

**ADM30-  
Radical Modes  
of Design**

MA Sustainable Design

**CARDS AGAINST  
MOBILITY**

# STATEMENT OF INTENT

## Employing radical design modes as an ethnographic research methodology

Conventional design for disability has a tendency towards exclusionary and over medicalized design outcomes. As such, I argue that design for disability consistently falls short of creating sustainable resolutions. By employing radical modes of design within an ethnographic research methodology we can produce a more rigorous understanding of the current issues around isolation and how they impact people's lives, both in the disabled and able-bodied communities.

My position piece for this project is intentionally left unfinished. I see this piece of work as a snapshot in time of my current understanding of how to use radical modes of design to add complexity to the issue of isolation in the UK.

The Cards Against Mobility provoke interaction, engagement, and discussion. The OECD better life index 2011 presents 9 elements which I have critiqued from a micro perspective, using Design Justice and Mobility Justice principles as a guide. The cards present 9 comments on Mobility; the word I am using to describe a concept of barrier free life.



fig 1 Mobility scooter at "High and Over" in Seaford, East Sussex. 2021  
Photo by author, for She rides and Reviews, accessible green space blog.  
[www.cspencerdesign.co.uk/blog](http://www.cspencerdesign.co.uk/blog)

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My position piece for this project is intentionally left unfinished. I see this piece of work as a snapshot in time of my current understanding of how to use radical modes of design to add complexity to the issue of isolation in the uk.

The Cards Against Mobility represent 9 elements taken from the OECD better life index 2011<sup>1</sup> and critiqued from a micro perspective, using Design Justice and Mobility Justice principles as a guide to produce 9 comments on Mobility; the word I am using to describe a concept of barrier free life.

<sup>1</sup> OECD, How's Life?: Measuring well-being, United Nations (OECD Publishing, 2011), <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/broaderprogress/pdf/How's%20life%20-%20Measuring%20well-being.pdf>.

**This is an interactive diagram. please click on the black cards below to reveal them in a larger format alongside their accompanying white card responses:**

I used the Cards Against Humanity model to signal to the viewer that this is something that they can take part in, and to expect a nihilistic and challenging tone in the work itself.

The black cards are the responses to the 9 elements of Mobility. In some cases, I have used relevant quotes from radical thinkers:

- **“I understood microaggressions to mean little bullshit acts of racism”**<sup>1</sup>
- **“Inclusion without the power of leadership is tokenism.”**<sup>2</sup>
- **“Most men and women will grow up to love their servitude and will never dream of revolution”**<sup>3</sup>
- **“Her whiteness and extroversion and neurotypicality are factors that aid her in being able to access an abundance of care.”**<sup>4</sup>
- **“The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”**<sup>5</sup>
- **“If it’s inaccessible to the poor, it’s neither radical nor revolutionary.”**<sup>6</sup>

1 Gabby Rivera, *Juliet takes a breath* (Penguin, 2019).  
 2 Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care work: Dreaming disability justice* (arsenal pulp press Vancouver, 2018).p127  
 3 Aldous Huxley, *Brave new world*, New ed. (London: Vintage Classic, 2014). <https://go.exlibris.link/Bn6VJMKW>.  
 4 Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care work: Dreaming disability justice*.p46  
 5 Audre Lorde, *The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house* (Penguin UK, 2018).  
 6 UNknown and Laura Le Moon, “Neither Radical nor Revolutionary: The Preservation of Privilege in Social Justice Activism,” *medium*.

In others I have used my own words but based the content on themes and ideas from my Design Justice , Mobility Justice and autoethnographic research.

- **Gentrification is a form of**
- **Mo’ money mo’ ...**
- **The invisible labour**

The white cards are my responses to the black cards. I have only included 3 for each black card as part of the position piece so as not to overload the work.

The white card responses are to both help inform the reader of my intentions with the black cards and to give the viewer a clue where to start where they might write their own white card. The interactive part of this position piece is extremely important, this is work that needs to be discussed and argued amongst as many people as possible. Therefore, I have created an interactive an online space for my work and with that an interactive page that will allow the viewers to comment and make their own white card, with more anonymity than social media or in person (*see fig 4*). I hope that people will feel comfortable to express things that maybe they would be worried to express on their social media profiles.

In addition to the online space, I have also created a series of events, called small talks (*see fig 3*). I will be talking about my work at one of these talks and inviting questions and comments from the viewers. Using these platforms as a research space as much as a space to show my work.

com (07/08/2017 2017). <https://lauralemoon.medium.com/neither-radical-nor-revolutionary-the-preservation-of-privilege-in-social-justice-activism->



Fig 3 : Image of “Small Talk” LinkedIn events page.image by author.2022

**This is an interactive button. please click here to be taken to the online interactive space.**

Fig 4 : Image of screenshot of interactive page in online exhibition space. Designed by Author. 2022. [www.fwrdsplash.wixsite.com/susdesbrighton/chantal-spencer](http://www.fwrdsplash.wixsite.com/susdesbrighton/chantal-spencer)

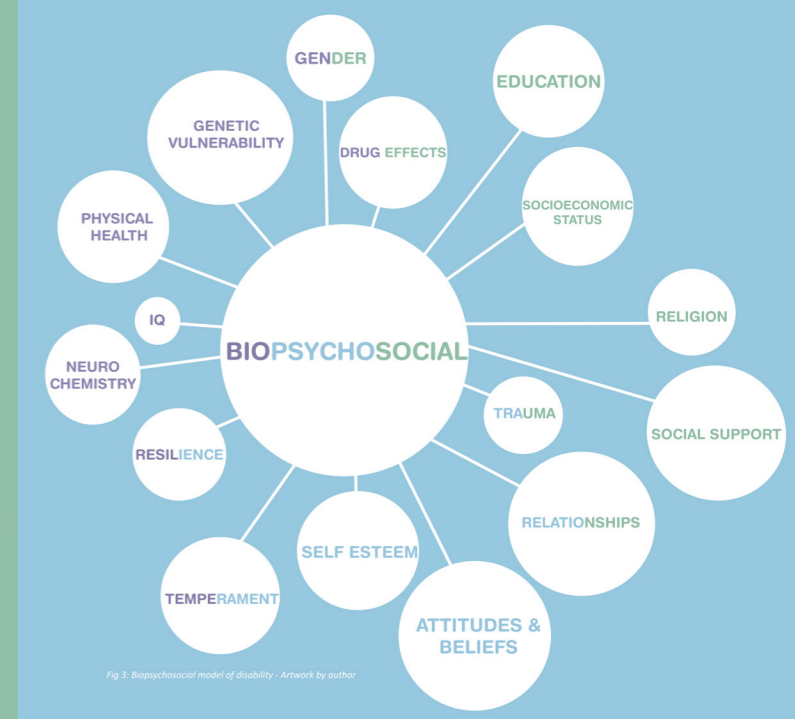


Fig 5,6 & 7 : Diagrammatic interpretations of 3 models of disability. Artwork by author. "Isolation in the disabled community". 2021. www.cspencerdesign.co.uk/publications

In my previous paper I discussed the importance of tackling isolation within the disabled community<sup>1</sup>, I. Since then, my work has begun to expand into how isolation occurs in all intersectional communities.

My previous paper discussed the different models of disability and how each one of them perceived disability in a different way, some more problematic than others.

Even though I am moving away from focusing mainly on disability, I continue to support the biopsychosocial model within my design research methodology. As explained above, it is still relevant in the broader work for intersectional oppression that leads to isolation. Using this radical, multi-perspective approach allows me to add complexity to my work. Allowing the untaming of the wicked<sup>5</sup> problem that is isolation.

Whilst these models focus on disability, I feel they can be re-engineered as models for intersectionality across the board.

**Medical = punitive/solutionist** perspective that focuses on intersectionality as a problem to be solved (traditional systemic design: a benefits system that leaves those on it living below the poverty line)

**Social = unachievable utopian** vision of a perfect world that doesn't recognise intersectionality (universal design: creating spaces that are 'accessible for all' but do not consider impairment or individuality. E.g.: a dentist surgery with a ramp, still is inaccessible to those who have a phobia or cannot afford to pay for dental treatment)

**Biopsychosocial model = A complex and nuanced approach to understanding people as individuals** (Radical modes of design that take a multi-perspective approach: universal basic income etc..)

**Where has traditional modes of design not worked for disabled**

people in the past? much of the focus on isolation in the past has been to focus on those who are physically unable to leave their house and offer ways of going to them to be treated medically or to have social interaction. As a disabled person who is often isolated from the world, I feel we can do better than that. My perspective is that we need to create a better world outside our homes that allow people to live barrier free lives in more than just the physical sense.

In this paper I will be using the term *Mobility* to mean the ability to do, whether that be something physical, digital or conceptual. By using radical modes of design for my research I will dive into the granular manifestations of oppression that lead to isolation.

I have used Design Justice and Mobility Justice principles as a type of overlay onto other more traditional and apolitical design modes, such as systemic design and communication design. I have also used these principals to radicalise other forms of design such as discursive/adversarial design modes.

My position piece is intentionally left unfinished, as I am positioning myself firmly within a state of anti-solutionism and investing in the complexities of the issues I am working on. One element of this work that is important is to see it as a connection point between past, current, and future work. Therefore, I will be referencing from past papers and current work that is in development. This will add an uncertain tone to some of my writing, which is intended and purposeful.

- Medical model:**  
**'Over medicalised and individualistic accounts of disability'<sup>2</sup>**
- Social model:**  
**'Barrier free utopia that is impossible to realise.'<sup>3</sup>**
- Biopsychosocial model:**  
**'Blueprint for research, a framework for teaching and design for action in the real world of health care.'<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Chantal Spencer, "isolation in the disabled community," (10/10/2020 2020). <https://www.cspencerdesign.co.uk/projects-3-1>.  
<sup>2</sup> Tom Shakespeare, "The social model of disability," The disability studies reader 2 (2006).  
<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare, "The social model of disability."  
<sup>4</sup> Engel, "The need for a new medical model: a challenge for biomedicine."

<sup>5</sup> Ben Sweeting, "Wicked Problems in Design and Ethics," (2018).

## Enable Jackets: OK Dementia

Created by  
Enable Foundation x Pascal Anson

I used this exhibition as a starting point from which to begin this project. I was inspired by the simplistic language of this plain blue jacket was being used to describe such a complex thing as dementia. I also felt that this was an excellent example of how different modes of design can communicate different aspects of an issue and how the viewer was able to experience the exhibition by trying on the jackets and getting a visceral understanding of what the designers were expressing through wearing the objects.



Fig 8 OK DEMENTIA exhibition  
by Enabled Foundation + Pascal Anson,  
Hong Kong .2021  
[www.enable.org.hk/](http://www.enable.org.hk/)

### communication/storytelling/ information based Design

This jacket describes the aspect of Dementia, that pertains to the way that memory is stored. The last things that fade away are sequences and music. The sequence helps the user to remember what button to do when. but this doesn't feel like it was made to wear it was made to describe how this could manifest in design

### Solutionist/ traditional Design

Traditional mode of design that has aspects within it that help a person with dementia. There name and address sewn into the pocket, large buttons etc. this is very much in the camp of the medical model of disability and is problematic in many ways from a biopsychosocial point of view.

### Commonality as a base point

Using the jacket as the central part in this exhibition is important as it binds the viewer with the people that are living with dementia. By creating a common ground. We all use jackets; we all know what they are. The design of the jacket is a little problematic in that it looks quite medical, like scrubs. And the blue is very reminiscent of medical uniform colours too.

### Empathetic Design

This jacket has physical elements within it that simulate the mental hurdles that occur when a person is struggling with dementia. Additional sleeves, one very small cuff, the pockets on upside down. All of these physical properties act as a metaphor for non-physical issues.

### Revolutionary/perfectionist/ universal Design

This final jacket is very in line with the social model of disability. It reinvents the jacket itself so that it can be worn any way around, refocusing the issue away from the person with dementia and demanding a radical rethink of where the issue is. Create a universal design that enables anyone to wear the object.

**“All knowledge is situated  
in the particular embodied  
experiences of the  
knower”**

-Sandra Harding



As I sit here and write these words, I have left my house barely a handful of times in the last 3 months. With Covid 19 numbers raging at over 100 000 new cases per day, my compromised immune system must be kept out of society, away from other humans. It is a high enough risk to have two teenage offspring attending places of education riddled with a deadly disease that could easily wipe me out for 6 months if not kill me entirely. Although the current pandemic is responsible for a significant portion of my exile from society, it is not the root of the issue. As a disabled woman who relies on a mobility scooter, I experience a plethora of barriers to my mobility, such as verbal abuse in the street, inaccessible buildings, pavements that are dangerous for me to use, broken lifts and many more. Who better to discuss and discover the complexity of isolation than someone like me?

**There is nothing more radical than existing within the wicked problem.**

As I micro-gaze into my own experiences and interactions, I begin to ask questions and formulate hypothesis of how others, like me, may be struggling or perhaps thriving despite these barriers. I see autoethnography as my way of adding to this collective knowledge.

Creating a space for that knowledge to reach others is also vital. My blog writing process has become part of the experience. It adds a layer of productivity to failed missions, which helps cushion me from the crushing disappointment of having to experience a world so violently opposed to my existence.

My radical design research position is based on dismantling barriers that create isolation for intersectional people. Interlacing myself into the foundation of this research process allows me to understand the minutiae of barriers to Mobility. It allows me to know, in a visceral way, what these barriers feel like and how they disperse like wildfire into a person's state of being.

I recognise that a plurality of views<sup>1</sup> is necessary for my research. However, in this, I give myself the space to delve deeply into my own perspective and experiences. This investigation creates a nucleus from which a more complex epistemological view of the work can emerge.

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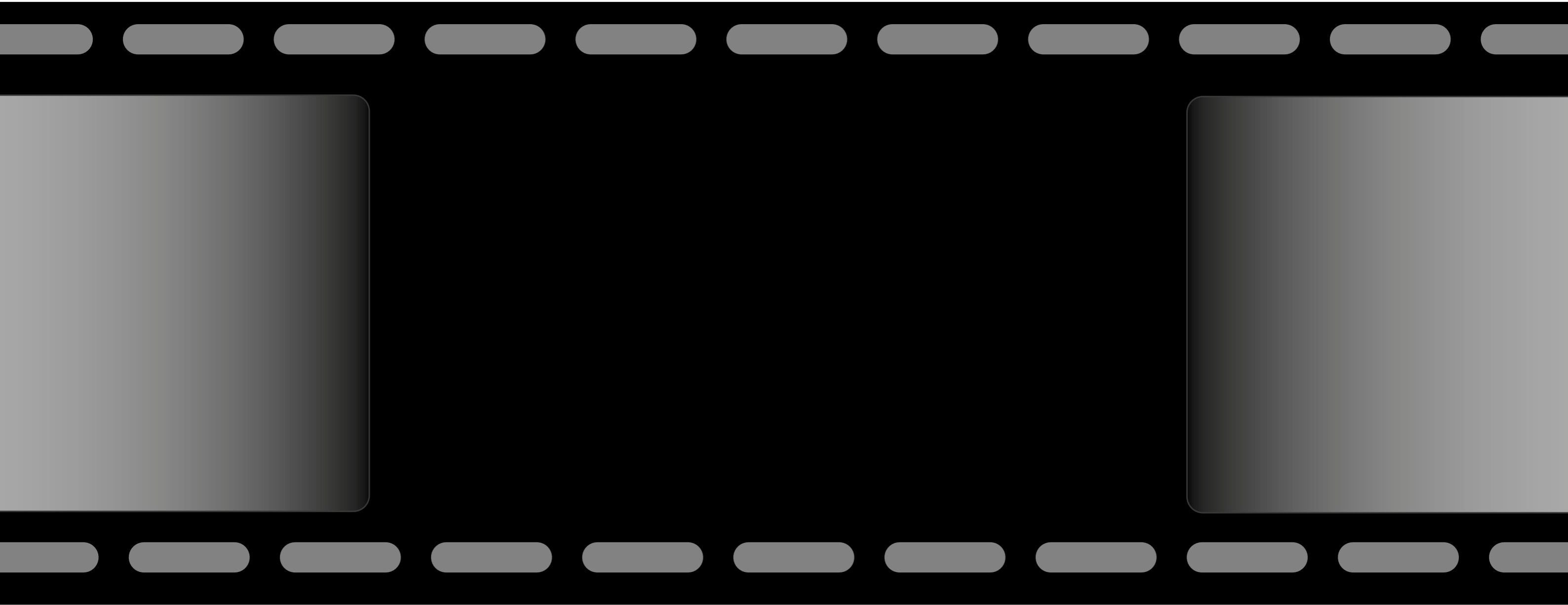
1 Harding, Sandra. Objectivity for sciences from below. Flavia Padovani, Alan Richardson, and Jonathan Y. Tsou, Objectivity in Science : New Perspectives from Science and Technology Studies (Cham, SWITZERLAND: Springer International Publishing AG, 2015). p46 <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ubrighton/detail.action?docID=3108722>.

Fig 9 Interactive button- screenshot of author's Blog Page  
image by Author  
.www.cspencerdesign/blog



Fig 10 Mobility scooter in a Abbot's wood with bluebells.  
Photo by author for She rides and reviews log. www.cspencerdesign/blog

**This is an interactive page please click the play button to be taken to a video clip:  
An example of how my autoethnography 'missions' can explicitly describe Mobility barriers and freedoms**



*Fig 11 Interactive button- link to video by Author  
video of two autoethnographic action research trips,  
illustrating the different narraitves that can come from  
the same action.  
by Author  
[www.youtu.be/dMXEDcl58KY](http://www.youtu.be/dMXEDcl58KY)*



Fig 12: Image of body scan at an airport.  
"The TSA: A Binary Body System In Practice," by Cary Costello. 2016  
[www.transadvocate.com/the-tsa-a-binary-body-system-in-practice\\_n\\_15540.htm](http://www.transadvocate.com/the-tsa-a-binary-body-system-in-practice_n_15540.htm).

Design Justice is a radical mode of design because it looks at the route of injustice and aims to unsettle the matrix of domination that appears through more traditional modes of design. The design justice principles work like a "how to" guide for designers and design researchers like me. How do we make sure that we are designing correctly?

**'Design justice acknowledges that some people are always disadvantaged by any design'<sup>1</sup>**

and

**'Discriminatory design of operates through standardization'<sup>2</sup>.**

This foundation is disruptive of the traditional solutionist and reductive design modes, allowing complexity to take its rightful place in all things designed.

Design Justice feels like the right way to design. How one might apportion the value of the contributions that go into preparing a meal. The designer didn't grow the food or make the recipe. The designer is there to cook the food. The participants grow the ingredients, teach the recipe to the designer and taste the food at the meal to judge if the designer has cooked the food well.

1 Sasha Costanza-Chock, Design justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need (The MIT Press, 2020).p53

2 Costanza-Chock, Design justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need.p43

I intend to 'recentre marginalised people'<sup>3</sup> in my design research and champion the ideology that 'a human's worth is not dependant on what and how much a person can produce'<sup>4</sup> which is exactly what design justice intends to do. Costanza-Chock describes the Design Justice framework as a 'prism through which to generate a wider rainbow of possibilities'<sup>5</sup>. My interpretation of that statement is that design justice can help me structure the way in which I seek complexity in my work.

There was only one small aspect of the book that I disagreed with, but it is an important part of my work. Constanza-chock states that 'Segregated solutions are technically and economically unstable'<sup>6</sup>This is certainly true in a lot of cases, but my position on this is: what if they could be stable? We manage many different aspects of segregated industries, like shoes , food ,and clothing .

All in all, this book and the design justice principles have heavily influenced this project and will continue to guide me through the rest of my work going forward.

3 Costanza-Chock, Design justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need.p169

4 Costanza-Chock, Design justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need.p94

5 Costanza-Chock, Design justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need.p230

6 Costanza-Chock, Design justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need.p60

Whilst mobility Justice is not technically a design mode in its original context, I am reinterpreting it as a radical design research paradigm. As with Design Justice, Mobility Justice is an intrinsically politicised critique of the world that we live in. It does this, by employing a multi scalar approach to looking at the issues surrounding mobility.

**‘Reconnect[ing] discussions of mobility justice to the corporeal struggles of gender, sexuality, disabling and racialised mobility regimes’<sup>1</sup>.**

To help problematise and understand how the power dynamics that are reinforced by the ‘kinetic elite’<sup>2</sup> impact those who are mobility poor both as individual humans and on a global scale.

In her book Sheller challenges traditional sustainable design methods and interrogates them in terms of how a lot of work, particularly in the sustainable transport industry, is still supporting damaging power dynamics and disadvantaging intersectional communities.

This fascinating dissection of the world has sung to a lot of my ways of thinking with regards to my work around mobility as a broader issue than simply those with physical impairments that are not able to move their bodies around spaces freely, and how that creates a breeding ground for isolation to take seed and grow.

Sheller talks about macro and micro-Intersectional (im)mobilities ; I identify my work on this topic as Micro (im)mobilities<sup>3</sup>, whilst Sheller’s theory

of Mobility Justice connects the tangled web of Kinopolitical<sup>4</sup> issues from inaccessible streets to the disproportionate effects of climate change on the mobility oppressed. My focus is settled on the nuances of day-to-day life for the intersectional communities of the uk and how these issues can manufacture isolation within them.

Sheller writes:

**‘waiting is a form of disabling environment.’<sup>5</sup>**

Although I agree entirely with this statement, I feel it is a good example of how my work differs slightly to what I perceive her meaning of Mobility Justice to be. In the book she explains the veracity of this statement by explaining that poorer people end up having longer and less safe commutes than the richer kinetically privileged. Where I see my work differing is that I am also focussing on the aspects of mobility that do not necessarily equate to physical movement, but still come under the banner of doing. Taking waiting as an example, my work would also focus on the idea that poorer people in the uk have to wait longer to be seen by the NHS than more wealthy people who are able to pay NHS health professionals for private surgery appointments. However, there is a distinct possibility that I have missed some of these important nuances in her work as I have only just begun to explore the vast expanse of Sheller’s knowledge on the topic. I feel her work will be seminal to my career as a design researcher and will heavily influence my future work.

1 Mimi Sheller, *Mobility justice: the politics of movement in an age of anxiety* (London: Verso, 2018). <https://go.exlibris.link/gkNcrkxx.p47>

2 Sheller, *Mobility justice: the politics of movement in an age of anxiety*, p56

3 Sheller, *Mobility justice: the politics of movement in an age of anxiety*, p67

4 Thomas Nail, *The figure of the migrant* (Stanford University Press, 2020).

5 Sheller, *Mobility justice: the politics of movement in an age of anxiety*, p79



Fig 13 : Image of an elderly person driving a mobility scooter in a cycle lane . Photographer, unknown. Germany .2021 Powershift, “Mobility Justice – Who Owns the Street?,”

**“The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”<sup>1</sup>**

Traditional systemic design, such as neoliberal capitalism, thrive on certainty, standardisation, and economies of scale. We can disrupt these paradigms and create more radical systems by introducing foundational uncertainty, plurality, and individualism as ‘generative technology’<sup>2</sup>.

It has been argued that ‘segregated solutions are technically and economically unstable’<sup>3</sup>. My radical perspective on this is, what if we changed our focus away from the four decades of endless growth seeking<sup>4</sup>? What if we refocus our priorities on creating sustainable systems that benefit the people that they are designed for over the people designing them. What if we valued fluid systems that were able to change and be modified to produce the best outcome for those individuals? Surely then, the idea of instability would be rethought as a positive trait. Stability would then be seen as rigidity, a negative old-fashioned paradigm that cannot cope with embracing the plurality of the modern world. In my studio work, am currently working on an example of how we might begin to add radicality to a system. By using the OECD Better Life Index 2011<sup>5</sup> as a base point and transposing it onto my spectrum model from my previous paper<sup>6</sup>. I have created an analysis of a micro perspective in comparison to the macro perspectives that were being used originally. (See fig 16)

I see these micro perspectives as the foundation of my current and future work. This is where I consider mobility to be most impactful for intersectional communities in the Kinopolitical<sup>7</sup> landscape of the UK and perhaps even the global north as a whole.

1 Lorde, The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.  
 2 Sarah Pink, Yoko Akama, and Shanti Sumartojo, Uncertainty and possibility: New approaches to future making in design anthropology (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018).p19  
 3 Costanza-Chock, Design justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need.p60  
 4 Chris Riedy, “Discourse coalitions for sustainability transformations: common ground and conflict beyond neoliberalism,” Current opinion in environmental sustainability 45 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2020.09.014>, <https://go.exlibris.link/Qwj2JVHj.p100>  
 5 OECD, How’s Life?: Measuring well-being.  
 6 Chantal Spencer, “Empathy spectrum workshop,” (04/05/2021 2021). <https://www.cspencerdesign.co.uk/projects-3-1>.  
 7 Nail, The figure of the migrant.



Fig 14 : Diagram from “the empathy Spectrum workshop”2021 (this is not an interactive diagram)  
 Artwork by Author

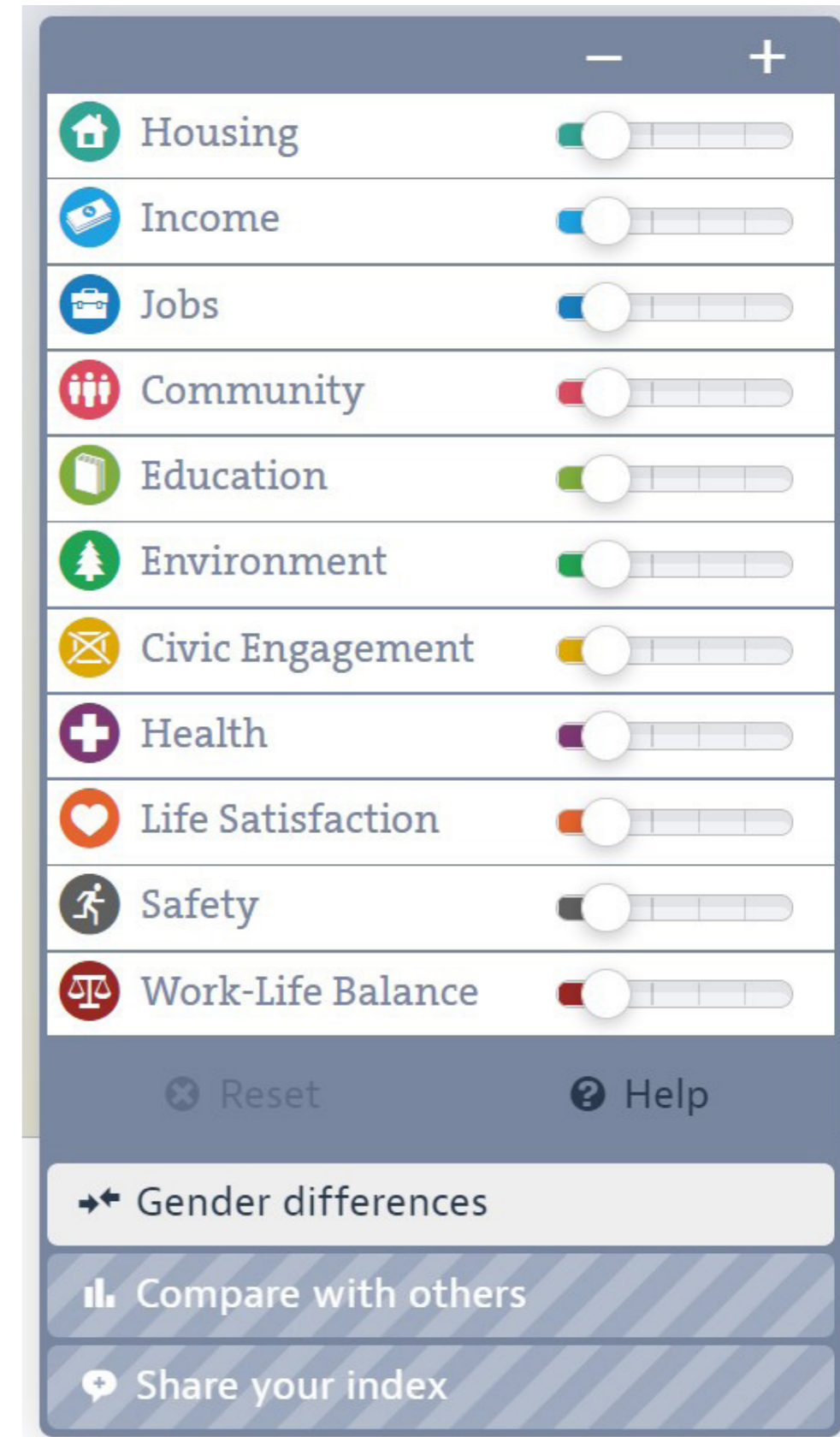


Fig 15 : image of slider bars from oecd Better Life Index 2011 webpage.  
 screenshot taken by Author 2022  
[www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/](http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/)

**This is an interactive diagram from my current studio project.  
Please click on the buttons to reveal additional information.**

Universal design and inclusive design have long been seen as revolutionary forms of designing for disability and inclusivity. Whilst they have indeed been responsible for creating accessible public spaces for those that are physically impaired, they have also sadly lacked in the radical plurality that exist within the realms of disability.

## ‘accessibility and Universal Design stems from inadequate critical and historical attention to the concept of disability’<sup>1</sup>.

Focusing largely on the medical model for disability, by creating ramps, hearing loops and other forms of physical additions to a space. Whilst this is intrinsically important for access, this expensive and space hungry version of designing for disability can often lead to turning people off of creating accessible spaces. My paper, the empathy spectrum workshop<sup>2</sup>, goes into detail of how



Fig 17 : image of a generic gender neutral toilet.2022

embracing the complexity of disability can lead to creating accessible environments even in small spaces. A large shiny hallway maybe perfect for a neurotypical wheelchair user to use but may be a nightmare for a neurodivergent person who has as sensitivity to light.

My perspective on universal design is that it also lacks the universal aspect, why are we only considering disability as intersectionality in universal design? As Sheller writes ‘we need to reconnect the discussion of mobility Justice to the corporeal struggles over

1 Aimi Hamraie, “Universal Design and the Problem of “Post-Disability” Ideology,” *Design and Culture* 8, no. 3 (2016/09/01 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1080/17547075.2016.1218714>, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17547075.2016.1218714.abstract>

2 Spencer, “Empathy spectrum workshop.”

gendered, sexual, disabling, and racialized mobility regimes’<sup>3</sup> that create inaccessible environments on many levels other than the physical. My perspective is that radical universal design should include all forms of intersectionality. It’s for this reason that I have chosen a non-disability centred design as an example of universal design.

What universal design intends to be is this toilet sign (see fig 17), It tries to be inclusive for all but is, in reality excluding many people. Those who are disabled and do not use a wheelchair, the problematic gender-neutral toilet sign that clearly denotes a person half male or female: ‘a disconcerting representation of “gender neutral.”<sup>4</sup> This is inappropriate for those who do not conform to binary genders and harks back to the offensive transphobic rhetoric of trans people not being wholly one gender.

Social Justice writer activist Sam Killermann presents their:



Fig 18 : generic image of a generic toilet icon.2022

## ‘The Sam Killermann Super Innovative Gender-Neutral Bathroom Sign’.(see fig 20)

I felt this was a perfect example of radical universal design. Killermann goes right back to the route of the issue, and simply creates a sign with a toilet on it. This simple design is both radical and adversarial. It is an agonistic response to the ridiculous meetings Killermann had been subjected to regarding signposting gender-neutral toilets. If we are removing gender from the conver-

3 Sheller, *Mobility justice: the politics of movement in an age of anxiety*.p47

4 Sam Killermann, “The Sam Killermann Super Innovative Gender Neutral Bathroom Sign,” *it’s pronounced metrosexual* (2020). <https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2014/04/gender-neutral-bathroom-sign/>.

sation, then we must truly remove gender from the conversation. Inclusive design is equally as problematic as universal design in many of the same ways, but also in that just the term itself reinforces the power dynamics that I aim to dismantle. The fact that people are being included, not only indicates that someone has chosen to include them, but also means that exclusive spaces are not available for those who are ‘included’ in the inclusive spaces. the double bind that I described in my previous paper ‘isolation in the disabled community’<sup>5</sup>.

## “Inclusion without the power of leadership is tokenism.”<sup>6</sup>

5 Spencer, “isolation in the disabled community.”

6 Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care work: Dreaming disability justice*.p127



Fig 20 : Image of bathroom door with a generic toilet icon, as a gender neutral toilet.artwork by Sam Killerman, 2020 [www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2014/04/gender-neutral-bathroom-sign/](https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2014/04/gender-neutral-bathroom-sign/).

As I have mentioned in previous pages, I am invested in the role that communication plays within my design research methodology. Communication plays an important role throughout the process of research; Explaining my goals to those participating in the research, describing my findings and also by creating a language with which those participants can communicate their own take on the work.

**The Domestic Academics:  
Finding the time to write and  
care. Storying the gendered  
inequalities of academic  
research in the global pandemic<sup>1</sup>  
was an excellent example of radical  
communication within design  
research. (see fig 21)**

Initially the work resonated very strongly with me. Not only am I a woman, mother, and academic but also an avid maker and sewer. For all intents and purposes, I appeared to be the ideal target audience. Using forms and materials with a strong narrative impact, was something that I have tried

<sup>1</sup> The Domestic Academics, the Domestic Academic Quilt, 2021. University of Brighton.

to emulate in my position piece for this project. However, as I considered this piece further, It occurred to me that a lot of work had gone into making these pieces, which seemed at odds with the foundational message that it was telling. Surely these works that are highlighting how little time the participants have, due to gender inequalities, have taken even more time away from the participants. Would it perhaps have been better to gather the male academics up and ask them to create a piece devoted to the female academics that are underrepresented due to the time pressures of gender inequality? Or was it in fact a more powerful message bound up in the sacrifice that these academics made in order to give voice to the message that they were delivering?

What I have taken from this line of questioning, alongside a conversation with my lecturer Sally Sutherland, is a consideration of who will be viewing the position piece and how will they be able to interact with it. This will now become a foundational element to my design research practice. Consideration of the work that goes into the participation I am asking of people.



Fig 21 : Photo of quilt created by participants in *The Domestic Academics: Finding the time to write and care. Storying the gendered inequalities of academic research in the global pandemic.* University of Brighton. 2021 [www.blogs.brighton.ac.uk/thedomesticacademics/2021/11/08/on-display/](http://www.blogs.brighton.ac.uk/thedomesticacademics/2021/11/08/on-display/)





**WELL-  
BEING**

**MOBILITY**

**QUALITY  
OF  
LIFE**

fig 22: Image of ongoing studio work. playing with ways to situate mobility within sustainability. photo and artwork by author 2022

# DISCURSIVE/ADVERSARIAL DESIGN

Discursive design is not necessarily a politically inert mode of design like others that I have mentioned in this paper. However, it does have the potential to be used in a non-radical way. As Tharp writes:

**‘the nine facets of discursive design – intention, understanding, message, scenario, artifact, audience, context, interaction, and impact’<sup>1</sup> .’**

1 Bruce M. Tharp et al., *Discursive Design : Critical, Speculative, and Alternative Things* (Cambridge, UNITED STATES: MIT Press, 2018). <http://ebook-central.proquest.com/lib/ubrighton/detail.action?docID=5649566.p212>



Within these nine facets there is space for radical design, it all depends again on how the designer wishes to use them. Adversarial design on the other hand, builds upon a foundation of agonistic enquiry and expression that creates an intrinsic radical element to adversarial design. As DiSalvo states:

**‘the foundation of agonism is a commitment to contestation and dissensus as integral, productive, and meaningful aspects of democratic society’<sup>2</sup> .**

I feel that discursive design is an interesting way to formulate a response that is concise and impactful, creating work that confronts the viewer with a new understanding of the subject at hand. ‘The real advantage of representational imagery is its ability to communicate information’<sup>3</sup>. However, discursive design objects such as the teddy bear blood bag (see fig 23) can often feel lacking in substantive action to change or better the topic it is discussing. It lacks purpose other than signposting people to an issue. The element that is often lacking in discursive design is ‘staying for the conversation’<sup>4</sup>. Surely as its name would suggest discursive design should initiate a discussion and not just a one-way stream of information.

This is where I feel that my work moves towards adversarial design and its’ propensity for inviting complexity into the discussion. DiSalvo describes: ‘Agonism is a condition of forever looping contestation’<sup>5</sup>. This way of thinking aligns with my methodology and with the principles of Design Justice and Mobility Justice.

I feel that the Cards against humanity model acts as a good example of adversarial design that could also be considered discursive (with an included act of discussion within it). The Agonistic, nihilistic style of the cards and the game lends itself well to the ideas of complexity building and information sharing. I see

2 Carl DiSalvo, *Adversarial design* (Design Thinking, Design Theory, 2015).p12

3 Tharp et al., *Discursive Design : Critical, Speculative, and Alternative Things*.p213

4 Dr Tom Ainsworth, conversation 01/12/21

5 DiSalvo, *Adversarial design*.p5

cards against humanity as a new form of slam poetry or haiku making, that breeds the type of dissensus<sup>6</sup> that DiSalvo mentions in his book ‘adversarial design’.

In conclusion I concur with DiSalvo that ‘adversarial design as a theoretical construct- a tool to think and make with(..)’<sup>7</sup>. And I will be using it as a part of my radical design research methodology, alongside discursive design that works as a tool for discussion over one way signposting.

6 DiSalvo, *Adversarial design*.p7

7 DiSalvo, *Adversarial design*.p17

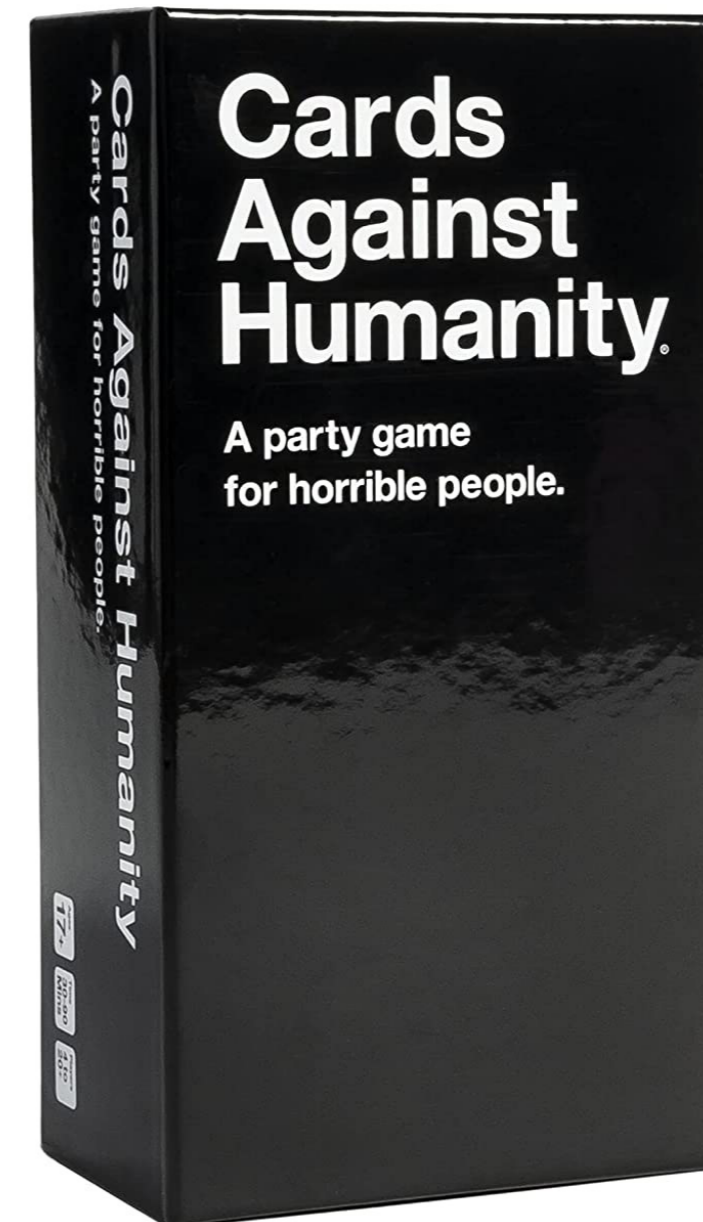


Fig 24 : Cards Against Humanity - a Party Game for Horrible People

Fig 23 : image of Teddy Bear blood bag. Dunne and Raby.2009 <http://dunneandraby.co.uk/content/projects/512/0>

# CO-DESIGN CONCLUSION

As a designer dedicated to championing the voices of those less heard, it seems that this experiential form of research development should be an intrinsic part of how I work.

I'm interested in how co-design manifests in the real world. Drawing from my own experiences workshops can often be performative and seem to serve the workshop creator more than those attending. Thinking on this quandary brought me back to a community project called :

## A drop in the ocean<sup>1</sup> .

The project began with a simple task of creating some data with which to discuss the issue of plastic pollution on Brighton beach. The council commissioned a local designer to create a temporary exhibition piece for Brighton seafront, from all the collected bottle caps that were found on the beach earlier in the year. What began as an exercise that was not co-design, started to turn into one, fluidly. As we all sat around the table sewing bottle caps, we discussed ideas and thoughts around this issue and many others. The project then became extended as the bottle caps were used to create a chandelier, under which more organised talks could occur in the public library. Eventually the bottle tops have found themselves a permanent home as a mosaic mural on the seafront. A permanent reminder of the talks and time that community members spend together hearing and being heard.

As I shift towards an anti-solutionist agenda of adding complexity to the issues that I am researching, there are some valuable take aways for me with regards to this unconventional co-design model. The pollution problem is not solved, the workshops were never designed to do that. But they were a way for knowledge, experience, and ideas to be passed around and there is still immense value in that. Using research for knowledge and experience working towards enrichment over solutions at this point in my work feels like exactly where I need to be.

<sup>1</sup> "A Drop In The Ocean," 2018, accessed 24/01/22, 2022, <https://www.adropintheocean.org.uk>.

Fig 25 : Bottle cap sewing workshop. Brighton. A drop in the ocean. 2019. [www.adropintheocean.org.uk](http://www.adropintheocean.org.uk)



Fig 26 : Temporary Bottle cap display. Brighton Beach. A drop in the ocean. 2019. [www.adropintheocean.org.uk](http://www.adropintheocean.org.uk)



Fig 27 : Permanent Bottle cap display. Brighton Beach. A drop in the ocean. 2019. [www.adropintheocean.org.uk](http://www.adropintheocean.org.uk)



Fig 28 : infographic and image of the chandelier. Brighton jubilee library. A drop in the ocean. 2019. [www.adropintheocean.org.uk](http://www.adropintheocean.org.uk)

# CONCLUSION

I have purposefully chosen to write these final words in the same style as my autoethnography page. Using my own voice to sum up what I have written allows me to add another layer of critique and not simply repeat what has been written already but in fewer words.

As with my position piece this workbook is a moment in time that represents my current standpoint in my work. As I write this now, I have already begun to question some of the positioning statements in this workbook. Certainly, some that were made with regards to my work differing from Sheller's mobility Justice.

I have chosen to use less references in this workbook than in my usual work, opting to use my own perspectives to add a reflective tone. Interestingly, where I found it difficult to use my own words was in the Cards Against Mobility piece itself. I found it hard to be as nihilistic and confrontational as I needed to be, to do the Cards Against Humanity model justice. Not because I lacked that perspective, but some part of me felt laid bare by that activity. Therefore, I used quotes from other, more practiced, radical thinkers as a tool for expressing my own points of view. Which in the end, turned out to be much better than using my own words. I did allow myself the space to be brave in the white cards and used my own responses on those.

This same tension appeared when I began writing about autoethnography, this came after the card making. Perhaps the cards emboldened me to write in my own style. The topic of autoethnography lends itself to me writing in this storytelling way. I feel a tension about writing in my own voice, a worry that it is somehow not academic enough.

I have always read a lot, to escape the world and find a peaceful moment for my racing mind. Having read books like Design Justice<sup>1</sup>, Mobility Justice<sup>2</sup> and Care Work<sup>3</sup>, I now read to run towards the world. These texts that I have discussed in this workbook, resonate so strongly with my perspective on design that they have given me the confidence to take risks, use my voice and solidify a foundation of principles to build my design research methodology on.

Amongst all the uncertainty, questioning and unfinishedness of this workbook, there is one thing that I am certain of; I am committed to the work of discovering and understanding complexity and uncertainty without focusing on a solutionist response.

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1 Costanza-Chock, Design justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need.

2 Sheller, Mobility justice: the politics of movement in an age of anxiety.

3 Piepza-Samarasinha, Care work: Dreaming disability justice.

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