# How do we create LARP mechanics at Russia

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Larpers of the World

#### Plan of our talk

- . 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

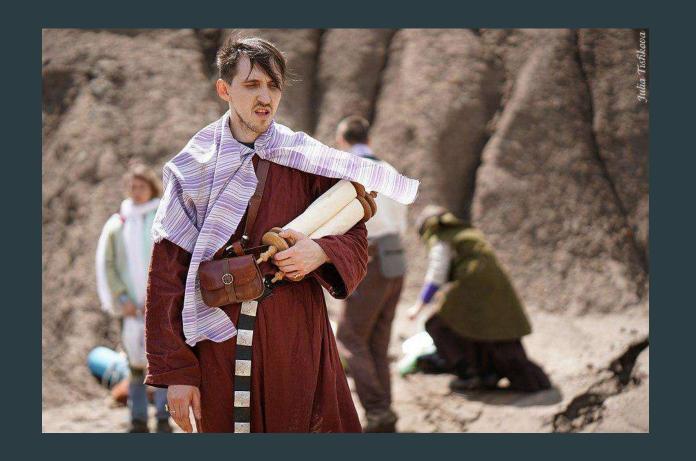






To Die in Jerusalem

Fight, medicine, economy, Piligrimage



#### 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.



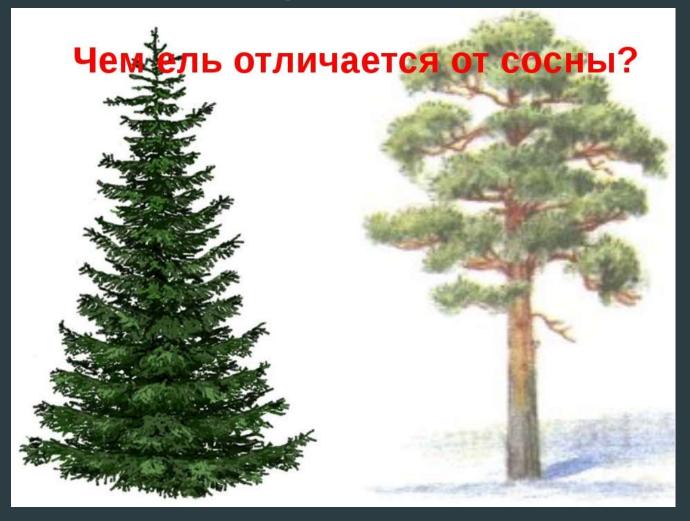
Steampunk: Age of Reason

Growing up of a human and the whole humanity.



Battlestar Galactica
Survival, Treachery, Fate.

## Idea of a larp: soft vs hard



## 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

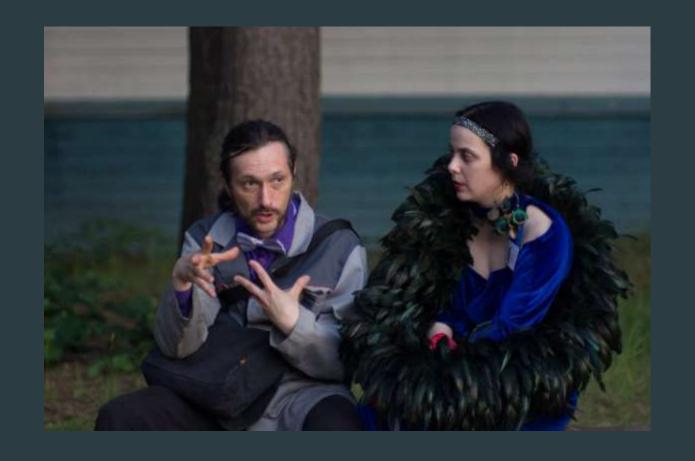
Idea: Patriotism vs Honor

## 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 swordfighiting 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 <u>resolve conflict</u>!
- Seek "what then?" questions

# 5. Add consequences for decisions

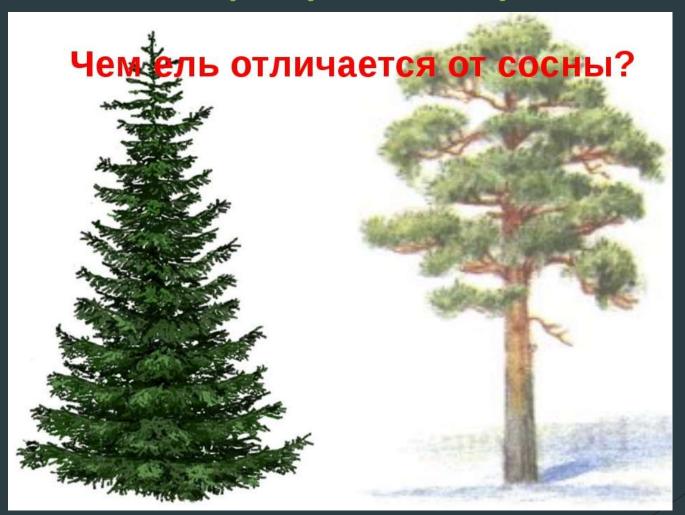
- Character's big decisions should have consequences in game world
- Consequences should lead to new precedents



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# 6. Unimportant: allow to play as they like



### 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 presense "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"
- lt'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"

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#### 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