

ASSIGNMENT 04: CITY PROBES



Image: Robert James Djaelani

Probes, as defined by Bill Gaver et al, are collections of evocative tasks meant to elicit inspirational responses. Probes also embrace a notion that knowledge has limits, and that uncertainty, play, exploration and subjective interpretation help us deal with those limits.

As we've seen from our research to date, the trend of urbanization and the urban structure itself has inherent qualities as well as flaws. As cities become more ubiquitous, questions arise around what defines them, the contributions they may make, the struggles they face, and how they might evolve in the future.

In order to re-frame these questions, devise a Probes kit that will help you learn more about the identity and nuances of your context's change and urbanization. Work in groups of 3 to develop your kit, and use Bill Gaver's essay to inform your decisions.

1. Make a list of the elements that you find most interesting, perplexing, or challenging about your context.
2. Use this list to help you form your probes kit tasks. The kit should include at least 3 tasks that explore personal, subjective questions around urbanization and the associated conditions. Shape your tasks to give you inspiration-lead, open-ended results – not just to confirm what you already believe.
3. Make multiple kits (6 minimum).
4. Develop a plan for distributing the kits to individuals or groups who may have some insight into your selected context. In order to be sure your kits are returned, consider who you'll give your kit to. You may have better luck with respondents who you see regularly (example: a neighbor), respondents who you can dependably find again (example: a librarian), or someone who you are believe is reliable (example: a researcher).