

# *The Shore Line*

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The coast, where the land meets the sea and where runaway development meets rising waters, is the site of *The Shore Line* interactive. I used this dynamic place as a prompt to visualize and connect human and nonhuman communities that survive and adapt in one of the most dynamic places on the planet. Ecological change and disaster are proliferating in a world in crisis, and the coast inspires us to imagine and enact collaborative actions that transcend borders.

For many of us, the appeal of interactive documentary is the non-hierarchical curation of peoples, places, and environments. How might an interactive help me tell a polyphonic, collaborative, cross-species story of resilience and climate justice? I was drawn to the coast as a subject, as a metaphor and even a method—as a way to challenge disaster narratives. The surge of coastal tourism, the increased dumping of industrial waste, and the unsustainable growth of fossil fuels are threatening

the very ecosystems that protect us from storms and sea level rise. Rather than dwell on disaster however, I was inspired by Anna Tsing's (2015) notion of collaborative survival and her provocative invitation to observe what survives in the midst of disaster.

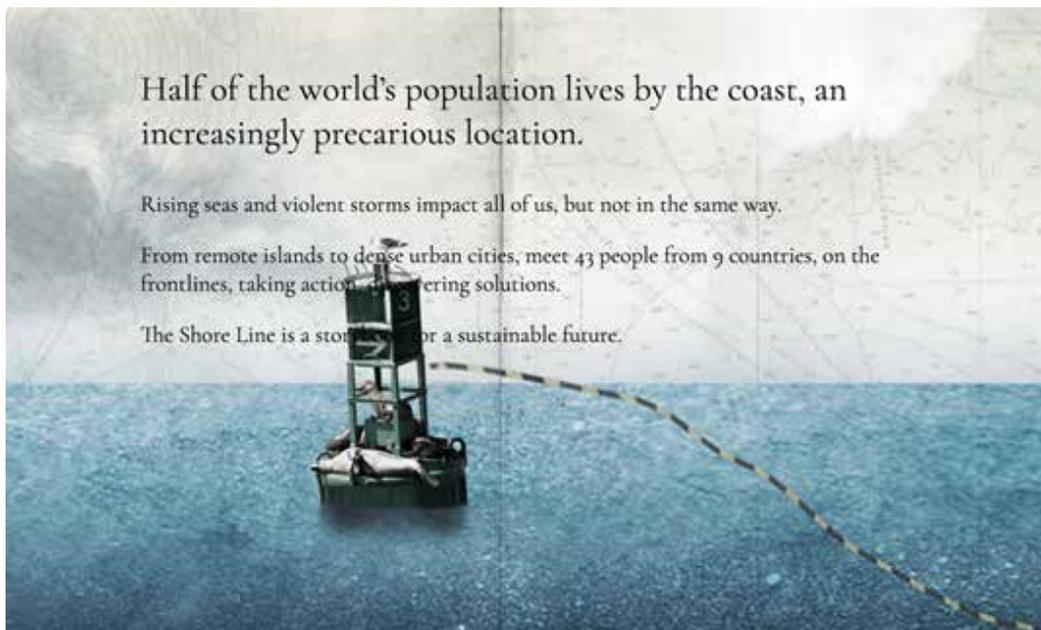
Change at the shoreline can be sudden with storms that result in massive destruction, flooding, displacement, and death. Changes also play out through what Rob Nixon (2013) calls "slow violence," involving the gradual seeping of toxins into the water or the displacement of shoreline communities and cultures. Likewise social change most often comes in the form of slow resilience, the often invisible processes of social change, enacted through a deepening knowledge of coastal ecosystems and collaborative frameworks. Over three years and in collaboration with students and filmmakers from around the world we curated a collection of 43 video profiles, of people taking actions over time, often in quiet but resourceful ways. We feature a sustainability architect in Bangladesh designing floating schools and gardens, an Indigenous organizer in Panama, moving his community from a sinking island to the mainland, a science fiction writer from Canada writing resilience into storylines, and more.<sup>1</sup>

With my co-creator, Helios Design Labs, I was able to connect local stories into a global network through interactive maps. We turned datasets of growing coastal populations and shrinking coastal wetlands into visualizations so that users could grasp the present and future risks of development on the very ecosystems that protect us. In our strategy toolkits I worked with teachers, students, and organizers to develop educational resources.

And while taking advantage of a range of new technological affordances, I also wanted to draw attention to the largely hidden Internet infrastructures that we rely on to communicate interactive stories like *The Shore Line*. Ninety-nine percent of international data is transmitted by big heavy cables that stretch from shore to shore, under the ocean.<sup>2</sup> While we feature an Internet cable on our interface, we never fully resolved how we might instigate a deeper reflexivity about the energy required to both produce and watch an interactive. I am still grappling with how I and other makers might communicate climate justice stories with a lighter footprint.

### *The Shoreline Project*

<http://theshorelineproject.org/#!/about?howto>



## Endnotes

1. Links to these particular elements are here: <http://theshorelineproject.org/#!/archive?People=Architect>; <http://theshorelineproject.org/#!/archive?People=Writer>.
2. <http://www.nec.com/en/global/about/mitatv/02>.

## References

- Nixon, Rob. 2013. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.