

Introduction to the Special Issue: Design and Futures (Vol. I)

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As Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon famously observed: “Everyone designs who devises courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones” (Simon, 1996).

Designers and futurists, it turns out, have a great deal in common. This mutual recognition is reaching critical mass as each comes to appreciate how their respective traditions have much to offer to making urgent change in the world, and even more so, together.

It is increasingly acknowledged within the futures studies community that operating with a largely verbal and theoretical bent over the past half century has afforded too little impact on actual future-shaping behaviours. Meanwhile, those in the design community recognise a need to interrogate higher-level consequences – the futures, the worlds – that their products, systems and other outputs help produce.

Part of what bringing design and futures into sustained dialogue does is to allow each field to become more fluent in a second language which is the other’s native tongue.

How may designers systematically map out preferred futures, and what frameworks might futures studies furnish to help them? Conversely, how might futures scholars and practitioners adopt designerly modes of exploration, working more materially, visually and performatively to instantiate and illuminate possibilities?

‘Design and futures’ together offer ecosystemic and embodied approaches to shaping our collective prospects, informed by a diverse range of practices.

We are excited to have been working with the Journal of Futures Studies over several years to bring readers a special double issue dedicated to ‘Design and Futures’.

In this first issue, Vol. I, we have five peer-reviewed articles: Stuart Candy and Kelly Kornet introduce a new framework engaging communities and individuals in tangible forms of speculation. Ramia Mazé argues for the significance of how political dimensions suffuse futures thought. Cher Potter, DK Osseo-Asare and Mugendi M’Rithaa analyse the worldviews embedded in a makerspace platform in Accra, Ghana. Jake Dunagan offers an account of teaching experiential futures, written in collaboration with a whole class of graduate students. Anne Burdick shows how a multilayered experiment around developing a storyworld, characters, prototypes, and plot, delineates a rich design space scaffolded by a simultaneously narrative, conceptual, and material brief.

Powerful shorter contributions by speculative designers James Auger and Julian Hanna, design futurist Anab Jain, Hollywood worldbuilder Alex McDowell, architect Liam Young, design scholar Jamer Hunt, and

the geographically-distributed Decolonising Design Collective round out a remarkable first cross-sectional scan of design and futures perspectives.

In the next issue, Vol. II, curators, strategic designers, policymakers, and philosophers join the conversation.

As guest editors of this special edition, we wish to thank all authors who submitted articles and essays, and also the peer reviewers who so generously gave their time.

Our own practices originate in futures and design studies respectively, but we have both been actively 'hybridising' for a while now. In promoting such entanglements more widely, we aim to offer readers across both communities, and well beyond, insight into how disparate perspectives and tools, in combination, can challenge, remix, and strengthen each other, as well as open on to further exchange.

Of the immensely exciting community weaving that is underway where futures and design meet, these pages represent just some initial strands. We foresee many more to come.

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Introduction to the Special Issue: Design and Futures (Vol. II)

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Volume I of this special double issue of the *Journal of Futures Studies* ‘Design and Futures’ – the largest themed project in the history of the journal – began by noting something that is increasingly self-evident to anyone paying attention: the fields of futures and design are merging in a process of dialogue, experimentation, and mutual discovery. Obvious perhaps, and yet this process and the practices and perspectives it engenders are nonetheless remarkable. They show no sign of abating.

The dialogue continues (note we do not say ‘concludes’) here in Volume II, with scholars and practitioners from across the two fields, and beyond, delving more deeply into the practical and philosophical issues at various intersections. Both established and emerging voices share generously of their case studies, lessons learned, and methodological questions. They traverse the worlds of media, design, curation, and strategic foresight; they propose research strategies that cross community perspectives and shift our geographical (and political) focus to different sites for design and futures. To adapt an observation from cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove, “position and context are centrally and inescapably implicated in all constructions of [design and futures] knowledge” (Cosgrove, 1999, p. 7).

This second volume of ‘Design and Futures’ opens with seven peer-reviewed articles from a constellation of contexts, spanning five continents: Maya van Leemput (Belgium) distils lessons from many years of relational work and play where futures meets media, art and design. Leah Zaidi (Canada) illuminates the importance of worldbuilding as an emerging practice that intersects science fiction with real-life applications of design and foresight. Ralph Borland (South Africa) outlines a case study of interventionist art from the streets of Cape Town as an instance of guerrilla futures activism. Karla Paniagua (Mexico) describes the first four years of running a postgraduate design/futures program in the highly energetic and fast-changing context of Latin American foresight practice (*la prospectiva*). Stefanie A. Ollenburg (Germany) offers a generic ‘research through design’ framework, inviting researchers to hybridise futures and design in participatory projects, early and often. And finally, a pair of case studies from Taiwan: Jeanne Hoffman investigates preferred future images about the environment in 2060 as held by a cross-cultural cohort of undergraduate students; and Kuo-Hua Chen considers the possibility of designing for increased environmental awareness among young Taiwanese through a suite of futures interventions in curriculum.

These are followed by a potent collection of shorter essays and interviews from philosopher Timothy Morton; Museum of Modern Art curator Paola Antonelli; transdisciplinary artists Maja Kuzmanovic, Tina Auer, Tim Boykett and Nik Gaffney; designers Nik Baerten, Dan Hill, and Lucy Kimbell; futurists Aaron Rosa and John Sweeney; NASA visual strategist David Delgado; architect Lizzie Yarina, and design theorist Tony Fry.

Taken in singularity, these voices are strikingly diverse, but when hearing them together, they begin to harmonise. It is the music of a community emerging.

Through this issue, we encounter contemporary questions around design and futures in the twenty-first century, as well as ageless questions about what it means to be human, and the nature of time itself. We're excited to see what these may do to help deepen, enrich and catalyse further activity and exchange.

It seems fitting that this second volume starts and ends with articles about journeys. This project has been a remarkable journey for us as guest editors – with several years of work spanning multiple job changes, international relocations, and children being born – as well as tremendous changes in the context of design and futures themselves. In spite of expanding this themed publication to two volumes, the interest and contributions have far exceeded our expectations. It is gratifying that the relevance of this undertaking continues to grow apace.

We wish to express our gratitude to all authors who submitted proposals; our wonderful peer reviewers; our incredibly understanding partners on the home front; and not least José Ramos of the *Journal of Futures Studies*, without whose tireless support this project would not have been possible.

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