



Creative Fellow 

Anna De Mezzo

Where can you live? A board game exploring privileges in the city of Zurich, Switzerland

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Written by
Anna De Mezzo

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Introduction

“Where can you live?” is a board game situated in the city of Zurich. The objective of the game is to find a place to live for each character. Players take on different characters with varying levels of privilege, and therefore different types of housing to obtain. The dynamics of the game encourage discussions about privilege, stereotypes, and societal structures. Players are invited to reflect and discuss the privileges that their character might have or not have, unveiling possible stereotypes and demystifying the role of certain privileges in today’s society.

The game is a playful tool to foster social cohesion through a shared awareness on the topic of privilege. The project emphasises the importance of transparency and awareness regarding privilege dynamics to facilitate a paradigm shift away from oppressive systems. The local aspect of the project stems from the willingness to instil a conversation on premises that are very close to the players, and most of all, to inspire discussions directed to tangible solutions. Even though privileges and societal power dynamics can be observed globally across countries, societies and communities, it is also important to focus on the significance that these phenomena have within the local dimension. The way privileges are exercised and/or accumulated in specific places may have different effects than in other areas, and the translation of what it means to be privileged may not always be easy to make.

Privileges are also perceived in a subjective way and the game focuses on fostering discussions, by means of playing and enacting different characters, on the meaning of being advantaged or disadvantaged in terms of wealth, nationality, civil status etcetera.

The present document highlights the creative process that brought to the creation of the game, summarising the different design phases and describing the testing phases and the importance these had on the final design of the game. This report also underlines the potential for the game to be adapted to other cities and settings, emphasising the importance of local contexts in discussions of privilege. It also delves into the role of creative and cultural economies promoting positive change and social cohesion. The project aims to contribute to a broader dialogue on privilege and its societal implications, potentially starting a conversation on the locality of the topic throughout several cities and important hubs in Europe.

During the creation process, it became clear that the cultural and creative economies can be at the forefront of social innovation, striving for a more fair and just distribution of resources and inspiring for change. This project weaves into the greater scope of the CIRCE initiative, which demonstrates that actors in the cultural and creative economies are equipped not only with skills for innovation and societal change, but also with an immense amount of willingness and hands-on tools to make the said change happen. The cultural and creative economies are developing themselves as bridges between grassroots initiatives and policymakers. They are an essential element to connect the future and the present, with an important dose of pragmatism.

In a society that is constantly alarmed by polarisation and extreme individualism, fuelled by social media and populisms, this game aims to bring present and future generations together and help them understand each other profoundly. The project seeks to create a tool that can help unveil unjust power structures and their declination in a local setting, while positively impacting the way people come together, respecting diversity and honouring differences that sometimes are rooted in practices that are today no longer deemed as fair.

The solution, in my opinion, is not to hide those roots, but to call out their wrongness, their aggressivity, so as to create new practices that refuse to perpetrate mechanisms of injustice.

Therefore, creating terrains for transparency and translation, to build shared meanings of rather abstract and sometimes conveniently-deemed-as-invisible concepts such as privileges, is ever more important to ensure that as societies we are constantly engaging in a negotiation process aimed at fairness, rather than fuelling ruptures and divisions fomented by indolent lack of understanding.

The creative process described in this report happened in the timeframe of six months and brought an idea to concrete realisation. The value and strength of the CIRCE network can also be seen in the metamorphosis that forty different projects, at various stages of conception, underwent in the time of a summer, ready to exit their cocoon after being carefully nourished and cherished.

The power of a candy

The starting point for this research stems from a personal reflection on privileges and power dynamics, and how little transparency there is around those topics. In my personal experience, there have been a few instances in which people have brought to my attention that I have certain privileges, which they did not. As an example, while volunteering at a winter camp that provides shelter for people experiencing homelessness at risk of frostbite, a young guest whom I had frequently encountered during my train commute to and from high school, offered me a candy with a remark I have not forgotten to this day. He said, “I can’t eat it, because my parents don't pay for a dentist. You should have it.”

I accepted the candy because, indeed, my parents were covering my dentist bills. As aware as I was about topics such as socioeconomic classes, global inequality and the uneven distribution of resources, this was the most practical and on-point comment I had ever heard, highlighting the issue of privilege in a very concrete manner.

Other similar instances followed in the years after; these brief exchanges happened, in every case, in a very direct yet respectful way, and I was left pondering about the power of these interactions and the weight they can carry so effortlessly, devoid of any interpersonal conflict while leaving such a significant impact.

Why did these encounters matter so much? Because prior to them, I had never really been directly confronted with the topic of privilege – which is, of course, a privilege in itself. To my knowledge, I was part of the so-called (and self-defined) category of “ordinary” people, or even more strongly connoted as *normal*, coming from a middle-class family and growing up in the province of a big city. Amongst my evident lack of self-reflection, something else was permeating this conviction, and I was absolutely unaware of it: the idea that there is a “norm”, and it’s ultimately defined and shaped by those who possess certain privileges. In hindsight, the timing of these realisations is also quite unsurprising: they occurred during my first years of university, which I attended right after finishing high school. Privilege after privilege unfolded. Without going too much into personal details about my rather unspectacular life, it is indisputable that these conversations, as much as they were uncomfortable and put me on the spot, they also left a mark and became precious food for thought which I have nurtured for the past decade, until I could formulate it into this research question that motivated this project.

It is not uncommon for privileged individuals to ponder their own advantages; what I observed, however, is that the topic is deeply stigmatised and therefore discussions around privileges are perceived as challenging and potentially ending in conflicts and/or defensiveness. This perception stems from the expectation that such discussions will inevitably be confrontational, with one person being accused due to their own advantages. Moreover, there are many different types of privileges concerning several aspects of a person’s life and their relation to the systems in power. Privileges can also be earned or unearned (often called “ordinary” privileges as generally the privileged category

in question tends to define the norm) meaning that one's agency can or cannot have an impact on a specific set of privileges. As Peggy McIntosh puts it, "we usually think of privilege as being a favoured state, whether earned or conferred by birth or luck". (McIntosh, 1989) In all these instances, the privileged individual enjoys some advantages; however, they might deal with these advantages in a different way depending on whether those very privileges were earned or unearned. Specifically, being aware of unearned privileges may prove to be difficult, especially if those privileges are common to what the individual perceives as being "the norm". It is easier to spot privileges in others, to look *upwards*, because acknowledging one's own participation in an oppressive system from the side of the oppressor can be difficult. However, holding a privilege also means being part of the dominant group, at least in certain aspects (Borghi, 2020).

How aware are we of our privileges? And even more precisely, how do our privileges compare to other ones? These questions are very hard to answer as they are webbed into a much more complex reality. On the one hand, privileges exist because of systemic power dynamics and, in turn, contribute to perpetuating these power and oppression dynamics, thereby maintaining the status quo; on the other hand, some types of privileges are also perceived in a subjective way, affecting people differently depending on an array of factors. For example, being considered attractive by one's peers can be seen as a privilege, even if the perception of beauty is extremely subjective and sometimes feeds into unconscious biases.

Moreover, even though most privileges are universal due to the power dynamics they depend on and feed into, the local context does play a role in the way the perception and the connotation of certain privileges changes. It is thus important to tailor the discussion on privileges to each local context in order to be more specific with privilege categories and labels.

If it is true, for example, that socioeconomic privilege, male privilege and white privilege, to name a few, are indicators of systemic oppression that occur worldwide, it is also true that if we are to understand the characteristics of each type of privilege, we have to examine them in a local context; which, to be more specific, might need to be examined at a national or even regional level. Taking the socioeconomic privilege as an example – the definition of which is intrinsically linked to the wealth and income data in a specific country – the way socioeconomic status expresses itself in a small and generally very rich country such as Switzerland, is very different from the way it is declinated in other countries in the world that, for example, are much bigger and/or have less strong economies and infrastructures to rely on.

The importance of connecting to the local meaning of the concept of privilege lies also in what Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie defines as "the danger of a single story": without acknowledging the diversity and complexity of reality, not only at a global but first and foremost locally, we run the risk of believing in a single story, which is creating stereotypes and therefore spreading incomplete information (Adichie, 2009). If we don't discuss and interrogate ourselves about identities and privileges, we will always end up

praising and contributing to sustain the aforementioned *norm*, the predominant narrative, measuring *everyone else* – thereby fuelling the divisive discourse of *otherness* – against one big story of what is good and what is bad. The nuances that stereotypes fail to acknowledge are as important to build a sense of collective identity that is truly celebrating diversity. As explained later in the text, the game tries to play with stereotypes in order to highlight the incompleteness of the story they aim to tell.

The hypothesis behind this project was that discussing privilege at a local level could help bring the topic to a very concrete point of elaboration. What does it mean to be underprivileged in a privileged country? What does it mean to be privileged at all? There are multiple answers to these questions, all depending on the context from which they are formulated. All the answers are valid as well. What is necessary however, is to create a conversation amongst these worlds, these perceptions of privilege. To show the intersectionality of the problem and the power structures behind those. Only by being open to understand how others feel, can we understand how to move forward, and build a better future all together.

This project stems from the hypothesis that being aware of one's privileges (and/or lack thereof) may foster social cohesion, that is, the understanding that we are all connected and that solidarity and plurality are essential characteristics of a healthy society. Only by being aware of differences (thus, privileges) can a community work together to establish better ways of living together.

There is a strong misconception associated with the word *privilege*. It is common to feel guilty for one's privileges, but also protective: all in all, people don't want to lose their advantages. This attitude makes perfect sense, however, the discourse around privilege does not necessarily mean that those who hold any have to give it away.

Awareness may make people aware of the reason behind certain advantages and may inspire change towards a more equitable society. It is not about giving up privileges but about creating a system in which those privileges do not exist or are not necessary. Imagine a world without white privilege: it is not a world in which suddenly white people have it harder; it is a world in which racial discrimination does not exist.

The theoretical research behind this game mainly touches upon decolonial theory and the role of privileges in today's systems, both from a general and from a local perspective. The theory body was instrumental in framing the project's hypothesis and proved to be an important foundational basis from which to create the rules of the game. An important concept often overlooked is the *privilege of neutrality*: being part of the dominant system, which is a minority, while calling everyone else as such (Borghi, 2020). This is a powerful concept that demands even more awareness of one's privileges. The theoretical corpus on intersectionality, seen as the intersection of different social categories and the social dynamics that stem from these intersections (hooks, 1984; Crenshaw, 1989), guided the development of the characters and the randomisation of each category.

The motivation behind this project doesn't come from a place of *removal* of privileges, rather from a perspective of *acknowledgment* and, subsequently, *collective eradication* to create something better, together. It comes from an *inward-looking* question rather than an *outward-looking* judgement. The local aspect is crucial for two reasons: it links to concrete examples and gives the possibility to be an agent of change in one's own community, the only place from which slow and impactful radical changes can start.

This project, therefore, aims to develop a tool to spark discussions on the local dimension of privileges. The aim is to create the possibility for a just and honest exchange of opinions and perceptions, in the same way as described in the introductory chapter. Even though the candy interaction was spontaneous and thus impossible to recreate, the conditions for such an exchange are clear: an open ground to exercise curiosity towards elements of privilege and the structures behind them.

The vessel to reach the destination is "*Where can you live?*", a board game intended for adults, set in the local context of the city of Zurich. These were the premises of the project as it was submitted to CIRCE.

The willingness to initiate a conversation on a local perspective has two main reasons: the first, as mentioned previously, to dig into practical meanings of the quite abstract concept of privilege, thus potentially sparking very concrete ideas to change or influence the status quo; the second, to create a structure for discussion that may be translated for other settings. For example, the game may be slightly amended to fit other cities in Switzerland and the European Union. The reflection on the adjustments to be made may also be a fertile terrain for further research on the significance and impact of privileges in a specific country and/or society.

Creative and research process: thinking and designing the game

The main objective of this project has, from the very beginning, been to create a tool for playful discussion. The intuitive decision, therefore, was to focus on a board or card game that could be easily accessible to most people without the dependence of technology. Given the wish to foster the discussion on privileges from a local perspective, a physical game was preferred as it requires closer proximity – players must share the same physical space. However, this last consideration is of lesser importance than the first, meaning that a virtual and/or digital version could work very well too, as long as it is accessible to all participants and enables space for discussion. Several design possibilities were taken into consideration, from classical board game structures to custom-made objects that could show the interdependencies between privileges. These thoughts and considerations during the process of how to develop this game resulted in the clear and logical decision to create a board game featuring cards.

The creative and research process that led to the development of the game primarily followed two paths. On the one side, the analysis of the theoretical background from which the concept of privilege and its facets stem from, focusing primarily on postcolonial and decolonial theory (the latter as a way to imagine a new world; the former, as a critique to colonialism being the source of unbalanced power dynamics). On the other side, the creative process unfolded in a practical manner, investigating game design and its foundations, mapping user journeys, testing and prototyping the final product.

The two sub-processes were intertwined from the very beginning. It would be difficult to portray their progression over time in a truthful manner, while maintaining clarity. Therefore, the creative and the research processes have been described separately, even though they occurred simultaneously. The theoretical research process was addressed in the previous chapter, hence the current chapter focuses on the creative process.

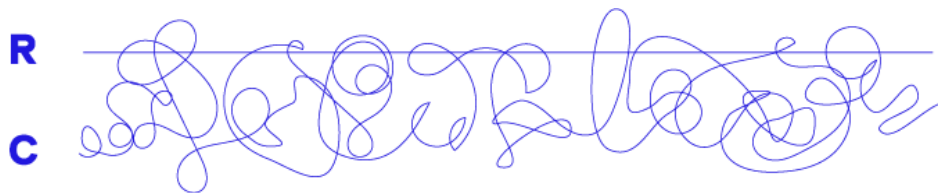


Fig. 1
Research and creative process over time, relative to this project

Designing the game

The target group for this game was defined as adults of any age and background. This decision was made after careful reflection of the project's scope: in order to foster social cohesion by increasing transparency regarding the topic of privilege, and therefore power structures and oppression dynamics, it seemed appropriate to initiate the conversation with adults. The decision followed the understanding that the language, theme and setting for a game on privilege designed for adults should differ from the ones pertaining to a game for children. Given the importance and sensitivity of the topic, it would not prove beneficial to create a one-fits-all game. Specifically, this became clear during the decision process to pick the right theme for the game, as it proved to be a rather difficult process that needed the choice for a specific audience to be made. There are, however, several ideas to expand the game for children and in other contexts, which will be elaborated on further in the text.

First steps

From the very beginning, together with a literature review on the topic of privileges, which will be discussed further in this text, the central question of the project revolved around the possibility of making a game based on such a broad and delicate topic both simple and fun. Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, the intention was to encourage a

discussion amongst players, creating a space open to disagreements while intentionally avoiding the creation of a defensive atmosphere. Such an atmosphere would not be conducive to a fair exchange of opinions.

In order to reach this objective, the original idea was that creating fictional characters in fictional worlds would be the best strategy to keep discussions in this open, respectful and safe atmosphere. However, after testing the first prototype in which players could create their own character, it became clear that this decision would lead to an extremely complex game or, alternatively, to needing a moderator that would have to manage these various new worlds and systems that could emerge from the creation of these fictional characters and worlds. After considering the dynamics generated by games requiring a moderator role such as *Werewolf*¹, it was clear that these types of board games often imply a hierarchy of roles; a characteristic that did not meet the design requirements for this game.

As previously mentioned, the decided target group for the game was for adults, and the player was expected to most likely play the game in their free time. During the preliminary research, it became clear that a privilege game with moderation could be a fitting option for work environments and professional settings in which such topics are very rarely talked about (or even forbidden to be discussed by internal regulations). There is a firm desire to focus on and develop these paths in the near future, after the completion of this project.

| WHO/WHAT AM I? | |
|----------------|-------|
| Species | _____ |
| Gender | _____ |
| Age | _____ |
| Class | _____ |
| Race | _____ |
| Nationality | _____ |
| Ability | _____ |
| Sexuality | _____ |
| Language | _____ |
| Education | _____ |
| Residency | _____ |

| WHO/WHAT AM I? | |
|---------------------|--|
| My main values are: | |
| _____ | |
| _____ | |
| _____ | |

Fig. 2
Character development card as per the initial design where players create their own fictional character.

The first version of the game therefore enabled a discussion on privilege on very distant terms to today's reality, as players invented their own made-up characters in fictional worlds. Another aspect worth mentioning regarding the design methodology is that the creation of the game followed quite an intricate path. While looking for the most fitting game dynamics and experimenting with point systems, tensions and interactions, it was

¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mafia_\(party_game\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mafia_(party_game))

also important to find the right theme for the game. Initially, the theme was going to be an allegorical representation of the city of Zurich, fictional and fantastical but presenting clear references to the real-life local context of Zurich. Players would have been tasked with performing certain actions or achieving objectives within the game, such as gaining access to specific places or interacting with a certain character. They would then have had to assess whether their character was going to be able to perform these actions based on their privileges or lack thereof. In the case of an affirmative answer, the player could proceed in the game, otherwise they would either have had to have waited another turn or required the assistance from another player/character to perform that task in a collaborative way. Due to the lack of a precise storyline and the potential for misunderstanding the references, the process took different directions, and this idea was not developed any further.

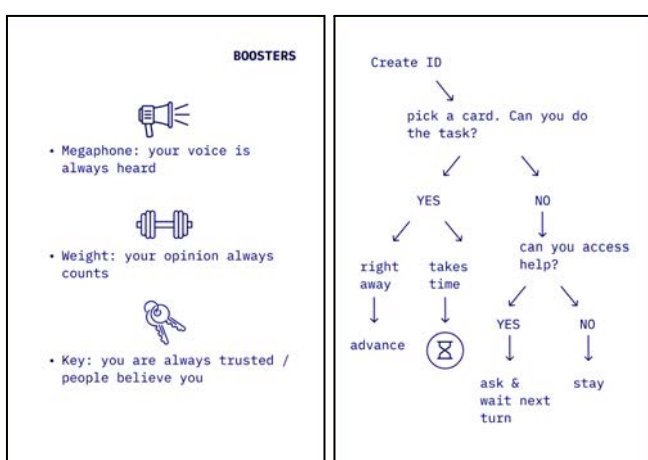


Fig. 3
User journey in the first iteration of the game design process

Creating the game concept

There are several approaches within the realm of game design in developing a game. The primary distinction lies in the hierarchy applied to the different components and phases of the process. The most important aspects to consider when designing a board game consist of: mechanics (the general rules), theme (the setting of the game), scoring conditions (how does a player advance in the game), components (what are the physical objects the players interact with), dynamics (how do the players interact with each other) and aesthetics (what is the emotional response, the experience of players).

The approach varies depending on which aspect is put at the forefront of the design process. Within the board game design realm, it is common to prefer a mechanic-first approach as this aspect has the greatest potential to bring innovation and novelty to gaming communities.

The main goal behind this game was to create a setting to facilitate and encourage discussions; the mechanics of the game were always considered instrumental to this

purpose. Therefore, after experimenting with dynamics, the theme-first approach ended up being the best strategy as privilege could be discussed in a multitude of ways.

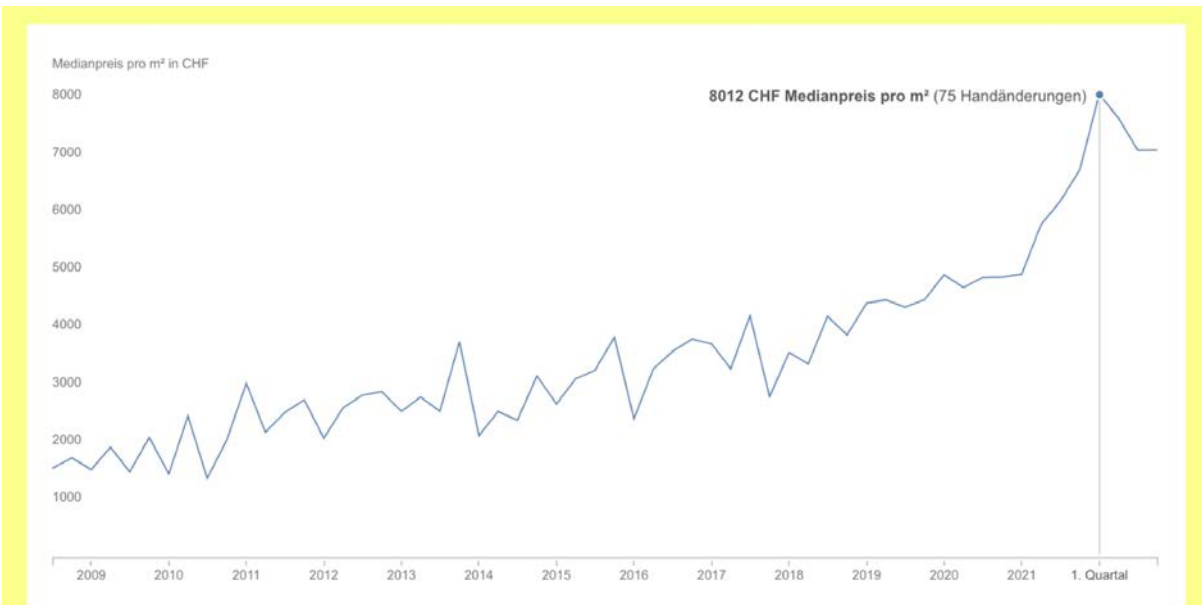
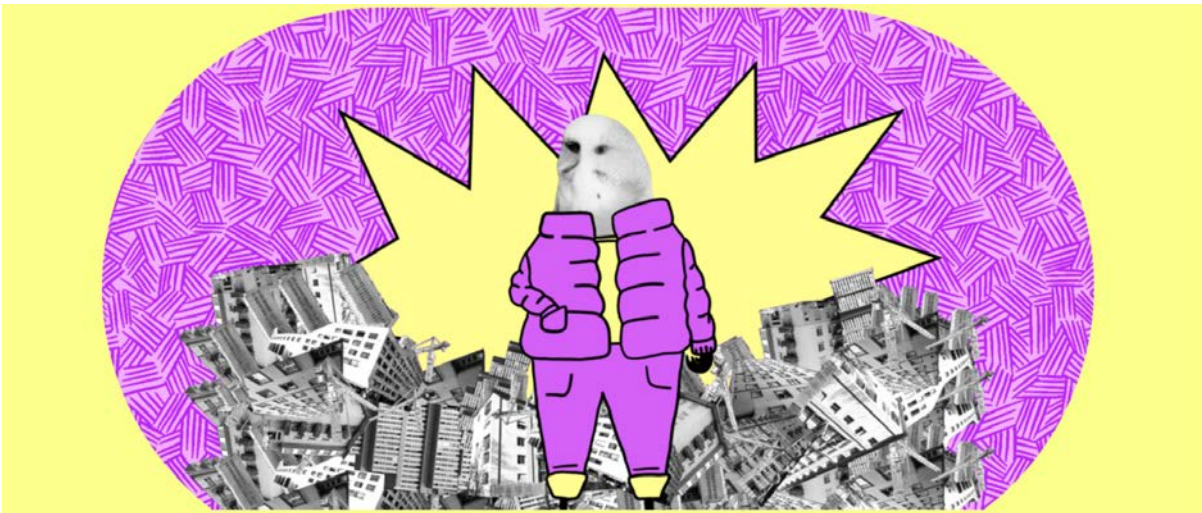
The search for a theme was not an easy one. Intuitively, because of the willingness to foster the discussion on a local level, the theme revolved around the city of Zurich. At first, the idea was to centre the game around the geography of the city and have players perform their actions/objectives while on “a walk through Zurich”. The principal game dynamic would have revolved around the relationship between a player and a specific place; for example, if the character would be allowed to enter an institutional place or if they had necessary financial means to purchase something in a specific shop. The lack of a specific topic resulted in a very complicated game dynamic, as the combination between the walk through Zurich and privileges would have required a lot of additional historical and political information to be added to the game. As much as this could be a very valuable path to pursue, it would also imply a more informative game rather than one in which discussion is at the focus point. Therefore, the decision was to move past this theme and look for other options that would be more appropriate for the initial intention behind the game.

The research for the game’s theme was also informed by the literature review about privilege and decolonial theory, and by several interviews conducted with scholars and people working closely with topics related to discrimination, structural oppression and power dynamics. From a game design perspective, it helped to reflect on possible tension points within the game, that is understanding what obstacles and frustrations could arise between the players and the end goal. A lack of privilege in real life is in itself a great example of a source of frustration and therefore a good tension point to be implemented in the game. However, given the overall objective, the decision was to counterbalance the tension points with a general collaborative aspect of the game. These design considerations helped to formulate the first ground rules. Nevertheless, it was still quite challenging to create the flow of the game without a specific theme.

Where can you live?

After experimenting with some possibilities, the decision was to focus on the housing issue in the city of Zurich. The situation is dire: prices of properties both for rent and to buy have skyrocketed during the pandemic, and the trend is not set to change in the near future. (Mieten Marta, 2023) Countless renovations and the progressive and persistent gentrification of many neighbourhoods are pushing more and more people outside the city. This is, therefore, a very relevant issue in the city, however not for everybody. Individuals possessing considerable assets, the wealthier class, are exempted from this crisis; or even more, they are contributing to driving the trend further. This means that the whole population of the city of Zurich is somehow either involved in or affected by this issue.

Moreover, even though accessibility to the housing market is heavily dependent on wealth, there are several other aspects that contribute to determining the degree of ease with which someone will find an apartment or a house in the city. These aspects provide an ideal foundation for initiating a discussion about privileges.



Bildunterschrift: Stark steigende Bodenpreise seit 2008 (Impliziter Näherungswert) (Statistik Stadt Zürich)

*Fig. 4
Sharply rising land prices since 2008 (Implicit approximate value). (Statistics City of Zurich)*

Design considerations and game components

Character cards

Once the theme – finding a place to live in Zurich – was set, the design considerations mentioned previously were embedded in the narrative. Several characters were created, according to the following criteria:

- Name, Surname
- Age
- Nationality
- Gender identity
- Race and/or ethnicity
- Socio-economic status
- Occupation
- Civil status.

These criteria were selected to guarantee a certain level of intersectionality, while still leaving other aspects to the imagination and creativity of the player.

Moreover, the criteria are not bound to one card, meaning that several combinations are possible. This way, players may be confronted with their own stereotypes from the very start of the game.

Objective cards

Characters receive an objective that is directly correlated to their socioeconomic status. Each objective card states the type of accommodation the player has to aim to, which is based on a few of the main possibilities present in the city of Zurich:

- buying the land to build a house,
- buying a villa, house or a flat,
- renting a flat owned either by private entity, a cooperative, or the city of Zurich, or
- renting a room in a shared flat.

Since it is not purely a real estate game, I decided to represent a few but not every different type of housing possibility existing in Zurich. It is important to note that the game doesn't consider each and every possible living circumstance, and that the aforementioned selection of objectives is representative but not exhaustive. For example, the topic of homelessness or the case of *sans papiers*, meaning foreigners who do not (yet) possess a valid permit to stay in Switzerland, are not portrayed in this game. This choice has been taken to reduce the complexity of the game, yet it is important to acknowledge that an array of diverse situations exists beyond the ones hereby represented. The decision to connect the objectives to the socioeconomic status of the character emphasises that economic privilege is a very strong form of power. The intersectional dimension of privilege also implies that societal divisions also stem as consequences of the possibility to accumulate, for a few, a vast array of privileges that

remain unknown to many. To portray this situation, I opted for designing excessive objectives for the wealthy characters, in order to draw attention to the implications of privilege (and wealth) accumulation.

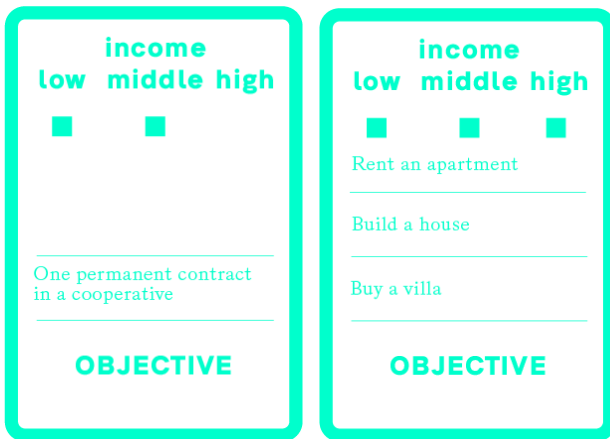


Fig. 5

Objective cards for a character with low or middle income and for a high income character

Document cards

In order to apply for a place to live, characters need to be in possession of an updated and valid application dossier, which consists of the following documents:

- Passport/ID card
- Valid work permit
- Job
- Clean debt record
- Motivation letter

The documents can be collected throughout the game.



Fig. 6

An example of a document card

Board

At first, the board was designed to be very similar to the Monopoly² one. It featured the different objectives to be reached and the steps to access the properties. Documents and chance cards could be picked throughout the game. However, this first design lacked a playful element: before players could apply to a property, they needed to collect documents and this phase proved to be too long and rather unspectacular. Several players during the testing voiced the need for more action.



Fig. 7
First iterations of board game design

After several sessions, two main components were added to the game: the presence of a committee evaluating the applications, and an outer layer to the board game allowing for more interactions to happen while the players collect their necessary documents.

At this stage, it was possible to include an array of Chances (positive or negative action cards) directly on the board. For example, if a player lands on the “change your mind” zone, players have to switch their character and objective with another player, thereby taking on a new character to continue the game with. This feature was one of the most appreciated by the players in the testing phase.

The inner layer of the board features all the properties available in the game. Players can only access the inner layer when they are in possession of a full dossier, that is when they have collected all the necessary documents. Moving to the inner layer of the board is only possible when a player stands on a zone presenting a connection arrow between the outer and the inner layer.

² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monopoly_\(game\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monopoly_(game))

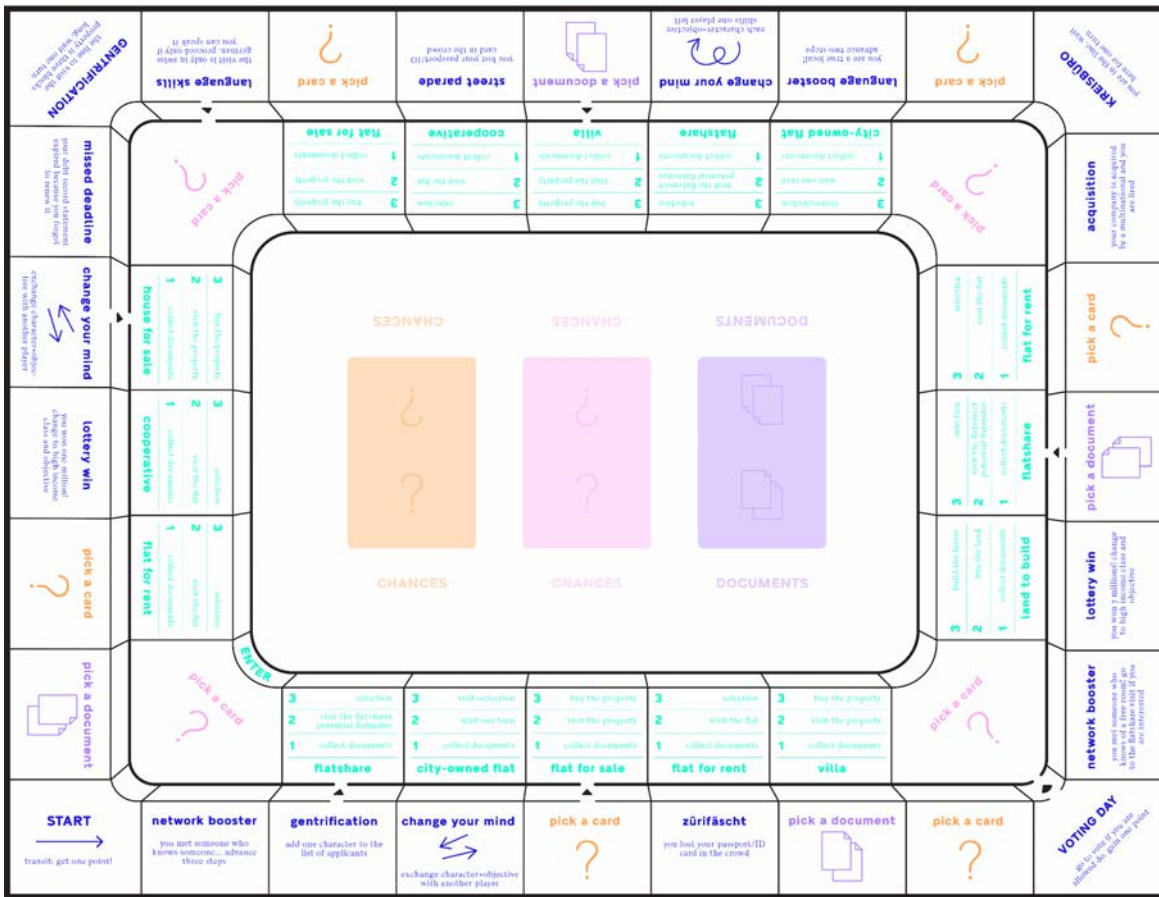


Fig. 8
Final design of the board

Chance cards

Throughout the game, players might need to or choose to pick up Chance cards. They contain actions that could be positive or negative for the player picking them. For example, a player might have their application eaten by a pet or they might find a temporary subletting contract to move into a property immediately. Chance cards are meant to create a disturbance as the game unfolds.



Fig. 9
Chance cards. The orange one corresponds to the outer layer of the board; the pink one, to the inner layer

Reviewing committee

When a character applies for a place, the other players pick up a different character card, which gives them a temporary role: for example the owner of a place, or a neighbour, or an employee of the city of Zurich (in the case of a city-owned flat). The committee interviews the character to understand if they could be a good fit; each character in the committee has specific quirks that they might express in the interaction with the applicant, highlighting the presence or absence of privileges. For example, a neighbour speaking only Swiss German might not like applicants that do not speak their language; a very progressive owner might be happy to give their flat to a student, and so on and so forth.

This part of the game is heavily based on the interaction between the players; they have to enact their temporary character to the fullest. The fact that the end goal is for everyone to find a place to live, ensures that players act truthfully to the characteristics of the card they drew.

If the reviewing committee accepts the application, the character can move in and has reached their objective. At this point, the player can pick another objective and another character. The first character to reach the objective obtains 30 points; everyone else 10. Each player earns 3 points for each character they have played, as soon as they reach their objective, irrespective of when this happens.

In the end, the player with the most points wins the game. Additionally, there are other ways and opportunities to obtain points throughout the game, which are scattered across the board.



Fig. 10
Packaging of the game

Testing and analysis

The creative process was fueled by testing sessions, without which it would have been impossible to reach the final result. In each iteration, adjustments could be made and new ideas stemmed from the collective intelligence process that each group automatically engaged in. The enthusiasm of players proved to be a great source of continued motivation. The game was tested seven times with different groups of people. Group sizes varied from 3 to 7 players, and despite the homogeneity under certain aspects such as age group and general openness to the topic, the groups also presented elements of heterogeneity, such as geographical provenance, race, occupation, and nationality.

The feedback and suggestions from the individuals who tested the game were fundamental for the creation of the final prototype.

One of the most appreciated features of the game was the eventuality that one might need to change their character; the reviewing committee enactment was also very much valued as it added another layer of relation to the topic, while giving players the opportunity to embody some stereotypical traits and actively engage in discussions. The fact that the reviewing committee characters are redistributed at every application keeps the game fun and without repetitions.

While playing, the dynamics stimulated many discussions on privileges and also on stereotypes: players became aware of their own projections on characters.

The game is centred on the aspect of socioeconomic class, however several other privileges arose within discussion. For instance, the topic of nationality but also identity, such as speaking the language of the country, the stereotypes that come with being a person of colour, and/or a foreigner, arose as discussion points.

During one of the testing sessions, a player manifested their unhappiness after receiving the first four criteria building up the character they would have played with (Name and Surname, nationality, gender identity and race); as soon as the remaining character criteria cards were distributed (socio-economic status, occupation, civil status and age) the player smiled and added “ok, my character is not so boring in the end”. It turned out that the first criteria were portraying a white Swiss man, while the complete picture revealed a 48-year old carpenter with two children coming from a low socioeconomic status. The immediate association with the words “white Swiss man” connects to the aforementioned danger of a single story. (Adichie, 2009)



Fig. 11
The game set

I have always been present during the testing phases of the game. Therefore, the clarity of the “Game Rules” in the appendix has not been tested yet. In the next steps it will be crucial to test the game without my presence.

Another feedback that was gathered during testing and at the CIRCE Fellow Convention in Berlin in September 2023, concerned the understanding that such a game could easily be translated to other cities, maintaining the main structure and changing the specifics on local information and dynamics, which was one of the initial objectives of the project.

The game was also perceived as a good tool to convey the message and reduce the barriers around the stigmatised topic of privileges. The local setting of the game was appreciated, but the evidence about the possibility that the local discourse can foster social cohesion can only be found by playing the game at a much larger scale than this testing phase. However, all participants appreciated the specificity of some instructions in the game, which added a touch of originality to the game.

As mentioned earlier in this document, the game in its current form is targeted to adults; however I remain very interested in creating a similar game with a different theme, yet still related to privilege, addressed to children. In this case, depending on the age of the children, special attention to words should be exercised and it would be important to work together with educators to find the right angle to introduce the theme. Even though children may be aware of privileges from an early age, the way they learn to express these concepts might impact their relation to it and it is therefore important to use an accessible and soft language to introduce the topic. I am committed to engage with schools in a near future and seek further funding to further expand the discussion including children.

The game can also be further developed into a tool for work settings, potentially featuring another theme and a moderator. The idea of changing characters in a professional setting connects to the creative “six thinking hats” exercise (De Bono, 1985) and could thus be combined with the privilege that certain roles entail. It is another avenue that I am interested in taking as soon as I am able to find the proper setting within which to expand the current version of the game.



Fig. 12
Testing en plein air

The overall creation and testing process proved to be extremely dynamic and interesting, utterly woven together. The testing phase introduced the essential plurality and diversity into the process, both in terms of ideation and critical point perspectives. The process could not have been developed successfully without the group sessions and the useful inputs that each participant gave. In total, twenty individuals actively participated in testing the game and/or took part in ideation sessions. The creative power of these informal settings was outstanding: in a short amount of time, a lot of feedback was given and critical points were raised and a dynamic brainstorming followed.

It is necessary to create more and more conditions to allow for this free, liberated exchange of minds: without hierarchies, outside of the so-called institutional places where knowledge is created and approved.

Relevance to CIRCE

This project fits in the context of the CIRCE initiative as part of an effort to build a better Europe, little by little. The local dimension of this game can be, as explained previously, declinated in various other cities across Europe, creating a synergic awareness around privilege structures and therefore creating the momentum towards the questioning and redefinition of current power dynamics. The interplay between local and European dimensions is vital for the preservation of culture and traditions, while maintaining a healthy and vibrant exchange of ideas towards the creation of strong, international, creative economies. The theme of the game, centred around the housing crisis in the city of Zurich, sheds light on a diffuse current issue in many European cities. Without demanding to be a game exclusively based on the real estate market, the pretext to discuss privileges proves at the same time to be a great opportunity to debate both on a local and on a trans-national level about a crisis that concerns the whole of Europe, at least within its largest cities. Gentrification and market speculation are only two of the forces playing in the field. If collectively imagining a future for Europe in which social justice plays a role is a desirable goal to pursue, then disseminating practices across places, with the common objective of reaching this goal, is a promising path to take. These practices can be seen across most of the CIRCE projects, forming local islands of change that connect to each other through their optimistic drawing of the near European future. The feedback gathered so far while testing the game, has confirmed that there is a willingness to discuss delicate topics such as privileges, and that a board game is a good tool to do so in a light yet impactful way. The necessity to foster creative and cultural economies, to let spontaneity arise and beauty manifest itself, originates from the impact that the people in these sectors can have in implementing change on different scales. The collectivity benefits immensely from these local forms of changemaking which are attentive to the contexts in which they operate, also because these actors are generally capable of involving communities and truly understanding their needs. Generative, collaborative, distributed practices all lie in the realm of creative and cultural economies, and should be preserved and fostered to continue implementing positive change within society.

If it is true that changing the world only happens little by little, these are the tiny forces that can induce a paradigm shift.

The cultural and creative economies are bound both to local and international phenomena. In this sense, the game, as a tool for local exploration, fits parts of the equation; the adaptability to any of the major European cities makes it a very useful tool for a common discussion on privilege. The current migration waves within and across Europe, together with the devastation brought forward by the climate crisis, are a constant reminder that not much should be taken for granted, and that what we believe to be the *norm* is nothing but the privilege of a few. Questioning the systems in which certain privileges are rooted contributes to shifting perspectives towards visualising a

different society, one that is not built on unjust power dynamics, but one in which everyone can take part and be part of, without discrimination.

It is important to create ways to remind ourselves that reality is fluid, that boundaries are blurred and that solidarity and openness are vital signs of a well-functioning society. Let us not forget that we are all united in the desire for a better tomorrow.

Appendix

Game Rulebook

Where can you live? is a board game for people interested in learning more about privileges and the relationship between those and the place they live in. This edition has been designed for the city of Zurich. By playing this game, you might be interested in:

- Understanding your own privileges and the power structures that are behind those;
- Understanding what could you do about it: actions that don't necessarily take your privilege away but mitigate the effects of power structures
- Being mindful about interactions with people
- Helping create new dynamics and social structures, which are not relying on power as a systematic tool of oppression

Theme

In *Where can you live?* players have to find a place to live in the city of Zurich.

Finding a place to live in Zürich, as in many European cities, is a challenge that is becoming more arduous every year.

The real estate bubble is pushing prices already for a few years, reaching levels in 2023 that were unthinkable ten years ago. After the pandemic, due to speculation and building renovations, the prices have further increased, creating a real emergency situation in the city of Zurich. (Mieten-Marta, 2023)

Therefore, finding a home in the city is not easy. Are you able to? Take your chances and get a feeling for your privileges!

The game is designed for 3-8 players, aged 16+.

One full round may last around 60-80 minutes.

Components

The game features the following components:

1. A deck of 8 different criteria (Name, Surname, Age, Nationality, Gender identity, Race and/or ethnicity, Socio-economic status, Occupation and Civil status).
2. A deck of Document cards
3. A deck of Objective cards
4. Two decks of Chance cards
5. A deck of Reviewing committee characters
6. A board
7. Eight player Markers
8. A die.

General rules

The goal of the game is scoring points by reaching objectives. The objective of every player is to find a place to live in Zurich for the character they impersonate.

Every player is given a character, who is in one of the following life situations:

- they are relocating to Zurich from abroad, or from another place in Switzerland;
- they are being evicted from the place they are living in now because the building is being sold or renovated;
- they just arrived on Earth and somehow landed in the city of Zurich.

Ending the game

The game ends when every character has reached their objective, that is, finding a place to live. When players reach their objective, except the last to do so, they score points. These points will be part of the final calculation to determine the winner.

Starting the game

Each player receives a character to start the game with. Characters are randomly generated by a combination of eight factors:

- Name, Surname
- Age
- Nationality
- Gender identity
- Race and/or ethnicity
- Socio-economic status
- Occupation
- Civil status.

In the first round, each player receives two random document cards.

Each player introduces themselves by impersonating the character they received.

In the second round, each player receives one random document card. After the second round, players can only draw documents by landing on the corresponding slot of the board.

Objectives

Each character receives an objective, which is related to their socioeconomic status. The objective states the type of housing the character will have to move in.

There are several types of objectives:

- Buying the land to build a house,
- Buying a villa, house or a flat,

- Renting a flat owned either by private entity, a cooperative, or the city of Zurich, or
- Renting a room in a shared flat.

In order to apply to a place, the character needs to land on the corresponding zone of the board (for example, on the *villa* tile, if the objective is to move into a villa). The first character to reach the objective obtains 30 points; everyone else 10. Each player earns 3 points for each character they have played, as soon as they reach their objective, irrespective of when this happens. After reaching their objective, players can pick another character and another objective to remain in the game.

Application process

Players may only apply to a place if they have a complete documentation to apply. The documentation consists of the following documents:

- Passport/ID card
- Valid work permit
- Job
- Clean debt record
- Motivation letter

The work permit is only necessary for characters without Swiss nationality. The work permit validity is the following:

- Two turns for non-EU citizens
- Ten turns for EU citizens

Once a document is expired, it is not valid anymore for the application dossier. Characters need one motivation letter for each application; the rest of the documents can be collected once. When applying, the character gives back one motivation letter to the deck, but not the other documents.

If a non-Swiss citizen draws the job card before the work permit one, they have two turns to find the work permit. Otherwise they are working illegally and they will lose their jobs in two turns.

Reviewing committee

Once a character has collected the necessary documents and lands on the place they want to apply to, they will give away their motivation letter and start the application process following the steps on the board. At this point, every other player takes a temporary character card from the Reviewing committee deck. Each player has to temporarily enact the person depicted in the drawn card, and engage with the applicant. If the reviewing committee accepts the application, the character can move in and has

reached their objective. At this point, the player can pick another objective and another character. There might be other characters passively applying to the place, if anyone has landed on the “gentrification” tile beforehand. The reviewing committee has to take those characters into consideration too, even though they will only be passive.

Board layers

The game starts on the outer layer of the board game. Players throw the die and move their character marker along the board. Once they collected a valid and updated dossier of application documents, can players move to the inner layer of the board. They can only move when landing on a tile that presents an arrow between the inner and outer layer. The move will happen on the subsequent turn.

General rules

Players can exchange documents with each other when they are occupying the same slot of the board. After collecting 3 copies of the same document, they can exchange it with the one they need.

Special cards

The Joker card can be used as any document.

There are two types of Chance cards, one per layer. They contain actions that could be positive or negative for the player.

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