

X-DIMENSIONAL CARDS

PLAYING CARDS FOR X-DIMENSIONAL EXCURSIONS

There is a certain moment in role-playing games when a game master, in dialogue with other players, add new information to the game. It can be in the form of a player character's backstory or statement about what people in the game world strive for. This information is immediately accepted by everyone in the game. They all begin acting according to what has just been established, as though it had always been the case. This card game wants to be that kind of moment. We act on what is said as though it is true while we know it's make-believe.

This card game wants to serve as a collective act of dreaming, wherein outside and inside are interwoven, where we share imagination, and where we drift through reality's different dimensions, travel through portals, read thoughts and hack perceptions.

This card game uses a certain language to set a particular mood. It's almost as though the world expands through the simple act of describing what already exists.

Such is the game's magical elements. The subjective, the objective, the corporeal, the relational, the physical, the virtual, the microscopic, the cosmic, the linguistic – inside the game, attention shifts between these different layers. Each one is as real as any other, in this game.

This game was developed at a mall, on a street, at a conference table and in a hotel lobby. To play it is a straight forward activity performed at a table anywhere, inconspicuous to outside observers. We, who created the game, want to encourage play in places where other activities are going on all around. Play in places that interest you, that are hard to understand, that frighten you or that you want to make your own.

EBBA PETRÉN



PLAYING CARDS FOR X-DIMENSIONAL EXCURSIONS WAS DEVELOPED BY TEATER INSITE & NYXXX.
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This game manual is free to download and print from nyxxx.se/x-dimensional-cards
It is not to be sold or taken profit from in any way. Everyone can master a game session, just read through the manual first, to get a grip of the game. We, the makers of the game, encourage future game masters to tell their players from where they got the game.

PLAYING THE GAME

There are ten cards. This manual suggests several different ways to use the cards. For example, they can be used to describe what you see when you look around, but they can also be used to imagine things you may not be able to see but that could potentially be there. On each card, you will find something that you can use to describe or imagine a place. You can find a list of the cards as well as the cards themselves at the end of this document.

Game Modes

BASIC GAME STRUCTURE

This is designed for a group of players (3-6 is optimal) and a game master.

1. The game starts when the game master turns over the first card.
2. Every now and then, the game master turns over a new card and return other cards to their original, face-down, positions.
3. Play passes around the table. On your turn, you look at the card currently turned up and you say something based on that card. For the purposes of the game, every statement about the space you're in is true. This means that the game works best when players build on each other's suggestions, rather than contradict each other. More than one card may be turned face-up at the same time. If this is the case when it's your turn, you pick one of the face-up cards to base your statement on.
4. Players keep taking turns making statements about the space until the game master has flipped the final card, at which point the game ends.

Example: The game master places nine cards, face-down, in this order: Shared Phenomena, Absent Phenomena, Sensations, Thoughts, Objects in Relation, Adjacent Spaces, Portals, Systems, Transformations.

The game master begins by turning over the Shared Phenomena card. Player X says: "There are nine cards on the table". Player Y then says: "There is a table". Later, the game master flips the Shared Phenomena card and turns the Portals card face up. Player Z says: "I become invisible if I hide under the table." The game master turns up Transformations. Both Portals and Transformations is now facing up. Player X chooses to use Transformations and says: "If the table is turned upside down, a revolution will break out."

BASIC GAME STRUCTURE IN FICTION

The same game structure can be used to describe imaginary spaces. Players take turns making statements

describing a space that doesn't necessarily correspond to the actual space around them. As in the case of the basic game structure, everything the players say about the space is true for the purposes of the game. Play passes around the table.

Example: The card Shared Phenomena is face up on the table. Player X says: "There's an elephant in the middle of the room". Thus, Player Y should not continue by saying: "The floor is empty", but should instead stay true to the fact that there is an elephant in the room. For example, they can say: "The floor is covered in sawdust". If the actual floor under the players is made of wood, they will perhaps imagine that floor dissolve and transform into mulch.

DESTROYING THE WORLD

Played similarly to the basic game structure, but instead of describing the room you destroy it by removing objects. Players use phrases such as: "[X] does no longer exist" or "[X is gone]". The game ends after a preset time (e.g. 30 minutes) has run out or when the space has been cleared out. No one is expected to act "as if" anything has actually disappeared, the game simply continues with things being removed, object by object.

Example: "The chair I'm sitting on is gone", "The music played through the speakers is gone", "The word 'painting' no longer exists".

ODD ONE OUT

This is designed for a group of players with no game master. 3-6 players is suitable. One of the players (the Odd One Out) pick one card to use in describing the space. Remaining players decide on one or more other cards to use in their descriptions of the space. Play passes around the table.

Example: The Odd One Out picks the Transformations card. The remaining players choose Shared Phenomena and Objects in Relation. These choices sets up a dynamic where the larger group of players make statements about what they can perceive in the space while the Odd One Out imagines what else the space could be. On the other hand, should the Odd One Out instead choose the card Shared Phenomena and the remaining players pick Thoughts and Sensations, it will result in a different dynamic. The larger group will, in this latter case, describe corporeal and personal experiences, while the Odd One Out points out things which are tangible to everyone.

A GUIDE IN THE SIMULATION

This game suggestion has the players move through an environment they wish to explore. One player is the Guide. The Guide can use all of the cards or make a selection by, for example, picking Portals, Thoughts, Adjacent Spaces, and Transformations. With the help

of the cards, the Guide describes the surroundings. The other players may ask the Guide questions. The Guide can switch roles with another player by handing over the cards. In the example above, the players' surroundings may begin to seem as if it's been carefully constructed. This feeling can be enhanced by the Guide addressing the players as if they are in a virtual simulation of the real place. Maybe the one who designed the simulation takes issue with some of its features?

LISTENING TO THE SPACE

This game suggestion requires the players to have access to a device with a "speakerphone" function as well as a device connected to a handsfree headset. As in A Guide in the Simulation, one player assumes the responsibility of being the Guide. Here too, the Guide can choose whether to use a single card or selection of them. The Guide puts on the headset and leaves the player group. The Guide can go to an adjoining room or on the other side of town. Based on the cards, the Guide then describes the space they are in for the other players, who listen and try to imagine that space. The players might picture it or see a completely different spaces.

ROLEPLAY

This game suggestion requires a group to have spent some time playing through the basic game structure. Once the players have described a place – imaginary or otherwise – using the basic game structure, they are ready to explore the possibilities of that place through roleplay. For this game, the cards are removed. The game master begins by describing the place in which the roleplay takes place. The game master does this by turning what the players have said into a cohesive description. Then, the game master asks questions, one at a time, to the players, just like in a traditional tabletop roleplaying game. The first question is "Where are you?" The player answers. The game master tells the player what the consequences of what they say are. The game master then asks further questions, such as "Who are you?" and "What are you doing?" or they move on to another player and ask the first question. The game continues at least until all players know where they are and have a mission in the imagined space. This scene can also be the start of a longer role-playing adventure.

PLAYING WITH QUESTIONS

This is a game for a group, with or without a game master, that wants to explore the possibilities and affordances of a certain place. Players take turns describing the space based on the cards. This time, their statements aim to find the answer to a certain question, perhaps one of the following: *What is my best escape route? What is the best way into this space? Which enemy is most vulnerable? Which enemy is the biggest threat? What should I be on the lookout for? How would I make myself feel at home here? How would you go about settling into this*

space? Answers won't be straightforward. Instead, they will be implied in the way players describe the space. The question guides players' perception of the space and informs what they decide to say about it.

DEEP-DIVE

This game proposal is an add-on to other game structures. Guided by further questions, one player is given the opportunity to expand on their description of the space.

Example: The card Transformations is in play. Player X says: "If I put my hands on the table, I can connect with everyone who has been at this table before me". Player Z puts a hand on player X's shoulder. Player X should then close their eyes. Player Z asks "You now put your hands on the table. Who do you see?" Player X keeps their eyes closed and answers "I see a person chopping vegetables". Player Z asks "Is the person alone?" Player X answers "No, there are three children playing under the table". Player Z is satisfied with the deep-dive session and lifts the hand off Player X's shoulder. Player X opens their eyes and the game continues.

TO SAY AND TO DO

This suggestion is made for a group of players (2-4 is suitable) that both play and guide each other. Compared to other game modes, it relies more on player relationships and less on describing the space. The cards are not used at all but much like the card game, this game mode explores what players see and what potential phenomena they can imagine. Play passes around the table.

On one's turn, a player can choose to do one of the following:

1. Describing an action while performing it. Example: Player X says: "I stand up". Player X then stands up.
2. Describing an action without performing it. Example: Player X says "I stand up" but remains seated.
3. Describing another player's action. That player then decides whether or not to perform it.

Example: Player X says: "You walk up to me". Player Z chooses to remain seated, but could have chosen to walk up to Player X.

4. Describing one's own appearance, letting it correspond or not to what one actually looks like.

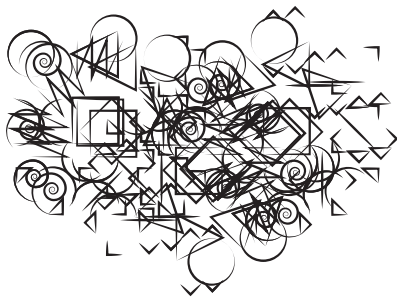
Example: Player X says: "I'm wearing a full suit of armor, and I'm carrying a longsword in my right hand". In fact, X is wearing jeans and a sweater.

5. Describing another player's appearance, letting it correspond or not to what they actually look like.

Example: Player X says: “You are wearing a blue sweater”. Player Z is in fact wearing a red sweater.

For the purposes of the game, both what is said, and what is both said as well as performed are true. Similarly, statements about the space are to be taken as truth regardless of whether they correspond to the actual space or take the form of pure imagination. Players must keep both speculative and factual statements in mind.

This game mode is a form of negotiation between players on what actually is going on and, as a consequence, depends on a sense of trust and attentiveness between players.



Scenario Proposal

This is a suggestion for how the deck of cards can be used to create a longer, cohesive game for 3-6 players and a game master. The game master’s job is to steer the collaborative storytelling and guide players through the different parts of the game. This game suggestion must be read through by the game master before play begins.

The game is divided into four sections. The first allows players to map, and locate themselves within, the space. The second section is about reshaping the actual space. The third invites players to collectively imagine an entirely different kind of space. In the final section, players disassemble the fiction and return to the actual space.

Each section of the game is made up of a game sequence and a portal sequence. In the game sequence, players describe the space according to the basic game structure. The portal sequence serves as transition to the next section of the game. Sometimes, a portal sequence overlaps with a game sequence.

PREPARATIONS

Unless the players already know each other, give everyone the opportunity to introduce themselves. Once introductions are taken care of, move on to explaining the cards and the game’s general outline.

Example: “We are going to play a game where we describe different spaces, real as well as made up ones. We will use these cards, our observational skills, our voices, and our imagination. The game is divided into four sections and once we’ve played through them, we will have

traveled from the space we’re currently in, through other spaces, and back again. I will guide you by placing cards on the table. Every now and then, I will provide you with new or more detailed instructions.”

Before a game sequence starts, the game master places the cards face-down in two rows. The order of the cards varies between the four sections of the game. The order for each section can be found below. The cards must be reorganized before starting on a new section. The bottom row has more cards than the top (except in section 4), and thus changes faster. Cards in the lower row are generally in play for a shorter amount of time than those in the top row. The game master is responsible for setting the pace. All cards must have been in play before the game master flips the final card over.

The game starts by the game master turning over the first card in the top row. Players can then start the first section of the game by describing the space they’re in. Play passes around the table while the game master work through the card sequence by bringing cards into and out of play (i.e. flipping face-up cards so that they face down and vice versa). If players are new to the cards, it’s a good idea to let every player make at least one statement based on a card before it is turned face-down again.

SECTION 1. DESCRIBING THE ACTUAL SPACE

GAME SEQUENCE 1

Top row: Shared Phenomena, Systems, Adjacent Spaces

Bottom row: Objects in Relation, Sensations, Portals, Thoughts, Transformations

Concluding card: Absent Phenomena

PORTAL SEQUENCE 1

The game master summarizes what players have said based on Transformations and Absent Phenomena. This summary forms the basis of the altered space they will describe in section 2. Phenomena that are absent in the actual space will be present in the altered space in section 2.

The premise for section 2 is that players describe a space built on the actual space. The actual space is a kind of background and they may add to or alter the phenomena therein. The players create a place which is, in part, based on what is in the actual space as well as what they can imagine.

SECTION 2. DESCRIBING AN ALTERED SPACE

GAME SEQUENCE 2

Top row: Shared Phenomena, Systems, Absent Phenomena.

Bottom row: Objects in Relation, Sensations, Adjacent Spaces, Portals, Thoughts.

Concluding card: Transformations

PORTAL SEQUENCE 2

The game master leads one or more players on a Deep Dive (see “Deep Dive” in the game modes section above) into statements they’ve made based on the Transformations card. Players are encouraged to let the information revealed in the Deep Dive inspire them in the creation of the space in section 3. The players decide whether or not to build on the Deep Dive, the game master does not force it.

The premise of section 3 is that players describe a fictional space, which doesn’t need to have any connection to the earlier spaces. Players create an entirely imagined space.

SECTION 3. DESCRIBING A FICTIONAL SPACE

GAME SEQUENCE 3

Top row: Shared Phenomena, Adjacent Spaces, Absent Phenomena.

Bottom row: Objects in Relation, Sensations, Portals, Thoughts, Transformations.

Concluding card: Systems

PORTAL SEQUENCE 3

The game master guides the players through a roleplaying scene in the fictional space (see “Roleplay” in the game modes section above). Each player must be loca-

ted within the space and given a task before section 4 can begin. At the end of the scene, the game master incorporates one or more of the things that players mentioned in earlier sections.

Example: “You enter the medieval church. There’s a table in the middle of the church. Strangely enough, the table looks exactly like the one we’re sitting at.” This speech act is a segway into section 4.

The premise of section 4 is that players travel from the fictional back to the actual space. They do this by gradually removing things from the fictional space (using the Absent Phenomena card) and adding things to the actual space (using the Shared Phenomena card).

Example: Player X uses Absent Phenomena to say: “There is no longer a medieval church”. Player Z uses the Shared Phenomena card to say: “There are nine playing cards on a table”.

SECTION 4. RETURNING

GAME SEQUENCE 4

Top row: Shared Phenomena

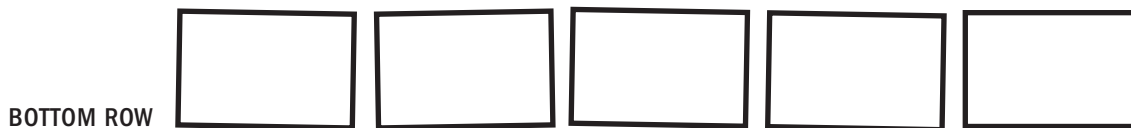
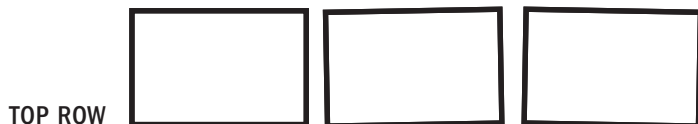
Bottom Row: Absent Phenomena

Concluding card: Thoughts

THE END

Players usually use the concluding card in section 4 to reflect on the game, thus lending the game a sense of completion when it is turned face-down. If the group needs a structured post-game discussion, the game master may take it upon themselves to make sure everyone has the opportunity to speak.

EXAMPLE OF CARD PLACEMENT:



THE CARDS

SHARED PHENOMENA

When this card is in play, you can describe the world we share. It can be things or phenomena that exist, that could be perceived by anyone in the room. It can also be invisible or abstract phenomena that we know exist, such as blood, time, oxygen.

Sentences could start with: *"There is/are ..."*

ABSENT PHENOMENA

When this card is in play, you can describe what doesn't exist in the space that you are in. It can be something small or something big, visible or invisible, obvious or implausible. It can also be emotions or more abstract phenomena not currently present in the space.

Sentences could start with *"There are no ..."* or *"No one here ..."*

SENSATIONS

When this card is in play, the participants are encouraged to verbalise perceptions from their own body or senses. These sensations can be in relation to other players, something in the space, or they can be internal to the player making the statement.

Sentences could start with *"I can notice ..."* or *"I feel that ..."* or *"When I sit like this, I..."*

THOUGHTS

When this card is in play, players can pay attention to other things that occupy their minds. For example, thoughts about the future, memories or associations from popular culture that arise in the moment.

Sentences could start with *"I think that ..."* *"I'm thinking about ..."* or *"I remember ..."*

OBJECTS IN RELATION

When the card is in play, players can say something about the relationship between objects in the space.

Example sentences: *"I can not reach the ceiling, even if I stand on the table"* or *"There are shoes enveloping our feet."*

ADJACENT SPACES

When this card is in play, players can say something about spaces next to, above, inside or beyond the one in which the game is played. Fantasy or conjecture can be used.

Sentences could start with *"On the other side of the wall there is..."* or *"Under the floor are..."*

PORTALS

When this card is in play, players can describe ways out of the current situation based on the various features of the space. A door is, of course, a way to another room, but the statements can be more fanciful than that, or even pure fiction. A cinnamon bun may contain a portal to a memory. A mirror may be an passage to another dimension. A text from a dear friend changes your bodily condition.

Sentences could start with *"If I would... then..."* or *"If this would... then..."*

SYSTEMS

When this card is in play, players can say something about how things are connected. It may be how the room is supplied with electricity, who pays to be allowed to be there and who doesn't, what you can do without diverging from a norm, how gravity keeps things in place, or something else.

Sentences could start with *"There is..."* or *"Everyone here..."*

TRANSFORMATIONS

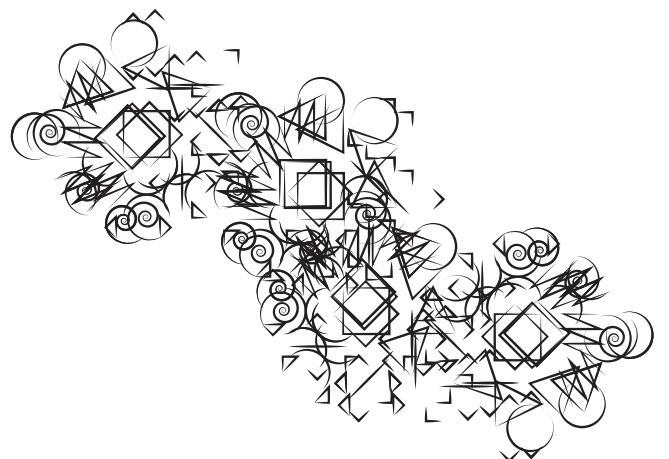
When this card is in play, players can imagine how things and people in the room can be transformed or transported. Perhaps the buildings outside are no longer building, but mountain peaks? Perhaps you have a chip implanted in your neck? Perhaps time moves backwards?

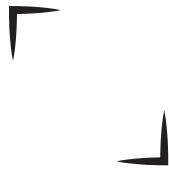
Sentences could start with: *"X turns into ..."*

DETAILS

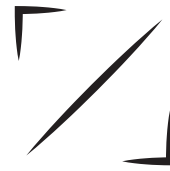
When this card is in play, players can describe details in the space. The player peeks through the hole in the card and describe what they see. The card is not used in the basic game structure but can be added to it. Prepare the card by poking a hole about the size of the eye of a needle in the middle of the card.

Sentences could start with: *"I see ..."* or *"The checkered pattern on..."*

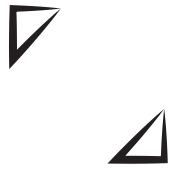




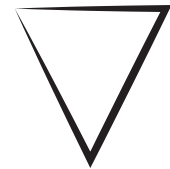
SHARED PHENOMENA



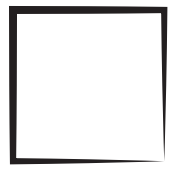
ABSENT PHENOMENA



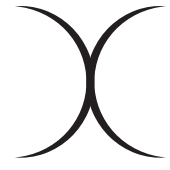
SENSATIONS



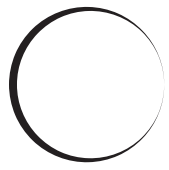
THOUGHTS



OBJECTS IN RELATION



ADJACENT SPACES



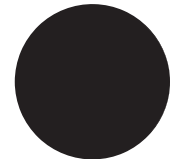
PORTALS



SYSTEMS



TRANSFORMATIONS



DETAILS