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Continuation — a beautiful word, which has become something more than just a dream. The second Polish Larp Conference has been concluded, and apparently its third edition is to be held in January.

Continuation encompasses both past and present. We have started to document larps, and some of us are rummaging through the form's history to bring back its already forgotten beginnings. It turns out that the history of live role-playing is much older and richer than it seemed. Others are boldly looking ahead, always pushing the limits and designing new experiments. New, daring social drama games are being made. More techniques are used and more senses are involved. The scenarios are becoming better, and they are published more often.

In just a year, the Polish larp scene has developed incredibly. This publication presents a fraction of this development, which includes really impressive educational, artistic and even international projects.

What the reader can also find here are the first articles written by a foreign author specifically for the conference. It is amazing how little we know about our neighbours. In the future, we are sure to invite authors to represent more countries — after all, Poland is in the very centre of the larping world. The Scandinavian forms and theories are coming from the north to inspire our authors, and this influence is clearly visible in several of the articles. Many field game authors see the future and commercial success of the genre still closer to us, in Germany. In the south the Czech approach is gaining in importance, also on our side of the border. The client-specific set-ups, with — for example — rich decorations and rented limos, are truly admirable. In Brno, Czech Republic, role-playing games are starting to compete with theatre as the evening entertainment of choice.

However, it doesn't mean we don't create our own, original works.

With the conference becoming more visible on our larping map, these articles are gaining more readers. It is easier for us to share our knowledge, and we are becoming more eager to do so. We learn from each other, and so we stumble upon new, even better ideas.

What is interesting, this publication will not be read exclusively by professionals, or even hardened larpers. Just as it happened last year, our articles will be received by a broader audience, and possibly promote our passion among them. Live gaming is becoming a really serious business, and the number of larp projects and initiatives featured in media is growing. Many of these bring notable social, educational, or even financial benefits. We used to grow out of games — now it seems we have to grow into them. And larps are developing like crazy, drawing inspiration from older genres like cinema or theatre, as well as from various non-artistic fields, for example marketing.

However, there is still much to be done. We need to work hard to build a larping community in Poland, and to reach out to the people around us. Continuation gives us confidence in our efforts not going to waste, in people learning on our mistakes and taking up new challenges with us.

Nonetheless, what is the most important for us now is the present. Each of the seventeen articles collected in this publication is sure to become food for thought, and maybe to inspire and encourage the reader to try something new.

Enjoy the read.
Kuba Tabisz

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And Quoth RPG,

**“Oh Larp, Thou
Ungrateful Child
of Mine!”**

“And thus the RPG players abandoned their dice, donned their blanket-mantles, and covered their broomsticks with duct tape so that they gleamed like silver in the sunlight. And forth, into the outside world they went, headed for the woods, and having been at odds about who was to bring the pizza, they engaged in an epic duel. And thus, larps were born.”

One of the most common myths about larping in Poland concerns its presumed RPG origins. It can be debunked just as any other urban legend. Unfortunately, it is a task neither easy nor obvious, especially taking into consideration the scarce amount of documentation on the early Polish larping activity. Thus, the easiest way is to follow the development of both larps and RPGs during the period that was crucial for their emergence. Before this is done, however, the essential information on the cultural context should be recalled.

Fin de siècle: revisited

RPGs and larps appeared in Poland roughly at the same time, namely in the second half of the '80s. When we go back to the '80s and '90s in Poland, it is important to remember what kind of reality we refer to. There is a stark difference in civilisational development between the year 2012 and the end of the 20th century — and one of the most important disparities concerns communication. At that time, universal access to the Internet, blogs, e-mails, instant messengers, social networking sites, websites, mobiles, text messaging, digital cameras or video cameras was something unheard of. For the Polish fandom, which gave birth to the first larpers and RPG fans, all these technological wonders were just that — wonders, taken straight from science fiction. Even a home computer was very different from what it is now — even for the simple fact that no one had a printer. It was cheaper to buy books than to copy them. The only sources of information and contact with the fandom were the speculative fiction clubs, the fanzines they published and the letters they exchanged.

In such a world, one had to be much more daring to try and organise a larp than to play the first Polish editions of RPGs. Larp authors, if active at all, did not tend to go public with their works or search contact with others, but rather created games on a small scale only, for their friends and local fans of this new form of entertainment. RPGs were quicker to gain in popularity. They were something new, unusual, and there was no real competition. They did not have to fight for people's attention with hundreds of TV channels, the Internet or thousands of beautifully published, colourful board games. When larps finally won their place in the Polish fandom's broader awareness, RPGs were already well-known. It is small wonder that the question, “What is larp?” was usually answered with, “It's like RPG, but outdoors and with costumes”. One cannot argue with the fact that larps (especially chamber larps and action games) and RPGs have many common features, and such a comparison is a fair description in many aspects. Thus, this definition became popular, and the belief was born in the fandom's common consciousness about larps being but the suckling babes of RPGs. Which, of course, is not the case.

From the archives

With a little effort, it is very well possible to verify what and when was published or — in the case of larps — organised in Poland. The conclusions should be obvious. To make the description of the period more than just a record of empty dates, it is supplemented with a subjective choice of important facts from that time, concerning both Poland and the world.

1982 In October, the first issue of the monthly magazine *Fantastyka* is published, with Adam Hollanek as the editor-in-chief. It is the first Polish periodical devoted entirely to speculative fiction. Jan Adamski, an entrepreneur, founds the Encore publishing company. *Citadel of Blood* and *Star trader*[I] find their way into the market. They are the very first games with RPG-based elements published in Polish, and are mainly distributed by Ruch and Składnica Harcerska companies. Both games are published without the license of the American publisher, SPI (Simulations Publication Inc.).

Poland. The country has been under martial law for two years now.

World. The Falklands War starts. The Soviet Venera probes land on Venus.

1984 Encore publishes two more games that gain extreme popularity among the fandom. These are *Gondor* and *War of the Ring*[II]. A short gamebook entitled *Władca Podziemi* (Lord of the Underworld) is published in a weekly magazine *Razem*.

Poland. The films *Akademia Pana Kleksa* (Mister Blot's Academy) and *Seksmisja* (Sexmission) premiere. The priest Jerzy Popiełuszko is murdered by agents of the Polish communist internal intelligence agency.

World. Alexey Pajitnov develops the game Tetris. Indira Gandhi is murdered by her Sikh bodyguards. The Summer Olympics in Los Angeles is boycotted by fourteen Eastern Bloc countries.

1988 *Razem* regularly publishes articles on RPGs, like *Ghostbusters* and *Warhammer*, as well as short gamebooks, including *Goblin* and *Dreszcz*. The latter are written by Jacek Ciesielski, who names the genre "fantasolo"[III].

Poland. A Warsaw Pact summit is held in Warsaw. A connection with Copenhagen with the bandwidth of 9600 bps is made, introducing the Internet to Poland.

World. The first and only flight of the Soviet space shuttle Buran is made. NASA resumes their Space Shuttle program after the Challenger disaster which put it on hold. The USSR army withdraws from Afghanistan.

1989 Between the 4th and 7th of May in Supraśl, the Kontur convention takes place. It is jointly organised by the Ubik club from Białystok and the Taurus club from the Podlasie region. One of the attractions is a field game prepared by Polish scouts affiliated with Ubik. The players are divided into teams which cover the same route at various time intervals. On the route, there are checkpoints with tasks and characters that the players interact with. The game is set in a simple, fairytale-like setting. It is, presumably, the first Polish "action larp".

The book market sees the debut of the gamebook series *Wehikuł Czasu* (Time Machine), advertised by the publishing company as "history book-games".

Poland. The Fall of Communism. The Polish Round Table Talks lead to the first free Sejm elections.

World. The oil tanker Exxon Valdez runs aground by the shores of Alaska. The oil spill into the ocean is one of the most dire ecological disasters in world history. Protesting Chinese students are killed by the military during Tiananmen Square Massacre. The Berlin Wall falls, the Autumn of Nations starts in Central Europe.

1990 The second fairytale field game is organised during the Kontur convention. As its predecessor, it is team-based. The teams compete with one another, but there is no interaction between them.

Due to changes in the economic system and copyright, Encore stops reprinting the Western board games it has been copying. The sales records for games (over 100,000 in the case of the most popular titles) has not been beaten ever since.

Poland. The communist Polish United Workers' Party is dissolved after its XI Congress. According to the Polish Central Statistical Office, in March the annual inflation rate is 1360%. In May, the Civic Militia is transformed into regular police forces.

World. The first McDonald's restaurant is opened in Moscow. ABC channel starts broadcasting the *Twin Peaks* TV series. The World Health Organization removes homosexuality from the International Classification of Diseases. The Iraqi army invades Kuwait.

1991 A new game is played during the Kontur convention in Supraśl — *Akademia kosmiczna* (Space Academy). It is attended by six teams of ten people each, composed of "lieutenants" and "privates". Players are tested before the game in order to determine their ranks. They are equipped with military outfits and wooden weapon replicas, heaved up with steel and painted black. Following the linear scenario the teams explore locations and meet NPCs. The route ends close to the playground of a local kindergarten. Terrified with the sight of the players, the kindergarten teachers call the police. The game is attended by the members of the Rebel group, from the SCAS club from Silesia. In August, they organise Orkon, a 4-day-long convention. Its main attraction is the larp *Smocze jajo*. The structure of the scenario is different than in Kontur field games. The authors introduce two revolutionary changes (1) the teams can interact with one another (2) the scenario is not linear — the locations of the NPCs are scattered over the whole game area, which covers a rocky terrain and roads between the ruins of the Mirów and Bobolice castles. The game is attended by more or less 50 people, including 4 teams and a dozen organisers, whose main duty is to play the NPCs (with some of them playing more than one character). Fights are resolved by means of the so-called "Pasko-Ryu" mechanics[IV], which uses foil stripes fitted to a person's torso. The stripes represent health points and race, and they are ripped off during fights. The players have no other weapons, and their characters' skills are defined by their class: a warrior, a mage, a priest, a thief or a bard.

At the same time, Sfera company appears on the Polish market. It publishes the board game *Magia i Miecz* (Magic and Sword), on the *Talisman* game license by Games Workshop. The game, with its new graphic design, becomes a bestseller. *Razem* is shut down, and the Amber publishing house sells the first two books of the gamebook series *Wojownik Autostrady* (The Highway Warrior).

Poland. The Warsaw Stock Exchange is reestablished. The Sejm introduces the Personal Income Tax Act. The first e-mail is sent from Poland to Denmark. Radio Maryja, a religious radio station, starts broadcasting.

World. After much turmoil, independence is declared in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova, Ukraine, Slovenia and Croatia. Operation Desert Storm is being carried out in Iraq, war breaks out in Yugoslavia. *Terminator 2* and *The Silence of the Lambs* are triumphant at the Academy Awards ceremony.

1992 In spring, fascinated by J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, students from the Gdańsk Autonomous High School decide to re-enact the adventures of the Fellowship of the Ring. The game is based on scouts' field games. The players follow a specific route, meeting opponents known from the book. Because it is a premiere, the game does not fulfill all the expectations — the Nazgûl-cyclists fail to intercept players dispersed on the large play area. Because of that another game is organised in autumn, this time based on the adventures of the brave hobbit, Bilbo Baggins.

The monthly magazine *Nowa Fantastyka* features articles on the new phenomenon of RPG. English RPG rulebooks find their way into the libraries of speculative fiction clubs.

Poland. Polsat, the first Polish nationwide private TV channel, starts broadcasting. A Jehovah's Witnesses' branch office is founded in Nadarzyn. The first mobile phone network is created. The Sejm passes a lustration bill.

World. Aleksander Wolszczan's article on the discovery of extrasolar planets is published in the *Nature* journal. The European Organisation for Nuclear Research announces free access to the World Wide Web standard. Microsoft presents its Windows 3.1 system. With the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Union is born.

1993 In spring, the first issue of *Magia i Miecz* (often shortened to *MiM*) is published by Wydawnictwo MAG. The magazine contains the first Polish RPG system, *Kryształy Czasu* by Artur Szyndler. Later issues feature articles on other RPG systems: *Warhammer FRP* and *GURPS*. *MiM* also publishes information on two conventions: Szedariada and Orkon. The former is organised between the 1st and 3rd of May in Wrocław, and is solely dedicated to RPGs. Sessions are run in numerous systems, including *Warhammer*, *AD&D*, *Call of Cthulhu* and *Star Wars*. Around 100 people attend. In summer, the Rebels group organises the second Orkon convention, expanding the plot of their game. The convention, held on the 17th and 18th of July in the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland, is also attended by about 100 players, divided into 9 teams. There are far more NPCs in the scenario as well, and the game itself spans two days. Also this year, the first Playwalk RPG Summer Camp, which will annually attract at least several dozen participants for the next several years, takes place in Pomerania.

In autumn, the Ravelin club is formed in the Gdańsk Autonomous High School, and in November they organise *Krew na śniegu* (Blood on the Snow), the first Polish winter larp. The game is set in the original world of Ganwalia, and its mechanics are inspired by the *Magia i Miecz* board game. The characters are described with several statistics, reflecting their strength, stamina, power and knowledge. The game starts with 40 individual players that form teams during the game and are free to roam the whole game area. Fights are performed with wooden melee weapons, considered to be safe — due to injuries, during the next editions only weapons with rounded edges will be allowed.

Poland. The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity organises its first concert. The last issue of scouts' magazine *Świat Młodych* is published. The last remnants of the Russian army leave Poland.

World. The USA and Russia sign the START II disarmament treaty. The war in former Yugoslavia continues. There are two big premieres: a film — *Schindler's List*, and a computer game — *Doom*. Nelson Mandela receives the Nobel Peace Prize.

1994 *MiM* publishes another Polish RPG, *Oko Yrrhedesa* by the writer Andrzej Sapkowski, as well as countless source materials for popular RPGs, mainly *WFRP*, *AD&D*, *Call of Cthulhu* and *Kryształy Czasu*. Two publishing houses are founded, both issuing Polish editions of Western RPGs: Copernicus Corporation with *Cyberpunk 2020*, and ISA with *Dungeons & Dragons*. MAG markets the Polish edition of *WFRP* — it costs the company almost half a million zlotys[V]. *Złoty Smok*, a new RPG magazine, is published.

Another Orkon convention takes place between the 8th and 10th of July, and since then it is organised every year, gaining in popularity with each edition. Scouts from Wrocław organise the first Fantazjada field game in Lower Silesia. There is no division into teams, and the plot construction is typical for "action larp" games. Another Playwalk takes place in Pomerania, and a new convention is organised near Kielce — Borkon, featuring a team larp reminiscent of the Orkon games.

Poland. Nothing really interesting happens. It seems that the whole population, if they are not watching the first episodes of *Familiada*[VI] or *The Bold and the Beautiful*, they spend their time with their noses buried in the freshly published RPG rulebooks, with the print aroma still lingering between the pages.

World. Eurotunnel is opened under the English Channel. The whole world is watching the latest blockbusters: *The Lion King* and *Forrest Gump*. The war in Chechnya begins.

1995 The first *MiM* issue this year presents *Strefa śmierci* (The Death Zone), another Polish RPG. Since then, ISA, Copernicus and MAG provide the Polish fandom with a constant stream of new RPG rulebooks and sourcebooks (in the next year the Polish edition of *Vampire: The Masquerade* is published, followed by *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* in 1997, beginning the glorious rule of *World of Darkness* over the Polish RPG and larp scene). The Borkon, Playwalk, Szederiada and Fantazjada conventions are organised again, along with some new events dedicated to RPGs and larps. A peaceful schism divides the Orkon organisers — some of them decide to create a new convention, named Falkon[VII] (which came back in 1997 as Gladion, and since 2002 has been known as Flamberg). The differences in opinions concern the game construction. Falkon is an old-school field game, with participants divided into set player teams and NPCs, utilizing the stripe mechanics. The Orkon organisers decide to introduce safe weapons made of coated PVC pipes, and gradually eliminate the teams-and-NPCs system (abandoning it completely in the late '90s). From now on, all the Orkon participants are players. The game is referred to as “a larp” on Orkon and “a field game” on Falkon, which causes quite a confusion in Polish larp terminology for more than ten years.

Poland. A brand new subway line is opened in Warsaw. Redenomination occurs — the new one zloty is worth ten thousand old zlotys. With this, the prices of RPG rulebooks fall considerably. In the presidential election Lech Wałęsa loses to Aleksander Kwaśniewski, who becomes the new president of the Republic of Poland.

World. The online auction and shopping website eBay is founded in the USA. The war in former Yugoslavia comes to an end. The GPS system is launched.

Let us stop here.

It seems that the facts listed above are self-explanatory, and this article clearly shows that larps and RPGs in Poland were developing more or less simultaneously (if we talk sports, it is a tie — with larps possibly winning the race by a hair's breadth), and none of them was derived from the other. True, the development of larps after 1995 was very closely connected to the dynamic development of the RPG scene and the game industry in general. The first larp authors were given a choice of ready-made settings for their games, and did not have to create everything from scratch. Suddenly they gained access to races, religions, politics, traditions, customs, and even many finer details they could easily use by simply drawing them directly from RPG systems. All they had to do was to buy the rulebook and neatly fit its content into their larp scenario. This allowed them to save the time they needed to write the game, and play even complicated scenarios with players unknown to them, but familiar with the setting

— sometimes even more familiar than the larp author or Game Master. The sheer number of larps in the well-known settings of Warhammer or Vampire: The Masquerade that were played on RPG conventions could give the impression that larps were just a new kind of RPG, or a phase in the RPG game evolution. That was not the case, though.

Larps appeared in Poland as a result of the development in speculative fiction and, consequently, its fandom. It comes as no surprise that science fiction and fantasy classics, hundreds of carefully selected texts in *Fantastyka*, gamebooks, or complex and “fantastic” board games found loyal fans among the Polish youth, surrounded by the gray reality of the communist times. It is no surprise either that scouts strived to add some colour to their field games, over-exploited for years and much in need of some refreshing (what is interesting, several groups operated independently in different areas of Poland, not knowing about one another). Thus, even before the Republic of

Poland saw — along with washing powder commercials, currency exchange offices and CD players — the arrival of the RPGs, well...

The first larps were already there.

No matter how deep one digs for information, what becomes clear is that the roots of Polish larps should not be traced back to RPG games, but to scouts' field games as well as independent scenarios inspired by speculative fiction and every person's favourite childhood game.

The game of make-believe.

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TRANSLATORS' FOOTNOTES

- I The Polish editions of these games were known as, respectively, *Labirynt Śmierci* (Labyrinth of Death) and *Gwiazdny Kupiec*.
- II Polish titles: *Bitwa na polach Pelennoru* (Battle of the Pelennor Fields) and *Wojna o pierścień*.
- III From *fantastyka* — “speculative fiction”, or possibly fantasy, and *solo*; the term is no longer used, and the medium is referred to as *gry paragrafowe* — “paragraph games”.
- IV From *pasek* — “stripe”.
- V For the sake of comparison — according to the Polish Central Statistical Office, the average monthly salary in 1994 was just over 5 million zlotys.
- VI A popular TV show, based on the American *Family Feud* format.
- VII Not to be confused with the speculative fiction convention of the same name, organized annually in Lublin since the year 2000.



Some Points of the History of Larp in Belarus

Indeed, there is some evidence that many larp-like activities were held on the territory of Belarus long before 100 years ago, as in many other countries perhaps; but I will bring to your attention only some points of the history of larp theory. At the beginning we will discuss briefly the history of larps in the USSR and Belarus.

Even though larps have been an object of Russian scholars' attention for some time, as the works of Kapterev, Krapivka and Karavaev in the 19th century might suggest, the first conscious, official and documented application of the larp methodology in educational process dates back to 1916–18. This new wave was connected with a teacher, sculptor, poet, fiction writer and visionary — Innokentiy Nikolaeovich Zhukov (1875–1948). All this was happening during the fall of the Russian Empire and the formation of the USSR. Zhukov was the first to organize larps into a movement and to establish larp methodology as a milestone of a new educational system. His concepts of edu-theatre and larp campaign are still remembered. He was responsible for inventing the Pioneer movement and many fascinating ideas which sound through the ages [1].

No one can deny that one of the main features of childhood is imitation. In a more vivid form, it is expressed by preschool children — all their games, whether it is playing with dolls for girls, or a variety of games for boys — all these games are about imitating adults.

On the role-playing games he said,

They differ from ordinary games in that they are never accidental and short, but can be long-term or even ongoing. The game gets serious by merging with life itself. There have been two main types of these great educative games:

1. *Based on imitating the contemporary adult citizens, like the School Republics and all kinds of Chil-*

dren's Clubs. A school's Cabinet of Ministers and other elected official positions help young people develop: a sense of responsibility (for others and for the cause they serve), public speaking, and organizational skills, which are all essential to their functioning in a liberal democratic country. As we already said, this type of organized education is based on the imitation of adults in their social roles.

2. *Based on the characteristics of the imitative young soul, but instead of imitating adults and citizens in general, imitating favorite heroes of children's books, or*

rather a certain type of heroes.

A young soul at the age of 12 is full of idealistic, romantic impulses. This soul craves for feats coupled with risking life while rescuing someone from the sea. It inevitably involves a wandering life in the wild, a full moon, nights of poetry, a camp life in the woods or on the shore of a deep river, crackling evening fire and fading voices of the night. In this, and in other types of educational games, self-education and self-activity are the basic principles, and the enormity of the game and its severity are a powerful educational stimulus.

To conclude this article, let me repeat again: boring for students, our rationalist school should be reformed! Initiative and self-education of young people should supplant these poor rationalist educational efforts which yield negligible results. Zhukov (1918)[2].

In 1918 he conducted the first of his larp campaign projects, which included over 700 participants aged 12–14 from all schools of Chita, and was designed to

last two and a half years. At first, such innovations were strongly supported by Nadezhda Krupskaya (1869–1939), who was in charge of education at the dawn of the USSR. With the help of Zhukov's experience, the National Youth Organization (Pioneers) was created, based on the Zhukov's method of larp campaign. Unfortunately, the Communist Party decided to use this innovation as a powerful ideological and political tool[3].

Larps were briefly examined in the works of Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), for example in *The Problem of the Cultural Development of the Child* (1928), but by all accounts the greatest larp research in the USSR was conducted by D. B. Elkonin (1904–1984). His works on larps date as far as the '30s, and his books on larps are still unmatched, in particular *Artistic role playing games of preschool children* (1957) and *Psychology of Playing* (1978). He wrote over a hundred publications, most of them on games, and the most prominent dealt with larps.

As a subculture

If we look at the history of scientific approach to larps, we can assume that larps as a subcultural phenomenon have existed for some time as well. Indeed, it was less of a movement and more of children's leisure until the USSR. However, later larping became stimulated by the ideological departments of the Ministry of Education, and strong evidence of that could be found in various publications for children. For example, the newspaper *Pionerskaya Pravda* from 1938 featured a front page article "The Three Games" which clearly instructed children on how to larp and suggested ideological topics to "larp out"[4]. Later on, these games became even more state-coordinated, and with time they turned into military

larp-like games for children and teenagers.

The beginning of the larp subculture in Belarus, in the form we now refer to as "larp communities", came in two waves, as in many other USSR republics. Little is known of most people who were in the first wave. At the beginning of the '80s, larps suddenly enjoyed a surge of interest throughout the USSR.

Pushed on by the success of the reenactment-turned larps and with the aid of educators and Literature Clubs of Fantastics Amateurs, the Centres of Role-playing started popping up here and there. By 1982, each republic had at least one such Centre. Not much information remains, however, there is evidence that the Academy of Postdiploma Education in Minsk had one of such Centres set up. Fortunately, many of their activities were described in the publications and dissertations on larp study, which were quite abundant at that time. Some of these centres are still active, especially in the east and north-east of the Russian Federation.

Nevertheless, on the turn of generations and with the fall of the USSR most clubs lost support of the State institutions and were disbanded. That very moment was a turning point for the new generation bred on creations like print and play educational larps, RPG rulebooks, literature etc. The pioneers in Belarus saw a flow of translations of fantasy and science fiction literature from abroad, and started dreaming and playing out their fantasies. In 1990 in Russia, the first *Hobbit's Games* (a larp based on *The Lord of the Rings*, later to become the biggest annual larp) took place. This larp maintains a decent international participation up until now. After that game three main larp-oriented groups were formed in Belarus (1990–93).

1. In Gomel, the club Istok Vetrov (Source of Winds) founded by the writer, and by many accounts the first GM of Belarus, Rakitina Nika[5] with the nickname “Khozyayka” (Hostess).
2. In Rechitsa, the club Terra founded by Bakaev (the organizer of the first annual larp conventions WestCon in Belarus).
3. And in Minsk, the club Alter Ego founded by Dmi-triy “Magistr” Nestuk (the name changed several times, first into Heart of Dragon, then it became a strictly history-oriented association with the main theme being the Templars — The Order of North Temple, later Nestuk left the club and it was renamed The Order of the Temple, and several years later he created another, Order of the North Temple).

There is evidence that several clubs researching national history and larping existed at that time. One was connected to the Historical Faculty of the Belarus State University, and the other (and the oldest by my accounts), Belarusskiy Rytsarskiy Klub (Belarusian Knighthood Club), was founded by Arina Vecherko and had existed in Minsk long before the first strictly larp-oriented club. One of the members of this club, Sergey “Razor” Dakhutovich, wrote the first prominent theoretical work on Belarussian larps (2005?–2007?). It is entitled *LARP*, it is 76-pages long and remains unpublished as of yet (we will work on that). Much has happened since then, but perhaps it is the subject for another article.

Gradually, the subculture has developed and the number of existing approaches to larp creation can compete with the diversity of Life itself. Each country, each town or village which has at least a small larp community has its own roots, history, its own path of development, forms and terminology. This lack of centralization is indeed impractical in some way, yet such “natural” evolution is inevitable and has its advantages. One of these positive sides is, on some level, that it has led to the appearance of the so-called “academic larpers” who research the uniqueness of each approach and demonstrate the marvels

of each path to the world. There will always be something new for such an academic to share, as there is no final list of all differences and similarities between larp groups even from the same country, sometimes even from the same city, moreover — from different parts of the world.

So here I am to humbly do my part, and demonstrate you some of the terminological pursuits Belarusian larpers have generated.

When talking about the ways of my Land, I should start from the GMs. We call them *Mastera* (word for word — “Masters”) and due to the small size of our larps (the luckiest GM might get little over 300 players) many of the games are organized by one or two GMs. When a group of Masters is bigger than 3, there could be, although not necessarily, a *GlavnyiMaster* (“the Main Game Master”) who coordinates the work of the whole group. At the beginning of the larp

Each country, each town or village which has at least a small larp community has its own roots, history, its own path of development, forms and terminology. This lack of centralization is indeed impractical in some way, yet such “natural” evolution is inevitable and has its advantages.

movement, a GM could be just anyone selected from among the participants to uphold certain rules agreed upon. The further

classification of GMs depends on the particular larp event and deserves more pensive research, which could be a subject for another article.

Now about larps — we call them simply *Igry* (“Games”). The main classifications include:

1. **According to size** — depending on the number of people participating in the larp. If the game is considered big we call it *brig* (to our convenience, a word for word translation — “brig”), which is short for (*B*)*olshevaya* (*R*)*olevaya* (*Ig*)*ra* (“Big Role-playing Game”). If the game is considered small, we call it *mig* (word for word — “instant”), or (*M*)*alaya* (*Ig*)*ra* (“Small Game”). The number of players required for a game to be considered big is widely disputed, yet the number 50 is the most commonly agreed on.
2. **According to place** — there are three main categories, which should be mentioned:
 - **pavilonnayaigra** (word for word — “pavilion game”) — a larp which takes place within the boundaries of one building or structure

- **gorodskayaigra** (word for word — “city game”) — a larp which is limited by the territory of a particular settlement or, in rare occasions, several of them (these often include a number of interactive pavilion games)
- **poligonnayaigra or polevayaigra** (word for word — “range game” or “field game”) — a larp located within the limits of a specific territory — often outside of town, in the wild, yet on certain occasions settlements could be located within the boundaries of a larp territory

All these definitions are in common use as there are very few exceptions. For example, in the year 2010 a larp took place in the catacombs (not sewers) under a city, and even though it had some features of a city game, the activities of the players were limited by the boundaries of those catacombs, which technically could be considered a single structure. So a game underground has features of both types. It was even considered a separate category, commonly used by larpers in Moscow at the beginning of 2000s called “underground games”.

There are many more classifications by: genre, time, style, methodology, structure, percentage of NPCs,

source, aim, setting used, freedom of player etc., which are still arguable and may take even more of your attention and require profound systematization, although it is a topic for another tale.

Another difference that might be of interest is the approach to the definition of NPCs. First of all, in the larp movement of Belarus an NPC is called *igrotekhnik* (word for word — “game technician”). Their functions are similar to those of other NPCs throughout the world — they do what they are told by the GMs. This may mean work, but not always. Within the Belarusian larp system it often happens that some of the characters which are vital to the project could be called NPCs to impose additional responsibility for the quality of the performance and the compliance to the character info[6].

With this, I have to finish this article and hope that the tiny glimpse on the larp theory of the Republic of Belarus is only the first out of many in the mosaic of our mutual enrichment. We serve the god, which has given life to all other deities — Imagination.

all translations by the author

AUTHOR'S FOOTNOTES

- 1 Kot Yaraslau. *Educational Larp: Topics for consideration*, Wyrd Con Companion 2012, p. 116-125
- 2 Zhukov, Inokentiy. *Two directions of schools evolution*, 1918
- 3 Kot Yaraslau, *Long-term larp of Inokentiy Zhukov*, 2013
- 4 Okhlopkov, Nikolay. *The Three Games / Pionerskaya Pravda* — 22 march 1938 # 40 (2034)
- 5 For her literary page see: www.samlib.ru and her personal page at a social network: www.vk.com/id18060083
- 6 Kot Yaraslau, *LARPs in Belarus: a glimpse into their culture*, Branches of Play: the 2011 Wyrd Con academic Companion, p. 27-28



From *Dragon Eggs* to the *Wings of Imagination* Larp Projects at International Youth Exchanges in Lublin

Larps have always constituted a separate but prominent chapter in the activity of Grimuar, a speculative fiction and RPG club from Lublin. Its members have always approached new games with unrelenting enthusiasm. The projects themselves evolved with time — from simple, quest-oriented field games, through straightforward scenarios based on other works and complex tales using RPG or historical settings, to multi-layered scenarios written jointly with the players. Eventually, the club members' commitment was noticed, and an idea was born to bring larps outside the fandom during an international youth exchange.

By that time, reports of role-playing games successfully expanding outside the Western (and Northern) speculative fiction fan milieu were already reaching Poland. Larps were used in children and youth education, as well as for staff trainings. Moreover, several years earlier our country saw an idea to use games as an educational method in school (as proposed by Dr Jerzy Szeja, who presented the thesis in his book *Role-playing games. A new phenomenon of the modern culture* (Gry fabularne — nowe zjawisko kultury współczesnej)), however, it did not meet with much appreciation.

The offer for the club was presented by Fundacja Szczęśliwe Dzieciństwo, an NGO from Lublin that was coordinating a project for the Polish-German Youth Cooperation programme. The youth exchange organized in the Social Education Centre in Motycz Leśny near Lublin hosted young participants from Poland, Germany and Ukraine. As an integrative activity, a larp for the participants was proposed for the first evening of the exchange. Preparing such a game proved to be quite a challenge in many aspects. First of all, the participants had no prior contact with role-playing games and had no idea what they are. Another serious difficulty was the language barrier — the scenario was to be played in English, and not all of the participants knew it well enough to communicate freely. However, in this case the enthusiasm turned out to be at least as big as the challenge.

The Quest for Dragon Eggs

We discovered that the key to success was to find a new approach to our larps. In order to get through

to the participants and involve them in the game, we settled on a generic fantasy setting, which is well-grounded in popular culture. We decided to simplify the plot as much as possible, and focus on quests to introduce a decent competitive structure. Because of that, we resigned from giving dramatic roles to the participants, and instead we prepared interesting, if very archetypal, Non-Player Characters. We assumed it would be an option better than asking a German or Ukrainian teenager to pretend to be a warrior, a druid or a rogue.

We wrote a very simple story, reminiscent of good-night tales or RPG adventures run by beginner Game Masters — a realm is invaded by dark powers, which weaken the king with a mysterious illness. The only way to save both the ruler and his people is to gather six dragon eggs, each of different colour. The participants were divided into six international teams and given the time until midnight to accomplish the task. The first team to do it won.

The eggs could be acquired by fulfilling quests given by the NPCs. A quest could be, for example, finding the wizard's magical amulet, getting some water of life for the temple priestess, delivering wanderer's spices to the inn, translating an elven text for the dwarf, or bringing the witch a hen's claw for her elixir. It was also possible for the participants to haggle with the NPCs and to exchange their eggs with the other teams, bearing in mind that some of the eggs were rarer, and thus more valuable, than others.

We were given the whole area around the centre and

the adjacent woods to use for the game. The adventurers were provided with flashlights and reflective bands, as well as “health stripes” that they had to protect from being taken by other teams and rogues hiding in the forest. When it became cold — and it did — they could warm up by the dwarf’s bonfire or drop by the inn for a warm meal.

It was the NPCs who were responsible for the atmosphere during the game. All the characters were

written and acted out by the club members. It was important for us to impress the participants, so we decided that they would not see the stylized NPCs until later, in the dark forest. Thanks to that decision no-one laughed at the guy with fitted elven ears as we had feared, and the wandering ghost caused the players to flee. One of the participants even refused to play, as she was too afraid of him.

The game turned out to be interesting enough to really engage the youth. Most of them spent the next four hours on tirelessly fulfilling the tasks. The only participants to give up earlier and leave their teams were those with communication difficulties. When the clock struck midnight, everyone gathered in the throne room, where a magical ritual was performed to banish the evil and heal the king. The winners were then ceremonially knighted.

The game was appreciated by both the participants and the organisers. The NGO staff and the interpreters were very surprised by the youth’s involvement in the game — the participants wanted to exchange their mobile phones, expensive watches, or even pay the NPCs in euro for the dragon eggs. It is very likely for some parents to have later heard about their children fighting evil in Poland by collecting raw chicken eggs dyed with food colourings and gold spray.

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It is worth noting that *The Quest for Dragon Eggs* was appreciated not only by German and Ukrainian teenagers. Half a year later the scenario was run for a group of very enthusiastic university students during the Dni Kultury Studencki (“Student Culture Days”, a student festival with concerts, events etc., organized in every city with a university in late spring

— translator’s note) in Lublin. And another several months later, it was accepted for the Złota Brama field

game competition, organised during the Hardkon 2008 convention.

Heroes of Might in Motycz

Not even a year had passed before we received another offer to run a larp during a sports project for the same youth exchange programme. Encouraged by the positive reception of *The Quest for Dragon Eggs* we decided to prepare a more ambitious game, which would give its participants more possibilities. We already knew the area and facilities, and had a general idea of what we could expect from the players — some of the participants from the previous exchange were coming back for this new one. We also had a larger budget and more people.

The premise of the game was to use well-proven elements, namely a fantasy setting, division into teams and a quest-oriented structure. This time, however, the setting was given a more complex background, as well as an economical system based on resource exchange — both of which were rejected from the design of *The Quest for Dragon Eggs*. Both the title and the objective of the larp referred to a popular computer game, *Heroes of Might and Magic*. The main objective of the teams was to develop their villages by erecting new buildings. To accomplish that, the participants needed certain resources, like wood, stone, iron, gold, sulphur, and diamonds,



Krystian Paździor, Visha Angelova, @Grimuar

which they could acquire by completing quests. Each of the buildings had its specific cost and was represented by a jigsaw piece, the whole puzzle illustrating a finished village. The first team to build five buildings were the winners.

A very prominent aspect enriching the game and creating an impression of a complex yet coherent world was the variety of Non-Player Characters. They were divided into three types, namely (1) quest-givers, who provided resources for the players, like the stonemason or the lumberjack (2) storytellers, whose main objective was engaging the participants into the plot and building the mood, like the time traveler or the druid (3) five village rulers, introduced to diversify and motivate the teams. This third group included the Evil Queen Kruella and four Kings — Lysander the Pious, Shaman Hok-Sha-Wo, Rogue Alfred and Dwarf King Kilovsonn.

This division made it possible for us to introduce simple quests as well as more complex sub-plots. The resources were not the only things to be collected — the participants could also look for information and legends that also played a major role in the game. Not only did the players prominently influence the plot and what happened to the NPCs, but they also acted out roles suitable for the village they belonged to.

During the game some of the participants turned out to be very creative with the quests they were given, the best example being the finale. None of the teams managed to finish all five buildings in their village, however two of them arranged a marriage between the wife-seeking dwarf Kilovsonn and forever young and beautiful Kruella. After the wedding, which was played as the final scene, the two villages merged into one, rendering the two teams the winners.

The game was applauded, especially by those of the youth who had also participated in *The Quest for Dragon Eggs*. We had to answer numerous questions concerning the making of such games, and were very pleased to hear that the Ukrainian group wanted to organise *Heroes of Might In Motycz* in their hometown.

Under the Wings of Imagination

Inspired by the aforementioned projects and eager to develop our skills in an international environment, we made an offer for Fundacja Szczęśliwe Dzieciństwo to jointly organize a youth exchange devoted entirely to speculative fiction and larps. Together with a fellow worker of the NGO, we wrote a project on the topic for the European Union programme Youth in Action. The application was rejected at the first attempt, but after introducing necessary changes and corrections we were awarded a grant for the organisation of a speculative fiction-themed youth exchange, that was to be crowned with a scenario set in an original fantasy world.

The *Under the Wings of Imagination* project encompassed two youth exchanges, both taking place in Motycz Leśny. The first of

them was attended by youth from Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and Turkey. Half a year later, during the second edition, the Polish and Bulgarian groups were joined by partner organisations from Lithuania and Latvia. The project gave birth to a jointly created by the participants, unique fantasy world called “The Seed”, which became the setting for a larp scenario under the same title that was published in print after the exchange. To describe these we would need another article, however, it is worth mentioning that one of its objectives was to build the plot upon themes drawn from the history and culture of the participants’ countries. We also found inspiration in both legends and historical figures, as well as used words in different languages to create meaningful proper names.

For several days, we worked in three international groups. The first of them wrote a scenario for fifteen players and took the roles of NPCs, the second created a card-based mechanics for fights and magic, as well as supervised the game, and the third was responsible for preparing the scenography, costumes and handouts.

This way the centre in Motycz Leśny, buried deep in winter snow, for one night transformed into a beautiful world on the brink of destruction. A market appeared, filled with sellers and the scent of apples. Warriors arrived at an arena, led by a bloodthirsty harpy. An ancient elven forest became a silent witness to dramatic decisions and a bearer of terrifying secrets. Priests and mages embarked on a quest to reveal the mysteries of the Dream World, a submarine arrived with brash dwarves on board, and a solitary library heard the dying words of the last member of an ancient race, known as Uatu.

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The scenario, after being slightly remodeled, was also featured in the second exchange, which took place in autumn. It was accompanied by other, shorter games, for example a Po-

lish-Bulgarian larp *Monte Rosa*, based on original documents from the turn of the 20th century, or *The Quest for Dragon Eggs* run for a group of school children from Lublin. The Imaginary Realms website was also created to serve as an communication and experience sharing platform.

The *Under the Wings of Imagination* project broke away from Grimuar and exceeded even our greatest expectations. The third edition was held in 2011 in Lithuania, and the fourth — in the beginning of July 2012, in Hungary. However, probably the most significant result was the Land of Imagination project, organised in 2012 by Fundacja Szczęśliwe Dzieciństwo — an international training on using larps in youth exchanges and NGO projects which resulted in the publication of a handbook on the topic.



DEMOCracy Project

Larp in Civic Education

Intro

Pospolite Ruszenie Szlachty Ziemi Krakowskiej[I] is a historical reenactment group, as well as an NGO involved in historical and civic education. As the name suggests, our favourite period is the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth[1]. Many of us have developed a passion for this era thanks to the Dzikie Pola RPG and *VETO! CCG*, so, well aware of the educational potential of games, we are eager to make good use of them. In the recent years we have been involved in the “Living History Classes” project, we published an educational card game *Folwark*, and we organised larps both just for fun and for historical events like *Pola Chwały*[II]. The DEMOCracy project built on these experiences, but this time we took on a much more ambitious task.

The DEMOCracy project reached 26 middle schools (*gimnazjum* in Polish) in 12 communes of the Małopolska Province. Between September and December 2012 we held 64 meetings (called “interactive lessons in democracy”, or ILDs, in the project-speak) with the total number of 1100 participants.

with the total number of 1100[2] participants. Each meeting was an autonomous entity, at the same time connected to others in a coherent structure modelled on the 17th century parliamentary system:

- **Level 1:** 56 smaller *sejmik*[3]/*rokosz*[4] conventions in the *ziemia* units and districts, each electing 3 representatives for the 2nd-level meetings (1100 participants)
- **Level 2:** 4 general *sejmik*/3 large *rokosz* conventions, again electing 3 delegates for the national Sejm
- **Level 3** (grand finale): the national Sejm of 1607, with delegates elected by the legal *sejmik* assemblies joined by the *rokosz* delegation (21 students + 11 historical reenactors playing the roles of the king, Senate, and royal court staff)

In the summer of 2011 we submitted a proposal for the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme. Bearing in mind the main purpose of the Programme we had to connect our passion for the 17th century to the present-day challenges. By the enactment of the Old Polish world of politics, problems, and — first and foremost — civic-mindedness, we wanted to encourage the youth to get interested in contemporary politics as well as their democratic rights and responsibilities. The main project team included Agnieszka Strojny, Paweł Strojny, Łukasz Wrona, Korneliusz Krupa and Piotr Krzystek. In the fall of 2011 we got the green light — the proposal was accepted!

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The Big Picture

The first stage, i.e. the 56 ILDs played by groups of third grade middle school students, reenacted the *sejmik ziemski* assemblies, which combined the function of a parliamentary constituency with the functions of local administration. The pre-designed storyline, based on the 1606–1607 conflict between King Sigismund III Vasa and Mikołaj Zebrzydowski, introduced the students to the atmosphere of a 17th century *szlachta* gathering. Moreover, the focus on the anti-royalist *rokosz* opened way for discussion on the authority of legal government and the limits of civil disobedience. Each grade represented the *sejmik* or *rokosz* convention of a different *ziemia*, voivodship or district, scattered all over the historical Commonwealth, with the official (legal) *sejmik* assemblies slightly outnumbering the rebellious gatherings. All ILDs were run by three organisers, travelling between schools day by day. Short summa-

ries of each ILD were immediately posted on a blog (<http://diariusz.projektdemokracja.pl>), with the schools' locations marked on the map of Małopolska Province. Simultaneously, we were updating the historical map of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, visualising the patterns of the political decisions made on the *sejmik* and *rokosz* meetings in the game reality — in the *ziemia* units and districts from Prussia to Lithuania and Ruthenia.

With 3 delegates elected at each of the 56 games (including both the legal *sejmik* and half-legal *rokosz* conventions), 168 people[5] entered the second stage of the project, divided into 7 general assemblies. In the old Commonwealth, a general *sejmik* was a meeting of delegates elected by the *ziemia* or district *sejmik* assemblies in a large province, like Małopolska, Ruthenia or Prussia. In our game, we activated the “generals” of Wielkopolska and Małopolska regions, Mazovia and Lithuania, and corresponding large *rokosz* conventions from Wielkopolska, Małopolska and Mazovia. Brutally violating the historical reality, we introduced a second selection here. In the 17th century, general *sejmik* assemblies were just a preparation for the national parliament, with delegates from the given province trying to reach some agreement before they all went to the Sejm in Warsaw. For practical reasons, we had to cut down the number of players. Mirroring the 1st-level games, the 2nd-level larps also ended with the elections of 3 representatives for the national Sejm. Another ahistorical decision was to introduce gender equality — starting from the first *sejmik* meetings, girls and boys played the roles of delegates, local officials or soldiers on equal terms. These decisions were not easy to make as we are practising reenactors, always insisting on historical accuracy. But we kept on reminding ourselves that this project puts civic education first and historical second, so this was a compromise we had to make.

All 1st- and 2nd-level events followed the same pattern:

- multimedia presentation of the political context and narrative background, plus explanation of the larp mechanics
- distribution of character sheets and resources — coloured beads representing money and “business cards”, called “favours”, standing for the support of a high-standing person
- the larp proper post-larp discussion (1st-level games) or political science workshop (2nd-level)

The last stage of the project, proudly called the Grand Finale, was a larp simulation of the National Parliament of 1607. Beside the 21 middle-schoolers as elected delegates (12) and *rokosz* delegates (9), we introduced the king and Senate played by historical reenactors. The game was followed by a discussion on the ideas of the knight's ethos vs. the citizen's ethos and the democracy vs. republic. Then, we held a panel of experts called “Past — Present”, focused on the political heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and yet another panel of NGOs working for the idea of civil society. The last item on the schedule was a tour around Kraków.

1st and 2nd Levels — Scenario Design and Implementation

Except for the final Sejm, all larps (royalist and *rokosz*) used the same model, based on the scenario written by Michał Mochocki, Tomasz Łomnicki and Łukasz Wrona. After the briefing and role/resources distribution, the game was played in three phases:

- **Preparation:** both religious factions (Catholic and Protestant) had a separate meeting
- **Corridors:** both factions met during unofficial talks preceding the *sejmik*
- **Sejmik:** official gathering leading to the election of 3 delegates and formulation of written instructions for them



@DEMOCRACY Project

Three staff members of *Pospolite Ruszenie* in historical outfits were always active in the game: Łukasz Wrona, Tomasz Łomnicki and Piotr Krzystek, each of them playing a specific role:

- **Marshal of the sejmik:** presided over the meeting, making sure it followed the procedure
- **Secretary:** documented the meeting, e.g. took down the number of votes and the text of instruction given to the delegates
- **The king's/Zebrzydowski's emissary:** at the royal *sejmik* assemblies it was the king's official envoy, and at *rokosz* conventions a messenger from Zebrzydowski

In the preparation phase, when Catholics and Protestants had two separate meetings, the Secretary and the Marshal had an additional function, namely they had to tutor the factions. They had an important task of asking the students for opinions and suggestions, the aim being to help them get into the roles and get used to voicing their thoughts. For every single one of them, it was the first contact with larp ever, so this carefully guided "slow start" was a must. In the Corridors phase, when both factions met and went into arguments, intrigues, and bargains, the Marshal and the Secretary backed off, leaving the initiative to the players. In the *Sejmik* phase, they performed their assigned duties. The emissary from the king or Zebrzydowski also made his appearance at the opening of the *sejmik* and read a letter from his patron, reminding the *szlachta* of the most important matters to be discussed. When the debate was largely over, and the list of candidates for delegates was complete, the Marshal and the Secretary called for an electoral vote, and also for votes on the two basic issues (1) what to do about the king/Zebrzydowski problem (2) whether or not to demand the confirmation of the rights and protection of religious freedom for non-Catholics. The decisions made by the *sejmik* were included in the "electoral instruction" which were to be obeyed by elected delegates at the Sejm.

The players received individual character sheets. We prepared over 30 of them, as this was the highest number of students we could expect to be in a class. Every sheet included the following elements:

- **Title or function:** judge, lieutenant, duelist etc.
- **Religion:** Catholic or Protestant
- **Who you are:** personality traits and social position
- **Views:** the character's opinions on the *rokosz*, religious tolerance, and other issues
- **Info on the title or function:** a brief description of the character's title or function
- **Resources:** the amount of ducats, portugaloösers (10-ducat coins) and favour cards
- **Your aims:** a list of several tasks to complete during the game, each task with a point value

Reenacting the 17th century society of *szlachta*, we introduced characters of various financial status, so a classroom — the *sejmik* room — hosted the *starosta*[IV] judiciary officials and colonels next to not-so-well-off soldiers and “commoner” members of *szlachta* with no honorifics. As we have already mentioned, we divided the players into Catholics and Protestants, with both groups starting the game in different locations. All Protestants (who were always in a minority) were given the task of persuading the *sejmik* to declare support for the confirmation of religious tolerance. In the Catholic group, some were strongly opposed to this idea (one of their tasks was “+1 point if the *sejmik* does not confirm the rights of non-Catholics”), others did not care.

Still, neither of the religious groups was a monolith, divided as they were about the political issues. At the legal *sejmik* assemblies summoned by the king, the bone of contention was the course of action to take against the Zebrzydowski's rebellion — at the seditious *rokosz* meetings there was a disagreement about the course of action against the “tyrant” king. Three opinions clashed at the *sejmik* meetings: Zebrzydowski was to be either beheaded, banished or reconciled with the king. By analogy, the *rokosz* conventions argued if the king should be deposed, called to stand a humiliating Sejm trial or persuaded to resume peace talks. The negotiated decision of the *sejmik* was to be brought to the higher-level assembly

by the elected delegates. To spice up the argument, each *sejmik* and *rokosz* meeting was infiltrated by an agent working for the opposing faction, who tried to bribe people to change sides.

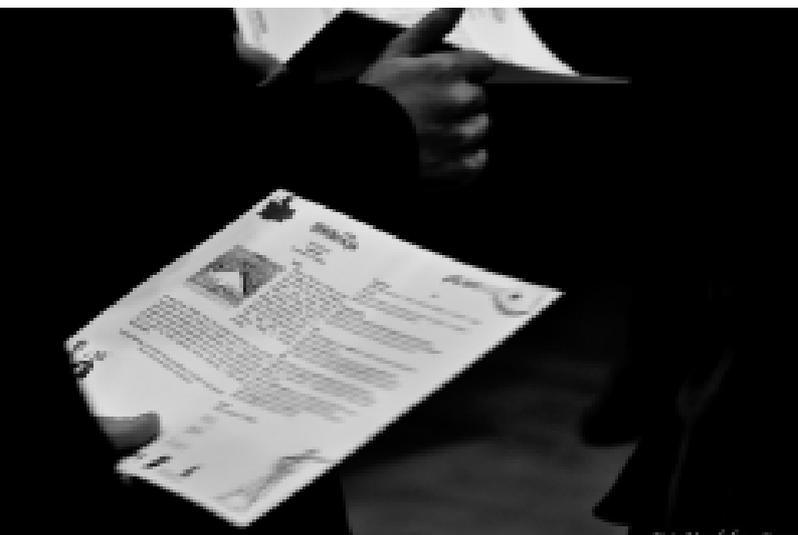
Some of the *szlachta* were completely uninterested in public affairs and focused only on personal gains and career. That is why, beside the two basic aims (religious and political), there were several other issues and objectives, not related to the big politics. For example, instigators and duelists wanted to obtain legal immunity as delegates or in military service in order to avoid punishment for offences, while the *starosta* wanted to see these troublemakers behind the bars. Several pairs of characters were in personal conflicts over financial issues, and their aim was to make sure their enemy was not elected a delegate. Military veterans from hussars and *pancerny* cavalry searched

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for new recruits. Others desperately needed to get money or political support represented by the favour cards.

Yellow beads (ducats), red beads (portugaloösers) and the favour cards of high officials constituted resources in the virtual economy of our larps. Their distribution was intentionally asymmetrical, reflecting the differences in social and financial standing. Only a few of the characters, e.g. judges, had 3 favour cards to trade. Of no value to their original holders, the cards were coveted by characters in need of legal assistance or planning to work their way up the ladder. Characters of low financial status earned victory points for the money acquired, while the wealthy ones scored points only for the achievement of political, professional or personal goals. The unequal distribution of resources, the different values they presented to different players, and the possibility of exchanging the favour cards for gold and the other way round, as well as both of them for real favours in the game (e.g. a vote) were designed as an additional mechanism stimulating the dynamics of gameplay.

Still, the election of representatives was the thing which drew the most attention and engagement. Each 1st-level meeting elected 3 delegates for



@DEMOcracy Project

2nd-level general *sejmik* meetings. Each *szlachta* member had 3 votes to spend on anyone, including themselves. The 3 people with the highest number of votes got elected. But not everyone had the same motivation, as reflected by the point value system. *Szlachta* with the highest status and influence would get 3 points for getting elected; a military man or an average official 2 points, while the poorest chaps only 1 point (historically, the function of delegates involved significant travel and accommodation expenses, so people with low income were rarely interested). To make up for it, the poor members of the *szlachta* could score points for ducats and favour cards, which were less valuable (or useless) for the rich ones.

Assigning point values to character's aims is unusual in larp, and it definitely pushes the playing style in the direction of gamism. But we were dealing with middle-school students with zero experience in larps or RPGs, so we could not expect dedicated acting or immersion. We had to take into account the risk of players getting all silly, or paralysed with stress, or simply at a loss. That is why we decided on a clear, point-based system which, in a way, would instruct the players on what they could do to succeed in the game. It also acted as a motivating factor which could make the players involved in the game even without immersing in the role or narrative. Moreover, they scored points in order to get a prize. What prize? The *Konsensus* board game that we published in 800 copies for this particular project. Students with sufficient scores (usually 50–100% of the group) got the board game. But we do not think a material prize makes a huge difference. As we saw several weeks later, while running 2nd-level games with no prizes whatsoever, competition and task orientation are motivating enough.

Each meeting was followed by a talk about the larp and about the political and social issues. We compared the elements of Old Polish parliamentarism to the democracy of today, emphasising the differences between the past and present states. We did not have to be worried about distorting the image of the period by the gender equality element: when we asked after the game who could participate in the *sejmik* assemblies of the Commonwealth, the students knew well it were male members of the *szlachta* only.

The 2nd-level games were also followed by political science workshops, with a great majority of students expressing very interesting political opinions and their own ideas for an ideal state. However, the careless and inconsistent use of political vocabulary (like right/left-wing) in the media makes students confused and unable to navigate in the terminological chaos. Further analysis of the records from these workshops should shed more light on the problem, and help us evaluate the efficiency of our methods. Just one more stat: 93% of the nearly 1100 participants declared they would vote in the next parliamentary election.

The Grand Finale!

The final stage of the project took place on the 17th of December in the Auditorium Maximum hall at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. With the students having participated in two larps before, there was no need for the “how-to-play” intro. The attendance was 100%: all 21 representatives elected at the 2nd-level games showed up (with the transport to Kraków and back home arranged as a part of the project). After a short welcome, introduction to the particular event in the story, and distribution of resources, the game continued.

The final scenario, like the previous ones, started with a preparation phase for the two factions in separate locations, followed by a united Corridors stage and the official session. This time we had four phases, reflecting the historical procedure of the grand Sejm which also had to accommodate a joint session of the House of Representatives with the Senate and the king. The two factions were no longer divided along the religious line: this time we set official delegates elected at the *sejmik* meetings against the delegates coming from the main *rokosz* camp located near Warsaw. We had 2 hours for the entire game, including briefing, resources distribution etc., so each phase was designed for about 30 minutes:

- **Preparation** (15 minutes): delegates verification and the appointment of each faction leader

(the Marshal of the Sejm in one faction, the president of the *rokosz* delegation in the other)

- **First session** (30 minutes): welcome of the king and the senate, followed by a session of the House of Representatives together with the *rokosz* delegates
- **Corridors** (30 minutes): a day-off, filled with unofficial meetings of all parties (except for the king) in the royal castle and in the city
- **Conclusion:** a joint session of the House of Representatives, the *rokosz* delegates, the Senate and the king, ending with the creation of the official register of new bills signed by all the parties involved

Students played the same characters all the way from the 1st-level *sejmik* meetings, but they were given new character sheets with a much longer list of tasks (with point values, as usual). At the 1st-level *sejmik* meetings, players had 4–6 separate tasks each — and this time it was more than 10!

There were four types of aims:

- **“your most primary aim”**, worth 5 points, was assigned on individual basis — those who had performed exceptionally well as players and speakers in the previous stages were charged with the task of getting elected for the Marshal of the Sejm (legal representatives) or the leader of the delegation (*rokosz*); other “most primary” aims included: getting elected a member of the committee to verify the text of the Sejm documentation, collecting 3 favour cards from the senators, or obtaining a new title
- **two “instructional” aims**, 2 points each, were copied from the instructions given to the players by their electorate at the 2nd-level general meeting; these aims reflected the attitude of the *sejmik* to both fundamental issues: the political (how to solve the *rokosz* issue) and the religious one (tolerance and protection for non-Catholics)
- then, we had a **sequence of faction aims**, each worth 1 or 2 points, organised in two identical sets, one for the *rokosz* delegates, the other for

the legal representatives; some of these aims were contradictory (legal delegates — 2 points if the *rokosz* group agrees to settle all public matters on the legal Sejm, *rokosz* — 2 points if the delegates agree to suspend the Sejm and come to the *rokosz* camp), others were important for one faction only and irrelevant for the other

- finally, each person had a **financial aim**: “1 point for each portugalöser in your possession at the end of the game”

Only the senators had favour cards. Players were given beads they knew from the previous games — ducats and portugalösers. With the official delegates outnumbering the *rokosz* group 12 to 9, we gave more money to the *rokosz* members to even the economic power of factions.

A novelty was the large number of costumed reenactors: Marek Piwoński as King Sigismund III Vasa, Paweł Strojny, Łukasz Pleśniarowicz, Korneliusz Krupa, Tomasz Łaska and Sławomir Furtak as the Senate, Michał Link-Lenczowski and Piotr Krzystek as security. We also had two people inside the House of Representatives. Planted as a “mole” between the student-delegates, Alicja Mochocka (13 years old) appeared as the Marshal of the previous Sejm. Her special task was to run (with the help from the Secretary) the representatives verification and the election of a new Marshal, to whom she handed over the “presiding” duties and participated in the rest of the game as a regular delegate. This was also a new and a bit risky thing. Previously, all the 1st and 2nd-level games were marshalled by one of the organisers. This time we decided to put this responsibility into the hands of a student, supported by an NPC Secretary (Tomasz Łomnicki). The Secretary, beside writing down the minutes, had to supervise the procedure and prompt the Marshal when needed. Neither of the NPCs was given specific aims or game mechanics, their only duty was to “service” the players and act in the appropriate Sejm scenes. Michał Mochocki as the Marshal of the court could freely move between the House of Representatives and the Senate chamber, coordinating the game on the run.

Preparation & First Session

The start of the game was dominated by stage fright. The delegate verification (*rugi*[6]) passed by in

a split second, with no-one willing to speak apart from a *starosta* and an instigator (the interaction at this very moment had been implemented in their private aims). People running for the post of the Sejm Marshal volunteered by raising hands, and they had to be persuaded to say a few words of self-presentation. But the anxiety quickly faded away. We staged a brief greeting of the king and the senate, and soon after the official opening ceremony (with a kiss on the royal hand) the game was in full swing.

Corridors

30 minutes later we announced the end of the first session and the beginning of a day-off — this was the Corridors phase. With the disappearance of the minutes-writing Secretary and the procedural framework, the players now walked around the hall, plotting and arguing in small groups, sometimes joined by the senators. Actually, the senators soon found themselves besieged by the official representatives and *rokosz* delegates hunting for the favour cards (each senator had a few to give away). Persuaded by the legal delegates (who had it on the list of faction aims), the *rokosz* group sent a letter to Zebrzydowski, asking him to come to the Sejm in person and lay down specific complaints. They soon got a reply with refusal that we had prepared in advance. It was a real shame we had to stop the Corridors phase after another 30 minutes, as this could easily be carried on for twice as long. But the clock was relentless: it was the time to conclude.

Final (Joint) Session

As the king and the senators again took their seats in the chamber, the Secretary and the Marshal of the Sejm started to address all issues discussed in the first session. For a while, stage fright again loomed over us, as this was now official public speaking, as opposed to the chaotic and emotional discussions in small groups just a while earlier. But the students managed to overcome it. Passionate speeches were made, “Objection!” was heard, arguments were waged over details, matters already discussed were brought back, with the conclusion prolonged from the scheduled 30 to 45 minutes. Afterwards, the king said that at times he had felt as if he had been watching a real 17th century Sejm. The *rokosz* group dwindled, with several of the members publicly admitting their mistakes and apologising to the king. However,

we cannot say the *rokosz* faction lost the game, as nearly all of their requests were met, and the remaining few were not rejected but postponed to the next Sejm. Our Sejm reached a happy ending, with a mutual agreement and a call for reconciliation.

What now?

Now we need to sort our memories and impressions, analyse the evaluation questionnaires, think over the discussions and workshops we have had; in general, we must bring out the educational value of nearly 200 hours spent with the young citizens. And now let us give the floor to some of them:

For me and other students in my school, the Democracy project gave us much food for thought, and made us realise what democracy looked like in the past. I'm not a fast learner, unfortunately, but with this project, without the need to sit over books, I gained a lot of knowledge.

— Marzena Mędrek, gimnazjum in Czernichów

I find your larps a great thing. In an interesting and fun way, they deliver knowledge about history and contemporary politics. I never thought fun and learning could be so efficiently combined!

— Arkadiusz Kowalski, gimnazjum in Rybna

This was a translation of our paper “Projekt DEMOkracja: LARP w edukacji obywatelskiej” published in Polish in the proceedings of Druga Konferencja Larpowa (January 2013). It's more or less an exact translation, with the addition of footnotes I found necessary for non-Polish readers. Now I'd like to add an afterword I posted on the website of my next edu-historical-larp project (see on: <https://sites.google.com/site/edularp2013/home/myslil-pokonferencjilarpowej>):

At the 2nd Larp Conference (Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/436385023088651/>), that took place on the 11th to 13th January in Wrocław, Łukasz Wrona and I presented Project DEMOkracja (see on: <http://www.projektdemokracja.pl/>) which had just been completed in December. Briefly speaking, the idea of the project was civic and historical education in junior high schools, carried out by a series of larps (more than 1000 first-time larpers!). Well, not just larps. We also had workshops, discussions, a board game etc., but larps were the key element. At KoLa, the larping community gave us so much endorsement, with so many people asking about the second run, that I started to seriously consider it. We hadn't planned a second run, but now it seems to be on the table. Think 2014, the year of election for local government, or 2015 — for national parliament, perhaps? In high schools (not middle schools), with 18/19-year-olds eligible to vote in real elections a few months later. On a national scale, i.e. around cities with larp teams willing and able to run our games. For the time being, the idea has to be shelved. I already have too many projects going on. But that's something I definitely want to dig out next year.

Michał Mochocki

AUTHORS' FOOTNOTES

- 1 The term *pospolite ruszenie* refers to a specific variation of levée en masse established in the time of the *Rzeczpospolita Szlachecka* (Republic of Szlachta) of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569–1795), which called to arms all able-bodied *szlachta* members — without townsfolk or peasants. In broader sense, now it can denote any kind of publicly announced initiatives calling for mass participation. The direct translation of *pospolite ruszenie* is “public movement”.
- 2 In the Polish version published in *Druga Konferencja Larpowa*, it says 1400 participants, as this was the total number of students reported by their teachers. Now, when we have calculated the real number recorded in attendance lists, it turned out to be around 1100, with the missing 300 standing for absences.
- 3 *Sejmik* (literally: a small *sejm*) — a small assembly of citizens living within a specific *ziemia* or district, summoned by the king to elect delegates for the upcoming *sejm* — national parliament (or, to elect delegates for judicial bodies). Beside its primary purpose, a *sejmik* also functioned as a local government.
- 4 *Rokosz* — an anti-royalist rebellion of citizens against the misconduct or incompetence of the Crown, legally sanctioned as a legitimate act of civil disobedience. Seen as the last resort in the defence of civil liberties.
- 5 162 of them showed up.
- 6 *Rugi poselskie* — the first step taken at the Sejm to verify the legitimacy of mandates.

TRANSLATORS' FOOTNOTES

- I *Szlachta* — the noble class of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, holders of many privileges and landed property. What should be noted is that *szlachta* was very diverse in terms of lifestyle and wealth, with some of its impoverished members possessing nothing more than their legal status and forced to become tenants to wealthier gentry.
- II *Pola Chwały* (Fields of Glory) — an annual event in Niepołomice, dedicated to history, its reconstruction and education; for more information, please see: <http://www.polachwaly.pl/index.php>
- III The text mentions several Polish administrative units, from the largest: province, voivodeship (which is the historical equivalent of province; in Polish, these two units still share the name *województwo*), district (*powiat*), *ziemia* (lit. “land”, historical only) and commune (*gmina*).
- IV *Starosta* — a title of a royal administrative official. It can be roughly translated as “elder”.

House of Dreams



In October 2012, it finally happened! During a one-day event, theatre, visual arts and larp became one. Born among trials and tribulations, the experiment turned out to be a success and the first step towards something new. Here it is — the game of art, and the art of game.

Difficult beginnings

The idea for *House of Dreams* came to my mind after we had given up on organising a festival that was supposed to unite RPGs, larps, speculative fiction and art. A group of students from the Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław had undertaken to create special interactive installations for that event. Along with Violetta Łata, the project coordinator from the Academy, we decided not to give up on the possibility to mobilize young artists and combine their works with something more theatrical and larp-like.

July came, and we were still looking for a good team. Viola was bravely fighting for the artists, while I was pondering on scenarios, scriptwriters and how to use various works. We received a green light to organize the project in the Światowid Creative Activity Centre, which gave us access to the entire two-storey building with a variety of rooms and possibilities. We needed actors as well — fortunately, we were given a helping hand from a theatre group lead by Ada Biela.

The name House of Dreams was supposed to express the diversity of dream visions, which enabled us to mix various artistic concepts, which sometimes were very different from one another. The main theme was expressed in the subtitle of the project — The Game of Art, the Art of Game. We intended to engage the audience to play with the artists' works as well as to encourage the artists to create a game together with the audience.

Art vs. larp

Working with artists is not an easy task. We went through numerous disputes concerning both justified interpretations of works included in a given scenario and purely personal problems.

The Academy students had many different ideas. A corridor full of tinfoil hair, which created a peculiar chamber full of candy waiting to be found, strange flexagons — geometrical models made solely of paper which could be freely rotated, a board game based on the relationship between a man and a woman — these are just several of the crazy ideas we created together.

All the works of art needed to be fully interactive — which meant that every participant could and did touch them. It created more problems, as some of the artists did not want to expose their works for potential damage. Many of the Academy students resigned because of time shortage or lack of interest in such a project.

On the other hand, it was really inspiring to come into contact with a different way of perceiving the world expressed with pictures, sculptures or patterns. Each of these works gave new and unusual ideas for the scriptwriters. Thanks to joint effort, we managed to give totally new meanings to many works.

15-minute gaming

The idea of a larp-like approach to art did not come from nowhere. Several years ago, along with some other scriptwriters I ran a series of larp meetings whose construction concept proved to be very helpful in this new task. My original idea was for the participant to enter the room where the scenario took place in any chosen moment. The rules, concise and to-the-point, were written down on a board. Additional help was provided by staff who acted out roles building the mood, and gave appropriate tips.

This 5- to 15-minute games construction was later utilized in *House of Dreams*. The event was com-

prised of 4 such ongoing scenarios. Each of them was staffed by one person, who was to trigger the interaction with the participants. Visitors came alone or in groups. They could be joined by others in any moment. For example, *Lalki opowieści* (Story Dolls) presented its participants with puppets placed next to easels with certain situations briefly described on them, for example “a farewell”. A participant chose a puppet and approached a given situation, starting the story. An actor or another participant took another doll, and together they created an ad-hoc tale. After this mini-performance was finished, the visitor wrote down their ideas or a prominent dialogue piece. This way the empty paper sheet was gradually filled with new concepts and meanings.

Casting required the participants to enter the room one by one. The first person to arrive was approached by a staff member running the casting, and given a game card with a list of emotions and scenes that they were supposed to act out. The participant was then to go around the corner, to the part of the room which was covered in mirrors, and where the jury was present — several masks fitted to chairs. Every member of the jury had a number next to them. The candidate was to present the scenes they had received earlier. The rest of the participants that stayed behind the wall could hear what the candidate was saying, but they could not see to whom. At any moment, the staff member could play some recordings — sounds of applause, whistles, and gasps. The recordings had varied effects on the participants — some of them were amused, others were motivated to try harder. The casting ended with the participant choosing the member of the jury most partial to them.

Experiments and more

Four other installations did not require any actors to be present. The participants visiting them initiated the interaction by themselves. For instance, *On i Ona* (Him and Her) required them to sit on two sides of a board and move the game pieces according to instructions found on a piece of paper, which was put on the wall.

Apart from the artistic installations, *House of Dreams* also featured larps, freeforms, a fashion show, and traditional theatre performances at a set time. This way, various short and longer forms complemented one another. For this part,

The event was comprised of 4 such ongoing scenarios. Each of them was staffed by one person, who was to trigger the interaction with the participants. Visitors came alone or in groups. They could be joined by others in any moment.

we used a theatre room, fitted with a proper sound and lighting equipment. Many of the visitors who came with the intention to see the performances took tours of all the installations during the intervals. This set program included *Footfalls* and *Krapp's Last Tape* by Samuel Beckett, directed by Ada Biela, a Norwegian larp scenario *Falne stjerner* run by Bartek Ziolo, and my freeform scenario *Włosy*, inspired by Japanese mystery tales. It should be noted that the games saw first-time players taking part in them.

Entrance to the House of Dreams

The event was free of charge. Our expenses, spent on artistic materials and shipping, were no higher than 400 zlotys. It was a relatively modest budget for an artistic event. Our promotion was limited to the local media. As it was the very first time such an event was organized, we didn't get much coverage. However, several prominent portals, like TuWrocław, wrote about us.

It was possible to enter and leave the House at any moment.



Violetta Łata

Mistakes, mistakes

We couldn't avoid making mistakes. *House of Dreams* started at noon, and lasted as long as 12 hours, while an 8-hour form would be better — especially as the majority of the participants did not turn up earlier than on late afternoon, and the morning visitors did not last until the evening programme.

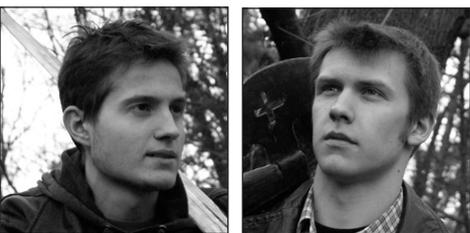
Logistics wasn't great either. One of the artists was over two hours late because there was nobody to give her a lift. Many of the staff were also late. Moreover, there was no possibility to revise or practice some of the ideas before the presentation proper. Fortunately they were all interesting enough to be appreciated sooner or later.

In the end, not the end

House of Dreams was visited by over 80 people. Most of them spent several hours with us, during which they had contact with both visual arts, larps and theatre. We succeeded in creating something new, and it worked despite many problems. This event left us with rich documentation and experience how to organize such events in a more professional way and avoid mistakes.

We also managed to prove that larps and freeforms may be successfully used both as art and as means of presenting art to common people. The strength of these forms lies in showing those of us who are unlikely to ever visit an art gallery the works of young artists in a completely new and appealing light.

We had to wake up from *House of Dreams* — but we do not rest on our laurels. We are already working on the continuation, looking for new inspirations as well as an even more interesting location to present a new version of this unique union of larps and art.



HIGH_RISE

larp
video game
RPG

The origin

We've been great fans of everything connected to science fiction ever since I remember. Devouring heaps of books, cartoons, films and games, we even wanted to create a comic strip in this setting. Looking for inspiration, we went to Pyrkon (a convention in Poznań in late March — translator's note) — we weren't disappointed. We played many diverse and interesting games, and had the pleasure of taking part in the *XF-001* scenario. It was an action-packed science-fiction chamber larp. The idea for this game was a walk through the tunnel of fears. It was then that we realised that there's a niche for this kind of games. On top of that, there was the theme which was pretty heavy and not very popular with larps — hard SF. Inspired by this project, we started dreaming of creating a game which we would like to play ourselves. Of course, we also wanted to develop science fiction by exploring new artistic territories. With upcoming Polcon 2012 convention, we had a chance to test our ideas and get feedback. Our larp fell in with the theme of the convention: the end of the world. We wanted to talk about people, or to be more precise, about being human, and the best setting for that was cyberpunk.

Believe, feel, experience

The core of this larp was creating an environment which, with the use of the set, costumes, and props, would be realistic enough to help the world of the game supplant reality as we know it. From experience, we knew that more interaction with the surroundings means deeper immersion for the players, just like in field larps. We asked ourselves a simple question, "What can be done to create an impression that a small room is actually a vast space?" The answer was right there in horror sci-fi video games, where an important factor was the level design. Series such as *Doom*, *Resident Evil*, *Unreal*, or *Dead Space* built on small interiors where you fought for your life feeling like an animal in the cage. Bearing this in mind, we came up with the idea of screens

which, thanks to their modular construction, could be used to build labyrinths for various stages of the game. What's more, the claustrophobic atmosphere of the constructed levels stirred imagination which we then bombarded by various stimuli: light, sound, graphic, and special effects. Another advantage of the screens was that they "removed" the elements of surroundings unfitting the game — thanks to the screens they were practically invisible, and that in turned built the atmosphere. Lastly, we upheld the illusion by hiding the backstage.

Setting — the message

Once we'd decided on the main idea of *High_Rise*, we had to create a plot which would intrigue the players, and fit the cyberpunk setting. We knew that people often try to grasp new things by referring to familiar, tested schemata. Thus, trying not to be innovative just for the sake of it, we used a compilation of selected works of art, books, games and films. We ordered the whole set and, based on our vision of cyberpunk, we chose these ideas which would allow us and our future players to answer the question, "What does it mean to be human?" One of the requirements for playing the larp was reading the introduction to the game setting:

At the end of the 22nd century, global megacorporations plunged the world into crisis. Their impact on international economy and politics led to an extensive devastation of the natural environment. In 2170, Lighthouse becomes the most influential Asian corporation worldwide. It carries out research into the output and processing of strategic resources, computer and military technology, and bioengineering, in the devastated and contaminated areas of former countries it's swallowed up. One day they lose radio contact with one of their research sky towers running a space colonization program. An elite unit of security and technicians is sent there to fix the problem. They arrive at the place only to find out that the complex has been shut due to an emergency and the causes of the breakdown remain unknown.

The action in the game was designed to fit (1) the room where the larp was to take place (2) an element in the plot which explained changes between levels and the presence of screens. The ambiguous opening sequence was a great kick-off for solving mysteries and answering questions, which the players did while picking up clues on the way. This allowed us to confront two hostile groups which were made to cooperate in extreme conditions. Eventually, the players reached a neat twist which resolved most of the queries.

Characters

Creating clear divisions in the society of our fictional world of the future

We ordered the whole set and, based on our vision of cyberpunk, we chose these ideas which would allow us and our future players to answer the question, “What does it mean to be human?”

allowed us to divide our players into two groups (the number of people was to fit the size of the room) (1) egoistic, actively identifying itself with the corporation (2) altruistic, loosely related to the corporation. An open conflict and the obligation to cooperate in dire conditions were to make the players identify themselves with their characters and immerse in the world we created. Since the reality presupposed uniformity of outfits, we transformed the players into characters by providing them with basic props and costumes. Uniform clothes forced the players to externalize their character’s individual personality traits in their behaviour.

Mechanics

The larp used our original mechanics inspired by video games and RPG. It was based on (1) character sheets (ID badges on neck straps) which described combat, tech, and class abilities — with their values depending on the character class (2) the P.U.S.S. Deck system — a deck of cards with multipliers for abilities. This card mechanics allowed us to control the game on two levels: the one based on storytelling, and the other based on rounds. The former was about solving mysteries, uncovering the intricacies

of the plot and acting; the latter was mainly about fighting opponents, technical activities and other action tests. Implants were an additional element enriching the game. They served as an ace up the sleeve and, at times, as the character’s last resort. Apart from these, players and their opponents had stamina points, which equaled the number of hit points they could lose before they died. The script was about hostile relations between representatives of two different social groups, so we decided to highlight these enmities even more by giving characters certain occupations.

There

are two character classes in the game:

soldiers, whose priority was to fight and defend, and

technicians, who explored the sky tower complex. Each of the classes was equipped with a set of abilities fitting the character’s functions.

Running the game

To minimize the costs, we decided to use the materials we’d find in our attics and basements. We looked for old electronic parts, building materials, carnival ornaments, and disco equipment. Since we’re an airsoft group, most of the military equipment was our own stuff. The next step of the project was creating models of opponents. We wanted the players to come into physical contact with their enemies. Inspired by the ‘80s movies’ dolls and marionettes, we formed a tech group (responsible for special sound and light effects, as well as the set) who managed to spark life into the creatures and the system of traps and security devices in the building.

To build up the science-fiction setting, we gave the players the possibility to log into records of the employees who’d worked on different levels through the sky tower system’s database. To do that, they needed a numeric password. The program supporting the terminal and all the records were written specifically for



@HIGH_RISE

the purpose of the game.

Assembling the whole installation for the *High_Rise* larp was laborious because of the substantial number of details which influenced the development of the plot. Teamwork and precision were extremely important. While the tech team were running their final tests, we were introducing the players to the game, distributing costumes and equipment.

Conclusion

Because of the efforts of the organizers and the involvement of the players, *High_Rise* proved to be a successful show directed in a way significantly different from all our other projects. Our original idea, its execution, the players' satisfaction and their need for more convinced us to continue the project. Nowadays access to multimedia is so easy that the plot of one project may be incorporated into other media and continued. That's why we want to create a series which will interweave the stories of the same characters and places, and whose events will shape the future of the whole world we've created.



City Games are Larps

Every time I read a newspaper article about a city game attended by hundreds of people, I wonder why there's nothing on larps there. When I participate in yet another larp that several geeks have prepared for a group of their friends, I think I understand what the problem is. However, city games are actually not so different from other live games.

What are city games?

City games are direct descendants of scouts' games. They're based on scouting and orienteering, so they often emphasize elements such as time pressure and searching for specific locations on a map. There are also tasks, similar to those hidden in envelopes during scouts' field games. As implied by their name, city games are run in urban areas, and for several years they've been enjoying a golden age of sorts. Even only in Wrocław, there are several dozens of city games run every year during various festivals and other cultural events. They were organized by such institutions as Polish State Railways or Ośrodek Pamięć i Przyszłość. Their themes were also diverse, for example there's a dwarf game organised every year, and the opening of the renovated central railway station was accompanied by a game about the importance of railway in the city. City games are regularly attended by hundreds of people.

Why are they so popular?

It's a simple question to answer. City games enjoy good publicity, are easily accessible, and participating in them often can result in winning some kind of a prize. As in many other types of games, the key elements are competition and fulfilling certain objectives. However, unlike board and video games or most larps, city games usually let participants "play themselves" and use their own personal skills. It surely helps them to get into their roles better. City game participants usually expect fun connected with urban exploration or an interesting story. Although their individual expectations differ, everyone is easily carried away by the magic of the game. In addition, depending on the game, it may be enjoyed by whole families, youth or adults. All this results in city games gaining in popularity and participation.

First of all, the team — *Miejskie Puzzle*

When my adventure with city games started in 2011, I decided to cooperate with a prestigious institution. It so happened that in the second half of September the first edition of Dolnośląski Festiwal Architektury (Lower Silesian Architecture Festival) was organized by a respected and resourceful Stowarzyszenie Architektów Polskich (Polish Architects Association — SARP). A city game was perfect for an event dedicated to architecture and urbanism. That's why the organizers were eager to cooperate, especially as the only cost they were to bear was printing the materials. Of course, with my very first game I made a lot of mistakes, and the biggest of them was the lack of a good team. Only two people actually worked on the game concept: me and Ada Biela, who dealt with the graphics and contacts with SARP. In consequence, everything was done in the last possible moment, and up until the very end we didn't know if we would have enough volunteers for the task checkpoints, or if enough participants would show up. There were simply too few of us for the project. *Miejskie Puzzle* (City Jigsaw) was a modification of a standard model that most city games are based on. There were ten points on the map, connected to one another and recognizable thanks to buildings representative of the modern architecture of Wrocław. The participants were divided into teams. Unlike during regular city games, they could start playing from any point. Everyone that successfully completed one or two of the designed routes in within a given time limit received prizes — albums and T-shirts from the festival organisers. The mechanism that allowed to start the game from anywhere resulted in the game, originally designed for thirty people, attracting around seventy participants, which was an unquestionable success and made me realize the potential of this kind

of games. The game also had educational value, as it let the participants discover the city from a whole new perspective. However, it didn't change the fact that city games need a good team of organisers and enough time to prepare everything. In the case of regular larps such teams are found, at least now, only in field games. Unfortunately, most Polish larps are written by one or two people, and sometimes in a rather slapdash manner which affects their quality. In turn, the difference between field games and city games lies mainly in the clearly specified target group and the event

that the game is to be a part of. City games are usually written in a month — compared to a year in the case of

many field games — and are targeted at, for example, families with children or architecture festival attendees, and not speculative fiction fans.

Poszukiwacze języków — a game for the European Council

The next game, and a far greater challenge, was *Poszukiwacze języków* (Language Hunters) prepared for the celebrations of the European Day of Languages in Wrocław in September 2012. For the sake of comparison — the budget for *Miejskie Puzzle* was around 600 zlotys plus prizes, whereas the budget for the game for the Wrocław EU Commission Representation was 5 thousand zlotys plus prizes. *Poszukiwacze języków* was created by five designers, a graphic, and 23 volunteers, whereas *Miejskie Puzzle* had a team of two designers and 10 volunteers. This clearly shows the difference in scale between the two projects. However, it turns out that the sum of 5 thousand zlotys is actually not very big for such a project. A certain company that prepares city games for commercial purposes charges even 11 thousand zlotys for smaller events. The budget was spent on game materials, print-outs, props, and small

City game participants usually expect fun connected with urban exploration or an interesting story. Although their individual expectations differ, everyone is easily carried away by the magic of the game.

remuneration for the designers, the graphic and the staff. This time we've prepared as many as 20 tasks, divided between four paths — knowledge, theatre, communication and adventure. Everything we did was to help the participants find the answer to the question, "What is language?". This topic brought us many problems, but also lots of fun. The educational aspect was essential, but it didn't make the game any less enjoyable. There were over one hundred participants, including adults, youth and families with children. It was possible to join the game at one of the

four starting points, which were also used to enroll new participants. This time, the best of them received special prizes, and

the rest small gifts. The tasks were so varied and time-consuming that none of the teams managed to complete them within 4 hours, which eliminated, for example, the complaints about the game not being challenging enough. Apart from new experience, *Poszukiwacze języków* also gave us something much more important — a team of designers.

Dewizy Śmierci — a larp-like detective story

Before a month passed, we were creating another scenario, this time for Międzynarodowy Festiwal Kryminału (International Crime Fiction Festival — MFK). Excited by the earlier successes, we decided to introduce elements that are typical for larps into the new city game, entitled *Dewizy śmierci* (Death Currency). This time our budget was 3 thousand zlotys, which we could use only for print-outs and props. The money was managed by our partner organisation — Fabryka Tajemnic, which, along with the organisers of the festival, was also responsible for the promotion of the game. What exactly did we draw from larps? The plot revolved around a murder committed in the communist times. The suspects, played by 15 volunteer actors, interacted with teams

of detectives, members of the Civic Militia, and relatives of the victim — a woman named Kamila. Instead of checkpoints and tasks, as in the previous two games, we decided to create a simulation of a real, living city. All the actors had their own duties, as well as free time. Their character sheets were similar to the ones used in larps, and they included a detailed schedule — for example, a Civic Militia officer knew when he was supposed to be at his station, and when he was free. Among the volunteers there were also characters of murderers, who committed more murders during the game. It was their choice which of the actors they wanted to dispose of, and that in turn created new clues and possibilities for the participants to uncover the culprit. This larp-like experiment made (1) the organisers surprised several times (2) the plot non-linear (3) the actors — unaware of who is responsible — active and feeling threatened. Although the scope of control was smaller than in regular city games, the experiment proved to be successful. 200 people took part in the game, and we had to turn down many because the game would become too crowded. Those who managed to find one or two murderers, or acquired the biggest number of props, received prizes — books funded by the festival organiser.

Mesjasz w Walizce — good ideas play out

In November, the MFK creators organised the first edition of Festiwal Imienia Brunona Schulza (Bruno Schulz Festival). Encouraged by the previous success, they asked us to organise another city game. *Mesjasz w walizce* (Messiah in a Briefcase) was a game totally different from the previous ones. The literary theme — Schulz's prose — and much worse weather forced us to look for new solutions. Due to lack of preparation time (the game was created within the record time of one and a half week) we resigned from making a map of the game area. Instead, we focused on other interesting elements — including the title briefcases (made of cardboard), which were used by each team as a prop and to mark their progress

We focused on other interesting elements — including the title briefcases (made of cardboard), which were used by each team as a prop and to mark their progress during the game. This way, big cardboard “ads” of the game covered the Wrocław main square and its environs. This time, various tasks and stories connected to cinnamon shops from Schulz's prose were intertwined with a sub-plot of the struggle between order and chaos.

during the game. This way, big cardboard “ads” of the game covered the Wrocław main square and its environs. The budget for the project was 4 thousand zlotys. We had 11 actors for the game. This time, various tasks and stories connected to cinnamon shops from Schulz's prose were intertwined with a sub-plot of the struggle between order and chaos. By choosing whom to help, the participants caused either chaos or order to win. Completing specific tasks changed the actors' attitudes towards the teams. For the sake of clarity, the overall status of a team was represented by coloured stamps on their cardboard briefcase. The collected stamps were also points for which prizes (books) were given in the end. The final location had to be found after collecting clues from the actors. After getting there, every team had a conversation with the organisers about their achievements, and could hold an old briefcase with a prop manuscript

of *The Messiah*, Schulz's lost novel. It was enough to see the enthusiastic faces of the participants to realize how much fun they had. For every team *Mesjasz w Walizce* constituted a very different experience,

even though many of them performed similar actions and took part in the same sub-plots. The city game that spanned three hours was attended by over one hundred people. Our premise was to create a game smaller than *Dewizy Śmierci*. It should be noted that many participants of the previous game played this one as well, because they liked the quality and design of *Dewizy Śmierci*. Step by step, we started to develop a solid audience.

Why city games aren't larps?

It's a question I've been asking myself for quite some time. Up until now, I've associated city games with a rather primitive amusement, based on completing series of checkpoints and tasks. Nothing really interesting. And indeed, most city games are badly-prepared, unoriginal, and really schematic. It doesn't stop their authors from earning a lot of money and turning up on the first pages of newspapers.

Of course, there are some exceptions as some city games are really creative, but these are still rare. At the same time, most people have no idea about larps. Almost no one would come and write an article on a larp made in Wrocław or Gdańsk, regardless of the quality of the scenario. It should come as no surprise. However, basing city games on larp-like ideas, creating fan communities, experimenting and earning money for one's work may bring much quicker and bigger results. After all, aren't larps one of many kinds of city games?

Our team, Wrocławskie Gry Miejskie (Wrocław City Games), is composed of Ada Biela, Katarzyna Górka, Violetta Łata, Izabela Kowalik, Tomasz Jeznach and Jakub Tabisz..

Definitions in Use



In science, definitions serve a purely didactic function. They specify the topic and, if we share the same set of notions, prevent communication noise. In extreme cases, they help us identify new concepts since they do not overlap with the already-existing definitions. In a word, in everyday life, unless we want to explain what a larp (or a similarly phantasmagoric notion) is, we do not resort to using definitions.

Yet, with a whit of creative energy definitions may give birth to wondrous reinterpretations of familiar forms and genres. But let us first look at the definition of definition:

Definition [Lat. definitio 'division', 'term'], log. a statement explicating the meaning of a preceding expression.

Encyklopedia PWN

In accordance with their definition, definitions are used to set boundaries between meanings of words (but not the things they describe). Pretty obvious, is it not? Sadly, in reality we often see the attitude, "I will not do *it* differently, cause *it* will not be *it* anymore." (substitute "it" with "larp", "jeepform", "impro theatre", or whatever you want). Definitions are used to describe expressions, not to create them. That is all for the traditional understanding of the word "definition". For the purpose of this article, though, I will use the following, modified one:

Definition [Lat. definitio 'division', 'term'], log. a statement giving meaning to an expression and the phenomenon it describes.

We have defined our new definition of definition (sic!). Let us see what comes out of it.

1+1=3 or creative addition

Defining phenomena inevitably entails pointing to their typical features. While it is useful in distinguishing between physical phenomena or evolutionary whims, in the field of art (which in my opinion includes larps) it may limit the meaning of an expression to a set of stereotypes. On the one hand, it is

unjust, but on the other it highlights these elements which can be modified to make the larps unique. Practically speaking, when a definition reads,

Larps are similar to improvised theatrical plays. The director and the scriptwriter in one person [...] is the only person who knows the whole scenario.

Wikipedia

it informs us about the trend for keeping the players in the dark about the scenario. Creative approach to definitions is about pointing to such pitfalls and finding ways of altering the proposed models.

In this example, the most unambiguous piece of information concerns the availability of the scenario to the players. If during an average larp the game master is the only one who knows the whole scenario, does it mean that a game where all the players know the whole scenario, or a scenario which is only partially known to the game master, can no longer be called a larp?

Both the idea of jeepforms and the 1-2-3 larps[I] violate the definition based on this premise. In jeepforms players are often familiarized with the whole scenario before the game, in 1-2-3 all the larp players possess more knowledge than the game master who doesn't know the characters, only the general construction of the scenario.

Looking for boundaries set by definitions we find ways of creating new, unprecedented forms with relatively small effort. The scope of the introduced alterations is limited only by our courage, creativity, and the chosen definition. I will present examples of

three truths about larps which were negated and it lead to creating brilliant scenarios. After all, at the end of the day, our world, peppered with longish definitions, is waiting to have them intellectually chewed and spat out in new, better forms.

Three unities — an analysis

The unity of time, space, and action

Practice shows that most larp scenarios are created according to a certain approach, which is consistent with the classical three unities of the Greek tragedy. It means that the plot is set in one place (whose in-game interpretation fits the reality, and which does not change during the game), one time (time passes linearly in the game), and is communicated by means of one plotline (each player has one role and a story related to it). This gives basis for creating an adequate definition:

*A larp scenario is set in **one specific, unchangeable** place. Action is **chronological and linear**. Every player communicates with the in-game environment by means of **one character**, defined on the basis of an agreement reached **before the game**.*

To make the process easier to follow, I bolded the elements which are the easiest to change in order to receive a new game form. Clearly, even for a text as short as the one above, we have six of them; and the longer the definition, the more boundaries to be crossed it contains. This procedure is called an analysis, and is one of two methods proposed in this article which allow us to create new solutions on the basis of definitions and propositions.

*Analysis (Lat. analysis, Greek ἀναλύειν *analyein* “break up”; from ἀνα- *ana-* “up, throughout” and -lyein *-lyein* “loosen”, “untie” “break up”) — breaking up into components/factors (in the material and immaterial sense); opposite of synthesis.*

Wikipedia

In order of appearance:

Specific place — this information may trigger the question, “Who chooses the place?” Usually it is the author of the game. But nothing stands in the way of having the players define the place (e.g. 1-2-3 larps, where the scenario does not specify the place at all). We may also ask, “Do we need to specify the place?” In fact, games set in an unspecified space are possible, and giving the players the possibility to redefine their whereabouts at will may result in creating unique, literally unrepeatable scenarios (e.g. *System* by Malwina Otto and Marcin Słowikowski, where all the features of the fictional reality can be modified by the players).

Unchangeable place — during most larps, the unity of place is related to limitations of the scenography. The bigger the area, the harder it will be to make quick changes to the set. Still, we can pose the question, “Can the place be changed?” Light effects, special effects, light furniture, foil, and small but important elements which attract the players’ attention can be used (at least during chamber larps) to create an impression of realistic changes of the place to fit the plot (e.g. *Creed of Ruin*, where in subsequent scenes the set is modified to construct different places).

Chronological passage of time — many larps, especially chamber larps and outdoor larps, comprise one scene with a chronological passage of time, which passes with the same speed as in reality. By dividing the game into scenes, we can distort chronology and say “yes” to the question, “Can time go backwards in a larp?” Non-chronological games can build tension in an interesting way by unravelling not the results, but the motivations, and alter all the characters’ attitudes rapidly (e.g. *Podróż Miguela* by Krzysztof Chmielewski, in which the events are ordered in a reverse manner).

Linear passage of time — can scenes move in any direction on the time axis? The mechanism of introducing scenes, instead of one continuous timeline, opens up a whole world of possibilities beyond simply disrupting chronology. Retrospections, introspections, futurospections and many other cinematic tricks are perfectly playable in larps. Jeepforms make extensive use of such techniques, but the possibilities for application are not limited to short forms (e.g. *New Dynasty* with numerous retrospections)[1].

Only one character — can a player not have more than just one character? Doing away with linear timeline and introducing scenes to the game gives the players time (in between the scenes) to familiarize themselves with new information, and possibly — new characters.

Especially during jeepforms, this mechanism yields excellent results. The same small group of players is able to simulate

relationships between dozens of different characters or present points of view on one and the same role (e.g. *Romeo i Mercurio* by Bartek Ziolo, where in subsequent acts Romeo and Mercurio are played by different pairs of players, irrespective of their sex or age).

Getting to know your character before the game — The last highlighted element of the definition of the three unities is describing characters to players before the game. “Does the player have to know everything about their character before the game?” Not necessarily. As the subsequent scenes and acts introduce new information, for example on the character’s past, motivations or reflections, the character itself will change. A character can be “an arch” (and change) or “a stone” (and have a steady, unchangeable personality). Applying these categories consciously makes it easier to create multilayered, believable, and unique characters (both *Creed of Ruin* and *New Dynasty* make use of this technique).

Three functions of larps — a synthesis

Therapy, Education, Fun

Another theory which we will use in the quest for new larp forms is the three functions hypothesis. Larps serve three functions (1) therapeutic — they heal, eg. psychodramas (2) educational — they teach, eg. edu-larps (3) ludic — they entertain, eg. chamber larps, jeepforms and field games.

The three functions hypothesis itself is so simple that there is only a minimal number of elements whose credibility could be undermined. But one might ask, “Are there more functions of larps?” The answer is seemingly an easy one. The value of this statement does not lie in the possibility to analyze it, but to synthesize it.

Can a player not have more than just one character? Doing away with linear timeline and introducing scenes to the game gives the players time (in between the scenes) to familiarize themselves with new information, and possibly — new characters.

Synthesis (Greek σύνθεσις, *synthesis* “agreement”, from συντιθέναι *syntithenai*, “put together”, from συν- “with”- i τιθέναι *tithenai*, “placing, putting”)

— refers to creating more complex entities from simpler elements, it can be used to describe material processes (e.g. in chemistry), or more abstract (in literature). It is opposite to analysis (or decomposition, disintegration).

Wikipedia

How can we apply this information to the three functions hypothesis? We can treat each of the functions as a starting point in the search for solutions in other fields of art and science and use our findings in larps. A good example of the therapeutic function is the conscious application of psychological phenomena during larps. Looking for information on the therapeutic potential of larps, one immediately comes across the phenomenon of immersion, and later — various methods of using it to enter altered states of consciousness. Synthesizing solutions from different areas was utilized in the larp *Delirium*, which explored the therapeutic function more broadly to have access to techniques and tools allowing the players to feel real emotions and real madness. A rather different approach to the therapeutic function is the deliberate introduction of the “catharsis” effect to larps. Almost every game has this cathartic effect on

the player, but in two different ways.

In psychology catharsis is described as follows:

Catharsis (Greek for purification) — liberating oneself from suffering, relieving suppressed tension, emotions, bridled thoughts and visions.

In literature:

Catharsis (Greek κάθαρσις — purification) — one of the basic features of tragedy, especially ancient (classical). The term was coined and defined by Aristotle in Chapter VI of his "Poetics". He claimed that art should evoke feelings of pity and awe in the viewer, and in doing so purifying them from these sensations.

In the 20th century the concept gained recognition again, mainly thanks to psychoanaly-

sis, where it was introduced by Breuer and Freud. According to more recent interpretations, the essence of catharsis lies in the fact that by experiencing pity, awe, defiance, and suffering the recipient gains an understanding of the mystery of human fate, reconciles with it and with the collective wisdom and experience."

Wikipedia

In the context of larps, these two seemingly similar definitions describe two different phenomena. The first definition concerns the phenomenon occurring after the game, when the players go out of their characters, and immersion subsides; the latter relates to the feeling deliberately evoked by the author through a specific construction of the scenario. Thus, the player can experience two different types of catharsis during one game, where one is related to the player's experience, and the other to the character's experience.

This approach to catharsis with all its consequences is another means of synthesizing information from different areas of art and science. It was applied when discussing the issue of AIDS in the *All My Loving* scenario, set in 1969 — fourteen years before the

discovery HIV. The catharsis of the characters who face the problem of one of their commune members developing an unknown disease varies from the catharsis of the players who know about HIV and are aware of their characters' future.

Similar ploys can be resorted to while creating an edu-larp. Using the knowledge of the scientific methodology allows the game master to share knowledge through games. There is substantial research into learning through games that goes far beyond my knowledge. For further information please refer to the *Homo Ludens* periodical and a rich record of sources and articles of the Games Research Association of Poland.

The synthesis method may prove to be especially creative in the context of the ludic function. Larps, seen as both games and works

of art[2], are part of an unimaginably rich landscape of literary works, theatrical plays, paintings, musical compositions, films, plays, board games, and computer games. Referring to these works, reinterpreting them, and even shamelessly copying motifs and inspirations (i.e. creating a pastiche), are but a standard procedure in the age of postmodernism.

A very simple, and at the same time universal, example of using the ludic function in creating a new quality of games is using schemata and models from other works of art while writing larp scenarios. An example of a larp which made full use of mechanisms and models taken from the film theory was *New Age: Krwawi Rekruci*. The plot of the larp, the way the characters were constructed, and the attitude towards the scenography, light and music were taken from textbooks on film directing, scriptwriting and Hollywood productions, and all that to create the strongest impression of being a film character.

The frosty North

Meilahti, Dogma 99, Turku, and you

The number of references in the line above is not accidental. It is enough to break down the information included in these texts which may be a bit archaic,

but still very true when it comes to larp theory. The Meilhati School offers a definition of larps that is very susceptible to analysis, while Dogma 99 and the Turku manifesto are rich collections of rules “never to be broken” while striving to create “a great larp”. Do I need to add that precisely in breaking all their claims lies the key to creating unique and exceptional games?

True artistry requires great genius, a bit of madness and a lot of luck. Things that are truly new are created once every few centuries, and are often linked to changes in society or technology; but they are not the driving forces behind development in every area. These little steps, based on iron logic and methods known to humanity for thousands of years, result in improving the quality of larps with each designed game. I hope that my presentation of the methods of analysis and synthesis will allow you to cross the boundaries and create something unique.

Good luck!

AUTHORS' FOOTNOTES

- 1 A detailed list of various methods of breaking chronology and linearity of the passage of time can be found in the article *Czasoprzeżenie w larpach* (Time and space in larps).
- 2 For simplification I assume that the artistic function is reflected, depending on the approach, in all the other functions — art can influence emotions, teach and entertain. One may, of course, want to look for other functions of larps on the basis of analyzing various definitions of art. The aim of this article, however, is not exhausting the possibilities of interpretation of all the known definitions, rather pointing to tools for carrying it out.

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A Taste of Larp

Why every game featuring food is simply better

Taste is a forgotten sense in larps. Yes, food is present during most big field games in Poland, but it serves a purely practical purpose. It's an element with a specific function, namely satisfying hunger. Of course, food comes with a game-specific dressing — but its role lies, so to say, in between the world of the game and the one outside it.

As stated before, food has one important, basic function: satisfying hunger. When players are full, they're also happy, and less likely to complain about the game. If both players and organizers are satiated, the communication process is more efficient and is disturbed by fewer conflicts.

In this article I'd like to write a few words about some other aspects of food in larps, especially when smaller games are concerned. How to consciously use food (and when I say food I also mean beverages) as a tool to create games?

Create with food! — advice for organizers

Most larps avoid playing with players' senses, as the games are set more often in imaginary worlds rather than in real spaces. By that I mean that the most important thing is the character to be played, their history, relations and goals. Probably everyone has some experience with a minimalistic larp, ran in a forest, with improvised costumes. How full of immersion and possibilities to create good scenes it is, you can judge for yourselves. Of course, every larp can be saved by good players, but in my opinion a good larp should give them a chance to play well. Food can be a part of scenography and give players such an opportunity by creating atmosphere or entire scenes.

Simulationist larps based on the WYSIWYG rule, which are gaining popularity in Poland, are moving into this direction. These games make use of senses: mostly sight, due to the great locations and players' costumes (*Geas*, *Fantasy Village*), but sometimes hearing as well (for example, traditional music gigs on *Geas*). The sense of taste also becomes prominent when a feast starts or the players need to prepare

fricassee of cow stomachs. But it's all because food needs to be there, and it needs to be "like in fantasy". I mention it, because this is something quite opposite from what happens on other big events, like Orkon or Flamberg. There you have a larp location "The Inn". It has its role in the larp scenario, some quests can be placed there, but the food itself plays a marginal role. In simulationist larps players get their food as an outsourced in-game service. There is plenty of it, it helps to build the world, but its potential is wasted.

Tastes and smells are probably the sensations best remembered by the human brain. If you wish to make your larp unforgettable, give players a chance to associate it with a specific taste. Let them eat things they would normally avoid: aromatic, or maybe disgusting? Why not give all the meals some common flavour, or specific names? From now on, a player who smells cinnamon will recall your game where he tasted a unicorn.

Food is an extremely rewarding resource to use. Games are about conflicts, and the majority of these are resolved during verbal communication. Players strive to achieve their goals that are described in their character sheets ("You need to kill a prince in revenge for your murdered family." "Take part in negotiations and make the best possible deal." etc.). It gets even worse, when conflicts are played out using non-existing resources, such as land in geopolitics, or meaningless goods, like gold, notes, or coins which don't have value outside the game. Food is great, because players can destroy it by eating it, make it by cooking it, it needs room, it has its weight, they can instinctively judge which food is of better quality, and they don't need instructions on how to do that.

It's just playable. A real resource you can fight for. Instead of two ambassadors fighting over some unreal territory, you can have two scouts fighting for a bag of cereal for their villages.

You can play with food shortage, but not with complete lack of food — it won't give you anything. It's because players can just take its absence for granted, consider it a feature of the game, not the setting. If you can't introduce food shortages, you need to show the players where the food is. Can you imagine how you would feel if, after starving for a few hours, you had an audience with a prince who didn't stop eating his chicken

wing while talking to you? That's definitely a better motivation to revolt than having, "The prince raped your daughter and kidnapped

your wife (or the other way round), avenge them!" written in your character sheet. But you need to remember that it's the players who feel hunger, not their characters, so use it carefully. It can cause players to fall out of character as well as trigger negative emotions.

And when players make a revolution, kill the prince, get to the treasury — it's full of food. Would there be anything more rewarding? How would they feel if there was only a chest full of gilded props, useless coins? Or, even worse, a piece of paper with the "gold" mark?

This leads us to another point. Food makes your game epic. It gives you memories you won't forget. Part of this process is about making a connection to the well-known cultural topics, schemas and images. It's much easier to make somebody "feel" something, if they already know what they are supposed to feel. You can achieve it by using cultural schemas connect-

ed with food. You make a bottle of champagne pop? You have the feeling of celebration, and it's only natural. Dozens of movies, New Year's Eves, and many other special moments all make you feel like that in this particular in-game situation. A huge roasted pig — a barbarian feast. Dehydrated pulp — postapo, or the Matrix. In each setting there is something, a food element which can create more magic than any scenography could.

Play with food! — advice for players

Food may be the thing that makes your character distinct from others. During larps with no food planned,

Tastes and smells are probably the sensations best remembered by the human brain. If you wish to make your larp unforgettable, give players a chance to associate it with a specific taste. From now on, a player who smells cinnamon will recall your game where he tasted a unicorn.

it can make your character. Can you imagine playing a hobbit who would not cook anything? What's more, your attitude towards other people can be

shown by food. Do you share it with others? Or maybe you let them watch you eat, but you keep it all for yourself? It says a lot. How do you behave at the table? Which seat do you take? Is there somebody who serves you while you eat, or are you the one serving? It's all significant, because eating is a very social thing. We all have our own ideas on how we should do it, and how we perceive those who do it differently. What we eat is also something that makes us different. One could think, "My character is from this Scotland-like country and therefore I need a kilt." And maybe you could eat haggis in public instead, try to share it with others and watch them with a smile on your face as they refuse it politely? Who's the real man now, Englishman?

What is more, food gives players a great reason to interact with one another, and without interaction, there is no larp. Who would refuse food? That's a much better reason to start a conversation than, "Have you heard anything interesting lately?"



Food as a mechanics?

Food can seriously break your game mechanics if it's not a common thing, provided for all players. From my experience, 90% of larps have a character who wants to poison somebody. How is that possible, if there's no, or very little, food around? Anyone would get suspicious if they were offered the one and only cup of wine at the game. Creating an Inn, where a beer costs a third of all the character's money, isn't a solution. Food has to become an ordinary thing to be used in this way. That, or the poisoning mechanics should be totally unrelated to eating anything: you may use pinching somebody, sticking something to their back without being noticed etc.

Food can constitute the core of mechanics. The mechanics of alchemy used at the *New Age Larps* is based on the taste and the colour of the matter, and every taste and colour has its own effect (sweet heals and has positive effects, so respectively, sweet-red heals your body, and sweet-white heals your mind).

Mana can be symbolized by a bottle of water fitted to a wizard's belt, and one should drink a certain amount of it to cast a spell, and then refill the bottle at a mana source. How epic would it be if you could distract a wizard by knocking the bottle out of his hands?

Food-play, let's do it!

I encourage you to look for new, innovative ways to use food during your games. Every element that appears in the game area can be used with benefit for the game, or ignored with a huge loss for it.

I'd like you to see the above ideas and examples as an invitation to discuss how to involve more senses in larps. What distinguishes larps and constitutes their essence is their physicality. I dare you to make use of it — also by using food.

Enjoy!



The Quickie

About beds in larp and larps in bed

My first time? Two years ago, with two lovely gentlemen. None of us knew what it was all about. We did it in a great hurry. It was nervous and intense. There were some shameful mistakes. We all have similar experiences with writing our very first larp, don't we?

Since we lacked knowledge, we trusted our instincts. We felt that sex makes every game better. Rough sex. Especially between siblings. And with lots of pregnancies which could lead to multiple abortions. So we took all these elements and put them into the script. We invented several meta-techniques (of sex, pregnancy, virginity), sat on the roofs of The Fantasy Village in Przemyśl for a tiresome briefing, and when we started the game... it didn't work out — at all. Then, in our innocent youth, we made nearly all the possible mistakes in introducing sexuality to larps. No intro workshops, too much theory and too little practice, lack of coziness, hastily sketched relationships between the characters and, above all, a light-hearted attitude towards the subject. None of these contributed to creating an intimate, romantic mood. This was the first of the lessons that pushed me to writing this article. The second lesson was *All my loving* (recently gaining in popularity), a real breakthrough in the field, a direct game with no taboos[1]. This game tells a story of a hippie commune, where everyone does it with everyone, and where sex isn't only a casual activity but also reflects bonds between the characters (all of whom are entangled in sexual relationships). The story also tackles a variety of subjects: drug use, polyamorous relationships, and the decline of the Peace&Love ideology. What's more important though than the plot itself, are the emotions the game evokes in the players. They don't just finish the game and forget about their characters — they want to talk; they're impressed. They say that most larps lack such themes, that they want to play the larp again, that it was their first role like this. And I'm not surprised. Currently, sexual elements are rarely introduced to larps. Sometimes foreign mechanics and clichés from table-tops are copied. It's most notorious during fantasy larps, where sex (how important in our lives!) is treated very carelessly, as

opposed to violence. Fights, duels and battles are always thought-out well — they've got clear rules, they are preceded by weeks-long flames online, and they are connected to historical reconstruction. They usually constitute turning points in the story and the one and only way to achieve characters' goals. Foam swords appear even in chamber larps (sic!), while sex is treated as just another complication. Sex is hardly ever used as a means to complete one's quests. Why is it so? The thing is that there are absolutely no consequences of sexual intercourse. Nobody knows about it, or witnesses it, and it doesn't affect any characters stats either. In some games it's marked by the lady losing her "garter of virginity". (By the way, this meta-technique discriminates male virgins — after all, isn't a skilful lady able to assess her lover?) The matter is quite different in freeforms. Let's take jeepforms, where sex is a hot subject discussed openly. Still, though modern setting and rom-com themes absorb sexual activities as rightful elements of the fictional world, they're never controversial. Intimate scenes are cut, and possible intercourses not pictured but presented through small talk between the lovers involved.

It won't hurt — a three-steps manual

Sometimes it works out well, sometimes it doesn't. It's because the spicy themes are introduced at random, as a blind pick. While we were making the abovementioned larp, we just threw in some game mechanics which we had thought the players would jump at simply because "sex is cool". They didn't — probably due to all the shortcomings of our preparations, and among them the disharmony between the way sex was introduced to different dimensions of the larp: the mechanics, the plot, the set etc. Let's then use our creative energy to undress this issue to learn how to bring more satisfaction to our players.

Sex during larps can be:

1. Part of the fictional reality

Sex not only describes but also broadens our fictional reality, introducing a rich variety of locations and props which are simply indispensable. It's a challenge for the stage designer. Aren't grapes in a brothel a must-have? What about scents, incenses or... handcuffs? The scriptwriter shouldn't stay indifferent either. Including a description of a character's sexuality into their sheet enriches their personality (e.g. built upon Freud's dynamic model). This subtle touch may significantly increase immersion and bleed by giving the opportunity to put players into very intimate relationships with one another, and toying with their feelings.

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2. Mechanics

The way we design the mechanics of sexuality will affect the players' perception of the fictional world. Pointing to consequences of a sexual act (like pregnancy or illness) will make intimate meetings more dangerous and harder to perform. At the same time, love conquests can give certain privileges (fame, renown, admiration) when from every woman he scores a young lover boy receives a keepsake worth bragging about: a hairpin, a ribbon or a lock of hair.

With appropriate mechanics sex can become as important in solving conflicts as violence — a courtesan looking for a father for her child, or a young prince seducing the count's daughter for his own benefit will have a lot more fun when the situation gets out of hand because of mechanics.

3. Contact

First and foremost, sex during larp is a form of contact. It strengthens relationships — makes them stronger, more real. On the other hand, this is also serious business: intimate contact during the game affects not only the character's but also the player's emotions. It's hard to distance yourself, so don't hesitate to stop the game if you need it and talk about it out of character. What's also important is the support from the organisers. They must explain the mechanics comprehensibly, introduce a safeword and encourage the players

to use it, stimulate the gameplay, and talk with the participants about their impressions afterwards. Debriefing and helping the players to go out of character are crucial in smaller, more

intensive productions.

One-night stand — can such a relationship last?

In the previous publication I complained that during larps "it all boils down to talk"[2]. Luckily, the games that I've seen since then made me change my mind! Almost every character sheet for this year's Geas [1] contained some kind of a shameful secret, and there's no shortage of players for future editions of *All My Loving*. Sexual promiscuity in larps is gaining in popularity. It attracts new players, facilitates immersion, and creates new plots. It gives the gameplay a brand new dimension: there are no winners or losers, but players sharing an important experience — more important than choosing a new vampire prince or dropping a nuke.

I hope the games which inspired these thoughts weren't just one-night stands and that the upcoming season will also be fruitful, controversial and

groundbreaking. Thinking about the future, I'd like to see gender-bending, ubiquitous polyamory, homosexual plots — not only for lustful ladies — and luxurious, well-equipped fantasy brothels. And if my thoughts contribute to that, I'm taking on full responsibility for this moral laxity. Let me then just wish you to reach the depths of debauchery and have lots of great adventures on the way.

AUTHORS' FOOTNOTES

- 1 R. Bujniewski, D. Dembinski, D. Domagalski, A. Gryszka, P. Tumińska, *All my Loving*, 2012
- 2 Agata Lubańska, Mikołaj Wicher, *Na co się gapisz? Czyli What you see is what you get w Polsce* (What are you looking at? Or What you see is what you get in Poland), KoLA 2012

TRANSLATORS' FOOTNOTES

- I A series of larps run by Deadline Association, following the idea of "360 degree illusion". *Geas* larps are organized with utmost care as far as creating a realistic scenography, props and costumes is concerned. The games (1) run all day long (2) use DKWDDK mechanics (3) will change their premise, themes, and the venue in the future editions. The first two were "burgkons" — larps played in an authentic medieval castle far away from everyday modern life.



Bad Games

The main focus of this article is not the quality of games, but rather the moral issues connected to their execution. The term “a controversial larp” has been used relatively often recently, and the question if “such things” should be featured in games has been coming up repeatedly on Internet forums and Facebook fanpages.

Other activities, such as interpersonal and integrative trainings, combat sports or sex games, are becoming more and more similar to what we call “larps”. These may prove to be risky areas sometimes. The ideas for more daring larp elements are met with varied responses. Some players find the introduced technique of acting out intimate situations wrong, others see waterboarding (a torture in which water is poured over foil or cloth covering the victim’s mouth) as a justified form of artistic expression. Therefore, an attempt can be made to classify several areas in the scope of which the ethical aspects of a game should be analysed. The following article is a starting point for such a discussion, rather than a set of profound truths.

Crossing the boundaries

It should be noted that there are two ways for a larp author to “step into the darkness”, namely the themes and the measures used in the scenario. The first case is clear enough — it the inclusion of topics which may cause controversy. There are not so many of these, however, it is still possible to find some. For instance, if sex appears solely as a theme, the larp is not going to create any moral dilemmas, at least not among adults. It may be suggested that Romeo and Juliet have spent a night together — and that is all. On the other hand, a hypothetical larp whose theme would be enough to raise moral objections? The adventures of a brave neo-Nazi defending his values in the fight against the judicial system.

Another area with the potential of going wrong is the choice of practical means. Sex may be accepted as a theme, however, acting it out fully during a larp — not as much. Moral dilemmas are more likely to appear in the case of techniques utilized in the game

than in the case of themes. However, themes and practical measures are closely connected to each other. Thus, the following part of this article constitutes an overview of potentially controversial topics, with the used means taken into account.

One more aspect should be taken into further consideration, and that is artistic expression. When a larp is treated as a work of art, its contents cease to be a literal manifestation of the participants’ beliefs. It gains context as well as various possibilities for interpretation. In such a case, our “young skin-head larp” may be a sarcastic commentary on the right-wing extremists — which may ease the moral discomfort a game like this would normally cause. In most cases then, the question if such a game should have been created will be considered from the perspective of artistic expression.

What may be controversial then?

Sex

While it would seem that eroticism is the main topic of larp controversies, I perceive it as a rather simple issue. This is one vast category, with themes ranging from alluring glances all the way to four Swiss mid-gets riding ponies, and means including everything from pieces of paper explaining the seduction mechanics to fully acting out sexual congress. Although there are more than “50 shades of grey” on this scale, for most of people the line between the acceptable and the controversial will lie somewhere in between. The controversies seem to be closely related to the mores. With the employment of the first position on the list of extremely useful (although not absolute) rules, namely “a willing participant is not harmed”, I think it is enough to fulfill the following conditions:

- all players are aware of and accept the given theme / means of expression,
- neither players nor any other people who are unaware or do not accept the aforementioned, can participate or witnesses the game elements in question,
- there is a method, clear and available for every player, to halt the action (for example a safe-word)[1].

If these conditions are fulfilled, one can proceed with making the game with clear conscience. What other complications could arise? Possibly, if someone decides to create a larp based on the infamous Russian amusement — “mercenaries raiding a village full of young peasant girls”, with hired “female NPCs” — however, this is covered by the Article 204 of the Polish Criminal Code which covers procuring. As for now, nothing indicates for such plans to be made by Polish larpers, so there is nothing to worry about.

Violence

Let us be honest — violence as a larp theme does not raise any objections, and it is still present in the majority of games. The question of its permissibility may be solved using the criteria widely applied to movies. If three hundred people kill each other with swords during one afternoon, it is an action movie, allowed from the age of 12. If one person is being killed for an hour, in an inventive way — it is an 18+ horror film. However, it is uncommon for violence to be acted out directly. As for causing physical harm during a larp, I feel that with mutual consent it is possible for us to push the border even further than it is now. After all, a culture that allows for two people to step onto a ring and intensify each other’s concussion until one

of them cannot stand on their feet any more does not really impose any restrictive boundaries within this theme, does it?

In my opinion, a larp featuring a real fight could be interesting. However, in such a case it is actual aggression one could be worried about, rather than violence as such. When the border of permissible physical abuse is moved further, it is essential for the participants to remember to maintain the context of conventionality, a symbolic approach to the situa-

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tion. This makes the difference between a boxing match and an actual assault — even when the former is more brutal, it is the latter that is immoral.

In an extreme case, where could this path lead to? A larp version of the film *Fight Club* comes to mind. If taking part in such a scenario was be voluntary, I would not consider it immoral.

Infringing the sovereignty of will

Games that could infringe the freedom of one’s will is problematic to define in practical terms. Many forms of artistic activity, such as poetry, are set to evoke emotions — even if not against, then regardless of the recipient’s will. Even a social campaign that involves posters informing about the dire consequences of smoking is actually based on the society being involuntarily exposed to emotional persuasion. Thus, the fact that the participants take in an emotive message should not be considered immoral as such. The argument that in the case of the aforementioned anti-smoking campaign the apparently foul form should be excused as it pertains to a greater good is, after all, invalid. The very concept of “freedom” is very difficult to define. However, an attempt to tackle

the topic follows. Let us assume that this area covers games where the level of participant manipulation is higher than in the “typical” art forms: it is more intensive, longer-lasting, or the influence on the recipient is concealed to a higher degree.

The issue definitely concerns these larps which remind us of Zimbardo’s prison study[2]— scenarios that involve forcing the characters to commit deeds against their will. The case study shows that in such situations the boundaries between the player and the character are at least disrupted — thus, it is a case of the player being forced to perform given acts. Polish examples of such larps include *Camp Vifon* by Wojciech Ingielewicz and *Tylko mnie kochaj* by Artur Wysocinski. The latter constitutes a subject for two other sections of this article (violence as well as, later on, giving immoral roles to the participants), however it seems to be the best example for the topic of infringing the freedom of participants. It seems that *Tylko mnie kochaj* pushed the border of permissibility as far as it could: during interrogations the players were being drowned until they confessed their love to the Big Brother — that is, acted against their own will.

Such a game construction seems at least disturbing. Is there any excuse? How does one answer the question, “What is the purpose of this game”? There is no entertainment factor here. Is this to be considered art, a message from the artist, the beauty of the form? Not really. There is, however, one argument in defense of this larp: all players were aware of its character, as well as its potential influence on the participants. My explanation for both participating in and creating this larp is curiosity. “Toying” with free will was the main focus for the participants, not the plot or setting of the game. Various motivations for participating in larps, especially in simulationist scenarios, include dealing with situations that are impossible to experience in real life. From this point of view, it is more understandable why one would want to be an interrogated defiant citizen. Also, it comes as no revelation that wisdom is all too often bought for the price of innocence.

Ethical requirements for this kind of games could be specified as follows:

1. Obviously, the possibility to resign at any moment, and/or a safeword.
2. The participants need to be fully aware of the character of the game, including the fact that it will infringe their free will. In other words, the meta-level of the scenario needs to be evident to the participants even before the game starts.
3. In this case, the rule “a willing participant is not harmed” can not be definite and decisive. Zimbardo’s prison study shows that a participant may become “trapped in the game”, and consequently the “acceptable” level of violence aimed at them may become higher than the one they would accept if they did not internalize their

“Toying” with free will was the main focus for the participants, not the plot or setting of the game. Various motivations for participating in larps, especially in simulationist scenarios, include dealing with situations that are impossible to experience in real life.

role. Because of that, what is essential is the presence of an observer who is able to stop the game in any moment. The author of the game cannot fill

this role, as they could also immerse too much into the game.

4. The game can be made neither for entertainment nor competition (as in, “who will withstand waterboarding the longest”). I would consider it dangerous to participate in such games in order to immerse in the imagined world — as there is a risk of “staying there”. Games of this kind should only function as a research tool, an experiment with one’s personality.

These criteria were fulfilled in the case of the aforementioned larps. However, this group includes, or could potentially include, other kinds of acting games used to manipulate the recipient, meaning various games aimed to induce the feelings of commitment, loyalty or obedience. These are rather rare among larps, but may be practiced by certain companies as well as sect-like organizations, such as AIESEC. Various elements of such games include:

- group bonding techniques: isolating a group of participants, trust fall (a group catching a falling participant together) etc.
- operant conditioning: a system of reinforcements and punishments for certain behaviours (a punishment may be symbolic or humorous

- for example, patting the heads of those who speak without permission during a session still results in their being conditioned)
- communicating very intensive, authority-building messages to the participants

It is quite possible that in near future the areas of “corporate games” and larps will combine — larp authors possess both the abilities that could enhance the appeal of such games and the motivation to develop this trend, even if the latter is only an economical one. On the other hand, the business sector is showing signs of interest in larps — as for now, in the context of promotion and integrative games, the latter understood as spending time on engaging activities together. However, there is potential for the training and human resources sectors to be included as well.

As for evaluating games of this kind — of course, participant manipulation

is acceptable to some extent. There are many intermediate stages between manipulation-free group cooperation training and games used to forcefully educate door-to-door sellers. I think that the aforementioned conditions, especially those concerning the transparency of objectives, consequences, methods and voluntary participation, need to be fulfilled. If the game assumes the need to conceal the nature of the techniques used from its participants, it is unethical. In other words, if one wishes to enforce certain behaviour in a participant by giving them a chocolate every time they perform the given action, one has to inform the participant about the conditioning intent.

Putting the players in immoral roles

Up to this point, the article focused on situations which saw the player become a victim of manipulation or violence. However, certain scenarios (*Fat man down* by Frederik Berg Østergaard, *Gang Rape* by Tobias Wrigstad) cast players in the roles of aggressors. These are not only adverse characters used to create events in narrativist larps, where the aim of a participant is to shape a dramatic plot using their role. The aforementioned games are very immersive by nature, they encourage to empathize with the

character’s motivation and way of thinking. Playing the role of a prison-guard, an interrogator, a discriminating person or a rapist has a certain educative value, which is confirmed by the involved players’ accounts.

As in the case of other types of games discussed in this article, it should be noted that for some larp enthusiasts taking part in such scenarios would be unacceptable. I think what is necessary here is fulfilling the condition of voluntary participation and awareness, meaning the players need to be clearly informed of their roles before the game. If a safeword element is added as well, in my opinion it is fine to proceed with the game.

Consider the famous picture of Pope John Paul II crushed by a meteorite which may be interpreted in at least three ways. Similarly, in the case of larps the controversial element should probably be interpreted in the context of the scenario as a whole.

Ideologically sensitive content

The final section of the article is dedicated to the topics that larp participants may find offensive. These are

numerous: issues connected to gender equality, religion, nation, race etc. The line between what is acceptable and what is not is difficult to draw — as in the case of other fields of art, the message and interpretation will always be strongly dependent on the context. Consider the famous picture of Pope John Paul II crushed by a meteorite which may be interpreted in at least three ways: offense, expression of sympathy, or an example of kitsch the meaning of which is not to be pursued. Similarly, in the case of larps the controversial element should probably be interpreted in the context of the scenario as a whole, or even in the context of the author’s previous works. A certain experiment in this area conducted by the undersigned, involved a larp with a scene of burning books in public (*Chaos in the PRL*). This image, seemingly bearing a significant historical burden, did not cause much controversy during the larp. The participants had their doubts which, interestingly, concerned the question if one of the specific books chosen for this purpose should be burned, and not the general idea of biblioclasm. The scene constituted a logical development of the plot, and the context indicated good intentions of the participants: creating a better, utopian future by rejecting the hitherto

culture which led to degeneration. One of the works among those to be burned was Voltaire's "Traité sur la tolérance". None of the participants seemed offended.

Other content that raised doubts in the authors of a game *Geas: Burgkon Drugi* by AR Argos were: a confession, and a childbirth followed by the child's death. The former bore a very strong resemblance to a Catholic sacrament, the latter constituted a danger of personalizing the acted-out trauma in an excessive way. Both ideas were finally incorporated into the game. Moreover, an interesting phenomenon occurred — those of the organizers who showed the most objections in the beginning, with time became very engaged with designing these sub-plots.

It seems that in the case of sensitive themes and elements in larps it is difficult to formulate a decent list of permissive criteria like the ones presented in the previous sections. It is also difficult to specify the themes that should not be explored in art. If the freedom of artistic expression is perceived as a value, even a "content warning" information may be

problematic. The author's evaluation on the controversial value of the themes tackled is sure to diverge at least from some recipients' opinions. I think the fact that larps include controversial themes needs to be accepted as their feature, an unavoidable direction in which the form evolves. As long as the given larp is deemed art, it should be entitled to the right for using artistic license to interpret its content in a non-literal way.

Conclusion

To sum up briefly, there are several areas in larping in the scope of which the author should pay notice if their games are ethical. It is both possible and justified to formulate certain rules concerning the practical means used in games in order to avoid any harm scenarios could potentially cause. It is much more difficult to define such rules in reference to larp themes, as they should be recognized as artistic expression. Maybe it would be a reasonable idea to create a special system of warnings, similar to the PEGI classification, however concerned with certain types of larp techniques?

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- 2 Monika Kincel, *Więzień 819 — czyli o uniformie, którego nie dało się zdjąć*, KoLa 2012

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- 1 Wojciech Ingielewicz, *Camp Vifon*
- 2 Artur Wysocki, *Tylko mnie kochaj*
- 3 Bartosz Ziolo, *Burdel*
- 4 Frederik Berg Østergaard, *Fat man down*
- 5 Tobias Wrigstad, *Gang Rape*
- 6 Kamil Bartczak, *Chaos in the PRL*
- 7 AR Argos, *Geas: Burgkon Drugi*



Flamingos and Penguins

November 2011, University of Oslo, Grenslandet — a Norwegian larp festival. I come to take part in a game created during the Larpwriter Challenge[1], a competition organised by the Norwegian Association Fantasiforbundet and the Belarusian Education Centre POST[2]. The subject is serious: human rights. Suddenly, the woman running the contest asks us, “Do you know how the flamingos do it?” I don’t even have time to show my surprise, because she starts her presentation, “Spread your arms wide apart, flip them like wings and walk slowly with huge leaps, just like that.”

Someone bursts out laughing. Someone else, perhaps encouraged by her demonstration, starts imitating a flamingo. Then, every one of us starts imitating another animal — a penguin. Right after that we play a game: there’s only one flamingo at the beginning, but if it touches a slow, short-legged penguin, the latter becomes a flamingo too. Just like zombies, only long-winged and red ones. We laugh our heads off and in the end we all become flamingo-zombies. “OK, it’s time for some real workshops,” the woman says. And I’m ready and waiting.

The game doesn’t end with the end of the game

Preparing a larp is hard work. You need to outline the plot, connect the subplots, write down character sheets, prepare all the props, scenography, and soundtrack. Then you need to get to the venue earlier with a certain air of

self-confidence and, with a conviction that you have not forgotten anything, wait for your players to arrive. Wrong. Preparing a larp is so much more than that. I don’t want to recall how often I’ve seen games which were run this way. We distribute character sheets, and say something like, “1, 2, 3 — let’s play!” Then we answer an incessant stream of questions and intervene in matters of dispute; and afterwards, we joyfully say “The end” and go back home, or, more likely, grab a beer with our players. Even the best sce-

nario, no matter how “correctly” it’s run, will never spread its wings if it’s conducted this way. Sadly, for the majority of games I’ve had a chance to see in Poland, this is the case.

Before

This game is for you, not for me. This fundamental — as it may seem — premise is still treated lightly by Polish larp writers (of course, it’s related to a completely different problem, deserving a separate article on how players should be treated during larps). For the benefit of this text, let’s assume that a player is simply a client. Everyone with at least some basic knowledge of marketing will tell you that a client

needs to be taken care of. It’s not enough to launch a product and wait till it disappears from the shelves. To tell the truth, nowadays, advertising alone is not enough. You need

to catch the clients’ attention, and earn their brand loyalty. These clichés can easily be applied to larps. „What for?” many readers will ask. Let me provide you a (very) quick answer — competition. Fortunately, the times when to play a good larp you needed to travel all across Poland (and even then it was possible only once every six months) are finally over. Only just a few days before my writing this article we had three quite big (20 or more participants) local larp events in Wrocław, all at the same time. The

conclusion is simple — if we don't care for our players, we will lose to those who are better prepared.

But there's something even more important: it's the fact that by caring for your participants you get a better game. Maybe some of your players don't feel like acting out some types of scenes? Maybe they've misunderstood the structure and the aim of the game? Maybe they've misinterpreted the character they're supposed to play? Or they confused their character's motivations? Obviously, answering the above questions will allow us to prepare our players better for the game. If we do, they'll play better; they won't do anything against their will, they won't wade into elements which they don't want to explore, and they'll know more about the game. This in turn makes the game play out better. It's a win-win situation. How can it be achieved? There are two ways.

Briefing

A decent one. A question, "Is everything clear in your character sheets?" right after distributing them, and moments before "1, 2, 3 — let's play!" is definitely not enough. There are various techniques for introducing players to the game, all of which have one thing in common: they should help us describe the game thoroughly and in full. It's a common mistake to perceive the game as just the characters and the setting. Coming back to the questions mentioned above — we know that's not all. The players need to know what they will play, what they may expect, and what the aim of the game they co-create is. The player isn't the only one who deserves it — the game itself and its authors deserve it too. After all, since the authors take the effort and time to prepare the game, they should do the same with the briefing. It happens that running the briefing incorrectly, or — horror of horrors — not doing it at all, may ruin even the best promising scenario.

Workshops

The element of the game which is skipped most often. The theory alone, served via briefings or any other form, isn't enough. A practical introduction to the subject is also necessary. This will result in the players entering the game more smoothly and a lower probability of them stopping in the middle of the larp, spreading their arms helplessly and asking, "What am I supposed to do now?" The less obvious part is the scope and form the workshops may and should take. Do you need the players to behave chivalrously and elegantly? Run workshops on etiquette for everyone, even the guys playing savages. Don't skip any element: from courteous bows to, "What do I need this small fork for?" Of course, no one will remember everything, but if you devote enough time to manners beforehand, everyone will take extra care to mind them during the game. Let's say you're preparing a larp about a prison escape. Precede it with a 30-minute game on a similar subject. Your players are animals locked in cages and they're seeking their caregivers' attention. They do tricks, fawn, etc. until everyone stops looking at them, and they become sad, miserable and start talking about their lot. In the end, one of them is set free. Or, to the contrary, dies in front of their mates. After an introduction like that, won't it be easier for the players to get into the roles of prisoners? These are only two unsophisticated examples unrelated to any real games. Possibilities are endless. What's important is for the workshops to be well thought out and suitable for the game they precede. It's not an easy trick, and preparing good, valuable workshops may even be more demanding than creating the game itself. The important thing is that they should serve their purpose. It's important to realize that the only universal (fit for any game) workshops are warm-ups (like the flamingos and penguins game) which do as little and as much as make players focused on playing the game. They don't suit what I've mentioned above, but they do help in getting oneself going, and form a solid foundation for any subsequent preparations to the game.

After

We all know this one. After the game we all sit around in a circle and everyone says what their character was supposed to achieve, what worked out, and what happened with them during the game. It's a must to describe "that hilarious scene with Ann — ha ha." As a bonus, the organizers add that it's a pity the characters didn't go to the cellar with the ancient demon locked inside, as that would've been something. Yuk. Why not ask the players to take a glass and mix liquids in two different hues (which imitated alcohol during the game) to make a drink whose colour will best visualize their — the player's, not the character's — mood after the larp. Afterwards, they'll briefly describe what made them choose, for instance, yellow and not blue. The closure of the game will be signaled by the participants downing the contents of their glasses as a symbol of cleansing themselves of all emotions. Doesn't it sound more appealing? What you need to remember is that it's just like the case of workshops: there's no one solution suitable for every game.

Of course, concluding the game this way isn't all there's to be done. Afterwards, there's always time for criticism — of the GMs, the scenario, or the players. And it's another thing which scares the organizers stiff, especially as far as the most popular types of larps in Poland go: the ones intended "to please everyone", simply because nobody wants to hurt anyone's feelings. But it's not about mocking one another, it's about an honest assessment of events and behaviours. After all, nobody wants to get tangled in a loop of the same old schemata and clichés, to play in the same way, in the same games, and not develop at all. Right? The answer seems evident. It's much simpler to take the easy way out, and not evaluate your

game. Evaluation shouldn't be limited to fragmentary and disorganized conversations just after the game. It's worth giving a moment's thought to what kind of feedback we want. And try, hard as it may be, to eliminate any comments which lead the debriefing off the set track. It's well worth to get information out of everyone and go back to some problems after some time, when the players have thought through what's happened during the game. Currently, when Internet access is always at hand, it's not a problem.

To conclude

This article is just a smattering of a vast subject that's largely neglected by the Polish fandom. Surely, much more can be written and said about the ideas I discussed here — also to contradict them. And that's fine, because this way something will definitely change. Some will argue, others will agree, and everything will at least move from a standstill — as the current convictions about running and preparing larps don't support what we all care about: development and popularization.

If only we started to approach the games we run more seriously and stopped thinking that — this might be hard — it's only us and our opinion which are the most important, we'd already be one step ahead in the right direction. Without it, as we all know, we won't get anywhere.

I used the game of flamingos and penguins as an intro before a larp I ran in Poland. The theme of the larp was the issue of forcing women to work in escort agencies abroad. The intro game played out perfect. Hard to believe? Try it out for yourselves.

AUTHORS' FOOTNOTES

- 1 I took part in it in 2009 in the Czech Republic. The game was called *Star* and it dealt with the subject of adventures and mishaps in everyday lives of Hollywood celebrities. See more on: <http://www.courtofmoravia.com/en/games/star-en/>
- 2 For more information see: <http://www.larpwriter.org>



Block-bust Your Larp!

When the boundary between a movie and a larp becomes blurred

The era of great larp manifestos has passed over a decade ago, however, they still shape the contemporary style of larp authors. In Poland, most of the games can still be classified as simulationist [1] or gamist [2] and they dominate over the once-disapproved narrativist games [3] — which also include the scenarios created within the so-called cinematic larp writing school.

In this article I intend to (1) clarify, in a direct and concise way, what the cinematic larp school as practiced by the Liveform[4] is (2) explain the fundamental values upon which our cinematic games are built upon (3) present the ten most important ideas behind our experiments, which we included in such games, as *New Age: Krwawi Rekruci* (2012) or *Star Wars: The Creed of Ruin* (2012) (4) challenge the legacy

of the Turku manifesto[5] (5) totally ignore the resolute solutions of Dogma99[6] (6) once and for all defend my belief in the existence of an ideal narrativist larp. I believe that the cinematic larps actually constitute this ideal.

ACT I

What is a cinematic larp?

A cinematic larp is heroic, spectacular and action-packed. It is a game where every player can become a hero, the surroundings constitute a part of the tale, and the game structure is based on the Hollywood models.

Tenet I: Heroism

Every player can become a hero, feel like a star at some point in the game, change the fate of the world (on a micro- or macro- scale) by their deeds, and take part in spectacular, mood-filled and action-packed

scenes. Tenet I does not mean that it is necessary for a player to be a hero — it should be a matter of choice, especially in bigger larps. However, everyone should have this possibility. In the context of this article, a hero is not necessarily a demigod, but a character prominent and important for their surroundings. A thief that robs a bank in a spectacular way (with explosions, hostages and a swift escape) is, in that very moment, a hero as well.

Tenet II: Spectacular Style

The surroundings are a hero as well! This results in two things: first, the scenography tells its own tale, second, it also has the right to have its shamelessly cinematic, flashy action, full of special effects and explosions.

It is not necessary for a player to be a hero — it should be a matter of choice, especially in bigger larps. However, everyone should have this possibility.

Each and every prop — the colour of the curtains, a spot of fake blood, a picture on the wall, a bullet mark

in the murdered president's armchair — everything has its own story to tell. Tenet II is all about how this whole story should be consciously written by the authors of the game. A well-made scenography allows us to characterize prominent characters (there are different stories to a CEO in a spotless office and one working among empty whiskey bottles, with a broken family picture on their desk), or even introduce new sub-plots to the game (a decent crime investigation needs to be based on evidence and clues — the more polished the scenography is, the more elaborate clues can be left for the players).

Tenet II also means that the surroundings are to be life-like. Gripping action needs explosions, play of light, a soundtrack suitable to the plot (even if it takes place in the middle of a forest) and much, much more. Why? Because this is what the Hollywood style is all about.

Silence should not be forgotten either. It may constitute a useful tool for creating a specific effect in a game where the soundtrack is normally always present in the background.

Tenet III: Cinema style

Have you seen *Cloud Atlas* or *The Matrix*? It is easy to see that films can differ in how much cinematic they are. It depends on the level of abstraction, formal techniques and the postmodern[7] genre-savviness.

According to Tenet III, in order to make the impression as strong as possible, the author needs to use each and every element of the game structure. Non-chronological timelines, beginning with a flash-forward, a multilayered diegesis[8], character development — there are a number of formal techniques which can be used to enrich the game and surprise the players[9].

However, to create a cinematic feeling, it is not enough to break the rules — one also needs to know them well. Before I move on to present a detailed construction of a blockbuster larp scenario, I need to mention one thing — using the three-act structure (proposed by the Hollywood in such iconic works as *SCREENPLAY: Writing the Picture* by R.U. Russin and W.M. Downs) greatly enhances the quality of the game. Do you wish to create a cinematic larp? Learn how to write a film scenario first.

ACT II

How to write a cinematic larp scenario?

In the ten points that follow, I present very briefly the methods I used so far to create cinematic effects. None of them is universal, and many of them are not suited for other types of larps. I encourage the reader to experiment, as you will truly understand the mechanisms only by using them.

Theorem I: The Rule of Three Acts

Every decent story consists of three acts — introduction (Exposition), rising action (Confrontation) and ending (Resolution). There is an optimal model of events that take place in each act which has been the subject of considerable research by film theory experts. What follows is a short outline of elements and events in the right order

Act 1 — Exposition

- Balance
- Inciting Incident
- Reversal
- End of Exposition
- Basic Questions
- The Point of No Return

Act 2 — Confrontation

- Conflicts, Crises, Obstacles and Complications
- First Culmination
- Midpoint (A Moment of Doubt)

Act 3 — Resolution

- Epiphany
- Climax
- Catharsis

It is easily noticeable that every Hollywood blockbuster fulfills all the requirements posed by the elements of this structure. I know from my experience that using the aforementioned interpretation of the three-act structure is the way to an easy success (although it is certain that there is an infinite number of equally good alternatives, which are simply more difficult to use)[10].

Theorem II: An Arch or a Stone?

Every character can be “an arch” or “a stone”. In a film, “archs” are these characters who develop and become better or worse. Characters who do not change are called “stones”. There is no good reason for a larp to include only “stones” — however, there are many good reasons for the players to receive roles which will somehow evolve during the game.

Maciej Nitka, larp *New Age*, 2012

There are many techniques that allow the author to create “archs”. They can give out envelopes with new information during each act, use the Fate Play mechanism, and even refer to the player’s knowledge[11].

Theorem III: Dream Factory

One of the most important functions of larps is to fulfill the players’ expectations and dreams. It mainly refers to big larps, where the players create their roles by themselves. The only way to get to know the players’ expectations is to openly ask them about what they look forward to and what they want to experience. Players often have many brilliant ideas, and there is nothing wrong in using them.

Theorem IV: Postmodernism and Genre

Larps are not solitary islands, separated from one another or from other media with impenetrable barriers. Larps are a part of a vast and rich culture, and behave accordingly to its rules and models. When one creates a scenario, they should be aware of its genre and draw from the rich stock of cultural schemata that have grown upon it. A space opera needs complicated family relations from “Star Wars”, and there can be no ‘20s-style police department without doughnuts and cold coffee.

Do not be afraid of literary references. Basing a subplot on Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Raven* or using the biblical topos of the savior in a post-apocalyptic horror inspires many unique plot ideas, and constitutes an attractive intellectual challenge for the players.

Theorem V: The MIA Model

The MIA model is a technique that can be used to minimize the risk of a prolonged “plateau”, meaning the lack of players’ engagement in the game after scenes with very intensive action.

MIA is short for Mood-Intrigue-Action (originally: KIA, from *Klimat-Intryga-Akcja* — transaltors’ note), the three phases of a film plot which should appear in this specific order during larps longer than 12 hours. These should not be confused with the three-act structure — the Mood phase takes place during Act I (Exposition), and the Intrigue phase only lasts for a small part of Act II (Confrontation). Most of the elements included in the typical model presented in the sources take place during the Action phase.

Mood

The first phase (Mood) should last for more or less one-third to a half of the game (in the case of larps that last several days — up until the penultimate night, when the Intrigue phase should already kick in) and it should let the players feel the atmosphere and engage in social interactions, as well as give them space to play their roles freely. It is the right time for numerous events that will build the mood, but will not push the plot forwards. It is also the time for the players to be presented with the sub-plots and themes that will accompany them until the end of the game. The more important a detail, the earlier it should be introduced. The Mood phase includes Balance, Inciting Incident, Reversal and End of Exposition elements.

Intrigue

The second phase (Intrigue) should take more or less one-fourth of the game (in the case of larps that last several days it is the penultimate night) and constitute a smooth transition from the mood-building to the proper action. This is a good moment to begin the espionage and political sub-plots, as well as to plan the events that are to take place in the third and final phase. The event should allow the players to feel like characters from the Bond movies, or at least create an opportunity for secret meetings, spying and plotting.

The Intrigue phase includes Basic Questions, The Point of No Return as well as Conflicts, Crises, Obstacles and Complications elements. Remember! The Point of No Return may come to pass in different moments for different factions, or be shared by the whole larp. It may be marked by different events. Regardless of the situation, the elements important for particular factions are the most important for the intrigue phase. The Point of No Return that is shared by the whole larp begins the third phase — Action.

Action

The third phase (Action) should take from one-fourth to one-third of the game. It should be noted that the shorter the game, the longer this phase should be —

it is possible for larps shorter than 12 hours to only consist of the action phase. While the previous two phases functioned more or less independently from the three-act structure, this is the last call for the climax.

The Action phase includes The Point of No Return, Conflicts, Crises, Obstacles and Complications, First Culmination, A Moment of Doubt, Epiphany, Climax and Catharsis, meaning it encompasses almost the whole plot from the end of Act 1 until the finale.

Theorem VI: The IDA Model

The IDA model refers to a smooth introduction of an event into the game. It is built of the following phases:

INFORMATION → DECISION → ACTION

In the first phase the players receive information they need to make decisions (second phase) about the actions they are to perform during the event (third phase). The idea behind this model is simple — no event could ever appear out of nowhere, but has to result from somebody's decision, which in turn has to be based on information. Each phase may refer to a different player (one player may make a decision that will influence another), however, none of them may be skipped (a decision made without motivation, meaning without information, has no right to be made).

Characters who do not change are called “stones”. There is no good reason for a larp to include only “stones” — however, there are many good reasons for the players to receive roles which will somehow evolve during the game.

Theorem VII: The Narrativisation of Mechanics

The mechanics should serve the purposes of the game. The appearance of zero-mechanics larps in Poland proved that a scenario without mechanics may be equally good as, or even better than, one with mechanics. Therefore, a game should include only those elements of mechanics which will serve its purpose. It is worth noting that there are two functions to larp mechanics, the first of them being conflict resolution, the second — providing the elements which are impossible to attain without it, like magic.

Theorem VIII: Workshops, Debriefing, Creative Space

A good larp is the effect of cooperation between the authors, the game masters and the players. Character sheets and written communication is a medium not efficient enough, and relying on these only wasted the potential of many a scenario. Every game should be preceded by activity-filled workshops for the players, the game masters and the authors to receive one last chance to confront and compare their knowledge and expectations, as well as to acquire practical and theoretical skills needed for the game. It is also the last moment to familiarize themselves with their characters' closest environs (there is nothing as unnatural as a family played by a group of people who do not recognize one another on the street).

Workshops do not have to be limited to the preface of a larp. After the game, it is the organizers' duty to run a full and well-prepared debriefing, and even during the game it is worth it to create an out-of-game space, where the players can ask the game masters' for something, practice or play out an important scene without any interruptions. A sample solution for a creative space within a game is the "blackbox" — a room separated from the game proper, where the players can play scenes that serve as comments for what is happening (e.g. retrospections or introspections).

Theorem IX: The Monolith of Atmosphere

What You See Is What You Get is a concept that suits the cinematic model very well, even if it is the epic plot that the model is focused on and not realism. However, cinematic realism is very different from the one we know from our actual experience. Do not be afraid to use a soundtrack, even if it means installing loudspeakers in every building and on every tree in several-kilometer radius. Do not be

afraid to use smells and tastes as important clues in an investigation, do not be afraid to play with the colour codes by making the burgundy red the hallmark of an aristocratic house, do not be afraid to use artificial light wherever you need it for a proper contrast and shadowplay. Larps are so much more than films — they are actually three-dimensional. When fireworks explode right beside you, and you can feel their warmth as well as the smell of sulfur, the emotions that accompany you also become more real.

Theorem X: The Payroll

Every good film begins with an intro and ends with the so-called payroll. Many years' worth of experience with the media taught us that an intro to a film creates certain expectations concerning the plot and the rules that govern it, as well as introduces the viewers to a specific atmosphere. If such an introductory video precedes a larp, the players' behaviour during the game proper will be more consistent with our plans as they will strive to fulfill the expectations set by the intro. Consequently, a payroll after the game will give them satisfaction and a sense of closure. This is a powerful tool for creating better games, and has an additional asset — after seeing an intro to their own story, the players will really feel like protagonists in a film.

ACT III**Catharsis**

You do not have to agree with me on any point of this lengthy article. I am sure that by rejecting the previously-chosen paths and bending the heritage of the past to suit our own expectations we can make an effort and develop. However, if the solutions I presented are of any value to you — use them, alter them, and then you may proudly state that the larps you create are heroic, cinematic and spectacular!

AUTHOR'S NOTES

- 1 Simulationism — an approach, according to which producing a faithful image of the given setting is the most important element of a game
- 2 Gamism — an approach, according to which winning is the most important element of a game
- 3 Narrativism — an approach, according to which the plot is the most important element of a game
- 4 Founded in 2006 as Cieszyńskie Forum Fanatyków Fantastyki, which merged with the club Wehi-kuł from Katowice, creating Liveform. The main project is the larp series *New Age* — a steampunk game that explores the borderlands between larps and films. Apart from that, Liveform promotes Nordic-style games and jeepforms in Silesia, manages the open larp scenario base — larpbase.boo.pl, and cooperates in many other projects, including the organization of Grojkon — the biggest convention in Cieszyn Silesia.
- 5 Turku manifesto — a larp theory focused on immersion, or empathizing with one's character
- 6 Dogma99 — a larp theory encouraging to create perfect simulations by avoiding any symbolism in games
- 7 Postmodernism — an art movement. Here, it means using pastiche, or intentionally imitating specific features of other works of art or genres
- 8 Diegesis — the fictional world in a literary work, theatre play, film or larp
- 9 More information on formal techniques can be found in the essay *Czasoprzestrzeń w LARP-ach* (Time and space in larps).
- 10 More details can be found in *SCREENPLAY: Writing the Picture* as well as in the article *Jak pisać LARP-y inaczej* (How to write larps differently), in which I adapted the three-act structure of films for larps.
- 11 Many solutions can be found in the article *Czasoprzestrzeń w LARP-ach*. The “arch and stone” opposition was described in *SCREENPLAY: Writing the Picture* and was adapted for larps in *Jak pisać LARP-y inaczej*.

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All the Sins of Larp Campaigns

I enjoy long and well-made stories that engage their recipients. It may be a decent literary saga, a great TV series, a new installment of a favourite computer game or, finally, an enjoyable larp. The continuous nature of a story allows for it to be presented in a fuller, more immersive way. The author can fully realize the potential of the story, and slowly submerge us into its world.

I enjoy larp campaigns, I have written about and praised them on many occasions, I run and participate in them on a regular basis. However, it cannot be denied that games of this kind have their “sins” — flaws which may completely destroy the gameplay and overshadow all the merits. This article is an attempt to enumerate them, as it is said that noticing and defining a problem is the first step to resolving it. The following is a list of cardinal sins of larp campaigns that I would like to confess.

1. The sin of burning out

Those of us who have a favourite TV series know this problem only too well. We become attached to the characters, we enjoy following their ups and downs, observe the changes they undergo as the story unfolds, discover new secrets and revisit long-forgotten but recurring sub-plots. Some of the TV series, because of the addition of new seasons, end up being aired for years. With time, everything starts to deteriorate. The plot weakens, sub-plots and ideas for characters are recycled, and the scenario becomes annoyingly schematic. Why is the main character kidnapped, again? Why has X fallen in unrequited love, again, and Y is experiencing the same old drama, again? Almost every TV series enters this phase after several seasons.

This is what we call a “burnout”, and it affects larp campaigns in a very similar way. It becomes apparent after some time, when another similar character appears, an identical NPC approaches us with a problem only-too-familiar, a sub-plot emerges that seems a photocopy of an earlier one. The authors themselves are somewhat bored with the topic and out of ideas for new plot points. Sometimes the story

is burned out, having already experienced its culmination, but being dragged on by the participants for too long. The players are starting to get bored with the game, they leave, they lose their enthusiasm. This makes the larp’s other flawed aspects, like mechanics, authors’ decisions and relations between players become more and more visible.

Why does it happen? It seems to me that every story has its time with the passing of which it is simply finished, and nothing can be added that would not be excessive. Let us suppose we want to present a tale about a city of sin, with prostitutes and gangsters as the heroes — this gives us a certain variety of themes, events and characters that will make the story great. However, after some time all the available means of creating such a story will have already been used. Tragic crimes, scandals involving authorities, detectives with their last crumpled cigarettes, young girls who lost their innocence out on the streets — we have seen them all. Continuing this tale will be difficult. The longevity of a story depends on the chosen theme, the authors’ and players’ creativity, as well as the story’s tolerance to routine. However, after some time every scenario will encounter this problem.

What can be done about this? It is better to use themes that are difficult to exhaust, vast enough and not so heavily exploited. It would be good to spot the right moment to draw the tale to its end and start a new one, maybe in another setting, with new characters. It might be worth considering to run a game based on a theme contrary to the last one, including topics that were impossible to tackle there. When we see that the participants are getting bored, are not so involved in the game anymore and we hear the

moans of “oh, not again!”, it is a good idea to consider finishing this adventure and embarking on a new one.

2. The sin of recycling

The second problem on the list is very similar and connected to the previous one, however, I wanted to elaborate more on the topic.

Many larp campaigns, regardless of the chosen genre or setting, draw upon a set list of themes, like a struggle for political position (electing a prince, a president, a council etc., with its own set of intrigues), a plague, a war, an apocalypse, a great and mighty adversary who has decided to threaten the players... Anyone could give a number of such themes.

When another similar character appears, an identical NPC approaches us with a problem only-too-familiar, a sub-plot emerges that seems a photocopy of an earlier one. The authors themselves are somewhat bored with the topic and out of ideas for new plot points.

Another problem that emerges here concerns the characters’ progress in terms of the larp mechanics. If every larp in a campaign

Is it a bad thing? Not necessarily — a larp could very much use a popular theme, if it is presented from a new perspective, especially in a new, less popular genre or setting, surrounded with new topics. However, too many of used-up themes in used-up settings may lead to the story burning out quickly, so be careful.

3. The sin of escalation

“A tale should start with a dead body in the closet, and then the plot should thicken” — easy to say. It can be done in a one-shot larp, however in a campaign it may lead to a “kill the god — end game” problem. If we start with some really “epic” themes, after six episodes it becomes difficult to think of any new challenges for the players. The TV series *Supernatural*, a tale of two monster-hunting brothers, is a good example of this problem — it is not easy for the story to continue after the characters end up in a struggle against a biblical apocalypse and the most powerful entities of this world.

What can be done about this? We could start with some day-to-day, not exactly epic themes — a scenario does not need a proverbial dragon right at the beginning. Everyday problems may create a better and more believable tale than those of kings and gods. These are human problems, from every time, epoch and place — love, money, envy, greed, intolerance, a clash between religions or cultures. Players do not need their challenges to be more difficult, bigger and more important every time. It is enough for the challenges to be varied. This makes the starting tension level seem not so important.

sees a great deal of mechanical bonuses, it becomes difficult to create a decent plot challenge for the characters, who rapidly grow to be superheroes. This is why it is important to award such bonuses reasonably and not very generously. A game mechanics could also involve only a very limited character development. However, this approach may not be very appealing for “bonus-collecting” players — therefore, the author should put extra work into designing the game in order to compensate for this aspect. The problem of escalation is also a solid reason to plan for the game to involve only a specific number of meetings — and to start a new tale after they are finished.

4. The sin of stagnation

A one-shot larp allows the author to do practically anything, experiment with its form, toy with its plot. A game progressing from the ending to the beginning? Two people playing the same character? A division into several rooms, each of them being a different historical period? No problem! We do not need

to worry — even if something fails, oh well, at least we gained a new experience. It helps our larp techniques develop, and prompts us to create new things.

However, a common opinion states that in the case of a larp campaign it is better to use proved, reliable designs and be cautious with experiments, as the consequences of choosing a given element are longer-lasting. This makes it difficult to introduce any innovative ideas to larp campaigns. In the long run, it creates a serious problem. After all, stagnation is boring.

What can be done about this? It may be worth a try to introduce at least minor innovations in a larp campaign. Enriching the game by adding jeeps, freeforms or other design experiments may prove to be a great addition. In such a case it would be a good idea to discuss it with the players first, and find out if they are okay with it, as well as take special care for the new element to actually benefit the scenario.

Moreover, giving a larp campaign a less-exploited theme, for example

setting it in an Orwell-style anti-utopian world, or during World War II, or in the modern Middle East, could make it not only interesting, but educational as well. I could even imagine a decent jeepform campaign, although in my own scenario I would prefer this form to be an addition to the main storyline. Original and adequate ideas always add to both the quality and the longevity of a larp.

5. The sin of isolation

Larps constitute a rather uncommon form of entertainment in our country. Larp campaigns — even more so. Why is that? Firstly, it is difficult to start watching a TV series with the episode five of season two with no possibility to see the previous ones — and the same applies to larps. It does not appeal to everyone, especially when the experienced players are privileged in many respects — they are familiar with the plot, and if they always play the same character, they have some own sub-plots as well as some experience points or other bonuses. Secondly, on the

outside larp campaigns look a bit intimidating for a new person — numerous rules, many forum pages of setting information, characters and events to read, plus a dozen of arguments between users as well.

What can be done about this? Every author should think about how to make their larp appealing and approachable for new players. It should be possible to find an important place for them in the plot, so that they would not just shuffle around, bored, while the “old” players enjoy their sub-plots. It may also be a good idea to prepare some kind of an info-pack, a kind of a “starter kit” for any potential new players. Every author should also give some thought on how to promote their initiative, so that it would not seem so closed and complicated.

6. The sin of (lack of) involvement

The first problem connected to involvement, or more specifically its decline, is the “disappearing characters” issue — players leaving the game and causing their sub-plots to fade from the larp. If a player resigns just before a one-shot larp, the problem is not so serious — if they were to play an important role in the scenario, the author can call some friends to look for a fill-in. Usually you can find someone. But for a campaign larp? Someone playing a character prominent for the plot of the meeting resigns from the game, with no turning back. If they warned us about it in advance, something could have befallen the character, or they could have left the place for some reason. However, players do not always leave only when it is “safe” for them to leave the game. It may happen sometimes that important sub-plots are left hanging or inactive, and the balance of power shifts in an uncontrollable way. It is even worse, if a player informs about their absence a day before the larp (no matter if they want to come back another time or not) — you cannot just call for someone to play the character in their place. Sure, theoretically it would be possible, although difficult — if the new person had more time to prepare and absorb several months’ worth of information. But in just one day?

Every author should think about how to make their larp appealing and approachable for new players. It should be possible to find an important place for them in the plot, so that they would not just shuffle around, bored, while the “old” players enjoy their sub-plots.

An interesting issue emerges here — if the character in question is essential for the plot, is it all right to let a new player (after a necessary preparation) fill in the empty spot? Could we, with the players' consent of course, substitute all the "stray" characters? It definitely is some kind of solution to the "disappearing characters" issue.

Another problem connected to involvement is the so-called "consumptionist approach to playing", or "you make it, and I come to play". It happens sometimes that the players want to participate, but are not very eager to contribute anything to the game — they prefer to be its passive recipients. They make no preparations to playing, they do not try to help the author or the other players in any way, like decorating the room or adding a new sub-plot to the larp. They neither discuss the game after a meeting is finished nor offer any solutions to the problems that emerge on the way. It is great when the characters cause interesting events to happen, when meetings and sub-plots are the results of their actions, not only the author's ideas. However, that is usually not the case.

Players should be aware that their contribution benefits the game and its quality. A larp campaign is not a sole property of its author, it belongs to all of the participants, each of whom affects its final shape.

How to deal with this? Players should be aware that their contribution benefits the game and its quality. A larp campaign is not a sole property of its author, it belongs to all of the participants, each of whom affects its final shape. It is worth it to reward those involved in this process, as well as to talk to the players and listen to them.

7. The sin of (bad) relations

This is probably the most serious problem of this kind of games. A larp campaign creates a community. Its members meet from time to time to play the game, between these "proper" meetings others are arranged to discuss the players' plans or the recent events, and let us not forget the forum threads. A larp campaign is a great opportunity to meet new people, to bond with others — and it is important to ensure it actually happens.

Unfortunately, there is also a number of unpleasant situations that can take place — people arguing, because one character stepped on another's toes, because the author made a bad decision in a conflict, because of another player's unfair behaviour, or because a player did not submit to the author's vision and, according to the latter, did something wrong. Not everyone can accept their failure in a game with dignity; some players simply get irritated and arguments emerge. Some authors are also unable to find reasonable solutions to the plot or character problems that emerge on the way, and simply drop a proverbial piano onto the players. In extreme cases things start to happen outside of the game — acts of deception, manipulation, intrigues, created both by the players and the authors — which is not fun. Obviously, it will all come to light eventually and make things unpleasant.

There is nothing more important for the game than good relations within the group and the satisfaction of each and every participant. If something spoils the relations and the fun — sit down and talk about it, everyone, the players and the authors.

Dear author, if a decision of yours is met with a player's protest — think it over very carefully. This decision may ruin your game for the player, and it may be difficult to take it back. Dear player, if your actions cause the other players to have less fun than you, think them over, as it may spoil the game and your relations.

Dear author, consider several things with regards to your game. Firstly — how do you solve conflicts and make decisions that are important for the larp? Is your opinion decisive? Do you listen to your players? Remember that a larp is to be enjoyed by everyone. If you force your decisions without listening to anyone else, your relations to your players won't be great.

Secondly — be fair. Introduce fair and clear rules that apply to everyone, and stick to them. It is easy to ruin the game for a player with something like "you

fail because I said so, you're crushed by a falling piano, but another player has just won a lottery". Avoid having favourite players or characters.

Thirdly — think about how you can support good relations between your players. It is a good idea to introduce and promote the "don't be a douche" rule. In-game, the players may be mean, they can be crooks and murderers with no moral code at all — but apart from their roles they should play so as not to spoil the fun for others. For example, if a character is an antagonist who deceives other characters and ruins their lives, the latter should also enjoy it in some way. Think about it — acting out a downfall is a whole lot more interesting than death (which in the case

of larp campaigns should be used with caution in general), especially when the character in question was just solving an interesting plot point. If a player's character is a ruler who dominates others, make sure that each and every servant is having fun, and if the game is not ruined for them by the ruler's orders. Nobody is perfect, everyone makes mistakes, but it is important to talk about them and not let them spark arguments.

For all these sins and for those I do not remember, I am very sorry. There is nothing left for me to do, but to resolve to amendment.



Postulates for the 200+ Scenarios

Were I to be precise, the following text would be entitled *Postulates for the Field Larp Scenarios That Are Focused on the Most Faithful In-Game Reality Simulation Possible and Intended for Two Hundred and More Players, as Based on the Experience Gained During the Organisation of the Game Fantazjada*. Are they applicable to other events of this kind? I don't have a clue. Still, in this scarcely researched field, this article may well serve as a very short handbook.

It's possible that I've missed some important points, that seemed really obvious. But I can assure you that there's nothing too fanciful or contrived here. The content has been verified by harsh reality, and by my own past mistakes in particular.

- 1 The scenario.** The description of how we intend to provide the players with the opportunities for numerous and exciting interactions with the game environment, mainly through contact with other characters.
- 2 What is the larp about?** Sum up the whole game in one sentence, which will serve as a guidepost during the larpwriting. Including ideas that seem fun, but are totally unrealistic may dilute the story that's jointly created by the players and organizers. Good examples: "A country destroyed by occupation rises from the ashes and confronts its past", or "The people from a region rich in natural resources have a referendum concerning their identity".
- 3 Add-on quests** (originally *misje z kilometra* — roughly translated into "quests for miles", a phrase the author borrowed from the Flamberg larp event — translators' note). It refers to various "offers" addressed at the players who exhausted all their sub-plots (or so they claim), quests which may be taken up by any character, in any moment. Usually, they're connected to the main theme of the game (Postulate 2). Remember! It's not enough for these sub-plots to simply be there — players have to know about them (Postulate 15).
- 4 Adventure sub-plots.** Regardless of the main theme of the larp, a big field game has to include some treasure to be found, as well a handful of monsters to be slayed — not what one would call a sophisticated sub-plot, but these still have their fans. Such elements may constitute an enjoyable interlude for some of the players, and fulfill — to some extent, at least — Postulate 3.
- 5 Influence on the world.** Being aware of the fact that the character's actions may have consequences on a cosmic scale, or at least affect the whole kingdom, turns on the "idiot mode" in some players. If they feel unfulfilled, they destroy the atmosphere, disregard the in-game reality, and happily spoil the fun for others just to bask in the limelight. Such actions may have great impact on the in-game world, which cannot be ignored if we already allowed the players to interfere with the setting so much. Therefore, it's better for a larp to tackle only local issues (Postulate 2). In the

movie by Akira Kurosawa, the seven samurai didn't have to save the whole Japan for their story to be exciting.

- 6** **Swinging the foam.** Big field games always lure heaps of people hungry for melee combat. If the scenario isn't a "pure" battle larp, it will be also attended by players who are less bloodthirsty, and it'll be difficult to cater for preferences of both groups. A simple solution is for the "boffer-heads" to larp-fight with one another only, and see no profit in killing the "civilians". For example, they may constitute the electorate whose votes will be decisive for the outcome of the conflict between the fighters.
- 7** **Recycling the dead.** Planned in advance, and necessary in the light of Postulate 6. What to do with the fallen — give them a new, full-blown character, or just a generic member of one of the factions? Which factions? On what terms does one come back to the game after their character was killed, and who — if anyone — controls it? Do we have enough people to properly implement the given solution?
- 8** **Death on the spot.** There are many potential situations which may frustrate the players. Possibly, the one that's the worst is when your character dies from a single powerful attack — or spell, or elixir, whatever. No player should do such a thing to another player — no player should be able to do so.
- 9** **Spreading the game.** Two hundred and more players in one location is nothing less of a macabre and a disaster. However, it may be difficult to make them scatter, especially when the weather is unpleasant as well. The solution is to create several locations in the game area, with a "regular cast" as a must. By "regular cast" I mean these characters that will stay there regardless of the weather conditions. A solid roof is just the first of the things that must be provided in such a place. We also need mediators that will take care of specific game aspects, as well as characters who will make the locations feel more real. Continuing that thought, it's invaluable for the game area to have a location with food and water supplies.
- 10** **Blocking a location.** A phenomenon very unfavourable in the light of Postulate 9. It's usually associated with an especially hazardous situation that may occur in the game area. Wandering the roads is supposed to provide the players with the feelings of excitement and real danger — after all, it's all about adventure. However, if doing so leads to inevitable death, it completely paralyzes the game. To sensibly level the difficulty and danger, the organizers need to have full control over the most serious threats (usually, the forest creatures). This in turn calls for an efficient communication system and rewards for the persons responsible, for example reimbursing some of the costs — of course, after they fulfill their tasks.

- 11** **No compromise.** If some characters' roles are based on conflict, it's very important to highlight the parties' contradictory objectives and interests. This refers to some players' tendencies to forming absurd alliances just to "win the larp".
- 12** **Overmanning the quest.** How many characters does it take to look for one magical sword? That's right.
- 13** **Multiple plotlines.** Every faction needs to have several missions, which may be completed in various ways. This will add more funtime, and a single failure won't be enough to stalemate and frustrate the players. Also, the scenario should include opportunities for every faction to interact with others. What's helpful here is the "spider's web", a helpful visualisation of the relations between groups and characters. To increase the chance of interaction, all the planned pursuits should involve both sides.
- 14** **No one is irreplaceable...** in a well-constructed scenario, that is. Each key piece of information and objective needs to be shared by all members of a faction, meaning the main plot should rely on whole groups, not on single characters. Some people tend to shamelessly submit a character essential for the scenario and then not show up for the game. The only way to introduce some discipline is the obligatory payment that needs to be made before the role assignment is confirmed. This solution is really effective, but it also affects the popularity of the larp.
- 15** **Divergence of ideas.** The organizer may invent a really great scenario — but it's all for naught, if it stays in their imagination only. It's not easy to make the ideas and expectations of both the player and the organizer meet. What helps here is striving for the most precise and clear communication possible. This especially applies to written briefings, which should be formulated in a simple, communicative style, according to the Knows-Wants-Has model (adapted from our friends from Hardkon). What's important here is a conscious and orderly way of communicating with the players — with groups on faction forums, and with single persons through e-mail.
- 16** **Away with the conspiracy everywhere!** Two or three spies can be fun. But a larp where every other character has a secret identity is ridiculous and embarrassing — and only too common.
- 17** **Mages, sod off!** This covers all supernatural creatures, travellers from other worlds, mythical entities — all the "weird" characters in general. Freaks make sense only when they're a sensation of a kind, right there next to three hundred ordinary characters.
- 18** **Judas in action.** If there's a traitor in a faction, they need to act out this role. If their comrades don't get any chance to detect them, the sub-plot is as good as dead.
- 19** **The secret ingredient.** Whenever possible, while looking for the cast it's a good idea to provide every faction with at least one player on whom we may count to create an enjoyable, atmosphere-filled game. It's difficult when all we get are some readily-made "RAS parties" (Random Adventure Seekers). In such groups people usually only interact with one another, and it's very difficult for them to absorb any gaming skills. It's no use to separate them as they'll come together again during the game — entirely by chance, of course.

- 20 Careful with the big fish.** If the game features a faction that holds considerable power, for example a city council, they should be appointed a supervisor who'll be able to control their decisions, at the same time giving them enough freedom to enjoy their roles. It would be naive to assume that the players will refrain from acting upon ideas that could spoil the fun for others.
- 21 Order in the larp!** If any simulation of the fictional world is to be successful, order needs to be maintained in the main location of the game. It's not that easy if, for example, the very centre of our larp town becomes a murder scene. To avoid such situations, a proficient order-keeping staff is needed. Its members should serve in several shifts to avoid getting bored with their duties. Their larp-boss should be someone with an iron hand, who will be respected, efficient in restoring order, and still able to provide their subordinates some free time. Such a combination of responsibility and skills may be found almost exclusively among larp organizers.
- 22 The wife of Caesar.** No game mediator should take up the role of a competitive faction leader, or even of its member — it could affect their objectivity. Mediators aren't there for their own enjoyment, but for the enjoyment of others. The functions presented in Postulates 20 and 21 are rather technical, and the ones who take them up aren't there to pursue any personal objectives, but to serve the plot.
- 23 Where's that ring?** No sub-plots should be dependent on objects that are small and fragile. There's too much risk of such an item being lost or destroyed, and the sub-plot falling apart.
- 24 Did you buy the ostrich eggs?** It's unacceptable for a scenario to include any props that we're not entirely sure we can get. A good idea is to set a deadline, with the passing of which we cross out all the items we still don't have.
- 25 Release the golem!** It's good to invent some additional events, that could be used to liven up a game that loses its pace. However, these should not all be limited to yet another enemy attack. Not only is it boring, but it also degrades the larp into a costumed fight. An archery tournament, a speech of an official, or a village beauty contest will be just as interesting.
- 26 The Grand Finale.** If there's nothing planned for the larp finale, the players will try to do something on their own. Most probably, it'll be a pointless battle or something even more stupid. The riffraff likes to mess everything up in the end, no matter how dumbass it is (author's note: this sentence is dedicated to the Editor - all the best! / translators' note: What about us?). It's impossible to predict how the game will unravel, so it would be advisable to have several different versions of the finale planned.

Larp Copyrights



The topic of larp copyrights seems surreal to many. The truth is that our community is constantly developing, and Polish games are becoming more and more ambitious and artistic. We are catching up with the West, where larps are created by writers, dramatists, and scientists who treat the form as experimental art and try to make a living out of it. As we are also growing out of “nerdiness”, it is interesting to consider what rights we have in Poland in reference to larps and how we can use them, and to check if we do not infringe any third party rights.

One larp — many authors, many rights

The copyright is a collection of rights that an author has in reference to their work, which in turn needs to fulfill certain legal requirements. These are fulfilled by every larp, however, in their case it often happens that more than one person is the rights holder. It is essential to include all the persons who are entitled to the larp copyrights. To do that, it is important in every case to determine who has offered any creative input into the scenario, i.e. whose contribution to the game could be defined as an artistic work.

Under the provisions of Article 1 § 1 of Polish Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act of 1994[1], a work is defined as any manifestation of a person’s creative activity of individual nature, expressed in any form and irrespective of its value. Clearly copyrights may be held only by a person, and no animal or machine could be the author of a work. However, other elements may need some explanation. The premise of a manifestation of creative activity, or originality[2], constitutes a very vague criterion, a clear assessment of which has not been achieved even in legal science. It is assumed that such a manifestation should be innovative and original[3], meaning the creation of an identical work should not be probable. In turn, the individual nature of a work is understood as a manner of expressing the author’s ideas in their works[4]. A work can be expressed in various forms, even such impermanent and fleeting as, for example, running a larp.

Under the Polish law (and contrary to, for example, the American legal system), for the work to be copy-

rightable it does not need to have a written or in any way permanently recorded shape: the form of a larp is considered to be expressed with it simply being played. Even if the form is not yet complete, the work is nonetheless copyright-protected. It is also irrelevant if the work is based on an existent RPG system or e.g. on George R.R. Martin’s books; the part of the larp which fulfills the statutory criteria is protected by copyright. In the case of using an established universe created by another person, it is usually necessary to receive its author’s consent (in the form of a written statement or a license — see below).

The aforementioned criteria of a work are fulfilled by a scenario, scenography, and directing (in this case — gamemastering). However, any larp in its final, actually played form is a creation of many persons, who all hold the copyrights for the larp as a whole. The exploitation of any of those rights requires the joint consent of all of the joint authors. Of course, the larp proper should be considered separately from its particular components, which can constitute works in their own right (for example, character sheets).

The issue that I would like to consider is if a larp participant is to be considered its joint author, or rather an equivalent to an actor starring in a theatre play? It is especially important in the case of the games that are continued, with plots that are updated and altered by the players’ actions and achievements. Assuming that a player’s creation of a character during a game is a work (it is original and individual in its nature), the player effectively becomes a co-author of the system, and to some point they are entitled to

hold the copyrights. Theoretically, they should have the right to have a say in such issues as publishing the handbook, alterations to their own creative input, etc.

However, to assess the possibility of awarding the authorship status to larp participants, it should be considered if the notion of playing a larp character is not actually closer to the idea of an artistic persona, identified with the work of professional actors. This question is essential, as the so-called rights to performances are separately covered by the Polish copyright. These are not connected to authorship, however, they allow for performers

(musicians, actors etc.) to receive remuneration for their performances of other persons' works, as well as to protect the integrity

of such a performance (i.e. by means of making alterations). In my opinion, this interpretation would limit the rights of a specific player and allow them to influence their own way of playing of their character only. It is difficult to make a definite decision here. On the one hand, a player's influence on plots of larps after their runs would be simply pointless and even absurd. On the other however, a player's creative input into a larp is larger than that of an actor in a theatre. In my opinion, a player can be considered a joint author of the final form of the larp, but only if their contribution is really significant, becomes an integral part of the given setting, and visibly influences the plot created by the original author. In other words, a player can be considered a joint author of the larp if their creative activities alter the handbook or the consecutive scenarios. I would not consider it a legitimate basis for legal action, however, I do think that any alterations to the game that are connected to a player's contribution to the scenario should be consulted with that player.

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Having noted that larp copyrights could be attributed to more than one person, I would like to clarify what actually constitutes the copyrights, apart from the fact that they are held by the author of a work. The copyrights are divided into two categories. As fully defining all of them would consume much space, I will simply list them. The author's moral rights (Article 16 of the Polish copyright) are inalienable and permanently linked to the author. These include the rights to claim authorship, to sign the work with their name or pseudonym (or to publish it anonymously), to protect its integrity (meaning to have

control over any alterations made to the work), to decide whether the work should be made public for the first time, and to control the manner of using the work (the right

to object to any improper use, for example using the Mona Lisa as a doormat).

The second category is referred to as the author's economic rights, which may be transferred (sold or gifted, for example) or made available to third parties, either for remuneration or for free, by granting a proper license. This category covers the rights to use the work, to dispose of the work, and to receive remuneration for its exploitation. These constitute the basis for transferring the rights (including their sale) or granting a license to use the work. They also allow holders to take legal action against unauthorised uses.

The other side of the coin: using another person's work in a larp

Many larp authors, when writing a game, draw from existent works such as books, films, or RPG systems. The borrowings include sub-plots, characters, or even whole settings. If a larp were not a work itself, one would need the consent of both the economic

rights holder to use the materials and of the author to alter it. It is important, therefore, for larps to be associated with art and education, rather than with sports (as some would like them to). If this issue ever raises any doubts in authorities or courts, the statutory legal institutions of the copyrights that allow authors and scientists to use other persons' works may not apply. Normally, these define the cases in which the copyrights holder's authorisation is not necessary and thus infringement allegations will not apply. These are collectively called the permissible use of works. Two of them are especially important for larp authors.

The most convenient method of not infringing other person's copyrights is to use the so-called right to quote. Under Article 29 § 1 of the Polish copyright it is permitted, in works constituting an independent whole, to quote fragments of disseminated works or minor works

in full, within the scope justified by explanation, critical analysis, teaching, or the rights governing a given kind of creative activity. Literature is not the only field

covered by this regulation; it pertains to any other kind of creative activity too. It renders it possible to draw from the story, characters, or other elements of a given setting. The extent of a quote is not a problem. Pursuant to the ruling of the Appellate Court in Łódź of the 17th of December 2002[5], even if the quote constitutes one-third of a larp, its author does not commit copyrights violation if the quote pertains to an adequate aim — a proper connection must be present between the larp and the included quote, meaning: teaching, explanation, critical analysis, or the rights governing a given kind of creative activity. The latter makes it possible to include the longest quotes and is very convenient, as larps constitute a rather specific and distinct branch of art. In my opinion, the rights governing larps allow a larp author to feature another person's music in their game for free, or even use another person's setting with all its premises, as long as it is within reason. According to the Supreme Court of Poland (the ruling of the

Also, there is a rise in popularity of various materials under the so-called free licenses, which allow, under certain conditions, for using the works covered thereby in whole. They may be worth noting for those who intend to disseminate their own scenarios. It would allow others to use the scenario freely and, at the same time, help establish certain rules pertaining to the work

23rd of October 2004[6], a work of which 90% is a quote does infringe the copyright.

The second method of avoiding law infringement is the permission to use copyrighted works given to research and educational institutions. Under Article 27 of the Polish copyright, such institutions are allowed to use published works in original and in translation, and to make copies of fragments from the disseminated work for teaching purposes or in order to conduct their own research. If our project is in any manner joined by an institution fulfilling the requirements specified in Article 27, the aforementioned regulation allows for free and unrestricted use of works in any larp, on the condition that it pertains to any educational purpose. It is enough for a school or a university to be a co-organiser. In my opinion, any organisation with research or educational statutory aims may be adequate as well. This is why it is so

important for larps to be associated and identified with educational activities. (Note: Article 27 does not cover computer programs, and it seems that most computer games are considered to be excluded from that regulation as well.)

The permissible use (either the right to quote or the rights under Article 27) is subject to specific requirements. The audience (the players) need to be informed about the author and the source of every work used (Article 34 of the Polish copyright). It is enough for this information to be included in the character sheets, shown on a computer presentation after the larp, or simply read to the participants. If it is not done, the requirements of the permissible use are not fulfilled and the project is treated as plagiarism, which may be punished by up to 3 years in prison (Article 116 of the Polish copyright). Furthermore, the permissible use may not violate the rightful interests of the author or infringe the normal use of the work (Article 35 of the Polish copyright), meaning: not violating the economic interests[7] (not taking away the author's earnings), which would be difficult considering the current scale of the Polish larps.

It should be noted that the Polish permissible use is not the same as the American fair use. The US law allows using other persons' works for almost every non-commercial purpose. The rule is general, and each case is considered separately. The Polish law is much more restrictive, and in many cases what Americans are allowed, Poles are not.

Of course, the permissible use does not exhaust the possibilities available for larp authors. In the case of drawing from an existent setting, it is a good idea to check for officially published handbooks. Although usually the license[8] included therein only allows for the dissemination of the game mechanics and rules, in my opinion purchasing an RPG system handbook gives us the right to use its contents in a larp. A prohibition of such an interpretation would be inconsistent with the social and economic purpose of the handbook — after all, one buys it to play and run games[9]. Also, there is a rise in popularity of various materials under the so-called free licenses, which allow, under certain conditions, for using the works covered thereby in whole. They may be worth noting for those who intend to disseminate their own scenarios. It would allow others to use the scenario freely and, at the same time, help establish certain rules pertaining to the work[10].

The NERO case

It should be noted that the copyright is not the same as the legal protection of trademarks covered by the Industrial Property Rights Act of the 30th of June 2000[11]. The latter allows obtaining the exclusive right to use, for example, a specific name or logo by means of their registration. This issue mainly pertains to business relations, however, there has been at least one case of larp authors' conflict of this kind in the USA. It is presented below, as an example of legal problems connected to larps being very real.

The case concerned the NERO system created by, among others, Michael A. Ventrella and Ford Ivey.

It started with small, local larps. However, in time the games grew to cover at least several states. Ivey registered the name NERO and started to run the games under the company called Legends Unlimited Inc. Ventrella moved to another state to start his own NERO edition there. He then received a written and permanent permission to use the name, the logo, and all other system elements supplied by Legends Unlimited Inc. within his area of activity. When he moved to yet another place, unknowingly (or so he claims) he disturbed the territory where another person — Joe Valenti — had already received a written permission to use the NERO trademark. Michael A. Ventrella had not been informed about this, although the duty to do so constituted a part of his contract. Valenti started persuading Ventrella to leave the territory, as well as promoting an informational campaign, described by Ventrella as “aggressive”. In the meantime, Valenti bought Ford Ivey's company, which was renamed NERO International, along with all the NERO rights, and claimed the author's economic rights for all handbooks published, including those that contained texts written by Ventrella. The “aggressive campaign” did not stop, and Michael A. Ventrella decided to initiate legal action. The case was relegated for mediation, to no avail. Out of necessity, Ventrella renamed his NERO version into Alliance LARP and has been operating under the name since[12].

Final words

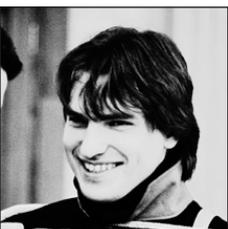
Polish larps are developing, and soon people will start engaging in the field professionally and on a large scale. Along with real money, unethical activity is bound to appear. Therefore, when planning a game it is reasonable to take legal regulations into consideration, both in order to protect one's own work and to respect other persons' rights. It is better to think in advance than to worry about apocalyptic compensation!

AUTHOR'S NOTES

- 1 Journal of Laws of 1994, No. 24, Item 83 with later changes, hereinafter referred to as “the Polish copyright”
- 2 J.Sieńczyło-Chlabicz (ed.), *Prawo własności intelektualnej*, 2008, p. 40
- 3 M. Późniak-Niedzielska, *Przedmiot prawa autorskiego*, in: *Prawo autorskie*, J. Barta (ed.), 2010, p. 8
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- 9 I can not guarantee such an explanation would be accepted at the court.
- 10 There are many licenses of this kind, however, I would not advise Poles to use the ones in English. The Anglo-Saxon legal system is very different from ours, and not all elements of foreign licenses may be used in Poland. The safest and most convenient licenses I know are the Creative Commons — they are translated into Polish and fully compatible with our law.
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- 12 For more information, refer to the websites of the aforementioned parties: <http://nerohq.com/break.php> and http://www.nerolarp.net/NERO_LARP_2011/NERO_LARP_LEGAL.html.

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Live Role-play Games within the System of Moral Development of Preschool Children

The problem of moral education of preschool children is constantly emphasized by the contemporary society. Lack of values and heartlessness, which developed along with the tendency to exclude individualists from the rest of society as a means of preserving and passing down culture, in turn lead to a change in the understanding of good and evil by the modern generation, and put the society in danger of moral degeneration.

The system of moral education of preschool children itself requires reorganization. Taking into account the number of explorations in local educational research, their depth and academic quality, the area of moral development is far behind intellectual, physical and other related areas of development. If a practice of moral education existed on the preschool educational level (such as kindergartens and nurseries) under the Soviet rule, it was determined by the ideological standards and limited

to teaching basic norms (manners, courtesy, ethical values), and the

methods of education were based on the concept of authority (methods of persuasion, imposition, ethical dialogue) (Makarenko, 1947; Vygotsky, 1982). Today, the dominant tendencies for determining the curriculum of moral education should be based on more universal ethical values, such as goodness, justice and compassion (Bibler, 2002; Blyumkin, 1990; Kabush, 1995, 2000; Kalinina, 2003; Laptinok, 2002; Schastnaya, 1985).

During its development, human personality goes through stages of extreme vulnerability to social influence. Early childhood (especially the period between 5–7 years of age) is a time of extreme openness to social, moral and pedagogical influence, as well as a readiness to accept it. This age is the most sensitive for the development of morality, since a child's ability to make moral choices is based on the developing activity of conscious moral evaluation and enforced by the child's need for approval and acceptance. The foundation for developing this ability is connected to

the development of independence and the eagerness of a preschool child to consciously and willingly follow socially accepted examples of behaviour.

Despite the multitude of approaches towards the problem of moral education of children, the mechanisms of how the very beginnings of a child's moral consciousness are formed and developed remain insufficiently defined. The resources useful for the

improvement of moral consciousness are not fully determined either. As of yet, there is no satisfying Belaru-

sian research of live role-play games in the context of their application in the moral development process, especially in the specific and significant area of moral education of preschool children.

One of the most unique features of role-play games is the possibility for a child to adapt the role of an adult. Because of that, children become interested in aspects and dimensions of surrounding reality which they wouldn't notice while playing other types of games. First, children become interested in activities regularly performed by adults, and later, in the significance of these activities, as well as interpersonal behaviour. Live role-play games greatly improve children's methods of realizing objectives and their ability to interact with objects. The in-game interaction with toys becomes more varied. If a child cannot find the toy they need, or if some unusual object is required during the role-play — the child has no problem with finding a substitute. Moreover, the substitute can be found not only in the already-known objects, but

also in those that are new. Whenever a need emerges during a game, children are more eager to use imaginary objects, or often substitute the missing items or impossible actions with words. Therefore, to fulfill the game objectives during role-plays children use various methods learned during the earlier stages of the game. They develop their abilities of expressing emotions via actions, movement, gestures and facial expressions. So, one of the main advantages of games based on role-play is that children develop various methods of achieving one's objectives.

In-character actions during a live role-play game are accompanied by in-character spoken expressions and phrases, with which the child addresses their toy-partners,

imaginary companions, adults, or their peers. With time, the uttered in-character expressions and short phrases evolve into exchanges of phras-

es logically linked by their content, which means that children achieve the next communicative level, namely in-character conversations. The first in-character conversations should be initiated by an adult. Later, after gaining enough experience, children have in-character conversations with one another. With the accumulation of life experience, the in-character conversations between children become longer and more detailed. On the other hand, a new negative tendency is observed in the contemporary practical research — that in some games based on role-play children become less talkative with age, or their communicative skills degenerate (Shcheglov, 2007). The possible reason could be that children simply do not know what to talk about. Therefore, when the in-character conversations are developed, it is strongly advised that adults provide a good model of interaction and communication.

During a live role-play game, children have the possibility to interact with both adults and other children. What is more, while children can spontaneously create new game objectives, it may be difficult for them to accept and understand those created by other children, and that may provoke conflicts.

During a live role-play game, children have the possibility to interact with both adults and other children. What is more, while children can spontaneously create new game objectives, it may be difficult for them to accept and understand those created by other children, and that may provoke conflicts. At first, players engage in brief interactions, but with more experience their interactions become longer. During a role-play game, children become more independent, they become more creative with their game and change it, which means that they develop the skill to create the plot. For its realization, they invent and set specific objectives. In real-life situations, teachers in preschool education institutions often address the children with suggestions such as, "Let's

play (something)"

(Zakharov, 2005). This could mean either that these children do not have their creativity developed enough, or that their developing this skill is not

that particular teacher's objective at the moment.

What is more, children can choose materials and other decorations for the in-game reality by themselves. If a needed object is not available, they often choose to use some toys instead. In such situations they use both actual and imaginary objects as substitutes with ease. If the entire game takes place in one location (e.g. a hospital), conventional means of decorating do not foster the development of a child's independent thinking and creativity, as all the props are rather obvious and do not need to be imagined beforehand.

Preschool childhood is a relatively short period in a person's life. However, this is when the child learns significantly more than through the rest of their life. There are indeed many things to be achieved during

this period: good command of speech, cognitive and communicative skills, the understanding of interpersonal interactions, ethical values and moral judgment, and the basic ability to plan one's own actions and future life altogether.

Preschool age is the age of games. Children play a lot and with pleasure, and they tend to accept the objectives set for them by adults more easily if these come in the form of a game. What is important is the choice of different aspects of adult life imitated by children in their role-play. By imitating job-related activities and interactions between adults the child learns empathy, the significance of a given job, and the rules of conduct observed in the society he or she is a part of. Live role-play games may have very different plots. They may depend on the specific times in which the children live, as well as family, domestic, geographic or working conditions surrounding them. Therefore, games affect children's learning in different ways, depending on which aspects of real circumstances and human behaviour they focus on. During role-play games it is important for the child to imitate these features which are the most important for their future personal development: kindness, respect, honesty, fortitude. All these and many more could be ingrained in a child's personality with an appropriately designed live role-play game.

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The hypotheses were confirmed by the results of an experiment conducted in 2010–2011 in the kindergarten Buratino in Minsk, Belarus. During the research, great amount of interesting data was collected. It also resulted in developing a live role-play games programme called Child and the Whole World, designed to be 6 months long and aimed mainly at children at the age of 5.

The main aim of the experiment was to determine how deeply the preschool children were involved into live role-play games. The analysis of games was based on four criteria, which were (1) the content of the game (2) the diversity of the methods invented to

achieve the game objectives (3) how much children interact during a specific live role-play game (4) the independence of action-taking and decision-making. For the purposes of the experiment, and to aid the educators in the future, four questionnaires were developed, one for each criterion.

The first group of questions was used to determine the depth of the game content:

1. How do the children create the plot of the game? Children can invent the plot and the topic of the game themselves, but the teacher can direct them or influence their decisions.
2. How different are the plots created by children? It is difficult to determine this basing only on 1–2 role-play games, so the process of observation should be lengthy and thorough.
3. How many game objectives can the child create? The ideas children have during games usually manifest themselves in creating new objectives. For example, a boy is a driver fixing a car. A dog approaches, so the "driver" treats the doggy to a "bone".
4. How varied are the game objectives? We have to determine if they are all similar or if they vary
5. How independent are the children during the creation of new game objectives? The game objective could be set (1) independently, as a reflection of circumstances (2) by an adult (3) with an adult's assistance. For example, an adult could say, "Look at this kitty! It looks so hungry. What do you think we should do with it?"

The second group of questions is used to determine the diversity of the methods invented to achieve the game objectives:

1. How diversified is the child's interaction with toys? At an early age, children learn to use toys according to their direct, obvious purpose. The use of toys during games can be the same, or different if the same toy is used in many different ways.
2. What is the level of connection between par-

ticular in-game actions involving toys? Actions involving objects can be separate, or constitute a part of a certain chain of actions. Single actions which a child enjoys are repeated many times. In other cases, the action is performed quickly and the attention is turned to something different.

3. Do children use any substitute objects during the game? Here, we need to determine the level of independence displayed by a child when they include the objects in the game. Note any assistance of an adult.
4. Do children interact with imaginary objects during the game? We also need to determine the level of independence of these interactions.
5. Does the child play their role? Usually this ability develops by the age of 3 and signifies the start of a role-playing period of childhood.
6. How diversified are the in-character actions? The example with "the driver" mentioned before could be used here as well.
7. How expressive are the in-character actions? While playing their roles, children can use various means of self-expression – individual movements, gestures, facial expressions. Even mothers differ from one another if played by different children.
8. Do children express themselves verbally in-character? Those need to be uttered in-character with the role the child takes.
9. Do children engage in any in-character dialogues?
10. Who initiates the in-game dialogues? It could be an adult or the child.
11. Whom did the child have the in-game dialogue with? With an adult, one, or more other children.
12. What is the quality of the contents of the dialogue?

The third group of questions is used to determine interactions expressed by children during a live role-play game:

1. Does the child have any interaction with others during the larp or is the process of playing individual?

2. Who does the child appoint the new game objectives to? To an adult, oneself or another child.
3. Is the child able to accept in-game objectives?
4. How long are the interactions during the game?

The fourth group of questions concerns the child's independence in actions and decision-making. Is not a separate group, but exists within each of the previous groups of questions.

The methodology of the live role-play game analysis is designed as follows:

1. Observation of live role-play games played in groups and recording them (using technology where possible).
2. Repeated interviews with the teachers about the contents of the games, the methods invented by children to achieve various game objectives, children's interactions during a specific game, independence in taking actions and making decisions.
3. Teacher's participation in the game which should only influence its course, not interfere with it — unless such an intrusion is necessary to push the game forwards from a passive stage, which makes the role-play difficult to analyse.

As the result of data analysis, three levels of game depth were defined: high, moderate and low. The experiment also pointed to the existence of three different levels in relation to the active model of world image formation among young children. The distinction between these levels was mainly focused on (1) the level of systematization of the knowledge about nature, society and human beings (2) the evolution of the child's activities (3) the intensity of activities (4) independence and initiative of the child (5) the change in quality of the child's speech and artistic creativity.

In their early, preschool years, children imitate the activities of adults and the relations between them. In later years, children are able to "grasp" the essence and social significance of these activities during

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should only influence its course, not interfere with it — unless such an intrusion is necessary to push the game forwards from

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a game. It indicates more conscious acquaintance with the life of adults around the particular child. Because of their content, live role-play games give children the possibility to interact with the world outside of their narrow family circle.

By imitating adult behaviour, children practically recreate those relations, the knowledge of which they gather by observing the lives of the adults around them. Along with the form of behaviour, children reproduce and experience the emotions and attitudes of the adults that originally performed the activity. If a child is cruel to a doll during a live role-play game, is being rude, does not communicate with others, does not share anything with others, is careless with toys — then the roots lie within the internalized examples of the given role. By following such examples, at first a child develops bad habits, which later evolve into negative features of personality — such as selfishness, untidiness, stubbornness etc.

Therefore, we have good reasons to form the following conclusions:

1. Role-playing is very significant for preschool children's development. Games based on role-playing constitute most of the activities during that period. Children may play the same games over and over again, but the content and the focus of these games will gradually change. Through these activities preschoolers pass the stages where they gain abilities connected to social problems, interpersonal relations and causality — and, hopefully, learn care, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, helpfulness etc.
2. A live role-play game is a very powerful tool for moral education and personality development during the preschool period. However, how much the children will benefit from playing, and how diverse their development will be, greatly depends on teachers and pedagogues to whose professional care the children are entrusted.
3. It is important for the game to shape not only the development of communicative skills and the knowledge of proper social conduct, but first of all — the sense of morality. Only then

A live role-play game gives a preschooler the possibility to imitate the methods of interaction with both objects and other people in various social situations.

can children be taught the sense of community, the ability to understand others and to compare with them, to listen to them as well as to oneself. These give the foundation for the moral attitude towards others: empathy, tolerance, cooperation etc.

4. Adults' influence on the development of moral judgment and evaluation is necessary, but not entirely sufficient for moral education. It is important to create such a game environment where the norms of morality will begin to regulate the child's actual behaviour, in order to establish the link between moral consciousness and moral conduct — then the fulfillment of the specific moral norms will have an emotional impact on the preschooler.
5. The connection between moral consciousness and behaviour establishes when the child taught to act morally is given a possibility of a moral choice, and when the child independently decides which line of behaviour to choose, how to make the right choice. Making a decision in favor of upholding the norm, overcoming the momentary desires and wishes, as well as putting aside own interests in favour of someone else's, the child experiences the satisfaction and sometimes the pleasure of the "deed done right". With time, such behaviour will become habitual and form the need to uphold the moral norm.
6. In the area of a child's moral education the example set by the adults plays a major part.

The creation of the first live role-play game in the life of a child is connected to a number of factors. Firstly, at the preschool age the child has already developed the understanding of the "symbolic function" — they can use objects not only according to their designated purpose, but also in many other ways, depending on the plot of the game. Secondly, the child develops the necessity to recreate actions of adults. Thirdly, the child already knows how to interact with other people in the game.

A live role-play game gives a preschooler the possibility to imitate the methods of interaction with

both objects and other people in various social situations. Therefore, it fosters the child's comprehension of activities based on using objects, forms and norms of communication, as well as role-restricted behaviour. From the practical point of view, a live role-play game can be looked at as the preparation of a child to participate in social life and to take up different social roles. Engaging the child in the process of organization and running a live role-play game, an educator supports the development of the structure of the preschooler's image of the world (Here, the term "image of the world" means what

the local educational science calls the "picture of the world" – certain combination or regulated system of human knowledge about own self, nature and other people, which serves as a filter for any outer influence (Laptenok, 1999). This image is formed by each child as the process of interaction with the reality is being reflected within the child's mind. It serves the function of orientation within the world, affects all actions and activities of the child. — author's note), which allows the child to reach more complexity of cognition.

Glossary

Polish terms from the original text in round brackets.

ASG (ASG)

Short for “Air Soft Gun”, pneumatic firearms. Thanks to using air pressure, ASG guns fire plastic balls at the range of several to several hundred meters. Being hit with such a “bullet” may hurt, but it does not cause any serious injuries. Playing with ASG requires wearing protective goggles. Such equipment is common at those field games that are set in modern times or in the future. An additional asset is the fact that ASG replicas look very real.

Bleed (efekt przenikania / bleed)

A phenomenon of blurring the boundary between the player and their role. For example, continuously offending a character in a larp may actually offend the person playing them.

Boffers (otuliniaki)

(In Polish, the term otulinowce is also used. English translation of the term based on the Scandinavian terminology drawn from the Knutepunkt publications. — translators’ note)

A colloquial name for dummy melee weapons made of PVC or latex. In Poland, it is common for boffers to be covered with characteristic grey tape. A better-quality boffers, made of latex, are also gaining in popularity. Such props allow the players to perform safe duels and fights during games. It is impossible to harm anyone with a properly-made dummy, and at the same time it is quite effective during a fight simulation.

Chamber larp / convention larp (chamber larp / larp konwentowy / larp pokojowy)

A very popular kind of larps where the scenario may be played in one or several rooms. These larps are regularly played in most big Polish cities, and during conventions and festivals. An important characteristic of chamber larps is their diversity. Usually they do not feature dummy weapons, but employ a number of additional rules for conflict-solving. Chamber larps may be played with very sophisticated or very

minimalistic decorations. Usually there are from 15 to 30 players, and a game typically lasts around four hours.

Field larp / field game

(larp terenowy / gra terenowa / terenówka)

A term denoting a larp played outdoors, in an open space, for example in a forest. The characteristics of such games include: a lot of attention paid to costumes and decorations (→ simulationism), solving conflicts with the use of dummy melee weapons (→ boffers) and/or firearms (→ ASG), and long duration (a game usually lasts at least half a day). In a Polish field game, the number of players may count from twenty to even four hundred.

Freeform (freeform / wolna forma)

Scenarios characterised by freedom of construction, organization and character descriptions. The main objective is to tell an interesting story. Some freeforms are very similar to larps. Many of them focus on such aspects as (1) showiness (2) drama (3) the presence of audience (3) short duration of the game. Scenarios of this kind are usually divided into series of short scenes. The most important element of most freeforms is adjusting the form to their content. Many freeforms belong to the slice-of-life genre.

Immersion (immersja)

Empathising or identifying with one’s character. The more we break away from our own selves during the game, and the more we become a cosmonaut or a famous rock star, the stronger the immersion. There are many ways to achieve this effect, the basic ones involving the use of costumes, props and decorations. Other factors include: duration, well-constructed scenario, involvement of the participant, their fatigue, as well as a convincing, well-written character. Each and every of these elements may trigger immersion.

Jeepform / jeep (*jeepform / jeep*)

Freeforms of the Danish variety. The name was thought as a joke of a kind, to make the online scenario search easier. What is important here is breaking every possible rule pertaining to game construction. Scenarios of this kind usually feature difficult themes. Normally, the game is divided into short scenes, the rules of the unity of time and place do not apply, and decorations and props are practically non-existent. No plot information is hidden, and the main focus is on the participation of the audience.

Larp (*larp*)

Short for “Live Action Role Playing”. At first, larps were associated exclusively with RPGs and speculative fiction in general, and were mainly about the players impersonating their favourite characters using costumes and simple theatre techniques. However, larp writers quickly discovered that the medium held much greater potential, and could be used to create scenarios with educational, historical, social or even political themes. Larps unite the elements typical for games (such as: pursuing some objectives, competition, abiding to rules) and theatre (playing roles, props, costumes, scenario).

NPC (*BN / NPC*)

Short for “Non-Player Character” (*Bohater Niezależny* — literally, “independent character”). A term drawn from RPGs, denotes a character that takes part in the scenario to a limited extent only, and is purely functional as assistance for the players or as a plot device.

**Polish Larp Conference / KOLA
(*Konferencja larpowa / KoLA*)**

The first official Polish convention for people interested in discussing larps. It is modelled after the Scandinavian Knudepunkt and Czech Odraz. Its main objective is to facilitate experience sharing, integration, popularisation and documentation of Polish larps, the result of which is this very publication.

Simulationism (*symulacjonizm*)

The focus on creating a faithful picture of the fictional reality and eliminating the outside stimuli. Simulationism is very popular in field games. Examples include: building whole villages and special vehicles, using already-existing buildings (e.g. old castles) or eating food characteristic for the game setting (e.g. traditional delicacies from Medieval times). Simulationism also encompasses the actual role-playing of the character’s skills, lack of rules that may halt the game, and the focus on fitting one’s appearance and ways of expression to the role.

**Symbolism / conventionality
(*symbolizm / umowność*)**

The opposite of simulationism. In symbolism, a normal chair may represent a mountain, and an empty hand may be said to hold a golden brooch. Symbolism is usually applied in freeform scenarios, as well as in games that focus on acting and storytelling, and not on representing the in-game reality.

Vampire larps (*larp wampirze*)

A very common type of larp in Poland, based on the White Wolf RPGs. These constituted the first larp experience for many Polish larpers. The kind of games strongly emphasize obeying rules from the RPG rulebooks. The main characteristics include: RPG characters (the players play vampires), costumes and episodic structure.

