On the Need for Mapping Design Inequalities

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Introduction

"We might agree to reclaim the keyword design in order to refashion it, but we need to do that deliberately, with an eye to the tensions inherent in articulating projects in transformational change as "small d" design, without reproducing the supremacy of Design with that initial capital letter."

Lucy Suchman on "Design," 2018[1]

This special issue explores the relationship between design(ing) and inequalities. It prompts a decidedly cross-disciplinary exchange between design scholars and social scientists on design inequalities to incite a new dialogue that extends beyond notions of participatory design or diverse design cultures. It connects with research into complex and intersecting inequalities that are historical, structural, and practiced.

The project originates in the individual research that Nell Beecham and I have been conducting in recent years on different aspects of design and inequality. In early 2017, we aligned our interests and organized a seminar called "Design and 'the Social': Mapping New Approaches to Inequality in Design," held at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).[2] The event was premised on an active engagement with the current and politically pressing inequality debate, set against the backdrop of the specificities of design as a creative and commercial profession. The response to the call for papers for this seminar was interdisciplinary and enthusiastic. Some of the papers given at the seminar are featured as articles in this collection. In May 2017, we held a second seminar on design inequality at the Center for Science, Technology, Medicine & Society (CSTMS) at the University of California, Berkeley. Both these events reached a multi-disciplinary audience, with participants from design practice as well as scholars from anthropology, sociology, science and technology studies (STS), creative industries, cultural studies, architecture, urban planning, technology studies, and more. The discussions at both events were very productive and played a central role in developing both this special issue of *Design Issues* and a workable framing of different kinds of design inequality.

1 Lucy Suchman, "Design," *Theorizing the Contemporary, Cultural Anthropology* website, March 29, 2018, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1355-design (accessed May 5, 2018).

2 This seminar was funded by the British Sociological Association and supported by the International Inequalities Institute (III) at the London School of Economics, as well as Theatrum Mundi. A report on the seminar is available here: http://www.lse.ac.uk/International-Inequalities/events/BSA-Seminar-Design-and-the-Social-Mapping-new-Approaches-to-Inequality-in-Design.

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Bridging notions of inequality and design, as well as social science and design scholarship, this special issue is broadly guided by the following questions: In what ways do designers and/or processes of design operate on and engage with sociality? What kinds of processes, concepts, and complications emerge in relation to (social) inequalities when we look at different forms and aspects of design? How can engaging with design practices broaden the discussion of inequality, and how can engaging with inequality broaden the discussion of design practices?

The contributions discuss a wide range of design domains. They include social design, technology design, hacking and making, sexuality, performativity and web design, as well as post-colonialism and urban design, spatial design and material politics, housing and social reform, and food market curation. This diversity only begins to reflect the diversity of the field of design and points to design's significance for contemporary social life. What holds the papers together is a strong commitment to theorizing (design) inequality from the *empirical case of design,* rather than the other way around. Across this commitment, three overlapping themes emerge, all connected to a broader understanding of inequality: The first is a view for the classification cultures and norming narratives (e.g., of people, bodies, things, situations, and so on) that permeate and structure design practice, and how these evolve over time. The second is the presence or absence of politics within and beyond the reach of design and designers. The third is the unfolding of power and (human) agency, including activism and the evolvement of alternative ontologies of design and sociality and new forms of practice.

To provide an overview of the emerging field of design inequalities, this introduction does two things: First, it describes the parallel rise of design and inequality and introduces relevant scholarly concepts and debates. This introduction is intended to be a useful tool for scholars and practitioners who want to engage with design inequalities and is hence heavily referenced. Second, this introduction describes the works in this collection and sketches out the links between them.

The Rise of Design and Inequality

Today, global economic divisions have escalated to a level that increasingly transforms both social life and the public discourse on social inequality.[3] These new dimensions of inequality affect the very basic structures of society and its participants, ranging from democracy to peoples' health.[4] Paralleling this development is a new significance of design in society: From our toothbrush to our mobile phone and the apps on it, from our spatial environment to the policies that govern social life and international relations, everything "has a designer, whether amateur or self-consciously professional."[5] Anthropologist Lucy Suchman

3 Mike Savage, "End Class Wars," *Nature News,* September 21, 2016, https://www.nature.com/news/end-class-wars-1.20619, (accessed March 27, 2017); and Facundo Alvaredo et al., "World Inequality Report," 2018, http://wir2018.wid.world (accessed June 23, 2018).

4 Martin Wolf, "Inequality Threatens Democracy," *Financial Times,* December 20, 2017, https://www.ft.com/content/47e3e014-e3ea-11e7-97e2-916d4fbac0da (accessed January 7, 2018); and Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Equality Is Better for Everyone* (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

5 Harvey Molotch, *Where Stuff Comes From: How Toasters, Toilets, Cars, Computers, and Many Other Things Come to Be As They Are* (London: Routledge, 2003), 22.

recently commented on this new situation by asking, "Has *design* now displaced *development* as the dominant term for deliberative, transformational change?"[6]

Design has gained authority, it seems, as a powerful *modus operandi* for how society is organized, routinely surpassing the domains of beautification and style. The new centrality of frameworks like "service design" and "design thinking" across innumerable organizations—both private and public—is just one of many testimonies to the rise of design.[7] In response, new works are being produced and published across a wide range of interdisciplinary perspectives. They explore design and the anthropological method[8]; focus on design and cultural production and consumption (e.g., in branding or fashion)[9]; raise new philosophical questions conjured up by design[10]; examine the role of design in the context of accessibility[11]; and investigate the design studio as a central site for cultural production.[12] In addition, increasingly political conversations are materializing around design and its complex relation to power and sociality. In this context, design has been critically examined in a number of ways: as a strategic driver of consumption in aesthetic capitalism[13]; as an active agent in the neoliberal marketization strategies[14]; and as entrenched with exercising power and forms of oppression and violence, including through algorithm design.[15] Prompted by these conversations, the popular discourse has brought design into the inequality context. For example, critical comments on "neglect by design" have surfaced in the context of privatizing the National Health Service (NHS) of the United Kingdom[16]; on "global inequality by design" as part of the prevailing canon of colonial ontologies in higher education[17]; on social media as "truth-less public sphere by design"[18]; and on technology consumers' being "deceived by design" to compromise on exercising their privacy rights.[19]

These observations resonate with a new political moment that is gaining traction within, around, and beyond design.[20] Here, manifold design activisms have emerged to address participation, democracy, and inequality issues and to propose alternative models of practice.[21] For example, the focus has been on "decolonizing design," and on the ontological implications of design(ing) in the global South versus the global North.[22] Ramia Mazé's work makes the important point that design is never neutral and that "criticality" in design necessitates reflexivity.[23] Meanwhile, Arturo Escobar underlines the significance of agency in design as a powerful cultural practice that is deeply embedded in capitalism; he proposes that design is both cause and the potential cure of the current ecological and social crisis.[24] These important voices and perspectives build on a long tradition of addressing social change (albeit not necessarily, or explicitly, in the context of inequality and its structural rootedness).[25] This tradition has brought about scholarships

6 Lucy Suchman, "Design," *Theorizing the Contemporary,* Cultural Anthropology website, March 29, 2018, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1355-design (accessed May 5, 2018).

7 For the former, see, e.g., Lara Penin, *An Introduction to Service Design: Designing the Invisible* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018). For the latter, see Lucy Kimbell, "Rethinking Design Thinking: Part 1," in *Design and Culture* 3, no. 3 (2011): 285–306; DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/175470811X13071166525216 (accessed November 21, 2016); and Lucy Kimbell and Mona Sloane, "Mapping Design Thinking Resources Outside of Higher Education – An Exploratory Study," in *Design Thinking in Higher Education,* ed. Gavin Melles (New York: Springer, forthcoming).

8 Wendy Gunn et al., eds., *Design Anthropology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); and Cassandra Hartblay et al., "Keywords for Ethnography and Design," *Theorizing the Contemporary,* Cultural Anthropology website, March 29, 2018, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1363-keywords-for-ethnography-and-design (accessed June 23, 2018).

9 Guy Julier and Liz Moor, *Design and Creativity: Policy, Management and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009); and Angela McRobbie, *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2016).

10 Glenn Parsons, *The Philosophy of Design* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2015).

11 Charlotte Bates et al., eds., *Care and Design: Bodies, Buildings, Cities* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2016); Elizabeth Guffey, *Designing Disability: Symbols, Space, and Society* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); Aimi Hamraie, *Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Disability* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Liz Jackson, "NYTimes Opinion: We Are the Original Lifehackers," *The New York Times,* May 30, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/30/opinion/disability-design-lifehacks.html; and Bess Williamson, *Accessible America. A History of Disability and Design* (New York: New York University Press, 2019).

12 Ignacio Farías and Alex Wilkie, eds., *Studio Studies: Operations, Topologies, Displacements* (London: Routledge, 2016).

and strategies for responsible[26] and empathetic design,[27] new modes of participatory or co-design (including in the context of "making publics"),[28] inclusive design,[29] sustainable design,[30] thinking about design justice for both humans and non-humans,[31] works on critical theory and human-computer interaction (HCI),[32] or phenomena such as the hacker-maker movement.[33]

Against this backdrop, it appears ever more curious that the ontological and empirical relevance of design has evaded focused sociological investigation.[34] This lack of attention is particularly true for the kind of inequality research that focuses on economic inequality.[35] Here, the emphasis is largely on income and wealth distribution, new class formations, and elite culture[36]; design generally is absent from this discourse. However, more recent research on social inequality is promising because it opens up, for example, the study of design as elite occupation[37]; it also provides links to the notion of design-specific cultural capital as emerging, rather than as fixed.[38] The point here is that this development provides an opportunity to shift focus toward (design) inequality as social practice *as well as* a superstructure. Such a move facilitates the much-needed sociological engagement with design, particularly via feminist and intersectional scholarship. Sasha Costanza-Chock has recently made a significant and important step in this direction by proposing an "intersectional feminist framework for design theory and practice."[39] They build on the important observation that "intersecting inequalities are manifest at all levels of the design process" to formulate a notion of "design justice."[40] This angle profoundly resonates with this collection in that it charts design as encompassing both the *reproduction of and resistance to* the unequal distribution of "design's benefits and burdens."[41]

Mapping Design Inequalities

Cued in by these conversations, this collection looks at design as a way of "making society" and explores how design is entangled with social inequalities across a wide spectrum of domains. The point of departure is to view "design" and "inequalities" as both superstructures and micro-practices of creativity, power, and expertise that can simultaneously sustain and challenge privilege and exclusion, regardless of what is being designed.

The open-ended nature of this endeavor feeds into the overall concern of this special issue, which is to *map*—rather than exhaustively list—research into various forms of design and their entanglement with the diversity and complexity of inequality. Based on this approach, we provide no singular definition of social inequality to bookend this collection; rather, we emphasize the contextual and complex nature of different inequalities that have a bearing on design practice or that design practices seek to

13 See, e.g., Alan Warde, "Consumption and Theories of Practice," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5, no. 2 (2005): 131–53. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540505053090 (accessed June 23, 2018); and Gernot Böhme, *Ästhetischer Kapitalismus* [Aesthetic Capitalism] (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2016).

14 Guy Julier, *Economies of Design* (London: Sage, 2017).

15 See, e.g., Paola Antonelli and Jamer Hunt, *Design and Violence* (New York, NY: The Museum of Modern Art and ARTBOOK/D.A.P., 2015). For design of algorithms, see, in particular, Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality: How High-tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2018); Cathy O'Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction* (London: Penguin Books, 2017); and Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).

16 Bev Skeggs, "A Crisis in Humanity: What Everyone with Parents is Likely to Face in the Future," *The Sociological Review* blog post, January 18, 2017, https://www.thesociologicalreview.com/blog/a-crisis-in-humanity-what-everyone-with-parents-is-likely-to-face-in-the-future.html (accessed May 27, 2017).

17 Kehinde Andrews, "The West Was Built on Racism. It's Time We Faced That," The Guardian video, January 18, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/video/2017/jan/18/the-west-was-built-on-racism-its-time-we-faced-that-video (accessed March 27, 2017).

18 Noortje Marres, "Why We Can't Have Our Facts Back," in *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society* 4 (2018): 423–43. DOI:10.17351/ests2018.188 (accessed July 31, 2018).

19 The Norwegian Consumer Council, "Deceived By Design: How Tech Companies Use Dark Patterns to Discourage Us from Exercising Our Rights to Privacy," June 27, 2018, https://fil.forbrukerradet.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018-06-27-deceived-by-design-final.pdf (accessed July 31, 2018).

20 See, e.g., Albena Yaneva, *Five Ways to Make Architecture Political: An Introduction to the Politics of Design Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); or Adam

address—or anything in between. The point is that the relationship between design and inequalities is fluid. It can move between demonstrations of power and elitism that sustain unequal power relations and decided efforts to challenge them. As part of "mapping design inequalities," the papers in this collection reflect the multiplicity and richness of this relationship. They all work with different cases and theoretical foci, but what ties them together is a concern for how "the social" is rationalized, narrated, and acted upon in design practices and processes, under which circumstances, and to what ends.

The first piece, "Keeping the System Going: Social Design and the Reproduction of Inequalities in Neoliberal Times," by Guy Julier and Lucy Kimbell, sets this scene clearly by critically assessing the claims made by "social design" for tackling inequalities. It links sociological and design concerns by working through the socio-economic conditions created for (social) design in a neoliberal economy. Here, Kimbell and Julier review the institutional structures within which social design operates to examine how its precarious status mitigates against the consolidation of a legitimate professional practice. Based on that, they argue that neoliberal conditions necessitate inequalities, and that the current configuration of social design practices is not set up for tackling these inequalities and bringing about fundamental change. However, to conclude their essay, Julier and Kimbell suggest three ways in which social design might develop the capacity to do so in the future: developing critical and reflexive social design practices that acknowledge the entanglement of design practice with neoliberal economies and that create infrastructures for public accountability; conceiving of social design beyond the client–designer template and locating social designers according to the multiplicity of roles they may take up—for example, as public servants, politicians, or citizens; and establishing new and interventionist methodologies for bringing the structures of inequalities into focus in design practice.

The claims made about "the social" within design and by design actors are also a focus of Elizabeth Petrick's piece, "Curb Cuts and Computers: Advocating for Design Equality in the 1980s." She examines the overlap of social and design concerns by investigating the work, narratives, and associations that were required in the early days of the personal computer to make it a universal technology fit to be used by people with different bodies and abilities. Her central unit of inquiry is the "curb cut metaphor" and its role in facilitating accessible computer design through disability activism, technology design, and public policy. With detailed attention to historical vignettes, Petrick sharply outlines the multiple layers of the curb cut metaphor and its role in the computer design process. She analyzes how the metaphor helped advocates to conceptualize the computer as a sidewalk in need of a curb cut; how

Kaasa et al., eds., *Designing Politics: The Limits of Design* (London: The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2016). For a more radical view, see also Tony Fry, *Design as Politics* (Oxford: Berg, 2010); Fry asserts that design must take the place of politics to advance global sustainability.

21 Guy Julier, "From Design Culture to Design Activism," in *Design and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2013): 215–36. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/175470813X13638640370814 (accessed June 9, 2017).

22 For the former, see http://www.decolonisingdesign.com; see also the special issue, "Decolonising Design, *Design and Culture* 10, no. 1, (2018). Editors of the issue were Tristan Schultz, Danah Abdulla, Ahmed Ansari, Ece Canlı, Mahmoud Keshavarz, Matthew Kiem, Luiza Prado de O. Martins, and Pedro J. S. Vieira de Oliveira. For the latter, see Tony Fry, "Design for/by 'The Global South,'" in *Design Philosophy Papers* 15, no. 1 (2017): 3–37. DOI: 10.1080/14487136.2017.1303242 (accessed June 23, 2018).

23 Ramia Mazé, "Design Practices Are Not Neutral," http://speculative.hr/en/ramia-maze/ (accessed July 27, 2018). See also Lilly Irani and M. Six Silberman, "Stories We Tell About Labor: Turkopticon and the Trouble with 'Design,'" *Proceedings of CHI' 16,* May 7–12, 2016, San Jose, CA; https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8nm273g3 (accessed February 19, 2019).

24 Arturo Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

25 See, e.g., Victor Papanek, *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971).

26 See, e.g., Victor Margolin, "Design, the Future and the Human Spirit," *Design Issues* 23, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 4–15. DOI: doi.org/10.1162/desi.2007.23.3.4 (accessed on July 29, 2017).

27 See, e.g., Carolien Postma et al., "Social Theory as a Thinking Tool for Empathetic Design," *Design Issues* 28, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 30–49, http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1162/DESI_a_00122 (accessed on July 29, 2017).

the computer itself became a curb cut, fostering a more equal participation in the new and computerized social world; and how it was deployed by a computer company in the design process, as well as in advertising to new users.

The exploration of technology design is continued in Ellen K. Foster's article, "Claims of Equity and Expertise: Feminist Interventions in the Design of DIY Communities and Cultures." In this piece, Foster brings feminist and design scholarships into conversation and examines feminist hacker responses to claims made about democratization in the Do It Yourself (DIY) technology movement. Deconstructing how these activists work to establish new kinds of technology knowledges and value systems as part of grappling with equity, she considers the power relations embedded in technology design and use. Drawing on ethnographic research in communally organized DIY spaces, she works through both the design of these spaces and the practices and groups that make up their associated organization. Attending to the politics of how identities are established vis-à-vis the DIY space itself, Foster builds on feminist technoscience theorizations on care to suggest a framework for investigating the ways in which feminist hacker practices can be seen as facilitating "epistemic activism" and challenging the notion that design is politically neutral. She describes how feminist hacker groups decided to break away from male-dominated spaces and the discomfort they caused for them, but also how these groups position the practice of confronting discomfort as a basis for resistance and alternative models of "making" and equitability in design. She concludes that these explorations of discomfort and the politics of care form the medium through which feminist hacker collectives push for the recognition of heterogenous narratives in DIY technology cultures.

"Designing the Female Orgasm: Situating the Sexual Entrepreneur in the Online Sex-Education Platform OMGYes," by Nell Beecham and Clio Unger, takes up the issue of gendered dimensions of product design. Beecham and Unger cut across design and the sociological concerns of interface design, feminism, and neoliberalism. They critically analyze the design of the female-focused sex education platform, OMGYes, against the backdrops of neoliberal subjectivities and sexual commodification. Beecham and Unger build on interaction criticism and use visual analysis to draw out key questions around OMGYes's claims of neutrality and feminist emancipation. Working through OMGYes as an example of feminist design practices providing an alternative to often male-dominated sex products, they show how OMGYes deploys affective design to promote notions of sexual confidence, self-optimization and personal responsibility. They argue that the clean website design of OMGYes decontextualizes the female orgasm from its

28 See, e.g., Ezio Manzini, Design, *When Everybody Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innvation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015); and Jesper Simonsen and Toni Robertson, *Routledge International Handbook of Participatory Design* (London: Routledge, 2013).

29 See, e.g., Rob Imrie and Peter Hall, *Inclusive Design: Designing and Developing Accessible Environments* (London; Routledge, 2001).

30 See, e.g., Jonathan Chapman, *Routledge Handbook of Sustainable Product Design* (London: Routledge, 2017); and Alastair Fuad-Luke, *Design Activism: Beautiful Strangeness for a Sustainable World* (London: Routledge, 2009).

31 See, e.g., Laura Forlano, "Posthumanism and Design," *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation,* special issue on Transforming Design Matters 3, no. 1 (Spring 2017), DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sheji.2017.08.001

32 See, e.g., Jeffrey Bardzell, et al., eds., *Critical Theory and Interaction Design* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018).

33 See, e.g., Sarah R. Davies, *Hackerspaces: Making the Maker Movement* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017); and Pelle Ehn et al., *Making Futures: Marginal Notes on Innovation, Design, and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014).

34 Note that some streams of sociological research have long focused on issues of design including parts of Science and Technology Studies (STS) research. Notable in this context is Lucy Suchman's work on technology design and HCI, as well as the research of Elizabeth Shove and her colleagues into the alteration of designed products in everyday social practice and a growing body of work on the creative industries, including architecture. A growing methodological exchange also is happening between design scholars and practitioners and the social sciences—for example, in the work of Nortje Marres, Michael Guggenheim, and Alex Wilkie, which looks at inventive approaches in qualitative social research. However, we still lack a comprehensive social theory of design in the way in which social theories of "the economy" or "culture" have been developed. See Lucy Suchman, *Plans and Situated Actions:*

corporeal reality and bodily fluids, thus mobilizing female orgasm as an arena and tool for self-improvement. Beecham and Unger locate this practice of self-improvement in the emergent neoliberal subjectivity of the "sexual entrepreneur," applying a postfeminist critique of retail activism that emphasizes personal responsibility. Based on this analysis, they conclude that OMGYes is a design case that prioritizes an individualized strategy for empowerment, rather than a collective one that would acknowledge and address wider structures of gender injustice.

How design practices and concerns tend to shift the labor and responsibility for change onto those at the receiving end of designed structures and processes is also a central theme of Adam Kaasa's auto-ethnographic article, "Unequal Ideas: Reflections on Designing Politics, an Urban Ideas Competition in Rio de Janeiro." Creating links between sociological and design concerns around decolonization, labor, power and institutions, this piece examines the changes made in order to diversify the nature of entries received for "Designing Politics/Designing Respect" (DPDR), an urban ideas competition run by Theatrum Mundi (TM) in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. Kaasa initiates a discussion about the geography of unequal labor to challenge institutions and processes of public scholarship in design. Building on Sara Ahmed's notion of the "willful subject," he suggests that the burden and labor of decolonizing rests on those against whom systems embedded in the continuous presence of coloniality are staked. He works through detailed vignettes and analyzes the structures of the competitions, the institutional networks enabling the competitions, the entry requirements, the make-up of the juries, and the exhibitions to argue that the structures and conditions of knowledge production must be interrogated, not just their actors and contents be diversified. The centerpiece of Kaasa's reflection is making visible that the collaborators in Rio de Janeiro were those who were burdened with laboring to make visible the systems of inequality that the structure of a design competition is imbued with.

Picking up on the political dimension of design practice, Mona Sloane's paper "The Shelves that Won't Hold: Material Politics and Social Inequality in Spatial Design Practice" examines how the material politics in spatial design practice are central for legitimizing unequal treatment in the material planning of space. Engaging with design and sociology's shared concern with materiality and material culture, this piece presents a detailed vignette of a community theater project in London. Sloane analyzes how materiality can become the locus of a public dispute and power struggle, as well as a key reference point for valuation frameworks and calculation practices. She works through the ways in which a "fit for purpose" framework pits private/commercial against

The Problem of Human–Machine Communication (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Matthew Watson et al., *The Design of Everyday Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007); and Noortje Marres et al., eds., *Inventive Social Research* (London: Mattering Press, 2018).

35 Exceptions include the large literatures in social policy research into the design of state policies and welfare structures. See, e.g., Tony Atkinson, "Social Policy: Looking Backward and Looking Forward," in *Proceedings of the Department of Social Policy's 100th Anniversary Colloquium: Social Policy Futures: Wreckage, Resilience or Renewal* (London: London School of Economics and Political Science 2015), 83–86; John Hills, "The Distribution of Welfare," in Pete Alcock et al., eds., *The Student's Companion to Social Policy* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 212–17; and Deborah Lupton, "Digitized Health Promotion: Risk and Personal Responsibility for Health in the Web 2.0 Era," in Joseph E. Davis and Ana Marta Gonzalez, eds., *To Fix or To Heal: Patient Care, Public Health, and the Limits of Biomedicine* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 152–76.

36 See, respectively, Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Mike Savage, *Social Class in the 21st Century* (London: Penguin Books, 2015). For elite culture research, see, e.g., Shamus Khan, "Elite Identities," *Identities* 19, no. 4 (2012): 477–84. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2012.718713 (accessed June 23, 2018); Rachel Sherman, *Uneasy Street: The Anxieties of Affluence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); and Katharina Hecht, "A Relational Analysis of Top Incomes and Wealth: Economic Evaluation, Relative (Dis)advantage and the Service to Capital," LSE Working Paper (London: London School of Economics, May 2017), http://www.lse.ac.uk/International-Inequalities/Assets/Documents/Working-Papers/Katharina-Hecht-A-Relational-Analysis-of-Top-Incomes-and-Wealth.pdf (accessed July 27, 2018).

37 For example, Daniel Laurison and Sam Friedman show that architects are part of the elite class within the UK. See Daniel Laurison and Sam Friedman, "The Class

public interests, positions materiality as arena for de-valuing user needs and "cost-engineering" them down, and prescribes superficial stakeholder engagements. In light of this analysis, Sloane suggests that such design systems contribute to a material divide that leaves vulnerable communities with homes of poor (or even unsafe) material quality and therefore perpetuate and heighten social inequality. She concludes by suggesting that discussions on design inequalities must include material politics so that design inequality and materiality are theorized in the context of access to and participation in processes of design.

The concern for design practice's entanglement in the politics of social inclusion and exclusion is carried on in Paz Concha's article, "Curators of Markets, Designers of Place: The Case of the Street Food Scene in London." Linking design concerns with sociological concepts of cultural intermediaries, cultural calculation, and social distinction, Concha's essay draws on ethnographic research about the curation of the street food scene in London. She discusses how market designers assemble space, objects, people, aesthetics, and atmospheres into a marketplace that has distinctive aesthetic and affective qualities. She analyzes how these qualities are deployed in the processes of design to appeal exclusively to an upper middle-class audience with disposable income. Drawing on her ethnographic work at a night market in Dalston, London, Concha describes how the market is set up and how only certain food traders are included in the market. Her analysis reveals the kinds of socio-economic framings that are deployed by the market designers in this process. She shows how these considerations are steeped in the need for commercial viability and social distinction and that the respective design practices run contrary to the designers' claim that their markets are space "for everyone." Thus, Concha suggests, the designers of these specific food markets contribute to the unequal configuration of urban space.

"Mass Factory Housing: Design and Social Reform," by Fani Kostourou, provides another analysis of the unequal configuration of urban space. She looks at design inequality in the context of social inclusion and social form in housing design and policy. Kostourou discusses the case of Cité Ouvrière in Mulhouse, France, to analyze the socio-political agenda on which the design of company towns were founded in the nineteenth-century. She describes the entanglement of spatial design practice both with social ideals and social control, and she reviews the role of architecture and urban design in shaping the social life of working-class inhabitants. Her analysis is situated in the history of factory settlements, and it ranges from the introduction of mass factory housing in the second half of the nineteenth century and the founding of the Cité Ouvrière in Mulhouse in 1853–97, to the current day. Kostourou

Pay Gap in Higher Professional and Managerial Occupations," in *American Sociological Review* 81, no. 4 (2016): 668–95. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122416653602 (accessed June 23, 2018); and Sam Friedman and Daniel Laurison, *The Class Ceiling: Why It Pays to Be Privileged* (Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2019).

38 The notion of cultural capital was proposed by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in 1986. Cultural capital refers to education, know-how, and socialization as expressed in taste and distinction in the context of class formation. The notion of *emerging* cultural capital, proposed by Annick Prieur and Mike Savage in 2012, argues for updating this notion of cultural capital by acknowledging that the building up of cultural capital is always relational to its field; that it is floating and continually updated, rather than firmly tied to certain activities. Relatedly, Mona Sloane argued in 2014 that design practitioners need to acquire and continually update a distinct version of cultural capital. See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Forms of Capital,* (1986), https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm (accessed April 4, 2014); Annick Prieur and Mike Savage, "Emerging Forms of Cultural Capital," *European Societies* 15, no. 2 (2012): 246–67. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2012.748930 (accessed June 23, 2018); and Mona Sloane, "Tuning the Space: Investigating the Making of Atmospheres Through Interior Design Practices," *Interiors* 5, no. 3 (2014): 297–314. DOI: 10.2752/204191114X14126916211184 (accessed June 23, 2018).

39 Sasha Costanza-Chock, "Design Justice: Towards an Intersectional Feminist Framework for Design Theory and Practice," *Proceedings of the Design Research Society,* June 3, 2018; https://ssrn.com/abstract=3189696 (accessed June 23, 2018).

40 Although there is a crucial conceptual overlap between the notions of "design justice" and "design inequality," I would argue that the two terms have slightly different intellectual roots, trajectories, agendas, and scopes. Costanza-Chock's notion of design justice provides the very important and much needed link between theorizations of intersectional inequality

argues that the bourgeois industrialists who sought to address an acute housing problem did so primarily for personal gain and increased control of workers. She asserts that the public sector, then, was more successful in securing public infrastructure and social integration, but it lacked long-term reform strategies. Today, the workers who could secure home ownership are able to invest in their homes and participate actively in the ongoing spatial design of their community. Kostourou concludes that these observations are valuable cues for the potential of mass housing and homeownership and for tackling the contemporary housing crisis that beleaguers many cities around the globe.

Nell Beecham brings this collection to a close with reflections on what was and is at stake in the process of assembling a special issue on design inequalities. She takes readers through the genealogy of this project, providing a view of its changing political landscape. By narrating the questions and conditions that formed the backdrop for putting together this collection and putting personal ethnographic vignettes to work, she explores what it means to reflexively and (self-)critically work on scoping out the new field of design inequalities as an early career researcher. In doing so, she maps out the networks of power and prestige with which this project is entangled to carefully consider who and what has been silenced in this project, and what kinds of questions we need to ask ourselves to change these conditions moving forward.

This collection offers *Design Issues* readers insight into the multi-layered connections between design and inequalities. All the articles address issues that are both deeply sociological and acutely concerned with design. They move across themes like the economy, labor, gender, disability, politics, colonization, material culture, class, and (social) policy. The essays clearly position themselves in the context of design inequality by pushing for greater criticality and reflexivity in design scholarship and practice. They address neoliberal conditions of design and its implications with capitalism, critically consider design users and their labors and deconstruct the claims design/ers make about challenging inequalities. At the same time, they also re-orient the notion of design inequality through the three central themes mapped out at the beginning of this introduction: the claims and narratives that design generates about inequalities and the classification cultures that get deployed within it; the question of (non-)politics within design; and issues around power and agency. This collection of articles represents a practical exercise in bringing sociological and design scholarships and practices together. We hope the essays prompt new and interesting sets of questions and facilitate a renewed and much-needed dialogue on the structural rootedness of inequalities and their practical re-enactment in design.

within design practice and *activism.* (This link is signaled by the significance of the terms "justice" and "equitability.") The notion of design inequality (or rather, inequalities) sets out to make the relevance of design inequality clear *to the social sciences* (particularly the economic and sociological inequality scholarships). Thus, "design inequality" looks at the other side of the "design justice" coin. It works to make design a significant case for social theorists so that we can embark on assembling a social theory of design. On this basis, the term "design inequality" sets out to connect existing and emerging design *and* inequalities scholarships to provide new approaches for researching design and inequality as both social superstructure and micro-practice. As such, it focuses on the critical investigation of design inequality that spans all sorts of design domains, *including* design activism. (In this special issue, Julier and Kimbell, as well as Foster, make this link explicit.) This perspective is premised on the view that we need a thorough analysis and theorization of design inequality, from which activism is not exempt (this is not to say that an analytical engagement with design activism precludes engaging in activism, but that we need to investigate both). This stance is also reflected in the three themes that emerge from this collection—classification cultures, (non-)politics and power/agency—which may lead to new research that is complimentary to the important works and agendas emerging from "design justice."

41 Costanza-Chock, "Design Justice," 2018.