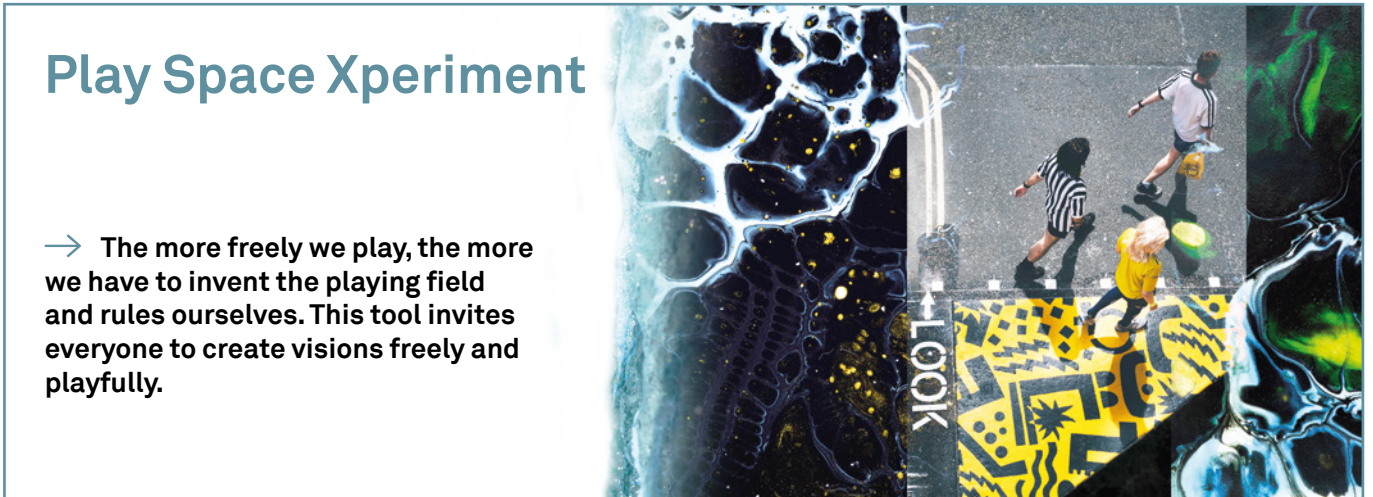


Publication on the Play Space Xperiment for all those who want to read more about it:
Article in the anthology „Artographies“



Content of the tool: Play Space Xperiment



Play Space Xperiment

→ The more freely we play, the more we have to invent the playing field and rules ourselves. This tool invites everyone to create visions freely and playfully.

The topic

Play Space Xperiment is looking for ideas for the open public spaces of the future. Places where people can play and move around joyfully, or just sit, dream and relax. Visions for the green spaces, streets and urban squares of tomorrow and the day after – beyond rules, norms and the limits of reality.

The Xtopian moment

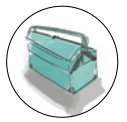
The activity helps participants to begin freely visualising the future. Particularly when accompanied by a facilitator, it requires them to constantly balance their own interests against those of other people, animals and plants. It stimulates questions that develop the ideas ever further: In a world without cars, how would the fire brigade work? In a world with fire-extinguishing drones, how would they fill up with water? In a world where every roof has a pool, would you be allowed to swim there, and would waterfowl use the pools as a habitat?

The target groups

The tool can be used independently by anyone who wants to think about what the world of tomorrow might look like. It is suitable for adults, young people and children. Younger children should complete the exercise with an adult. The tool can be particularly useful for setting objectives in urban development, for education in design- and planning-related fields, or for trainings of future skills.



Time required	Group size	Format	Location	Materials
<p>Introduction 10-15 mins</p> <p>Execution 90-180 mins</p> <p>Conclusion 30-90 mins</p>	<p>Up to around 20 people</p>	<p>Individually or in pairs</p>	<p>Digitally or face to face: plenty of space and a quiet, welcoming atmosphere are important</p>	<p>Instructions, pen and paper, various craft materials</p>



The educational goals

Thinking about our own visions for future open spaces requires letting go of habitual patterns of thought, being able to think spatially, and applying our imagination. It can help your participants perceive social conditions and the physical environment as something we have the power to change. Discussion with other participants enables reflection: How would implementing my ideas impact other people, animals and plants? Is my utopia your dystopia?

Application

Participants can complete Play Space Xperiment alone or as part of a group process.

Preparation: The front page of the instructions explains the task and gives some suggestions about the process and how to visualise the ideas. Consider whether you want to limit the time available or specify certain materials, a specific type of open space or the spatial parameters (e.g. mark out paths or existing structures on an otherwise blank piece of paper). For some people, setting constraints can actually encourage creativity. If sufficient time is available, you can do creative exercises before beginning Play Space Xperiment, e.g. guided journaling, reverse brainstorming or the “Yes, and” exercise. Prepare the room so that everyone has enough space and different materials to choose from (you could put all the materials together in a kit, for example).

Execution: Introduce the exercise by inviting participants to try to think beyond the familiar. Explain what will happen to the visions after the exercise. Everyone receives the instructions (or just the first page) and can read the suggestions for themselves. You may also want to discuss the task together with the group. Working alone or in pairs, the participants then develop their vision and decide in what format they want to express it. You may also want to incorporate a second phase in which the participants visit each other and ask questions, providing them inspiration to refine their own ideas.

Conclusion: Allow the participants to present their visions for play spaces and reflect on them together. You can suggest some rules for a constructive discussion and agree these with the group. Everyone who wants to presents their own vision, potentially as part of an exhibition. The visions are then discussed in a respectful, encouraging environment, looking at what they mean for other people, animals and plants but also for our own lives in the here and now. The reflection questions in the instructions provide further suggestions.

Potential and challenges

Visualising and discussing the future can make participants more aware of their personal worries, priorities, wishes and ideals. However, there is a risk that participants may be disheartened by the gap between their vision and the current reality (e.g. the state of public open spaces in their neighbourhood). It would be a shame if this led participants to devalue their own vision. It may be possible to avoid this by helping them to at least replicate some of the feelings and attitudes experienced in the vision or to mobilise resources for change. Ideally, the gap between vision and reality will motivate participants to change their own behaviour or become involved in social change. A good discussion can give rise to concrete ideas for this.

Source: Jossin, J., Voigt, A., Godlewsky, T., Beecroft, R., Arnold, M., Bernstein, F., Messerschmidt, S., Rothfuss, D., Multhaup, S., Olshausen, I., Aweh, M., Lafratta, M. & Amrehn, U. (2023). *Toolbox for Xtopias: New tools for futurists*. kassel university press. doi:10.17170/kobra-202312089182

We would like to thank: The Visionautik Akademie for their advice, the Robert Bosch Stiftung for the funding.

Publication on Play Space Xperiment: Voigt, A., Rothfuss, D. & Jossin, J. (2023). Freiraum für Übermorgen: Das transformative Potenzial spielerischen Visionierens [Open space for the day after tomorrow: The transformative potential of playful envisioning]. In K. Singer, K. Schmidt & M. Neuburger (eds.), *Artographies – Kreativ-künstlerische Zugänge zu einer machtkritischen Raumforschung* (pp. 160-172). transcript.

The “Urban Xtopias” project was sponsored by the Robert Bosch Stiftung.
More tools and materials: xtopien.org/toolbox



Invitation to Play Space Xperiment: Your vision of an open space

Imagine ...

... that there could be a public space near where you live that inspires you. A place where you can play. A place where you can move around joyfully, or just sit, dream and relax. Imagine that everything is possible. Don't worry about whether your idea can be implemented yet. Develop your vision for an ideal open space of the future.

Sometimes it can be difficult to imagine how places could be different from the way they are now. Maybe the following questions will help you develop your ideas:

What is your ideal open space like?

What does this place look like?

Is it a neat city garden, a wild park, a bright and colourful street, a majestic city square or a completely new type of play area? What can be found there? What is there space for?

What senses does this place appeal to?

What familiar or unfamiliar noises are there? What does it smell of? How does it feel to move around in it or spend time there? Are there things you want to touch or taste?

Who is in this place – and who isn't there?

Are you alone or with others? Are there animals or other beings?

What do you do in this place?

What's your favourite thing to do outside? Or what have you always wanted to do but never found the right place for? What outdoor activities do you dream of? How do you play in this place?

Are there rules in this place?

Who sets them, and who monitors them?

When do you go there?

A misty early morning? A peaceful sunny afternoon? A clear starry night? Or is this somewhere you want to go to even in a heavy storm?

What feelings does this place trigger in you?

Does this place make you happy? Is it relaxing, spiritually uplifting or exciting?

What time does this place come from?

Is it a place that could exist in the far-away future? Or is it somewhere that's become forgotten? Is it a place of impossible things or a specific place you know well and want to change?

Let's begin! Create your vision of an open space:

Write a story, create a collage, paint a picture or sculpt your open space in 3D from Plasticine, Lego, natural materials or anything you can find around your house. Craft your vision alone or with others. There are no limits to your creativity! At the end, you can give your contribution a name.

Have fun!

Thinking about your vision of an open space

To now expand the process into an Xtopian thought experiment, think about your ideas with the help of the following questions – either on your own or in conversation with others:

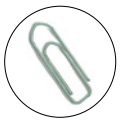
- What would your family members say about your vision (grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc.)? Or what about friends and other people you respect who often have a different opinion to you?
- Can everyone use your open space who would like to? Can – and should – people feel comfortable there who find some parts of the city unwelcoming (children, young people, senior citizens, women, people living in poverty, people with reduced mobility or chronic illness, people subjected to racism, the LGBTQIA2S+ community, dog owners, and many others)?
- Does your vision offer habitat for animals and plants? What animals and plants are important and don't currently have enough space?
- What other consequences does your open space have for the planet? Does the space, or the way people use it, generate climate-damaging emissions or rubbish? Does it address certain environmental problems?
- What would it cost to implement and maintain your open space (or achievable elements of it)? Are there elements that could be made cheaper or less resource-heavy with similar effects?



- What image of the future is your vision based on? In what aspects does this future differ from the present? Is it a completely desirable future for you, or are there aspects you are not sure about yourself? Do you think this future can be achieved? Is it a future you can contribute to achieving? And how?
- What else is not yet clear in your mind? What are you ambiguous about? What would you like to give further thought?

Have these questions given you some ideas of how you could develop your vision to take better account of the needs of others and future generations? This would allow your open space to better support a socially and environmentally just future and perhaps give it more chance of being implemented.

Feel free to change your vision or create a new one at any time. Carry it with you and allow it to grow with you.



Application example: Digital and analogue Play Space Xperiments

We created the tool as a digital campaign during the Covid-19 lockdown to offer people a „substitutional experience“ for the restricted access to public open spaces and to use the longing for open spaces to train the imagination. When used in courses in design and planning sciences, students also practised design and communication skills by creating and presenting. You can view some of their visions and other submissions to the campaign at padlet.com/xtopia.

The image displays a grid of 24 digital play space experiment submissions, each presented in a white card format with a title, author, and a small image or diagram. The submissions are as follows:

- Das große Los** von Stephanie
- geschickt: Visionsstorming von Karin, Amy und Hannah** (Teil 3)
- Visionsstorming von Karin, Amy und Hannah** (Teil 1)
- Visionsstorming von Karin, Amy und Hannah** (Teil 2)
- PDF** Klettere durch die Lücke im Zaun und trete ein in den "anderen Raum".
- Alles ist Experiment** PDF Alles ist Experiment
- Schrott-/Spielplatz** von Silas (nach Søren Carl Theodor Marius Sørensen, "Aus Im Grunde Gut")
- Klangpark** von Klara
- Der Kulti-Multi-Ebenen-Parcours**
- Leonas Traumland für alles** von Leona
- Wachsende Forgora** von Tilmann
- Das Miteinander** von Annalena
- try again** von Elina
- Von A nach B** von Ronja Heeland
- Nachbarschafts-Naschpark** von Jeannie-D.
- Nach der Arbeit** von Lutricia
- Future Symbiose** von Sascha
- Kreativ-Spielraum** von Sabrina
- MakerField** von Tilmann
- Der Wer-will-ich-sein?-Spielplatz** von Yolanda
- Kulturbiotop**
- Under the City** von Su Kaia