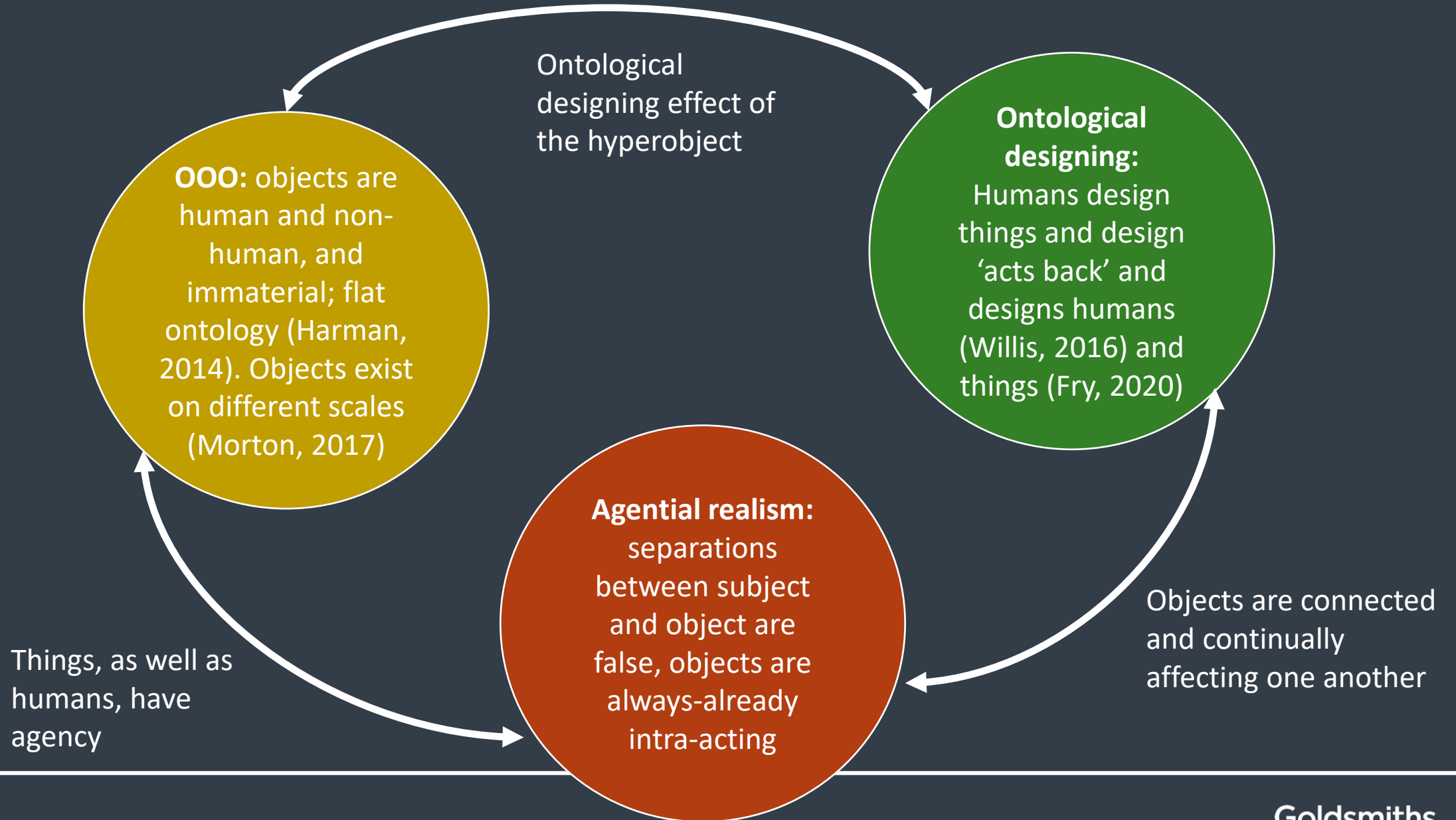


ENGAGING OBJECT AGENCY: NEW WAYS OF DESIGN LEARNING AND BEING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE MUSEUM

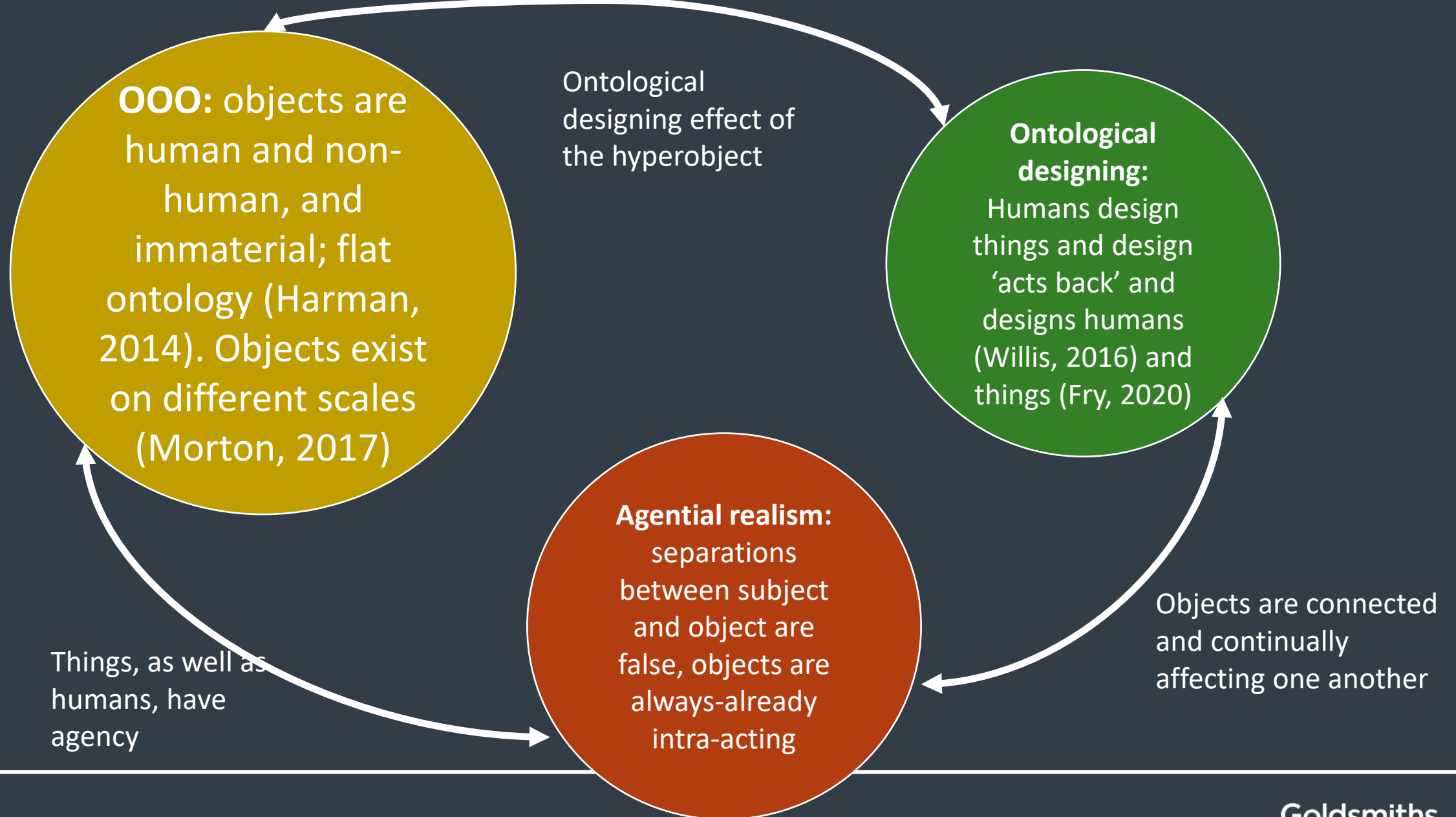
Alice Hellard, Goldsmiths, University of London

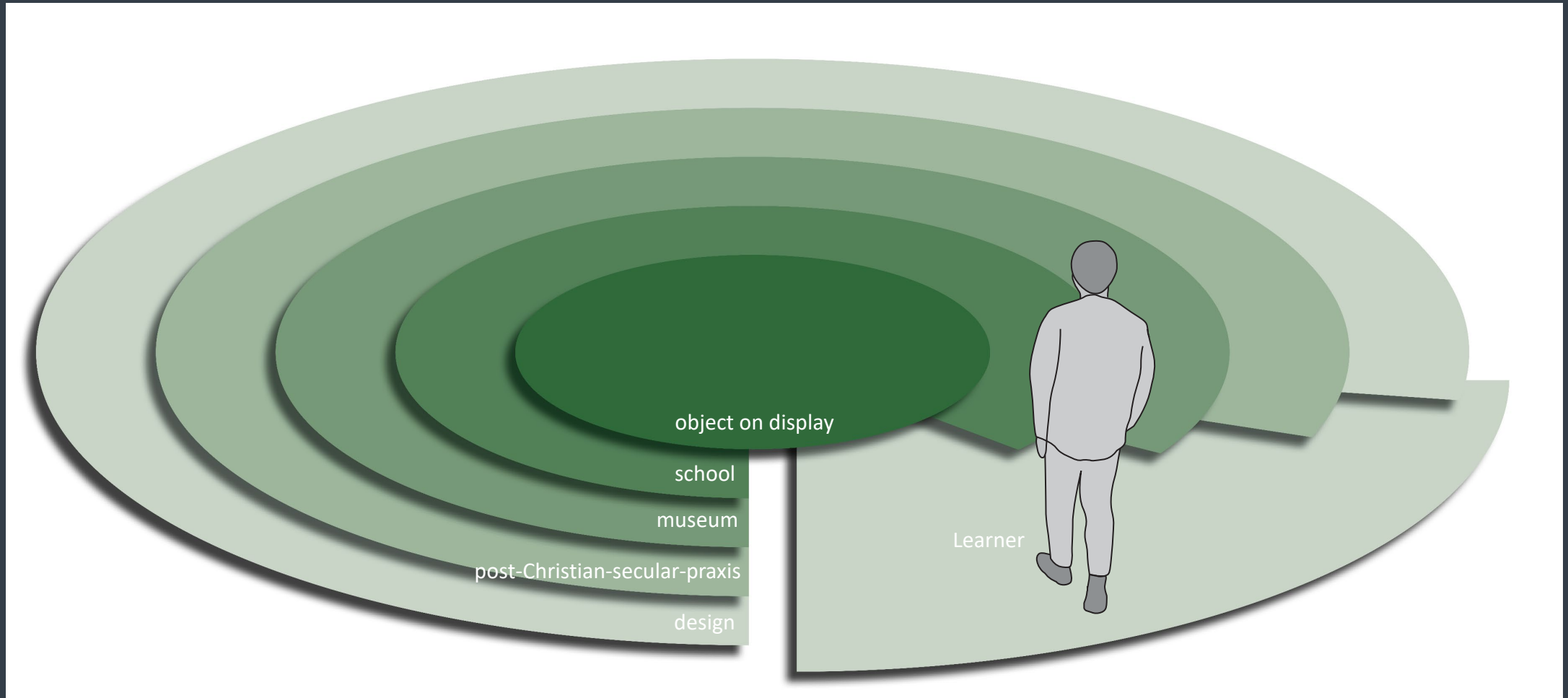
alice.hellard@gold.ac.uk

FRAMEWORK-METHODOLOGY

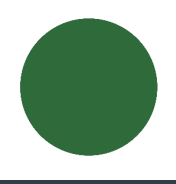


FRAMEWORK-METHODOLOGY





Objects within the research context



OBJECT ON DISPLAY

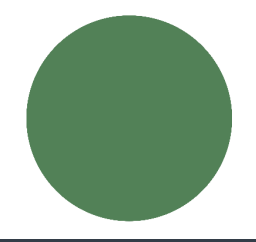
- Learning colleagues in museums have little control over
- Pedagogies can be varied, but often include brief summaries (interpretation label) and may be involved in learning materials directed towards KS3 or 4 students

Links to learning in Design & Technology:

- Object based learning
- Technology in society
- Design history
- Broadening understanding/learning about design

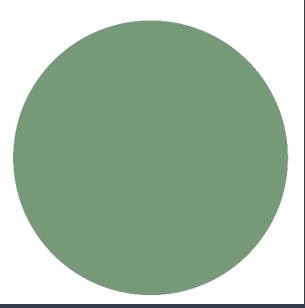
For design, the object on display is seen as the ‘reification of an idea into material form’ (Charman, 2016)

However, reification is considered a problem as the object is often decontextualised from its embodied context, a mere representation of itself (Preziosi, 2004)



SCHOOL

- Museums find it difficult to engage with secondary schools
- When they do, it may be for a one off museum visit, including a workshop and/or free choice visit
- Museums can help schools to meet government mandated frameworks, e.g. Gatsby Benchmarks
- Competition model gaining traction, drives up museum engagement and also tends to centralise and raise the status of designing activities
- My experience in museums indicates perceptions of museum colleagues as experts, and of the expert knowledge of museums



MUSEUM

- Formerly public structures to educate the masses – Christian values, inseparable from colonialism (Findlen, 2004)
- Now considered sites of democratic learning which centralise the visitor experience and personal meaning making (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007)
- Institutional struggles - siloes of practice (Wood, 2019)
- Curatorial decisions something that learning colleagues have little control over (Dewdney et al, 2016)
- Perceptions that pedagogy (and methodology) not routinely considered within conversations about purpose (Kristindottir, 2017)

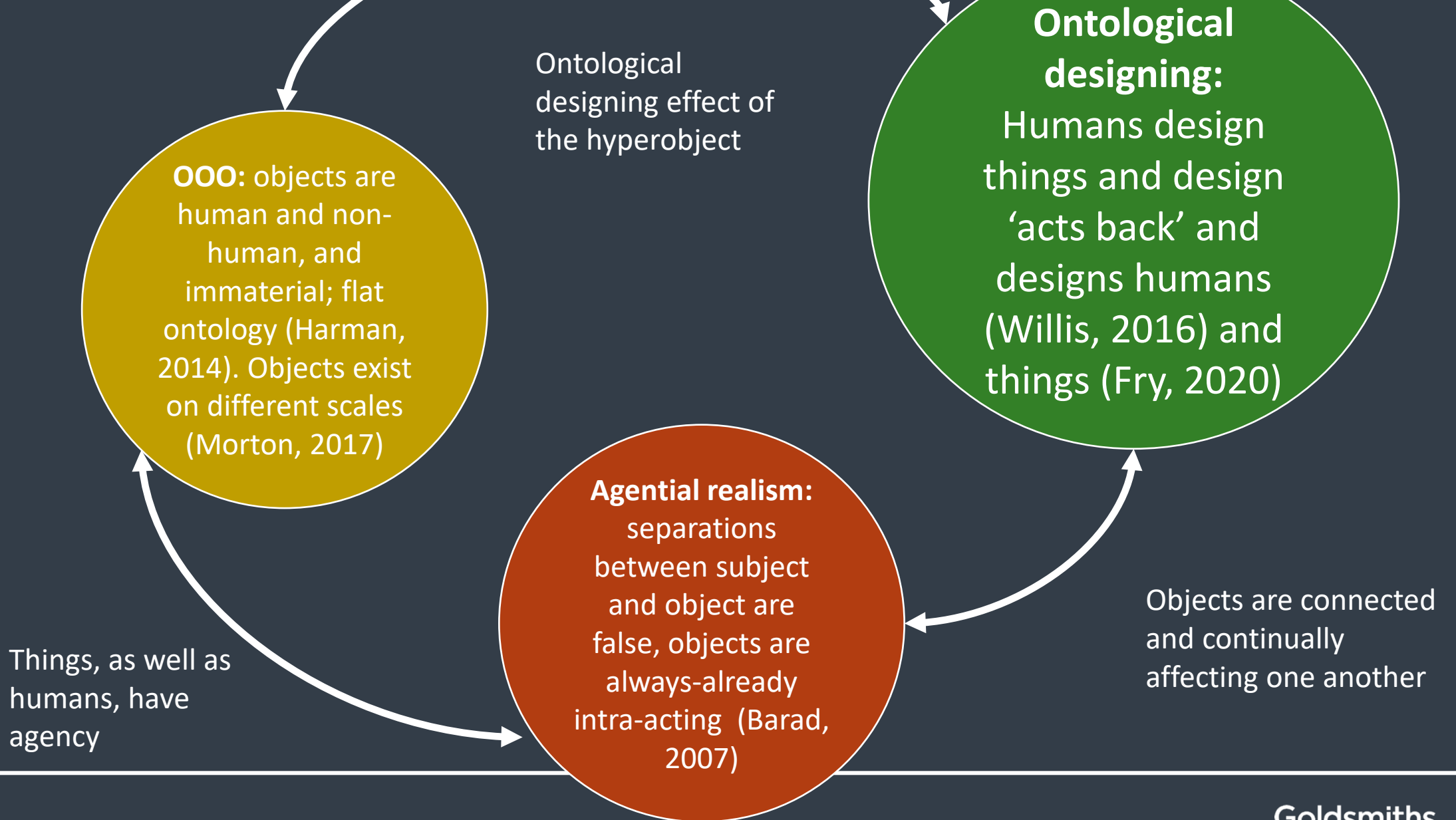


POST-CHRISTIAN-SECULAR-PRAXIS

- Museum landscape dominated by visual culture – pioneered by Jesuit education
- This helps to reify the object, separating subject from object
- It is argued that these methods echo colonial curatorial habits, which abstracted objects from their embodied contexts, stripping away religious and spiritual meaning in order to demonstrate progress and power (Morgan, 2017)
- Museums considered to have played an important part in the process of secularisation

In other words, within the museum context I argue that this is an unrecognised structural inscription

FRAMEWORK-METHODOLOGY

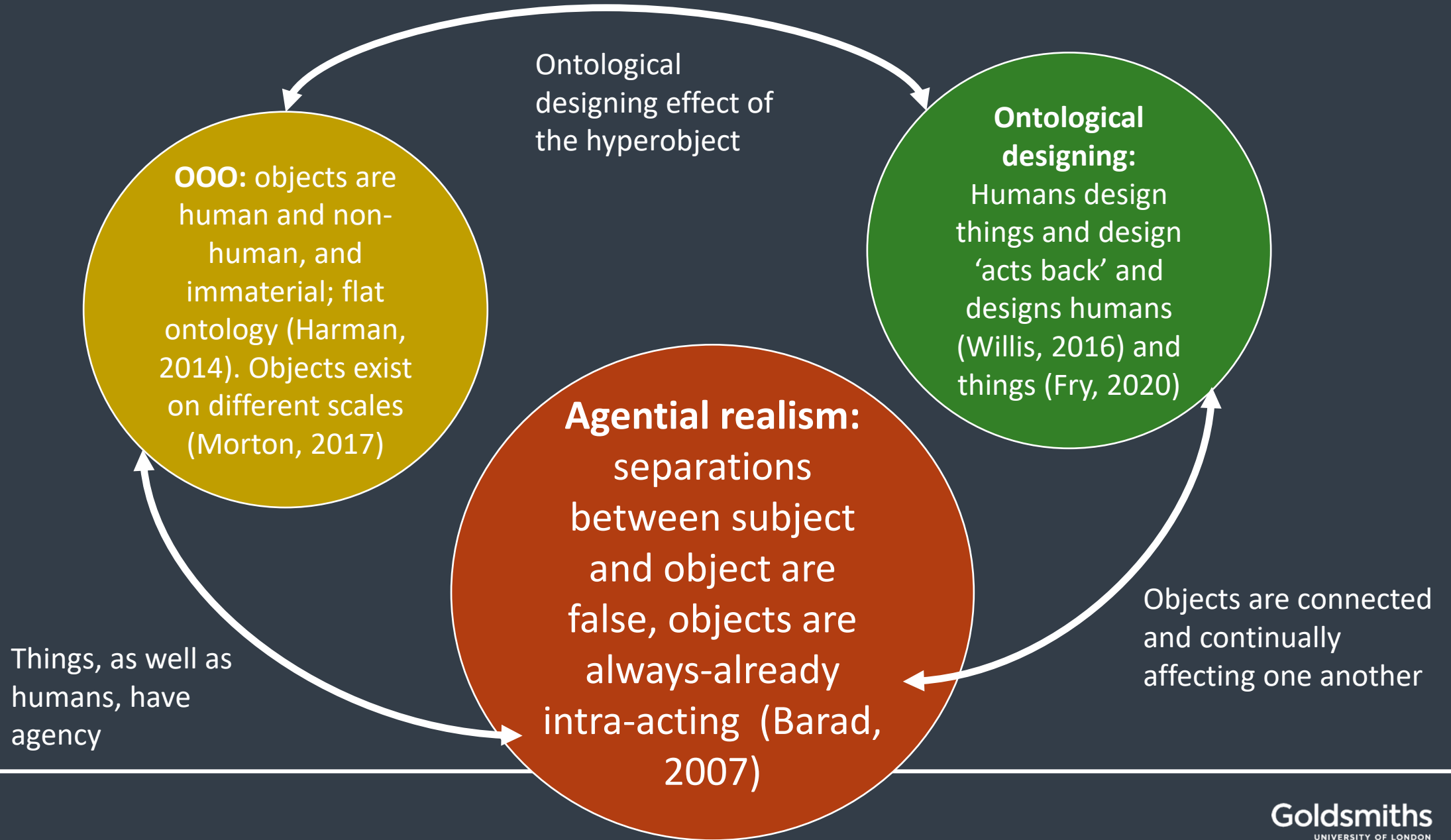




DESIGN

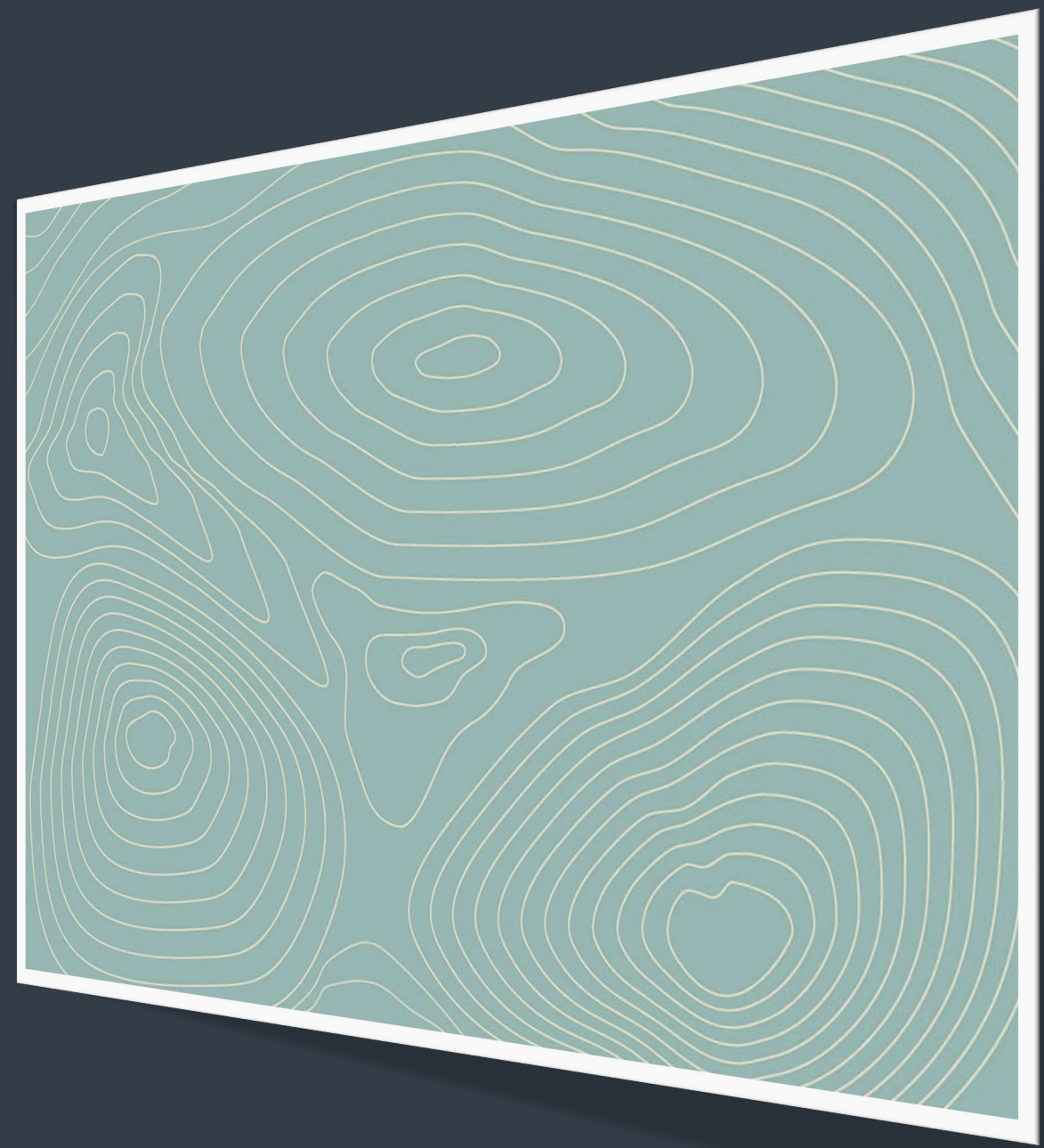
“Design’s agency does not usually come from it being mobilised with a clear vision of consequences, but rather from its power as an unrecognised structural inscription” (Fry, 2020, p.3)

FRAMEWORK-METHODOLOGY



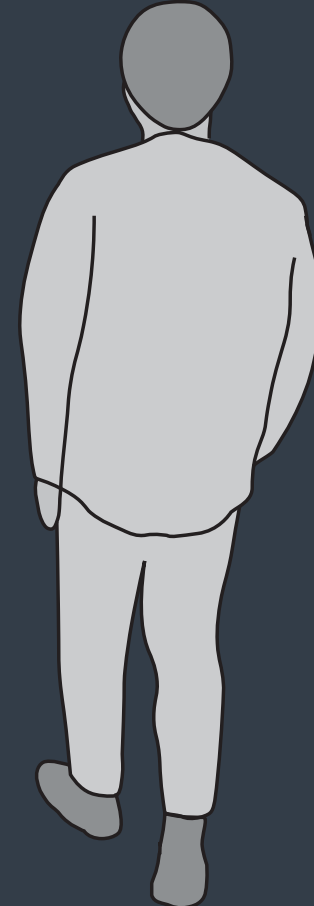
OBJECT INTRA-ACTIONS: DIFFRACTION (BARAD, 2007)

- Objects are 'always-already' intra-acting, and as they do so they create matter
- Diffraction is “patterns of difference that make a difference” (Barad, 2007, p.72), in which both subject and object are absorbed and remade together (Are, 2018) – matter and mattering are created



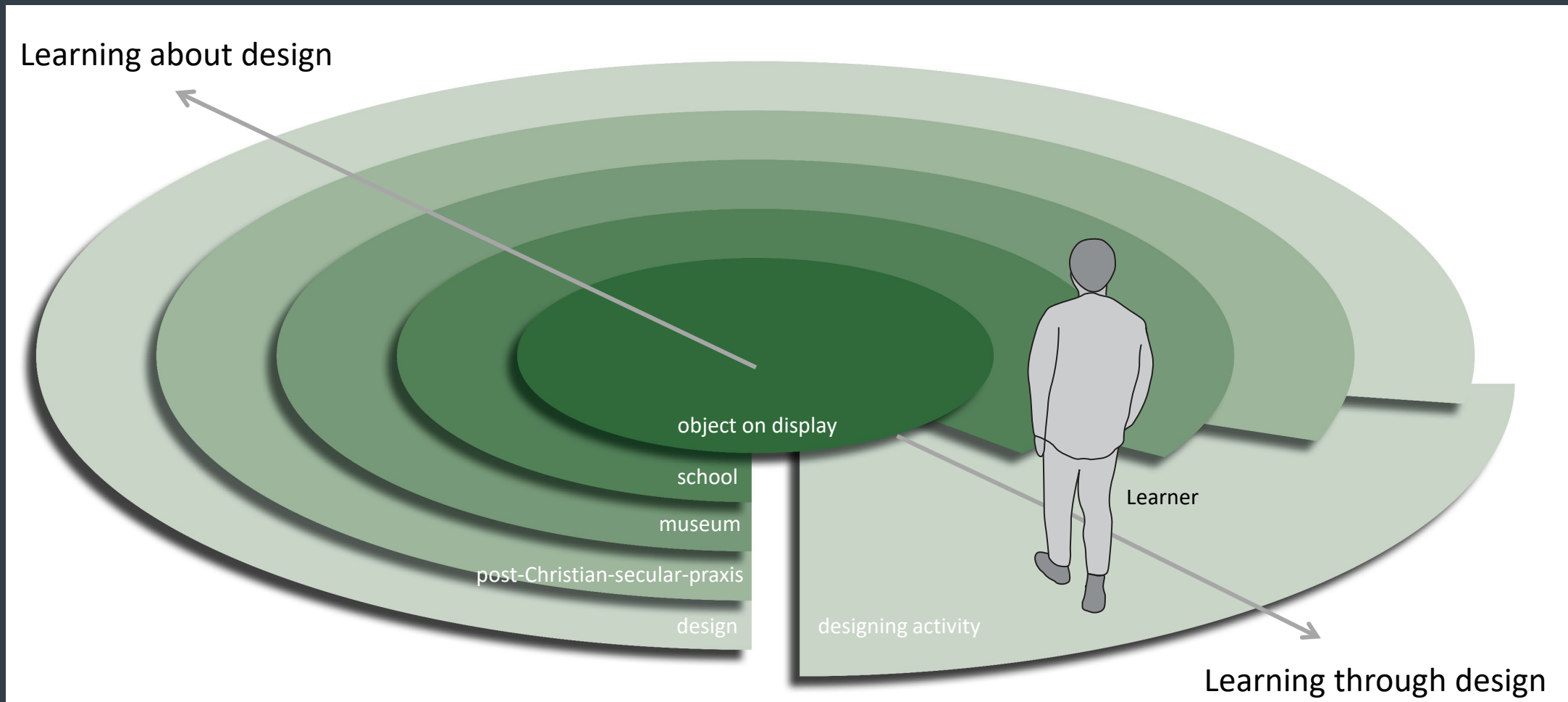
LEARNER AGENCY

- Subject-object
- In museums learner agency is considered to be under-researched
- In D&T agency is considered through (among other things) decision making in designing activity – action and reflection (Barlex, 2014); knowledge for action (McLain, 2022)
- Agency is a doing (Barad, 2007) – it is not something we possess, it is something we enact



ON REPRESENTATION...

“Representationalism is so deeply entrenched within Western culture that it has taken on a common-sense appeal. It seems inescapable, if not downright natural” (Barad, 2007, p.48).“



Object intra-actions in the design museum context

PRACTICE RESEARCH OUTLINE

- Taking place Nov-Dec 2023
- 10 Y12 students and their teacher
- East London school, serving a diverse community with a higher than national average number of students with EAL
- Initial school-based workshop activities include
 - Subjectivities mapping, and mapping these onto objects
 - Dérive/psychogeography activity
- Visit to the V&A Museum South Kensington using subjectivities maps and dérive method, with context probes
- Design activity in follow up workshops to re-present one or more objects on display, making object intra-actions visible

PRACTICE RESEARCH – A FEW KEY POINTS

- Subjectivities mapping – inverse design personas: Not designing for themselves, designing and learning *with* themselves
- Understanding students' agentic orientations within the 'temporal-relational contexts-for-action' (Biesta and Tedder, 2007) – the UK design museum
- My own positioning as teacher-learner-researcher acknowledges my subjectivities, through my professional experience, among other things

DISCUSSION

- i. How do you locate learner agency in design and technology education?
- ii. How and where is the agency of the object located in design learning?
- iii. How recognisable to you are the issues discussed here around power, agency and authority in contemporary museum- and school-based learning about design?
- iv. How do we do and experience dialogues about religious and political issues and design with young people?