

## Coda: Communicating Futures: An Uncommon Urge

Scott Smith  
Changeist LLC  
USA

Last August, I had a sudden, but possibly fortuitous, change in plans. I had been set, along with a colleague, to deliver a paper in Istanbul to the Yeditepe International Research Conference on Foresight and Futures 2011 on the value of ludic foresight—being playful in collaborative constructions of possible futures. Due to some last minute issues offstage, that paper wasn't finalized and I stopped short to visit London for a series of meetings.

However, instead of Istanbul in person, I found myself amidst the remote participants of the same event—tucked in a central London meeting room with Dr. Noah Raford, and the majority of Superflux, with Anab Jain, Jon Ardern and Justin Pickard. Bound together with us electronically were Dr. Wendy Schultz of Infinite Futures and Dr. Jake Dunagan of the Institute for the Future. All in all, quite an assembly of brain power and creativity.

But while I was sorry not to get back to Istanbul, I was pleased to be with a sub-tribe of the futures world with which I share a close affinity—that which believes you need to make imagined futures tangible and experiential to make them most valuable, one that is willing to elevate communication and experience at least to a position alongside traditional tools and methods. Superflux was present to talk about its own design futurescaping process, which I'd admired from a distance via my own interest in design fiction as a foresight tool. For Changeist and Superflux, the short meeting was the start of a collaboration that has yielded one project and another co-teaching opportunity to engage younger futures thinkers in our exploration.

For Drs. Raford, Dunagan, Schultz and I, it was also an opportunity to play the role of deviants—another sub-tribe that increasingly lurks the edges of the futures wilderness. We were brought together not as much by professional collaboration but by what one might call a bit of *unprofessional conspiracy*—to spontaneously channel some of our feelings into a pretty unorthodox container—a “flash” slide presentation called “Alternatives to the Singularity” a series of mock forecasts that were created by the “crowd,” globally, in the space of about two days.

You can find out more of the backstory of “Alternatives to the Singularity,” as well as the impact, elsewhere but it represented something I think is of growing importance in the futures community. As an exercise (to stretch the term) it was generative, pretty unorthodox, quite emotive at points, collaborative, and experimental—it grew out of a Twitter thread, not a conference or a classroom. It was open, not behind closed doors or tied to a copyright symbol. It was iterative—we literally co-authored live. It gained visibility—the press coverage (not sought) was better than most forecasts receive. And it was fun, something too often missing from our work. Judging from the reaction to our group presentation,

even from a distance, that message seemed to get across to the group assembled in Istanbul as well.

Being with the panel on the day, I certainly felt a kinship that doesn't necessarily arise from professional alignment or methodological agreement. Only one of us physically in the room—Noah—had academic qualifications in foresight, but together with Wendy and Jake, and the rest of our group, we formed a community of common vision. We all had, and continue to have, a common...urge. To tinker, experiment, play, and take risks. Hopefully we brought some of that to the community at large, and will continue to do so.

### **Correspondence**

Scott Smith  
Changeist LLC  
Email: [ssmith@changeist.com](mailto:ssmith@changeist.com)