

HispaBrick Magazine® Staff: Jetro de Château (a.k.a. linmix)

By HispaBrick Magazine®

Images by linmix



Hi. I'm from Holland, but I've been living in Spain for more than 20 years. I am a language and robotics teacher as well as a translator.

HBM: How and when did you start participating in HispaBrick Magazine®?

JdC: When Lluís told me about the idea for the magazine I immediately volunteered to participate with an LDraw tutorial I was working on. When we realised how much interest there was for an international version I started to coordinate the translation of articles. Shortly after that I became a member of the staff.

HBM: What are your responsibilities in the magazine?

JdC: In addition to coordinating and supervising the translation effort, I take care of the topics related to MINDSTORMS, Technic and digital content (LDraw, LDD, etc.). I'm always on the lookout for collaboration opportunities in these fields and appreciate every proposal we get. I am also in charge of liaising with the Croatian team and keeping our internal workflow up to date. Of course I also write articles and reviews. I am the ambassador for HispaBrick Magazine® on the LEGO® Ambassador Network (LAN) so I am in charge of most of the communications between HBM and the LEGO® company.

HBM: Had you done any of these things before?

JdC: I was already working as a translator, and as a teacher I always make sure my materials are accessible to my intended audience. But there are many tasks I have had to learn as I went along.

HBM: Did you need to learn how to use the tools for any of those tasks?

JdC: One of these days I have to learn more about InDesign...

HBM: Talking about all the tasks that are carried out in the magazine, what are the ones you like the most? And the least?

JdC: I enjoy writing tutorials as those are the result of my own learning process. Normally they centre on subjects I am passionate about. At times I really loathe translating, but not because of the work itself, but because of the enormous amount of work involved.

HBM: Are there any tasks you would like to do but haven't had a chance to work on yet?

JdC: I have barely done any layout work, although I did some on a different publication many years ago, using different tools. For now I have more than enough work translating so I don't need to go looking for more.

HBM: What do you think of the rest of the people who make up the staff of the magazine?



JdC: I think what defines our team is implicit trust. There is always a good vibe and although there are of course better and worse moments, at the end of the day we are still a group of friends sharing the same passion. That becomes especially palpable during the few times a year we physically meet for an event.

HBM: Many people don't know how much work it takes to create a free fan magazine. Does it really take that much work to get each issue published?

JdC: Some of the tasks related to the magazine are more a matter of constancy than of time: cultivating contacts, getting articles to be handed in, keeping an eye on the quality of the text and images. There are other tasks that require more time and concentration but which take up a limited time, like writing articles, reviews and tutorials. When it comes to reviewing and translating I really lose all notion of time. It makes no sense to translate a poorly written text, and improving it not only impacts the language it was written in but also the translation. When it comes to translating it's even harder to maintain a balance. Often the work accumulates in the last few weeks before we publish the magazine, but I also need to set aside time for my paid job and my family. It would be impossible to dedicate all the hours required to get perfect translations so I try to make the most of the time I have available. For the last couple of issues I have had the inestimable help of Adrian Barbour who proofreads the English articles and this has meant a considerable improvement in the quality of the magazine.

HBM: Of all the criticism and praise you receive, what has most surprised you or drawn your attention?

JdC: I love it when a lone AFOL discovers the magazine and realises there are a bunch of back issues for them to read too. Hearing something like that is more gratifying than many other comments. On the other hand, I am very happy our decision

not to include advertising or make money with the magazine is appreciated.

HBM: It's been ten years since the first issue. How do you see the evolution of the magazine since then?

JdC: Many things have changed, but the essential part is still the same. We make a magazine by AFOLs for AFOLs and try to touch on all aspects of our hobby. The collaboration we receive from other Fan Media and forums when it comes to announcing the magazine has allowed us to reach more and more AFOLs. At the same time this has led to us receiving more proposals for collaboration from all over the world.

HBM: It all started as a local format designed to preserve and publicize MOCs by Spanish AFOLs, and now the magazine is published in three languages and read all over the world. What do you think has caused this evolution?

JdC: I believe there are several factors. On the one hand we have been fortunate enough to be able to include articles that generate a special interest to this very day. An example is the article about the Alien MOC by the Arvo brothers that was only ever published in Spanish and in the first issue. On the other hand we filled a gap, we were constant and we were determined to make an international version in English. Another important factor is the range of personal relations within the AFOL world we have cultivated over the years and which have allowed us to be visible in many places.

HBM: After ten years you are still going strong. Have you ever thought there wouldn't be a next issue?

JdC: After every single issue :D

Each time we publish an issue there follows two or three weeks in which we don't want to even think about going

through all of that again. After that we start to miss it, we start getting ideas and we start working on the next edition. There have been a few difficult moments when our team was reduced due to personal decisions or situations affecting our (ex) members, but we have always managed to overcome those difficulties.

HBM: What do you believe are the best qualities of the magazine?

JdC: The magazine is a real showcase for the AFOL world in all its facets. We include all themes and subjects, from CITY to MINDSTORMS, from using LEGO® in the classroom to charity events. That wide scope and inclusive approach means each issue always contains something of interest for any AFOL. We are also open to all kinds of collaborations and that also helps us to present a wide range of views and subjects.

HBM: What would you like to improve in the magazine?

JdC: Although we have improved a lot, one aspect that still causes a lot of stress is our workflow. The last few weeks before we publish an issue are a mad dash, trying to fix a million things at the same time. In part, this is inherent to our format and to the fact that most of the articles are submitted right on or shortly after the submission deadline. It would be nice to be able to distribute the work over a longer period, but that is not easy to achieve.

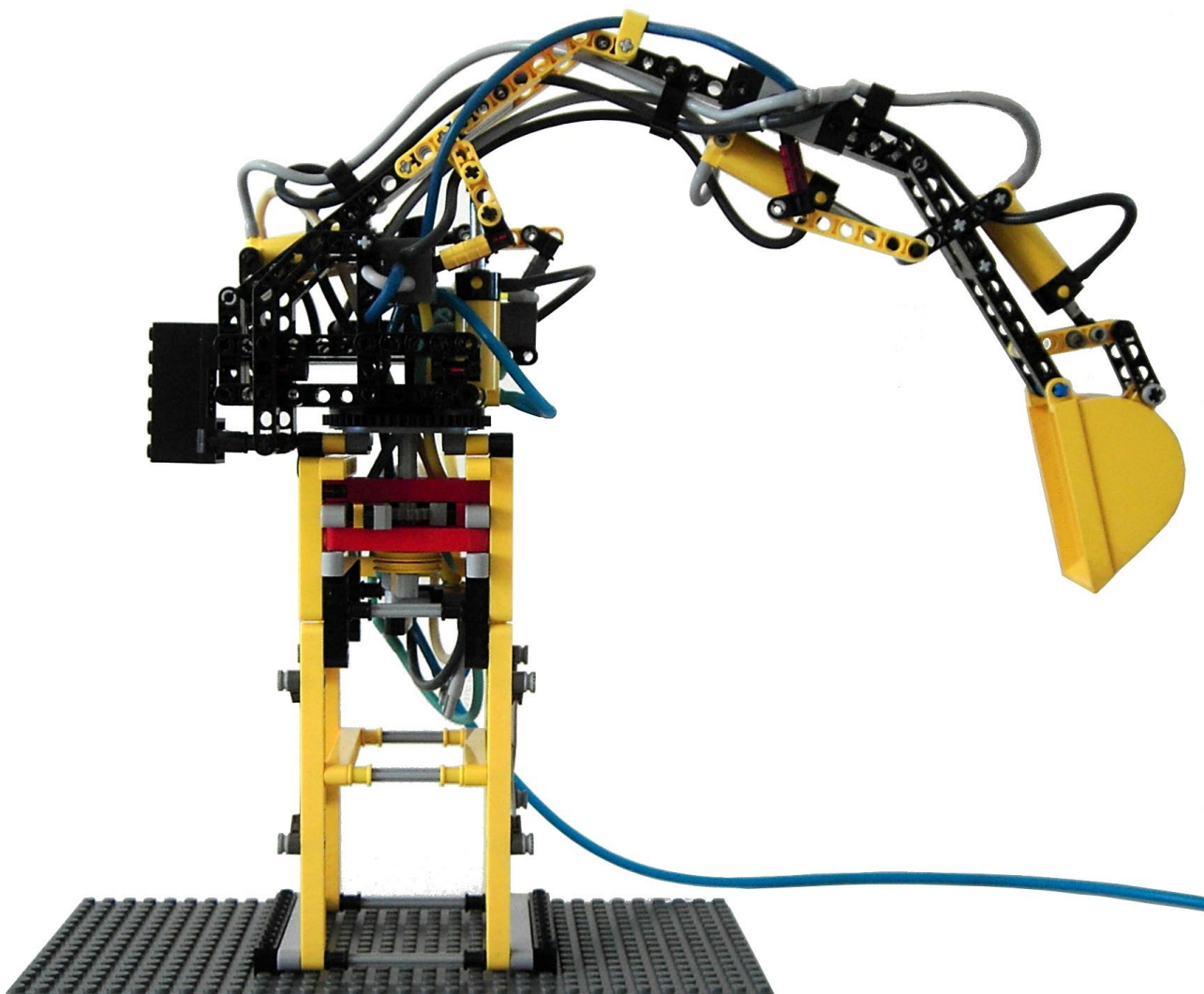
HBM: You always mention in the magazine that its continuity is possible thanks to the collaboration of those who send in articles. Is that really such an important factor?

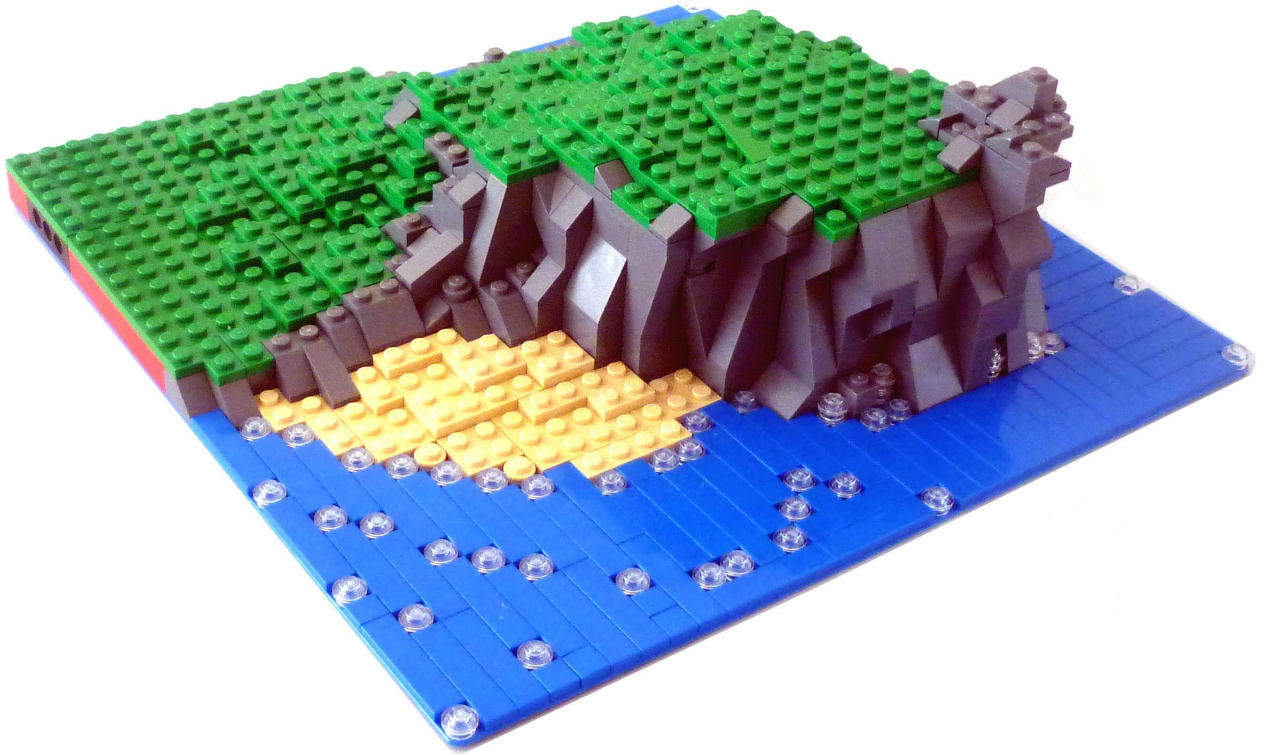
JdC: The magazine depends on collaborations. Without them we would only be able to reflect the opinions and interests of four LEGO® fans. Although we have very varied interests, collaborations always bring new points of view and subjects we would not be able to cover otherwise. On the other hand, there are also collaborations that don't immediately stand out but which are absolutely essential. I have already mentioned Adrian Barbour, but I would also like to mention Oton Ribic who coordinates the Croatian team. They are examples of collaboration that is essential to the quality and diversity of the magazine.

HBM: Of course there are also regular collaborators. What can you say about them?

JdC: Nothing good :D

The truth is, if it weren't for them... we would still keep going, but with much less force and variety. Knowing that we are not just a small team of four, but that there's a group of people who support us unconditionally to the best of their possibilities provides real encouragement. And although their work is not always in the front row, we really appreciate all the efforts they make.





HBM: You have also written articles and done interviews with people from the LEGO® company. How do you see your relationship with the company?

JdC: From the very first issue of the magazine we have had a fluid relationship with LEGO®. Jan Beyer congratulated our efforts on the first issue and that same issue also included an interview with the then general manager of LEGO® Iberia. Over the years that good relationship has materialised in many collaborations, both by allowing us to review certain special sets before they were available on the market (like the Emerald Night or the Porsche 911 GT3 RS) and also through interviews with employees. Our classification as Fan Media has allowed us to participate in the Fan Media Days which has increased the level of collaboration, and we are really happy with our current relationship with the company.

HBM: As the motto of the magazine says, it is a magazine made by fans. So in addition to making the magazine you also like to build with LEGO®. What are your favourite LEGO® themes?

JdC: My return to LEGO® as an adult was inspired by MINDSTORMS and I have been an MCP (MINDSTORMS Community Partner) for nearly 10 years. Programmable platforms and Technic are my main interest. I also love medieval sets and displays and that is where my predilection for MILS-based displays comes in. Lately I have built a few modulars as well so we'll see where that leads me...

HBM: Is there any theme or set you would like LEGO® to make?

JdC: I would love to see the return of classic medieval sets. I would also love to see a series of GBC sets as a subtheme of Technic. Otherwise, I am very interested in what is happening in the field of robotics and BLE connectivity, with WeDo 2.0 and Boost and who knows what else.

HBM: Is there life beyond the magazine and building with LEGO®?

JdC: Absolutely. Aside from spending time with my family and my students, I love to make music, alone or accompanied, and we like to travel and visit places.

HBM: Do you think you will still be making the magazine in another ten years?

JdC: As I have said before, after each edition there is a moment when you think that will be the last one... and then you get back to work on the next. As long as I enjoy doing this and there is a team to work with I will be actively involved in the magazine. For how long? Time will tell...

HBM: Throughout these ten years there must have been many anecdotes. Could you share some?

JdC: I drew a blank :)

HBM: Finally, what would you like to see in the magazine?

JdC: Although we publish a digital magazine, we are still very close to the physical format. I believe it would be interesting to become more digital and adapt the magazine further to the devices we read it on. At some point we may be able to include video in much the same way we now include images, or we may include 3D pictures... but first we will have to figure out how to make that work :D.

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