

The Process Model of Roleplaying

Eetu Mäkelä, Sampo Koistinen, Mikko Siukola and Sanni Turunen

Address correspondence to: eetu.makela@iki.fi
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Abstract. This paper presents the Process Model of Roleplaying. The model provides concepts to describe and analyze roleplaying sessions, to describe roleplaying preferences, as well as to plan and convey visions of future roleplaying sessions and campaigns. The core idea of the model is looking at roleplaying as a process, that goes on over time. On top of this, a model is built that identifies both the end results of roleplaying, the individual methods used, as well as the interactions of all of these components. When the model is compared with other models of roleplaying, it stands on its own.

Keywords: roleplaying, roleplaying styles, models of roleplaying, roleplaying analysis

1 Introduction

The process model of roleplaying is a set of concepts and tools to describe, analyze and discuss the act of roleplaying. The specific design goals of the model were as follows:

1. to identify distinct elements and components inside the act of roleplaying and create a vocabulary of such concepts, and
2. to describe how these components interact to make or break a game.

In this article, the concepts used in the model are first explained, and then tools and advice are given on how the model can be used for the following:

1. to describe and analyze singular or typical gaming sessions from the viewpoint of an individual or the whole group,
2. to plan and communicate visions of future sessions and campaigns, and
3. to describe play preferences of an individual or the whole group.

The terms used for the concepts of the model have been selected to be as fitting as possible. Some of the terms selected are however already being used with varying meanings in the general roleplaying community. The reader is advised to see the definitions given here as normative with regards to the model, and read no more into the terms in relation to the model than is given in the term descriptions.

In this article, first a general outline of how roleplaying is perceived through the model is given. A general description of the actual model is then given, after which the individual components of the model are explained. In chapter 3, the model is put to use, first in analyzing and planning sessions, then in describing preferences and plans. In chapter 5, it is compared to other models of roleplaying, primarily focusing on how the concepts of the model relate to the concepts of the other models compared. The paper closes with a discussion of weaknesses and ambiguities in the model and other areas of future work.

2 The Process Model of Roleplaying

2.1 The Definition of Roleplaying as Seen From the Viewpoint of the Process Model

To understand the basis of the model, it is useful to offer a description of how the act of roleplaying looks from the viewpoint of the model. First, the act of roleplaying must be defined. For the purpose of the model, roleplaying is defined as any act in which an Imagined Space (IS) is created, added to and observed. Imagined Space can shortly be defined as the facts, expectations and hopes about the imagined reality explored by the participants. In some texts[1, 2] Imagined Space is also called Diegesis. When roleplaying in a group, the Imagined Spaces of the individual participants overlap to create a Shared Imagined Space (SIS) in which the majority of interaction pertaining to the game is enacted. The environment in which this interaction is enacted is the Shared Space of Imagining, a concept that includes the Shared Imagined Space, but also all the other facts, expectations and intentions concerning the act of roleplaying, like unspoken or spoken social contracts pertaining to how the game is played. This definition of roleplaying is intentionally as open as possible, including for example both improvisational theater, storytelling and Turku-style one-person-imagining-alone-in-a-closet eläytyjivism[3].

With roleplaying defined as interaction among the participants in the Shared Space of Imagining, with regards to a Shared Imaginary Space, a description of how the model sees the actual act of roleplaying can now be given. The Process Model of Roleplaying sees roleplaying first and foremost as a process, something that happens and goes on in a time-frame. Inside this process, multiple concurrent but distinct subprocesses can be seen. Each of these subprocesses revolves around a certain element, creating and consuming it, be it player competition or the exploration of a theme. The qualities manifested in a roleplaying session by these various processes are hopefully enjoyable, benefiting the participants in some way. If they do not, they can be considered losses.

The needs of the various processes in terms of techniques and decision-making considerations vary, sometimes coinciding, sometimes being at odds with each other. Processes benefit from methods and other processes that support them, leading to a more optimal gain of benefit, while conflicting processes and methods lead to the poor running of the affected processes, diminishing the benefits gained thereof. The driving idea behind the research presented here is that by understanding and intelligently selecting the processes and methods used, and controlling the circumstances that affect them, wanted benefits can be maximized and unwanted losses minimized.

2.2 Overview of the component types recognized in the Process Model of Roleplaying

The process model of roleplaying forms around four main types of components and their interactions. The main component types are Circumstances, Methods, Processes and Results. The relationships of the components are visualized in figure 1.

A Result is what comes out of the roleplaying session, what the people engaging in roleplaying get out of it. Wanted Results are called Benefits, while unwanted Results are termed Losses.

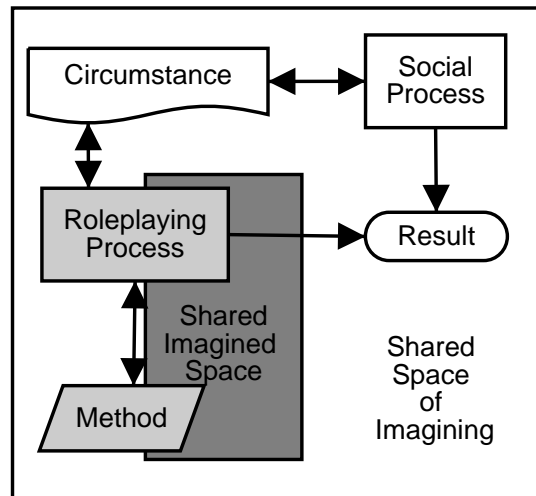


Fig. 1. A flowchart showing the relationships of the component types of the model

Feeding to the Results are a number of Processes, both social and roleplaying. Processes describe what actually happens inside a roleplaying session. The roleplaying processes describe what qualities are being created or explored in the roleplaying session and how, while the social processes are general forms of social contact that happen to coincide with roleplaying, but are not actually tied to it. Both types of processes describe what the means that lead to the different Results are.

While the Processes are the means to the Results, they are in turn constrained and guided by Circumstances and Methods. Circumstances are any states of affairs that affect how the roleplaying group enacts the various processes. Methods on the other hand are agreed-upon means and rules by which the actions pertaining to the roleplaying session are undertaken. The influence is not one-way however. The Processes can affect the Circumstances, while the Methods actually used are usually chosen from an available set depending on the Processes.

In the following chapters, the four component types will be discussed in detail, in turn naming and describing the Results, Processes Circumstances and Methods observed.

2.3 Results

The term Result in the process model describes the final wanted or unwanted outcomes of the interaction of the various roleplaying subprocesses.

Benefits describe the reasons we roleplay, what we gain from participating in the roleplaying process. The benefits currently recognized in the model are as follows:

Entertainment Enjoyment of fun, being together and passing the time.

Learning Gaining new knowledge or understanding, affirming or questioning old knowledge, spiritual growth and reflection.

Social Benefits Positive changes in the social sphere arising from roleplaying, for example the strengthening of social bonds, or getting to know the other players better.

Meaning Enjoyment of an emotional experience, resonance with established thought constructs

Aesthetic Appreciation Artistic appreciation, enjoyment of beauty and form.

The losses mirror the benefits, being:

Boredom

False Knowledge

Social Dysfunction

Unpleasant Emotional Experiences

Aesthetic Failure

Entertainment The most common benefit gained from roleplaying is entertainment. Being together with friends, having a good time, twisting the game processes into something funny. These all belong under the heading of entertainment. Entertainment is the lighter side of roleplaying, the passing the time aspect of it. When this fails, the result is Boredom and disinterest.

Learning The benefit of learning applies equally well to the study of ancient Greece through a roleplaying game as it does to learning how to deal with emotional situations through the game, encompassing equally the acquisition of factual knowledge as well as experience, self-knowledge and understanding. Sometimes the understanding gained through gaming can be faulty however, leading to the loss of False Knowledge.

Social Benefits The results of play are Social Benefits when the play experience changes something in the social space of the participants for the better. This can be for example by transference of inter-character social cohesion to the actual participants, or when playing the game tells the participants more about each other. Social Dysfunction appears when the roleplaying processes produce negative social results like distrust or hatred.

Meaning Meaning is defined as an emotional connect with the game content, be it fear, suspense or a remembrance of past love, as long as it is wanted. The flip-side of meaning are unpleasant, unwanted emotional experiences. Meaning is usually approached via empathy or sympathy for, or immersion with the characters, but can also be obtained through any of the other processes, for example when suspense is being created by competition.

Aesthetic Appreciation Aesthetic appreciation is the enjoyment of form and beauty in itself, the satisfaction one gets from a perfectly composited scene in the game or from the simple joy of applying a well-designed rule system. Aesthetic Failure is the result when these aspirations fail, when a rule mechanic leads to frustration or when the person framing the scene just fails miserably in conveying anything to the other participants.

2.4 Processes

The processes are the core of the model. They describe what actually happens in a roleplaying sessions by identifying various distinct aspects of the roleplaying process that are responsible for producing the results of play.

The characteristics of processes are as follows

- A process produces some measurable quality in a roleplaying session
- Results are produced by the processes.
- The amount such a quality is present or is realized depends on how play is conducted, ie. is affected by how decisions are made by the players or by how the players choose to experience the Shared Imagined Space. In most cases, it is affected by both.
- The processes are distinct entities in and of themselves. If a roleplaying session is permeated by a single process, it can even be said that realizing that process be the primary process, roleplaying merely being the means.

The processes are further subdivided into roleplaying processes and social processes. The social processes are the general social interactions that could as easily co-exist with other activities, and are therefore not given much thought here. The major roleplaying processes observed on the other hand are first listed here, then explained below:

- Competition
- Suspense
- Immersion
- Exploration of an Entity of the Shared Imagined Space
- Exploration of a Concept through the Shared Imagined Space

Competition Competition is the name given for the pursuit of victory in some form, in the classical sports race sense of the word, where there can be only one who is fastest. In the context of a roleplaying game, this process requires some form of measuring competence, be it experience points, character levels or simply giving implicit social appreciation to whoever solves a puzzle first. An important element in Competition is Tactics. Tactics is the subprocess of both optimizing resources for maximum potential and also the actual act of pondering situational choices in relation to their expected benefits. The only roleplaying game currently to embrace Competition fully from also the game-master's viewpoint seems to be Rune.

Suspense While it may look like most traditional tabletop games and roleplaying games with a strong element of such in them revolve around Competition, in truth most games are designed and most people seem to play in a way which keeps Suspense as high as possible. This is the style of play where, in order to keep the winner uncertain for as long as possible, people give slack to those who have fallen behind and use other means to keep the playing field relatively equal. In roleplaying games, this balancing or “fair challenge” is most often seen as the responsibility of the game-master, who in traditional roleplaying games is given way too much power to actually Compete with the players. Like actual Competition, Suspense requires at least some form of measuring competence, and also employs a great deal of Tactics. Good examples of games designed to support this style of play are D&D and its ilk.

Immersion Immersion is the process of becoming another entity, thinking, feeling and acting as that entity. It is a process going beyond mere empathy or sympathy, the latter two being general methods of relating and experiencing the Shared Imagined Space. To Immerse is to be, to feel inside. It has few counterparts in other medias, method acting perhaps coming close, while for example feeling with the characters in a book or a film is sympathy, feeling from the outside. While Immersion is generally possible with only one target, empathy can be felt for other players characters as well as for other entities in the SIS.

Exploration of an Entity of the Shared Imagined Space Exploration of an Entity of the Shared Imagined Space is the process of observation. It means taking an entity, and exploring the interactions of that entity with its surroundings. The entity need not be a character, it can be a medieval village, the concept of psionic abilities or the love of two individuals. What is important is that it is a distinct entity and that its interaction with other elements is the focus of the exploration.

Exploration of a Concept through the Shared Imagined Space The flipside of the Exploration of an Entity is the Exploration of a Concept through the Shared Imagined Space. The two form differ in focus. In the Exploration of a Concept, the focus is on a concept, which is then explored possibly through numerous expressions in the Shared Imagined Space. Again, the subject of the exploration can vary wildly, from exploring the sides of a moral dilemma to the study of social dynamics of clan life.

As said, the two forms of exploration differ in focus. Exploration of an Entity takes one entity as a focus and explores the interactions that entity has with its environment. Exploration of a Concept takes the concept as a focus, and explores it through the interactions of possibly multiple expressions of that concept in the SIS.

These two last explorative processes are interesting also in that in them, the two sides of interacting with the Shared Imagined Space are more clearly separate. After the subject matter is injected into the Shared Imagined Space, it must somehow be experienced. Most often this takes the form of Empathy, an emotional connection with an element of the SIS. This experiencing the SIS is actually the part of exploration that brings on the Results - but it cannot stand on its own as a process, as it always needs

that some subject matter be brought in to the SIS to observe. Only in this combination is it whole.

2.5 Methods

While Processes tell us *what* happens in a roleplaying session, Methods tell us *how* it happens. Methods guide and constrain how the game is played. They are any singular techniques, rules or contracts that are used or referred to in connection with the game. The amount of methods is nearly infinite and so no definite listing is possible, but some important and often discussed choices of methods are considered.

Authority over the Shared Imaginary Space The single most important choices shaping a roleplaying session are the methods used to distribute authority over the Shared Imaginary Space. Usually this authority is subdivided into authority over the inner world of player characters and their actions, authority over the actions of the world and finally authority over resolution of events.

In traditional table-top roleplaying games, usually the players have absolute control over their characters inner world and their choices of actions, while the game-master has similar control over all other aspects of the imaginary reality. Authority over the effects and resolution of stated actions seems often overtly to reside in the rules system, likened to the laws of physics of the imaginary world, but usually actually resides with the game-master with his godlike ability to ignore or bend the rules when he wants.

In games of co-operative storytelling without a game-master, the final authority over all matters usually rests within the game system, tasked with resolving any conflicts that arise between the storytellers. Usually the drive for social consensus is given a chance before resorting to the system, or is actually facilitated by the system.

In live-action roleplaying, authority is mostly trusted to the likening of the actual laws of nature to the laws of nature of the Shared Imagined Space and the strong drive for silent social consensus, with authority resting on specific rules for discrepancies like injury, death and technology.

Use of Out-Of-Character Knowledge, Realism and In-SIS Causality

2.6 Circumstances

Circumstances are any outside parameters that affect the game. They differ from methods in that methods are chosen and agreed-upon means of interacting with the SIS, while circumstances exists in and of themselves. The number of circumstances affecting every event is nearly infinite, and thus as in the case of methods, no definitive list can be given. Example circumstances are for example the mood of the players, the amount of outside disturbance in the place where the game is played and the social relationships between the players.

Circumstances can share some space with methods however, where a method is used to change a circumstance. So, while the number of players should most often be considered a circumstance, changing the number of players dynamically in response to some in-game situation could be considered a method.

3 Using the Process Model

3.1 Using the Process Model for Analyzing and Planning Sessions

The main use of the process model is in analyzing how the different components support or hinder each other. For this purpose, because the components of the model are distinct and complete entities in themselves, the interactions between them can be modeled as a simple support/hinder dichotomy. In this, the choosing of Methods by Processes loses significance, making all of the component interactions one-way, from Methods to Processes and Processes to Results.

A flowchart depicting the support/hinder relations of components of a sample session can be seen in figure 2.

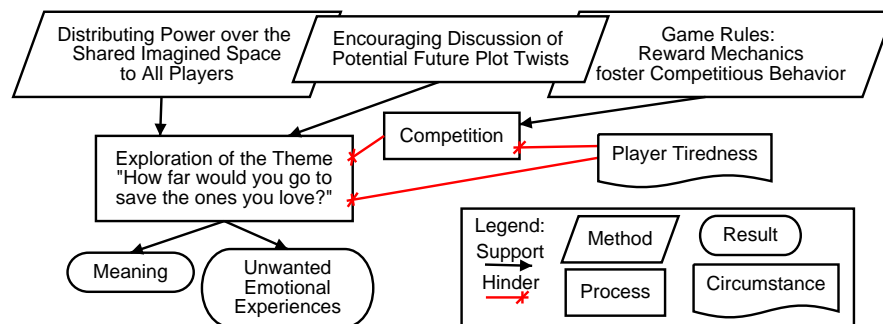


Fig. 2. A flowchart showing the support/hinder relations of components of a sample session

In the example, Meaning has been generated through the Exploration of a Theme. There was also some Suspense arising from competition among the players, but no-one actually enjoyed that enough to gain any benefit from it. In contrast, the existence of competition was seen to pollute the exploration of theme with incompatible priorities.

In the example, the Circumstance of Player Tiredness has hindered all the processes, while the Method of Distributing Power over the Shared Imaginary Space to All Players and the Method of Encouraging Discussion of Potential Future Plot Twists was seen to help in Exploration of the Theme. Certain aspects of the rules were seen to be the forces fostering the air of Competition among the players.

This same simple formalization of interactions can also be used to plan future sessions, trying to predict what the interactions of the various components will be and selecting a blend that supports the most important components best. Perfect support between the processes is extremely hard to obtain and perhaps not even advantageous — humans are extremely good at adapting, and cross-process interference can be easily forgiven if the processes still provide a good enough yield of Benefits.

3.2 Using the Process Model for Stating Preferences and Describing future Sessions or Campaigns

When using the concepts of the Process Model for stating play preferences or describing visions of future sessions or campaigns, one should always start with the Results desired. After that, if necessary, other layers of components can be added on, if desired.

The simplest form of stating preference is only stating the results a person is interested in. For example: “I’m interested in gaining Meaning and Entertainment from roleplaying”, or “I’m thinking my next campaign will be pure Meaning”.

To this, Process restrictions can be added: “I’m interested in gaining Meaning and Entertainment from roleplaying, and want to do it by Immersion and/or Exploration of a Subject Matter” or “I’m thinking my next campaign will be pure Meaning, through the Exploration of moral social dilemmas”.

Finally, if necessary, Method restrictions can be added: “I’m interested in gaining Meaning and Entertainment from roleplaying, and want to do it by Immersion and/or Exploration of a Subject Matter by pure in-SIS causality simulation” or “I’m thinking my next campaign will be pure Meaning, through the Exploration of moral social dilemmas, with much scene framing power given to the players”.

In this way, the preferences stated never lose sight of what actually is important. All roleplaying that is enjoyable must lead to a benefit, and that benefit must come through a process. A plain statement like “I want to play a game with pure in-SIS causality simulation” guarantees an enjoyable game only in the rare circumstance that actually all processes and benefits are equally palatable to the one giving the statement.

4 Analysis of Typical Component Interactions in the Model

While it is useful to remember that none of the support/hinder relationships between the components of the model are absolute, there are many common patterns that usually hold. This section tries to analyze some of them, starting with the Processes and the moving on to some common and sample Methods.

Process: Competition Usually, Competition co-exists poorly with the other processes. The grounds for decision-making required in Competition are very rarely in synch with the decision-making grounds of other processes. With Suspense, Competition can co-exist for as long as other factors like the game rules can keep Suspense alive. For as long as that is the case, the decision-making priorities between the two are the same. It is only when balance is broken that problems arise, but then they may be as severe as with all the other processes.

Process: Suspense Suspense shares much of the same interactions as Competition. It can rarely truly coexist with the other processes. But because the imperative to do well is not as strong as in Competition, it may be easier to blend it with the other processes. For example, in a murder mystery game, Suspense (and even Competition) could exist alongside the Exploration of detective work or even Immersion, with the various characters racing to find the murderer first.

Process: Immersion Immersion is a companion of the Exploration of an Entity. The two can share the exact space for a long time, so that the other players get Exploration and the one Immersing into the entity gets Immersion.

Those Competing will not be bothered by Immersionists much — except if they perceive a total lack of challenge, but anyone valuing Suspense present may be spoilt by having to keep dragging the Immersionists along to keep Suspense going.

Process: Exploration of an Entity of the SIS As previously stated, Exploration of an Entity goes well with Immersion, if the entity being explored is the same that the immersionists are trying to immerse into. But if true Immersion is attained, at least for that player, it completely replaces the Exploration.

As for the other processes, they are not very much constrained by the Exploration of an Entity, unless they touch on that Entity directly and profusely.

Process: Exploration of a Concept through the SIS Exploration of a Concept doesn't often do really well with the Exploration of an Entity. They approach exploration from too different vantage points, with the Explorators of Concept wanting to inject that concept into all interactions, while the Explorators of an Entity would just like to see that entity interact with a multitude of different elements. With Immersion, the situation is the similar.

Competition and Suspense can co-exist amicably with Exploration of a Concept, though neither really supports each other.

Method: Consequence Rules Consequence Rules are a rule Method that describes the consequences of a characters actions in relation to a meter. Examples of such mechanics are the humanity mechanic in Sorcerer and all the attributes of characters in My Life With Master.

These methods are directly built for a subclass of the Exploration of a Concept, the exploration of the consequences of ones actions.

In relation to the other processes, these rules are usually reasonably isolated. However, Immersion can suffer from any forced behavior resulting from the consequence rules.

5 Comparison of the Process Model with Other Models of Roleplaying

In this chapter, an attempt is made to compare the process model with the various other models of roleplaying created before. The chapter is mostly intended for people familiar with the respective models, not as a full review of the models, so previous knowledge of the other models discussed is assumed. The focus of the comparison is on relating the models to each other by analyzing design purposes and use expectancies, and by mapping concepts between the models. Additionally, some thoughts are given on what the process model might have to give the other models. The models discussed here are The Threefold Model[4], The Three-Way Model[5], The GENder Model[6], GNS[7], The Big Model[8], and Channel Theory[9].

5.1 The Threefold Model and The Three-Way Model

The Threefold Model describes three styles of play, Dramatism, Gamism and Simulationism. The short definitions of these, taken from [4] are as follows:

dramatist is the style which values how well the in-game action creates a satisfying storyline. Different kinds of stories may be viewed as satisfying, depending on individual tastes, varying from fanciful pulp action to believable character drama. It is the end result of the story which is important.

The mapping of dramatism in the threefold depends on what actually makes the story satisfying. Most likely it will be exploration of a subject matter, whatever that may be.

gamist is the style which values setting up a fair challenge for the players (as opposed to the PCs). The challenges may be tactical combat, intellectual mysteries, politics, or anything else. The players will try to solve the problems they are presented with, and in turn the GM will make these challenges solvable if they act intelligently within the contract.

This definition of threefold gamist maps directly to the Suspense process of the process model.

simulationist is the style which values resolving in-game events based solely on game-world considerations, without allowing any meta-game concerns to affect the decision. Thus, a fully simulationist GM will not fudge results to save PCs or to save her plot, or even change facts unknown to the players. Such a GM may use meta-game considerations to decide meta-game issues like who is playing which character, whether to play out a conversation word for word, and so forth, but she will resolve actual in-game events based on what would "really" happen.

Simulation, in the scope of the process model, is not really a process, but a method. The process most likely involved in threefold simulationist play will again be exploration of a subject matter, but this time with the added methodological constraint of strict in-game cause-and-effect.

This analysis puts into question the level orientation of the threefold. While threefold gamism is a well defined distinct component also in the process model, the component corresponding to dramatism is actually defined in terms not related to story at all, and shares much of the same with simulationism, which is actually a combination of a process and a method. Also, of the important processes of the model, Competition and Immersion are not recognized at all.

In the Three-Way Model[5], Simulationism is replaced with Immersionism, defined as follows:

Immersionist is the style which values living the roles life, feeling what the role would feel. Immersionists insist on resolving in-game events based

solely on game-world considerations. Thus, a fully immersionist player will not fudge rules to save its role's neck or the plot, or even change details of background story irrelevant in the setting to suite the play. An immersionist organizer will try to make the plots and setting such that they are believable to the players.

While this definition skirts the process of Immersion, it mixes it problematically with other elements. The notions of realism and in-game causality are again methods. The definition also does not make a clear difference between Empathy, a mode of relating to the Shared Imagined Space and Immersion, a whole and complete process.

5.2 GENDER

As for the GENDER model[6], no definitive definitions of the terms exists. From the discussions and related definitions can however be gleaned that Gamist in GENDER means the overcoming of obstacles, whatever they may be. This definition puts it into close contact with at least Competition and Suspense, mostly hovering between them. Explorative play on the other hand points directly at Exploration of Entities of the SIS, but with the added constraint that the exploration must be of the what-if type. Finally, narrative seems to share the definition of Threefold Dramatism. Thus, as a whole, much of the critique given the Threefold applies to the GENDER model.

5.3 GNS

The GNS model is an evolution from the Threefold, and a precursor to the Big Model, developed by Ron Edwards at The Forge¹.

GNS defines the elements of Gamism, Narrativism and Simulationism as follows in [7]:

Gamism is expressed by competition among participants (the real people); it includes victory and loss conditions for characters, both short-term and long-term, that reflect on the people's actual play strategies. The listed elements provide an arena for the competition.

The GNS definition of gamism maps neatly and completely to the Process of Competition.

Simulationism is expressed by enhancing one or more of the listed elements in Set 1 (Character, System, Setting, Situation, Color) above; in other words, Simulationism heightens and focuses Exploration as the priority of play. The players may be greatly concerned with the internal logic and experiential consistency of that Exploration.

The simulationism of the GNS model maps to various aspects of the Exploration of a Subject Matter, in particular to the Exploration of Entities of the SIS.

¹ <http://www.indie-rpgs.com/>

Narrativism is expressed by the creation, via role-playing, of a story with a recognizable theme. The characters are formal protagonists in the classic Lit 101 sense, and the players are often considered co-authors. The listed elements provide the material for narrative conflict (again, in the specialized sense of literary analysis).

While this definition of narrativism is still a bit vague, later definitions have equalized this definition with the Process of Exploring a Premise, a form of Exploring a Concept through the SIS.

Thus, the definitions of the GNS seem to map quite neatly to the Processes of the Process Model. However, The process of Suspense left is unaccounted for, and because methods are absent, many important parts of gaming are left out.

5.4 The Big Model

As stated above, the Big Model[8] is the current form of the model of roleplaying developed at The Forge. It has its roots in GNS, but those aspects are only a small part of the current model.

On the top tier of The Big Model stands the Social Contract, defined as follows in the Glossary of The Forge[10]:

Social Contract All interactions and relationships among the role-playing group, including emotional connections, logistic arrangements, and expectations. All role-playing is a subset of the Social Contract.

While the wording and intent in the Process Model is quite different, the concept of Shared Space of Imagining defined here certainly does have lots of points of contact with the Social Contract of the Big Model, both concepts being the containers of everything else.

The Big Model then defines a layer containing three Creative Agendas, Step On Up, The Right to Dream and Story Now, defined as follows:

Step On Up Social assessment of personal strategy and guts among the participants in the face of risk. One of the three currently-recognized Creative Agendas. As a top priority of role-playing, the defining feature of Gamist play.

Step On Up is not actually fully covered in the current Process Model, being a possible driving force behind Competition and in close contact with Suspense. In this, it may require a process designation of its own.

Right to Dream, the Commitment to the imagined events of play, specifically their in-game causes and pre-established thematic processes. One of the three currently-recognized Creative Agendas. As a top priority for role-playing, the defining feature of Simulationist play.

The Right to Dream maps directly to the method of in-game causality, and is in close proximity with other methods, like the use of out-of-character knowledge. In this, it seems to be on a totally different level from the other social contracts, at the same time defining a tight gaming style on one end but leaving — at least from the perspective of the Process Model, the more important end wide open.

Story Now Commitment to Addressing (producing, heightening, and resolving) Premise through play itself. The epiphenomenal outcome for the Transcript from such play is almost always a story. One of the three currently-recognized Creative Agendas. As a top priority of role-playing, the defining feature of Narrativist play.

In terms of the Process Model, this Creative Agenda can simply be likened to the Process of Exploring a Premise. As such, when compared with the other, more general definitions of The Right to Dream and Step On Up, one must ask if the term definition has been tightened too much in the Big Model from what it meant in the Threefold, now describing only one distinct style of play instead of a closely-knit family.

At the bottom tier of the model are Techniques and Ephemera, described as follows:

Techniques Specific procedures of play which, when employed together, are sufficient to introduce fictional characters, places, or events into the Shared Imagined Space. Many different Techniques may be used, in different games, to establish the same sorts of events. A given Technique is composed of a group of Ephemera which are employed together. Taken in their entirety for a given instance of role-playing, Techniques comprise System.

Ephemera Moment-to-moment or sentence-to-sentence actions and statements during play. Combinations of Ephemera often construct Techniques. Changes in Stance represent one example of an Ephemeral aspect of play.

In the Process Model, these are both compacted into Methods, which then occupy the exact same space in relation to the SIS.

5.5 Channel Theory

Channel Theory[9], built upon the foundations of a solid critique[11] of the Threefold and GNS, shares much with the Process Model, but also differs from it fundamentally.

Both models leave behind the single planar level partitioning of a space that the older models exhibit. Both try to isolate distinct concepts from the whole of roleplaying that could be measured independently.

The basis of classifying these axes are completely different however. Channel Theory tries to create a thorough description of a gaming style, and then stops at that, partitioning the axes, or channels into priorities. Unfortunately, the model stops at this, without describing any relations or interactions between the various channels. Due this, the applicability of the Channel Theory model is extremely limited. It can only be used to describe, not analyze. The priorities chosen for channels seem also quite arbitrary at times. In general however, most of the top element channels of the Channel Theory model correspond with either social or roleplaying processes in the Process Model.

6 Discussion and Future Work

The concept of a process, while intuitively very simple, is actually quite complex, with many adjoining concepts. Thus, while the authors of this paper are certain that the central concept of a process is a worthy one, there may be other tied concepts, sub-concepts and concept relations still hidden beneath the conglomerate process.

If one goes really far, many of the processes can be seen as the Exploration of a Concept through the SIS, for example Immersion being the Exploration of Immersion through the media of roleplaying, and so on. Thus, further thought is needed to clear this matter.

A big field for future work will be to further analyze the common interactions between the various Methods, Processes and Results — and in breaking those defaults by applying new, innovative methods.

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