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Games for **Futures** Thinking

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UH Foresight Spring Gathering
Houston 2019

Agenda

- Brief Discussion of Foresight Games — 10 minutes tops
- Patellar Reflex "Game" Exercise — 40 minutes
 - Game Instruction — a few minutes
 - Team Formation — a few minutes
 - Prompt Card Distribution — a few minutes
 - Play the Game — 20 minutes or so
 - Readouts — 10 minutes or so
- Judging, Awards and Reflection (if there's time) — 10 minutes or less

Foresight Games

Foresight Games: What and why?

Foresight?

Thinking and imagining multiple possible futures, the factors that influence the future, and the opportunities and challenges that might eventually emerge.

For Kids / All Ages?

By engaging people in the challenges of the present, we can stimulate, shape, and potentially help them create images of the future in which we will all live.

Why Games?

Through the fun and engaging activities of play and games, we can open up minds and hearts to the creative possibilities and latent potential hidden in the present.

**What do effective Foresight Games entail? How can they be best developed?
How can they best be used?**

Foresight Games: Examples

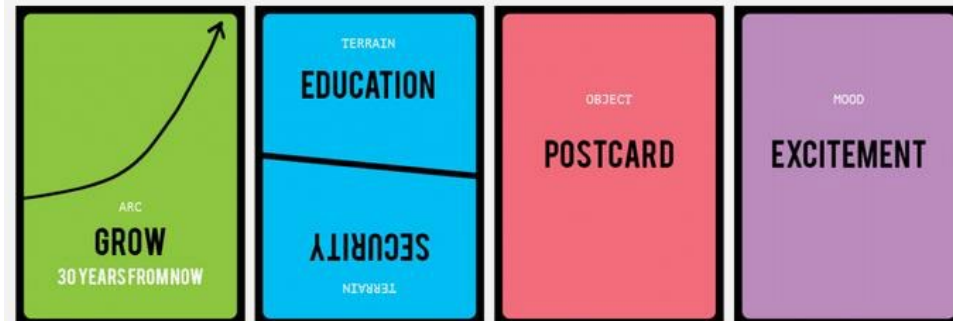
The Thing From The Future is an award-winning imagination game that challenges players to collaboratively and competitively describe objects from a range of alternative futures. From Stuart Candy/OCAD and The Situation Lab.



Arc, Terrain, Object, and Mood are the four cards. Arc sets the overall future paradigm theme (Grow, Collapse, Discipline, Transform). Terrain identifies contexts, places and topic areas where the future thing might be located. Object provides a common shape or type. Mood establishes the emotions evoked in the present observer of the future object. The multiple options within the four categories allow more than 3.7 million prompts, not counting Wildcards.

A sample of drawn cards in a hand and the subsequent alternative future:

EXAMPLE PROMPT



- Arc = "Grow, 30 years from now"
- Terrain = Education
- Object = Postcard
- Mood = Excitement

<http://situationlab.org/projects/the-thing-from-the-future/>

Foresight Games: Examples

Cards

Card games use visuals and the juxtaposition of ideas to stimulate creativity and new ideas about the future.

Foresight New Zealand

Designed to develop and strengthen their futures thinking skills: scenario-building, problem-solving, creative thinking and dealing with uncertainty. 64 cards developed by the participants of the 2016 *ForesightNZ* workshop in Wellington.

ForesightNZ playing cards

Compete, collaborate, create
One deck, infinite possibilities

Thank you for downloading the printable PDF version of the *ForesightNZ* playing cards.

36 participants aged 18 to 25 came together from throughout New Zealand to explore the events and trends that could shape our long-term future. From 27 to 29 April 2016, participants worked to create a robust foresight tool in the form of a card game.

Post a photo or tweet your interesting scenarios using the hashtag #foresightnz to contribute to the national conversation around New Zealand's long-term future.

To learn more about the *ForesightNZ* Workshop, see the website at www.foresightnz.org.

If you would like to purchase a deck of cards, please visit our online store at www.mcguinnessinstitute.org.

What are the ForesightNZ playing cards?

These are 64 cards developed by the participants of the 2016 *ForesightNZ* workshop in Wellington. The workshop participants invented three games (instructions overleaf) so that players can develop and strengthen their futures thinking skills: scenario-building, problem-solving, creative thinking and dealing with uncertainty.

You can experiment and mess with these games as much as you like, or even create your own. *ForesightNZ* calls for a dynamic and diverse conversation about New Zealand's possible futures, so add your voice to the mix.

In the Deck

- 4 Capital Cards
- 32 Event Cards
- 3 Joker Cards
- 25 Trend Cards

4 Capital Cards

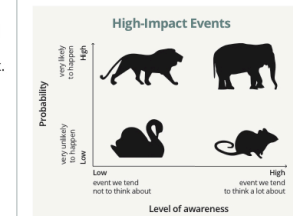
The four Capital Cards refer to the types of capital at the heart of the New Zealand Treasury's *Living Standards Framework*.

'Capital' in this sense describes something of value that can be drawn upon to produce more value, and together the four capitals describe where all of the resources come from that can improve the everyday lives of New Zealanders.



32 Event Cards

Each Event Card falls into one of four types depending on how much society thinks about the event's possibility and how likely the event actually is. Although not an exact science, the types of Event Card help to ensure we have a range of possible events. Each event category is represented by an animal – lion, elephant, swan or mouse – as shown in the diagram below.



Thinking about these event types may help you add context to your scenarios: Was the event expected? Was anyone prepared for it? What happens when two high impact events occur at the same time? Does the order of events impact on the outcome?



3 Joker Cards

The three Jokers can be used in any game as an optional extra – they challenge you to devise your own events and trends.

You can dream up your Jokers either before the game or in the moment as you play.



25 Trend Cards

A trend is a change we can see happening in the world around us over the medium- or long-term. Each Trend Card can be played either as increasing or decreasing.

10 of the 25 Trend Cards describe a tension. You can play these by thinking of the tension represented on the card as rising or falling, or the balance of power shifting from one side to the other.

You can use this choice to your advantage in *I Reckon*. For *Quarrel* and *Cards for Humanity*, you might decide before the game begins to play Trend Cards as all increasing or all decreasing, or you might decide during the game on a card-by-card basis.

You can decide the direction of a trend by considering how it is developing in the world around you, challenging yourself to imagine the opposite situation, or simply tossing a coin.



Foresight Games: Examples

Board and Cards

Games with boards and cards provide a context for gameplay and structure actions within the game.

Pandemic

Pandemic based on the premise that four [diseases](#) have broken out in the world, each threatening to wipe out a region. The game is unlike most board games in that the gameplay is based on [cooperation](#) rather than on [competitiveness](#). Through the combined effort of all the players, the goal is to discover all four cures before any of several game-losing conditions are reached.



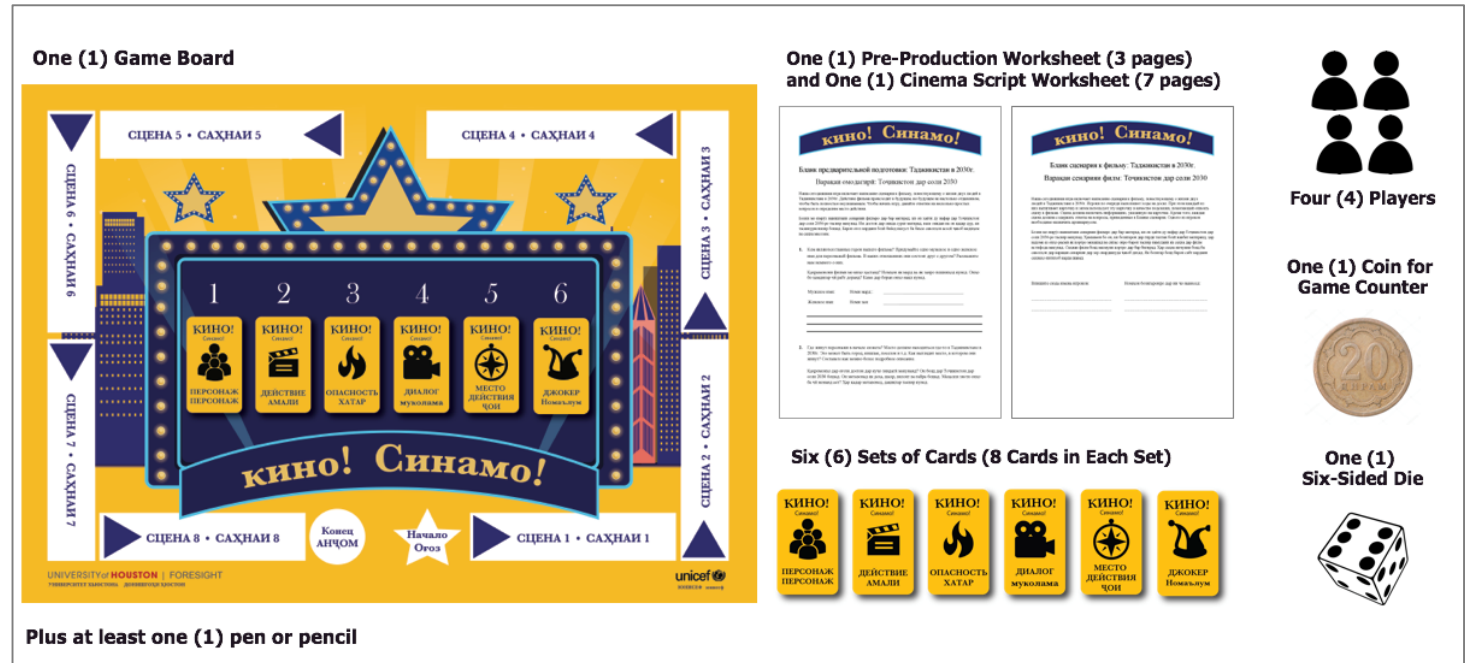
Foresight Games: Cinema

Board and Cards

Games with boards and cards provide a context for gameplay and structure actions within the game.

Cinema

Cinema was developed and used as a foresight exercise for adolescent engagement and a foresight tool for research about adolescent attitudes about the future. As part of the research, 374 adolescents played the game, in a total of 24 settings, and 96 games were played across five regions of the country of Tajikistan.



Patellar Reflex

Overall Objective

Have
Fun.



Patellar Reflex: The Goal

Teams will collaboratively write a brief piece of “Flash Future Fiction” (or FFF) about global climactic-social conditions (or similar) in 2050 — 31 years from now! You will have no research or background or scientific forecasts at your disposal, but you still need to act like an expert (imagine you’re a Congressperson). So then ... you will construct your story based on the card prompts and your knee-jerk reaction thereto.

Rules:

1. Your story must fit on one handwritten page. It can be narrative, bullet lists, sketches, whatever works.
2. Your story doesn’t have to make perfect sense or really be any good, but do your best!
3. Your story should describe a future in 2050.
4. You must incorporate some or all of your card prompts in your story somehow.
5. During play, you must respond instantly to each card prompt. No cogitating or brainstorming or group conferences. Quick response! Knee-jerk! Go fast!
6. You can bend or break any of the rules.

NO TIME FOR QUESTIONS, LET’S GET READY TO RAMBLE!

Patellar Reflex: How to Play

You each have a set of cards chosen from a variety of random Foresight Game sets I've collected.

Do This:

1. Flip a card.
2. Each player knee-jerks a response to the prompt, these are recorded. Short responses are the best. Go around the team in any order.
3. Keep doing #1 and #2. After all cards are used, or you run out of time, look at your responses.
4. Collaboratively draft a narrative from those responses that describes 2050. Here's where you can brainstorm and groupthink it up! Work together! Be creative!
5. Teams will all read out (2 minutes each) their flash fictions, or outlines thereof, or whatever you got.
6. We will keep time and herd you cats as best we can.
7. You will be judged.

GO FAST GO FAST GO FAST

Please Record Your Knee-Jerks Like So

As responses come out, please record them on one of two sheets of paper, labelled:

HOPE

FEAR

Just quickly classify each response. No “neutral” and no need to fill out or balance either sheet.

Patellar Reflex: You Will Be Judged

After readouts, a panel of distinguished judges will pick a winning team.

Criteria:

1. Narrative coherence or completeness.
2. Creativity.
3. Foresightiness (whatever that is).
4. Arbitrary whims of the panel.

GOOD NEWS: THERE WILL BE PRIZES!

Games for **Futures** **Thinking**

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