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"It starts with a conversation"

An exploration of creative, collaborative and participatory design approaches, in the context of disability, kāinga (housing and home) and policy

Title attributed to advice by Susan Wadsworth, co-facilitator and collaborator

*Faye O'Sullivan. An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Design. **Massey University. July 2024.***



*Funded by: NZ Health Research Council,
Emerging Researcher First Grant [21/099]*

A note on format

This exegesis is available in three formats:

- 1) Interactive Miro board**
- 2) Digital PDF**
- 3) Printed copy (upon request)**

If you are reading this exegesis on paper, or as a digital PDF, you are encouraged to join us alongside your reading in the interactive digital format via Miro.

There, I'll say 'kia ora' and we can have a chat via sticky notes. After all, it starts with a conversation...

To visit the Miro exegesis, click here:

<https://bit.ly/46mFwbw>

Password: conversation

(Recommended viewing via laptop or computer, not a mobile device)

Suggested pathways:

If you are interested in...

- ~ collaborative design theory, jump to p23
- ~ the detail of a collaborative design process, jump to p50
- ~ recommendations on 'how' to get started, jump to p72

Keywords:

Co-design, Co-production, Experience Design, Collaborative Design, Disability, Health Policy, Housing, Home, Kāinga, Participatory Design, Policy, Process Design

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***NB.** Sections J and K are
available digitally,
print upon request.*

Glossary:

This work features context-specific language.

A quick overview of some commonly used terms are described below:

Collaborative Design

A broad-strokes, non-academic definition, for the purposes of this exegesis: intended to encompass all 'co-' methodologies. Explored in more detail in 'Methodology'

Co-production / co-producing

In the context of the Flourishing Together project, a descriptor that acknowledges the 'co-production' of knowledge, and collaborative methods across the entire span of work

Co-production team (or CPT)

Our collaborative group: comprising people who self-identify as disabled, and are situated across Aotearoa

Disabled People

The preferred term within this research project for people with disabilities. "in line with affirmative language used by NZ disabled-led organisations and strategy documents" (Martin)

Kāinga

"A Māori term encapsulating aspects of house and home – including a sense of place and community, where one's collective identity is lived out" (Martin)

Literature Review

The activity undertaken by our co-production team: selecting, reading and commenting on a sample of reports and papers relating to disability housing interventions

'Mosaic-style literature review'

A shape and colour system, coding the reports involved in the literature review. Also a visual metaphor for the combination of knowledge-types

Realist Review

A type of systematic literature review, focused on sourcing literature that addresses the question: ""What works for whom under what circumstances, how and why?" (Wong G et al)

Tāngata Whāikaha

"A Māori term for 'disabled people'; literally translated as *'people in the pursuit of empowerment'*" (Martin)

We / I

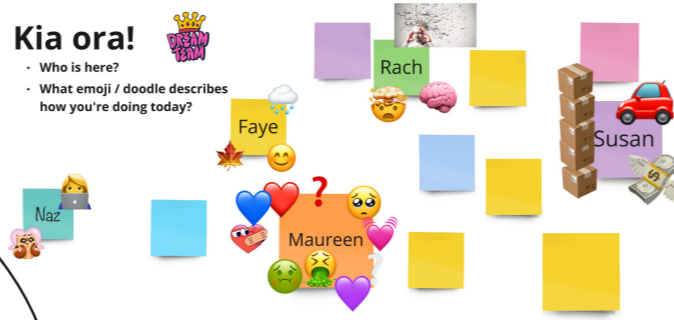
The use of 'we' and 'I' are used throughout this exegesis. 'We' is used primarily when discussing tangible process steps as these were collaborative efforts to carry out. The reflections in this exegesis were an independent activity, in which case 'I' is used when reflecting on design theory.

AROHANUI...



Kia ora!

- Who is here?
- What emoji / doodle describes how you're doing today?



Co-production Team

To all of the CPT, for your enthusiasm, advocacy, patience and trust. You are the project, I simply send the calendar invites! Thank you for the time and energy to show up so thoughtfully each time. Ka kite anō

The Co-Production Project & Toi Āria, for welcoming me to your meetings for eavesdropping, ideas (and cake) For being my cheerleaders along the way

To Anna, for one-upping my idea to 'do a paper' (!), challenging my thinking the whole way through, encouraging me to question everything and own my identity in design

Massey

(Thanks for convincing me to do a Masters, Jean...!)

Special thanks to Anjuli for being my personal Slack librarian and debating the definitions and depths of collaboration with me, I can't wait to see how your own work turns out next

To Liv for leading the way, to Rob for the library solidarity, Fran for the creative outlets, Bridget for the research pragmatism and Mum, for never failing to ask about 'my course'

Whanau

Bonya, Kayda, Arlo, Luka & Empress: my furry writing companions, you made it far less lonely: everybody should write their exegesis with a pet nearby

Space, place, pets

To KA and the Co-Design with Care crew, you helped expand my thinking and give words to the nebulous: thank you!

Co-Design with care

from the Wellington treehouse, to the Massey design studio, Predator Free offices, Te Awe library, Boulder, Denver, Steamboat and several coffee shops inbetween: for the fresh perspectives

Flourishing Together

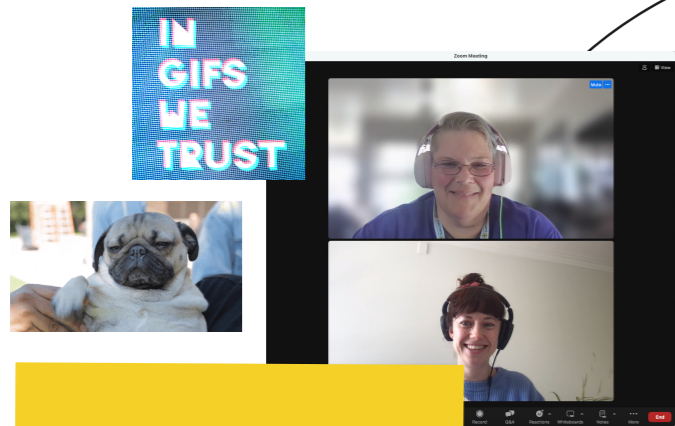
To Rachelle, for asking me to be a part of this mahi and trusting me with this task. Your unwavering enthusiasm for this mahi and your belief and support in me have bolstered me the whole way, thank you!

Lesley, Sarah, Miranda and the team at HUD: I so appreciate your patience and the time taken to explain policy 101 to me, you brought the roles to life!

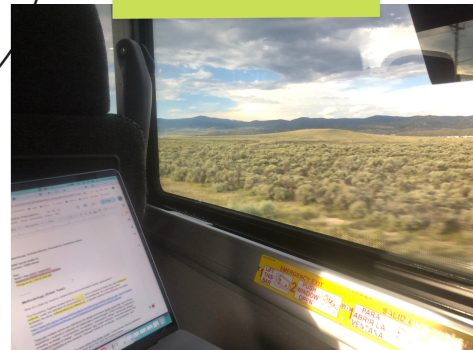
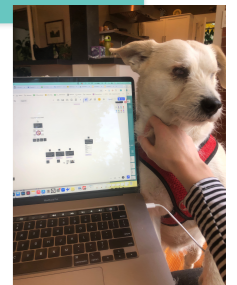
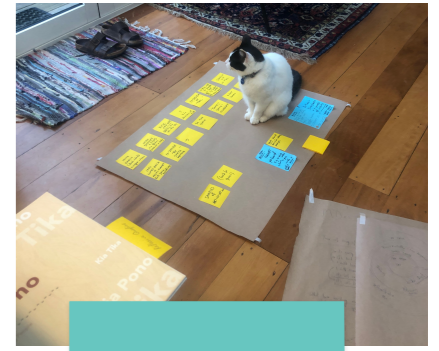
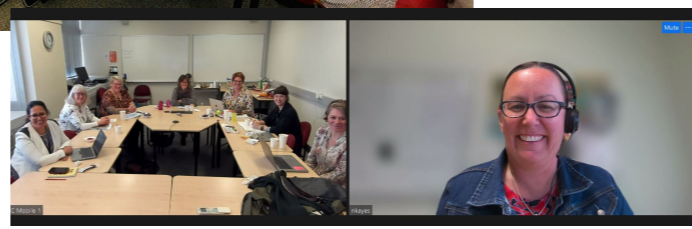
Policy folks

Nic, Kirsten, Lesley, Jasjot, Rachel, Jean: thank you for being so welcoming, encouraging and generous with your expertise, it was wonderful to learn from you all along the way

Core Research Team



To Susan, the GIF queen, most connected community collaborator, hustler, ideas whizz, wordsmith and co-conspirator, none of this would have happened without you, your knowledge and 'get-sh*t-done' attitude. Thank you for making it all less daunting and a lot more fun. Can't wait to work together again soon!



B:

Flourishing Together:

The wider project context



Flourishing Together:

Including Tāngata Whaikaha in Health Policy Development

'Flourishing Together: Including Tāngata Whaikaha and Disabled People in Health Policy Development' is a 3-year research project funded by the Health Research Council Emerging Researcher Fund, led by Dr Rachelle Martin.

The research is being conducted via the University of Otago Wellington (UOW) in collaboration with the University of Victoria Wellington (VUW), Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and Massey University, Wellington.

The key aims of the study are to 'co-produce':

- Resources to improve meaningful involvement of tāngata whaikaha in health-related policy development processes more generally.
- Policy recommendations about kāinga (housing and home).

Flourishing Together comprises four phases, of which phase 3: ***"a realist literature review with embedded co-production workshops"*** forms the context for this Masters of Design submission.

Rachelle Martin, lead researcher for Flourishing Together was co-supervisor for this Masters of Design project.

All citations for pages 7-8 (Martin et al.)

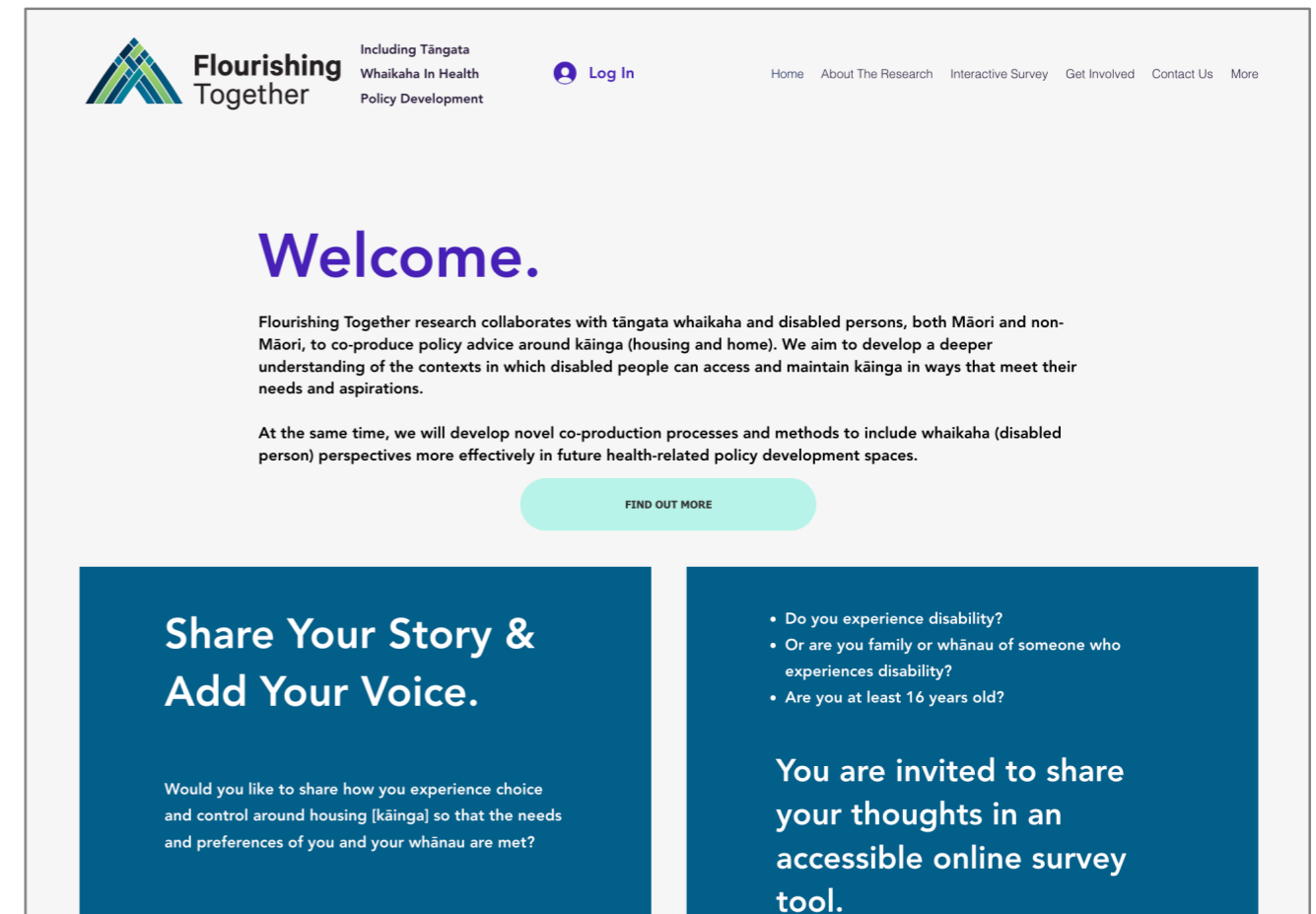


Fig. 2: Screenshot of Flourishing Together website, 2024



Key Links:

Flourishing Together website: www.flourishingtogether.co.nz/

The ethics for this Masters of Design project are covered by the Flourishing Together ethics, which [you can access here](#)

Protocol paper: [access here](#)

Flourishing Together: A phase in the midst

The four phases of Flourishing Together are discrete, yet interlinked. Each phase has a different focus, and aims to generate different knowledge, all of which contributes to the ongoing objectives of:

1. Developing co-production methods and tools
2. Emerging and refining theories about kāinga

The research is structured into four phases as shown in **fig. 3**:

- (1) co-developing the scope and focus of the policy question,
- (2) co-designing a qualitative data survey collection tool to gather nationwide data from disabled people,
- (3) co-designing and piloting a process to incorporate disabled people's experiences and expertise into a literature review, and
- (4) co-producing materials that disseminate the knowledge gained throughout the research, including co-production methods, tools, and housing policy recommendations

The Flourishing Together approach draws on healthcare, policy and design methods such as realist evidence synthesis, with embedded co-production and co-design (Martin)

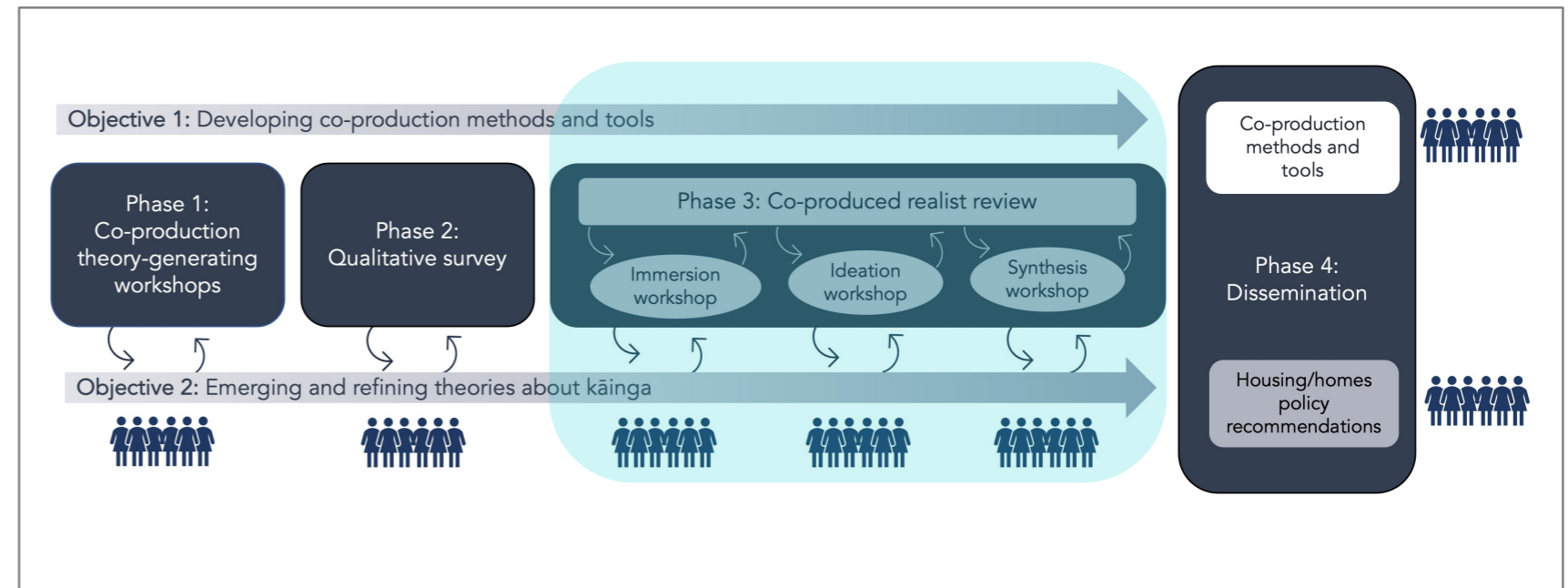


Fig. 3. Overview of research design, Flourishing Together, 2022

The initial proposal for phase three, as shown in fig. 3 (a series of workshops, engaging with a realist literature review) was offered as the context for this Masters of Design project, with the understanding and encouragement that this was not a set structure or process, and could be carried out in any design-led way.

The only explicit ask was to work with a 'co-production team' of disabled people, and work together to interact with literature about disability and housing, with aim of generating a lived-experience response to content usually interpreted exclusively by policy practitioners.

Flourishing Together: A simplified problem

To **simplify the ask entirely**, the goal of phase three was to work with two forms of knowledge:

A: knowledge gathered from literature, via a 'realist review'

B: knowledge gathered by 'lived experience', of experiencing the world from a disabled perspective

and find ways to combine these forms of knowledge, to generate a third form, **C:** knowledge that encompasses both perspectives.

As shown in **fig. 4** and **fig. 5**, these initially separate forms of knowledge, merge and overlap.

The intention behind this ask was to inject the voice and perspective of lived experience of disability into a process that is usually conducted by policy practitioners alone. This new insight would be a valuable addition to policy makers seeking to bring the disability community into their process.

The design challenge was in **how** to do this.

Samples of the types of 'literature' that the team engaged with are viewable in **appendix 6**: <https://t.ly/eHniQ>

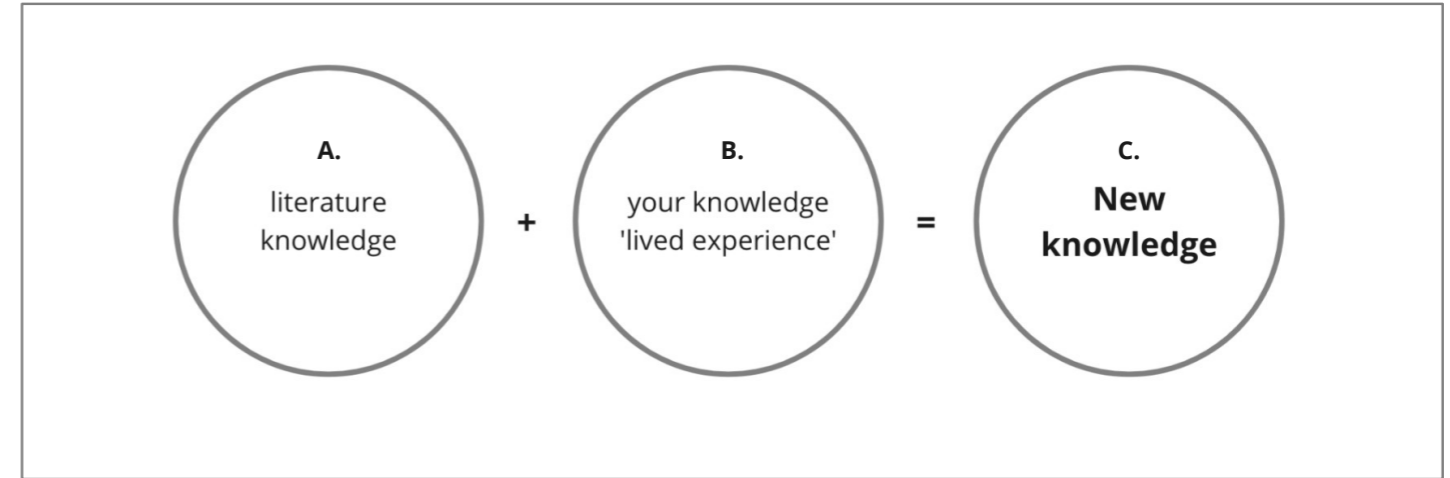


Fig. 4. Design challenge equation, digital image by author, 2023

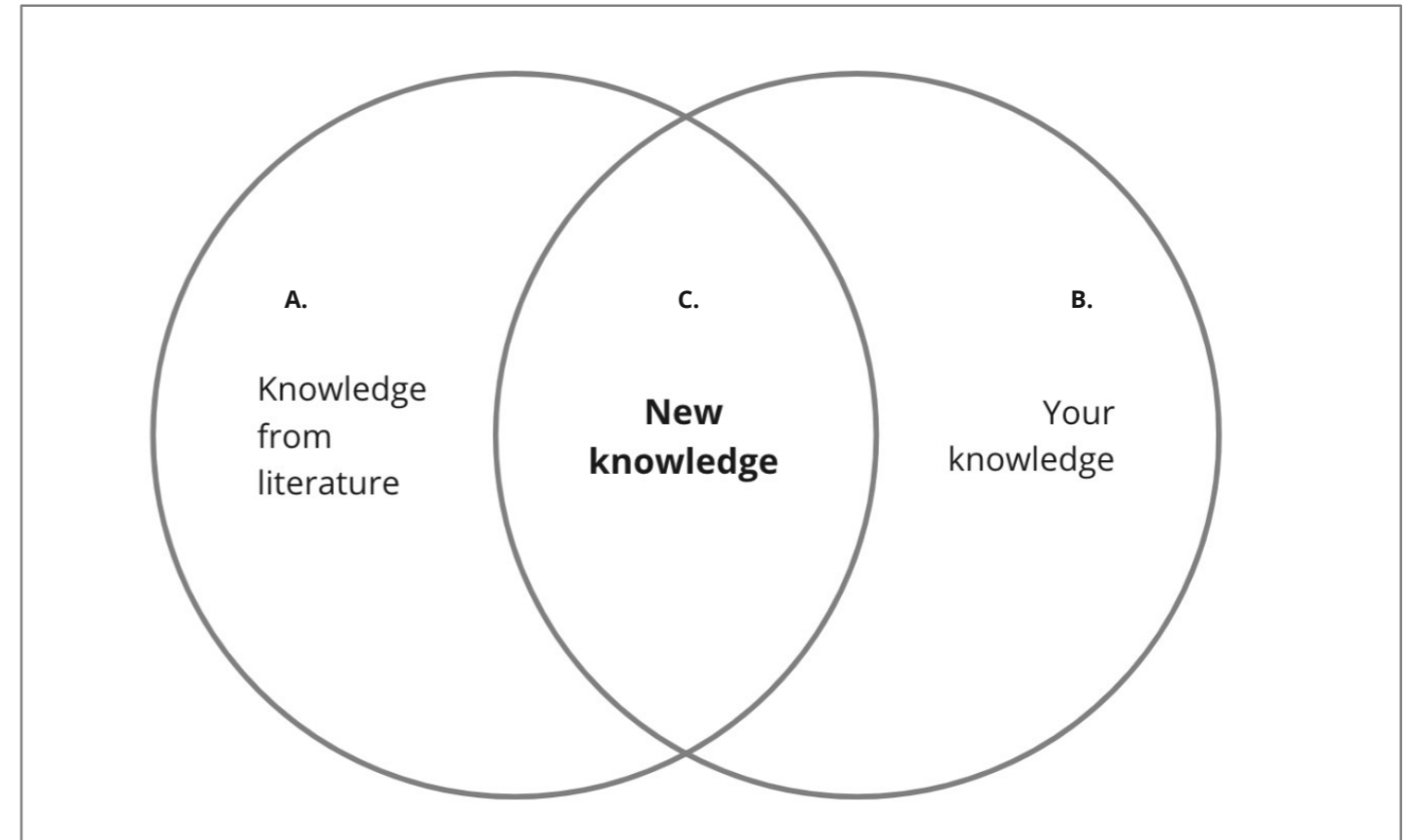


Fig. 5. Design challenge venn diagram, digital image by author, 2023

Levels & layers: micro, meso, macro problems

The Flourishing Together project has explored and framed the work around the principles of different system and impact levels: using the framework of micro, meso and macro thinking (Martin)

Fig. 6 shows this thinking in a simple visual form: micro actions affect and impact at an individual level. The meso level involves more actors and perhaps an organisational level. A macro level is more complex and wide-reaching: it may involve institutions that govern.

This is reinforced by **Fig. 7**, which focuses on Design Ethics, but again shows how there are different levels of complexity within different levels.

Each phase of the Flourishing Together project is considered in terms of where the intentions and impact sit within this scale. This Masters of Design project sits at the 'micro' level.

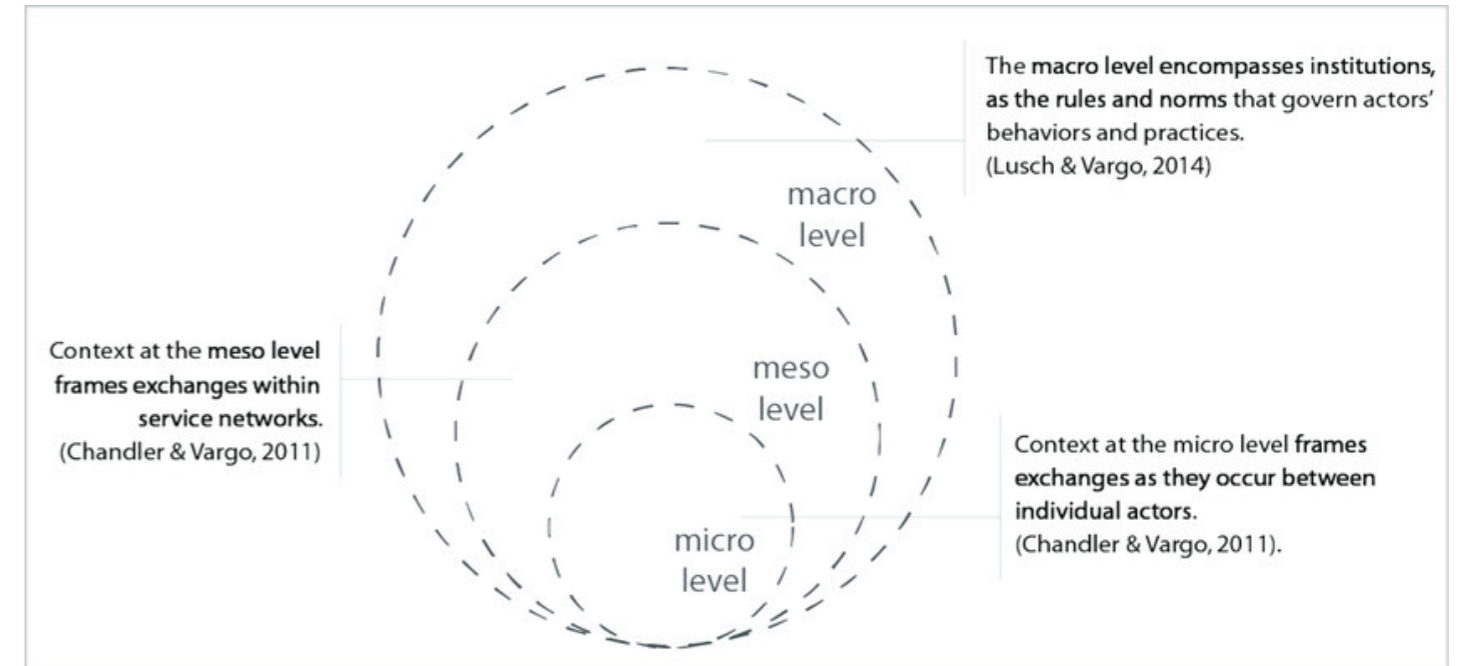


Fig 6: Maira Joly, *Service ecosystem model* based on Lusch & Vargo (2014) and Chandler & Vargo, (2011), 2020

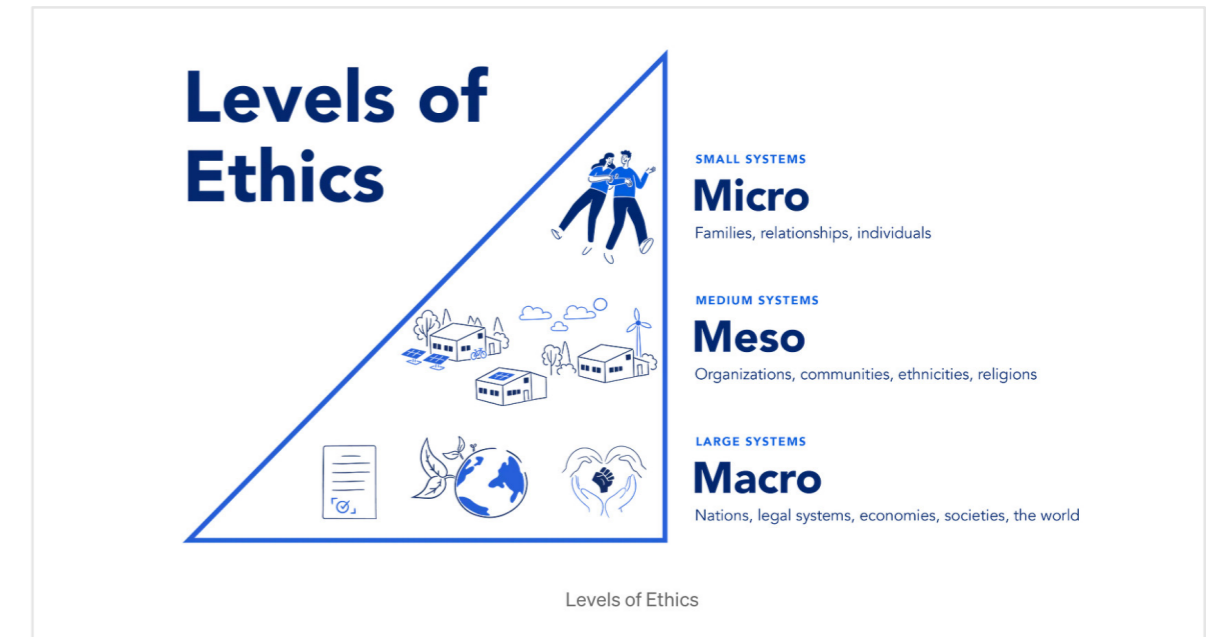


Fig 7: Nate Schloesser, *Levels of Ethics*, 2022

A micro challenge amidst macro issues

Fig. 8 shows questions raised by the Flourishing Together project, mapped to the different system levels they apply to. Highlighted in blue are questions that apply most to the scope of phase 3 (this project)

Fig. 9 shows the positioning and scope of this Masters of Design project within both the wider Flourishing Together project, and the micro, meso, macro framework.

This Masters of Design project sits at the micro level. The focus is on actions, interactions, methods and tools, which combined create an inclusive process. This process can then, in turn, facilitate the gathering of insight from literature.

We worked with a small sample of literature, from a wider realist review. The intention is that the process designed within this Masters, and the lessons learned, will enable the gathering of further insight across a 'full' realist review, for the wider Flourishing Together project, and future projects seeking to include disabled perspectives in meaningful ways.

Therefore, this exegesis will focus exclusively on the design and evaluation of the process. It will not contain detail on the content of the literature and the insights gathered, as this output relates to the wider Flourishing Together project and the 'meso' level.

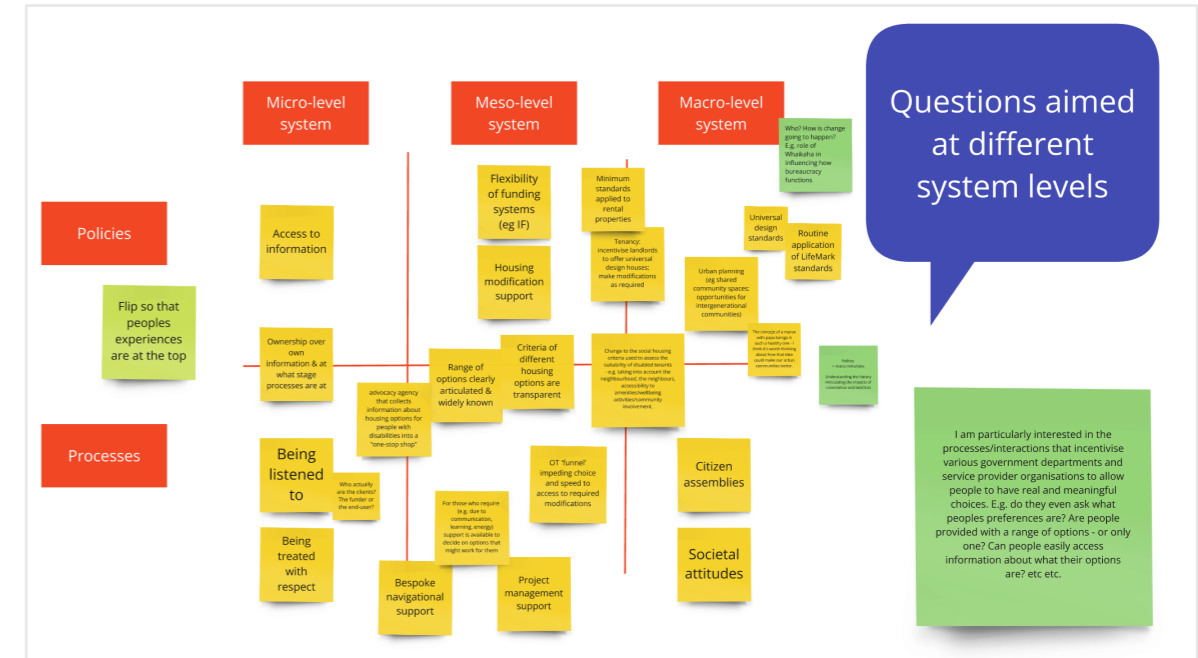


Fig. 8. Questions aimed at different system levels, a Miro diagram used with permission from the wider Flourishing Together project board

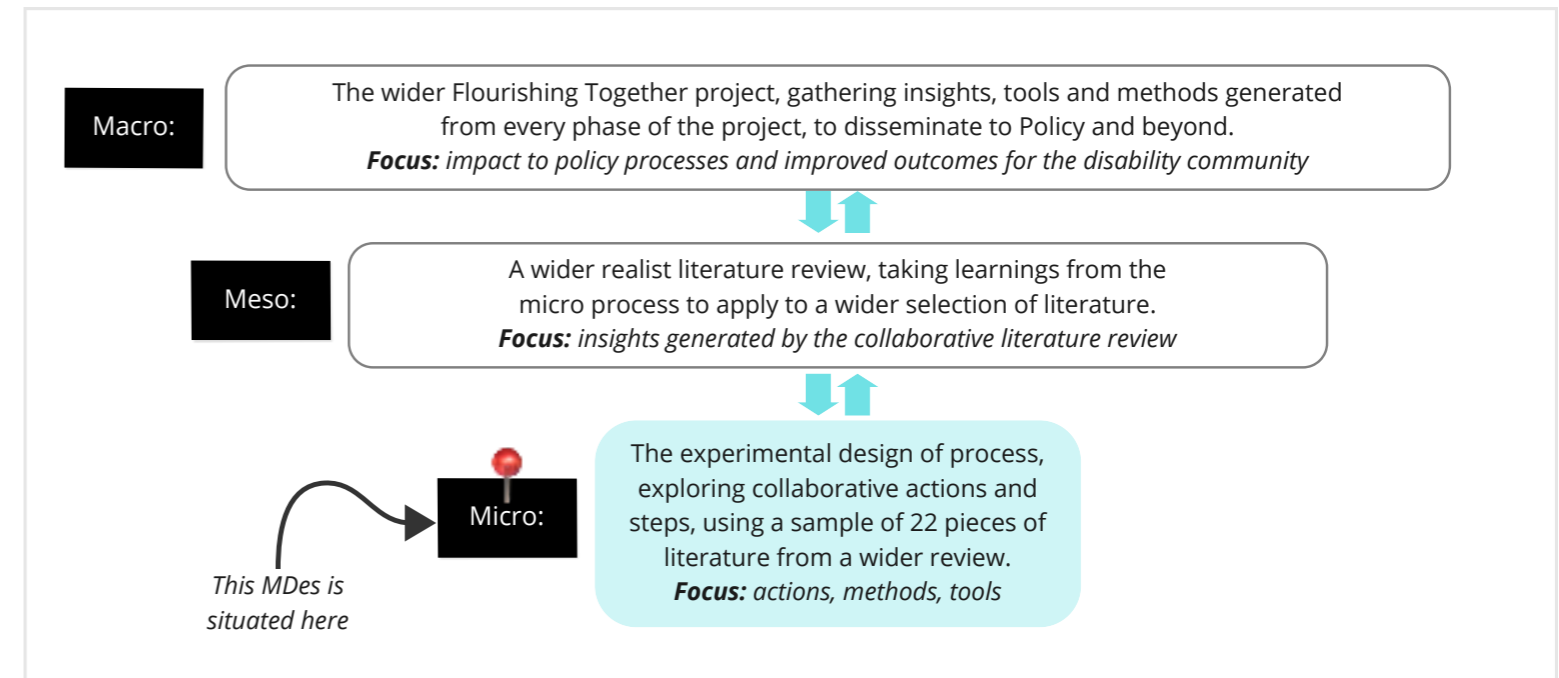


Fig. 9. Diagram showing the positioning of this Masters of Design amidst the wider Flourishing Together project, digital image by author, 2024

The benefits of joining an established project:

The Flourishing Together project had been underway for 2 years when I joined the team. This meant that there were people with specific expertise on-hand, ready to support and contribute to this phase of work. I was fortunate to be introduced to the following key collaborators:

Core Research Team

The core research team act as key advisors for the ongoing project and span multiple universities and institutes, bringing expertise in disability, health policy, health sciences, kaupapa māori and design.

University of Otago	Victoria University of Wellington	Auckland University of Technology	Toi Āria, Massey University
Dr Rachelle Martin	Prof Jean Hay Smith	Dr Kirsten Smiler	Dr Lesley Middleton
		Prof Nicola Kayes	Prof Anna Brown
			Faye O'Sullivan
Rachel Haselden	Jasjt Maggo		Susan Wadsworth



Fig. 10. Core Research team hui in Christchurch. Image by Rachelle Martin. October 2023.

Co-facilitator

Susan Wadsworth joined the co-production team in phase 1, before joining the core research team as a paid role within the research team. Susan has lived experience of disability and strong skills in community connection, facilitation, creativity and giving projects momentum. She had existing relationships with many of the co-production team and supported co-ordination, recruitment and maintenance of the team alongside working in partnership with me on creative elements on this project.



Fig. 11. Screenshot of Susan (top) and Faye (below) during a Zoom chat. 2023

Co-production team

The CPT began to gather during the first phase of Flourishing Together and currently consists of approximately 15 people, with varied disability experiences (e.g., physical impairments, sensory impairments, neurodiversity) and ages range 20 – 78 years. They live in different cities across New Zealand, and they are mostly female (70%). We reached out to this evolving group as we began this process and worked consistently with approximately eight individuals who were passionate about engaging with literature on the topics of disability and housing.

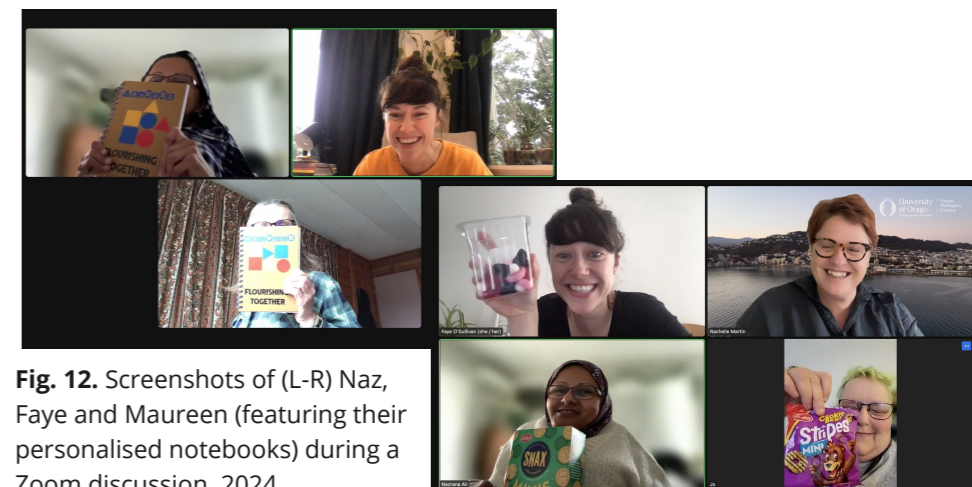


Fig. 12. Screenshots of (L-R) Naz, Faye and Maureen (featuring their personalised notebooks) during a Zoom discussion. 2024

Fig. 13. Screenshots of (L-R) Faye, Rachelle, Naz and Jo comparing snacks during a Zoom session. 2024

C:

Defining a Design project

Scoping & sense-making:

After receiving the initial resources, documentation and challenge for this phase, came a process of defining the Design challenge within it.

As a multi-faceted project which spans several complex terrains (policy, disability, housing, literature, accessibility, Aotearoa, Te Ao Māori to name a few) how could this project remain an exploration of design? It was important to clearly define the problem statement and tightly scope the work, in order to centre design methods at the heart of the work.

Furthermore, how much could realistically be achieved within the constraints of a 12-month Masters project?

These questions prompted a process of visual sense-making: drawing diagrams to understand the challenges, the audiences, and raising design research questions which would prompt the start of my discovery process.

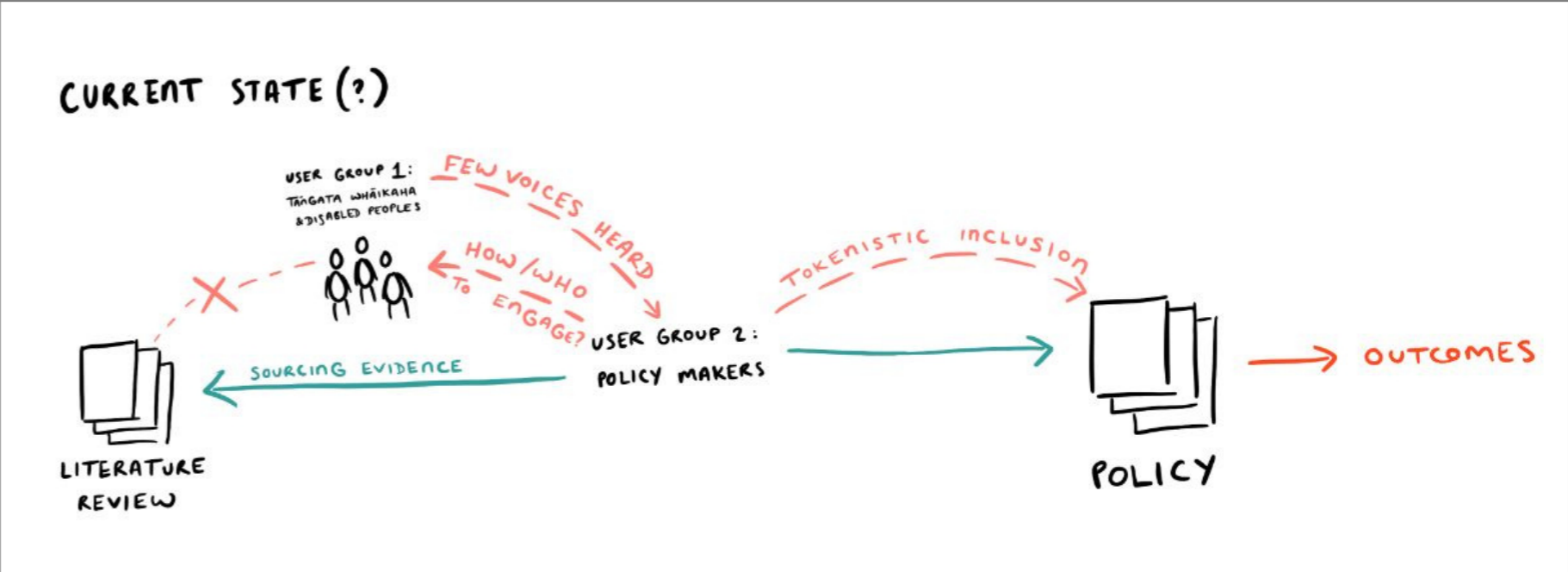


Fig. 14. Current state, illustrated diagram sense-making the problem space, digital image by author, 2023

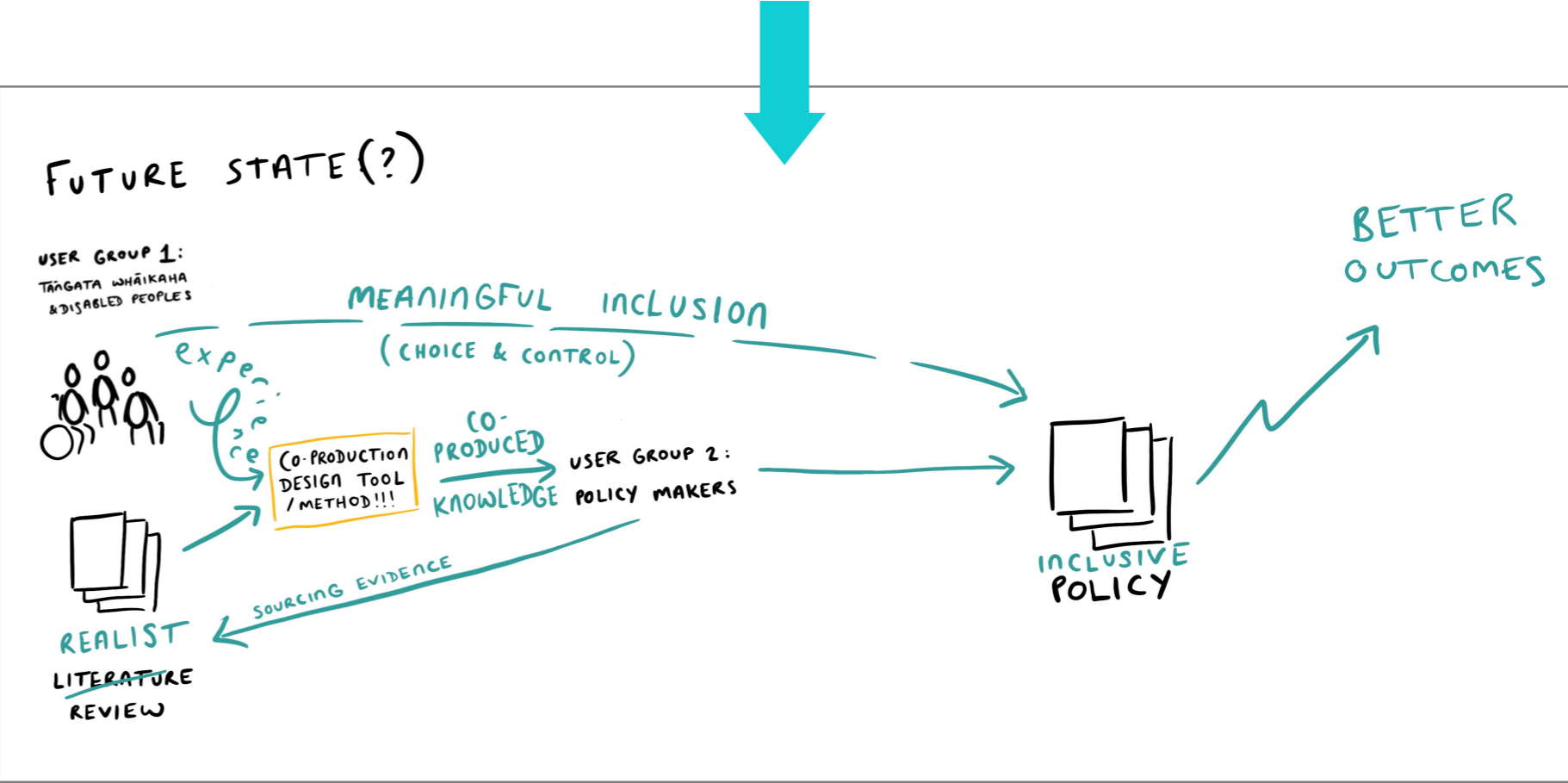


Fig. 15. Future state, illustrated diagram sense-making the opportunity space, digital image by author, 2023

Defining & questioning:

Fig. 16 shows how this process of sense-making led me to the heart of the challenge: bringing together these diverse forms of knowledge with some kind of collaborative tool or method.

It also highlighted the two distinct audiences in the process:

Audience 1: Tangata Whāikaha Māori and Disabled people

Audience 2: Policy practitioners

To understand the design challenge in-depth I first needed to understand these audiences further.

Fig. 17 shows the questions raised by this process of sense-making, spring-boarding me into discovery methods, such as semi-structured interviews which are articulated in more detail in [the process section of this exegesis](#).

Jump to the process section

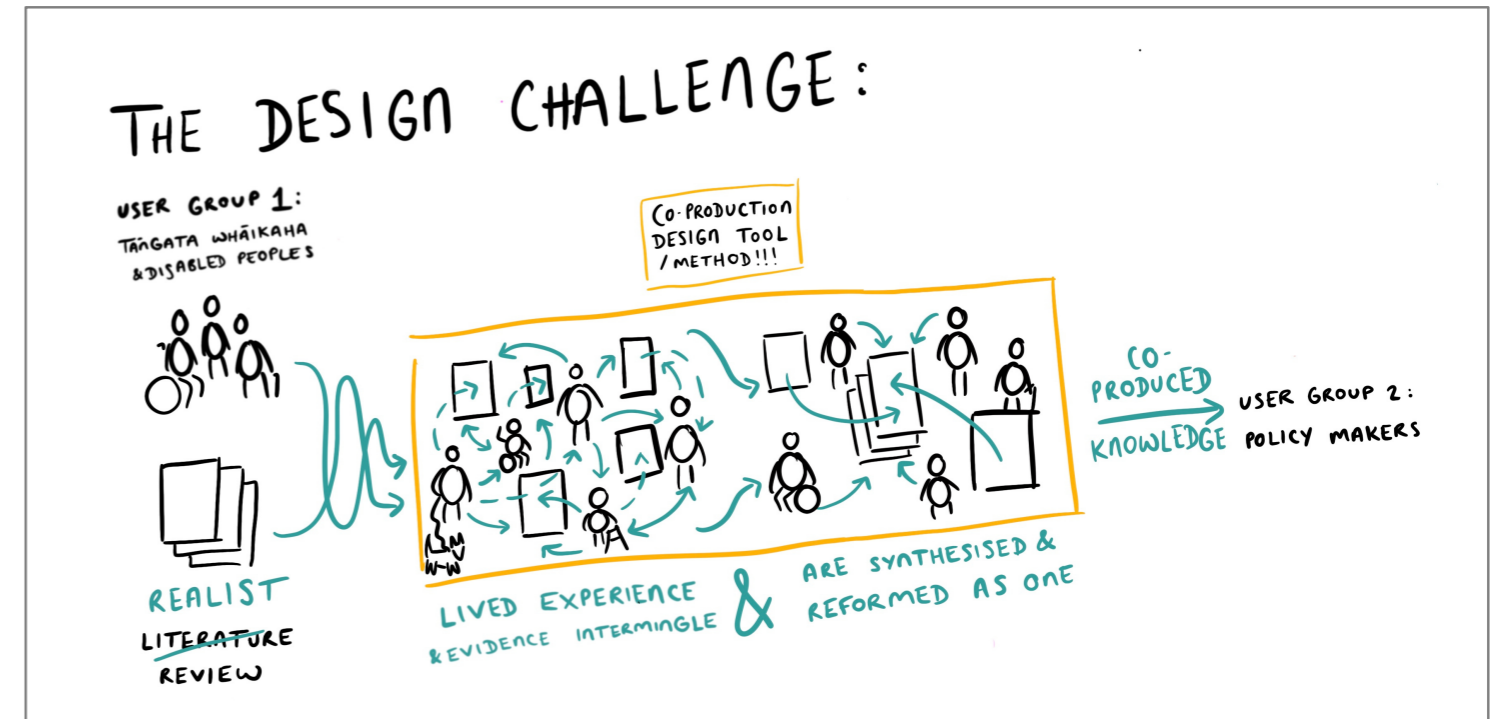


Fig. 16. *The Design Challenge*, illustrated diagram defining the design challenge, digital image by author, 2023

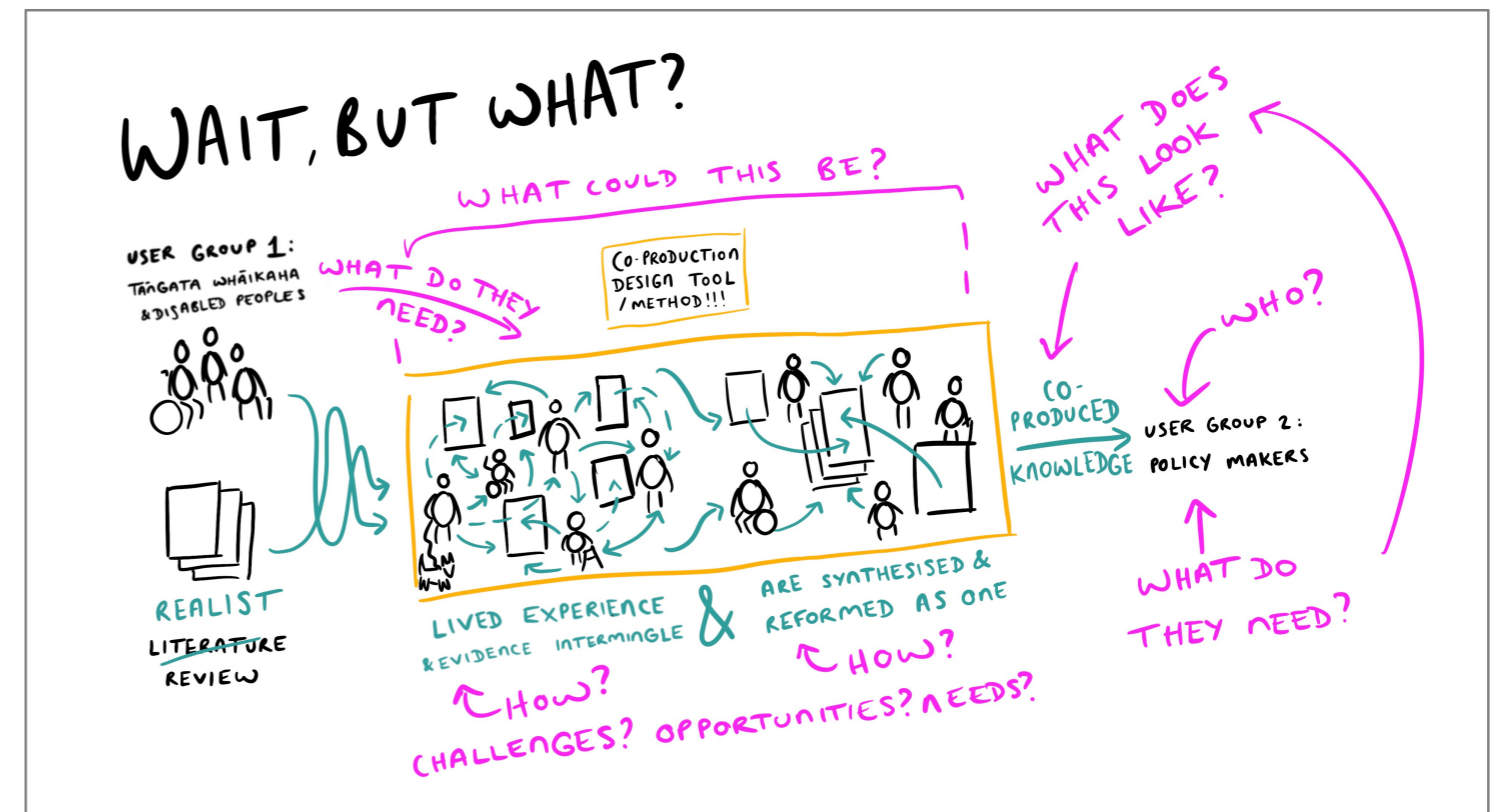


Fig. 17. *Wait, but what?*, illustrated diagram showing the design research questions, digital image by author, 2023

Scope, constraints & limitations:

As a phase of work within a complex wider project, it was important to define the scope of my design challenge, and to keep the work within the 12-month timeline of the Masters of Design. Additionally, limitations emerged throughout the process. These are highlighted and annotated within **fig. 18**.

What was in scope?

Key scope was on collaborative design methods, with a focus of inclusivity (in the context of disability and policy)

What was out of scope?

Out of scope was involvement in producing the 'realist review' (the wider Flourishing Together team would provide this literature)

Part of my process involved considering the text-detail of the formats the CPT received. This is not commented on in this exegesis, to focus on the scope of wider design goals.

We also defined this as a prototype process to provide back to Flourishing Together. This meant that 'packaging' of knowledge for policy was also out of scope.

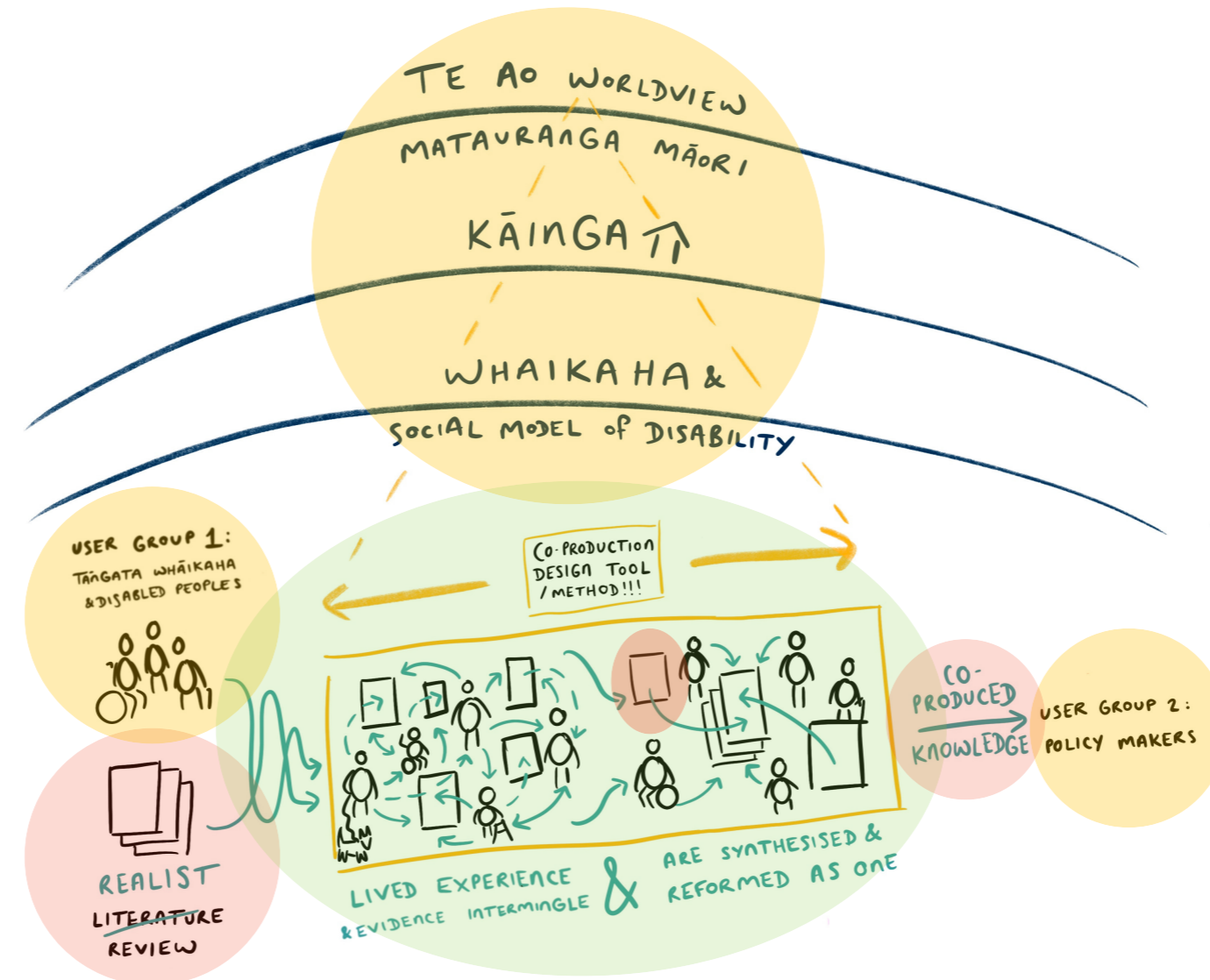


Fig. 18. The Design Challenge in context, digital illustration showing scope and limitations across the challenge space, digital image by author. 2024

Limitations

It was important to understand our two user groups, but after some early discovery, I realised it was not possible to take a deep dive into either community of Disability or Policy: this allowed the scope to remain focused on Design.

This works sits amidst complex community and government spheres of Te Ao, kāinga and the principles of 'Enabling Good Lives' (EGL) as part of Whaikaha: Ministry of Disabled People. We aimed to keep these in mind as part of the context, but were unable to fully consider each within this timeframe and scope.

Our co-production team was notably absent of Tāngata Whāikaha Māori, which creates a lack of full Aotearoa perspective in this work. After some recruitment efforts, we discovered that Tāngata Whāikaha can often be in demand for such research and somewhat oversubscribed representing community in these spaces.

Existential crises & researcher positionality

Throughout this process of sense-making, I simultaneously began exploring collaborative design literature and immersing into resources on Disability culture.

The important of having the right people in the project became clear to me and I began to question my role in this work as someone with a lack of lived experience in some key domains.

Mapping my positionality as a researcher and designer in this context helped to switch this thinking to a strengths-based approach: acknowledging that each collaborator brings strengths in different areas: and these differing perspectives are valuable when we can combine them as a collective. It also acknowledges the 'materiality' of encompassing physical, digital, and economic accessibility between the participants and research materialities: that not everyone has the same access to research materials (De Coen et al. 3)

In particular, I bring skills in visual communication, facilitation and experience design and strengths in sense-making, curiosity, and willingness to experiment

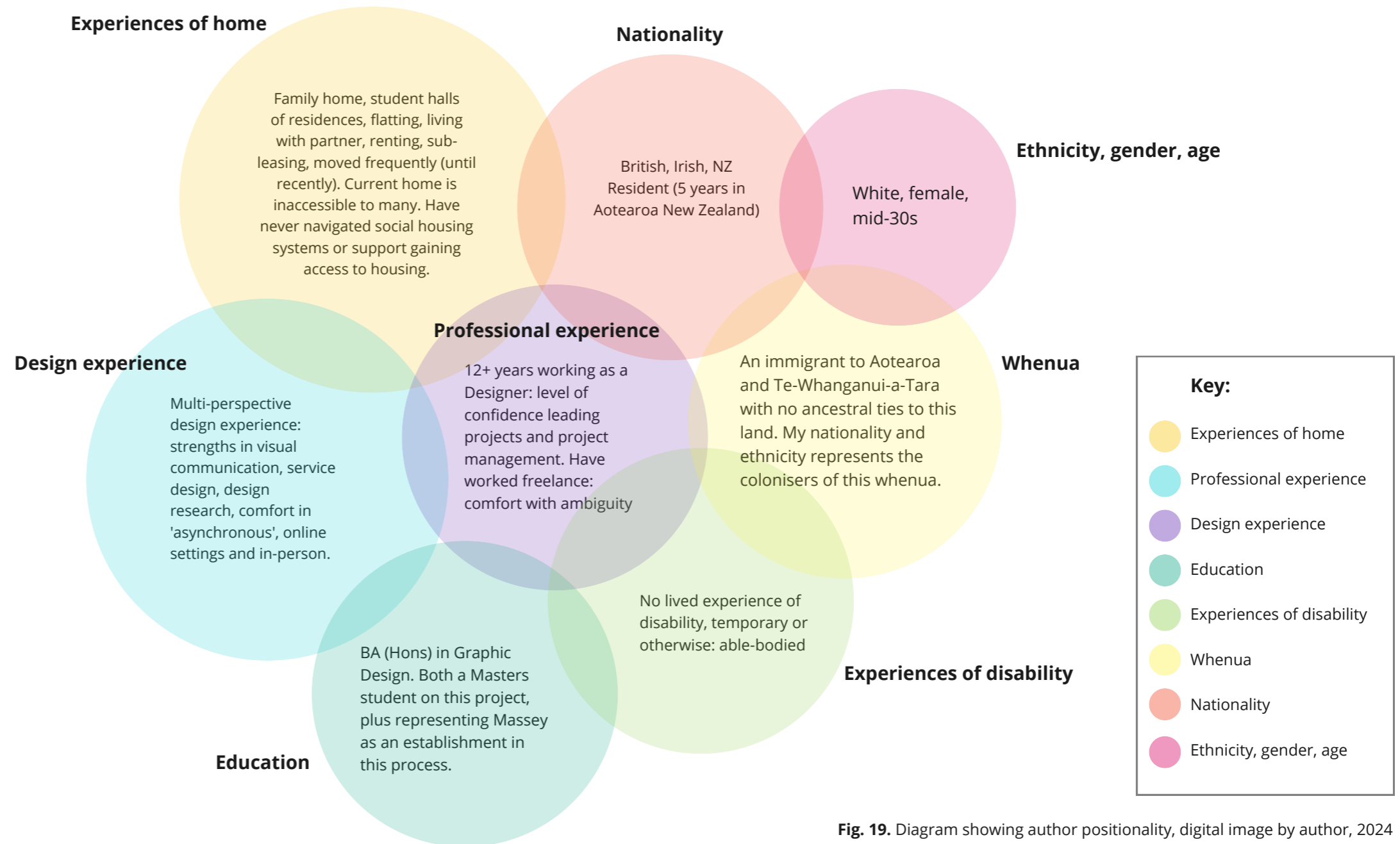


Fig. 19. Diagram showing author positionality, digital image by author, 2024

D:

Research question & aims

Research question & aims:

The formulation of this research question is an output of the scoping exercises. It specifically focuses on the design methods and approaches which could be used to add value to this context of disability, kāinga and policy. During the process of formulating this question, I wanted to ensure it was actionable and impactful. As such, I deconstructed the question and applied colour-coding to articulate the intent within each part of the question. This also carries through to the research aims as shown on the following slides.

Key:

- **Design Theory**
- **Design Action**
- **Design Impact**

How might participatory and collaborative design approaches be used to creatively blend diverse knowledge of kāinga, building an inclusive process that bridges the knowledge gap between disabled people and policy roles?

Research Question

How might *participatory and collaborative design approaches*

be used to *creatively blend diverse knowledge of kāinga,*

building an *inclusive process that bridges the knowledge gap between disabled people and policy roles?*

Key:

- *Design Theory*

- *Design Action*

- *Design Impact*

Research Aims

1.

Explore the potential and pitfalls of existing participatory and collaborative design approaches with a team of diverse, and busy, disabled people

2.

Surface learnings and recommendations for anyone* looking to undertake collaborative approaches within the disability-policy space, and beyond

**Those most interested might include Disability advocacy groups, or Design and Policy Practitioners.*

These research aims apply to the design theory and design impact parts of the research question. I intend to explore them using design action

Some additional questions:

The research aims prompted a cascade of questions to pay attention to throughout the design process. They are not necessarily resolved by this research, nor even acknowledged again in this document, but feel important to log as peripheral and reflective thinking alongside this work.

What parallels and differences are there between the principles of co-design, social models of disability or indigenous world views? How can these inform one another?

What digital design tools work well in this context? Which work less well? Why? What would you suggest for next time?

How to even begin with digital online accessibility? What is the minimum and how to begin approaching this?

How can design tools create options and opportunities for wider and more diverse populations to engage in co-design?

What emerging technologies can contribute to a diverse design process and how?

E:

HOW?

Method, Context, Precedents

Methodology:

Methodology:

What do I mean by 'collaborative and participatory design approaches'?

Definitions for collaborative and participatory design approaches differ greatly and have for some time. In 2008 Sanders and Stappers noted that the terms 'co-design' and 'co-creation' can often be interchanged or treated as one and this remains largely true today. In 2020, *Co-design in Aotearoa New Zealand: a snapshot of the literature* revealed that "the term co-design is used interchangeably with a set of other terms: participatory design, experience-based design, co-production, human-centred design and others." (Mark and Hagen 7) Yet much of the literature tends to agree on the core principle of designing with the communities affected by any design, as "an opportunity for people to impact, lead, and shape the things that influence their lives." (Mark and Hagen 4) The crux of this intent can be summarised as "nothing about us, without us" (fig. 20); a popular mantra of the disability civil rights movement, (Pfeifer)



Fig. 20. Ed Hall. *Disabled people fight back*, banner, 2015. Source: *Nothing About Us Without Us*, People's History Museum.

"To positively impact the social determinants of health, disabled people need to contribute to policy planning and programme development" (Martin et al.) Flourishing Together aims to do this through participatory co-production methods with disabled people, embedded within a realist methodological approach (Martin et al.)

In a Design context, there are multiple names and definitions for processes that centre the voice

The long-form text in this section can also be read as a Google Doc, double click the thumbnail above, or click link here to access:

bit.ly/4fpSljV

Methodology:

What do I mean by 'collaborative and participatory design approaches'?

Definitions for collaborative and participatory design approaches differ greatly and have for some time. In 2008 Sanders and Stappers noted that the terms 'co-design' and 'co-creation' can often be interchangeable or treated as one and this remains largely true today. In 2020, Co-design in Aotearoa New Zealand: a snapshot of the literature revealed that "the term co-design is used interchangeably with a set of other terms: participatory design, experience-based design, co-production, human-centred design and others." (Mark and Hagen 7) Yet much of the literature tends to agree on the core principle of designing with the communities affected by any design, as "an opportunity for people to impact, lead, and shape the things that influence their lives." (Mark and Hagen 4) The crux of this intent can be summarised as "nothing about us, without us" (fig. 20): a popular mantra of the disability civil rights movement. (Pfeifer)

"To positively impact the social determinants of health, disabled people need to contribute to policy planning and programme development" (Martin et al.) Flourishing Together aims to do this through participatory co-production methods with disabled people, embedded within a realist methodological approach (Martin et al.)

In a Design context, there are multiple names and definitions for processes that centre the voice of lived experience. I scanned a collection of collaborative methodologies, under a range of definitions: including 'co-design', 'co-production', 'co-creation', 'participatory design', 'democratic design', 'experience based co-design', 'convivial design' and 'action research'. From this extensive list, and for the purposes of this research, I focused mostly on 'co-design', 'co-production', and 'co-creation'.



Fig. 20. Ed Hall, *Disabled people fight back*, banner, 2015.
Source: Nothing About Us Without Us, People's History Museum.

Why this method?

Benefits:

Why choose 'collaborative design' as a methodology to approach this context of disability, kāinga (housing & home) and policy?

The benefits of collaborative design approaches have been well documented: primarily focusing on how putting affected communities at the heart of a process (and giving them voice) not only improves impact, outputs and outcomes, but increases investment in the work and builds capability, for all, along the way.

Co-design in Aotearoa New Zealand: a snapshot of the literature, found that "co-design practice is, on the whole, viewed positively. The review suggests that when done well, co-design is a powerful method to connect with those using or impacted by services and products. It allows their experiences to shape a solution to a problem, and, more importantly, to define the problem itself." (Mark and Hagen 13). This is reinforced by the Social Care Institute of Excellence in the UK: "If you have that grass-roots, expert by involvement from the start, you're talking about the right things that really matter to people" ("What impact can co-production have?" 00:45)

As a project with the voice of lived experience at its core, collaborative design methods are foundational for the Flourishing Together project. In this complex context of policy, kāinga and disability, it is critical to identify the issues of most importance to the disability community from early on in the work: as shown via fig. 21 in previous phases of Flourishing Together.



Fig. 21. Jean Donaldson, live illustration capturing an early project workshop focused on listening to what 'home' meant to people with lived experience of disability. Source: Flourishing Together, 2022

This process of deep listening in the early stages of the project, identified what 'home' meant to people with lived experience of disability, which shaped direction for the Flourishing Together project, gave voice to the community and ultimately ensures the project is addressing the issues that matter most to a community. This is in line with the overall project impact goals to "meaningfully involve" people in health policy development that contain "refined theories about kāinga" (Martin) This approach would remain critical for my own phase of work if I were to align with the aims of Flourishing Together.

Drawbacks:

Many of the benefits of a collaborative approach are intrinsic and intangible. This contributes to them being difficult to measure, at least in terms of immediate short-term impact. A lack of agreed-upon definitions can create confusion or uncertainty around this methodology, especially when communicating or proposing these approaches to stakeholders, funders, or detractors. Furthermore, the time required to do this process justice can create additional costs or put strain upon the team or process.

“Genuine collaboration through productive relationships takes time to establish and effort to maintain. Competing demands and agendas require effort, which may well not be funded by external agencies, or clearly evident within the array of performance metrics associated with research work” (Rycroft-Malone et al.)

Emma Blomkamp, a Design Academic based in Australia, argues that “while co-design may have transformative effects, many of the claims about its benefits have not been rigorously evaluated” (“The Promise of Co-Design”)

This Masters project sits as a phase of work inside the wider Flourishing Together project, which offsets many of the constraints of collaborative design, such as clarity of definitions, funding and timelines. However, the time required, especially to forge genuine collaboration, was a concern for the time available within this phase. Fortunately, the research aims of this project (exploring the potential and pitfalls of these approaches, whilst surfacing learnings and recommendations) allow us to use these approaches experimentally, for the purposes of potential and critique.

On a larger scale, health researchers Rycroft-Malone et al, argue that pragmatic and critical thought should be applied to the suitability of a collaborative approach: “this includes asking the question of whether all research endeavours lend themselves to this approach.” For the purposes of this phase of work, this critical thought led us to reflect on which component ‘parts’ or specific activities within our process might be more suited to collaboration than others: which is explored further in the section ‘Process reflections: Time, ambiguity & power’.

Context Review:

Context Review:

To explore the landscape of collaborative design in action, I approached my research from multiple angles. My search was informed by traditional academic materials, alongside websites, podcasts, a design conference, conversations, observation and analogous thinking.

Whilst 'collaborative design' methods were the primary context to review, the multi-faceted nature of the Flourishing Together project meant that my research also ventured into other examples, with all sitting across topics of disability, policy and kāinga, where possible.

My research sources sit on a spectrum of theoretical, practical, and inspirational, across these topic areas. Fig. 22 visualises an overview map of the areas I explored.

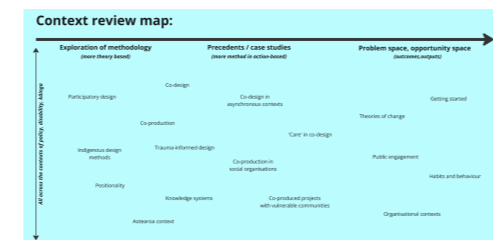


Fig. 22 A visualisation of key context areas explored, digital diagram by author, 2024.

Key findings.....

1. Across these complementary and intersecting design and contextual approaches, one predominant consistency is the use of principles and mindsets to guide and inform a process.

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), a UK improvement agency defines "the principles of equality, diversity, accessibility and reciprocity (or getting something back for putting something in) are critical values for putting co-production into practice" ("Co-Production: What It Is"). Enabling Good Lives (EGL), an Aotearoa disability equity framework informing policy and service provision highlights a "principles-based approach", the main principles being

The long-form text in this section can also be read as a Google Doc, double click the thumbnail above, or click link here to access:

bit.ly/3LGyogE

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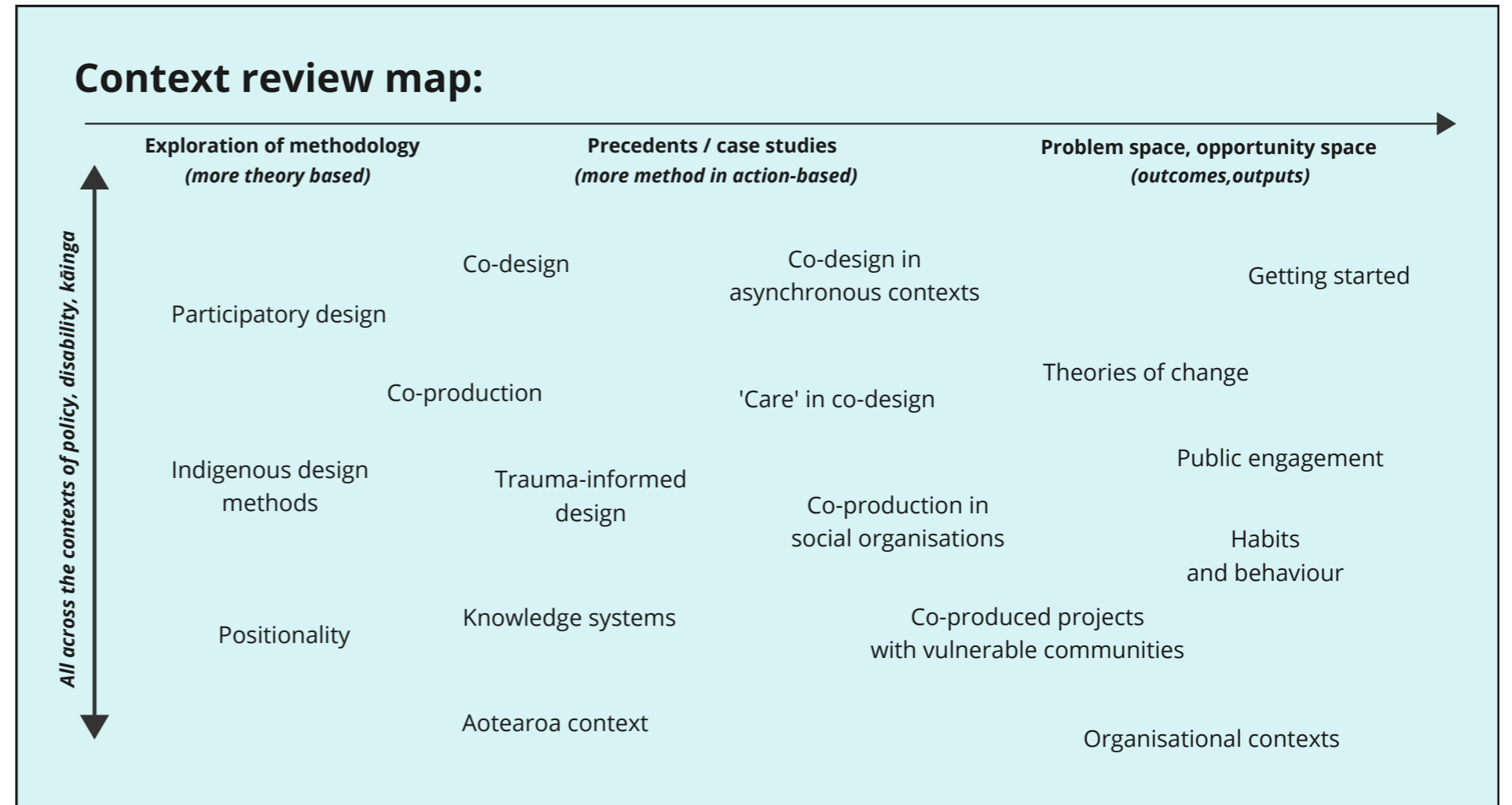


Fig. 22. A visualisation of key context areas explored, digital diagram by author, 2024.

Key finding #1

Across these complementary and intersecting design and contextual approaches, one predominant consistency is the use of principles and mindsets to guide and inform a process.

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), a UK improvement agency defines “the principles of equality, diversity, accessibility and reciprocity (or getting something back for putting something in) are critical values for putting co-production into practice” (“Co-Production: What It Is”). Enabling Good Lives (EGL), an Aotearoa disability equity framework informing policy and service provision highlights a “principles-based approach”, the main principles being “self-determination, beginning early, person-centred, ordinary life outcomes, mainstream first, mana enhancing, easy to use, and relationship building.” These are reinforced by KA McKercher, who references four principles (fig. 23) of “share power, use participatory means, prioritise relationships, and build capability” (“What is Co-Design?”)

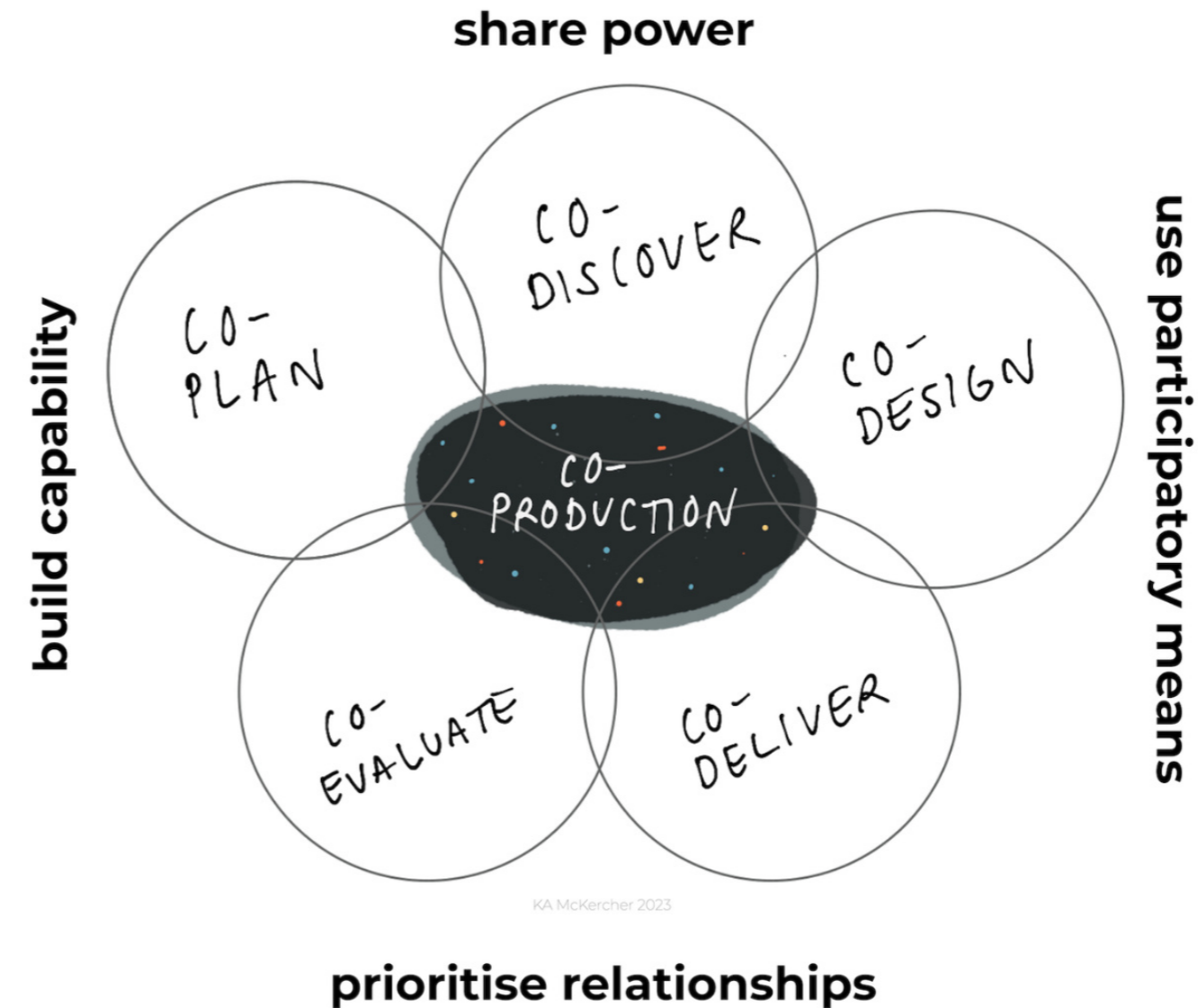


Fig. 23. KA McKercher, Principles of co-design, 2023.

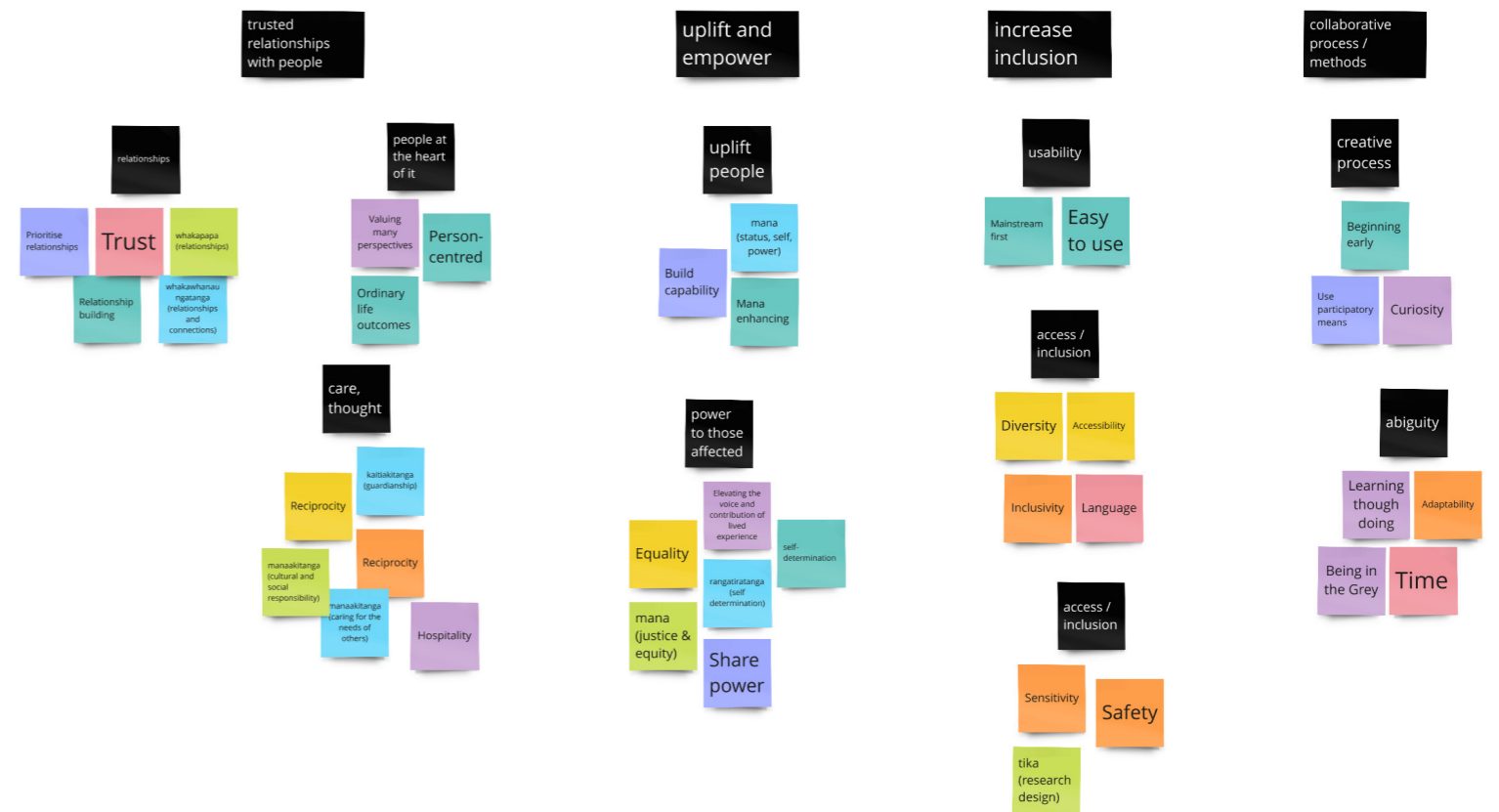
This theme of guiding principles was so strong across so many key resources, I was curious to visually map them, finding similarities and differences between them, and adding more along the way. I encountered the terminology of both 'principles' and 'mindsets', which for the purposes of this exercise I merged into one category. (fig. 24)

Whilst each set of principles is different, there are some overarching themes (fig. 25), of trusted relationships with people, of uplifting and empowering those people, and of increasing inclusion. Small clusters relating to the 'how' also emerged, offering insight into a flexible, collaborative, action-focused process. These overarching themes distilled a complex context landscape and offered a starting point and guiding principles from which to base my process.



Fig. 24. A collection of collaborative principles and mindsets, colour-coded by source, digital diagram by author, 2024.

Fig. 25. Principles and mindsets from eight sources, clustered by theme, digital diagram by author, 2024



This clustering exercise can be viewed in closer detail in appendix 1

Key finding #2

There are strong parallels between the principles of collaborative design, the social model of disability, and indigenous research approaches. One consistent similarity is the goal of distributing power.

“Co-production helps to move the power away from those who are privileged, to those who are less privileged” (“Social Model of Disability”), a mindset which is echoed in co-design principles: “Co-design is about sharing power in planning, research (sometimes called discovery), designing and deciding what gets implemented” (McKercher, “Power Differentials”) From an Indigenous perspective, this attitude can be encapsulated by the concept of upholding ‘mana’ (fig. 26) (justice and equity). “Mana in a Māori context refers to power and authority bestowed, gained or inherited individually and collectively” (The Pūtaiora Writing Group 13)

There is agreement between these overlapping contexts that a successful collaborative approach should involve an element of examining power structures. In this context of a collaborative design approach, and as tangibly described by KA McKercher: power might mean the permission to make decisions about the process, be that in the planning stages, or implementation. This could be extrapolated more broadly to “the ability to bring about change in our lives, or the lives of others” (McKercher, “Power Differentials”)

As a project grounded in goals of improving health policy outcomes for the Aotearoa disability community (including Tangata Whaikaha Māori), it is reassuring to observe the shared knowledge between design approaches, disability theory and Māori Research Ethics, as reinforced by a snapshot review of co-design in Aotearoa: “Māori practitioners are leading a strong and emerging practice that explores the potential of approaches based in kaupapa Māori or tikanga Māori practice and principles. It signals the relationship between co-design and the principles of Te Tiriti” (Mark and Hagan 5)

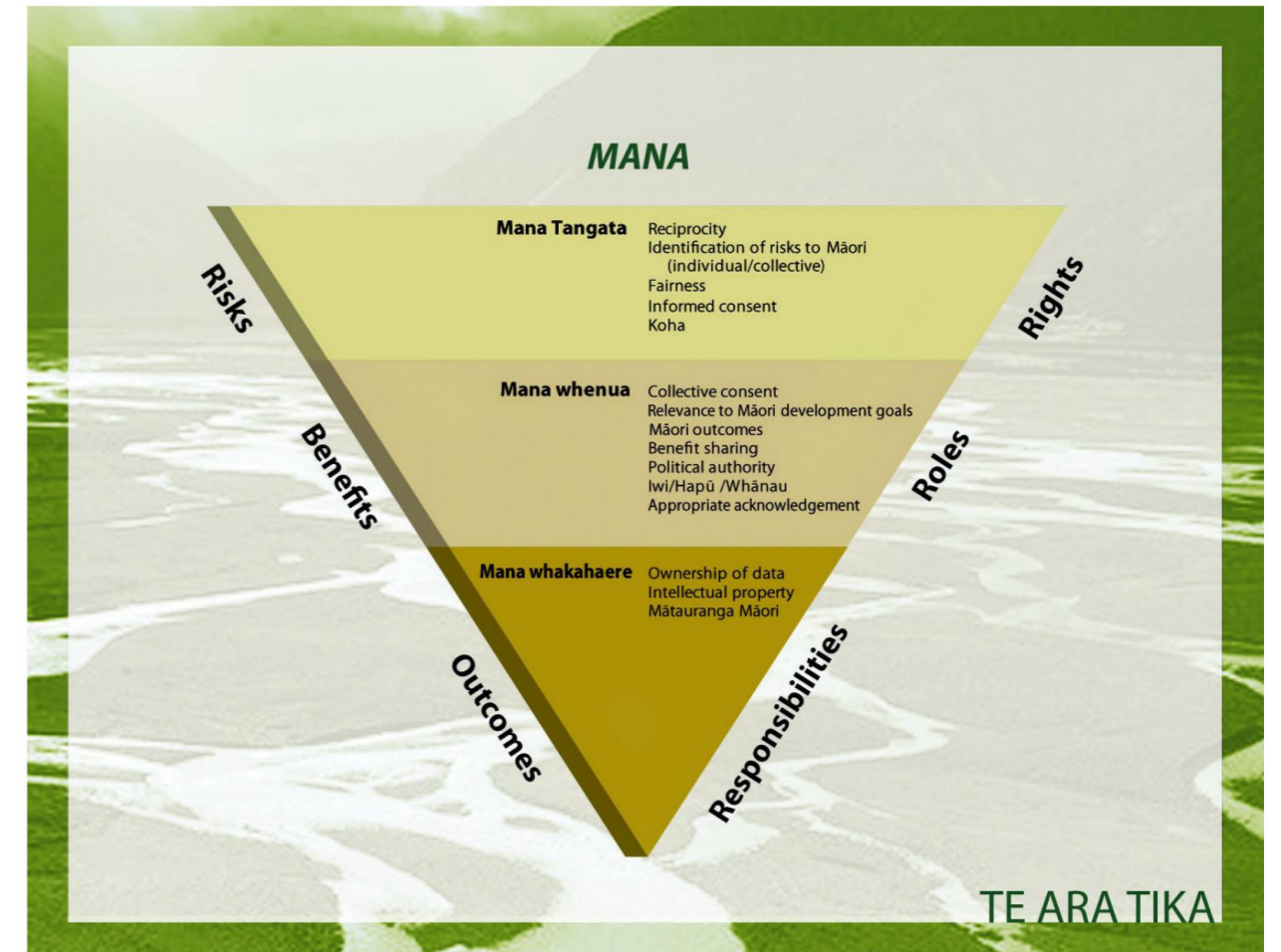


Fig. 26. Mana – Kei a wai te mana mō tēnei kaupapa? ‘Who has control over the project?’, 2010.

Key finding #3

Through a lens of systems, collaborative design principles can be layered up to show how the scale of practicality and participation relates to the spheres of impact.

Fig. 27 Shows how a systems perspective recognises the interrelationship between different parts of a system, as knowledge flows outwards from the action of ‘collective making’ Fig. 28 shows how practical foundational layers and processes need to be put in place, before high-level shifts such as ‘mindset’ can be achieved. Fig. 29 also demonstrates building upon layers of cultural understanding to attain cultural ethical standards.

My interpretation of this group of frameworks is that deep collaboration and high-value impact can be achieved through multiple ‘layers’ of participation, beginning with small and tangible steps such as ‘making’, good ‘structures’ and ‘consultation’ or at minimum: understanding and awareness. These diagrams show that there is a ripple-effect from one layer to another: for example fig. 30 shows ‘Cultural Sensitivity’ eventually leading up to Māhaki (Spiritual Integrity) or how ‘reducing jargon’ could ladder-up to an ‘intervention ‘owned’ by end users (fig. 26). Langley et al. refer to this as “knowledge mobilisation”.

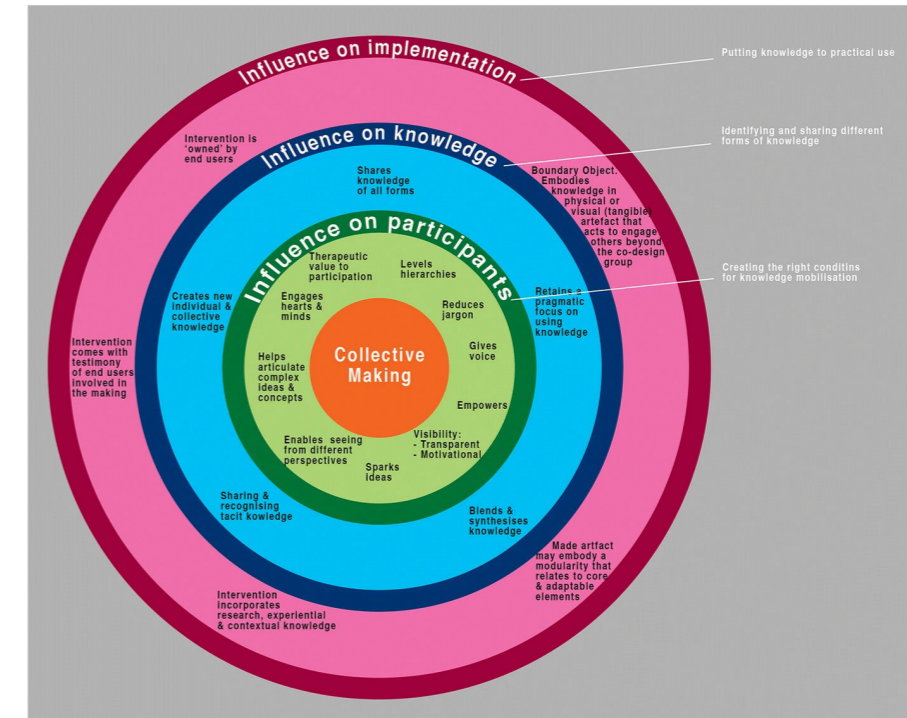


Fig. 27. Joe Langley et al., diagram illustrating the different domains of influence of collective making from a knowledge mobilisation perspective, 2018

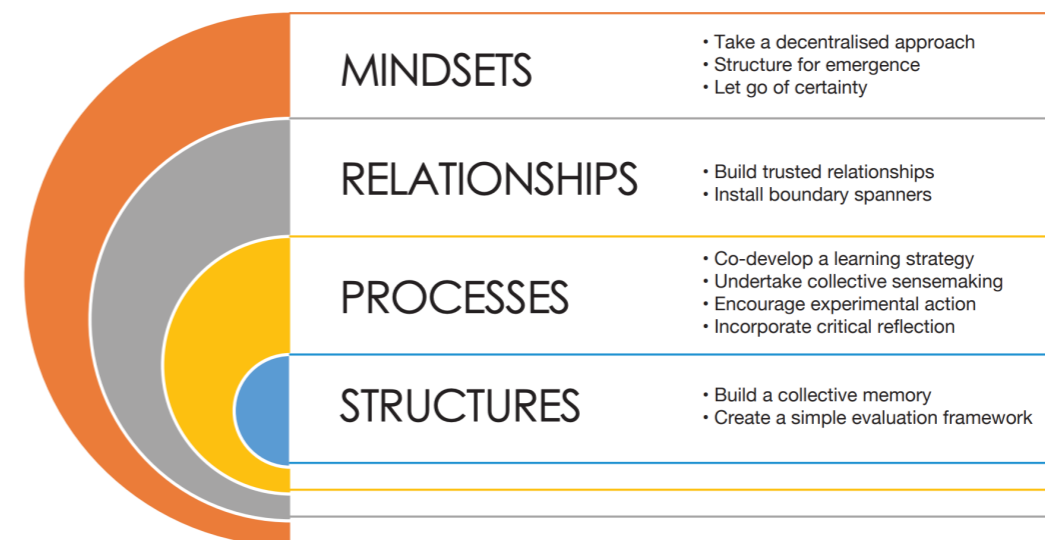


Fig. 28. Fiona McKenzie, a framework of necessary enabling conditions – categorised under the headings: mindsets; relationships; processes; and structures, 2021

However, these frameworks appear to view the process from the outside: there is an underlying perspective of the designer, the organiser; essentially anyone with ‘power’ to facilitate the mobilisation from one layer to the next. I am led to question the role of the community in these structures, and how they might begin to “make decisions about the process” (McKercher, “Power Differentials”). This concern was also highlighted by Co-design in Aotearoa New Zealand: a snapshot of the literature, which found that “while the intent of co-design is promising, there is still a lot of work needed to close the gap between potential, capability, conditions and, in some cases, the commitment needed to follow through and deliver on this potential.” (Mark and Hagen 5)

‘The Early Years Challenge’, a case study of co-design with parents in South Auckland in 2017 reported on “an unexpected consequence” of co-design, detailing the impact on participants beyond the project. The report describes how participants had gained new skills from the work, which increased their confidence, sense of respect and ultimately had a holistic positive impact as they utilised these new problem-solving skills in all parts of their lives. (Mark and Hagen 15)

The outcomes of the Early Years case study set a standard to aim for and a key objective of Flourishing Together is to “empower disabled people to participate in policy development within NZ” (Martin) Yet, the question remains of *how*.

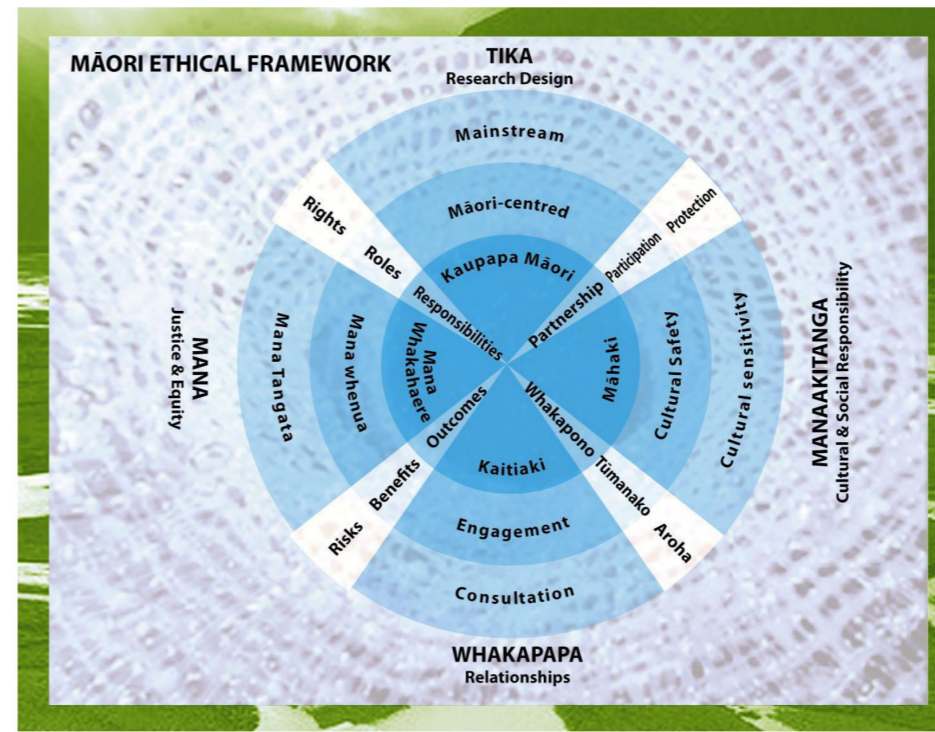


Fig. 29. The Pūtaiora Writing Group, Māori Ethical Framework, 2010

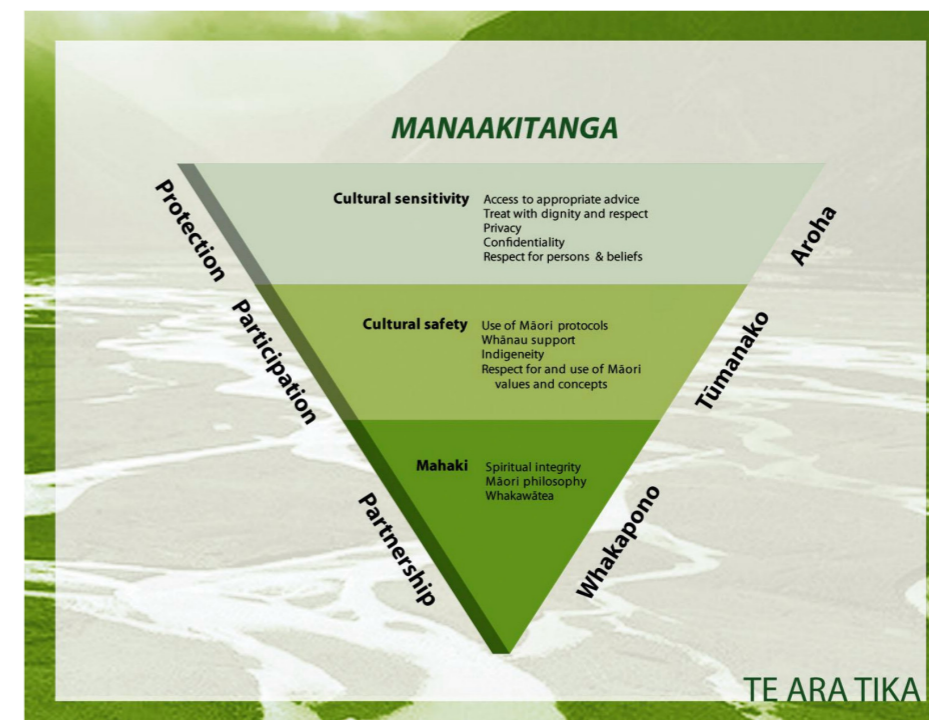


Fig. 30. The Pūtaiora Writing Group, Manaakitanga, 2010

Key finding #4

When delving into the detail, beyond principles and frameworks, it can be really difficult to figure out tangible advice on 'how' to do a collaborative design process.

"Current literature supports using co-design to improve service quality and create more satisfactory services [in health and disability]. However, while the 'why' of using co-design is well understood, there is limited literature on 'how' to co-design." (Benz et al.)

When consulting the 'Co-production: what it is and how to do it' section of SCIE, it states "this section does not offer a step-by-step guide to doing co-production, as effective approaches will vary according to circumstances" ('Co-Production: What It Is and How to Do It')

As someone new to these methodologies and looking for practical advice on the steps of a process, this can be a frustrating dead-end. Whilst critical thought, principles and collaborative mindsets are the pinnacle, it can be difficult to know how to get there or freeze en route, wondering "[But is co-design?](#)", as per this quiz (fig. 31) by Beyond Sticky Notes (McKercher).

The quiz does not give you an answer, nor advice, but guides you through questions to reflect on your design process. My initial interpretations of this summary of definitions, principles and mindsets were that achieving a collaborative process can be quite a binary thing: it either is, or isn't collaborative design.

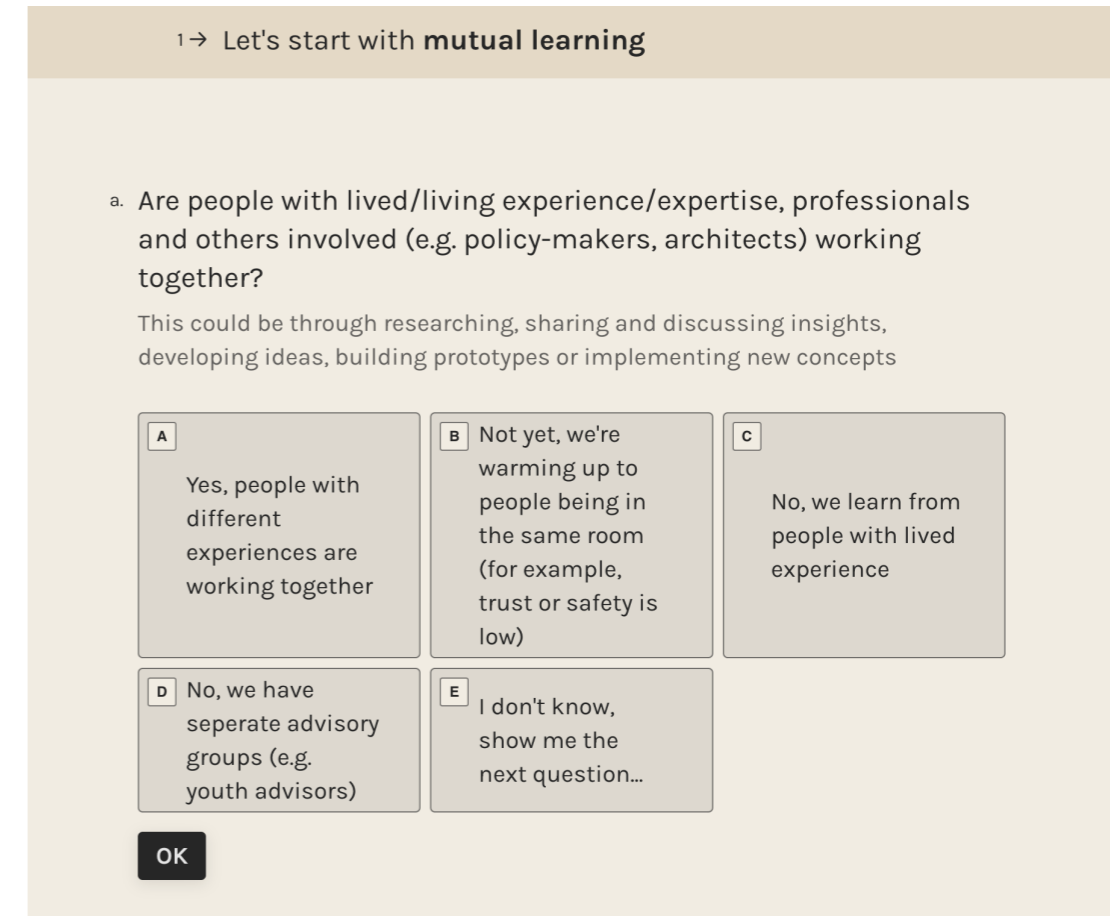


Fig. 31. KA McKercher, screenshot sample question from 'But is it Co-Design?' quiz, 2024

Key finding #5

Rather than assessing collaborative design approaches in binary terms, a more inclusive approach might be to analyse the ‘level’ of collaboration, with a mindset of continuously building on participation and capability, within practical constraints.


The International Association for Public Participation’s (IAPP) 2018 Public Participation Spectrum (fig. 32) “show(s) that differing levels of participation are legitimate depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made. However, and most importantly, the Spectrum sets out the promise being made to the public at each participation level.”

This illustrates how clear communication of intention and ‘ask’ are as important as depth of collaboration and reinforces the idea that there are increments of collaboration. There is also a reference to tangible constraints such as time and prioritisation of decisions, which are huge considerations in any non-academic scenario.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2’s Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public’s role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL		To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Fig. 32. International Association for Public Participation – IAP2 International, IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, 2018

Emma Blomkamp argues we should be asking “how much” co-design there is, as opposed to whether it is, or isn’t. Fig. 33 breaks the full design process down into components, illustrating that a process may contain collaboration in the smallest form of applying ‘principles’, or may apply to one phase, but not the entire process. Blomkamp details how we can also assess the ‘depth’ of each of these components in fig. 34, beginning with collaboration as simple as talking to those with lived experience. This approach strikes “a balance between purism and pragmatism” (“Shades of Co-Design”) and feels more achievable than a blanket application of collaboration.

These ideas based on ‘ladders of participation’ (fig. 35) encourage those new to this methodology to ‘get on the first rung’, as opposed to creating a process that is either inclusive, or exclusive. Within the time constraints of a 12-month Masters project, these incremental approaches allow for an experimental approach to best-practice of these collaborative design principles.

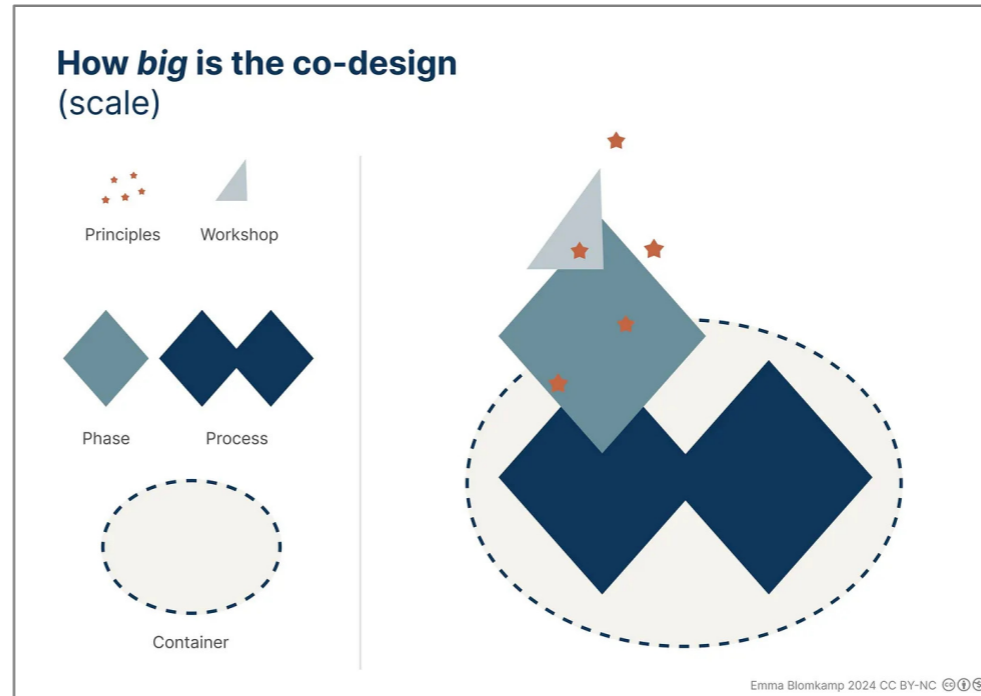


Fig. 33. Emma Blomkamp, How big is the co-design? 2024

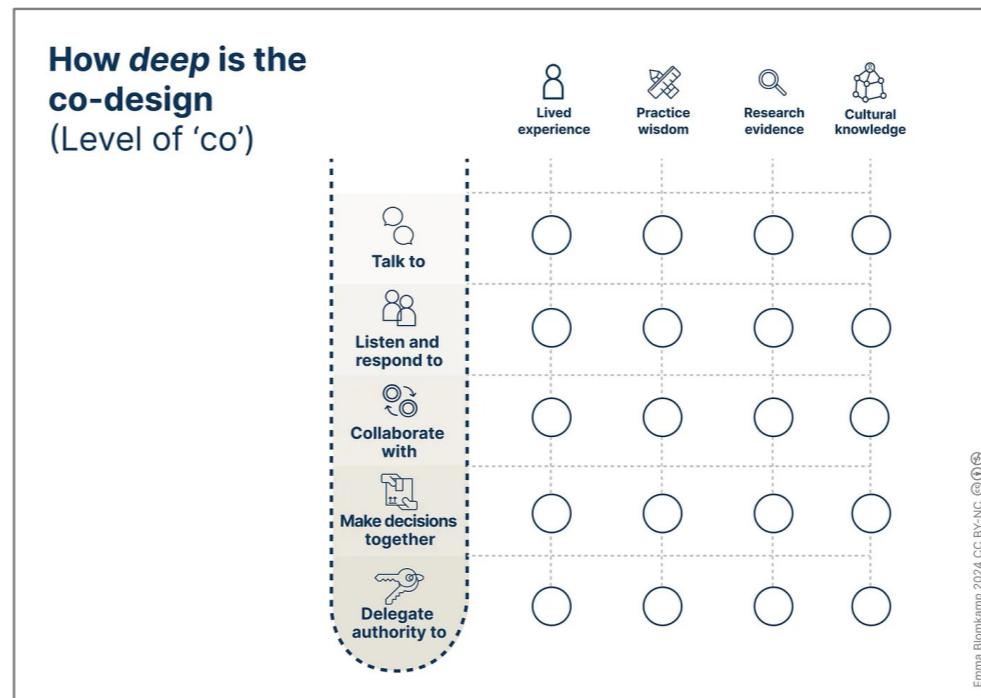


Fig. 34. Emma Blomkamp, How deep is the co-design?, 2024

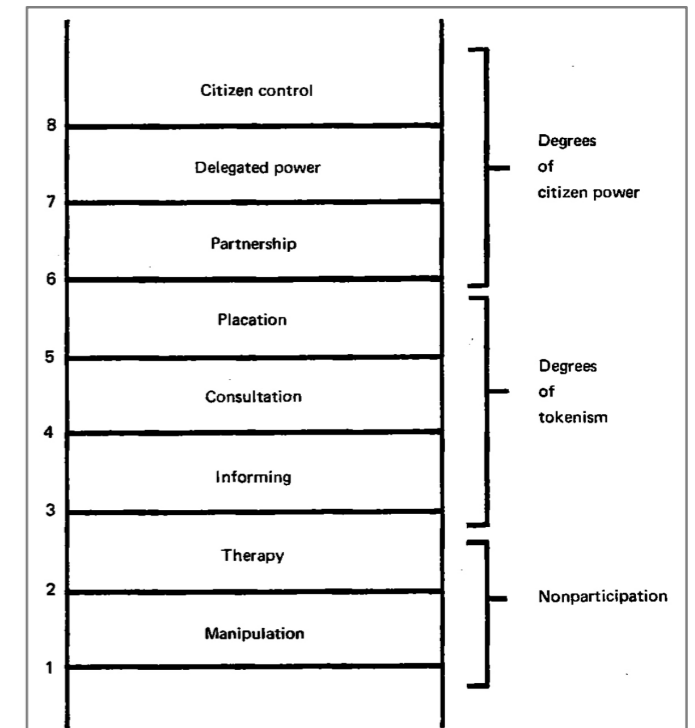
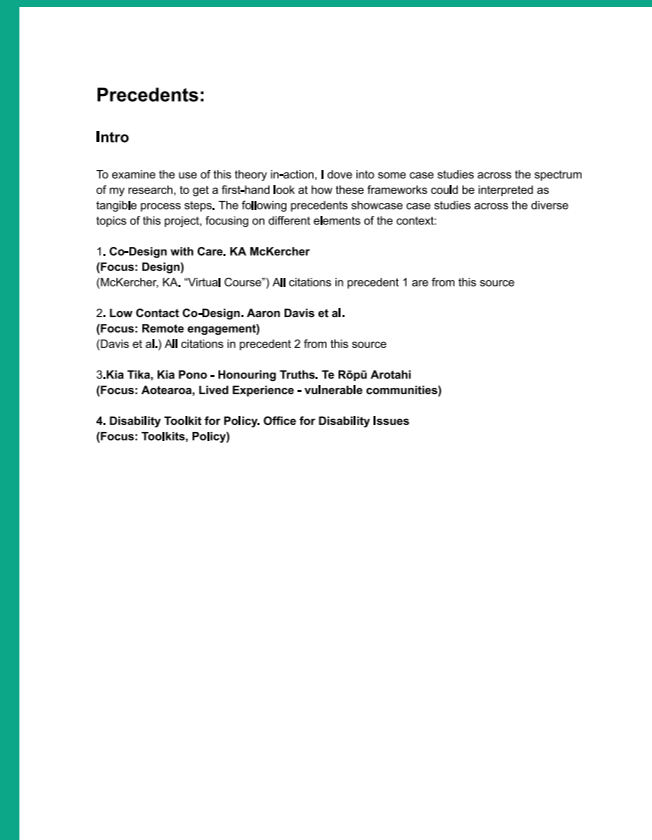


Fig. 35. Sherry Armstein, Ladder of Citizen Participation, 1969. Source: “Ladder of Citizen Participation.”

Precedents:



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A cross-section of case studies:

To examine the use of this theory in-action, I dove into some case studies across the spectrum of my research, to get a first-hand look at how these frameworks could be interpreted as tangible process steps.

The following precedents showcase case studies across the diverse topics of this project, focusing on different elements of the context:

1. Co-Design with Care. KA McKercher

(Focus: Design)

(McKercher, KA. "Virtual Course") All citations in precedent 1 are from this source

2. Low Contact Co-Design. Aaron Davis et al.

(Focus: Remote engagement)

(Davis et al.) All citations in precedent 2 from this source

3. Kia Tika, Kia Pono - Honouring Truths. Te Rōpū Arotahi

(Focus: Aotearoa, Lived Experience - vulnerable communities)

4. Disability Toolkit for Policy. Office for Disability Issues

(Focus: Toolkits, Policy)

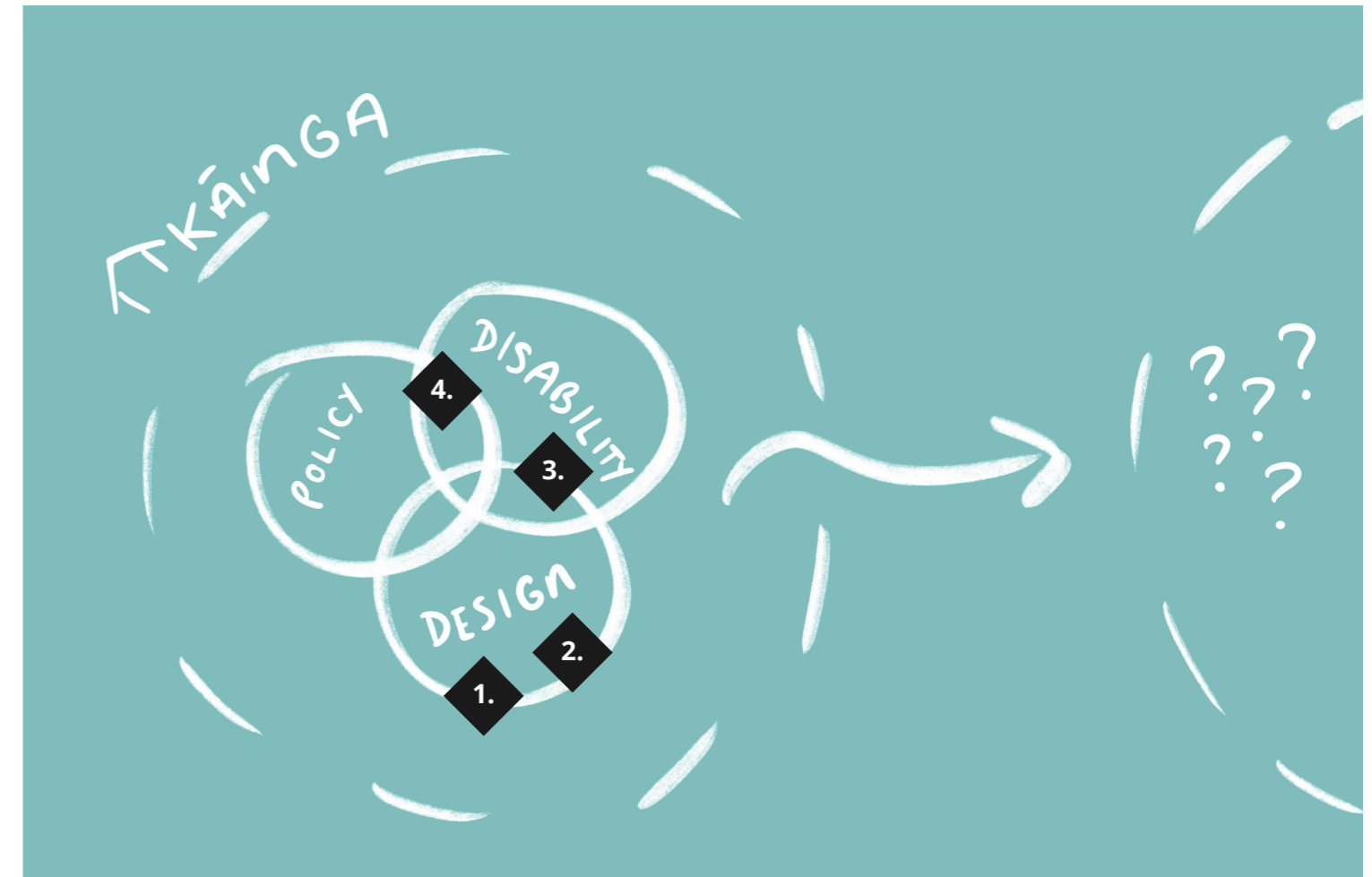


Fig. 36. Problem space context map, overlaid with case studies, digital image by author, 2023

1. Co-Design with Care (Design)

What is it?

Co-Design with Care is an online professional development course for 'designers' or those interested in a 'co-design' approach. It explores a 'Model of Care for Co-design' via seven 3-hour online group sessions (<15 participants), over approximately four months. Alongside the online sessions, videos, activities and reflections are offered.

What was the aim?

The course aims to offer space to learn from a co-design expert and peer-group about the technical nuance and critical reflection required of conducting 'co-design with care'. Each session focuses on walking through a different stage of the process: from assessing and planning, to 'ending', whilst taking care of the safety, inclusion and overall care of group members.

Additionally, the group become somewhat participants and collaborators in a honed co-design experience. Through this perspective, I was able to see the value in moving slowly, prioritising relationships, spending time setting up the ways of working before we began and taking time to explicitly discuss and define optional ways of participating.

Key thing(s) you might take with you into your own work?

Experiencing being the recipient of the course 'pack' (fig. 37) was a surprising moment that heightened the feeling of inclusion and care in the course, before it had even begun. The first course session was spent almost entirely setting up the environment to be as inclusive and welcoming as possible: establishing protocols and codes of conduct. Prior to the first group session KA had a 1:1 with each individual, which created a sense of familiarity even before the course began.



Fig. 37. The welcome pack I received in the mail, in preparation for the Co-Design with Care course. Image by author.

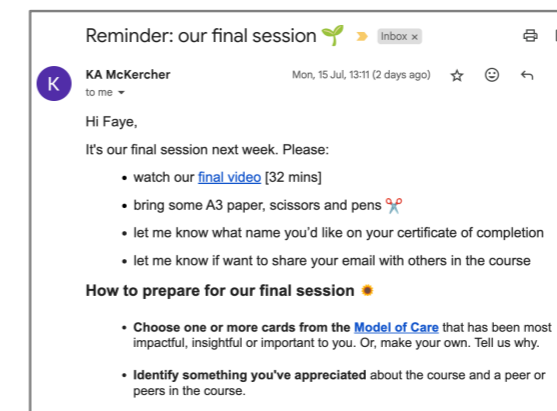


Fig. 38. Screenshot of one of the session preparation emails. In advance of each session, we received an overview of what to expect and what to prepare, 2024

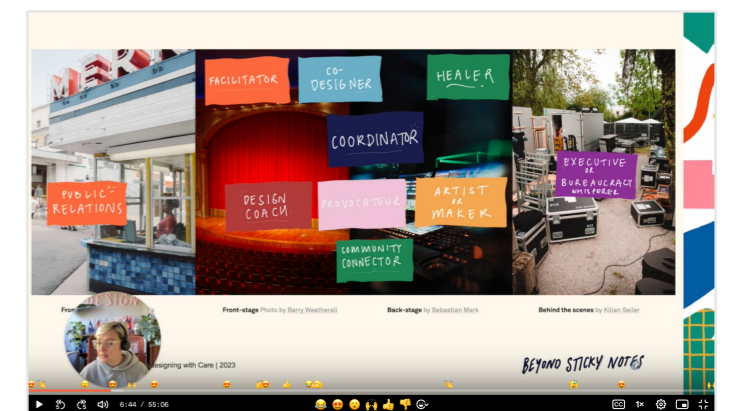


Fig. 39. Screenshot of one of the preparation videos, focusing on co-design roles and featuring ways to interact with the video content via emoji in the video tool 'Loom', 2024

2. Low Contact Co-Design (*Remote engagement*)

What is it?

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread globally in 2020, projects paused: in-person workshops and the default methods for collaboration were impossible. Design academics from Sheffield Hallam University (UK), Jo Langley et al. took the opportunity to question the status quo of collaboration and explore innovative ways to collaborate amidst constraint. 'Low contact co-design' is an academic paper sharing their findings.

What was the aim?

This work aimed to explore beyond the idea that technology is used as a 'stand-in' for face-to-face collaboration, and further experiment with a range of 'low contact' methods which not only allow for collaboration to take place, but add value and "contribute beyond COVID-19 to expand the inclusiveness of co-design processes and respond to some of its historical limitations."

What did they do?

Through a series of experiments within ongoing projects, the team tried out creating alternatives for traditional methods: e.g. creating a printed workbook as an alternative to a workshop. Their experimentations largely focused around 'space' and 'time', acknowledging that different combinations of each element can open up new opportunities for activity if first asking yourself " 'who?', 'what?', 'where?', and 'when?' " They found benefits such as increased flexibility and the potential to expand who could be included, based on this thinking.

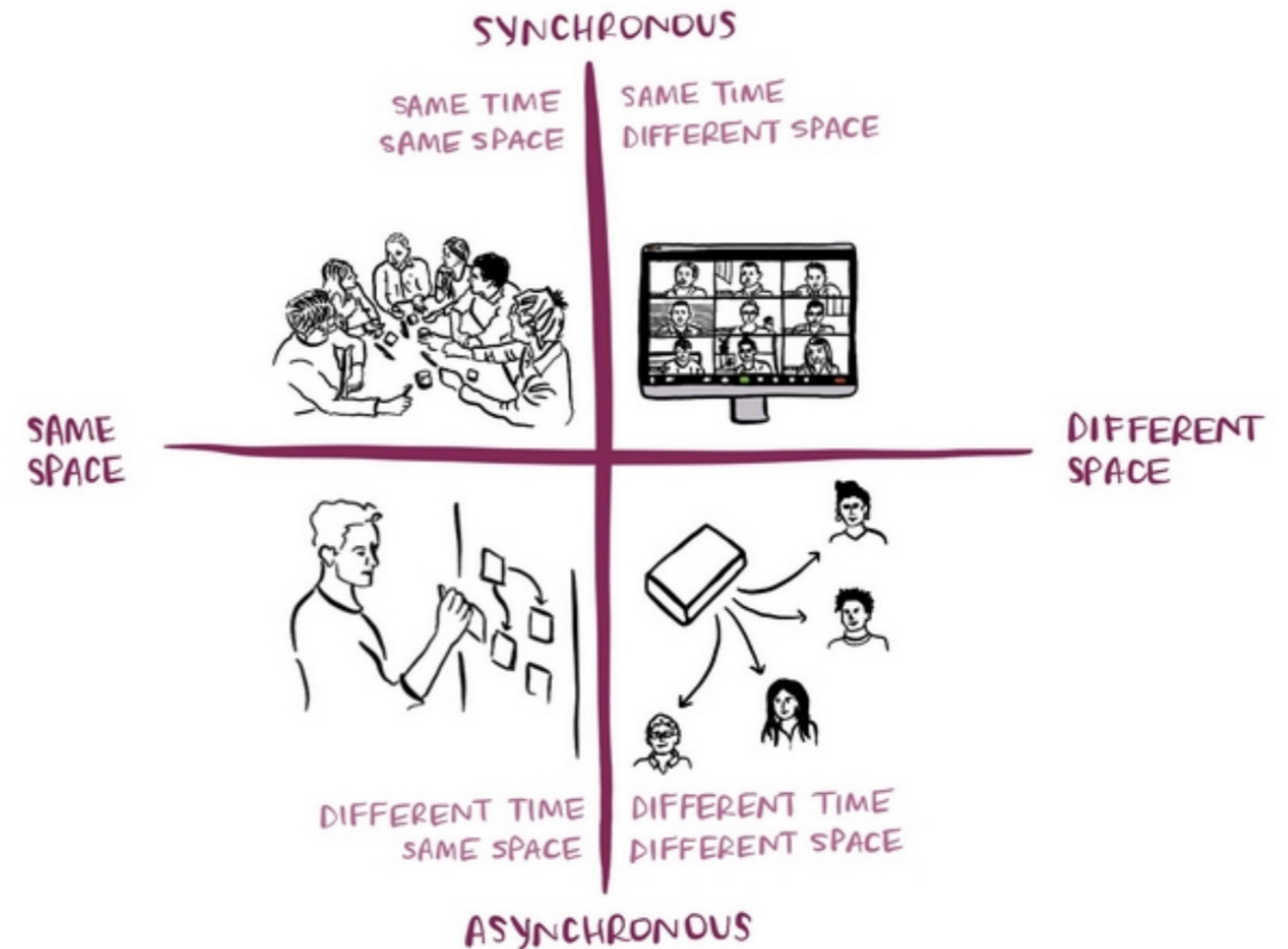


Fig. 40. Davis et al, Prototype 2: Spatiotemporal quadrants of co-design approaches, 2021

What's a key thing you might take with you into your own work?

The Flourishing Together project had already been established with a co-production team distributed across Aotearoa. Furthermore, online interactions are strongly relied upon within the disability community, as a great leveller for physical access and inclusion ("Clickbait & Crutches: Community") The default mode of engagement for this project was therefore online, and learnings from 'Low-contact co-design' provide a new perspective from which to view this default: particularly when thinking about combining or offering options of ways for people to participate throughout the process. The use of synchronous/asynchronous is particularly relevant for this work.

3. Kia Tika, Kia Pono (Aotearoa, Lived Experience)

What is it?

'Kia Tika, Kia Pono' is a practical and ethical framework formed of a set of questions, which encourages practitioners to reflect on their process to assess how deeply it is informed by the audience it aims to serve, and how this can be done with no harm. It asks them to consider 'Is it tika? Is it pono?: "the right people doing the right things" (10)

Specifically: the framework is to assist those seeking to work with 'rangatahi who are care experienced', however many of the reflective questions form a good starting point for work with other audiences.

What was the aim?

This project centres the voices and priorities of rangatahi with care experience and the process was deeply informed by participatory rights and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. ("Kia Tika, Kia Pono".)

The output of this process is a framework which focuses on the voice of care experience 'Our Words', a set of ethical values informed by these words, and a set of questions which encourage practitioners to consider how closely they are keeping to those ethics.

The ongoing and engrained collaboration with rangatahi as the voice of this work is a defining factor of this work and the 'our words' section reads as an instruction manual on how to engage with this audience, written by them. As defined by Voyce (an Aotearoa charity who advocate for children with care experience, "It is also distinctive in its centring of rangatahi with care experience as both knowledge-holders and knowledge-creators." ("Kia Tika, Kia Pono".)

What's a key thing you might take with you into your own work?

Kia Tika, Kia Pono is one of the few uniquely Aotearoa-focused case studies within this context review. Similarly to Flourishing Together, the work intersects many spaces: youth, care-experienced, Aotearoa, design. The use of deep collaboration with rangatahi (young people) and the tangible tool of a set of questions to guide a process, are inspiring for this phase of work within Flourishing Together.



Fig. 41. Te Rōpū Arotahi (authors) and Gabrielle Baker (illustrations), excerpt layouts from the Kia Tika Kia Pono report, 2022

4. Disability Toolkit for Policy (Toolkits, Policy)

What is it?

An online toolkit which aims to aid policy practitioners to consider the implications of policy from a disabled perspective. The toolkit offers seven steps: each containing prompting questions and additional resources, addressing different parts of the policy process. 'Step 3: Embedding disability into the policy issue' is the recommended minimum to read for policy practitioners. Most relevant to my work is 'Step 2: Engaging with the Disability Community'. I will focus on the content of step 2 for the purposes of this precedent. ("Step 2: Engaging with the Disability Community.")

What does it do?

Step 2 offers advice for considering "how to gather the different views of disabled people and relevant experts from across the disability sector." The content expresses a need to engage early, and continuously and advises against "making engagement with disabled people a check-box exercise."

The page goes on to provide written advice and links to resources on ways to do this, including:

- *why this engagement is important*
- *organisations involved*
- *levels of engagement*
- *who to engage with*
- *paying disabled people for their expertise*
- *advice on direct engagement*

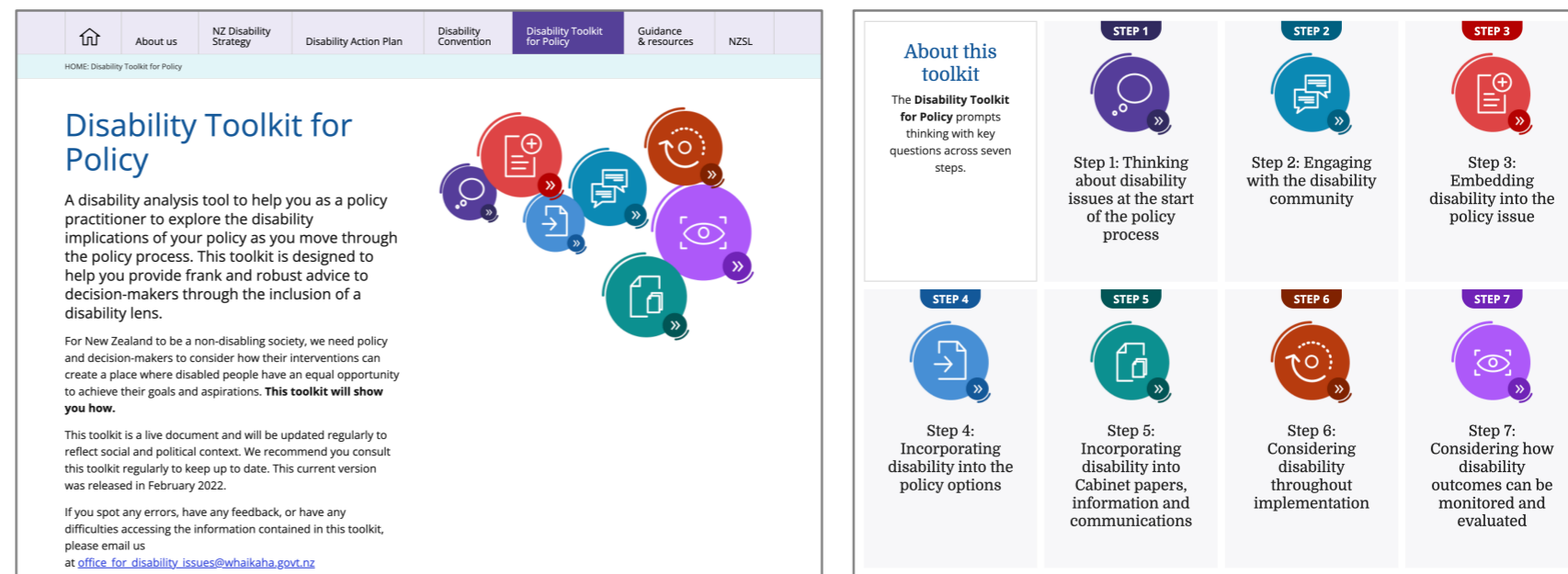


Fig. 42. Screenshot of the Disability Toolkit for Policy overview page, 2022

How is it relevant to your work?

This page offers good advice that touches every part of the wider Flourishing Together project. [The section for advice on direct engagement](#) is particularly relevant to the work of this Masters project.

The section provides solid advice such as "good engagement has accessibility and inclusion built into the consultation process", but leaves me asking 'how?'. Some advice is tangible, such as the recommendation to provide NZSL interpreters, braille, audio, easy-read and distribute information ahead of meetings, but leaves me wondering if and how this relates to inclusion: is this enough? These additional formats cover accessibility, but does this mean inclusion? Furthermore, this tangible advice is a very small part of this disability toolkit, deeply buried in a much more high-level, and verbose, toolkit.

The toolkit provides links to additional resources on creating accessible engagements. The guide to running accessible meetings, also from the Office for Disability Issues ("Running Accessible Meetings") is incredibly useful, offering practical advice on what to do before, and during a meeting, such as providing material in advance and checking the needs of the group. I wonder how these tips could be combined with a collaborative design approach to enhance inclusion within these contexts.

Reflections on 'HOW?'

Key mindsets / principles:

Through my deep-dive into collaborative design theory, I began to take on some of the key mindsets and principles proposed.

As discovered in the context review, a range of principles were uncovered, and through my synthesis, they fell into overarching themes of:

- *trusted relationships with people*
- *uplifting and empower*
- *increasing inclusion*

Some of the source material principles that I most identified with are shown to the right, inside the circle of fig. 43.

Additionally, the process approaches of 'being in the grey' and using creativity, resonated with my background as a creative and visual designer. Ambiguity allowed space to iterate and react to new information within the project, which appeals to my background in human-centred design, and experience as a freelance designer. These are shown on the outside of fig. 43

This interpretation of these principles and mindsets formed the foundation of my approach to the engagement process.

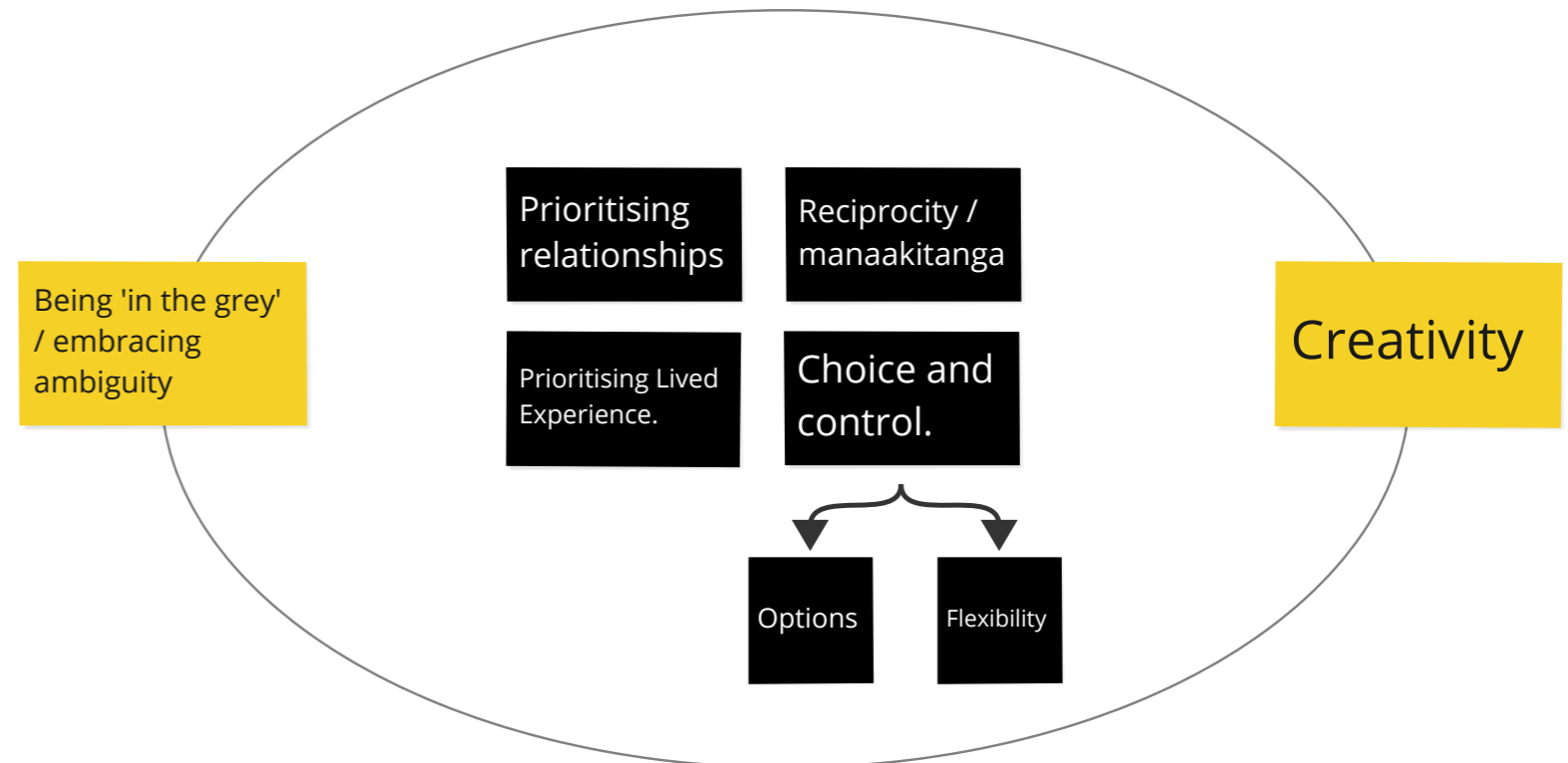


Fig. 43. Key collaborative principles, digital diagram by author, 2024

Some additional questions:

Throughout this context review, I also began to raise observations, reflections and questions about the process:

- If collaborative design is supposed to make everyone a designer, then why does it sometimes still feel so...designery? Frameworks can be abstract and complex, terminology feels difficult and a lot of the materials are quite polished.

- Principles, frameworks and mindsets are critical for undertaking a well-considered process, but I wonder how daunting these might be to non-'designers', or people wondering where to begin in such a process? I certainly began the process with our co-production team thinking 'omg but how do I share power???

- Definitions are important, but also confusing: it can be helpful to name a thing, but I wondered about to who? Is it helpful to the community we are working within? Or is it more external?

After reading a lot of sources about how collaborative design, I still didn't really know where to begin. But luckily I had Susan, a handful of principles that resonated, a lot of questions and a relatively 'safe'* environment in which to explore this process, so we jumped right in.

**The context of this phase of work, inside the wider Flourishing Together project, and exempt from the external pressures of funding accountability or stakeholder involvement, plus a pre-established co-production team, allowed for an experimental process with room for mistakes.*

F:

PROCESS: What did we do?

An overview:

A process approach:

It was with some key principles, a specific challenge and no specific plan that Susan and I dove into collaboration. After all, "it starts with a conversation"...

Gathered from the literature, life experience, expertise and some gut sense, we had a collection of considerations that we had stances on, which felt like enough to begin. An outline of these is shown to the right, with a reminder of our challenge below (fig. 5)

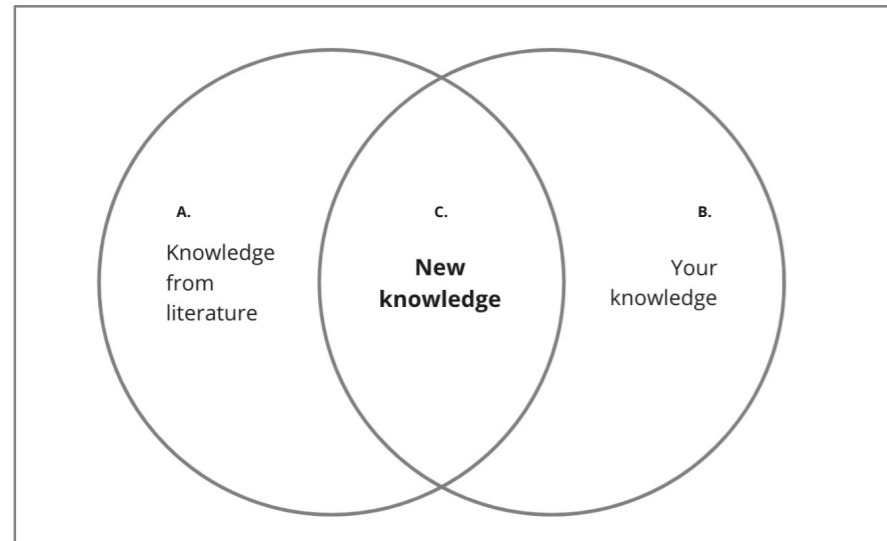


Fig. 5. Design challenge venn diagram, digital image by author, 2023

'Collaborative design'

We would take inspiration from all collaborative design approaches (e.g. co-design, co-production, co-creation etc) rather than following one definition.

Co-facilitation

Facilitation would be open and shared between myself, Susan (co-facilitator) and Rachelle (lead researcher for the wider Flourishing Together project) We could all be points of contact to the group and decide roles per session.

Zoom-first

With a co-production team distributed across Aotearoa, our sessions and interactions would be via Zoom as default, but with openness to in-person gatherings too.

Strengths-focused

Relying on Susan's expertise in online gatherings within the disability community, and existing relationships with the co-production team, we held a holistic approach to accessibility: we focused on strengths, preferences and needs and did not ask for any details of disability, unless people chose to disclose. Within Zoom sessions we enabled closed-captions, used image descriptions where needed and asked the team if they needed anything additional.

Adaptive process

The outline of the process was guided by the goals of the literature review, but we designed specific steps as we went, responding to the thoughts of the group.

Accessibility

As a primarily digital project, web accessibility was a consideration, but we did not want to expand scope to full digital accessibility. As the primary scope of this project was inclusive processes, we chose to follow our approach of contextual knowledge (Susan's knowledge of the individuals in the group) and a strengths-focus to guide our approach.

Process outline:

Fig. 44 shows how this process centred around the literature review (step C). However, in order to build an inclusive process to produce this literature review, it was important to first establish the conditions in which the work could take place (step B). Once the work was 'done', there was also a final step involving reflecting on the process itself: we wanted to understand the opportunities and challenges, alongside any new skills or capabilities the CPT had gathered during this process (step D). Whilst the whole process was intensely collaborative, step A was a solitary immersion phase.

Feedback was sought throughout all steps via email, survey, and conversations, but was most reciprocal at the end of the process, once trust had been established. The reflections in the following Process Map and the more detailed thoughts in Appendix 4 are primarily from my perspective, and include some thoughts from the CPT. Susan and I will reflect further on this process in the next stages of Flourishing Together.

NB. What 'literature?'
 The Core Research Team systematically searched for and sorted literature to select a sample of 22 housing-related publications, reports and strategy documents for the CPT to review. This was provided to Susan and I for the purpose of this process design.

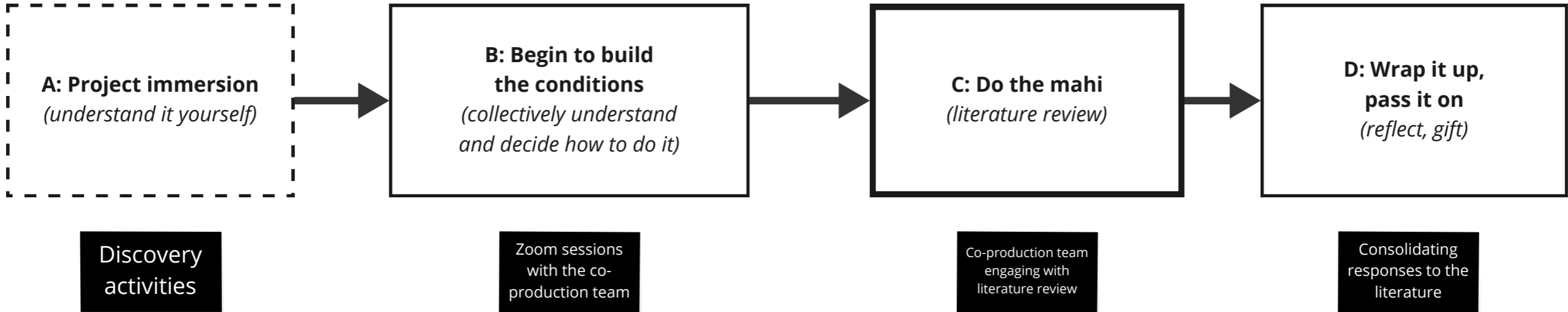


Fig 44: Collaborative process overview, digital diagram by author, 2024

Process map:

*NB. This process map has been designed to be scrolled and zoomed through.
It is best viewed on-screen via Miro*

*This whole section is considered 'fig. 45' with all
inset images available in the appendix 6.*

A: Project immersion (understand it yourself) → **B: Begin to build the conditions (collectively understand and decide how to do it)** → **C: Do the mahi (literature review)** → **D: Wrap it up (reflect on the process, pass knowledge on to Flourishing Together)**

Process step:

Action (what?):

Goal (why?):

Visual snapshot:

Tools used:

Appendices (link to open Google Drive):

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	Sense-making	Position yourself	Scope, meet	Discovery	Establishing regular meetings	Invitation	'Intro' Zoom sessions	'Launch' Zoom sessions	'Let's talk about literature' Zoom sessions	Creating a literature experience	Sending out a 'menu'	Making literature 'packs'	Sending out literature 'packs'	Hosting drop-in sessions	Modifying formats	Creating forums	Group discussion Zoom sessions	One-to-one Zoom chats	Sending out request for notes	Receiving notes	Wrapup feedback docs	Wrap-up session	Handover
	<i>I absorbed existing information, provided by Flourishing Together and sketched diagrams to define the challenge space and write myself a design brief</i>	<i>I immersed into Disability culture by reading biographical stories and listening to podcasts. I defined who I am as a designer in this space articulating the strengths and gaps that I bring to the project</i>	<i>I joined the Core Research Team to listen in on progress. All activity on other phases of the work, to align with the wider project and begin to align the scope of this phase. I began to build relationships with the core research team, specifically Susan who co-lead this phase with me.</i>	<i>I conducted semi-structured interviews with three Policy experts: those in current, previous or academic policy roles.</i>	<i>I began to meet regularly with Susan, who would co-lead and co-facilitate this phase of work with me. We worked together to begin planning engagement with the 'co-production' team (CPT hereafter)</i>	<i>To invite the CPT to our first online gathering. Susan and I each recorded a video introducing ourselves and our roles in the project. We sent this out within an invitation email.</i>	<i>We hosted 2 x Zoom sessions to introduce this phase of work to the CPT. We hosted the same session at two different times of day / week.</i>	<i>We hosted 4 x Launch Zoom sessions (same session repeated at different times and days during the week) We initially planned two, then added more based on availability.</i>	<i>We hosted 3 x 'Literature' Zoom sessions, at different times and on different days of the week.</i>	<i>Susan and I worked through the conversations and findings from the Zoom sessions, to create a cohesive way in which to distribute and discuss the literature.</i>	<i>Learning on the visual metaphor, we designed a 'menu' to facilitate easy selection of which reports people wanted to explore, and the format they wanted to receive them in. We distributed this as a PDF via email, with the option to respond via email or Google Form</i>	<i>Using the visual metaphor of a 'mosaic' that we landed on in step 9, we organised the literature (provided by the wider team) into groups and created a symbolic code for each. We began to consider how people could make notes.</i>	<i>After receiving selections from the co-production team, we sent out 'literature packs' containing the selected reports, note-taking materials and templates, and some creative items. We mailed each person a pack and also emailed those who had requested digital versions.</i>	<i>During the 2-3 week period in which the team were working through their chosen reports, we hosted 'drop-in sessions' via Zoom a few times a week, in which the team could join to chat and share any learnings or challenges.</i>	<i>Throughout the reading period, we worked with group members to modify the content into new formats which aided their understanding.</i>	<i>We set up a Whatsapp group chat and a Facebook private group to create space for discussion amongst the group, as they worked through their reports.</i>	<i>We hosted 4 x 2 hour group discussions via Zoom, exploring what people had read, and their responses to the content.</i>	<i>A 20 minute - 1 hour chat via Zoom with each group member, reflecting on their experience.</i>	<i>We emailed and mailed out a request for the notes that the group had taken whilst reading the reports.</i>	<i>We received notes, drawings and collages via email and post. Some people had used our templates, others had created their own.</i>	<i>As part of the email and mail send-out, we included some templates for the team to offload any final thoughts. This was an additional format to the 1:1s and wrap-up session</i>	<i>We hosted a 2-hour wrap-up session, with a focus on how this process and their insights could be helpful to policy. We continued the use of our 'mosaic' visual metaphor and relied on narratives</i>	<i>Flourishing Together will draw on the findings and recommendations from this sample process, to enable a more wide-scale literature review.</i>
	Drawing diagrams and mapping problems	Context exploration in disability space and working possibility statement	Meeting the group via zoom to discuss the project and working possibility statement	1x Zoom or in-person semi-structured interviews	Send invitation video-email	2 x Intro Zoom sessions (same session repeated at 2 different times)	4 x Launch Zoom sessions (same session repeated at different times and days during the week)	3 x 'Let's talk about literature' Zoom sessions	4 x Susan (synthesizing info, creating visual metaphor for materials)	The menu / offering choices / ways to engage	Creating materials: literature packs to send via digital and printed. Research the creative elements, produced the literature packs	Bundling and distributing materials	Drop-in sessions	Modifying formats	Forums: Whatsapp and Facebook	4 x Group discussions: format modified throughout	1:1s	Facilitating the sharing of materials	Receiving / Sharing of materials	send / receive wrap-up feedback docs	Wrap-up session		
	Sense-making and problem definition, Scope.	Gain understanding of the challenge space, question my possibility within the work	Begin relationship building	Gain understanding of the problem space	Whakawhanau getanga. Shared strengths.																		
	ProCreate, Apple pencil, iPad	Google slides	Zoom & in-person kōrero, Kai	Google Docs for interview notes, Kōrero, Recording via phone, All Open for transcription, Teo, Gita.	Zoom, Kōrero.	Zoom, Video recording (to built to laptop), Zoom, Calendar, Slack.	Google Slides, Zoom, Kōrero, Calendars	Miro, Zoom, Kōrero, Calendars	Miro, Zoom, Kōrero, Calendars	Miro, Kōrero, Sketching, Annotating notes, Zoom group discussions	Google slides, Google Forms, Miro.	Google docs, Chat PDF (by Kōrero), Zoom, Google Forms, Postcard, Zoom paper, Slides etc.	Digital, Post.	Zoom, Kōrero.	Chat GPT.	Whatsapp, Facebook.	Zoom, Miro, Kōrero.	Zoom, Kōrero.	Google / Word Docs, PDFs, Paper and pen, Post.	Google / Word Docs, PDFs, Paper and pen, Post, Google Forms.	Google / Word Docs, PDFs, Paper and pen, Post, Google Forms.	Zoom video-based, Visual Metaphor, Narratives, Postcard / role play, Kōrero.	
	Drawings	Working possibility statement	-	Transcripts & summaries	Prep docs for session 1...	Videos / email copy	Slides, Transcript from the sessions	Appendix 5	Appendix 5	Appendix 5	Menu, PDF & Google Form	Links to photos	-	PDF of workings	not included (privacy)	Appendix 5	Transcripts	Photos	Scans	Link to Drive with scans and PDFs	PDF of Zoom, Whatsapp, Narratives of session		

G:

PROCESS: Reflections

Whakawhanaungtanga (relationship building)

Process: Relationship building

The process of whakawhanaungatanga ("process of establishing relationships, relating well to others") (*Te Aka*), and the ongoing relationships throughout this project have been the most important element of the work. As facilitators, Susan and I worked to foster connection between members of the co-production team, and with each other, to create interconnectedness that would bolster the process steps. 'Prioritising relationships' (McKercher, "What is Co-Design?") was a mindset we aimed to bring to every interaction at every step of the process. The importance of relationships within collaborative design was strongly evidenced in the context review for this work, and a key theme of this review was 'trusted relationships with people'. A high precedent for this had been set in previous phases of Flourishing Together.

The key steps of the process in which we focused on relationships or the level of trust facilitated better outcomes are outlined here.

The foundational work Susan and I put into creating connections with each other and the co-production team, showed up in every part of the process. Establishing genuine interest and rapport with each member of the co-production team allowed us to have more meaningful conversations and exchanges throughout.

During step 8, our 'literature' sessions, our groups were becoming smaller: a natural drop-off occurring as time progressed. During one session, only one person attended the Zoom. My initial reaction was that this was a problem: the sessions were designed for group discussion so that we could benefit from each others' thinking and collectively come up with ways to move forward. However, the group member and I had (by now) met a handful of times, and were able to have a much deeper and more nuanced conversation about the literature formats than we would have been able to otherwise.

During step 15 (creating forums), we created 'forums' of a Whatsapp group chat and a private Facebook group, with the intent of group members being interconnected and discussing the literature more organically. Whilst sparingly used by a handful of people, it proved beneficial as an informal method for the team reaching out with queries at any time. "If you don't understand anything, you have to like, jump on... the WhatsApp group... put your concern out there. And then, you know, there are people that have... more knowledge than you and certain things, and they will definitely help you" (Naz, CPT, 1:1 wrap-up chat, May 2024). The existing work to foster this trust had allowed a more informal channel to flourish.

We applied this learning to later stages of the process and invited each group member to a one-to-one conversation to wrap-up our involvement in this phase: to hear their thoughts and feedback directly, in a more detailed way than is possible in a group setting. These conversations were so rich that we extended each kōrero (conversation) by more than double the allotted time.

Reflections:

In future, I would create more deliberate and formal opportunities to begin growing relationships

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double click the thumbnail above, or click link here to access:*

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Steps within this process that showcase moments of relationship building



Whakawhanaungatanga (relationship building):

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Fig. 46. Screenshot of regular Zoom call with co-facilitators, Susan (top) and Faye (below), 2023

Whakawhanaungatanga (relationship building):

Reflections:

In future, I would create more deliberate and formal opportunities to begin growing relationships with the team members, and find ways for them to get to know one another, much earlier. Booking one-to-one times with people was far more effective than simply asking if they wanted to chat: in future I would pro-actively invite each group member for a direct conversation at the start of the project. I would also establish a group forum from the beginning: facilitating introductions and discussion.

The question of platform-choice remains a challenge: using existing platforms works well for people, but everyone has different preferences. For example, we set up both a Facebook group and a group chat via Whatsapp, but different people gravitated towards each based on their usual use. We were reluctant to introduce a new platform to avoid fatigue of new technologies, yet there is a question around the richness of conversations when they occur in splintered groups. Conversely, communicating via a preferred and known platform may create safety and willingness to engage. In future work, this is something I would explore further, and from earlier on in the project.

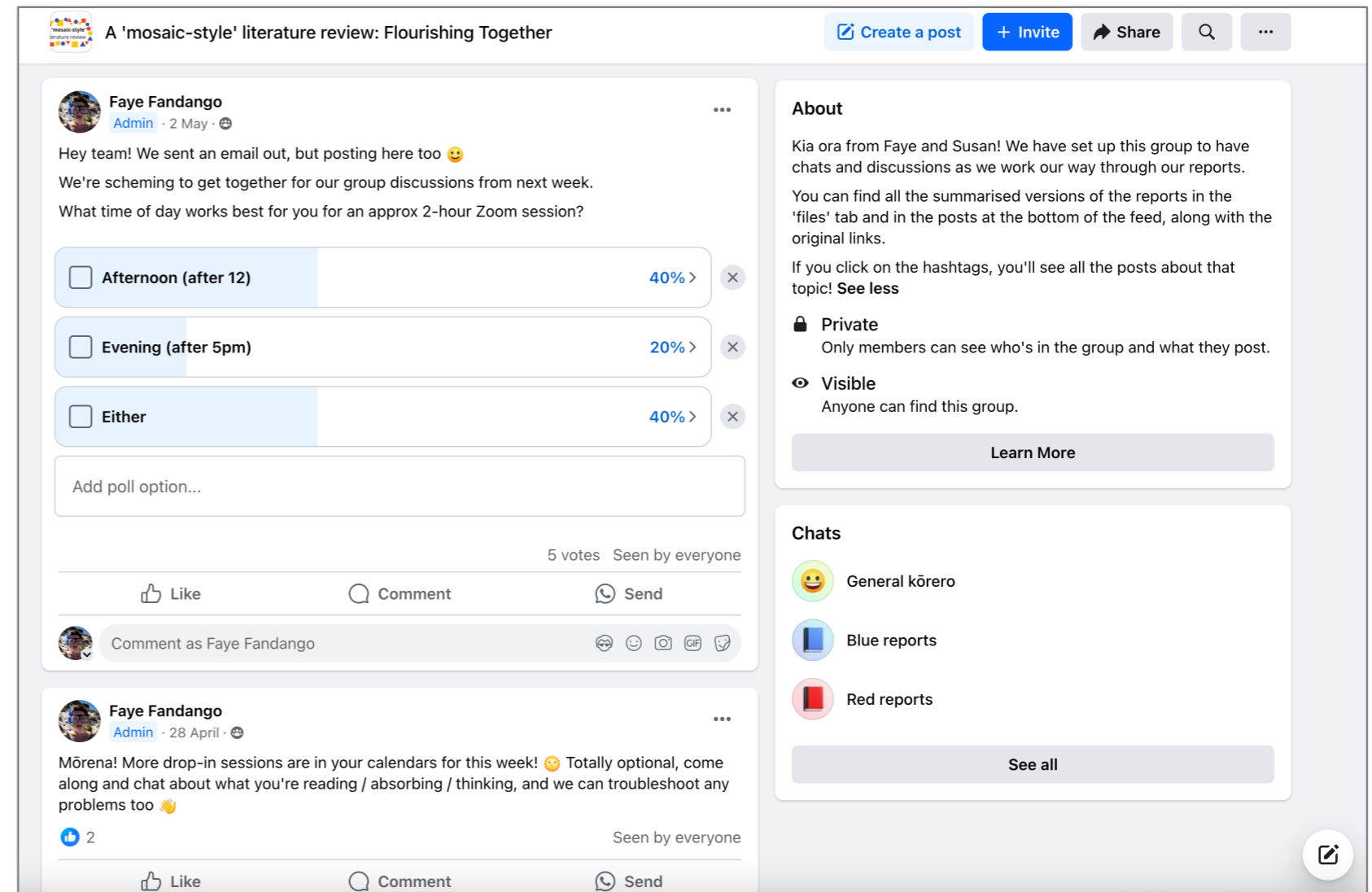


Fig. 47. Screenshot from private Facebook group, created for conversations amongst the co-production team, 2024

Options:

Process: Options

Creating alternative formats, or multiplying options to cater to peoples strengths, preferences, needs and availability was our interpretation of offering 'power' to the co-production team and a way of upholding and increasing mana (power and authority bestowed) (The Pūtaiora Writing Group 13). When advising on direct engagement, The Disability Toolkit for Policy recommends that "Disabled people may require reasonable accommodations to have their say", yet our strengths-based approach inverts this thinking, preferring instead to offer choices based on preferences, and reducing the need to ask for 'accommodations'.

This approach became both a practice and a mindset, as we asked ourselves at each step: what are some other ways people could do this? It was initially suggested by Susan, when establishing timing for our first Zoom session (step 7), that we could host the same session multiple times, at different hours and on different days, therefore creating options that might work for different schedules, increasing chances of participation and ultimately inclusion. This had been a successful technique for Susan in previous engagements within the disability community, and proved so again: we had a mix of attendance at each session and over time discussed what schedule worked best for the (CPT) team, and why. Taking this approach of multiplicity at the very beginning of the project embedded this thinking early on.

During step 10 (making literature packs), we created and distributed individual 'literature packs' of reports and note-taking formats. We gave options for the team to receive these digitally, or printed, and as full versions of the reports, or summarised versions. We provided note-taking templates which could also be digital (Word docs) or printed sheets. We encouraged everyone to take notes in any way that worked best for them as individuals. This effort of creating options, though time-consuming, was rewarded at step 19 (receiving notes), when we received rich and varied notes from the team. Some had typed detailed responses in Word, others had scribbled notes on the printed sheets and another had created their own responses: featuring colour, collage and drawings (fig. 49).

After distributing the literature packs, we received feedback from a co-production team member that one of the reports was confusing in its summarised version (see step 14). We valued the feedback as evidence that a strong relationship was forming and saw the opportunity to be more creative with our formats. In a group discussion, it was highlighted that the voices of participants had been lost in some of the summarised reports. We therefore experimented with Chat GPT to summarise the research as a story, with more of a focus on narrative, and re-including the voices of the participants. (More detail about this process can be read in the Appendix 4 - Process map 2.0, step 14)

The results of the experiment were delivered to the team member who found it hugely helpful for their understanding of the core content. This raised questions for us about how narrative could be used for greater impact across this set of reports, and the process as a whole. Based on this lesson, we later employed the use of characters and narrative to convey theoretical scenarios in our wrap-up session (step 21)

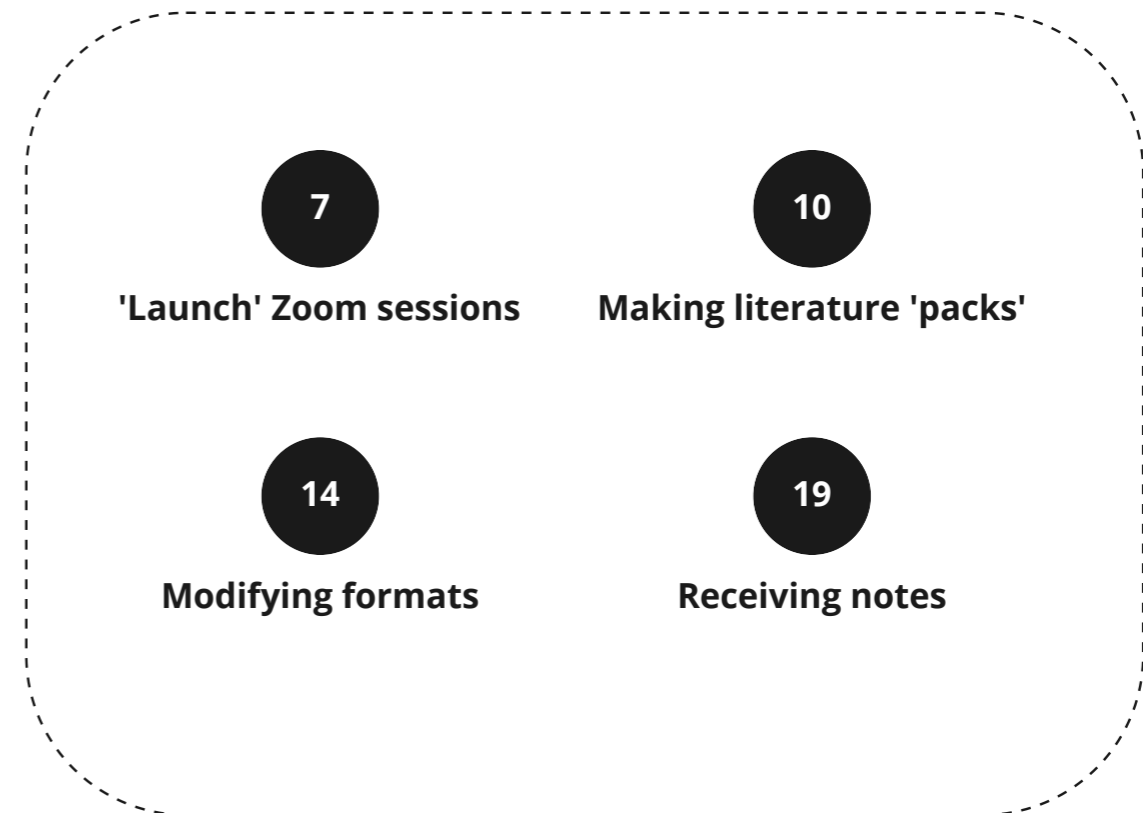
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Steps within this process that showcase our use of options



Options:

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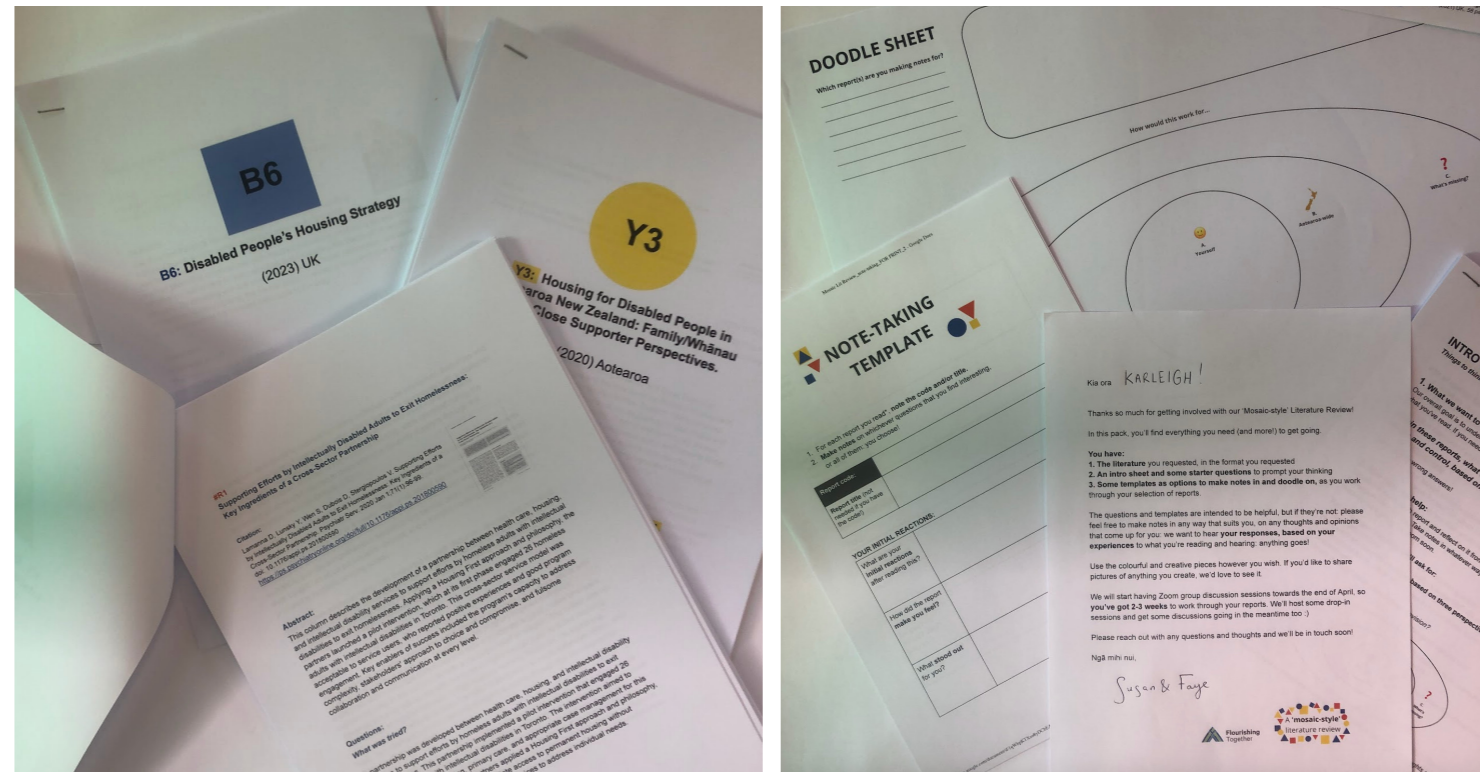


Fig. 48. Printed copies of literature and note-taking formats, images by author, 2024

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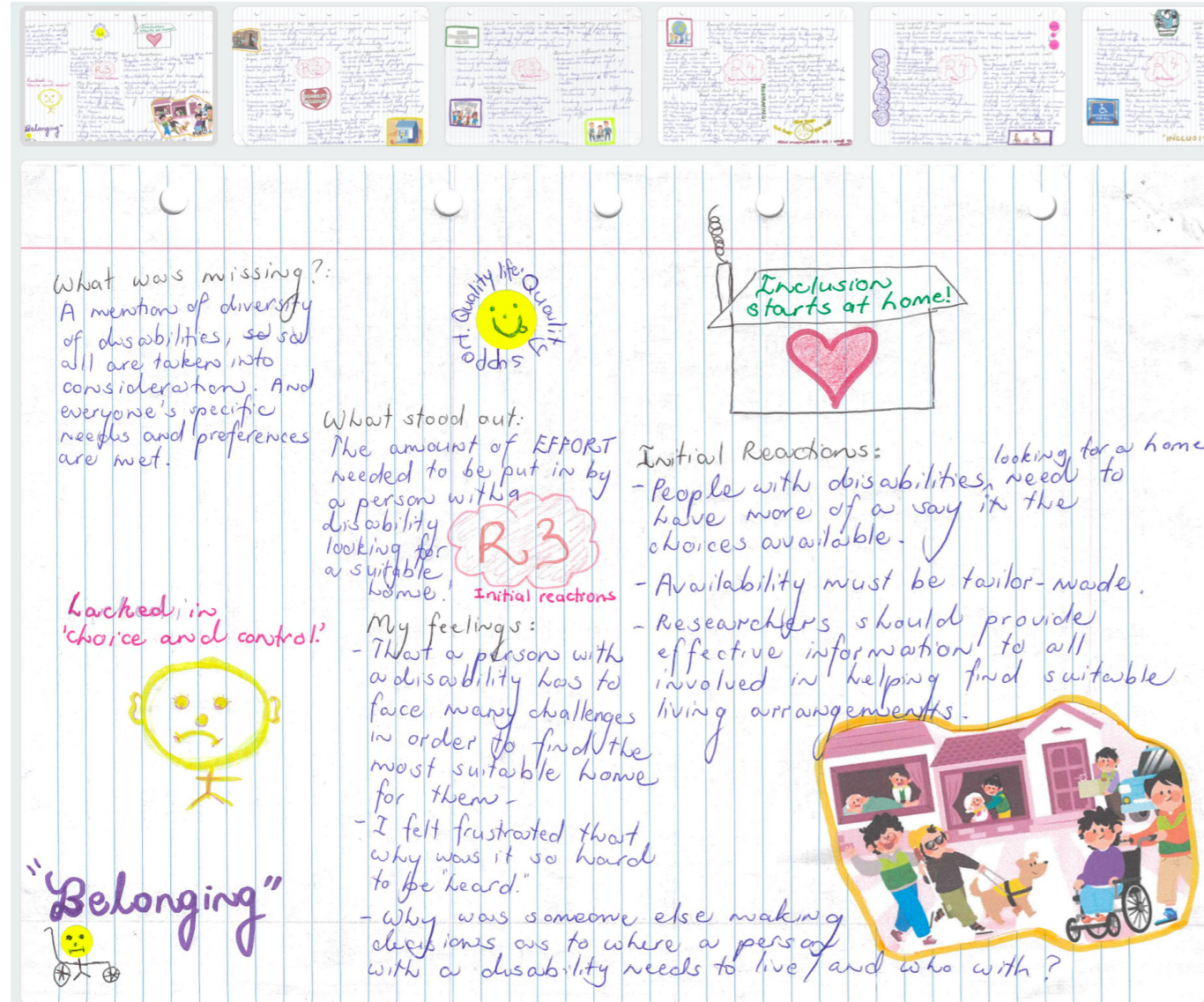


Fig. 49. Literature notes by Naz, 2024

Reflections:

Whilst hugely beneficial, and creating opportunities for higher, and more varied inclusion and engagement, multiplying formats and sessions is a time-consuming and energy-consuming task. Facilitating the same session repeatedly can be draining, with concern that this energy may translate to the success of the session. Creating multiple formats of the literature reports took far longer than expected and ultimately delayed the timeline in sending these out. Furthermore, it was not entirely clear whether the format options offered were 'enough', as feedback was difficult to gather at this stage of the process: it was offered more freely at the end of the project.

In future, I would aim to distribute 'test' formats and materials before the full batch: this would allow us to explicitly gather feedback on the format options and provide those of greatest value. Ideally, more time would be allowed for the preparation of the full batch of materials too: or better planning and sharing of tasks (in retrospect, this is something the wider Flourishing Together team could have helped with if we had asked in advance).

Overall with more structure and planning to the process, more tasks could have been shared: for example, rotating the role of facilitator of the Zoom calls would have provided more opportunity and reduced fatigue. However, these logistics often add more time to an already time-consuming process: a tension throughout the project as a whole.

Creativity & novelty:

Process: Creativity/novelty

Creative and visual techniques are often used in collaborative design projects. The welcome pack received as part of the 'Co-Design with Care' course (**precedent 1**) was a colourful introduction to the group. McKercher, in the book *Beyond Sticky Notes*, also encourages collaboration with artists and creatives as a way for us to expand beyond verbal and written learning (133). As a visual designer, it is part of my approach to lean on visual materials to help articulate content. A personal ethos shared by Susan and I was also to inject some novelty into the process, aiming to make it enjoyable for anyone who participated.

During step 7 the 'launch' Zoom sessions, we began to experiment with the use of Miro (an interactive digital whiteboard tool, that you may be reading this exegesis in) (**see Appendix 5**). The overall intention was to encourage participation: using a visual tool to allow people to contribute in ways other than verbally (e.g. by writing responses on sticky notes, or using emojis and GIFs to express feeling). We also wanted a central 'home' for the work where people could see the project progress and go back to it in their own time.

The use of Miro had mixed results: some of the group relished the opportunity to try a new tool and took extra time going back in to experiment and play with some of the visual activities. However, the creative element was overshadowed by the technical newness of the tool for some. Some found Miro too overwhelming or unfamiliar to use, or they struggled to see or load the board on their device due to internet connection or hardware issues. To mitigate this, we tried to balance both sets of needs: we aimed to create opportunities for those who wanted to use the tool: sending the link at the start of a Zoom session and encouraging them to use it. We also 'presented' the board to the Zoom call, so others could view the evolving board without interacting.

This presented some challenges as direction became less clear, and as facilitators we needed to juggle multiple 'views' — e.g. being 'in' the board with those participating, whilst simultaneously being aware of the view being presented via Zoom. We continued to trial this approach throughout the sessions, but never quite found the right balance.

In our final wrap-up session (step 21) we experimented with the whiteboard function in Zoom, which removed some of these technical barriers, due to its integrated nature. This allowed us to focus more on its use as a creative tool, and I would further experiment with this in the future.

As we approached stage C of the process (Do the mahi: engage with literature) it became clear that creativity would help us to consolidate and simplify the complexity of the content we needed to present to the group. Working with starter ideas created during the 'Launch' sessions (step 7), Susan and I collaborated to explore how a metaphor might help name and identify the work. We landed on a 'mosaic-style literature review' to convey the mix of diverse knowledge at play. A simple visual identity helped to 'brand' the materials somewhat and create a coding system for the list of 22 reports for the group to choose from (fig. 51). This was hugely helpful, not only for our own initial understanding of how to distribute the content, but for the group to access this

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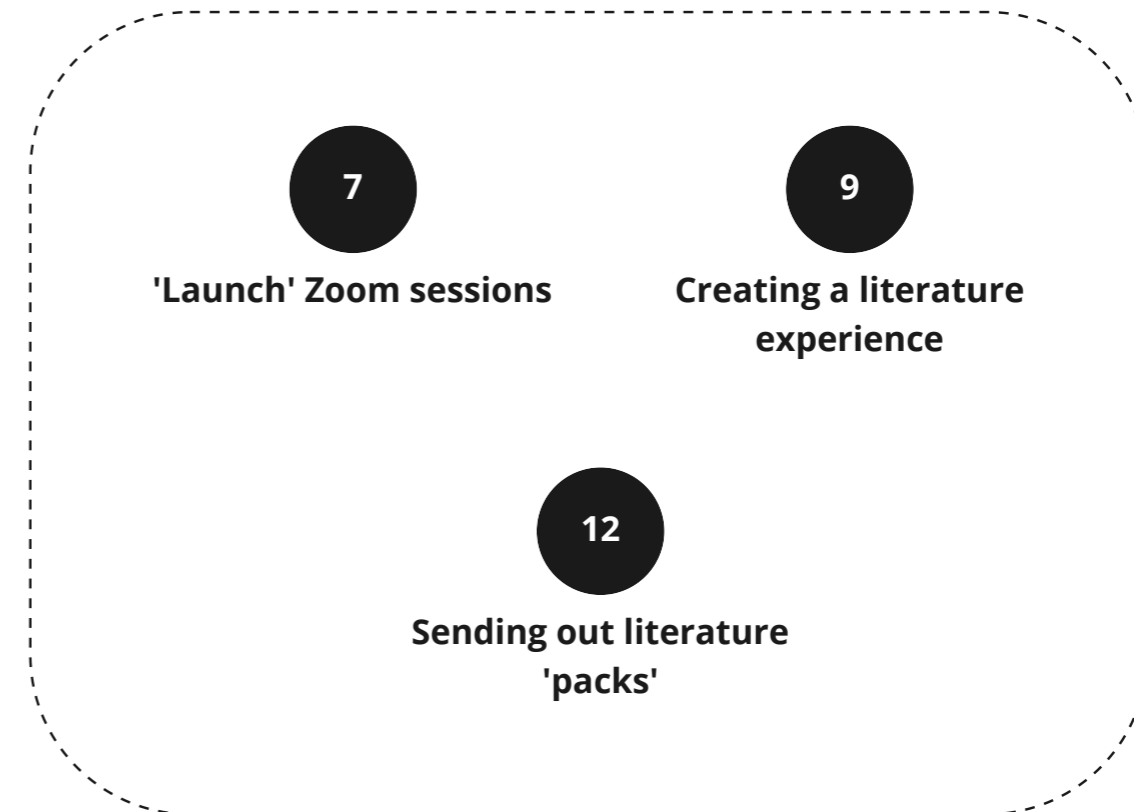
Creativity & novelty:

Creative and visual techniques are often used in collaborative design projects. The welcome pack received as part of the 'Co-Design with Care' course (precedent 1) was a colourful introduction to the group. McKercher, in the book *Beyond Sticky Notes*, also encourages collaboration with artists and creatives as a way for us to expand beyond verbal and written learning (133).

As a visual designer, it is part of my approach to lean on visual materials to help articulate content. A personal ethos shared by Susan and I was also to inject some novelty into the process, aiming to make it enjoyable for anyone who participated.

During step 7 the 'launch' Zoom sessions, we began to experiment with the use of Miro (an interactive digital whiteboard tool, that you may be reading this exegesis in) **(see Appendix 5)** The overall intention was to encourage participation: using a visual tool to allow people to contribute in ways other than verbally (e.g. by writing responses on sticky notes, or using emojis and GIFs to express feeling. We also wanted a central 'home' for the work where people could see the project progress and go back to it in their own time.

Steps within this process that showcase our use of creativity



Creativity & novelty:

The use of Miro had mixed results: some of the group relished the opportunity to try a new tool and took extra time going back in to experiment and play with some of the visual activities. However, the creative element was overshadowed by the technical newness of the tool for some. Some found Miro too overwhelming or unfamiliar to use, or they struggled to see or load the board on their device due to internet connection or hardware issues. To mitigate this, we tried to balance both sets of needs: we aimed to create opportunities for those who wanted to use the tool: sending the link at the start of a Zoom session and encouraging them to use it. We also 'presented' the board to the Zoom call, so others could view the evolving board without interacting.

This presented some challenges as direction became less clear, and as facilitators we needed to juggle multiple 'views' — e.g. being 'in' the board with those participating, whilst simultaneously being aware of the view being presented via Zoom. We continued to trial this approach throughout the sessions, but never quite found the right balance. In our final wrap-up session (step 21) we experimented with the whiteboard function in Zoom, which removed some of these technical barriers, due to its integrated nature. This allowed us to focus more on its use as a creative tool, and I would further experiment with this in the future.

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Fig. 50. Preparing literature packs to send out to the co-production team, image by author, 2024

Creativity & novelty:

This was hugely helpful, not only for our own initial understanding of how to distribute the content, but for the group to access this work “I understood the mosaic of reports and the myriad of ways I could select content and mode of access; marvellous work, really well done. I’m quite astounded that you can take such a complexity of process and options and package those and reader response options to those so succinctly.” (Maureen, CPT, email feedback from testing the ‘menu’, March 2024)

We extended the use of this metaphor and approach to novelty when creating the 'literature packs' to send out (step 12). Digital and printed materials featured the theme, and we created a kind of 'goody bag' of creative materials to send out to each team member. The creative materials were colourful and included geometric shapes, to reinforce the theme. The intention of this pack was to add some unexpected novelty to the process, whilst also providing items that may be helpful to the work: e.g. a notebook, a pen, highlighters, and an essential chocolate fish.

Responses to the goody bag were mixed: everyone was pleased to receive tangible mail, and a chocolate fish received positively by all, but some items were not fully thought-through: one team member could not use the unusually shaped highlighter with her hand-strength, and a couple of people questioned the purpose of some of the creative items. “Yeah, to be honest I was a little bit miffed about what some of the stuff was for...maybe there was a brochure inside the package...But yeah, I personally, I probably didn't need that too much. I just focused on the literature that you sent” (Adam, CPT, 1:1 chat, May 2024)

Reflections:

It seems that overall, the use of creativity and novelty throughout the project worked for some and not others. In future, I'd simplify the 'ask' of any creative activity and be clearer with any materials provided. I would also be more thoughtful with which items to include and why. Simplifying the use of any digital tools could also increase engagement, though there will likely always be a spectrum of comfort with digital tools within any group.

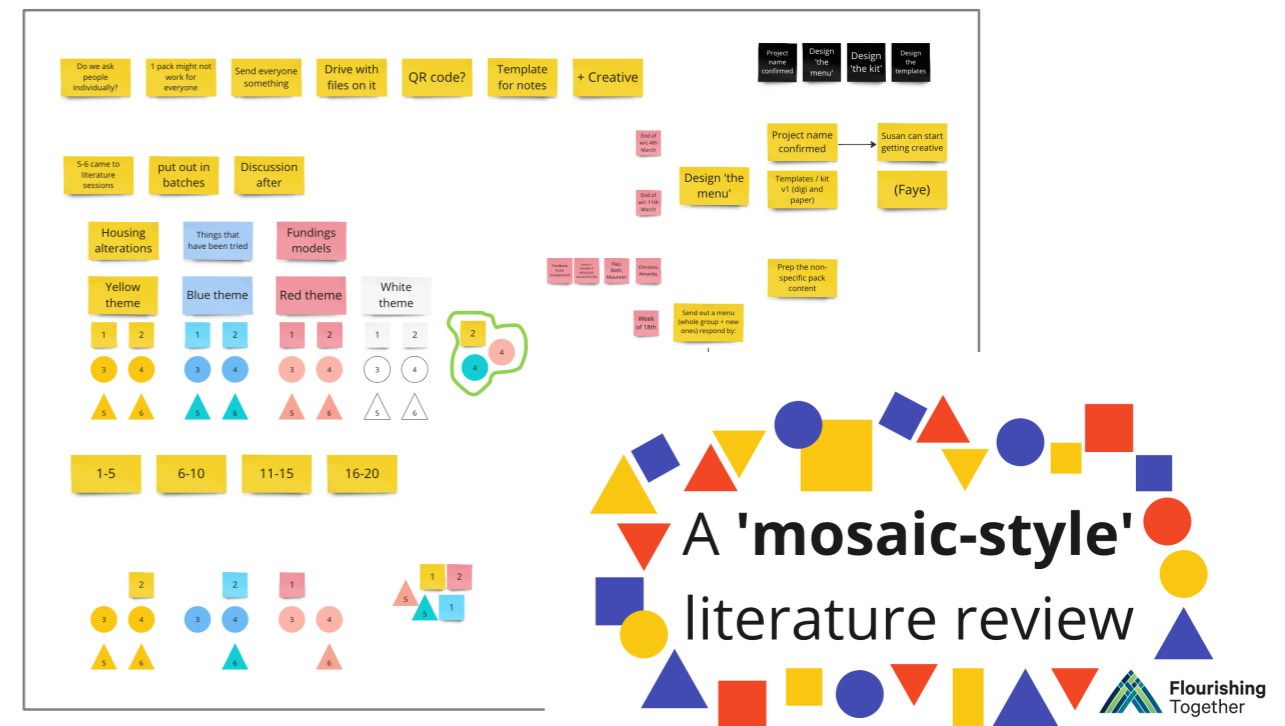


Fig. 51. The process of creating a visual metaphor and identity for the literature review, based on input from the co-production team, 2024

Reciprocity:

Process: Reciprocity

Reciprocity is defined by the Social Care Institute for Excellence as "ensuring that people receive something back for putting something in, and builds on people's desire to feel needed and valued." ("Co-Production: Principles of co-production")

The Flourishing Together project as a whole encapsulates reciprocity: contributors offer their time and lived experience to contribute towards the overall goal of improving policy outcomes for themselves, their whānau and the disabled community. However, this mindset trickles down through immediate and tangible actions too.

Though not a part of my personal process (this was outside of the scope of this phase), I have been able to observe discussions amongst the core research team on remunerating participants appropriately, and how. This is a topic of considerable interest in the wider collaborative design community. The general aspiration is to try to pay collaborators, rather than offering standard koha. Also to ensure the amount is not tokenistic, and instead reflects the expertise offered.

Within our phase of work, reciprocity began with a question: *if we were asking something of someone, what could we offer first?*

In step 5 (Invitation), we were inviting the existing co-production team (from previous Flourishing Together phases) to join us in an introductory session (step 6). Turning up to an online Zoom with no prior knowledge of the other co-production team members, or facilitators can be daunting for many: the expectation to share on-screen, speak in a group etc. So we decided to offer something of ourselves first, by recording a video introducing ourselves, in the hope that this would increase confidence to attend.

Later in the process, in step 18: we were asking the group to send us any physical notes they had taken. To reciprocate this effort, we sent them another bundle in the mail, containing a chocolate fish, a thank you note and a stamped, addressed envelope to send their notes.

In a most basic form of reciprocity, early in the process, when interviewing policy professionals, I brought kai and bought coffees, as a thank you for their time and energy.

We have no insight into whether these efforts of reciprocity were valued (other than some of the notes being returned to us) and it is difficult to judge the success of something so intangible.

We were able to measure that the videos in the invitation email had been viewed over 10 times, however this does not necessarily convey success. Sending addressed envelopes out to our team members more than doubled the time it took for us to receive them. Nevertheless, the value is in conducting reciprocity without tangible expectation. Much like building relationships, these mindsets hold the process together in invisible ways.

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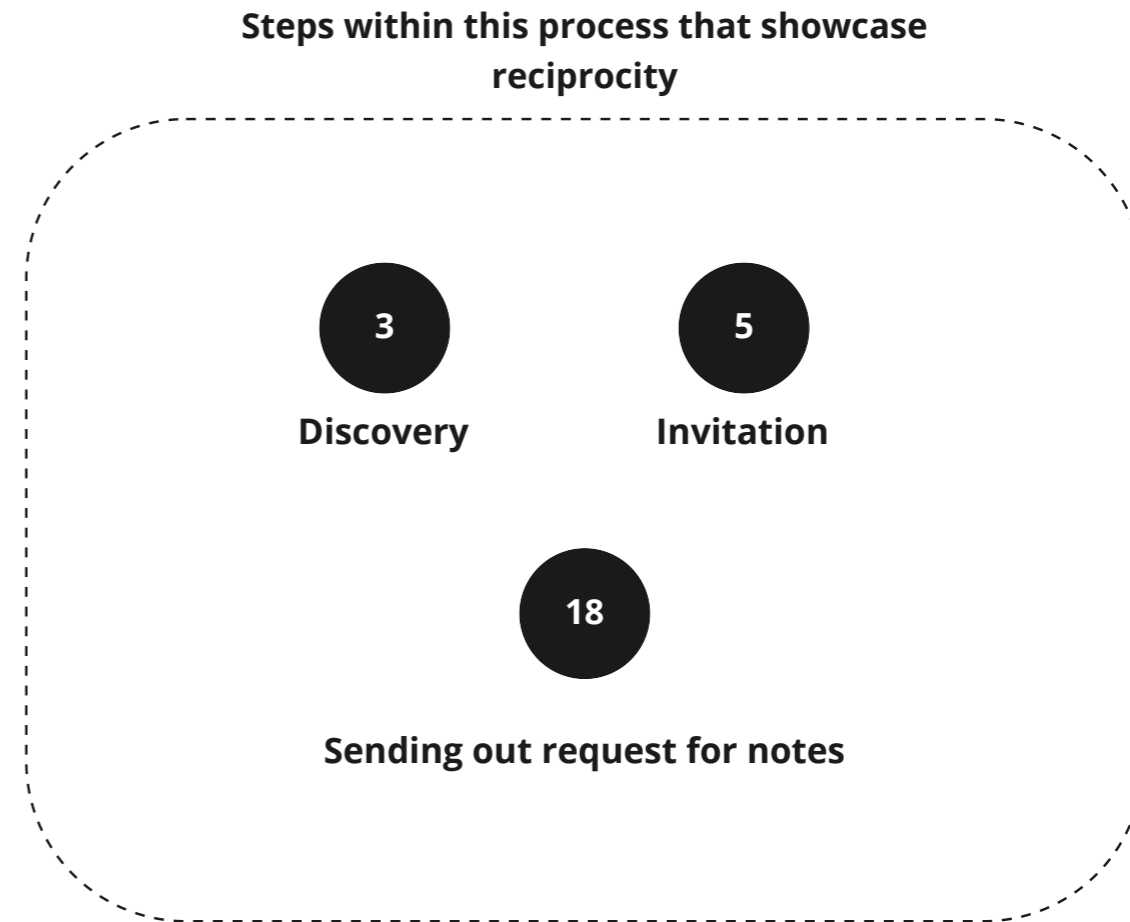
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Fig. 52. Sending out wrap-up reflection sheets (also provided digitally), treats and a paid-addressed envelope for the CPT to return any physical notes from the literature review, 2024

Time, ambiguity & power:

Time, ambiguity and power:

The use and management of time was a significant reflection of this process: people are busy, and despite remuneration and an inclusive process, work such as this (community advocacy) inevitably needs to be squeezed in on top of work, care, health, and family needs. Particularly within the disability community, there is an expectation that schedules will move as individual needs emerge and change. It's critical that this is prioritised upfront in the schedule planning. Our experience was one common within collaborative design, as reinforced by fig. 53, a slide from the 'Co-Design with Care' course (McKercher, "Virtual course")

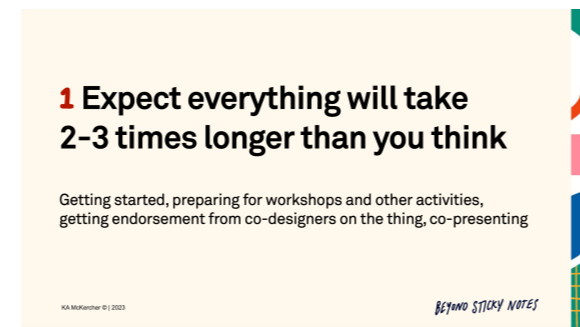


Fig 53: Presentation slide from 'Co-Design with Care', 2024

This lesson to be generous with time applies to all parts of the process and in both preparation and participation stages.

At nearly every step, the materials took longer to prepare than anticipated, because we found opportunities for additional options along the way. Sometimes, this impacted people's anticipations of when and how the work would happen. We learned that people need plenty of advance notice to fit the work into their schedules.

There is also a seasonality to the work: for example: we held the introduction sessions in early December, but then experienced a significant delay until the next session, as the end of year and summer season created a natural lull. In future, I would advise being more considered with when collaborative parts of a process can take place with momentum and make use of any seasonal pauses to spend time on non-collaborative activities such as material preparation. This

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1 Expect everything will take 2-3 times longer than you think

Getting started, preparing for workshops and other activities, getting endorsement from co-designers on the thing, co-presenting

KA McKercher © | 2023

BEYOND STICKY NOTES

Fig. 53. KA McKercher, screenshot from Co-Design with Care course material, 2023

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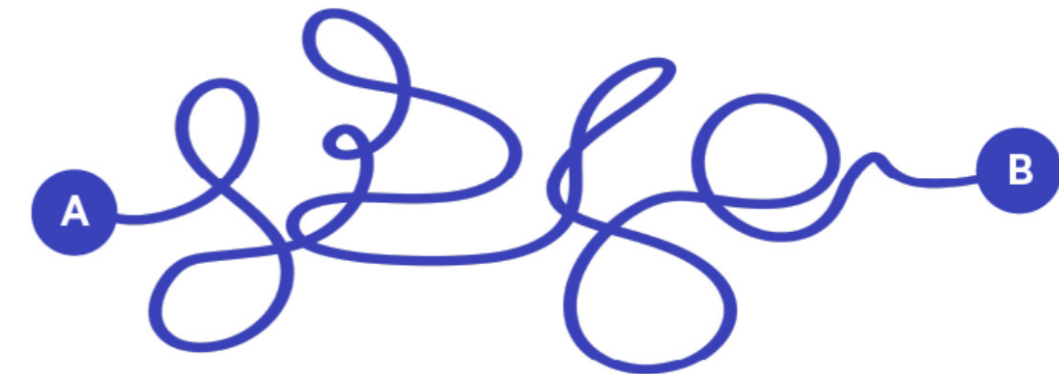
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Our kōrero and group discussions were so rich and varied that we rarely got through the planned agenda. Our one-to-ones ran significantly over time. In future I would plan fewer activities for each session, and allow buffer time to all sessions.

Scientific Process



Design Process



Our Potential Process

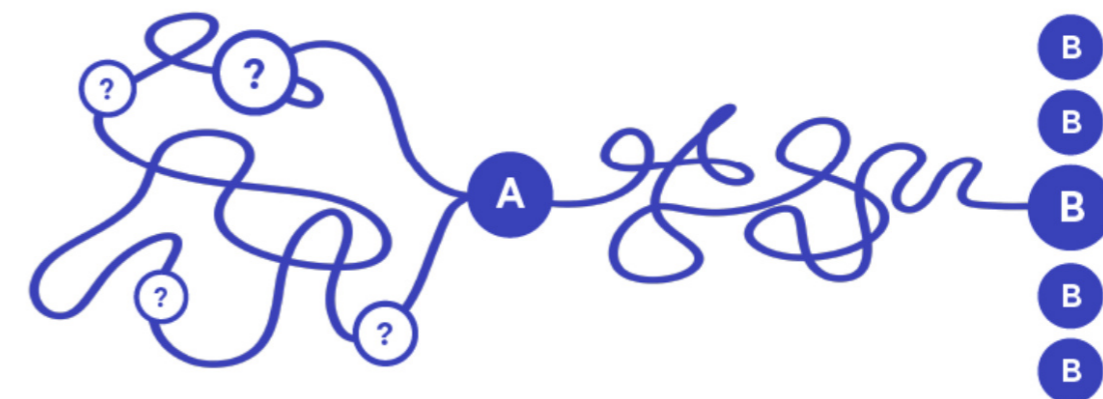


Fig. 54. Jean Donaldson, *The Starting Journey*, The Co-Production Project, Toi Āria, 2024

Time, ambiguity & power:

'Being in the grey' and 'embracing ambiguity' showed as a theme in my context review (fig. 24) and is a typical phase of any design process as we work to understand how "considerations of many natures come together" (Sanders and Stappers). This process can be particularly messy in collaborative design as shown in fig. 54. However, this was a mindset that I potentially embraced too strongly, which created confusion at some points in the process.

We approached each step of the process in turn, as opposed to having a flexible outline of the whole plan. In retrospect, a skeleton structure of what to expect throughout the engagement period may have given co-production team members more clarity and I wonder if this may have reduced the number of people who became less engaged with the process.

Additionally, we had a loose structure within each group discussion session, particularly step 16 (group discussion zoom sessions), when we experimented with a different format for each session. This left some group members confused or anxious "it puts me on the spot with a question and I can't think fast enough. All other stuff goes through my head." (Jo, CPT, 1:1 chat, May 2024) and we learned that providing information in advance of each session was important, so that everyone could feel prepared.

Through this process, I came to realise that ambiguity is inherent in some parts of the process, but where there is potential for clarity this should be embraced. Ambiguity sits across the challenge-space and process as a whole, but activities, schedules and tasks should be clear and unambiguous, but with room for flexibility. There is also a lesson around the responsibility for this overall ambiguity, and my opinion is that this is the responsibility of those driving the momentum and structure of the project, not the people contributing lived experience.

This ties into a discussion on 'sharing power', another key principle of much collaborative design literature as discussed in the context review (**key finding #2**).

Throughout this process, our approach to sharing power was to provide choices, options and the ability to ask for something different, at every stage. This was particularly notable in our approach to scheduling sessions multiple times and providing materials in multiple formats (steps 10-12), underpinned by the earlier group Zoom sessions (steps 6-8) in which we sought opinion on how everyone wanted to work. A success for this approach was the moment a group member got in touch to say that one of the formats was confusing, and requested an alternative (step 14)

Our approach does align with the early stages of a power-sharing process, as shown by the 'component' approach highlighted in the context review (**key point #5**) This felt appropriate for the available time-frame and multi-faceted, high complexity of the project. 'Delegated authority' or 'empowered' roles take time to establish, which was a constraint of a 12-month Masters project and furthermore, not always what people want. Our co-production team have busy lives and need to prioritise what they engage with. The power, and therefore responsibility, of decision making and keeping momentum could be seen as a burden rather than valued. However, this is a layer of collaboration that we did not get to explore within this timeframe. From observations of the wider Flourishing Together project, this is again, something which takes time to unfold as relationships develop and investment in the work deepens. In future, with more time available (and the lessons from this work), this is a topic to explore more deeply: especially in conversation with team members to ascertain the role they want.

H:

SO WHAT?

Learning, recommendations, next steps

Small steps build inclusion

The themed learnings from this process show a series of experimental steps that became more than the sum of their parts.

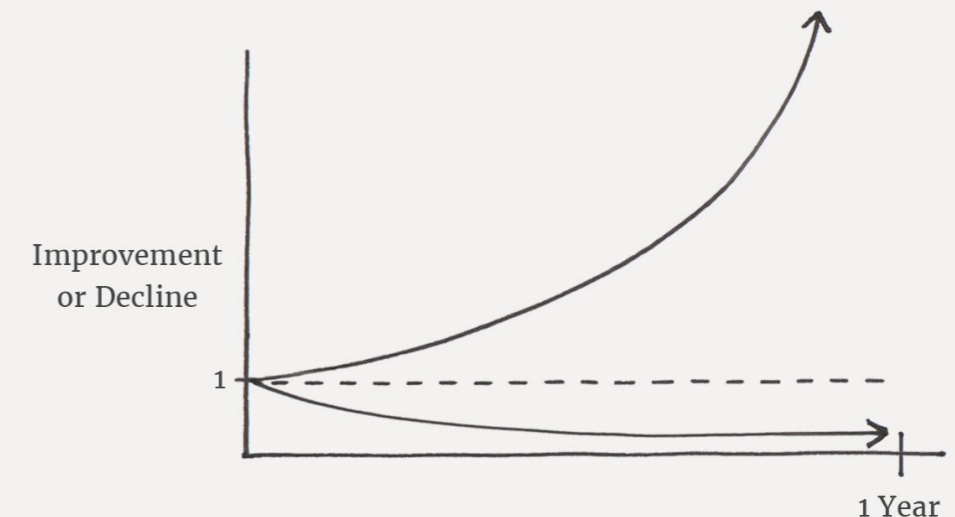
The design literature within the context review highlighted frameworks which layer up from simpler actions to deeper meaning, as shown in Te Ara Tika: 'Cultural Sensitivity' laddering up to Māhaki (Spiritual Integrity) (The Pūtaiora Writing Group), yet these frameworks centre around the perspective of the organiser and we are left wondering how to achieve outcomes; such as the gaining of new skills from the work, and increased confidence exhibited by co-designers in the 'The Early Years Challenge' (Mark and Hagen 15)

As a process which centred around relationship-building and took place in small increments over six or seven months, we witnessed some of this transformation towards the end of the process. Co-production team members showed increased confidence to ask for different formats, put forward opinions, question the process, share vulnerabilities and offer out additional resources and suggestions for involvement within this problem-space. One CPT member shared "...maybe that's why, like, towards the end, I was... just putting up stuff on WhatsApp, because I felt that comfort? That, hey, I can turn to this group, even as just friends, yeah." (Naz, CPT, 1:1 wrap-up chat, May 2024) Another offered that "I guess it's kind of sparked of thinking of getting back into education stuff and and that for me, you know, I know I've got it in my head. I can speak it better than I can put it onto paper" (Jo, CPT, 1:1 wrap-up chat, May 2024)

These examples represent how increased trust can move everyone along the ladder of participation ("Ladder of Citizen Participation."), but we could not have moved in this direction without small, practical steps. James Clear, expert on decision making and author of 'Atomic Habits' speaks of the theory of "continuous improvement: a dedication to making small changes and improvements every day, with the expectation that those small improvements will add up to something significant" ("Continuous Improvement: How It Works and How to Master It")

The Power of Tiny Gains

$$\begin{aligned} 1\% \text{ better every day} & \quad 1.01^{365} = 37.78 \\ 1\% \text{ worse every day} & \quad 0.99^{365} = 0.03 \end{aligned}$$



JamesClear.com

Fig. 55. James Clear, The Power of Tiny Gains

Everything is a trade-off

For each step of the process, and each new way we engaged with the co-production team, there were trade-offs, or 'pros and cons'.

Many of the 'cons' involved time, but there were many other small decisions to be weighed up each time we made a choice about format, platform, or tool.

These learnings about individual small methods of engagements hold value for others who may also be looking to uncover the 'how' of collaborative design.

In the 'Co-Design with Care' course, by Beyond Sticky Notes (**precedent 1**) KA McKercher discusses the importance of documentation when 'ending' a process, and not only including findings, but also critiques and 'fail reports' as shown in a still from one of the course videos, in **fig. 46**. They also refer to this need to 'practise' co-design (**fig. 57**) along the way to achieving mindsets.

The lessons from each individual step, plus the potential of these small steps to combine into long-term change prompted the idea of documenting the tangible learnings from this process into a kind of catalogue, to be shared with policy practitioners or anybody looking into how to begin a collaborative design process.



Fig. 56. KA McKercher, screenshot from Co-Design with Care course material, 2023

#Tip: before doing co-design,
practise being co-design.

Fig. 57. KA McKercher, screenshot from Mindsets of Co-Design, 2020

A prototype resource

A key aim of this research was to 'surface learnings and recommendations for anyone* looking to undertake collaborative approaches within the disability-policy space, and beyond'.

**Those most interested might include Disability advocacy groups, or Design and Policy Practitioners.*

As an early prototype output, the pros and cons of these small steps have been catalogued into a templated wiki page via Notion. It aims to showcase actions that can be implemented by individuals, on a small scale, as a first step towards a more inclusive process.

The intention is to build on this catalogue within the wider Flourishing Together project, bringing together a wide range of tips, advice, do's and don'ts from these forays into collaborative design. This aims to begin to fill the gap discovered of 'how' to do collaborative design.

This resource is for anyone interested in taking first steps toward collaborative design, and is unsure where to begin. It may be of most use to policy and design practitioners, or those in disability advocacy groups.

Click here to view the work in progress:

<https://bit.ly/3A3ZuMb>

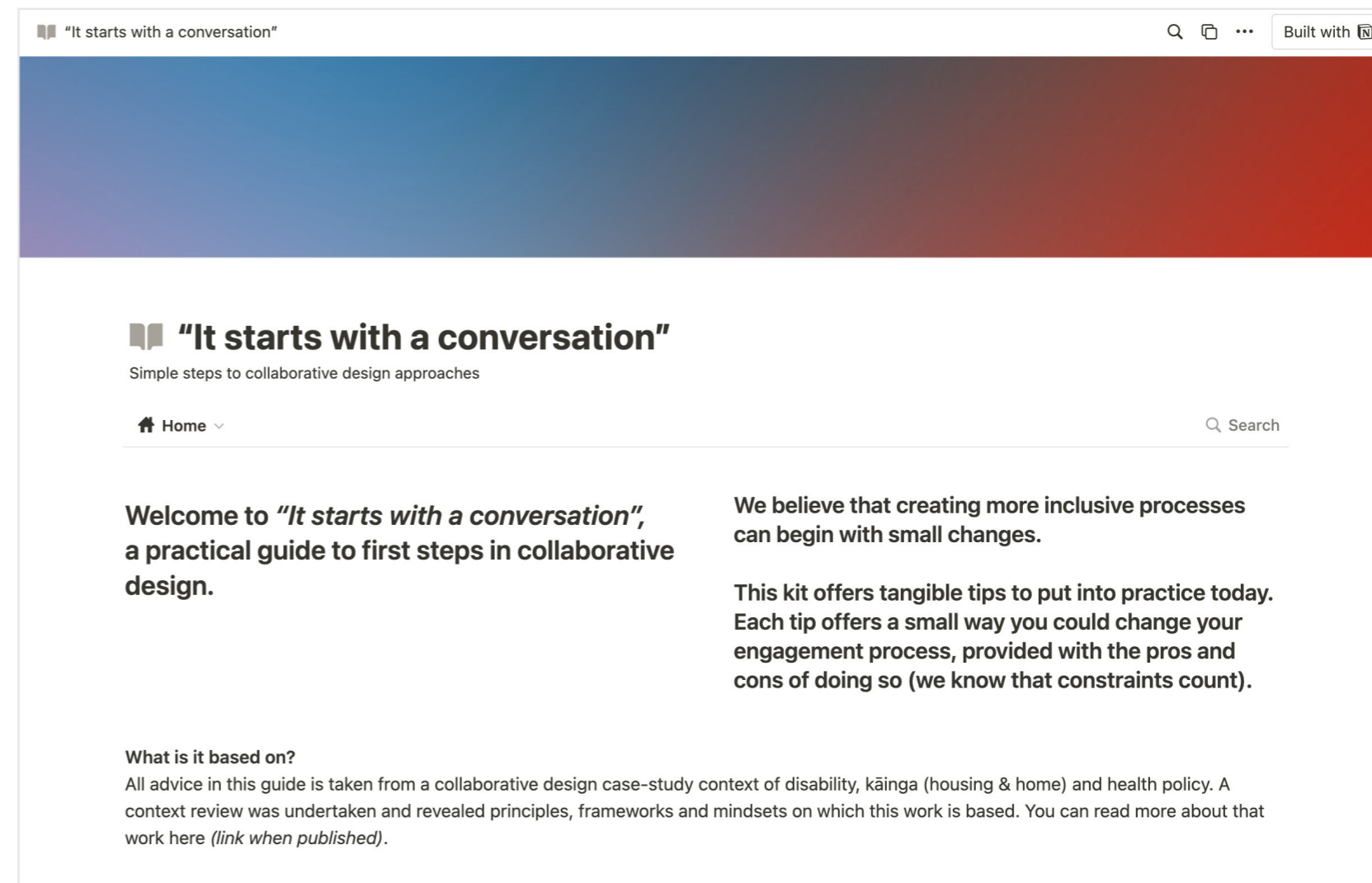


Fig. 58. Screenshot of prototype webpage, 2024

!

Discussion:

Conclusion

This research set out to explore 'how participatory and collaborative design approaches might be used to creatively blend diverse knowledge of känga, building an inclusive process that bridges the knowledge gap between disabled people and policy roles'.

The aims were to:

- explore the potential and pitfalls of existing collaborative design approaches with a team of diverse, and busy, disabled people and
- surface learnings and recommendations for anyone* looking to undertake collaborative approaches within the disability-policy space, and beyond.

**Those most interested might include Disability advocacy groups, or Design and Policy Practitioners.*

I found that a myriad of principles, frameworks and mindsets are recommended across collaborative design literature. Still, these high-level and idealistic goals can feel difficult to achieve without tangible steps, and little practical advice is available on 'how' to do collaborative design, especially when collaborating with disabled people with specific accessibility and inclusion needs and preferences. Furthermore, principles centred in relationships between people cannot be achieved overnight: for "transformative effects" (Blomkamp, "The Promise of Co-Design") to take place, time and tangible steps are required to build reciprocal relationships built on trust.

I discovered that by embedding these principles into the smallest of tasks, at every step, the small acts would amass over time to match those principles of collaborative design. Additionally, as per Emma Blomkamp's model for "Shades of Co-design", it can be useful to assess which parts of a process might be more suited to full-scale 'collaboration' than others, at that moment in time. Based on the constraints of a specific project, it might be helpful to keep the responsibility for momentum and timing with the co-facilitators, whilst creating more space for decision-making in other parts of the work. In other projects, there may be more opportunity to move slowly and build trust and capability from the start, or to advocate for this approach.

The learnings and recommendations surfaced from this process are realised in a prototype resource that offers a collection of tangible engagement steps through which anyone can apply collaborative design principles to practical parts of a process, one small change at a time. The prototype showcases the 'potential and pitfalls' featured as practical 'pros and cons' to each step we tried. It recognises that despite the best intentions, collaborative design happens amidst constraints of timelines, budgets, stakeholders and capacities. This supports and encourages practitioners to take the first step towards a more inclusive process, knowing that all methods are imperfect.

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The intention is that these evaluated recommendations and this prototype will contribute to the wider Flourishing Together project - the resulting outputs of which will provide value to those in policy roles, advocacy groups, and collaborative design projects, providing much-needed starting points for better quality engagements. More directly, these learnings and this prototype will be useful to anyone hoping to gain insight into a working process of collaborative design.

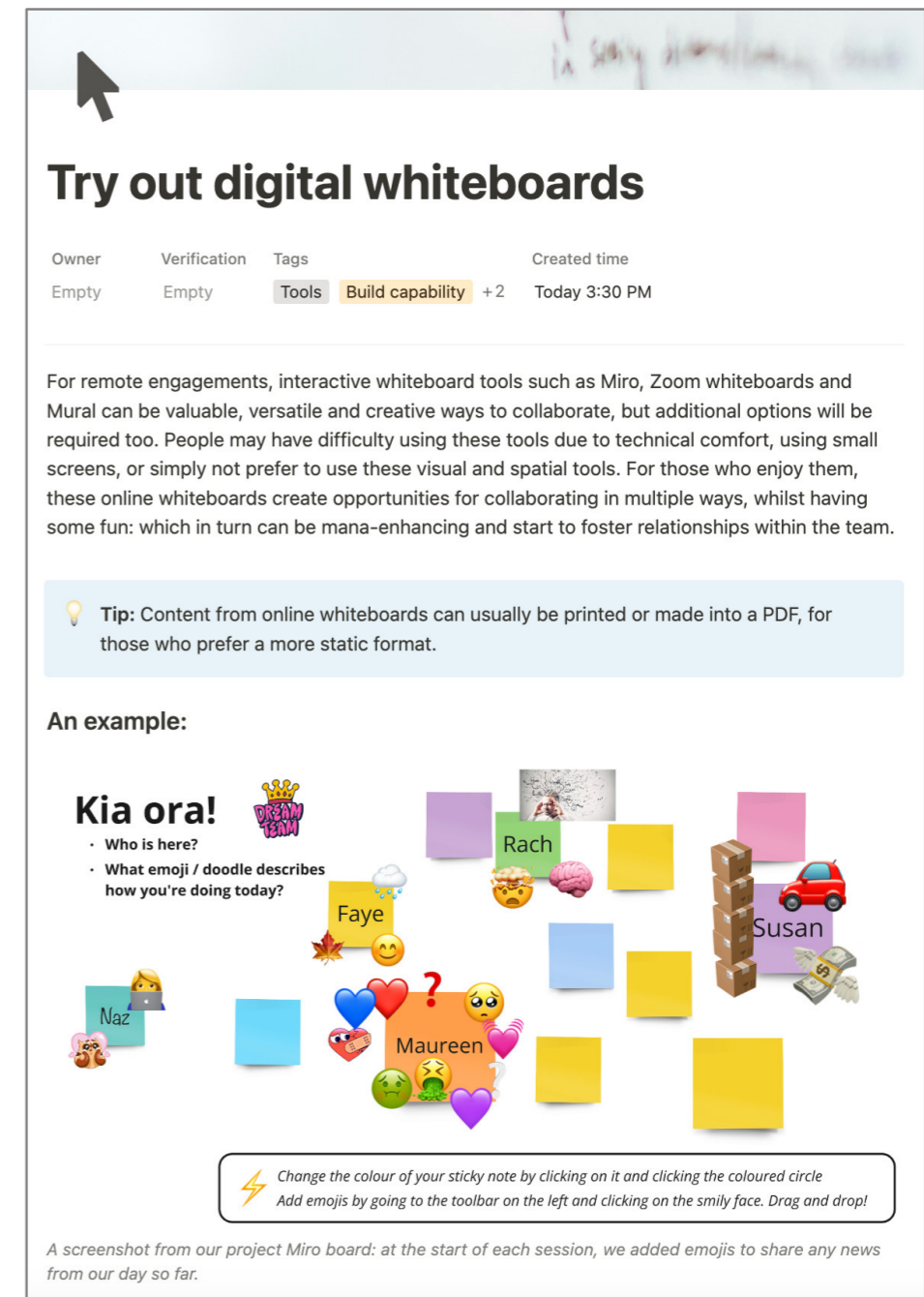
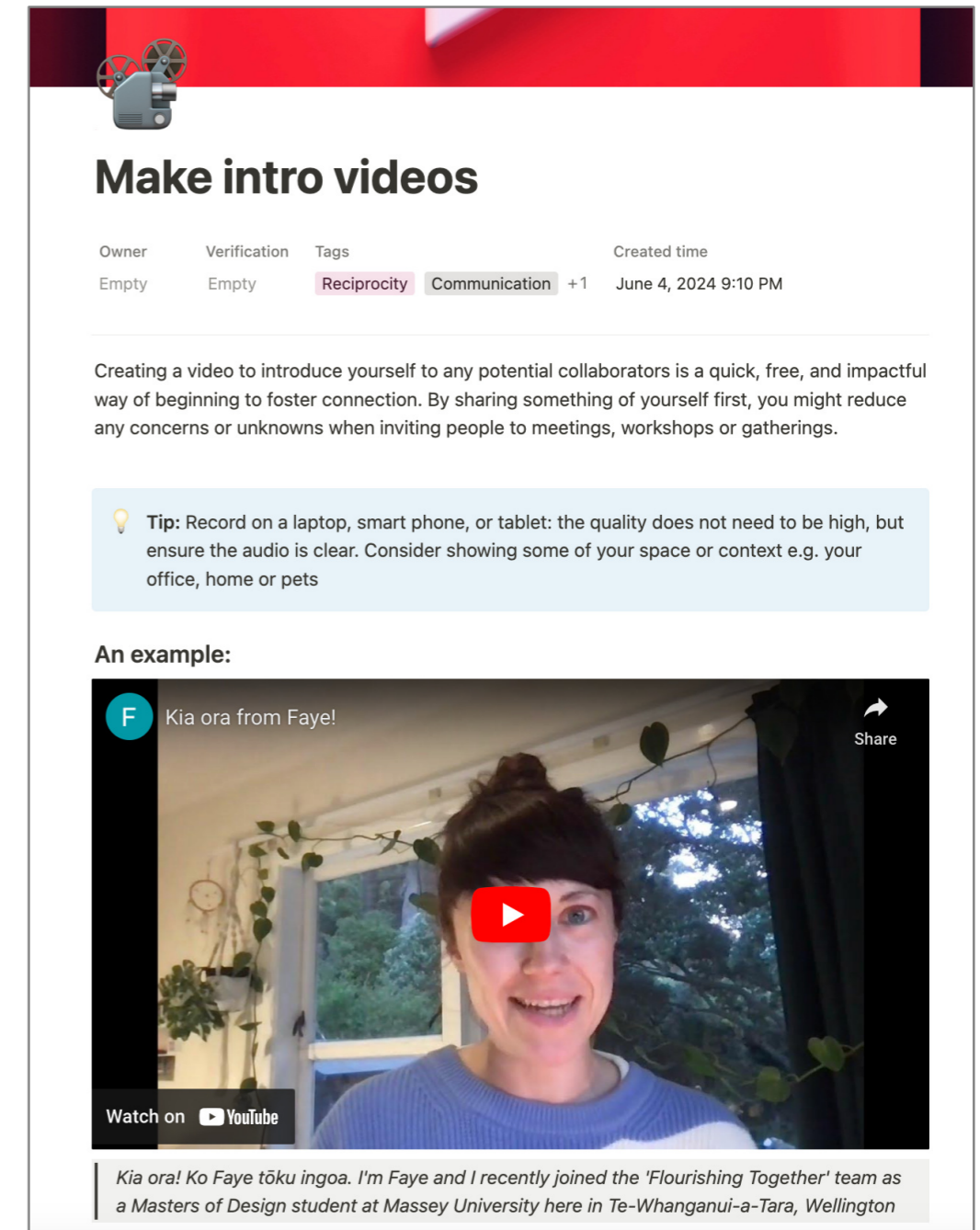


Fig. 59. Screenshot of prototype page, 2024

There are interesting parallels between my thesis on collaborative design and my reflections as a designer throughout this process. The theory that these mindsets and principles are difficult to embody from scratch, but can be attained through a series of small practical steps is proven by the fact that these principles now being an embedded part of my design practice. Reciprocity, relationship building, and creating options are principles that now feel particularly embedded.

Whilst I have always seen intentional relationship building as important to any project, this process has validated that intuition and provided the tools and language to build upon it further. The corroboration of this approach offers explanation and understanding to others, and I anticipate advocating for the space, time and resources to create foundational relationships in every project, regardless of its definition of 'collaborative' or not. To quote the title of one of my sources: "The relationship IS the project" (Lillie et al.) [my emphasis]



The screenshot shows a web page with a red header bar. Below the header is a camera icon. The main heading is "Make intro videos". Below this is a metadata section with columns for "Owner", "Verification", "Tags", and "Created time". The "Tags" column contains "Reciprocity" and "Communication". The "Created time" is "June 4, 2024 9:10 PM". Below this is a paragraph of text: "Creating a video to introduce yourself to any potential collaborators is a quick, free, and impactful way of beginning to foster connection. By sharing something of yourself first, you might reduce any concerns or unknowns when inviting people to meetings, workshops or gatherings." Below this is a light blue tip box: "Tip: Record on a laptop, smart phone, or tablet: the quality does not need to be high, but ensure the audio is clear. Consider showing some of your space or context e.g. your office, home or pets". Below the tip box is the heading "An example:" followed by a video player. The video player shows a woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a blue sweater, smiling. The video title is "Kia ora from Faye!". There is a "Share" button in the top right corner of the video player and a "Watch on YouTube" button in the bottom left corner. Below the video player is a caption: "Kia ora! Ko Faye tōku ingoa. I'm Faye and I recently joined the 'Flourishing Together' team as a Masters of Design student at Massey University here in Te-Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington".

Fig. 60. Screenshot of prototype page, 2024

J:

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The list of works cited and the bibliography for this exegesis are available digitally.

 **Links:**

Works cited:

https://t.ly/O5l_a

Bibliography:

<https://t.ly/uugtw>

K:

Appendices

Appendices

Appendices are available digitally. They are linked directly where relevant throughout this document (primarily to resources in the Process map)

All appendices are also available directly via this open-access Google Drive folder, as view only files.

Should you wish to use any templates, materials or simply have a chat about this work, please contact Faye on **faye.e.osullivan@gmail.com**

It starts with a conversation...

Links:

Appendix 1:

Principles synthesis (in this Miro board, click arrow)

Appendix 2:

Context review map (in this Miro board, click arrow)

Appendix 3:

Context review synthesis (in this Miro board, click arrow)

Appendix 4:

Process map 2.0 (in this Miro board, click arrow)

Appendix 5:

Project Miro board used with CPT (view access)

<https://bit.ly/4c1wmCn>

Appendix 6:

Project materials Google Drive folder (view access):

<https://t.ly/eHniQ>

***"Co-Design is a process,
not an event"***