

11.123 Big Plans & Mega-Urban Landscapes

MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning
Spring 2014

Assignment 2: Site Probes

Assigned Lecture 11

Due as report on Lecture 15 (!)

Following the large-scale studies of specific elements of Boston in Assignment 1, this next assignment asks students to go out into the “field” to explore the city in more neighborhood-level detail.

In **teams of 1, 2, OR 3**, students will conduct visits to sites of their own choice. Using direct observation, photography, mapping, and online data collection, you will “probe” your site, uncovering social, political, economic, physical, and environmental conditions specific to that place.

The objective is to explore and illuminate a broad range of sites and issues in the Boston area, to understand this city through the direct and personal observations of each of your classmates, and to analyze the documentation in order to find challenges and opportunities for intervention in these areas.

Site Selection

- **A site in Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, or Somerville** (your choice*)
- Maximum of 15-20 minutes from a MBTA T stop
- A site encompassing **at least 2** different land uses, and 2 different spatial typologies (built form, street pattern)
- Minimum of 8 block diameter, maximum of 12 block diameter

Initial Deliverables (due Lecture 13)

- **10-20 photographs**, printed out, a visual essay of your visit to the site (printed out on 8 ½ x 11 color laser print (preferable) OR 4 x 6 photographs)
- **1 aerial photograph** of the site (Google Earth or equivalent, no labels, just image)
- **1 street map** of the site (same scale as aerial, with your site selection clearly indicated by overlay or boundary)
- **3-5 (found) maps** of the site showing demographic data (e.g. age, gender, race, income, employment), land use (commercial, residential, industrial, park...), economic (e.g. housing prices), and/or environmental factors (e.g. asthma rates)
- An **initial (verbal) summary** of the site and your impressions (3 minutes)
- At least **4 ideas of topics** you want to explore in your layers – for example, *physical* (size, materiality), *environmental* (“nature,” light, air), *social* (crowds, movement), *economic* (income, real estate prices), *political* (history of conflict, current electoral breakdown)

Final Deliverables (due Lecture 15, 6pm!)

ALL IN 1 PDF

- **Final photo essay** (10-20 photos)
- At least **4 analytical maps**, with each map representing one specific topic of study, and **1 “combined” map** showing all topics layered together, revealing the relationships between multiple topics of study in one site
- **2-3 page written report**, presenting the challenges and opportunities of the site
- **8 ½ x 11 sized, vertical or horizontal format**, font to be 10-11 point Arial, single-space, 1” margins all around.

Preview of Final Project

We will use your findings from this assignment to discuss and debate the best area to take on as our final project site.

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