Creating an independent work of fiction through live action role-play

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Abstract

Live action role-play (larp) is a recognized form of role-play where players physically embody characters in fictional settings. The medium is immensely versatile and different larp traditions approach the activity and its design in a variety of ways.

The participatory and ephemeral nature of larp makes it a difficult medium to explore without playing. It is, however, relevant to communicate aspects of the activity to external audiences for purposes of posterity and recognition. Larp documentation cannot encapsulate the fleeting artwork, as it lacks a permanent form. As the player is the central audience of larp, we seek to understand the player experience in order to comprehend the relevance of larp. The importance of documentation forces the larp community to explore new ways of capturing the dissipating artworks.

The study explores what can be captured of the ephemeral larp experience, and how it translates to outside audiences. The written part of the study examines characteristics of larp and central challenges for its documentation, as well as the creation of a fictional documentary film. The artistic part of the study is the outcome of an exploration of larp as a platform for creation, resulting in a fictional documentary called "Vielä hetki."

The study shows that while larp is impossible to document thoroughly, parts of the ephemeral larp experience can be captured. Larp documentation should be approached as a collection of different documents, as no single document or medium can cover the whole larp. The medium can be used as a source for sampling, as larp provides a platform for artistic exploration but only allows parts of its expression to be captured. It is possible to create independent works of art inside larp that external audiences can relate to and to utilize such artworks in translating the exclusive larp experience to non-participants. When larp documentation is implemented into the fiction of the larp, it becomes a diegetic part of the larp and creates more intimate documents of the elusive and coveted player experience.

Keywords larp, live action role-play, documentary film, artistic creation

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Tiivistelmä

Liveroolipeli eli larp on roolipelaamisen muoto, jossa osallistujat ilmentävät hahmojaan fyysisesti fiktiivisissä ympäristöissä. Larp on äärimmäisen monipuolinen media ja erilaiset larppaamisen perinteet tarjoavat monia vaihtoehtoja larppaamisen ilmentämiseen.

Larpit ovat osallistavia ja hetkellisiä tapahtumia, joihin ulkopuolisten on vaikea tutustua. Tiedon säilyvyyden ja larppaamisen tunnistettavuuden lisäämiseksi on tärkeä dokumentoida larppeja ja viestiä niistä myös ulkopuolisille. Larppeja on kuitenkin mahdotonta tavoittaa dokumentaation keinoin, sillä larp on taiteenmuotona aineeton ja hetkellinen. Larpin keskeisin osa on pelaajan kokemus, joten keskitymme usein taltioimaan pelaajien kertomuksia tarjotaksemme käsityksen larpin tapahtumista ja niihin liittyvistä kokemuksista. Dokumentoinnin tärkeys pakottaa etsimään uusia menetelmiä hetkeen sidotun teoksen vangitsemiseksi.

Tämä työ tutkii mitä voimme säilyttää larppien tarjoamista ohikiitävistä kokemuksista ja niiden mahdollisesta funktiosta ulkopuoliselle yleisölle. Työn kirjallinen osuus tarkastelee larppien ominaisuuksia ja niiden dokumentointiin liittyviä haasteita. Kirjallinen osuus käsittelee myös fiktiivisen dokumenttielokuvan tuotantoprosessia, ja sen lopputuloksena syntynyttä elokuvaa "Vielä hetki." Tämä dokumenttielokuva on opinnäytteeni taiteellinen osa.

Työ osoittaa, että vaikka larppien kokonaisvaltainen dokumentointi on mahdotonta, pystymme tallentamaan merkityksellisiä osia ohikiitävistä kokemuksista. Dokumentoinnin tulisikin rakentua useista eri menetelmistä ja lähestymistavoista, sillä mikään yksittäinen keino ei ole tarpeeksi kattava larpin kokonaisvaltaiseen ilmentämiseen. Liveroolipelit tarjoavat alustan "sämpläykselle" (eng. sampling), mahdollistaen osiensa käytön taiteellisten tuotosten luomisessa. Larpin puitteissa on näin ollen mahdollista luoda itsenäisiä taideteoksia, jotka voivat tarjota tarttumapintaa larpin ulkopuolisille yleisöille. Dokumentoinnin ollessa osa larpin fiktiota, se muodostuu osaksi pelaajan kokemusta, ja pelaajan kokemuksesta tulee vastavuoroisesti keskeinen osa dokumentaatiota.

Asiasanat larp, liveroolipeli, dokumenttielokuva, taiteen tekeminen

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1. Introduction

The popularity of online content creation has led to new forms of entertainment and art to emerge. While online video content possesses many attributes, one of the most interesting is the emergence of idiosyncratic and vicarious ways to enjoy different activities. While games are traditionally designed to be *played*, they are now also being exclusively *watched*. As of April 2019, one of the most funded Kickstarter campaigns of all time is an animated series based on the established Dungeons and Dragons Twitch-show called Critical Role. The concept of the show is simple; a group of friends – who happen to be professional voice actors – play the tabletop role-playing game Dungeons and Dragons, inviting the audience to follow their adventures through weekly video streams. The lineage of the upcoming animated series is fascinating, as it is a prime example of different creative works enabling the conception of others; the animated series owes its existence to the video series, and the video series has its roots in the game Dungeons and Dragons. Inviting an audience to observe something that was initially intended to be experienced leads to the emergence of entirely new creative works. It proves that we can utilize different experiences (like games) as platforms for meaningful creation, providing new, exciting content for audiences to enjoy.

This study seeks to explore live action role-play (larp) as a platform for such content creation. Larp is a participatory medium, providing meaningful experiences to its players. It is, however, inherently exclusive and complicated to explain to outsiders.

Traditional larp documentation cannot convey the intrinsic values of the medium, and new approaches are required to expand the understanding of larp. However, larp is a creative medium emphasizing action, which suggests that it can be used as a platform to create lasting art.

This study explores what can be captured of the ephemeral larp experience, and how it translates to outside audiences. The exploration constitutes two parts. The written part examines characteristics of larp and central challenges for its documentation, as well as the creation of a fictional documentary film. The other part is an artistic exploration of larp as a platform for creation, resulting in a fictional documentary called "Vielä hetki." The documentary was created inside the fiction of a larp called "Viimeiset" (2018), where I played the role of the documentarist. This work serves as an experiment in creating lasting, meaningful artistic products inside the boundaries of the multi-faceted construct that is larp, while also adding to the discourse about larp documentation.

The second chapter will provide a framework for understanding what larp is by examining the activity through its definitions, functions, and characteristics. Similarities between larp and other activities like games and rituals will also be considered, as well as different larp traditions. The chapter also explores the potential of larp as an art form.

The third chapter focuses on larp documentation. Central challenges for documenting the fleeting experience are addressed, as well as obstacles specific to video and film as modes for documenting larp. The findings presented in this chapter provide relevant insight for understanding the production process of "Vielä hetki," as well as the outcome.

Chapter four introduces the foundation for my artistic work; the larp called Viimeiset and the process of creating the fictional documentary as part of the larp's fiction. As the larp was an extensive creative process, the chapter also presents the procedures that prepared the players for the larp itself.

Discussion and analysis of the outcome will take place in chapter five. The process of creating the fictional documentary will be examined, and central observations

will be evaluated. The discussion will also include reflection on the different functions of larp as a medium and the role of audiences and creators, relating primarily to the potential of larp as a platform for creative expression and creating art.

In the concluding chapter, we will return to the initial question of this study and reflect on the potential of larp as a platform of artistic creation.

2. An introduction to larp

Evaluating the significance of my artistic work requires examining the medium at the center of it; *live action role-play* (larp). While "larp" is an acronym of the words live action role-play, the word has achieved a normative status and will henceforth be used in its non-capitalized form. This chapter will provide an overview of what larp is by examining larp as an activity and as a form of art. The study avoids stating grand claims of what larp is and what it is not, as cultural differences between larp traditions are substantial, and the medium is constantly evolving into new, unexpected directions. While many questions presented in this chapter remain unanswered, the aim is to first and foremost contextualize the potential and challenges of larp as a new medium. These aspects serve as motivation for the artistic work covered in chapters 4 and 5.

2.1. What is larp?

Role-play is an array of activities ranging from analog and digital games to child's play, sexual play and more. While there is no single definition that scholars, fans and designers universally accept, there are common characteristics that grant us some insight into what role-playing can be (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 19–27). The words *role* and *play* encompass different connotations, and there are, as Jesper

Juul notes, language-specific distinctions for the word "play" that do not translate universally (Juul, 2005, p. 28-29). The words do, however, indicate playfulness related to behavior, status or presentation. Zagal and Deterding (2018, p. 47) suggest that role-playing games "are play activities and objects revolving around the rule-structured creation and enactment of characters in a fictional world" and emphasize player involvement in the emergent play. Arguably the most commonly known role-playing games are the tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) Dungeons and Dragons (Arneson and Gygax, 1974) and the massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) World of Warcraft (Blizzard Entertainment, 2004), which allow the players to explore and progress in fictional fantasy settings. While MMORPGs enable role-play through digital systems, TTRPGs rely on mainly verbal and analog means of play. We can view role-play as structured play of pretense facilitated by different media, and larp is one of many recognized types of role-playing.

While it is complicated to determine a definite historical timeline of larp, it is noteworthy that larp is not a unique or particularly modern activity in human history. It has been recognized that modern larp emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, parallel to the rise and popularity of tabletop role-playing. Fantasy literature, like The Lord of the Rings (1954) by J.R.R Tolkien, also had an impact on the rise of role-playing games, although the extent has not been indefinitely established. The United States and the United Kingdom were at the forefront of the emergence of larp, and one of the earliest documented cases is the UK based Treasure Trap that evolved in the early 1980s (J. Tuomas Harviainen et al., 2018).

It is, however, relevant to acknowledge that the tradition of participatory drama extends far beyond the late 20th century. Lizzie Stark states that 16th century pageantry (enjoyed by rich and titled Europeans) is a historical counterpart to larp (Stark, 2012, p. 31), and Martin Ericsson acknowledges the similarities between larp and an early documented dramatic performance; an 1800BC passion play from ancient Egypt (Ericsson, 2004, p. 17). While it is impossible to ascertain the true nature of this passion play, the documented account bears a striking resemblance to modern retellings of larp experiences. It also shows that participatory drama is a tradition much older than what we call modern theatre.

It is also important to acknowledge the connection between the tradition of participatory drama and rituals. Modern societies have in many cases replaced traditional rituals with other activities like games and art (McLuhan, 1997, p. 237), thus providing varying amounts of recognizable connections between modern participatory activities and ancient rituals. While larp possesses ritualistic characteristics (Copier, 2005; Ericsson, 2004), they are not exclusive to larp. Recognizing these similarities provides an interesting perspective for analysis. However, proclaiming the presence of a coherent lineage between them is somewhat naïve. Looking at larp as a successor of rituals is like comparing a camel to an airplane; both are means of transportation and while the airplane might not have been invented without the initial taming of camels, the camel and the airplane exhibit more differences than similarities. The ancestry is apparent, but the evolution is complex. One can safely argue that it is unlikely that the Wright Brothers designed their airplanes based on camels. Similarly, one can claim that while larp and the Abydos passion play exhibit similarities, the connection between them is more thematic than concrete. The ancestry of larp is complex, as is the evolution of rituals, theatre and other participatory forms of art.

Defining larp is as complicated as dissecting its lineage, as the activity is complex and multifaceted. Larp is a form of role-play where players physically portray imaginary characters and experience the fiction through those characters, often utilizing props, costumes and physical spaces to facilitate play (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004, p. 578). Larp relies on collective improvisation, and the play occurs for the participants' pleasure, not for an external audience. The word itself is an acronym of the words *"live action role-play,"* which indicates that in contrast to many other forms of role-play (like TTRPG or MMORPG) larp transpires in the physical world and "takes what happens in a player's imagination and makes it 'real' or embodied" (J Tuomas Harviainen et al., 2018, p. 87). The arguably most famous larp in recent years is the *College of Wizardry* franchise (Dziobak Larp Studios, n.d.), where participants experience life at a Harry Potter inspired school of wizardry in a 13ᵗʰ-century castle in Poland. While it – like Dungeons and Dragons and World of Warcraft – is set in a fantasy universe, larp and role-play does not exclusively cover

traditional fantasy settings, and especially in the Nordic larp tradition, fantasy "is just one more genre, one more expression of Nordic larp" (Stenros, 2014, p. 151). Therefore, examining the most well-known or well documented larps does not reflect the diversity of larp as it is malleable by nature.

Describing larp is especially complicated because of differences in larp traditions. As previously noted, the heritage of larp is varied, and it seems to have been "invented and reinvented in numerous places over the last decades" (Stenros and Montola, 2011, p. 1). While many larp traditions have their roots in tabletop role-playing, there is a multitude of influences that have shaped them; historical reenactment, theatre, simulations, educational processes and more (J Tuomas Harviainen et al., 2018, pp. 92–104). Local differences in play style allow for a varied and vibrant global larp culture, ranging from large, commercially produced combat larps with complex rule systems and game mechanics, to minimalistic, non-profit larps focusing on interpersonal relationships. Some larps are designed as pure entertainment while others pursue artistic excellence, and many are a combination of both.

A prominent larp tradition originating in – but not exclusively to – the Nordic countries is known as Nordic larp. It has contributed to larp culture by contrasting standards set in North America and the United Kingdom (J Tuomas Harviainen et al., 2018, p. 97). As the diversity of larp is present also in Nordic larp, there is no all-encompassing definition for what it is, however, there are general characteristics that are considered typical for the tradition (Stenros, 2014, p. 149). While some of these findings have since been challenged, some are still considered relevant. One of these characteristics is thematic focus; Nordic larps are designed to make all participants connected to a theme (Stenros, 2014, p. 151). Themes can be broad or specific, but the larps are explicitly "about something" (Stenros, 2014, p. 151) like friendship, the inevitability of death or life under occupation. The approach provides a framework for examining different concepts through emergent play and emphasizes the value of co-creation. The concept of winning is foreign to Nordic larp, while leading ones character into disadvantageous situations to enable more interesting play is encouraged (J Tuomas Harviainen et al., 2018, p. 99). Game mechanics are often brought to a minimum, the idea being "what you see is what

you get" (Stenros, 2014, pp. 150–151). Workshops are utilized to ensure common ground among participants, emphasizing the importance of trust and agreement (J Tuomas Harviainen et al., 2018, p. 99). Most importantly, Nordic larp is valued as a cultural activity and is "taken seriously" (J Tuomas Harviainen et al., 2018, p. 99).

While larp can be considered a hobby, it also has other than recreational functions. Role-play and larps are used as tools for education, ranging from education in museums and schools to professional training for law enforcement and medical professionals (Hammer et al., 2018, p. 283). Different role-playing activities have also been used in clinical psychology (Bowman and Liberoth, 2018, p. 250), and larp has been used as a form of political activism, even considered "the perfect medium for political art" (Kangas et al., 2016, p. 7). A notable example of larp as political art is the Palestinian-Finnish production *Halat Hisar* (AbdulKarim et al., 2013), a larp about life under occupation, where the participants experienced a fictional state of occupation in southern Finland that reflect the actual circumstances of Palestine.

The assortment of larp traditions and play styles make it difficult to categorize larp as an activity, and while role-playing is widely recognized as a subgenre of gaming, it is considered an outlier. Some scholars seem to agree that many role-playing games do not fit the strict definitions of what games are due to the lack of strict rules or measurable outcome (Juul, 2005; Salen and Zimmerman, 2004). Juul also notes that differentiating types of game and play is complex, as the words have different connotations in different contexts and languages, but suggests that play refers to "a free-form activity, whereas game is a rule-based activity" (Juul, 2005, p. 28-29). Moreover, in some larp communities, larp is called *live-action role play,* not *live-action role-playing game* (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, p. 34) to perhaps distance it from the strict definitions of games. However, Roger Caillois accepts that even child's play can be considered a game, as the fiction serves the function of rules and therefore games are by definition "ruled *or* make-believe," instead of "ruled *and* make-believe" (Caillois, 2001, pp. 8–9). James P. Carse also addresses the question of rules, as he identifies two types of games; *finite* and *infinite* (Carse, 1986, p. 3). While games of finite nature function through static rules, infinite games require flexible rules that prevent anyone from winning, as the "rules of a finite game are the

contractual terms by which the players can agree who has won, the rules of an infinite game are the contractual terms by which the players agree to continue playing" (Carse, 1986, p. 9). Consequently, there is no consensus on whether larp should de facto be considered a game or not, but for this study, it is only marginally relevant. More interesting is the artistic potential of the medium.

2.2. Larp as art

While some already recognize larp as art, the concept of art itself eludes rigid definitions. Art theorists (Dissanayake, 1988; Freeland, 2001) agree that the definition of art fluctuates depending on culture, time and language, and this complicates identifying a new form of expression as art. Similarities between art, play and ritual confuse attempts to find conclusive definitions even further. However, Johan Huizinga argues that all human culture is derived from play (art being no exception) (Huizinga, 2016, pp. 4–5), and Marshall McLuhan sees art as a substitute for magical games and rituals in detribalized societies (McLuhan, 1997, p. 237). Harviainen (2010, p. 132) calls attention to people's inclination to differentiate larp from being seen as play, to make it more convincingly fit our expectations of what art is. These inclinations seem exceedingly uninformed as art and play are by no means opposites;

> In its ambiguity and undefinability, as well as in other ways, play resembles art, and indeed several thinkers have posited a more than casual relationship, considering art to be a derivative of play, a kind of adult play behavior (Dissanayake, 1988, p. 75).

Especially in the Nordic countries, larp has been traditionally a noncommercial activity and has consequently developed without commercial pressure, allowing game developers the freedom to explore alternative approaches to larp design.

Stenros and Montola (2011, p. 2) recount that "[w]hile boffer combat and convention larp also exist in the Nordic countries, there is also an ambitious subculture that develops larp as an expressive form." There is an artistic and academic interest in larp and role-play, and "larp has been successfully framed as a cultural activity, worthy of artistic collaboration and public funding" (Harviainen, 2018, p. 99). As research into larp as art is especially prominent in the Nordic larp tradition, many of the arguments presented here apply particularly (but not exclusively) to that tradition.

Larp has however experienced both external and internal resistance for being called art, despite many larps being publicly seen as such (Harviainen, 2010, p. 134). New forms of art are often initially viewed with disregard, and as Richard Schechner notes; "[s]ome of yesterday's avant-garde became today's establishment … Often enough, events were attacked or dismissed as not being art at all" (Schechner, 2002, p. 39). This dismissive attitude is problematic and complicates addressing sensitive topics in larp. Just a Little Lovin' (Edland and Grasmo, 2011), a larp exploring life impacted by the AIDS epidemic, was met with skepticism in the media (Teir, 2011) as games and playfulness are not traditionally viewed as serious platforms for exploring sensitive matters. As larp is accessible only to its participants, it is arduous to demonstrate the artistic potential and seriousness of the activity to outsiders (see chapter 3).

It is however impossible to ignore the artistic potential of larp as a medium, as it exhibits similarities with recognized forms of art. In the 1960s Allan Kaprow created participatory performance events called Happenings, where the line between audience and performer was removed, and the work existed for the participants themselves (Kaprow and München, 2008, p. 17). It is no surprise that the similarities between Happenings and larp have been widely recognized by larp scholars (Harviainen, 2008; Stenros and Montola, 2010; Vanek and Peterson, 2015). Participatory theatre has also aimed to blur the line between performer and audience, and different participatory and interactive art forms strive for audience inclusion and integration that larp provides effortlessly. Some argue that to achieve artistic recognition larp should distance itself from the concept of play and instead

be described as a form of a more well-established artform (Harviainen, 2010, p. 132). However, as Harviainen suggests; "it deserves that on its own merits, not as something which it is not, be it theatre or something else" (Harviainen, 2010, p. 132). In contrast, larp has already found its way into the established art world, as artist Brady Condon – known for video game art – has explored larp as an expressive medium (Clarke, 2007, p. 119). Thus, the potential for larp as art is already recognized, yet not deeply established in general parlance.

As the intrinsic value of larp is already known to the larp community itself, it is more important to relay the worth of the activity to outsiders. As we evaluate art through norms and expectations of our cultural context, we need to circumvent the initial opposition mentioned by Schechner to identify a new form of expression as art. If the worth of larp and serious play remains unknown, people might be inclined to criticize it for covering sensitive topics (like Just a Little Lovin') or dismiss the activity as unsuitable for receiving funding or even being organized. In March of 2018 Dziobak Larp Studios, best known for the enormously popular College of Wizardry franchise, were forced to closed down their operations as a response to failed efforts in raising funds for their (perhaps overly) ambitious enterprise ("Dziobak Larp Studios," 2018). Other cases have also shown, that the non-larping community lacks understanding of larp as a medium. The prestigious fantasy and sci-fi convention Worldcon 75 banned a Nordic larp that caused outrage for having participants play elderly characters with Alzheimer's disease, proving the need to inform outsiders about what (in this case Nordic) larp can be (Stenros, 2017). Cultural differences and a lack of understanding for serious play increases the need to validate larp as a worthwhile activity or a potential art medium. While academic discourse is crucial, it is as essential to find means to demonstrate the value of larp effectively to outsiders. To learn how to successfully communicate the potential of larp as art (or even a worthwhile activity), we need to consider how larp is traditionally presented to outside audiences – and why it has proven extremely difficult.

3. Capturing ephemera

3.1. Documenting larp

Larp documentation is essential for reflection and dialogue about larps but capturing a fleeting artwork has proved to be challenging. The artform lacks permanent material output, and when we stop playing, we are left with memories and mementos but the essence of the larp itself dissipates. The editors of a substantial collection of documented Nordic larps, Markus Montola and Jaakko Stenros, state that "undocumented achievements and lessons are quickly forgotten" (Stenros and Montola, 2011, p. 2), corroborating the need for methodical larp documentation. However, larp documentation cannot allow "others to have an authentic sense of that [larp] experience" (Cox, 2018, p. 24), which provides a challenge to overcome – especially when the documentation tries to serve audiences that are not familiar with larp.

As the need for documentation is recognized, there have been efforts to immortalize larps through different means. The book Nordic Larp (2010) is compiled of written accounts and photographs relating to 30 Nordic larps, resulting in a sizable collection of larp documentation (Stenros and Montola, 2010). The book allows a multitude of voices to be heard (players, designers, and academics), avoiding focus on larp designers as primary conveyors of valid information (Stenros and Montola,

2011, p. 3). Written accounts of larps are common, and substantial books covering Nordic larps include annual Knutepunkt books published since 2003 (Stenros and Montola, 2010, p. 2), as well as books on individual larps, such as Halat Hisar (Pettersson, 2014), College of Wizardry (Stenros and Montola, 2017), and Dragonbane (Koljonen et al., 2008).

However, books are not the only means of larp documentation. Both Waldron (2014) and Torner (2011) identify a multitude of means for documenting larp, such as written documents, photographs, video, and props. Different approaches are utilized in both public and private contexts; Jason Cox approaches larp documentation by cataloging player created artifacts from the New World Magischola larps (Cox, 2018), YouTuber Mo Mo O'Brien recounts her larp experiences in videos (O'Brien, 2017), and many others have attempted to produce video documentaries about larp (Torner, 2011). While there is an array of larp documentation available, these documents portray only certain aspects of larps, leaving much room for further exploration.

While certain modes of documentation are widely utilized, they are severely lacking. Waldron poses that "[i]t is impossible to recreate the original larp, or to capture the knowing from the larp into knowledge fixed on paper, film, or in objects" (Waldron, 2014). Cox suggests that while there is a considerable difference between larp and traditional narratives – larp being a space for flexible experiences, not rigid narratives – larp documentation often presents the audience with *a* story that undeniably fails to provide a real sense of what was experienced (Cox, 2018, p. 25). Assuring the sympathies of outside audiences is arduous, as they need to "be persuaded of the value of an activity that transpires primarily in the mind of its participants" (Torner, 2011, p. 107). Consequently, the need for alternative approaches to larp documentation is evident.

Both Cox and Waldron present interesting solutions for overcoming the complexity of larp documentation. While Cox (Cox, 2018, p. 26) approaches larp documentation by examining player created artifacts (like costumes and accessories made by players for their characters), Waldron emphasizes the need to recognize *why* the documentation is conducted, as that should inform the chosen approach and

medium (Waldron, 2014). Knowing the purpose and the intended audience for the documentation is crucial, while also recognizing that no approach will cover every aspect of a larp experience. Cox also values maintaining the co-creative nature of larp in its documentation:

> " No single method will ever completely contain what it meant to be a person co-creating the experience of a particular game, but through the creation of media that are co-created experiences themselves, we can shift our perspectives and gain new insight on what it might have been like to "be there" (Cox, 2018, p. 28).

It is crucial to both analyze the shortcomings of traditional larp documentation and experiment with different ways to document larp, as documentation is elemental for analysis, posterity and recognition. It is, however, futile to attempt to conserve *a truth* about what the fleeting experience of a larp was like, as no traditional medium can encompass the complex experience that larp bestows its participants. As said by Waldron; "to what end are documentation efforts in place to try to fit larp into a textocentric mold, and in what ways can our future documentation efforts more deliberately challenge that mold in order to better harness the unique qualities of larp?" (Waldron, 2014). To successfully explore alternative means of larp documentation, we need to acknowledge the challenges and why they emerge.

3.2. Central challenges for larp documentation

Challenges for larp documentation arise from different characteristics of larp as a medium. Montola and Stenros identify five central challenges for larp documentation, posing that larps "must tackle problems of ephemerality, subjectivity, first-person audience, and co-creation, as well as the underlying question of what larps are" (Stenros and Montola, 2011, p. 1). While these issues are recognized, they are not easy to overcome. As the artwork only exists inside the

participants' minds, we need to find ways to access it (Pettersson, 2015). Finding suitable approaches to document larp has proven difficult, resulting in interesting but ultimately lacking documents.

A substantial obstacle for exhaustive larp documentation is that larp is participatory and designed to be experienced, not observed. Therefore "watching larp is like listening to a film; you may be able to follow parts of it, but you lack a central part of the expression" (Stenros and Montola, 2011, p. 4). The participants' experiences can be described but not re-experienced (by themselves nor outsiders), resulting in mere retellings that are unable to convey the true complexity of the medium. Moreover, larp is comprised of exclusive player experiences, making it impossible to determine what the experience was like. It complicates documentation, as the artwork consists of multiple unique points of view, all equally valid. Like Cox, Johanna Koljonen accentuates that larp is too multidimensional to be reduced into a single narrative:

> " Imagine a book club based on the premise that all participants read a handful of chapters from the same novel, dividing it up between them, so that most or all participants read the key moments, but the rest of the chapters are randomly assigned. The book club would then meet to discuss the book, reconstructing a sort of ghost-text in the process: an uncanny fiction of a novel that has never existed and will never be read. Imagine that even the partial texts are burnt before the meeting, so that it is not possible to go back and check against one's memory (Koljonen, 2008, p. 34)

Koljonen also poses that larp is temporal and never completely accessible to anyone, and that "we are writing novels which dissolve upon completion" (Koljonen, 2008, p. 35). As player experiences are subjective, it is impossible to find one perspective to represent all possible angles.

Furthermore, the meaning of what happened in a game partly emerges after the game is over when players discuss and compile their experiences into stories that can be retold and understood (Koljonen, 2008, p. 35). Capturing larp in motion is,

therefore, unachievable as it is in flux even after ending. Encapsulating it after the fact is equally impossible, as the artwork itself ceases to exist (Koljonen, 2008, p. 35). Montola and Stenros accurately state, that even if the whole larp were filmed, it would still not overcome the challenge of temporality, as it is impossible to communicate how the larp was subjectively perceived by the players (Stenros and Montola, 2011, p. 5). Larp cannot exist in a state other than the ephemeral, and like Waldron states; the larp itself is inaccessible to any audience through any means of documentation (Waldron, 2014).

The documentation process includes conscious and subconscious decisions that affect the portrayal of the game, thus making objectivity unachievable. Larp documentation is lacking and biased, as the point of view of the documentation always affects the result (Pettersson, 2010). As any larp is comprised of a multitude of subjective experiences, a single, true form does not exist, and the perspective of the documentation might even contradict some players' experiences. The issue is perhaps most noticeable in larp photography where some characters might appear in dozens of pictures, while others might not appear at all. Montola and Stenros (2011, p. 6) agree that although multiple writers covered each featured game in the book Nordic Larp, it is not all-encompassing. They accept that "... having three voices from a game that was played by a thousand people is still far from comprehensive" (Stenros and Montola, 2011, pp. 5–6). This upholds a problematic culture of erasure, as only certain voices will be heard. However, excluding all player statements in fear of subjectivity would be even more questionable.

Although the problem of bias is recognized, the player experience is still crucial testimony. Without the perspective of the player, the documentation fails to provide insight on what was experienced in a game. While Pettersson emphasizes the importance of documenting player experiences, he also questions the responsibility of players to expose their personal, often intimate experiences:

> Is writing about your experience, appearing in photos and on video, part of the responsibility of playing in a game? Do you as the player have to accept the task of framing and expressing your inner processes

for the consumption of a wider, non-playing audience? (Pettersson, 2015)

Overcoming this challenge is equally difficult as the other more pragmatic issues of subjectivity and first-person audiences. Obligations can be enforced, but only on willing participants, and only to a certain degree. Pettersson admits that substantial efforts had to be made to gather input from the players for the documentation of Halat Hisar (Pettersson, 2015). However, making the documentation an integral part of the game's design can provide players and organizers with common ground. Likewise, it is effective to allow players to share what they deem valuable. Jason Cox's Magischola Museum was inspired by understanding that "almost every character carries a wand of some description, and that while players had put some thought into the story behind that item, they rarely had the opportunity to share their creative efforts" (Cox, 2018, p. 25). It is undoubtedly arduous to encourage players to commit to documentation after a larp is over, making it crucial to approach documentation not as something that happens after the ephemeral experience has faded, but as a continuous process.

3.3 Film and larp documentation

Video and film are interesting media for capturing the "live action" of larp. Larp has been portrayed in both fiction and non-fiction film, presenting the viewers with a variety of angles on what larp looks like. Technological advances have made it easy to record larps on video, resulting in a variety of non-fiction films about larp. However, alongside the challenges mentioned previously, film has its limitations in capturing the multi-layered artwork.

While film and video may be suitable for capturing performance, the medium struggles with encompassing more intrinsic values of larping. A now infamous YouTube video titled "lightning bolt" ("Lightning Bolt!," 2005) shows a group of

fantasy larpers in combat, while one of the larpers throws small bean bags at an enemy while repeatedly shouting "lightning bolt." This simulated battle is hard to comprehend, as the participants have a predetermined agreement regarding the realities of the collective fiction (also referred to as the magic circle, coined by Johan Huizinga), while the people watching the video remain uninformed. The video gained attention, and a majority of it was derogatory towards the larpers that appear in the video, undermining the value of the activity and calling attention to the larpers perceived social ineptitude. The reception demonstrates a discrepancy between experiencing larp and simply watching it (or parts of it); what may look comical to an outsider has deep value and meaning to the people experiencing it. Filming larp "changes it from a mixed social-interior narrative to a recorded performance" (Torner, 2011, p. 108), providing a new set of expectations for framing what takes place.

Larp performances are not performances for external audiences but the participants themselves (Lampo, 2011, p. 91), and there is an intrinsic value to experiencing something instead of primarily projecting it for others to interpret. Lampo states that "where theatre emphasizes perception, larps emphasize action" (Lampo, 2011, p. 91), bringing attention to the fact that the action in larp is valuable even if it is not necessarily cinematic or performed for outside perception. Consequently, filmed larps often seem confusing and the larpers acting performances inept (Torner, 2011, p. 114). It is therefore imperative to frame the activity in a way that allows audiences to perceive intrinsic values instead of what is most apparent, thus placing additional pressure on the documentation:

> " Whereas non-fiction film routinely relies on the protagonists' lack of perspective and viewers' lack of information to drive its narratives, the larp film must grapple with a narratively self-sufficient subject that needs no film to justify his/her openly fictional fictions (Torner, 2011, p. 113)

Like other means of larp documentation, larp non-fiction film often utilizes player testimony to gain insight into what was experienced and depend on verbal accounts to display the personal significance of participating in a larp. A prominent genre of

non-fiction larp film is the "introduction," where audiences are introduced to larp through a combination of footage from larp events, interviews and mundane activities connected to larp events and larpers (Torner, 2011, p. 111). While interviews serve as testimony on the subjective player experiences, larp films still rely on the filmmaker's ability to compile a compelling narrative. Torner acknowledges that film and larp have contradicting expressive qualities that increase the complexity of fitting the two together (Torner, 2011, p. 108). As previously stated, it is problematic to transform larp into a traditional narrative.

The 2014 documentary Treasure Trapped (Taylor, 2014) explores (Eurocentric) larp culture by incorporating the documentarists as a proxy for the viewers, as they seek to learn what motivates people to larp. Treasure Trapped allows the audience to explore the world of larp alongside the documentarists, creating a compelling narrative about the documentarist's skepticism for larp turning into appreciation for the activity. The film, therefore, avoids forcing larp into what Waldron refers to the "textocentric mold" (Waldron, 2014), making the central narrative about the documentarists personal journey. This method makes the film easily approachable and an impactful introduction to larp culture, but like any other means of documentation, it fails to truly encapsulate larp as an artwork.

While film is a problematic mode for documenting larp, it also exhibits potential. Although some larps prove difficult to frame cinematically (due to practical issues, larp visuals are underwhelming in comparison to what Hollywood has to offer), others prove cinematically impressive. Treasure Trapped exhibits many visually ambitious larps, where props and scenography display the high level of skill and craftsmanship often associated with larp. When documentation is an integral part of a larp's design, it leads to more dynamic results. This is perhaps most evident in Brody Condon's *Level Five* (2010) that was streamed online and allowed people to follow the events of the larp in real time. However, such documentation requires resources that are rarely available for larp organizers. Structuring a larp to suit video documentation allows for a more consistent cinematic result, avoiding among other problems what Torner identifies as "the complex sound field generated by multiple uncoordinated speaking subjects" (Torner, 2011, p. 107). It does, however, ultimately

change the larp experience in ways that are hard to quantify, even to a point where the larp may become more about performing for an audience than experiencing it for oneself, and the artwork might cease to be what constitutes larp altogether.

It is not entirely uncommon for larpers to turn the camera on themselves, making documentation part of their player experience. As many larps are set in modern times that allow the diegetic presence of mobile phones and cameras, larpers may integrate their devices into the fiction of the larp. Characters may use their cameras to record thoughts and events, resulting in captured fragments of the lived fiction. This technique was utilized in the first run of *Mad About the Boy* (Edland et al., 2010), where characters talked to the camera about their thoughts and feelings, providing an exciting glance into the fiction of the larp. The footage is intercut with full-screen text graphics that contextualize the footage, and the eight-and-a-half-minute video is accompanied by music to enhance the mood. The video invites the viewer to become part of the fiction of the game by allowing the characters to talk to the audience directly, acknowledging their presence. It closes the distance between the fiction of the larp and the reality of the viewer, creating an agreement between them that constitutes a magic circle of its own. The video is constructed in a way that does not highlight the dichotomy of reality and fiction. Instead, it allows the two to blend.

While the video *Mad about the boy* (Linder, 2010) represents an interesting, performative approach to documentation (Waldron, 2014), it presents a singular narrative that tells *a story* about the larp. It provides only a small sample of what was experienced and arranges the fragments to support the grander narrative of the larp. As it forgoes non-diegetic footage, it excludes player testimony and brings the easily perceivable to the forefront. It does the bare minimum at contextualizing the content of the video, as only the end credits state that the footage was filmed during a larp. One could argue that the subjective, single-narrative video fails to overcome many of the central challenges of larp documentation, therefore not truly serving the purpose for documentation, and instead becoming a separate work of art that utilized the larp as a platform for its creation.

However, the video should not be criticized for its inability to overcome all the central challenges for larp documentation. It should only be considered *one part* of a more extensive collection that constitutes the documentation of Mad About the Boy. The larp has been documented through different methods with unique capabilities to encompass multiple aspects of the larp (Waldron, 2014). As no single method of larp documentation has proven capable of capturing all the intricacies of larp, different approaches should be utilized to serve different functions. Cox's approach for documentation through player created artifacts is commendable, as it challenges our instinctual need to force larp documentation into normative molds. Like the video Mad about the boy (Linder, 2010) shows, it is sometimes more effective to merely show larp in action instead of trying to convey all aspects of it, allowing the documentation to be as fragmented as the medium it tries to reflect. Larp can after all only truly be experienced by being part of it, but larp documentation can still provide viewers experiences of their own.

4. Case: the fictional documentary "Viimeiset"

The artistic approach of this study is not one of pure larp documentation, but one that resembles the video documentation of Mad About the Boy. The aim of filming the larp Viimeiset (Tarpila, 2018) was not to preserve the larp as the player's experienced it, but to provide a separate experience for people outside the larp's primary audience. This chapter examines the building blocks of Viimeiset, looking at central aspects of the larp and the preparation process, as well as the creation of the fictional documentary; preparations, filming, and post-production.

4.1. The larp called "Viimeiset"

Viimeiset (2018) was a live action role-playing game and a creative process for 17 people. The process also resulted in a secondary work of art alongside the larp itself, as the larp served as a platform for the creation of a fictional documentary film. The parent of the project, Maiju Tarpila, wanted to make the larp accessible to an outside audience and included a fictional documentary filmmaker as part of the character ensemble.

The creative process ran between May 2017 and January 2018, and the larp took place 11th-14th of January 2018. The playtime covered the time between Thursday evening and Saturday-Sunday night, while Sunday was reserved for debriefing. The larp was set in an alternate reality Finland, in a world like ours with a fictional additive; a terminal illness called Body Collapse Syndrome. Viimeiset explored themes connected to living with a terminal illness, such as what is important to people when they know their life is going to be cut short.

Viimeiset was designed to facilitate 360-degree illusion (Koljonen, 2007, pp. 175–187) and aimed to simulate realism. Larps like these aim to have "a complete universe available to interact with, a situational, emotional and physical realism in character immersion, and a what-you-see-is-what-you-get attitude to the physical environment of the game" (Koljonen, 2007, p. 176). As the game was set in present day and strived for realism, there was only limited need for the use of meta-techniques; only certain activities like sexual contact or violence were replaced by nonabrasive (yet performative) actions to ensure the players' wellbeing. Viimeiset also exhibits some of the characteristics of Nordic larp established by Stenros (2014, pp. 150–152), as it:

- examines a specific subject
- is non-commercial
- is not about winning, but focused on collaborative creativity
- lacks hard rules and game mechanics, and instead of written rules contains extensive amounts of written (an otherwise recorded) material
- incorporates workshops and debriefs

Tarpila is a drama instructor, long time larper, larp game master and student of philosophy at the University of Helsinki. Tarpila served the function of game master (*pelinjohtaja*), which is in this context a designer and a facilitator, not a director or an enforcer of rules, as the style of play did not call for such roles. Instead, Tarpila created the initial setting for the larp, drafted character concepts and facilitated the individual and collective creative processes of the participants, providing tools and a structure for their creativity to prosper. Her approach to the project was methodical and purposeful, and she implemented multidisciplinary techniques to support the

participants' preparation, play and debriefing. The layout of the process will hence be examined, as the outcome of the game and the documentary are inseparable from the extensive preparation they are built on. The long-term commitment of the players affected the dynamics of play, and therefore also shaped the filmed material.

4.2 The Preparation Process

" Two-three years ago I started thinking about how to explore what people find significant, especially when there is only a little time left. I thought that if one would design a larp where the characters would be in a situation like this, one could get close to this question because as many larpers know; feelings and realizations encountered in a larp are stunningly real, even if the framework is fictional (Tarpila, cited in Laine, 2018, own translation).

Maiju Tarpila designed the larp Viimeiset as a platform for exploring the complex themes of death and life. Sixteen players (and Tarpila herself) were invited to take part in the larp and the nine-month-long preparation process. The players assumed roles of mostly young adult members of a commune in rural Finland, most of whom had been diagnosed with a fictional terminal condition called Body Collapse Syndrome (BCS). The larp itself covered an ordinary weekend at the home of the commune, called *"Resari"* (derived from the words *"The Last Resort"*).

At the beginning of the preparation process, Tarpila issued a written statement covering the goals and strategies for reaching the objectives of the project. In this statement, she expresses that "the goal is to create an artwork through which we can experience something meaningful, something that guides us towards the things and questions we want to explore" (Tarpila, 2017, p. 2, own translation). She highlights the importance of personal experiences and the importance of finding themes and approaches that are specifically tailored to individual player's requirements. This

approach is highly ambitious, as conforming to specific players' desires requires heavy involvement from both the game master and the players' and is arduous even with a moderate amount of players. However, Tarpila designed the preparation process to support this approach and to build community between the participants. The duration and intensity of the preparation process are also noteworthy, but worthwhile, as Tarpila posits that commitment enables more meaningful and emotionally substantial play (Tarpila, 2017, p. 3). While the span of the process is not unique, it was unfamiliar to most of the participants. The players were introduced to the creative process early on, and the project evolved based on their input.

Tarpila designed a multidisciplinary preparation process to allow the players to get acquainted with the fiction and each other. The preparation process constituted three live workshops and different player assignments, as well as player meetings and briefs written by Tarpila. Outside physical meetings, the participants used a Slack-workspace to communicate.
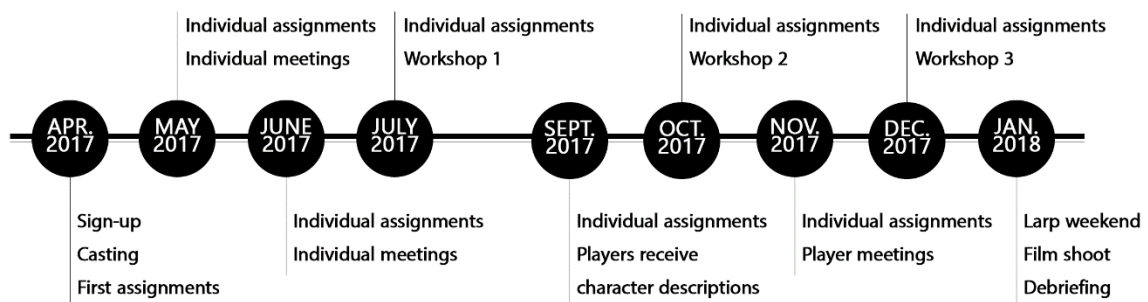

Figure 1: Preparation timeline for the larp Viimeiset

Before the sign-up in April 2017, Tarpila invited an exclusive group of people to take part in the project and provided them with basic information about the larp and the creative process. This information helped the potential players to assess if the larp and the process were suitable for them, but also gave them an idea of what the experience could be like. The material also included character concepts that painted a preliminary picture of the people the players were going to portray.

During sign-up, the players individually answered nearly 30 different questions to aid Tarpila in the casting process. In addition to identifying the most intriguing character concepts that players would like to play, Tarpila also wanted to learn about the players' personal preferences regarding play style, character relationships and the players' general thoughts and experiences with larp and creative processes. Questions like "why do you larp?" and "in your opinion, what constitutes a good larp?" forced the players to take a reflective stance immediately and allowed Tarpila to assess the potential participants' compatibility.

The first player assignment after sign-up and casting was for the players to name their character and specify their age and gender, and to provide Tarpila with questions, thoughts, and ideas regarding the character they had been assigned. The players were also allowed to turn down the assigned character concept. The approach allowed for a smooth transition into the process itself.

Once the participants had committed to the project, Tarpila set out to meet every participant individually. The individual meetings were a setting for Tarpila to have in-depth conversations with the players regarding the information that had been shared during the sign-up phase, and it served as a place for further brainstorming of the assigned character concepts. The meetings were between one and two hours long and established open communication between Tarpila and the players.

At the beginning of each month, Tarpila presented monthly player assignments to the participants. The assignments had multiple functions and served as tools to manage different aspects of the process. Some were designed to help the participants get to know each other, some focused on character creation or expanding the collective fiction, while others helped the participants process thoughts and questions that emerged during the process itself (Tarpila, 2017, p. 6). Tarpila presented three different assignment categories; *public, private* and *personal*.

The public assignments were shared among the players upon completion. An early public assignment prompted players to record video introductions of themselves to help participants get to know each other and make them more comfortable in front of the camera. Later players were assigned to create and share short character

introductions to let other participants gain a more conclusive picture of the characters in the larp. Players were also asked to contribute to the creation of diegetic content. An example of this was the creation of a public diary that was to be situated in the kitchen of the collective and allowed the characters to leave notes to each other about mundane things like shopping lists, complaints about dishes or missing items. This forum allowed the players to explore their characters voice before the larp itself and to highlight facets of their characters' behavior.

Private assignments facilitated less public preparation and were not shared with all participants. Instead, players explored different aspects of the project in smaller groups or on their own, sharing their findings with Tarpila. One of these assignments constituted one-on-one discussions between players that allowed them to get to know each other, but also to flesh out their characters' relationships. Another private assignment asked the players to reflect on differences between themselves and their character.

The personal assignments were never shared with anyone, not even Tarpila. These assignments were mainly tools for introspection and reflection. One of these assignments asked the players to write letters to themselves about their current life and feelings, and the letters were to be opened and read privately after the end of the creative process. Another task prompted the participants to reflect on their personal ambitions by creating a physical poster of their goals and dreams.

While some of these assignments may sound less relevant than others, they all served a purpose. Not all participants completed all the assignments (even if it was highly recommended), but as the assignments allowed for different approaches and use of different media, they provided comfortable tools for people with different strengths and needs. It is noteworthy that Tarpila created a platform for the participants to explore different sides of the creative process, as she emphasized personal reflection as much as collective creativity. While some of the assignments may seem redundant, they are part of a responsible and an in-depth approach to examining difficult topics.

The preparation process also included three 5-hour long workshops where the participants got to explore different aspects of the project together. During the workshops Tarpila employed different individual and group exercises to foster discussion, introspection, and creativity. The first workshop was organized in July 2017 and focused on participants getting to know both each other and the themes of the larp. Tarpila facilitated relaxed introduction games, but also reflection on different topics, like the participants expectations and uncertainties regarding the process. She also designed exercises to encourage sharing personal thoughts related to the participants' world views and ethics.

The second workshop took place in October 2017 after Tarpila had provided the players their extensive written character descriptions. The workshop focused on getting to know all the characters and the collective fiction. This included not only player characters, but also former members of the commune that had already passed away. The workshop utilized easily approachable creative exercises; one task required the participants to compile newspaper clippings into introductory posters of each other's characters, while another made them come up with different diegetic events based on random objects that Tarpila provided. The second workshop served as a reunion for the group and provided a space to explore the already somewhat familiar collective fiction further. It also utilized playful activities and artistic expression, allowing people to explore their creativity without the fear of failing.

The third workshop was arranged in December, only a couple of weeks before the larp. It allowed the participants to expand the collective fiction further and provided a space for discussing practicalities regarding the upcoming game. Discussions in smaller groups allowed the players to share their questions and worries, but also offer their support to each other. As larp is co-creative, players rely on each other to uphold the collective fiction and the border between fiction and reality. Each player had the opportunity to express how their play could be supported. These discussions made the participants aware of each other's needs and further solidified the basis for responsible co-creation. More importantly; the participants were prompted to ask questions of each other instead of forcing individuals to ask for others to listen. While this may seem insignificant, it reflects Tarpila's ambition to

create a space where attention is given to each participant without them having to compete for it. This approach was utilized for the duration of the creative process and built trust between the participants.

Character creation was a central part of the preparation process. Each player was assigned a character concept in April 2017, and during the preparation process, the concept was extensively fleshed out.

The character creation was a collaborative process. Both the players and the game master created content that became canon in the fiction of the larp. Tarpila often provided players with different prompts to inspire their creativity, but the players provided similar inspiration to the game master through their proceedings. The player assignments were often designed to make the players draft different meaningful (or sometimes mundane) aspects of their characters life, which supported augmentation of the character concepts.

The character descriptions were written narrations of the characters' lives, feelings, relationships, thoughts, and wishes. Tarpila assembled them during the creative process and shared them with the players in the fall of 2017. The character descriptions were private, giving each player only access to their assigned character's description. This makes Viimeiset non-transparent; the collaboration between players and Tarpila made it possible for the players to know only what their character would know, as the game master was able to control the information flow. It allowed characters to have secrets that other characters and their players were unaware of. While this prohibited players from knowing more than their characters, the players did choose to make some information public if they deemed important enough for others to know.

4.3. Compressed life – the larp itself

As stated before, it is impossible to document larp fully and the outcome of larp documentation may be incomprehensible or in other ways unsatisfactory. While it is sometimes tempting to condense a larp into a single narrative, Viimeiset did not provide that opportunity. It focused on individual experiences, and while I was part of the experience, I do not claim to know what happened or what was experienced. There is no grand narrative to tell, as the larp was a fragmented work of art that all participants experienced differently. The characters were all the protagonists in their own stories, and while these stories were inseparably intertwined, they cannot be retold as a single narrative. For this study, it is irrelevant to recount "what happened." Instead, it is worthwhile to examine how the larp was constructed, as it provides the framework for the artistic work of this study.

Viimeiset was a larp examining grand themes, but the themes were processed through the mundanity of everyday life. The larp explored a typical weekend at a commune and apart from filming the documentary, the weekend was structured around everyday routines and activities. Play did not exclusively emerge through the game master's input, nor did it depend on a grand, pre-written narrative. It relied on the players exploring the normalcy of human life, allowing great freedom of play and opportunities for different experiences to emerge. While the focus of the larp was on individual experiences, Tarpila did include some content that impacted all the characters. One of these events had the residents watch a discovered video, that had been recorded by a member of the collective that had died a month prior. However, pre-planned events played only a minor part in the larp.

Viimeiset was played in a large, homely holiday rental house in the Finnish city of Parkano. The house represented the communal home of the characters, and the house provided many mundane tasks to keep the characters occupied. While chores played an integral part in the larp, the characters did also organize different activities like book clubs, film nights and sauna. The characters were also able to

leave the house and the rural area surrounding it to visit shops or to take walks, but the house and its immediate surroundings were the main areas of play.

Non-player characters were utilized to enhance the illusion of a functional world that extended outside the main play area. Letters and phone calls were used to let the characters interact with people of interest, like family members, lawyers, and friends that were not physically present at the house. This allowed players to explore their characters' lives more comprehensively and it supported the illusion of an all-encompassing fictional world.

The players also employed creativity to express their characters' thoughts by creating a substantial amount of paintings, diary entries, videos, and photos during the larp. These creative endeavors provided the players different methods to process their characters' reality, and to sometimes express significant parts of them to others. The documentary film was a noteworthy part of this exploration and expression.

The characters were invited to be interviewed by the resident documentary filmmaker, and during Friday and Saturday 16 interviews were conducted. The interviews ended up being an interesting game mechanic, as they allowed each player to have their character be at the center of attention and have someone be exclusively interested in their story. The interviews prompted the characters to address their personal issues, and the interviews became formative and therapeutic moments for many characters.

4.4. Making the film

Viimeiset provided an exciting setting for filmmaking, as its visual and thematic presentation was easily approachable. The lack of fantastical elements provided an identifiable space for filming while diminishing the need to contextualize props or game mechanics. However, it was affected by many challenges presented previously,

and the challenges added resistance during the production phase. While analysis of the film and the related process will be covered in chapter 5, the next step is to examine how the film was constructed.

4.4.1 Preproduction and filming

As the documentary was to be performative and part of the game's fiction, it allowed for a relaxed approach to filming. The camera would be present in the game, and all the players and their characters were aware of it and allowed to react to it. The fictional backstory was simple; one of the residents of the collective was a documentary filmmaker who wanted to make a documentary about the people of the collective. It allowed the camera not only to observe events from a distance but to get involved in what was going on.

Documentary filmmaking requires extensive preparation, but in the case of Viimeiset, the preparation process was seemingly haphazard. As the documentary was to focus on fictional people, it would have been possible to use the fictional framework to devise a substantial plan, as Tarpila knew most of the information regarding the individual characters and their lives. Instead of using this information to formulate a script, the film was formed through interviews and filming emerging events during the larp. The result was not predetermined, therefore allowing my personal player experience to intertwine with the filmmaking process. It is, however, to be noted that many important steps of preproduction were approached in a relaxed manner.

While the motivation for making the film was clear from the start, it was also approached with experimentation and observation in mind. The substantial preparation process of Viimeiset replaced the research phase typical for documentary filmmaking. Plans for the general aesthetics of the film were not made during the pre-production phase, and no lists of required imagery were compiled. A

possible narrative of the film was not drafted beforehand. The making of this film can thus be viewed as an emergent – not a finely structured – process.

Although the pre-production of the film was casual, it was not aimless. Great emphasis was placed on protecting the players' experiences and ensuring the participants' comfort, as they are *players,* not *actors*. As previously stated, the player experience is at the center of larp, and consequently at the center of the film. While there was an ambition to create a substantial larp film, it was more important to use Viimeiset as a platform for experimentation. It was deemed more important to explore how the camera could be used as part of the larp experience than to produce *the best* larp film, thus shifting priority from documentation to player experience.

A central issue for making the documentary was to ensure player safety and comfort. All participants agreed to be filmed during the larp, but uncertainty about how the presence of the camera would affect the experience remained. Like Pettersson points out; documentation affects the game and the experiences of the player's, as it turns a spotlight on the intimate experience that larp often is (Pettersson, 2015). As the players did not have control over what was being filmed, their trust and comfort had to be guaranteed. It was paramount to ensure that the players could be immersed in the fiction and play their characters without being worried about performing for the camera or being constantly observed. Tarpila aimed to secure the players' comfort by making sure their concerns were discussed and acknowledged, but she also asked the participants to increase their comfort in front of the camera by creating assignments that required them to film themselves. A safety system was put in place for the duration of the game, enabling players to effortlessly signal if they (the *players*, not their characters) did not want to be filmed. The players were also given a right of veto in case they upon seeing the finalized documentary would not want it to be screened in public, or if they would want to be excluded from it completely.

While it was important to make sure the players were comfortable with the presence of the camera, it was equally important to make sure that the limelight would be shared. As discussed in chapter 3, larp documentation often lacks the scope to have all participants be heard and seen. Viimeiset was a small larp, which

made it possible to focus on inclusivity in the documentation process while simultaneously valuing player safety and comfort. Conscious efforts were made to film each character during the larp, as well as provide an opportunity for in-depth, one-on-one discussions through individual interviews. This approach emphasized the players' subjective experiences and allowed each character to be the focal point of the documentation for the duration of the interview. The interviews helped ensure inclusivity, but also provided the documentary necessary narrative elements that are hard to obtain by merely observing emerging gameplay.

Although dramatic moments and conflicts were filmed, it was essential to avoid recording them exclusively. Mundane activities and conversations were filmed to emphasize the general atmosphere of the larp, as much of "what happened" in the larp was not dramatic nor particularly interesting. It was important to avoid composing the fictive normalcy through only the most "interesting" parts, as it would have reduced the feeling of realism. The observational recordings were mainly to be used as illustration during the interviews and to provide context for what was being discussed.

The 16 interviews were conducted over two days and resulted in almost 11 hours of material, averaging at approximately 40 minutes per interview. A separate building was reserved for filming (it was utilized for other diegetic uses outside filming hours), allowing for an intimate setting separate from the bustling atmosphere of the main house. The makeshift studio included a sofa, a chair for the interviewer, three studio lights and a Sony Nex-FS700E camera (backed up by a Sony HXR-NX70E) on a tripod. The audio was recorded through the integrated microphone on the camera, as the acquired wireless lapel microphones were defective.

While a list of general interview questions was compiled before the larp, most of the interviews consisted of follow up questions and exploration of emerging topics. The characters were asked about the commune and the people in it, but also about their lives and thoughts regarding their impending death. As the larps designer, Tarpila's contribution to the interviews remained modest. She did not impose, but offered her insight when required. While preparing the interview questions before the larp, Tarpila was asked to suggest which residents each interviewee should be asked to

describe and talk about, as she had insight that helped explore the character's most meaningful interpersonal relationships.

As the interviews covered a large portion of the runtime of the larp, time for filming emerging content, mundane activities and illustration became sparse. Even with the limited time focused on filming emerging content, recordings outside the interviews accounted for more than 3 hours of filmed material.

4.4.2 Post-production

The film's post-production process proved to be the most arduous part of the artistic process. As the pre-production phase was approached without clear structure and the filming itself focused heavily on interviews, compiling the film required complex creative decision making. The amount of filmed material and the fragmented nature of the content resulted in complications during the editing process, and technical shortcomings of the filmed material made it difficult to shape the material into a pleasing form. The film was finalized over a year after the larp itself, and two years after the start of the process. It is also noteworthy that while the post-production phase was seemingly long, time allocated to it was not as substantial.

The editing phase was initialized by examining the filmed material. The initial examination exposed some mistakes made during shooting; the interviews were visually unpleasing, as the camera had been calibrated improperly. The recordings lacked vibrancy in color, and the image quality was not what had been expected. This added further complications, as all interviews had been covered by a single, stationary camera with a medium shot to ensure the interviewees were always properly framed – even if they were to move. While the expected 4K video quality should have allowed some flexibility to recompose the images during post-production to provide variety in shot sizes, the actual quality of the footage did not

seem to allow such manipulation without considerable loss of quality. Substantial color correction seemed to be necessary, as the images showed a lack of contrast and general vibrancy.

After the initial inspection, a consequential examination of the content was needed. As the filmed material amounted to approximately 14 hours of content, it was imperative to review and categorize it before further use. Color coding was implemented to differentiate topics covered during each interview. Some clips were also marked based on their narrative potential; emotional moments, interesting narration and impactful anecdotes were highlighted to be more readily accessible for later use. General notes were taken to acquire loose annotations on the content to keep the material organized and searchable.

While the process of categorizing and examining the filmed content was imposing, it was a small feat in comparison to compiling the material into a coherent film. The filmed material was imbalanced, as the majority of all recordings consisted of interviews. The lack of establishing shots and shots suitable for illustration created resistance for compiling a well-balanced film. However, it was evident that the material included some impressive and emotionally compelling content. While Torner states that larpers often seem like bad actors (Torner, 2011, p. 114), the filmed material showed that it is not inevitable. The recordings involved expressions of thoughts and emotions that did not distinctly resemble fiction or theatrical performances but were easy to interpret as non-fiction. This provides some proof for Tarpila's claim that "feelings and realizations encountered in a larp are stunningly real, even if the framework is fictional" (Tarpila, cited in Laine, 2018, own translation). This "stunningly real" material provided the proverbial backbone for the film.

A central struggle during the editing process was the question of inclusivity. As previously stated, it is impossible to document larp in a way that represents all the participants' experiences. The careful and inclusive approach to filming Viimeiset tried to combat the issue of exclusion, however, turning the camera towards each participant is a simple task in comparison to compiling a cohesive film narrative out of the fragmented experiences. Examining the filmed material raised doubts, as it

felt natural to bring certain characters and their stories to the forefront while acknowledging the importance of somewhat equal representation.

However, it became abundantly clear that the fictional setting of the film allowed for a different approach. While other characters had used painting, photography or writing as their means of expression, the film was the medium for the documentarists self-expression. The editing process became part of the larp experience, as the guiding principle for creative decision making was contextualized through the fiction; what would the documentarist want to say or do? The importance of telling everybody's stories diminished and the desire to commit to the fictional nature of the documentary expanded.

The option to approach the documentation as part of my player experience provided a clear point of view for the film. It is (as previously stated) imperative to identify the reason (the *"why")* for larp documentation, as different audiences require different things to find value in the documentation. To create a fulfilling product, a target audience and narrative approach need to be established. As the post-production phase unveiled the malleable nature of the filmed material itself, it allowed for not only one, but multiple end products to be produced. The one examined in this study is only one of many potential films about the larp, although it is the only one produced thus far. It captures parts of my player experience, as well as parts of other participants experiences, and creates a space for external audiences to form their own relationship with the larp's fiction.

5. Discussion

5.1. Post mortem of "Vielä hetki"

Creating the fictional documentary was an extensive process resulting not only in an interesting artwork but also an experiment in larp documentation and the creative platform that larp is. Examining the process and outcome grants us insight that can be useful in future endeavors by showing the potential and the restrictions of creating independent artworks inside larp and how they might add to the traditions of larp documentation.

5.1.1. Lessons learned

Some of the encountered challenges for filming the documentary are connected to issues discussed in chapter three. Recording emerging content presents several technical challenges, like the complex soundscape of multiple simultaneous sources of sound. Audio is an interesting diegetic element of a larp, as it allows characters to connect to their surrounding world by listening to radio programs and music or watching TV, but it presents specific challenges for film documentation.

Copyrighted music played during the larp may need to be removed during the editing phase, and the music can obfuscate relevant dialogue that becomes unusable. Controlling the soundscape through detailed sound design may solve some of the issues but requires resources and attention.

It is equally essential to allocate resources to other technical aspects of the production, such as proper lighting and camera work. As the film crew for "Vielä hetki" consisted of one person, the attention for detail suffered, thus confirming the need for a more substantial film team. A larger crew would also ensure more comfortable working conditions, as filming and editing a documentary alone is an arduous process.

A larger crew also allows for more focus on the narrative content, providing space for thorough directing work to be done. Observing and filming emerging play requires the undivided attention of a reporter or director, as it is essential to make decisions on what to film when seemingly nothing is happening – or while multiple intense events take place simultaneously. The director should focus on constructing a narrative throughout the production process and ensure that enough relevant material is being recorded. When filmmaking is part of the diegetic fiction of the larp, the director can get more involved and ask questions, direct characters, and the film crew, which also creates interesting play between the filmmakers and the ones being filmed.

As film narratives substantially differ from larp experiences, there is also an evident need for substantial preparation to translate the sporadic events of larp for film audiences. If the camera remains a mere observer, it cannot contextualize the intrinsic essence of what takes place. While resourceful editing may support weaving the fragmented occurrences into a coherent film narrative, it is equally important to allocate resources for preparation.

Although a clear goal guided the production of "Vielä hetki," the construction of the film suffered from a lack of focus. The filmed material, consequently, proved overwhelming to edit, as there was no predetermined way the film was imagined to look like. While the lack of a concrete plan provided much freedom to explore, it

also resulted in an unnecessarily lengthy post-production process. It is therefore evident, that while the unpredictability of larp is an asset for play, it may constitute a challenge for the unprepared filmmaker. In addition to more substantial preparation, the production of "Vielä hetki" would have benefitted from having an outside editor to assist with the post-production of the film.

Some aspects of larp are more suitable for film documentation than others, as the expressive differences of the two media are substantial. Larp characters are not explicitly designed to drive a grand narrative, but to allow players to explore the collective fiction. On film, larp characters may seem like exaggerated caricatures as they often serve a specific purpose in a larger dynamic. Consequently, some character's actions and backstories may feel outlandish when witnessed on film. Making the camera a mere observer does not provide fertile grounds for filming larp, as larp facilitates play for participants instead of performances for outsiders.

Even the most realistic larp elevates the realism, making it more potent than real life. While film also thrives within the realm of the incredible, larp requires experiences to take place in a condensed timeframe. Dramatic events stack up and may become an exhausting cacophony of mismatching and oddly timed occurrences. While Viimeiset was muted in its approach to grand, dramatic events, it contained some instances that became difficult to incorporate in the documentary. Although the themes of the larp – and the documentary – were simple and relatable, some character's backstories (while valuable to the players) seemed to shift the focus away from the normalcy of human life to the overly dramatic. It proved difficult to justify the inclusion of these stories in the film as they did not add to the narrative, nor did they enhance the feeling of realism. However, the sensitive issue of subjectivity and erasure demanded careful consideration of how to approach this material.

The question of "bad acting" presented in chapter three should also be addressed. As the players are not actors, the filmed material may include instances of exaggerated performances, as well as actions that seem like deliberate attempts to provoke reactions from others. Larp does not provide individual players the consistent, undivided attention of the other participants, as there is no stage where

the performances take place, no distinction between audience and performer, and no main character to watch. The players are constantly dividing their attention between a complex array of processes; performing, experiencing, reacting, and more. This may lead to the need for extra emphasis on their expression to allow other players to perceive relevant details and react to them. The camera, however, picks up shifts in physical expression more effortlessly. It also lacks the ability to discern their context. Film thus accentuates pronounced performances even further, and as Torner states, the two different forms of media struggle to find common ground:

" Audiovisual records of a larper's body destroy the ephemeral nature of its performance. These epistemic problems emerge from the borders of both media - film, and larp - as they grapple with each other's communicative limitations (Torner, 2011, p. 108).

The documentary is unable to overcome some of the previously identified issues that larp documentation constantly struggles with. Of the five central issues identified by Stenros and Montola, it most evidently fails to solve the problem of subjectivity. While the documentation process was designed to incorporate all participants and the individual interviews enhanced the feeling of inclusion, the final product is not a balanced representation of the player experiences. As previously noted, objective documentation is impossible to achieve as larp is a collection of subjective experiences. It is, therefore, no surprise, that "Vielä hetki" fails to encapsulate the subjective player experiences fully.

Although the film managed to capture parts of the larp, Viimeiset remains ephemeral and unattainable. As previously stated; larp can never be captured, as it lacks a constant form. However, the aim of the documentary was not to document the larp but to create a film inside the boundaries of the larp that could be enjoyed by external audiences. The film is therefore consciously biased, designed to entertain viewers – not to capture the complete larp.

5.1.2. Encouraging findings

While filming spontaneous play proved complex and underwhelming, the opposite is true for interviewing larp characters. The intimate setting provided a space for the interviewees to express their characters to an alert audience, and to have more control over what was being recorded than during the documentation of activities around the house. The interviews provided effective means to explore underlying themes central to individual player experiences, instead of merely documenting what was visible through observation. This provided much needed narrative context for the film, as Viimeiset did not have an all-encompassing narrative. The larp was, however, thematically coherent and the interviews brought these themes to the forefront and allowed closer examination of the underlying stories of the individual characters.

Conducting diegetic interviews resulted in exciting play, as the interview proved to be an engaging game mechanic. The players of Viimeiset invested much time and effort into the creation of their characters, and the interviews became a natural space to explore their stories. Like Cox points out; players rarely get the opportunity to talk about their props, characters or experiences (Cox, 2018, p. 25). It is, therefore, significant to provide a space where this is not only welcomed – but encouraged. Utilizing diegetic interviews as a central game mechanic elevated the feeling of relevance of the individual player experience, while also respecting the fictional framework of the larp.

The interviews served as motivation for the characters to address personal issues. They forced the characters to attempt to mend difficult relationships or speak up on topics that had been previously avoided. Consequently, while the interviews were intimate instances between only two characters at a time, they seemed to affect the larp on a larger scale. They provided the characters and their players motivation to

act while enhancing the feeling of each character being the unchallenged focal point of someone's interest.

The interviews also enhanced my personal player experience, as they allowed me to share intense moments with all the other characters. It is uncommon to have the opportunity to explore the backstories of other characters in such detail, but the role of the documentarist provided an excellent excuse to be unabashedly interested in those stories. The fictional setting also allowed for a more abrasive interview technique, as the interviewees were fictional. Thus, hurting their feelings or breaching their privacy would not result in any real-life consequences. While the process was arduous, it proved to be highly fulfilling.

The experience of interviewing larp characters was also highly immersive. During an interview on the second day of filming, my character asked for elaboration on a small detail the interviewee had mentioned moments earlier. While studying the interviewee to determine why they were reluctant to answer, I realized I might have asked something the player was unable to answer as *they are not their character*. Before that, I had not been conscious of the distinction between the players and their characters, although the players were familiar to me through the nine-month preparation process – or in some cases through years of intimate friendship. I was convinced that everything I wanted to know, the person in front of me could answer. This is a testament to the commitment of the players and the foresight of Tarpila, who deemed thorough preparation and player engagement fundamental for meaningful and emotional play (Tarpila, 2017, p. 3). The immersion relied on the participants being intimately familiar with their characters and on their emotional connection to them.

While the emerging play may provide examples of inconsistent "acting," it is equally important to acknowledge that the need for exaggeration diminishes when the player and their character are in a distraction-free environment. Individual interviews offer an intimate setting and a space for the players and their characters to express themselves without interruptions or the need to project their emotions to distracted counterparts. As previously discussed and identified by Lampo (Lampo, 2011, p. 91), theatrical performances are based on the performers capacity to *express*

something. Instead, during diegetic larp interviews, the expressive quality relies on the player *experiencing something*. In the interviews conducted during Viimeiset, the players' performances are subtle and more akin to what is expected of performances witnessed on film. There are, in most cases, no apparent indicators that suggest that the interviewees are characters instead of real people. Bringing the camera close to the characters and allowing them to express themselves to someone who is there only for them proved to be a productive space for filmmaking. While it creates a conceptual stage and an audience, it can also support intimate play if the comfort of the players has been ensured by proper preparation. It allows the documentarist – and thus the documentary – to become part of the player's experience.

Although "Vielä hetki" fails to overcome the complexity of documenting subjective larp experiences, it succeeds in creating a unique experience for the external audience. One can argue, that it attempts to circumvent the issue of larp only being accessible to its participants. While it is impossible to experience larp without larping, it is valuable to close the gap between the unknown world of larp and the non-participant. Although the viewer experience is never equal to the larp experience, it can grant valuable insight into the value of larp.

It is consequently apparent that Viimeiset provided a remarkable space for filmmaking that was the result of a functional and truly collaborative process. Creating the film depended on the extensive work done by all the participants, as they served the functions of not only performers but designers, script writers and more. They knew their characters on such a detailed level that they convincingly became their characters not only in the larp but also on film. As Tarpila posed; the larpers experience becomes impressively realistic for them, and in the case of the documentary, some of it also translates to an outside audience. It seems beneficial for larp documentation to be as co-creative as the medium it tries to document.

5.2. Larp as a platform for artistic creation

As larp is an intricate construct, it presents diverse perspectives for artistic creation. It does not only provide a platform for expression for a variety of creators but also a multitude of experiences for varied audiences. The medium presents itself differently depending on artistic approaches, target audiences, and presentation, and each artwork has intrinsic properties that represent the medium in different ways. While there are undoubtedly more examples of larp related art, Viimeiset provided examples from three clearly defined categories: art created for larp, art created during larp and larp itself.

The primary work of art is larp itself, and as previously discussed, it is ephemeral and can only be experienced by its participants. The primary audience for larp is, therefore, the players, and the co-creative nature of the medium suggests that players and designers are the artists responsible for the work. While the creation of the artwork is a participatory process, the artwork results in individual experiences that cannot be recreated. The fictional framework is central to the artwork itself, as it contextualizes the value of what takes place. The participants have a shared understanding of the characteristics of the fiction, allowing them to share the space inside the magic circle of the larp. The artwork is therefore ephemeral, exclusive, participatory, co-creative and intended for a first-person audience.

The properties of artworks created for larp are less uniform. These works are often props or elements that aid in the augmentation of the larps fiction, but can also be parts of a creative preparation process, serving no purpose in the larp itself. The art is usually created outside the fiction of the larp, therefore distinguishing them from art that is created during larp. The players are the primary audience for these works, and the artworks can be central to the player experiences; an outfit created for a character is integral to the embodiment of that character, and a piece of music created for a larp affects the collective mood. Art created for larp often serves a predetermined function, but once the larp is over, the function changes. The

artwork becomes a memento as it loses its fictional context. The function is also different to outside audiences, as they are not cognizant of the fiction of the larp.

Artworks created for larp can be created by larp designers, players and outsiders alike, but they are rooted in the fiction of the larp. This separates them from artworks that are used in larp but not made specifically for the context, like pre-existing books and movies. The approachability of artworks created for larp varies, as their meaning and value may be extrinsic. Although good craftsmanship and interesting design can be universally appreciated, the artwork's fictional context may remain obscured. The expressive qualities of the artistic medium dictate the value of the artwork for the uninformed audience. However, artworks created for larp are generally not designed for external audiences but the benefit of the larp and the larper.

Art that is created during larp is equally non-uniform as artworks created for larp. There are few boundaries to the choice of medium, and the variation in possible creators and audiences is proportionally diverse. Players can utilize artistic creation as part of their larp experience, and the artist of such art is usually a character, rather than a player (although the distinction is vague). Outsiders can also use larp as a creative platform. However, the outsider-artist remains excluded from the magic circle of the larp, which affects the outcome of their work. Art created during larp can hold characteristics that translate to outside audiences but may also be too closely connected to the exclusive larp experience to be comprehensible to the non-participant. The artist's intention, capacity for expression and target audience determine the artworks relation to its viewer.

It is evident that larp is a fruitful platform for artistic creation, as it presents an interesting framework for exploration. The distinction between player and character affords the player-artist unique perspective that is (at least partially) separate from their day-to-day self. The fictional setting provokes the creative mind to acknowledge the significance of things that lack meaning in their personal lives. Works created during larp can, therefore, be products of fictional insight that translates to the real world. The magic circle of larp can also provide a safe space for

creativity, as it is separate from real life and thus not attached to real life pressure or expectations.
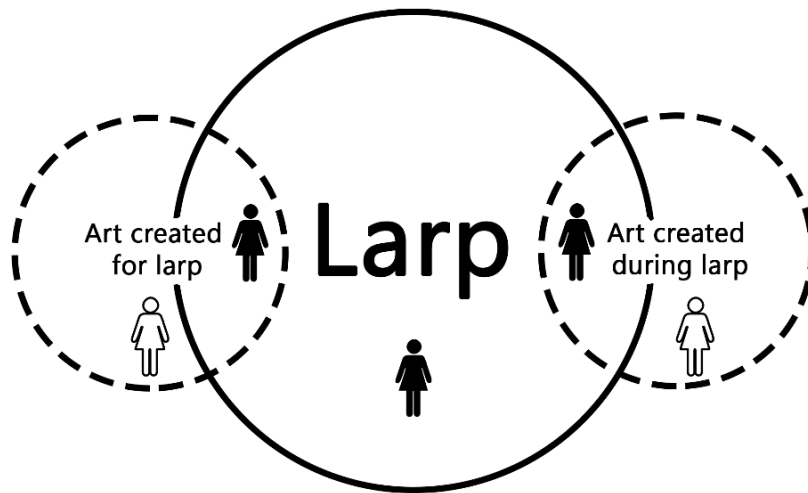
Audiences for larp related art

Figure 2: Audiences for larp related art constitute participants, but also external audiences
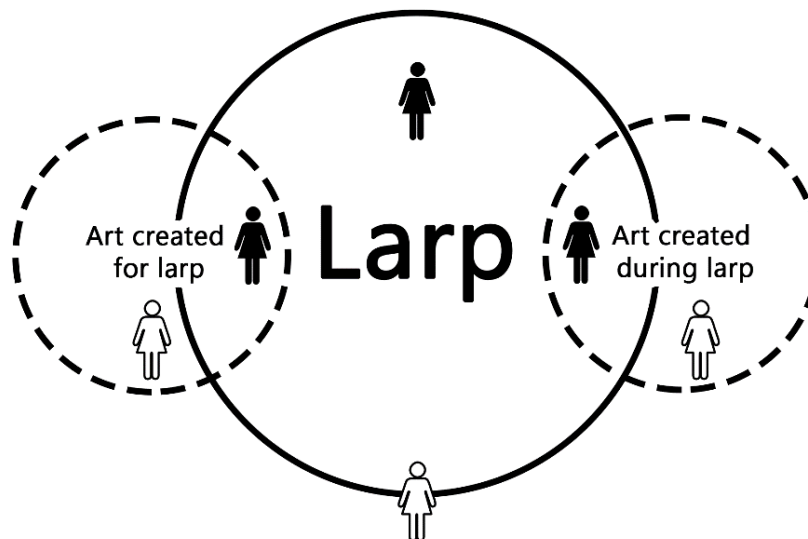
Creators of larp related art

Figure 3: Creators of larp related art can be both participants and outsiders

The three identified categories of art are intricately connected and codependent. While larp is the primary work of art, it is shaped by other artworks created as a result of it. Art made for larp impacts the larp experience, as does art created during larp. The respective creative processes become a part of the expression and contextualization of larp. It is therefore complicated to separate the two secondary categories from the primary artwork, as their function is often specifically supporting play and augmentation in larp. However, it is possible to appreciate art created for or during larp without being intimately familiar with their fictional context. With proper design and presentation, these works become more approachable and meaningful – even for the non-larping audience.

Although this study has emphasized larp documentation, it is equally interesting to consider documentation as a separate creative endeavor. The goal for filming a documentary during Viimeiset was to create an independent work of art that could be understood and valued by outside audiences. The intent was to explore the possibility for diegetic filmmaking inside larp from the standpoint of artistic creation – not pure documentation. In retrospect, it is obvious, that the distinction between the two is ambiguous. The initial intention is, however, still relevant. While diegetic artworks created during larp also serve the function of documentation, their inherent qualities are more intricate as they are integral parts of the experience itself. As larp documentation pursues capturing the player experience, artworks central to these experiences provide considerable value to documentation efforts. While artworks connected to larp (diegetic or not) are unable to encapsulate the fleeting artwork, they remain the most lasting pieces of the ephemeral experience.

6. Conclusion

Larp remains ephemeral, exclusive and complicated to explain to uninformed parties, and traditional means of larp documentation fail to capture the essence of larp. The medium does, however, facilitate exploration of new ways to capture parts of it and to translate some of its meaning to outsiders. Player experiences – while notoriously difficult to document – are considered central to larp and thus larp documentation. Although it is impossible to conclusively document player experiences, it is possible to make documentation an integral part of them. While the magic circle of larp constitutes a barrier between participants and the outside world, it is possible to bring means of documentation inside these barriers. Larp documentation should be approached as a co-creative process, resulting in not one – but multiple documents that reflect parts of the fragmented experiences central to the medium.

While larp cannot be experienced through observation, the medium allows us to produce meaningful and lasting works of art that can convey some of the value of larp as an art form to those who are unable to experience it. These works can also have intrinsic values, that have meaning to audiences outside the larp. While the fiction of the larp frames all art created for and during larp, it is possible to find ways to circumvent the divide between the informed participant and the uninformed outsider. Artworks that overcome this challenge represent multiple things to different audiences; the player contextualizes them through their larp experience, while the outsider experiences the artwork from a separate perspective. The artist's intention and design choices dictate the artwork's functionality for different audiences, as does the context of viewing them. It is essential to know the

reason for both documentation and artistic creation in order to serve the intended purpose. It is impossible to capture larp comprehensively, but it is, however, possible to capture parts of its expression.

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