

# Cassandra: A Case Study on the Ludic Urban Experience - Unveiling a Framework for Community Mapping Workshops Promoting Sustainability



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## Abstract

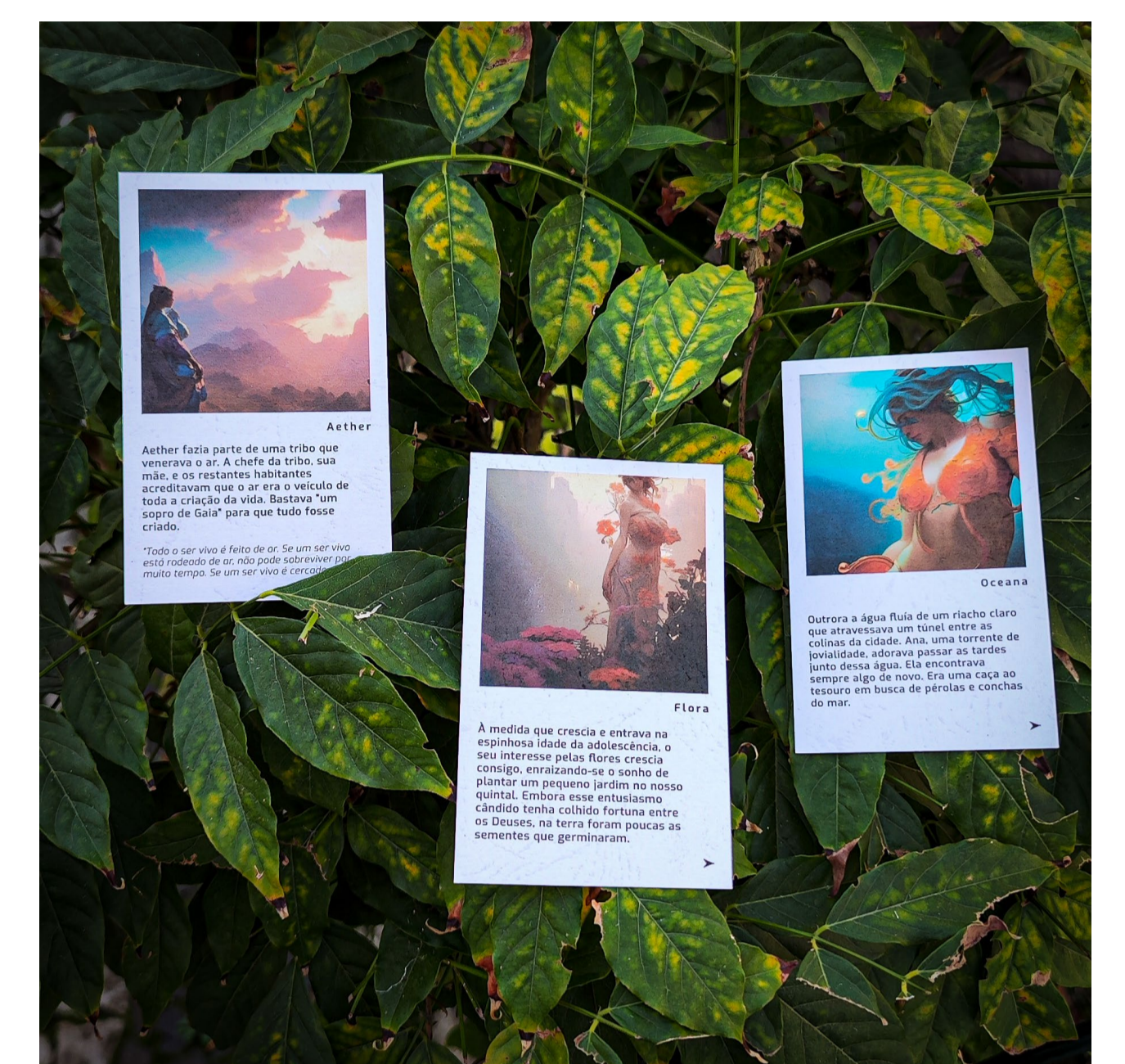
Henri Lefebvre's concept of "right to the city" centers around the idea that urban spaces should be designed in a way that allows for inclusive participation by all citizens from any age in shaping and utilizing them (1968). This could be achieved by encouraging a playful and ludic approach to urban space, a "ludic city" (Stevens, 2007) and the "city of play" (Pérez de Arce, 2018). One of the key elements is the notion of the *dérive*, wandering through urban spaces that allow individuals to interact with and experience the city in a way that is not dictated by predetermined routes or destinations. This allows for a deeper and more diverse understanding of the city and the people who inhabit it. Following that and the "hackable city" concept (de Waal et al., 2020), we propose a constructed situation, a playful framework workshop for community mapping, based on the concepts of the *dérive* and art/design-based action research methodology. "Cassandra" is a playful urban experience that proposes a rediscovery of the city through multiple senses. Aiming to foster a critical look at the socio-environmental conditions we experience in our everyday places. This rediscovery in a playful way culminates in individual maps, mental and physical, followed by a collective debate on sustainability, about the present and the future of our cities. As such, this case study deals specifically with the experience carried out on 12 November 2022 in the library of Belém in Lisbon, where a group of inhabitants experienced the city from a social and environmental point of view through a playful experience, that integrated storytelling and RPG (Role Playing Game) concepts. Three characters were developed, composed of a kit, each with a different associated story, relating relevant socio-environmental issues that could be observed locally. People were recording visual cues, thoughts, and objects from the route, and at the end, there was a shared discussion about their individual or family experience. The discussion was fuelled with general questions from all the characters, to understand the different perspectives of the place. The story and the adjacent experiment were designed for Belém in Lisbon, but the methodology can easily be adapted to other cities, demonstrating its replicability component (will be presented at the "UrbEX" conference in Berlin on September 28).

By using an active approach, participants have shown themselves to be more driven to share their ideas, try new things, and explore different perspectives while involved in unitary urbanism. It helped to create a positive and supportive learning environment, which led to effective community mapping outcomes.

Key-words Ludic; community mapping; framework; storytelling; case study



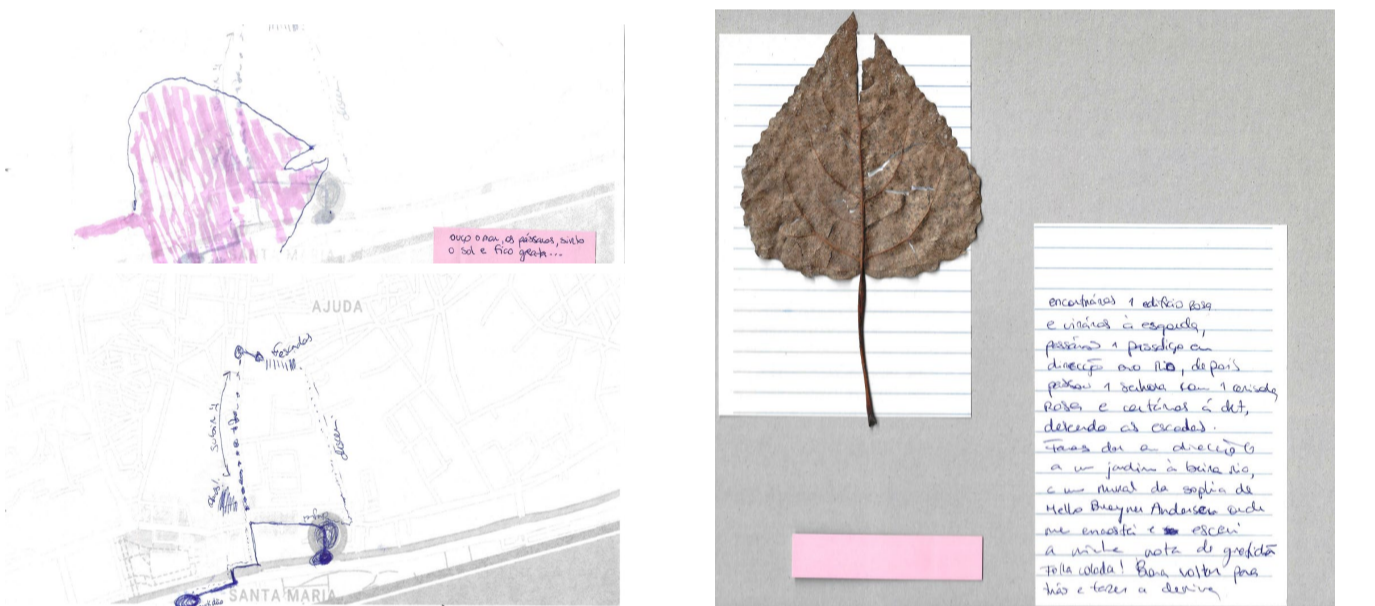
Poster of the event held in Belém, Lisbon.



Poster of the event held in Belém, Lisbon.



Some of the participants filling in post-its with ideas, after having done the *dérive* process.



One of the participant's game sheets, where it can be seen text records, graphics, a natural element (leaf) used to outline a path on the map.

## Findings

A playful community mapping workshop framework can offer several benefits to a community in terms of listening to local sustainability issues. Here are some ways in which such a framework can be advantageous:

- **Inclusivity and Participation** By adopting a playful approach, the workshop framework encourages the participation of diverse community members, including people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. This inclusivity ensures that a broader range of voices and perspectives are heard, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of local sustainability issues.
- **Engagement and Empowerment** Playful activities and ludic approaches create an engaging and enjoyable environment for community members. This engagement can foster a sense of ownership and empowerment among participants, as they actively contribute to the mapping process and the identification of sustainability issues affecting their locality.
- **Alternative Perspectives** The ludic nature of the workshop allows for exploration and discovery in urban spaces beyond predetermined routes. Participants can engage in *dérives* or playful wanderings to uncover hidden or overlooked aspects of their community. This approach promotes the discovery of alternative perspectives and insights that might not arise from conventional mapping exercises or studies.
- **Knowledge Sharing** The workshop framework provides a platform for community members to share their local knowledge and lived experiences. Through collaborative activities, participants can collectively pool their knowledge about the community and its sustainability challenges. This knowledge sharing facilitates a deeper understanding of the issues at hand and enables the identification of potential solutions.
- **Relationship Building** Playful activities in the workshop foster a sense of camaraderie and social interaction among participants. Collaborative mapping exercises can help build relationships and social connections within the community. These connections can serve as a foundation for ongoing dialogue and collaboration, allowing for sustained efforts towards addressing local sustainability issues.
- **Visual Representation** Community mapping workshops often result in the creation of visual representations, such as maps, diagrams, or other forms of documentation. These visual outputs can serve as powerful communication tools to raise awareness about local sustainability issues. They can be shared with local authorities, decision-makers, and other stakeholders to advocate for change and influence urban planning processes.

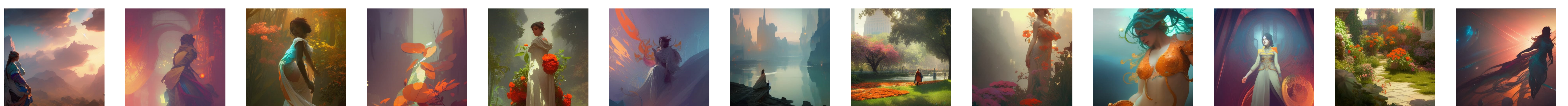
In summary, a playful community mapping workshop framework facilitates inclusivity, engagement, alternative perspectives, knowledge sharing, relationship building, and visual representation. By embracing a ludic approach, the community can listen to local sustainability issues in a more participatory and holistic manner, empowering residents to shape and advocate for a more sustainable and inclusive urban environment.

## References

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Illustrations generated by artificial intelligence, Stable Diffusion method. They were applied to the cards that players used to navigate the city.

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