The Cutting Edge of Nordic Larp

Knutpunkt 2014

Edited by Jon Back

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Preface

After a big co-operative process, the book starts to take form. The Knutpunkt book is always made in co-operation, but this year so more than ever. The book has been produced as a 'peer commentary'. The authors applied with a shorter abstract and got feedback on this. However this was only used as a guide, and no acceptance was made at this stage. Already from this early version the text was available to all other authors, and others interested. Everyone was encouraged to read and comment on each other's texts. Only after the texts were finished the decisive accept was made, just as if they would have been sent in as finalized articles. The abstracts and final articles were graded on the three criteria how *well they related to the Nordic larp discourse*, how well they used this year's theme of *looking towards the future* and how well they were *targeted towards the Knutpunkt audience*. A good grade in at least two was needed to be accepted.

The development has at times been a bit of a struggle, mostly due to technology not working as wished, but in large I am happy with the process. In the end I believe you as readers, and especially you as authors will have to be the ones who decide whether it would be a useful method to use also in some future books. I hope the process of working will at least spur discussions on co-creation and co-creativity in the book writing process.

In all articles, the authors had the final say over all content. The peer commentary gave the authors input from several directions, and comments were also given from the editor. However, through the process the authors always owned the text. The editor graded the material from the three criteria mentioned above, but avoided to grade the actual content of the article. Therefore, the texts are the products of the authors and do not necessarily represent the view of the editor.

48 drafts were sent in, of which 19 are in the book. Most of the pieces not in the book were abandoned already on the abstract state. You may see

some of them for another year when the book has a different aim.

This is one of two books written for the Knutpunkt conference 2014. Where this book tries to be the 'cutting edge', the new, and the vision for the future; the other book builds the 'foundation stone' that the edge can be sharpened upon. The other book is a reprint of older, often cited material, making it easier for the new in the Knutpunkt audience to find the information. The books are meant to complement each other.

I hope you will have a good read, both on future, and past!

 — Jon Back, editor

Acknowledgements

As the process has been open for everyone to participate, it has been hard for me to track all that have supported this work. First I would like to thank all of the authors who involved themselves also in the reviewing, commenting and proofreading of other articles. This has really formed the book, and I believe it was good not only for the articles getting the comments, but also for how the writers of those comments understood their own work.

I am also grateful to those who had ideas for the book that did not fit this year. As I have been pushing this book in an academic direction, there have been articles that did not fit, even though they could have become great pieces, and I hope that they will get a chance to spread their information in coming years. Some of these people still stayed on to review and comment on other's work, and I am really happy that I could get that input!

A few people were called in externally even though they did not write for the book, and they need an extra mentioning. Some of these people were called in by me, but many also appeared through the other authors. As I have not been able to keep track on exactly who did what I am avoiding to put names here, but be assured, you are all very, very, VERY, appreciated!

This book is a co-operation, and you should all see yourselves as an integral part in its creation!

Introduction

This book is split into three rough categories. 'The Game and The Design' gather those articles focused on the game itself, and on the creation of the construct that is the game. In the chapter, there is material on writing scripts, designing vampire tragedy, using Jungian typology in character design, and two design concepts for political larps. There is also an article on the use of mobile phones, and a critical review of the mixing desk that has been presented at earlier conferences.

The second chapter, 'The Play and The Culture' focus on the activity of playing a larp, and on the culture that is created around it. In the chapter, you can read about ideas for changing the real world through larp, both one example in Finland and one in Lebanon. You can read about immersion, about the effects of crowdfunding, and you can read about the likeness and difference between Nordic larp and the larp culture in Brazil. You can also read about making larp as art, and on cultural appropriation and how to build games without stepping on cultural minority.

Finally, in the chapter 'The Meta and The Agitator' you find the articles that focus on Knutpunkt and the Nordic larp scene in itself. Here you can find articles on what Nordic larp means, on how we should act toward each other, and on the ethic understanding of larps. For our ex-USSR readers, you can find a first attempt at explaining the terms, and create understanding between the cultures. You can also find an article on selling Nordic larp, and getting people to listen, and you can even find an article about the Knutpunkt books themselves, and their meaning for academia.

The Game and The Design

Elin Nilsen, Lizzie Stark & Trine Lise Lindahl

Larps from the Factory

How to Write a Good Larpscript

The book Larps from the Factory *came out in October 2013. It is written in English, and contains larpscripts of 23 Norwegian larps. In this article the one American and two Norwegian editors share some thoughts about the book, the process, and about larpscripts in general.*

During 2013, we edited *Larps from the Factory*, a book of 23 larpscripts based on larps run in the Oslo and Trondheim Larp Factories. We began with some ideas about how to write larpscripts, since we had written scripts for our own games and run games from the instructions of others. However, as they say, "practice makes better." In leading some 28 larpwrights through the writing process, we soon learned many more lessons about how to write scripts. In this article we will share some of our perspectives on larpscripts as a form of documentation. We will also take you through some of the lessons we've learned and share some broader points about the larger project of producing a book of larpscripts.

Why Write a Larpscript?

Traditionally, larps in the Nordic countries have been one-time deals, but in recent years the re-runnable larp has become popular, with designers writing scripts or notes to help them re-run the game later.

But writing notes to yourself and your organizer team to help you re-mount a production is a quite different project from writing a script that a stranger will use to stage your larp. We focused on the latter.

Writing a larpscript provides several advantages. For starters, it means someone can run your larp without your presence. This frees up the larp so it can travel the world without you and reach people and places that you can't, spreading information about styles and techniques used in your community along the way. In addition, making a larp requires lots of time and energy—having a ready-made larpscript cuts down on the required organizer effort. In practice, this means a community might be able to run more larps, balancing organizers' energy between creating their own larps and producing pre-written ones. Documenting your larp in script form also inspires readers to learn from ideas, techniques and design choices you made when designing their own.

"But Hasn't This Been Done Before?"

A larpscript is the equivalent to what the tabletop role-players call a "boxed game," which enables a gamemaster to create a version of a particular adventure. The *Do Larp* book from Knudepunkt 2011 responded to the statement that it is impossible to box a larp, so one shouldn't even try—a premise we strongly disagree with. We believe that many larps are suitable for boxing, as you can read more about later in this article. *Do Larp* birthed the blueprint format as a sort of compromise. While blueprints, like larpscripts, are a form of larp documentation, they aim at describing the interesting design bits of the game to communicate some design goals and techniques from one organizer to another. But they are not the sort of thing you could use to run these larps as their designers would.

The freeform scene around, for instance, the Danish festival Fastaval has written down their scenarios for many years. These scripts have found a form of best practice that works well. We have played, game mastered and written these sort of games. But since our roots are in larping, we also see that there are some things that need to be framed in a different way in a larpscript.

A larp is usually quite differently structured from a freeform game. Most importantly, in a larp there are many stories told simultaneously, whereas in a freeform game there is generally one story told at any given time. While a larp usually tells a more or less continuous story, a freeform game is usually fragmented into shorter scenes. There are also typically more players in a larp than in a freeform game. For these reasons a larp requires a more indirect gamemaster style, sometimes to the degree that you can't really talk about a gamemaster at all. In fact we prefer to refer to the people running a larp as "organizers," not "game masters," unless the organizer has specific story-driving tasks during the larp.

In larp the story progression thus need to be built into the design itself. This is often done through motivations and agendas written into the characters and through instructions in the workshop and game materials. In addition, a larp often has other requirements when it comes to location, scenography, costumes and other practicalities.

In writing and editing our book of larpscripts, we took traditions from boxing, blueprints and freeform scripts into consideration, and found what we think is a suitable manuscript form for a larp - a larpscript.

Are All Larps Suitable for Scripting?

It's important to remember that a larpscript is not a larp, but a potential larp, a tool that enables you to run one. A larp is what happens then and there, framed by time, space, and the people present. Any larp that is rerun has its own autonomy.

We think that not all larps are suitable for scripting because some larps are less re-runnable than others. Larps that rely on very particular locations or that are large scale, requiring hundreds of players who self-create interlocking characters together, would be quite difficult to box. Huge productions are harder to reproduce. For instance, the WWII historical larp *1942 - Noen å stole på?* would be difficult to recreate due to the sheer size, its strong connection to the game location, and its need for lots of military equipment. Another problem is characters created very specifically for certain players, and built around their abilities and personalities, and characters that are created by the player groups and never written down. The typical here is a fantasy larp where the organizer decides the setting and the players sign up with a character or group concept that they then develop together with organizers and that the organizers incorporate into their structures.

Although very few larps from the Trondheim and Oslo Larp Factories had been designed with re-runnability in mind, we

found most of them suitable for boxing due to their modest scopes. Typically, Larp Factory games require limited time and space, have a flexible number of players, and are played with little preparation on the part of the players. This simplicity of design also suggested these games might travel well, since for the most part they don't require grand sets or elaborate scenography—they are runnable for people working with limited resources in other countries.

Writing the Scripts

We began the process by producing a larpscript template that the authors could work from. Our template included all the elements we thought necessary to describe the larp for an organizer unfamiliar with running Nordic larps. Our thoughts are based on our own experience as larpers and larp designers, and from reading, running and writing freeform- and larpscripts. We will articulate the main points later in this article, and also discuss the changes we made as we learned during the process.[1]

At the beginning of the writing process, we distributed this document to our authors and quickly realized that really, it was more a guideline than a strict template. Although each larpscript in the book contains most of the same elements, every script is structured to fit its own content. We chose not to streamline the scripts both because we already had several manuscripts in the pipeline that did not follow the template but worked equally well or better, and because we realized that individual larps are unique, and thus require different ways of framing the content. Looking back, we're happy that we did not force our authors into a limiting, cookie-cutter format, in part because we learned many interesting ways to structure a larpscript, some better than others.

We also did not impose a character limit on the scripts—a good larpscript should include everything an organizer needs to run the game, no more, no less. Squeezing the content into too small a frame would compromise the script quality.

Who Are You Writing For?

When you write a larpscript, your audience is potential organizers of your larp. This means your goal is not to instruct the players, but to enable the organizer(s) to do so.

If you want to make your larp accessible to a wider audience, then you must write for a general reader who doesn't necessarily know much about your local play culture or even about larp, which means you need to describe things in great detail. Usually it is better to over-describe than to under-describe. Inexperienced organizers don't necessarily feel free to improvise, and others may not know what elements they should keep as they are written and which they can freely improvise with, so that is also good to include.

From making this book, we also learned the value of having readers outside the Larp Factory tradition, and even the Nordic tradition, read the larpscripts while they were in production. Outsider eyes can spot when an author takes tradition-based knowledge for granted.

What Is the Basic Content of a Larpscript?

On a general level we prefer larpscripts that have a flowing, but structured text that takes the reader through the whole process step by step. The script must be comprehensive enough to be transformed into a larp. In the following we will go through the main elements that we covered in our original template, and mention it where our perspective changed through the process.

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1   You can find the document on the Larp Factory Book Project website. It goes more in detail than we do in this article. http://larpfactorybookproject.blogspot.no/p/writing-larp-script-how-to-describe.html

Firstly, an introduction is essential. It should let a reader quickly decide whether the larp fits their interests and capabilities, and whether they want to read more. We have read freeform scripts that don't really tell you what the game is about or what you need to run it until page 4, or scripts where you need to puzzle it out from the whole text. If this larp fails without a hot-air balloon, a new organizer needs to know that from page one. Withholding this essential information until the middle of the larpscript, or giving instructions that are ill-organized and require many pages of meticulous reading confuses potential organizers, especially inexperienced ones, and can make the process of running a game seem opaque, putting off potential organizers from running a game at all. We settled on a short teaser text to communicate a larp's ambiance, as well as a fact box that included bulleted entries for genre, playing style and practical requirements like number of players, playing time, location, and organizing load.

For the same reason, early on in the manuscript an author should briefly present the structure of the whole event from player arrival to debrief. This helps the reader get the larp overview before delving into the details, giving the reader a large-scale framework that they can fit the later detail into. Early on, the potential organizer should also understand the organizer's role and what is required of her.

Most larps require physical preparations before the players arrive, and these should be described in as much detail as needed. Just as a recipe tells you to chop the onion before you heat up the pan, so too should you tell the organizers to arrive with the completed music playlist, or masking tape and markers before starting the workshop. Again, it's about giving clear instructions, and not expecting a potential organizer to know things that you as a designer take for granted. In early stages of the writing process we found examples of our authors mentioning props in the run-through of the workshop, but not mentioning anywhere else in the manuscript that the organizer needed to acquire them. It can be a good idea to make a separate section in the larpscript about practical matters.

The next step is to describe what the organizers need to do during the workshop, larp and debrief. We find that spelling out each step is necessary, so the organizers understand fully, and feel secure in their task, and also because workshops and debriefs are uncommon in many scenes. Do more than simply explain what the organizer should do--explain why they should do it. Describing the intention behind the different activities is crucial for two reasons. Doing so makes potential organizers aware of the design intention so that they can better fulfill it, and also communicates design ideas to the organizers, which might inspire them to make their own larps. As mentioned above, these instructions should target the organizer, not the players. In the writing process we specifically asked the people giving feedback to ask themselves two questions: "Do I understand what I need to do?" and "Do I feel confident about how to do this exercise?" and to ask concrete questions of the authors if they were uncertain.

One thing that differs from script to script in our book is where in the script the authors explain methods, techniques and rules. Some of them integrated these descriptions into the walkthrough text when they are scheduled to be explained to players. Others chose to simply mention the techniques there, and gave fuller descriptions at the end of the script. Both methods work equally well, but suit different larps, writers and scripts. The first system worked well with methods that didn't require long descriptions and writers who used clear and structured language, producing a reading experience with more flow. The latter method suited more extensive descriptions and allowed the reader to see the overview more quickly.

Larpscripts can run to many pages, but on a practical level, as an organizer, it can be a hassle to deal with a lot of pages or a book while instructing the players. For this reason, we found a cheat-sheet to be a valuable addition. A cheat sheet is a one-two page

condensed list of elements you need to go through during the workshop, larp, and debrief. It is an organizer aid that helps avoid having to leaf through a book or stack of papers while communicating with players.

Of course, the game materials are also essential. These can include character sheets, cards, a character priority list, or any other materials you need to run the game.

How Do You Get 28 People to Write a Book in Five Months?

The short answer is that it's not easy. To say that we learned a few things about wrangling many people into an ambitious book project in a limited time frame would be an understatement. For starters, it's essential to make authors feel taken care of and give them a sense of ownership of the process. We invited everyone who had created larps for either Larp Factory to the project and ensured they knew from the start that we planned for a collective process. Nearly all the larpwrights agreed to be part of the project. But saying yes was only the first step. We promised to help and support each author if and when needed. (And we hope we did.)

Some people prefer to work alone, and some don't, so we organized four weekend gatherings where we invited the authors to work in the same place and help each other out with scripts. We provided meals and snacks; they supplied the brain power. We held the final workshop at a hotel—20 people attended, and insane feats of literary strength and editorial derring-do were performed. It was a milestone on the way to the finished scripts. We think that providing designated work time, company, and a fun social frame motivated the authors to finish the scripts and created the feeling of a collective project.

Another element of the effort was providing feedback to writers when they wanted it. One of the three editors didn't write any scripts for the book, freeing her up to concentrate fully on feedback. We also had a few staff readers dedicated to providing

feedback, and the authors peer reviewed each others' texts as well. This meant that when authors hit a wall, a pair or two of fresh eyes provided new angles on how to enhance a script's quality.

The most positive lesson learned is this: People are happy to contribute. More than 60 people all together worked voluntarily to realize this book; every time we needed something we found people eager to help.

In hindsight, we realized that we had planned too little time for all steps of the process. In addition, the time we planned for the editing process ended up shortened to roughly ten weeks total. We probably should have rescheduled the release date, and we would have had to if one of the editors had not been given leave from work, enabling her to work full-time on the project for two months. We greatly underestimated the time needed for both writing the scripts and editing them to a satisfactory level of quality.

The book is still not perfect. But this is also an important lesson learned from this project: a good, but imperfect larpscript is far better than no larpscript at all.

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Marije Baalman & Rene Barchmann

A Lion's Game

a Vampire's Tragedy

We propose a re-interpretation of Vampire: The Masquerade for live roleplaying, that focuses on the tragic elements of the vampire, by drawing upon The Poetics of Aristoteles (1994, ch. 5-7). Tragedy aims to bring the spectator closer to the main figure, in larp we take it one step further: there is no spectator and every participant is the actor of the main figure, immersed in the character's tragedy. The Katharis, the purification and purgation of emotions (R. Levin, 2003, p. 42), does not just affect the character, but also the player. With this our Vampire: Akheron fits well within the Nordic larp tradition, given our aim for immersion and bleed.

Our aim is to change the original concept of White Wolf's "A Storytelling Game of Personal Horror" (Rein•Hagen, 1991/2) into a lived and deeply felt tragedy. In order to do so, we revisited the core concepts of the game – the vampiric instinct, the psychology and society of vampires; we set guidelines as to how create characters and introduce them into the ongoing game, emphasized the guiding plot devices – elder vampires playing out their personal feuds, rather than external threats to unify a group, and abolishing the concept of a global vampire society; and strongly simplified the game mechanics to enhance the possibility of immersion. In the last section of this article, we will reflect on how our approach fits into the discourse of Nordic larp, where we found many resonating ideas.

Note, a large portion of the text that follows is taken from our handbooks for playing, mainly the Lions' Guide (Barchmann, 2013).

From the Beast to Internecine Strife...

The original *Vampire: The Masquerade* game world (Rein•Hagen, 1991/2) portrays a world of vampires that are torn apart between a struggle between their humanity, and their bestial, vampiric instincts, slowly succumbing to the latter: the Beast, loosing touch more and more with their human

morality. The game follows the premise of Anne Rice's concept of the vampire, who in her novel *"Interview with a vampire"* (1976) for the first time portrayed the vampire not as a monster external to us, threatening or tempting us, but rather from the first person perspective, the monster struggling with himself and his monstrous character, and develops it further to a create a game setting with various archetypes of characters, who form bloodlines that are involved in an eternal struggle with each other (the different clans), while at the same time being dependent on each other because of common enemies from outside (Camarilla vs. Sabbat). Vampiric society is inspired on a medieval concept of a local court, and traditions that are the basis for enabling a society of monsters – the society is built up in such a way that power structures are very hierarchical, protecting the interests of the elder vampires, and keeping the younger ones under control. Where in the medieval courts, there were always struggles for succession, the vampiric court game moves slower – with every courtesan being immortal and murder of the own kind forbidden, the power struggles take on a long timescale, never-ending, there are no winners, and there are only losers.

As a setting *Vampire: The Masquerade* provides for many levels of game: the personal, the social, the political and the physical confrontation. For us, to create a believable portrayal of this dark world of personal horror, the primary focus needs to be on the personal game, everything else follows from that – the relationships between characters become the entanglement and collision of their own inner struggles, the elder characters pull the younger ones into their own ploys with serious threats of destroying what one holds dear and false promises of security and protection.

Conflict is the basis of the game – the reasons for conflict are a multitude – and the conflicts are never fully resolved or forgiven, any step towards resolution is simply a further step towards new conflicts.

To achieve this as the premise of our game, we needed to change some of the basics of the game mechanics. We found we needed the *personal* horror as a prerequisite for a vampire's existence: so rather than having a generic concept of humanity, sliding down towards more and more hideous, monstrous acts – we found we needed to transform this concept to an inner struggle, an inner conflict, an internecine strife as the psychological basis for the vampiric nature. The vampiric psyche needs to be broken in order to survive. *White Wolf* already started with some concepts of personalizing the Beast with the concept of Beast Traits in the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebooks for the larp game (Rein•Hagen et al, 1993; Dansky et al., 1996), but we have taken it a step further. During character creation the character concept and the preludes for playing are set up around an internecine strife. A character that is not at odds with him- or herself cannot be embraced into vampiric society.

In addition – we defined the separation between elder vampires and younger vampires as a step further in this internal struggle. To become an elder vampire, the character will have to have lost once one of these personal battles – have suffered the catastrophe and have gone through the katharsis – have gone through another transformation of their psyche. Afterwards the vampire is able to recognize this psychological struggle in humans, to see that they are fit to become a vampire, and – in their sick addiction to conflict, their longing for company, their fear of boredom - have a way of breaking a human psyche to create the potential for a vampire. Every person they touch becomes tainted – the ones that stay around for too long, are broken and if they are unlucky, embraced to fight this inner struggle eternally.

Every character that is played in the game has his or her own story, in which he or she is the main character – experiencing all that the character experiences is the goal of the game. There is no main storyline but the summation of all the personal stories, interconnected and entangled with

each other, in such a way that characters become co-dependent and even if they are at odds with each other, that same conflict forces them to stay in the same courts continuing their battles eternally.

It is our goal to create a game almost without game masters (or storytellers). A game master is a judge in conflicts outside of the game, concerns him or her self with administrative and organizational matters, but doesn't build worlds. It is not a storyteller who has to describe the invisible rest of the World of Darkness. That person no longer exists. Seeing is believing – what you see is what you get.

The Katharsis of Tragedy

With this internecine strife as the basic concept of the vampire, the step is small to go to *tragedy* as a foundation for the realization of this game. We take the concept of tragedy – *Katharsis* (Aristoteles 1994) the empathic suffering and mourning of the audience with the portrayed character, a step further: no one can be closer to the character than the actor herself. Especially when the moments of catastrophe are not rehearsed or known beforehand, when it is unknown what will happen when and how, the character and its actor will experience the downfall the strongest. All three parts of horror: fear, disgust and panic are so much stronger because of their unexpectedness.

The game however does not just consist of the catastrophes and the mourning that follows: every love, every friendship, every trust that will fall apart in the catastrophe, wants to be felt and lived. Power games can last for years before they find a horrible end. There is no predefined fixed plan for the way into catastrophe.

New players and their characters will not find their way into this world by themselves. Someone needs to open the doors and guide them in their first steps: we call these the lions. Lions, because they – like Bottom in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" – play all the side figures and extras in the

prologue, from first to last, and of course, the lion.

The texts that follow are the foundations of the lion's game: the basic construction of the tragic prelude and the necessary cast, connections between existing characters, historical scenes and the playing field itself. Lions, or non-player characters, should have a lust for roleplaying, have no fear of emotional scenes, and have no problems with quick changes of roles. Often it is useful to create groups of lions, as every lion can play certain archetypes better than others. In the prelude the foundation for the inner conflict is created and the start of the stories of the new character is made.

These lions, or non-player characters only have a role in preludes or when memories of characters are played out, in the running game there are only player characters.

The Prelude

The prelude is the first, short tragedy of a new character entering the game. In the prelude the player will learn and experience not only the internecine strife of the character and its foundations, but also that she is the agressor, the victim and the main character of her own story. In the prelude the character of the player is the central point of attention – all scenes are shaped to create her memories, centered around her key moments of shaping her psychology, the dear ones she loved and lost, the decisions she made, the wrongs that she did and were done to her.

According to Aristoteles (1994), a character in tragedy needs two elements: A driving motivation, some sort of goal for which the character is striving – continually, though never attaining it, and the internecine strife, which is at the same time the root for the defeat – this is the cause for the character's breakdown sooner or later. After experiencing the first catastrophe and subsequent katharsis, the character should be filled with new fractures, new enemies and ungrounded motivations, well "armed" for the next act. The player will have devel-

oped a more intimate relationship with his or her character.

Structure of the Prelude

The prelude consists of a handful of key scenes filled with as much drama as possible and is a replacement for the written character history. Before the prelude a rough character concept, a mortal history and the inner conflict should be worked out with the player. The scenes themselves should be shaped as intensive and concentrated as possible:

Only acting characters: Even when the scene actually took place in a full ballroom, in the prelude only the characters with which the character interacted are present. The vampiric memory is very selective. It aids the player to concentrate on the essential events.

No longer than necessary: When the act of a scene is over and the emotions have finished ringing, the scene should be ended, to keep the emotional impression as strong as possible.

A modest scenery: What holds true for the characters and extras also holds true for the décor of the scene. In as far as possible one should concentrate on and reduce to the essential elements: instead of a library, a few old books suffice as decoration, instead of a church, a cross and the smell of incense in the air is enough. It is recommended to use just a little bit of light, to enlighten just the central motives, or use fog, to enhance the dreamlike nature of the memories.

In most cases a prelude needs two to four lions, in hardly any scene more than two. Here one can use the deceptive nature of the vampiric memory: an especially overbearing father can melt together in memories with a similarly overbearing, vampiric teacher (and thus be played by one and the same lion). Where every character needs a driving motivation: it counts moreover for the lions: often it is only one or two scenes in which the minor character can leave behind a strong impression.

Scenes of the Prelude

Every prelude is unique, has its own dynamics, its own atmosphere, depending on its main character, and its own structure. Some scenes are part of almost every prelude: an excerpt of the human life (important people and the environment should be portrayed), the first contact with a vampire, the embrace of the human, and the first hunt.

The whole should always be embedded in a tragedy. When the inner conflict of the vampire is for example between loyalty and love, then this has to recur in the prelude: if the character was already in his mortal life separated from his love by social class, then both – as vampires – should belong to rival houses.

When the lions have conveyed the player the personal tragedy of the character, filled his relationships with life, and guided him successfully into the catastrophe, one should end the game night. Every tragedy needs time to unfold itself for the player.

Pauses Between the Scenes

As only excerpts of the history of the character are played out, between the scenes there will be a break in content, sometimes dozens of years apart. There are various ways of dealing with these breaks, which way makes sense depends on the situation.

The first and most simple option is the break of the scene: all participants shortly go out of character, before the next scene starts. The second option is the narrative solution: a narrator describes, what happened in the meantime and guides the story to the next scene. The third option is the melting together of the scenes: as the prelude often makes up a unified act, one can let one scene flow into another, "scene-ends" are reflected by the departure and re-arrival of the lions.

Inevitable – Unforeseeable

The narrative strand of the prelude is given by the planning of the lions; one should however give the main character at the

point of dilemma a choice to go into a different direction determining the course of his history (whether he betrays characters, or builds alliances, by which clan he is embraced, etc).

Vampiric memories are essentially different from human memories. As the vampire exists for several human lifetimes and his everyday life in the best case is hardly eventful, he forgets more than every human. The Beast acts as a distorting mirror on the experiential world of the vampire: every trauma, every wound and every humiliation leaves an enormous impression in the memory of the vampire – the pleasant, supporting experiences fade quickly and are forgotten. Instead the actual happenings are mixed with ideals, fears, longings, partly alien, overlapping memories of vampires and humans, whose blood the vampire has drunk.

The Portrayal of Memories

The Beast perceives other vampires as a threat. When two vampires meet each other again after a longer period of time, then they will only remember their last meeting in the moment of the new meeting (at the moment that the memories are played out). The fragmented memory of a vampire should coincide as much as possible with the experience of the player of the game, so that he or she only needs to play with experienced, but not assumed relationships.

If possible, the played memories should always conform to the perspective of the character: derangements, delusions, but also manipulations of the memory by disciplines should be taken into consideration and portrayed accordingly.

Countless truths. These distorted experience worlds should erase the objective truth from the game. There should be contradicting "truths" in the game, e.g. who started a war, or who broke a treaty first.

Inhuman. For older characters the dissolving of the personal experience (including sense of time and truth) is one of the most concrete expressions of the dwindling humanity.

Connections Between Characters

Whereas the prelude is the start of a personal story, playing out meetings between characters is the beginning of a common story. Similar to the prelude, connections between characters should be held as brief as possible:

A single tie: To make the connection as intensive as possible, only the relevant characters should be present in the scenes. Often it makes sense to split up acts with too many protagonists into several scenes. Direct, personal encounters under four eyes are often the most intensive ones.

Fitting – unfitting: How well connections between characters work out or not is unpredictable and depending on the chemistry between the players of the characters. If a close connection between characters is desired (close family ties, or love relationships), it is recommended to place the first scene after the characters have not seen each other for a long time, when they have experienced a trauma or another clear break. If the connection does not work out as planned, the characters simply grew apart from each other, and the relationship between the characters stays consistent.

Siblings: When characters have lived with each other for a long time, because they are related or served at the same court, they should get to know each other and their common environment in a historical game night.

Elders

The political structure of the game is based on the elder vampires – these characters will provide the basis for many conflicts in the game and are at the same time the most feared and respected characters in the game. Despite this, we do not see the elder characters as all powerful godlike beings, who should be respected just because of their age and personal powers. The elder characters are tragical characters of their own, who are filled with emotions as much, or even more than any other charac-

ter, who are loosing more than any young vampire can imagine, and who weave webs to protect themselves, to fight their own struggles, out of paranoia, fear of loneliness, boredom and habit. The webs they weave are intricate, their minds plan for a long term. When they get back at an enemy they do not choose the easiest, simplest way, as they know that this will come back to them soonest. Instead they choose the longest, most windy way, entangling as many other characters in their games as possible. They are continuously looking for allies, attempting to pervert their enemies allies, and striking small blows at their age-old enemies, who they can never defeat completely, as they need their enemies just as much to survive – if they would not have this enemy, they would loose their motivation, their drive to leave their haven, their safe home, and be truly lost to the bestial instincts of the vampire, the Beast.

Given this, elder characters should spend time to engage in stories with other characters, build up intimate relationships with the younger characters, who in the end will not just fear the elders for their personal power, but because they have seen a hint of the madness that lies behind the facade of self-control, and have felt the threat of being destroyed by this monster – not physically, but in a slow, psychological manner, torn apart shred by shred, loosing all that they still have that is dear to them.

A Small Circle

Since Vampire: The Masquarade was originally a roleplaying game of a commercial company, which expanded the setting to the World of Darkness with various tabletop and live roleplaying games, novels and a computer game, there is a wide-spread, but wildly varied interpretation of the setting. To get back to the core of the original game, we do away with all of the global setting provided by the World of Darkness. We abandon the concept of the sects – there are no Sabbat vampires – only Fallen or Lost vampires, who have lost their internal conflicts and are only driven by the Beast. They have personal ties to the characters in the game, and they are part of the preludes

that are played – and they have their own preludes in which they build up ties with other characters. We only play with the seven basic clans and refer to them as dynasties or families; we use the nicknames of the original clans, rather than the names of Brujah, Gangrel, etc. The Camarilla does not have a global history, all of history is local and personal, there is not one truth as to how the past was, there are no global treaties of vampires. A vampire needs to meet his peers, as otherwise he would loose touch with the bestial side and easily loose himself amongst humans. Vampiric society consists of Courts of vampires who are related to each other through their past, but there is no general concept of a sect that holds together. The Traditions are natural laws which make a vampiric society possible. This keeps the setting of the game contained to the history that is actually experienced by the players, and prevents the wildly varied interpretations of the World of Darkness and the canon that fanatical White Wolf fans have consumed to become part of our game reality.

Game mechanics

To support this game of personal tragedy, where the goal is to feel the suffering of the character – we have done away with all game mechanics that would break the emotional tension of a scene (Barchmann, 2013). Physical confrontations are played out theatrically, and characters cannot survive more confrontations than a few per night, and will need to drink blood to survive afterward. Latex weaponry from fantasy larp games are used to simulate sword play, and wooden stakes. Firearms hardly damage vampires and are thus of no real interest to carry around, and gun powder mysteriously doesn't work in the vicinity of vampires.

Mental powers are indicated with one simple hand gesture to indicate that the character's actions and words are enhanced with supernatural power, thus making clear to the victim that he should either go along with this, or visibly pull himself together to resist this supernatural power. Supernatural powers that would require

a longer period of time to take effect, or some element of "telling" can only be used between game nights.

Which powers a character has and in which situations they can be used, is described on the character sheet – the player only needs to be aware of the basic game mechanics and of the powers his character possesses – anything more will become clear as he becomes the victim of other character's powers.

The game mechanics are very minimal, but we do feel supernatural powers are important to the game: they can be used to force characters into directions they will not go into by themselves, emphasizing their becoming a victim of the monsters they are surrounded with, while at the same time finding themselves using their powers to pervert and destroy others. We put discretion of the extent and influence of these powers on the side of the victim, rather than the aggressor, as it is the victim who knows, or rather feels, best how the force from outside affects the character.

The Lion's Game in the Context of Nordic Larp

We developed our interpretation of *Vampire: The Masquerade* in the context (since 1998) of creating a chronicle of interconnected vampire larp groups across Europe (mainly between Germany and the Netherlands, but at times also collaborating with groups elsewhere in Europe and beyond). Learning about the extensive scene of Nordic larp, which evolved in the same time period with rather little contact, we found many tangents between our interpretation of *Vampire* and principles of Nordic larp (e.g. Stenros, 2014).

As we brought our chronicles together, we realised there are different ways of playing the game and not all ways fit together in one chronicle. The Three-Way model (Bockman, 2003) describes the archetypes of players and game styles that we found, quite well. We realized the game that we wanted is a game of immersion, and not

so much a dramatist, or gamist game. As we described our style on the European Camarilla website: "You are digging deep when you play this game. This game was not meant to be comfortable, it was designed to provoke and inspire. It was designed to make you think and feel, to dream and aspire..."

While in the Nordic larp scene manifesto's came up, defining the premises for immersive "Nordic" larping, we started defining our style of playing vampire larp as an European countermovement within the global Camarilla – White Wolf fanclub, and eventually parting ways with the Camarilla fanclub in the anglophonic regions. We continued the discourse amongst our chronicles as we more and more refined our desired style of playing, and ways to achieve this type of game.

Parallels with Nordic larp can be found in the focus on immersion, serious dedication in the preparing of players for the game, debriefing of individual players, and the critical approach to game design and praxis. On the other hand, we do not design our game as a scenario – rather as a setting whose only thematic coherence is the tragic existance of the vampire – a setting within which players can create and experience their own personal stories. Within this setting, transparency is not possible, rather we propose a game within which there is not "one truth", just personal interpretations.

Immersion and Bleed

Immersion is key to our game – the goal of our game it to be immersed in the world of the character portrayed; while when a player starts playing a character he will be acting, as the character is played more and more often, the player will get more in touch with his character and at some point does not need to act anymore, the character plays itself as the player experiences the character's emotional world. What starts out as simulation and acting, becomes an immersive exploration of the character's psychological depths.

Co-creation and inter-immersion follow from the need for conflict between the characters, the co-dependency on each other. We cannot point to one story that is created – we strive to create a world of multiple, parallel developing stories.

We use drama to set up the stage for immersion for the players, politics and tactical games follow from these first two – and are inherently flawed due to the compulsions of the characters involved. There is no external plot, only plot coming from the character's ambitions and ploys. Character and plot are interlocking, and in a sense we take "character+conflict=plot" (Nathan Hook, 2013) one step further, where characters with conflicts create plots to create more conflicts. By making the centre of attention of the game the loosing of an internal struggle, we do not attract players who want to "win", or who lean too heavily on using the supernatural powers of their characters over playing the part of their character. While characters have goals they attempt to achieve, players do not play for winning – anyone who joins our game is well aware that in this game of personal horror, their characters will in the end only loose. Even if they gain power, the cost will be their ideals or their loved ones.

We strictly play with the concept of what you see is what you get. Everything that is relevant to the experience of the character has to be portrayed, or it does not exist. This is mostly a reaction to game styles where players can use some "telling" elements to indicate e.g. my character's ghoul (a human controlled by a vampire) will do these actions. On the other hand, we do tend towards a minimalistic style, the setting can be reduced to just have indicators of the environment (a pile of books indicating we are in a library or study).

We play in real time and do not go out of character at any time. If a player needs a break from playing he or she needs to find a reason for the character to leave the space and can only then go out of character. Physical actions are played out – combat is played out as realistic as possible (though without actually hurting each other phys-

ically), intimate encounters are acted out – up to the comfort level of the players involved.

We demand a lot from a new player entering the game – it does not suffice to write a character history on paper and just show up at a game night – we meet and sit down with any new player and work out the character's basic concept, psychology – and then play a prelude to introduce the player to his new character. We ensure that a character is suitable for the player – whether the player can portray the character, and whether the character is interesting enough for the player in the long term –, and has relationships to other characters, so that he does not enter the game just out of nowhere. The role of a game master has become one of a loose director – ensuring that different characters have connections to each other, that characters are worked out well, and in between games to discuss with players how their characters are developing. The latter also has a psychological component, as it is often a balancing of where the character is in terms of psychological development, and what the player needs for his or her own development at that time.

The standard we set for our game is high – this game is not for everyone, if we feel during the introductory meetings between the organizers and a new player that the player is looking for a different kind of game, or that the dark thematic of the game is not suited for the player, we will tell the player to look for another group of Vampire larp or a different game altogether.

The Katharsis of the character is often a purgation of the player's emotional world - as such we are aiming for bleed (JeepForm, 2007). Bleed, as in many larps with horror elements, is essential to our game. Players are encouraged to provoke bleed: Characters should include traits of their players, ideally traits they dislike or even hate. These traits become part of the vampiric beast linked to its raw instincts, everything suppressed and all socially unacceptable aspects of the characters. Besides its vampiric aspects the beast is closely modeled

after the concept of Shadow as established by C. G. Jung (1990). The game is a way to express oneself, and one in which there is a lot of room for self-exploration – characters usually connect to some part of a player's own psychology (see also the auto-biographical method of character creation (Hook, 2013), which by playing the game is explored, so that in real life it can be recognized easier.

The game we play is one for the long term – one night is often found too short to get fully immersed in a character, to get beyond the simulation of emotions. A tragedy needs to be built up over various nights of playing, taking time to build up a love relationship, which can then be lost afterward.

Scenario, Game Design and Transparency

Our game is not designed as a larp scenario, we do not play the game with an end in mind (in fact, in our ongoing Katharsis chronicle there are characters with over 15 years of played history). As we only play out a slice of the life of an immortal being, we do not devise plot lines to come to an end at a specific point in time, rather we try to avoid creating plotlines other than those instigated by the characters. The only moments where game masters create "plot" is when new characters enter the game, as their stories are weaved into the existing tapestry, or when players leave the game before their characters find a natural end – in that case we occasionally come up with a sensible reason for the character's departure, which may spark off or end some plot lines.

The backgrounds and character concepts are not written by one single person, rather they are developed and played out together with the player and the lions at hand playing the parts of important persons of the character's past. What happens in these preludes is often personal, and in most cases not written down. So in that sense we cannot provide every player who wants with insight into all the characters' backgrounds and do not have full transparency

- even more so, not even the game masters have full transparency.

For a strong experience of feeling the tragedy of the character, it is essential that the game has surprise and players do not know what decisions a character will face. Therefor, we advocate a certain amount of secrecy on the whole, not to discuss out of game the ingame tactics and plans.

Because of the intensity of the game, we find it important to provide for after-game occasions to discuss the situations that were experienced by the player within the players group, so that everyone can reflect on the developments of their own characters and how they impacted other characters. We believe that this will help the player distinguish the relationships of their character with other characters from his relationship with other players, creating trust to engage in such intense role playing experiences. The game master's role is to provide the opportunity for each player individually to discuss the psychological development of the character.

Conclusion

While Vampire: The Masquerade is a well-known game, in the Nordic larp discourse it seems to have a bad reputation (e.g. Koljonen, 2003). Interpreting the core concept of the game, personal horror, as the Katharsis from Aristoteles' Poetics, we have proposed in this paper a game that fits well within the Nordic larp tradition: Vampire: Akheron. The game is created from conflict - at all levels, the internecine strife of the characters provides the drive to create conflicts with other characters - and these never end. As a vampire's life is eternal, our game knows no end; we do not provide a larp scenario, we provide a setting and guide for creating a long lasting larp experience, a possibility to create the most intimate of friends whose life the players of the game will share on a semi-regular basis over an extended period of time.

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Charles Bo Nielsen and Hanne Urhøj

Typology in Character Creation

In a recent presentation on character creation it has been pointed out that a character should be playable (Fatland 2012). Back in 2008 in an article for Fastaval Anne Vinkel argued that female characters in larp/ tabletop games often tend to be unplayble characters because they are solely based on gender and suffers from being hollow (Vinkel 2008). In this article three versions of Jungian typology is presented as tools to make playable characters. The two versions are gender neutral and the third is gender active.

The two authors are highly experienced in two different fields; Charles as a larp writer and Hanne as a Jungian analyst specialized in Jungian typology. They have made a bridging work between character analysis and character creation. Human beings are not one- but multidimensional. E.g. an 'introverted' person has extraverted capacities as an 'extraverted' person has introverted capacities. Using typological aspects like this and many more in character creation we can add psychological resonance to our characters and dramas. The article is concluded with a discussion of strengths and weaknesses in use of typology in larp.

Although typology is used in the game industry this fusion of typology and character creation is new to larp and the article is targeted to play writers that might be interested in more indepth character creation.

Introduction to Typology

In the article typology is presented in three versions. Carl Gustav Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist created the theory of types that is about functions of consciousness operating in the psyche as four pairs of opposites (Jung 1921/71).

The next version of Jung's typology, known as Myers-Briggs, adds a personality test named Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and 16 types of personality and additional type codes e.g. ENTP. Apart from being criticized for 'labeling' people, Myers-Briggs tests and types of personalities have been successfully spread all over the world and used very successfully in man-

agement businesses and marriage counseling for more than 70 years[1].

With John Beebe, a third development on the type theory has taken place over the last 30 years. Beebe is a psychiatrist and Jungian analyst and very engaged with analysis of films. Saying that 8 available functions are carried towards consciousness on the backs of archetypes[2], Beebe is bridging Myers-Briggs and Jung's two versions of typology in a new concept, now called type-in-depth. This concept is e.g. about being 'Heroic', 'Parental' and 'Creative' and about the 'Shadow'[3] and the contra-sexual.

With these three versions of typology we have a set of tools that are highly developed, flexible and more specific to human psyche than to gender. If you want to flesh out characters you can find an extensive study to draw inspiration from. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, so to speak and you can use typology on a basic or on a high and very complex level. Therefore we in the following section shortly present these three versions of typology.

Jung's Typology - First Stage

Early in his career and long before his work on typology Jung understood that the movements of the psyche (observable in analysis) tend toward consciousness and he recognized that consciousness is not expressed uniformly in the same way in every person (Beebe 2006). Jung conceptualized, Beebe says, consciousness as center in an ego that expresses its ability to orient the psyche through different basic 'attitudes' and 'functions' (Ibid.).

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1   http://www.myersbriggs.org.

2   Archetypes can be considered as groups of complexes, such as father complexes (Beebe 1988. Roesler 2012) Complexes are like frozen inner images e.g. images of the father - positive or negative.

3   Shadow is a Jungian term for psychic content that is not compatible with the conscious ego.

In this concept as presented in Jung's (1921/71) theory of types he gives us four functions (*Sensation*, *Thinking*, *Feeling* and *Intuition* and two attitudes (*Introversion* and *Extraversion*). The four functions are both introverted and extroverted, Jung defines, and that makes eight functions of consciousness. But a normal human being, Jung said, develops only one maybe two of these eight functions in life (Ibid).

Sensation tells us *that* a thing 'is', Thinking *what* the thing 'is', Feeling tells us *what it is worth* to us. The ability to *get a hunch* about things coming from or going to somewhere without knowing and to a certain degree to trust the hunch is what Jung means about Intuition (Ibid.).

Further the concept of opposites is essential in Jung's theory and he arranges the functions in 'pairs of opposites' or dichotomies:

- Extrovert – Introvert (attitudes)

- Thinking – Feeling (rational functions of consciousness)

- Sensing – Intuition (irrational functions of consciousness)

- Rational – Irrational (later renamed to: Judging – Perceiving by Myers-Briggs)

These opposites, Jung said, are mutually exclusive (Jung 1921/71). Let us present some examples:

You can't evaluate a situation with your Feeling function and your Thinking function at the same time. If you are a psychologically developed personality you can switch consciously between the two functions and use both - but you can never use two opposite functions at the same time. If a type prefers Thinking that in the concept of typology is the opposite to Feeling, he/she will perceive, act and look upon the world around him/her accordingly. The world will be evaluated according to logic, true and false. A type who prefers Feeling

evaluates what is going on according to what feels good or bad.

A person who prefers Introversion becomes energized when he/she is alone or with just one person and becomes exhausted when in a crowd. A person who prefers Extroversion becomes energized when he/she is among people and loses momentum when alone for too long.

A person who prefers Sensing tend to stick to the concrete, the realistic and to details while a person who prefers Intuition are more likely to follow hunches while forgetting realities.

When a person prefers Judging he/she aims for clear plans of action, to be on time and he/she always meets deadlines. On the contrary a person who prefers Perceiving tends to be flexible, always open for more input, never trying to sets things in stone and most likely he/she doesn't like models like these that try to put people into boxes!

Can you imagine what kind of tensions and possible conflicts you can add to your characters when using typology? Tensions occur especially when functions are still 'undifferentiated'. About differentiation Jung writes:

> Differentiation means the development of differences, the separation of parts from the whole. In this work I employ the concept of differentiation briefly with respect to the psychological functions (q.v.). So long as a function Is still so fused with one or more others functions – thinking with feeling, feeling with sensation, etc. – that is unable to operate on its own, it is in an archaic (q.v.) condition, i.e., not differentiated, not separated from the whole as a special part an existing by itself. Undifferentiated thinking is incapable of thinking apart from others functions; it is continually mixed up with sensations, feelings, intuitions, just as undifferentiated feeling is mixed up with sensations and fantasies [...] without differentiation direc-

tion is impossible, since a direction of a function towards a goal depends on the elimination of anything irrelevant. Fusion with the irrelevant precludes direction; only a differentiated function is capable of being directed" (Jung 1921/71, para. 705).

After this quote you maybe can recall one or more 'situations' in real life where functions were not differentiated. We all experience tensions and conflicts between opposites throughout life and that often (always?) involves undifferentiated functions. Although such situations are often very unpleasant experiences they might be the fuel for personal growth and development. You simply need outer tensions and conflicts to develop psychologically and that is according to Jung an ethical task. He says:

> "Life is born only of the spark of opposites" (Jung, C.G. 1953/1966, para. 78) and to raise oneself above opposites, is an essential ethical task, because deliverance from the opposites leads to redemption (1921/71, para. 327)

To put that in a larp way; you need the tension of opposites to create a drama where the opposites normally are carried by two or more characters. Accordingly we have a basic typology structure not only suitable for personal analysis and personal development but for creating characters and dramas as well - and a recipe for an ethical task!

When writing about Jung's typology functions' are named with "#". E.g. the secondary function - that is also called the auxiliary function is named #2. As presented in model 1, the pairs of opposites are arranged on cross bars, where #1 is polarized to #4 and #2 polarized to #3. Knowing the pairs of opposite functions we are now able to make a typology diagram.

This typology diagram shows an example on a person with thinking (T) as first function (#1) and intuition (N) as his/her auxiliary function (#2).

#1 Thinking

#2 Intuition   #3 Sensation

#4 Feeling

The irrational axis   The rational axis
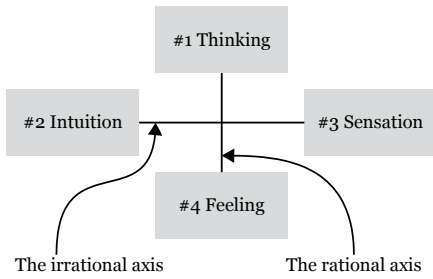
Model 1. Jung's diagram of typology. Our version.

As mentioned above Jung had an idea that a normal person would be able to develop only the primary and maybe the secondary function and then no further. The rest of the potential functions would remain in the subconscious. It is likely that is why he never introduced more than a four functions diagram.
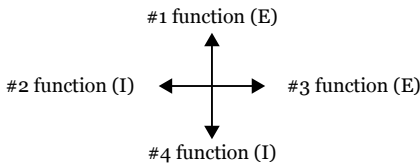
Myers-Briggs Typology - Second Stage

Myers and Briggs who evolved the first typology test have been consistent and specific about introversion and extroversion, saying that introversion (I) and extroversion (E) alternate from function to function (Beebe 2006, the notes) as presented in our own model below.

Because the four functions can be both (I) and (E) we have access to eight function-at-

#1 function (I)

#2 function (E)   #3 function (I)

#4 function (E)
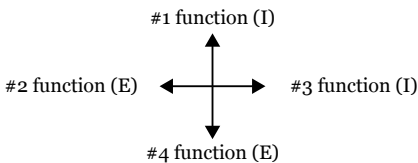
Model 2. Person with an introverted #1

#1 function (E)

#2 function (I)   #3 function (E)

#4 function (I)

Model 3. Person with an extraverted #1

titudes and because #2 and #3 can change position, it results in a total of 16 types of personalities. On this basis Myers-Briggs has developed type codes, schemes and short explanations on their 16 personality types.

Jung operates with eight functions of consciousness and the 4-function-diagram and although Myers-Briggs operates with 16 types of personalities they also hold on to Jungs 4-function-diagram.

Presentation of Myers-Briggs 16 Types of Personality

The 16 types will be presented with:

- a type code like 'INFJ'

- a name of the type

- a short presentation of the type

To make the presentation a little larp-like, 16 characters from the Star Wars universe have been inserted as characters in the 16 types of personality on the next spread.[1]

Actually the Star Wars universe can be traced back to Carl Gustav Jung the way that George Lucas, who created the Star Wars universe, has credited Joseph Campbell for all his ideas to the universe. (Campbell 2003) Joseph Campbell as a young student was scientifically deeply involved with Jung's Eranos conferences in the 1930s and he is obviously inspired by Jungian thoughts including typology.

The two versions of typology presented above has been gender neutral. To insure playability for gender focused characters in a larp we would like to go a bit further.

Female characters need personality besides being Female with a BIG F. Anne Vinkel, in her article "The fifth character"- puts her

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1   The choice of characters to each type is inspired by a blog called 'geekinheels. com' and the presentations have been inspired by 'personalitypage.com'.

Myers-Briggs 16 Personality 'Labels' Applied to 16 Star Wars Characters

ISTJ "The Inspector" - Owen Lars	ISFJ "The Protector" - C-3PO
This "Duty Fulfiller" is a quiet and re-served individual, who focuses on security and peaceful living, has a strongly-felt internal sense of duty, is organized and methodical, can generally succeed at any task which he undertakes, is loyal, faith-ful, and dependable. He/she places great importance on honesty and integrity.	This "Nurturer" lives in a world that is concrete and kind, warm and kind-hearted, and wants to believe the best of people. He/she values harmony and co-operation, is likely to be very sensitive to other people's feelings and has the ability to bring out the best in others by a firm desires to believe the best.

ISTP "The Crafter" - Chewbacca	ISFP "The Artist" - Bail Organa
He/she has a compelling drive to under-stand the way things work, good at logi-cal analysis, likes to use it on practical concerns, has strong powers of reason-ing, although he is not interested in theo-ries or concepts unless he/she can see a practical application, likes to take things apart and see the way they work.	He/she lives in the world of sensation possibilities, keenly in tune with the way things look, taste, sound, feel and smell, has a strong aesthetic appreciation for art, has a strong set of values, needs to live in accordance with what he/she feels is right, will rebel against anything which conflicts with that goal.

ESTP "The Promotor" - Han Solo	ESFP "The Performer" - Wickel
"This doer" is outgoing, straight-shooting types, enthusiastic and excitable, lives in the here-and-now world of action, a straight-forward risk-taker, plunges, gets hands dirty, place little importance on introspection or theory, looks at the facts of a situation, quickly decide what should be done, execute the action, and move on to the next thing.	He/she loves people and new experiences is lively and fun, enjoys being the center of attention, lives in the here-and-now, have strong inter-personal skills. A peacemaker and usually concerned for other people's well-being. Gives practical care. Not be the best advice-givers, because they dislike theory and future-planning.

ESTJ "The Supervisor" - Darth Vader	ESFJ "The Protector" - Jar Jar Binks
He/she lives in the present, in a world of facts and concrete needs, with his/her eye constantly scanning his personal environment to make sure that everything is running smoothly and systematically. He/she honors traditions and laws, has a clear set of standards and beliefs, expects the same of others, and has no patience or understanding of individuals who do not value these systems. He/she values competence and efficiency, and likes to see quick results for his/her efforts.	He/she is warmly interested in others, uses his/her sensing and judging characteristics to gather specific, detailed information about others, and turns this information into supportive judgments. He/she wants to like people, and has a special skill at bringing out the best in others and is extremely good at reading others, and understanding their point of view. Strong desires to be liked and for everything to be pleasant makes him highly supportive of others.

INTJ "The Mastermind" - Palpatine	INFJ "The Counselor" - Obi-Wan Kenobi
This "Scientist" lives in the world of ideas and strategic planning. He values intelli-gence, knowledge, and competence, and typically has high standards in these re-gards, which he continuously strives to fulfill. To a somewhat lesser extent he/she has similar expectations of others.	This "Protector" is gentle, caring, complex, highly intuitive, artistic and creative, lives in a world of hidden meanings and possi-bilities and is the rarest of all the types. He/she knows things intuitively, are usually right, and knows it. Put huge amount of faith into his/her instincts and intuitions.

INTP "The Thinker" - Yoda	INFP "The Idealist" - Luke Skywalker
He/she lives in the world of theoretical possi-bilities, sees everything in terms of how it could be improved, analyzes diffi-cult problems, identifies patterns, and comes up with logical expla-nations, values intelligence and the ability to apply logic to theories to find solutions.	He/she is focused on making the world a better place. His primary goal is to find out the mean-ing in life. What is his purpose? How can he/she best serve humanity in his/her life? An idealist and perfectionists, who drives him-/herself hard in his quest for achieving his/her goals.

ENTP "The inventor" - R2D2	ENFP "The Champion" - Qui-Gon Jinn
This "Visionary's" primary interest in life un-derstands the world he lives in. Using his intu-ition to process information, he/she constantly absorbs ideas and images about the situations. He/she is extremely quick and accurate in his/her ability to size up a situation. He/she has as his ENFP cousin, a deeper understanding of his/her environ-ment than any of the other types.	"This "Inspirer" is warm, enthusiastic, bright and full of potential, lives in the world of possi-bilities, can become very passionate and excited about things and ability to inspire and motivate others, may seem directionless, but are quite con-sistent, has a strong sense of values and ev-erything that he/she does must be in line with his/her values.

ENTJ "The Executive" - Leia	ENFJ "The Giver" - Padme
Natural born leader, lives in a world of possi-bilities where he/she sees all sorts of challenges to be surmounted, wants to be the one respon-sible for surmounting him/her. He/she has a drive for leadership, which is well-served by her quickness to grasp complexities, her ability to absorb a large amount of impersonal informa-tion, and his/her quick and decisive judgments.	He/she is a people-focused individual, in the world of people possibilities. Under-stands and care about people, has a talent for bringing out the best in others. Focused on understanding, supporting, and en-couraging others, make things happen for people, and get their best personal satis-faction from this.

focus into gender. At the same time Vinkel argues for playing human - not just gender. (Vinkel 2008)

"The fifth character" refers to a classical tabletop game setup with four male characters and one female character. The common mistake made at that time and arguably still being made, was writing female characters based on gender. This made 'the fifth character' - the female character - unplayable. (Vinkel 2008)

Writing a female character solely based on her qualities as being the woman in the group and being related only through her love/sexual relations to others exclusively, makes her one-dimensional and actually not very believable or playable. (With the possible exception of Hollywood-produced movie-characters)

Even though Vinkel's article is discussing a way to play with these questionable female characters, we think the main lesson is to avoid these hollow characters in general. It is our understanding that the scene of Fastaval in the last couple of years has been writing mainly gender neutral characters, but we believe that it is possible to use gender actively.

Using gender actively, gender specific tensions and conflicts in our opinion can be included in larp in a more pro-active and positive way. Gender can be used actively to create drama, conflict and tensions of opposites.

The Eight-Function Model - Type-In-Depth - Third Stage

If you want to analyze how opposites are constellated, how to rise above them and exercise typology, John Beebe's Eight-function Model can be helpful. His model offers a typology structure, which is based on the idea that the eight available function-attitudes numbered #1- #8 is carried towards consciousness on the backs of archetypes.

In the Jungian world there is a contemporary debate going on whether the archetypes are nature of nurture (Roesler 2012). In this article archetypal complexes are 'groups of complexes' like stored inner images of e.g. experiences with parental figures.

Archetypes are bi-polar they all have a 'positive' and a 'negative' end and that makes the model a quite complex and even more exciting work with.

Positive and Negative Aspects of the Archetypes in the Eight-Function Model[1]

First function; #1 is carried by the Hero/ Heroine archetype. On the positive end of the scale this archetype is associated with mastery and competence. On the negative end of the scale this archetype is associated with lack of mastery and competence

Second/auxiliary function; #2 is carried by the parental Father/Mother archetypes. On the positive end of the scale this archetype is associated with being parental in a helpful manner. On the negative end of the scale this archetype is associated with being parental in a critical, abandoning manner.

Tertiary function; #3 is carried by the Puer/Puella archetypes. On the positive end of the scale this archetype is associated with the creative and playful child; always ready for fresh starts. On the negative end of the scale this archetype is associated with the vulnerable child with no capacity for standing up against authorities and therefore often evaporating.

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[1] The presentation of these archetypes is based on Urhøj (2013, 1,2) and revised for this article. If a source is not mentioned in the presentation the descriptions are gained from John Beebe's articles and twisted in Urhøj's previous work.

Fourth function; #4 is carried by the Anima/-mus archetypes that are the contra-sexual sides of men and women and the door to the unconscious. Where in men Anima mirrors their soul and in women Animus mirrors their spirit. "Where there is Anima/us, we want to go, we want to be part of it and we want to join it, if we are not too timid or afraid of adventure. (Stein 1998, p. 142)

In her positive aspects:

- The Anima takes the role of guide and leads the man to a higher more meaningful form of life; like Beatrice in Dante's Divine Comedy, Isis in Apuleius The Golden Ass and 'She who must be obeyed' in Rider Haggard's "She".

- The Animus takes the role as a male figure of passionate and original wisdom.

In her negative aspects:

- the Anima is e.g. seductive like the Sirens who traps men and turns them into swine's and smashes the men on their heroic journey at Scylla and Carybdis

- the Animus constellates as the inner critic, judge, sadist, murderer, evil magician and a voice that constantly informs the woman that she's ugly, worthless, stupid, and unlovable.

Garnermann; who is a Jungian analyst and former Chairwoman of the CG Jung Society of Ireland and Director of the CG Jung Institute says about the Jungian concept of the animus, that it is particularly suited to dealing with the problems facing the new women.

> Jung discovered that the human psyche was androgynous and consisted of both masculine and feminine. Because of gender-identified ego-development, however, the masculine element in the woman and the feminine element in the man remain unconscious and undifferentiated. When any psychological content is unconscious it follows two courses – either it becomes projected outwards onto an external object, or leads to identification with it (Garnermann 1991).

Fifth function; #5 is carried by an archetype that John Beebe name the Opposing Personality with passive-aggression and defense. This archetype is not differentiated into a positive and a negative scale.

Sixth function; #6 is carried by the Senex/Witch archetypes. On the positive end of the scale these archetypes are associated with 'The wise old man' and the juicy old crone; knowing about herbs and healing. On the negative end of the scale these archetypes are associated with the cold and bitter old man and the devouring, numbing witch type.

Seventh function; #7 is carried by the Trickster. On the positive end of the scale this archetype is associated with being tricky and explosive and with dual power and transgression. On the negative end of the scale this archetype can be associated with pure evilness.

Eight function; #8 is carried by an archetype named by John Beebe as the "Demonic Personality". This archetype is bi-polar and contains two in one; the beastly in accordance with redemptive spirit.

As we understand Beebe we – at the bottoms of our souls – are constellated with a possibility to carry our angelic and devilish essence in one archetype that is represented by two linked characters. In his articles and workshops John Beebe often gives the Beauty and the Beast as an example of the Daeminic Personality.

Beebe talks about poorly constellated functions that become visible in the display of that function (Beebe 1988). A poorly structured second function may be caused by absent, critical, harsh, cold, numbing, abandoning parental figures (Urhøj, 2013, 1,2)

Both men and women have fathers and mothers and they are mirrored by and are identifying with both parents. These mirroring and identifying experiences accordingly may be stored and constellated in the Eight-function structure. The Eight-function Model should - we think - be clearer on this with more examples from clinical studies.

According to John Beebe the function-attitudes are arranged in an ego-syntonic quartet (Urhøj rename it the "Ego-quartet") to the left in the model below and an ego-dystonic quartet (Urhøj rename it the "Shadow-quartet") to the right. (Beebe 2007a) Please follow model 1 below.

Beebe further states that the four function-attitudes #5 - #8 carried by archetypes in what Urhøj names the "Shadow Quartet", in the Eight-function Model are incompatible with the conscious ego or sense of "I-ness", far harder to realize, still part of the total functioning of a person and more regularly projected or totally out of conscious awareness. (Beebe 1988, p. 347)

All the functions operate in tandems and in his "SPINE" and "ARMS" concept, Beebe defines the vertical SPINE to express the ego's relation to self and reflecting the personal integrity and the horizontal ARMS to express the relation to others. (Beebe 2007a and b)

Both axes in the Ego-quartet cast their shadows in the Shadow-quartet.

Beebe defines "Shadow" as same function but opposite attitude (Beebe 2007a). E.g. if the 'Hero' carries introverted intuition and then the 'Opposing personality' that is the shadow to the hero - carries extroverted intuition.

On the spine the heroic function (#1) is supported by the inferior function (#4) normally the place of shame, but also a place in the psyche of great idealism. The spine forms the personal integrity. On the arms, the tertiary function carried by Puer/Puella tends to be aware of its need for the stabilizing influence of another person and is associated with vulnerability. (Beebe 2007a, Beebe 2007b) The auxiliary function is 'Parental'; it takes the lead in fostering the development of other people, and often serves as their role model (Beebe 2007a, Beebe 2007b).

We can put it this way: #1 is 'Heroic', #2 is 'Parental', #3 is 'Creative, Playful and Vulnerable and #4 is 'Contra Sexual'. You can therefore ask yourself the question: "How am I or my character Heroic/Parental/playful, creative and vulnerable in life? And how do I or my character function when it comes to the contra sexual qualities in life?"

Charles is - as an ENTP. His dominant 'Heroic' function is extraverted intuition and that function is supported by his auxiliary introverted thinking. When gathering information and constantly absorbing ideas and images about situations he is heroic in life. Referring to Myers Briggs Star Wars model, presented above, he is an R2D2.

Hanne – as an INFJ. Her dominant function is introverted intuition. She is 'hero-
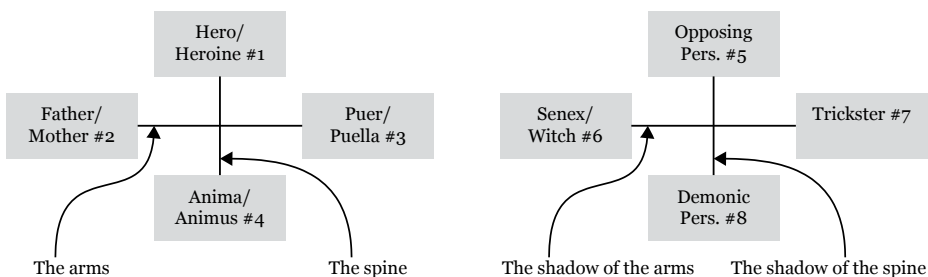
Model 4. John Beebe's Eight-function Model. Urhøj's version (2013)

ic' when she can be gentle, caring, artistic and creative and live in a world of hidden meanings and possibilities. She is an Obi-Wan Kenobi type.

Charles is 'Parental' with his secondary function that is introverted thinking and how can he display that? When it is best by being supportive to others using his "internal precision through logical evaluation and decision making" and in his case that is being supported by his R2D2 like extraverted intuitive way of grasping what is 'in the air' and that gives him a kind of strategic parental functioning: a coach asking others the right questions in the right moments.

Hanne is 'Parental' with her secondary function that is Extraverted Feeling and she is a therapist.

If you want to develop even further you can ask yourself: "Am I or my character 'Parental' in a supportive or a critical way?" Is the function constellated by an archetype representing the positive or the negative end of the scale of that archetype and that goes way back to what was experienced with the parents.

You can look at it this way: Your functions become constellated in childhood. If you are supported by good parents in your childhood your second 'Parental' function will most likely become constellated with positive parental complexes. If you on the other hand are being hurt by critical parents in your entire childhood your own 'Parental' secondary function may turn out to be critical as well.

The secondary Parental function is in a balance or imbalance with #3 that is carried by Puer, the young, immature, creative and playful side of us. This balance or imbalance is a huge potential when it comes to the drama, because our complexes are involved. Our complexes are full of repressed memories and feelings and can be very painful when it becomes activated. The fact is that our complexes are in ac-

cordance with our typology (Beebe 1988, Urhøj, 2013, 1,2).

In adult life the constellated functions become activated over and over in dramas that can be traced back to pairs of opposite functions and the archetypal pairs of opposites accordingly.

It is possible to take out the typology and focus exclusively on the archetypal level of the model and you can just imagine how am I or how my character is 'heroic', 'parental', 'creative' in life.

When imbalances in between archetypal pairs of opposites are accumulated in the psyche a breakdown is a risk. In a study of a portrait of Bob Dylan (Urhøj, 2013, 1,2), Hanne has provided proof that the archetypal scene is changing from the Ego-quartet to the Shadow-quartet. She is showing how psychological problems that could not be solved in the Ego-quartet area of the psychic functioning could be solved in the psychic functioning that go on in the area of the Shadow-quartet. In that case a creative but vulnerable and ever evaporating Puer figure is transformed into a Trickster figure after series of breakdowns. The Trickster has the capacity to stand up against the Senex that is the shadow side of the Father and replace psychic chaotic conditions and inner tensions with equilibrium.

You can make an analysis of a text, a larp or a film this way: first you identify archetypal characters and insert them in to the model. Following you analyze balances and imbalances between the characters on the four axes of archetypal pairs of opposites. Finally you search for the plots and dynamics that are being unveiled in the dramas. (Ex.: Urhøj, 2013, 1,2)

In the larp What Are You Worth Charles inspired by typology has introduced a method of character creation based on 'opposites'. Charles experiences are summarized in the following chapter.

'What are you worth?'

At the latest run of What Are You Worth (WAYW) - a dystopian near-future political game about values, where the state of Denmark introduces death penalty to get rid of non-contributors to society - the game was setup to be used for a documentary at Discovery Channel. The character creation at WAYW is based on a concept, where the characters are created on basis of the players' personal shadows. All the players answered a survey about their own prejudice about who they think don't contribute to society. Following their written characters are being based on their own opposite, own shadow, own non-contributor (WAYW 2013) (Shadow/opposites as explained above).

The design of these characters needs a lot of work. Therefore we are looking for concepts demanding lesser efforts, still offering potential for great successes.

At the first run of WAYW, people had to draw their character based on their own prejudice, outline characteristics of abuse, failure and deceit. In this example the 'drawing characters' can be written by organizers and by players alike in workshops (WAYW 2009). Basically ask people to make a crude cartoonish drawing, that can represent the character they are playing and draw tools and symbols beside it. An image or a symbol can say more than a thousand words!

As described earlier the use of typology - that was actually not real typology - at WAYW but mainly personal 'shadow-work' with a purpose to create characters of what participants themselves saw as so called non-contributors. Here we must be aware of bleed[1] effect that can be caused by arousal of repressed memories that are linked to our shadow. In this method we approach

something that might be viewed as unethical (WAYW 2013).

The latest run of WAYW the participants filled out a form or survey with a variety of questions regarding their own thought on the topic of the game. This served two purposes: handling expectations and identifying their shadows of real life, to be used as inspiration for their character. This process was very rushed. We recommend a more thorough and secure process, when inviting peoples shadows into the process (WAYW 2013).

Conclusion

Using typology in character creation obviously needs a lot more thought and work. Nobody learns typology in two days. If we can accept that we believe typology has a lot of potential for giving more depth to characters and giving players more tools to play with in-game.

You can use typology on a basic level or a higher and more sophisticated level. Thinking of the concept of opposites and using the vocabulary from the typology we consider a basic level whereas taking tests and using the personality code is a higher level.

Using the Eight-function model in its totality with all eight functions-attitudes and archetypes is a highly sophisticated business but possible to introduce step by step.

In order to make the Eight-function Model more accessible you can create characters on the basis of the two conflicts: Hero vs. the contra sexual figures and Parental vs Puer and then flesh the archetypes out using inspiration from literature or the internet.

We recommend a workshop for players and playwriters on typology to offer a more thorough understanding and how to make a benefit in playwriting: how to use typology as guideline and inspiration in the creation of characters.

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1   Bleed is when emotions bleeds over between player or character, in either direction. Link: http://nordiclarp.org/wiki/Bleed

Involving participants can be an unnecessary burden. Initially considerations have to be made whether typology should be a tool for larp writers or only a tool for writing more complex characters.

Discussion of Strengths and Weaknesses

Viewed with strictly academic eyes, typology as a method in psychology is frowned upon, and the studies of Carl Jung lack credible studies. But typology is one possible map of the human psyche that through years of testing in management business has proven its worth. We believe that typology gives a tool to identify the dynamics of traditional conflicts that gives resonance to human beings because we all share the typology structure.

A person's typology can be boiled down to eight available functions or 16 different types of personalities. What make human beings so different are the different constellations of the functions in childhood. But these differences can be traced back to the eight functions and that's why a complete drama that plays on all the typological pairs of opposites has a deep resonance in all human beings. This resonance is attractive in character creation.

Using Myers-Briggs you might oppose the labeling of people into 16 types of personality, and you are more than welcome to do so. But the labeling critique is not relevant in larp because we don't use the method for labeling but to evolve characters out of common basic human traits and conflicts. In larp, where we cannot live the whole life of another person, Myers-Briggs 16 types of personality, might be a helpful way to get around creating very diverse characters that all brings something to the table.

Being based on the idea of preferences of functions of consciousness, typology before the Eight-function Model is not based on anything like gender, sex, profession, income or nationality. But as typology exist in culture; typology is mixed up with culture. Using typology in larp for conceptualizing the personal development as well as cultural problems going on in the game might also in time become a great tool.

Typology can turn out to be very complex and complicated. We need to be very strict in the vocabulary if we want to prevent confusing situations. We also need to choose our levels of the use of typology: are we on the levels of opposites, are we using type code of personalities or are we on the level of archetypes?

Players need a reason to interact with one another; Introvert characters need extra attention in this case. Some LARPs might have a very introvert focus, other a very extrovert focus. Larps about fighting and loud dramas often favor extrovert characters, while larps with many restrictions on how to communicate might favor introvert characters. Saying this we have to remember that a person who prefers introversion has an extraverted secondary function like a person who prefers extraversion has an introverted secondary function. Why not exercise both?

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Elin Dalstål

Sharpening Knives

Integrating Phone Use in Larp Design

In this article I will examine how the horror larp 'Post Mortem' (Nordström & Eriksson 2006-2013) integrates cell phone use into the game design. It details in a step-by-step way how the campaign uses cellphones, from very basic uses to unexpected and new ways to integrate cellphone usage on many levels of game design.

Let's talk about knives. In my family knives are a matter of family honor. We keep them sharp. Really, really, sharp. Every time you use a knife's edge, it dulls a little. It only dulls a bit, but over time, a knife's edge wears down completely. I spent a lot of time sharpening knives. It's quiet work. Nothing flashy. Nothing innovative. Just sliding the blade over the whetstone, over and over again.

So, let's talk about larp, about the quiet work that sharpens the cutting edge. Not the flashy stuff, not the innovative stuff, but the quiet and careful work that keeps the edge sharp.

When you look at a larp as a participant it can be hard to see all this quiet and careful work. You look at the game and see the complex end product, not all the small steps leading up to it.

Post Mortem

Post Mortem is a horror larp campaign that been running for eight years. It is organized by Emmelie Nordström and Amanda Eriksson for Midälvariket. It tells the story of *Post Mortem*, a secret occult organization that investigates and handles supernatural threats. Each autumn the larp runs pervasively for about two months. The game format includes, three weekend larps, weekly events run as mini-larps, ARG elements and different formats of role play as play by text and tabletop play. The campaigns rules are simple, we show respect towards non-participants and we use safe words if needed.

How Does this Relate to Sharpening Knives?

Post Mortem uses and abuses whatever tool it can get its hands on to tell the story. Larping, tabletop roleplaying, freeform,

phone calls, text messages, chat, video conference, in character forum discussions, books, audio recordings, artwork - you name it. Introduce a tool and the campaign will probably grab it and make use of it. Not all of the tools are used at once. What formats and tool are used varies between events. Some larps are played out in public and strive for a 360° illusion, others are blackbox larps played in a local theater. Different meta-techniques are stolen, hacked, or invented to suit the theme of each event.

But one tool the campaign makes a lot of use of during nearly all events and all types of play is cellphones. They are available, easy to use and are a tool all players already are familiar with.

Yet in a larp context cellphones tend to be an under utilized tools. I will look at what can be learned from how Post Mortem step by step sharpened its methods for cell phone use from very basic approach to a more complex and varied use.

Cell Phones as a Resource

Some uses for cell phones at larps are probably familiar: before a game, participants use their phones to get things ready, and after the game use them again to coordinate cleanup. During the game cell phones form a part of the game's safety infrastructure by being available in case someone needs to make an emergency call.

Often the use of phones ends here. Cell phones are seldom used as active a part of the game's design even in contemporary settings. Especially in horror larps, isolation and lack of information is often used to build tension. Cell phones represent both a connection with the outside world and an opportunity to share or find information. So at many horror larps, as in many horror movies, things are often set up so that cellphones don't work.

In contrast, *Post Mortem's* approach is to maximize cellphone use and see how it can be integrated into the game's design. Post Mortem do this this by using basic cell-

phone functions everyone is familiar with, and do it without compromising ability to terrify players.

How to Make Phones Scary

While isolation is scary, having someone you care about call you for help can be scary as well - especially if they are hyperventilating and sobbing on the phone. If the phone call doesn't provide a solution to the emergency, it is just as likely to trigger fear and isolation. When you can't help the person on the other side of the line, both parties are likely to feel more desperate and helpless. The option to communicate can also provide a player with a more active way to express their character's fears in play.

For example, after my Post Mortem character was attacked I learned how I could use a phone call to add to the fear. I was injured, confused and traumatized. I managed to call a friend to warn her about what was happening. The person I called happened to be a three hour drive away from me, so while the scene was emotional and intense, she was unable to actually help me. The only thing she could do was to talk to me to try to keep me from passing out before someone could find me. It was a beautiful scene, and gave us a way to explore the feelings of vulnerability and shock that occurred after the danger had passed.

As for the information aspect: While horror is about fear of the unknown, an overflow of information can be just as disorienting and scary as no information at all. If you are not sure what is true, don't know how things fit together, and you have no idea what's going on but only a thousand scary clues that you can't resolve, then you will be scared shitless despite your abundance of information. The only thing you know for sure is that there is much you do not know. When you have a bunch of scared players calling each other on the phone, you have an overload of confusing and scary information.

The most-effective example of how unsettling an overflow of information can

Author Elin Dalstål during one of the debriefs. (Photo: Linn Vikman)

be came when we had to split up to cover three different locations at once. When things started happening, the person acting as communication central got swamped because everyone tried to call her at once. That communication breakdown compounded into a second breakdown because each group started calling each other directly instead of following established protocol. In turn, this made it hard for the communication central to get information out to the right group.Things quickly descended into chaos where everyone had to rely on confused second- and third-hand information and paranoia. By combining a high stress situation with a need for communication the organizers managed to create a situation where stress, miscommunication and paranoia spread among the players. Free, accessible communication does not necessarily provide any solution to stressful situations, it can also provide more opportunities for things to go wrong.

So, Post Mortem used cellphones to create horror, but didn't stop there. Phones were used for a lot of other purposes as well.

Extending the Illusion

Post Mortem is set in an occult version of our modern world, so the most obvious thing is to use cellphones the normal way: calling people, texting, accessing stuff on the internet, taking photographs and recording sounds - both in and out of character.

This might seem insignificant, but it is not. At some larps, the game "ends" at the edges of the game area. You can't uphold the illusion that there is an outside world beyond the bubble where you play the game. If you are able to call someone outside that bubble, it helps you extend that illusion.

At one point in the campaign a character took a head injury and things weren't looking good. The characters realized they needed to call a doctor. It was empowering to be able to make that decision to call a doctor and then actually make the panicky phone call to an organizer (after notifying them by an out of character text). It made the situation feel so much more real that other players feared that the player had actually called a real emergency services line.

Being able to do that, knowing that the organizers expected and welcomed that sort of play, gave us a chance to react more naturally to what was going on. This was true both with regard to our inward emotions and the kinds of actions we could take. It also gave us the opportunity to face new ethical dilemmas. For example: would we call for help, even if it meant putting the ambulance driver and the integrity of the mission at risk?

Documentation

We also used our phones to document the investigations. This turned out to be useful, not just for the character but for the game design as well. For example, photographic clues made it easier to inform other players what was found and it also made it a lot easier to research the stuff we found - like looking up the mystic symbols drawn in blood.

Our documentation also became a tool for the organizers. They could mess with the documentation and manipulate it. In this year's campaign, one of the fictional elements used was that an owl would hunt a character in their last week of life. The organizers used photo-manipulation on photographs taken with a cell phone to include an owl sitting in a tree in the background.

We also used phones to record and play sounds, for example, we interrogated a witness and recorded the resulting interview with unexpectedly great results on one occasion. One of the players managed to record the whispering voices heard in a haunted house using her phone. The organizers were not aware the recording had been made. So, when the organizers suddenly heard the whispers again, coming from the wrong direction and after turning off the sound system, they nearly had a heart attack!

Out of Character Communication

There is always a need for out of character communication. Be if for practical reasons,

like running out of toilet paper, planning for plot, or to obtain emotional support; cellphones were used for all of these purposes. They were used to tell a fellow player that you needed to have someone to sit down with, relax and debrief.

Things Happen All Around Us All the Time

The opportunity to call and text people also had other effects. The campaign ran 24/7 for about two months. There were 22 players, and two organizers. Cell phones were essential to give everyone the intended pervasive experience that the larp was happening all the time, all around them.

During the bigger events there were always players that were unable to attend for out of character reasons. Often the absent player had the opportunity to participate by phone in some way. Characters would call them up for emotional support or ask them to research some clue we found on site. The absent player would in turn call or text the organizers for the information their character was researching and then the player could call back in character with the information they had found. This also worked the other way around. The absent player could suddenly get a message from the organizer with information about something that happened to their character. This would give the absent player a reason to call the players at the event for help.

It facilitated 24/7 play in other ways as well. Sitting at work you could play out small scenes with your fellow players over text messages. Pieces of micro fiction going back and forth between players created moments of your character's everyday life.

Super Powers and Bad Feelings

Many elements of the game's occult theme were helped by cellphone meta-techniques. As we were using our phones a lot in character to call and text other characters, cellphone meta-techniques could be used without disrupting the illusion for other characters.

Escape (Photo: Astrid Holmström)

For example, a character had a supernatural "spider sense" (that is, she had the ability to sense approaching danger), so when danger was approaching the organizers sent her a text message containing a number between one and five. One was a vague sense that something was generally wrong and five meant something going as wrong as it could. The player that had the spider sense could then act on the information she got via the text message.

Another example was a character that was a mind reader. The way his telepathy was described was as though everyone around him were speaking their thoughts aloud, all the time. If your character was feeling or thinking about anything particular you thought the mind reader might pay attention to, you could send him a text message about it. Sweet and simple.

The organizers could also use text messages for different forms of shadow play and to give direction over the phone. Impulses, visions, dreams or just a push to get the plot moving, all of it just a short text away.

Limits of the Tool

Phones are useful, but like any tool, they have their limitations. For example, even if text messages are useful for many things they are not truly instant. You need to find a moment to both read and write messages during the flow of the game. In a non-contemporary setting this is even more of an issue. A seer character at a fantasy larp can seek and be given visions over text message, but the players might want to keep the phone hidden most of the time and not check it as often.

Another concern is that unless you get a separate phone number for the larp, then in-character calls could intrude on your everyday life and you could get out of character calls during a game. Because everyone was aware of the problem of in character calls coming at a bad time, they accepted that players might just turn down such calls. In the case out of character phone calls intruding, the *Post Mortem* setting provides an alibi. Because we played members of a secret organisation, when an out of character call intruded players could al-

ways treat the call as if it were coming from a friend or family member that wasn't part of the organisation to "maintain secrecy".

So even if a tool has limitations you can work with the limitation. Sharpen the tool a little more, and you come up with an improvement that makes it less of a limitation and improves play at the same time.

Phones are Like Knives

Let's get back to the knife's point. This article was suppose to be about knives right, not phones? Except in this case a phone is a knife. Bit by bit push the phone game design element a little bit further. Make it a little bit sharper, until is as sharp as can be.

None of the individual steps are very flashy or innovative, even if the end product was. Each step was just a small improvement.

Using phones for in character communications is something many contemporary larps already do. Integrating it a bit further into the design helped extend the illusion that the game was going on beyond the game area. The intense phone contact between players both between and during events created a strong atmosphere that things were happening all around us, all the time. Documenting clues with out phones came naturally, and so did organizers manipulating those clues in turn.

Using phones for out of character communication isn't exactly rocket science, but a campaign with a lot of phone use made the out of character communication flow more smoothly.

When you have a lot of phone use both in and out of character, using the phones for meta-techniques seem more natural. Soon you realize how useful cell phones are for everything from shadow play, giving character super powers, to pacing and directing the plot.

None of the steps taken were flashy or revolutionary. Merely sharpening the tool of *Post Mortem*'s framework

for cellphone use resulted in it growing into something quite impressive.

In the end that is what makes the difference between a blunt object that barely deserves to be called a knife and something sharp enough for neurosurgery. I have no doubt *Post Mortem* will keep on sharpening the tool further and come up with all sorts of smart ways to use smartphone functions in the game design.

Elin's Knife Sharpening Guide for Larps

1. Take a game design element.

2. Use it.

3. Sharpen it just a little.

4. Repeat and keep on repeating.

That's it. That is what it takes to sharpen the cutting edge. You sit down with the metaphorical whetstone, let the blade slide over it and lift it just a little bit shaper. Nothing flashy. Just careful quiet work. Just small improvements. But they add up over time. In campaigns you can track the improvements over time, but it is just as true for one shots. Any game design element can be improved. How you use the game area, how you write the plot, body language use, workshops, rules, character design, anything. You just have to make it a little bit shaper.

The important thing for me is that improvement is about the small steps. That is why it helps to be reminded they are important and spending time on them is invaluable. Small improvements add up.

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Nathan Hook

A Critical Review of the Mixing Desk

The mixing desk of larp was originally developed as a teaching tool for larp design, for use at the larpwriter summer school in 2012. Its stated aims are to "raise awareness of which design opportunities exist" and "making you more conscious about your default design choices." (Andressen & Nielsen, 2013) The mixing desk is one of the first attempts to create a structure to teach larp design, and as such is an important step forward regardless of its own merits or application.

This article is a critical review of the mixing desk, based on the description of version 2 available on the larpwriter summer school resources webpage (2013), expanded on by the slides and videos on that page. A similar description was published in the Knudepunkt book Crossing theoretical borders (Andressen & Nielsen, 2013).

The mixing desk model is based on a series of "faders" - sliding scales of polar opposites, using the metaphor of a music engineer's mixing desk. The concept is intended to guide the user to actively consider their design choices (for example, between transparency and secrecy) rather than assume default positions.

The Fader Structure

One weakness of this model is that locks the user into a binary sliding scale of thinking, conceiving of each topic as a duality.

The model struggles with concepts that lack direct opposites in this way. To put this in visual terms, the mixing desk limits the user to visualising in one dimensional rather than two dimensional space.

This article will now look at four examples of design features that do not fit into the concept of a one dimentional fader.

The first example is the concept of the creative agenda from the GNS model (described in Kim, 2008 and elsewhere) or its variant the Threefold model (Bockman,

2003). GNS presents three creative agendas (Gamism, Narrativism, Simulationism) that contrast without being the direct opposite. The closest the mixing desk seems to come to this concept is the sixth fader "player motivation," which appears to put "competitive" gamism at one end of the fader and combine every non-gamist agenda into "collaborative" to oppose it.

A second example of a design feature that does not fit into a fader is the concept of themes, both in a general sense (e.g. "this is a larp about pirates") and the deeper sense of truth based themes (e.g. "this larp explores the concept of freedom"). A good discussion of this point is included in Schell (2008). Themes are categorical rather than scalar – a theme slider would make no sense.

A third example of this is the eighth fader "Playability vs. plausibility." It's not clear that the concepts of playability and plausibility are actually opposed. Why does making a larp more plausible make it less playable? While both are important concepts in their own right, it seems they do not fit into the fader model.

A fourth example is in the second fader "Representation, abstraction vs. realism." The issue of representation is richer than choosing between realism and abstraction. For example, a sharp metal sword representing a real sword has stronger realism in terms of weight and appearance than a safe prop sword, but since it cannot be used to safely strike someone in the way a safe prop sword can, it is less realistic in terms of affordances. It can therefore be argued both that a sharp sword and a safe sword are more realistic than each other, showing that realism cannot be expressed on a single one dimensional scale.

Together, these four examples - non-duality based concepts, categorical concepts, faders that don't seem to have a clear opposite and relative concepts beyond a simple line - demonstrate the weakness of the binary scale fader approach.

Twelve faders are given in the published model. The authors point out when the mixing desk is explained that the user should add more faders as needed. This does not read as a strong position, since then all it offers is locking the user into this one dimensional way of thinking.

The way forwards on these issues is to move beyond one dimensional sliding fader for every concept, and instead use a template-like design that includes text boxes to fill in ('what themes does this larp explore?') and other shapes (such as a GNS triangle shaped fader).

Faders That Mix Separate Concepts

A number of the faders presented in the model seem to mix together quite separate concepts, creating confusion. This article will now discuss a few examples of this issue.

The first fader presented is titled "Playing style, Physical vs. verbal," and appears to combine two separate concept. The first is how 'live' the larp actually is; do players physically act or describe their character's actions? For example, a traditional 'boffer' larp would be more physical than a Mind's Eye Theatre (MET) vampire larp. This would also seem to include the level of physical illusion– do players see what their characters see, or does an organiser narrate/describe it (i.e. verbal action by the organiser)? The second concept included in this fader is the nature of in-game conflicts; whether the characters are involved in physical or verbal conflicts. This is actually an entirely separate concept. For example, a werewolf larp run according to the published MET rules would be verbal in play style (the first concept), but could be based heavily around physical conflicts (the second concept). It would therefore be impossible to locate on this fader.

A second example is the fourth fader titled "Openness," which expresses "Secrecy vs. transparency." This fader combines both

player knowledge of the diegetic setting, (e.g. other character's secrets) and player knowledge of the larp itself (e.g. the intended theme and mood, position of the faders themselves, when it will finish). These seem entirely separate concepts, and combining them is confusing.

A third example is the sixth fader titled "Player motivation," which expresses "Competitive vs. collaborative." Based on the slides used to present this fader, it mixes together player's motivation (e.g. players competing for off-game fame, or collaborating for the best story) with character motivation (characters competing to achieve in-game aims, or collaborating with each other against the world). It's also unclear how this fader would describe a larp where groups of characters collaborate within their group to compete against other groups.

These three issues seem to derive from the mixing desk not acknowledging the separation between player and character The solution to these issues is to separate out these blended faders, perhaps having two separate sets of faders, one that relates to the player (e.g. whether they do physical or verbal real actions during play, how much they know about the larp) and the diegetic character (e.g. whether they do physical or verbal diegetic actions, how much they know about the diegetic setting).

Implicit Bias in the Mixing Desk

The mixing desk is presented as a neutral design tool. In fact, a number of faders show signs of inherent bias towards certain kinds of design in their structure.

One example is the seventh fader, "Metatechniques, discrete vs. intrusive." The fader does not actually address the question of to what extent to use meta-techniques, but instead carries an assumption they are used and moves the user into thinking about how intrusive they should be.

A second example is the second fader, "Representation, abstraction vs. realism." The fader questions how to "represent the reality in the setting," presenting a choice between "realism" and "abstract elements to focus on the feeling and atmosphere." This reads as a bias towards abstract/surreal elements, since it implies that a more realistic setting has less "feeling and atmosphere" than an abstract one. This seems counter-intuitive; for example would a realistic church have less atmosphere than an abstract church?"

A more widespread form of bias across the mixing desk is its unstated focus on externalised interaction. The first fader "physical vs. verbal" and the sixth fader "competitive vs. collaborative" both describe interactions in-between characters. No fader in the model relates to the inner life of a character, or styles of play based not on character interaction, such as a Turkuist playing while locked alone in a wardrobe. (Pohjola, 2000). The model over all then is bias towards external play and against internal play.

Based on the descriptions given (e.g. in the ninth fader, active vs. passive game master style), the writers favour narrativist play, and a particular kind of intelligent design rather than emergent narrativism.

The way forwards on these issues would be to redesign the meta-techniques fader, and add a 'play style, external vs. internal' fader for what kind of play the larp is intending to support, and reconsider how the other faders are described and presented.

Conclusions

The stated aims of the mixing desk are to 'raise awareness of which design opportunities exist' and 'making you more conscious about your default design choices.' As an attempt to create such a tool, it has certainly done that. However by imposing the notion of linear faders with direct opposites it binds the user's thinking in a dualist mindset. It also fails to separate player from character and subtly pushes a bias to-

wards narrativist abstract meta-technique based play styles. Its structure excludes established concepts such as creative agenda, dramatic theme and character immersion. The mixing desk is based on the model of a sound engineer's control desk. Perhaps future models will instead look at more elaborate interfaces with a wider range of different controls than just faders.

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Kaisa Kangas

Bringing the Occupation Home

Like any other form of art, larp develops through individual works. Our piece Halat hisar (2013) was an attempt to transfer the Palestinian experience of living under occupation to Finland. In this article I examine two techniques that were used in creating the game - bringing home and distancing. I discuss using the techniques in political larp and take a brief look at the potential of larp as political activism.

Halat hisar (*Piiritystila* in Finnish, *State of Siege* in English), named after a poem by the Palestinian author Mahmoud Darwish, was the first Palestinian larp that was played outside Palestine. The game was made together by Palestinian and Finnish designers, and it was played in Finland. The players were from Finland, Palestine, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany and the UK. The game lasted for 29 hours.

In the game, a state called Uralia had been established on Finnish soil, and Finns lived under military occupation. Diegetically, the game was set in the University of Helsinki. The visit of a Jordanian minister who had promised funding, but also supported the occupation, created controversy as students were preparing to elect a spokesperson for the student council. Moreover, the Uralian army put the campus under siege, having been informed about suspi-cious persons in the university. This led to a demonstration during which the soldiers shot a student. At night, the soldiers repeatedly invaded the university premises to arrest and interrogate people.

Palestinian larp culture is still young. The first Palestinian larp, Till Death Do Us Part, organized together with Norwegians, was played in August 2012 on the occupied West Bank. Juhana Pettersson, one of the organizers of Halat hisar, participated in the game and wrote about it in Helsingin Sanomat, the main daily newspaper in Finland. In the article, one of the organizers of Till Death Do Us Part, Fatima AbdulKarim, brought up the idea of using larp to inform Finns about the occupation of Palestine. Soon there was a team of three Palestinians and three Finns working on the game. I was one of the Finnish organizers, and was

A university building under siege. Ingame. (Photo: Tuomas Puikkonen)

responsible for the game fiction. The views I express in the following are my own.

The Palestinian organizers came up with the idea of transferring the occupation to Finland. This made things easier, as we didn't have to brief the players on Palestinian culture. I would not have thought of using the Finnish context myself, but it immediately made sense. This way we could concentrate on the political situation, and the players would feel more strongly about events happening in a familiar environment: we would bring the occupation home. By bringing home, I mean relocating foreign issues to familiar surroundings. The goal is to create emotional involvement and make players relate intimately to issues that might otherwise seem distant. I am aware of only one game where the method has been previously used, the Norwegian larp Europa (2001), which I will discuss in more detail later. I will refer to the circumstances that are brought home as the source context, and to the environment they are transferred to as the home context.

Bringing home has to be complemented by distancing, moving something out of its usual environment. Whatever is brought home has to be removed from its original context. Distancing works through analogue and allegory, and involves a certain level of abstraction. At its best, the technique makes it possible to concentrate on the essentials and to see the original situation more clearly. Distancing has been used in many cases alone, without bringing home, such as in the Danish larps System Danmarc (2005) and Den Hvide Krig (2012), which I will discuss later, and the Palestinian larp Killed in the Name of Honor (2013).

A typical example of distancing is role reversal. In Killed in the Name of Honor, written by three Palestinian women and played on the West Bank, so-called honour killings were treated in a setting where gender roles were reversed. In Europa, the Nordic countries mirrored the former Republic of Yugoslavia, and characters were Nordic asylum seekers in a reception centre located in Orsinia, a fictitious Balkan country.

The Israeli separation wall transferred to central Helsinki. From Halaat hisar background material. (Art: Joel Sammallahti)

Halat hisar featured a similar change of roles. Northern Europe was in constant turmoil, and Nordic countries were either dictatorships or flawed democracies. In contrast, the Middle East was known for the welfare state, high levels of equality and commitment to human rights. In the game, the occupation forces were brutal towards Finns, whereas the Arab journalists and activists, played by Palestinians, were treated with more respect.

Background Instead of Stereotypes

As I see it, the focus of *Europa* was on the hardships faced by asylum seekers and their feelings of national hatred, rather than on what actually happened in the Balkans. There was not much background material provided on the wars between the Nordic countries, whereas the everyday life in the reception centre was based on thorough research of such facilities in Norway. We, however, wanted to highlight the political reality in Palestine.

It would have been possible to neglect the real world history and create an occupation in the abstract. However, we didn't want there to be an easy solution. Usually, military occupation can be ended simply by the withdrawal of the occupation forc-

es. In Palestine, there is not only a military occupation, but also a situation of settler colonialism and apartheid (Tilley 2009, Tilley 2012). There has never been an independent Palestinian state, and the occupiers see the area as their home. Palestinians and Jewish Israelis live intertwined but segregated on the same land area. The line between the occupiers and the occupied is based on ethnicity and religion rather than citizenship; about 20% of Israeli citizens are Palestinians who face legalized discrimination because they are not Jewish.

This approach meant writing dozens of pages of background material on history, geography, politics and human rights violations. This is more in line with the Finnish national larp tradition than the current trend of the Nordic tradition connected to the Knutepunkt events. Many of the well-known recent Nordic larps have been very scarce in written material. For example, *KAPO* (2012) was set in a Danish concentration camp in an alternative reality that was described with only one paragraph. In *Mad About the Boy* (2010), all men had died, and the social developments of an all-female world were mostly left for the players to invent during the game or in the pre-game workshops.

Larp is co-creative, and consists of player experiences rather than written material. Memorizing a huge amount of material may thus seem like an unnecessary burden. However, different goals call for different design principles, and designers should choose methods that best suit the larp. Exploring a real political situation requires firm common ground, lest players end up exploring their own prejudices and stereotypes instead of the actual reality.

Apparently this happened in *Den Hvide Krig* (2012), an attempt to study the occupation of Iraq in an anachronistic fantasy setting. The game documentation, *The Book of the White War*, gives the impression that conflict between the occupiers and the occupied – a culture "similar to Western Europeans" and a "nomadic, desert-tribe inspired people" – arose from cultural differences rather than political realities. The players were given some simple guidelines for building the occupied culture. From the player-written descriptions, it seems that this resulted in a childlike people who lacked understanding of technology – an orientalist caricature of a "primitive" culture.

In *Halat hisar,* cultural stereotyping was avoided because every character was from the same cultural background as the player. However, we needed to be very explicit about the political situation. For example, it was important that the players understand the asymmetric power relations implicit in an occupation. An occupation is not a conflict between two equal sides that can be solved by mutual compromise. There are the occupiers and the occupied – the oppressors and the oppressed. Power relations are the essence of politics, so they cannot be neglected in any political piece of art. We tried to make sure that the political context is clearly transmitted by having comprehensive written materials.

Avoiding the Pitfalls

When applying the technique of distancing, decisions have to be made about which elements are central and which are less important, what to transfer and what to leave

aside. The danger is that something crucial will be lost and the end result will have no more than an anecdotal connection to the starting point. The process of distancing resembles writing history. The choice of which facts to include is as important as their truth, and history is always written from someone's point of view.

Halat hisar was made from the point of view of the occupied, the Finns – or in the original context, the Palestinians. It was their experience that we wished to transmit, to the extent that it is possible. Most of the occupiers were supporting cast. They had more dramatic functions and less character description than the player characters. Perhaps more importantly, they didn't face moral choices. The shooting of a protestor by a soldier was a scripted event. Maybe it was this aspect that prompted one of the players to say that the game was not about conflict between Uralians and Finns, but about conflict between different factions of Finns struggling under occupation.

Bringing home also has its pitfalls. Players already associate things in the home context in a certain way, so the designers have to take care to avoid misleading associations. For example, we were tempted to use real-world Finnish politicians as leaders for the different political factions. However, this would have risked shifting the emphasis from the occupation to real-world Finnish politics.

We also wanted to be extremely careful when constructing nationalism for the game. In Finland, racist right-wing politicians are trying to appropriate the nationalist discourse and its symbols. Their nationalism is built on exclusion: it is xenophobic and focuses on not having to share our wealth with outsiders. For the larp, we wanted a different kind of nationalism. Highlighting traditional crafts and folk dance provided a departure from reality where nationalist discourse is often anti-intellectual and is not drawn towards folk heritage.

Another danger involved in bringing home is transferring things that will make the

Students protest during the visit of the Jordanian minister, two of them with backs turned. Ingame. Photo: Tuomas Puikkonen

home context lose its familiarity and alienate players. This will dampen the effect. In principle, one could transfer so many elements that there would not be much left of the home context. In practice, this is unlikely, but there is the risk of causing the same result by transferring something that feels too foreign.

Finland, as a rather democratic welfare state, doesn't currently have much of a culture of resistance, so we had to import it from Palestine. For example, we decided that at demonstrations Finns would throw stones at soldiers and that comrades of the student who was killed by the military would put up posters of her. Designing the look for the posters was one instance where we had to take care in mixing the Finnish and Palestinian settings, as we wanted the Finnish players to have an emotional connection to the posters.

Providing enough background information was our way to avoid most of the potential problems of distancing and bringing home, but in building the protests it was better not to instruct the players too much. We practiced a demonstration before the game to find the right loud and angry mood. Otherwise the everyday resistance was left to emerge during the game, so players had a strong connection to it. This worked much better than we had expected. On the morning of the second day of the game, an army spokesperson came to give a press conference. The faculty staff and students stood there silently, their backs turned to him, protest signs plastered on to their jackets. The scene was very powerful, and had a distinctively Finnish feel to it.

On the webpage of *Europa*, it said:

> "The Nordic Troubles" were a series of wars between the traditional ethnic groups of the Nordic countries. This may seem absurd, but so did the notion of the wars on the Balkans before they began.

Like the organizers of *Europa*, we also wanted to point out certain real-world absurdities. A common argument in support of Israeli colonialism is that there are plenty of Arab states where the Palestinians

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could go. This is as silly as saying that there are many Nordic countries where the Finns could go instead of staying in Finland. In the debrief for *Halat hisar*, one of the players said that when reading the game material, the idea of a group of people immigrating to Finland to establish their own state had seemed artificial. After reading about Palestine, the player had understood that this followed the course of actual events.

In *System Danmarc* (2005), distancing was used in a way opposite to that of *Halat hisar*. The game was set in a cyberpunk future where Danish democracy had degenerated. Those not well-off were confined to low-priority zones and had no influence on society. At the end of the game, the players were shown a documentary where real-life Danish prostitutes, drug addicts, homeless, researchers and social workers talked about social exclusion and inequality. It turned out that the future dystopia is already here. Some of the participants had found the ending manipulative.

In *Halat hisar*, it was not a surprise that the game content was inspired by real-world events. We had the idea that the personal story of every character would contain something that has happened to a real person in Palestine, and this would be revealed in the debrief. We ended up not writing the characters like this, mainly because of lack of time. Afterwards I thought maybe it was for the better. Such analogues might have made the players feel that their experiences were devalued.

Transplanting Palestine to Finland?

There are many things to take care of when bringing home real-world circumstances. In addition to choosing the things that are important enough to be relocated, attention has to be paid to the home context. It is essential to consider how the transferred ingredients fit their new environment, and natural counterparts for elements from the source context need to be found. For this, the home context and its history have to be considered as carefully as the source con-

text. Looking more closely at the fiction created for *Halat hisar* provides an illustrative case study.

In *Halat hisar*, Finnish culture was the home where the occupation of Palestine was transplanted. We chose to relocate the political context but not the cultural one. For instance, we changed Islamic groups to Christian ones, while leaving their political roles intact. In the instructions given to the players we said that Finnish culture was by default the same as in the real world. Nevertheless, there were a couple of points on how the occupation had affected it. For instance, alcoholism was even more prevalent than in the real world. To make the background feel more alive, we described how some important real world Finnish cultural personae were coping under the occupation. For example, the filmmaker Aki Kaurismäki was known for his absurd and darkly humorous depictions of life under occupation, somewhat reminiscent of the Palestinian director Elia Suleiman.

However, we wanted to be very specific about the historical and political details. Historical Palestine is the region that was a British Mandate area called Palestine until 1948, when Israel was founded. At the moment, it consists of the state of Israel and the territories Israel occupied in 1967, the Gaza strip and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem). Since 1967 Israel has de facto annexed large parts of the occupied territories by building settlements – residential areas meant for Jewish Israelis only. The whole of historical Palestine is under Israeli control, and on the West Bank, walls and checkpoints restrict movement. Since the early 1990's, Palestinians have taken care of local government on parts of the occupied territories through a body called the Palestinian Authority (PA).

The road to the current situation started in mid-nineteenth century, when Zionism, Jewish nationalism, was born as a reaction to European anti-Semitism. Its central idea was establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. Mass immigration of Jews eventually led to conflict with both the British authorities and the local Palestinian population.

Students and staff cross a checkpoint on their way to the university. Ingame. Photo: Tuomas Puikkonen

In connection with the founding of Israel, the Zionist forces ethnically cleansed most of Palestine. Towns and villages were destroyed and 700 000-800 000 Palestinians driven from their homes. Refugees from other regions in Palestine poured into the West Bank and Gaza and into the neighbouring countries. Some Palestinians managed to stay in the area on which Israel was established, and they later obtained Israeli citizenship.

We wanted to focus on the current situation but felt that a fictional history was needed to explain how it had come to be. In the history, we mirrored the central elements in Palestinian history since the birth of Zionism. For this, real world Finnish history had to be taken into account. Finland was an autonomous part of the Russian empire in 1809-1917. The concept of Finns as a nation was established under this period, and Finnish nationalism was born in resistance against the Russian rule and developed into a struggle for independence. These circumstances made it relatively easy to adopt the Palestinian history. The Russians provided

a natural counterpart to the British, and we invented a religious group called the Ugrics to play the part of the Jews. Their shamanistic religion was loosely based on the religion practiced in Finland before Christianity. This reflected the fact that Judaism is very similar to Christianity and Islam, the two religions practiced by Palestinians. The Ugrics had established a state called Uralia on most of the area of Finland, excepting the Åland Islands and a part of South-Eastern Finland called the South Coast. Uralia had later occupied these remaining areas, so that Åland played the role of Gaza, and the South Coast corresponded to the West Bank.

The less the home context and factors connected to it (history, society, culture etc) are changed, the more directly the players will be able to relate to the game world. Transferring Palestinian history to Russia or Sweden would require much more fiction than doing so in Finland, which would probably make the game experience quite different. When bringing something home, the question is not only what to transfer

but also how to do it. Connecting elements from the two settings can be fruitful. If the home context already contains something that brings up the right kind of associations, utilizing it will help the players feel familiar and make it easier to invoke bleed.

Importing the two biggest Palestinian political parties, Fatah and Hamas, provides a good example on this. Fatah has historically played an important role in Palestinian politics. In early 1990's, it signed the Oslo Accords peace agreement with Israel, after which its support rose. It controls the PA on the West Bank. However, Fatah is past its heydays of high support, and many supporters feel that it doesn't live up to its old achievements. All this, and the fact that the party has its roots in socialist ideology, resonated with the oldest party in real-world Finland, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), which was established under Russian rule. Inspired by this, we created the Social Democratic Liberation Party (SDLP) that shared its early history with SDP and had Fatah's political role.

We invented a Christian fundamentalist party called Party of Christ to play the role of the Islamist party Hamas that is in power in Gaza. There are many fundamentalist sects in Finland, but none of them carry the militant connotations we were looking for. However, Finnish history provided useful material. The Lapua Movement, active in 1929-32, was a right-wing extremist movement known for its political violence. It drew much of its support from members of the *körtti* sect. Many of the Party of Christ supporters in the game had a *körtti* background, and alluding to the town Lapua brought suitable associations. Like Hamas, Party of Christ was known for terrorism, and it had established a fundamentalist regime on the Åland Islands. Its support was on the rise also on the more secular South Coast, mostly because of its struggle against the occupation. We decided this should have some visible effects on the society, so the attitudes towards homosexuality were more conservative than in real-world Finland, and violence against gays had become increasingly common.

Nationalism of the Downtrodden

We were surprised by the intensity with which the nationalist theme affected the Finnish players. It was clear from the beginning that nationalism would have a central role since it is usually important for people under occupation. Some players even stated in the sign up form exploring nationalism as the reason they wanted to participate. Nevertheless, we were afraid that the players would find it difficult to come to terms with nationalism. Many of them felt alienated from Finnish nationalist sentiments. In the pre-game workshop several players had difficulties coming up with things that make them proud of Finland.

Nationalism was a big theme also in *Europa*. However, the treatment was almost the opposite. In *Europa*, nationalism created conflict between different national groups, whereas in *Halat hisar* it was a positive force that united Finns from different factions to resist the occupation. For many players, the game turned out to be as much, if not more, about Finnish nationalism as about the occupation of Palestine.

We needed to avoid associations to the present-day nationalism that is connected to racism and reactionary politics, the nationalism of a wealthy and stable country. Finland under occupation resembled real-world Finland from not that long ago. After independence in 1917, Finland had to take loans from abroad in order to avoid famine. The country was poor after the Second World War, and as late as in the 1960's, many Finns migrated to Sweden in hope of jobs and a better quality of life.

Most of the well-known Finnish nationalist songs were composed under Russian rule or during the early period of independence. There we found sentiments that suited the game well, like the idea that although our land is poor and barren, it is dear to us and we will never leave. Before the game, we encouraged players to listen to these songs,

A Finnish demonstrator has tied his hands to show he is not throwing stones. Ingame. (Photo: Tuomas Puikkonen)

and in the workshop we sang some of them together.

At some point we discussed whether we should replace the real Finnish flag with a different one that was used under Russian rule. We ended up not doing this, partly because present-day flags are easier to obtain. I had a slight preference for the old flag. It would have provided distance and reminded the players that they were in an alternate reality, and it would also have made sense inside the fiction. Our history diverged from the real one before the current flag was adopted. On the plus side, the players would find it easier to relate to the real flag.

For me, the Finnish flag symbolized racism and ice hockey. I felt awkward when I was carrying four huge Finnish flags home the week before the game. When I boarded a bus, a dark-skinned man got wary when seeing me. I felt I could never reclaim the flag as a symbol, and I wasn't even sure whether I wanted to. After the game, I felt different. I couldn't help feeling that the flag symbolized something that is dear to me.

The nationalist theme became so powerful in the larp that it made me wonder if the game had inadvertently turned into nationalist indoctrination. It is a measure of the strength of the theme that it affected not just the players, but also the Finnish organizers. Finnish Independence Day was three weeks after the game. I had never identified with nationalism, but now I took part in the public ceremonies for the first time. I am not fond of the concept of a nation state, but after the game I realized I couldn't help having nationalist feelings.

Another thing I realized was that Finns have a collective fear of being occupied. At some points in history it has been very close to happening. Nowadays, this fear mostly surfaces in right-wing rhetoric about "the threat of Russia". I am against such scaremongering, but the game made me remember that I, too, had held the fear.

Palestinian and Finnish players workshopping a demonstration before the start of Halat hisar. (Photo: Tuomas Puikkonen)

During the 1991 coup in Soviet Union, I was living in Stockholm. My family purchased a television just to be able to follow the news. Twelve at the time, I remember thinking that instead of one more year, we might end up living in Sweden indefinitely.

Halat hisar ended up being much more intense than we had dared to hope for. We had instructed the players to "play to lose", but some of them said they had immersed too deeply to be able to do this. The fact that Finnish nationalism – like its Palestinian counterpart – was born under oppression on one hand, and the national fear of occupation on the other, probably contributed to the intensity. It is likely that they were among the key factors that made it possible to effectively bring the occupation home, and to make it feel real.

It was probably easier to organize the game in Finland than in many other places. Finnish history made it possible to create the alternative reality without too much rewriting. The same would not have been true in, say, Sweden, a former superpower that has been a rich country for a long time. Because of the different histories, tra-

ditional Finnish nationalism differs from the nationalism in Sweden. The former concentrates on surviving in hard circumstances, the latter on wealth and a glorious past. Finnish nationalism of the downtrodden provided one of the important tools for reaching the right sentiments. After the game, the Finnish participants returned to their normal lives as privileged first-world citizens. Yet, the experience probably made us think differently about nationalism and remember that our country has not always been prosperous.

Larp as Political Activism

In their essay *The Paradox of Nordic Larp Culture*, Jaakko Stenros and Markus Montola (2010) write:

> Games and play are standard tools of activism: the playful nature of humour, theatre and game lends a social alibi for pushing the boundaries of what is tolerated. Even so, games *as* activism are rarer.

They then go on to argue that these games are either pervasive or staged in a public

space. Neither was the case in *Halat hisar,* but I think it can be seen as political activism. A powerful experience for a small audience may have limited impact on society, but we managed to get good media coverage of *Halat hisar*, which guaranteed exposure to a much larger group of people.

The most direct predecessor of *Halat hisar*, the Palestinian-Norwegian game *Till Death Do Us Part* (2012), also seems like larp as political activism, although the game itself was not political. It was made as a part of Fantasiförbundet's project to bring larp into different environments as a way to raise the quality of life. Before Palestine, this had been done in Belarus. Nordic participants had a chance to familiarize themselves with the political situation on the ground during the Week in Jerusalem, organized before the game. The project also led to the Palestinian larp festival *Beit Byout*, held in Ramallah in October 2013. The game *Killed in the Name of Honor*, discussed earlier, was part of the festival and was covered by Palestinian media.

Political larp is sometimes accused of preaching to the choir. *Ground Zero*, a Finnish larp set in a bomb shelter during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 in an alternative past where a nuclear war actually starts, is maybe the most powerful game experience I have ever had (I participated in the original run in 1998). It was unquestionably a great piece of art. Yet the core message was very simple, and we all agreed with it: nuclear weapons are horrible. The intensity of the experience was so overwhelming that it shadowed all other themes.

I think such works have their place and deserve our respect. Nevertheless, I wanted our game to have other questions and themes in addition to the anti-occupation message. For example, the game explored positive nationalism, and one could even interpret it as having a pro-nationalist message. There were also other themes that arise in a situation of occupation. For instance, some players wanted to study moral questions involved in armed resistance or collaboration. In the materials, we aimed to present the different political factions in such a way that the players could find good reasons for their characters to support or oppose any of them. We tried our best not to let our own opinions on Palestinian politics show, since we wanted the players to feel free to explore different viewpoints.

For many players, both those with actual characters and those in the supporting cast, the game provided an opportunity to go inside the heads of people who they saw as wrongdoers. The players of interrogators went through the heavy experience of conducting torture scenes. One player suffered strong bleed after the game from using Christianity, her real-life religion, to incite terrorism. Another one had similar feelings for using socialism to justify violence. Collaboration turned out to be an interesting theme. For example, there was a black box scene set in the near future involving a collaborator being beaten to death by his comrades in armed resistance.

I think the methods of distancing and bringing home proved an excellent way to create fiction for a larp that explores real-life politics from a context that is unfamiliar to most players. Bringing home allowed the players to relate to people that we have a tendency of viewing as "the other" and to situations that are remote from our everyday lives. It made it possible to create a setting with a complicated moral landscape and to raise awareness of injustice in the real world. To be successful, in most cases distancing and bringing home require lots of background material, which means extra work for both organizers and players. Yet, based on comments from the players, this worked well in *Halat hisar.*

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The Play and
The Culture

Juhana Pettersson

Larp for Change

Creating Play for Real World Impact

There's a long tradition of political roleplaying games and larp in the Nordic countries. Early examples from Finland include .laitos (1997), a game by Mike Pohjola set in a dystopian high school, and Hiljaisuuden vangit (Penttinen & Heikkinen 1996), a tabletop game set in a totalitarian Finland.

Recently this tradition has come under criticism. Annika Waern gave a speech at the Solmukohta 2012 conference, titled "My rant about why larps may not change the world". Waern argued that the games being made reinforce and emphasize societal structures instead of questioning them. The co-creative nature of larp demands a certain familiarity, and this in turn means that it's hard to assault the participants' assumptions.

And if a larp manages to question, Waern says that's still not enough without providing alternatives. She uses Kapo (2011) as an example of a game which while powerful, doesn't have a statement beyond: "Totalitarian structures are evil". You don't learn what to do about them.

I believe that larp can be used for real political impact, in Waern's words "to change the world". To do this, it is necessary to consider who are the people the project intends to reach, and what are the means, inside and outside the game, that can be used for this purpose. A larp can engage with its participants on a political level while simultaneously acting as a media story to improve the visibility of the issues it deals with. Having political goals means that a larp has to be designed differently than if aesthetics were the only concern.

We attempted to create a believable approximation of the political discussions in Palestine in regard to the occupation. (Photo: Tuomas Puikkonen)

I served as the producer of a Palestinian-Finnish larp called *Halat hisar* (State of Siege), played in Finland in November 2013. Created by a core team of three Palestinian and three Finnish designers, the game attempted to recreate the political and practical conditions of the occupation in Palestine in Finland. In our alternate history, the Occupied Finnish Territories were controlled by the fictional state of Uralia, created over the territory of real world Finland.

The political ambitions of our game added another layer of complexity to the design requirements. Not only did we want to achieve a certain political effect, we also wanted to make it happen in a way that worked with our values. The original impulse for *Halat hisar* came from the Palestinian larp designer Fatima AbdulKarim. The Finnish organizers Kaisa Kangas and Maria Pettersson caught onto it, and eventually three more people were recruited to

the core team: myself, and the Palestinians Mohamad Rabah and Riad Mustafa.

Organizing a Palestinian larp in Finland had implications for the internal organization of our work. The practical production machine was in Finland, while the subject matter and the experience our game was based on came from Palestine. Thus, we ended with a model where the Palestinian members of our core team worked on design and concepts, and the Finnish team worked on practical production and localization.

Since this was a cross-cultural project, we felt it essential that it was done in the spirit of equal partnership. Both Finland and Palestine should benefit from our mutual association. This was achieved in a natural way because the strengths of the different members of our group were so different. We used the game as a platform to showcase larp mechanisms we hadn't seen used in Finland, such as workshops and the

black box. While we had a solid production capability and Kaisa Kangas did an excellent job with the alternate history of Occupied Finland, Fatima AbdulKarim, Riad Mustafa and Mohamad Rabah had a superior touch with the actual workings of interaction design. In this way, we could learn from each other.

The imperatives of cultural exchange also affected the priorities of how we used our budget. We had a total budget of approximately 13 000 €, maybe 70% of which went into the travel expenses of Palestinian participants. Every time we made a decision such as: "Should we rent a van?" we considered the expense against the possibility of flying another Palestinian player to Finland. Because of this, our production values were low.

This also meant that we issued invitations to the Palestinian players in the name of our Finnish production entity Pohjoismaisen roolipelaamisen seura for the purposes of applying for a visa. A couple of the players had to cancel because their visa applications didn't go through.

Changing the World

The goal of our game was to effect real change in the world we live in, and it was designed with that purpose in mind. Not necessarily a huge change, but nevertheless something that would make a political act worth doing. For us, the question was practical: what can be done with larp, and what can't.

The beauty of larp is that when it works, the experiences it creates are very strong. For myself, movies, books or anything else can't compare with the things I've felt in larps and roleplaying games. The downside is that the number of participants one can have in a larp is limited, especially compared to mass communication. The tradeoff between impact and audience size is not quite as harsh as in tabletop roleplaying games, but still pretty extreme. We knew we could have a number of participants somewhere between 50 and 100.

We tried to mitigate the limited nature of the game's participation by trying to have a varied player base. We had veteran larpers and people playing their first game. We had Finnish, Palestinian, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, German and British players. We had younger and older players. We did our best to avoid just making a game for our friends.

So larp is not an artform for a mass audience, and it doesn't make sense to limit one's audience when making a game as a political act. In *Halat hisar*, we had a dual strategy to solve this problem.

We were very aware of the potential of Palestinian larp in Finland as a news story. One of the ways we felt able to affect change was by raising awareness of Palestinian issues in Finland and dismantling notions of Palestinians as culturally "other". News stories about our game furthered both goals. We felt that larp is seen as a Western pursuit, and the idea of Arab larpers would thus work to diminish the cultural strangeness often attached to Arabs in the Finnish media. Being interviewed about the larp gave us opportunities to talk about what's happening in Palestine.

I was responsible for writing the press releases and distributing them to various journalists and media. I have worked as a journalist, a tv producer and even briefly as a press officer, but our strategy involved nothing more complicated than a list of publicly available email addresses and some consideration for issues of timing. The amount of work I was able to put into this was limited, but I was very happy with the results. As of this writing, the game has generated six news items on mainstream news sites, seven blog posts, five longer articles, one segment in the evening tv news, one segment in a cultural tv show, and one post on an Islamophobic website. Every press release included an invitation for journalists to participate in the larp.

The media stories about the larp would only achieve a limited impact on an individual level, but would also reach a mass audience. Thus, the game would have a

A camera crew from the Finnish national broadcaster YLE, in-game playing themselves. (Photo: Tuomas Puikkonen)

strong impact on a small amount of people, and the media stories a weak impact on a large amount of people.

Bleed

In terms of the larp itself, our main tool for maximum effectiveness was bleed (Montola 2010). We didn't want the participants to experience the occupation as something that happens to a cultural "other". Instead, it would be experienced by people just like you. Our Palestinian co-organizers were also worried that if Finnish players were asked to play Palestinians in a game with actual Palestinians, they would be paralyzed just trying to get the culture right.

The solution was to create an alternative reality world where Finnish history was rewritten using real world Palestinian history as a template. Finnish players would be the citizens of Occupied Finland. The characters other participants were able to play were based on their language skills. Arabic-speakers, meaning our ten Palestinian players, were reporters, human rights ac-

tivists and other visitors from the affluent and democratic Arab countries. Non-Finnish Nordic players were from the war-torn dictatorships of Sweden and Denmark.

We tried to heighten the feeling of bleed in the background materials by going into detail about how the occupation has affected various parts of Finland where players or their characters might be from. For the Palestinian players, there was a bleed effect of another kind as they played characters based on the human rights activists, soldiers and other foreigners who routinely move in Palestine.

We also had another, even stronger bleed effect in play. Nordic larps about political questions have traditionally been insulated from the actual people whose experience the game is about. *Halat hisar* wasn't. Created by a half-Palestinian organizing team for Finnish, Palestinian and international players, it gave the opportunity to experience an analogue to the occupation of Palestine alongside actual Palestinian partici-

pants. It was a *Kapo* with actual prisoners, a *Den hvide krig* (2012) with Iraqi players.

For me as an organizer, it felt like something new. For the first time, I was directly accountable to the people whose experience our game was about, inside our own organizing team.

It also underlined the reality of the things our larp was about. When I left the Occupied Finnish Territories, I went home to my pleasant and un-oppressed Helsinki apartment. When Palestinian participants left the game, they went back to the Occupied Palestinian Territories. As one player said after the game: "There's no off-game in Palestine."

High-Resolution World

A non-political larp has more room for surprising interpretations and divergence in vision between the organizers and the participants. The game can be good even if it does something completely different from what the organizers intended. (Harviainen 2012) In a political game, the game must stay true to its political goals. Otherwise, it can be seen as a failure (Jarl 2013). Change is not good enough; it has to be the right kind of change. To achieve this, specific tools are necessary.

Many, maybe most Nordic Larp games have broadly sketched, low-resolution game worlds. Kapo is one example of such a game. When the world is detailed, that detail tends to come from an external source. In the case of *Just a Little Lovin'*, from history, and in *Monitorship Celestra* from the TV show *Battlestar Galactica*. From a game design perspective, this makes a lot of sense: The participant doesn't have to burden herself with learning material by rote, and can instead contribute to the game by fleshing out the world herself.

I'd argue that while a low-resolution world often makes sense, it is just another design tool that has to follow the dictates of the game's vision.

For a game attempting to create an experience based on a real-life political situation, the low-resolution world is problematic. If the player has only a sketch of the real-life situation to build her own creative participation on, what emerges is not an exploration of the games political subject but instead an exploration of the participants' prejudices. This is fine if the game is about something we all agree on, but if the subject is more complex, problems arise.

Thus, in *Halat* hisar we decided that the game world needed a deep background so that the players would be able to build their own participation on a nuanced and complex foundation. We focused on the areas essential to the situation in Palestine: history, geography, political parties, and the politics of the occupation. To allow for more creative player freedom in the game, other aspects were left vague. Thus, Finnish culture under occupation, the working culture of the journalist characters and the cultures of the NGO organizations were developed less thoroughly in advance.

There was also a community safety aspect to this choice. The Finnish players were asked to larp the Palestinian experience together with actual Palestinian players. Many of the Finnish players expressed fears before the game that they would play in such a way those Palestinian participants would be offended. By supplying a high-resolution game world, we attempted to give the Finnish participants enough tools that they could confidently express themselves in the game.

News

In one of the more improvised moments of *Halat hisar*, Mohamad Rabah, one of our Palestinian designers, said that we should create a wall where the journalist players could post their stories. The game had already started, so it was impossible to brief the players about the new meta-mechanism, but another member of our team, Maria Pettersson, implemented the "media wall" anyway.

Many details in the game were inspired by real-life events in Palestine, such as the death of Rachel Corrie in 2003. (Photo: Tuomas Puikkonen)

It was created using the sophisticated technologies of felt tip marker and printer paper, taped to a wall. First we had some player-created articles. Then these were complemented by organizer-written headlines from media like the BBC, CNN, Reuters and others, reflecting game events. Then a player posted some Tweets on the wall, and soon we had a pen-and-paper Twitter with players and organizers writing stuff on the fly.

Palestine is a highly mediated environment. It's full of stories reported from all perspectives and with all possible biases, and news are made on a daily basis. The events of our game, the death of a student politician and the visit of the Jordanian Minister of Culture, were newsworthy, and it made sense for the world to react. Even more importantly, many characters had the means to influence outside perception. Thus, when the players of NGO characters decided that they wanted to make some noise on the net and the media, their actions had an immediate effect on the kind of things that appeared on the wall.

While improvised, this element proved to be important for the game and the political ideas that it was made to convey. The media plays an essential role in how the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories progresses. The ways different newspapers write about an event can be so different, you wouldn't know they're talking about the same thing. "Finnish-Canadian youth politician killed by the UDF" turns into "A Nordic terrorist dead in a clash".

The theory is that after experiencing the news wall, the participant will be able to see similar phenomena in actual news stories from Palestine. Thus, the game can effect change in its participants by giving them tools to unpack media narratives that obfuscate repression.

To complement the media wall, sometimes journalists played by myself and Maria called characters to ask for interviews and pressure characters to give statements. We also tried to make the organizer-created news headlines respond to player improvisations in the game. Thus, when the player

To help our players do resistance in the game, we had a practice demonstration in the workshop before the game. (Photo: Tuomas Puikkonen)

of a reporter invents comments made by the Jordanian Prime Minister, those comments are reported as a news item on the wall next time the players walks by.

Because it was improvised, we didn't have a fancy technological implementation for the wall. We had had to scrap our plans to use the real Twitter as an in-game tool because our venue didn't have internet access. Looking back on it, the fact that the Tweets and the headlines were collected on a wall was a feature, not a bug. It made reading and commenting the news a communal experience, and others immediately saw when you wrote something.

Resistance

Nordic Larp has a strong tradition of simulating systems of oppression. *Europa* (2001), *System Danmarc* (2005) and *inside/outside* (2001) all attempt to model totalitarian structures and bring them to light. But what they don't do is show you how to fight back. For change to happen, consciousness of the issues is not enough:

action is also necessary, and for action to happen, people have to know what to do.

We hoped that *Halat* hisar would be a game of resistance as much as it was a game of oppression. We ran a smaller version of *Halat hisar* as a test game in July, 2013, as part of the big Ropecon roleplaying convention. (Incidentally, a test game is something I recommend for everyone making a bigger game.) In the test run, we found that our Finnish players didn't really have the reflexes and life experience to resist hostile power. Our assumption is that life in a Nordic democracy doesn't really prepare you for the moment when the soldiers come. In contrast, our Palestinian co-designers had the relevant experience.

Thus, in the main run of the game, we attempted to give the Finnish and Nordic participants better tools for fighting back. Our hope was that the game would walk the line between resistance and realistic respect for overwhelming force. The rule was that in a physical conflict, a soldier would always eventually win, but you could engage in non-violent protest, sing, throw

stones (we had fake stones), and otherwise make life difficult for the occupier.

As the game progressed, emergent forms of resistance appeared among the players. The *Finlandia* hymn was hummed or sung in emotional moments and also as a form of quiet protest. The first spontaneous march to a checkpoint happened only a few hours into the game, and led to a lasting vigil. When the soldiers started to arrest people, and the initial shock wore off, the players gathered into a large ring, linked arms and started to sing. The soldiers had to physically wrest people away to arrest them, and sometimes carry them out of the building. For me, following the game as a non-playing outsider, these were among some of the most moving moments of the whole experience.

What emerged was a situation where it was difficult to violently resist the soldiers, but it was possible to try to make life complicated for them. Another function for the resistance was to communicate a message: we're not going along with this. You're doing violence to us, and cannot pretend otherwise. In an occupation, resistance is a fact of everyday life.

Politically Worthwhile

In *Halat hisar*, the goal was to make a good, aesthetically worthwhile game that also doubled as a worthwhile political project. *Halat hisar* provides three examples of criteria that can be used to see if a political larp project works.

We wanted the game to engage with the world. Making larp inside our own social bubble would not be enough. It would have to cross boundaries to be meaningful. To make this happen, we allocated resources into flying Palestinian players to Finland, tried to make player selection as inclusive as possible, and engaged in media work to create discussion around the game.

We also wanted to create an approximation of how it is to live under occupation within the specific political context of Palestine. As a Finn, that's hard for me to evaluate,

but our Palestinian co-organizer Mohamad Rabah said in an interview that: "As a Palestinian I have never seen something that reflects life under occupation the way this larp did." (Karlsson 2013)

Finally, we wanted to give the participants not just an experience of living under occupation, but tools to engage with and even resist the occupation. Their characters might be victims, but they would not be helpless. On a meta level, the high-resolution background material gave tools for the participants to improvise within a solid framework. On an in-game level, promoting both organizer and player created methods of resistance was designed to make it possible to act against the occupation. The media wall would give the players tools to deconstruct similar media phenomena in the real world after the game was over.

I would argue that this is change.

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Lauri Lukka

The Psychology of Immersion

Individual Differences and Psychosocial Phenomena Relating to Immersion

In role-playing games, a player may achieve a subjective, immersive state where they feel in a more or less pronounced way that they are the character in the game world. Certain personality traits may mediate how intensively and how often one experiences such a state. These traits, especially openness to experience and empathy, are also prerequirements for immersion and may be more emphasized in live action role-players. Immersive state can be activated by self suggestion, acting, or situational factors, and it leads to dissociation between the character and the player. This dissociation upholds itself by cognitive biases but becoming conscious of it weakens it. Further, immersion protects the player psychologically and has a social, communicative functions.

Immersion, n.

1. The action of immersing someone or something in a liquid

2. Deep mental involvement
   – Oxford dictionary of English (2003)

dfThe researchers of live action role-playing have put a lot effort into describing the differences between games and playing styles. In the beginning of the century, there was a normative tone to this discussion, perhaps a most prominent example being the polemic Turku manifesto (Pohjola 2003) arguing for the "right" immersionist role-playing. A particular boundary has been drawn between immersionism and dramatism (Broden 2006; Kim 2004), and it has been suggested they lead to different game styles (Bøckman 2003). Archetypal immersionist player strives to immerse themselves completely into the inner world of the character and the game world, the diegesis, whereas a dramatist aims to tell a shared, interesting story, and immersion is secondary to this goal.

Yet, what is this immersion precisely? It is one of the constituents of player experience and appeal in (video) games (Christou 2014) and an important part of role-play-

ing vocabulary. However, its definition remains unclear (Jennett 2008), the term is used inconsistently (Hook 2012), and it has aroused criticism due to its ambiguous nature (Holter 2007). This article explores the psychology of immersion in live action role-playing games: what elements does it include, which personal factors affect it, and what social phenomena are related to it. First, the most important concepts are defined.

In this article, immersion has two meanings. Immersion is both (1) the inner, psychological state: a result of a process where the player empathises with the inner experience of the character and the diegetic framework; and (2) the process by which this is achieved. The process of immersion is partly automatic and guided by individual predispositions to it. In immersed state the player feels in a pronounced way that he is the character in the game world (Lappi 2007). The result of immersion is a subjective experience where the sense of self and interpretative framework changes (Harding 2007).

The definition made here stresses the changes in the individual experience. Ermi and Mäyrä (2005) propose there are three different forms of immersion in video games: sensory, challenge-based and imaginative. Sensory immersion relates to the audiovisual execution of the game; challenge-based immersion describes the balance between player skills and the difficulty of the game; and imaginative immersion depicts how player identifies with the character and the game world. The definition used in this article refers mainly to imaginative immersion, and views sensory and challenge-based immersion as factors arousing and supporting and the former.

Even if closely knit, immersion should be clearly separated from empathising with the character and the game world, and acting. Empathising refers to the mental activity in which we take the perspective of another person. This does not mean, however, that every time we take another person's perspective we would be immersed into their experience; rather, a sense of separateness remains. Acting, in this article, describes only the external behavior, portraying a person – whereas immersion is a state pursued via multitude of methods such as acting and taking another person's viewpoint. This simplification is made in order to clarify the difference between behavior and mental processes.

Immersion and Behavior

It would be tempting to evaluate immersion by the behavioral changes: the more the demeanor of the player, not only his attire, has changed in comparison to that of their typical behavior, the more immersed a player would be. Yet, there are many errors in this line of thought. First, the behavioral changes are not necessarily the result of immersion but many other factors such as anxiety or a restless night. Second, the behavioral changes are rather the manifestation of immersion, not indication of it. Still, acting may increase the likelihood of immersion because there is a reciprocal relationship between our behavior and our mind: our behavior affects our sense of self and our character, and vice versa (Säilä 2005).

Third, behavioral changes are related to the skill of the player to modify their behavior – their skill as an actor. The skill of acting, however, may correlate only moderately with the experienced immersion, even if good acting skills may strengthen it. It is possible to act with a more or less external orientation, only portraying the character without the aim to be them. Then, even if the acting is exquisite, the character is subjectively experienced as distant. This goes the other way around too. The player can experience high amounts of immersion without acting, which is sometimes described as "playing inside one's head".

Due to the internal nature of immersion, the player experiencing it and others observing him are susceptible to several social biases, such as the actor-observer bias (see Pronin 2009). When making assessments about ourselves, there is a tendency

to overestimate the introspective information we receive from ourselves, and dismiss our behavior as secondary to that. The observers, on the other hand, underestimate the significance of inner processes, and stress the significance of behavior. For instance, if we steal something we could justify it to ourselves by "knowing" that we are generally fair while others are more likely to deem us criminal by nature.

We also know that people tend to overestimate the effect of situational factors over personality traits when assessing themselves. When they assess others, the contrary happens: then the behavior is rather attributed to personality than the situation. For example, if you forget your keys you may explain it to yourself as a regrettable result of being very busy that day, others may consider us careless by character.

These biases explain why acting, the external behavior, is the most important way of communicating to others about the personality of the character. The player's skill as an actor affects how other players view the personality of the character, because we tend to make constant, automatic attributions and inferences about the personality and the inner state of others. Further, whether immersed or not, acting serves as a signal about the inner state of the player and guides other players to react to themself as a character, which reinforces immersion. Acting also strengthens other players' immersion by keeping up the diegesis. In conclusion: while the experience of immersion is fundamentally internal, in the game it is an inseparable part of social interaction.

Immersion, Personality and Individual Differences

The personality – the individual cognitive, affective and motivational processes – guides how one perceives the world

and acts in it. Individual patterns in these processes are called traits. There are several models describing numerous traits, the most researched being the five factor model, Big Five (Table 1). Traits can predict the behavior and thinking of a person, to a certain extent. For example, extrovert people are more active and more likely to direct their energy to group activities than

Table 1: The five factor model of personality traits

Trait	Description of a person with high trait
Openness to experience	artistic interest, creativity, unusual ideas, curiosity, need for variety
Conscientiousness	self-discipline, organization, dependability, planning of actions
Extraversion	energy, assertiveness, sociability, talkativeness
Agreeableness	compassion, cooperation, helpfulness, friendliness
Neuroticism	tendency to anxiety and depression, emotional instability, reactivity

introverted people. In this section, the personality traits of live action role-players are explored: they lay a foundation for the process and then the state of immersion, and explain some of the individual differences behind experienced immersion.

Starting a certain hobby depends partly on environmental factors one can not control, such as place of birth, and the selection of activities within the culture and community, but the process is not completely random. People with more similar personality traits tend to choose similar hobbies rather than the hobby would make them similar (see for instance Bakker 1991; Nettle 2006a). The interest in a certain hobby is not necessarily related to ability in the chosen field. Furnham and Chamorro-Premuzic (2004) studied the relationships between personality, intelligence, art interest and art judgment. They found that the personality trait of openness to experience was linked to tendency of being interested in art but not artistic abilities.

Intelligence had inverse relationship with the trait: higher intelligence was related to visual giftedness but not interest. It is very likely that the motivation to engage in live action role-playing originates primarily from personality rather than skills such as acting.

Often, our personality traits guide us – motivate us – to environments and roles in which we can use our abilities to the benefit of ourselves and others. Some hobbies, such as larp, have additional roles to specialize in. They affect the behavior and the status of the person in the event (Table 2). These roles may or may not overlap: the game designer can run the game themselves or even participate in it. Some roles are somewhat culture and game style specific. For instance, the role of game master may mean anything between organiser and director. These roles also affect immersion. Only participants may achieve a state of immersion into character, while game master and game designer may be immersed into the diegesis.

Table 2: The roles within live action role-playing games

Role	Behavior
Participant	Takes part in the game, interprets the character, acts, possibly immerses
Game master	Organizes and coordinates the event, guides the players
Game designer	Comes up with the idea for the game, writes the materials

Next we will explore the specific traits associated with live action role-players. To my knowledge, there is no empirical research done on the personality traits of larpers. Perhaps the closest group studied are actors. Comparison seems justified, because acting is a key part of role-playing (Jarl 2009) especially for the participants. Nettle (2006a) compared the five factor personality traits of professional actors to the general population sample. He found actors being more extrovert, open to new experiences, agreeable and slightly more neurotic than the comparison group. This supports the findings of Marchant-Haycox and Wilson (1992) who describe actors as extrovert and expressive. It may well be that these traits are pronounced in game participants, too.

Nettle (2006b) compared the schizotypy of poets, visual artists and mathematicians. Schizotypy describes tendency to have psychotic experiences (Tabak & de Mamani 2013) and it can be divided into four factors: unusual experiences, cognitive disorganisation, introvertive anhedonia and impulsive nonconformity. He found that poets and visual artists have as high tendency to unusual experiences as those suffering from schizophrenia. He linked this trait to divergent creativity, where one constantly creates new ideas, thoughts and content. Mathematicians were low on schizotypy and their thinking was rather characterized by convergence, striving for one solution, and autism. As larping involves varying amounts of improvisation, it may more often require divergent than convergent thinking, which may be reflected on the participants' style of thinking. This trait may also partly explain the capability to pretend, imagine and perceive things as something they are not (see also Henriksen 2005).

The pathological personality traits, such as paranoid, narcissistic, attention-seeking or emotional unstability, may affect immersion. The more pronounced the trait is in the player, the harder it is to separate, dissociate, from oneself and prevent its transference to the character. Usually, most of these traits are unconscious to the degree that they most likely do not affect the experienced immersion, but limit how versatile characters the player can identify with and harm the social interaction in the game group. For instance, a player high in

narcissism may have a hard time putting himself to a subjugated or a humble status, and to follow shared rules, or an introvert may have difficulties leading a group. Still, immersion and personality pathology may be distinct phenomena.

There are differences in people between their tendencies to empathise with the inner life of others. Empathy and the ability to identify with another person's perspective is a key to acting (Hannah et al. 1994) and role-playing (Lieberoth 2006). Empathy is partly based on automatical neural processes (Rizzolatti, Fogassi & Gallese 2006). Nettle (2006a) found that actors are significantly more empathic than the comparison group; they were more socially intelligent and identified more emotionally with others. This trait of empathy correlated positively with other big five personality traits but neuroticism.

Empathy can further be divided into affective and cognitive empathy (Rogers, Dziobek, Hassenstab, Wolf & Convit 2007). The first includes empathic concern, which refers to sympathy and compassion towards the suffering of others, and personal distress describing the self-centered feelings of discomfort and anxiety in response to the suffering of others. Cognitive empathy includes the skill of taking the perspective of another person and also the skill to identify with a fictional character. Taking a role could be linked especially to cognitive empathy. Lieberoth (2006) has previously suggested using the term theory of mind that is sometimes used as a synonym for mentalization or metacognitive skills. These skills are a prerequisite for immersion and without them it is impossible to know whether one is immersed at all. Further, without the skill to observe one's thoughts one is unable to modify them, which is a requirement to changing one's perspective.

In short, the average larpers who are mostly in the hobby for the acting and immersion may very well be characterised by extroversion, openness to experiences, agreeableness and neuroticism. Their thinking is rather divergent than convergent, and they have a tendency in being creative and having unusual experiences. They are rather high in empathy which enables them to understand and describe their own and others inner states. These traits may both directly and indirectly affect immersion experienced during a game.

Immersion as a Dissociative State

Immersion as an experience does not arise from personality traits alone: the situation must support it. In role-playing games, the first contact to immersion often comes from reading the game materials or the character. The player creates an internal model of the character, the goal to be pursued. Then, the player imagines the diegesis through the eyes of the character. Using the theory of mind, the player pictures the reactions of the character to fictional events: how do they feel and think about the state of the world, and how do they relate to others. This self-suggestive interplay, interaction, between the player, character and the diegesis sets the stage for immersion. The player guides their attention to the internal and external elements reinforcing the changed perspective such as the game environment, other players pursuing immersion, and alternative patterns of thinking. The less external factors there are reinforcing immersion, the more important are the inner factors. As immersion grows deeper, the player is required to use less and less effort and energy trying to consciously guide their attention: when immersion is sufficient it will uphold itself and the player is only required to correct this process when they become aware that immersion has decreased.

When the player is immersed, they lock their perspective to that of the character and attempt to uphold the diegetic reality. Then, unlike otherwise, they do not flexibly change their viewpoint. Immersion creates a noticeable, lasting, but reversible, bias in our attention that can be described using the perceptual cycle (Neisser 1976): once

the player has immersed into the character, the worldview of the character guides their attention primarily to the factors reinforcing this view strengthening it and guiding their attention further. This is a self reinforcing confirmation bias – a perspective, once achieved, upholds and strengthens itself.

Additionally, the player is constantly ignoring elements that could break the immersion. This phenomenon is bidirectional: immersion requires the player to disregard information not reinforcing it but also enables this. Individual executive functions, current attentional processes and the situational factors affect the extent players can ignore such elements. Some players argue strongly for the 360 degree immersion while in jeepform games there is but a minimal importance to props and attire. Could it be that personal differences in the ability to disregard immersion-breaking elements may guide the player's preference of games?

When immersing the player pays less and less attention to their actual self. While immersed, the player is somewhat separated, dissociated, from their everyday personality that is replaced by another perspective. This dissociation generates an experience that the character and diegesis are real – the structures questioning them are inactive. Cognitive science could describe this as decoupling (Lieberoth 2006), but I will use the term dissociation because it is more established in psychology, and increasingly researched (see van der Hart, Nijenhuis & Steele 2006). Besides acting in accordance with the inner model, controlling one's behavior is at times achieved by inhibition, the ability to not act out on inner urges, thoughts and emotions. Having achieved a certain level of immersion there is no longer as much need to consciously inhibit urges, as there is less to inhibit. Our everyday personality has momentarily been dissociated from the personality of the character.

During the game, the players have a dual awareness of the character and their every-day self (Andreasen 2003). But rather than experiencing them both at once, usually only one of them can be active at a time, and our consciousness of the immersive state varies. Actually, once we become conscious of it we have already partly lost it. We can only hold one perspective active at any given moment due to the natural limits of our attention. For example, look for a moment at the Figure 1 below. Notice how its shape constantly changes according to how you look at it, and how it is impossible to see the two contradictory viewpoints simultaneously. Similarly the extent and depth of immersion can vary during and between games. The extent represents the frequency of perspective changes between the players' everyday self and the perspective of the character, and how long these periods are. The depth describes the subjective strength of the experienced immersion.
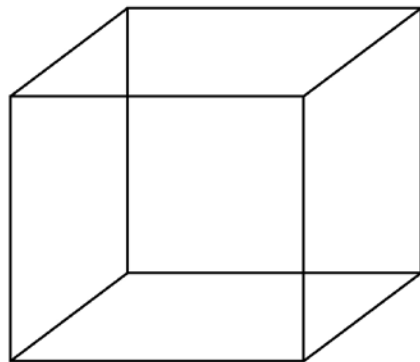

Figure 1: A cube with two perspectives

There is evidence that there are personal differences between the strength of immersion, and thus dissociation, the players achieve during the game (Hook 2012). This strength is partly mediated by the situational factors and varies throughout the game: at moments the player may be completely immersed in the story, then become more conscious of their actual self. Brown and Cairns (2004) have suggested using three tiers to describe player immersion: engagement, engrossment and total

immersion. The state of being immersed could be rather described as a continuum than a binary state.

Immersion and dissociation it produces act as a psychological defenses: the crisis, challenges and insults during the game are directed to the character, not the player. In the recent years, there has been increasing attention to the psychological safety in live action role-playing games: safety words, traffic lights, "cut" and "break" are in the repertoire of more and more games. During the warm up exercises, the players prepare for the game psychologically, tune to the character and prepare for immersion. The exercises support the dissociation between the perspectives of the player and the character ensuring both good game experience and psychological safety. Learning is strongly state and context bound. Dissociation hinders learning unless the experiences of the character are turned to learning experiences of the player. The debriefing after the game breaks the achieved dissociation, helps the player return to their own personality, reinforces learning and generates distance to the character by strengthening the player's real personality.

Immersion in Different Environments

The three way model differentiates players according to their primary motivation to the game: the gamists strive for competition and problem solving; the dramatists aim to tell a story; and simulationists pursue immersion (Bøckman 2003). Personality traits guide the players to find groups and games that suit their traits: the players look for an environment that fits their personality. Perhaps there are differences in the quality and quantity of immersion into character and diegesis between these groups, and the players may look to different game elements to achieve immersion.

Immersion can have many targets in the game: the personality of the character; the game reality; or the narrative, which results in feeling the story is real (Harviainen 2003). These three are emphasized to a different extent in games. It would be incorrect to presume the games that strive primarily to character immersion would result in stronger immersion than other games. The target of immersion is merely different and an explicit goal of the game. At the same time, jeepform games can produce strong immersion by shared and dramatic narrative.

Table 3: The external factors strengthening and dissolving immersion

	More external factors dissolving immersion	Less external factors dissolving immersion
More external factors supporting immersion	The environment supports immersion but dissolving elements are present. Present in Nordic larps or computer games.	The game world nearly completely upholds immersion. Present in 360 degree larps, simulations and historical re-enactment.
Less external factors supporting immersion	Immersion is mainly the result of self suggestion, not external elements. Present in pervasive games or reading a book.	Immersion is the result of self suggestion in a structured environment. Present in black box scenarios or guided meditation.

When immersion is a key aspect pursued by the players, the games are often designed to promote this goal: the characters and the game world are focused on while the shared narrative has less of an importance. There is a focus on elements that support immersion and also aim to reduce factors that could break it (see Holter 2007). Immersion is increased belief in the viewpoint of the character and the world – and forgetting to disbelief them. This is also reflected to the game design (Table 3). Thus, the playing style, target of immersion, and game design are closely tied together.

This far, we have focused on conscious, deliberate immersion, but one can also experience immersion without aspiring it. This automatic immersion is rather a by-product than primary objective of activity, and it is a part of the gameplay experience (Ermi & Mäyrä 2005). This spontaneous immersion is closely related to cognitive empathy discussed earlier. It is a product of many factors and can be found in several contexts: in digital games it originates from effortless interface, prolonged concentration and imagination; in historical reenactment it is the activation of rich historical knowledge and immersion into authentic environment; in a simulator the player perceives an alternative reality with many of their senses; in meditation there is focus on mindfulness skills, the body consciousness and breathing; in reading a novel the rich narrative and identifiable characters strengthen it; while listening to music it is forgetting one's self. People high in cognitive empathy may have a tendency to experience such identification with the characters and the imagined worlds, forgetting themselves. Conscious immersion may be the strive to this automatic immersion that is familiar to a person from other fields of life.

Conclusion and Discussion

In summary:

- Immersion as a *state* means the subjective experience of being someone else in an alternative, diegetic reality.

- Immersion as a *process* is automatic, unconscious reaction to and interaction with the environment mediated by personality trait resulting in immersive state. This process can also be consciously and deliberately activated.

- Conscious immersion is first upheld by the attentive processes controlled by the player. Once immersion is deeper, it is upheld by automatic attentive processes and biases.

- Immersion requires cognitive empathy, the theory of mind: the ability to take the perspective of another person.

- The strength of immersion is a continuum that correlates with dissociation from our everyday personality.

- Acting reinforces both the player's own and others' immersion and also has a communicative function in the game.

- Internal (self suggestion) and external factors (clothing, environmental changes) affect immersion.

- Subjective immersive state cannot be completely derived from behavioral changes.

- Becoming conscious of immersion weakens it making it harder to assess.

Jennett et al. (2008) have made advances in the subjective and objective measurement of immersion in video games – yet, there are methodological difficulties to it. When the players are asked about their immersion, the consciousness of their own personality is activated and their state changes affecting immersion. Also, assessing immersion from the outside is challenging: we cannot decide whether a person is immersed merely by the way they act, because our behavior is the result of many personal and situational factors. Even the players themselves become conscious of their immersion only after the fact: "at that moment I was really in character".

According to Stenros and Hakkarainen (2003) a role-playing game requires a player, game master, interaction and diegetic framework. There is no mention of immersion. Immersion as psychological, dissociative state is not a requirement for a role-playing game, but a result of it. Yet, immersion, using metacognitive skills and empathy, is a process defining role-playing games. Some games may more explicitly strive to produce this state while other games have different goals. Regardless of the nature of the game, it may or may not lead to experienced immersion: at times immersion may creep up on the players without conscious effort as a result of situational factors such as other players' immersion, grasping storyline, strong metatechnique or authentic environment.

Many researchers have noticed that games sometimes produce an experience of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) involving an unceasing concentration on the situation; changed sense of time, self and the environment; and focus on the moment and activity at hand. Psychologically immersion and flow have many similar qualities (Jennett et al. 2008) and include a state change. Immersion and flow may often coexist in games (Christou 2014; Ermi & Mäyrä 2005). The two concepts overlap, but it is suggested immersion precedes flow (Jennett et al. 2008), and flow may increase immersion. Whereas flow can occur in many encapturing fields of life such as hobbies or work, immersion appears in more limited environments and includes dissociation, an experience of being someone else, unlike flow.

What makes players strive for repeated experiences of immersion? There may be several explanations, the most important being that immersion is secondary to other factors, such as sense of belonging to a group, escapism or having fun. One can engage in the same activities with many motivations. For instance, games can have a therapeutic, entertaining or educative function (Henriksen 2005). One player may larp due to peer pressure, other because they want to explore new sides to themselves, third because they want to identify with their favorite characters, idols, and fourth because they want to escape their torturing self-awareness. The most important requirement for striving precisely to immersion is the capability to do so; second are personal motivational factors including a wish away from or toward something, such as an altered state of mind.

Suggestibility is one marker of hypnotic susceptibility. In role-playing games an immersed state may be achieved using self suggestion or the suggestion of the game master, such as in tabletop role-playing games. It would be intriguing to compare hypnosis and immersion – and the resulting states they produce. Perhaps dissociation is a common denominator between the two. To this date, many studies on immersion have focused on digital games. One has to be careful, though, when interpreting these results. Live action role-playing and digital games are fundamentally different environments in many aspects such as methods of communication, movement and player-game interaction. There is a clear need for interdisciplinary studies.

Does immersion arise only in people who have a certain personality favorable to acting and role-playing games; is it a skill that can be practiced; or is it a state brought on by the situation? If it was a skill, the players who have had more immersion experiences would achieve deeper immersion than beginners would. There are little such observations in the literature – and we know that already children spontaneously act and immerse. The childrens' tendency to engage in role-play reflects their developmental objectives. Some children may be more prone to automatic, spontaneous immersion, identification, empathy; to others is it a more distant phenomenon. These temperament tendencies develop into personality traits that may both directly and indirectly impact how, and how much immersion one experiences. There is some preliminary evidence that immersion is rather a player trait than a game trait (Christou 2014). The traits predisposing

one to experience immersion are necessary but not sufficient requirements for it; rather they may mediate the strength of immersion the player can achieve. Immersive state is a personal response to the internal and external situational factors guided by personal traits.

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Harald Misje, Martin Nielsen & Anita Myhre Andersen

Larping in Lebanon

Introducing Nordic Children's Larp to Palestinian Refugee Kids

In the Nordic countries, children's larp has proved itself as a successful way to get young people out of the couch and into the forest, taking part in a challenging, physical, participatory activity that is fun, healthy and strengthening the kids' self-efficacy. Inspired by the the question if larp can change the world, children's larp veterans in Bergen asked themselves if Nordic children's larp could be useful to refugee camp kids in Lebanon.

We wanted to see if larp could spark the same interest amongst the Palestinian children in the camp as it does for Norwegian children back home. In cooperation with the local organization Al Jalil, that run an activity house in the Rashedie camp, we worked with a group of young volunteers aiming to provide them with the skills necessary to start developing children's larps in the camps. We learned about Palestinian traditions of playing, storytelling and games, and tried to find a way of turning them into children's larps. The aim of this pilot project was to see if children's larps were interesting as an activity in the camps, get to know our potential partner and find out if there are locals willing to keep on working with us on a larger project in the future.

The Beginning:

At Knudepunkt in Denmark 2011, Harald Misje and Martin Nielsen discussed why there were no Palestinian larpers participating and they wondered if there were any larpers in Palestine at all. Not even half a year later Martin had made larp workshops in Palestine, and Harald was trying to find partners to help him with the idea of trying out children's larp in Palestine.

Harald had, together with Anita Myhre Andersen and the rest of the Tidsreiser crew, been running the children's larp Eventyrspill in the woods of Bergen, Norway, for the last six years. Every month, regardless of weather, they played with children and youth, and experienced the effect larps can have on the human being.

Scene from the Wolf larp; the first children larp for and by Palestinians. (Photo: Ane Marie Anderson)

Anita explains:

> We know how we feel after we have been running, laughing, playing and feeling the excitement of the adventures in the forest. It´s easy to see how it affects the children, you can see the sparkles in their eyes.

Harald's wish and the spark that initiated this project was the idea that we also could – and should - transfer this thought and experience to children in Palestinian refugee camps.

Harald discussed his idea with Lisa Landsverk Engervik, from Palestinakomiteen. She has several years of experience from a project on sending Norwegian youth as volunteer workers to Lebanese refugee camps. Lisa's recommendation was to do the project in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon instead of in Palestine. Compared to Palestine, the refugees in Lebanon get relatively little attention and there are fewer aid organizations present.

The families living in the camps in Lebanon have been there for generations, with little hope of returning home, even if many of them still keep the keys to their old houses in Palestine. The people living there lack several of the civil rights that Lebanese citizens have. The unemployment rate in the camps is very high. All grownups and many of the young have experienced wars (the last war with Israel was in 2006). Children in refugee camps usually live in cramped conditions, where the space for playing is limited, both in terms of physical spaces and in terms of opportunity and social norms. The opportunities for careers and self-fulfillment are limited. And maybe the most important for our project: there is very little for the children and youngsters to in their spare time.

Preparing

When the project group first met in Bergen, in October 2012, we didn't know Najat, Omar, Hannadi, Jacob, Hussein or any of the other Palestinians we were going to meet and create larps with in Rashedie.

We had yet to eat lunch under the lemon trees outside Nadjats house. We had yet to swim in the warm and beautiful, yet littered, Mediterranean waves outside the refugee camp of Rashedie and to play with the children in the camp. We had not yet experienced driving south from Beirut to the Tyre area, where the green and yellow Hezbollah flags are flying over the houses and martyrs look at you from posters lining the roads. We had yet to get our permissions and finally enter Rashedie through the checkpoint run by the Lebanese army separating it from the rest of Lebanon.

We were sitting safely around a table on the 2nd floor in the human rights house called Raftohuset in Bergen. Outside the Bergen sky was dense and forbade rain. Inside the mood was bright. Harald, leader of the project, had brewed coffee, unlocked the doors and wished us welcome.

We had several weekends reserved for preparing ourselves for the project. To be able to carry out the project and succeed with engaging the children and the youth in the camp, it was vital for the project group to strengthen its competence on children's larp in general, learn about the experiences of using larp as a development tool from other projects, as well as acquire knowledge on the history and culture of the Palestinians in Lebanon, and also how to behave in the camp. Most of this took place in Raftohuset in Bergen, owned by the Rafto Foundation, a human rights organization that Fantasiforbundet has been cooperating with in several larp projects previously, and that generously let us use their facilities.

One of the speakers, a Palestinian born and raised in Rashedie, told us that the children were often hanging in the streets, and sometimes throwing stones at each other as a way to kill time.

Anita comments on this:

> That´s not very good at all, was what I thought - and it projected images in our heads of Palestinians kids throwing stones at the Israeli soldiers. It was not until I had a rock thrown at me in the camp that I understood that it doesn't have to be an act of aggression. It can also be a game, and one does not throw the stone to hit anyone, just like playing with boffer swords is usually not harmful.

We had talks from Miriam Lundqvist from LajvVerkstaden in Sweden and Anders Gredal Berner from Rollespilsakademiet in Denmark, and had a workshop where we looked at different methods and ways to make children larps. They had lots of valuable experience to share with us, and we got to know several of the methods they use when they design childrens larps. We also had had a thorough discussion on whether or not to introduce boffer weapons to the camp. We all agreed that boffer is a very efficient way of getting children interested in larping. But it costs money, it sometimes take the focus away from the game and sometimes frightens some girls away. And maybe it would be better to try other game mechanics than war with boffer weapons to children living in a region where war is something very real and constantly threatening. So we decided not to introduce boffer weapons as a first encounter with larp. We also found that there are far too few Nordic children larps and game mechanics that are totally boffer-free. It is important that children's larps is not a synonym with boffer larps.

Introducing Larp in Rashedie

After arriving in Lebanon, we spent the first days sorting out papers and permissions. Fatima Abdul was joining us from the West Bank, and the value of having a Palestinian larp-organizer on the team should prove enormous. Our other Palestinian contributor, Riad Walid Mustafa, never got to leave Amman as the authorities were suspicious on why we had invited an engineer to help us with a drama workshop.

When the rest of us had finally cut through all the red tape and were inside Rashedie camp, it was time to begin the actual work.

Al Jalil volunteer Hannadi giving instructions before the larp. (Photo: Martin Nielsen)

Our strategy was to spend the first days on icebreakers, learning about the concept of larp and training the volunteers to be team leaders. Then, in the middle of the week, run a larp written by us, but using the young volunteers of Al Jalil as team leaders. After this first larp, we wanted to go on to the next step, where we wanted the locals to make a new childrens larp with some help from us, before finally running it for the camp kids.

A group of wonderful volunteers between 18 and 35 met us at Al Jalil's house when the workshop were about to start. Most of them were male, but a fair share were female. Al Jalil does a terrific job to ensure that girls in the camp also have opportunity to take part in recreational activities, even though many parents are extremely concerned that their children could end up doing something inappropriate when they are out on their own. To counter this, Al Jalil works systematically to ensure the trust of parents through well-trained volunteers and close dialogue with parents to promote their activities as a space that is enjoyable but safe.

We started out with a day filled with icebreakers and small drama exercises. After some initial success, we ran into the first complications. When the games included any kind of physical contact, some of the girls opted out, creating a cascade where all other girls also opted out of the exercise. This created severe constraints on how much of the prepared material that could be used, which severely diminished the quality of the workshop. We later learned that some of the participants considered leaving the training course at this stage, but fortunately most of them gave the foreigners the benefit of doubt and continued.

On the next days we introduced a few simple larps. Fantasiforbundet often uses 'The Family Anderson' (2009) as the first introductory game because it is easy to understand and also allows two and two players to «team up» and work together. Refugee camps can be added to the 'Familty Anderson's' success list; we ran the larp with some modifications and experienced a high level of enthusiasm from the participants. The value of Fatima on the team at this stage, as a native, arab-speaking instructor

Task: Get the old, sad lady happy. Anita who played the old lady, was very happy by the time all the teams had visited her. (Photo: Martin Nielsen)

with solid larp experience and experience as a trainer, cannot be emphasized enough.

The next larp was 'When our destinies meet' (2009). This tool-box style larp allows the participants to create most of the scenario themselves, and we used it as a warm up to the process of creating of a children's larp from scratch. The larp worked very well and we played a rather high-intense story with mixed languages and a level of involvement that allowed for more extrovert play and at least some level of physical interaction. Still, the players did not seem to feel completely safe, and the intensity fell at an instant every time somebody pulled a smartphone with camera.

At the middle of the training session it was time for the volunteers to start moving into the children larp territory. We went by bus out of the cramped camp to a nearby park. Palestinians living in the camps are allowed to go in and out of «mainland» Lebanon as they wish, although most only spend time and money to do this only when they have some kind of business there. Our bus was full of enthusiastic kids, both boys

and girls, ready for a short vacation to another world.

The Trashmonster Larp

The children were introduced to the scenario by two of the volunteers. Obvious good at storytelling, they easily captured the children's attention and explained to them about the terrible monster that were known to live near this park.

For ages, the monster had been terrorizing the nearby realms, and the only way to neutralize it was to use magic water balloons that would send it back to a hundred years of sleep. The only problem, however, was that the water balloons was locked down by a wizard into a magic chest, and only by obtaining components from various miserable NPCs could the children provide the wizard by the means to open the chest.

Making a larp for a war-ravaged society, we wanted to focus on riddles and puzzles rather than violence, and even made the water-balloon solution as non-violent as

The Trashmonster! Advancing on the kids while screaming: "Drittungar! Eg ska spise dokker ALLE SAMMEN!" (Photo: Martin Nielsen)

possible as it didn't kill the monster, just send it back to sleep.

While there were variations among the children on how they took part in the larp, most of them were quite enthusiastic in both the puzzle solving and the balloon-fight with the monster, and almost all of them in at least one of the two. At the end of the day, we believed we had solid proof of the larp's potential to engage the children, and that no boffer swords or other warlike equipment is needed to achieve this, even in a region where acting soldiers may seem the default mode of children's play.

Creation of the Wolf Larp

Everyone was happy after running the trash-monster larp, and the volunteers were ready to go on the next task: Creating a larp on their own. At this stage, we has lost some of the volunteers from the process, but the 7-8 who remained were really committed to the project.

After some brainstorming sessions and workshops for developing ideas we ended up with two options: A sci-fi spaceship larp or a larp about a dangerous wolf making life unbearable in the nearby villages. The participants generally spoke out only in favor in their own ideas, trying to make it «win». It was at times very difficult to have a true collaborative process. On the other hand, everyone also showed a large degree of commitment and ownership over what we created. We finally reached a decision to go on with the wolf scenario.

The structure of this scenario was very similar to the Trash Monster scenario. This meant the process of creating the plots went easy (although maybe not so creative). Much more efforts were put into the scenography part. We had agreed beforehand that the larp should have a budget of no more than € 10, in order to train for designing larps that could be doable even with minimal financial resources. Less than half of this was used, and we ended up with chicken costumes made by rubber gloves, sheep costumes made from a donated bro-

The only way to defeat the Trashmonster is by throwing magical water baloons. (Photo: Martin Nielsen)

ken sheep's skin and a wolf costume made by a grey cape, a hat and scary sunglasses. Furthermore, a cage to catch the wolf was constructed by wood found on the beach.

The larp was set to take place on the beach. We had 40 children signed up, following us the few hundred metres from Al Jalil's house in the middle of the camp down to the shoreline. By the time we reached the beach, the size of the group had doubled. No doubt that there is need and interest for larps here.

Some of the people on the beach seemed quite perplexed at the sight of grownups playing with the children. Once again, social norms seemed to challenge the ideas of play. Some of the volunteers were rather uncomfortable with this, although the foreigners provided a useful alibi for grownups playing. It seemed the smiling faces on the children's faces were good rewards however, and after half an hour of play or so, both children and grown-ups seemed to have forgot about the bystanders.

We rounded off the week with pizza, soft drinks and diplomas for everyone who had participated. Najat said with a smile on her face: «We don't stop playing because we grow old – we grow old if we stop playing».

Lessons Learned

1. There are far too few Nordic childrens laps and game mechanics that are totally boffer-free.

2. During workshops with the young volunteers, the drama/warm-up exercises with physical contact did not work that well. Larp provided an alibi for more extrovert and physical play than drama exercises.

3. The young volunteers were afraid to break the social norms of the camp by playing. The foreigners gave an alibi to play, even though it broke the social norms.

4. Larps can be organized in refugee camp with minimal financial resources.

The big bad wolf snaches a sheep while the farmers sleep. (Photo: Martin Nielsen)

5. When the young volunteers was going to make the second larp , they copied the structure of the first larp. To be fully aware of the potential of larp you need more than ten days .

6. To succeed with a project like this it is vital to gain trust and confidence of the local participants as well as of the parents of the children who participate. To achieve this it is vital for the project group to gain sufficient knowledge about cultural and social norms, the does and don'ts, and be well prepared. Further the group should discuss how you will relate to the different restrictions put on you as persons (us of alcohol, what to tell about your personal life back home etc.) - agree on a common way to limit the time and energy spent on these kind of discussions during the project.

7. This pre-project proves that larp can be used as a tool for activating and inspiring kids and grownups in refugee camps.

8. The project has, as far as we know, not lead to regular larps (yet!).

9. The refugee kids love larp!

To Be Continued:

'Nobody can help everyone, but everyone can help someone.' This has been an important compass also for the various projects aiming to use larp as a tool in civil society building. We keep the faith that it is possible to change the society to something better, or to keep and strengthen what is already working.

Everything one does, everything one dedicates oneself to, will to some degree change the society. But the degree of influence, and if one changes it to something better, will change depending how comprehensive the activity is, and how one conducts the project.

Our project has, over the span of one year, has so far involved approximately fifteen persons here in Norway, about fifteen young volunteers teenagers took part in the workshops and about seven of them stayed

The wolf falls into the trap. (Photo: Martin Nielsen)

the whole course and got the basic skills to start developing children's larps in the camp, and the about seventy children that were able to try larps in the camp. Our blog has been well visited, and a lot of people around the world have shown interest in the project. The larps When our destinies meet and The family Anderson have once again proved very valuable as introductory larps, and we need more larps like this.

We have received funding from Youth in Action for a follow-up project in 2014 where we will continue the exchange of know-how on roleplaying for children. The project will include a kidslarp summer school in Norway for young volunteers from Rashedie, Palestine, Denmark and Norway. The goal of the follow up project will be to provide the young volunteers enough know-how to be able to plan, organize and lead regular children's larps in Rashedie refugee camp and to get an international exchange program up and running on children's larps.

Acknowledgements

Ludography

The Family Anderson, 2009, Nolemo, Å. & Röklander, J., Performance: Larp.

When our destinies meet, 2009, Jarl, M. & Karlsson, P., Performance: Larp.

Alexey Fedoseev

Larps, Interactive Theatre and Participatory Arts
Cutting and Pasting

We used to call larp a form of contemporary art. We are proud for this activity to be considered as not just entertainment but artistic expression. Despite this, larps are still far from being recognized in the 'big' art community. In the Nordic larp tradition larps have been frequently compared with theatre, cinema and performance art. Here I will do just the opposite: I will try to highlight several illustrative examples of modern art products which lie very close to larps in terms of participation. Moving in these directions we could bring larps and the mainstream art together.

The history of larps goes back many years. But the question — what is so interesting and unique about larps that could contribute to mainstream culture — remains still open. There are fields where larps have been occupying their niche for a long time. A good example of larp expansion can be found in the world of education. There larps are acknowledged by the professional community and are gaining more and more popularity among the public. At the same time, the position of larps in the field of art is much more ambiguous. Even if larps are very close to art in terms of goals and form, and no matter how many times authors of particular larps call them "art", it doesn't automatically make them art in the eyes of artists, curators, critics, officials and journalists — everyone who comprises modern art professional community in general. I think the most interesting and crucial question is to understand where one can find the meeting points of larps and canonical art. Those intersections will require our profound experience and unique competences in the nearest future, and we may have even outstripped both traditional and non-traditional forms of art.

Larps haven't appeared out of the blue, so they were always compared with other conventional forms of art such as theatre (Choy 2004; Flood 2006), literature (Livanova 2004), more modern trends like happenings (Harviainen 2008). Most often these cultural phenomena are compared with larps using the language familiar to us: speaking about the plot, the player's

agency, atmosphere, diegesis, rules and characters. Thus we happily feel close to the mainstream art, and sometimes we even find new curious techniques. However, it is obvious that this approach is not enough for breaking out of the larp isolation. There are even rarer attempts to speak about larps within the framework of conventional terms and theories of art criticism such as performance studies (Lampo 2011) or film theory (Torner 2011). Despite all scientific accuracy, we can hardly say that such articles will greatly change the external perception and understanding of larps. At best, they will just enrich the vast collection of articles on art history. Moreover, this approach will hardly become popular outside Nordic larp community.

So how can we bridge the gap between larp scene and 'professional' art? To my mind, there is one essential ingredient to do this — the development of penetrating joint projects with the art community. Good examples of such projects could be a larp in the space of modern art (like museum, biennial), a piece of art in the space of a larp (a diegetic installation which provides innovative contextualization to the art), a fusion of larp techniques with modern art on a neutral ground (for instance, a hybrid of larp and performance at the town square) and so on. These projects could bring unique experience to the both artforms, but more importantly, they could start further public discussion. The discussion becomes effective as soon as we highlight and explain the differences between larp and art. By looking at the different sets of techniques and capabilities inherent to larp and to the traditional arts we can learn to cross-pollinate. We can improve traditional arts with our larp skills and make new breakthroughs in our larps.

Nordic larp communities are pioneers in this field; they have been working in this area since the beginning of the 2000s (Fatland 2009). There are more recent examples of combining larps with modern theatre (MacDonald 2012; Korpela 2012) and larps with political performance (Kaljonen & Raekallio 2012). In these examples larps and art made a step towards each other. But here I would like to look from the other view-point: what art projects have come as close as possible to larps how we know them.

I will consider several outstanding theatre, cinema and modern art projects which resemble larps most. Hypothetically, these and similar projects could become a locus of mutual engagement. In defining a range of relevant culture and art events, larps and role-playing games can jointly create a unique and desired artistic form[1]. The projects I consider are known among people who study art. Thereby, the larp community can use these examples to easily demonstrate what place larps can take up in this sphere.

Theoretical Framework

In order to compare such different objects as a larp, a movie and a theatrical performance, it is necessary to choose some framework. The framework should be both profound and clear enough to serve not only ourselves, but also to those who know little about larps.

First of all, I will base ourselves upon the distinction introduced by the Swedish artists and larpers in the book *Interacting Arts* (Larsson et al 2008). According to the book, art can be classified into the three categories: spectatory, interactive and participatory. Most traditional forms of art belong to the first category. Painting, music, cinema and classic theatre make clear distinctions between the artist and the consumer (a viewer, listener, etc.). Being viewers, we can operate only in the space of thoughts and interpretations; we cannot influence the work of art itself. Interactive art makes a step forward to the viewer.

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1   And, for sure, I must have missed something interesting there; I will be glad to learn about your ideas and examples, so, please, don't hesitate to write.

There it becomes possible to make some choice which will influence the perception of the work of art in a crucial way. It can be a playback theatre where the viewers are asked some questions, a computer game with a branched scenario, hypertext literature or, incredible as it may seem, architecture[1]. Such art provides a consumer with some space for choice, but still keeps a distance between her and the author of the work. In fact, it is the author, the artist who develops possible trajectories of immersion into the work. Finally, in participatory art the artists take away their unique right to create the work and define what the participants should do and feel. This art may include role-playing games or carnivals, as the participants of such works are the authors and the consumers at the same time.

On the other hand, this classification can be presented as a kind of a scale showing a participant's agency. One endpoint of this scale will accommodate a viewer sitting in the auditorium, while the other will be occupied by a participant of an improvisation performance — a co-creator of a larp. The middle part of this scale will hold all kinds of computer games, ARGs or interactive theatre. Certainly, here we speak not about the situation when a participant can do anything she likes, but about the degree her will, personality and creativity may influence the work of art, the final outcome.

But when we talk about freedom of action or participation, is it really the way that art develops? One should mention the role of autonomy in the contemporary art, the possibility to become free from the social framework through the art. Larps were analyzed through this prism as well (Pohjola 2004). But besides democratism what particularly could this trend in art give to an artist? To answer this question we need one more important term from the field of art critique — *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Translated from German, this word means "a universal work of art"[2]. Introduced in the 19th century, this notion still thrills the minds of western critics and artists. It implies not just mixing various kinds of art in a single work; it is a work engaging all the viewer's feelings. Moreover, it is not just a simple combination of video sequence and soundtrack (as it is done in cinema) but it is such a fusion where a viewer won't perceive himself as a viewer at all, being completely immersed into the work of art. Art history keeps a record of some attempts to create such a work. However, the most interesting examples of Gesamtkunstwerk appear nowadays, facilitated by promotion of games and other participatory arts.

The examples collected in this article when combined with some larps are similar both to participatory art and for creating consumer participation. These examples, more or less, claim to be called Gesamtkunstwerk. Now let's start from the areas of actionism, cinema and theatre.

Reenactments

Reenactment comprises not only historical battles or living history festivals in medieval castles. Contemporary art acknowledges reenactment as an artform (Blackson 2007). This is because it aims to create understanding and discussion of some important event or a story from the past.

This area was booming within the framework of the Russian avant-garde, new post-revolution art[3]. The most vivid exam-

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1 Especially if we remember that we not only look at architecture, but also use it

2 See the Wikipedia article — http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gesamtkunstwerk [Accessed January 07, 2014].

3 It is curious, that right after the Russian Civil War popular theatres multiplied throughout Soviet Russia; by the 1920s they amounted to tens of thousands. One of the hypotheses that explains the popularity of this artform is the necessity of mass change of way of life and life goals for millions of people. Are larps, also 'lowborn', able to take up the

ple can be presented by the reenactment called *Storming of the Winter Palace*, which took place in Petrograd in 1920 in honour of three years anniversary of the October Revolution. This large-scale performance, involving more than 8 thousand participants, a huge stage on Palace Square, hundreds of spotlamps, armored cars and machine guns, background music and real shots made by cruiser Aurora, left the original event of 1917 far behind (Annenkov 1920). It is difficult to overestimate the role of this reenactment for the young Soviet state: new way of life was accompanied by creating new myths and heroes; the avant-garde art, involving thousands of common people, headed this process. The performance engaged both direct participants of the storming of the Winter Palace and numerous actors, students and soldiers. Despite the fact that the performance was arranged according to a certain scenario, the size and scope of the event did not allow it to evade improvisation and excessive acts. How many larpers would we see engaged in the project, were such a reenactment held today? Amusingly, a British artist Albert Hunt in 1967 together with 300 students honored the 50th anniversary of the Russian revolution by reenacting it on the streets of Bradford, a small English city (Hunt 2013). During the performance, public buildings, designated areas held by the provisional government, were stormed by Bolsheviks soldiers.

There are contemporary examples. In 2001 Jeremy Deller, another British artist, reenacted the *Battle of Orgreave* (Deller, 2006; Correia, 2006). The Battle happened in 1984 and was a strike and armed conflict between policemen and miners, caused by the reforms performed by Margaret Thatcher in the English countryside. The reenactment involved about one thousand people; among them there were actual participants of the Battle of 1984. Jeremy suggested the former miners and policemen swap their roles within the framework

of the artistic performance. The majority of the participants comprised members of British historical reenactment clubs. The artist wanted to engage young people interested in history into current affairs. At the same time, the participants' valuable experience in military encounters was important for Deller to reconstruct the battle in details. The reenactment was preceded by months of preparations. The events were reenacted very accurately, including the material aspect, such as clothes, cars and newspapers of that time. Deller's main goal was to return to the still relevant ideological conflict between government and common people. What it actually was: "the enemy within", as Thatcher herself called the strikers, or an attempt of simple workers to protect their rights. Deller wanted the new generation to see this event with their own eyes and to evaluate from the inside. This success was intensified by the post-production (the essential lesson we should learn from this work). The final results of the project were arranged into hours of video, a large exhibition and numerous articles and publications. Thus, a participatory work of art, which had its own value — the participants felt direct power of the historical event, being its authors and witnesses at the same time — also left a significant media imprint. It gave birth to numerous derivative works which became available to those who were not personally involved in the reenactment.

Cinema

The technique of reenactment and playing historical situations starts to be applied for producing cinema. The film *La Commune (Paris 1871)* by Peter Watkins is a vivid example of such new type cinema (Levine 2008). This very long film is devoted to the historical events of the Paris Commune and is filmed in a peculiar pseudo-documentary black-and-white shooting. The action is performed in a large warehouse fitted up with some episodic scenery. The film involves more than 200 participants — non-professional actors from Paris, the neighbourhood and even from North Africa. The participants play themselves in

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same place in the modern society?

historical circumstances than roles rigidly stated by the scenario. The camera moves in a reporting film manner and the scenes often change, displaying various aspects of life of the Commune. The action in-shot and off-screen is not pure reenactment, but a mixture of present day and the Commune history up to the moment the Commune was destroyed by the government forces. For instance, the events are covered by two 'TV channels': on the part of the Commune residents and by the Versailles journalists. There are more anachronisms: from time to time the participants speak their personal opinions on-camera not like characters, but referring to modern political realities. It was crucial for the director to keep such freedom of the participants' actions and speaking. He regarded such kind of living-through and discussion of a historical event as a new form of political activity. For sure, the experience of participation cannot be compared to the experience of watching this film. Yet, these two works of art — the participatory one and the more traditional one — provided for each other's existence.

There is a similar example in the Russian cinema. From 2008 to 2011 a film series called *Dau* was filmed in Kharkov. The film was devoted to the life and work of Lev Landau, an outstanding Russian physicist (Idov 2011; Maximishin 2012). The film has not been widely released yet, which is why we can evaluate this project only by the information from the witnesses or journalists' reports, which are fortunately numerous. The work on the film was a tremendous process: a millions-dollar budget, years of non-stop shooting, incredible scenery built almost from scratch, thousands of participants engaged. But the most important thing here is that Ilya Khrzhanovsky, the director, created a whole living world of a Soviet research institute and the surrounding city of the period from the 1930s to the 1960s. The shooting area included the special inner zone, the Institute, where you could gain access only with a special permission from the director. A real Soviet life was continuously going on there, featuring appropriate costumes, conversations and surrounding props, thor-

oughly reproduced. At the entrance to the Institute everybody was made to change clothes, exchange the money, cigarettes and other things for authentic Soviet ones. Inside all the thing were real and working, there were no imitations! The participants were also told the rules: all modern conversations were prohibited, people were sent away immediately if they violated the rules.

During three years of shooting thousands of people took part in the game, being mostly just volunteers, including larpers from Kharkov. The majority of them were not professional actors. Individual situations played inside were not prescribed by a rigid treatment scenario but arose on their own accord: people lived there and performed routine work, carried out experiments at the laboratories, served sandwiches at the cafe, hunted down traitors of the Motherland, etc. They also met each other, drank and fell in love. Most of it was not even recorded, but still created inherent. Shooting inside the Institute was performed selectively and in parallel to this everyday life. At the same time, there were no posed shots or doubles; everything was shot as-is. The work became the result of the interaction of individual participants of the project. According to the director, they managed to get much more meaning from this unpredicted story than in traditional cinema (Arkus 2009). In a real way, it is not important what the film finally will be like, because all the participants of the project have already received their portion of Gesamtkunstwerk.

Theatre

One can find the similar art projects in the sphere of theatre. I already mentioned an example where larp and performance were combined in Finnish theatre, however there was one more interesting project in USA. In September 2010 Hammer Museum located at the University of California at San Diego hosted the unique two-day performance-reenactment-staging-larp *Level5* (Krasinski 2010). The author, Brody Condon, was an artist with a larping background. He created the larp about Erhard

Seminars Training — a weekend of the spiritual growth seminar typical of those held in America in 1970-s. Participants of the original seminar went through self-actualization and self-invention practices to gain new level of understanding themselves and answer existential questions. Brody decided to reconstruct one run of this event, but faced the problem that there was almost no materials available. Therefore, this was a participative event or social experiment rather than reenactment or traditional theatrical production. The two larpwriters from the Nordic larp community — Bjarke Pedersen and Tobias Wrigstad — helped to fulfill the performance by supplying the game mechanics. And the result was quite Nordic. For instance, the special preliminary workshop was organized for the participants one week before the event. The participants were provided by characters — American people of the era — some of them were critical to the event, some looked for salvation, and so on. Special reflection techniques were used to make not only characters but players think about the event. The project left a trail of video materials and reports from the participants.

The examples we have already considered are one-time events. Reenactment or film shooting may result in materials available for watching, yet, the action takes place only once. The same we can see in theatre — every performance is unique, and even more unique, if it is based on improvisation or the spectator's reaction. But in this respect theatre as an institution differs crucially from performances, and even from films because it is, in actuality, a machine built to create single-use products.

That is why a theatre director is in a much more difficult situation than a performance artist. Each stage play should, to a certain degree, guarantee artistic result; the spectators have bought tickets and have some expectations. Moreover, usually they have not prepared to contribute the content of the performance (as a consumer), unlike a participant of film shooting or a larp (who acts as both artist and consumer). This may be the core reason why participatory theatre has only undergone rare experimentations while interactive theatre (which allows participants to interact with the performance without controlling content) has had considerable treatment and success.

I will omit the overview of interactive techniques in theatre on the whole. There is a wide variety of literature on this topic (Schechner 2003; Blatner 2007). It is much more interesting to study the examples of interactive performances which have already come rather near to what we are accustomed to see at larps. And here, at last, I will base the description on the personal experience of participation.

At the moment, one of the most famous interactive (or, more like, immersive) show is New York performance *Sleep No More* by the British art-group Punchdrunk. Originally staged in London in 2003, this performance was recreated in one of the deserted warehouse buildings in Manhattan in 2011 and still remains a must-visit show for theatre enthusiasts from all over the world. Every day hundreds of visitors pass through it. The scene of action is a great space on five floors having a hundred rooms turned into a hotel, a bar, a street, a hospital, a graveyard, a taxidermist shop and many other locations. Noir style and horror film atmosphere are achieved with complicatedly arranged space, music, light and a huge number of strange scenery which can be not only viewed, but is allowed to be touched. The spectators are left alone: they can walk around the whole hotel and explore this realm on their own. The story unfolds simultaneously at several locations: actors show their version of Macbeth's story, first of all, in the language of dancing and via a succession of scenes.

The spectators must wear white masks, not to interfere into the action, keep silent and watch. Thus, the spectators' agency is limited by movement and choosing the appropriate viewpoint. There is no possibility to influence the story. It is no wonder that the actors — who move quickly around the hotel from one room to another — become eventually followed by a stream of

curious observers. At the same time, one can explore this tremendous and mystic place, look at the props and background characters and immerse into the scary atmosphere. One should mention the high level of organization and the authors' professionalism: there are no halts, everything runs like clockwork, special organizers wearing black clothes and masks and being almost invisible change the rooms configuration in action and fish out 'lost' spectators, the actors play brilliantly and the scenery is incredible.

Having told about *Sleep No More*, I cannot leave out *Then She Fell*. It is one more New York interactive performance, created by the American art-group The Third Rail Project, in many ways, as an opposition to its super popular counterpart. The stories of Alice in the Wonderland and behind the Looking-Glass are told in the language of dancing, music and unfolded story. You are immersed into the psychedelic atmosphere of a tale or a asylum, whichever you like best. On the one hand, it is a much more immersive, intimate and secretive story than *Sleep No More*, as not more than ten actors play for only fifteen spectators. On the other hand, the participants' freedom of action is minimized here: during two-hour performance you are actually being 'led by the hand' from one breath-taking scene to the next one. Yet, you have no possibility to choose your own route and explore this world completely. You can take part in a real Mad Tea-Party, run after the White Rabbit or try yourself as Alice's reflection. But I can hardly tell that you take part in the creation of this story. This example shows pretty well that deep immersion into the diegesis by no means always comes together with full freedom of characters' actions.

The Next Steps

Whether we want it or not, larps are being institutionalized: the community has started active discussions on training game writers and masters, larp theories become scientifically confirmed with dissertations, more and more frequently external interest to larps exceeds the scope of mocking curiosity, and not only in the sphere of education. And if we want to see larps as a part of the mainstream art, it is high time to think about our ways of organizing cooperation with the existing institutions of the modern culture and contemporary art.

I see the four following promising directions where larps will move in the near future:

1. *Large scale experiments*. Larps are very good in reconstructing economic, social, psychological experiments in real time. Here art intersects with the fields of education, science and management but still has unique aims and means of expression.

2. *Historical reenactments and political events*. Larps allow building really various historical models and immerse modern people into the states of consciousness, specific for the people of the bygone epochs. Starting to work at small grounds and in small projects, larps can gradually become a popular tool for creating serious attitude to the history, rethinking of historical events and speaking out personal political positions in a live conversation.

3. *New format of exhibitions and museums*. Gamification has stormed into the sphere of education and bewildered many minds. Now a similar effect can also be seen in the space of museums and exhibitions, where fashion for adventure, quest and game is gaining ground. Larps, being a much more complicated and powerful tool, could claim to create a new-type museum, where the visitor is immersed into the atmosphere of an epoch that has less to do with the exhibits and more to do with the visitor's own actions, emotions, experience and understanding of the events of the past within the live process.

4. *Participatory theatre*. In order to introduce larps into the space of the modern theatre, we somehow need to solve the described productive problems: a participant 'from the street' is unprepared for the game, we need to guarantee the plot

is realized in a short time, the participants should be really able to influence the story. In comparison to the difficulties just listed, all other ones (like organizing the theatre space anew, providing props for the participants, training of actors and non player characters) seem to be of technical nature. I will illustrate this field by the example of the project I have been developing since last year. Within the framework of the experimental *BLACKBOX* laboratory of the Moscow Theatre and Cultural Center named after Vsevolod Meyerhold we stated production of a participatory performance which will be shown in June, 2014. The performance-and-larp is being developed by a group of professionals from various spheres: theatre, architecture, modern art and larps. The space, organized into a kind of a city by using transport containers, will become the ground for the viewers-and-participants' independent adventures and trials. Moreover, the end of the story will depend on the participants' decisions and actions — so they will be able not just to choose the preferred path or viewpoint but change the situation within the diegesis. I can hardly tell you more without depriving you of the opportunity to take part in the performance, but I will surely tell how we worked and what the outcome was.

In summary, I would like to encourage you all once more not just to call larps 'art' or make larps for your friends as works of art, but to invent and employ unique artistic methods like the one I have described. My experience tells us that these directions are not simply real; they have already started to come true.

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Luiz Falcão

New Tastes in Brazilian Larp

From Dark Coke to Caipirinha with Nordic Ice

The article reflects briefly on the path of larp in Brazil: from its arrival along with RPGs and long years of "for fun" larps without far reaching outcomes until 2011, with the growing interaction with practices and theories of Nordic and world larp. This influence is building a new identity of Brazilian larp, based on the idea that larp is a language, a medium and a kind of art.

Larp in Brazil has been around for more than 20 years, but until recently very little was known about it — the first attempts to build a collective memory and historiography of Brazilian larp have started very recently and even nowadays stumble upon enthusiasts' and researchers' main difficulty: the memory of larp in Brazil is private. Until very recently, when larp came to be seen as a public cultural activity and not only a hobby to be enjoyed behind closed doors, games, records, stories and plenty of material about larp (then associated with RPG) circulated only among restricted groups of those who performed larp.

Therefore this article does not intend to give an account of the whole history of Brazilian larp, but instead be the record of a possible point of view, built on the author's and his collaborators' paths, dialogues, and research traditions. The focus of this view is São Paulo city, which has had a kind of leading role in the building of a national larp scene, but inevitably leaves out many important episodes of this story that is beginning to take shape.

The First Wave

Apparently larp arrived in Brazil with the role-playing game Vampire: The Masquerade in the first half of the 1990s. Rapidly it won over hundreds and perhaps thousands of adepts all over the country. Some games were already integrated into the project One World By Night which aimed to unite all of the Vampire larp campaigns into a single, cohesive official story. These larps spread throughout the country, not
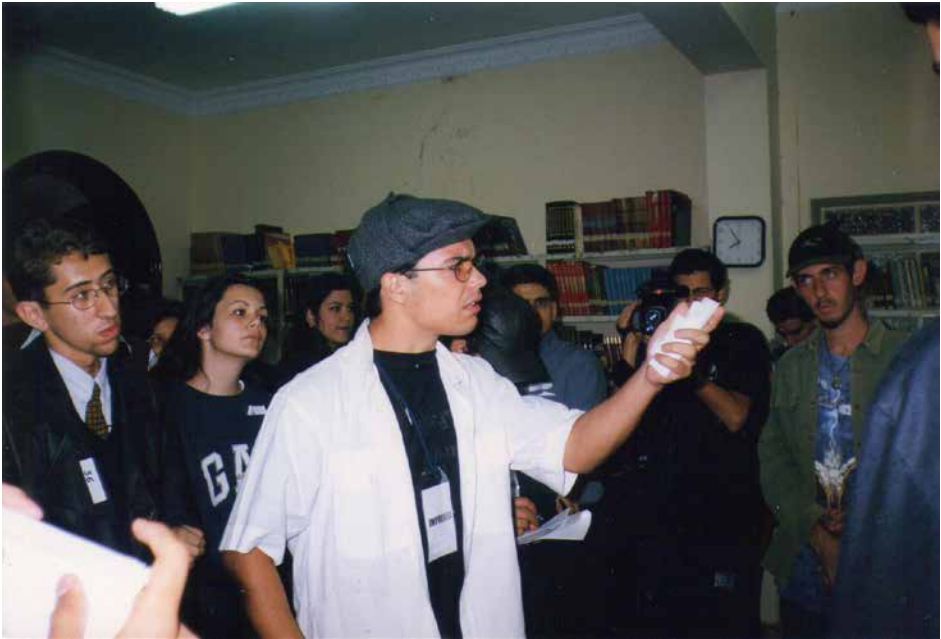
Lead Times, 1999 (Photo: Confraria das Ideias)

only among the 27 state capitals, but also in many towns in the countryside. In São Paulo, it is told even today that events that exceeded two or three hundred players were not rare. The plots were continuous (we call it campaign larp) and most larps were played monthly.

The "One World" model weakened as time went by, due in part to its own contradictions and limitations. The officiality of the plots brought about the need for approval of the stories after they had already taken place regionally, thus whole game sessions could be excluded for not fitting in the official chronology. The rigid diegetic (and non-diegetic) swollen and globally distributed hierarchy often prevented or discouraged local development of characters and plots. The need for consistency and adherence to guidelines — for approval and validation of local plots — limited the freedom and creativity of local groups, often restricting them to alienating models. In conjunction with the regionalist, personal, intimate and private nature of game groups or clubs, these complicating factors caused

this "big model" to lose adherents to more private games.

Shortly thereafter, the popularization of the Internet brought American boffer larp to Brazil. Its major representant these days is the famous Graal group, which originated in São Paulo in 2000, renting small farms during the weekend for larps of about 50 people. Medieval larps with foam swords exist in Brazil until today (and are multiplying).

This first wave of larp in Brazil brought what were the two main tendencies of American larp, still very attached to the themes and procedures of tabletop RPG and its commercial franchises. Since its emergence in Brazil, this "coke" model went through numerous variations — despite the hegemony of "Vampire larp", there have always been other thematical and aesthetical approachs — but always following the logic of tabletop RPG games, with adventurous or pulp settings, very unpretentious productions, character sheets, rules, scores to describe actions and characters, and the duration of "a tabletop RPG session". After all, the larp

was considered to be as a "modality" of tabletop RPG.

As to the way of playing, even though the formulas were North American, regional flavor influence is unavoidable. The American larp "commandment" "do not touch", for example, seems to have become widespread in Brazil in an attenuated way — players seemed to adopt the "common sense" rule, which is admittedly subjective, but illustrates quite clearly the idiosyncratic character of Brazilian culture.

In some cases, as in the city of Londrina around the year 2000 (with *Matrix* and *X-Files* larps, for example) and Confraria das Ideias (Brotherhood of Ideas) in São Paulo, games developed almost free form features: the character sheet consisted of a name, some character information and objectives; in case of dispute, the game master decided the outcome, or employed simplified resolution systems. It is the case of *Tempos de Chumbo* (*Lead Times*), Confraria das Ideias' first larp, about the Brazilian military dictatorship of the 60s and 70s, which would shape the identity of the group's whole production until mid-2012.

Larps became very common at RPG and card game conventions, mostly in "one-shot" versions (short stories that begin and end in the same session). As Vampire and boffer larps grew less frequent and popular in Brazil, and somehow went on hiatus a few years after its emergence, giving way to non-larp swordplay groups for a long time, these casual and short larps performed at events arguably became the place where the practice developed and consolidated. Megacorp and Confraria das Ideias are some of the groups that took part in this movement (which was much smaller than the first "wave"), and are still known and active.

The Second Wave

So American larps came to Brazil, making some fuss within the RPG players community and outside it too, but soon grew less visible, known (and acknowledged) and certainly less practiced. As with tabletop RPG, larp culture was personal, private. Mostly — except for the already mentioned larps in events — the larp was something to be practiced among friends and friends of friends, behind closed doors.

The turning point for a second wave to emerge was transforming larp into a public cultural activity recognized beyond a limited circle of friends. And this step was taken by Confraria das Ideias in partnership with the Secretariat of Culture of the Municipality of São Paulo. In 2005 and 2006 a course focused on larp was promoted by this partnership, and in 2007 larp joined the official cultural program of the city. Those larps have been run in public libraries all over the urban sprawl, and this partnership is still ongoing. The recognition as a cultural activity gave Brazilian larp another previously unseen factor: government financing of larp production. As the time went by, this affected quality, range and documentation, which is available, in social networks, websites and blogs on the Internet, though in a scattered way.

The example of the Municipality of São Paulo and Confraria das Ideias stimulated and gave a basis to other initiatives around the country, giving new life to this language. Some good instances are *Arraiá de Assunção* (Assunção Festival), a larp with mythical and regionalist themes, created on the occasion of the anniversary of a popular Brazilian musician, Luiz Gonzaga, *O Maior Passo de Humanidade (The Greatest Leap of Mankind)*, science fiction larp created in the context of the commemoration of man's arrival on Moon (both run by Confraria das Ideias), and *O Pomo de Ouro* (The Golden Apple), recreating the Greek myth for the MASP (São Paulo Museum of Art Assis Chateaubriand), a larp run by Megacorp group.

By 2011, larp in Brazil had gone through a process of modest maturing and diversifying. Most of its memory and its meagre documentation stayed private, but attempts to turn it public began to appear on the horizon. The rigid forms of larps based

Arraiá de Assumpção recreation in 2010 (Photo: Luiz Falcão)

on tabletop RPG began to give room to free forms, and even the association with tabletop RPG gave way to a greater autonomy of the language. The themes, however, although they were no longer bound to tabletop RPG settings, continued revolving around the same axis: adventure stories, pulp, mystery and horror themes — fiction genres dear to a public already familiar with other role-playing practices.

The Third Wave

If the second wave consists of a time of subtle settling and progression, the third wave has been marked by a vigorous eruption and productive effervescence that, even if engendered by a small group at first, has provoked discussions and paradigm shifts — and increasingly motivated more people to experiment with the language.

The landmark of this moment in Brazilian larp was the creation of the Boi Voador (Flying Ox) project. A small group, emerged from within Confraria das Ideias, started a new project with a different focus: although the Brotherhood had succeeded to make larp acknowledged as a cultural activity in the previous years, the group realized that there was one more step fur-

ther: making larp acknowledged as a form of art. The group intended to present a formal project to the Municipality of São Paulo. It was during the search for a basis for this project that the group learned about Nordic Larp.

In 2011, this group applied to and later received a grant from the Culture Secretariat of the Municipality of São Paulo to run two closely related projects.

One of these projects was Boi Voador, which was a larp production group based on the model of theater companies and the work that some members had already been doing within Confraria das Ideias. Nevertheless, it differed from this previous work in that it had very clear design objectives and goals. The goal was to produce larps that could be technically and aesthetically compared to professional plays or performances and whose design departed from the formula hitherto established in Brazil larps. The larps were for 15-40 people and with quite elaborate and interrelated characters, or characters created by the players as in a tabletop RPG campaign (a model inherited from Vampire and boffer larps, but which had developed a character of its own in Brazil).

Caleidoscópolis, 2011 (Photo: Luiz Falcão)

The other project was NpLarp — Núcleo de Pesquisa em Live Action Role-Playing (Research Group on Live Action Role-Playing) —, which aimed to research, discuss and make public the largest amount of relevant material about the language in Brazil. Another aim was to organize events to promote interactions between larp and other languages (mask theater, indie RPGs, board games etc.) and meetings among larp creators and players that, divided in groups, never had, until that year, met to discuss the language or even their practices and experiences.

Boi Voador and NpLarp were not the first Brazilian contact with Nordic Larp. Before that, in 2009, the researcher Wagner Luiz Schmit attended to Knutepunkt and published an article in the book of that year. Another researcher, Renato Alves, had presented an academic paper about the Nordic larp theory. But none of these cases, until then, had had a great impact and influence on Brazilian larp culture, or even become widespread known.

Tango for Two, a chamber game by Even Tømte and Tor Kjetil Edland, was the first larp run by Boi Voador and the first Nordic game to be translated and held in public in Brazil. Role-playing poems, also Nordic in origin, were widely used by the group in many different contexts (especially the games *Mystery Loves Company* and *Good Night Darlings*).

The stories, games and theories of Nordic larp began to attract the attention of other groups, producers and players, but the influence was not limited to running translated or adapted games. By reading Nordic larp bibliography (from the *Dogma 99 manifesto* to the *Nordic Larp* book and articles by Lizzie Stark), Boi Voador developed their own games. These larps were *Caleidoscópolis* and *A Clínica – Projeto Memento*.

Caleidoscópolis (*Kaleidoscopolis*), by Cauê Martins, was a radical experience of improvised in-game character and plot creation, based only on a few sketches chosen by lot and building models scattered through the

The Clinic – Memento Project - on the left, blindfolded players during the pre-game immersion process. On the right, a in-game moment: a group of players gathered around objects found in the room. (Photo: Leonardo França)

environment (in an unmimetical representation of space).

A Clínica – Projeto Memento (*The Clinic – Memento Project*), by Luiz Falcão, tried to integrate the experimentalism desired by the group with the preferences of São Paulo larp public at the time. In this game the characters started without memories, dressed in hospital inmates clothes, in a closed room. As they interacted with each other and with objects arranged in the space, they randomly recovered memory fragments. Players should then had to fill in the gaps between the recollections they had found. They were often disjointed or contradictory. Very focused on generating an experience (with extended waiting times, gradual onset, kinesthetic experiences), *A Clínica* did not lay aside the development of a somewhat more traditional storyline, including even a mystery to be solved by the characters.

At the end of the project, the group published the results of their work in the form of a commented retrospective and a guide of 80 pages, the book *LIVE ! Live Action Roleplaying, Um guia prático para larp* (*LIVE ! Live Action Role-playing, a practical guide to Larp*), which contains the result from the research work of NpLarp. The book adresses larp as a language, discusses a wide range of sorts of larp (and similar activities), presents links to ready-to-play scenarios, describes Brazilian larp groups, and has a final chapter on the practice of

larp worldwide. It is the longest reference guide of its kind in Portuguese. It is free and licensed under Creative Commons, and has also been responsible for bringing (and bringing back) many people to the language.

The impact of this project on the Brazilian larp scene gradually made itself noticed: at first in Confraria das Ideias and later in other groups from other parts of the country. These groups were stimulated and inspired by Boi Voador's work or NpLarp's research, as is the case of *Fronteiras de Akitan* (*Akitan's Borders*) in Viçosa and Batalha Cênica Salvador (BCS — Salvador Scenic Battle) in the city of Salvador. In Confraria das Ideias' larp *Macondo*, for instance, illumination changes altered the characters' identity (mechanics inspired by *Tango for Two*). It was a completely new type of experiment in Confraria's tradition. Another larp of theirs, *Funeral*, used immersive techniques and a kinesthetic and gradual transition from offgame to ingame atmosphere, as in *A Clínica*.

The project's influence on Confraria das ideias deepened in 2012. The group's main larp writer that year was Luiz Prado, also an NpLarp member. He is acquainted with Nordic larp reflections, aware of the local public's peculiarities and one of the leading developers of new aesthetic and formal experiences. Some examples of formal and aesthetic developments of this period are the concept of the larp *Funeral*, the dra-
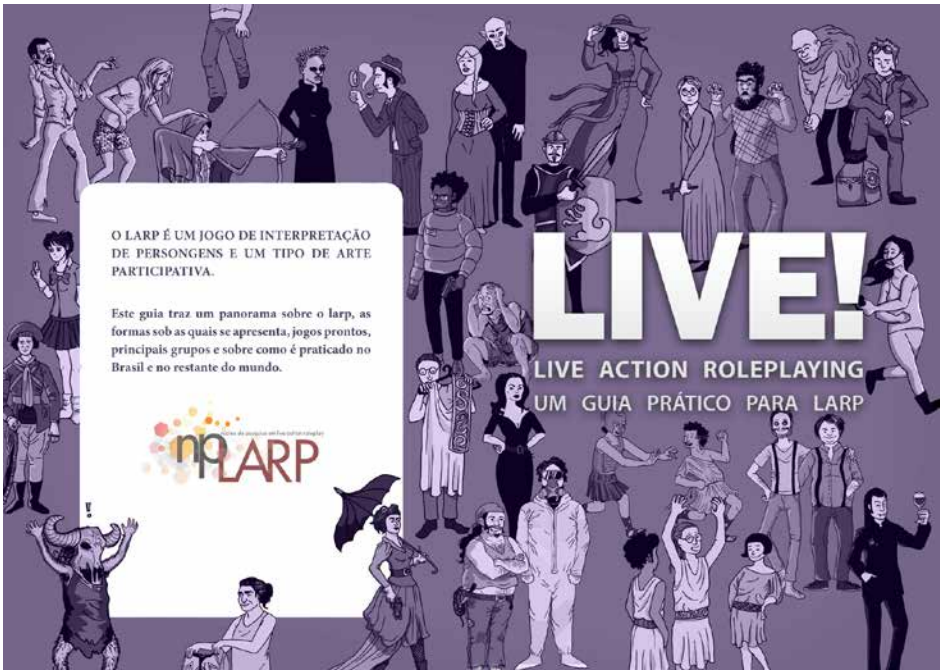
A unique initiative in Brazil, LIVE ! is part of the little material on larp available in Portuguese. Available free at: http://nplarp.blogspot.com.br/p/guia.html (Image: Luiz Falcão)

matic structure and mechanics in *Drácula - uma história de poder e monstros* (*Dracula - a tale about power and monsters*) - both in 2012 - and the characters written using a "tag cloud" in *a.experiência.quimera* (the.quimera.experience), inspired by the larp *The Mothers* (in 2013).

In 2013, the NpLarp published a new version of its guide and invited the researcher Wagner Luiz Schmit for a lecture in São Paulo in which he spoke about larp in his city, Londrina, his research on representation games and education, his travel to Norway in 2009, Knutepunkt and Nordic larp. In the same year, Goshai Daian and Leonardo Ramos, organizers of the larp *Fronteiras de Akitan* in Viçosa, published a short article in the Knutepunkt book.

In 2013, we also began to communicate with a group of larpers in Salvador, Bahia — the swordplay and boffer larp group BCS (Batalha Cênica Salvador) which started using "Ars Amandi" in their campaign larp *Zalius*. Similarly to Fronteiras de Akitan,

they were concerned with creating a medieval fantasy larp that was not completely foreign to Brazil and its traditions. They created a fantasy setting inspired by the European middle Ages but also using some elements of the Brazilian colonial and imperial eras - and with more emotional depth than just a "combat larp".

At the same time, more conventional boffer larps resurfaced in São Paulo (where it had disappeared in the early 2000s, as opposed to what happened in Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais). Several Vampire larp groups gained strength and local relevance independently from one another; some of them were new, some returned to activity. The fidelity to the official Vampire larp games models and rules (whether in ts most recent version, *Requiem*, or the older one, *Masquerade*, still highly popular) varies from group to group. In Belo Horizonte, the group Requiem Project BH uses very little of the rules and guidelines in the manuals, having more of a free form approach, making use of the setting, but gathering

The researcher Wagner Luiz Schmit as "John - the blogwriter" in the far left during the larp 13 at the table, in A Week In Norway, 2009 before Knutpunkt. (Photo: Britta K. Bergensen)

all possible influence from other sources — one of them was Nordic larp. The group employed its vocabulary and concepts (as, for instance, the term "bleed "), ran occasional games in other settings (including some created by themselves) and experimented with formats such as role-playing poems in special meetings. They were also interest to discuss and reflect over the possibilities of larp.

Moreover, in 2013, the first edition of Laboratório de Jogos (Game Laboratory) took place in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais. It was an event made for "narrative games" developers. "LabJogos", as it became known, was promoted by people linked to the Brazilian Indie RPG scene (who gained international prominence this year with the game Pulse, by Vinicius Chagas, winner of Game Chef, a RPG and analog games contest) and also attracted larpers from Minas Gerais and neighboring states. The meeting was important for the larp scene in Brazil, bringing together producers who did not knew each other yet, promoting discussions, experience exchanging and resulting in the creation of a discussion group on social networks, probably the first national larp "forum". And, of course, there was larp in the Laboratório de Jogos — the players got to know the role-playing poems (with particular attention to *Good Night Darlings*, again), the prototype of the larp

Jogo do Bicho (Animal Game – the name of a mixture of gambling game and unofficial lotto in Brazil), by Boi Voador, and *Ouça no Volume Máximo* (*Listen at the Maximum Volume*), by Luiz Prado.

Back in São Paulo, the meeting gave rise to a new initiative, LabLarp (Laboratório de Larp - Larp Laboratory), a series of meetings that took place during the second semester, aiming at experimenting with larp and discussing it as a language. LabLarp met on Wednesdays evenings, twice a month, in a private space, but as far as possible open to anyone who could participate. The experience brought in new players, and promoted more frequent attendance and deeper reflection among those who had already practiced larp. The schedule was focused on role-playing poems, but some longer larps were also run during the meetings, such as *Limbo*, by Tor Kjetil Edland (on a Saturday) and Brazilian unreleased games, like *Café Amargo* (Bitter Coffee), by Luiz Prado, *Retalhos* (Patchwork), by Tiago Braga and *Cegos* (Blind), by Jonny Garcia, among others.

Blind was perhaps the longest larp held in Brazil by then. Based on the novel by the Portuguese writer José Saramago, *Ensaio sobre a cegueira* (Blindness), the larp lasted 28 hours on a weekend. The players were blindfolded after creating their char-

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Blind*, loosely based on the novel by José Saramago and inspired by larps such as* Kapo *(Photo: Jonny Garcia)*

acters (on a "close to home" basis) and then they would live in quarantine during that time, guarded by soldiers and with scarce resources. With a minimalist storyline, the game's goal was to put the participants in an unpleasant situation, of physical and mental tension.

2013 was also the year when Brazilian read-and-play larps emerged. *Breves Encarnações* (Brief Incarnations) by Goshai Daian, *Retalhosfrom* Tiago Braga, *Três homens de Terno* (Three Men in Suit), *Café Amargo* and *Ouça no Volume Máximo,*by Luiz Prado, are representative examples of this type of game, which appeared in the national scene, all costless available on the Internet.

If the second wave meant a major breakthrough in terms of identity and diversity of Brazilian larp, the third wave seems to have broken any barrier to the formal and thematic axis of larp in Brazil. By 2011, it was common to say that a larp, *Detetives*

– mistérios e mentes criminosas (Detectives – Mysteries and Criminal Minds), for example, was "about a dark circus and investigators of the unknown " or *Piratas — Muito além dos mares conhecidos* (*Pirates — Far Beyond the Known Seas*) was a larp about... pirates. Nowadays it is more common to find things like "*RedHope* is a larp about horror, fear, paranoia and claustrophobia." (even though it has zombies as a part of the plot), that "*Ouça no Volume Máximo* is a representation game about nostalgia, sorrows and new beginnings" and "Café Amargo is about farewells and the importance of other people in our lives". The examples demonstrate a shift from an adventure approach (from a point of view based on "genre" — an approach actually derived from the table-top RPG tradition in Brazil) to a more dramatic, autonomous, personal and sometimes even everyday one.

In recent years, Brazil has got to know larps with diversified structure and form

— beyond the ones composed of 20 or 30 characters created previously by the organizers or with the players' help. These changes were stimulated by experiences like *Tango for Two* and other chamber games, role-playing poems, jeepforms and the Nordic bibliography on larp, or arouse from local experiences which have been held since then. Many variations of dramatic structure, narrative, character sheets and the use of metatechniques that were hitherto unprecedented in the country or were not accepted by Brazilian public are presently becoming increasingly common and sought after by larp players and creators.

More than two years after the project Boi Voador/ NpLarp has made the Brazilians more acquainted with Nordic larp, the idea that larps is more than a hobby, that it is an autonomous lanuage, a medium and an art form is growing stronger in the country. The scene has become incredibly more alive since 2011. There are new authors and organizers, a growing community of increasingly active and participative players, interested in the issues involved in and discussions about the games. Creators and organizers are interacting at national level (and we are talking about a huge country!), larp criticism and discussions are arising on social networks and blogs and free and open guides are emerging on the Internet.

Brazil enters 2014 with a busy, diverse and fully developing scene. There is room for the "American" models, which have always undergone adaptations to the local culture, but new forms of larp are here to stay and conquered their public. The identity of a Brazilian larp will probably begin to take shape in the coming episodes of this story – and seemingly with a strong influence by Nordic tradition.

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Shoshana Kessock

Cultural Appropriation and Larp

Larp designers often draw on cultural subjects not their own for the sake of creating powerful game experiences, but run the risk of being perceived as appropriating material in an insensitive manner. As the larp community grows worldwide, designers must take a hard look at the way they are incorporating appropriated material and why.

2013 was the year of cultural appropriation discussions in the media.

Miley Cyrus twerked her way across the stage and into headlines about appropriating black culture after her controversial Video Music Awards performance. Fashion designers from Paris to New York Fashion Week were slammed for incorporating Native American and Asian designs into their designs. Celebrities tweeted pictures of themselves in blackface for Halloween costumes. Award-winning musician Macklemore was criticized for succeeding as a white hip-hop artist by appropriating traditionally black music for his own gain. Across all these mediums, discussions rage about the right of creators to take inspiration and content from cultures other than their own for the sake of their art. And while the discussion goes on about whether larp qualifies as art or not, there is a lot to talk about in terms of cultural appropriation in larp creation.

Cultural appropriation is also a loaded topic. In the examples above, these artists interpreted their world and translated those experiences into their work. Similarly, larp designers turn the blank canvas of a larpscript into a game loaded with whatever content they want to share with their players. Yet in doing so, designers run the risk of being criticized for appropriating cultures other than their own for the sake of emotional tourism and entertainment. These charges are often made by those outside the game not privy to the designer's intentions or from players who come in contact with game materials they find distastefully rendered. A critical eye must be cast at how cultural material is incorporated into larp design to diffuse charges of privileged appropriation and cultural insensitivity within our growing multinational community.

Appropriation And The Cycle of Larp Design

To understand why this issue is a problem, we have to explore what cultural appropriation means. The term arose as a way to recognize the borrowing of cultural materials of one culture by another, implying an uneven cultural exchange in which a dominant culture incorporates items from minority groups. Cultural items can include any item from a group's way of living, including "language, customs, basic values, religion, core beliefs, and activities." (Young 2005) The item becomes assimilated into the dominant culture's narrative, stripped of its original context and is instead reinterpreted from the view of an outsider. An example of this would be a non-Native American person wearing a traditional war bonnet as part of everyday fashion. The person in question is not Native American and appropriated the bonnet in their dress without recognizing that, outside of being beautiful as a piece of headgear, a war bonnet has great spiritual and cultural significance. They disregard the cultural context of the item and instead seek to use it in their own expression without consideration for how that might misrepresent the item's meaning or how its misuse might be taken by members of the Native American community.

James O. Young in his book *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* identified five modes of cultural appropriation:

1. *Object appropriation,* such as when a piece of art or historical relic native to one culture is physically transferred to another group. (Example: The collecting of ancient Egyptian relics by art collectors for display in Western museums and galleries).

2. *Content appropriation,* the idea of an artist taking wholesale an idea used in a work of art by an artist of another culture. (Example: a musician sampling a tribal song wholesale for inclusion into their own modern music creation).

3. *Style appropriation,* in which an artist lifts stylistic elements from another culture to incorporate into their art. (Example: the incorporation of jazz music into mainstream music as a style).

4. *Motif appropriation,* which is similar to style appropriation, but differs in that the artist only incorporates motifs expressed in another culture's art (Example: incorporating African tribal motifs into a contemporary piece of art of another style).

5. *Subject appropriation,* in which an outside culture appropriates the identity or pieces of the identity of someone from another culture to incorporate into their work. (Example: Creating a narrative from the first-person perspective of someone of a different culture). (Young 2010)

It should be safe to say that the issue of object appropriation should not come up in most larps --there isn't actually a call to sack real tombs-- and won't therefore be the focus of this essay. However, there is room for discussing how larps can engage in *content, style, motif,* and especially *subject appropriation.*

With the above broad definition of culture, it is easy to see how many games can fall into appropriating materials from other cultures. Provided that the design team and players are not from the culture they are representing, nearly any materials taken from a minority group would be considered appropriated. The practices of the Danish Landevejsridders or "road knight" hobo culture were appropriated for the 2006 game *The White Road*. The world of the LGBT community in New York during the AIDs crisis in the 1980's was appropriated for the much acclaimed game *Just A Little Lovin'*. Yet these games used the content to create the game worlds and experiences that made these games such profound successes in the Nordic larp scene.

It is important to note that the idea of cultural appropriation by its initial definition is not inherently positive or negative. It is simply the act of taking another's cultural artifact and utilizing it in another cultural context. The idea however becomes a problem when considering that most appropriation is being done by dominant cultural groups from a place of privilege, taking pieces of culture from people whose ways of life are often exoticized, romanticized or stereotyped by outsiders. The experiences of the culture being appropriated are not taken into consideration; their cultural artifacts are cherry picked outside of context for the needs of someone else's expression. People wear t-shirts emblazoned with the face of Che Guaverra, often without realizing his historic significance as a Marxist revolutionary or the cultural relevance he has to the people of Argentina. To them, he represents an idea divorced of his actual context or is reduced even further to a simple fashion accessory. It's that decontextualization that sparks debate about the harm appropriation can cause and the insensitivity it represents to the native culture.

Though consumers who pick up a Che Guaverra t-shirt can be criticized for their consumption of appropriated materials, it's the artists and designers who take the cultural artifacts for incorporation into their work that receive the scrutiny. It is the designer who chooses the material and decides how it is being represented, so the responsibility for considering how their work represents someone else's culture falls squarely on their shoulders. If a work of art incorporates a motif from a native culture or includes a style from another culture, the designer must be aware that their work is then set in the context of the original sampled culture. Further, their work does not stand alone but exists as part of the larger creative narrative of cultural artifacts, recontextualized by their choice of material. Returning to the Che example, the artist who puts Che on their t-shirt must then understand that their statement of revolutionary ideals also incorporates everything Che embodied, as well as the notion that there are those that might see the use of their cultural icon in that way as insensitive or offensive.

When a larp designer samples from other cultures to create their game world, they must understand that their work then is contextualized by the history that comes with the appropriated material. A designer may want to include Native Americans in their Wild West game, but they must be aware that their representation of Native Americans comes with the weight of the generations of misrepresentation and exploitation of Native Americans in media, not to mention the history of Native American oppression by dominant white society. This makes every design choice in relation to appropriated content a chance to become precarious, or a chance to design something respectful and well-handled.

Larp Appropriation as Offensive, Harmful or Unethical

To analyze how a larp handles its content, we also have to consider what kind of questions are raised by appropriating said content for a game. Specifically, does the content actually harm others by its inclusion or simply raise offense? To what end is offense enough of a reason for the appropriation to be an issue? And more specifically, is the inclusion of appropriated cultural material in a larp unethical? Let's take a look at each one by one.

First, we need to look at the difference between the terms *harm* and *offense*. Harm is considered by legal definition a setback in one's interests; for example, should someone be robbed or injured or their pursuits be blocked in a serious way (Feinberg, 1985). Offense on the other hand is a state of mind in which subject material has made one feel unpleasant, outraged, disgusted, or otherwise unsettled (Young, 2005). These two aren't always differentiated in such clear-cut ways, as someone can feel offended by the harm they've endured and can potentially be harmed by being extremely offended. This state is

called *profound offense* (Feinberg, 1985) and is defined as different from regular offense in that it "is an offense to one's moral sensibilities" (Young, 2005) as opposed to just distasteful. Something profoundly offensive is also considered such because it is considered offensive even when not witnessed first-hand. A person swearing in a synagogue might offend the sensibilities of those present, but it does not insight the profound offense that might occur should someone enter said synagogue wearing a swastika. That level of offense, when retold, creates a level of offense due to its egregious nature that goes beyond garden variety distaste.

To many, the notion of cultural appropriation provokes offense that strikes at the heart of their moral sensibilities and therefore steps into the realm of profound offense. It is that profound offense that has to be watched for when creating larp content. Though games may push the boundaries on people's comfort levels and even lead to issues of bleed that might provoke strong psychological and emotional reactions (Bowman, 2013), even distress, by and large designers are not out to cause harm when they design a game. If that is the case, and the notion is to provide players with a safe space in which to play, then the idea that content included in a game could create profound offense or even cross into the realm of harm is potentially contrary to that safe space principle. Not considering the harm that could be caused by game content may then lead to ethical questions about said game's design.

However, games place players in discomforting mindsets for the sake of experiencing a meaningful roleplaying experience all the time -- Nordic larp specifically is known for this kind of deep, difficult play. Does this automatically make them unethical? The answer comes in the opt-in that players choose when they enter a game (Järvelä, 2012). A player may opt out of scenes or even entire games should they feel their tolerance for the content has been reached or that they have entered an unsafe situation; the technique of *cut* and *brake*

(Fatland, 2013) were created for such an occasion. Yet should the content incorporated in a game give someone profound offense, it pushes past the line again into potential harm to a player. For the sake of creating games as safe spaces, a game's players must be able to raise concerns with the designer(s) about appropriated content and any offense it may cause for the game space to remain an ethical one.

The First-Person Audience and External Criticism

Bringing the discussion back to larp design, the question of appropriating cultures becomes potentially even more problematic when you consider the question of the audience. Most art that is created is meant simply to be consumed; a painting is viewed, a piece of music heard, or a narrative in a book is read. Yet larp has the distinction of being a game and art form that is participatory, in which players take the game design and play it through, interpreting the setting and all its cultural data and incorporating it into their role-play performance. The fact that the participants must interact with whatever cultural items have been appropriated makes the player complicit in any appropriation taking place. Because of this participatory creation process, cultural appropriation and representation therefore becomes a communal issue.

The performative co-creative nature of larp also has a profound impact on where the criticism of cultural appropriation comes from. As has been discussed extensively elsewhere, role-playing is a co-created form that is aimed at the *first person audience* and is not aimed at those viewing it from the outside (Stenros and Montola 2011). Because of the focus on the player-as-audience, documenting a larp is a difficult process that tries to capture the nuance, energy and context of the original performative experience. It is often from those documentations, be they photos, video, player stories or post-game designer reflections that critics who did not participate in the game will view appropriated material and

point out problematic representations and potentially insensitive content.

A good example of this is the hip-hop inspired larp *Afroasiatik*. Run in a tranquil zen garden in Aigle, Switzerland in 2013, this five-hour long game drew heavily from the French hip-hop scene that inspired the game organizers to create an alternate history where the world's powers developed as decidedly non-western. As a result, the three ruling powers -- the Afrochine Empire (a combination of Africa and China), the Shogunato (Japan and NATO countries) and the Samurasta (a philosophical group based on Rastafarian ideas) -- came together to discuss their future through expressions of hip-hop music, dance, DJing skills and graffiti creation. While the game was considered an award-winning success, earning it the 2013 Larp of the Year award from the French larp blog *Electro-GN.com*, it received criticism about its handling of Asian and hip-hop culture from those on the outside. Designer Thomas B. in turn provided extensive design notes online to explain to the public the choices behind the controversial material in *Afroasiatik,* including the choice to allow a player to appear in blackface during the game (Be, 2013). However the video of game circulated online, viewed by those within the larp community and without, provided the fuel for charges leveled of racial and cultural insensitivity. Despite whatever good intentions the game's designers may have had in the creation of *Afroasiatik*, a section of the larp population the world over found the appropriated content troubling and worthy of critique. Though there is no documentation at present about whether any of the players involved found the content in any way problematic, this external criticism highlights that though larps may be, as noted by Stenros and Montola (2011), a first-person audience medium, there is a community at large to which designers may find themselves accountable.

The issue becomes further complicated when we realize that what is considered offensive to one group may not bear the same offense to another (VanDeVeer,

1979). What might be considered a fair and respectful treatment of an appropriated culture by one set of designers could be considered insensitive by larpers elsewhere. This has become a particular point of contention when talking about the ways in which race is viewed in the United States versus other countries, for example. The United States has a history laden with slavery, racial discrimination and an embattled drive towards civil rights that informs any conversation that a larper from America brings to the discourse on content. Similarly, larpers from across the world bring their own country's treatment of minority cultures to the table in both their designs and content conversations. This can cause disagreement on what is or is not an offensive way to portray minority culture and can cause further division. Yet while criticism is being pointed outwards by those concerned about cultural appropriation, it is important that those critiquing games outside of their community also practice self-reflection about their own design choices.

A good example is the American larp community. During the discussions on appropriation regarding the game *Afroasiatik,* it was posited that Americans have a different level of sensitivity to appropriation that they bring to the international scene due to our own cultural history. Let it not be said that American larpers aren't turning that critical eye inwards on itself, for example. Within the American larp community, disagreements have raged about the ways in which cultures have been appropriated for our own games. For example, criticism has been leveled against the almost obsession-level fascination with Asian culture that pervades many American larps. Medieval fantasy games like *Knight Realms* offer players a chance to play their game's Asian equivalent, the Khitanese, alongside Gypsies, who are described exactly like their real-world counterparts, right down to the role-play suggestion that "a Gypsy should have a Romanian/Hungarian accent" (Kimball, 2013). The fact that the term gypsy is considered offensive to the Romani people and comes loaded with negative

connotations put upon them by dominant society earns criticism for inclusion in the game, yet the race has been in the game as such for years. Other games like *Dystopia Rising* poke fun at the same stereotyping in games by naming their post-apocalyptic Asian fusion race Genjian, a take-off on the Japanese term *gaijin,* or "outsider person" (Pucci, 2013). Even the import of Nordic games required some consideration for appropriated content, such as when a trio of ultra-conservative religious characters were added to the US run of *Mad About the Boy* (Bowman, 2012). Voices internal to the American larp community such as Peter Woodworth have called for players and designers to rethink the ways they approach representing other cultures in their games (2013).

A Question of Intent

If every choice when incorporating appropriated material into a design raises with it all these complicated questions, then perhaps the first question that should be asked is why incorporate this material in the first place. What is served by borrowing another culture's material, or even an entire culture, to create a role-playing experience? What is the designer's intent? There are a few intentions that can fuel a design, such as *education, exploration* or *entertainment.*

The first category is sometimes clear-cut, as many larps that are designed for educational purposes clearly market themselves as education games, or edu-larps. A designer with education in mind might include culturally appropriated material with the intent of sharing that culture's achievements or conveying accurate information about a culture with the players. A good example of this is the week-long game *Ancient Mesopotamia* run by the organization Seekers Unlimited (2013).

The second of these two categories is *games for exploration.* Larpers come to play games for different reasons, yet exploration of new experiences is often a fundamental reason offered when asked about the appeal of the form. A designer can choose to include appropriated content to allow players to explore what it's like to live among another culture, invoking deep meaning by including these cultural signifiers. This often falls into the direct category of *subjective appropriation* mentioned above, in which players utilize the first person narrative of someone from another group to tell their culture's story. A good example of exploration is the previously mentioned Danish *Just A Little Lovin'* which allowed its players to explore the fraught issues of death and love in the time of AIDs.

Many games that incorporate education and exploration are also created simply to be enjoyed. Players come to larps to have fun and therefore designers create *games for entertainment* purposes. These games incorporate other cultures to allow players to enjoy themselves and escape into the roleplay for a little while, to experience something outside their normal lives. While there is nothing wrong with that of course, the inclusion of appropriated materials into a game that is purely for entertainment's sake raises the most concern in terms of sensitivity. The question could be asked what makes living out the experiences of a minority group more fun for purely entertainment reasons then, say, living within one's own cultural narrative? Playing out a minority group's narrative for fun smacks of emotional tourism and romanticizing of *the other* that critics of appropriation have been railing about.

A simple test to check if a game is potentially appropriating for the sake of using the exotic would be to rethink the design and replace the minority cultural materials with something from the designer's own culture. Could the same design ends be met and the same experience offered to the players without the use of appropriated material? If yes, then some thought should be paid as to whether or not the game has some problems with appropriation.

Almost as important however, is the question of *clear and meaningful intent.* Any

choice made in regards to appropriation, just like any choice made in the design of a larp, will affect every aspect of the game play. How to handle cultural appropriation could almost be another dial on the mixing desk of larp, with designers turning up or down the dial depending on the intent behind their design. Just like every other choice, how to incorporate appropriated material should be a conscious choice and not one to be considered lightly.

How to Address Cultural Appropriation

Considering what's been said so far, does that mean that appropriating cultural items for the sake of game design should be reconsidered altogether? If appropriation is a problem, it would seem prudent for designers to shy away from representing other cultures in their games for fear of causing offense. Yet as we have said, appropriation itself is not necessarily inherently positive or negative; it is simply a mode of cultural exchange that, due to the imbalance of power involved is generally *considered* negative. From here, we'll talk about why a designer might choose to use appropriated material despite the potential pitfalls, as well as how to do so without falling into issues of cultural insensitivity.

Young, when discussing the ethics of appropriation in art, weighs in by stating that just because a piece of art incorporates appropriated material does not mean that it is inherently problematic (Young, 2010). He states that some works may have a *positive impact* on their audience that potentially outweighs the offense of appropriating the material in the first place. If a piece of art is received by an audience in a way that can cause a positive impact, potentially through meaningful interaction, something learned or gained by the audience, or the culture appropriated being seen in a positive light, then the potential damage of the appropriation can be mitigated by the good it has done. In a larp this ties directly to the very reasons why cultural pieces are appropriated and the question of intent we

discussed earlier in this paper. If a designer's intent is to utilize that cultural material to create a positive impact with their game, such as allowing the players to get inside the cultural space of another group for the sake of understanding them further, then the good they do can outweigh the difficulty of the appropriation.

For the good to outweigh the difficulty, however, the designer must make sure that the very act of using those cultural items does not further disenfranchise the culture they're appropriating. They must take care to not cause further offense by misrepresenting, stereotyping, or otherwise being careless with another's culture. For example, regardless of the good intentions a designer might have about telling the story of the plight of Aboriginal people in Australia, that good intent would be completely undone should the game mishandle the representation in practice. In this case, to come away without causing offense, a designer must be careful to make certain they represent the appropriated culture with respect and consideration, and then execute their material well.

Designers also have the added task of making sure their entire play community handles the material respectfully, from their staff down to the players. A single player in the game who comes to game and presents an offensive cultural stereotype can undermine and even undo the organizer's hard work. An example of this was the game *Darfur Bingo* presented at InterCon 2010. The original game was intended to represent a well thought out diplomatic negotiation session. The session was marred however by several players attending in blackface to represent their characters, thereby providing profound offense due to their costume choice. This is why cultural appropriation in larps is a communal issue that needs be discussed as fervently as any larp theory or new technique. It is a social issue that impacts both how larp goes forward as part of the overall socially conscious game design world, and how the larps may foster safer spaces for those other minorities outside of the dominant cultural groups.

A simple way to make sure that designs are being created that speak to and not about other cultures aside the dominant ones is to design with members of said cultures. The larp community is growing across international boundaries, yet remains largely homogeneous in terms of racial, religious or cultural representation in many areas. Yet Nordic games are now being played in other countries across the globe, and are being seen through the eyes of audiences with different cultural sensitivities. A quick way to make sure that the game is doing due diligence in representing other cultures would simply be to bring on members of said culture to design the games. The joint Nordic-Palestinian game *Til Death Do Us Part* is a perfect example of a game that brought together designers from the Peace and Freedom Youth Forum and the larp group Fantasiforbundet to tell the story of the wedding of a Palestinian woman and a Norwegian man. The game could have been designed by an entirely Nordic larp team, but in designing together with Palestinian designers, the designers brought an authentic insider voice to the game as well as helped foster expansion of the larp community. This game stands as a testament to the notion that when in doubt as a designer, check with the group being represented for their input and critique on the work being done when possible.

Some questions then to consider when designing a game which appropriates material:

1. What cultural items have you included in your game from outside your experience?

2. How is that material represented? Additionally, are you doing due diligence to make sure your presentation of said material isn't stereotypical or insensitive to the appropriated culture?

3. From whose perspective have you researched/considered that material? If the answer is only from your own, have you considered engaging someone from the appropriated culture as a co-designer or at least consultant?

4. What sources have you used to research said cultural material? Were they primary sources, second-hand accounts, or just literary/film/television representation of said culture?

5. What is your intent in using this material? Could the same story be told from within your own cultural experience? If so, what does bringing another's culture into your design do to enhance your game?

6. What is your gaming intending to do - educate, explore or entertain?

7. Are you considering the ways in which your players might interpret the material in your game for their own performance? Could there be a way for you to help your players understand the material better so their own portrayal isn't stereotypical or insensitive?

8. Have you presented your material to someone outside of your game design circle for critique? Consider presenting said material to someone outside of your cultural circle, even someone with an international perspective.

Conclusion

With the expansion of the Nordic larp and indeed the worldwide larp community as a whole, the representation of non-dominant cultures cannot remain an undiscussed and unconsidered part of game design any longer. Where small conversations have occurred over the years by those concerned with political correctness or cultural sensitivity, the time for the discourse about appropriation is now. We benefit as a community by having these conversations so designers will consider not only how they are sampling other cultures but how, creating deeper portrayals of characters and material.

For the larp community to grow as a diverse space with room for every kind of

voice, we must make cultural awareness a fundamental design choice in the creation of every larp as fundamental as what meta techniques are used or what workshops to include. The solution doesn't always have to come from within as well; there is a host of resources in the artistic community outside of larp that have been tackling this problem, from thinkers like James O. Young to bloggers from within communities calling out appropriation where it can be found. We only need as larp designers to recognize the particular uniqueness of our game form and adapt our rules to incorporate this new sensitivity.

Moreover, to grow as a game community we must be aware of how our games are viewed from the outside and consider how appropriation in our games damages the reputation of the form if seen as frivolous or offensive. Larp is on the rise and we as members of the community can hold ourselves accountable to present our best inclusive foot forward to the rest of the world and among one another. To ignore this issue or label it an internal issue to each part of the larp community is to create further division based on supposed differences in cultural sensitivity. The issue of cultural appropriation is not based on a particular country's history with diversity, but an international game design problem that must be considered a fundamental basic in the creation of games going forward.

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Markus Montola

Crowdfunding Celestra

The Monitor Celestra was the first Nordic larp to use crowdfunding for financing. This article, based on the experiences of and discussions surrounding the crowdfunding campaign explores various tensions that become relevant when players make a significant and risky monetary investment in a larp project.

The Monitor Celestra was a larp set in the world of *Battlestar Galactica,* run three times in March 2013. It was organized by Alternaliv AB in collaboration with Bardo AB and Berättelsefrämjandet, with 85 people working on the project in various capacities. The larp aimed for extremely high production values: It was played on the museum destroyer HMS *Småland* in Gothenburg, where the team created a close-to-perfect 360° environment[1] including sounds, uniforms and functional consoles that were used to steer the ship.

Although *Celestra* was a non-profit project, it required significant funding to realize the ambition. To secure early financing necessary for the project and to mitigate financial risk to the organizers, the *Celestra* team boldly pioneered crowdfunding as a larp funding model.

This story is mainly a report on experiences on how crowdfunding impacted the game, including things that actually happened as well as dangers that were averted. Some of the issues discussed relate to participation fees, some to considerable differences in participation costs, and some to cultural differences inevitable for international larp.

The observations are based on the Celestra crowdfunding campaign and the discussions it stimulated before and after the game. Several players and organizers had an opportunity to comment it before publication. This story is not to be read as an evaluation of success or failure of The Monitor Celestra, but more as a general analysis crowdfunding.

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1   See Koljonen (2007) for the 360° ideal.

The Celestra Model

Basically, the crowdfunding was built around selling perks to early birds and people willing to pay more for their experience. Contributions were asked for in a very early stage of the project, so the crowdfunders had to take a concrete risk of losing their investment in case the project had to be cancelled. Everything was uncertain in the crowdfunding stage: For example, the team had not yet secured *Småland* as the playing location.

The following crowdfunding categories[1] were offered:

> €6 – Crewman: "Every penny will contribute to the realization of this project. Perhaps you are planning to play but are uncertain, perhaps you just think this idea rock and want it to become a reality?"

> €60 – Lieutenant: "You will get an email with a special link that allows you to sign up two days before everybody else. (Included in all below)"

> €120 – Captain: "You will get a special invitation to our release party where you will be able to fraternize with the organizers and inspect the progress of our props and software development. (Included in all below)"

> €290 – Major: "You are invited to participate in the game mastering room on any game that you are not playing in to follow the game from the other side – behind the scenes."

> €590 – Colonel: "Be among the first to pick in which game you want to participate and what character to play. On top of that you will get a uniform that you can keep after the game."

€1170 – Commander: "We will write a custom character for you and your writer will invite you to a dinner in Stockholm or Gothenburg to discuss and develop it. Plus you get to keep your costume."

€5860 – Blue Squadron: "This reward gives you 12 tickets to any of the games, a personal invitation by the game masters and a custom written back plot for you and your friends to explore."[2]

From the marketing and monetization perspective, *Celestra* crowdfunding was a success. It generated revenue to the project in a very early stage, as the crowdfunders took a leap of faith and committing themselves to the project long before the team went beyond the point of no return. The heavily-invested crowdfunders also increased hype around the game. According to the *Celestra* project manager Tomas Walch, the project was possible only due to the significant early crowdfunding.

For the players who did not opt for more expensive tiers of crowdfunding, there were three pricing categories for signup. Class A characters (€280) – civilians, refugees, suits, politicians – had to provide their own costumes. Class B characters (€330), including the crew of Celestra, Vergis scientists and Galactica engineers, received simpler costumes customized from off-the-shelf items such as coveralls, construction helmets and so forth. Class C characters (€400) had custom-made or otherwise complex costumes, including Galactica of-

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1 Prices converted and rounded from SEK. All citations come from *The Monitor Celestra* website.

2 €490/person. When inquired, the organizers clarified that like Colonels and Commanders, the Blue Squadron participants also got to select their characters from those available. One of the Blue Squadrons signed up very early, and as a compensation for the higher risk, was also given their costumes after the game.

ficers, colonial marines, Viper pilots, and Vergis Corporation security troops.

The differences in character class prices were explicitly justified through costuming expenses on the Celestra website:

> The ONLY difference between the character classes is the prize of the costumes worn during the game. There is no qualitative difference in the writing or the amount of influence the characters have.

Despite that notification, the crowdfunding was quite successful, as numerous veterans of the Swedish larp scene risked their reputation by participating in the work, and the game was advertised as a "spiritual sequel" of the celebrated 1999 spaceship larp *Carolus Rex* (see Koljonen 2010). As a consequence, the both available Blue Squadrons, all ten Colonels were sold out. Class C characters were sold out in a few days after the signup opened, with Class B following afterwards. Not all Class A tickets were sold to all games.

Although two companies – Alternaliv and Bardo – collaborated to create *Celestra*, it was strictly a non-profit project. The team has estimated that the budget of the project was approximately €120000. With that money, they organized the game three times, for a total of 389 players, each game running for some 32 hours.

However, as the monetary goals of the crowdfunding plan were met, it is important to inspect the various tensions generated by the crowdfunding that impacted both the creative side and the production side of the project. Some of the tensions are due to expensive game fees, others are due to various price tiers, and some are due to a combination of the both.

Division of Work

Running such a project is an immense amount of work, and in this chapter, I look at tensions related to division of work related to crowdfunding.

Players' monetary investment on The Monitor Celestra was considerable. My personal spend was at least €1000, including a participation in a Blue Squadron, flights, stays at a hostel during the game and one night in a hotel afterwards, and apparel not included in the costume provided by the organizers. Players who pay such a sum for a weekend in space can easily think that the monetary investment in the larp replaces the need for putting effort into it, and their expectations on all arrangements increase.

Player as a co-creator vs. player as a customer. Usually larpers are regarded as co-creators, largely responsible for their own enjoyment of the game. However, investing a large sum in a larp may change this dynamic, as players start – fairly or not – seeing themselves as paying customers, expecting a ready-made ride in exchange for their money. *Celestra* made this phenomenon worse by advertising itself as a "pay-and-play event, aimed at players that don't have the time or inclination to spend scores of hours preparing a costume and going to group-workshops weeks or months before the game".

In this game, this was a wrong message to send. When a larp lasts for 32 hours, no amount of traditional character writing can efficiently compensate for players' own effort in creating connections before the game and workshopping their characters. The lesson of Celestra is clear: In long larps, money alone cannot buy happiness; players also need to invest time on character connections to make the larp work well. Team Celestra encouraged players to discuss their characters on game forums in advance, which alleviated the problem for some players.

Players owing organizers vs. organizers owing players. In a typical larp, the players believe they owe gratitude for the organizers who create a larp for them to play in. This dynamic turns around in an expensive larp: After I fronted €490, the organizers owe me a great game.

When the players feel that the organizers already owe them, placing additional requirements for participation suddenly feels like changing a done deal. For example, Celestra players had to sign waivers on-site right before the game, taking all responsibility in case of injury. While such waivers are common in larp, many reacted negatively to the fact that waivers were presented much after the buy-in. The impact of this perceived debt impacts all communication – for instance, if a player has a complaint to make, she is likely to feel that the organizers owe her a prompt and appeasing response.

This feeling of the organizers owing players was created through deliberate marketing efforts by team Celestra:

> It's a professionally run scenario for a mature audience who expect the best quality of props, gamemaster assistance and writing available and are prepared to pay for the privilege. The ticket price includes a the game, a written character, a uniform on loan if you play a uniformed character, food, off-game sleeping arrangements, character-specific props and a pre-game workshop as well as an afterparty. The game is set in a real naval vessel redecorated, propped and lit to look and feel like a ship from the first Cylon War.[1]

Organizers of ambitious larps have to take this kind of social risks in order to create hype around their game, to market it and to recruit players.

Hype as success driver vs. hype as marketing. One slogan in the Nordic larp scene is "What You Give Is What You Get", meaning that the more the players invest in a larp, the more they will enjoy it. This happens on two levels: First, everyone else investing in a larp improves my experience, as they invest in costumes and study their characters and bring eagerness and positive energy to the game. Second, my investment improves my experience. For this reason, larp hype has been considered somewhat acceptable; the larp community believes that hype improves games. However, in an ambitious larp, the audacious but self-fulfilling prophecy of this being the greatest larp of all times must be done very early. The more outrageous details you can promise, the more committed your players and your organizer team will be, but that plan can also backfire: Although the promise of a dragon drove players' and organizers' commitment to Dragonbane, it has been argued that there would have been better ways of spending the same effort.[2]

Hype is difficult to control, and expectations easily get bloated. Celestra sold itself as a WYSIWYG game: What you see is what you get. While the game promised fully functional battle stations and full 360° immersion onboard Celestra, the Viper missions were role-played with a game master in a manner resemblant of tabletop role-playing. As a consequence, navigators, helmsmen and scanner operators had WYSIWYG tools to work with, but pilots did not. Although all Celestra pilots I spoke with were extremely happy with their flight missions, a consumer-minded player could have as well found that a major source of disappointment.[3]

Delivering on Promises

Ambitious larps are, by definition, high-risk projects. Doing something that has never been done before, deploying novel techniques in large scale and running a new kind of a production with immovable deadline, with a team that has never

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1   Celestra website, after crowdfunding phase.

2   See Koljonen (2008) for more on *Dragonbane*.

3   *The Monitor Celestra* did not specifically promise WYSIWYG experiences for pilot characters, but it also did not tell either that piloting would be conducted verbally.

worked together before, is inherently risky. This risk is always present, no matter how skilled or experienced the team is.

Although one of the purposes of crowdfunding is reduction of financial risk to organizers, the risk is translated into reputation risk: If the game fails or is cancelled, there is likely to be a vocal community backlash. This, in turn, increases organizer pressure.

Plans vs. promises. It is normal to not deliver 100% of the promises. For example, Celestra promised pyrotechnics, which did not materialize due to fire regulations. Crowdfunding and steep participation fees make the challenge harsher: Organizer plans transform into promises. Making public plans is necessary for generating marketing hype, but suddenly those plans become promises, and failing to meet them can be seen as disappointment or even betrayal of promises.

In a typical crowdfunding project, disappointment certainly damages the reputation of the project and leaves sour feelings. In the participatory art of larp, however, disappointment is a negative force that impacts the aesthetic qualities of the main project itself. It reduces players' inclination to get invested to the game emotionally, it makes them prepare less, and it drains energy from workshops.

It is hard to predict what might disappoint players -- sometimes they are tiny things. As a personal example, Celestra promised some crowdfunders that they would get to keep their costumes after the last game was played. Although I played a Major, I was given Lieutenant's insignia with my costume, which left me feeling slightly miffed in a childish and irrational manner. But even irrational annoyances require effort to overcome and ignore. Based on discussions with other players, I believe the disappointment cost may have, for some players, exceeded the value received from crowdfunding perks.

Doing what is needed vs. sticking to a plan. Plans becoming promises also carries the risk of forcing the organizers to do the wrong things. For example the Blue Squadron funders were promised "a custom written back plot for you and your friends to explore". Even if the game masters are running low on time, they still have an obligation to write that custom plot – even if the game does not depend on it. In our group, the characters were mostly Celestra and Galactica officers, who had their hands full with game content already, while the civilians in the holds of the ship could have certainly used more game content.

In games, there's no such thing as a free feature: Everything costs money or work, and resources spent on one thing are away from something else. Keeping the crowdfunders happy is an expense, both in terms of money and in terms of effort.

Celestra costumes are a good example: For the larp, it was sufficient that a uniform would endure three runs of the game, and in the case of a wardrobe malfunction, costumes could be fixed quickly between episodes – with duct tape if need be. Wisely, this was the chosen standard of quality in Celestra. Promising players their costumes after the game carries the danger of either disappointing players with makeshift quality, or derailing the costume team with too high quality.

Larp Art

As an increasing amount of money enters the equation, it certainly impacts creative decisions. Especially when offering perks, the team is trading creative freedom for monetary resources.

Casting as art vs. casting as customer satisfaction. In Celestra the most desired perks were probably about character selection. Colonels, Commanders and members of Blue Squadrons could cherry pick their characters to some extent. This is a clear example of trading power for money: Although Celestra generally averted casting

problems, such clauses might have lead to bad casting decisions.[1]

Whether *Celestra* managed to keep the promise of "no qualitative difference in the writing or the amount of influence the characters have" is a matter of debate. On one hand, all payment categories did include highly influential characters: *Galactica* crew was lead by C characters, *Celestra* crew by B characters, and the Vergis Corporation and the Roslin government by A characters. All categories also included characters with little power, such as refugees (A), low-level engineers (B), and Vergis security troops (C). Then again, on the average, the B and C characters were provided with more game content and narrative power than A characters. In particular the refugees drew the short straw in the game.

The crowdfunders that most significantly impacted casting were the members of the Blue Squadrons, and the 10 Colonels. Even though these players generated a gross revenue of almost €18000, the net sum of crowdfunding was only some €4500 – compared to the price of 34 Class C tickets they, in principle, bought.[2] One way of looking at this is that selling 8.7% of the cast garnered 3.7% of the total budget – and since there were only some 30 coveted Class C characters in each game, one could argue that as much as one third was put up for sale.

Crowdfunders supporting the larp vs. the larp supporting crowdfunders. Large larps with high production values often show imbalance in terms of physical architecture. Narrative influence and scenographic effort are concentrated in key locations in a manner that is, of course, typical for all human societies. Although all play areas on Småland looked good, Celestra was not immune to such a division. The team worked hard to distribute command consoles around the vessel, encouraged officers to delegate tasks to lower-ranked characters, and tried to involve civilians, but the bridge and the areas of the Vergis Corporation were still the most important centers of power. Bluntly put, the team invested far less on non-Vergis civilians than on the top brass.

In future large projects, crowdfunding may make this extremely tricky territory. The danger is that the players paying lower participation fees end up paying also for the coolest toys of the biggest-spending crowdfunders. If the player who spends €590 to play a captain of a starship gets better value for her euro than a player who spends €330 to play an crewman toiling in the engine room, the ethical logic of crowdfunding turns around. Crowdfunders no longer go an extra mile to improve everyone's fantastic experience, but they become highest bidders in a competition determining who gets to do the coolest things everyone contributes for.

Larps portraying hierarchical organizations with high but uneven production values seem to be zero-sum games to some extent, no matter what we choose to collectively pretend. Even though the value built into the system can be sold to players to increase the budget, selling it too cheaply might lead to problems. If the price of crowdfunding perks is kept high enough, the ethical logic of trading perks for contributing to collective experience can be maintained.

It should be specifically noted that in expensive larps, both regular players and

1   Tomas Walch commented that *The Monitor Celestra* was not the first game to trade special casting or fictional freedom for player investment. In some (Swedish) larps, players sign up as groups, and often the group coordinators play the central characters. What was new in *Celestra* was that the trade was about money, not about effort.

2   Not all of these players played Class C characters. At least one chose not to, and many signed up for crowdfunding late, after Class C and even Class B tickets had been sold out.

crowdfunders carry additional hidden costs in the form of taking risks. Although crowdfunders carry higher risks, because they invest earlier, the typical player risk is considerable as well. In *Celestra*, many risks actualized in the first run of the game, which suffered from serious problems with technology.

Bang and Buck

The Monitor Celestra was one of the definite highlights of my larping career. My investment paid off a lot better than spending same kind of money on a holiday trip. In that context, I actually got good value from the monetary crowdfunding investment: Compared to Class C participation, my total spend only increased by 10% through Blue Squadron.

Even so, the biggest lesson from my *Celestra* experience is this: *Never expect bang for your buck when crowdfunding a larp.* There are many reasons for this:

First; as long as larps are mostly organized with volunteer work, the money you spend will not be a huge impact on larp quality. Some 85 people worked on *Celestra* for free: The worth of that effort completely eclipses whatever money you pay for the game. Might be you paid €100 extra for your game, but what can you expect for that money in a project consisting of volunteer work worth hundreds of thousands of euros?

Second; larp is an inherently unpredictable form of art. Even if a game is generally a success, no individual can be guaranteed a great experience. Some people argue that players are always ultimately responsible for their own experiences, but plain luck plays an important part as well. Sometimes you get murdered early on, sometimes the larp is too rough for your comfort levels, and sometimes the way someone else plays just blocks your game.

Third; large projects have the greatest need for money in a very early stage. Plans will change, the game will not be what you

expect of it, and the whole thing might be cancelled. If you expect value for your money, you risk disappointment. If you are disappointed, that in itself drains your larp experience, and by extension, that of the others around you.

And fourth; if you expect value for your money, you are not funding a game and taking a risk to support it – but purchasing a business-class experience. That mindset can turn a larp into bidding contests for the limited organizer resources, which is antithetical to the freedom from commercial pressures that had allowed Nordic larp to develop its diversity.

In many cases, the safest perks are the ones that do not directly impact game experience – although such perks are probably not very effective as sources of funding either.

Based on *The Monitor Celestra* it is apparent that larp crowdfunding can be a great servant, but also has dangers of turning into a bad master. When done successfully, it drives hype, increases commitment, helps early finances and reduces financial risk. But in a worst-case scenario, it could force the team to focus on wrong things, lead to wealthy players taking the main stage, or result in a reputation meltdown.

Despite the dangers, team *Celestra* used crowdfunding powerfully to realize an ambitious vision that would have been impossible to create without it.

Acknowledgements

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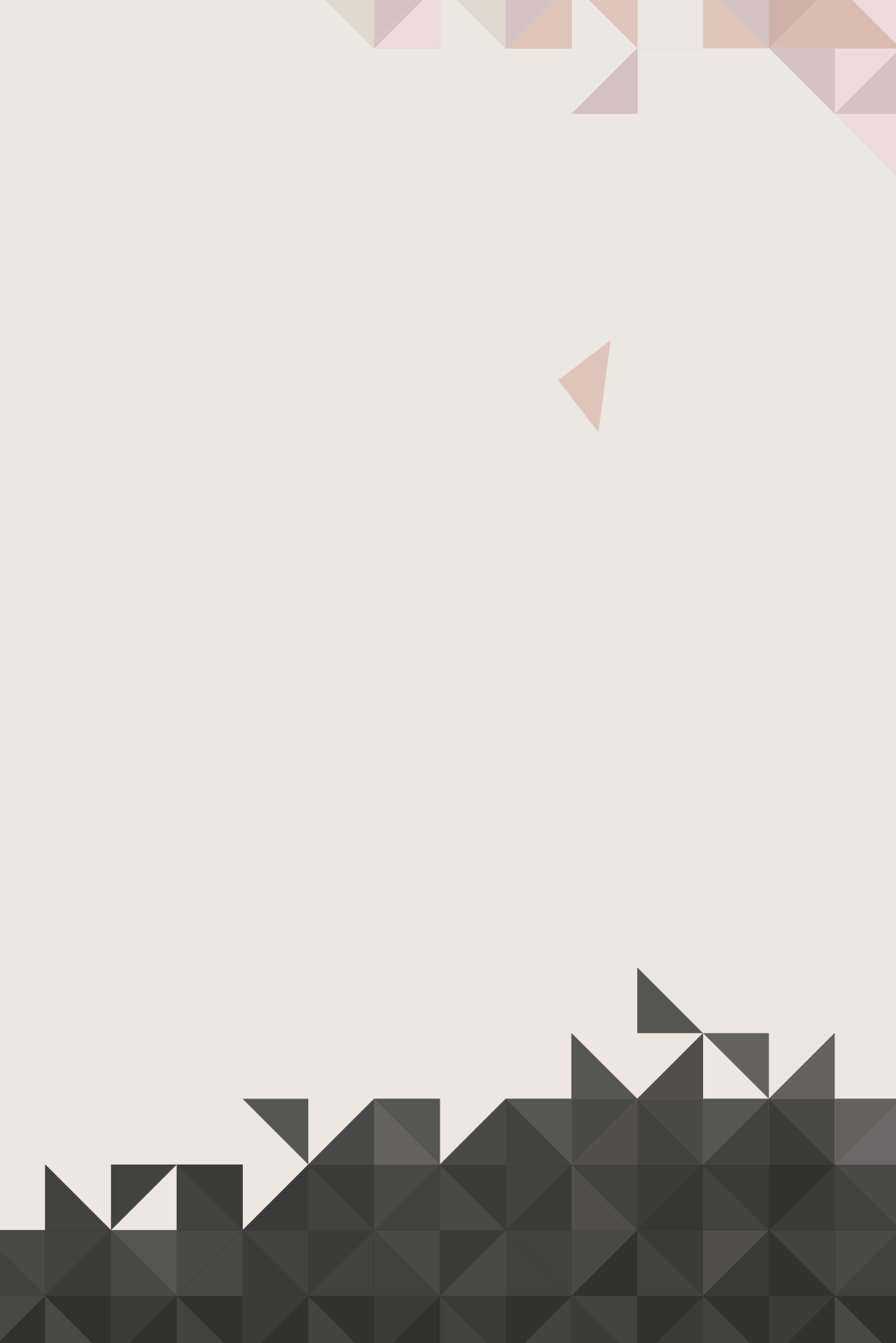
The Meta and
The Agitator

Jaakko Stenros

What Does "Nordic Larp" Mean?

What is a "Nordic larp"? What does "Nordic larp" mean? What do we mean by that expression?

The question used to be academic or trivial. Five years ago no one cared about what counted as a "Nordic larp". That has changed. Now the term has brand value. It is worth something — and thus there is something at play in determining what it means. If you brand something "Nordic larp" you might get cool indie cred in the US. Or by advertising something as Nordic larp you might get players who want to try something a little different.

For us in the Nordic scene, for a long while we could use the expression US Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart in 1964 used to define pornography, "I know it when I see it". However, not even we can agree on it anymore, and this kind of a definition just angers people who are coming from the outside trying to understand what it is that we find so awesome.

Of course, there have been numerous attempts at defining Nordic larp, but not only are they in conflict with each other, I feel that they do not get at the core of the issue and are ultimately unsatisfactory. Some of them hang on geography, stuff coming from the Nordic countries, others concentrate on Knutepunkt, and some relate to the form or content.

Nordic larp is not a thing. You cannot take it in your hand and see exactly how it functions and what it is comprised of. Nor is it a recipe; you cannot simply follow instructions: one piece immersion, two helpings of government funding, a splash of touching, mixed in a WYSIWYG environment! It is not a category where by looking at the content you know what it is (like vampire

larp) or by looking at the production environment (like indie RPGs).

Nor does it remain the same over time. Nordic larps today are not the same as ten years ago, and probably five years from now they will again look a little different. If someone comes up with an absolute rule for Nordic larps, you can be sure that someone else will design a larp that will violate that command – just to show that it can be done.

Thus the problem becomes that there is no *objective* way to determine what Nordic larps are. All definitions are political. They place something at the centre and something at the periphery. Something is left out.

That is obviously true of this article as well. I will do my best to give *an* answer, or maybe a meta answer, but certainly not *the* answer. I fully expect to be criticized, even ridiculed, by future commentators.

For no one owns Nordic larp. Not the game organizers, larpwrights, designers. Not the journalists and experts. Not the academics or researchers. Not the event organizers or popularizers. Not the web service providers or editors in chief. Not the people who are doing their darnest to export Nordic larp, nor the people who are working to import it. Not even the players.

We all own Nordic larp. There simply is no central bureau of Nordic larp. And if there was, I can promise you that splinter groups would surface faster than you can say "fucking fascist trying to limit my imagination, to copyright my reality hacking tools, to steal my status and funding, and to take away my fun and misery".

Indeed, when I announced on Facebook that I would try to provide an answer to this question, it took exactly 18 minutes for someone to say that the whole endeavor is *wrong*, *misleading* and *idiotic*. And that is a good thing. We are a creative bunch that is not looking for an end product, but the next cool thing that will inappropriately fondle our souls in just the right way.

"Nordic Larp"

The term "Nordic larp" is not the best possible to describe these larps. The term was debated for a long while, and others were floated, like arthaus larps, art larp, experimental larps, Nordic style larps, Scandinavian style, Knutepunkt larps, freeform larp and so on. Terms like indrama or interactive improvisational theatre were floated. However, the only one that stuck was Nordic larp.

Nordic.

Larp.

I feel I share a bit of the responsibility for that due to the book we published under that name. We held on to the word *larp* – and it is a lowercase word for us like laser or radar and no longer an acronym – even if in many places it is seen as a childish activity or even a derogatory word. Instead of changing the word we have been fighting to change its perception in the public eye – and we have been quite successful here in the Nordics. In a way the Nordics have been the centre for the larper pride movement – and here the stigma relating to the word is all but gone.

The word Nordic, on the other hand, has always been used in two, *conflicting* ways. It has been used as a term to refer to larps coming from the Nordic countries. But it has also been used to differentiate the international scene from the national traditions. So, Nordic larp as opposed to, as different from, Danish larp or Finnish larp.

The first usage, 'Nordic for larps from the Nordic countries' is more common in Norway and perhaps Sweden, where the difference between the national scene and the Nordic scene is not as strict. Whereas "Nordic as different from domestic larps" has been more common in Finland and Denmark, where the larps can be very different on the different sides of the fence,

or almost identical, just having different brands burned on them.

Indeed, an article could easily be written on just debating the differences between the four countries and how the word "Nordic" obfuscates the very real differences between the four national and the many regional cultures.

To sum up, Nordic larp has historically been both an umbrella for four national traditions, and also a term for a specific international alternative tradition.

Today, however, it is not enough to define Nordic larp in opposition to Norwegian larp or Danish larp. Today we need to also define it in comparison to American larp, to German larp, to theatre style or to boffer larp, to freeform and jeepform, because we have attracted international attention. It is not just the Nordic people, or Nords as the non-Vikings sometimes call us, who are into these kinds of experiences.

But even that is not enough. We also need to delimit Nordic larp in comparison to participatory theatre, to performance art, to transmedia projects and ARGs, to amusement park design, to educational games and economic simulations, to site-specific art, to Happening, to Experimance and to many other things.

Why is this relevant? Because what we do is relevant in some way for all of them. Because ten years ago we read books on invisible theatre, went to improv workshops and played freeform scenarios from Fastaval. We went anywhere we felt could to learn stuff about participatory experiences, stole their best ideas and adapted them and integrated them into our tradition, to Nordic larp. Today we still do that, but the migration of influences now works in two directions. Role-players around the world are paying attention to what we do – if only to disagree with us.

We get artists who hire our best designers to help them build their pieces. We get funded to help build civil society in oppressive areas. We get amusement park research and development people coming over to our larps to see what they can learn from us. We work with teachers and other educators wanting to adapt larp for the classroom. We get invited to give lectures about transmedia experiences. We get theatre directors who want make their performances co-creative and not just participatory. The list goes on.

So, a lot of people need an answer to the question: What does "Nordic larp" mean?

A Definition

Currently I think that "Nordic larp" is most practical to be viewed as a *tradition*. The works that have influenced people who go to Knutepunkt conventions, the works discussed at Knutepunkt, and the works inspired by the discourses around Knutepunkt would probably sit at the core of this tradition.

Instead of looking at Nordic larp as geography-based or as having a uniform style, I think it makes more sense to approach it as a social phenomenon, and as an ongoing discourse.

To get a grip on the tradition one needs to consider the key works, the migration of influences, the social structure, the social situations in which the works emerge, and the people involved.

Yes, most Nordic larps are played in the Nordic countries, but not all. Not all larps played in the Nordic countries are 'Nordic larp style larps'. And yes, there are some features that are common in the tradition, and production related similarities also exist. However, building a strict *definition* of the Nordic larp based on these features would be difficult even if no new Nordic larps were ever to be created...

... and downright impossible with a living tradition.

My strict definition of Nordic larp is:

A larp that is influenced by the Nordic

larp tradition *and* contributes to the ongoing Nordic larp discourse.

This definition may seem circular, but it is not - at least no more than definitions by their very nature are. It is not a historical definition, but one that only works when there is already a thing called "Nordic Larp Discourse".

There is a self-congratulatory element to the definition, one that can be and has been interpreted as elitist. It is built on the fact that there is already a social construct of Nordic larp, with relevant works, theories, discussions and people. There is already a *tradition*. I'll come back to that.

This definition, by the way, is what Bjarke Pedersen appropriated from the art world and presented in Solmukohta 2012, what Markus Montola refined in a Facebook discussion and I then stole and fine-tuned.

This is also a pretty strict definition. It means that in order to qualify, a work needs to reflect an awareness of a tradition and somehow contribute to it. But it also means that in order to qualify as a Nordic larp the work needs to be discussed. There needs to be people talking and writing about the work, and designing larps that are in dialogue with it.

Strictly speaking you then cannot advertise a larp as a Nordic larp, nor can you say right away after a larp has concluded if it was a Nordic one. Because the definition work — or canonization — takes place after the fact. Only after some time has passed can we see if it has contributed to the discourse?

This obviously makes the strict definition a little impractical. Thus we also need a loose definition of Nordic larp:

> A larp that is influenced by the Nordic larp tradition or contributes to the ongoing Nordic larp discourse.

This means that any work building on the tradition and wanting to be in dialogue with the tradition qualifies. A much larger portion of larps fit this bill. Also, this allows for works that were created disconnected from the tradition to be appropriated to it.

This definition may seem disappointing, or even like a cop out. It does not arm you with analytical tools that you could use, disconnected from larp practice, to identify a Nordic larp.

But Nordic larp is not a set of instructions. It is not even a coherent design philosophy, though that is a fairly common claim online. It is a movement.

The Nordic Brand

The problem with the above definition is that it does not work as a brand statement. It does not advertise our excellence, not communicate our key values to people who are interested in Nordic larp. What could we say to them? What is "Nordic larp" like?

The challenge is identifying how Nordic larp is unique, if it indeed is.

It is easier to say how Nordic larp is different from some other tradition, say the UK fest larps or the American indie scene. Similarly we can point out the difference between Nordic larp and participatory theatre or the classic experiments of social psychology. But these differences are often relative and relational.

I'll go though some claims about Nordic larp.

Looking at our history, the works we have appropriated, a *360 degree illusion* is a strong design ideal. The idea is that what you see is what you get, there is as little as possible symbolic props, and you can work with the environment. *Persistent role-playing* is also key. You are not your character. And you do not go out of character while the larp is on. Then there are *physicality* and *indexical action*. Among other things these mean that we don't have "no touching" rules. Amorous and antagonistic encounters, and everything in be-

tween, are played as is – at least up to a point.

However, it is easy to find exceptions to each of these four ideals – especially when you consider the short convention larps that have been strongly influenced by the Fastaval scene, freeform and jeepform. What makes this particularly important, is that these small, easy-to-set-up larps – though perhaps not at the core of our tradition – are the larps that most easily travel and ones that people who are trying out Nordic larp outside the Nordics most probably encounter.

Another feature often associated with Nordic larps is *immersion*, i.e. pretending to believe that you are your character. But immersion is internal to the player. No one can say if you are acting or simulating or immersing. And Nordic larp hardly holds a monopoly on immersion. Also, there are approximately a gazillion definitions of immersion. So let's not make a key selling point out of something we cannot agree upon.

Co-creation and *inter-immersion* are key as well. With these words I attempt to grasp at the idea that Nordic larps are collaborative. The participants do not follow a script or just choose from predetermined alternatives. Indeed they not only play their own characters, but support the play of others.

Nordic larping is not about winning, but about creating something meaningful together. In order for there to be a king, subjects are also needed. To have prisoners, we also need guards. We play together and we often *play to lose*. We indulge in tragedies and open the larp design so that secrets leak out. Yet there are also larps which are, at least to some extent, about winning. And there are heavily railroaded larps as well.

Often there is *thematic coherence*. Nordic larps tend to be about something, be it love, the war in Afganistan or the loss of humanity. Usually the ideal is to craft the larp in a way that makes the theme relevant for all participants.

As a side note to larp content: I want to stress the relationship between Nordic larp and the genre of fantasy. At times Nordic larp and fantasy are seen as opposing each other. I disagree with that. I think fantasy games are absolutely a part of our history, our discussion, and Nordic larp. Nordic larp is not anti-fantasy. However, because there is such a strong historical connection between fantasy and role-playing games, it creates, in many role-playing traditions an atmosphere of what I call *fantasy entitlement*.

In Nordic larp fantasy does not enjoy a special place. It is not at the core of Nordic larp. It is just one more genre, one more expression of Nordic larp, just like prison larps or cancer larps or queer larps. This does not mean that Nordic larp is anti-fantasy, but it does strip away the special-ness of fantasy – and that is sometimes perceived as being critical of fantasy.

Often Nordic larps have *minimal game mechanics* and few rules – at least in comparison to the thick manuals associated with Mind's Eye Theatre and many fantasy campaigns. Yet blackboxing, meta techniques and such are common.

Instead of official rule *books* Nordic larps involve a lot of written game materials. But the ideal is that there is less material rather than more. In addition to these there are often all kinds of pre-larp meetings where diegetic social worlds are co-created. The umbrella term for these is *workshop*. Nordic larps sometimes even use complicated systems to lead the players out of the larp, in the form of highly planned *debriefs*. But not all larps use workshops or debriefs, sometimes you just get a pdf in email and after the larp ends head out to a party.

Looking at the production side of Nordic larps, there are again some commonalities. Nordic larps tend to be *uncommercial*. Larps are not run as businesses, and larpwrights and organizers rarely get paid for their time. This means that there is less of a customer-service-provider relationship

between the two parties than in some cultures.

Two things are related to this. Nordic larps tend to be one shots. Even continuous chronicles usually announce and plan just one larp at a time; there is no business incentive to keep a campaign going on every month. The other thing is one of the most perplexing things about Nordic larp production in some parts of the world: it is possible to get *public funding* for organizing a larp in the Nordic countries. Yes, this is true, you might get money that, for example, targets youth activities or arts and culture funds, but it is in no way automatic. Most Nordic larps are produced with no public funding.

The one thing I feel relatively secure in identifying as a feature of Nordic larp is its taking of larping seriously. In the tradition of Nordic larp, larp is seen as a *valid form of expression*, one capable of prompting strong emotions and one that can be used to tackle any subject matter.

This is what people refer to when they toss around words like elitist, artistic, avant garde, pretentious, ambitious, experimental and committed. The activity is *taken seriously* even when it is being used for entertainment.

How to boil all this down to an understandable sales pitch? A brand statement? A bulletpoint take-away?

This is the brand statement that I came up with: Nordic larp is:

> A tradition that views larp as a valid form of expression, worthy of debate, analysis and continuous experimentation, which emerged around the Knutepunkt convention. It typically values thematic coherence, continuous illusion, action and immersion, while keeping the larp co-creative and its production uncommercial. Workshops and debriefs are common.

As you can see it does not exactly roll off the tongue, but I do feel that it is fairly accurate. At least in at the time of writing.

What makes it so special, then? What sets Nordic larps apart from other larps and other traditions that sometimes do very similar things?

Tradition

To some extent there is no such thing as "Nordic larp". The whole concept is a fiction, a story some of us tell ourselves to tie together things that do not actually relate to each other.

Call it social construction, call it reality hacking, call it chaos magic, call it: our history.

We may have chosen certain key larps from the 1990s as "our history", but these larps have very little to do with each other. Even the larps that get branded as "Nordic larp" today may have nothing in common with each other, at least nothing that clearly separates these larps from a thousand others played around the world.

Except that we have socially constructed a tradition out of them. In essence, we in the Nordic community, Knutepunkt community design, organize and play larps, and this influences future larps. These larps are in dialogue with each other. The designers are aware of earlier works and are building on them, as well as criticizing and pointedly ignoring them.

Furthermore we discuss, analyze and critique larps – and document those discussions. It is not enough that you design and organize a cool game. That is obviously the foundation, but it is not enough. You also need to discuss it with other people in the tradition – and if you want your contribution to last, you also need to document it in a way that makes the larp and its insight accessible to people who were not there.

Larps are ephemera. The moment they end they cease to be. Without discussion and documentation they fade away.

How many times have you discovered a fantastic larp image gallery on the web, filled with gorgeous shots from a reality you really wish you had been able to inhabit? At least I have. Many times. And how often do you find an accessible description of that larp in any language, let alone in one that you can understand? In my experience, rarely.

This is one of the key things that sets Nordic larp apart. We have not only put up fabulous larps and continuously worked to hone our craft, but we try to communicate what we have learned to others.

So, in order to make it in the tradition, you need a piece *and* someone to talk about that piece. And thus emerges a discourse. And you need to be aware of this history. It is a history you are in dialogue with. When a new piece is created, it is understood in relation to the tradition.

Nordic larp is a movement and a tradition, comparable, at least in its structure, to movements such as Situationists, or traditions like site-specific art. So, which Nordic games do you need to know in order to participate in the conversation? Today there are pieces, larp works that you need to be aware of, but there is no master list. Some larps are more important than others, for the tradition, but there is no canon (not even the *Nordic Larp* book), there are canons.

Anyone can make their own, and – this is important – argue why her canon is the best one. Everyone who chooses to participate has a voice. The discourse is open to new voices.

But this is not a case of "everyone is entitled to their own opinion".

No. Every opinion is not as valid. But every considered opinion, one that you can argue for and are willing to defend in public, is valid and enters the discourse. The relevance of different works changes over time. As long as the tradition stays alive the debate goes on.

On top of this debate, as part of the debate we have built the theories, the magazines, the websites, and the books. And, again, though we might be able to agree on some key texts, no single person can delimit which texts are relevant.

Finally there are the people. Sometimes the difference between a Nordic larp and something else is the people who organize it – or the people who play it. It is not fair, but the network position of people who have been active in the tradition for a long while does make a difference.

Could a person, like Johanna Koljonen, who has written about Nordic larp more than most and has been one of its public advocates, individually lift a non-Nordic larp into the tradition? Yet this is also a double edged sword. Could a designer, say, Peter Munthe-Kaas, who has already created key works, organize a game that is not a Nordic larp? Perhaps. The community decides.

Another way to look at the tradition is through history. We have many roots and inspirations that have helped us develop. Role-playing games in general, *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Treasure Trap*, *Vampire: the Masquerade*, historical re-enactment, folk theatre, scout-movement, other games, literature etc. Yet the Swedish larp *Trenne byar* from 1994 is usually seen as the big bang of Nordic larp. This is again fictive, after-the-fact history construction.

The Nordic Larp Discourse was built in and around Knutepunkt between 1999-2004. That is when a real discussion, with shared terminology and understanding of the various national larp scenes started to emerge. This is when the most influential manifestos were written. This is when the most fondly remembered larps were played. This is when the written tradition started.

The discussion was not only carried out in Knutepunkts obviously, but many others played parts: *panclou*, the knutebooks, *Fëa Livia*, *Larppaaja*, *Laivforum*, *G-punkt*, *StraptS*, *Playground*, *Roolipelaaja...*

Others have joined the discussion from Germany, Russia, Italy, France, US and elsewhere. We have been influenced by other role-playing cultures from the Forge to jeepform. We discovered game, play and role-play analysis and research. We have watched reality television, and tried out improv, stolen stuff from theatre and performance, read up on philosophy and game design, dabbled in social psychology and art.

Sometimes older larps that have not been part of the discussion are appropriated and integrated into the tradition. Sometimes hyped up larps that get talked about a lot right after they have concluded, fade over the years and start drifting further from the centre of attention in the discourse. This, too, is similar to how arts discourses operate.

We have also recognized that our tradition can be a little hard to penetrate for an outsider. Not everyone can fly to the larps we organize or to Knutepunkt and not many people have the conviction to wade through all the Knutebooks and academic articles.

So we have tried to open the discussion with things like Nordic Larp Talks and the *Nordic Larp* book, articles, books, podcasts and websites targeting people who are not already in the know.

The Nordic Larp Discourse was created and still is centered around Knutepunkt. This is the annual event that brought together people from numerous countries and this is the nexus where much of the discussions have been had. However, that does not mean that Knutepunkt is only about "Nordic Larp Discourse". Not everyone goes there for the main discussion.

Also, it is hardly the only relevant hub for the discourse today. Other places such as Fastaval, Ropecon, Prolog, Odraz, Mittelpunkt, Larp Symposium and WyrdCon, to name a few, have joined the discussion. Some of these are relevant because they attract the same people or discuss the same topic, some because they provide counterpoints and alternatives, some because they disseminate our larps and theories, or publish stuff that furthers the debate, and so on. Yet there are also art festivals, academic conferences, educational symposiums, humanitarian workshops and others that linger at the edges of the discourse.

This discourse makes it possible for us to debate if *The Monitor Celestra* was, in fact, a "1990's style larp" and a sequel to *Hamlet*? To ponder how *Just a Little Lovin'* broke the queer mold of Nordic larps. To ask what new, if anything, did *Kapo* bring to the table. To analyze how *Perintö 1963* was incorporating insights from the German tradition. To talk about the pervasive years, or the bleed turn, or the manifesto boom. The tradition is the foundation and the reference point. It provides meaning and context.

Coda

The world is filled with awesome larps. What is a Nordic larp? A Nordic larp is a larp that is influenced by the Nordic larp tradition or contributes to the ongoing Nordic larp discourse.

We have designed, organized and played some of the coolest larps on the planet. We have picked them apart, analyzed them and tried to do better. We have built a tradition of learning from our mistakes and from our successes and we have used that knowledge to develop understanding of larp – and to build more larps. And we have conducted this discourse in public, in a way that makes it possible for a person who was not there to get a glimpse of what it was all about.

What sets Nordic larp apart from other larp traditions is that we have not only taken our activity seriously, but we have

actively tried to make the discourse about it accessible. This open discourse is what drives us forward and attracts new people to the table.

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Markus Montola & Jaakko Stenros

Play: The Soul of Knutepunkt

Knutepunkt is a playful space.

It is a summer camp, a student club, and a rock festival. It is a place where like-minded people gather to think outside the box, to meet new people, to fool around. When newcomers describe Knutepunkt as a magical experience, it is this playfulness they are talking about.

We must acknowledge that Knutepunkt is play. Wacky room parties, crazy rituals and weird traditions are not incidental side effects, but expressions of the playful core. That is what the provocative talks, in-your-face rants and offensive jokes are about, and yes, even the flirting, singing and drinking. It is a carnivalistic, liminal space, where we wield play to express creativity and to build community.

The playful nights of Knutepunkt are filled with rituals, parties and performances. Yet the days are playful as well, though perhaps not as playful as they once were. The whole idea of taking larp seriously once was almost a big, shared act of pretend play. Gathering in a room to discuss and develop larp theory was a playful act. That play has now become serious and dignified, yet Knutepunkt is still filled with brilliant, funny and creative people sharing their insights, experimental larps, and wondrous workshops.

The less frivolous daytime of Knutepunkt makes it tempting to look at other serious conventions for experiences and guidelines on how to run the community, but to do so would be to misunderstand the event. Play is the soul of Knutepunkt.

It has been said that writing about music is like dancing about architecture. At Knutepunkt we certainly talk about larp, but it is very valuable that we play about larp as well.

Traditionally, in Western culture, adults are not supposed to play. And adults are certainly are not supposed to spend five days having fun and being creative with their friends. Play binds us together. Play is why people stick with Knutepunkt even

when they retire from larping – you do not need to play larps to *play Knutepunkt.*

The taboo of serious, adult play is half of the reason why bars and room parties are a big part of the Knutepunkt culture: Alcohol is like a mask or a character; it serves not only as a social lubricant, but also as an alibi for adult play.

As a community, we *know* that play is not necessarily safe. We have discussed the psychological and social impact of play for years, we do not need to be told that play can hurt, damage and destroy.

Our community has traditionally glorified dangerous and provocative play. We have celebrated the sinful *Hamlet*, the offensive *PanoptiCorp*, and the thrill-seeking *Delirium* as landmark achievements. We cheer the creators of intense larps, whether that intensity is created through physical, social, or psychological manipulation. Hunt for extremes shows itself in the convention as well, where we flirt with transgression. We have not only tolerated, but encouraged play on the boundary.

The paradox is this: In order to be playful, we need to feel safe. Yet play is not safe in itself. How do we protect the safe space from the play it enables?

An Expanding Community

Knutepunkt has its own culture and traditions that have evolved over the years. It is a place where you are allowed, even expected, to be a little out of control. We have chosen to believe that you can play on the edge, since everyone knows that you are smart, tolerant and egalitarian. While often true, that belief is clearly problematic: If we want to provide marginalized groups with a feeling of safety, they need to be explicitly welcomed.

Gender equality has been an active Knutepunkt project for over a decade. The feeling has been that sensitive issues may be joked about, but if a line is crossed, that behaviour will be socially condemned. And usually it has been the behaviour that has been condemned, not the individual. There is a history of assuming the best of people, as stupid stuff sometimes gets done with good intentions.

But the community is constantly changing. We like to believe that Knutepunkt is a world apart, situated within a magic circle of its own. But it is not: We are happy to welcome new people all the time.

In 2013, 91 out of the 308 participants were newcomers. People came from some 22 countries. How do we explain our inside jokes to new participants, whether they are Nordic first-timers, Mediterranean larp pilgrims, or professionals of theatre and transmedia? How do we explain that we are not "really" making fun of gays, or women, or Danes, or teetotalers, or monogamists? How do we ensure each year, that all participants, new and old, feel welcome, respected, and most of all, feel safe enough to play?

Now the event is reported in real time on the web, and many talks are filmed. A remark that was funny in its original context may seem completely unacceptable when it is disconnected and reframed. As context collapses, fear of reframing makes people less inclined to play.

For many of us it is a point of pride to defy bounds of propriety. Many of us are radical, queer and kinky. Few would be offended by nudity, free love or gender bending. Since adult play is forbidden in our culture, even *to larp* is to defy a taboo.

Defiance of taboos inevitably generates tension, even conflict. A convention about playful expression cannot make it a principle to guarantee protection from being offended. If we wanted to guarantee respect towards everyone's physical boundaries, we would need to adopt the American rule of no touching. As a community, we have been unwilling to make that sacrifice.

Yet we must protect each other from harm. To what extent do we protect the freedom

to transgress? To what extent do we protect safety of people – especially the safety of minorities and newcomers – from transgression and fear? Control and fear both lead to insecurity that stifles creative play.

Knutepunkt is not alone in learning to process this tension; our cousins at Fastaval are struggling with similar challenges.

Preserving Play

Addressing the danger of play with precise rules is a tempting solution. Yet writing down strict rules is problematic. One key problem is that the question "Is this okay?" is replaced by "Is this against the rules?" We do not want to start gaming our own system, we want to live our values. We do not want a situation where someone does offensive things just to point out that the rules do actually allow it.

Even our values are amorphous. What are values good for if they need to be written down instead of lived? Coming up with a loose value statement for a community this diverse is difficult. What would be the process? Who would draft such rules? Who would have a say in the matter?

We suggest *self-regulation* as the first stage of conflict management. The eloquent policy of Knutepunkt 2006 was "Do what you will, but do it responsibly". A part of the self-regulation is taking corrective action as soon as needed – if you upset someone, talk it out.

In a system of self-regulation, every now and then someone steps over a line. In most cases, it is due to error, ignorance, or cultural differences. We suggest *peer pressure* as the second stage of conflict management. The idea is that whenever *you* see play go too far, you should take the responsible person aside and voice your opinion. An offender having ten such discussions learns much more than an offender who is ejected from the event. Peer review is a constant process: An anonymous note posted on a wall can easily be removed by anyone.

Sometimes a misstep is too bad to be kept on a peer level. A very public transgression may be impossible to contain. A repeat offender may be beyond the reach of peer pressure. In such rare cases, the community must act.

We suggest *community control* as the third stage of conflict management. Involve a few level-headed community members to mediate the conflict and have them bring the two parties together to talk about the transgression.

*

This community of play is built on trust. Trust, that all of us can play together without harming each other, respecting each and every other participant – yet trusting that we may sometimes fail. In order to push boundaries and think new thoughts we need to be able to trust in each other's intentions, and we need to be able to count on forgiveness in case of an error. Without that trust we, as a community, will fail.

A radical community like ours is never free of tension. That element of danger is a price we pay for doing new things in new ways. To preserve our playful and safe community, we must actively confront violations in ways that do not stifle the freedom of play.

Ludography

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Yaraslau I. Kot

Nordic-Russian Larp Dictionary

ExUSSR larp culture so far is one of biggest in the world. Most of the 15 ex-republics have an active multitude of larp subcultures. The diversity of independent approaches and types of larp still has not been fully summarized. With time the Nordic larp culture more and more interacts with the larp cultures of exUSSR countries. Perhaps it is time to make a small dictionary with the explanation of some terms and analogies to Russian speaking larpers. It would aid to the Larp community both for academic transcultural debate and for translation of valuable articles from the Nordic discourse to the vast Larp community of the 15 mentioned countries.[12]

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1   The project of a Larp Dictionary is topical and perhaps soon we will be able to publish a fully-fledged, peer reviewed, academic level, Nordic-Russian dictionary. It all depends on your help and support. We will add the results to the Nordic Larp Wiki, and Russian Larp Wiki communities.

2   The editor would like to add that he does not read Russian, and have not been able to himself review the text. However, as this piece can be seen as the beginning of a larger discussion, rather than some 'one truth', it can be valuable no matter how the individual entries will be received.

For the English readers there will be a short commentary of similar terms in Russian, but it is strictly the point of view of the author, as the full study of larp traditions of all the regions has not yet been conducted.

360° или 360 illusion

Source: Nordic Larp Wiki (2013)

Иллюзия на 360 градусов - По сути это концепция идеала материального обеспечения полигона соответствующим игре антуражем и декорациями, для максимальной реалистичность физического восприятия игрового пространства. В последнее время в это понятие включают

ещё внутри игровые взаимодействия и все остальные явления\факторы, влияющие на игровой опыт кого либо из участников. Как и любой идеал, эта концепция сложно достижима, но является характеристикой игры, объема символизма в ней используемого. Таким образом, если скандинавский Мастер заявляет, что его игра 360°, значит в ней признаваться будут только те действия, которые можно реально выполнить.

Background (бэкграунд) фон, прошлое.

Source: Trad; Bockman (2003)

Аналог русскоязычным терминам «загруз», и в некоторых случаях «легенда», «квента». По сути, информация от мастера\организатора ролевой игры, содержащая тот объем описания, требований и инструкций конкретному участнику игры, который соответствует мастерскому замыслу и роли конкретного человека в конкретном проекте.

Так же как и в русскоязычной традиции: форма может быть разная: от нескольких слов\ предложений или простого изображения, до большого эпически-развернутого художественного произведения. Авторство может быть как мастерское, так и совместное с игроком, а в некоторых случаях и полностью игрока.

В «gamist larps» «загруз», как правило, содержит зацепки на различные сюжетные линии персонажа. В «fate-play», как правило, содержит судьбу персонажа.

Может быть представлен в любом виде: от устного до символического театра, но доминирует письменная форма. Может быть только существительным.

There are a few terms which are more common in the Russian language than others - "загруз": word to word "upload"; "квента": from Tolkien's elvish "a song of" or "leg-end"; and "легенда": "legend" which came from spy movies and such, as this is how a fake biography for undercover agents are called. Russian larps personal background is often written by a player or at least in cooperation with players, yet in exUSSR, backgrounds and the ways they are given out differ greatly and are subject for some experimentations. Some more "old school" communities and younger larp groups still use verbal player briefing.

Black Box (черный ящик) или Meta room

Source: Nordic Larp Wiki (2013)

Концепция позаимствована из театра. В Скандинавских играх используется с 2007 года.

Специально обозначенная территория, где можно, отграниченно от всего остального игрового пространства, моделировать любое взаимодействие и место вне игрового пространства (к примеру: события сна, внутренний диалог, встреча посольства с заморским государем, поход в горы к оракулам, оживающие воспоминания и т.п.). Отыгрывают то, что не входит в уже моделируемое время и пространство.

Комната или любое ограниченное пространство, либо максимально нейтральное (все черное и пусто), либо комната-конструктор, где антураж легко сменить. Часто такие «комнаты» оборудуют спец эффектами и обслуживающей командой. Иногда игроки имеют механику приглашения друг друга в «черный ящик» (к примеру, шепнуть неигровой пароль или подарить какой либо символический подарок).

Bleed (кровоточение, просачивание)
Source: Trad.

Явление, когда чувства, эмоции или мысли просачиваются из персонажа в игрока, из игрового мира в реальный и наоборот.

Часто рассматривают такие виды данного явления как «bleed in» (из реальности в игру) и «bleed out» (из игры в реальность)

К примеру, неприязнь к человеку в жизни переносится на персонажа (bleed in) или внутри игровая любовь становится реальной привязанностью и игрока к другому игроку (bleed out).

Boffer (боффер)
Source: Trad.

Не в полной степени аналог русским терминам «гуманизированое оружие», «игровое оружие» и «бутафорское оружие».

Данный термин используется для описания моделируемого холодного оружия, сделанного из мягких материалов, в основном с твердой сердцевиной. Например: палка обернутая резиной или поролоном.

Но в некоторых традициях так называют любое оружие позволяющее моделировать конфликт или боевое столкновение в игре, не нанося реального физического вреда участникам.

В некоторых скандинавских странах (Швеция) используется термин «latex arms», т.е. латексное оружие, так как часто изготавливается из латекса. В Норвегии бывает используется термин «padded arms» как базовый, а boffer arms называют виды игрового оружия пригодные для полномерного боевого столкновения.

Производные: «Boffertomte» (боффертомт) – не вежливое описание игроков которые ездят на игры «по вонзаться» (ради возможности подраться); «boffers», «boffer larps»и др. – производные термины, обозначающие игры, построенные на боевых столкновениях.

There is a more common term "игровое оружие" \ "larp weapons" which more often includes all materials imaginable (rubber, wood, plastic etc.) that can be used as long as the game masters allows it to the game.

Cage (кэйдж) клетка
Source: Coleman (2001)

Внутриигровой механизм предупреждающий покидание персонажами (не игроками) определенного игрового пространства. Различают несколько форм таких «клеток»: физическая, формальная, социальная, магическая или комбинация любых из этих форм.

A more commonly used term is "границы полигона", "границы игры", meaning game boundaries, or boundaries of the game zone.

Chamber Larp – павильонная ролевая игра
Source: Trad.

В скандинавской традиции это ролевая игра, проходящая в ограниченном маленьком помещении и, как правило, длится лишь пару часов.

In russian there is the term "павильонная игра"\ "the pavilion game". It can be any number of chambers, or even the whole building. KAPO (2011) for example would be a pavilion game as it was all inside of one indoor location.

Character или коротко Char.
Source: Trad.

Персонаж.

Некоторыми используется как синоним «role» - роль (Bockman, 2003)

Так как в скандинавской традиции корни данного термина берут начало в планшетках , то по отношению к ним чаще и используется. Современная традиция все больше разделяет "роль" и "персонаж".

City Larp – городская ролевая игра
Source: Trad

Обычная наша городская игра с несколькими локациями в реальном городе. Как правило pervasive game.

The Russian term "городская игра" is a direct translation with the same meaning.

Context - контекст
Source: Bockman (2003)

1) Термин обозначающий ролевую игру живого действия с научной точки зрения. 2) Игровая реальность.

In Russian this word often has more narrative connotations.

Debriefing (Дебрифинг) Разгруз с игры.
Source: Nordic Larp Wiki (2013)

Дословный перевод: опрос, расследование

Аналог нашему «разбору полетов», но кроме всего прочего нацеленный на конкретно игрока и его переживания.

В скандинавской практике это комплекс мероприятий реализующий любой набор из следующий трех целей: 1) «Что только что произошло?» - что то вроде групповой рефлексии и закрытие неразрешенных ситуаций; 2)

Критика и оценка – как правило, форма аналогична предыдущей; 3) Деролинг – выведение из персонажа и возврат в реальную жизнь.

Существует ряд методик для каждого этапа. Некоторые стали традиционными, но все же их уже достаточно большой выбор, т. к. активно задействуются системы методов психологических, театральных и педагогических наук.

Planned full debriefings are rarely used in Russian larps - only in practically oriented, e.g. education larps. At the same time the special "land of dead" is used often to fulfill the players' reflection process (Fedoseev & Trubetskaya, 2013). Also often used is the "discussion of the flights" which gives feedback to the players and game masters on the game, and wraps up the plot outcome. Yet in no form of russian larp tradition is de-roleing and psychological rehabilitation used.

Dekontextualisation – деконтекстуализация
Source: Bockman (2003)

Аналог: Неигровуха.

Противоречие контексту.

Термин, обозначающий ситуацию, в которой персонаж (не игрок) потерял связь с игровой реальностью и больше не может переживать через роль или когда какая то часть игровой материи начинает противоречить изначальному игровому миру, его структуре.

Близкое по смыслу: «Offing»

The Russian larp slang term "неигровуха"\"not-in-game" has the same meaning.

Deus Ex Machina
Source: trad

От латинского «Бог из Машины»

Русский аналоги – мастерское вмешательство, божественное вмешательство, воля мастера, мастерский произвол, «рояль в кустах».

Изначально театральный термин. Выражение, означающее неожиданную, нарочитую развязку той или иной ситуации, с привлечением внешнего, ранее не действовавшего в ней, фактора. Является калькой с греч. ἀπὸ μηχανῆς θεός. Словом mechane (греч. μηχανῆς) в древнегреческом театре назывался кран, который позволял поднимать актёра над сценой (позволял ему «летать»). В античном театре выражение обозначало бога, появляющегося в развязке спектакля при помощи специальных механизмов (например, «спускающегося с небес») и решающего проблемы героев. Из античных трагиков приём особенно любил Еврипид, в сохранившихся его произведениях данный приём используется восемь раз. В Новое время он встречается, например, у Мольера («Амфитрион»). В современной литературе выражение употребляется для указания на неожиданное разрешение трудной ситуации, которое не вытекает из естественного хода событий, а является чем-то искусственным, вызванным вмешательством извне (Бабичев, Боровский, 2003).

В РИ так называют любые вмешательства Мастера для стимулирования игрового процесса и прогресса игровых сюжетов.

exUSSR larp culture have numerous terms for this same phenomena which symbolize different aspects of game master intrusion in the game process of the larp. "Master intervention", "Masters despotism", "Masters will" and most ancient - which came from the theatre - "the piano in the bushes".

Diegesis, (Diegetic) - Диегезис
Source: Fatland (2005, 2006)

тип отражения действительности в произведениях - в отличие от миметического - изображает возможный, вымышленный мир, в котором встречаются нарративные (повествовательные) ситуации и события. Это такой способ изложения, в котором объекты и события именно описываются, о них рассказывается (в т.ч. . подробно). (Воробйова О. П., 2004).

Понятие это вводят еще Платон, а потом Аристотель и противопоставляют диегезис (с греч. «нарратив») и мимезис (с греч. «притворство»). То есть диегезис - это искусство, в котором зритель погружается в повествование.

В РИ это означает то что соответствует игровому миру. Все что соответствует роли. Субъективное восприятие мира игры персонажами.

Dionysian Zone- зона Дионисия
Source: Trad. Bockman (2003)

Концепция позаимствована из социальных наук, античной философии в частности. Такой зоной является место во времени и пространстве где Деонисийские порывы правят, а нормальные законы не применяются. Антиподом является зона Аполинария, где царит закон и здравый смысл.

Некоторые авторы описывали РИ как вид зоны Дионисия , где игроки посредствам вымышленных персонажей могут вести себя так как не рискнули бы в нормальном обществе. Шведский этнолог Лотте Густафсон использовал термин "Fortrollad sone" (зачарованная зона) как шведский аналог.

Dissipative- Диссипация
Source: Stenros (2002)

Термин позаимствован из математической теории хаоса и его использование противоречиво. РИ

построенная так, что её сюжетное завершение не конкретизировано, не является значительным для ролевой игры или роли прописаны так что, конфликтуя, своими достижениями обуславливают различные концовки, создавая сюжетные разветвления.

Dramatism-Драматизм
Source: Kim (2003)

Стиль создания игры или отыгрыша, при которых основной фокус делается на создание интересной сюжетной линии. Такой игрок будет делать упор на отыгрыше персонажа во благо общего сюжета.

Драматизм один из триады ролевых стилей. Часто драматизм путают с нарративизмом.

Ekstatikoi - Экстатико
Source: Pohjola (2001/2002)

Стиль ролевой игры, ставящий целью пережить персонажа, роль.

Из греческой театральной терминологии. Так Аристотель обозначал стиль отыгрыша роли путем переживания её.

Антиподом считается "Euplastoi"-симулирование роли.

Ряд скандинавских ролевиков используют этот термин как синоним «immersionism».

Freeform – свободная форма
Source: trad.

Традиционно ролевые игры свободной формы это – игры не относящиеся к каким-либо игровым традициям

Термин до сих пор вызывает дебаты.

В скандинавской традиции - павильонные ролевые игры, отвергающие основные общепринятые игровые механики настольных планшетных ролевых игр (к примеру, игровая система очков и игровые кости, а иногда и мастеров). Часто это маленькие, на 3-8 человек, короткие павильонки проводящиеся в одной комнате и без подготовки. Стало общепринятой практикой играть по уже прописанным сценариям и бывает по одним сценариям по несколько раз.

Близкое к нашим Словескам, Лангедокам .

Pervasive - распространяющийся, проникающий
Source: Nordic larp Wiki (2013)

От латинского pervas- 'проходить сквозь' (от pervadere)

Применительно к скандинавским ролевым играм, обозначает переплетение вымышленного игрового и реального мира. Как правило, для таких игр в качестве декораций используется реальный современный мир и реальные люди (к примеру, большинство городских игр по Миру Тьмы).

Playing to Lose (играть на проигрыш)
Source: Nordic Larp Wiki (2013)

Играть на проигрыш – определенный стиль отыгрыша, когда игрок стремится к увеличению сюжетного драматизма не победой, но позволяя своему персонажу проиграть в игровом сюжете, возможно и погибнуть. Чаще такой стиль применим в кооперационной игре и реже в соревновательной.

Immersion (погружение)

Термин – прямой аналог нашего термина погружение. В западной традиции есть больше производных, к примеру, immersive games (погружающие игры) книга под редакцией доктора Торнера. Некоторые используют данный термин со значением "отыгрыш".

Jeepform (Джипформ) новая форма

Так называют ролевые игры (не всегда павильонки, скорее лангедоки или костромские ри) носящие экспериментальный, а иногда и противоречивый харрактеригр свободной форм. Разрабатывает их в основном группа мастеров Vi åker jeep (Vi Åker jeep—the home of Jeepform, 2005-2007). Большинство игр этой формы задокументированы и доступны для проигрывания всеми желающими.

Вид freeform (см.) игры

Meta Technique (Мета техника)

Мета техниками называют: 1) внутрииировые деятельные метафоры.2) реальное\ неигровое измерение игры.

Возможно, изначально и появилось как производное от слова «метафора», но подтверждений этому пока нет.

Вообще в этот термин сейчас вкладывают разное, чаще – все, что связано с механикой игры и организационными моментами (правила, инструменты управления игрой, ритуалы, черный ящик, тени и т.п.).

До сих пор исследователи и практики не сошлись на одном определении данного понятия – самое широкое определение включает в себя всю игровую механику, а самое узкое наоборот подчеркивает мета технику как противовес механике.

Одно из более или менее внятных определений метатехники сводит все ко всем не внутриигровым неигровым взаимодействиям, т.е. взаимодействия не персонажей, но игроков.

Workshop или Pre-Larp Workshop (воркшоп) Мастерская, пред игровая мастерская.

Похоже на наше "сыгровка", но шире и глубже.

На данный момент активно используется по всем скандинавским странам.

Комплекс доигровых мероприятий, чаще тренингов, по сыгровке, проработке и отработке особенностей игры и т.п.

Хоть подобные пред-игровые мастерские, часто, разительно отличаются друг от друга и структурой и продолжительностью –- можно выделись следующие структурные компоненты:

1. Информатизация

2. Сплочение группы

3. Создание персонажей и\или игро- вых команд

4. Безопасность

5. Мета техники

6. Развитие персонажей или групп.

In russian tradition workshops are not used in larp subcultures. The closest thing

to it is "сыгровка" \ aprx. "gamewarmup". It is a pregame game, which has the purpose of getting all players get acquainted with some of the ingame mechanics, other players, game information, style and so on. The main idea is to have less of an adaptation period during the larp itself. The forms vary greatly: players can be writing in character letters to each other to get acquainted with the politics; or a team can gather together and play a usual in-character-day for a few days. Some people would arrive to the location a few months prior to a Viking larp to live there in character to get in to the role (we are just crazy some times). It is similar to the process and diversity of methods of how actors get in to the role.

Acknowledgements

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Eleanor Saitta

On Ethics

Larp as an artistic medium implies taking others with us on a journey. When we act in the world in a way that affects others, we're responsible for the ethics of our actions; this is fundamental to our membership in society. The conversation about ethics in larp is almost as old as our community, but it's happened in a dozen different threads. This piece attempts to bring those threads together, not to make a statement on what our ethics should be, but rather as a point of observation and a starting point for further conversation.

In the same moment that the Nordic larp community started playing more involved games, it started to talk to itself about the ethics of those games. This conversation has meandered through the community, lately finding a home in the context of the player safety debates. This essay attempts to summarize what I believe is the current consensus, where there is one, across the various threads. My hope is that a single summary will bear fruit for direct discussion moving forward and may lead to a better recognition of those areas of game design and production that have ethical components. Better understanding the framework in which we operate and its limits can let us take some kinds of risks more easily, knowing where our points of safety lie.

It should be emphasized, before we go further, that a safe game and an ethical game are not the same thing; the two properties are entirely independent of each other. Some danger is a component of many games we play, and in these games people may get hurt. We can call these "normal accidents" — things that are expected within the scope of play. However, in other cases, people are hurt unintentionally, under circumstances that may be similar to those normal accidents but which have different proximate or root causes; in many cases, these accidents can be the result of ethical violations. Distinguishing between the two is complex, and it's not my intention here to attempt to produce a guide, but rather to speak about ethics as such, separate from safety.

While in some instances I use normative language, this piece is purely observational. I don't intend to declare that a specific standard should be held, but rather merely that it appears to be commonly held. In order to avoid the appearance of censure when the intent is descriptive, all examples are explicitly constructed and should not be taken to refer to real people or games.

Consent

Consent is the most basic ethical structure within the larp community. When we enter the magic circle, we enter a state of changed social rules. If all parties have not agreed to those rules, actions are still bound under existing social norms. If there's a conflict between two people's understandings of the agreement, existing norms will likely win absent mitigating circumstances. Consent is thus the thing that makes play that violates social norms possible. The canonical example here is a boxing ring. Inside a boxing ring you're expected to punch people, but woe be unto you if your opponent was expecting a chess match.

Consent must be informed to at least a minimum degree. If I don't understand or are incapable of understanding the meaning of the act I'm consenting to, you can't really say I've consented. Equally importantly, I'm unlikely to say after the fact that whatever putative agreement you thought we had was reasonable, just like the person who got decked while they were looking for the chessboard. In the course of the discussion of bleed-out (the emotional experience of a character having a lasting influence on the player) and of the "positive negative experience" (games that are actively unpleasant to play but seen as desirable), some time has been spent on the question of to what degree designing games intended to be painful to play is ethical; the general consensus is that informed consent is a minimum bar.

Consent isn't a one-time choice, but rather a state. I've consented to an act while I maintain a state of consent. If I withdraw that consent, even if an act I previously consented to has already started and is ongoing, I'm no longer consenting to it and all parties involved have a responsibility to stop the event as soon as they become aware of this. In some cases, especially involving either temporary impairment or unexpected consequences, consent may even be effectively withdrawn after the fact. Imagine here the owner of a china shop who has consented to allow you to stage an argument in his store overnight, not realizing that you intended to have this argument in character as a bull.

A number of cases can make informed consent difficult in larps. Secrecy is an obvious problem. While making certain plot points a surprise may be occasionally useful for dramaturgy, the consensus is generally that concealing themes, situations, or techniques that some players may find challenging or unacceptable restricts their ability to effectively consent to a game. This has happened in games intended to act as political allegories or to change player's political beliefs where this fact wasn't communicated to players beforehand. In some cases, these games have been successful and received broad acclaim from players; in other cases, players have been left feeling violated — sometimes in the same game. Players are not all alike, and consent is the structure that permits them to judge for themselves what is appropriate.

Certain game design techniques designed to stress players physically or psychologically require specific consent, and in some cases run into the boundaries of informed consent entirely. When designing a game that intentionally uses solitary confinement, dehumanization, control of diet, or manipulation of sleep and day/night cycles to break down psychological resistance and force players to more deeply immerse in the story, players may choose to participate in the game on the assumption that these techniques won't affect them. In practice, these techniques work and work well, regardless of player belief. As with potentially challenging themes, the consensus within the community appears to be that while meeting a strict definition of informed con-

sent is difficult here, informing players of the techniques to be used and their general efficacy is both a minimum and can be sufficient, although designers must tread this territory carefully. Specific care must be taken with either new players or for players who only have experience in significantly less challenging games. Players have a responsibility to self-evaluate before participation to ensure that they are in a position to and wish to consent to participate, a process that should be supported by both organizers and the community.

Even more critical than informed consent for players are cases where designers use tools whose implications they do not fully understand, either in workshops or games. For instance, trust-falls are often used in workshops as a technique for building player trust. They're sometimes used casually, as icebreaker techniques, when in fact they can have a fairly significant psychological impact on players. Worse, they're sometimes intentionally abused. An intentionally broken trust-fall can leave a serious impact on people.

Many situations in larps can be seen as producing states of temporary impairment. When techniques like those mentioned in the previous paragraph are in play, they can obviously place players into an altered state — that's the point. In this state, there can be questions as to the value of continuing player consent, or consent to new situations. Certainly, it would be problematic to propose entirely new themes, techniques, or significant rule changes to players already in this kind of altered state. In a less extreme example, player judgement with respect to both consent and larger ethical questions may be clouded when either experiencing significant amounts of adrenaline or simply in a situation that's already demanding most of their cognitive resources.

Play in public, either in merely non-isolated settings or in games where players are explicitly intended to engage the public, raises obvious and particular issues of consent. Assuming that risks of liability and interactions with the police, if any, are appropriately handled, a certain amount of leeway exists in most places run for people acting oddly in public.

There are limits to this tolerance, as a long history of what are thankfully now mostly just amusing anecdotes can attest. Games that both interact with the public and deal with potentially disturbing themes or scenes must consider their impact carefully. As games have been played partially in public for many years now, most of these limits have been well-explored and it is understood, for instance, that it's not just legally inadvisable to have a gang of characters run through a mall firing blank rounds at each other and expiring messily, but also ethically problematic for potentially traumatized and non-consenting bystanders.

Games that exist within the frame of conventional reality and attempt to actively engage non-players in non-traumatic ways may operate in a grey area. While non-players who don't understand what's actually going on may not mind, the ethics of e.g. accepting the charity of a bystander on fictive pretences is undecided. The difference is likely a matter of degree, a standard that's common for matters of ethics. Asking an uninvolved bystander to pay one's tram fare in the context of a game might be fine; sleeping on their couch for a month as a fictional character most certainly wouldn't be.

Exceptional hazards call for a higher degree of care around consent and may require the organizers ensuring that all players are aware of the risk involved. For instance, if a game involved skydiving it would clearly not be reasonable for players to merely accept the risk. Rather, the organizers would need to ensure that all players were appropriately trained and had relevant experience before they consented. The same could be said of some games involving, for instance, wilderness survival.

The final broad issue around consent involves structures designed to make the withdrawal of consent during play more

difficult. Withdrawing consent in a game stops or prevents play at least temporarily and raises the possibility for off-game social conflict. These consequences sometimes stop players who would like to withdraw consent from doing so. Withdrawing consent doesn't need to involve someone leaving a game entirely — it applies to the use of the "cut" and "brake" safewords during game play as well. It's been acknowledged in a number of community forums that social pressure causes these words to be underused to the point where their value as safety mechanisms is in some doubt, while their presence still encourages players to push harder than they might be willing to do without a safeword. Possible responses to this include actively training players to use the words during pre-game workshops, normalizing a culture where use of a safeword is considered a success (playing up to the pre-agreed limit of emotional intensity and then correctly recognizing it and responding to it), and creating an ensemble culture where status is conveyed on the personal exploration, not absolute endurance of suffering.

A broad agreement appears to exist that the community, designers, and players should actively resist structures that make withdrawing consent harder even where unintentional, and that especially for challenging games, intentionally designing such structures is a clear ethical violation. An example of this that's arisen frequently is games that structurally require pair or group signups, where all members of the group are removed from play if anyone decides they're unable to continue. There does not yet seem to be a consensus with regard to organizer responsibility for ensuring that safety mechanisms do function in a game, at least not to the level where organizers who simply assume that known-questionable mechanisms are sufficient receive any kind of censure.

It should be clear through all of this that consent is not remotely sufficient to render a game "safe". What it helps do is render a game ethical; participants may still get hurt.

Conflicts of Interest

Even assuming all players agree to enter and remain in play, conflicts of interest can still present ethical issues. Conflicts of interest can occur in a number of directions, e.g.:

- Between a player's stated wishes within the scope of the game and those (in that scope) they do not reveal — for instance, a player that agrees to a character role with a leadership position in the fiction, possibly because of their experience, when they might actually prefer less central but more personally interesting character.

- Between desires within the scope of the game and those outside it, such as wishes around attention or notoriety, financial interest, unresolved and pre-existing interpersonal conflicts, sexual desire, or other similar categories. This is one of the most common categories of conflict; the canonical example is a player who'd like to play a relationship between their character and another not because of the fiction, but because they have a real-world crush on the player and want to use the game to get close to them.

- Between a participant's personal needs or wishes and those of the group that they have agreed to share. For example, a player who wants to play a heroic story of triumph when they've agreed to be part of a tragedy.

- Between a participant's wishes as, for instance, a player and an organizer or a player and a documentarian, if they are performing multiple roles in a game. For instance, a player intentionally intruding in spaces where their character isn't welcome in-game to get photographs, or an organizer who is also a player trying to steer the game against the wishes of the players due to a conflict in visions.

- Between an organizer's desire to see a

game continue and their duty to player's physical and emotional safety. While we covered this issue in some cases above, it can occur in many cases, some serious and some that can be resolved with little comment. For instance, if a medical issue occurs during a game, the organizers may have it well in hand and wish to see play continue without interruption, but players who realize the issue was non-diegetic but not that it was taken care of may be distressed if no information is forthcoming.

A number of these issues fall under the general category of bleed-in. I highlight them here as a conflict of interest as that part of their nature is what makes them problematic, while many other ways in which a player's life may influence their character are neutral or positive.

Conflicts of interest aren't always dramatic — some of the above I'm sure many readers recognize and can even recall a variety of cringeworthy stories about, hopefully not their own. However, many people might call the last example an expected part of the creative process, albeit one that might have been handled better. This is useful as it reminds us that not all conflicts of interest can or should be resolved in all cases, and that issues arise most seriously around conflicts of interest that are both undisclosed and of a nature where other participants might withdraw or modify their consent were they to be disclosed. In many cases, some set of the participant's desires may not be socially acceptable, which can result in strong social pressure not to disclose them. This seems to happen most often with sex.

While an ethical breach may begin immediately upon agreeing to perform a specific action in the presence of a conflict of interest, the breach often will not be noticed until other participants realize the conflict of interest. This delay can worsen conflict, where an issue that could have been easily resolved if negotiated at the onset breaks the game, causes significant off-game conflict, or leaves a player feeling violated when the conflict is discovered later.

Conflicts of interest are unavoidable at some level. In many cases, if conflicts are disclosed, compromises may be negotiated that all parties can consent to. Negotiation as a specific social script has not been made as explicit in the community discourse as one might expect from the frequency that conflicts arise, and as it's a skill that becomes both easier and less socially awkward with practice, this lack may relate to the frequency with which undisclosed, unnegotiated conflicts of interest arise.

Regardless of whether a conflict is disclosed, the community as a whole has a clear expectation of good faith interpretation of shared agreements. Individuals are expected to interpret statements in the sense they were intended, even (and sometimes especially) if they would personally benefit from an alternate interpretation. While this is a standard expectation in the context of social agreements, it's even more pronounced with respect to agreements made within the scope of games. The community expects participants to be less attached to individual outcomes within games and more motivated by collective outcomes. In general, participants are also expected to prioritize the game-related goals and needs of the group over personal, non-game desires.

One specific conflict is of particular note as it involves power structures unique to larp. The designer of a game (particularly if they're also involved in production and casting) can uniquely shape situations for other players. If they have desires unrelated to the game, they can abuse their position and power, forcing players into situations they may not have anticipated and may not feel able to back out of. This can be uniquely damaging when the situations involve portrayals of sex, abuse, or other emotionally charged issues. Note that when both (all) participants in the creation of such a portrayal negotiate scenes from a position of equal power, play in such charged territory can work without problems, even if

participants are satisfying (disclosed) off-game desires. Key here is mutual informed and withdrawable consent, clear disclosure of any conflicts of interest, relative power equality when negotiating such situations, and support from or at least a lack of conflict with the larger game, its themes, and other players.

Equality of Effort, Outcome, and Presence

Nordic games, and indeed most organizational efforts, expect a certain degree of equality of effort between participants. Such expectations may be unstated, and someone who is seen as not pulling at least their weight may see social sanctions. Problems occur when different parties have different expectations of the work expected of them. This issue can be compounded when participants are unaware of or overestimate their ability to contribute, overcommit, and then are unable to deliver. As with many issues, this is significantly magnified if financial return or risk is involved.

The Nordic community also favours equality of outcome over equality of origin, generally speaking. Individuals who have status in the community, the players of characters with status inside games, and organizers in a position of power are generally expected to contribute more to collective efforts because of this. Much of both of these two issues simply reflect Scandinavian society at large.

The participatory ethic of Nordic larp implies a degree of commitment to the game at hand. Once consent has been negotiated, everyone is expected to more or less give themselves over to the game. While everyone has characters they do and do not get into, has times they may find immersion difficult, the assumption is that everyone is willing to be fully present. This is the affective labour of play, and like any other labour, letting those around you do all the work violates the contract of the game.

Violations of Written and Unwritten Rules and Responsibilities

Nordic larp has been described as a "social extreme sport", and as such we create rules for ourselves to let us play harder. Ethics may be a more general case of this, but in many games we establish specific tools, metatechniques, and boundaries before play, for the safety of players and to enable exploration. Violating any of these is a clear ethical breach, in proportion to the intent behind the violation, its degree, and the consequences.

More subtly, organizers can attempt to either reinforce or undermine the same structures that they de jure establish for player safety. There seems to be a broad consensus that it's a clear ethical breach if anyone attempts to covertly undermine safety structures overtly established in the game. The breach is magnified significantly if it's done from a position of power as an organizer or writer. This covers a scale from intentionally designing structures you know will fail in play through merely turning a blind eye to indications that safety structures will be insufficient. More discussion may be fruitful as to when organizers have a responsibility to override the social resistance to withdrawal of consent in play and actively step in to prevent safety structures breaking. This latter is complicated by genre-drift, where games intended by the organizers to run in one way are taken up by players and performed in a very different way, where what is seen by all players as an entirely acceptable outcome may be somewhat shocking to organizers.

Organizers and other players may mostly consider playing to win and violations of the honor system often used to decide conflicts as examples of bad play. However they may, especially if they result in a player damaging outcomes for other players sufficiently, endangering others, or simply stepping far enough outside of accepted social norms, rise to the level of ethical issues.

It's traditional that, because a player isn't the same person as their character, in-game actions shouldn't result in off-game consequences. This, known as the "roleplay contract", is both a critical part of creating the magic circle of play and an active fiction. Exactly when this contract is observed and when it is voided involves a complicated and often collective social negotiation; suffice it to say here that, even absent violations of consent, conflicts of interest, unequal effort, or violations of explicit or implicit rules, player behaviour in game can, over time, cause them to be considered less than ethical, albeit in a generally diffuse manner. This is magnified when a player has an active choice in the characters they play. One should be allowed to play a villain sometimes; if one chooses consistently for a decade to create characters that are evil in the same ways, people will rightly wonder about the ethics of the player.

Very overt breaches of either written or unwritten rules are normally not considered mere ethical violations; if behaviour rises to the level where it is sanctionable under national law or clearly violates off-game sanity, a breach of a different sort has occurred.

For organizers of games one more potential category of issues arises. Players have certain basic expectations. When we undertake to play, we negotiate a huge amount, including everything from whether players can expect to sleep with a roof over their heads on up. However, in that negotiation an organizer commits to provide for commonly understood needs of their players either explicitly or implicitly and this is considered a reasonably serious contract. This covers everything from basic human needs like food and shelter through ensuring that if a game is emotionally difficult, sufficient time and opportunity will be provided for player-lead debriefing and aftercare. The details of what is and is not expected have changed over time and will continue to evolve as the medium changes, but the fact of a set of player expectations won't. The implicit nature of some of these expectations, especially around issues like time for aftercare, is a potential source of conflict. These conflicts can be more pronounced when players from different subcultures within Nordic larp meet.

The final responsibility I'd like to take up is aesthetic responsibility, possibly the most distant of ethical issues, but also one of the most fundamental. The art we create has an impact on the world and on ourselves as players. We have a responsibility to at the least consider that impact when we design and play games. Similarly, we have a duty to those whose stories we tell and to those whose lives are reflected in the facets of those stories, even when we play a very long way from the lives we live. We have a duty to take those lives seriously even when we play lightly, and to be aware of the structures we recreate and give energy to in the world, a duty duly reflected in the consideration the community gives to this topic in most games. The writers of games (and players who create their own characters) sometimes face ethical censure if their creations are out of step with the community consensus around aesthetic responsibility. As games have become more involved over time, that level of responsibility has deepened.

Conclusion

Ethics are a scaffold upon which we build our world. The more strongly we brace that scaffold, the more we may push and pull atop it. We let our scaffold rot beneath us at our peril. Hopefully this compilation may contribute a small plank.

Claus Raasted

So You Want to Spread the Larp Revolution?

"Every succesful revolution started with a statement. This is a statement."

So, you want to spread the larp revolution?

Larp. It's cool. We love it. Yeah. So far so good. But how do we get from there to getting larp considered culture on the same level as theatre and making it accepted as part of modern society? There are several ways to do this and that's what I'm going to talk a little about.

Ah, but you ask: 'Why should you listen to Claus? What does he know?' Not neccesarily a lot but on the subject of bringing larp to the mainstream – quite a bit. When it comes to larp as part of mainstream culture Denmark is by far the leading country in the world. We have the highest amount of larpers as compared to the country population. It's been 7 years since the first latex sword was seen in a supermarket chain and when appearing on national television to comment on Cosplay, I've been greeted with the words "You roleplayers are old news. Everyone knows who you are."

Since 2002 I've made a living doing larps for non-larpers and selling the idea of larp to the general public. I've been quoted by our minister for culture on how teaching 8-year old orcs how to vote on orcish plans is actually also teaching 8-year old kids about democracy in practice. I've had a 2-hour chat with our minister for education about how larping can be used for teaching, and discussed ideas on how the Danish public school system can benefit from some of the things we've learned from doing larps for thousands and thousands of children.

I'm not just trying to brag here (though of course that's also fun), but I want to stress that while some people don't believe in larp experts, I consider myself one on this subject.

I'm going to be talking a lot about 'them' for the next couple of pages. Who are 'they'? Who is this 'them'? 'They' are the normal people. The mundanes. The muggles. Those who don't yet realise that larp is the future and those you want to convince that it is.

Some of 'them' will be people you want to get money from. Some of 'them' will be

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people you want to impress. Others will be co-workers/family/friends who complain about your strange hobby. 'They' can be anyone.

But for whatever reason you want 'them' to change their opinion on larp. While there are many ways to accomplish this here are ten that work. So start spreading the love.

1: If You Explain It in Simple Terms They'll Like It

One of our biggest failings as larpers and roleplayers in general is overcomplicating things. I know, I know... you want people to understand all the nuances and intricacies of what you do and if you play Dungeons & Dragons you want them to understand that a Fighter and a Paladin are not the same.

But guess what? People don't want complicated. They want simple. If someone sends you a link to a youtube movie, how many seconds are you willing to give it before it turns interesting? 5? 10? Probably not even that much. Explain things using simple words.

'Larp is organised play. No more. No less.'

'Larp is improvised theater without a manuscript.'

'Larp is dressing up in weird clothes and pretending to be other people.'

Make it simple and people will listen.

This is also why this is a 10-point manifesto and not a PhD-study. Yeah, also because I don't have a PhD. That, too.

What Does This Mean For You?

Don't make things complicated if you don't have to. If they are complicated then uncomplicate them. Use examples that people can relate to. If you're talking to somebody who's a football fan then explain larp using football examples. If it's your mom explain it as child's play – just with adults. If an explanation doesn't work use another one next time.

2: If You Quote 'Experts' They'll Like It

There's an old 'golden rule' that says 'Nobody believes that friends or friends of friends are smart.' Of course it's not true (very few golden rules are) but it's true enough that you need to understand how it works. When your boss asks what larp can be used for and you quote your friend Petr, nobody's going to take you seriously but when you quote the world's leading expert on roleplaying for children Claus Raasted it will sound impressive. This sadly means that none of my friends quote me but refer to renowned Czech larp expert Petr Pouchly instead; such is life.

What Does This Mean For You?

People who are far away sound impressive. It's sad but true. Not necessarily far away geographically but mentally. It needs to sound like it's somebody who's an authority. That's why people with university degrees are good to quote. They sound like they know something even though they sometimes have no clue. It sounds more convincing if you quote someone who has a PhD in Sociology, but knows jack shit about larp than your friend who has twenty years of expertise at the front lines. Sad, but true. Of course, if you can find someone with an impressive degree AND actual knowledge, that's hard to beat. Of course, if want to look at (or do) actual research, it's probably a better idea to talk to the sociologist even though your friend might be loaded with even more anecdotes than I am!

3: Fear is Always the Third Reason

At Rollespilsakademiet, my company, we have this mantra that 'fear' is always the third reason no matter what the list is about. Strange people, those I work with.

What Does This Mean For You?

When you're trying to explain something to people remember that after giving them two good reasons give them a third rea-

son that has to do with fear. Fear of being laughed at. Fear of being overheard. Fear of being labelled as strange geeks.

Because fear is always the third reason.

4: If It Looks Good, They'll Like It

Everybody thinks parkour is cool. It's hot athletic people jumping and doing crazy-ass-shit stuff with walls, cranes and rooftoops. It looks good.

Have you seen youtube videos of American larps? They mostly look like shit. I'm not kidding around. Badly-dressed adults throwing weird small bean bags at each other and yelling 'Lightning Bolt' doesn't look cool. Sure it's great fun; I've been to four American larps and enjoyed myself quite a bit there. But they looked like crap.

If you want to sell something – anything – make it look good. 400 adults dressed in plate armour crashing together in a battle that looks as violent as the ones in action movies is easy for people to like. Two untalented actors in bad pirate costumes making horrible in-game jokes just doesn't have the same effect.

What Does This Mean For You?

If you put crappy videos on youtube they'll be seen by someone. If you show people pictures of ugly larpers in horrible costumes they'll believe that larp sucks even though the players may be awesome. If you show them the Nordic Larp book they'll be impressed. It's simple: If you want people to be impressed by what they do show them stuff that looks impressive.

5: If the Cool Kids Do It They'll Like It

Whether it's larp, parkour or wearing crazy clothes – if the cool kids do it they'll like it. If leading Hollywood actors started talking about this cool thing they do in their spare-time called larp the reputation of our hobby will receive a worldwide boost. If celeb-rities endorse something it's easier to sell the idea to non-celebrities. This is just as true for larp as it is for waterskiing.

What Does This Mean For You?

If you know any cool/famous/influential people try to get them hooked. It'll help. This is sad but true. It's smarter to get a local politician interested in larp than your neighbour, unless your neighbour is a rock star.

6: If You Tell Them They Should be Proud by Association They'll Like It.

One of the things I always tell Danes about larp is that Denmark is the leading nation in the world when it comes to larp. Not because we do the most interesting stuff or have the most players, which we don't. But nowhere has larp reached the mainstream as it has in Denmark. And it makes them feel good.

If you tell Danes that children's larp is a more or less uniquely Danish thing (which is true) and tell them that we (the Danes) are world leaders when it comes to kids and roleplaying they feel proud. Just like being a world leader in windmills, sausages or submarine technology sounds good to people who don't have a clue about either of these things.

What Does This Mean For You?

Tell them that larp in your country is interesting in some way. Maybe your larp scene started before others did. Maybe you had the first Lord of the Rings larp ever. Maybe you're the only people who've done larps about the 1968 'revolution' in Prag. Find something that's cool and talk about it. It works. Playing on national pride works when it comes to larp also.

7: If You Make Them Understand That You Are Relaxed About It They Will Like It

One of the reasons larp has spread like it has in Denmark is that most people think it's a fun, refreshing and healthy activtiy for children. Of course it's a bit annoying that they don't know that it's exactly the same for adults but it's a start. One of the reasons they like it is that when kids do something it's cute. Adults wearing crappy costumes and doing bad acting is just embarrassing, but kids doing the same is cute. Adults pretending to be circus performers is horrible. Kids doing it? Cute.

Even adults can be cute if they're serious about something that seems ridiculous. Just not too serious. Stamp collecting is seen as nerdy because stamp collectors are dead-serious about their stamps. Collecting stamps (or coins) in a relaxed way and laughing about it is seen as interesting (and a little cute).

What Does This Mean For You?

When you talk about your hobby think about how it looks to other people. Does it seem weird and bizarre to them? Then maybe talking about dressing up in elf ears and being deadly serious about it isn't the way to go. If you meet someone who's passionate about teddy bears, chewing gum wrapping paper or Iranian poetry you'll be much more like to listen if they can make fun of themselves. The same goes for larp. It's ok to be passionate but not everyone will understand that passion off the bat and it can easily seem extremely weird. After all... elf ears?

8: If You Get Them to See That It's Powerful They'll Like It

In the 80s and 90s most adults thought that computer games were silly and would rather have their kids play football than computer games. Today most adults (at least where I come from!) know that games can also be educational and learning games are a common feature in many schools. Football is still accepted, though.

What happened along the way? The right people realised that computer games could be powerful tools when it came to learning and suddenly they were ok. It is precisely the same with larp. Ten years ago larp was an unknown subculture and if people knew about it they laughed. Today museums, companies and even religious institutions use larp for learning and pedagogical purposes.

Larp hasn't changed a lot. The way it's seen has.

What Does This Mean For You?

Instead of talking about what larp is talk about what it can do. Anyone can understand that it's easier to understand a historical period if you've lived it. Nobody will dispute that you can learn something from trying out different perspectives. That's what we all do. So tell people about it.

9: If You Don't Force Them to Try It They'll Like It

One of the most common mistakes of enthusiasts everywhere is their relentless quest to try to get others interested. 'This Harry Potter novel is cool. You have to read it,' 'You should try out this larp thing because I love it,' or 'I like gangbangs. Why don't you give it a try?'

People want to try new things but they don't want to be pressured constantly. Tell them you'll help them if they think it sounds cool but don't try to get them hooked. If what you're doing sounds interesting they'll want to try it. If it doesn't they won't no matter how much you bother them.

What Does This Mean For You?

One of the things I've found the least appealing about larpers is the tendency to try to convert the uninterested. I've done my share of preaching – more than most, I'd

guess – but always to the curious and the interested. Not to the friends who just want me to shut up about it. Don't try to convert everybody; convert those who want to know more and the rest will follow. It's a slow battle, but it can be won.

10: If You Don't Do It No-One Will

Stop believing that the revolution will happen without you. Because then you surely won't make much of a difference.

What Does This Mean for You?

It means that you don't know where you are in ten years. I certainly didn't know I'd be here ten years ago. Act like what you do matters even if you joke about it. It does.

J. Tuomas Harviainen

From Hobbyist Theory to Academic Canon

In this chapter, I analyze key examples on how texts published in Knutepunkt books and their siblings have contributed to academic research and understanding of larps. I start with an analysis on the differences between types of such texts, their intended goals, and the way in which they can - or can not - be seen as a part of academic discourse. Then, I move onto the discussion on how repeated citing of some non-academic Knutepunkt contributions have effective turned those into parts of academia. Following that, I discuss the problematic status of larp manifestos. I then conclude with some observations on how I expect the process to continue in the future.

In my opinion, the defining characteristic of Knutepunkt books has always been mutability. With new editors have come different ideas, often in direct opposition to the year before. Therefore, one volume may have had an artistic focus, another aimed for provocation, yet another just been a mishmash due to the editors having had (in the words of one particular editor), "also some real books to edit" at the same time. The most visible conflict of themes, nevertheless, has been between aiming for an academic versus aiming for a journalistic or practical style. In other words, it has been a battle for maximal value - but towards very different audiences. Yet, curiously, the texts most cited by academics may not

actually be those of an academic bent. Nor may they be of the highest quality.

It is no surprise that the most often referenced contributions seem to come from the early books, particularly *Beyond Role and Play* (Montola & Stenros, eds., 2004). This is however not only a question of time, even as every year has added a reference or two here and there into the pool of citations. The most significant reason for the number of citations is, I believe, the fact that the early contributions were essays in which grounding viewpoints were expressed by many authors who eventually became central thinkers to how the Nordic scene views larp. This goes for not just future

game scientists, but also artists, designers and philosophers. I by no means claim that the best or the most dedicated were active at that point, just that the first wave of future professionals laid the groundwork of conceptualization and vocabularies - as well as manifestos - the others have been almost forced to either follow or oppose. In essence, for good or worse, they set the baseline.

Crucial also is the fact that most of the academics (i.e. professional or semi-professional scholars who mostly write about larps in an academic context and on academic venues) who have emerged from amongst the Knutepunkt scene were contibutors to the earliest books, myself included, or their scholarly scions. Therefore, it is very hard to separate lines of teaching from lines of relevance. In the following sub-chapters, however, I will try and show how particularly citation done by the first wave of larp academics has been instrumental in not only shaping the discourse, but also in turning certain key contributions from larp theory and design into academically credible contributions.

The Relationship of Knutepunkt Books and Academia

Knutepunkt books and their siblings outside the Nordic countries were first and foremost written for the scenes themselves. That is, larpers interested in immediately relevant clues. The tone, however, was often closer to academia than journalism or practical instructions. While this means that they were sometimes less accessible for practitioners, they were also more credible for citing, even if they de facto were semi-academic. Therefore, as the first future larp academics started publishing more formal work, they were able to cite those Knutepunkt articles that they saw as both sufficiently factual and useful. This was possible because they were (and often still are, despite the occasional cry to the contrary) active larpers, sometimes also larp designers, themselves. So what was

cited was that which was found to be *credible by practitioners themselves*.

Looking back at the early academic contributions that became initial cornerstones of larp-related doctoral dissertations, we can see how certain Knutepunkt essays were already treated on par with early academic works on larp - sometimes even superior to them. Montola (2008, originally written in 2005), for example, cites among his 48 references no less than 17 articles from Knutepunkt books. I, in turn (Harviainen, 2007), had 12 Knutepunkt texts and one lecture held at Knutepunkt 2006 amongst my 35 references. We could chalk this up as an omission by the reviewers of those articles, not familiar with the sources in question, but the fact that the arguments still stood solid during dissertation reviews in 2012 says differently.

I believe most of the academically cited Knutepunkt works have survived the test of time because they ring *true* in the ears of larp players and designers. In the next sub-chapters, I will examine why this may be so and then, heretically, discuss why it actually might not.

Looking at the Cornerstones

A set of searches on e.g. Google Scholar will point out certain Knutepunkt texts as much more often cited than the others. They furthermore stand apart even when one removes the citations made by their own authors. They come in three categories: first expressions, paths to a clearing, and templates of accuracy.

First expressions encompass articles and essays the contents of which were later developed (much) further, but are mentioned time and again because they contained the initial ideas. For example, the key contents of Markus Montola's *Role-playing as interactive construction of subjective diegeses* (2003) have been repeated time and again in his later work, but in order to show who stated something before whom, it is often necessary to mention the point of origin as well.

In the second group, *paths to a clearing*, we have contributions that lead to a nod of acknowledgment, but have not really been developed since. The key example again comes with the same author name attached: *A semiotic view on diegesis construction* (Loponen & Montola, 2004) examined the way larpers make sense of semiotic discrepancies and differences in the play environment. The argument has since been built upon several times, but never really re-visited, so the core remains almost untouched. In a similar vein, John H. Kim's *Immersive story* (2004) has sparked repeated arguments on how to perceive larp narratives (particularly relating to larp-as-art), when players all have their own individual viewpoints, even if it does not equal the theory impact of the author's massively cited earlier work (1998). In some sense, this second group is a sibling to the first category, as here too we see a set of ideas first mentioned.

Most interesting, however, is the third segment. In *templates of accuracy*, we find the rare bird, an empirical or design article that expressed its ideas so well that it has become a cornerstone, *on par with any academic, peer-reviewed work*. This is epitomized by one particular contribution, Eirik Fatland's *Incentives as tools of larp dramaturgy* (2005, often cited alongside its 2006 companion piece). That particular article gets repeatedly cited as an authoritative source on the basics of designing larp narratives. While the citations may increasingly add also other sources, the fact remains that this particular contribution remains the core around which the expansions are built.

Yet, despite its practitioner-perceived accuracy, *Incentives* did not acquire its academic level status by way of being right. It has gained that credibility by being cited. As more and more peer-reviewed articles and high-profile books reference it, an article can become to be seen as nearly canonic, at least as far as larp scholars are concerned. The same process takes place in many fields, especially if the author is known as a practitioner whose work is valued or even more so, seen as exemplary. For example, neither Bernie De Koven (1978), Keith Johnstone (1979), nor Konstantin Stanislavski (e.g. 2010) were very academic, yet their thoughts keep getting cited as academically relevant, maybe even authoritative at times. In the case of an essay accepted by the community of practitioners as accurate, this is a positive thing. However, academic citation can also sometimes exalt non-academic or biased sources that are not always that credible.

Nowhere is this as evident as in the case of the Nordic immersion discussion. As shown by Matthijs Holter (2007), discourse on what exactly counts as being immersed is a massive can of worms, where people talk way past each other while using the same terms. Because of this, central contributions get either ignored due to different paradigm or platform and the complexity glossed over (see e.g. Calleja, 2011; Quandt & Kröger, eds., 2013, for examples of such glossing), or they are accepted without sufficient critique. Even as holistic steps are taken to rectify the situation (e.g. Torner & White, eds., 2012), the not-so-occasional less accurate reference gets through, cited as authoritative. Many of those concern the issue of immersion, in particular. This is the dark side of the credibility equation, to which we turn in the next sub-chapter.

The Manifesto Problem

Not every Knutepunkt text is created equal, as far as credibility is concerned. Alongside the track of empirical and design research runs a tradition of purely ideological texts. This is all well and good, and has in my opinion benefited the community immensely. An outsider, however, may not have the knowledge required to separate ideals from data. Nowhere is this as obvious as in the cases where larp manifestos have been cited.

Manifestos have, ever since the Turku case (Pohjola, 1999), been a central part of Nordic larp discourse, one that still sporadically continues (for a brief summary, see Harviainen, 2010). Through them, larpers,

designers and scholars alike have been able to recognize the ideals of their colleagues, and - increasingly over the years - been furthermore able to discuss individual viewpoints while finding common ground. The problems arise, however, when their ideas are taken as research. This is fortunately not common beyond the level of discourse and the occasional lecture, and most of the time, academic works do take the suggestions with a proper grain of salt, stating that the manifesto texts "argue" rather than "prove" (see Falk & Davenport, 2004, for an excellent example).

Nevertheless, the situation is in truth more complex. The authors of several key manifestos have over the years engaged in academic or semi-academic discourse with their own work. Pohjola, for example, has provided critique of his own manifesto (2004), while simultaneously expanding its arguments to new directions, as have several others. In contrast, however, other manifesto authors have instead of critique moved on to producing focused games that (seemingly) validate their points, without really discussing the criticism the manifestoes have received (see e.g. Harviainen, 2010, on those who signed the "Dogma 99" of Fatland and Wingård (1999)). Most curiously, some manifestos (and a couple of similar essays) have achieved an academic citation status, because they have been found useful. A good example of such is Westlund's *The storyteller's manifesto* (2004), which discusses the creation of strongly plot-driven larps, but has since its inception been also reverse-engineered as a tool (by myself and others) to show how dissonant yet meaningful play can be intentionally created by going against its precepts.

Furthermore, we also have the occasional manifesto that has actually sought to be research, or at least a close analogy. Exemplifying this trend is the *Meilahti school* of Hakkarainen and Stenros (2003), in which a social identity theory is used to potentially explain immersive experiences. In my opinion, it is closer to the second category of the cornerstone texts: a path to a clear-

ing, which has since then been occasionally explored, but not to a sufficient depth, and not in true continuation of the hypotheses.

All these, too, survive as references because they have reached the critical mass needed for further citation (which is not very high yet, when it comes to the study of larps). In most cases, they are taken as what they are - ideological texts. Yet here and there we see leaking through moments where they are cited as authoritative, descriptive of the entire Nordic scene or, worst of all, as research. Therefore, a new critical mass is needed, to present the Nordic tradition(s) in the proper, truthful light.

Discussion

The purpose of this short chapter has been to point out that more than anything, practitioner knowledge and repeated mentions are what garners academic respect to a Knutepunkt article that is not a larp report or design document (which may get respect regardless of citation numbers). This is something that goes against the grain of field complaints, and should be in my opinion kept constantly in mind when offering practitioner critique of larp academia.

In the future, I expect such citing to further increase. Not only has the Nordic scene, with its sibling publications from other countries, and through including non-Nordic authors in the Knutepunkt books, produced more and more citable high-quality material. It has also engaged in continual semi-academic critique with that material, turning the Nodal Point tradition into a community of discourse. This way, the works - despite being maybe tied up in the argumentation and jargon of the early authors - keep evolving, keep getting refined, keep becoming *more and more relevant*. We can see similar processes taking place in the wider field of game studies as well, relating to the works of e.g. Jesper Juul (2005) or Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman (2004).

For the academic part of the community, what the Knutepunkt essays truly repre-

sent is not theory, but empirics. They are documented empirics of field research, empirics of design, empirics of player studies and - also - hypotheses based on those empirics. They are by no means systematic empirics, but that does not mean they are not valuable. What the academic larp community will, in turn, provide for those empirics is plausibility tests, by placing the individual documented experiments' results in a wider context.

I for one feel a lot more confident in applying my findings to my next game design, when I know that I am both drawing upon player data from the field, from numerous games that are not my own, and at the same time, have validated my ideas through the academic refinement and review processes. Then, and only then, do I feel safe and informed enough to commit myself to writing a larp that may actually push the proverbial envelope.

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Anita Myhre Andersen is an historian, economist and teacher. She has worked with larp, theatre and film since 1995. She was one of the people behind the wargame 1942 (Bergen 2000) and one of the initiators for the cooperation with Belarus. She have made larp in Botswana and is currently working with childrens larp in Lebanon. In addition she works with childrens larp for Tidsreiser AS and with making larp for and with youth in Bergen.

Charles Bo Nielsen. After a year with extraordinary experiences, having his larp "What are you worth" (WAYW) filmed into a Discovery Channel documentary, participating as an 'expert' at the Larp Writer Summer School and getting even more clarity about gender issues in larp - Charles has a lot to share about character creation in larp. As a parallel interest Charles has studied Jung's typology and Meyers-Briggs type indicators for the past 5 years. Charles is writing this article with Hanne Urhøj, his mother. She is a Jungian analyst specialized in Jung's typology, Myers Briggs type indicators and John Beebe's Eight-function Model.

Claus Raasted (b. 1979) is a professional larper from Denmark. Claus is mainly known for his books on larp (15 as of now) and for being one of the pioneers in bringing childrens' larp to the world. Along with Charles Bo Nielsen, Claus produced "What are you worth?", a larp that's been featured on the Discovery Channel. He is also the driving force behind The Roleplaying Academy Podcast and the chairman of the Danish non-profit organisation Rollespilsfabrikken (the Roleplaying Factory).

Eleanor Saitta is a hacker, designer, artist, writer, and barbarian. She makes a living and vocation of understanding how complex systems operate and redesigning them to work, or at least fail, better. She's new to the Nordic larp community but has had pieces in the past two Knute-books and is looking forward to more. Eleanor is nomadic and lives mostly in airports and occasionally in London, New York, and Stockholm. She can be found at http://dymaxion.org and on Twitter as @dymaxion.

Elin Dalstål is a feminist gaming blogger, freelance game writer, larp organizer, and former gaming club board member. She started larping and playing roleplaying games in 2002. She lives in Luleå, Sweden, and has held seminars about gender and roleplaying at Luleå University of Technology and the Luleå Pride parade. Elin views roleplaying games as one art form that can be expressed in different kinds of media, be it larp, tabletop, freeform playing over the internet or in some other yet-to-be-explored media. http://www.gamingaswomen.com/

Elin Nilsen works as a project manager and has been larping since 1998. In 2005 she started designing larps too, and was involved in making the last two Knutepunkts in Norway. She initiated the founding of the Trondheim Larp Factory, and last year she was one of three editors of the book Larps from the Factory, a larpscript collection based on the productions of the Oslo and Trondheim Larp Factories.

Harald Misje political scientist of education, currently working with international affairs at Norwegian Food Safety Authority, and he has previously worked as a lobbyist and speechwriter. Initiator and project manager for Horizon South, a project aimed to introduce children's larp in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. He has worked for over six years with childrens larp for Tidsreiser AS.

Hanne Urhøj is a Jungian analyst (IAAP) in private practice in Copenhagen, Denmark. In her practice Hanne uses Meyers-Briggs type indicators (MBTI) and John Beebe's Eight-function Model. The Eight-functional model is an additional to MBTI helping clients not only to understand the plots in their inner dramas but to spot what is usually being projected. Hanne has a Master's degree from Roskilde University in sociological and technological planning and for many years has been a consultant in organizational change. Hannes has written this article in cooperation with Charles Bo Nielsen, Charles is her son. He has; Hanne says "a very sharp and creative thinking and an extraordinary sense of characters and dramas and for the last 6-7 years he has been an inspirational support in her work with typology".

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Juhana Pettersson is a Finnish novelist, larp designer, tv producer and journalist. His most recent larp is Halat hisar (2013), in which he acted as the producer. Earlier games include Luminescence (with Mike Pohjola, 2004) and Muovikuppi (The Plastic Cup, 2008). He has written or edited five books, the most recent being his first novel Sokerisamurai (Sugar Samurai), published in 2013. So far, he has produced 63 episodes of the videogame tv show Tilt. www.juhanapettersson.com

J. Tuomas Harviainen (M.Th., Ph.D.) wrote his doctoral dissertation on larps as information systems. His recent game studies research has focused on management training simulations, game-based learning and the use of information as currency in game environments. Harviainen works as a chief information specialist, designs larps for entertainment, education and organizational development, edits the International Journal of Role-Playing, and supervises doctoral dissertations for three Finnish universities.

Kaisa Kangas is a Finnish larpwright. Her most recent game is *Halat hisar* (2013) in which she was in charge of the fiction. Earlier works include *Ghost Express* (with Dare Talvitie, 2001-2002), a campaign that pioneered pervasive larp in Finland. She holds a M.Sc. in mathematics and a BA in East Asian Studies, and is currently working on her Ph.D. in mathematical logic.

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Lizzie Stark is an American journalist and author of *Leaving Mundania*, a narrative nonfiction book about larp. She helped edit the collection of Norwegian larpscripts *Larps from the Factory*, and has been active in her local scene, organizing Nordic games for a US audience. She designs American freeform scenarios and blogs about larp at LizzieStark.com.

Luiz Falcão lives in São Paulo - Brazil, and is a visual artist, graphic designer and multimedia instructor. Since 2007 he works with the creation and promotion of larps for the Brotherhood of Ideas and since 2011 for the Flying ox group. In São Paulo he Coordinates the NpLarp - Research Group on Live Action Roleplaying and is the auhtor of the book "LIVE! Guia Prático para Larp" (Live! Practical guide to larp). http://nplarp.blogspot.com. luizpires.mesmo@gmail.com

Marije Baalman (M.Sc., Ph.D.) is an artist and hardware/software developer working in the field of interactive sound art - creating performances and installations. The overlap of her work and education with live role playing games is in the creation of immersive environments creating extra-ordinary experiences, and interaction design. She has been organizing and playing vampire larp since 1997; organizing games in The Hague and Amsterdam, and bringing together various groups in the European Camarilla, and playing across the globe in about 10 different countries.

Markus Montola (PhD) is a game designer at Housemarque and a game scholar affiliated with University of Tampere. In addition to his award-winning doctoral dissertation *On the Edge of the Magic Circle*, he is an author of *Pervasive Games: Theory and Design*, and an editor of *Nordic Larp, Playground Worlds* and *Beyond Role and Play*. In 2011 he won the Ropecon lifetime achievement award Golden Dragon together with Jaakko Stenros.

Martin Nielsen, political scientist of education, has his dayjob in UngOrg, an NGO promoting empowerment of young people in Oslo. He has been larping since 1999 and has been a key contributor to Fantasiforbundet's projects in Lebanon, Belarus and Palestine as well as meeting places such as Grenselandet, Knutepunkt in Norway and The Larpwriter Summer School. He is also partner in the company Alibier AS that works with participatory methods, including larp.

Nathan Hook (MSc MBPsS) lives in Bristol, UK and works as a data analyst for the UK Civil Service. He trained as a psychologist and is working on a distance PhD at University of Tampere, Finland on identity in role-playing games. He has larped since 1996 and been active on the Nordic Larp Scene since 2006. He publishes the Green Book series of psychodrama freeform scenario books and the literary scenario Heart's Blood. http://www.nathanhook.netii.net/ http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/NathHook

Rene Barchmann lives among tens of thousands of books that he sells in the middle of Germany and has organized and played Vampire larp in Hannover and surroundings since 1999; currently guiding a group of Akheron vampire larp. He has developed and written the Akheron rulebooks for Vampire larp between 2006 and 2014.

Shoshana Kessock is a game designer and researcher at the NYU Game Center in New York City, pursuing her MFA in game design. Shoshana serves as the founder of the Living Games Conference in New York and has written, organized or staffed over twenty five larps across the United States. She is also the co-founder of Phoenix Outlaw Productions, an independent game design company specializing in larp and tabletop role-playing games. Her writing credits include the freeform larp *SERVICE*, the tabletop scenario *No Exit* for Fate Core, and the upcoming Larp *Dangers Untold*. She lives in Brooklyn.

Trine Lise Lindahl is a high school teacher in Oslo, Norway. She has participated in and run larps since 1997, including Screwing the Crew, Till Death Do Us Part, and Mad about the Boy. She was one of the main contributors at the Oslo Larp Factory, has been involved in organizing three Knutepunkts in Norway, and is one of the editors of the book of larp scripts Larps from the Factory.

Yaraslau I. Kot holds numerous degrees in law, psychology, dramaturgy, edu science and business and is author of over 100 academic works in various areas. Works as: Senior lecturer of Belarus State University (Legal Ethics, Forensic Psychology); Research Fellow and game expert of National Institute of Education at the Ministry of Education in the Republic of Belarus; is the Head of LARP, Social Mission at Business School IPM; serves as one of the Directors for the International medical charity organization "Medicine and Chernobyl" and Trustee for the International charity "Independent Children's Aid", etc. He is organizer and participant of numerous international larp related projects, research projects and events. He applies larp methodology for education, therapy, rehabilitation, corporate training, crime investigation, research, and entertainment.