

Two brothers: “Entdecker” and “The Settlers of Catan”

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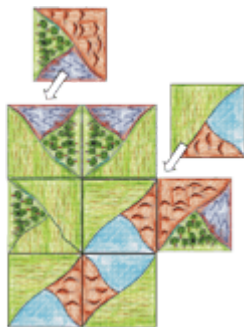
Early in my childhood, I was extremely fascinated by discovery stories.

Since I began designing board games, I felt the desire to experience the elements of discovery and development (settlement) in a game. I began to explore these themes with increasing intensity.

Finally, in the early Nineties I started out with the development of my first prototype. Most of the time, I get the best ideas for game design while creating the game material. In order to make the process of discovery attractive in a game, the development and experience of discovery should vary from game to game.



Encouraged with this basic insight I proceeded with the design of square landscape tiles. Each tile showed three out of six possible landscapes, namely sea, mountains, forest, hills, meadow and farmland. When placed adjacent to each other, the single landscape tiles formed a larger or smaller area.



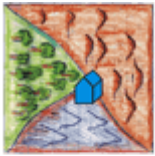
Initially, one landscape tile was placed in the middle of the table. Each player had five scouts. The first landscape tile served as a base from which scouts explored the territory. This was conducted by simply positioning a new tile next to an already placed one. As you can imagine, the ensuing overall landscape spread chaotically, if not uncontrollably. There were a plethora of gaps and holes.

Here and there, some overly ambitious scouts followed paths of discovery over the edge of the game table. If a player managed to assemble three scouts at the cross point between three landscape tiles, he or she could turn them into a settlement. The settlement generated resources according to the adjacent three landscape tiles. The gained resources from the adjacent landscape tiles allowed the creation of new scouts, who all ventured out with great enthusiasm to found new ones.

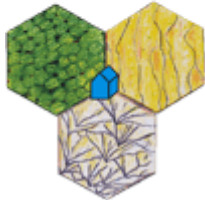


Again, some of these poor fellows went off the deep end—that is the table edge.

The goal was vested in establishing the majority in areas of equal landscapes, for instance, to establish the most settlements in the forest area. The concept was simple: The greater the area the more victory place points players received.



For some reason, I was not too happy with this initial concept. I felt like a cook, who had overloaded a meal with too many delicious ingredients. Up to that point I had only tested the game on my own, but I quickly realized that it was not yet seasoned.



After a few months I decided to separate the two elements “discovering” and “settling.” I started from scratch with the latter topic. In the new game settlements were always built on places between three landscape tiles.

I also substituted the square landscape tiles with hex-shaped tiles. The hex fields fulfilled the same functions as the squares in regard to founding settlements.



However, the advantage of the hexes over the squares was vested in the creation of equal distances for the placement of roads. After approximately one year of game development I had created the groundwork for the board game “The Settlers of Catan.”

Simultaneously, I continued to work on the “Entdecker.” Naturally, the main focus of this game is vested in discovery. Due to this circumstance, the difference As a result of this change, the new water/land tiles allowed the discovery of a different world of islands in each game. The goal and purpose of the discovery endeavors was to find islands with the greatest land mass, and to establish The bigger the discovered island, the more promising the rewards and victory points! the majority through founding units of settlement.



Despite the innovations, I still was not completely happy with the game. Everywhere on the board, players discovered islands and founded settlements, however, there was no real incentive to finish the discovery of an island. This circumstance significantly stifled the excitement and especially the flow of the game. Finally, I fixed the problem by implementing a simple but effective change. I limited the number of valuable units, available to the players, to one settlement and two bases. Under the new rules, players positioned their units on the islands and could only retrieve them when the islands were completed. Now, players

were given an incentive to units to finish the discovery of islands. After all, they needed to withdraw units from completed islands in order to venture out for the discovery of new islands. The game started to “live,” which made me extremely happy.

Entdecker was released in this first version in 1996. Now, in 2001, the game was re-released as “The new Entdeckers” at KOSMOS in Germany and MAYFAIR in the U.S. I used the change of companies to rework some of the game elements of the “Entdeckers.” First, I reduced the factor of luck by allowing players to better equip their expeditions, by paying the appropriate amount of money. Now, the chance of finding a fitting tile has increased enormously. Moreover, in the new game the joy of discovery is not limited to islands anymore, but extends to the inland of the islands. More specifically, players are now able to send expeditions of scouts into the mysterious jungles of the islands, hoping to find hidden treasures. This additional track of discovery allows players to garner more “discovery points.” Moreover, it also opens an additional strategic opportunity for the discovery of islands.



The above mentioned changes elevated Entdecker to a new level of gaming experience. Indeed, “Entecker” has moved up to the ranks of his older brother “CATAN,” who gives us an insight into the life of the Settlers before the discovery of Catan.



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