A Hostile World:
A Pervasive Urban Game to Sensitise and Foster a Cross-Cultural Reflection

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Hostile World is a persuasive game designed for an urban context with a high level of multiethnic presence, a recurrent feature of the contemporary megalopolis. Our players are ordinary native citizens who are plunged into an alternative reality where they can realize how complex and demanding it is to deal with gestures and tasks of everyday life in a foreign context, trusting them to live a destabilizing experience that aims to increase the sensitivity, understanding, and empathy towards foreigners, soothing the existing multicultural tensions. The game is a quest-based system; quests recreate situations of everyday-life needs, from shopping to bureaucratic adventures; it's designed to be modular and its sessions may change in the number and quality of quests adapting to different cities, contexts, and targets. The authors identify its effectiveness through the analysis of data collected during and after actual gameplay.

BACKGROUND

Politecnico di Milano is a scientific-technological university which trains engineers, architects and designers. Its focus is on quality and innovation of teaching, research and technological knowledge transfer. Research activity constitutes a path parallel to that formed by cooperation and alliances with the industrial system. The drive to internationalization sees Politecnico di Milano take part in the European and world network of leading technical universities and offers several exchange and double-degree programmes beside Bachelor of Science, Master of Science, Specialization Master's and Doctoral degree.

We are developing our research at the Department of Design, which elaborates and promotes research and education in design investigating various fields that, with a focus on the centrality of the individuals and of the community, study: the spaces in which people live and the objects they interact with; their ways and means to communicate, to move, to consume, to produce and dispose of tangible and intangible assets, to enjoy and increase the value of cultural and environmental heritage, to innovate social interactions. It also promotes and coordinates research and training initiatives, publications, events, repositories of knowledge and documentation centers. In collaboration with other departments, centers and institutions it carries out research activities and provides consultancy on contracts and agreements.

The Department is divided into research groups. We are part of the *Products, Strategies and Services* one which is theoretically and methodologically based on an idea of the project as a continuum of products, strategies, services and communications that affect the evolution of society, culture, technology and economy, with a special eye on innovation and sustainability. Our research on Game Design fits well in this context, since our work includes theoretical and applied research as well as teaching and thesis tutoring. In particular, we design projects for ludic activities and we are interested in the dynamics that concern both the urban area and the people as a result of the activities we offer. The project presented here comes from one of our ideas and has been developed as the output of a Master of Science thesis in Communication Design at the School of Design, Politecnico di Milano, submitted in 2013 by Lavinia Ierardi.

SETTING THE STAGE

We live in a historical moment in which our communities are urged to face and deal with complex and pressing socio-cultural issues. The contemporary western cities are hybrid and multifaceted realities, characterized by a fluid and dynamic nature

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