

Introduction to foreign LARP*

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*This course will have a focus on German medieval fantasy LARP

Part I - Introduction

- a. Variety of LARPs**
- b. Data of LARP in USA**
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Part II - Events, Conferences and Websites

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- b. Introducing conferences**
- c. Introducing websites**

Part III - What makes European LARP “European”?

- a. Examples of campaigns**
- b. Example of rule systems and immersion.**

Conclusion

Sources/references - www.Larpwiki.de, www.larpwiki.org, www.Larpkalender.de, www.larpevents.co.uk, www.Knutepunkt.org, www.Larp-Mittelpunkt.de, www.Mittellande.de, <http://geocommons.com/maps/359196>, www.DlrV.eu, www.Larp-Zeit.de, www.phoenixlarp.de and www.Larper.ning.com,

Part I - a. Variety of LARP

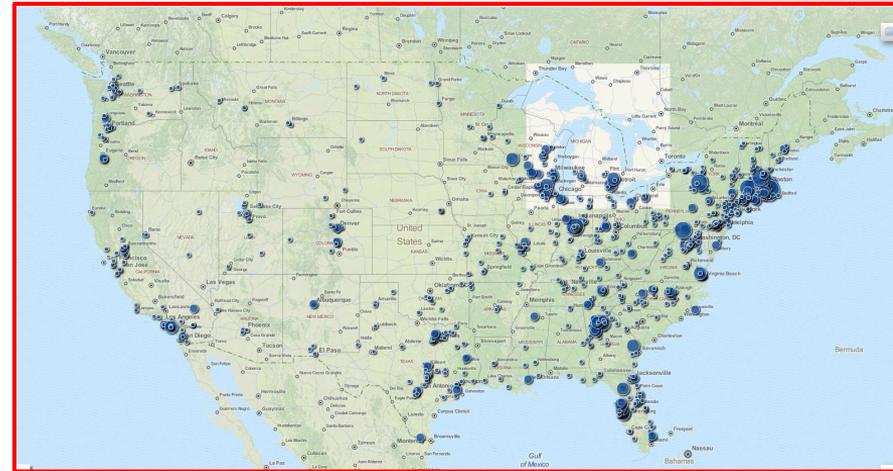
- LARP is an umbrella term for role playing games, where players interact with other players physically using a self created character or given character. The nature of the setting can fictitious or historical.
- There areLARPs based on Cthulhu, Steampunk, Reenactment of actual historical medieval/renaissance events, 19th Century/Prohibition, American Wild West, Vampire (Live), Zombie Apocalypse, Post-Apocalypse, Cyberpunk, Battlestar Galactica, Star Trek, Star Wars, Warhammer 40k, Theater-LARP, Nordic LARP and etc.

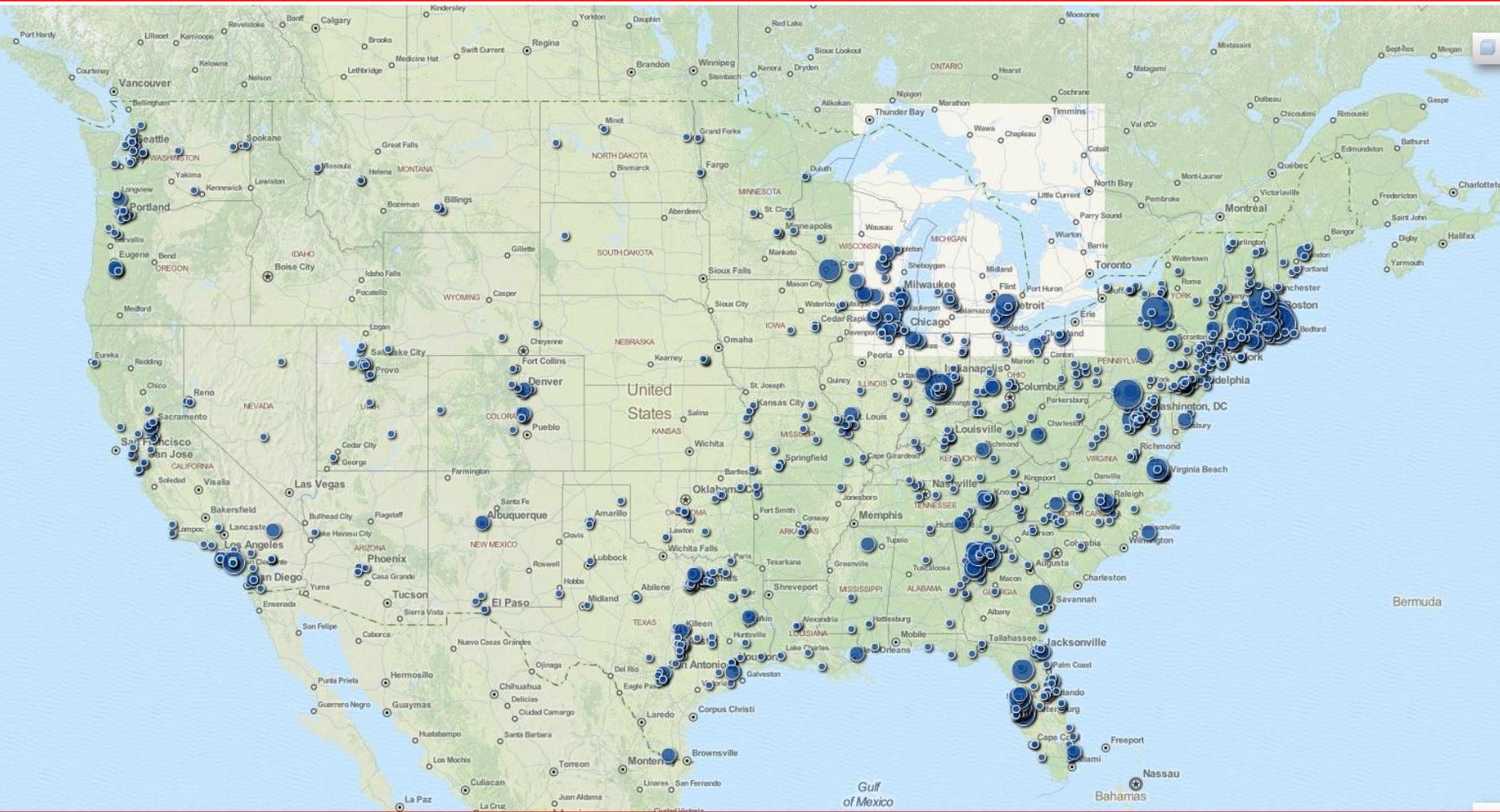
Part I - a. Variety of LARP

- The mainstream LARP is known as medieval fantasy LARP. It can contain a high amount of fantasy elements, low amount of fantasy or no fantasy.
- Of medieval fantasy LARP there are subgroups that base their setting in popular fantasy books/movies and games; Warhammer, Dungeon and Dragons, Game of Thrones/A Song of Ice and Fire, World of WarCraft and many more.
- Usually, game organizers create their own fantasy setting and rule system

Part I - b. Data of LARP in USA

- This survey was done by LARP City Project.
- Approximately 1,600 people were surveyed.
- The East Coast has clearly the highest concentration of LARPer, particularly New England and Atlanta.
- There are no clear numbers of how many actual LARPer there are in USA or North-America in general. Maybe 10,000+?





Part I - b. Data of LARP in USA

- The survey indicates that about ~80% of all US American LARPer's play medieval fantasy LARP.
- Therefore, this presentation will be focused mainly on the main stream LARP, medieval fantasy.
- New England has the most LARP events per weekend.

Europe



Part I - c. Data of LARP in Europe

- The largest LARP communities are in Europe.
- Denmark has proportionally the largest LARP community compared to any other country in Europe and perhaps in the world with a population of ~5.6 Million people.
- Unlike in the United States, there are LARP stores, where people can walk in and buy products.
- Some stores have not only an online shop, but produce products themselves.

Part I - c. Data of LARP in Europe

- Some of these businesses are relatively large, i.e. Mytholon from Germany (www.Mytholon.com).
- Iron Fortress, also known as Epic Armoury, is also a big company that has a big online shop and manufactures its own products.
- About 10 years ago the size of LARP events gradually increased and the popularity increased as well.
- However, some businesses are outsourcing labor and material to India and Pakistan. Many of the armors, clothes and LARP weapons are made there. Thus making LARP products more affordable in Europe.

Part I - c. Data of LARP in Europe

- According to Iron Fortress the average LARPer from Denmark spends 6776% more than the average US American LARPer
- In 2013 about 74% of all LARP events in Switzerland, the rule system does not use a point system.
- In 2013 about 46% of all LARP events in Germany, the rule system is based on “You Can Do, What You Can Display/Portray”. That is a new trend, where events do not use little to no rules, but require players to simple display and portray what they are doing. (More to it on part III)
- In 2013 about 79,3% of all LARPs events in Germany were fantasy.

Part I - d. Discussion on Stereotypes

**What do YOU think you know
about foreign LARP?**

Part II - Events, Conferences and Websites

Part II. a. Introducing large events

- Today, some and the largest LARP events are in Germany;
Epic Empire (since 2010) ~ 1,500
(PvP, strict entrance rules and 18+ only)

Drachenfest (since 2001) ~4,500
(PvP, oldest Mega-event in Germany)

Conquest of Mythodea (since 2004) ~7,500
(PvP, PvE, largest in the world)
- Each event is once a year. However, they have spin-off events and Conquest of Mythodea is developing its own campaign.

Part II. a. Introducing large events

- United Kingdom:

The Gathering (since 1992) ~ 2,500-3,000
(PvP, oldest mega-event in Europe, probably, and largest in UK. It is part of a campaign which has multiple events throughout the year, but which are usually much smaller)

Empire (since 2013) ~ 1,500
(PvP, PvE, multiple times a year)

Part II. a. Introducing large events

- Canada:

Bicolline (since 1994) ~ 2,500 - 3,000

(PvP, It has its own campaign which runs multiple events throughout the year, but which are usually much smaller. It is the only mega-event in North-America. Unlike any other event, it takes place on 150 acres and it has over 150 buildings, which belong to player groups mostly. The site grows each year.)

Part II. b. Introducing conferences

- Over the years, LARP communities came together in the German speaking countries and Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway, Finland and Sweden) to create conferences.
- The conferences are there to help LARP communities get together and show organizers to improve.
- Knutpunkt (Meaning: Meeting point) is an annual conference on Nordic LARP since 1997. The location can vary between each Nordic country.

Part II. b. Introducing conferences

- MittelPunkt began in 2006. It is the largest LARP conference in Germany. It is organized each year by the German Live Role Association. It is open to the entire LARP community national and international level. Its focus is to bring the LARP community closer and improve the LARP scene. It also gives out awards for many different

Part II. a. Introducing websites

- www.radio-aena.de - Internet radio station. It streams medieval music, medieval rock and other medieval like music. It often broadcasts news within the LARP or medieval festival scenes.
- www.larpevents.co.uk - British calendar that allows players to locate events and add events.
- www.larpkalender.de , www.larpkalender.ch - German and Swiss calendar that allows players to locate events within the German speaking countries. However, it often includes events from other countries.
- www.larper.ning.com - German social website for German speakers. It allows to upload pictures and videos. It became as important as Facebook within the LARP community there.
- www.larpwiki.org - A collaboration website for the international LARP scene.
- www.larpwiki.de - Probably the largest LARP wiki, but in German.
- www.larpzeit.de - It is the website of the largest German LARP magazine. They also sell many other materials relating to LARP and medieval ages.

**Part III - What makes European
LARP
“European”?**

Is there an answer?

Part III. a. Examples of campaigns

- Many campaigns are quite similar as in the United States. However, that's only (more or less) true for very large events - Conquest of Mythodea.
- In Central Europe, which includes Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Netherland, Belgium and Netherland, many events have a shared cosmology/shared fantasy universe. That means one player could go to the event of organizer A and on the next weekend go to the event of organizer B without being required to re-create a new character nor use the same rule system
- Even though many events have a shared cosmology they are not necessarily affiliated with each other nor financially.
Different to American "Franchise" (NERO, Amtgard and etc. in the USA)

Part III. a. Examples of campaigns

- Arch stories usually do not exist in every events. For example, in Germany, where some campaigns are well organized, the event's backstory can influence the events of someone else's event. This mean, there could be an event in south of Germany, which then could influence an event in northern Germany, for example, but as long as the events take place within the same campaign and the organizers communicate with each other beforehand.
- In Germany, there are also closed campaigns, where players are forced to recreate a new character and organizers have to use one specific rule system.
- Some other campaigns are not affiliated with other campaigns, but allow players to use the same character. The character of the player can simply "travel from one continent to the other continent by a sea route".

Part III. a. Examples of campaigns

- In Germany, the largest LARP campaigns are:
 - Mittellande (Middlelands)
 - Südlande (A different continent that is within the same universe of Mittellande)
 - Phönix Carta (A very closed campaign, which requires event organizers to have strict communication to the campaign owners and use their rule system)
 - Ostlande (Players are encouraged to be non-human characters and there can be less combat)
 - Mythodea (Owners of Conquest of Mythodea are starting their own independent campaign outside of the annual main event)

Part III. a. Examples of campaigns



Let's talk about one campaign.

Part III. a. Examples of campaign



Part III. a. Examples of campaign

- That campaign consists of 65 active nations. Most nations are represented or run by some organizers.
- Most events within that campaign use 3 rule systems, Dragon Sys, Silbermond, and DKWDDK (You can do, what you can portray/display)
- Members of the campaign pay 25 Euros each year so that their nation stays on the map.
- Once a year, a meeting is organized to allow organizers to add a nation, change the size of their nation, to discuss future development within these nations and etc.
- Many events are collaboration between 2 or more organizers to influence their nations.
- Some nations cannot be changed by organizers, because they are only there for plot purposes. For example, the Dark Kingdom, Orcland and etc.
- Once a year, a small event is organized to allow players to meet players and nobles from different nations or kingdoms for diplomacy reasons.

Part III. b. Example of rule systems and immersion.

- There is a trend to move away from complicated rule systems.
- Mega-events have been simplifying rule system so to allow foreign players to adapt easier.
- The concept of classes is still very impeded in German LARPs to prevent characters to be too powerful.
Warrior class, Universal, Wizard and Adventurer i.e. Dragon Sys
- The concept to make rule systems to be even less complicated to the point to use common sense only is becoming very popular in Central Europe. You can do, what you can portray/display.
- Real armor, medieval like clothing or at least impressive fantasy clothing has to be worn at events.

Part III. b. Example of rule systems and immersion.

- Weapons have to be realistic looking. Therefore, latex weapons are very popular, because (in the eye of foreigners) they are the safest weapons and players can make them themselves.
- Players should have a sense of knowledge about the middle ages and pretend to be a character that could have lived in the middle ages. Hence, someone should put himself or herself in a character that still believes the earth was flat and eating vegetables might cause sickness.
- The 90 degree rule for weapon use is a very common rule in many countries and systems

Part III. b. Example of rule systems and immersion.

- That means a player should pretend the weapon was made of metal and therefore has to deal with the weight of that weapon.
- The role playing of injuries and even death. It is very important for players to act the pain and agony by being hurt.
- Players who become unconscious or even dead have to remain on the ground and should act it out. Other players will have to carry them in order to either safe them or put somewhere else.
- Game-Masters or Referees are usually not playing but are bystanders who observe and ensure the game runs smoothly.

CONCLUSION:

Conclusion

- LARP is a very complex hobby with many different sub-groups.
- European LARP differs even within each nation. East European and Russian LARP are also different than Central European LARP
- Some stereotypes like immersion are true, but many others are wrong, i.e. armor is mandatory and real weapons are used.
- The community in Europe is much more structured than in the USA in certain aspects: Multi-platform events, businesses, media and etc.
- Maybe, we can learn from them and they can learn from us.