

Dealing respectfully with game ideas – our capital

An open letter from Reinhard Staupe

Since almost twenty years I invent games. I worked with dozens of companies very nicely and I have a nice contact with many people from different parts of the industry, and quite often it has become a friendship. The games industry is sort of a small clear family. We know each-other and we treat each-other respectfully. Most of the time...

Shortly after “Essen 2010” several people informed me that Asmodée respectively Blue Orange Games published a game called *Dobble* (respectively *Spot it* in the USA), which is, referring to the idea/concept/mechanics, the same like my *Kunterbunt*.

Kunterbunt was my very first published game and it's successfully on the market since 1995, among others at FX Schmid and Ravensburger, currently at Amigo, Gigamic (*Colori*, France) and *Playroom Entertainment* (Catch the Match, USA).

There are thousands of games and it's almost unavoidable, that parallel inventions or almost identical publications happen now and then. As long as a duplicity happens unintentionally, as long as there is an open communication about it and the will to find a constructive solution which respects the rights of the original inventor, it's no problem. But it's definitely not acceptable, if there is no desire for talks or just flimsy arguments, if there is a refuse to acknowledge the work of the original inventor.

Let's take a positive example beforehand, how dealing with already existing games and mechanisms should look like. In the rules of Bruno Faidutti's great game *Ohne Furcht und Adel* (*Citadels*) the publisher Hans im Glück explicitly thanks Marce-André Casasola-Merkle and Adlung-Spiele for giving the kind permission to use the dividing-element from the game *Verräter*. This means: They talked with each-other! Hans im Glück acknowledges the work of the original inventor! They worked together respectfully! That's the way it has to be! And compared to *Kunterbunt/Dobble* *Ohne Furcht und Adel* is lightyears away from *Verräter*!

To say this explicitly: I am only giving my very personal opinion. I am not trying to make a legal judgement in this case, and of course no final judgement of any copyright claims. Lawyers and judges is the last thing I have in mind. What I am talking about is loyalty to your colleagues and a professional attitude.

Good, successful, unique games are our capital. No-one can really have an interest in having identical or extremely similar games on the market, or that one is copying the other. It's basically no problem at all to take any game, to change it a little bit and add some slight variations. This is easily done within a few hours. But: This will not create a new game! It's indispensable to have a real portion of new creation, something which makes something really new out of something there already is.

Regardless of the fact that some of my other games are much more successful than *Kunterbunt*, I still consider it my best game ever. Idea and mechanic are unique. To me it's THE mechanism of my life. This is how it works:

On each board there are several symbols. No matter which two boards you take, there is always (!) exactly one symbol exactly the same on both boards, never more or none. Players have to find this identical image.

My very first exercise-prototype in 1993 had only five symbols, the prototype which I sent to FX Schmid had 20 symbols on each board. FX Schmid wanted less symbols, so I changed it to 15. Almost any other number of symbols and boards is basically possible without any problem (*Dobble* uses 50 boards and 8 symbols). In order to make the game challenging I decided to use 2-coloured-symbols. But no matter if the identical pairs are 2-coloured or “normal” symbols, if there are 15 boards or 60, if there are 8 symbols on the boards or 25 – it basically stays the same. The *Dobble*-cards with 8 symbols are included in the *Kunterbunt*-cards, it's exactly the same, it only looks different.

