

ANIMAL perspectives

Explore your city!

Idea

Animal Perspectives is a role play that invites you to switch your perspective and imagine what it would be like to live as a wild animal in a city. It aims to give people a better understanding of urban animals.

PerspekTIERwechsel
www.perspektierwechsel.de

Urbane Xtopien
www.xtopien.org

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

We humans largely shape the world according to our own interests, but often give little consideration to how animals 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 or design, plan and build it differently from the very beginning in order to meet animals' needs?

Game Preparation

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.

Animal Perspectives can be played **alone** or **in a group**. It makes the change of perspective more effective if, after exploring the urban space as an animal, you can share your experiences with others. But you can of course also complete the exercise alone.

Before you start, find a **suitable location** and a **convenient time** to play – most animals avoid places and times when there are lots of people around. If you are playing in a group, it is best to start together to clarify any questions, decide on the duration of the game and make the 'transformation to an animal' easier.

Game Instruction

Each participant chooses an animal card or draws one from the pack. The cards initiate a change in perspective by providing a short description of the abilities and needs of the species depicted.

With the animal card visibly attached to your clothing, interactions with other animals (hunting, hiding from predators, etc.) are possible during the role-play. However, it can also be exciting not to know which other animals are around and to guess based on the playful behaviour of the other participants.

If you wish, you can use a 'mini meditation' for the transformation. Once they have "transformed" themselves, all participants go off on their own to explore the world. After a certain time has elapsed (approx. 15–45 mins), somebody should 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

In our experience, it is not easy to put yourself in an animal's position. To help with the change in perspective you can lead a guided mini meditation.

"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?
By the way: 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 animal card and run, fly or swim away ... Explore your world."

Questions for sharing experiences after the role play

Becoming an animal

→ Was it fun being your animal?

→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 about the animal species given on the card? Have you looked up further information about your animal (senses, characteristics, behaviour) online, in books or in documentaries? Or: 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, urban woodland, park, shopping centre, etc.)? How long were you there?
- →What places were particularly difficult or dangerous for your animal? What places were safe or well-suited?
- →Did you meet any other animals (real animals or other role-players)? How was that?
- →What did you learn? What left a strong impression on you?
- →How should we plan and construct buildings, roads, urban parks, etc. differently o that your animal can thrive (even more) in the city?
- →Would you rather have been a different animal? Which one? Why? Would you like to try a different role-play card?