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VOLUME 11, NUMBER 3

Special Issue: Perspectives on RPG Studies from Latin-American Scholars

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Perspectives on RPG Studies by Latin American Scholars

During the last two decades, role-playing game studies have gained inertia as a field on their own. This is partly due to the increasing attention they have received in popular media such as literature, cinema, social media, and streaming services but also because they pose a complex and rich phenomenon attractive to several disciplinary fields, including art, design, humanities, social sciences, and STEM, that have recognized their potential as transformative tools in education, therapy, business, and other areas yet to be discovered. The year 2018 marks a tipping point with the publication of the book *Role-Playing Game Studies: Transmedia Foundations*, edited by Deterding and Zagal, as it served as a touchstone for the state-of-the-art of RPG Studies in the US, Canada, and Europe.

In the last decade, the field has also seen significant development in Latin America, where reflections on the practice and applications of RPGs in their many forms have not been studied in detail before but offer a novel lens of cultural diversity in the postcolonial world. This Special Issue aims to gather several perspectives on RPG Studies resulting from the collaborative efforts of Latin-American scholars, particularly those belonging to the Role-Playing Games Researchers Network (Red de Investigadores de Juegos de Rol or RIJR).¹ Founded in 2018, the RIJR is a non-profit academic network that gathers researchers from Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Spain, and the United States with three main objectives: fostering the development of RPG studies in Latin-America by producing academic resources (publications, seminars, conferences, human resources), encouraging international collaborations among researchers from the different fields from which the study of

¹ See <https://academiadelrol.org.mx/>.

RPGs can be tackled, and enriching the practice, design, and self-awareness of the people who play RPGs in Latin-American communities. Since 2016, the RIJR has hosted each year an international Colloquium in RPG studies and, in 2020, published the first book on RPG studies from Latin-America: *Lanzando los dados: primeras aproximaciones a los juegos de rol* (*Throwing the Dice: First Approaches to Role-Playing Games*) edited by M. Rangel Jiménez.

In the first article of this Special Issue, "Role Playing Games as an Educational Stimulation," Morales Carbajal and Chavez Lizama introduce and apply two RPG methods to increase learning motivation for high-school students in mathematics and social sciences courses in Mexico. Next, in "Exploring Cultural Narratives Through RPG Design: The 4th Bootcamp" Gallego Escobar and Henao Santa describe a bootcamp project in Colombia, where they explored how symbols create culture, promoting cultural product creation through RPG. Using Challenge-Based Learning, they study how students developed skills in game design through workshops, resulting in an RPG manual.

In the third article "Tabletop and Digital Rituals in *Dungeons and Dragons*," Rangel Jiménez, León, and Lipuma analyze the effect of digital spaces on ritual elements in *Dungeons and Dragons* during the pandemic era. Using two game groups observed through participant observation and interviews, they show that the remote digital mode has modified the form of the game, contributing to future anthropological investigations. In the fourth article, "Constitutive Factors of Mega-campaigns in TTRPGs: A Systematic Literature Review," León, Cabobianco, and Lipuma explore the emergent characteristics of Mega-Campaigns in TRPGs. Using a systematic literature review, they reveal key factors, illustrate them with examples from their experiences in Mexico, Argentina, and the US, and discuss their implications for creating rich and interconnected co-created Mythologies in TRPGs.

Finally, in the last article, "A Tri-Heuristic Ontological Approximation to Tabletop Role-Playing Games," Bastarrachea-Magnani, Meritano, Corrales, and León investigate a set of explanatory principles and propose three heuristics (performing a metaphor analysis, discussing essential elements, and exploring RPG's meta) for developing a discourse of the being of RPG phenomena and what happens when we play them from an ontological point of view.

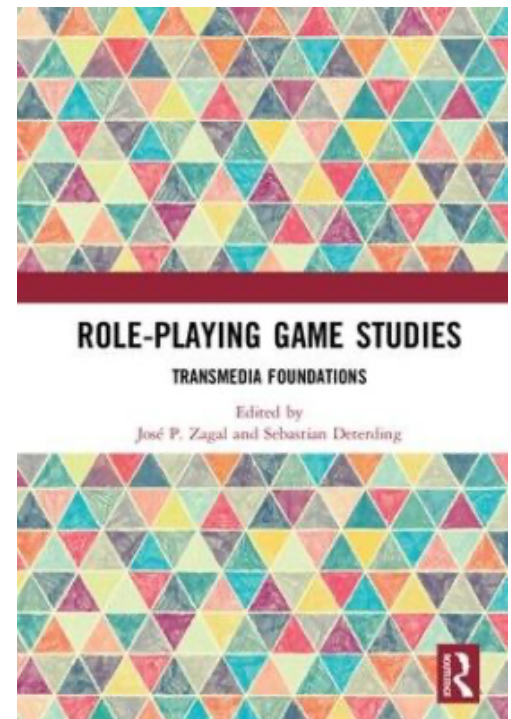


Figure 1: The cover of the first edition of *Role-Playing Game Studies*, edited by José Zagal and Sebastian Deterding.



Figure 2: Cover of *Lanzando los dados*, the first edited collection of Spanish-language scholarship on TTRPGs.

We believe these contributions will push forward the investigation of how RPGs are played in other parts of the world, unveiling common threads connecting RPG players, designers, and scholars worldwide and simultaneously disclosing the particularities and challenges each culture brings to gaming.

—Miguel A. Bastarrachea-Magnani, Special Issue Editor
October 14, 2024



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