

Peer reviewed article

From Breaches to Breachers

Three designers reveal blindspots in the design field from a position of in-betweenness/‘mellanförskap’

Despina Christoforidou

Lecturer (PhD), Lund University,

<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3736-6171>

despina.christoforidou@design.lth.se

Keywords

Blindspots, breaches, breachers, in-betweenness/‘mellanförskap’, norms and values, norm awareness, norm critique, norm creativity.



© Author(s). This is an Open Access article released under the terms of CC-BY 4.0

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

www.FormAkademisk.org

Abstract

This article offers a development of Garfinkel's (1984) breaching experiments. The discussed breaches are not artificially staged to provoke a reaction; instead, they occur spontaneously in their context—in this case, the design field. Also, the focus shifts from the breaches to the people enacting them, the breachers. Three examples of breachers are compared, enabling a deep understanding of what they have in common, what sets them apart and what they reveal about the prevalent conditions of the context in which they occur. From a position of in-betweenness/'mellanförskap', breachers illuminate blindspots and push the boundaries of what questions are possible to ask in their respective fields. Not only breaches but also breachers offer valuable friction and build norm awareness, which is a premise for norm criticism and ultimately, norm creativity.

Introduction

How often have we heard the expression “to think outside the box” when creative processes are called for? Undeniably a popular expression, not least in design contexts, but what is meant by this, exactly? In general, it is an idiomatic phrase used to describe the consideration of alternative, creative solutions to various challenges rather than being limited by stereotypical thought patterns (i.e., being open to new ideas, innovations and perspectives that can lead to unique and unexpected results).

In the context of design, “thinking outside the box” indicates that designers are, or should be, prepared to challenge conventional norms and values to create something novel; it is about not *limiting yourself* to expected or established patterns but instead exploring possibilities and being open to testing new ideas. Consequently, thinking outside the box in the design process can mean questioning traditional design elements, using unusual materials, experimenting with colours and shapes or even re-evaluating the very purpose of a design proposal. By doing this, one can create products, graphics or experiences that stand out and provide a fresh and innovative approach to design; basically, it is about breaking free from conventional constraints and daring to explore new avenues for a more original and creative design process. There are numerous references related to creativity in design, such as Csíkszentmihályi (1996), Schön (1983/2003), Cross (2007) and Lawson and Dorst (2009), just to mention a few classics in the field.

During the past two decades, I have worked as a design educator at Lund University School of Industrial Design (LUSID), located in the city of Lund in southern Sweden, where we offer BA, MA and Ph.D. education in industrial design. Especially in one of the design courses for which I am responsible, where design students meet and engage with design professionals to understand various niches of their future practice, the importance of developing their

ability to think outside the box has been emphasised countless times, not only by myself but also by colleagues and practising designers. Although the phrase has become a stereotype over time, it is by no means obvious how to concretely think outside the box.

Norm-critical approaches emerged with the overarching goal of promoting inclusion and equality by questioning power structures and norms that affect our perceptions of what is “normal”, and thereby refer individuals to various limiting social templates (De los Reyes, 2001; Bonnevier, 2007; Hjerm & Peterson, 2007; Ahmed, 2010; Browne & Nash, 2010; Zavalía & Vinthagen, 2014; Wikberg-Nilsson & Jahnke, 2018). A norm-critical perspective entails acknowledging the diversity of various, at times conflicting, viewpoints present in research that critiques social norms. It underscores the importance of shedding light on the myriad manifestations of oppression and discrimination via a range of theoretical and pedagogical lenses. This approach aims to prevent the inadvertent perpetuation of the very oppression that one seeks to change (Kumashiro, 2000). Within an educational context, norm-critical work primarily involves unveiling and critiquing the processes that perpetuate power imbalances in everyday life, resulting in certain individuals being considered “normal” and privileged, while others are categorised as deviant, less desirable or less valuable (Bromseth & Darj, 2010).

Illuminating social norms is challenging because they are inherently obscure and, therefore, difficult to access and ultimately question. For example, encouraging norm-critical approaches in design education fosters norm creativity. Norm criticism and norm creativity are design approaches that challenges current norms and inequalities in order to explore innovative alternatives. It involves critical thinking about current use and users, with a focus on inclusivity and diversity (Zavalía & Vinthagen, 2014; Ehrnberger, 2017). However, if norm creativity is to be supported to the fullest via norm-critical approaches, this must be preceded by and grounded in norm awareness (Christoforidou, 2023).

It is crucial to recognise that people’s judgements of what qualifies as creative or innovative are deeply intertwined with prevailing norms within a given context (Benhabib, 1986). Considering that the world of ideas is heavily influenced by these norms and values, they inevitably shape the boundaries of creative thinking. Therefore, there is reason to take a closer look at the norms and values that govern designers’ contexts. Encouraging norm-critical approaches within design education can foster what we might term “norm creativity”. However, to maximise the impact of norm creativity via these approaches, a keen awareness of norms must first be cultivated. For this reason, I was inspired by Garfinkel’s (1984) “breaching experiments,” *namely*, staging situations that go against given conventions to provoke a reaction; the stronger the reaction, the deeper the norm is rooted (Garfinkel, 1984). Key terms and concepts are presented in the next section, Frame of

reference, along with a short presentation on how they were employed in previous research and the aim of this present study.

Frame of reference

This study delves into the complex interplay of norms, creativity, and design, contributing to a deeper understanding of creative thinking mechanisms in design contexts. According to Foucault (1970/2002), a critical attitude towards our existence and contexts involves a well-developed ability to identify blindspots to understand what is both possible and impossible to think within the constructs of blindspots. The term “blindspots” implies practices of cultural behaviour that we take for granted and thereby risk neglecting. Consequently, blindspots are a helpful concept when seeking to unravel critical issues.

By introducing an exploratory approach to breaches, underlying blindspots can be brought into focus and addressed along with critical issues that otherwise go unnoticed. In the following section, the key concepts of blindspots, breaches, breachers and in-betweenness, which constitute the frame of reference, are outlined.

Blindspots

In the optometry field, blind spots occur in a region of an eye where detecting light is impossible due to the absence of receptors (Wandell, 1995). The brain compensates for the blind spot via visual information received by the other eye. Depending on where the eye is looking, the blind spot moves along with it (Wandell, 1995).

When conflicts or misunderstandings arise in interpersonal communications due to cultural differences, they may be triggered by cultural blindspots¹, which occur not unlike visual blind spots (Bjørn & Ngwenyama, 2009). The information that is overlooked due to blindspots mainly relates to taken-for-granted cultural attitudes and practices in relation to prevailing cultural values and preferences (Clausen & Zølner, 2010; Christoforidou et al., 2021; Christoforidou, 2023). Subsequently, to prevent blindspots from inhibiting communication, they must be revealed (Matthiesen et al., 2014; Christoforidou et al., 2021; Christoforidou, 2023).

Breaching experiments

Dealing with blindspots poses challenges due to their inherently obscure nature. A scholar who was successful in illuminating underlying norms and values was Harold Garfinkel, who developed the concept of breaching experiments (Garfinkel, 1984). These were usually embedded in ordinary activities to provoke people’s adherence to norms and values by challenging common social rules. The breaching experiments provided an opportunity to

study people's reactions: the more intense a reaction, the more deeply rooted the challenged convention. Similar concepts, such as disruptions, breakdowns, contradictions and asymmetries, are applied today in research on e.g. participatory design and co-design (Akama et al., 2015).

Breaches, breachers and in-betweenness

In prior research work, I staged breaching experiments in design education contexts to provoke stereotypical ideas and support and enhance norm creativity by fostering norm awareness and encouraging norm questioning. The concept of breaching experiments was explored in several ways (e.g., by exposing design students to the subculture of Bling to provoke authentic reactions and push the boundaries of normative conventions). The Bling aesthetic of rap culture was utilised as a trigger against the own design education context and proved an effective tool for revealing blindspots in personal preferences that are otherwise difficult to access (e.g., confusion surrounding the difference between 'good design' and 'good taste', etc.). Although the design students were initially sceptical of the design project's approach, after iterations of reflections and animated discussions, they were pleasantly surprised that they had managed to address and change ingrained norms (Christoforidou et al., 2012; Christoforidou, 2013).

As breaching experiments operate by reflecting the underlying norms of specific contexts, they are useful for illuminating them so that such norms do not go undetected and become blindspots. Therefore, in my research, I continue to explore breaching experiments as a theoretical framework, a methodological tool and an analytical filter (Christoforidou, 2013; Christoforidou et al., 2021). In a previous comparative study, breaching experiments were not staged to incite reactions, thereby revealing information regarding the prevalent norms in the given context. Instead, naturally occurring deviations in the empirical material, i.e., breaches, were employed as an analytical filter to compare designers' accounts from Sweden and New Zealand to understand the dynamics that arise in each context and to potentially unveil unconscious blindspots (Christoforidou et al., 2021).

The focus of my studies has revolved around how breaching experiments and breaches can reveal underlying norms and values by formulating a contrast to their contexts. This current study explores the concept of breaches further by taking a closer look at different types of contexts within the design field where breaches occur and by outlining various dimensions regarding similarities and differences, motivations, etc. Thus, the emphasis is shifted from actual breaches to the individuals that prompt them (i.e., the breachers and what characterises them).

Three examples of breacher-portraits and their breaches are compared. By exploring these breacher-portraits, the primary aim is to better understand their breaches, whereas a secondary focus lies on what breaches and breachers can reveal about the norms that surround the design field so that they can become more visible, reflected on and questioned.

Comparing the three breacher-portraits suggests that these breachers seem to share a common experience, namely, a state of in-betweenness that influences the way they react to their context (Christoforidou et al., 2021; Christoforidou, 2023). As in-betweeners, they identify both as insiders and outsiders, or neither (Bhabha, 2004). While this is a challenge regarding a sense of belonging, being in limbo allows for a more flexible position (Scott & Tuana, 2017; Christoforidou et al., 2021; Christoforidou, 2023). This current article discusses whether and how in-betweenness is one of the key characteristics of becoming a breacher.

Critical theorists and postcolonial scholars have developed concepts such as in-betweenness. Bhabha (2004), for example, used the ideas of hybridity, ambivalence and third space to describe how colonised people resist colonisers' power and shape their own identities. Akama (2015) explored the Japanese philosophy of 'Ma' in connection with designing betweenness as a way of 'becoming together'.

Methodology

Each of the three examples that the empirical material consists of represents a niche within the field of design:

- Anders Jakobsen and a documentary about him, "Radikalslöjdaren", broadcasted by Swedish public television, from the context of professional design practice (Fougner & Degerman, 2017).
- Johnson Witehira's² presentation at the Helix symposium, representing design education (Helix, 2015).
- 'Ashok Kumar's' post on a digital design research forum illustrates an example from a design research setting³.

The documentary and the symposium were mentioned during an interview study with designers in Sweden and New Zealand as examples of a controversial designer and an arena of potentially animated discussions (Christoforidou et al., 2021). Regarding the forum post deriving from the context of design research, I encountered it while updating myself on the latest news from a design research forum. This specific post caught my attention because its

format and content stood out in comparison to the posts usually published at the forum (Christoforidou, 2023).

To maintain a consequent delimitation principle throughout the study, the empirical material for the analysis of the current study was limited to include material only from the above-mentioned sources. Moreover, in the “Radikalslöjdaren” documentary (i.e., radical sloyd/craftsman), apart from Anders Jakobsen, art and design experts are also interviewed about his work. In contrast, Johnson Witehira's presentation at the Helix symposium and ‘Ashok Kumar's’ post at the design research forum, communicate their own opinions. Aiming to ensure a balance between the three examples, the focus of the analysis of the documentary is, therefore, on Anders Jakobsen’s statements and the parts where experts comment his work have not been included.

The amount of material from each example varies; the documentary has a duration of one hour, the symposium presentation is approximately 14.5 minutes long, and the forum post has a length of approximately one A4 page. Therefore, the material was collected and studied to establish whether the chosen examples of breachers provide ‘thick’ descriptions (i.e., content-rich information about the context they originate from so they can become comprehensible outside a prevailing culture) (Geertz, 2017). Subsequently, it could be determined that the three selected examples offer ‘thick’ descriptions of their context and are comparable in the sense that they are not representative of the setting in which they take part but are rather the opposite (i.e., by constituting a breach) (Garfinkel, 1984; Christoforidou, 2013; Christoforidou et al., 2021).

The material from the examples was transcribed; in the case of the documentary, it was translated from Swedish to English. Several iterations of perusing the transcripts while taking notes were carried out to become familiar with the material and achieve a deep understanding of nuances, themes, similarities and differences, etc. The transcripts were analysed via a qualitative content analysis process of focused coding (i.e., reading and re-reading the transcripts to identify patterns in the material while taking margin notes like bookmarking) (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). These ‘memos’ were in turn analysed and categorised. Using these categories helped identify key themes and relevant quotations (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007, 2011; Flick, 2018).

To provide an understanding of the context, the three examples are briefly described in terms of the information offered via the specific channels and forums that make up the empirical material, along with the three breachers’ portraits (i.e., the documentary, the symposium and the digital discussion forum for design researchers). Since the recording of the documentary was, and the symposium presentation still is, openly and publicly

accessible, they are referenced accordingly. At the digital design research forum, in contrast, access is limited only to members. Therefore, references to forums, persons, networks and channels involved are omitted or pseudonymised. To further safeguard the integrity of the protagonist, 'Ashok Kumar', he gave his consent to write about his post.

Example 1: Anders Jakobsen and the K Special documentary

In 2017, Swedish public service television featured a one-hour documentary produced and directed by Åse Fougner and Otto Degerman (2017), portraying designer Anders Jakobsen as part of a television series with cultural content, K Special: "K Special - world-class cultural documentaries. The stories you did not know, the portraits you longed for and encounters with artists who surprise, seduce and provoke [...]" (Sveriges Television, 2021, translated by the author).

A film crew follows Jakobsen in his apartment in Björkhagen, Stockholm, the woods of Hede, the desert in California and the coast of northern Norway. The documentary provides insights into his life and work, which are entirely entangled. Jakobsen explains what he is doing and shares his thoughts.

Breacher portrait of Anders Jakobsen

The announcement of the television programme, which was broadcast for the first time in May 2017, mentions the following:

Anders Jakobsen works in the borderland between design, art and sloyd/handicraft and is considered one of Sweden's most interesting designers. He calls himself Lagombra⁴ and his work Radicalsloyd. Already as a student at Konstfack in the late nineties, he ended up on edge with the design establishment and the minimalist design ideals that prevailed. And so it has continued. Rowdy and troublesome, many say, but not a provocateur for the sake of provocation itself. A film about a unique artistry and the artist's conditions, about exclusion and about being diagnosed late in life with ADHD and bipolarity. [*AllaTVkanaler*, n.d.), translated by the author]

According to additional biographical information from the K Special documentary (Fougner & Degerman, 2017), Jakobsen studied interior architecture and furniture design at Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm until 2000 when his degree project was not approved. The reasons for failing Jakobsen's degree project are not mentioned in the documentary. Regarding an auction where his work was represented, Jakobsen is described as someone who "for over a decade has been pushing his DIY radical handicraft style to new

places and new scales. He is known for his reuse of standard materials and found objects and transforming them into new things” (Fougner & Degerman, 2017, 3:59).

In general, there is a great deal of focus on Jakobsen’s diagnoses of ADHD and bipolarity, especially among the interviewed art and design experts. The audience of the documentary thus mainly gets to hear that Jakobsen is different because of his personality and less so because of his groundbreaking body of work.

Anders Jakobsen’s breach

The documentary opens with scenes from Jakobsen’s apartment in Björkhagen, Stockholm. It looks like a construction site; he is in the process of tearing up the floor with a pneumatic drill (Fougner & Degerman, 2017, 1:13). A feeling that this is a person who does things differently gets through the screen.

Talking about his work, Jakobsen describes it as something he has always “done”; ever since he was a child, he “built box cars [...], crossbow weapons and model aeroplanes, rebuilt bicycles, and so on. Then it just kept going. I never stopped building; I just started building other things instead” (Fougner & Degerman, 2017, 2:33).

He reflects on why he ends up on a collision course with what is accepted professionally and socially in the design field and has some assumptions regarding why he cannot see eye to eye with the design establishment. He describes himself as being incapable, uninterested even, in changing his work or his attitude to be accepted by the art and design scene: “I do not tolerate authorities. I have a very well-developed intuitive feeling for when someone tries to exercise authority. And then I get directly in opposition; it just comes by itself” (Fougner & Degerman, 2017, 11:11). While he intellectually understands why he should be in Stockholm, e.g., to participate in openings, etc., he does not have any desire whatsoever to do so because “it feels repulsive to go there, because then I know that I will have to play this game that I do not like. So, I can only leave instead” (Fougner & Degerman, 2017, 31:00). Although he could not be clearer on how little respect he has towards such events and contexts, he is considering alternative strategies:

I pushed off from the city because I was so bloody bored of the whole thing, with the cultural sphere in Stockholm. It’s up to my throat, but I don’t really know what to do about it. Because now I have been in Hede a lot, and it is not really a very good solution either [...]. You get easily isolated; it’s hard to disregard [...]. There could be another solution and that is that I go here to North America where no one knows me basically [...]. I do not know if it’s just paranoia or if it’s reality [...]. (Fougner & Degerman, 2017, 33:39)

Jakobsen was diagnosed with ADHD and bipolarity in adulthood, which seems to be something he reflects on quite a lot; possibly, it helps him understand his reactions to the outside world better. At the same time, he appears to be affected by opinions about him; for example, he reflects on how long it would take to be forgiven for things he regrets and expresses feelings of being rejected as a person:

Much of what I do has caused trouble for me [...]. As an adult, I have been diagnosed with ADHD, so that explains very much for my own part why it has become like this. And that I am slightly bipolar. The only way I have found that works for me to avoid anxiety is to keep myself relatively tired all the time and to keep me on the verge of exhaustion, more or less constantly. (Fougner & Degerman, 2017, 46:59)

I have done some things in Stockholm that may not have been so damn well thought through. But it should be ten or fifteen years since I did that stuff. So, I mean, ... I wonder how long you must pay for stupid things that you have done; I don't know. (Fougner & Degerman, 2017, 35:18)

It is difficult. In a social situation like this, there is a strange mixture between the work that I do and the person I am, which becomes the very basis of the assessment. And as it turns out in almost all cases, I cannot keep the measure as a person. (Fougner & Degerman, 2017, 12:06)

Example 2: Johnson Witehira and the Helix symposium presentation

The second example unfolds in Wellington, New Zealand, at a symposium for educators, researchers and practitioners in the design field. In the fall of 2015, DesignCo, an association of design educations and trade associations in New Zealand, hosted the Helix symposium (DesignCo, 2012). Over two days, some 40 design professionals, design educators and researchers gathered to discuss the design DNA of New Zealand and how to articulate its unique identity: “How do we articulate the unique character of New Zealand design? [...] Over the course of this two-day symposium, we seek to demonstrate the fundamental and distinctive characteristics and qualities of New Zealand design” (DesignCo, 2015a).

Witehira's presentation was scheduled during the first day of the Helix symposium, which has a “focus on the exploration of New Zealand design and the individual characteristics that comprise our design DNA, looking closely at those aspects that provide coherence and continuity, and identifying those that most prominently feature in New Zealand's design identity” (DesignCo, 2015a). His presentation is put under the theme “INFLUENCES”, “intended to provide a broad foundation as well as key reference points for discussion throughout the two-day symposium” (DesignCo, 2015a). Before it was Witehira's turn, four

speakers presented in the sub-session “Narrative”, and after a short break, he was the first speaker to present in the second sub-session, “Metaphor” (DesignCo, 2015a).

Breacher portrait of Johnson Witehira

In the Helix symposium programme, Witehira was presented as “Dr. Johnson Witehira, artist, designer and researcher” and the title of his presentation is “Invisible culture: mono-cultural graphic design in a bicultural New Zealand” (DesignCo, 2015a). On the symposium’s website where the speakers’ short biographies are provided, the text about Witehira states that he is an artist and designer of Māori⁵ and New Zealand European descent. He studied design and Māori culture at the bachelor’s, master’s, Ph.D. and postdoctoral levels, where he “developed a platform for contemporary Māori design practice through the exploration of traditional carving” and explored “how design can be used to bring Māori visual culture from the Marae⁶ back into our everyday lives”.

Witehira began and ended his approximately 15-minute-long presentation in Māori, one of New Zealand’s official languages, along with English and New Zealand Sign Language, a tradition that many speakers practice regardless of their origin. Early on in his talk, he provides a summary of the topic of his presentation, where he connects a “we” and the New Zealand identity to a bicultural perspective: “How might New Zealand look? How might the places we inhabit, typically our homes, feel and connect with us as New Zealanders if they were designed from a bicultural perspective?” (DesignCo, 2015b).

While explaining why this topic is important to him, Witehira repeated some of the information also present in the biographical note having to do with his family’s bicultural roots:

And this was something really close to my heart. I guess reflecting on growing up being an urban Māori and looking through photo albums of me and my brothers and sisters and our family and seeing the only Māori family in those photos is us.
(DesignCo, 2015b, 4:57)

It seems that Witehira, being both Māori and Pākehā⁷, experienced that he has a clearer perspective on certain issues, e.g., the absence of Māori culture while reflecting on the identity of New Zealand’s culture, which is coupled with a degree of frustration but to some extent also a wish to be nuanced and balanced:

Wow, we’ve had some really impressive talks so far. Hopefully, I can try to keep the level up. So, it has left me [...] feeling quite conflicted, actually. Very excited but also saddened in some ways. And I think through my presentation, you’ll see both sides of it. But I thought I’d switch things up a little bit. [...] You know, the disheartening part

for me is hearing four speakers talk about design culture, culture, culture, culture, yet not seeing any culture. [...] These things are painfully obvious to me, but for some reason, they continue to be ignored. (DesignCo, 2015b, 3:59)

Towards the end of his presentation, Witehira shared a Māori proverb with the audience. Here, he referred to his Māori heritage, while at the same time pointing to his Pākehā roots to end his talk on a forward-looking note:

I just want to leave you guys with [...] a Māori proverb, which loosely translated means “we walk into the future with our eyes fixed on the past” [...]. I always had that in mind, and [...] our ancestors [...], my Pākehā and my Māori ones ..., what might they think of the future and what might they change? And how can I make a future that might connect to what I want? (DesignCo, 2015b, 13:42)

Johnson Witehira’s breach

According to what Witehira shared in his presentation, it appears that he did not really participate in the symposium with a planned intent to make a breach. As the fifth speaker of the first day, he was provoked into changing his original plan and some of his habits in several ways. One deviation he mentioned compared to how he usually behaves is that “I actually made notes [...]. I do not usually take notes, but I think this is a really important event” (DesignCo, 2015b, 1:39).

In connection to this, Witehira made the decision to deviate from his original plan, according to which he would give the presentation “Invisible culture: Monocultural graphic design in a bicultural New Zealand”. In the presentation, he instead focused on “THE AOTEAROA HOUSE: Decolonising tertiary design education in New Zealand” (2015). Witehira presented examples from his courses where he encouraged design students to familiarise themselves and work with the mythology and concepts originating from the Māori culture on a deeper, and not just a symbolic level, and how these have been translated into design projects. In doing so, he explicitly stated that he intended to “say things against the grain”:

You know, these things are painfully obvious to me, but for some reason, they continue to be ignored. So, I want to talk about some of this. It’s hard to do so without being marginalised as a radical [...], and also just within New Zealand’s design community, because that community is so small. You know that if you stand up and say anything against the grain, you either get slapped down or get ignored. So, I’m going to say some things against the grain. (DesignCo, 2015b, 3:59)

While Witehira expressed feelings of being “conflicted” and “saddened” and was transparent regarding his intention to go “against the grain”, at the same time, he admits to

being “excited” by “impressive talks” and states that his talk will focus on “moving forward” rather than focusing on “the mono-cultural history”:

But for the most part, this talk is about moving forward, actually. That’s why I changed the topic of my discussion rather than focusing on this mono-cultural history. I want to focus on this project we’ve been doing, which is about changing things in the classroom and showing you some of the results we’ve had. I think it’s more constructive and probably more positive. (DesignCo, 2015b, 4:35)

Example 3: ‘Ashok Kumar’ and the forum post

‘Kumar’s’ post was retrieved from an international, academic and digital discussion forum for design, which “was created to discuss, and exchange information about PhD studies and related research in design”, based in the United Kingdom. Unlike other design-related fora that provide information about conferences, announcements, publications, etc. and are comparable to bulletin boards, the discussions hosted by the forum cover a wide variety of topics. The first post is from mid-November 1998, and the number of registered users at that time was 15. Since the forum was launched, the number of members has grown to over 3000 users from around the world⁸.

To read the posts of the forum and upload own posts, one must first become a member of the forum, for example, by accepting the mailing list etiquette of the host organisation. Since the forum posts are not available to the public without a membership, the forum name is not mentioned, and to ensure the anonymity of ‘Kumar’, his name has been pseudonymised. The ambition of the organisation hosting the various forums is to operate “to the highest standards and our relationship with you is based on trust”. The importance of posting “appropriate messages” is stressed, and members are asked to “keep messages short and to the point”, consider whether to reply to “the entire list or just the originator”, and urged to “be nice”. Adjectives such as “legal”, “honest”, and “respectful” are frequently used in the “simple” code of conduct and it is clearly stated that action will be taken against anyone who violates the mutual relationship of trust and/or whose conduct is not legal and honest. The importance of “consent” and “agreement on conditions of use” is emphasised. As the host organisation neither moderates nor edits messages before they are posted on various forums, they do not control nor bear any liability for the content of messages members post or their conduct; complaints are directed to the forum owners, not the host.

While there is a code of conduct, there are forum members who feel that they are treated badly. One such example is ‘Kumar’, who in his two last posts reacted against what he

experienced as uneven power dynamics prevailing at the forum. As a result, he ultimately announced his decision to terminate his participation.

Breacher portrait of ‘Ashok Kumar’

The information available about ‘Kumar’ originates from his six posts on the digital discussion forum. His first four posts appeared between 2014 and 2015 and pertain to “job or workshop announcements”. On the first three of these, he signs as “UX and Innovation Specialist” and the fourth as “Researcher (Interaction & Experience Design)” at a “School of Art, Design, and Technology” in India.

The fifth and sixth posts from mid-2016 and early 2017, which were also his last, are of a more personal nature, in which he invites his peers to discuss privileges, aiming to foster a more empathetic and inclusive atmosphere at the forum. ‘Kumar’ signs these posts as “Researcher & Faculty Member” at the same academic institute as before. He describes himself as “a ‘silent’ member of this email list”, “a young researcher”, “a design academic(s)”, “a brown, Indian, male researcher” and who, due to his social position, i.e., “an upper caste male, educated in a Ph.D. from a Western university, is much privileged here in India”. At the same time, he admits that “I, as a brown, Indian researcher just about figuring out my space in this world, am made to feel ashamed of my country”. Here, ‘Kumar’ refers to an ongoing discussion, which turned “ugly”, regarding whether the forum is an inclusive space, or only caters to “established”, “senior”, “white” and “male” design researchers.

‘Ashok Kumar’s’ breach

In his final post, ‘Kumar’ takes a stand and defends the “dissenting voices” against the established ones; however, it is not clear whether he identifies with them. In his experience, “the dissenting voices” are expected to remain silent on the list’s forum discussions. Being a list member while remaining silent, however, is not an option for ‘Kumar’. Therefore, he sees no other alternative but to “say goodbye from this list” and “hit the unsubscribe button”. In doing so, his action is a breach in relation to the expected behaviour in a specific context.

Already, the subject of ‘Kumar’s’ last post is a breach in comparison to most of the posts on the list. Instead of relating the subject to the content of the post, which is usually the case, possibly seeking to attract attention, he uses a quote from the fourth book of the “Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy” series, “So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish” (Adams 1986, 1999). Furthermore, the language is well adapted to its purpose; it is rich in metaphors evoking images of imbalances, deviances and breaches:

The ‘violent’ outbursts you see here, and more on social media, are nothing but acts to reclaim a space for hearing. The violence is not against you, but against your actions, which you seem not to acknowledge. (‘Kumar’, post at anonymous digital discussion forum, 2017)

‘Kumar’ builds up the argumentation of his breaching post around three themes, which in his experience outline a pattern of misuse of power by the “established” voices at the expense of the “dissenting voices”: “disciplining”, “colonising” and “silencing” (‘Kumar’, post at anonymous digital discussion forum, 2017).

A pattern has emerged and is fixed. A pattern where any young/female/PoC dissenting voice is disciplined by usually old/white/male voices.

Disciplined by terming the dissenting voices as rabble rousing, badly behaved, (uncouth?).

Disciplined by demanding for ‘objective’ and ‘rational’ argumentation. [...]

Disciplined by talking down to only the dissenting voices, but not to others, mostly because a) they are senior, b) they are your friends, or c) you are scared of the implications.

Disciplined by demanding knowledge labor. [...]

These and other modes of disciplining are acts of colonizing.

If you do not see that as that, then you are blinded. By your privileges along the race, gender, geographical power axes. [...]

And silencing. You wonder why the younger folks on this list do not discuss and debate. Well, here is the answer: You colonize by your acts of disciplining. (‘Kumar’, post at anonymous digital discussion forum, 2017)

Although these are not breaches initiated by ‘Kumar’ planned and conscious breach., the experienced “disciplining”, “colonising” and “silencing” attitudes enacted by the establishment constitute breaches against the list’s code of conduct. According to the membership guidelines, the members should “be nice” and behave in a “respectful” manner.

Terminating a membership from the list does not require an actual exit statement. ‘Kumar’ could have chosen not to download the list posts ever again. With his explicit exit statement, ‘Kumar’ performed a breach in an attempt to raise focus on the experienced mis-conditions on the list for a final time:

If I have to continue on this list, I cannot remain silent, and I will have to call-out each and every instance of colonizing, and that's just too much of time and effort off my day work.

So, goodbye and thanks for all the fish! ('Kumar', post at anonymous digital discussion forum, 2017)

Discussion: Comparing and contrasting the breachers and their breaches

The three examples of breachers above describe how they end up on edge with their respective contexts and prevailing norms. In the following section, the motivations of each of the breachers, along with the tensions that underlie them, are discussed.

Anders Jakobsen's unintentional breach

Jakobsen's actions do, for the most part, not constitute deliberate, planned norm breaches—he acts like he does because he is intrinsically compelled to do so. Although he is aware that he sometimes provokes the art and design scene, it is difficult for him to compromise according to socially accepted codes of conduct. Instead, he isolates himself in the woods of Hede, where he keeps himself busy on the verge of exhaustion to hold anxiety at bay. Jakobsen's breach is a complex interplay of deliberate resistance against design norms, a rejection of authority, an alternative artistic process and the impact of his diagnoses. The latter may be a contributing factor to why he experiences difficulties fitting into art and design contexts. At the same time, according to the documentary's accounts, he does not seem to suffer from such limitations in his encounters with 'ordinary' people in the countryside. In a way, Jakobsen's breach affects him more than anything else, as it reinforces his isolation in the countryside. Nevertheless, it has indirect consequences for the design field in that it contributes to questioning established norms, encourages a more flexible and open-minded approach to creativity and challenges the status quo within the design and art communities.

One could argue that Jakobsen's reputation favours a position as a 'mad genius' in the art and design scene, or even that it is a deliberate strategy on his part. On the other hand, as the documentary highlights, Jakobsen is not fully accepted by the art and design scene, and he expresses reluctance to participate in events and contexts he finds "repulsive" due to the perceived need to conform to the norms he opposes. This suggests that he faces resistance and exclusion within the very establishment that recognises him. Characterising Anders Jakobsen solely as a 'mad genius' would therefore risk oversimplifying his position within the design establishment. While he challenges norms and is recognised for his unique approach,

his experiences of exclusion and reluctance to conform underline the complexities of his relationship with the design world. This suggests that Jakobsen's identity and work cannot be explained solely by the traditional 'mad genius' archetype.

In essence, Jakobsen's example breaches against the conventional definition of a breach. The breaching blueprint introduced by Garfinkel (1984) involves orchestrated, intentional breaches. Having analysed the three examples of breachers, Jakobsen's breach stands out in comparison to the other two because it is unintentional in character.

Johnson Witehira's spontaneous breach

Listening to Witehira's presentation, it seems that his intention was not to make a breach, at least not initially. While he listens to four speakers' presentations before his and mentally prepares for his own, feelings of being "quite conflicted actually. Very excited but also saddened in some ways" (DesignCo, 2015b, 1:13), build up in him, to a degree that he "actually made notes [...]. I do not normally take notes, but I think this is a really significant event" (DesignCo, 2015b, 1:39).

Even though the symposium's theme is about New Zealand culture, and even though the previous speakers talk about "culture, culture, culture" (DesignCo, 2015b, 3:16), no one refers to the obvious: "I do not know the answer to what New Zealand's unique design character DNA is, but I do know what makes New Zealand unique. It's Māori culture, it's to do with Māori" (DesignCo, 2015b, 1:54). Therefore, he decides there and then to perform a breach, or as he puts it himself, to "go against the grain" (Helix, 2015, 3:50). He is aware of the risk of being "marginalised", "slapped down" or "ignored" (Helix, 2015, 4:02) and he tries "moving forward" and being "constructive" (DesignCo, 2015b, 4:36; 13:42).

'Ashok Kumar's' planned breach

'Kumar' reacts to a treatment that he perceives as discriminatory, to which the established forum members expose the dissenting voices, i.e., the young/female/PoC members from the Global South. They feel treated as if they do not belong to the context in a true sense, and the prevalent code of conduct does not seem to apply, at least not to them.

In a first attempt to change the forum's conversational climate, 'Kumar' acts as a mediator by suggesting a much-needed discussion on privileges to raise awareness regarding these issues. When his initiative fails, he says goodbye to the forum and explains his choice by pointing out the problems matter-of-factly and earnestly. Considering that one can very easily terminate a digital forum membership without attracting attention, 'Kumar's' exit statement is an active, planned and conscious breach.

Concluding reflections: In-betweenness and ‘mellanförskap’ in relation to breaches and breachers

Seemingly, the motivation and the intention, spurring the breachers on, vary (i.e., breaches can be involuntary, spontaneous, planned, etc.). There are also similarities regarding the position from which they enact their breaches, be it by moving between or belonging to several contexts at the same time. Possibly, they can perform their breaches due to a position of ‘in-betweenness’, i.e., being both insiders and outsiders, or neither (Bhabha, 2004).

The equivalent term of in-betweenness in Swedish is ‘mellanförskap’, which describes a feeling of identifying with several, opposing even, categories without really feeling fully at home in any of them, except possibly among other in-betweeners/‘mellanförskapare’, and thereby ending up somewhere in between (Hübinette, 2011). Being an in-betweener poses some challenges in relation to race, ethnicity, identity or belonging to one’s context. At the same time, this ambivalence can provide degrees of freedom and enable a more flexible attitude, such as breachers (Scott & Tuana, 2017; Christoforidou et al., 2021; Christoforidou, 2023). As Figure 1 illustrates, in a way, the Swedish term communicates this aspect clearer than in-betweenness, which can be understood as a rather static position, whereas ‘mellanförskapare’ creates (*skapar*) the in-between (*mellan*) space, reflecting a more active stance, which is why I have chosen to use this term as more relevant in this context (Christoforidou, 2023).

In sum, a characteristic the breachers have in common can be described as being in-betweeners and ‘mellanförskapare’. The Swedish terms for in-betweenness and in-betweener are ‘mellanförskap’ (e.g., Arbouz, 2012) and ‘mellanförskapare’, respectively. Etymologically, in-betweenness suggests a static position compared to ‘mellanförskap’, which includes *skapa*, meaning to ‘create’, implying a dynamic position, potential movement, and expansion of spaces and fields. Although in-betweenness and ‘mellanförskap’ are synonymous due to the inclusion of *skapa*, which means to ‘create’, the latter implies a more dynamic position, a potential movement, and an expansion of spaces and fields. Figure 1 illustrates the relative roles and positions of in-betweeners compared to ‘mellanförskapare’ in relation to insiders and outsiders of a context (Christoforidou, 2023).

Figure 2 is another illustration of why I find the Swedish term ‘mellanförskap’ more dynamic compared to in-betweenness. The person to the left is caught in a situation of being between ‘a rock and a hard place’. The terms in-betweenness and in-betweeners do not indicate the direction of tension, i.e., whether it is stable and static without any movement of the ‘walls’ or if the ‘walls’ are about to give way. ‘Mellanförskap’ and ‘mellanförskapare’

in contrast, offer an in-built indication of the possibility of moving potential (norm) ‘walls’ outwards, increasing the space between them, and in so doing, allowing for more openness.

Figure 1.

From in-betweenness to ‘mellanförskap’. The relative roles and positions of in-betweeners compared to ‘mellanförskapare’ in relation to insiders and outsiders of a context (Christoforidou, 2023).

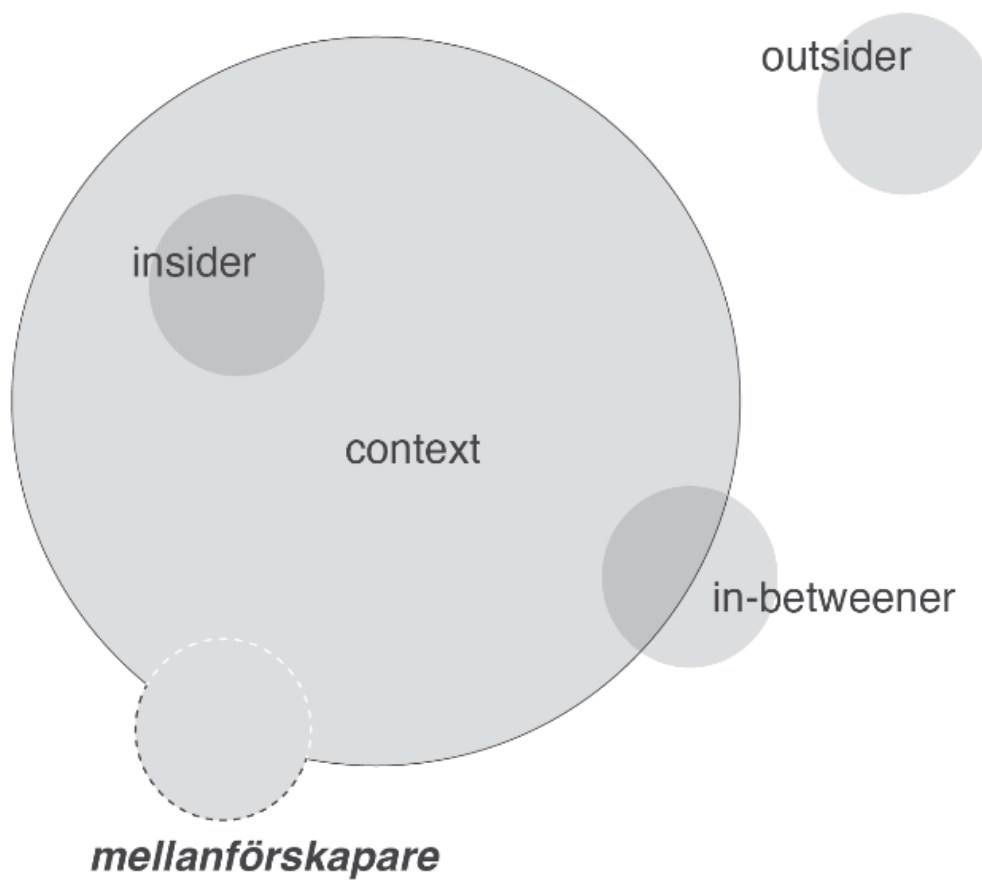
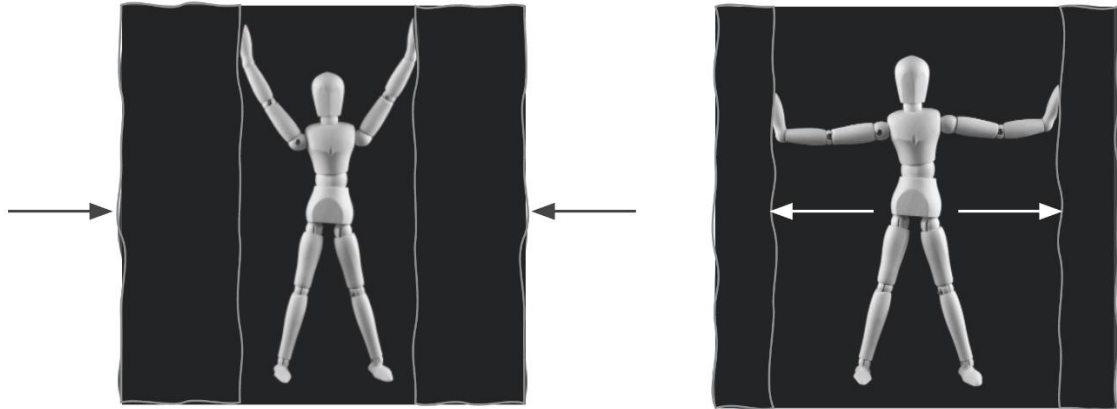


Figure 2.

In-betweenness (left) vs. ‘mellanförskap’ (right) (Christoforidou, 2023). Adapted from photographs by L. F., March 3 and August 20, 2011.⁹



Taking into consideration the degree of acceptance of the three breachers in their respective contexts in relation to their breaches, Jakobsen and ‘Kumar’ can be seen as in-betweeners while Witehira as a ‘*mellanförskapare*’ (Christoforidou, 2023).

Jakobsen seems to be in several positions of ‘*mellanförskap*’ in relation to the respective contexts, e.g., his ADHD and bipolarity diagnoses. Before these, both he and his surroundings had other expectations of him—that is, to behave in a socially accepted manner, like a ‘normal’ person. After the diagnoses, although he understands his situation better, at the same time, he struggles to figure out what he can do about it. While he feels that his work is accepted, this acceptance does not extend to including him as a person. Jakobsen tries to handle the frustration he experiences by living out in the woods of Hede for long periods. Here, he feels he can work on large projects without disturbing anyone and avoids “playing the game” and “manipulating or being manipulated” (Fougner & Degerman, 2017, 31:00; 54:30). Both Jakobsen and some of the interviewed experts seem to agree that his career would be better off if he was present at the art and design scene more, although it remains unclear what Jakobsen’s professional disadvantages really are. When he describes his process and the filming crew follows him while working on some of his projects, he seems to be practising his profession actively, adapting his methods to suit his personal needs—just as most creative workers do. Furthermore, the niche of his work is also a ‘*mellanförskap*’ as it is in the borderland between art, design and sloyd. Jakobsen’s work is known as ‘radical sloyd’, not the usual, traditional handicraft, and he is associated with two, almost opposite nicknames: “Radikalsløjderen” (radical sloyd), and “Lagombra” (good enough).

Witehira's positions of 'mellanförskap' are manifested on both a professional and a cultural level. The symposium programme refers to him as "Dr. Johnson Witehira, artist, designer and researcher" (DesignCo, 2015a), while in his presentation, Witehira frequently refers to his European and Māori descent. Although he seems aware of the risks involved, being part of several professional practices provides Witehira with the flexibility and confidence to act spontaneously and "go against the grain", without fearing failure, "being marginalised as a radical", or getting "slapped down or get ignored". Also, his diverse cultural heritage gives him the sensitivity and clarity to identify what is obviously amiss and to acknowledge that "as designers..., we're in a privileged position within society, that we get to envision, or in this case, reimagine how Aotearoa looks and feels" (DesignCo, 2015b, 2:29). In Witehira's case, the position of 'mellanförskap' seems to involve the right balance of frustration and courage to "go against the grain" and to be forward-looking while at the same time being respectful of the past (DesignCo, 2015b, 3:50; 13:42).

In 'Kumar's' case, a possible explanation for why he takes on the role of a breacher is that he stands with one foot in each constellation among the design researchers of the digital discussion forum and acts from the position of 'mellanförskap'. On the one hand, as a male academic with a doctoral degree, 'Kumar' is aware that he belongs to the privileged ones in society. On the other hand, as a relatively young and unestablished researcher from the Global South, he opposes the fact that the voices of his peers are dismissed as dissenting and silenced by the forum's "oppressor[s]". These opposing positions and the space in between potentially contribute to 'Kumar' seeing the injustices towards the "dissenting voices" more clearly, having a harder time accepting them, feeling a responsibility to do something about them and considering himself capable of initiating change. Failing to create a common ground, an in-between space, of mutual respect as 'mellanförskapare', he decides to act as a breacher before terminating his involvement in the forum.

Finally, since Witehira and 'Kumar' are both active in academia and presumably have some continuity in the conditions of their employment, their breaches might be easier to accomplish compared to Jakobsen's, who must survive in a gallery context as an unintentional breacher and radical sloyder.

As postcolonial theory confirms, the adoption of a critical approach can be facilitated by maintaining a flexible, nuanced position that transcends the boundaries of traditional categorisations. This flexibility implies a recognition of the complex interplay between different social markers, including, but not limited to, gender, race, colour, ethnicity and the geopolitical divisions of the Global North and the Global South. Scholars such as Fanon (1989), Said (1993), Bhabha (2004), Hall (1997), Nakayama and Martin (1998), Ashcraft and Allen (2003), Ahmed (2007) and Connell (2007) have explored these intersections,

highlighting the intricate dynamics of postcolonial thought. Postcolonial theory fundamentally challenges simplistic narratives that have historically dominated academic discourses and societal perceptions. Emphasising the importance of recognising the diversity of identities and experiences encourages people to move beyond rigid binary contradictions. Instead, reflection on the diversity of identities constructed via historical, cultural and sociopolitical processes is encouraged.

Breachers and blindspots

Jakobsen's 'Radicalsloyd' work challenges conventional design norms, pushing the boundaries of what is considered 'good' design. The blindspot his breach points towards is the art and design community's conservatism and tendency towards conformity and 'monolithic' values (Christoforidou et al., 2021), hindering the acknowledgement of the designer/artist/radical sloyder of groundbreaking work and approaches to design that fall outside of conventional norms walls (Christoforidou , 2023).

Witehira's breach at the Helix symposium sheds light on a blindspot in the discussions about New Zealand's design identity. By pointing out the omission of Māori culture, a significant part of New Zealand's cultural heritage, Witehira's breach calls attention to the need for a more inclusive, bicultural perspective in defining New Zealand's design identity that does not marginalise Indigenous contributions.

'Kumar's' breach on the academic discussion forum reveals a blindspot related to power dynamics and inclusivity in academic spaces by drawing attention to discriminatory treatment by established scholars who silence dissenting scholars from marginalised groups. His breach exposed a blindspot in the forum's code of conduct that fails to address this power imbalance and protect the voices of young, female and PoC researchers, which prevents open, respectful and inclusive discussions within academic communities.

In each of these cases, the breachers question established norms and boundaries from the position of 'mellanförskap'. Their breaches reveal blindspots within these contexts by exposing inadequacies, biases or oversights in the existing systems or discourse, emphasising the need for greater awareness and inclusivity in these areas and offering opportunities for positive change and transformation within these respective fields or communities.

Comparing and contrasting the three different examples of breachers described above, each representing a field of design, i.e., design practice, design education and design research, it seems that breaches are a suitable approach to uncover blindspots in various contexts as initially described by Garfinkel (1984), who studied artificial breaching experiments induced by academics to study social interactions and norms. Developed from that, this article also

suggests looking at naturally occurring breaches and the people who enact them (i.e., breachers).

These three breachers have a position of in-betweenness/’mellanförskap’ in common. Does that apply to all breachers, and do all in-betweeners/’mellanförskapare’ become breachers? Establishing whether these propositions are valid for all breachers, in general, would require a more substantial investigation and study of a larger group of breachers. What this current study indicates is that because of breachers’ position of in-betweenness/’mellanförskap’, they seem to possess a valuable ability to identify blindspots in their contexts. In doing so, they can facilitate a critical stance against commonly accepted truths and help the fields they are part of remain flexible and even expand. Not least in design in general, and design education in particular, where thinking outside the box is highly regarded, the concepts and approaches described in this paper offer opportunities for reflection on prevailing norms and values that otherwise risk remaining veiled. The heightened norm awareness achieved through the friction created by breachers and their breaches is a prerequisite for norm criticism and, by extension, for norm creativity, both of which are essential abilities for designers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank ‘Ashok Kumar’ for permitting me to write about his last post by which he terminated his participation at the ‘Forum’, a digital knowledge exchanging platform for design research. Moreover, I would like to thank my colleagues and peers and the reviewers and editors at FormAkademisk for their invaluable comments during the publication process.

References

- Adams, D. (1986). *The hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy: A trilogy in four parts* (New ed.). Guild.
- Adams, D. (1999). *So long, and thanks for all the fish*. Del Rey Books.
- Ahmed, S. (2007). A phenomenology of whiteness. *Feminist Theory*, 8(2), 149–168.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700107078139>
- Ahmed, S. (2010). *The promise of happiness*. Duke University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822392781>
- Akama, Y. (2015). Being awake to *Ma*: Designing in between-ness as a way of becoming with. *CoDesign*, 11(3–4), 262–274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15710882.2015.1081243>
- Akama, A., Stuedahl, D., & Van Zyl, I. (2015). Design disruptions in contested, contingent and contradictory future-making. *Interaction Design and Architecture(s)*, 26(1), 132–148.
<https://doi.org/10.55612/s-5002-026-008>
- AllaTVkanaler. (n.d.). *Radikalslöjdaren*. Retrieved 2022-02-09, from
<https://www.allatvkanaler.se/play/radikalslojdaren-svtplay/>
- Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2007). Constructing mystery: Empirical matters in theory development. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(4), 1265–1281.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2007.26586822>
- Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2011). *Qualitative research and theory development: Mystery as method*. SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446287859>
- Ashcraft, K. L., & Allen B. J. (2003). The racial foundation of organizational communication. *Communication Theory (1050-3293)*, 13(1), 5–38. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2003.tb00280.x>
- Benhabib, S. (1986). *Critique, norm, and utopia: A study of the normative foundations of critical theory*. Columbia University Press.
- Bhabha, H. K. (2004). *The location of culture*. Routledge.
- Bjørn, P., & Ngwenyama, O. (2009). Virtual team collaboration: Building shared meaning, resolving breakdowns and creating translucence. *Information Systems Journal*, 19(3), 227–253. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2575.2007.00281.x>
- Bonnevier, K. (2007). *Behind straight curtains: Towards a queer feminist theory of architecture* [Doctoral dissertation, Royal Institute of Technology]. SwePub.
<http://kth.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:11685/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

- Bromseth, J., & Darj, F. (Eds.). (2010). *Normkritisk pedagogik: Makt, lärande och strategier för förändring*. Centre for gender research, Uppsala University.
- Browne, K., & Nash, C. J. (Eds.). (2010). *Queer methods and methodologies: Intersecting queer theories and social science research*. Ashgate.
- Christoforidou, D. (2013). *Bling? Roles and contradictions in design* [Licentiate dissertation, Lund University]. SwePub.
[https://portal.research.lu.se/files/146737314/Licentiate thesis Bling including Papers A D.pdf](https://portal.research.lu.se/files/146737314/Licentiate%20thesis%20Bling%20including%20Papers%20A%20D.pdf)
- Christoforidou, D. (2023). *Bling & other breaches in design* [Doctoral dissertation, Lund University]. SwePub.
[https://lucris.lub.lu.se/admin/files/146681786/PhD thesis kappa Bling Other Breaches in Design web 20230517.pdf](https://lucris.lub.lu.se/admin/files/146681786/PhD%20thesis%20kappa%20Bling%20Other%20Breaches%20in%20Design%20web%2020230517.pdf)
- Christoforidou, D., Olander, E., Warell, A., & Svengren Holm, L. (2012). Good taste vs. good design: A tug of war in the light of Bling. *The Design Journal*, 15(2), 185–202.
<https://doi.org/10.2752/175630612X13258652805095>
- Christoforidou, D., Erlingsdóttir, G., & Warell, A. (2021). Monolithic vs. polyolithic design cultures? Designers' accounts of professional practices in Sweden and New Zealand. *Journal of Design Research*, 19(1/2/3), 7–30.
<https://doi.org/10.1504/JDR.2021.10043836>
- Clausen, L., & Zølner, M. (2010, August 6–10). *Cultural awareness processes in corporate knowledge sharing: Turning 'cultural blind spots' into resources* [Conference presentation], The Academy of Management Annual Meeting 2010, Montréal, Canada. <http://annualmeeting.aomonline.org/2010/>
- Connell, R. (2007). *Southern theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003117346>
- Cross, N. (2007). *Designerly ways of knowing*. Birkhäuser.
- Csikszentmihályi, M. (1996). *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention* (1st ed.). Harper Collins.
- De los Reyes, P. (2001). *Diversity and differentiation: Discourse, difference and construction of norms in Swedish research and public debate*. National Institute for Working Life.
- DesignCo. (2012). *Advocating for the role of design in New Zealand's future*. Retrieved 2016-06-09, from <http://designco.org.nz/>
- DesignCo. (2015a). *Helix: A symposium on the New Zealand design DNA project*. Retrieved 2016-06-09, from <http://designco.org.nz/helix/helix-symposium/>

- DesignCo. (2015b). *Presentations: Videos and other content from the Helix speakers*. Retrieved 2016-06-09, from <http://designco.org.nz/helix/presentations/>
- Deverson, T., & Kennedy, G. (Eds.). (2005). *The New Zealand Oxford dictionary*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780195584516.001.0001>
- Ehrnberger, K. (2017). *Tillblivelser: En trasslig berättelse om design som normkritisk praktik* [Becomings: A Tangled Story of Design as Norm-Critical Practice] [Doctoral dissertation, KTH Royal Institute of Technology]. SwePub. <https://kth.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1076067/FULLTEXT02.pdf>
- Fanon, F. (1989). *Studies in a dying colonialism* (New ed.). Earthscan.
- Flick, U. (2018). *Managing quality in qualitative research* (2nd ed.). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529716641>
- Foucault, M. (2002). *The order of things: An archaeology of the human sciences*. Routledge. (Original work published 1970)
- Fougner, Å. (producer and director), & Degerman, O. (producer & director). (2017). *Radikalslödaren: En film om Anders Jakobsen a.k.a. Lagombra* [Radical craftsman: A film about Anders Jakobsen a.k.a. Lagombra, TV-programme]. Fougner Film/SVT.
- Garfinkel, H. (1984). *Studies in ethnomethodology*. Polity Press.
- Geertz, C. (2017). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays* (3rd ed.). Basic Books.
- Graneheim, U., & Lundman, B. (2004). Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: Concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness. *Nurse Education Today*, 24(2), 105–112. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2003.10.001>
- Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. SAGE, in association with Open University.
- Hjerm, M., & Peterson, A. (Eds.). (2007). *Etnicitet: Perspektiv på samhället* [Ethnicity: Perspectives on society]. Gleerups utbildning.
- Hübinette, T. (2011). Att överskrida ras: En introduktion till begreppet transrasialitet speglad genom transrasiala erfarenheter och fantasier [Transcending Race: An Introduction to the concept of transraciality as reflected through transracial experiences and ismaginations]. *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning*, 11(3–4), 49–57. <https://doi.org/10.7146/kkf.v0i3-4.28034>
- Kumashiro, K. K. (2000). Toward a theory of anti-oppressive education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 25–53. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543070001025>
- Lawson, B., & Dorst, K. (2009). *Design expertise*. Architectural Press.

- Matthiesen, S., Bjørn, P., & Petersen, L. M. (2014). "Figure out how to code with the hands of others": Recognizing cultural blind spots in global software development. In *Proceedings of the 17th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing: CSCW '14* (pp. 1107-1119).
<https://doi.org/10.1145/2531602.2531612>
- Nakayama, T. K., & Martin, J. N. (Eds.). (1998). *Whiteness: The communication of social identity*. SAGE.
- Rennstam, J., & Wästerfors, D. (2018). *Analyze!: Crafting your data in qualitative research* (1st ed.). Studentlitteratur.
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329389400_Analyze -
_Crafting_your_data_in_qualitative_research](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329389400_Analyze_-_Crafting_your_data_in_qualitative_research)
- Said, E. W. (1993). *Orientalism*. Ordfront.
- Schön, D. A. (2003). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action* (Repr.). Ashgate. (Original work published 1983)
- Scott, C., & Tuana, N. (2017). Nepantla: Writing (from) the in-between. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 31(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.31.1.0001>
- Sveriges Television (2021). *K SPECIAL*. <https://kontakt.svt.se/guide/k-special>
- Wandell, B.A. (1995). *Foundations of vision*. Sinauer Associates.
- Wikberg-Nilsson, Å., & Jahnke, M. (2018). Tactics for norm-creative innovation. *She Ji*, 4(4), 375–391. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sheji.2018.11.002>
- Witthira, J. (2015, November 25–26). Invisible culture: Mono-cultural graphic design in a bicultural New Zealand [Symposium day 1: INFLUENCES, Session 2: Metaphor]. In *The Aotearoa house: Decolonising tertiary design education in New Zealand*. Presented at the Helix/DesignCo Symposium, Wellington, New Zealand.
<http://designco.org.nz/helix/presentations/>
- Zavalía, L., & Vinthagen, R. (2014). *Normkreativ* (1st ed.). Premiss.

¹ The term *blindspot* refers to a visual phenomenon in medical and biological literature and is usually written as two words. A blindspot in the cultural sense can be written as either one or two words. In order to avoid confusion between visual and cultural blindspots, cultural blindspots are henceforth referred to as *blindspots*.

² Johnson is the first name and Witthira the surname.

³ ‘Ashok Kumar’ is a pseudonym to ensure his anonymity. Unlike Jakobsen and Witehira who appear on national television and on a recorded and publicly available conference, ‘Kumar’s’ statement is only available to the members of a digital design research forum.

⁴ Meaning moderately good; good enough.

⁵ A member of the indigenous Polynesian people of Aotearoa New Zealand and of or pertaining to the Māori, the Māori language, or Māori culture (Deverson & Kennedy, 2005).

⁶ A “Marae” is the courtyard in front of a meeting house, the focal point of Māori tribal life (Deverson & Kennedy, 2005).

⁷ Pākehā is the Māori term for New Zealanders of European descent (Deverson & Kennedy, 2005).

⁸ The number of registered users is not indicative of the number of active users.

⁹ <https://www.pexels.com/photo/omino-di-legno-15622550> and <https://www.pexels.com/photo/omino-di-legno-15622546/>