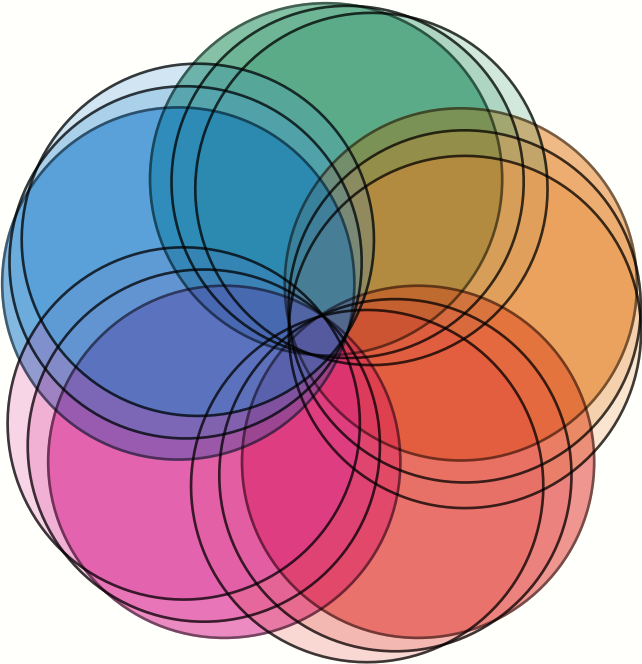


# Disability Justice for Urban Planners and Designers

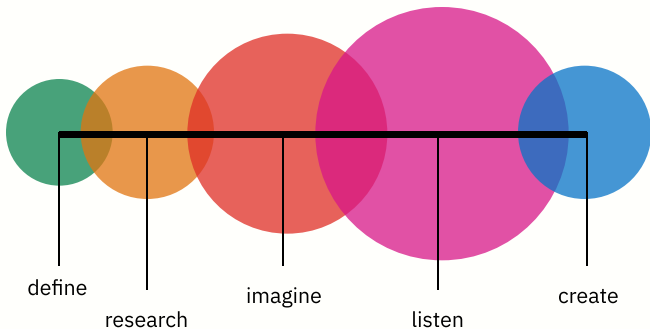


# How to use

These cards are meant to help translate the principles of disability justice into actionable steps in the urban design and planning process. They are a starting point and ultimately it's important to consider each principle at every step of the process. First read the introduction cards which should help contextualize, then within each principle card is my take on the tenets of disability justice along with a project that exemplifies this idea, questions to ask yourself, key takeaways, and more. No principle is more important than another and they often overlap or intersect; consult these throughout your own design process to help guide methods and decisions. Finally, these cards are a starting point in a larger learning process, this QR code links to more resources on these topics.

Scan the QR code for more resources.



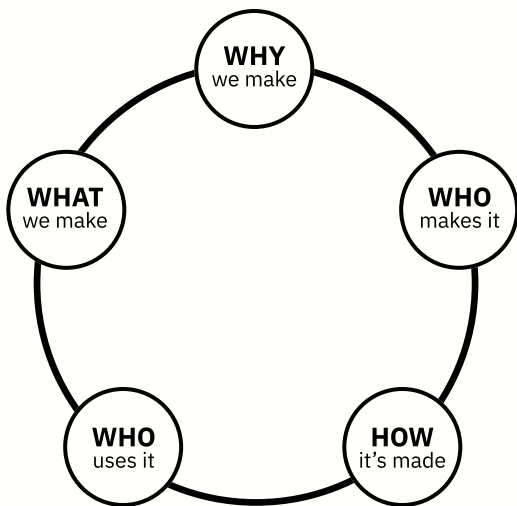


## Design Process

While the design process is highly variable, using this sample design process may help guide you when consulting the cards. For example, my design process starts with defining the problem, then moves into research, iteration or imagining new methodologies, gathering feedback, and finally creation.

# Cycle of Exclusion

Merging the design process with disability justice benefits from an understanding of the cycle of exclusion. Created by Kat Holmes, the cycle is composed of 5 elements which are interrelated with one another. It can help designers recognize where barriers arise, and ultimately begin shifting them towards inclusion in their process.



# What is Disability?

The Americans with Disabilities Act defines disability as

- a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual;
- a record of such impairment;
- or being regarded as having such impairment

Rooted in the **medical model** of disability, this definition identifies disability as an impairment.

On the other hand, the **social model** identifies disability in the barriers created by environments, attitudes, and systems.

Another definition, from Emily Ladau, author of *Demystifying Disability*, describes it as a state of being; a natural part of the human experience. Moreover, disability is a label that has been applied to a variety of human experiences that are largely characterized by similarities in the oppression they face, and having been medicalized, pathologized, or otherwise deemed different.

# What is Disability Justice?

While the US Disability Rights Movement helped to establish a legal basis for rights of persons with disabilities, it failed to capture the diversity of disabled people or acknowledge the layers of oppression that come from historically white institutions. Disability justice came as a second wave of this movement in the 2000s, with activists like Mia Mingus and Patty Bernes engaging in conversations around the interconnectedness of systems of oppression and establishing a framework for thinking about disability. Moreover, disability justice holds a vision of collective access that is born out of collective struggle. Sins Invalid, a performance based group, has defined this framework through ten principles that understand and uplift the complexities of all bodies. These principles are explored further in these cards, as a means of approaching the planning and design processes with disability justice as a guide.

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# Moving Forward

Legislation like the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, and later, the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 have sought to define a legal basis for accessibility. However, a huge gap still remains between compliance and accessibility with professionals in urban planning and design lacking the proper tools and understanding to implement inclusive designs in practice. Contextualizing this against the principles of disability justice may help elucidate some of the moments in your own process where exclusion may occur. Moving forward, the goal of the design process should be working towards access and liberation for all, rather than compliance.



# Collective Access



Street Moves by Sweden's National Center for Architecture and Design

Building environments that uplift intersectional voices, account for the widest range of experiences, and foster positive community. Radical access is within collective access.

# who currently has access?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS: COLLECTIVE ACCESS

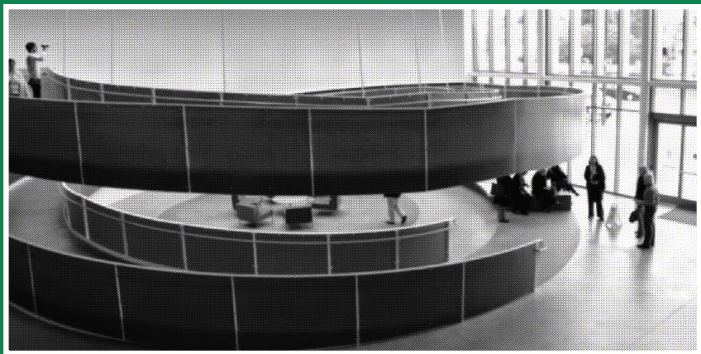
- Build basic literacy in accessibility and ADA compliance
- Question the necessity of existing barriers to access
- Design for the maximum amount of people

## ★ Suggested Reading:

“Crippling the Apocalypse: Some of my Wild Disability Justice Dreams” - *Care Work* by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

why we  
make

# Collective Liberation



Ed Roberts Campus by Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects

Connecting diverse communities allows us to move forward together. Imagining spaces that not only connect diverse voices, but work against the systems that silence them.

# how does one gain access?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS: COLLECTIVE LIBERATION

- Connect people with similar experiences
- Acknowledge histories of activism
- Contextualize your work against different systems of oppression

### ★ **Relevant History:**

The Independent Living Movement was largely established at UC Berkeley in the 1960s by a group of students calling themselves the Rolling Quads. Among their efforts, they established the first Center for Independent Living as well as installing the first curb ramps.

why we  
make

# Intersectionality



San José Emerging Mobility Action Plan by San José Department of Transportation

Radical access asks that disabled users are not just considered, but that the design process is centered around the experiences of people with multiple intersecting identities. Further, good design embraces a diversity of experiences and nuance that each perspective can offer.

# who are we designing for? who are we excluding?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS: INTERSECTIONALITY

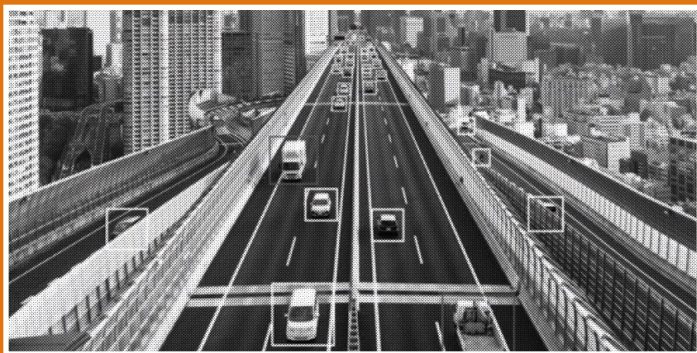
- Learn about the community you are designing for
- Identify current biases and mismatched interactions
- Consider who has historically had access

### ★ **Relevant History:**

Intersectionality was introduced in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the intersectional experience that black women face in receiving both racism and sexism in specific ways.

who  
uses it

# Interdependence



Mobility Data Interoperability Principles

Researching communities and the way they support each other can illuminate methods of interdependence. Working together increases access, uplifts diverse bodyminds, and encourages liberation.

# how might we build trust with the community?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS: INTERDEPENDENCE

- Work with the community to identify their needs.
- Match complementary skills or interactions together
- Allow space for assistive devices or personal assistance

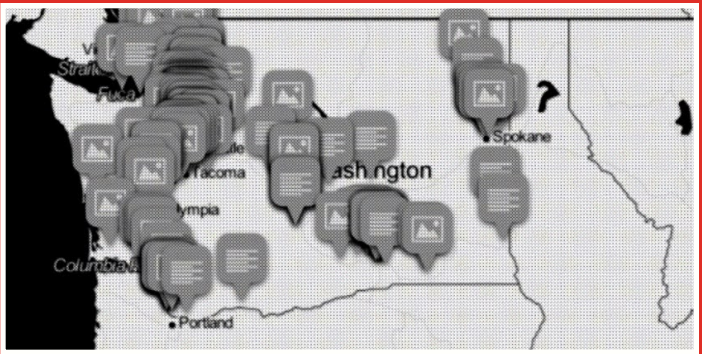
## ★ Suggested Reading:

“Room” - *What Can a Body Do?* by Sara Hendren

who  
uses it



# Commitment to Cross-Disability Solidarity



Transportation Access for Everyone Storymap by Disability Rights  
Washington

Connecting community members, across a range of disabilities and experiences, can enrich knowledge making practices and forge lasting relationships between maker and community. Sustained solidarity fosters collective liberation.

# how are we connecting communities?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS: COMMITMENT TO CROSS-DISABILITY SOLIDARITY

- Uplift voices in the community from a diversity of backgrounds
- Avoid language that divides the community amongst themselves (eg. high or low functioning)

### ★ **Relevant History:**

In 1990, disabled protestors abandoned their mobility aids to crawl up the steps to the U.S. Capitol demanding the ADA be passed. This became known as the Capitol Crawl and demonstrated both the power of solidarity and the need for access.

how it's  
made

# Anti-Capitalist Politic



ORCA Opportunity Program by Seattle Department of Transportation

Capitalism depends on wealth accumulation that is rooted in ableist ideas about productivity. By rejecting capitalist notions of productivity, ideas about collective care and interdependence can begin to take precedence. Moreover, recentering the design process around non-normative users, allows for appreciation of innovations drawn from disabled labor.

# what kind of relationship are we building through our environment?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS: ANTI-CAPITALIST POLITIC

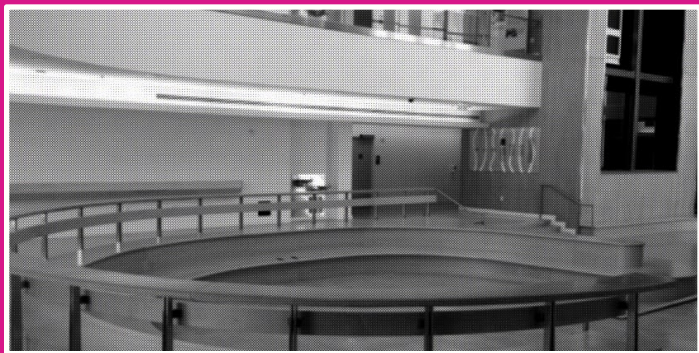
- Consider diverse abilities and motivations
- Create adaptable solutions
- Imagine spaces that value labor outside of productivity

## ★ Suggested Reading:

“For Badass Disability Justice,  
Working-Class and Poor-Led Models of  
Sustainable Hustling for Liberation” -  
*Care Work* by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-  
Samarasinha

how it's  
made

# Leadership of Those Most Impacted



DeafSpace for Gallaudet University by Gallaudet University ASL Deaf Studies Department and HBHM Architects

More than considering disabled people in the design process, disabled people need to be an integral part of the process; Designing with, rather than for.

# who's the expert on this?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS: LEADERSHIP OF THOSE MOST IMPACTED

- Identify the people who stand to lose the most (exclusion experts)
- Respect the value and knowledge that comes from their experience
- Design with them, not for them

### ★ **Relevant History:**

“Nothing About Us Without Us” has become a slogan for the disability rights movement, calling for the leadership of disabled people in conversations, organizations, and processes that impact them.

who  
makes it

# Commitment to Cross-Movement Organization



Boom Pop Parks by LMNOP Design Inc.

Investing in politics of alliance presents a diversity of relevant voices in the planning and design process. Moreover, organizing across multiple movements illuminates a range of experiences that offer varied insights into existing barriers and potential solutions.

# where might we seek help when guidance does not exist?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS: COMMITMENT TO CROSS- MOVEMENT ORGANIZATION

- Build relationships with organizations that support excluded communities
- Invite contributions from a range of disciplines

### ★ **Suggested Reading:**

“Entangled Principles” - *Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Disability* by Aimi Haimraie

who  
makes it



# Sustainability



AccessMap from the Taskar Center at the University of Washington

The environment should support the community, granting them the time and space needed to sustain themselves. Considerate planning not only allows, but encourages sustained efforts towards justice and liberation.

# what does this ask of its user?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS: SUSTAINABILITY

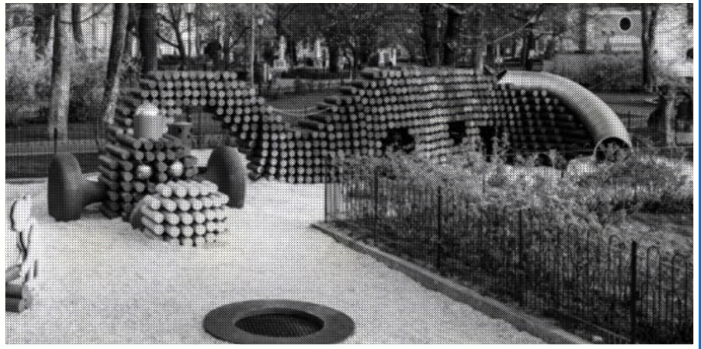
- Build spaces that can be used with minimal effort while offering maximum comfort
- Plan for variations in pacing
- Support the user in their own goals

### ★ **Suggested Podcast:**

“Aimi Haimraie on Sustainability and Disability Justice” - *Imagine Otherwise*, episode 121 by Ideas on Fire

what we  
make

# Recognizing Wholeness



“The Cuddly Playground” by BUDCUD and Iza Rutkowska

The environment should acknowledge and uplift the value within each body and experience. Beyond access is appreciation; for diverse people and the value they bring to each space.

# does this support the community it serves?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS: RECOGNIZING WHOLENESS

- Offer a variety of experiences and modes of participation
- Provide instructions in a variety of ways (audio, visual, tactile)
- Designate quiet spaces for people to decompress

## ★ Suggested Reading:

“The Beauty of Spaces Created for and by Disabled People” - s.e. elliot,  
*Disability Visibility* by Alice Wong

what we  
make

# Applying Theory

After reviewing the principles of disability justice, it's time to apply these ideas towards your own work.

Consider this prompt inspired by the Cycle of Exclusion,

Our goal is to \_\_\_\_\_ by involving \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ to ensure our project is fully accessible to \_\_\_\_\_.

One example of this may look like,

Our goal is to ensure equitable access to public transit by involving unhoused, working class, and disabled populations in discussions and collaborative workshops to ensure our project is fully accessible to those who are most effected by public transportation services.

# what's next?



have you adopted any new tools?

how have you innovated upon  
current tools and methodologies?

how will you involve the  
community in your planning  
process moving forward?

Identify where exclusion occurs,  
gain inspiration from these cards, &  
when in doubt, ask the exclusion experts.