Tracing History: Jakarta, A Board Game Design

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Abstract

Jakarta, with its long behind it has a lot of museums and historical landmarks which are highly potential as tourism spots. Yet such are the things not known the locals. By comprising the whole list into a map and put it interactively in a game, the audience are expected to have direct comprehension of local attractions, increasing their interest of Jakarta, hence a higher probability of traveling to Jakarta. The style takes a Dutch colonial approach and the colours are intentionally low in contrast to promote an old look and target young adults as they are the more probable age group to travel on their own funding.

Keywords: history, Jakarta, tourism, board game, game design.

1. Introduction

It has been widely known that for the past few years, backpacking has increased in popularity as a cheap yet efficient way of travel [1]. It has made a significant increase in numbers of tourists in third world countries, one of them being Indonesia. Jakarta as the capital city itself has particular spots where backpackers can stay, meet up with other backpackers and start their travel plans, locally known as kampung backpackers. Recent reports have made claim of the government’s plan to actually allocate some funding into the development of such areas. Throughout August 2012, the statistic center (BPS) recorded [2] 145,241 international visits with the numbers of the ten highest nationalities going through the international Soekarno-Hatta Airport in Cengkareng as shown: Japan (14,589 visits), Malaysia (13,882 visits), China (13,818 visits), Singapore (9,540 visits), South Korea (6,154 visits), Arab Saudi (5,710 visits), Netherland (5,598 visits), United States of America (5,487 visits), Australia (4,774 visits), dan France (4,688 visits). This shows a high and rising interest and acknowledgement on Jakarta as a tourism city. Yet locals claim that Jakarta lacks interest spots. The spots that are known to locals beside malls are only the town zoo Ragunan, the National Monument Monas, Sea World, the local beach Ancol and its theme park Dunia Fantasi, whilst museums and cultural tourism spots aren't considered as interest spots. This can rise a problem as backpackers tend to ask locals for interest spots and alike. Even though Jakarta is a city with one of the most museums built throughout Indonesia [3], without the right information deliverance these spots would never get the spotlight of tourism despite the long historical background Jakarta could provide.

Jakarta which is one of the 100 largest cities in the world [4], started out as a port in the early 5th century of the Hindi civilization by the mouth of the Ciliwung River. It has experienced several name change throughout history, starting out with the oldest record of ancient Sundanese script mentioning the name Kalapa as a port of the Sunda Kingdom. Its area covers the northern coasts which spread throughout what is now Cirebon, Sangiang and Banten areas. Even from those times this port has already attracted foreign interest. The Portuguese placed the Java Island on their navigational map dating back to the 15th century, and on it was the name Cunda Calapa, indicating the Kalapa port was under the Kingdom of Sunda. There were also records of ships from India and China harboring on the Kalapa port [5].

After the invasion by Fatahillah of the Demak Kingdom, the name Sunda Kalapa was eventually changed into Jayakarta, bearing the meaning of total victory or welfare. The name was again changed into Batavia at the time of the Dutch colonial occupancy before finally settling with the last name change issued by the Japanese invader; Jakarta until today. Now the name Batavia serves as a reference to Jakarta of the old times along with the integrated visual styles of the Dutch colonials on Jakarta's tropical grounds. In some areas like Kota Tua, this style has been preserved in the means of architectural structures which mostly serve as cafes and restaurants nowadays [6].

To compile interest spots in one surface as a travel map is not a particularly new idea, but to actually use the map interactively in a game is hoped to raise more interest in traveling Jakarta and increase comprehensions of what lies beneath the depths of the bustling modern life of Jakarta.

Board gaming itself has been around for as long as 3000 B.C. with the oldest game being similar to checkers. It was found in a city ruins called Ur, an area which is in current days Iraq. Another similar board game named Alquerque was also found in Egypt and was dated back as far as 1400 B.C. Board games have evolved in such a way that they still survive all these years until today. Even after the revolution of digital games, board games still exist with new types and rules emerging ever so often. According to Victor Epand [7], a chess and board game consultant, aside from the
satisfaction of winning over opponents and accomplishing given tasks, board games also provide a *different life* to live by our imaginations. One can become anyone one wishes to be and experience different life adventures in the comfort of one’s own home. In such matters, visual elements play quite a role to bring out the imaginations of the players. The illustration style, decorative drawings, also the colours used in a visual design is important to match the theme wanted for the board game.

As board games evolve, a lot of types have been classified to easily describe how a board game is played according to its play-time, game-play, theme (in wider terms) and patterns such as mass market games (*Monopoly, Scrabble*, chess), wargames, german-style strategy games (*Settlers of Catan, Puerto Rico*), Role-Playing Games (*Order of The Sticks*) and beer and pretzels games (*Junta, Nuclear War*). A lot more are classified depending on the community classifying them, but mostly these four are in.

In terms of player interactions however, there are seven defining patterns as written in the book *Game Design Workshop* by Fullerton which are player versus the game (*Solitaire, Free-cell*), several individual players versus the game (*Slingo, roulette*), player versus player (*Yu-Gi-Oh, Mortal Combat*), unilateral competition (*Scotland Yard*, dodge ball), multilateral competition (*Monopoly, poker*), cooperative play (*Harvest Time, Lord of The Rings*), and team competition (*Tribes, Battlefied 1942*) [8].

In recent years, German-style strategy games have been taken into notice and are emerging in popularity, especially since the publishing of *Settlers of Catan*. Strategy games in general have risen and some of these games are complex in terms of rules and game parts. This has taken the age group of young adults more in interest than any other age group and so are the age groups in Indonesia as well. The high commercial cost of these board games in Indonesia has driven more young adults into them rather than teenagers and children. This is a beneficial aspect as backpackers tend to come from this group of age as well. With that factor being taken into consideration, using board games as a measure to inform directly about Jakarta’s historical traits is hoped to be effective and beneficial. As board games mostly need more than two players to play, they drive players to search for others and thus widening the probability of a bigger audience.

Social matters have also been taken into consideration. The popularity of digital gaming has driven players to become more solitary day by day. Board games need actual people to play on them. They push face-to-face interactions with other players as players need to be on site together at the same time to play a board game. This is also why the visual interpretation of the theme is also very important. To actually touch a thing and not merely seeing it through a screen is one of the humane sides of board games. Not to mention the side-effects of prolonged interactions with digital appliances humans experience nowadays such as back-pain, headache and eye-sores, playing board games may be one of the recreational activity to actually take people aside their computerized life for once throughout the day. As board games actually have a wide range of playable age group, it is not unexpected to increase family interactions as well; an easy source of recreational yet educational family fun on weekends.

Board games also easily fit into the part of an environmental friendly lifestyle. As the name serves, most boards on board games use cardboard and paper. Yet these biologically degradable materials are not that easy to get damaged and have long durability expectancy, especially if they are well kept. This durability enables handing down the board games from friend to friend or between sibling and even between generations, decreasing the amount of waste from the prolonged use. Even if it is to be discarded most materials are degradable and thus make it environmentally friendly.

### 2. Creative Study Process of the Board Game Design

At first the project was meant to emphasize on the visuals and was more of a redesign of the previously published German traveling board game *Deutschlandreise*. As the progress continued, it was seen necessary to actually change quite a few aspects on the game itself, including the rules and cards. In the game *Deutschlandreise*, each player chooses a starting place and receives seven destination cards on which are written names of cities in Germany. The players roll and move along the board. When a player arrives at a city named on one of his/her destination cards, he/she shows the card and put the card in front of him/her. When a player stops at a city that has a number on it, the player should take a card according to the number and follow the instruction on it, whether it was to take more steps, miss turns or go to appointed city. The first player who has visited all of his/her destination cards and arrives in his/her starting place wins the game.

In the redesigned game, each player was given a random set of eight destination cards. Each decides on a starting point from one of their destination cards. From there on they must think of a route to visit every single destination they have in their hands. After deciding on who goes first either by highest dice rolls or other means, players would roll a dice in turns to move across the board. There are full circles and hollow circles on the map. When a player stops on a full circle, he/she only needs to wait for the others’ turn to finish. But when it is a hollow circle the player stops his/her turn.
at, the player would need to take one random card from the chances cards stack. These cards may help the player go further or on the contrary weaken the player’s condition in the game, as there are lucky cards and bad luck cards.

It goes without saying that the board needed changes into being the map of Jakarta and the destination cards that were originally cities were changed into interest spots around Jakarta. While the city cards in the previous game only shows the name, coordinates and a compass rose, each destination cards in the redesigned game bears an illustration related to the spot and a description of the place’s history or name origin. This is to give a sense of actuality and a classic touch through the visual style which is pen on paper.

The numbers cards were changed into chances cards for it was considered an advantage when one player has played the game several times and memorized where the lucky numbers are and where the bad numbers are. These chances cards are not numbered and serve as one of the luck factors in the game. By changing numbers cards into chances cards which needed to be shuffled first there would be no knowing which card would the player receive and thus lessens the gaps between frequent players and first-time players. For even though it is meant to be a form of information in the end a game has to serve its recreational means and be fun to play.

Originally the visual theme was meant to be sketchy with a feel of a traveler’s visual journal, with handwriting scribbles as the main font and a character for the players to relate to. The overall surface look was that of old papers with sepia shades, as if it an old journal that was taken along in the journey. After some reviews, it was decided to bring out more of the old colonial style to emphasize on the historical theme. The theme of treasure hunting was also brought up, but was considered stretching the theme too far from the original idea and could interfere with the game play as the suggested application was also to change the cards into coins and such.

Eventually it was decided to make the visual theme as old Jakarta or Batavia in colonial times, shown in the use of pen on paper illustrations, a lot of borders, center alignments, serif fonts and a dim and simple colour scheme. Illustrations were meant to be line arts and not coloured to match the colonial illustrations of the time that were mostly produced out of woodcuts or etches. The game’s visual was expected to place the players in similar position like the colonialists discovering Batavia in the old times for the main target market is foreigners. It was made to give the feel of an overseas travel that leads to the discovery of old Batavia and its interest spots. This was the reason behind the packaging box design which is in the image of old boxes like a nautical monocular telescope’s box and the board, instead of literally being a board, was made as if it an old colonial map of Batavia, and thus was made as a scroll. The old paper surface pattern however, was maintained on the map.

3. Results and Discussion

The alternate theme of a sketchy visual journal was scrapped, but the character (shown in Figure 1) use was once still considered to be put in. Several styles were sought, like the simple lineart type (far right sketch), one with simple shadings (middle sketch), and even the type that almost a silhouette (far left sketch). Yet in the end none were used as it might interfere with the player’s role. Instead of making a traveling character to relate to, it was decided to make a theme a player could play a role into and make a story of his/her own instead of following what is proposed from early on in the game. With that too, the visual elements could focus more on the classical old look and not to be confused with the modern side of backpacking travel theme.

![Figure 1. Sketch of character samples.](image)
The illustrations for each destination cards are hand-drawn by pen on papers using photos as references. There are two continuous patterns; for the back part of destination cards and of chances cards. Patterns are made by taking several shapes and forms from antique furnitures or decorative ceramic tiles as shown below (figure 2). The pattern on Figure 2 is the one used on the destination cards. The destination cards have a dimension of 7.5 x 14 centimeters whilst the chance cards measured 7.2 x 12 centimeters.

**Figure 2.** Derived forms used for patterns.

Borders were used excessively throughout the whole design; in the production plank, the front and back of the packaging box, and framing the illustrations on each destination and chance cards. These borders were designed carefully by taking references to old engravings on tin cans, and borders of old woodblock prints of landscape illustrations and bible illustrations such as the ones from the book *Images from the Bible* [9]. The entwined wirings and high-contrast shading were given utmost attention.

**Figure 3.** Derived forms used for chance cards' borders.

The packaging was made of cardboards with the inside portion using a deep red coloured fabric as a covering instead of cherry wood print papers like how the outside covering is. Two artificial leather straps were placed on the outside of the
box to keep the box shut even though it's shaken around and as decorative features as well. In Figure 4 it is shown that the positioning of cards and the map in the packaging box are separated by cardboard partitions into smaller quarters. The top quarter holds the scrolled map of the game, the lower left quarter holds the chance cards, the lower right quarter holds the destination cards while the lower middle quarter is to put in the dice, rules scroll, and the playing pieces. The map, measuring at 47.8 x 85.3 centimeters with a scale of 1: 30,000, is considerably large, and is therefore being rolled up as a scroll instead of a hard board plane. It matches the theme as well as it gives off a hint of old handed-down navigational map. The illustration behind it (shown on top of the front of the map on Figure 4) refers to the time where nautical adventures were popular and hints the players' mind to imagine themselves being on such an adventure themselves.

4. Conclusions

Based on the aforementioned analysis, it can be concluded that:

1. There is a miss in the information deliverance of Jakarta's tourism to the foreign travelers, especially backpackers. There are a lot of potential historical and educational interest spots in Jakarta to advertise and there are the potential target markets too, yet the means it was implemented in was still insufficient.

2. Through board games, people can gain some knowledge and interest about something new in a fun and interactive way. Board games are also a social type of activity that brings people together since generally it is required to have three or more players to play. With the market nowadays, it is mostly young adults who are into board games. Accordingly, young adults are also the main age group for travelers, especially backpackers, since they already earn a living and are responsible for their own expenses. Thus it was seen as a reasonable way to bring Jakarta's tourism information up in a board game.

3. Seeing as Jakarta has a long and interesting historical background, it was the main theme to be brought up in the game. The visual design elements were all delivered accordingly to the main theme of old colonial Batavia. These elements include the frequent use of borders, the hand drawn illustrations, the center alignments, the use of serif fonts and the color scheme.
The resulting board game has already been tested by test-players and has been revised. Rules were altered to implement more luck factors and emphasize on the game play. The layout on the cards has been adjusted to give more focus on the illustration as the attracting point, yet the text was also added as the detailed information. However there are still rooms for improvements, for instance the elimination of unnecessary details like bushes and trees around the buildings in the destination cards’ illustrations and the resemblance of most destination cards when they are alongside each other probably could be prevented by adding more colours into them.

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Daftar Pustaka


