

The Island Game

Overview

Just one generation ago, several groups of settlers arrived on a small, secluded island. You represent a small family tribe living on the island. Each tribe lives in its own village some way of the others. Your aim in this game is for your tribe to survive—live can be harsh on the island—and moreover, to thrive. To do so, you must make some difficult decisions each year.

RESOURCES

There are several resources on this island which are represented in abstract terms.

COIN represents any tradeable material, such as food, wood, metal goods, or medicine. Coin yields can be transformed into capital, traded, and captured from other players. At the beginning of each round, you must spend a certain amount to survive.

CAPITAL stock represents resources which yield an annual return. This could be farms, livestock, buildings, or even human skill. Each round, you can decide to invest COIN into capital; alternatively, you can take out from the capital stock, transforming it back into COIN. You can also keep it the same, of course.

There are three types of capital. Your PRIVATE STOCK represents resources which only your village uses (e.g., farms surrounding it), and only you receive returns on it. In the beginning of the game, private stock yields a return of 25% annually.

The COMMON POOL represents resources everyone on the island profits from, such as forests, wild fruit, fish in lakes and rivers, prey, and so on. No tribe can be excluded from reaping the benefits from the common pool, and everyone receives them equally. In the beginning of the game, the common pool yields returns of 10% annually for each player.

You can also start a JOINT INVESTMENT with other tribes. Every owner of a joint investment receives returns equally. At the start, joint investments yield a return of 15% for every player.

As with your private stock, you can put COIN into the COMMON POOL and JOINT INVESTMENT, or take resources out and transform them into COIN. Other players will not know what you did.

ATTACK AND DEFENCE

Each year, you can spend COIN on ATTACK and DEFENCE. DEFENCE represents defensive structures you put up, guards you post, and so on. ATTACK represents efforts you make against other tribes.

Fights are resolved as follows. If the defender's DEFENCE is stronger than or equal to the attacker's ATTACK, then the attack fails, and no player gains resources. If the attack is stronger than the defence, then the attacker gains coin determined by the following formula,

$$\text{base} + (\text{attacker's strength} - \text{defender's strength}) \times \text{multiplier}$$

In the beginning of the game, the base is set at 5, and the multiplier at 3.

You can decide to attack as many tribes as you like in a given round. Similarly, it is possible that you are attacked by more than one tribe. If the victim of an attack cannot cover the losses through coin, the remainder of it is taken out of the victim's private stock.

SPECIAL EVENTS

There might be special events and opportunities later in the game. Amongst other things, these might change the return on the various investments, impose extra costs, and increase or decrease the gains from successful attacks.

Rounds

The game is played over 10 rounds. Each round follows the same structure:

STAGE 1. SURVIVAL AND SPECIAL EVENTS

In this stage, special events will be announced and resolved. You can also transfer coins to other players, and take out of your private investment at this stage. To proceed further into the game, you will need to pay the survival fee during this stage.

You should use this stage to think about which strategies you aim to pursue.

STAGE 2. PUBLIC DISCUSSION

In this stage, you can discuss deals with other players, make offers and demands, discuss past events, and so on.

STAGE 3. DECISION STAGE

Each tribe will decide, independently from each other and simultaneously, how they wish to spend their resources for this round. The following decisions need to be made, with costs paid immediately:

- how much to invest into private stock;
- whether to invest resources into the public pool;
- whether to create, or invest, into a joint commitment with other players;
- how much to spend on defence;
- whether to attack other tribes, which one(s), and with which strength.

You can also decide to take out of a joint investment, or the public pool, in this round. However, any gains you will make from such decisions will only be available in the next round.

Any coins not spent at this stage will carry over into the next round.

STAGE 4. OUTCOMES

The outcomes of your choices in stage 3 are determined in this stage.

- If you have decided to take out from a public pool or a joint investment, pay-outs are made. (Note that players might try to take out more from a given pool than there is in it.)
- You receive any returns from private stock, the common pool, and any joint investments.
- If you win an attack, you receive coin.
- If you are subject to an attack, and have inferior defensive strength, you lose coin, and possibly capital.

The preceding information is private, and is released only to you.