

# **Science of the Project:**

## **Session 3**

**Using Design probes and techniques of observational  
research**

# recap from session 2

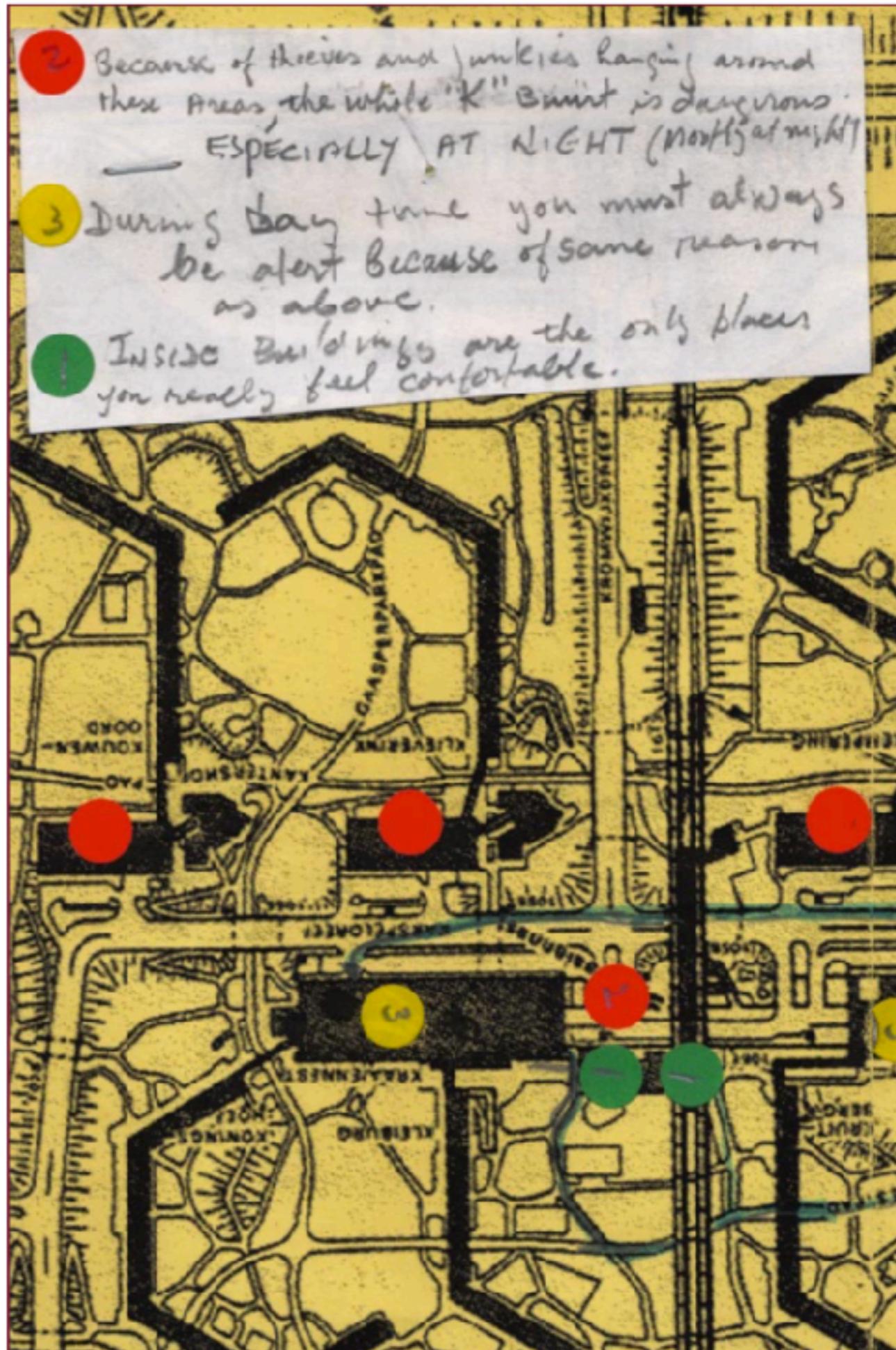
- HCI and the turn to experience
- Experience and the turn to phenomenology
- Ethnography as observation of action in context
- Ethnography and Auto-ethnography processes and practice
- ‘Pleasureable troublemakers’, funology and ludic design

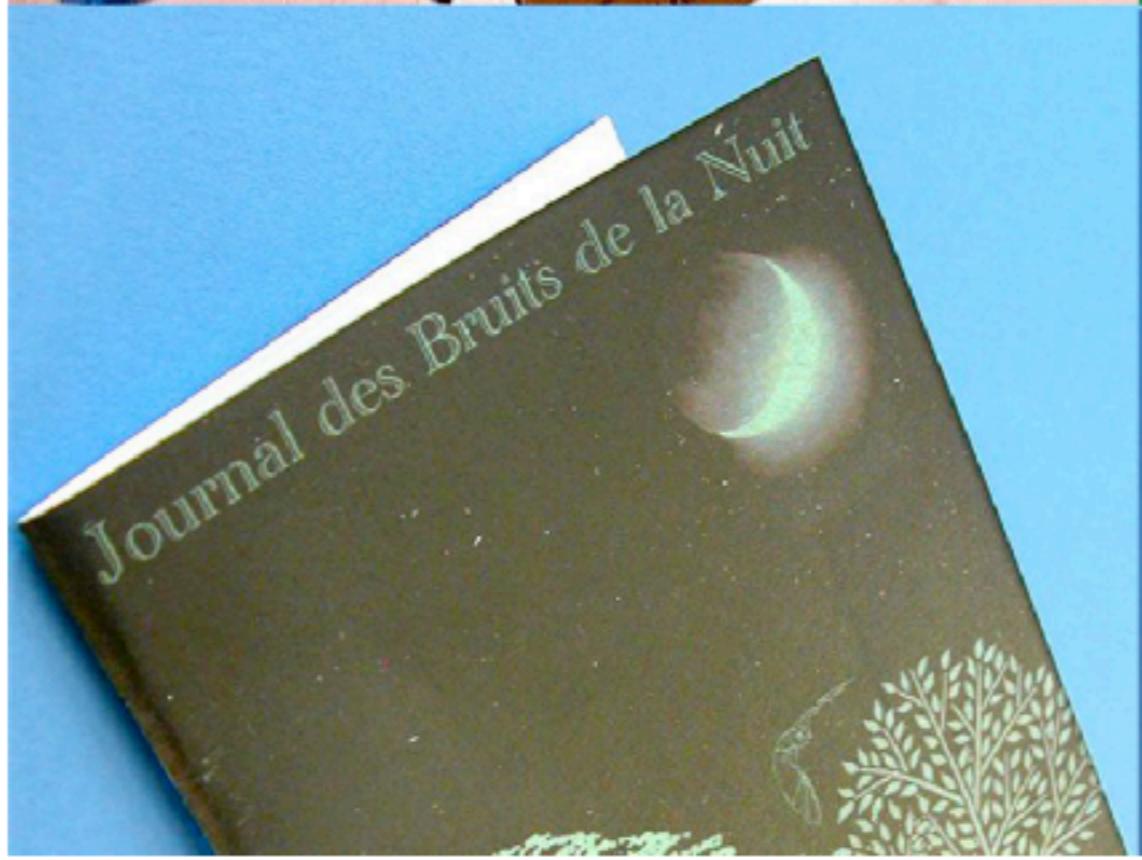
# **What is a design probe?**

# Cultural/ Design probes

“cultural probes—these packages of maps, postcards, and other materials—were designed to provoke inspirational responses from elderly people in diverse communities. Like astronomic or surgical probes, we left them behind when we had gone and waited for them to return fragmentary data over time.“

Gaver, Dunne, Pacenti 1999

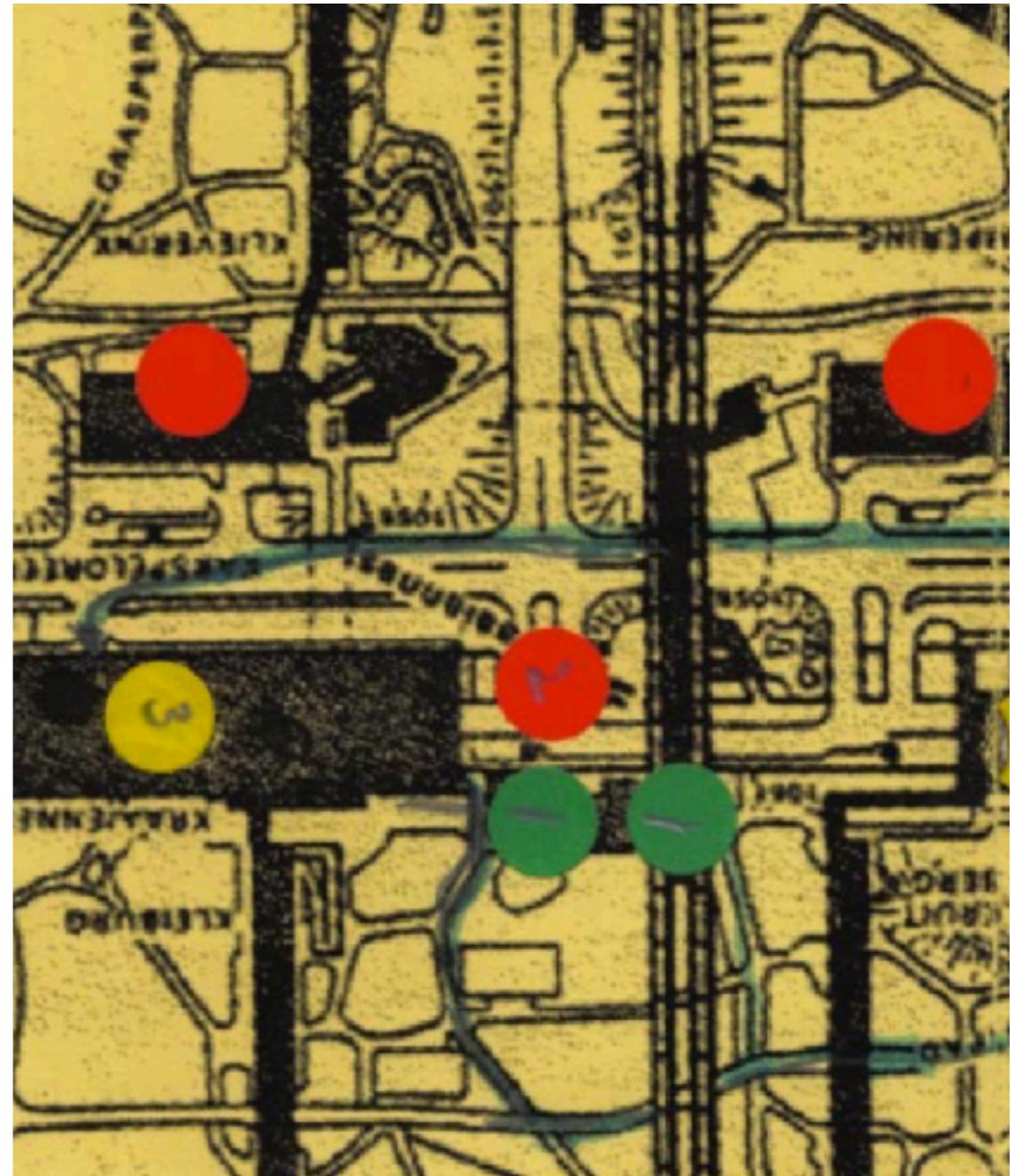




*Figure 5. Sample Probe materials. From top to bottom, left to right: a) map with stickers; b) dream recorder; c) nighttime sounds diary; d) self-portrait camera.*

Participants were also asked to mark zones on local maps,  
showing us where;

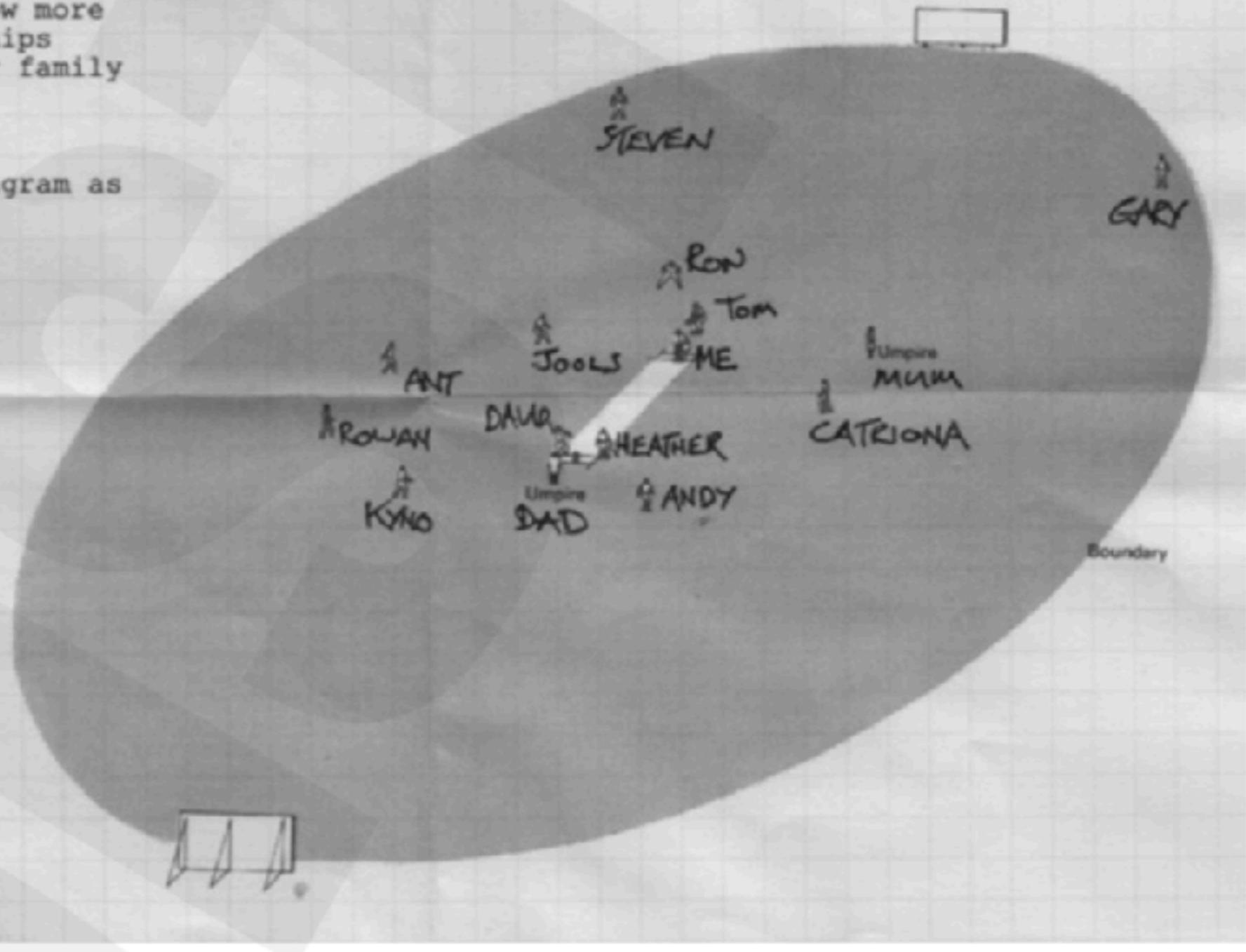
- ✖ They would go to meet people
- ✖ They would go to be alone
- ✖ They liked to daydream
- ✖ They would like to go but can't



## family & friends

We would like to know more about the relationships between you and your family and friends.

You may use this diagram as a tool to map these relationships.



“The designers from the RCA, however, set out to take a more experimental approach. They framed the Presence project as facing two fundamental challenges: one conceptual, and one pragmatic. Conceptually, they wanted to subvert stereotypical representations of the elderly as frail and marginalized, as well as assumptions that computation should focus on productivity and efficiency. Instead, the designers intended to tap into people’s inherent playfulness and mindfulness in the products they would eventually propose. Pragmatically, they knew this meant getting to know the targets of their design work – groups of volunteers from Norway, the Netherlands and Italy – in ways different than those afforded by traditional research instruments. Rather than focus on problems and needs, they wanted to know about hopes and fears, curiosities and dreams. At the same time, they did not want their research findings to dictate the design, but were anxious to leave ample room for their own interests and imaginations.

• ‘Probes’ Boehner, Gaver and Boucher



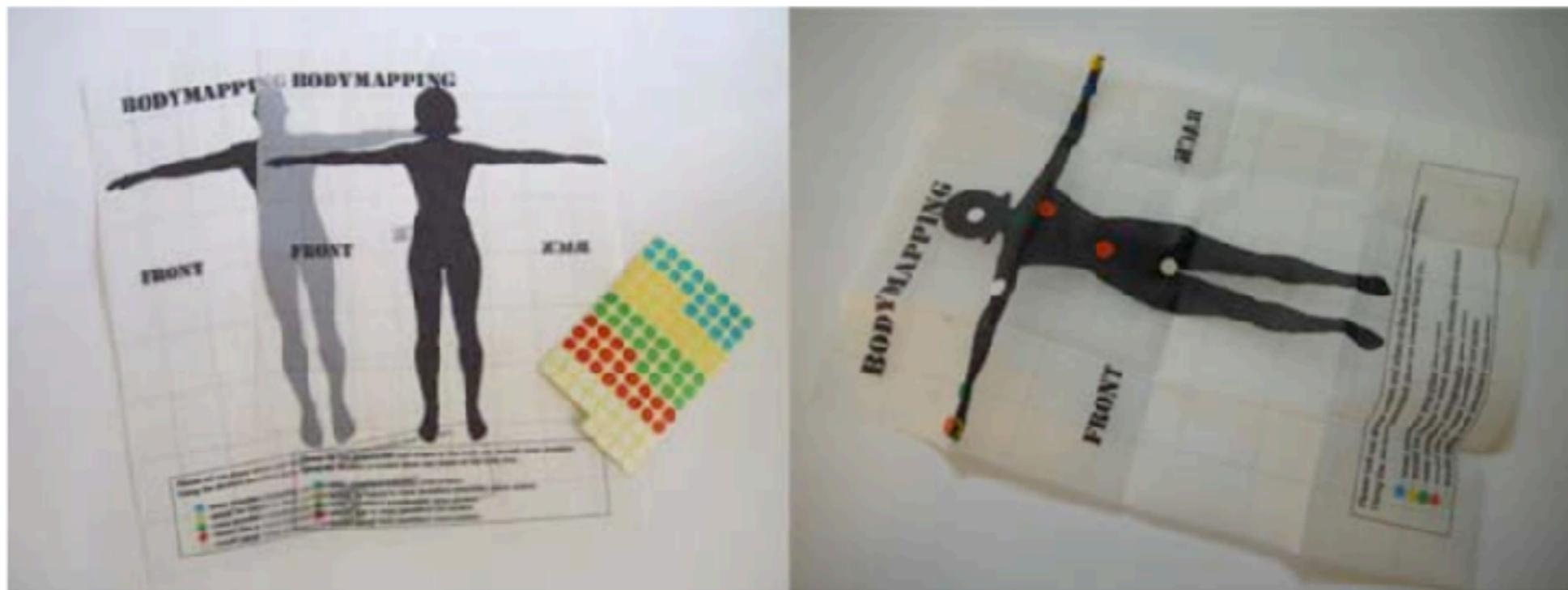
### *Dream Recorder*

A repackaged digital memo-taker with instructions to use it after waking from a vivid dream. Pulling the attached cord activates the device, turning on the small LED in front. The volunteer has 10 seconds to record an account of their dream, after which the device shuts off. No provision is made for reviewing or editing their recording.

# The Domestic Probe packet containing 10 individual probes.



*'Probes'* Boehner, Gaver and Boucher



**Figure 5. *Bodymapping* probe with an example of a response.**

**What is this recording? What is it communicating**



Cultural Probes - Qualitative Contextual Design Research : Dirk Van Erve

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJqpUG4pJIE>



Bill Gaver: SIGCHI 2018 Montreal  
TaskCam: Designing and Testing an Open Tool for Cultural  
Probes Studies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIkNtODZhs4>

[www.probetools.net](http://www.probetools.net)

**what could you use  
this for?**

**how would you evaluate  
the data you gather?**

## Reading:

- Gaver, W., Dunne, T. and Pacenti, E. (1999) ‘Cultural Probes’, *Interactions*, 6(february), pp. 21–29. doi: 10.1145/291224.291235.
- Wallace, J. et al. (2013) ‘Making design probes work’
- watch (as much as you want)  
DGTF Conference 2012 Keynote Bill Gaver  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQBHFv\\_CCY0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQBHFv_CCY0)

# references

- Boehner, K., Gaver, W. and Boucher, A. (2014) Probes, Inventive Methods.
- Boehner, K., Vertesi, J., Sengers, P., and Dourish, P. 2007. How HCI interprets the probes. In Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems. CHI '07
- Gaver, W. (2004) ‘Cultural Probes and the Value of Uncertainty’, *Interactions*, pp. 53–56. doi: 10.1145/1015530.1015555.
- Gaver, W., Dunne, T. and Pacenti, E. (1999) ‘Cultural Probes’, *Interactions*, 6(february), pp. 21–29. doi: 10.1145/291224.291235.
- Wallace, J. et al. (2013) ‘Making design probes work’, in Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems. New York, New York, USA: ACM - Association for Computing Machinery, p. 3441. doi: 10.1145/2470654.2466473
- DGTF Conference 2012 Keynote Bill Gaver. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQBHFv\\_CCY0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQBHFv_CCY0)