

#### STATEMENT OF INTENT

This mode of design anthropology uses a lens of feminist technoscience encapsulating intersectional contexts of patriarchal ethnocentrism, mapped through design anthropology, and advocating forms of sensory ethnography to uncover situated knowledges, with practical grounding in co-creative metadesign principles.

Using radical design sensemaking tools such as an implosion method analysis on fundamental street design, I reflect on history and histories of living, playing and interacting in the street, as well as shifts in cultural and societal norms. These angles of inquiry seek insight into the gradual recession of placemaking and human wilderness in western streets that precludes the prevailing neoliberal discourse and (industrial) technocentricity<sup>1</sup>. Through epistomological discussion of objectivity and intersectional histories, a new approach is demonstrated, alongside a design research probe that explores how convivial use of streets has changed. The probe looks to uncover situated ecologies by avoiding excessive structure or hypothesis, in order to minimize goal-oriented paternalistic research design that will only amplify embedded intersectional hierarchies.

Changes in our discourse around street spaces, neighbourly kinship and spontaneous recreation have influenced and will influence our sense of place and community, which defines our lifestyle. Designing fair and more sustainable urban spaces means understanding historical, recent and current cultural developments in radical ways.

The design probe asks: What has changed in the emotive wildernesses of street spaces?

Can we track the continually shifting expectation, habits and discourse around streets, neighbours, and recreation?

This affects our sense of place and community around our homes, and in turn affects the lifestyles we have and aspire for.

This mode of design wonders and asks; what you remember about playing or socializing in the street as a child compared to nowadays? How do you feel about the memories you have?

It seeks to host collective, intergenerational reflection, because when designing to move towards sustainable ideals in the Global North, vulnerability can provoke deeper reflection on our societal priorities.

<sup>1</sup> Preston, Oscar F. What are streets (even) for? p.27. Brighton University 2022.

# Path-kerb-road-kerb-path

The Kerb is the dividing line..

... A boundary mark of authority that is designed into the vast majority of residential streets in the the West and Global North.

### DESIGN SENSEMAKING THROUGH THE IMPLOSION **METHOD**

The space, gap or 'way' between dweliings

roads

0. Etymology of Kerb mid 17th century (denoting a raised border or frame): variant of curb.

Curb: a check or restraint on something.

1. The kerb was designed as check or restraint on carts or carriages from entering walking space, where streets and roads converged.

3. Through threat of collision, the kerb also checks and restrains pedestrians

5. The prevailing hierarchy leads streets to be more roaddominated, even the quieter side streets then have roads built into their design.

The efficiency of the privileged is more important than the safety of non-dominant or marginalized

As urban population grew ordinary streets doubled up as busy roads more often. not just reserved to one section of main road through a linear settlement

2. It restrains by the threat of damaging wheels and jolting the vehicle.

4. This restraint morphs into a boundary. Horses and carriages owned by the privileged, carts owned by the wealth-generating, began to take priority over the non-dominant: Women, children, elderly, the less wealthy and less able. Even the same person not at work is less important, than when she/he is.

6. The prosperity of dominant demographics is maintained and embedded by their power.

Women were particularly affected by this as they didn't typically or ride or drive independently until the 20th century.

## DESIGN SENSEMAKING: THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE RADICAL

As outlined in the implosion technique above, the kerb was designed and implemented chiefly by wealthy men, as a threat to break or damage wheels for drifting away from the middle of the street, but in turn provided a threshhold to marginalize the less wealthy, healthy and powerful.

Some european cities have recently removed kerbs to encourage the idea that the street is for everyone, with a white line to demonstrate where pedestrians can let vehicles pass. Yet it's not radical to reclaim the streets away from cars. It's revolutionary in that we are revolving (from Latin; revolvere 'roll back') to a previous consensus, but not radical in that it is drawing on fundamentals.

Recent commentary surrounding London's car free day and post-covid futures fixate, as one might expect, on the low-hanging fruit of motorcar. Peter Norton pinpoints the growth of the automobiles as radical, in retaliation to the car as traditional, highlighting evidence from a century ago showing streets were being systematically repurposed in the road-centric way<sup>2</sup>: An american journal for road builders is quoted as saying "the only solution is a radical revision of the conception of what our streets are for". It's true that norms shifted, but not that this was radical. Norton makes valid points on cars redefining norms, but pinpoints change on short-term surges:

"..they redefined responsible walkers as jaywalkers. They redefined streets across the country as primarily for cars. They changed laws and engineering standards, and they even changed social norms. And they did all this long before most urban Americans even owned a car. There's good news in this. It means that the radical break with the past came from motordom"

The 1922 journal may have been at the forefront of change, but it wasn't radical, as Norton describes. To design radically isn't to necessarily move forward in the same direction as longstanding popular ideas (in this instance that of speedier transport as a facilitator of efficient productivity) it's to connect to the fundamental elements and add new direction. What's fundamental to our social constructs are sex and gender roles.

We can identify that a patriarchal objectivity was dominant, and within that rationale, road-dominated streets were a logical next step, to continue designing primarily for wealthy, wealth-generating men in transit.

Patriarchal forces within the framework of instrumentalism pushed its priorities based on physical strength and power, which it does even under the guise of open-minded progressivism<sup>3</sup>. In this way, politicisation and divisiveness stigmatize

resistance to change as luddite or conservative, overriding any merit in inherent internal resistance that is often founded in a situated knowledge, but cannot be expressed by those without a platform.

This relates to a class struggle, specific to the UK that can be addressed within intersectionality. A radical mode needs to dismantle and reverse as much as we can about the patriarchal, colonialist and ethnocentric frameworks that are ingrained into design through dominant rationale of objectivity. As soon as a patriarchal norm or objectivity is identified and becomes less prevalent, rather than the process being finished, human-centred design sensemaking can continue searching for alternative accounts or situated knowledges, with are more common ground and the most common truth.

That is not to say that all truth or objectivity is relative to whichever world it applies to, this view acts as a smoke-bomb - a mirror to totalization<sup>4</sup>, but a truth relative to more non-dominant forms of knowledge is better. With radical feminist mode of design, it would be incongruous to violently dismantle knowledge in a way that creates more attritional dichotomies<sup>5</sup> to threaten other knowledge, or make dominant groups marginal. Don't "defeat" an account or a situated knowledge through a conversational debate, but look at the relativity of translation and interpretation. With this thoery of epistemology, we can therefore appreciate several directions hidden by dominant entrenchment, which resonate through different privileges of partial perspective<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Norton, Peter. Redefining urban mobility for the 21st century, Taking back the streets: essays on the post-covid future of cities, Published by London Car Free Day, March, 2021 https://bit. ly/3L76KYQ

<sup>3</sup> Harding, Sandra, Objectivity in Science: New Perspectives from Science and Technology Studies p.40 edited by Flavia Padovani, et al., Springer International Publishing AG, 2015. ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.brighton.ac.uk/lib/ubrighton/detail.action?docID=3108722.

<sup>4</sup> Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." Feminist Studies 14, no. 3 (1988): 584. doi org/10.2307/3178066

<sup>5</sup> ibid, p**588** 

Pictured: Robert Hooke and Christopher Wren's proposed redesigns of London, following the Great Fire.8

Returning to roads and kerbs, with a hypothetical history of mixed genders or local commoners involved in the decision-making process around streets, oppressive design that was seen as forward-thinking may have been designed more fairly before it became entrenched; such as kerbs being kept only for main thoroughfare, meaning less acute marginalisation of less dominant or privileged groups.

## SENSEMAKING FROM ANTHROPOLOGICAL SHIFTS IN STREET DESIGN

The prevalence of governmental aspiration towards GDP, growth and development unsustainably, at the expense of the Global South is well-established<sup>7</sup>. Through further historical and anthropological analysis, I identify deeper roots which precede capitalist aspiration and monitoring of "the market". These roots lie in the implicit design for patriarchal privilege.

Idealized futures where the lifestyle of the ordinary person eventually reaches the lifestyle of the wealthy, do run parallel to culturally western ideas of 'development', which emerged in the late enlightenment era and the subsequent industrial revolution, as part of a triumph over scarcity.

Before this, the realities of street spaces had already begun to take a shape that prioritized the privileged and powerful most likely to afford horses and carriages, travelling farther afield in exclusive social strata. This power took part in instrumental planning when the opportunity arose through destruction and colonialism. For example, after the Great Fire of London in 1666, a redesign of London was commission, in which Charles II wished to have "order and direction", and there were proposed redesigns for London involving grid systems. These weren't fully implemented, but were eventually taken up in North America. Instrumental mercantilist principles had begun to take hold, particularly in instances of settler colonialism in the western hemisphere, where there lay a barer canvas to artificially define community boundaries...

..In other words, Europe at least had existing higgledy piggledy neighbourhoods that authorities couldn't justify destroying, but the "new world" (new to Europeans) could be newly built upon ideals of order and efficiency.

"These designs were all variations on a grid system that later became prevalent in the development of cities in the United States.

Newcourt's eerily repetitive plan featured rigid rows of church squares within rectangular plots – a scheme that would influence the lay-out of Philadelphia in the 1680s."

Centralized religion was dismantled and the sense of self transformed<sup>10</sup> such that a individualism was celebrated as a driver of productivity, celebrated amidst the cultural shift toward protestant work ethic.





Consider that jaywalking was able to become an offence in the USA, but not Europe. The design of straight roads and grid-like street formation justifies high speeds and designated crossing points. As North America was invaded and colonized by western

<sup>7</sup> Reidy, Chris. Discourse coalitions for sustainability transformations: Common ground and conflict beyond neoliberalism, Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability Volume 45, 2020, Pages 100-

<sup>112,</sup> doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2020.09.014

<sup>8</sup> Forrest, Adam. How London might have looked: five masterplans after the great fire of 1666, p. 1 The Guardian, www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/jan/25/how-london-might-have-looked-five-masterplans-after-great-fire-1666

<sup>9</sup> ibid, p1.

<sup>10</sup> Baldwin, Geoff. "Individual and Self in the Late Renaissance." The Historical Journal 44, no. 2 (2001): p. 341-42. www.jstor.org/stable/3133611.

europeans, it fostered a catalysed version the european cultural shifts.

On a class level, even before motorcars, vehicles with heightened privacy and grandeur meant insulating certain social circles from the masses and prioritizing mechanized productivity over community productivity. Roads became fastermoving mechanical rivers, exploited chiefly for wealth creation and the wealthy.

The hegemony exerted during the early modern era is an example of contravention of design justice; showing that risks, harms and benefits of design were skewed towards the patriarchal, capitalist and settler colonialist priorities<sup>11</sup>. Well before industrialization, western European commercial discourse chiefly supported unencumbered individualism among the privileged. This was later reinforced by aspirational culture for individualism as a universal goal, in the post-industrial world.

Privileged mercantilist classes began to see order and efficiency as tantamount, with little consideration for community synergy in the simplicity and freedom of spaces in between their houses. In this way roads began to colonize streets through patriarchal design, as a precursor to capitalism.

Design can subsequenty benefit from a radical mode that colonialism has occurred on a microlocal level as well as a macro- level between continents.

Fast-forward to the completion of industrialization, and modern urban spaces typically design for ordered technocentricity, even in residential side streets.

Children and youth eventually remained the only demographic with enough time and imagination to use the streets for play and frivolity day-to-day. In post-war Europe, increased prevalence of motorcars and more structured living standards mean street play has become generally less common in richer, more "developed" countries by western standards. Takeover of streets for recreation is a novelty now reserved for carnivals, protests and other highly-charged or special events in town or city centres, such as a marathon.

Co-creative placemaking design in community streets won't thrive without radical upheaval of established limits of local authority, or instead, a local authority that facilitates co-creativity.

There have been strides by organizations, echoed by government advice, to encourage street closures by private residents wishing to host a party or gathering. The current UK government website has a string of "myths" to bust, one of which is that it's difficult<sup>12</sup>. However, in another

section it says to give the Council 6 weeks, while the Street Party Site that is hyperlinked from the government website suggests you should write





to your neighbours 2-3 times per month<sup>13</sup>. The government in this case is trying to encourage a creative culture or co-creative design, without changing the hard rules or reality -- that these streets are prioritized for roads.

To delve deeper into receding habit of open conviviality and play in streets, we need to research contemporaries' memories, not just to find examples of these changes, but to make sense of the emotive wildernesses through voices that are not usually confident, empowered, heard or taken seriously, due to status.

<sup>11</sup> Costanza-Chock, Sasha, Design Justice: towards an intersectional feminist framework for design theory and practice, p. 8-9 "DESIGN STRUGGLES", Valiz, Amsterdam

<sup>12</sup> UK Government Website as of 02/02/2022 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/your-guide-to-organising-a-street-party/your-guide-to-organising-a-street-party

<sup>13</sup> https://www.streetparty.org.uk/road-closures/

Patriarchy can hardly be underestimated, in its part in shaping and designing our world, and therefore us, particularly by what it inhibits through the assumed hierarchies, with privileged, most anglo-saxon adults males generally ruling the roost.

Without a western lens, the eastern hemisphere (predominantly eurasia) is arguably less developed than the "new world" or western hemisphere relative to the west's own frameworks of success, despite keener technical advancements.

On the social side of western ideas of development, the traditional pressure to display acutely heternormative qualities based on constructs of percieved masculinity or feminity, many are traumatised or stunted by self-denial and oppression of perfectly natural gender roles.

Conversely, Native American cultures incorporated multiple gender spirits into the social and family structures thousands of years before European civilisation began settling. This universe incorporated and correlated many of the gender-neutral and queer indentities that leading western nations are only recently tolerating, as championed by mainstream liberal progressivism.

Spanish settlers in Latin America and the English colonists in North America condemned them as "sodomites". Rather than emphasising the homosexuality of these persons, however, many Native Americans

focused on their spiritual gifts14

Hundreds of years later, catching up with these cultures is seen as western progress and this bias or weighted narrative plays into every belief system, decision-making framework, prioritization as well as fears, identities and hierarchies that dictate design decisions. Major companies currently teach LGBTQIA+ recognition, embedding this into corporate protocol. But before diversity and inclusion initiatives, many were taught the story of Columbus discovering the New World. We still talk and narrate in terms of western ethnocentrism, and yet western europeans could have had recent revelations hundreds of years ago if they had seen people of colour as equals, to learn from.

Within western culture there is now an mainstream liberal appreciation of dogmatic or extreme cultural ideals as damaging; but not introspectively. This is weighted in a towards islamic extremists in a jingoistic way, or against political extremists in a sense of keeping order. But imagine if western society began languaging traditional gender ideals as "extremist" to counter those putting forward gender ideals of extreme femininity or masculinity?

From an outside perpsective, it might be said that women, queer men and queer women have been marginalized by western extremism, affecting almost all design.

With this in mind, co-creative sensory ethography via non-experts, ordinary people and neglected regions could uncover knowledges within situated ecologies that traditional forms of expertise and knowledge sit outside of.

14 Williams, Walter L. The 'two-spirit' people of indigenous North Americans. p1. Guardian 2010 https://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/oct/11/two-spirit-people-north-america

Squaw Jim, a Native American Navajo who was a 'two-spirit'

# SENSEMAKING THROUGH CULTURES OF VULNERABILITY

Any new provision for street spaces might have to be designed in a way, or within the right communication design, that encourages or nudges users to break through expectations of reserve; the shyness and habit of keeping to yourself when around your neighbourhood.

This might be achieved by taking inspiration from the street culture of regions in the Global South that is more developed; and doesn't need a government webpage to create a sense of place in the street.

In the West we stoke competitive drive in walks of life that means vulnerability is seen as weakness. Our focus on debate and competition - "struggles for and contests for over what may count as rational knowledge" means diverse knowledges can be drowned out by a percentage point of a scoreline, or due to attritional tactics.

News corresepondent George Alagiah recently spoke very candidly on the *Desperately Seeking Wisdom* podcat of the advice he would leave behind, and his advice related to reinstilling a sense of togetherness and vulnerability lost to a adversarial culture of competition in the west<sup>16</sup>.

"Constantly ask the question: What is it we can do together?[..]that's what I've learnt. We have talked about vulnerability and intimacy[..] and all of those things are about sharing, thoughts, ideas, things that we could do to help, they're about togetherness[..]take the political world, it's all about being adversarial, much of it is driven by competition, deadlines[..] get to a place where we are asking eachother 'okay we disagree about things, what can you and I can together?' [..] it [the former] is a very western approach to life and what I find very sad is the way that it is bleeding into other cultures. I spent a lot of time in Africa, and in South Africa they have a word: Ubuntu. It's the idea that I'm only human if I recognise the humanity in you. There's this collective notion of life which I think we have lost"

A really pertinent ethnographic aspect about this passage is how Alagiah himself is in a setting that lets him be vulnerable, through Craig Oliver's style of open-ended conversation. He is allowed to ramble, and in this way accesses his version of truth through a setting where he is under no threat of being wrong, or being rushed towards precise conclusion. This in itself reflects how my design probe seeks to uninhibit vulnerability to get closer to truth.

## SENSEMAKING THROUGH HISTORIES OF NON-DOMINANT GROUPS' RESISTANCE

Research through vulnerability of sensory emotive ethnography is a radical break compared to the over-emphasis of competitive debate as an

<sup>15</sup> Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." p. 587 16 Oliver, Craig & Alagiah, George. Desperately Seeking Wisdom Podcast 50:30-52:00 www.desperatelyseekingwisdom. com/episodes/desperately-seeking-wisdom-with-george-alagiah



epistemological tool.

Those educated in certain articulation, privileged and dominant, can use competetive debate to drown out the voices of marginalized; designing them out of the process:

Non-dominant demographics aren't often in the conversation.

If they are, they aren't often heard

If they are, they better be using dominant language.

If they do, their rationale won't be expressed neatly

If they articulate their rationale effectively (against the odds) their truth may be treated as anomalous.

It's an issue of intersectionality that applies to those outside the middle-class sphere of academia. More so in the UK than continental Europe and North America; acutely due to a class system -- that despite being increasingly blurred -- is still embedded. Working classes have been "red-lined" out of professions and academia, though the infamous polytechnic and grammar school system. It still exists today in counties such as Essex and Kent, where fairly clear lines are drawn between learning environments of the offspring of professionals, biased towards specifically trained forms of articulation as tantamount to success, without also incorporating spatial or emotional intelligence.

Overall, non-dominant and less wealthy socioeconomic classes, alongside those marginalized by race, sex, gender or age, have alternativelyarticulated knowledges and wisdoms that don't (and haven't) benefited from an accepted professional or academic veneer. Due to this we have lost knowledges. With regard to streets, open-ended research can locate these knowleges.

Similar to systematic appreciation for non-heternormativity that was precluded by Native Americans, working class women had inherent intuitibe knowledge of the importance of street play, that precluded common architectural design for pedestrianization. This markedly non-dominant group pushed back against the rise of motordom in the 1950s and 1960s through activism to protect "play streets" that were design in the 1930s<sup>17</sup>:

"...while the continued importance of public street sociability to children and women post-war was recognized through national and local government's roll-out of its play streets scheme from 1938, this became contested throughout the 1950s and 1960s by other interest groups whose priority was business and a related management of urban traffic flow. This divided outlook on suitable play areas resulted in post-war conflict as working-class women, struggling to maintain traditional street sociability against the gathering power of business interests and car-focused affluence, combined in locally-based forms of activism"

#### SENSEMAKING WITH INTERDISCIPLINARY SENSORY ETHNOGRAPHY TO UNCOVER EMERGENT PHENOMENA

When ordinary people are studied in academic settings such as social science, this is often carried out in isolation of art and literature, with the siloed

<sup>17</sup> Cowman, Krista Play streets: women, children and the problem of urban traffic, 1930–1970, Social History, 42:2, 233-256, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071022.2017.1290366



disciplines competing with each other for relevance rather than learning from eachother's insights.

The relevance of broad interdisciplinary ethnography in the significance of placemaking is well-established but seen as a several small veins of evidence rather than a hugely consequential and all-encompassing body of evidence and theory. Ethnographer Sarah Pink mentions that academia separates its the same spheres of research, between disciplines<sup>18</sup>.

"..there has been little joining up of these bodies of work theoretically or empirically. The study of the theory of everyday life and of its representations in literature and art are often undertaken in isolation from the ethnographic and qualitative literature on everyday life"

The interactive exhibition below delves into memories in a way that is normally at best a casual reminiscence -- and at worst something almost completely forgotten. The stories and lived experiences, and how placemaking occured in the street during different lives and ages, is key in finding out sense of place within community and how it's revered.

We are all designers of our culture, and many traditions and cultures develop by accident, when some good habits take hold and remain. Through really open-ended emotive forms of ethnography that draw on vulnerability of nostalgia, we can avoid ideology, and find out the happy accidents that occur through this natural variation, eventually designing spaces where these serendipitous encounters and synergies are more likely to occur.

The exhibition for some provokes a response and raises awareness of this issue, while the design probe aspect explores memories of how streets have been used by children and young people, who are less aware or risk-averse towards contravening the culturally accepted use of streets as a road as the prioritized for the busy middleaged adult rushing through.

Aspects of childhood; like the abundance of free time alongside lack of mature self-consciousness, might reconnect us to emotive wilderness and could subsequently uninhibit adults' attitudes to streets, reimagining them for a range of productive or recreational uses equal to on-grid transport.

I am looking to tap into memories and histories of spontaneous place-making in the context of what Tim Ingold calls "correspondence" ; the sense that instead of meeting people face-to-face, we develop deeper kinship through parallel journeys when thrown together in "meshwork" , where the movements create the place, not the nature of space. The emotive wilderness is described by Sarah Pink as an "entanglement of persons, sensations, trajectories, discourses and more" 1.

Through past emotive wildernesses, of entanglement of kinship and correspondences, we can connect to moments in people's formative lives that might - through youthful ignorance in some cases - preclude or transcend the prevailing instrumentalist culture that disproportionately prioritizes goal-oriented, predictable routine.

By tapping into one's own history, we are researching another person in one sense, as we have changed by such a degree that we are no longer the same being. What these moments of self-reflection do is find truth in of placemaking as an emergent phenomenon, as Rachel C. Smith suggests, drawing upon Rabinow:

"anthropology has predominantly focused on how society or culture reproduces itself through institutions, symbolic work, power relations.

But there are also phenomena that are emergent. 'That is to say phenomena that can only be partially explained or comprehended by previous modes of anaylsis or existing practices..'"<sup>22</sup>

My design probe will subsequently take the form of the following exhibition...

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<sup>18</sup> Pink, Sarah. Situating Everyday Life p.2 SAGE Publications, London 2012

<sup>19</sup> Ingold, Tim.. Correspondences: a conversation about art, memory and heritage 0:56:15 CORE Research, Brighton https://vimeo.com/630813933#

<sup>20</sup> Pink, Sarah. Doing Sensory Ethnography, p 37 SAGE Publications, London 2015

Pink, Sarah. Doing Sensory Ethnography p. 48-49

Smith, Rachel C.. Design Anthropological Futures p.21 Bloomsbury Academic 2016

DESIGN PROBE: USING SENSORY ETHNOGRAPHY TO UNCOVER SITUATED KNOWLEDGES OF STREET PLACEMAKING





#### Consider a street that you grew up on.

If you didn't have access to a street, consider a village green, car park, alleyway or other open, shared public space in which you could play, relax or socialize as a child or young person.

- 1. Using pen and paper or a mobile handset, or out loud, or in your head, recount or describe a memory, letting it flow freely to other memories if preferred.
- 2. Next, reflect on your sense of place, such as where you and neighbours, friends or siblings congregated and played, alongside any particular feeling associated with the space, e.g. fun, boredom or a sense of freedom or restriction
- 3. Now, repeat this exercise (circa 2-3 minutes) for your current neighbourhood street(s) or equivalent space, or any following neighbourhood that you lived or stayed in.
- 4. Finally, consider any differences between the use of these spaces in these two stages of your life. If you'd like to, leave post-it notes around this poster to sum up the contrasts, as well as any other remarks or insights.

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SITUATED ECOLOGIES. Situated Ecologies gathers art, design and research collaborations to contest and democratise ecologies. http://www.situatedecologies.net/