Surviving the Swedish Winter

Mittens	Flip Flops	Sunglasses	Bathing shorts	Winter coat	Bikini	Scarf
+3	+2	+ 1	+2	+ 15	+3	+4

Cap	Hoodie	Knitted sweater	T-shirt	Jeans	Tank top	Long underwear
+1	+5	+8	+5	+8	+3	+3

What I did

– Play testing
– Prototyping
– Self-testing
– Confidential testing

Task

Create a board game for four players that takes about 20 minutes to finish.

Core Gameplay

The game is set during a harsh Swedish winter. The players are tourists who travel with their travel guide from the south of Sweden to the north and the famous tourist spot called Treriksröset. Since it is winter the weather outside is really cold and gets colder the further north the tourists go. Therefore, they must dress properly to survive, but they cannot just dress however they want because if they dress too warmly, they will overheat instead of freezing to death.

Some of the tourists might not have understood how the weather in Sweden is like so they did not pack very well, some tourists might have brought their bikini for example. There is also a catch, during their journey the tourists cannot find any laundry machines so when they have worn their clothes, the clothes are so dirty that they have to be thrown out.

So, to survive the harsh weather, the tourists have to dress accordingly. If they get too warm or too cold, they will die. To put on clothes, players play clothing cards from their hands to try to negate the temperature outside. Examples of cards are sunglasses (worth 1 degree of Celsius) and jackets (worth 10 degrees of Celsius).

Clothes can also be worth style points by matching them correctly: after all, you want to look your best as you travel through Sweden. The player with the most points or the last man standing is the winner.

The game is made up of three rounds. Each round one weather card is pulled from the weather card deck and the card is discarded when the round is over. These cards affect the weather outside, decreasing or increasing the temperature. The effects of the weather card apply to the weather temperature and thus it does not alter any of the player's body temperatures.

Once the weather card has been placed, each player gets to draw one event card in turn from the event cards deck. These cards will affect each player individually, but some can also allow you to interact with other players, e.g. stealing cards or increasing/decreasing another player's body temperature. Event cards can therefore adjust the number of cards a player has on hand while some of them can instead directly affect the player's body temperature.

Design Process

Foundation Step

In the foundation step, a representation of the core gameplay is made, in this case with clothing cards and other cards that changed players' body temperature. The clothing cards were handmade to make them fast and easy to change. During this step, a lot of self-testing was used to see how the core gameplay worked and if any mechanics had to be changed, added or removed. The self-testing also tested if the game was balanced or not.

Self-testing was visited many times during the whole process when something was changed to quickly try out the concept.

Structure Step

When the core gameplay was decided and the game was somewhat balanced, the structure step was entered. In this step, the most important rules had to be set. In our case, this was the fact that a player cannot wear two pairs of shoes for example.

At the end of this step, we had a finished prototype that we tested with confidentials (people we know), in this case, our teachers, where we got a lot of feedback on how to improve the gameplay.

Formal Details Step

In this step, we added the last rules to get a fully functional game. We added one rule at the time and self-tested that to see if it worked or not.

Refinement Step

For this prototype, the refinement step has had two iterations. The first iteration consisted of the playtest and the changes done afterward. The second iteration was the second playtest. The second iteration would also contain changes according to the feedback gotten from the playtest if there would have been time.

Play Tests

The participants in the playtests were other classmates in the course and therefore we did not give a lot of explanation of the context or who we were. Instead, we in the first tests gave them the rules written down, let them play and after we had a discussion with all of them based on some questions.

The rules we had made were not clear enough so therefore we decided to give the participants a description orally instead to make the rules and the game clearer, which worked better since they did not need as much help during the game ses–

Original concept

– Three rounds
– Three regions of Sweden
– Keep body temperature at 37 degrees
– Each region has a base temperature
– Event cards affect the weather or the player's body temperature
– In the end of each round, the payers are using their clothing cards to bring the body temperature back to 37 degrees
– In the last round, the player closest to 37 degrees would win
– If a body temperature is higher than 42 degrees or lower than 32 degrees the plyer dies and are out of the game

Changes after self-testing 1

Problem
– Hard to calculate the relationship between weather temperature, body temperature, and clothing cards

Solution
– Body thermometers as a visual aid

Changes after confidential testing 1

Problem 1
– The relation between the body temperature, weather temperature, and clothing degrees was not obvious

Solution 1
– Make weather cards that affect the weather temperature and event cards that affect the player
– One weather cards are drawn per round and each player draws their own event card per round

Problem 2
– Very random game

Solution 2
– Make characters for the game
– Each character one ability that can be used once in the game
– Example; draw three new clothing cards, but also drop 3 degrees in body temperature

Changes after confidential testing 2

Problem
– Game still random

Solution
– Add a point system
– Points for being close to 37 degrees
– Points for matching patterns on clothes
– Only certain clothe combinations allowed
– The different border color on the clothing cards to indicate the type of clothing
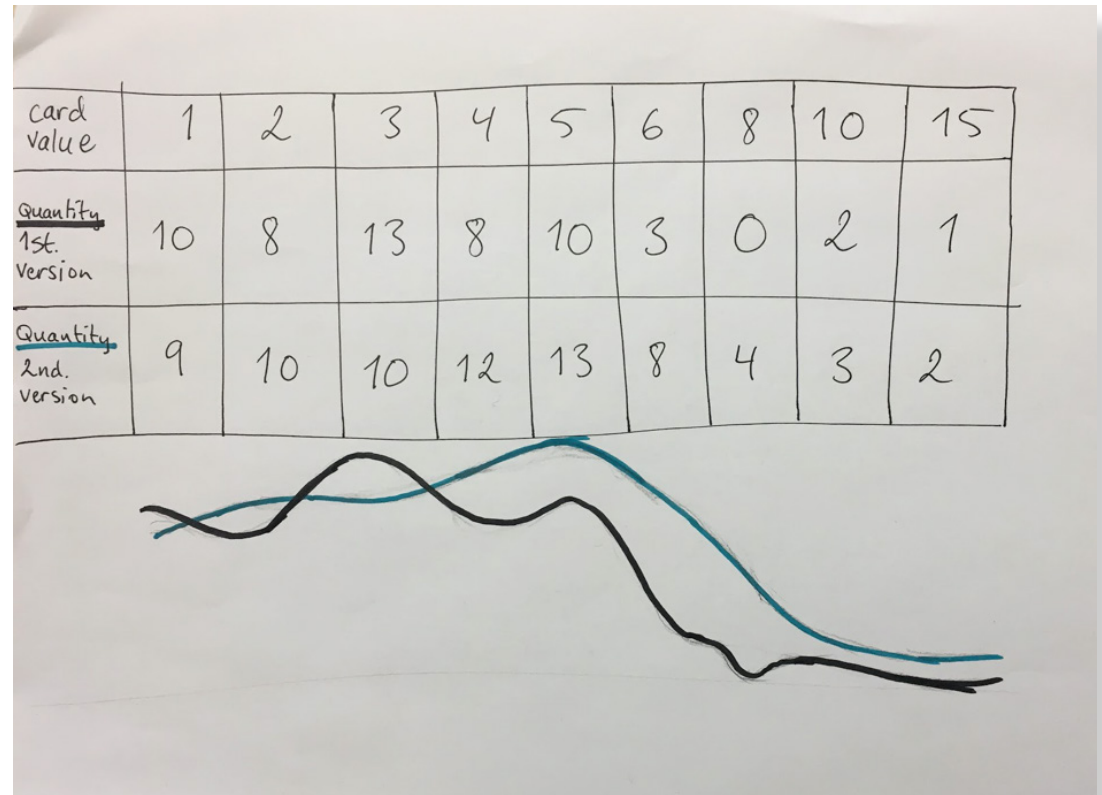
Changes after self-testing 2

Problem
- Lack of balance

Solution
- Investigate clothing cards value
- Make more clothing cards with higher values to get closer to a normal distribution
- Player take 8 cards at the beginning of the game and 4 more at the beginning of second and third round

card value	1	2	3	4	5	6	8	10	15
Quantity 1st. Version	10	8	13	8	10	3	0	2	1
Quantity 2nd. version	9	10	10	12	13	8	4	3	2

Changes after pilot-test

Problem
- Ambigious event cards

Solution
- Change wording of event cards

Changes after playtest 1

Problem 1
- Confusing clothing cards

Solution 1
- Remove different types of clothing within a type, example only one type of top
- Only have one version of a pattern

Problem 2
– Event cards too easy

Solution 2
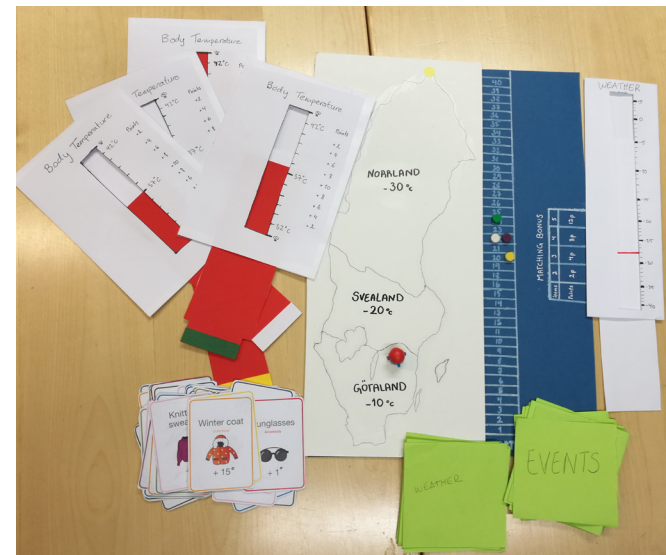– Make event cards harsher, example drop 4 degrees instead of 2 degrees in body temperature
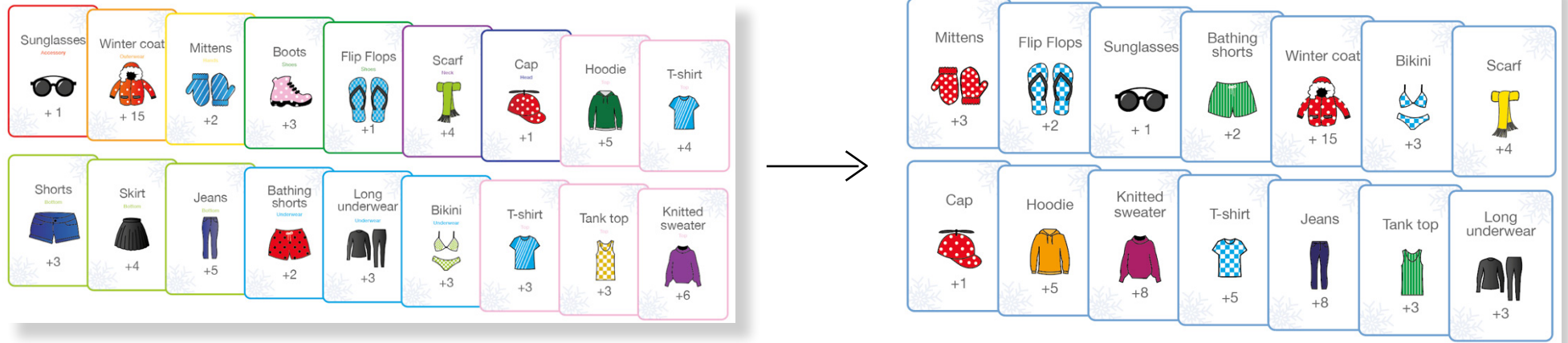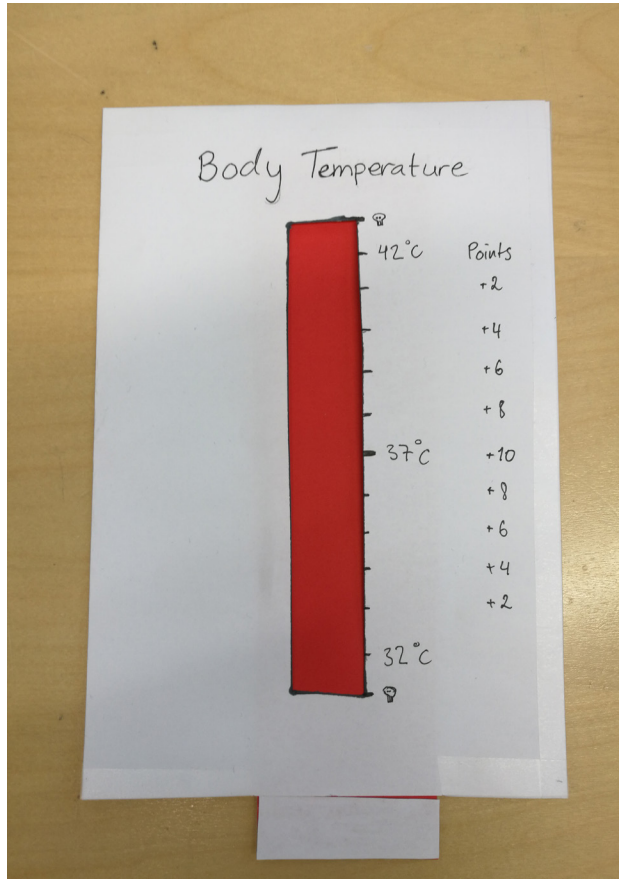

Final version of clothing cards

Results

Interface Design

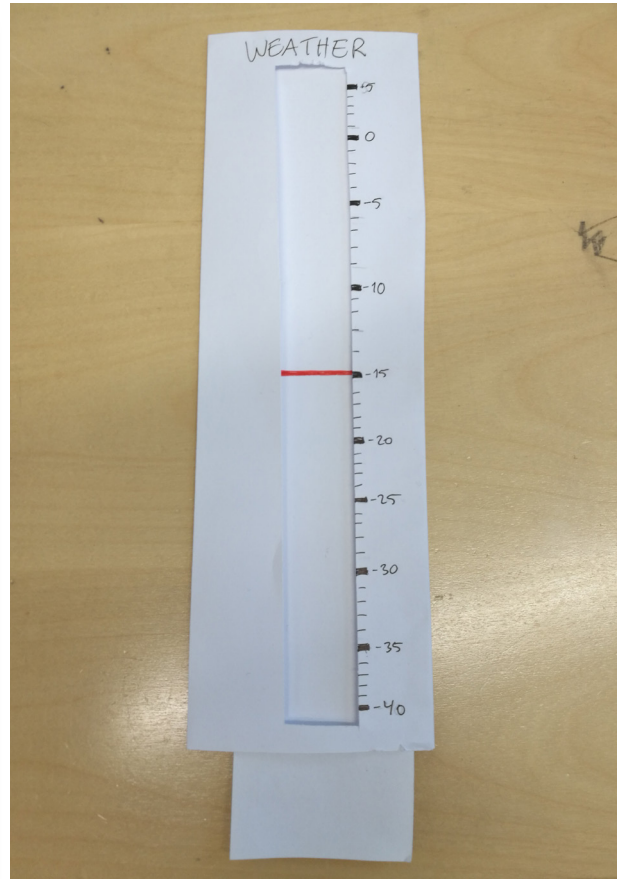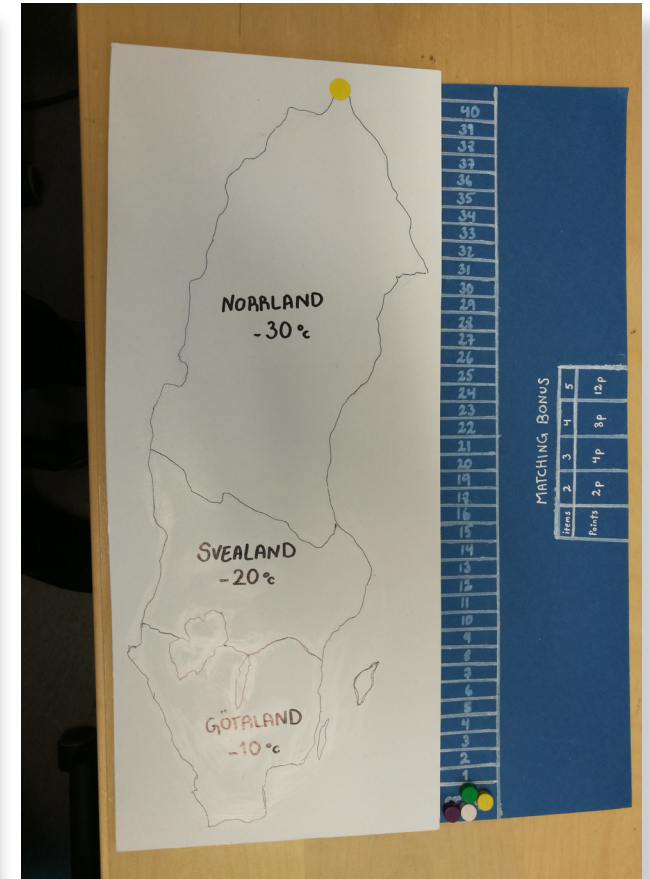All the components in the game.

Results

The body temperature indicator, each player have one each.

The weather temperature indicator, one for the game.

The game board with the point counter on the side.