

ENHANCE EMPATHY AND
UNDERSTANDING TOWARDS **LGBTQIA+**
COMMUNITIES THROUGH LARP



DEVELOPING EMPATHY THROUGH LARP TOOLKIT



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INTRODUCTION

This publication aims to serve as a practical and theoretical resource for educators, trainers, teachers, facilitators, LGBTQIA+ advocacy organisations, and community groups who wish to explore larp (Live Action Role-Play) as an experiential methodology to deepen understanding, expression, and empathy within and towards LGBTQIA+ communities.

Inside this toolkit, you will have the chance to:

- Explore the theoretical foundations of larp as an experiential learning methodology, including its potential for emotional engagement, identity exploration, and empathy-building.
- Understand LGBTQIA+ community contexts and terminology that inform safe and meaningful larp design.
- Learn practical tools and frameworks to design immersive experiences and community-focused larp, from early ideation to prototyping, facilitation, and evaluation.
- Discover guidelines on safety, consent, accessibility, and inclusion, essential for creating empowering environments for LGBTQIA+ learners and participants.
- Engage with step-by-step facilitation structures, including onboarding, de-rolling, debriefing, and co-design workshops.

This toolkit is organised into thematic chapters, moving from foundational concepts to practical applications:

- Larp fundamentals
- Designing for Empathy
- Design Implementation and Engagement
- Accessibility and Inclusivity
- Larp Safety
- Larp Design Workshop
- Glossary

We hope it may support you in creating spaces where stories can be shared, identities explored, and empathy strengthened.

ENJOY THE JOURNEY!

LGBTQIA+ CULTURAL CONTEXT

The involvement of the LGBTQIA+ community in the world of larp (Live Action Role-Play) has grown significantly over the years, as larp spaces have increasingly embraced diversity and inclusion. This development parallels broader cultural shifts towards greater acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals and issues, and reflects larp's unique ability to offer immersive environments for self-expression.

Historically, larp has been a medium through which marginalised groups, including LGBTQIA+ individuals, can experiment with identity in a safe, fictional context. The anonymity and fluidity of characters in larp offer participants the freedom to explore aspects of their gender and sexuality that may be difficult to express in everyday life. The freedom granted by wearing "a mask", by inhabiting a character to which players are connected by their own body, but functions in a world where rules are different from the ones imposed in their everyday life, allows for great catharsis. It gives players a space where they effectively become "someone else", which often leads to exploration.

Events like **Knutepunkt**, the renowned Nordic larp convention, have frequently addressed themes of inclusivity and diversity, providing a platform for LGBTQIA+ larpers to engage with both the community and game design. Several larp events, particularly in the Nordic countries, have specifically catered to LGBTQIA+ themes, with larps focusing on exploring relationships, gender nonconformity, and the experience of being part of a marginalised group.

The strong commitment to inclusivity within the larp community has not only made it a welcoming space for LGBTQIA+ individuals but also positioned larp as a medium through which societal norms can be challenged. Characters and collaborative play can be used to question heteronormative structures or to experiment with lifestyles and gender identities in ways that can feel liberating and transformative. The improvisational and collaborative nature of larp often leads to the creation of narratives that critically explore or disrupt traditional gender and sexual roles, offering players a rich opportunity for personal and collective storytelling. In this sense, **play is a political act** especially for queer communities. Play has always been a way of learning societal norms, as much as it has been a way of challenging them.

One of the most emblematic examples is the larp "Just a Little Lovin'", created by Tor Kjetil Edland and Hanne Grasmø. Set during the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, the game explores the lives of queer people, highlighting not only their romantic and sexual relationships, but also the fear and loss that defined that historical period for the LGBTQIA+ community. This larp has had a profound impact because it allows players to confront vulnerability and intimacy in a dramatic historical context, while simultaneously fostering empathy and awareness.

Designing a larp addressing LGBTQIA+ needs can be challenging, as each group, community, and individual may have not only different needs but also diverse ways of expressing or fulfilling them. Attempting to create a design that fits all purposes can easily lead to overgeneralization, stereotyping, or labeling. For this reason, it is often more effective to focus on what feels meaningful for the particular group or community with which we are working.





LARP FUNDAMENTALS

Live Action Role-Playing (larp) is a form of interactive storytelling and improvisational performance in which participants physically embody characters within a fictional setting. It combines elements of theatre, game design, social interaction, and collaborative storytelling, allowing players to act out their characters' choices, emotions, and conflicts in real time. It's a medium of collective expression where imagination, emotion, and story come together. Experiences can range from intimate, personal tales to grand, epic narratives. At its heart, larp is always a co-created space of exploration: there is no audience, only participants. Everyone steps into a shared world, framed by rules, setting, and consent.

Larp can serve many purposes: it may reflect the culture in which it was created, open glimpses into possible futures, reveal echoes of the past, or imagine alternative realities. It allows participants to transform into characters and act out their own narratives. By stepping into roles far removed from everyday life, players gain new perspectives and deeper insights into themselves and others. There are many larp traditions around the world, each with its own codes, aesthetics, mechanics, and themes. Exploring these different traditions is part of the richness of larp: each opens a door into a unique way of creating meaning, and together they form a vibrant, diverse landscape.

For some, larp is primarily an art form; for others, a game. Some approach it as a space for socializing and community building, while others seek adventure, self-exploration, or the chance to test boundaries in a safe environment, as well as to reflect on their emotions, preferences, and inner selves. At its core, larp is about asking "what if?" and stepping into someone else's shoes. It can be playful, dramatic, poetic, political, abstract, or intimate. It is not one style or tradition but a broad spectrum of practices, each rooted in culture and community.



Here are some commonly used larp forms (more terms can be found in the glossary):

- **Nordic larp:** Originating in the Nordic countries, this style prioritizes immersion, emotional realism, co-creation and social reflection.
- **Edu-larp:** Designed for educational purposes for schools, universities or training contexts, these larps focus on learning outcomes such as historical understanding, empathy, or problem-solving.
- **Chamber larp:** Small-scale larps, usually played in a single room over a few hours. They are ideal for testing themes, exploring specific dynamics or creating accessible experiences.
- **Campaign larp:** These long-form larps involve ongoing character development over multiple sessions or a large world with many parallel storylines. They can involve hundreds of players over months or years.

Many more types of larp exist, each with its own definitions and traditions.

Larp is not about acting skills or performance. It is about feeling, making choices, connecting with others, and exploring what emerges in the space between you and the character.

LARP AS AN EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATIONAL TOOL

Larp has evolved far beyond its entertainment roots to become a powerful tool for learning, reflection, and social engagement. Unlike more traditional educational tools that rely on passive absorption of content, larp invites participants to learn by stepping into a situation and navigating it from within.

Larps can be a powerful educational tool. It can:

- Foster empathy by allowing participants to inhabit perspectives different from their own.
- Encourage critical thinking as players face dilemmas, navigate grey zones, and make meaningful choices.
- Support collaborative learning, where players construct understanding together through interaction, negotiation, and shared storytelling.
- Enhance emotional regulation, offering opportunities to experience, reflect on, and manage intense feelings in a safe environment.
- Teach conflict resolution and negotiation skills through in-game challenges and social dynamics.
- Enable emotional engagement, strengthening memory and deepening insight.
- Bridge theory and practice, embedding learning objectives directly into game mechanics and character journeys.

By combining imagination, action, and reflection, larps offer participants a unique space to explore personal, social, and cognitive growth while enjoying immersive and playful experiences. A well-designed edu-larp connects clearly to its learning goals while leaving enough openness for participants to make the experience their own. This specific feature makes it especially effective for diversity and inclusion training, civic education, conflict management, and intercultural exchange.

LARP AND KOLB'S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

In educational contexts, larp can be directly mapped onto Kolb's learning circle, a widely used model in nonformal education. This connection shows how role-play experiences do not stand alone, but can be structured into meaningful learning journeys.

- Concrete Experience (doing/having an experience)
- Playing the larp. Participants immerse themselves in roles, storylines, and interactions.
- Reflective Observation (reviewing/reflecting on the experience)
- Debriefing after the larp. Through guided discussion, journaling, or creative expression, participants process emotions and observations.
- Abstract Conceptualisation (concluding/learning from the experience)
- Linking the larp's themes to broader learning. This may include workshops, content sessions (e.g. on climate change, migration, gender diversity), or collective analysis.
- Active Experimentation (planning/trying out what you have learned)
- Bringing insights into real life. This can mean shifting attitudes, practicing new forms of communication, or engaging in activism and community change.

By aligning larp with Kolb's cycle, facilitators can ensure that the emotional intensity of play transforms into sustainable learning. Participants move from experience to reflection, from concept to action.

EMBODIED LEARNING AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

How we move, gesture, and inhabit our characters can influence not only our in-game experience but also our behavior and self-perception beyond the larp. Experiencing oneself “as” that character can cultivate real-world change long after the larp ends.

Movement, posture, tempo, and physical interactions serve as a form of bodily learning. Participants gain awareness of their own physicality, practice nonverbal communication, and experiment with behaviors they might not ordinarily express. By consciously designing opportunities for varied physical engagement, facilitators can enhance the transformative potential of the larp.

DEBRIEFING: REFLECTING AND LEARNING FROM THE LARP

Debriefing is a central element of larp-based learning. Without structured reflection, the emotional and cognitive experiences that participants undergo may remain unprocessed or disconnected from real-life insights. Debriefing can take many forms, depending on the goals of the session and the nature of the larp. A well-designed debrief balances emotional processing with analytical reflection and personal insight.

Finally, it’s worth noting: larp is not therapy, but it can be therapeutic. When facilitated with care, it offers space for personal insight, healing, and connection. This is why the framing, safety mechanisms, and accessibility practices are essential to educational impact.

THE ROLE OF LARP IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education is the intentional creation of learning spaces that centre diversity, challenge systems of oppression, and provide meaningful access to growth for all participants. The key is **authenticity**. Designing experiences that honor real diversity, amplify underrepresented voices, and foster participation not only for those identified as marginalized.

This means **designing for genuine diversity**: inviting multiple identities, abilities, and experiences into the larp, while still keeping a strong focus on the narrative we want participants to reflect on.

Collaborative co-creation involves participants and communities in shaping stories, roles, and mechanics, ensuring representation is not tokenistic.

Flexible, responsive structures allow for adapting rules, narratives, and environments so all participants can engage safely and fully.

Reflection and feedback give tools to listen, adjust, and learn from participants' experiences to strengthen inclusivity in practice.

For example, when LGBTQIA+ communities are involved in the design or facilitation, their perspectives enrich the experience for everyone, allowing people from any background to explore identity, relationships, and social dynamics in a safe, imaginative environment.

Designers and facilitators must remain intentional and humble. Inclusivity is not a checklist, but rather an ongoing process of listening, adapting, and centering care.



DESIGNING FOR EMPATHY

NEED-ORIENTED DESIGN: DESIGNING BASED ON COMMUNITY NEEDS

Larp design should consider the needs of both participants and designers. Here are a few tips to ease the challenge of designing transformative larps that remain meaningful without becoming overly pompous or literal:

- **Focus on shared needs rather than “hot topics”:** Instead of trying to tackle something perceived as universally important or urgent, consider the personal and communal needs of the group you are working with.
- **Embrace idea generation:** During the initial brainstorming let ideas flow freely. You can use frameworks to support creativity, and later refine.
- **Identify common values:** Look beyond the surface topic and consider underlying values. Freedom, love, safety, justice, peace, balance, friendship. These often form the foundation of behaviors, institutions, and stories.
- **Embed personal perspectives:** Connect individual or community experiences to larger themes. A seemingly small case study can illuminate broader issues and raise universal questions.

There is no single formula for creating a need-oriented larp. Depending on context, designers can select approaches that best fit their group, goals, and resources. Below is an example of a design plan:

Example of Need-Oriented Larp Design

1. **Target Group:** Define who the larp is for: Age, background, context (e.g. professionals, minorities), previous experience with larps or the topic, constraints (time, language, accessibility, space)
2. **Needs:** Identify the needs of the group and the educational context: Skills to develop (e.g., communication, empathy, collaboration), gaps or challenges (e.g., low awareness of social issues, difficulties in conflict management, experiences of discrimination)
3. **Aims:** Set clear objectives: Is it educational? Is it experiential? Is it reflective?
4. **Design:** Outline the larp structure: Logistic limitations (number of facilitators and players, access to props, venue type, time frame etc.), setting and story world (realistic, fictional, or symbolic), characters and their goals (individual and group), game flow (stages, scenes, key moments), balance between drama, learning, and play.
5. **Tools:** Choose methods to support both educational aims and the larp experience: Game mechanics, safety tools, educational elements (source texts, films, reflection prompts, or exercises embedded into gameplay)

6. **Prototype:** Create a minimal version of the larp: draft scenario and simplified character sheets (or instructions for character creation), core mechanics in their simplest, testable form.
7. **Test:** Run a small-scale trial: Observe group dynamics and check if mechanics support the learning aims; test pacing, engagement, and safety measures; gather initial feedback from participants.
8. **Play:** Run the full version with the target group: Provide clear introduction, warm-ups, workshops, and safety tools; Ensure coherence, accessibility, and engagement throughout the experience.
9. **De-role and Debrief:** Choose de-roling exercises; structure reflective discussion: What did you feel? What happened? What dynamics did you notice? Connect the experience to real-world insights; provide space for emotions, closure, and processing.
10. **Conceptualize (Optional):** Shift focus from personal experience to thematic content; facilitate theory or data presentation (statistics, definitions, case studies) and invite players to confront their experience with this context; bridge emotions and experience with critical thinking.
11. **Evaluate:** Collect feedback from participants, facilitators, and observers. Assess the larp's impact: Were the needs addressed? Were objectives met? Identify successes and areas for improvement.
12. **Implement for Players:** Support application of the larp experience in real life: Reflect on attitudes and behaviors; practice new communication or conflict-resolution skills; engage in activism, community work, or research.
13. **Implement for Designers:** Integrate insights into future educational practice: refine scenarios based on testing and feedback; create facilitator guides and supplementary materials (workbooks, teacher guides); adapt for different groups, contexts, or objectives.

CREATIVE TOOLS FOR ADDRESSING REAL ISSUES

Creativity is at the heart of larp. It can be understood through several key parameters, including **flexibility, originality, fluency, and elaboration.**

“Storytelling” is the fairy godmother of larp. It blesses the game with captivating narratives, whether expressed through **oral, nonverbal, or visual means.** And the mother of storytelling is, of course, **creativity.** So we remain in the same family. Just as families have traditions, larps often develop their own creative rituals and tools that help address real-world issues through imaginative play.

Larps that explore real-world challenges rely on **imagination, symbolism, and interactive design** to make complex or sensitive topics approachable. Creative tools help participants engage with themes safely, thoughtfully, and meaningfully, without oversimplifying the issues.

Some effective tools include:

- **Player co-creation:** Players collaboratively build the world or characters. This empowers participants, ensures relevance, and allows diverse perspectives to shape the experience.
- **Symbolism and metaphor:** Abstract or allegorical elements can represent real-life challenges, such as oppression, migration, or identity struggles. Metaphors create distance that makes difficult topics safer to explore while preserving emotional depth.
- **Immersive environments and sensory design:** Soundscapes, lighting, textures, scents, or spatial arrangements help participants feel the story physically and emotionally, supporting embodiment.
- **Multi-modal expression:** Using different media (music, dance, visuals ecc) offers multiple ways to communicate ideas. This accommodates diverse learning styles and allows participants to engage through their preferred senses.
- **De-centering the facilitator:** Allowing participants to influence pacing, mood, or direction through democratic mechanics (scene calling, voting, collective rituals) reflects values of inclusion and shared responsibility.

By combining these tools thoughtfully, designers can create larps that are both imaginative and meaningful.

DESIGNING LARPS WITH LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITIES

LGBTQIA+ coded topics may explore identity, shared values, and common challenges. Equally important, however, is to honor the legitimate perspectives of LGBTQIA+ people on broader social, political, or environmental issues such as climate change, basic income, or job insecurity. Designers should also be aware that not every community wishes to focus on painful or traumatic experiences. Many groups prefer to highlight the brighter aspects of their lives, celebrating the spectrum of love, freedom, and joy that their identity affords them.

It is crucial to meet, talk, and engage with the community. By participating in and listening to the lived experiences of the group, designers can grasp not only their needs but also the ways these needs may be fulfilled. Defining their approach at the beginning of the design process helps guide later choices and settings: whether it's a small town in Poland with everyday people, a fantastical Valley of Fairies populated by humans and fays, or the inner world of a teenager where players embody emotions, as in *Inside Out*.

Larp design also benefits greatly from including LGBTQIA+ community members in the designers' and facilitators' team. A mixed crew is often an effective asset: it ensures that terminology and concepts remain accessible to a broader spectrum of players, while preserving authenticity for those with lived experience.

Finally, designing larps with LGBTQIA+ communities often requires particular attention to **accessibility, inclusion, and safety**, which will be addressed in later chapters of this toolkit.



DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

GAME MECHANICS AND DESIGN TOOLS

Designing a (larp) game involves crafting an immersive, interactive narrative experience for players. There is no “right” or “wrong” design, in general, just more appropriate choices to tell a specific story and craft a specific experience. This is particularly important for larps focusing on difficult and educational themes, for example dealing with representation of minorities often excluded by more mainstream narratives. All the elements introduced in this toolkit can be experimented on, can be used to create hybrids and can be remixed to suit the narrative needs of a larp creator.

THEME: THE MESSAGE, OR “WHAT (AND WHERE) ARE WE EXPLORING THROUGH PLAY?”

At the heart of any larp lies its **theme**: the underlying message, question, or emotional journey that the game seeks to explore. Whether it addresses political oppression, personal transformation, collective memory, or moral ambiguity, the theme shapes the players’ experiences and emotional engagement. The setting, in this context, becomes a narrative instrument: a historical court, a dystopian prison, or a fantasy realm is not chosen for its own sake, but because it provides the most evocative framework through which the theme can be embodied and examined. The world supports the theme by embedding its stakes and conflicts into a concrete, interactive environment, allowing players to engage with abstract ideas through lived, embodied action. A larp’s world gains coherence and power precisely when it is in service of its theme.





IMMERSION AND ATMOSPHERE

Immersion, the sensation of truly “being there” in the fiction, is one of the central aspects and pleasures of larp. It arises when players fully inhabit their characters and respond authentically within the game’s world. Achieving immersion depends not just on individual effort but on the careful orchestration of physical, emotional, and narrative elements. Some of the key tools for building and maintaining immersion include:

- **Costumes and Props:** Visual and tactile cues help anchor players in the fiction. Well-chosen clothing, objects, and symbolic items serve both aesthetic and functional purposes, signaling social roles, cultural codes, or emotional states within the narrative.
- **Setting and Venue:** The physical space of the larp plays a crucial role in maintaining the illusion of the world. Immersive venues, such as medieval castles, forest encampments, or stark institutional buildings, can embody the tone and theme of the game. But often mundane or minimalist spaces can be transformed as effectively through scenography and player imagination to support the fiction.
- **Lighting and Sound:** Music, ambient noise, and lighting design can profoundly influence emotional tone. Dimming lights, natural firelight, eerie drones, or sound effects... you name it. All these sensory inputs help guide players’ emotional responses and deepen their connection to the unfolding story. These elements can be extremely effective even on a lower budget.
- **Metatechniques:** These are explicit game tools that temporarily suspend or shape the fiction to support deeper emotional, narrative, or psychological engagement. Examples include blackboxing (a method of pausing the game to play out a scene in a different space/time), monologuing (inviting players to voice their characters’ internal thoughts), or bird-in-ear techniques (where players receive narrative cues or direction via whisper or technology). Far from breaking immersion, well-designed metatechniques can enhance it by allowing access to inner worlds, flashbacks, dreams, or symbolic representations that would be difficult to convey through pure diegetic play. They serve as narrative devices that enrich the larp experience without undermining its internal logic.

CHARACTER DESIGN: THE PROTAGONISTS, AKA "WHO ARE WE?"

Characters are the heart of any larp. Whether they are player-created or pre-generated, character design involves developing personal goals, backgrounds, and relationships. They are the main engine for developing the story. The design should consider:

- **Motivation and Agency:** Characters must have a reason to engage with the world, and players need the freedom to make meaningful choices. A job, so to speak.
- **Goals:** What does each character want? Conflicting or complementary goals enhance interaction.
- **Relationships and Personality:** Predefined relationships between characters foster deeper role-play. A well developed set of coherent values facilitates players in knowing how their character will build new relationships or react to the world and its events.
- **Rule of Conflict:** Characters need conflict, even in light-hearted narration. This can be conflict VS other characters, VS the world, VS a specific political system, VS nature or technology, VS fate itself, VS themselves... The list is long!

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE: SCENARIO, AKA "WHAT DO WE HAVE TO DO?"

Even the most elaborate and aesthetically rich larp design can fall flat if players are unclear about their characters' purpose or the narrative stakes. The structure of a larp's scenario determines how stories unfold during play and how players navigate the fiction. Different narrative models serve different design goals:

- **Railroaded games** follow a predetermined storyline in which players progress through scenes, tasks, or chapters that have been structured in advance by the organizers. While this model limits some aspects of player agency, it offers a focused experience with strong narrative coherence. This clarity can be especially helpful for new larpers, as it provides clear direction and ensures that key emotional or thematic moments are encountered by most or all players. A well-constructed railroaded game can be deeply moving and powerful, precisely because the arc is carefully curated.
- **Sandbox games**, by contrast, emphasize open-ended exploration and player-driven storytelling. The narrative emerges dynamically from the interactions and decisions of the characters, often starting from a broad premise rather than a linear plot. This format maximizes player agency and encourages improvisation, but it also relies more heavily on players' initiative and can risk thematic or emotional diffusion without some form of narrative scaffolding.

Importantly, these two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Many well-designed larps incorporate elements of both: a sandbox framework may include a few pre-scripted events or dramatic set-pieces that guide the overarching narrative, while a railroaded structure might embed moments of choice and freedom that allow players to shape how the story unfolds. Balancing these elements allows designers to offer both meaningful agency and narrative resonance, ensuring that all players find a sense of purpose and story in their experience.

Player vs. Player (PvP) - Player vs. Environment (PvE)

In larp design, the dynamic between **Player vs. Player (PvP)** and **Player vs. Environment (PvE)** is a key consideration that shapes the interactions and conflict within the game.

- **PvP (Player vs. Player):** In PvP-focused larps, conflict arises between players while in character. This type of design encourages direct competition, intrigue, or combat between characters, often driven by conflicting goals, rivalries, or political power struggles. PvP larps tend to have high tension and strategic interactions, where players must navigate alliances, betrayals, and personal conflicts. PvP requires clear communication, clear rules and safety tools to manage intense emotions and ensure fair play.
- **PvE (Player vs. Environment):** In PvE larps, players collaborate to overcome challenges posed by the game world, such as hostile creatures, environmental hazards, or narrative-driven tasks. The focus is on teamwork, problem-solving, and cooperative storytelling, with less emphasis on inter-character conflict. PvE larps often have a strong narrative structure where the environment or game masters introduce obstacles for the players to face together.

Choosing between PvP or PvE (or again a blend of both) significantly affects the tone of the larp and the type of player experience. PvP is ideal for competitive, tension-filled scenarios, while PvE fosters cooperation and exploration of the game world and themes.



MECHANICS: THE RULES, AKA "HOW DO WE DO IT?"

Mechanics govern how interactions and outcomes are resolved during the game. They can range from very simple, abstract systems to complex rulesets that include skill checks, point systems, or live-action combat. Diegetic mechanics, where rules blend seamlessly into the world, are often favoured in immersive larps. Other design elements, often borrowed from other expressive forms like theatre or immersive art, can be also used to bend the shape and limits of your story and deliver the desired experience.

Larps generally cluster around three broad approaches to writing and applying rules, each with its own design philosophy and suited to different play styles and objectives. There is no single "correct" method: each approach is valid, and the best choice is the one that aligns most effectively with your larp's goals and the kind of experience you want to offer to your players.

- **Gamism:** focuses on game mechanics and player achievement. In this approach, rules are structured to create challenges, competitions, or puzzles that players must overcome. While it often encourages a competitive mindset, where players strive to "win" or reach specific objectives, it doesn't necessarily require adversarial play. Gamist larps can also support cooperative team dynamics, especially when the game is structured around shared missions or survival mechanics. This approach works well for players who enjoy strategic thinking, clear objectives, and a sense of progression.
- **Narrativism:** places the co-creation of story at the center of the experience. The rules are usually designed to support dramatic development, emotional arcs, and character-driven choices. While conflicts between characters (in-game conflict) are often a rich part of the narrative, players themselves are expected to collaborate in shaping compelling and meaningful stories. The emphasis is not on "winning" but on building a shared narrative that is satisfying for everyone involved. This approach is often favored in character and theme-driven larps, where emotional immersion and storytelling are paramount.
- **Simulationism:** emphasizes the authentic recreation of a world or setting. The goal is to explore "what it would really be like" to live in a particular place, time, or set of circumstances. Rather than focusing on story or objectives, simulationist larps invite players to inhabit their characters' everyday lives, rituals, and social structures in a highly immersive environment. This is often referred to as a "slice of life" design, where narrative developments are emergent rather than pre-structured, and the pleasure of play lies in being rather than doing. This approach is especially suited to historical, ethnographic, or experimental larps, and those exploring social dynamics in detail.

Each of these approaches offers different tools to achieve different kinds of experiences. Designers are also free to combine elements of all three, blending mechanical structure, narrative depth, and immersive realism in whatever proportions best suit the larp's goals.

APPROACHES TO PLAY: INTENTIONS AND PLAYSTYLES

In addition to rules and structure, larps also differ in how players approach the act of play itself: their personal goals, strategies, and emotional investments within the fiction. These playstyles or intentions shape how stories emerge and how players interact. “Play to win” is the most intuitive, especially in gamist larps: players try to succeed, survive, or accomplish their character's goals as effectively as possible. However, other approaches are often more rewarding in narrative or immersive contexts. “Play to lose” encourages players to deliberately embrace failure, tragedy, or emotional vulnerability when it enhances the drama or deepens the story; losing becomes a path to rich character development rather than a negative outcome. “Play to lift”, on the other hand, means actively supporting the spotlight and emotional arcs of others, playing in ways that make your co-players shine. These approaches are not mutually exclusive and often coexist in the same game. Someone might “play to win” within character, while “playing to lose” structurally to serve the narrative, and “playing to lift” socially to support the ensemble. Being aware of these styles, aligning them with the larp's goals, helps create a more intentional, collaborative, and emotionally resonant play experience.

Facilitators

Organisers and facilitators guide the larp experience, providing narrative cues, resolving conflicts, and ensuring that the game runs smoothly. In some larps, the facilitators are active participants in the game as NPCs, while in others, they work behind the scenes strictly out of character. Their primary role is to facilitate the players' experiences while keeping the narrative on track.



ALESSANDRO
LUI

GUSTZ

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ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY

Accessibility and inclusivity are ongoing practices that shape how safe, welcoming, and meaningful a larp can be. Designing and facilitating with care ensures that all participants, regardless of background or ability, can fully engage with the experience. Below are practices and principles that support inclusive play.

CREATING SAFE AND WELCOMING SPACES

Participants should feel that the larp space is theirs to inhabit with comfort and trust. A welcoming desk or designated person/group at the entrance can greet participants, answer questions, and set the tone of hospitality.

Facilitators can offer clear framing statements, such as:

- *“This is not therapy. It is a powerful, playful and creative method to help you explore something.”*
- *“In this space, you only need to share your name and pronouns. Everything else is optional. You may, if you wish, share your triggers, but not the reasons behind them.”*
- *“The whole experience is more complex than what can be shown here. What you encounter is only a glimpse of a theme we want to explore. We hope you take from it what resonates with you.”*ù

These disclaimers invite agency and establish safety while leaving space for curiosity and exploration.



ADAPTING ACCESSIBILITY FOR DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES AND BACKGROUNDS

Accessibility begins with asking: “What do you need to feel comfortable and supported here?” A simple question in a sign-up form can open important conversations. Facilitators can also offer concrete examples of accommodations, which makes it easier for participants to voice their needs.

Examples include:

- Quiet room for sensory breaks
- Earplugs or noise-cancelling tools
- Fidget toys or sensory objects
- Interpreter or language support
- Hearing assistance devices
- Pronoun name tags

Facilitators should also clarify their own limits: not every need can always be met, and being transparent about boundaries ensures clarity and trust. Communicate these limits with co-facilitators and larp writers.

MANAGING POWER DYNAMICS

Power dynamics are an inherent part of any group interaction, and they become especially significant in larps that address sensitive social, cultural, or identity-related issues. Designers and facilitators must be aware of these dynamics to ensure that the experience is safe, respectful, and empowering for all participants.

Intersectionality and awareness

Be mindful that participants’ experiences are shaped by multiple, intersecting identities such as gender, sexual orientation, race, class, disability, and more. These intersections influence how individuals engage with the game or respond to scenarios. Inclusive larp design requires sensitivity to these differences and acknowledgment that no single approach fits all participants.

Roles and representation

Whenever possible, include LGBTQIA+ people in the design and facilitation team. Their lived experience provides invaluable insight into nuances that may be overlooked by those outside the community. Allies can also contribute effectively, but their participation should be informed and reflective. Allies should:

- Establish a reference group or advisory network within the community to consult on sensitive content.
- Ask for feedback openly and clarify their role as supporters, not representatives.
- Engage in ongoing self-reflection about their positionality and potential blind spots.

Feedback and reflection mechanisms

Providing multiple, accessible ways for participants to give feedback is essential for monitoring and addressing power imbalances. Some practical approaches include:

- Provide mechanisms for anonymous feedback, giving participants a way to influence the experience.
- Online forms for private input before, during, or after the larp.
- A second facilitator who can observe interactions and provide immediate support if issues arise.

Focus and boundaries

When designing characters and scenarios, it is not necessary to include every minority or identity. Simplicity and clarity are key. Designers should choose a focus and explore it deeply rather than attempting to cover all perspectives superficially. This approach allows participants to engage meaningfully without being overwhelmed. As the saying goes in creative writing: “kill your darlings”. Acknowledge that some ideas, no matter how appealing, may need to be left out for the sake of focus and coherence.

Empowering participants through choice

Encourage players to express their own experience safely and on their terms. Players can:

- Share aspects of their identity that feel relevant.
- Explore perspectives through metaphor or narrative without exposing personal trauma.
- Take breaks or step out of scenarios as needed, without explanation or judgment.

Also, by collecting trigger warnings from participants in a confidential manner, facilitators can anticipate sensitive content and adapt the game if needed.

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IN PRACTICE: EXAMPLES FOR MANAGING DIFFICULT OR SENSITIVE SITUATIONS

Even with thoughtful design, larps can touch on challenging or emotionally charged topics. Effective facilitation requires proactive strategies to support participants and maintain a safe environment.

Using metaphors and narrative distance

When addressing serious issues, consider using metaphors, symbolism, or allegorical scenarios. These allow participants to engage with complex or sensitive topics without direct exposure to trauma, creating a space for reflection while preserving emotional safety.

Safety personnel and support structures

- Designate a safety person who participants can approach if they feel uncomfortable.
- This person has the authority to pause the game or intervene with facilitators to address situations that may become overwhelming.
- Encourage participants to take breaks or step out whenever necessary, without needing to explain themselves.

By integrating these practices, facilitators create a space that is both immersive and caring, allowing participants to explore meaningful themes while feeling supported and empowered throughout the larp experience.





LARP SAFETY

SAFETY TOOLS IN-GAME AND OUT-OF-GAME

Feeling safe makes us brave! Safety is the foundation of larp design. Thanks to it, we dare to do things that we wouldn't in real life. Without it, participants may feel exposed, unsafe, or harmed instead of supported and inspired. Safety and calibration tools are the mechanisms we introduce to ensure that participants can fully engage in play while knowing that they can stop, adjust, or step back at any time.

We distinguish between:

In-game tools: mechanisms embedded in the fiction that allow players to communicate boundaries or shift intensity without breaking immersion. Each larp culture have their specific signals or own codes, often in their native language, here we're showcasing only few examples:

- **“Cut/Brake” system** – players say “cut” to immediately stop a scene or “brake” to slow it down.
- **Palm up/Palm down** - calibration tool, palm moving up - encouraging to escalate the scene (e.g. scream louder), palm moving down - asking to calm down (e.g. lower your voice).
- **Red/Yellow/Green** - players say “red” to immediately stop a scene, “yellow” to lower intensity, show that their boundaries are nearly overstepped and asking to step back, “green” to encourage to go on (e.g. be more intimidating or allowing for a pretended intimacy), depending on larp there might be different coding, (e.g. instead of saying “green” - saying “YOLO”).
- **Look Down** (Nordic tradition) - to signal that you wish to fade out from a scene without words.
- **OK check-in** is a simple safety calibration tool you use during play to make sure your co-player is comfortable with what's happening. You hold out your hand toward your co-player, usually with your thumb and index finger forming an “O” (like the “OK” sign) or simply making a small circle with your fingers. You're silently asking: “Are you okay?” If the co-player is okay, they return the same “OK” sign. If they're not fully okay but can continue, they might respond with a “so-so” gesture (hand wobble) to signal caution. If they're not okay and need to stop, they shake their head or show a clear “no” gesture (depending on larp, can be thumbs down, Off sign etc), and play should immediately de-escalate or pause.

Out-of-game tools: agreements and practices outside the fiction, supporting safety before, during and after play. There are many different practices from various larp cultures, here are just few examples:

- **Code of conduct:** Outlines the expected behaviour and responsibilities of the players during the larp, it often includes vision and values that potential players should share.
- **Transparency in casting:** Players know beforehand with whom they will be bound to interact and in case of any objection can intervene.
- **Transparency in event rules and game mechanics:** Clarity builds trust, consistency and predictability reduce players's uncertainty and anxiety before the larp.
- **Opt-out policy:** Players can leave scenes or the whole larp without having to justify themselves.
- **On-Site support:** Designate an off area or cool-down space for anyone needing a break. Safety team members should be visible and accessible but not intrusive, offering help when needed while respecting players' autonomy and privacy.

Safety tools should be explained clearly before the larp starts, practiced briefly if possible, and normalized so that using them is never stigmatized.

CONSENT: PRE-GAME AND DURING-GAME LEVELS

Consent is not a one-time checkbox, but a continuous process of negotiation and respect. In larp, we ask people to embody emotions, conflicts, and relationships that may touch sensitive areas, even more. For this reason, consent must be layered:

Pre-game consent:

- **Pre-Larp Framing:** Clarify that while experiences may feel intense, they remain fictional. Emphasize that self-care is prioritized over "finishing the story." Players are always more important than their characters.
- **Content warnings:** Announce what themes will appear in the larp (e.g, violence, discrimination, grief, etc.).
- **Consent calibration:** use tools such as the "Lines and Veils" method, where participants set clear boundaries (Lines = "off limits", Veils = "fade to black").
- **Character negotiation:** ensure that players know they can adjust or refuse roles, and that casting is a dialogue.

During-game consent:

- Hand signals or safe words
- Calibration workshops: small warm-up scenes where participants try out the intensity of play and learn how to signal limits.
- Active check-ins: facilitators and safety team monitoring body language, mood, and energy of participants.

Consent ensures that participation remains voluntary, enthusiastic, and reversible. Remember that consent is continuous. It can be given, adjusted, or withdrawn at any time.

MANAGING EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING DURING THE LARP

Larps often engage with strong emotions such as love, conflict, oppression, grief, euphoria. While this is part of their transformative power, it also requires care. Emotional well-being is a shared responsibility between designers, facilitators, and players. While it is often emphasized that players' emotional well-being is the priority, we sometimes forget about the organizing crew. They are placed in particularly stressful situations: striving to provide an excellent experience for participants, meeting high expectations, and demonstrating that the larp is a success.

Therefore, organizers also need support structures: clear division of responsibilities, moments of rest and debrief for themselves, and an atmosphere where they can openly share struggles without fear of judgment. Caring for the facilitators' emotional health not only prevents burnout but also ensures that the overall event remains sustainable, safe, and fulfilling for everyone involved. Nobody feels good when organizers are all the time tense and overwhelmed.

Managing well-being isn't about avoiding challenges. Instead, it's about ensuring that participants can face difficulties with support, choice, and resilience. It also involves fostering self-regulation, encouraging players to take responsibility for their own emotions, and providing tools to manage and process them effectively.

ONBOARDING, DEBRIEFING AND DE-ROLING: TOOLS FOR ENGAGING AND DISENGAGING PARTICIPANTS

Larp often evokes strong emotions, blurring the line between character and player in a phenomenon known as “bleed”: emotions evoked in the character we inhabit can transfer to the player. If managed safely this emotional transfer allows for deep and transformative experiences, empathy and understanding. It’s a powerful tool for creating connection and can be even therapeutic. Onboarding, debriefing, and de-rolling are essential tools to help players manage bleed and leave the game in a healthy mental state.

Onboarding: Preparing for Immersion

Pre-larp workshops are crucial in setting up the learning process for both designers and players. These workshops introduce participants to the rules, themes, and characters of the game, while also providing a space to discuss the educational goals. These sessions can act as “learning situations” where participants start to internalize the educational objectives before the game even begins. Onboarding prepares players before a larp by setting expectations, explaining boundaries, and ensuring emotional readiness. It includes workshops to build trust and discuss sensitive themes. For example, in *Mad About the Boy*, a post-apocalyptic larp exploring gender and survival, players engage in consent-based workshops before the game begins. These exercises establish a safe environment and help players differentiate between themselves and their characters, reducing the risk of emotional bleed. Other workshops can create space and time for the players to discuss character relationships beforehand and understand a common ground when it comes to expectations and boundaries.

De-Roling: Separating Player from Character

De-rolling is the intentional process of stepping out of character. Players might physically remove costume pieces or recite a phrase to symbolically leave the role behind. For example: engaging them in a ritual where they remove elements of their character’s costume to signify their transition back to reality. This process reinforces the boundary between the character and the player, helping participants to mentally and emotionally return to their own identities. Exercises can include writing a goodbye letter to the character, letting go of physical mannerisms or visual elements strongly associated with the character. In a way, it is the opposite of what happens in the onboarding phase, this time allowing participants to get back into their own body, mind and emotions.

Debriefing: Processing the Experience

Debriefing after a larp allows players to reflect and process their emotions. Structured discussions help participants separate their personal feelings from those of their characters. Discussing the choices and actions a character made during the game helps re-establish the “character alibi”: the player doesn’t need to carry those conflicts or difficult decisions as a personal guilt outside of the game. Separation is needed to properly process and reflect. Debriefing can take many forms, depending on the goals of the session and the nature of the larp:

- **Group reflection** immediately after the larp allows participants to share emotions, first impressions, and personal reactions.
- **Paired or small-group discussions** offer a more intimate setting for participants to explore specific dynamics, dilemmas, or conflicts they encountered during the game.
- **Content-focused or thematic workshops** can deepen learning by connecting larp experiences to specific knowledge areas.

Facilitation techniques can vary to support engagement and insight:

- **Fishbowl discussions** allow a subset of participants to discuss a topic while others observe, then rotate roles to ensure all voices are heard.
- **World Café-style conversations** rotate participants through multiple small-group discussions, generating diverse perspectives on key questions.
- **Structured reflection exercises** can guide participants to consider their emotional responses, ethical choices, or team dynamics.
- **Scenario analysis** encourages participants to revisit key moments, explore alternative decisions, and examine the consequences of different actions within the larp.



The Importance of these practices

Onboarding, de-roling, and debriefing are crucial for maintaining players' mental and emotional well-being. Without these practices, players may experience unresolved feelings, or difficulty distinguishing between in-game and real-life emotions. Structured transitions support healthy disengagement from the intensity of larp, ensuring that participants can safely process and metabolise their experiences. This is particularly important in a larp that plans on players to make a lucid conversation on the topics presented, or expect them to reflect on them in a constructive way.

Feedback and reflection mechanisms

In larp, feedback and reflection mechanisms play a critical role in enhancing both the learning experience and the emotional impact for participants. These mechanisms help designers refine their games, assist players in processing their experiences, and create a structure for deeper engagement with the themes and dynamics of the larp. For designers, gathering feedback from players is essential to refining their larp. Player feedback offers designers insights into the effectiveness of game mechanics, narrative structures, and emotional or intellectual engagement. Designers can collect this feedback through surveys, interviews, or post-larp debriefing sessions, which offer important information on how the larp was experienced. This can inform future iterations of the game, making each version more effective at achieving its goals.

Surveys are another effective tool for gathering structured feedback from players. These can include questions about the game's mechanics, the players' emotional engagement, and the overall impact of the experience. Surveys provide designers with quantitative and qualitative data that can be used to refine the larp's design.



BEN (M)

LARP DESIGN WORKSHOP

GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATORS IN CREATING SCENARIOS

This workshop is a **beginning**, not a demand for a finished game. It can end whenever participants wish. Whether this is the only session they attend, or the start of a longer design process, all approaches are valid. The principle guiding us is PLAY: have fun, play while creating a meaningful story. In play, resistance can be joyful, and transformation can begin with a game.

This is:

- A chance to find **new ways to tell your stories**.
- A space where **small narratives can be powerful**.
- An invitation to **experiment, to dare, to own the process**.

Remember:

- **Design serves you**, not the other way around.
- **No pressure** to “get it right”. This is a **safe, exploratory space**.

Facilitator Considerations

- Ideally led by a **queer facilitator (Q2Q)**.
- If you are an ally, be open about that. Check in with a **reference group** for feedback.
- Ensure **emotional safety** and **psychological accessibility**.

WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

PHASE 1: PREPARING PARTICIPANTS FOR CO-CREATION

1. Creating a Safe Environment and Liberating Energy

- **Round of Names & Pronouns** (voluntary sharing only).

2. Rotating Partner Circle (3 Questions, 1 Minute Each)

This is a quick exercise designed to encourage active listening and connection between participants. Everyone will form two concentric circles—an inner circle and an outer circle—so that each person is standing face-to-face with a partner. Once the circles are formed and everyone has a partner, the facilitator will ask a question. Each pair will have **2 minutes total** (1 minute per person) to respond. **One person shares while the other listens silently**, then they switch roles.

The three questions are:

- **“Tell the person in front of you an interesting fact about your name.”**
This could be where it comes from, what it means, who chose it, a nickname you’ve had, or even how you feel about it.
- **“What is a value that is important to you and why?”**
This encourages people to reflect on what matters to them (honesty, creativity, independence, kindness, etc.) and briefly explain why it’s meaningful.
- **“Tell the person about something that makes you happy.”**
This can be anything, whether it’s a hobby, a memory, a person, a place, a routine, anything that brings them genuine joy or comfort.

After each question round is complete, the outer circle rotates one step to the right (or to the left, as long as it’s the same direction for everyone!), so everyone is now face-to-face with a new partner. The process then repeats with the next question.

- Continue until all three questions have been answered with three different partners.

3. Embodiment Exercises

Walking Awareness

- Participants walk around the room, becoming aware of their breath, posture, and pace. The facilitator guides them through the exercise, instructing them on pacing and giving them cues.
- Increase and decrease pace gradually, without collisions. Be mindful of the space: if everyone is gathering in the same areas, picture the floor as a shifting platform and distribute the weight equally.
- Shift to imitating others - when instructed by the facilitator, one person changes their walk very visibly. Without talking, the others must notice and imitate the new walk until the group moves the same way.

Note: if it is impossible to perform a walking exercise due to space or personal necessities, this exercise can be done sitting and interacting with hand movements (It can be useful to choose an object each to interact with. Any object will do!).

Object Exercise

- Pass an everyday object (like a pen) around the circle.
- Each person mimes using it as a completely different item (e.g., violin bow, toothbrush, dagger), while the rest of the group guesses which.
- Encourage spontaneity and uniqueness. Remind them to be quick and not to overthink. The objective is to not repeat objects that have already been mimed.

Storytelling Warm-Up

- **Untold** is a fast-paced, collaborative storytelling game designed to build creative flow, group cohesion, and improvisation skills, without requiring anyone to share real personal experiences, unless they choose to. Each player writes two intriguing or evocative story titles (real or fictional) on slips of paper and places them face up in the center. One player begins as the Storyteller and selects a title they did not write; the person who wrote that title becomes the Prompter. The Storyteller opens with the line: *"I'm going to tell you a story I've never told before..."* and begins narrating a short, improvised tale inspired by the title. The Prompter's role is to actively support and shape the story without taking it over. They can ask open-ended questions ("What were you feeling?" "What did it smell like?"), offer challenges ("Add a complication," "Reveal a secret," "Introduce a stranger", "Enter the bedroom", "You hear someone knocking on the door"), or guide the pacing ("Go slower," "Wrap it up"). They should aim to keep the story vivid and surprising, helping the Storyteller lean into details, tension, and turning points. The rest of the group listens silently unless invited to answer a question by the Storyteller ("Do you

remember somebody else being there?”). Stories end with an open question or unresolved mystery (e.g., “And I never found out who left the key.”), after which the roles rotate: the Prompter becomes the next Storyteller, a new title is chosen, and the game continues. Stories can be drawn from real memories, complete fiction, or a mix. What matters is the shared act of creation and the permission to experiment.

PHASE 2: BRAINSTORMING AND COLLABORATION FOR IDEA DEVELOPMENT

Thematic Clustering

- Divide into **small groups or pairs**.
- First round: Discuss **themes that need more representation** from a queer perspective.
 - These can be LGBTQIA+ specific (e.g., trans joy, euphoria, community history, discrimination).
 - Or broader (e.g., climate collapse, gentrification, pay gap, accessibility) seen through queer lenses.
 - Or personal (e.g., my first love, my first heartbreak, the day I finally got the present I truly wanted)
- Write each idea/theme on post-its and arrange them on the table like a **branching tree of options**.

PHASE 3: COLLECTING EXPERIENTIAL DATA AND TRANSLATING IT INTO DESIGN

NanoLarp Prototyping

Introduce the concept:

A NanoLarp is a minimal, quickly designed larp. It can be described in under 300 words, requires minimal materials and writing, and is playable in any space. The focus is on core ideas (emotions, dynamics, or situations) rather than elaborate world-building or mechanics.

Instead of relying on long character sheets or dense scenario texts, Nanolarps often use symbolic props, improvisation, and embodied play to create meaning. Increasingly, designers are also replacing written materials with multimedia elements such as voice memos, short video prompts, ambient soundscapes, or image-based inspiration.

These tools can evoke mood, backstory, or emotional tone in more intuitive and sensory ways, helping players connect to the experience quickly and creatively. Nanolarps embrace the idea that games can be powerful even when they are flexible, ephemeral, and created on the spot.

There is the possibility of running a longer format of this section by having participants play one NanoLarp to familiarise themselves with the idea. You can find one suitable example here:



[SNOW](#)

Produced by Liveform


Scenario by Agata “Świstak” Lubańska

If the time available for the workshop doesn't allow it, it's a good idea to still show the examples provided.

Design in Action

- Stay in your group.
- Choose one theme from your “post-it tree”.
- Build a Nanolarp prototype:
 - **IDEA:** Why is this worth playing?
This is the heart of your game. Ask yourself: *What is the emotional core or political question I want players to explore?* Your idea doesn't need to be complex. Sometimes small, focused stories are the most powerful.
 - **SETTING:** What space are you using? (Symbolic, imagined, literal)
Think about where your game takes place. Is it in a literal room (a kitchen, a bus stop), a symbolic space (the inside of a closet, a memory), or something imaginary (a dreamscape, a sort of utopia)
 - **SITUATION:** Who are you? Why are you there? What's happening?
This is the dramatic premise. What's the moment in time being played? What brought these characters together, and what's unfolding right now? You don't need elaborate backstories: just a **clear, shared situation** to act from.
 - **CHARACTERS/RELATIONS:** Are roles assigned or co-created?
Decide how much you want to define the characters. You can give them full roles, short prompts, or let players create them together at the beginning. Also think about: *How do these people relate to each other? Are they lovers, strangers, rivals, family?*
 - **STRUCTURE:** Does the game have scenes? A timeline? A goal?
How is time used inside the story? Is it divided into scenes? Does something trigger change? Is there a goal (solve a problem, reach a decision, sit with discomfort)? Consider whether your structure is open and fluid, or guided and sequential.

Use WYSIWYG principles and symbolic objects if needed. Minimalism is a tool, not a constraint.



WYSIWYG stands for *What You See Is What You Get*, it is a design principle in larp where the physical and aesthetic elements presented to players - such as costumes, props, and spaces - are treated as literal and diegetic within the game. Instead of asking players to imagine a sword where there's a stick, or a grand palace where there's a classroom, WYSIWYG embraces the idea that what's physically present is what exists in the game world. It also encourages to create larp ideas that can be played in accessible "regular" spaces such as someone's flat or a garden rather than expensive or harder-to-get locations.

TIP!

Presentation and Restitution

- Each group presents their NanoLarp to the rest of the group.
- Run a round of **constructive feedback**:
 - What excited you about?
 - What would you love to see more of?
 - What felt unique or authentic?

Critique is **not the goal**. Engaged encouragement is.

CLOSING NOTES

- Invite participants to **continue working** on their ideas, or let them end here. This workshop can be modulated to be a one-shot experience or to be repeated and extended for a longer approach. If the group decides to keep working on their design, consider the possibility of running **Alpha tests** and **Beta tests**: sessions in which they play their game and then make changes, adjust or expand based on their experience, or offer it to other people to try.
- Remind them that their story and their view **matter**, and even a tiny larp or an apparently mundane story can **make a big difference**.
- Offer follow-up channels (email group, future meetups, or online feedback form).



GLOSSARY

LGBTQIA+ DICTIONARY AND TERMINOLOGY

Agender - A person who does not identify with any gender. They may feel genderless or experience a complete lack of gender identity.

Aromantic (Aro) - A person who experiences little or no romantic attraction to others, distinct from asexuality.

Asexual (Ace) - Someone who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others. Asexuality exists on a spectrum, and individuals within the ace community may have varying experiences with attraction and intimacy. For example, demisexual people, who typically only experience sexual attraction after forming a strong emotional bond, are often included under the asexual umbrella.

Bisexual (bi), Pansexual (pan) - A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to more than one gender, but not necessarily at the same time or in the same way.

Cisgender (Cis) - A person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Coming Out - The process of revealing one's LGBTQIA+ identity to others. This is often a deeply personal decision and can be an ongoing journey, as individuals may choose to come out in different contexts at different times. It's important to distinguish this from outing, which is when someone discloses another person's identity without their consent. Outing is widely regarded as a breach of trust and a form of aggression, as it can expose someone to emotional harm, discrimination, or danger, especially in unsupportive environments.

Deadnaming - The act of referring to a transgender or nonbinary person by their birth name, which they no longer use. This is generally considered disrespectful unless explicitly permitted by the individual.

Gay - A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of the same gender. Often used to describe men but can be used for anyone regardless of gender.

LGBTQIA+ DICTIONARY AND TERMINOLOGY

Gender Dysphoria - Distress or discomfort that a person may experience due to a mismatch between their gender identity and the sex assigned at birth or societal expectations.

Gender Euphoria – A feeling of joy, affirmation, or well-being that a person may experience when their gender identity is recognized, validated, or expressed in ways that align with who they truly are. Gender euphoria is often described as the positive counterpart to gender dysphoria, highlighting the emotional and psychological benefits of living authentically.

Genderfluid - A gender identity that shifts or changes over time, fluctuating between different genders or expressions.

Gender Identity - A person's internal sense of their own gender, which may or may not align with the sex assigned at birth. Gender identities can include male, female, both, neither, or something else entirely.

Genderqueer - A term for people whose gender identity falls outside the categories of male and female. It may overlap with nonbinary but can also include gender nonconformity more broadly.

Heteronormativity - The assumption that heterosexuality is the default or norm, often leading to the marginalisation of non-heterosexual identities.

Intersectionality – A framework for understanding how multiple aspects of a person's identity - such as race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, and more , interact and overlap to shape their experiences of privilege and oppression. The term highlights that discrimination is not experienced in isolation, but as a web of interconnected systems. An intersectional approach helps ensure that experiences are acknowledged in their full complexity, and that efforts toward inclusion and representation consider diverse, overlapping realities, not just single-issue identities.

Intersex - A term for individuals born with physical sex characteristics (such as genitals, chromosomes, or hormone patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies. Intersex people may have diverse experiences with their gender identity.

LGBTQIA+ DICTIONARY AND TERMINOLOGY

Lesbian – Traditionally defined as someone who identifies as a woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women. Today, the term is also understood as a broader identity that extends beyond rigid gender definitions. In some contexts, the word sapphic is used as a more inclusive term, offering space for identities that do not fit neatly into binary gender categories but still resonate with lesbian or woman-loving-woman experiences.

LGBTQIA+ - An acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and Aromantic. The “+” represents a broad spectrum of other sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions not explicitly listed. It's important to note that this acronym has evolved over time and will likely continue to do so, as language and understanding around gender and sexuality develops. The changes reflect ongoing efforts to be more inclusive and respectful of diverse identities and experiences.

LGBTQIA+phobia – A broad term encompassing prejudice, fear, hostility, or discrimination toward individuals based on their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Homophobia** (against gay people),
- **Transphobia** (against transgender and gender-diverse people),
- **Biphobia** (against bisexual people, often involving erasure or invalidation),
- **Interphobia** (against intersex people, including medical or social attempts to enforce binary norms).

Minority Stress - The chronic stress experienced by individuals who belong to marginalized or stigmatized social groups, such as LGBTQIA+ people, due to their position in society. Unlike everyday stress, minority stress stems from systemic discrimination, social exclusion, internalized stigma, and the constant need to navigate prejudice or hide aspects of one's identity. It helps explain how social environments contribute to the health disparities faced by minorities, and why creating affirming, inclusive spaces is vital for well-being.

Misgendering - Referring to someone using incorrect pronouns or terms that do not align with their gender identity. It can be harmful, especially if done intentionally.

LGBTQIA+ DICTIONARY AND TERMINOLOGY

Nonbinary (Enby) - A person whose gender identity does not fit within the traditional binary of male or female. Nonbinary people may identify as a mix of genders, as neither gender, or in some other way. They are part of the transgender community, as they don't identify as the gender they were assigned at birth.

Pronouns - Words used to refer to someone in place of their name (e.g., he/him, she/her, they/them). Many people include their pronouns to ensure respect for their gender identity.

Queer - A reclaimed umbrella term for individuals who do not conform to conventional sexual orientations or gender identities. While once used as a slur, it is now embraced by many, but not all, within the community.

Romantic Orientation - Refers to who a person is romantically attracted to, which may differ from their sexual orientation. Examples include heteroromantic, biromantic, homoromantic, and aromantic.

Sexual Orientation - Refers to who a person is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to. Common orientations include gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, and asexual and other labels.

Transgender (Trans) - A person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans individuals may or may not undergo medical procedures to align their body with their gender identity, and their identity is valid regardless.

Transitioning - The process by which a person begins living as the gender they identify with, which can involve social, legal, or medical steps (e.g., changing name/pronouns, hormone therapy, surgeries).

GLOSSARY

LARP DICTIONARY AND TERMINOLOGY

Agency - The player's ability to make meaningful decisions that affect the story or outcome of a larp. Agency is key to maintaining immersion and engagement.

Alibi - The social and psychological mechanism that allows players to act in ways that are different from their real-world selves because they are "in character." It creates a buffer between the player and the character's actions.

Bleed - The emotional or psychological spillover between a player's real-life emotions and their in-character (IC) emotions. Bleed can occur in both directions: when the player's real emotions affect their character (bleed-in) or when the character's emotions affect the player (bleed-out).

Boffer larp - A style of larp that uses foam weapons (boffers) for physical combat. These games are often rules-heavy to account for combat, and safety is a high priority.

Calibration - A safety mechanism in which players check in with each other during the game to ensure that everyone is comfortable with how scenes are unfolding. This includes the use of safe words or gestures to adjust intensity levels or change the direction of the play.

Character Sheet - A document that provides information about a character's background, abilities, goals, and motivations. This sheet helps guide players in embodying their character during the larp.

Collaborative Storytelling - A key feature of larp where the narrative is co-created by the players, often influenced by their in-game actions, character interactions, and the environment. Unlike traditional role-playing games (RPGs), where the game master directs the story, larp relies on multiple participants to shape the outcome.

Debriefing - A structured session after the larp ends, where players can reflect on their experiences, process emotions, and provide feedback to each other. Debriefing helps players step out of character and reconnect with reality, especially after intense emotional scenes.

LARP DICTIONARY AND TERMINOLOGY

Design Team - The group of people responsible for creating and shaping a larp, including its concept, mechanics, narrative, characters, and overall player experience.

Diegesis - The fictional world of the larp. Everything that exists and occurs within this world is considered diegetic, and it forms the basis of the game's reality.

Experience Design - The process of designing a larp in such a way that players not only engage with the game mechanics but also with the emotional, social, and physical experiences offered by the scenario.

Facilitator - The individual or team responsible for managing the flow of the larp and ensuring that players understand the rules and objectives. Facilitators guide players through pre-larp workshops, calibration processes, and debriefing sessions. They act as a point of contact for questions and concerns, helping maintain the safety and integrity of the game.

Immersion - The feeling of being fully absorbed in the game world, where players lose awareness of the real world and deeply engage with the fictional universe. Immersion can be emotional, physical, or intellectual, and it is a key goal for many larps.

In-Character (IC) - Refers to actions, dialogue, or behaviors that are part of the character's role within the game world. When players are IC, they are fully engaged in the diegetic world and role-playing their character's thoughts, emotions, and actions.

In-game (Diegetic) - Refers to elements that exist within the world of the larp. For example, diegetic dialogue means that the characters are speaking in-world, as opposed to off-game interactions that exist outside the narrative world.

Mechanics - The rules, systems, or tools used in a larp to structure play, guide interaction, and support desired outcomes. Mechanics can range from complex rule sets (e.g., for combat, magic, or resource management) to light-touch narrative tools (e.g., confession scenes, timed events, or emotional calibration cues). They help define what is possible within the fiction and how players can affect the world or each other. Mechanics may be diegetic (visible and acknowledged within the game world) or meta (used outside the fiction to influence play). Well-designed mechanics serve the larp's theme, tone, and player experience, whether to encourage strategy, foster immersion, heighten drama, or ensure safety.

LARP DICTIONARY AND TERMINOLOGY

Meta-techniques - Tools or mechanics used to influence or enhance gameplay without breaking immersion. Meta-techniques allow players to convey information or adjust the scene without leaving the in-game world. Examples include safe words or narrative control mechanisms like "cut" or "pause".

Nordic larp - A style of larp developed in the Nordic countries that focuses on immersion, emotional realism, and often explores serious themes such as politics, identity, and social issues. Nordic larp tends to emphasise the role of the player as a co-creator of the narrative.

NPC (Non-Player Character) - A character in the game that is controlled by the organisers or facilitators rather than by the players. NPCs often serve as narrative drivers, providing plot points or creating obstacles for players to navigate. They help guide the story but are not part of the main player-driven narrative.

Off-Game (OG) - Refers to anything that happens outside the fictional world of the larp. Off-game interactions include conversations about game logistics, safety, or personal matters that are unrelated to the characters or the storyline.

Pre-larp Workshop - A session held before the game begins to help players prepare for the larp. This may include character building, rules explanations, calibration, and emotional preparation. Workshops can also help foster group dynamics and provide a safe space to practise certain in-game mechanics.

Reflection - A process, usually occurring after the larp ends, where players think back on their experience. Reflection is often guided through debriefing sessions and helps players process the game's themes, emotions, and their personal impact.

Safety mechanics - Pre-agreed verbal signals used by players during a larp to indicate discomfort or a desire to adjust the intensity of a scene. Common safe words include "cut" to stop a scene, "break" to pause, or "safe" to signal the need for recalibration. Safe words are essential in intense or emotional larps to ensure player safety and comfort.

Sandbox larp - A type of larp where the game world is open-ended, allowing players to freely explore and interact with the environment and other characters. Sandbox larps often have no set narrative, giving players the freedom to create their own stories.

LARP DICTIONARY AND TERMINOLOGY

Steering - A technique where players make decisions based not on what their character would necessarily do, but on what will enhance the narrative or experience for other players. Steering is often used to ensure that scenes develop in a way that benefits the entire group.

Transparency - A technique in larp where players openly communicate about their goals, emotions, or desires to ensure that scenes develop in a way that aligns with the overall narrative. This can sometimes involve breaking the diegetic immersion to ensure that everyone is comfortable and engaged.

Workshopping - A key part of the Nordic larp tradition, workshopping refers to activities, discussions, and exercises that prepare players for the emotional and narrative aspects of the game. These workshops help align expectations and build trust among participants.

Zero-to-Hero - A character development trajectory where a player begins with a weak or underdeveloped character who gradually becomes more powerful or influential over the course of the game.







ENHANCE EMPATHY AND
UNDERSTANDING TOWARDS LGBTQIA+
COMMUNITIES THROUGH LARP

