

Conversational Artefacts

Critical design and exhibition
as tools for creative research

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alvin Tang". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'g'.

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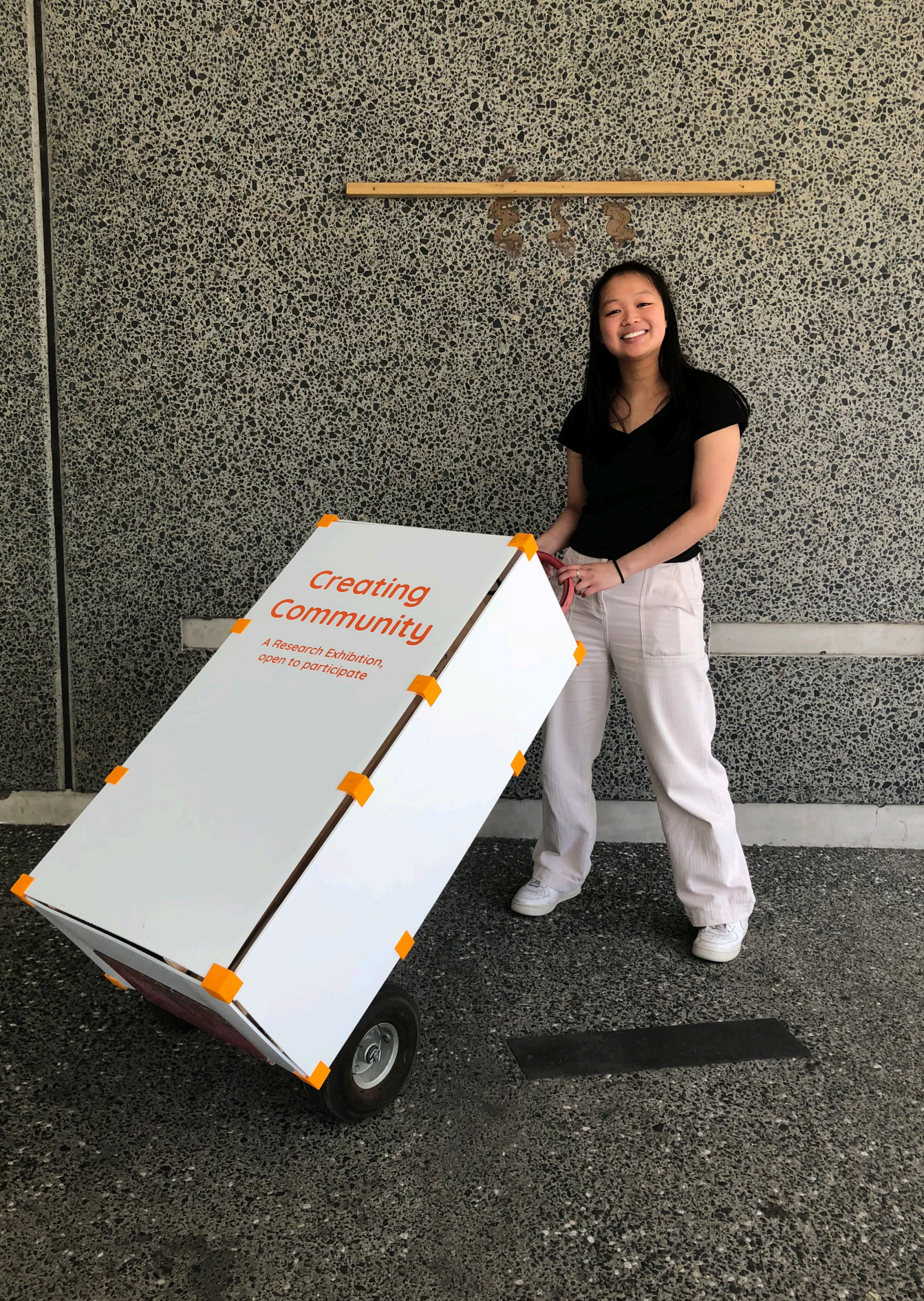
Abstract

This design-led research explored how critical design and public exhibition can be incorporated into a qualitative creative research method inquiring how people in Auckland City conceptualised community. Past literature has acknowledged the ability of physical objects and creative methods in research to activate different lines of thinking and elicit thoughtful and in-depth responses from participants that may not have arisen through traditional interviewing.

Critical design is an approach where outcomes stimulate reflection amongst participants. In this research, this approach was employed to inform the design of critical artefacts – objects that have no utilitarian function but are intended to start conversation. The critical artefacts were then displayed at pop-up exhibitions in public spaces where members of the public were invited to share their thoughts on community through talking about the artefacts. Responses collected as data at each exhibition informed future artefacts, which were exhibited again in an iterative cycle.

This research was an example of how design tools such as critical design and exhibition could be shifted into a research space and adapted for qualitative research. Responses to the exhibitions demonstrated the value in using critical artefacts in qualitative research methods to explore complex topics such as community. The artefacts allowed participants to share personal thoughts and experiences in a non-confronting manner and helped navigate conversation about what can be an overwhelming concept.

01. Introduction



Positioning the Researcher

Over the course of my undergraduate studies in product design, I developed an interest in critical design, conceptual art, and speculative design. Throughout my minor, Temporary Practices, I was introduced to a different pathway of thinking that existed beyond the physical properties of products. I found myself drawn to work that would leave me contemplating about its discourse long after I encountered it. I was inspired by the ability of critical and speculative design to stimulate thought and debate that might influence human behaviour.

In 2019, I explored using speculative design in my graduate project. Inspired by Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby's approach to speculative design, I designed artefacts that illustrated a future where trees could no longer survive on Earth, but humanity had developed an artificial atmosphere that could sustain human life. The objects facilitated interactions with a preserved tree, protecting it from the destruction of humans and fragmenting the user's experience of being near nature.

Alongside my interest in critical and speculative design exists a curiosity aimed at both conscious and unconscious exchanges between people. Interaction and participation excite me and align with my product design background that heavily focused on design for people. Exhibition as a medium to present critical design to the community, and community as an investigative vehicle fell naturally alongside my own experience and interests.

Figure 1. Cassie Khoo, *Moving exhibition*, 2020, photograph, Auckland.

Positioning the Project

This project was a synthesis of three explorations; critical design, exhibition, and community; combined into a proposed research method. I wanted to explore a form of critical design that could exist outside of the gallery and within the community. The nature of critical design as a tool to stimulate debate means that it requires an audience – the community who are invited to engage through exhibition.

Critical design is more recently finding its way into design research as an approach to create discussion amongst participants or audiences. Matt Malpass discusses the use of critical design to “enable us to understand matters more immediately than abstract theories”¹. By projecting into the near (or far) future, critical design creates a space for audiences and participants to discuss the implications of future technological or cultural shifts. Ramia Mazé and Johan Redström incorporate critical design into their design research, stating that, “a shared aim of critical design and design research is not simplification but diversification of the ways in which we might understand design problems, ideas, and boundaries”². Critical design and design research both aim to provoke thinking and explore new possibilities, making them a natural combination in this research.

Critical design and critical artefacts can be powerful tools to generate conversation around abstract topics – especially those that venture into difficult themes³ such as exclusion, stigmatisation, and privilege. Critical design can become a facilitator for difficult discussion, or a window into the narrative of an alternate world. As a catalyst for discussion, critical design asks, “how can we do this differently?” It disrupts our ‘known’ world, giving a consciousness to what we currently unconsciously accept so that we might look at our present—and future—from a different perspective.⁴

This research explored the efficacy of critical design and exhibition as research tools to generate discussion and collect qualitative data around what community means to people in Auckland City. Through this research, I addressed the following research question: “How can critical design tools be incorporated into a public exhibition as conversational artefacts, in order to engage the wider Auckland City community in discussions about community in the city?”.

Throughout this iterative process I designed and fabricated a series of critical design artefacts inspired by themes related to community that I was interested in. I exhibited these in pop-up, public spaces in various locations throughout the city, inviting members of the public to share their responses to the objects and the narratives that they proposed. These responses then served as inspiration and a guide to the direction of a subsequent exhibition.

While I am not trying to propose a problem or a solution to any situation, I think that it is important that we constantly reflect on how we currently exist, and how we want to move forward. It is undeniable that the way we live has changed over the last 50 years, some changes being welcome, and others less so. This research creates a framework for a method that could be adopted to facilitate discussion on various complex topics in multiple contexts.

¹Matt Malpass *Critical Design in Context: History, Theory and Practices* (London: Bloomsbury Academic), Theoretical perspectives and methods of engagement, 478, Bloomsbury Design Library.

²Ramia Mazé and Johan Redström, “Difficult Forms: Critical practices of design,” *Research Design Journal* 1 (2007): 35. Retrieved from <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:ri:diva-23540>

³Paul Chamberlain and Claire Craig, “Engagingdesign: Methods for collective creativity,” International Conference on Human-Computer Interaction (2013). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-39232-0_3

⁴Anthony Dunne, *Hertzian Tales* 2005 ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005)

02. Contextual Review

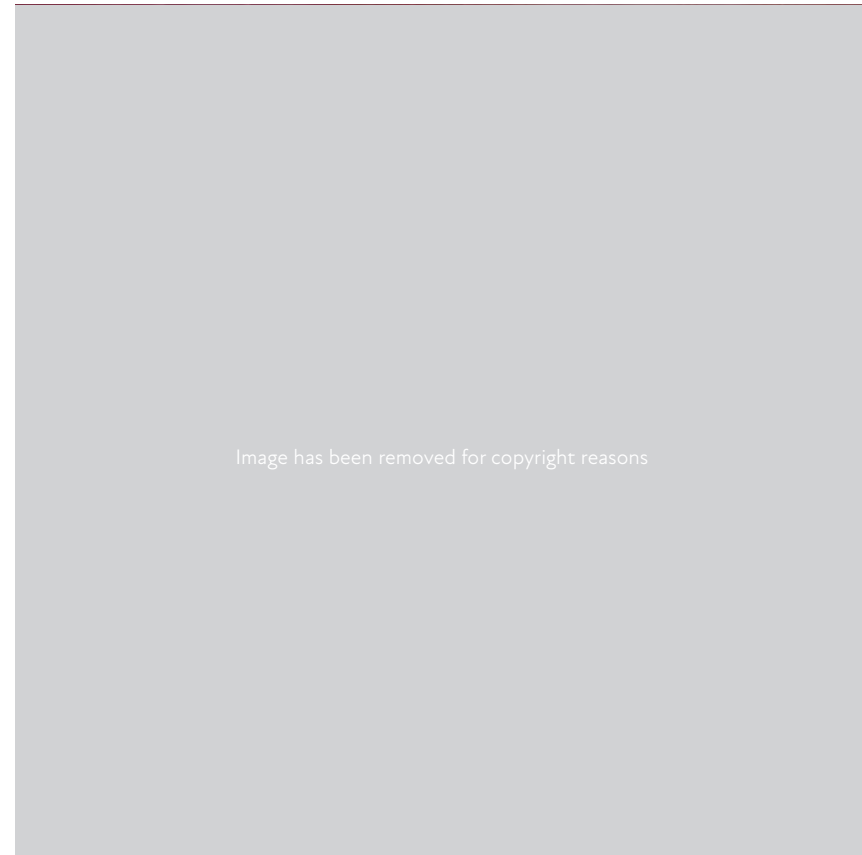


Figure 2. Bill Gaver, Tony Dunne, and Elena Pacenti. Cultural Probe Package, 1999. <https://doi.org/10.1145/291224.291235>

Objects in research

Injecting design methods into qualitative social science research creates the potential for richer, lateral participant responses that may have been unexpected by the researcher.⁵ Physical objects (or artefacts) and interactions with physical objects are used by researchers to stimulate thinking amongst participants. Finnish design professor, Maarit Mäkelä, argues for the recognition of art and making as research, stating that, “artefacts present themselves as mute objects which do not reveal their stories until interpreted”⁶. When presented as vehicles for thought, objects – becoming artefacts – are tools for articulating meaningful responses to a prompt. These objects can take the form of probes, critical artefacts, or other tools for thought.

Bill Gaver, Tony Dunne (Anthony Dunne), and Elena Pacenti designed cultural probes for collecting data in their 1997 research to understand the needs and desires of elderly people in three different European towns.⁷ The research team distributed packages of these cultural probes to the elderly participants. The probes contained different activities for the participants to complete and send back to the researchers. The materials in the package included: a map with a list of places to circle – such as a place to meet people, and a place to be alone, a disposable camera, and a set of post cards with prompts such as “what do you like about your city?”. Having physical materials and activities to work with engaged multiple senses and prompted a more thoughtful response than if these questions were asked using a ‘traditional’ form of qualitative data collection such as an interview.

Gaver, Dunne, and Pacenti state that they “didn’t want to constrain [their future] designs unduly by focusing on needs or desires they already understood”⁸ — the cultural probes were a vehicle to expose the participants’ needs or desires that they were not consciously aware of. UK-based designer Simon Bowen refers to these as “latent needs”⁹. The researchers expressed that, rather than trying to identify problems to solve, the cultural probes were intended to create an understanding of the local area and a deeper insight into the participants’ lives. The researchers frame themselves as “provocateurs” and the probes as “interventions” that “affect the elders while eliciting informative responses from them.”¹⁰ By avoiding direct questioning when asking for participants’ responses, the researchers were able to capture participants’ thoughts about their daily lives during their daily lives, rather than in a removed interview situation.

⁵ Jayne Wallace et al., “A design-led inquiry into personhood in dementia,” *Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on human factors in computing systems* (2013). <https://doi.org/10.1145/2470654.2481363>

⁶ Maarit Mäkelä, “Knowing Through Making: The Role of the Artefact in Practise-Based Research,” *Nordes* 1 (2005): 6. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12130-007-9028-2>

⁷ Bill Gaver, Tony Dunne and Elena Pacenti, “Design: cultural probes,” *Interactions* 6 (1999). <https://doi.org/10.1145/291224.291235>

⁸ *Ibid*, 22

⁹ Simon Bowen refers to latent needs as needs that the user may be unaware of or unable to recognise but elevate a product when met. Simon Bowen, “A critical artefact methodology: using provocative conceptual designs to foster human-centred innovation” (doctoral thesis, Sheffield Hallam University, 2009): 30. <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/id/eprint/3216>

¹⁰ Gaver Dunne, and Pacenti, 25

Similarly, British design researchers, led by Jayne Wallace, used design artefacts to explore personhood amongst dementia patients.¹¹ They collaborated with a woman living with dementia to gain knowledge about her lived experience. Throughout a series of interview and discussion sessions in her home, the researchers deployed design probes (interactive artefacts) that prompted the woman and her husband to identify and reflect on memories that were significant to her sense of personhood. For example, one of these probes was a preserve jar, which prompted the individual to identify something (such as a moment, song, or smell) that they wanted to capture and keep. The probes became “conversational instruments” that allowed the woman to talk through her experiences with the aid of the object to stimulate thinking. The ambiguous nature of these objects also gave agency to the woman to direct the conversation – there was no right or wrong answer, and she was able to decide what topics to speak about.

The probes unexpectedly revealed that the woman could recall much more than initially expected, highlighting the potential of objects and activities to activate deeper thinking and elicit a different response to regular interviewing techniques. This research is an example of how “certain forms of making can be powerful ways to understanding,”¹² especially when exploring complex topics such as personhood and dementia.

Wallace’s and Gaver’s probes reveal a great depth of insight into the lived experience of their respective participant groups, creating an understanding of the stakeholder or user group before identifying or solving any ‘problems’. Despite this, both sets of probes require a high level of engagement and each ‘package’ can only be used by one party. This results in the need for recruitment of participants, and resources to create multiple probe packages (even if they are relatively low-cost). Helen Cunningham’s market sessions in her research on Continuous Positive Air Pressure (CPAP) therapy masks overcomes this barrier.¹³ Cunningham set up multiple market stall exhibitions displaying critical design probes – CPAP masks with slight modifications that replaced some parts of the mask with household items such as a flower pot and hose, intended on removing the medical discourse usually associated with CPAP masks. She invited market attendees to participate in her research by sharing their thoughts on CPAP masks, through talking about the probes displayed and matching them to emoticons to express their feelings in a simple way. Participation in Cunningham’s research was primarily through conversation, which meant people were able to control how long they spent participating and end their involvement by walking away from the stall. The probes were also used as artefacts for display, rather than activities, which meant Cunningham was able to reuse these at each stall.

¹¹ Wallace et al.

¹² Ibid, 2625

¹³ Helen Cunningham, “Discourse and Design of CPAP Therapy Masks for OSA: Applying Foucault to Product Design Research” (doctoral thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2020): 92. <http://hdl.handle.net/10292/13139>

Critical Design and Critical Theory

“The critical–ideological paradigm is one of emancipation and transformation, one in which the researcher’s proactive values are central to the task, purpose, and methods of research.”¹⁴

Critical theory was founded by scholars at the Frankfurt School. At its core, critical theory believes that lived experience is influenced by bodies of power and it is the role of critical theorists to help emancipate oppressed groups through dialectic discussion.¹⁵ Critical theory approaches the world through an egalitarianist, democratic lens. Ponteretto states that “a criticalist is a researcher who uses his or her work as a form of cultural or social criticism.”¹⁶ Critical theory was a foundation for Anthony Dunne’s critical design.¹⁷

In this inquiry, I used a critical design approach to designing artefacts as tools for thought. Critical design refers to a design approach, originating but diverging from Industrial design practice. Rather than creating objects for the market and consumption, critical design objects often exist to stimulate debate, provoke audiences, and create discussion. The term ‘critical design’ was first coined by Anthony Dunne in his book, *Hertzian Tales*¹⁸, where he expressed concern around the seemingly blind acceptance of electromagnetic objects into society. He believed that by accepting these objects, society also blindly accept their attached values and principles that prioritised optimisation and efficiency.

Critical design primarily sets itself apart from traditional industrial design through its perceived ‘lack of function’—Dunne refers to this as ‘para-functionality’. In *Hertzian Tales*, Dunne introduces the terms ‘post-optimal’ and ‘para-functional’. Post-optimisation refers to design ambitions that are no longer focused on efficiency and optimisation – or creating a seamlessness between user and product – but integrate aesthetics and poetry that create ‘para-functionality’; “design [that is] within the realms of utility but attempts to go beyond conventional definitions of functionalism to include the poetic.”¹⁹ This is achieved through disrupting the seamless interaction between human and object and creating a ‘user-unfriendliness’ that in turn creates a consciousness that allows for provocation. Design researcher Simon Bowen explains that “conceptual [and critical] designs afford²⁰ critical reflection.”²¹

¹⁴ Joseph Ponterotto, “Qualitative research in counseling psychology: A primer on research paradigms and philosophy of science” *Journal of counselling psychology* 52 no. 2 (2005): 129. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.126>

¹⁵ Ibid: 130

¹⁶ Ibid: 130

¹⁷ Shaowen Bardzell et al. “Critical design and critical theory: The challenge of designing for provocation,” *Proceedings of the Designing Interactive Systems Conference (2012)*: 289. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2317956.2318001>

¹⁸ Dunne, “Hertzian Tales”

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Donald Norman uses the term “affordance” to refer “to the relationship between a physical object and a person.” The affordance between an object and its user determines how the object is used. Donald Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things: Revised and Expanded Edition* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2013), 11. ProQuest Ebook Central.

²¹ Bowen, “A critical artefact methodology,” 99

While traditional industrial design creates objects that assist in everyday life, critical design gives us tools to question the objects we consume and how they reflect and influence the culture they are situated in. Anthony Dunne's *Faraday Chair* (1999) is designed in an age where digital products were becoming more popular and accepted into society. The *Faraday Chair* (see Fig 3) is a secure box where a person might seek refuge from electromagnetic radiation emitted from these products.²² Though it originally reflected the wariness amongst people at the time, the questions asked by this object are still valid today, where society's relationship with digital technology is even more complex and intertwined.

In their more recent work, Dunne and his partner, Fiona Raby, engage in future-focused, speculative concepts visualising the possibilities of technology when it is "decoupled" from the marketplace.²³ They explore the social, cultural, and ethical implications of a technologically embedded society through absurd, but believable future scenarios. *Between Reality and the Impossible* (2010) is a set of future possibilities using speculative technologies to represent future society. One such technology is shown through *Foragers*, presenting a world running out of food, where people have created their own synthetic biological devices that extract nutrients from non-human food. This scenario questions the direction our growing population and apathy towards climate change will take us, creating a space for discussion around what can be done to avoid, or adapt to such a future. This future world is an unlikely possibility, yet communicates themes and discussion points that are relevant to the world that we currently live in. As criticalists, Dunne and Raby bring attention to issues for audiences to discuss.

Critical theory has a reputation for being elitist.²⁴ Critical theorists often claim to be working towards an 'ideal' world – but the 'ideal' world is a subjective concept. Political philosopher, Raymond Guess' critical theory also recognises that some of the 'oppressed' may not realise they are oppressed. It is then the role of the critical theorist to emancipate 'the masses,' deciding that they 'know better'²⁵. Critical theorists and critical designers inevitably insert their own values into their work, which resists the democracy they claim to be working towards. Bowen explains that by using critical artefacts as part of a research process, "the 'better world' they imply is a tool for opening up the design space, and the artefacts subsequently reflect needs users agree as relevant."²⁶ Using a critical design approach in participatory research reopens a dialectic space for discussing issues with those directly affected by them.



Figure 3. Lubna Hammoud, *Faraday Chair*, photograph, 1999. Retrieved from <http://dunneandraby.co.uk/content/projects/67/0>
Reprinted with permission of Anthony Dunne

²² Dunne, "Hertzian Tales"

²³ Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 162

²⁴ Simon Bowen, "Critical theory and participatory design," *Proceedings of CHI* (2010): 4. Retrieved from <https://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/events/experiencingcriticaltheory/Bowen-ParticipatoryDesign.pdf>

²⁵ *Ibid*, 5

²⁶ *Ibid*, 5



Figure 4. Paul Chamberlain and Claire Craig, *Engagingaging*, 2013. Retrieved from <http://lab4living.org.uk>
Reprinted with permission of Paul Chamberlain

British design researchers Paul Chamberlain and Claire Craig use a critical design approach alongside co-design²⁷ methods in their *Engagingdesign* research²⁸ to inform artefacts that express everyday challenges as an older person. The research involved a set of semi-structured interviews with older people to gain an understanding of the problems that nearly all people will eventually face, such as declining health, loss of control and comfort, and mortality. These interviews informed the design of the critical artefacts, which were then used as central prompts for conversation and discussion about ageing. In this research, the ‘oppressed’ older people directed the inquiry and were positioned as experts of their own experience, overcoming elitism concerns associated with critical theory.

While Dunne and Raby’s work leans towards a future-focused, speculative direction, Chamberlain and Craig use metaphor to give form to the current social issues experienced and shared by participants in their research. Their *Stigmas* exhibition (part of their *Engagingdesign* research) showcased a series of furniture with slight modifications representing experiences of older people, which Chamberlain and Craig refer to as critical artefacts. The researchers describe critical artefacts as tools “to pose questions and promote discussion to gain rich, in-depth data.”²⁹ While Chamberlain and Craig do not explicitly state that their objects were critical design, they describe their function as “considered questions informed by data...as prompts and a theatre for conversation.” This aligns with Dunne and Raby’s description and purpose of critical design and demonstrates a different ‘type’ of critical artefact.

²⁷ Sanders and Stappers refer to co-design as designers and non-designers working together towards a design solution. Elizabeth Sanders and Pieter Stappers, “Co-creation and the new landscapes of design,” *Co-design* 4 no. 1 (2008): 6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15710880701875068>

²⁸ Chamberlain and Craig, “Engagingdesign”

²⁹ *Ibid*, 25

Moving towards designing products for the market, Simon Bowen applies critical design principles to a Critical Artefact Methodology, where he uses critical artefacts as research tools during stakeholder interviews to encourage deeper thinking and expose latent needs.³⁰ Exploring user needs for storing digital photographs, Bowen presents his interviewees with speculative products that explore aspects of photograph storage. For example, the *Forget Me Not Frame* (Fig. 4), is a digital photo frame that will slowly fade out a person's image over time, indicated by a lever on the side. Users are required to periodically raise the lever to prevent the photo from disappearing but can also erase people from photographs by intentionally pushing the lever down. The object allowed Bowen to explore complex social situations and relationships in photographs and create discussion around the implications of this object if it existed. Like Gaver and Wallace's design probes, the critical artefacts that Bowen presents are not outcomes themselves, but tools for research that inform the design of a 'functional' product.

Both Bowen's Critical Artefact Methodology and Chamberlain and Craig's critical artefacts explore the use of critical design as a tool for research, giving critical design objects a role beyond exhibition artefacts where debate and discussion is the outcome. Dunne and Raby use physical objects to illustrate a "possible"³¹ future world, Bowen's objects offer radical interventions to everyday problems that allow participants to discuss the implications of the solution, and Chamberlain and Craig create metaphorical representations through products to offer a different perspective and create conversation around everyday life as an older person. This research incorporates all three approaches into designed artefacts, exploring the public response to each 'type' of artefact.



Figure 5. Simon Bowen, *Forget Me Not Frame*, 2007. Retrieved from <http://www.simon-bowen.com/downloads/research/crazyIdeas.pdf>
Reprinted with permission of Simon Bowen

³⁰ Simon Bowen, "Crazy ideas or creative probes: Presenting critical artefacts to stakeholders to develop innovative product ideas," Proceedings of EAD07: Dancing with Disorder: Design, Discourse and Disaster (2007). Retrieved from <http://www.simon-bowen.com/downloads/research/crazyIdeas.pdf>

³¹ This term is derived from Dunne and Raby's (probable, plausible, possible, preferable) PPPP future cones that visualise the design space of speculative design (possible) in relation to "where most designers operate" (probable). See Appendix x. Dunne and Raby, "Speculative Everything"

Exhibition for Data Collection

Critical design requires an audience to facilitate conversation and debate—most commonly, this audience is generated using exhibition as a medium to disseminate work or research. To collect data in this research, I publicly exhibited my own critical artefacts, which were probes for data collection. The exhibition context helped frame critical artefacts as non-utilitarian objects to provoke discussion and thought.

Paul Chamberlain and Alaster Yoxall challenge the common conception of an exhibition in their *Future Bathroom* research, framing their exhibitions as a designer's 'field-lab'.³² Chamberlain and Yoxall “propose that research can be conducted through exhibition itself”³³ through simultaneously disseminating research and gathering data through reactions and responses to the work displayed. *Future Bathroom* presented various bathroom situations and products in a maze-like journey where audiences were able to respond and provide feedback through writing on walls or ‘voting’ on proposed products or situations. Chamberlain and Craig’s *Stigmas* exhibition³⁴ used exhibition in a similar way, though they presented critical artefacts rather than functional products. They held exhibitions in the UK and Taiwan, inviting people to view the work and participate in workshops that brought together older people, families, designers, and carers. While there were not any interactive ‘stations’ set up in the same way as *Future Bathroom*, *Stigmas* was also a site for research through workshops that were primarily based on the response to the artefacts.³⁵ Both inquiries position exhibition as a tool to progress research, instead of an end-point where research is disseminated.

Cunningham’s CPAP research market sessions with CPAP mask probes also used exhibition to reach participants in the community³⁶. Conversation was used to facilitate other physical interactions and collect responses. For example, participants were asked to match emoticons and statements related to CPAP masks to a designed probe, talking the researcher through their decisions. Prototyping material such as pens and post-it notes were also available for people to physically articulate their own ideas. By adopting the field-lab at a smaller scale, Cunningham was able to be present for conversations that revealed insights into public opinion on CPAP masks. These interactions are different to *Future Bathroom*, and exist at smaller scale, but still generate data to propel research forward.



Figure 6. Paul Chamberlain and Alaster Yoxall, *Future Bathroom*, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175630612X13192035508543>
Reprinted with permission of Paul Chamberlain

³² Chamberlain and Yoxall describe a 'field lab' exhibition as “a vehicle which creates opportunities for gatherings to prompt discourse and encourage visitors to engage in ‘experiments’ in a simulated field environment,” combining the idea of site-based ‘field experiments’ with the control of ‘laboratory experiments’ created by the context of the exhibition. Paul Chamberlain and Alaster Yoxall, “Of Mice and Men: The Role of Interactive Exhibitions as Research Tools for Inclusive Design,” *The Design Journal* 15 no. 1 (2012): 59. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175630612X13192035508543>

³³ Ibid, 59

³⁴ Chamberlain and Craig, “Engagingdesign,” 25

³⁵ Ibid, 25

³⁶ Cunningham, 97

Chamberlain and Yoxall state that exhibition for research with audiences allows for a broadened demographic of participants and can subvert unintentional biases or discrimination when recruiting participants.³⁷ While I agree with this, exhibition in gallery spaces as a research method creates other exclusionary forces. Participants in both *Future Bathroom* and *Stigmas* were recruited in advance and had to have the ability to access the galleries in person. Chamberlain and Craig acknowledge these accessibility issues in their *Engagingdesign* research. Subsequently, they made their field-lab research more accessible through the portable ‘*Exhibition in a Box*,’³⁸ where a series of critical artefacts are brought to elderly participants’ homes for researchers to discuss the objects with them. However, this method was still only used with participants recruited in advance. Situating my data collection in public, pop-up exhibitions, made the research accessible to the wider pool of participants, in a way that non-discriminately invited all people in the city.

Another limitation of *Future Bathroom* and *Stigmas* as vehicles for research is the logistical difficulty in setting up these events. Both exhibitions require a large amount of resources resulting in high cost and working partnerships with galleries or other event spaces, which can limit the length and the frequency of these data collection events. Within the scope of a master’s project and on my full-time student budget, I aimed to subvert these barriers, taking inspiration from *Exhibition in a Box* and Cunningham’s market exhibitions to create a cost-effective, small-scale, portable, pop-up exhibition.

³⁷ Chamberlain and Yoxall, “Of Mice and Men,” 66

³⁸ Chamberlain and Craig, “Engagingdesign,” 26

Community

This research used the complex, abstract topic of community as a vehicle to explore the efficacy of critical design and exhibition as creative methods for data collection. Community is interlinked with a sense of belonging—a human need ranked in the middle of Maslow’s motivational hierarchy.³⁹ In their 1995 review of the human motivation and need to belong, Baumeister and Leary formalise this need through their ‘belonging hypothesis,’ outlining that human beings have a “pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships”.⁴⁰ In this review, they cite evolutionary evidence that it was advantageous for prehistoric humans to create community for survival⁴¹ —it is universally recognised that community is important for humanity; however, it is still considered an abstract and difficult concept to explain.

In his 2008 book, *Community: The Structure of Belonging*, Peter Block laments the increasing isolation and individualistic narrative that permeates our culture today.⁴² His writing is a call to action to create ‘authentic communities,’ believing that a transformation of our current community is required. Critical design as a vehicle for problem finding aims to help identify themes and ways that people feel belonging to a community. Participant responses might later contribute to an updated belonging hypothesis or formalise opportunities for creating community in the future.

Auckland has an ever-growing, multicultural population that means the social landscape of the city is continuously shifting. Its population is forecast to increase by 48% to 2.3 million by 2048⁴³ —with this change in the number of people living in Auckland, we can also expect changes in the way people relate to the city and its residents. Exploring the thoughts and perspectives of people in Auckland towards the city community creates moments of consciousness to reflect on what they feel is important to them and what they want from their community.

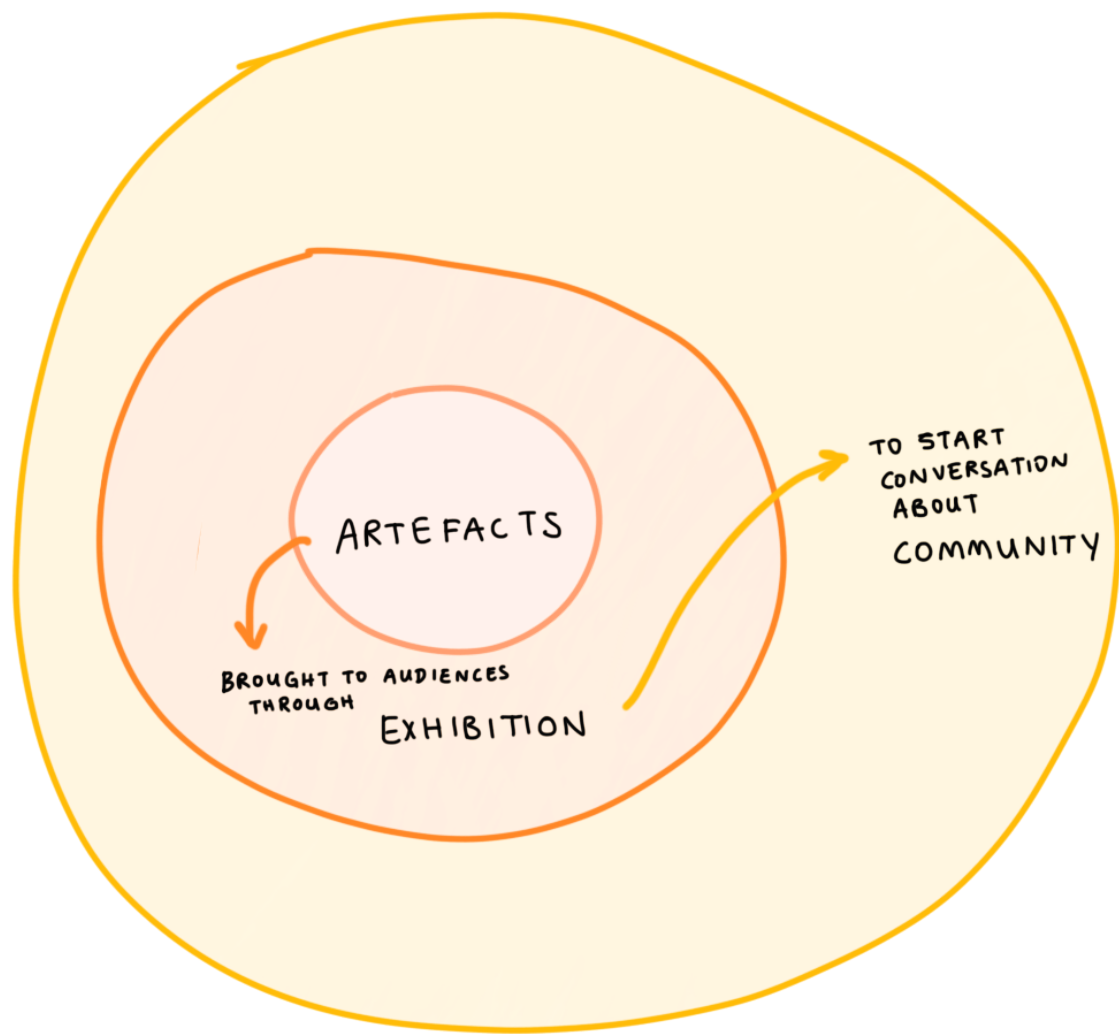
³⁹ Roy F. Baumeister and Mark R. Leary, “The need to belong: desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation,” *Psychological bulletin* 117 no. 3 (1995): 497. Retrieved from <https://dlwqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/>

⁴⁰ Ibid: 497

⁴¹ Ibid: 497

⁴² Peter Block, *Community: The structure of belonging*, (California: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2018). ProQuest EBook Central.

⁴³ Auckland Council, *Auckland Plan 2050 Evidence report: Demographic trends for Auckland: Data sources and findings* (Auckland: Auckland Council, 2018): 9. Retrieved from <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/>



Research Aims

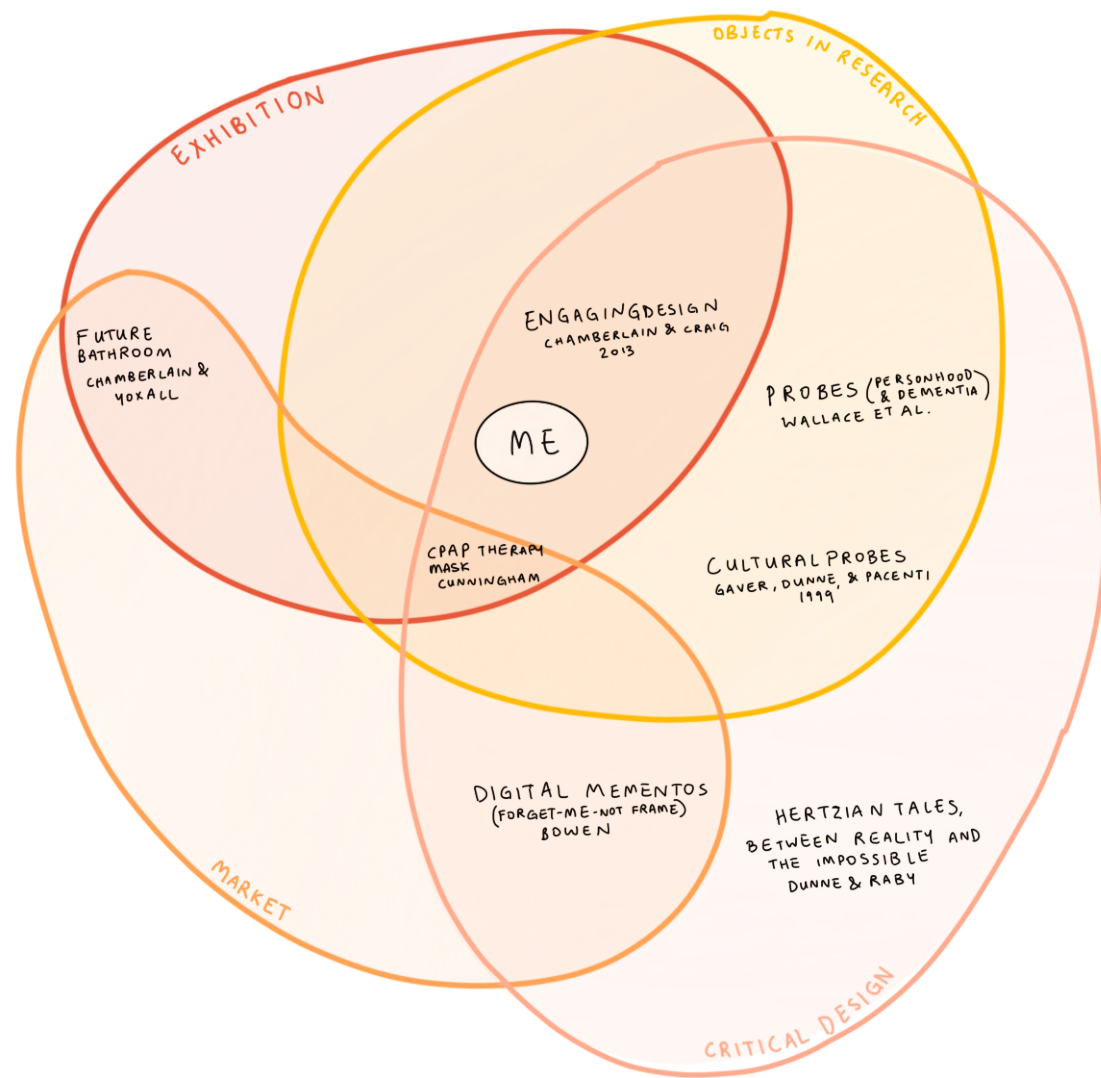
This research aimed to address the question: “How can critical design tools be incorporated into a public exhibition as conversational artefacts, in order to engage the wider Auckland City community in discussions about community in the city?”.

Primary Goals

1. Assess and discuss the efficacy of critical artefacts as tools for engaging the Auckland City community in discourse around community.
2. Explore how interest and deep thinking can be generated through critical artefacts as tools for facilitating conversation within a public exhibition.
3. Explore how critical design artefacts can scaffold conversation and influence discussion around attitudes and opinions about community in Auckland City.
4. Establish a place and value for critical design in qualitative research to explore complex social issues.

Secondary Goals

5. Explore the ways that people in Auckland City engage in conversations about community.
6. Develop my skills in critical design and establish myself as a critical designer.
7. Encourage a sense of community within Auckland City through facilitating conversations with critical artefacts.



Conclusion

This research explored the use of critical design as a creative method for research data collection, with exhibition as a medium for participation and community as an investigative vehicle to test the method. The designed artefacts are inspired by a combination of critical design approaches by Dunne and Raby, Chamberlain and Craig, and Bowen. Exhibition in this project is an adaptation of Chamberlain and Yoxall's 'exhibition as field-lab', creating a space for interaction between the participant and the researcher. In this design-led inquiry, I invited members of the public to participate in pop-up exhibitions that used critical artefacts as conversation prompts on thoughts and attitudes towards community.

Using community as context informed my efforts to make the exhibitions and participation as public as possible, situating myself across multiple public spaces in Auckland City. To make this possible, the pop-up data collection exhibitions had to be easy for one person to set up, portable, and cost-effective.

I describe the methodology and process used in this research in the following chapter.

03.

Methodology

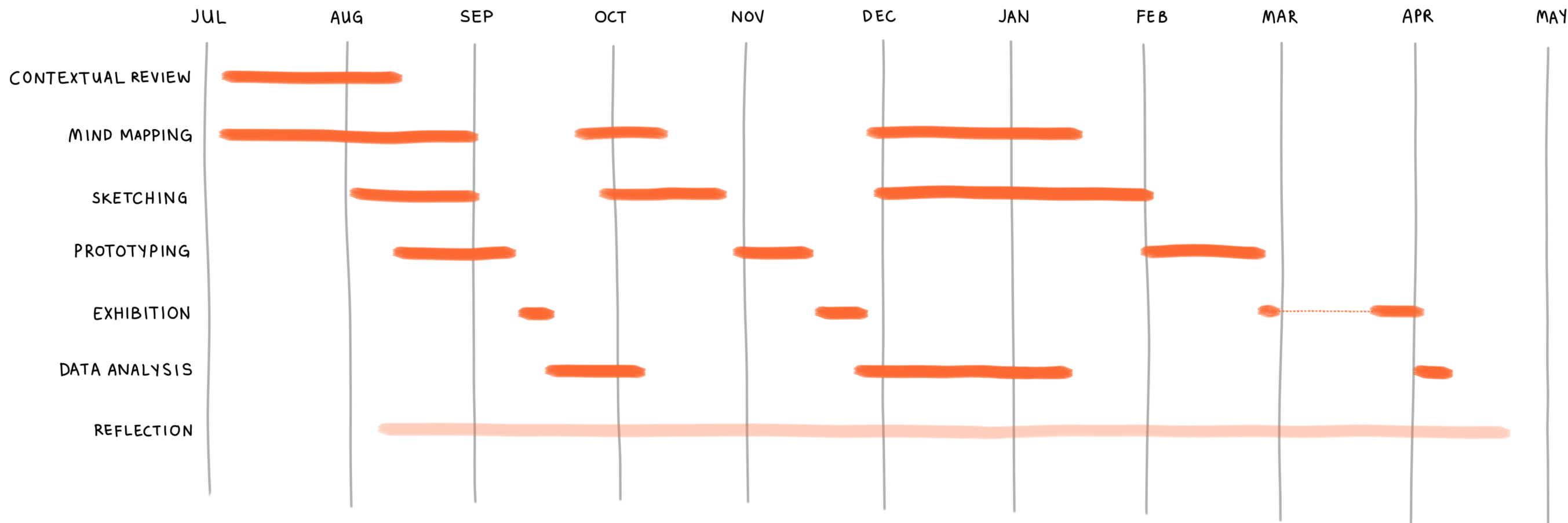


Figure 9. Alyssa Tang, Exegesis Map, 2021, digital illustration, Auckland

Introduction

This research adopted a Participatory Action Research methodology framework with a critical design approach, taking inspiration from Simon Bowen's Critical Artefact Methodology. This iterative process became the framework for the proposed method in this research.

Participatory Action Research

Action Research (AR) is an iterative process that follows the steps of ‘Plan – Act – Observe – Reflect’.⁴⁴ A key action or event will be planned and executed, and the result or success of this action will then inform further developments of the work. Cal Swann describes action research for design as appropriate when the outcome of the research is uncertain, allowing for ‘problem finding’ before developing a solution.⁴⁵

Participatory action research (PAR) adopts the same structure as AR but involves the researcher (or designer) working with the affected groups to identify a problem and develop solutions.⁴⁶ Fassinger and Morrow frame PAR as a way of asking:

“How are systems of power and privilege manifested in the lived experiences of this person or group of people, and how can knowledge be gained and used to raise consciousness, emancipate, and empower this person and group?”⁴⁷

Both AR and PAR are built around authentic collaboration and user-centred (or human-centred) design principles. User-centred design situates people affected by design outputs as the experts who designers need to empathise with and understand.⁴⁸ User-centred designers will often create partnerships with and seek feedback from their users throughout the design process. The user-centred design process in my research is enacted through the PAR cycle, allowing me to gather feedback on critical artefacts and modify them based on the responses.

Research Process

In my research, the ‘actions’ implemented were public, pop-up exhibitions in different locations in Auckland City. I displayed critical artefacts and conducted intercept interviews with members of the public who were interested in participating, discussing their responses to the artefacts and how they related the objects to their ideas of community. I then reflected on and analysed the responses, using the feedback to modify or create new artefacts, and adjust the exhibition to investigate other research enquiries that may have arisen during interactions with the audience.

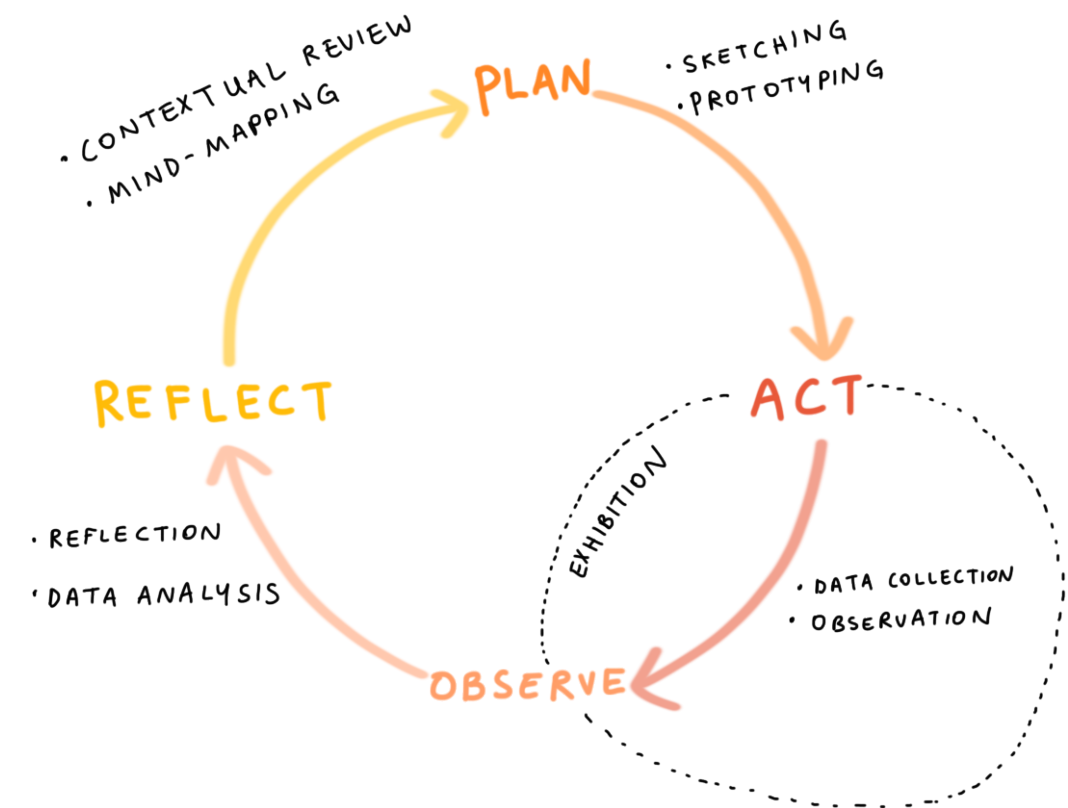


Figure 10. Alyssa Tang, *PAR Diagram*, 2021, digital illustration, Auckland

⁴⁴ Cal Swann, “Action research and the practice of design,” *Design Issues* 18 no. 1 (2002): 53. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1512029>

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ruth Fassinger and Susan Morrow, “Toward best practices in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method research: A social justice perspective,” *Journal for Social Action in Counseling & Psychology* 5 no. 2 (2013). <https://doi.org/10.33043/JSACP.5.2.69-83>

⁴⁷ Ibid, 75

⁴⁸ IDEO, *Field Guide to Human-Centered Design* (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.designkit.org/resources/1>

Critical Artefact Methodology

Simon Bowen proposes a “Critical Artefact Methodology” to “produce innovative, human-centred product ideas”⁴⁹. By combining participatory methods and critical design, he used critical artefacts in interviews with stakeholders to explore radical ideas that can elicit responses that reflect the latent needs of users. The responses then inform the design of a product that may go to market in the future. Bowen positions the Critical Artefact Methodology as initially exploratory-based—where the designer might propose para-functional products to a stakeholder—and progressively more implementation-based—to test the efficacy of a final product.

My research remained within the exploratory phase of Bowen’s Critical Artefact Methodology, with no intention to move to implementation. This inquiry did not propose a solution to a problem identified through discussion around critical artefacts. Development of this method and contribution to the use of creative methods for research is the outcome, with community as the topic of this inquiry. This research is closer to the dissemination of Chamberlain and Craig’s, or Chamberlain and Yoxall’s work where recorded reflection from participants is the outcome and may be used to propel the research further.

Thinking through objects

Mäkelä presents the idea that objects – or design artefacts – are a physical form of embodied knowledge, that reveal this knowledge when interpreted.⁵⁰ She states that “the artefact can... be seen as a method for collecting and preserving information and understanding.”⁵¹ There is also an argument that objects hold qualities beyond just their physical properties. Within the consumer market, Hallnäs and Redström refer to this as “meaningful presence”.⁵² The meaningful presence of an object is its place in our lifeworld – an individual’s understanding and relationship to a physical object or artefact, rather than its intended use and functionality.⁵³ Hallnäs and Redström use the example of buying a sofa, acknowledging its use and presence: “We consider both its practical functionality as a sofa and its prospective expressions as a sofa placed there in our living-room.”⁵⁴

Co-design toolkits utilise meaningful presence through the interpretation of objects as a medium for participant discussion and storytelling.

“Taken in isolation, the artefact may say very little or remain highly ambiguous...the meaning of the artefact is revealed through the stories told about it and the scenes in which it plays a role”⁵⁵

Sanders and Stappers’ (2014) review of co-design tools highlighted the role of artefacts for expressing thought. Sanders (2001) also proposed a participatory design toolkit that used an aesthetic physical design language, based on the belief that people “project their need onto ambiguous stimuli because they are driven to make meaning.”⁵⁶

Thinking through objects and the meaningful presence of physical artefacts became a tool for participants in this research to express their thoughts, and a facilitator for discussion. This was a less confrontational medium where people can use their lived experience to inform a response prompted by an ambiguous object. This research adopts the same approach through critical artefacts, which were used similarly to co-design tools. They are intended to be an object for a participant to interpret and link to their perspective.

⁵⁰ Mäkelä

⁵¹ Ibid, 1

⁵² Lars Hallnäs and Johan Redström, “From use to presence: on the expressions and aesthetics of everyday computational things,” *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction (TOCHI)* 9 no. 2 (2002). <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/513665.513668>

⁵³ Ibid 108

⁵⁴ Ibid 122

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Sanders and Pieter Stappers, “Probes, toolkits and prototypes: three approaches to making in codesigning,” *Codesign* 10 no. 1 (2014): 7. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15710882.2014.888183>

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Sanders, “A new design space,” *Proceedings of ICSID 2001 Seoul: exploring emerging design paradigm* (2001): 4. Retrieved from u.osu.edu



Ethical Considerations

As part of the PAR framework used in this research as an exploration into how people in Auckland city felt about their community, participation of people was required. This was necessary to test the efficacy of the proposed research method in-situ, with the involvement of people who became the audience for the exhibition and participants in the research.

Ethical approval was obtained for this research from AUT Ethic's committee (AUTEK) on 15 September 2020 (number 20/249). See Appendix 2.

Members of the public who approached the exhibition were informed about the nature of the research and offered an information sheet (See Appendix 2). They were required to give their verbal consent before participating. Participation remained confidential, as I did not ask for any personal or identifying information and redacted any that was shared through the response channels. Participants were able to end their involvement by leaving the exhibition space whenever they wished.

People were able to participate through conversational intercept interviews where they talked to me, writing responses on pieces of paper that were deposited into a collection box, and/or a public 'graffiti box' where responses to a high-level prompt were visible to the public. The intercept interviews involved questions such as, "What do you think about this object?"

The interactions were designed to make participation as accessible as possible. People under the age of 18 without present guardians and non-English speakers were excluded as there was a high chance of misunderstanding what was being asked of them as participants. Writing or drawing as a form of response was included so people who did not feel comfortable talking to the researcher were still able to participate. All instructions for written responses included drawing as an accepted form of response for participants who were not comfortable in their literacy. Conversational intercept interviews as the main form of participation also created a response channel for participants who had low literacy, were short on time, or were unable to write or draw.

Figure 11. Cassie Khoo, Information Sheets, 2020, photograph, Auckland

Methods

Contextual Review

The formalisation of both critical design and exhibition as a method for data collection is relatively new, with Anthony Dunne's *Hertzian Tales* being published as recently as 1999.⁵⁷ The research method I proposed was a synthesis of multiple approaches: critical design, creative research methods, and exhibition for data collection. This method was then used to explore an abstract concept (community). A contextual review was necessary to develop a clear, focused direction for the research and its methodology by building on previous practice.

In this contextual review, I searched for literature around community, citizenship, and social exclusion to identify themes of interest that could be channelled into artefacts. I used online library databases and Google Scholar to search key terms including community, citizenship, creative methods, critical design, and participatory exhibition. The contextual review also helped me position myself in this research area, making me aware of gaps in knowledge and the conversation I was contributing to. I assessed existing studies that used creative methods or exhibition as tools for data collection to inform my own decisions for locations, interaction stations, and how to invite the public to participate.

⁵⁷ Dunne, "Hertzian Tales"

Mind-mapping

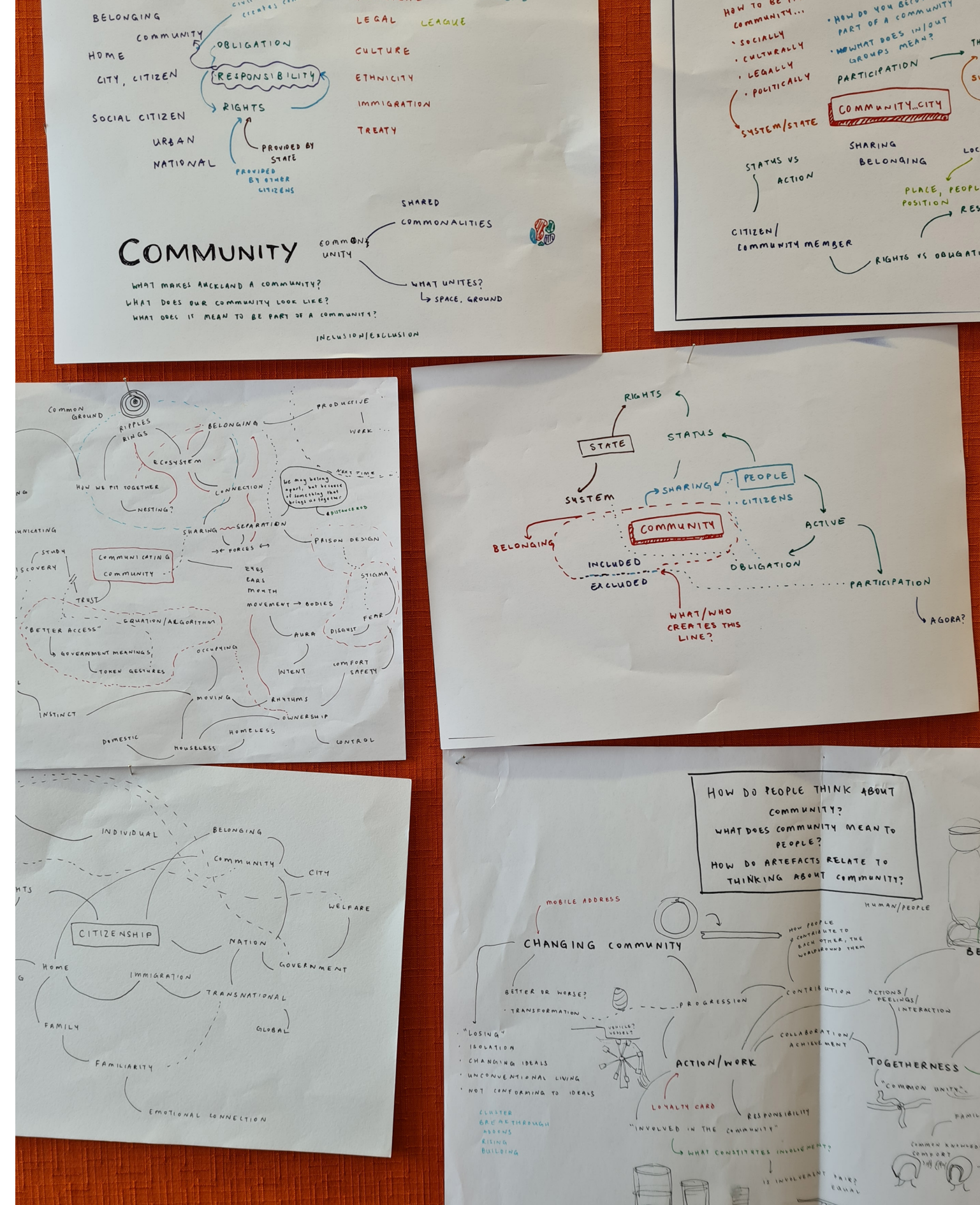
Mind-mapping creates a space for organising and clarifying thoughts and ideas⁵⁸ through a visual medium that is easier for the brain to understand. Florian Rustler related this phenomenon to the “Pictorial Superiority Effect,” that places visual stimuli at the top of the hierarchy of sensory stimuli.⁵⁹

At each phase when I was generating ideas for artefacts, I used mind-mapping to identify themes related to community. This allowed me to constantly re-situate myself amongst the context I was working within. I could consolidate my thoughts and how they related to other concepts that I generated previously but had not developed. Establishing a mind-map created space for me to then generate new ideas through inspiration from themes and directions of my own and other practitioners’ existing work.

Right: Figure 12. Alyssa Tang, *Mind Mapping*, 2021, photograph, Auckland

⁵⁸ Silvana Hilar, *Mind mapping with Freemind* (Birmingham: Packt Publishing, 2012). ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁵⁹ Florian Rustler, *Mind mapping for dummies* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2012), 22. ProQuest Ebook Central.



Sketching

Sketching can help create a “deeper understanding of the design problem by visualising their current solutions,”⁶⁰ whilst also providing a medium where ideas can be rapidly communicated to others.⁶¹ The low-cost nature of sketching allows designers to generate and communicate a large quantity of ideas before fabricating them as 3D prototypes, which is more time and resource intensive.⁶²

This process supported thinking through practice and allowed me to imagine what a speculative or metaphorical situation expressing aspects of community may look like. Sketching also allowed me to quickly ‘collect’ all my ideas so that they could be assessed as a group, contributing to the process of curating the exhibited artefacts.



Right: Figure 13. Alyssa Tang. *Idea generation*, 2021, photograph, Auckland

⁶⁰ Qifang Bao, Daniela Faas, and Maria Yang, “Interplay of sketching & prototyping in early stage product design” *International Journal of Design Creativity and Innovation* 6 (2016): 4. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21650349.2018.1429318>

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 4

⁶² *Ibid*, 2



Figure 14. Alyssa Tang. Prototyping, 2021, photograph, Auckland

Prototyping

Prototyping allowed me to gauge the efficacy of communicating ideas and themes as physical objects at the exhibition. Critical and speculative design often use image and narrative to communicate ideas that are tied to objects, but with a small, pop-up exhibition, I did not have the resources to present moving image and in-depth world-building to a comprehensive level. Industrial designers use prototyping as a tool to “make an idea just tangible enough to elicit a response,”⁶³ which creates the opportunity to analyse and adjust an idea so that it achieves its objective. Prototyping allowed me to test how understandable, provocative, and (if applicable) usable an object and its attached prompt was.

Mind-mapping, sketching, and prototyping were used simultaneously to develop and refine ideas for artefacts in response to collected data or literature. Prototyping gave ideas a physical ‘presence’ and developed aesthetics not found in 2D sketches through choices made for material, construction, and form. I used low-fidelity materials such as cardboard, corflute, and twine to help me rapidly visualise these ideas in 3D at low cost. Prototyping allowed me to test and adjust the ‘functional’ parts of an object such as its proportions, scale, materiality, and user experience so that it communicated the narrative I was trying to portray.

Exhibition

The exhibitions in this research were portable, pop-up, and able to be set up by one person. The exhibition became the forum for discussion about community through critical artefacts. To indiscriminately invite members of the public to participate, I chose locations that were free to access, visible from high traffic areas, and in publicly owned spaces.

Observation

By observing how participants interacted with their *Future Bathroom* exhibition, Chamberlain and Yoxall were able to draw insights that influenced future decisions. While my exhibitions were set up, I observed how members of the public and participants behaved in or around the exhibition. This informed small changes and decisions like the placement or orientation of the plinths, to encourage more people to engage or interact with objects.





Figure 16. Alyssa Tang, *Written response sheet*, 2021, photograph, Auckland



Figure 17. Alyssa Tang, *Graffiti Box in use*, 2021, photograph, Auckland

Participant engagement

The exhibition contained three mediums for participants to contribute to the research, which are outlined below. Their responses were collected as data for later analysis.

Intercept interviews

Participants who agreed to participate were directed to spend time looking at the artefacts. They were then able to engage in a conversation-like intercept interview. Chamberlain and Craig, and Wallace et al. used semi-structured, conversational interviewing through objects in their research. Both inquiries highlight the way that this method elicited thoughtful responses from participants and allowed them to comfortably share personal stories.⁶⁴ In this study, participants responded to generic questions such as, “*What did you think about the objects?*” Or “*Where there any that stood out to you and why?*” These questions allowed the participant to direct the interview to their own thoughts and beliefs, while the researcher could probe their responses to gather further insight. The responses were subsequently recorded through short-hand notes and researcher’s reflections on the interaction.

Written responses

A writing station was set up in the exhibition where participants were able to respond by writing or drawing their thoughts in response to the objects displayed. This could be

done privately and anonymously on a response form dropped into a collection box. This gave participants a way to share their thoughts without having to engage with the researcher. Drawing was emphasised as a valid form of response alongside writing to consider participants with low English literacy.

Graffiti box

The graffiti box, inspired by Chamberlain and Yoxall’s use of a graffiti wall in *Future Bathroom*, created an enclosed forum where participants could read and respond to each other. The graffiti box contained high-level prompts such as “*What does community mean to you?*” Participants were able to respond to the prompt or to other responses by writing or drawing. The questions were high-level and did not interact directly with the objects but did create other avenues of thought that I could draw from in future exhibitions. This was also an easy interaction that increased engagement amongst participants. The box had a double door that was opened to access the writing space, creating privacy so that other people were not able to identify who wrote which response.

⁶⁴ Chamberlain and Craig, “Engagingdesign,” and Wallace et al.

Data Analysis

Fabia Lin discussed the use of thematic analysis amongst art and design practitioners to reframe and organise their work and thought processes, stating that, “artist-researchers...use thematic exploration techniques to gain insight into the relationships between their personal interests and larger cultural or social concerns.”⁶⁵ The Braun-Clarke approach to thematic analysis follows six steps: *Familiarisation with data, initial coding generation, searching for themes based on initial coding, review of themes, theme definition and labelling, and report writing.*⁶⁶ I loosely followed this framework, incorporating Lin’s interpretation of thematic analysis for artist-researchers, allowing for subjectivity of the researcher (see Table 1).

Familiarisation with data came from being the primary researcher talking to participants and recording responses as data. The responses were all printed out onto small pieces of paper, with one idea per sheet, even if they were from the same participant. The data was then coded by highlighting key terms, then grouped into themes and sub-themes. I defined these themes to justify and clarify the decisions I made in grouping the data. As I was not looking for conclusive statements based on this data, I did not review the themes or write a report after each analysis session. The responses and these themes were used as inspiration to create new artefacts that aimed to prompt discussion on the ideas that were previously raised. Decisions on which themes and which responses were used did not have any logical system such as a frequency ranking. As a designer, I exercised my creative freedom to explore what was interesting to me, whilst keeping patterns from the overall response in mind. Thematic analysis in this research was a means to gain insight, not conclusive results.

Braun-Clarke thematic analysis

<i>Familiarisation with data</i>	As the researcher facilitating the exhibition and interviews, and through transcribing and recording the responses
<i>Initial coding generation</i>	Key terms were highlighted, except for interview responses which were usually paraphrased and emphasised key terms already
<i>Searching for themes based on the initial coding</i>	The codes identified in the initial coding were grouped into higher level themes.
<i>Review of the themes</i>	In this research, I am not looking for a conclusive statement based on the exhibition data. As this was intended to be a loose thematic analysis to reveal new themes, I didn’t feel the need to change any themes or codes I had initially identified.
<i>Theme definition and labelling</i>	I defined each theme to clarify and justify why each code was grouped together. This helped to flesh out themes that I was interested in exploring and generate new thematic questions.

Table 1. Braun Clarke thematic analysis response
Source: Howitt and Cramer

⁶⁵ Fabia Lin, “Using thematic analysis to facilitate meaning-making in practice-led Art and Design research,” *International Journal of Art and Design Education* 38 no. 1 (2019): 158. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jade.12177>

⁶⁶ Dennis Howitt and Duncan Cramer, 3rd ed, *Introduction to Research Methods in Psychology* (Pearson Education, 2011), 351. <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1419871&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

Reflection

Reflection throughout the research allowed me to capture insights and thoughts at relevant moments that might be revisited to gain insight into successes, failures, and opportunities to make changes in the process of this method.

Reflections during each stage of the design process were used to make changes and improvements at each phase of the research. Reflection during each exhibition was also significant as this created a space for me to think critically about the success of each individual day and make changes that were possible in the timeframe before the next day. Reflecting in the moment of each exhibition allowed me to revisit my notes later. This allowed me to compare and analyse my experiences in different locations and days against the success of different artefacts. Over the course of this inquiry, I was able to make improvements to the exhibition based on insights from these reflections.

04.

Documentation
of Research

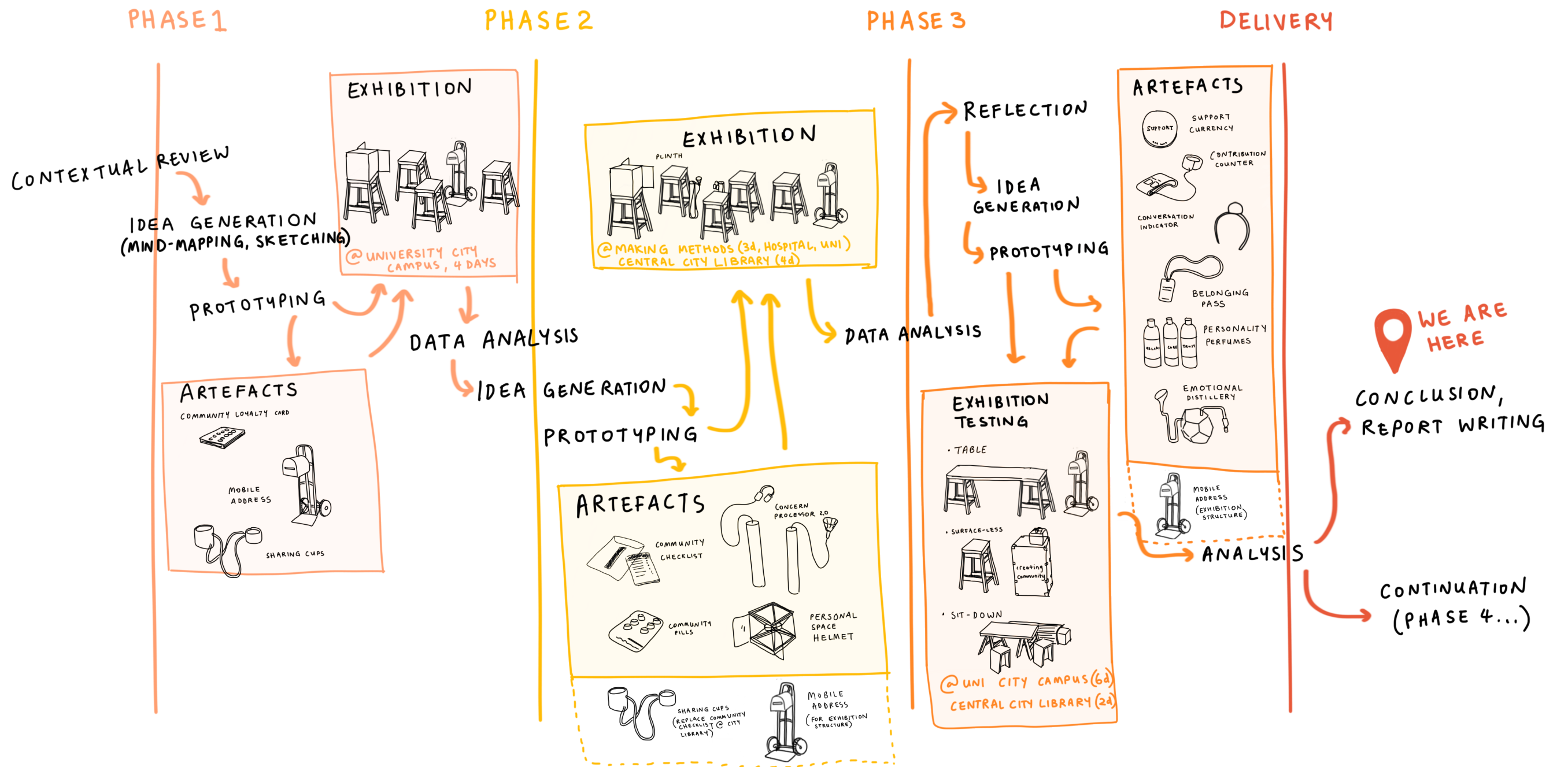


Figure 18. Alyssa Tang. Phase process map, 2021, digital illustration, Auckland

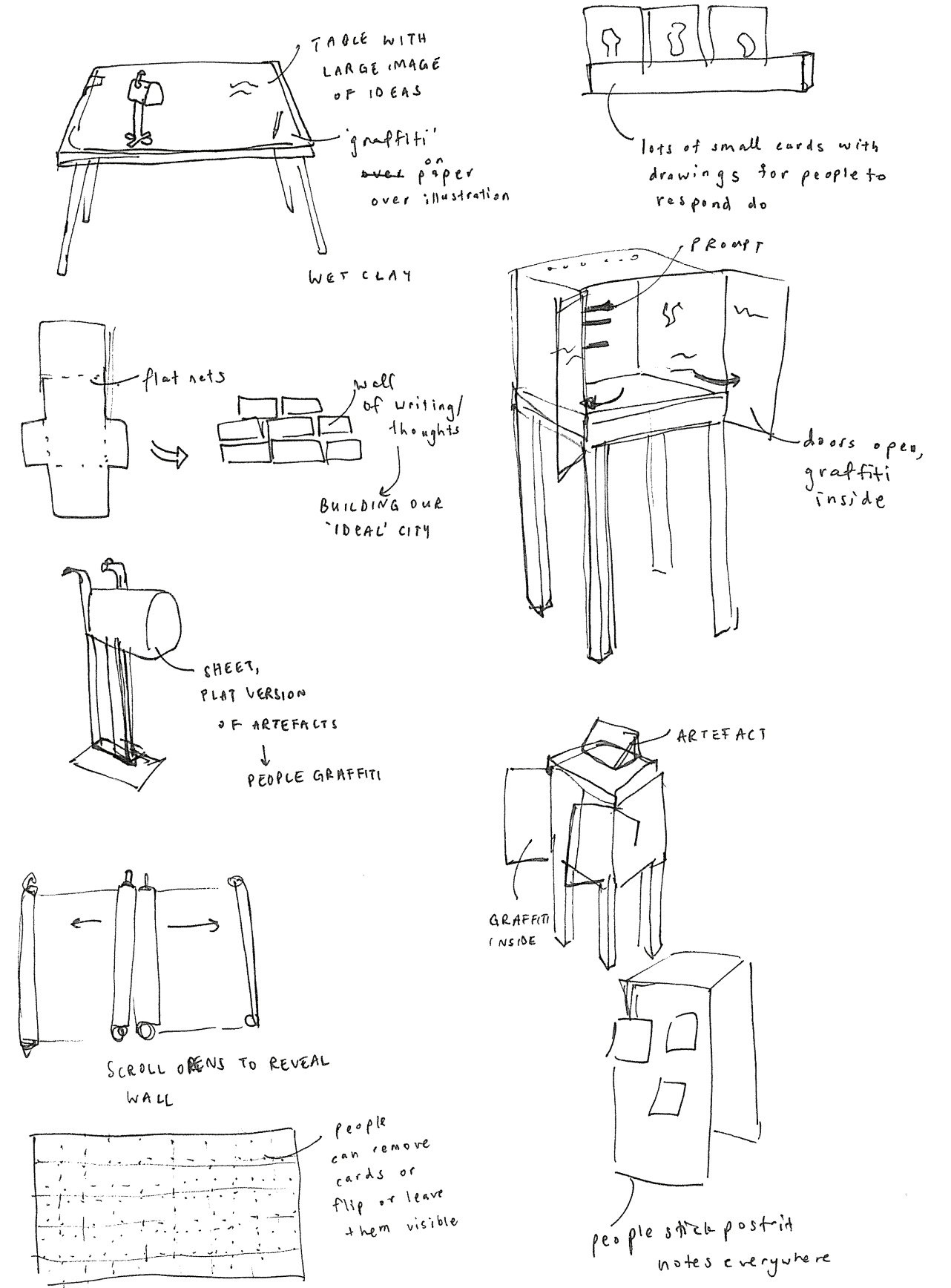
Research Framework

In this research, I implemented three iterations of conceptualising, making, then exhibiting artefacts – these are distinguished by phases shown in Fig 18. At each exhibition, responses from participants were recorded and analysed to inspire new sets of artefacts. Within each phase, informed by the learnings and findings from the previous iteration, there were variations in how artefacts were exhibited, how the exhibition was set up, and which data collection modes were used (see Table 2).

The remainder of this chapter describes the design and set up of the exhibition, the artefacts and modes of data collection. This is followed by the detailed description of each of the three phases of research.

	<i>Phase 1</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>	<i>Phase 3</i>
<i>Exhibition set up/ formats</i>	Plinths	Plinths	Table Surface-less Sit down
<i>Artefacts</i>	Sharing Cups Community Loyalty Card Mobile Address	Community Checklist Community Pills Concern Processor 2.0 Personal Space Helmet	Support Currency Contribution Counter Conversation Indicator Belonging Pass Personality Perfumes Emotional Distillery
<i>Data Collection</i>	Intercept Interviews Graffiti Box Written Responses	Intercept Interviews Graffiti Box Written Responses	Intercept Interviews Written Responses
<i>Locations</i>	AUT City Campus	Making Methods (metropolitan hospital and university campuses) Auckland Central City Library	Ellen Melville Centre (community centre) Auckland Central City Library

Table 2. Exhibition Phases



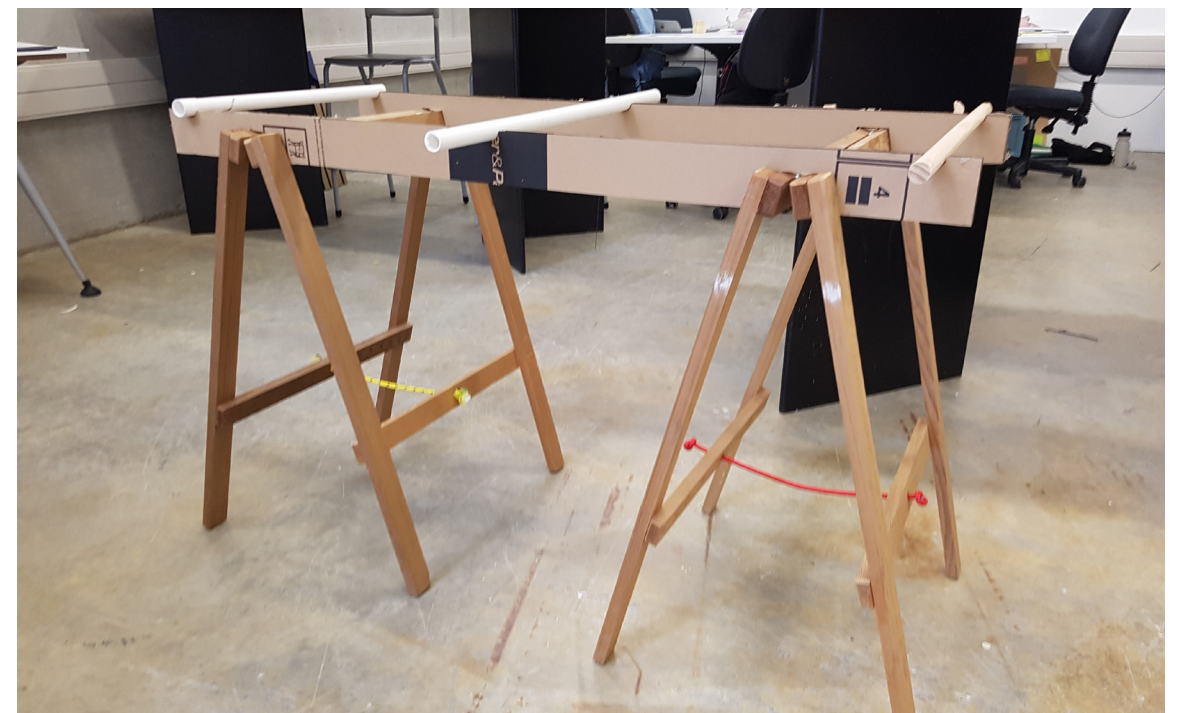
Exhibition

Prototyping

Chamberlain and Yoxall and Chamberlain and Craig's exhibitions as spaces for research data collection were usually in gallery spaces that required registration to enter.⁶⁷ In this research I wanted to indiscriminately invite members of the Auckland City community to participate and felt that exhibiting in a gallery space would exclude people who did not have an interest in art or visiting a gallery. Other spaces in the city, such as the university, would result in similar problems. Consequently, I decided to make the exhibition transportable so I could set it up and later pack it down in different public locations around the city. Thus, I would be able to invite a spread of people in the community with different interests and daily routines.

When ideating how I would achieve a pop-up, portable exhibition, I explored using lightweight materials such as cardboard and corflute to create the structure (Fig 20). With such light materials, I needed to consider the impact of being outdoors on my exhibition – while I would likely not exhibit in the rain, it would need to withstand wind.

The exhibition was built out of plywood using a collapsible design. The plywood design developed into a modular system allowed me to interchange parts of exhibition to create different structures throughout the research phases. Each component was computer numerical control routed (CNC'd) out of sheet plywood, making it easy to replicate when I needed more plinths. The components of the exhibition structure packed down into a box that was transported using the moving trolley in the *Mobile Address* artefact (page 90).



Top left: Figure 20. Alyssa Tang. *Exhibition plinth experiment 1*, 2020, photograph, Auckland
Top right: Figure 21. Alyssa Tang. *Exhibition wall experiment 1*, 2020, photograph, Auckland
Bottom: Figure 22. Alyssa Tang. *Exhibition table experiment 1*, 2020, photograph, Auckland



Figure 23. Alyssa Tang. Packed exhibition 1, 2020, photograph, Auckland



Figure 24. Alyssa Tang. Packed exhibition 2, 2020, photograph, Auckland



Figure 25. Alyssa Tang. Exhibition set-up, 2020, overlaid photograph, Auckland



Figure 26. Alyssa Tang. Location map, 2021, graphic, Auckland

Locations

The exhibitions were located across the city at the university campus, city library, and community hall. It was also included as part of a multi-location symposium event that was situated at the hospital and university. The locations allowed me to reach a variety of people and achieve a diversity in responses. Throughout the inquiry, I revisited the library and university at different phases of the research.



Critical artefacts in this research aimed to be facilitators for conversation, supporting participants in talking about topics that can often be complex or confronting. When designing the artefacts, I considered how the objects could easily communicate themes surrounding community whilst also gently asking participants about their own experiences. As I progressed through the research journey and phases, the artefact designs were directed towards personal opinions and experiences of participants, as responses and secondary research revealed that this was a strength of deploying objects for thought.

When designing the artefacts, I moved through a reflexive cycle of reading past literature or participant responses, sketching, and mapping key themes to generate ideas for potential artefacts. I challenged myself to sit in a space that was radical, critical, future-focused, and sometimes, playful. Chosen ideas needed to translate well into a 3D artefact whilst also being feasible for the scale of the exhibition and the time allocated for fabrication. Ideas also needed to be understandable without too much explanation, as I found that some participants' responses could be influenced by overexplaining, and others would be dissuaded by confusing concepts.

Some ideas were designed to be open to interpretation, where understandability was less important, as I wanted to encourage participants to create their own narratives for the objects. Some people found it difficult to interpret these types of artefacts, while others gravitated to them and enjoyed creating a narrative. As a collection, having diversity in the types of artefacts was important to cater for different people.

Prototyping

Prototyping was significant in developing ideas, especially because of the unpredictability when inviting the public to participate. Wearable ideas such as the *Blinders* (Figure 29) needed to be prototyped for ease of wear and consideration of body types, and objects that were able to be picked up needed to have a level of durability so that they would not break immediately. These considerations needed to be balanced with a choice of materials that were able to be transported easily, and relatively cheap for the budget available.

Material and form of artefacts effectively communicate themes by drawing on the aesthetics of existing products. Malpass claims that the aesthetics of critical design is significantly important as this is what creates meaningful presence.⁶⁸ Meaningful presence refers to how humans not only use objects, but also “dwell” with them, giving them meaning beyond their function and utility. Critical design capitalises on meaningful presence, balancing disruptive strangeness with the aesthetic familiarity of an existing object’s meaningful presence. This helps create fiction that provides an alternative lens for us to view and respond to an object – and through meaningful presence - its connotations, and implications. Despite not actually functioning, participants were able to understand the artefacts through their meaningful presence.

Designers Pelle Ehn and Morten Kyng state that mock-ups – or low-fidelity prototypes – work because they are understandable as not being the real, functioning product. They work as placeholders in “language games”. Language games refer to the function of language more than what can be written down. Participants in this research understand that the critical artefacts are non-functional objects but participate in the language game narrated by the descriptions attached to them. For each artefact, I considered materiality and how materials would communicate references to existing objects, such as using ceramics for cups or using thicker paperweights for ‘important’ documents. The artefacts in this research were intentionally designed to look like low-fidelity prototypes, communicating that they were ideas rather than functional products. I felt that this would lead participants to consider the artefacts as ‘ideas’ rather than implementable products and think about them conceptually, rather than pragmatically.

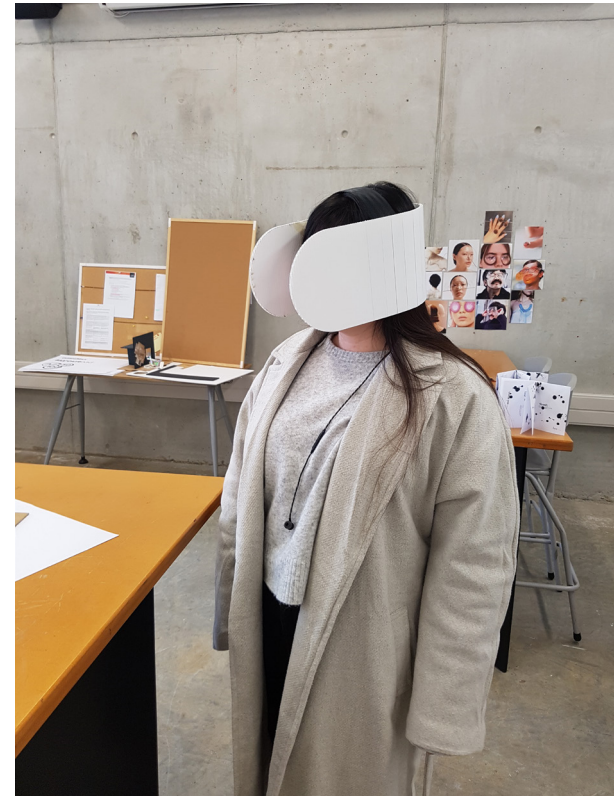


Figure 29. Alyssa Tang. *Blinders*, 2020, photograph, Auckland

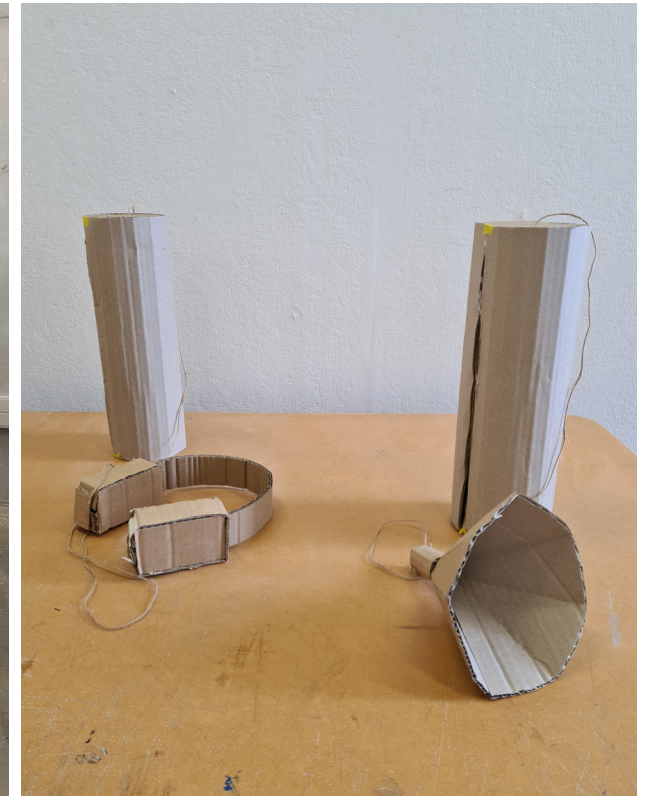


Figure 30. Alyssa Tang. *Concern processor 2.0* prototype, 2020, photograph, Auckland



Figure 31. Alyssa Tang. *Mobile Address test*, 2020, photograph, Auckland



Figure 32. Alyssa Tang. *Personal Space Helmet* prototype, 2020, photograph, Auckland

⁶⁸ Matt Malpass, “Critical design practice: Theoretical perspectives and methods of engagement,” *The Design Journal*, 19 no. 3 (2016): 475. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14606925.2016.1161943>

Artefact Categories

The exhibited artefacts fell into four categories of ‘type’ of artefact:

<i>Speculative</i>	<i>Metaphorical</i>	<i>Implementable</i>	<i>Probe</i>
Community loyalty card	Mobile Address	Concern Processor 2.0	Emotional Distillery
Community checklist	Sharing Cups	Conversation Indicator	
Community pills	Personal Space		
Personality perfumes	Helmet		
Contribution counter	Support Currency		
	Belonging Pass		

Table 3. Artefact Categories

Speculative artefacts presented systems or products that might exist with future technological or political developments. The situations that the artefacts presented were often easy to imagine and respond to. Participants in this research often talked about whether they agreed or disagreed with their existence, how they might use them, or what they thought might happen at a societal level.

Metaphorical artefacts were designed to represent social situations that might occur within a community. Participants were asked to create their own interpretations based on the forms used and some would relate ideas from the artefacts to aspects of their community. More successful artefacts had recognisable features or affordances that participants were able to build narratives around. For example, the *Personal Space Helmet* (see page 106) had a headband in the centre, so people were able to infer that this was an object to be worn on the head. Most responses that talked about personal experiences were responding to a metaphorical artefact.

Implementable artefacts are technologically possible, but not existing. These ideas are like speculative artefacts and were ideas for participants to react to, rather than interpret. There

was a sense of playfulness with these artefacts that gave them a novelty, and participants in this study usually reacted to these with humour.

The *Emotional Distillery* (pg 134) was considered a ‘probe,’ and took aspects from Gaver, Dunne, and Pacenti’s cultural probes⁶⁹ and Wallace et. al’s probes.⁷⁰ This artefact was something that the participant was intended to interact with. Probes in previous practice usually involved participants completing an activity related to the objects in their own time, away from the researcher. These probes were also single use, as participants were asked to write on or alter them in some way. The *Emotional Distillery* is similar as it is designed to directly ask a question, rather than propose a situation to respond to. Unlike the examples, participants do not alter this artefact, so it can be reused.

In this research, speculative and metaphorical artefacts were the most successful ‘category’ for eliciting thoughtful responses. Though there were fewer artefacts in the other two categories, these artefacts still did not generate many responses when exhibited alongside the others. Simplicity in the artefact design made them easier to understand, and therefore easier to respond to. Ideas like the *Personality Perfumes* (page 132) and the *Belonging Pass* (page 130) had simple core ideas that were easy for participants to connect to their experiences or communities.

⁶⁹ Gaver, Dunne, and Pacenti

⁷⁰ Wallace et al.

What does community mean to you?
Write your thoughts and respond to others on the inside of this box

Write your thoughts and respond to others on the inside of this box

Write your thoughts and respond to others on the inside of this box

Write your thoughts and respond to others on the inside of this box

Creating Community
A Research Exhibition, open to participate

Phase 1





Exhibition

Exhibition Formats

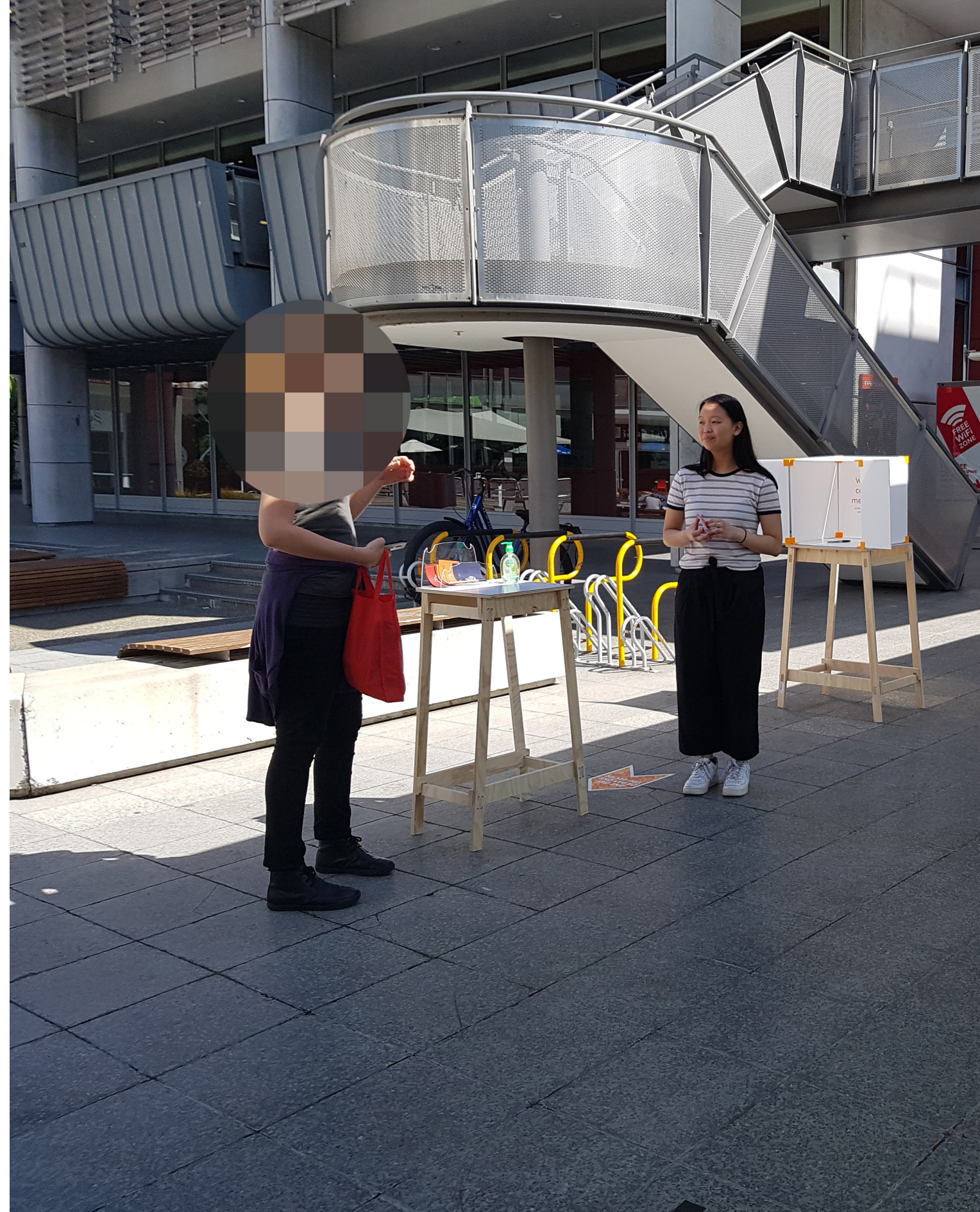
In Phase 1, artefacts were displayed on individual plinths. This was designed to emulate the layout of a gallery exhibition. Having plinths for each individual object extended the footprint of the exhibition and created space for multiple participants to simultaneously look at the artefacts. The plinths acted as ‘stations’ to move between, making the experience more dynamic than the other formats listed below. Basic response sheets were used that had an illustration on one side and a short prompt asking participants to write their thoughts on the other (pg 122).

The plinth layout was unusual for many of the outdoor spaces the exhibition was held in, and many participants approached the space through first approaching me to ask what was going on. The unusual layout may have made some participants unsure about what they were meant to do, as people asked if they were doing the “right thing” more often in this format than in the others. There was also a noticeable tentativeness when touching or interacting with the objects, which I tried to combat through changing the structure in Phase 3.

Responses at the plinth exhibitions varied in depth, especially because the graffiti box was included in this format. I found that many participants would spend time talking about only one artefact, and nearly all participants were able to see these objects as ideas rather than products. Because the individual plinths allowed me to delineate a space for this activity, people may have had a mindset of ‘entering’ the space, and many put their bags down before participating. On average, participants stayed at the plinth exhibitions longer than at any of the other formats (explained in Phase 3).

Exhibition Interactions

Conversational intercept interviews were, by far, the most effective and popular way for participants to respond to the critical artefacts. Most participants encountered the exhibition unexpectedly while passing through the space, so intercept interviews were also an easy way to share their thoughts without much additional effort. The ability to respond to participants and further explore their initial responses helped generate a level of depth that was not possible through written or graffiti box responses. The responses in the graffiti box were short and did not talk about community with any specificity. However, they did introduce new themes to the inquiry that had not been considered.





Artefacts

Sharing Cups

Sharing Cups explored disparities between different individuals and populations. Two cups are interlinked with tubes. When one party goes to take a drink from one cup, some water is inevitably transferred to the other cup and vice versa. The tubes connecting the two cups is my own projected belief that society is interlinked, and I wished to explore whether participants felt that these cups were an accurate representation of the relationship between different populations. I decided to make the cups on a pottery wheel, knowing that it was likely that these would be imperfect and look different to each other – which I felt strengthened the artefact and the metaphor of different people interacting with each other.

Most participants saw the *Sharing Cups* as a representation of a “give and take,” and a positive characteristic of being part of a community. There were also some people who initially thought they were tin-can phones and instinctively put them up to their ears. Some interesting responses included:

- One participant feeling that this was not representative of community and viewed interactions as “too binary” which was unrealistic - they disagreed with the idea that, by someone gaining, someone else is losing.
- One participant was particularly interested in the hand-crafted nature and “sub-optimal” slumped cup, which led to a conversation about efficiency and the values of society.

The *Sharing Cups* were also exhibited at the library in Phase 2 to replace the *Community Checklist*. The library staff had concerns that the *Community Checklist* might be mistaken for a real programme and decided it would be best to omit it.



Community Loyalty Card

Inspired by discourse around citizenship and what it means to be a citizen, the *Community Loyalty Card* is derived from the question; “*Is being part of a community a right or a responsibility?*”⁷¹ James Holston and Arjun Appadurai frame cities as a unique arena where urban poverty is juxtaposed with industrial wealth⁷². This forces a reconsideration of the rights of people to be part of a society, and the state’s role in meeting the requirements for citizens to fulfil their rights. Holston and Appadurai cite adequate housing and employment as examples.

The *Community Loyalty Card* presented a hypothetical framework for a non-monetary currency that surrounded participating in community. It imitated a business stamp card scheme and was based on an idea that people ‘participate’ in the community in return for stamps from their fellow community members. A full stamp card could be exchanged for public services such as healthcare, the right to vote, or education. To access community services, one would need to be actively participating in the community. The logistics of this system, like was what actions would constitute a stamp, were left up to interpretation.

While the *Community Loyalty Card* presented a general idea, smaller details like what would amount to a stamp were left to the participants to decide. In some ways, this backfired, with some participants then discussing the details on how this might be implemented. Participants would usually agree or disagree – or a mixture of both – with the idea being implemented in real life. Some people felt that the formalisation of participation and involvement in the community undermined the culture of community, while others felt that this was helpful for people who wanted to help the community more but did not know how to.

(Left) Figure 37. Alyssa Tang. *Community Loyalty Card*, 2021, photograph, Auckland

⁷¹ Inspired by Louise Humpage, “Talking about citizenship in New Zealand,” *Joituitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online* 3 no. 2 (2008). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1177083X.2008.9522437>. James Holston and ArjunAppadurai, “Cities and Citizenship,” *Public Culture* 8 (1996). Retrieved from http://www.arjunappadurai.org/articles/Appadurai_Cities_and_Citizenship.pdf

⁷² Holston and Appadurai

Mobile Address

The *Mobile Address* is a mailbox on wheels initially intended to explore societal standards for what constitutes a home. The artefact was inspired by a situation recounted by a homeless participant in Shiloh Groot and Darrin Hodgetts' research on homemaking on the streets.⁷³ A space under a bridge, that the participant considered as their home, was fenced over by the local council, making it inaccessible. In this situation, city authorities made a decision that impacted a member of the street community without considering their perspective and loss of home. This artefact playfully wonders if having a mailbox legitimises one's status as a resident of the city.

As I prototyped the *Mobile Address*, I postulated that the artefact could also be interpreted as a commentary on moving home, transience, and unconditional ideas of home other than rough sleeping. This informed the decision to make the mailbox's main 'vessel' a moving trolley – I felt that this implied a weight that was being carried along with the metaphorical home, whether this was physical or emotional.

In the first two phases, the *Mobile Address*' description card mentioned not being able to vote without an address. This resulted in a lot of responses talking about the privilege of having a physical address. In some of my verbal explanations, I mentioned homelessness as an influencing theme of the artefact, which resulted in two responses talking about Maori perspective on homelessness, whakapapa, and land ownership. There were few (if no) personal interpretations of the object, rather than reactions to the explanation of the object.

- One participant said that the *Mobile Address* reminded them of the current situation in the USA and the barriers to voting, and how this is another barrier, "why an address? Why not a phone number?"
- A participant said that Māori would not necessarily see a person who is "homeless" in the Western understanding of homeless.

The moving trolley used as part of the *Mobile Address* became an integral part of the exhibition construction as the main form of portability. The *Mobile Address* was used throughout all 3 Phases of this project.



Figure 38. Alyssa Tang. *Mobile Address*, 2021, photograph, Auckland

⁷³ Shiloh Groot and Darrin Hodgetts, "Homemaking on the streets and beyond," *Community, Work & Family* 15 no. 3 (2012). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2012.657933>. 264

CHANGING COMMUNITY

Ideally this is what I imagine, but may not be like this is real life (response to G10)

LOSS OF COMMUNITY

I think with so much of stuff done the Internet, its easy to feel less part of a groups as there is a lack of F2F [face to face] connection (response to G1)

SYSTEMIC/SOCIETY COMMENTARY

"If you don't have these things [Mobile address and loyalty card], do you even exist?"

This reminds me of a nomadic lifestyle. Someone who has no home, there home travels on there back. This is their letterbox

[Loyalty card] - "How many stamps would equal an education?"

HOME

Being at a stage of life where they have a transforming sense of home

A participant reflected on the situation of a friend who moved from the US to NZ so their children could grow up in a community that they felt was more accepting

[Sharing cups] the slumped cup is "sub-optimal". We live in a commodity-based economy. "When did efficiency become our God?"

[Loyalty card] Reminded a participant of community points of distribution (USA)

[Sharing cups] Disagree with the binary nature of exchange that this artefact reflects - that by someone gaining something, someone else is losing. It is possible that both parties can gain from the act of providing/giving/sharing

ACTION/WORK

PROGRESS/WORK

[Loyalty card] this incentivised being active in the community which was good - especially for young people

"Community is a building block of society" - to progress as a society, we need to work in teams or communities.

RESPONSIBILITY CONTRIBUTION

[Loyalty card] Might result in better support within the community, but those who don't want to participate should still have free will.

[Loyalty card] This should be implemented as people should be involved in the community

Community is dysfunctional, but also often beautiful. It is very representative of our ability to make things while having no idea how to improve or maintain them

I think something like this would be great to incentive younger generation to be more active in the community

INTERACTION

One participant felt that the graffiti box was a good representation of how they thought of community "a place to be heard and listen to other people"

The sharing cups represent community (stickman) help how they can w/o knowing who they help etc. The stamps: a bit unnecessary for encouraging (stickman) to help. It may work for some (stickman) who tracks their records & acknowledge how much they have done.

This is like a checklist of what citizens SHOULD do: (to be part of a community). These are their responsibilities

It shows (metaphorically) that no matter the community, we are all the same and feed off each other/work together in communal living. To sustain community, we must work together.

[Loyalty card] A guide for how to give back and participate in the community

Closeness connection to someone secret?

[Sharing cups] they feel like they take a lot (e.g. healthcare, public transport, education) but don't know where or how to give back. Maybe people want to give to the community but don't know how to

[Loyalty card] Disagree with this idea - there shouldn't be an obligation in order to receive public services

TOGETHERNESS/ JOINING / LINKING

SPACE / ENVIRONMENT

I find this interesting as my spatial environment is very important to me + my headspace. I believe an inviting + light space can create/encourage a community (a gathering of people (response to G1)

I disagree, there's a stereotype/stigma of where I live. I am proud to represent myself as that type of person (response to G1)

Spatially, I don't feel like I have much of a community. Socially, I do

TOGETHERNESS

This object [sharing cups] to me makes me think of community as bringing everyone together. - Communication - Interaction

Their community is ethnicity based but welcomes everyone no matter their ethnicity

"Community is just a group, isn't it?"

There are communities on the internet, where people can act very differently to how they do in real life.

Community is a group of people with common connection: Both geographicals, preferences, beliefs, there is also a sense of community - support & human interaction.

Community bringing people together, to interact and activate a space

"Community for me is a collective group of people who make me better"

Community is the collective production of subjective beings

This person felt that they exist between communities and require multiple groups to feel satisfied

BELONGING

COMFORT

I <3 this! community means I feel safe to be myself. It's a choice and a privilege to belong with others

A place/space/group where you feel comfortable/heard and welcome

Good community should be feeling content with the people & environment around you

Community is my extended home. Your commitment, efforts & service is equally or more valuable than your address or passport

For me, community means a place/group where I am appreciated and I can bless others too

SUPPORT

Community is belonging and having support from the people around you. Community means that someone will be there to help and in return you could pay it forward

Community to me is about finding a place/people that make you feel at home, supported and comfortable with

[Sharing cups] which was an important part of community

Community for me is being supported by those around you, looking out for one another whether that be neighbours, friends and family!

I think community is about belonging to something without judgement. Being accepted for who you are. The cards make me think about how community lives by giving and taking. It also makes me think about how people might not want to participate to get stamps. Or in order to have access to certain things you need to contribute. The cups make me think about support and how in a community people support one another.

Figure 39. Alyssa Tang, Phase 1 thematic analysis, 2020, photograph, Auckland

Phase 1 Findings

In both phases 1 and 2, community was explored as a general concept. Responses to this were often vague and difficult to relate to a personal experience. In Phase 1, they were related to four major themes: changing community; belonging; action/work, and togetherness. Examples of participant responses for each theme are shown in Figure 39.

Changing community:

The responses in this grouping reflected either a 'change' in what is generally understood as an individual's or a societal norm. Some responses in this group reflected discontent or unhappiness with the status quo and referred to unrealistic ideals. These responses could be considered to sit at varying points in a progression of a changing community – some had identified changes that they weren't happy with or used to, and others reflected on changes they had made in their own life and communities.

Belonging

These responses often talk about how participants feel as a result of being part of a community ('safe', 'comfortable', 'heard', 'welcome', 'content', 'appreciated', 'supported', 'accepted'). The responses frame community as a positive thing and an important part of the participants' lives. A lot of these responses came from the graffiti box, which had responses that didn't have much depth and there was no discussion around why or how community made people feel those emotions.

Action/work

These responses implied a collective effort to achieve something or create a community. Being 'active,' 'involved,' or 'participating,' in the community were common amongst these responses, and were often around what people do or should do. These actions ranged from simply interacting with other people positively, to "giving back" to the community.

Togetherness

Some responses implied that community is formed through a connection or 'thing' that "brings people together" or a 'common unity'. Some responses identify geographies, preferences, spatial environments, ethnicities, and beliefs as forces that connect people to each other. Other responses identify community itself as the connective force that brings people together, which could be seen as the nature of people to gravitate towards others.

Phase 2



Drop-off box

Hello, welcome to this exhibition space

7e

What does community mean to you?

Write your thoughts and respond to others on the inside of this box

Exhibition

Exhibition Format

Plinths from Phase 1 were used in this iteration of the exhibition. However, throughout Phase 2, I experimented with a less rigid layout than in Phase 1. For example, I would angle plinths irregularly to try catch the attention of people walking by.

Exhibition Interactions

In Phase 2 I experimented with asking directed questions alongside the artefacts. For example, when talking about the *Sharing Cups*, asking: “*This artefact is about exchange between different people. Is there a time you can remember an unexpected exchange you had with someone else?*”.

The responses to directed questions were much more detailed than during Phase 1 where participants were asked generic questions around artefacts. Consequently, participants were often more likely to link their experiences to their own conceptions of community. Introducing these questions through the artefacts also seemed to put participants at ease and they understood what terms like ‘unexpected exchange’ were referring to, making the interaction feel much less confronting. I decided to reduce the artefact descriptions to a question or prompt that inspired the object and implement the directed questions as a prompt for participants to answer.

Artefacts

Phase 2 allowed me to explore the relationship between my making and participants’ responses. The new artefacts were not just a reflection on participants’ thoughts, but an embodiment of my own response to what had been said. For example, I was surprised by the positive reactions to the *Community Loyalty Card* because I had interpreted it as an inherently bad idea. I created the *Community Checklist* as an expansion on this idea, pushing the rights versus obligations discourse even further.

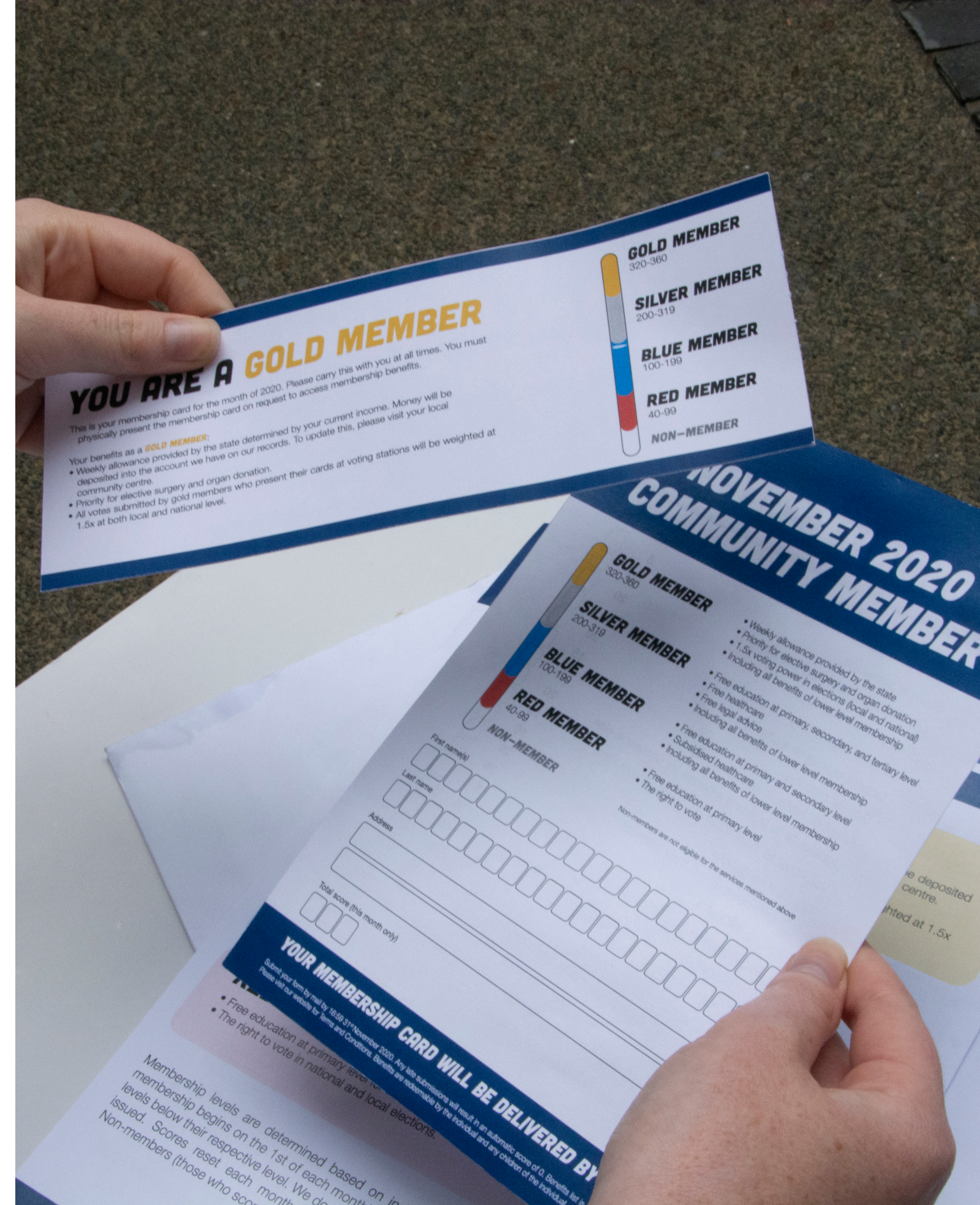
Community Checklist

The *Community Checklist* expands on the *Community Loyalty Card* and continues to ask, “is belonging to a community a right or an obligation?” This artefact was based on a combination of responses to the *Community Loyalty Card*:

- One participant pointed out that some people don't want to be part of it or participate and free will is still important, but a “good person” would want to participate.
- One participant said at a recent food drive, a lot of people were donating, and thought that maybe that indicated that a lot of people wanted to give to the community (more than what is generally understood) but didn't know how to.
- One participant pointed out that this undermines the whole point of community.

The *Community Checklist* is a monthly list of activities people need to fulfil for points. A final score at the end of the month determines a level of membership in a hierarchy. The higher you are ranked, the more benefits you receive, including the right to vote, free healthcare, and free education. The list is curated so that some actions are not accessible by all people – for example, driving a car, or having money to spend at a local business. As a parallel to our current world, this explores levels of privilege and how difficult it can be to break out of a poverty cycle. Social actions such as asking someone how they are, or attending a funeral, paint a dystopian picture of an ingenuine community who only interact because they have something to gain.

The *Community Checklist* didn't get many responses, and I was surprised that some responses talked about how this list could be a good thing to remind people of what to do. Most of the responses were from participants at the Design Space, which may have influenced this (as this wasn't presented at the library). I think the object required too much reading for participants to recognise the underlying commentary about inequality and privilege.





Community Pills

In the same vein as the *Community Checklist* alluding to 'genuine' community, and some people not wanting to be part of the community, *Community Pills* are a speculative idea that draws from responses in the Phase 1 related to the theme of 'belonging'. The pills, when taken, create feelings of support, appreciation, and safety that were cited on the graffiti box:

- "Good community should be feeling content with the people and environment around you."
- "Community to me is about finding a place/people that make you feel at home, supported, and comfortable with."

The *Community Pills* eliminate the need to interact with people to receive the same emotional benefits that being active in a community can provide. I felt an aversion to this idea because of the artificial nature of it, which, for me, created a very interesting polarity.

This was an easy-to-understand concept, and most people responded with their own opinions on whether, if implemented in real life, this would be a good or bad thing. Some people were reminded of situations where pills already existed, i.e., drug abuse and medication for mental illness. The pills were also what participants at the library gravitated to first, potentially because it was a recognisable object in an unexpected context (on a plinth at an exhibition).



Concern Processor 2.0

The *Concern Processor 2.0* was inspired by the responses to the *Sharing Cups* looking like tin cans. In a way, there would still be an exchange going on if two people were talking and listening to each other, though if one person were not listening while the other was talking, they would miss what the other person said. A conversation had also emerged in the graffiti box discussing whether spaces created communities, inspiring the question, “Can geographies be communities? And to what extent?”

This artefact allows members of the public to unburden themselves at a speaking station. The idea is that, elsewhere in the city (or their approximate geography), there might be someone listening and helping to carry their concerns at a listening station. This one-way interaction intended to explore community as a geographic concept (a place), asking if individuals would feel supported by their community through a system that allowed them to speak, even when they did not know exactly who – or if anyone was listening.

The construction of the *Concern Processor 2.0* made it difficult to display outside where it could have been blown over or placed on uneven ground which would have made it unsteady. This meant that this artefact was excluded from a lot of the walk-through intercept interviews. The form of this the *Concern Processor 2.0* was not obviously about geographies, and this was only communicated in the description card. As a result, geographies were only mentioned after I had explained it verbally. Participants did not talk about what they thought about this artefact existing in real life but responded by expressing how they thought listening was important in a community. This artefact demonstrated the importance of considering the collection as a group. Because it was free-standing, it was not obviously within the collection, so people did not move towards it to look at or discuss it.



Personal Space Helmet

The responses to the Phase 1 exhibition included sentiments about losing communities or needing to be more active in the community:

- *"I think something like this would be great to incentiv[ise] [the] younger generation to be more active in the community."*
- *One participant said that we live in a very Euro-centric society, which is very individualistic in nature.*
- *"We are losing our communities every day."*

In Phase 1, I had been inspired by Heidegger's generative philosophy stating that the whole point of human existence is to be concerned.⁷⁴ Tonkinwise uses this framing to explain why people in cities are more detached from other people, saying, "I encounter countless numbers of people each with their own concerns...It is just not possible to be someone concerned for all other people in a city."⁷⁵

The *Personal Space Helmet* visualised people existing as individuals isolated from the people around them. The *Personal Space Helmet* also includes doors, which alluded to the ability for someone to 'open up' to others, but also shut them out.

The *Personal Space Helmet* was interpreted differently by participants . Because the object was understandably something to be worn on the head, people could imagine being the wearer. This may have directed them to other things that the helmet reminded them of, or what the helmet might be a metaphor for. Some examples of responses included;

- *One person's apartment building has a system where your key card will only let you into the floor that you live on, keeping people who didn't 'belong' there out. Which was nice for safety, but also a barrier to establishing community. As a result, their community exists outside where they live.*
- *One person said the clear walls reminded them of how we are always being watched through government spying – less so in NZ, but in the USA and China.*

Right: Figure 43. Alyssa Tang. *Personal Space Helmet*, 2021, photograph, Auckland

⁷⁴ Cameron Tonkinwise, "Concerning Relations in the City: Designing Relational Services in Sharing Economies," *Designing Cultures of Care* (2018). <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350055391.0019>

⁷⁵ Tonkinwise, 5

**CHANGE/
MOVEMENT**

While change in community is inevitable, it is important to be aware about what is happening, and what might happen - this is where the role of sociologists are important.

**CREATING
COMMUNITY**

There are a lot of crude methods to measure community, e.g. counting how many friends or close contacts people have now and compare that to the past

**"OUT" OF
COMMUNITY**

[Pills] A scary thought, thinking that interaction and endorphin release can be replaced. Made them think about VR experiments that proved a sensory experience to stimulate feelings

**MAINTAINING
INDIVIDUALITY/
NOT ENGAGING
IN COMMUNITY
"CLOSED OFF"**

[Personal space helmet] Thinking about how in larger cities, we are often closed off to other people, but people are more open in smaller towns

**FUTURE/
CHANGE**

[Concern processor 2.0] Reminded them of old phones, and pneumatic tubes to pay in department stores - no stealing back in those days.

[Concern processor] Geographies are communities - this person lives in the city centre and believes that they get a sense of community from the events that happen in the area (e.g. my exhibition). They have built their community in relation to geography

Community can also be thought of as resonance

**ARTIFICIAL
COMMUNITY**

[Pills] If these were real, they thought some people would use them and others wouldn't, and those that would use would be in a "disadvantaged" demographic, and this would simply widen the gap.

[Helmet] Individual people who create a community together - creative people who split off and then come back together with their own separate work for a project - like in t.v. shows who have different writers

Thinking about community reminded this person of their hometown, which is an "isolated, desolate, poor" community with "strong-minded" people who "didn't buy into society"

It is important to reflect on what the community is and looks like, but also actively think about what can be done to direct it in the future

Thinking of ways to invite community.

This person talked about community through their arriving in NZ in March, not knowing anyone, but building a community around their hobbies - rock climbing, music, football. They said that their football team was made up of mostly people on a 1-year travel visa from around the world who shared the same interest in playing and watching football

"How can you trust someone you don't know and know nothing about?" Often it's a personal preference about what we feel around others and how we perceive them

[Pills] Depression is often a result of a lack of these things, and we almost have these in the form of antidepressant medication. This might sit at one end, while these speculative pills sit more in the middle

[Pills] when you go to university and have stress problems, you are likely to be sent down a path of pharmaceuticals, and this is a narrative that no one objects because it isn't in the interest of government to challenge this.

[Personal space helmet] COVID made people closed off to some people, but also made them open up to others - especially in their geographies i.e. neighbourhoods

[Helmet] Feels more relevant in a COVID climate, but it is also nice to maintain your individual space and be able to move away from other people.

**CARE/
SUPPORT**

Community is support, acceptance + belonging

**CONVERSATION/
LISTENING**

[Mailbox] "reminds me of old communication methods - clunky and so inconspicuous"

**LOSS OF
COMMUNITY**

[Pills] People look for a quick fix for something that can be achieved through interaction, connection, dialogue

This participant felt that from memory, when he was younger, he thinks he had more close contacts than his children currently do.

[Pills] Not needing to interact with people and being left to do [their] own things sounds great

INTERACTION

Community is about having support [img]

Community is support, acceptance + belonging

**COMMUNICA-
TION**

[Mailbox] "reminds me of old communication methods - clunky and so inconspicuous"

EXPECTATION

[Pills] We're currently overmedicating with pharmaceuticals for temporary problems (like stress) that can lead to a dependency, and also problems that could be solved through conversation and meaningful interaction

[Pills] "This is probably where the world's drug problem comes from - trying to recreate those feelings"

[Pills] This person thought that human interaction will always be better [than pills], but this would also be nice to have sometimes - people always push you away, they're always on their phones

Community is about having support [img]

Community is support, acceptance + belonging

[Concern processor] Reminded them of the Sunshine Africa, on the Sunshine coast where mental health services are limited, people with minimal training sit in a listening chair, and people are able to sit down with them and have a conversation

[Mailbox] "reminds me of old communication methods - clunky and so inconspicuous"

[Cups] Thought about their sister who had some symptoms, and how she is so capable of things in the same way as things in the same way as longer for her (and the 50 level of respect of everyone else, he reflected that people differently, perhaps because they are trying not to offend them.

[Pills] We're currently overmedicating with pharmaceuticals for temporary problems (like stress) that can lead to a dependency, and also problems that could be solved through conversation and meaningful interaction

[Pills] "This is probably where the world's drug problem comes from - trying to recreate those feelings"

[Personal space helmet] People also find it rude when people who use their phones are ignoring others, but it's a generational thing - people used to read newspapers on the train to signal the same thing

[Pills] This person thought that human interaction will always be better [than pills], but this would also be nice to have sometimes - people always push you away, they're always on their phones

[Pills] "I want to be able to buy these. These are something I would send to a friend"

people caring for others

[Concern processor 2.0] We are made more whole and learn when we listen to others perspectives and ideas. Listening well is so important to being in community

[Hallbox] Is a way to communicate - relates to community

[Response to G10] Community are people who are treated equally regardless of race. Kauri da mauri

Our communities are always changing. Digital life has resulted in a less formal community and less meaningful conversation.

I feel communities are disengaging and its frightening

[Pills] This person said they had been having insomnia recently, and that they wish the pills were real because then they felt it would help with this

[Personal space helmet] People use headphones to keep people out

[Pills] This person said they had been having insomnia recently, and that they wish the pills were real because then they felt it would help with this

[Pills] Even as a placebo, can be a nice reminder (of being supported, appreciated etc)

Conversation can be so simple and complex simultaneously

[Hallbox] Is a way to communicate - relates to community

[Response to G10] Community are people who are treated equally regardless of race. Kauri da mauri

Our communities are always changing. Digital life has resulted in a less formal community and less meaningful conversation.

I feel communities are disengaging and its frightening

[Pills] This person said they had been having insomnia recently, and that they wish the pills were real because then they felt it would help with this

[Personal space helmet] People use headphones to keep people out

Being supported and connected is important, and the elderly population comes to mind when thinking about this

My community is caring and always sharing things. Connected

[Sharing cups] Interpreted as communication tin cans. 1 person can't talk and listen at the same time, which is an important message regarding community

[Hallbox] Is a way to communicate - relates to community

[Response to G10] Community are people who are treated equally regardless of race. Kauri da mauri

[Checklist] Sometimes we don't always give back, and general busy-ness can be a reason for this, but this is a good reminder

[Mailbox] "I don't like opening my letterbox - it's always got bills. It scares me!"

[Pills] Gives an artificial sense of 'support' - to feel this you need to take the pills. I think it would be great for people who have trouble communicating and connecting with others

[Checklist] Forces/ encourages people to be a part of a community. Makes you think about what you must do to create/ maintain and be a part of a community

Safe, friendly, supportive and welcoming :3

My community is caring and always sharing things. Connected

[Sharing cups] The give and take here is like conversation.

[Hallbox] Is a way to communicate - relates to community

[Response to G10] Community are people who are treated equally regardless of race. Kauri da mauri

[Checklist] Some people don't connect with community, and this can be a reminder of what can be done

Society now is often very black and white, and if you aren't on the "acceptable" side of the argument, you are labelled a bigot, or a racist.

[Pills] Gives an artificial sense of 'support' - to feel this you need to take the pills. I think it would be great for people who have trouble communicating and connecting with others

[Checklist] Forces/ encourages people to be a part of a community. Makes you think about what you must do to create/ maintain and be a part of a community

PEOPLE

"PEOPLE"

**FRIENDS/
FAMILY/
HOME**

Community often starts with your immediate family, then moves to your outer family, and continues from there. People who don't have this connected or are dislodged from their families can suffer as a result

[Cups] Reminded them of being a child, where their parents would make the tin-can phones for them and their sister. It's a good way for kids to communicate and form community

PRIVILEGE

[Mobile address] Resonated because more people don't have conventional homes, and they can become dislodged from society as a result

**UNRECOGNISED/
UNCONVENTIONAL
COMMUNITY**

My community is mobile - I take it with me where I go.

He tangata, he tangata, he tangata

Community is sharing food, cooking for others, having a cup of tea and sharing ideas + conversation

Community is my home, all my friends, plus every single person who shares the same special space; and are all included without differences

Community is one big family with a whole lot of difference!!!

Community is leaving your home unlocked all the time. Sometimes you come home and there's fresh avocados in the kitchen

[Mobile address] Reminded them of the USA and the barriers to voting, and how this is another barrier. "Why not a phone number?"

[Mobile address] Resonated because more people don't have conventional homes, and they can become dislodged from society as a result

[Mobile address] Māori would not necessarily see a person who is "homeless" in the Western understanding as homeless

[Mailbox] You can find community anywhere, e.g. the and Facebook group, and other virtual communities.

Community is human existence. We are social creatures who could not survive both the best and worst side of our nature. It is hard to define, nebulous amorphous but all around us.

Community is sharing food, cooking for others, having a cup of tea and sharing ideas + conversation

Community is my home, all my friends, plus every single person who shares the same special space; and are all included without differences

Community is one big family with a whole lot of difference!!!

Community is leaving your home unlocked all the time. Sometimes you come home and there's fresh avocados in the kitchen

[Mobile address] Reminded them of the USA and the barriers to voting, and how this is another barrier. "Why not a phone number?"

[Mobile address] Resonated because more people don't have conventional homes, and they can become dislodged from society as a result

[Mobile address] Māori would not necessarily see a person who is "homeless" in the Western understanding as homeless

[Mailbox] You can find community anywhere, e.g. the and Facebook group, and other virtual communities.

A community is a group of people in an area

Family and the friends who speak into my life + spend time with me

Community is home :3

My community is my family

Sharing God's love & interacting with people

**"SYSTEM"
REFERENCE**

[Personal space helmet] Also related to sharing, there are organisations that try to integrate/involve people who are less well-off, particularly young people, and this is a good thing to do

[Checklist] Why is adopting an animal only 5 more points than asking how someone is doing?"

[Mobile address] From a Māori perspective, you are never homeless - thinking about iwi and ancestry. It's more about choice - you may see beggars on the street, but not homeless people.

Figure 44. Alyssa Tang, Phase 2 thematic analysis, 2020, photograph, Auckland

Phase 2 Findings

The artefacts at seemed to influence the overall thematic response to the work, and this is most evident in the Phase 2 responses. These framed current community as far more negative than in Phase 1. The negative responses referring to themes such as 'guidelines', non-community, and being out of community were all related to artefacts. In contrast, the graffiti box - which is unrelated to the artefacts - was filled with responses that talked about community being a place for people to support and care for each other.

Responses in Phase 2 were grouped into the following themes: change; out of community; people; expectations; and interaction.

Change

These responses talked about how communities are changing as time passes, often mentioning a 'loss' of community. Some of these responses talked about how communities are created, e.g., through family. Some participants acknowledged the presence of the exhibition as a space where we can reflect on our own communities to consciously influence the way we create communities in the future.

Out of community

These responses talked about how some people don't always want community, whether the participant themselves is the one maintaining distance, or felt that people around them were not interested in interaction. Some of the responses to the *Community Pills* cited other factors that may interfere were someone's sense of community (depression, stress, pharmaceuticals, VR).

People

These responses highlighted the presence of people in community - often through family and friends - but many responses also mention the place of a 'home' space where people invite others and gather. Some responses also refer to others who they are familiar with or have a shared connection.

Expectation

These responses reflected expectations or standards that people needed to fulfil to be part of a community. Some participants talked about not fitting in or being unable to be a part of a community for reasons such as not having an address (reflected in the *Mobile Address*) or needing to hold views that were deemed acceptable. Some responses talked about non-traditional communities like online groups or a mobile community, implying that there is an expected 'normal' community that these did not fit into.

Interaction

These responses talked about ways people interact with each other within a community. Key words throughout these responses are care and communication.

Phase 3



EMERGENCY EXIT
PLEASE KEEP CLEAR





Exhibition

Exhibition Format

Following Phase 2, I reviewed the artefacts with my peers and roleplayed what it might be like to be a participant in the exhibition. This gave me a new perspective on how the exhibition was likely to be experienced, and I found that holding and interacting with the objects created new lines of thinking. This reflection influenced future decisions to alter the exhibition to encourage participants to touch and pick up the objects. In the previous phase, I observed that using plinths likely made participants feel that they were not allowed to touch the objects, which may have set the tone for the exhibition as a contemplative activity rather than interactive participation. Three new exhibition formats were thus trialled to encourage interaction: table, surface-less, and sit-down formats.

Table

This format involved adapting the plinths into a table to encourage participants to pick up and interact with artefacts. The table held multiple artefacts, with a written invitation to touch and interact with the objects.

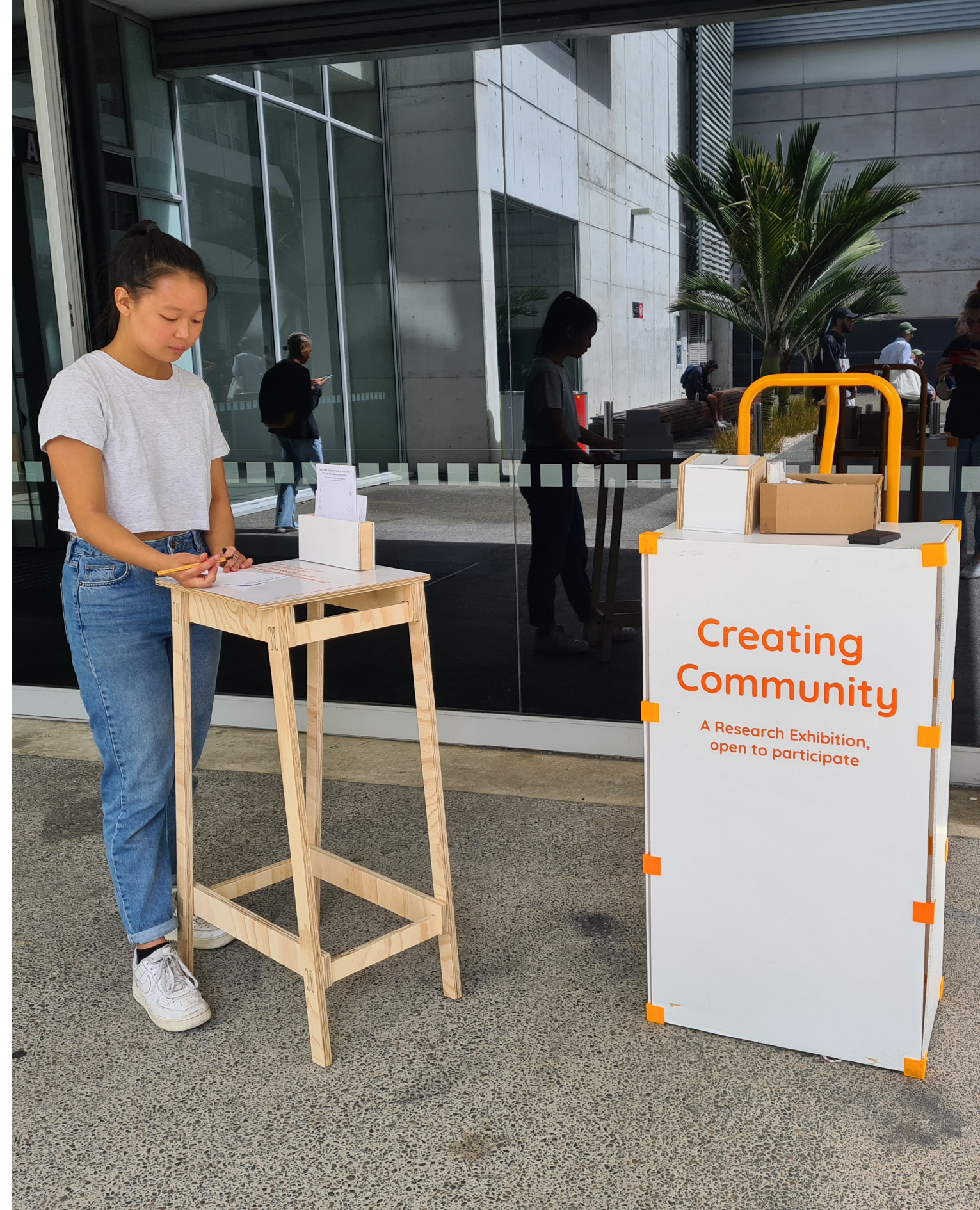
I found that the table format of exhibition worked similarly to the exhibition as an intermediary space where participants were able to scope out the exhibition without committing to participating. I thought that people were also more confident when approaching – potentially because the table was like a stall, which they may have had experience with. They were able to approach with expectations of some form of interaction where something will be asked of them – for example, buying products, signing petitions, or sharing thoughts about research objects. Some participants asked me if I was selling the objects, and others would confidently approach and ask how they could help.

Responses to table exhibitions were usually shorter than the plinth exhibitions but had much more focus on the artefacts, which often activated more depth amongst responses. The responses here were often linked to personal experiences of real-world situations. The stall-like nature of the table also meant that people were more inclined to engage with me, rather than experience the work by themselves. Participants and I would stand around the table, keeping the artefacts at the centre of conversation. Having the artefacts displayed together also allowed people to jump between them when they struggled to think of a response to one, or link different artefacts together through common themes.

Surface-less

To emphasise interaction with artefacts, I tried removing the plinths completely, leaving the writing station and sign only, and keeping the artefacts out of sight in a box. Participants were then handed an artefact, given a moment to explore it and read the card, then asked how they related the artefact to their own experience with their community. In this format, participants were encouraged and shown that it was intentional for them to handle the artefacts.

Engagement in this format was much shorter but achieved a more personal and thoughtful response than most of the plinth exhibitions. I struggled to attract as many participants in this format as I did with the plinths or the table. Despite being in a busy thoroughfare location, people often did not stop to talk to me. Standing alone beside my sign, without any artefacts visible to passers-by likely did not provide enough information to entice people to stop.



Right: Figure 47. Kate Weatherly, *Surface-less exhibition*, 2021, photograph, Auckland



Sit-down

To try encouraging longer, in-depth intercept interviews, I experimented with creating a space for participants to sit down and talk about the artefacts. I hoped that sitting around a table would lend itself better to picking up and physically exploring the artefacts and create a slowness that might give participants more time share thoughtful responses. I wanted to encourage multiple people to sit down to see how a group conversation might work in this context, almost moving to a workshop.

The sit-down events were largely unsuccessful. Having a table stall was not unusual, but the invitation to sit down might have intimidated people who weren't sure how much time they needed to give or what was being asked of them. I had very few participants and most knew me already. I found that the participants I did have would spend more time thinking and did not rush off after their first response. Sitting down created a slowness that made people more contemplative but inviting people to sit down was a major challenge.

Participants in group situations across all formats often still looked to me after sharing their thoughts, and participants would not often respond to each other when I was present unless they knew each other. When I had someone already at the table, others often waited to approach or did not approach at all. In one situation, a person who said they would return saw me with another participant and signalled that they would let me speak to them instead. Few group situations emerged from the table exhibition where participants were confident enough to call others over or speak directly to other people who were looking at the work. It is also important to consider that some people might not want to be drawn into conversations with other strangers. This can be difficult to judge, and inviting other people into a conversation without their consent might make them feel uncomfortable, yet obliged to stay.

Exhibition Interactions

In Phases 1 and 2, conversation remained the most successful way for participants to respond to the exhibition and artefacts. In Phase 3 I reframed the interactions around the exhibition to support thoughtful and meaningful conversation between myself and participants. At this stage, I also reflected that the core of the research was the artefacts, and the interactions at the exhibition should be centred around them. I decided to omit the graffiti box from Phase 3 exhibitions to emphasise the focus of responses on the artefacts.

The response sheet, artefact description cards, and how questions were asked in the intercept interview also impacted participants' responses. By adjusting the design of these components at Phase 3, I observed changes in my interactions with participants.

Artefact Description Cards

In the Phase 3 formats, reduced descriptions were used. When longer description cards were used for individual artefacts in Phase 2, some participants often responded to some of the influencing themes that were mentioned instead of formulating their own interpretations. The descriptions were often long and often took away from the experience of the objects. This became a barrier for participants to engage. Using shorter description cards allowed me to succinctly communicate the larger ideas, whilst also creating an activity for participants who could write their responses to the questions asked.



Figure 49. Alyssa Tang, Artefact description card comparison, 2021, photograph, Auckland



Figure 50. Alyssa Tang, Response sheet comparison, 2021, photograph, Auckland

Written response sheets

At Phases 1 and 2, I used basic response sheets that had an illustration on one side and a short prompt asking participants to write their thoughts on the other. At Phase 3, I reframed the written responses as a substitute for intercept interviewing. The new sheets had small illustrations of the objects that participants could refer to in their responses and link just asking about community. I found that the new response sheets worked much better, with participants using them to directly answer questions in prompt cards. Small details like asking what artefacts stood out and encouraging people to take the sheet around the exhibition may have contributed to better use of this interaction.

Location-based community

In Phases 1 and 2, I had been exploring community as a general concept. Responses to this were often vague and difficult to relate to a personal experience. In Phase 3, I reframed the exhibition to explore the location that I was situated in. For example, I would ask participants to relate the artefacts to their library community when I was exhibiting at the library. This worked at the university, but not the library. Many people who had visited the exhibition at the library didn't feel a connection to the community there, so didn't have personal experiences to share and felt that there was nothing to comment on. There were also occasions where people were passing by the library, but not visiting it and did not often visit it. The success at the university may have been because there was a 'membership' established through being an enrolled student. People understood what the community at the university was because there was a formal way of belonging to it. At the library, because there are no requirements to belong the community – other than being present – not many people felt that they were part of it.

If the exhibition is tied to a location, the participants need to feel that they belong to that community. There was one case where a participant approached and informed me that because they weren't from Auckland, they could not participate. Using Auckland City as a community in Phases 1 and 2 likely worked because having a residence or workplace in Auckland City would have made people feel included in that community.



Artefacts

Support Currency

The *Support Currency* was inspired by participants who saw *Community Pills* as something you might give to a friend to communicate care and support for them. Throughout this research I had also been interested in alternate forms of currency (e.g., *Community Loyalty Card*, *Community Checklist*). I found it interesting to think about support as a finite resource, considering Heidegger's philosophy that people in cities do not have the capacity to be concerned for everyone else.

- A participant, referring to the pills, said, "I want to be able to buy these. These are something I would send to a friend."

When framed as a currency, I thought it was interesting to think about what it would look like to be support-rich, or support-poor. One participant who responded to the *Community Pills* speculated that a lack of support is where the world's drug problem came from – people who were support-poor looking to supplement this with substances. I also thought about situations where individuals might give out more support than they receive, leaving them in a deficit.

Participants saw the *Support Currency* as both a metaphor or an object that could be given to others as a symbol of one's care or support for them. Most participants who saw this as a metaphor also talked about being selective with who to give coins to, or running out of coins:

- One person saw the *Support Currency* as representing actions. They talked about how they have a lot of care for people in their community, but nothing left for others.
- One person said that there might be a situation where someone might want to talk to you, but you don't have enough currency to have a conversation.



Contribution Counter

Responses about 'expectations' that needed to be met to belong to a community led to me thinking about 'how to belong'. Responses to the *Community Loyalty Card* (Phase 1) and the *Community Checklist* (Phase 2) referred to an understanding that "giving back" or performing altruistic actions makes someone a "good person".

- *"Sometimes we don't always give back, and general busy-ness can be a reason for this, but this is a good reminder."*

Phase 2 also had a lot of responses that talked about wanting to be apart from community:

- *One person expressed that not needing to interact with people and being left to do [their] own thing sounds great.*

I thought about how we measure these different viewpoints. I felt that contributing to community should be balanced with taking care of oneself. The *Contribution Counter* is designed as a blood-pressure monitor to allude to the significance of belonging for one's health, with a scoreboard-like visualisation that opposes "community" with "me". I don't completely agree with this binary framing of community but thought it would still be interesting to see how other people responded to it.

Many people mistook the form of this artefact as a working blood pressure reader, and others were not able to separate this form as a healthcare product from the idea that I was trying to communicate. Many people argued that there was no 'real' way to measure contributions and that this was not something that anyone would be interested in measuring. Other participants talked about the relationship between oneself and the community, most disagreeing with the separation that this artefact creates between the two. One participant talked about how they thought actions between self and the community are intertwined. They gave an example where they donated their second-hand clothes to clear space in their home, which also helps others

Conversation Indicator

- When talking about the *Personal Space Helmet*, one participant said that people find it rude when people who use their phones are ignoring others, but it's a generational thing – people used to read newspapers on the train to signal the same thing.

I responded to the question, 'How do you know you belong?' by reflecting on how someone would know they were welcome. The above response reflected on how people communicate to others that they don't want to talk. This inspired the *Conversation Indicator* – a light on someone's head which glowed red when they didn't want to talk to people, and green when they were open to talking to strangers.

Most participants responded to the idea of a *Conversation Indicator* with humour, and many appreciated the idea of being able to communicate without speaking. Responses on how people would use this varied, with some saying that they would "always be on red" and others saying it would be great because they "love talking to strangers". Other participants proposed other ways this could be implemented, such as through jewellery or apps.

The *Conversation Indicator* is an example of how Bowen's Critical Artefact Methodology can be used to develop a product or service. This object explores interaction between strangers through a different lens, eliciting responses that allowed me to identify insights. These insights could inform an implementable outcome that supports people in making connections in the city. For example, one participant said that this was good because they like talking to strangers. Another said that some people are shy and don't like to be the [conversation] starter, and this might help with that. Other responses included participants saying that:

- They felt like they were always saying hi to people without thinking too much about it.
- Switching their light from red to green would be something they had to prepare for
- This would allow people to connect to each other, but also show respect for someone having a bad day.

Wanting to talk but lacking confidence in approaching people was a common theme, as was talking to strangers without considering whether they wanted to respond. The responses demonstrated a range of perspectives but showed that there would be interest in creating a system that worked similarly to the *Conversation Indicator*.



Right: Figure 53. Alyssa Tang, *Conversation Indicator*, 2021, photograph, Auckland



Belonging Pass

One participant reflected on the *Personal Space Helmet* in Phase 2 as a metaphor for keeping people out and rejection – similar to how some places won't let you in their doors if you don't 'qualify'.

The *Belonging Pass* explored the 'qualifying' or 'not qualifying' mentioned in the above response. A lanyard and nametag often indicate that someone belongs to an organisation and has access to spaces that someone outside that group would not. The belonging pass grants 'all access' into any community the wearer wishes to be part of.

Responses to the *Belonging Pass* often alluded to the existence of multiple communities, and fitting into some, but not others. Some responses talked about the existence of membership being the cause for exclusion. Examples included participants saying that:

- *There could be different passes for different communities. You might have a pass for one community, but not the other.*
- *As an Asian person born in NZ, they felt out of place, especially outside of Auckland. They talked about how they feel pressure to show that they were born here and part of this community by talking louder to show they have a NZ accent.*



Personality Perfumes

During Phase 2, one participant talking generally about community said, “How can you trust someone you don’t know and know nothing about? Often it’s a personal preference about what we feel from others and how we perceive them.”

I imagined *Personality Perfumes* as a scent that would make someone seem trustworthy, caring, or reliable to others. To be deemed trustworthy or accepted by communities is out of one’s control. The personality perfumes explore this by creating a cosmetic adjustment that influences people’s impressions of one another. I thought about the polarity of whether this artefact would be a ‘good’ thing or not – on one hand, it might give marginalised groups the ability to overcome stigma, and on the other, it creates the potential for manipulation. As a cosmetic product, perfume also closely links to outward appearance, which is something that factors heavily into a first impression.

Responses to the *Personality Perfumes* talked about trust and reliability as a subconscious and personal reaction to someone else. Many saw attraction to others as a passive phenomenon that was difficult to explain. Connecting the idea of trust to perfumes provoked interesting responses such as talking about a perfume wearing off over time, or how positive memories can result in someone lowering their guard. One participant said that the perfumes make them think about how perfumes wear off - so the ‘reliability perfume’ might be someone putting on a front about being reliable, though this wouldn’t last forever. Participants also talked about the potential of a scent triggering a memory that would lower anxiety.

Emotional Distillery

I decided to create the *Emotional Distillery* to explore a new category of artefact after Wallace et al. and Gaver et al.'s cultural probes⁷⁶. This artefact exists as a question more than an object, but is reframed to provoke a more thoughtful answer. The *Emotional Distillery* was also intended as an object that was more future focused in asking what people wanted from their communities, rather than just reflecting on their current situation.

The *Emotional Distillery* is a machine that bottles feelings. This machine asks participants what feelings they get from their community that they would like to bottle.

The *Emotional Distillery* was not very successful in getting participants to think about feelings one gets from their community that they would like to bottle. Participants were intrigued by the form of the object but thrown off by the question that it was asking. Some people found humour in the idea of bottling feelings being a good thing. Two responses demonstrated different interpretations of how the machine would be used – for themselves or for others:

- One participant said that they would want to bottle support, good vibes, and happiness that they felt through interacting with the university community.
- Another said they would want to bottle comfort for the people around them. They said that in both their university community and friend community they felt the people around them weren't relaxed or were worried about looking a certain way.



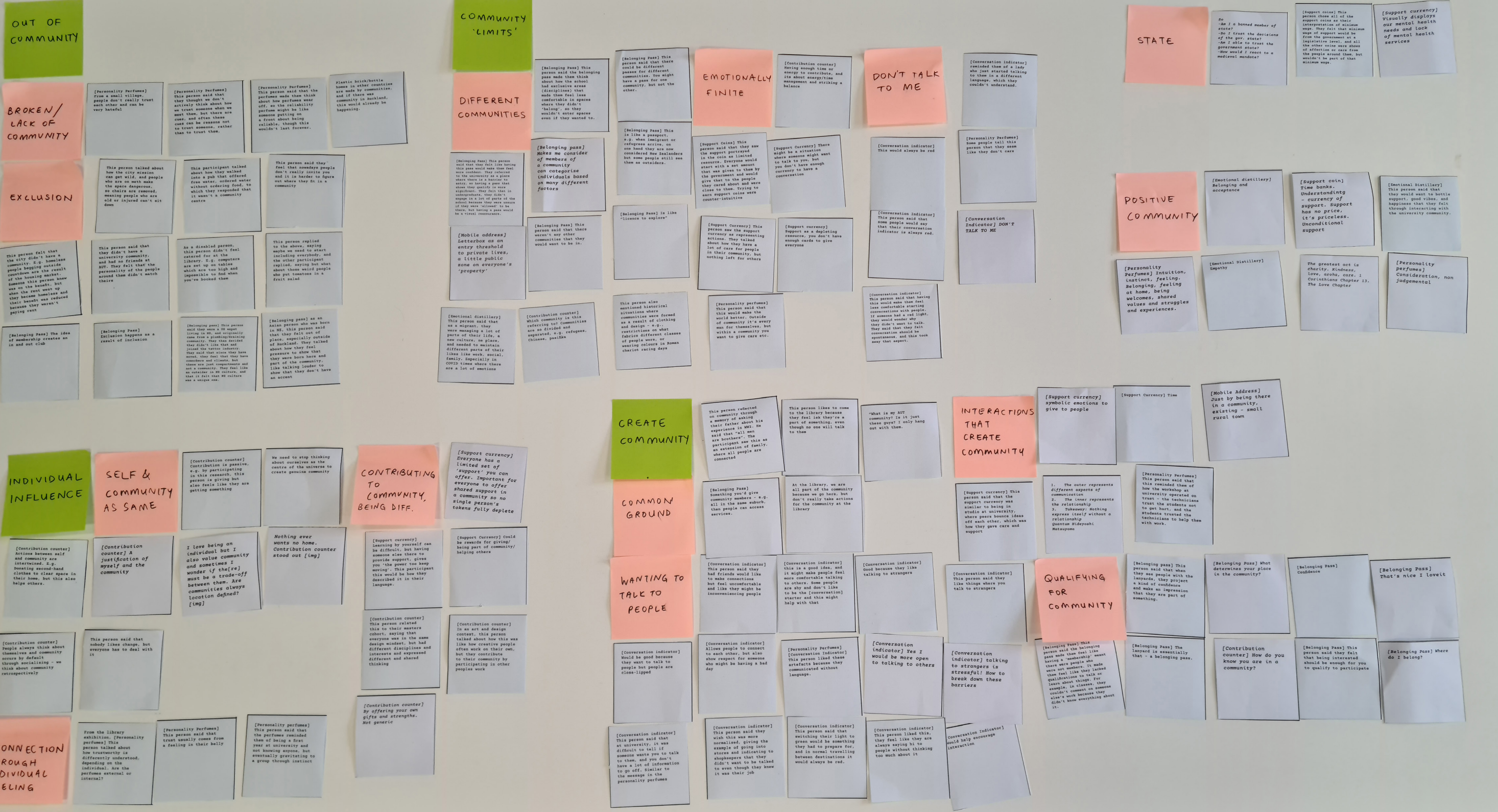


Figure 57. Alyssa Tang, Phase 3 thematic analysis, 2021, photograph, Auckland

Phase 3 Findings

Phase 3 objects were inspired by ideas of belonging, responding to the expectations and exclusion that was referenced in Phase 2. The themes that emerged represented different places along a spectrum of belonging to a community (Fig. 58).

Overall, responses in Phase 3 were grouped into four main themes: out of community; community 'limit'; creating community; and individual influence.

Out of community

These responses talked about exclusion or factors that contributed to a lack of community. Some responses around exclusion framed it as a result of inclusion, and other talked about specific situations where they felt excluded.

Community 'limits'

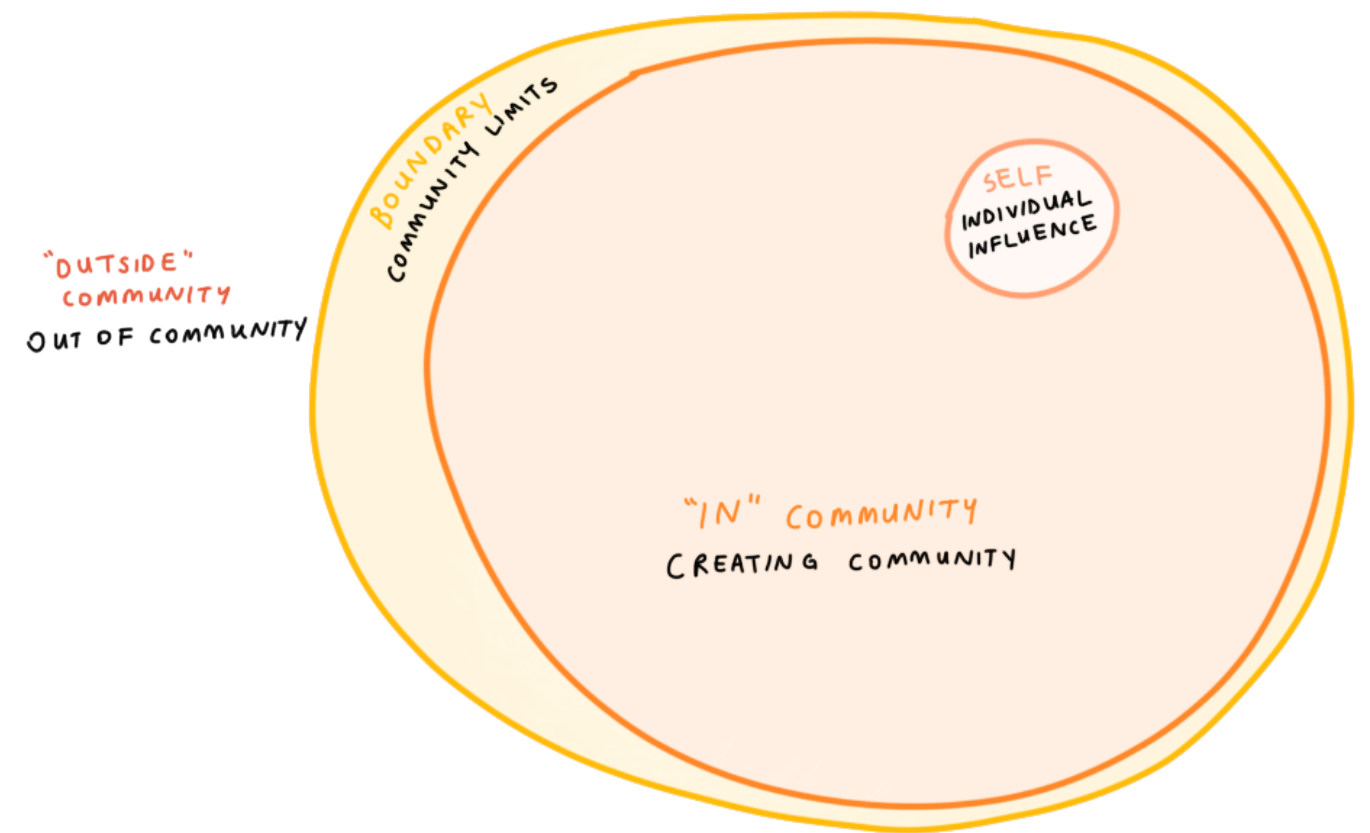
These responses alluded to delineated borders amongst communities - they saw communities as multiple, where one might not be included in every area. Responses about being emotionally finite were also grouped here. Some talked about how an individual does not have the capacity to include everyone in the community surrounding them, while others talked about how the *Conversation Indicator* would be a way to delineate their own boundaries.

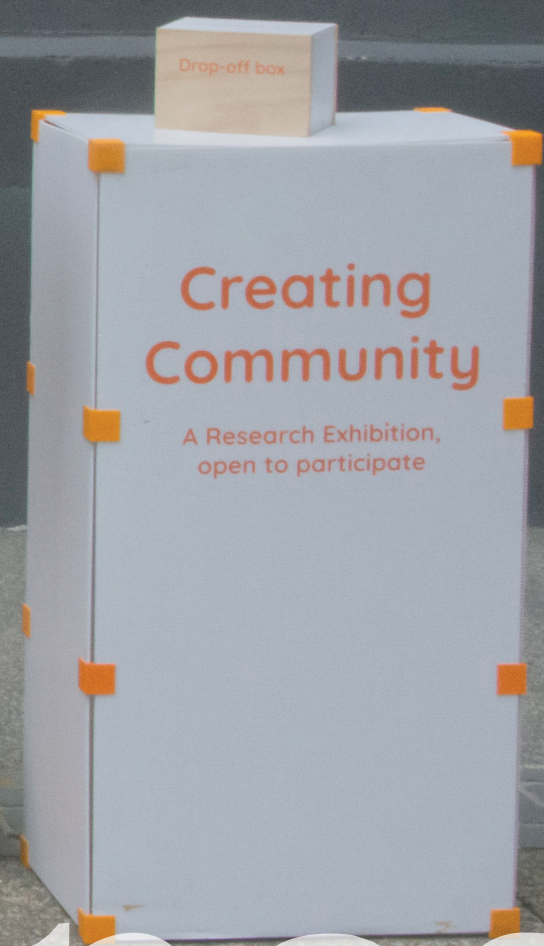
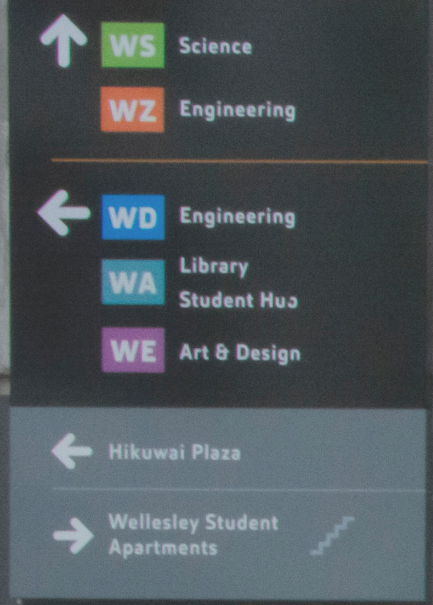
Creating community

Factors that create community. People here talked about wanting to talk to people, or shared experiences or actions that connected people. For example, attending the library, spending time together at university, or having the confidence to declare yourself as part of a community.

Individual Influence

These responses talked about the place of self in relation to the community. They define areas where an individual might express their individuality within a community, whilst still contributing to it. For example, many creative students sharing their own differing perspectives to create one overarching design community or the relationship between actions for yourself and the effect on community, framing these as intertwined.





Summary of Findings



Exhibition

Exhibition Format

Changing the format of the exhibition in Phase 3 impacted participant engagement. The way the artefacts were displayed dictated the dynamic between participant and researcher and shifted levels of initial engagement from the public. This research found that having a space where people could look at the work without talking to the researcher worked best to encourage people to approach but using a format that encouraged people to interact with artefacts and talk about them elicited the most thoughtful responses.

Overall, the table exhibitions were the most successful, followed by the plinths. Both these formats created a delineated 'space' for the exhibition activity. Using the table allowed people a glimpse of what was going on so they could decide whether they wanted to participate. People were able to approach the exhibition and see what it was without talking to the researcher or committing to participating, and the larger footprint meant that there was space for the researcher to be present but not overbearing.

Exhibition Interactions

Exhibition interactions that revolved around the artefacts lead to more thoughtful responses, both verbally and written. Conversation was the most common and meaningful form of responding across all three phases, likely because it was easiest for participants and it allowed me to ask people to elaborate on their thoughts. More participants used the written response forms in Phase 3 than in the other two phases and changing components such as the response form and the artefact description cards transformed this interaction into an activity. The written responses in Phase 3 were much more specific and related to the artefacts more often than in Phases 1 and 2.

Context

Public engagement with the exhibition worked best in outdoor, thoroughfare locations where large volumes of people were passing by. Situating the exhibition outdoors created an informal atmosphere where participants were more comfortable talking to me and approaching to see what was going on. This was reaffirmed through the lack of engagement at the university gallery and the indoor space at the library. Some participants at the library had seen the exhibition while it was indoors, but only approached and engaged with it when it was moved outside.

At the gallery space, there were already set expectations of it being a place for quiet contemplation, but outdoors, many participants who approached were open to an unknown activity. Outdoor activities such as stalls and festivals are also, generally, more interactive and dynamic.

Artefacts

The *Community Loyalty Card*, *Community Pills*, and *Conversation Indicator* generated the most responses in each of their respective phases. These are speculative and implementable artefacts presenting proposals of objects that could be used in society but are limited by technology or cultural reception. They were likely the most popular because they are easy to understand, and participants simply needed to respond saying whether or not they liked or agreed with these ideas.

The *Belonging Pass* and *Personal Space Helmet* elicited the most thoughtful responses that were lateral to the idea of general community. The form of the *Personal Space Helmet* was easy to understand, which may have made it more interesting to participants. Participants' interpretations of it were varied, but many people linked this artefact to real-life situations that they had experienced. Both these artefacts reflect themes of inclusion and exclusion, which may have resonated amongst people and made them more relatable.

Participant responses and themes

Themes that were found throughout the research included:

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Changing community	Change	Out of community
Belonging	Out of community	Community 'limit'
Action/Work	People	Creating community
Togetherness	Expectations	Individual influence
	Interaction	

Table 4: Exhibition response themes

Successful Critical Design?

It can be difficult to measure the success of a critical artefact as a tool for thought and provocation. The data collected in this research allowed me to assess how audiences received the objects by looking at the frequency and depth of responses. Thus, for example, the *Belonging Pass* artefact could be seen as successful because it generated a high number of in-depth responses. In this research, there were also multiple participants who returned to subsequent phases of exhibition and could recall the objects that were presented in past iterations. This could indicate that for some people, the artefacts were memorable and therefore successful in provoking thought around a complex topic.

05.

Discussion

Contribution to research

In this research I set out to explore how critical design and exhibition could be incorporated into a qualitative research method to explore complex societal constructs such as community. I employed critical artefacts as tools to encourage thoughtful responses from participants in a public space and recorded these responses as data. Past literature has acknowledged the ability of objects and creative methods in research to activate different lines of thinking to ‘traditional’ research methods.⁷⁷ Creative participatory research methods create opportunities for participants to lead a research inquiry and can be a less confronting and informal way for marginalised groups to participate in research than some traditional qualitative methods. Rather than exploring critical design as a practice, critical design was employed in this study to inform the design of artefacts that could be used in a research context, specifically, in creative participatory research.

Responses to the exhibited artefacts throughout the research affirmed the ability of objects to elicit deep thinking around a complex topic. For example, a participant responding to the *Sharing Cups* artefact shared that the exchange the artefact depicted reminded them of their sister, who had Down Syndrome, and that they felt people generally treated people with Down Syndrome differently. This was a personal response that is unlikely to have been their answer to a question asking what they thought about community.

Talking through the objects elicited a level of depth in responses that was not achieved by simply asking generic questions such as, “*What does community mean to you?*” This is demonstrated when responses to the graffiti box questions are compared to responses to the artefacts. For example, a graffiti box response said, “*My community is caring and always sharing things. Connected.*” This response was high-level and did not elaborate on what things were shared or who their community were. In contrast, a participant talking about the *Personal Space Helmet* said that their apartment building has a system where your key card will only let you into the floor that you live on, keeping people who didn’t ‘belong’ there out, which was nice for safety, but also a barrier to establishing community. As a result, their community exists outside where they live. In this response, the participant identifies a specific community and shares their thoughts on barriers in their community.

This research explored Chamberlain and Yoxall’s “field lab exhibition”⁷⁸ as a space to simultaneously disseminate research and collect data from participants. By displaying the designed artefacts in a public exhibition, I was able to optimise the value of critical design and

objects for thought by taking them to a public audience, creating a place for discussion and reflection. Chamberlain and Craig also adopt this approach in their *Stigmas* exhibition, which shared and collected data for their *Engagingdesign* research.⁷⁹ The *Stigmas* exhibition displayed critical artefacts expressing everyday life as an older person, creating a space for both younger and older people to engage in discussion on this topic. In my research, critical artefacts were designed and exhibited for the public to experience and share their opinions on community in Auckland City, though gathering responses about community was not the main focus. This research was primarily about developing a research method informed by critical design and exhibition methods to be used in a wider context relatively efficiently and easily, with a transient audience. Through exploring this context, it builds on Chamberlain and Yoxall, and Chamberlain and Craig’s research.

Instead of recruiting and asking participants to visit a gallery space, I decided to take the exhibition to multiple public locations in Auckland City, bringing the exhibition into the community. Chamberlain and Craig used a similar approach through *Exhibition in a Box*, shifting the onus away from being on older people to visit the gallery. However, this was still pre-arranged and in participants’ homes. To bring the exhibition into the community, I adapted the field lab exhibition into a smaller scale, portable, pop-up exhibition.

Making the exhibition portable and small meant that I was able to set up and indiscriminately invite people in the city to participate. I made this decision attempting to avoid restrictions and unintentional biases in recruiting participants, as my target group was all members of the Auckland City community. The exhibition also created a non-confrontational way of inviting people in the city to participate in the research, as they were able to approach at their own discretion and could easily leave at any time.

The components of critical design, exhibition, and community worked together to develop a cohesive method that enabled me to share work and collect data to propel the inquiry forward. This method as a synthesis of these components meant that decisions made for each part were heavily influenced by the others. For example, bringing the exhibition into the community was a direct response to the inquiry being about community. The critical artefacts all surrounded the idea of community, and the exhibition was designed and developed

⁷⁷ Chamberlain and Craig, “Engagingdesign,” and Wallace et al.

⁷⁸ Chamberlain and Yoxall, “Of Mice and Men”

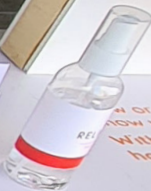
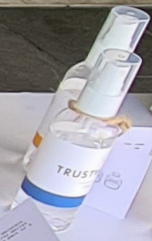
⁷⁹ Chamberlain and Craig, “Engagingdesign”

emergency exit keep clear

emergency exit keep clear

emergency exit keep clear

emergency exit keep clear



1. ...

2. ...

3. ...

4. ...

5. ...

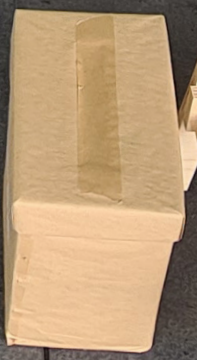
6. ...

7. ...

Please use these objects to help you think.

... or write to let me know what you think ...

With these objects in mind, how do you think about community?



Process

The development of this method builds on Simon Bowen's Critical Artefact Methodology, shifting its use from designing for the market, to designing to explore a social issue. Exploring community as a social issue meant that there was a huge range in themes and discussion points, but this created the opportunity for some participants to share deeply personal stories and reflect on what they wanted from their communities. Though Bowen's interest in the Critical Artefact Methodology is its ability to expose latent needs of users, this research demonstrates the value of this method in guiding people through a conversation about a complex social topic.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is commonly used to address social issues. Guided by a PAR framework, I explored how adjusting the exhibition impacted engagement with audiences. Fassinger and Morrow state that PAR "has as its explicit and primary goal empowering a community toward social change." While there are no explicit actions taken towards empowering a group, insights gathered in this research could influence and activate future initiatives that respond to the community. This research method could also be used in a different context where there is a recognised need for change, and the artefacts could be designed around a specific context. However, this was outside the scope of this master's research.

After each iterative cycle of exhibiting, I was able to reflect and assess the success of the exhibition interactions, artefacts, and locations chosen. Throughout the process, I was able to work towards developing a more effective way of engaging audiences and encouraging in-depth responses. This iterative process also involved experimenting with different modes of exhibition – for example, setting up a table instead of plinths to observe changes in engagement. Between each iteration, I developed my critical design skill and understanding of what kind of artefacts resonated with audiences. In my opinion, the artefacts in the last iteration are more provocative, yet easier to understand than the first iteration. I had found that in the third phase exhibitions, I did not need to explain the artefacts as often.

PAR emphasises a collaboration between participant and researcher. In this research, a conversation emerged between participant and designer. Participants shared their thoughts

on community, and I designed and made artefacts that respond to or reflect these thoughts. In this situation, the researcher holds more power over the direction of the inquiry, which themes to explore, and how responses are perceived. Participants have control over how they interpret objects, so have some influence on the direction of the research, but the inquiry is largely researcher-led. There are benefits to this dynamic, as researchers who are providers or instigators of social change can manage participant expectations and have conversations within the scope of their abilities.

Researcher influence on participants was largely unavoidable. The objects and their attached descriptions were intended to provoke discussion and viewing them alone may have felt unnatural to some people. Some participants started conversations with me while viewing the artefacts, asking what I was thinking when creating them, and often this led to conversing over all the objects. In these situations, I largely relied on my intuition for how much information I should share or how I directed participants. My inconsistent input and presence in participants' experiences of the critical artefacts is likely to have impacted the responses. Ultimately, I don't think this was detrimental to the project or confounded the data, and it is important to acknowledge that my own voice and opinions are embedded in this research.

Macdonald describes maintaining participant interest and commitment to a research project as a challenge of PAR.⁸¹ By continuously inviting all members of the public, this inquiry did not rely on maintaining interest from the same people to continue. There were situations where participants sought out the exhibition at each iteration to see how it had developed, but they were not obliged to do this. Participants control how much they share and how long they participate for in an opt-in system. At times, this was a detriment to the research, as I struggled to attract participants at some of the exhibitions and did not have pre-recruited or invited participants to rely on attending.

⁸⁰ Bowen, "A critical artefact methodology"

⁸¹ Cathy Macdonald, "Understanding participatory action research: A qualitative research methodology option," *Canadian Journal of Action Research* 13 (2012): 40

Key Insights

Relationship Building

Changing the format of the exhibition in Phase 3 impacted participant engagement. The way the artefacts were displayed dictated the dynamic between participant and researcher and shifted levels of initial engagement from the public. Having a space like the table where people could look at the work without talking to the researcher worked best to encourage people to approach. However, using a format that encouraged people to interact with artefacts and talk about them elicited the most thoughtful responses. Displaying the artefacts on the table allowed people a glimpse of what was going on so they could decide whether they wanted to participate.

Without prior knowledge or an invitation to the exhibition ahead of time, people had no information about the research or what was expected of them as participants before approaching the exhibition space. There was a poster displayed and information sheets available, but many people who looked curious did not approach to read these. Establishing a legitimacy for participation is critical when inviting people to participate.⁸² Building legitimacy involves letting participants know their purpose in the research and creating a trust relationship between participant and researcher. At the library and community centre locations, participants trusted the respective organisations that were hosting the exhibition, which may have helped them feel more comfortable approaching the exhibition. I also witnessed this when people approached because their friends were viewing the work. Returning participants were much more confident when approaching the exhibition and often engaged in casual conversation, even when the locations had changed.

Having information about the exhibition helped remove reservations around engaging with the researcher. The table exhibition was a familiar, stall-like format which communicated that people could expect interaction with me by approaching. This format was likely the most successful because it was the most familiar set-up. The surface-less exhibition did not provide much information other than the name of the event unless people approached to read the poster or information sheets. This likely made people nervous or discouraged from approaching, as it relied almost entirely on having to initiate direct interaction with the researcher. They may have also felt that by reading the poster, they would be showing

interest and the researcher would approach them. Information was also provided through the locations that I had chosen. For example, when exhibiting at the university, most people understood that I was a student. However, when I exhibited at the university quad, where external organisations often have stalls, I had far less engagement – likely attributed to people not knowing what I was offering or asking for and not taking the time to approach and inform themselves.

In the future, the exhibition could be used as a place to collect participant details so they could be formally invited to future exhibitions or events ahead of time. In this research there were a few returning participants who showed interest in the progression of artefacts and how their responses may have influenced my design decisions. In this research, I was limited by ethical procedures set at the beginning of the study that stipulated no personal identifiers to be collected. Within the scope of this research, there was limited time to amend this. Being able to ask for participants' contact details at exhibitions would have allowed me to build relationships over the course of the project. This could be conducted using an opt-in sign up system so invitations could be sent without requiring the formal commitment from participants that a traditional recruitment process asks for.



Figure 62, Cassie Khoo, Ellen Melville Centre Participant 1, 2021, photograph, Auckland



Figure 63, Cassie Khoo, Ellen Melville Centre Participant 2, 2021, photograph, Auckland

Community Hub

The fact that people approached at all shows that there are members of the community who are keen to talk about their community. The exhibition encouraged interaction, which was identified as a theme from the responses in Phase 2. The emergence of the exhibition as a starting point for building a community could be explored in future research. There were many participants who talked about wanting to find a community or struggling to belong in Auckland City. For example, one participant who was a US expat living in New Zealand said that since they moved, they had coworkers and clients, but these were just ‘compartments’ and not a community. They said that they felt like an outsider in NZ culture. Another participant said that they felt that nowadays people don’t really invite you and it is harder to figure out how one fits in a community.

Block frames conversation as the core of creating “authentic” community, saying “it is the act of engaging citizens in a conversation that allows us to act in concert.”⁸³ The conversational nature of the method in this research lends itself well to becoming the genesis or catalyst for future community-building. Zino et al. state that design artefacts have the ability to “create a shared understanding and shared language.”⁸⁴ Using objects as conversation facilitators could help to break down barriers between people and create a safe space for discussion that might progress into a sustainable community.

Many responses mentioned the importance of the topics addressed in this research and there were multiple instances of returning participants asking what other people had said to

see if they agreed with them. Indirect discussions between participants emerged through the graffiti box, where some people would talk about statements they disagreed with. For example, to a Graffiti box statement, “Community is sharing food, cooking for others, having a cup of tea and sharing ideas + conversation” one participant responded verbally, saying that their interpretation of community was different – not everyone has the privilege to have a place to host people or the ability to cook for others. They said that they find community in other spaces like the going to the library or other public events. There were also situations where discussions between strangers emerged through talking about the artefacts. These participants were usually more confident and comfortable addressing strangers, and it is important to acknowledge that this is not the case for everyone. There were other situations where people would not attend the exhibition if there was somebody already there, and some people would only approach because someone they knew was there. The exhibition structure and format would need to be developed to further pursue the possibility of it becoming a community hub.

⁸³ Block, 32

⁸⁴ Imogen Zino et al., “Things for thought: A creative toolkit to explore belonging,” *Design for Health* (2021): 2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24735132.2021.1883822>

Limitations

Participation

The momentum of this research relied on participation at each exhibition to collect data and insights into the development of this method. As a public exhibition with no prior recruitment and invitation, participants will have encountered this research unexpectedly. Engaging as a participant in this research required people to have an open and thoughtful mindset to interpret the artefacts. Not everyone will be in this mindset when encountering the exhibition or will want to engage in a thoughtful activity without warning. Many responses to the artefacts in this research were unhelpful and related to opinions about colours or material choices, rather than engaging with the concepts embodied in the artefacts. With such a short contact time with participants, it can be difficult to get them to engage with the artefacts as intended.

At several locations, I struggled to generate interest in the exhibition and engaging the public. Not knowing about the exhibition may have deterred people, and my presence may have made them feel that by approaching, they were committing to a conversation. This research showed that a facilitated exhibition using intercept interviews generated richest responses. The limited contact with participants also meant that it could be difficult to build a rapport with people and make them feel comfortable participating. Participants who had longer conversations with me tended to share more personal responses. Over the time they were in the exhibition space, I was able to build a rapport that may have made them more willing to share their stories. Whether people decided to engage is likely reliant on their first impression of the researcher, which is largely out of their control.

The COVID-19 pandemic and multiple outbreaks in Auckland City may have impacted participation in this research, as many exhibitions occurred following city-wide lockdowns. The public may have been reluctant to approach and interact due to the health risk associated with talking to strangers. At some exhibitions, people mistook the Personality Perfumes as hand sanitiser, and others commented that touching the objects would be “interesting” considering the current climate.

My decision to not have a prior recruitment process meant that there was no control over whether the participant group accurately reflected the community in Auckland City. Therefore, it is likely that some demographic groups did not participate in the study. It is difficult to draw conclusive evidence from the data because it may not represent the entire community. There is also likely to have been some level of exclusion or skew as the participants were all people who had initiative and confidence to approach the exhibition and participate.

I found that relationship building was a significant oversight in my research. Without a recruitment process preceding my data collection, I was unable to build relationships with participants prior to them encountering the exhibition. At some locations, particularly on the university campus, there were a lot of people around at the time of the exhibition, but no one was willing to participate. Locations such as the library or community centre had established relationships with their patrons, which may have contributed to more participants engaging with the exhibition at these locations. This may explain Chamberlain and Craig’s, and Chamberlain and Yoxall’s decision to use semi-structured interviews as their main form of data collection, alongside exhibitions. Without any prior relationship building or contact, it can be impossible to predict how many people will participate. Some exhibitions only attracted two participants and exhibiting more often and for longer based on the possibility of capturing more participants would have been an inefficient use of resources in a limited time.

Location

In this research, the process of getting permission to exhibit in various locations throughout the city proved limiting. I was relying on the generosity of other organisations so I could exhibit over a spread of locations throughout the city, as buying permits or booking spaces was out of my budget. Waiting for responses from organisations also caused multiple shifts in my scheduling and timeline. I was fortunate to have been able to exhibit at the library and university, but the limited locations meant the data would not be representative of everyone in Auckland City. Although not originally intended, this was managed by changing the main inquiry of each exhibition to be location specific in the latter iterations of the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

The research had initially begun as an inquiry to the general public's view on community but was adjusted in the final phase to focus on specific smaller communities such as the university or city library community. Without time constraints, I would have liked to continue to explore and analyse the data collected in this context. Responses about a specific community may be more conducive to problem-finding that might lead to social change. The number of participants in this research would have been too low to draw insights into community spanning the entire Auckland CBD but could work for smaller communities or initiatives.

This research was primarily focused on designing for engagement and depth of response. It did not attempt to identify problems through the data or design solutions. Further research might explore the efficacy of this method for identifying problems that could be addressed through design solutions.

The recommended use of this method would be to display artefacts on a table-like layout that encouraged people to pick up and interact with objects. Standing height tables worked best in this inquiry as they created an informal setting, so participants did not feel like they were committing to an activity. Exhibitions were best located in dynamic, thoroughfare-like spaces that were part of larger public organisations who had existing communities or patrons, otherwise, steps would need to be taken to build relationships with potential participants prior to inviting them to the exhibition. Relationship building could occur through advertising the exhibition as an event or sending invitations to target populations, so more people participate. The exhibition could also be held alongside major public events where people would be prepared for interaction, rather than spontaneously encountering it.

The critical artefact explorations could also be adapted for non-exhibition formats as tools for thought. In the following examples, I demonstrate how this research could inform two additional workshop toolkits for talking about community at a smaller scale than the exhibition.



Tabletop Edition

In a tabletop edition, the artefacts created in this research could be compiled into a toolkit, similar to Wallace et. al.'s probes⁸⁵ or Chamberlain and Craig's *Exhibition in a box*⁸⁶. This tentative workshop kit would include hand-sized critical artefacts from all phases in this research and small prompt cards, such as those used in Phase 3 of this study. Members of a focus group or workshop group would each have an object and take turns sharing how they might relate it to their community.

In this workshop, eight artefact cards are distributed to participants, followed by the corresponding artefacts. Participants are encouraged to explore the artefacts through interacting with and holding them to support their thinking. They are then invited to share their thoughts on how their object related to their community to a partner, then to the group.

Adapting the artefacts into a workshop would hope to encourage interaction between members in an existing community, smaller than Auckland City. Using the context of a scheduled workshop would also overcome the difficulty I found attracting participants in the 'pop-up' form of this research.



Right: Figure 65, Alyssa Tang, *Creating Community tabletop edition*, 2021, photograph, Auckland

⁸⁵ Wallace et al.

⁸⁶ Chamberlain and Craig, "Engagingdesign"



Pocket Edition

The illustrated ideas for artefacts could be repurposed into card prompts for use in discussion-based workshops. This would become a ‘pocket edition’ of the method. Fisher, Craig, and Chamberlain’s *Life Café*⁸⁷ used photographs as tools for participants to communicate and explore feelings such as happiness, care, and safety. From a selection of photos, participants are asked to choose ones that they related to when thinking about specific emotions. The illustrations from the idea generation of this research could be printed onto cards and used as a similar activity to explore community.

Participants would be asked to choose cards that, for example, made them think about their community or made them think about what they wanted their community to look like. They would then explain their choices to a partner or to the group. As a shorter activity, this could be used as an ice-breaker or conversation starter to precede a longer workshop or co-design activity.

In the proposed adaptation (Figure 66), each illustration is printed on both black and white backgrounds. The ability to choose between lightness or darkness is intended to help participants communicate their responses. This activity is accompanied by an instruction guide so the activity could be self-facilitated.

Both the workshop and card game format of this research would need to be tested with participants to assess the efficacy of these tools for discussion about community. These tools would also need to be refined for better engagement of participants or adjusted for different communities.

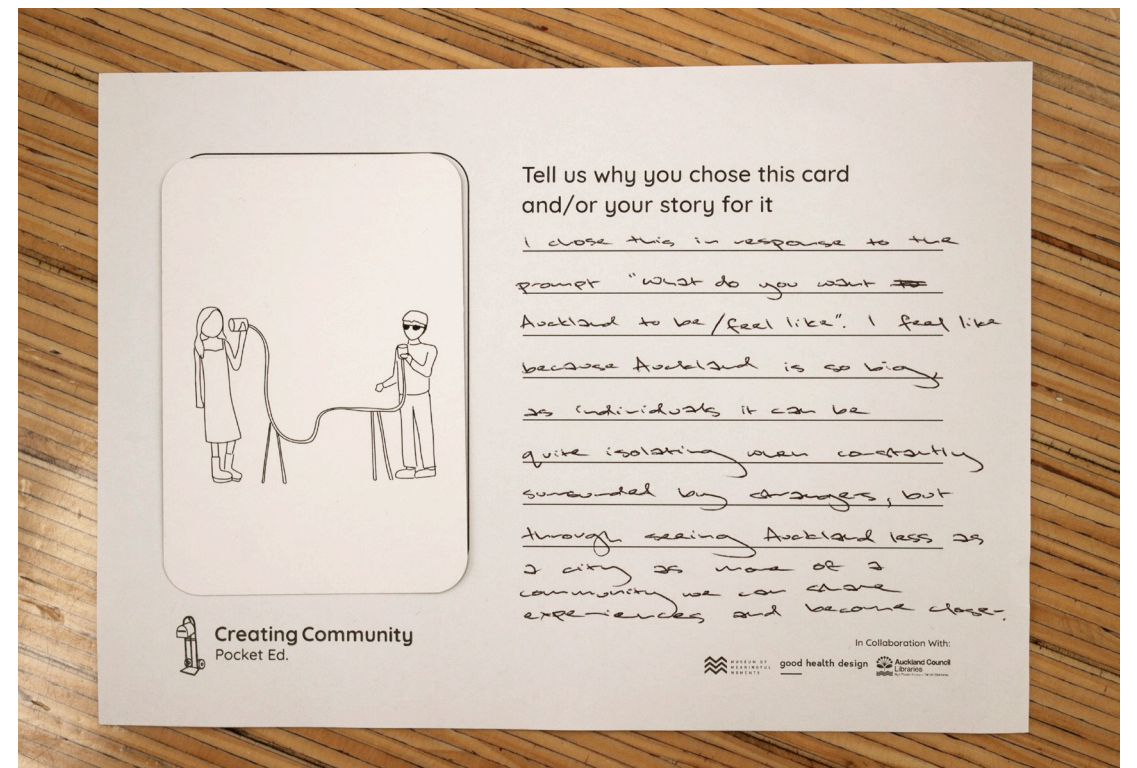
Left: Figure 66, Alyssa Tang, Creating Community pocket edition, 2021, photograph, Auckland

⁸⁷ Helen Fisher, Claire Craig, and Paul Chamberlain, “Life Café: A Co-Designed Method of Engagement,” *The Design Journal* 22 no. 1 (2019): 454. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14606925.2019.1595431>

Pocket Edition Testing

I tested the Pocket Edition (image elicitation card game) 'live' as part of a series of workshops held at the City Library. The prompts were adjusted to fit under the theme of 'place and belonging in Auckland'.

At the end of the session, participants were asked to write about an image that stood out to them. This helped capture stories and discussion that emerged through this activity. In future research situations, this could be used as a way to record data from participants.



Above: Figure 67. Cassie Khoo, Pocket Edition library Speak Auckland, 2021, photograph, Auckland

Below: Figure 68. Alyssa Tang, Pocket Edition library Speak Auckland response, 2021, photograph, Auckland

Dissemination of Research

I created three zines exploring how data and insights gathered through this research might be disseminated back to the community. Through these zines, the conversation started through the exhibitions would be able to continue, and exist outside of the 'pop-up' times for each exhibition.

Each zine was based on an overarching theme or insight that I had found interesting throughout the research. Content was a combination of my thoughts, artefact ideas, and participant responses that culminated into the main theme.

In future research, the zines could simultaneously disseminate insights and invite potential participants to upcoming exhibitions, creating cyclical interaction between the researcher and participant audience.

See Appendix 4 for full zines.



In Conclusion

This research set out to explore the efficacy of critical design as a creative research tool for engaging members of the Auckland City community in a conversation about community, what it meant to them as individuals, and how they related to the community around them.

The initial framework developed through this process proposes an engaging and interesting way to reach out to, and research with public communities at a small scale. This also diverged into multiple outputs and opportunities for future research through the *Tabletop Edition*, *Pocket Edition*, and zines.

I feel incredibly grateful to have undertaken this Masters research, and excited by the opportunities for critical design in social research.

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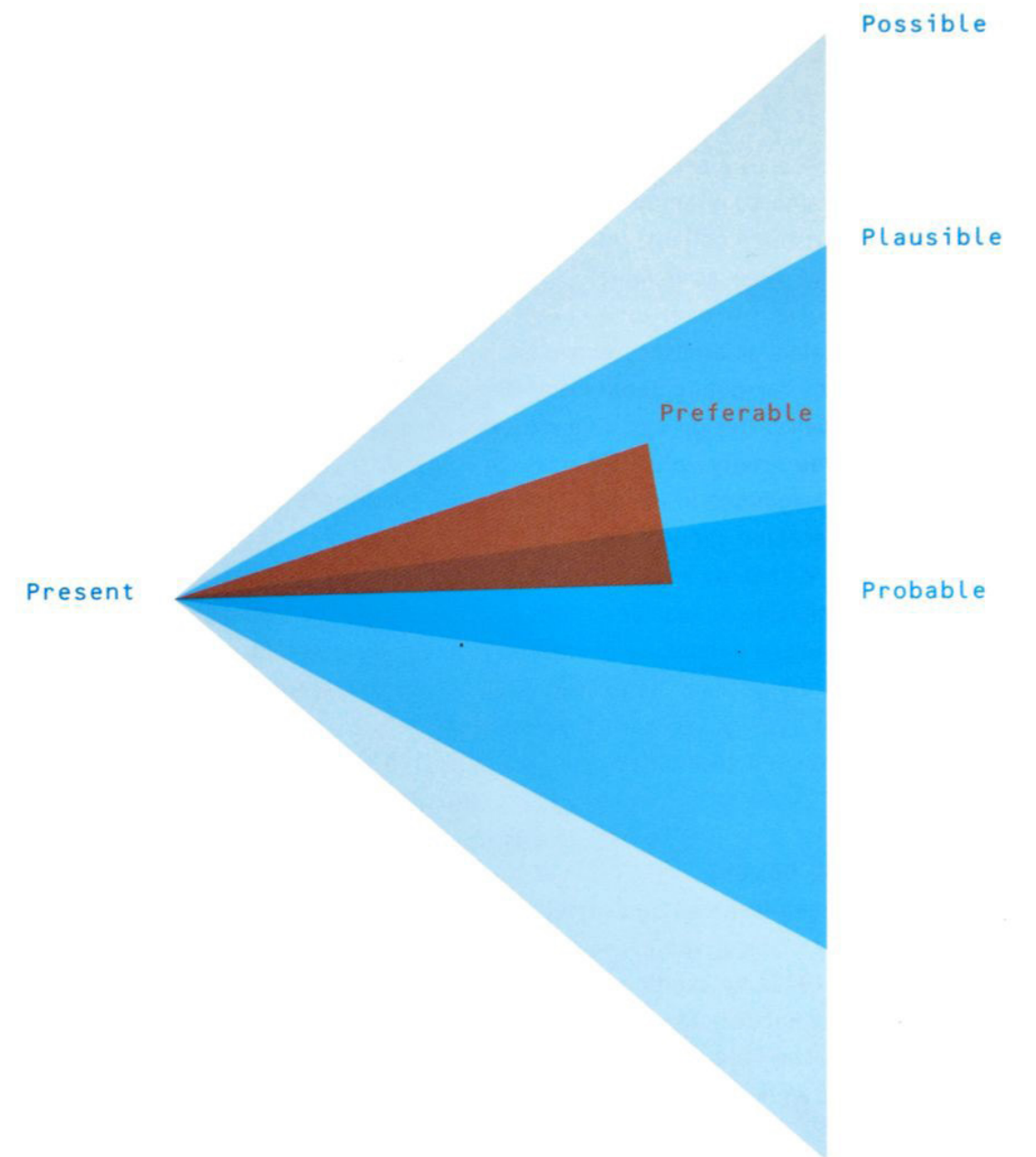
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Appendices



Appendix 1

Right: Dunne and *Speculative Everything*, PPPP Diagram, 2013. from *Speculative Everything*

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

15 September 2020

Ivana Nakarada-Kordic
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Ivana

Ethics Application: 20/249 **Creating community through critical artefacts: Using creative methods to explore attitudes towards community in Auckland City**

We advise you that a subcommittee of the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) has **approved** your ethics application.

This approval is for three years, expiring 14 September 2023.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: aswtang@gmail.com

Appendix 2

Ethics Application 20/249

Hello, welcome to this exhibition space

My name is Alyssa and I am a design student at AUT. This exhibition is part of a design research project about how critical artefacts (the objects that you see here) could be used to get people thinking and responding differently regarding our community in Auckland CBD.

As part of this research, I invite you to participate by sharing your thoughts about the critical artefacts and how you might relate them to your own thoughts about the community in Auckland CBD and the culture of the city.

There are different ways for you to share your thoughts on the critical artefacts in this research and how they might relate to community in Auckland CBD. You can respond by writing, drawing, and/or you might like to answer a few simple questions verbally if you feel like talking to me directly. I will collect any written and/or drawn feedback you provide with your consent, and/or notes written by me if you wish to respond verbally.

Your participation in this research will remain completely confidential. You will not be asked to provide any personal information (such as your name) that might be used to identify you.

If you do not want to provide written and/or verbal feedback but still wish to experience the exhibition, that is okay, and you are most welcome to do so. Please let me know if this is the case.

If you have any questions or queries, please approach me - I am present in the space - and take a written information sheet.

You can also find the Exhibitions at the following locations and dates:

AUT City Campus Hikuwai Plaza	26th September	11am - 1pm
AUT City Campus outside WF	28th September	11am - 2pm
AUT City Campus Hikuwai Plaza	29th September	11am - 2pm
AUT City Campus outside WM	30th September	11am - 2pm

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor

Ivana Nakarada-Kordic
ivana.nakarada-kordic@aut.ac.nz

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC,

ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

If you have any queries or would like to know more about this research, you can contact the research team:

Alyssa Tang | Researcher
aswtang@gmail.com

Ivana Nakarada-Kordic | Project Supervisor
ivana.nakarada-kordic@aut.ac.nz

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The costs of participating will be your time to provide written, drawn, and/or verbal feedback.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

This exhibition will be running from 11am-2pm in several locations in Auckland CBD. If you do not feel like participating right now, please feel free to do so in one of the locations/times below:

The Design Space, North Shore Hospital
Ellen Melville Centre, Auckland CBD
AUT City Campus St Paul street Gallery 2
AUT South Campus, Mana Haurua Building

Auckland City Library

19th Nov

21st Nov

24th Nov

26th Nov

30th Nov-

3rd Dec

What are the discomforts and risks?

I understand that this can be a sensitive topic that might be something you might be uncomfortable sharing your opinions about.

If you don't feel like talking to me about this, you can still participate and share your thoughts by writing them on our graffiti wall or on the response cards which will be hidden from the public once you place them into the collection box.

If at any point you feel uncomfortable, feel free to end the conversation or stop participating. If you do not feel like participating in research and providing written and/or verbal feedback, but still want to view the exhibition, you are most welcome to do so. Please let me know if this is the case.

Hello, welcome to this exhibition space

Hello, my name is Alyssa and I am a design student at AUT. I'm interested in the way exhibitions like the one you see today can help us think about our community in Auckland CBD and what citizenship in the city looks like.

The objects in the exhibition are called 'critical artefacts'. These are products that aren't functional but are intended to get people thinking and responding differently - regarding topics such as community - than they would if simply asked interview-like questions.

What will happen in this research?

Today I would like to know what your thoughts are on the critical artefacts on display and how you might relate them to your own thoughts about community. I might ask you some questions like "What do you think about this object?" You do not have to respond if you don't want to. You can also share your thoughts by writing or drawing on the graffiti wall or the response cards.

Please note, you must be over 18 to participate. If you are not over 18, you are still welcome to view the exhibition without writing anything or submitting any data.

What data is being collected?

There are different ways for you to share your thoughts on the critical artefacts in this research and how they might relate to the community in Auckland CBD. You can respond by writing, drawing, and/or you might like to answer a few simple questions verbally if you feel like talking to me directly.

I will collect any written and/or drawn feedback you provide with your consent, and/or notes written by me if you wish to respond verbally. At the end of the day, I will also take some photos of the graffiti wall to help me summarise and analyse all the feedback.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice). Your identity will not be known to the researcher. That means that I will not know your name or who you are and no information that would identify you as individuals will be recorded.

Any information you yourself wish to provide to the researcher will not be linked back to you in any way.

Why are we doing this? What are the benefits?

Using exhibition and critical artefacts is a new way to research. I want to test this form of research and data collection and see how it can be used when talking about the community in the city.

This research is to see what the people in our city think about community and what they feel makes up a community. Our world is constantly changing and as a result, so is our idea of a community and what it looks like.

Information Poster displayed at exhibitions (Left)

Information Sheet available for participants to take away from exhibitions (Right)

Appendix 3

Phase 1 Artefact Description cards



Sharing Cups

This object thinks about the disparities and differences between groups through two non-identical cups that are interlinked with tubes. When one party goes to take a drink, some water inevitably is transferred to the other cup and vice versa. It is interesting to think about the give and take within a community and how these cups might represent that.



Mobile Address

The mobile address explores transience, home, and unconventional ways to be part of a community. Currently, having a home address is required to participate in the community through formal means such as voting. This object challenges how formal systems might not consider different ways a community can form and exist.




Community Loyalty Card

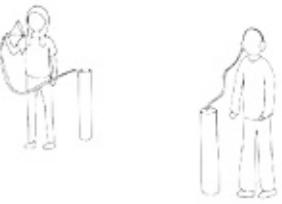
This object questions whether citizenship or belonging to a community is a right or an obligation. Members of the city community might collect 'stamps' for participating or contributing to the community, and use a full stamp card to access community services like education, healthcare, voting, and legal services.



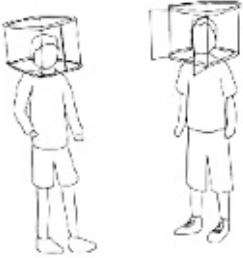
Community Checklist
The community checklist explores the responsibilities of citizens and how they 'should' contribute to the community through a mandatory points system that awards people with different rankings based on their score. To score points you must participate in the community. To earn your right to the community you must score points.




Community Pills
Community pills allow people to 'feel' community - creating feelings of support, safety, appreciation, content, and welcome. This speculative proposal explores the role of community to fulfil our social needs, and what would happen to community if we were able to fulfil these with substances instead of interaction. Are these still feelings of community if the community is absent?



Concern Processor 2.0
This artefact connects members of the public through a speaking and a listening station. Someone might unburden themselves by speaking into the speaking station, whilst someone elsewhere in the city, a stranger might be supporting the through listening. This one-way interaction explores communities created by shared geography, and asks if people feel supported by their community through a system.


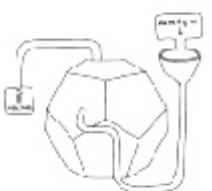




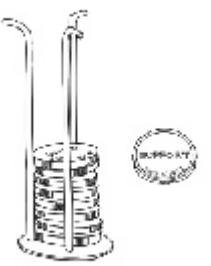


Personal Space
The personal space helmet is a metaphorical representation of community being made of individual people. This visualises a situation where everyone wears a transparent cube with doors on the front, exploring isolation through the physical separation, control through being able to open your own doors to invite others in, and acceptance (or rejection) when one person invites another (or denies them entry) into their personal space.



Mobile Address
The mobile address explores transience, home, and unconventional ways to be part of a community. Currently, having a home address is required to participate in the community through formal means such as voting. This object challenges how formal systems might not consider different ways a community can form and exist.

Phase 3 Artefact Description cards

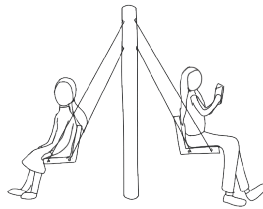
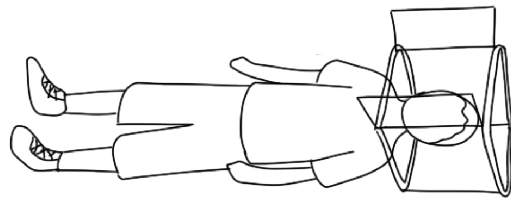
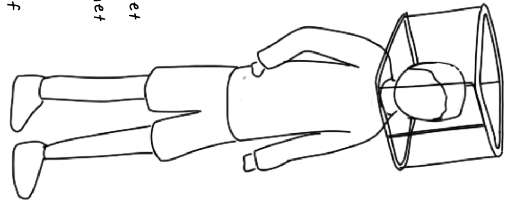
	<p>5. Belonging Pass</p>	<p>What determines whether you 'qualify' or not to belong to a group?</p> <p>What are some communities you would like to access but currently feel that you can't?</p>
	<p>2. Emotional Distillery</p>	<p>This is a machine that bottles feelings. What is a feeling you get from your community that you would like to bottle?</p>
	<p>6. Contribution Counter</p>	<p>How do you maintain individuality whilst still being part of a community?</p>

	<p>7. Personality Perfumes</p>	<p>How do you know you can trust someone you know nothing about?</p> <p>What about a community makes you connect to it?</p>
	<p>3. Support Currency</p>	<p>What would support look like as a currency? What would it look like to be support-poor?</p> <p>If support were a currency, what do you think your life might look like?</p>
	<p>1. Mobile Address</p>	<p>What do unconventional ways of being part of a community look like, and how well are they recognised?</p> <p>What is an unconventional or unrecognised community that you've been a part of?</p>
	<p>4. Conversation Indicator</p>	<p>The conversation indicator allows people to communicate to others if they are open to talking to strangers.</p> <p>How would your interactions change if you could see whether people were open to conversation?</p>

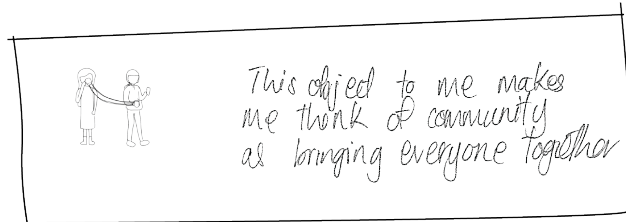
#1 COMMUNITY IS CREATED BY INDIVIDUALS

Community is
the collective
of subjective
beings

33. Personal Space Helmet
The personal space helmet
is a metaphorical
representation of
community being made of
multiple individuals.



30. Collaborative Seating
Collaborative seating creates a partnership
between strangers. The seats are
turned away from each other, but the users
are still reliant on one another to remain
comfortably in their sitting position.

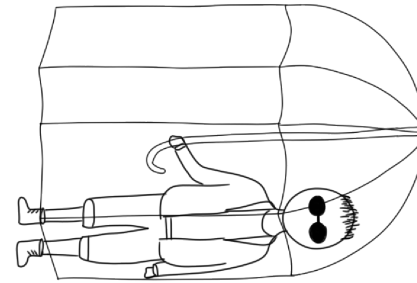


This object to me makes
me think of community
as bringing everyone together

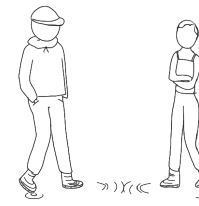


A participant said that these cups show a form of
exchange that is too binary and not realistic - that when
someone is gaining something, someone else is losing
something. They used an analogy where two people are at a
bar together and one buys the other a drink - the buyer
could be seen as losing money and the receiver 'wins' a
drink, but they both benefit from each other's company.

03. Sharing Cups
Sharing Cups interlink two different people. When one
person takes a drink, water is inevitably transferred to
the other cup and vice-versa.



11. Body umbrella
The body umbrella delineates a person's
individual space. Interactions between
individuals now become more deliberate.
In a situation where everyone was using this
umbrella, one might feel excluded in their
own space, but included in the trend.

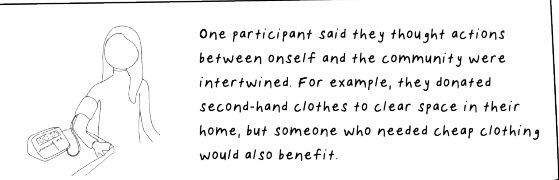
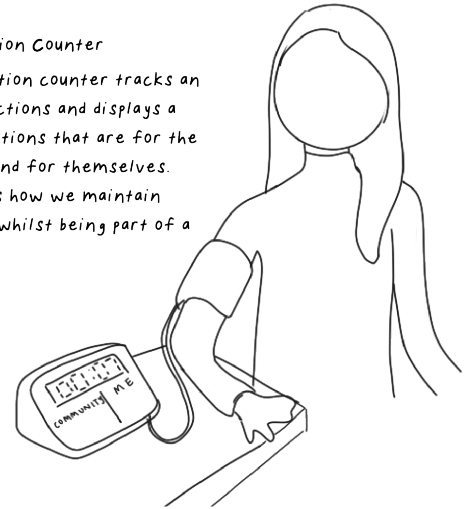


24. Ripple Boots
When these boots sense another person nearby, they
light up as if people were walking in water and their
ripples were encountering each other.



A participant talked about individual people
who create a community together. For
example, creative people who split off and
then come back together with their own
separate work for a project like t.v. shows
who have different writers.

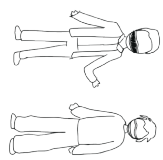
38. Contribution Counter
The contribution counter tracks an
individual's actions and displays a
balance of actions that are for the
community, and for themselves.
This explores how we maintain
individuality whilst being part of a
community.



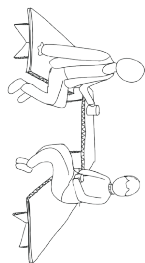
One participant said they thought actions
between oneself and the community were
intertwined. For example, they donated
second-hand clothes to clear space in their
home, but someone who needed cheap clothing
would also benefit.

A participant talked about how the city mission can get
wild, and people who are on meth make the space
dangerous, so chairs are removed, meaning people who are
old or injured can't sit down

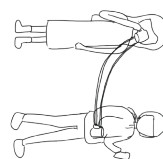
AS A COMMUNITY, WE TAKE RESPONSIBILITY
AND BEAR THE CONSEQUENCES OF
INDIVIDUAL'S ACTIONS. DOES THIS MEAN
THAT THE COMMUNITY IS ALSO RESPONSIBLE
FOR INDIVIDUAL'S WELLBEING?



1. Censorship Mask



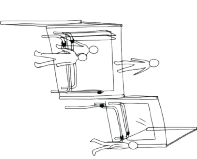
2. Tea Break Chair



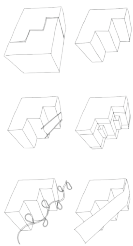
3. Sharing Cups



4. Concern Processor



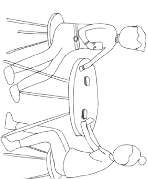
5. Communication Barrier



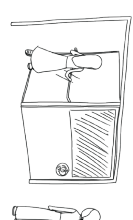
6. Ways to get up the stairs



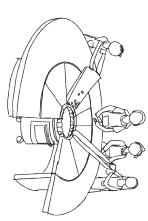
7. Previous Lives Maker Space



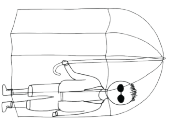
8. Conversation Cards



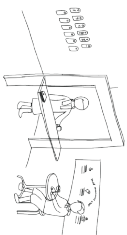
9. Physical Storbook



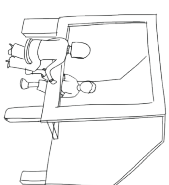
10. Person Recipe



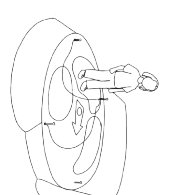
11. Body Umbrella



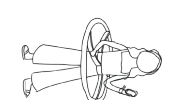
12. Community Gate



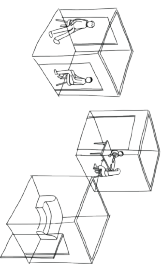
13. Human Computer



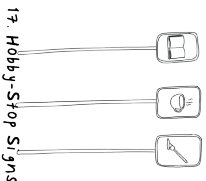
14. Reflection Compass



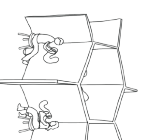
15. Keep Your Distance



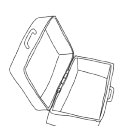
16. City Cubes



17. Hobby-Stop Signs



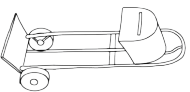
18. Talking Tubes



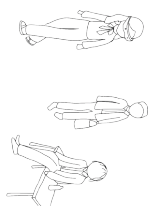
19. Working Tools



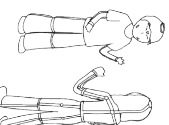
20. Distance Rod



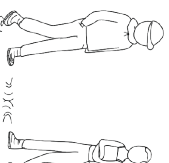
21. Mobile Address



22. Perception Processor



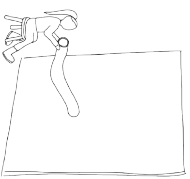
23. Behavioural Training



24. Ripple Boots



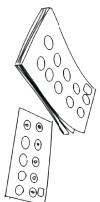
25. Street Lamp Switch



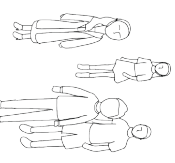
26. Communication Stranger



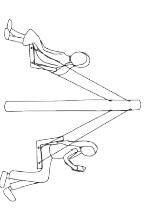
27. Identity Labels



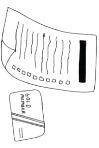
28. Community Loyalty Card



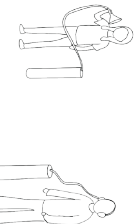
29. Faceless Mask



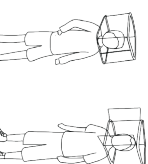
30. Collaborative Seating



31. Community Checklist



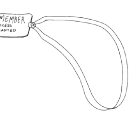
32. Concern Processor 2.0



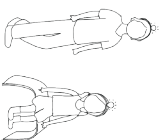
33. Personal Space Helmet



34. Community Pills



35. Belonging Pass



36. Conversation Indicators



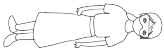
37. Belonging Gauge



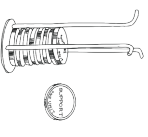
38. Contribution Counter



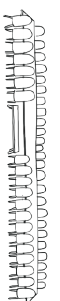
39. Personality Perfumes



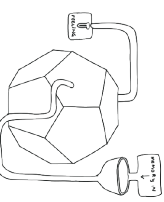
40. Perspectives



41. Support Currency



42. The Longest Dining Table

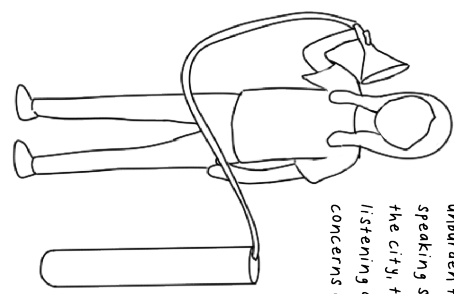


43. Emotional Distillery

#2. IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE WELCOME

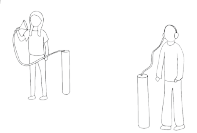
ARE GEOGRAPHIES OR SPACES CONSIDERED COMMUNITIES?

One participant said they found community in micro environments like with family and friends, and didn't identify much with geographical or wider communities. We discussed how in their own local community, most people who identified and felt that they belonged there were part of local groups like sports clubs



32. Concern Processor 2.0
The concern processor 2.0 allows members of the public to unburden themselves at a speaking station. Elsewhere in the city, there might be someone listening and carrying their concerns at a listening station.

One participant affirmed that geographies are communities - this person lives in the city centre and believes that they get a sense of community from the events that happen in the area. They have built their community in relation to geography



Think with so much of stuff done on the internet, its easy to feel less part of a group as there is a lack of F2F connection

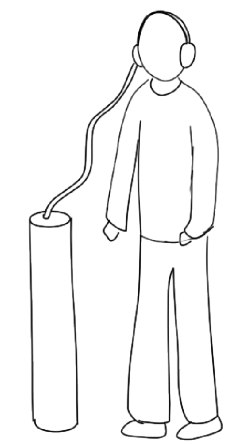
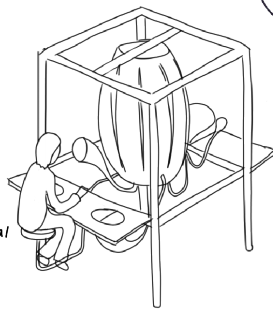
Spatially, I don't feel like I have much of a community. Socially, I do.

I disagree, there's a stereotype/stigma of where I live. I am proud to represent myself as that type of person.

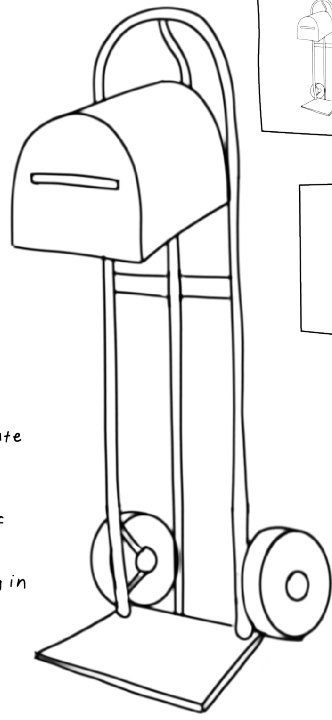
I FIND THIS INTERESTING AS MY SPATIAL ENVIRONMENT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ME + MY HEADSPACE

I BELIEVE AN INVITING + LIGHT SPACE CAN CREATE/ENCOURAGE A COMMUNITY (GATHERING OF PEOPLE)

04. Concern Processor
The Concern Processor is a space where people can unburden themselves and receive a response. An individual might approach and share their concerns. At a different point in time, another individual might 'submit' a creation. An unexplained processor in the Centre responds to the concerned person with a creation.



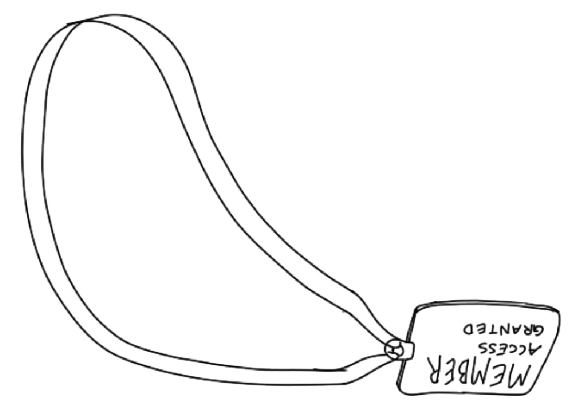
21. Mobile Address
The mobile address is intended to explore societal standards for what constitutes a home. The artefact trivialises this restriction on citizens, asking what adequate living standards are. This was based on a situation where the Auckland City Council fenced over a sleep-out used by members of the street community. The Mobile Address becomes verification that the person living in this area is also part of this neighbourhood.



One participant said that Maori would not necessarily see a person who is 'homeless' in the western understanding as homeless

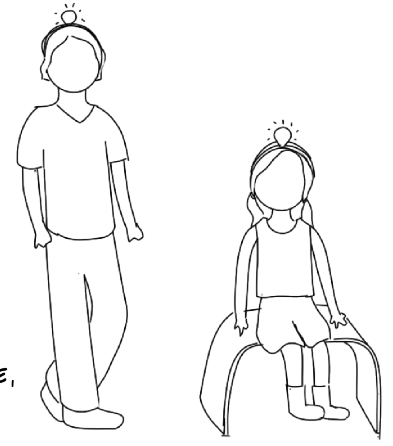
A participant said that from a Maori perspective, you are never homeless. They talked about iwi and ancestry and said that it was more about choice - you may see beggars on the street, but not homeless people.

IF SOMEONE DID HAVE A HOME OR SOMEWHERE THEY WERE WELCOME, HOW WOULD THEY KNOW IT?



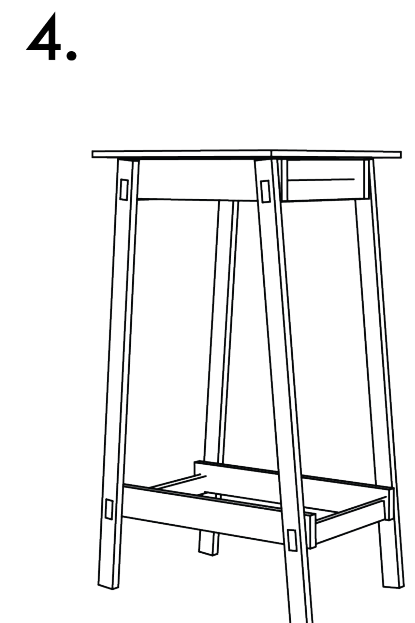
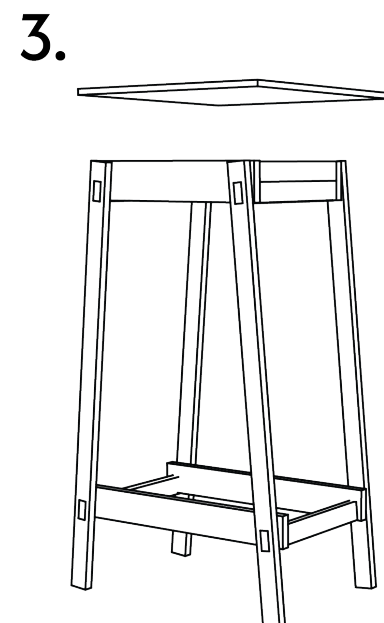
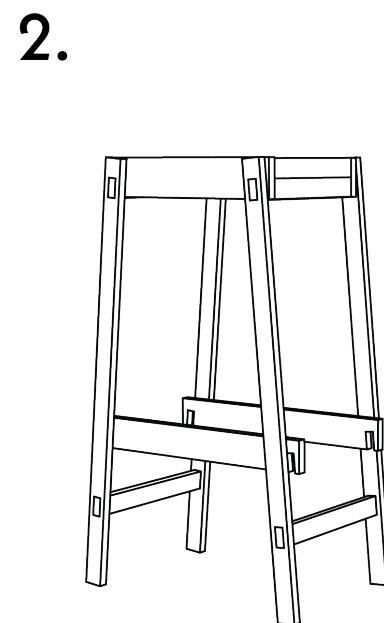
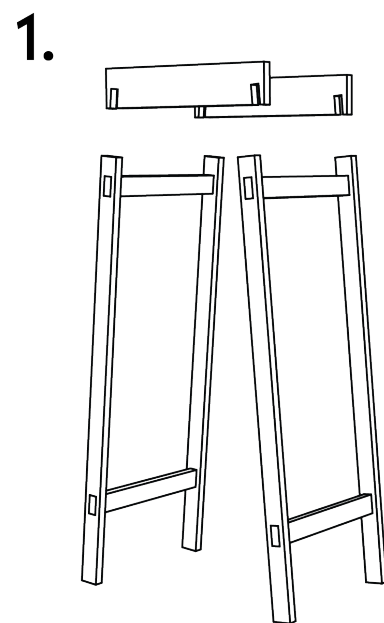
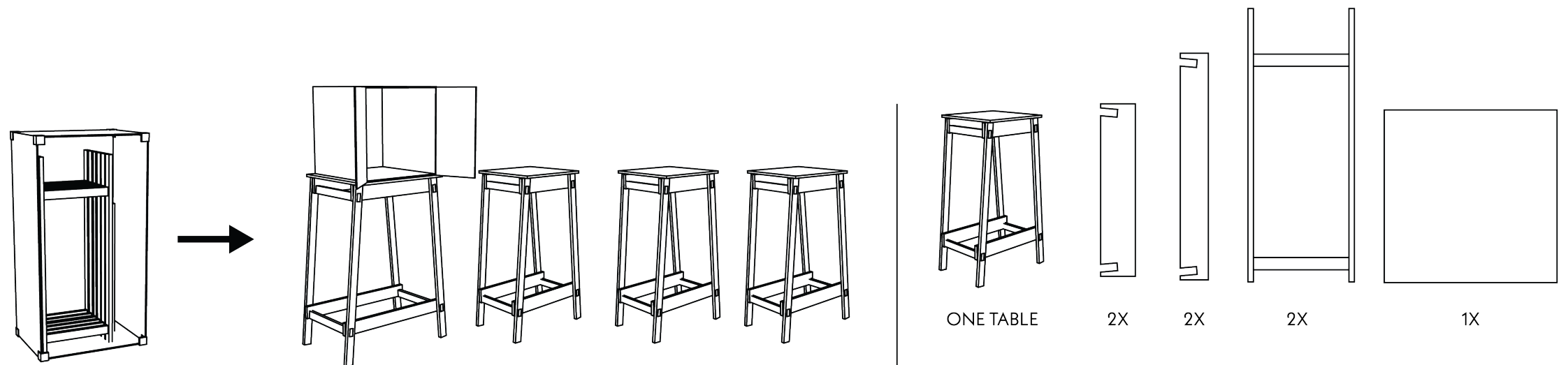
35. Belonging Pass
The Belonging Pass grants its wearer access into any space or community they wish to be part of, but may feel excluded from. This lanyard and badge verify them as 'welcome' in the community.

One participant said that as an Asian person who was born in NZ, they felt out of place, especially outside of Auckland. They talked about how they feel pressure to show that they were born here and part of the community, like talking louder to show that they don't have an accent



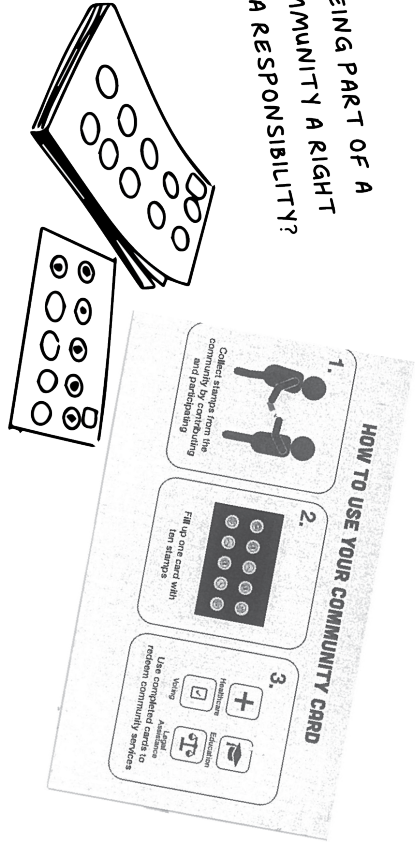
36. Conversation Indicator
Conversation indicators display when someone is open to interact with others in public, creating a space where strangers might connect and form new communities.

How to: Build a Mobile Exhibition



#3 WHAT IS A GOOD PERSON?

IS BEING PART OF A COMMUNITY A RIGHT OR A RESPONSIBILITY?



28. Community Loyalty Card

Members of the city community collect 'stamps' for participating or contributing to the community, and use a full stamp card to access community services like education, healthcare, voting, and legal services. Without participating, you are not eligible to receive community services.

One participant felt that this should be an implemented idea as they agreed that people should be involved in the community.

One participant disagreed with this idea, saying there shouldn't be an obligation in order to receive public services. Their community is ethnicity based but it welcomes everyone - including people who aren't that ethnicity.

This is like a checklist of what citizens SHOULD do! (to be part of a community).

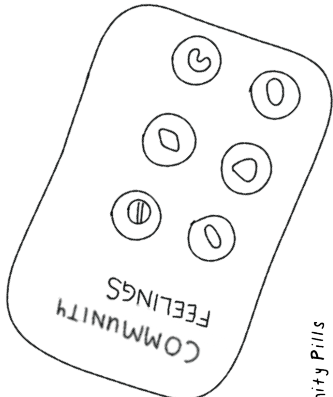
COMMUNITY CHECKLIST	
	Nov 2020
Have a conversation with someone	Points 10
Smile at someone	5
Ask someone how they are doing	20
Compliment someone	20
Ask someone if they are okay	35
Donate money to a charity	20
Private: 10/100	15

31. Community Checklist

This is a mandatory points system that awards people with different rankings based on a monthly score. Collect points by participating in the community to earn your rights.

One participant said this was interesting because it shows how we get different feelings from interactions and community.

"I want to be able to buy these. These are something I would send to a friend"



34. Community Pills

Community pills allow people to 'feel' community without needing to interact with other people - for example, supported, safe, appreciated, content, and welcome.

HOW MUCH DO WE NEED TO GIVE?



YOUR MEMBERSHIP CARD

GOLD MEMBER
ID: AWL20095122
NOVEMBER 2020

One person said that sometimes we don't always give back, and general busyness can be a reason for this, but this is a good reminder.

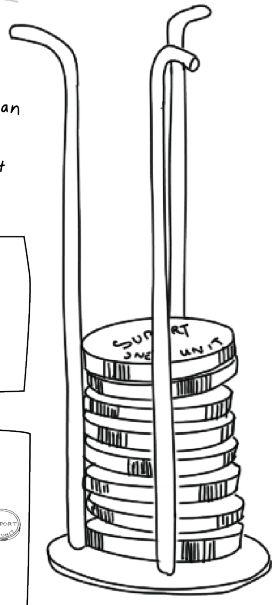
"Why is adopting an animal only 5 more points than asking how someone is doing?"

One person said that some people don't connect with community, and this can be a reminder of what can be done.

A participant found this interesting as they mention that this might result in better support within the community, but some people don't want to be part of it or participate and free will is still important, but a "good person" would want to participate.

Community to me is about finally a place/people that make you feel at home, supported and comfortable etc.

SUPPORT AS A FINITE RESOURCE



41. Support currency

Support currency is a way to show appreciation of members in your community. This artefact frames an abstract interaction as a material resource, asking questions like 'can we run out of support?' and 'what does being support-poor look like?'

One participant talked about how there might be a situation where someone might want to talk to you, but you don't have enough currency to have a conversation.

Everyone has a limited set of "support" you can offer. Important for everyone to offer shared support in a community so no single person's tokens fully deplete.



