

## Strategic Design Futures: Exploring strategy and futures to learn and practice design for intentional change.

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**Abstract:** Designers change existing situations with a focus on changing the behavior of artifacts. When designers aim to intentionally change the behaviors of individuals, organizations, or social systems, practitioners use specific approaches. Strategy (strategic design) and futures (design futures) are two alternatives for designers working on complex situations that require intentional change. This paper presents and reports three editions of a course titled Strategic Design Futures that address this type of situation. The course includes a seminar and a project component, which are structured into six design activities: sense-making, participatory visioning, designing futures, designing strategy, participatory evaluation, and design implementation. The course has ambitious goals, and students can only learn initial competencies. After three iterations, the course has focused on participatory visions and designing futures. The initial competencies the course provides are seeds for complex design situations of the real world requiring strategic and futures-oriented design skills.

**Keywords:** strategic design; design futures; design for change; service design

### 1. Introduction

As the greater scope of design becomes a familiar topic, concepts like change, transformation, and transitions become central in design discourse. While any design artifact produces a change, designers lack the ability to create, explain, or anticipate change. Design for change needs to be an intentional practice. In general design theory, design practice is fundamentally about change, “*changing existing situations into preferred ones*” (Simon, 1969, my emphasis). Nonetheless, I argue designers have a narrow vision of change centered on form-giving and satisfying human desire for commercial purposes. Strategy (strategic design) and futures (design futures) are powerful approaches to design for intentional change, considering challenges beyond the configuration of artifacts such as human needs and well-being, organizational culture, social systems, and planetary health. The purpose of this paper is



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## **Table of Contents Strategic Futures Cd**

1. Understanding the eBook Strategic Futures Cd
  - The Rise of Digital Reading Strategic Futures Cd
  - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Strategic Futures Cd
  - Exploring Different Genres
  - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
  - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
  - Popular eBook Platforms
  - Features to Look for in an Strategic Futures Cd
  - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Strategic Futures Cd
  - Personalized Recommendations
  - Strategic Futures Cd User Reviews and Ratings
  - Strategic Futures Cd and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Strategic Futures Cd Free and Paid eBooks
  - Strategic Futures Cd Public Domain eBooks
  - Strategic Futures Cd eBook Subscription Services
  - Strategic Futures Cd Budget-Friendly Options

6. Navigating Strategic Futures Cd eBook Formats
  - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
  - Strategic Futures Cd Compatibility with Devices
  - Strategic Futures Cd Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
  - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Strategic Futures Cd
  - Highlighting and Note-Taking Strategic Futures Cd
  - Interactive Elements Strategic Futures Cd
8. Staying Engaged with Strategic Futures Cd
  - Joining Online Reading Communities
  - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
  - Following Authors and Publishers Strategic Futures Cd
9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Strategic Futures Cd
  - Benefits of a Digital Library
  - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Strategic Futures Cd
10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
  - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
  - Minimizing Distractions
  - Managing Screen Time
11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Strategic Futures Cd
  - Setting Reading Goals Strategic Futures Cd
  - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Strategic Futures Cd
  - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Strategic Futures Cd
  - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
  - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
  - Exploring Educational eBooks
14. Embracing eBook Trends
  - Integration of Multimedia Elements

- Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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