DESIGN DIARY OF "MINE WARS"

PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION

- **Implemented the perfect imbalance theory:**
  we have noticed that the game was going into a too balanced situation where everything was symmetrical, I have modified fa ew factors such as the dragon that in could be arguable that is over powered in some cases. But we have created a divisional factor that allows the game to take more interesting twists that unbalance the gameplay.

- **Design the map and cards:**
  Instead of having a free area to move I have used a map with a hexagon that has a symmetric and fair approach for both players.

  For the cards, I got inspired by the first Magic: the gathering versions. With different colours that made the players identify different categories easily.

- **Simplify the gameplay to favour better accessibility and dynamicity:**
  Throughout the whole process, I always pointed to a simple and understandable approach that can be enjoyed by everyone.

- **Made the rock, paper scissor combat approach:**
  By making this combat system there are not problems of balance as this system is perfectly symmetrical and the player always knows the outcome with no doubts.

- **Made the bard's mechanic:**
  As the combat system had to be symmetric, we modified a unit into a powerup which doesn't occupy additional space in the terrain and doesn't affect the combat system.

- **Made the shop accessible anytime to the player:**
  in this way the players can always have more choices and modify the game state.

- **Define the durability of the dragon:**
  As the dragon is definitely too powerful, I limited the dragon to be used only for three turns.

- **Brake down the rules into bullet points:**

For a better understanding of new players and the dynamicity of the game, they find the rules needed depending on the state of the game.

In the first day, brainstormed our first ideas, we initially said that we wanted an RTS-like with units to command and resources to use.

We put some possible initial features into a paper to see the logic of the game and its elements. While discussing, we decided on the terrain outline and the player interactions. Paulo had already a main idea and he intended to design a board game, while I intended to keep the structure playable for everyone.

As a result of that meeting, we have reshaped the ideas and dynamics of classical and complicated RTS ideas into something more immediate in order to fit a clear and immediate approach that we wanted the player to feel which can be arguable and seem closer to a MOBA game structure.
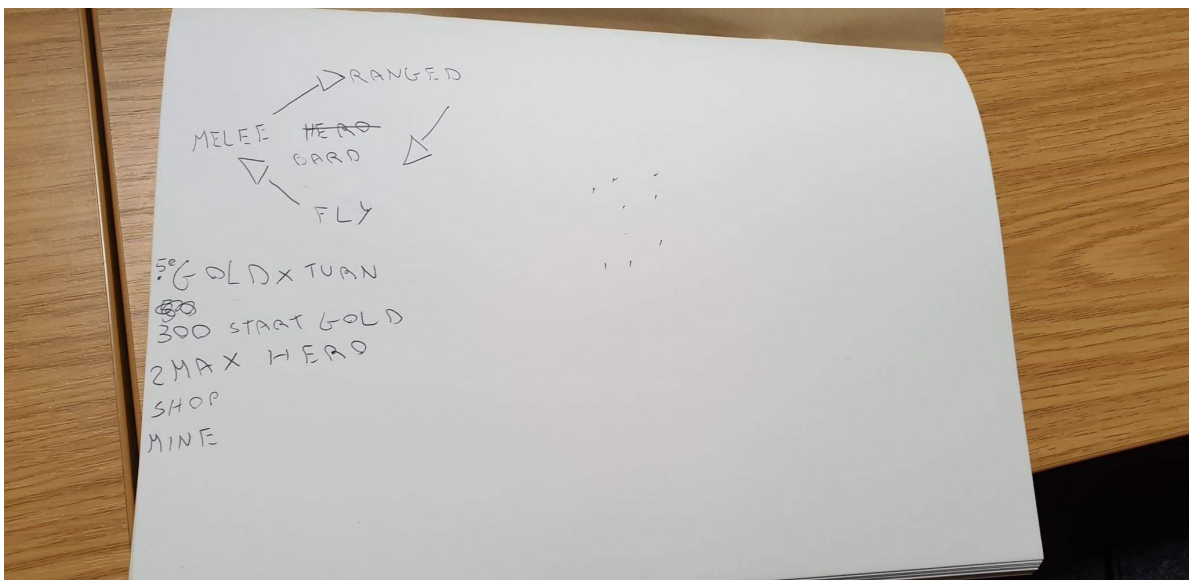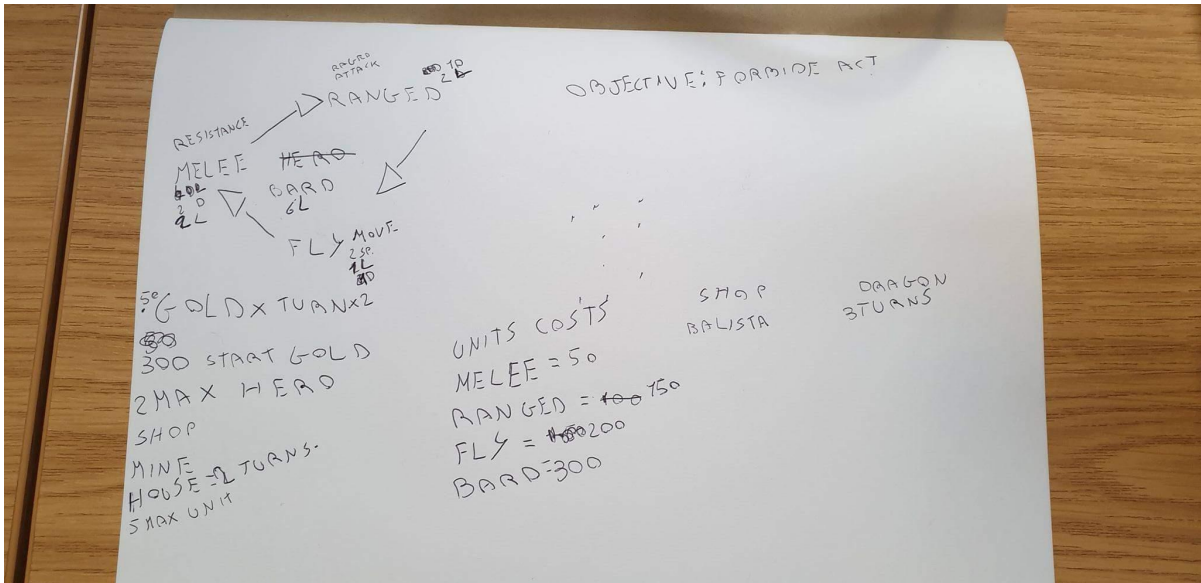

Fig.1 initial ideas
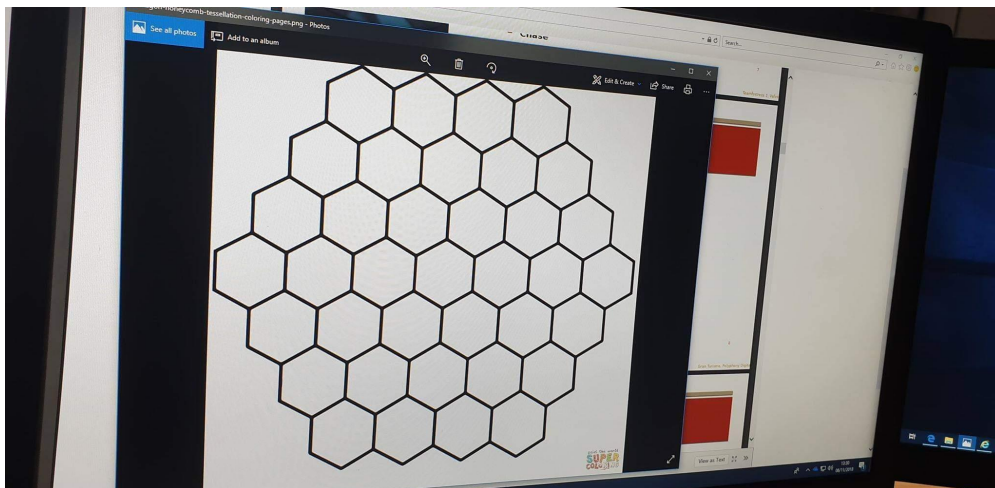
Fig.2 Evolution of the ideas

Fig.3 Terrain shape

In fact, when we decided on the mechanics, we took off most of the details that would make the game slower in terms of learning and application.

SECOND MEETING: MAP STRUCTURE

In this meeting we sorted the terrain by putting different locations of interest, and how the player will move around it. While working on this part we tried to create an additional special challenge where the player has different paths that represent choices with different outcomes.

We decided to have:

- **The dragon nest**: where a player can tame and control a dragon, this is an exceptional unit.
- **The mercenary camp**: where we can maximise the units from 5 to 6.
- **The gold mines**: where we can have a resource with an economic impact.
- **The spawn points**: where the players can place their units, which are going to move over the map.

The mine represents the "power of choice" of the player and it's here where resources are coming from.
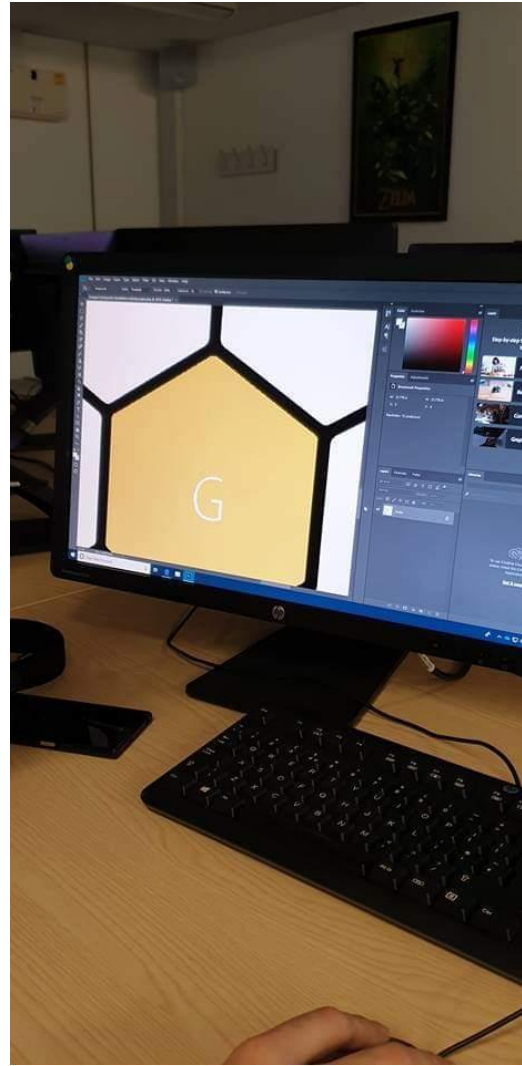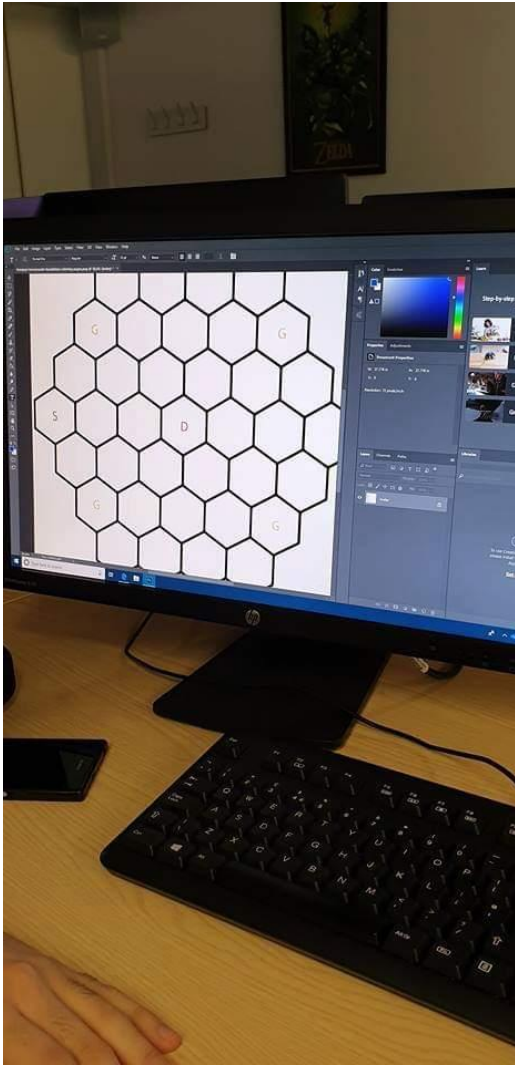
Fig.4-5 points of interest

I designed the map and we both compromised the points of interest. Then we moved into the units and items. And we decided their abilities and costs. We shaped them into cards, for a better understanding.

By adding different costs, the player could immediately see what is more effective and what is not. So now the economic resource has a value and an impact connected with the units and items.
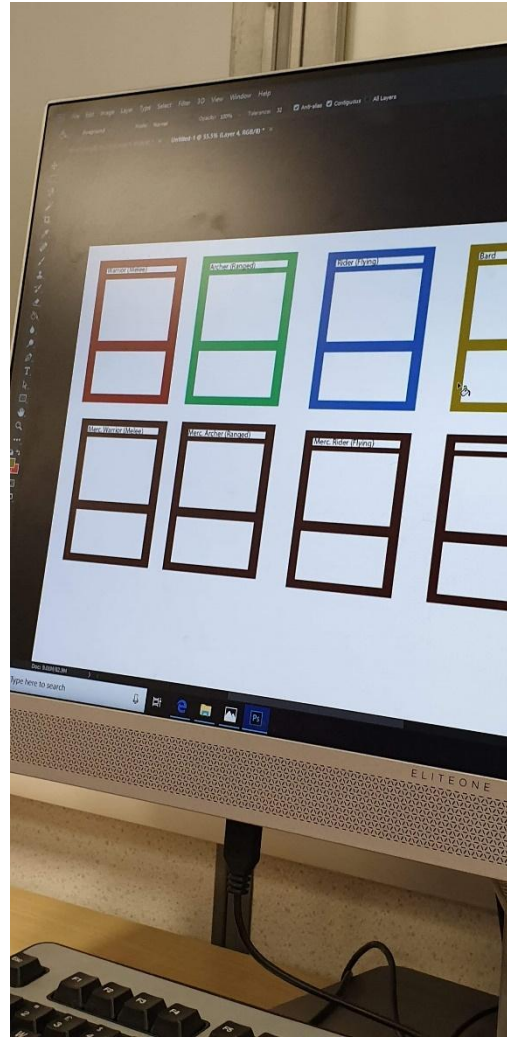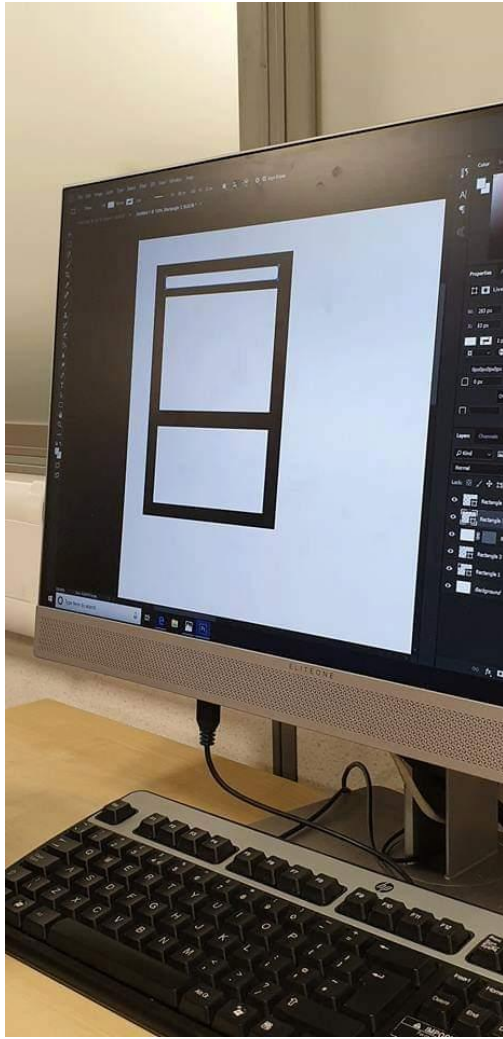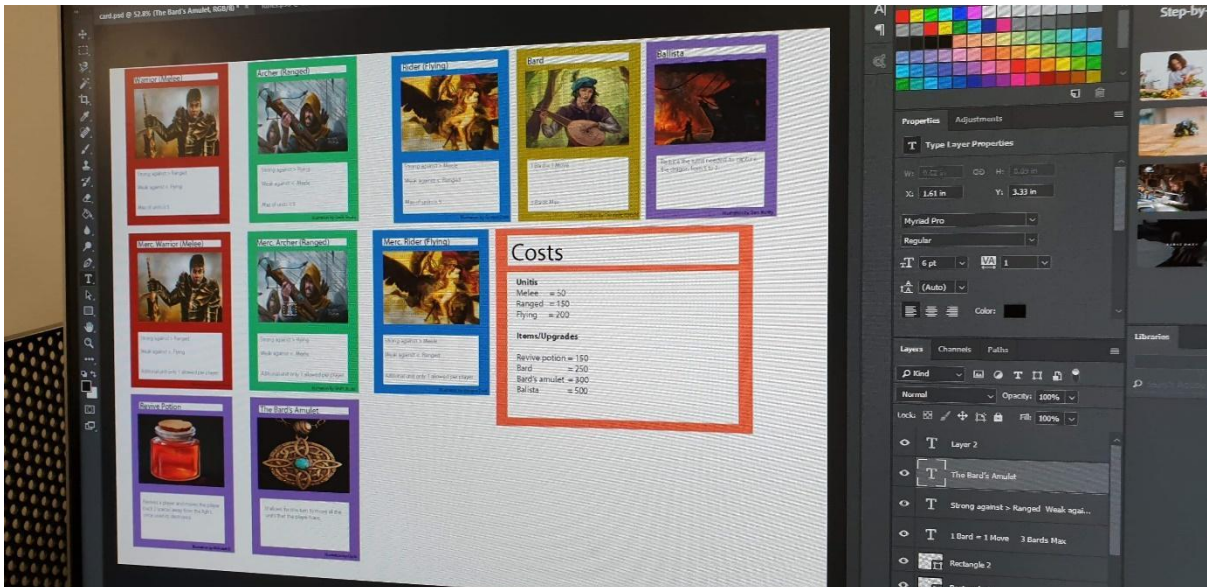
Fig.6-7 Cards shape

Fig.8 Cards completed

Here is when we sharpened our rules in order to follow the initial design and keep the game immediate, alongside the creation we also minded the balance to an embryonal state. On top of that, we also created items that allow the player to have special conditions.

We initially had:

- **The paladin**: This unit will guide and buff the others; the other units will be always attacked to it.
- **The warrior**: it's weak against the rider but strong against the archer.
- **The archer**: it's weak against warrior but strong against rider.
- **The rider**: it's weak against archer but strong against warrior.

In this way, we created a three-lateral combat system.

Here is when we realised that the paladin would overfill the map and slow the pace, we kept him and modified I'm into a bard, a power-up that affects the movements of the units per turn.

As item we created:

- **The bard's amulet**: allows you to move all the units in your turn no matter how many.
- **The revival potion**: in case of a loss in the battle the player can revive that unit.
- **The ballista**: decrease the time needed to tame the dragon.

These exceptions would give to the game variety and allow a player to recover or create an advantage.
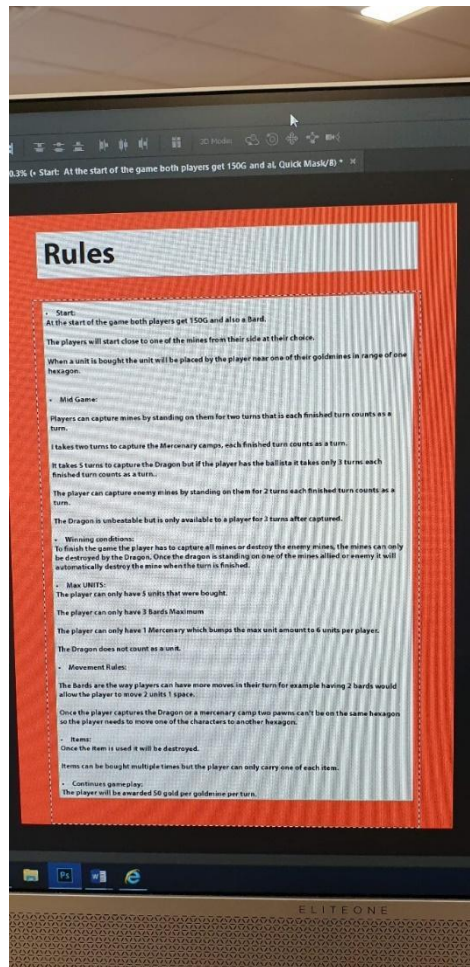
Fig.9 Table of rules

Playtest session

We made two of our classmates Elliot and Andrew play the game while observing them and gaining real-time feedback and it's here that we found a few weaknesses.

- **Slow pace**: the game needs time in order to move into the proper "fun" phase.
- **Stagnant parts**: as the player had too much freedom, they both used the most convenient paths which it replicated over and over.
- **Hard to learn the rules**: the guys struggled to understand and apply the rules, and this took off the enjoyment as they were distracted by this factor.
- Elliot Ainscough also pointed out that the movements had too much freedom.

Fourth meeting: fixing and evaluating

We simplify the rules for a better understanding. And also limited the unit's movements to one per turn as we realized that movements are vital in strategy games, we limited them in order to increase the meaningfulness of the choices (Salen K. Zimmerman E. 2004) and avoid the stagnant parts.

Reference List

Hexagon Honeycomb Tessellation coloring page, supercoloring.com,
hexagon-honeycomb-tessellation-coloring-pages.png [Online Image]. Available from:
http://www.supercoloring.com/coloring-pages/hexagon-honeycomb-tessellation [accessed 1 December 2018].

Salen k. Zimmerman e., 2004, Rules of play: game design fundamentals. 1st edition. London: the MIT press.