

Creative Ethics

Fiona Cowie | Portfolio | **UX Research**

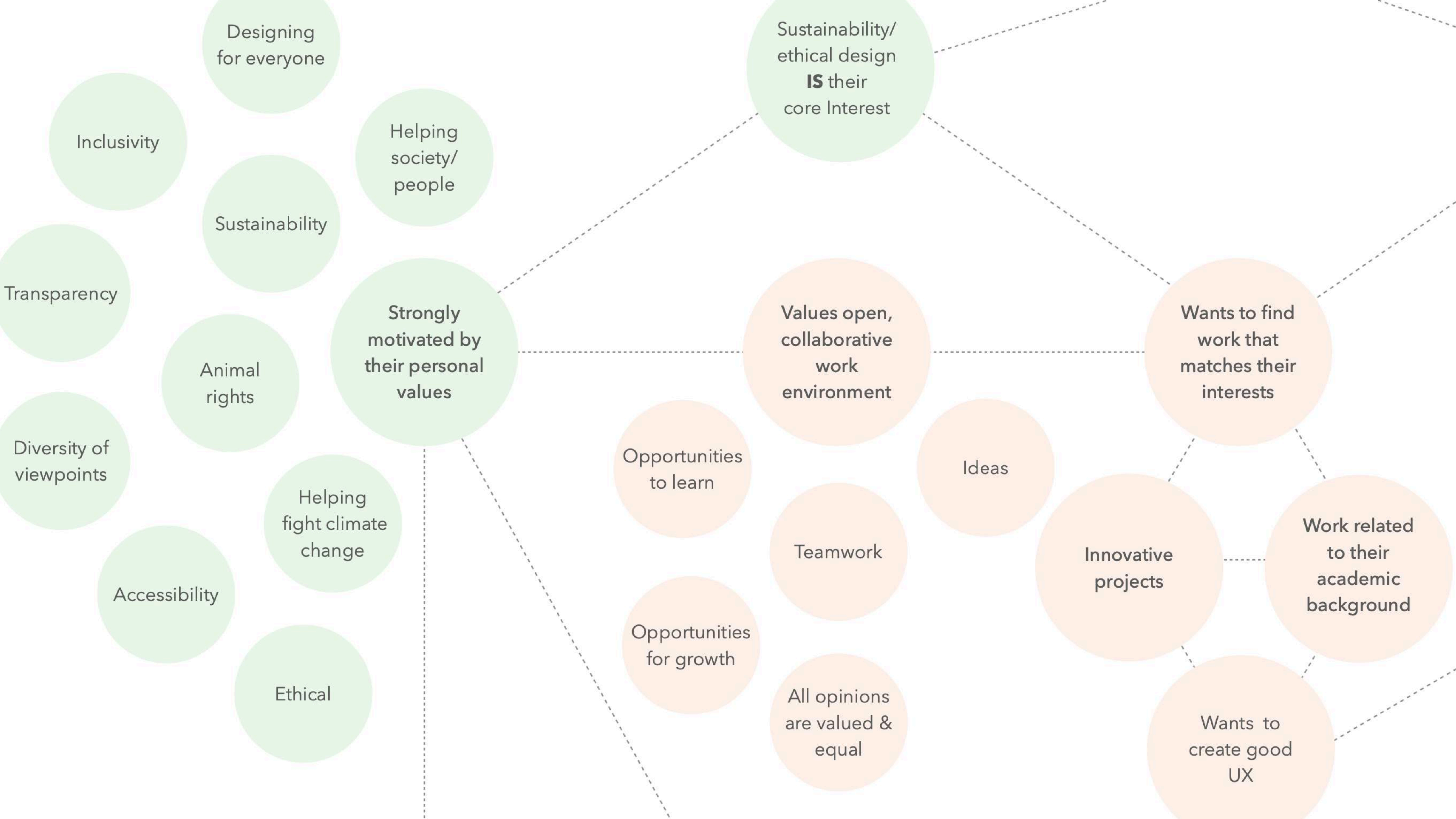
Overview

The aim of this team project is to address the challenge of what we can do to help designers create a cleaner, greener and more inclusive Internet.

At the outset of the project, we wanted to look at how we could integrate this mission with helping digital graduates gain professional experience. I conducted UX research to find out about graduates' job search expectations and current pain points so that we can provide relevant opportunities. I also assessed the level of interest in learning about sustainable digital design and found it to be strong.

The focus of our project then shifted to prioritising launching a live site featuring learning resources. Transferable insight from my research is coming into play here, both in terms of the functionality of the site and the content we present.

With the help of mind-mapping, I discovered different motivations for people wanting to learn about ethical design but a shared interest in practicing good UX and the value of collaboration. This will influence our marketing and the opportunities for professional experience that we will offer in the future.



About Creative Ethics

Creative Ethics is a non-profit venture that aims to provide a platform for digital designers to learn about and practice sustainable, inclusive and accessible web design.

The project was founded by Sophie Lépinoy with the aim of spreading knowledge about the pollution caused by the web and what designers can do about it. I joined to undertake UX and research work and since then we have expanded into a multi-disciplinary design team.

Project Details

Project Team:

- Project Management
- User Research
- UX Design
- UI Design and Branding
- Wordpress Web Development

My Role:

- User Research
- Project and Business Research
- Content Sourcing and Curation

Project duration:

Sep '20 - Ongoing



Defining the Problem

What can we do about the Internet's massive, largely unseen carbon footprint? The Internet is after all an essential, intrinsic part of our lives. Transferring to clean energy seems the most obvious solution. However, progress made in this direction is not at the same pace as the exponential growth in tech. For the foreseeable future, much of the world and the internet will continue to be powered by fossil fuels.

What could our project do to help create a more sustainable web?

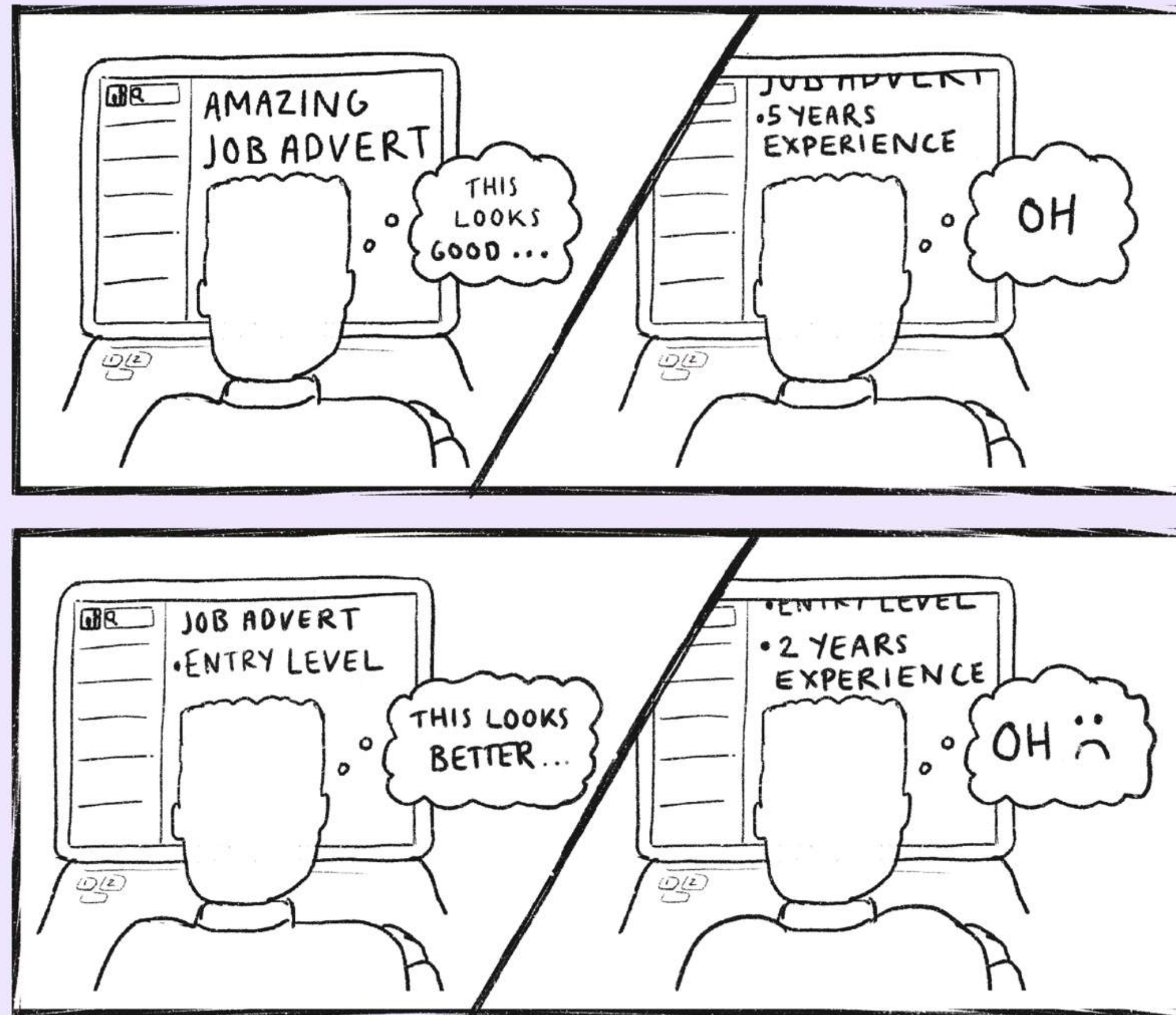
Expanding the Scope

Early project research highlighted that existing resources on sustainable web design were generally laser-focussed on the subject. However, our belief at Creative Ethics was that sustainability was part of a bigger picture in the quest for good web design. Helping ensure the Internet was as accessible and inclusive as possible was also equally important.



Our Challenge

- How can we help designers create a cleaner, greener and more inclusive Internet?



A Second Problem to Solve!

As a team we had firsthand experience of UX bootcamps as students or mentors and were aware that a common issue was gaining the experience required to land a first contract or job in the industry.

Was there a way that we could help graduates get professional experience while at the same time enabling them to learn about and practice sustainable, inclusive design?

Commencing User Research

To begin to explore how we could assist digital graduates with opportunities for project experience and learning, I conducted a series of user interviews.

This allowed me to delve into the potential needs and pain points of people who would use our platform. It was also a chance to get some feedback on our core theme of sustainable, accessible web design.

My Research Goals:

- To find out what UX/UI students/grads ideally want to do after graduation - what are their **expectations** when it comes to looking for work and placements?
- To find out about their **actual process** of finding a work/project opportunity after graduation.
- To find out what awareness was of sustainable UX and to gauge the **level of interest** in learning about sustainable and accessible design.

A Research Challenge

In asking about people's job search, there could be potentially sensitive questions.

For example, I needed to ask about **salary expectations** to get an idea of the level of projects we should be pitching to graduates on our platform.

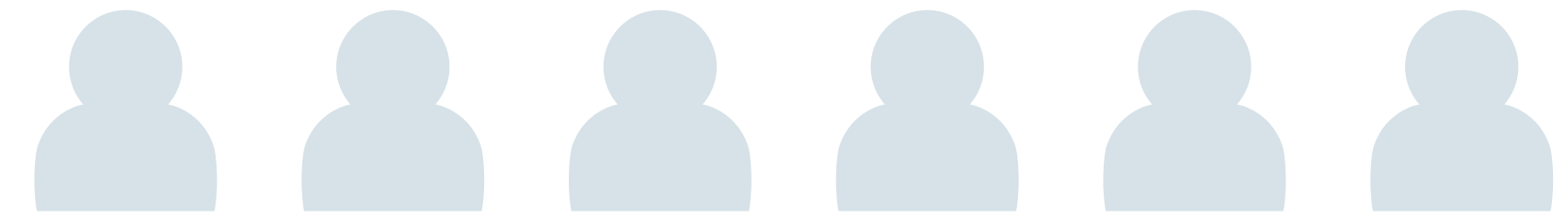
I assessed that all we really needed was a ball-park guide to salary expectations rather than specifics.

I formulated the question so that interviewees would not have to provide a figure and could feel as comfortable as possible in providing their answer:

"Regarding project pay, what would you say are your expectations in relation to salaries in your local area? - For example, would you expect equivalent to an internship, a junior designer, a mid level designer or a senior role?"

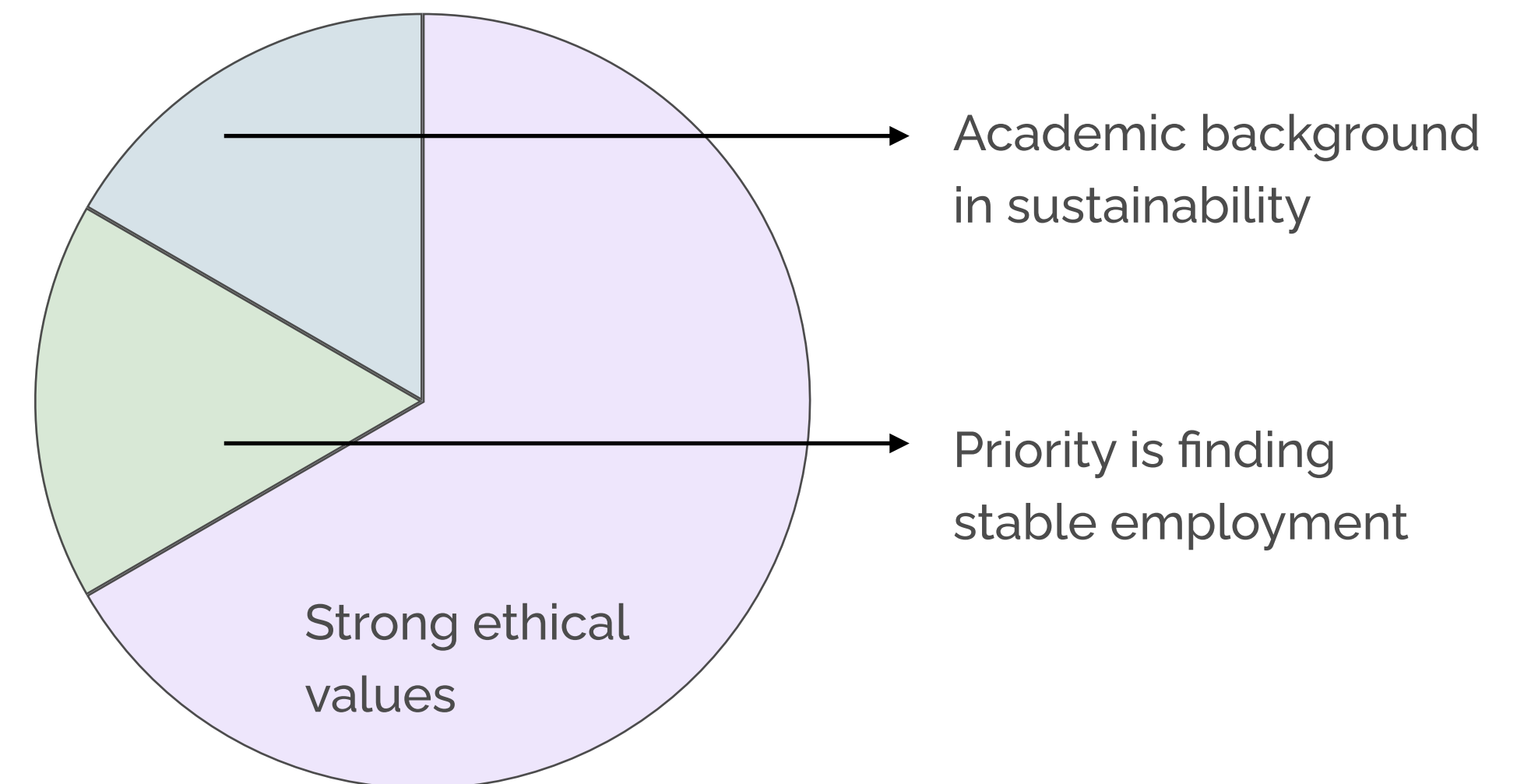
User Interview Insights

- When thinking about their ideal role, **alignment with personal values** was an important factor for the majority of interviewees, more so than securing work in a particular role or company
- Those who were motivated by ethical values spent a **large proportion of job search time researching companies** to check for alignment with their values
- There was **universal interest in practising sustainable, accessible design** but little awareness of the specifics of sustainable web design



6 remote user interviews conducted

- 4 recent UX/UI graduates (within 3 months)
- 1 longer term UX/UI graduate (6 months+)
- 1 current UX/UI student midway through course



Key motivators in participants' job searches

A Presentation Challenge

While interview participants had distinct motivations that guided their job search, there was also a lot of crossover in their needs.

I needed to find a simple way to help convey this nuance to the rest of the team. I found creating **mind maps** helped the **team discover connections** between our different types of potential users. It also showed the different reasoning behind interviewees' shared interest in wanting to practice sustainable, accessible design.




Next Steps

Simultaneous to carrying out this research, we decided as a team to prioritise launching a live website. This would provide a place to start sharing knowledge about sustainable web design as well as providing credible background to our venture for potential project hosts.

Using information gathered in my research, I was able to create a primary **proto-persona** to provide a starting point for exploring design ideas for the site.



Julia: The Learner



- Career Changer, moving from teaching into UX/UI
- University Degree plus UX/UI Bootcamp Certification

Interests and Behaviour

Interests:

- **Passionate about sustainability and ethics**
- Interested in **social and environmental causes**
- In relation to design, they place importance on **inclusivity and accessibility**, particularly diversity of viewpoints at the design stage and the need to design for everyone, not just one section of society

Behaviour:

- **Motivated by a strong set of personal values** centred on the above
- Reads a lot and is **interested in seeking out information online** in the form of blog posts, articles, videos and design tools/resources
- Engages in **collaboration and mutual support among designers**, sharing ideas, knowledge and resources

Needs and Pain Points

Needs:

- Wants to **learn more about sustainable UX/ UI and accessibility** with a view to implementing learnings in their own design practice
- Wants to find **real world projects** to gain hands-on experience
- Wants to **collaborate** and share with other designers

Pain Points:

- **Finding information on sustainable UX** is difficult
- Accessibility guidelines can be overwhelming
- Overall, **information on both subjects is often not easily digestible**
- **A lot of time, energy and effort is required to find opportunities and learning resources that align with their interests**
- Search functions without filters

Potential Solutions

Information that's Findable, Bitesize and Actionable

- High level checklists that designers can easily action and which will provide a structured overview of what they need to do to make their work sustainable and accessible
- Curated links to videos, Infographics, and short blog posts - e.g. Medium articles rather than lengthy reports
- Search feature with option to filter by area of interest and keywords

Opportunities for Site Viewers to Collaborate and Network

- A 'Get Involved' links section alongside articles or resources so viewers can further explore related projects/groups/organisations
- Developing a social media community in tandem with the website where people can discuss and share ideas and resources; the website could then feature opportunities and material created by the community

Incorporating my Research

The current focus of our website is to provide resources for learning about sustainable, accessible and inclusive web design.

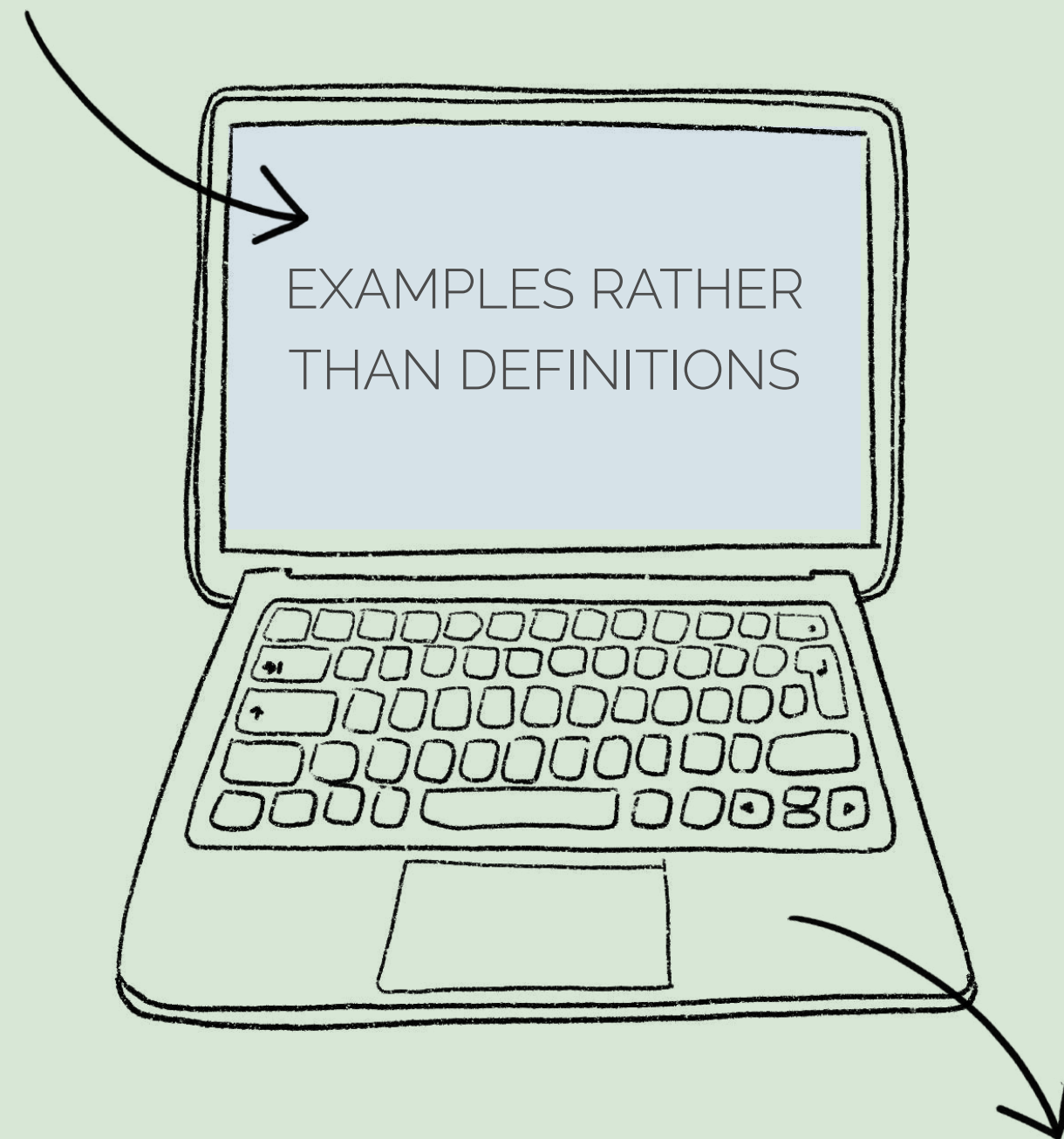
The project is still ongoing but here are some ways my research is influencing our site's design and content so far...

Alignment with ethical values is important to our audience and they invest time and effort in research.



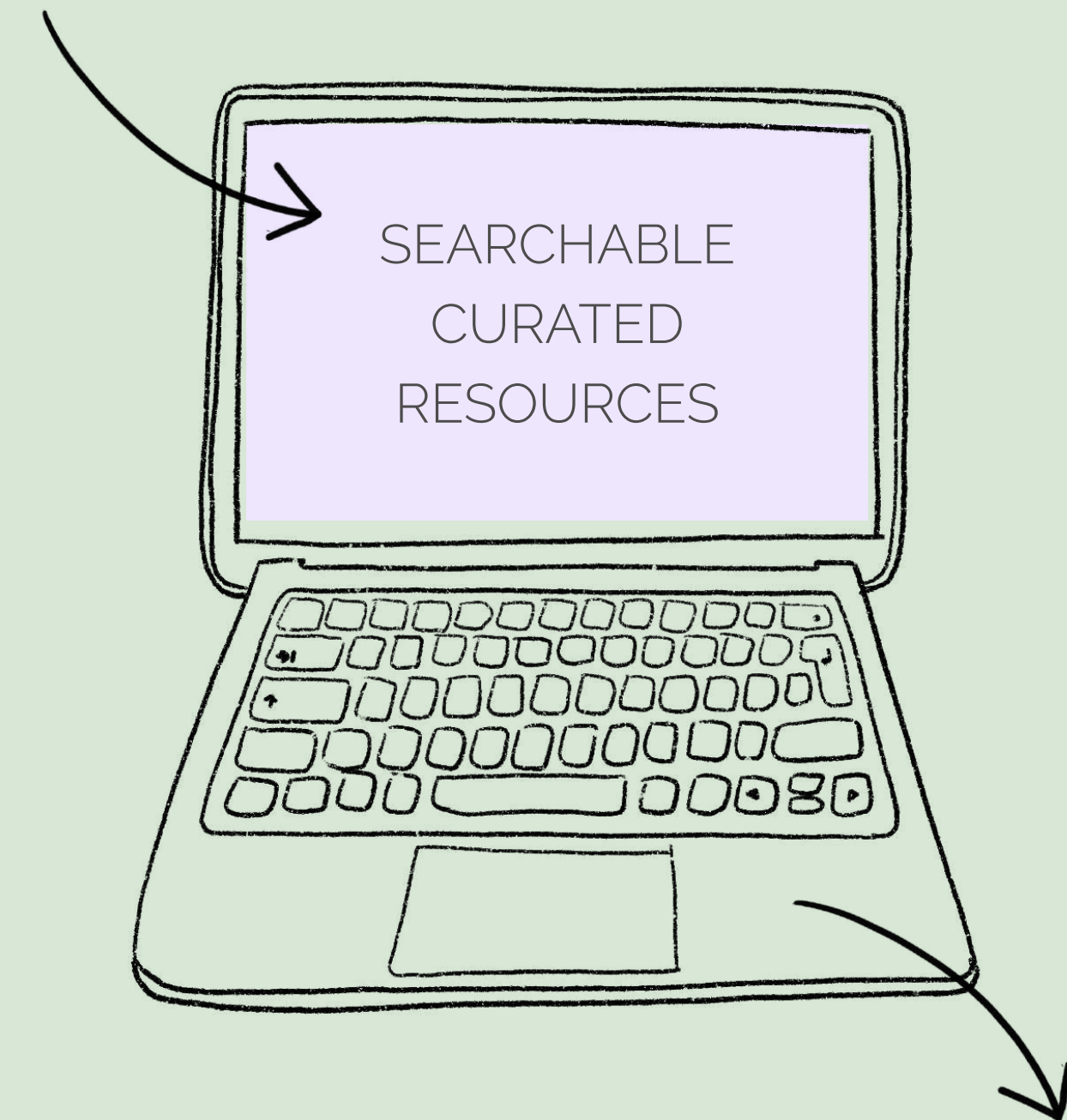
★ By clearly identifying our values, we can build trust in our site and in the 3rd party resources and opportunities we provide, **saving our audience time and energy.**

There is strong interest in learning about sustainable web design practices but **there was confusion around the meaning of our original term 'Sustainable UX'**



★ A first solution was to include a definition of the term 'Sustainable UX'; however testing showed users found this complicated. Instead **we are favouring examples that demonstrate sustainable web design practices.**

A key difficulty is finding information online relating to **sustainable web design**. Also, a common frustration is being unable to filter searches to match interests.



★ We are creating a library of curated links, aiming for a one-stop location for resources on ethical design. This will include a strong filterable search function. **Our users will gain time for learning rather than searching.**

What's Next?

Moving forward, my research will come into play when we market the site as well as in future plans to create learning tools.

Referring back to the mind map, we will need awareness that **our audience may have different starting points for wanting to learn** about sustainable, ethical design.

We can also see that **collaboration is a shared ideal**. We can work towards **building a community around our mission** for a greener, more inclusive Internet, providing opportunities for teamwork and for our audience to learn from each other.



Reflections

This project has built up my experience of **collaborative design**. A particular learning has been how to **optimise sharing research findings**. I will definitely look to creating visual tools like mind maps again as this helped efficiently explain nuances and facilitated team involvement.

I've also learnt about the need for **adaptability**. For example, when project focus shifted from helping graduates find opportunities to designing a live site, I was able to **promote user needs by drawing on transferable insight** from my research.

Beyond the Project

- On a personal level, this project has been an opportunity to broaden my horizons on what it means to practice **sustainable, inclusive design**. I am now researching ways to improve the accessibility and efficiency of my [portfolio website](#).

