

Ken Eklund
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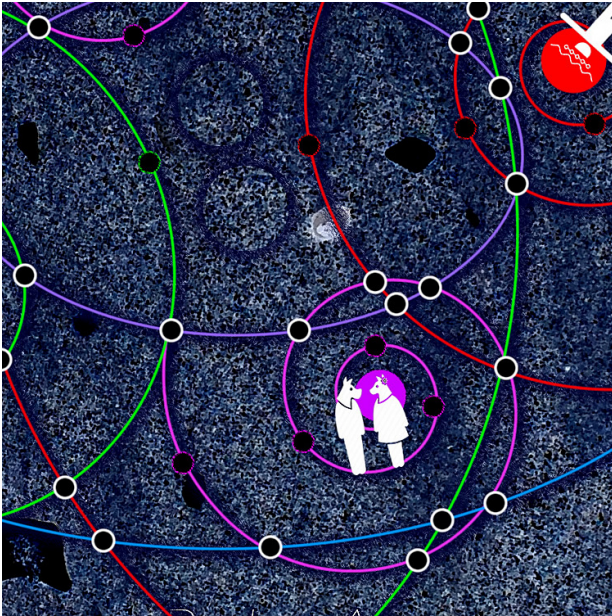
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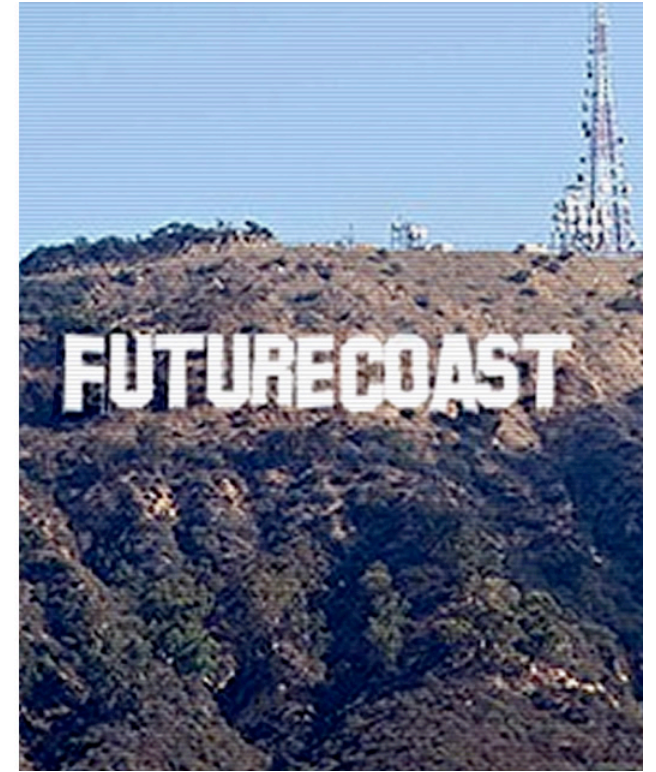


FUTURECOAST





[@FutrCoast](#) [#chronofall](#) recovery proved to be difficult. The artifact was broken in the fall.
pic.twitter.com/K49biXvXeY



Statement

FutureCoast has an open, playful premise: what if voicemails are leaking out of the cloud of our possible futures? They're fascinating to listen to, because each voicemail hints at what's (climate)changed and what life is like as a result. As an eminently familiar and accessible form of storytelling, voicemails enable people to engage directly with imagining the future – to the point of expressing their own visions, as the voicemails we hear on the site are made by the players themselves. Through the collaborative process of collecting authentic-sounding narratives, FutureCoast opens up an immersive, participatory path to futures thinking.

Description

FutureCoast is a storytelling game, an immersive, collaborative work of climate fiction. In the game story, the voicemail system of the future has sprung a leak in space-time, and voicemails made in the future appear in our time as "chronofacts" – physical objects players can actually find. Recordings amass on the website as people create the most authentic-sounding voicemails they can, messages that seem to have leaked out of the near future (2020-2065). Listening to and creating these "street level" future visions empowers people to get past the veil of unreality that often separates us from understanding and acting upon the threat of climate change.

Notes

- Finalist, Webby Award, Best Net Art
- Extensive press [LINK](#)
- Milestone in Climate Fiction (cli-fi): first massively participatory cli-fi work
- Ongoing:
 - part of art and writing curricula exploring climate change themes at University of Oregon, University of West Georgia, more
 - inspiring local extensions such as FutureCoast Brighton at ONCA [LINK](#)

Tags

[#alternate reality game](#) [#storytelling game](#)
[#authentic fiction](#) [#climate change](#) [#immersive](#)
[#crowdsourced](#) [#futurethinking](#) [#geocaching](#)

Creator: Ken Eklund
Producer: Sara Thacher [CREDITS](#)

Commissioned as a member of the PoLAR Partnership at Columbia Univ: Dr. Stephanie Pfirman, Principal Investigator

Funded by a climate science education grant from the National Science Foundation, 2014



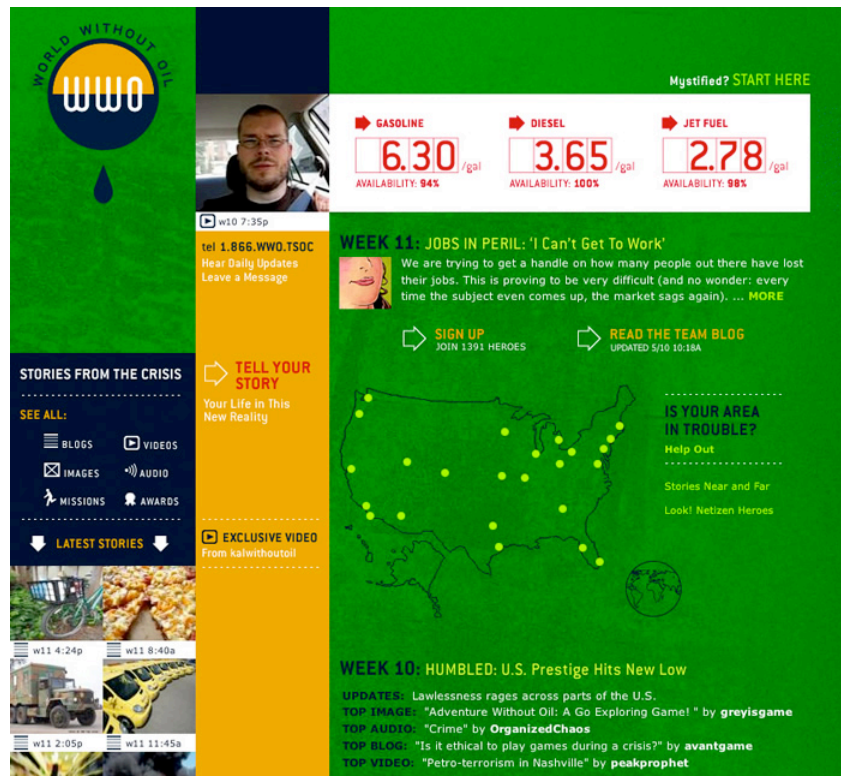
FUTURECOAST



breizhouheodez ([breizhouheodez](#)) wrote,

last snapshots

I didn't think the landscape, or should I say cityscape, could change so fast. Sometimes I look around and feel that I am on the set of some post-armageddon, sci-fi film.



World Without Oil, Week 5, Boise



Statement

World Without Oil was a "what if" game – what if an oil crisis started on April 30, 2007? It simulated the first 32 weeks of this realistic oil crisis, by inviting people anywhere on the Internet to contribute "collective imagination" to confront our real-life risks of oil dependency. The idea was, "play it before you live it."

The innovative game approach created an online space for a story to write itself and a community to coalesce around that process. Collaboratively building the narrative not only created a vivid, immersive, multi-authored account of life in an oil crisis – it made the game experience life-changing for many of its players.

Description

In the game fiction, World Without Oil established a citizen "nerve center" to track events and share solutions. Anybody could play by creating a personal story – an email or phone call, a blog post, video, photo, twitter, whatever – that chronicled the imagined reality of their life in the crisis. The game site links to all these stories.

By creating a simple nonpartisan framework that focused thousands of people from all walks of life upon this common issue, the game sparked peer learning and inquiry-based exploration of the roots, outcomes, and prevention of an oil crisis. Players worked together to gain grassroots insights into the forces that will rule at street level in a crisis, and shared their solutions.

Notes

Winner, SXSW, Best Activist Website

Finalist, Webby Award, Best Internet Game

Finalist, Special Mention, Stockholm Challenge: Best Information Technology for the Environment

Finalist, Honorable Mention: OISJ Bien-nial, Green Prix for Environmental Art

Extensive press [LINK](#)

A landmark in game theory and design

Tags

#alternate reality game #authentic fiction
#resilience #immersive #crowdsourced
#multiauthored #storymaking #oil crisis

Creator: Ken Eklund
Participation Architect:
Jane McGonigal

[FULL CREDITS](#)

Commissioned by ITVS, a public media non-profit: Cathy Fischer, Senior Producer, ITVS Interactive

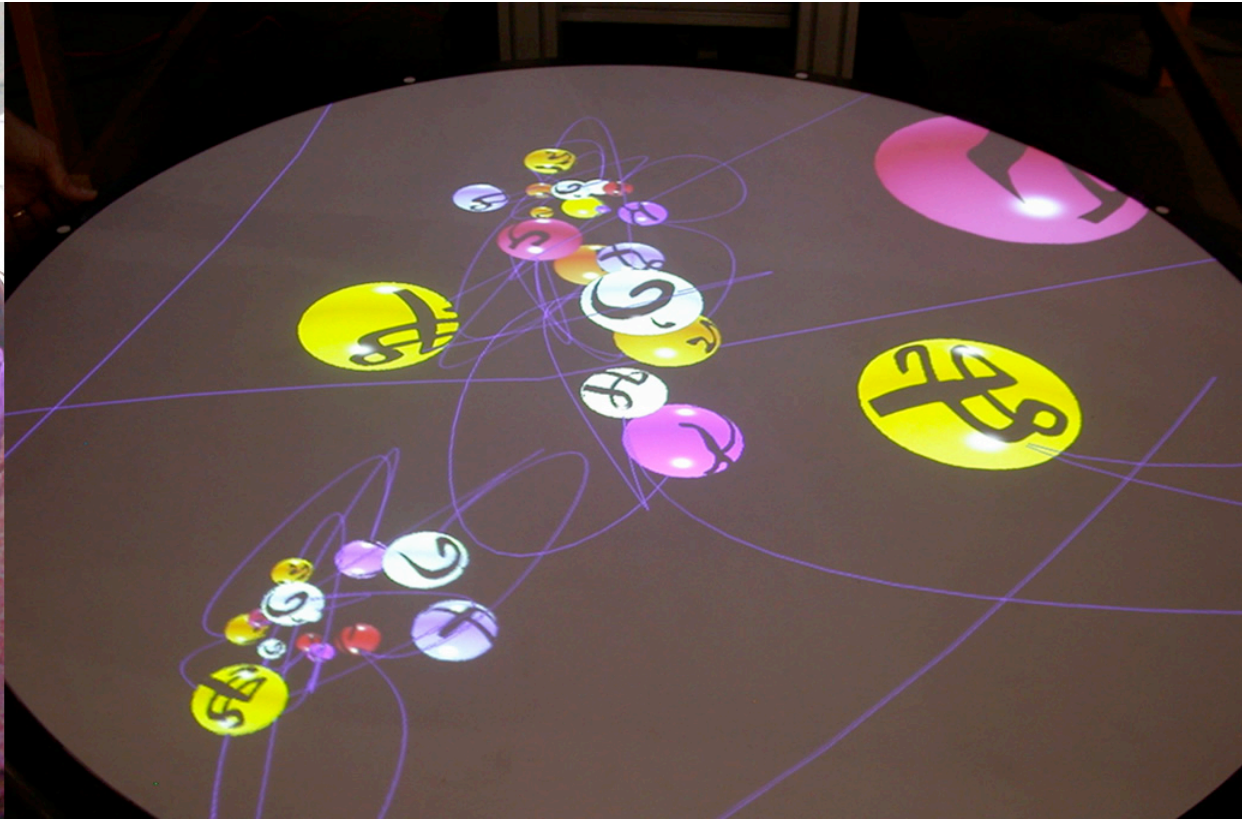
Funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 2007





ZOROP

THERE'S NO NEED
FOR ICE AND SNOW
END THE HEAT BACK
ON THE GO!



Statement

Zorop is a geolocated pervasive game developed as interactive art. Zorop's goal manifests as two sides of a coin: on one side, the game is a serious yet quixotic effort to catalyze world peace by sparking a "critical mass" of deep connections among strangers within a tight geographical and temporal space. On the other side, Zorop employs simple props and a playful narrative to transform public areas into friendlier spaces, and to demonstrate (and data-visualize) how each personal experience helps weave our social fabric, and ultimately, community harmony and world peace.

Description

A cadre of volunteer Zoropathians don bright scarves and head out into the streets, encouraging people who don't know each other to connect and discover hidden things they have in common. They then feed the information into a browsable 3D data visualization in the central hall.

Zorop is a game that reinvigorates community by fostering diverse and creative connections among strangers. By relating social contact to the experience of public space, the participatory artwork illustrates how fostering simple connections can lead to meaningful social gains.

Notes

Zoropathians: 40 people from the arts, urban game and general community

Hours of play: 12

Number of players (appx): 500

Individuals/groups connected: 231

Pantoglyph array: 14 ancient sigils of connection

Most commonly invoked pantoglyphs: The Journey, The Root, The Hand

Tags

#urban game #pervasive game #art game #games for good #immersive #dataviz

Creators: Ken Eklund, Annette Mees

[CREDITS](#)

Data Visualization: Onomy Labs

Commissioned by [OISJ](#): Steve Dietz, Artistic Director, for the OISJ Biennial digital arts festival in San Jose, Calif.

Funded by the James Irvine Foundation et al, 2010

Z O R O P

GISKIN ANOMALY





Statement

"What we know so far: two people are operating 'under the radar' in Balboa Park. They are investigating 'anomalies' – Pandora finds them with a detector and Drake decodes them. The two don't get along. Rather than meet, they communicate by voicemail – and to follow in their footsteps, you just call their number with your cellphone..."

"Which is worthwhile, because the anomalies turn out to be 'ghost thoughts' from World War II. Drake and Pandora are chasing a riveting personal story... and now, so can you."

Description

The commission directed me to "add a digital layer" to the way people think about Balboa Park. The commissioner wanted the experience to be widely accessible, thought-provoking, adventuresome and above all, fun.

I created an immersive cellphone adventure exploring history and culture in the Park. As a simple voicemail system, any cellphone can be used (no app). Messages lead the players on a wayfinding exploration of the Park, and unlock chapters to a historical drama. Although it appeals as a casual game, GISKIN ANOMALY bends all its elements to creating an intuitive, immersive whole, so that the game disappears and its players connect directly with the story.

Notes

Number of calls players made: 11,300

Call minutes they used: 32,300

Number of players (appx): 16,500

Game availability: 24 x 7 for two years

Silver MUSE Award, American Association of Museums, Best Game

Excellent press and word-of-mouth

Tags

#geolocated game #wayfinding game
#adventure game #cellphone adventure
#treasure hunt #alternate reality #geocaching
#educational #immersive #fun

Creator: Ken Eklund

[CREDITS](#)

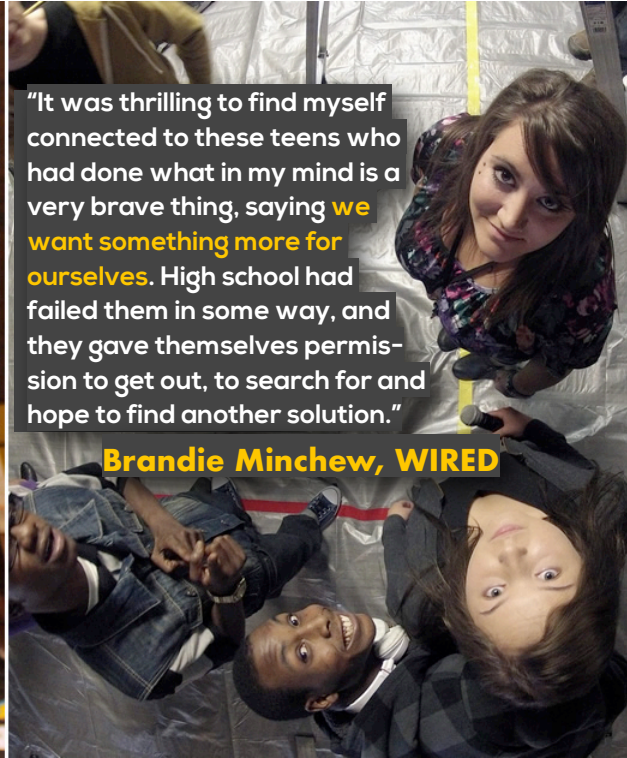
Commissioned by the Balboa Park Online Collaborative, Rich Cherry, Director; on behalf of the Park's museums and cultural institutions

Funded by the Benbough Foundation, 2010-2



ED ZED OMEGA





Statement

"Zed Omega" – slang for "totally done with."
To go Zed Omega is to ragequit something or to break completely with someone

If you are a high school junior or senior, and you announce you're "taking a semester off" to explore other options, certain things may happen.

After the heart attacks, threats and bluster, you can get down to business. People start to talk realistically to you about school, what it's good for and what it isn't. Step back, and you'll see education is an "emperor's new clothes" topic, full of unquestioned assumptions and issues polarized to the point of paralysis. And you find yourself, like the child in the fable, pointing to the way things really are.

Description

This collaborative thought experiment and "interactive documentary" used a unique provocation to crowdsource perspectives about education today. The Zed Omega teens, played by actors, "dropped out loud" from high school – frustrated with traditional education, they left to explore the alternatives.

The arc of each Zed Omega character was unscripted: they responded in real time to discussions with people on social media and in live events. At the end of the semester, each announced (with appropriate drama) what each had learned, how they had changed, and whether or not they would be returning to school.

Description (cont'd)

The Zed Omega characters evoked real reactions and perspectives because they seemed real – because the young actors playing them were channeling aspects of their real-life experience. People play-interacted with the Zed Omegas; freed from real-life consequence, people could tell the Zed Omegas what they truly thought. This authentic connection brought questions about purposes and methods of school out of the abstract into the immediate and real.

Tags

#alternate reality #immersive theater #social media storytelling #authentic fiction #education

Creator: Ken Eklund [CREDITS](#)
 Producer: Maggie Ryan Sandford

In partnership with Twin Cities Public Television (TPT): Andi McDaniel, Interactive Producer

In cooperation with the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis

A Localore storytelling initiative, commissioned by AIR; funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting et al, 2012



RUINATION: CITY OF DUST





Statement

Our mission: to make art that would bring Minneapolitans to feel a new reality: their water resources are being stressed. To that end: a game. At heart, RUINATION's a mystery game, because mysteries encourage people to dig for knowledge. It's a team game, to encourage collaboration and collective action. It's played on (and off) bikes, so that players will directly experience the wide green spaces that are at risk. We structured the game to immerse players in artful moments – playful and fun, sobering and reflective, deep, enigmatic, light and social – because such moments open the player to empathy and personal transformation.

Description

It's the year 2314. Minneapolis is a dusty ruin. Which of six deadly problems was the villain that "murdered" Minneapolis? You navigate to five archaeological digs investigating the failed city. Along the way, you mine for plastic; eat meals of smoked carp; shelter from dust storms; shut down boron reactor spills. The farther you go, the more the story takes shape. The game world resonates between the compellingly fictional and the eerily possible, with water stewardship and protection of water resources always at the center of the narrative.

In time your path leads you to the cyborgs, who dispassionately assist you in analyzing the clues you've



Description (cont'd)

gathered (about actual present-day threats). The rumors are true, they tell you: the fabled Understory does exist – and they intercede to gain you entrance to the water-rich subterranean haven.

The narrative of RUINATION is by turns immersive, playful, dramatic and mysterious. The game sketches out a cohesive multithreaded story that spans hundreds of years and engages the player in "what if?" thinking.

Tags

#urban game #bicycle #place-based #alt future #immersive theater #community #stewardship #water resources

Photos 1 2 3 Dusty Hoskovec; 4 Matt Holland



A Northern Lights project: Steve Dietz, Artistic Director; Erin Lavelle, Ruination Art Director

Game Design by Ken Eklund

[CREDITS](#)

On behalf of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District in Minneapolis

Funded by a Bush Foundation community innovation grant





ABUNDANT FUTURE

An Environmental Humanities project at the University of Oregon: Stephanie LeMenager, producer. Funded by Environmental Humanities at UO. Created by Ken Eklund

"Imagine that there's an organization that wishes to transform a city into 'the city of the future' – to create a living breathing example of what a future city could be like. Imagine that they had the money to make it happen. Would they choose a city in The Netherlands, or maybe Finland? Or would they choose Eugene, Oregon? Does Eugene have what it takes to become 'the city of the future'?"

"We staged Abundant Future in 2019 to transform Eugene's streetscapes into a lab exploring positive futures. Abundant Future is a wayfinding game that immerses players in a speculative fiction: that this organization exists, and they sent a team of scouts with advanced futurecasting technology to walk through Eugene, looking for signals that our city is ready for positive change. In Abundant Future, players retrace the scouts' path and eavesdrop on what they said to each other; anyone with a cellphone can stand where they stood, and see what they saw: driverless autotaxis; vertical gardens; alternative economies; community resilience in the face of climate change – all extrapolated from small signals in the Eugene cityscape today. Abundant Future demonstrates how new media storytelling and innovative pedagogy can build a bridge to new ideas and collaborative visions."

TRAIN AFTER TRAIN (OREGON 2044)

"My work focuses on playing the future. Inspired by the ideas and methods of game design, I create experiences that help audiences visualize and participate in possible futures. Last year, as a visiting artist/futurist at Arizona State University, my interactions with students led me back into the realm of board games, and to reconsider how board games engage their players with cultural ideas. I began to think about the game board as artifact, a signifier of story space framed by the game designer but ultimately written by its players. In much the same way that we readily understand a painterly canvas to be a platform to negotiate ideas, we can readily understand the game board to be a platform dedicated to emergent narratives negotiated by the designer/artist and the player/viewer. At Leland Iron Works I set out to engage viewers in a storymaking experience through the visual medium of a game board that has leaked to us from the future."

Work created as a 2019 Leland Iron Works Fellow at the Pacific Northwest College of the Arts, with Christine Conant as program manager and Nan Curtis as director. Funding from the Ford Family Foundation

Keri Eklund

Train After Train (Oregon 2044)
Local media, 48" paper
80" x 60" x 10"
2019

My work focuses on playing the future. Inspired by the ideas and methods of game design, I create experiences that help audiences visualize and participate in possible futures. Last year, as a visiting artist/futurist at Arizona State University, my interactions with students led me back into the realm of board games, and to reconsider how board games engage their players with cultural ideas. I began to think about the game board as artifact, a signifier of story space framed by the game designer but ultimately written by its players. In much the same way that we readily understand a painterly canvas to be a platform to negotiate ideas, we can readily understand the game board to be a platform dedicated to emergent narratives negotiated by the designer/artist and the player/viewer. At Leland Iron Works I set out to engage viewers in a storymaking experience through the visual medium of a game board that has leaked to us from the future.

www.keriekund.com
@keriekund

ACTION REQUIRED

After
the Oregon 2044
game board, please
take the time to
write a short story
about the future of
Oregon.

NAME: _____
DATE: _____
CLASS: _____
TEACHER: _____

LUNA CITY 2175



In 2018, Emerge, the annual festival of futures at Arizona State University, was an immersive visit to a well-imagined moon habitation in the year 2175. I was Resident Artist at ASU's School for the Future of Innovation in Society that year, in part to be a principal contributing artist to that participatory exhibit.

I undertook two roles for Luna City 2175, both focused on intensive worldbuilding. First, I initiated a "story bible" that wove a comprehensive backstory for the lunar habitat as it emerged from the exhibit's separate core creative efforts. Having a coherent synthesis of the habitat's history and evolving culture made it possible for other art and university groups to join the creative arc. Second, I curated the exhibit's commissions with five outside artists, to incorporate them seamlessly into the immersive work.

Luna City 2175 enabled its audience to move past the passive role of spectator: they were invited into active roles such as investigators or potential residents. All the artists were performers, dynamically engaging and being engaged by the audience, collaboratively imagining life on a world apart from, yet still inextricably linked to, life on Earth.



MEET LUNA CITY

Emerge, the annual festival of futures at Arizona State University, seeks to extend its ideas beyond the festival itself. In 2018, as Resident Artist at ASU's School for the Future of Innovation in Society, I worked with ASU and the Santa Fe Institute to reimagine that year's Emerge, Luna City 2175, as a "suitcase immersive experience" for SFI's InterPlanetary Festival in Santa Fe.

Our reimagining focused on the strength of Luna City 2175 – the unscripted, emergent dialog between audience participants and a city resident. In this new work, the audience met and talked (chatted) with a moon resident via a high-tech viewscreen. We called the adaptation "Meet Luna City."

In the work's framing fiction, to prevent "timesnap," the audience pretends they also live in a small community out in space in the year 2175 – on an asteroid, or on a satellite orbiting Mars. Each small audience group thus authored their own creative backstory, debating and agreeing on the defining characteristics of their space community. Meet Luna City thus engaged audiences with deep questions of our time: are we human, or transhuman? Should our artificial intelligences be limited, or pervasive? Should citizens work, or play? And followed up these ideas in live conversation with a resident on the Moon.

HOST COUNTRY



The Ambassador's day begins:
four weeks until Election Day.



You meet representatives from
the election monitoring
organizations in country.



You form a team at post to assess the actual
violence capability of the video makers.

One day later ☹

An anonymous video is released
online which accuses the host
government of planning to steal the
election. The video indicates that this
plan may be met by local violence at
polling stations.

Pre-Crisis Training for U.S. Ambassadors

In 2017-8, as Resident Artist at the School for the Future of Innovation in Society (SFIS) at Arizona State University, I worked with ASU's Decision Theater on a pilot project for the American Academy of Diplomacy in Washington DC. Currently, U.S. Ambassadors receive no instruction about navigating pre-crisis situations, and the AAD sought a contemporary, experiential learning solution to be evaluated by the U.S. State Department.

I am the lead designer of the training, which runs on the proprietary Decision Theater platform. The immersive one-day experience places Ambassadors into a series of "days in the life" on post in a fictional host country. Ambassadors engage with the events and decisions as they develop, as brought to life by a story facilitator and a mentor who live-roleplay the other people in each scenario. The tone is not that of a test or trial, but cooperative discovery of the nuances that signal crisis in the making.

"Host Country"

(Pre-Crisis Training for U.S. Ambassadors)

Director: Benjamin Freakley, Decision Theater

Project Lead: Erik Johnston, ASU

Lead Design: Ken Eklund

Executive Producer: Ron Neumann, AAD

MY FRIEND JULES

Dear Jules!
Need you lots, but
you need to clean up
your act!



"Everybody knows Jules. But nobody knows Jules like you know Jules."

"Like it or not, you're in a relationship with energy. How's it working out for you? Is it amazing what your friend will do for you: take you places, show you things – or is your friend Jules getting a bit too high-maintenance? Here I'm collecting stories about Jules, the friend that everyone knows but never in the same way."

My Friend Jules is an experiment in creative envisioning: by contributing stories about Jules, people help build a more dimensional understanding of our society's complex relationship to energy. The project connects our relationship with energy to the rich language we use for human relationships.

My Friend Jules is one component of Stories of Change, which aims to foster lively public and political conversations about energy by looking in a fresh way at energy's past, present and future. The project draws on history, literature, social and policy research and the arts to encourage more imaginative approaches to current energy choices and lower-carbon futures.

Stories of Change
Director: Joe Smith, Open University

Storytelling design by Ken Eklund

LINKS

» [FUTURECOAST](#) WNYC audio interview (4 min)

» [FUTURECOAST](#) archived at the Internet Archive

» [FUTURECOAST: THE EXHIBIT](#) art exhibition idea – video on Vimeo

» [WORLD WITHOUT OIL](#) archival site

» [Welcome to a WORLD WITHOUT OIL](#) video on YouTube

» [ZOROP](#) supporting site

» [ZOROP](#) artists' statement – pdf, 3.5MB

» [GISKIN ANOMALY](#) pdf, 27MB – complete tour of the game

» [ED ZED OMEGA](#) main site

» [What is ED ZED OMEGA?](#) video on YouTube

» [RUINATION: CITY OF DUST](#) recap at northernlights.mn

» [RUINATION: THE TEASER](#) by northernlights.mn

» [RUINATION: THE VIDEO](#) by northernlights.mn

» [RUINATION: CITY OF DUST](#) pdf, 17MB – complete tour of the game

» [LUNA CITY 2175](#) main site

» [LUNA CITY VIDEO](#) recap on Vimeo

» [MY FRIEND JULES](#) main site

» ["MY FRIEND"](#) commissioned art video on the Jules stories



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