

How Futures Thinking can benefit from Design Thinking and Strategic Thinking

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FUTURE STRATEGIC THINKING

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Problem

- ❑ Futures Thinking, without a doubt, a multi-disciplinary field where professionals hail from a variety of schools of thought.
- ❑ When every 'prediction' is wrong, what makes a great Futures Thinker?
- ❑ Where is the cohesive foundation of thought that allows the structured growth of 'futurists'?

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Method

- ❑ What is a futures thinker?
 - ❑ Meta-analysis of literature
 - ❑ Original survey of active 'futurists' from World Futures Society
- ❑ What is design thinking and is that a useful construct?
- ❑ What is strategic thinking and is that a useful construct?

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Futures thinking is undefined

- ❑ Is it a method?

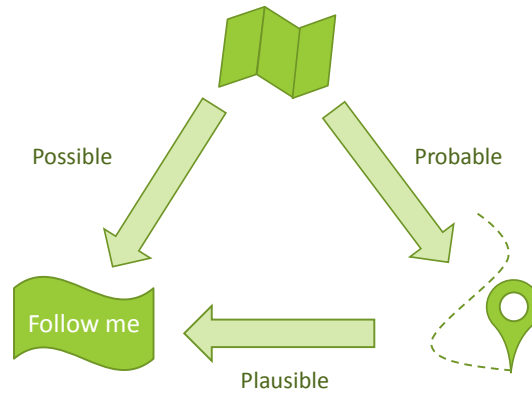
- ❑ Is it a field of research?

- ❑ Is it discrete or an approach to all problems?

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what is a futures thinker?

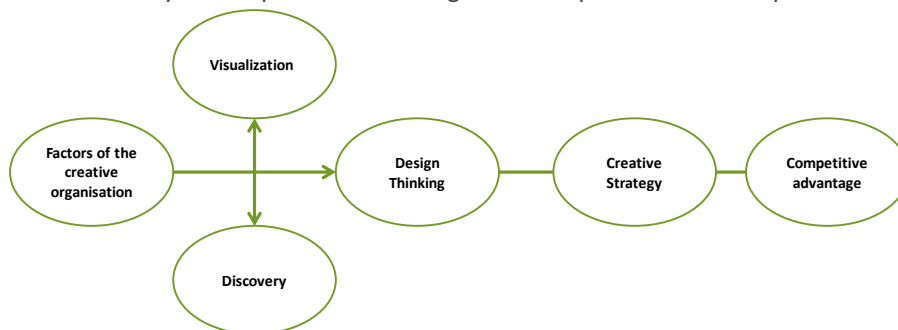
- ❑ Futurists appear to categorise themselves as either:
 - ❑ Explorers – what could be?
 - ❑ Driven to learn
 - ❑ Engineers – What is plausible?
 - ❑ Driven to understand
 - ❑ Guides – Follow Me!
 - ❑ Driven to improve



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Design thinking - insights

- ❑ ‘...design thinking as a construct remains intangible’¹ and ‘it is a mix of different kinds of thinking’²
- ❑ There are a variety of interpretations of the generalised process. For example:



1. *Badding, Leigh and Williams, 2014, Models of thinking: Assessing the components of the design thinking process*
 2. *Dorst and Kee, 2011, The core of 'design thinking' and its application*

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Discussion - Culture

- ❑ Design thinking can be thought of as a culture¹
- ❑ Culture refers to the values that all members of the group hold in common²
- ❑ Organisational Culture also requires:
 - ❑ Structural stability – not reliant on an individual (WFSF, WFS, APF etc)
 - ❑ Depth – May be unconscious / simply the way you do things
 - ❑ Breadth – affects every part of the organisation
 - ❑ Patterning or integration – it is what makes values, rituals and behaviours coherent

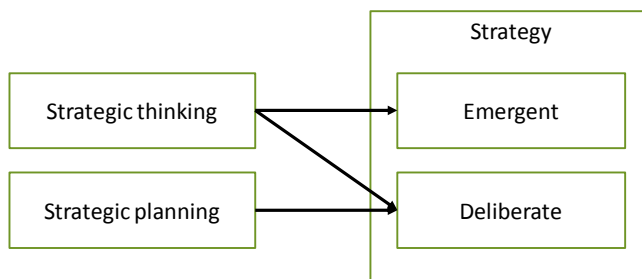
1. Acklin, 2010, *Design driven innovation process model*; Brown and Wyatt, 2010, *Design Thinking for Social Innovation*; and Carlgren, Rauth and Elmquist, 2016, *Framing Design Thinking: The concept in idea and enactment*

2. Schein, Edgar. H., 2004, *Organizational culture and leadership*

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Strategic Thinking - insights

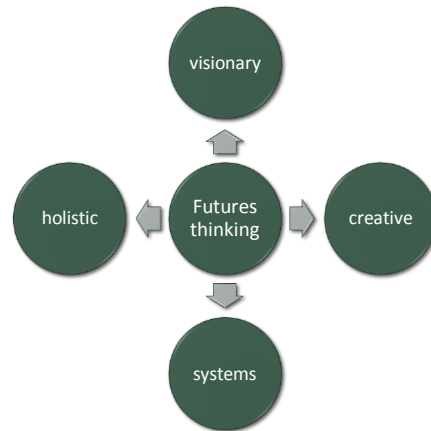
- ❑ Strategy is a plan
- ❑ Good strategy is enabled by the capacity to foresee futures and the ability to act
- ❑ Strategic thinking is a 'means-ends way of thinking that seek future value'



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Discussion – Cognitive Characteristics

- ❑ Visionary thinking
 - ❑ Inayatulla – ‘[scenarios] do not pull organizations and civilizations forward’
- ❑ Systems Thinking
 - ❑ Understanding interconnected complexity
- ❑ Creative thinking
 - ❑ New solutions to new problems
- ❑ Holistic Intuition
 - ❑ ‘intuition is of great use in finding solutions to complex problems’



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Summary

- ❑ Future Thinkers appear to categorise themselves as Explorers, Engineers or Guides
- ❑ Future Thinking could be categorised as a culture, similar to Design Thinking
- ❑ Future Thinking capacity could be built using the cognitive traits of a Strategic Thinker

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