

# The Urbodrom Game

creativity, exchange & encounter

## A participation & social research tool

Urbodrom is a moderated board game with the objective to collectively build a sustainable city district that meets everyone's needs, and where everyone feels comfortable.

The players take on different roles. Their choice already reveals interesting insights about functions and agency in city communities. By putting themselves into the position of people with different interests and opportunities, the players are able to change their perspectives. This helps to create understanding and empathy in a playful way.



*Urbodrom in Brussels, October 2020.  
Photo: Michael Anranter*

The players not only build houses, streets and parks but thanks to the exchange with the other players, they come up with new ideas and have the opportunity to give free reign to their creativity. Urbodrom represents an entertaining approach to the topic of spatial planning. This way, it functions as a tool that facilitates citizen participation. Simultaneously, it helps to develop understanding for the challenges urban planning and urban transformation projects have to tackle.

## Who benefits from it?



First of all, each individual player profits from playing Urbodrom, especially disadvantaged people, because it gives them a voice, too.



The whole group benefits as well, as they establish a place together, which creates a sense of community. It encourages people to change the perspective and it is a source of inspiration.



Urbodrom enables participation and bottom-up strategy is made possible for spatial planners, municipal or educational institutions, private companies, etc.



It promotes social and ecological sustainability as the procedure of building shows the importance of compromise and leaving no one behind. The whole community benefits from growing solidarity and understanding.



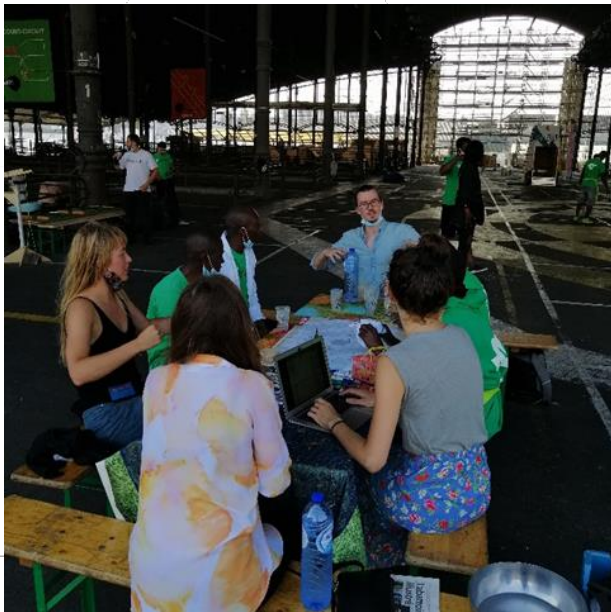
*Urbodrom in Vienna, July 2020. Photo: Ina Ivanceanu*

### What do you need for it?

The focus of Urbodrom is on the players. Everyone should feel comfortable and have a good time during the game. Create a safe space, provide food and drinks, offer childcare, hire a translator, play music during the game - just to name a few things that you can do for enhancing the wellbeing of the players.

The time and energy invested in creating comfortable surroundings will surely pay off!

Another essential thing is a board, on which players can draw and build. It is good to provide pens in different colours. The better the ideas of the players are visualised, the easier it is for them to imagine the space and immerse themselves into the game. Depending on the subject of the game and the age and needs of the player, you can use modelling clay, stickers, building blocks and other tools. Every game has different circumstances and therefore requires different preparation.



*Urbodrom in Brussels, October 2020.  
Photo: Michael Anranter*

### How to develop an interesting game?

→ Develop the narration of the game based on the challenge related to the site, the objectives of your project and the interests of the potential participants. Reflect on your own role in the game as well. Will you actively participate in the game or is it more convenient for the participants if you take on a passive role?

→ Create the game board: it can be a hand-drawn sketch on cardboard, a large printed map of the area, etc. You can draw some orientation points onto the board, define 8-12 roles with one object/artefact for each role and even prepare costumes that the players can wear.

The parameters that determine the course of the game are adapted individually and should be chosen wisely.

## How to play the game?

- At the beginning, describe the setting and the aim of the game, and assign the roles or have the players choose one for themselves.
- In each round, the players have the chance to propose and discuss a relevant feature for the new environment and draw and build on the board. How do the players build their living spaces? There are no strict rules to be followed and the game participants develop their own sense of DOs and DO NOTs.
- At the end of the game, the moderators ask the players to cast off their roles and step back into their identities. At this stage it can be helpful to change the seats or just stand up and look at the board from above. The result of the creation on the board may be utopian or not, but surely reveals interesting insights about the opinions and perceptions of the players. In this last round, the players analyse the city or district they created. Is it a sustainable living space? Is there a new sense of community? Prepare some questions that you can ask at the end of the game, for example: "What makes you happy/thoughtful looking at the space we created?" Encourage players to express any thought that comes to their mind.

## The role of the moderator(s)

There is no recipe for a good game: Urbodrom develops in the course of playing, but it is important that you are flexible as a moderator. The participants should be the ones deciding about the direction and the results of the building process. As a moderator, you support, visualise and empower the decisions of the players. If needed, you can intervene and remind them to be more tolerant and look for compromise. Be aware that any result, even if it is an unsolved conflict, has its rationale.

## Post-analysis

Develop and fill in a reflection grid with questions relevant to the specific setting and aim. What has been said? What has not been mentioned? Just one game provides a lot of insights about peoples' opinions, needs and concerns. Comparing different games can add to these results.

## More information

If you are interested in playing Urbodrom, do not hesitate to contact OUTsite and ask them to moderate Urbodrom in your project and/or help you with developing a reflection grid for the post-analysis of the game.

Website: <https://co-create-outsite.com>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/urbodrom/>

E-Mail: [urbodrom@gmail.com](mailto:urbodrom@gmail.com)

[ina.ivanceanu@oikodrom.org](mailto:ina.ivanceanu@oikodrom.org)

