

Civic collaborative worldbuilding via role-playing games: recommendations from two case studies

This paper showcases the findings of current research around the use of collaborative worldbuilding techniques, facilitated by table top role-playing games (TTRPGs), to discuss aspects of transformative mobility and resilient futures. TTRPGs are great instruments to facilitate the design of worlds, via collective imagination. Since these games are inherently collective and collaborative, players often generate solutions to challenges together, being able to also change the gameworld, where their characters belong to.

This paper first starts by outlining the features of TTRPGs that facilitate collective imagination, by focusing particularly on systems thinking, transformative mobility and resilient futures. We then, utilise two case studies of current projects that address collaborative worldbuilding: a hybrid RPG game about participatory budgeting (Empaville) and an adaptive version of Dungeons and Dragons (DnD) for sustainability.

This is followed by an analysis of 4 one-shot games of 4 hours long each (16h of gameplay) of the DnD gameplay and 4 Empaville sessions, of 90min each (6h of gameplay). In both case studies, we have recorded the gameplay audio and we have taken observational notes. Our initial findings show that (fictional) shared objects in both gameworlds grounded the worldbuilding process. We suggest that these shared objects could be further translated into the real world and influence policy making.

This work is centred around the themes of collaboration and co-creation, with further suggestion towards the development of innovative frameworks that tackle citizen participation and the city observatory, as TTRPGs can be great opportunities to study social sustainability and adaptive city systems.