



# Groups, forms and roles

An analysis of the similarities and differences of psychodrama, sociodrama and educational live action roleplay.

Psychodrama director thesis

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Choosing the theme and methodology

I first started live-action roleplaying twenty years ago. I was a teenager and I wanted to experience life through a different set of eyes than my own. I participated in dozens of larps and I felt like living dozens of lives, although one life would not last more than two days at the maximum. I still remember the emotions I had as different characters and the shared laughter of characters in imaginary worlds. Larping became part of my profession as an educator.

Psychodrama and sociodrama are more recent acquaintances. In my theatre studies I had the opportunity to try out psychodrama course, and I got hooked. Exploring peoples' lives and roles was exciting and new, and the role of the director seemed unbelievably challenging and therefore also inviting. There was always more to learn. Sociodrama I have tried out both as a participant and director only recently, in my psychodrama director studies. Every time I have heard about it, it has sounded like my dear hobby as a teenager, larping. I have been curious about it for years, and having now some experience with it, I have also come to face to differences to larp.

Both forms, sociodrama and larp, are living forms with many experiments inside the forms, and thus the boundaries between the forms might seem vague, superficial or even unnecessary to point out. Psychodrama literature and especially Moreno, the founder of psychodrama, is often quoted in larp research (i.e. i.e. Harviainen 2011, Söderberg et al. 2004). In my opinion, defining helps evolving. That is my ultimate purpose with this thesis – try to find out, what sets them apart and what the forms can learn from each other. It might not be thoroughly answered in this thesis, but it is a beginning.

This thesis is about differences and similarities of three forms that all have working with roles as a central part of the form. Having experience with all three forms, I have found many similarities as well as differences. The aim of this thesis is to find similarities and differences of the forms in particular categories, thus helping future researchers in both defining the forms and setting them apart.

Psychodrama is the first form of group therapy, developed by Jacob Levi Moreno in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and has evolved and been actively used ever since. This thesis focuses on protagonist-centered psychodrama and not psychodrama as an umbrella term that also includes sociodrama. Sociodrama is a form of psychodrama really similar to live-action roleplaying. In sociodrama, groups

research phenomena they are interested in, group dynamics and themselves by improvising together, acting in predefined conditions and having a thorough debrief afterwards. Live-action roleplaying games (larps) are games that have predefined conditions, a narrative of what has happened before the game, and people participating in larps have characters that have their own narrative, goals and relationships inside the game. In the larps participants improvise together, playing their characters and afterwards they have a debrief of the larp where they find out what all has happened during the game. Larps usually written and run by volunteers, and most larpers do larp as hobby. However, larps have been increasingly used for other purposes as well from therapy (Burns 2014) to education (Bowman 2014).

All these forms have “roles”, and roles play a central part in each form. The word ‘role’ comes from Old French, and derives originally from the Latin word ‘rotula’. It also refers to the rolls in Ancient Greece and Rome in which theatre plays were written. It was not until the sixteenth or seventeenth century before ‘role’ referred to characters in a theatre play. The role is thus not a sociological concept, but it came to the sociological vocabulary via drama. (Moreno 1987, 61.)

This thesis uses the approach of systematic analysis presented by Harviainen (2011, 174) in which documents and sources are deconstructed for their data content.

*“In systematic analysis, one takes the documented properties (or opinions) of a subject, in this case the elements of certain other activities, and analytically condenses those in order to understand their essence. These parts are then compared to one another, in order to create a holistic understanding of the subject. The core essence of the method lies in systemic immanence, i.e. in that the subject document is analyzed through itself, not with external tools.”*

*(Harviainen 2011, 174-175.)*

Since some of my material consists of guidebooks and descriptions of psychodrama, larps and sociodrama, and the method helps compare and understand the forms, I chose this approach. Furthermore, since this is a thesis of a psychodrama director in training and it is supposed to show individual thinking, I also use my own knowledge and expertise on the different forms as material.

In this thesis, my goal is to distinguish larps from psychodrama and sociodrama. Since both psychodrama and sociodrama are goal-oriented forms and have specific goals for participants, I concentrate on a larps form that is designed for specific purposes as well, edularp

### 1.2 Choosing the criteria

As said before, this thesis is about defining differences and similarities in these forms. In order to accomplish this, I decided on criteria that would make it possible to distinguish these forms from each other. I based the criteria on my experience with the forms and discussions I have had with my psychodrama educators. Having these criteria also means that the forms (protagonist-centered psychodrama, sociodrama and live action role playing) will be defined through these criteria, and many aspects of all forms are not referred to in this thesis.

The criteria I chose needed to fulfill the following requirements: The criteria should tell something essential about the form. Each critery should also be sensible for all forms, protagonist-centered psychodrama, sociodrama and live action roleplaying.

As criteria I chose the structure of each form, the definition of role in each form, the role of the facilitator (director in psychodrama and sociodrama, game master in larps) and goals of the form. Based on these criteria, many similarities and differences could be found.

### 1.3 Chapters in this thesis

In chapters two, three and four I define the forms in this thesis through the chosen criteria. The idea is to get an overview of each form and build a basis for the comparison later in this thesis. The analysis and the comparison of the forms takes place in chapter 5, as well as my suggestions for future directions.

## 2 Larp and edularp

Larping means improvising together in pre-defined conditions, with usually both the game master and the players of the larp preparing the play before the larp. Live-action roleplaying games are quite hard to define precisely (Morton 2007, as cited in Harviainen 2011, 176). Doctor J. Tuomas Harviainen (2011, 176–178) found some parameters to help define larp and set it apart from other, similar forms. According to him, these criteria should apply to every larp. Harviainen also notes that there is no “game” or “scenario” component in these criteria, and these criteria are also debatable:

- *Role-playing in which a character, not just a social role, is played.*
- *The activity takes place in a fictional reality shared with others. Breaking that fictional reality is seen as a breach in the play itself.*
- *The physical presence of at least some of the players as their characters.*

(Harviainen 2011, 177.)

Montola (2009) describes role-playing as:

- 1) Role-playing is an interactive process of defining and re-defining the state, properties and contents of an imaginary game world.*
- 2) The power to define the game world is allocated to participants of the game. The participants recognize the existence of this power hierarchy.*
- 3) Player-participants define the game world through personified character constructs, conforming to the state, properties and contents of the game world.*

(Montola 2009, 23-24, as cited in Harviainen 2011, 177.)

The characters are usually written by larpwrights or larp designers and handed out before the game to the players. The characters include crucial information for the players in order to play the game. Very often the characters have some narrative about the character’s past, its role in the society of the game, its relationships with other characters and also goals in the game. Although live-action role playing is an improvisational form, the larp designers often have wishes for characters’ personal plots, pre-planned events in the game and an idea, where the narrative of the game could lead to if the players play their character according to their plan for the character.

The vast majority of live action role-playing games are made by volunteers for volunteers. In other words, it is a hobby for many. These larps might have some predefined goals that the larprawrights or -designers have thought of. The goals vary from goals in the narrative (e.g. the advisor of the king should meet the rebels and and plan a rebellion) to goals in the over-all experience like in Halat Hisar, a Finnish-Palestinian larps about another country occupying another country, giving many participants the experience of being part of an occupied country and what it feels like (Pettersson 2016).

## **Edularps**

Edularp means live-action roleplaying used to impart pre-determined pedagogical or didactic content (Balzer & Kurz 2015). In edularps, participant research the pre-determined content taking pre-determined roles. The learning continues after the actual edularp experience. After an edularp there is usually a debrief. In the debrief the participants have the chance to both gain an understanding of how the others viewed the studied phenomenon as well as clarify for themselves what they learned of the phenomenon and what it felt like to play. Although in the marginal, edularps are used in many countries as an educational method (Bowman 2014).

The idea of an edularp is to provide a motivating learning environment that often is fun, a learning environment in a kind of “secondary reality” where students can research different phenomenon and try out new ways of thinking, behaving, reasoning and feeling without the fear of negative consequences, since the decisions edularp participants make affect only the “game world”. Thus also setbacks are not as demotivating, and participants return to the challenges even after failing. (Balzer & Kurz 2015.)

Edularping is an action-oriented method of learning (Balzer & Kurz 2015). The action inside the edularp is central in the learning process, in creating both an emotional and a cognitive relationship to the phenomenon. However, the work before and after the actual edularp is central in organizing the learnt content.

### 2.1 Structure of an edularp

A typical edularp consists of three phases: pre-larp, larp and after larp. Pre-larp refers to all the actions needed to put up a larps, both by the game master and the players. The larp is the actual larps,



improvising together in predefined roles and settings. After larp means the debrief situation after the larp, as well as the work done around the phenomenon of the larp in regular school settings.

#### 2.1.1 Pre-larp phase

Before the larp both the players and the game master need to prepare. In this thesis, game master also refers to the person writing the larp (larpwright, larp designer). The first step is to decide the pedagogical content and what of the content should be learnt through the edularp. (Simkins 2016, personal communication, March 8<sup>th</sup> 2016.) The next step is to design the larp to serve the purpose of learning. Designing includes designing the interaction system for the game (how people interact, techniques for possible simulations of e.g. violence, trade system, etc.), writing the narrative of the game (where it takes place, what has happened before the game, why are the characters there) and of course, writing the characters of the game.

The characters are handed out to players before the game, and depending on the purpose of the game, the players need to prepare as well. They might need to get acquainted with the historical setting of the game (how people looked, what the trade system was, what the political atmosphere was, what is important to know in order to be able to play the character in the game). At least the players need to get familiar with their character. The character includes the personal narrative (history of the character, what has happened before the game, why the character is there, which other characters the character knows and what possible goals the character has).

The pre-larp phase also includes familiarizing the players with larping itself, with safety rules, with the game system and sometimes pre-larp workshops that help the players play the game.

#### 2.1.2 Larp phase

After all the preparations are done, the larp phase begins. The duration differs. Edularps can last from few minutes to a few hours, depending on the purpose of the game. In the larp phase, players play their characters both according to the pre-written narrative and their own personal choices as players. It is improvised play, and in this phase, the players have the “ownership” of the larp, since they run the action. The game master may let players play as they will or intervenes in the game with new narratives. The game master observes the action and decides also when and how to end the game.

### 2.1.3 After larp phase

The first thing after an edularp after de-roling is usually a debrief where the players of the larp tell about their experience. Debriefs can be organized in many ways. In edularps they are essential to guide the learning process as well as in acquiring knowledge about the experiences of other players, thus getting an overview of the whole. Often classes continue to work with the topic of the edularp when they return to their normal classes, reflecting on what they learnt in the edularp, what was accurate and what not, and what they still need to know about the phenomenon that was researched by the means of edularp.

## 2.2 Roles in larps and edularps

“Role” in larps and edularps usually refers to the “character” of a player. Each player of a larp has a character that they play. The character is often complex; it is a whole, narrative persona that has multiple roles (social roles, professional roles, role in the society of the larp) and multiple functions inside the system of a larp. Harviainen (2011, 177) describes a sufficiently complete character as a persona who could get by in the fictional environment on its own, were it somehow torn apart from the player. The “role” of the player is to be the character in the game world. Even if the character is less complex, like a set of instructions, it still has a pre-determined function that is planned by the game master.

Roleplaying in larps refers to playing the character. Playing the character includes getting acquainted with the character before the game and making choices as a player during the game. These choices are based on the player, other players and the pre-written narrative of both the game and the character.

### 2.2.1 Player-character relationship

In larps and edularps the players build a relationship to their character. Players have different motivations to larp, and that is partly why their relationship to their character also varies. Some seek to “become the character”, others see it as a new social identity in the same way as a “home self” is different from a “workplace self”. Sometimes these two are also blended. The relationship between the player and the character is not stable, and a phenomenon called “bleed” is also present. Bleed means the leakage of information and emotions between the character and the player, to either direction. (Harviainen 2011, 177, citing Montola 2010 and Harviainen 2006.)

### 2.3 Goals of edularps

The goals of edularps are usually bound to the learning goals; what should the edularp teach about the studied phenomenon? Many edularps have also other goals, some in cognitive, some in affective and some in behavioral areas. Inside the game, there are also goals. The characters have certain goals, and the game master wishes for the larp usually to contain certain events and also for it to end in a certain way.

Like in many action methods, the learning in edularps does not happen solely inside the pre-defined goals. Much of the learning comes from the interaction with other players, from exploring new ways of thinking and new behavioral patterns, from exploring being in character and one's relationship to the character and learning about the form itself.

Professor Sarah Lynne Bowman (2014) made an article about edularp research all over the world, and by going through the research she summarized student development points in different learning dimensions (cognitive, affective and behavioral).

Learning Dimension	Student Development
<b><i>Cognitive</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Critical ethical reasoning</li><li>• Exercising creativity, spontaneity, and imagination</li><li>• Intrinsic motivation*</li><li>• Improved problem-solving skills</li><li>• Learning multiple skills and knowledges simultaneously</li><li>• Self-efficacy, perceived competence</li></ul>
<b><i>Affective</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Active engagement*</li><li>• Enhanced awareness of other perspectives</li><li>• First-person identification improving emotional investment</li><li>• Increased empathy</li><li>• Increased self-awareness</li><li>• Intrinsic motivation*</li><li>• Raising social consciousness</li><li>• Social skills development, e.g. cooperation, debate, negotiation</li></ul>

<b><i>Behavioral</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active engagement*</li> <li>• Exercising leadership skills</li> <li>• Intrinsic motivation*</li> <li>• Improving team work</li> </ul>
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\* Intrinsic motivation and active engagement have cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions, hence organizing them in multiple categories. (Paul D. Eggen and Don P. Kauchak, Educational Psychology: Windows on Classrooms. 9th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2012; Jennifer A. Fredericks, Phyllis Blumenfeld, Jeanne Friedel, and Alison Paris, “School Engagement,” in What Do Children Need to Flourish?: Conceptualizing and Measuring Indicators of Positive Development, edited by Kristin Anderson Moore and Laura H. Lippman (New York, NY: Springer Science and Business Media, 2005), 1-5. as cited by Bowman 2014, 115.)

Figure 1: Cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of student learning through edu-larp. (Bowman 2014, 115)

## 2.4 Role of the facilitator in edularps

The facilitator of edularps and larps is called the game master. As mentioned before, larps are usually written by volunteers. This means that game masters come from very varying backgrounds and are rarely professionals. Professional game master training for larps does not exist. There have been professional continuing education programs for teachers concerning edularp, but the profession “edularp game master” does not exist, either. The professionals of this field are self-taught and often professionals of other, related fields such as education, social sciences or theatre. Though there is research on the matter, no curriculum exists to teach the skills necessary to host an edularp.

In this thesis, I also refer to the writer of the larps as game master, although these roles do not necessarily fall on the same person and very often larps and edularps are both written and facilitated by multiple persons. In the form of edularps, the game master is very often the teacher of the participants, and therefore has a crucial role in the preparations of the edularp as well as the opportunity to continue the learning process after the game.

The role of the game master is most active before the game. The preparations of both the game and the players take much time. During the game the game master may or may not intervene during the game, depending on the goals of the game. In some cases, the game master may even play a character in the game, thus influencing the game from inside, not breaking the immersion of the players. During the game the game master should be very aware of the players. The game master is in charge of safety, and should consider safety issues both when planning the game and during the game.

After the game the game master is in charge of the debrief of the game, and if they are teachers of the participants, they also are in charge of continuing the learning process.

### 3 Psychodrama

Moreno (1987, 13) describes psychodrama as the science which explores the individual truth, using five instruments: the stage, the subject or the actor, the director, the staff of therapeutic aides or auxiliary egos and the audience. Both in psychodrama today as well as in this thesis “the subject” is referred to as the protagonist. In this definition, Moreno describes the classical, protagonist-centered psychodrama and not psychodrama as an umbrella term for all the methods that can be counted as psychodramatic. Psychodrama was developed by Jacob Levi Moreno throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was a doctor that began to experiment creative drama already in 1908, developing the Theatre of Spontaneity in 1921-1924 which worked as the foundation of psychodrama. (Blatner 2007.) Sociodrama is usually considered part of psychodrama. In this thesis when referring to psychodrama I refer to protagonist-centered psychodrama, not the umbrella term.

According to Blatner, psychodrama is a method of psychotherapy, applicable mainly in groups, but with modifications can also be used in family therapy and with individuals. Psychodrama about more than just treatment and can be applied in many non-clinical contexts, schools, businesses, spiritual development programs, etc.). He says that psychodrama draws on the natural capacity for imaginative, make-believe play that is evident in childhood. In adulthood, this capacity is used in more focused, task-oriented ways, for example, by candidates for political office in rehearsing for a debate. (Blatner 2005.)

#### **Key concepts of psychodrama used in this thesis**

*The protagonist* is the one whose life situation is being explored during the psychodrama action.

*The director* facilitates the dramatic enactment, suggests when the protagonist might change parts or try on a different role, brings up the supporting players (auxiliaries), and in general orchestrates the process.

*The auxiliary* is the third basic element in psychodrama. Originally called “auxiliary ego,” this term refers to a supporting player, one who takes the role of the someone else in an enactment. If the auxiliary isn’t playing the role properly, the director (or the protagonist) can review and correct the performance. Auxiliaries may also come up with very intuitive and insightful points that might never have occurred to the director.

*The audience* refers to the remainder of the therapy group, those that have not yet been cast as auxiliaries to the protagonist's psychodrama. According to Blatner, the protagonist's awareness that the scenes being enacted are being witnessed brings in a sense of intensified reality. The audience also functions as the source of auxiliaries as the action progresses.

(Blatner 2005.)

*The group* refers to the whole therapy group apart from the director.

### 3.1 Structure of a psychodrama session

Every psychodrama enactment has at least three obligatory phases: warming-up, action and sharing. (Blatner 2005.) In my psychodrama studies, the phases also include processing which happens after some time has passed after the psychodrama session. I will describe the phases according to Blatner (2005) and add processing to them. In the beginning of a psychodrama session usually every group member is at an equal position; the group or the director do not know who will be the protagonist. The protagonist chooses the auxiliaries during the drama, and the rest remains as the audience.

*Warming-Up* involves a number of activities that get people involved. It might be just an explanation by the director, or the audience getting out of their chairs and starting to walk around. It might be a structured experience, though as Yalom (2002) noted, these should not be used excessively when the group dynamic has its own momentum. (Blatner 2005, also citing Yalom 2002.) The warming-up has much impact on how the action phase builds up. During warming-up the director helps the participants of the session find a theme, and also the protagonist for the action phase.

*Action* is the second phase and its variations seem endless. The director uses various techniques according to the needs of the client. Modifications and techniques are chosen to fit the tenor of the group, the abilities of the client, and other aspects of readiness. In classical psychodrama there often evolves a curve of emotional intensity and focus, increasing with the warm up, culminating with the action, and cooling down at the end of the action as a working-through of insights are pursued, heading toward the sharing phase. (Blatner 2005.) There are improvisational techniques, but the improvisational parts are usually short, since the idea of psychodrama is to reflect the reality of a particular individual, not the reality of the group.

*Sharing* is the third phase. The protagonist has revealed much of his or her personal life, and is in a vulnerable state. Respecting this unusual degree of self-disclosure, the director invites a counterdisclosure of what the enactment has meant in terms of the lives of the others in the group, meaning both the auxiliaries and the audience. Analysis and criticism are not part of sharing. (Blatner 2005.)

*Processing* takes place after the psychodrama journey is completed. The group, the protagonist and the director can all learn in the processing phase. Theoretical assumptions, clear rational and therapeutic contract are discussed, and the technical aspects are reviewed by the director and group members. During director training the director in training also gets feedback from the group as well as the trainer. (Karp 2005, 10.) During processing, the protagonist's expertise of his or her own life is still respected. Theories may be suggested, but mostly through observations of the action inside the drama or the director's or the group's knowledge of the protagonist. The most important part of the processing is when the protagonist can explain how the drama has or has not affected his or her life afterwards, what the protagonist may have learned and what the protagonist still struggles with.

### 3.2 Roles in psychodrama

The definition of role in psychodrama comes from Moreno, the founder of psychodrama. The roles are a central part of theory in psychodrama. Moreno defines role as the actual and tangible form the self takes. Furthermore, it is the functioning form the individual assumes in the specific moment he reacts to a specific situation in which other persons or objects are involved. The symbolic representation of this functioning form, defined by both the individual and others, is called the role. (Moreno 1987, 62.)

#### 3.2.1 Role theory

Role theory is in the core of psychodrama. The core of role theory (as well as psychodrama) was formed in the early 1920's when Moreno was experimenting with Stegreiftheater in Wien. Moreno wanted to apply the terminology of theatre to psychotherapy. (Niemistö 2008, 37-38.) The role is strictly bound to a specific moment and the reaction of an individual. With role Moreno meant a culturally recognized and agreed upon cluster of behaviours that had both collective (shared) and private (individual) components. (Sternberg & Garcia 1994, 6.)



The role theory has evolved even after Moreno. It recognizes the roles found in different developmental phases (psychosomatic, psychodramatic and social roles, cosmic roles). It also recognizes the different developmental phases of roles (fragmenting, dysfunctional role system, coping role system, progressive functional role system). (Niemistö 2008, 39-40, Clayton 1994, 138.)

Role theory can be applied to various activities like leadership, education, consulting and psychotherapy. The concept of role requires caution; it might over-simplify. In psychodrama “role” is not purely on the psychological or the social level. It combines these two and describes both ways of action and interaction. (Niemistö 2008, 50.)

### 3.2.2 Role reversal

Role reversal is the most used technique in psychodrama action. Role reversal invites the protagonist to imagine what it’s like to be in the role of another person. It cultivates empathy, and there is inherent value in the expectation that a protagonist will learn and exercise this skill. Even if the person whose role the protagonist takes is not present, there is still an opportunity to imagine what the world looks like from a different point of view. The role reversals also help the director to bring the action of the psychodrama alive, and move on with the “storyline”. Longer role reversals are needed when the protagonist needs to understand what it means to look at life from a new point of view. (Blatner 2005, Aitolehti 2008, 71-73.)

The therapist-director needs the ability to gently warm the protagonist up to the experience of the other’s role, through interviewing the protagonist as if he or she were the other person. The technique is used to portray the behavior of that other person, with an emphasis on voice tone, pacing, intensity, posture, facial expression, and gesture. (Blatner 2005.)

Technically, role reversal goes as follows: The protagonist says something in the drama to someone else. The director calls for a role reversal. The protagonist takes the role of the other person, and an auxiliary takes the role of the protagonist and repeats what the protagonist just said. Then the protagonist can react to this as the other person, after which the director yet again calls for a role reversal, and the auxiliary repeats what the protagonist said as the other person, letting the protagonist react to this as him- or herself.

### 3.3 Goals of psychodrama

Like in every form of therapy, the goals of psychodramatic action vary between individuals. However, some general goals can be named.

Moreno believed in the creativity and spontaneity of every human being. Psychodrama was developed to support and bring out these traits in humans. Moreno promotes the development of each person's maximum involvement in life and every person's subjective reality is accepted as equally valid (Tuvon 2005, 31.)

Spontaneity is often confused with impulsivity. Spontaneity in psychodrama is quite different, meaning

- the spontaneity which goes into the activation of cultural conserves and social stereotypes (cultural conserves meaning unchanging things that are accepted without question);
- the spontaneity which goes into creating new organisms, new forms of art, and new patterns of environment;
- the spontaneity which goes into the formation of free expressions of personality;
- the spontaneity which goes into the formation of adequate responses to novel situations.

(Tuvon 2005, 33.)

Apart from therapeutic goals within the individual, psychodrama has also social goals. Moreno tried to empower people by affecting their relations, and empower communities to become active in influencing their relationships. (Aitolehti & Silvola 2008, 12.)

Moreno saw the importance of spontaneity in every aspect of life. Summarized, the goal of psychodrama is to become free of unwanted behavioral patterns, to become able to choose one's actions oneself, still being aware of the social responsibility. In a broader sense, Moreno saw that our inner world reflects on the outer world, and thus the function of psychodrama is to make the world a better place (Tuvon 2005, 31).

### 3.4 Role of the facilitator in psychodrama

The facilitator of psychodrama is called the director. The directors of psychodrama are highly trained professionals that are approved by the psychodrama community in order to be able to practice psychodrama.

According to Moreno, the director of a psychodrama has three functions: producer, counselor and analyst. As producer the director needs to be aware of every clue that the protagonist offers to be turned into dramatic action and aware of the audience and their needs of rapport with the protagonist. As counselor the director chooses his way of interacting with the protagonist according to the protagonist's needs. As analyst he interprets the drama and can also use the group as aid of his interpretations. (Moreno 1987a, 15.)

A psychodrama session is strongly director-driven. The director is in charge of every step from warm up to processing, and even during the drama he leads the protagonist by asking questions and choosing the techniques. Although the content of the psychodrama comes from the protagonist, the director can influence the direction the drama takes strongly by choosing techniques, questions and timing. Since the director also facilitates the warm up phase, he has strong influence on the initial theme of the psychodrama.

The director is also in charge of the safety of the group. Before the sharing phase, the director should make sure that the protagonist and auxiliaries are "de-roled." Those who play roles in the protagonist's psychodrama should be helped to become themselves as fellow group members. (Blatner 2005.)

## 4 Sociodrama

Whereas psychodrama focuses on the individual, sociodrama focuses on the group (Garcia 2013, 34-35.) According to Sternberg and Garcia, sociodrama is a group action method in which participants act out agreed-upon social situations spontaneously. It is also a learning process focused on providing practice in solving human relations and helps group members to clarify values and feelings, giving them an opportunity to practice new behaviours. (Sternberg & Garcia 1994, 1, 4.) In other words, sociodrama is a group method that focuses on the needs of the group. The participants of a sociodrama improvise together in pre-defined and agreed-upon settings that derive from the group. (Sternberg & Garcia 1994, 4, Minkin 2013, 6, 7.) Sociodrama is used for e.g. therapeutic, educational and social purposes as well as in organisations for different purposes. (Wiener, Adderley & Kirk 2011).

Apart from improvisational role-play, the scenes in sociodrama can also be enacted, and various psychodramatic techniques are used to expose the deeper levels associated with the conflicts (Blatner 2009). Also, some other forms of sociodrama exist. The Living Newspaper which was very close to modern day improvisation. Moreno would ask the audience to select an article from a newspaper of that day, and after a brief consultation, the actors would create a spontaneous enactment of the article, with Moreno as director. (Propper 2006.)

Geisler (2005) views sociodrama as “the method that presents a theme with theatrical means”, the umbrella term or overall concept for methods such as group-centered or theme-centered psychodrama, pedagogical role-play, system-play, axiodrama, bibliodrama, large-group workshops, political stage and the living newspaper. (Geisler 2005, as cited in Kellermann 2007, 16.) I find this definition troublesome, since these all are forms with different goals and methods. In this thesis I concentrate on role play –type sociodrama and whenever I refer to sociodrama, I refer to role play –type sociodrama.

### 4.1 Structure of a sociodrama session

A typical sociodrama session has the same structure as a psychodrama session: warm-up, action and sharing (Garcia 2013, 37). The sharing phase of sociodrama shares some traits with the processing phase of psychodrama.

*Warm-up* in sociodrama refers to the preparation for action (Minkin 2013, 24) and it focuses on the collective, the role aspects that group members share in common (Garcia 2013, 37). During warm-up a theme for the sociodrama is set, as well as the roles of the participants. Both the theme and the roles can be decided either by the director or the group. (Minkin 2013, 10.) The warm-up phase is facilitated with various warm-up exercises used by the director to create a safe and trusting atmosphere, readying the group for action (Minkin 2013, 26.)

*The action* phase refers to the enacting of the theme and the issues by the participants. This is done by improvising in the roles decided in the warm-up phase. Themes refer to the topics and general themes the group has interest in, and issues derive from the theme, being points, matters and questions about the theme. (Minkin 2013, 29.)

*Sharing* happens after the action phase. The way of sharing depends on the goals and the setting of the sociodrama. In therapeutic settings the sharing concentrates more on the personal issues that arise in the sociodrama, whereas in educational settings these themes might be left out completely. Sharing can be done in character, which according to Minkin (2013, 31) can create new ideas, thoughts and information and in-character sharing has different perspectives than sharing as oneself. When sharing as oneself, sharing concentrates on personal learning, personal insights. Sharing can highlight personal and unfinished issues that emerged in the sociodrama, and provides participants with an opportunity to sort out how, why and if the session was important to them. (Minkin 2013, 31.) Depending on the group, both forms of sharing may be used at the same session.

#### 4.2 Roles in sociodrama

As mentioned before, sociodramas are based on the needs of a group. These needs can be defined by the group members, the community the participants are from or the director. The structure of the sociodrama as well as the roles are based on the recognized needs (Sternberg & Garcia 1994, 6).

According to Minkin (2013, 10), there are four ways in which the roles and the theme of the sociodrama are decided. The first is the director choosing both the theme and the roles. The second is the group selecting the theme and the roles. The third is the director choosing the theme and the group choosing the roles, and the fourth the group choosing the theme and the director choosing the roles. The participants do not know the roles before the sociodrama session and they do not prepare

for the roles. They usually do not have a strong narrative but are rather generally accepted social roles on which the participants make their own versions (Sternberg & Garcia, 4, 5). The definition of role in sociodrama comes from psychodrama (see chapter 3.2).

In psychodrama the roles are done through role reversals, but in sociodrama participants improvise together and create their roles through interaction with themselves and each other.

#### 4.3 Goals of sociodrama

According to Sternberg and Garcia (1994, 5, 21), sociodrama's goals are: catharsis (expression of feelings), insight (new perception or point of view) and role training (behavioral training).

*Catharsis* is a term borrowed from Greek theatre, meaning purging of the emotions of fear and pity the audience feels when watching the fall of a great man in a Greek tragedy. In sociodrama, it refers to the deep expressions of emotions that take place in a sociodrama enactment. Unlike in the theatre definition, these emotions take place in the enactors as well as the audience. The enactors have an opportunity to vent pent-up emotions, giving immediate relief. Unexpressed emotions might lead to individuals having difficulties dealing with a particular situation. Thus catharsis has an even deeper, therapeutic meaning in sociodrama. It is important to note that personal attacks and confrontations are still to be avoided during sociodrama. (Sternberg & Garcia 1994, 21-22.)

*Insight* in sociodrama means a new perspective, a clearer image of something that has evolved during sociodrama. It might be insight into some intrapersonal themes or the theme or issue of the sociodrama. Achieving insight in action is often a powerful impetus for change. (Sternberg & Garcia 1994, 22-23.)

*Role training* refers to behavioral training, experimenting in roles, experiencing new roles and difficult situations in safe environments without fear of consequences. During sociodrama participants can experience real emotions in different situations, and although the situations are "not real", the same emotions are experienced in life, and that is why it is helpful to practice. (Sternberg & Garcia 1994, 23.)

Any one of these goals taken alone might be insufficient to insure change, and these three goals should be utilized in the combination that a particular group needs at a particular time. (Sternberg &

Garcia 1994, 23.) The needs of the group are the defining factor of the goals of the sociodrama, but usually the goals fit into these three categories.

#### 4.4 Role of the facilitator

Like in psychodrama, sociodrama facilitators are called directors, and they are highly trained professionals. The sociodrama director usually has a strong role in a sociodrama session. The director is responsible for the emotional safety, explaining the rules of sociodrama and guiding the sociodrama during each phase.

A sociodrama session is usually based on the needs of the group participating in the sociodrama. During the warm-up phase the director chooses appropriate exercises to warm the group up to a sociodrama session. As mentioned before, the director might prepare the sociodrama beforehand, choose the theme and the roles (see chapter 4.2). The director has a central role in listening to the needs of each individual and finding the *shared central issue*, one major issue that seems to excite the group most. (Sternberg & Garcia 1994, 5.)

The director is responsible for the action phase, as well. While constructing a sociodrama scene, the director also tries to recognize the needs of each individual inside the sociodrama, called *act hungers*, and help them fulfill the goals inside the sociodrama. (Sternberg & Garcia 1994, 5.) In other words, the director is an active participant of the sociodrama, facilitating it, freezing it when necessary and giving more content when necessary.

During the sharing phase the director is responsible for guiding the sharing, helping the participants to share what they need and leave critiques and analysis of other participants out.

## 5 Analyzing the differences and similarities

### 5.1 Structure

The structure of all forms has similarities (see chapters 2.1, 3.1 and 4.1). In each form, there is the pre-action phase (pre-larp phase, warm-up), the action phase and the post-action phase (debrief, sharing and processing).

#### **Pre-action phase**

The main idea of each pre-action phase is to prepare the participants for the action. In edularps, there is more work involved on both the participants and the facilitator's side. Because of the simulatory nature of larps, there is more pressure to do things "right". The player's must prepare in order to be able to play their characters, get acquainted with the pre-written material. The game masters or larp designers must write all the material, design a system, design a narrative and bring life to all the characters. In psychodrama and sociodrama the participants do not need to prepare for the session. The director guides the warm-up phase, and the main focus of the warm-up is to motivate the participants and get them warmed up to the action phase. In psychodrama the warm-up centers around finding the individual who wants to be the protagonist although the whole group is warmed up and in sociodrama the whole group is warmed up to the theme of the sociodrama. In a sense, the sociodrama session finds much of its structure during warm-up, since both the theme and the roles are selected during the warm-up.

#### **Action phase**

During the action phase the action differs. The participants' action is quite similar in edularps and sociodrama. The participants have roles (or characters) in which they improvise together, reacting to impulses from each other and within themselves. The guidance of the facilitator is usually stronger in sociodrama than in edularp. The sociodrama director intervenes regularly in order to be able to determine both the needs of the group, the individuals and the drama. The large preparations for edularps make it possible to affect the structure and the course of action already before the action. The psychodrama action is strongly director-driven. The action stops without the guidance of the



director, because the director decides on the techniques, and the improvisational sequences are much shorter, if there are any.

### **Post-action phase**

The post-action phases also differ. In edularps the focus of the debriefs is on the learning process. The debrief usually are guided, having questions about the inner processes, the overall narrative of the game and the studied phenomenon. In sociodrama the focus depends. In educational settings, the sharing might be quite similar to edularps, with focus on insight, and in therapeutical settings the focus is in intrapersonal processes. In psychodrama the sharing phase is part of the de-roling process. The protagonist comes back to the group listening to the other members of the group about their lives and what they found for themselves in the protagonist's psychodrama. It also serves the whole group as part of the therapeutical process. (Blatner 2005.) In psychodrama the process continues after a period of time has passed with processing. Processing leads to new insights for the protagonist, the group and the director. In edularps the process may continue in schools, but not necessarily – depending on the teacher. Whether the sociodrama process continues with guidance depends much on the setting. It might be ordered by an organization which continues to explore the theme afterwards or it might be a one-shot sociodrama for a group that comes together for the sole purpose of trying out sociodrama.

	Psychodrama	Sociodrama	Edularp
Focus of the form	On the individual	On the group	On the phenomenon
Pre-action phase	Light preparations, focus on warming up the group and choosing a protagonist	Light or medium preparations, focus on warming up the group to the theme or finding a theme and choosing roles for participants	Medium preparations for the players (getting acquainted with the material) and heavy preparations for the game master (writing the material, designing the system)

Action phase	Director-driven, protagonist-centered, slow-paced	A balance between the group and the director, group-centered, improvising together	Player-driven, group- and narrative-centered, improvising together
Post-action phase	Sharing and processing, focus in intrapersonal themes	Sharing, focus in the theme of the sociodrama OR intrapersonal themes OR both	Debriefing, focus on the narrative and learning

Figure 2: Differences and similarities in the structure

## 5.2 The concept of role

The concept of “role” comes from the same origin in psychodrama and sociodrama. However, in edularps and larps, role usually refers to the character, resembling a whole persona. (See chapters 2.2., 3.2 and 4.2.) In psychodrama and sociodrama, role refers to the functioning form the individual assumes in the specific moment he reacts to a specific situation in which other persons or objects are involved (Moreno 1987, 62). The roles of psychodrama and sociodrama usually do not have goals, whereas goals are central to edularp characters. The goals define their course of action and have a big effect on the narrative and design of the game.

	Psychodrama	Sociodrama	Edularp
Concept of role	Functional, reactive, bound to a time and place	Functional, reactive, bound to a time and place	Narrative, very often used in the same sense as “character”
Creating the role	The protagonist decides all roles in a psychodrama during the process.	Participants either choose their own roles as part of the process or are given by the director. They derive	Roles/characters are pre-defined by the game designer. They serve a narrative purpose.

		from the theme of the sociodrama.	
Goals of the roles	No pre-defined goals for the roles, the roles serve a specific purpose in the psychodrama.	No pre-defined goals for the roles, the goals are born inside the sociodrama if at all.	The character have pre-defined goals, with purpose in the game design

Figure 3: Differences and similarities in understanding and using of role

### 5.3 Goals

All forms seem to have different goals at first glance, but there is one goal in common: learning (see chapters 2.3, 3.3 and 4.3). In psychodrama participants learn about themselves, about their choices and what is behind them, about their interaction with other people, their relationship to other people and different themes and the changing of the inner world reflects on the outer world. The also learn spontaneity and creativity. In sociodrama participants learn about the theme, about the group, about interaction and about themselves through the issues and questions raising during the action phase. Edularp is all about learning. A specific edularp has specific goals related to subject matter, the studied phenomenon, curriculum or other skills the edularp is supposed to teach. However, as mentioned in chapter 3.3, edularps develop students on three learning dimensions: cognitive, affective and behavioral. This can be said of all the forms. In sociodrama the named goals are catharsis (resembling the affective category), insight (resembling the cognitive category) and role training (resembling the behavioral category). These could also be seen as goals of psychodrama, since catharsis is a central part of psychodrama (Blatner 2005), and spontaneity is present in both the insight and role training categories.

	Psychodrama	Sociodrama	Edularp
Purpose of the form	Researching one's life with psychodramatic	Researching a theme with a group by taking a role, and	Researching a phenomenon through the eyes of the role and both

	methods and training spontaneity	also learning about oneself in that role	learning and creating a relationship to that phenomenon
Cognitive goals	Understanding one's life in both theoretical and practical level – how does one's past affect the choices of today	Understanding the researched theme and the group and oneself through the researched theme (insight)	Critical ethical reasoning, exercising creativity, spontaneity, and imagination, skill learning, understanding the studied phenomenon, learning social skills
Affective goals	Catharsis (expression of emotion that brings release), gaining insight into one's emotions and the reasons behind them, gaining the ability to work with emotions, learning empathy	Catharsis (expression of emotion that brings release), researching the emotional relationship to theme, learning empathy	Building an emotional connection to the studied phenomenon, raising learning motivation, learning empathy, increased self-awareness, learning social skills, e.g. cooperation, debate, negotiation
Behavioral goals	Practicing new behavioral patterns, finding spontaneity (adequate responses to novel situations, new and adequate responses to old situations)	Practicing new behavioral patterns in new situations (role training)	Exercising leadership skills, Improving team work, Practicing new behavioral patterns in new situations (role training)

Figure 4: Differences and similarities in goals

#### 5.4 The role of the facilitator

In the role of the facilitator there is a core difference: In psychodrama and sociodrama the facilitators are trained professionals who train specifically psychodrama or sociodrama. In edularp the game masters may or may not have some training, but most of edularp practitioners are self-taught professionals with expertise in education or other areas that are useful in hosting edularps. (See chapters 2.4, 3.4 and 4.4.)

The role of the facilitator during different phases of the forms was also addressed in 5.1. Summarized, in edularps the facilitator has much more preparations before the action phase, and in psychodrama and sociodrama the role of the facilitator is more active during the action phase. In edularps the activity level of the facilitator during the action phase varies from very little to some interventions. A difference is that in sociodrama and psychodrama the facilitator remains in the role of the director all the time, and in edularp it is possible to play with the players and affect the game from inside the game. In all forms, the post-action phase is important, and the facilitator is active in guiding the sharing, the processing or the debriefing.

In all forms, the facilitator is essential in creating a safe, trusting environment in which participants feel free and able to express themselves.

	Psychodrama	Sociodrama	Edularp
Education	Several years of psychodrama director training	Several years of psychodrama or sociodrama director training	Not necessary, but some education is available
Preparations of the facilitator	Light, can also happen spontaneously	Light, can also happen spontaneously	Heavy, writing the characters, designing the game system, preparing the players
Level of activity during action	Constant activity, leading the action all	Many interventions, leading the action but	Some or no interventions, leading the

	the time, observing the protagonist and the group	having passive moments, observing the group all the time	action if necessary, the possibility to affect gameplay from inside the game
Activity after action	Leading the sharing and processing	Leading the sharing	Leading the debrief
Responsibilities	Creating a safe and trusting environment, being aware of therapeutic choices, being aware of the whole group as well as the protagonist	Creating a safe and trusting environment, being aware of the group all the time and making interventions according to the group's needs	Creating a safe and trusting environment, being aware of the narrative and making interventions according to the game's learning goals

Figure 5: Differences and similarities in the role of the facilitator

### 5.5 Summary and future directions

The forms share more similarities than I initially suspected. The main differences are in the role of the facilitator and the specific goals of the forms, although even the goals shared more similarities than differences. Psychodrama and sociodrama come from the same origin, and they share the same concept of role and the concept of professional director training. Psychodrama directors often use sociodrama as part of their activities with groups. The action phase is most similar with sociodrama and edularp – both relying heavily on the improvisation of the participants. All forms have cognitive, affective and behavioral goals that help the participants to develop new skills, gain perspective, practice empathy and develop as a human being.

This thesis addressed the similarities and differences from a theoretical perspective. Having interviews of participants would have brought more in-depth information. Having experienced larpers try out psychodrama and sociodrama and vice versa could bring both more in-depth information about the forms as well as new insight into the forms. In the near future, I intend to continue this research with the mentioned methods. Psychodrama, sociodrama and edularp are all living forms of

interaction, not cultural conserves as Moreno would say. I have the strong believe that cross-experimenting with these forms brings more answers to my main question: What can these forms learn from each other? How can these froms be modified and possibly improved?

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