

# THE CITY AS TEXT

**The City as Text** is a participatory game that invites young people to explore the city they live in through three interconnected perspectives: climate change, community, and mental health.

Using a map of their city and a set of cards, players reflect on locations they know, share experiences, imagine changes, and develop ideas for a more just, inclusive, and sustainable urban future.

The game is based on the idea of the city as a “text” (Radović, 2013). A city can be understood as a space that we constantly write, erase, and recreate through everyday life, social relationships, and political decisions. Urban space is not neutral; power relations, economic interests, and social inequalities shape it. Processes such as gentrification, the privatization of public space, and the unequal distribution of green and safe areas often transform community structures and affect residents’ sense of belonging, safety, and mental well-being.

Climate change often deepens these inequalities, as vulnerable social groups are often more exposed to environmental risks, have weaker infrastructure, and lack supportive spaces. The game “The City as Text” encourages participants not only to observe the city but to read it critically—understanding who it belongs to, who shapes it, and who is excluded from decision-making processes.

The game emphasizes personal experiences, local knowledge, and collective reflection. It encourages participants to engage in dialogue, build solidarity, and imagine alternative ways to co-create cities based on care for people, communities, and the environment.

**There are no right or wrong answers—only conversations, connections, and possibilities.**

## GAME MATERIALS

**PRINTED MAP OF THE CITY (IF YOU ARE NOT IN MARIBOR, ZAGREB, OR BUDAPEST, PRINT A MAP OF YOUR CITY OR TOWN)**

**24 CARDS IN 4 CATEGORIES**

**STONES/MARKERS IN DIFFERENT COLORS**

**STRING**

**YOU WILL ALSO NEED: A PEN, SCISSORS**

**TARGET GROUP:**  
YOUNG PEOPLE (15-30) AND YOUTH WORKERS

**GROUP SIZE:**  
3-10 PEOPLE (UP TO 20 WITH APPROPRIATE ADAPTATIONS)

**DURATION:**  
UP TO 40 MINUTES

**FORMAT:**  
IN-PERSON + ONLINE

**SETTING:**  
ANY URBAN SPACE (SMALL OR LARGE CITY)

<https://pekarnamm.org/the-city-as-text>

# I N S T R U C T I O N S

- ▶ If you are not in Maribor, Zagreb, or Budapest, print a map of your city or town.
- ▶ At the beginning, agree on who will guide and facilitate the game.
- ▶ Ensure that everyone participates as equally as possible—no one should dominate with their ideas or perspectives.
- ▶ We draw on personal experiences.
- ▶ If a question feels uncomfortable, it can be skipped and another one chosen.
- ▶ Phones may only be used to check the map or look up locations.
- ▶ The game is suitable for 3 to 10 players. If the group is larger, participants should split into pairs or teams.
- ▶ The game is divided into 4 steps, each lasting approximately 10 minutes.
- ▶ During the game, you will draw cards, mark locations, answer questions, and discuss them as a group.
- ▶ Locations are marked on the map using stones. If you want to indicate a broader area instead of a specific place, place the stone in the center of that area.
- ▶ The cards can also be used in ways other than those suggested by the game. They can serve as discussion prompts, be used in workshops, or inspire writing, poster-making, and similar activities.
- ▶ Place the map in the middle of the table or on the floor, with players sitting or standing around it.
- ▶ Each player chooses their own stones.
- ▶ Shuffle the 24 cards well and place them face down.

Igro je izdelala **Pekarna Magdalenske mreže** (Maribor, Slovenija), oblikovala **Anamarija Ludvik** v okviru projekta “**Urban Community - In Transition For Youth**” in partnerstva z **Udrugo Vestigium** (Zagreb, Hrvaška) in s **Profilantrop egyesulet** (Budimpešta, Madžarska), ki ga podpira program **Erasmus +**.

V okviru projekta in partnerstva smo si prizadevli izboljšati blaginjo mladih in med mladimi ter mladinskimi delavkami\_ci spodbujati trajnostne načine življenja in razumevanje vpliva prebivalcev\_k mest na okolje.

## ▶ STEP 1 - MAPPING EXPERIENCES

**Each player chooses one card.**

They read the prompt on the card, identify the location, find it on the map, and place their stone there. They explain their choice and answer the question.

Cards that have been answered are removed from the game and placed in a separate pile.

If there are 5 or fewer players, Step 1 is repeated, so each player takes a turn twice.

## ▶ STEP 2 - FINDING CONNECTIONS

**Each player chooses a new card.**

They read the prompt and answer the question by selecting one of the locations already marked on the map by all players in Step 1.

Using a piece of string, they connect their stone from Step 1 to the location (stone) they choose in Step 2. They explain their choice, answer the question, and try to find a connection between the two locations.

Cards that have been answered are removed from the game and placed in a separate pile.

## ▶ STEP 3 - COLLECTIVE PERSPECTIVE

**All players together look at the map and determine which location (stone) has the most connections with the others. This location becomes the starting point for the discussion in this step.**

The group selects 4 cards from the remaining cards and discusses the topics and questions written on them.

The person facilitating the game moderates the discussion and ensures that everyone is included equally.

## ▶ STEP 4 - FINAL REFLECTION

**The facilitator asks the following questions and ensures that each player answers in turn:**

Do you see the city differently after the game than before?

Did anything during the activity, mapping, or discussion surprise you?

Do you think there is any location or area that should be better maintained?

In one word, describe how you feel.

The facilitator encourages the players to write one sentence together about the city's future, based on the reflections and discussions from the game.

**Take a photo of the map and the sentence you created and send it to [info@pekarnamm.org](mailto:info@pekarnamm.org) titled “The City as Text”.**



**THE CITY**  
**AS TEXT**

**A LOCATION  
WHERE YOU FEEL  
SAFE .**

- ▶ Find and mark it on the map. Why do you feel safe there?

# A LOCATION YOU AVOID.

- ▶ Find and mark it on the map. What makes it unpleasant or stressful?

**A LOCATION  
THAT YOU THINK  
REPRESENTS  
YOUR CITY.**

- ▶ Find and mark it on the map. Would everyone agree with this? Why or why not?

**A LOCATION WHERE  
YOU HAVE NICE  
CHILD-  
HOOD  
MEMORIES.**

- ▶ Find and mark it on the map. How has it changed?

**A LOCATION WHERE  
PEOPLE OFTEN  
MEET.**



Find and mark it on the map. Who meets there and who does not?

**A LOCATION YOU  
WOULD MISS  
IF IT DISAPPEARED  
OR COMPLETELY  
CHANGED .**



Find and mark it on the map. What would be lost?

# THE CITY AS TEXT



**A LOCATION WHERE  
THE EFFECTS OF  
CLIMATE  
CHANGE ARE  
MOST EVIDENT.**

- ▶ Find and mark it on the map. How does it appear there? How do we experience it?

**A LOCATION THAT  
HELPS THE CITY  
“BREATHE”.**



Find and mark it on the map. In what way does it help the city “breathe”?

# A LOCATION WITH MANY **CARS.**



Find and mark it on the map. How do you feel there and why?

**A LOCATION  
THAT COULD BE  
GREENER.**



Find and mark it on the map. What small change could help?

**A LOCATION WHERE  
ENVIRON-  
MENTAL  
INEQUAL-  
ITY IS VISIBLE.**

- ▶ Find and mark it on the map. Who suffers and who benefits?

**A LOCATION THAT  
SHOULD BE A  
MODEL FOR  
URBAN  
PLANNING.**

- ▶ Find and mark it on the map. What works well there?

# THE CITY AS TEXT



**A LOCATION  
WHERE PEOPLE  
HELP  
EACH OTHER.**



Is this care visible or invisible?

**A LOCATION  
WHERE YOU FEEL  
WELCOME.**



What creates this  
feeling?

**A LOCATION WHERE  
C O N -  
FLICTS OCCUR.**

- ▶ **What kinds of conflicts happen there and why?**

**A LOCATION  
INTENDED FOR  
YOUNG  
PEOPLE.**



Is it designed with  
them or for them?

**A LOCATION  
WHERE INE-  
QUALITY  
BETWEEN  
PEOPLE  
IS VISIBLE.**



Whose well-being is overlooked?

**A LOCATION THAT  
CONNECTS  
DIFFERENT  
COMMUNITIES.**



**How does it do this?**



**THE CITY**  
**AS TEXT**

**A LOCATION THAT  
CALMS YOU.**



**Which sensory  
elements help?**

**A LOCATION  
THAT CAUSES  
STRESS.**

- ▶ Noise, crowds,  
pressure, expectations?

A LOCATION  
WHERE YOU CAN  
BE **ALONE**  
WITHOUT  
FEELING LONELY.



Does the city make this possible?

**A LOCATION THAT  
STRENGTHENS  
MENTAL  
HEALTH.**



**Formally (services) or  
informally?**

**A LOCATION WHERE  
YOU FEEL SOME-  
THING **UN-**  
**PLEASANT**  
COULD HAPPEN.**



What are the characteristics of that space?

**A LOCATION  
YOU WOULD  
REDESIGN  
TO FEEL BET-  
TER THERE.**



One realistic change.