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The development of games for education, or for occupational therapy, or for fostering civic participation in disadvantaged communities, or any of the other purposes for what was for a long time termed "serious games" requires a commitment to inclusion beyond simple technical adherence to accessibility standards. No matter the ability of the involved experts –in health, education, policy, or any other relevant domain – a game that simply dictates 'correct' behaviors to a target audience will waste the true potential of games for involvement, collaboration, and subjectivity and improvisation in play. Games and society is not a one-way street. Games hold significant cultural and societal impact precisely due to how they become day-to-day-life and connections, away from the dictates of game studios.

It is not enough to iteratively test the game on the target audience as it gets developed and claim user-centered development. Decades of work in "serious" games have shown that the societal and cultural potential of games can only be delivered by continually deepening the meanings of inclusion and participation. Game development with a purpose beyond mere entertainment has to be built on knowledge exchanges between design and scholarly researchers, communities of beneficiaries, and society at large. The lines between authoritative domain experts and game-makers and beneficiaries need to be blurred, and this needs to factor into the development of these games from square one.

The International Journal of Games and Social Impact (IJGSI) is founded on the need for an academic publication dedicated to the study of knowledge exchanges between the proponents, beneficiaries, and stakeholders of games, among academia, non-governmental and grassroots organizations, local communities, industry, and governments. From IJGSI's perspective, the study of these knowledge exchanges means both how communities, cultures, and societies relate to existing games, and how the development of new games with a societal purpose (education, heath, activism, and more) can be done through these knowledge exchanges. IJGSI is an initiative by GLOW – the Games and Social Impact Media Research lab at Lusófona University in Portugal. GLOW is dedicated to the same ideas as IJGSI. Much like the societal impact of games requires stepping back from clear-cut divides between experts, partners, and players, GLOW is not an official university research unit, but a knowledge-sharing initiative between three university labs, local stakeholders (for instance secondary schools, disability-support associations), and other organizations.

IJGSI is deeply tied to GLOW's annual conference. The authors of the best presentations at the inaugural edition of GLOW – GLOW'21 – were invited to submit full papers to this inaugural issue of IJGSI. Micael Sousa's article describes the MBGTOTEACH framework and preliminary results for its use, for bringing up-to-date boardgame design approaches to bear on the design of educational games, namely as it relates to the adaptability and fine-balancing of high-quality contemporary board games. Benjamin Hanussek proposes a novel, more pragmatic approach to designing moral complexity into games. Katriina Heljakka describes an autoethnography of how the visitor can relate to experiential museums as adult play spaces. Scott DeJong traces the state of games for countering fake news.

Marta Guerra Belo reflects on a playground framing for pedagogy as a new alternative learning structure in higher design education centered on ludic thinking. All in all, these articles in this inaugural issue of IJGSI exemplify the journal's remit of studying games and play through knowledge sharing.