

How do we create LARP mechanics at Russia

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Larpers of the World

Plan of our talk

1. What's our larp?
2. Theory of everything (incomplete)
3. Tips for designing working mechanics

Define “Russian LARP”

- ▶ Russian LARP scene is huge
- ▶ Russian LARP scene is diverse (we have a lot of communities)
- ▶ We speaking about “our” LARPs
 - ▶ Participants of Comcon (Moscow) and Blincom (St. Petersburg) and our friends
 - ▶ That’s also diverse scene, with a lot of experiments
 - ▶ Try to talk about “average”

Our LARP

Nordic



Drachenfest



Our LARP

Nordic





To Die in Jerusalem

Fight, medicine, economy, Pilgrimage



Exodus

Generations / Ideology



Battlestar Galactica

Space battles, Shooting, Anchors

Please stand prepared for Leo's
coming out

What are we actually into

- ▶ Not about winning per se
- ▶ Not about “powerplaying”/”muchkinism”
- ▶ Not only about competition with other characters
- ▶ Fair play
- ▶ The world of the game is defined
- ▶ “Real” events that “really” happen to our characters
- ▶ “Real” achievements that our characters “really” achieve

Immersion

- ▶ We like to be “in character”
- ▶ We don't like to break immersion
- ▶ If we will start steering, you will start losing immersion
- ▶ Stanislavsky was Russian after all

But we still like a good plot. How could we achieve it?

We design our mechanics so that
they will create events for us

Theory of Everything

(uncomplete)

Theory of Everything

Designed by Vladimir Nuci Molodykh as attempt to reflect how he and Stairway to Heaven team build their LARPs.

It hadn't get a lot of traction in Russian LARP scene, but that's closest attempt to analyze "our" LARP method



Let's make LARP!

- ▶ ...about specific setting
- ▶ ...for my friends
- ▶ ...with my friends
- ▶ ...with halberds/space battles/fancy electronics
- ▶ ...to reflect and make parallels between 1905 & 2015 in Russia
- ▶ ...et cetera et cetera

Crystalizing idea

- ▶ What is our LARP really about?
- ▶ What is interesting in our future LARP?



The Hobbit, or There and Back Again

Idea

- ▶ Idea is a core of the game
- ▶ We make a game around it
- ▶ Gamefocus
 - ▶ One sentence to measure everything
 - ▶ Every word should count
 - ▶ Esp. useful for big teams of organizers



Deus Ex Machina

Technological world of future on the threshold of transhumanity.



Steampunk: Age of Reason

Growing up of a human and the whole humanity.



Battlestar Galactica

Survival, Treachery, Fate.

Idea of a larp: soft vs hard

Чем ель отличается от сосны?



How idea realizes in a larp

- ▶ Larp In a nutshell is a sequence of scenes/events
- ▶ In evry event character should experience something
- ▶ “Something” is determined by idea



Price of Honor

Idea: Patriotism vs Honor

Key precedents

- ▶ Atmosphere
- ▶ Value / Sacrifice
- ▶ Decision
- ▶ Knowledge / Understanding
- ▶ Affect



Second Age

Atmosphere (Mechanics for seafaring)



Happily ever after

Value / Sacrifice (Mechanics for dream/noir)



1905

Decision (Mechanics for manufacturing & war)

Observers vs election riggers

Knowledge / Understanding



Basically every LARP with swordfighting

Affect

Mechanic is a useful tool to
mass-create specific precedents

5 minutes break!

After the break we will talk about more practical stuff
and tell you about useful techniques for design perfect mechanics

18 useful techniques for mechanics design

1. Understand your goal first

- What kind of precedents do you wish to create?
- Is a mechanic the best instrument for this?
- Alternatives: character legends, NPC, et cetera et cetera
- No goal = no mechanic!

2. Write down your requirements

- Write them down
- If you have team:
 - Get an approval from them
- Check against them all the road down

3. Make mechanics for the most important

- What's most important thing about your LARP / about world?
- Mechanic is a hard and powerful tool
- Use the “hammer” to strike here



Constantinople: One More Spring

Mechanics: Battle, Cannon fire, Permadeath, Food supply

4. Check:

Are the conflicts resolvable?

- If character has a goal (or option to explore), it should be reachable during a larp
- It should be possible to resolve conflict!
- Seek “what then?” questions

5. Add consequences for decisions

- Character's big decisions should have consequences in game world
- Consequences should lead to new precedents



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6. Unimportant:
allow to play as they like

Чем ель отличается от сосны?



7. Disallow undesirable

- ▶ Various reasons:
 - ▶ Not part of your story
 - ▶ Not part of your world
 - ▶ That's unsafe from real life reasons
 - ▶ ...
- ▶ This should not happen on your larp



There is such craft...

Yellow ribbon mechanic (Invincible characters)

8. Separate Engine / content

Issue: a lot of complicated mechanics to memorize

Solution: separate engine and content

- ▶ Cards with instructions
- ▶ Cards with scratch area (Askold cards)
- ▶ IT systems
- ▶ ...

9. Remove organizer

The best mechanic doesn't require organizer's interaction

If not possible, make organizer presence "async"

10. Make them play with other players

- Play with a another player
 - Directly
 - Indirectly

11. Award for everything you want in your game

- We want characters to behave like that
 - Beauty, Activity, Cooperation, Conflict, Trust, Treachery
- We award them for it
- Pavlov also was Russian

12. Count players

- ▶ How many players will use this mechanic?
- ▶ How many players will be affected by this mechanic?
- ▶ Cost/benefit analysis

13. Hire killer

- ▶ Aka “editor”
- ▶ It's hard to remove from them game your ideas

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14. Make it shorter & add structure

- “Rules should be shorter” is a valid argument
- Short is f..king awesome
- Quality check: Could you accommodate existing mechanics to solve new task?

15. Extract specific

- Universal vs “only wizards”
- Not the same as secret rules

16. Optimize for non-Assholes

- Not a single thing could save you from hard cheaters
- Avoid “soft cheating” opportunities
- Just say no

17. Remove numbers

- If possible, use no numbers
- Time “until something”
- Distance “line of sight”
- ...

18. Make numbers standard

- ▶ 5 for everything

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Sidenote: organizers responsibility vs players responsibility

- ▶ “Our larp is about that thing. Play about that thing to the best of your ability” is not enough anymore
- ▶ We (as organizers & designers of LARP) have to assume more responsibility for player’s experience
- ▶ That’s doesn’t make player our customer 😊

Questions?



Steampunk: Age of Reason