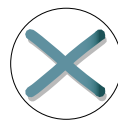# TOOLBOX **FOR XTOPIAS**

New tools for futurists

Imprint

This brochure was created in the project "Urban Xtopias: Open Future Spaces".

The imagery on the cover is by Florence Iff.

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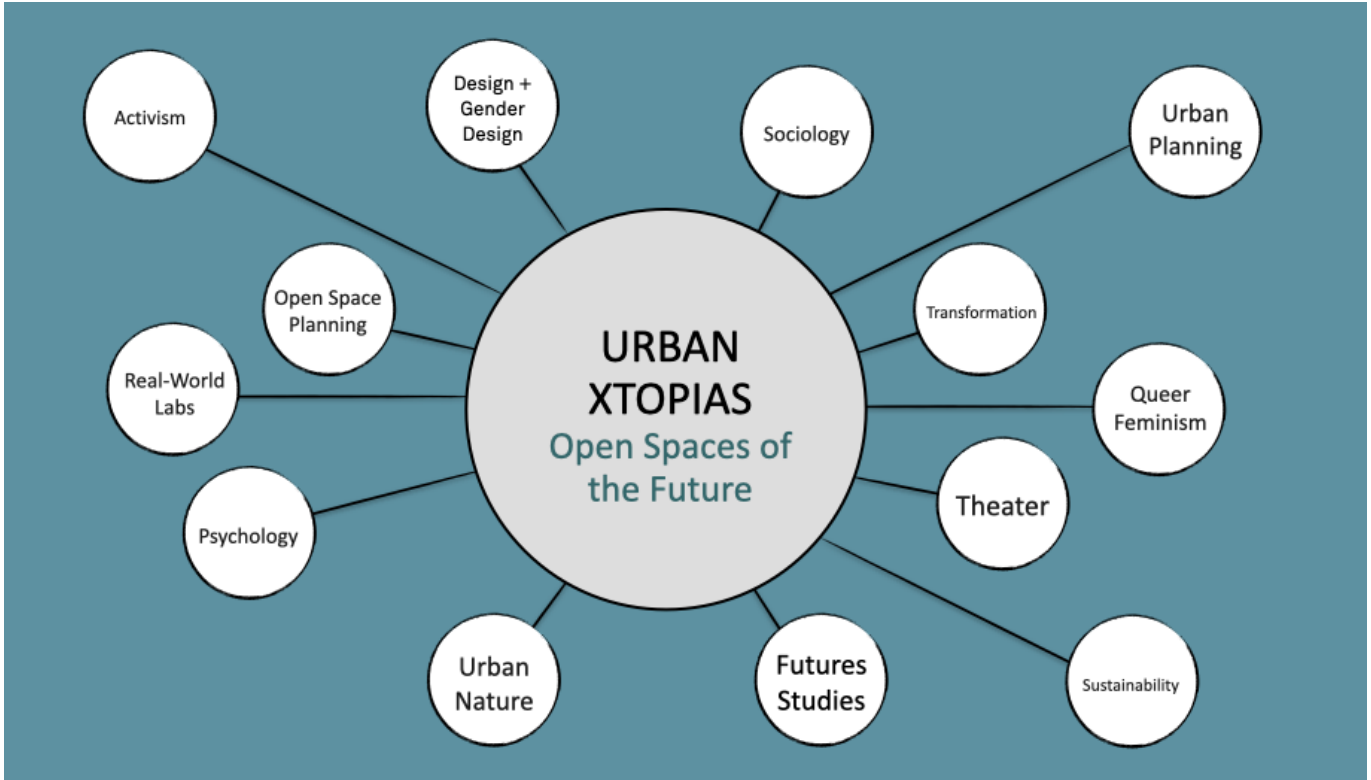Insa Olshausen
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Our inter- and transdisciplinary team opened up a variety of perspectives on possible distant futures. How can people be motivated and empowered to actively shape the future?

Xtopias – **Foreword**

With the Toolbox for Xtopias, we invite teachers, educators, team leaders, funding providers, artists, activists and everyone interested in topics of the future to help shape tomorrow in a more democratic way. We invite you to incorporate the Xtopian approach in your everyday work: by making use of the different tools or by setting out on the exciting, joyful and challenging adventure of developing and implementing your own Xtopia.

The toolbox was developed as part of the project "Urban Xtopias: Open Spaces of the Future". Funded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, our inter- and transdisciplinary team set out to find new ways of thinking about the extraordinary diversity of possible futures and new ways of motivating and empowering people to actively help shape them. We wanted to draw on the potential of utopias (being inspired by ideal goals) and dystopias (warning of social and political dangers) while at the same time emphasising the ambivalence (ambiguity, contradictions, nuances) contained in every vision of the future. This led us to develop the concept of Xtopia – a playful way to engage with the complexity of the future and to become actively involved in shaping tomorrow. This brochure brings together the experience we have gained over the last four years and is designed to help you develop Xtopias for the topics, issues and people you work with.
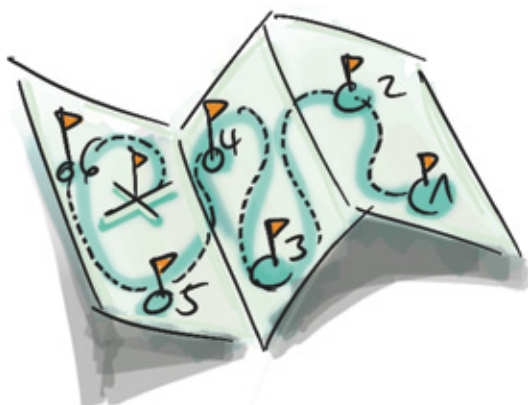
We hope it will provide you inspiration, encourage you to take some risks, allow you to enjoy the process and help you achieve your goals.

The Xtopias team

TOOLBOX **Introduction**

What is an Xtopia?

What are Xtopias for?

What is an Xtopia?

Xtopias encourage people to playfully develop and discuss their own new visions of the future, empathise with other perspectives and engage in critical reflection. As interventions aimed at transformative learning, they have the power to fundamentally change world views and perspectives.

In Xtopian interventions, topics and methods are systematically connected:
Ambivalent visions of the future, i.e. visions which contain both positive and negative aspects or on which people have differing views, make ideal topics for Xtopias. Xtopias are neither utopias nor dystopias, but rather something in between. After all, the future will be just as complex and contradictory as the present. This ambivalence is a starting point to debate and reflect on our own ideals and fears. As examples of such ambivalent topics, our Urban Xtopias project focused on the future of death, the future of work, and changing relationships between people and nature. The following double page briefly introduces a selection of these Xtopias. We will return to these examples to help illustrate the section on how to build an Xtopia. But Xtopias can of course encompass many other topics too. To promote holistic thinking, we recommend choosing core topics that are closely interrelated with other areas (e.g. social, environmental or technological issues).

These topics can be tackled using a wide range of methods: These may include guided activities such as facilitated workshops, digital interaction using a virtual whiteboard, and objects such as interactive exhibits and learning stations.

Integrating topic and method helps people think or feel their way into ambivalent visions of the future and even experience them in experimental form. This allows them to analyse and weigh up these different visions, explore how they relate to their own values and ideas about the future, and reflect on them in depth.

The methods used can be drawn from many fields, including educational theory, performance art, design thinking, museum pedagogy and social work. This range of approaches is particularly inspiring when a diverse set of partners are involved – for example from academia or civil society. The important thing when constructing an Xtopia is not the origin of the methods used but the way in which the method relates to the topic. As the following examples show, it is often worth combining several different methods so as to satisfy the various different requirements of the project.
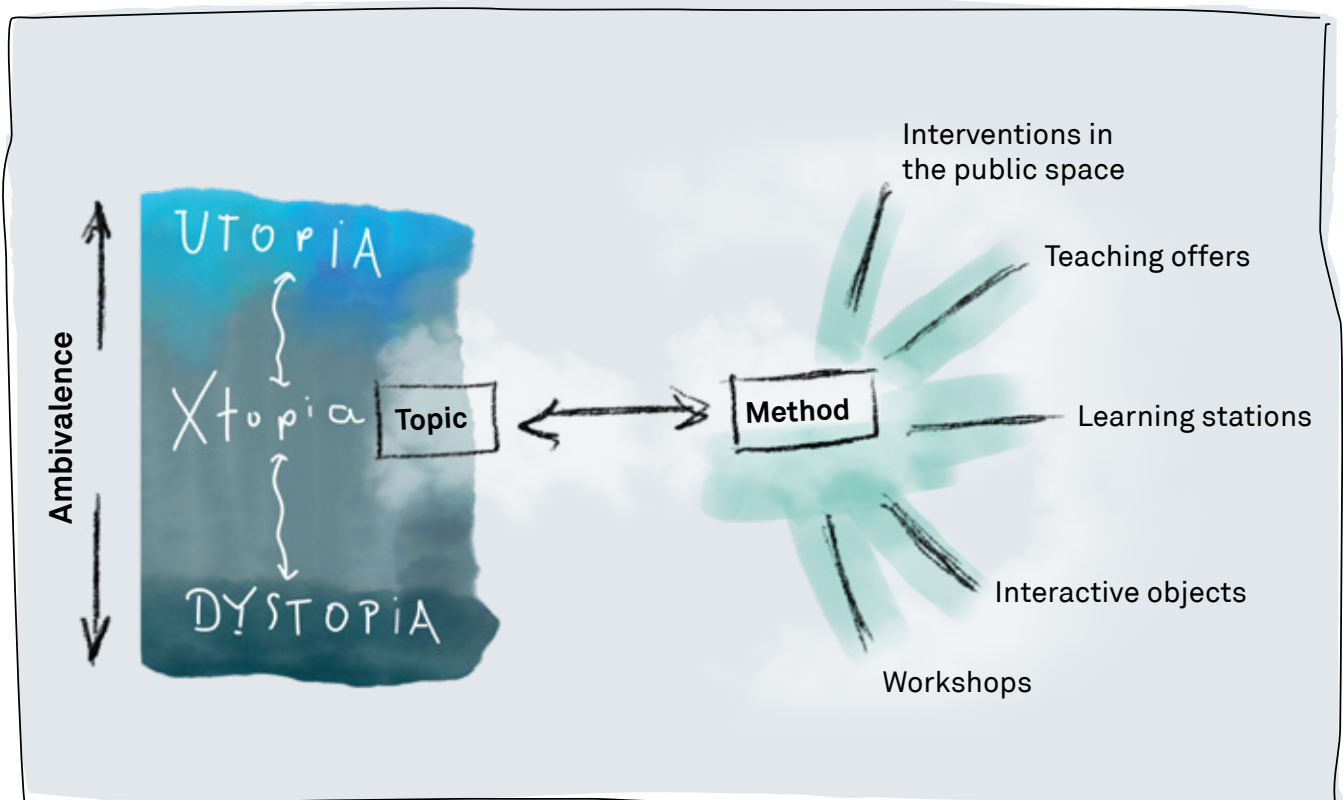
Examples from the Urban Xtopias project

The end of human dominance: The content of this Xtopia is a vision in which the human race gives up its dominance over the natural world. We developed an interactive "circuit training" course for use in

Foto: Tilmann Finner

Playful interactions at various stations dealt with future human-nature relationships.

public spaces (see toolbox) to bring to life this radical idea, inspired by discourses on "conviviality" and the "more-than-human" approach. Participants visited different activity stations, each illustrating aspects of different possible futures and inviting between 5 and 60 minutes of playful interaction. The activities included a role play on the perspective of bees, a fashion studio for clothing that grows on the skin and an audio drama about a future where "nature" is artificially manufactured. The stations were developed in design experiments by students working with university teaching staff (e.g. from the University of Applied Sciences Potsdam; see www.dasendederdominanz.de) The students themselves supervised the circuit training.

The primary educational aim of this Xtopia was for participants to consider our present relationship with nature in Germany and imagine more equal forms of coexistence, while also getting a sense of their own boundaries when it comes to the natural world. Research diaries, participant observation, a reflection wall by the exit and spontaneous conversations were all used to evaluate the training's impact on visitors.

Automento Mori ('Todomat' in German) is a repurposed ticket machine. It takes users to a future where people are more used to thinking about their own mortality. This "artefact from the future" is at once familiar and innovative. It helps users to think about their death in a more empowering and sustainable way. Around 20 questions enable them to input their wishes and decisions in multiple categories: body, ceremony, memory, possessions, data and secrets. Users can choose from different forms of bodily transformation after death, some of them still in the realm of fiction. They can also consider digital memorials along with current and possible future practices around physical and digital legacies. Based on the responses, Automento Mori prepares a to-do list to help the user prepare for their own passing. The list includes a QR code giving access to the machine's online "digital twin". That means users can dip in and out of the questions as they feel able and think about them in more depth if they wish. Automento Mori has been on show at the Museum for Sepulchral Culture in Kassel (our partner) since September 2023. The digital twin is available online (todomat.org). The educational goals (reflecting on what matters in life, openness to future practices around death) are explained in more detail in the next section.

Foto: Maximilian Beck

Automento Mori is called ‚Todomat' in German, which is made up of the words „death", „to-do" and „automat". It is located in the Museum for Sepulchral Culture in Kassel.

The motifs that emerged from the children's joint work with the mood boards were then sprayed on the gym wall under professional supervision.

The future of work: This Xtopia was a two-and-a-half-day local workshop in which we examined the interplay between two extremely important processes of change: the future of work and the transformation to a more sustainable society. Real-life examples of this interplay were explored in the local neighbourhood, where we worked with our partner Spirit of Football. The main educational goal was to empower participants to develop their own path amid complex processes of change. Young people and adults were the planned target group. However, most of those who took part were children under 15. We therefore added numerous playful and movement-based elements. Combining artistic, creative activity with conversation remained central to the process. The use of mood boards (see toolbox) to open up discussion about the future proved particularly inspiring. By thinking their way into scenarios for the future of their neighbourhood, participants developed recurring themes, which they then sprayed legally onto the outside wall of the workshop venue (a sports hall). The local authorities provided organisational and financial support for the Xtopia, and dedicated graffiti walls have now been put in place around the neighbourhood. A local café helped us measure the impact of the project.
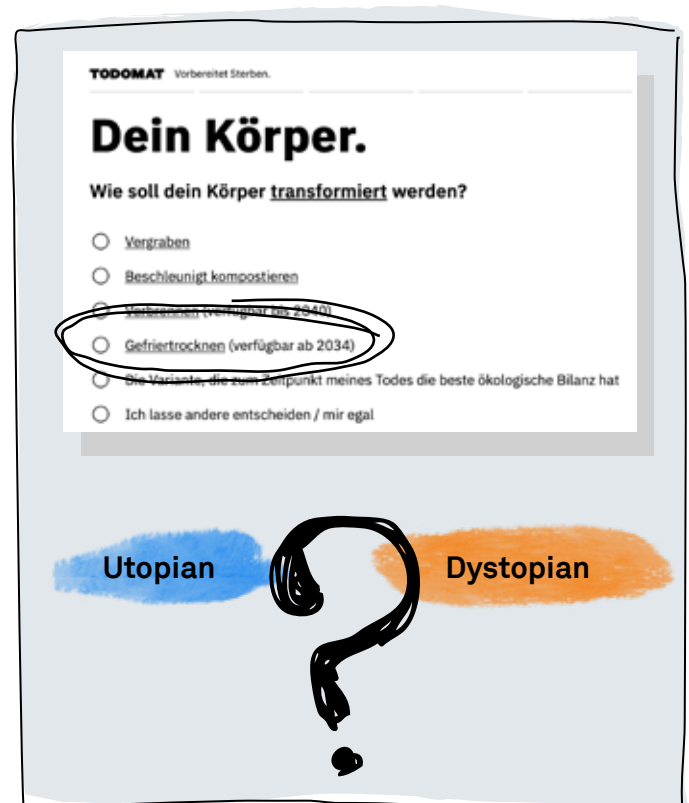
What are Xtopias for?

An Xtopia initiates transformative learning processes and trains people in important skills for the future so as to motivate them to actively shape sustainable development. Building Xtopias can help shape the future in a more democratic way.
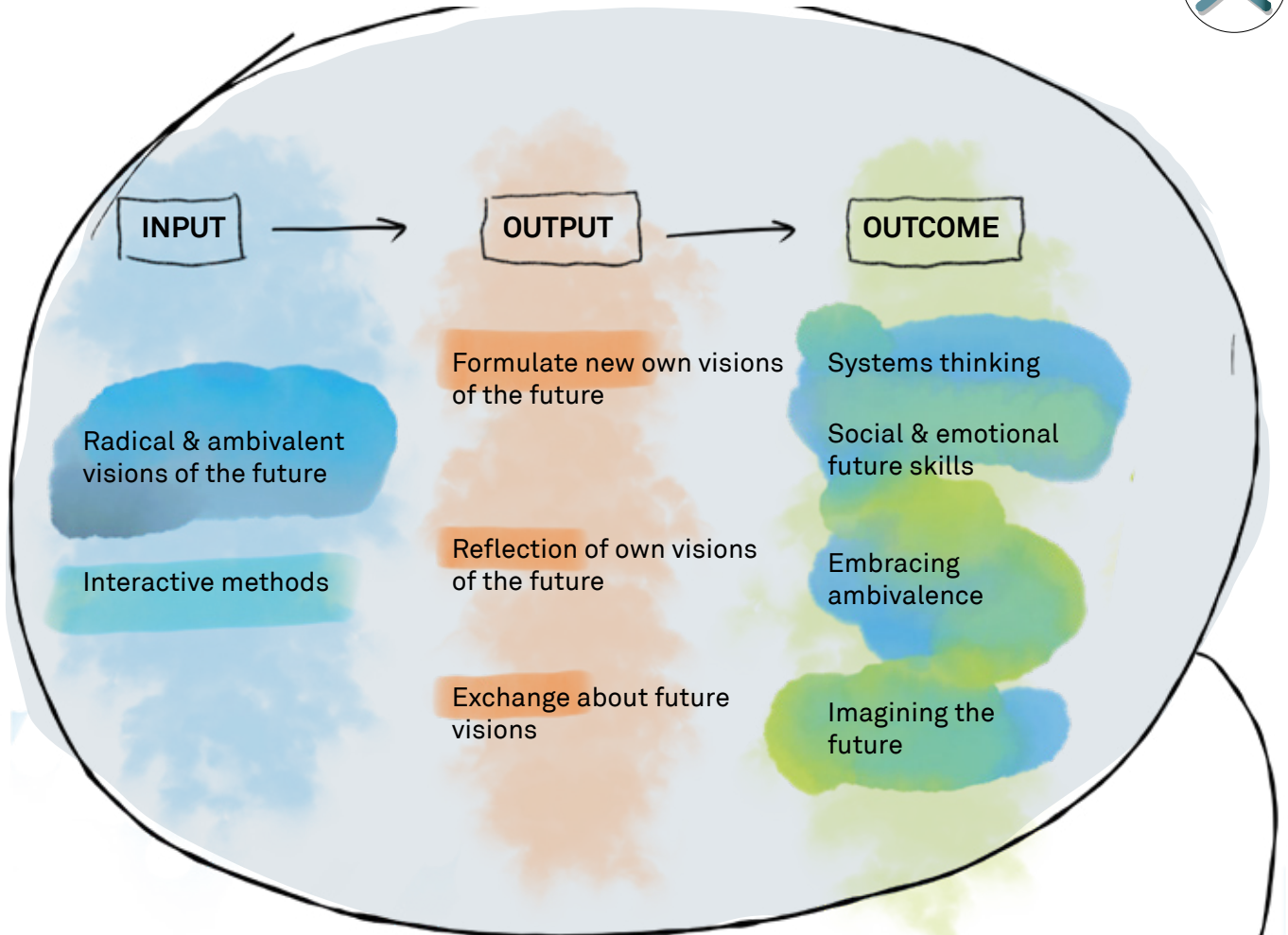
Direct learning outcomes
While the topics covered and methods of interaction can be highly diverse, all Xtopias require the ability to discuss visions of the future. This is achieved both through presenting radical, ambivalent visions and encouraging participants to formulate their own. By focusing on the ambivalent aspects of the future, Xtopias also help us to think about how our own wishes for the future might affect others: Is my utopia your dystopia? At the same time, Xtopias enable people to re-evaluate excessive fears or idealised visions of the future and perhaps see these in a more balanced way.

Using some background information, Automento Mori encourages users to think about the options available for when we die. For example, it informs them about the environmental footprint of cremation and presents some alternatives that are less well known or do not yet (legally) exist, such as composting or freeze-drying.

INPUT	OUTPUT	OUTCOME
Radical & ambivalent visions of the future	Formulate new own visions of the future	Systems thinking
Interactive methods	Reflection of own visions of the future	Social & emotional future skills
	Exchange about future visions	Embracing ambivalence
		Imagining the future

Participation in futuring

Through imaginative and reflective interactions, Xtopias open up different ways of engaging with ideas about the future. The learning process can be transformative.

Educational goals

By presenting unfamiliar visions and inviting critical reflection, Xtopias can promote transformative learning. Fundamental assumptions, beliefs and values in relation to the future are challenged and changed, often in dialogue with others.

Automento Mori pursues two transformative learning objectives: Firstly, it encourages us to think about our own mortality so that we can initiate a conversation with those close to us and live a more conscious life, focusing on the things that really matter. It can help us practice gratitude, recognise where we are falling short and give us courage to change. Secondly, the machine is designed to get users thinking about how society could deal with death differently, for example in the interests of sustainable development.

Working towards these educational goals means practising a range of important skills for the future. We see three of these skills as elemental to participating in discourse on profound transformation processes:

Imagining the future: This means being able to avoid making path-dependent assumptions or simply reproducing dominant ideas about the future. Through imagination, we can develop alternative images, ideas and visions. This requires not only creativity and fantasy but also an interest in the questions of the future and a belief that the future is something we have the power to shape.

Future skills
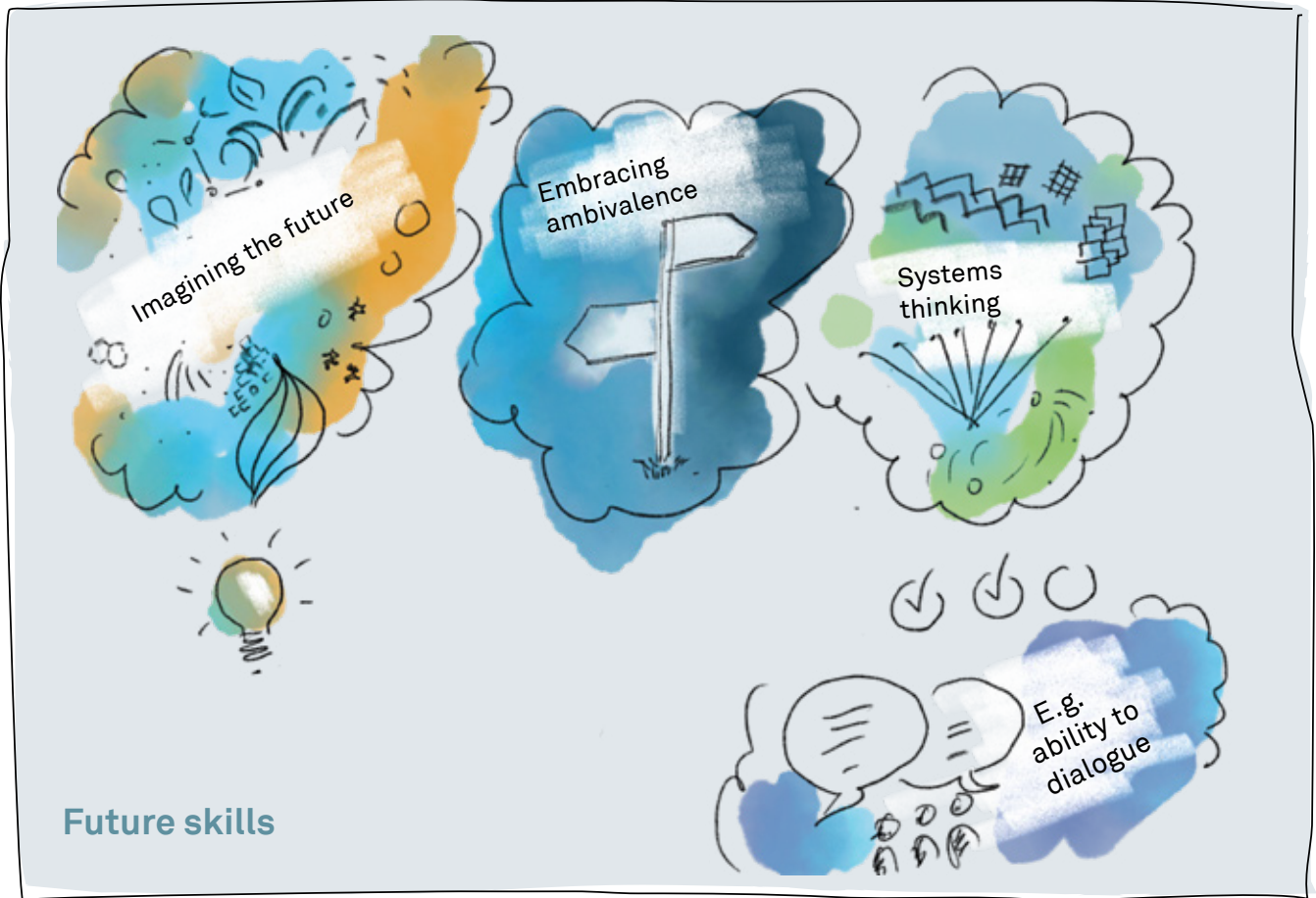
Embracing ambivalence: Xtopias focus on complexity and ambiguity. This means that they are designed to open people's minds to uncertain futures and ambiguous visions. In particular, the Xtopian method means accepting that the future is likely to be just as ambivalent and contradictory as the present. Accepting this ambivalence is both a more realistic approach and an exciting way to evaluate possible futures.

Systems thinking: An Xtopia has the potential to promote understanding of the world of tomorrow (and today) as a complex and diverse system in which various competing interests need to be negotiated. Shaping the future requires a perspective that recognises the interrelations between the many different areas of action and understands the scope for change. Xtopias can provide inspiration here and enable people to reflect on their own active role.

As well as these cognitive skills of the future, Xtopias also promote emotional and social skills that enable constructive dialogue with others: e.g. an emotional connection to oneself and the outside world, active listening skills and other communication skills and critical faculties.

TOOLBOX **Instructions for building an Xtopia**
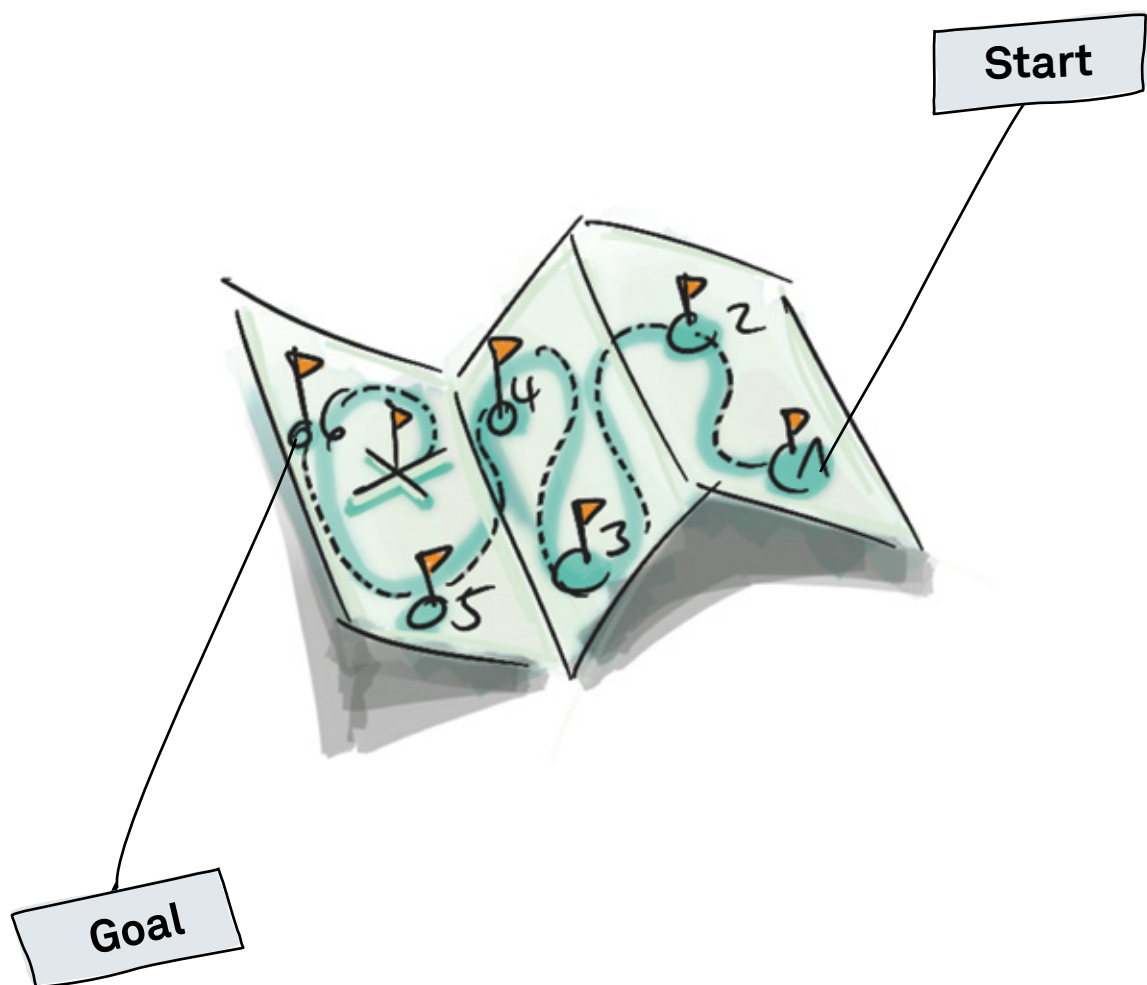
Instructions for building an Xtopia

We want to inspire you to create your own Xtopia. Let us now guide you step by step through the process. We will show you how to develop the idea, put it into practice and review the results.

The instructions are based on the experience gained over four years of transformative research on Xtopias: This included digital and physical prototyping and the lessons learned from four large series of interventions that we conducted in various contexts and evaluated formatively. In developing your own Xtopia, you may find that it makes sense to do things in a different order or that you are unable to implement every piece of advice. This was sometimes our experience, too. The format lends itself to an iterative design process rather than a rigid set of rules. Partners should be involved in this work at the earliest possible stage (see below).

1 **Step 1: Create an Xtopia hexagon as a basis for your work**

A challenge when developing Xtopias is not to get lost in all the exciting topics, contexts and potential methods that present themselves. We have therefore developed the Xtopia hexagon: a visualisation tool that helps you keep an overview and make good decisions.

The edges of the hexagon mark out six key fields: **The topic of the Xtopia (visions of the future), its educational goals and target audience, its context, possible partners for development and implementation, and evaluation components.** As you continue the development process, you compile key words for each of these fields. **In the centre of the hexagon, you can write down the different methodological elements that will be used.** You can then systematically link these to the key words for the fields to check you have met the requirements for all six sides. Use your preferred media, software and visual style for the hexagon. In the Urban Xtopias project, we used an online collaboration platform so that the core team and partners could all work digitally on the Xtopia. The archiving function also proved useful. As well as using text, you can also provide other forms of information, e.g. maps for the spatial context, mind maps for the topic, organisational charts for the partners and theoretical models for the educational goals. The priority is that all the partners involved in developing and implementing the Xtopia are able to use the information presented. Some elements that may seem trivial can in fact be crucial to the success of the Xtopia (e.g. child care, event invitation, food and drink) and should therefore be written down.

The order of the steps suggested below is just one possible approach. You may find some sides of the hexagon easier than others. If so, start with these. Often, the things you write down on one side will give you ideas for the other sides.

Xtopia hexagon
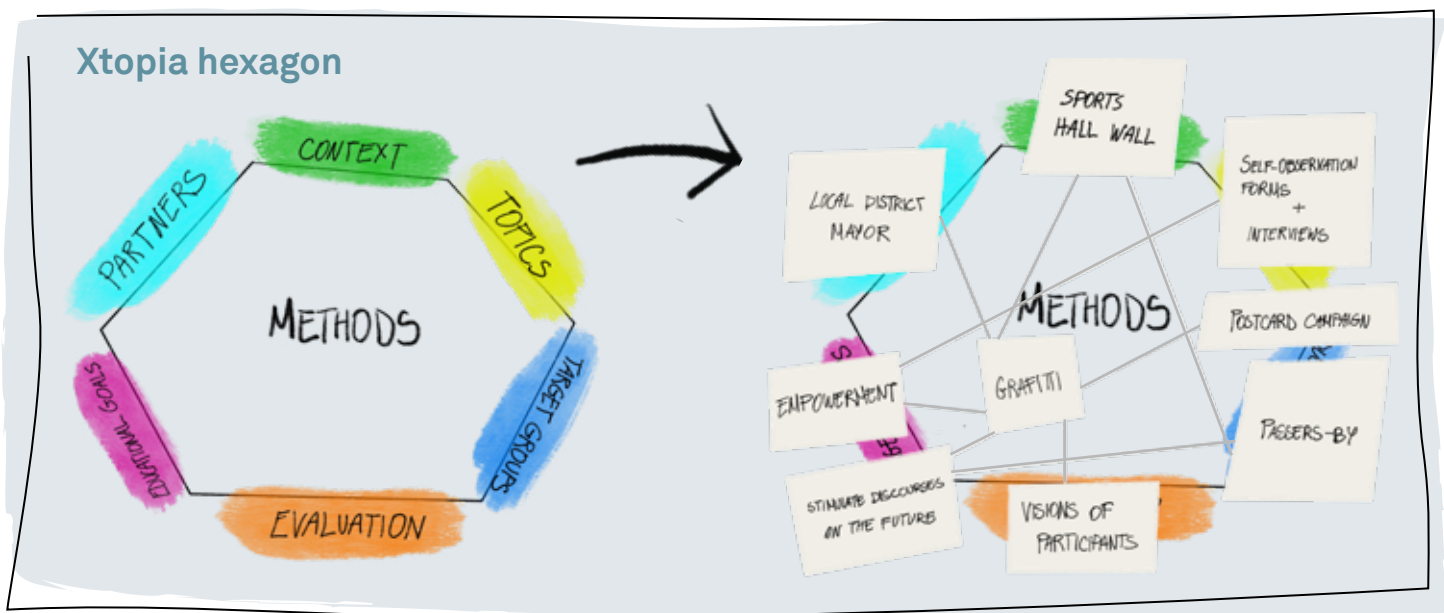
2 Step 2: Choose a topic of the future and get creative

A particularly exciting task that often comes right at the beginning is choosing the topic: Your Xtopia should focus on one topic. This is not to artificially seperate topics you but to concentrate participants' thoughts and stop the event becoming unwieldy.

Figure 1 (Xtopia hexagon on page 11) shows the criteria we think are important: Choose topics that allow sufficient distance from the present day, that involve ambivalent aspects and that can be readily communicated to your target group. Identify their relevance to sustainability and societal transformation. Break down big questions for humanity so that participants can think them through using a manageable example. Explicitly link the core topic to visions of the future being developed in other fields and design it so that people are motivated to keep exploring the topic. Wherever possible, take into account the perspectives of marginalised groups (see below), as there can be no sustainable future without social justice.

For the hexagon, it is important to write down what makes the core topic a big and important one, but also to stay rooted in a concrete example.

In our work-themed Xtopia, our focus was to think about the changes emerging in the world of work (robots taking over many tasks, AI as an everyday tool, nursing crisis, etc.) together with sustainability transformations such as the energy transition or changing diets: What challenges and solutions could there be?

The content chosen at the start should not be set in stone; it makes sense to continuously review and adjust the Xtopia.

Xtopias have the following characteristics:

- ☐ They break with the present.
- ☐ They shine a light on differences, ambivalence and nuance.
- ☐ They foster communication.
- ☐ They raise big social questions, especially regarding sustainable development.
- ☐ They can be explored using concrete examples.

They link the core topic to other areas such as:

- ☐ Environment
- ☐ Technology
- ☐ Economy
- ☐ Infrastructure
- ☐ Society
- ☐ Politics

They motivate people to keep exploring them by being:

- ☐ Relevant to the world in which the target group lives
- ☐ Innovative, surprising and inspiring
- ☐ Multi-layered, raising new questions and revealing new perspectives
- ☐ Critical of how society currently works

They promote social justice, for example by including perspectives of:

- ☐ Economic disadvantage
- ☐ Gender diversity
- ☐ People of color
- ☐ People with experience of migration
- ☐ The Global South
- ☐ Neurodiversity
- ☐ People with physical disabilities

3 Step 3: Choose a set of methods

In most cases, you will choose a set of methods for your planned intervention relatively early in the process. This should be a good fit for your chosen topic and meet the following criteria:

→ It awakens interest: inviting, engaging and aesthetically appealing
→ It triggers interaction (passive observers are not enough!)
→ It triggers emotions and is therefore memorable
→ It is suitable for the envisaged space
→ It is ethical
→ Its impact among the target group can be evaluated

From this set of methods, you will then select a specific method as you continue to develop the Xtopia. You can borrow from other methods and constantly adjust the approach. Do not be scared to start again with a different method if you need to.

> **The eight tools presented in the toolbox are suitable methods for building an Xtopia; however, this collection is of course not exhaustive and is certainly not always suitable.**

Make sure to take advantage of your partners' and your own experience with different methods. Write down the different elements of your chosen method in the hexagon. For example, you can note down the different phases of a workshop or game or the different elements of an installation. Depending on the kind of Xtopia you are creating, you can break down the different methodological elements by time, location or function.

In our work-themed Xtopia, for example, we planned a multi-stage workshop taking place over two and a half days. The final part of the method was to graffiti a large wall using templates the group had worked on together. The example illustration on page 11 shows this last phase and the connections to the other sides of the hexagon.

4 Step 4: Finish the Xtopia hexagon

Target groups
Xtopias should be able to reach as many different people as possible. Nevertheless, it is sensible to concentrate on one or a small number of target groups. Check that the groups are a good fit for your partners, topics, contexts and educational goals.

In the case of the work-themed Xtopia, we encountered a surprise: In contrast to what we had planned, the participants in the workshop were almost all children, who had become aware of the project through one of our multipliers. A second target group comprised passers-by and local residents of the sports hall where we sprayed the graffiti.

Transformative educational goals
With a successful Xtopia, you will encourage people to think more diversely and openly about possible futures, to engage with different visions and to discuss the contradictions and ambivalent aspects of these with others. You will enable them to break free from existing, dominant ideas about the future.

In our example, we aimed to empower the workshop participants in relation to their own career choices and ability to shape the future world of work. With the graffiti, we were able to reach passers-by and local residents indirectly with the hope of stimulating conversation and reflection on the future.

Partners

Xtopias are particularly exciting when they bring together partners from different fields, e.g. academia, education, local politics, art or business. On this side of the hexagon, write down the partnership that will support your Xtopia. If multiple partners are involved in significantly different roles, you can also write this down here (e.g. advertising, consolidation, practical aspects, evaluation).

Our work-themed Xtopia was supported by a partnership between our academic team and the "Spirit of Football" association along with local stakeholders from the fields of social work and public administration. In this case, the decision to work on an Xtopia together came before all the other sides of the hexagon.

Context

Your Xtopia will take place in a specific social and spatial context that will influence the impact it can achieve. You should lean into this context or at least consider it: How will my Xtopia change if I present it to people in a disadvantaged part of the city rather than to an academic research institute? How will the Xtopia work in a seminar room, at an art exhibition or in a graveyard? There are often practical and organisational aspects to consider, too. This applies whether the space you use is outdoors (e.g. weather and lighting) or indoors (e.g. access and keys). You can also write down other context-related factors, e.g. whether the Xtopia will take place as part of a large event or needs to be designed from the start to work for multipliers in very different locations.

The neighbourhood where we ran our workshop was chosen by our local partner. We then chose the thematic focus on the future of work due to the high rate of unemployment among the residents there. The local mayor gave us permission to graffiti the outside wall of the sports hall.

Evaluation

We consider the evaluation an integral part of Xtopias. After all, there is nothing trivial about inspiring people to think about the future in new ways. In the worst case, an Xtopia can have damaging effects, for example if it fuels fears about the future. We therefore highly recommend that you document at least some aspects of your Xtopia and its impact so that you can learn from experience (formative evaluation). Collecting data using documents that exist already (e.g. photos or partners' notes) or through participant observation usually has less impact on proceedings than a before-and-after survey, for example. On this side of the hexagon, write down what information you want to gather, and potentially what data protection rules you have to follow.

The evaluation of our work-themed Xtopia took place alongside the workshop itself. We recorded our impressions using self-observation forms. A year after the intervention, we also conducted two interviews with multipliers from the neighbourhood and used a postcard campaign to research whether passers-by had noticed the graffiti and what they had made of it.

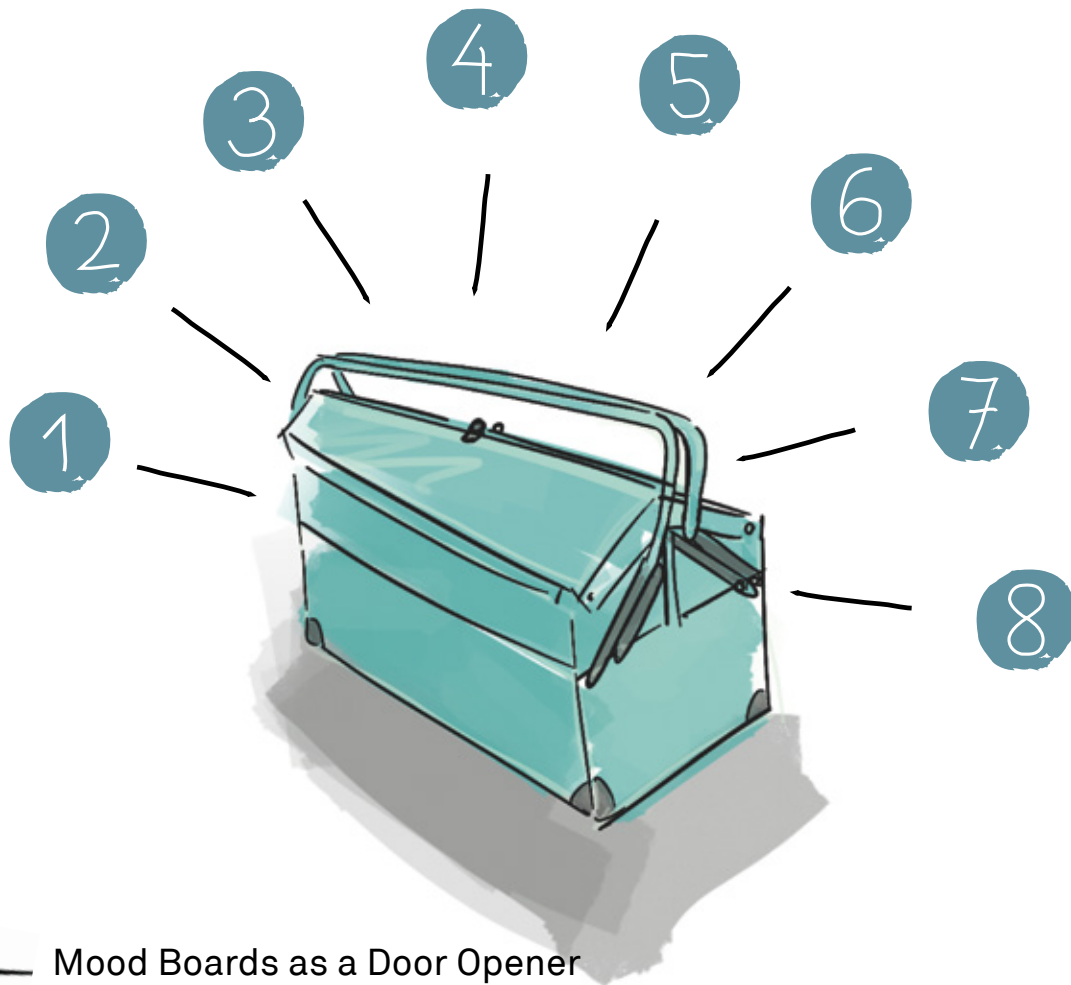## ⑤ Step 5: Review, test and finalise the content of your Xtopia

Once you have completed the six sides and the methodological elements in the centre, you should check how well all the elements of the hexagon link together. Some aspects may be very simple (do the partners have access to the target groups?), while others may reveal unexpected problems (e.g. relationship between spatial context and evaluation: do we have the right to photograph here?).

TOOLBOX **Building instructions**

We recommend developing the Xtopia gradually, starting with prototypes, and to test it (preferably multiple times) along the way. This makes the workload manageable and allows you to check where any obstacles lie: e.g. in relation to the topic, scheduling, access to the target group, etc.

Having completed the work-themed Xtopia in Erfurt, for example, we developed the "Installation for Interconnected Thinking" (see toolbox). This condenses the most effective working step of this Xtopia into a new format to make it accessible to a larger target group.

Checklist for developing an Xtopia

When you are developing Xtopias and bubbling with ideas, we have found that it can be easy to lose sight of whether what you are building still constitutes an Xtopia. The following checklist should help keep you on track. It can be used both to finalise an Xtopia and to evaluate a prototype (this working step is highly recommended).

Side of the hexagon	This side of the hexagon fits the Xtopian approach	It is compatible with the other sides of the hexagon
Topics The Xtopia addresses complex visions of the future on which society has different interpretations and views (ambivalence) and follows the other criteria described above.	☐	☐
Context The Xtopia engages with its social and spatial context.	☐	☐
Partners The partners are willing and able to implement the Xtopia in this form.	☐	☐
Target groups The Xtopia is appropriate for the target group (and potentially other target groups).	☐	☐
Educational goals The educational goals are transformative and relate to the future.	☐	☐
Formative evaluation The evaluation covers the most important and difficult aspects of the Xtopia.	☐	☐

Inside

Methodological elements The methods actively involve the target group and satisfy all six sides of the hexagon.	☐	☐

TOOLBOX **TOOLS**

1 — Mood Boards as a Door Opener

2 — Guided Visualisation Journey (plus instructions, download materials)

3 — Animal Perspectives (plus instructions, download materials)

4 — Play Space Xperiment (plus instructions)

5 — Installation for Interconnected Thinking (plus instructions)

6 — Cohabitat (plus instructions, download materials)

7 — Automento Mori (Todomat)
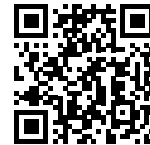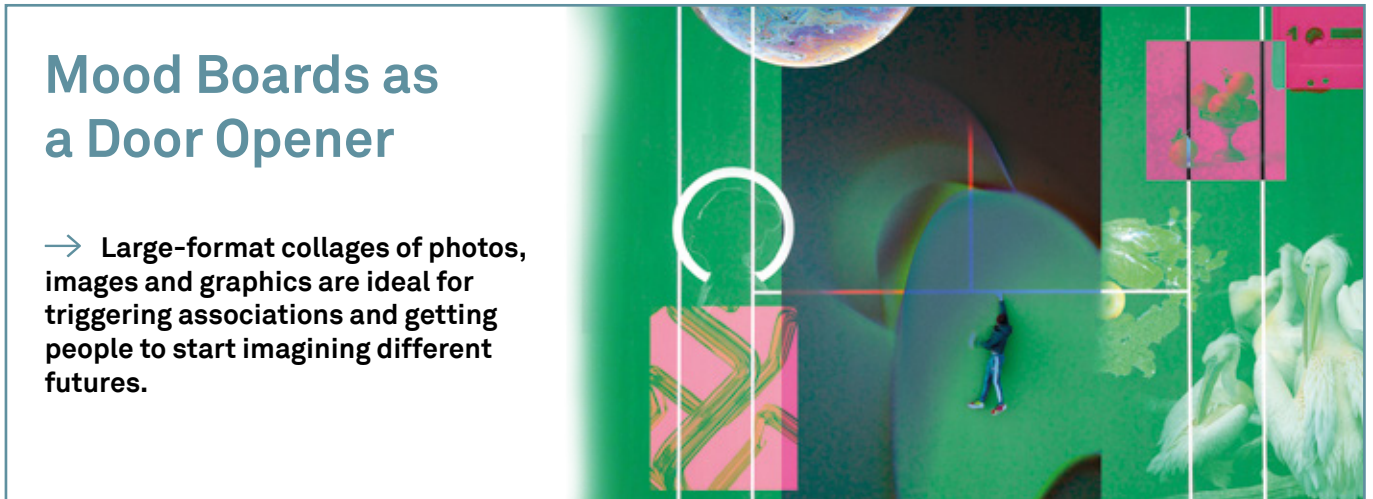
8 — Xtopian Circuit Training (plus instructions)

TOOL

1 **Short profile**
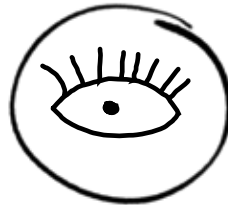
2 **Practice example**

Outputs: How does the Wiesenhügel neighborhood in Erfurt want to live after tomorrow?

Content of the tool: Mood Boards as a Door Opener

Mood Boards as a Door Opener

→ **Large-format collages of photos, images and graphics are ideal for triggering associations and getting people to start imagining different futures.**

The topic

A mood board lends itself to a vast range of topics. Along with pictures, your mood board can also include key words or diagrams. Mood boards help participants combine their creative, intuitive response to images with analytical thinking, e.g. by drawing links between the topics visualised. For a more complex discussion, it can be helpful to work with multiple mood boards, each capturing a different aspect of the topic. Do not choose topics that are too abstract. The participants should be able to relate the topic to their everyday life.

The Xtopian moment

The different images, photos and graphics on the mood board trigger feelings, questions or thoughts. These can be used as the starting point for a conversation and for participants to develop their own ideas or entire visions of the future. Images that are ambivalent, contradictory or even provocative can help to trigger responses that you can then explore in conversation and use in further work on your Xtopia. If you work with multiple boards, it is highly recommended to have a trained facilitator on each board.

The target groups

You can use mood boards as a great starting point when working both with adult participants or with children and young people. Visually appealing mood boards encourage people to open up and engage in discussion. In addition to a physical board, online collaboration tools can also be used.

Time required	Group size	Format	Location	Materials
Introduction 5-10 mins **Execution** approx. 15 mins per mood board **Conclusion** 15-30 mins	3-8 people per mood board; participants can move freely between the mood boards or may be instructed to do so after a set time	Small groups, each with a facilitator	Plenty of indoor or outdoor space; alternatively an online collaboration tool	Approx. 8-10 images on an A1 board

The educational goals

Mood Boards as a Door Opener can incorporate all sorts of diverse images and are a great way to awaken associations in people's minds. This helps participants begin to imagine for themselves what the future could look like and to start engaging in discussion on this topic. Participants become aware of their own unconscious ideas or attitudes and can reflect on them together. Importantly, this can reveal whether one person's utopia is another's dystopia.

Application

You should integrate your mood board into a workshop or teaching unit. For example, you could use a mood board as the basis for each of the tables in a world café.

Preparation: Find suitable photos, images or graphics and arrange them on a large poster (at least A2) – either directly on the paper or digitally ready to print out later. Surprising, provocative and ambivalent scenes help participants engage with the topic, as do interesting and aesthetically appealing images. Depending on the group, you could also use graphics, artworks or other illustrations. Make sure you have the right to use the images. Quotes or short phrases may be used to complete the mood board.

Execution: The mood board is placed on a table or hung up so that a small group can work with it. First, participants look at all the elements on the board. The facilitator then invites participants to concentrate on certain images. For example, they could ask participants to start by describing what they see. This encourages participants to think about how they relate to the pictures and begin talking about their own attitudes and ideas. The discussion that develops may be guided by the images on the mood board or may move on from them altogether. Write down the thoughts and ideas that emerge, e.g. on large sticky notes around the board, so that you can use these later.

Follow-up: At the end, the most interesting ideas from each board can be presented and discussed in the whole group. Other methods, e.g. image theatre, could follow on from the work with the mood boards.

Potential and challenges

Images and graphics are readily available these days, so it is relatively easy to put together a good mood board. You can tailor the choice and arrangement of images to the target groups. Make sure to give this careful consideration so as not to accidentally reinforce stereotypes or confuse the topic being addressed. You can create mood boards for any topic, but you should ensure they are not too abstract for your target group. In a longer workshop setting, you could leave the mood boards hanging in the room as a constant yet unobtrusive presence. Participants may be emotionally affected by some of the images, either positively or negatively (e.g. one young participant was excited to recognise an influencer in one of the photos). The facilitator may need to digress from the core topic to respond to this. Depending on the context of the event, image rights may be an obstacle to choosing suitable images, particularly if visual documentation is planned but no funds are available to acquire the images you need.

Implementation example: Use of mood boards as a door opener in Erfurt
We tested mood boards for the first time in a two-and-a-half-day Xtopian workshop in the Wiesenhügel neighborhood in Erfurt. There, we worked with the younger residents in particular to develop visions of how they would like to work and live in the future. In an interplay between images and language, the mood boards provided an ideal introduction to envisioning in a setting similar to a world café. A rating of the most popular ideas allowed to select (new) motifs for graffiti.

1 **Short profile**

TOOL

2 **Instructions**

3 **Download materials:**
Audio file and text
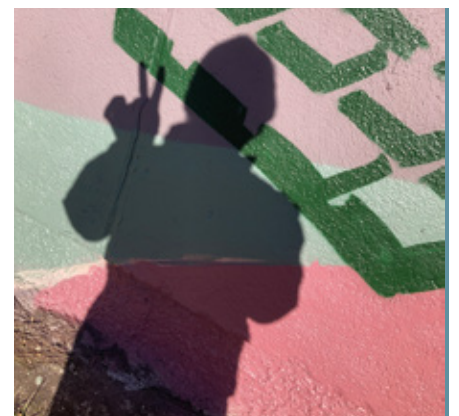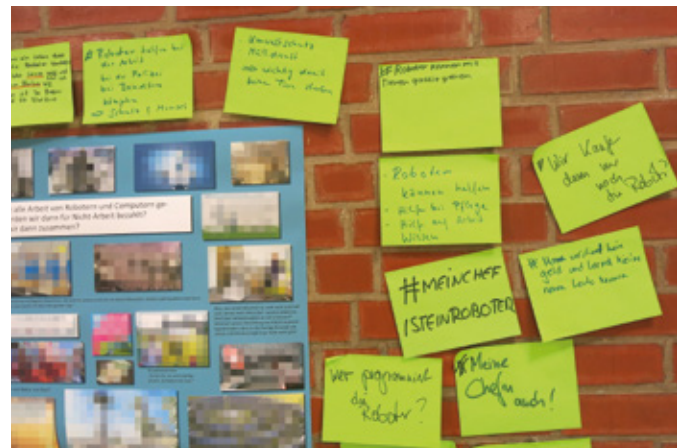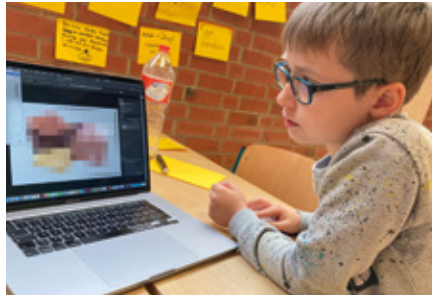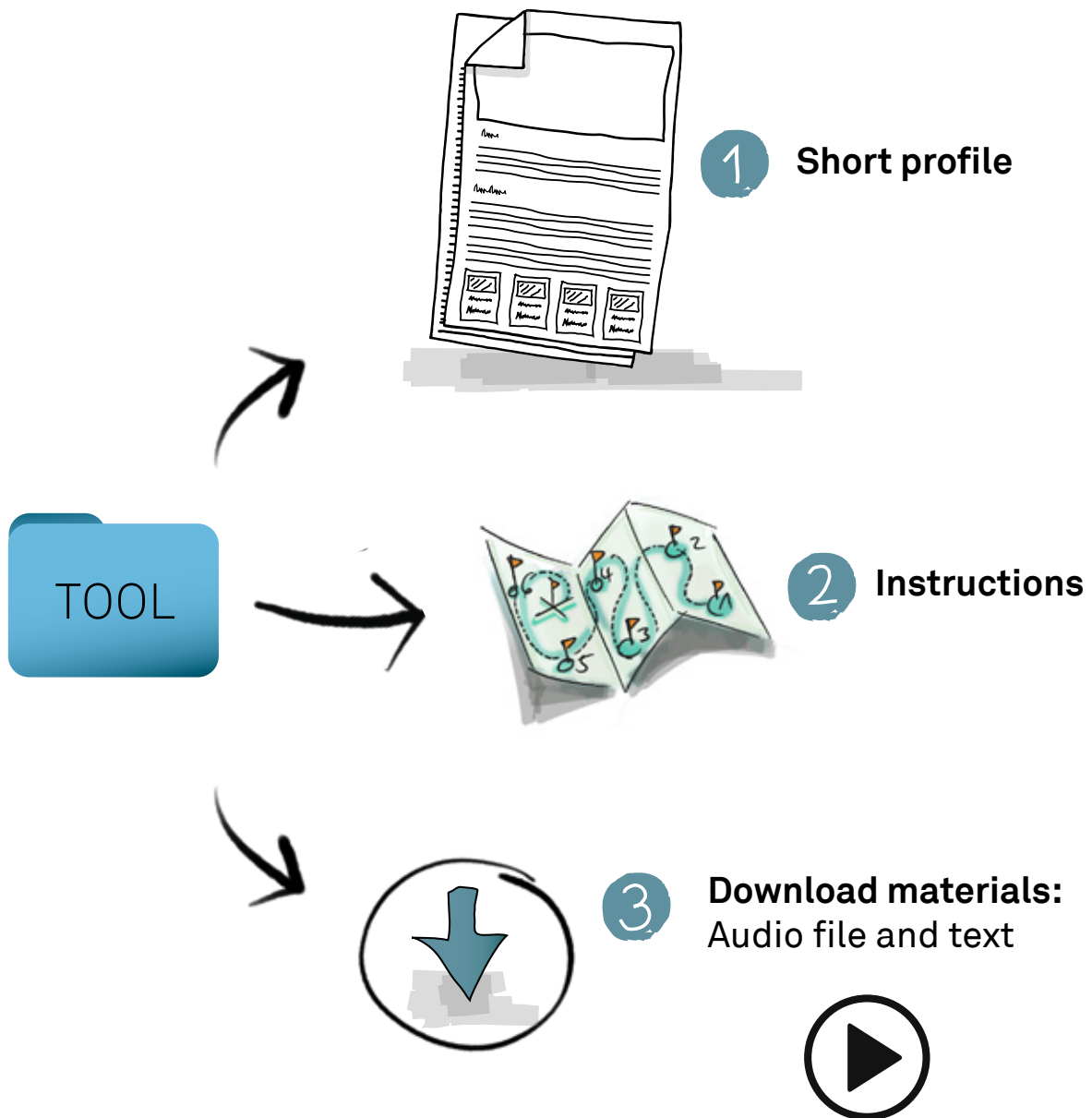
Content of the tool: Guided Visualisation Journey to the Future

Guided Visualisation Journey to the Future

→ **How do people picture the urban future? A guided meditation helps to answer this question and discover fascinating new visions.**

The topic

The meditation poses open questions that invite participants to imagine buildings, the natural world, human beings and other species in an undefined future. It begins with a body scan relaxation technique to direct concentration inwards and fuel the process of imagination.

The Xtopian moment

The journey's outcome is uncertain. The images and sensory impressions triggered may be familiar or surprising. The experiences can motivate, inspire and create a feeling of optimism. However, they may also feel confusing and daunting, urging participants to seek to change things. The methodological approach of this exercise reflects the openness of the future and its potential to surprise us.

The target groups

Guided visualisation is a particularly useful exercise in educational settings, in innovative sectors involved in planning and – depending on the target group – in an urban development context. It is suitable for all psychologically healthy adults and young people who are willing to engage with their own mental images and associations. The written texts can be adapted for use with children and read aloud.

Time required	Group size	Format	Location	Materials
Introduction 5 mins **Execution** 30 mins **Follow-up** 15-30 mins	Any	Individually – alone or as individual work in a group setting	A quiet, safe environment	Instructions, audio file and playback device or text to read aloud, pen and paper

The educational goals
Guided Visualisation Journey to the Future fuels the imagination, helping participants imagine different futures and formulate new visions. As part of a guided process of reflection, it can open their minds to ambivalent aspects of debates about the future or mobilise them to address undesirable parts of these ambivalent futures.

Application
We recommend that you try out the Guided Visualisation Journey to the Future yourself first. This is the best way to determine whether the audio file is suited to your aims and target group.

Preparation: Decide whether you want participants to complete the journey alone before the group session. If so, give them the instructions. Alternatively, you may want the process to take place live in the group session. You can adapt the text to your needs and read it out yourself – for example if you want the visions of the future to centre on particular spaces (e.g. workplaces, housing, etc.). Introduce the exercise to participants using the introductory remarks in the instructions. Ensure a relaxed and quiet space where participants will not be disturbed. You may want to complete other exercises to promote concentration or creativity before starting the guided visualisation journey. Have some alternatives ready for anyone who does not want to take part in the exercise.

Execution: As the participants will be exploring their inner self, emphasise that participation is voluntary. If the mind travel will take place live in the group session, you can play the audio file through loudspeakers or ask the participants to bring headphones and access the recording through their smartphone. Young people may find it easier to engage with the experience if they do not feel they are being observed.

Follow-up: A guided group process is a great way to achieve lasting impact from the experience. It can encourage participants to reflect on the meaning of the visions for their life in the here and now: What small thing can I change in my life right now? Do I want to help make these ideas a reality, and if so, how? What do I want to personally avoid? Active listening methods in pairs or small groups are well suited to this. You could then ask these pairs or small groups to give flash feedback in larger groups. Depending on the time available, the participants may want to write down their experiences beforehand or express them creatively in poems, images, sculptures or dance.

Potential and challenges
Guided visualisation enables participants to become aware of the ideas about the distant future that they already carry around inside them. It can also trigger new visions and inspire them to continue thinking about issues of the future. The tool is a good way to initiate creative and critical thinking, for example when you first start working with a new group. In group settings, participants can inspire each other by discussing their experiences. Sharing personal experiences can also strengthen the group's sense of community. Note that the intensity and emotional quality of the visions depend on how relaxed the participants are and on the atmosphere in the room. Sometimes, participants may "see" something they do not like. Guided visualisation without professional supervision is not suitable for people with mental health difficulties.

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Instructions for mind travellers

Where are we going?

We invite you to take an exciting guided visualisation journey with the help of our audio file: You can take the journey alone whenever you get a quiet moment and are feeling curious. Or, if you prefer, you can invite others to join you.

The guided visualisation will help you to spontaneously become aware of the images and ideas you are already carrying around with you.

You will travel in your mind to a city of the future. The journey begins with a relaxation exercise to fuel your imagination.

Please note: Guided visualisation is also used in psychotherapy to help people deal with trauma or become more conscious of themselves and their personal goals. If you have recently been struggling with your emotions, if you are taking psychotropic medications or other drugs, or if you suffer from schizophrenia or borderline syndrome, we advise you only to complete the mind travel exercise with professional supervision. The Play Space Xperiment from the Toolbox for Xtopias would be a good alternative way to develop your own visions of the future.

Preparing for your journey

→ You will need a device to play the audio file. If you are travelling alone, choose one that allows you to easily press pause. This means you will be able to control the pace of the journey yourself.

→ Allow at least an hour to complete the exercise. Choose a quiet time when you are able to concentrate and are feeling curious and ready for the experience.

→ Make sure you will not be easily distracted: Ensure you have had enough to eat and drink. Put your phone on silent. Check that the pets have been fed and that the children are safely occupied. Choose a quiet place where you will not be disturbed unnecessarily.

→ You may want to have a pen and paper ready to write down your thoughts during or after the journey.

→ We recommend a relaxation exercise before starting the mind travel. The audio file begins with a body scan exercise. If you already have experience with relaxation techniques, you may prefer to use another exercise familiar to you. In this case, once you have finished your own relaxation exercise(s), start the audio file at minute 15:30.

→ Choose a comfortable but mindful position. Keep your feet in contact with the floor. You may sit or lie down. If you choose to sit, try to maintain an upright posture and avoid leaning back.

It is up to you how deep into the experience you want to go. You can steer the journey, change direction and of course stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

Now start the audio file. We hope you enjoy the journey!

Letting the experience sink in

You may want to help yourself remember what you experienced on the journey:

→ Start by writing down everything you remember – even things you do not want to share with others. Be guided by the images, sounds, smells, feelings and even tastes that came to your mind during the journey.

→ Did you have particular feelings in particular places during the walk? Write these down too.

→ Of course, you can also develop these thoughts, images and impressions further, elaborating on them or changing certain aspects. You do not have to limit yourself to your original experiences.

If you want to creatively express your city of the future:

→   Write a travel report or describe your experiences, draw a sketch, paint a picture, create a collage, or build a space using modelling clay, Lego or other items around the house and take pictures of the results.

→   There are no limits to your creativity. You may find that new ideas come to you during the creative process.

If you want to talk about your journey:

→   You may want to tell someone you know about what you saw or experienced and relive some of your thoughts and feelings. You can also expand on some of the ideas for the future together.

→   A conversation can also help if you want to get what you experienced out of your head.

→   You can invite others to go mind travelling too. You will have plenty to talk about!

To help you reflect on your experience, here are some questions to ask yourself:

→   What small thing can I change in my life right now to turn an aspect of my positive visions into reality?

→   Do I want to help realise the ideas I had, and if so, how?

→   What do I personally want to avoid?

You can even formulate specific goals based on these questions. Ideally, make these goals SMART, i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.
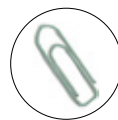
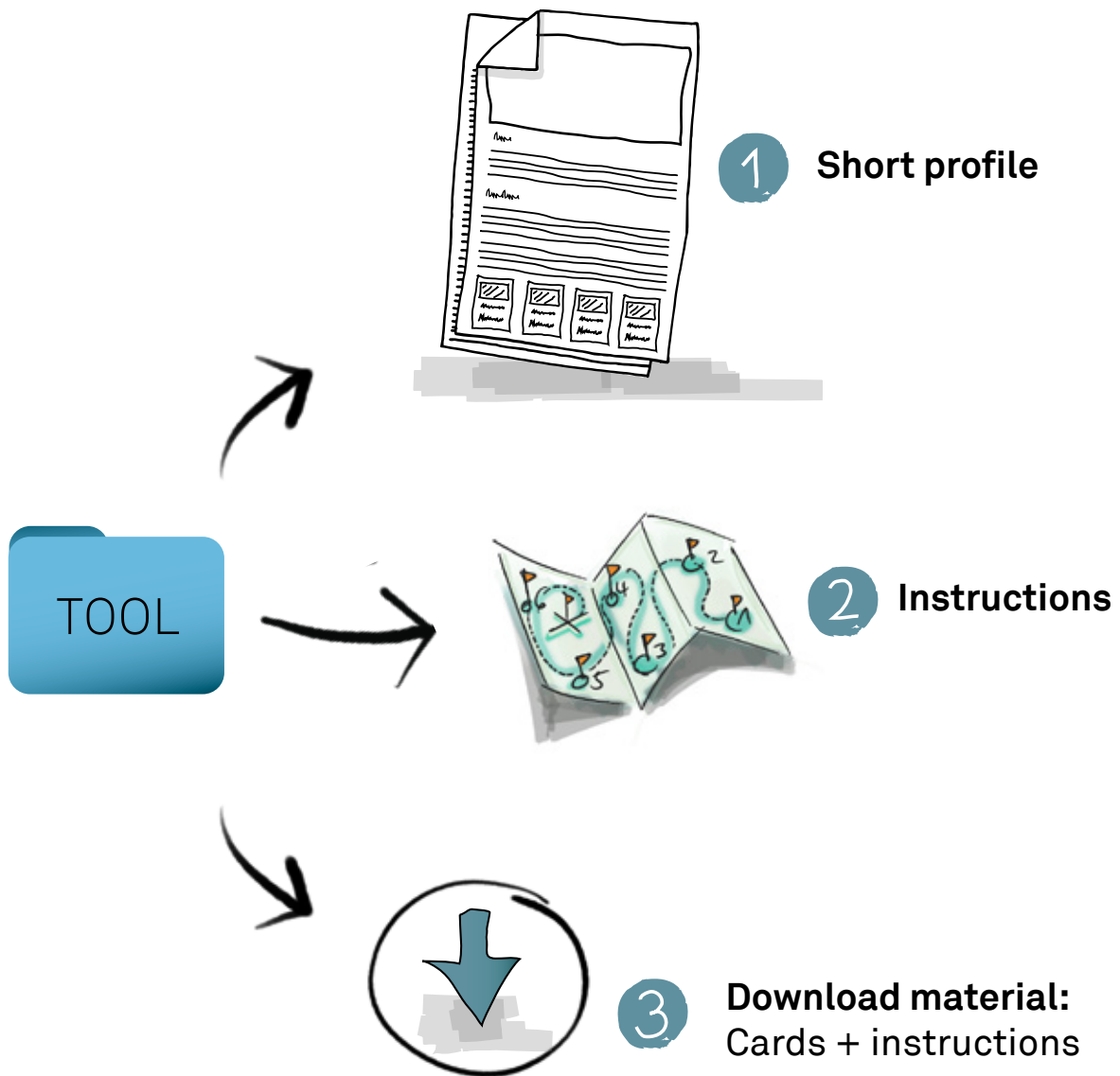## Application ideas for the guided visualisation journey to the future

The Guided Visualisation Journey to the Future was initially created to track down our own visions of the future for our research project Urban Xtopias. Subsequently, we also used it in an Xtopian course at the University of Kassel (as one of several possible envisioning methods). Students then sketched out their experiences and, if they wished, presented them to others. You can see an example of this documentation below.

You can find the spoken text for the guided visualisation journey and the audio file on our website
at https://xtopien.org/guidedvisualisation_xtopias/

all limits of physics have been overcome.
humans are pure consciousness.
body, space and time are freely selectable variables.
humans create parallel universes.
realities can be formed by everyone.
there is no difference between creating and thinking.
everything is free of consequences and interdependencies.
everything is experiment, everything is play.

1 Short profile

2 Instructions

3 Download material:
Cards + instructions

Content of the tool: Animal Perspectives
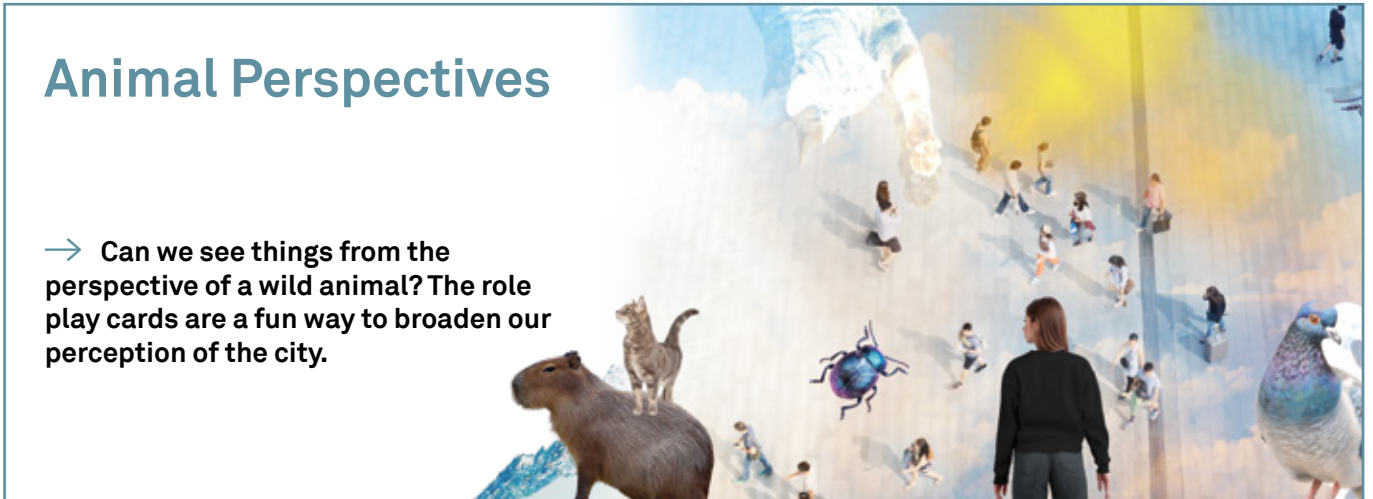
Animal Perspectives

→ **Can we see things from the perspective of a wild animal? The role play cards are a fun way to broaden our perception of the city.**

The topic

The cards contain a brief text to help participants get into the role of a different species. This enables them to experience the city from the perspective of 12 wild animals (bee, gull, butterfly, hedgehog, squirrel, etc.). What possibilities, challenges and dangers do these animals encounter? The cards invite participants to re-think the relationships between humans and wild animals in cities.

The Xtopian moment

The road is an ear-splitting death zone, the dustbin a bountiful paradise, the absence of trees a barrier to movement and the high-rise roof a safe nesting place. Putting yourself in the position of a wild animal reveals unfamiliar and ambivalent sides to urban spaces and their everyday uses – and maybe to our own habits. Animal Perspectives helps stimulate new ideas for a more wildlife-friendly future.

The target groups

Animal Perspectives helps participants question what they take for granted and experience the city in a playful new way as a wild animal. It is suitable for children aged 8 and above who are able to get to know the different animal species and study them further (e.g. in classes on general knowledge, art, etc.). The cards are aimed at people who are willing to question the way we design and use urban spaces and want to develop new ideas for the future. The tool is therefore particularly suited to those involved in designing spaces – in a private or professional capacity.

Time required	Group size	Format	Location	Materials
Introduction 10-15 mins **Execution** 15-45 mins **Conclusion** 30-60 mins	3-12 participants per set; approx. 24 in total	Individually; introduction and conclusion in the group	Outdoors: school playground, neighbourhood, public square or similar.	Instructions, animal cards; optional: double-sided tape, map, barrier tape or similar.

The educational goals

Animal Perspectives awakens interest in wildlife and can raise awareness of its needs. By sharing experiences, the players see that all species have different, sometimes irreconcilable needs. The role play helps participants negotiate between contrary positions: "As a pigeon, I want.. and as a human, I want.. ". Ideally, participants' improved ability to switch perspectives will extend to the way they approach topics such as gender, diversity and inclusion.

Application

You can use Animal Perspectives as a standalone exercise or as a workshop module.

Preparation: As the group leader, choose appropriate animal species for your region. Decide whether participants will each be allowed to choose their favourite animal or be asked to draw a card from the pack. Decide where the exercise will take place: Depending on the purpose, suitable locations could be a densely built city centre, a housing estate or a school playground. If participants are unfamiliar with the location, or the boundaries of the game play area are unclear, you may want to prepare a map or (if children are playing) visibly mark out the edges of the area. Marking out a clear boundary is also helpful if you want to encourage interaction between the "animals" (not recommended for younger children, as this can be too distracting). You may want to distribute the cards in advance so that the participants can prepare for their role – e.g. by researching the animal or wearing comfortable/themed clothing. To reduce inhibitions, it can be helpful to perform icebreaker exercises before beginning Animal Perspectives.

The **execution** is described in detail in the instructions – including a mini meditation that can help participants with their "transformation" into an animal.

Follow-up: In the instructions, you will find some possible questions for a follow-up discussion in the group. Depending on the time available, you can encourage the participants to first record their impressions themselves, for example as a story or a vignette (phenomenological observation method). If your learning objectives relate to designing spaces or urban areas, you could get the participants to mark the areas on a map where their species feels safe or threatened. The group could then debate opposing views and possible improvements to problematic sites from an animal and human perspective: Who agrees and who disagrees? Are "green" spaces good places for all animals? How does wildlife fare on gravel roofs, car parking areas or school playgrounds?

Potential and challenges

In addition to facilitating individual learning, the game enables players to jointly work out specific ways to improve a site. The role play itself can take place alone as a homework exercise or with everyone together in the same place. In the latter case, the participants can interact with each other as animals; however, this may mean they spend less time exploring the location. The degree of interaction also depends on how large the space is and how well the participants know each other. In the case of younger children, it is advisable to clearly mark out the area so that they do not get lost. Depending on their personality, children and young people may have inhibitions about playing the role of an animal. It is therefore crucial to create an atmosphere of trust and encouragement.

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Game instructions: Animal Perspectives

Animal Perspectives is a role play that invites you to switch your perspective and imagine what it would be like to be a wild animal living in a city. It aims to give people a better understanding of urban wildlife. Changing your perspective means being able to see and understand things from other points of view.

Why should we see things from an animal's perspective?

We humans largely shape the world according to our own interests and often give little consideration to how wildlife uses the spaces we create. What opportunities, challenges and dangers lurk here for them? Of course, it is not possible for us humans to truly experience things from an animal's perspective – but we can at least try our best. The role play is a fun way to think about the following questions:

→ Can I empathise with an animal and imagine having the same sensory perceptions, needs and behaviours?

→ How does my perception of the world change when I adopt an animal's perspective?

→ How would we have to change the city to meet animals' needs?

The game consists of cards for 12 animals that are common in some German towns and cities but rare or even absent in others. Some of these creatures are animals we see every day, while others are harder to find. Some are popular and others have a bad reputation. They all have skills we humans lack, and they can do some things much better than us. The cards initiate a change in perspective by providing a short description of the abilities and needs of the species depicted.

Below, we describe how to play the game as a group. The game is more fun and effective when you can share your experiences with others after transforming into an animal. But you can of course also complete the exercise alone: In this case, choose a card and think beforehand about what could help you put yourself in this animal's position (e.g. clothing, time of day, location).

To perform the exercise as a group, we recommend that you all start it together so as to agree the location and time and facilitate the "transformation" into the animals. Each participant chooses an animal card or draws one from the pack. You can then say the following: "Imagine you're not a human but another creature. The card contains some information about your animal. To turn yourself into this animal, you don't need a costume, just your imagination. Now read through what's written on the card." If participants attach the animal card to their clothing so it is visible to the other players, they can interact with other animals during the role play. However, some groups find it more exciting to guess the animals from the behaviour of the other participants.

In our experience, it is not easy to put yourself in an animal's position. To help the participants with the change in perspective, you can lead a guided mini meditation. You will find an example script below. Once they have "transformed" themselves, all participants go off on their own to explore the world from the animal perspective.

After a certain time has elapsed (approx. 15-45 mins), you can signal that it is time to turn back into a human and return to the agreed location. Now you can discuss the experiences together.

Mini meditation for the transformation:

"Close your eyes. Breathe in deeply through your nose. Breathe out through your mouth. Keep breathing deeply in and out. Now imagine your animal. What does your animal look like? How big or small is it? Try to imagine what it's like to be the size of this animal. How does your skin or shell feel as this animal? What shape is your body? What colour? You look great! How does it feel? Imagine you can see the world differently now. Everything looks, sounds, smells and tastes different. It feels different to your touch. What is different, what is new? How do you move around? Give it a try. Is there something you need? What is it? Where can you find it? Take your card and run, fly or swim away .. Explore your world."

Possible questions for sharing experiences after the role play

Becoming an animal

→ Was it fun being the animal on your card?

→ Did you manage to shift your perspective and feel like an animal? If so:

→ Did the change happen quickly or slowly? Did you find it difficult or quite easy?

→ Did anything help you?

→ (If relevant: Did you prepare? Did you wear particular clothes to help you feel like the animal?)

→ Was there enough information on the card? Did you research any other information about your animal (senses, characteristics, behaviour) on the internet or in books or films? Would you like to do some research so you can have another go at the role play?

Exploring the area

→ Where were you (city centre, garden, woodland, park, shopping centre, etc.)?

→ How long were you there?

→ What did you discover?

→ What places were particularly difficult or dangerous for your animal?

→ What places were safe or well-suited to your animal?

→ Did you meet any other animals (real or other players)? How was that?

→ What did you learn? What left a strong impression on you?

→ Would you rather have been a different animal? Which one? Why? Would you like to try a different card?

Preparing and producing the cards

Please note: We have created print materials for this tool. The attractively illustrated cards are available for you to download. You can either send them to a printing service (we provide printable PDFs with crop marks) or print and cut them out yourself.

Printing service:
Simply download the print PDF and send it to the print shop. Please include a note to produce with rounded corners (if possible).

Print at home:
We recommend you use a colour printer to make the images as inspiring as possible. It is best to print on relatively thick paper (160 g). Fold the cards in the middle and glue the front and back together. Any sort of paper glue will work, but we recommend spray glue for this purpose. Finally, cut out the cards along the markings.
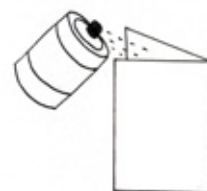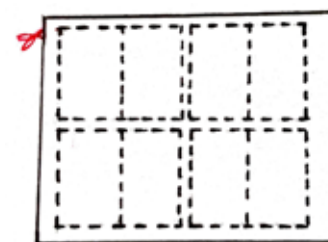
Prepare cards:

1 → Download and print cards

2 → Fold along the markings
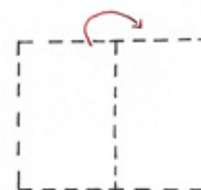
3 → Glue the front and back together using spray glue

4 → Cut along the markings

Download material

We have created print material in German and English for Animal Perspectives. Here are some examples of the cards to preview. You can download the animal cards and cut them out yourself or have them produced by a printing service. You can find the instructions in the download area at xtopien.org/toolbox in the same format as the cards so that you can print them out if necessary.

knurr!

Raccoon
Procyon lotor

Raccoon
Procyon lotor

You are a raccoon. You don't need your eyes much. You can hardly see any colours. But your hearing is so good you can even hear earthworms in the ground. Most of all, you rely on your paws. They are much more sensitive than human hands. You are also a fantastic climber and a good swimmer. During the day you hide in trees or attics. At night you look for fruit, birds' eggs and small animals to eat. Sometimes you dig in the rubbish. Some people think you make a mess and don't belong here. Others find you cuddly, cute, and funny.
Run off and be a raccoon! Feel the world with your paws. Where can you find food and good hiding places? What are other animals doing? Beware of foxes, cars, and city hunters.

krrah!

Raven Crow
Corvus corone

Raven Crow
Corvus corone

You are a crow.
You can fly and you feel very comfortable among other crows. You give them presents - or steal from them when they are not looking! You are clever and you learn fast. Sometimes you even make your own tools. You are not fussy about what you eat: worms, mice, beetles, young birds, and also fruit and seeds. Many people don't like you very much. You annoy them because you don't sing very well. Some people even find you scary.
Fly away and be a crow! What animals do you see when you fly? Do you find food? You don't like to be alone. Are there other crows to talk to? Watch out for the fox.

sss!

Wasp
Vespula Vulgaris

Wasp
Vespula vulgaris

You are a wasp.
You can fly and are small and nimble. You see the world around you in a blur but, when something moves, you can focus on it very well. Even in fast flight, you easily avoid obstacles. You don't have ears but you perceive sounds through vibrations. You love sweets, but also meat and insects. You live in a wasp colony. You build your nest in mouse holes or other dark cavities, often inside buildings. Many people are afraid of you because of your sting hurts, but you only sting to defend yourself.
Fly off and be a wasp! How fast can you fly? Can you find food and a good place for your nest? What are the other animals doing? Beware of birds!

wauuu!

Redfox
Vulpes vulpes

Redfox
Vulpes vulpes

You are a fox.
You are very intelligent. Your world is full of sounds and smells, you can hear and smell much better than humans. You use your bushy tail as a flag to communicate with other foxes. It also helps to keep you warm. You prefer to eat small animals such as mice and birds. You hunt alone. Many people find you exciting, others are afraid of you. You are not very shy of people nowadays and are seen more and more in cities.
Run off and be a fox! Concentrate on your sense of smell and hearing. Where are you sneaking off to? Can you find food? What are other animals doing? Watch out for people and cars!

fiep!

House mouse
Mus musculus

House mouse
Mus musculus

You are a mouse.
You are as fast as lightning. You don't see all that well, but you can smell, hear and taste very well. With your whiskers you can sense the smallest changes in the air. Your teeth are almost as hard as diamonds. You eat plants, insects, carrion and just about everything that humans leave behind. You are very curious and like to explore your surroundings from under the protection of edges and ledges. Unfortunately, many humans don't like you very much. Some are even afraid of you.
Run off and be a mouse! Feel the air with your whiskers. Rely on your sense of smell and hearing. What are other animals doing? Hide from your enemies – many creatures want to eat you!


Peacock butterfly
Aglais io

Peacock butterfly
Aglais io

You are a butterfly.
You can fly, but only after you have warmed yourself up in the sun. You don't want to fly high, you prefer to fly close to the ground. Your wings are extremely water-repellent but very heavy raindrops can be dangerous for you. So, when it rains, you hide under large leaves. Your eyes can't see far, but you can smell, taste, and even sense temperature with your antennae. You prefer to eat flower nectar. You spend the winter in quiet places like cellars or garages. You scare your enemies with the colourful patterns on your wings. Humans find you beautiful.
Fly away and be a butterfly! Can you smell nectar? Can you find a safe, warm place? What are other animals doing? Beware of birds that want to eat you.

1 Short profile

TOOL

2 Instructions

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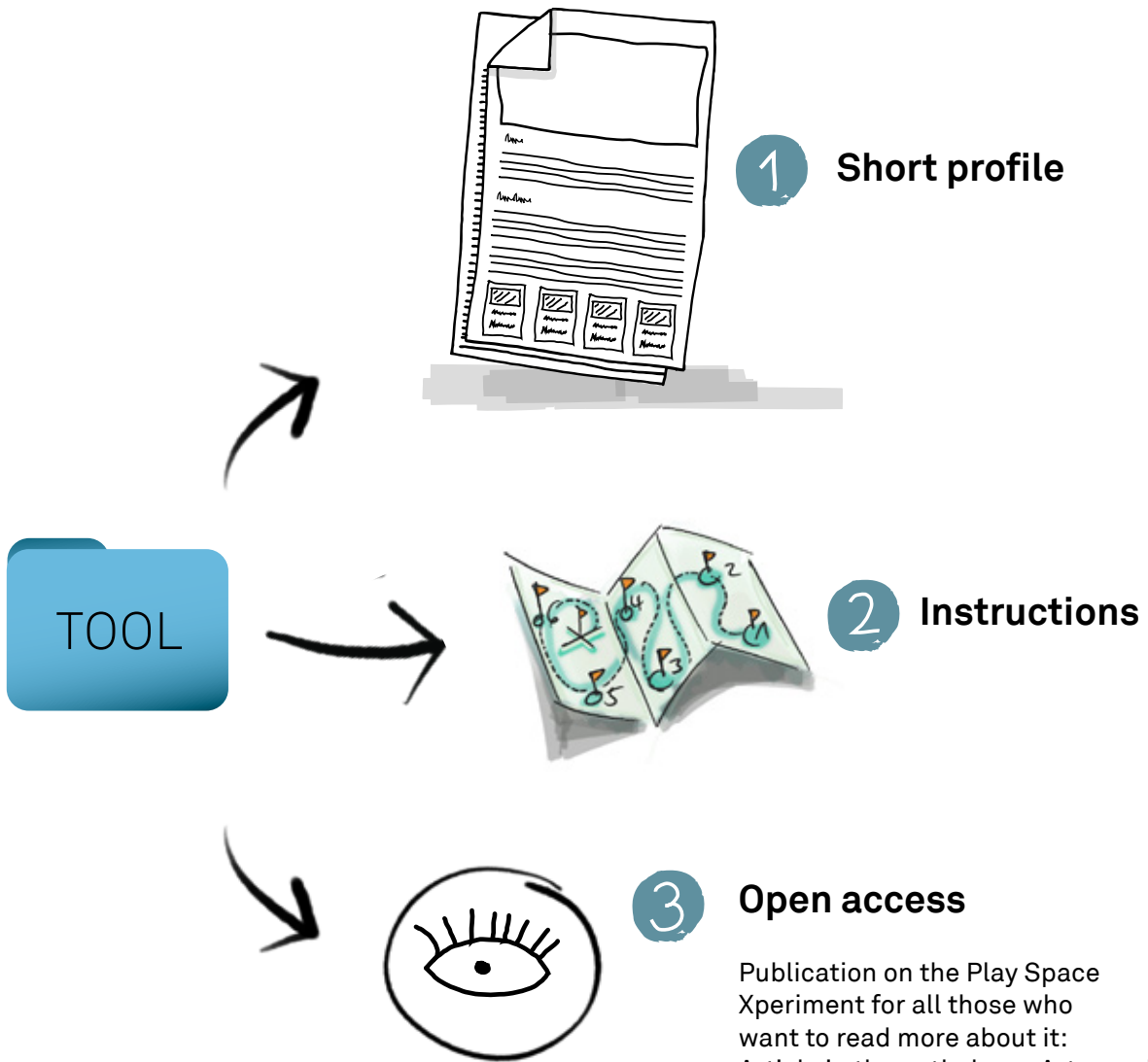
Publication on the Play Space
Xperiment for all those who
want to read more about it:
Article in the anthology „Artographies"

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
Introduction 10-15 mins **Execution** 90-180 mins **Conclusion** 30-90 mins	Up to around 20 people	Individually or in pairs	Digitally or face to face: plenty of space and a quiet, welcoming atmosphere are important	Instructions, pen and paper, various craft materials

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 journalling, 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.

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.

1 Short profile

TOOL

2 Instructions

3 Practice examples
Pictures from a science
communication event
at the Karlsruhe Institute
for Technology (KIT)
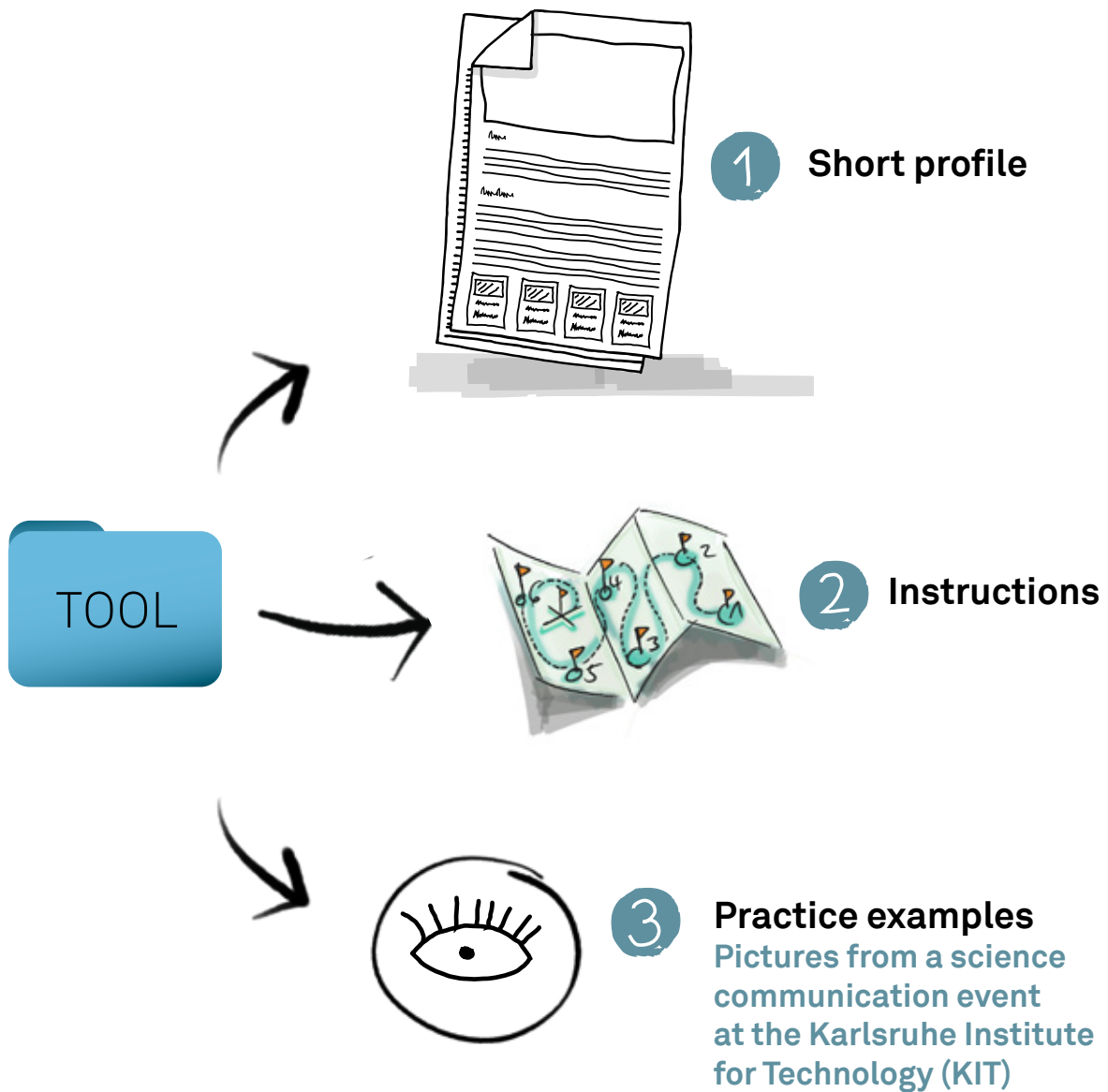
Content of the tool:
Installation for Interconnected
Thinking

Installation for Interconnected Thinking

→ **This three-dimensional installation of bamboo poles and strings invites people to explore the interconnections between two complex transformation processes and share their questions and ideas.**

The topic
You can choose your own two topics for the Installation for Interconnected Thinking. We recommend choosing two big transformation processes that can be broken down into multiple smaller topics ("trends"): For example, the changing world of work encompasses new types of jobs and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Sustainability encompasses changes in mobility, energy sources and diet. As only a small amount of text is used to present the trends, it is best to use key words that require little detailed explanation.

The Xtopian moment
Transformation processes are complex, particularly when they interact with each other. Amid so many topics to think about for the future, the installation can help people explore how two big trends interact. Visitors can physically place their own thoughts on the connecting lines between the two trends. This allows them to get to grips with individual interrelationships – visualised in the installation as connecting strings – without losing sight of the whole.

The target groups
Depending on where it is placed, the installation is aimed at adult passers-by or at attendees of major events such as exhibitions or conferences. The event does not necessarily have to relate to the topic of the installation.

Time required	Group size	Format	Location	Materials
Set-up after initial construction: 30 mins **Duration of exhibit:** any **Dismantling:** 20 mins	**At any one time:** individuals or very small groups **Overall:** unlimited	Individual conversations, individual time for thinking and writing	An environment where people can talk in depth; indoors or outdoors	Assembly instructions, installation, clips, cards and pens, weights if necessary to protect from the wind

The educational goals

The Installation for Interconnected Thinking helps people systematically connect future trends – both independently and through exploring the contributions of others. It combines the individual contributions (which are hung on a connecting line joining two trends) in a participatory process to create a structured overall picture. The educational goal is to combine creative thought with systems thinking. You can support this individually by allowing visitors to ask you open questions as they study the installation.

Application

Preparing the topics: Make the topics of the installation as compact but appealing as possible. Choose two topic areas and assign 3 to 5 trends to each topic (for example, if the topic is the future of work: AI in management, ageing workforce, human-robot interaction). Introduce each trend with a keyword and, if possible, a descriptive image.

Construction: The Installation for Interconnected Thinking is a tetrahedron made from six bamboo poles. The trends of two topic areas are aligned on two poles on opposite sides, the other four stabilize a network of strings representing the interconnections. A string net is suspended between the trends to connect the topic areas (e.g. nine connections for three trends, 16 for four; details in the assembly instructions). It takes some time and finesse to set the installation up for the first time, but it is well worthwhile, particularly if you plan to use it on multiple occasions. The installation folds away for easy transport and is extremely lightweight.

Execution: The installation serves as a talking point. You should therefore install it somewhere passers-by can see it clearly and pause to look at it. Brief the individuals who will be supervising the installation so that they can answer questions about the idea behind the structure. They should be able to use the Socratic method (open, reflective, probing and clarifying questions) to help visitors formulate their thoughts and engage in systems thinking. You may want to give them an overview of the thoughts of previous participants. Have pens and cards ready to record the participants' ideas.

Evaluation: If you want to make use of the results of the installation, you can transfer them to a matrix containing the two trends. For a more in-depth interpretation (e.g. through qualitative content analysis), the two reference points (trends) must be written on each card. The person supervising the installation may also keep an observation sheet recording their interactions with visitors. This means that you can also record the responses of people who did not hang their contributions on the installation itself.

Potential and challenges

The size and unusual geometric shape make the installation an eye-catching addition to a public space. The simple materials and avoidance of long explanatory texts create a playful atmosphere that invites people to engage with complex questions about the future. Not every conversation will be recorded on a card. Some conversations may be deep and time-consuming. The more complex the topic, the more preparation required by the people supervising the installation.

xtopien.org

Instructions for assembling the Installation for Interconnected Thinking

The installation is a tetrahedron made from six bamboo poles: one horizontal pole above the floor, one horizontal pole at the top edge, and four diagonal poles that connect the ends of the horizontal poles.

▶ **You can also find an assembly video on our website xtopien.org/toolbox. Have fun assembling!**

Bars / bamboo poles

1 Upper crossbar
2 Two diagonal rods with 3-5 nodes each
3 Two diagonal poles without junctions
4 Lower crossbar (shortened)

Signs and cards

→ Title label
→ Two topic cards
→ 6-10 trend cards

Cords for constructionons

a) Permanent knots between the diagonal poles (short)
b) Detachable knots at the corners to attach the crossbars (short)
c) 3 to 5 connecting cords between the knot points (several metres each depending on the overall size)

Detachable auxiliary cords

d) Auxiliary cord for the title plate (short)
e) Four auxiliary cords for the theme and trend cards (2-2.5 metres)
f) Auxiliary cords for weights (2-3m)

Construction sketch of the Installation for Interconnected Thinking

Moderation material:

→ A title sign showing the installation's name, e.g. „Installation for Interconnected Thinking" or similar, approx. 15 cm by 100 cm
→ 2 topic signs for the transformation processes, with a brief explanation of the topic on the back if necessary (A3, folded lengthways, laminated if necessary)
→ 6 to 10 trend cards (A3, folded lengthways, laminated if necessary)
→ A5 cards or moderation cards
→ Marker pens
→ Small foldback clips
→ A small surface for people to rest on as they write the cards (e.g. bistro table)
→ Observation form to record interactions (optional)

Construction material:

→ 5 bamboo poles approx. 200-250 cm Ø 15 mm,
→ 1 bamboo pole approx. 160-210 cm Ø 15 mm
→ 100 m of string for tents (or similar)
→ Adhesive putty and rough string
→ 10 clothes pegs

Aids for transport and installation:

→ Fabric remnant for easier transport, ideal 1x2m
→ 2 sandbags or stones to protect from the wind (optional)
→ Depending on where you will place the installation, use weatherproof materials

Set-up:

①

If necessary, shorten the bottom horizontal pole by 40 cm.

②

Discretely mark two of the four diagonal poles, e.g. with a pencil: 10 cm from the top (=thinner) end, 30 cm from the bottom, and then, depending on the number of trends, 3-5 markings at equal intervals between the top and bottom markings.

③

Connect the four diagonal poles at the outer pencil marks. Two at the bottom end and the other combination at the top end (see illustration on the right).
   a. The knots must be absolutely secure on the bamboo, but must keep some space between the poles and allow some play (see illustrations below).
   b. If the knots do not hold firmly enough on the poles: Wrap a ring of adhesive putty around the pole and knot three turns of very rough string tightly over it. Cut the ends short. You can now attach the other knots over this layer.
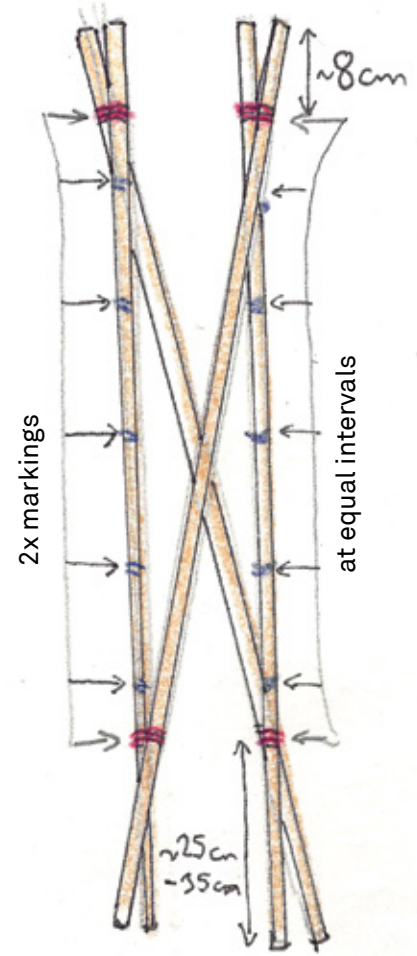
Movable knot for the diagonal poles

④

Temporarily assemble the poles as a tetrahedron
(not on a very slippery floor).

⑤

Attach the top horizontal pole:
  a. Place it on the top two intersections so that it protrudes by around 25 cm on each side (see markings).
  b. Secure it with a strong knot where the upright poles intersect. Use a knot you can untie for transport but that is strong enough (e.g. loop the string around the poles several times) to keep all the connecting lines in the installation taut, see photo.
  c. Place the shorter, bottom pole on the lower intersections of the diagonal bars; it should only protrude a few centimetres. Attach it in the same way as the top pole so that it is easily detachable.

Positioning and knotting the top horizontal pole

⑥
Estimate the lengths of the connecting strings:
  a. To estimate the correct length it is worth drawing a sketch showing the nodes on each side (image). You should leave at least 40 cm of string spare at each node so you can tie the knots and attach the topic card.
  b. The strings should not have more than 4-6 nodes to keep the strings easy to adjust.
  c. Number of strings = number of nodes on one pole (3-5).
  d. Length: 3 or 5 strings measuring 1.8 m cord + 1 m extra for the ends and loops.
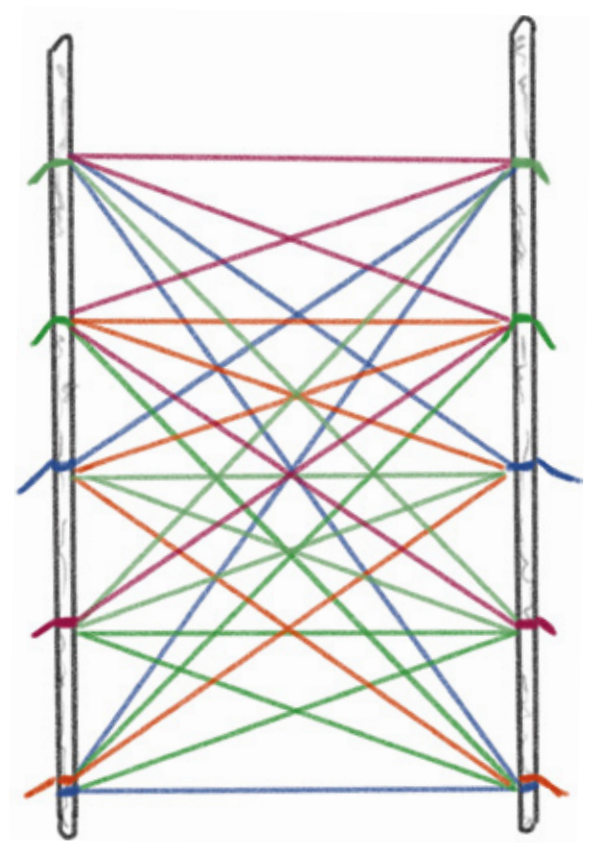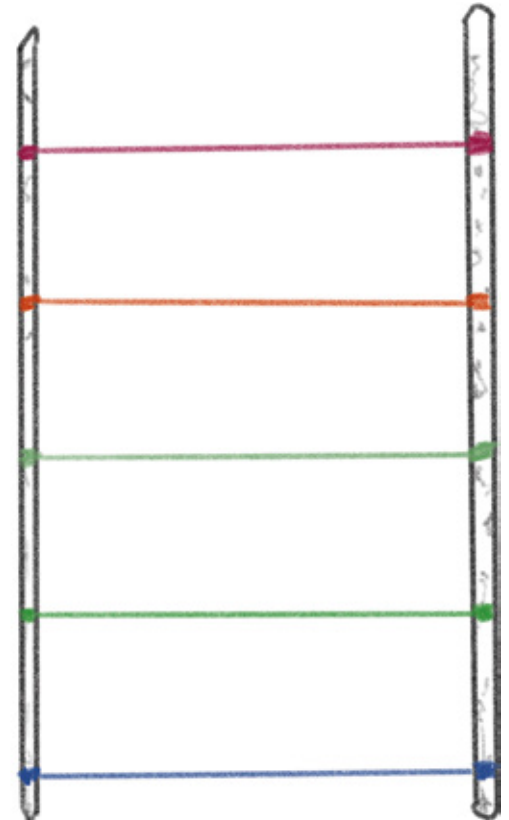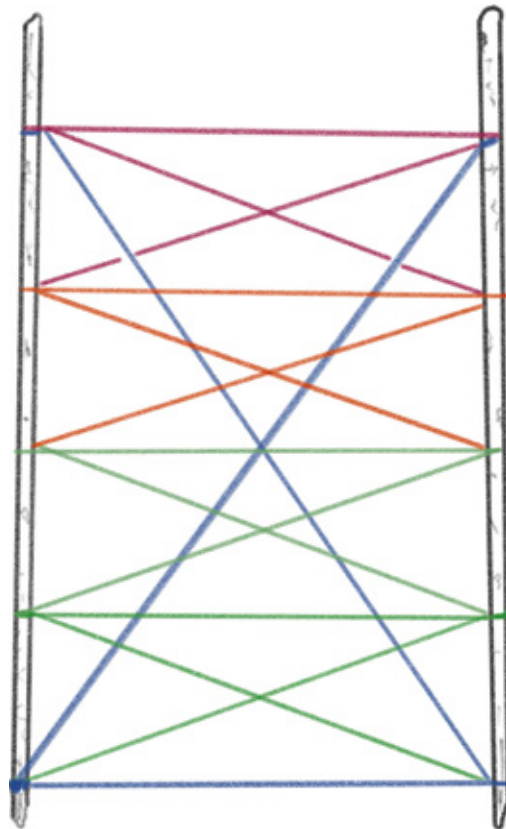
Sketches for bracing, example with 5 nodes and 5 horizontal strings each

7

Provisionally tensioning of the strings, which serve as connecting lines:

a. Choose two diagonal strings opposite of each other (front left, back right). Attach a ring of adhesive putty to each of the pencil lines and tie them very tightly with three turns of rough string. Cut the ends of the string short. These fixed points will become the nodes.

b. Connect the lowest nodes of both poles with a string. The middle of the string (mark this with a foldback clip) should be in the middle of the bracing, the cord should only be gently tensioned.

c. Then connect the second lowest nodes and so on up to the top ones in the same way.

d. Loop the ends of the strings around the bamboo pole and fasten them temporarily with a clothes peg.

e. Then tighten the other diagonal connections of the nodes according to the line drawing and stabilise the strings at each node with clothes pegs behind the poles.


Intermediate position during tensioning: Clothes pegs hold the strings in position.

⑧
Finalising the strings:
a. Only when you have provisionally tensioned all the strings do you equalise the tension of the cords. The level of tension itself is not important (this can be adjusted later using the upper and lower pole). However, all strings should be evenly tensioned.
b. At each node, at least one string will have enough extra length. Use this to tie all strings together securely so that they cannot slip down the bamboo. It is important to achieve a "tidy" knot, as visitors' eyeline will be drawn to these points.
c. If individual string ends are still protruding, you can now cut these and, if necessary, prevent them from fraying (e.g. by melting the end of the string).
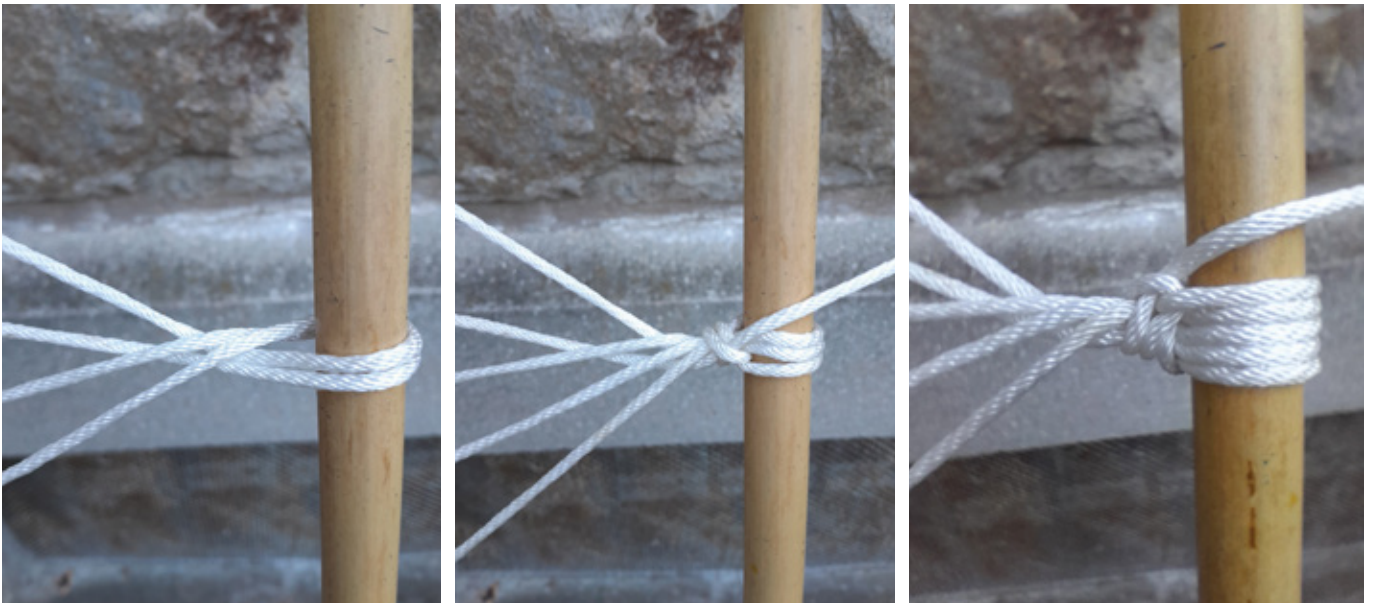
The strings at a node are firmly connected to each other and to the pole with the string end.

⑨

Attaching auxiliary strings (these are fully removed for transport):

a. To hang the trends where they will be clearly visible, now tie strings running parallel to the two poles with knots from the upper horizontal pole to one of the lower ends of the slanted poles. One runs close to the slanted pole, one from the end of the upper horizontal pole to the lower end of the slanted pole.

b. You should attach these strings with strong knots that can easily be untied again.

c. If you are placing the installation where there is a risk of wind, you can use the two upper corners of the tetrahedron to tie it to weights or fixed points (e.g. railings). The installation is much more stable than it appears.

d. In busy environments, you can also attach a weight to the lower horizontal pole. This improves stability without creating a tripping hazard.

Disassembling for transport:

a. Remove the signs and clips.

b. Untie the auxiliary strings. You may want to clip them together with a label. The connection strings remain on the poles.

c. Remove the horizontal poles.

d. Fold the upright poles together so that they do not become entangled with the connection strings.

e. Wrap all the poles in a sheet or similar and tie the bundle together with one of the auxiliary strings for safe transport.

Auxiliary strings for the title, the topic cards and the wind fastening

Set-up at the installation location:

a. Depending on how busy or windy the site is, you may want to first set the installation up in a quieter/more sheltered place nearby. The tetrahedron is extremely easy to transport, even by one person, but is too large for most doors.

b. Lay out all the materials, separate the auxiliary strings from the strings you will use to tie the horizontal poles together.

c. Put up the tetrahedron and untangle the strings if necessary. Check that all the knots are still firmly tied.

d. Position the upper and lower horizontal poles and secure them (use knots you can untie again!) so that all connecting strings are under slight tension.

e. Adjust the knots if the tension is uneven. The bamboo poles should not visibly bend.

f. Attach all the auxiliary strings. Use knots you can untie again.

g. You can attach the sign containing the name of the installation to the upper horizontal pole using two short strings and clips at the ends or with a zigzag string with several clips.

h. Use foldback clips to attach the two topic headings to the top of the auxiliary strings.

i. Also use foldback clips to attach the trend cards to the nodes. Tie the trend cards to the leftover string at the nodes.

j. Finally, place the installation so it can be seen clearly from all sides (if possible, a surface area of 9 square metres for easy walking around).

k. Attach guy lines and weights if necessary.

l. Place a bistro table with cards, pens and (optionally) the observation form next to the installation.

m. So that the installation is not completely empty at the beginning, you can write some cards yourself and hang these up. You can then remove these later.
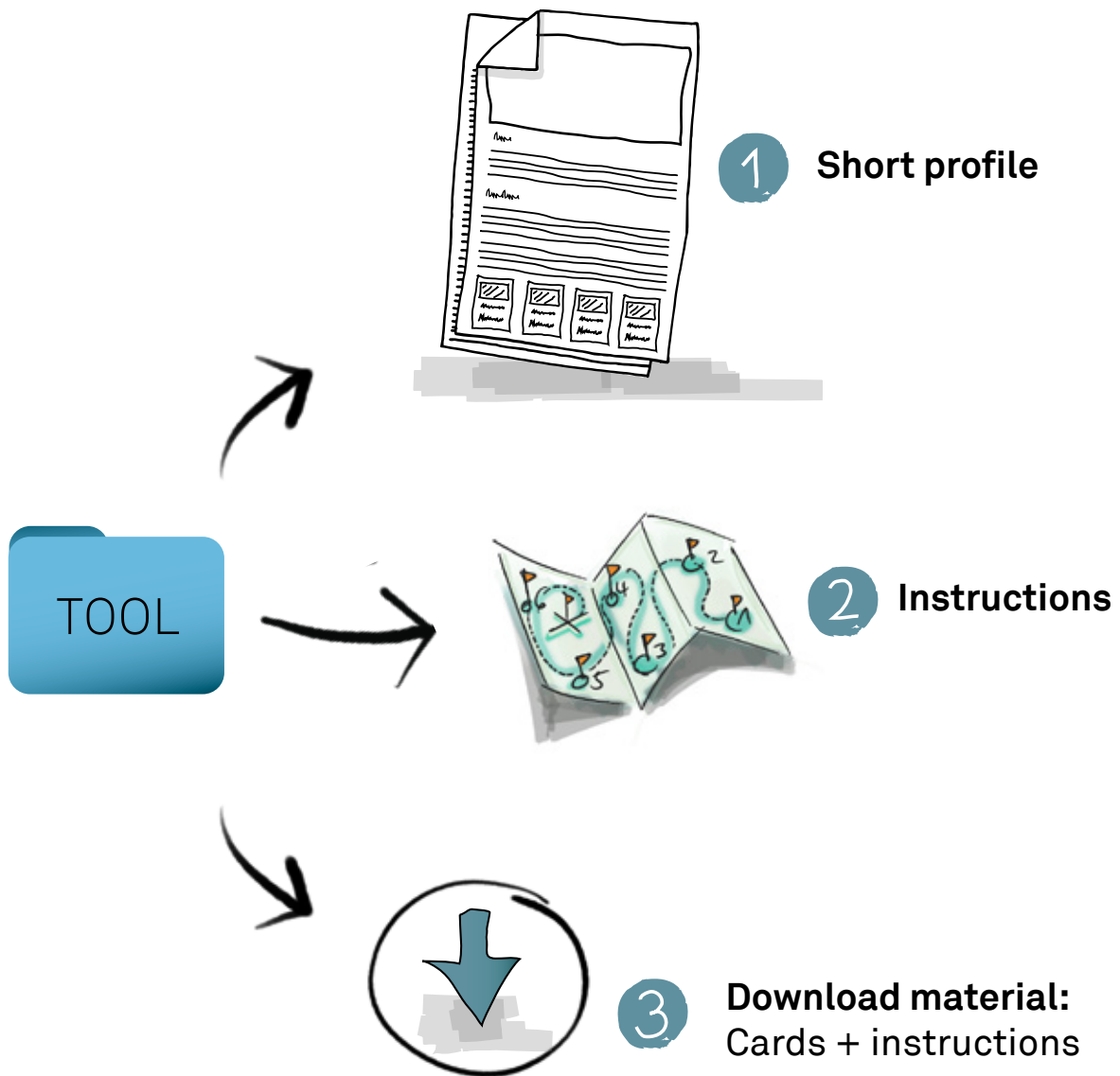
Application example: The Installation for Interconnected Thinking in use

As part of two multi-day science communication events organised by the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), we set up the installation in a public square in the city. The aim was to invite passers-by to talk about how the various necessary sustainability transformations interact with the changes in modern working environments. To address such „dry" topics, an inviting, lively and interactive installation is exactly the right door opener.

1 Short profile

TOOL

2 Instructions

3 Download material:
Cards + instructions

Content of the tool:
Cohabitat

Cohabitat

→ **A mystery and role play game that highlights current conflicts between humans and the natural world and prompts ideas for future forms of cohabitation with other species.**

The topic
The game is based on the idea of cohabitation, which focuses on how different creatures can live together or alongside each other. In the first part of the game, the players solve a mystery together. The mystery describes a present-day conflict between humans and animals, plants or microorganisms. The second part of the game takes the players on an imaginary journey to Zoopolis, a future multispecies democracy, where the players must renegotiate the positions of the protagonists from the first part of the game.

The Xtopian moment
By imagining what it would be like to be another living creature and defending that species' right to a good life against other (largely human) interests, participants become aware of what we humans take for granted. The change in perspective and the process of negotiating with other species as equals open up space for new ideas on how we could live together in the future, while also revealing the limits of the utopian vision of cohabitation.

The target groups
From urban planners to animal rights activists, anyone with an interest in rethinking how we coexist with other species and who enjoys riddles and role plays can take part in Cohabitat. Given the complexity of the mysteries, the game is unsuitable for children. Players must be able to quickly think their way into a new role and formulate arguments from the perspective of this character.

Time required	Group size	Format	Location	Materials
Introduction 5 mins 5-20 mins **per round** **Conclusion** (optional) 10-30 mins	4-7 people (including game leader) per group; multiple groups can play at once	Small groups	Indoors or outdoors	1 set of instructions and 1 set of cohabitation cards per group

The educational goals

Cohabitat highlights the everyday dominance of humankind over other species. It also enables a playful change in perspective, in which participants must recognise other creatures' right to exist and argue from their position. The ability to see things from the perspective of others is not only important in how we treat plants and animals but in many different social contexts (diversity, inclusion, etc.). Participants who act as game leader for one of the rounds are also able to learn leadership skills.

Application

Preparation: Divide the group up into smaller groups of 4 to 7. Print out the game instructions for each group and the required number of cohabitation cards (or print all ten if you want the participants to choose the mysteries themselves). Decide how many rounds you want the game to have.

Execution: Make the small groups as diverse as possible: a variety of perspectives is advantageous in both parts of the game. In each group, one person acts as the facilitator for the round (one round = both parts of the game). This person does not require any particular prior knowledge. If the groups play multiple rounds, they can change the facilitator for each round. The groups play independently, but you can go around the participants, listen and provide help with any problems. There is no right or wrong solution in the role play. This means it is up to the group whether the players find new ways to live together. The idea of the game is to simulate a multi-species democracy, where there are no easy solutions. Roles may include, for example, blackbirds, humans, mosquitoes and viruses. The key aim is for the players to put themselves in the position of another living being, defend their right to a good life and try to accommodate the perspectives of other species. To help the discussion along, you may temporarily slip into certain roles as you observe the groups. If multiple groups are playing the game at different speeds, you will need to bring the game to a close (tell the participants beforehand how much longer they have left) or call a break.

Conclusion: You can follow the game with a reflection round for everyone to share their experiences. How did it feel to play the role of a tree or fox and argue for their right to a good life?
What did this reveal about dominance, human assumptions and conflicts? Was it possible to find solutions? What will the participants take away with them for their work or personal life? Depending on the available time, you could follow up with other exercises. For example, you could get your participants to develop the Zoopolis idea further. Adapting the Play Space Xperiment from this toolbox would be one option for this. An exciting task for older students, for example, could be to develop their own mystery and role play cards. In an advanced version, they could even include futuristic scenarios in their mysteries.

Potential and challenges

The groups can play Cohabitat largely on their own. However, it is recommended to keep an eye on them so you can help out if any problems arise. In the role play, some participants may be better than others at switching perspective and negotiating from different positions. When planning the game, you should take into account that some groups talk for longer than others.

Game instructions for Cohabitat

How do we humans want to live together with other species – now and in the future?

The aim of the "Cohabitat" game is to leave the human perspective, put ourselves in the position of other species and develop ideas as a group for different ways to coexist. The game is more fun in a larger group; you need at least four players.

Cohabitat consists of two parts: a mystery to solve and a role play based on the solution to the mystery. You can read the instructions for the second part when you have completed the first mystery.

→ **Important: On the front of each card you will see a picture and a short text that gives the players a mystery to solve, ending with the question "How could that have happened?" The solution is written on the back of the card – do not read this yet!**

Part 1: The mystery

Preparation: One person takes the role of the game leader. The other players try to solve the mystery together. If you play multiple rounds, you can change the leader each time.

→ All the mysteries are themed around the relationship between humans and other species and are based on true events.

→ Your task as a player is to solve the mystery: Can you identify the animal, human or plant species behind each name? What other species are involved? What has happened and why?

→ The names of the characters give no clues as to which type of species they are: Susi, Milan and Ali could be humans, animals, plants or microorganisms.

→ To solve the mystery, take it in turns to ask questions to the game leader. The questions must be worded so that the leader can give a "yes" or "no" answer, e.g.: "Is Rita a swan?" "Did Max get eaten?"

→ Solving the mystery does not mean you have to precisely identify every species involved. The important thing is to guess what has happened and why; this does not rely on knowing the exact name of the species.

Execution: Choose a card from the set without looking at the back of the card. The game leader first reads the solution on the back of the card quietly so that they can answer the questions from the players. The leader then reads the heading and the mysterious text on the front of the card aloud and asks: "How could that have happened?" To solve the mystery, the players take it in turns to ask the leader questions, who answers them using only the words "yes" or "no". If you are finding it difficult to solve the mystery, the game leader can give some additional clues.
The solution on the back of the card is the "correct" one, but maybe you can come up with other scenarios for the humans, animals and plants in the game. Once the players come up with the right solution or another explanation that fits, the game leader reads aloud the text on the back of the card.

Part 2: The role play

Congratulations! You have solved the mystery. We now invite you to join us in Zoopolis: a future place where all species can communicate with each other and have the same right to a good life. In other words, Zoopolis is a multi-species democracy. Each player takes on the perspective of one of the creatures featured in the first part of the game. If you have more players than the number of roles, participants can share a role and help each other. If you have fewer players than the number of roles, decide which role(s) you will exclude from the game. The game leader chairs the discussion: They can allow players to speak, decide how long each person has the floor, suggest compromises and bring proceedings to a close. They do not play the role of a species themselves.

Execution: Assign the roles. Imagine you are in the situation raised by the first part of the game. This time, however, the different species can talk to each other to resolve the conflict or challenge described.

Remember: Everyone has the right to a good life! What arguments can you think of to defend your goals and actions? Can you manage to find another solution or reach compromises? Can you find new rules to help you live together? Can you redefine your relationships, or will everything stay as it was? The aim of Zoopolis is to think your way into the interests and perspectives of other species. The outcome of the discussion is entirely down to you as the participants, and there is no predetermined solution: Depending on your discussion and what positions you prioritise, you will come to different results.

Enjoy your visit to Zoopolis!

Preparing and producing the cards

Please note: We have created exclusive print materials for this tool. The attractively illustrated cards are available for you to download. You can either send them to a printing service (we provide printable PDFs with crop marks) or print and cut them out yourself.

Printing service:
Simply download the print PDF and send it to the print shop. Please include a note to produce with rounded corners (if possible).

Print at home:
We recommend you use a colour printer to make the images as inspiring as possible. It is best to print on relatively thick paper (160 g). Fold the cards along the markings and glue the front and back together. Any sort of paper glue will work, but we recommend spray glue for this purpose. Finally, cut along the markings.
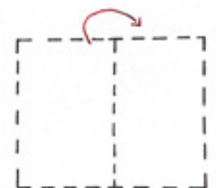
Prepare cards:
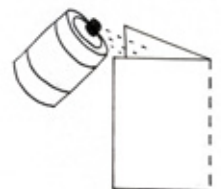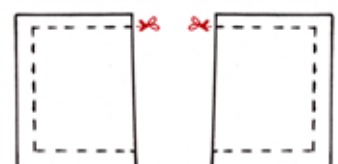
1 → Download and print cards

2 → Fold along the markings

3 → Glue the front and back together using spray glue

4 → Cut along the markings

TOOLBOX **Supplement**

Download material

We have created print material in German and English for Cohabitat. Here are some examples of the cards to preview. You can download the cards and cut them out yourself or have them produced by a printing service. You can find the instructions in the download area at xtopien.org/toolbox in the same format as the cards so that you can print them out if necessary.

Paradise Lost

Giselle the pantry moth lived in the kitchen of John the human and laid her eggs there. When the eggs hatched, the moth larvae ate their way through John's store cupboard. John wasn't happy! To get rid of the moths, he bought some ichneumon wasps, including Hugo. The tiny wasps laid their eggs on Giselle's eggs. When they hatched, the ichneumon wasp larvae ate the moth eggs. John was delighted that the moths had gone from his kitchen and that he hadn't used any poison. Once there were no more moth eggs to eat, the wasps disappeared too.

Giselle had more than enough food. But because of Hugo and his gang, her eggs and larvae did not survive. Giselle knew John was behind it.

What could have happened?

Your roles in Zoopolis

1 Giselle the pantry moth and her eggs and larvae
2 John the human
3 Hugo the ichneumon wasp and his fellow wasps
4 Ichneumon wasp eggs and larvae

Temptation

The butterfly bush (also known as summer lilac) has been planted all over the world as a richly flowering and robust garden plant. Gardener Hakan has also planted David in his garden and is delighted with the fragrant purple flowers. This also attracts butterflies such as Amira as well as bees and bumblebees. They find a rich source of food here. However, the butterfly bush is considered an „invasive species" as it spreads rapidly and crowds out other species. It also provides nectar for butterflies, but no food for their caterpillars. That's why conservationist Jill wants to fight it.

Hakan is pleased that David attracts many beautiful creatures like Amira to him. Amira's children are initially critical of him. Jill, on the other hand, would like to get rid of David forever.

I wonder why?

Your roles in Zoopolis

1 Butterfly bush David
2 Garden friend Hakan
3 Butterfly Amira
4 Bees and bumblebees
5 Butterfly caterpillars
6 Conservationist Jill

A Misleading Name

Levi, a five-year-old boy, is too scared to go into the garden anymore since his father Juan told him that earwigs like Elias live there. Levi is worried the earwigs might crawl into his ears. But earwigs are no danger to humans. they eat aphids like Carl and the eggs of apple worms, mites and ermine moths. Juan even makes little shelters for earwigs and hangs them in Alcmene the apple tree. He wants Elias to eat Carl and his family, who are damaging the tree.

Levi is scared to go into the garden since Juan showed him Elias. But Juan is always happy to see Elias and looks after him.

What could have happened?

Your roles in Zoopolis

1 Levi the child
2 Juan, Levi's father
3 Elias the earwig
4 Carl the aphid and family
5 Alcmene the apple tree

Troubled Waters

Felix the aquarium owner kept red swamp crayfish, a species from America. When the aquarium got too small for them, he released the crayfish Tom and Mira in a lake, where they bred successfully. Red swamp crayfish not only outcompete the European crayfish but also transmit the deadly crayfish plague. They themselves are resistant to the plague. Because of this, the European crayfish are in sharp decline, and the introduced red swamp crayfish are multiplying rapidly. For conservationists, the red swamp crayfish are an "invasive species". A few years ago, some clever young entrepreneurs in Berlin saw an opportunity: They have started catching the crayfish and marketing them as local yet exotic "Berlin lobsters".

Felix didn't have enough space anymore for Tom and Mira. Tom and Mira's distant relatives paid for this with their lives. But recently, some clever souls have had a successful idea.

What could have happened?

Your roles in Zoopolis

1 Felix the aquarium owner
2 Tom and Mira the red swamp crayfish
3 European crayfish
4 Conservationists
5 Clever young entrepreneurs

Hot Summer

Rita the human was happy that Ron the blackbird came to her balcony to drink from the birdbath and sing. But Rita was afraid of tiger mosquitoes like Sandra. Tiger mosquitoes have come to Europe due to global warming and the growth in international trade and transport. Sandra lays her eggs in water, where they develop into larvae and then mosquitoes. To lay eggs, she needs blood. Sometimes she gets this by biting humans. This can transmit viruses including Lucas the dengue virus. In central and northern parts of Europe, the risk of catching the dengue virus is low. However, it can cause a deadly disease here too. Worried about this virus, Rita removed her birdbath.

Rita used to love seeing Ron, but because she is afraid of Lucas, she doesn't want to tempt Ron to come near her home anymore.

What could have happened?

Your roles in Zoopolis

1 Rita the human
2 Ron the blackbird
3 Sandra the tiger mosquito
4 Lucas the virus


Easy Prey

Ivan the fisherman thought he had finally struck lucky. But as he began to reel in the fish that was thrashing on the end of his line, he suddenly saw something out of the corner of his eye. Agnes the osprey swooped in, grabbed Peter the fish straight off Ivan's fishing line and flew away with the catch.

Before he died, Peter felt a sharp pain in his throat. But Agnes was happy.

What could have happened?

Your roles in Zoopolis

1 Ivan the human fisherman
2 Agnes the osprey
3 Peter the fish

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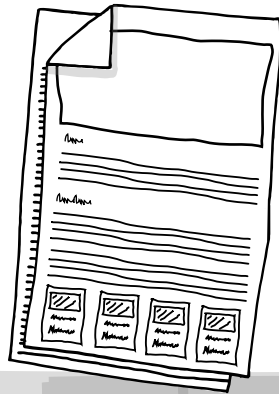
1 Short profile
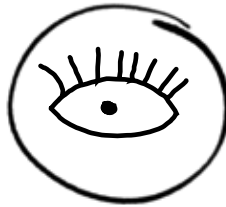
TOOL

2 Website
todomat.org

Content of the tool:
Automento Mori
(Todomat)

Automento Mori (Todomat)

→ **This unusual digital machine invites users to think constructively about what will happen when they die and suggests some actions they can take to be better prepared.**

The topic

Automento Mori is a digital machine called 'Todomat' in German, which is made up of the words „Tod" (death), „to-do" and „automat". It asks users 20 questions about their own death in six categories (body, ceremony, memory, possessions, data and secrets). The answers they can choose include current options but also other possibilities that may exist in future. The machine offers additional information on the environmental and social consequences of the different options (e.g. in relation to funerals, burial and inheritance). Based on the individual responses, Automento Mori offers a list of preparations the user can make.

The Xtopian moment

Being asked to think about your own death can be both inspiring and unsettling, reflecting the ambivalence highlighted by Xtopian methods. Even the way the machine first greets users is designed to provoke. At the same time, it conveys how early preparations for their own passing can benefit the individual themselves and their loved ones – both during their life and beyond. The fictitious options trigger ambivalent feelings, challenging users to reflect in a way that gets under their proverbial skin.

The target groups

Automento Mori is suitable for anyone who wants a gentle, playful introduction to the serious topic of what happens when we die and what we can do to prepare. It is also a versatile tool that can be used for group work on this topic – for example in the context of personal development or intercultural understanding. Other target groups include various occupational groups involved in end-of-life care and funeral arrangements. At the time of writing, Automento Mori is sadly not yet suitable for visually impaired people and is only available in German; an English version will be published by spring 2024.

Time required	Group size	Format	Location	Materials
Approx. 10 to 30 mins	Any	Participants use the tool individually or in pairs	Anywhere participants can clearly read the screen	Smartphone, tablet or PC; website: todomat.org

The educational goals

The options users can choose and resulting to-dos prompt self-reflection. What is important to me in life? Who do I have a message for? What places are dear to me? What am I proud of? The background information touches on various aspects of sustainability and promotes systems thinking. The fictional options show that our society lacks debate and imagination when it comes to new ways of dealing with death and that there is scope to shape the future in this area too.

Application

Individual use: The tool can be accessed at todomat.org and is self-explanatory. Users choose whether they want to work on one or multiple categories. However, please note that the digital version does not allow them to save the information entered for later reuse. The machine produces a to-do list based on the user's responses. The to-dos are displayed on the screen and can be printed out or saved as a pdf. It is up to the user to select and prioritise tasks from the to-do list.

Integration into a group process: If you want to integrate Automento Mori (Todomat) into a guided group process, we recommend giving prior warning that you will be covering the topic of death (see below). Ensure a sufficient number of web-enabled devices and consider whether you will suggest limiting the exercise to certain categories for time reasons or leave it to the participants to decide which questions they want to cover. Prepare questions to reflect on afterwards and have the participants debate these individually, in pairs, in small groups or in a whole-group setting (depending on the size of the group and how well they know each other). Some possible examples: Which questions moved you (the most), and why? What questions or categories did you find unwelcome? What topics or aspects did you think were missing, and why are these important to you? Are there jobs on the to-do list that you will do, and if so, on what timescale? Do you feel privileged to be able to think about your own death in this way? What will you take from the exercise as a whole? Do you have ideas for other visions of the future? What issues would you like to give some more thought?

Potential and challenges

Automento Mori gives a new perspective on shaping the future, encourages us to think carefully about our own lives, stimulates fruitful conversations between friends and relatives, and can potentially prompt lasting change – for instance when users implement the recommended to-dos. By presenting such an unusual topic in the context of discourse on the future, it can provide a refreshing element of surprise in an extended group setting. However, everyone's personal circumstances are different, and not everyone will feel ready to think about their own death. Use of Automento Mori must therefore be voluntary. For the purposes of an Xtopian intervention, it would not be helpful to list every option available today when it comes to the subject of death. The traditions and practices of cultural and religious minorities may therefore be underrepresented.

Automento Mori as an artefact from the future

The website todomat.org is the digital twin of the analogue original: a converted ticket machine serves as the shell of the Automento Mori ('Todomat' in German) and is located in the Museum for Sepulchral Culture in Kassel. There, it welcomes visitors to the freely accessible museum café as an artefact from a future in which people have overcome the taboos surrounding death and are organizing death both more self-determined and more sustainable. The machine provides its users with personalised to-dos and a personal access code to the digital twin.

TOOL

1 **Short profile**

2 **Instructions**

3 **Practice example**

Pictures from the circuit training at Staatstheater Kassel
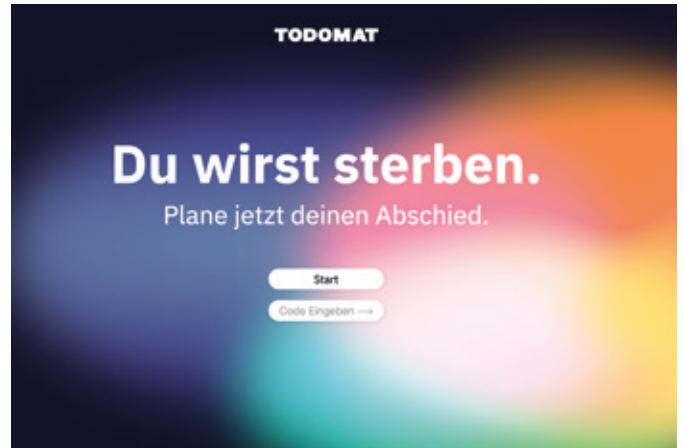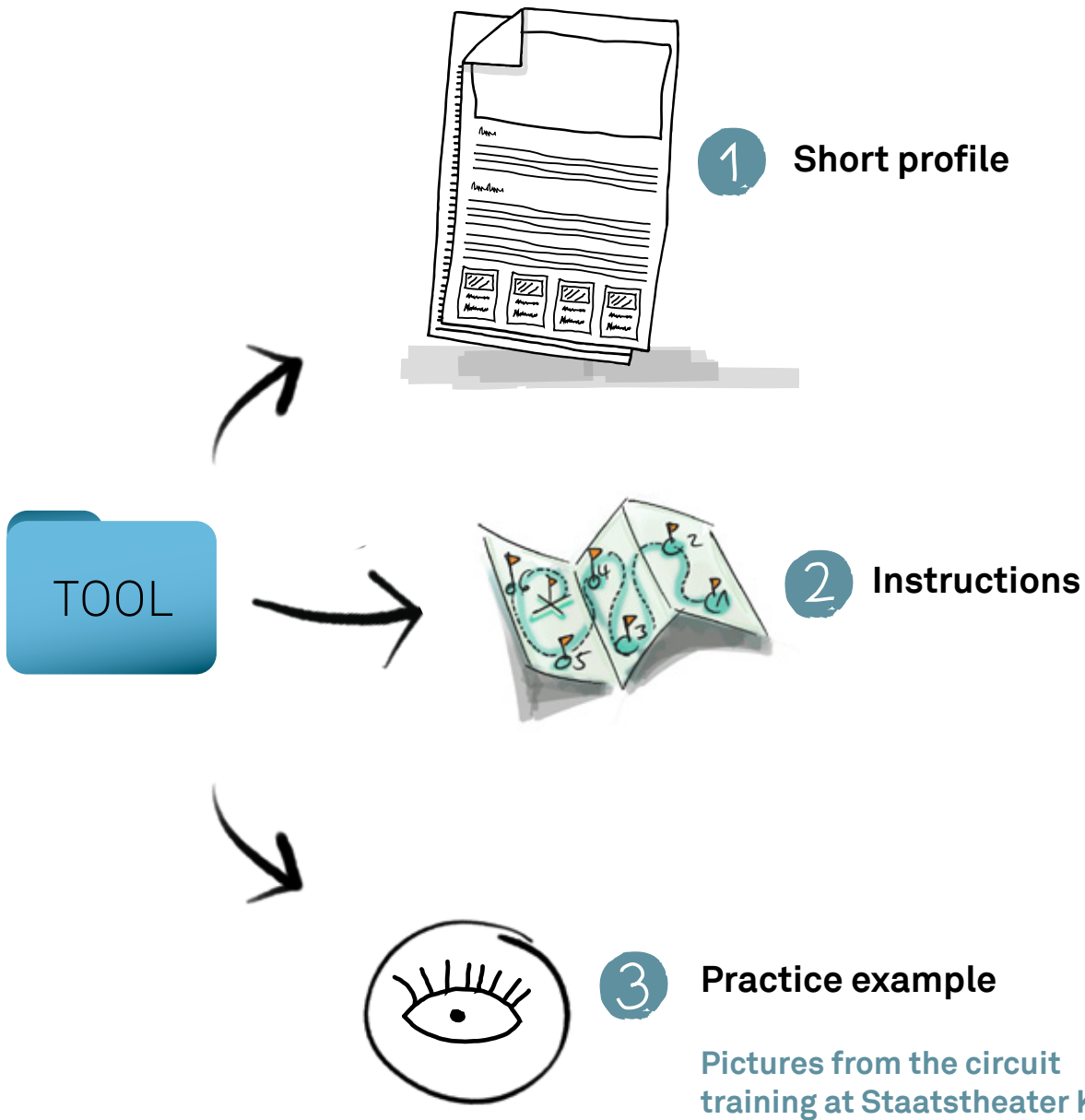
Content of the tool:
Xtopian Circuit Training

Xtopian Circuit Training

→ **An interactive format consisting of multiple stations that train participants (and the circuit's developers) for the future using thought experiments.**

The topic
The tool provides a methodology for developing learning stations themed around the future. Each station deals with a different aspect of a chosen overarching topic. You will need to develop the stations yourself; however, you can use the Xtopia toolbox to help you do so. The toolbox is particularly geared towards topics that address relationships between people and nature, but it is useful for other themes too.

The Xtopian moment
By visiting the different stations, participants engage with topics relating to the future from different perspectives and using different methods. Each station may itself represent an Xtopia. It should use active learning methods to address radical, ambivalent aspects of the future. Alternatively, the process of completing all the stations may provide the Xtopian moment.

The target groups
As an interactive format, an Xtopian Circuit Training is typically aimed at the general public. However, it can also be targeted to specific groups, e.g. city officials, planners and developers, employees of civil society organisations, and many others.

Time required	Group size	Format	Location	Materials
Set-up 60-120 mins **Game duration** > 60 mins **Dismantling** 30-60 mins	Large groups of around 30 or more	Individually or in small groups	Outdoors or indoors; the method is not suitable for remote participation	Stations, accompanying materials, stamp card (if using), evaluation materials (if using)

The educational goals

An Xtopian Circuit Training aims first and foremost to open up imaginary spaces, train the imagination and promote critical engagement with visions of the future – not only for visitors but also for those developing the training. Visions are both presented by the circuit's developers and developed by the visitors themselves. Depending on the design of the circuit training, visitors may also be able to practice other important future skills.

Application

Developing the circuit training is relatively complex and is described in detail in the attached instructions. You will need a relatively large group for this method.

Preparation: We recommend integrating the circuit training into a larger event or registering the event with the relevant local authority with plenty of advance notice. Prepare a set-up plan. This should also take account of transport arrangements and the available time of the people involved in the project.

Set-up: Familiarise yourself in advance with the location and space for the event. Make a note of what facilities you can use and what extra items you need to arrange (e.g. tables, power supply, materials, etc.). Provided you are well prepared, the set-up itself should take no more than two hours.

Execution: A stamp card can increase motivation to visit all the stations. If the participants are supposed to visit the stations in a certain order, it is helpful to provide a clearly marked check-in station.

Conclusion: Depending on the design, visitors may leave the circuit training whenever and wherever they want, or you can offer a check-out point where they can discuss their experiences, return their completed stamp card in exchange for a reward, and give feedback on the event.

Evaluation: You may wish to evaluate the circuit training for research purposes or so that you can further refine the stations. Suitable methods include analysing the results from each station, asking the facilitators at each station to keep research diaries, interviewing the facilitators or visitors, and (if resources are available) participant observation.

Potential and challenges

An Xtopian Circuit Training can reach a large and diverse audience by offering many different ways to engage with the future. It can therefore generate a large public response and give you access to the opinions, attitudes and visions of your target group. Once developed, you can use it as a travelling exhibition. However, developing and implementing the circuit training requires considerable time and organisation, motivated developers and socially skilled, well-briefed facilitators.

Developing and setting up an Xtopian Circuit Training

What is an Xtopian Circuit Training?

The concept is inspired by sport, where circuit training consists of multiple stations, each training different muscle groups and athletic skills. In an Xtopian Circuit Training, the circuit is made up of varied stations, each representing an Xtopia (see the instructions for building an Xtopia) or Xtopia-related exercise. The stations use engaging, participatory methods to enable participants to think and feel their way into different visions of the future. Each station is usually developed by a small team, and facilitators are on hand to supervise participants. An Xtopian Circuit Training trains both the developers and visitors in various skills for the future. These include:

→ Being able to imagine different futures

→ Being motivated to engage with the issues of the future

→ Systems thinking

→ Recognising ambivalent aspects of visions of the future and dealing with these constructively

Developing an Xtopian Circuit Training step by step

Developing a circuit yourself from scratch is a fun-filled and inspiring expedition. You will learn a great deal along the way. However, it is also very time-consuming. The group that develops the circuit training will work intensively on both the overarching topic and the various action-based methods.
This should involve extended group processes such as those used in education or transformative research. You should therefore make sure that you have sufficient (wo)manpower and at least a few weeks available to prepare and develop the circuit. Also consider what financial resources you can invest. When designing the individual stations, you have the option to use tools from the Toolbox for Xtopias. This will significantly speed up the development process (see step 3).

Step 1: Read the instructions for building Xtopias
As an Xtopian Circuit Training consists of multiple small Xtopias, we recommend that you and your group first familiarise yourselves with the *instructions for building an Xtopia*.

Step 2: Choose a topic for the circuit training
An Xtopian Circuit Training is suited to dealing with broad and ambivalent topics of the future. Each station can focus on a different aspect of the topic, take a different perspective or use a different method. In the Urban Xtopias research project, for example, we worked with students to develop two circuits themed around future relationships between humans and nature (Fig. 1). Depending on the purpose and context, it is also possible to address different future-related topics in the same circuit. The *instructions for building an Xtopia* provide tips on how to develop a topic in a way that fully utilises the Xtopia's transformative potential.

Step 3: Develop an overall plan for the circuit training
Having chosen the overarching topic, you now decide the target group, the educational goals associated with the circuit training and a suitable location or occasion for the training (e.g. a street fair). You may also want to recruit potential partners for the project and possibly start thinking about how you will evaluate the results. During this stage, we recommend working with the Xtopia hexagon, as described in the *instructions for building an xtopia*. Before developing individual stations, you must decide whether participants should complete the stations in a certain order, spending the same amount of time at each station, or whether the stations will be "playable" independently of each other. The first option requires a structured game plan and lends itself to projects where you want all visitors to have similar experiences – e.g. for research purposes or as a basis for further work with the participants on the relevant topic. If you want your group to have more freedom in developing the stations, and the participants to be able to choose which stations they visit and in what order, an open-space format makes more sense. In this case, the visitors decide how they take part in the circuit training and when to take a break.

As with fitness training, this approach takes better account of the different skills and motivation levels of the visitors. However, one disadvantage is that visitors are unlikely to distribute themselves evenly across the different stations. This may result in queues and waiting times, which can be demotivating.

You also need to decide how many stations to set up and how long the activities will take. Depending on resources and the desired time for completion of the whole circuit, we recommend around three to seven stations. The more stations featured in the circuit, the more diverse the imaginary spaces opened up. Another advantage of many different stations is that different personalities are attracted to different topic areas and methods. On the other hand, a smaller number of stations allows more time to explore each topic area in depth.

Step 4: Create small groups
Given the workload involved, you will probably want to develop the circuit training in a group. Start by putting together small groups who will each develop a station. We recommend that everyone first puts forward their ideas for a station (topic and method) so that groups can then be formed based on matching interests.

Step 5: Develop the individual stations
A wide range of methods are conceivable for the individual stations – for example, interactive theatre formats and role plays, serious games or installations that trigger debate. You can aim your stations at individuals or small groups. It is important to plan in advance how the individual stations can be supervised. We recommend having a "game master" or someone to talk to at each station. In our experience, stations that engage different senses are particularly popular. Discursive elements, i.e. opportunities to share and debate with others, are not essential at every station. However, they are often a great way to help participants reflect on the topic. Giveaways to take home can remind participants about the station or circuit and encourage continued reflection. Ideally, stations should offer different versions of the game and different levels of difficulty (e.g. for children and adults).

The *Toolbox for Xtopias* offers two tools themed around the relationships between people and nature (*Animal Perspectives and Cohabitat*), which could both be used as stations in your circuit. *Guided Visualisation Journey to the Future* can be used as a station with a longer activity time and is suitable for many future-related topics. By revising the text and rerecording the audio file, it is relatively easy to reduce the time required for the exercise or relate it to a specific topic. The same applies to *Play Space Xperiment*, which we developed for visualising playful open spaces and which can be easily adapted to other
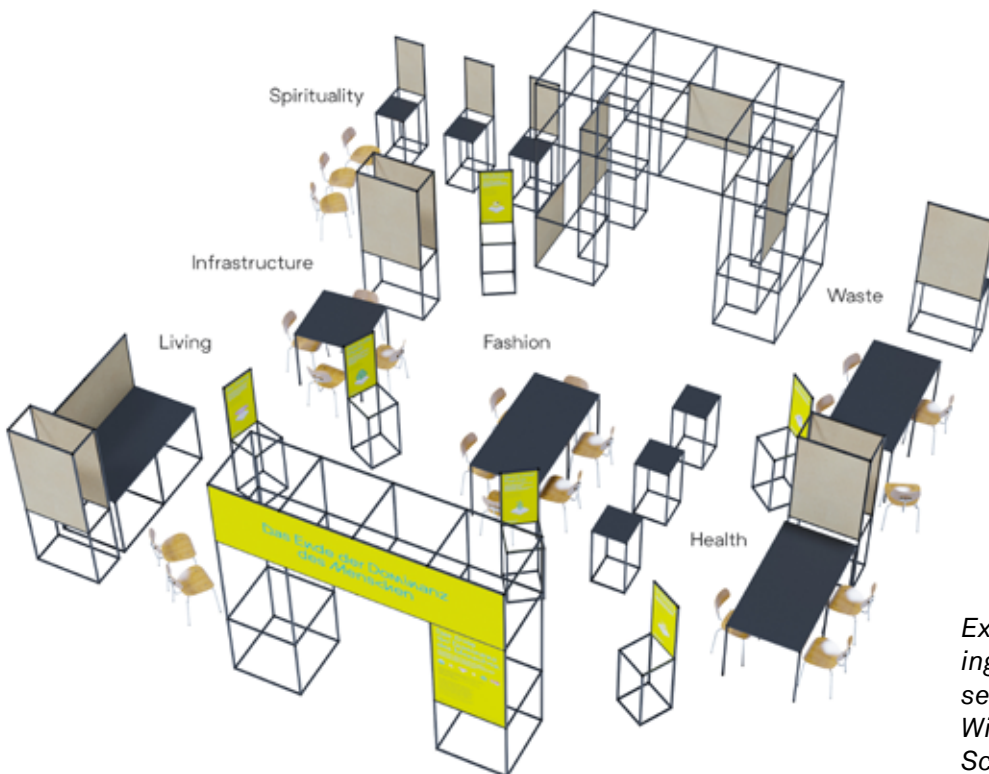
Example of an Xtopian Circuit Training as part of the Urban Xtopias research project. Rendering by Gilbert Wigankow, University of Applied Sciences Potsdam

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types of spaces. The *Installation on Interconnected Thinking* and the *Mood Boards as a Door Opener* are not tied to a specific topic and can be assembled/filled with content as suitable formats for your stations.

Whatever method you use for individual stations: Build any props and accessories as simple prototypes to begin with, without spending a lot of money on materials. This means you can test and refine the stations without wasting valuable resources too early. When finalising the station, ensure that it is inviting and fits your message; use natural, eco-friendly materials.

Step 6: Test and finalise the stations

No Xtopia will be exactly right first time! Show each other your prototypes and test or "play" them to gather feedback. Refine the ideas together, coordinate the individual stations with each other and improve them further. You may want to repeat this process several times and invite guests to try the stations out; an outside perspective can be very helpful. When testing them, pay particular attention to whether the stations (both individually and collectively) a) can be understood by the target group, b) work as envisaged, c) meet your educational objectives, and d) have no unwanted effects. Most importantly, remember the following: Like all Xtopias, the individual stations may address utopian, dystopian and, above all, ambivalent aspects of the future. However, in the case of negative scenarios for the future, the participants should always have the opportunity to develop their own responses in order to counter or constructively deal with such scenarios. Where participants complete the circuit in a set order, this opportunity may come at one of the next stations. Ensure that visitors can leave the circuit training feeling motivated, inspired and, if possible, optimistic. Once the four criteria above are fulfilled, you can finalise and produce the props and accessories for your stations.

Step 7: Join the stations together

A unifying, appealing design for the stations provides orientation for visitors, improves their experience and can trigger thematically relevant associations. A designated starting point as the "entry" to the circuit training can help visitors understand the layout and introduce them to the topic. Additional posters (e.g. with thought-provoking questions such as "What would it be like if...?") around the circuit can help them grasp the focus of each station. Make sure to use simple language – especially if you have a broad target group. A stamp card, on which participants can collect a stamp from each station they visit, is a good way to ease navigation around the circuit and motivate people to try out every station. A check-out station can enable some concluding thoughts, gather feedback for evaluation or provide space for discussion.

Preparing the Xtopian Circuit Training

Choose the time and place for the circuit training

The circuit training format works best when it is part of larger events such as city festivals, school fêtes or cultural events. Here you have the opportunity to reach a wide public. Simply taking to the streets and persuading passers-by to take part in such a unique and intensive experience can be very difficult – particularly given all the factors that cannot be planned, such as the weather conditions.

Setting up

The stations should be set up at least a few metres apart so that they do not disturb each other. To emphasise the links between the stations or to recommend a direction, you can use markings on the floor (e.g. neon tape) or other connecting elements.

### Plan and brief the facilitators at each station

Ideally, there will be someone to greet visitors at the start. They and the facilitators at the stations should be friendly and sociable and enjoy talking to visitors. They need to be well briefed, especially if they have not developed the station themselves. It is important to prepare them to respond respectfully to criticism and be able to deal with any strong emotional reactions. Ideally, the best communicator should look after the check-out station.

We wish you fun and success in developing your Xtopian Circuit Training.

Application example: An Xtopian Circuit Training at Staatstheater Kassel
In courses at the University of Kassel and the Potsdam University of Applied Sciences, we worked with students to develop two Xtopian Circuit Trainings on the „End of human dominance over other species". They consisted of five and six stations respectively. After several presentations in the respective course group, we were guests at the Staatstheater Kassel as part of the event „Green utopias or the end of the world", where four stations from both courses were involved. The response was very positive and the circuit training was subsequently in demand.
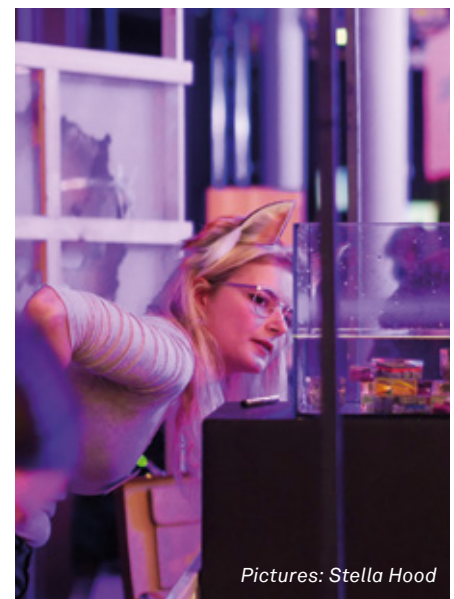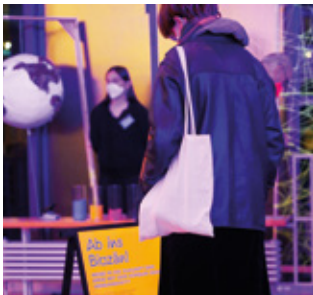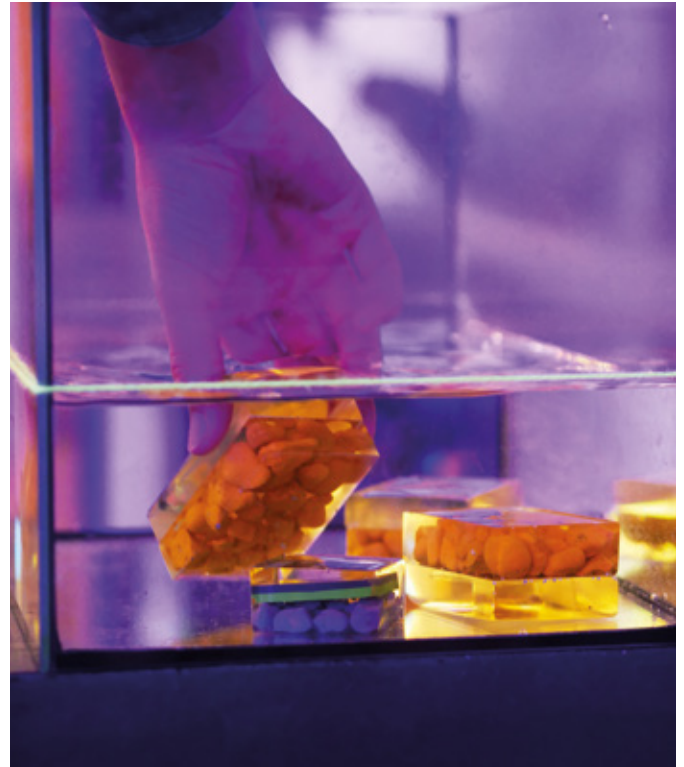
Pictures: Stella Hood

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