

# Political Simulation and Gaming

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## **Reflective Practice Analysis**

*By*

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My experience of playing the games with the class was exceptionally rewarding. However, in some games I did not understand the rules of the play quickly and this eventually led to a state of confusion and discomfort leading another player to a victorious end. Of course, this is of a less importance and the lessons that I have learned have greater reward and value. The framework of this module is different from what I have been learning in the past. A great emphasis is the practical simulation and gaming we were doing, and hence the method of learning is combined with playing and receiving feedback as soon as game ends or during the game.

The first game that I have played was the Monopoly game. I have played this game in the past when I was in school and have few memories about the rules of the game and how it operates. But here in the first practice game I had to recall those memories into my mind and apply them as we played the game. Since I could not recall the important information about the game I just sat and played the game by observing others making moves. As game progressed the learning-by-doing helped me to understand the basic structure of the game. The state of confusion and discomfort relaxed and I could concentrate by planning my moves. However, I must admit that certain moves that helped me in progressing during the game were due to the very nature of confusion. I have made certain moves during the game that if I knew the game better I would have not applied them. This makes the Monopoly or the Landlord's game as was known originally a good and dynamic game. From a chaotic state of confusion arises a pattern of play that helped me in better organising my resources as play progressed. During the play certain aspects of my moves were based on what I have learned from economics. Monopoly applies certain techniques that are based on chance and how players organise and manage their resources. How players interact with each other as game progress. What I like about games like Monopoly is the social relationship that emerges during the play. I would like to call these types of games socio-dynamic in reference to experiencing the decision making of not only yours by other players too. A simple linguistic relationship among the players is making games like Monopoly difficult to predict and hence the level of complexities embedded within the structure of the game. The design structure of the game is easy to understand as the rules of the game but thinking about a winning formula similar to other games like chess is difficult. Unlike chess were usually played by two player Monopoly can be played with more than two player and this increases the level of complexity. The informal conversation and negotiation during the play makes Monopoly open to diplomatic style experience among the players. The rules of the game in chess are much more difficult to understand and hence applying them during the play, whereas, Monopoly is structured with simple rules but with a more dynamic decision processes. I recall my memories of trying to improve my rating in playing chess online but at certain level it was very

difficult to reach a higher rating, eventually I would play with the rules of the game, by losing as many games as possible. By reaching a negative rating the system could not recognise it and my user name would appear at the top of the rating list. This was only possible due to the nature of playing chess online and the motives I had in playing with the rules of the game. Unlike the original Landlord's game designed for socialistic goals, Monopoly is seen to create a capitalistic representation of our society. By playing the game and experiencing the inner structure of the Monopoly certain elements can be seen in promoting a capitalistic mode of production. The aesthetics of the game reaches a level that players can set free from the world we live and see themselves as the businessmen or women of tomorrow but one should remember that this experience is a novel part of the game; Monopoly images this unrealistic world in the players' minds by its structural design but also the engagement of players who create the atmosphere of the play. Can Monopoly with its rephrased name carry a message of political meaning? This depends on the personal views of the players who play the game. The very first time I have played the game I was in school with my friends who brought the game. I was only 14 and I did not know the meaning of the term Monopoly. My economics studies here in University of Westminster have helped me to better understand the dynamics of monopolistic situation. In Monopoly the pieces and the material play a crucial role in presenting a more meaningful game. Each piece is symbolising a unique set of thinking behind the Monopoly. Monopoly is gone through a process of redevelopment since its birth as the Landlord's game.

The Vietnam War game or a simulation of the situation was of great learning experience for me. During the play another student and I took the role of representing the United Kingdom as a player between the Free World and the Communist representatives. This role playing exercise were challenging since the number of players involved and the decision making processes among the players. To my surprise we were given a set of goals to achieve but the opposite situation had to be done by other players. For instance to obtain a certain victory points the UK needed to chair the Geneva peace conference, at the same time the Vietnamese team also were asked to chair the Geneva peace conference. This game created an atmosphere of interrelated and interacting situation. I have learned that good speech making of importance in situation like Vietnam War. Diplomacy played a crucial part during the exercise as at a certain point cooperative agreements reached between the two factions. During the play there remained a degree of rule breaking events that surprised our team. This was an important factor hence there remained new events that could change the results of the game. The Vietnam War exercise contained little material to play with; apart from the whiteboard and the name of the representative nations on a piece of paper there were not much to bring into the game. Of course, the very environment that play took place is an element

that can be counted as the materials of the game. The classroom, organisation from Mr. Russell King and guests during the play all helped to create a framework of play. The dynamic sets of rules during the play give each team more options to think in making decisions, and hence making it an enjoyable game to play with. The rules of the game were easy to follow but the rules could change as a result of some new events during the play. Vietnam War uses a set of techniques to create a game different to the previous games. The game is more dynamic: there is a physical movement during the play. Players walked around the classroom to negotiate with other players. For example in Monopoly players are sitting around a board and there is no physical movement around the game. The negotiation phase is the very core of Vietnam War; players choose to work with countries that are thought to be more friendly to form an alliance against the other groups. By raising the tension level during the game Mr. King helped to create a surprising game. For instance the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics team instructed to use a nuclear weapon during the war to obtain certain victory points; since the game ended with the division of Vietnam into two parts in Geneva peace conference this helped to raise the tension level and make the game more playful. Most of critical information in Vietnam War was hidden amongst the players. Access to the set of victory point conditions in each team members was initially hidden but players could share its content with other teams if they wished to do so. In contrast to Monopoly where most of the information is seen by all during the play Vietnam War simulated this hidden information in its design mechanism but also leaving its rule open by giving the players the option to share their information. Some information in the whiteboard was available to all players this was not hidden and everyone could see the progress of the game. By constantly checking the victory points on the board players who started well could be given better condition to work on winning the game. If this could be hidden from the players from the start and could be revealed in the end of the game, it could make the game more surprising by not knowing who is winning the game. The Vietnam game was also to a degree more complex than the games I have played on the course. The structure of the game was not organised to be in a certain order – conditions could be changed by some events so decision making were based on personal opinions and it was not fixed with some calculated plan from team members. The process of decision making required more time since in each team two players had to agree to some action plans. In a single player game, the process of decision making is quicker than multiple players in each team. The experience of playing games like Monopoly and Vietnam War helped me to better understand the two situations. Before knowing the evolving structure of the Monopoly I would have think it as an abstract game designed to be an afternoon entertainment for the family. But as I have learned the historical past of the Landlord's game play an important part in shaping the meaning of the play. Created originally to be a critique of capitalistic mode of production, is reframed with different symbols Monopoly does to certain degree creates an imaginary world that

one can exercise how to become a selfish rent-seeking zero-sum monopolist. Modelling the real world is complex but simple models or games in this case can help us explore simple elements, to better understand the world around us. The Vietnam War still is a good simulating model to analyse the conditions of the events during the actual war. It should be acknowledged that in real situation decision making is governed by a set of complex dynamics. The simulating model by Mr. King is an abstract role playing exercise combined by a set of theoretical assumption that it hoped to picture the real events of the Vietnamese past. Many lessons can be learned by simply building models of the situation. In playing the Monopoly game I have learned to see beyond the surface of the play itself. In an imaginary world of play you can fall into unconsciousness of not knowing your present moment in time and place. It is only after the game that you can realise what decisions you have taken and how your participation during the play shaped the very meaning of the game. When I was playing Monopoly but also the Vietnam War I was only thinking about winning the game. The games took me outside the present movement of time and space and this lose of consciousness is an important lesson that I have learned. Even in everyday life certain events may lead us or direct us to set of actions that undermine the set of values or principles that is considered to be important.

By playing Modern Society with other students the importance of law and order was emphasised greatly. This game reflects the current era of human civilisation that a set of law that is being passed through legislation by the representatives in the parliaments govern our everyday life. Modern Society is designed mainly by playing by cards. During the play I have felt the game could be improved if fewer cards were brought into the game. Constantly moving objects and checking the cards required considerable time of the game. The rules of the game in Modern Society is easy to learn but our team as failed to win the game, since we did not understood the rules clearly. The game does combine abstract events in each card and holding certain cards gives great degree of advantage to the player. In thinking about the modern way of living that we go through our everyday life, it is difficult to conceptualise it within a closed system of board, cards, rules and players. Our past history has shaped the current moment of life and the future of next generation with be influenced by the actions of the current generation. Still in many parts of the world traditional way of living is dressing the lives of millions. Modernity in this game is being introduced by advanced development in law and a set of codified rules. It may take different forms of meaning by looking at it from different perspectives, for example from the cultural changes, scientific developments and ideological thinking, etc. The process of decision making in Modern Society is easier than the two previous games. Players can choose to keep certain cards that can help them in different events by improving the degree of winning. It also contains certain hidden information and common information during the play but there is no trading or similar methodology

to encourage players in a more social interaction during the play. The game could be improved if it can introduce some form of social interaction during the play.

Liberty, the French Revolution game was designed around France's cultural customs. The colourful sets of pieces, board and cards presented a historical overview of the country's revolution. The set of rules in the game is simple to learn but players need to have a good strategy to win the elections in different parts of France. Player relations are also crucial in winning the game. Players can use a set of rules to eliminate each other's pieces during the play. This game can take long time to complete all the steps needed to finish the game. A shorter version of the game can be used for the introduction to help players learn the rules and the structure of the game. As I have learned by playing the game, too much concentration in a particular region can cost you the game. This game helps players to think ahead about the management of their resources, especially during an election campaign. The structure of the game mainly focused on the four factions during the revolution and their importance. It is a good starting point to view the French Revolution from this perspective; however, it is short of providing a meaningful play about the semantics of liberty. After first playing the game I wanted to play again and apply what I have learned into the game. It is this mechanism of the game that makes it an enjoyable game to play with again and again.

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