

6 Conclusion



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In drawing conclusions from my work I hope to merge the two strands of this study - that of practice based research with that of designing a more inclusive environment. I have shown that an inclusive environment does not depend on providing prescribed and quantifiable solutions but rather on an informed trade-off between, often conflicting, provision or what the DDA perceptively identifies as 'reasonable provision'. Moreover this idea is based on society's understanding of what is reasonable and is itself an evolving not fixed concept. My research has changed my attitudes and my understanding of reasonableness and by doing so has encouraged me to engage a wider, and more inclusive, set of parameters. Without such continued inquiry, I suggest, our standpoint remains fixed and limiting. Quantifiable reasonableness is not reasonable at all.

The hypothesis with which I began this research was that *opportunity leads to access* and the purpose of this work is to reflect upon, not prove or disprove, this statement. In a small way the opportunity I have had, and indeed made for myself, to do this research will, I believe, increase access not only through the physical manifestation of my work but also through my dealings with clients and others. In the wider sense the provision of opportunities, as understood through my research, is linked to the cultural and physical diversity that is seen as so essential to our environment by Jacobs, Sennett and others. Further, the idea of opportunity embodies that of choice, as opposed to formal dictated behaviour, and can be seen as belonging to ideas of democratic pluralism.

We see many encouraging attempts to produce such diverse environments and related to Jacob's mixture of use and visual form, like my work, they are often expressed through meandering paths and a variety of materials and textures. However just as the uniformity of minimalism is inappropriate to the visually impaired so cobbled streets are, as emphasised by my walk with Lee Harker, inappropriate for others. What seems

appropriate and reasonable for one is not so for others. As designers we thus begin to understand that there are things we may like the look of but which are excluding and disabling and if it is to be useful the idea of opportunity must then embody *limits* not complete freedom. For me Hagan's idea of the 'new within limits' (p73) is crucial here. Talking about environmental concerns she suggests that whilst searching for new solutions the imperative is that these are not unbounded but restricted by our moral viewpoint. The outcome as in 'reasonable provision' is thus based on negotiation. It is not a question of not being able to do certain things but these things may not be consistent with a moral viewpoint. Such limits are not the arbitrary rules of proportion, dictums of movements or fashion but instead become apparent through research and consultation – evolving with and through our understanding.

My conclusion, then, is that research based on the actual lives of people is essential to understanding our standpoint and formulating these limits. Further the doing of this research strengthens the skills of looking, listening and analysing and develops a progressively deeper understanding. Opportunity can lead to access but only if it recognises, and continually revises, the limits imposed by essential provision.