

Prosopopeia—Playing on the Edge of Reality

Markus Montola & Staffan Jonsson

In this paper we discuss the genre of pervasive larp that seamlessly merges game and ordinary life, presenting *Prosopopeia Bardo 1: Där vi föll*¹, which was intended as a proof-of-concept for the genre. In addition to being a street larp staged in the cityscape, *Prosopopeia* aimed at blurring the border of game and ordinary life by spanning over a long duration of players' lives and by forcing the players to larp with outsiders. Mixing the game content and non-game content turned out to produce a load of engaging experiences and emergent game content.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of *Prosopopeia*² was to create a proof of concept for pervasive larp—essentially a prototypical combination of pervasive gaming and larping. It has been proposed earlier [8, 9] that pervasive games are games that expand the traditional magic circle of gameplay in terms of space, time and social relations: while a traditional game is played in certain places at certain times by certain people, a pervasive game purposefully breaks these limitations. The spatial boundaries are expanded by taking the game into unlimited physical places and to unmarked corners of digital space. The temporal scale is expanded as the games may last long times, being interlaced with the lives of the players and calling them to play at unforeseen moments. And the social limit of participation is expanded, as these games invite outsiders to participate in some fashion, being more or less unaware of the gamic nature of the events. In highly pervasive

¹Ed.: Proposopeia Part 1: Where we Fell.

²Prosopopœia, 1) A rhetorical figure by which an imaginary or absent person is represented as speaking or acting; the introduction of a pretended speaker; 2) A rhetorical figure by which an inanimate or abstract thing is represented as a person, or with personal characteristics (Oxford English Dictionary [10]).

games nothing is certain, as even the gamic nature of the game can be obfuscated. In this paper we describe the prototype and analyze it briefly with these three dimensions.

Prosopopeia was a larp about forgotten and abandoned ideals and about freeing a lost friend who was left stuck between life and death after committing a suicide. It all started with late night phonecalls to players with strange distorted voices from the other side, providing clues that pointed at a new age festival celebrating change in the old Mayan calendar. Quoting a player debrief³:

I was woken up around 01:30 [...] by a telephone call I wasn't able to record. I caught the numbers 12.19.13.9.0 from the telephone call and immediately fired up Google. In an hour I had discovered that this format was a Mayan date.

The festival was just a regular new age happening with nothing special about it, until the players' phones rang. Instead of a message, Nina Hagen's *Antiworld* was playing. A bit later the very same tune coming from a boom-box lead the players to chat with a punk, subsequently taking them a locker in the central station, where they acquired personal files on 12 deceased persons. Quoting another player:

I hadn't realized there were so many people honestly engaged in the Maya calendar, colonial silver, chackra cleaning and so on. I arrived quite nervous not knowing at all what to expect. Would I become possessed at the meditation, and if so would the spirit allow me to study for my exam etc?

Piecing the story together, the players came to understand that the previous agent sent to rescue had failed, and looking for him might shed some light to the problem. The voices kept calling the players during the next week, and further scrutiny calendars lead the players to Kista, Stockholm next Friday. They were hooked up to a techno-magical device at Swedish Institute of Computer Science, allowing the twelve dead to possess them.

I really loved the intense tempo, the feelings of fatigue and insecurity, the feeling of being herded along on a journey where I had absolutely no control over anything. These memories are what will stay with me for a long time.

³The quotes in this paper are used mainly as illustration, they were obtained from the research questionnaire filled by the players after the game. The language in the excerpts has been corrected, and the characters and the players have been anonymized.

The game was on: for 52 hours they followed the trail of the failed agent, discovering hideouts, looking through old documents, talking to strangers, hacking encryption and trying to discover what had happened. The journey took them all the way from high tech areas to rundown parts of the town, visiting cemeteries, ruins and rusty dock areas. Finally they found the missing spirit in an abandoned mental hospital, traumatized by rapes and considered insane for being a gifted medium. After the players talked her out of her personal hell, the helpful staff of *sics* channeled the spirits out of the hosts.

1.2 PERVASIVE LARP

During the recent years, larp has been increasingly brought from closed spaces to urban areas (see for example Talvitie [12] and Pettersson [11]). Especially the *World of Darkness* larps have been more and more commonly played in the cityscape. In this paper we discuss *Prosopopeia Bardo 1: Dår vi föll*, which was an attempt to exploit the merging of ordinary world and game world to the fullest.

This ambitious pervasivity differentiates *Prosopopeia* from a generic urban larp. While a street game of *Vampire* lurks in cafeterias and alleys, it does not actively interact with surrounding world. The game is clearly limited to its players—if the bartender is not wearing a sign of participation, he is not an equal part of the ludic framework, but is treated like scenery. Characters might buy drinks from him, but the intent of hiding the game from the bartender is deeply written to the game genre—the goal of the vampires is to stay hidden. This approach was contested in *Prosopopeia*, where the players were expected to expect unexpected from the random passerby.

As McGonigal [5, 4] has thoroughly discussed, games that allow the players to see them as part of ordinary reality can produce very engaging and interesting gameplay experiences. A game that supports the player in pretending to believe that it is not a game can be very overwhelming and exciting experience. As an experiment, *Prosopopeia* ventured to this area, trying to combine this exciting aesthetic with a larp.

In order to create the spatial, temporal and social pervasive expansions and to merge ludic and ordinary realities seamlessly, three important design solutions were applied: the possession model, the prosopopeia proposal and runtime game mastering.

The relationship of players and characters was defined through the *possession model*. Players played diegetic⁴ versions of themselves, possessed by ghost characters during

⁴We refer to elements existing within the game world as diegetic, or existing within the diegesis. Diegesis is one player's understanding of everything that exists in the game. Off-game elements are thus non-diegetic. (See Montola [6], cf. Hakkarainen and Stenros [3]).

the game. This was intended to allow both character playing and reacting naturally to events not related to the game—like meeting a friend on the street. Thus, the everyday life of a player was taken as it was, changing the ordinary life into game by adding the ghost. All these spirits were deceased people from real history.

“Play the game as if it was real” was the most important rule of the game, labeled the *prosopopeia proposal* by the organizers. The combination of the proposal and the possession model implies that while a player could discuss the game events with her boyfriend during the game, she was not allowed to refer to the game only as a game, since it was to be taken as ordinary reality. In addition to being a playing guideline, the *prosopopeia* proposal was a design principle: it motivated creating scenes where players had to actually do things for real. In practice this resulted in crawling in tunnels and researching real-world sources for game-relevant information.

Runtime game mastering was done through game masters playing out characters in the world in real time, in a fashion adapted from the tradition of tabletop role-playing. Successful orchestration requires the game masters to acquire a sufficient amount of information on the player activities, and to have sufficient means to influence the player activities. Both the sensing and actuating are particularly difficult in a pervasive larp, and thus a multitude of technological solutions were applied, as discussed below.

In summary, *Prosopopeia* was built by adding ludic content to our ordinary reality but hiding the gamic nature of the added element. The players could never exactly say where the game ended and the ordinary reality began: in addition to obvious game elements and obvious unrelated elements, the game experience included many non-game elements appearing ludic and game elements being indistinguishable from the world around.

Our focus is mostly on the designs and intentions of the game organizers, discussing the player feedback and their subjective experiences a little less. This is because we want to emphasize the design lessons of *Prosopopeia* rather than the ups and downs of the unique orchestration of June 2005⁵.

Prosopopeia was organized in Stockholm in June 2005. It was played by 12 players for 52 hours, but the semi-game states that lead into the game lasted for a much longer time. The artistic orchestration was lead by Martin Ericsson, Staffan Jonsson and Adriana Skarped. The game was produced in collaboration with IPerG project⁶.

⁵We plan to report our player feedback elsewhere later on.

⁶Full credits according to the organizers: Martin Ericsson (lead design), Staffan Jonsson (production), Adriana Skarped (characters), Holger Jacobsson, Linus Andersson and Emil Boss (writing), Jonas Söderberg (sounds), Karl-Petter Åkesson and Pär Hansson (electronics, surveillance, wireless), and Martin Lanner, Johan Eriksson and Henrik Esbjörnsson (production assistants)

1.3 TECHNOLOGICAL GAME MASTERING

Montola [7] argues that role-playing games can be designed to be chaotic or orderly depending on the application of dissipative and integrative design solutions applied. Dissipative choices⁷ make unpredictable, uncontrollable and free games, while integrative choices make predictable, controlled and pre-planned games. The *Prosopopeia* design structure, where anything could be interpreted as game-related, is extremely dissipative and chaotic. In order to give any sense to the experience, integrative structures were needed, and, as demonstrated by decades of tabletop role-playing, live game mastering is one of the strongest options available. Thus, technological solutions for runtime game mastering were implemented.

In order to perform runtime game mastering, three things are needed: a sensory system, a processing system and an actuating system—in addition to the infrastructure connecting the three. Sensory system provides the information on player activities, processing system decides what to do with the information, and the actuating system executes activities. In tabletop role-playing and in smallest larps all these three functions can be trivially performed by one person, but game mastering a larp like *Prosopopeia* requires considerable technological support. The players are spread out all over the city for a long time and the actuation needs to be done either invisibly or diegetically.

Sensory information was gathered through video camera feeds, audio feeds, dialogue with characters and direct visual observation. Due to technological problems the main audio feed was unintelligible, and the practice quickly taught that video feeds are extremely uninformative, so the game masters had to rely on direct observation and dialogue with characters, the latter of which was also the sole means of actuation in the game.

All these functions were concentrated to the technological centerpiece of the game, an old reel-to-reel recorder, which was rigged with a cellphone, allowing the communication of the ghosts and the living. In the other end of the cellphone there was a game master control center, equipped with sound scramblers and synthetizers, which was manned for the full duration of the possession. According to the aesthetic of the 60's mythos of *electronic voice phenomenon* (EVP), the players recorded their questions and comments, and after rewinding the tape the ghosts mysteriously answered on the tape. In addition to the EVP machine, many non-player characters were played through the Internet.

⁷Choices pertaining all designed elements of the game, such as plot structure, character goal choices, power division, diegetic culture, pacing, game mastering, random elements et cetera.

In practice, the dialogue of game masters and players formed a large part of the game. As an unwanted side effect, this strongly integrative feature unfortunately led many players to experience the game as very orderly and controlled, a dysfunction similar to “railroading” common in tabletop role-playing. One discernable behaviour pattern was “milking”, which often occurs with railroading—the behavior where the players expect to be led further by game masters, because they have been led by them earlier. Thus, when the players were stuck with their investigation, they desperately tried to pump the non-player characters for extra clues.

The pacing of seamless pervasive larp turned out to be a problem, since the uncontrolled nature of ordinary reality makes it impossible to predict when players decide to spend hours chasing a red herring. Interesting solutions could be found from looking at ways of giving the players transparent feedback when they are progressing in the game. In a game like *Prosopopeia*, the players who are following a game master-designed course of action are occasionally able to confirm that they are on a correct path, as they encounter elements that clearly are game-related. Confirming that a path is incorrect is much harder, as no obvious signals can be found.

The *Prosopopeia* experiment suggests that the challenge of pervasive larp pacing and game mastering is finding the middle ground between leaving the players unguided and dragging them on excessively.

1.4 DRAMATURGY OF PHYSICAL SPACE

Prosopopeia was a spatially expanded game. It was played in unforeseen areas, and the players moving around and communicating to distant places articulated these areas into the playspace. The basic structure of playing larps in closed spaces has allowed a very detailed propping of the game locations, where literally every object can be redefined for the purposes of the game. However, in a city larp such as *Prosopopeia* it is impossible to create scenography for the whole gaming area, so usually selected small areas are propped while the majority of gaming space is taken as it is.

Even though there were certain hotspots of player activity, very few locations were truly redefined to be something that they clearly were not. In the spirit of the *prosopopeia* proposal the game went strongly for *indexical propping*—the players were expected to visit a new age festival that was portrayed by a real new age festival and *sics* premises that were portrayed by *sics* premises. As Lojonen and Montola [7] discuss, props can be categorized into symbolic, iconic and indexic categories, depending on how an object in the real world refers to an object in the diegesis. In a basic Peircean fashion a symbolic prop represents something through a convention or contract, like

when a game rule states that a paper slip with the word “gun” represents a diegetic gun. Iconic prop represents something similar, like in a game where a Finnish pair of army boots represents a German pair of army boots just because they are worn by a person who larps a German soldier. Indexic prop is the third class, where the prop represents itself directly in the diegesis—and this was done a lot in *Prosopopeia*. Instead of redefining objects, the aim was to recontextualize them into the game world. By virtue of the prosopopeia proposal, all real objects were also game objects.

In *Prosopopeia* this was aimed to create a feeling where everything is a prop and thus nothing is a prop. This indexicality went much further in *Prosopopeia* than is usual, as even the social context of the props remained largely unchanged; even though in a regular urban larp a jacket may signify a perfectly identical jacket, in *Prosopopeia* the jacket signified the exact same jacket owned by the exact same person. One of the driving themes of *Prosopopeia* was to encourage players to look at their everyday environment from a new perspective, finding game clues where none existed and interacting with ordinary world in a game-inspired, free fashion. When everything is a prop, this kind of perception and interaction is encouraged.

A great upside of indexic propping is that it allows the players to solve puzzles in a real and tangible way. Players were allowed to toy with everything they encountered, and some puzzles could be solved that way as well. For instance the players could have added loudspeakers to the reel-to-reel recorder in order to make the using of the device easier—the puzzle was to understand this and to acquire some loudspeakers somehow. Indexic propping supported the realness demanded by the prosopopeia proposal: the players could fidget with the recorder just like with any regular 60’s recorder.

In the spirit of the prosopopeia proposal, technological game devices had to be invisible and very convincing in order to fabricate the indexicality. According to player feedback, the rigged EVP recorder succeeded in this, and was appreciated for that by the players.

The [recorder] was excellent, it made it so much more close to reality.
The technology was physical proof that this was actually happening and we weren’t only playing a game.

The requirement of indexicality in cityscape allowed *Prosopopeia* interesting opportunities in designing the dramaturgy and the aesthetic of the space used in the game. Discovery and exploration were central themes, and thus many of the events took place in desolate urban areas, offering the players a tour into the blind spots of urban landscape. This aesthetic was borrowed from the urban exploration movement for purposes of both adding dramatic tension to the gaming areas, and offering tangi-

ble physical action in cityscape. While a regular larpwright transforms a private place into a gaming area with scenography, *Prosopopeia* looked for semi-public locations in the urban landscape that already suited the design of the game. The game could only feature a scene in Beckomberga mental hospital, because Beckomberga mental hospital was available for the use of the game. Where scenography was done, it tried to fabricate reality as perfectly as possible—the design goal for the propping was to make the perceived image of the game locations be the same for a player and a non-player, in a way where the player could reinterpret the meaning of the objects through the game filter⁸.

Urban exploration is often done in areas where an ordinary person is not allowed to go, and doing so may require avoiding security guards. *Prosopopeia* exploited this tension and the forbidden feeling of these places by introducing game master security guards patrolling some of these areas; for instance the players were expected to sneak into the hospital rented by the organizers. Even though entering the asylum was legal—the place was rented for the game—the entering was given the tension of trespassing by introducing the guards and by not openly disclosing the legality.

Indexic propping may cause problems of excessive authenticity. Some *Prosopopeia* players reported that they had almost missed the central playing venue, a rusty old boat in a repelling dock area, since it didn't appear to be a gaming area. Obviously the game needs to incorporate failsafes ensuring that the most critical parts of the game are discovered. The players might have refused to enter the mental asylum if they considered it very illegal or dangerous. Also, if representation is largely indexic, the players are bound to be confused when encountering symbolic and iconic props—like the webcams *Prosopopeia* organizers used to monitor the game.

Discovering the prepared locations in *Prosopopeia* was designed to happen in a branching structure, where the players could find and go through locations in the order they wanted. However, players reported this experience as very linear. One of the main reasons of this was that the clues leading to locations were hidden in difficult puzzles, and thus they entered every location as soon as they found a clue pointing there. Another reason was that the game designers had overestimated the players' initiative and competence to solve the puzzles to the locations and were forced to make runtime maneuvers to provide the players with the clues needed for progression⁹.

⁸There was one exception to this rule, one area that was not adequately scenographed. One minor place was used for a brief period only, and thus the limited resources were spent elsewhere. In that area the illusion was severely broken, which might have been a mistake considering the general high-end quality of propping in the game.

⁹Fatland [1] discusses linear, branching and nonlinear plot structures in detail in larp context. The lesson of *Prosopopeia* is that in addition to applying a branching or nonlinear structure, the larpwright must ensure

In the beginning of the game the players knew the overview space of the game, but they only had the access to a limited number of prepared locations. Later on in the scenario they got access to more and more locations, while losing access to some. This kind of location structure can be used as a tool in designing game progression and pacing, while still giving the players a large degree of freedom. The players can explore and move between the locations they have access to at the moment and unfold the scenario in their own way and liking. The information about the next locations could be hidden as a clue somewhere in the locations the players already have access to, hidden in puzzles or provided to the players by the game masters.

Transportation is also an important part of the spatial dramaturgy of urban larp. In *Prosopopeia* it did not include any clues or game content to the players, but it provided them with low intensity gameplay where they could interact socially, explore the possessing spirits' attitudes and feelings for the world today and the situation at hand. Casual everyday experiences gave them the possibility to explore the city from the possessing spirits' perspective, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

The most memorable situation of being possessed around people was our very early morning snack at 7-eleven at 5.30 am the first morning. The whole experience was surreal; the feeling of being alive and open to the world mixed with everyone else's drunken happiness. A completely unknown person (if he wasn't one of yours) actually fed me pizza as I tried to enter the shop.

1.5 LIFE-GAME MERGER

Being a temporally expanded pervasive game, *Prosopopeia* merged the game time with non-playing time in several fashions. Most of this took place before the main event, before the possession, but the game time and ordinary life time were also merged during the main larp phase by the possession model.

In *Prosopopeia* design there were two game modes: ambiguous game time and dedicated game-time. The game began with an ambiguous preparatory phase, and then continued with a weekend-long period of dedicated game time making up the main larp event.

During the preparatory phase the game was in the state of dormancy, waiting to enter the lives of players at planned times. Players were expected to conduct their

that the lack of linearity is communicated to the players. Many players (at least in our sample) strongly prefer the feeling of freedom in the game, and the design flaws mentioned made players lose that feeling in a non-pleasurable fashion.

everyday business, remembering the prosopopeia proposal if something unexpected happened. In the dedicated game time the players were supposed to be ready to be possessed by the ghosts, spending their time quite actively with the game.

For the players of *Prosopopeia* the first entrance into the game was clearly marked on the application webpage, by the following text: “You should now do all you can to forget about this project until it contacts you again. This is the only time the game will be presented as such. From now on everything is real.” Pushing the button meant entering the preparatory phase of the game, even though the player was given no character. The typical elements of larp participation were absent; the only rule provided was the prosopopeia proposal. The players were aware that they were supposed to larp themselves, and that the dormant game could enter their lives at any time without them knowing it.

Weeks later the players were introduced to the game with a series of nightly voice messages from entities beyond death. These messages lead the players to the preparatory new age festival, with almost no specific game content at all. Even this event, where the players met each other in real life was part of the dormant game. Instead of prepared game content, the event was full of real new age mysticism, which players were expected to take for real according to the prosopopeia proposal.

In the end of the festival day the players received the character materials on their upcoming ghost characters. All this material was also diegetic, and available for the players within the game. The players were not given non-diegetic character information at all, along the lines of the prosopopeia proposal integrating everything non-diegetic into the diegesis, but they were expected to work out their characters from the diegetic materials they were given. In a quite unusual fashion, players could have read each other’s character materials within the game, still without breaking the illusion in any way.

The main phase started a week after the festival, with players entering the basement of SICS, where they were infused by SICS staff. Possession was done through a technomystical ritual involving audiotapes where the ghost characters addressed the players directly.

This marked the beginning of the possession. During the main phase the players were allowed to larp themselves, the possessing spirits, or any mixture of the ghosts and the hosts. In order to succeed in the game, the players actually had to use the possession model to its fullest; combining the backgrounds of the ghosts with the contemporary skills of the hosts. Interaction with the world outside was easiest through the hosts, of course, but in some cases the ghosts needed to talk with outsiders as well. For example, one player reported the following:

I did not at any time openly play myself, but at several occasions did my personality shine through quite clearly. Some of the puzzles required my personal skills rather than those of the spirit, and being under constant pressure to solve them created a sort of “quest mode”, mustering all my personal resources. [...] Come to think of it, actually at one point I called [a relative] to find out how to get to Beckomberga, she worked there in the seventies. I then played myself, but probably it was just [the ghost] using my voice.

The possession model was expected to eliminate the players’ need to step outside the game; whenever the game would excessively disturb the ordinary life, the player could quit playing the ghost and revert to playing himself in the game world. However, it should be pointed out that this didn’t work perfectly, and several of the players reported game occurrences where someone had broken the prosopopeia proposal:

But I really can’t say I “played” myself [when I called my girlfriend]. Not consciously that is. Also when I had knowledge that the spirit didn’t have, I used that as myself. Like using the Internet for instance, or my ATM-card.

To further add the confusion, sometimes the events of *Prosopopeia* were also discussed as a game within the diegetic reality of the prosopopeia proposal. For instance, the characters were hinted that in many occasions they might want to lie to the outsiders, claiming that their strange activities were actually a part of a game. In the following excerpt a game master character is found from a tunnel in the game. He’s claiming that *Prosopopeia* is a game, since he has regressed to denial after deeply traumatizing (diegetic) possession-related events.

We found [the agent] curled up in the dark not very far down. We managed to talk him into coming with us. He kept saying “It’s only a game, nothing is real.”

The players also broke the prosopopeia proposal mentally when accidentally peeking behind the scenes, for instance when seeing game masters in wrong places. Curiously, they also occasionally broke the proposal when they mistakenly believed that they had seen behind the scenes—for instance once when encountering a person whom they mistakenly believed to be one of the ghost voice actors. Just as interesting game experiences emerge from the seamless merging of life and game, off-game experiences emerge as well.

1.6 PLAYING WITH NON-PLAYERS

In addition to breaking the boundaries of playing area and playing time, *Prosopopeia* also expanded the traditional social boundary of larp, including outsiders into the game in many ways.

Outsider involvement helped in making the life-game merger more perfect and more seamless. Many strategies were used: game content was placed in the hands of unaware outsiders, some outsiders were given instructions by the game masters, and sometimes the players had to accomplish missions involving outsiders.

The former two strategies both bolster the feeling of realness. The advantage of using unaware outsiders is that they are more real as they are not part of the game. One downside is that as they do not realize the importance of the game content, they might not tell the players the critical information or might not show them the important prop. If the piece of information is vital, the latter strategy of instructed outsiders should be preferred.

Each character in the game was also given a mission that involved the outside world and interaction with bystanders. For example, one of the possessing spirits was a pioneer of free communal housing and wanted to manifest this by sheltering a homeless person for a night. Another spirit was a Catholic Christian, wanting to confess her sins committed in life that had not been forgiven in her life. The player had a mission to go to a mass and discuss with a (non-involved) priest. These missions were both very powerful and extremely demanding; unfortunately, many *Prosopopeia* players left these quests undone, so deeper analysis is not possible¹⁰.

On occasion outsiders became involved in the game accidentally or unpredictably. Mostly these were casual encounters on the streets, but two specific cases deserve mentioning. The first one happened next to a graveyard in Stockholm, where the players tried to communicate with the dead using the EVP-recorder. A player describes:

A guy came by when we were using the tape machine at Skogskyrkogården. We talked to him for a while, but couldn't figure out if he was involved in the game or not. This I think is the best part, where you have no way of knowing if a person or experience is created with intent or not.

Believing that the stranger might have been involved with the game the players spent a considerable amount of time discussing game-related issues with him. Even though

¹⁰Due to an unfortunate miscommunication, the debrief questionnaire lacked the questions that would have shed light to reasons of not pursuing the tasks.

the discussion never dropped a critical clue to the players, they were afterwards extremely uncertain on whether the encounter was staged or coincidental.

In the second case a player sent some emails to his friend during the game, including some discussion related to the game events. He described ending up in a foreign city after confusing sequence of events, and that he was planning to head back home next. According to his account, the discussion probably was somewhat disquieting from the outsider perspective.

These examples demonstrate that the borderline of a pervasive larp and ordinary reality is uncontrollable to both the game masters and the players. The email in the latter case was completely spontaneous piece of game action from the player's behalf, not provoked by larpwrights in any predictable way. The former incident was also beyond player control, as they were not aware on whether the bypasser had a relationship with a game or not. Even asking the stranger directly would not have confirmed his relationship to the game, as it is possible to involve outsiders even without telling them—*Prosopopeia* organizers planned to have an actor performing game-related activities before the main event in the areas players were expected to frequent, in order to make it theoretically possible to meet witnesses who'd seen the events. Unfortunately this was not done due to unexpected problems with scheduling.

In addition to this direct social expansion of involving non-players with the game, *Prosopopeia* also took the border of ludic and ordinary down indirectly, in game background and reality fabrication. Many elements in the story were fitted for or inspired by the historical backgrounds of the characters, so it can be argued that several important game events had really happened before the game even began. Thus, the players could google up significant additional information on their characters, and find out both important and irrelevant clues about their past. Quoting a debrief:

I read up on EVP in general, the Maya calendar and the spirit world mythos within the EVP context. Some of this was discussed by email [among the players before the possession]. [...] No solid "clues" were found, but a lot of background material that helped explain the game story.

Even this googling was occasionally controlled by the game organizers, as they took many existing sources of information and altered the content for the purposes of the game. For example one website was duplicated in its entirety, hundreds of pages of occult lore, just adding some six pages to it. This reality hacking was used to fabricate substantial amounts of data for the players to scrounge. Also, the chance of randomly finding game-related information was introduced.

1.7 CONCLUSIONS

We have described *Prosopopeia Bardo 1: Där vi föll* as an example of where an ambitious pervasive larp can go, briefly going through the methodology and the philosophy of the game. Although the implementation of the game was far from flawless, it demonstrated the genuine value of seamless merging of ordinary and ludic, as well as ideas such as indexic propping and the possession model. Clearly, such design features have significant potential in creating new kinds of engaging game experiences (also McGonigal [5]).

Prosopopeia experimented mixing of ambiguous content and confirmed game content, creating the certainty of *Prosopopeia* being a game but leaving it ambiguous where the game content ended and real world began. This mixture proved to have advantages, but there are also design challenges that need to be solved in the future.

Prosopopeia also demonstrated that active runtime game mastering is possible even in a boundless open space larp, if sufficient technological and personnel resources are present. Such tools need to be used with care, in order to avoid guiding the game too obviously. Another important technical lesson learned was that surveillance technology has to be applied with care. Even though there were cameras installed in every (private) location the players visited, the utility of the video feed was low, due to bad quality of the image, player movement and labour-intensivity. Assessing the state of the social process of the game by looking at video feed is very difficult, and audio feed suits the task much better. Also, concealing video cameras is a lot harder than concealing microphones. Tools to monitor the state, position, information flow and social dynamics in the player group need to be developed further.

In this paper we have not addressed the ethical lessons of *Prosopopeia*. Obviously, looking at ethical issues is extremely important for pervasive gaming, and the challenges are significant especially for the extreme forms such as *Prosopopeia*. We are investigating issues like player privacy and outsider experiences elsewhere in project IPerG.

The next step is to take this proof of concept to another level, by scaling the larp up in terms of number of participants and duration of the game. In order to accomplish this scaling we will focus on generic, reusable technology, rather than dedicated technology that was used here. According to the plans the next game could be 5–10 times larger, and last 5–10 times longer. Such scaling unfortunately might require downscaling in the detail of background work and authenticity of propping.

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