

The Invisible Rules of Role-Playing

The Social Framework of Role-Playing Process

Popular Abstract - This paper looks at the process of role-playing that takes place in various games. Role-play is a social activity, where three elements are always present: An imaginary game world, a power structure and personified player characters. In a nutshell, all role-playing activities about imaginary people acting out in an imaginary environment; the power structure is needed to differentiate these activities from free make-believe and children's play. After the basics, the paper moves on to discuss the various components in detail, going through how rules, goals, worlds, power, information and identity function in role-play. While the paper does not lead to a simple conclusion, it seeks to present a solid foundation for further research.

Markus Montola
University of Tampere
Finland
markus.motola@uta.fi

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a structural framework for role-playing that can be used as a foundation when creating further role-playing theory. The framework is based on assumption that all games are based on rules, and tries to make the implicit rules of role-playing visible by proposing the three rules of role-playing. Compared to regular gaming, role-playing is seen ultimately as a qualitative process rather than a quantitative one, differentiating it from many regular games.

1. INTRODUCTION¹

When studying games, a critical differentiation has to be made separating the study of games as formal systems from study of games as social processes. In the formal system of Texas hold'em Poker the player has quite limited number of legal options influencing her chance of winning a single round – in addition to bidding, she may change some cards or fold right away.

In the social process of gameplay the alternatives are a much wider. Gamers might influence each other in a million ways beginning from bluffing and threatening, with or without the intent of affecting the outcome of the game. Clearly, looking at Poker as a formal system can never fully grasp

the whole essence of the game – the game as it is played is very different from the game on paper.

Role-playing has also been often defined as a game system (e.g. Mackay 2001), though some attempts to look at it as a gaming process (e.g. Hakkarainen & Stenros 2002) have been done as well. Based on Heliö (2004), it can be argued that any formal game system can be used as a basis of role-playing process, provided the players have the proper mindset, and that any formal game system is not necessarily needed. On the other hand it has been noted that any role-playing game – whether we are discussing traditional tabletop role-playing games, larps (live role-playing games) or online role-playing games – can be participated without role-playing. Bartle (2004) for instance decides that online worlds are not games but places, since they lack many qualities of games while having several qualities of places.

Partially due to this confusion, the ludological discussion has been confused on whether role-playing is game playing or not. Typically, the analyses have focused on the role-playing games as rulesets. Role-play has been seen as a borderline case of game for various reasons. Due to game master's influence, role-playing lacks static rules (Juul 2003), and many role-playing systems do not allow the players to rate their characters' success or

¹ This paper was originally written in 2005 and updated in 2008. My two other papers (Montola 2007a, 2007b) already reference it.

failure in the game as “positive” or “negative” thing (Montola 2005).

In this paper I see role-playing mindset as a method of game playing, which can be optionally combined with various game systems. It is not the only distinct gaming mindset. For instance, some games are supposed to be played with mindset of a conspiratorial diplomacy and backstabbing, while others require a honorable sportsmanship or a style prioritizing style over success.

Hakkarainen and Stenros (2002) define role-playing game as that which “is created in the interaction between players or between player(s) and game master(s) within a specified diegetic framework”. This definition approaches role-playing from the angle of communication. If role-playing games are to be studied as games, a more ludological definition is required, one that demonstrates the similar game-like and features of all different forms of role-playing. It must also be understood that Bartle’s notion of persistent worlds being places rather than games is appropriate to all forms of role-playing to certain extent.

To this end, we need to make the implicit rules of role-playing visible. Typically the role-playing contexts such as virtual worlds, tabletop game rulesets and larp events only provide algorithmic rules of the formal system used as a platform for role-playing, but do not explicate the rules of role-playing expression itself. In this paper, I look at the played game as a game, not the game presented in the tabletop role-playing game rulebooks.

The following discussion includes several forms of role-playing, focusing on tabletop role-playing, live-action role-playing and virtual role-playing (see Montola 2003).² Other forms do exist, including freeform role-playing (which combines elements from larp and tabletop role-play) and pervasive role-playing (Montola 2007b), and even more can be invented. Additionally, there is a group of borderline forms of expression and gaming that might constitute role-playing as defined in this paper. These include a forms such as improv, psychodrama and Happenings.³

2. The Invisible Rules

Björk and Holopainen (2003) divide game rules and game goals into endogenous and exogenous categories – the rules and goals defined in the game structure, and the rules and goals brought to the game activity by players to give it meaning. Earlier, Fine (1983) has proposed a three-layered⁴ structure for role-playing, consisting of a primary (social) frame inhabited by people, secondary (game) frame inhabited by players and tertiary (diegetic) frame inhabited by characters.

Combining the approach of Fine with that of Björk and Holopainen, it is clear that endogenous rules are a part of the game frame, while exogenous rules are a part of the social frame. However, we need to add a third category, that of diegetic rules and diegetic goals, for rules and goals existing within the fiction of the role-play (see Montola 2005).

Illustrating Fine’s three frames with examples, this is how they look like:

- “Do not discuss non-game business during the game” – exogenous.
- “A sword does d10 points of damage” – endogenous.
- “Carrying a sword within the city limits is punishable by fine” – diegetic.

In its various forms, role-playing process appears to follow certain endogenous yet implicit rules, making it simultaneously a relatively formal way of expression and a relatively informal kind of a game. These rules have not been explained as rules in the published role-playing games, but rather this implicit information has been conveyed in the sections of the book trying to explain what role-playing is or how a role-play should be conducted.

For all role-playing in general I propose the following three rules, which are the world rule, the power rule and the character rule:

- 1) Role-playing is an interactive process of defining and re-defining the state, properties and contents of an imaginary game world.
- 2) The power to define the game world is allocated to participants of the game. The participants recognize the existence of this power hierarchy.

² Tabletop role-playing is also sometimes called pen ‘n’ paper role-playing. Live-action role-playing is called often larping, and virtual role-playing includes role-playing in persistent on-line worlds such as MUDs and MMORPGs.

³ See e.g. Kaprow 1966 and Boal 2002 for direct sources, and Morton 2007 and Harviainen 2008 for role-play approaches.

⁴ Mackay (2001) has proposed a five-layered version, dividing the diegetic framework into three layers depending on the style of parole used in them. Kellomäki (2004) has a model similar to Mackay’s with four layers of interaction: social, game, narration and characters.

- 3) Player-participants define the game world through personified character constructs, conforming to the state, properties and contents of the game world.

Depending on the platform and methodology used, the possible participant roles include player, game master, actor, live musician, system administrator et cetera. The player role is a special case among these, since presence of a participant in a player role is a logical requirement for a "game". Role-playing as defined in this paper is not possible without any players with personified characters; this distinction is made in order to separate role-playing from various forms of collaborative storytelling.

The rules 1, 2 and 3 also define role-playing: All gaming conducted according to them is role-playing, while the gaming not based on them is not. Thus, it can be said that role-playing is a game of formal make-believe. Though the game world is fluid and undergoing a constant re-definition process, the re-definitions are restricted by the current state of the game world; thus, the process of constant iteration does not allow completely arbitrary or random changes (see also Kellomäki 2004). This iterative nature is necessary for the ludic, gamelike experiences created in role-playing, since it moves the focus from creating fiction externally to acting within it. The existing fiction provides the constraints and opportunities making the experience meaningful as a game. The game master and the character are structures that are used to establish the limits of definitional power in the game. As restrictions of rules give meaning to ordinary gameplay, in role-playing the restrictions of defining power give meaning to acting within the game world. These restrictions also differentiate role-playing from make-believe.

I also present four optional, additional rules that often complement the first three rules. These are not definitional criteria of role-playing, but they are used so commonly that their descriptive value warrants the inclusion here. The possibilities of additional rules are endless, but these are probably the most typical and descriptive of them.

- i) Typically the decisive power to define the decisions made by a free-willed character construct is given to the player of the character.
- ii) The decisive defining power that is not restricted by character constructs is often given to people participating in game master roles.

- iii) The defining process is often governed by a quantitative game ruleset.
- iv) The information regarding the state of the game world is often disseminated hierarchically, in a fashion corresponding with the power structure of the game.

There are infinite ways of dividing the power to define in role-playing games. The ways of doing the division begin from the dictatorial and omnipotent game master, ending in a completely collective system lacking any ultimate authority (see Svanevik 2005). These divisions are sometimes changed during the game, for instance the game master role might move from participant to another, or some participant might be given the decisive defining power within certain areas or events of the game. Player-participants are also often given more power than declared in rule three.

Additionally, these three endogenous rules (based on Lojonen & Montola 2004, Montola 2003) differentiate certain forms of role-playing from each other:

- t1) In tabletop role-playing the game world is defined predominantly in verbal communication.
- l1) In larp the game is superimposed on physical world, which is used as a foundation in defining the game world.
- v1) In virtual role-playing the game is superimposed on a computational virtual reality, which is used as a foundation in defining the game world.

By this definition, role-playing conducted in internet chats, for instance IRC-roleplaying, is usually not virtual role-playing but a form closer to tabletop role-playing. If the chat is a part of a larp staged in physical world, chatting is part of larping, and if it is a part of virtual world, it is part of virtual role-playing. Virtual role-playing requires a computerized virtual representation of reality (typically textual or graphical): It should be noted that due to this, all virtual role-playing games are governed by a quantitative ruleset (iii) to some extent, since all virtual worlds are mathematical rule systems.

While rules 1, 2 and 3 defined role-playing, rules i-iv provide typical, descriptive additions to the first three rules. However, the latter rules are not powerful in defining role-playing. Rules t1, l1 and v1 can be combined with rules 1, 2 and 3 in order to define certain subforms of role-playing, so they are also definitive in nature.

Though game rules are often seen as mathematical, logical or algorithmic systems, the structures of a game can actually be classified into quantitative and qualitative structures, depending on whether they can be reduced into numbers and or not. In sports striving for aesthetic value – such as ski jumping and ice dancing – the qualitative activities are quantified by referee boards who transform the qualitative part of the performance into points.

The rules of role-playing (1, 2, 3) are obviously qualitative and non-algorithmic. In this sense role-playing differs from the majority of games. Sometimes, especially in tabletop role-playing, the game master acts as the quantifying entity, by evaluating characters' actions and determining the dice rolls the players must make in order to have their characters succeed. Character discussions and non-contested actions usually are handled within the qualitative system, while all-out combat is often very quantitative, especially within the rules-oriented tabletop role-playing cultures. Role-playing does not need the quantitative part to work, but performing qualitative actions is necessary for the process of game world definition.

There are infinite ways of dividing the power to define in role-playing games. The ways of doing the division begin from the dictatorial and omnipotent game master, ending in a completely collective system lacking any ultimate authority.

Salen and Zimmerman (2004) differentiate the game rules into three categories: operational rules, constitutive rules and implicit rules. Operational rules tell the players how the game is supposed to be played, while the constitutive rules define the logical and mathematical system underlying the operational rules. Implicit rules are the unwritten social rules governing the play. Just like the social gaming important to a Poker process, the rules of role-playing pose a problem to Salen and Zimmerman's classification system, being constitutive but qualitative, and implicit but still somehow operational.⁵ Using the division of Björk and Holopainen (2003) above, the rulesets used as a basis for role-playing are endogenous rules, as are these rules of role-playing process.

3. Role-Playing and Goals

A layered structure similar to the rules exists for goals as well.⁶ However, role-play typically has no inherent endogenous goals at all. The rules of role-playing only provide the structure for the activity, but give no end condition or an objective. Classical tabletop role-playing rulesets and virtual worlds sometimes implicitly offer some pursuits for players to follow, usually involving character power development or survival. These are rarely true endogenous goals either: as no one can win or lose in role-playing, the emphasis of the action is not even focused on the game frame.

The most central goals that provide role-play with content are defined and accepted within the diegetic frame, by players defining the world and characters. This distinction is one of the key issues in the discussion whether role-playing games should be defined as games or not.

- "I want to have fun in this game" – exogenous.
- "I want to explore Norwegian refugee politics in this game" – exogenous.
- "I want to become the mightiest wizard in the kingdom" – diegetic.
- "I want to play the man tragically failing in his quest of becoming the mightiest wizard in the kingdom" – exogenous.

The contradiction of the goals in different frames is a common gratifying element in role-playing. Just as a spectator enjoys a tragical experience brought to her by actors on the stage, a role-player enjoys creating one for herself.

The endogenous goals made explicit in the written system of a role-playing game only become a meaningful part of the role-playing process, if the players interpret them into the game world as diegetic goals. The most traditional role-playing games intentionally leave the endogenous goals undefined or vague, and even when they are explicated clearly, player troupes often disregard them entirely.

In some exceptional role-playing games there are explicit endogenous goals that are critical for the game as a whole. Examples of these include many "Forge-style" games such as *My Life with Master* (Czege 2003) and *Circle of Death* style larps (Tan 2001) such as *Killer* (Jackson 1981). While *My Life with Master* is intended to follow a certain story arc

⁵ The tacit knowledge of how to play Poker is not communicated in the written game rules, but the players still communicate that social maneuvering is a legitimate and important part of the play.

⁶ I have discussed the role-playing goals in deeper detail in Montola (2005), in the particular context of role-playing within virtual worlds.

practically every time it is played, ending up in the death of the master in the hands of his minions, Killer is a very gamist assassination game where players really try to win the game.⁷ My Life with Master and Killer feature endogenous goals such as the following:

- “When minion’s love for the villagers has grown strong enough, slaying the master becomes her goal” – endogenous.
- “The player whose character kills the most enemy characters is the winner” – endogenous.

As I have discussed earlier (Montola 2005), the endogenous goals dominate the contemporary online role-playing game design culture. The role-playing players occasionally translate the endogenous goals into diegetic goals. The following example is from (the original version of) Star Wars Galaxies.

- “By completing the jedi quests and collecting enough experience points, the character becomes a jedi” – endogenous.

The value of the endogenous goals is derived from the players’ exogenous goals. If a role-player’s aim is to have a good role-playing experience, such an endogenous goal is only valuable if she can translate it into a diegetic goal as well. If it cannot, it might just be ignored.

The goals of the social level vary immensely from one gaming culture to another; sometimes the explicit dissonance of social and diegetic goals is a source of enjoyment, while often diegetic character success is teamed with social pursuit of success in the game. As role-playing does not take place in the domain of ordinary life, tragic experiences can be highly pleasurable.

The exogenous goals are not restricted to entertainment – the normative claim of fun being the only purpose of role-play (e.g. Laws 2002, Duguid 1995) is simply erroneous. In a more constructive approach, Mäkelä & al. (2005) propose a list of six gratifications that warrant further study: entertainment, learning, meaning, aesthetic appreciation and social and physical benefits.

4. THE ELUSIVE GAME WORLD

Ryan (2001, 91) sums up the concept of world with four features, defining it as a connected set of objects and individuals, a habitable environment, a reasonably intelligible totality for external observers and a field of activity for its members. In role-playing the world construction can be seen as a textual⁸ process, where different actors produce elements that are in the process combined into new texts (Aarseth 1997, Kellomäki 2004).

The earlier discussion on the game world of role-playing games has discussed it both with a collective (Hakkarainen & Stenros 2002, Pohjola 1999, Heliö 2004) and a subjective (Montola 2003, Andreasen 2003, Lopenen & Montola 2004) emphasis. In this paper, I call the collective structure a “game world”, as it is ludologically proper term to describe the arena where the game is played, while the subjective structure is “diegesis”, a subjective view created by interpreting input from the other participants and environment, complemented by the participant’s own creative additions.⁹

Player perceptions on the game world are constructed in interpersonal textual interaction. As Ryan (2001) explains, cultural background and

Just as a spectator enjoys a tragical experience brought to her by actors on the stage, a role-player enjoys creating one for herself.

imagination are used in building a world based on textual inputs.

“The idea of textual world presupposes that the reader constructs in imagination a set of language-independent objects, using as a guide to the textual declarations, but building this always incomplete image into a more vivid representation through the import of information provided by internalized cultural knowledge, including knowledge derived from other texts.”

As I have discussed earlier (Montola 2003, Lopenen & Montola 2004) the problems inherent to communication mean that every player has a

⁷ There are many curious similarities between Killer and My Life with Master, despite the fact that Killer can be considered extremely gamist role-playing game while My Life with Master is an explicitly narrativist one. (See Kim 1998 for discussion on gamism, narrativism and simulationism).

⁸ Even though Aarseth (1997) differentiates cybertexts from hypertexts by requiring cybertexts to have a computational element in their creation, he still brings up role-playing activities as “oral cybertexts”.

⁹ What I call game world has also been called a shared imaginary space (SIS). According to Mäkelä & al. (2005) the imagined spaces (IS) of the participants overlap to create the shared imaginary space; Hence, their imaginary

different reading of the game world provided by other players. In addition to the reading of the game world, every player complements her perception of the game world by never-expressed internal ideas and feelings. This internal element combined with the reading constitutes participant's subjective diegesis, which is the end result created by the player in the process of playing: The subjective diegesis is both the primary product created in the role-play and the transient object of aesthetic value.¹⁰ No participant of the process can ever understand the game world completely, as parts of it are inaccessible – created by other players but never voiced aloud.

The interactive process¹¹ of arbitration producing the diegeses and the game world is usually based on negotiation and cooperation rather than on struggle or contest. Usually this arbitration process is implicit, but explicit negotiation is used to reconcile radical differences in player diegeses. Perhaps counter-intuitively, the imaginary and arbitrary nature of the game world is the force guiding the players to cooperate in diegesis

The exogenous goals are not restricted to entertainment – the normative claim of fun being the only purpose of role-play is simply erroneous.

construction. Though conflict is often simulated in the game frame, it stems from the diegetic frame.

Game master¹² and game mechanics are the two central methods created specifically in order to avoid the struggle on the level of form, in order to keep it on the level of game content. Typically the conflict begins from the game world, potentially escalating to game frame and occasionally even to

the social frame. This happens if the players first need rules to solve the conflict between characters, and then if the players begin to argue over the rules as the conflict escalates.

If game world construction is looked as a communication system, it can be seen as an interpretation loop of three basic activities:

1. Interpreting outside input into the subjective diegesis
2. Making changes into the diegesis
3. Communicating the changes to other participants

This cycle of three activities is a theoretical model; in practice all these functions are performed simultaneously. In larp, for instance, player walking on a street constantly changes the diegesis (by moving herself), while getting new input (seeing new things) and communicating the change to other players (who see her moving. In tabletop role-playing this decision-making model appears more clearly, elaborating the continuous cycle of iterative reinterpretation of the world in the communication loop of the game.

To keep up the loop of interpretation the players must be able to understand the world they are defining and re-defining. They have to understand the diegetic laws of nature and the state of the diegetic world in order to uphold the logic of the game world, constructing its future based on its properties, state and history. In order for the game world to work as a place or a space, the world needs not to be “realistic” but sensible; the laws of nature can be very different to ours.¹³ In Juul's (2003, 117) classification of game worlds this means that the game world has to be coherent – which means that there must be nothing that would prevent a person from imagining the world in any detail. Only extremely experimental games can be

space is equivalent to my diegesis. The idea of a shared imaginary space contains an oxymoron, as no imaginary thing can ever be truly shared.

¹⁰ Sandberg (2004) discusses the idea of a “first-person audience”, with the idea that only the role-player can properly understand and appreciate her own subjective creation.

¹¹ My use of term “interaction” denotes that A can affect B's way of affecting A in a non-predetermined and non-trivial fashion, and vice versa (as opposed to Costikyan's (2002) trivial definition). Indeed, this decision excludes the single-player computer games: This paper discusses role-playing as a social process, requiring two sentient participants.

¹² Game master's role originated from the role of a wargame referee. In wargames, the struggle is supposed to take place between gamers on the game level, not between people fighting over rules on the social level – including a referee facilitated this process.

¹³ An innovative example of ruleset portraying the genre of the diegetic world as well as its laws of nature is *Amber: Diceless Role-Playing*. The author Erick Wujcik (2004) emphasized that the game is not diceless due to “some obscure theoretical reason”, but rather to capture the feel of Roger Zelazny's *Amber* books. “In the original books nothing ever happens by chance; every time something seems to happen by chance, it is revealed that someone was manipulating the events behind the scenes. In *Amber* the theme should be the same, hence dice are not needed”. In many cases such as this, the game world physics are mixed with genre elements: reading the rules it is impossible to tell how mechanics of probability work within the world of *Amber*.

made in abstract, iconic or incoherent worlds. It is difficult or even impossible to role-play in worlds such as the ones portrayed in *Super Mario Bros* or *Chess*.¹⁴

It would be a simplification to say that the use of an artefact (such as a virtual space or physical reality) as the basis of game world would restrict the use of player imagination, though the artifact provides fairly strong initial definitions for many diegetic elements. However, as I argue that role-playing is a process of social interaction taking place in an imaginary game world, it should be emphasized that in role-playing process elements explicit in the artifact are often re-defined when they are interpreted into players' diegeses. As Ryan (2001) puts it, the children playing make-believe select an actual object x_1 and agree it represents a virtual object x_2 . Then the players imagine themselves as members of the world in which x_2 is actual. An action is legal when the behavior it entails is appropriate for the class of objects represented by x_2 . A legal action generates a fictional truth.

This re-definition happens in an arbitration process governed by the possible rules and instructions of the game, and is based on the divisions of defining power used in the game. In larp, the player does not need to physically fly in order for his character to do so. By comparison, neither needs the virtual avatar to fly in virtual world for the role-played character represented by the avatar to do so.

These re-definition practices are also cultural. Many role-player communities in virtual worlds habitually pretend to use and handle plot-related make-believe objects that cannot be represented as virtual artefacts by limited game architectures (Montola 2005). Some larpers prefer to have as direct connection between physical reality and diegeses as possible, while others have no problems treating latex swords as metal swords. (See Lojonen & Montola 2004 for a semiotic analysis).

Claiming that the role-playing worlds have to be coherent is not to say that the role-playing game world needs to be complete – actually, as fictional worlds they are always incomplete, since it is not possible to define every imaginable piece of

information in a coherent world (Juul 2003, 111). Distinction is certainly theoretical especially regarding larps, since the physical world is always infinitely detailed anyway.

McCloud (1993) discusses the way sequential images of comics are understood though the process of *closure*. While a comic book is composed out of still, juxtaposed images, the reader fills in the lacking elements in the process of reading, creating the impressions of time and movement, also filling in elements not shown in the images. A smiley is closed into a smiling face in a fashion similar to the way a spectator watching a movie closes the room where the characters are discussing. The movie image is not closed with impressions of cameramen and studio equipment, but with walls and landscapes extrapolated from the ones shown on screen.¹⁵ Even without any visual evidence, a spectator uses her earlier experience to assume that the news anchor has two legs, even though they are not shown on the screen.

In role-playing, a semi-conscious closing process is crucial, as players are constantly dealing with an incomplete representation of the game world. In the first phase of the interpretation loop, the players make assumptions on the world, extrapolating and interpolating their diegeses based on the explicit game discourse.

The requirement for a coherent world can be seen in the definition of role-playing by Björk and Holopainen (2005): "Players have characters with at least somewhat fleshed out personalities. The play is centered on making decisions on how these characters would take actions in staged imaginary situations."¹⁶ Unless very significant closures are made by the players, the world of Chess is too incomplete to allow the players to take meaningful actions or make sensible decisions. For most players, the world of Chess is too abstract to even allow logical closures: Even though we know there are bishops and kings, it is hard to know whether priests and princes exist as well.

Due to their nature that is based on arbitration, imagination and closure, the game worlds of role-playing can be very free and complete compared to worlds created in other games or in static media. Every imaginable element can be described in any

¹⁴ Chess can be used with role-playing in several ways. For instance the players might construct diegeses imagining a match between Kasparov and Karpov, or, they might use some pieces as their personalized character constructs. Role-playing within the world of Chess refers to the latter alternative.

¹⁵ Some movies, of course, break this fourth wall by intentionally showing filming crews or by having actors talk directly to the watchers.

¹⁶ Ryan (2001) calls essentially the same thing as mental simulation. According to her, simulation can be described as a form of counterfactual reasoning by which the subject places herself in another person's mind. "If I were such and such, and held beliefs p and q , I would do x and y ", she illustrates.

detail. In a movie the amount of available information regarding the diegetic world is very limited in comparison. Players' possibilities of affecting any of the features of the game world are not restricted by artificial limitations such as the scope of the ruleset or the programming of the virtual space, but all these limitations are purely diegetic.

In rule iii I proposed that the game world defining process is often governed by quantitative ruleset. While one function of the ruleset is to enable players to pursue some interests in the game frame, it is also a valuable method of providing participants with a logical structure for game world re-definition. Juul (2003) claims that while rules are not dependent on fiction of the game, the

Some larpers prefer to have as direct connection between physical reality and diegeses as possible, while others have no problems treating latex swords as metal swords.

fiction is dependent on the rules. Among other methods, rulesets and genre and style conventions are frequently used to provide tangible frameworks for simulating the alternate logic of the game world (see Montola 2003, Stenros 2004, Kim 2006).

5. POWER STRUCTURE

On the Caillois' (1958, 13) continuum ranging from formal play (ludus) to free play (paidia), role-playing resides somewhere in the middle ground. Spontaneous make-believe with little game master moderation is highly paideic, while complicated rule systems allow meticulously formal ludus games as well. This is one reason why discussing role-playing games is sometimes difficult: Many different styles exist.

Just like the rule and goal structures, the power structures of role-playing can be analyzed using the broad division to exogenous, endogenous and diegetic frames. Exogenous power is the participant's power to influence the game from outside of the game; more importantly, the exogenous power is not defined within the game system. Endogenous power is power given to the player by the various rules of the game. Diegetic

power is the power the character has, restricted by the game world. As all endogenous and diegetic rules and goals are subordinate to exogenous rules and goals, endogenous and diegetic power is subordinate to exogenous power. The voluntariness and willfulness of the participants are necessary to create the magic circle of play (Huizinga 1938, Salen & Zimmerman 2003) where the endogenous and diegetic structures exist.

Often the structure of power to influence diegesis is left very implicit and based on cultural conventions. Beginning role-players are often not even aware on the fact that the power structure could be made purposefully different, having often derived their understanding of these conventions from the implicit discourse of role-playing rulesets and local larping communities. One reason for this is that describing the power system in detail is a meticulous task, as has been demonstrated by the attempts to create global role-playing campaigns, where characters could be seamlessly moved from the domain of one game master to another.¹⁷

- These examples illustrate the exogenous, endogenous and diegetic activities that may to exert power over diegeses:
- Proposing a change to the rules of the game – exogenous.
- Showing other players a movie influencing their perceptions of the game world – exogenous.
- Moving a queen two squares diagonally on the game board – endogenous.
- Taking a combat action to swing an enemy with a sword – endogenous.
- Swinging a person with a sword – diegetic.
- A colonel character issuing a military order to her troops – diegetic.

It should be noted that the very same action can be a display of diegetic and endogenous power, depending on how it is conducted in the game. In the fourth example above the power to swing an enemy with a sword is derived from the explicit game system rules, while the fifth example is derived from the diegetic facts that the character has a sword in hand and the target is within her reach. Even the latter case is then perhaps resolved on the endogenous level, but the difference has relevance when we try to analyze the facts that

¹⁷ Organizations like *Camarilla* (White Wolf) and *RPGA* (Wizards of the Coast) have created extremely detailed rule systems for this, utilizing thorough exogenous and endogenous rules to determine who can affect the diegeses and how. They also feature exogenous and endogenous penalties for infractions.

empower the participant to propose a change into the diegeses.

Both the game masters and the players can use exogenous, endogenous and diegetic power to re-define the game world. They both play characters in the world, the both often have rules-based privileges over the diegesis and the both can change the others' understanding of the game world with extra-ludic methods as well.

Endogenously granted powers can be classified to two groups; to power granted by the rules system of the game and to power granted by the rules of the role-playing process. An example for comparison:

- Taking a combat action to swing an enemy with a sword for d10 points of damage – endogenous.
- Game master declaring that it begins to rain – endogenous.

Sometimes the power use in the three layers is contradictory. The larper displays poor sportsmanship by physically outrunning another player whose character should be quicker in the frames of game and diegesis. In tabletop role-playing the same conflict is displayed if one player outwits another player with character of low intelligence score. The endogenous rules of casino Poker are able to cope with the situation where one player walks out of the room in the middle of the game (as she is considered to have taken a break or forfeited the game) but if she cheats by marking the cards, the game encounters a crisis it is unable to solve within its own formal system.¹⁸ The role-players often implicitly consent to giving a game master the social, exogenous authority to reconcile many potential crises (Brenne 2005, Fine 1983).

The recognized division of power to define game world is a key element in giving the touch of game to role-playing. Juul (2003) points out that rules do not only restrict the options players have in game, but they also give meaning to actions conducted within it. The same applies to limitations of defining power: it can be said that limits of the player options – whether they take the form of ruleset or a game masterial authority – make the player choices meaningful.

In tabletop role-playing the power division between participants is rarely exact. Typically the players are mostly restricted to using their characters' diegetic power and a limited, explicitly defined repertoire of endogenous options – but the

scope of this restriction is ambiguous. Sometimes the players are also allowed to define their characters' relatives, friends and property, while a strict gaming culture might restrict their defining power to the conscious decisions made by their characters (see Boss 2006 and Kellomäki 2004). Even the power to define the character's mental activities is sometimes restricted by rules discussing diegetic forces such as fear or telepathy.

One very typical endogenous power division grants the player the ultimate authority on her character's feelings and thoughts, rules-dependent authority on the quantitative attributes of the character, and limited power to define relatively inconsequential stylistic elements related to physical objects in the game world. All these

Spontaneous make-believe with little game master moderation is highly paideic, while complicated rule systems allow meticulously formal ludus games as well.

powers are endogenous, since they are defined on the endogenous level, either explicitly or (usually) implicitly.

On the other hand, in on-line role-playing games the game interface typically gives the player only the power to move his avatar and engage in actions such as chatting, fighting, trading and crafting. However, the role-player communities often grant their participants further diegesis-defining powers, such as making up objects not existing in the game database.

As a diegesis is an imaginary world constructed in collective arbitration process, its contents can be in explicit contradiction with the virtual or real environment used as the foundation in its construction. This means that all diegetic elements need not be represented with virtual artefacts. Just as a larp vampire might control shadows or turn invisible, the virtual role-players deal with non-existent items and intangible actions. A barfight or a sex scene might be staged with emotes, leaving it ontologically unclear if anything actually happened in the virtual reality. Or, a character might act as if she had an ID card though none exists within the game architecture. (Montola 2005.)

¹⁸ Rather, the problem is solved within the social frame or the frame of law.

Defining and restricting the player power is a ubiquitous feature¹⁹ in the field of games, but not in the fields of narrative and performative arts. In the chapter about rules and goals I included the demand that in role-playing the player-participants of the game define the game world through personified character constructs, conforming to the state, properties and contents of the game world. This third rule is critical, since dropping the personified character constructs shifts the activity in the field of regular gaming, and dropping the restrictions in the defining power would change the activity into collaborative storytelling.

6. INFORMATION AND POWER

As role-playing games are seen as communication constructs, information is the basic building block of the imaginary game world. It is trivial that a player cannot incorporate a game element into her diegesis, if she is unaware of its existence. As mentioned above (and in Lopenen & Montola 2004 and Montola 2003), no participant of a role-playing game can have an access to all information present in the game.²⁰

The three-layered division of power addresses the power use based on social frames, which is quite consciously done in the phase two of the interpretation loop. There is still one very significant form of power use in the game: closure.

As discussed above, closure the semi-conscious process of adding detail to the interpretation. I call this process semi-conscious, since we generally do this unconsciously – when we interpret stick figures as people (McCloud 1993) – but can also make creative decisions when doing closures. External input can be interpreted into a diegesis in very different ways, to the extent where role-playing game masters often explain genre expectations and playing style recommendations to the players, in order to manage the filling processes. Making light-hearted interpretations in a horror game²¹ is a perfect example of this kind of

power use – one that is often used passively but can be used willfully as well.

The continuous use of interpretational power occasionally leads into a conflict, which occurs when the participants find that their understandings of the game world contradict each other.²² In those cases an explicit negotiation reconciling the differences in the diegeses is required, typically leading into re-definitions of the diegetic past and present. (See Lopenen & Montola 2004.) Of course all the interpretational differences do not force the game to be halted, though they sometimes disrupt the gameplay seriously. As an example these problems occur commonly when the game participants do not share a common level of historical lore that would be needed to play in a particular historical game setting.

The role of the closure process is critical especially in the traditional tabletop role-playing, where the players have a lot of leeway in interpreting the verbal cues on the state and properties of the game world. However, this process is constantly significant in all the forms of role-playing. Basing game on the actual world or a virtual reality diminishes the need for inventing new game elements. Still, even elements such as character reactions and social developments are created in a closure process.

Using a real (l1) or virtual (v1) world as the basis of diegesis restricts the player choices powerfully: spontaneously making up a café or a person requires disregarding the physical or virtual artifacts by arbitration process (as discussed above). However, the elements not currently present – such as diegetic history or distant places – are commonly improvised and made up during the game. Often this kind of elements are defined or at least approved by game master prior the game, but during the role-play the player may need additional information. In those cases, the players often define (and re-define) the game world by inventing diegetic elements in a fashion very similar to tabletop gaming.

¹⁹ It can be argued that in *Tetris* the player power is not restricted, as the player is allowed to manipulate the blocks as efficiently as possible. However, the computational system of *Tetris* includes a multitude of features disabling the best methods of placing the blocks in neat rows.

²⁰ Fatland (2005) has noted that before a larp is played, the larp game masters' work is to establish a pre-diegesis, a starting point of the larp. This is the final point where any individual may access all the information regarding the game; as soon as this information is given to the players, the unified game world is shattered into as many diegeses as there are people accessing (parts of) the information.

²¹ This kind of interpretational resistance is common in all media consumption. Laughing can be used as a strategy for refuting fear caused by a horror movie.

²² I have earlier (Lopenen & Montola 2004) claimed that as long as the players' subjective diegeses are equifinal – i.e. the diegeses produce indistinguishable consequences – the crisis can be averted. The equifinality is lost when the players notice a contradiction, and the differences must be reconciled. Often this reconciliation is lead by the game master, with exogenous and endogenous power given to her by the players.

While the closure process is a democratic²³ structure in the sense that it forces all the game participants into a mutual arbitration of the diegetic truth, the information management is also commonly used as a power allocation tool. The distribution of information is presented in the fourth optional rule, since it an omni-present variable that is implemented very differently in different games and role-playing cultures. In one end of the scale is the style where the players are only allowed the knowledge their characters have (see Pettersson 2005), while in the other end of the scale the game masters do everything practically possible to provide the participants with all information possible (see Fatland & Wingård 1999). Even in the role-playing styles where flow of information is free between players, the characters are usually only expected to use information that they have acquired diegetically.

The information distribution is a structure that considerably influences the power use by different participants in the game. Especially in tabletop role-playing games the game master is often allowed the privilege of accessing all available game information. This does not mean that game master is omniscient regarding the state of the game world, but she may possess the right to even ask the players to provide hidden information regarding their characters' emotions, plans and reasonings.

Much of the game master's social power in the arbitrations concerning the state of the game world is derived from this information access. As the participants tend to act in the fashion that keeps the diegeses similar and the illusion of a collective game world intact, information is an important requirement for the defining process. If a player cannot be sure on whether someone else has already defined an element of the game world, defining it risks a contradiction. This structure is also problematic in larps, where the players often need to make up things in order to complement their characters' fictional histories during the game.

7. THE PERSONIFIED CHARACTER

It seems that the requirement of character is the lowest common denominator of various definitions

of role-playing (e.g. Björk & Holopainen 2005, Pohjola 2004, Mackay 2001, Fatland & Wingård 1999, Fine 1983); only Hakkarainen and Stenros (2002) leave it outside the core of their definition – and even they rely on it heavily in explanatory sections of their model.

However, the term has many different meanings, so it is often unclear what the authors actually mean with it. A "character" may indicate a group of quantitative attributes within the formal ruleset, a representation of the player in the game world or a fictitious person in the game world.

The first meaning is derived from the wargaming history of role-playing, where the hero characters fought battles along the rank'n'file soldiers with improved, heroic characters. Allegedly the first version of Dungeons & Dragons was a game about how these heroes became heroes in the first place (Pettersson 2005).

The second, representational view is common to virtual world thinking, where the character is used sometimes synonymously with "avatar". Typically the avatar is not perceived as having a distinct personality of its own, but is seen as an extension of the player, the player's body within the game world. Sometimes the avatar is seen to include only the visual and physical aspects of the character, but occasionally the game mechanics are attached to that as well.

The meanings above are not essential for this paper; the first of them needs to be refuted for this discussion because I earlier declared that rule iii is optional, and the latter because specifically personified character constructs are central to role-playing.

This leaves us with the the word "character" meaning a diegetic person; a combination of physical, social and mental properties, as for example Lankoski (2004) has discussed (based on Egri (1965)).

I see the character as player's *diegetic identity*, along the lines drawn by Hakkarainen and Stenros (2002). Their definition draws on the postmodern identity theory²⁴, seeing character as a set of roles bound together by fiction. A role²⁵ is "any subject position within a set discourse, an artificial closure

²³ Democratic in the sense that it tends to give similar amounts of power to all participants. It should be noted that democracy is not necessarily a desirable feature in the aesthetics of role-playing. (cf. Svanevik 2005 and Pohjola 1999.)

²⁴ This kind of an approach has been encouraged within the film and literature studies earlier. Quoting Smith (1995, 20-21): "James Phelan has pointed out that any 'talk about characters as plausible and possible persons presupposes that we know what a person is. But the nature of the human subject is of course a highly contested issue among contemporary thinkers.' While this would be regarded as a truism by most contemporary theorists of film and literature, only a fraction of the voluminous literature on personal identity to which Phelan alludes has been drawn upon."

²⁵ Some Scandinavian authors (Fatland & Wingård 1999, Brenne 2005) occasionally use the word "role" synonymously with "character", due to the linguistic influences of the local languages.

articulating the player within the diegetic frame of the game or in a real-life situation". The character is "a framework of roles through which the player interacts within the game, and for which she constructs an illusion of a continuous and fixed identity, a fictional "story of self" binding the separate, disconnected roles together".

In the postmodernist view of Hakkarainen and Stenros, the role-played character is just as fictitious and non-fictitious as the player's "normal identity". The only difference of character and person is constructed solely by the fact that one is constructed within a frame of game while the other is not. As Hakkarainen and Stenros reject the idea of stable identity, embracing only the shifting roles bound together by personal fiction, they conclude that actions performed by character are actions performed by the player herself, acting within "fiction". The logical consequence of endorsing postmodernism would be that just as character is not a character compared to "real identity", game is also no longer a game compared to non-game. While this relativism can – and should – be questioned, a slightly more modern interpretation of this character model is a viable depiction of how a diegetic identity is constructed.²⁶

The diegetic identity approach essentially equates the character with the player, with the claim that the player creates the character by pretending to be someone else. In this Hakkarainen and Stenros refute the idealistic approach of many idealist immersionists²⁷, who have claimed that the character is a separate and external entity to be adopted for the duration of the game. To say that the character is the player also means that all characters exhibit human thinking; even when the character is a rock, a tree or an ancient elf, it is anthropomorphized for the purposes of the play. A homo sapiens cannot replicate the identity or the thinking of a dog. This approach also refutes the claims of complete or perfect character immersion, as pretension is self-conscious activity somewhat aware of both pretended fiction and the existence outside it; it has been argued that the players essentially pretend to believe that they are their characters (Pohjola 2004).

Harviainen (2005) has proposed a view on the concept of character that can be placed between the idealist immersionist and the one presented by Hakkarainen & Stenros, writing:

"A role-playing character and its player's sense of self exist in a state where each is influenced by the other. The character derives new information from the player and is, when necessary, spontaneously expanded to new directions by him. At the same time, the player experiences new things with the character acting as both a mask enabling events not normally possible for the player and as a filter through which the player experiences only the parts of the game events he deems necessary (or just interesting)" (Harviainen 2005).

In his characterization Harviainen retains some of the immersionist idealism, seeing that the sociocultural mask that is a character provides the player with some genuine agency enabling her to perform actions or accessing information that could not be done without it. Harviainen's approach is not in contradiction with the postmodern character view of Hakkarainen and Stenros, except for the fact that it is based on the modern understanding of an identity.

It is important to understand that a diegetic identity and a movie character are fundamentally different structures. The movie character is an external entity interpreted by the spectator, and thus it can have properties that the watcher could not have invented herself. A movie character may have quicker wits and broader vocabulary than the spectator has. Role-players need to use rule systems and distanced, descriptive playing styles to portray such characters: instead of telling a good joke, a tabletop role-player might just describe that her character tells a good joke, and perhaps even roll a die to justify the goodness of the joke in the game frame.

Another difference is that while characters of the static media are presented in the context of a story world, role-playing characters are presented in the context of a game world. Goldilocks is defined by her adventure: It is difficult to imagine her in another story. The context of the narrative provides Goldilocks with her Goldilocks-like qualities. For the players of role-playing characters, the world full of opportunities and potentials is the significant context, and much more central than the story.²⁸

²⁶ Fine's (1983) view is that players do have a real identity, which is bracketed during the role-play. Whether this experience is illusionary or not is not central to this discussion; the point is that diegetic and "real" identities are constructed in a similar fashion.

²⁷ Such as Pohjola (1999), who later (2004) changed his stance.

²⁸ Paul Czege's (2003) *My Life with Master* is one exception to this rule.

Only in retrospect the narrative context becomes central. When role-players reminisce the careers of their characters afterwards, they do narrativize the played histories. Indeed, often the game masters intentionally plan the intrigue²⁹ in a manner that is likely to produce appealing stories (see Heliö 2004).

Just like the concept of identity in general, the concept of diegetic identity can be seen from various angles. The multiple faces of the character have different functions in the role-playing process.

Looked as a collection of roles bound together by personal fiction, the character acts as a proxy for the player, differentiating the exogenous success of the player from the diegetic success of the character (see Montola 2005). Physical body cannot be entirely excluded from this personal fiction; quite oppositely it is an important foundation in identity building. Even though the diegetic story of self may be a tragedy, the player's exogenous story of self can be a success story. This personified construct serves as the basis of identification within the game, allowing diegetic decision-making, which Björk and Holopainen (2005) characterize as the essential element of role-playing.

Seeing the character as the player's presence in the game world implies that the character acts as the eyes, ears and hands for the player in the game: the character is the focal point of the player's diegesis and a game token she uses to affect her surroundings.

Finally, the character is a measure of player's power being a combination of mental and physical attributes, personal history and social relationships. Defining the character as an archmage or a mafia boss draws quite clear boundaries of actions allowed for the player and what kind of consequences they might have.

8. CONCLUSION

The multitude of role-playing cultures makes defining and describing them very problematic. The differences of, for example, performative, competitive and immersionist role-players are vast. The view presented here is centered to the Nordic scene of tabletop and live role-playing, but my aim has been to accommodate a broader range of role-playing activities.

When role-playing is discussed from the angle of ludology, it is relevant to contemplate the position

of role-playing activities as games. Juul (2003) provides six requirements for what he calls a classic game. They are fixed rules, variable outcome, valorization of outcome, player effort, player attachment to outcome and negotiability of extra-ludic consequences. Based on these criteria, Juul argues that "pen and paper role-playing games are not normal games because, with a human game master, their rules are not fixed beyond discussion". In this paper I have presented the invisible rules of role-playing, which are fixed "beyond discussion". Admittedly, the three rules presented here are very open, and do not make a good game ruleset on their own.

As I have demonstrated earlier (Montola 2005), role-playing does not inherently require valorization of outcomes either. With valorization Juul (2003, 34) means that the outcomes of the game are assigned positive and negative values according to their desirability. In role-playing the typical priority is the diegetic importance of diegetic outcomes, while the valorization of game frame outcomes is highly ambiguous depending on players' exogenous goals. In fact, role-playing mindset usually means that the activities taken in the game frame are far from optimal, which is in contradiction with both valorization of and player attachment to game outcome.

The more important thing to understand how ludological approaches can be successfully used to further the understanding of role-playing games. The intent of this paper is to clarify that if role-playing is a game, what kind of a game it is, and if it is looked at ludologically, what reservations should be applied.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the writing of this paper I received a plenty of valuable criticism, ideas and comments from various people, such as J. Tuomas Harviainen, Simo Järvelä, Petri Lankoski and Jaakko Stenros. The work done for this paper was funded by The Integrated Project on Pervasive Gaming as well as the Finnish Cultural Foundation. Draft version was presented in the Playing Roles –seminar (March 20th, 2006, Tampere).

²⁹ Aarseth (1997) uses "intrigue" to denote "a secret plot in which the user is the innocent, but voluntary, target (victim is too strong a term), with an outcome that is not yet decided – or rather with several possible outcomes that depend on various factors, such as the cleverness and experience of the player". In other words, intrigue is the planned structure of potential plots that might be realized during the game. Fatland's (2005) larp fabula pretty much equals Aarseth's intrigue.

REFERENCES³⁰

- 1) Aarseth, E., 1997, *Cybertext. Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- 2) Andreasen, C., 2003. The Diegetic Rooms of Larp. In M. Gade, L. Thorup & M. Sander, eds. *As Larp Grows Up. Theory and Methods in Larp*. Copenhagen: Projektgruppen KP03. www.laivforum.dk/kp03_book
- 3) Bartle, R., 2004, *Designing Virtual Worlds*. Indianapolis: New Riders.
- 4) Björk, S. & Holopainen, J., 2003. Describing Games. An Interaction-Centric Structural Framework. In M. Copier & J. Raessens, eds. *Level Up – CD-ROM Proceedings of Digital Games Research Conference 2003*. www.digra.org/dl/db/05150.10348
- 5) Björk, S. & Holopainen, J., 2005, *Patterns in Game Design*. Massachusetts: Charles River Media.
- 6) Boal, A., 2002, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors. Second Edition*. Routledge: London. First edition in 1992.
- 7) Boss, E. C., 2006. Collaborative Roleplaying: Reframing the Game. In *Push* vol. 1, 2006, 13-35.
- 8) Brenne, G. T., 2005, *Making and Maintaining Frames. A Study of Metacommunication in Laiv Play*. Master's Thesis for University of Oslo.
- 9) Caillois, R., 1958, *Man, Play and Games*. Chicago: Free Press. Ref. 2001 version.
- 10) Costikyan, G., 2002. I Have No Words & I Must Design: Toward a Critical Vocabulary for Games. In F. Mäyrä, ed. *CGDC Proceedings* 9-33. Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- 11) Czege, P., 2003, *My Life with Master*. Ref. the 2004 Finnish translation *Kätyrin osa*. Elimäki: Arkkikivi.
- 12) Duguid, B., 1999. I Know What I Like. In *Imagine Rolegaming Magazine* #34. Originally published in *Interactive Fantasy* #3, 1995.
- 13) Egri, L., 1965. *The Art of Creative Writing*. New York: Kensington Publishing.
- 14) Fatland, E. & Wingård, L., 1999. Dogma 99. A Programme for the Liberation of LARP. International version. Ref. the 2003 version in Gade, L. Thorup & M. Sander, eds. *As Larp Grows Up. Theory and Methods in Larp*. Copenhagen: Projektgruppen KP03. www.laivforum.dk/kp03_book
- 15) Fine, G. A., 1983, *Shared Fantasy. Role-Playing Games as Social Worlds*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 16) Hakkarainen, H. & Stenros, J., 2002. The Meilahti School. Thoughts on Role-Playing. In M. Gade, L. Thorup & M. Sander, eds. *As Larp Grows Up. Theory and Methods in Larp*. Copenhagen: Projektgruppen KP03. www.laivforum.dk/kp03_book
- 17) Harviainen, J. T., 2005. Corresponding Expectations. Alternative Approaches to Enhanced Game Presence. In P. Bøckman, & R. Hutchison, eds. *Dissecting Larp. Collected papers for Knutepunkt 2005*. <http://knutepunkt.laiv.org/kp05>
- 18) Harviainen, J. T., 2008. Kaprow's Scions. In Montola, M. & Stenros, J., eds. *Playground Worlds. Creating and Evaluating Experiences of Role-Playing Games*. Jyväskylä: Ropecon.
- 19) Heliö, S., 2004. Role-Playing: A Narrative Experience and a Mindset. In M. Montola & J. Stenros, eds. *Beyond Role and Play: Tools, Toys and Theory for Harnessing the Imagination*, Helsinki: Ropecon. www.ropecon.fi/brap
- 20) Huizinga, J., 1938, *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. Ref. 1955 edition. Boston: The Beacon Press.
- 21) Jackson, S., 1981, *Killer. The Game of Assassination*. Steve Jackson Games. Referred to the 4th edition, 1998.
- 22) Juul, J., 2003, *Half-Real. Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*. Doctoral Dissertation for IT University of Copenhagen.
- 23) Kaprow, A., 1966, *Assemblage, Environments & Happenings*. New York: Abrams.
- 24) Kellomäki, J., 2004, *Simulaatio ja kerronta – roolipeli ergodisena järjestelmänä*. Master's Thesis for University of Helsinki.
- 25) Kim, J. H., 1998. The Threefold Model FAQ. In www.darkshire.net/~jhkim/rpg/theory/threefold/faq_v1.html
- 26) Kim, J. H., 2006. Understanding Genre in Roleplaying. www.darkshire.net/~jhkim/rpg/theory/genre/definition.html
- 27) Lankoski, P., 2004. Character Design Fundamentals for Role-Playing Games. In M. Montola & J. Stenros, eds. *Beyond Role and Play: Tools, Toys and Theory for Harnessing the Imagination*, Helsinki: Ropecon. www.ropecon.fi/brap
- 28) Laws, R. D., 2002, *Robin's Laws of Good Game Mastering*. Steve Jackson Games.

³⁰All Internet references validated in April 2008.

- 29) Loponen, M. & Montola, M., 2004. A Semiotic View on Diegesis Construction. In M. Montola & J. Stenros, eds. *Beyond Role and Play: Tools, Toys and Theory for Harnessing the Imagination*, Helsinki: Ropecon. www.ropecon.fi/brap
- 30) Mackay, D., 2001, *The Fantasy Role-Playing Game. A New Performing Art*. London, McFarland.
- 31) McCloud, S., 1993, *Sarjakuva – näkymätön taide*. Helsinki, Good Fellows 1994. Finnish translation of Understanding Comics – The Invisible Art.
- 32) Montola, M., 2003, *Role-Playing as Interactive Construction of Subjective Diegeses*. In M. Gade, L. Thorup & M. Sander, eds. *As Larp Grows Up. Theory and Methods in Larp*. Copenhagen: Projektgruppen KP03. www.laivforum.dk/kp03_book
- 33) Montola, M., 2005. Designing Goals for Online Role-Players. In S. de Castell & J. Jenson, eds. *Changing Views: Worlds in Play. Proceedings DVD of DiGRA conference, June 16.-20. Vancouver, Simon Fraser University*. www.digra.org/dl/db/06276.39565.pdf
- 34) Montola, M. 2007a. Breaking the Invisible Rules. Borderline Role-Playing. In J. Donnis, L. Thorup, & M. Gade, eds. *Lifelike*. Copenhagen: Projektgruppen KP07. www.liveforum.dk/kp07book
- 35) Montola, M., 2007b, Tangible Pleasures of Pervasive Role-Playing. In Baba, A. (ed.), *Proceedings of DiGRA 2007 Situated Play Conference* 178-185. September 24.-28. The University of Tokyo. www.digra.org/dl/db/07312.38125.pdf
- 36) Morton, B., 2007. Larps and their Cousins Through the Ages. In J. Donnis, L. Thorup, & M. Gade, eds. *Lifelike*. Copenhagen: Projektgruppen KP07. www.liveforum.dk/kp07book
- 37) Mäkelä, E.; Koistinen, S.; Siukola, M. & Turunen, S., 2005. The Process Model of Role-Playing. In Bøckman, P. & Hutchison, R., 2005, *Dissecting Larp. Collected papers for Knutepunkt 2005*. Oslo, Knutepunkt 2005. <http://knutepunkt.laiv.org/kp05>
- 38) Pettersson, J., 2005, *Roolipelmanifesti*. Jyväskylä: Like.
- 39) Pohjola, M., 1999. The Manifesto of the Turku School. In M. Gade, L. Thorup & M. Sander, eds. *As Larp Grows Up. Theory and Methods in Larp*. Copenhagen: Projektgruppen KP03. www.laivforum.dk/kp03_book
- 40) Pohjola, M., 2004. Autonomous Identities. Immersion as a Tool for Exploring, Empowering and Emancipating Identities. In M. Montola & J. Stenros, eds. *Beyond Role and Play: Tools, Toys and Theory for Harnessing the Imagination*, Helsinki: Ropecon. www.ropecon.fi/brap
- 41) Ryan, M.-L., 2001, *Narrative as Virtual Reality. Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- 42) Salen, K. & Zimmerman, E., 2004, *Rules of Play. Game Design Fundamentals*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- 43) Sandberg, C., 2004. Genesi. Larp Art, Basic Theories. In M. Montola & J. Stenros, eds. *Beyond Role and Play: Tools, Toys and Theory for Harnessing the Imagination*, Helsinki: Ropecon. www.ropecon.fi/brap
- 44) Smith, M., 1995, *Engaging Characters. Fiction, Emotion and the Cinema*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 45) Stenros, J., 2004. Genre, Style, Method and Focus. Typologies for Role-Playing Games. In M. Montola & J. Stenros, eds. *Beyond Role and Play: Tools, Toys and Theory for Harnessing the Imagination*, Helsinki: Ropecon. www.ropecon.fi/brap
- 46) Svanevik, M., 2005. The Collective's Little Red Book. A Step-by-Step Guide to Arranging Larps the Collective Way. In P. Bøckman, & R. Hutchison, eds. *Dissecting Larp. Collected papers for Knutepunkt 2005*. <http://knutepunkt.laiv.org/kp05>
- 47) Tan, P., 2001, *Tensions in Live-Action Roleplaying Game Design*. Master's Thesis for the MIT. Available in <http://web.mit.edu/philip/www/chapters/thesis.pdf>
- 48) Wujcik, E., 2004. Personal discussion. The 26th of July 2004, Espoo.

Markus Montola (M.Soc.Sc.) is a game researcher and a doctoral candidate in University of Tampere, Finland. After working for 3.5 years in a pervasive games project, he is now funded by a grant from the Finnish Cultural Foundation and focuses on his doctoral dissertation on role-playing and pervasive gaming. He co-edited *Playground Worlds* (2008) and *Beyond Role and Play* (2004) with Jaakko Stenros. During the last 20 years, he has tried out most of the various forms of role-playing. He is a member of the Main Editorial Board of the IJRP. www.iki.fi/montola