INTERROGATIVE DESIGN AS A MEANS FOR CONFRONTING HOSTILE ARCHITECTURE
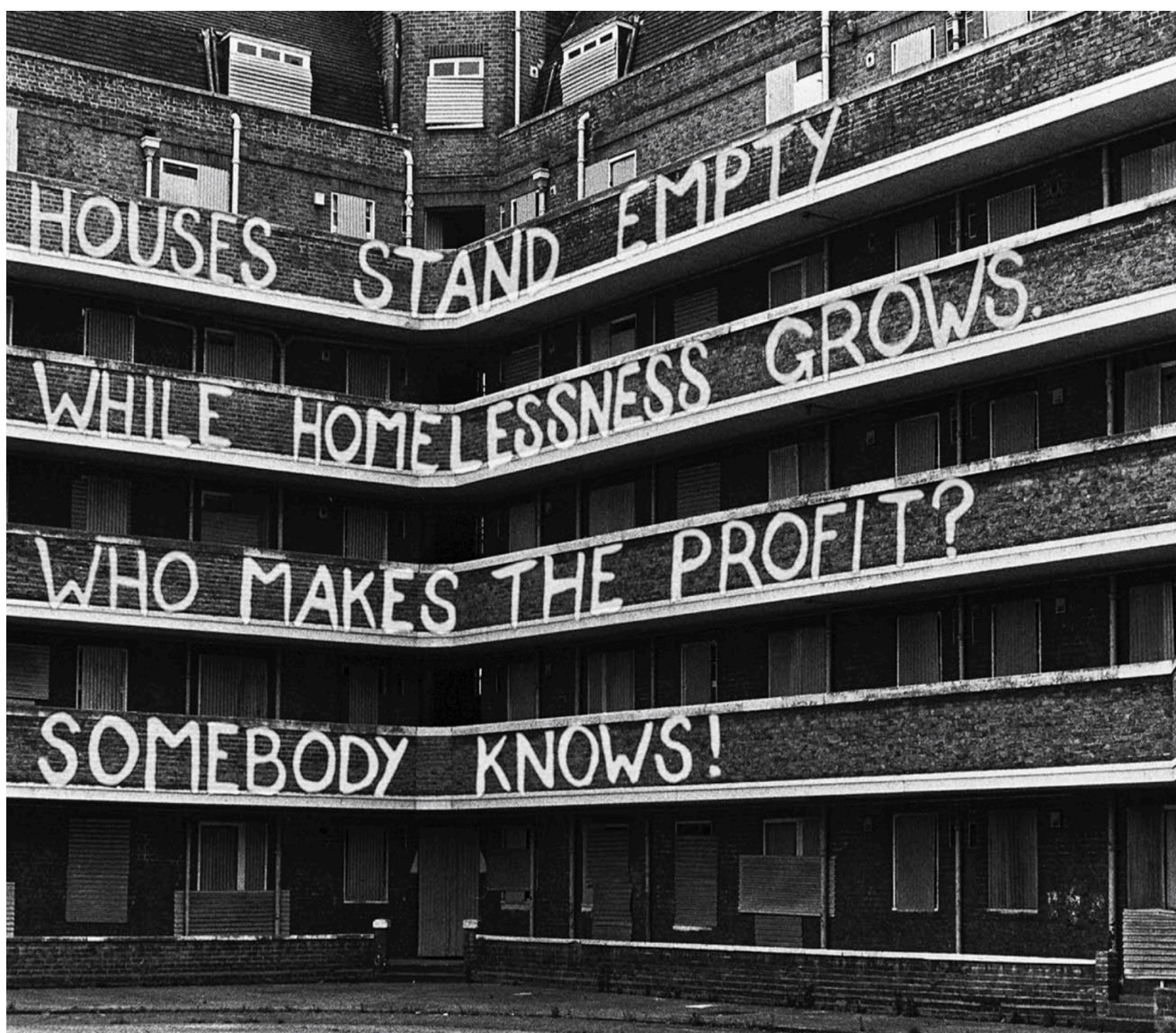
Fig 1: Houses Stand Empty in East London, Photograph (David Hoffman, 1973).

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INTERROGATIVE DESIGN AS A MEANS FOR CONFRONTING HOSTILE ARCHITECTURE

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy awarded by University of the Arts London

September 2023

Interrogative Design as a Means for Confronting Hostile Architecture

ABSTRACT

This practice-based research considers how, in the context of homelessness, people struggle to inhabit and shape space to connect with their surroundings and establish a sense of place. Focusing on the situation of homelessness in London, the research investigates spatial design as a form of interrogative design applied to the issue of homelessness. The thesis interrogates hostile design by exploring the theoretical underpinnings of 'affordance' theory and its implications for understanding the phenomenon of so-called 'hostile' architecture; it examines possibilities to shed light on the complex interplay between human perception, environmental affordances, and social control. Here, the body is seen as a critical location of our connection and expression of our sociality.

Homelessness is a multifaceted concept, and people neglect the vulnerability associated with a population that is disproportionally impacted by social, economic, political and environmental agendas in London. Focusing on the physical and psychological relation with space, negatively impacted by hostile architecture, the research aims to conduct an anonymised inventory of private domestic rituals, necessarily carried out in public through drawings, maps and photographs of traces of inhabitation. This research engages spatial conditions that push the boundary of public space, using temporal edifices and social narratives. The research will draw on the various notions and typologies of hostile design, in order to highlight the dehumanising nature of such designs in the built environment and the repercussions of designing public space with social exclusion in mind.

Examining the intersection of hostile design, homelessness, and the blurred divide between public and private space in London, the research uses practice to confront this boundary, shedding new light on how urban environments impact vulnerable populations. It seeks to counter effects of hostile architecture on the homeless through interventions that transform negative design into affordances. This utilises drawing as a core method to my practice, allowing me to capture and communicate the complex intersections between public and private spaces, and the impact on people who are homeless. This references the notion of the 'squatters handbook', which offers historical and practical perspectives on how individuals might interact with urban environments in order to counter hostile design and claim their right to public spaces. This approach adds to knowledge by providing a creative lens through which to evaluate urban dynamics; it also emphasises the importance of artistic methods in addressing social issues and effecting meaningful change.

My research demonstrates how design and co-creation can intervene to amplify the voices of people with lived experiences of homelessness, that are often not heard, making visible the advocacy needed for this sort of social mobility. This challenges the perception of homelessness and invites the public to renegotiate their perception of homelessness by confronting the boundary between public and private spaces.
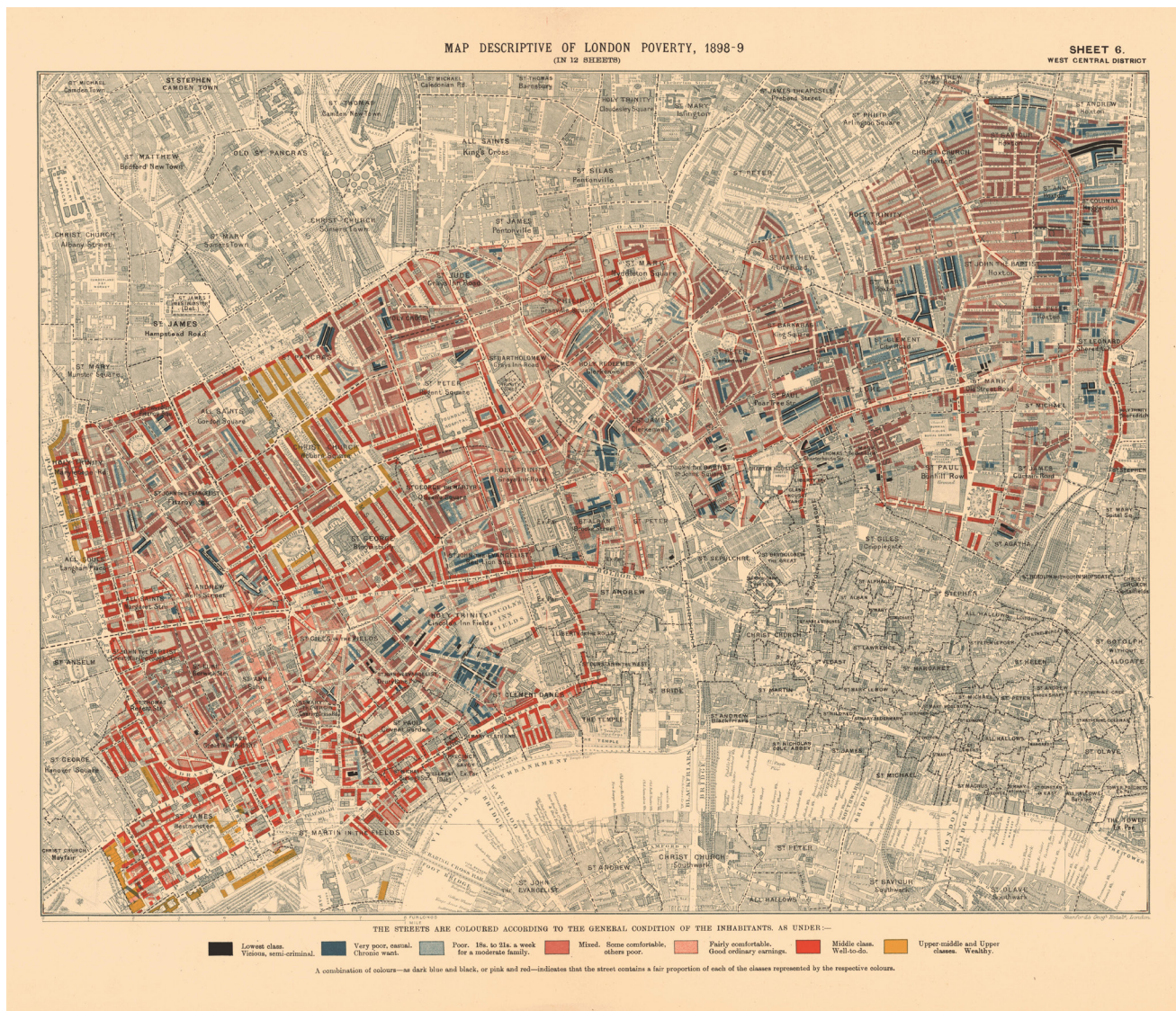
Interrogative Design as a Means for Confronting Hostile Architecture

Fig 2: Inner west central London poverty map (Charles Booth, 1898-9).

In memory of,

my grandmother Hilda Bennie and Aunt Iris Bennie.

Interrogative Design as a Means for Confronting Hostile Architecture

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dedication,

This research is dedicated to those who have experienced, or are experiencing homelessness.

I have tried to approach this research as someone listening, learning, and recognising homelessness as a human experience—one that deserves empathy and action. This work is my attempt at shedding light on the voices that are too often ignored and pushing for design and education to do more in challenging such injustices.

CONTENTS

GLOSSARY

Co-Design
A collaborative design approach where all stakeholders work together as equal partners in the creative process.

Covid-19 Pandemic
A global health crisis that began in 2019, leading to widespread illness, lockdowns, and economic disruption. The pandemic exposed and deepened social inequalities, which are central concerns in this research.

Decolonial Ethics
A critical approach that seeks to dismantle colonial power structures and prioritise marginalised knowledge systems. In this research, decolonial ethics inform design methods that challenge exclusionary urban policies and advocate for equitable public spaces.

Dialogue
An open exchange of ideas between individuals or groups, promoting mutual understanding.

Dialogue(s)
Ongoing, multi-perspective discussions that evolve over time. This research facilitates dialogues between design students to challenge and document hostile architecture in urban spaces.

Ghettoising
The process of isolating or segregating a particular group, often based on socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or other factors. In the context of homelessness and this research, it refers to the concentration and marginalisation of homeless populations in specific areas or neighbourhoods, often leading to social exclusion and stigmatisation.

Interventions
Considered actions that disrupt existing conditions to provoke change.

NRPf (No Recourse to Public Funds)
A UK immigration condition preventing certain individuals from accessing public welfare benefits including housing assistance.

Open Access
A model that makes research freely available without paywalls. Open access supports knowledge-sharing and enables wider engagement with research findings, particularly in social justice-driven studies.

Participatory Design
A design approach that advocates for the input of all stakeholders (including users, designers, communities and non-traditional designers).

Pluriversal
A concept that acknowledges multiple ways of knowing and being, challenging dominant Western-centric perspectives.

PSPO (Public Space Protection Order)
A legal order under the UK's Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, used to restrict certain behaviours in public spaces.

Spatial Analysis
Spatial analysis refers to the process of examining the physical arrangement and relationships of objects, spaces, or phenomena within a specific area. It involves the use of various methods and techniques to interpret the patterns, structures, and distributions of spatial data. This can include geographic information systems (GIS), mapping, and statistical analysis to understand how space is utilised, how different entities interact within it, and how spatial patterns influence social, economic, or environmental outcomes.

Spatial Interventions
Design actions that modify spaces to influence their use and perception. This research employs spatial interventions to reveal and subvert the impact of hostile architecture.

Toolkit
A set of resources, including 3D-printed objects and instructional drawings, that offer insights to understand or counter hostile design. The toolkit serves as both a pedagogical and a practical tool.

Note: This glossary, specific to the context of this PhD research, offers definitions related to the critical exploration of hostile architecture, homelessness, and socially engaged design practices.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The introduction sets out my methodology and the set of specific concerns relating to the distinctive role of the artist-designer in creating spatial interventions that challenge the perception of homelessness in London. It introduces the phenomenon of hostile architecture, where aspects of the built environment purposively impede occupation by the homeless; through provocations, it seeks to transform hostile architecture from a defence mechanism that excludes into an affordance (Gibson,1979). A hostile architectural design taxonomy is introduced and unfolds to reveal the intricate layers of design strategies employed to discourage certain behaviours within public spaces. This taxonomy traces the roots of hostile architecture and its evolution through the categorisation of such designs into distinct types; those that target people experiencing homelessness, discourage lingering, deter gatherings and prevent skateboarding. My research further considers the social and ethical implication of these excluding devices, emphasising the challenges faced by vulnerable populations and the erosion of inclusivity in urban environments. This is further developed through the examination of real-world examples in London, as well as, through my practice in chapter 4.

In chapter 1, I outline and detail my research questions as well as the aims and objectives of my research and practice. These research questions and objectives represent a crucial step in unravelling the complexities of the research and practice. I further outline the approaches that have helped inform the proposed intervention and the importance of this research topic, briefly touching upon the impact of the covid-19 pandemic that swept across the globe in early 2020 and brought unprecedented challenges to societies, economies and public health systems. This chapter explores the intricate relationship between the pandemic and homelessness in the context of London, exploring how pre-existing challenges were exacerbated and new issues emerged. By examining the effects of covid-19 on homelessness, this chapter sheds light on the urgent need for change. Additionally, the concept of hostile architecture is introduced, shedding light on its purpose, history and underlying motivations. I explore the idea that urban spaces are increasingly designed with the intention of manipulating human behaviour or deterring certain activities. I trace the origins of hostile architecture back to the 19th century, highlighting its evolution in response to societal changes. Finally, one aspect that remains implicit, but is pivotal in shaping this research, is my personal relationship with the subject. This chapter acknowledges this connection and offers an exploration of the personal motivations that fuelled the choices of this specific topic. It seeks to offer insight by constructing a backdrop against which the context of homelessness, and my personal relationship to the research, plays out.

Chapter 2 addresses practice as research and its intersection with design methods adopted from other researchers. This chapter sets the stage for examining various design methods that facilitate the relationship between practice and research. This section provides a comprehensive

overview of art and design research practices, emphasising the importance of embodied knowledge. I investigate the interrelated relationships of these design methods utilised by artists as activists, illustrating the potential of design methods in generating new perspectives and challenging assumptions. Analysing the relationships between artistic practices, I both distinguish between them and highlight the interplay between cross-disciplinary boundaries of knowledge. Through real-world instances, this chapter explores how design methods and artists as activists can facilitate a productive dialogue. This chapter also highlights the significance of practice as research, through design methods such as speculative design, conceptualised by Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby. This is an approach that challenges conventional design by exploring alternative futures as an approach to critical thinking, encouraging people to reflect on the societal, ethical and cultural implications. Another method explored in this chapter is social design, advocated by Victor Papanek, which emphasises the ethical and inclusive aspects of design, aiming to address pressing societal issues. Papanek's Design for the real world highlights the responsibility of designers to create products that serve the needs of the marginalised to promote environmental sustainability (Papanek, 1971). Papanek believed that design should be a tool for social change, transcending mere aesthetics to tackle systemic inequalities and empower communities (Papanek, 1984 p.20-24). Finally, this chapter critically analyses Interrogative Design as a design methodology developed by Krzysztof Wodiczko. This approach allows designer-artists to engage in dialogues with the public, unveiling hidden perspectives and fostering critical discussions. Wodiczko's method dares us to explore the uncomfortable and reshape our understanding of design's role in shaping the world. It pushes the boundaries of existing paradigms and contributes to both academic and practical landscapes, demonstrating how practice-led research and design methods intertwine.

Chapter 3 critically examines and introduces the theoretical and methodological concepts that underlie the thesis, as an approach to the design intervention related to the pressing issue of homelessness in London. This chapter outlines the significance and relevance in addressing this critical societal phenomenon. The chapter explores the core concept of affordance theory and its relevance in understanding the experiences of people who are homeless in urban environments. This is further developed through the notion of mapping domestic rituals, shedding light on how everyday practices within the homeless community interact with the built environment. Within the realm of understanding human interaction, and the environment they occupy, the practices of mapping sites of inhabitation emerge as a crucial aspect of my practice. Such mapping encompasses the analysis of locations in London where individuals and communities reside, traverse and engage in daily activities. Depicting various dimensions of inhabited spaces, shedding light on the insights it can offer as a method to addressing contemporary challenges such as homelessness. Such acts of mapping uncover the intricate relationship between people and the places they call home. Additionally, it serves as a tool for

deciphering the complexity of human habitation, revealing patterns, behaviours and connections that shape our understanding of such spaces in diverse contexts. Finally, the chapter investigates the notion of advocacy as an aspect of addressing homelessness, introducing the significance of the self-help handbook as a resource within the homeless community.

Finally, in chapter 4 I introduce my practice and lay the foundation for my proposed design response. My design practice centres around addressing the complex issue of homelessness in London, highlighting the role of the artist-designer through the lens of 'affordances'. It demonstrates how the built environment should provide opportunities and resources that empower individuals facing homelessness to regain their autonomy and dignity. This chapter examines the core principles and values that underpin my approach to this research, through a design intervention response, through a taxonomy of hostile architecture and design, and design student responses aimed to offer insights to a multifaceted concern. Additionally, my practice seeks to transform the built environment into a catalyst for positive change, evolving a holistic toolkit for hostile designed spaces, in turn fostering a sense of belonging and security amongst those in need. Finally, this section sets out the two aspects that my practice component addresses and draws on my own experience as a migrant of colour. It highlights the impact and influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on my practice, which meant my practice had to adapt to these new challenges, despite the imperative to consider the evolving impact of the pandemic on homelessness in London. Hence the development of a toolkit, aimed to counteract hostile design in public spaces. Such effort not only enhances our understanding of hostile design but lays the groundwork for a more nuanced and comprehensive response through art and design practices, advocating for change and challenging the status quo.

In the conclusion, I examine the relationship between hostile architecture and design in relation to homelessness within the urban context of London. I demonstrate how this practice-based research constitutes a contribution to the field of interrogative design by exploring the theoretical underpinnings of 'affordance' theory. The conclusion draws on the implications and analysis of how hostile designed elements are intentionally and strategically integrated into the city's public spaces. It provides an overview of how such design strategies are employed to deter people who are homeless from seeking shelter or rest in public spaces, and demonstrates the multifaceted challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness in urban environments. By bringing attention to the pervasive issue of hostile design as a critical aspect of the homelessness crisis, which often goes unnoticed, the thesis further challenges the need to recognise the ethical and moral dimensions of hostile architecture, as it directly affects the well-being and dignity of some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Furthermore, the conclusion explores how this practice-based research aims to encourage public awareness and dialogue about hostile architecture in relation to homelessness. It serves as a call to action, inviting the public to confront the ethical implications of design choices within our cities. By advocating for inclusive and empathetic architecture and design we can work towards a future where public spaces are not exclusionary but instead contribute to social inclusion and equity.

INTRODUCTION

This practice-based research aims to become a contribution to the field of interrogative design, developed by the Polish born artist/designer Krzysztof Wodiczko and which constitutes a novel method whereby 'design must articulate and inspire communication of real, often difficult lived-through experience, rather than operate as a substitute for it' (Wodiczko, 1999 p.29). Applying the method to homelessness, and focusing on the situation in London, the research investigates the distinctive role of the artist-designer in creating spatial interventions that challenge the perception of homelessness, and invites the public to renegotiate their understanding of homelessness by confronting the boundary between public and private spaces. The premise on which the thesis is founded is that the ghettoising of the homeless in London has consequences for how private domestic activities take place within full public view (Minton, 2012). This is an aspect of homelessness that Wodiczko's engagement with marginalised and estranged city residents has not addressed. This issue is made more pressing by the widespread phenomenon called 'hostile architecture' (Petty, 2016), where aspects of the built environment are 'designed' purposively to impede occupation by the homeless. As a spatial designer, concerned with domestic space, I shall conduct this research through:

- an anonymised inventory of these private domestic rituals, necessarily carried out in public, through drawings, maps, photographs of traces of inhabitation etc.
- the development of a taxonomy of 'hostile' architectural devices, investigating how these impact upon the inhabitation of sites by people who are homeless.

This 'archival' research, comprising documenting techniques often associated with archaeological sites or forensic investigations, will then inform the design of a series of performative actions that constitute an urban 'toolkit' of means by which people who are homeless can counteract such hostile architecture, transforming it from a defence mechanism into an affordance (Gibson,1979). These designed actions, realised as a set of drawn instructions (in the spirit of open access and open-source software), will reveal and address the issue of privacy as a design problem, through transient devices that can be adapted both to the body and its daily rituals, and hence adapt the architecture as found. Drawing on my own experience as a migrant of colour, these 'instructions' for interventions/actions/performances will be proposed for areas where the people experiencing homelessness are excluded through the increasing privatisation of public space. These proposed interventions seek to confront the harsh reality of how people who are homeless are routinely left out of the social fabric of our cities as a form of social exclusion. It represents a response to a pressing crisis and draws upon the richness of my journey as a migrant, where the themes of exclusion and resilience resonate deeply. Such intervention is not only a response to an acute issue but responds to the urgent need to create a more inclusive and compassionate urban landscape for everyone, regardless of their origins or housing status.This practice-based research centres around key research questions that form the foundation of this thesis. These questions

Fig 3: Photograph of a view of Bulawayo City (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

explore the intricate relationship between the artist-designer and a set of societal impact aims, which serve as a catalyst for social change and aim to provoke meaningful dialogues. The following research questions are addressed:

(i) can 'interrogative design', which seeks to reveal social and ethical conditions, be applied at the level of the body inhabiting space (i.e. a new application[1]);

(ii) how might the mapping of spatial typologies (both patterns of habitation and types of hostile architecture employed by owners) help rethink an otherwise instrumentalised problem;

(iii) how might the role of an artist/designer highlight (and find solutions for) issues of privacy in relation to the 'domestic' rituals of the homeless;

(iv) how might such design responses highlight—to a public largely unfamiliar with the term - the phenomenon of 'hostile architecture', through processes of transformation (such that impediments to occupation by people who are homeless are countered and transformed into affordances).

Question (i) involves a nuanced examination and critical review of interrogative design as a method. How might such a critical practice, with its 'scandalising' tendencies (in its deliberate utilisation of a series of provocations), explore the ethical conditions of bodies in space, in order to better understand the ways in which this knowledge can be applied as a new application within the context of homelessness in London and art and design research/thinking. This examination of interrogative design specifically analyses Krzysztof Wodiczko's controversial approach and methodologies. Wodiczko's methodology of interrogative design can be described as a provocation; as he explains, 'the appearance of interrogative design may "attract while scandalising" – it must attract attention in order to scandalise the conditions of which it is born' (Wodiczko, 1999). This is justified by the severe nature of the problem the design intervention is aiming to address. But this faces complex ethical considerations when addressing the issue of the body in urban space in the context of a particularly vulnerable group of diverse people. Such ethical approaches are multifaceted; any interventions should respect autonomy, privacy and personal agency. In essence, the ethical considerations—in addressing homelessness in urban spaces—revolve around human rights, social justice and compassion, with a focus on ensuring efforts are respectful.

Question (ii) is specifically concerned with qualitative ethnographic data analysis as a tool for depicting the patterns of habitation for people who are homeless across London boroughs. Further, it asks how art and design can play a contributory role in reframing British society's understanding of the issue of homelessness in London. It will emphasise the social justice aspects of this area of concern and seek to respond through the lens of a spatial designer. It will also involve developing a taxonomy of types of hostile architecture, and document how these impact upon people who are homeless. Finally, this question responds to actual experience of people that are, or have been, homeless, not only highlighting such marginalised social communities (where personal care activities are by necessity played out in public view) but provide source material for later creative responses.

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1   Krzysztof Wodiczko's interrogative design approach transcends traditional aesthetic considerations, emphasising design as an important instrument for social critique and dialogue. Representing a departure from conventional design paradigms to create thought provoking devices.

Question (iii) is concerned with the connection between the process and purposes of design and art in order to illustrate how the differences between these closely aligned fields interrelate and support each other to create a specific kind of hybrid practice engaging real social problems. The question attempts to show how space is treated in relation to the body, public and private space.

Question (iv) then engages both the bringing to the public's attention the phenomenon of hostile architecture, and developing a toolkit of speculative responses that provide instructions for creatively adapting hostile architecture–transforming it from a means of impeding inhabitation to a means to enhance the performance of domestic ritual.

The thesis was written during an unprecedented period of social inequality. The pandemic has exposed and highlighted the extreme inequalities and structural injustices that have been born out of successive Government policies. The covid-19 crisis, and the requirements of 'social distancing', has also significantly impacted upon my activities as a researcher. Due to the ever-changing nature of lockdown restrictions in London, my role as a researcher has had to shift from the original intent of developing an embedded practice. Although embedded practice was, theoretically, a key aspect of the practice component of this research, the severe restrictions placed on my research by the pandemic has, as a by-product, allowed the practice component to move towards a more taxonomical approach, analysing and highlighting the detrimental role of hostile architecture in the urban landscape. As mentioned above, the practice component considers notions related to architectural designed devices and the notion of the urban toolkit (consistent with previous models of social agency addressing homelessness such as squatter handbooks from the 1960s and 70s). By drawing on both theoretical and practical perspectives, this research demonstrates that design, education, and art are inherently interconnected, with each contributing to the development of a more inclusive and socially responsible built environment. Furthermore, this practice-based research endeavours to closely examine the intricate fabric of homelessness in London, weaving together a narrative that not only uncovers the multifaceted dimensions of this issue but also seeks to highlight pathways towards meaningful change. This research aims to provide a holistic understanding of homelessness while advocating for innovative interventions that can catalyse transformative shifts in the lives of those affected. It thus constitutes an intersectional approach that acknowledges that "multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149).

The Role of Practice

The concept of 'practice' within this practice-based research has not been confined to a single discipline or area; rather, it has evolved as a fluid, interconnected process that spans across my work as an artist-designer and educator. The latter role has become increasingly important during the period of undertaking my PhD, as teaching opportunities have presented themselves. Teaching during this PhD has not only allowed for the dissemination of critical ideas around design and social justice but has also offered a reflective space to test and challenge the methods developed through practice. Engaging with students, particularly in workshops that explore hostile architecture through drawing, mapping and 3D printing has provided valuable insights into how others perceive and experience urban spaces. This has also allowed me to confront the ethical responsibilities of

working on socially engaged design projects. Facilitating discussions around public space, exclusion and power dynamics within the city has encouraged students to consider the political agency of design and the implications of their own creative decisions. In this way, my practice has become intertwined with pedagogy, where the studio or classroom becomes a site for collective enquiry. Ultimately, this dual role as both practitioner and educator has expanded the scope and impact of my research. Design, art, and education are not seen as separate entities but as integral parts of the research process itself. In many ways, the distinction between these roles has become increasingly porous as my research has developed. Each informs and enhances the other, creating an interplay between theory, practice, critique, teaching and learning. As Terresa Moses notes, 'designers are problem solvers crafting intentional artifacts, systems, and experiences that we use every day. The research that informs what design approaches we tale may draw on historical literature or our own lived experiences. That is the beauty of design. And we use that information to guide us in design approaches that shape how we move about the world' (Moses, Souza and Tunstall, 2023, p. 176). Moses' approach highlights the reciprocal relationship between practice and teaching, demonstrating how integrating practical experience with educational methodologies can lead to a more impactful understanding of designs role in society and its impact on human experiences.

The act of designing, the process of making, and the role of teaching are not isolated from one another but are intrinsically linked, and together, they form a core part of my own research journey. Additionally, traditional academic views often hold theory and practice as distinct, but my research is grounded in the belief that practice is not merely a tool for the exploration of theory; rather, I think of practice as theory in action. Therefore, the integration of these practices into this research is not simply a matter of using design or art as tools for enquiry but rather positioning them as the very backbone of the research itself.

I view my practice as a continuous act of enquiry where each iteration of design, drawing or teaching is both a reflection of existing theoretical frameworks and a challenge to them. The act of drawing or making is not a passive reproduction of ideas but an active process of exploration that deepens my understanding of social, political, and spatial issues. It is through the practical engagement with materials, people, and contexts that I have come to understand the broader implications of hostile architecture and the power of design to counter such negative use of 'design' by creating inclusive spaces. This methodology is rooted in a belief that design, as both an intellectual and creative process, can be a tool for transforming the way we experience the world and the spaces we inhabit. As a researcher, I recognise that knowledge production is not limited to academic texts or theoretical frameworks but is also produced through materiality, experience, and pedagogy. The latter has become increasingly important as my own role as an educator has evolved during the course of undertaking a research degree. In this sense, the practice itself becomes the research—a process of knowledge-making that is grounded in action, collaboration, and engagement.

Fig 4: Photograph of Vauxhall, London during lockdown in May 2020 with hostile design features on the ground (Adrienne Bennie, 2020).

Practice as Knowledge Production

As indicated previously, the relationship between theory and practice in this research reflects the belief that the act of making—whether through design, art, or education—can be a form of knowledge production. Richard Sennett (2008) points out that, "Craft is not a tool of technical mastery. Craft is a way of being, a form of thinking" (Sennett, p. 15). Sennett's perspective on craft, with its focus on the relationship between the hands and the mind, encapsulates part of my approach: practice itself is a form of knowledge production. The act of designing and creating is not simply the application of existing knowledge; it is a site for the generation of new insights and for testing. By intervening in spaces designed for exclusion, I do not merely critique hostile architecture; I engage with it directly, creating opportunities for transformation. The making of interventions, whether in the form of drawings, photographs, participatory workshops, or artistic explorations—becomes a means of interrogating and reshaping these spaces. Design, in this sense, is not just a response to a problem but an active process of reimagining, challenging, and reshaping the built environment.

On the other hand, it is important to note that the act of design in this context is not just about creating functional solutions but about engaging with material, context, and people in a way that develops new understandings of space and social relations. Additionally, this is evident in Donald Schön's (1983) concept of 'reflective practice,' where practitioners move between action and reflection, constantly engaging with the practical implications of their work while also refining their understanding of it. Schön's model emphasises that professional knowledge is developed through a continuous engagement with practice, where understanding emerges not from the detached analysis of theory but from direct, lived experience. My research and practice draws on this approach, particularly in how I engage with the public spaces affected by hostile architecture. Through workshops, documenting, rethinking and drawing encounters, I reflect on the social dynamics at play and adapt my practice based on the real-world impact of these interventions. The research itself becomes a vehicle for change, moving beyond theoretical critique to directly engage with the lived experiences of those affected by hostile spaces. Similarly, the work of educator and philosopher Paulo Freire's (2000) pedagogy demonstrates the power of education as a practice that encourages critical thinking and active participation, as a process of co-creation, where knowledge is not transferred from teacher to student but collectively constructed through dialogue and action. As an educator, this approach is implemented within my teaching where the act of educating students is not just about delivering content but about engaging them in the co-creation of knowledge through practical, hands-on exploration. In this way, my role as an educator is inextricably linked to my practice as an artist-designer, as I facilitate learning processes that encourage students to critically examine the built environment, question design choices, and create new, more inclusive possibilities for the future. Moreover, Freire's work emphasises the role of education in empowering individuals to critically engage with and transform the world around them. For me, this is where design and pedagogy intersect; by teaching students to question the ethics of design and challenge the status quo, I am contributing to a broader culture of critical engagement with the built environment.

The Role of Teaching in My Practice

As previously mentioned, the impact of covid-19 significantly altered the trajectory of this research and practice. Therefore, teaching became central to the development of my research, as it allowed me to bridge the gap between theory and practice in a way that directly impacted students. I believe that education should not merely be about transmitting existing knowledge but about encouraging critical thinking, empathy, and the ability to address pressing societal issues. Through the teaching of design and the exploration of hostile architecture, I have been able to encourage a learning environment that challenges students to question the ethics and implications of design in a broader social and political context. Stuart Walker (2013) writes, "Design is a social activity that must be understood through action and reflection" (p. 47); therefore, my practice encourages students to embrace the idea of design as a legitimate process of enquiry, rather than simply focusing on the production of aesthetically pleasing or commercially viable products. This notion further shapes my approach to teaching, where I see the design process as an ongoing cycle of reflection and engagement. Through workshops run with my undergraduate product and furniture design students we interrogated public spaces, particularly those affected by hostile architecture, asking questions like: Who benefits from these designs? Who is excluded? How can design be used to foster inclusion and equality? This process of teaching and learning is rooted in the concept of co-creation where I work alongside students, not as a lecturer who imparts knowledge but as a facilitator who creates space for critical dialogue and collaborative problem-solving. This process of co-creation further reflects Bell Hooks' (1994) notion of 'education as the practice of freedom,' where education empowers individuals to use their creativity and critical thinking to transform the world. Therefore, my teaching practice cultivates an environment where students feel empowered to challenge the status quo and question the power dynamics inherent in design. This process is not just about producing good designers; it is about producing socially conscious individuals who are aware of the broader implications of their work in the world. In this way, teaching becomes an extension of my own research practice, providing a platform for the co-creation of knowledge and ideas. This research explores hostile architecture as a manifestation of societal power dynamics, using design and art as tools for critique and intervention. Therefore, in this research, the integration of design, art and education is not just a theoretical construct but a lived practice. It is inherently collaborative—it is about sharing knowledge, empowering others, and co-creating. As Freire (2000) contends, education is not a neutral process; it is inherently political. Similarly, design is not a neutral activity—it carries with it a set of values, assumptions, and ideologies that can either perpetuate or challenge existing power structures. Through this research, design becomes a tool for social change, as I work to deconstruct the power dynamics embedded in public spaces.

With this in mind, as both a designer-artist and educator, my research has been shaped by the understanding that practice itself is a form of knowledge production, grounded in the process of making, reflecting, and teaching. It is a process of ongoing engagement with the material world, with people, and with the social issues that shape our lives. As Sennett (2008) argues, making is a form of thinking, and design is an active process of rethinking the world. Therefore, within this research, design, art, and education are not isolated domains but are interconnected practices that feed into each other, creating a more comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing the social and spatial injustices of hostile architecture: all of which are part of a larger, ongoing dialogue about the role of design in shaping a more just and inclusive society.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations form a critical foundation in this research, shaping both the methodology and its practical interventions. Grounded in practice and participatory methodologies, this research operates in complex social environments where the power dynamics of space, voice, and representation are constantly at play. Ethical questions arise not only in terms of consent and transparency but also in how to engage with vulnerable populations without perpetuating harm or inequality. The following section explores how ethical considerations have informed the research process, from site visits and documentation to co-creation, critically reflecting on the challenges and responsibilities of designing for social change. Central to these considerations was a commitment to ethical research methods that respected the agency, privacy, and dignity of marginalised individuals. Informed by theories of participatory design, critical spatial theory, and decolonial ethics, my approach aimed to prioritise consent, reflexivity, and collaboration throughout the research journey.

Consent in Public Spaces, Origins of Hostile Architecture and Participatory Methods

One primary ethical challenge was navigating informed consent within public spaces, particularly when working in areas where people experiencing homelessness were disproportionately affected by hostile architecture. Hostile architecture is a term that emerged within urban design, architecture and critical spatial discourse to describe design strategies that deliberately restrict certain behaviours in public space. To date, research is unable to successfully identify the origins of the term hostile architecture or design; however, in Norwich, England, anti-urination devices were installed in the 19th century to deter public urination. These devices were sloped and appear to be constructed from concrete and stone and are situated in the corners of buildings. The intent was to discourage people from performing a specific action in public. In the early 2000's professor Jerold S. Kayden, a Harvard University professor of urban planning and design, began documenting an array of spikes, railings and other obstructions on benches (Hu, 2019) – this is when hostile architecture became a topic for debate.

Hostile architecture, also known as 'defensive architecture, hostile design, unpleasant design or exclusionary design' (Petty, 2016), is an area in urban studies that focuses on a design approach in public spaces aimed at controlling the behaviour of the street homeless community, with hostile architecture specifically intended to restrict certain actions. It further objectifies people who rely on public space. This type of architecture prevents people from activating space freely, it can be seen as a device to stop people experiencing homelessness or rough sleepers from inhabiting covered building facades or finding somewhere to sleep. It extends to the implementation and adaptation of benches that encourage no other behaviour other than sitting, as metal dividers are usually inserted to prohibit laying down across the bench as well as adapting the shape of the bench and introducing undulating surfaces or reducing the seat with to that of a ledge. It represents another subtle form of social exclusion and policing people who are experiencing homelessness within the urban environment. This notion of hostile architecture extends into other forms of social exclusion in public space and can be categorised as; public spaces that are highly monitored by CCTV, highly policed by security guards and the use of ultraviolet lights in public toilets to discourage drug use.

Fig 5: 19th Century anti-urination device, St Gregory's Church, Norwich England (Iridescent, 2022).

Fig 6: An example of a bench that deters prolonged sitting, illustrating hostile architecture in public space in London – the Camden bench (Adrienne Bennie, 2021).

Public spaces often blur traditional boundaries of consent because they are, by definition, accessible to all. However, as scholars like Henri Lefebvre have argued in his book *The Production of Space* (1991), public spaces are deeply political and contested terrains, where marginalised groups often face surveillance, displacement, and other forms of exclusion.

Within this research, informed consent extended beyond procedural norms to become a relational and ongoing process. For example, while documenting urban sites with hostile architectural features–such as benches with armrests to deter sleeping or spikes placed on ledges–I sought explicit consent from individuals occupying these spaces whenever they were visibly present. When approaching people experiencing homelessness, I introduced myself and explained the purpose of my research, emphasising that it aimed to critique and reimagine these exclusionary design features rather than scrutinise their personal circumstances. The concept of 'relational ethics' as articulated by Carol Gilligan in her book *In a Different Voice* (1982,) was integral to this approach. Gilligan's framework emphasises the importance of relationships and context in ethical decision-making, advocating for an ethics of care that prioritises listening, mutual respect, and understanding. By engaging in open dialogue, I aimed to establish trust and promote a collaborative atmosphere, ensuring that people felt empowered to share their perspectives or decline to engage on their own terms. Subsequently, running workshops with BA Product and Furniture design students presented some ethical ethical considerations too, and

it is important to note that my aim was to create a space where students could explore the socio-political dimensions of design, experiment with speculative practices, and challenge the norms that define public spaces. Their work wasn't just an output of these sessions; appropriately acknowledged (and with signed permission), it also became a critical part of my practice as an educator, enriching my own understanding of design's potential to address social exclusion. This notion is further explored within Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) where he explores education as a dialogical process in which "teachers and students co-intent on reality are both subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge" (Freire, 1970, p. 69). By embedding student work within this research through my teaching practice, I embraced the idea that the studio is a space for co-creation, where students and educators collectively challenge dominant paradigms–in this case, the exclusionary practice of hostile architecture.

Moreover, visual documentation, including drawings and photographs, form a critical component of this research, enabling detailed analysis of hostile architecture's physical and spatial dimensions. With this in mind, Judith Butler's *Precarious Life* (2004) illustrates that those rendered vulnerable by social and political systems often occupy positions of heightened precarity in public spaces. Documenting their presence risks exacerbating their vulnerability if done without care. Therefore, to address these concerns, I adopted an ethical approach to visual documentation that prioritised the anonymity and dignity of individuals. For example, when photographing benches, ledges, or other architectural elements where people were present, I either excluded individuals from the frame or used techniques to obscure identifying features. In addition to photography, hand-drawn sketches became an important methodological tool, allowing for nuanced representation without capturing identifiable details. Drawing from practices of ethnographic sketching described by Sarah Pink in *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (2009), I used this method to focus on the spatial and material characteristics of hostile architecture as a way to understand how individuals interact with and perceive their surroundings. Such approach offers a critical framework for how people experience and make sense of the world through embodied and multisensory engagement such as sound, textures or spatial awareness. This approach is particularly valuable when examining the spatial and material dynamics of hostile architecture, which often operates subtly through the manipulation of surfaces, textures and spatial arrangements to control behaviour in urban environments. In my practice, I adopted Pink's sensory ethnographic approach to document and analyse the materiality and spatial characteristics of hostile architecture in London. By engaging directly with urban spaces, I sought to understand how these environments are experienced by those they target– particularly people experiencing homelessness. Through practices such as sketching, mapping and photographing hostile design elements, I was able to capture visual aspects that these structures produce (see appendix).

Additionally, participatory design methodologies were employed within this research. Participatory design, as articulated by Elizabeth Sanders and Pieter Jan Stappers in *Convivial Toolbox: Generative Research for the Front End of Design* (2012), emphasises co-creation as a means of democratising the design process and ensuring that solutions are contextually appropriate and socially just. When students participate in workshops, they do so as part of their educational experience but introducing a research element requires implementing additional layers of consent and transparency.

Linda Groat and David Wang, in *Architectural Research Methods* (2002), emphasise the importance of trust and clarity in collaborative research practices, particularly when participants may not see themselves as research subjects. Before running the workshops, I made it a priority to explain their dual purpose: to fulfil the learning outcomes of the module and to contribute to my own research on interrogative design and hostile architecture. I shared consent forms that detailed how their work, discussions, and reflections might be used in academic papers, exhibitions, and presentations (see appendix). Notably, this participatory approach aligns with decolonial ethics, particularly the notion of 'pluriversal' thinking which, though introduced earlier, was advanced by Walter Mignolo in *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (2011). Pluriversality emphasises not only the entanglement of ideas in a power differential that needs to be uncovered, but the value of a border epistemology and the 'dwelling' in the border. By engaging with diverse perspectives and challenging the universalising rationale of dominant design models, this research (which also inhabits a border territory) sought to disrupt the power dynamics embedded in hostile architecture.

Informed consent was a essential aspect within this research and practice. As Ezio Manzini suggests in *Design, When Everybody Designs* (2015), collective knowledge production in design often challenges traditional notions of authorship by emphasising co-design and shared creativity. Within my teaching practice, this translated into recognising the originality and agency of student work while situating it as part of a broader, collaborative exploration. Additionally, in practice, this meant adopting a reflexive and dialogic approach to authorship where a critical component of this is reflexivity, or the ongoing examination of one's positionality and the power dynamics inherent in the research process.

As a researcher, I recognised that my own privilege and positionality as someone not directly affected by homelessness could influence both my interpretation of hostile architecture and my interactions with participants. To mitigate these dynamics, I embraced a reflexive practice informed by Donna Haraway's concept of "situated knowledges" (Haraway, 1988). Haraway advocates for acknowledging the partiality and subjectivity of knowledge production, emphasising the importance of accountability and humility in research. Reflexivity manifested by actively decentring my own voice to prioritise the perspectives of those with lived experience of homelessness. This practice helped me stay mindful of the ethical impact of my decisions, especially in situations where power imbalances were clear.

By embedding student work into my practice, the workshops also became a space for reflecting on the broader social responsibility of design education. Tony Fry argues in *Design as Politics* (2010) that design education must prepare students to address the complex social, political, and environmental challenges of our time. For me, this meant creating a space where students could critically engage with issues like urban exclusion and interrogate the ethical dimensions of design practices.

It is important to note that ethical considerations were a key part of every stage of this practice-based PhD, shaping how I engaged with participants, documented public spaces, and translated findings. By grounding the research in principles of consent, collaboration, and reflexivity, I aimed to navigate the complexities of working within contested urban environments in a manner that upheld the dignity and agency of marginalised individuals and participants. These ethical concerns were heightened by the onset of the covid-19 pandemic, which will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis. Personal Background

Revisiting the Impact of Covid-19

While covid-19 was initially addressed as a catalyst for change in this research, it warrants further examination due to its ongoing influence on both the research process and its outcomes. The pandemic did more than disrupt planned activities–it exposed vulnerabilities in the ways socially engaged design is conducted and highlighted the need for flexibility in participatory practices. Returning to the theme of interrogative design, the constraints imposed by covid-19 prompted a richer reflection on the ethics of engagement, particularly in relation to access, representation, and inclusion.

Before the pandemic, this research relied on in-person, embedded practices within existing charitable organisations such as Café Art. Such organisations played a pivotal role in facilitating access to communities affected by hostile architecture, enabling direct collaboration and co-creation with lived experiences. The pandemic, however, halted these interactions, leading to the loss of planned partnerships and face-to-face engagement. This disruption raised critical questions about the viability of embedded practice in times of crisis and the ethical responsibility of the research.

Recognising these ethical concerns, I decided to pause direct community engagement (at least temporarily) and instead focus on facilitating online workshops with students, using this as an opportunity to refine my methods. Working with students on issues of hostile architecture and public space during this period allowed me to maintain a form of co-creative practice, albeit in a different context. This shift also provided a space to reflect critically on how to rebuild embedded practice in a post-pandemic world, a process I will further explore in a postdoc position.

Initially, the research sought to explore how embedded design practice could counter hostile architecture by working closely with communities through existing support structures. As the pandemic unfolded, it became clear that this goal needed to expand. The research began to focus not only on interventions but also on the broader question of how communities could maintain agency in reclaiming public space. Light and Akama (2012) argue that participatory design must be adaptable to the socio-political context in which it operates. Demonstrating how I could maintain critical perspectives within this complex field of enquiry was crucial to the ongoing research.

As this research adapted to a post-covid environment, it shifted toward alternative models of engagement, such as remote workshops, speculative design approaches, and eventually in-person workshops. This development highlights how covid-19 not only altered my methods but also expanded the critical lens through which the research examines exclusionary design. By forcing a reconsideration of what constitutes participation and agency in a time of isolation and enforced social distancing, the pandemic became a turning point in the development of this research as a framework. While this notion was pertinent to the outcome it is important to note how this methodology was shaped by external factors such as the covid-19 pandemic, and internal developments within the practice itself. The research shifted toward an adaptive, interrogative design approach that critically examines the social and ethical conditions embedded in urban environments. This methodological approach draws on Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby's concept of speculative design (Dunne and Raby, 2013), where design is used not merely to solve problems but to provoke critical reflection and uncover power dynamics.
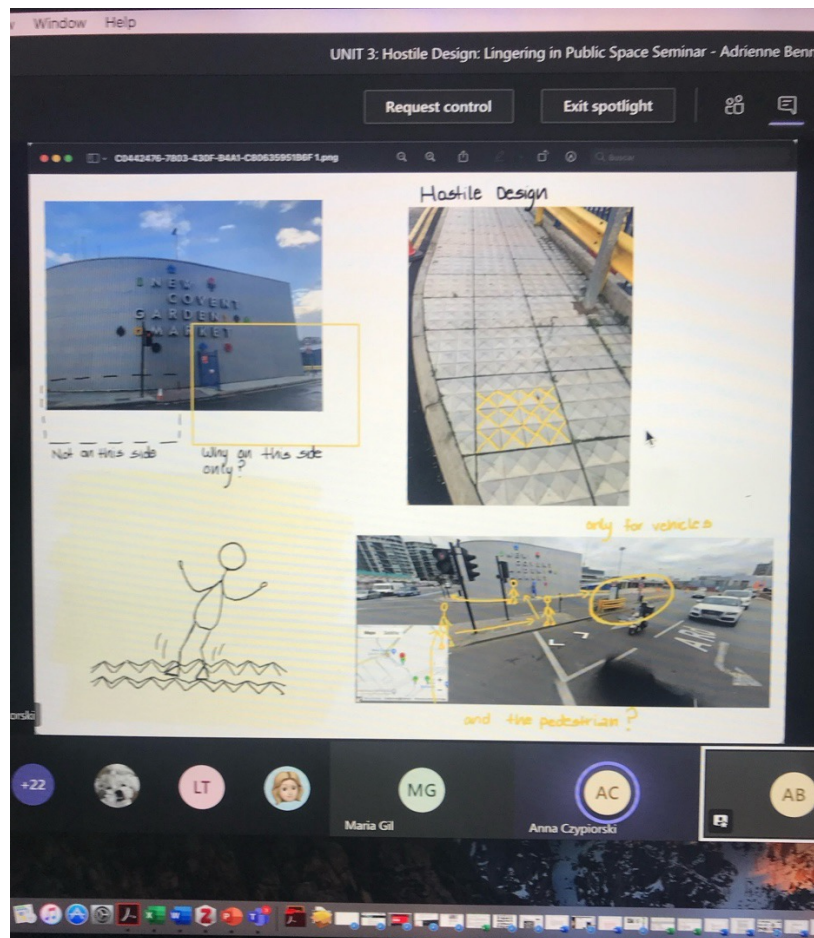
Fig 7: Screengrab of online hostile architecture and design workshop with product and furniture design students (Adrienne Bennie, 2021).

Through this lens, the research explores how public spaces are shaped by exclusionary practices particularly hostile architecture and how these conditions impact the bodies inhabiting them.

Therefore, revisiting covid-19 in this context highlights not just the external challenges faced but also the trajectories of the research, as it moved toward a more reflective, adaptable, and ethically aware practice. This shift continues to inform how the research engages with communities, interventions, and ultimately contributes to ongoing discourses on social justice and the role of the designer in contested public spaces.

Introduction Summary

This research occupies an intersection between academic discourse and practical design methodologies by critically engaging with hostile architecture, social justice, and participatory design. Through a methodology grounded in interrogative design and co-creation, it generates new insights into how design can act as a tool for highlighting and resisting exclusionary practices.

As an artist-designer and educator from a minority background I bring a set of sensibilities from a perspective that is often underrepresented in design research; therefore, I have endeavoured to address issues of exclusion not merely as an external observer but as someone who has experienced, and continues to navigate, spaces shaped by marginalisation.

A fundamental aspect of this research is its critical engagement with hostile architecture, which embodies the subtle yet pervasive ways in which power and control are inscribed in public space. By applying interrogative design at the level of the body inhabiting space, this research develops a new method for mapping and documenting hostile spatial typologies. Drawing from the theories of Wodickzo's interrogative design and Dunne and Raby's speculative design, I have engaged participants in questioning whose bodies public spaces are designed for, and whose presence is being actively deterred.

Additionally, the inclusion of my teaching practice into the research creates a ripple effect, equipping future designers with critical tools to address spatial inequality. The student workshops on hostile architecture demonstrate how participatory design can encourage social agency, with participants developing speculative responses through documentation, exploring exclusionary urban environments. In doing so, the research contributes to a broader pedagogical shift toward socially engaged design education, where students are encouraged to interrogate socio-ethical issues through their practice. Students, many of whom come from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, brought their own lived experiences to these sessions, contributing to a richer dialogue on exclusion, access, and agency in public spaces.

The pandemic further amplified the importance of these collaborative and inclusive approaches, covid-19 forced a re-evaluation of embedded practice with organisations like Café Art. This period of uncertainty was personally challenging, but it also led to a necessary shift in perspective. I had to reconsider how participation could occur remotely, how to ethically engage with communities during a global crisis, and how design could still serve as a platform for social agency despite the restrictions. Additionally, the research touches on broader debates around privacy and the politics of space, particularly in how domestic rituals are conducted within public space resulting in people being excluded from spaces. By working with participants to explore these themes, I aimed to highlight the often-overlooked experiences of those navigating hostile environments. This approach, informed by my awareness of spatial vulnerability, contributes to a growing body of work on design's role in revealing hidden socio-political conditions. It emphasises the designer-artist not just as a maker but as an advocate, someone who can amplify marginalised voices through creative intervention.

In summary, the impact of this research lies in its ability to bridge theory, practice, and lived experiences. By generating new frameworks for interrogative design that centre marginalised perspectives, it offers a model for how socially engaged design can be more inclusive and responsive. Beyond academic contributions, the research has practical implications for design policy, urban planning, and community-led initiatives. It proposes a future in which design is not a neutral or purely aesthetic act but a deeply political one–a means of questioning existing structures and imagining more equitable alternatives.

In positioning myself as both a researcher and participant in this process, I have come to see design not as a separate practice from my personal and professional life but as an extension of it. This integration has allowed me to critically reflect on how my own experiences shape my work and how, in turn, this research can contribute to broader conversations about equity, access, and social justice in design.

Fig 8: The key Booth used for colour coding social class (Charles Booth, 1898-9).

CHAPTER 1:

THE ARCHITECTURE OF DISPLACEMENT

Aims and Background

The issue of homelessness has grown exponentially in London, with the charity Crisis stating that there has been a 15% increase between 2018–2019. These figures were reflective of the earlier stages of my research. However, as of 2024, new research from Shelter indicates that at least 354,000 people are now homeless in England. This research highlights areas where homelessness is most severe, with London showing a particularly high rate, where one in 47 people are homeless. In the capital, the total number of homeless individuals has risen by 12% in just one year, with Newham experiencing the highest rate, where one in 18 people are homeless (Shelter England, 2024). This issue remains an enduring challenge that transcends both urban landscapes and societal boundaries; as the city's skyline continues to evolve, its streets grapple with persistent crisis, leaving thousands without the security of shelter or stability. The complexities of this crisis extend far beyond mere statistics; they are woven into the fabric of the city's social, economic and political landscape. The coronavirus pandemic that developed globally in late 2019 brought the world to a standstill by early 2020, and London was not exempt from its far-reaching impacts. Covid-19 presented several significant challenges for the most vulnerable community in our society. While the pandemic affected nations across the globe in a variety of ways it also presented a significant opportunity to alleviate homelessness. Support was adapted to focus on preventing covid-19 outbreaks in rough sleeping communities by offering temporary housing as part of the 'Everyone In' scheme in United Kingdom specifically (Crisis, 2021). However, London's response cannot be dissected without acknowledging the socio-economic disparities that became glaringly evident; the question that remained prominent during this period was how long rehousing through national lockdowns will last and what impact of the pandemic is on marginalised communities.

The above forms a stark context to this practice-based research, which investigates spatial design as a form of 'interrogative design' applied to the issue of homelessness. This thesis further investigates the social and political issues of homelessness through art and design practices. The aim of this PhD is not to make any grand claims about the latter, but rather to create a dialogue through social interventions that seek to make conscious the issue of homelessness and its relation to spatial design, and to invite the public to renegotiate their perception of homelessness and the area between public and private spaces. My research has increasingly focused on the issue of hostile architecture, a 'defensive' mechanism that in privatised public spaces is increasingly aimed at the homeless to deter occupation of a specific site.

Hostile architecture is arguably one of the most undignified forms of design used in public space, and hopefully my critical analysis of the contributing factors associated with hostile architecture—utilising interrogative and speculative design as methodologies—will problematise the relationship between homelessness, the body and public space. Through an interdisciplinary approach, this research examines the intersection of hostile architecture and homelessness and the ways in which urban environments often inadvertently exacerbate the challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness.

As such, the research develops concerns first raised in my MA in Interior and Spatial Design, which evolved a series of wearable structures grown through the process of bacterial cellulose, taken from swab samples from park benches. This work was rooted in a fascination with the unknown that exists within urban spaces and surfaces and how these microbial ecosystems relate to the human body, particularly the skin. By transforming invisible bacterial cultures into tangible, organic material, I aimed to provoke public speculation around the hidden life that inhabits shared spaces and the ways in which we unknowingly interact with these environments. In developing these bacterial structures, I was not only interested in material innovation but also in the conceptual implications of communal disposition; how the surfaces we touch and occupy are embedded with traces of others, reflecting both shared experiences and invisible forms of connection. This exploration of surfaces as carriers of biological and social histories has relevance to the politics of public space and the ways certain bodies are excluded or rendered invisible within such urban environments.

Fig 9: Grown, Augmented and Functionally Wearable Microbial Structure (Adrienne Bennie, 2017).

The grown sheets of bacterial cellulose were then used to make a wearable hood, which became a focal point of experimentation in my practice, leading to a series of responses that were interventions in both the material and conceptual aspects of my work. This led to interventions where I manipulated the cellulose further, experimenting with the ways in which it could interact with the human body altering its shape, texture, and permeability to explore its potential. These polemical devices were intended to draw attention to and anonymise the wearer in order to construct a dialogue about the surface of the street and its relation to the skin, the exposure (literally and metaphorically) of 'skin' as a membrane between private and public. The wearable functioned as a speculative object, inviting audiences to question their relationship to public spaces. "One of the basic human requirements is the need to dwell, and one of the central human acts is the act of inhabiting, of connecting ourselves, however temporarily, with a place on the planet which belongs to us and to which we belong" (Kacmar, 2015). The resulting intervention served as a vehicle to immerse the public into the gritty reality of street homelessness, and it aimed to challenge preconceived notions about our shared public spaces. It set out to do this through the exploration of the tactile similarities between the pavements concrete texture and the resilient, exposed skin of people experiencing homelessness.

By means of microbiology, and adapting existing technologies such as the process of bacterial cellulose, the primary aim was to exhibit and depict the social reality of homelessness through wearable structures, in turn encapsulating the multifaceted lived-experiences of homelessness.

Fig 10: Close-up view of bacteria colonies growing on an agar plate (Adrienne Bennie, 2017).

Fig 11: Close-up view of nanofibers, revealing their intricate structure and thread-like texture (Adrienne Bennie, 2017).

These notions of 'skin' as a membrane between public and private space formed the basis of my MA. Out of my MA, I realised that public spaces are meant to be designed to be open and accessible to all, however, the presence of homelessness challenges our collective understanding of these areas, leading to stigmatisation and sometimes call for exclusion. Essentially, my practice set out to highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of public space in relation to the body and skin, an understanding that recognises the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their housing status. Taking aspects of my MA project, my PhD shifts towards a more critical and socially engaged practice that investigates hostile architecture and urban interventions that intentionally restrict behaviour and access, often targeting people experiencing homelessness. This research utilises design and co-design methods and is rooted in my role as an artist-designer and educator, allowing me to challenge existing systems of exclusion.

Fig 12: A view of Grown, Augmented and Functionally Wearable Microbial Structure (Adrienne Bennie, 2017).

Fig 13: Side view of Grown, Augmented and Functionally Wearable Microbial Structure (Adrienne Bennie, 2017).

Personal Background

Within the broader context of this practice-based research, it is essential to acknowledge the distinct perspective that my own background as a migrant of colour brings. I want to set a personal context in relation to how I am approaching homelessness and this relationship to space, place and identity, as a person of colour and a migrant. My personal journey has been marked by the experience of leaving one country and settling in a new and unfamiliar place. This process of migration has been accompanied by a range of challenges and opportunities that have significantly influenced my worldview and research interests. My experiences have profoundly shaped my interest in social issues, particularly homelessness. Having witnessed and personally encountered the challenges of adapting to a new culture and socioeconomic environment, I have developed a deep empathy for those who find themselves without stable housing. My practice draws upon my own exclusion as a migrant in the context of Auckland, New Zealand, and demonstrates how one's identity, often shaped by ethnicity and migration, interacts with the spaces they inhabit and the places they call home. Having witnessed the effects of migrating, and being from a marginalised community, I was the 'outsider', a social construction; with this in mind I recognise that experience has a geographical dimension, and the notion of identity has been an underlying concern from the final year of my undergraduate degree (hiding, but unacknowledged, within my practice). As a result, my practice and research explore this intersectionality which has made me acutely aware of how certain spaces and places can perpetuate inequality, making it imperative to advocate for equitable environments for all–through my experiences and those of other marginalised communities.

It is within this context that I approach this research as a designer-artist and educator committed to social impact. A fundamental right guaranteed by The Constitution of Zimbabwe[2] was citizenship by birth[3]. To best understand my background and the circumstances I found myself in, it is necessary to consider the legislative framework regarding citizenship. It is through a consideration of this framework that my interest in researching issues/matters relating to persons who are displaced and rendered homeless was raised. When I was nine years old, I discovered that I did not belong to any country including the country of my birth. How was that even possible, I wondered. Surely, if both my parents were born in Zimbabwe then automatically my citizenship status was one which was granted by the mere fact of Zimbabwe citizenship by birth. I was rendered stateless, and I equated this statelessness to being homeless. Dual citizenship (or rather its withdrawal) became a source of pain for not only my mother but for many Zimbabweans. The Constitution of Zimbabwe– specifically the citizenship clause was amended, such that dual citizenship was no longer permitted. This amendment had a retrospective effect of a blanket policy that covered all citizens whose parents were not born in Zimbabwe.

In 1999, the Registrar General's Department, which was responsible for civil registration, identity documents, citizenship and the voters' roll, began to refuse Zimbabwe citizenship papers to people who had a potential right to another citizenship, even if they had never sought to claim that right. The Registrar- General's Department continued to apply the former interpretation that dual citizenship was prohibited for all, despite a High Court Judgment that the Citizenship Act provisions requiring a citizen from birth with dual citizenship to renounce the other citizenship

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2   The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No 20) Atct,2013.

3   The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No 20) Act,2013, s 35.

Fig 14: Photograph of fire burning as part of a mourning process in my grandmothers' backyard in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

were in breach of the amended constitution[4]. A further amendment was passed in 2001 with provisions requiring a person with a foreign citizenship to prove renunciation of that citizenship under the relevant foreign law, and not only (as had previously been the case) to complete a simple declaration[5]. A six-month deadline was set, expiring on 6 January 2002. In February 2003, the Supreme Court–which by 2002 had been augmented by judges known to support the government–confirmed the registrar-general's interpretation that this amendment required a potential claim to a foreign citizenship to be renounced, not only where citizenship documents had in fact been obtained[6]. The High Court, however, continued to issue judgments against the Registrar-General on the grounds that individuals had in fact no foreign citizenship to renounce[7]. One of the huge number of people affected by these developments was my mother; in turn, this situation would affect me directly as my maternal grandparents were born in foreign countries (Latvia and Botswana).

The Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act was amended again in 2003 to allow people who were born in Zimbabwe, but whose parents came from another country in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) (as farm labourers, mine workers, domestic employees, or 'in any other unskilled occupation'), to apply for 'confirmation' of their citizenship of Zimbabwe. For those born before 1996, citizenship had in theory been acquired automatically at birth. The amendment also required that applicants sign a form renouncing their foreign citizenship (without the need to obtain any documentation from the other SADC country)[8]. The resulting difficulty and impact upon people's lives was significant. Specifically, in terms of my own history, this amendment did not cover my mother's parents as they did not fit into any of the categories covered, namely 'farm labourers, mine workers, domestic employees, or 'in any other unskilled occupation'. My maternal grandparents were considered to occupy professional occupations. My maternal grandmother was a Registered Nurse and worked for the Ministry of Health and my maternal grandfather was an Engineer at the National Railways of Rhodesia and subsequently National Railways of Zimbabwe. Furthermore, administrative requirements continued to block those with connections to neighbouring countries from gaining recognition of Zimbabwean citizenship, while birth registration remained difficult to access for children born out of wedlock or to parents whose own citizenship was not documented[9].

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4   Piroro v Registrar General [2011](2) ZLR 26 (H).

5   Citizenship of Zimbabwe Amendment Act No 12 of 2001, section 3(c), amending section 9(7) of the Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act, chapter 4:01; see also General Notice 584 of 2002: Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act [Chapter 4:01]: Renunciation and Proof of Foreign Citizenship: Governing Rules, 22 November 2002. Act No.12 of 2001 also amended Section 13 of the Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act to reduce from seven to five years the period after which citizenship by registration would lapse if a person was absent from the country.

6   Registrar General of Citizenship v. Todd (58/02/01) [2003] ZWSC 4, 27 February 2003.

7   Lewis Uriri v. Registrar General of Citizenship and another (Harare High Court, Case No. 7128/03); Trevor Ncube v. Registrar-General (Harare High Court, Case No. 7316/06).

8   Citizenship of Zimbabwe Amendment Act No. 12 of 2003, introducing section 9A to the Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act

9   Zimamoza Institute, 'Ethnic Cleansing In Zimbabwe: The Origins and Objectives of the Zimamoza Institute' (Harare, Zimbabwe, 2007); Justice for Children Trust, 'Birth Registration of Children in Zimbabwe' (Harare, Zimbabwe, October 2007); Rumbidzai Dube, 'A Right or a Privilege' (Harare, Zimbabwe: Research and Advocacy Unit, 2008); Rumbidzai Dube, 'Identity, Citizenship, and the Registrar General: The Politicking of Identity in Zimbabwe' (Harare, Zimbabwe: Research and Advocacy Unit, 2012).

Acknowledging these aspects of my background has played a pivotal role in shaping my understanding of broader social issues around displacement. My research and practice have been grounded in trying to make sense of what it is that leads people to end up as displaced or homeless, having regard to the prevailing political, economic and cultural factors/reasons. In Zimbabwe, it was evident that there were only two classes. Wealth was concentrated amongst a few whilst the majority of citizens were mostly unemployed and without resources, due to widespread economic mismanagement, and (to a large degree) corruption amongst those responsible for government/governance. There were no social security payments available, in contrast with New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

My identity as a person of colour further compounded these experiences, and according to Chief Justice Mogoeng (Constitutional Court of South Africa) in the case of Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe v Fick[10]

> For the right or wrong reasons, or a combination of both, Africa has come to be known particularly by the western world as the dark continent, a continent which has little regard for human rights, the rule of law and good governance.

These experiences exposed me to various forms of discrimination and bias, both implicit and overt: hence the need to directly recognise the multifaceted nature of my background and approach as an artist-designer to this research. In turn, this connection between space, place and identity have contributed to my own perspective and background as an artist-designer, where my earliest recollections of Zimbabwe are tinged with fear and sadness. I remember that the streets were filled with so many 'street kids'. These children were as young as five years old. Most of them would be asleep on frayed, thin and flimsy and overused bits of cardboard. The mornings were very cold, and I wondered why these children were asleep with no blankets and sleeping in the streets. Then when I moved to New Zealand, when I was 5 years old, I got to witness again, more children—and this time adults too—living and rough sleeping on the streets in the city. As a researcher, my personal experiences have been marked by such events and it is through these experiences that I am able to bring a set of skills and insights into the complex relationship between identity and place, particularly in urban settings where homelessness is prevalent. Through this lens, I aim to contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced exploration of homelessness or itinerant users of space, where these notion for the homeless are played out in very visible public space.Another essential point worth examining is the increased surveillance and policing of public spaces which has led to discriminatory practices, including the fining of individuals who had no alternative but to remain in public areas. The increased policing of public spaces, under the guise of public health measures, disproportionately impacted individuals who were unable to access emergency accommodation due to ambiguous eligibility criteria ('mixed messages') or fear of enforcement actions. This lack of clarity led to uneven application of the policy, leaving some individuals subject to fines for violating lockdown restrictions by remaining in public spaces. Moreover, during the UK lockdowns, *The Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020* were introduced, 'on 02 December 2020, at the end of the second national lockdown in England' (The National Archives, 2020), as a necessary response to curb the spread of covid-19. These regulations mandated strict social distancing, restricted movement, and required people to stay at home unless they had a valid reason for leaving. While the intention was ostensibly to protect public health, the way the

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10   Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe v Fick [2013] ZACC 22.

In my practice and research, I trace the multi-layered relationships of art and design practice, and in doing so, draw on a range of ideas from a range of disciplines. As a spatial designer and practice-based researcher, for instance, I bring certain skills and sensibilities towards domestic space. My practice centres on employing design methods as a transformative lens to gain insights into complex societal issues such as homelessness, statelessness and migrant inequalities. By integrating ethical design principles, my practice hopes to unravel the intricate web of challenges faced by these vulnerable populations: in turn, bridging the gap between speculative approaches and real-world issues. In this case, it is the issue of homelessness, and more recently issues highlighted by covid-19, where the expected economic fallout will only add to existing inequalities.

Defining Homelessness

Defining homelessness in the context of London presents a range of challenges. Homelessness in London manifests as individuals or families lack a stable, safe and secure place to live. This can include living on the streets and being exposed to the elements and often grappling with profound social and health issues. It includes people who are sleeping rough (on the streets or in public spaces). As a result, the gap between housing affordability and income has widened. At least 320,000 people who are homeless are living in Britain at the moment. Nearly 9000 people sleep rough on the streets of London every year (Shelter, 2020). They come from all walks of life, and many want to find work. Successive governments have singularly failed to address the underlying economic factors in this rise of homelessness.

Homelessness is difficult to define because of the complex living situations that have to be considered. However, in England, the statutory definition of a homeless person, as set out in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, is:

> (1) A person is homeless if he has no accommodation available for his occupation, in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, which he-
>
> (a) is entitled to occupy by virtue of an interest in it or by virtue of an order of a court,
>
> (b) has an express or implied licence to occupy, or
>
> (c) occupies as a residence by virtue of any enactment or rule of law giving him the right to remain in occupation or restricting the right of another person to recover possession.
>
> (2) A person is also homeless if he has accommodation but-
>
> (a) he cannot secure entry to it, or
>
> (b) it consists of a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is no place where he is entitled or permitted both to place it and to reside in it.
>
> (3) A person shall not be treated as having accommodation unless it is accommodation which it would be reasonable for him to continue to occupy (Shelter, 2018).

It is challenging to define homelessness in a singular form because of the degrees, types and causes of homelessness. In our society today, the forms of homelessness include, but are not limited to, the 'hidden' homeless (which refers to people who are living with friends, sleeping in overcrowded accommodation or even squatting) and rough sleeping (which could be considered the most visible form of homelessness and represents the population that sleeps rough on the streets). Understanding the link between the different degrees of homelessness and the notion of public space in society today will help conceptualise why a new way of thinking is required when addressing such concerns.

While the above is important to register, I have chosen to focus my attention on the more public face of homelessness. This research specifically addresses the loss of capability in relation to the body and its rituals when denied the privacy of a home. The ghettoising of the homeless in London has consequences for how private domestic activities take place within full public view. This process is driven by systemic inequalities and urban policies in addition to the inadequate provision of support services. Research highlights how local authorities' placement strategies frequently force individuals into areas far from their original communities. This displacement disrupts support networks and reduces access to employment opportunities or education. For many, the resulting environments become places of 'managed poverty,' where limited resources are insufficient to address the underlying causes of homelessness. While such factors contextualise this research, the aim is not to propose design solutions as such to such a complex situation (an ambition beyond the remit of this thesis), but specifically to investigate artistic practices that draw attention to and/or polemicise this wider social issue.

Homelessness, by its very nature, is a complex and dynamic social phenomenon and there are a number of challenges associated with quantifying the exact number of people that are homeless in any given region. The reason for this relates to the complex, multifaceted reasons people can become homeless, as well as a nation's ability or willingness to record homelessness. Furthermore, the stigma surrounding homelessness often leads individuals to remain hidden within society, making them less likely to participate in formal surveys or counts. Fear of discrimination, or legal consequences of disclosure of personal information, can result in individuals avoiding contact with authorities, making them challenging to identify and include in quantitative assessments.

As a result, I believe that the ramifications of homelessness we face in society today may have been influenced by the post-2007 economic recession but will be further impacted by the corona virus pandemic. The post-2007 economic recession had a lasting impact on England, particularly London. The crisis unfolded through a complex web of interconnected factors (Fitzpatrick et al, 2012), all deeply influenced by the economic downturn. "This is a very concerning time for homelessness in England: the simultaneous weakening of welfare protection and the housing safety net, in a context of wider recessionary pressures, is already having a negative effect on those most vulnerable to homelessness, with the prospect of much worse to come" (Fitzpatrick et al, 2012). As job losses escalated and wages stagnated, individuals and families grappled with diminishing incomes, rendering housing costs increasingly unmanageable. This economic instability formed the bedrock of homelessness in London. Cuts to public services introduced in the wake of the recession had a cascading impact. Reducing funding for vital support services, including mental health addiction treatment, had the effect of heightening vulnerabilities and making it easier for people to slip into homelessness. Home repossessions surged as homeowners struggled to meet mortgage obligations, further contributing to the homelessness crisis.

These economic pressures disproportionately impact low-income households, many of whom are unable to keep up with rising costs. Welfare reforms have further exacerbated the issue.

In addition, the economic impact of homelessness highlighted the urgency of legislative intervention, such as the Homelessness Intervention Act 2017. The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) was introduced to address rising homelessness in the UK by placing a statutory duty on local authorities to intervene earlier and prevent homelessness where possible. The Act widened eligibility for support, ensuring that individuals at risk of homelessness within 56 days were entitled to assistance regardless of their priority need status or intentionality (Garvie, 2018). The act came into force in April 2018, and while initially hailed as a progressive step, its effectiveness has been undermined by the structural inequalities exacerbated by the economic recession and the covid-19 pandemic. While the HRA provided a framework for earlier intervention, its implementation was hindered by underfunded local authorities struggling to meet demand. This is evidenced in a report published by London School of Economics for London Councils titled *The Cost of Homelessness Services in London* that states that,

> this increase in homelessness and its associated costs has wider drivers that solely the HRA, to date the government has only provided some £30 million for managing the new duties specifically resulting from the Act—leaving London boroughs to find £50 million from their own resources over the period to 2022/23. This analysis highlights that government's calculations used in the HRA new burdens assessment severely understated the cost of new duties in London (Scanlon et al., 2019).

These gaps in policy reveal how the Act, while well-intentioned, failed to address the broader structural drivers of homelessness. In parallel to these systemic failures, the rise of hostile architecture became a visible manifestation of society's woefully inadequate response to homelessness.

Simultaneously, the increasing privatisation of 'public' space has seen the rapid increase in the use of hostile architecture, including anti-homeless spikes, slanted benches, and gated public spaces; this has rightly been criticised for criminalising and excluding people who are homeless rather than addressing their needs. The Manifesto Club (2019) argues that such measures reflect a shift towards urban environments designed to prioritise economic interests over human welfare. These interventions are often justified as ways to maintain public order but, in practice, they displace rough sleepers and push them further into invisibility and danger. Perhaps, in this sense, the development of hostile architecture can be linked to austerity policies and the economic recession, which emphasised cost-cutting over social investment. During the pandemic, when public spaces were restricted due to health concerns, the use of defensive design heightened the negative impact of hostile architecture, creating additional barriers for those reliant on these areas for shelter and safety. This exclusionary approach stands in stark contrast to the inclusive ethos of the HRA, highlighting a disconnect between policy intentions and the reality of urban practices.

Fig 15: Public bench closed due to covid-19 restrictions in Clapham, London (Manifesto Club, 2020).

The Erosion of Public Space

Public space has been a topic for debate for a number of years. We tend to think of it as being 'owned' by the public or being operated by the public. While historically this may have been the case, over time public space has taken a new form to include the notion of public-private space, and this is a grey area where private space essentially operates as public space. We often associate the characteristics of public space as open and accessible; however, public space presents several questions in architecture and design related directly to the idea of ownership and the role of public space in specific environments. This concept is often referred to as the privatisation of public space. As Anna Minton writes: "today nearly all space is owned by somebody – be it government, private organisations, private individuals or financial consortiums" (Minton, 2002). This is why this concept has to be challenged in specific relation to how people who are homeless are treated and effectively excluded in such spaces, when public space is essential to their daily rituals and lives. The issue of homelessness in London is intimately connected to the privatisation of public space. As the city is experiencing increasing gentrification and the privatisation of formerly public spaces, people who are homeless now face greater challenges finding safe and accessible shelter. The transformation of public spaces into privately owned and managed spaces often involves stricter security measures, which can result in the displacement of people experiencing homelessness from these areas. Furthermore, the commercialisation of public spaces, driven by privatisation, can lead to people who are homeless being treated as unwelcome or 'undesirable'. This can result in increased policing and efforts (including hostile architecture) to discourage people experiencing homelessness from using these spaces, further marginalising an already vulnerable population.

Moreover, homelessness is a critical social issue that has been heightened by the media and public perceptions of what constitutes a homelessness. Society has dictated how homelessness can be viewed as a manifestation of people who are homeless becoming homeless due to their own fault. It is important to understand the complexity involved with understanding all the different degrees of homelessness. It is also crucial to acknowledge how people who are homeless have been categorised historically and represented with negative connotations by the media. Some labels used to describe people who are homeless include the following but are not limited to: "vagrant; squatter; loafer; sofa-surfer; statutory homeless; dosser; beggar; of no fixed abode; and tramp" (History Extra, 2018). I believe it is critical to shift the public's perception of homelessness in order to create the social change needed for this area of concern. Research suggests that "homelessness is [too often treated as] an individual rather than a collective problem...and public thinking about homelessness is trapped by individualism" (O'Neil et al., 2017, p. 3). This notion of individualism can be seen as a way of deterring the public from comprehensively understanding the origins of homelessness and contextualising the factors that affect homelessness as a social issue. My research therefore attempts to create a dialogue through social interventions that seek to make conscious the issue of homelessness and its relation to spatial design. It further invites the public to renegotiate their perception of homelessness and the area between public and private spaces. In doing so, I attempt to shift the public's perception of homelessness by putting the perspectives of those who experience at the forefront of conversations. In my opinion, it is essential to view homelessness not in isolation but as a critical social issue intrinsically linked to the changing dynamics of urban life and the use of public spaces.

Criminalisation of Poverty

The concept of criminalising poverty is neither new nor accidental; it reflects long-standing socio-economic inequalities embedded within the political and legal structures of England. Sociologist Loic Wacquant (2012) argues that punitive measures directed at poor populations serve to manage 'disorder' rather than address the structural roots of inequality. In contemporary England, practices and policies aimed at regulating poverty have escalated, manifesting in policing, welfare sanctions, and exclusionary housing policies. This section examines the ways in which the criminal justice system and broader socio-political frameworks interact to criminalise poverty, perpetuating cycles of marginalisation. As Fitzpatrick et al. (2021) argue,

> with respect to the main structural factors, internation comparative research and the experience of previous UK recessions, suggest that housing market trends and policies have the most direct impact on levels of homelessness, with influence of labour-market change more likely to be lagged and diffuse, and strongly mediated by welfare arrangements and other contextual factors. The central role that poverty plays in shaping homelessness in the UK is also now well established (Fitzpatrick et al., 2021, p. 3).

Research highlights that the shrinking welfare state has left individuals more vulnerable to punitive interventions. For example, the rise of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) used to penalise behaviours such as rough sleeping and begging demonstrates how visible poverty has been reframed as anti-social behaviour. While proponents of PSPOs argue that such measures ensure public order, I argue that they serve to render poverty invisible by displacing marginalised populations rather than offering support. Squires and Lea (2012) argue that, rather than addressing poverty as a social issue, the state has increasingly relied on policing as a means of control. Policies such as PSPOs, introduced under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, empower local authorities to criminalise activities like rough sleeping, begging, and loitering. Though these measures are justified under the guise of maintaining 'public order,' they often target the most vulnerable in society. Danny Dorling's book *Injustice: Why Social Inequality Still Persists* (2015) critiques such policies, arguing that they reflect "an ideology that seeks to hide the visible signs of poverty rather than address its causes" (Dorling, 2015, p. 72). Within this research, I observed how exclusionary practices in the built environment shape the realities of poverty across London. Public spaces–parks, benches, doorways–are not merely places of survival for those without a home; they are contested spaces where visibility becomes dangerous. The act of simply being present in these spaces, without engaging in economic activity becomes grounds for suspicion and policing.

From a design standpoint, this exclusion is especially noticeable. Urban design, ostensibly meant to be neutral, often embodies undeclared social values that determine who is seen and who is erased. Defensive architecture, therefore, represents an outward, physical manifestation of this exclusion. As a designer, I am compelled to question how such choices reflect societal priorities. If public spaces are designed to exclude, what does that say about who we consider worthy of belonging?

Another key element of the criminalisation of poverty is the role of media narratives in shaping public perceptions. In the article *Poverty Talk: How People Experience Poverty Deny Their Poverty and Why they Blame 'the poor'* (2013), by Tracey Shildrick and Robert MacDonald, the authors argue that media representations of poverty in Britain often rely on moralistic discourses, portraying the poor as either 'scroungers' or 'deserving' victims. Furthermore, they note that "those who live in poverty are not only materially deprived but are also socially devalued" (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2013, p. 89). This is in turn a dual exclusion—economic and social—and it is these narratives that serve to legitimise punitive policies by framing poverty as a personal failing rather than a structural issue. Additionally, Zygmunt Bauman (2004) suggests that the stigmatisation of poverty in neoliberal societies functions as a form of social control, reinforcing divisions between the 'included' and the 'excluded.' This stigmatisation underpins public support for punitive welfare reforms and aggressive policing strategies, which are framed as necessary measures to protect social order.

In summary, the above section demonstrates that the criminalisation of poverty in England reflects a collective failure of imagination. Rather than addressing the root causes of poverty, society has chosen to punish its symptoms, deepening exclusion and entrenching inequality. As someone who has lived through exclusion and worked with people facing hardship, I am convinced that real change requires more than policy reform—it requires a cultural shift towards empathy, inclusion, and respect for human dignity. A more just society calls for a fundamental shift from punishment to support, and from stigmatisation to solidarity. As Ian Loader and Richard Sparks suggest in *Public Criminology?* (2010), "a society's treatment of its most vulnerable members is the true measure of its justice" (Loader and Sparks, 2010, p. 67). Acknowledging poverty as a structural issue, rather than an individual one, is the first step towards a more just and humane approach. Fundamentally, by creating spaces of inclusion whether through design, education, or policy we can begin to dismantle the narratives that criminalise poverty and build a society where exclusion is no longer the norm.

Fig 16: Signage displayed during lockdown in London
advising people to maintain 2-meter distance in public
(Adrienne Bennie, 2021).

The Impact of Covid-19 on the Criminalisation of Poverty in London

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the post-2007 global financial crisis had a lasting impact on homelessness in England. The economic downturn led to higher unemployment and financial instability, which exacerbated housing insecurity and contributed to the rise in homelessness. A study published in the *Journal of Public Health* found that each 10% fall in economic activity was associated with an increase of 0.45 homelessness claims per 1,000 households (Loopstra et al., 2016). This correlation highlights how economic decline can directly impact rates of homelessness. *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2012*, published by Crisis highlighted concerns that these policy changes would exacerbate homelessness (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). Undeniably, the reduction in social housing and increased reliance on the private rented sector, where rents were rapidly rising, made it more challenging for low-income households to secure stable accommodation.

Fast forward to the covid-19 pandemic, and we see a further exacerbation of homelessness. The pandemic not only threatened public health but also intensified existing socio-economic disparities. This is evident in an article published in the *National Library of Medicine*, that identified that, "People experiencing homelessness were particularly vulnerable due to the risk of transmission in shared accommodations and a higher prevalence of comorbidities" (Lewer et al., 2020). This evidence further suggests a similar pattern seen during the 2007 – 2008 financial crisis, where government actions or, rather, inactions exacerbated existing vulnerabilities rather than addressing their root causes. In my view, while these two crises are different in origin—one an economic collapse, the other a public health emergency—their outcomes highlight a shared failure to address systemic vulnerabilities within society. Furthermore, a key difference lies in the framing of government responsibilities. During the recession, the focus was largely on economic recovery, often at the expense of vulnerable populations. In contrast, covid-19 placed public health at the forefront, forcing a recognition however fleeting of the link between housing and health. Yet, as Lewer et al. (2020) point out, this recognition did not translate into sustainable policy changes. This comparison highlights a recurring failure: the tendency of governments to priorities crisis management over systemic reform.

Covid-19 significantly exacerbated pre-existing inequalities in London, exposing the structural vulnerabilities faced by those living in poverty. The lockdowns and social distancing measures, while undoubtedly necessary for public health, disproportionately affected individuals experiencing homelessness and poverty. The 'Everyone In' initiative, aimed at providing emergency accommodation, highlighted both the potential for rapid systemic response and the limitations of a short-term fix: "for the first time, therefore, rough sleeping became widely understood as a public health emergency" (Fitzpatrick, Watts & Sims, 2020, p.88). Although hailed as a success, the initiative left gaps in support that led to increased policing of those who remained on the streets. Many found themselves caught in a cycle of displacement, moving between temporary shelters and public spaces as the pandemic progressed. Consequently, this resulted in "subsequent 'mixed messages' from central Government, particularly with regard to the accommodation of non-United Kingdom nationals ineligible for benefits and the continuation of Everyone In" (Fitzpatrick, Watts & Sims, 2020, p.88). This essentially meant a kind of lottery where some councils extended support to migrants, while others refused to help, disproportionately exposing them to the health risks of the pandemic. This issue was further intensified by the ongoing policies introduced by successive governments. Designed to make it difficult for undocumented migrants, these policies created fear among communities and discouraged individuals from seeking help; the government thus systematically deepened systemic inequalities.

rules were enforced often led to fines that many believed were unjust particularly when it came to people experiencing homelessness. In 2020, "four charges were withdrawn because they were against homeless people" (Dearden, 2020); this misapplication of the regulations was particularly problematic with respect to people experiencing homelessness because homelessness, by its very nature, means there is no 'home' to stay in, so these individuals found themselves caught in a system that mistakenly assumed everyone had a private space to stay.

Additionally, there were numerous reports of individuals being fined for activities that didn't actually breach the rules, even though they were following the guidelines, such as sitting in public parks or meeting friends outdoors. In these cases, police officers sometimes misinterpreted the rules or issued fines without fully understanding the context of the person's situation. A total of "119,000 fixed penalty notices for covid breaches has been issued as of March 2022" (Gray and Murray, 2024). Ethically, the situation highlighted the way in which public health policies can sometimes overlook the realities faced by marginalised groups. While the wider public was being asked to stay inside to help reduce the spread of covid-19, those without homes had no such option.

As a result, the policing and enforcement of public spaces during covid-19 revealed deep, underlying structural inequities in how homelessness is managed in England, particularly in urban centres like London. While the government's 'Everyone In' initiative demonstrated the capacity for rapid action to protect vulnerable populations, its inconsistent implementation left significant gaps, disproportionately affecting those already marginalised by systemic barriers such as migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)[11] . The increased surveillance of public spaces, combined with punitive measures such as fines for breaching lockdown restrictions, in my opinion further exposed the contradictions in policy responses. Individuals who were excluded from emergency housing due to unclear or restrictive eligibility criteria found themselves criminalised simply for being visible in public spaces, spaces they had no choice but to occupy. This policing approach not only undermined the public health objectives of the initiative but also perpetuated harmful stereotypes about homelessness and poverty, framing these issues as matters of public order rather than structural inequality.

The blog also highlighted the potential for innovative and collaborative approaches to address complex social issues with chief executive Steve Douglas CBE stating that "St Mungo's is urging national and local government to build on the success of the 'Everyone In' initiative. And to continue working closely with service providers to develop longer term solutions that prevent more people ending up street homeless" (St Mungo's, 2022). This highlights an aspect of the limitations and challenges associated with the scheme, as the emergency accommodation provided was often temporary, and the longer-term sustainability of the solution wasn't guaranteed. There were cases of people returning to rough sleeping after the initial phase of the initiative ended and Petra Slava OBE, St Mungo's Director of Rough Sleeping, Westminster and Migrant Services, states in a press release in 2022 that:

It's concerning that the number of people living on the streets has increased in the

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11   According to the No Recourse to Public Funds Network under rights and entitlements (immigration status) guidance. A person will have no recourse to public funds when they are 'subject to immigration control'. A person who is subject to immigration control cannot claim public funds (benefits and housing assistance), unless an exception applies.

Fig 17: People sleeping at social distance in Trafalgar Square, London, (Adrienne Bennie, 2021).

What struck me most in monitoring this situation was the fundamental failure to account for the lived realities of those experiencing homelessness. The reliance on punitive measures in the absence of comprehensive support reflects a broader trend of prioritising 'control' over 'care' in social policy. It is clear that while the pandemic created a moment of opportunity to rethink how we support vulnerable populations, the emphasis on enforcement rather than inclusion has only deepened existing inequities.

Fig 18: Capturing homelessness during the pandemic in Central London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020).

The pandemic led to initiatives that acted as temporary solutions, constantly changing as lockdown restrictions evolved, leaving uncertainty for those who were experiencing homelessness before the crisis. From my observations in London, the economic impact of covid-19 is clear. Numerous retail stores on high streets remain vacant, and job losses, along with reduced incomes, have put additional pressure on the already strained housing situation for many. The effect of this is evidenced in a report published in The Financial Times which indicated that local authorities in England were facing significant financial deficits, with increased costs in homelessness and social care contributing to a projected £9.3 billion deficit by 2026–27 (Financial Times, 2024). These notions inevitably challenge us to consider how future crisis might be approached differently.

The covid-19 pandemic therefore marked an unprecedented moment in recent history, exposing and amplifying long-standing structural inequalities in England, particularly in relation to homelessness.

The emergence of the pandemic in early 2020 brought a series of complex effects on people experiencing homelessness. One of the most notable impacts was the heightened vulnerability of people experiencing homelessness to catching the virus. Challenges related to maintaining proper hygiene, adhering social distancing guidelines, and accessing healthcare services made them far more susceptible to contracting and spreading the virus within their communities.

As the pandemic unfolded, many homeless shelters and outreach programs faced closures or reduced capacities due to health and safety concerns. This had a direct and adverse effect on people experiencing homelessness' access to critical services such as meals, showers, and medical care. The limited availability of these services further exacerbated the hardships faced by those already grappling with the challenges of homelessness. When the first lockdown was announced in March 2020, the UK government faced mounting pressure to address the risks posed to people experiencing homelessness. In response, the 'Everyone In' initiative was launched (referred to above), a directive that sought to provide emergency accommodation to rough sleepers, as well as those in night shelters and unsafe shared housing. *The Centre for Homelessness Impact* notes that, "between March and May 2020, approximately 4,500 people in London were moved to self-contained or single room accommodation, including many who had been living in covid-19 unsafe accommodation, comprising 30% of the national total" (Centre for Homelessness Impact, 2022) number of people accommodated by the initiative.
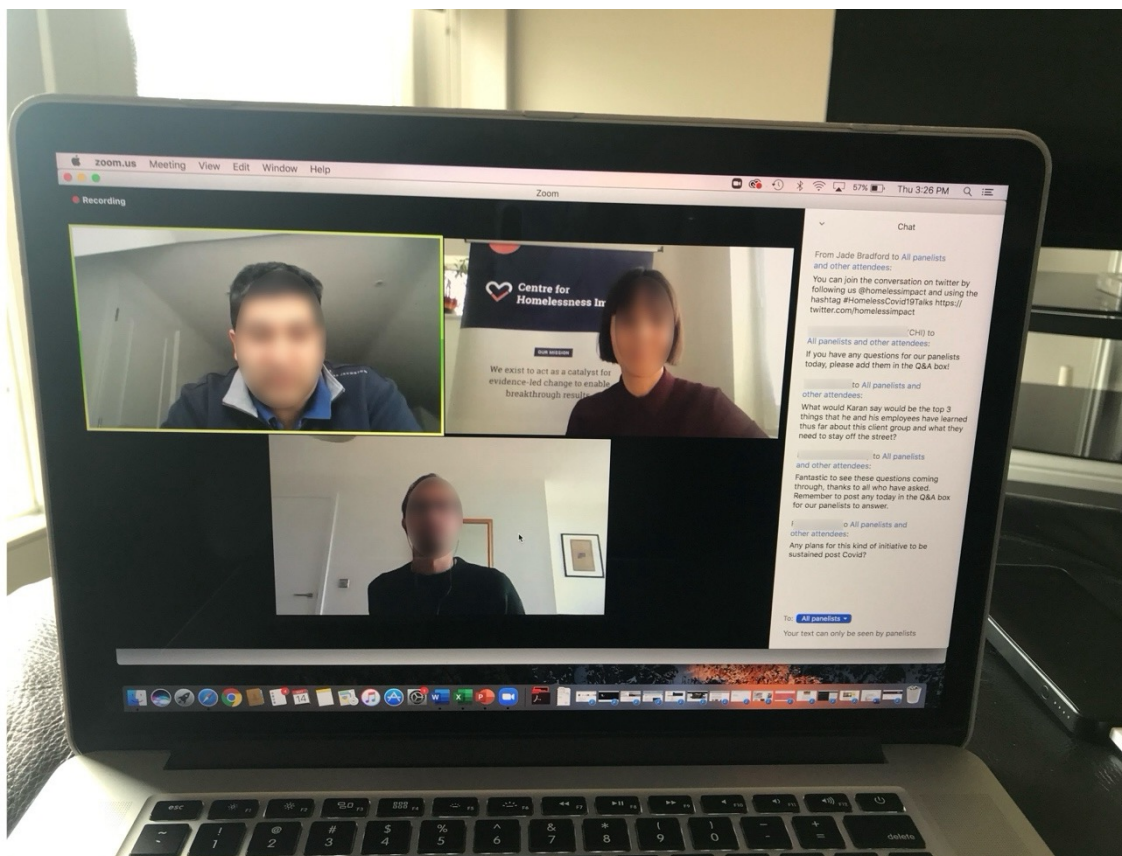
Fig 19: Attending the Online Homelessness Impact Forum, 2020, discussing homelessness during the pandemic. (Adrienne Bennie, 2020).

According to official statistics released by the UK Government in Autumn 2021, approximately 37,000 individuals in England were offered immediate shelter as part of the 'Everyone In' initiative within the first few months. This initiative represented a significant departure from the government's usual approach; but while initiatives like 'Everyone In' temporarily reduced rough sleeping, they were not designed to tackle the chronic housing shortages or the social safety net deficits exacerbated by the recession. Based on the information discussed earlier, while the immediate response to rough sleeping was recognised for its short-term success, it lacked a long-term solution. The programme did not address the underlying issues such as the persistent shortage of affordable housing, the inadequacy of social support systems, and the exclusionary policies that affect migrants and those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). These systemic problems remain unchallenged.

The timeline below outlines the effects of covid-19 on homelessness in London that I gathered, based on UK Government reports, media outlets, and live updates throughout the pandemic. Key sources included the reports by the House of Commons Library (2021), which detailed the legal restrictions affecting homelessness, and updates from the UK Government that highlighted emergency measures for rough sleepers. Media coverage, particularly from BBC News, reported on the challenges faced by homeless individuals in London during the pandemic. Additionally, The Impact Forum Online, hosted by The Centre for Homelessness Impact, provided expert discussions on the pandemic's impact on homelessness, offering further insight into the crisis:

Early 2020:
- Covid-19 pandemic emerges globally.
- UK government implements initial lockdown measures in March, impacting various sectors including homelessness services.

March 2020:
- The UK government launches the 'Everyone In' initiative, providing emergency accommodation for rough sleepers in hotels and other temporary spaces to protect them from the virus.

Mid-2020:
- 'Everyone In' initiative aims to reduce visible rough sleeping in London.
- Homeless shelters face challenges in maintaining services due to health and safety concerns, leading to reduced capacities and changes in how services are delivered.

Late 2020:
- Economic repercussions of the pandemic lead to job losses and financial instability for many, increasing the risk of homelessness.
- Challenges in maintaining hygiene and accessing healthcare persist for people who are homeless.

Early 2021:
- Vaccination efforts begin, with priority given to vulnerable populations including people who are homeless.
- Ongoing uncertainty about the pandemic's duration hampers long-term planning for homeless services.

Mid-2021:
- Some emergency accommodation provided under 'Everyone In' starts to transition to more sustainable housing solutions.
- Concerns arise about the mental health impact of prolonged isolation and disruption of routine services for people who are homeless.

Late 2021:
- Challenges persist in securing stable housing for individuals transitioning out of emergency accommodation.
- Discussions about the need for affordable housing and comprehensive support systems gain momentum.

Early 2022:
- Efforts to address homelessness involve a combination of emergency measures and longer-term strategies.
- Remote work arrangements impact opportunities for people experiencing homeless to access job training and employment services.

Mid-2022:
- Continued advocacy highlights the importance of addressing underlying issues contributing to homelessness.
- Government and non-profit organisations collaborate to develop more sustainable solutions beyond emergency accommodation.

Late 2022:
- Comprehensive strategies emerge to address the complex challenges of homelessness, focusing on prevention, affordable housing, and wraparound support services.
- Efforts to bridge the digital divide gain traction to ensure that people experiencing homelessness can access vital information and services online.

Early 2023:
- Progress is made in reducing visible rough sleeping, but challenges persist in providing ongoing support for individuals facing homelessness.
- Lessons learned from the pandemic lead to discussions about the need for a more resilient and adaptable homelessness response system.

Mid-2023:
- Ongoing research and data collection provide insights into the long-term effects of the pandemic on homelessness in London.
- Advocates continue to stress the importance of collaboration between government agencies, non-profits, and community organisations to address homelessness comprehensively.

Late 2023:
- The effects of covid-19 on homelessness in London continue to evolve as the city navigates the post-pandemic landscape.
- Efforts to prevent future homelessness crises by addressing systemic issues gain prominence in policy discussions.

I acknowledge that this timeline is a generalised overview and may not capture every specific event or development. However, it is used to highlight the sequence of events that have unfolded and led to the current situation of homelessness in London.

The timeline of events during this period reveals a mixture of urgency, success, and ongoing challenges. By March 2020, as covid-19 cases surged and lockdown measures were enforced, councils were instructed to find immediate housing for rough sleepers. By May, data showed a reduction in visible rough sleeping in cities like London, with over 4,500 people temporarily housed in the capital alone (Homeless Link, 2020). However, as the initial funding tapered off by the summer of 2020, cracks began to appear in the programme. Many individuals who had been housed were at risk of returning to the streets due to a lack of follow-up support, while those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) remained excluded from significant parts of the initiative.

The effects of the pandemic on homelessness in London have therefore been complex and multifaceted, influenced by a variety of factors including government policies, economic conditions, healthcare responses, and community efforts. The second wave of the pandemic, beginning in late 2020, further strained these efforts. Councils faced growing financial pressures, and the gaps in the 'Everyone In' initiative became more pronounced. By 2021, despite the continued health risks, homelessness numbers were rising again, highlighting the temporary nature of the scheme. This period not only exposed the government's reliance on short-term measures but also reignited debates about the structural causes of homelessness, such as a lack of affordable housing, underfunded local authorities, and the exclusionary policies affecting migrants. Additionally, as public health directives such as 'stay at home' assumed the privilege of secure housing—a privilege that is not equal to 'everyone'. What stands out, in contrast to the 2007-2008 recession, is how both crises demonstrate the government's tendency to focus on immediate containment rather than prevention. Arguably, the financial crisis prioritised economic recovery at the expense of those in poverty, setting the stage for deeper inequities when the pandemic hit. Subsequently, covid-19 posed urgent questions about the role of housing as a fundamental component of health and well-being. If governments were able to house thousands of rough sleepers in a matter of weeks, why has such urgency not been sustained to address homelessness long-term? The pandemic laid bare the inadequacies of piecemeal interventions and highlighted the interconnectedness of health, housing, and social policy. It also challenged societal perceptions of homelessness, shifting the narrative—however temporarily—away from individual failings to systemic responsibility. This shift raises critical questions about whether the lessons of this period will lead to enduring change or merely be seen as an anomaly. Perhaps, policy makers could adopt a preventative lens. Instead of waiting for crises to highlight the failures of existing systems, governments should invest in structural reforms that prioritise housing as a human right. This includes funding for genuinely affordable housing, rethinking welfare policies to ensure they are inclusive of all residents and supporting local councils to build resilience against future economic or health concern. In my opinion and moving forward, there is an opportunity to use design as a means of reimagining how society addresses homelessness—not just as a crisis to be managed but as a solvable issue embedded in broader discussions about equity, inclusion, and sustainability.

The Digital Divide During Covid-19

The notion of the digital divide has long been a point of concern, referring to the gap between individuals who have access to modern digital technologies and those who do not. The covid-19 pandemic highlighted this divide, revealing its significant impact on both individuals and communities. The pandemic pushed many aspects of daily life, including education, work, healthcare, and social interaction, into the digital realm, making the ability to engage with these services a necessity. For many individuals, particularly those in low-income households, the lack of reliable internet, devices, and digital skills became a significant barrier, resulting in serious economic impacts. While millions could seamlessly transition to remote work and online learning, those without digital access were being left behind. According to Dr Gemma Burgess from the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (CCHPR), "of the eight million in the UK who don't use the internet, 90% suffer from other kinds of economic and social disadvantages. They are also more likely to be in the lowest income bracket and/or be disabled with long-standing health conditions" (Burgess, 2020). For people experiencing homelessness, the digital divide was even more acute. Shelters and public spaces offering free internet access were closed as a result of lockdowns, leaving individuals unable to access essential information and services or apply for government support. The closure of libraries, community centres, and other public facilities exacerbated this digital exclusion, further marginalising already vulnerable populations. Research conducted by CCHPR shows that "the likelihood of having access to the internet from home increases along with income, such that only 51% of households earning between £6000 - £10,000 had home internet access compared with 99% of households with an income of over £40,001. The link between poverty and digital exclusion is clear: if you are poor, you have less chance of being online" (Burgess and Holmes, 2020). Therefore, access to digital tools and the internet should no longer be a luxury, but a critical necessity in navigating modern life—there is an urgent need for systemic change.

Building on the above point, research published by Groundswell in a series titled: *Listen up! Insight 3: Digital Inclusion and Exclusion* demonstrates how, "when people were forced to use digital services in ways they were not comfortable with, it negatively impacted their mental health, was ineffectual, and in some cases, cut off their support completely" (Groundswell, 2024). This notion highlights a critical oversight in policymaking: the assumption that digital access is universal and equitable. The shift toward digital-first services during the covid-19 pandemic was meant to provide continuity in support during unprecedented times. However, this reliance on digital platforms left already vulnerable populations, such as individuals experiencing homelessness, older adults, and those lacking digital literacy, at a significant disadvantage. Arguably, it should be noted that digital exclusion is a multifaceted issue that goes beyond internet connectivity. In my view, to tackle these disparities, policymakers and service providers should have taken a more nuanced approach, one that recognises that digital competence and access are not universal. For example, Thames Reach's work during the pandemic revealed that in-person outreach remained essential for reaching those who were digitally excluded (Thames Reach, 2022-23). This highlights the importance of retaining hybrid models of service delivery that combine digital and face-to-face support. Furthermore, there must be recognition that digital services are not a one-size-fits-all solution. A hybrid approach, where individuals can choose the format that works best for them, will ensure that no one is left behind.

In summary, the need for more inclusive approaches to digital literacy has become undeniable, particularly in light of the disparities revealed during the covid-19 pandemic. While digital transformation has allowed for innovation and efficiency in a metropolitan city, it has simultaneously highlighted the dangers of assuming universal access and competence. Marginalised groups, particularly people experiencing homelessness have been disproportionately excluded from these systems due to a lack of resources, digital skills, and accessible alternatives. Therefore, addressing this exclusion requires a fundamental shift in how digital services are conceptualised and implemented. Perhaps, true inclusivity begins with recognising the diverse realities of those accessing support services. Simply providing devices or connectivity is insufficient when many lack the literacy, confidence, or safe environments necessary to engage meaningfully with digital tools. It is essential to design systems that are not only intuitive but also co-created with input from individuals who have experience of digital exclusion. Additionally, providing in-person support alongside digital services is equally important to ensure that no one is left to navigate complex systems on their own. As we look to the future, several important questions arise. How can policymakers create responsive systems that adapt to the needs of marginalised groups during times of crisis? What measures can ensure that digital services are not a substitute for human connection but rather a complement to it? How do we ensure there is no risk against digital exclusion that perpetuates existing inequalities in areas such as healthcare, housing, and education?

Economic Repercussions and the 'Everyone In' Initiative

The economic impact of the pandemic severely affected those experiencing homelessness, with widespread job losses and financial downturns hitting low-income individuals hardest, making it increasingly difficult for them to obtain and sustain stable housing.

> England experienced a so-called first wave of covid-19 in the general population in early 2020. The first case was reported on Jan 29, cases peaked in the first week of April… There is evidence that homeless populations have particularly large spikes in hospitalisations during pandemic influenza seasons, suggesting vulnerability to viral respiratory infections. The risk of covid-19 outbreaks in homeless accommodation settings has prompted interventions to reduce transmission risks, but the impact to date, and potential future impact, are unclear. (Lewer et al., 2020).

As a result, many individuals faced a greater risk of eviction, which contributed to a troubling cycle of rising homelessness. In terms of healthcare, those experiencing homelessness encountered significant barriers to accessing Covid-19 testing and medical care. The lack of consistent access to healthcare services, coupled with the existing health issues that are more prevalent in this community, further heightened their vulnerability to severe illness. This highlighted the urgent need for healthcare solutions tailored to the specific challenges faced by people in this situation. While this is one aspect of the challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness during this period, an additional effect of the pandemic is the psychological toll faced by individuals: a toll that shouldn't be underestimated. The ramifications of social isolation, concerns about virus transmission, and disruptions in routine services had an adverse impact on mental well-being. Building on the earlier discussion of the 'Everyone In' scheme, it was a response in the UK, designed to provide temporary accommodation for rough sleepers during the crisis.

However, the effectiveness and sustainability of these efforts were inconsistent, exposing the need for more comprehensive, long-term strategies that address issues driving homelessness. *The Homelessness Monitor England 2020 Report* stated: "In the immediate aftermath of government announcements to accommodate all rough sleepers in the face of the pandemic, and as the country headed into the first lockdown there was an immediate increase in pressure and demand on local authorities and frontline services. The expectation was to accommodate all people experiencing rough sleeping or in unsafe accommodation where self-isolation wasn't possible, but a continued flow of people newly at risk of rough sleeping throughout the early months of the pandemic led to a constant pressure on services" (Fitzpatrick, Watts & Sims, 2020, p. 7).

The 'Everyone In' initiative was launched by the UK Government in March 2020 in response to the covid-19 pandemic. Its goal was to provide emergency accommodation for people experiencing homelessness, particularly rough sleepers, by moving them into hotels and temporary shelters. This was intended to protect both the people who are homeless and the wider community from the spread of the virus. However, I believe the effects of 'Everyone In' on homelessness are mixed. On one hand, the initiative reduced visible rough sleeping and provided vulnerable individuals with temporary relief from life on the streets. In a blog post on the Centre for Homelessness Impact website, Dr Ligia Texiera highlighted in April 2020, how housing minister, Luke Hall, wrote to councils in England to ask them to house all street homeless people over the weekend and a line from the letter was highlighted by her:

> In the longer term it will of course be necessary to identify step-down arrangements for the future, including the reopening of shelter-type accommodation. The implication here is that, when the coronavirus pandemic is over, we will need to go back to how things were. But we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to redesign the homelessness system in the UK. Knowing that public health emergencies always take an increased toll on groups at risk such as people with experiences of homelessness, the government and local areas have rightly been busy doubling down their emergency response. This work is extremely important. However, if history teaches us one thing, it is that you never want a serious crisis to go to waste. With all the worry and uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus pandemic, each day seems to bring news that's worse than the last...The pandemic came at a time when homelessness remained stubbornly high in many parts of the country. 2020 can mark a definitive turning point. But only if we use the coronavirus pandemic to step up the ambition to end rough sleeping and embrace the opportunity to tackle all forms of homelessness more effectively. This is a historic opportunity for the government in all parts of the UK at national and local levels to seize measures and interventions to recover from the impacts of coronavirus as the moment to gear the system firmly towards the primary prevention of homelessness. To take action to stop new people from becoming homeless, while redesigning local systems and accelerating the transition away from crisis services and accommodation. At the moment, leaders at all levels of national and local government are rightly very much preoccupied with the current turmoil. But in the same way that we know that the race to find a vaccine is just as important as public health interventions and the availability of medical treatment, when it comes to homelessness the aim should be to respond to the immediate emergency, while maximising on this opportunity to achieve a step change in the longer term. 'Business as usual' would not be good enough post-pandemic (Texiera,2020).

last year. Our outreach teams tell us these are a mix of people with no recourse to public funds who have lost their accommodation, or people who were temporarily housed during 'Everyone In' but who have returned to the streets as covid restrictions lift and services have not yet been able to offer them longer term options that work for them (St Mungo's, 2022).

I believe this also highlights the complex nature of homelessness, which 'Everyone In' did not fully address. While the scheme faced challenges, it emphasised the need for systemic change and encouraged new approaches to tackling homelessness. In conclusion, as highlighted earlier, the pandemic not only intensified existing inequalities but also exposed the digital divide. With services moving online, those experiencing homelessness, without access to technology, were further marginalised, limiting their ability to access essential support. Additionally, restrictions on public space access, driven by concerns over virus transmission, increased stigma and isolation for this already vulnerable group.

Setting a Context for the Practice

As a spatial designer and practice-based researcher, understanding the effects of these complex issues is crucial for developing effective interventions. The challenges brought about by the pandemic highlight the need for solutions that not only address the immediate crisis but also tackle the deeper issues contributing to homelessness. I believe, the effects of covid-19 on homelessness have, unfortunately, worsened the negative impact of hostile design. Rather than addressing the issue, the challenges posed by the pandemic have inadvertently led to the introduction of design elements that discourage or exclude people who are homeless from public spaces, further exacerbating their already difficult circumstances. For example, signage was placed in public areas, such as parks and train stations, banning certain activities, while some spaces were temporarily fenced off. Additionally, the reduction in shelter availability due to capacity limits or closures during the pandemic forced many people experiencing homelessness to seek refuge in public spaces, such as parks, bus and train stations, and pedestrian areas.

Fig 20: Fenced-off area in Clapham, London 2020 reflecting covid-19 restrictions on public spaces. (Manifesto Club, 2020).

These issues are reflected in reports on homelessness during this period, which highlight the increased marginalisation and difficulty in accessing safe spaces and support. "One of the biggest challenges facing local authorities is the ability to successfully move those housed in emergency covid-19 accommodation into permanent and secure housing. The structural barriers that existed before the pandemic, including a lack of housing supply and a welfare system that does not address the underlying causes of homelessness have been exacerbated during the pandemic" (Boobis & Albanese, 2020 p. 6).

The increased visibility of homelessness during the pandemic highlighted the role of urban design in exacerbating the challenges faced by those without shelter. For example, the installation of uncomfortable seating or benches with armrests, which prevent lying down, may have originally been intended to address aesthetic concerns. However, these interventions create inhospitable conditions for individuals seeking respite. Similarly, the closure of public restrooms and limited access to sanitation facilities during the pandemic further restricted homeless individuals' ability to maintain basic hygiene. It is also worth noting that some cities have coin-operated public restrooms or those with harsh lighting—measures meant to deter illicit activities but which, in effect, discourage homeless individuals from using these facilities. These issues are central to my practice, as they underscore the need for more thoughtful, inclusive design that considers the realities of homelessness.

The challenges brought on by the covid-19 pandemic have highlighted the hidden yet widespread impact of hostile design. While these design measures may aim to address specific problems, they reveal a greater need for more thoughtful and compassionate approaches. These approaches should focus on ensuring fair access to public spaces and services for everyone, regardless of their situation. The pandemic has shown that our public spaces must be designed to include, not exclude, vulnerable individuals by further restricting their access to public spaces and facilities.

Chapter 1 Summary

In summary, in this chapter I have set out how this research is rooted in my lived experiences as a migrant of colour and my identity as an artist, designer, and educator with a history of navigating exclusionary systems. It reflects my commitment to critically interrogating the intersections of systemic inequality, social justice, and homelessness. By positioning myself within this work, I aim to bridge the often-abstract discussions of policy and societal structures with the realities faced by individuals experiencing homelessness, particularly as a result of an economic crisis and the covid-19 pandemic. This positionality enables me to approach the research with a unique lens that combines academic analysis, creative enquiry, and an empathetic understanding of marginalised experiences.

The rationale behind this research lies in the urgent need to unpack and address the structural drivers of homelessness, which disproportionately affect people of colour, migrants, and other vulnerable groups. The pandemic magnified these disparities, revealing the fragility of existing support systems and the inadequacies of policies such as the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. While the Act was a pivotal step in broadening the scope of support, this research highlights how its implementation fell short in responding to the complexities of homelessness in an era of unprecedented social and economic upheaval. The pandemic also exposed the intersectionality of homelessness with issues such as digital exclusion, hostile architecture, and public health, making this research particularly relevant in today's post-covid society.

Homelessness, as explored in this research, is a complex issue that goes beyond the visible presence of rough sleeping. It represents a form of systemic marginalisation that strips individuals of safety, community, and dignity. The covid-19 pandemic highlighted these vulnerabilities, exacerbating existing inequalities and revealing flaws in housing, healthcare, and social support systems. While the 'Everyone In' initiative was a positive response, it also exposed the limitations of emergency measures, particularly in meeting the needs of marginalised groups, such as migrants and those with no recourse to public funds. This research interrogates these dynamics, using the pandemic as a lens to examine the broader socio-political landscape that shapes homelessness today. This research and practice also emphasise the multifaceted nature of homelessness, which requires a nuanced understanding of its economic, social, and spatial dimensions. The research draws from lived experiences to critically analyse how structural inequalities perpetuate cycles of poverty and exclusion. Fundamentally, this practice-based research challenges the perception of homelessness as a personal failure and reframes it as a systemic issue rooted in inequitable policies and societal neglect.

It aims to move the conversation beyond the pandemic, advocating for a future where housing is seen as a human right, and policies are shaped by compassion, equity, and lived experience.

Ultimately, this practice-based research is a call to action. It challenges policymakers, practitioners, and society at large to reconsider their assumptions about homelessness and to commit to systemic change. By positioning myself within this discourse, I aim to contribute a perspective that is not only grounded in evidence (visually) but also shaped by a lived understanding of exclusion and resilience.

CHAPTER 2:

PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

Art and design research challenges traditional models of knowledge production by operating through embodied, materially engaged, and socially situated practices. This chapter critically examines practice as research through the interrelated frameworks of speculative design, social design, and interrogative design questioning their ability to operate as methods of critique, activism, and resistance. In this section, I argue that these approaches reveal the tensions between institutionalised design practice and more radical interventionist methodologies that seek to unsettle dominant systems of power and control. By looking at case studies where artists and designers employ these methods to address urgent socio-political issues, this chapter considers the potential and limitations of practice as research in generating meaningful change. Design, when understood as an embodied form of research has the capacity to make visible the structures that govern our lives, foregrounding alternative ways of thinking, being, and acting.

Gathered at the bottom of almost every social order is an accumulation of stigmatised individuals. Throughout history, culture has been shaped by the social, political, and economic changes and needs of society. The shift in cultural perspectives today, has resulted in the change in dynamic and provocation in relation to issues of communal disposition and the autonomy relating to people experiencing homelessness. The issue of homelessness is a pressing societal concern and sleeping rough can be demoralising, frightening and isolating. This chapter explores the intricate interplay between practice as research and the artists emergent role as activists for addressing the multifaceted dimensions of homelessness. This chapter further explores how practice as research within art and design operates as a transformative force in advocating for the rights and dignities of people experiencing homelessness. This is explored through a range of scholars and practitioners who have worked at the intersection of art, design, and social activism. Drawing inspiration from the seminal work *Digital Practices: Aesthetic and Neuroesthetic Approaches to Performance and Technology* by Susan Broadhurst, it becomes clear that contemporary artists and designers are not just creators but also researchers. As such, issues of homelessness are explored and communicated through the perspectives of art and design. Broadhurst argues that artists, in contemporary contexts, not only manifest creative outputs but also operate as researchers in their own right. As a result, their body of work is conceived through a prism of artistic enquiry that engages with and dissects pressing societal concerns. This embodies the investigative, research-orientated approach to my practice and homelessness in London as, "perception is always embodied within a specific context or situation. Perception is an active process of meaning construction involving not only visual perception but all the senses, together with the total physical environment in which the body is situated and an 'intentionality' towards the world" (Broadhurst, 2007, p. 3). In

the case of homelessness in London, art and design, when positioned as forms of research, opens gateways to a richer comprehension of the issue, laying a foundation for innovative approaches and dialogues. The combination of artistic practice, research, and activism is particularly powerful in addressing homelessness in London, as it challenges societal norms and provides a platform for advocating for marginalised groups. This approach not only raises awareness but also pushes for meaningful change by confronting the issues faced by people experiencing homelessness in a way that traditional methods often fail to do.

Design Methods

Interrogative Design

One of the central focuses of my thesis is an innovative approach that revolves around asking questions at every stage of the design process, enabling an understanding of needs and context. Interrogative design, as a methodology in my research, provides a framework for exploring the ethical considerations of bodies in space, spatial dynamics, and their impact on individuals specifically, in relation to homelessness in London. This method, in relation to my practice lies in its capacity to challenge established norms and hierarchies, thereby revealing concealed power structures and disparities. As mentioned briefly in the introduction, Interrogative Design, developed by Krzysztof Wodiczko, challenges traditional design practices by focusing on the social and ethical implications of design. It is clear example of the notion of practiced-based research, which in distinction from practiced-led research foregrounds design as a means to think through a specific real-world problem. It is an approach that centres on understanding and empathising as a guide to taking action. As a methodology it offers perspectives on how design can tackle complex problems of our modern world. Emerging at the intersection of art and design practice, the notion of risk-taking is applied to real-world situations, conceived as a form of 'performative articulation' of an issue with social ramifications (Wodiczko, 1999). By combining interrogative design with Dunne and Raby's speculative design, this methodology highlights the issues of homelessness and addresses the inhumane aspects of 'hostile' design that specifically target vulnerable people. This approach not only offers opportunities to improve the quality of urban spaces but also facilitates a dialogue between the space, the user of the design intervention (the 'toolkit'), and the general public, encouraging them to rethink their perceptions of homelessness.

Applying his interrogative design to the issue of homelessness, Wodiczko's Homeless Vehicle (1988-9) was a mobile structure conceived as a 'home' on wheels. Wodiczko describes the vehicle as a 'device where its user can wash, cook, rest and sleep. He or she is able to safely store collected bottles and cans' (Wodiczko, 1999). The designed device appears to offer elements of safety based on the construction of the various compartments within the device as well as creating a level of alertness or 'scandal' to the user as a result of the aesthetic nature of the device, for example the bright colour and hazard tape may act as a barrier to prevent vandalism while notifying users in public space of the intervention. Wodiczko's work challenges the status quo of traditional design practices. Equally, 'homeless vehicle' (fig.20) attempts to address a pressing societal issue as a form of social practice. Homeless vehicle appeared in squares, streets and parks of New York and

Fig 21: Homeless Vehicle, a modified shopping cart that provides temporary shelter, New York City (Krzysztof Wodiczko, 1988-89).

Philadelphia for two years (Wodiczko, 1999). Moreover, 'Alien Staff Xenobàcul' (1992), is another early example of design serving as a conduit for raising profound sociocultural questions. Created in the early 1990's, it consists of a large, elongated object resembling a staff or walking stick (fig.22). The staff is embedded with, "a mini video monitor and a small loudspeaker. A video player and the batteries are located in a specially designed shoulder bag. The small size of the monitor, its eye-level location, and its closeness to the operator's face are important aspects of the design. As the small image on the screen may attract attention and provoke observers to come very close to the monitor and therefore to the operator's face, the usual distance between the stranger and the observer will decrease. Upon closer examination, it will become clear that the image on the face of the screen and the actual face of the person holding it are the same. The double presence in 'media' and 'life' invites a new perception of a stranger as 'imagined' (a character on the screen) or as 'experienced' (an actor offstage, a real-life person)" (Wodiczko, 1999, p. 104). The work encourages viewers to confront their biases and consider challenges faced by marginalised groups in society. These seminal works laid the theoretical foundations for interrogative design, emphasising its potential to stimulate critical societal discourse and introspection.

Moreover, Wodiczko incorporates art and technology into his critical design practice, addressing issues that highlight marginalised social communities and drawing attention to cultural concerns often overlooked in design (Borja-Villel, 1992). Because of this foregrounding of a problem through creative practice which highlights an issue (bringing it to a wider public's attention), Wodiczko's methodologies and treatment of space remain important within art and design. In particular, Wodiczko's work is significant to my research as it demonstrates an early example of 'speculative' design practices, a turning point for interventions that deal with transience through technologies,

Fig 22: Alien Staff, designed to help immigrants be heard in public in various locations (Krzysztof Wodiczko, 1993).

while still drawing attention to the political aspects of the issue. While an important reference, my own research focuses on instructions for participatory actions that transform situations enacted by the people experiencing homelessness (a set of instructions constituting a toolkit as a provocation of a response to hostile architecture). Additionally, the impact of interrogative design goes beyond art exhibitions and installations, playing a significant role in tackling global issues. As a result, ethical considerations are crucial in interrogative design, including matters like individual agency and finding the right balance between provoking thought and exploiting people. In my view, interrogative design has truly reshaped the role of design in society. It goes beyond just looking good; it sparks meaningful sociocultural conversations and encourages deeper engagement with the world around us.

Social Design

Building upon Wodiczko's interrogative design as a methodology, another crucial aspect to this research is social design. Social design embodies a paradigm shift in how we conceive, craft and articulate solutions to the multifaceted issues within our globalised, interconnected world. It is defined as a, "set of concepts and activities that exist across many fields of application including local and central government…although all designing can be understood as social, the term 'social design' highlights the concepts and activities enacted within participatory approaches to researching, generating and realising new ways to make change happen towards a collective and social ends, rather than predominantly commercial objectives" (Armstrong et al., 2014, p. 15). The issue of homelessness is a global challenge, impacting individuals and communities around the world. However, within the scope of this research, focused on London, social design emerges as a way to encourage the public to reconsider their views on homelessness through empathy and inclusivity. This research explores how art and design can be used as tools for social change, particularly in addressing homelessness, and how they can influence the way we experience and interact with our surroundings, ultimately contributing to the creation of more inclusive spaces. Whether it's designing inclusive parks or accessible transportation, social design ensures that everyone, regardless of their abilities, can fully engage in community life. Admittedly, Professor Lorraine Gamman makes a compelling statement that effectively captures the essence of social design in relation to my practice, "I have always thought that policy lags behind practice and so I want to make a case for practice-led socially responsive design research experimentation within communities as to what works – and evidencing that"(Armstrong et al., 2014, p. 22) . This perspective highlights the need for policy makers to adopt a more agile and responsive approach to keep up with the dynamic nature of practice. In the context of homelessness, this reflects the frustration many experience when policies fail to meet society's current needs.

Design has always reflected society's needs and values. In modern design, we can trace a lineage from historical movements that emphasised social responsibility. This is evident in Wodiczko's practice and interventions, as well as in my own work, which draws inspiration from historical movements and practitioners like Wodiczko, "As socially and morally involved designers, we must address ourselves to the needs of the world" (Papanek and Fuller, 1972, p. 18). To fully understand the importance of this design methodology, it is crucial to explore its philosophical foundations, tracing its development through the key thinkers and movements within design theory. Victor Papanek, a key figure in design theory, has had a lasting impact on contemporary design discourse. A central aspect of his legacy is the idea that design goes beyond mere aesthetics and carries significant social and ethical implications. According to Papanek, design is fundamentally user-centric and inherently sustainable. In the book, *Design for the Real World*, Papanek argues that designers must place the human experience at the forefront of their creations and must consider the long-term ecological implications. In doing so, he challenges the perception of design as merely decorative, positioning it instead as a field where its societal implications are of primary importance. In Papanek's critique of design culture, he advocates for a shift away from consumerism towards socially responsible design (Papanek and Fuller, 1972, p. 81). He argues that designers are not merely creators of products, but are, in fact, architects of society. By emphasising the need to consider diverse abilities, cultures, and contexts, he highlights the historical complexities faced by vulnerable communities. This perspective stresses the importance of prioritising these considerations in

contemporary design practices. Furthermore, it highlights the significant impact design has on the human experience and its wider societal implications. In the context of technology and design, Papanek's insights urge us to question the ethical implications of our technological innovations. This is particularly evident in design elements found in public spaces, such as high-pitched sounds and bright spotlights, which are used to move people who are homeless along and restrict their ability to rest. These examples highlight the importance of incorporating ethical considerations into design, "if design is to be ecologically responsible and socially responsive, must be revolutionary and radical" (Papanek and Fuller, 1972, p. 343). Therefore, I believe Papanek's ideas and principles provide a foundational framework that both informs and inspires contemporary social design practices. His insights challenge designers to push the boundaries of conventional approaches and consider how design can inform and influence society, ethics, and sustainability. Ultimately, they guide us towards a future where design is not just a reflection of society but a tool for its improvement and transformation.

Additionally, several factors have contributed to the recent rise in homelessness, much of which have already been discussed earlier in this thesis. These factors include, but are not limited to, the decline in affordable housing, the lack of suitable or well-paying jobs, and the overall shortage of housing. However, a key concern in this context is the growing privatisation and control of public spaces (Minton, 2009), which has further marginalised homelessness. Minton's work on public space offers a crucial context for my own mapping practices. In recent years, the privatisation and control of public spaces has become a significant issue, especially in London. Traditionally, public spaces have been vital areas for civic life and public expression. Yet, with the evolving landscape of the city, "the idea of 'regeneration', a word which came into use during the 1980's, and means 'rebirth' in Latin" (Minton, 2012, p. 5) has transformed public spaces in many global cities like London. We have seen the rise of privately managed public spaces, raising questions about access, governance and the nature of urban democracy. Successive governments have consistently failed to address the underlying economic factors contributing to homelessness. As Doherty et al. (2002) note, public space access for homeless individuals is increasingly restricted, with city authorities and some national governments imposing limitations on certain groups. This highlights the detrimental effects of such legislation on a vulnerable population that already relies heavily on public spaces to carry out their daily activities. In the book *Ground Control* by Anna Minton, she examines the growing trend of public space privatisation, highlighting the increasing role of private corporations and developers in shaping and controlling these spaces. Minton also addresses the exclusionary practices linked to this privatisation, such as selective access policies and the widespread use of surveillance, which further marginalise certain groups within society, "when it comes to surveillance, the UK has gone much further than the US; CCTV is not common in American cities, although its use is growing. Britain, on the other hand, has the most CCTV in the world, with more cameras than the rest of Europe put together" (Minton, 2012, p. 47). Therefore, it is inevitable that such control will impact the activities and behaviours of individuals within these spaces. Furthermore, these devices would essentially target anyone who appears out of place.

This understanding of public space is crucial in addressing the issue of hostile architecture, particularly in how public spaces and urban environments are often controlled through various means that unfairly target vulnerable populations. An environmental mechanism of social control that "enhance and extend the segregative effects of architectural modes of exclusion…and

contribute to the expansion of modernist institutions of control" (Beckett and Herbert, 2008). While such mechanisms are not obvious to those who don't rely on public space to conduct their daily lives these 'architectural modes of exclusion' (Beckett and Herbert, 2008) are associated with the rise in hostile architecture. Furthermore, this privatisation can extend to entire parks, squares, or even more subtle features such as seating areas, effectively altering the traditional concept of public ownership and blurring the boundaries between public and private spaces. Recent research on the use of hostile architecture in public spaces examines its growing prevalence in recent years.

A 2016 survey conducted by the charity Crisis, which involved over 450 individuals using homeless services across England and Wales, highlighted this increase. According to the survey, "Six in ten reported an increase in hostile architecture in 2016, and 35% stated they were unable to find anywhere to sleep or rest as a result" (Crisis, 2016). Additionally, the study revealed that "20% of those surveyed experienced deliberate noise pollution, such as loud music or recorded bird songs" (Crisis, 2016). The survey concludes by highlighting the increased security presence in public spaces, which leads to individuals being moved on, as well as the use of various mechanisms designed to prevent homeless people from finding a place to rest. The effects of privatisation go beyond the physical alterations of public spaces, reaching into the very core of urban democracy. Minton's analysis suggests that as private interests become more dominant in public spaces, traditional concepts of civic participation and collective decision-making may be undermined. The commercialisation of public space can prioritise profit over the public good, raising concerns about the equitable distribution of resources and the representation of diverse voices in the urban landscape (Minton, 2012). Furthermore, this emphasises the urgent need for policy and research to prioritise the protection of the democratic principles that underpin public spaces.

Recent developments in hostile architecture and the control of public space have come under considerable scrutiny, particularly following the 2014 controversy in London over (fig.23) 'anti-homeless spikes' – metal studs installed at ground level to prevent homeless people from sleeping in otherwise unrestricted areas (Petty, 2016). This serves as an example of how urban planners or government bodies are actively designing spaces that exclude those experiencing homelessness. It also highlights the importance of the practical component of my research, which aims to provide a designed response to such issues. The aim is to empower homeless communities and users of hostile architectural environments, restoring agency and support for vulnerable individuals.

Fig 23: Anti-homeless spikes installed outside an apartment building in South London. (Source: @Ethical Pioneer, 2014).

The concept of freedom, particularly in relation to homelessness, is critical in understanding its impact on individuals. In his work Poverty, Homelessness, and Freedom: An Approach from the Capabilities Theory, Guillem Fernandez Evangelista argues that homeless people experience varying degrees of restricted freedom, particularly in terms of their capabilities (Evangelista, 2010). He explains that freedom, in the context of homelessness, refers to a process where an individual's capabilities are diminished by various factors, ultimately limiting their choices and their ability to secure a home (Evangelista, 2010). Therefore, it is essential to consider the unique circumstances that lead to homelessness and force individuals to live on the streets. Evangelista's concept of freedom is particularly relevant here, as it underscores the way in which one's ability to live a full life is constrained by their lack of housing.

There is an expanding body of research on the concept of home for people experiencing homelessness, a topic that has gained increasing relevance, particularly in the wake of the global pandemic in early 2020. This is especially true in relation to hostile architecture and the growing privatisation of public space. In the context of homelessness, freedom is closely tied to an individual's capabilities and opportunities. It goes beyond the mere absence of physical barriers, encompassing the ability to exercise fundamental human rights and live with dignity. Evangelista argues that 'housing meets our need for shelter by protecting us from elements such as inclement weather. At the same time, it enhances our capabilities by providing a space for rest, storage, personal hygiene, social interactions, creativity, and even work or leisure. It also serves as a symbol of belonging to a community and enables political participation' (Evangelista, 2010). When individuals lack access to these basic resources, their freedom is severely compromised, limiting their ability to make choices. Consequently, addressing homelessness is inherently linked to the enhancement of freedom, as it provides individuals with the means to regain control over their lives and exercise their agency. In the context of my research and practice, homelessness is explored as a way to highlight freedom and social justice. The aim is to empower individuals experiencing homelessness, enabling them to live with dignity, while also raising public awareness about the issue.

Building on these concepts, it becomes evident how urban planners and designers can shape environments in ways that either include or exclude marginalised groups. In this context, affordance theory, introduced by James J. Gibson in the 1960s, suggests that the environment provides perceivable cues and signals to individuals, guiding how objects and spaces can be used or interacted with (Gibson, 2015). Gibson's concept of 'affordances' connects to Evangelista's ideas about the capabilities of home and the impact of hostile design, as hostile architecture directly limits the affordances available to people experiencing homelessness. Affordances refer to the inherent possibilities for action that an environment or object offers to an observer. These concepts of affordance are crucial to my speculative proposal for an urban 'toolkit,' designed to help people experiencing homelessness challenge the dehumanising effects of hostile architecture (discussed in Chapter 4). Hostile architecture raises concerns not only about how people can behave in public spaces but also about their ability to seek refuge when necessary. As Gibson (2015, p. 128) explains, "an important kind of place... is one that affords concealment, a hiding place. This involves social perception and raises epistemological questions. The act of concealing oneself from observers and hiding an object from others are driven by different motivations." This highlights how public spaces, and urban environments influence human behaviour.

In this context, it is crucial to understand how hostile design and architectural elements impact the affordances available to people who are homeless in public spaces. Gibson's notion of affordance rationalises objects as he states, "the affordances of what we loosely call objects are extremely various. It will be recalled that my use of the terms is restricted and that I distinguish between attached objects and detached objects. We are not dealing with Newtonian objects in space, all of which are detached, but with the furniture of the earth, some items of which are attached to it and cannot be moved without breakage" (Gibson, 2015, p. 124) this notion of affordance is central to this research, particularly in relation to hostile architecture. Architectural elements such as spikes on benches, sloped or divided seating, and rough textures on flat surfaces serve as clear examples of how public spaces are intentionally modified to discourage certain activities, like sleeping. This phenomenon is explored in detail throughout the thesis, with an in-depth analysis of affordances provided in Chapter 3. This concept is closely tied to affordance theory because it manipulates the environment to signal specific actions while discouraging others. Such notions are applied to speculative intervention, which aims to address the interaction between the built environment and its inhabitants.

As early as the 1960s, Theodor Adorno recognised how the rise of modernist culture would reshape the arts and introduce new technologies into society. These technologies brought about issues of displacement, subjectivity, and shifting social expectations. It is important to acknowledge that for some, a transient or itinerant lifestyle is a choice, while for others, it is a response to life's challenges. However, many fail to recognise the vulnerability of those who are homeless or transient, and the complex circumstances they face as users of public space.

Speculative Design

Drawing on interrogative design and social design theory, this research builds upon the intersection of speculative design, an approach that encourages us to think beyond the constraints of the present and explore alternative futures. The book, Speculative Everything by Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, challenges the conventional notions of design thinking. Speculative design serves as a medium for generating discourse about the roles, implications and ethical considerations surrounding emerging technologies however, an integral part to this methodology is the concept of critical design (Dunne and Raby, 2013). A subset of speculative design aims to critique and question existing norms, and it is this aspect that directly relates to my practice and research. Like speculative design, my practice involves creating thought-provoking objects, artifacts, or experiences that serve as provocations, encouraging the public to reflect on their societal impact. One key feature of speculative design is its embrace of ambiguity, "speculative designs do more than communicate; they suggest possible uses, interactions, and behaviours not always obvious at a quick glance"(Dunne and Raby, 2013, p. 139). This concept of uncertainty has shaped my approach to hostile architecture in my practice, allowing me to embrace ambiguity without being constrained by practicality. It enables me to weave narratives of place, space, and identity in relation to homelessness in London, while confronting the issue of hostile architecture within the city. Dunne and Raby highlight the importance of imagining alternative futures, emphasising the need for designers to carefully consider the potential societal impact of their creations. Speculative design

has since been applied across various fields, including technology, urban planning, and healthcare. For instance, Dunne and Raby's Huggable Atomic Mushroom (fig.24, fig.25) project explores the potential consequences of nuclear disasters by designing a plush toy that emits ambient light patterns in response to real-time radiation levels (Dunne and Raby, 2013). This project illustrates how speculative design can make abstract and distant threats more tangible and relatable.

Fig 24: Huggable Atomic Mushroom (red fabric) mushroom part of the Designs for Fragile personalities in Anxious times collection (Dunne & Raby, 2004-5).

Chapter 2

Fig 25: Huggable Atomic Mushroom (white fabric) mushroom part of the Designs for Fragile personalities in Anxious times collection (Dunne & Raby, 2004-5).

Building on this, speculative design can meaningfully influence public discourse and policymaking by presenting thought-provoking narratives about potential futures. It can stimulate discussions on urgent issues such as climate change and social inequality, while also encouraging individuals to take a more active role in shaping the future they want. As a methodology, speculative design broadens the scope of what design can accomplish, encouraging critical reflection and dialogue on the complex challenges we face today.

Moreover, in Replacing Home (2012), Jennifer Johung provides novel ways to conceptualise bodies in space that engages both site-specific art and portable structures/architecture, whereby we experience transient spatial conditions. The book discusses ways in which to engage spatial conditions that push the boundary of public space, temporal edifices and most importantly social narratives, similarly, to exploring the ethical conditions of bodies in space through interrogative

design. A central theme within the book that Johung explores is the concept of dwelling by successfully questioning place, "but how might we be in one place, whether voluntarily or involuntary, where we could find ourselves lingering with others? And how does this one place become home? If to be in one place is to be still, perhaps to belong and to find home however momentarily or accidently, then how can we situate ourselves while also on the move, both towards and away from each other"(Johung, 2012, p. 14). The spaces, which we inhabit become far more than architectural structures, they depict notions of belonging and identity. Furthermore, the notion of home expresses concepts of domesticity and privacy. Such notion of home represents a space where individuals can establish a sense of belonging, safety, and personal identity. In relation to homelessness this can lead the erosion of these concepts. Finally, Johung notes that "the concept of an architectural second skin can be historically associated with experiments in the late 1960s and 1970s that aimed to dematerialise the solid, fixed walls of conventional building, and thus to render architecture as and of the body" (Johung, 2012, p. 105). However, homelessness challenges this idea by stripping away the sense of stability, privacy, and belonging that such architectural concepts aim to provide. People experiencing homelessness are often forced to live in overcrowded shelters or on the streets, where they experience a significant loss of personal privacy and security, further undermining the domesticity that architecture is meant to support. This situation makes it increasingly difficult for individuals to maintain personal boundaries. It reinforces the need for my practice and research to address and emphasise these fundamental aspects of human dignity, particularly in spaces where homeless people have been systematically excluded.

Contemporary Art and Design Practitioners

As designers and researchers, we have a responsibility to question the ways in which public spaces are shaped and controlled. In London, hostile architecture–anti homeless spikes or bars, gated doorways or benches that restrict access have become increasingly common tools of exclusion, reinforcing notions of urban inequality through design. While these measures are often justified under the guise of public order or safety, they reveal deeper social prejudices about who is welcome in the city and who is not. Contemporary artists and designers are responding to this issue by using creative practice as a form of critique. Making the invisible visible and opening up a dialogue around such notions of spatial justice. In addition, such contemporary artists and designers are actively challenging the impact of hostile architecture and homelessness through speculative, social, and interrogative design methods. Their work not only exposes the hidden ideologies embedded in urban design but also reimagines how public spaces might be more inclusive and humane. Artists such as Sarah Ross and collectives like Space Not Spikes intervene within the built environment revealing how design is used to regulate behaviour and restrict movement.

Sarah Ross's *Archisuits* (2005 -2006), for example employ speculative design to draw attention to the ways public seating is deliberately shaped to deter rest. By creating padded suits that allow wearers to comfortably occupy these restrictive forms of hostile architecture. Ross highlights the ways in which the built environment enforces social control and dictates who belongs in public space. Making it clear that exclusion is not an accident; it is embedded in the physical fabric of our cities. Archisuits (2005–2006), therefore offers a subversive and playful critique of defensive architecture. Ross describes her project as a means of highlighting "the negative space of the

Fig 26: Archisuits, made for specific architectural structures in Los Angeles (Sarah Ross, 2005-6).

structures and allowing a wearer to fit into, or onto, structures designed to deny them" (Ross, 2005). Her interventions shift the conversation from the functionality of public space to the ethics of its design. By creating garments that 'hack' hostile architecture, Ross reclaims spaces designed to exclude turning them into sites of dialogue as "*Archisuits* suggests a wearer might resist by not only being present but being present comfortably, leisurely" (Ross, 2005). Ross's work resonates with larger discourses about visibility and invisibility in public spaces.

Similarly, philosopher Judith Butler argues in the book *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, 2020 that society has an ethical obligation to acknowledge and protect precarious lives. 'To be ungrievable,' Butler writes, "is to be unrecognised as a life worth protecting" (Butler, 2004, p. 36). Ross's project confronts such ethical failure by making visible the dehumanising effects of urban design choices on those excluded from public space. In doing so, Archisuits transforms design from a tool of exclusion into a medium for activism and empathy.

Likewise, the collective Space, Not Spikes intervenes within the urban landscape, using interrogative design methods to counteract hostile architecture in spaces where metal spikes are installed to deter rough sleeping by replacing them with interventions that "engage in creative

Fig 27: Another view of Archisuits in Los Angeles (Sarah Ross, 2005-6).

mischief" (Space Not Spikes, 2016). These acts challenge the normalisation of exclusionary design making visible the political choices behind seemingly neutral design decisions.

> Walking around the seemingly public and communal spaces and places of our cities, many may miss the covert and subtle methods through which urban space is being systematically privatised, and those within it managed and controlled. From insidious anti-homeless spikes to sprinklers that drench rough sleepers and their possessions, from segmented benches to prevent lying down to the blasting of music to prevent sleep; the cities we inhabit are subtly yet aggressively antagonising and excluding unwanted 'others' from public space (Space Not Spikes, 2016).

This highlights the key question posed by their interventions, grounded in social and interrogative design: who decides how public space is used? While public space is often seen as open and accessible to everyone, in practice, it is carefully regulated and managed to exclude specific groups. This is evident in the growing use of hostile architecture and design in London, with collectives like Space, Not Spikes working to reclaim public spaces through grassroots interventions. These efforts challenge not only the presence of hostile design but also the broader societal values and systems embedded within the urban landscape. Moreover, the ethos of Space, Not Spikes aligns with contemporary discussions around decolonising design, as hostile architecture is far from neutral;

it reflects the biases and power structures of those who create it. By reclaiming these spaces, the collective challenges the dominant narratives that prioritise control over care. This approach is also reflected in the work of Sarah Ross, which responds to the experiences of those displaced by hostile architecture. Their interventions go beyond critique; they act as forms of resistance that sparks conversation and calls for systemic change.

Fig 28: Better than Spikes in Shoreditch, London (Space Not Spikes Collective, 2015).

Hostile architecture is more than a design choice; it functions as a political tool that dictates access to public space and its usage. In response, contemporary artists and designers have developed diverse yet interconnected approaches to confront these exclusionary practices. Sarah Ross's Archisuits addresses the physical constraints imposed by hostile architecture by creating wearable interventions that make exclusion highly visible. Similarly, Space Not Spikes counters the authority behind these design decisions through actions that reclaim public spaces for everyone.

Building on these interventions that challenge and expose the impact of hostile design, Julius Christian Schreiner's photographic series *Silent Agents* captures hostile architecture as it exists, documenting the subtle yet insidious ways urban spaces are designed to exclude. His work does not rely on physical interventions; instead, it takes an observational approach capturing the quiet but deeply political presence of hostile architecture and design. By framing objects such as anti-homeless spikes, divided benches, and gated doorways as agents of exclusion, Schreiner forces us to consider their role in shaping human behaviour. His work invites a critical analysis of the built environment, challenging us to question what we often overlook or accept as part of the urban landscape. In an interview with the Daily Sabah, Schreiner states that, "the growth in privately managed public spaces has exacerbated the problem...leaving little room for people to lean back, loiter or socialise without the pressure to buy something" (Public hits back at 'hostile architecture'
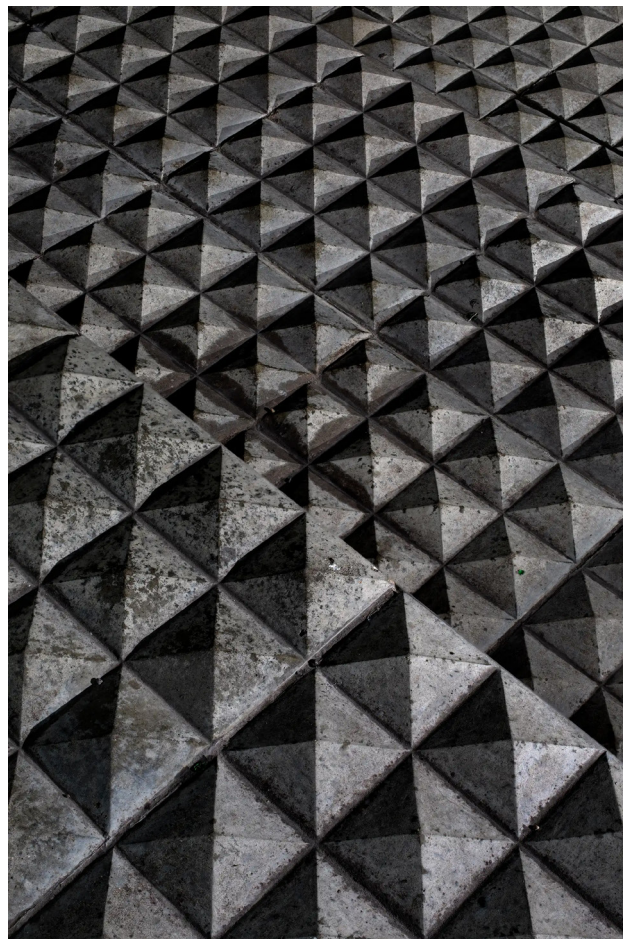
Fig 29: Silent Agents, floor surface on the top three steps below the Millennium Bridge in London (Julius Christian Schreiner, 2018).

Fig 30: Silent Agents, Design of a sheltered, partly glass-covered seating area in London (Julius Christian Schreiner, 2018).

in European cities, 2018). What makes Silent Agents particularly powerful is how Schreiner's photographs reveal these structures as intentional tools of exclusion, designed to marginalise vulnerable communities. His work contributes to a broader movement within contemporary practice that both documents and critiques hostile design. In my view, this approach not only highlights the injustice inherent in these designs but also serves as a critical call to reimagine public spaces as inclusive environments for all. This reinforces the central argument of this thesis and my practice, which seeks to challenge hostile architecture and promote spaces that respect human dignity and accessibility. Together, the work of these artists emphasises the pressing need to bring attention to and confront the issue of hostile architecture in our urban spaces. Unlike activist interventions such as those by Space Not Spikes, which physically alter urban space, Silent Agents approaches these pressing social issues through representation and interpretation. Moreover, while interventions like Space Not Spikes directly alter urban spaces to challenge hostile design, Julius

Christian Schreiner's Silent Agents takes a different approach by addressing these issues through representation and interpretation. This method does not diminish its impact; rather, it adds a crucial layer to the conversation by documenting and evidencing the increasing normalisation of exclusionary architecture. By capturing these structures in their everyday contexts, Schreiner's work plays an essential role in highlighting how such designs perpetuate social inequality, offering a form of archival critique that complements the physical interventions seen in other practices.

While Schreiner's focus on documentation highlights the pervasive presence of hostile design, Michael Beitz adopts a more interventionist approach, actively engaging with and challenging these architectural elements through his sculptural public works, particularly his reimagined benches manipulate the familiar forms of everyday objects to challenge assumptions about function, comfort, and control. Where Schreiner highlights exclusion by capturing it as it exists, Beitz disrupts exclusionary design by manipulating it making it impossible to ignore. One of Beitz's

Fig 31: Friendly Benches (Michael Beitz, 2021).

Fig 32: Hostile and Friendly Benches (Michael Beitz, 2021).

most significant works in this context is his series of distorted public benches. These sculptures, which twist, loop, or extend in unconventional ways, mirror the traits of hostile architecture. By doing so, Beitz highlights the absurdity of design choices that prioritise restriction over comfort. His benches compel people to interact with them in unexpected manners, sparking a conversation about how public furniture can influence both movement and the ability to rest. In contrast, Beitz's work and Schreiner's *Silent Agents* represent two distinct yet complementary approaches to confronting hostile design. One encourages reflection through observation, while the other prompts engagement through interaction. Together, they contribute to the broader conversation on hostile architecture, each offering a unique yet equally vital approach to challenging how urban design perpetuates social exclusion. These works highlight the need for diverse responses to hostile architecture, showing that design should provide alternative ways to think about, engage with, and inhabit public space

Chapter 2 Summary

In summary, this chapter explores how speculative design, social design and interrogative design all play a crucial role in addressing the multifaceted issues of homelessness. It further demonstrates how contemporary art and design practitioners engage with the politics of homelessness by challenging hostile architecture. Moreover, these design approaches share a commitment to critical thinking and pushing the boundaries of design. Rather than accepting the built environment as neutral, these practices expose how urban space is shaped by exclusionary policies that reinforce systemic inequalities. Drawing on both historical design precedents and contemporary artistic interventions, the chapter critically examines how design can function as both a tool of oppression and a means of resistance. It argues that while hostile architecture physically reinforces social exclusion, counter-design strategies whether through documentation, direct action, or speculative interventions can help to disrupt these mechanisms and reimagine public space as a site of care rather than control.

Building on the exploration of design methods, this chapter examines how speculative, social, and interrogative design frameworks reveal design as a site of tension, shaped by power dynamics and governance. Speculative design invites us to imagine alternative futures, while social design addresses pressing social issues, that engage with experiences and people experiencing homelessness. In contrast, interrogative design critiques and challenges traditional design practices and assumptions. What I find most compelling about these approaches is their ability to expose design as a space of conflict, deeply influenced by broader societal structures of control and authority. Collectively, these design approaches offer a comprehensive framework for tackling homelessness. By integrating these methodologies into my research and practice, I aim to contribute to a future where homelessness is not merely managed but proactively prevented, ensuring that the dignity and well-being of every individual is preserved. Hostile architecture is not simply about benches with armrests or spikes outside buildings; it reflects a wider attitude towards homelessness and public space, one that prioritises visibility and order over care and support. The designers and artists in this chapter engage with these tensions in ways that are not only critical but also generative. Their work actively proposes alternative ways of thinking about urban life whether through direct interventions, speculative provocations, or methods that document and expose. By positioning these practices within the wider discourse of speculative, social, and interrogative design, the chapter argues that design is never neutral—it is always entangled in politics, shaping who belongs in public space and under what conditions. For me, this is where the true potential of design lies, not just in creating new forms but in reshaping how we think about notions of space, power, and social responsibility.

Reflecting on this chapter, I recognise that design plays a dual role in both addressing and perpetuating social issues like homelessness. Hostile architecture reveals how design is shaped by power structures that determine who belongs in public spaces. While interventions are crucial, they must be part of a broader societal shift in how homelessness is addressed. My practice must continue to challenge the assumptions underlying urban design, advocating for a more inclusive approach to public space.

CHAPTER 3:

THEORY AND METHOD

Affordances

The concept of 'affordances' plays a pivotal role in socially engaged practice and research, offering the potential to connect various collective efforts. Building on the brief exploration of affordance theory in Chapter 2, which demonstrated its relevance to hostile architecture, this chapter aims to explore the significance of affordances within the context of socially engaged practice and its implications. Affordances, within this research methodology, are inherent opportunities for action intrinsic to the situation encountered. These affordances, often subtle, act as guiding forces, and I will attempt to demonstrate the significance of the concept in relation to homelessness. As I have outlined previously, hostile design, often characterised by its deliberate measures to deter or discourage certain behaviours (particularly with respect to people who are homeless), represents a stark contrast to the principles of inclusivity and community engagement that underlie socially engaged research and practice. In the context of hostile design and architecture, affordances are not just inherent possibilities but, at times, deliberate constraints embedded within the physical environment. Rather than the positive sense of affordances that allow us to fruitfully engage with our environment, these constraints are engineered to limit certain actions or access often affecting vulnerable populations. Architecture thus actively embeds exclusion. The recognition and interpretation of these 'negative' affordances are critical in understanding how hostile design operates and how it impacts individuals and communities. Therefore, as an artist-designer and researcher, I must engage with this complex landscape to explore how hostile design and architecture interact with the individuals who experience these spaces. It is important to recognise how affordances within hostile architecture can shed light on the hidden mechanisms at play in our urban environments as well as the ethical implications of these designed features, particularly with concern to marginalised or disenfranchised communities, and how socially engaged practice and research can contribute to a more inclusive empathetic approach to urban planning and design.

As mentioned earlier, affordance theory, introduced by James J. Gibson in the 1970s, has since become a crucial framework for understanding the relationship between individuals and their environment. Affordances refer to the potential actions or uses that an object or environment

presents to an individual, shaping how one interacts with and navigates through a given space. In the book, *The Ecological Approaches to Visual Perception*, Gibson introduces the notion of affordances as, "how we see: the environment around us (its surfaces, their layout, and their colours and textures); where we are in the environment; whether or not we are moving and if, we are, where we are we going; what things are good for; how to do things (to thread a needle or drive an automobile); or why things look as they do" (Gibson, 2015, p. 2). This notion suggests that perception is an unmediated process, that utilises information available in the environment itself. Gibson's theory suggests that affordances are the inherent properties of objects or environments that encourage specific actions or behaviours, while simultaneously discouraging others (Gibson, 2015). This concept has since been utilised across various fields, particularly in the design of public spaces.

Building on these notions, hostile architecture represents a darker side of design, focusing on exclusion and control rather than enhancing human experience. Strategies such as anti-homeless spikes, tilted benches, or high-pitched sounds aim to discourage certain behaviours or target specific groups, often marginalising vulnerable populations, including the homeless. These design choices limit the actions individuals can take, making public spaces uncomfortable or inaccessible, reinforcing social inequalities. Gibson draws attention to the negative side of affordances, noting that the environment provides opportunities for action, either positive or negative, depending on its design. As he states, "the affordances of the environment are what it offers... what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill" (Gibson, 2015, p. 119).

When we view hostile design through the lens of affordance theory, it becomes evident how these architectural decisions manipulate the environment's affordances to dissuade certain behaviours. For example, the deliberate discomfort built into public benches, or the physical barriers designed to stop people from resting or sleeping are not neutral. These designs reflect an intentional effort to control how spaces are used and, in doing so, reinforce societal power dynamics. From my perspective, these interventions do more than just limit space—they signal who belongs and who does not, pushing marginalised groups further to the edges. The result is a physical environment that makes life even harder for people who are homeless, isolating them and restricting their ability to find rest, shelter, or basic dignity in public spaces. This raises a critical question: how can we design spaces that are truly inclusive, rather than ones that perpetuate harm and exclusion?

These ideas raise important ethical questions about the role of designers and policymakers in creating spaces that are inclusive, equitable, and accessible. The stigmatisation of homelessness often reinforces the false belief that it is an individual choice, rather than the result of systemic issues, thereby perpetuating negative stereotypes. In the context of Gibson's affordance theory, an 'anti-affordance' refers to design elements that actively hinder or prevent certain actions, making them difficult or even impossible to perform. This thesis demonstrates how such concepts can be applied to understanding how the built environment exacerbates the challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness.

For example, if you consider the design of public seating in urban spaces. Many benches are intentionally designed with dividers or armrests, making it uncomfortable or unfeasible for individuals to lie down. These features act as anti-affordances, discouraging or obstructing the use of the bench for resting or sleeping for prolonged periods. Such design modifications are purposefully intended to people experiencing homelessness from occupying public spaces for extended times.

Fig 33: Photograph of a hostile bench demonstrating strategies to discourage lingering in public space in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020).

Fig 34: Photograph of a hostile bench demonstrating strategies to discourage lingering in public space in Central London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020).

Fig 35: Photograph of a hostile architecture: a textured windowsill discouraging seating or resting in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2021).

Fig 36: Close up of hostile architecture, textured windowsill discouraging seating or resting in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2021).

Chapter 3

Moreover, anti-affordances can take more explicit and hostile forms. For example, public spaces may incorporate deterrents such as spikes, rough textures on surfaces like ledges, windowsills, or under bridges, and high-frequency noise devices to prevent homeless people from sleeping in these areas. These features are intentionally designed to discourage activities associated with homelessness, making Gibson's affordance theory a valuable framework for understanding the relationship between individuals and their environment, particularly in the context of hostile architecture and design.

In considering the affordances and constraints created by the built environment, Gibson's theory provides a valuable lens through which we can understand how intentional design choices both affordances and anti-affordances, shape individual behaviour. Affordances support actions such as sitting or resting, while anti-affordances such as spikes or rough textures actively prevent behaviours like sleeping. These design strategies are crucial for understanding the social justice implications for marginalised communities. Hostile architecture, by normalising exclusionary design, influences public perceptions of homelessness, desensitising individuals to the challenges faced by those living on the streets. This decline in empathy can ultimately obstruct efforts to address homelessness and undermine the collective will for meaningful change.

Critical Methods in Social Change

Another key theoretical model I adopt, as previously mentioned, is Interrogative Design. This approach takes risks, explores, and responds to the challenging conditions of contemporary life in a critical and questioning manner. Interrogative design encourages a heightened ethical awareness, prompting reflection on urgent issues as part of our everyday ethical responsibility. It serves as a tool for critical judgement, prompting us to examine both the present and the past in order to envision and work towards a better future.

My practice critically examines Wodiczko's methodology as a means to highlight underlying social and economic issues that manifest at a bodily level. It contrasts the performative aspects of Wodiczko's 'interrogative design' with the future-oriented focus of Dunne and Raby's 'speculative design', which explores potential futures through social interventions. In this context, speculative design offers an approach distinct from traditional design thinking:

> design thinking is concerned with problem solving, and although social design moves away from a purely commercial agenda to deal with more complex human problems, it too focuses on fixing things. Large scale speculative design contests 'official reality'; it is a form of dissent expressed through alternative design proposals. It aims to be inspirational, infectious, and catalytic, zooming out and stepping back to address values and ethics (Dunne and Raby, 2013, p. 160).

In my practice, the relationship between design and architecture is explored by juxtaposing these contrasting approaches, drawing attention to the significant concerns surrounding hostile architecture and homelessness in London. It also explores the role of the artist-designer in creating spatial interventions that challenge and reshape the public's perception of homelessness.

My research therefore investigates the intersection between solving 'real world' design issues (Papanek,1974) and performative actions that make explicit an underlying 'problem'. As such, in addressing real bodily needs of the homelessness (issues such as privacy, warmth etc.) I do not pretend to 'solve' the issue but rather raise consciousness within the context of an art/design project.

Practice is therefore at the centre of this research, with both Interrogative and speculative design serving as practice-based models. Wodiczko asserts that designers must engage directly with the world, rather than 'administering the painkillers of optimistic design fantasies' (Wodiczko,1999). By enacting interventions in areas where people who are homeless are excluded, due to hostile architecture and the privatisation of public areas, my work aims to highlight pressing social and ethical issues, which rather than being an add-on to the research are central to its methods. The performative aspect of the research includes factors such as negotiating access to such privatised 'public' spaces, the documentation of which constitutes an essential part of the practice (demonstrated in more depth in chapter 4).

By challenging idealistic design concepts and addressing real-world issues such as hostile architecture and privatised public spaces, my work aligns with the broader movement of socially engaged practice. In a world characterised by complex social challenges, the intersection of art, activism, and academia has given rise to a transformative approach aimed at addressing pressing societal issues. Emerging in the late 20th century, this approach saw artists, scholars, and activists questioning the boundaries and traditional roles of their respective disciplines, with the goal of bridging the gap between these fields (Persinger and Rejaie, 2021). Socially engaged practice encompasses a wide range of collaborative art forms and research methodologies, prioritising the social, political, and ethical dimensions of human existence. It seeks to engage diverse communities, amplify marginalised voices, and catalyse societal change.

In the 2014 book *Socially Engaged Art History and Beyond*, Cindy Persinger characterises this notion of practice: "socially engaged art history is produced within and between social groups over an extended period of time, it will seek to engender a productive dialogue regarding political and social issues and to foster resilient and sustainable communities. Its focus will be on difference, division, and inequality in society" (Persinger and Rejaie, 2021, p. 19). Therefore, these factors conceive the role of ethics and social justice as a moral compass that guides socially engaged practice. This relationship demonstrates an awareness to deconstruct oppressive systems. By cantering the experiences and voices of marginalised communities, socially engaged practice addresses deeply ingrained issues with a depth and efficacy that traditional methodologies fails to do, which in turn has a profound effect and significance in relation to this practice and research.

> Socially engaged art is not an art movement. Rather, these cultural practices indicate a new social order – ways of life that emphasis participation, challenge power, and span disciplines ranging from urban planning and community work to theatre and the visual arts. This veritable explosion of work in the arts has been assigned a catchphrase, such as 'relational aesthetics,' coined by French curator Nicolas Bourriaud, or Danish curator Lars Bang Larsen's term, 'social aesthetics'(Thompson, 2012, p. 19).

Socially engaged practice and relational aesthetics are two distinct yet interconnected approaches within contemporary art and cultural discourse. Both emphasise human interaction and social contexts, though they differ significantly in their methodologies, intentions, and theoretical foundations. Relational aesthetics [12] primarily seeks to create unique social experiences within art spaces, often in temporary or ephemeral settings, highlighting the momentary nature of the encounter. In contrast, socially engaged practice has a broader goal, aiming to effect social change and address pressing societal issues. It also extends beyond the confines of art institutions into real-world community contexts (Dohmen, 2016). Both approaches highlight the multifaceted nature of artistic practices in addressing societal issues. The intersection of relational aesthetics and socially engaged practice offers a framework for tackling complex issues like homelessness within my art and design practice. My practice has always sought to cultivate connections and empathy through participatory art experiences that transcend traditional artist-audience boundaries. As an artist-designer, I recognise the transformative potential of these interactions, which not only redefine the role of the audience but also spark dialogue and inspire change. My practice is driven by the conviction that art and design can be powerful tools for social change, particularly in advocating for marginalised communities.

Artists as Activists

It is important to acknowledge the key figures who have made significant contributions to the field of socially engaged practice. Among these distinguished practitioners, Lucy Orta stands out as a visionary artist whose work embodies the principles of collaboration and community engagement. Orta investigates boundaries between architecture and the body, using the body as a metaphorical framework to question societal issues through public interventions, she actively involves local communities and participants in her projects. Her work serves as an example of how design can transcend traditional boundaries, fostering a sense of shared ownership and collaborative problem-solving within communities.

In fig.37, Orta's work can be seen intervening with the site through performative enactments, 'in response to the dislocation of bodies from social network' (Johung, 2012). Additionally, Orta's *Nexus Architecture*, created during the 2nd Biennale in Johannesburg, South Africa (1997), challenges preconceived notions of what architecture represents. It defies traditional confines of architectural design by seamlessly blending elements of sculpture and social activism. The work was made possible through workshops with migrant Zulu women from the Usindiso shelter. The choice of Johannesburg as the site for this installation is both intentional and significant. The city's complex history, shaped by apartheid and its lasting impact on urban development, provided a poignant backdrop for Orta's socio-political commentary.

12   Relational aesthetics, a concept introduced by art theorist Nicolas Bourriaud, emphasises human interactions and collaborative practices. In addressing homelessness, this approach involves working with homeless individuals or advocacy groups to create interventions that foster connection, raise awareness, and encourage public engagement. The aim in this research is to use art and design to build empathy, understanding, and social change by creating spaces for meaningful interactions and documenting the experiences of marginalised voices.

Fig 37: Nexus Architecture enacted in public space (Lucy Orta, 1993-1998).

> Nexus means link or bond and the symbolic content is more important that functional. In this work clothing becomes the medium through which social links and bonds are made manifest, both literally and metaphorically. The links of zippers and channels, while enhancing the uniformity of workers overalls, create androgynous shapes that defy classification by the usual social markers, and attempt to give form to the social, not the individual body. (Orta, 2011, p. 26).

Therefore, we might argue that *Nexus Architecture* acts as a catalyst for dialogue on issues of inequality, displacement, and power dynamics within urban spaces. Through her work, Orta compels viewers to confront and reflect on the unresolved social issues embedded in Johannesburg's urban landscape. In an interview with curator Roberto Pinto, Orta states that,

> the proof [of the success of the project] was the public intervention that we staged for the opening of the Biennale, which formed a defiant chain linking the city and exhibition venues, with passers-by, children, men, and teenagers tagging on shoulder to shoulder. The women began spontaneously singing and improvised chorus version of Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrica (God Bless Africa), which stopped everybody in their tracks and resonated so powerfully. This song had been outlawed under apartheid. (Pinto, Bourriaud and Damianovic, 2003, p. 20).

Moreover, as a person of colour, the concept of Nexus Architecture resonates with me on a deep level. The interconnectedness of architectural elements in the nexus approach mirrors my own approach to life and self-expression, where I draw inspiration from my cultural roots, the challenges of migration, and my broader global identity.

To understand the power of socially engaged art, we can look to Lucy and Jorge Orta's collaborative practice, which is built around participation, dialogue, and the active engagement

Fig 38: Nexus Architecture enacted in public space during the 2nd Biennale in Johannesburg (Lucy Orta, 1997).

of communities. Together their collaborative practice asks, "how art can pave a new critical role, faced with the growing problems in the world? How can it erase contradictions between formal aesthetics and social function? How can works of art empower and nurture constructive dialogue? What contribution can we as artists make to human and environmental sustainability? (Orta, 2011, p. 5). In essence, Lucy and Jorge's practice serves as an example of the intersection between socially engaged practice and relational aesthetics; demonstrating how art can empower communities, encourage meaningful collaboration, and drive constructive social change.

Their *Refuge Wear* project (1992-1998), for instance, involved collaborating with refugees and was "a dual response to the global crisis: the humanitarian aid appeals for shelter and clothing for Kurd refugees fleeing war zones, and the increasing number of homeless people on the streets of Paris" (Orta, 2011, p. 7). This involved transforming discarded materials into wearable shelters (fig.39).

Ultimately, Lucy and Jorge Orta's practice highlights the multifaceted nature of socially engaged art and design, emphasising the importance of participation, collaboration, and advocacy. While I recognise concerns about the long-term impact on the lives of those involved, their work provides valuable perspectives on socially engaged practice and challenges us to critically assess the potential of art to promote lasting social and environmental change.

Fig 39: Refugee Wear intervention in London's east end (Lucy and Jorge Orta, 1998).

Fig 40: Enacting Washing, Tracks, Maintenance outside. (Mierle Laderman Ukeles,1973).

Complementary to this is the work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, an artist whose practice challenges conventional notions of art and labour. Both Ukeles and Orta are contemporary artists whose work is rooted in social and environmental themes, though their specific approaches and artistic practices differ. Ukeles' cleaning rituals ('maintenance art'), enacted in public places, highlights marginalised social communities whereby menial activities are transformed through transgressive performances. Her Manifesto for *Maintenance Art*, written in 1969, is a document that redefines the boundaries of art and advocates for the recognition of often invisible labourers. Within the manifesto she boldly declares, "I am an artist. I am a woman. I am a wife. I am a mother (random order). I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning and preserving, etc. Also, (up to now separately) I 'do' Art. I will simply do these maintenance everyday things, and flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them, as Art" (Ukeles, 1969, p. 3).

This statement challenges the traditional image of the artist during this period. Through her work, Ukeles redefines conventional understandings of art, shifting away from the idea of art as objects or performances created for contemplation in galleries and museums. Instead, she suggests that the act of maintenance–the repetitive, often mundane tasks that sustain society–should be regarded as a form of art (Ukeles et al., 2016).

By doing so, Ukeles blurs the lines between art and everyday life (fig.40 & fig.41). A key theme in this work is the invisibility of maintenance labour. During her artist residency with the New York City Department of Sanitation, she recognised that such essential work often goes unnoticed and unacknowledged. Those who carry out these vital tasks are marginalised, with their contributions frequently taken for granted. (Ukeles et al., 2016).

These invisibilities are especially evident in the gendered division of labour, where women have historically shouldered the majority of domestic maintenance tasks, deepening their undervaluation. Ukeles' work challenges the public to confront these biases, urging a reassessment of our perceptions and attitudes. Washing, Tracks, Maintenance demonstrates how art can provoke thought, challenge norms, and shift our understanding of the world. In my view, Ukeles' practice exemplifies socially engaged art. Through her work, she addresses societal issues, amplifies marginalised voices, dismantles hierarchies, and creates spaces for dialogue. By focusing on the

Fig 41: Enacting Washing, Tracks, Maintenance outside from another view. (Mierle Laderman Ukeles,1973).

recognition of everyday labour, Ukeles uses art as a catalyst for social change, highlighting the essential contributions that sustain our communities.

I believe that the work of Ukeles, Orta, and Wodiczko highlights the transformative potential of socially engaged practice. Through their active engagement with communities, they not only tackle pressing societal issues but also challenge established norms. Their work encourages critical dialogue and raises awareness about key social concerns, connecting with the focus of this research. Furthermore, these practices intersect with broader conversations in design, particularly in relation to Victor Papanek's ideas in *Design for the Real World* and the concept of hostile design. Papanek's exploration of 'real world' design issues remains highly relevant today. As he points out, the need for designs that address global challenges is urgent as more than two billion people lack access to essential tools and resources, while regional disasters, famine, and water shortages occur regularly (Papanek, 1974). This urgency is evident within the themes explored in this thesis, particularly in its examination of homelessness in contemporary London.

Papanek's advocacy for design with a social conscience highlights the ethical and humanitarian responsibilities of designers, reflecting the societal concerns addressed in socially engaged practice. Throughout this thesis, I have argued that the rise in homelessness is closely linked to the phenomenon of hostile architecture, where the homeless are increasingly excluded from public spaces due to the dehumanising effects of such designs. In contrast, hostile architecture reveals the detrimental impact of design on public spaces, often reinforcing exclusionary or oppressive systems. Therefore, the connection between these concepts is clear: both art and design possess the power to shape and reflect societal values, providing opportunities to challenge established norms and advocate for inclusive, ethical, and socially responsible practices.

Socially Engaged Practice

Building on the idea that design can either challenge or reinforce societal values, it is crucial to examine how hostile design, in contrast to socially engaged practices, actively limits dialogue and excludes vulnerable communities from public spaces.

Throughout this thesis, I have examined how hostile architecture plays a role in shaping public spaces to exclude certain groups, particularly those experiencing homelessness. In relation to this, the concept of 'social control' helps explain how urban design is used to regulate who has access to public spaces. This concept reflects broader societal trends where design becomes a tool for pushing individuals to the periphery, as discussed by Beckett and Herbert (2008). By manipulating the built environment, cities effectively limit the spatial freedom of vulnerable groups, especially those who rely on public spaces such as sidewalks, parks, and squares for shelter and connection. In London, these subtle architectural choices disproportionately impact the homeless community, reinforcing social exclusion in ways that are often unnoticed by the broader public.

This is not to say all hostile architecture is subtle, it can be as aggressive as metal spikes being installed on pavements near doorways or other sheltered areas or as subtle as slanted benches at a bus stop and awning gaps to restrict the amount of time one is able to take refuge from the

weather. It is worth noting that the concept of hostile or defensive design extents further from architecture into nature. With cities implementing and designing tree spikes into landscapes – this type of action not only restricts children from climbing and interacting with nature, but it poses questions about what damage may be done to our ecosystems.

These examples illustrate how hostile architecture functions as a tool for social exclusion and control, and how it is linked to the privatisation of public spaces. Understanding these mechanisms is essential for grasping the broader implications of hostile architecture and the erosion of truly public spaces. This contrasts with grassroots efforts that challenge such practices, such as those outlined in the *Squatters' Handbook*. While hostile architecture aims to restrict behaviour through design, the *Squatters' Handbook* offers a counterpoint by providing guidance on reclaiming space. Though these ideas remain relevant, it is important to recognise that the *Squatters' Handbook* is not typically viewed as a formal 'model of social agency'. A more detailed exploration of the Squatters' Handbook and its implications is provided in Chapter 4. Ultimately, these contrasting approaches highlight the ongoing struggle between control and agency in shaping public spaces, reinforcing the need for a more inclusive urban environment.

Chapter 3 Summary

This chapter aims to contribute to an understanding of how critical methods, such as the examination of affordances in the context of hostile architecture, play an essential role in socially engaged art and design practices. These methodologies are not merely theoretical but are actively applied to uncover the subtle yet significant dynamics between the built environment and social behaviour. By critically engaging with how public spaces are designed to either exclude or include certain groups, we can uncover the underlying power structures that shape our interactions with these spaces.

Through these methods, this research highlights how artists and designers working within socially engaged practices are questioning the role of architecture in reinforcing societal divisions. The analysis of affordances, as both enabling and restricting forces, helps to explain the relationship between space and social control, allowing for a broader reflection on how public spaces can be reimagined. These critical approaches contribute to this practice by offering tools to challenge dominant narratives of space and design.

In this research, these methods not only serve to critique hostile design but also clarify how socially engaged art and design can create new affordances—ones that open up possibilities for collective action, community building, and social change. By examining how these practices operate within urban environments, this work demonstrates the potential for art and design to influence the development of spaces that genuinely serve the needs of all people, especially those who are often marginalised.

CHAPTER 4:

PRACTICE AS
INTERVENTION

This chapter explores the development of my practice throughout the PhD, examining how different methods and processes have shaped both the research and its outcomes. Rooted in a commitment to critically engage with hostile architecture, my practice developed in response to spatial exclusion and the ways design can both reinforce and resist these conditions.

The section begins by discussing how drawing, photography, and mapping were used to document and analyse instances of hostile design in urban spaces where people experiencing homelessness encounter it. These methods provided a way to record, interpret, and communicate the impact of exclusionary spaces. Workshops with students expanded this investigation, encouraging collaborative interaction and dialogue. Through these discussions, a taxonomy of hostile architecture was developed, categorising the various approaches used to control and restrict public space.

The research then shifts towards a material response, using 3D printing to recreate and reframe elements of hostile design. This process not only uncovers hidden design tactics but also makes them accessible for wider examination. These diverse strands of practice culminated in the creation of a toolkit, which acts as both a challenge to dominant narratives around public space and a resource, equipping others with the knowledge to engage with these issues. By combining these methods, this chapter considers how practice can serve as a critical tool for resistance and action.

Building on the methods outlined in the previous chapters, this practice-based research adopts an interdisciplinary approach that combines ethnography, design practice, and anthropological enquiry to interrogate the socio-political conditions of hostile architecture and design. These methods are not treated as distinct entities but as interrelated approaches that respond to such conditions of hostile architecture and this relationship with people experiencing homelessness in London. The research and practice critically engages with the ways public space is mediated, controlled, and experienced. This section explores how these methods—rooted in the practices of observation, documentation, and participation—have shaped the development of a taxonomy of hostile design, and how subsequently they might inform the development of a toolkit. Additionally, this section draws on the *Squatter's Handbook*, first published in the 1970s by the Advisory Service for Squatters, which is a practical guide that challenges ideas of property ownership and the right to inhabit space. It provides strategies for occupying and maintaining spaces, offering a

form of knowledge that resists exclusionary housing policies. This research therefore draws on the '*squatters handbook*' as a way of thinking about space differently. Its focus on reclaiming and adapting urban spaces which then informs the development of a toolkit that highlights and challenges hostile architecture.

My practice demonstrates that these approaches not only offer tools for analysis but also reconfigure the role of the designer-artist as an agent of social change. Moreover, as an artist-designer and educator my practice blurs traditional boundaries to address issues of exclusion, inequality, and marginalisation. Essential to my practice is the notion of questioning the role of design in shaping lived experiences, particularly in urban spaces, and exploring how alternative approaches can encourage more inclusive and equitable futures. Rather than viewing design and education as separate activities, I treat them as interconnected elements of a single, evolving practice. This hybrid approach allows me to critically engage with the structures and systems that perpetuate inequality while also empowering other students, collaborators, and communities to participate in this critical engagement. My practice does not seek to impose solutions but rather to create spaces for reflection, dialogue, and co-creation, where multiple voices can be heard and valued.

"Change can happen in a number of ways: propaganda, semiotic and subconscious communication, persuasion and argument, art, terrorism, social engineering, guilt, social pressure, changing lifestyles, legislation, punishment, taxation, and individual action. Design can be combined with any of these but it is the last one—individual action—that we value most. We believe change starts with the individual and that individual needs to be presented with many options to form an opinion" (Dunne and Raby, 2013, p. 160). With this in mind, in the book Speculative Everything Dunne and Raby emphasise that designs are not meant to provide practical solutions but rather to stimulate critical thinking and a debate about alternative futures. Equally, my work draws on critical design methodologies and adopts an interrogative perspective through which my work reveals underlying social, political, and ethical conditions that are inherent to society.

However, my practice moves beyond traditional applications of critical design by grounding this method in the lived experiences of marginalised individuals and communities. This approach has been particularly evident in my exploration of hostile architecture, where design is weaponised in order to exclude and control vulnerable populations. By documenting, analysing, and reimagining these spatial interventions, I aim to challenge the normalisation of exclusionary design practices and highlight their human impact. For example, my taxonomy of hostile architecture—developed through drawing, mapping, and 3D modelling—seeks to demystify these designs, making their intentions visible and open to discussion.

As discussed earlier, and on a macro level, my practice occupies the intersection of interrogative design, speculative design, hostile architecture, and social design, exploring their relationship with public and private space. It combines art and design as a critical tool to highlight homelessness, examining how space is treated in relation to the body. This type of practice led research is distinguished from other socially informative art practice by factors such as public intervention, and speculative design as a methodology investigating the boundaries between the body and architecture in the context of homelessness. It explores how design can either empower or exclude individuals, especially those experiencing homelessness.
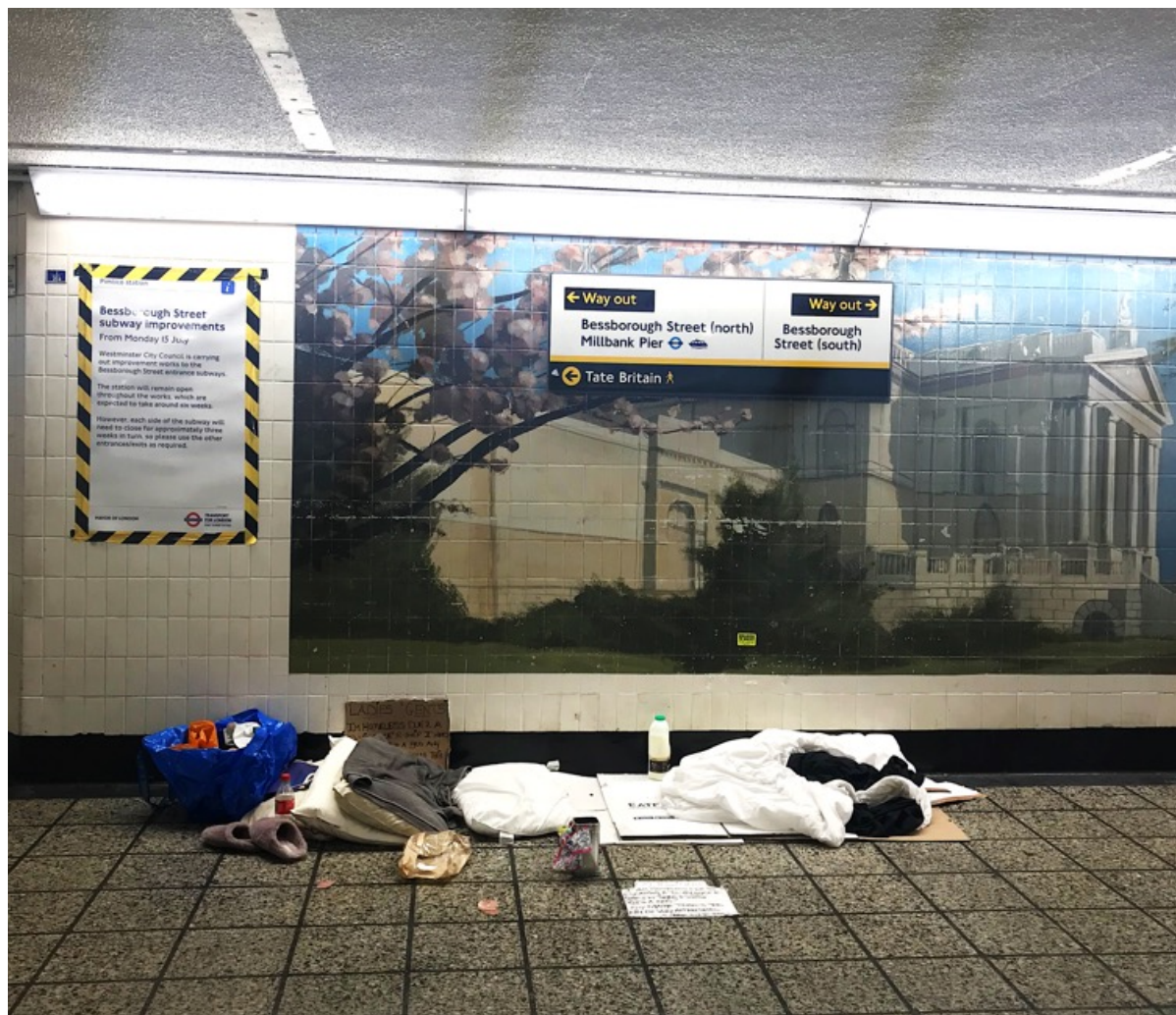
Fig 42: Photograph of sites of habitation in Pimlico Station (Adrienne Bennie, 2019).

Drawing, Photographic and Mapping Practice

My work involves documenting sleep sites occupied by people experiencing homelessness in London, UK. This documentation highlights the significance of the issue in the city. Drawing, in this research, is understood not merely as a representational act but as an embodied and critical enquiry into the physical and spatial politics of hostile architecture and design. In the book, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (2013) by Tim Ingold, he argues that drawing is a way of 'thinking through making,' where the act of sketching is not separate from the process of understanding but is integral to it: "I am interested in drawing as a way of telling" (Ingold, 2013 p. 125). My practice builds on this perspective by using drawing to engage with the materiality and intent of exclusionary design features. I travelled to various boroughs across London, documenting how people experiencing homelessness create their own sense of home in public spaces. In this context, domestic rituals such as sleeping, eating, and changing are performed in full view of the public.

Location Number 16
Chelsea
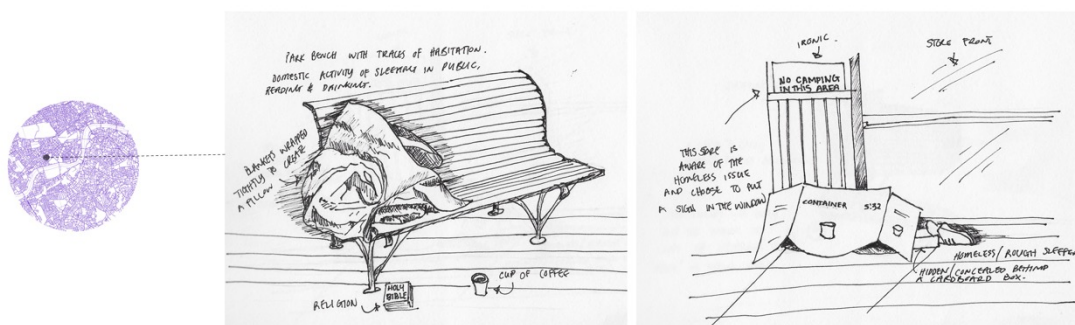
Fig 43: Documenting and analysing domestic rituals in London. (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-20).
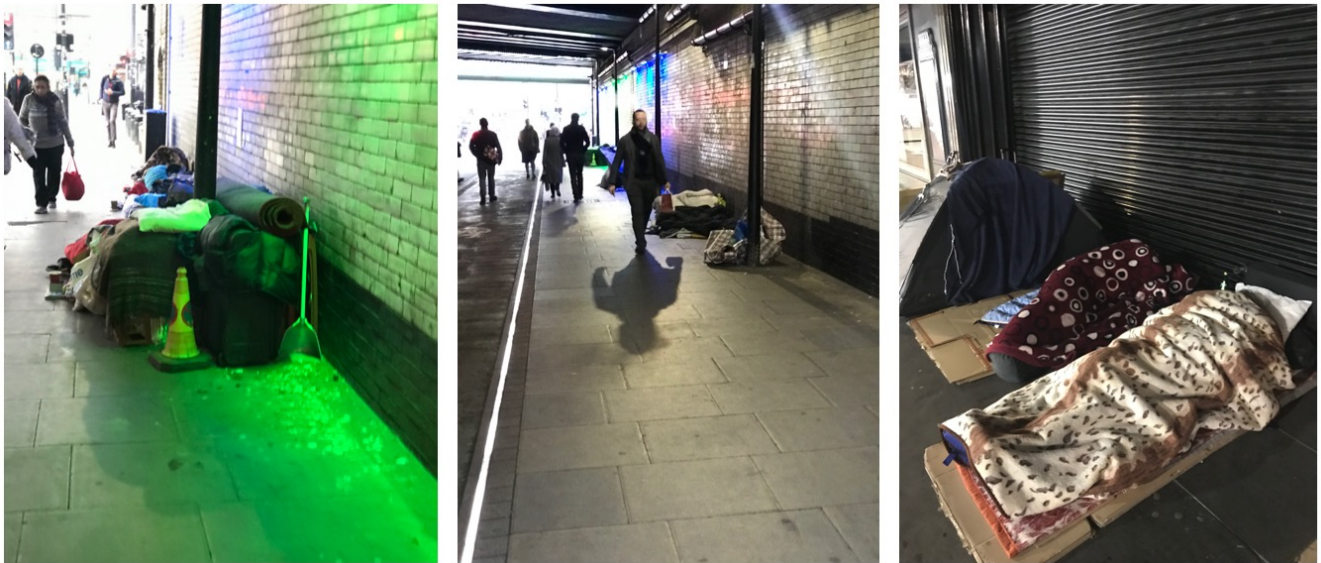
Fig 44: Photographs documenting domestic rituals in London. (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-20).

The documentation and observation of these sites illustrate how passersby perceive individuals who are pushed against walls, often concealed beneath blankets or found materials, in public spaces. These images highlight the contrast between the experiences of homelessness and the everyday lives of those who pass by, drawing attention to the visibility and invisibility of poverty in urban environments (fig. 44).

This observation highlights the complex reality of how private lives unfold in public spaces, where the vulnerability of individuals is often overlooked. In public view, we see the striking contrast between private routines and the backdrop of public vulnerability. Ethnographically, drawing provides an embodied and sustained engagement with the spaces I encounter. This supports Ingold's argument that drawing is not merely representational, but a way of understanding the world through movement, materiality, and perception (2011). It's time to challenge the perception that people experiencing homelessness are any different from the rest of us.

The concept of home is idealised as a place of safety, stability, and privacy, holding a central position in dominant socio-political narratives. Home is typically seen as a private space for refuge, where we can reflect on ourselves away from the scrutiny of others. Yet, people experiencing homelessness are forced onto the streets, overlooked in their own city, and excluded from society. This notion of home is far from universal. For those facing homelessness, the privilege of a stable, private dwelling is absent, leading to the displacement of domestic activities into public view.

If people experiencing homelessness are forced to live on the streets, we must ask: where can they go to the washroom during the day or night? Where can they shower or bathe? Where can they wash their clothes? And how easily can they access these basic necessities? Routine activities, such as eating, sleeping, or washing—taken for granted by those with access to private spaces—become public performances, subject to judgment, hostility, and control.

Homelessness exposes a clear contrast between the comfort of domestic rituals and the harsh realities of life on the streets. In the public eye, this contrast highlights the intersection of private routines and public vulnerability, offering a powerful commentary. Ultimately, it calls for a rethinking of how public and private spaces intersect in the design of contemporary cities.

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Fig 45: Photograph documenting sleepsites in London. (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-20).

Fig 46: Photograph documenting domestic ritual notions of home in London.
(Adrienne Bennie, 2019-20).

Bedtime rituals, typically a time of solace and respite, become a precarious endeavour for those experiencing homelessness. Sleeping on the streets—whether in doorways, under bridges, or in makeshift encampments—exposes individuals to the elements and constant safety risks. The absence of secure, private spaces for rest highlights the need to address the multifaceted issues contributing to homelessness. These visible acts of survival serve as a sobering call to action, urging us to recognise that homelessness is not just a housing issue, but a complex web of interconnected challenges, including economic instability. This stigma is not accidental; it is embedded in the spatial and social organisation of urban environments, where public spaces are increasingly designed to privilege certain behaviours while excluding others. The erosion of privacy is further compounded by the politics of urban design. As I have previously discussed, hostile architecture—such as anti-homeless benches, spikes, and gated alcoves—renders public spaces inhospitable, leaving those without homes with fewer places to perform the necessary acts of living.

This practice demonstrates how privacy is a privilege afforded to those with stable housing, yet it is often treated as an inherent expectation. Despite systemic exclusions, individuals experiencing homelessness engage in acts of resistance, reclaiming public spaces for survival. These actions challenge dominant narratives that render people who are homeless invisible. Creating temporary shelters, occupying parks, or simply sitting in prohibited areas becomes an act of defiance, asserting their right to exist in spaces that exclude them. My research builds on these acts of resistance by documenting how people experiencing homelessness navigate and appropriate public spaces. To capture sites of domestic rituals inhabited by homeless individuals across London, I employed an approach combining ethnographic research, photography, drawing, and spatial mapping. This multifaceted approach allowed me to develop a comprehensive exploration of these rituals.

Fig 47: Photograph documenting domestic rituals, sleep site and notions of home in London. (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-20).

Chapter 4

The Homelessness Monitor: England 2018 and 2019, conducted by Crisis, served as a critical starting point for my exploration of the spatial realities of homelessness. This report provided an essential framework, mapping the scale and systemic causes of homelessness across England, particularly the rise in rough sleeping in cities like London. It offered a comprehensive analysis of trends, policies, and the lived experiences of homelessness. Using this data as a foundation, I sought to engage with the spaces occupied by people experiencing homelessness, focusing on documenting sleep sites–public or semi-public spaces where individuals sought shelter. My practice aimed to capture both their physical characteristics and the broader social and political conditions they represent. As previously mentioned, I employed drawing, photography, and spatial mapping to develop a nuanced understanding of how individuals navigate and inhabit urban spaces under precarious conditions, while also engaging with the material and sensory dimensions of homelessness. By focusing on the spatial and environmental contexts of these sites, I aimed to uncover how urban design, public policy, and social attitudes intersect to shape the lived experiences of those forced to inhabit such spaces.

By visiting various locations highlighted in *The Homelessness Monitor: England* 2018 and 2019, I was able to identify key boroughs in London as starting points for my research This allowed me to observe these rituals firsthand, gaining insights by introducing myself to the people experiencing homelessness within the urban environments I encountered. Additionally, drawing played a role in the initial documentation of sleep sites, offering a means to slow down, reflect, and engage with the spaces I was recording. Unlike photography, which captures moments in an instant, drawing required prolonged observation, encouraging me to notice details that might have otherwise been missed.

For example, while sketching a sleep site in central London, I became attuned to the textures of the space–the weathered concrete, the traces of soot from passing trains, and the makeshift bedding arranged to maximise shelter from the elements. In this instance drawing was utilised to capture the interplay between the built environment and traces of human inhabitation. The space bore the marks of its temporary inhabitants: flattened cardboard, discarded clothing other remnants. Through this process, I came to see drawing not just as a method of documentation but as a way of thinking and questioning. The process revealed how people adapt to hostile urban environments, transforming inhospitable spaces into sites of survival through ingenuity and resilience.

Through such methods, I have sought to highlight the spatial typologies and socio-political conditions that shape these experiences. This method is utilised in response to Sarah Pink's (2007) ethnographic methodologies that emphasise the importance of ethnography as "a process of creating and representing knowledge about society, culture and individuals" (Pink, 2007. p. 22), thereby demonstrating the importance of capturing the sensory and emotional dimensions of lived experience. Additionally, drawing also encouraged an ethical sensitivity to the people whose lives intersected with these spaces. Spending time sketching a site meant being physically present and aware of my role as an engaged rather than disengaged observer. This awareness informed how I approached my practice, ensuring that my engagement with these spaces respected the privacy and dignity of those who inhabited them.

Fig 48: Drawing from a series that explores traces of habitation in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-21).

Fig 49: Drawing from a series that explores traces of habitation in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-21).

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Fig 50: Sketching traces of habitation in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-21).

BELT STRAP
BUCKLE SYSTEM
TO ROLL & PACK AWAYS

Carry STRAP

ROLLS INTO A TRANSPORTABLE
BAG? DURABILITY.
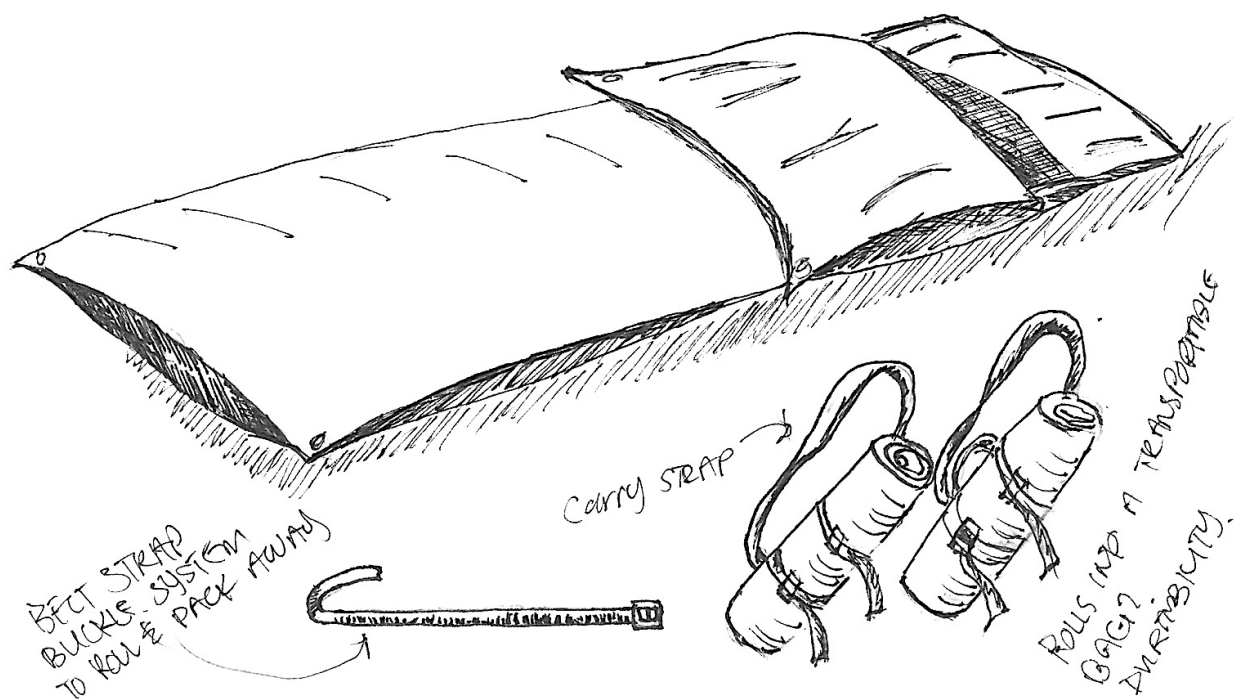
Fig 51: Drawing from a series that explores traces of habitation in London, looking at objects and belongings (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-21).

Photography complemented my drawing practice by offering a different way of engaging with sleep sites. While drawing encouraged time and reflection, photography captured the immediacy of a space—the interplay of light and shadow, the arrangement of objects, and the traces of human presence. It provided a visual record, preserving the essence of these moments. My drawing method, by contrast, ensured the anonymity of those I encountered. However, I approached photography with caution, aware of its potential to objectify or exploit the lives of people experiencing homelessness. Throughout this practice, my focus remained on the material and spatial aspects of sleep sites rather than on the individuals themselves. Photography became a tool for uncovering the layers of meaning embedded in urban spaces, with each photograph offering a fragment of a larger narrative, prompting reflection on how these spaces are shaped by both human agency and systemic neglect.

Fig 52: Photograph from a series that explores traces of habitation in London, looking at objects and belongings (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-21).

Fig 53: Photograph from a series that explores traces of habitation in London, looking at objects and belongings at night (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-21).

Fig 54: Photograph from a series that explores traces of habitation in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-21).

Fig 55: Documenting domestic rituals in London during the pandemic, police trying to move people on (Adrienne Bennie, 2020).

Drawing on geospatial data from the Homelessness Monitor and field observations, I created a map documenting the distribution and characteristics of sleep sites and spaces where people experiencing where encountered, across various boroughs in London. By employing mapping techniques, I plotted the locations of these sites, resulting in a spatial analysis that contextualises their significance within the urban landscape. This method captures the intricate details of domestic rituals in London, offering a deeper understanding of this often-overlooked aspect of life.

Mapping synthesised the information gathered through drawing and photography, transforming fragmented observations into cohesive visual narratives. It allowed me to explore how people experiencing homelessness navigate and negotiate urban spaces, making use of what is available while contending with the constraints of hostile architecture and policing practices.

My practice uses mapping not just as a representation of physical locations but as a tool to analyse the socio-political forces that render these spaces necessary. In this sense, drawing, photography, and spatial mapping are integral methods in investigating how people experiencing homelessness adapt to and inhabit urban environments. These approaches are not merely forms of documentation but serve as critical tools for engaging with the material, spatial, and political conditions of homelessness.

The use of these methods in my practice and research was both methodological and conceptual, shaping the process and its outcomes. While documenting domestic rituals in various locations around London was a key aspect of this work, it was crucial to me to capture the essence of these rituals while safeguarding the privacy and dignity of those involved. Drawing techniques played a central role in achieving this, as they allowed me to document the nuances of these rituals without revealing the identities of the individuals. This approach preserved their anonymity and emphasised the importance of ethical considerations when working with vulnerable communities. The drawings and photographs in this research not only record physical structures but also attempt to capture the performative aspects of everyday survival—such as how a piece of cardboard becomes a mattress, how a plastic bag serves as a makeshift pillow, or how a sleeping position adapts to the angles of an alcove.
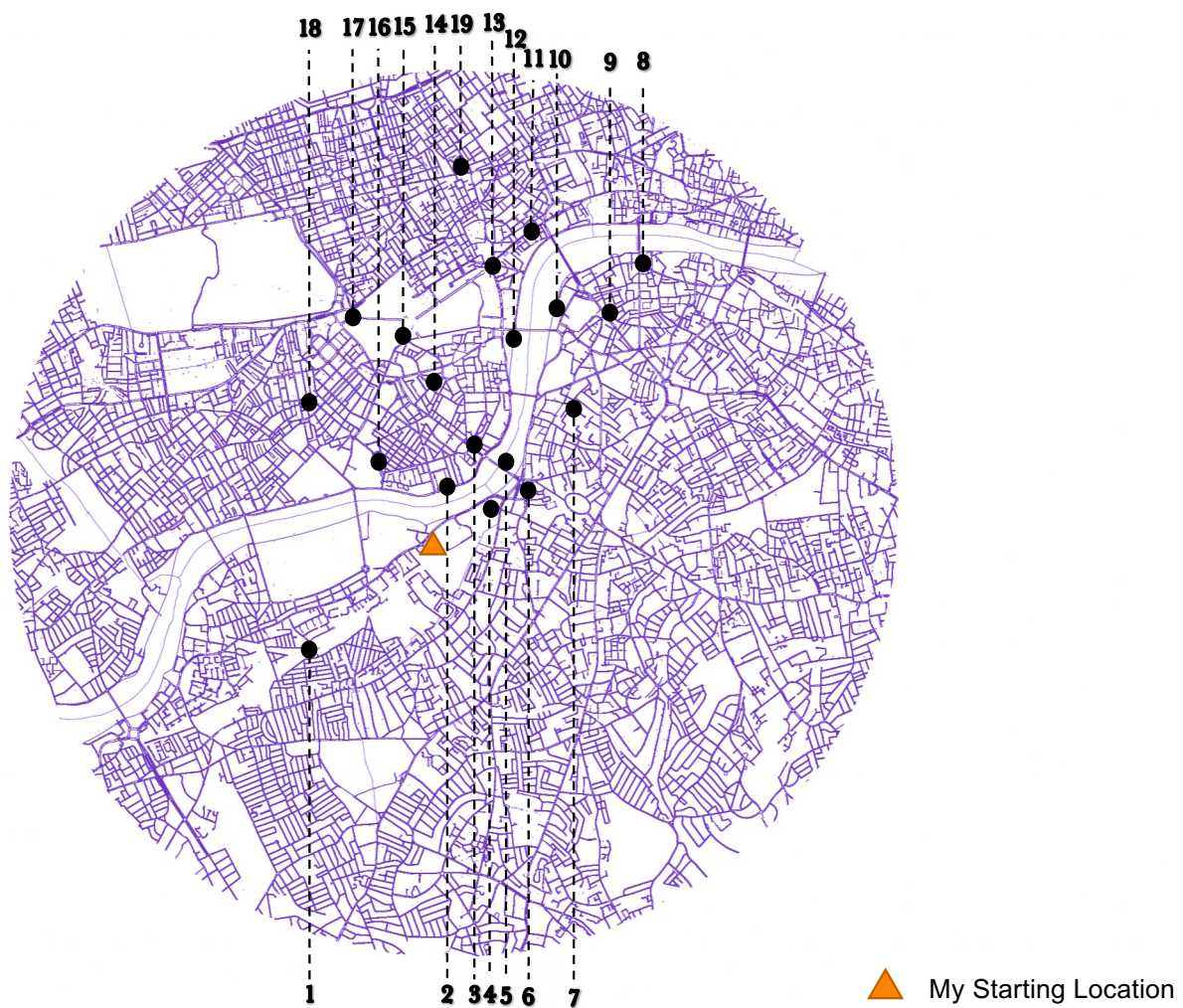
Fig 56: Map developed to plot spatial typologies and patterns of habitation within 5 mile radius in London as a result of restrictions from covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

These observations highlight how people transform hostile public spaces into sites of habitation, even if only temporarily. Photography captured ephemeral moments that drawings might not fully convey—such as changes in weather, the accumulation of personal belongings, or material traces left by those seeking refuge. However, due to the ethical complexities of photographing vulnerable individuals, the focus of this research was on documenting spatial conditions rather than the people themselves. This approach is informed by Rose Wiles et al.'s (2008) reflections on visual ethics. The photographs produced here aim to highlight urban exclusions without reducing people's lived experiences to aesthetic objects. Rather than positioning individuals as subjects, photography is used to examine the infrastructures and micro-geographies of homelessness—doorways, underpasses, benches with dividers—where domestic life unfolds under precarious conditions. Additionally, spatial mapping was employed as a methodological approach to document domestic rituals in London. Mapping these spatial typologies allowed me to visualise and categorise the various locations where these rituals took place. As a method, mapping extends these investigations by situating sleep sites and makeshift dwellings within the broader spatial politics of the city.

This spatial analysis provided a broader context for understanding these rituals and revealed patterns and connections between sites. For example, I found that rituals in more public spaces often had a communal aspect (fig. 47 & fig. 57). By charting the locations and material characteristics of these spaces, this research highlights how urban policy and design decisions shape the experience of homelessness. Mapping, therefore, is not just a tool for geographic documentation, but a critical intervention that exposes the hidden struggles of those forced to live in public space. Together, these methods go beyond mere documentation; they interrogate how acts of domestic life persist in environments designed to prevent them. The ability to perform basic rituals—such as cooking, washing, and resting—is essential to human dignity, yet for those experiencing homelessness, these activities must be adapted, concealed, or negotiated within restrictive urban spaces.

At the same time, I recognise the need to critically reflect on my own positionality as a researcher. My practice has been shaped by an awareness of the power dynamics inherent in documenting and representing the lives of marginalised individuals. This awareness has informed my commitment to ethical research practices, which include seeking informed consent where possible and ensuring that my methods respect the privacy and dignity of those I encounter. Equally, by employing these methods, the research challenges dominant narratives surrounding homelessness, which often frame rough sleeping as a failure of the individual, rather than as a systemic issue shaped by urban policies, housing inequalities, and socio-economic conditions. Through drawing, photography, and mapping, this research repositions acts of domesticity in public space as both necessary and political, arguing that the right to inhabit the city must extend beyond those who have access to private property.

Fig 57: Photograph depicting homelessness in London in the median (landscape zone) of a highway (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

Positioning Practice

In my view, our society's social, cultural, and economic issues inform my practice, and as an artist-designer, I believe it is essential to be conscious of the world we live in. My practice is grounded in a keen awareness of these concepts. I believe that as designers, we often situate our work within the context of current social, cultural, and economic events, sometimes without fully recognising the underlying issues. Design is never a neutral act; it is embedded within power structures that dictate who has access, visibility, and agency within public and private spaces.

My practice aims to highlight the role of the designer-artist in addressing 'real world' issues, engaging with social justice concerns through design. Design, as I see it, is an articulatory practice that can be sensitive to interventions that seek 'to find ways to address specific needs and create better socio-spatial relationships' (Gieseking et al., 2014). Through the lens of spatial design, I focus on the issue of homelessness, particularly as it becomes increasingly visible in public spaces.

I view my role not only as a artist-designer but also as someone who critically interrogates the systems that underpin design itself. This aligns with Victor Papanek's assertion that "design, if it is to be ecologically responsible and socially responsive, must be revolutionary and radical" (Papanek, 1971, p. 61). Papanek advocates for prioritising human need over profit, a belief that resonates with my commitment to challenging spatial injustices and exclusionary urban policies. I adopt methodologies used by practitioners like Lucy Orta and Mierle Laderman Ukeles to address homelessness, particularly in London.

It is essential for me to stress that my perspective is not detached or neutral; rather, it acknowledges the systemic inequalities embedded in the design of public space and seeks to make these inequalities visible. By employing decolonial methods, I aim to dismantle the Eurocentric frameworks that have long shaped whose spatial practices are valued and whose are erased.

Moreover, Papanek's advocacy for socially engaged design is particularly relevant to demonstrate how decolonial approaches inform my work. His belief that "there are professions more harmful than industrial design, but only a very few of them" (Papanek, 1971, p. 14) is a reminder of the ethical responsibility that comes with being a designer. Traditional design often serves the interests of capitalism, reinforcing exclusionary policies and neglecting the needs of marginalised communities. By embedding these critical concerns within my research, I position my practice within a lineage of socially engaged and interventionist design. Rather than accepting the limitations of traditional design methodologies, my work actively critiques and resists the structures that produce spatial injustice. In doing so, I contribute to ongoing discussions around decolonising design education and practice, advocating for an approach that is both socially responsible and politically engaged. Overall, Papanek's work serves as a reminder that design is not simply about problem-solving—it is about questioning the systems that create the problems in the first place.

Fig 58: Photograph of the Camden bench, documenting hostile design in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

In The Margins: A Spatial Enquiry into Homelessness in London

This section explores *In The Margins*, an artwork exhibited at Camberwell Space Gallery and The Triangle Gallery in Chelsea. It is a designed piece that operates as a spatial enquiry into homelessness in London. Developed through an iterative process of site-specific observation, research, and documentation, the work interrogates the ways in which public space is controlled, regulated, and rendered inaccessible for certain bodies. It highlights the boroughs with the highest rates of homelessness, focusing on the east London borough of Newham, which has the highest number of people experiencing homelessness in London–1 in every 24, according to statistics released by the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) in 2018. This information is crucial for understanding the urgency surrounding this social issue, and such reports also inform the technical foundation of my practice.

This artwork challenges dominant narratives around urban space and its intended users. My intention was to stimulate a dialogue about how the city controls space for people who are homeless through data representation and spatial mapping. The work uses a designed logo of a broken home to represent the statistical value placed on people experiencing homelessness, symbolising society's perception of this issue. It is an issue that is known, but purposefully neglected, and pushed out of visibility. Through the construction of such spatial typologies in *In The Margins,* the work brings attention to the often-overlooked spatial negotiations of homelessness, foregrounding questions of visibility and agency in the contemporary city.
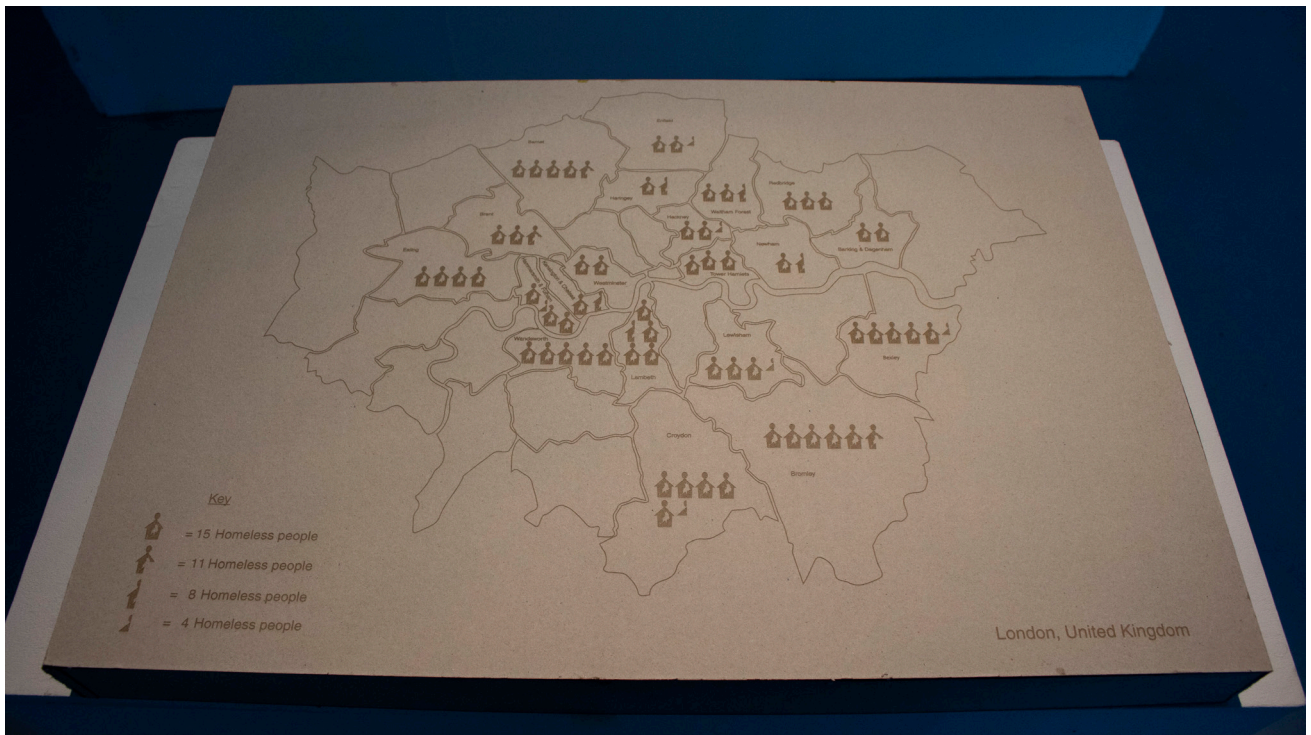
Fig 59: In The Margins, Laser Etch on Greyboard (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-20).

Fig 60: Close up of In The Margins, Laser Etch on Greyboard (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-20).
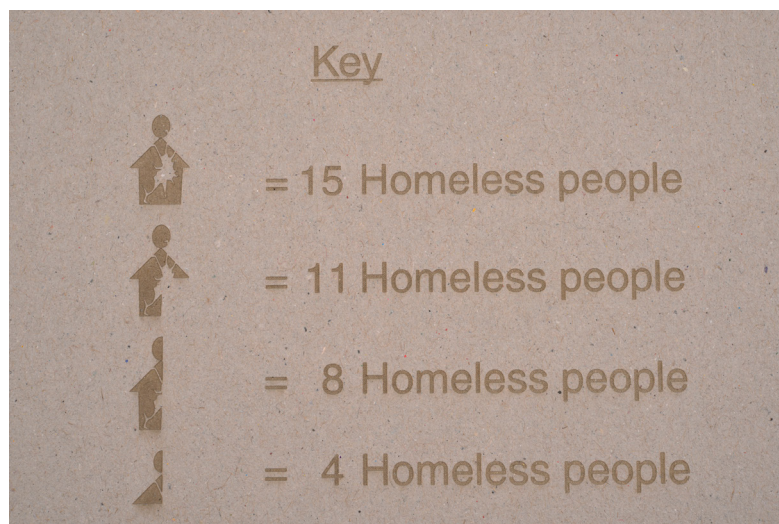
Fig 60: Close up of In The Margins, Laser Etch on Greyboard (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-20).

Fig 61: Viewer interacting with In The Margins while on exhibition (Adrienne Bennie, 2020).

Chapter 4

This notion echoes Lefebvre's (1968) perspective of the 'right to the city,' which frames urban space as a site of struggle, where access and occupation are contested. Art and design have long served as powerful mediums to provoke thought and dialogue on pressing societal issues. In the context of homelessness in London, this work highlights the often-invisible mechanisms through which urban spaces are regulated and controlled. I aimed to bridge the gap between complex reports on homelessness and public understanding by transforming empirical data into a tangible, spatial experience. This approach sought to demystify the systemic issues surrounding homelessness, making them more accessible to a wider audience.

Similarly, the *Homelessness: Reframed* exhibition at London's Saatchi Gallery (fig. 62 and fig. 63) showcased works that reflect personal experiences of homelessness, humanising the issue and challenging prevailing stereotypes. My approach, through design and artistic interpretation, invites the viewer to confront the realities of homelessness and consider the societal structures that perpetuate it. It extends beyond traditional reports, which are often limited to academic or policy-making circles, broadening the discourse to include diverse public perspectives.

The work is also situated within a decolonial design framework, aimed at interrogating the broader socio-political structures that sustain spatial injustice. Escobar (2018) suggests that decoloniality in design requires a rethinking of space and materiality beyond Western-centric epistemologies, advocating for design practices that respond to localised experiences and struggles. This artwork, therefore, serves not only as an aesthetic intervention but as a means of critically engaging with urban space, making visible the systemic exclusions embedded within its architecture. Through this work, I offer alternative ways of understanding and representing marginalised experiences within the urban environment.

Fig 62: Invisible Word, exhibited as part of the Homelessness Reframed exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery (curated by Wendy Abrams and Eleven Eleven Foundation, 2024).

Fig 63: All I Got, exhibited as part of the Homelessness Reframed exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery (Alexandria Julouis, 2024).

Chapter 4

Fig 64: Hostile Design Workshop with year 1 BA (hons) Product & Furniture Design Students (Adrienne Bennie, 2022).

Student Workshops

Co-creation, as an approach within my practice, goes beyond mere collaboration; it serves as a means of critically interrogating knowledge production within design research. A key component of this practice-based research involves the workshops I have hosted with BA (Hons) Product and Furniture Design students since 2022 (in-person), which focus on exploring hostile design and architecture in London. Rather than positioning students (participants) as passive contributors, these workshops frame them as co-creators of the perspectives presented. This approach moves away from extractive methodologies that often reinforce hierarchical structures, instead advocating for an embedded, relational form of knowledge-making that values lived experiences as a critical source of insight. One of the fundamental challenges in design research is ensuring that participation is meaningful rather than tokenistic.

For example, Sanders and Stappers (2008) argue that co-design must move beyond surface-level inclusion to actively redistribute creative agency, enabling participants to shape not only the outcomes but also the process itself. In my workshops, this was enacted through iterative dialogue and non-hierarchical facilitation methods that allowed students to define the direction of enquiry, challenging the conventional authority of the designer-researcher and educator. In the context of design pedagogy, co-creation in my practice can be seen as a means of disrupting dominant narratives that have traditionally shaped design education. Akama, Pink, and Sumartojo highlight the need for design research to embrace the notion of 'uncertainty', where "knowledge is not only situated in disciplines, and that knowing is not emergent from the encounters that go beyond disciplines" (Akama, Pink, and Sumartojo, 2018, p. 33). This idea suggests that knowledge is not produced in isolation but emerges through complex relational networks. In applying this concept to my workshops, co-creation was not simply a methodological choice but an epistemological stance—one that recognised the interconnectedness of social, cultural, and political structures within the act of designing.

Hostile design, often hidden in plain sight, involves the creation of public spaces and products that discourage certain behaviours, disproportionately affecting marginalised communities. Through these workshops, I aimed to raise awareness among my students about the ethical implications of design decisions. As an educator, I've always been passionate about cultivating a holistic understanding of design. It's not just about creating aesthetically pleasing objects; it's also about considering the broader impact of design on society, particularly in relation to social justice and equity. Hostile design and architecture embody this ethical dilemma. Furthermore, my practice-based research revolves around bridging the gap between theory and practice in design education. I firmly believe that students should not only be proficient in design techniques but also be critical thinkers who are aware of the ethical implications of their choices.

Fig 65: Hostile Design Workshop with year 1 BA (hons) Product & Furniture Design Students (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

Fig 66: Introducing Hostile Design to year 1 BA (hons) Product & Furniture Design Students (Adrienne Bennie, 2022).

These workshops on hostile design were a crucial part of this research, aiming to instil in students a sense of responsibility as designers. Rather than focusing solely on generating outputs, the workshops sought to reveal the processes of negotiation and exchange that occur when multiple perspectives are brought into dialogue. By exploring hostile design, we challenged our preconceptions of design and its role in society, examining how seemingly innocuous design decisions can perpetuate exclusion and inequality. This awareness is pivotal in cultivating a new generation of designers who are attuned to the needs of diverse communities and prioritise socially responsible design.

Within a decolonial context, this notion of co-creation disrupts the historical dominance of Eurocentric epistemologies in design research. In *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds* (2018), Arturo Escobar argues that decolonising design requires an ontological shift, where localised, situated knowledge is foregrounded over universalist models. Therefore, my workshops sought to challenge dominant frameworks by engaging with students whose perspectives are often marginalised within formal design discourse, using a co-design methodology informed by how "communities, activists, and some outside participants (including expert designers) engage in a collaborative exercise" (Escobar, 2018, p. 187).

Beyond pedagogy and decolonisation, co-creation also carries implications for activism within design practice. Rather than viewing design as neutral or purely aesthetic, these workshops positioned design as a tool for critical intervention. Following the work of DiSalvo (2012), who describes 'adversarial design' as a "theoretically informed construct for understanding, describing and analysing a range of objects and practices" (DiSalvo, 2012, p. 20), these notions of critical practice challenge power structures. The workshops aimed to disrupt existing narratives around homelessness, urban space, and public policy. By involving students in the process of mapping, documenting, and reimagining urban spaces, the workshops created opportunities for alternative spatial enquiries. Furthermore, they embodied socially engaged practice, encouraging students to use their design skills as a force for positive change. We discussed how designers can actively engage with communities to understand their unique needs and co-create inclusive solutions.

Fig 67: Hostile Design workshop discussion with BA PFD Students (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

One of the most enlightening aspects of the workshops was the diverse range of outcomes they generated (see appendix). Each student brought a unique perspective to the task of spatially mapping encounters with hostile design in London. In one workshop, I worked with approximately 70 first-year students, who were asked to document these encounters through photography or drawing, utilising the same approach I have been employing in this research and practice. The exercise encouraged students to consider the emotional and psychological impact of hostile design on individuals, an aspect that often goes unnoticed. This multifaceted approach not only deepened their understanding of the issue but also demonstrated the versatility of design as a tool for raising awareness and advocating for change. It highlights the potential for design education to extend its influence into communities, cultivating a sense of responsibility and activism among students.

While the workshops focused on hostile architecture and design, I also encouraged students to critically analyse the colonial histories underpinning public space and urban design through discussion. Anti-homeless architecture, for example, is not just a contemporary phenomenon but part of a broader historical continuum of spatial control rooted in colonial and racialised power structures. This analysis draws on scholars like Mignolo (2011), who emphasises the need to 'delink' from colonial epistemologies and adopt pluriversal approaches that foreground diverse knowledge systems and practices (Mignolo, 2011). In practice, this meant incorporating examples from non-Western contexts, such as community-led design initiatives, to challenge the dominance of Eurocentric models. By exposing students to these perspectives, I aimed to create a more inclusive and critical design approach, one that acknowledges global contributions to design and empowers students to question and transform the systems they are inheriting.

Furthermore, the outcomes of the exercise extended beyond the workshops, with some third-year students choosing to investigate these issues further within their final-year studio projects.

In summary, the workshops on hostile design and architecture marked a pivotal moment in both my teaching practice and research journey. They highlighted the complex interplay between design, ethics, and society, demonstrating how socially engaged practice can serve as a powerful tool for addressing pressing issues in our built environment. This reflects the evolving role of designers—not just as creators of objects, but as catalysts for positive social change.
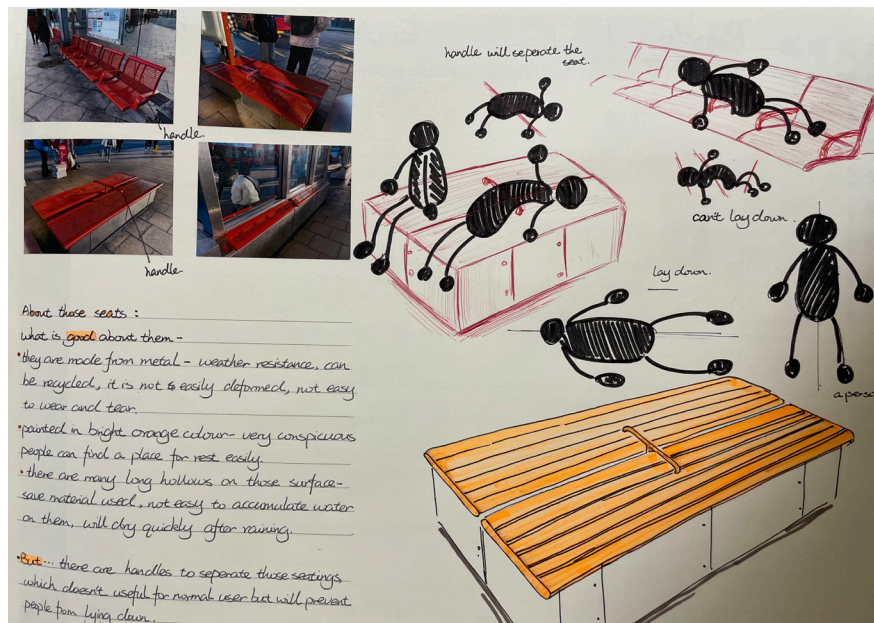
Fig 68: Hostile Design student response (Alice Yuan, 2022).

SPIKES IN HOLBORN (ARUNDEL ST)

This was in a very work based area of holborn. Surrounded by office blocks. At the front of an entrance into one of these blocks. It was in a very busy/open area.

SPIKES TO STOP HOMELESS PEOPLE SLEEPING THERE
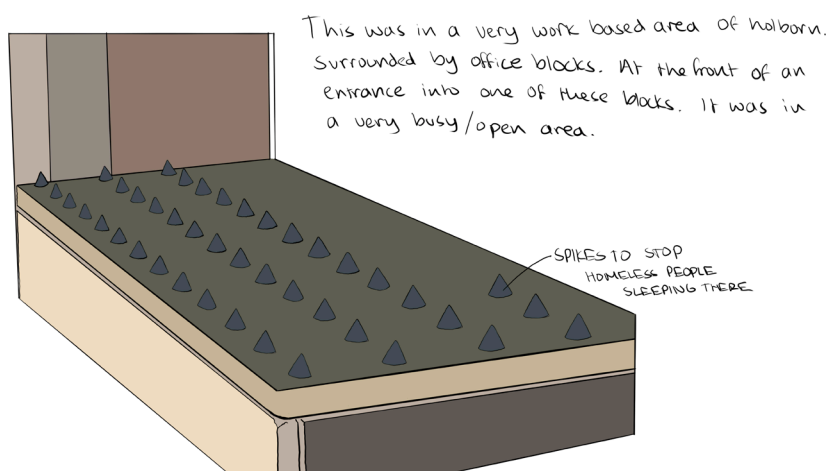
Fig 69: Hostile Design student response (Archie Thompson, 2022).

The following is the difference between the angle of the foot and the wall of people sitting and leaning on the seat

leg

leg

Wall

Stand

Wall

sit

Fig 70: Hostile Design student response (Keqi Li, 2022).

HOSTILE Design

Benchs In the amalfi Coast Italy

This Bench design was made with the intent for Short Rests. this Bench is made with Metal Rods ening for support but not quite enough for comfor. The Benchs are Spred out along a long walk to the Beach front though are the bny wates these humin Benchs whom added to allow people to quickly rest But Not Stop and relax (thans for the Bench). It's also curved to prevent Sleeping

Fig 71: Hostile Design student response (Luca Concilia, 2022).

The second location explored was a public garden space by the Thames. The space has open seating which is made of wood and concrete.

RIVERSIDE WALK GARDENS

The way in which the design is built does not allow individuals to rest or sleep because the surface is not completely flat.

Fig 72: Hostile Design student response (Mercedes Plazola, 2022).

Near my house   Around the Big Ben
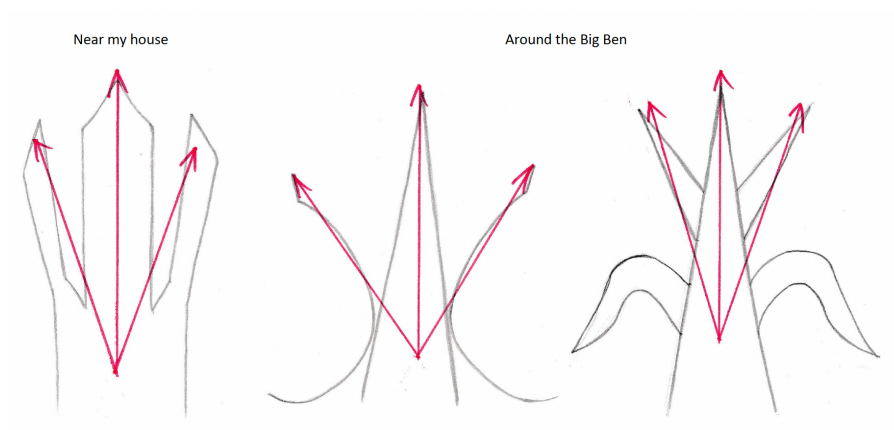
Fig 73: Hostile Design student response (Kengo Horikoshi, 2022).
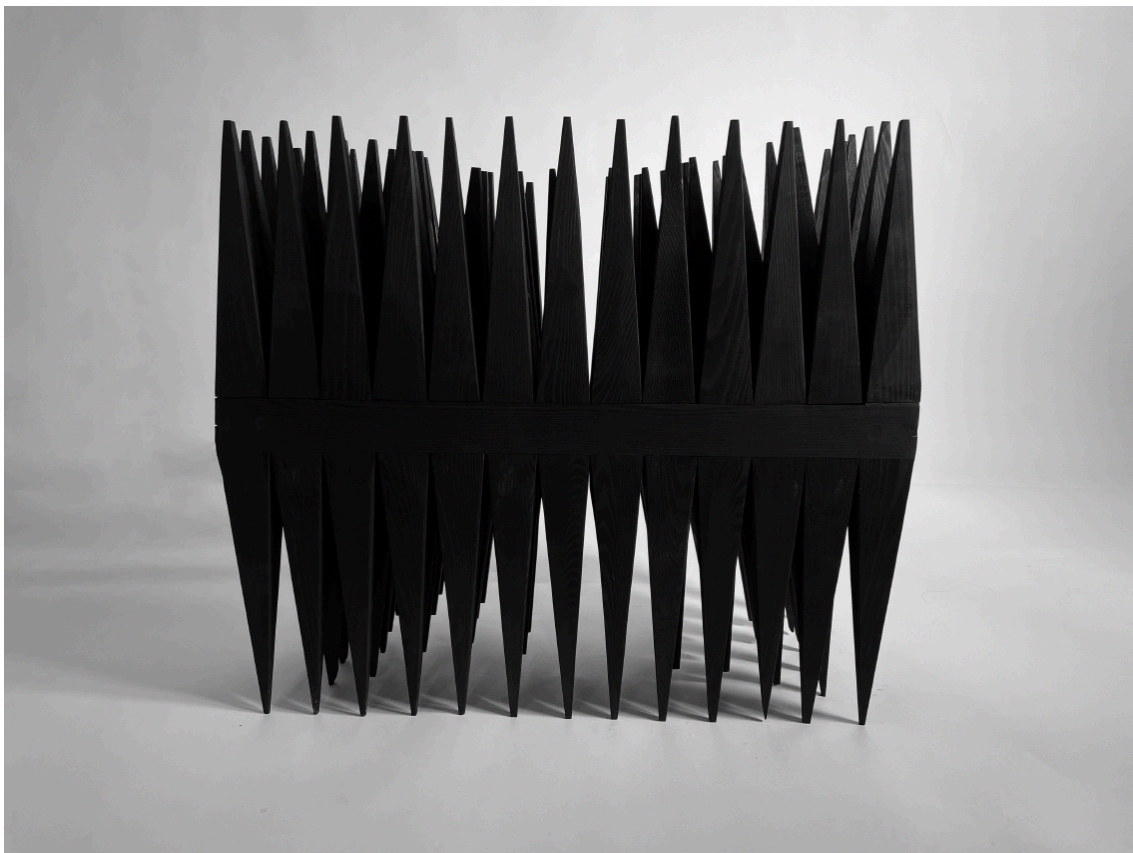
Fig 74: (Dis)Comfort Chair. Year 3 BA Product & Furniture Design student I worked closely with (Klinta Locmele, 2023-24).

Taxonomy of Hostile Design

Hostile design manifests in urban spaces as an implicit yet powerful means of regulating behaviour, subtly enforcing socio-political hierarchies through the built environment. While often framed as a strategy for maintaining order or enhancing security, such interventions frequently serve to exclude, control, or marginalise specific groups—particularly those who rely on public space for rest, shelter, or social interaction. My research develops a taxonomy of hostile architecture, drawing on spatial analysis through drawings, photographs, and examinations of habitation processes. This taxonomy is not simply a classification of design tactics, but a critical interrogation of how spatial interventions shape lived experience, often with unintended—or deliberately exclusionary—consequences.

Through this research, I have explored how urban infrastructures dictate movement and interaction. The spatial analysis, captured through photographic documentation and site-specific drawings, reveals deterrent strategies: benches with central armrests to prevent reclining, sloped ledges that make sitting uncomfortable, or spikes embedded in surfaces to discourage loitering. These artefacts of urban design are not passive; they actively shape behaviour, enforcing spatial discipline often hidden in plain sight. By mapping these interventions, my research situates hostile design within broader discussions on power, access, and the right to the city.

Location Number 14
Mayfair

Fig 75: Documenting and mapping hostile architecture and design in London(Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

Location Number 12
Covent Garden
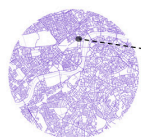
Fig 76: Documenting and mapping hostile architecture and design in London(Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

Location Number 14
Mayfair

Fig 77: Documenting and mapping hostile architecture and design in London(Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

This critical perspective was further developed through a series of student workshops, where participants engaged directly with hostile environments through embodied enquiry. These workshops encouraged students to navigate and critically respond to spaces imbued with exclusionary design tactics, using photo elicitation and documentation processes. By positioning themselves as both users and observers, students were able to uncover the subtle ways in which design influences movement, interaction, and a sense of belonging within a space.

Their findings, articulated through drawings and photographic studies, provided additional layers to the taxonomy—highlighting not only the materiality of hostile design but also its affective and experiential dimensions.

Hostile design, or hostile architecture, can be categorised into several taxonomic lev-els to better understand its various forms and purposes. At the highest level, it can be divided into two primary categories: physical and psychological.

Physical hostile design includes elements such as spiked benches, sloped surfaces, and restrictive fixtures aimed at discouraging specific activities, often targeting home-less individuals or loiterers. Psychological hostile design, on the other hand, employs subtler techniques like high-frequency noise or uncomfortable aesthetics to deter par-ticular behaviours without the use of physical barriers. Within these categories, hostile design can manifest in forms like hostile landscaping, defensive furniture, and exclusionary infrastructure. Understanding this taxonomy helps illuminate the multifaceted ways in which urban spaces are shaped to influence behaviour, sometimes at the ex-pense of inclusivity and social well-being.

Anti-homeless lighting embedded in the design of building awnings around oxford circus
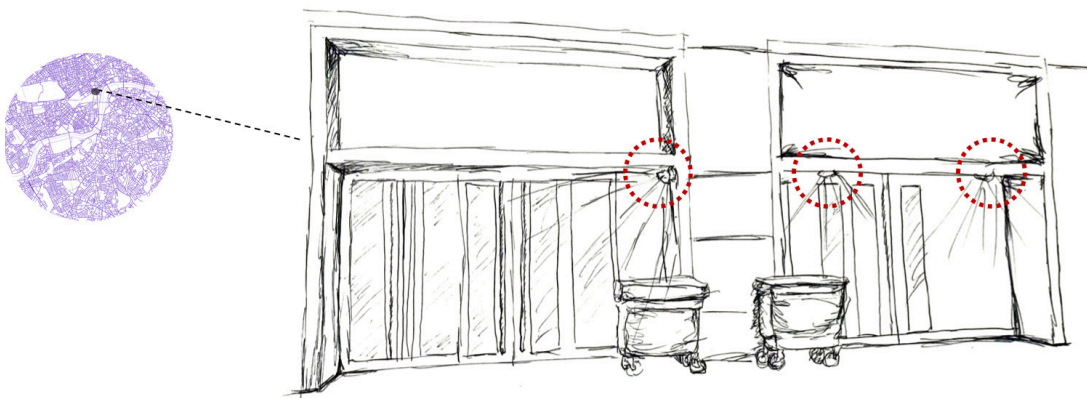
Fig 78: Sketch documenting and mapping hostile architecture and design in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

The Taxonomy

1. Anti-Homeless Measures:

- Spikes or protrusions on flat surfaces: Placing spikes or metal studs on ledges, windowsills, or benches to prevent individuals from sleeping or resting.
- Sloped benches or uncomfortable seating: Designing seating areas with uncomfortable materials or angled surfaces to discourage long-term use.
- Public space layout: Manipulating the design of public spaces to make them less accommodating to people who are homeless, such as removing benches or installing high armrests to prevent lying down.

2. Anti-Loitering Measures:

- Uncomfortable flooring or deterrent surfaces: Using materials like gravel, rough textures, or metal studs to discourage people from standing or congregating in specific areas.
- High-frequency sound devices: Emitting high-pitched or irritating sounds that only younger individuals can hear, deterring loitering or gatherings.
- Motion-activated sprinklers: Installing sprinkler systems that activate when motion is detected, targeting loitering individuals to disperse them.

3. Anti-Skateboarding Measures:

- Skate-stoppers: Placing metal ridges or obstructions on ledges, handrails, and other skateable surfaces to prevent skateboarding.
- Rough surfaces: Applying coatings or textures to surfaces to make them less smooth, making it difficult for skateboarders to perform tricks or manoeuvres.
- Skate-deterrent barriers: Installing low walls, planters, or other obstacles to prevent skateboarders from accessing certain areas or performing tricks.

4. Anti-Vandalism Measures:

- Anti-graffiti coatings: Applying specialised coatings to surfaces that make it difficult for graffiti to adhere or that can be easily cleaned.
- Anti-sticker surfaces: Using materials or coatings that make it challenging for stickers or posters to stick to surfaces.
- Surveillance systems: Installing visible security cameras or signage to deter potential vandals.

5. Exclusionary Design:

- Uncomfortable or discriminatory seating arrangements: Designing seating arrangements that are uncomfortable for certain individuals or that separate groups based on socioeconomic status, race, or other characteristics.
- Inaccessible features: Implementing design elements that hinder individuals with disabilities,

such as lack of ramps, narrow doorways, or inadequate signage.
- Poor lighting or lack of amenities: Creating an unwelcoming environment by neglecting maintenance, cleanliness, or basic amenities like public restrooms or seating.

Fig 79: Documentation of hostile design features in London showing how subtly such elements are in the built environment (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

The Process

Documenting the Taxonomy

This aspect of the research began with fieldwork, conducted through site visits to a range of urban locations where hostile design was suspected or evident. These included transport hubs, commercial districts, public squares, and residential developments—spaces where access and use are often subtly, or explicitly, controlled. I approached these sites with an open, observational methodology, allowing patterns of exclusion to emerge through sustained engagement rather than assuming their presence from the outset. Using photography and on-site sketches, I documented the spatial features that shape human movement and behaviour. I paid particular attention to materials, form, and placement—how surfaces were angled, where barriers were positioned, and how seating was designed to limit extended occupation. These drawings and photographs were not mere representations but analytical tools, helping to dissect the rationale behind these interventions. By redrawing these elements in isolation and in context, I was able to deconstruct their intended functions and unintended consequences.

Beyond simply categorising hostile design features, I aimed to understand how these interventions interact with human behaviour. This required observing how space was structured and how people adapted, resisted, or conformed to these conditions.

- SPIKES PLACED AT
A SINGLE SEAT DISTANCE
"LOGIC".

- METAL PLACED ON
UNDULATING WOODEN
BENCH / SEATING AREA
to DETER SKATING/
RESTING IN PARK.
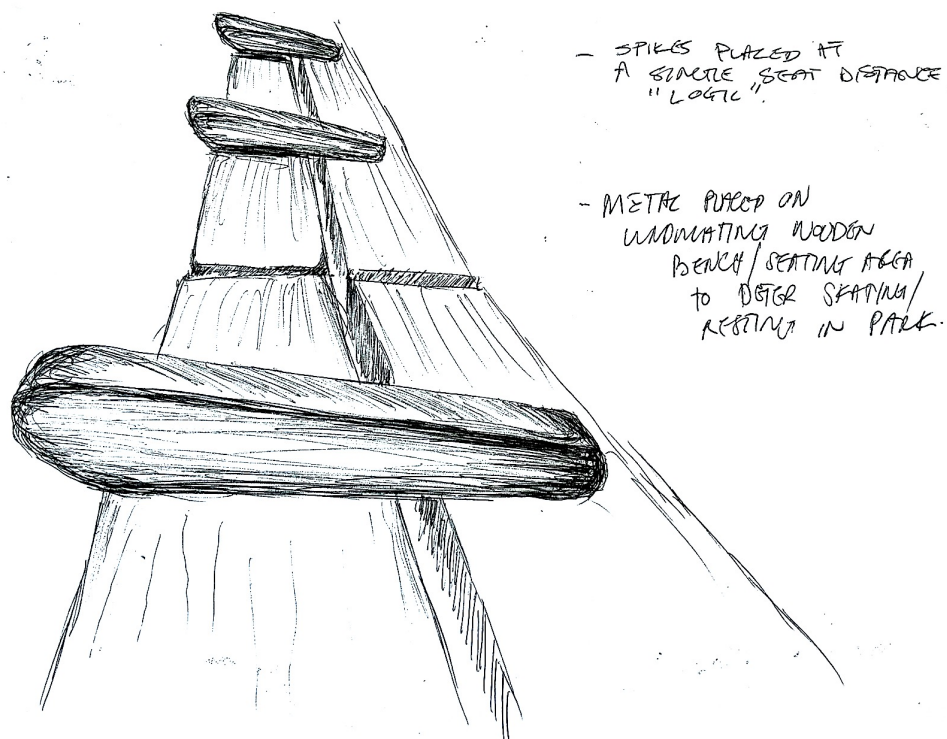
Fig 80: Documentation of hostile design features in London
through sketching (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

Fig 81: Documentation of hostile design features in London showing the difference in benches at a bus stop (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

Fig 82: Documentation of hostile design measures in London showing the use of oversized pot plants to block off a sheltered area (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

These acts of negotiation revealed the ongoing tension between hostile design and the lived realities of those it aims to exclude. This interaction was further explored through a spatial intervention at Cardinal Place in Victoria (fig. 83 and 84), which highlighted how people navigate and appropriate spaces. It showcased the friction between design intentions and real-world experiences. This phase was crucial in moving beyond a static classification system, leading to a deeper understanding of how hostile design operates in practice.

As patterns emerged, I began to classify hostile design elements into distinct categories, organising them based on their primary mechanisms of exclusion. Rather than relying on existing definitions, I allowed the taxonomy to be shaped by evidence gathered through fieldwork. The categories were refined through continuous comparison and analysis, ensuring they accounted for both the material properties of the designs and their social implications. The taxonomy remains flexible, allowing for subcategories and overlaps where features operate on multiple levels.

These ideas of documentation were expanded in student workshops, where students identified and documented examples of exclusionary design across London (fig. 83 and fig. 86). This participatory approach brought multiple perspectives to light, as students used drawings and photography to critically examine urban environments. Some students acted as intended users, while others positioned themselves as those most likely to be excluded–those seeking rest, social interaction, or refuge. Their responses highlighted the emotional impact of hostile design and revealed how these interventions affect not just physical behaviour but also psychological and emotional responses to space. By engaging directly with these environments, students and I moved beyond simple categorisation, seeing hostile design as an evolving practice–one that is constantly challenged, adapted, and resisted (fig. 87).

Thus, this taxonomy is not a static classification but a tool for critical engagement. It invites designers, policymakers, and the public to reflect on how space is produced and controlled, and by whom. By exposing the mechanisms through which hostile design operates, my research challenges the assumption that exclusionary spatial practices are neutral or necessary. Instead, it frames them as active sites of contestation and resistance. As cities continue to address issues of inclusion and exclusion, this taxonomy serves as both a record of existing typologies and a prompt to rethink our approaches.
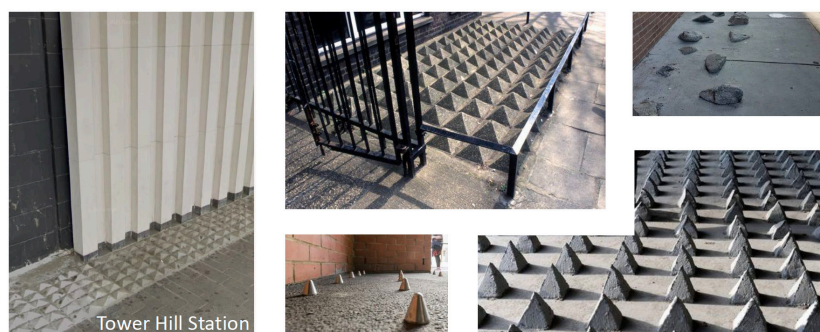
Fig 83: Documentation of Hostile Design student response in London (Yuan Gao, 2022).

Fig 84: Intervention engaging with hostile design in London highlighting the tension between design intent and lived experience (Adrienne Bennie, 2021).

Chapter 4

Fig 85: Image demonstrating the impact points of hostile designed features on the body (Adrienne Bennie, 2021).
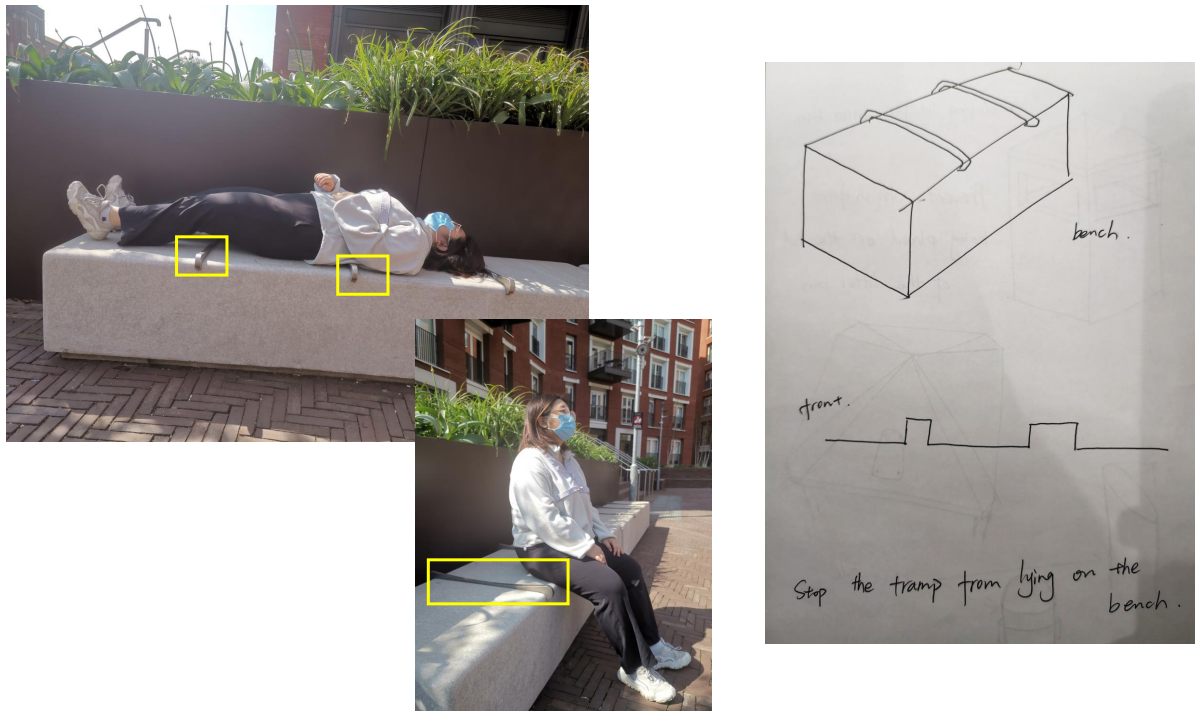
Fig 86: Student engaging with hostile design and documenting in London (Xuan Liu, 2022).

Responses

As part of this research, the development of a prototype/toolkit emerged as a critical response to hostile architecture in London. This toolkit aims to make visible the ways in which public spaces are designed to exclude those experiencing homelessness while offering an alternative design intervention that reclaims these spaces through everyday items. At this stage, the toolkit functions as a pedagogical tool within design education, enabling critical engagement with spatial justice and urban exclusion. However, a future postdoctoral application will seek to expand its impact by engaging broader audiences, including community organisations and policymakers.

The toolkit comprises two key elements:

1.   3D-Printed Responses to Hostile Architecture

These objects serve to reveal the often-hidden design features that restrict access and prevent rest in public spaces, such as anti-sleeping spikes or segregated seating. By using bright colours, these 3D-printed forms draw attention to the hostile nature of these interventions.

2.   A Drawn Toolkit as Counteractive Response

The drawn component functions as a speculative and practical response to hostile design, identifying

Fig 87: Student-led discussion presenting responses to hostile design (Adrienne Bennie, 2024).

everyday items such as blankets, sleeping bags, or pillowcases filled with fabric or clothes as tools for reclaiming space. These drawings are informed by spatial mapping, photo elicitation (earlier in the research), and workshops conducted with students. This is then presented here as a response to the findings of the taxonomy of hostile design developed earlier in the research.

In this context, drawing becomes a tool not only for documentation but for imagining alternative ways to inhabit and transform hostile spaces.

Hostile Design Through 3D Printing

The workshops I held with students on hostile design provided an opportunity to critically engage with the materiality of exclusion embedded in urban spaces. In response, my practice explored this concept through 3D printing, creating elements of hostile design that are often hidden from view in our urban landscape. This was intended to highlight the issue of hostile public spaces, particularly for people experiencing homelessness. By making these elements visible, the aim was to foster dialogue about the challenges faced by the homeless. This approach also facilitated conversations with students about inclusivity, empathy, and the importance of designing public spaces that are safe and welcoming for all.

That being said, it is important to note that this work was not simply about replication but about the critical reinterpretation of urban design strategies that regulate bodies in space. The juxtaposition of invisible hostile elements comes to life through 3D printing, following spatial analysis that reveals how hostile architecture is often designed to evade public scrutiny. Its effectiveness lies in its ability to blend seamlessly into the city's fabric. Spikes embedded into ledges, dividers on benches, and strategically placed armrests that prevent reclining–these interventions are designed to deny rest and occupation without overtly declaring exclusion. This invisibility is further reinforced by the choice of materials–metal, concrete, and glass–which convey an aesthetic of neutrality and permanence.
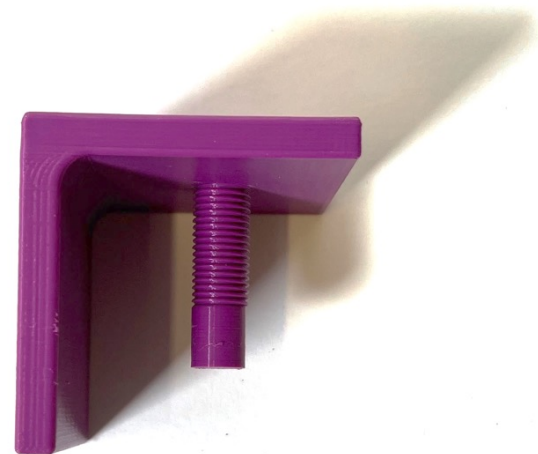
Fig 88: Element of 3D printed toolkit of hostile design (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

My response, through 3D printing, was to subvert this by making these elements hyper-visible with the strategic use of colour. Unlike their urban counterparts, the printed objects are bright and immediately noticeable, inviting dialogue within my teaching practice. These objects make the often-invisible exclusionary tactics in urban design more tangible and accessible for students, allowing for a hands-on exploration beyond theory. In this context, they function as a pedagogical tool.

3D printing enabled me to physically recreate hidden hostile design elements that might otherwise go unnoticed. By making them tangible and visible, I provide a representation of the challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness in public spaces. Rather than simply documenting hostile architecture, my work engages with it through material translation, reinterpreting these interventions in a form that disrupts their assumed neutrality. The use of 3D printing offers an alternative mode of enquiry, positioning design as a tool for critique rather than complicity.

Additionally, these 3D printed objects provide an interactive, tangible outcome within the context of workshops. Participants can touch, feel, and engage with the objects, fostering a stronger emotional connection to the issue. These ideas demonstrate that design is not merely functional but deeply ideological, as argued by Victor Papanek in *Design for the Real World*, where he states that "design, if it is to be ecologically responsible and socially responsive, must be revolutionary and radical" (Papanek, 1971, p. 60). In this context, 3D printing serves as a means of reconfiguring urban interactions, allowing for more direct engagement with the mechanisms of exclusion embedded in everyday spaces. This effort aims to evoke empathy and a deeper understanding of the discomfort and exclusion faced by people experiencing homelessness.

Fig 89: Seated element of 3D printed toolkit of hostile design (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).
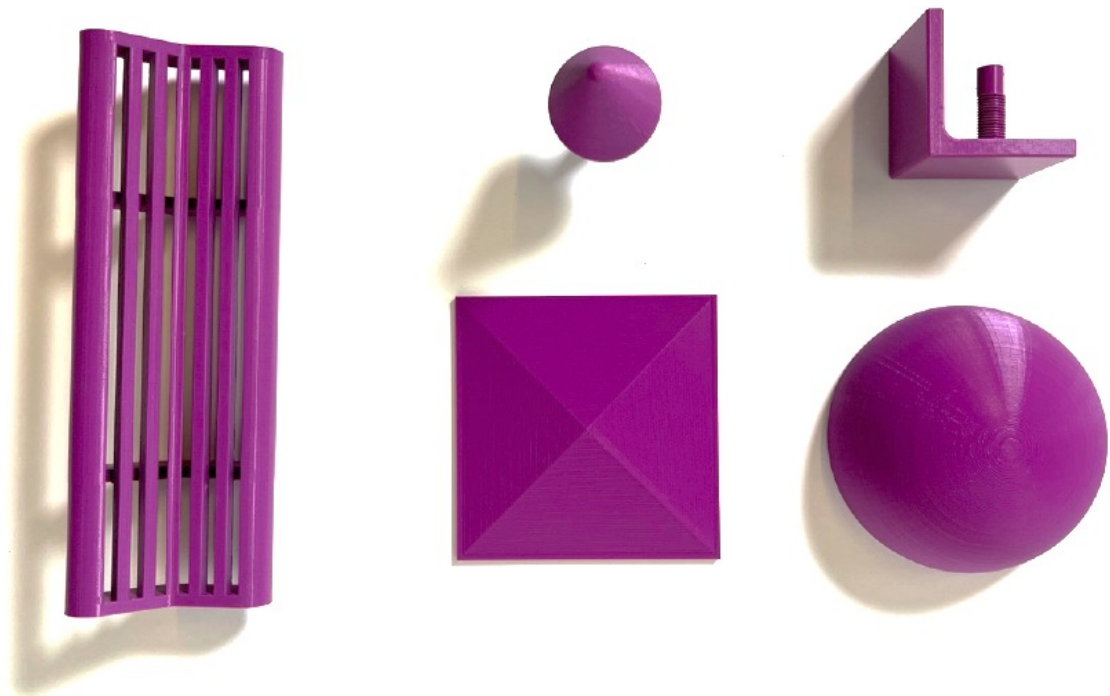
Fig 90: Purple 3D printed elements of hostile design to make visible the taxonomy (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

Fig 91: Blue 3D printed elements of hostile design to make visible the taxonomy (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

The 3D printed objects developed through my practice are not limited to student workshops but are intended to engage broader audiences within a post-doctoral context, acting as a critical tool beyond academic settings. These objects can be utilised in educational platforms such as exhibitions, external or internal workshops, or presentations, providing a platform for discussion and extending beyond interactions with BA Product and Furniture Design students. They are meant to be further developed in a post-doctoral application, shifting the conversation from academic discourse to more public forums. Viewers can learn about the concept of hostile design, its history, and its effects, ensuring that both those who experience its consequences firsthand and those unaware of its existence are part of the dialogue. In this way, these objects will serve as provocations, with their visual impact inviting audiences to question the ethics of such design choices and advocate for more inclusive urban planning.

From a pedagogical perspective, the use of 3D printing in these workshops encouraged material-based critical thinking. Rather than engaging with hostile architecture solely through theoretical discussions, this embodied approach allowed for a deeper interrogation of material politics–how the choice of materials, form, and placement in urban contexts dictate social interactions.

Unlike traditional modes of architectural critique that rely on text-heavy analysis or abstract theorisation, these objects operate through material immediacy, allowing individuals to physically engage with and understand the mechanisms of exclusion that shape their cities. This approach builds on the concept of 'critical making', which Matt Ratto describes as a way of connecting technical and social concerns through material engagement, using "material forms of engagement with technologies to supplement and extend critical reflection and, in doing so, to reconnect our lived experiences" (Ratto, 2011, p. 253). By recreating and altering hostile design interventions
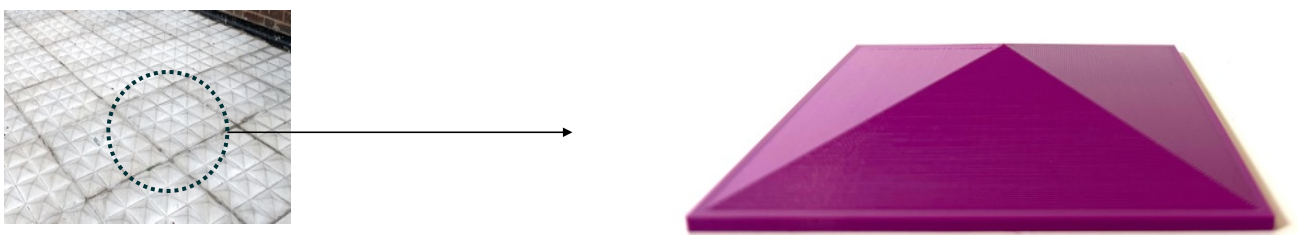
Fig 92: Element of 3D printed toolkit of hostile design (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

through 3D printing, these objects offer a sensory and interactive means of understanding spatial injustice. This ensures that discussions around hostile design are not confined to policymakers, designers, or academics, but can reach a broader audience.

While the toolkit currently operates within pedagogical contexts, allowing students to critically engage with design ethics and spatial justice, a post-doctoral application will further develop these ideas through:

- Co-Creation with Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness: Collaborating on the adaptation and design of everyday items to resist hostile design.

- Public Interventions and Installations: Using the toolkit to stage temporary spatial interventions that challenge perceptions of urban space.

- Engagement with Policy and Advocacy Networks: Presenting these strategies as practical approaches for more inclusive urban design.

In this way, the work contributes to decolonial approaches to design, aiming to dismantle dominant narratives that reinforce social hierarchies and exclusions. Decolonising design requires not only diversifying the voices involved in design discourse but also reconsidering the methodologies through which knowledge is produced and disseminated. By shifting the discussion from the institutional space of academia into public and community spaces, my practice will continue to challenge the authority of traditional design institutions in shaping urban environments and invite a more pluralistic, participatory discourse.
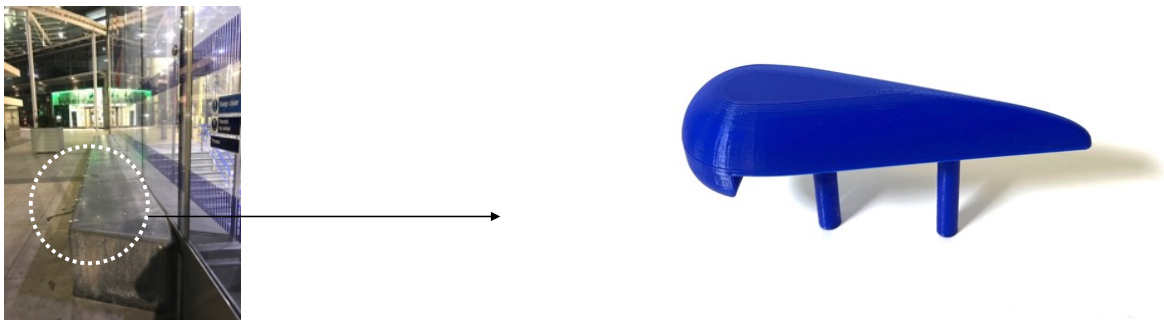
Fig 93: Element of 3D printed toolkit of hostile design (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

Fig 94: Hostile design workshop with 3D printed prototypes (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

In *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Walter Mignolo argues that decoloniality is about "delinking from the colonial matrix of power" (Mignolo, 2011, p. 287) and producing knowledge that serves communities, rather than reinforcing existing hierarchies. In this context, my 3D printed objects align with these principles by offering an alternative mode of knowledge production that is tactile, visual, and widely accessible. This approach is crucial in analysing hostile design, as the regulation of public space through architecture mirrors colonial strategies of spatial governance—where bodies are controlled or excluded based on their perceived belonging.

Furthermore, these objects act as a form of counter-design, disrupting the normalisation of exclusionary architecture and encouraging conversation about alternative ways of imagining inclusive public spaces. Through this process, my practice positions design not merely as a problem-solving tool but as a critical, activist practice that questions existing power structures and envisions more equitable urban futures.
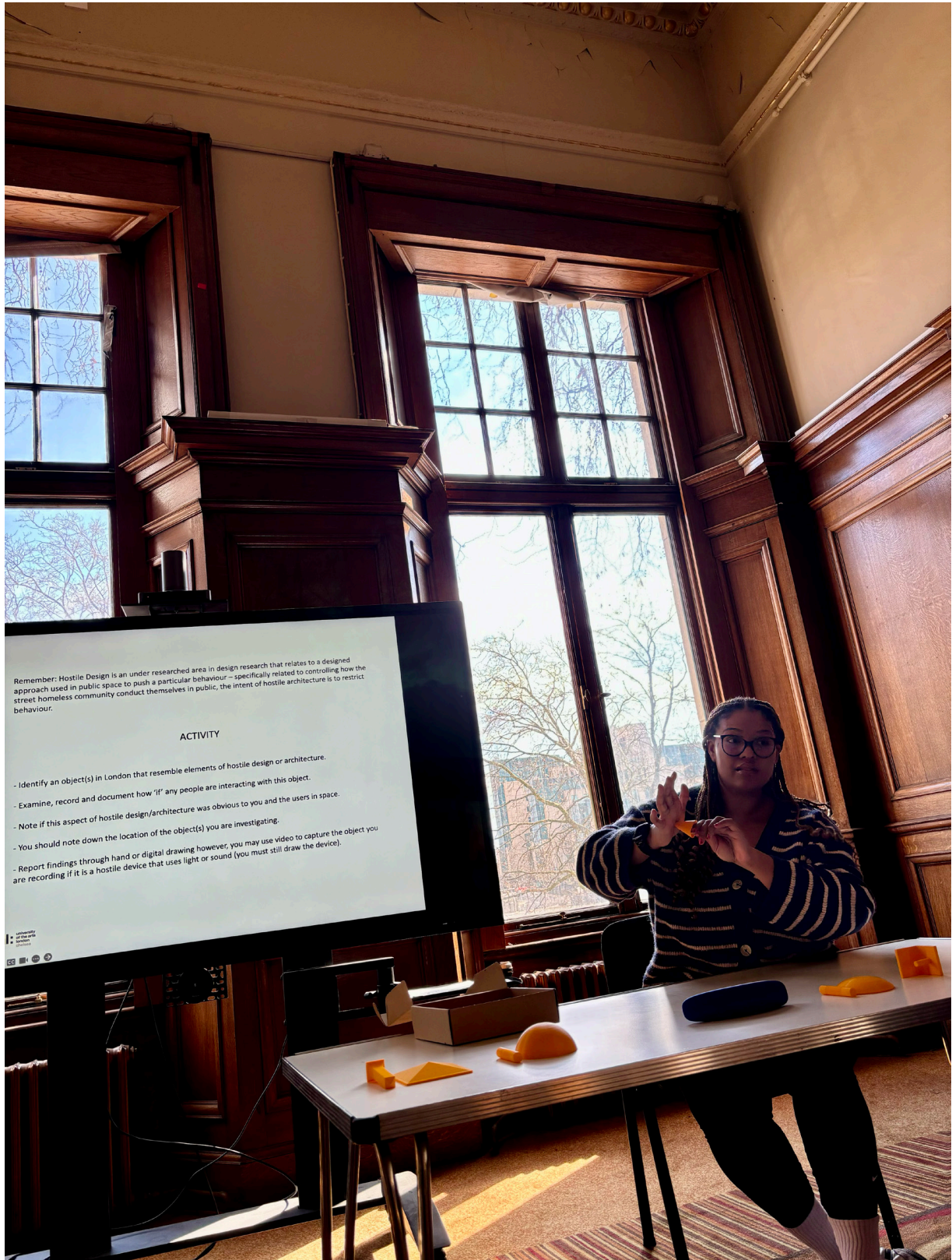
Fig 95: Explaining how to identify elements of hostile design in public spaces with prototype toolkit (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

A Drawn Toolkit as Counteractive Response

In this context, a toolkit refers to a set of practical, visual, and material resources designed to identify, understand, and respond to hostile architecture in urban environments.

The toolkit developed through this practice functions both as a critical intervention and a pedagogical resource, addressing the pervasive yet often unnoticed presence of hostile architecture. Rooted in a taxonomy developed through photo elicitation, spatial mapping, drawings, and workshops, the toolkit responds to exclusionary urban design practices. By engaging with both material and visual strategies, it seeks to expose and challenge the mechanisms of spatial control embedded within the built environment. As mentioned earlier, it comprises two key elements: first, a series of 3D-printed objects (fig. 90 and fig. 91) that recreate and recontextualise elements of hostile design, and second, a drawn toolkit (fig. 98) that functions as a speculative design response to counteract hostile architecture.

Together, these elements act as a method of interrogation–documenting and resisting the spatial injustices embedded in contemporary urban environments. The toolkit does not propose fixed solutions but offers a way of seeing, understanding, and questioning how public spaces are designed to control behaviour, restrict movement, and exclude certain bodies.

By materialising defensive architecture in a tangible form, the 3D-printed objects within the toolkit highlight often hidden or normalised elements of exclusionary design. Reinterpreting these structures in alternative materials and colours makes them visible, counteracting the muted or camouflaged nature of many hostile interventions, and foregrounding the mechanisms of spatial exclusion.

These artefacts are not mere replicas but provocations that challenge the assumed neutrality of design. As Dunne and Raby (2013) suggest in their concept of critical design, objects can function as tools for speculation, prompting discourse and debate rather than fulfilling purely utilitarian functions, "Critical design uses speculative design proposals to challenge narrow assumptions" (Dunne and Raby, 2013, p. 34). My 3D-printed responses adopt this mode of criticality by inviting new perspectives on the design, implementation, and justification of hostile architecture.

Fig 96: Purple bench 3D printed elements of hostile design to make visible the taxonomy (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).
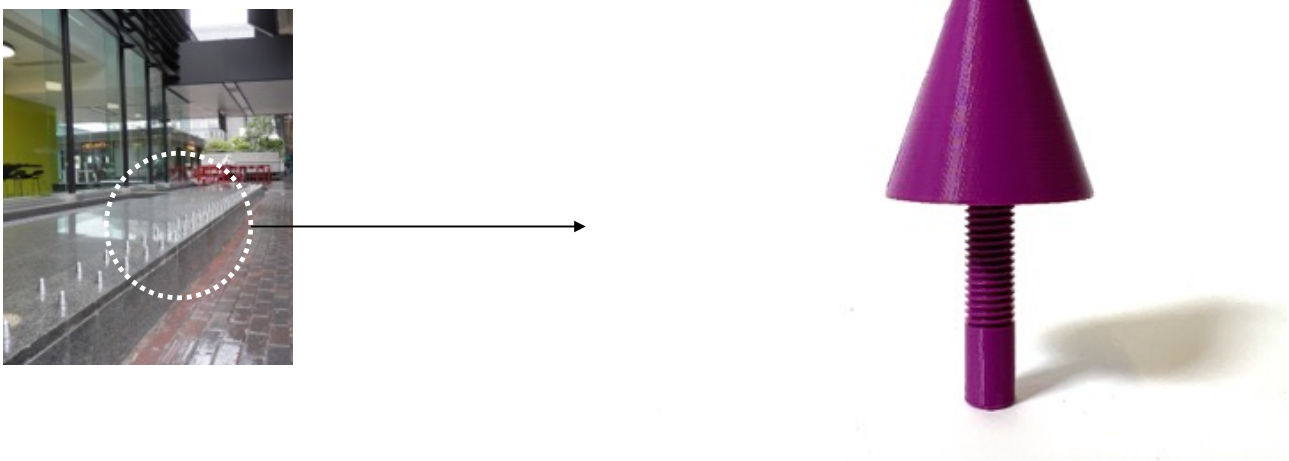
Fig 97: Purple spike 3D printed elements of hostile design to make visible the taxonomy (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

Alongside these material interventions, the drawn toolkit offers an analytical response to hostile design strategies. In this sense, it functions both as a documentation of hostile architecture and as a visual counter-narrative. The toolkit also has potential for wider public engagement. By making hostile architecture more visible and comprehensible, it invites individuals who encounter these interventions–whether consciously or unconsciously–to reassess their surroundings.

The drawn toolkit (fig. 98), in particular, acts as a provocation rather than a didactic tool. A solution as a provocation is suggested through the use of everyday accessible materials, identified through photo elicitation and spatial mapping analysis. In both its material and visual components, the toolkit provides an accessible way of engaging with and challenging the politics of space. It offers tangible strategies for reclaiming public space and addressing the issues of comfort and rest often denied to people experiencing homelessness.

While the toolkit serves as a pedagogical tool within this research, it has the potential to extend beyond educational contexts to support grassroots advocacy and community-led interventions that challenge the social and political structures embedded within hostile architecture. For urban researchers, policymakers, and activists, it could provide a structured means of understanding how hostile design operates across different typologies and contexts. By offering a clear visual and material language to describe these interventions, it could facilitate more precise discussions around urban exclusion and the ethics of public space within design. Rather than positioning design as a neutral or purely functional discipline, it reinforces the idea that every design decision carry social and political weight.

Furthermore, these interventions represent small acts of resistance that reclaim agency within the urban environment, enabling people experiencing homelessness to adapt to and negotiate hostile architecture. The drawn toolkit is not just about making these strategies visible, but about creating shared knowledge that can be accessed and replicated by others. This echoes with broader decolonial approaches to design, which challenge dominant power structures and centre lived experience in the design process. For students and educators, the toolkit functions as a pedagogical resource that encourages critical engagement with the built environment. This is evident in its integration into workshops (fig. 86 and fig. 95), which enable participants to move beyond mere observation and engage in direct analysis and creative responses to spatial injustices.

COUNTERACTING HOSTILE DESIGN
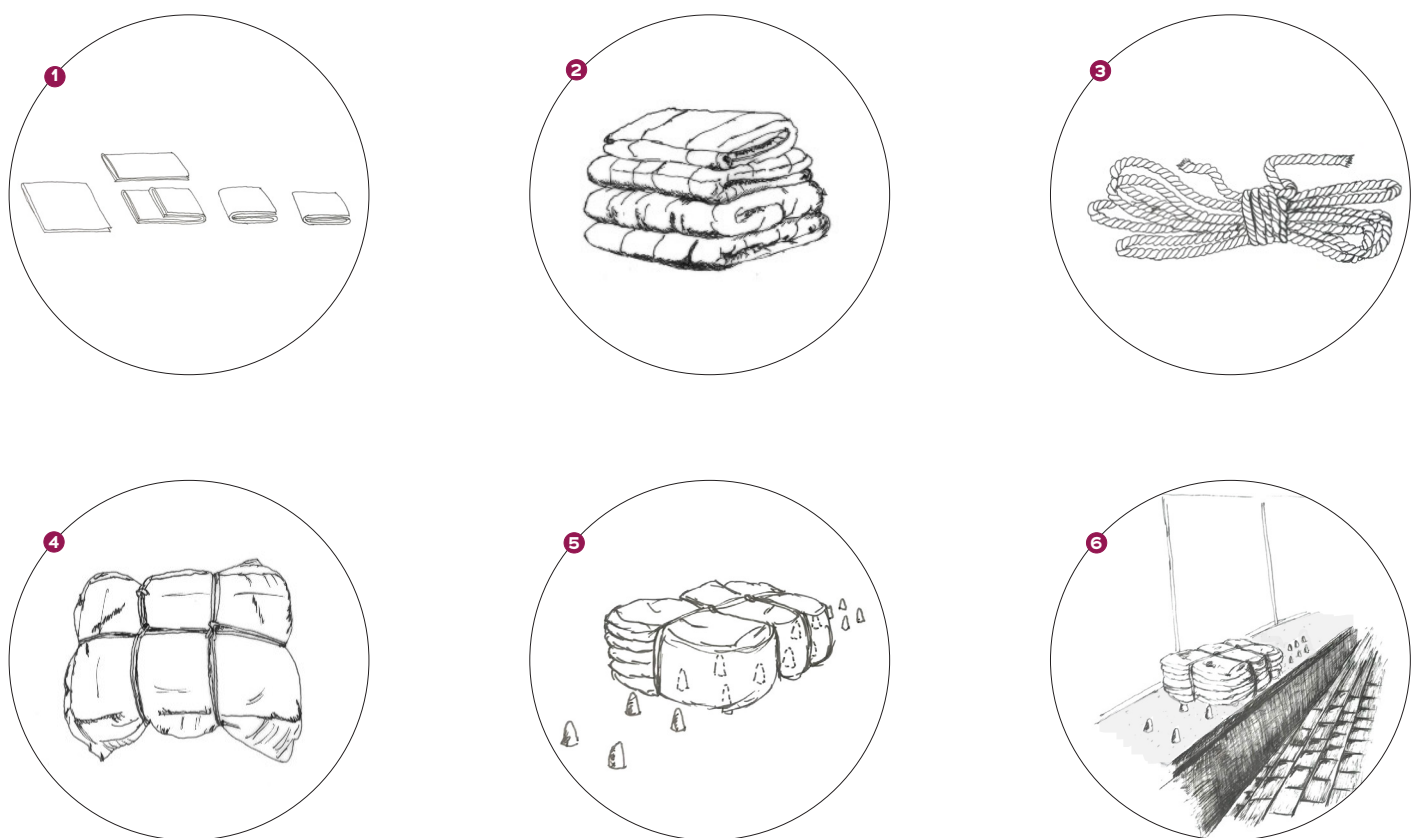
Fig 98: Drawn toolkit illustrating hostile design strategies and offering speculative responses to challenge exclusionary urban spaces (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

The Squatter's Handbook and Hostile Architecture

Building on the development of the toolkit as a response to hostile architecture, this section situates the project within a broader context of spatial resistance and alternative urban practices. While the previous discussion positioned the toolkit as both a practical and conceptual intervention, this section extends that analysis by examining its connection to historical and contemporary forms of urban contestation—specifically the tactics and methodologies informed by squatting movements and their documentation in the *Squatter's Handbook*. The toolkit functions not only as an educational device but also as a method for reclaiming public space through knowledge production and design (a focus my postdoctoral research will further develop).

The squatting movement in Britain emerged as a response to systemic housing shortages, historically linked to broader struggles for social justice. In the post-war period, squatting addressed a housing crisis exacerbated by bomb damage, economic austerity, and inadequate government action. As Quintin Hogg of the Conservative Party noted, "Either we give the people social reform or they will give us social revolution" (Anning et al., 1980, p. 110). Squatting, therefore, was not only about survival but also an act of resistance against a system prioritising property rights over human needs. James Hinton, in *Self-help and Socialism: The Squatters' Movement* of 1946, notes that these approaches "are of interest not because they might have created a different past, but because of their implications for our futures" (Hinton, 1988, p. 100). By the 1970s and 1980s, squatting had become increasingly politicised, with movements linking to anarchist, feminist, and anti-racist struggles. Squatted social centres like the 121 Centre in Brixton and Ramparts in Whitechapel became hubs for radical organising. In this context, squatting was about more than shelter; it was about reclaiming the right to the city.

My research critically engages with models of social agency in design practice, drawing on historical and contemporary approaches to collective action and grassroots resistance. In particular, it reflects on and applies frameworks such as the *Squatters' Handbooks* from this periods, which provided practical guidance for individuals seeking to reclaim agency over space in response to systemic neglect and exclusion.

These handbooks were more than just instructional documents; they embodied a form of resistance rooted in self-determination and social justice (fig. 102). By incorporating these models into my practice, my research positions design not merely as a service-oriented profession but as a form of activism that can address issues of spatial inequality and exclusion, particularly in the context of hostile architecture. It is important to note that the approaches in this practice align with the ethos of self-organisation and direct action found in the *Squatter's Handbooks*, a resource long used by individuals reclaiming space in response to housing precarity. These handbooks
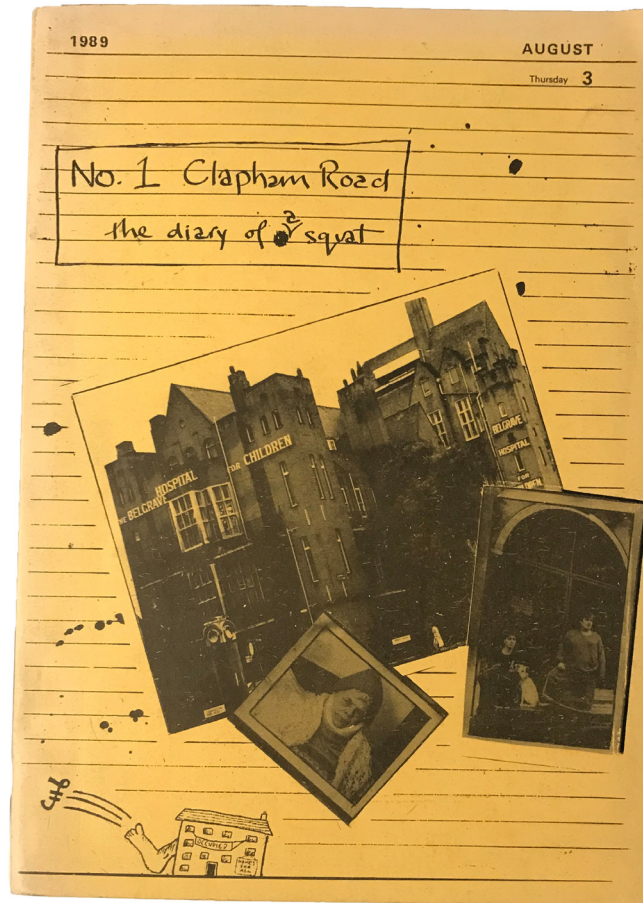
Fig 99: Photograph of *A Diary of a Squat 1989* from Museum of Homelessness Archive (Museum of Homelessness Archive, 2021).

emerged during a period of significant socio-political change and were created by grassroots organisations like the Advisory Service for Squatters, which viewed space not as a commodity but as a fundamental right.

Much like the handbooks, which demystified legal rights and provided practical strategies for occupying and maintaining urban spaces, this practice seeks to expose and challenge exclusionary design tactics that regulate access to the city. The handbooks offered guidance on reclaiming unused spaces, from legal advice on property law to practical tips on sustaining squatted buildings. In the context of my research, these models provoke a rethinking of contemporary design practices, focusing on the reclamation of public space from exclusionary design.

Hostile architecture, like the vacant properties targeted by squatters in the past, represents a form of modern spatial exclusion that prioritises certain groups while marginalising others, particularly those experiencing homelessness. By drawing on this historical model of social agency, and through spatial analysis, drawing, and 3D printing to make hostile architecture visible, this practice operates as a form of spatial enquiry that echoes the pragmatic activism embedded in squatting movements.

However, while the *Squatter's Handbook* primarily addressed the occupation of physical space, this research extends the concept to include the occupation of discursive spaces (fig. 100 and fig. 101) within the context of workshops. Rather than passively accepting the limitations imposed by hostile architecture and design, this research embraces a methodology that makes visible the hidden mechanisms of control, much like how the handbooks provided knowledge that empowered individuals to navigate and subvert restrictive housing policies, highlighting the potential of design as a tool for social change. Additionally, both approaches share an underlying principle: that access to space should not be dictated solely by economic and institutional power, but should instead be open to those who need it. The parallels between the toolkit and the Squatter's Handbook underscore the enduring need for counter-practices that expose the inequalities embedded in the built environment. Through this lens, the research considers how design can function as a tool for resistance.

Fig 100: Photograph workshop on hostile design with BA PFD students (Adrienne Bennie, 2022).

Fig 101: Student-led discussion following a workshop on hostile design with BA PFD students (Adrienne Bennie, 2024).
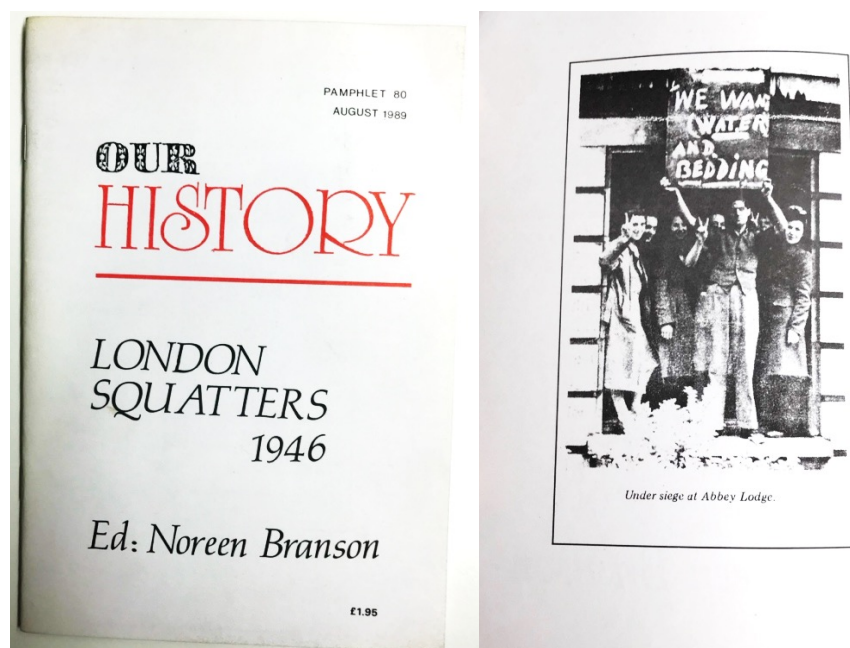
Fig 102: Photo of London Squatters History 1946 from Museum of Homelessness Archive (Museum of Homelessness Archive, 2021).

In addition, the next phase of my practice and research, to be pursued through a post-doc, will build upon my existing work countering hostile architecture by co-creating with individuals who have lived experience of homelessness. This will culminate in a handbook that draws on the principles outlined in squatters' handbooks, such as *Squatting: The Real Story* (1980), which provides practical guidance on squatting, legal rights, and strategies for inhabiting urban spaces.

Squatting: The Real Story emphasises that squatting is not merely about occupation but also about resisting systems of control (Wates and Wolmar, 1980). My handbook will follow a similar approach, combining text and visual documentation, including drawings and photography, to communicate complex ideas about occupation. Using hand-drawn illustrations, diagrams, and step-by-step guides, it will outline strategies for countering hostile design. Just as *Squatting: The Real Story* (fig. 103 and fig. 104) employed drawing to convey its message, my handbook will map out ways to challenge exclusion using everyday objects like blankets, sleeping bags, or fabric-filled pillowcases.

Fig 103: Example of squatting handbook illustrations from 1980 (Squatting: The Real Story, 1980).

Fig 104: Example of squatting handbook photography from 1980 (Squatting: The Real Story, 1980).

Chapter 4 Summary

This chapter critically explores the relationship between design practice and the complex social issue of homelessness in London, positioning the work within a broader context of social responsibility and urban space. It specifically addresses the research questions by investigating how design can intervene in the lives of people experiencing homelessness, focusing on how hostile architecture shapes their experiences and proposing that design, reimagined through co-creation and empathy, can overcome these barriers.

Through this approach, the practice demonstrates how design and creative methods can act as a form of social advocacy, amplifying the voices of those with lived experience of homelessness. Using a range of techniques, including mapping, drawing, photography, and 3D printing, the practice interrogates how urban environments are designed to exclude and control certain bodies. Rather than simply documenting these exclusionary interventions, the work actively challenges them, making them visible and accessible for critique.

The process has been informed by direct engagement with urban sites, ethical considerations surrounding representation, and collaboration with students to unpack the systemic nature of hostile architecture. A key concern throughout has been the 'hidden' nature of hostile design – how its materiality, form, and integration into public infrastructure allow it to remain largely unnoticed. Benches with armrests, sloped surfaces, spikes, and dividers are typically seen as neutral design choices that reinforce the assumption that public space is equitable and shared. In reality, these interventions are deeply political, enforcing exclusion by restricting access to those who do not conform to normative expectations of public space occupants.

By reconstructing and reinterpreting these elements through 3D printing, the work exposes their function, bringing them into sharp relief through colour, form, and tactility. This process serves not only as a critique but also as a method of engagement within the workshops I conducted, disrupting their invisibility and generating dialogue around the ethics of space design.

Additionally, the practice engages with spatial analysis and co-creation as critical tools for understanding and responding to hostile architecture. Photo elicitation and mapping have traced patterns of exclusion across multiple urban contexts, revealing the strategic placement of hostile design in areas of high visibility and transience. Workshops with students further contributed to this process, with the act of documenting and understanding these mechanisms serving as a way to inform and counter these interventions through material practices and dialogue, exploring the agency of design.

Fig 105: Demonstrating how elements of hostile design function in public spaces (Adrienne Bennie, 2024).
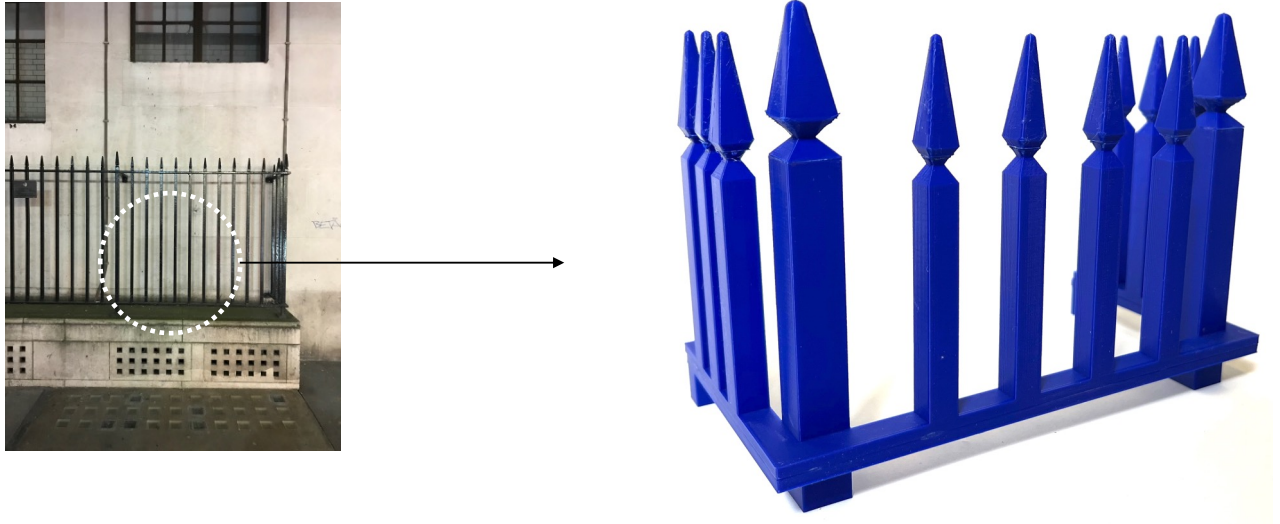
Fig 106: Blue 3D printed element of hostile design to make visible the taxonomy, showing how public space is manipulated to restrict occupation of a raised flat covered space (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

The workshops were grounded in action-based pedagogy, emphasising the importance of learning through doing. This positions education not just as a means of learning about hostile design but as a space to challenge and resist it. By encouraging students to rethink their role as designers in shaping the environments people inhabit, the workshops inspired them to develop final major projects based on the concepts they had explored.

Additionally, this practice employed a decolonial approach to design pedagogy, influencing both the workshops and the broader research. It aimed to create space for alternative, marginalised perspectives, questioning the assumed neutrality of design education and demonstrating how spatial practices are embedded within broader systems of social and economic control. These perspectives challenge the hegemonic practices of design that perpetuate inequality. Engaging with them, I sought to develop a design practice that was responsive to these concerns, actively addressing the injustices embedded in the spaces we inhabit.

At the core of this practice is the recognition that the politics of space are not abstract but are profoundly linked to lived experience. For people experiencing homelessness, urban environments become sites of negotiation, where everyday activities such as sleeping, resting, and seeking shelter are performed under the constraints of hostile infrastructures. The toolkit developed through this research, comprising both physical objects and visual provocations, responds to this condition.

Although the toolkit operates within the pedagogical context of design education, it will be expanded through future postdoctoral research. The 3D-printed responses bring acts of exclusion into the discussion, allowing students to engage with the politics of space beyond the classroom. The toolkit's accessibility through both visual representations and tangible objects makes these complex issues more understandable for a broader audience, particularly given the multinational composition of the student cohorts. This, I believe, represents the most powerful role of design: not merely creating objects, but facilitating conversations and ultimately driving change.

Crucially, this research does not propose design 'solutions' to hostile architecture but critiques the existing power structures that define how we use and control space, offering tools for critical engagement. The work serves as a provocation to rethink how spaces are constructed and who they serve. The toolkit and workshops embody the notion that design is inherently political—it either reinforces or challenges the status quo.

By engaging with hostile design, this practice aims to provide a means of understanding, reflecting on, and reshaping the built environment to make it more inclusive and just. The goal is to push the boundaries of design education and practice, preparing socially aware, ethically driven designers who can critically assess and respond to the spaces they create and their societal impact.

By combining material practice with social critique, the research will extend beyond academia, offering new ways of seeing, thinking, and responding, with implications for urban policy, pedagogy, and the public understanding of hostile architecture. This will be further explored in the next stage of my practice development through a postdoctoral project, which will expand these ideas into a handbook. Drawing on *Squatting: The Real Story* (Wates and Wolmar, 1980), this handbook will use drawing as a critical tool to illustrate strategies for reclaiming public space, co-created with individuals with lived experience of homelessness. In doing so, it asserts the role of creative practices in interrogating and resisting the spatial injustices embedded in the city's fabric, extending this research beyond academia.
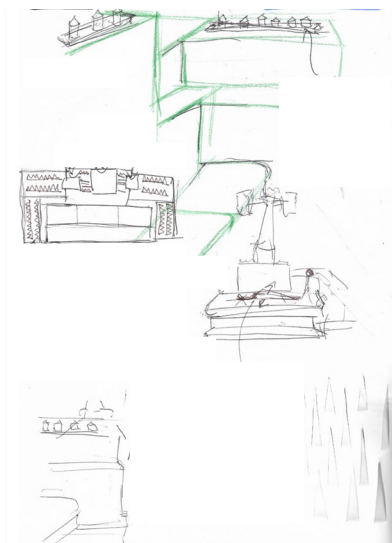
Fig 107: Sketching hostile design around London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020 -23).

Finally, the workshops and broader practice developed through this research will continue to evolve, extending beyond the PhD into new collaborations with organisations and community-led initiatives. A key focus moving forward is working with Stockwell Park Community Trust and Café Art, integrating these themes into teaching practice to cultivate a dialogue between students, communities, and public space. While this engagement is still in its early stages, it will enable a more nuanced exploration of how spatial interventions shape social interactions and contribute to systems of inclusion or exclusion. By engaging with real-world contexts, my practice will continue to bridge the gap between academic enquiry and lived experience, developing more socially responsive and engaged approaches to design.

Ultimately, my hope is that this work will not only inform the public and challenge policymakers but also shift perceptions, encouraging a more compassionate and equitable approach to addressing homelessness in the city. Through this practice, design is presented not merely as a tool for problem-solving but as a means of social advocacy, offering new insights into the role of the artist-designer in addressing urgent social issues.

Fig 108: Discussing hostile design and my practice to a wider audience (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

Fig 109: Discussing how to identify hostile design in public space and how the elements are integrated into the build environment (Adrienne Bennie, 2024).

CONCLUSION:

CHALLENGING HOSTILE ARCHITECTURE

In the contemporary urban landscape, the design of public spaces plays a pivotal role in shaping the lives of city dwellers. It has the potential to facilitate social interactions, promote inclusivity, and foster a sense of community. However, this power can also be wielded in ways that exclude and marginalise vulnerable populations. This research has sought to unpack the complex relationship between design and social issues, particularly focusing on interrogative design as a means of challenging hostile architecture and its implications for those experiencing homelessness in London.

By positioning myself within the intersecting roles of artist, designer, and educator, I explored the ethical and social implications of hostile design from multiple perspectives—as a maker, a critical observer, and an educator working with students to collectively interrogate the built environment. The research was driven by an urgent need to examine how design practices are being used to exclude vulnerable communities, particularly those without stable housing.

Homelessness in London is a persistent and multifaceted issue, raising questions about the role of design in either perpetuating or alleviating the challenges faced by those without stable housing. Interrogative design, in challenging hostile architecture, provides a unique lens to explore this issue. It introduces criticality into discussions about the urban environment, prompting individuals to reconsider their presence within a space, often inducing discomfort or insecurity. Through a series of provocations, it encourages critical thinking and raises awareness of pressing social concerns.

Throughout this practice-based research, I have analysed the concept of hostile design— architectural and urban planning choices that discourage or even prevent certain activities within public spaces. Hostile design can take many forms, from anti-homeless spikes to high-frequency noise devices. One notable example is the strategic placement of armrests or dividers on public benches, which prevent individuals from lying down. While such measures may be justified in terms of promoting cleanliness or discouraging loitering, they disproportionately affect the homeless population, rendering public spaces inaccessible to those in need of rest. This research has illuminated the ethical and social implications of these design choices.

By investigating the practice of hostile design, I have uncovered its inherent inequality and its hostility towards marginalised groups. In this context, hostility extends beyond architectural inconvenience; it represents a broader, systemically applied form of exclusion and neglect. Hostile design reinforces societal stereotypes and stigmas, portraying homelessness as a problem that should be hidden rather than addressed with empathy and compassion. Moreover, architects and designers who comply with the requirements of their corporate or municipal clients contribute to the reinforcement of a status quo that perpetuates exclusionary conditions. Architecture and design, in this sense, actively create marginalisation and exclusion.

In disability studies, there has been a shift from viewing disability through a medical model to understanding it through a social model. Vasilis Galis argues that architecture creates disability because when a space is designed without accessibility in mind, it actively disables individuals who cannot use or navigate it (Galis, 2011). This perspective can be extended to homelessness—not in the sense that homelessness itself is 'created' as disability is, but in how urban environments and spatial policies shape and reinforce the conditions of exclusion experienced by homeless individuals. By responding to the demands of clients and working within the constraints of commercial and political interests, architects and designers play a role in maintaining environments that marginalise homeless people. This is not a passive act but an active reinforcement of a system that produces spatial inequality. In this way, the built environment does not merely reflect societal values; it actively constructs and maintains social hierarchies.

From this perspective, the exclusion of homeless people through urban design parallels the ways in which inaccessible environments create disability. The lack of inclusive infrastructure does not just reflect a failure to consider specific needs; it produces barriers that disable individuals from fully participating in society.

Similarly, the hostile design of public spaces creates barriers that reinforce the precarity and vulnerability of homelessness. If an urban space is designed to prevent people from sitting, resting, or sheltering, it is not merely discouraging undesirable behaviour–it is enforcing a specific social order in which those without housing are made invisible, unwelcome, or subject to displacement.

This understanding of design as an instrument of exclusion is fundamentally at odds with my notion of compassionate design, which challenges the assumption that exclusion is an inherent or necessary part of urban planning. Instead of reinforcing hostile environments, design should be a tool for reimagining public space as inclusive and adaptable. Just as the social model of disability calls on architects to recognise their role in shaping accessibility, compassionate design urges designers to recognise their role in shaping public spaces. By designing with empathy, social responsibility, and an awareness of how space produces exclusion, we can begin to counteract the systemic forces that sustain homelessness and work towards a more just and inclusive urban landscape.

It is essential to acknowledge that people experiencing homelessness are not a monolithic entity. They come from diverse backgrounds and have varying circumstances and needs. Design decisions that target or marginalise them can have severe consequences, exacerbating the cycle of homelessness and deepening the divide between the privileged and the disadvantaged. This research highlights the importance of understanding homelessness as a complex issue that demands holistic and humane solutions.

Furthermore, the study has revealed the broader implications of interrogative design on the social fabric of urban communities. When public spaces are designed with hostility in mind, they create an environment of suspicion and exclusion. Citizens become conditioned to view certain behaviours or individuals as threats, which further fragments the sense of community. The very essence of public space, which should be inclusive and welcoming, is undermined.

To address these concerns, I have argued that it is crucial to advocate for a paradigm shift in urban design. Compassionate design, as a counterpoint to hostile design, prioritises human dignity and social equity. Rather than approaching design with exclusion in mind, compassionate design seeks to cultivate a sense of belonging and empowerment for all community members. One practical avenue for change is through community engagement and participatory design processes. Involving people experiencing homelessness and other marginalised groups in the design of public spaces not only empowers them but also ensures that their unique needs and perspectives are considered. This collaborative approach can lead to innovative solutions that benefit the entire community while dismantling the hostile design practices that perpetuate social inequities.

Additionally, as a migrant and person of colour, I am acutely aware of the importance of drawing upon lived experience. My personal connection to this research, particularly its focus on homelessness in London, is deeply intertwined with my own experiences navigating urban spaces and societal dynamics. These experiences have shaped my perspective and fuelled a personal commitment to advocating for inclusive and equitable urban environments.

Migrants and individuals of colour often face unique challenges in urban settings, ranging from subtle forms of exclusion to overt acts of discrimination and harassment by police (such as through disproportionate use of stop-and-search measures) or other authorities. The concept of hostile design, which I have explored extensively in this research, resonates with my own encounters of feeling unwelcome or out of place in certain public spaces. Recognising the parallels between these experiences has underscored the interconnectedness of social issues within the urban landscape.

Through the exploration of interrogative design as a methodology, I have highlighted how hostile design operates within this broader context, affecting not only people experiencing homelessness but also perpetuating systemic inequalities that impact marginalised communities. While my experiences as a migrant of colour differ from those of people experiencing homelessness, there is a shared thread of vulnerability in navigating public spaces designed with exclusionary intent.

Another key point addressed in this practice-based research is the need to invite the public to confront the ethical implications of design choices within our cities. Engaging the public in this discourse is key to building more humane and equitable urban spaces. Cities are not just physical

DESIGN EDUCATION

HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS

Social Impact

Community Engagement

Educating New Designers

Highlighting homeslesssness and hostile
design to future generations to make better
design decisions and policys

Curriculum Integration

Advocacy

Advocacy

Design Ethics

HOSTILE ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN
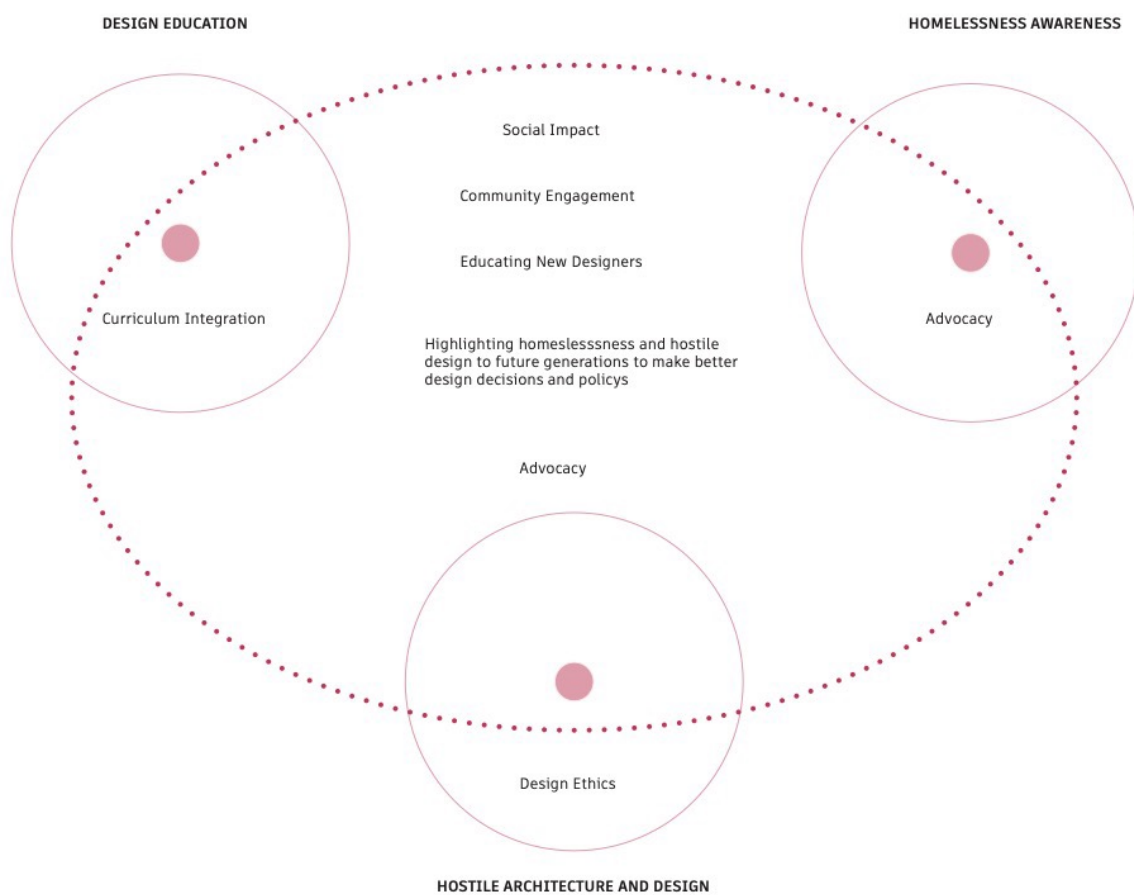
Fig 110: Diagram of research impact (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

entities but living ecosystems shaped by the design choices we make. By involving the public in this dialogue, it can encourage individuals to reflect on the broader impact of these choices, particularly on the most vulnerable among us.

This invitation serves as a call to action, urging people to move beyond passive observation and become active advocates for change. When individuals recognise that their surroundings can perpetuate exclusion, discrimination, and discomfort for certain groups, it empowers them to demand better. Moreover, confronting the ethical implications of design choices encourages us to reflect on our own roles within the urban landscape. It challenges us to question how our actions, as citizens or designers, contribute to shaping the cities we inhabit.

My personal connection to this research reminds me that addressing issues like hostile architecture and its relation to homelessness require a holistic approach—one that acknowledges the intersecting identities and vulnerabilities of individuals within the urban environment. My own journey as a migrant and person of colour has instilled in me a sense of responsibility to advocate for change and engage in socially responsible practices within art and design. It has fuelled my commitment to amplifying the voices of marginalised communities, including those experiencing homelessness, and to working towards urban spaces that reflect the principles of inclusion, equity, and justice.

Returning briefly to the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 crisis, my initial practice research had been centred around established connections with charitable organisations working directly with individuals with lived experience of homelessness. However, government restrictions severely limited my ability to engage in responses to hostile architecture through the charity Café Art, posing a significant challenge to the on-the-ground engagement I had originally envisioned. As a result, I was forced to change my approach. This transformative shift led me to a new line of enquiry that proved equally impactful, as I began to harness my practice as an educational tool.

The work carried out with my students has highlighted the potential for transforming hostile architecture by treating it as an opportunity for design responses that highlight exclusionary tactics. This approach will be further explored in my future research and integrated into my teaching practice. Therefore, the thesis does not mark the conclusion of this research but rather establishes a foundation that I will continue to develop through practice-based research in the context of postdoctoral study.

In this light, my contribution to knowledge within this research lies in its capacity to synthesise and explore the intricate interplay between interrogative design, social design, speculative design, and their potential to address hostile design, homelessness, and the experiences of migrants and people of colour in urban settings. This amalgamation of perspectives has allowed for an exploration of the ethical and sociocultural ramifications of hostile design, particularly its impact on marginalised communities. My research pushes the boundaries of existing knowledge by shedding light on the multifaceted nature of hostile design. While prior scholarship on hostile design practices is limited, my research not only explores the physical manifestations of these practices but also examines their psychological and societal consequences. By framing hostile design within the context of interrogative design, it becomes evident that these practices not only

Fig 111: Photograph of a sunset in Zimbabwe illustrating my multilayered connection to this research and practice (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

deter specific behaviours but also prompt a broader questioning of an individual's right to occupy public spaces. This shift in perspective is vital in understanding how these designs can undermine a sense of belonging and inclusivity in urban environments.

This research, therefore, forms part of a broader project that extends beyond the thesis. The incorporation of socially engaged practices advances the discourse surrounding hostile design and homelessness by emphasising inclusivity and collaboration. By emphasising the importance of engaging with people experiencing homelessness and advocacy groups highlights the invaluable lived experiences of these communities in shaping solutions. This demonstrates that achieving more empathetic and equitable urban design requires active participation from those directly affected by hostile design practices.

Moreover, the application of affordance theory offers a nuanced approach to analysing the impact of design choices on behaviour within public spaces. Affordance theory reveals that hostile design practices not only restrict physical actions but also deny basic human needs and rights. For example, a bench designed to deter sleeping denies the affordance of rest to those who require it most—an 'anti-affordance'. This insight underscores that hostile design is not merely an architectural inconvenience but a manifestation of structural inequalities, exacerbating the marginalisation of vulnerable populations.

My personal perspective as a migrant and person of colour provides a vital contribution to this research, adding depth by highlighting the intersectionality of urban challenges. In sum, this research expands the understanding of hostile design and its ethical implications, promotes socially engaged practices to address these challenges collaboratively, and utilises affordance theory to highlight the denial of basic human rights within urban spaces.

Future Recommendations

To build upon the foundation of this practice-based PhD, several recommendations emerge. First, continued research in the evolving fields of interrogative, hostile, social, and speculative design, and their impact on marginalised communities, should be pursued. This includes exploring emerging design trends and evaluating the effectiveness of various interventions aimed at dismantling hostile design practices. Collaborative efforts with policymakers, urban planners, and community organisations will help translate research into actionable policies and design guidelines that prioritise inclusivity and empathy.

Promoting interdisciplinary collaboration is also essential for a more holistic understanding of the complex urban challenges addressed in this research. Involving experts in sociology, psychology, and anthropology can offer deeper insights into the societal and psychological impacts of hostile design. Cross-disciplinary partnerships will also help address the interconnectedness of urban issues such as housing insecurity, mental health, and discrimination, contributing to more comprehensive solutions.

Furthermore, leveraging emerging technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality

(VR) can create immersive experiences that allow stakeholders to empathise with the challenges faced by marginalised communities. These technologies can be used for educational purposes, urban planning simulations, and public awareness campaigns.

Finally, ongoing engagement with advocacy groups, community leaders, and marginalised populations is crucial for effecting change. Incorporating their voices and perspectives into the design process ensures that interventions are grounded in the needs and experiences of individuals impacted by hostile design. As this research emphasises the importance of empathy and inclusivity, future projects should focus on these values to create urban spaces that work for everyone, no matter their background or social status. Through postdoctoral research, I aim to develop a handbook inspired by *The Squatters Handbook* and *Squatting: The Real Story,* using drawing as a critical tool to extend my practice. This will build upon existing responses to hostile architecture, co-creating strategies with individuals with lived experience of homelessness to provide practical interventions to reclaim public space.

In conclusion, this practice-based research highlights the complex relationship between interrogative design as a form of hostile design and the issue of homelessness in London. It underscores the ethical concerns associated with such design choices and their broader impact on urban communities. To address these issues, we must shift our design paradigms towards compassion, inclusivity, and empathy. By doing so, we can ensure that our cities become spaces where everyone feels valued and supported, encouraging a more just and equitable society for all.

LIST OF FIGURES

challenge exclusionary urban spaces (Adrienne Bennie, 2023, p. 178).

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APPENDICES

Contents

Appendix A: Mapping Hostile Architecture through 3D Printing

This appendix documents and maps hostile architecture using 3D printing. The images show how urban design can subtly discourage certain behaviours or groups of people from using public spaces, as well as how to identify and locate such designs.

A1: Element of 3D printed toolkit of hostile design (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).
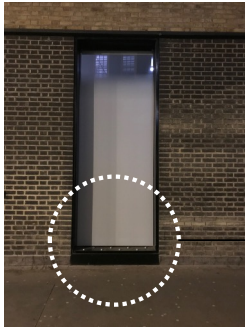
A2: Element of 3D printed toolkit of hostile design (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

A3: Element of 3D printed toolkit of hostile design (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

A4: Element of 3D printed toolkit of hostile design (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).
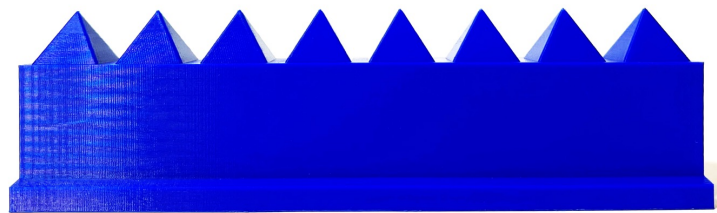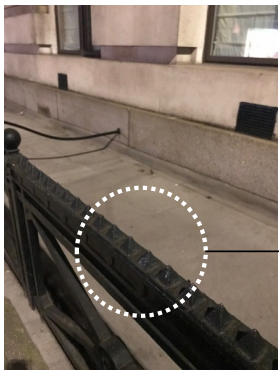
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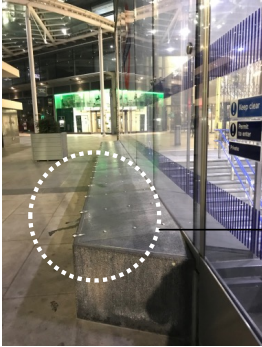
A6: Element of 3D printed toolkit of hostile design (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

Appendix A: CAD Drawings
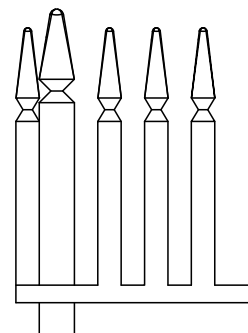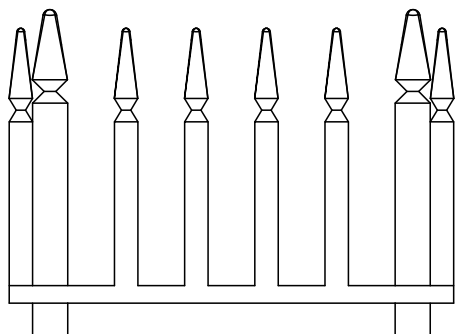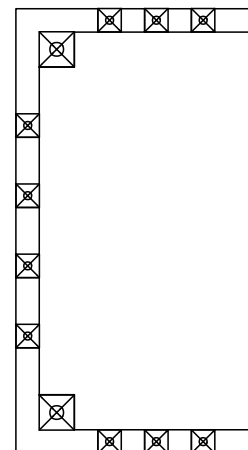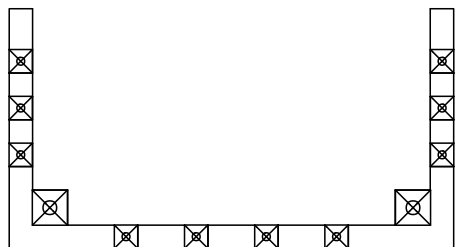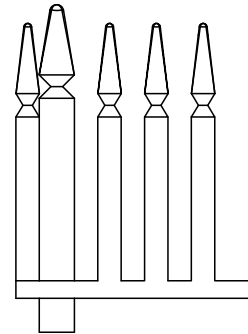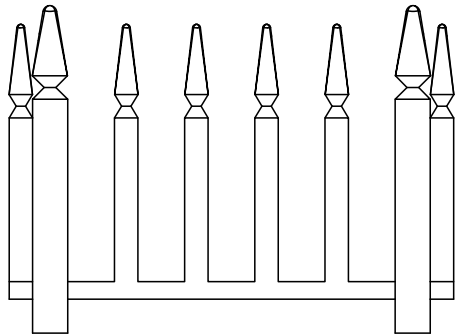
A7: CAD Drawings of hostile design, Not to Scale (Aleena Antony, 2023).
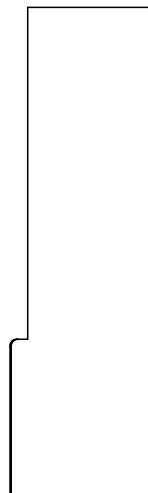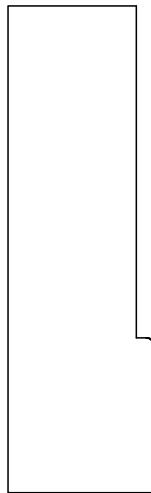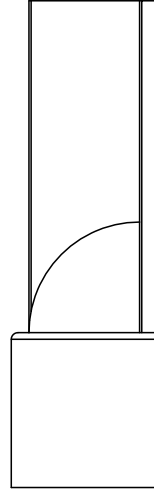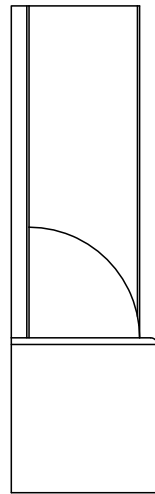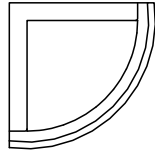
A8: CAD Drawings of hostile design, Not to Scale (Aleena Antony, 2023).
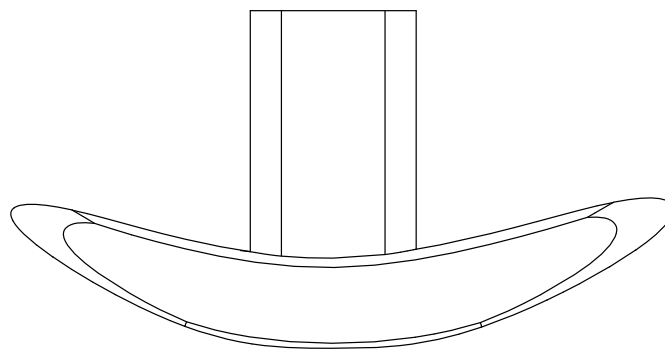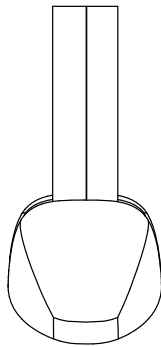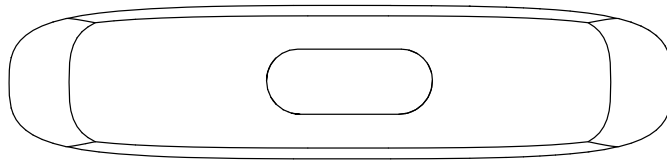
A9: CAD Drawings of hostile design, Not to Scale (Aleena Antony, 2023).
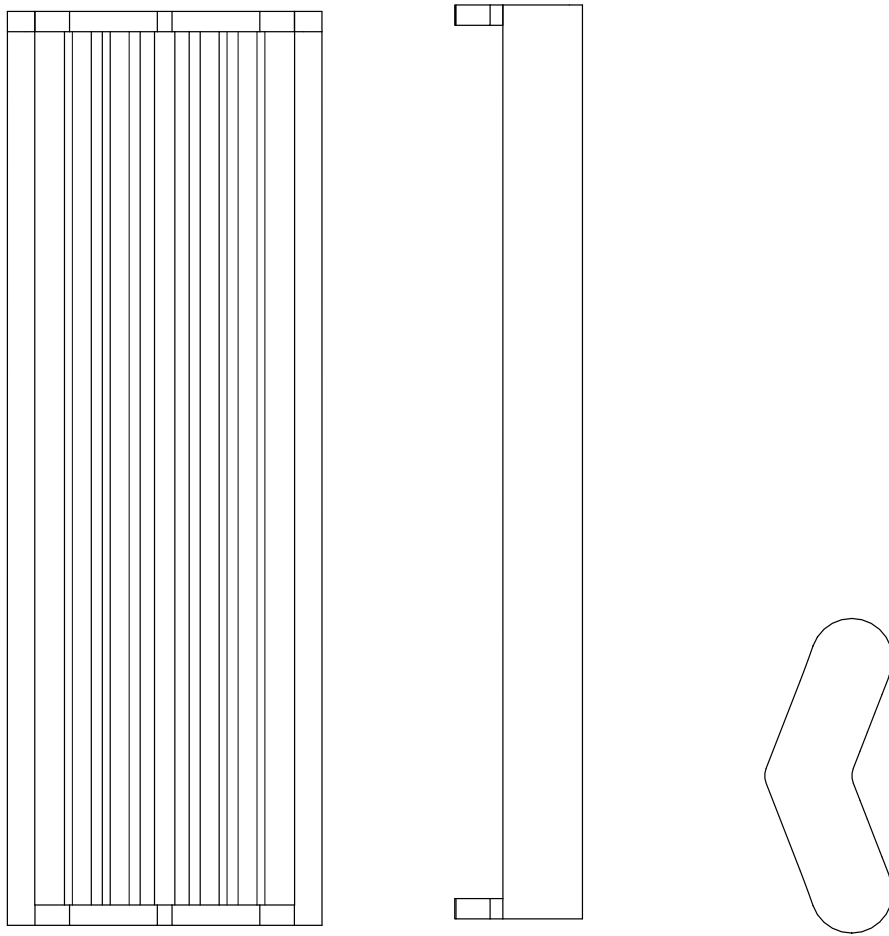
A10: CAD Drawings of hostile design, Not to Scale (Aleena Antony, 2023).
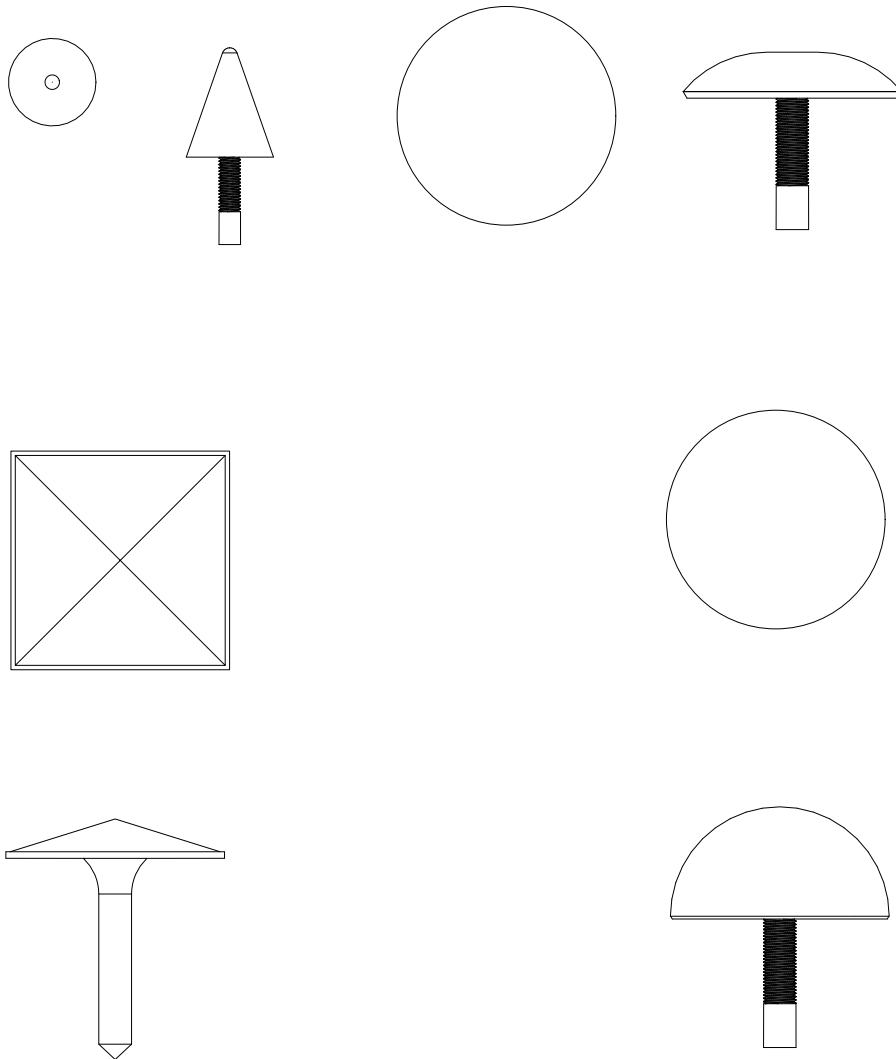
A11: CAD Drawings of hostile design, Not to Scale (Aleena Antony, 2023).
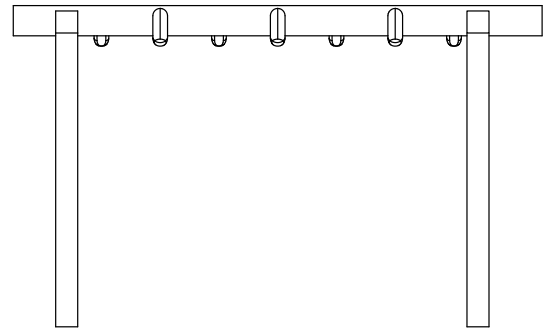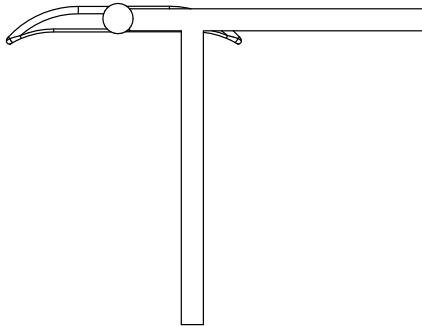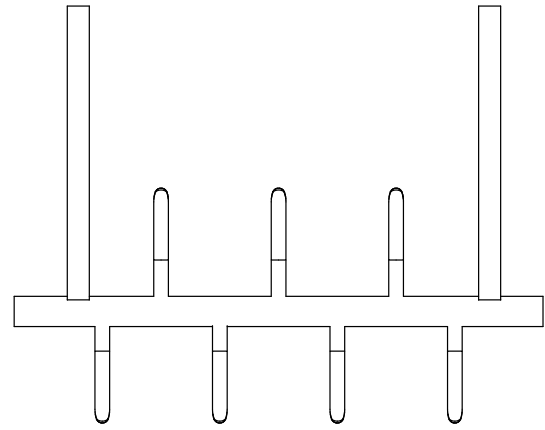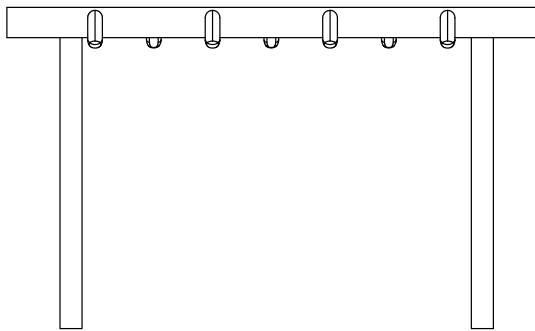
A12: CAD Drawings of hostile design, Not to Scale (Aleena Antony, 2023).
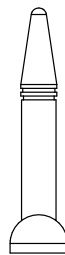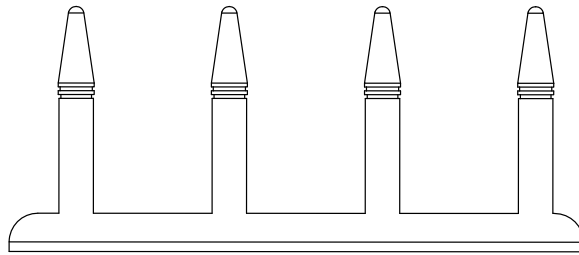
A13: CAD Drawings of hostile design, Not to Scale (Aleena Antony, 2023).
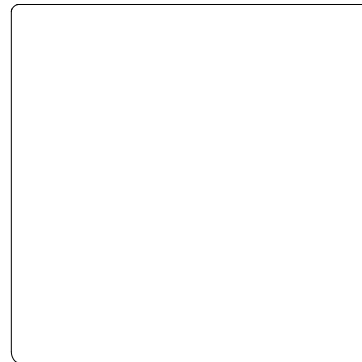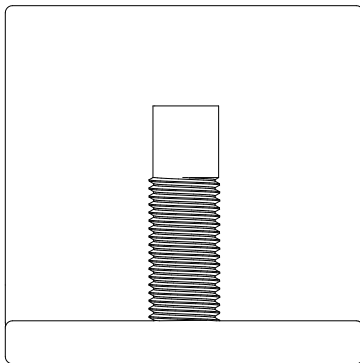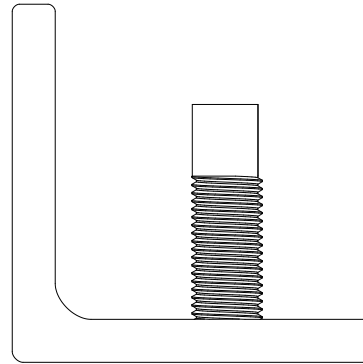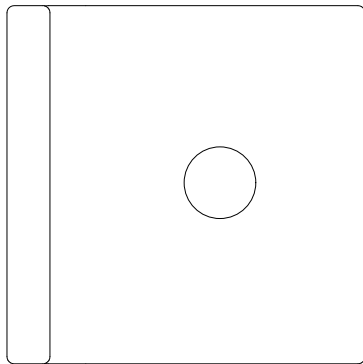
A14: CAD Drawings of hostile design, Not to Scale (Aleena Antony, 2023).

Appendix B: Drawing, Photographic Practice, and Mapping

This appendix documents additional practice through drawings of hostile design and concepts of home, alongside photographs and mapping. It explores how the intersection of urban environments and personal space.
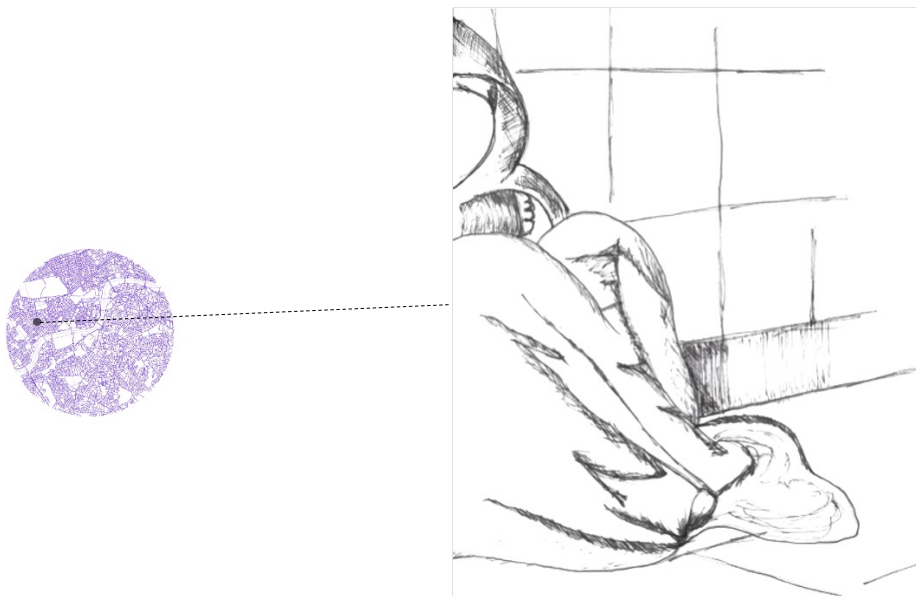
B1: Drawings
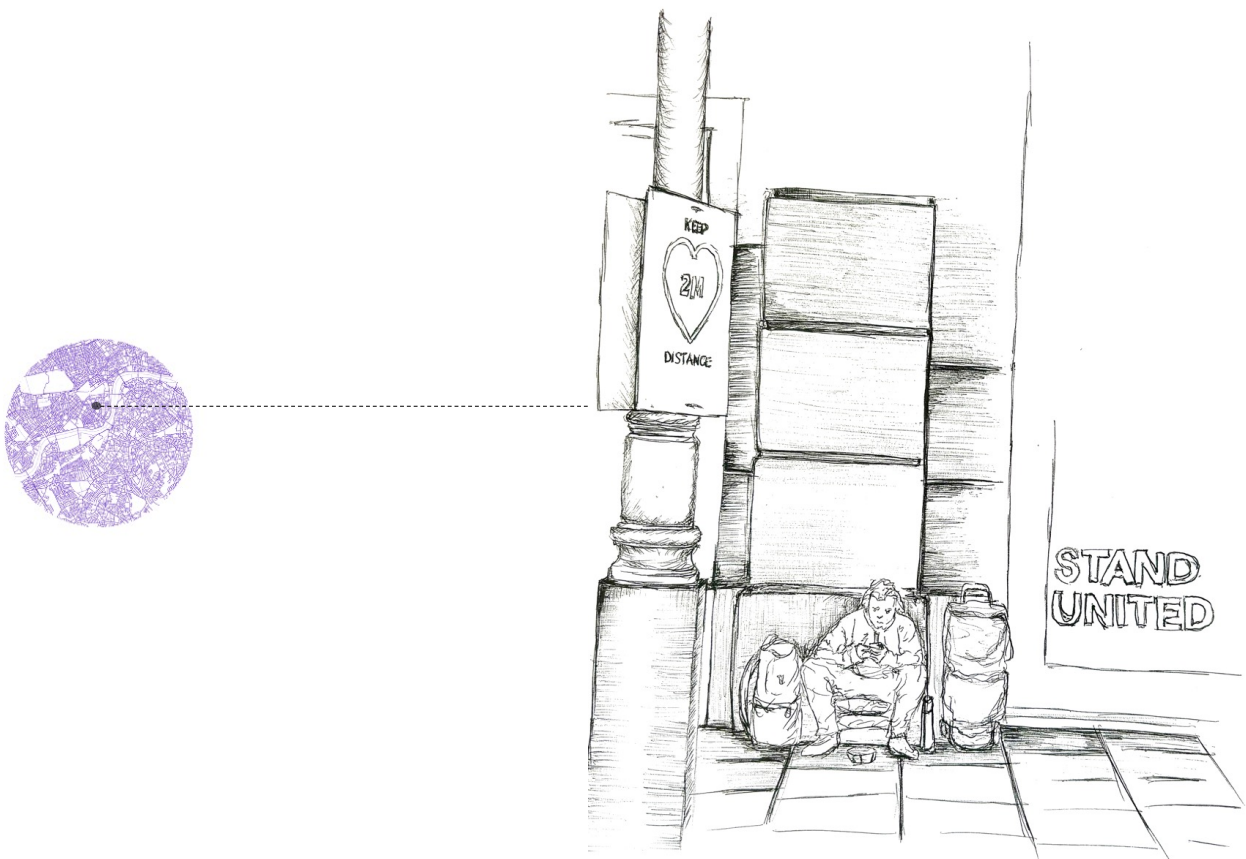
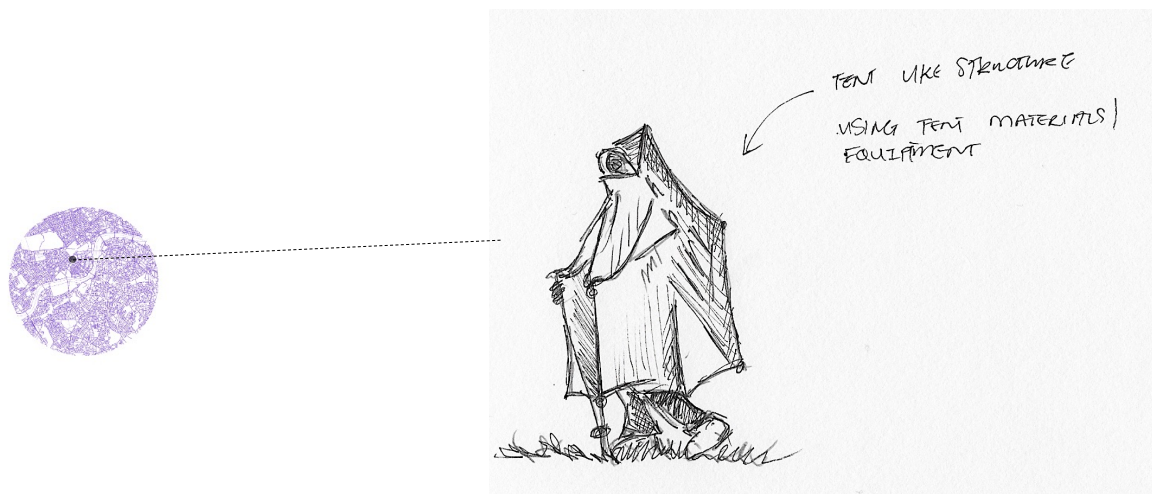

B1.1: Documenting domestic rituals in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-23).
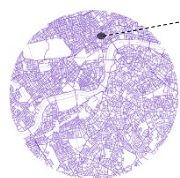
B1.2: Documenting domestic rituals in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-23).
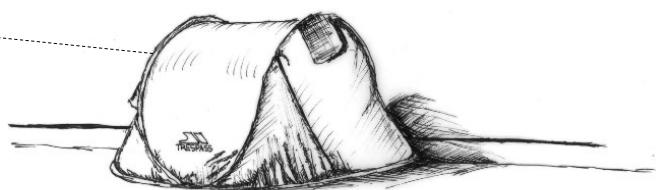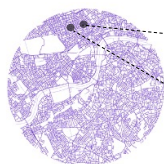
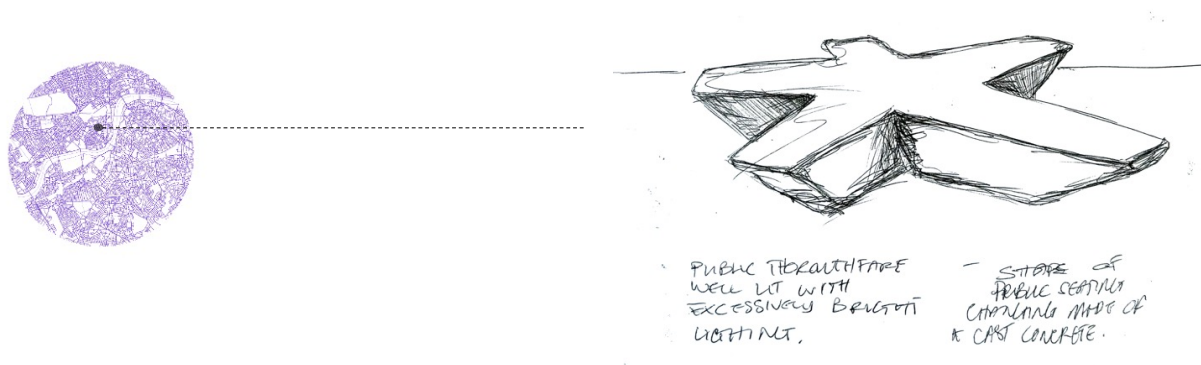B1.3: Documenting domestic rituals in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-23).

Appendix B
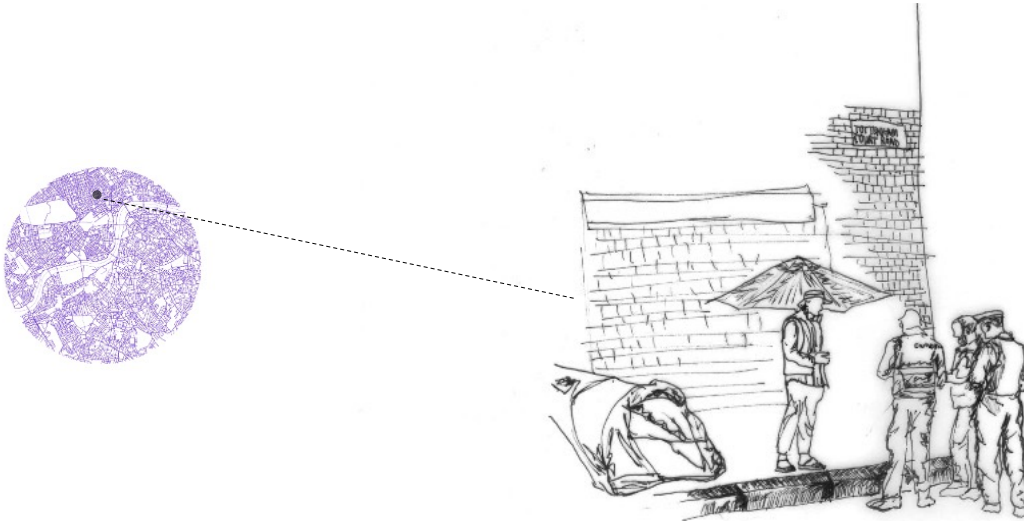
B1.4: Documenting domestic rituals in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-23).

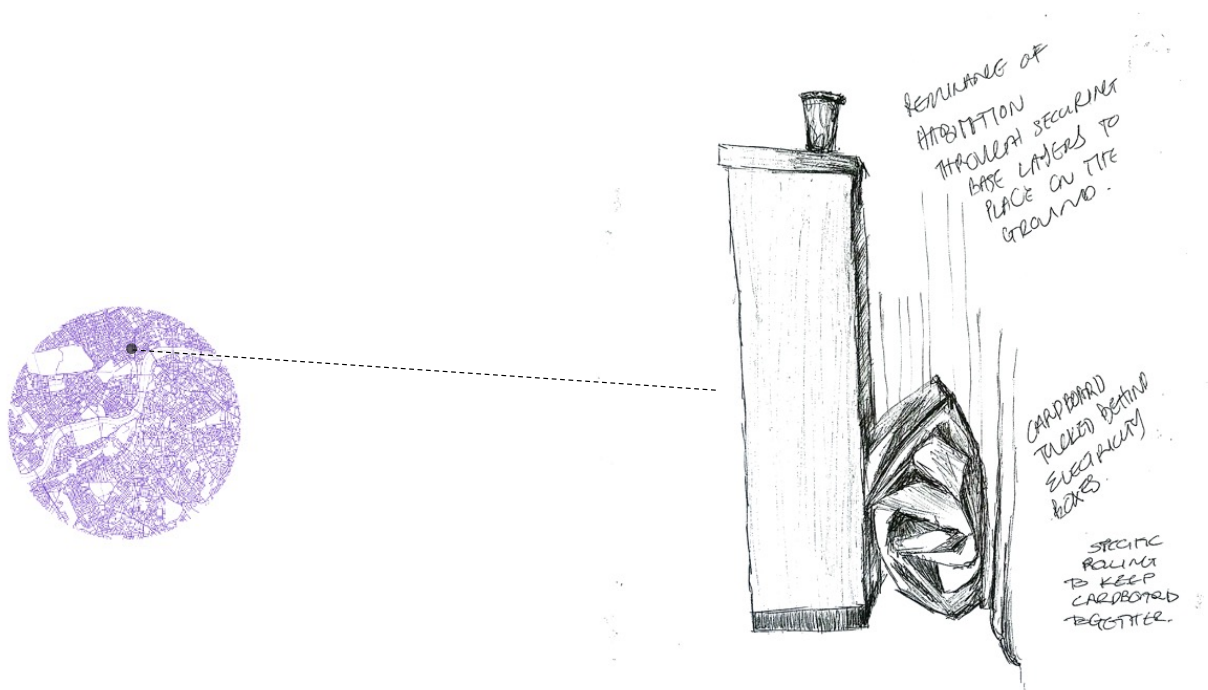B1.5: Documenting domestic rituals in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-23).

Handwritten annotations on sketch:
- HOODED TOP? ZIPPERS.
- POCKET ADDED.
- RESEMBLES MUMMY TOMBS
- EXISTING SLEEPING BAG DESIGN.
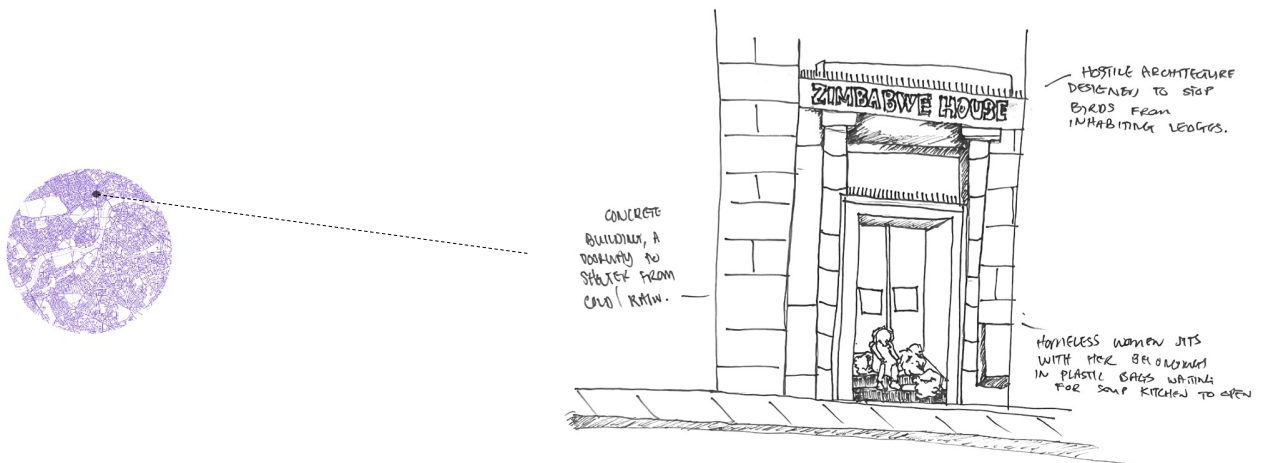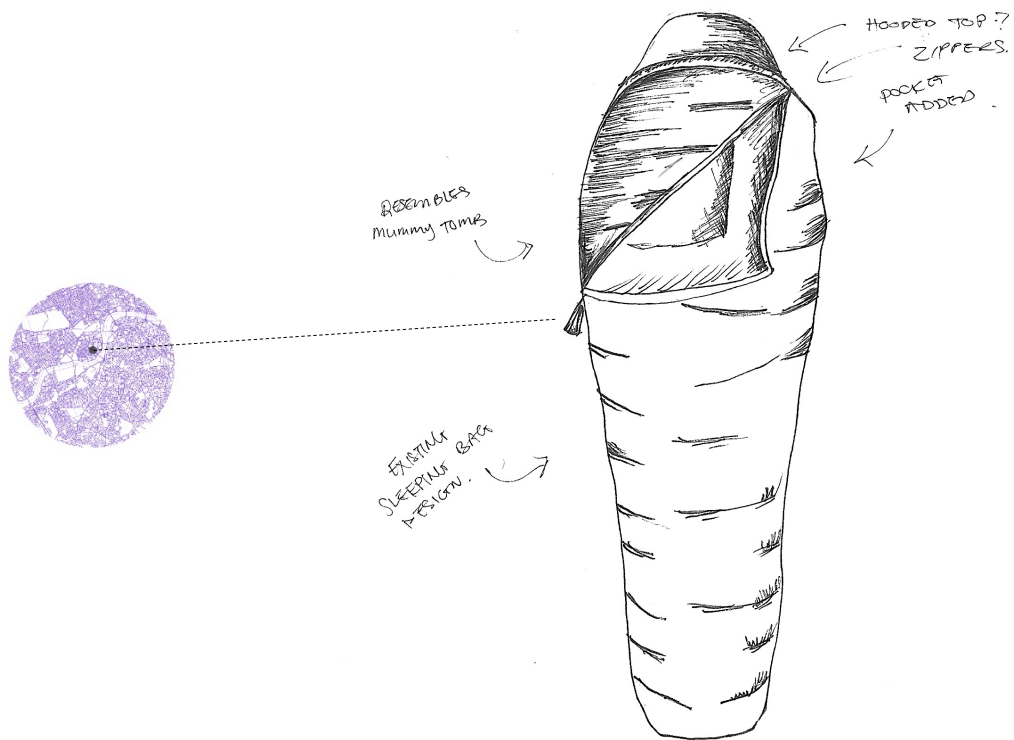
B1.6: Documenting domestic rituals in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-23).
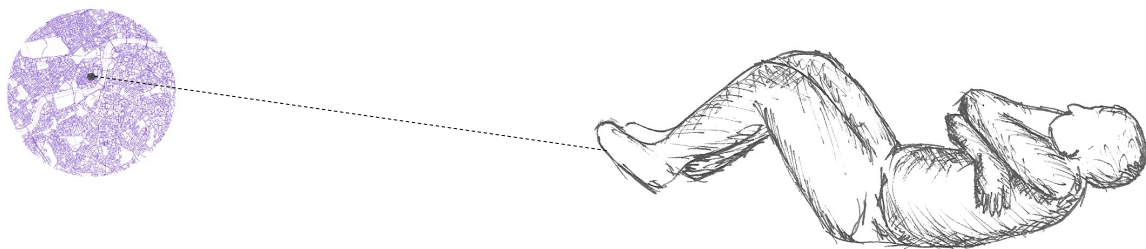
B1.7: Documenting domestic rituals in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-23).
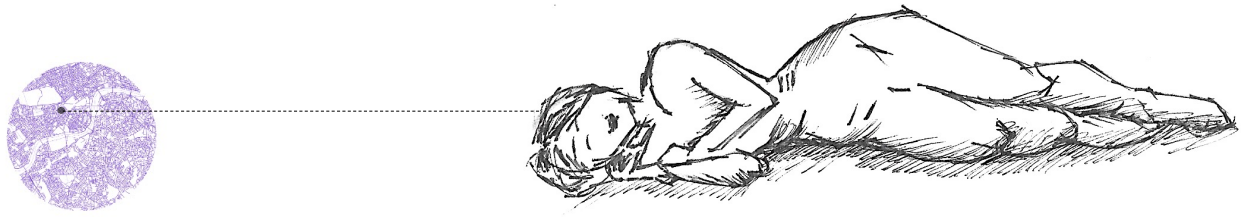
B1.8: Documenting domestic rituals in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-23).
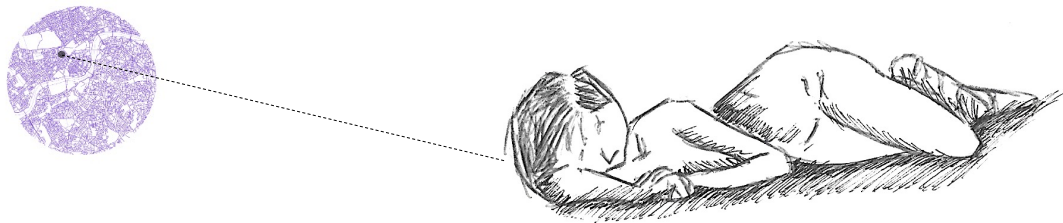
B1.9: Documenting domestic rituals in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-23).

B1.10: Documenting domestic rituals in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-23).

TENT LIKE STRUCTURE

USING TENT MATERIALS/ EQUIPMENT

B1.11: Documenting domestic rituals in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-23).

PUBLIC THOROUGHFARE WELL LIT WITH EXCESSIVELY BRIGHT LIGHTING.

— SHAPE OF PUBLIC SEATING CHANGING MADE OF CAST CONCRETE.

B1.12: Documenting domestic rituals in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-23).

B1.13: Documenting domestic rituals in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2019-23).

B2: Photographs

B2.1: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.2: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.3: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie,
2020-22).

B2.4: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19
(Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.5: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.6: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.7: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.8: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19
(Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.9: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.10: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.11: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.12: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.13: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.14: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.15: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.16: Photographs of sleepsites in London through covid-19 (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-22).

B2.16: Photographs of hostile design in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

B2.17: Photographs of hostile design in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

B2.18: Photographs of hostile design in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

B2.19: Photographs of hostile design in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

B2.20: Photographs of hostile design in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

B2.21: Photographs of hostile design in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

B2.22: Photographs of hostile design in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

B2.23: Photographs of hostile design in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

B2.24: Photographs of hostile design in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

B2.25: Photographs of hostile design in London (Adrienne Bennie, 2020-23).

Appendix C: Participant Consent Forms and Information Sheet for the Research

This appendix contains the consent form and information sheet used in the research. The consent forms explain that participation is voluntary, how personal information will be kept confidential, and the rights of the participants. The information sheet gives a clear overview of the research aims, methods, and any possible risks. These documents were provided to participants to ensure they understood everything before agreeing to take part.

INFORMATION SHEET

TITLE: Hostile Design: Lingering in Public Spaces

This workshop aims to investigate and document instances of hostile architecture and design in public spaces, particularly in London. Participants will engage in observational exercises, note-taking, and visual documentation to identify and analyse everyday objects that exemplify hostile design principles. The information gathered will contribute to a research project aimed at creating a taxonomy of hostile architecture and design, serving as an educational resource for future designers. Before you decide whether you are happy for the data to be included, it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and how the data will be used and stored. Please read the following information carefully and if you are happy for your responses to be included as part of the research study, please complete the consent form below.

What is the purpose of the workshop?

Participants (UAL, BA PFD students) will observe public spaces in London and document instances of hostile architecture or design using detailed notes, sketches, or other visual documentation methods. Participants should consider the ethical implications of documenting and discussing hostile architecture (an introduction to ethics will be covered within the workshop). Respect for individuals affected by such design interventions should be maintained throughout the workshop and field enquires.

What happens if I agree for my data to be used?

Any personal information or identifiable details gathered during the workshop will be handled with confidentiality. Your consent will allow the findings and results of the exercises conducted to be included in the research project's taxonomy of hostile architecture and design and may be used as an educational tool for future designers.

What will happen if I agree to participate but then decide I do not want to allow the continued use of my findings or results in relation to the workshop I participated in.

You can withdraw from the study, without having to justify your decision, at any time. If you decide that you would prefer not to be involved in the research, please immediately email Adrienne Bennie. If you do decide at any point to withdraw from the study, your results and findings will be erased.

Will my participation in the study be kept confidential?

The data will be collected and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, secured against unauthorised access. Data will be kept by the researcher for possible re-use in related research projects. It will be stored in an identifiable format for five years. At this point, it will be reviewed annually in terms of its potential research value. If the data is no longer considered to be of relevance for research, it will be destroyed.

I will use brief extracts from the data both in presentations and/or at academic conferences and colloquia and include anonymised images in papers and publications. Data will only be shared with the research team and any third parties with your consent.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this project and the use of the data, please the researcher involved in the project listed below.

Adrienne Bennie UAL a.bennie0820181@arts.ac.uk

Who can I talk to if I have concerns about this research?

1

C.1: Copy of information used within workshop settings (Adrienne Bennie, 2021-24).

ual: university of the arts london

Consent Form

TITLE: Hostile Design: Lingering in Public Spaces

I confirm that by ticking/initialling each box I consent to the use of my findings and results gathered in response to the workshop, to be used for research purposes.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided. ☐

2. I consent to my data being used in this study and understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time. I understand that if I do withdraw from the study, I am within my right to ask for any data in which I am included to be erased. ☐

3. I understand that the information will be dealt with under the terms of UK data protection law, including the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. ☐

4. I recognise that despite the general data being anonymised for research and presentation purposes, it is still possible that I can be recognised. ☐

5. In the case that I use original documentation from student participants, they will be asked for permission, identified, and referenced. ☐

6. I understand that the original workshop recording will not be made available to other academic researchers or the general public but saved for brief extracts in academic presentations and publications. ☐

7. I understand that my data will be stored in an identifiable format, and consent to this data being used for future research and teaching purposes. ☐

8. I understand that the findings and results gathered through the exercises and selective still images will be shown at conferences, in publications and at research, teaching and training events. ☐

_____ _____ _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

2

C.2: Copy of consent form used within workshop settings (Adrienne Bennie, 2021-24).

ual: university of the arts london

INFORMATION SHEET & CONSENT FORM

TITLE: Bridging Research and Teaching: Understanding Hostile Design as Part of Adrienne Bennie's PhD

As part of my ongoing research into the concept of hostile design and architecture and its implications for design, this form recognises an extension of this exploration within an educational setting. Your involvement in this research will contribute to our understanding of hostile design and architecture in addition it is hoped to enrich future educational experiences within the design field.

Description of Research:
This research represents a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between research and teaching. Through extended tutorial sessions, that engage in in-depth conversations, hands-on exercises and discussions that explore alternative approaches that address the challenges posed by hostile architecture in public spaces, whatever format that takes.

Integration of Your Work:
Your participation in this research may involve the integration of your work into current research, teaching, presentations, and presentations at conference papers. Your insights, analysis, and creative solutions will inform discussions and serve as examples for future students and researchers interested in this area.

Extending the Discussion:
By consenting to include your work in this research, you are helping to extend the discussion surrounding hostile design and architecture beyond the confines of the classroom. Your contributions will be referenced as part of my research findings and integrated into my teaching materials, allowing me to share collective knowledge with a wider audience.

Consent Agreement:
By signing this consent form, you acknowledge the dual role of this research project in both research and teaching contexts. You voluntarily grant permission for your work to be included in my research 'Bridging Research and Teaching: Understanding Hostile Design as Part of Adrienne Bennie's PhD' and consent to its use for educational and research purposes, with appropriate credit and referencing.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this project and the use of the data, please the researcher involved in the project listed below.

Adrienne Bennie UAL a.bennie0820181@arts.ac.uk

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

C.3: Copy of consent form and information sheet used within tutorial settings (Adrienne Bennie, 2021-24).

Appendix D: Student Activity

This appendix presents an example of the task students were completed following the hostile design workshop.

Remember: Hostile Design is an area in design research that relates to a designed approach used in public space to push a particular behaviour – specifically related to controlling how the street homeless community conduct themselves in public, the intent of hostile architecture is to restrict behaviour.

ACTIVITY

1) Identify an object(s) in a public space that resemble elements of hostile design or architecture.

2) Examine, record and document through drawing, how 'if' any people are interacting with this object.

3) Take note of the type of public space you are in and if this aspect of hostile design/architecture was obvious to you and the users in space.

4) Report findings of your observations through hand or digital drawing however, you may use video to capture the object you are recording if it is a hostile device that uses light or sound (you must still draw the device).

5) You should note down the location of the object(s) you are investigating. Eg (Spikes in Pimlico).

ual: university of the arts london chelsea

D.1: Copy of Student activity after delivering workshop on hostile design (Adrienne Bennie, 2021-22).

Remember: Hostile Design is an under researched area in design research that relates to a designed approach used in public space to push a particular behaviour – specifically related to controlling how the street homeless community conduct themselves in public, the intent of hostile architecture is to restrict behaviour.
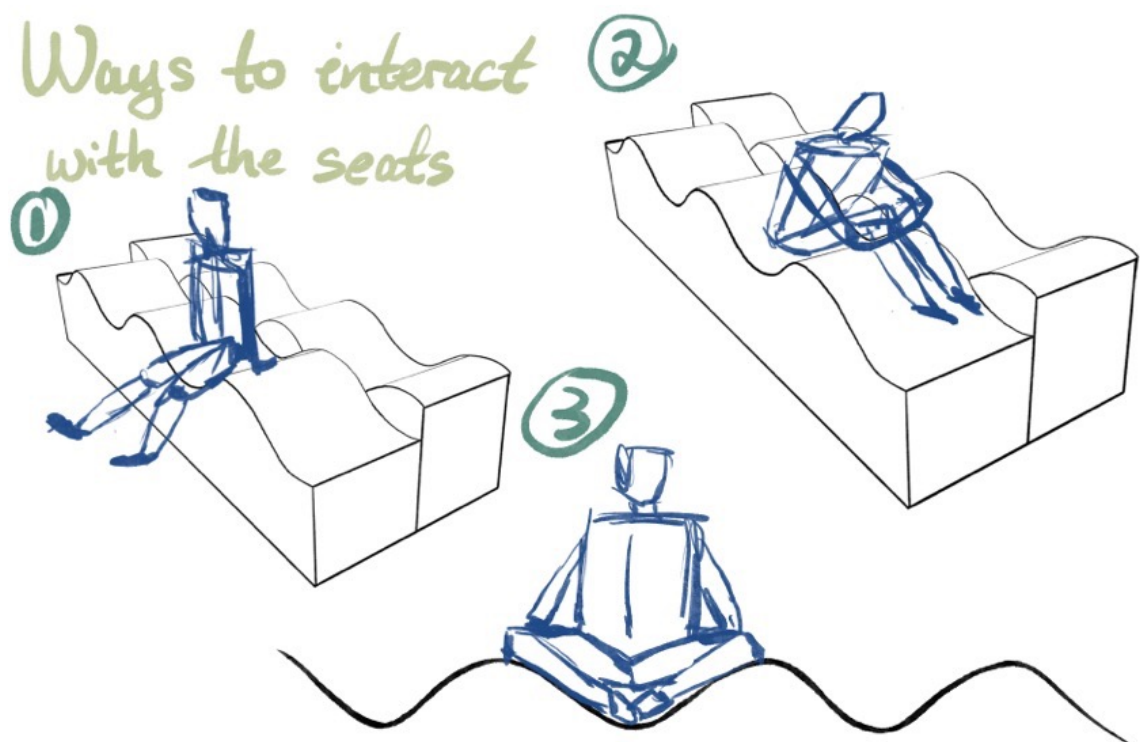
ACTIVITY

- Identify an object(s) in London that resemble elements of hostile design or architecture.

- Examine, record and document how 'if' any people are interacting with this object.

- Note if this aspect of hostile design/architecture was obvious to you and the users in space.

- You should note down the location of the object(s) you are investigating.

- Report findings through hand or digital drawing however, you may use video to capture the object you are recording if it is a hostile device that uses light or sound (you must still draw the device).

ual: university of the arts london chelsea

Appendix E: Student Responses to Workshops

This appendix includes documentation of a selection of student work through drawing and photography, demonstrating their contributions to the development of the taxonomy of hostile design from 2021-2024.
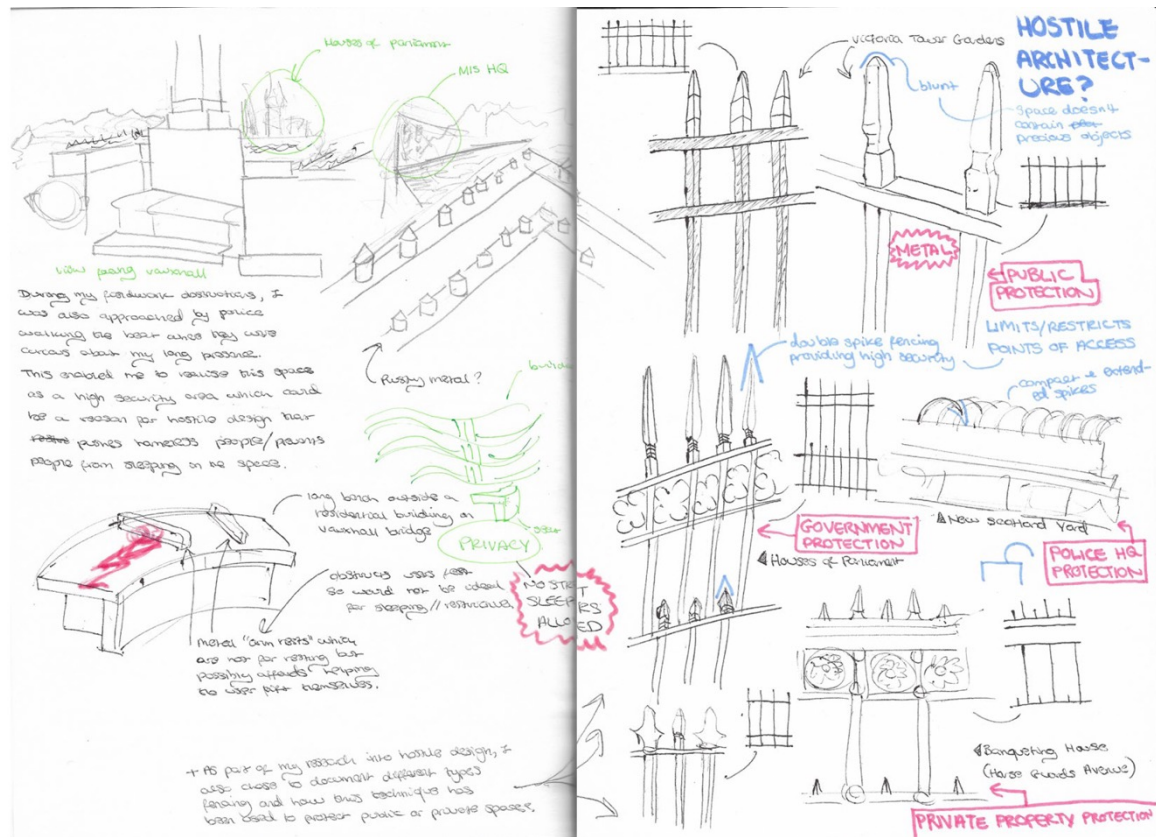
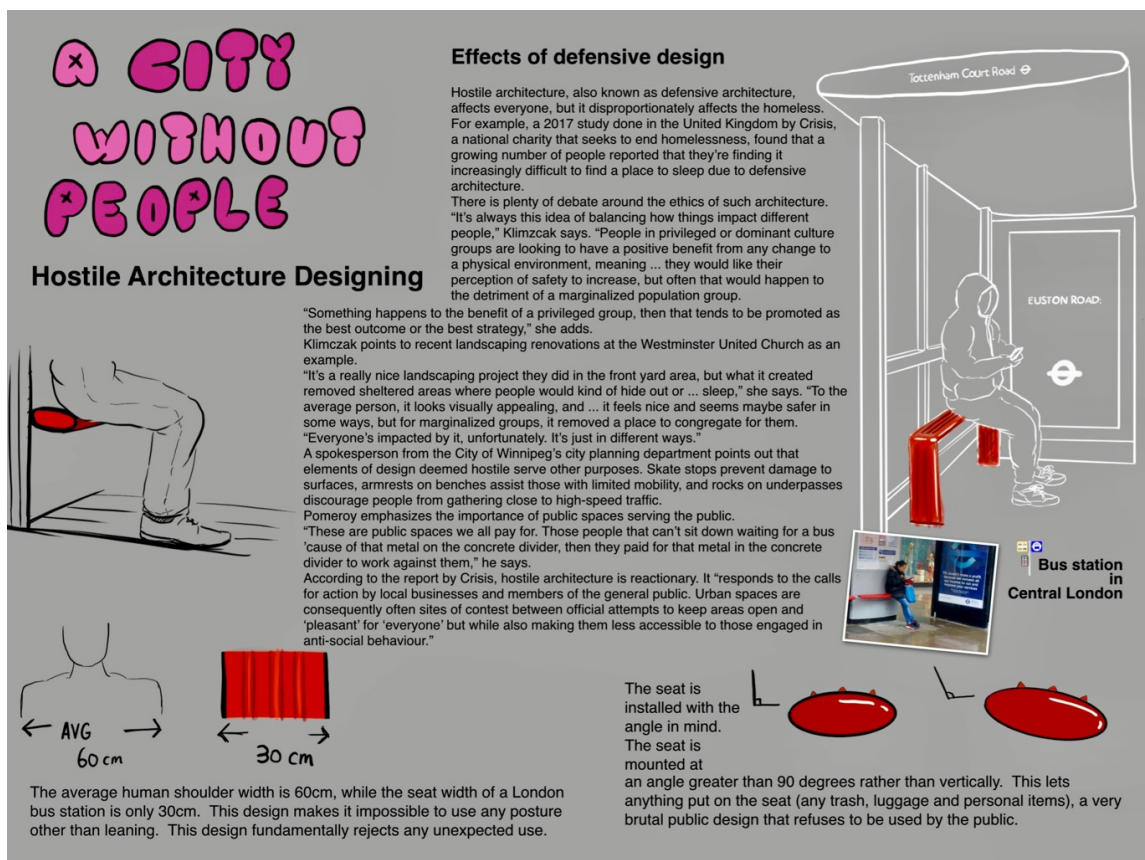E.1: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Aaron Mighty, 2022-24).

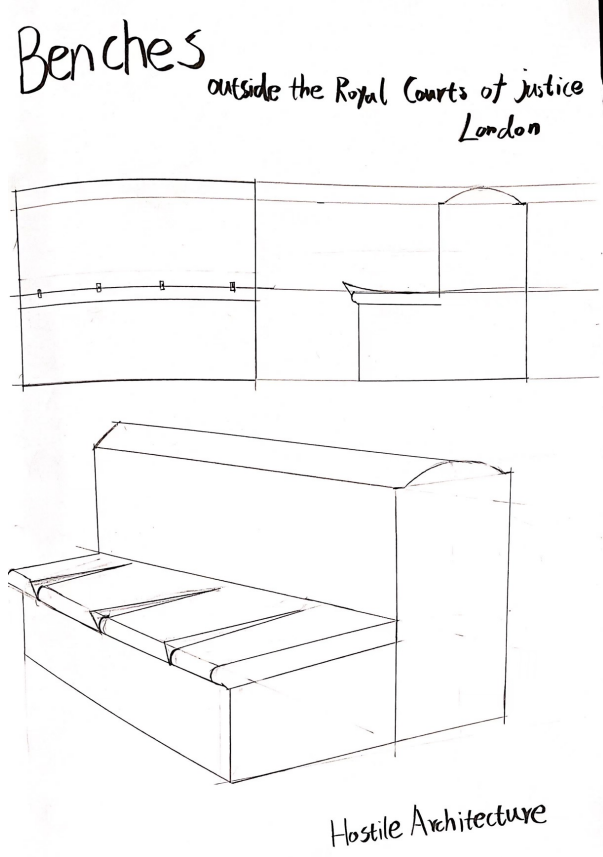E.2: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Alice Wei, 2022-24).

Hostile Design

I visited the vauxhall bus station and record some hostile seating design around that area.

can only lean on this seat. for short time. relax.

Remember: Hostile Design is an under researched area in design research that relates to a designed approach used in public space to push a particular behaviour – specifically related to controlling how the street homeless community conduct themselves in public, the intent of hostile architecture is to restrict behaviour.

ACTIVITY

- Identify an object(s) in London that resemble elements of hostile design or architecture.

- Examine, record and document how 'if' any people are interacting with this object.

- Note if this aspect of hostile design/architecture was obvious to you and the users in space.

- You should note down the location of the object(s) you are investigating.

- Report findings through hand or digital drawing however, you may use video to capture the object you are recording if it is a hostile device that uses light or sound (you must still draw the device).

E.3: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Alice Yuan, 2022-24).

E.4: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Qingsen Su, 2022-24).

Bench at Victoria Tower Gardens
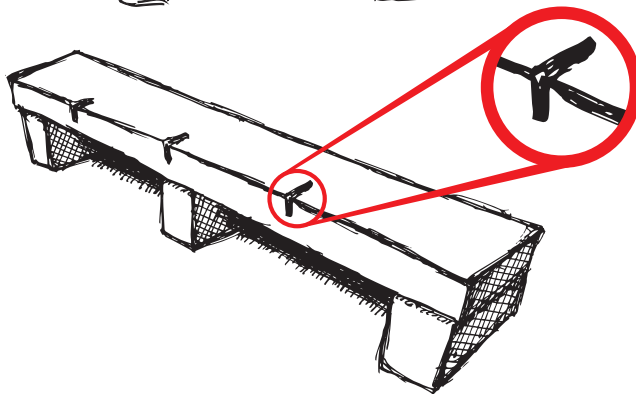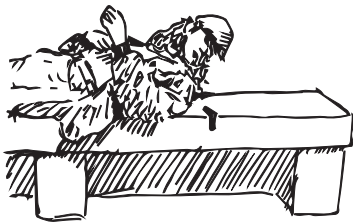
Though the knobs/bumps were a bit uncomfortable at times it was possible to lay on the bench, which makes it possible for homeless people to sleep on it.

The knobs/bumps were most likely put there to prevent skaters from "grinding" on the bench.

E.5: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Toby Friedman , 2022-24).

Benches outside the Royal Courts of justice London

Hostile Architecture

E.6: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Xingyu li, 2022-24).
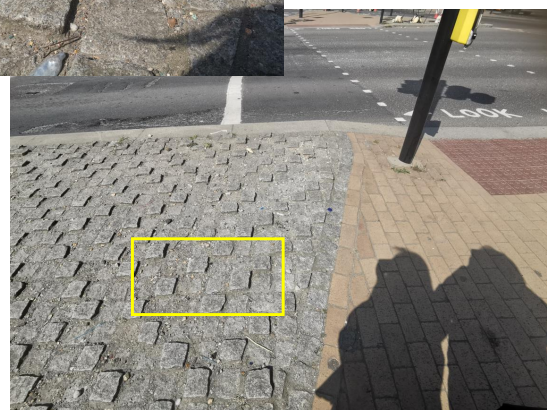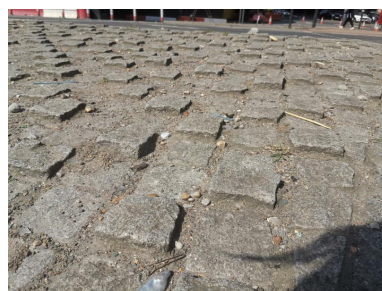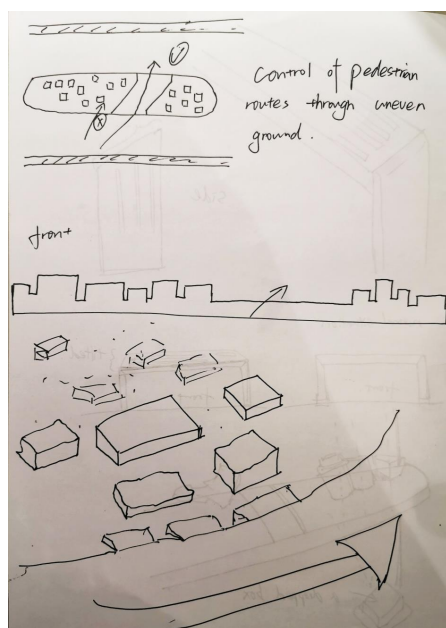
E.7: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Xuan Liu, 2022-24).
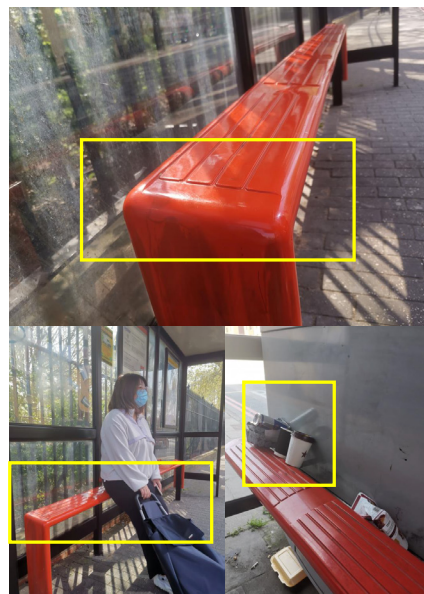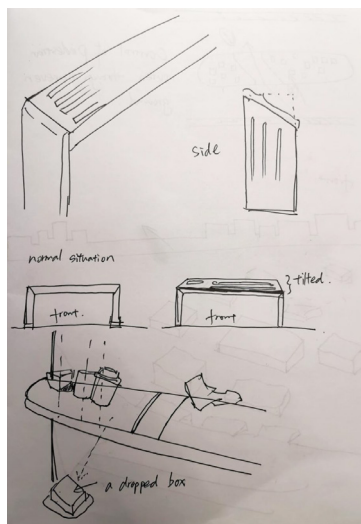
E.8: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Xuan Liu, 2022-24).
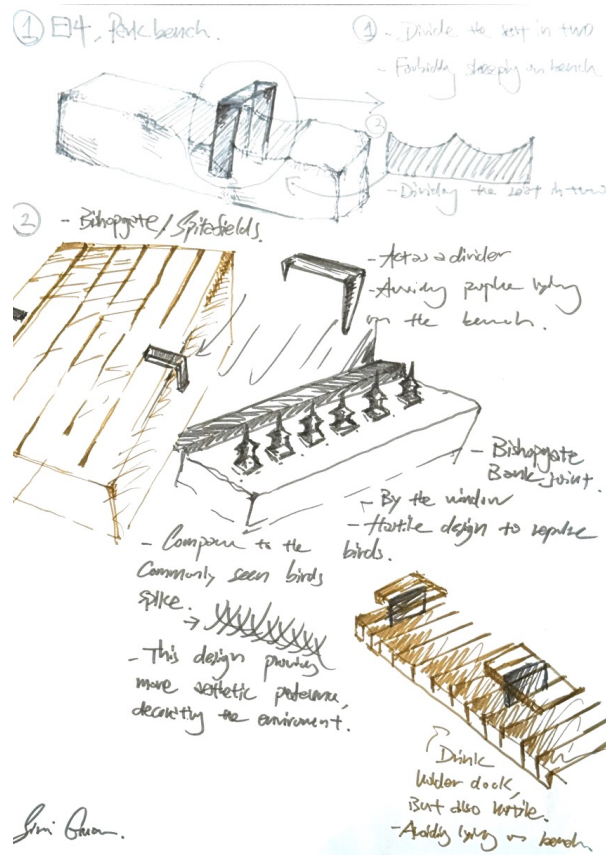
E.9: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Yumeng Wang, 2022-24).
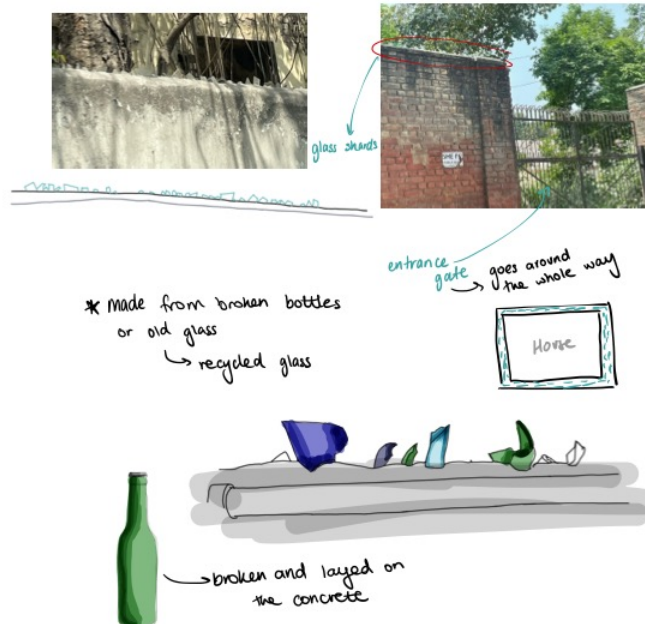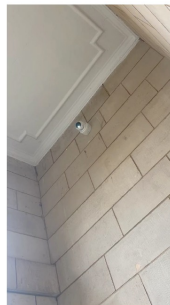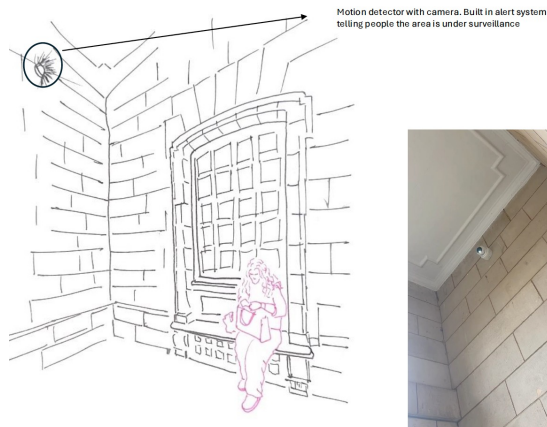
E.10: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Anousha Chowdhry, 2022-24).

E.11: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Sirui Guan, 2022-24).

Sound system to deter people:
Chelsea college of arts

Motion detector with camera. Built in alert system
telling people the area is under surveillance

How is it hostile?

Is an irritating repeated message
warning people they are being surveyed

Why?

It's being used as a deterrent to not
linger for too long in that one area. May
be because the benches underneath
don't have anything hostile apart from
the material. As the message repeats
consistently when somebody is present
(through a motion detector), it would
deter a homeless person from sleeping
here.

How could this be altered?

It could be removed as it doesn't serve
any purpose to be there. Perhaps it's for
safety as it is a fire exit under it.
However, it seems to be more a
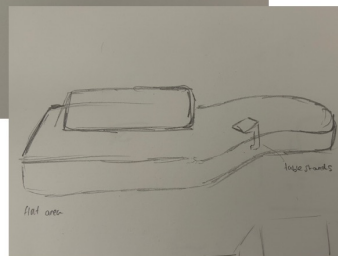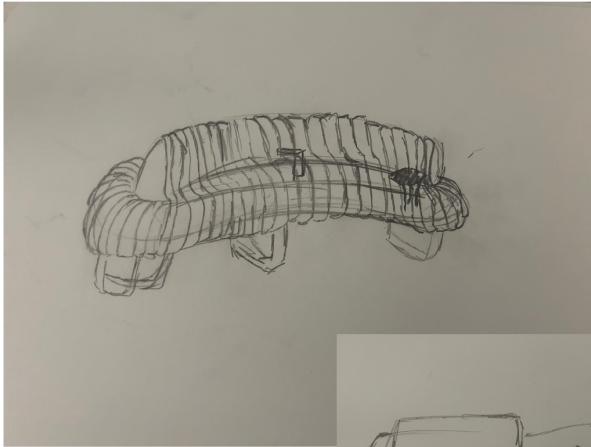deterrent for homeless sleepers.

If it is for students, then why are we
being watched?

E.12: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Harry Barrington, 2022-24).

E.13: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Xiaoxhe Li, 2022-24).

Documentation:
- Sitting
- Waiting
- Leaning

Paddington station

It doesn't seem obvious as hostile design due to the aesthetics aswell as you primarily think of the seat and not using it as a place to rest.

Looking at the design it could exclude homeless since the seats are curved not allowing consistent long parts. The hand rests also block the bench from being slept on since Paddington is quite an open station.

E.14: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Isabel Ogunjuyigbe, 2022-24).
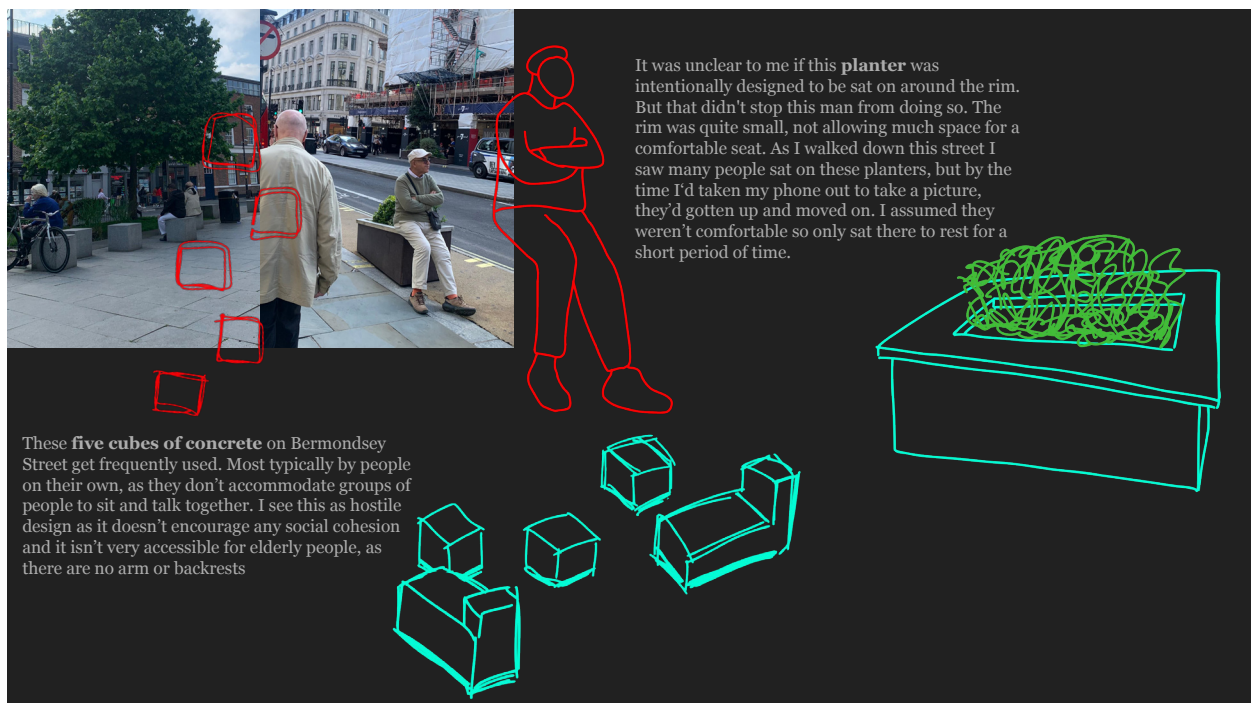
Selfridges

Russell Square

E.15: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Meichen Zhou, 2022-24).
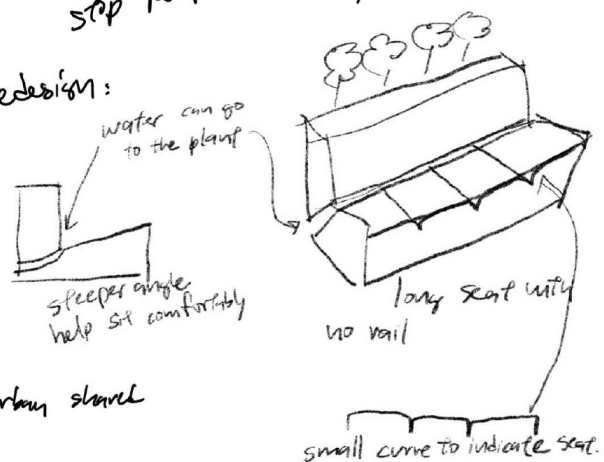
It was unclear to me if this **planter** was intentionally designed to be sat on around the rim. But that didn't stop this man from doing so. The rim was quite small, not allowing much space for a comfortable seat. As I walked down this street I saw many people sat on these planters, but by the time I'd taken my phone out to take a picture, they'd gotten up and moved on. I assumed they weren't comfortable so only sat there to rest for a short period of time.

These **five cubes of concrete** on Bermondsey Street get frequently used. Most typically by people on their own, as they don't accommodate groups of people to sit and talk together. I see this as hostile design as it doesn't encourage any social cohesion and it isn't very accessible for elderly people, as there are no arm or backrests

E.16: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Mia Harris, 2022-24).

E.17: Hostile Design student response to hostile design workshop (Punpun Phophientong, 2022-24).

Appendix F: Diagrams of Engagement with Organisations Post-Doc

This appendix presents diagrams that illustrate the different ways in which I have engaged with organisations, and will continue to do so after the completion of my doctoral research.

Embedded Practice within
organization. Working with people with
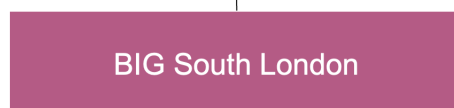lived experiences.

↑

Cafe Art

| Stockwell Park Arts Centre
Initiative |
|---|

↓

Part of a team that won EDI Funding
(£2500) to co-design and deliver an
arts centre.

F.1: Diagram of post-doc engagement
(Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

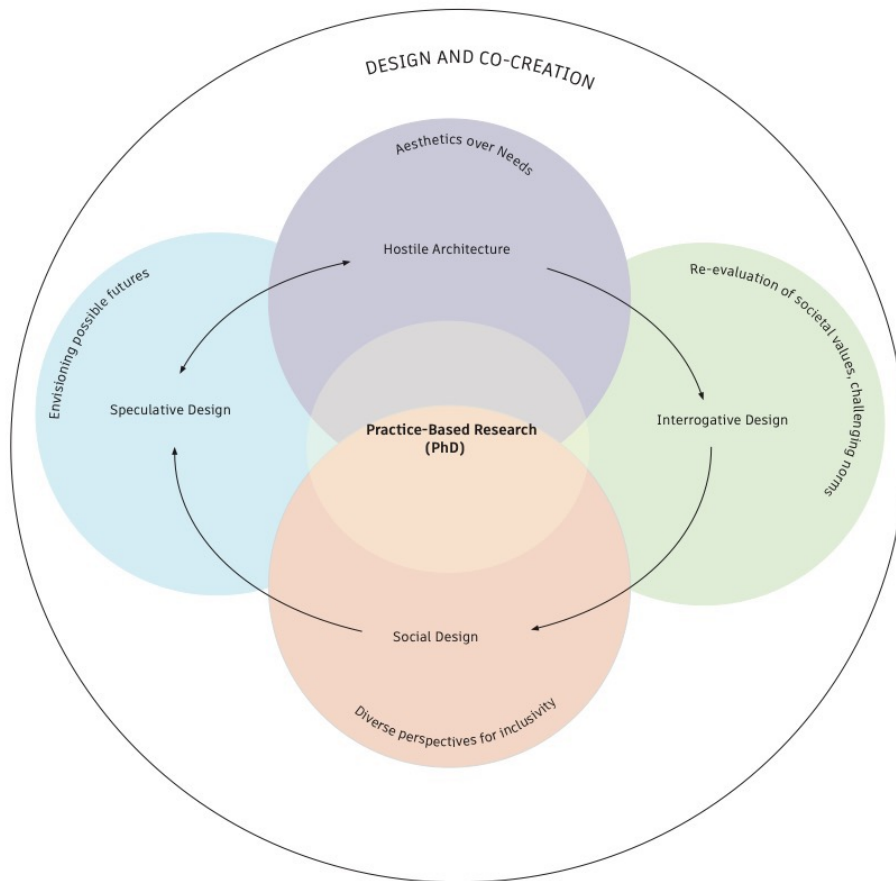Fund winner through KE to work with local businesses, charities & third sector organisations. (£3000).

BIG South London

F.2: Diagram of post-doc engagement (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

Public engagement as part of research for UAL.

Arts & Homelessness International

F.3: Diagram of post-doc engagement (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

F.4: Research context diagram (Adrienne Bennie, 2023).

Interrogative Design as a Means for Confronting Hostile Architecture

Interrogative Design as a Means for Confronting Hostile Architecture