

# Table of Contents

[Table of Contents](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Types of games we design](#)

[Inspiration for game ideas](#)

[Brainstorming for concept, gameplay, game scenario](#)

[Game design process](#)

[Testing and evaluation](#)

[Finalization of the projects](#)

[Conclusions/recommendations for our target audience](#)

[Further resources](#)

## Introduction

Fundacja Fantazmat is a team of highly trained educators, facilitators, trainers and teachers set on changing educational paradigms. At the core of our foundation lies long-lasting, process-based youth work via long-term projects founded on principles of participatory culture, pedagogy of experience, learning theories gathered under the umbrella term of social constructivism (pragmatism, socio-cultural theory, as well as experiential and situated learning), as well as holistic approach to the relationship between mental and [physical well-being, to provide a steady stream of non-formal education opportunities for our all involved, removing all possible barriers that might be hindering growth. The main idea relies on an American urban sociologist, Ray Oldenburg's theory of "the third place" designated as a non-public space where groups of individuals meet informally, willingly and regularly while remaining outside their home, school or work and their designated spaces. With its policy of openness, acceptance, gender equality and inclusivity, our space becomes a safe haven for youth to aimed towards empowerment.

Our primary focus is using game-based methods, with the emphasis on role playing games (both tabletop and live action). We also extensively use drama, theatre, dance and movement on the creative-expressive level, with some of our personnel currently studying to become certified therapists in those fields of Dramatherapy and Dance Movement Therapy. Lastly, living history lessons, historical re-enactment, as well as workshops, seminars and discussion meetings, combined with all manner of interdisciplinary projects area a mainstay in our toolkit.

## Types of games we design

The type of games we are designing are usually Live Action Role Playing Games (LARP) as well as fostering a local youth community for which one of the main activities is designing, testing, and promoting LARP as a medium for community building and education. Occasionally we delve into urban games as well.

## Inspiration for game ideas

The inspiration for game ideas is never a single one: we usually draw our inspirations from various sources including popular culture history, literature, pressing social issues, parts of the educational curricula and more. This wide array of inspirations, allows for blending and reusing old tropes as well as having new takes and ideas, mixing genres, creating new mechanics and more.

## Brainstorming for concept, gameplay, game scenario

Brainstorming for concept, gameplay, game scenario starts either from the point of aesthetics deciding on what kind of story we would like the players to co-create, or from constructing a list of desired educational objectives in reaction to the main issue tackled by the game. When it comes to educationalLARPs, we tend to involve field-related experts, teachers and educators as consultants during the design process, while also playtesting the games with the members of desired target groups, often using the network of schools in the areas as playtesters' base. However, it is worth noting that the term "expert" does not need to refer specifically to a person pertaining to a particular set of skills or pool of knowledge. For instance, many members of our community identify themselves as members of the LGBTQ+ community or possess the diagnosis of having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and thus we tend to work both ways, by using their own expertise steaming from group and personal experience, side by side with the expertise of external parties.

## Game design process

Game design process is where we blend brainstorming and free-flow of ideas with the design-based methodology. Thus, our usual process looks as follows:

- **Brainstorming**, understood as a time for conceptualization of the main ideas. Here we decide about the starting point of the project, be it an aesthetic, a set of educational objectives related to the specific issue, or any other matter. At this point, we initially define:

- > the game mechanics, rules, and themes
- > objectives and quest-specific items and props
- > the aesthetic and genre of the game
- > the main storyline, possible plots and subplots
- > characters and their character arcs, factions,
- > venue (if the choice is possible), spatial design, temporary modifications to its internal structure
- > scenography and props

It is also the phase when we see which elements of the game do not add up in the initial concept and thus set out to the next stage having those particularities in mind.

- **Research for design** understood as compiling knowledge and expertise needed to design a specific game, including but not limited to: expanding our knowledge in specific areas related to the project, compiling and cross-referencing data, consulting with experts possessing specific knowledge or skill set, looking for sources of inspiration in other areas of life and culture, expanding the design and production team with external personnel needed for the job.
- **Research of design**, understood as searching for and playing other games tackling similar themes and issues in order to gather ideas for elements of our own design.

## Testing and evaluation

Testing and evaluation happens in the form of research through design, understood as fast-paced prototyping, playtesting, gathering feedback and integrating it into the prototype before another playtest. Thus, the prototypes are simple, often devoid of graphical elements, reusing already used resources and relying heavily on digitalization so that changes dictated by feedback and data collection could be implemented smoothly. Changes can pertain to any and all elements of the design, including but not limited to: characters and their individual design, in-game group dynamics, mechanics and their balance, aesthetics, tokens and other in-game props.

## Finalization of the projects

The finalization of the projects is twofold. **The beta version of the game** created in the previous stage, after the first round of playtests and reiterations, is produced as a fully-fledged prototype using pre-decided materials and graphics to see the game in. We strive for the entire process to end up in a place where possible changes at this stage would be purely cosmetic should they be needed, yet are still open to any change necessary.

# Conclusions/recommendations for our target audience

## Recommendations for LARP design in regard to accessibility and inclusion

The below section contains recommendations for future LARP designers categorized in four sections: inclusivity, accessibility, circular economy and environment. Some of those recommendations may address more than one issue simultaneously.

### Regarding written materials such as design documents & character sheets.

- If possible, provide materials in two forms: one with graphics and embellishments (for instance in PDF format) and one plain text, so that the reader can adjust the contrasts' font and size of the text.
- Adjust the language of all written materials to the target group for the game.
- Use fonts easier to read for the visually impaired, such as Arial, Helvetica, Verdana, especially in plain format documents.
- Recommend text to audio programs in order to allow for the contents of the documents to be listened to instead of being read.
- More on the topic of designing materials for people with sight-related issues can be found here:  
<https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/media/ebu-media/Guidelines-for-producing-clear-print.pdf>
- When writing character sheets, remember about spacing. Shorter paragraphs make information easier to digest, limiting the [cognitive load](#), which is especially important for neurodivergent players.
- If the players have no prior access to their character sheets, those should not exceed 1 page. This is vital with school students with no prior LARPing experience.
- While writing character sheets, it's useful to **write important information in bold** which makes them easier to spot.
- Use pointers to sum up important information for the character at the end of the character sheets, such as relationships with other characters, goals, secrets.
- Provide the access to written materials in planned and communicated advance, if possible.

### Regarding character & plot design

- Strive to design characters in a gender-neutral way so that the character's gender does not matter in terms of plot and objectives of the game. In such a case, allow the player to decide who they play by providing either a male and a female name for the character or a neutral one.

- If other design restrictions (such as, or instance, historically-accurate world do not allow for gender-neutral character design, then make sure to allow for crossplay (understood as playing a character which gender is not the one that the player identifies themselves as in real life).
- Having a player with physical disabilities to discuss their character design with them, in regard to incorporating their limitations as in-universe character traits.
- Should a person with disabilities require an assistant person for the sake of participation, design-wise, consider one of the two approaches. Either design their characters in tandem roles, or make the assistant invisible to other players by communicating it clearly that such a person is there only to be of help to the one with disabilities.
- Should you design characters outside your cultural circle, consult them with a person from said circle to avoid stereotypes.
- Similar notion applies to designing LARPs in specific historical setting or regarding specific social groups/vultures/minorities. It is advised to always do thorough research beforehand, as well as having an expert on the subject on the design team or as a consultant.

#### Regarding venue

- Make sure to organize games in venues accessible to people with movement impairments. If possible, visit said venue with such a person beforehand in order to assess it properly in regard to said accessibility.
- Communicate any and all potential obstacles.
- Design the play space to accommodate big groups as well as small groups dynamics.

#### Regarding physical and mental safety

- Designate a safe space within the area where players can go, should they feel threatened, overwhelmed or simply in need of momentary respite or can wind down if overstimulated.
- Designate a safety person within your organizing team which will provide emotional support to players in need of it.
- In case of smaller games, have a basic first aid kit on site. With bigger events, include a person trained in first-aid into the team,
- Introduce separate mechanics responsible for providing safety. Provide both verbal and non-verbal mechanics,
- A popular verbal mechanics consists of three color-related words which the players use to describe their attitude towards their current situation:
  - > Green is used to encourage others to make the scene more intense,

- > Yellow is used to keep the intensity of the scene on the current level and is a sign that it should not be escalated further,
- > Red is used to immediately break up the scene in case of a player's discomfort or physical safety issue, as well as any other situation the player see fit,
- A popular non-verbal mechanics consists of a set of certain gestures conveying specific meaning:
  - > OK check-in ( 🙌 ) is used to check if the other player feels comfortable in a given situation. There are three possible responses
    - > It's OK ( 👍 ) which mean that the player feels OK and no action needs to be taken
    - > It's not ok ( 👎 ) which means that the player does not feel ok with the situation and actions such as taking them off-game or to a safety person/medic need to be taken as the issue may be either mental or physical in nature
    - > I don't know ( 🙄 ) means that the player is not sure as to howthey feel and actions described above should be taken.

### Regarding communication

- Before the game, clearly communicate its goals, aesthetics, tone and target group using the design document.
- If the game requires preparation from players, communicate it ahead of time.
- Do not change essential organizational details such as location, date, hours etc. shortly before the game.
- Remind and repeat important details regularly before the game.
- You can use LARP pictograms to convey the themes of your game while also avoiding miscommunication and language barrier.

## Further resources

8 Ways to Make a LARP or Event Accessible

<https://guardup.com/how-to-make-a-larp-accessible/>Inclusion in Larp: Between Challenge and the Experience of Limits

<https://nordiclarp.org/2024/07/31/inclusion-in-larp-between-challenge-and-the-experience-of-limits/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85ArdpLr72c>

LARP pictograms: <https://btwlarp.wixsite.com/infography>

Playing it Safe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qnzGnz5S1M>