

HOUSE OF GOSSIP

4- 6 players /// Age ~10 - ∞ /// ca. 60 min.

PLOT

Berlin, late 2010s, all across the city real estate is changing hands fast, the market is hot and many are investing, houses are revaluing. As it tends to happen, this situation has at least two different sides:

Scene 1

- "What about this building? Might you have found a good opportunity here?"
- "It indeed looks nice, but have we explored if it's in good condition?"
- "The architect sent me this report, look, all clear."
- "It certainly looks promising."
- "It's time to act fast."
- "Ok, yes, let's go for this house!"

Scene 2

- "Hi, how was your day?"
- "Nothing special, yours?"
- "I heard rumours, two neighbours speaking in the corridor: the building is finally going to be bought!"
- "Yes, there was a letter in the mail, look".
- "But... What will happen to us? Will we have to move if they raise the rent?"
- "We have to do something..."
- "But we know nearly no one in the house."

"When an apartment building is to be sold, every single alarm bell sets off for the residents. In view of the horrendous purchase prices, there is a danger of being displaced by higher rents or even conversion into condominiums." [1]

House of Gossip is a game that stages and creates the grounds for reflection on conflicts regarding housing and the different viewpoints in a volatile real estate market. In the game, you will have the opportunity to play either as a resident of the house or as a covert buyer, acting as one of the house's residents.

In a process where no one can be certain about anything, gossip abounds: In the game you will have to gather information form alliances and find your way to save (as residents) or buy (as the buyer) the house! Think twice about who and when you want to share your information with!

During the course of the game you will repeatedly encounter your neighbours in the stairway to exchange gossip. Your main goal is not just to understand to whom you're talking to, but also to perform in front of others and form alliances for one of the two competing purposes of the game: Buying or saving the house.

Those who manage to gather the necessary gossips will in the end win the game. Will the house community manage to resist or could the buyer succeed in acquiring the new property?

GAME MATERIAL

Staircase, 6 player tokens, 6 role cards (1x buyer, 5x resident), gossip cards (25x resident gossip cards, 10x buyer gossip cards) and 30 action cards.

Resident gossip cards:

There are 5 different gossip cards to help the residents: *Milieu protection, Cooperative, First refusal, Protests, Rent Cap*. You need these cards to exchange ideas with your fellow players in the staircase.

Buyer gossip cards:

There are 5 different gossip cards that help the buyer: *Asbestos, Start-Up District, House quarrels, Own Use, Foreclosure*. You need these cards to exchange ideas with your neighbours in the staircase.

Action cards:

Marathon, Dinner Party, Restlessness, Hangover, Lack of sleep, Busted, Package Delivery, Sickness, Meeting, Foodsharing. You can use the action cards strategically during the game. **Attention: You must play cards with the "!!!!" symbol immediately!**

PREPARING FOR THE GAME

1. Place the staircase centrally on a table.
2. Form two piles of cards: action cards and gossip cards.
3. Mix the role cards (resident and buyer). Each player should take one card and place it facing down on the table. It is important that you do not show this card to anyone.
4. Choose a player token and a floor from which you want to start the game.
5. Pick two gossip cards and familiarise yourself with your cards.

OBJECTIVE OF THE GAME

How do you win? That depends on whether you are the buyer or a resident.

If you are a resident...

- you win if you collect all 5 cards belonging to a resident gossip case (e.g. cooperative) individually. If you have collected all 5 cards, you can play them during your turn. By doing so you have prevented the sale of the house and all residents have won the game.

- you can also win partnering with others, collecting the 5 necessary cards as a group. Doing so you firstly have to assess who the other residents are by exchanging, showing and talking about gossip in the staircase. If you have the feeling you have found the neighbours you can trust, you can couple up collecting a resident gossip (e.g. cooperative) card together and make a collective move.

However, if the buyer has played well, you might not notice that s/he was part of your allies, and can hi-jack the process, and that gossip topic is lost (discarded from the game). But if you succeed in collecting all 5 cards, you prevent the sale of the house and win the game.

If you're the buyer...

- you win if you collect the two cards belonging to the buyer gossip topics (e.g. asbestos). If you have got both cards together, you can play them in your turn, allowing you to buy the house and win the game.

- you can also win by collecting one of each of the resident-gossip cards, thus preventing the residents from collecting the cards needed to save the house.

GAMEPLAY

Starting point: Each player chooses one floor in the house to start at and positions his/her game tokens there.

1. The youngest player starts the round and chooses between an action or a gossip card.
2. You are allowed to have a maximum of 5 cards in your hand. If you have more, discard the excess cards under the respective pile (Gossip or Action).

3. After you have picked a card, you may move up or down up to two floors in any direction you wish. You can also move just one floor or remain where you are. But remember, how you move and whom you want to meet will be giving information to others.

4. If you happen to meet a fellow player on a floor, it's time to gossip! (See "Gossip Time") There is no time limit for the conversations, but the other players left on the table continue playing. When you have finished your conversation in the staircase, you come back to the table. Each person can decide when the conversation is finished. However, those who are left at the table can also call you back if they want to interrupt your conversation.

5. When it's your turn, you can try to win the game as a resident or buyer with your gossip information (See "Objective of the Game").

6. If the attempt to win fails, you have to put all played gossip cards back into the deck and shuffle it.

7. The game is over either when one gossip turns out to be true or is prevented from existing. (See "Objective of the game")

GOSSIP TIME

You met on the same floor, great!

1. Pick up your gossip cards, move away from the table and enter the imaginary staircase. Try to understand who the other person is, and what she/he is doing. And, most importantly, exchange information about your gossip cards. But, be careful, think about what you want to reveal and how. You will also have to play and take a role. You can improvise, but don't forget, others might be talking about you too!

2. As the game on the table continues, you can join an existing gossip group by placing your character on the same floor when it's your turn. This means that you can also get up from the table to join the others. You can decide when you want to return to the table. You may find an excuse to end the staircase gossip. As a group, one of the most fun aspects of the game is to find your own rules for this: Improvise, experiment with rules, and have fun!

SOURCES

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Gossip cards display adapted versions from these sources:

Resident gossip cards:

MILIEU PROTECTION

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2. <https://nds.rosalux.de/news/id/42894/soziale-erhaltungssatzung-milieuschutzsatzung?cHash=2c434b5713121eab62fa7b823ef02be5>
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COOPERATIVE

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PROTESTS

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2. <https://www.bizim-kiez.de/>
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4. <https://www.prenzlberger-ansichten.de/aus-den-kiezen/kollwitzkiez/mieter-setzen-sich-gegen-gewobag-durch-1/>
5. <https://www.dwenteignen.de/>

RENT CAP

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- lantrag-gegen-berliner-mietendeckel-ab/
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3. <https://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/wohnen/wohnraum/mietendeckel/>
4. <https://mietendeckel.berlin.de/faq/>
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Buyer gossip cards:

ASBESTOS

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CREDITS

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