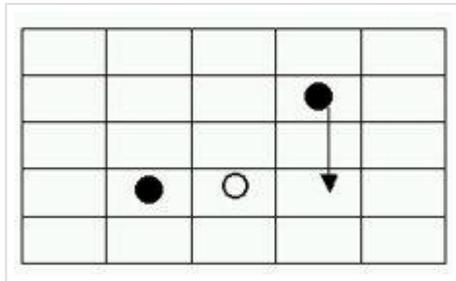


the wireless

MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY, RADIO, ONLINE MUSIC - AND STORIES FROM LIFE.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 30, 2005

The first open-source board game



I've been thinking a lot about open source applications recently. Well, this might be a bit of a lateral leap, but a few years ago, I invented a board game.

Nothing flash, no plastic moulded parts, no boxes of questions. I called it *Dugi* for reasons that elude me now, but this was the byline I thought up while anticipating my millions:

AS SIMPLE AS CHECKERS...
AS STRATEGIC AS CHESS

Well, the riches never arrived, but the game is still here. So - in the spirit of open source and [creative commons](#), here is the first open source board game. (Correction: [Cory Doctorow](#) reckons it probably isn't the 'first' open source board game. Chess is probably open source, if you think about it. Possibly the first under a CC licence then?)

Feel free to take it, use it, play with it, make suggestions for improvements and generally adapt, remix and pass it on.

RULES:

AIM: Capture your opponent's pieces by surrounding it on opposing

sides. When your opponent has only two pieces left, or cannot move on his/her turn, then you have won the game.

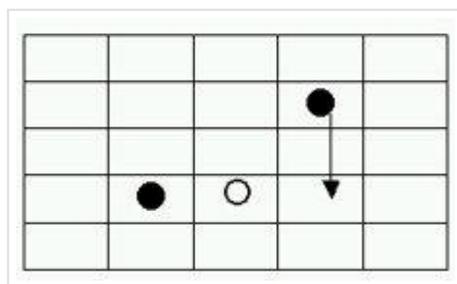
SETUP: The board is a circle consisting of 7 rings, divided into 24 segments. There is a circle in the centre called the 'dead zone'. There are 12 black counters and 12 white counters. Arrange these on the board on the outer spaces (one per space on the outer ring of the board), with the black pieces closest to the black player, and the white pieces closest to the white player.

PLAY: Players take turns moving one piece per turn. The pieces may be moved 'forward' (toward or away from the centre of the board) or 'sideways' (left or right around the ring). The pieces may be moved as far as the player wishes, but must not leave the board on the outside, enter the dead zone, move diagonally or 'jump' a piece in its way.

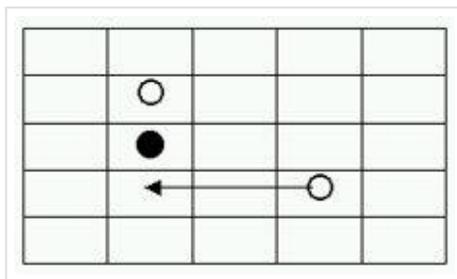
To capture a piece, you must move your piece so that it completes a 'surround', then remove the captured piece from the board.

My graphic design skills at short notice are slim to none, but imagine these spaces are on a circular board. The outer edge is towards the bottom, the centre circle is towards the top.

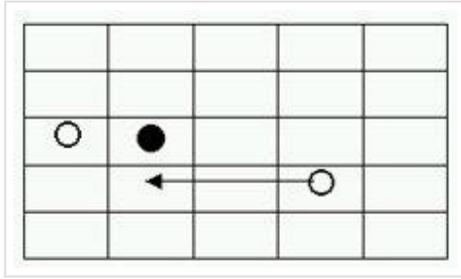
Obviously, if you continue around to the left, you end up back on the right. Hope that's reasonably clear...



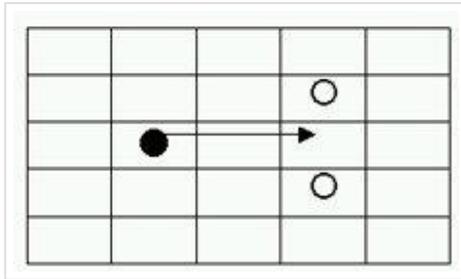
Black captures white



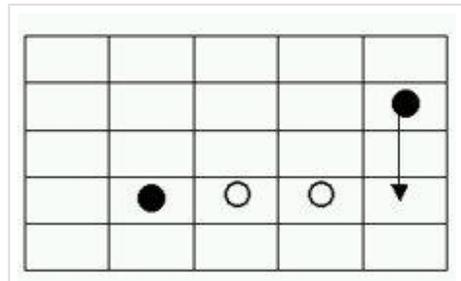
White captures black



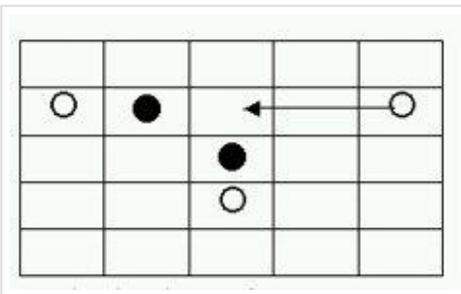
Black is *not captured*: capture only occurs when pieces surround on opposite sides.



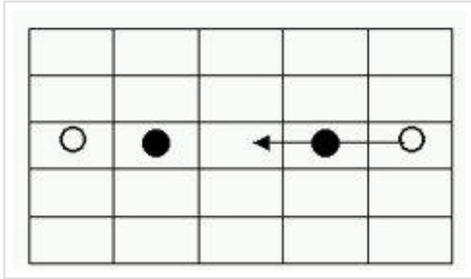
Black is *not captured*: White did not make the capture and so black remains safe, although it is between two white pieces.



White is *not captured*. A capture must consist of a single piece surrounded by two of the opponent's pieces.

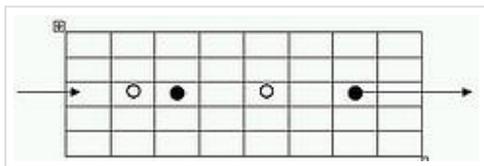


Both black pieces are captured. White has made two separate single captures in one move.

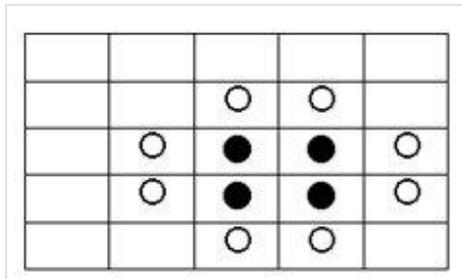


Illegal move: white may not jump or pass through another piece of either colour.

Note: As the board is circular, and the pieces may be moved as far as the player wishes, opponents can often be taken by surprise (assuming no other pieces stand in the path):



Black circles the board and ends up, around the ring, to the left of the white piece, capturing it.



Although black has four pieces remaining on the board, white has trapped the black player. Black cannot move on his/her turn. White wins.

And that's it. Make yourself a board (I went with 300mm x 300mm MDF and I used a big compass and some black marker pens. I stole the black and white counters from my game of Go - but later, I switched to garden pebbles. You can probably do better.

I'd love it if someone actually did a flash or shockwave style online version of it - but generally, the point of this is to just get it out there. I've run out of people to play it with.

As usual, the standard attribution, non-commercial Creative Commons licence applies.

=====

84. Ohio Players - Pleasure Westbound 1972

85. Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong - Ella and Louis Again Verve
1957

[39 comment(s)]

39 Comments:

Anonymous wrote:

Hi Bro'.

Can you post a pic of the board ?

Thanks...

8:36 AM

Anonymous wrote:

Um, if you think about it, the first 'open source' board game was probably backgammon. And if you want to look at one closer to Dugi, a strategic boardgame, then the oldest is most certainly Go/Baduk?WeiChi.

I applaud your creativity and resourcefulness. And of course, your support of open-source. But were I to devote time to remixing this, I would bend it towards a Go/Baduk/WeiChi interface -- for Go is much easier to learn (but not comprehensively say!), and yet is the most complex game around.

Be well,

Jason

8:55 AM

Anonymous wrote:

Aside from being circular and not being able to take

multiple pieces in the same row, this is extremely similar to Japanese hasami-shogi. Nice idea anyways.

<http://www.chessvariants.com/shogivariants.dir/hasami.html>

9:02 AM

Anonymous wrote:

go outside and tell ten people to draw " 7 rings, divided into 24 segments" and you'll get ten different boards. you really need a picture of the entire board if you want anyone to actually make this.

11:57 AM

Anonymous wrote:

The gameplay is also similar to the old scandinavian game named tafl. However this game is slightly different because one of the players has a special pawn named "king". This player wins by moving his "king" to the border, before it is captured by the other player.

<http://user.tninet.se/~jgd996c/hnefatafl/hnefatafl.html>

12:22 PM

Dubber wrote:

Ten different boards would not be a bad outcome. I'd be interested to see what other interpretations people came up with - but I take your point.

I'll sketch something, get it scanned, and put it up here a bit later on.

12:28 PM

Anonymous wrote:

Like this?

<http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v237/1516puzzle/pics/dugi.jpg>

12:34 PM

Anonymous wrote:

FYI, the rules of the game and the gameplay cannot be copyrighted, as they're a system for playing the game and are barred under 17 USC 102(b). Basically it's on the wrong side of the idea-expression dichotomy.

Only the box, board and pieces -- to the extent they're eligible, which I doubt these are -- are copyrightable, as would be the exact expression of the rules, but not the rules themselves. And of course, the board and pieces may be subject to the utility doctrine, making them difficult to protect, and the rules may be subject to the merger doctrine, likewise making them difficult to protect.

Typically, if you want to protect rights in a game, you need a copyright for the expression of the rules, the board art, box art, and pieces. Trademark the name and other distinctive elements. Patent -- if possible -- the rules and gameplay as a method for playing the game.

Patented games are fairly uncommon (IIRC there is a patent involved in playing Magic) and difficult to get since there's not that much that's novel and nonobvious in the gaming world, but that's what you'd really need. As it stands, if you invented it a few years ago, the window for patenting it may well have closed.

A copyright license doesn't matter much unless someone wants to use the precise language and such you posted here. And as noted, the merger doctrine may impair that since you cannot effectively control the rules by copyrighting an expression thereof, where the number of reasonable possible expressions is limited. Some expressions of game rules have been uncopyrightable before.

12:49 PM

Dubber wrote:

That's pretty much it - bang on. The only real difference is that I found the centre circle had to be much bigger to accommodate the fact that you need the counters to fit in the segments on the inner ring.

Try a circle with a 4cm radius in the centre, and rings of 2cm in width. It means your board is 36cm across, but you can be sure of making your stones fit every space that way. To divide into 24 equal segments, centre your protractor and measure 15 degree intervals. Of course, you can scale according to the size of your board.

And I coloured my centre circle in, just for fun.

1:31 PM

Anonymous wrote:

Hi,
I'm myself an amateur boardgame-inventor, and have some games in my drawers awaiting recognition :)
As for your game - the good old tafl was the one that came to mind first to me, too. Although there it's only one piece that must be caught, and the board is a square grid, it makes no real difference. I have a board game that has similar aim and rules, but different enough to call it a different game.

My views: The board is hard to draw correctly either on a screen or on paper/cardboard. Either the inner rings are going to be packed too close or the outer rings will have "squares" so long that the pieces just get too far from each other and that does not look good. This doesn't seem to be important, but with a board game, believe me, it is. The rules seem simple enough and the whole game seems good enough to become a really played one. No problem that there are old games with similar rules - yours are really so simple that it's impossible not to find quite a lot of ancient games with basically these rules - but it's not a problem at all. I like this game. If you're interested in board games - especially new ones, and/or you have other games in store, just drop me a message here:
borz458@yahoo.com. thanx.

Gabor Sperla
from Hungary

2:26 PM

Anonymous wrote:

I love the idea of a circular game, very nice! I'd like to see this game done on a stained cherry or oak board with a center circle large enough for two cup-holders! :)

3:52 PM

Dubber wrote:

Now you're talking! I think a circular oak coffee table with a game board on top, perhaps with a sunken bowl for the centre circle to either keep the pieces in - or for the supply of nibbles. There should definitely be cabinetry involved.

And then there's the party version with the shot glasses for counters, 12 filled with Kahlua, 12 filled with Advocaat - capture a piece and you drink it. That would level the playing field fairly quickly - the one who was better at strategic play would be impaired at a much earlier stage of the game!

4:02 PM

Anonymous wrote:

<http://www.piecepack.org/> :)

6:23 PM

Anonymous wrote:

Do you really need a weird circular board? How about a square one with toroidal topology. ie. Pieces wrap round from top to bottom, or from left to right - John Carter

6:29 PM

Anonymous wrote:

Interesting idea, the circular board.

I think the previous comment that the inner track is so much more cramped than the outer is reasonable.

Possibly an athletic track shape (ie 2 curves and 2 straight edges) would help solve the problem? You could space the grid on the curve pretty wide and have the bulk of the grid (i.e. along the straight sides) as rectangles. The concept that pieces move in a circular motion would remain intact.

Just a thought.

Spike

6:30 PM

Tom wrote:

For more Public Domain and CCLd games check out the Countermoves Zine which has been putting out semi regular issues packed with games for a few years.
<http://www.countermoves.blogspot.com/>

Enjoy and keep on creating games.

-tomhiggins

6:46 PM

Dubber wrote:

I've actually made a figure of 8 board which was really challenging... but it was enormous - and, after a while, quite boring.

6:51 PM

Anonymous wrote:

Hey,

Very cool idea, but I thought you should know that, as far as I understand copyright law, you cannot copyright a board game. This is because copyrights protect "expressions" in a fixed, tangible form; it cannot protect ideas.

"Copyright shelters only fixed, original and creative expression, not the ideas or facts upon which the expression is based. For example, copyright may protect a particular song, novel or computer game about a romance in space, but it cannot protect the underlying idea of having a love affair among the stars."

http://fairuse.stanford.edu/Copyright_and_Fair_Use_Overview/chapter0/0-a.html

You may however be able to patent the game. I don't know enough about patents to tell you if your game would qualify for one. What you've released under the CC license is not the game itself, but rather the rules/diagrams for the game that you've written.

Which is still awesome!

Just thought you should know the difference though.

Good luck in future projects!

- Steve

6:56 PM

Anonymous wrote:

I love homegrown games. I've tried my hand at them, but my efforts always seem to follow this exponential curve of complications, and I have trouble achieving this kind of simplicity of play that you have arrived at.

As an example of my talent for complication, I am wondering if your game wouldn't be better served with a hex board. It would give your men three degrees of movement instead of two. Your board could still have the dead space in the middle, and need over-all less spaces for the same number of men (and for initial placement 'balance' you might want an odd number of men).

Some or all of the opposing sides could be considered connected for the wrap-around. I can think of an easy way to facilitate this, but it's hard to explain. Add an additional ring of hexes along the outside of the board, skipping the corner hexes, and number each pair of opposing hexes the same. A piece moving into one of the numbered hexes would 'teleport' to its opposite, and still be moving in the same direction. Pieces could not come to rest in the teleport hexes. A couple of diagrams would make this much clearer, and (in my opinion) would not be excessively additionally complicated to add on.

I think there might still be some flaws in this idea, but on the other hand I'm wondering if it wouldn't make for a faster game (this arrangement may make it easier to capture pieces still in their starting positions).

8:57 PM

Anonymous wrote:

Or you could have a large, see-through, magnetic globe and all the 'men' are magnets. And that way they could move around the outside.

Ooh, it could even hover by magnetic levitation. Like this:

<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Shire/3075/globe.html>

Yay. I win. I AM the queen of good ideas.

9:28 PM

tromik wrote:

<http://www.cheapass.com/free/index.html>

Cheapass Games has created a dozen or so games that are now free. Most are card and dice games though, though Coin Fight is good.

10:32 PM

Anonymous wrote:

About the hex idea: i think the most respectable idea behind this game is its simplicity of the possible movements, therefore the hex-solution would take away some of the simplicity - and thus the fun of it. Maybe if there was an "wexpert-variation" or something like that, it would be great with hexes.

As for the uneven layout of the fields in the middle and in the perimeter, my solution to that problem, when i was developing my chess-version to a rather similar board layout, was, that instead of the brickly fields i applied circular ones, ever bigger toward the outer rings. Looked nice. Ill link in a pic if ill have the time to make a pic and upload it.

Anyone interested in home developed board and card games are welcome at this address:
borz458@yahoo.com

Gabaor Sperla
from Hungary

10:34 PM

Anonymous wrote:

Clarification:
Is this what the board game is supposed to look like?

<http://ad.hominem.org/downloads/misc/dugi.gif>

Trent
ad.hominem.org

8:57 PM

Dubber wrote:

Almost...

A larger centre circle works better, and there should be one more ring of 'squares' around the outside. At least, that was how I did it.

11:15 PM

Anonymous wrote:

now, here's that board-design I mentioned earlier, with the circular fields instead of the rectangular ones:

<http://img.tar.hu/groundzer0/size2/10723499.jpg?1107387719&cef581d091ca865fee2d4723e47d1b0e>

This is only a sketch, eye measure, just to illustrate the idea.

Gabor Sperla
Hungary

11:39 PM

Anonymous wrote:

I don't know if i'm allowed to apply html-tags ion the comment, but let's try to make it a link of [the board...](#)

Gabor Sperla
Hungary

11:42 PM

Anonymous wrote:

I love the concept just as Andrew has presented it! In fact, inspired by the shape, I downloaded a NASA photo of the sun and used that as the background for my take on the "infinite" 24x7 board ... the sun shines 24/7, after all.

Here's a low rez shot:

<http://www.quip.net/dugi-board.jpg>

I'm having it printed and plan to decoupage the print to a 10x10 board for my own use. Yes, the inner-most "squares" are a bit small, but not unplayably so.

Thanks for sharing the game, Andrew!

David

stiller (at) quip (dot) net

4:50 PM

Anonymous wrote:

Great design, David!!!

Mine can't be displayed it seems...

Gabor Sperla
from Hungary

10:35 PM

Anonymous wrote:

Here's my board design again, with the circular fields:

First, the [more handy size](#), but too low res.

Then the [bigger](#), but nicer res one.

Gabor

10:43 PM

Anonymous wrote:

Oops, my mistake. I managed to link in the same pic twice... So, [here](#) is the bigger pic.

Sorry.

Gabor

10:48 PM

Anonymous wrote:

Hi Dubber. Nice idea but I'm puzzled about the absence of a correct diagram of the game board on the blog.

You actually posted rectangular sections, but after several minutes of reading I'm learning that the board is actually circular. In the time it has taken you to re-describe the board to all your visitors you could have whipped out an official diagram and put all speculations to rest. I know the board described verbally, but also you have pictures that seem technically incorrect and imply that the board is rectangular.

4:14 PM

Aaron wrote:

I have implemented an asynchronous version of this game on my free gaming website <http://games.daltons.ca>. I have made it possible to play with 2, 3, or 4 players. I'm interested in any feedback and look forward to some games!

4:30 AM

Aaron wrote:

I also wanted to say that after playing a few rounds (at <http://games.daltons.ca>) we found the endgame to be problematic as there is simply too much mobility. We implemented, therefore, a variant we call "Blackout." When a piece is captured, the cell it occupied becomes impassable for the rest of the game. This ensures that there are plenty of obstacles in the endgame to keep things interesting. Any other variant ideas out there?

FYI, Super Duper Games (<http://games.daltons.ca>) is a 100% free, no hassle, no advertising, hobbyist-run website. Feel free to come check it out.

Aaron

1:09 PM

Aaron wrote:

After further experimentation, we decided that the opening can be somewhat static. There's no real incentive to go outside of your blockaded zone. We

have implemented some alternate starting layouts as a result. Currently, 2-player games lay out the 12 pieces in alternating 4-piece blocks. For 3-4 players, the pieces alternate one-for-one.

9:35 PM

Aaron wrote:

At Super Duper Games (<http://games.daltons.ca>) we have done some further tweaking of the game. We have introduced, first of all, a 'Center Line' variant where the pieces start on the middle row instead of the outermost row. The second variant, 'Entrapment,' implies 'Center Line' and 'Blackout' (described earlier). In this variant, any pieces that are completely boxed in at the end of a turn are captured (even if against a blacked-out piece or board edge). This means that you must be careful to not capture your own pieces!

The base game is neat for the circular board and simple movement rules, but it really requires variants to work well. Come try it out!

3:23 PM

Bèr Kessels wrote:

At [remixcommons](#) I publisehed a printable version of this game. Watch it get remixed there.

10:03 PM

Anonymous wrote:

Yep, GO is the game... very similar to your idea. Probably the oldest surviving board game in the world.

It is beautiful in it's simplicity and yet because of this it is infintely complex.

<http://senseis.xmp.net/?GoBoard>

Very cool. There are quite a few open-source and freeware builds of this classic game out there for every

OS which utilise a standardised language to allow people from around the world to play each other.

Unlike with chess, so far they've not been able to build a computer capable of beating even an 8 year-old at Go.

Get yourself a Goban and get Go-ing! ;)

10:13 PM

Tito Maury wrote:

I have a [embedded single board computer site/blog](#). It pretty much covers The first open-source board game related stuff.

Come and check it out if you get time :-)

5:26 PM

Crazy Dan wrote:

Tis the season! I was searching the web and found your entry The first open-source board game I really like your site and found it worth time reading through the post. I am looking to publish a comprehensive site ranges many types of historical needlework. All those interested in this area will find this article of interest as it is written from many perspective. Please feel free to take a look at my blog at [single board computers](#) and add any thing your want.

9:37 PM

POST A COMMENT



ABOUT THE AUTHOR :



Andrew Dubber is a researcher, lecturer and consultant in online music, radio, new technology and media.

Originally from the city of Auckland, New Zealand, Dubber is now based at UCE Birmingham, UK.

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