

THE LEWES MAKER SPACE

A Maker Space for the 21st Century

A proposal from *Making Lewes & Fourth Door Research*
An envisioning document by Oliver Lowenstein & George Sinclair



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION - A Maker Space for the 21st Century	2
WIDER CONTEXT - Think Global, Make Local	3
OUR VISION - The Lewes Maker Space	4
WIDER CONTEXT - The key ingredients of a maker space	5
THE LEWES MAKER SPACE - Key ingredients further explored	6-8
- An interdisciplinary experiment	9
- Natural materials in the regional economy	10
- Turkish Baths - ideal location within Lewes	11
- Local, regional, and international connections	12
- A timely opportunity for growth and innovation	13
ABOUT US	15

INTRODUCTION

A Maker Space for the 21st Century

Lewes is a town with a higher than average number of makers, crafts-people, designers and others involved in related work given its scale (16, 000 pop.) Over the immediate wider geographical area of the LDC these numbers remain comparably high. Likewise, there is a significant and unusually active community involvement and participation in making and crafts culture, from pottery and jewellery evening classes to the Bonfire Societies and the annual Moving On mass arts and making tradition for local young people.

The community organisation Making Lewes is proposing a Lewes Maker Space, to be a community and educational facility, a hub and focus for the town's maker and craft culture, while also acting at the national and international level. The aim is to become an exemplar for the integration of maker culture, sustainability and a built environment education with a strong regional focus.

The Turkish Baths building, used as a pop-up space during the most recent Make Lewes Festival, is strikingly well matched as a venue and hub for the proposed Maker Space. This 'envisioning' document proposes harnessing and supporting the potential of this unusually large craft based local talent pool for the good of the local economy and community by transforming the Turkish Baths into a bespoke Maker Space, developing key elements and strengths in Lewes District's maker/crafts/design and sustainability communities.



Guitar making at Lewes's Star Gallery

WIDER CONTEXT

Think Global, Make Local

There is a strong economic and social case for developing a creative hub in Lewes. We can extrapolate from national figures on the contribution of creative industries to the economy, employment, tourism and community well-being, that a Lewes Makers Space could boost local competitiveness, support local businesses and promote job creation:

- Figures from the Department of Media, Culture and Sport show that cultural organisations and practitioners contributed £27bn to the UK economy in 2015, a 15 per cent increase on the previous year.
- Total jobs in the UK cultural sector have grown by 17.8 per cent since 2011. Source : Creative Industries Focus on Employment, June 2016, DCMS.
- The UK's arts and culture are a very strong draw for international visitors, attracting at least £856m of tourist spending. Source: Economic Estimates of DCMS Sectors, August 2016.
- For every £1 of salary paid by the arts and culture industry, an additional £2.01 is generated in the wider economy through indirect and induced multiplier impacts. (Source: The Value of Arts and Culture to the People and Society, Arts Council of England).
- The arts and culture sector has an important benefit on health and well-being. Those who had attended a cultural place or event in the preceding 12 months were 60 per cent more likely to report good health, than the average. (Source: Arts Council of Great Britain)



Pottery making at Lewes's Star Gallery

OUR VISION

The Lewes Maker Space

Maker Spaces, Hack Spaces, Fab Labs, Community Factories, Creative Workspaces are buzz phrases describing varied workshop resources which provide facilities, tools and space for all kinds of making. Maker Spaces have become popular by providing otherwise unavailable space and technical facilities for makers, designers, and crafts-people as well as engaging with the wider community.

Supporting creative businesses, educational and community organisations, the origins of maker spaces are in a new wave of digital technologies although both digital and analogue tools are part of their kit-box. Urban districts internationally have embraced this key new vehicle for incubating employment, training, and business start ups.

Lewes town and surrounding area has a wealth of makers and craftspeople, including basketweavers, jewellers, ceramicists, book binders, carpenters and metalworkers. A local maker space would provide a locus to increase their connectivity, share resources, share their skills and learning, provide an educational resource for local young people and older people those looking to learn new skills, and build links with similar innovators nationally and internationally.



Make Lewes Festival's popular Kinship II design & make workshop co-led by William Hardie

WIDER CONTEXT

The key ingredients of a maker space

I A set of flexible workspaces for makers, crafts-people and others working within the 'maker' sector with a focus on start-ups, and early career stage development, working across disciplines.

II Skills Training, mentoring and employment, with induction and ongoing training integrated into the existing LDC area's education and training network.

III Comprehensive facilities, from hand tools to digital technologies, with technical assistance on site.

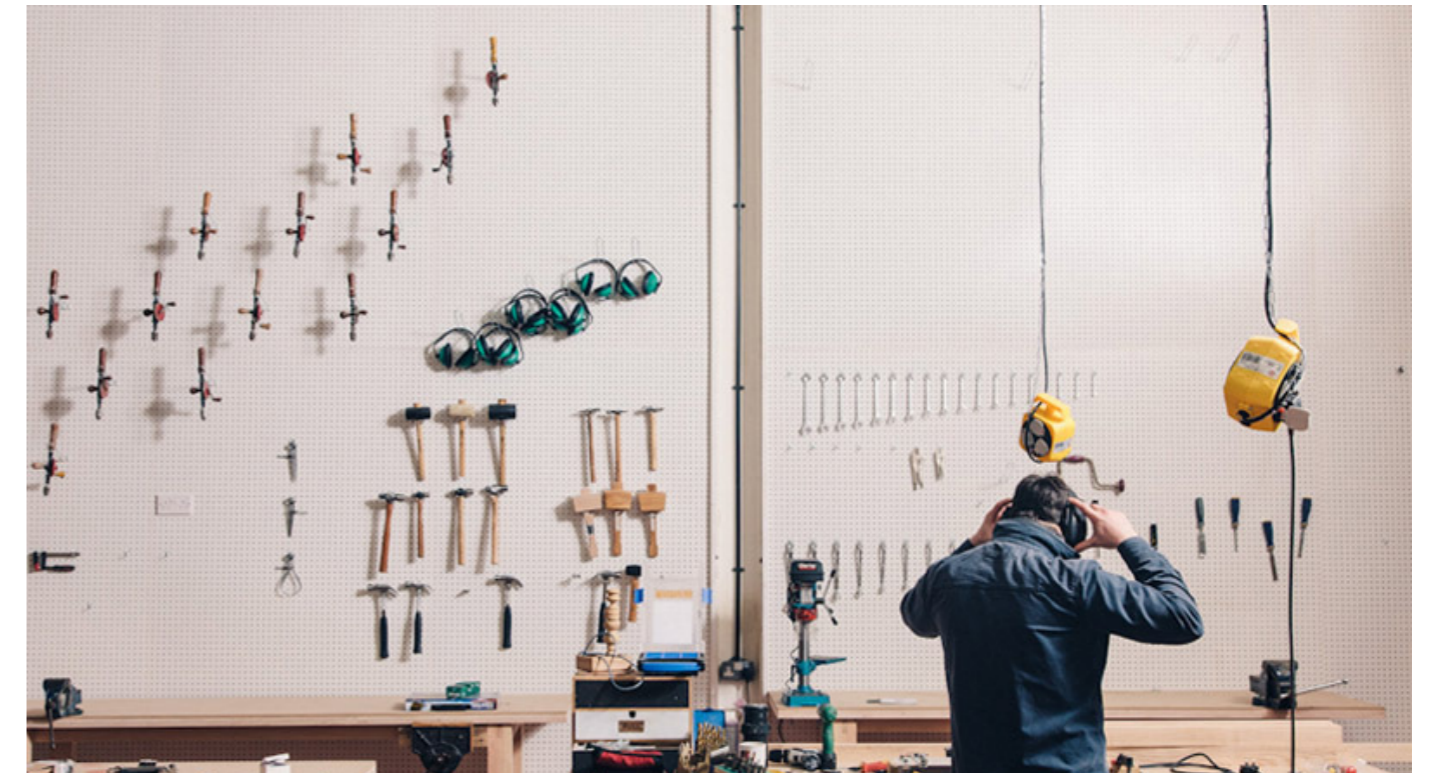
IV Provision and access to a broad range of materials, with partial emphasis on local renewable materials, as well as re-use, recycling and upcycling.

V A Makers Café, plus Makers Shop and complementing the adjacent Lewes Library, a makers related Library, (ie books on making, crafts etc)

VI Exhibition space/showroom for local Lewes District Makers as well as influential visiting makers.

VII Regular programme of exhibitions, talks, and other community focused events and hub venue for the Make Lewes Festival, repair café

VIII Specialist workshops led by Lewes (and District) Makers, crafts-people, designers and cross discipline creative networks.



Walthamstow, N London's Blackhorse Maker Space

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Key ingredients further explored

Multi disciplinary

This Maker Space vision takes an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach, with a focus on the multiple strengths of Lewes District makers, rather than a single discipline, ie Ceramics and Woodwork, Metalwork and Basketmaking.

Education and Training

Main sources of makers' education, continuing professional development and training overlap. The Maker Space concept links in with regional Higher Education, Further Education and schools connecting a shared curriculum, classes and courses where relevant with Maker Space resources.

Materials for Makers

The envisaged emphasis is on local and renewable materials (as often highlighted through Making Lewes events), as well as re-used and upcycled materials. More broadly, the emphasis is on the circular economy, with the possibility of creating a materials re-use hub and showroom/library, and demonstrated in a materials experience wall.

The Maker Space could focus on a material pallet in the context of Weald and Downland's significant 'green' history and its continued environmental reputation. The local provenance and the natural renewable properties of materials sourced from within and close to the South Downs National Park chimes with the SDNPA goals.



The Kinship design and make workshop

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Key ingredients further explored

The Café, Makers Shop and Exhibit space

These facilities act as the interface between Lewes Makers and the public. The café extends maker culture into the spheres of food and drink. This can be developed into food making etc, events, training and courses. Lewes's considerable humanitarian reputation could be enhanced further through educational and community links to maker aspects of international humanitarian projects.

The café could be organised around a makers theme, to distinguish it from other local cafés and restaurants.

The Makers Shop is the literal front of house for Lewes Makers. It connects to the exhibition space and also provides an open space for people's community uses, eg repair cafés, and a range of information facilities, including a specialist makers book library and archive connected to the main Lewes Library.

The Lewes Makers exhibition space will provide an ongoing and imaginative exhibition programme, and related events, focused primarily, though not exclusively, on the Lewes community of makers.

Exhibition programming shall also develop collaborations with like-minded communities and bring exciting, provocative and relevant shows to Lewes. Events, talks, specialist workshops, etc, will mix the spectrum of concerns, themes and issues that underpin both the Lewes Maker Space, MakingLewes, and other relevant community groups and organisations. Programming will clearly connect to but not be defined by the exhibition programme. A regular programme of community focused events including workshops, aimed at different sectors, children, families, young people, the unemployed and the retired (U3A.)



Maker Space cafe in London

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Key ingredients further explored

Specialist Maker Workshops

Given the number of makers, crafts people and designers etc, in the Lewes District, the inclusion of evening classes, specialist workshops, and related making events further underlines the community nature of the Maker Space.

Led by makers, crafts-people, designers and interdisciplinary creative networks, the classes and workshops would be aimed at the broadest community spectrum, with a cross section of users, from hobbyists through to accreditation and qualification based classes and courses.

The Circular Economy

Re-use, upcycling and the circular (or spiral) economy are becoming increasingly mainstream. The Lewes Maker Space can highlight and showcase ways in which this mainstreaming is happening, both with local examples, and drawing in national and international examples.

Lewes's environmental history includes repeated experiments and initiatives highlighting material re-use:

- Many recent examples of organic re-use and upcycling culture were a key aspect of the Phoenix Industrial Estate creative makers community.
- BakerBrownMackay Sustainable Architects Wastehouse Project – BBM are LDC based architects, designers of the internationally influential, award winning Wastehouse at the University of Brighton.
- Transition Town Lewes initiated a series of re-use and recycling/upcycling projects.



BakerBrownMcKay's award winning Wastehouse at Brighton University

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An interdisciplinary experiment

There are strategic rationales and advantages of the Maker Space concept envisaged in this proposal which has emerged from broader considerations about the future of the Lewes District. It has referenced how both the district's maker culture and future-focused sustainability culture is informed by, and develops further the town's identity and reputation. These elements are considered as strategic advantages with striking potential for growing, for the benefit and enhancement of the district.

Considering its size, Lewes's sustainability credentials are formidable, including a noted and significant 'green cultural history.' This green culture is also future focused, established and embedded in the town and recognised nationally and internationally. The maker/craft and design culture in Lewes and the LDC area is dynamic, imaginative and original, containing many significant seeds for developing to an international level.

Strategically, this interdisciplinary fusion is innovative and dynamic, to be viewed as an advantage that can be capitalised upon as part of an overall strategy to boost the local economy, create jobs and support local well-being, thereby avoiding unnecessary costs and reducing waste of skills and limited resources. As already suggested integrating a Materials Re-Use Centre (MRC), a Materials Library and an Information Resource with the town's maker and design culture creates a new kind of Maker Space. Together these elements contribute to the first steps in a strategy for Lewes to work towards becoming an internationally influential centre for maker culture and sustainability, doing so by demonstrating sustainable innovation leadership, breaking new green ground and positioning the district as a sustainability and maker culture pioneer.



Kinship workshop at Hardie Studios

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Natural materials in the regional economy

The emphasis on natural, renewable materials builds on nearly two decades of R&D, and commercial development of locally sourced construction material, and could constitute a new phase in the use of locally sourced natural building materials. See Natural Materials section below.

The focus on timber and other bio and land based materials are an increasing part of the building sectors materials palette. While various city authorities have become identified with timber engineered construction (Hackney, London), so far no regional town has explored the potential for linking its building culture along comparable lines. The Weald & Downland region is a pioneer in locally sourced timber building materials and technologies. The region is the third most wooded part of Britain, with considerable potential to grow this use of locally sourced timber in construction.

Timber is one of the Bio-Based family of materials, a rapidly growing part of the green economy. There is considerable potential for locally sourced timber in the regional Bio economy. A 2015 Government report valued the country's Bio economy at £100 billion per annum see below. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408940/BIS-15-146_Bioeconomy_report_-_opportunities_from_waste.pdf. There is a concentrations of makers and crafts-people in Lewes whose core materials are natural materials including: timber-framers & carpenters, potters and ceramicists, basket makers, and wooden guitar and other instrument makers.

Making Lewes has developed links with a network of comparable communities across Europe. These include the ceramics community on Bornholm island, Denmark, the timber design and make and self build communities in Trondheim, Norway, and the vernacular architecture and building culture in Graubunden, Switzerland. A Lewes Maker Space could further nurture these links to the District's advantage.



Flimwell Woodland Enterprise's phase 2 buildings using locally sourced building materials

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Turkish Baths - ideal location within Lewes

Making Lewes believes there is a strong business and social case for the Turkish Baths building to be the venue for the Lewes Maker Space.

The Turkish Baths is an ideal venue for a MakerSpace. It is a central location, close to shops, public amenities and transport interchanges. On the doorstep of Lewes Library, it can be developed to complement the library's public and community roles in the town. Libraries have been one of the primary venues for maker space type facilities in Europe and North America. The library link can be expanded across the county's library network, with the MakerSpace a potential hub within a wider – Library based network. This network overlay is particularly relevant to the materials re-use centre dimension of this proposal. This dimension supports countywide/regional materials re-use strategies that are being adopted by cities and towns leading the 21st Century search for sustainability.

What is more, the Turkish Baths are ideally placed in the immediate town environs context. It sits at one boundary edge of Lewes's emerging cultural quarter, which extends from The Depot, the new community cinema via All Saints to the Library.

This proposal envisages further development of a cultural strategy dimension for Lewes. While many Maker Spaces have so far emerged over the last decade in large cities and metropolitan urban areas, there are very few in small-scaled towns of the size of Lewes. Indeed there is considerable discussion developing the next phase of Maker Spaces, to extend the network to smaller communities, including small towns.

This provides the opportunity for Lewes to be at the forefront of innovation in this growing area, developing a cutting-edge exemplar and taking a leadership position in discussion and debate about Maker Spaces within smaller town scale contexts. It also enables the development of a 'green' maker space model, which will be new, ground-breaking and be another layer to the experimental nature of the Lewes Maker Space.



Lewes Turkish Baths while being used for Make Lewes Festival III's very popular 2016 events

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Local, regional, and international connections

The Lewes Maker Space is envisaged as part of a regional Network of Maker Spaces within the South East region, working across the South East to facilitate sharing and exchanging, and building on strengths. International connections and partnership links are already in place for instance with emergent green Maker Spaces from Validaura in Spain (www.validaura.net), the world's first Green Fab Lab, and Dewar, Amersfoort, Holland (see appendix.)

The Lewes Maker Space is also a meeting space for urban and rural cultures, reflecting Lewes's own market town context of connecting metropolitan (Brighton and London) to rural (Weald and Downland).

The proposal is based on a recognition that to thrive in a competitive environment, a Maker Space culture needs to be distinctive, innovative and original in what is becoming a competitive field. The Lewes Maker Space does this by grounding the Maker Space concept in the already well developed Lewes maker culture, while framing these within closely related further functions and strategic precedents, underpinning longer term aims of growth and development.



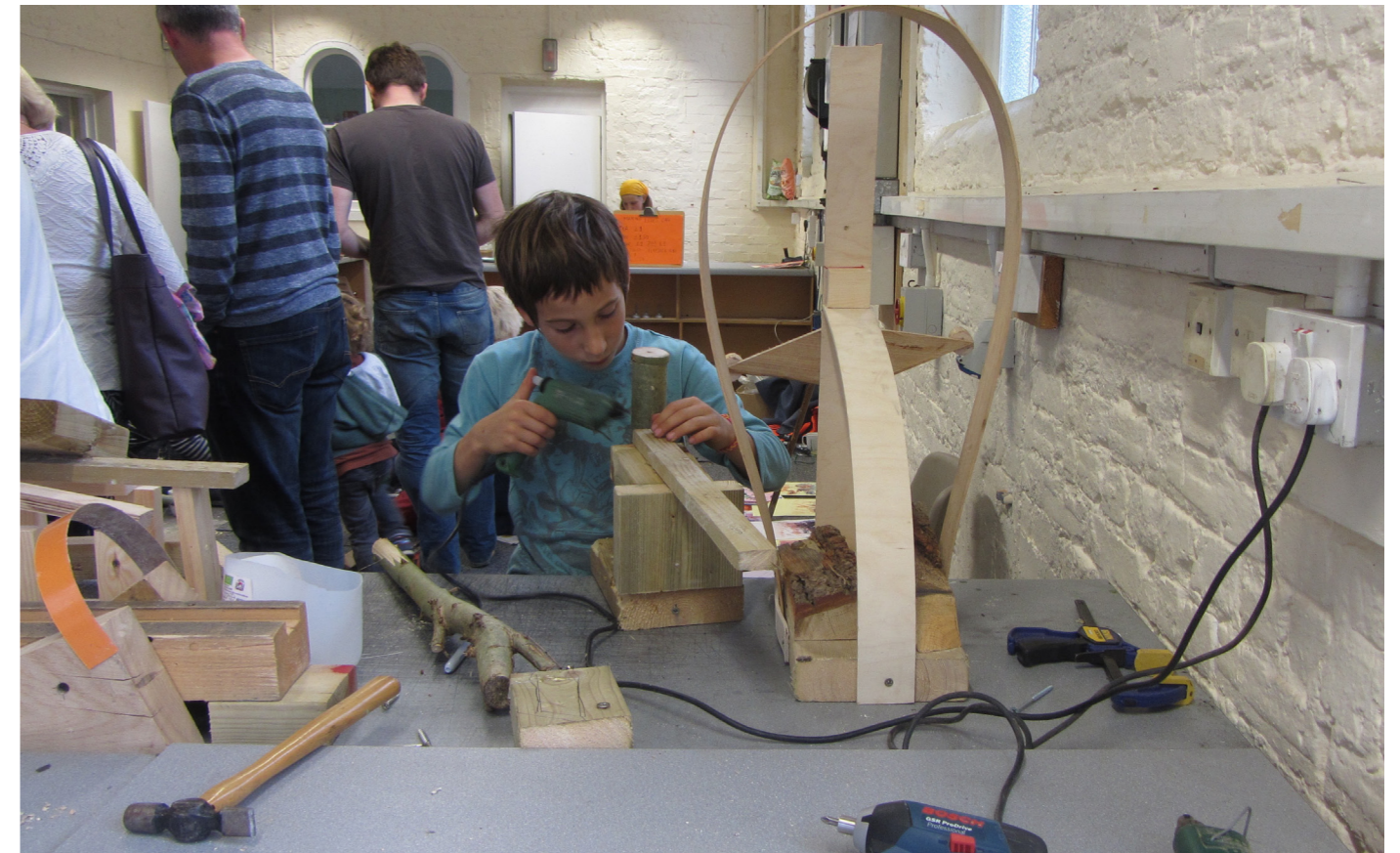
One of last year's Make Lewes Festival III's talk events at the Turkish Baths

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A timely opportunity for growth and innovation

Providing facilities for makers and other creative members of the local community via a maker space would counter the significant risk of Lewes missing out on this important wave of innovation. In Brighton, Barclays plc has rolled out its Hub Spaces within their banks, and Brighton University is developing creative maker space type quarters on its Preston Barracks, Lewes Road site www.fieldbtn.com/about/, as part of the city's Urban Gateway programme. Eastbourne, Bexhill and other towns in the eastern part of the country are opening a network of creative hubs, focused around the Devonshire Collective www.devonshirecollective.co.uk initiative.

The Lewes Turkish Baths Maker Space initiative provides an opportunity for Lewes District Council to catch up on this burgeoning area of the economy, capitalising on an existing and under-utilised asset in terms of the venue while providing leverage for the unusually strong and diverse local skill sets and energy available, thereby ensuring that Lewes does not miss out on this unique opportunity.



Children's workshop in the Turkish Baths during Make Lewes Festival 2016

ABOUT US

Making Lewes

Making Lewes is a community organisation that promotes the exchange of knowledge in the fields of Making, Architecture, Design & Sustainability. It is made up of leading craftspeople and innovators based in and around Lewes and has connections and partnerships with various universities and ground-breaking projects in the United Kingdom and across Europe.

Over the last three years Making Lewes has developed a unique platform and profile, promoting a fusion of the vibrant creative maker and crafts culture with the development of a sustainable and forward looking built environment. Driven initially by a concern at the poor design and sustainability standards and imagination found across a wave of building developments in the town, Making Lewes has highlighted the leading forces of sustainable architecture. Making Lewes believes that the prospect of a Lewes Maker Space would link Lewes to comparable initiatives regionally, nationally and internationally and significantly benefit the town and its future resilience. Making Lewes is currently transitioning from a Unincorporated Association to a Community Interest Organisation.

Oliver Lowenstein

Oliver Lowenstein is a writer and the editor of the award winning cultural review magazine, Fourth Door Review. He is an established specialist writer on sustainable, timber and regionalist architecture, writing both popular and technical pieces for among others, Financial Times, The Independent, Blueprint, the AJ, the Architectural Review and is the UK architectural correspondent for Detail Green. He works as lead partner in the research network, Fourth Door Research, on the boundary line between actionist, pollinator, and imaginer. As such Lowenstein has catalysed a number of idea projects, including the Cycle Stations Project and Roots Architecture.

Fourth Door Research

Fourth Door Research is a research network working in collaboration with a variety of partners. In addition Fourth Door Research provides one-off consultancy and research. At present FDR's principal three projects are The Cycle Stations Project – sustainable architecture, design and transport project focused on cycle networks; Arborecence - distributed new media project which uses wood and tree based data as basis of new media art; Roots Architecture - humanitarian Architecture workshops and events project running annually at the WOMAD world music festival. Fourth Door Research has significant experience in research and consultancy across a wide spectrum of expertise.



Kinship I - completed community structure



Kinship I - group design process