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Historical Empathy: How LARP Can Facilitate Historical and Cultural Understanding

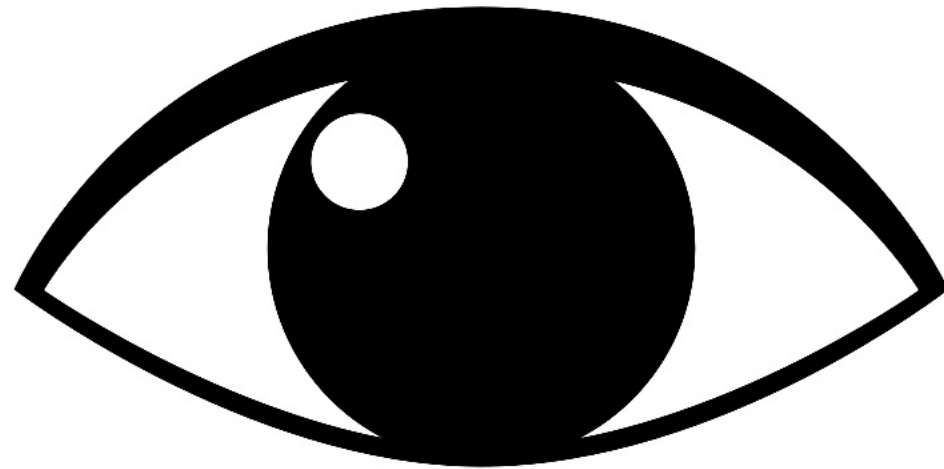
Liv Hernø-Toftild

Transformative Play Initiative Seminar 2022



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Close your eyes...



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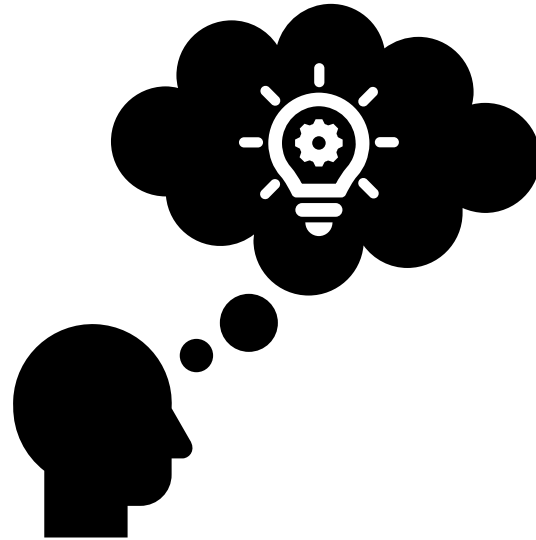
Close your eyes...



What did you visualize?

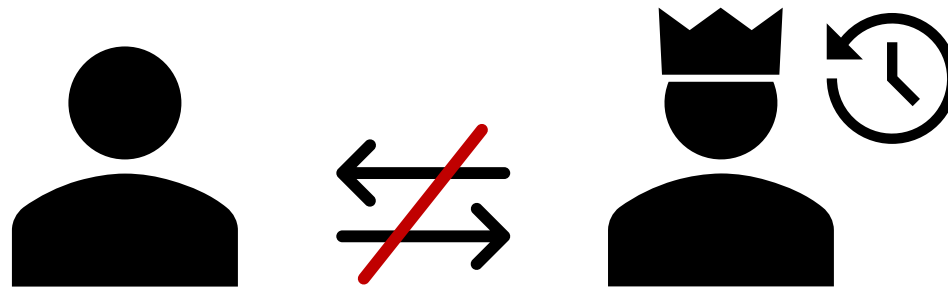


Who did you visualize?



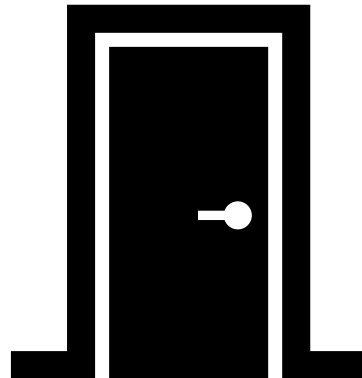
Disconnect...

...Between the reader of history and the actual people having experienced and lived that past.



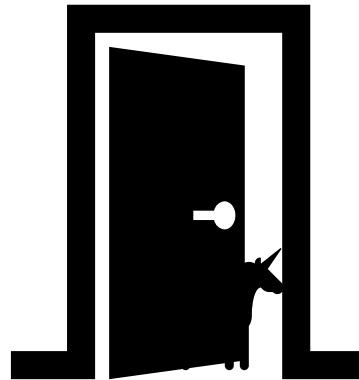
LARP as a teaching tool...

...Can open the door to the past, giving the opportunity to understand and emphasize with other peoples' lived experiences. Thereby facilitating historical and cultural empathy.



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Allegiance, October 6th-9th 2022

Concept design by Martin Nielsen and Ida Foss.
Made by designers from nine different countries.

Setting: The Cold War, 1970.

Focusing on conflicting loyalties in a world on the edge of war.

Culture and language as themes in both design and play, with designers and participants portraying their own countries.

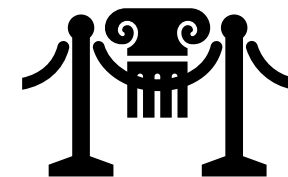


Challenges designing LARPs for a museum context

- Physical limitations
- Time limitations
- Costuming and prop conservation
- Participant experience and knowledge
- Preparation and post-experience

- **Participant motivation**

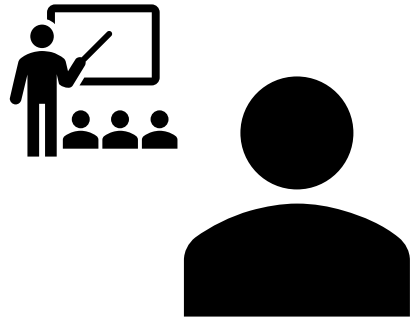
- **Ethics**





Participant motivation

Challenge: Participants' lack of agency and potentially focus and interest

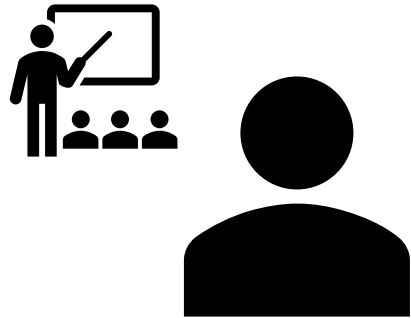


Extrinsic motivation: Motivation based on external rewards or avoiding punishment

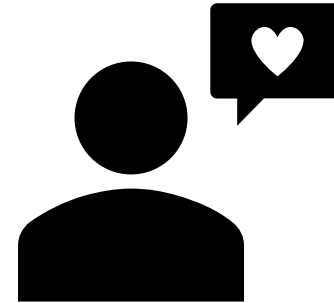


Participant motivation

From extrinsic to intrinsic motivation: Creating a personal connection to and investment in (his)story, making historical empathy possible.



Extrinsic motivation: Motivation based on external rewards or avoiding punishment



Intrinsic motivation: Motivation based on personal rewards and satisfaction



Ethics in design of historical and cultural LARPs

- What stories do we tell?
- Who tells them?
- How are the stories told?
- Avoiding the LARP equivalent of voyeurism and Dark Tourism
- Preventing the (re)creation of negative emotions and conflicts



As a final note...



LARP can be used as a learning tool to facilitate historical and cultural understanding, thereby creating empathy towards lived experiences of the past.

But using history and culture as the framework for LARP design necessitates a consciousness regarding ethics and the stories we decide to tell.

