SERIOUS GAME RULES

Waste management in Bắc Hưng Hải

This game aims at raising people’s awareness on the issue of domestic waste pollution and its impact on an irrigation system. It also gives room for innovative ideas for improvement and fosters the social dialogue between different stakeholders implicated in pollution management.

The game follows the evolution of waste management and agricultural production in a fictional territory of a rural commune (*xã*). This commune is divided in four villages (*thôn*), each facing specific issues due to their location either upstream or downstream. The game is played by four groups of two players. Every workshop is planned to be led with homogeneous categories of actors (for example, farmers will not play, at first hand, with local authorities). Each group represents a head of village and takes decisions on actions that will have a local impact in order to reach a goal that is common to the four villages: obtaining the EcoLabel. This label is required for farmers to be able to sell their products to supermarkets. It requires a minimum level of agricultural production and a maximum level of soil and water pollution. It is given by the Ministry of agriculture and rural development to model communes. That is, every village must meet the EcoLabel requirements for the commune to acquire it. Therefore, the players have to coordinate their actions in order to better understand the processes of waste spatial trajectories, as well as taking common decisions for the management of this resource to improve the agricultural production quality.

The game is played in 8 rounds of 5 minutes. A round in the game represents a year of functioning within the system which they are interacting with. Each round is divided into two phases: first, the groups choose their actions, communicating or not with the other groups, during three minutes. After this time, each group takes the chosen action cards for the year to come and scans their QR codes for the actions to be implemented in the model projected on the wall. Secondly, the groups look at the evolution of the model and discuss the consequences of their actions, both in their village and in the other villages. After two minutes, the next round can begin.

The game relies on two different supports. The first one is material: based on a board game, the disposition of the players, to which village they belong to, and the actions they are taking over the different rounds. The board also provides a material interface for the player to keep track of their choices of action: the cards are always given back to them; each group has a full deck of action cards. Each round, the players can only choose two different actions.

The players are confronted to an initial situation meant to be critical. They are presented as a general gauge implicating several indicators (level of pollution and agricultural production) on which the EcoLabel is based. The EcoLabel is represented by a threshold, which is close to being taken away from the commune during the first round of the game. Their goal is to make common choices that allow them to keep the label, but more importantly to understand how taking common decisions can be difficult when individual interests interfere.

A workshop is divided into two game sessions. First, each group plays the game on their own, in a fast forward scenario. This first session makes the game harder as the players are not able to communicate, yet they already have to fulfill a common objective. This first session is made both to help players acknowledge the actions that are suggested to them, and to understand the importance of communication in taking actions that affect both environmental and economic aspects.