

# The Treegame



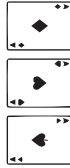
Change of roles

ဖိတ်ကံစဉ်းစမ်း



3 Diamonds

ဖိတ်ကံစဉ်းစမ်း



3 Ace  
any suits

ဖိတ်ကံစဉ်းစမ်း



3 Hearts

ဖိတ်ကံစဉ်းစမ်း



3 Clubs

ဖိတ်ကံစဉ်းစမ်း



3 Spades

ဖိတ်ကံစဉ်းစမ်း



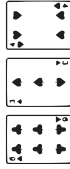
1 Jack 1 Queen 1 King  
any suits

ဖိတ်ကံစဉ်းစမ်း



3 Queen  
any suits

ဖိတ်ကံစဉ်းစမ်း



3 numbered cards  
any suits

ဖိတ်ကံစဉ်းစမ်း



3 figured cards  
any suits

ဖိတ်ကံစဉ်းစမ်း



3 numbered cards  
in a row  
any suits

# What is it like to play a Tree?

## What is the game about?

In this game, **you will be playing different roles**: for some time, you will be an Industrialist, then you might become a Lake or take on the role of Citizens. Each of those roles is able to do different things, and each has different victory conditions. Some, in fact, have no victory conditions at all.

While inhabiting the roles of Citizens or Industrialist, you will play something akin to a classical boardgame. While playing the roles of **Lake** and **Woods**, you will play something that is more like a party game or a **creative drawing exercise**.

We ask you to have an open mind about all of those roles and invite you to **discuss the game with your play partners afterwards**.

## What do you need to play?

- **A blank sheet of paper, A3 or larger**  
This will be the game board. Two players (lake and woods) will draw on it, while the other two (industrialist and citizens) will place pollution markers as well as houses and villas (which serve as victory points) on it.

- **Pens, pencils or other drawing tools.**

- **A printout of the investment scale sheet and the natural disasters table**  
Place those beside the game board where everyone can see them. Put a small marker on the number 3 on the investment level track.

- **Printouts of the player handouts**  
Place those around the game board, one at each side.

- **A set of Wishlist cards = Wunschzettel**  
Cut them out or print them. To make them more durable, you can put them into card sleeves or glue them to old playing cards. Shuffle the cards and place them face-down besides the Citizen player handout.

- **A set of standard playing cards**  
You can use a **52 card poker deck** or

something similar. Leave two Jokers in the deck. Shuffle the deck and put it face-down between the Citizens and the Industrialist player handouts.

- **About 40 pollution tokens**  
You can use anything that takes your fancy for that: counters from other boardgames, beans, coins, old nuts and bolts etc. We use Go stones, which have a nice weight and feeling to them.

- **5 house markers and 3 villa markers**  
Again, you can use whatever takes your fancy. Monopoly houses for the houses and hotels for the villas work very nicely. We made some Bauhaus-looking shapes out of cardboard.

- **A marker to indicate investment level and markers to show the Industrialist's bonus actions**  
You can use any markers for this. Place one marker on the number 3 on the investment level track to indicate the current investment level. You will move it up or down the scale during the game. Put the bonus action markers beside the Citizens player handouts.

- **Play money = „cash“**  
You can use Monopoly money, or poker chips, or real coins.

### Natural Disasters Table

1	Catastrophic flood. Remove one factory.
2	Landslide. Remove one house.
3	Supply chain disrupted. Remove all cards in the Industrialist's display.
4	Disaster management is expensive. Roll two action dice and add the numbers. The Industrialist immediately loses that amount of money.
5	People get anxious. The Citizen player immediately discards their Desire card and draws a new one.
6	Natural disasters make investors nervous. Roll one action die and reduce Investment Level by the number rolled.

- One standard six-sided Die (D6)

This is your bog-standard die labeled 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, which can easily be pilfered from many boardgames.

- One special Action Die (AD)

This is a six-sided die labeled 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 4. You can buy a blank die and write the numbers on it, or put small stickers on a normal die and label those. Or you can use the following table to convert the results:

normal die result	Action Die
1	1
2-3	2
4-5	3
6	4

Most components can be easily sourced from other games or from household materials. If you want to get the extra mile, we suggest to look at your local game store, which will sell you spare markers and blank dice, or to browse online for boardgame parts.

### Setting up the game

Put the blank sheet of paper in the middle of the table. **Draw the outlines of a woods and a lake on it.**

Place the investment scale sheet and the natural disasters table somewhere everyone can see them. Put a marker on the number 3 of the investment track. Then place the player handouts on each side of the game board (that is, your still almost blank sheet of paper). Put the Wishlist cards and the Bonus Action markers beside the Citizens player handout. The poker deck, the pollution markers, the money and the houses and villas go between the Citizens and the Industrialist handouts.

**Each player chooses a role.** If you can't decide, each rolls a die and, going from highest to lowest result, chose in turn. Take a seat where the handout for your designated role is.

**Lake, Woods and the Industrialist players each draw two cards** from the poker deck and put them face-up in front of them. **Lake and Woods players also get pens or pencils.**



Investment Scale

Investment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Revenue	-	-	🎲	🎲	🎲	🎲 x2	🎲 x2	🎲 x2	🎲 x2	🎲 x3
Cards in display	0	1	2	3	3	4	4	5	5	6
Pollution	-	🎲	🎲 x2	🎲 x2	🎲 x3	🎲 x3	🎲 x3	🎲 x4	🎲 x4	🎲 x5



# You are ready for the game to begin!

## Playing the game

The game is played in turns. During each turn, every player will be able to do something. **What they can do, however, depends on the role** they are playing at the moment - so the Citizens player will be able to do different (and usually more) things than the Industrialist player and the Lake and Woods players. However, **player roles will change during the game**, so usually, everyone gets a chance to play each of the four roles.

Each turn, players will act in the following sequence:

1. Citizens
2. Industrialist
3. Lake
4. Woods

After the Woods player has concluded their actions, start again with the Citizens player.

## CHANGE OF PLAYER ROLES

**At the beginning of their turn, a player rolls one D6.** If the result is a 1, a change of roles occurs. Players will have to **physically change place** and move to their new position around the table. Leave all markers, player handouts and so on at their place - it is the players that move, not the stuff on the table! (You might want to take your beverage with you, though.)

**Players will from now on play the role of their new position until another change of roles occurs.**

**But which player will switch with which player?** This can be determined in several ways. You can either exchange roles in a

way that each player gets to play a role, or you can write the roles on pieces of paper and have the players draw them out of a cup or something similar.

In any case, player positions are immediately changed before the players conduct their actions. The new player will take over and finish their turn. So, for example, if the Industrialist player rolled a 1, they will immediately get up and exchange their place with another player, who will then continue as the Industrialist, conducting actions in this new role.

## Citizens

1. Roll 1D6. On a 1, a change of roles occurs (see above).
2. If you do not have a Wishlist card, draw one from the Wishlist deck. You can **only have one Wishlist card at a time.**

3. Roll the Action Die. The number rolled is the number of actions you can take this turn.

This means that you will get from 1 to 4 actions in your turn, with 2 or 3 actions being the most probable.

### 4. Perform action

You can **perform as many actions as you have rolled** on the Action Die. Those are the actions available:

- **Take a card** from the **Lake** or from the **Woods** player. This **will cost one action.** As long as you have actions available, you can do this several times in your turn.
- **Take a card** from the **Industrialist.** This **will cost one action**, and you can also do

this several times per turn. However, for each card taken, **hand the Industrialist one Bonus Action marker.**

- **Move the investment track** one step in any direction. This **will cost one action** per step and you can also do this several times per turn as long as you have actions remaining.

- **Discard your Wishlist card** and draw a new one. The discarded Wishlist card is removed from the game. If there are no more cards left in the Wishlist deck, you can't perform this action.

- **Remove one pollution marker** from the Lake or from the Woods. Again, you can do this several times per turn provided you have the actions.

At any time **during your turn**, you may **discard poker cards**. Place **one pollution marker** either on the Lake or on the Woods for each card discarded. Remove the cards from the game.

5. If you have collected the cards corresponding to the instructions on your **current Wishlist card**, discard both and **place one house** anywhere on the game board. If there are **five houses** on the board, the **game ends immediately** and you have won!

6. Discard excess cards. **You may not have more than three poker cards at the end of your turn.** For each card discarded, **place one pollution marker** either on the **Lake** or on the **Woods** for each card discarded. Remove the cards from the game.

### Industrialist

1. Roll 1D6. On a 1, a change of roles occurs (see above).

2. **You start your turn with one action.**

However, for each **Bonus Action token** you received **from the Citizens player**, you may take an additional action. Chose from the following actions:

- Move the **investment track one step** in any direction. This **will cost one action per step**. You can do this several times per turn as long as you have actions remaining.

- **Remove one pollution marker** from the Lake or from the Woods.

You can also **discard poker cards** from your display. This doesn't cost an action, but it **will cause pollution**: For each card discarded, place one pollution marker on the Lake or the Woods. Remove the cards from the game.

After you have finished your actions, **determine your revenue**. Roll the Action Die and multiply the result with the Revenue coefficient indicated on the Investment Track according to the current investment level. **Take the corresponding amount of money.**

By spending **15 cash units**, you can place a villa anywhere on the game board. **If there are three villas** on the board, the **game ends immediately** and you have won!

Otherwise, **fill your card display** by drawing cards from the poker deck and placing them face-up in front of you. There have to be as many cards as indicated on the Investment Track according to the current investment level in your display.

Finally, **determine the amount of pollution**. Roll the Action Die and multiply the result with the Pollution coefficient indicated on the Investment Track according to the current investment level. Take the corresponding amount of

pollution markers and **distribute them as evenly as possible** among Woods and Lake.

### Lake and Woods

The players **inhabiting the role of Lake and Woods** follow the same structure.

When it is the turn of the Lake and Woods players they can draw on the game board and change it by that way.

1. Roll 1D6. On a 1, a change of roles occurs (see above).
2. Roll 1D6 and remove as many pollution markers from your area (lake or woods) as indicated by the die roll. Then compare the remaining pollution with this table and follow the instructions:



0	Remove one pollution from the other area (i.e. not yours, so if you are Lake, remove one from Woods and vice versa). Add one element to your area on the game board. Then draw poker cards from the deck and put them face up in front of you until there are two cards.
1-9	Add one element to your area on the game board. Then draw poker cards from the deck and put them face up in front of you until there are two cards.
10+	Destroy one element of your area by painting over it or tearing it out. Remove all cards from your display.

### Aftermath

**As soon as either the Citizens or the Industrialist have won, the game ends.** Take a short break and reflect upon your experiences.

First, have a look at the game board. How does it look? What elements can you see in the woods and lake areas? Have many elements been erased? Where have the houses and villas been placed?

Second, think about the different roles and how they made you feel. Why did you enjoy some more than others? What was it that you liked in a role, and what

was it that you didn't like? Does this correspond with your usual taste in games? And how did the role change make you feel?

And finally, **discuss the system dynamics the rules create.** Does the game suggest a certain play style? Are there optimal strategies? Do you, in hindsight, see where you could have done things differently to get a different outcome? How could this have been achieved?

We invite you to share your thoughts and a picture of the final game board with us! **You can mail it to [egc@uni-ak.ac.at](mailto:egc@uni-ak.ac.at)**

# PLAYER HANDOUTS

## Lake

First, roll 1D6: on a 1, a change of role happens.

Then, roll 1D6 and remove the indicated number of pollution. Afterwards, check this table and follow the instructions:

0	Remove one pollution from the Woods. Add one element to your area on the game board. Then draw poker cards from the deck and put them face up in front of you until there are two cards.
1-9	Add an element to the map of the lake. Then draw poker cards from the deck and put them face up in front of you until there are two cards.
10+	Destroy one element of your area by painting over it or tearing it out. Remove all cards from your display. If you have rolled a 1 for removing pollution, additionally roll once on the Natural Disasters table.

## Woods

First, roll 1D6: on a 1, a change of role happens.

Then, roll 1D6 and remove the indicated number of pollution.  
Afterwards, check this table and follow the instructions:

0	Remove one pollution from the Lake. Add one element to your area on the game board. Then draw poker cards from the deck and put them face up in front of you until there are two cards.
1-9	Add an element to the map of the lake. Then draw poker cards from the deck and put them face up in front of you until there are two cards.
10+	Destroy one element of your area by painting over it or tearing it out. Remove all cards from your display. If you have rolled a 1 for removing pollution, additionally roll once on the Natural Disasters table.

## Industrialist

First, roll 1D6: on a 1, a change of role happens.

You have one action plus the number of Bonus Actions marker you have.

• Move the investment scale one step in any direction	1 action per step
• Remove one pollution	1 action

Check Revenue factor according to the investment level and roll the Action Die.

Fill your card display to the number of cards indicated on the investment track.

Check pollution factor according to the investment level and roll the Action Die. Distribute pollution evenly between Lake and Woods.



## Citizens

First, roll 1D6: on a 1, a change of role happens.

Second, roll your Action Die. The result is the number of actions available this turn.

• Take a card from Lake or Woods	1 action per card
• Take a card from Industrialist	1 action per card Give 1 Bonus Action marker to Industrialist per card
• Move investment track one step in any direction	1 action per step
• Discard Wishlist and draw a new one	1 action
• Remove one pollution	1 action

## Tree Game Overview / Prototype

### 1. Citizens



Roll die to determine action points. Spend them to...

Take cards from industrialist, woods or lake

Move the „investment“ scale up or down

If you have collected the cards corresponding to your current Yearning, take a victory point and draw another Yearning.

If you have 5 victory points, you have won.

### 2. Industrialist



Use your actions to...

Replenish cards according to the current level of investment

Move the „investment“ scale up or down

Then, check the investment scale for your revenue and the pollution and CO2 you have to place on the woods and in the river

If you have a wealth of \$ 200, you have won.

### 3. Woods



Roll die to determine how much CO2 to remove.

Then, check the table to see if you have to draw or erase something on your map.

### 4. Lake



Roll die to determine how much pollution to remove.

Then, check the table to see if you have to draw or erase something on your map.

Each player rolls a die after their turn to determine if a change of roles will occur



The game concept was developed after a conversation under a cherry blossom tree by Margarete Jahrmann and Stefan Glasauer.  
Game development Thomas Brandstetter.

TREE GAME is an emanation of the artistic research project  
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Janine Scheer-Erb

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Louise Linsenbolz

Georg Luif

Stefan Maier

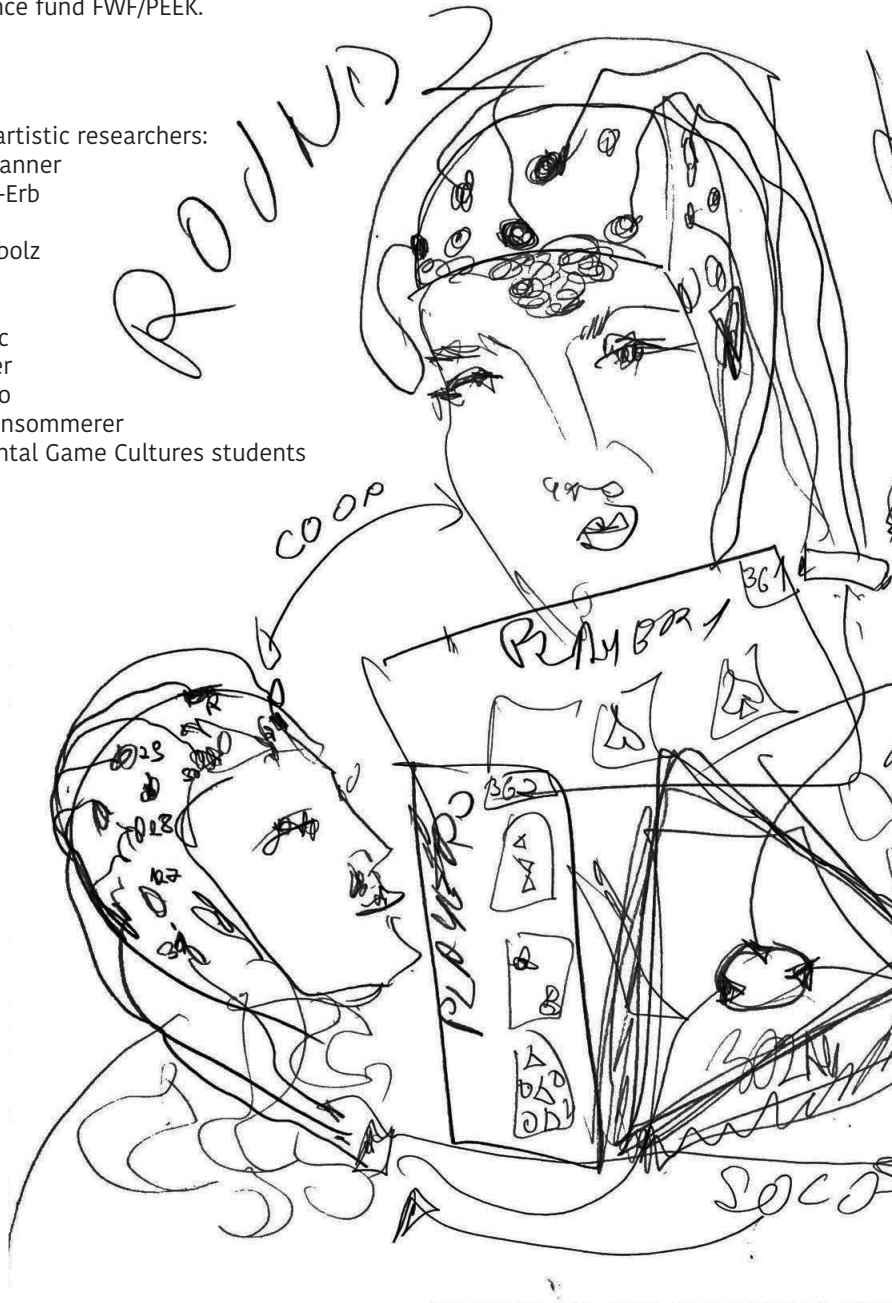
Barbi Markovic

Max Moswitzer

Fabian Navarro

Thomas Wagensommerer

and Experimental Game Cultures students



This drawing shows players with **electroenzephalogramm caps**.

EEG measurement and interpretation of brain data/ Developing models out of it is a method we adapt from our neuroscientific research partners. Brain activity synchronization and player action is measured. In the data-analysis we can compare the individual brain activity during the same game-play session.



26.02.24 / Mf.



This is a drawing of the game board that was made during a playlets session at the University of dieAngewandte Festival/ Psycholudic research group meeting in June 2024. The drawing is made collectively during the game play. Tree and Lake players draw, to express a different kind of efficacy that is inherent to vibrant matter.

Lake and Woods

Man



Korn! Squache!





# Designing a phyto-punk game

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We have designed an artistic experimental board- and role-playing game that investigates new ways of addressing environmentalism, democracy and the relationship between society and nature. The way it does this is not by simple making those issues themes of the game. Rather, we employ experimental game mechanics that aim at subverting established gaming conventions and expectations.

Our game features two experimental mechanics: 1. A fundamental asymmetry in rules between the roles of “citizen” and “industrialist” (representing society) and “lake” and “wood” (representing nature). While the first two play something akin to a typical Eurogame, the latter can’t influence the game state but instead play a drawing game that prioritizes creativity and expression. 2. Players’ roles are switched randomly at irregular intervals. This means that each player will potentially play each role at least once during the game. Our aim is to let the players experience multiperspectivity and radically different concepts of agency.

The punk ethos is present in the game at two levels: First, at the gameplay level, mechanics such as role change and freestyle drawing (not as a competition element, such as in party games, but as a form of creative expression akin to the DADAist game of cadavre exquis) call into question the capitalist logics of accumulation, winning and even identity.

Second, on the production and consumption level, the game is not published as a boxed game, but in the form of a booklet and/or pdf. Players must supply their own gaming material

and are encouraged to use everyday materials or even repurpose junk. This mirrors the DIY attitude of the punk movement and of parts of the indie role-playing game scene, which subverts the consumerist drive to ever more lavish big boxes with plastic components.

By throwing a spanner into the „frictionless clockwork“ of game mechanics fetishized by many boardgame designers (especially in the Eurogame context) and by rejecting the consumerist aesthetics of perfectly designed boxes and components, we aim at bringing something of the energy of punk into the world of analogue games.

## References

Alder, Avery: Imagining Ourselves Queer Mechanics and Queer Games. Presentation, Regnbagsfestivalen 2014, Flanagan, Mary: Critical Play: Radical Game Design. The MIT Press 2009. Holland, Amabel: Cardboard Ghosts. Using Physical Games to Model and Critique Systems. CRC Press 2025.





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3 Diamonds

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3 Ace  
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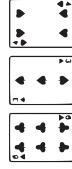
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3 Queen  
any suits

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3 numbered cards  
any suits

ဖိစပ်ကိရိယာများ



3 figured cards  
any suits

ဖိစပ်ကိရိယာများ



3 numbered cards  
in a row  
any suits



FWF österreichischer  
Wissenschaftsfonds



di:angewandte  
Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien  
University of Applied Arts Vienna

Layout Moornax