

# The village

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*An educational game about nationalism and history*

## About the game

Pedagogical and Didactical Centre created this game by commission from The Living History Forum, as a part of a three-game series about *history*, *nationalism* and *reconciliation*. The game is a *classroom format role play* where the participants play four different families in the Village. The families have very different values and very strong opinions of each other based on events during the latest 100 years. During the game, the four families have to solve 3 different conflicts by voting.

When using this game in an educational context, the village, families and conflicts can act as a metaphor for real-world events and conflicts, and the feelings and thoughts the students experienced during the game can help them understand some of the underlying mechanisms of human decision-making during long-term conflicts.

## About the authors

Pedagogical and Didactical Centre is a part of the municipal union of the Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR), a co-operative organization uniting 13 municipalities in western Sweden.

The organization meets over 5000 teachers and 15000 students every year through different projects and activities. Pedagogical and Didactical Centre works with individual schools, whole municipalities and other organizations both nationally and internationally.

Read more at [www.pedagogisktcentrum.se](http://www.pedagogisktcentrum.se)

## Target audience

15 years and older. The game might work for a younger audience, depending on the participants' previous experience with similar games and role play.

## Purpose and goal

The goal of the game is to create a more in depth understanding for the mechanisms and feelings involved in human decision-making during conflicts. Central questions lifted by this game is:

- What role does history have in present-time conflicts?
- What drives nationalism and how is it justified by those involved?
- What might a long-term conflict solution look like in a conflict where history plays a strong role?

## About the translation

This is a reworked and translated game. The original in Swedish version is called *En by som alla andra*. Translation by Carolina Dahlberg, GR Education. The original version is available at the game database at [www.pedagogisktcentrum.se/speldatabas](http://www.pedagogisktcentrum.se/speldatabas).

## How the game works

The game is a metaphor for real-world events, but none of the events of the game can be directly translated to any particular event or type of events. Instead, the game is designed to create certain motivations and behaviours among the participants. Here is a brief explanation as to how the different parts of the game design works to further the goals of the game.

### The four families

*“It felt like it was an us-and-them situation. I felt at home with my family. I felt safe with them.”*

In the game, the families could be seen as representing nations of peoples that have different backgrounds and reasons for the values they uphold within their group. By grouping participants into families – without giving each individual a role to follow – the participants can choose how active they want to play the game, but they can also relate to the feeling of having a common goal and identity.

### The three conflicts

*“I felt like I didn’t care what happened to my family – I just wanted to give those bastards of the Borowic family what they deserved for breaking their promise!”*

As with the families, none of the conflicts is an exact metaphor for any real-world conflicts. The purpose of the conflicts is to create a feeling of rivalry between the families, and give them a good reason – and avoid conflict resolutions that will hurt their family in any way. Conflicts are handled by voting, but they aren’t always resolved. It often happens that a conflict ends up in a tie with 2 against 2 votes (all families have one vote). This, in the game story, means that the conflict remains unresolved. However, you may remind the participants during the course of game that an unresolved conflict also could have very serious implications for the village.

### The voting

*“We knew that if we could make the others vote for number two and three, number one would win and they would be forced to leave the village. I loved the feeling when we won. But I also realized that what we’d just done was a terrible thing.”*

In the game, the four families have one vote each. This means, in order to avoid a tie or even losing the vote, the families have to talk to each other and try to negotiate what the others are going to vote – or maybe even compromise on their own goals. Through negotiation, the participants have to confront the other families and their opinions about the current conflict. It is also completely legal for a family to lie to another during the course of the game.

### The solutions

*“I didn’t like any of the conflict solutions available during the third conflict. I wish there had been an option where nobody would be forced to leave the village.”*

The solutions available for each conflict are far from ideal. The reason for this is to force the families into a mindset of “us or them”. After the game, during the discussion, the participants will have the option to come up with new, and better, solutions for the conflicts. This is a way of making the participants *reflect* on what would be a good and sustainable conflict resolution, and it can be a good strategy to discuss this further in relation to real world conflicts.

## Tips for game-mastering The Village

*The game has three phases. First, you will do the theme introduction with the participants. After this, you run the game itself. Last, you lead the post-game discussion. All three phases should be included, but if you absolutely must skip or change any part, the theme introduction is the least 'vulnerable'.*

### The theme introduction

The purpose of this phase is to introduce the participants to the theme of the game, and prepare the participants for the generalization process. You can choose not to introduce the theme, but that might impair the participants' chances to make good observations during the game and focus on the goal.

### The game

When running the game, make sure you've read the instructions and keep a copy of the schedule close at hand for support, in case you forget the next step.

Move around the game area and listen in to what is happening. Through close observation during the game, you will be able to help the participants remember the events of the game during the post-game discussion.

Do not worry if not all of the participants are 'active' during the run of the game. Even some participants don't speak or interact with others, they may still observe and reflect on the events of the game.

### Debrief and post-game discussion

When learning through experiences, the process of transforming the experience into general knowledge is called generalization. After an educational game, the purpose of the post-game discussion is to facilitate this process for the participants.

Although you probably have plenty of input for the participants on how their game went, and what kind of knowledge can be drawn from the events of the game, it is important that you *ask questions* during the discussion and allow the participants to make their own conclusions.

# Instructions

## Introduction

Begin with telling the participants what the game is about. For example: *This is a role play about history and nationalism.*

You may, if you think it's good for the group, start with a short exercise where you ask the participants if they can give you examples of real world conflicts or wars. Gather 4-6 examples from the group. You don't discuss the conflict – the purpose of doing this is to help the participants remember facts they already know.

Move on to introducing them to the fictional world of the village.

*The role play is about a village with four families that have a history, which makes their relationship quite complicated. This is a remote village, and even though there is a law, the village also resolve conflicts by voting. Whichever solution gets the most votes, all four families in the village have to obey. Each family have one vote.*

## The game

Begin with creating four family groups. Make each group roughly the same size. (If any group is larger than the others, make this group the Collins or Daniels family.)

Tell them the groups will now get one family each to play. For example:

*I will now give you some information about the family you will play. Make sure you read through the text and ask me if there's anything you don't understand. Make sure everyone in the group understands the text. When everyone have read, I will ask each family to introduce themselves to the village.*

Hand out the families and give the participants a few minutes to read through the text. Walk around and quietly ask each group if they understand everything or if they have any questions about the text. When everyone's ready, tell everyone that you will now have presentations of the families.

Explain that the presentations aren't actually something that has happened in the game world. They don't have to talk to each other as they would if they were playing their families during the game – they can be more honest and so on.

Always start with Andersson, and then Borowic, Collins and Daniels. *“Andersson family, can you tell us a little about yourselves?”* Make sure you've read the texts about the families before the game. You can help the players present their family by asking them questions, if you believe they missed important facts. *“How do you feel about the way some of the other families accuse use of having cheated Daniels and Borowic?”* Make sure each family gets about equal amount of time for these presentations, and that they manage to get the important facts in the presentation – remind them by asking questions otherwise.

When presentations are finished, explain that you will now move on the first conflict. Before handing out the conflict, read the text so that all can hear you. Explain that they are now going to read the solutions and talk to the other families to decide what they're going vote. They have 8 minutes to discuss the conflict, after this they will vote. (You can, if you want and have the time, allow them more time to discuss, but for non-role players 8 minutes is usually enough) For example:

*Read about the conflict and discuss in your families what solution would be best for you. Bear in mind that the other families will do the same, and might disagree with you. Whenever you want to, you can visit the other families and try to convince them to vote in your favour. You have eight minutes, and when the time is up you will have a few moments to reach consensus within your family on how to vote. When you are ready, you will send one family member to the middle of the room.*

*The representative moves to the middle of the room. When all four representatives have gathered, voting is done by showing the same number of fingers that corresponds to what solution you vote for. If you vote for solution 1, show one finger. Number two, show two fingers. Everyone votes at the same time, to avoid strategical voting.*

At this point, it is good to ask the group if they have any questions. Clarify any questions the participants have, then read the first conflict and hand out one copy of Conflict 1 to each family.

When time is up, ask them to reach consensus within their family and send one representative to the middle of the room to do the voting. When all representatives have gathered, count down from three to zero.

Voting result works like this: The solution that gets most votes is valid. If there is a tie between two solutions, the conflict is unresolved.

Resolved conflict:

Alternative I: 1 vote

Alternative II: 1 vote

Alternative III: 2 votes – Winner

Resolved conflict:

Alternative I: 0 vote

Alternative II: 1 vote

Alternative III: 3 votes – Winner

Unresolved conflict:

Alternative I: 2 votes

Alternative II: 2 votes

Alternative III: 0 votes

After the vote on Conflict 1, repeat the procedure with conflict 2 and 3.

When the participants have voted on conflict 3, explain that the role play is over, and you will move on to debrief and discuss the events of the role play.

## **Debrief and post-game discussion**

Ask the participants to gather in a circle. Either standing, sitting on chairs or on the floor. Try as best you can to have everyone on the same level so that no one stands out. You should sit in the ring as well.

Begin with doing a round where you ask each player to say something about the game that they think about right now. It doesn't have to be very elaborate and they can be honest. (If someone, for example, say the game was "fun" its equally OK to say "boring") Don't reply or explain to the participants what they felt or experienced, just let them say what they think without analysing or judging their opinions.

After the round, ask each family what it was like to play the Andersons, Borowic etc. Here you can ask supportive questions if you think that will help.

Next, discuss the conflict solutions. From reading the instructions, you know the purpose of having quite bad solutions available during the game (boost conflicts, making hard choices). During the debrief, it's important that the participants now get the option to talk about what they think *would* have been a good solution to the village problems – especially the last conflict. For example:

*In the game, the solutions available to you were limited by the three options. If you had had the option to come up with your own solution, what would it be?*

After this, talk about if they think this role play has any similarities to real-world conflicts. Try as best you can not to steer the discussion in any particular direction (the participants *will* notice if you do) but help them elaborate their line of reasoning.

Lastly, if there is additional time, ask if the participants have any other thoughts about the game and help them elaborate these thoughts.

*Often, participant – especially students – give feedback as how to make the game/role play more 'fun'. This is valuable feedback, and as the facilitator you should listen and consider their input. However, the main objective of the game is to help participants get a further understanding of how history and nationalism plays a role in conflicts, and not to play a 'fun game'. Fun is good – but it is not the main purpose.*

**Next: Hand-outs (families and conflicts)**

## Anderson

Your family have always been industrious and wise money spenders. You own the tools factory, which employs a lot of people in the village.

Your family moved here one hundred years ago. At that time, the village consisted solely of farmers and people here had a hard time getting by – many were poor.

You offered to buy the land, and pay an – at the time – very reasonable sum for it. Both Borowic and Daniels picked up on the offer, but the Collins family decided they'd rather keep their lands and remain poor.

Borowic used the money wisely and started a bank and a local food store.

It turned out that buying the land was a good investment, because a few years later the value of the land had increased tremendously. You managed to sell most of it to the forest industry, earning up to ten times the sum you had originally paid. Daniels wanted to cancel the selling and have their share of the profit. Of course, you said that wasn't possible – they had already agreed to sell the land, after all.

With the money earned from selling the land, you built the tools factory and could offer employment to the Daniels family.

### **Important values to your family are**

- Good sense of business
- Flexibility
- Look forward; don't linger in the past

### **Rules of the Village, when solving conflicts**

- All families have one vote
- If one of the solutions gets more votes than any other, all families must accept this conflict solution
- If there is a tie between two solutions, the conflict is unresolved

## Borowic

You own the bank and the food store in the village. Your family have always been careful spenders, knowing the value of wise investments and savings. The other families call you cheap, but as soon as anyone is in trouble, they come to you, asking for loans.

One hundred years ago, your family as well as the others owned a lot of land at that time, but times were hard and you had had several bad harvests in a row. It was then the Anderson family moved to the village, and offered to buy the land in return for a very acceptable sum of money. Your family, as well as Daniels, sold your land to Anderson.

A few years later, Anderson sold off the land at tenfold the price they'd offered you for it. You naturally felt cheated, but Anderson claimed they hadn't known at the time that the land would increase in value. To this day, this issue is still sensitive.

Being wise spenders, your family used the money earned to make a good living as bankers and by opening the village's food store. You also rent out a house to Daniels.

The Collins were the only family who had refused to sell their land to Anderson. Over the following years, Collins borrowed a lot of money from you, and they still owe you a considerable amount, which they haven't been able to pay back.

### **Important values to your family are**

- Law and order
- Paying your dues
- Politeness

### **Rules of the Village, when solving conflicts**

- All families have one vote
- If one of the solutions gets more votes than any other, all families must accept this conflict solution
- If there is a tie between two solutions, the conflict is unresolved

## Collins

Your family owns a small farm at the outskirts of the village. Farming doesn't make one rich, however.

One hundred years ago, the Anderson family moved to the village. Times were hard then, and when the wealthy newcomers offered to buy the land, two families agreed – Daniels and Borowic. You didn't sell, and today you are grateful indeed for having seen through Anderson's lies.

Just a few years later, the land had increased in value and was now worth tenfold compared to what Anderson had offered you. Same for Daniels and Borowic – but they had already sold their land.

Despite the high market value, you still refuse selling your land. You still hang in there, managing to get by year after year. A lot of it is thanks to the money Borowic borrowed you – a lot of which you still haven't been able to pay back.

### **Important values to your family are**

- Loyalty
- Traditions
- Pride in one's family and homestead

### **Rules of the Village, when solving conflicts**

- All families have one vote
- If one of the solutions gets more votes than any other, all families must accept this conflict solution
- If there is a tie between two solutions, the conflict is unresolved

## Daniels

Your family are workers at the Anderson family's tools factory. You rent your house from the Borowic family.

One hundred years ago, you owned the largest amount of land in the village. Food prices had fallen several years, and you had had several bad harvests. You didn't have a choice when Anderson, who'd just moved to the village, offered to buy the land. Like you, the Borowic family also sold their land, but Collins refused to sell.

Finding new employment was hard, however. It turned out the land you'd sold had increased tenfold over the coming years. You demanded that Anderson would give back your land in return for the money they'd paid. They refused, of course. To this day, you family haven't forgotten Anderson's greed and ruthlessness towards you and the people of your village.

Not having any other way to get by, you started working at Anderson's tools factory, while renting a house from the Borowic family. While you are glad to have employment, you believe what the Anderson family did one hundred years ago were unfair and unjust.

### **Important values to your family are**

- Justice
- Honesty
- Social responsibility

### **Rules of the Village, when solving conflicts**

- All families have one vote
- If one of the solutions gets more votes than any other, all families must accept this conflict solution
- If there is a tie between two solutions, the conflict is unresolved

## Conflict 1: The lake

A few minutes walk from the village border is a lake with clean water, a sand beach and a jetty. The Anderson family owns the beach, but anyone who wishes may bathe or fish in the lake.

As of late, the amount of fish in the lake has decreased drastically. Soon the reason why became evident: The Collins family have been fishing and sold their catch in a nearby village to get some extra money.

So far, it's been free to fish in the lake for anyone who wishes. Is it fair that Collins can use a public resource for economic gains? Or should they be exonerated due to their economic difficulties?

### What do you think should be done?

1. Collins should pay a fee to the village for using a public resource for their own gains. The money can be used to implant more fish in the lake.
2. It's no big deal if Collins wants to fish in the lake. They are having a hard time getting by as it is.
3. Collins may keep the money they earned, but may not continue fishing and selling the fish.

## Conflict 2: Profit or preservation?

A company wants to build a vacation resort by the lake, and has offered the Anderson family a huge sum of money for the land around the lake.

Legally, Anderson may sell the land, if they want to. But selling would mean that everyone in the village would lose the possibility to visit the beach or fish in the lake. From what everyone has heard, the plans for the resort means the lake would be completely walled off from the village.

### What do you think should be done?

1. Anderson shouldn't be allowed to sell even more land to companies. Period.
2. Anderson has the law on their side. Even if we don't like the decision to sell, they must be allowed to proceed.
3. The land belonged to Daniels and Borowic before Anderson tricked them into selling. The profit should therefore be split between the three families.

## Conflict 3: Harsh times

For a long time now, demand has decreased for the tools produced in the village's factory. The tools company is in bankruptcy.

As a result, Daniels lost their jobs, and now they are unable to pay Borowic for food and housing. Borowic decides they need to evict Daniels, and has asked Collins to be there as witnesses and security.

Borowic knocks on Daniels' door. This is followed by an exchange of insults and emotions run high as Borowic begins to carry the belongings of the Daniels family out of the house. A fistfight erupts, and Collins are stuck in the middle, defending themselves furiously. A person from the Daniels family gets badly hurt in the fight.

Anderson have heard the noise and comes out to see what is going on. The scene turned into a giant fight and hours pass before everyone calms down enough to talk things through.

The families gather to see if a common solution can be found.

### What do you think should be done?

1. This is all Andersons' And Borowics' fault. They have been cheap and only tried to help themselves to more money. They should give half of all their money to the village, then leave and never return.
2. Collins have caused nothing but trouble. They are indebted, and now they have hurt a person from the Daniels family. They should leave the Village.
3. It doesn't matter whose fault it is. According to the law, Daniels must leave their house since they are unable to pay the rent. Daniels should leave the village.