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**Community formation and  
protectionism in Auckland's  
intensification process:**

**Exploring opportunities and complexities of  
high(er)-density planning in a low-density city**

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the degree of

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# ABSTRACT

A rapid population increase due to increasing migration, escalating house prices and supply issues have led to a 'housing crisis' in Auckland. These challenges, in addition to efforts to curb suburban sprawl and improve community outcomes, have made intensification a priority for Auckland Council. However, intensification creates tension between stakeholders, not only in relation to the end-product which some consider unsatisfactory or discordant in existing low-density neighbourhoods, but because of perceived shortcomings in the process as well. As this process gains momentum, traditional ideas about community are being challenged, reimagined and protected.

This thesis reports on a longitudinal interview and focus-group based study, and examines how intensification and community formation processes are experienced and interpreted by a range of stakeholders including new and existing residents, developers, Auckland Council and community interest groups. It also examines challenges in the intensification process, especially related to place-attachment and place-protectionism amongst existing communities in response to proposed or planned change. This research interprets phenomena through social, spatial and temporal lenses, of which each is given equal weighting, and is consistent with social constructionism which recognises multiple 'knowledges' and 'truths'.

Findings reveal a diversity of views regarding community, both at a conceptual level and as an outcome which is derived from specific processes and influences. Representing either a group of people bound by commonality, a personal feeling of belonging, or a resource providing members with benefits, notions of community and community outcomes are increasingly important to stakeholders in Auckland's intensification process. However, institutional distrust in the planning process poses a threat to achieving successful community outcomes, with schisms and tensions evident between stakeholders. While a degree of conflict is inevitable in a democratic system, findings suggest that intensification will be more successful, both in terms of outputs and public acceptance, if institutional distrust (where it exists) is replaced by forms of critical trust in the planning system as well as in the stakeholders operating within it.



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