

Over the past year, my friend group—composed entirely of my cross-country teammates—and I have grown extraordinarily close. We love spending hours together before, during and after practice, and a hobby that has become extra popular this year has been playing Catan. Once we began playing semi-regularly, we started to keep score on a google excel sheet. We would play both in person and online. We dreamt of including features of the online version in the in-person version. We would discuss, explore and ideated solutions to help improve the enjoyability of the game, as well as spice things up to make things more interesting.

I come from a massive background of playing board games. During my summers it is not unheard of to play 4-8h of board games on a perfectly hot summer day with friends and family. I really enjoy them, and I believe my experience lends me some imagination and creativity for exploring new methods to improve games that I play so often.

I began to compose ideas for projects I could do to make something thoughtful for my friend group when I graduate (in 3 days or so :(). I wanted to be ambitious and create a custom catan board. This would exude craftsmanship and would elevate the gaming experience. I would expect that my friends would think of me and the memories we shared whenever they played with this custom board.

I began synthesizing hex patterns and designs to engrave into plywood on the laser cutters. I did this in illustrator. I came up with 2-4 different designs for each resource hex, and printed each of those in 3 separate levels of contrast. I had plenty of beta hexes to choose from. The problem was that it took 2 hours to print 6 hexes. And my testing would require 7 prints to occur, amounting to 14 hours of waiting for the laser cutter. Not including the final print(s) which would take an additional 14 hours. And that excludes printing the perimeter/water—estimated at another 4-6 hours of printing. All in all, I was unwilling to spend 35h printing these hexes which I felt didn't deliver on quality for time I was investing into creating them.

Another major problem was that my laptop screen failed me on week 3 of the quarter, so it was paramount for me to be in my dorm on my monitor to ensure that I could work efficiently.

On week 7, I pivoted to building a custom deck of development cards for catan. I wanted to re-invent the standard deck for the development cards to include more creativity, create more interesting board states and initialize more unique interactions to spice up a very enjoyable but somewhat predictable game. I drew inspiration from the Catan: Cities and Knights progress cards. These mirror development cards from the original but add fun twists without causing rage (at least not too much). I begun playing the C&K expansion just this winter, and it was super fun. It adds another hour or so to the game but is totally worth trying!

I wanted to create two pillars of development cards. Red – signifying the lower tier cards, costing the typical ore, wheat, sheep – offer slight advantages over opponents. And Blue – representing the higher tier development cards, costing ore, wheat, sheep, wood, and brick. The blue deck offers greater advantage to the player owning one and is a step above the average power of the red cards.

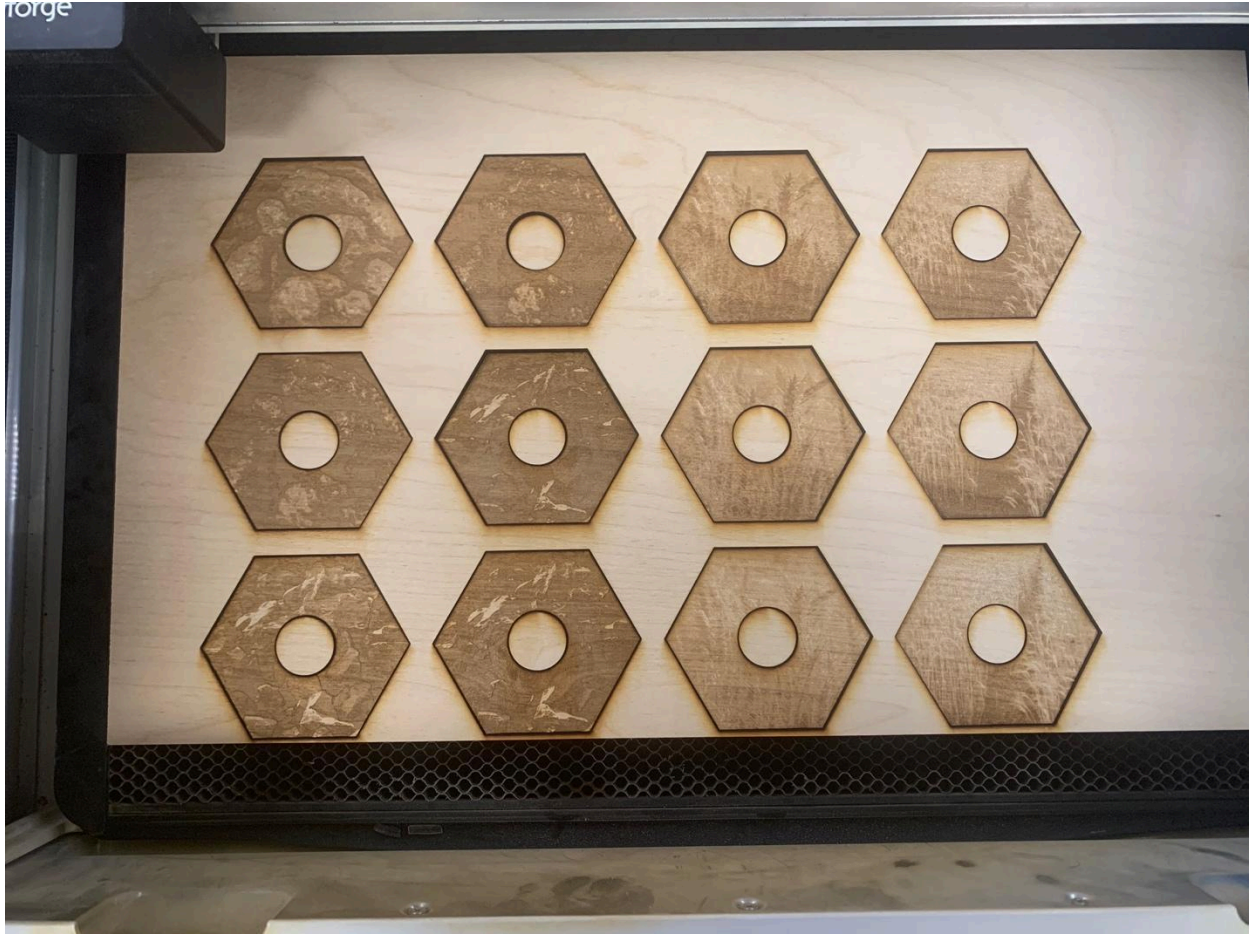
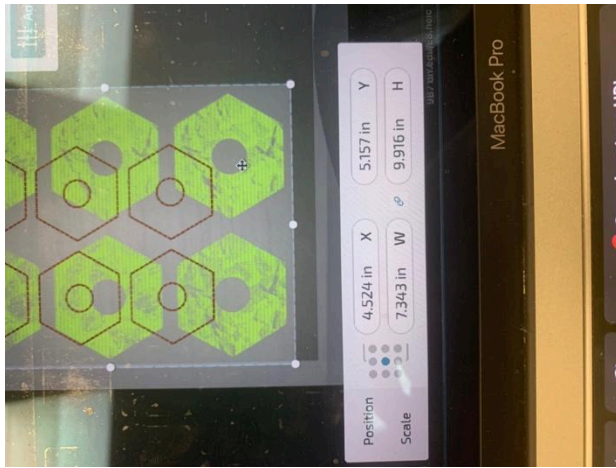
The cards themselves mirror the original development cards with respect to their layout. There is a 'metal' frame surrounding a focal image in the center of the page that represents the text at the bottom of the card describing the effect of the card. The text is engulfed in this vector shield graphic that I made myself with tonnes of gradients to mimic reflected light on metal. The graphic on the page has margins with respect to the cards, but this rule is broken by the shield graphic. The graphic then dissolves into white nearing the bottom of the card. After this, I added a grain texture.

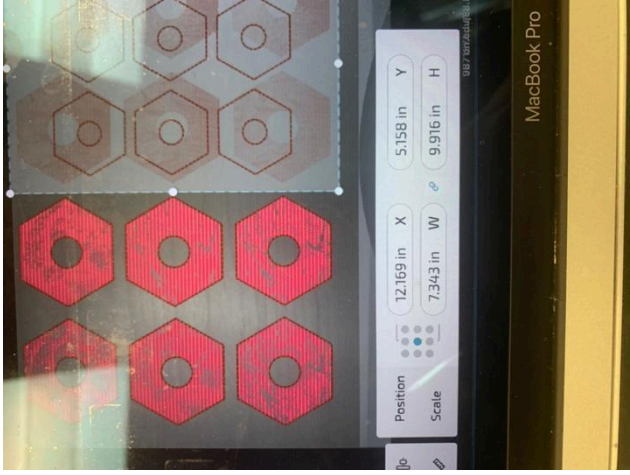
Printing these was a pain. But luckily I was able to leave to eat lunch for 45min while the bulk of it was printing. Unfortunately, the vinyl cutter is inconsistent and lacks precision, so I pivoted to cutting out each slip of paper with an exacto-knife and ruler.

All in all it turned out well! My biggest gripe is the curves of the cards. I did not hand-cut the rounded corners of the cards. It's not the biggest deal in the world, but I think it would be nice to have that. My last step was to put my cards in 66-90mm sleeves to protect them!

I've gotten very sentimental winding down these last few days here at Stanford, and I am so glad that I made something for my friends. I hope they can appreciate it :)

See the pages that follow for images of my project!







resource from the owner
of a settlement or a city
adjacent to the robbers
hex.

or a settlement or a city
adjacent to the robbers
hex.





You may swap two resource tiles on the board. You may not choose 2, 6, 8 or 12.

Choose one opponent, you may steal an exhausted knight card and play it immediately.

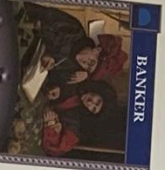
You may swap any two resource tiles on the board (not including desert).

Name one type of resource. Each player must give you all their resources of that type.

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BANKER



Play this card before you roll. This turn you acquire all resources generated when the die is rolled.

DESERTER



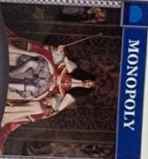
Choose one opponent. You may steal an exhausted knight card and play it immediately.

GAMBLER



Roll the red die. Following turn order, you may steal a random card from opponents up to the value of the die.

MONOPOLY



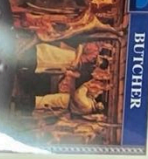
Name one type of resource. Each player must give you all their resources of that type.

SPY



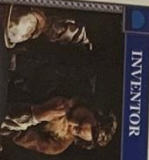
Examine an opponent's hand of development cards. You may take 1 card of choice and add it to your hand (cannot be a Victory Point).

BUTCHER



For 1 victory (1) you may upgrade a settlement into a city.

INVENTOR



You may swap two resource tiles on the board. You may not choose 2, 6, 8 or 12.

DESERTER



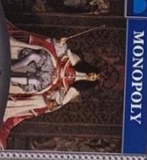
Choose one opponent. You may steal an exhausted knight card and play it immediately.

LANDSLIDE



You may swap any two resource tiles on the board (not including desert).

MONOPOLY



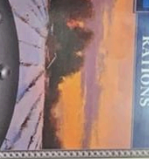
Name one type of resource. Each player must give you all their resources of that type.

SPY



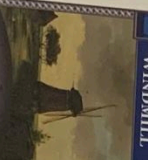
Examine an opponent's hand of development cards. You may take 1 card of choice and add it to your hand (cannot be a Victory Point).

RATONS



For 2 ore and 1 grain, you may upgrade one of your settlements to a city.

WINDMILL



1 Victory Point! Reveal this card on your turn. If, with it, you reach the number the number of points required for victory.

RIVER



1 Victory Point! Reveal this card on your turn. If, with it, you reach the number the number of points required for victory.

HACKER



You may place a settlement for its cost on a hex 1 road distance away from other settlements.

ESTATE



1 Victory Point! Reveal this card on your turn. If, with it, you reach the number the number of points required for victory.

FISHERIES



You may swap any two ports of your choice.