

Incentives as tools of larp dramaturgy.

Summary

The article discusses the concept of dramaturgy, the authoring and structuring of live role-playing works. It provides an overview and analysis of “incentives”, methods employed by larpwrights to encourage specific player interactions during the larp – conflict, puzzles, fates, etc. and how they can be structured into connected “webs”.

Introduction

Dramaturgy is in the strange situation of being the aspect of larp theory that is the most popular (“how do I write larps?”), but also the least covered. This article is an attempt to remedy some of that imbalance by presenting an overview and analysis of What We Already Know. As such, it may serve as a “crash course” for the beginning larpwright, giving her an introduction to some of the methods available. Though not, it should be noted, much advice for how to use them properly. I should also hope there is something in here for theorists and even the most experienced of larpwrights, since the methods common in one tradition of live role-playing may be entirely unknown to another and vice-versa.

These methods are for the most part time-honoured and tested, used by larpwrights on all five continents for several years. Still, they have rarely been described in much detail. A number of “how-to” articles and columns in larp-related magazines offer the best documentation available, but unfortunately these are often brief, written in a local larp jargon, and take much for granted on the part of the readers familiarity with the tradition wherein the author is writing. This very local style makes international discussion of dramaturgy rather difficult. My goal in this article is to describe, analyze and organize these dramaturgical methods into a coherent system that enables further discussion.

I have relied on several sources in writing this article – personal larp experience, discussions in person or on the internet, previous articles on websites and in fanzines - most of which are not easy to reference. Erlend Eidsem's classical article “Plotteori”, published in *Guru* in 1992, was the starting point of the discussions that have led to this article, but since then precious little has been put into writing. The first section of this article provides an overview of larp dramaturgy and its problems, explaining dramaturgy through concepts from recent Nordic larp theory. The second, and largest, section deals with one group of dramaturgical methods: incentives.

Notes on live role-playing dramaturgy

A larpwright friend of mine described her recurring nightmare before a major larp: “the players are all there, all enthusiastic, having made wonderful costumes and prepared for

months. But they have no idea how to interact, they try gesturing and smiling and connecting to each other but cannot find any words to speak, any meaningful opening to a conversation. They don't blame us, but it is our fault, they don't have characters, they don't have plots, they can't interact”.

This dream illustrates a dogma of Nordic live role-playing: it is the larpwright's responsibility to give the players “something to do” during the larp, and without the larpwright's input a larp risks becoming unplayable, overly predictable and/or dull. We can imagine a larp where the larpwright has not done this task: the characters are interesting, but have no established relations between each other, no reason to stay put at the given place, and no reasons to contact each other. The larp begins with all the players in the same room, but players immediately confront the question: “Why do I stay here, with these strangers? Doesn't my character have anywhere else she wants or needs to be?” If characters leave, the larp disintegrates, and if they stay, the interaction feels forced, artificial, unnatural. No-one has, to the best of my knowledge, authored such a larp.<1>

At the bare minimum, live role-playing scripts establish relationships and an initial situation that brings characters together. So a purpose of the larpwright is to provide characters with reasons to interact, and reasons to continue interacting. Once the larpwright fulfils this purpose, the larpwright will do so in accordance with her own creative vision. Simply providing excuses to interact are usually not enough, the reasons to interact will form a whole, a creative work, a foundation not just for improvisation but also for artistic meaning.

I use the term “dramaturgy”<2>, defined as “the inner and outer structure of a larp as it is authored by a larpwright”<3>, to describe this aspect of larp authoring. Dramaturgy has several aspects:

- Establishing an **Initial situation**, the starting point of the larp and what came before it, bringing or binding characters together – such as a society, a past common history, a set of social rituals. (more on this in Wingård 2001, Fatland 2005, Hansen 2003)
- Establishing **Relationships** between characters – by organizing them into families, factions, friends, hierarchies, networks, by defining relationships between individual characters and by suggesting how characters are to relate to other characters they meet. (see Gade 2003, Gräslund 2001)
- **Real-time directing** the progress of role-playing, for example by using “contact points” and “control knobs”, adopting ad-hoc characters, staging theatrical segments, and controlling the flow of information. (see Freitag,2002, Young 2004)

And finally, the focus of this article:

- Providing **Incentives** that encourage players to follow specific paths in their improvisation, to play specific scenes, to confront specific questions, etc.

A “textbase” is the larp equivalent of a theatrical “script”: the sum of all information provided to players before the larp, including character descriptions, group descriptions,

world descriptions, etc. (Fatland, 2000) Even verbal briefings and drama exercises form part of the “textbase”. With the exception of real-time directing, the dramaturgical tools mentioned above are normally authored in the textbase.

The Fog of Larp

Unlike texts in linear media (the theatre, the novel, the film) a larp is typically unpredictable. Some larps are planned “open-ended” or “player-driven”, purposefully unpredictable, others risk seeing the carefully crafted plans of the larpwright failing utterly when played. Bøckman's maxim states that

“[it] is impossible to control the direction of a game as long as the plot-structure is hidden from the players, and that an action appearing the only logical step to an organizer don't necessarily do so for the players. (...) For any given problem, there are an infinite number of solutions, and as an organizer, you may take for granted that the players will think of those you did not.”

(Bøckman, 2003) .

I call the unpredictability implied by this maxim for “**the fog of larp**”, and the fact of it's existence can be attested to by any number of larpwrights and players.

Markus Montola's application of a chaotic behaviour metaphor to larp (see Montola, 2004) sheds further light on the fog-of-larp. Chaotic systems are not random, i.e. not “pure chaos”, but become unpredictable due to their qualities of non-linearity, recursivity and dynamism. Montola makes the convincing case that role-playing can be described as a chaotic system, and recommends that larpwrights view their activity not as authoring scripts but as establishing **attractors**. An attractor is “a dynamic pattern of behaviour the chaotic system tries to follow”. We can think of attractors as paths or roads leading through the fog of larp, which players may try to follow but from which they may also deviate or be forced to deviate. Montola's example is that of the race-car which attempts to stay on the racing track until it strays too far off-course and picks a new track leading into the forest. A web of incentives involving the election of the next Pope may be the focus – the attractor being followed - for the Cardinal characters of a larp, until suddenly the Visigoth characters decide to attack Rome and the cardinals jump onto the attractor called “defend the Vatican”.<4>

Integrative techniques make attractors stronger, bringing the larp closer to order and hence predictability, while **dissipative** techniques nudge the larp towards chaos and unpredictability. Integrative and dissipative techniques can be used by larpwrights and players both. For the larpwright to issue clear instructions as to the purpose of the role-playing (“Elect a new pope!”) is an integrative technique, for the player to ignore them (“fellow cardinals, enough in-fighting – let's get drunk instead!”) is a dissipative one. The fog of larp gets thinner when integrative techniques are used, thicker with dissipative ones.

The chaos model is a useful tool for analysing larp dramaturgy, not just on a theoretical

level but also in the practice of authoring larp. It forces us to think about which parts of the larp we can predict and which we can't, and on how the dramaturgy will actually affect the larp - as opposed to how good it looks on paper. Comparing the concept of "attractor" to the concept of a "plot" or "incentive web" helps us to see the difference between the structures visible to the larpwright and the structures that are followed by players.

While Bøckman, Montola and other authors (including Hansen, 2003 and Henriksen 2004) argue that live role-playing is for the most part unpredictable, I do not believe this to be absolutely and universally the case. Bøckman's maxim applies only to larps where the "plot-structure is hidden from the players" which is not usually the case with Dogma larps, fate-plays or suggestion-plays. Implicit in the chaos model is that if attractors are made strong enough, the larp becomes predictable. Montola also mentions "over-integrative" techniques, such as fate-play, which remove some of the characteristics of chaotic systems from a larp, leading to the question of whether they are role-playing at all. <5> Whether that is a good or a bad thing and whether the boundaries can be pushed to include them remains to be discussed.

Predictions, Intentional Possibilities and Fabula

Apart from the use of strongly integrative techniques, a second factor is the ability of experienced larpwrights to predict player behaviour at otherwise chaotic larps. It is easy to offer anecdotal evidence for this statement, hard to offer empirical evidence. But consider, in general, all the predictions made that do not go wrong: if a murder occurs and a detective character is present, that character can be relied on to investigate the murder.

At the beginning of a larp, anything may seem possible - the characters may elevate themselves to godhood, or commit mass suicide, or sit meditating for the entire duration of the larp. Some things are however more likely to occur than others since the players improvise according to their characters, based on their understanding of the world in which these characters exist, and according to the rules and conventions of the larp. A normal family at a social realist larp are pretty unlikely to elevate themselves to godhood, a group of businessmen are probably not about to sit meditating for hours during an important trade meeting.

Specific predictions, such as "Mr. Moo will go to the toilet at 14:00" usually fail, but general predictions, such as "Mr. Moo will visit the toilet at some point during the larp, and will see the painting on the wall of the toilet" are usually accurate. Making precise predictions about the development of the larp is probably a matter of experience in larps and in understanding which developments are safe to predict and which are not. An experienced larpwright may easily foresee that allowing 40% of the players to play Visigoths hungry for plunder is bound to interfere with the activities of the 60% who play cardinals meeting in the Vatican.

Different players will usually interpret and play the same character in entirely different

ways, but the character's social role tends to stay the same with different players – the character of a judge can be relied on to give judgement, but may do so in many different ways. For the larpwright it is a fairly safe prediction that the combination of discovered crimes and the characters of a judge, a prosecutor and a defence lawyer will lead to a trial, but a shaky prediction how the trial will conclude. The experienced larpwright will avoid predicting the outcome of the trial, preferring to focus on the possibilities it opens – by planning an in-game prison, and by contemplating how an “innocent” verdict will affect the larp.

In other words, a central part of the larpwright's craft is predicting the outcome of the larpwright's decisions. This leads to “**intentional possibilities**”, possibilities and probabilities planned by the larpwright in order to establish specific attractors and events during the larp. Since they are planned and intended, these intentional possibilities exist prior to the larp being played. Unforeseen events may be improvised by the players, some intentional possibilities may be realized, others not. The intentional possibilities may include choices to be made by characters, conflicts with no clear outcomes, puzzles that may or may not be solved, courses of action that may seem obvious to the larpwright but not to the player. It is the summary of larpwright-held intentional possibilities I call “**the fabula**”.

The term “fabula” helps clarify what exactly it is that larpwrights do. They certainly do not author the thoughts or actions of characters, the way a movie director or writer would – while the larp is played, the characters are the domain of the player. What larpwrights author is not the actual larp, but the fabula. The dramatics of the larp situation are partly the result of players’ improvisations and interactions with this fabula.

The term “fabula” is derived from theatre theory, where it describes the underlying story of a play - the actual acting is called the “suzjett”. It is a concept pair similar to that of “story” and “discourse” in narratology. “Fabula” changes meaning when applied to larp since, as discussed in the next section, a larp cannot be said to have a single “underlying story”.<6>

The lack of an objective perspective

A larp cannot be observed, it can only be played. Passive observation is non-participation, and non-participation is not role-playing. Anyone who merely watches a larp, will see amateur ham actors engaged (for most of the time) in boring, humdrum activities. In an age saturated with media, where films with production values above the GNP of an average third-world country are instantly available in your living room, it is obvious that people do not larp to watch amateur actors perform humdrum activities. The experience of live role-playing lays only in the act of participation.

Analysing a larp as the summary of events externally observable thus makes little sense. A larp is experienced from the perspective of the single player, not even of “the players” (plural) but of a mass of single players, each with a set of unique experiences derived from the same larp. Markus Montola argues, and I agree, that even the “**diegesis**” - the

world which is true to the characters of a larp – does not exist in an objective sense but that each player interprets the events of the larp as a **subjective diegesis**. (Montola, 2003) Subjective diegeses differ from each other, but players strive to maintain the illusion that their characters are interacting in the same world. I use the term “**pre-diegesis**” for that single consistent diegesis that larpwrights author before a larp begins (typically evident in the textbase), and the term **diegetic situation** for the diegetic truths that players believe their role-playing signifies to each other during the role-playing of a larp. In the **larp situation** (the real world “visible interaction or non-interaction of players”, Jonsson, 2001), one player touches another with a grey rubber stick, while in the **diegetic situation** one character kills another with a sword. Being entirely the subject of individual interpretation, the diegetic situation is a *convenient illusion*, not an “objective” truth.

What all of this means is that the theories of narratology, of dramatology, of cinema studies are hard to apply to the study of the dramaturgy of live role-playing. Even basic terminology, like “story” and “discourse” change meaning when the “story” could not exist before the discourse, and the discourse is only observable to those who take part in it, while they take part in it.

“**Story**” remains a problematic term in discussions of live role-playing theory. There are both fierce critics (see Pohjola, 2000 and Pettersson, 2004) and fierce proponents (See Westlund, 2004 and Rognli, 2004) of the idea that larps can and should “tell stories”. Part of this disagreement stems from what, for the proponents and opponents, a “story” is and how, exactly, they can be told through live role-playing.

I use the word here in the meaning of “a chain of events where the whole chain in sequence yields a greater meaning than it's individual components”. Murder, discovery and punishment yield a greater meaning if all three occur, and occur in that sequence. Under this definition, stories can be “told” through larps by larpwrights authoring the events and their sequence using incentives such as fates, suggestions or simple linear puzzle webs. They can be “told” through larps by players desiring to follow a path of improvisation that is story-like. They are always told after the larp, as the narrative created by the player to interpret the role-playing (Stenros & Hakkarainen, 2003, mention the “narrative of self” in relation to role-playing roles). This is a broader definition of “story” than the one used by Edwards, 2003, and role-playing stories in my sense does not by definition imply narrativism or even dramatism.

Since talking about a played larp as an objective set of events makes little sense, it is equally nonsensical to talk of “the story of a larp”, singular. What we have is a number of players, who improvise according to their understanding of the textbase, who interact with each other and the diegesis following attractors – some established by the fabula, others improvised on the spot – and who ultimately interpret and narrate what happened as a story of what their character saw, felt and did. It is against this background that we need to see the use of incentives and other dramaturgical tools in larp – not as tools turning the role-playing into a grand story, but as tools providing reasons and methods to interact, an interaction which may or may not form stories.

Types of Incentives

Now, the beef.

An incentive is any method used by the larpwright before the larp has begun, in order to encourage specific events to occur during the larp. We can identify a number of different types of incentives: Writing two groups of characters that are at war with each other is an incentive (conflict), encouraging battles between these during the larp. Writing a timetable of daily tasks during the larp is an incentive (scheduling), encouraging these tasks to occur and to occur with a specific rhythm. Burying the five fragments of the One True Ring needed to save the world at different locations is an incentive (puzzle), encouraging a complicated treasure hunt under threat of oblivion (conflict). Ordering a character to fall in love with the woman who calls him “little man”, is another incentive (fate), initiating a story over which the character has no control. Incentives are usually combined into inter-dependent structures, what I call incentive “webs”, but previously called “plots”, “plot-lines”, “story-lines”, “fate-webs”, “intrigues” etc. depending on jargon and context. Combining incentives into webs is sometimes done by design, but may also be a necessity as far from all incentives are self-contained.

One of the most easily misunderstandable words in discussions of larp is the term “plot”. “Plot” means different things in different larp jargons, and something else entirely in common English and in narratology.<7> Whether “incentive” means the same as “plot” depends on which definition of “plot” you are talking about.

In terms of the threefold models (Kim, 1998 and Edwards, 2001), all incentives are neutral. They can be used to facilitate any creative agenda, although some incentives are biased in that they more easily facilitate a specific agenda. Fates were invented to facilitate dramatism, (Fatland, 1998), while puzzles and conflict may nudge players towards gamism. But one can easily imagine a game-oriented larp where fates are used to initiate challenge, or a simulation-oriented larp where competition in solving the existing puzzles is important only to the characters, not the players.

Conflict

Nearly all larp dramaturgies establish some form of conflict between characters in order to encourage specific attractors in the diegetic situation. One of the simplest larp dramaturgies available is to divide the characters into two mutually hostile factions, and let the larp be about them fighting it out: Orcs hate humans, and humans hate orcs. Or Iran hates America and America hates Iran, and the larp is set in the UN security council.

An axiom of theatre theory is that every play has one or more conflicts at its core, which is resolved during the progress of the play; an axiom unchallenged even in the face of “absurd theatre” where a conflict is found between the actors and the audience. In this fairly abstract sense, we can identify conflicts on many different levels of a larp, but when talking of the use of conflicts as an incentive, I will use the word to refer to any

obvious conflict of interest or intent placed in the textbase by the larpwright.

While live role-playing traditionally, especially in the Anglo-American world, has focused on violent conflict, occasionally to the point where “LARP” has become a martial art in fantasy costume, a conflict incentive is more often resolved in non-violent ways, adding to the depth and complexity of the larp. Diplomatic conflicts may be resolved through negotiations, both in public and in the back room, unless “extending policy by other means” becomes necessary. Internal conflicts, inside a group such as a family or a political faction, can be resolved through emotional appeals, ideological discussion, and arbitration. Characters can be written with inner conflicts in mind, tearing the character between different courses of actions – enhancing the character interpretation, and perhaps involving other characters in what was initially a personal dilemma.

Likewise, conflicts need not be large battles between hostile factions – they can also be applied on a small scale. A violent conflict may be a war of civilizations, or a wife beating her husband. A diplomatic conflict may be about succession to the throne, or about what to eat for dinner. An inner conflict may be about murdering the heir to the throne or accepting defeat, about whether to speak out ones love for a particular person, or whether to wear the brown or the red coat. Conflicts may invoke huge, complex questions of morality, philosophy and human nature or be fairly straight-forward.

While some form of conflict incentive seems almost indispensable to larp dramaturgy, American author Ursula LeGuin has a different take on the issue:

“Modernist manuals of writing often conflate story with conflict. This reductionism reflects a culture that inflates aggression and competition while cultivating ignorance of other behavioral options. No narrative of any complexity can be built on or reduced to a single element. Conflict is one kind of behavior. There are others, equally important in any human life, such as relating, finding, losing, bearing, discovering, parting, changing.”

(LeGuin, 1998)

In my experience, which can be corroborated by taking a glance at web fora where players describe and discuss the larps they have been playing<8>, non-competitive behaviour often forms key elements of players experience: the death and mourning of an old friend, the birth of a child, the sharing of stories, falling in love, the sight of forest spirits dancing in the morning mist.

I can think of no examples of larps that have been authored and played entirely in this way, though “Mellan Himmel och Hav” (Wieslander et al, 2003) allegedly came close, but it is not hard to imagine a larp where characters are involved not in conflict but in relating, finding, losing, bearing, discovering, parting, changing.

A common dramaturgical tool is for larpwrights to instruct players on the relationships between their characters, both according to affiliation (membership in groups, families

etc.) and to emotional bonds or antipathies – the sum of these forming the “relationship map”. (Freitag, 2002). On the surface, this method could be seen as supporting a “LeGuinian” dramaturgy. However, relationships, when used to encourage events, often imply conflict. A relationship of mutual love is not always an incentive, it may encourage some role-playing between the two lovers but no specific courses of action. Love becomes an incentive when the parents of the young lovers refuse to acknowledge their relationship, and we once again speak of conflict.

Establishing conflict

Since incentives by definition are established in the textbase, it follows that conflicts are created by authoring the larp's characters, published materials, and other information given to the players before the larp begins. Aside from the obvious “You don't like Jim”, the textbase can be manipulated in many different ways to encourage conflict. A common and clear-cut method, **objectives**, give players clear goals in their character descriptions, as in: “your over-riding goal is to kill the king” or “your goal is to gain the acceptance of Maria's parents to marry her”.

A danger of objectives is that they usually are fairly integrative, leaving the players in an either/or situation when the attractor established by the objective fails to seem plausible, achievable or desirable. If the king turns out to be a good and capable ruler, the player may question why her character would wish to kill him, what the purpose of the objective was and whether regicide will contribute to her desired larp experience. **Motivations**, on the other hand, give players more depth and more alternatives than objectives, as they state the reasons a character might have to achieve any specific objective, for example “you are deeply unhappy with having others in control of your destiny. If you could somehow take the place of your despotic older brother, the King, you believe that happiness would be within reach.”

One of the more subtle methods of authoring conflict is the creation of **natural conflict** by introducing two entities (characters or groups of characters) who are bound to come at odds with each other even though there is no explicit statement that they shall. The natural conflict may simply be an issue of setting up mutually exclusive objectives, such as with a larp where the pioneers who are out to settle new land meet the American Indians who already live there. Or it may be constructed by supplying factions with different world-views and ideologies, as with a larp featuring missionaries from two different imaginary religions: one seeking salvation in the afterlife and rejecting all worldly concerns, and the other teaching that the afterlife is of no concern and the gods are here to help us while we live.

In larps where characters are written as narratives of their past life (**back story**), conflicts may be initiated by authoring events in that story which are left unresolved at the beginning of the larp, as in the following cliché: “The Abasians murdered your entire village and you fled, but you remember the face of their leader, you know he will be at the market, and you're hungry for revenge.” Alternately, conflicts may be established in

the back stories of groups (“Your pal Frodo has this magic ring, but there are some nasty folks who want to take it”) or the entire larp; “Three thousand years ago, Sauron was defeated, but unfortunately his defeat was not final and these days he is again gathering vile creatures to his fortress”.

By using other incentives, a conflict may be concealed in the textbase only to appear during actual play. **Triggered conflicts** do not provide initial reason for the hostility, but enter play when a trigger occurs. Triggering can for example be done through a fate - “on the second day, you shall declare war against the Abasians” - or a puzzle: “if Bob manages to combine the clues leading to his fathers Last Will, it will be clear that his fathers murderer was in fact his loving mother”.

inner, internal and external conflicts

Conflicts need not be between different characters or factions, but may as well be inside these or against foes that are not present in the larp situation. The **inner conflict**, a common device of storytelling, is one where a character faces a choice but does not know how to resolve this choice. Asking advice, thinking it through and rethinking it as events unfold will be a way to resolve the question.

Inner conflicts may be fairly straightforward, pitting two options against each other, as with “Your parents want you to marry Peter, a decent chap, but you love Andrew. You can’t make up your mind on whether to follow your parents or your heart.” Or they may also involve larger questions of morality and ethics : “You believe in doing what is necessary and good. But on the other hand, you hope most problems can be solved with diplomacy and understood over time. You don’t want to be a hero, but face a moral obligation to act as one.”

Internal conflicts can be seen as inner conflicts on a group level, where various factions of a group will disagree, and there will be no obvious way to resolve that disagreement. A larp where the characters are divided into conflicting factions can become even more complex when members of these factions disagree on how to confront the other factions. For example: “The Knights have begun persecuting the witches, but the witches’ council is divided. Of nine members, four say we should flee, four say we should abandon our pacifism and fight and one says we should do neither but stand our ground and be martyred.”

Conflicts may also be set against a foe that is not present at the larp – as in a larp set amongst European diplomats discussing how to confront the American drive towards war in Iraq. Even though the foe is not present, the pressure of preparing for confrontation may lead to role-playing as if it was.

“Lids” - prolonging conflict

The usefulness of conflicts as incentives is tied to how much actual role-playing they

generate. A conflict involving two duelling cowboys is not particularly interesting if they kill each other off at the beginning of the larp. Especially if a narrativist creative agenda is pursued, where it may be desirable to gradually build tension and provide an illusion of a “story arc”, conflicts work the best if they can be made to last for a while. Similarly, diplomatic conflicts usually require a reason to remain diplomatic and for the tension of unresolved differences to be preserved.

“Lids” are methods used to prevent premature resolutions of conflicts, or to prevent unsatisfactory resolutions. A number of different methods may be used to put lids on conflict, including:

Ruling out some possible resolutions: if a member of Council kills another member, the murderer will be executed by the magistrates guard.

Direct instructions: “In no circumstance will any of the characters consider going for a peaceful solution”

Scheduling: The negotiations are set to last for four days. On the last day, not before, will be discussed the one topic the factions cannot possibly agree upon.

Setting a deadline: The wedding will be held on Saturday, the decision must be reached by then and can be changed at any time before the wedding.

Limiting the area: As magic is forbidden, and the Magistrates spies are everywhere, the ritual to silence the magistrate can only be held somewhere it is neither seen, nor heard and therefore can't be interrupted.

Several of these examples rely on the use of other incentives to construct the lid, forming webs of incentives. More on those later.

Triggers

Conflicts are often fairly simple incentives to deal with – they establish an interesting situation, usually with the onset of the larp, and occasionally put a lid on it to keep it interesting. Players are left with a large degree of freedom to follow and switch between the attractors established by conflicts – the fog of larp is thick, but unproblematic. The fabula becomes more complex if the larpwright intends to reveal new attractors at later points of the larp, as is the case with most of the incentives discussed below.

When dealing with predictions and developments over time, the question of causality becomes an important one: which effects will be caused by the events established in the fabula? How can it be ensured that a certain event will produce the desired effect? One way to control causality is by using triggers, “if-then” situations embedded in the fabula: if a certain thing happens, then another thing will also happen. The concept of “triggers” may seem both a bit abstract and painfully obvious, but since they are integral to several other incentives (puzzles, fates and suggestions especially) , they are worth a closer scrutiny.

Triggers can be discerned and established in many different ways. One is by direct instruction: If Event X occurs, then character Y must do Z. (“If your wife divorces you, you will kidnap the children.”) Another is by planning outside intervention in the event of a condition being fulfilled: If character X achieves objective Y, then the organisers will stage event Z. (If Arthur pulls the sword out of the stone, Merlin will appear to proclaim him King). Triggers may be features of the underlying logic of a fabula : if the King dies, the struggle of succession will naturally begin, and so we may view the event of the King's death as a trigger for the struggle of succession.

All triggers can be broken down into conditions, effectors and connectors. The event that sets the trigger in motion is the “condition”, the outcome is called an “effector” and the way the trigger activates the effector is called a “connector”.<9>

To illustrate, we’ll break down the previous example:

Condition: Character X achieves objective Y

Connector: The larpwright reacts

Effector: Event Z occurs

Condition: Arthur pulls the sword out of the stone.

Connector: An organiser observes the sword-pulling feat and orders Merlin to enter the game.

Effector: Merlin proclaims Arthur to be king.

Studying triggers in terms of their conditions, connectors and effectors are a useful way to “debug” an incentive web. Triggers can be analysed by looking at how likely their conditions are to be reached, which demands the connectors put on organisers, the likelihood of a connector actually producing the desired effector, and how an effector will further influence the larp.

Connectors can be “direct”, i.e. they require no outside intervention to work, or “invoking”, calling the attention to an outside influence (typically an organiser) to cause the effector.

A direct connector: “If Agrod has the three keys, he may enter the treasure chamber” - Three keys are needed to open the door to the treasure chamber. The chamber has actual locks, and the keys actually fit in these.

An invoking connector: “If the five elfstones are gathered at the holy place, the Green God will appear”. The organisers need to know this is being done, and send in the green god NPC.

Especially connectors can be the troublesome links in an incentive web. In the case of direct connectors, the larpwright will need to examine whether they actually will causally produce the desired effector or not. In the case of invoking connectors, it is necessary to

examine which organizational burdens they imply: having lots of invoking connectors at a larger larp is usually an excellent way to produce overworked organizers and a dysfunctional dramaturgy.

Dramatic, temporal and spatial triggers

Triggers may be broadly divided into categories according to the nature of their condition; “dramatic triggers”, “temporal triggers” and “spatial triggers”. These terms were originally invented as part of the terminology of fate-play (Wingård, 1998), but are easily applicable to other incentives as well.

“Dramatic triggers” have conditions that are events played out. Dramatic triggers are by far the most common form of triggers.

Examples: If the pope dies, the cardinals must convene to elect a new pope.

If the five elf-stones are gathered on the sacred hill, the Dark One will be defeated.

Temporal triggers have a specific time as their condition.

At 11 PM John will turn into a werewolf. At 6 AM he will resume his human form.

On the morning of the third day, the Shiites will rebel against the Sunnis.

Spatial triggers have some event occurring at a specific location as their condition.

If someone enters the graveyard, the ghosts will appear.

If someone enters the underworld, they cannot return to the world of the living.

These different types of triggers affect role-playing in different ways. Temporal triggers may act integrative, perhaps even over-integrative, by establishing new situations no matter which situation preceded it. Spatial triggers may add an element of discovery to the larp experience. Dramatic triggers can be used to establish story, by ensuring that events occur in the desired sequence.

Puzzles

When the conditions of triggers become sufficiently complex, they represent a distinct source of challenge to the players/characters, and it makes sense to talk of them as “puzzles”, a separate type of incentive. In addition to having complex conditions, puzzles differ from fates and suggestions in that puzzles require investigative effort on the part of the characters to solve, and in that they may be left unsolved.

Examples: If all the clues surrounding the death of Sir Edward are put together, it will be apparent that the Butler was the murderer.

If the three fragments of the Necronomicon are assembled, the spell for dispelling Cthulhu may be read.

Larp puzzles are similar to the puzzles of adventure computer games: they both require investigative effort, problem-solving, and the gathering of objects (items or clues) for resolution. Where this similarity comes from is a bit of a chicken and egg problem: both larps and adventure games trace their genealogy back to “Dungeons & Dragons” and it is hard to say whether D&D first inspired computer adventures or computer adventures was a significant source of influence on the evolution of D&D. Both may be true.

We can discern at least two major types of puzzles used in larp - those that concern items, and those that concern information. The classic murder mystery is an information puzzle, the Lord of the Rings has an item puzzle at its core.

Item puzzles require a certain combination of physical objects for it's conditions to be fulfilled, for example the One Ring, Mount Doom and the person Gollum in order to destroy Sauron or the three keys in order to open the safe of Madame deRiche. Solving item puzzles (called “Widget Hunts” in the U.S., see Young, 2004) is thus mostly about gathering stuff and taking it to places.

Information puzzles require the understanding of a certain combination of facts in order to gain an over-riding insight. For example, if the detective finds out that the butler was underpaid by Madame deRiche, that he was the sole heir in her secret testament, that he did not have an alibi and that he spent his childhood as a throat-slitting hit-man in the slums of Calcutta it will be pretty obvious that the Butler was the Murderer.

Puzzles can be analysed and constructed in terms of the triggers they're composed of. For example, the “Lord of the Rings” puzzle contains a spatial trigger (mount doom), a temporal trigger (during the final battle, when Sauron is occupied elsewhere) and a dramatic trigger (Gollum grabbing the ring and falling off the cliff).

Instructions

Conflicts, triggered events and puzzles all give larpwrights some measure of control over the larp. They are also prone to the abilities and free will of the players, making their outcome rather difficult to predict. If there is a conflict – who will win it? If there is a puzzle, will it be solved, and will the players even care? Instructions are a group of incentives (meta-instructions, fates and suggestions) that give larpwrights a greater deal of control over the larp, especially it's chronology. This group can be sub-divided according to how voluntary or interpretable the instructions are – with fates at the absolute end of the scale, suggestions at the voluntary end, and a fuzzy are in between.

Meta-instructions are a form of instruction that borders on what can be considered an “incentive”, since the place responsibilities for the overall larp that go beyond what a normal player has. Unlike fates and suggestions, meta-instructions clearly have a non-diegetic purpose.

Example: The player of Judge Whitey is instructed not to allow the case of Josef K to be brought before the court until the second day of the larp. There is no diegetic reason for this delay, and the player will be forced to invent in-game excuses, but the larpwright has deemed that bringing the case up earlier will take focus away from the larp's opening scene.

Just as with puzzles, instructions rely on triggers to gain their effect. The difference is that instructions - in theory - should not pose any challenge for their conditions to be reached. While a puzzle might require forcing the truth out of the butler for the detective to solve the murder, an instruction could tell the butler to confess his sins.

Instructions are often associated with dramatist play. A dramatist player may be happy to carry out parts of the story, even or especially if it comes as an order, while a simulationist player may see the instruction as a violation of her character interpretation and a player pursuing a gamist creative agenda may see it as a hindrance to achieving the objective.

There are exceptions. For example, an instruction may create part of the challenge to achieve the objective, satisfying gamist priorities. Instructions may also be used to force natural events that do not occur naturally in the unnatural circumstances of a larp. For example, the King's player may be instructed that the King will die of a stroke on the larp's second day, triggering the contest for succession.

Fates

Fates are absolute instructions given as part of the character text. They are, by definition, unavoidable although human error or the fog of larp might make it impossible to carry them out. (see Fatland & Wingård, 1998)

Fates differ from meta-instructions in two important aspects. First of all, they may allow for surprise - the exact design of the fabula will only be revealed when the fate is acted out, it need not be discernible from the written instruction. Secondly, fates may be dealt with as diegetic truths - as the threads woven by the Moirai or Nornir, as the will of God or as the unavoidable determinism of nature.

Example: Orfeus' fate is to marry his true love Eurydice, to travel to Hades on the second day of the larp and beg for the return of someone who died recently, and to look back right before leaving Hades. Eurydice's fate is to die on the marriage night. Hades' fate is to let Orfeus have Eurydice only on the condition that he leave the land of the dead and not look back until he is outside.

A "fate" was originally the list of instructions given to the player. The term has drifted so that a "fate" today refers a single instruction. See Fatland, 2000 and Wingård, 1998 for more on fate-play.

Suggestions

The Oslo-based troupe Amaranth pioneered with "Dance Macabre" (Solberg and Bardal, 2000) their own version of instructions, under the name of "hendelsesforløp" (roughly: "sequence of events"), an incentive which I here will refer to as "suggestions".

Suggestions are a less rigid version of the fateplay technique. A fate is something you (the player) have to do, or something you (the character) inevitably will end up doing no matter how much you resist. Suggestions are often written like fates, and may be combined by triggers into webs, but encourages a player to follow a specific suggestion only if it suits the player at the given time. A larp using suggestions may deviate quite a lot from the fabula, while the suggestions serve as an inspiration to players and as a “safety net” for players to follow if the larp situation does not develop interesting dramatics by itself.

Suggestions are usually more dissipative than fates, they allow the larp's development to be recursive, and as such encourage a more chaotic larp with a greater freedom for players to improvise and choose attractors. On the other hand, suggestions can be harder for players to handle since it is not always known how central a suggestion is to the fabula, and whether other players are expecting you to carry out the suggestion since it forms as a dramatic trigger for their own suggestions.

Fate-Suggestion combinations

While fates often mix badly with puzzles and conflicts, they mix quite easily with suggestions. In a fate-suggestion combination, the most important events of a story may be secured by fates whereas lesser stories and non-critical details may be written as instructions. This combination is perhaps best described through examples:

William Anderson is a wealthy businessman, married to the neurotic Barbara, and father to Carl, an unruly anarchist of 19. It is fated that William will expel his son from the family towards the end of the larp. Before this, it is suggested that Carl smokes pot in his father's presence, that William tries to pressure Carl to attend business school, that Barbara reveals her plans for divorce to Carl – telling him about the many sins of William. The father-son conflict is the central theme of the story, and the breach is inevitable. The apple has simply fallen too far from the trunk. Suggestions provide several possible extra reasons for the breach, but these are not necessary and the players may choose other quarrels to build for the break. Suggestions also may bring the mother into the conflict, add a divorce to the story, and explore an unusual mother-son alliance.

In a story with a “Romeo and Juliet” theme; the Mavrocordato and the Sokollu families are fierce competitors for the attention, positions and gifts of the Ottoman Sultan. One family being Greek and orthodox, the other being originally Serb now Muslim, they have no love for each other. A Mavrocordato son is fated to fall in love with a Sokollu daughter at the beginning of the larp. Their parents are fated to despise any affair between the children, and certainly marriage. The rest of the story is described in suggestions, no matter if and how the children declare their love – the central theme remains intact.

Tasks and Scheduling

Tasks and scheduling are two kinds of incentives, reminiscent of instructions, but that

double as being purely diegetic information. A task is the job of a character or group, as defined from the onset of the larp: “The bakers produce bread”, “The watchmen defend the village”, “The Circassian army is under orders to pacify the village and root out resistance fighters hiding in it”. The concept of a task may overlap with objectives (see “conflict”, above).

Schedules set up daily rhythms and/or schedules for specific events during the larp. Two examples of schedules:

Farmers always get up at sunrise, and go to bed at sunset. After awakening, a family breakfast is enjoyed. The elderly, the young and women with child-raising responsibilities stay at the farm and care for the children, while other healthy adults go out to work the rice fields. When the sun is at its highest point, the farmers return and a communal lunch is enjoyed. The afternoon may be used for work, or for trade and visiting neighbours. Dinner, eaten when sunset approaches, is communal and often enjoyed with visitors from a neighbouring farm.

The Synode will begin with a meeting between clergy on the night of the first day. Drink is enjoyed, and theological points not discussed, but it is expected that factions begin organizing themselves during the night. The first debate is held on day 2, on the topic of whether Christ was of a human or a divine nature, and shall last 4 hours, chaired by the Patriarch of Constantinople. The second debate is held on day 3, chaired by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, on the topic of how many angels may fit on the head of a pin. This, too, shall last four hours. The third day is reserved for meditation, and at the fourth day the grand assembly, chaired by the Patriarch of Rome, shall reach consensus on the theological questions. Meals (at sunrise and sundown) are communal, involve much drinking of wine and no discussing of theology. The rest of the time, reserved for “meditation” will probably be used to socialize and attempt to convert fellow priests and bishops to ones own position.

Incentive webs

As may be discerned from the examples earlier in this article, incentives are rarely used alone. They may often require other incentives to yield meaning, and one incentive may trigger another. The term “incentive web” is borrowed from “fate-web” in the terminology of fate-play (see Wingård, 1998), and denotes any such inter-connected group of incentives.

If all incentives are connected, then the larp has a single incentive web, but it is more common for larps to have several unrelated webs – say a web of internal issues for each group, a “master web” involving all factions, minor webs involving characters from different groups etc. The bigger and more all-encompassing a web gets, the harder it is to predict and huge, inter-connected webs are notoriously difficult to manage – two good reasons why larpwrights often divide a larp into smaller, self-contained webs. On the other hand, separate webs that develop independently may establish attractors that conflict with each other and the overall dramaturgy of the larp. If a master web establishes a situation of warfare during the larp, the minor webs dealing with the grudges of family members may lose a lot of meaning.

Open, Closed and Wild incentives

Central to how incentive webs function is the degree of openness in their component incentives. Any incentive can be designed as an “open”, “closed” or “wild” incentive, depending on how much it allows for players’ interpretation and how many options it provides for different outcomes.

Closed incentives allow only for a single, or a finite set, of improvisation options. A fate is typically a closed incentive, but so is a puzzle which allows for only one outcome when being solved (the finite options are “solve it” or “not solve it”) and an objective (“you are consumed by a raging, all-pervading passion to murder John F. Kennedy”) that can only be achieved or not, never re-interpreted.

Open incentives, on the other hand, allow for a high degree of interpretation and variety in their accomplishment or non-accomplishment. A task such as “pacify the village” may be solved in multiple ways and lead to many different outcomes for all parties. A task such as “kill the villagers” allows only one solution and two possibilities : victory and defeat. It can be turned into a web of open incentives by including traitors in the village, and moral doubts as inner and internal conflicts amongst the soldiers.

A third class, **wild incentives**, allow for an even greater degree of freedom than open incentives. Wild incentives encourage players to re-interpret and re-define the frame of meaning wherein the incentive is used. That includes making alterations to the interpretation of normally “rock solid” premises of improvisation such as past diegetic events, the nature of a character, and the interaction code. A fate that when played unexpectedly turns a tragedy into a comedy (“an hour after your death, you shall arise from the dead and declare 'it was only a flesh wound!'”) is an example of a “wild” incentive.

The incentive web of the bohemians at Norwegian larp “Baghdad Express” forms a good illustration of wild incentives: a close friend of the bohemians had died, and each single bohemian was convinced that he or she was in fact the murderer. There was no “true explanation” available in the larp. As the incentive entered play, this left characters free to decide whether they were deluded and the first one to confess was the actual murderer, whether there had been an outside conspiracy to make them each feel guilt, or whether there had actually been a murder at all etc.

While most incentives gravitate towards one degree of openness, there are exceptions to nearly every rule. A suggestion that “on day two, you shall propose a toast to the health of your father” is closed. A Suggestion that “on day two, you shall propose a toast” is more open. A suggestion that “on day two, you shall fall in love with one whom you hate” borders on wild.

In terms of the chaos model, closed incentives generally act integrative while open and wild incentives generally are different degrees of dissipative. I write “generally”, because there are exceptions when you look at how incentives behave in context. For example Susanne Gräslund notes how fates may, from the players point of view, act dissipative:

“Many players tend to get stuck in a certain kind of character and in a common pattern of action. Fateplay is a way for the organiser to direct the players and thus both break their habits and make the game more unpredictable. A cautious player can get a little bit braver and an often too dominant player could be made to act more low-key. “

(Gräslund, 2001)

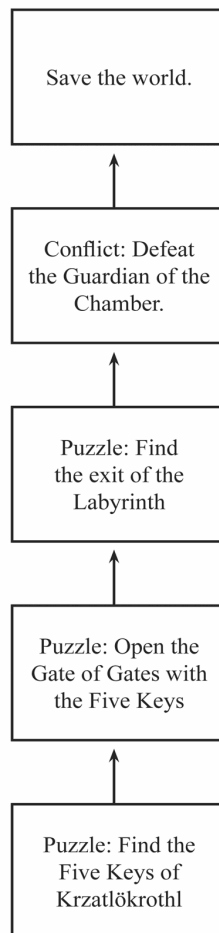


Fig. 1 : Linear Incentive Web

Web Structures

In his classic essay “plotteori” (Eidsem, 1992), Erlend Eidsem proposes a view of three kinds of incentive webs (“plot structures”) - linear, branching and non-linear. This distinction remains useful, as it shows how incentive webs may (and often are) organized. It also helps us analyze an incentive web in terms of the chaos model.

Linear web structures (see fig. 1) require conditions to be reached in sequence, only when one condition is fulfilled may the next one be attempted. Thus, the players may only explore this track of the fabula to the extent that the required incentives are carried

out. This is the typical structure of typical fate-webs, but also describes one kind of puzzle-based web.

Example: To get the Porpentine Amulet that will save the world, our heroes must first obtain the Five Keys of Krzatlö Krothl, then use these to open the Gate of Gates, then find the path through the Labyrinth, and finally defeat the Guardian of the Chamber of the Porpentine.

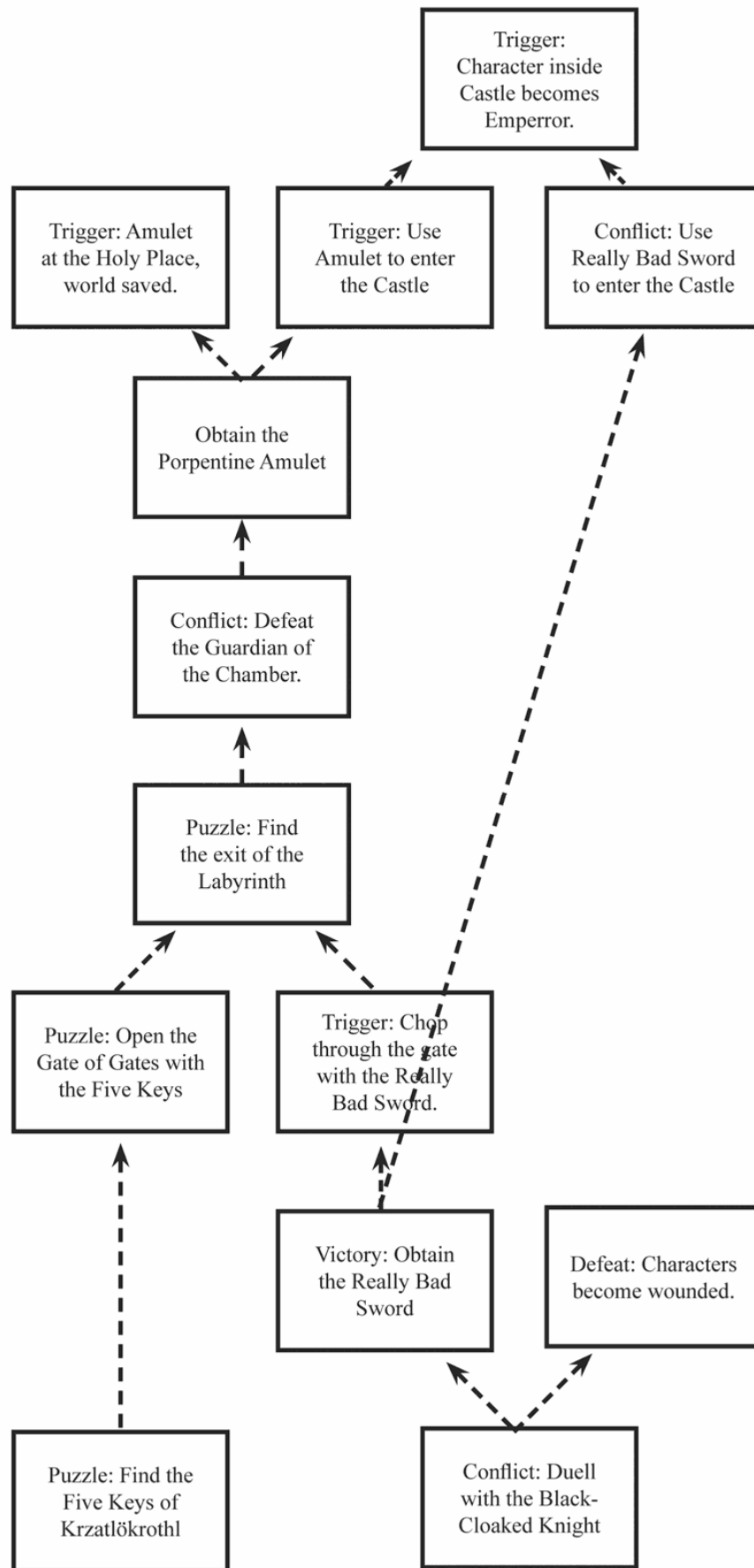


Fig. 2 : Branching Incentive Web

Branching web structures (see fig.2) are similar to linear web structures, except that they allow for different lines to branch out depending on whether a condition was reached or not, or on whether a specific choice was made. Branching structures may also mean that there are several paths leading to a single goal.

Examples: The players may obtain the Porpentine Amulet. If they do so, they may go to the Holy Place to save the world, or they may go to the Castle to become emperors. If they choose instead to obtain the Really Bad Sword, they may conquer the Castle or go to Mount Destiny and lob the sword in, thereby destroying the world. Or, if they don't have the Five Keys, but they have the Really Bad Sword, they use the Sword to cut open the Gate of Gates and grab the Porpentine Amulet.

“Non-linear” see fig.3 is a catch-all phrase for puzzle structures that are, well, non-linear - where one may jump from incentive to incentive in no particular order. A web of purely open or wild incentives would often be a non-linear web. Another example is the “marble structure” (proposed by Eidsem, 1992) that requires a certain amount of items or clues to be collected to trigger an event, but not necessarily in any specific order and not necessarily all available clues. Thus, if 4 out of the 10 clues left in the larp regarding the murder of Lady Poshbridge are collected, the murder will be solved, but which four and in what order they are collected is irrelevant. Wild incentives could be added to a non-linear web – for example by setting it up so that who is revealed as the murderer will depend on which 4 out of the ten clues that are collected. Different combinations of clues will yield different murderers.

If incentives are not connected to each other thematically or by using triggers, we may speak of a **“non-connected”** web (actually, not a web at all). Establishing some conflicts, and only conflicts, would be an example of a non-connected web, as would a web where the solving of puzzles do not lead to any other puzzles.

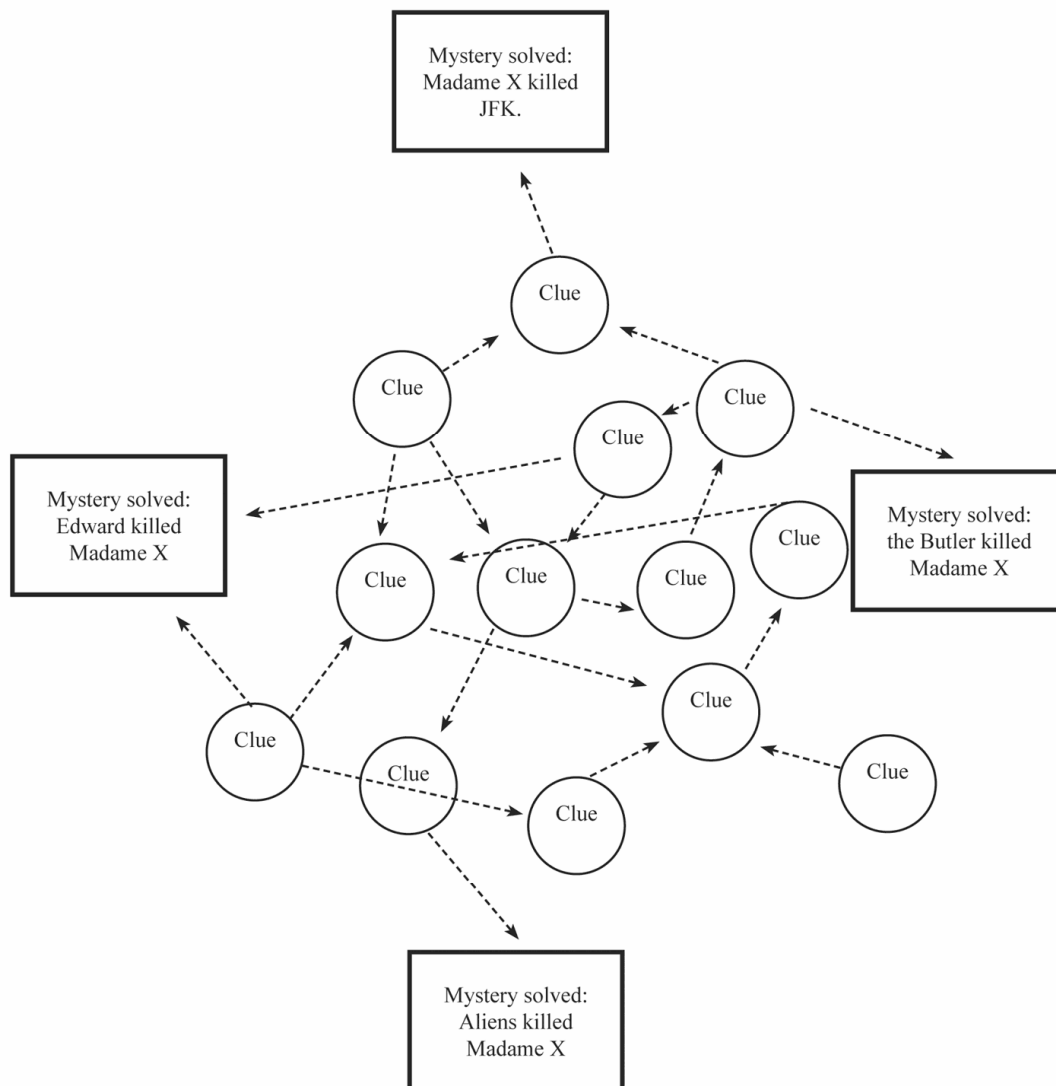


Fig. 3 : Non-Linear Incentive Web

Using incentive webs

Incentive webs are easiest to organise, in theory, when they use closed incentives only. But in actual play, closed webs can be the most problematic structure, where the non-achievement of a single incentive may halt the progress of the drama or put players in a conflict between following the logic of the fabula or the logic of their character and the diegetic situation. Closed incentive webs, when they fail, can greatly thicken the fog of unpredictability, not always in a positive way. That is not to say that closed incentive

webs are by definition dysfunctional or “bad”, only that they require a great deal of care to function.

Pure fate-plays commonly use closed incentives in linear webs. Of the many larps using this structure that have been attempted, only some (“Moirais Vev”, “Knappnålshuvudet”) have been successful. Others (“Much Ado About Nothing” and “Afasias Barn”, to mention a couple) have failed according to their larpwrights and players both. (see Pohjola, 2005 and Wingård, 1998) The successful examples, on the other hand, have become larp legends.

Larps using open incentives, especially if they are structured as branching or non-linear webs, are far easier to deal with. If the larpwright has failed in predicting a specific development or the failure of players to solve a puzzle, player improvisation will easily enter to fill the gaps. The non-connected web is perhaps the easiest structure to deal with, but also the one that provides the fewest opportunities for larpwright influence on the larp situation. With a non-connected web, chronology becomes impossible, and establishing story-like attractors using incentives equally impossible.

The use of wild incentives, on the other hand, may thicken the fog of larp so much that the role-playing loses all coherence. Players will have all the freedom in the world to fill in the gaps in the fabula, but when doing so they risk making even bigger holes in the consistency of the diegesis – the gulf between their subjective diegeses becomes so wide that the illusion of a single diegesis is lost.

Not many larps have used wild incentives, however, and some experimentation may well end up proving the previous paragraph wrong.

In closing

External influences

A number of factors which are not, technically, incentives have a strong impact on how incentives are played out. The limited scope of this article does not allow the discussion these deserve, but it should be clear that incentives are not autonomous structures, and that how they affect actual play depends greatly on the following external factors:

- The character spread. Which characters are present, and which players play them. There is a large difference between the larp with 100 starving, angry, peasants and 5 oppressive nobles and the one with 40 starving, angry peasants, 5 nobles, and their 30-strong oppressive guards. Or maybe not, if the guards of the latter larp are played by 12 year old kids and the peasants are adults in their thirties and forties.
- Relationship maps – what are the initial relationships between characters? A number of larps rely on relationship maps and only relationship maps in building their dramaturgy. Such maps may or may not construct conflict incentives. (see Freitag,

2002)

- The nature and values of characters. Different people handle the same situations differently.
- The players (obviously). Different people interpret the same characters differently.
- Interaction Codes – genre conventions, cultural conventions and thematic implications. Which course of action seems the most appropriate according to the interaction code?
- Space. A player will walk five minutes, but not five hours, to follow a promising lead. Which conversations are overheard? Which opportunities do the scenography offer for interaction?
- Ability. Which character has the greater chance of exerting her will in a given situation? Who will win a fight, be able to command the loyalty of others, win a debate? This is a question determined by players, their characters, their interpretation of characters and/or game mechanics – depending on the larp and the style of live role-playing.
- Creative agenda (GDS or GNS). Which non-character criteria are players pursuing during play? (see Edwards, 2001)
- A butterfly flapping its wings in Inner Mongolia.

Alternatives to the incentive-based fabula

Not all larps use incentives to construct the fabula. There are at least two notable alternatives to the use of incentives – one is to simply avoid incentives, relying on fundamentals like the society and relationships between the characters to provide a fabula. Pre-diegesis, characters and relationships remain the most powerful tools of larpwriting, adding incentives to the mix may bring in more complexity but also (which too often is the case) destroy the excellent possibilities that players improvise themselves.

The other alternative is what O.P. Giæver (Giæver, 2003) calls “Event-machines” (“handlingsmakin”), a structure embedded in the larp or larp society that generates possibilities of interaction without tying them to characters or groups. An example of an event machine is the dramaturgy of PanoptiCorp (Tanke et al, 2003): the constant appearance of customers (short time characters), or messages (by mail) from customers, kept the employees of the corrupt ad agency PanoptiCorp busy working. Added to the structure of the company, which determined leadership and distributed jobs and money through formal popularity contests, the characters were kept quite busy interacting, working and partying.

An event machine usually forms a very strong attractor, or a number of very strong attractors, without removing the chaotic nature of a larp. Players are in theory free to pick a different attractor, but the event machine tends to call attention back towards itself and may contain corrective measures for characters that stray off the path, as a PanoptiCorp character who didn't bother to attend business meetings would quickly discover.

Acknowledgements

This text has evolved over a period of five years, from an initial draft for a “larp organizing how-to” into a 100-page book covering every aspect of larp and dramaturgy, which was then cut up and pasted back into smaller articles, of which this article is one.

Larp dramaturgy is not an easy thing to capture in an article, as every part is connected to every other part of the larp medium and a full understanding of larp dramaturgy would require us to have a full understanding of every possible aspect and variety of live role-playing. It was this realization that prompted the original article to grow into a book, and it was the realization that one man cannot cover all aspects of larp alone – proven by the 2003 and 2004 Knutepunkt anthologies – that reduced it back into article format.

During this process of expanding and contracting, writing and re-writing, some things became painfully obvious:

- Fate-play is not, as I claimed in 1997, a radically new approach to larping but a tweak, a minor innovation that is reliant on the same structures as traditional larp dramaturgy: triggers and webs.
- “Plot” in most Nordic jargons is the same as what I call “puzzle”. They are structurally so similar to their brethren in computer games, that they provide easy proof for the “Larps are games!” camp, with whom I otherwise strongly disagree.
- Some of the most interesting larp experiments these days do not use any of the incentives mentioned.

There is still a lot left unwritten. The list of incentives presented here is by no means exhaustive, a couple of the methods mentioned have been invented within the past five years. This article answers a lot of “whats” but few “hows” and almost no “whys”. With a growing arsenal of tools available, why should larpwrights use a particular tool, and how is it used most effectively? And perhaps more importantly, how can we understand and encourage larp experiences in terms of drama, narrative and meaning? Some of these questions are in essence questions not of craft but of art, inspiration, expression.

I would like to express my gratitude to Lars Wingård, Mike Pohjola, J. Tuomas Harviainen and especially Markus Montola – who read through and commented on this work at different stages of it's (de-)composition. Without their constructive criticism and encouragement, this work would have spent the rest of it's life with spam e-mails and old to-do lists, gathering digital dust on an obscure hard disk sector.

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<1> It would have great value as an experiment if someone actually did organize such larps to test this hypothesis.

<2> My use of "dramaturgy" in English is a translation of the Norwegian term "dramaturgi". According to Gronemeyer, 1996 - "dramaturgi" is the "inner and outer structure of a play". See Hetland, 1997 for an example of "dramaturgi" in relation to larp. The English term "dramaturgy" may be used in this sense, and may have a meaning as wide as the "art of authoring theatrical drama" but more often refers specifically to the process of adapting a text for the stage.

<3> By "the larpwright" in this text I mean "the institution which holds defining power over the pre-diegesis and the fabula of a larp." It is not necessarily a single person. In fact, it is more often a team of people. The institution can even be a method whereby players democratically agree on these things. But for simplicity's sake, we'll pretend it's a single person, and in situations where I refer to actual people, such as in "experienced larpwrights": I mean a person performing the duties of the larpwright institution.

<4> I am aware of the fact that the Visigoths pre-date the cardinal system by a few centuries. The fictive larpwrights of this imaginary larp, however, are not.

<5> "On the scale from dissipative to integrative, taboo breaking techniques (overruling player actions, fate-play, rewriting diegetic history) can be considered over-integrative. They integrate the game, but as they remove interaction, dynamism or recursivity, they also change the core of role-playing essentially." (Montola, 2004)

<6> Coincidentally, "the Fabula" is also the name of a book that creates the world out of itself in Tomas Mørkrids role-playing game of the same name (Mørkrid, 1999), an excellent metaphor for the nature of a larp's fabula.

<7> See the definitions in the "dictionary of larp terminology" at [laiv.org](http://www.laiv.org/),
<http://forum.laiv.org/showthread.php?t=265>, for examples of conflicting definitions of plot.

<8> For example "Terningkast" at "forum.laiv.org".

<9> I originally stumbled upon the concept of trigger/connector/effector when reading an American "how-to" for new larpwrights on the web. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find that article again, and so cannot provide a reference for this Very Useful Concept.

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