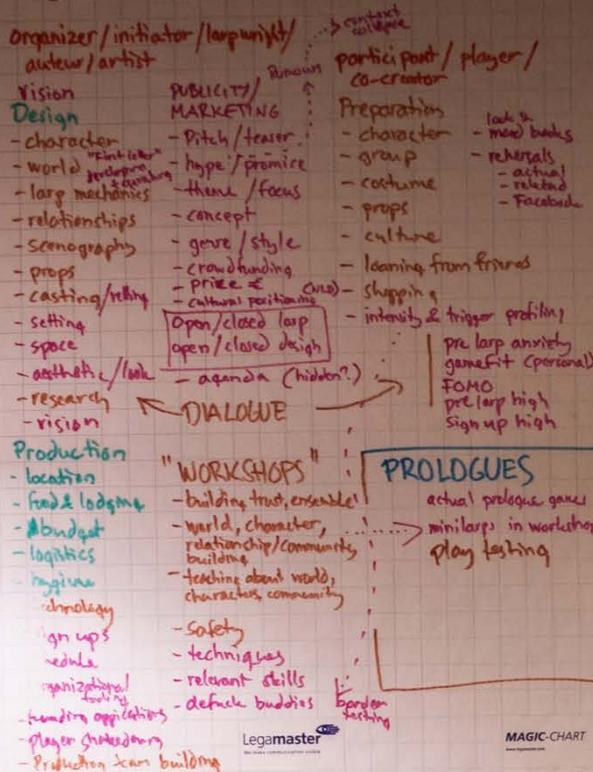


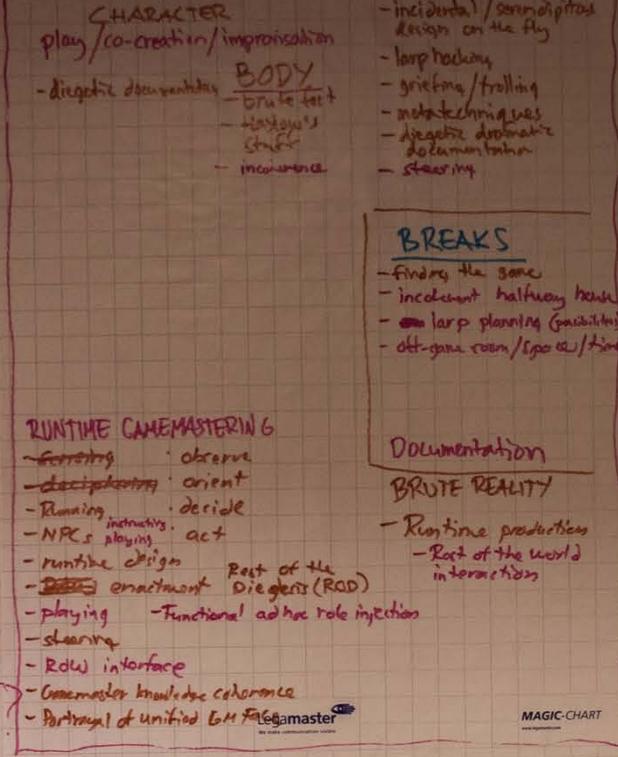
Steering for Fun and Profit

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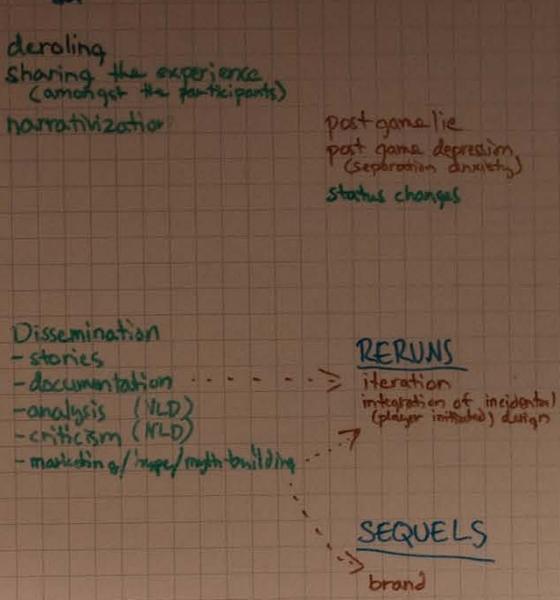
BEFORE RUNTIME BEGINS (pre-game)



RUNTIME "The larp"



AFTER RUNTIME ("post-game")



EXPECTATIONS (management)

- bleed hunting
- HC
- Status
- Personal growth
- political steering

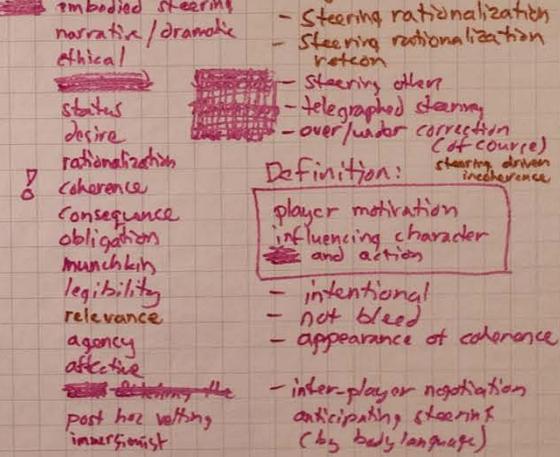
Preparation (cont.)

- character selection
- co-player optimization
- hard sign-up
- research
- organizer vetting
- cancelling
- last minute panic
- relationship chemistry search

Design (cont.)

- food design
- play testing
- critique
- retreats

STEERING



Why Do We Steer?

- Embodied
- Narrative/Dramatic
- Ethical
- Status
- Desire
- Rationalization
- Coherence
- Consequence
- Obligation
- Munchkin
- Legibility
- Relevance
- Agency
- Affective
- Post-hoc Vetting
- Immersionist

What is Steering?

Steering is the process in which a player influences the behavior of her character for nondiegetic reasons.

Coherence

- A player who is steering her character strives to maintain the semblance of *coherence* in her behavior
- Especially, the player strives to maintain *outward appearance of coherence*, but also her *internal coherence*

No Accidental Steering

- Steering is defined as an *intentional* and *conscious* activity
- Steering requires extra work and a specific choice

Which Actions are Steering?

- Steering is the opposite of the ideal of playing that requires no conscious thinking
- Steering is not just another word for larping: Not all character actions are the result of steering
- Steering is *not* an emotional process but a conscious activity

Talking About What We Really Do

- At least reflexes and unconscious reactions are external to steering
- It can be debated if all conscious player actions are steering
- The value of “steering” is not in debating what exactly it includes, or whether most of larping is steering
- It is useful in brutally honest understanding of what happens in the practice of larp

No Steering Others

- Players can change the course of the game by steering their characters
- But the precise term *steering* only applies to a player steering *herself*
- Also, unconscious or accidental 'steering' of others does not count as steering

Steering & Immersion

- Immersion: When the *double consciousness* falls away
- The immersionist ideal of “staying true to the character” is the opposite of steering
- There is no such thing as “staying true to the character”
- Although many players find this an important *aesthetic*, the *ideal* of a consistent character is only a necessary fiction

Steering and Uncertainty

- Since it is impossible to determine whether something constitutes “staying true to character”, it is impossible to determine whether something is steering
- This uncertainty makes steering possible in the first place

Immersion, Cont'd.

- The idea of steering emerges from a tradition that values character immersion as an ideal
- Immersion is a goal, an ideal, and an aesthetic, not a description of larping
- Understanding double consciousness shifts emphasis from the ideals of playing to the *actual practice*

Three-Fold Model

- Simulationism is similar to immersionism; the ideal of fidelity of simulation
- Dramatism is steering to create story
- Gamism is steering to win

Internal Validation

- Validation: When you satisfy some game rule
 - Internal and external validation
 - Internal and external rules
 - (Dansey et al. 2009)
-
- Steering implies interpretation of external rules and alteration of internal rules

Steering for Profit

- Steering is not a bad thing to do or an undesirable thing to do
- In fact, we steer almost all the time when we are playing

Selfish Not-Steering

- Players *not* steering are a frequent source of problems
- Not steering may force others to steer even harder
- People preferring to not-steer may find other's not-steering *selfish*
- Also people who prefer to steer may find not-steering selfish

Obligation to Steer for Coherence

- Equifinality conflicts need to be resolved
- Steering for coherent status
- Different game styles have different conceptions of coherence

Turbulence

- Another player's confusion about the steerer's character's identity, or her relationship with the steerer's character
- Cause by people steering hard

Character-Breaking Steering

- Steering can be characterized as a *character-breaking steering* when the player cannot maintain her internal sense of coherence.
- E.g. when executing game master directives

Rationalization

- Retroactive rationalization
- Retroactive rationalization retconing

Problems from Steering

- Some players find it very difficult to steer coherently
- Some players argue that steering ruins their game
- Some players say that steering forces them to take distance to their character, which hampers immersionist play style
- Some even consider steering a form of cheating

Steering in Other Forms

- Tabletop RPG
- Video games
- Novel authors steer too (*Eigenleben*)
- Damon Lindelof School of Writing

Questions?

Steering is the process in which a player influences the behavior of her character for nondiegetic reasons.