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GAME: playing a boardgame co-designed with a group of people with psychosis

Erika Renedo Illarregi
The Open University
Milton Keynes, UK
erika.renedo-illarregi@open.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

UPDATED—30 April 2020. This situated action aims to engage local community and conference attendees in testing, playing, and reflecting on a boardgame produced as part of a co-design project with people with psychosis. This project was part of a collaborative doctoral award with a mental health charity, exploring the role of co-design as a mode of treatment. The co-design project was not set up with the intention of developing this artefact, and the collaboration begun without a design brief. A broad design purpose emerged through time, that of expressing a notion of Stewardship, or taking care of, which resulted in the development of a boardgame, GAME. The situated actions at PDC provide a great context for trying out this boardgame. Playing it could be a greatly enriching way for PDC attendees to engage with the project and lead to further discussions about the nature and potential of participatory design.

Author Keywords

Co-design; mental health; wellbeing; boardgame, play.

INTRODUCTION

This situated action means to explore a boardgame produced as part of a co-design project with people with psychosis. This project is a collaboration with a mental health charity, and explores the role of co-design as a mode of treatment.

The co-design project was not set up with the intention of developing a game, and the collaboration begun without a design brief, with the general objective of understanding the design process and the experiences of participants. Research participants were

recruited through the mental health charity and were encouraged to participate in the process to the extent that they were interested and comfortable with. The project run in conjunction with a weekly drop-in service for approximately 6 months. The process started with activities that aimed to begin to understand and define what design means; for instance by bringing objects and reflecting upon their significance or carrying out short design projects. Through the use of a modified version of cultural probes, a broad design purpose emerged, that of expressing a notion of Stewardship, or taking care of, which resulted in the development of GAME.

This design outcome, the boardgame, appears to be worth exploring both in terms of its potential as a product, and as means to discuss the participatory nature of its design process. The situated actions at PDC provide a great context for trying out this boardgame. Playing the boardgame could be a greatly enriching way for local community and PDC attendees to engage with the project and lead to further discussions about the nature and potential of participatory design.

To date, GAME has been played in these contexts: by the co-designers in the mental health charity, with other peers and trainee psychotherapists, by PhD design students and professors at a design summer school, and at informal settings with colleagues and friends. People who have played it expressed its potential relevance to different contexts of use (e.g. psychotherapy, peer support, design education, diagnostics).

Interestingly, the boardgame is designed to encourage collaboration over competition, and the exchange of ideas and perspectives in a non-judgemental way. Some players for instance commented ‘I have shared things I wouldn’t have done otherwise’ or ‘I didn’t know I was so self-conscious’.

The experience of playing the game is also relevant to this year’s theme participations otherwise. One of the questions in the introduction to the theme is ‘from

whom else can we be learning?'. Through the process of this project, the researcher realized the great extent to which she learned from the people she worked with at the psychosis service, and arguably, playing the boardgame may provide a direct path to this intuition for others too.

GAME

Game is designed to help participants wonder, get to know themselves and connect with one another and the environment. There are no winners or losers, as the game acknowledges the developing nature of people and encourages collective action to address this. Interaction among participants is the main benefit. To achieve this, the boardgame involves players in addressing questions that relate to different themes, through different forms of interaction. Please refer to the short video for a brief insight (appendix 1).

The different themes are: green, philosophical, spiritual, mind & body, creativity and (?) which refers to any area not included in the main themes. See [figure 1]



Figure 1. Prototype of guidelines booklet (themes descriptions) and cards.

Randomly through a wheel, each question can be addressed in three different ways: Tell & share, Think & discuss, and Act & ask. See [figure 2].

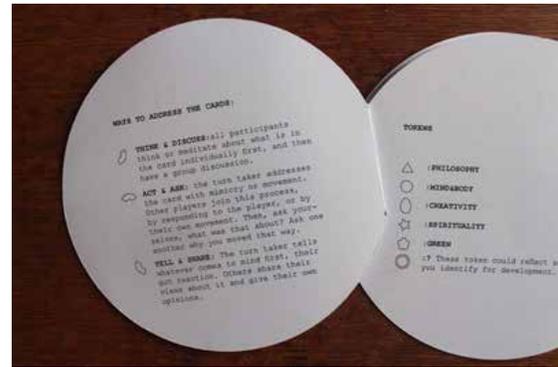


Figure 2. Prototype of guidelines booklets - ways to address questions and tokens.

Therefore, Game is composed by a set of cards with questions pertaining to these different themes in different colours, and a board offering these 3 different ways to address each card. There is also a set of empty cards where players can write their own questions. See [figure3].



Figure 3.. Participant holding cards.

Through sharing opinions, non-judgemental discussions and reflections with others, players may identify areas in which they may want to further reflect and develop themselves, individually or as a group. In order to keep track of these reflections, tokens are distributed among players, which reflect each theme [figure4]. Unlike most games, tokens are allocated subjectively. Throughout the game, when the player feels they need help with some area (e.g. spirituality), they can take a token as a reminder of this need (e.g. spirituality token). Tokens can also be given by others, if the player accepts them. At the end of the play session,

the number of tokens of each type reflects where the player needs development. Rewards corresponding to each theme are given to those who have most tokens of one type, to motivate them to develop that part of themselves. For instance, if you feel you are not very environmentally aware, fellow players could encourage you to take some green corresponding tokens. At the end of the game, if you have mostly green tokens, you may be given a reward that encourages you to become more environmentally friendly. Therefore, players identify how many tokens each player has, and distribute the relevant rewards accordingly. These rewards could be created ad hoc by the group or selected from a booklet of ideas.

Step by step – with example:

- First player randomly picks a card. The card is placed in the middle of the board, and spinned.
- Where the pointer lands determines the way in which the card needs to be addressed (tell & share, think & discuss or act & ask). See video at (appendix 2).
- Each card has a question (e.g. what colour is your soul?). The same question would be addressed in different ways depending on whether the pointer lands on tell and share (e.g. player expresses first thing that comes to mind ‘my soul is pink’ and others share their views), on think and discuss (players individually think their responses and then discuss with one another) or act and ask (player acts, addressing the question via mimics or gestures, and others ask, by joining the act or verbally).



Figure 4. Game, box of cards, board and box with tokens

corresponding to each theme.

- After discussing each card, the individual or group can reflect on any needs, and distribute tokens.
- At the end of the game, these tokens are used to distribute the rewards. The participant who has more tokens in one area (e.g. spirituality) will gain the corresponding reward (e.g. meditation event).

Principles of GAME

- It values diversity of lived experience over accuracy of factual knowledge. As one of the co-designers put it ‘in this game we are all equal’
- The subjective nature of the token system reflects how people judge, value, as well as support one another and make decisions in everyday life.
- People who identify themselves, or are helped to recognize, an area where they may want to seek further development, are given rewards to encourage this process. This symbolic gesture also reflects the principles behind peer-to-peer support, recovery and rehabilitation.

IN PDC:

The situated action will consist in playing this game with local community members and conference participants. Depending on the programme, the duration of the game can vary and be adjusted through the curation process of the situated actions. The rewards could be ready-made symbolic objects (e.g. water bottle) or a map/programme encouraging players to engage in various talks or other situated actions related to the themes (e.g. learn about sustainability by attending (x) presentation or spirituality by attending (x) situated action). After playing the game and subject to the available time, a discussion will be facilitated and/or feedback forms will be distributed, to enquire how people experienced the playing, the contexts in which the game could be beneficial, or the nature of the design process that led to its development.

Ethics

The situated action will seek approval from the ethics committee in the host institution of the researcher/ facilitator. Information sheets and consent forms will be provided to all participants, which will include a warning about the experimental nature of the game

and the potential benefits and risks for players.

Following consultation with participants, GAME is licenced under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

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