

ETHEREAL

A FUTURISTIC EXPERIENCE
CELEBRATING IMAGINATION,
TECHNOLOGY, AND PLAY.

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Report Overview

This report documents our process of researching, analysing and ideating from the design challenge to developing and articulating the design solution. The solution being EtheReal, an immersive play experience that offers education and social connection whilst using digital technology.

CONNECTION TO SITE

Encourages them to come back to rescue more



COMMUNITY BUILDING

Score system promotes people to help each other



SOCIAL IMPACT

Bond with friends and family over a new experience



FUTURE-FOCUSED

Uses technology to create a new interactive imaginative experience





© 2019 ISPT
KAWA, © 2019, KAWA, Pop-Up Experiences, Tim, Our Melbourne,
viewed 2 June 2021,
<https://www.timout.com/melbourne/melbourne-playtime>

Design Context

Design Context

Interactive and social connection is the way the world moves, and through this, the digital era has taken over, making people's lives easier by giving us access to the digital world at the touch of our fingertips.

ISPT owns 143 properties with 19 retail assets in Victoria, amongst other assets including 35 commercial assets and hotels, major CBD assets and regional assets (ISPT 2015). Shopping centres have always been a hub where people come together, it is a meeting place and a source for social connection. What we have seen in the last couple of years and especially since COVID-19 is that people are connecting more online or shopping online.

We were required to look at how this impacts people's movement and determine ways to attract them back to the shopping centres. People need a reason to leave their homes and a return to shopping centres that is more than simply buying things at retail stores. What environment do we want to add value to the shopping experience?. Many options come to mind, one of these ideas being the

National Art Gallery of Victoria and their success with their KAWS exhibition. The KAWS exhibition extended to Pop-Up Experiences at shopping centres like Chadstone Shopping Centre whilst their main exhibition was at NGV(Broadsheet 2019). KAWS was an artistic and cultural experience that also catered to a wide range of people by considering possible interactions in their experience. How can we apply elements of this success to give value to ISPT shopping centres?

We decided to create an environment for kids and young adults, the up and emerging generation who will build connections in the area and around the shopping district. It is a unique use of space and technology.

To analyse the context of the design challenge and inform our selection criteria and focus we have alluded to above, we began with the People, Places and Things (PPT) analysis from the design brief and context. We then determined the possible taxonomy and ontology of the results and that is how we decided on different aspects of our concepts such as the target audience we stated and the places we wanted our design to be.

PPT



Design Context

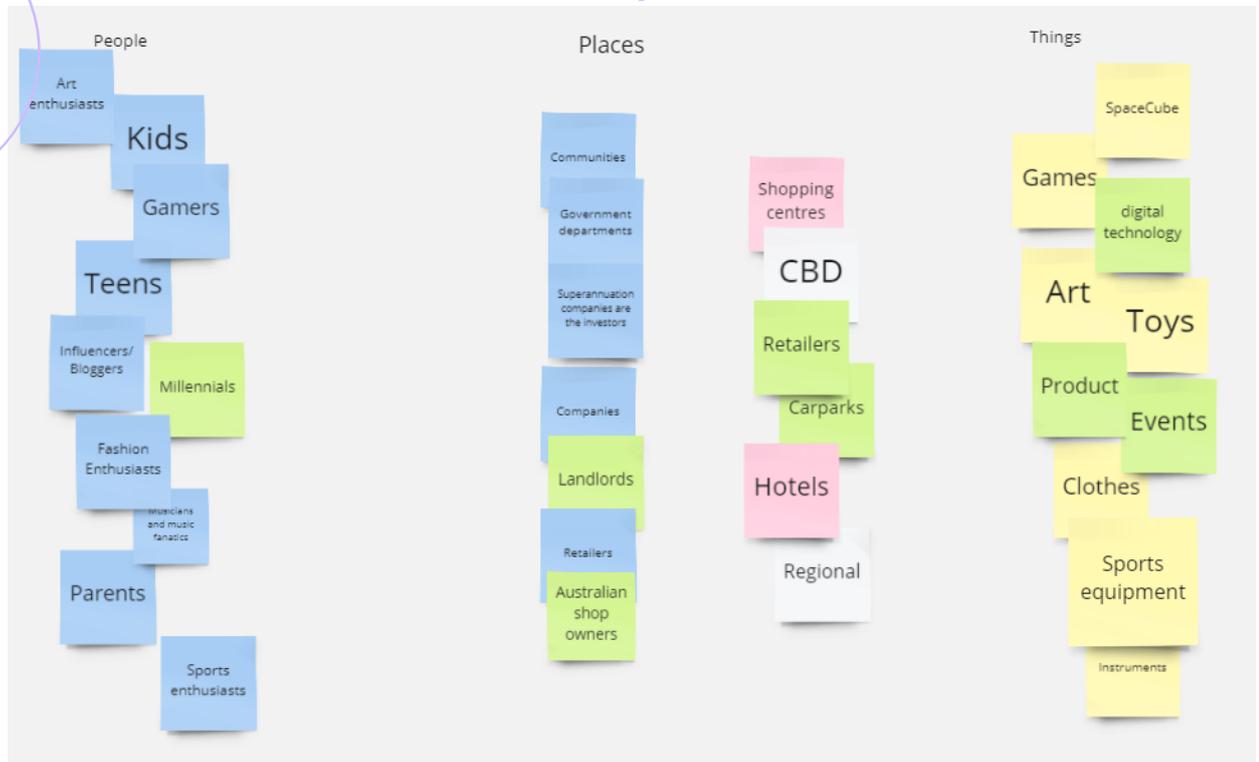
Analysis

People Place Things

The People, Place and Thing model is about identifying what cohort you're aiming to attract to your project, being able to identify different areas to see how they will work in the community.

We used this model as it clearly identifies the People, Places and things and the idea we wanted to generate for the project.

Taxonomy

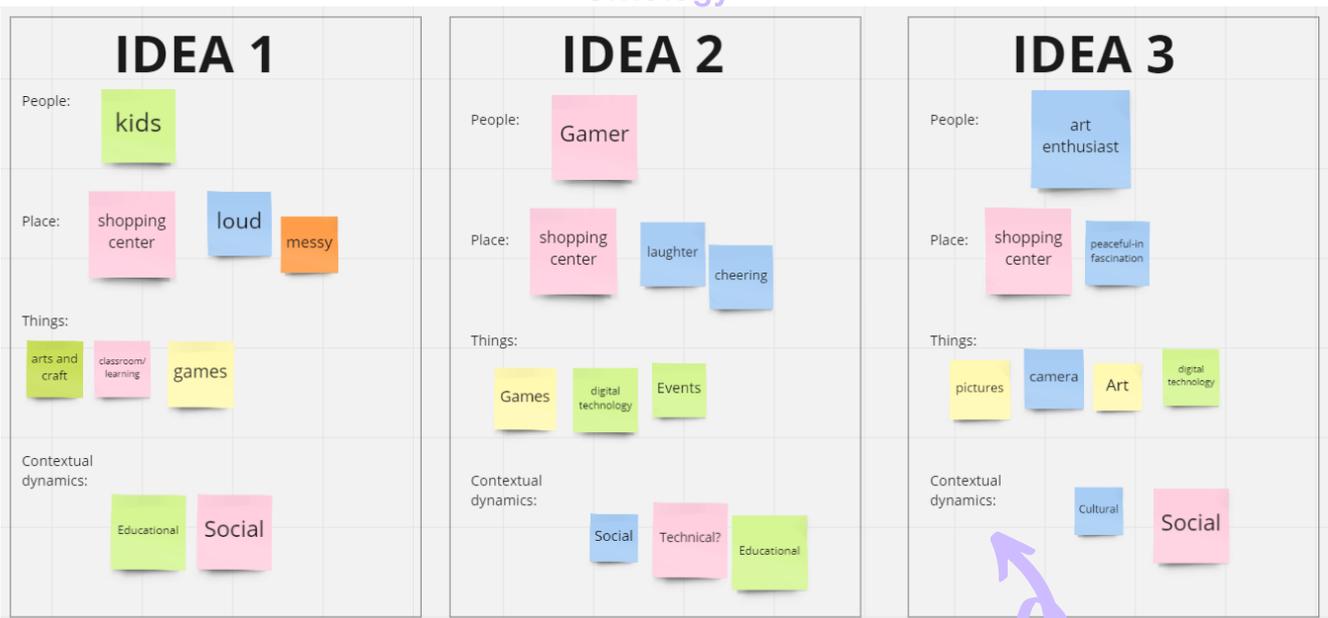


Ontology: Identifying connections, commonalities and their relationships

Taxonomy: Distinguishing hierarchy, structure, system

Taxonomies and Ontologies are used to place some sort of order whilst workshopping ideas and categorises the information in groups of importance. We determined this importance through our own interests and values.

Ontology



Contextual Dynamics

Vision

Our Focus



Our analysis of the design challenge and context has led us to focus on the social implications and connectivity of our project. Connectivity means the bond building to the site itself and between people and communities. It is important that there is consideration to being future-focused as well to align with the brief. Our vision as a team is to do so through an experience that is interactive and engaging. As a result, our team gravitates towards digital games because of their social context and interactivity. Our interests have also guided us towards projects that have artistic sensibility or immersive elements because of their emotional appeal. We enjoy the playfulness and possible educational inference that comes with projects for kids.



Selection Criteria

Innovation

Being future focused and speculative are key goals of the design challenge because static or close minded thinking leads to boredom and no growth. Utilising emerging technology that has near-future application is one aspect of being innovative. Considering or embracing the changes that may occur in the future in one's design is another aspect of being speculative. The designs should have room to expand and change with human behaviour.

Connection Building

The project should aim to create connections. This includes building a community which was one of ISPT's objectives. A community is built through encouraging social interaction between friends, families or even strangers. It may be done through creating commonalities or embracing differences. Connection building also considers connection to sites. Connection to a site encompasses the ability for a design to promote visitation and how it does this.

Social Impact

It is important to show intention to create an inclusive environment for everyone. Projects should have concern for different groups of people or aim to be accessible for groups of people who are usually not considered. Social impact also includes considering contextual dynamics into the design such as social and cultural issues, education and environmental implications.

Vision

Analysis Model



We are analysing the chosen case studies under similar criteria to the selection criteria. Innovation remains the same. However, we separated the other two categories differently. Instead, one category is connection to the design itself. Designs are usually able to do this by evoking emotions in people or providing a motivation that encourages a relationship with the design. I will also address if this offers a connection to a specific site in this part of the criteria. The other category is community building and this refers to anything that would assist in building a stronger, inclusive environment. Therefore, it covers the social and cultural impact for individuals or groups of people.



Case Study Analysis

Pokemon Go

Case Study 1

Description:

Pokemon Go was one of the first designs we looked into when creating our project. It is a free augmented reality mobile game and continues to be the leading location-based game (Key 2020). With over 500 million downloads internationally by the end of its release in 2016, Pokemon Go still continues to generate millions of dollars in player spending (Key 2020). Players are able to catch, train and battle Pokemon through the app where it largely requires people to travel.

Innovation:

Pokemon Go utilises innovative digital technology, particularly augmented reality, making it a refreshing experience for players who never encountered game mechanics as such before (Chamary 2018).



Connection to design:

This technology blended a virtual world into people's physical environment and this can be credited for its global phenomenon. It enabled people to build a connection to the game on a new level.

On the other hand, Pokemon Go lacks connection to a site because of its encouragement for people to travel so frequently and not to the same location as all other users. Although we want people to travel to different ISPT locations, with the wide variety of places, they would not be able to consider a place to be valuable to them if the options are as extensive as they are in Pokemon Go.

Community Building:

The Pokemon franchise already had an active community prior to the release of the mobile game. It was already a global sensation consisting of tv shows, movies, merchandise, games on other platforms and more (Madnani 2016). With its already existing popularity, the game was able to gain the attention of fans but Pokemon Go offered a community that was not strictly dependent on the existing fandom. The game allowed players to pick between three teams to which they can represent one in battles and events. This offers camaraderie between teammates or friendly rivalry between opponents. Pokemon Go also continues to update itself with new events to keep the community excited. People not only reap the social benefits of the game but also the health benefits of physical activity and exploration.





Case Study Analysis

TeamLab Borderless Tokyo

Case Study 2

Description:

As an art collective, teamLab consists of a wide group of specialists with a goal to convey a new perception of oneself and the world through ‘art, science, technology and the natural world’ (teamLab 2021). These collaborators include ‘artists, programmers, engineers, CG animators, mathematicians and architects’ (teamLab 2021). Their work intends to explore the interrelationship between the entities of life, that is, people, the world, and the continuity of time. Hence, the art exhibition Borderless, which perceives life without boundaries. The exhibition, or better, the world, created by teamLab, is a series of artworks that are all connected and naturally flow together (MORI Building DIGITAL ART MUSEUM: teamLab Borderless 2018). Being a digital museum it employed various digital technologies to achieve its outcome with notable use of light, projections, projection mapping, screens, and sound.



Innovation:

teamLab Borderless excels in creating an immersive experience that fulfils your senses. Their future focus is evident in their three dimensional union of technology and art. They claimed the title of the ‘first digital art museum in the world’ (Diederichs 2019) and the teamLab team continue to create temporary art exhibitions internationally that demonstrate that they are continually being imaginative.

Connection to design:

Their ability to convey an otherworldly experience and encouragement to wander and explore brings emotion to their design that people can feel and sentimentalise. This produces a connection to the teamLab sites as the uniqueness makes it memorable. But, teamLab Borderless is a permanent art museum so the expectations for dwell time of the experience is relatively long in comparison to what an experience designed for ISPT should be. It could take around 2-3 hours to go through the entire exhibition and this excludes the onboarding time of lining up to enter (Diederichs 2019). This means that although their ability to create a connection to a site is a strength, this connection can not be completely transferable to an experience in a shopping centre as a long dwell time could cause inconveniences. It may disrupt people from building a connection to the design.

Community Building:

With their mission, future focus and emotive design, teamLab has been able to create its own art community. It supports creatives such as the contributors to the exhibition as well as providing recognition for the digital art space by the broader art community. And as it draws attention to a broader group of people who can appreciate the beauty and craftsmanship of the designs, it becomes a cultural and social experience. Friends, families, individuals and strangers can all come together to explore the space.



Case Study Analysis

NISKA Robotic Ice Cream Bar

Case Study 3

Description:

NISKA intends to bring the future to you through a robotic ice cream bar. NISKA is a start-up company based in Melbourne that continues to research and develop to bring new novel designs. The experience at Federation Square in Melbourne CBD was their pioneer project and consisted of three Robot staff programmed to serve you ice cream. Customers had a variety of Australian-made gourmet ice cream to choose from. The three Robot staff had varying skill sets and roles at the store. Pepper being the social, front-of-house attendee who took orders and interacted with humans. Eka, who scooped ice cream. And lastly, Tony, who was mechanised to be intricate for adding toppings and delivering the final, presentable product (NISKA 2021)



Innovation:

As NISKA states, the Robotic Ice Cream Bar 'is just the beginning' (NISKA 2021). They have an emphasis on innovation and endeavour to improve the human-robot interaction experience. This makes them strongly future-focused. They are also continuing to look at emerging trends in robotic retail that will dazzle and excite you.

Connection to design:

Offering a novel experience with robots, people will feel connected to the design for being unique and therefore memorable. The entertaining opportunity is also short in dwell time so it is easy to reboard and build habits and connections to the space in that sense. Those who enjoy robots or learning about robotic technology may find the project emotive and claim it to be dear to them.

Community Building:

Their vigour for continual change shows that are attempting to remain relevant to their audience and prioritising the community in their designs. They offer not only technological impact but also educational impact because whilst providing entertainment, the store was a presentation of new technology to the general public. However, this project lacks in its building community potential when compared to the other two projects. As the interactions are between people and robots, connections between people are harder to establish. It still has some social impact if friends and families go together to enjoy the experience but it does not offer the opportunity to create new connections.



Final Design Solution



Ethereal is a space and game to save a creature from an ecosystem that isn't meant for them. You take these creatures home to care for, each will have information on what areas are better for it to survive. Once it is back to full health you go to the ecosystem or in other words, a space cube, to release it back to the wild.



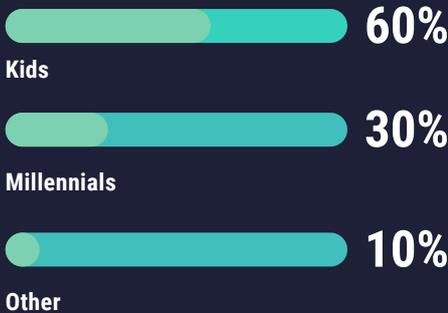
Quests will act as the first steps to taking care of a sick creature. These quests include finding food, cleaning the creature and playing with them. After completing quests, you can take your creature home and nurture it more until it is completely healthy.



Each ecosystem has a score. All ecosystems can also be put on a scoreboard. The higher the score, the better the ecosystem. The score depends on the number of healthy creatures released in that ecosystem. The goal is for all ecosystems to have high scores. The app will display the scores of each ecosystem so people are encouraged to assist lower-scoring ecosystems.

People, Technology, Space, Time

Target audience



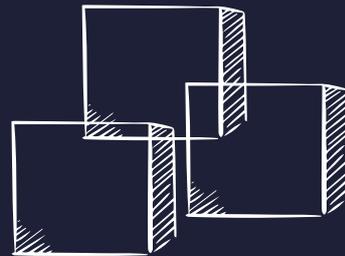
Time

Upon entering and picking a creature to nurture, each user will complete small tasks to get them started on healing the creature. With dwell time to observe the art of the worlds as well, the overall dwell time within the space is approximately 30 minutes.



Space

There would be approximately 6 worlds so the experience is accessible to people from all areas of Melbourne because our project encourages revisiting. It also allows for the creation of a variety of different worlds and creatures. It will be outside of ISPT shopping centres such as in parking lots so that the area is large enough for many people to enter and explore. We will use 6 space cubes in total with 2 stacked on top of each other.



Resources

The experience requires the creation of an app that utilises AR technology to interact with the creatures. The inside of the space cubes will have projections to display the scenic worlds on the floors and walls of the space. Sounds will also be played on speakers to match with the environment. The exterior will use screens so passing people will see a glimpse of their experience inside, even when the space is in idle mode.





Design solution

User Journey

DISCOVERY

Options: Sees new, large space on their trip to shopping centre/car park. Sees on social media, advertisement, what's on Melbourne, Sees posters

ONBOARDING

Reads sign for sign up process. Or signs up prior to visit. QR code's Lining up to go in

ONGOING

Collecting creatures
Walking through space completing quest to nurture creature
Take home creature to take care of it back to health Customising creatures.
Releasing creature back
Score goes up

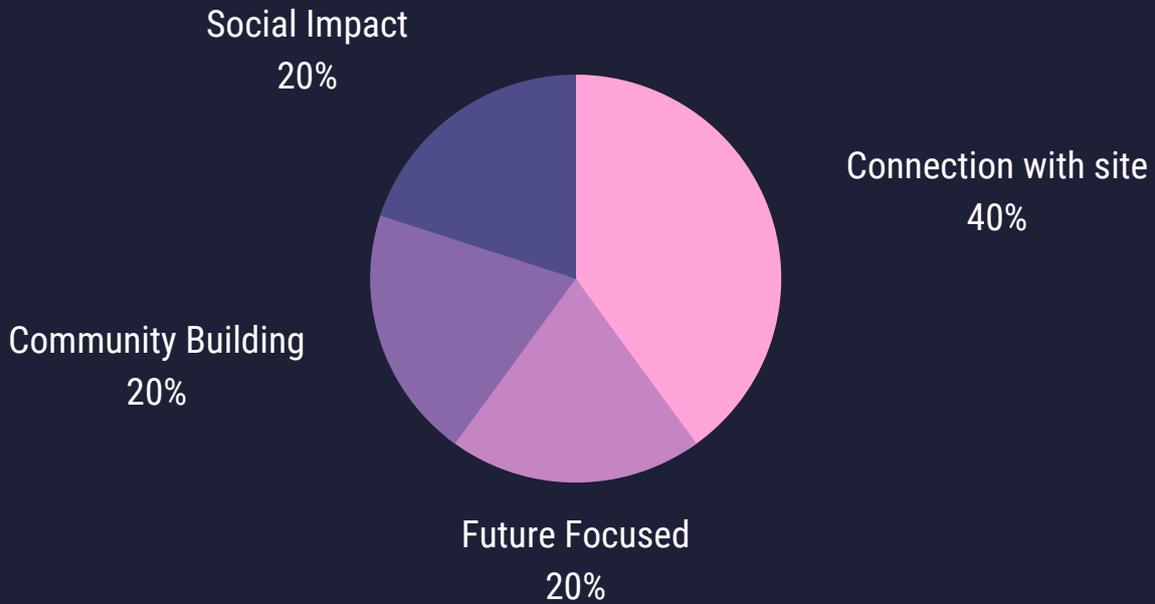
CHAMPIONING

The more creatures nurtured back to health, the healthier the ecosystems are. The goal is for all ecosystems to be

INFLUENCE

People will share the creatures, experience and educational value with other people, especially kids and their parents.

Value & Impact



Connection with site:
As creatures can only be seen through the app when a person scans the QR code of the space cube they visit, they will need to come to the space to immerse themselves in the experience. People are encouraged to take care of the creatures which start at the site and also end at the site when the creature is released, unless they would like to start the process again.

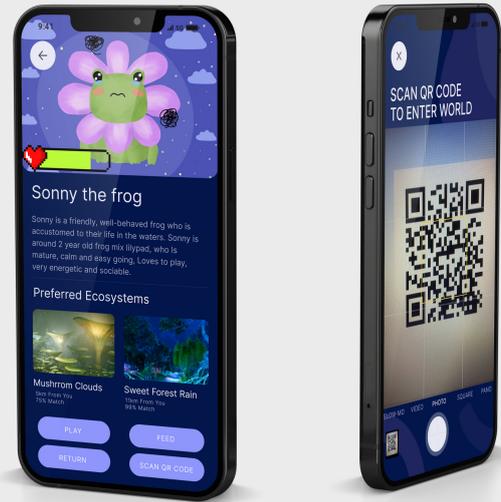
The site being an ISPT location and therefore providing more on goes as well as a change of importance to the properties.

Future Focused:
This environment provides a new emotional experience for partakers. It uses technology to create an immersive space whilst also providing a fun, gaming element.

Community Building:
The implementation of scores as well as their relationship with the health of the ecosystem, people will be motivated to contribute to caring for creatures with other members of their community. This community building can extend to all across Melbourne as people will be encouraged to visit different sites.

A community that coincides with ISPT's values and vision.

Social Impact:
It gives children the bond with their parents and be able to make friends within the environment, completing quests together or afterwards, when they share their creatures with each other. It gives children a space to explore ideas in a



Conclusion & Moving Forward

Given the design challenge, we strived to understand it through the design context. This included research and analysis such as the People, Places and Things analysis. Through our understanding and our own visions, we structured criteria that we could use to select and examine case studies of already existing designs. These all helped us ideate and define our final concept, EtheReal. With immersive technology and engaging gameplay, it provides distinct value and impact. We believe this synthesis of technology and emotion will fulfil the brief of creating an exciting environment that positively changes connections to ISPT properties.

There is room for more possibilities such as allowing customisation to creatures or introducing real animals. As long as the focus remains on what we touched on in all parts of our project, that is, being community-driven and environment building then moving forward it could be effective in gaining a wider connection to our target audience. Furthermore, always taking into consideration key themes such as technology, inclusiveness, community and the environment will bring together a system that can be the foundation of any system that will be relevant to ISPT and their other projects.

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IMAGINATION CREATES REALITY