RAJIEEN

An Interdisciplinary Engagement Design to Revive and Sustain

The Sense of Belonging.

By

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Abstract

"راجعين" or *"Rajieen"* is an interdisciplinary engagement design thesis project focused on

preserving Palestinian cultural heritage. Originating from my personal experience as a

Jordanian/Palestinian immigrant in Toronto, the project addresses the gap between diasporic

communities and their indigenous culture and language. Through primary methods such as

interviews, workshops, and surveys, combined with secondary research, *Rajieen* explores the

experiences of Palestinian immigrants and their descendants. Drawing on theories of belonging

and design methodologies, including co-creation, symbolism, and narrative space, the project

culminates in an innovative board game at the heart of an interactive exhibition space that

narrates the story of the project. The interdisciplinary approach not only aims to revive and

sustain Palestinian cultural heritage but also to foster a deep sense of cultural belonging among

immigrant communities. It is a reminder to celebrate the rich culture and profound land of

Palestine, which no matter what it goes through, will forever be so fertile and continue to give,

inspire, and share its rich culture, stories, and positivity to its people and all the people around

the world.

Keywords: Sense of belonging, cultural heritage, graphic design, board game design, narrative

space, storytelling, exhibition design, immersive experience, multisensory experience,

engagement design, co-design, symbolism, semiotics, typography, Autoethnography,

immigration, Palestine, diaspora, Arabic, interdisciplinary.

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Dedication

To my beloved children, Mahmoud, Malek, and Masa,

To the pursuit of authenticity,

And to all who seek to unearth the deep roots of their being,

To the land that cradles our soul,

And the spirits of those who tread its soil,

To Palestine,

And to the resilient hearts of its people,

This thesis stands as a testament to our shared journey of discovery,

A tribute to where we belong,

And the essence of our collective truth

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Introduction

Rajieen is inspired by the influential role of culture and language in shaping an

individual's identity and sense of belonging[1]. In this endeavor, my thesis asks; how does the

interdisciplinary design approach, particularly through game design and play, serve as a catalyst

for reconnecting the Palestinian community in the diaspora, mainly in Toronto, with their roots?

Through this study, I explore how the sense of identity and belonging is shaped, with a

special focus on the Arab Palestinian[2] immigrants and their descendants living in the diaspora,[3]

especially in Toronto. The research journey was initiated based on my personal experience, and

my observations of the Arab immigrants, particularly Palestinians, who struggle to sustain their

native Arabic language and gradually disconnect with the practice of their cultural activities[4]

over time. The primary rationale for this study stems from concerns about the potential

implications of this disconnection for future generations, including my children. To learn about

this pressing issue and respond to it, it is key to investigate the disconnection problem and its

contributing factors as the foundation of the project.

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[1] A sense of belonging is "the subjective feeling of deep connection with social groups, physical places, and individual and collective experiences – a fundamental human need that predicts numerous mental, physical, social, economic, and behavioural outcomes." (Allen et al., 2021). For example, when someone feels a sense of belonging towards a country, they might join in on things that reflect this belonging such as celebrating national holidays, or going to events that honour this country's past, along with celebrating its symbols, songs, and the things that make it unique, like special ceremonies, traditional dances, or sharing meals with others from its cuisine. Also, this sense of belonging can be extended to foster strong connection with people who share similar practices and traditions.

[2] Palestinians are the indigenous people who either lived in, or originated from, historical Palestine, which is an Arab Country located in the Middle East, between the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the River of Jordan.

[3] Diaspora: The movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland. (Merriam Webster, n.d.)

[4] Cultural activities in form of the traditions passed down through generations, emphasizing appreciation for the land, through stories of fertile soil and resilient crops like olives, grapes, and oranges and their agricultural practices, as well as culinary traditions, featuring dishes like Zaatar and Maaloubeh. In addition to the strong familial bonds that were reinforced through regular gatherings, and the Palestinian artifacts such as ceramics, Palestinian Embroidery fabrics and intricately carved olive wood that were used to decorate the houses, as well as the traditional rituals during special occasions, including Eid, Ramadan, weddings, and funerals. All these serve as constant reminders of the rich cultural heritage, ancestral roots, and identity.

In this exploration, I am curious to understand how immigrants' process of adapting to a new culture and language in a multicultural city like Toronto, affects their cultural values and sense of belonging. To approach this inquiry I rely on a combination of primary and secondary research methods, starting with an extensive literature review to form the foundation of the investigation. This pivotal secondary research informs the plans, strategies, and contents to embark on the primary research involving participants in interviews, workshops, and surveys. I find this method of involving participants in primary research crucial to the success of the investigation, as it unpacks the untold stories, particular experiences, unique perspectives, and activities of Palestinian immigrants and their descendants who have lived through the experience of immigration. The gathered data is analyzed, synthesized, and translated into multi-design experiences and deliverables. The research process in *Rajieen's* study engages various methodologies ascending from interior design[5], graphic design[6], and game design[7]. These approaches include co-design[8], symbolism[9], and narrative space [10] and are explored to inform the content, structure, and components of the final design deliverables.

This interdisciplinary approach enables me to create a cultural, educational, and fun board game design alongside a corresponding exhibition space that narrates the story of *Rajieen* and reflects the game design, concept, and components. Through these approaches, I aim to help immigrants in the diaspora, particularly Palestinians, reconnect with their cultural heritage, and

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[5] As is space planning, narrative space design, immersive experience, interactive design, light, materials, textures and product design.

[6] As in typography, colours, symbolism, motifs, information design and brochures design.

[7] As in game logic, concept, structure, mechanism, gameplay, design, components, theme, aesthetics, game testing and prototypes.

[8] Co-design is an approach to design that involves stakeholders, end users, or community members in the creative process in making the design (Sanders & Stappers, 2013).

[9] Symbolism refers to the use of symbols, images, or objects to represent abstract ideas, concepts, or themes, or communicate certain messages (Levanier, 2021)

[10] Narrative Space refers to the environment or setting in which a story takes place. The concept consists of not only physical location and items, but also the cultural, social, and emotional contexts that shape the story (Reinhardt & Teufel, 2010).

cultivate a sense of belonging –to their homeland, its people, and its culture. Additionally, I seek to contribute to the preservation of Palestinian culture and identity in a diverse and dominant English-speaking milieu.

Rajieen project promotes the optimistic, positive side of the country of Palestine – Palestine the rich culture, fertile land, and loveable people who, no matter how far or close they are to their homeland, carry Palestine in their hearts and memories.

The upcoming sections of this paper illustrate the journey of creating *Rajieen*. It begins with laying out the project's motivation, inquiries, and objectives. This is followed by a thorough explanation of the main methodologies that guided the exploration and creation process. Next, the literature review section presents the theoretical framework grounding the project. Subsequently, in the methods and approaches section, I delve into the analysis and synthesis of the various methods utilized to create the board game and exhibition space. The final research outcome, *Rajieen* the board game and interactive exhibition space at Ignite Gallery, OCADU, is detailed in the subsequent section. Lastly, the conclusion offers a deep analysis of the entire process, including future plans, implications, and research limitations.

The Impetus behind the Research

Canada has a long history of immigration, welcoming hundreds of thousands of immigrants each year. Immigrants come from various countries, representing diverse cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Arabs constitute one of the largest non-European ethnic groups in Canada, making up almost 2% of the population, and their numbers are growing faster than the overall population (Statistics Canada, 2007; 2022c). This is unsurprising considering the altered structure and circumstances influencing the

contemporary world, characterized by globalization, conflicts, increased displacements, and

heightened impacts of power dynamics.

As a Canadian with Palestinian and Jordanian ethnicity who spent her entire life in

Kuwait until relocating to Toronto, Canada in 2019, I couldn't help but notice the growing

disconnection among people here from their native language and culture. It's disheartening to see

families no longer speaking the Arabic language and witnessing the gradual disappearance of

cultural practices like Eid festivals, Ramadan celebrations, and other social and religious

gatherings from their lives. I realized that instilling these practices in my kids' lives in Toronto

is becoming increasingly challenging due to the growing forces of diversity and multiculturalism

in our evolving world and community. According to Bhugra and Becker (2005), immigrants

feeling isolated from their culture and unaccepted by the majority culture may experience

rejection, alienation, and poor self-esteem (Bhugra and Becker, 2005). To avoid such negative

emotions immigrants often strive to blend in with the rest of society. However, gaining

acceptance by the majority culture often requires assimilation, resulting in the loss of one's

distinct cultural identity. This not only raised concerns about the potential loss of the Arabic

language for my kids and future generations but also about the extinction of our cultural heritage

and identity, and that is what fueled the inception of the research project.

Research Questions and Objectives

My thesis will explore how design, through its multiple disciplines – graphic design, interior design, and game design – can function as a channel to reconnect people with Palestinian ethnicity living away from their homeland, with their land, ancestral lineage, traditions, and cultural heritage. This heritage includes tangible elements like Palestinian landscapes, geography, archival materials, artifacts, artworks, poems, and books, and intangible assets such as folklore, language, music, and traditions.

As I integrate these design disciplines, I aspire to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Palestinian culture, thereby strengthening the participants' sense of belonging and collective identity, and aiding in preserving this culture.

In *Rajieen*, my aim is not only to connect participants with Palestinian ethnicity to their land and culture, but also to involve participants from diverse ethnicities, backgrounds, and ages (with specific emphasis on individuals aged 12 to 25), and engage them in an immersive experience designed to educate participants on the sovereignty of Palestine, symbolism of the Indigenous peoples, and the legacy of traditional practices passed to the future generations of Palestinian culture bearers. Furthermore, through *Rajieen* I aspire to contribute to the body of knowledge in the design disciplines and other disciplines, inspire scholars with my research methodologies, the shared information and analyses that revolve around premises on preserving and sustaining a cultural identity.

Research Methodologies

In addressing *Rajieen's* research inquiries, I combine both primary and secondary research to examine the disconnection phenomenon, facilitate the development of design strategies, and create prospects to help deal with the issue.

The secondary research encompasses thorough literature materials, including books, articles, and journals to unleash, understand, and learn about how precedents define concepts and theories related to the thematic approach of this study, such as the concept of belonging, and cultural heritage to name a few, to gather various methodologies and look into what the multi-design discipline can offer. Followed by primary research that is realized through interviews, workshops, and surveys, to examine the nature of Palestinian immigrants' experiences with the intangible and tangible ethnical connections to their homeland. The thesis, through the explorations of these research approaches, aspires to bring new dimensions in defining the concept of belonging.

This multidisciplinary design approach aims to create an experiential engagement that fully immerses participants while visually expressing Palestinian sovereignty. To achieve this, a trivia board game design is created, enabling users to interact with Palestine, as well as experience and learn about its landscapes, geography, and Palestinians' archive materials, artifacts, artworks, heirlooms, poems, food, folklore, language, music, and traditions. The game practice aims to revive and sustain these elements of cultural heritage, through educating participants about these shared knowledge and appreciating their values.

The Trivia board game design is a prototype and the seed of a game product that I can hopefully execute in the future. However, for the purpose of this study, and to engage the audience with this trivia game and learn about its concept, structure, design and components, the

board game is to be installed in an exhibition space that is also transformed into a narrative space

to exhibit the project story and reinforce the experience of belonging.

Three methodologies funnel the research and the design processes of the trivia board

game and the exhibition: Autoethnography, Human-Centered Design: Co-Design; and

Symbolism.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography is one of the main approaches employed to complete this research

project. "Autoethnography is a research method that uses personal experience ("auto") to

describe and interpret ("graphy") cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices ("ethno")"

(Adams, Ellis, Jones, 2017, p.1). In my thesis I refer to this method as a form of self-reflective

writing that delves into my personal experiences and creates connections between my

autobiographical narratives and broader cultural, political, and social contexts, thereby exploring

their deeper meanings and implications.

Following this process, I will analyze my experiences, revisit memories and ancestors'

stories, combine the outcomes with the knowledge researched, and reflect it in the final design of

this project as a means of preserving it.

Human-Centered Design: Co-Design

A sense of belonging is a fundamental human need that predicts numerous psychological,

physical, social, and behavioral outcomes (Davis, 2011). In alignment with my research goal to

nurture the experience of belonging among Palestinians living away from their homeland, I

believe the adoption of human-centered approaches is essential to capture the rigorous stories,

experiences, and pressing needs of Palestinians to connect and reconnect with their culture. It

aids the process of defining and strategizing the concept of belonging and creates the design
framework to trigger this concept in the design deliverables.

Human-centered design is "the process of ensuring that people's needs, desires, and
capabilities are met, with the resulting product being understandable and usable, and that the
experience of use is positive and enjoyable" (Norman, 2013, p. 219). It is an effective design
process that addresses a diverse set of constraints and considerations, regarding factors such as
form and shape, efficiency and reliability, understandability and usability, aesthetic appeal, and
user satisfaction in real-world applications (Norman, 2013). One of the human-centered design
approaches is co-design. Sanders & Stappers (2013) portray co-design as a means to foster direct
communication between designers and non-designers. In such cases, non-designers transform
into partners sharing their knowledge and expertise, thereby enriching the design process and
facilitating the methodology of the project. This collaborative knowledge integration results in
the creation of end products that respond to the needs and desires of non-designers.

In the *Rajieen* study, I experiment with this co-design approach, through the involvement
of participants in the creative journey of the project through interviews, surveys, and workshops.
This decision is rooted in the belief that this approach will enhance the final product, making it
more functional and better designed.

Symbolism

Symbolism, described by Levanier (2021) as "the use of written marks, shapes, images
and/or physical objects that have meaning assigned to them," holds a crucial position in graphic
design. It functions as a tool through which meaning is conveyed visually. Understanding the
dynamics of symbolism and its application not only helps reveal the complexity of visual

communication but also clarifies how individuals perceive and interpret meaning from their

environment. (Levanier, 2021).

Exploring the world of symbolism within graphic design leads to the domain of semiotics

– a discipline that delves into signs, symbols, and their meanings. As David Crow explains in

Visible Signs; symbolism plays a key role within semiotics, enabling the visual exchange of

information and ideas. In this text, Crow further illustrates how symbols serve as a universal

language, transcending linguistic barriers to convey concepts, messages, and emotions through

visual communication (Crow, 2003).

Similarly, Sean Hall in *This Means This, This Means That* delves into the implications of

symbols and their role in shaping our perception of the world. Hall demonstrates that these

symbols are not merely arbitrary representations, rather, they carry deep cultural significance and

connotative power. For example, he contrasts the explicit meaning of symbols with their implicit

connotations; such as a stop sign linguistically signifies stopping, which conveys a sense of

danger. Additionally, Hall examines the relationship between symbols and culture. For example,

he discusses how a symbol like a rat may symbolize fortune and prosperity in certain regions of

China, while a gold ring may represent marriage for some Westerners. Through these

illustrations and others, Hall explains how symbols communicate complex ideas and contribute

to our collective understanding of reality and perceptions that may vary between different

societies, cultures, and individuals. (Hall, 2007)

In realizing my research objectives, I intend to embed principles of symbolism and

semiotics in the creation of icons, symbols, and color connotations in every aspect of the thesis

design deliverables. The visual outcomes symbolize the various fabrics of Palestinians' culture

and identity that I defined earlier.

Secondary Research: Literature Review

Prior to delving into the primary research stage, and before getting the creation of the project started, comprehensive analyses are conducted on existing models and concepts on framing the issue related to identity and culture and defining the concept of belonging. These explorations aim to establish theoretical frameworks that inform the approaches on how to trigger the sense of belonging in the formation of the main project deliverables, i.e., the trivia board game and the exhibition.

Framing the Problem

In the exploration of ethnic identity and culture within contemporary issues, the insights provided by post-colonial and decolonial literature are always key to unraveling the complexity surrounding the construction of identity and culture, offering a perspective that is invaluable in the analysis of the Western-centric and oppressive system of knowledge production, and the power dynamics that influence these phenomena. Throughout this exploration, the theorist who emerges prominently when examining these concepts of identity, culture, and belonging, particularly within the Palestinian context, is Edward Said, The Palestinian American intellectual, theorist, and cultural critic. In *Orientalism* (1978) Said argues that:

> Indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. There is in addition the hegemony[11] of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness, usually overriding the possibility that a

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[11] Hegemony: Preponderant influence or authority over others: Domination/ The social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group. (Merriam Webster, n.d.)

more independent, or more skeptical, thinker might have had different views on the

matter. In a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible

positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible

relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand." (p. 7)

Said touches upon the impact of Orientalist discourse on shaping the identity and sense of

belonging of the people from the "Orient" or the East, a discourse that is shaped by the colonial

Western "lenses through which the Orient is experienced, and they shape language, perception,

and forms of encounter between the east and west"(p. 58). Said's conceptualization of the

"Other" and the concept of "Orientalism" highlight the traditions of classification and hierarchy,

both in opposition to and within the Western societal framework. These depictions

predominantly rely on contrasts and distinctions, shedding light on how colonialism persists as a

mechanism for marginalization, reinforcing Western dominance over the perceived belated East

(Orientalism, 1978.).

Aligning with Said's assertions, I agree that the Western portrayal and categorization of

the East and West hold significant influence. The consistent themes embedded within this

portrayal undoubtedly shape perceptions, social practices, and cultural identities, impacting the

sense of belonging for individuals from the East. However, it's crucial to contextualize this

notion within the immigrant Palestinian community residing in Toronto. Despite Toronto being

part of the Western world, it operates under a distinct approach. Canada, known for its high

diversity rate, implemented a supportive system in 1971 to foster the maintenance and

development of cultural communities, as well as promote intercultural contact while reducing

barriers to participation (Berry, 2013). Here, although Western dominance persists, individuals

are encouraged to embrace their cultural belongings. Consequently, the discourse of *Orientalism*

in this context, in my opinion, may be somewhat moderate compared to other areas within the

Western world.

In this scenario, I found the work of Anzaldúa *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), more in

line with the provisions of my project. Anzaldúa examines the challenges faced by individuals

who navigate multiple cultural contexts and how these experiences shape their sense of

belonging and cultural identity. Anzaldúa explains this process:

> Like all people, we perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates. Like
>
> others having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, often opposing
>
> messages. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incomparable frames
>
> of reference causes un choque, a cultural collision. (p. 78).

Anzaldúa proposes a new concept in this context, "Nepantla" – a concept she uses to

describe how Indigenous peoples who were conquered created their own "in-between" culture.

Through "Nepantla", these people live in a world of both cultures, offering a limited, but real

sense of resistance, since at least part of their own culture was kept (Anzaldúa, 2002). In my

investigation, I discovered that the concept of "Nepantla" deeply resonates with the struggles

experienced by Palestinian immigrants trying to adapt to life in Toronto, as they navigate the

balance of integrating into their new environment while simultaneously preserving their ethnic

culture.

Anzaldúa's insights align with theories of acculturation[12] provided by John W. Berry. In

his work, *Immigration, acculturation, and Adaptation* (1997), Berry proposes an acculturation

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[12] Acculturation: A process by which individuals or groups adapt to a new culture or environment. It involves learning and adopting new behaviours, customs, and values while also retaining aspects of one's original culture. (Cassar, 2023)

model that outlines four strategies that individuals may adopt when adjusting to a new culture:

assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Assimilation involves adopting the

host culture while abandoning the heritage culture, while separation involves rejecting the host

culture while maintaining the heritage culture. Integration, or biculturalism, entails adapting to

the host culture while retaining elements of the heritage culture, while marginalization involves

rejecting both cultures (Berry, 1997). This model is essential for understanding the development

of ethnic identities, particularly among diasporic individuals. However, while the model outlines

distinct strategies, it may oversimplify the complex processes through which individuals balance

their cultural identities, which is a main factor of the disconnection issue examined in *Rajieen's*

study. Hence, *Rajieen* focuses primarily on assimilation, exploring how immigrants may

experience the loss of certain aspects of their cultural background while shaping their new

cultural identity in the host country. I believe that building a proper understanding of

assimilation can inform the creation of provisions aimed at supporting immigrants in maintaining

their cultural identity while facilitating their integration into the host society.

Identifying Belonging

       It all started with a question – "where are you from?" A question that my next-door

neighbor asked me on our first day in our new house in Canada. Over three years have passed

since then, yet each time I'm asked, I still grapple with a sense of puzzlement. As a person with

Canadian nationality and Palestinian and Jordanian ethnicity, born and raised in Kuwait, the

complexity of such questions has become apparent. "Where am I really from?" and "To what do

I truly belong?" These questions unfold into a narrative of my life, revealing that I am from

multiple places, and each holds a unique sense of belonging for me.

But, what is belonging? The concept of belonging has always been a crucial section in the realms of anthropology, humanities, and social sciences, for the significant role it plays in understanding the complex relationship between culture, identity, and individual life (Davis, 2011). When considering belonging, I reflect on the diverse ways a person can form connections and attachments to various things, including relationships with individuals, communities, religions, cultures, countries, and numerous other factors that contribute to one's sense of belonging. Baumeister & Leary (1995) have spoken of the feeling of Belonging as "an interpersonal connection that arises from an individual's need to form intimate and secure bonds, fostering feelings of safety, care, and affection" (p. 499).

How can individuals experience that sense of belonging? How can these concepts and definitions discussed above, be translated into tangible praxes? How can we design spaces and objects that cultivate a sense of belonging within participants? To address these inquiries, a deeper exploration of the tangible aspects of cultivating a sense of belonging is necessary. Through this exploration, I focus on four theories each shedding light on a particular dimension of belonging, which are:

- Cultural Memory Theory: As articulated by Assmann (1995), collective cultural memories and shared narratives play a key role in fostering a sense of belonging within cultural or social groups. This theory aligns with the practice of storytelling, which holds significant prominence within Palestinian culture, serving as a tool for bringing people together, strengthening their bonds, and fostering connections to their land and culture. Here, storytelling resonates with the objectives of *Rajieen* project, as it contributes to the preservation and transfer of cultural memories. However, while this Cultural Memory theory emphasizes the role of shared narratives in shaping group identity, it might not be

effective when dealing with the complexities of belonging within diasporic communities,

such as Palestinian immigrants in Toronto, due to the diversity of their experiences and

perspectives, as they cope with fragmented memories and challenging narratives,

stemming from displacement, trauma, and acculturation experiences. This, in my opinion,

makes collective memory alone not enough to acknowledge the agency and resilience of

individuals in forging a sense of belonging in the diaspora.

- Experiential Learning Theory: This theory emphasizes the importance of hands-on

  experiences and active engagement in fostering learning and development, which can

  contribute to a sense of belonging within a community context (Kolb, 1984). In *Rajieen*

  project, incorporating experiential learning approaches could indeed enhance participants'

  connections to their culture and identity and nurture a deeper sense of belonging among

  Palestinian immigrants in Toronto. By crafting experiences that allow participants to

  actively engage with their cultural practices and traditions, as in storytelling, performing

  traditional Dabke dance, singing traditional Palestinian songs, or describing the

  ingredients of Palestinian dishes, this experiential approach can facilitate a sense of pride

  in their cultural identity and heritage, ultimately contributing to a stronger sense of

  belonging within the community.

- Place Attachment theory: In this theory, Relph (1976) highlights the emotional and

  cognitive bonds that individuals develop with specific physical locations or places they

  visit, bonds that are often created from the experiences and memories individuals might

  have with these places, and can play a major role in shaping one's sense of belonging to a

  particular place or culture. In my research, this theory can be utilized as a powerful tool,

  by incorporating places, cities, or locations from Palestine or elements that symbolize

them as main components of engagement in the project design.

However, for individuals like myself who have never been to Palestine, and for others

who have experienced forced displacement and separation multiple generations ago,

achieving a sense of place attachment or belonging may be more challenging.

Nevertheless, I believe incorporating this approach can still be beneficial, as it can help

educate participants about places in Palestine and gradually build connections to them.

- Attachment Theory: This theory emphasizes the importance of relationships and bonds

  between individuals, and affirms that the need for attachment is fundamental to our

  understanding of human nature. It also suggests that this formation of secure attachments

  and bonds fosters a sense of belongingness – an essential human need (Bowlby, 1969).

  While this theory aligns with my research objectives of connecting individuals with their

  land, country, culture, and people, and confirms how this can lead to promoting a sense

  of belonging among participants, however, it is important to consider here how the

  experience of displacement and separation that Palestinian immigrants face while

  migrating from their homeland might influence their attachment bonds with family,

  community, and culture, and sometimes disrupt these connections. Also, these bonds and

  connections evolve in the diaspora, especially while navigating the challenges of

  acculturation and adaptation to a new country and culture. These changes might impact

  the responses from participants when applying this theory to a project like *Rajieen*.

Through *Rajieen* project I aim to test and experiment with these theories utilizing them as

methods for my research exploration. I will particularly emphasize the experiential learning

theory, as I believe it aligns perfectly with the engagement concept I seek to achieve through this

project.

Understanding these theories of belonging reshaped my perception of what it means to belong. Belonging, to me, extends beyond geographical boundaries and is not limited to a single place or culture. It is a fluid and expansive notion that involves the connections and relationships formed with every country or place I encounter, and shaped by every experience, person, or belief that has influenced me throughout my life.

However, I find myself deeply rooted in my connection to Palestine specifically – my homeland. This bond is grounded in the rich history, culture, and traditions of the land. It's the memories of family gatherings, the aroma of traditional Palestinian dishes, the joy of celebrating Eid and Ramadan traditions, the positive spirit of its people, and the echoes of ancient stories passed down through generations. It's the vibrant cultural heritage practices and traditions, such as the Dabke dance at weddings or the elaborate embroidery of traditional attire, that symbolize resilience and continuity. To me, belonging to Palestine is that feeling I have of a strong attachment to a place, even if I may not have physically been there.

Through *Rajieen*, I aspire to translate this sense of belonging I feel to everyone around me, ensuring that the culture and identity of Palestine remain vibrant and the sense of belonging to it remains alive, despite the challenges of distance and displacement. Through *Rajieen* project, the game board design I create, and its corresponding narrative space, will both symbolize this sense of belonging I feel and the cultural identity I embody. Applying my understanding of belonging to my approaches in the creation of *Rajieen* Project will facilitate the realization of the project's objectives, and cultivate a profound sense of belonging among its users and participants.

Board Game Design as a Vehicle for Cultural Exploration

Who doesn't cherish the joy of a board game night? As a mother of three, our household

has made it a weekly tradition. One beloved game that frequently graced our table was *The*

Holiday or "رحلة ممتعة" (Figure 1). It is a simple yet captivating board game that I brought with

me from back home to Canada. This game, reminiscent of my childhood spent playing it with my

siblings, and of our old times spent back in Kuwait, follows players on a journey from home to

the airport, navigating through various stages, areas, and places. Along the way, players spend,

earn, lose money, and encounter challenges and bonuses, with the ultimate goal of returning

home with a pocket full of money.
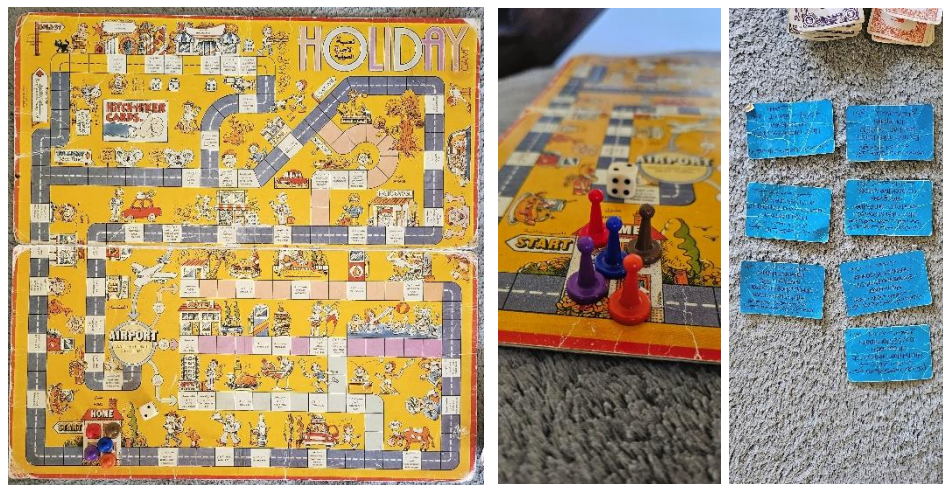
Figure 1. The Holiday Board Game and Components. From Personal Archive. 2023

The Holiday held a special place in our hearts, perhaps due to its simple design,

straightforward mechanics, bilingual nature (Arabic and English), and nostalgic connection to

our past. It was during these game nights that the concept of creating a personalized board game

first took root. Witnessing my children's enthusiasm for board games and observing the growth

of their personalities, knowledge, and interactions inspired me to craft a game that would not

only bring us together as a family but also celebrate our Palestinian cultural heritage, through a

game theme that revolves around preserving Palestinian culture and traditions, including

elements such as storytelling, traditional Palestinian cuisine, or folk dances like Dabke,

agricultural practices, Palestinian crafts and others. The game could serve as a fun and

educational tool for sharing Palestinian culture with others while fostering a sense of pride and

belonging within the community. This directed my investigation to delve deeper into considering

the potential of board games as educational tools, to educate participants about their land, people,

identity, and culture.

Erwin (2004), argues in his text *The Classroom of Choice: Giving Students What They*

Need and Getting What You Want, that humans' essential needs extend beyond the basic physical

requirements of air, water, food, and shelter. According to him, survival, love and belonging,

power, freedom, safety and fun, and other needs that every human requires too. Recognizing and

addressing these fundamental needs lays "a solid foundation for creating and managing a high-

quality learning environment" (p. 19). It is through the incorporation of these needs that

educators can foster an atmosphere in which learners feel secure and are empowered to engage,

learn, explore, and create. (Erwin, 2004)

On a similar note, Yoon (2014) and Treher (2011), see board games as tools that have

demonstrated their effectiveness as educational tools in recent years due to key attributes. For

example, the engaging and immersive qualities of board games facilitate increased attention,

concentration, and motivation among players. Also, by embracing a learn-by-doing, these games

offer a hands-on and heads-on approach to skill and knowledge development. Additionally, the

competitive aspect and the pursuit of victory motivate players to focus more on the game's rules,

fostering a comprehensive understanding of the educational content integrated into the gameplay

(Treher, 2011, Yoon, 2014).

Through countless game nights spent with family and friends, I've seen how playing board games actively cultivates vital life skills, such as critical thinking, pattern recognition, and effective communication. For instance, a board game like *The Holiday*, the one mentioned earlier, encourages players to strategize and plan routes and expenses, enhancing their ability to recognize, manage, and exploit patterns. Other board games like *Settlers of Catan* encourage players to strategize and adapt to changing circumstances, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. On the other hand, games like *Codenames* require players to communicate effectively and analyze clues, enhancing communication skills while promoting collaboration.

While examining and analyzing different board game designs, I observed a commonality among them. Despite their different themes, concepts, and mechanisms, they all employ connotative symbols to represent game subjects and categories. Relying on the strategic integration of symbolism as a methodology and a tool, visual representations of Palestinian legacy, such as the map of Palestine and cultural symbols, are integrated into the game's design, to provide players with an interactive experience that deepens their understanding of belonging and cultural identity within diasporic Palestinian communities. This game design draws from foundational theories like Cultural Memory, Experiential Learning, Attachment, and Place Attachment theories (refer to page 24 and 25) and offers interactive opportunities for players to engage with various aspects of Palestinian culture, through trivia cards and challenges that will prompt participants to explore and reflect on their culture and identity, fostering a stronger connection to their cultural roots, and sustaining a sense of belonging.

Exhibition Design as a Platform for Cultural Immersion

In the realm of interior design, exhibition design serves as a tool for embodying knowledge, narratives, and concepts and translating them into physical environments and experiences that resonate deeply with their audience. Bayer (1961) defines exhibitions as "designs in space", where architectural features shape the environment and communication elements guide visitors through a carefully designed journey of impressions. This multidisciplinary process integrates architecture, interior design, graphics, multimedia, lighting, object display, immersive and interactive design, and audiovisual elements, among others, to craft immersive experiences that stimulate, inspire, and educate.

Immersive spaces involve engaging visitors through sensory means and experiences, by incorporating elements that stimulate visitors' senses, such as sound, touch, and smell, to evoke emotions, deepen engagement, and cultivate a deeper understanding of the narratives presented (McSweeney & Kavanagh, 2016).

Narrative space design is another key discipline in interior design, essential for creating immersive and engaging exhibition experiences. It involves strategically arranging spatial narratives to guide visitors through cohesive experiences, transforming the space into a dynamic storytelling platform that resonates with audiences and evoking a sense of cultural identity and shared experience (Reinhardt & Teufel, 2010).

In *Rajieen* I draw inspiration from immersive experience design and narrative space design disciplines. These disciplines influence my approach to designing, structuring, and curating an immersive space that is dedicated to narrating the project's story, reflecting the board game design process, and elements, and symbolizing the Palestinian cultural heritage. By

utilizing soundscapes, visuals, tactile elements, and olfactory stimuli that symbolize Palestinian

culture and identity, the space will stimulate visitors' senses, enhancing their engagement.

Central to this space design concept is creating a home-like environment, with the board

game positioned at the center as the focal point. This incorporation of the board game design

within the milieu aims to replicate the sense of engagement and connectivity experienced in

collective engagements. Ultimately, *Rajieen* project, through its immersive space and board

game, seeks to inspire, educate, and connect communities with their cultural heritage, providing

a safe and secure environment where participants can experience a profound sense of belonging

to both their heritage and to each other.

Digital Palestinian Embroidery as a Tool for Cultural Preservation

My research investigation expanded to examine the practices of renowned designers from

the SWANA[13] region who have long demonstrated the concepts of belonging and identity in

their work. Designers such as Naqsh Collective[14], Iyad Naja[15], Bokja,[16] and others are analyzed

to understand how they successfully incorporated cultural elements in their designs to strengthen

the connection with one's identity. Studying how designers, while using different materials and

approaches, imbed their identity and culture in their designs offers insights into the approaches to

the topics of belonging and cultural identity in a comparable context. For instance, Naqsh

Collection incorporates traditional Palestinian embroidery motifs in all their designs, serving as a

reflection of Palestinian culture and resilience. Similarly, Iyad Naja uses Arabic calligraphy as a

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[13] SWANA region: South-West, Asian and North African.

[14] Naqsh Collective is founded in Amman, Jordan, by two sisters. It intertwines contemporary and traditional Arabic aesthetics, infusing their creations with the richness of their Palestinian cultural heritage. Retrieved from (https://www.naqshcollective.com/), Jan.2024.

[15] Iyad Naja is a Lebanese multidisciplinary artist and designer, who embodies the marriage of avant-garde with Arabic heritage, working with various concepts and materials. Retrieved from (https://www.iyadnaja.com/), Jan.2024.

[16] Bokja is a Lebanese design studio, crafting meaningful narratives through embroidery and textile to create personable objects, from furniture to fashion. Retrieved from (https://bokja.com/), Jan.24.

primary means of expressing his Arabic identity. Bokja, on the other hand, relies on aesthetic

assemblage techniques, bringing together textile fragments from various times and places, to

communicate a unified message. (Refer to Appendix A for examples of the designers' works).

In a project like *Rajieen*, the aim is to challenge prevailing Western perspectives through

design, exploring alternative, and authentic design approaches that can contribute to a more

profound sense of cultural identity and belonging for individuals in the diaspora. Building on the

insights gleaned from the study of SWANA region designers, in my project exploration I draw

inspiration from their successful incorporation of cultural elements by integrating traditional

Palestinian cross-stitch embroidery motifs known as "Tatreez" into the design aesthetics as one

of the key elements. These motifs hold significant cultural value, representing an inseparable

aspect of Palestinian art and design. I believe that Palestinian occasions, whether gatherings,

wedding celebrations, or Eid holidays, are incomplete without the presence of these motifs. They

are fundamental components of our cultural identity and a part of our existence.

"Tatreez" is an integral part of the Palestinian identity, transcending borders and

connecting Palestinians both in their homeland and throughout the diaspora. It is primarily

utilized for embellishing clothing and quilts, however, with the incorporation of technology,

these motifs started to become a part of more contemporary designs like household items, and

personalized products.

Figure 2. A vintage photograph of the author's grandmothers wearing Traditional Palestinian Clothing, with Palestinian Embroidery "Tatreez." From Family Archive that belongs to the author. 1990.

This unique form of art is characterized by unique patterns and techniques, each specific

to a Palestinian region and symbolizing a Palestinian practice or item, and sometimes they tell

stories. Rooted in the agricultural heritage that unites all Palestinians, this art form serves as a

cultural expression reinforcing their connection to the land. Utilizing digital design software like

Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop, alongside digital stitching software like Stitch Fiddle and

Winstitch, I embarked on the exploration of recreating these traditional motifs. Drawing

inspiration from the guidelines outlined by Nabil Anani and Suleiman Mansoor in their

embroidery book *Guide to the Art of Palestinian Embroidery* (2011), I engaged in

experimentation to capture the essence of these intricate patterns. (Refer to Figure 3)

The resulting aesthetic design of *Rajieen* is a composite of carefully selected Palestinian

motifs, each symbolizing a key finding from the research and reflecting the stories and

experiences shared by the participants. By incorporating the traditional Palestinian embroidery

motifs as a central theme in the design approach, the game board design becomes a traditional

Palestinian artwork that also serves as a visual manifestation of the collected data and shared

narratives. The integration of these motifs contributes to the overall cultural expression and

connection to the Palestinian land, enriching the game with a meaningful and authentic visual

narrative.

Figure 3. Palestinian Embroidery Digital Sampler, with some of the most commonly used motifs from different Palestinian regions. Created using Stitch Fiddle Software. 2023

Primary Research: Methods and Approaches

Following the completion of the secondary research, the primary research phase started,

involving interviews, workshops, and surveys, to gather qualitative data for the project's

exploration. These methods are conducted following ethical approval from the Research Ethics

Board (REB) at OCAD University (Ref No: 6192). The qualitative data collected is examined,

analyzed, and interpreted, and then combined with findings from secondary research to create a

preliminary board game design (Prototype 1). Subsequently, this prototype undergoes further

development after narrative gathering interviews, expert consultations, and initial testing,

resulting in Prototype 2 of the game, which is then utilized in the testing workshops, facilitating

refinement and finalization of the board game's design, which is subsequently integrated and

reflected into the final thesis exhibition space.

Prototyping: The Board Game Framework (Prototype 1)

In early December 2023, the preliminary design of the board game (Prototype 1) was

created through iterative paper prototyping, a method guided by the principles outlined by Salen

and Zimmerman in *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (2003).

Figure 4. *Board Game Prototype 1. The design was digitally created using Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator (To the left) and printed on A3 paper, for Testing session 1 that took place with family members (to the right). Dec. 2023*

Iterative design, as described by Salen and Zimmerman, enables the quick generation of a

game prototype. This method was adopted as it allows for easy refinement and adjustment during

the development stages with the insights gained from playing and testing. This initial prototype

laid the foundational elements of the game – its logic, concept, design, structure, and mechanics, all of which were drawn from secondary research.

Theories like Cultural Memory Theory, Experiential Learning Theory, Attachment Theory, and Place Attachment Theory shape the core framework of the game design, theme, logic, structure, mechanism, and visuals, with aims to foster a deep sense of belonging and connection to Palestinian cultural heritage by encouraging players to actively engage with their land, culture, and identity.

Inspired by Cultural Memory Theory, the game is designed to focus on shared cultural experiences and collective memories, by implementing features like historical cities and landmarks and including trivia questions and challenges to complete throughout the game, that are related to Palestinian history, cuisine, arts, and more, through which players reinforce their connection to Palestinian cultural memory.

Additionally, by applying the Experiential Learning Theory, the game design emphasizes hands-on experiences and direct participation and engagement, enabling players to learn about Palestinian culture through gameplay elements such as rolling the die, traveling between cities, and completing challenges across different categories such as Land and Agriculture, Palestinian Cuisine, and Crafts and Industries, and also performing challenges like signing traditional songs or dancing traditional Dabke Dance.

As for the Attachment Theory, it was reflected in the game mechanism that encourages social interaction and community-building among players. For example, one of the *Rajieen* wild cards offers a bonus allowing the player to collaborate with another player in the next round to tackle a trivia card or challenge. Additionally, another challenge encourages players to share a

story passed down from their parents or grandparents about the strong bonds within the Palestinian community. These acts of collaboration, consultations, listening, care, shared laughter, collective reminiscing, and building about each other's narratives all serve to strengthen the players' emotional bonds, fostering a feeling of attachment and therefore contributing to nurturing a sense of belonging.

Moreover, Place Attachment Theory influences the game's design and use of symbolic representations for iconic Palestinian cities and landmarks. This approach fosters emotional bonds with the land in several ways. For example, by incorporating recognizable cities in the game, players are reminded of familiar places within Palestine, evoking personal memories and connections to those locations. Additionally, as players navigate the game board, interact with these cities, and with the trivia questions and challenges about them, they engage in a form of spatial exploration that can evoke feelings of nostalgia, pride, and belonging associated with the depicted milieus.

In implementing these theoretical approaches within the game design I draw from the practical guidance provided by Jesse Terrance Daniels in *Make Your Own Board Game* (2022). This book provides insights that assist in deciding on the game mechanics, structure, and components, including dice rolling, trivia cards, challenges, methods of randomization, and winning. On the other hand, insights from *It's All a Game,* by Tristan Donovan (2017) also enriched the game's historical and thematic depth. I was inspired by board games examined in the text, and guided by the analysis of classic board games to create a captivating and immersive cultural narrative for players in my game. Through these two books, a preliminary idea of *Rajieen* board game is developed as follows:

- Gameplay, Mechanics, and Structure: Daniels (2022) provides insight into the mechanics of board games, including components, turns, rounds, rules, actions, movements, storytelling, and randomization. After analyzing the options provided for each of these elements, I decided on the game design of *Rajieen*, where players navigate a map, roll a die, answer trivia questions, and engage with other players through challenges. The game's structure is influenced by the journey-based gameplay theme, with players progressing through different regions and cities, similar to the structure of many classic board games (Like *the Holiday* game for example).

- Concept and Objectives: The central concept of the game is centered on a map of Palestine and its historical cities, as inspired by the cultural and historical themes discussed in both books. This objective of completing a cultural journey, strengthening players' knowledge, connection, and sense of belonging to Palestinian culture, aligns with the thematic exploration in *It's All a Game* (2017). In this book, Donovan uses games like *The Game of Life* and *Tomb Raider* to illustrate how board games can serve as channels for conveying knowledge about life's journey and history. This objective is key in a board game like *Rajieen*, which aims to educate and immerse players in a specific cultural theme and setting.

- Components: After learning and understanding how various components interact with the game board set, components such as the die, trivia cards, and sand clock were chosen to serve gameplay functions, following guidelines for component selection, functionality, and efficiency. The die adds an element of randomness, while the trivia cards encourage learning, challenge, and engagement, and the sand clock intensifies the level of challenge by imposing time constraints, increasing the excitement among the players.

- Visual Design: This prototype of *Rajieen*'s game board prioritized minimalism and

  intentional simplicity to facilitate ease in amending and developing the design, and

  encourage participants to focus on the game mechanisms and gameplay rather than the

  design details that might distract the feedback. Created using Adobe Photoshop, the

  design features a map outline composed of geometric shapes, defining the path for

  players, alongside city icons represented by simple silhouettes to maintain clarity and

  minimize distractions and at the same time symbolize what each city is famous for,

  following the symbolism theories examined in the literature review section. For example,

  Oranges are used in the city of Yafa, to represent how the city is famous for its orange

  tree fields and orange production. These symbols are not only added for aesthetic

  purposes but also to be utilized as clues when responding to the trivia cards. Vibrant and

  diverse colors were utilized to evoke a sense of fun and positivity, and as for typography

  and text on the map, they were exclusively in Arabic, aligning with the game's objective

  of reconnecting players with their culture and identity, with the Arabic language being a

  central component. Also, Instead of a board, *Rajieen's* game is designed on a rug. This

  choice allows players to lay the rug on the floor, providing them with a unique

  opportunity to engage in a metaphorical experience that symbolizes a direct connection to

  the land. By sitting on the rug during gameplay, participants embody a profound bond

  with the land, fostering a heightened sense of belonging and a deeper emotional

  connection.

Prototype 1 was tested in a family setup, right after obtaining the REB approval. (Refer to

Appendix B for the Game Manual). Through testing the game and observing players'

engagement, the following elements arose:

- The mechanism of traveling along a path between cities, where players must answer
  questions correctly to progress, proved to be inefficient. Players often struggled to
  answer questions correctly on the first attempt, resulting in prolonged periods of
  stagnation and extended game duration.

- The game lacked interactivity and engagement among players. Each player traveled
  along their path, with limited interaction between participants. Despite the inclusion
  of fun challenges and stories in the trivia cards, the overall excitement and interactive
  elements were lacking.

- The use of Arabic text posed a challenge for Palestinian individuals who struggle
  with reading proficiency. Additionally, it restricted the game's audience to only those
  who can read Arabic.

Expert Interviews

Following the receipt of the REB approval, primary research methods were initiated,
starting with conducting interviews with experts, professionals, and educators in the investigated
areas. This step is a crucial component in informing the research process and ensuring the
originality and authenticity of the study. Muneera Spence, a design educator specializing in
board game design, was an interviewee who brought valuable insights to the study. The purpose
of the interview was to gather insights and experiences from M. Spence, as an expert in the field,
specifically in the context of the *Rajieen* research project. The primary objectives of this
interview (refer to Appendix C for the Interview Form) were:

- To discuss various aspects of board game design, including the underlying logic
  and concepts involved.

- To explore the interviewee's experiences in targeting specific audiences for board

    games.

- To explore the design process in depth, seeking insights, key tips, and potential

    pitfalls to avoid in board game design.

- To examine effective strategies for successfully executing board game projects.

The interview was conducted via Microsoft Teams, lasted approximately 60 minutes, and
with explicit permission from the interviewee, it was audio recorded.

Expert Interview Synthesis

In the expert interview conducted with M. Spence, important observations emerged,
shedding light on crucial aspects of the board game design process:

- M. Spence emphasized the significance of initiating the design process by

    developing a strong concept, deciding on the audience, and then tailoring the

    game concept to the targeted audience. She recommended targeting individuals

    aged 8 and above, as this age group possesses a more developed sense of logic,

    self, place, and belonging.

- M. Spence outlined a systematic design process. She advised creating mind maps

    to explore the critical zones of culture, including food, language, place,

    geography, traditional dance and music, and traditional Palestinian embroidery

    art.

- M. Spence discussed the complexity of the game, questioning whether it would

    follow a single journey or involve multiple turns. She suggested exploring the

    idea of a knowledge-focused game without winners or losers, potentially

    involving card scenarios without the use of dice.

- M. Spence praised the concept of participants actively contributing not only to the game design's development but also during game testing as a part of the research process and methodologies.

- M. Spence highlighted the critical aspects of how the game begins, ends, and the overall duration. She highlighted the importance of considering the level of excitement and energy throughout the gameplay. Duration, she insisted, is linked to the depth of learning, requiring a careful balance between information depth and engagement.

Expert Interview Outcomes

Following Spence's insightful counsel, I strategically considered her recommendations and embedded them where relevant in the next iterative version of the game. Initially, while *Rajieen*'s concept was deemed strong in alignment with Spence's guidelines, empirical testing with younger participants, like my 8-year-old son, revealed limitations in engagement due to insufficient knowledge and capability. Therefore, the minimum age of participation was maintained at 12 years old. Regarding game complexity, I considered Spence's suggestion to experiment with a knowledge-focused game, without winners or losers. However, recognizing the potential benefits of competition in enhancing players' motivation and engagement, I changed the game to a card-based format with multiple turns, and a die, setting aside the use of journey, or map movement, an adjustment that is tested in Prototype 2 of the game.

Furthermore, in response to her guidance on game initiation, conclusion, and duration, I introduced elements, such as requiring players to roll a six on the die before commencing the game, as a challenging yet exciting element for initiating the game. Additionally, transitioning the game to a card-based format centered on a journey allowed for better management and

reduction of game duration, considering the time consumption associated with traveling from
one city to another. Lastly, M. Spence's advice regarding the depth of information on trivia cards
was duly noted, by developing and modifying questions on the trivia cards to feature a range of
difficulty levels and be presented as multiple-choice questions for easier answering. Overall, the
integration of Spence's counsel and insights greatly enriched the game's design and mechanics
and helped me create a more engaging and enjoyable experience for players of the game *Rajieen*.

Narrative Gathering Interviews

Semi-structured interviews (Refer to Appendix D for Interview Questions) were
conducted with Palestinian immigrants in Toronto, aged 18 and above, using Microsoft Teams.
The interviews, lasting approximately 60 minutes each, aim to collect personal stories related to
Palestinian culture and identity and a sense of belonging. The purpose is to define the motives
behind Palestinians' connections to their land and cultural heritage. This involves exploring their
sense of identity, their ties to the land, the significance of shared traditions and customs, and the
Palestinian society's enduring spirit of community and solidarity.

Thematic and narrative analysis techniques are employed to identify recurring themes and
key stories from interviews that were audio-recorded, after ensuring participants' approval. The
collected data is then organized into themes and sub-themes based on content. Four interviewees
from varying ages and genders were recruited, to ensure a diverse range of perspectives. These
interviewees are part of the Palestinian diaspora, residing in Toronto, Canada, and Kuwait, yet
maintaining connections to Palestine, by either living there once or frequently traveling.
Recruitment was conducted through an advertisement published online and promoted on my
social media network (Refer to Appendix E for Recruitment AD), which provided information
about the board game recruitment and included a link to an online survey (Refer to Appendix F

for the Survey). Following the survey stage, a filtering process was implemented to select

suitable participants, whom I then contacted via email and provided with additional details about

the interview, along with the consent form.

Narrative Gathering Synthesis

Participants' narratives revolved around four central themes that deeply resonated with their

sense of belonging: belonging to the people, to the land, to places, and to traditions/heritage.

Belonging

- Making Msakhan in Olive Oil Season (Fall)
- Ramadan gathering, Iftar, Dessert, and Suhor
- Old souq during Ramadan: the desserts, Hommos and falafel
- Ramadan Meals: Mlokheya, Dairy Meals (Laban)
- Eid events: gatherings, Eideyya, new clothes and gifts for kids, making Palestinian cookies (Ka'ak), making Kunafa in Eid
- Maaloubah: the Palestinian most popular meal.
- Traditional clothes for men and women
- Following traditions in Wedding arrangements, Celebrations, funerals, gatherings.
- Islamic principles as the main principles followed for relationships between people.
- Storytelling – sharing stories to preserve culture

- Old town market
- Gaza beach
- Old Jerusalem town
- Dome of the rock
- Orange tree fields
- Grandparents' house
- Family's house
- Family's neighbourhood
- University where studies were completed

- Olive tree, as a Palestinian symbol
- Wheat season
- Prickly Pears, as a Palestinian symbol
- Herbs of Palestine: Saje, thyme
- Flowers of Palestine: Poppy, Jasmine, lillies
- Being gentle with trees and plants when harvesting
- Smell of the trees, and the air breeze
- Taste of Palestine fruit like no other
- Feelings of comfort, serenity, and relaxation, like no other place, despite everything that is happening
- Nostlagic feeling, sadness, when remembering life there

- Cooperative community
- Helping family members, neighbours and community in harvesting seasons
- Always Hosting and welcoming visitors
- Sharing food and harvested crops
- Eid Gathering and big meals
- Wedding celebrations
- Together is Sadness: Funerals, sickness
- Memories shared with grandparents
- Family gatherings for meals and meals preparations
- Helping neighbours
- Practicing Tatreez (Palestinian embroidery) with mother, grandmother and women of the family
- Memories of mother/ Grandmother baking bread and pastries (Thyme Pastries), in the outside "Tabun" Oven in the backyard.

■ Belonging People ■ Belonging to Land ■ Belonging to Places ■ Belonging to Traditions

Figure 5. Significant Themes Emerging of Thematic Analysis from the Narrative Gathering Interviews, prepared
using MS PowerPoint. 2024

Belonging to the people, in terms of loyalty, cooperation, and strong bonds, emerged as a

foundation of the Palestinian community. Participants highlighted the close-knit nature of

Palestinian society, characterized by strong familial bonds, cooperation, and mutual support.

Everyday practices, such as assisting family members with chores, helping neighbors, and

coming together for larger community gatherings during Eid celebrations and weddings,

emphasized the depth of these connections. Special attention was given to the communal spirit

during harvesting seasons, where individuals united to help each other with various agricultural

tasks, fostering a sense of belonging within the collective.

Close to that theme was the theme of belonging to the land, which elicited nostalgic

sentiments for Palestine's landscapes and agricultural traditions. Participants fondly recalled the

simple joys of walking through olive fields, picnicking amidst orange groves, and partaking in

wheat harvesting seasons, making agricultural practices a vital thread connecting individuals

with each other and with the land, as they described their lives being deeply rooted in the

rhythms of planting, tending, and harvesting crops.

Participant Jabr Al Shami (Born 1939), who lived in Al Ramla, Palestine in his earliest years

until moving to Kuwait in the early sixties, shared nostalgic memories and stories

contextualizing the strong bonds shared by the Palestinian community and their relationship to

land:

One of the most traditional customs and rituals associated with agriculture in Palestine occurs

in May. This is when villages in Palestine engage in the harvest of wheat and barley. If

someone needs to go and plow their land, it takes about a month to complete. So what do

they do? Everyone in the village comes together. Every day they visit one of the villagers'

lands to help harvest the wheat and barley. I've witnessed and experienced this myself, it's a

beautiful sight. Imagine nearly two thousand people, with even the little boys and girls, each

holding a sickle—a tool used for cutting—harvesting the wheat and barley from the

ground… It's truly a beautiful sight. I was seven years old the first time I saw this. By the

time thirty days passed, the entire village had harvested all its wheat and barley. Do you see

the cooperation? It's amazing, nothing beats the beauty of that scenery (Jabr Al Shami, *Rajieen* Interviews, 2023).

Delving into the theme of traditions, participants shared poignant stories of cultural practices passed down through generations. Emphasizing values such as generosity, hospitality, and communal meals, they also recounted the significance of Eid celebrations and special occasions marked by traditional foods and rituals. Palestinian embroidery, with its intricate designs, and the art of storytelling were spoken proudly of as cherished customs woven into the fabric of familial and community life, preserving Palestinian identity across generations.

Sami Al Kilani[17], (Born 1952) who lived in Jenin, Palestine, and now residing in Canada, was one of this research's interviewees who was a great asset informing the formation of the project by sharing his invaluable insights and experiences related to Palestinian traditions and rituals:

One of the most important customs and traditions of Palestinians is the olive harvest season and its uniqueness. The entire village is deeply involved in the work, where individuals help each other to finish their tasks. This cooperation extends to the point where one family's completion of their work can assist another. This interconnectedness forms the backbone of relationships within villages. For example, in the village of Ya'bad, the tasks require the involvement of every family member, leaving no one idle, not even the children. And of course, the olive harvest season means the preparation of the traditional dish "Musakhan"[18].

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[17] Dr. Sami Al Kilani is Palestinian nonfiction writer, academic, and intellectual. He is the author of several literary works, short story books, and a children's stories. He also has two poetry collections. His writings and publications can be found on this website: https://m.ahewar.org/index.asp?i=12652

[18] Muskhan is roast chicken heavily scented with Sumac and a few other warm spices and served with caramelized onion flatbread. It is a traditional Palestinian dish served during the olive harvest celebrating the olive oil pressing season, but also served all year long during family gatherings and celebrations. Retrieved from (www.themediterandish.com), Jan. 2024.

After pressing the olives, every household prepares Musakhan, traditionally cooked in a

Taboon[19] oven. This dish holds significant value, usually made for extended family

gatherings rather than nuclear families. It's a collaborative effort where everyone participates

(Sami Al Kilani, *Rajieen* Interview, 2023).

Similarly, May Obaid, (Born in 1974), who lived her childhood in Tulkarem, Palestine, and

currently residing in Canada, shared sentimental stories and experiences about Palestinian

traditions, rituals, and values:

The most unforgettable memory I have is when I used to go to my grandparents' house. I

remember waking up to the smell of the fresh home-baked bread, baked by my grandmother.

I remember how they used to gather the wheat seeds, grind the wheat on the wheal millstone

to make the wheat, and use it to bake bread in the Taboon oven, it is the sweetest memory,

and I still feel that smell. I remember my cousins and me taking that bread and going on a

picnic. We would also take cucumbers, and tomatoes, their aroma and taste are unmatched.

No matter where you go, there's nothing like Palestinian food! We'd also take olive oil and

Zaatar (thyme), and head to my grandfather's field next to the house, where there are orange

and Clementine trees. Oh, the scent and the fresh breeze, there's nothing like the air of

Palestine and the life of Palestine (May Obaid, *Rajieen* Interview, 2023).

Jabr Al Shami, on the other hand, shared unique stories about the rituals of Ramadan in

Palestine:

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[19] Palestinian Taboon or Tabun Oven is an oven made using unbaked clay and it's styled similar to a Tandoor. The primary
purpose of it is to bake a Levantine flatbread known as Taboon Bread. Retrieved from (www.artisantandoors.com), Jan. 2024.

During Ramadan, there was a drummer who called for Suhoor. He would go around

drumming, holding a lantern, and singing praises… It's one of the sweetest childhood

memories. This is a heritage that's still there, but it's on the verge of extinction. We used

to enjoy it when we were little kids, about nine years old, we would go out, see him, greet

him, and give him bread, food, water, or anything to drink. I even remember his name; it

was Arfah. It's funny that I can't remember what I had for lunch yesterday, but I

remember Arfah, the Suhoor Drummer Arfah (Jabr Al Shami, *Rajieen* Interview, 2023).

Finally, the theme of belonging to places revealed participants' deep attachment to

specific locations infused with personal and collective memories. Nostalgia permeated their

recollections of grandparents' or parents' houses, old towns, busy old markets, and serene olive

groves. Limited mobility due to the complexities of the occupation[20] intensified the sentiment of

belonging to these cherished places, underlining their role in shaping individuals' identities and

fostering a profound connection to Palestine. Sami Al Kilani shared in this context:

I have such a deep love for ancient cities, like Nablus' Old City, Jerusalem's Old City, and

Akka's Old City. The authenticity and roots found in these ancient cities fascinate me. It's

in the people, their way of interacting, the facades of the shops, and the traditional

landmarks. Everything feels alive and vibrant, unlike the sterile environment of malls and

supermarkets. There's a human element present that gives life its depth. The colors, the

shapes, the way shops are displayed, and the human interactions—all contribute to the

unique atmosphere. In some towns, like Nablus' Old Market, you'll find everyone calling

---

[20] The history of Palestinian occupation dates back to the late 19th century when Jews began migrating to Palestine, occupying
Palestinian lands, and displacing Palestinians from their homes. With the establishment of the Israeli occupation state in 1948,
problems of occupation and conflicts between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples began. These conflicts have persisted over the
years to this day, leading to numerous tragedies and the displacement of many Palestinians from their lands.

out to sell their goods, creating a lively atmosphere. Some may see it as chaotic, but to

me, it's a multidimensional human experience that holds a special place in my life and

memories (Sami Al Kilani, Rajieen Interview, 2023).

Moreover, Mahmoud Matar (Born 1955), who grew up in Gaza, Palestine, and now

residing in Kuwait, expressed his sense of Space Belonging Differently:

You know, the most beautiful days of my life were the ones I spent in Gaza. Before

leaving, I cried because, despite all the difficulties we faced there, it was my home. My

mother was there, my family and my friends, and everyone I loved was there. For us, it

was the most beautiful place in the world. My home, which remains in my memories,

eternally cherished in the mind and heart, is the only place where I feel safe (Mahmoud

Matar, *Rajieen* Interview, 2023).

When asked about their definition of belonging, participants shared various definitions

and expressions of that concept:

I don't know what the magic in Palestine is... You feel it in your blood, it flows within

you. Just like the river flows, Palestine flows in the veins of humans. Its simple life, the

simplicity of people. People there are naturally good, genuine, and generous. They

embody goodness (May Obaid, *Rajieen* Interview, 2023).

I consider the homeland to be fundamentally about its people. The value of a place is

derived from the value of its people, their relationships, customs, traditions, and every

aspect of their lives. Therefore, your belonging to the homeland is your belonging to

these people… People express this belonging in various ways. The concept is simple: as a

writer, you express it in your writing, as a husband and father, you express it in your

relationship with your family and children, and as a teacher, you express it in your

relationship with your students. Essentially, you aim to embody the values you believe in

through your actions, whether in a literary work or daily interactions (Sami Al Kilani,

Rajieen Interview, 2023).

Palestine means Home, the most beautiful thing in existence. The homeland that heals us,

and even though we don't live in it, wherever we go, Palestine lives in us, in our blood, in

the blood of our children, and the blood of our grandchildren (Mahmoud Matar *Rajieen*

Interview, 2023).

Narrative Gathering Outcomes

Synthesizing from these interviews, I revisited the Board game to infuse particular

subjects and stories I learned about in the shared narratives during the interviews:

- Belonging to people and strong bonds that were emphasized through the strong sense of

  community and cooperation within Palestinian society, particularly during activities such

  as wheat and barley harvesting influenced the inclusion of cooperative gameplay

  elements in the board game, where players collaborate to overcome challenges and

  achieve shared objectives. For example, one of *Rajieen*'s Wild Cards includes a story of

  assisting the neighbors in harvesting their olive tree field, and therefore, grants the player

  an extra round within the game.

- The traditional practices and celebrations mentioned by participants highlighted the

  importance of cultural heritage in fostering a sense of belonging. Therefore these cultural

  elements were integrated into the trivia cards and challenges within the game, providing

  players with opportunities to learn and engage with Palestinian traditions. For example,

questions about Eid celebrations and Ramadan traditions were included in the trivia cards.

- The strong connection to the Land that was evident through the nostalgic recollections of olive harvesting seasons and picnics amidst orange groves underscored the deep connection individuals feel to Palestine's landscapes and agricultural traditions, influenced the inclusion of thematic elements related to agriculture and nature within the game design and visuals, such as the incorporation of olive trees, oranges, wheat, and other crops, with aims to reinforce players' connection to the land. These items were added as symbols on the visual game design, located on certain cities each providing players with clues about the cities that will assist them when responding to the trivia cards.

- The vital role of family stories and memories, which were shared by participants, including memories of baking bread with grandparents and participating in Ramadan traditions, highlighted the importance of family and storytelling in shaping Palestinian identity, an element that was reflected in the narrative and thematic elements of the game, creating opportunities for players to connect with their family histories, through challenges that are infused within the trivia cards.

- Descriptions of traditional Palestinian embroidery (Tatreez) served as reminders of the rich Palestinian cultural heritage such as art and crafts, and were translated into cultural motifs and incorporated into the visual design and thematic content of the next version game, with each motif symbolizing a story shared by participants, or representing a specific cultural element.

- The attachments to places expressed by many participants, such as grandparents' houses and old town markets, were apparent to evoke nostalgic memories and feelings of belonging, and therefore utilized in the game design by informing the selection of city icons and landmarks represented on the game board, providing players with familiar points of reference and connection.

The narrative gathering interviews I conducted provided me with a deeper understanding of how my design research can address the concept of belonging. This comprehension not only informs but also helps in developing the aesthetic, design, and concept of the game board, and ultimately leads to the development of the corresponding experiential space and installations showcased in the final exhibition.

Prototyping Continued: Board Game Iteration: Prototype 2

Based on the testing session and observations of Prototype 1 of the game, which were combined with the insights gathered from the interviews, Prototype 2 was developed. This iteration was created with more design details in the making and execution, to closely resemble the final product and deliver an experience similar to the ultimate gameplay. To achieve this, I experimented with various methods and materials during the creation phase.

- Game Design, Concept, and Mechanism: The main concept of the game is still the same – the map with the sixteen main Palestinian cities, and players need to respond to the trivia cards. What changed in this version of the game is how the game is played: instead of following a path on the map traveling from one city to another, players roll the die, and each number on the die represents one set of cultural trivia cards as follows: 1: General Knowledge, 2: Agriculture and Land, 3: Palestinian Cuisine, 4: Arts, Music and Literature, 5: Crafts and Industries, 6: *Rajieen* Wild Card. In this gameplay scenario,

players do not need to travel on the map, the map acts as a visual connection and

symbolization so players can connect, imagine, and understand the knowledge,

information, and stories shared through the game. Players get to keep the cards they

answer correctly and discard the ones not correctly answered. The winner is the one who

collects two cards from each of the five cultural categories, capturing the Cultural

knowledge of Palestine. (Refer to Appendix G for Prototype 2 Manual)

- Visual Design: As previously mentioned, the design aimed to imitate the final product by

   drawing inspiration from traditional Palestinian embroidery motifs "Tatreez" (Refer to

   Figure 6). The visual map and its surroundings were crafted with careful attention to

   detail. Each area of the map featured repetitive motifs representing the unique

   characteristics of the region it depicted. Overlaid on these patterns were typography text

   displaying the names of cities in both Arabic and English, facilitating a bilingual

   engagement. Additionally, silhouettes of each city's specialties were incorporated to

   assist players in answering questions and challenges within the game, providing visual

   cues for players to connect with. For instance, Bir Seba'a, renowned for its palm trees,

   dates, and wheat production, featured symbols of palm trees, and dates on the map. The

   chosen motif for coloring this city on the map was "Shaklet Nakhel" or Palm Trees,

which is a prominent design motif in traditional Palestinian embroidery and is rendered in

natural colors.

Figure 6. Prototype 2 Digital Design, created using Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. Jan. 2024

Similarly to the previous design, vibrant colors are applied to the map, symbolizing

positivity and fun. Surrounding the map were additional "Tatreez" motifs representing

the land and sea areas. The frames were intricately crafted with a repetitive pattern of

motifs, each reflecting stories shared by participants during interviews.
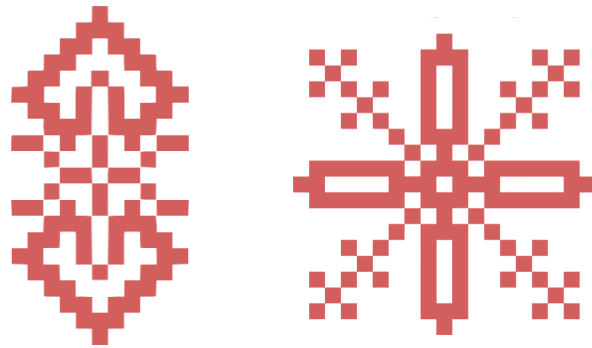
.

Figure 7. *"Qalb," Heart Tatreez Motif (to the left), and "Siaje" Barbed wire fence Tatreez Motif to the right. Created using Stitch Fiddle Software. Dec. 2023*

For example, motifs symbolizing the strong bond and connection between the people of Palestine, despite facing hardships, were prominently featured. The "Qalb" or Heart motif, surrounded by "Siaje" or barbed wire fence motifs (See Figure 7), served as poignant reminders of the resilience and unity of the Palestinian community.

- Design Execution: The execution of this Prototype was created through the following steps: Initially, the design was crafted on Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop, with dimensions set at 50 by 60 inches. Then, I divided this design into eight, A4 papers, ensuring that when assembled, they mimic the required final size. Using a home printer, each A4 sheet was individually printed, encased in clear plastic pocket protectors, and cut around the edges. Beginning with the first printed paper, I placed face down on the designated fabric piece, which was reused. Wax paper was then added on top of the paper, and thorough ironing followed until a secure attachment was achieved. This process was repeated for the remaining seven, A4 sheets until the entire design was seamlessly transferred onto the fabric in the final outlook required. As for the other components of the game, they remained unchanged.
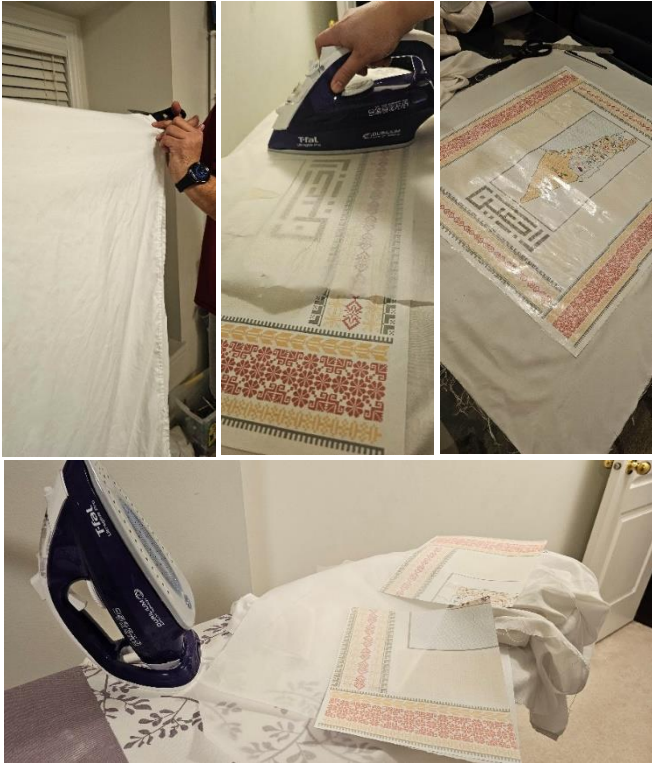
Figure 8. The creation of Prototype 2, using reused fabric, with the design printed on A4 papers, clear plastic pocket protectors, wax paper, and an iron. Dec. 2023

Figure 9. Prototype 2 testing sessions, with Primary and Secondary Advisors Diane Mikhael and Sadie Red Wing. Jan. 2024

This prototype initial testing involved my Primary and Secondary Advisors, Diane

Mikhael and Sadie Red Wing. Employing the same prototype testing methods as before,

observations were documented, notes were made, and feedback from the players was

collected.

- Observation and Developments: While testing the prototype, several observations came to

   light:

   o The game's mechanism, which revolves around collecting cards to win without

      physically moving on the board, lacks a crucial element of engagement. Players

      typically expect movement on the board in traditional board games, which was

      noted during testing.

   o While the concept of collecting cards across diverse cultural categories was

      intriguing, it was suggested that if the game's mechanism were to change to

      involve player movement between cities on the board, the categorization of cards

      would need adjustment. Instead of six cultural card categories, it was proposed to

      divide cultural knowledge according to the regions, with sixteen categories for the

      sixteen cities on the map.

   o The use of motifs to depict city areas on the map was found to be distracting. It

      was recommended to remove these "Tatreez" motifs from the cities to improve

      clarity and reduce visual noise.

   o The silhouette shapes representing city specialties were deemed confusing. It was

      advised to unify the design technique implemented for symbols on the board to

      enhance coherence.

- o   Some players attempted to match the colors of the cards with those on the map, despite no inherent connection in the design. To mitigate this confusion, the colors of the cards can be standardized, using a neutral color not present on the map.

Testing prototypes contributed greatly to the refinement of the game design and visuals, ultimately resulting in the creation of the board game design which will be considered the final iteration and will be used in the upcoming testing workshop sessions with the recruited participants.

Workshops and Testing

Building on the feedback from Prototype 2 testing, *Rajieen* Board Game design evolved into the one utilized in the testing workshops stage of the project.

Following Co-Design principles, which emphasize direct communication between designers and non-designers through interviews and testing to enhance the development of the final product, testing workshops were organized. These workshops allowed participants to test the game and provide feedback. For a social and educational game like *Rajieen*, playtesting is a crucial step in the design process, as it holds multiple essential purposes. Testing different game mechanics is vital to identify the most appropriate mechanism that is both easy to grasp and engaging. Furthermore, it ensures that the game maintains a logical narrative flow throughout its various steps and challenges, avoiding confusion or vagueness. Additionally, it is crucial to design a game that not only enhances the social experience but also allows for the emergence of engagement and dialogue during gameplay and beyond.

These testing workshops involved twenty distinct players (Refer to Appendix H for

Workshops Recruitment AD), who were from two categories:

- Twelve participants as Palestinian family members, divided into two sessions

  (each session of four members, including parents with their children),

  Males/Females, Adults Aged: 18- 60, children/youth Aged: 12-17.

- Seven Participants as Palestinian Adults, divided into two sessions (One with

  three participants, the other with four: Males/Females, ages 18-60.

All participants were Palestinians living in Toronto for at least one year, and able to play

and sit on the floor to explore the game. The small board game groups with a limited number of

participants were decided to enable close interaction, fostering a deeper understanding of

participants' experiences and feedback. As for the recruitment method, it was similar to the one

followed for narrative gathering, with a few differences regarding the age criteria and

compositions of groups required as explained above (Refer to Recruitment survey in Appendix

I).

With each testing session, more profound insights were gained regarding the game

mechanism, gameplay, initiation, and conclusion of the game, as well as the level of excitement

and engagement experienced throughout, leading to further iterations (two Iterative versions in

total) and modifications to both the game design and the aesthetic presentation of the game board

(Refer to Appendix J for the Iterative Process, including Version 1 and 2 details). In terms of

aesthetics, this version of the game (Figure 10) maintained similarity in design, layout, and

colors, while incorporating modifications based on the feedback from previous testing sessions.

The major adjustment made was the removal of the motif patterns used to color the cities on the map.

Throughout all workshops, the same visual design was utilized. However, continuous experimentation was conducted on the visual design of the game board and its components. As the design process was digital, various techniques and design principles were explored using Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop software. I experimented with color schemes, typefaces, symbolism techniques, motifs, patterns, scales, proportions, and other disciplines. Once decisions were reached regarding the visual design aspects, the exploration of materials commenced. Initially, the intention was to weave the design into fabric using the jacquard weaving technique. However, when submitting the final design for approval to the weaving center, concerns arose regarding the legibility of the text due to the technical limitations of this method. Therefore, the material decision shifted to more flexible materials that would showcase the intricate details of the design while ensuring the legibility of the text. The game will now be printed on a soft floor rug, allowing for easy folding and packing, stability when placed on the floor, and maintaining the quality of the final product and its details.
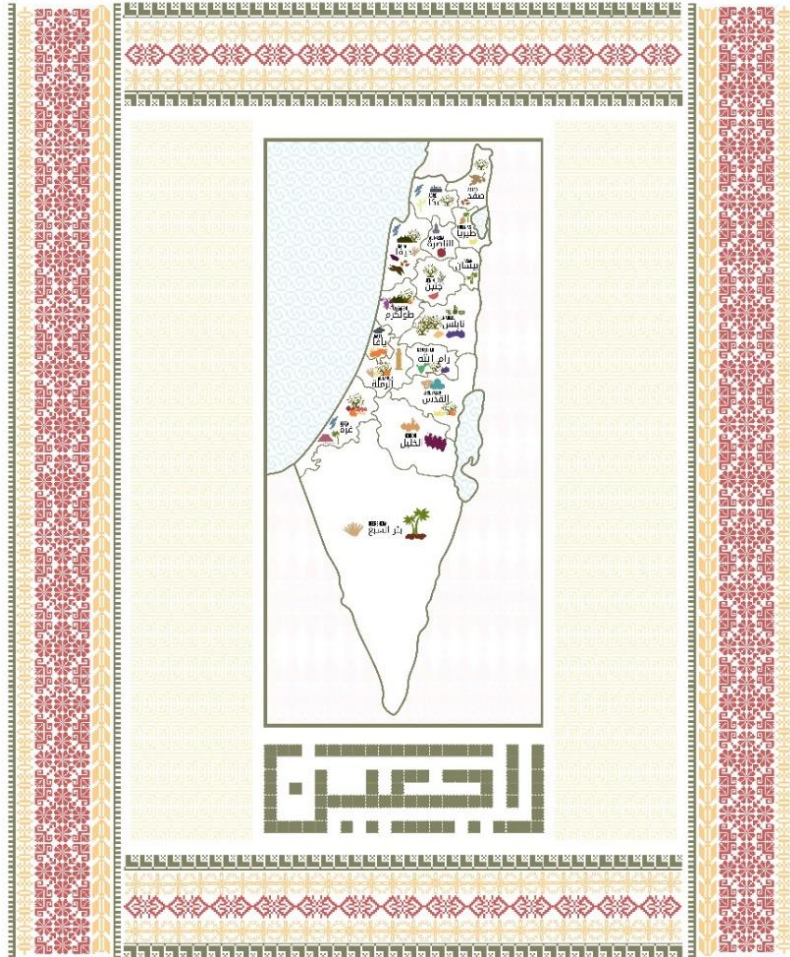
Figure 10. *Rajieen Board Game Visual Design for Version 1 and 2, Used in testing workshops. Created using Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. Jan. 2024*

Every workshop session resulted in an alteration of the game resulting from the two main methods conducted as foundational tools for developing the game, these methods are observation during the game session, and the feedback survey that was shared with participants afterward (Refer to Appendix K for Feedback Survey). For a game like *Rajieen*, participants' observation is key, as it yields a better understanding of the players' natural interaction with the game and with each other, as well as an evaluation of their level of engagement and energy with the game activities and mechanism. Recording these observations was completed through note-taking covering various interactions, inquiries, areas of confusion, and reactions/emotions observed during gameplay. No video documentation was taken to ensure participants were more

comfortable during the game. However, photographs that did not include participants' faces were

recorded for the documentation purposes of the game testing.

Omar Tanirh[21], a renowned board game designer, reviewer, and blogger of Palestinian

Canadian descent residing in Toronto, was one of the vital participants in these workshops. Omar

proved to be an invaluable asset to this study and experimentation, offering inspiring ideas and

insights that greatly influenced the shaping and structuring of the final game design. His

contributions inspired the mechanisms incorporated into the final version of the game. (The

addition of the cultural tokens (Discs) – Refer to Appendix J, The Iterative Process Details,

Version 2, for more details)

Similar to any collaborative project, *Rajieen* had the potential for continuous refinement

and development. However, for the scope of this paper, testing was concluded upon recognizing

the success of the chosen mechanisms and logic in creating a comprehensive game. Now, how

did this final iteration of the game achieve the research's goal and purpose by offering the

potential to celebrate Palestinian culture and nurture a sense of belonging?

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[21] Omar Tanirh is a renowned board game designer and reviewer who has gained recognition for his presence as a content creator
on social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. Through his platforms, Tanirh shares insights into various board
game techniques and mechanisms, providing valuable education and teaching resources for enthusiasts. Instagram Account:
Omar Tanirh (@gameswithomar) • Instagram photos and videos. Youtube Channel: مراجعة لعبة Munamahanna (youtube.com).
Retrieved from: Omar Tanirh (@gameswithomar) • Instagram photos and videos, Feb. 2024.
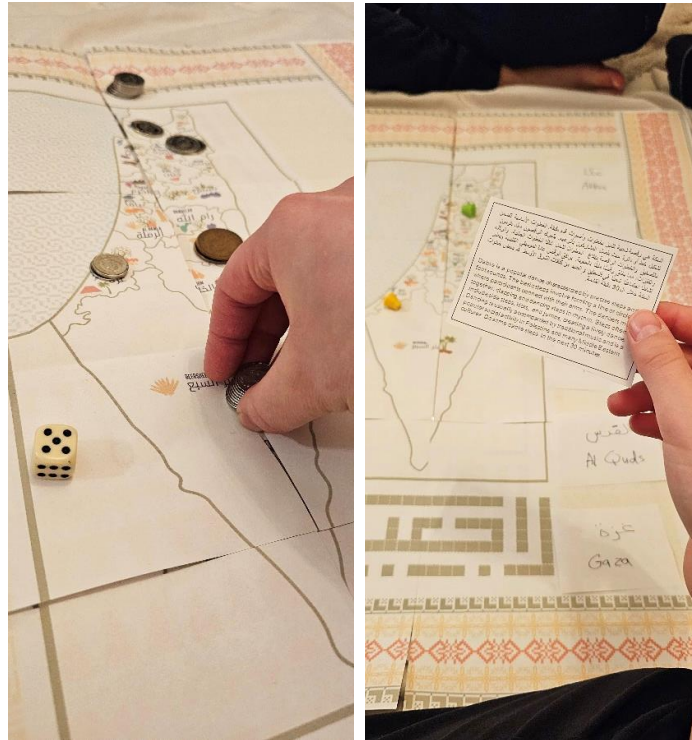
Figure 11. Documentation of Testing Workshops. To the left: Version 1, to the right: Version 2. Jan., Feb. 2024

Synthesis and Discussion

After the completion of this exploration journey with its primary and secondary methods, it was essential to analyze, synthesize, and examine the outcomes of these experiments:

- While the research adopted theories such as Cultural Memory theory, Experiential Learning theory, Attachment theory, and Place Attachment theory in equal portions in its experimentation methods, it became evident that engaging participants through experiential learning yields the most interaction, and aligns best with the study objectives. With this approach, participants showed a higher level of engagement and excitement, particularly the youth aged 12 to 18, who displayed a genuine curiosity about their native land and ancestors. Despite initial concerns about involving this age group due to potential liabilities, their enthusiasm added significant value to the study.

- During testing sessions with mentors and non-Palestinian participants, it was observed

  that while *Rajieen* could engage people from diverse backgrounds and educate them

  about Palestine, it didn't necessarily foster a sense of belonging among non-Palestinian

  players. This realization highlighted the target audience as the Palestinian community in

  the diaspora, with the potential to inspire others to connect with their cultural heritage

  using similar methodologies.

- Narrative gathering interviews played a crucial role in shaping the game, as the

  information gathered from these interviews inspired many elements, particularly the

  content of the trivia cards. This method proved to be a key asset adding to the originality

  and authenticity of the study.

- During the testing workshops and iterative testing, observation and note-taking were the

  most effective elements in providing feedback for the development of the game, while

  surveys, unfortunately, often lacked specificity and did not contribute significantly to the

  investigation.

- For *Rajieen*'s Visual design, the use of symbolism in crafting images, motifs, and colors

  added significant value to the game. It fueled curiosity among players trying to read the

  map, decode its components, guess what each symbol and motif means, and unravel the

  messages it conveys. This added to the players' knowledge, increased their understanding

  of the Palestinian culture and identity, and helped connect players with the Palestinian

  cultural heritage elements showcased in the game.

For the outcome of *Rajieen*, the board game and its corresponding exhibition space will

emphasize Experiential Learning, and Symbolism as the primary theories and methodologies in

the creation process. This involves integrating hands-on experiences, multisensory elements, and storytelling to create an immersive and engaging experience for users.

Research Outcomes: Design and Execution

The culmination of *Rajieen*'s thesis research and investigation is manifested through two distinct yet interrelated components: the design of a board game and the creation of an immersive narrative exhibition space. These components serve as the embodiment of *Rajieen*'s scholarly inquiries, drawing upon a synthesis of primary and secondary research findings. Within this section, the conceptualization, development, and realization of these elements are demonstrated, highlighting their significance within the broader context of *Rajieen*'s exploration journey.

Rajieen the Game

The central achievement of *Rajieen* project and its research endeavor is the interactive board game *Rajieen*. In this board game, players embark on a cultural journey, moving from one city to another, engaging with questions and challenges that highlight the diverse aspects of Palestine. The game, based on solid theoretical frameworks such as belonging theories and immersive experiences theories, is designed to connect players with the Palestinian cultural heritage, foster a deep sense of belonging by encouraging experiential learning, and empower individuals to embrace their Palestinian cultural identity. Players engage with the game board by rolling the die, drawing cards, responding to trivia cards answering questions and doing challenges, and capturing the knowledge of the Palestinian cities.

The visual design of *Rajieen* went through multiple evolvements, leading to the final design illustrated in Figure 12.

- **Color Scheme:** The colors selected for the final design are derived from natural

  earthy tones, a deliberate choice that aligns with the research objectives and

  findings. By embracing these hues, the design seeks to evoke a profound sense of

  connection and belonging, reminiscent of the grounding elements found in nature.

  Natural earthy colors have long been associated with feelings of comfort,

  harmony, and authenticity. Just as the earth's palette harmonizes seamlessly with

  its surroundings, these colors are intended to envelop players in a familiar and

  nurturing environment, fostering a deeper sense of connection to the game and its

  cultural context.

  The final design employs four primary colors to render these cities: Aquamarine

  Blue, Olive Green, Sand Yellow, and Brick Red. These hues, inspired by the

  natural elements of the Palestinian landscape, are carefully chosen to evoke

  specific associations and emotions. Aquamarine blue reflects the tranquil waters

  of the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River that surround Palestine, Olive

  Green represents the lush olive trees scattered across the countryside and

  symbolize land, heritage, resilience, and solidarity, Sand Yellow embodies the

  wheat and barley fields that are covering vast areas of the land, and Brick Red

  symbolizes the rich clay earth found in traditional Palestinian architecture.

  Additionally, the red color is prominently featured in Traditional Palestinian

  Embroidery "Tatreez" and is known for its alarming and eye-catching qualities,

  making it the dominant color choice for the design.

Figure 12. Rajieen *Final Game Board Design. Created using Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. Feb. 2024*

- **The Visual Design:** The design frames feature traditional Palestinian Cross-Stitch

  Embroidery "Tatreez" motifs, which form patterns around the map. Each motif

  holds unique symbolism or meaning, reflecting stories gathered from the project's

  participants. For instance, the Olive Branch motif symbolizes narratives related to

  olive trees, including their harvesting seasons and associated rituals, a theme

  commonly shared among research participants. The meanings and symbolism of

each element in the design are further detailed in the accompanying chart (Figure
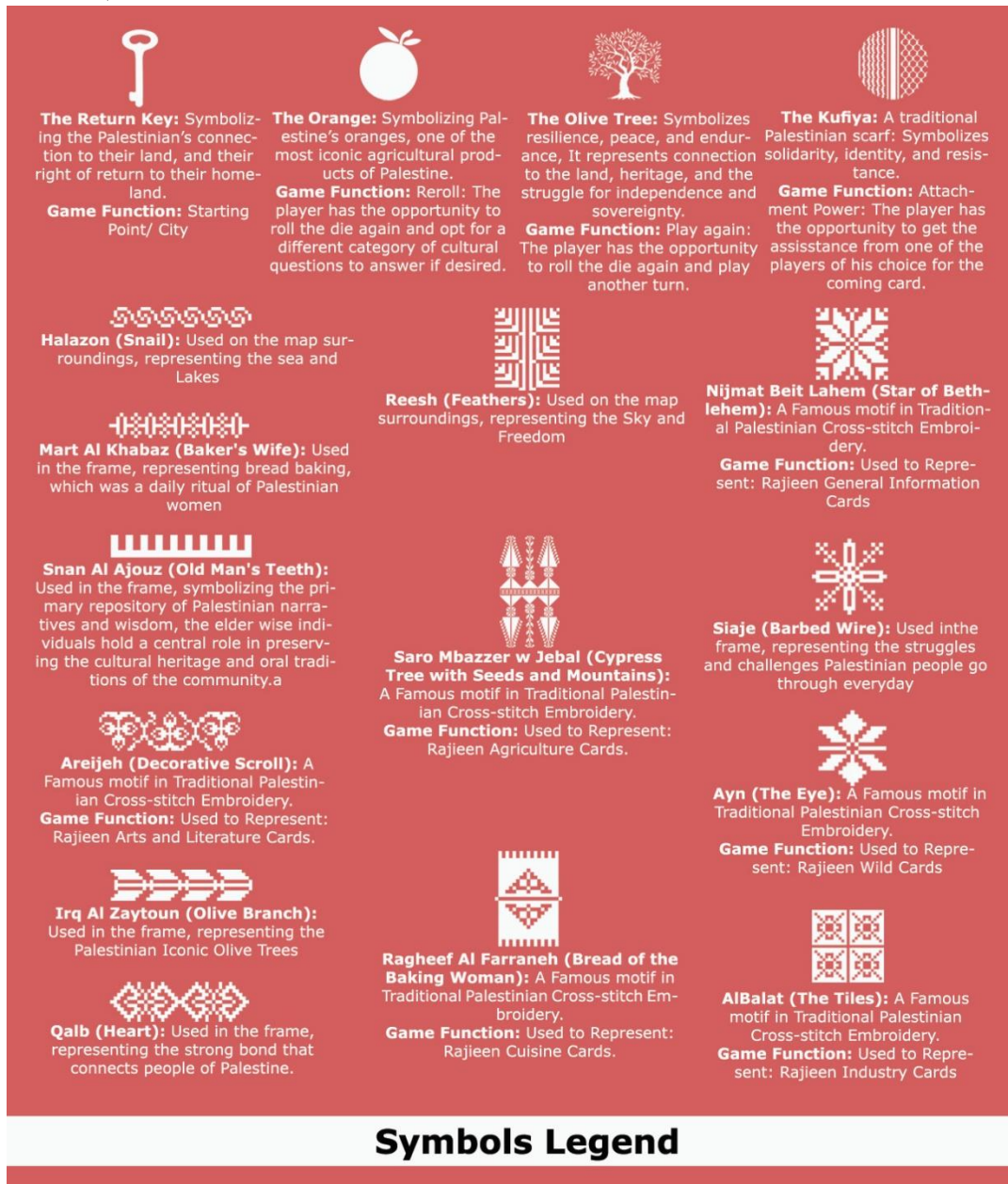
13).

Figure 13. Symbols Legend. Created using Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. Feb. 2024

- **Featured Typography:** Bilingual typography is featured in the game design,

  incorporating both Arabic script and Latin characters. This inclusion serves

  multiple purposes: firstly, it reinforces the sense of belonging by embracing the

  linguistic heritage of the Palestinian community. By showcasing Arabic script

alongside Latin characters, the game celebrates cultural diversity and promotes

inclusivity. Secondly, the use of bilingual typography enhances the game's

usability and readability for a diverse audience. It ensures that players from

various linguistic backgrounds can engage with the game comfortably, fostering

accessibility and encouraging participation from a broader spectrum of

individuals within the community.

- **Design Execution:** Instead of a board, the game is printed on a soft rug, so

  players can lay them on the floor and engage in an experience while being directly

  on the land, symbolizing belonging to the land and connecting through it. Designs

  of the game board, cards, tokens, and storage bags were all created using Adobe

  Illustrator and Photoshop, and sent to specialized printing studios to print all

  components. (Refer to Figure 14)

Figure 14. Board Game Mock-up. Created using Adobe Photoshop. Feb. 2024

Game Design and Instructions

Rules of Play

3 to 5 players, Age: 12 +

Objective

The objective of *Rajieen* is to embark on a cultural journey, capturing the knowledge of

Palestinian cities. Every right answer grants the player a new move and a chance to acquire

knowledge of a new city. A Player acquiring a city's knowledge marks it with their cultural

tokens (discs), symbolizing their deeper connection to it and their growing understanding of

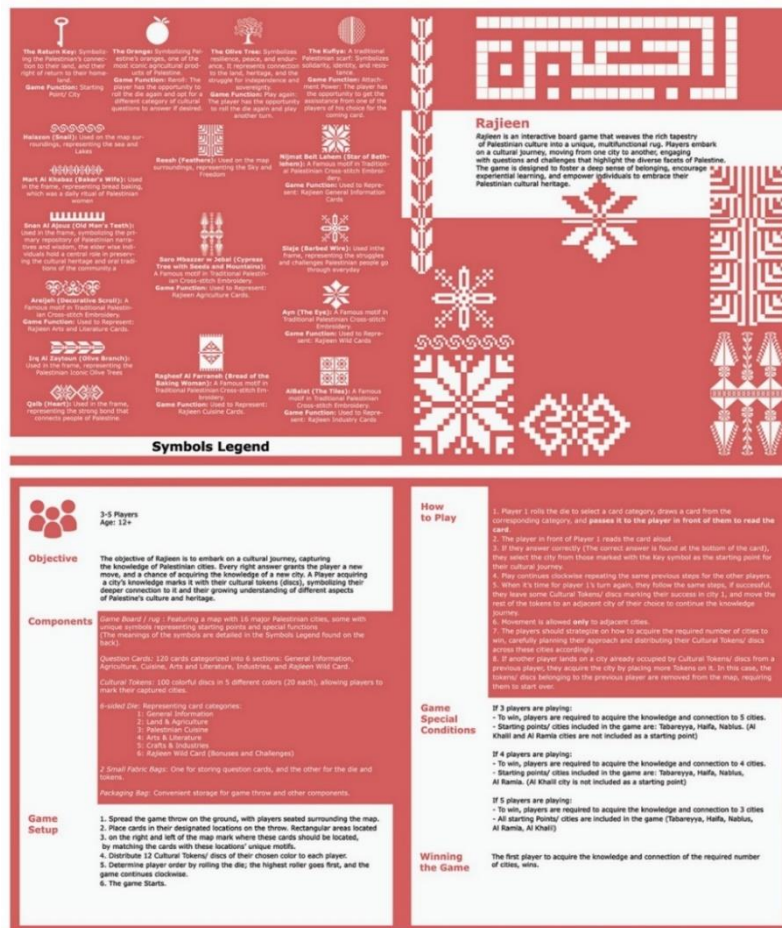various aspects of Palestine's culture and heritage.

Figure 15. Rajieen Board Game Manual Print. Top: Cover Page, Bottom: The Inside. Created using Adobe
Illustrator and Photoshop. Feb. 2024

Components

- *Board game/ Rug*: Featuring a map with 16 major Palestinian cities, some with unique symbols representing starting points and special functions (The meanings of the symbols are detailed in the Symbols Legend found in Figure 14).

- *Question Cards*: 120 cards categorized into 6 sections: General Information, Land & Agriculture, Palestinian Cuisine, Arts & Literature, Crafts & Industries, and *Rajieen* Wild Cards. (See Figure 16 for Trivia Cards Design and Sample Questions)

- *Cultural Tokens*: 100 colorful discs in 5 distinct colors (20 each), allowing players to mark their captured cities.

- *6-sided Die*: Representing card categories:

    1: General Information

    2: Land & Agriculture

    3: Palestinian Cuisine

    4: Arts and Literature

    5: Crafts & Industries

    6: Rajieen Wild Cards (Bonuses and Challenges)

- *7 Small Fabric Bags*: For storing the 6 categories question cards, and the last for the die and tokens.

- *Packaging Bag*: Convenient storage for game rug and other components.

- *Instructions Card:* Providing essential guidelines for players, and symbols guide
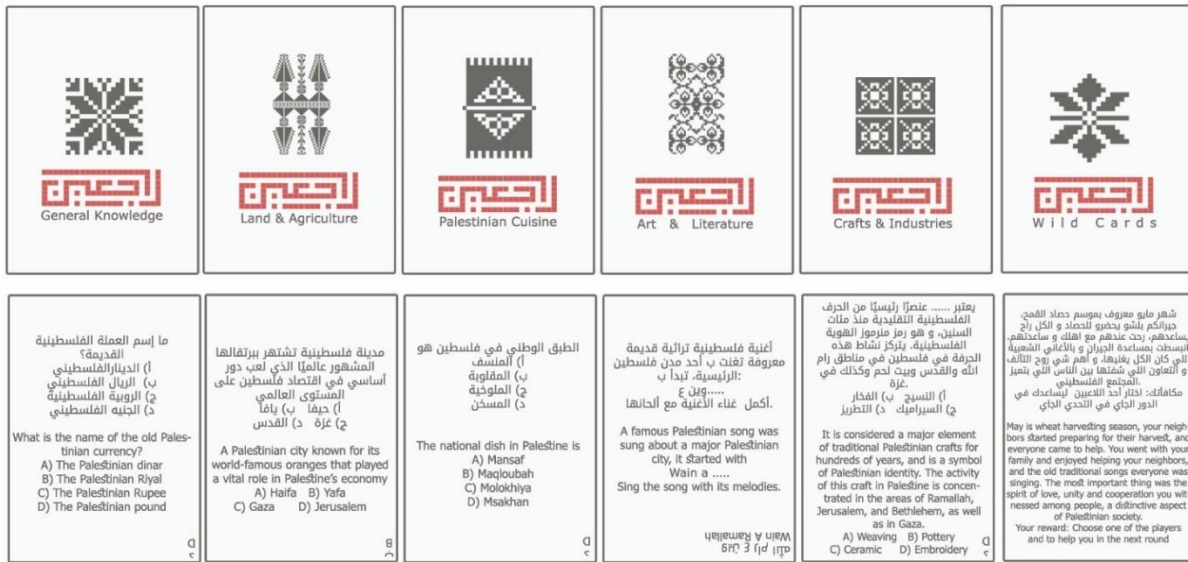

Figure 16. Trivia Cards Design and Sample Questions. Created using Adobe Photoshop. Feb. 2024

Set-Up

- Spread the game rug on the ground, with players seated surrounding the map.

- Place cards in their designated locations on the throw. Rectangular areas located on the

  right and left of the map mark where these cards should be located, by matching the cards

  with these locations' unique motifs.

- Distribute 12 Cultural Tokens/ discs of their chosen color to each player.

- Determine the player's order by rolling the die; the highest roller goes first, and the game

  continues clockwise.

- The game Starts.

How to Play

- Player 1 rolls the die to select a card category, draws a card from the corresponding

  category, and passes it to the player in front of them to read the card.

- The player in front of Player 1 reads the card aloud.

- If they answer correctly (The correct answer is found on the card), they select the city from those marked with the Key symbol as the starting point for their cultural journey.

- Play continues clockwise repeating the same previous steps for the other players.

- When it's time for player 1's turn again, they follow the same steps, if successful, they leave some Cultural Tokens/ discs marking their success in city 1, and move the rest of the tokens to an adjacent city of their choice to continue the knowledge journey.

- Movement is allowed only to adjacent cities.

- The players should strategize how to acquire the required number of cities to win, carefully planning their approach and distributing their Cultural Tokens/ discs across these cities accordingly.

- If another player lands on a city already occupied by Cultural Tokens/ discs from a previous player, they can acquire the city by placing more Tokens on it. In this case, the tokens/ discs belonging to the previous player are removed from the map, requiring them to start over.

Game Special Condition

If 3 players are playing:

- To win, players are required to acquire the knowledge and connection to 5 cities.

- Starting points/ cities included in the game are Tabareyya, Haifa, and Nablus. (Al Khalil and Al Ramla cities are not included as a starting point)

If 4 players are playing:

- To win, players are required to acquire the knowledge and connection to 4 cities.

- Starting points/ cities included in the game are Tabareyya, Haifa, and Nablus, AL Ramla.

  (Al Khalil city is not included as a starting point)

If 5 players are playing:

- To win, players are required to acquire the knowledge and connection to 3 cities

- All starting Points/ cities are included in the game (Tabareyya, Haifa, Nablus, Al Ramla,

  Al Khalil)

Winning the Game

The first player to acquire the knowledge and connection of the required number of cities wins.

Rajieen offers a unique blend of education, fun, and cultural immersion. By playing this game, players not only learn about Palestine's rich culture but also form a deep and personal connection to the land, its people, and their heritage.

The game's design and mechanics exemplify an exploration of interdisciplinary design applications, with emphasis on game design, particularly emphasizing their potential as pedagogical tools for audiences of all ages. The game serves as a prime example of how design can transcend its conventional boundaries, serving not only as a means of entertainment but also as a vehicle for education, awareness-raising, and effective communication of ideas and messages.

Rajieen the Narrative Space

Figure 17. Exhibition Space Design Mock-up. Created using Adobe Photoshop. Feb. 2024

Rajieen exhibition space translates the synthesis of all methodologies implemented in this research exploration, with its primary and secondary methods, into tangible items. The objective of the space is to narrate the story and findings of the study.

This space is designed to give the feeling of a home, with the game board/ rug setup positioned at the center as the focal point. This integration of game board/rug within the milieu aims to replicate the sense of engagement and connectivity experienced in collective engagements. *Rajieen* space endeavors to facilitate Palestinian individuals reestablishing ties with their cultural roots, whether by reviving cherished memories or creating new ones, especially for those who were unable to experience them due to their diaspora status. Additionally, it aims to remind individuals of all backgrounds and ethnicities about the importance of celebrating and embracing their identity, land, and culture.

The narrative space design draws from belonging theories such as Cultural Memory, Experiential Learning, Attachment, and Place Attachment theories. Utilizing multiple design disciplines such as interior design (in narrative space design, color schemes, and the game rug creation), graphic design (in game board/rug branding, information design, typography, motifs, and symbols), motion design (in the projection with its visual and sound effects), and interactive design (in the board game design, storytelling through design, and the immersive experience), the space design facilitates the engagement of visitors on multiple levels.
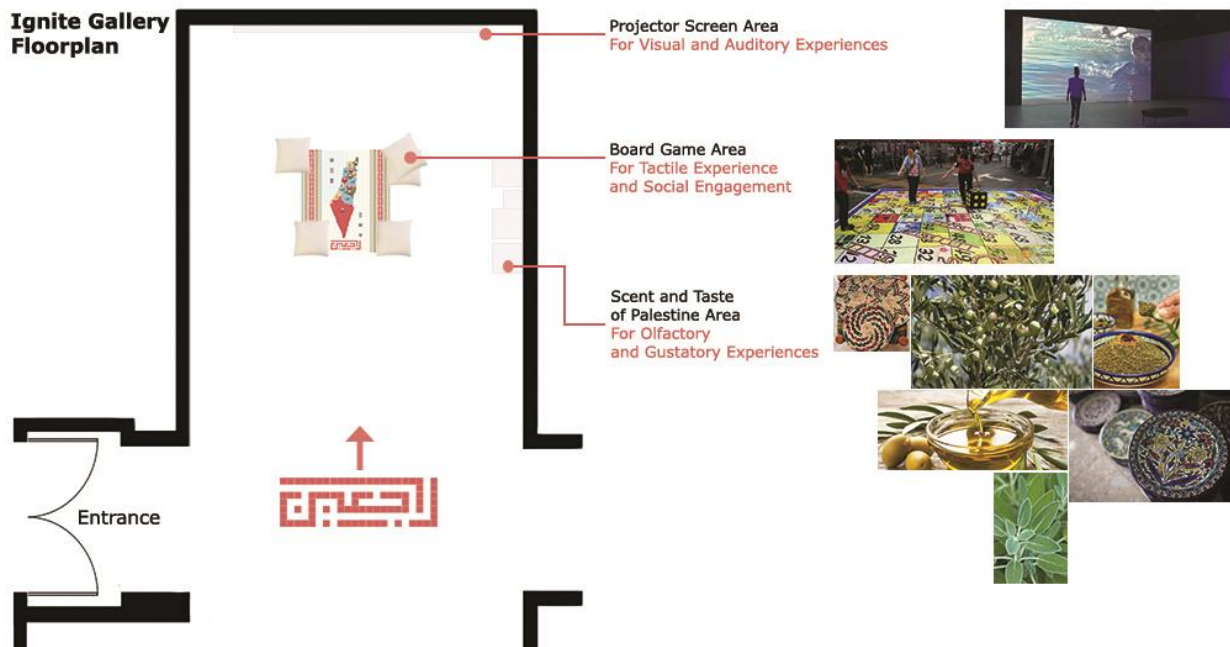

Figure 18. Exhibition Space Floorplan, with mood board images. Adobe Photoshop. Feb. 2024

Through auditory, visual, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile experiences, the exhibition communicates with visitors intellectually, emotionally, experientially, perceptually, and responsively, enabling full engagement with the space and its offerings.

Firstly, Cultural Memory Theory is utilized through narrative storytelling techniques, including documentary videos and interactive displays, to showcase Palestinian cultural memories and shared narratives. By immersing visitors in stories and experiences, the exhibition reinforces their connection to Palestinian culture and identity.

Secondly, Experiential Learning Theory is incorporated with the "Scent and Taste of Palestine" corner. Here, visitors engage in multi-sensory experiences, by interacting with traditional Palestinian products such as Palestinian ceramics, Zaatar (thyme), olives, olive oil, and Sage. They smell, touch, and feel these items, and are invited to taste authentic Palestinian goods like Zaatar and Kaak (Date cookies). This immersive experience allows the visitors to take home a piece of Palestine with them, creating lasting memories of their cultural journey.

Thirdly, Place Attachment Theory is embodied in the central element of the space – the game board/rug setup, which serves as a physical representation of Palestinian landscapes and cultural identity. By navigating the board and engaging with Palestinian landmarks, visitors form emotional bonds with the land and its heritage. Additionally, a documentary video will showcase the making-of process of the game and the co-creation journey, sharing narratives and stories about Palestinian cultural heritage and providing a virtual trip to Palestine through visuals and audio.

Lastly, Attachment Theory is reflected in the exhibition space's setup, resembling that of a home. This setup aims to provide a safe and supportive environment for visitors to share personal stories, connect with others, and engage in cultural activities, fostering a sense of community and belonging.

This interdisciplinary space design acts as a tool to facilitate the remembrance and reconnection process, aiming to encourage participants to revive their cherished memories, recreate and relive new ones, share personal stories, and engage in cultural activities in an enjoyable and educational manner. Through this approach, the project examines the capacity of design disciples such as interior design, graphic design, and game design to educate individuals

about their identity and culture while fostering a sense of belonging, one of the research's main

inquiries.

Rajieen Experience at Ignite Gallery, OCADU

In the heart of downtown Toronto, *Rajieen* exhibition unfolds at the Ignite Gallery,

OCADU, spanning from April 11th to April 15th, 2024 (See Appendix L for the exhibition

poster).

Figure 19. Documentation Photos of *Rajieen* Exhibition at Ignite Gallery: The Exhibition Entrance. Apr. 2024

This immersive exhibition showcases and celebrates the cultural heritage of Palestine.

The space serves as a metaphor for a diary – a diary that narrates the story of the project *Rajieen*

through all its stages and all its primary and secondary methodologies implemented. *Rajieen*

exhibition is dedicated to inspiring Palestinians in particular, and all visitors in general, of those

living in the diaspora, to embrace, cherish, preserve, and celebrate their cultural identity.

Rajieen draws from belonging theories such as Cultural Memory, Experiential Learning,

Attachment, and Place Attachment theories, by utilizing symbolism, narrative storytelling

techniques, and sensory elements to engage visitors on multiple levels. Through auditory, visual,

olfactory, gustatory, and tactile experiences, the exhibition aims to communicate with visitors

intellectually, emotionally, experientially, perceptually, and responsively, enabling full

engagement with the space and its offerings.

Figure 20. Documentation Photos of *Rajieen* Exhibition at Ignite Gallery: Front View of the Exhibition
Space with all its components and Elements. Apr. 2024

The exhibition space was thoughtfully divided into four distinct parts, each offering a

unique and immersive experience for visitors.

Figure 21. Documentation Photos of *Rajieen* Exhibition at Ignite Gallery: Information Corner. Apr. 2024

Firstly, the information corner (Figure 21) served as the gateway to the exhibition, providing visitors with essential materials such as brochures, project information, and a feedback notebook to capture their thoughts, feedback, and impressions.

Figure 22. Documentation Photos of *Rajieen* Exhibition at Ignite Gallery: The Central Installation of the Space – *Rajieen* the Board Game. Apr. 2024

At the center of the space stood *Rajieen* the game (Figure 22), serving as the focal point and captivating participants with its engaging setup. Surrounding cushions invited guests to immerse themselves in the game, connecting deeply with the intricate details, stories, and experiences woven into its fabric.

Participants not only enjoyed the gameplay but also delved into decoding the motifs adorning the game rug, uncovering the stories and symbolism behind each pattern or color. Additionally, they eagerly flipped through trivia cards to explore and learn about Palestinian culture through an engaging and interactive experience, through which they started recalling memories, sharing experiences and stories about Palestine, and their cultural background.

Figure 23. Documentation Photos of Rajieen Exhibition at Ignite Gallery: Details and Components of Rajieen
Game. Apr. 2024

Rajieen multisensory experience "Scent and Taste of Palestine" (Figure 24) proved to be

a highlight for many visitors, enticing them with the scents of sage, the touch of Palestinian

ceramics, and the taste of traditional treats like Zaatar and Kaak. These sensory offerings not

only provided a taste of Palestinian culture but also extended a warm invitation for visitors to

become part of it, taking home cherished memories and tangible mementos.

Figure 24. Documentation Photos of *Rajieen* Exhibition at Ignite Gallery: Details and Components from Rajieen the Multisensory Experience. Apr. 2024

However, it was *Rajieen* the Movie (Figure 25) that emerged as a profoundly impactful

element within the space, commanding attention with its prominent projection on a central wall.

This three-minute film integrated videos sourced from the author's family archive, supplemented

by publicly available online content and enriched with audio snippets from *Rajieen* interviews

and game testing workshops (See Appendix M for more details about the film).

Figure 25. Documentation Photos of *Rajieen* Exhibition at Ignite Gallery: Rajieen the Movie, Projected on the
Central Wall of the Space. Apr. 2024

Through captivating storytelling, the film seamlessly connected all elements of the

exhibition providing a comprehensive and immersive understanding of the project and the

culture it celebrated. Visitors found themselves deeply engrossed in the narrative, forging a

profound connection with both the project and the rich Palestinian heritage it illustrated.

Ultimately, the movie transcended its role as a mere component, elevating the entire exhibition

into a transformative experience that unified its various elements, processes, research,

methodologies, outcomes, and engaging interactive experiences, leaving visitors with a lasting

appreciation, and understanding of the cultural odyssey they had embarked upon.

Visitors' Engagement Analysis: Interactivity and Observations

Feedback and observations from participants revealed three distinct levels of engagement

within *Rajieen* exhibition space:

1. Palestinian visitors with prior experience in Palestine: These individuals experienced a

   profound sense of nostalgia and belonging, reliving memories and cultural connections.

   Engaging with the exhibition, through the game, the multisensory corner and the short

   film, reinforced the characteristics of their culture and familiarity with Palestinian

   heritage, and triggered a sense of connection and belonging. For example, during

   interactions at the multisensory corner, many participants enjoyed the scents of Zaatar

   and Sage. This sensory experience evoked nostalgia among many, prompting

   reminiscences and fostering conversations among participants as they shared memories

   and experiences from their lives back home.

2. Palestinians without prior experience in Palestine: Despite lacking firsthand exposure to

   Palestine, these participants found the exhibition to be a valuable opportunity to learn and

   connect to their cultural roots. While they enjoyed the immersive experience, they

   encountered challenges in navigating the game's content. Many expressed challenges in

   connecting with specific Palestinian landscapes and cities, as well as in answering

   questions or challenges related to traditional practices from their homeland. Suggestions

   were made to enhance the game's accessibility, such as integrating illustrations, images,

   or technological tools to aid comprehension of the cultural knowledge embedded within

   the game.

3. Non-Palestinian visitors: People from diverse backgrounds embraced the opportunity to

   learn about the Palestinian culture, often feeling a sense of welcome and land belonging

within the exhibition space. Many remarked on the homely atmosphere and the joyous

presence of children, which contributed to the inclusive ambiance and enhanced the

overall experience. Moreover, they actively engaged with the exhibition space and its

components as an exploratory journey, inquiring about various details showcased, such as

the components of Zaatar and its applications, the regions where Sage is cultivated, and

the embroidery motifs embedded within the game design. Additionally, they took

pleasure in reading the trivia cards, testing their understanding of Palestine, and

expanding their knowledge of its culture.

Through observation of the audience's overall experience, several insights emerged.

Firstly, it was observed that children and younger participants exhibited the highest levels of

engagement and excitement, highlighting the potential for targeting this demographic with more

tailored experiences. There is an opportunity to develop a simplified version of the game,

incorporating lively illustrations and clearer instructions to foster early cultural education

specifically aimed at youth and children.

Additionally, providing traditional Palestinian items such as Zaatar and Kaak as

souvenirs had a notable impact. For those familiar with these treats, they served as tangible

reminders of their connotations to Palestinian culture, and their connections to particular

traditions and events. Moreover, for those not acquainted with these items, especially non-Arabic

participants, the novelty of these items, particularly Zaatar, both in its name and taste, sparked

curiosity and interest in Palestinian culture. This led to further questions and explorations,

deepening their engagement with the cultural offerings of the exhibition. Generally speaking, the

experience of tasting these cultural delicacies served as a tangible connection to Palestinian

heritage, leaving a memorable impression on visitors and fostering a deeper appreciation for the culture being celebrated.

Furthermore, observing visitors' interaction and navigation within the space underscored the potential for enhancing *Rajieen's* experience, which can be accomplished by expanding to a larger space that allows for a staged journey of exploration. Starting with a multisensory encounter, visitors could gradually progress to storytelling sessions before engaging with the game. This structured approach would enable deeper immersion and personalized exploration for visitors.

While reflecting on these insights gleaned from analyzing visitors' engagement and interactive experience at *Rajieen* exhibition, it becomes evident that the project has succeeded in fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. In the conclusion section, the broader implications of these findings will be explored, along with considerations for future directions for advancing the mission of cultural preservation and education.

Limitation of Research

One of the primary strategies initially planned for the project's completion involved engaging individuals from Palestine to contribute stories, visuals, audio, and video content to inform the game and enhance the exhibition. However, due to the ongoing war in Palestine, and its challenging conditions, reaching out to these individuals has remained unattainable. Additionally, the resulting stress and pressure from this war have significantly impacted individuals' willingness to participate in this research study. This reluctance has posed considerable challenges to the data collection process, leading to extended timelines and increased difficulty in obtaining necessary information.

Additionally, the recruitment process, interviews, and workshops encountered significant

obstacles during the project's development. Despite the project's tight timeline, these activities

took longer than anticipated, often necessitating repeated sessions due to technical glitches or

cancellations and rescheduling caused by adverse weather conditions or unforeseen

circumstances. These challenges significantly impeded progress towards completing the project.

Conclusion

As we conclude this thesis journey, it's important to recognize the key role a project like

Rajieen plays in contributing to preserving cultural heritage within diasporic communities,

particularly focusing on the Palestinian community in Toronto. The research utilized primary

methods – through interviews, workshops, and surveys, to explore the experiences and narratives

of Palestinian immigrants and their descendants, and combined these methods with secondary

research through an in-depth literature review, resulting in the framework that guided the

creation of *Rajieen*. This framework is shaped by theories of belonging – like Cultural Memory,

Experiential Learning, Attachment, and Place Attachment theories, and design methodologies

such as co-creation, symbolism, narrative space, immersive experience, and board games as

educational tools. These methodologies have enabled the creation of deliverables to help deal

with the cultural disconnection phenomena that initiated the project investigation and enabled

crafting strategies aimed at cultural revitalization and preservation for the Palestinian community

in the diaspora.

Additionally, it is crucial to recognize *Rajieen* as a potent tool for activism in putting

design efforts to promote the Palestinian culture, sustain its value, and direct or intervene in

social, and cultural activities to reform and activate Palestinian engagement with their land and

roots despite the existing challenges that Palestinians are enduring until now on their land. While

not explicitly political, *Rajieen* inherently embodies my profound personal connection to my homeland, which, like any other Palestinian, can hardly be separated from politics. As a designer, I view my role as pivotal in catalyzing social and cultural change while resisting attempts to erase my country, culture, or identity. Consequently, *Rajieen* stands as a testament to my unwavering commitment to Palestine, serving as both an activist tool and a symbol of solidarity with my people.

Upon evaluating the sense of belonging within *Rajieen* project, it became apparent that despite employing various methodologies throughout the various stages, the elusive nature of this concept emerged. While the project successfully facilitated connections between Palestinians and their culture, traditions, land, and people, questions arose regarding its ability to truly foster a sense of belonging. Furthermore, considerations were raised regarding the experiences of non-Palestinian and non-Arabic participants and whether they, too, felt a sense of belonging. Throughout *Rajieen's* research project and exhibition, participants shared diverse interpretations of belonging, illustrating the complexity and fluidity of the concept. Reflecting on my own experiences, I've come to understand this complexity – this sense of belonging can be felt towards every country we've lived in, the religion we follow, the places we've visited and influenced us, the individuals we've met and added value to our life, and the experiences that have shaped us. These insights underscore the necessity for larger-scale projects with extended timelines to comprehensively analyze the sense of belonging. Such initiatives should adopt a more inclusive approach, integrating inclusive design methods to tailor spaces for individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, and can also benefit from technology integration such as augmented reality, to facilitate achieving its goals.

However, the analysis of visitors' engagement at *Rajieen* exhibition, of both Palestinian

and non-Palestinian participants, reveals the project's profound impact in fostering cross-cultural

understanding and appreciation, transcending boundaries to educate and engage individuals from

diverse backgrounds. By providing a platform for immersive cultural experiences, *Rajieen* serves

as a pedagogical tool, facilitating learning and connection beyond traditional methods. Its

utilization of design, particularly through game design, highlights the potential for innovative

approaches to education and cultural preservation. Through this endeavor, the exhibition not only

invited individuals to explore Palestinian culture but also offered a deeper understanding of the

significance of design in promoting empathy, activism, and cultural exchange. The incorporation

of elements such as traditional Palestinian items as souvenirs and the multisensory experience

enhanced the richness of the encounter, eliciting memories, curiosity, and a sense of belonging.

As we reflect on the outcomes of this research, it becomes evident that *Rajieen* has the

potential to inspire future initiatives and interdisciplinary collaborations. By offering novel

insights into design as a pedagogical tool, particularly through game design, this thesis

contributes to the broader discourse on education, cultural preservation, and social change. The

multidisciplinary nature of the project highlights the interconnectedness of design, narrative, and

cultural identity, paving the way for future research and exploration in these areas.

Moving forward, the research question expands to consider the role of play as a

pedagogical tool and the potential for game design to facilitate immersive learning experiences.

Additionally, the exhibition experience prompts a reevaluation of the sense of belonging, inviting

further investigation into its nuanced manifestations and implications.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Examples of SWANA Designers' Inspiring Work
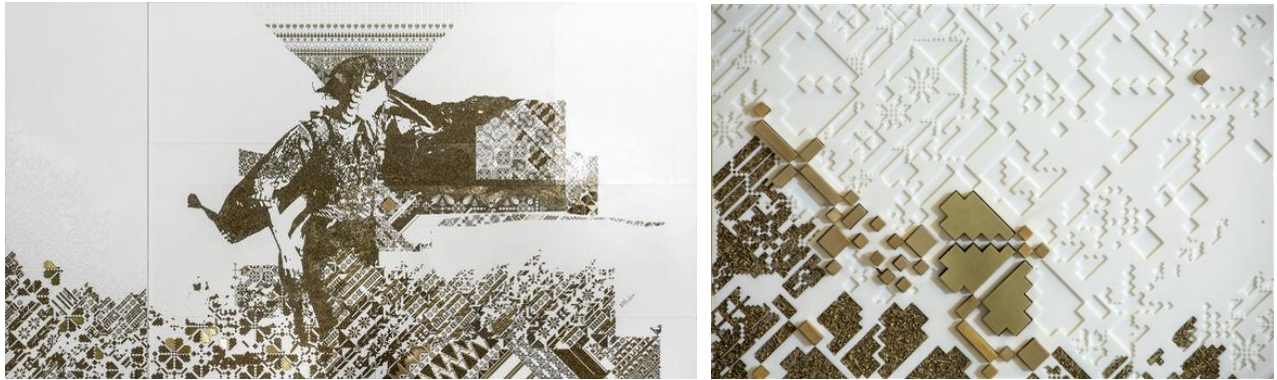
Naqsh Collective. *Wa Mashat*, 2020. Wall Art. Industrial marble with brass. 508 x 939.8 cm.

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Iyad Naja. Beirut Center Table. Prefabricated concrete, with Brass. H: 45 cm, W: 120cm.

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Bokja. *CYNZIA,* Embroidered Small Pouf. Embroidery on Fabric. 40 x 63 x 63 cm.

Retrieved from (https://bokja.com/)

Appendix B: Board Game Design Prototype 1: Manual

Rajieen: A Cultural Journey through Palestine

Rajieen is an interactive and immersive board game that weaves the rich tapestry of Palestinian culture into a unique, multifunctional throw. Players embark on a cultural journey, engaging with questions and challenges that highlight the diverse facets of Palestine. The game is designed to foster a deep sense of belonging, encourage experiential learning, and empower individuals to embrace their Palestinian cultural heritage.

Game Components:

- Game Board: The board features a map with iconic Palestinian cities, landmarks, and symbols.
- Player Tokens: Each player selects tokens representing aspects of Palestinian culture (e.g., olive trees, traditional clothing).
- Information Cards: These cards provide insights into Palestinian history, heritage, and traditions.
- Challenge Cards: Challenges related to Palestinian culture, including dance, music, food, and historical knowledge.
- Creative Expression Cards: Players use these for artistic activities inspired by Palestinian art, storytelling, or poetry.
- "Attachment Figures" Tokens: These tokens symbolize supportive figures in players' lives, such as grandparents or community leaders, which players win through the journey and give them bonuses, reflecting the influence of supportive figures within Palestinian communities.

Game Guidelines:

- Objective: The objective of the game is to complete a cultural journey that strengthens each player's sense of belonging to the Palestinian culture and heritage.
  This game design will be printed on a throw or rug, or foldable vinyl boards. This choice of materials allows players to engage with the game in a unique and interactive way. The players will sit on the floor to play. The idea of creating a board game directly on the floor adds a physical dimension to the experience. Players can spread it on the ground, sit together, and immerse themselves in the game while feeling a direct connection to the land. This physical interaction with the game board symbolizes the idea of belonging to the land and connecting through it, creating a profound and sensory experience. As players engage with the game, they are, in a way, connecting with the land itself. This connection is more than just visual; it's a sensory experience that helps them establish a meaningful link to Palestinian heritage.
  Also, by sitting on the ground around the game board, players naturally form a social construct, encouraging conversation, collaboration, and shared cultural exploration. This setup fosters a sense of togetherness, mirroring the communal aspect of traditional gatherings in Palestinian culture.
- Players: 3+ players. Age: 12 -60 years old
  - This game is thoughtfully designed to suit players aged 12 and above, ensuring that it remains engaging, entertaining, and educational for all. The game's appeal to this age group is achieved through a simple yet playful approach that combines fun and learning. Incorporating elements of cultural and educational content, the game provides an interactive experience that allows participants to explore, discover, and absorb knowledge while enjoying themselves. The game mechanics are intuitive, making it accessible to players of various ages and backgrounds. It's an inclusive experience that encourages curiosity, learning, and fun for everyone aged 12 and above.

- o In the case of recruiting young participants aged 12 to 17 in this research, their authorized parents or third parties are the ones who will consent on their behalf. (Check Consent forms in the Attachment section). Despite their lack of legal capacity to make decisions, prospective participants are welcome to express their wishes in a meaningful and mature way. Their self-direction to verbally or physically assenting to, or dissenting from, participation in this research will be respected.
  - o To optimize the study's outcomes and ensure the best results from the game, participants will be organized into familiar groups, such as families and friends. This arrangement allows for a more open sharing of experiences, stories, and feedback, particularly among younger participants (Youth 12 to 17 years old), who can engage comfortably without concerns about being observed or judged.
- Setup: Players choose their tokens and receive "Attachment Figures" tokens as they go. The Information Cards, Challenge Cards, and Creative Expression Cards are related to each city or landmark they visit. Players start their journey at the beginning of the game board.

Winning the Game: The player who reaches the end of the game board first and has collected the most "Attachment Figures" tokens is the winner.

Appendix C: Expert Interview Form

Welcome Note

Good morning/afternoon,

I am Razan Obaid, a graduate student at OCADU (Ontario College for Art and Design University), pursuing my Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree. I am currently working on my thesis research project, titled "An Interdisciplinary Engagement Design to Revive and Sustain the Sense of Belonging." The project explores how interdisciplinary design approaches can act as tools for fostering a sense of belonging within cultural communities. Its primary objective is to inspire participants to continuously uphold and celebrate their rich Palestinian culture, heritage, and identity.

Purpose of this Interview

Amid these dark days, this research study will act as tool to convey the optimistic, positive side of Palestine – Palestine the rich culture, fertile land, and loveable people who, no matter how far or close they are to their homeland, they carry Palestine in their heart and memories. The purpose of the interview is to gather valuable insights and experiences from you as a board game designer, educator, and expert in the field, in the context of my research project helping shape that vision. The primary objectives of this interview are:

- To discuss various aspects of board game design, including the underlying logic and concepts involved in designing board games.
- To explore the experiences of the interviewee in targeting specific audiences for board games.
- To delve into the design process, seeking insights, key tips, and potential pitfalls to avoid in board game design.
- To examine effective strategies for successfully executing board game projects.

Your knowledge and expertise shared during the interview will significantly contribute to my research project and enhance the quality of the board game being developed as part of my thesis project. Through this interview, I aim to build a better understanding of board game design and its role in fostering a sense of belonging within cultural communities.

Consent Reminder

Before we start our interview, thank you for reading and signing the consent form before this meeting. I would like to confirm that your participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to abstain from responding to any questions or withdraw from the interview at any time without any penalties.

Interview Details

Duration: The interview will last approximately 50 - 60 minutes.
Format: The interview will be held virtually through Microsoft Teams.
"Can I get your consent to record this interview?"

Ethical Clearance

This study has undergone a thorough review and has received ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Board at OCAD University (Ref No: 6192). If you have any comments or concerns, please feel free to contact the Research Ethics Office via research@ocadu.ca. The REB can provide answers to any pertinent questions regarding research participant rights.

I appreciate your willingness to participate in this interview. Shall we start?

Questions

1) What's your typical process for creating a new board game from concept to completion?
2) How do you determine the game's core mechanics and rules to make it engaging and informative?
3) How do you determine the target audience and player demographics for a new board game?
4) What considerations guide the design of game components and artwork? How do you make choices regarding the physical and visual aspects of the game, such as the board, cards, tokens, and box design?
5) How can you incorporate a compelling storyline or narrative elements that enhance the player's immersion in the game? What's the role of backstory, characters, and world-building in a game's concept?
6) From your experience, if your game has educational or thematic goals, how do you effectively integrate these elements into the gameplay while still making the game enjoyable? Can you provide examples of board games that successfully integrate cultural elements and educate players about a specific culture or history?
7) How do you perceive the capacity of board games to create a sense of belonging within cultural communities? And what design elements or strategies do you believe are particularly effective in achieving this goal?
8) How can you design the game to offer replayability and accommodate different player counts (solo, two-player, multiplayer)? What strategies can you employ to keep the game fresh and engaging over multiple plays?
9) What tips do you have for managing the design, production, and manufacturing process of a board game?
10) What are some common pitfalls or challenges that aspiring board game designers should be aware of?

Thank you for taking the time and contributions. Your interest and effort in helping with this study is highly appreciated.

Appendix D: Narrative Gathering Interview Questions

Welcome Note

Good morning/afternoon,

I am Razan Obaid, a graduate student at OCADU (Ontario College for Art and Design University), pursuing my Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree. I am currently working on my thesis research project, titled "An Interdisciplinary Engagement Design for Cultivating and Preserving the Notion of Belonging." The project explores how interdisciplinary design approaches can act as tools for fostering a sense of belonging within cultural communities. Its primary objective is to inspire participants to continuously uphold and celebrate their rich Palestinian culture, heritage, and identity.

Purpose of this Interview

Amid these dark days, this research study is initiated to convey the optimistic, positive side of Palestine – Palestine the rich culture, fertile land, and loveable people who, no matter how far or close they are to their homeland, they carry Palestine in their heart and memories. The purpose of the interview is to collect your positive personal stories related to Palestinian culture, heritage, and traditions to achieve that vision. These narratives will play a significant role in various components of my thesis project, which includes the thesis document, design of a board game, and setup of an exhibition space.

In the context of the thesis, your stories will serve as the foundation, enriching the content and offering quotes from both yourself and others who share their experiences. Also, your contributions will be incorporated into the design and concept of a cultural, social, and educational board game, which is an integral part of this thesis project. Your stories and narratives are instrumental in shaping the game's structure and design, influencing the logic, activities, and visual aesthetics of the board game. In the exhibition and installation, audio recordings of your oral stories will be integrated, providing an auditory dimension to enhance the audience's experience. Your contributions and shared stories will help to further inform the thematic aspects of the project, ensuring a cohesive integration of narratives across the thesis, board game, and exhibition space.

All your contributions, including your stories, audio recordings, quotes, photos, and any related materials, will be handled with the utmost respect and acknowledgment. These will be incorporated into the thesis document, publications, board game design, and subsequent exhibition showcasing the project installation only after obtaining your explicit consent, and will be used exclusively for the purpose of this study.

Consent Reminder

Before we start our interview, thank you for reading and signing the consent form before this meeting. I would like to confirm that your participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to abstain from responding to any questions or withdraw from the interview at any time without any penalties.

Interview Details

Duration: The interview will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

Format: The interview will be held virtually through Teams.

Please note that the interview follows a semi-structured format. All questions from the list below will be addressed and discussed during the interview.

"Can I get your consent to record this interview?"

At the end of the interview, you can share your feedback on the interview experience and add any additional input.

Ethical Clearance

This study has undergone a thorough review and has received ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Board at OCAD University (Ref No: 6192). If you have any comments or concerns, please feel free to contact the Research Ethics Office via research@ocadu.ca. The REB can provide answers to any pertinent questions regarding research participant rights.

I appreciate your willingness to participate in this interview. Shall we start?

Questions

1) Can you share a memorable story about a specific place, city, village, or historical landmark in Palestine that holds a special significance for you or your family? What makes this place unique or memorable?
2) Palestinian culture is rich in traditions and customs. Could you share a story about a particular tradition, value, or a cultural event that plays an essential role in your life or your family's life? What makes this tradition or value significant to you?
3) In Palestinian culture, daily routines, clothing, and food are essential aspects. Can you share a story about a traditional food, piece of clothing, or a daily practice that brings back fond memories or plays a vital role in gatherings and celebrations? What role does it play in preserving your cultural identity?
4) How do you define your sense of belonging to Palestine in the context of the stories and experiences you've shared? What does it mean to you to belong, and what specific aspects or memories make you feel connected to Palestine? How do you nourish and sustain your sense of belonging to your cultural heritage?
5) Do you have any photos, videos, notes, diaries, heirlooms, or items from Palestine, that you would like to share with me? These could be valuable artifacts that carry personal or cultural significance.

Thank you for taking the time and contributions. Your interest and effort in helping with this study is highly appreciated.

Appendix E: Narrative Gathering Recruiting AD

Appendix F: Narrative Gathering Recruiting Survey

Thank you for your initiative to take part in my study and participate in this survey. To confirm your eligibility for my research study, as the number of participants is limited, I would appreciate it if you can answer the following questions:

- Do you self-identify as a Palestinian or a Canadian Palestinian?
  - Yes
  - No
- Are you 18 years old or up?
  - Yes
  - No
- Demographic Information:
  - Age:
  - Gender:
  - Education:
• How long have you been in Toronto or in the Diaspora away from the Homeland?

• Have you lived in Palestine?
  - Yes
  - No
If yes, for how long?
- Do you visit Palestine?
  - Yes
  - No
  If yes, how often?
- How well are you versed in Palestinian culture and traditions?
  - Extremely Knowledgeable
  - Very Well-Informed
  - Moderately Familiar
  - Limited Knowledge
  - Not Familiar

- Do you have any memories, unique experiences, or stories to share that trigger the sense of belonging?

  - Yes
  - No
- Are you interested in further participating in this research study through one-on-one interviews?
  - Yes
  - No
  If yes, please leave your email below:
    - Email:

Thank you for your time and effort spent participating in this survey. If you show interest in further contributions to the project by answering YES to the last question, I will soon send you a follow-up email. In this email, I will provide information regarding your eligibility to participate in the study and arrange a meeting based on your preferred day and time. Also, I will include the necessary consent form as an attachment, which you must sign before being officially recruited to take part in this research.

Thank you for considering this opportunity. Your insights and contributions are deeply appreciated. If you have any inquiries or would like to get in touch with me, please feel free to reach out via email at: robaid@ocadu.ca

Razan Obaid, Graduate Student
Interdisciplinary Masters in Art, Media, and Design program
OCAD University

Appendix G: Board Game Design Prototype 2: Manual

Rajieen is an interactive and immersive board game that weaves the rich tapestry of Palestinian culture into a unique, multifunctional throw. Players embark on a cultural journey, engaging with questions and challenges that highlight the diverse facets of Palestine. The game is designed to foster a deep sense of belonging, encourage experiential learning, and empower individuals to embrace their Palestinian cultural heritage.

Players engage with the game board by throwing the die, drawing cards, and answering questions.

The game encourages shared cultural exploration, storytelling, and artistic expression.

Players collect cards to represent their growing cultural knowledge and connection.

Objective:

The objective of the game is to complete a cultural journey, collecting 2 cards from each of the 5 categories, representing various aspects of Palestine's culture and heritage.

Components:

Cultural Throw Board Game: Featuring major Palestinian cities, iconic landmarks, specialties, and symbols.

Question Cards: Categorized into 5 sections – 1 History and General Information, 2 Land and Agriculture, 3 Palestinian Cuisine, Arts, Music and Literature, Crafts, and Industries.

6-sided Die: Each number represents a card category:

> 1: History and General Information
>
> 2: Land and Agriculture
>
> 3: Palestinian Cuisine
>
> 4: Arts, Music, and Literature
>
> 5: Crafts and Industries
>
> 6: Rajieen Wild Card (Bonuses and Challenges)

Instructions Card: Providing essential guidelines for players.

Set-Up:

Players sit around the Cultural Throw on the ground.

The youngest player starts the game.

To start, players must roll the die and get number 6, to officially begin the game.

The game proceeds clockwise once the first player gets the number 6 on the die.

How to Play:

Player 1 rolls the die, draws a card from the corresponding category, and hands it to the player on their right.

The sand clock is turned, and the player next to player 1 reads the card aloud.

Player 1 must answer before time ends. If successful, they keep the card; otherwise, it returns to the deck.

The play continues clockwise. If a player collects 2 cards of the same category, they can skip a turn when landing on that category.

Winning the Game:

The first player to collect 2 cards from each of the 5 categories (Total of 10 cards) wins the game.

Cultural Intelligence Measurement:

At the end of the game, players assess their connection to Palestinian culture based on the collected cards:

8-10 cards: Original Palestinian

5-7 cards: 50% Palestinian

1-4 cards: Not Palestinian at all

Appendix H: Board Game Testing Workshop Recruitment AD

Appendix I: Board Game Testing Workshop Recruitment Survey

I am Razan Obaid, a graduate student at OCADU (Ontario College for Art and Design University), and I am currently working on my thesis research project as part of my pursuit of the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree in the Interdisciplinary Masters in Art, Media, and Design program. My project titled "An Interdisciplinary Engagement Design to Revive and Sustain the Sense of Belonging" explores the use of interdisciplinary design to nurture a sense of belonging within cultural communities. A central element of this initiative involves the creation of a board game that incorporates and reflects the research findings. By participating, you'll have the chance to interact with a prototype of this board game, designed with the primary goal of inspiring individuals to consistently embrace and celebrate their vibrant Palestinian culture, heritage, and identity.

Amid these dark days, this project will act as a tool to convey the optimistic, positive side of Palestine – Palestine the rich culture, fertile land, and loveable people who, no matter how far or close they are to their homeland, they carry Palestine in their heart and memories.

Thank you for your initiative to take part in my study and participate in this survey. To confirm your eligibility for my research study, as the number of participants is limited, I would appreciate it if you can answer the following questions:

- Do you self-identify as a Palestinian or a Canadian Palestinian?
  - Yes
  - No
- Are you 18 years old or up?
  - Yes
  - No
- Demographic Information:
  - Age:
  - Gender:
  - Education:
• How long have you been in Toronto or in the Diaspora away from the Homeland?

• Have you lived in Palestine?
  - Yes
  - No
If yes, for how long?
- Do you visit Palestine?
  - Yes
  - No
  If yes, how often?
- How well are you versed in Palestinian culture and traditions?
  - Extremely Knowledgeable
  - Very Well-Informed
  - Moderately Familiar
  - Limited Knowledge
  - Not Familiar

- Do you have any memories, unique experiences, or stories to share that trigger the sense of belonging?
  - Yes
  - No

- Are you interested in further contributing to this research study by participating in a cultural board game that allows you to showcase your knowledge and experiences related to Palestinian culture, heritage, and identity?
  - o Yes
  - o No
    - • If yes, are you flexible to sit on the floor to explore the game for 90 minutes?
  - o Yes
  - o No

If you answer **Question 7** with Yes, please proceed with the following Question 8.
If your answer is No, please proceed to the end of the survey.

- For this board game workshop, two group formats are offered to ensure the best results for the study. Kindly select your preference and provide the relevant information based on your chosen group format:

  - o **Format 1: Family Group:** If you are a parent or a guardian and you wish to participate as a family group, please indicate how many adults (18+) and how many children or youth (12 to 17 years old) are to participate. This group requires a minimum of 3 participants and a maximum of 5 participants, including at least one youth (12 to 17 years old).
    Please provide the following details for this Family Group:
      - Parent/Guardian's email:
      - Number of Adults as participants and age:
      - Adults' emails:
      - Number of Children/Youth as participants and age:
      - Children/Youth emails (email addresses can also be the same as parent or guardian's email):

    Eligible participants as parent or guardian and their family members will be contacted to be informed about the project details.
    Please note, that the number of participants is limited. If you and your family group are eligible for my research study, I will send you a follow-up email and provide you with information regarding your eligibility to participate in the study and arrange a meeting based on your preferred day and time. Additionally, I will include further details about the Board Game Workshop, and the necessary consent forms as attachments, which you and each member of the family group will need to sign before being officially recruited to take part in this research.

  - o **Format 2: Adults Group**: This group is for participants aged 18 to 60 years old. This group requires a minimum of 3 participants and a maximum of 5 participants. If you wish to be part of this game board and play with adults only, please provide your email address below so we can contact you to share the project information:
    E-mail:

    Please note, that the number of participants is limited. If you are eligible for my research study, I will send you a follow-up email and provide you with information regarding your eligibility to participate in the study and arrange a workshop meeting based on your preferred day and time. Additionally, I will include further details about the Board Game Workshop, and the necessary consent form as an attachment, which you will need to sign before being officially recruited to take part in this research.

End of the Survey

Thank you for considering this opportunity. Your insights and contributions are deeply appreciated. If you have any inquiries or would like to get in touch with me, please feel free to reach out via email at: robaid@ocadu.ca

Razan Obaid, Graduate Student

Interdisciplinary Masters in Art, Media, and Design program

OCAD University

Appendix J: Alteration Process Details

The iterative process of refinement of the board game design unfolded as explained below:

Version 1:

2 to 6 players

Age: 12+

Objective:

The objective of the game is to complete a cultural journey, collecting 1 card from each of the 16 cities categories, representing cultural knowledge of the different cities of Palestine.

Game Components:

- Cultural Throw with the game: Featuring major Palestinian cities, iconic landmarks, specialties, and symbols.
- 320 Question/ Challenges Cards: Categorized into 16 sections, for each of the cities on the map (20 cards each), and 20 extra cards for Rajieen Wild Cards: Bonuses and Obstacles
- 20-side die: Each number represents a city on the map, other numbers represent the Rajieen Wild Card of bonuses and obstacles, as follows:
  1: Bir Seba'a, 2: Gaza, 3: Al Khalil, 4: Al Quds, 5: *Rajieen* Wild Card, 6: Al Ramla, 7: Ramallah, 8: Yafa, 9: Nablus, 10: *Rajieen* Wild Card, 11: Tulkarem, 12: Jenin, 13: Bisan, 14: Heifa, 15: *Rajieen* Wild Card, 16: Al Nasra, 17: Tabariya, 18: Safed, 19: Akka, 20: *Rajieen* Wild Card
- 6 Different Game Figurines: Used by players to travel on the map.
- Instructions Card: Providing essential guidelines for players.

Gameplay:

- Each player chooses a figurine to represent them in the game.
- To begin the game, one player must roll the die and achieve a roll of 20 to officially initiate gameplay.
- The game progresses clockwise once a player successfully rolls a 20 on the die.
- Player 1 rolls the die, moves their figurine to the corresponding city indicated by the roll, draws a card from the corresponding category, and passes it to the player on their right.
- The sand clock is flipped, and the player next to Player 1 reads the card aloud.
- Player 1 must provide an answer before the time elapses. If successful, they retain the card; otherwise, it is discarded.
- Gameplay continues clockwise. If a player lands on the same city multiple times and has already collected their card, they may choose to skip a turn.

Winning the Game:

The game concludes when the first player successfully collects 10 unique cards, each from one of the sixteen cities, thereby declaring them the winner.

Cultural Intelligence Measurement:

At the end of the game, players assess their connection to Palestinian culture based on the collected cards:

8-10 cards: Original Palestinian

5-7 cards: 50% Palestinian

1-4 cards: Not Palestinian at all

Observations:

- Certain cities hold greater cultural significance and offer more informational depth compared to others, resulting in uneven distribution of cultural questions and challenges across the map. While some cities boast a diverse array of intriguing questions, others lack sufficient content. As a result, players gain limited insights into each Palestinian city rather than exploring a breadth of cultural aspects of Palestine.
- The duration of the gameplay exceeded initial expectations.
- Interaction among players was lacking, diminishing the overall engagement.
- The game lacked diverse challenges to maintain player interest.
- Gameplay relied heavily on luck, with player progression determined solely by the numbers rolled on the die, devoid of strategic decision-making.
- Due to the above factors, the game's entertainment value diminished over time.
- There is a low likelihood of replayability as players are unlikely to revisit the game due to the lack of variation in gameplay scenarios.
- The frame appears overly cluttered; simplifying it would reduce distractions.
- The typeface used for English text requires enlargement for improved readability and legibility.
- The map background lacks visual interest; incorporating colors, particularly with specific meanings and functions, would enhance engagement.

Version 2 (Final)

2 to 6 players

Age: 12+

Objective:

The objective of Rajieen is to embark on a cultural journey, capturing the knowledge of Palestinian cities. Every right answer grants the player a new move and a chance to acquire knowledge of a new city. A Player acquiring a city's knowledge marks it with their cultural tokens (discs), symbolizing their deeper connection to it and their growing understanding of various aspects of Palestine's culture and heritage.

Game Components:

- Cultural Throw with the game: Featuring major Palestinian cities, iconic landmarks, specialties, and symbols.

- 120 cards categorized into 6 sections: General Information, Agriculture, Cuisine, Arts and Literature, Industries, and Rajieen Wild Card.
- Cultural Tokens: 120 colorful discs in 6 distinct colors (20 each), allowing players to mark their captured cities.
- *6-sided Die*: Representing card categories:
  1: General Information, 2: Agriculture, 3: Cuisine, 4: Arts and Literature, 5: Industries, 6: Rajieen Wild Card (Bonuses and Challenges)
- Instructions Card: Providing essential guidelines for players.
- Youth (Ages 12 and up) were the most engaged and excited about the game and its tasks, maybe this is because of their high levels of curiosity to learn about their native land and ancestors.

Game Play:

- Each player chooses the colors of cultural tokens (discs) to represent them in the game.
- To begin the game, one player must roll the die and achieve a roll of 6 to officially initiate gameplay.
- The game progresses clockwise once a player successfully rolls a 6 on the die.
- Player 1 rolls the die, draws a card from the corresponding category, and passes it to the player to their right.
- The sand clock is flipped, and the player next to Player 1 reads the card aloud.
- Player 1 must provide an answer before the time elapses. If successful, they select the city from which they wish to start their cultural journey.
- Play continues clockwise repeating the same previous steps for the other players.
- When it's time for player 1's turn again, they follow the same steps, if successful, they leave some Cultural Tokens/ discs marking their success in city 1, and move the rest of the tokens to an adjacent city of their choice to continue the knowledge journey.
- Movement is allowed only to adjacent cities.
- The players should strategize on how to acquire the required number of cities to win, carefully planning their approach and distributing their Cultural Tokens/ discs across these cities accordingly.
- If another player lands on a city already occupied by Cultural Tokens/ discs from a previous player, they acquire the city by placing more Tokens on it. In this case, the tokens/ discs belonging to the previous player are removed from the map, requiring them to start over.

Winning the Game:

The first player to acquire the knowledge and connection of 5 adjacent cities wins.

Observations:

- Introducing the Cultural Token (Discs) placement mechanic enhanced engagement with the board game and heightened competitiveness among players as they strategically vied to capture knowledge from each other's cities.
- For a two-player game, capturing the knowledge of five adjacent cities was deemed equitable. However, with an increase in the number of players, acquiring cultural knowledge from the same number of cities posed a greater challenge. This necessitates customizing gameplay and winning conditions based on the number of players.

- In a two-player game spanning all 16 cities, the duration of the game was longer than expected, resulting in some level of boredom and a decreased entertainment value.
- The initiation of the game lacked excitement and would benefit from additional strategic elements.
- The use of the sand clock was deemed unnecessary. Players engaging with the cultural questions and challenges on the cards naturally share stories and experiences about Palestine and its cultural heritage, aligning with the game's objectives, rendering the sand clock redundant.
- The observation regarding the aesthetics of the design remained consistent, as identical visuals were utilized in both version 1 and version 2.

Appendix K: Board Game Testing Workshop - Feedback Survey

An Interdisciplinary Engagement Design to Revive and Sustain the Sense of Belonging

Board game Feedback

Thank you for taking the time to play our game prototype. Your input is invaluable in helping us refine
and develop this project to create an engaging and culturally enriching experience. Your feedback
will be instrumental in shaping the final design, ensuring it meets the needs and expectations of our
audience. Please take a few minutes to answer the following survey questions. Your insights
are highly appreciated.

Demographic Information:

Age:

- o   Under 18
- o   18-24
- o   25-34
- o   35-44
- o   45-54
- o   55-64
- o   65 or older

Gender:

1. How do you identify your gender?

    [Single-select]

    - o   Female
    - o   Male
    - o   Transgender Female
    - o   Transgender Male
    - o   Gender Variant/Non-Conforming
    - o   Not Listed, specify:
    - o   Prefer Not to Answer

- Have you ever played a board game or interactive cultural experience before related to Palestinian culture or similar themes? (Yes/No)

Gameplay Experience:

- On a scale of 1 to 5, how enjoyable did you find the game? (1 being not enjoyable at all, 5 being very enjoyable)
- Were there any specific parts of the game that you particularly enjoyed? Please describe.
- Were there any aspects of the game that you found confusing or less engaging? Please describe.
- Did the game effectively immerse you in the theme of Palestinian culture and heritage? (Yes/No)
- Were the interactive elements, such as augmented reality, engaging and easy to use? (Yes/No)

Learning and Cultural Insights:

- Did you learn something new about Palestinian culture, embroidery, or calligraphy through the game? (Yes/No)
- Please provide any insights you gained from the game.

Interaction and Design:

- Were the physical and digital components of the game (e.g., the textile/board, augmented reality) integrated well into your experience? (Yes/No)
- Please provide any insights you think can make the design more visually appealing and culturally representative.

Educational Value:

- Do you think the game could be used as an educational tool for people interested in learning about Palestinian culture, embroidery, and calligraphy? (Yes/No)
- Would you recommend this game to others as a means of cultural exploration and learning? (Yes/No)

Suggestions and Improvements:

- What suggestions do you have to enhance the game's immersive experience or educational value?
- Are there any specific features or content you would like to see added to the final design?
- Overall, do you have any additional comments or feedback on the game's concept, design, or potential impact?
- Would you be interested in participating in future testing or providing further feedback on the game's development?

Thank you for your participation. Your insights and contributions are deeply appreciated.

Appendix L: *Rajieen* **Exhibition Poster**

Appendix M: *Rajieen* the Movie, 2024

(Uploaded on the Open Research Repository as a supporting File)

Description:
3-minute movie featuring videos from family archive that belongs to the designer, combined
with publicly sourced online content, and audio snippets from *Rajieen* interviews and game
testing workshops.
Explore the Story of the project *Rajieen* through this compelling short film that is created using
VN Movie Maker application, and screened via a projector on the wall. Uncover the creation
process, the rich narratives interwoven within, the inspirations, and the innovative methods and
methodologies utilized to bring this project to life.