Sanningen om Marika

The truth About Marika, a transmedia case study

Alessandro Nanì

Transmedia Storytelling I

Part of Crossmedia production MA

Professor Renira Rampazzo Gambarato

Tallinn University

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Introduction

This paper is a case study from a transmedia storytelling point of view of *The truth about Marika* (Sanningen om Marika), a transmedia/ARG experience, produced in Sweden by The company P and Swedish public service broadcasting Sverige Television in summer/autumn 2007.

Loosely following the analysis framework developed by Elizabeth Strickler (2011) and the seven core concepts of transmedia storytelling formulated by Henry Jenkins, this paper presents weaknesses and strengths of the project and answers the following question.

Despite the fact that *The truth about Marika* is commonly referred as an alternative reality game (ARG), can we refer to it as a broader transmedia project? Does it present elements described by Jenkins? If it does, which one of those give a remarkable contribution to the transmedia experience?

Transmedia storytelling defined

The term transmedia was first coined by Henry Jenkins in a article for Technology Review published on the 15th of January 2003. The term was then revisited in Jenkins's book Convergence Culture (2006) and it was defined as " a story [that] unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best – so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded trough television, novels and comics; its world might be explored trough game play or experienced as an amusement park attraction " (p.96) According to Jenkins transmedia storytelling is the practice to spread a story across multiple platforms each of them giving distinctive and valuable contribution to the grand narrative.

Carlos Scolari then argues that transmedia is not a simple adaptation of the same narrative from one media to another. According to Scolari each medium has its own rules and dynamics making the story told in the specific mediums different from the original one to the extent that "the different media and languages participate and contribute to the construction of the transmedia narrative world" (Scolari, 2009, p.587)

Transmedia in Jenkins (2006) is strictly connected to the idea of convergence which is the spreading of content across platforms and it is characterized by the" migratory behaviour of audiences" who will search for the wanted entertainment.

The truth about Marika, which will be discussed later in this paper, is a clear example of convergence where producers and consumers (in the case of transmedia we should talk about participants, but this will be argued later) enjoy a bigger degree of immersion and cross-fruition of the transmedia elements.

In regards to television productions and viewers engagement, Markus Montola, Jaakko Stenros and Annika Waern, in the book *Pervesive games: theory and design*, develop a similar argument, they argue "Alternate reality games can be developed in tandem with television series, as in *ReGenesis* and *Sanningen on Marika*, but lately it has become quite common to set up interactive online content to maintain interest in television shows, as has been done by the *Lost Experience* and *Heros Evolutions*. These games are not so much advertisements for the series, but function as a loyalty program ensuring that people watch the shows" (p.38)

Transmedia at its full potential is then the building of a richer experience that goes beyond marketing strategies and that involves the participation of audiences.

Within this frame, Christy Dena (2005) argues that participation or ''participatory design approaches'' provide opportunities to involve possible stakeholders in the design and development of new technologies or services, but we could add, of narratives themselves creating a bigger universe.

At this regard Geoffrey Long (2007) adds that a box of Star Wars cereals, for example, is not a transmedia element if it doesn't make a distinct and valuable contribution to the Start War narrative universe.

From the brief overview of transmedia theories is anyway clear that transmedia is not simply about branding activities or cross marketing practices, but it is something related to the exploitation of possibilities and to the creation or co-creation of immersive narratives.

The truth about Marika premise

The Truth about Marika is a participation drama (The company P , 2011), produced by The company P and Swedish Television (SVT) and broadcasted in autumn 2007. It was consisting of five 45-minutes episodes. The full broadcast was made of two different parts making each show. One part was a traditional drama episode (45 minutes) featuring the disappearance of Marika few days before her wedding; the second part was a television debate. The debate was justified thanks to the claim of Adrijanna, a blogger friend of Marika, accusing SVT to have copied a real event from her blog, Conspirare.se, and made it into a TV series. She claimed that every year 20000 people disappear in Sweden and that an

organization named Ordo Serpentis could be behind it. SVT first deniesd the accusation then decided to admit that part of what Adrijanna was claiming to be true and gave her the opportunity to appear on national television to tell her side of the story. During the debate the audience was invited to participate in the search by following SVT dedicated web page, and as a consequence, Adrijanna's page.
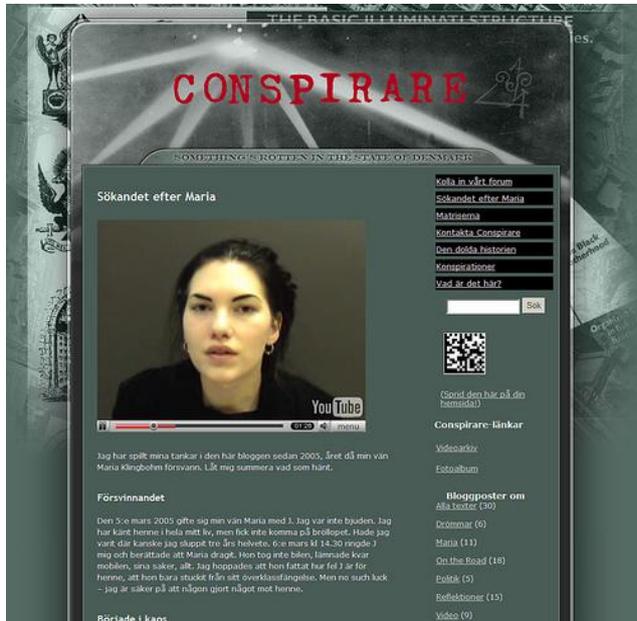

Figure 1- Screenshot of Conspirare.se (source The company P)

 Web users were then encourage to participate in the search for Maria (the 'real' person behind the fictional character of Marika) by engaging in internet forums, in the virtual reality of Entropia Universe and by participating in real life events.

Was then *The truth about Marika* a fictional experience or was it partially fictional and partially real? *The truth about Marika* was a fictional experience. The story was completely fictional and Adrijanna was part of the production. The TV series was recorder a year earlier, but the debates were recorded only a day before each episodes, why? To make the fictional line as blurry as possible and to engage the audience in a fictionalized reality.

The accomplishment of the fictionalized reality
 Just few months before the airing of the TV series, Adrijanna publicly accused SVT of having used her real search of her friend Maria to make a TV series. SVT confirmed that they

originally contacted Adrijanna as part of the research for a new drama series on missing people, but denied having stolen a real story.

In July 2007 Adrijanna began touring Sweden spreading the message that the upcoming TV series was based on her life story, and that Maria really had disappeared. Truth face to face promotion the first participants started joining the experience, they were fully aware of the fictional nature of the search, but, according to the alternate reality games unwritten rule, they pretended the events to be real.

When a new participant entered one of the websites crafted for the game, he or she was warned of the fictional nature of the experience. The warning appeared for the first two times a participant logged in, then the fiction took over and the participant immersed in a fictional reality.

Figure 2- the pop up warning at Conspirare.se

Note: Translation - "Warning: Conspirare is part of a fictional creation. Opinions expressed here do not always reflect opinions of P or SVT. Random similarities with real people are sometimes pure coincidental. Participation is on your own risk and under your own responsibility. Conspirare has only one rule – pretend that it is real. You participate through following the blog, watching the movie clips, and discussing in the forum. The search will lead you out on the Internet and out on the streets of your own city. Click on OK to show that you have understood this." (Denward and Waern, 2009, p.4)

The fact that the immersion in the fictional world was a primary element agreed between the participant of the ARG and that television viewers were not alerted of the fictional nature of the show, instead were told that the debate was a live event, made the line between reality and fiction almost impossible to be seen.

According to Marie Denward and Annika Waern research findings publish in the article On the Edge of Reality: Reality Fiction in 'Sanningen om Marika', the fictional reality took so much over the reality that even internet users started finding difficult to separate reality from fiction. Table 1 shows the findings of Denward and Waern from a survey conducted immediately after the last episode among online users.

Table 1 – Online survey about the awareness of the fictional nature of *The truth about Marika*	
I did not think that it was real (29%)	29%
I thought that it was real (30%)	30%
I pretended that it was real (24%)	24%
I make no distinction between truth and fiction	17%

Considering the fact that the survey was carried out among people that had previously enter one of the internet gates with the pop up warning, it can be assumed the awareness among those viewers that didn't immerse in the internet experience to be lower the above data. Denward and Waern stress that the illusion among TV viewers was further achieved by the debate being publicised as a live broadcasting in the TVguide.

Was the blurriness ethically acceptable when it was carried out by the nation TV station? *The truth about Marika* became the 'victim' of sharp criticisms. Britta Svensson, columnist of Swedish paper Expressen, in her October 29th, 2007 column, referring to the debate part of the first episode, wrote "This "scandal" seems to be part of the drama in which SVT in a way that has never happened before trying to fool viewers by relaxing the boundary between fiction and reality. It's completely idiotic. People disappear without a trace is a reality that news programs sometimes need to report on. To then pretend that it is true that SAPO (Swedish security service) silences the truth about the 20,000 missing Swedes is purely irresponsible.''

The characters

In the case of *The truth about Marika* the definition of the characters has to be done by dividing them in three distinct groups: the TV drama characters, the TV debate characters and the game characters.

The TV drama characters were:

Marika, that disappeared on her wedding night.

Janna, Marika childhood's friend searching for her friend

Andreas, Marika husband searching for his wife

Ingela Klingbohm, Marika deceased mother

Leif, an ex- policemen employed by Kerberos Security, a surveillance company that seemed to be linked to a secret organization named Ordo Serpentis and to Marika disappearance.

The TV debate characters were:

John Carlsson, the program host, a well-known 'real life' television presenter.

Adrijanna, played by Adriane Skarped

Adrijanna's boyfriend Martin Ericsson, played himself (in reality Ericsson was the creative director of The company P)

The policemen Thomas Fuxborg, the forensic dentist Aina Teivens, the sociologist Magnus Karlsson and the psychologist Anders Wellsmo., which all used their real name and profession (Darwen, 2011).

The game characters were, as Martin Ericsson said at The Crossmedia Film Forum 2009 organized by Power to the Pixel, the participants. In Participation experiences participants are the creators and the users of content and as a consequence they become the characters of the particular narrative.

The production objectives and the audience

The truth about Marika was produced by two very different production entities that, as Marie Denward finds in her PhD thesis *Pretend that is real* (2011), had slightly different reasons behind the production of the show. Following a number of interviews with SVT and The company P management, the research found the following: SVT had three main reasons to produce the series " 1) It was a pilot production aimed at exploring new production methods for this type of (interactive) formats 2) create a production format for novel media consumption and erasing the borders between drama and entertainment 3) reach an audience that did not watch SVT' s productions and/or did not watch television at all, generally speaking the 17-32 year old age group, that enjoyed online games and activities''. The company P, on the other hand, had different purposes, they wanted "1) to create a cross media narrative production covered with a layer of game structure and game components that invite to active participation and 2) to create a reality game where the reality outside the game would start to effect and intervene the game.'' (p.108)

What Denward found out is that even if the purposes were different they were not conflicting with each other and they were compatible with the production requirements.

If the reasons behind the production were different, the aims in terms of audience targeting were not so apart. As said above SVT wanted to reach an audience that normally would not watch national television and The company P wanted to have an opportunity to develop an universe beyond the limitation of simple ARGs. Both companies wanted to reach a larger audience and possibly to engage it in a deeper experience, but did the producers accomplish their audience goals?

The audience and the marketing failure

The truth about Marika was broadcasted once at week on Sundays prime time at 21.20. Unfortunately such time is typically prime time for a different age group from the target and, as picture3 shows, people watching the series were not those directly targeted. Göran Bolin (2010) points out that in terms of audience *The Truth about Marika* was not a success and shows the decrease in viewers trough the series (Figure 4).
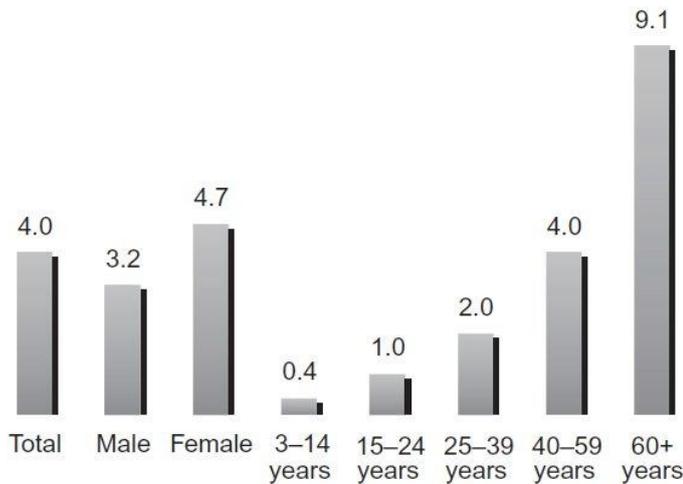
Figure 3- Audience profile by age group in percentage for episode 1 (source: Bolin, 2010)

Audience Size for *The Truth About Marika* (2007)					
	Oct 28	*Nov 4*	*Nov 11*	*Nov 18*	*Nov 25*
Fiction	350	210	200	165	170
Studio debate	240	210	135	120	105

Comment: Figures represent thousands of viewers. The fictional part starts at 9:20 p.m. followed by a studio debate beginning at 10:05 p.m.

Figure 4 – numbers of viewers (source: Bolin, 2010)

If the broadcasting slot assigned to *The truth about Marika* and the composition of SVT audience didn't help the show to reach the expected target audience, the budget represented another drawn back in the attempt of reaching the desired numbers.

As Denward points out, the final budget allocated to the production was inferior compare to the pre-production agreements. The production received only 60% of the primary cost estimations. The campaign was consequently down sized forcing the production to execute the filming of the drama episodes with a tighter budget compromising visual narratives and the general branding of the project.

The truth abaout Marika can be considered a failure in terms of ROI, but as Bolin (2010) points out its contribution to new media practices was so remarkable that resulted in the winning of an International Interactive Emmy Award for Best Interactive TV-service in April 2008.

A pervasive experience

The truth about Marika, as said above, was created by The company P which had previous experience in alternate reality games. We already seen the company's objectives and we can add that their inspiration came from the live action role playing culture commonly known as larp. Markus Montola and Jaakko Stenros (2008), in the book *Playground Worlds. Creating and Evaluating Experiences of Role-Playing Games*, refer to *The truth about Marika* as a pervasive larp. They argue ¨These games blur the line between larp and life as the game spills into the streets. The whole world becomes a playground, something to be enjoyed through a ludic gaze – which markedly limits the choice of available genres and settings. Pervasive larps often attempt either to enhance the feeling of realness by opening up the world, or to engage in an active dialogue with society'' (p. 7)

It is then within this framework that *The truth about Marika* game experience developed into a number of events engaging participation.

Wikander, speaking at Tedx Trasmedia 2011, describes the initial steps in the promotion of the experience. He tells the audience how the initial marketing strategy consisted in sending Adrijanna to a number of music festivals in the summer 2007, he describes her setting a stand to find people willing to participate in her 'search', and how initially she didn't have any followers. However, he stresses how one day during one festival a second flag with the encrypted data matrix started waiving in front of the stage (Figure 4), that was a turning point, *The truth about Marika* became to have a followers base and the pervasive game began.

Figure 4 – The first participant's response

Christopher Sandburg, from The company P speaking at Tedx Transmedia Geneva 2010, said "This is what Transmedia is all about. Lend us your body and we will inhabit it with stories. We all participate in our own lives. Now we can participate in the story fantasy. We bring drama from our centrally constructed ideas into their minds and bodies".

Media platforms

The company P describes *The truth about Marika* as " participatory drama series from 2007, that included a television drama series, a television studio debate series, an online alternate reality game, installations and events throughout Sweden, several video blogs, chats and forums, an online virtual world game, a mobile augmented reality game and hundreds of home pages, blogs and street interventions" (The company P, 2011)

The platforms forming the universe were developed on an axe that for 'classical' participants should have began from the TV drama functioning as entrance gate and should have lead to the discovery of the other platforms and elements.

The Universe was made of the following components:

- TV drama – As said above, *The truth about Marika* TV drama consisted in 5 episodes of 45 minutes broadcasted in October-November 2007 by SVT.
  In the TV drama people could get clues that were linking to the internet platforms and to the game experience.
- The Conspirare website – It was Adrijanna's website where people could gather to help her in the search for her friend Maria. It consisted of static pages, a forum, a blog and a video blog uploaded in YouTube.

- SVT dedicated webpage – It was the storytelling antagonist of Conspirare.se. It represented the voice of the drama production that first denied to have stolen a true story and then started admitting that perhaps what said by Adrijanna was partially true. As Denward (2011) writes " The SVT website questioned the trustworthiness of its own content with the main headline: 'Over 20,000 Swedes have disappeared without a trace since the 60s. Conspiracy theory or alarming truth?' The gameness of the site was clearly communicated with the sub headline immediately below: 'There is only one rule: pretend that it is real!' " (p.140)

- The debate program –It was an integrated part of the TV show taking part after each drama episode and lasted 15 minute. Each show covered societal issues like social exclusion, surveillance in public spaces, police work, and conspiracy theories and much more (Denward, 2011), but it was recorded a day ahead of transmission, to keep its narrative up to date with the development of the game and with the themes discussed by participants in online forums and real life events. The debate was hosted by John Carlsson, a well-known television personality, and it had the participation of SVT representatives, a number of experts acting as themselves and other guests. The debate was scripted and the participants acted as if it was real talking, for example, about Maria as if she existed. The show was advertised as live in the TV guide adding, as seen before, a layer of confusion to the differentiation between reality and fiction.

- The game activities – *The truth about Marika* game experience consisted of a number of elements like the street game Ordo Serpentis, the picture game Spektaklet, the virtual reality game within Entropia Universe, and all the pre-game activities that promoted it.

    Ordo Serpentis was a secret society that Adrijanna felt to be behind many disappearances, participants were suggested to register into their website to infiltrate   their organization and find clues on Maria disappearance. Once a member of Ordo   Serpentis, participants were given real life tasks and missions.

    Spektaklet was a composite of subliminal pictures embedded in the TV drama, which formed puzzles with clues. The embedded images were justified by the fact that story based an old friend of Maria's mother, Ingela, worked as an editor at SVT.

The Entropia Universe is " an advanced 3D online virtual environment" (Entropia Universe, 2011) were The truth about Marika could have been experienced with virtual missions (see Figure 5). As Denward stresses the Entropia engagement was crafted in an interesting way, she expaines that in the first episode of the drama, viewers could watch Janna (the fictional Adrijanna in the TV drama) playing in Entropia Universe. Adrjanna confirmed in the debate that she did that because she knew Maria used to spend lots of her time playing in Entropia. Adrijanna felt Entropia to be one of the places where it was possible to find clues or meet other players that may be had some information on Maria disappearance.

Figure 5 – Screen shot of Entropian player (source: Adrijanna Flickrs account)

Game players were often engaging in more than one platform and they represented the core participants of the transmedia world. In an exclusive interview made for this paper with DaHerminator, one of the Consipirare.se forum's moderators, when asked what he liked about the experience, he answered " The borderland between game and reality, and the feeling of adventure was really exciting. The best parts were the things you did in real life" and when asked if he had any regrets about the experience, he answered " The best IRL parts took place in the two major cities of Sweden (Stockholm and Göteborg) and I weren't able to attend. That was a bit of a disappointment".

DaHerminator added that he played the game since August 2007 (before the drama first episode was broadcasted), that he watched the all five episodes and that be believes *The truth*

about Marika to be one of the coolest things he has ever experienced. (personal communication, December 2011)

SWOT analysis for *The truth about Marika*

Strengths	Weaknesses
• The grand narrative was designed by a company P management that had previous experience in ARGs • SVT co-produced of the project • SVT's possible audience • Blurry line between fiction on reality (depending from POV)	• Budget limitations (as Warden reports the budget was decreased compared to the initial plan) • Initial marketing effort • General public d • egree of awareness of ARG
Opportunities	Threats
• First project of this type in Sweden • Possibility of using it as a pilot experience leading to other projects • Possibility to experiment with different platforms	• SVT's audience composition • TV drama broadcast slot • Complexity of the narrative • Blurry line between fiction and reality (depending from POV) • Different objectives of the SVT compared to The company P

***The truth about Marika* and Jenkins's 7 core concepts of Transmedia Storytelling**

Transmedia theories are considerably new and today are still at the centre of academic debate concerning terminology definitions, practices and scope of validity. As seen in the second chapter of this paper, Jenkins defines transmedia as " a story [that] unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole", but can the a project like *The truth about Marika* be considered a transmedia experience? Were their parts able to stand alone and to offer a valuable contribution to the all? With no doubt *The truth about Marika* is an atypical transmedia experience. People could

watch the TV series without participating in the ARG, viewers could have watched the short current affairs debates without watching the TV drama or without participating in the game and ARG's participant could have taken part in it without watching the television parts. Doing so would have probably translated into a degree of confusion, never the less would often makes them into transmedia projects (p.45), but are the seven core principles designed by Jenkins applicable to *The truth about Marika*?

Spreadability VS Drillability

In Jenkins terms spreadability is the ability to spread the narrative across different media platforms in order to expand its economic and cultural value. Drillability is the capability of the transmedia experience to direct participant to dig deeper into the storyworld to discover its complexity and to find elements such as its hidden meanings and cultural references. For the clarity of this argument, it is important to note how Jenkins uses VS. He doesn't refer to the antagonism between the two elements, rather to the specific weight that each of them holds in the story; one doesn't exclude the other, but it contributes to enrich the transmedia experience.

The truth about Marika presents both elements. It was developed across television and internet and it was pushing participants to dig deeper into the story. In this context I purposely use, and have used already in this paper, the term participants rather than users, viewers or spectators, borrowing the differentiation from Marie Denward and Annika Waern that in the article Broadcast Culture Meets Role-Playing Culture (2008) point out the differences between a viewer or consumer and a participant within a project aimed to 'participatory television'. They argue " the processes of broadcasting and role-playing are quite different. A broadcasted show is a one-way communicative activity, and differs a great deal from the multi-directional activity of role-playing. Broadcast ingrains a view of the audience as spectators. The television viewer is limited in influence and interaction with the storyline. The program is seen as a performance, with a set narrative and plot. [...] The performance is recorded and broadcasted to an audience. On the other hand, in role-playing culture the individuals taking part are seen as participants and co-creators. Role-playing games, like other forms of interactive narrative, represent a fundamental blurring of the distinction between producer and consumer, creator and audience, and storyteller and viewer." (p.9)

Similarly Martin Ericsson, former producer and creative director of The company P, giving a speech at Power to the Pixel 2009 argues " who has the power over the production of stimuli?

Traditional audience culture has the artist producing stimuli. Interactive culture has very small difference; you still have an artist producing massive stimuli the only difference is that audiences choose the order in which they consume. In Participatory culture things change completely. The artist acts as a host, sets up the game space, produces some stimuli, but the real producer, the real artist in participatory culture is the audience itself". Such differentiation is important to underline the nature of the projects that developed its transmedia nature by empowering participants in the co-creation and expansion of the narrative.

Continuty VS Multiplicity

Continuity of the story world in transmedia franchises contributes to 'coherence' and 'plausibility' of the plot and which is appreciated by participants that collect bits of information to access awareness and knowledge over the entire story.

Multiplicity allows participants to retell the story in their own ways. Also known fan fiction is the practice of creating user generated content that nevertheless enhance other participants' engagement and expands the understanding of the original narrative.

The truth about Marika presents one of these elements in an obvious way and the other element in more subtle way. The alternate reality game nature of the project is based on the continuity concept. Continuity represented the fluid that made the project interesting to participants. *The truth about Marika* would have not worked without a careful eye to continuity allowing the story to have coherence and plausibility in all its ramifications. Multiplicity applies like continuity, but it is not immediately recognizable. In one hand, at a first glance, participants participated in the ARG and watched the TV series, but didn't create content able to expand the understanding of the story, so in this case multiplicity doesn't apply to the project, but, on the other hand by participating they crated live events and happenings that contributed in an original way to the expansion and better understanding of the story narrated in the TV series. If the TV drama didn't allow interactivity, it was filmed a year prior its broadcasting, the television debate and the game were strictly related to the concept of multiplicity.

Immersion VS Extractability

Immersion is a possibility for the participants to enter the storyworld and take part in the story. Can a transmedia project that bases its core elements on alternate reality games be any other thing then an immersion experience?

Martin Ericsson speaking at Nordic Larp Talks 2010 explains the need of immersion as ″ the quest for the perfect manifestation of a dream". For Ericsson immersion is a 24/7 experience that takes over 'reality' and that can become so intrusive that participants can start dreaming in characters. Extractability, on the other hand, is about participants taking aspects of the story away with them as resources they deploy in the spaces of their everyday life (e.g. merchandising)

The extractability element is present in *The truth about Marika*, but probably cannot be considered as applicable. The reason of it is that participants took elements of the story in their everyday life, but probably didn't separate them from the created reality of the game. The slogan shaped by the producers to introduce the experience was "there is only one rule: pretend that it is real"; by saying so the line between fiction and reality became blurry and participants acted as if it was real regardless of their momentarily engagement. As Denward and Waern argue ″ people who had accepted the "pretend that it is real" rule and who were collectively co-creating the fictional world, populated the *Conspirare* forum and chat systems, were so immerse in the story found all explicit discussion of its fictional features ruining their creation'' (p.7) For those users the extractability element is irrelevant because they were living the fictional universe and 'extract' bits of it to take them into the 'real world' would have probably made no sense.

Worldbuliding

Worldbuilding stands for all transmedia extensions that give a richer experience of the storyworld creating a universe of experiences. The franchising may exploit both digital- and real-world that often lead to cataloging and capturing many different elements by fans.

The truth about Marika ARG was about building a world shaped, and to some extensions, created by the participants. As we seen, the TV debate was recorded only one day before the broadcast of each drama episode in order to picture the world created by the game and to keep up with the building of it. In *The truth about Marika* the world was only partially pre-built and the participants had the function to build the rest of the world. I have argued along this paper about the immersions and the pervasion of *The truth about Marika* experience such elements all contributed to the shaping of the fictional world described by Jenkins.

Seriality

By seriality Jenkins means the act of breaking up the story or idea into multiple instalments across multiple media. *The truth about Marika* again can be interpreted like a project with a seriality component when we refer to the ARG because if one of the core narratives was only consumable trough television, the search for Marika was broke into multiple instalments that could be experienced across channels like TV (the debate), mobiles, different online websites and physical events.

Subjectivity

With subjectivity is meant that the central narrative is explored by secondary characters and through new eyes; different perspective gives clarity of who is speaking and who they are speaking for. *The truth about Marika* main narrative (TV episodes) doesn't present such element, but the satellite components do. If we think of the debate following the series episodes, they were presented as an open space of confrontation and interpretation of the events narrated in the series and, more importantly, of the developments in the search for Maria. 'Characters' like Adrijanna played an important role in the secondary narrative offering a different point of view in the interpretation of the events. Adrijanna was not a character of the TV drama (Janna was), but gave her subjective contribution to the story acting in the second layer of the constructed fictional illusion.

Performance

By performance Jenkins means the fact that user generated performances can become a part of the narrative itself when some of them are invited by the main producer to the extension of the narrative world. *The truth about Marika* is about performances. As pointed out before Martin Ericsson stresses "the real artist in participatory culture is the audience itself". Ordo Serpentis and Conspirare were the two main sites of participants activities. Participants especially appreciated the real life events and considered a misfortune the impossibility to take part in the different performances.

The truth about Marika without performances would have not been possible and would have simply reduced it to a passive TV drama followed by a fictional TV debate.

Conclusions

This paper has investigated *The truth about Marika* project under two different, but similar, analytical lenses: the guidelines offered by Stickler and the seven transmedia core concepts formulated by Jenkins. Christy Dena (2009) already stressed that ARGs are often transmedia experiences, never the less this analysis found, once again, that even if *The truth about Marika* is usually referred to as an ARG game, it incorporated almost all aspects that make a project a transmedia experience.

The built of a transmedia Universe was crafted both by the production team and by the participants. The immersion in the story world became so deep that raised some ethical questions in relation to the call for limits in the blurriness between fiction and reality.

In terms of television target audience and its engagement, *The truth about Marika* was not a success suffering from inappropriate SVT audience base and budget contraction that effected the visual narrative. On the other hand, in terms of alternate reality game experience *The truth about Marika* turned to be an enjoyable project highly appreciated by participants.

In terms of academic and field case study *The truth About Marika* represented a unique European case study that was awarded an International Interactive Emmy Award for Best Interactive TV-service in April 2008.

Is then The Truth about Marika a unique European case in the interaction between national television and transmedia producers? and is SVT experiment something that will not be repeated on national television?

BBC in their in drama commissioning page , states " We are looking to find major multiplatform dramas which allow the user to *explore the world of a drama. . . .* by allowing the audience to *engage* and *become involved* with the characters and their world . . . We want to allow our audiences to *explore* and *create the new worlds* originally imagined by the linear narratives and to be able to *share their experiences and ideas* with others . . . We want to . . . expand linear program[s]. Enhanced dramas should give real added value to the experience of the linear drama, *providing extra content* which widens the horizon of the drama. We are looking to extend and deepen the [linear] TV narrative and *allow audiences to create their own content in its world* but without fundamentally changing it. Within these enhanced programs the audience should feel that they can *discover exclusive material that gives them access to the characters and their lives* and be able to share it with others." (Ursu etal, 2008 p.9)

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