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whakamana: embracing uncertainty in relationally responsible spatial design studio pedagogy for a flourishing aotearoa

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abstract

Socio-culturally restorative and ecologically regenerative futures for Aotearoa will be co-produced only in the context of mana-enhancing, Te Tiriti-led partnerships that embrace uncertainty and 'possibilism'. What are the implications of this for spatial design pedagogy? In this text-based research essay, we explore how Te Tiriti-led pedagogy might be integrated in a meaningful and fundamental way in undergraduate spatial design studios, including projects in which students self-select topics as part of developing their own design identities. These types of projects do not lend themselves to external partnerships, being too broad in scope, not initiated by the partners, and unable to adequately ensure tangible mutual benefits, particularly within institutional timeframes. Te Tiriti-led futures, however, will require a diversity of practices, not all of which can be conducted within the context of direct co-creative partnerships.

This presents a particular pedagogical challenge: whether mana-enhancing partnership and ethical engagement with Indigenous knowledges is possible in undergraduate studio projects where the 'partnerships' are only hypothetical. We analyse a third-year studio in which we introduced an expanded model of partnership, combining identity-driven student-centred pedagogy with Te Tiriti-led design for restorative and regenerative futures. This model rejects certainty/uncertainty binaries and reframes uncertainty as a fundamental condition of ethical engagement across cultural difference. We turn instead to Māori concepts of mana and manaakitanga, exploring ways to empower agency and overcome paralysis, and draft a relationally responsible framework for engagement with Indigenous knowledges. This employs a weaving metaphor that both protects the identity and autonomy of each knowledge source and enhances its mana as part of the woven fabric.

Offering this up as a case study of situated, ethical design pedagogy, we critically reflect on the effectiveness of these strategies, and find our own opportunities for transformational learning in the student work. We reject the toxic certainties of the dominant, degenerative paradigm, envisaging a joyfully uncertain pluriversal future in which ecologically regenerative and socio-culturally restorative processes facilitate human and environmental flourishing.

keywords

pedagogy; spatial design; Te Tiriti-led; pluriversal; regenerative

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mihi to mana whenua; acknowledgements

mihi: jen

He uri ahau nō Ngāpuhi ki Hokianga. He Pākehā hoki au. I whanau mai au i Te Awakairangi ki Tai. E noho ana au i Te Whanganui a Tara. My ancestors are Ngāpuhi and Pākehā, from the Hokianga in the north of Aotearoa, and from England, Scotland, and Ireland. I was born and raised in Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt for most of my childhood and adolescence, and currently reside in Wellington. Ko Jen Archer-Martin tōku ingoa. Tēnā koutou katoa.

mihi: georgina

Ko Ngāi Tahu te iwi. Ko Ngāi Te Ruahikihiki te tangata. Ko Motoitoi Driver oku tīpuna. Nō Ōtautahi ahau. Kei Te Whanganui a Tara e noho ana ināianei. I whakapapa to Te Waipounamu where my whānau live on the Canterbury Plains. England, Scotland, and Ireland were home to my Pākehā ancestors. I have recently bought my first home on the hills of Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai. Ko Georgina Stokes tōku ingoa. Kia ora koutou katoa.

a note on language

Our writing includes words and concepts from te reo Māori (the Māori language), with contextual interpretations in brackets the first time the term is introduced. We prefer 'contextual interpretation' to 'translation', as Māori words and concepts often do not have direct English equivalents. We use 'Māori' and 'tangata whenua' to refer to the Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand, acknowledging that Māori are not a homogenous group but retain identity and rights as iwi, hapū, and whānau (tribal, sub-tribal, and family groups). 'Pākehā' refers to New Zealanders of European settler-colonial descent. 'Tangata Tiriti' refers to all non-Māori New Zealanders with rights and responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Indigenous-language and therefore binding version of the Treaty of Waitangi).

introduction

…we are at the opening.It is the time of the unfinished, of wonder. Life walks on tiptoes.[…]There is the one, and the many; the one is the many. […]Earthly and celestial roots join together without usurping the limits of others.Everyone remains in his or her birthplace, but the whole opens.[01]

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As spatial design educators, how do we prepare students to design for a world in transition—a time of converging uncertainties, of ecological crises and socio-cultural shifts? In Aotearoa New Zealand, these include reckoning with ongoing impacts of colonisation on people and the environment, restoring Indigenous rights to land and culture, and re-imagining a society grounded in cultural identity and connection to te taiao (the natural world).

Designing for this transition will necessitate moving beyond 'doing no further harm', instead looking to regenerate thriving natural ecosystems and restore human flourishing.

Rather than succumbing to sugar-coated optimism or paralysing pessimism in the face of these complex challenges, our response is to join voices with those who embrace a 'possibilist' mindset and ways of being with uncertainty.[02] Within uncertainty, we see an opening to a pluriverse of possibilities—a 'world where many worlds fit.'[03] These possibilities emerge from co-creative processes of futuring, in which we all participate as separate but intertwined roots of a human-nature whole. Rejecting toxic certainty, we envisage a joyfully uncertain pluriversal future.

In this future, twin processes of decolonising and re-indigenising care for our unravelling ecological and socio-cultural fabrics by both hastening the unlearning of degenerative settler-colonial paradigms and uplifting regenerative Indigenous paradigms. Bringing together Māori ways of knowing and being with critical Pākehā perspectives reveals possibilities of healing, learning, and creating together. This is particularly important given our context as a bicultural nation founded on Te Tiriti o Waitangi—a promise of collective flourishing; since broken yet still leading the way to restoration.[04]

To us, being led by the promise of Te Tiriti includes working to uplift the mana (sacred force) of all. In order to lead to collective flourishing, Te Tiriti-led processes must be mana-enhancing (uplifting the dignity of all parties involved). We elaborate further on concepts of mana and manaakitanga (hospitality; care for others) in Part Two.

We believe that regenerative and restorative futures for Aotearoa will be co-produced only in the context of mana-enhancing Te Tiriti-led partnerships that not only embrace uncertainty, but reframe it as a fundamental condition of ethical engagement across cultural difference. We ponder the implications of this for spatial design pedagogy through the case study of an undergraduate spatial design studio. Our university is committed to becoming Te Tiriti-led. In a 2010–2014 bicultural partnership, our college reconceived the undergraduate curriculum as a pōwhiri framework, following the stages of a Māori ceremonial welcome.[05] Te Tiriti-led educational frameworks only become transformative, however, if activated through pedagogy.

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In our third year studio we run a project-based immersive introduction to Indigenous modes of understanding place. The student collective is guided in this by mana whenua (Māori with enduring authority and relationships to local land).[06] This has been an effective and safe way to prepare students to work in and with Indigenous knowledge systems, to begin to grasp the need for, and different worldviews at play in, Te Tiriti partnerships. In this essay, we interrogate how to expand Te Tiriti-led approaches across all studio teaching, including projects in which students self-select topics. This project typology does not lend itself to external partnerships, being too broad in scope, not partner-initiated, and without tangible mutual benefits, particularly within institutional timeframes. Te Tiriti-led futures will require a diversity of approaches beyond direct co-creative partnership. We therefore introduce an expanded understanding of partnership, in which student-centred projects sit within a model of Te Tiriti-led design for restorative and regenerative futures.

In this undertaking, we join an emerging set of Te Tiriti-led pedagogies for built environment education, including Ako Aotearoa's 'Te Whaihanga' (2019)[07] and AUT Huri Te Ao Hoahoanga's 'A Transformative Architectural Pedagogy and Tool for a Time of Converging Crises' (2022).[08] The former offers resources for engaging with Māori, while the latter goes further to anchor regenerative built environment practice in Te Tiriti partnership and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge). These are valuable

educational frameworks and tools for built environment professions such as engineering and architecture. Our offering adds to this conversation from a spatial design context within which diverse practices cross over with architecture, landscape and urban design, while also being grounded in understandings of spatial experience stemming from the fields of interior design and performance.

We focus on a particular pedagogical challenge: whether mana-enhancing partnership and ethical engagement with Indigenous knowledges is possible in undergraduate spatial design studio projects where the 'partnerships' are only hypothetical. We explore approaches to uncertainty and difference that empower agency and overcome paralysis, and draft a relationally responsible framework for engagement with Indigenous knowledges, seeking to avoid unethical inaction and facilitate ethical action. We critically reflect on strategies employed and offer a case study of situated, ethical, pluriversal design pedagogy.

part one: uncertainty in te tiriti-led pedagogy

An opportunity arose in 2022 to explore transformative pedagogies in our twelve-week second semester third-year Spatial Design studio. Already in place was the pōwhiri framework curriculum framing—tuakiri (collective and individual identity) within contemporary contexts[09]—and a School of Design focus

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on problems of wellbeing. Together with colleague Meg Rollandi, we had previously developed a Spatial Design studio pedagogy that facilitates the development of students' individual practices as a bridge to their final year research thesis projects. This involves locating their critical spatial practice in the spatial design pluriverse, in relation to diverse communities of practice, discourse, and concerns, underpinned by relational understandings of identity and positionality.

Students explore their place in the pluriverse through a response to a given site, and in 2022 we were looking for a new site. This opening coincided with two overlapping opportunities. The first was a design competition run by Nature-Based Urban design for Wellbeing and Adaptation in Oceania (NUWAO), which called for 'nature-based urban design solutions, rooted in Indigenous knowledges, that support climate change adaptation and individual and community wellbeing'.[10] The second was an invitation from Dr Rebecca Kiddle (Ngāti Porou, Ngāpuhi), then head of urban development at Te Awa Kairangi Hutt City Council, and involved with NUWAO. She was seeking student engagement with local kaupapa (agendas) such as re-indigenising Te Awa Kairangi, supporting non-human vitality and biodiversity, climate change, and social justice.[11]

Both calls were open enough to accommodate a pluriversal approach addressing diverse concerns, discourses, and practices, and both dealt with relationships between wellbeing and identity of people and place. We saw this as a chance to explore something we had been interested in for a while—the intersections between tuakiri-led learning, restorative Te Tiriti-led pedagogy, and design for regenerative futures—with Te Awakairangi ki Tai (Lower Hutt) as the site. Our educated hunch was that Te Tiriti-led socio-cultural restoration and ecological regeneration were interconnected, and this appeared to be supported by both the NUWAO and Te Awa Kairangi calls.

Both centred re-indigenising and Indigenous knowledges as pivotal to imagining better futures, pointing to a correlation between worldview and human-nature relationships.

paradigm shifts for flourishing futures
We share the view that our futures are dependent on deep and transformative shifts in the very systems that structure our thoughts and actions, and that the most effective shifts take place at the level of paradigms and worldviews, and of metaphysics and cosmologies.[12] This view recognises that ecological crises are linked to dualist Western ideologies of separation from and domination over nature, and that flourishing futures require an alternative conception of earth as 'a living relation, rather [than] a resource to be exploited'.[13] We join those seeking to instead uplift Indigenous traditions of stewardship that nourish a diverse ethnosphere and biosphere, replacing degenerative paradigms with regenerative ones in which all may flourish.[14]

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In Aotearoa, Māori ways of knowing, being, and caring sit within a relational worldview and cosmology. All beings and our environments are related through whakapapa (genealogical ties). The mountains and rivers of our lands are ancestors, and the non-human life they sustain are our kin. The identity and wellbeing of people and the natural world is thus interdependent, and the severing of ties to whenua (land) by colonisation and degenerative settler-colonial paradigms has had lasting impacts on both. This also means that the healing of people and place is interconnected.

te tiriti as the foundation for restoring regenerative paradigms

We see Te Tiriti-led pedagogy as fundamental to a paradigm shift in Spatial Design education, and a way to simultaneously address both socio-cultural restoration and ecological regeneration. This position draws from Indigenous scholar Moana Jackson (Ngāti Kahungunu), whose relational 'ethic of restoration' seeks to restore Indigenous kawa (protocols) that 'helped us sustain relationships, and whaka-tika or restore them when they were damaged.'[15] These were the values tangata whenua brought to Te Tiriti, envisioning 'a relational nation in which

politics was never just the art of the possible but the promise of reconciling difference across what was only ever meant to be an intimate distance.'[16] The Māori-language Tiriti speaks of equal, prosperous relations between Māori and Pākehā that would be mutually mana-enhancing.[17] However, 'the newcomers came as colonisers […] they had a different view about treaties as well as of relationships and the land.'[18]

These settler-colonial views became the dominant structures of Aotearoa society, undermining the agency and autonomy—tino rangatiratanga—of iwi and hapū Māori over the whenua (land) and built environment and, by extension, the social and cultural equity needed for people, Māoritanga (Māori cultural identity), and Aotearoa's living systems to thrive. In our work as designers and educators, we have a responsibility to recognise and dismantle the settler-colonial paradigms to which we are conditioned, and to restore and uphold the relational values of Te Tiriti. It is our hope that our students, both tangata whenua and tangata Tiriti, understand this history and 'commit to the ongoing fight for Māori self-sovereignty.'[19] As summarised in Figure 01, this requires being equipped to recognise dualist, settler-colonial and degenerative paradigms, and to
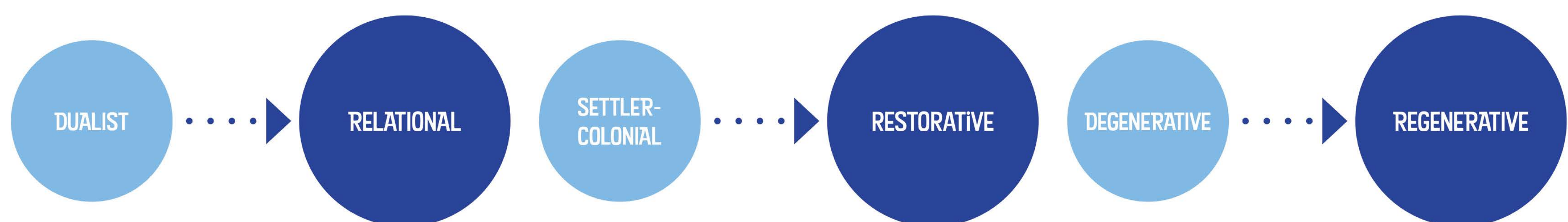

Figure 01.
Diagram of paradigm shifts.

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instead work within relational, restorative and regenerative paradigms. This is the first step to fostering meaningful and mana-enhancing Te Tiriti-led partnerships that uplift agency and autonomy, restoring relationships and balance.

uncertainty as a fundamental condition of mana-enhancing partnership

Critical to this kaupapa is the facilitation of ethical engagement with Indigenous knowledges. In Aotearoa, ethical 'research at the interface'[20] is often characterised by kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face) practices of co-governance and co-creation. Such direct partnerships, while vitally important, are not always possible or desirable in the context of the undergraduate design studio, particularly if not initiated by Indigenous partners. While students will likely benefit from engagement with mana whenua, project scope and institutional timeframes often pose barriers to that happening in ways that are Indigenous-led and mutually beneficial. When flows of Indigenous time, labour, and knowledge are not matched or reciprocated, the engagement or partnership cannot be considered ethical. Te Tiriti-led pedagogy must therefore also account for types of work that do not add to the existing burden of labour carried by colonised peoples.

In considering what an indirect or expanded understanding of partnership might look like, we must consider 'legacies of colonialism and entrenched systems of "othering".'[21] The long history of harmful settler-colonial practices includes researching from a distance rather than in partnership with Indigenous communities, and consuming Indigenous knowledges through Eurocentric paradigms. We suggest these practices of knowledge appropriation and misuse are predicated on a Western sense of entitlement to certainty. Uncertainty and difference are viewed as things that must be overcome in order to act.

Inspired by the words of Luce Irigaray, we instead look to 'take care of the difference between us'[22] and 'recognis[e] that the other is and will remain a mystery to me'.[23] In our expanded partnership model, mystery and uncertainty are liberated from the certainty/uncertainty binary and reframed as fundamental conditions of ethical engagement across cultural difference. Figure 02 illustrates key aspects of the relational possibilist paradigm that underpins this model, made possible by the rejection of toxic certainty and binaries.
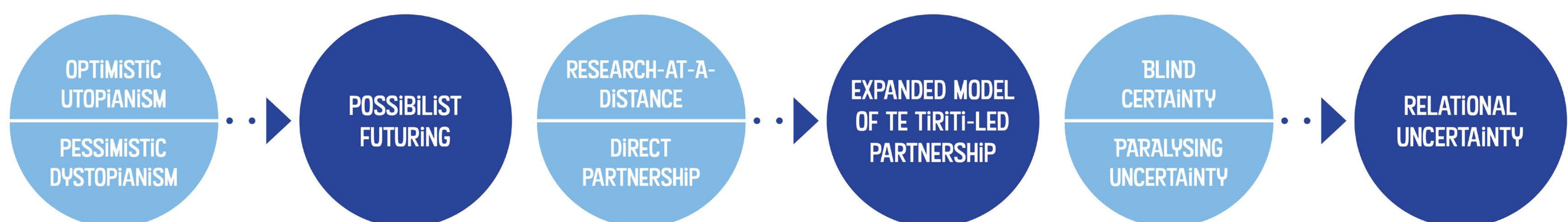

Figure 02.
Shifting from dualistic/binary notions of futuring, partnerships, and uncertainty, to a relational possibilist paradigm.

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perils of the certainty/uncertainty binary: when uncertainty leads to harmful inaction

Uncertainty can lead to non-Indigenous students and researchers avoiding engagement with Indigenous knowledges. Sociologist Martin Tolich described how supervisors and ethics committees, attempting to manage cultural risk, actively discouraged non-Māori students from including Māori participants in their research.[24] He argues that this risk mitigation in fact violates the ethical principle of harm, particularly in relation to Tiriti responsibilities.[25] Tolich calls this 'Pākehā paralysis,' characterised as an inability to differentiate between research for Māori, which should be Māori-led, and research for Aotearoa society, which may be by non-Māori but must include Māori. Māori educationalist Alex Barnes takes this further, describing Pākehā paralysis as 'the inability of Pākehā to be active participants in social and cultural relations with non-Pākehā people or groups. This paralysis can come about due to fear of "getting it wrong" or negative cross-cultural encounters and experiences.'[26] Pākehā paralysis exemplifies harmful inaction driven by uncertainty.

when false certainty leads to harmful action

The opposite of paralysis also occurs: some non-Māori simply '"blunder" into relationships with Māori unaware or blind to the power relations between them.'[27] This may change as the historical contexts of colonisation begin to be taught in schools. In the meantime, non-Māori students

and researchers may blindly utilise Māori concepts, stories, art forms, and/or language in their work, despite the work itself not being Te Tiriti-led. This might be driven by an infatuation with things Māori or a genuine desire to recognise the embeddedness of Māori culture in contemporary Aotearoa, and is perhaps symptomatic of an awkward adolescence in our collective journey toward a re-indigenised Aotearoa. However, the co-opting of mātauranga Māori to further non-Māori interests as a 'cultural garnish' or 'clip-on perspective to […] narratives of cultural respect and responsiveness'[28] carries a real danger of loss or warping of meaning. Similarly, notions of 'blending' Indigenous narratives into existing dominant practices reveal blindness to histories of Pākehā-centric assimilation policies.[29] Harm can inadvertently be caused through false certainty and a sense of entitlement to knowledge, including Indigenous knowledges.

strategies to avoid unethical action/inaction

Our task therefore turns toward strategies for avoiding the twin perils of harmful action and inaction. Shifting away from certainty/uncertainty binaries and toward relational, pluriversal paradigms, we acknowledge uncertainty as a fundamental condition of ethical cross-cultural partnerships. Tolich's and Barnes's strategies for overcoming paralysis involve knowing one's own identity, understanding the context of power relations, and becoming comfortable 'being with the complex and unknown.'[30] Furthermore, Barnes suggests moving from a one-sided perspective

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of harm avoidance and obligation, toward a relational perspective of mutual benefit. Our strategy development was guided by core values of caring for the space of relations and the differences between us, embodied through Māori concepts of mana and manaakitanga.

part two: toward strategies for mana-enhancing te tiriti-led pedagogy

Mana—a dynamic, relational concept—has long informed the actions of our tūpuna (ancestors). Mana is often described as a type of energy, vital force or power held by all living things that must be protected and respected. Mana can be diminished, but one can also whakamana—give, endorse or empower mana. Mana-enhancing practice 'cares for the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual dimensions' of an individual as they engage with people and places.[31] Underpinned by respect, integrity, and dignity within relationships, mana-enhancing practices are reciprocal and multi-directional, demonstrated through acts of manaakitanga. Commonly understood as 'hospitality', or 'the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others',[32] manaakitanga is inherently relational: 'The root [...] is mana; "aki" indicates reciprocal action. [This] captures the notions of mutual care and respect for people, honouring one another or power sharing.'[33] Manaakitanga is, therefore, a mutual uplifting of one another's mana. In the context of Te Tiriti-led practice, these relational concepts underpin how we uphold tino rangatiratanga within ethical partnerships.

Figure 03 illustrates a set of four mana-enhancing strategies that empowered our students to embody manaakitanga in their critical spatial design practice through care and service. These are positioned along two axes of relationality in which ethical practice is required: processes, from relating to acting-in-relation, and ways of being, from self-in-relation to the relational collective. The four strategies are expanded on below.
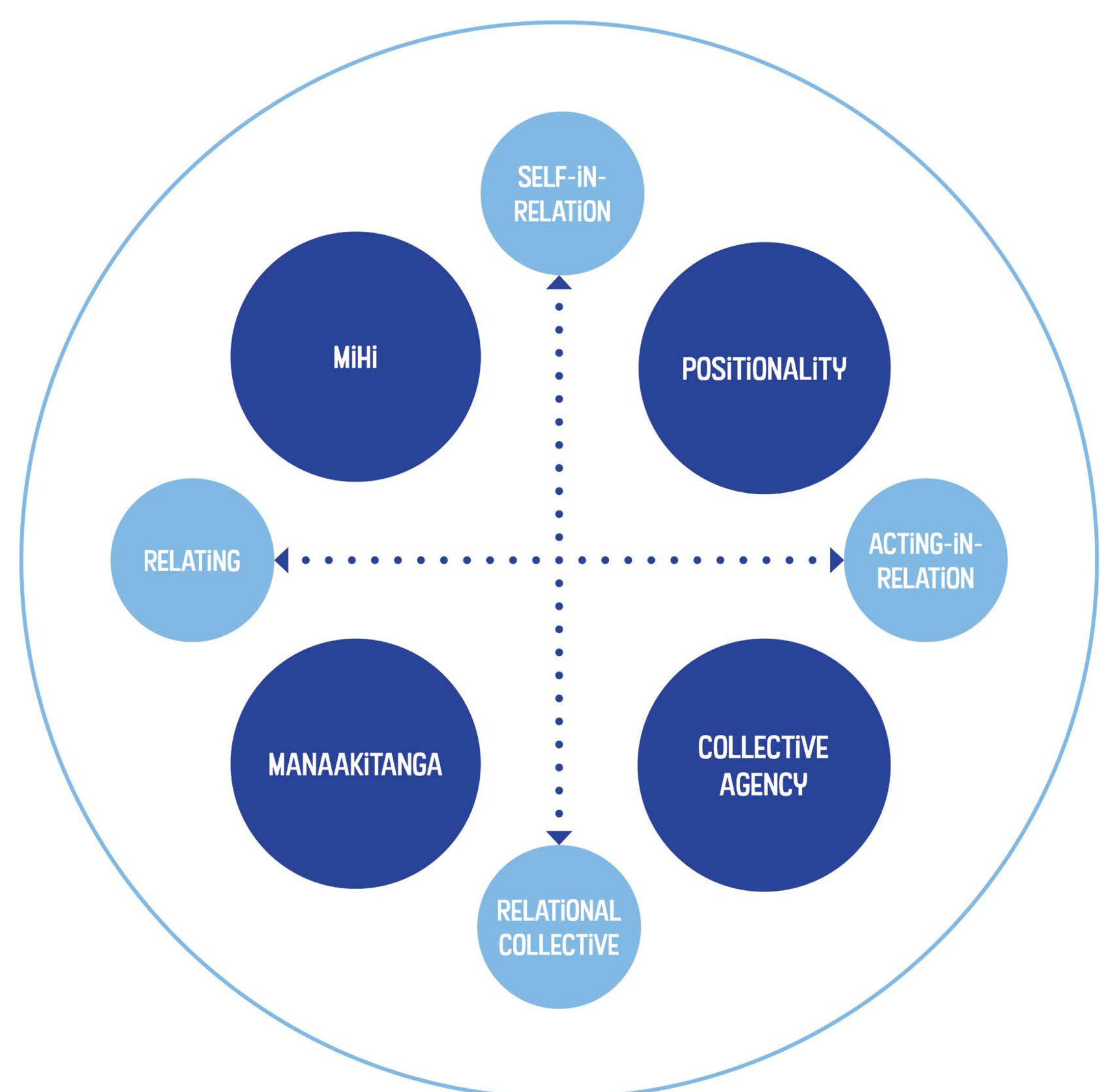
Figure 03.
Diagram of strategies for relational ethics in mana-enhancing Te Tiriti-led spatial design pedagogy (2023).

strategies for overcoming paralysis
Our first set of strategies target paralysis or unethical inaction, which can harm the mana of both students/practitioners and potential partners. In our experience, most students care deeply about the world's problems and want to make a difference through design. However, care alone is

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insufficient when the scale and complexity of problems combines with a lack of tools to address them effectively. While we can address scale through the project brief, introducing a local scale where problems have more tangible causes and effects, it is mana-enhancing practices that empower agency. Urbanist Sarah Ichioka and architect Michael Pawlyn name agency as key to a possibilist mindset, in which we all have agency to effect change.[34] They acknowledge the difficulty of empowering agency when faced with high levels of uncertainty, yet state that 'the combination of uncertainty and agency can be hugely energising if people can see that change is something they can be part of and influence'.[35]

strategy 1: mihi

Mihi (greeting) also encompasses notions of acknowledgement and gratitude.[36] While the practice of mihi depends on the context, it generally begins by recognising the people, place, and context that one is meeting with, then introducing oneself in relation to them. Mihimihi (the process of exchanging greetings) opens a space of relations, inviting the possibility of whakawhanaungatanga (building relationships) and manaakitanga. This became our first step in developing a proposal for critical spatial practice.

For students, this included bringing their identities, lived experience, aspirations, and values to the table. Time and space was afforded to learning to communicate who they were in relation to land and people, including their identity as tangata whenua, tangata Tiriti, or both. We discussed pepeha—a relational form of introduction stating whakapapa connections to land and ancestors—and how they might find their own forms that did not co-opt pepeha as a deeply Indigenous practice. Mihi were encouraged when presenting to anyone new, and informed the critical positioning of each project.

strategy 2: positionality

Western academia often discourages students from introducing such explicit subjectivity into their work. Consequently, they might avoid talking about themselves (unless the work is autoethnographic), and lack the tools to do so. Critical subjectivity is addressed in various fields through notions of positionality. We employed Dr Lesley-Ann Noel's 'Designer's Critical Alphabet' card deck, which empowers users to clearly see themselves in their work and to 'access multiple points of view, concepts and definitions' beyond their own,[37] prompting students to reflect on positionality and biases. Readings also helped students to navigate their tangata whenua or tangata Tiriti positionality, including Tina Ngata's 'What is Required from Tangata Tiriti'. Opening with 'Be tau (at peace) with your position', Ngata encourages understanding how identity and worldview is shaped by colonisation in a manner that is 'not ridden with guilt, not trying to evade or explain it, but ready to respond to the legacy of that story'.[38]

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strategy 3: manaakitanga

Acknowledging the often heavy tasks of unpacking one's worldview and encountering new positions, we established moments for kōrero (conversation) and whakarongo (listening). In weekly 'manaakitanga circles', students shared concerns, questions, reflections, insights, and aspirations. The name 'manaakitanga circle' foregrounded the spirit in which discussion would take place and the shared aim for everyone to come away with their mana intact and uplifted. Sitting in a circle, we would centre ourselves in the moment before opening the floor for anyone to speak. We encouraged becoming comfortable with being together in silence when sharing didn't feel necessary or possible; the act of being present, kanohi ki te kanohi, was in itself a demonstration of manaakitanga. The collective energy of the circle nourished the space of relations, helping us to become tau with uncertainty. As teachers, we were enabled to attune to the students' needs, facilitating responsive, reflexive, mana-enhancing pedagogy.

strategy 4: collective agency

Collectivity infused the ways in which individual student projects and practices emerged within the relational space of the project community. Rather than a collection of unrelated offerings, the diverse proposals formed a 'project ecology'. This resulted from mapping the projects against urban development kaupapa provided by Te Awa Kairangi Hutt City Council, possible sites within the geographic project area, and kaitiaki (guardians of mana whenua)

strategies for caring for the awa (river), people, and ecologies. Understanding their projects in relation to those of their peers allowed students to hone their own offerings, as well as unburdening themselves of the desire to 'do all the things' they found important, as they could see them being taken care of by others. Students gained agency, 'not alone but as part of a mutual enterprise.'[39]

toward a framework for ethical engagement with indigenous knowledges

The aforementioned strategies were pivotal in enabling mana-enhancing student agency and overcoming paralysis. In this section we outline complementary tools for ensuring that the actions thereby empowered are mana-enhancing to others. Responding to the re-indigenising provocations of NUWAO and Kiddle, we developed a framework for avoiding unethical actions when engaging with Indigenous and other knowledges outside of direct partnership. A weaving metaphor reinforced that recentring Indigenous knowledges 'doesn't mean appropriating Māori thought, but the weaving of ideas and approaches.'[40] This protects the identity and autonomy of each knowledge source, as well as enhancing its mana as part of the woven fabric.

Len Hetet's (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Apa) cultural design strategy for the Te Awa Kairangi Riverlink project was a key inspiration. Hetet conceptualised the landscape of the river valley as a korowai (cloak) gifted by the

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ancestral tupua (phenomenon) Ngake to the people of Te Awa Kairangi. Tasked with opening the 'mouth of the fish' of Te Ika a Māui (the North Island), Ngake broke through to the sea, shaping Te Awa Kairangi by the thrashing of his tail as he did so.[41] Invoking a raranga (weaving) technique called whatu, Hetet relates the aho (horizontal/weft threads) to the eastern and western land masses of the valley, and the whenu (vertical/warp threads) to the north-south flow of the river and interconnected waterways. Restoring connections between land, water, and people regenerates the korowai of Ngake.[42]

We applied this metaphor to student engagement with three place-based knowledge streams: Indigenous knowledges of mana whenua, storied and more-than-human knowledges of place, and lived knowledges of communities. Alongside these sat three external knowledge streams generated by the students' enquiry and positioning, relating to communities of concern, practice, and discourse. Each stream has its own tuakiri, whakapapa, and ways of thinking, doing, and discussing.

The students' first task was to gather the threads of knowledge streams running through their projects. Whereas in direct partnerships this knowledge would emerge through a process of kōrero (oratory) and wānanga (forums of learning/discussion), in indirect partnerships there is no face-to-face relationship with knowledge holders. Acknowledging this absence, we introduced

the notion of the proxy, referring to 'the function or authority of serving in another's stead'.[43] In this instance we consider proxies to be published sources in which knowledge holders have offered their knowledge into the public domain. This is a more nuanced understanding than being merely a 'primary' or 'secondary source'. It is important that these sources are authored by or with consent of the knowledge holder, and that the relational and situational context within which the knowledge was given is understood. Knowledge holders and their webs of relations are not abstract but retain their identity and autonomy. An example is the knowledge referred to by Hetet above, which comes not from him but from mana whenua narratives by way of Kura Moeahu (Te Āti Awa),[44] in the context of ethical tangata whenua relations.

To begin the whatu weaving process, students were encouraged to traverse the knowledge landscape of their project (aho) by mapping ways in which their own tuakiri, whakapapa, and methods might come into dialogue with the various knowledge streams (whenu). They then engaged in an active process of diagonal weaving (similar to whāriki, a harakeke mat weaving technique) to explore the various knowledge stream intersections, creating a foundation for action upon which opportunities for critical spatial practice were identified. Figure 04 gives a diagrammatic depiction of this framework, along with excerpts from one of the whāriki exercises. In this example, the student is utilising quotes from research in

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each knowledge stream to generate rapid ideation sketches at each intersection. This created a foundation for action upon which opportunities for critical spatial practice were identified. We then returned to whatu as a process of reflecting upon how the conversation between the student's own identity, woven together with the other knowledge streams, had informed the project. Through the use of proxies and the whatu-whāriki framework, we attempted to uphold tino rangatiratanga, avoiding cultural appropriation, misuse, and the continued colonisation of Indigenous knowledges.

We wish to clearly articulate our intentions in creating and sharing this framework. Hinekura Smith (Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi, Te Ati Awa) cautions against the use of mātaurangi Māori 'as vague metaphors that simplify and commodify our knowledge [...] often as a well-intentioned attempt to address bicultural aspirations.'[45] We acknowledge that our use of these metaphors would benefit from deeper engagement with whatu and whāriki as embodied weaving practices. However, we believe their activation within a kaupapa infused with meaningful discussion about Indigenous knowledges and bicultural partnership resists a simplifying or commodification of knowledge. We do not present the framework as a formula, but as a project-specific, place-based scaffolding of mana-enhancing approaches to engagement with Indigenous and other knowledges in critical spatial practice. Desna Whaanga-Schollum (Ngāti Rongomaiwahine, Ngāti Kahungunu, and Ngāti Pāhauwera), Yoko

Akama, and Penny Hagan highlight the problematic nature of replicable frameworks that cause harm to Indigenous knowledges, warning of 'the consequences of misplaced enthusiasm for [...] toolkits for beginners that emphasise a bias for action, without due process and consideration for duty of care, safety or ethics.'[46] We do not intend to offer tools that may be extracted as 'portable methods'[47] for application elsewhere, but rather to illustrate a rigorous process of relational responsibility[48] tied to the specificities of context, people and place.

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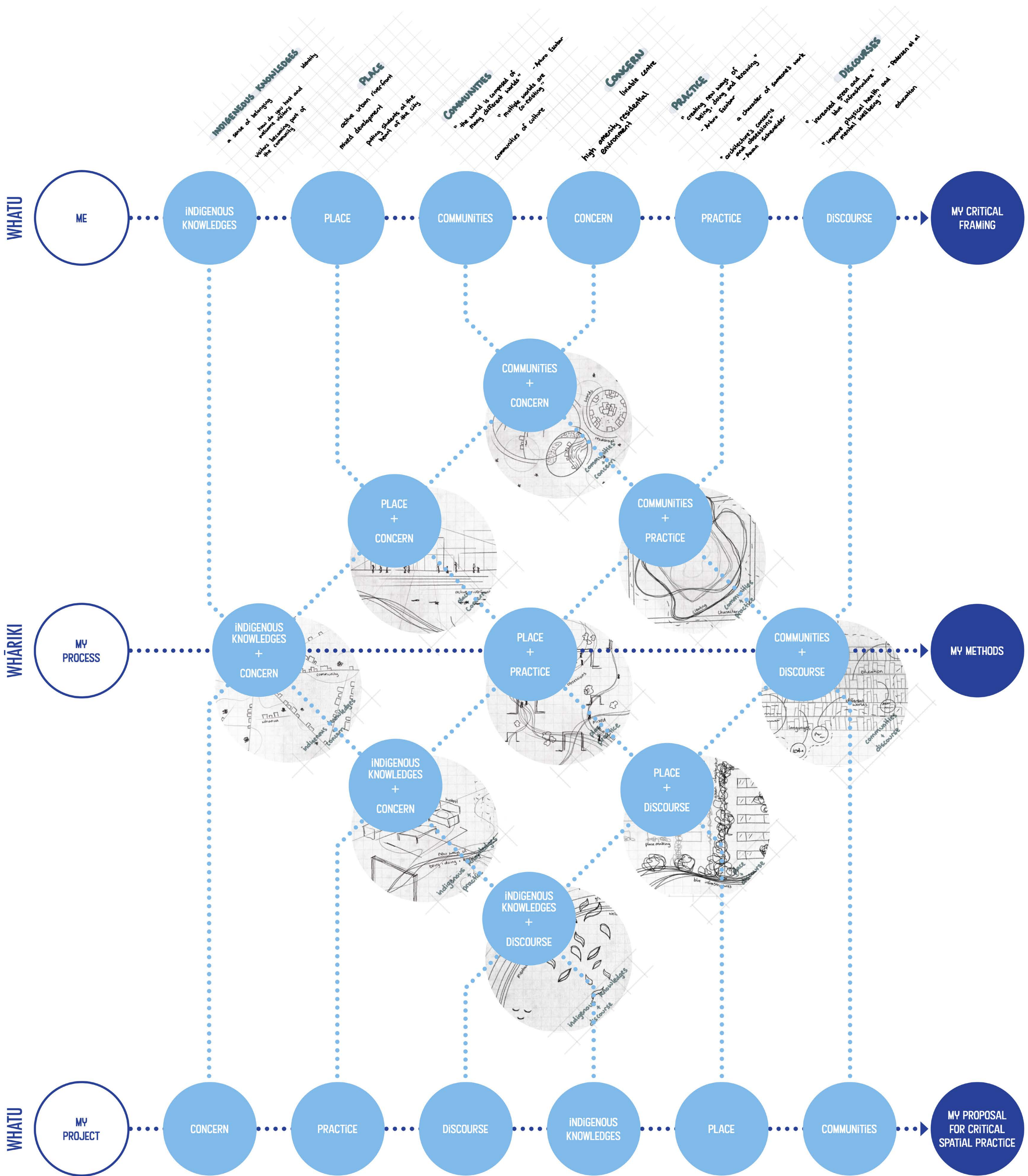
Sketch responses to framework by Nhi Tu

Figure 04.
Whatu/whāriki framework with example sketches by student Nhi Tu.

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reflection

The notion of relational responsibility returns us to the primary relationship within the studio—the one we have with the students. Reflecting on our shared responsibilities, we revisit the learning intentions around tuakiri/identity within a context of indirect partnership:

> This semester we won't have the opportunity to partner with mana whenua, so our challenge is to explore how we continue to honour the bicultural context of our work in a way that authentically acknowledges the identity, experience and knowledge each of you bring to the table, and uplifts your own mana along with that of mana whenua as kaitiaki, and all of the human and non-human inhabitants of this place. Our aim is to consider how Spatial Design might contribute to a livable future in Aotearoa, for the wellbeing of future generations. What is your role in that? How do you want to serve others, through design, in a way that also enriches your own sense of identity and wellbeing?[49]

To evaluate the effectiveness of our Te Tiriti-led pedagogy, we analysed the student work with an emphasis on both individual and collective processes and outcomes, and the relational impact within the Te Awa Kairangi project community and NUWAO competition. Focusing on identity, mana, and agency, we looked for indicators of how students navigated uncertainty as a fundamental condition of ethical partnership, avoiding both paralysis and unethical action. Surprisingly, evidence of success did not appear in the way we expected. This is, of course, the purpose of such discursive processes aimed at producing new knowledge. The insights shared below illustrate our own transformational learning and paradigm shift.

Where the project was most successful in enhancing mana and agency was in relation to identity (students being tau with their position), and in producing outcomes that were socio-culturally restorative, ecologically regenerative, or both.

Notions of identity were not individualistic but situated each student within a network of relations, as part of a project ecology and wider community with a shared goal of uplifting te mana o te awa; the mana of the river. This was embodied through the emergence of critical practice clusters formed around shared kaupapa and by the ultimate coming-together of all twenty-seven kaupapa in an exhibition. Figure 05 curates each student's contribution to the exhibition: a hero image and 'what if…?' question. Installed in the local community library, the exhibition embodied a collective form of social dreaming.[50] Inviting members of the public to contribute their own 'what if…?' questions, this pluriverse of possible futures ignited public imagination and agency.

Where our Te Tiriti-led pedagogy initially appeared less successful was in demonstrating engagement with Indigenous knowledges through the work. Many of

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the projects did not explicitly engage with or include representations of mātauranga Māori. Our sense of success in the ways the project community was energised by the process and outcomes was at odds with this apparent failure to engage tangibly with these knowledges. One reason might be that learners are at different stages of overcoming paralysis, with some perhaps less ready or equipped. This may point to a broader deficit in the curriculum, but may also indicate indirect learning as part of a learning ecology, in which those who are already equipped model behaviour for those who are not.

Ultimately, however, this revealed a misguided assumption that ethical engagement with Indigenous knowledges would be explicit in the outcomes in the first place. In coming from a place of their own identity, student work can align with mana whenua aspirations for restoration and regeneration without having to co-opt Indigenous narratives, language, or art forms. This is empowering both for Indigenous students, for whom the use of their own cultural practices may become visible in an authentic way, and non-Indigenous students, who can practise being good tangata Tiriti without adopting tangata whenua practices.

Evidencing this is the work of three students who received awards or commendations in the NUWAO competition. While an entry from a Māori student spoke directly to Indigenous knowledges and spatiality, the Pākehā students' kaupapa aligned with Indigenous aspirations for te mana o te awa in ways that were authentic to them [Fig. 06].

We offer this pātai (question) for future wānanga (deliberation): What might we expect the design outputs from a Te Tiriti-led studio with a diverse group of learners to look like? This risks being equated with making things 'more visibly Māori', or making attempts to 'integrate mātauranga Māori' by having students use Indigenous knowledges as content for what are ostensibly still Eurocentric design practices. Through this reflection on our studio, we offer a pluriversal approach that centres diverse student identities and empowers students to become both more themselves, and better tangata Tiriti. Shifting away from tokenistic 'dressing up' of work that remains within a colonial worldview, we look instead to Indigenous and partnership paradigms that uplift each student's identity and relational project networks.

Te Tiriti-led education equips graduates with the skills to serve their communities and environments in ways that are mana-enhancing for all. It recognises that overcoming Pākehā paralysis involves distinguishing between working directly with Māori knowledge (which should always be Māori-led) and working as part of a Te Tiriti-led community that actively includes Māori and mātauranga Māori. We could therefore state that student work is Te Tiriti-led by virtue of a) demonstrating a strong sense of identity and agency in transforming care into service for communities, in ways that b) align with Te Tiriti and mana whenua aspirations for restorative and regenerative futures. These were evidenced across the entire learning group.

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From initial uncertainty about whether a student-centred studio with diverse outcomes would be compatible with Te Tiriti-led pedagogy and expanded models of partnership, we ultimately arrived at the realisation that centring identity is precisely what is required. Architect Jade Kake (Ngāpuhi) and artist Desna Whaanga-Schollum emphasise the importance of diversity in the built environment industry, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the 'korowai over everybody' that makes this possible.[51] To 'go forward as yourself' is not only about authentic self-representation, but representing your ancestors and descendants.[52] It is also a way for non-Māori to situate themselves within a Tiriti landscape by acknowledging their own values and how they align with Indigenous kaupapa, rather than adopting Māori values as their own. Through shared kaupapa such as the wellbeing of people, environment, and lived spaces, 'there's always the potential for stronger connections.'[53]

WHAT iF…?

Third year Spatial Design students from Massey University's Toi Rauwhārangi College of Creative Arts have been working with Te Awa Kairangi Hutt City Council to imagine a plurivere of possible futures for the urban centre that celebrate the identity of Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt as a city in transition—turning to face the river.

We have been imagining and designing urban interventions, festivals, skateparks, apartment buildings, workplaces, community centres, installations, speculative futures & more that respond with care to the city, its people, its stories, its ecologies and its socio-political conditions.

Nei te mihi kau ake ki ngā mana whenua o tēnei wāhi—we acknowledge that any collective dream for its future must begin with mana whenua and evolve through meaningful partnership.

Mehemea ka manawanui tātou, ka tere e tātou.

Spatial Design @ Massey + HCC present
What if…? Urban Wellbeing in the River City of the Future
Lower Hutt War Memorial Library
21-31 October 2022

For more information please contact j.archer-martin@massey.ac.nz or g.stokes@massey.ac.nz
@massey_spatial

HUTT CITY
TE AWA KAIRANGI

1/ WHAT iF
WE UPHELD THE MAURi OF
TE AWA KAiRANGi, ALLOWiNG HER
DESiRED COURSE—ARO MAi TĀTOU
TE WHAKAPAPA O TE AWA…?
2/ WHAT iF iN 2200 THERE WAS A NEW WAY OF LiFE iN
TE AWAKAiRANGi AND HUMANS iNHABiTED THE SKY ABOVE THE VALLEY,
LEAViNG THE VALLEY FLOOR TO REGENERATE…?
3/ WHAT iF WiTHiN THE CiTY WE COULD ENJOY SMALL MOMENTS OF
REFLECTiON AND ENGAGE WiTH THE ViTAL ESSENCE OF THE LAND—
TE MAURi O TE WHENUA…?
4/ WHAT iF MĀORi AND PACiFiC PEOPLE HAD ACCESS TO
EQUiTABLE HEALTH CARE…?
5/ WHAT iF THERE WAS A SPACE WHERE YOU COULD BE
WHOEVER YOU WANTED—WHERE YOU BECAME LiKE THE
SOUND OF WATER, BUBBLiNG WiTH LiFE AND FLOWiNG FREELY…?
6/ WHAT iF A SERiES OF RiVERSiDE SHELTERS MUTUALLY
NOURiSHED THE PEOPLE AND ECOLOGiES OF THE RiVER…?
7/ WHAT iF DOORWAYS TO EVERYDAY MEMORiES iNSPiRED
CARE, CONNECTiON AND OPPORTUNiTiES TO LiSTEN TO
COMMUNiTiES AFFECTED BY CHANGE…?
8/ WHAT iF YOU COULD SLiP THROUGH LAYERS OF TiME,
SPACE AND MEMORY, CARRiED BY THE AWA…?
9/ WHAT iF WE DESiGNED STRUCTURES ON THE RiVER
THAT WERE MUTUALLY BENEFiCiAL TO THE WELLBEiNG OF
BOTH HUMAN AND AQUATiC iNHABiTANTS?
10/ WHAT iF A RiVERSiDE PAViLiON BASED ON HOLiSTiC
WELLBEiNG FRAMEWORKS SUPPORTED THE WHAKAHOA
COMMUNiTY GROUP AND LOCALS TO REGENERATE
NATiVE PLANTiNG…?
11/ WHAT iF WE CELEBRATED WATER AND iTS POWER
TO NOURiSH US…?
12/ WHAT iF YOU COULD iNHABiT A STAR LANTERN
AT A FiLiPiNO PAROL FiESTA iN RiDDiFORD GARDENS…?
13/ WHAT iF PEOPLE COULD TAP iNTO THE
EVER-PRESENT ESSENCE OF TE AWA KAiRANGi
FOR SPiRiTUAL GROUNDiNG DURiNG THE
TRANSFORMATiON OF THE CiTY…?
14/ WHAT iF THERE WERE MOMENTS ALONG
THE RiVERSiDE PATHWAYS THAT HELPED TO
MATERiALiSE THE CONNECTiONS BETWEEN
PEOPLE AND THE ECOLOGiES OF THE
RiVER'S EDGE..?
15/ WHAT iF THERE WAS AN ALTERNATiVE
ECONOMY MARKET THAT FACiLiTATED
TOGETHERNESS, SUSTAiNABLE TRADiNG
AND FOOD SOVEREiGNTY FOR
THE COMMUNiTY…?
16/ WHAT iF THERE WAS A CO-LiVING
APARTMENT BUiLDiNG WHERE YOUNG
HiNDU ADULTS FELT EMPOWERED TO
CELEBRATE THEiR CULTURAL iDENTiTY…?
17/ WHAT iF A NEiGHBOURHOOD CAFE
THAT FELT JUST LiKE HOME WAS AT
THE HEART OF A ViBRANT NEW
ANDREW'S AVE COMMUNiTY…?
18/ WHAT iF THE COLLECTiVE LABOUR
OF MAKiNG AND RE-MAKiNG A BUiLDiNG COULD
CREATE AND UPLiFT A COMMUNiTY REGARDLESS
OF SOCiO-ECONOMiC STATUS…?
19/ WHAT iF THE RHYTHMS AND RiTUALS OF A
COMMUNiTY CO-WORKiNG HUB AND MAKER-SPACE
WERE iNTERCONNECTED WiTH THE FLOW OF TE AWA KAiRANGi…?
20/ WHAT iF RiVERSiDE LiViNG FOR iNTERNATiONAL STUDENTS
COULD EMBODY MANAAKiTANGA AND CREATE LONG-LASTiNG FRiENDSHiPS…?
21/ WHAT iF THERE COULD BE AFFORDABLE HOUSiNG ON THE RiVERSiDE THAT
FACiLiTATED WELLBEiNG AND SUPPORTED A SUSTAiNABLE COMMUNiTY ECONOMY…?

22/ WHAT iF A NEW QUEENSGATE LANEWAY BROUGHT A
SLiCE OF HONG KONG TO TE AWAKAiRANGi SO THAT LOCAL AND
iNTERNATiONAL PEOPLE LiKE ME COULD FEEL AT HOME…?
23/ WHAT iF MARGARET STREET TRANSFORMED iNTO A
PLAYSCAPE, USiNG PUBLiC ART TO ACTiVATE
THE MAiN CORRiDOR TO THE RiVER…?
24/ WHAT iF, iN A POST-PANDEMiC WORLD, STREETSCAPES
COULD ADAPT AND RESPOND FOR THE SAFETY, RESiLiENCE
AND WELLBEiNG OF OUR COMMUNiTiES…?
25/ WHAT iF THERE WAS A SPACE TO EXPERiENCE
THE BEAUTY OF NATURE AND RESTORE MENTAL CLARiTY
WiTHiN THE HEART OF THE URBAN ENViRONMENT…?
26/ WHAT iF GOiNG TO WORK WAS LiKE GOiNG FOR A
WALK iN NATURE, SiTTiNG DOWN BESiDE THE RiVER AND
BREATHiNG THE FRESH AiR OF THE VALLEY…?
27/ WHAT iF REST-STOPS BETWEEN WATERLOO STATiON
AND THE RiVER MADE THE PEDESTRiAN JOURNEY
BETTER FOR PEOPLE LiViNG WiTH DiSABiLiTY,
AND ENJOYABLE FOR EVERYONE…?

1/ Samuel Dunstall (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Kahungunu) /
Kātoa o te maunga, Hōkia ki te tai
2/ Annie Sansom / Garden City in the Sky
3/ Keeley Waller / Vitality
4/ Lottie Harper-Siolo (Iva, Savai'i, Samoa / Palagi) /
Body of an Eel
5/ Aidan Johnson / Water Within
6/ Summer Hardie / Shelter
7/ Rhiannon Higgs / 17 Doors
8/ Kate Ashworth / A Living Tapestry of Watery Bodies
9/ Nina Cole / Mutuality
10/ Hannah Fahey-Quine / Whakahoa
11/ Hilary Armstrong / Places of Watery Interest
12/ Sabina Lacson / Parol Fiesta
13/ Holly Patchett / Creating Our Way Home
14/ Kate Healy / Riparian Pathways
15/ Tegan Pirimona / Handpicked
16/ Shyla Chhika / Bhavan
17/ Kate Jowsey / Local
18/ Marie Caecilia Preuss / 100 Ways to Build a Community
19/ Celia Hamling / Flow
20/ Nhi Tu / Moments of Intercultural Connection
21/ Grace Apperley / From Commerce House to Commerce Home
22/ Chung Tin Chow / Homecoming
23/ Libby Tonkin / The March on Margaret
24/ Mollie Nicol / Healthy Streets
25/ Amba Hancock / Passage of Tranquility
26/ Briar Grounds / Nature's Office
27/ Madeleine Thompson / Traverse

Supervised by Jen Archer-Martin
& Georgina Stokes

Figure 05.
Curated work of Toi Rauwhārangi 300 Level Spatial Design students from
2022 'What if…?' exhibition (2023).

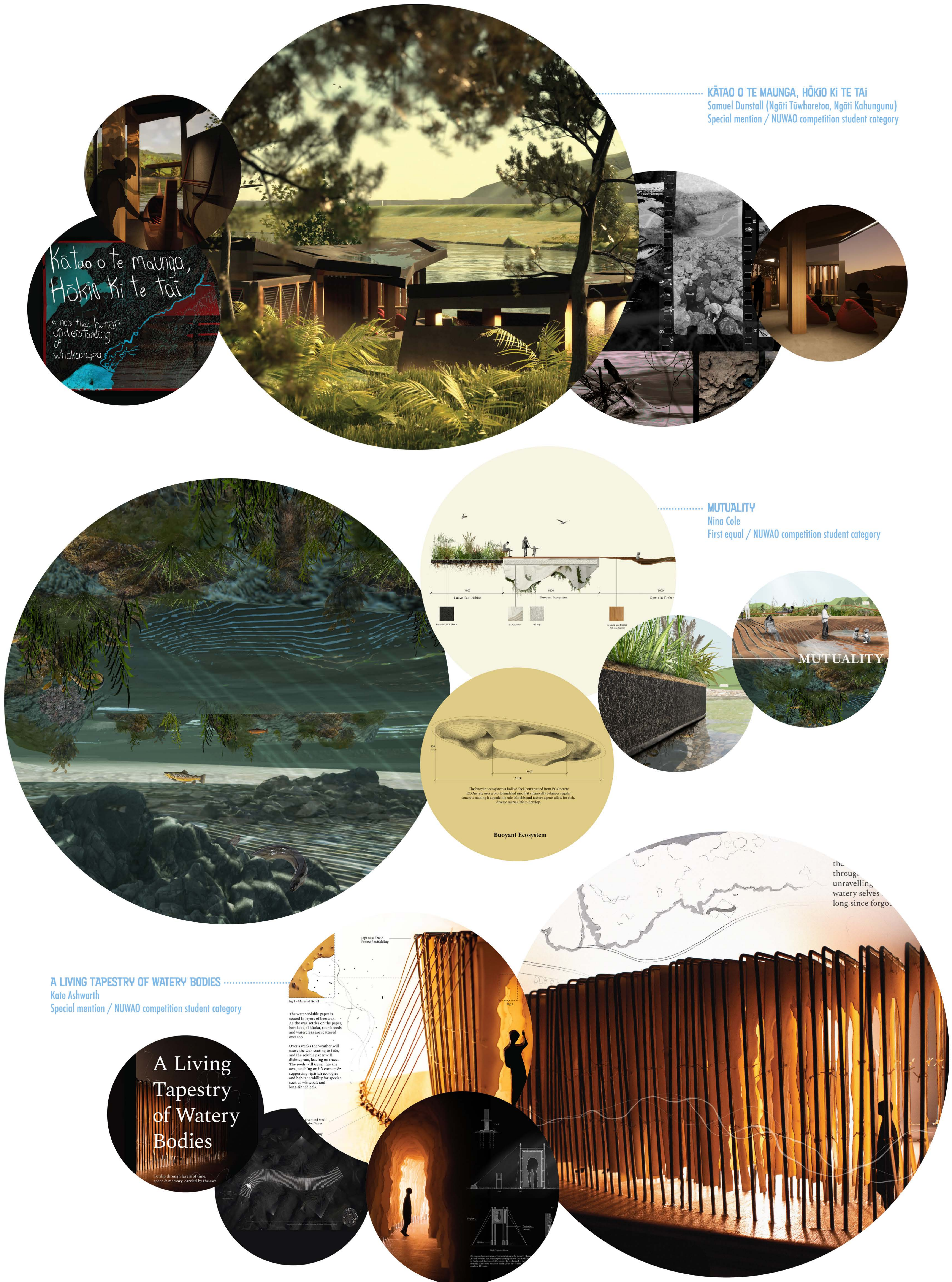[ij]   vol.20, no.01   uncertain   research   jen archer-martin   whakamana: embracing uncertainty in   201
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KĀTAO O TE MAUNGA, HŌKIO KI TE TAI
Samuel Dunstall (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Kahungunu)
Special mention / NUWAO competition student category

MUTUALITY
Nina Cole
First equal / NUWAO competition student category

A LIVING TAPESTRY OF WATERY BODIES
Kate Ashworth
Special mention / NUWAO competition student category

Figure 06.
Curated selection of 2022 work from students Samuel Dunstall, Nina Cole,
and Kate Ashworth (2023).

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conclusion

This mahi affirms our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the foundation for restorative and regenerative futures in Aotearoa. It has seen us develop tools for an expanded model of partnership in which we practise relational responsibility as treaty partners, contributing to collective flourishing through critical spatial practice. These tools are not replicable methods but rather examples that emerge from and remain rooted within situated, relational practice. We offer this essay as part of a wider discussion that will require wānanga. We do not position ourselves as experts disseminating 'certain' knowledge, but as part of a learning ecology facing the uncertainty of a world in transition.

In this work, we hope to join hands with others to turn Te Tiriti commitments into meaningful Te Tiriti-led pedagogy, underpinned by paradigm shifts and the unconditional welcome of Indigenous epistemes in the academy.[54] Shifting from a fixed mindset of certainty to possibilism and ways of being with uncertainty, we develop pedagogies of manaakitanga as 'a continuous relation, not another academic policy, programme or guideline that can be forgotten once implemented.'[55] We assert that mana-enhancing practices are fundamental to healthy partnerships for restorative and regenerative futuring, founded on ethical relationships across and within difference, and characterised by love, respect, and readiness to learn.

Perhaps, most importantly, Te Tiriti-led design is not just 'working with Māori and things Māori', but working together, as people of Te Tiriti, to co-create flourishing futures for all. This is pivotal to realising the academy's commitment to Te Tiriti, as we can no longer applaud ourselves for pockets of Māori/Tiriti work while the majority continues to uphold degenerative paradigms. This mahi has been our wake-up call to bring all our research and teaching under the korowai of Te Tiriti. Our own transformational learning has come from the students who, in demonstrating what this might look like, held up a mirror to our assumptions. What they showed us was not co-opted Māori identity reduced to 'cultural garnish', but themselves, as people ready to authentically serve all the people of Te Tiriti, working together to clear the undergrowth of degenerative paradigms and heal our world. In a flourishing Tiriti landscape, 'everyone remains in his or her birthplace, but the whole opens.'[56]

> Tungia te ururua, kia tupu whakaritorito te tupu o te harakeke.[57]

Tēnā koutou katoa.

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