How might a video game about a fictional post-war country reduce inherited bias among people living in countries which have experienced brutal conflicts?

ABOUT PEACELAND

Peaceland is a video game about a fictional country 30 years after a civil war, made for young people in the Balkans who still inherit the divisions of the 1990s wars. After 2 years of research, 3 summers of onboarding and a fully playtested Romeo & Juliet, it has a clear transformational design goal and a team built to sustain it.

THE PROBLEM, MAIN INSPIRATION

Most young people in the Balkans never lived through the 1990s wars. They still inherit its divisions: through family stories, silence, one-sided news.

HOW DOES PEACELAND WORK?

Streynia is a fictional country 30 years after a civil war. You play Marc, a museum volunteer who relives memories donated by survivors.



Relive a memory › **Bring it back to today** › **Election day decides**

Peace | Frozen conflict | Frozen conflict



MY METHOD

GAME DESIGN IN PRESENT

Characters, environment, gameplay



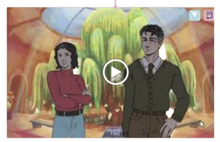
TRANSFORMATIVE GAME DESIGN

Visual novel that reveals real impact



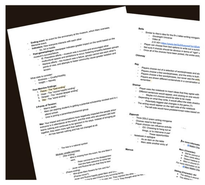
WORKING PROTOTYPE

Digital prototype ties to past and present



RESEARCH

News, history, case study



WORLDBUILD

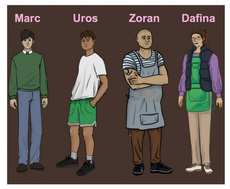
3 groups, individual voices



Thebrean = formal
Eskani = blunt
Cleoni = soft

DESIGN

characters, real references



PLAYTESTING

• South Serbia • Montenegro • Bosnia & Herzegovina • Kosovo border



PARTICIPANTS: family members aged 13 · 32 · 57 · 77 (3 generations).
I translated live.
HOW I MEASURED IT: Qualitative feedback.
INTERVIEW: After each session I talked with every player and took notes. I grouped what they said into themes: which character they connected with first and last, whether the story felt fair to every group, and whether it felt authentic.

The game felt not only about them, but for them (two playtesters 32 & 57)
Many first bonded with the character most "like them."
By the end, they had switched.

BEFORE PLAYING -> "Why are Americans explaining the war to us again?"
AFTER PLAYING -> "Very authentic."

Peaceland

MAIN TAKEAWAY

When fictional war is built on real stories, players step into the other side and feel the game was made for them.

FINDINGS & PLAYER FEEDBACK

The art:
- the museum tree, town square update, living room details
- crochet, wallpaper, plants

Authentic props:
- memorial chocolate cake, suitcase packing, the bakery, ID badge art

Pacing and length
- every player read every line (including the disclaimer)
"Not just about them, but for them"

NEXT ITERATION

Iterate on consequences so choices are more visible
Add music and sound
Add more memories and real-life scenarios
Playtest with a bigger group, including other parts of the world
Add a short survey before and after playing to measure change in bias
Keep it engaging enough that players read every line

WHERE DOES PEACELAND STAND NOW?

Project is open for more undergrad researchers
2 years of research, 3 summers of onboarding, and a fully playtested Romeo & Juliet, Peaceland has a clear, transforming design goal and a team structure built to sustain it.

The biggest wins were art, story, authenticity, and the biggest open work is pacing, decision-making, and minigame depth.

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REFERENCES

Full list printed & QR code

