

SVALBARD: FORGOTTEN

Foreword

Writing something is never simple and commitments are almost always in the way: the time available, the desire to run away, and the unexpected events that rain down on your head. Writing a map-game for the mapemounde can therefore be a real feat, because not only ideas must be channeled and match with the design goals of the event, but also because of such little time available to give shape to a thousand ideas that pass through the head not of one but of two people!

As if this were not enough, the objective of this year's Mapemounde presented a new challenge, the deletion of a map. This path therefore removed all ideas about a game spent creating a map. Sounds easy, doesn't it? Let's hope we've written something that makes you in any case want to play, explore the disappearing world and the words that you take away with you.

Inspirations

Svalbard: forgotten freely takes inspiration from Microscope (Ben Robbins 2011) for Lenses and Focus, The Quiet Year (Avery Alder 2013) for the deck of Questions and Problems, Dialect (Hymes and Seyalioglu 2017) for the idea of using the words as a gaming economy, Lovecraftesque (Fox and Annison 2016) for the division of narrative authority; besides these games certainly others have influenced us more or less unconsciously and sorry we can't mention them all but sometimes it's hard to figure out from where we grow our ideas. Maybe the day we clearly understand it, we'll also grow.

Why Svalbard?

<https://www.croptrust.org/our-work/svalbard-global-seed-vault/>

In the heart of a mountain, in the Svalbard archipelago, a treasure of enormous importance: a seed bank that is the guardian of our planet's biodiversity. It is an immense living catalogue, created not only in order to be studied, but above all to preserve everything we risk losing because of our inability to care about the planet upon which we live.

Svalbard: forgotten was born precisely to honor this wonderful project.

We imagined that a huge catastrophe was forever changing the Earth, forcing us to give everything to try to survive and rebuild. Svalbard is therefore bulwark of salvation and guardian of memories, all that remains in a world now almost completely lost. What we would be able to rebuild, after losing almost everything?

Sensitive issues

In Svalbard: forgotten players will talk about ideas and concepts that are there now but that they may never be there again. These are sensitive issues that should be dealt with due respect. We would like to point out that while you play the most important thing ever is to take care of the other people at the table: listen to them, try to tune in to them, pay attention to what they say, how they behave and how they react to what is said during the game; if you're in doubt that something is going in a direction unpleasant for someone, take the time to stop the narrative and talk about it. Might find out that there's a good chance you're channeling the discussion and topics into a sensitive subject area; have love for those around you and understand together if continue on that path or maybe leave out the topic and move on.

The heart of the game

Svalbard: forgotten speaks of terms, words and concepts that disappear, remaining in the heart and in the memory not of civilization or of a people but of one, or at most of a handful of people. What are the really important things? When

everything disappears what will remain to humanity? We would be able to reconstruct everything we lost from only few seeds of memories kept at the cost of our own lives?

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The Earth is Dissolving

The land that has emerged is evaporating, breaking down into dust, molecules or perhaps even atoms before ascending to the sky, in contravention of whatever physical law was known to man. We don't know why but there's no more time to look for the cause: planet Earth is condemned and all we have left is ourselves. Our people, reduced to a few handfuls of individuals, are moving to the various Territories to the search for the only Earth that legends pass on to be immune to this change, if it exists. On the way we will have to collect as much as possible of the Bequest of the other peoples and territories, so as to have a hope and a seed from which to humanity, if it is still possible.

Components

This game has a strong physical component, some of the mechanics could be adapted to play online but at the moment all the rules are meant to be used at the physical table. To play you will need:

- An A4 sheet, or two glued to the long side, on which to draw approximately a map of the world. Alternatively, if you have a map of the world that you want or you can sacrifice, all the better
- A handful of Post-its or "sticky notes"
- Pencil(s) and an eraser
- A pair of scissors
- A bunch of "questions." Several are included with this game.
- A bunch of "problems". Again, several of these are included with this game.

The map of the world

To play you must have a map of the world, but do not worry, its realism is completely irrelevant to the game. Moreover, the Earth as we know it is now a distant memory...

If you have a map to "sacrifice" skip this paragraph otherwise this part of drawing will be a necessary preparation.

The map is a physical object of the game, and it is part of the mechanism of destruction. Its relevance to reality is marginal: a doodle will work well enough. The important thing is that you all generally recognize the lands outlined.

Take sheet A4, or take two sheets and tape them together. Starting with the players who explain the game and proceeding in turn, draw the boundaries of a more or less wide Territory, which corresponds to a state or continent of the Earth. The size of the portion of the map you draw depends on the number of players: the more players you have, the smaller the area you will draw. You can also sketch only part of a continent, letting one of the other players complete it. Take two turns around the group: if before the last round of the last player you are not finished, the last outlines what is missing. If, on the other hand, you find yourself with the map already drawn, outline a Territory (either a geographic area or country boundary) within one of the continents already outlined.

This is a map that we drew with the google docs editor, as you can see it's full of errors but performs its function very well.

[picture of map]

Example: Stephanie decides to draw France on the map. Sketch a Territory in a any place of the sheet more or less in the middle, though Europe has not yet been Drawn.

Example: John really wants to draw Russia, of which he reports a vague idea - not exactly accurate - on the sheet. Since realism is not important, he places it in the north-east of France.

Questions and Problems

The two decks, or tables (included in these rules), both lay dilemmas that could be interchangeable. A problem highlights a question, and a question arises from a problem.

Questions

Questions represent ethical dilemmas or organizational issues. The answers to the Questions should allow you to create ideas that players can refer to while playing the current scene, or recall decisions made in previous scenes.

When the Question has been resolved, remember not to question it anymore. Even if in your opinion the discussion could be deepened, don't focus too much on none of them otherwise you risk losing progress in the game.

Problems

The problems serve to give you a practical obstacle that could create conflict. This game doesn't require you spend a lot of time in coming up with a resolution to these questions or problems. However, players will often disagree with one another. This is represented by the deck of Problems. Their resolution simply requires a communion of intentions on the part of those on stage: do not let yourself be carried away by them but take some second before dismissing them with a hand gesture, such as "thumbs up" or "thumbs down."

Players

Each player will be asked to play the representative of a Clan, a family, in general of a sub-group of people of the people, bound by close membership. Each of your units is part of a single people travelling to Svalbard. Svalbard is no longer the Norwegian archipelago that was on the maps of the time. Now, Svalbard is a legend: an unknown region that in distant stories is remembered as the only hope of salvation for what remains of mankind.

Svalbard is the place where you will have to reach the end of your long journey, bringing with you your traditions, customs and anything you were able to recover from human civilization and culture before it evaporated to infinite space.

Take a post-it, attach it near you. Write only one name, it will be your character. At this point, don't say anything else.

Time and its linearity

The game will have its own timeline, which begins in the present day and ends with the end of the match. In the game there is no need for the scenes to be sequential, to imagine them as a trip will help you know what happened before and what after but it's not a constraint for the match. In case you decide to play flashbacks tell the other players as well so they understand the events aren't happening in the present moment. Strive as a group to develop the story around what one remembers: memories are not always consistent, you may not have all the same perception of how the facts really went.

Turn of play

The first player is the last who has made a trip, or the first who declares it, or who has read and is teaching the rules. The Active Player will be called the Chosen One.

The Chosen One draws one card from both the Question and the Problem decks, and reads them aloud at the table. He will participate in the narration by playing his character in representation of their clan/family.

The player to the right of the Active Player will be the one who will choose the location on the map where this dilemma occurs. They will also describe the environment to “set the scene” for the dilemma to be resolved.

The player to the left of the player on duty will be a different Clan/Family who will address the problem and demand with the Active Player. During the turn they will play as the voice of this additional Clan.

The Active Player may choose, if he so wishes, to involve other players in the scene, then calling other clan spokespeople into the narrative.

Players not directly involved in the scene will act as a *People* and can add relief items or ask questions, but they will not be able to add their own spokesperson into the resolution of the dilemma.

Example: Elijah is the first player. Fishing from the deck of Problems: "stock depletion of food," and from the deck of Questions: "ties between clans". Elijah declares to all at the table: "The food shortage will lead us to explore the bonds between our clans as we travel and explore this territory."

To the right of Elijah sits Pervinca, who will have the task of interpreting the Territory. Pervinca chooses a place on the map and declares it to others "We will cross France". The player to the left of Elijah is Felice, who will be the opponent of the Active Player. Elijah decides that for this first trip two clans are sufficient, so he will leave the role of people to Carrot and Lava, the other two players at the table.

Once the roles are decided, the scene can begin. The player who plays the Territory describes the scene to others at the table. The People can always intervene to provide details, ask questions, and add interesting elements. The Territory is hostile, impervious, and it must be a source of problems and contrasts. If you are interpreting the Territory, do not be benign: give players obstacles and hazards to maintain high tensions. After all, it is your last journey to the only land that just might save you from extinction!

The two primary Clans recount their actions, trying to remain consistent with the two themes: the Problem and Question, which will have to be resolved at the end of the scene. The scene closes when the players at the table agree to an answer to Problem and Question.

The Choice of Legacy

The Active Player chooses the Legacy: it will be the knowledge gained from the journey through the Territory. This concept will be what the Clan will carry with them until they reach Svalbard, and they intend to pass down from generation to generation. The Legacy can represent a category, set of actions, a single word, a sentence, or a thought: any concept that the Active Player considers important and wants to bring with them to Svalbard.

It is only through the Legacies that humanity can rise again, so choose carefully.

Example: At the end of the scene Elijah declared that his character found a factory with old computer inside with data to assess soil fertility. This could be a great way to promote cultivation once you get to Svalbard!

Elijah then writes on a post-it next to the one with his name a concept that summarizes briefly this Legacy: "how to choose a fertile ground."

The meaning of having a Legacy

The Legacy is what remains of the identity, territory and people that will soon desintegrate. The player who owns the post-it with that Legacy is the one who, at the end of the game, will be able to tell how the People who have come to Svalbard will implement what he brought as tradition.

Example: Once they reach the end, Elijah's character will be the one who can instruct the people on how to identify the most fertile soils to start cultivation and thus meet the need to find sources of nourishment.

Map destruction and memory loss

Svalbard: forgotten is a race against time. The Territories evaporate and vanish into the sky. You can never stop too long or you will be dissolved too. For this reason, it is important to continue to travel to the only safe land. To symbolize the disintegration of the earth under your feet, at the end of the scene, the Active Player uses the scissors to cut out the territory explored from the map, crumples it, and puts it near him.

Like atoms that break down, your memories also falter as you in the Territories. Your minds lose what they have learned in centuries of humanity. How much you will remember at the end of your journey is only in your hands.

To symbolize the loss of memories, the Active Player takes a post-it note, attaches it in the area of the territory removed and writes a word inherent to the scene just Played. For the rest of the game, no player may say that word, as if everything but the memory held by the Clan has also evaporated.

Example: Elijah decides that, having talked about food throughout the scene, the word that will come forgotten is "FOOD". From now on, no player will be able to speak that word, simply because you have all forgotten it forever. You can use synonyms, turns of words, but never - for any reason - the word written on the post-it note.

Defining one's own

On the post-it with the name of his character the Active Player adds something more on who he is, what he learned he didn't know, what he found to be important to him. Be authentic. If there are already forgotten words at stake, you cannot use them in the description. Or rather, you can use them, but you have no idea what they mean anymore.

Examples: Chef with incredible palate, Paladin for Freedom, mathematical planner, scientist without borders.

Ending a Turn

The first player becomes the one who previously played the Territory.

The End of the Game

The game ends when you've done two full rounds at the table.

If there's more than one Territory on the table, choose one. Delete the rest: the one it's the Svalbard, your destination! Now take one last round of the table. Starting with the last Active Player, each player will describe how this journey changed his character, reading what he pinned on the personal post-it and briefly explaining their choice.

After talking about himself, he will also tell his Legacies. They are the heart of what will bring to Svalbard, the seed that he will cultivate and that he will try to make sprout so that humanity, whatever it represents for you, is reborn.

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Table of Questions

1. What "form of government" applies within the people? Who decides and why?
2. Yet another strange phenomenon that contravenes the laws of physics breaks into your walk, how do you react?
3. You're scientists despite everything you see isn't skeptical of objective reality, believers in a higher power or other?
4. The elderly slow you down but most of all they keep memories of what was and could participate in the reconstruction of at least the ideas of what will be. What is your relationship with them?
5. The people may be saved, but what about animals and plants? there's room for them on your journey of salvation?
6. The People are saving themselves, with their dreams, desires and knowledge, but perhaps wouldn't a computer be enough? Or love is impossible to explain to a machine?

Table of Problems

1. A difficult geographical physical obstacle creates problems for your journey.
2. You have met another group of people, with violent and antisocial ways.
3. A violent quarrel between some members of the People.
4. You no longer have the essential tools to tackle an obstacle.
5. Sleeping seems impossible, the noise of the disintegrating lands fills your ears and you risk going crazy.

(More Questions and Problems are available in the original Italian version of the game.)

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<https://black-hole-and-star.itch.io/>

Translation version 1 by Stephen B. Thomas

editor@let-off.com