EDITORIAL

RETHINKING BOARD GAMES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES

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Many board game publications say that we live in a different era, a unique time to play board games. Some say this is the golden age of board gaming or a renaissance of something that was decaying. There is growing interest in board games and an immense variety available, that is certain. Niche games are now rising in popularity. Never as today, analogue games (board, card, miniatures, etc.) seem to be so creative and developed so detailed for massive audiences. Players can choose board games according to the unique experiences they seek. However, some questions arise. Are there really games for all users, adapted or designed for all player needs? Modern board games explore new mechanisms and narratives, providing experiences that keep the hobby and market growing. Despite this apparent success, to what extent are they really inclusive? Besides the entertainment game market, the use of games for other purposes beyond direct entertainment (applied games, serious games, gamification, game-based learning, etc.) is also thriving.

Leiriacon is the oldest and biggest modern board game convention in Portugal. Since 2007, hundreds of gamers from Portugal and abroad have flocked to Leiriacon, now happening in Praia da Vieira, Municipality of Marinha Grande and Leiria district in Portugal. Gamers, game designers, illustrators, and other professionals in the board game industry attend regularly. During Leiriacon, we organize Leiriatalks as an event to talk about the hobby and industry. Since 2023, Leiriatalks has been a formal conference, a partnership between Spiel Portugal (organizer of Leiriacon) and University Lusófona. Participants can present communications regarding board games and aim to publish research papers in GLOW special issues. Besides the regular communications, open to every participant, there are keynote speakers and round table discussions.

In the 2023 edition, we focused on co-design and inclusion. Myself and Carla Sousa hosted the roundtable with Markus & Inka Brand and Isra & Shei, two well-known game design teams. We approached the game design process, especially the challenges and advantages of creating games in design teams (co-design). The gender issues emerged during the conversation. We learned about how the industry still treats women differently.

After the round table, Michael Heron was the first keynote speaker. He addressed accessibility in modern board games broadly, highlighting that these design requirements should be part of every game. Disability can affect every person at least at some point in their life. Even though we might never experience an incapacitating event, we all age and lose abilities. If board games are not prepared and designed to be played by seniors, someday in the future, we will not be able to play our loved games.

The second keynote was Ricardo Simões, presenting a communication about 3D printing. Because the materiality of analogue games is a core driver to play the games, the democratization of 3D printing has enabled hobbyists to build their addons and improve standard game parts. These material improvements can be merely aesthetics or to make the game more playable and inclusive. Regardless of these playable advantages, there are sustainable issues that arise.

The round table participants, keynotes, and all Leiriatalks speakers were invited to present papers to complement the video recording. Leiriatalks sessions were filmed and are available at Youtube.com/@JogosnoTabuleiro. The majority of the participants presented papers that, after a blind peer review process, were accepted to be included in this special issue. Other authors joined later.

In "Cognitive teleintervention with board games during the pandemic lockdown in school-age children" by Nuria Vita-Barrull et al., refers to an experiment of playing board games remotely and how it entails cognitive benefits.

In "Mapping emotions during analogue play in the elderly – a pilot study" by Dara Pincegher et al., refers to the positive effect of playing board games by seniors, increasing the ability for cognitive functions.

In ""Public Interest" and the (Potential) social impact of board games: the role of the "strategic Twist", definition and scope" by Paulo Antunes, address the historical, social and design changes that make modern board games different kinds of games.

In "Current accessibility challenges and perspectives for people with visual impairments in tabletop games" by João Léste and Jackeline Farbiarz, addresses the visual requirements and ways to deal with users with visual impairments, the social relationships and design techniques to make board games more inclusive for these users.

In "Computer-supported accessible dexterity board games" by Michael James Heron, explore computer vision combined and adapted to dexterity board games, making them more inclusive to all users. The case study focuses on Crokinole.

In "Ludonarrative conversion: children's books to games" by Katryna Starks, deals with the mechanics and optimal design to make gamers more readable by children.

In "Current and Future Opportunities for 3D printing in Modern board games" by Ricardo Simões, makes a state of the art of 3D printing and how it can be used by professionals and hobbyists in modern board games.

In "Why have there been no great women or non-binary board game designers?" by Carolina Magalhães Dias, explores the active role of women in the board game community, going into the sociological approach to ask why women are a minority in board gaming.