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Critical Game: Fish the Migrants

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Concept

The current migrant situation is one of the biggest social, political, and humanitarian problems we face today. However, they are alien and anonymous to European, making it easier for Europe to deny access, refuse help, and ignore them altogether.

In this game, players will be confronted with the migratory crisis and xenophobia issues by stepping into the shoes of an European country, particularly one directly affected by this crisis (Greece, Italy, Turkey), and will decide what to do with the migrants, provided that players play by the rules.

Image 1 – Suggestion of representation of 4-card books and a Joker: first four cards are family members and the card on the far right is the terrorist. The cards have written descriptions of the people's personal characteristics.

Image 2 – Suggestions of representation of 4-card books and a Joker: first four cards are family members and the card on the far right is the terrorist. The cards have visual representations of many of the migrants' fate.

Rules

The rules of the game are based on the Go Fish Game, where each player is given 5 initial cards from a 52-card pooled deck with the goal of collecting 4-card books by asking the opponents for the intended cards. A player asks for a specific card instead of a rank – provided that s/he has at least one of the cards of that rank in his/her possession. If the player that was asked the card has one in his/her possession, s/he must give them, otherwise the asking player must try to fish one of those cards from the pooled deck. If succeeded, s/he plays again, otherwise his/her turn is over. Wins the player without cards in his hands and with the greatest amount of 4-card books collected.

Fishing the Migrants is a turn-based card game that differs from Go Fish in the way that the winner ends up with the least amount of cards collected and the two Jokers are also included in the game.

A 4-card book collected represents a family of refugees and the Joker represents a terrorist.

Notes:
• Some cards are intentionally missing to represent the family fraction
• A Joker card represents a terrorist (no points awarded)
• If the Player fishes a Joker, he must return the Joker to the deck, as well as his cards that compose an incomplete 4-card book of his choice
• If the Player runs out of cards in his hand, he must pick one from the pooled deck
• When there are less than 10 cards remaining in the pooled deck, every Player that fishes a Joker should return his cards that compose an incomplete 4-card book of his choice, and should remove the Joker from the game.

Conclusion

Fishing the Migrants is a Critical Game challenging the migratory crisis and xenophobia view, setting up the ideal environment for players to see how well they would perform in front of other world powers that judge the ethics and social consciousness of other countries.

This game intends to represent the situation depicted by the large wave of people abandoning countries facing war or poverty, and the developed countries that should be in the position of helping out more. The game unfolds in the perspective of these European countries wanting to (publicly) rescue refugees from certain death, but internally wishing that other countries would take the refugees and save them the trouble and the "waste" of resources.

Noteworthy aspect in the game is the presence of terrorists who intend to emphasize Europe's reluctance to accept incoming migrants by enabling and inflaming mistrust, xenophobia and generalization when a terrorist is discovered among the rescued people, passing on the idea that "they are all alike" and propagating the lack of help given to these people.

Another important characteristic is the fact that every 4-card book represents a 4-member family who packed their bags on their desperate attempt to flee war or poverty. Consequently, and as a result of the real-word situation, some card books consist of less than 3 cards, representing the people who, unfortunately, die from consequences of the dangerous trip, fractioning families, homes and future stability for children.

Fishing the Migrants was created under the Game Design Introduction Module of the Interaction Design, Web and Games Specialization at the Faculty of Fine Arts from the University of Porto.