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**Design probes applied as fashion design probes**

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## PRACTICES

### METHOD 24

#### **Design probes applied as fashion design probes**

Clothes are given to participants who fill in a diary about their wearing experience by self-documentation.

JULIA VALLE-NORONHA AND KIRSI NIINIMÄKIT

When did you start using the method and where did your inspiration come from?

2015. The inspiring works of Ricardo Basbaum (1994) “Would you like to take part in an artistic experience?” and Tuuli Mattelmäki’s (2006) “Design Probes” suggested the method as a form of understanding engagements between wearer and worn.

What is your motive for exploring the wardrobe with this particular method?

It provides access to participants’ intimacy while preserving their privacy.

How do you go about using your method?

The fashion design probes are coined together with an experimental clothing project. As part of the creative production in clothes, projects were developed that were aimed at enticing a more active relationship between wearer and worn. During the process of creating and producing the pieces Julia Valle made open calls in the locations she is based in (Belo Horizonte, Brazil and Helsinki, Finland) inviting participants to take part in an experience with clothes. The clothes resulting from the design practice are given to around 15 participants as a fashion design probes kit. They include a made-to-measure garment, a diary, an informative leaflet on the project and a consent form. The kits are handed out from the designer’s workspace for participants to familiarise themselves with the production. A picture is taken of this first encounter. The

participants take the clothes home and wear them as they would wear all their other clothes. During the first three months they keep a diary of each use phase. After that period all participants meet in an informal discussion group, mediated and audio recorded by a third party, to share experiences and elaborate on any topics that seemed relevant to them.

How is your method different to others?

This method brings a new piece to individuals' wardrobes and investigates the agency of the new garment with regards to the wearers and also to the rest of their wardrobes. Other methods focus mostly on clothes that are already owned and employ interviews and cataloguing of these pieces to understand patterns in wearing, maintaining and disposing of clothes. The main aim here is to further scrutinize one specific production, and to explore if there are any particularities in such pieces that could promote a more active engagement between the wearer and the worn.



In your experience, what insight does this method generate?





The fashion design probes method aims at collecting user-centred information through empathic method and further information about wearers engaging with a specific production of clothes, in this case made under experimental processes. The insight it provides tells more about how wearers understand these clothes and what features alter how people relate to clothes through use experience.

How have you used the data your method produces?

In design projects, exhibition and academic papers.

Links to work demonstrating the method:

- Valle-Noronha, J. (2017). On the agency of clothes: Surprise as a tool towards stronger engagements. Research through Design 2017 Proceedings. Edinburgh, Scotland (in press). Available at: [https://figshare.com/articles/On\\_the\\_agency\\_of\\_clothes\\_surprise\\_as\\_a\\_tool\\_towards\\_stronger\\_engagements/4747033](https://figshare.com/articles/On_the_agency_of_clothes_surprise_as_a_tool_towards_stronger_engagements/4747033) [Accessed 2 May 2017]

Time to conduct method		People	
Time to analyse results		Location	Workshop, homes
Cost		Recruitment to method	Social media
Additional resources	Camera, audio recorder, sewing equipment plus gift of trialled item	Sample	15