



Live-action role playing and the affordances of social media

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Abstract

Live-action role-playing (larp) is characterized by participants' physical and mental immersion in a storyworld, played out in a specific location during a fixed period of time. Most of the immersion is realized during the live event itself, where a collective story is acted out in physical space in real time. However, contemporary larping also usually entails significant interaction and communication between players, and between players and organisers, before and after the event itself, through digital media. In this article, we explore the social media afterlife of one of the most significant Nordic larp events in recent years, Fortune and Felicity (2017). Using an affordance framework, we discuss what happens to the "liveness" of the larp when it is extended into social media. Through the affordances of persistence, visibility, editability and associability, we analyse material from the Facebook group connected to Fortune and Felicity, used by players and organisers to prepare for the larp and, afterwards, to continue the gameplay and to de-brief. In social media, the continuum of time and space, which is characteristic of the larp event itself, is changed into asynchronous and physically separate player action. Thus, the affordances of social media, we argue, enable player interaction and collaborative storytelling in ways that change the narrative, interactive and immersive dynamics of the larp.

Keywords: live-action role-playing; storytelling; gaming; performance; liveness; affordance; social media

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Introduction

Live-action role-playing (larp) is characterized by participants' physical and mental immersion in a storyworld, played out in a specific location during a fixed period of time. Most of the immersion is realized during the live event itself, where a collective story is acted out in physical space in real time. However, contemporary larping also usually entails significant interaction and communication between players, and between players and organisers, before and after the event itself, through digital media. In this article, we explore the social media afterlife of one of the most significant Nordic larp events in recent years, *Fortune and Felicity* (2017). Using an affordance framework, we discuss what happens to the "liveness" of the larp when it is extended into social media. Through the affordances of persistence, visibility, editability and associability, we analyse material from the Facebook group associated with *Fortune and Felicity*, used by players and organisers to prepare for the larp and, afterwards, to continue the gameplay and to de-brief. In social media, the continuum of time and space, which is characteristic of the larp event itself, is changed into asynchronous and physically separate player action. Thus, the affordances of social media, we argue, enable player interaction and collaborative storytelling in ways that change the narrative, interactive and immersive dynamics of the larp.

Fortune and Felicity

Fortune and Felicity was a larp that took place during five days in May 2017. Designed and organised by Anna Westerling and Anders Hultman, *Fortune and Felicity* was based on Jane Austen's novels and included 150 participants, who, in the words of the organisers, all had the chance to "form [their] own personal Austen novel" (Westerling and Hultman 2017). The sheer scope of *Fortune and Felicity*, both in terms of the number of participants and playtime, was impressive, with the Jane Austen theme adding appeal. Drawing participants from all over the world, *Fortune and Felicity* attracted larpers as well as Janeites. The location was Medevi Brunn, the oldest spa in Sweden, which is laid out around a village street. For the purposes of the larp, Medevi Brunn was transformed into Primrose Park, the imaginary spa town in which 16 families gathered to socialise and take the waters over the course of three seasons, spring, summer and autumn. In full regency costume, players co-created a storyworld inspired by Austen's novels, developing plots, relations and characters to form a large web of stories and experiences. For most of the time, players were immersed in the storyworld and lived, acted and reacted as their characters, in interaction with each other and the physical surroundings. The only interruptions were off-game workshops in which participants had a chance to discuss what had happened, plan for upcoming

events and develop characters and relations.

While the core of *Fortune and Felicity* consisted of physical, real-time gaming, social media turned out to be a very important part of the larp experience as a whole. Game designers set up different Facebook groups associated with the larp. A general group served the whole larp and all players, while other Facebook groups were set up for specific family groups. The material analysed in this article consists of posts made in the general Facebook group, which was created on 8 January 2017, almost five months before the larp event took place. Pre-larp posts ended on 25 May, the same day the larp event started, and post-larp posts started immediately after the end of the larp event, on 28 May. Activity peaked during the two weeks following the larp, significantly dropping after a month. The material consists of several hundred Facebook posts, text material amounting to over 100 000 words. The posts concern everything from practical matters such as getting to and from the event and how to prepare one's costume to more complex discussions on how participants experienced the larp, including the use and usefulness of meta-techniques, giving thanks to designers, game masters and co-players, and thoughtful comments on the larger significance of the larp, to participants' lives or more generally.

We carried out fieldwork at *Fortune and Felicity*, participating in the game on the same terms as other players. Like everyone else, we acted and interacted as our characters, immersing in the storyworld. Thus, our position as researchers was premised on always and simultaneously participating in the larp and studying it (Lundell 2014, Nordgren 2014). Our interpretation of the larp event itself is wholly based upon our own experiences in the larp and our understanding of the interactions that took place. For the quotations from the discussions in the Facebook group, we have requested and received consent from all players quoted.

Embodied storytelling and liveness in larp

Although *Fortune and Felicity* bore superficial resemblance to reenactment, larping is fundamentally about role-playing and collective storytelling, rather than the recreation of a historical past. A larp is carefully designed to create a fictional world populated by named characters and their narrative trajectories. At the same time, there is no script. Action unfolds through improvisation and players have considerable agency to decide, individually and collectively, how the story should move along. Importantly, however, actions happen within a mutually agreed framework and according to a number of rules and principles set up by the game design: "activity takes place in a fictional reality shared with others. Breaking that fictional reality is seen as a breach in the play itself" (Harviainen *et al.* 2018: 88).

Thus, in larp terminology, engaging with the storyworld means entering

the “magic circle” (Hopeametsä 2014, Montola 2012, Montola 2014, Stenros 2014). This is often achieved through almost ritualistic means. In *Fortune and Felicity*, a piece of signature music, performed live, marked the beginning of the game. Hearing the music, players were transported to the storyworld of the larp, turning into characters. Once inside the magic circle, everyone is part of the storyworld, which means that there is no audience. In the words of Hoover et al (2018), “to access the (embodied, co-creative, emergent) intended aesthetic experience of the piece, one has to perform, become an actor” (217). Furthermore, larp works through the embodied action and interaction of players. Whatever players want their characters to do, they actually have to do themselves (Tychsen et al 2006, 255. As Harviainen et al (2018) put it: “larp is often understood as role-playing that takes what happens in a player’s imagination and makes it ‘real’ or embodied: instead of describing a character’s actions, a player performs them” (87). The player entering a larp will be designated a character through which s/he will experience the whole game, both physically and emotionally. Mochocki (2018) discusses this in terms of “player-character perceptual unity” through which “at least part of the player’s sensorial input is supposed to be identical with the character’s” (97). Player-character perceptual unity produces “immersion”, a central concept especially in the Nordic larp tradition (Bowman 2018, Hoover et al. 2018, Montola and Holopainen 2012, White, Harviainen and Boss, 2012), but also theorised by Ryan (2001) as an active process of entering a fictional world more generally, of engaging with art, and argues for ways in which to renegotiate interactivity, criticality and immersion.

Inside the magic circle of the larp, everything happens in real time. In larp, player action can be planned but not rehearsed or repeated. The experience of the larp is an experience in the moment which depends on players’ continuous use of space and time. Drawing on performance studies, Hoover et al describe this as “an unrepeatable stretch of events and experiences here and now, at a particular juncture of time, space, and people, with some opening to the unexpected and spontaneous” (222). In this sense, larp is clearly part of live culture. “Liveness” is often used to discuss the particular characteristics of ephemerality, immediacy, presence, and dynamic interaction found in cultural expressions such as theatre and other performative practice (Auslander 2008, Phelan 2003, Schneider 2011). As Allain and Harvie (2014) observe, there is also a social dimension to liveness: “Performance’s liveness is social because it produces meaning in a dynamic process, rather than in the fixed and passive form that recorded media seem to present” (203). This is particularly so for larp as a participatory form of cultural expression.

The seeming opposition between the live and the recorded, brought up by Allain and Harvie, is at the heart of the critical debate on liveness. While Phelan

emphasises liveness as an intrinsic quality of performance, with a particular political potential thanks to its non-reproducible nature, Auslander contextualises liveness by situating it specifically in mediatized culture. Martin Barker (2003) points out that Auslander's basic position is "that the 'live' is both historically and semiotically dependent on its opposite, the 'recorded': 'the live can only exist in a context where there is recording'" (34). In other words, Auslander bases his analysis of liveness on the assumed opposition between recorded and non-recorded cultural expressions, showing how the two are interdependent in mediatized culture. Auslander is critical of conceptions of performance that valorise liveness over mediatised forms, especially the suggestion that some inherent qualities are lost in the processes of recording and reproduction. This does not mean that he entirely rejects the concept. This interdependence does not rule out the basic premise that liveness is a quality of certain types of cultural expression, like theatre, dance, music performances and larp, that is not found in other forms. In analogy with this stance, we want to show that even though liveness is fundamental to larp, its extension into social media does not signify loss. Rather, there is a relationality that affects the dynamics of the larp. Mochocki (2021) discusses the "processual enactment of storyworlds" (151) in pre-game stage, the game itself and the post-game stage, claiming that all stages are part of the larp itself. As our analysis shows, however, these stages are not distinct or clearly sequential. Rather, the space provided by social media contributes in specific ways to the live event, pointing to the relational dynamic between live and mediated environments of larp. The integrity of the larp, we argue, is upheld in its continuation in social media where players continued to tell their stories, de-brief and reflect on their experiences, generating significant contributions to the storyworld and other kinds of content. In order to understand this relation we will use an affordance framework.

Social media affordances

Since James J. Gibson's (1979) initial use of the concept of affordance, it has been employed in various scholarly fields, primarily in studies on design and human-computer interaction (Norman 1988). It has also become increasingly important in media and communication studies, specifically in studies on digital and social media, where the relations between media platforms and possible human actions on such platforms are analysed in terms of affordances (boyd 2011, Bucher and Helmond 2017, DeVito, Birnholtz and Hancock 2017, Evans *et al.* 2017, Faraj and Azad 2012, Majchrzak *et al.* 2013, Siegert, Holmgren Caicedo and Mårtensson Hansson 2020, Treem and Leonardi 2013). In accordance with Gibson's use of the term, affordance in digital media is seen as neither inherent

in the technology nor simply a feature of a technology. Rather, affordance is about the possible interaction between an environment and its users. This means that environments, or platforms, have features and structures but only in the perception of possible interactions with these features can we speak of affordances.

The concept is useful for studies on digital and social media in that it captures “the multifaceted relational structure’ between object/technology and a user” (Faraj and Azad 2012: 254) and “enables or constrains potential behaviours and outcomes in a particular context” (Evans *et al.* 2017: 36). Our use of the concept of affordance is mainly based on scholarly work in media studies, although our domain is not social media per se but larp. As discussed above, liveness is an inherent quality of larp. In order to understand how the live event extends into the social media environment, we need to highlight the relationality between the live event and the social media actions, and how the two environments complement each other in dynamic ways. Rather than seeing the live event and the digital event of social media as separate environments, or as oppositions, we want to examine how social media in fact afford actions that change the dynamic of the larp.

As we will show, the concept of affordance offers a productive approach to understanding the relational character between the larp event and the social media interactions before and after it. In the case of *Fortune and Felicity*, social media afforded certain actions and dynamics that differed from the live event itself. At the same time, we argue, the social media activities relate in complex ways to the live event, enhancing and extending it. For us, the social media activities are both a continuation and an expansion of the live event, and as such a part of the larp as a whole. In other words, the relational aspect of affordance is useful to us in two ways. On the one hand, we highlight the two-way relation between the social media platform and the participants. On the other, we want to stress the relation between the live event and its social media extension.

Previous research on the affordances of social media has identified a number of affordances that are relevant to our analysis. The domain analysed here is larp rather than social media, which means that some affordances are more relevant. We have chosen to employ four affordances identified by social media scholars and have adapted our use of these to the specifics of larp as the domain: persistence, visibility, editability and associability (boyd 2011, Evans *et al.* 2017, Siegert, Holmgren Caicedo and Mårtensson Hansson 2020, Treem and Leonardi 2013).

Persistence

Several scholars identify *persistence* as an important affordance of social media (boyd 2011, Evans *et al.* 2017, Treem and Leonardi 2013). Persistence can be described in terms of a piece of communication that remains “accessible in the

same form as the original display after the actor has finished his or her presentation” (Treem and Leonardi 2013:155) or, put differently as “the insistent memory of the online space” (Siegert, Holmgren Caicedo and Mårtensson Hansson 2020: 10). The possibility of making communications, actions, interactions persist through social media adds a dimension to the liveness of larp as “persistence opens the door to a variety of new uses and practices: persistent conversations may be searched, browsed, replayed, annotated, visualized, restructured, and recontextualized” (Erickson and Kellogg quoted in Treem and Leonardi 2013: 155). As Treem and Leonardi argue, those actions therefore “can have consequences long past the initial point of presentation” (155). Furthermore, as danah boyd (2011) argues, persistent forms of communication “transform the acts they are capturing” (47). In the context of the larp, the written interactions on Facebook give persistence to unique, in-the-moment experiences. Situations, events, conversations that were ephemeral and in the moment were given space to be reproduced in the social media groups, thereby changing the dynamics of the larp in interesting ways.

Visibility

Visibility in digital media is discussed in two ways. The first refers to “the colloquial definition of being visible or seen” (Evans *et al.* 2017: 42). In line with this definition, Treem and Leonardi discuss visibility in terms of users’ ability to make “[b]ehaviors, knowledge, preferences, and network connections that were once invisible (or at least very hard to see) visible to others in the organization” (150). In a larp, actions and interactions are often limited to a small group of people physically engaging with each other in real time. Such actions are not necessarily accessible, or visible, to other participants. Actions might even be limited to a single individual, as thinking a thought amounts to an action in the larp. The affordances of Facebook provided for new possible actions where visibility was a major force. When posting things that had happened between specific individuals, or in the head of an individual in the larp, actions and interactions became visible to other players than those present in the original situation. Referring to Bregman and Haythornthwaite, Treem and Leonardi (2013) highlight how the affordance of visibility provides opportunities for “presentation of self” (150), which in case of larp means the opportunity to make characters and their narrative trajectories more known and understood by other players. As we will show, making these actions visible on Facebook changed the narrative structure of the larp and the dynamic of interaction.

Editability

According to Treem and Leonardi (2013), editability “refers to the fact that the individuals can spend a good deal of time and effort crafting and recrafting a communicative act before it is viewed by others” and to “the ability of an individual to modify or revise content they have already communicated” (159, see also Rice 1987 and Walther 1993). Furthermore, editability “is a function of two aspects of an interaction: communication formed in isolation from others, and asynchronicity. A speaker need not worry about regulating nonverbal cues or involuntary reactions when using an asynchronous CMC; instead, they can focus on the form of the message they hope to convey” (Treem and Leonardi 2013: 159). The possibility to formulate actions asynchronously and in isolation from other players stands in contrast to the activities of the live event, which are produced in a continuous space and time and in interaction with others. In the social media afterlife of the larp, the affordance of editability allowed participants to retell events, thoughts and actions and to formulate the communication of those events in a more coherent way. It allowed players to establish new contexts for events that happened in the live event. In effect, Facebook provided an environment where participants could not only to relive experiences together with others, but also to redress, or edit, the narratives of the larp.

Associability

In Treem and Leonardi’s words, associations “are established connections between individuals, between individuals and content, or between an actor and a presentation” (162). The first type of association, which establishes a social tie between individuals, is important to the present discussion in that Facebook allowed for participants within the larp to re-introduce connections from the live event, and to establish new social ties – but still within the frame of the larp. Thus, networks between characters were created online, building on connections that were either very intensive or more loosely established within the live event. The other form of association, the one between an individual and a piece of information, is also relevant in this context in that the Facebook group allowed people to get access to information, mostly about actions and events within the live event, that was previously unknown to them. It also filled the function of repeating actions and events, which allowed participants to re-live and reflect upon those actions in various ways.

Types of action afforded by social media

Through the affordances of social media, discussed above, new kinds of actions were made possible in the larp. In the following section, we will give examples of this and show how the live event and the social media actions stand in a productive relationship to each other.

Telling what happened and getting perspectives

One of the dominant types of action afforded by social media in *Fortune and Felicity* was telling and retelling what happened during the live event. There are numerous examples of how players in first or third person recapitulate what happened to their character, often going to great lengths to provide information that contributed to the narrative as a whole. The most straightforward way of doing this is to describe a character's development during the live event. Specific events and situations are elaborated upon, and details of conversations, actions and interactions are shared. Many such posts are pages long, and carefully narrated. These long narrativizations often describe some important episode that was crucial to the character's development or somehow came to define the character.

In many of the posts that describe a specific episode or scene, the interiority of the character comes to the forefront. In the live event, the interior state can only be surmised from speech or body language (Mochocki 2018) and the social media interactions thus add information about the fictional story and provides more narrative material. This is exemplified below, where a player describes a painful scene in which she is confronted with an unwanted proposal of marriage from a man she does not want. In a very long post, which we have shortened considerably, she describes not only what happened from her character's perspective, but also her emotional and bodily reaction to the situation:

She returns her gaze to the kneeling Lieutenant, and manages to find her voice when at last the question is posed. Lieutenant A, I... I have given the proposition much thought and consideration as you know, and... Well, I have... I have decided to accept your proposal." The way his face lights up sends a stab through her heart and she firmly refrains from running away right there and then. Everything is so quiet, the din from the ball room is as distant as if in France even, and somehow they seem to be the only ones out near the Sunflower Square. It shouldn't be possible, but it is, and there's a high pitched tone ringing in her ears through that silence, accompanying the numbness that spreads through her limbs. Lt A is pleased, going on about something that she really

doesn't follow. He keeps patting her hand as it rests on his arm, and she's glad for the support. Left foot, right foot... Routine takes over and she manages to walk all the way to their parlour without stumbling. What has she done?

The excerpt is part of a lengthy exchange in the Facebook group, where players share and comment on each other's stories. Containing 15 posts, many of which are up to 1,000 words in length, and many more comments, the thread shows how players continue to engage in their characters after the live event itself has ended, adding both narrative information and interiority.

Even though larping is inherently collaborative and communal, the individual experience of the player is idiosyncratic and intensely personal. All stories are clearly experienced from the perspective of a specific character and is focalized through him/her, limiting the perspective (Stenros and Montola 2010; Mochocki 2018). Many of the posts do highlight the first-person perspective of larp, where every player is the protagonist of their own story, but Facebook also allows players to read the stories of others. This makes it possible to put different narrative strands together, get a more complex storyworld and put players' own experiences in perspective. A lot of effort is put into clarifying the relationships between different characters and to connect narrative strands in the larp. Since the larp engaged some 150 players, the narrative strands were multiple, and one type of action afforded by Facebook was to connect, clarify and creatively suture those strands. In the example below two players discuss some events that involved both of them, but remained unclear to both.

Player 1: [...] as you can see, my game took a dark turn, and this scene was properly the breaking point.

[...]

Player 2: It sure did! I am not sure if I am more upset or grateful to mr A right now... I had no idea this was the cause of the duel!

Player 1: it wasn't. The cause was that Mr A called the Late Mr B (their father) "A cheat that never intended to honor his promise to my father

Player 2: That made much more sense. In so many ways.

In such lengthy interactions on Facebook, a narrative layer is added to events that were played out in real time, revealing emotions that perhaps could not be shown at the time, or offering contrasting perspectives on the same events. Facebook allowed players to re-live episodes, scenes and interactions which they shared with other players, but never fully understood. By sharing their respective character's perspective with others, the narrative expanded, and the experience of the larp for each player was made more complex.

Through the visibility afforded by social media, players make explicit actions and emotional states and are able to both share and discuss them. Links between characters and narrative trajectories were made through association. On Facebook, players spend a lot of time to narrate the life and events of their character, and to give psychological depth to his or her actions. On Facebook, he/she can also continue to tell the future story of the character, after the plots of the live event, to provide narrative closure. Facebook also made it possible to connect many of the narrative strands of the plot and to clarify connections between characters. These actions were made possible by the affordances of social media.

Sharing and affirming challenging experiences

In alignment with the Nordic larp tradition, one aim of *Fortune and Felicity* was to immerse in conflictual situations and elicit strong experiences and emotions (Saitta 2014, Stenros and Montola 2010). While narrating the life of a character on Facebook, the player often selects episodes and scenes that bring focus to such challenging experiences. This also made it possible for other players to react to those experiences, and to discuss the ways in which one, as a player and a character, handled them. In the example below, a player describes how her character comes to realise that her husband does not love her and attempts to transform herself to please him:


A was over the moon when Mr B proposed. He loved her! He really did!
Of course she said yes! Oh think of the adventures they would share and
how they would live happily ever after.

But then came the marriage. She found herself in a house she didn't
belong in, in a family that didn't care for her and with a husband who
didn't love her as she had thought. A felt like a bird, trapped and unable
to spread her wings and fly. All of her was suppressed and she put on
a new persona to please her husband. Anything to make him love her.
Please B! Why couldn't he just love her?

She goes on to describe the rising tension and how, at the autumn ball, she finally can take it no more:

She saw her brother and his wife, so inappropriately happy and in love. She heard about their travels to France and Italy and all their adventures there. It was too much to bear. So she drank. Oh, did she drink. And she suddenly started laughing – more than what was appropriate. She talked loudly – more loudly than was appropriate. She called out for her husband, for France, for love and companionship and let everyone see the bird flying free at last. Mr Y was not pleased.

As can be seen in this example, the affordance of editability allows for the use of literary language – the simile of the bird and free indirect discourse – which gives additional weight to the experience. Here is a clear rhetorical function, drawing attention to the experience and inviting others to engage with it. In the exchange that follows, other players affirm her experiences (player 3 in the quotation):

Player 1: gave me goosebumps! perfect(ly sad) 

Player 2: Ouch :(didn't know it was that bad...

Player 3: Unfortunately :/

Player 2: Can't help but think of how much misery/unspoken emotion there was around me A [sic] then. And also feels kinda awful now to think of how very giddy and happy and C got when Mr A told her that B would go on travels in Europe. Two different sides indeed.

Player 2: (Will want to write that too, now. Interesting to follow it from both sides... Poor? Mr A ...

Player 3: Yes, misery from both sides! B REALLY loved Mr A and just wanted him to love her back. And Miss C got his love but could never get him. It's really sad :/

As we have illustrated, many of the posts and comments deal with how to handle a difficult, challenging play. Facebook made it possible for players not only to narrativize, and frame their experiences in a literary manner, but also to affirm other players' experiences.

Giving support and feedback to other players and reflecting on the game

An important type of action is giving recognition to individual players' performance. Such comments are mostly given in words of praise, both to character and player, followed by exclamation marks and emojis. This type of action is different from the previous in that the focus here lies more on gaming rather than commenting on the story or game experiences. Many comments functioned as a way of encouraging each other as players. At times such comments also amounted to ways of reviewing the larp:

Player 1: Thanks for sharing your story. It sounds amazing!

Player 2: [...] it was amazing. I was so Lucky to surrounded by awesome ppl. and i am quite hit by the larp blues by now 🥺

Player 1: It was an amazing game. But don't worry, we will be back. And next time we can be red coats and break all the girls hearts instead ;)

Player 3: I can tell you, the breaking girls hearts thing doesn't make the Larp blues better -still wondering why the girls don't respond to me anymore 🥺

Player 2: [...] What you feel bad about? The tiara? It was PERFECT! You couldnt have played that scene better!! (since I knew it was coming I had figured out my reaction :))

This section focuses on a type of action that provided metacommentary on the larp. Reading the numerous such comments, it becomes clear that Facebook afforded actions that are part of the larp community – to give encouragement and praise to each other after the live event. This is often done during debriefing sessions at the live event (Stark 2012; see also Mochocki 2021: 163), but it was clear that Facebook provided ways to share such praise more widely on social media. On Facebook players could work in isolation and asynchronously, which made it possible for the players to reflect on the larp, their own performance and experiences and to affirm other player's experiences to an extension not possible even in the debriefs after the larp. Since the interactions on Facebook are more persistent, some interactions and narratives also demonstrated a high degree of careful deliberation and formulation, making use of a literary language. Furthermore, due to the affordance of associability Facebook also allowed players

to reach out to players they did not engage during the larp and to complement events, narrative trajectories and experiences through written interactions.

Sharing thoughts and insights of how gendered social structures affected stories, characters and players.

No matter what station, age or gender of the character, the gender structures had a profound emotional, psychological and bodily effect on both characters and players in *Fortune and Felicity*. Gender norms informed all aspects of the larp, including the social media interactions. The majority of the posts and comments are fraught with implications of what it means to be a woman or a man in a social situation defined by extremely rigid gender norms. In the example below we have a conversation between two players about the marriage of the character of player 1 and a young girl, revealing not only the gendered structures governing the larp, but also how challenging it was to fit into those structures, and even to promote them.

Player 1: [...] But then he found out that his beloved friend, almost a little sister, A had fallen into infamy by the hand of Lt. Steele. So, being the utterly inept misogynist that he was, he quickly lept into action, and asked B to marry his sister to save her from disgrace. Everyone agreed, and later, he proposed to A (who had off course not been privy to the plans). It was at that point that he realized that he.would.be.married!! Yikes! And to someone he considered a sister no less, who he would now have to produce an heir with..that got to him somewhat....Manwhile, the family were all acting nuts, and so he forcibly tried to control them via threats, pain or bribes. Which I think in the end worked out pretty well for him. He got almost everything he wanted, he would just have to live the rest of his life in a loveless marriage where the marital relations made him want to throw up.

Player 2: Woah! I so wish I had known that I was the reason for this marriage. I would have gone nuts and blow the whole place up. Allow me Sir, to blow it of post-game "THAT WAS TWO DAMNED YEARS AGO! SHE'S NOT EVEN PREGNANT! NOBODY KNOWS! WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU LOT? ALL YOU CAN THINK ABOUT IS THAT SHE IS DAMAGED GOODS NOW IN YOUR ABSURD LITTLE WORLD? SCREW YOUR HONOUR NONSENSE YOU SICK BASTARDS!" aheM. Thank you. Loved your play, you seemed so icy that I had the feeling everything around you should freeze.

This quotation illustrates how the Facebook groups provided space for players to reflect upon and share the gendered experiences in ways that were not possible in the live event. Since the live event meant immersing in such gender roles and structures, not reflecting upon them, Facebook made it possible to distance oneself from distressing and exacting experiences and start reflecting upon them. Through the affordance of persistence, allowing for “continued presence of information” (Siegert, Holmgren Caicedo and Mårtensson Hansson 2020: 3), situations that in the live event were individually experienced in the here and now could be reflected upon and political implications could be highlighted and discussed.

To sum up, the fact that acts and actions were made persistent and replicable made it possible for players to tell and retell the stories of the live event. Facebook provides an environment to produce texts in isolation and asynchronously also enabled players to produce lengthy, elaborate narrativizations of their character’s journey, and to recapitulate events and episodes. The affordance of editability provided means for the players to use rhetorical, literary language to formulate those stories and to invite other players to read them. The affordance of associability made the narrative of the larp more complex. The act of retelling stories also made it possible for players to capture challenging experiences and emotions that were ephemeral and fleeting in the live event. Facebook also made it possible to make such emotions and experiences visible to other characters/players, which generated interactions amongst players who affirmed and supported such experiences. The affordance of associability also made it possible to make connections between different characters, events, scenes in a way that was impossible in the live event.

How the affordances of social media change the dynamics of the larp

In the previous section we have described how the affordances of social media enabled actions that were not possible in the live event. We will now turn to a discussion of the larger implication of these affordances and actions for the dynamics of the larp as a whole. According to boyd (2011), with the affordances of social media, and the actions that they enable, “new dynamics emerge that shape participation” (39). What this means in our material, is that while the affordances of social media make up the potential for action, it is only in the actualization of that potential in player action that the dynamics of the larp change. What Mochocki (2021) calls the post-game phase should in fact be seen as part of the game as a whole. The possibility to share narrative situations, inner turmoil of characters and player experiences visible with other players on a bigger scale than the live

event allowed for generated a complex web of posts, comments and reactions that in fact changed the dynamics of the larp. We have identified changes in three types of dynamics of the larp: narrative, interactive and immersive dynamic.

Change in narrative dynamics

Although each player/character encounters numerous life trajectories involving multiple characters in a larp, each player/character remains at the centre of action at all times and is the protagonist of their own story. This is what larp theory refers to as first-person audience (Bowman 2018, Montola and Holopainen 2012, Stenros 2013). Furthermore, there is a perceptual unity between the player and character (Mochocki 2018). Whatever the character does and feels, the player also does and feels, and vice versa. Continuing the play on social media means moving from the embodied action of the live event to writing, from experiencing to describing. Through the affordances of social media, the perceptual unity of player/character is destabilised and it is possible for players to make things happen without having to do them themselves. In other words, the player to a lesser degree coincides with the character as they also become a narrator. This can be seen in the longer Facebook posts where the stories shift between third- and first-person narration, as well as the past and the present tense, indicating the permeability between character and player. The style of writing also indicates this, frequently shifting between present-day choice of words and expressions and a clear imitation of Regency style of writing.

Getting access to the stories of others also means that players become readers, shifting the radical first-person perspective to include viewpoints not directly experienced in the live event. Whether it is about how players who were involved in the same scene describe their varying experiences of it, or about getting information about something you did not – or could not – know in the live event, the narrative expands in two ways. Firstly, more narrative becomes available to players, more events, exchanges and plot twists are known by more people. Even if a player has not experienced an event, it becomes available and part of the game through social media. Secondly, there is an expansion in terms of layers, where the psychological dimension of several characters involved in the same event can be added to the narrative.

Another change concerns the structure of the narrative. In the live event, there are multiple narrative trajectories, but each player only experiences those directly connected to their character, unfolding in a linear way. As Tychsen et al (2006) point out, players “can therefore be seen as perceivers of individual story lines in a narrative matrix defined by the shared game space” (269) and a larp can be understood as a form of “multilinear narrative” (269) where these story lines co-exist. This becomes manifest in the social media interactions, where the

different narrative trajectories multiply, and the linear narratives combine into we prefer to call a network structure. This kind of narrative can be understood in analogy with Caroline Levine's analysis of networked narratives in which "[e]ach character acts as a node in at least one distributed network, in which any point can connect to any other without needing to go through any central site or in any fixed order, but what makes this novel so interesting and so complex is that almost all of the characters act as nodes in more than one different distributed network at a time" (Levine 2015: 125). Through the affordances of visibility, scalability and associability of social media, the narrative dynamics change. When stories and story lines become visible, a more complex web of stories emerge.

Change in interactive dynamics

In the live event, interaction between players is dominated by synchronous action. This means that interaction is direct, immediate, and co-located. For interaction to happen, players need to act in some sort of reciprocal way in which pacing is crucial (Hoover et al 2018). In the Facebook groups, by contrast, player action is asynchronous. Players write and post comments in their own time and in different locations. Thus, asynchronous action is afforded by persistence, editability, scalability, and visibility. This allows interaction at different paces, adding reflection to the spontaneity of the live event. A more persistent and more edited interaction emerges, where players can engage with each other and with the story at different paces, for longer periods of time.

Player/character separation is also different. In the live event, it is fundamental that the fictional universe is maintained through players staying in character (Harviainen 2012). As we have described, the agreement around this is powerful, and for players to step out of character, specific mechanisms and manoeuvres are used. In the Facebook groups, the distinction between acting as a character and acting as a player becomes more fluid. Through the affordances of visibility and associability, it is possible to interact as both players and characters, sometimes switching between the two positions within one single thread or even post. This adds complexity to an already highly complex interaction. Furthermore, Facebook affords community formation in different ways as affirmation and encouragement can be directly expressed. The material shows great variation in the degree to which this happens. Nevertheless, the change in interaction is significant.

Change in immersive dynamics

The live event is dominated by immersive experience (Bowman 2010, Bowman 2018). While there is no clear-cut distinction between the game as it happens live and its extension into social media, immersion is radically altered in the digital context where emotions and experiences can be externalised. As the live event

unfolds, there are limitations to how player experiences can be externalised. In-game, emotional and physical reactions are intimately linked to the character and the possibilities for expressing them are determined by what makes sense in the game, even though the range of possibilities is broad. Most often, the inner state of a character remains felt rather than spoken, or is expressed through non-verbal means (Mochocki 2021). The Facebook posts and comments, by contrast, provide a space for putting experiences into words while at the same time staying close – or even in – your character. This adds a reflective dimension to immersion.

This becomes particularly evident when it comes to the immersive experience of power structures like gender, sexuality and class. In the live event, the immersive experience of, for example, gender oppression becomes tightly connected to the body of the player who has to frame character action according to such norms, however repressive. In immersion, player and character experiences are the same (Mochocki 2018), which means that it is possible to have a direct, lived experience of a situation that in real life you might only have a reflective relationship to. Inversely, in immersion, the space for reflection is very small or even non-existent. The affordances of social media change this dynamic, adding a political dimension, where gender structures can be analysed rather than lived.

Since immersion is such a dominant experience in larping, de-briefing and de-roling are crucial. Organisers put a lot of care into providing ample time and effective techniques for this as players step out of the storyworld they have been immersed in, sometimes for days. This was true also for *Fortune and Felicity*, where extensive de-briefing was facilitated on site, both during and after the event. In social media, de-briefing continued in several interesting ways. Importantly, the time frame was expanded from the regular de-briefing workshops lasting a few hours to the potential infinity of social media discussions. Through the affordance of persistence the time period of de-briefing can be significantly extended. This is especially relevant when it comes to so-called bleed (Bowman 2015, Montola 2010, Hoover et al 2018), which sometimes occurs for a long time after the event. The experience where the distinction between the emotional state of the character and player is blurred is a well-known phenomenon, and much of the debriefing is done to handle this. Even though such workshops play an important role close to the immersive experience, through the affordances of visibility and associability, the Facebook groups offer opportunities to continue to handle the experiences of bleed by externalising and sharing them.

As we hope to have shown, the social media dimension of a major larp such as *Fortune and Felicity* offers interesting insights into the multi-faceted nature of this form of cultural expression. It demonstrates how this live, embodied and participatory cultural form can also have a digital presence which can be understood not as radically different but standing in a productive relation

to it. Through the lens of an affordance framework, we can reach a nuanced understanding of the narrative, interactive and immersive dynamics of the larp. The actions in the social media extension are both the same as and different from the actions in the live event. What the affordance framework offers is a way to understand how these similarities and differences are the result of the potentialities of the different environments. The change in dynamics happens when players through their posts and comments actualize these potentialities. In this way, larp can be understood both in live and digital form, without losing sight of their differences.

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