

Building Experiencescapes in Christchurch

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The words *recovery*, *landscape* and *experience* come together in this paper's examples of how experiences are articulated in the landscapes of Christchurch, New Zealand, after the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes. This paper describes the city in its early stages of recovery when community and urban design processes helped create a sense of place as art and creativity brought life to Christchurch. Examples are projects that rethink the city landscapes and transform them into experiencescapes. Street art, events and festivals act as pathways to experiences for the locals in their daily life and for visitors as well.

Make Christchurch a place to tell each other stories.
(Future Christchurch, 2014)

What enables a devastated metropolis to rebuild its physical fabric and recover its social fabric and cultural identity? (Campanella, 2006, p 141)

Future planning and long-term investment in Christchurch, New Zealand are important issues for both media and researchers as the city faces the task of rebuilding after its 2010 and 2011 sequence of earthquakes. Recovery processes enhance the value and identity of a place by transforming, rebuilding or adapting urban landscapes so that they become authentic experiencescapes. It involves an interdependence between people and place that, as Hayman (2015) suggests, 'is fundamental to human settlement, and like any relationship, requires an investment of time and energy to ensure an ongoing synergy' (p 11). It follows that a sense of and an attachment to place are part of the recovery process (Silver and Grek-Martin, 2015). Moreover, the modern city, Campanella (2006) observes, 'has an almost magical capacity to rebound even from catastrophic destruction' (p 141). This includes New Zealand cities struck by natural disasters, which 'suffered appalling loss and were profoundly altered by catastrophe, yet each survived and even flourished' (Campanella, 2006, p 142). In this context, community organisations have played a significant role in the civic activities that contributed to the success of these recoveries (Shaw and Goda, 2004).

Another important consideration for recovery is that a city is made up of more than buildings alone: its social and cultural components give a place much of 'its defining essence and identity' (Campanella, 2006, p 142). For this reason, social spaces facilitate recovery in both the short and long term: 'the restaurant, the pub, the nightclub, the movie theatre, the mall and the internet-based social networking community, to name a few examples, can be the site of meaningful social interactions' (Chamlee-Wright and Storr, 2014, p 656). Moreover, tourism

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strengthens a city's pulling power and, in recovery, can become a means of promoting the city's interests – 'a vital mode of interaction between political leaders making decisions about resources for disaster recovery' (Pezzullo, 2009, p 30).

Being innovative and offering unique experiences are two of the main challenges cities around the world must address to achieve success, whether or not they are facing a recovery challenge. Every city needs to offer some evidence of 'what' its differences are and 'how' it is different. Planning for these experiences has similarities to a screenplay: both involve building a show, a story in which consumers are protagonists. The possibilities for creating an innovative and unique environment are endless – it may involve something as simple as a sculpture or a coffee. The goal is not only to offer something that visitors will enjoy, but also to improve the daily experience of local community members, who walk and buy in the same streets and shops as the tourists. The examples in this paper show the value of the experiencescapes in the city of Christchurch. Most relate to street art (Gates, 2015) because 'the things people were constantly surrounded by – lovely architecture, history, green spaces, cobblestone streets – had the greatest effect on their happiness' (Delistraty, 2014).

Places, rebuilding and experience of the landscape

The transformation in living circumstances that a disaster brings disrupts residents' sense of place and space in relation to a particular area. In this context, restoring meaningful places is crucial to recovery, and sense of place is a critical factor to consider when making decisions during this recovery process (Cox and Perry, 2011). As the literature highlights, people give 'meaning, identity, and connectedness ... to their places of personal significance, even when (or perhaps especially when) these places are threatened by environmental change' (Silver and Grek-Martin, 2015, pp 33–34). Previous research also demonstrates that people remain attached to place despite living in an objectively high-risk area (Billig, 2006). One explanation may be that they 'are more motivated to stay in and improve or protect places that are meaningful to them' (Manzo and Perkins, 2006, p 347). Another may be that when people work together on a shared goal of rebuilding their area, their sense of community and attachment to place grow stronger (Suomalainen, 2015, p 90). Moreover, in working towards this shared goal through 'grassroots activism, horizontal organization, and place-making practices', they may find opportunities for 'a new kind of urban life' (ibid, p 91).

Within this context, cities play a significant role in the formation of urban experiences. A growing body of literature is exploring people's attachment to non-residential places – that is, recreational places such as landscapes (Fishwick and Vining, 1992; Kaltenborn and Bjerke, 2002; Stedman, 2006). As Lewicka (2011) asks, 'Are non-places (shopping malls, homogenized entertainment sites, etc.) capable of triggering attachment, and does place attachment change along with changes that places themselves undergo?' (p 209). This paper takes these questions a step further by examining people's attachment to experiences – even understanding them as new landmarks.

Each crisis is different, depending heavily on time, and social and economic threats. In response to crisis, the resilience of each city, along with the enterprises within it, is likewise unique. However, as Campanella (2006) argues, what lies at

the heart of resilience anywhere is people: 'A business is only as resourceful as its employees and management. A city is only as resilient as its citizens. Resilient citizens have enabled urban resilience throughout history' (p 143). That resilience, moreover, involves more than the capacity to rebuild physical structures. As noted above, 'it is about reconstructing the myriad social relations embedded in schools, workplaces, childcare arrangements, shops, places of worship, and places of play and recreation' (Vale and Campanella, 2005, p 347).

Rebuilding place

When a city's communities and infrastructure are damaged, rebuilding can be an opportunity to improve designs, facilities and services (Leitmann, 2007, p 149). Although, as recognised above, the nature of recovery is different for each disaster, what recovery processes have in common are long-term changes and needs that the local residents alone cannot address: 'Disasters require more revenue, political support, and physical labor than the residents who return; they require broader political will' (Pezzullo, 2009, p 29).

In their study, Silver and Grek-Martin (2015) reveal the roles that sense of place can play in both immediate disaster response and long-term recovery. As they define it:

Sense of place is an affective concept that combines emotions, impressions, beliefs, memories, and experiences with a place. An individual's sense of place is constructed by their personality, their life histories, their values, and their interactions with that place. (Silver and Grek-Martin, 2015, p 32)

To Silver and Grek-Martin, sense of place becomes a lens through which we can 'explore the multiple layers of meaning that people attribute to their important places' (ibid).

During the recovery process, it is important to be aware of 'not only what happened, but also what is being done and is left to do' (Pezzullo, 2009, p 35). Research on urban resilience in New Orleans soon after it was devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 points to the vital role of grassroots involvement: 'Only with strong citizen involvement at the grassroots level will the rebuilding of New Orleans yield a robust and inclusive metropolis, rather than a theme-park shadow of its former self' (Campanella, 2006, p 141). This observation is reinforced by the experience of Kobe, Japan, where Shaw and Goda (2004) note that rebuilding and rehabilitation were continuing nine years after the 1995 earthquake. Following the earthquake, Japanese society saw two major changes: 'an increase in voluntary and non-government activities, and the enhancement of cooperation between local government and the residents' association' (Shaw and Goda, 2004, p 16).

Although each example is unique, both of those above indicate how anyone involved in a recovery must be aware that:

... the cityscape is more than just a physical place, it also occupies places in the mind of its visitors and inhabitants, to which they have linked their own identities, experiences, culture and memories. When a building or landmark is demolished, the physical anchor to these things is removed. (Barber, 2013, p 15)

Consequently, people feel a need to build again, to recover, to remember, to ‘articulate meaning out of the uncanny familiarity’ (Bennett et al, 2013, p 4).

A way of achieving such meaning is to use tactical urbanism – that is, to use small-scale urban interventions to drive long-term change. With such interventions, local people can ‘experiment with their urban landscape, without the risk associated with larger projects’ (Barber, 2013, p 18). While recognising that an infinite variety of tactical urban interventions is possible, Barber offers as examples street festivals, guerrilla gardening, chair-bombing, pop-up shops, adbusting, weed-bombing, parklets, food trucks, block-wide rejuvenation programmes and public performance and art. Such projects have major positive social effects on any community, and in particular on those recovering from disaster (ibid, p 34).

In addition to the community’s role in mobilising labour for recovery, tourism is a significant driver in restoring a sense of place. It is not simply a concern with the economic contribution of tourism; Pezzullo (2009) argues it also has a role ‘in fostering rebuilding, performing cultural memories, and providing political critique’ (p 35). In the rebuild of Sichuan after its earthquake of 2008, for example, a vital component was cultural tourism, which supported rural villages to rebuild in order to cater to city visitors coming for weekends and holidays (Abramson and Qi, 2011, p 518). Furthermore, after a disaster, the distinction between tourists and residents blurs in that an area can become unfamiliar to both: on returning after an evacuation, residents may ‘discover the place they once called “home” is radically changed’ (Pezzullo, 2009, p 35). It might also be argued that the post-disaster environment itself captures tourists’ interest and draws them to the area as they seek out ‘dark destinations’ (Amujo and Otubanjo, 2012, p 101); this paper, however, does not examine this idea further.

Landscapes to experience

Vivid landscapes are created through hybrid projects, in which knowledge centres (such as schools or universities) work collaboratively with cultural institutions, individual businesses and local people. This approach represents an opportunity to transform cities through everyday activities. Places themselves have a transcendental role in connecting local identity with products and services offered. In this sense, the power of experiencescapes in producing feelings of identity can be very strong and even help to redefine the complete sense of a city. As Johansson and Kociatkiewicz (2011) put it, such experiencescapes can create ‘soundbites’ that frame and present the ‘soul’ of a city (p 394). This phenomenon is of particular interest in cities facing post-disaster recovery.

According to O’Dell (2005), an experiencescape is a space of pleasure, enjoyment and entertainment. Experiences occur in a wide range of ‘specific places, such as stores, museums, cities, sporting arenas, shopping centers, neighbourhood parks and well-known tourist attractions. At the same time they do not need to be limited to any single place’ (O’Dell, 2005, p 15). The whole city can become an experiencescape, a landscape that is strategically designed. Places therefore are part of the experience economy: here they become experiencescapes or ‘places in which experiences are being staged and consumed’ (Lorentzen, 2009, p 836). Moreover, both tourists (Urry, 1995) and citizens (Glaeser, 2001) consume those places.

Pine and Gilmore (1999) argue that products and services in themselves are no longer sufficient to satisfy consumers: their success depends on the experience that they create for the consumer. As an experience, the place becomes a stage, 'perceived as a venue, a factory of atmospheres and events rather than the site for fulfilment of mere basic service desires' (Ek et al, 2008, p 124). The product becomes the experience (Azevedo, 2009; Gonçalves Silveira and Barretto, 2010). Creating experiences means designing actions, events, products and services that customers no longer consume passively but instead interact with in a much more emotional way, as well as physically, intellectually and spiritually (Mossberg, 2007).

Growth of cities is strongly related to the development of new and competitive experience products or, in other words, innovation (Jernsand et al, 2015). In this changing environment, it is necessary to keep abreast of trends and models that pioneering experience cities around the world establish (Cortadellas, 2011). Two such cities are Frederikshavn and Aarhus in Denmark, which demonstrate that nowadays more than ever the wellbeing of local society is a crucial consideration in planning, as is optimising the impacts of tourism. A successful experiencescape should be achieved through a blend of all the elements that make living in or going to a city worthwhile, all the elements that compound its landscape: art, culture, trade, tourism, eateries, heritage, urbanism and leisure. Likewise, aspects such as the economy, tourism, culture, society and environment should be considered in combination.

Because experiences in the tourism industry are produced and consumed simultaneously, they offer particularly strong economic advantages for local development. As Kiib (2008) suggests, to be successful, strategies for developing experience projects must recognise the special features of a destination. The experience economy is defined not just by what is sold, but also by the way it is sold (Lorentzen, 2007); customers perform as visitors or active spectators, suppliers as the actors, and sites as the stage. Consequently, 'people redirect their lives in experiences projects, which means [leading] a daily life but with an increasing focus on aesthetic and enjoyment dimensions' (Fusté-Forné, 2015a, p 202). It is important to restore both aesthetically and culturally significant aspects of the landscape in order to move forward. As a participant in one post-disaster recovery said, 'if we can heal the landscape, we can help to start to heal the people' (Silver and Grek-Martin, 2015, p 40).

In the modern environment, the tourism syndrome, which is characterised by temporality – that is, a loss of sense of belonging to the places a person is visiting – affects everyone's life in some way. As Bowring and Swaffield (2004) state, the dramatic rate of innovation and use of information technology have transformed the senses of space and identity for hundreds of millions of people worldwide. For example, big brands (such as Coca-Cola and McDonald's) have carried out initiatives where they challenge people and transform some public spaces into a different daily experience through events such as games. Most of these events are also linked to local development and sustainable actions (Fusté-Forné, 2015b). It is important as well to integrate digital technologies into the process of designing an experience because those technologies allow cities to 'talk' to people. We need to be immersed in a permanent landscape rebuilt so that

the whole city environment continues to be innovative, interact with people and let everybody enjoy the experience. The next section discusses examples from Christchurch that are expected to have this power.

Experiencescapes in Christchurch, New Zealand

In 2010 and 2011 Christchurch, the largest city in the South Island of New Zealand and the main centre in the region of Canterbury, experienced a destructive earthquake sequence during which damage to buildings and land was devastating and widespread. In the earthquake on 22 February 2011, 185 people died and thousands were injured.

In response, the government established a new government department, the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA), on 1 May 2011, which was to be responsible for overseeing the first five years of recovery (Morgan et al, 2015, p 1).¹ One of its actions was to produce a master plan for rebuilding the central business district (CBD) of Christchurch almost 18 months after the February 2011 earthquake. This master plan or 'blueprint' built on the Christchurch City Council's earlier plans for the city, which had involved considerable engagement with the community and stakeholders. During this process, the rebuild was 'posited as a unique opportunity to revitalize the CBD and outer suburbs by creating a future city, to correct past urban design failings and to construct a dynamic and attractive place for residents and visitors' (Orchiston and Higham, 2016, p 3).

The 2010 and 2011 earthquakes also had a major impact on the Christchurch tourism industry. International visitor nights fell from 3.2 million a year before the earthquakes to 1 million a year, and recovery thereafter was slow (Bradley, 2013). It was therefore all the more important to support the recovery of the tourism industry by 'protecting and rebuilding a positive destination image, reassuring potential visitors of the safety of the area, and re-developing the functionality of the destination to help local travel and tourism industries to recover their business' (Huang et al, 2008, p 220).

In the years that have followed the earthquake sequence, the central city has begun to recover through processes that extend beyond central and local government efforts. A large part of the recovery has been thanks to a variety of projects and experiences, ranging from the use of shipping containers as stores and cafeterias, to murals painted on the walls, to sheep sculptures spread throughout the streets of the inner city. Through the Christchurch City Council's 'Share an Idea' initiative, the people of Christchurch submitted up to 106,000 ideas for the redevelopment of the city. The response shows how the rebuild has come from the people and demonstrates an extraordinary potential to reimagine Christchurch. As Wesener (2015) argues, it was after the earthquakes that 'Christchurch's vacant spaces came into existence ... Parallel to the "official" rebuild discourse, temporary uses have emerged on vacant post-earthquake sites including community gardens, urban agriculture, art installations, event venues, eateries and cafés, and pocket parks' (p 1).

One particularly important urban regeneration initiative is Gap Filler. Facilitating temporary projects, events and installations, it was one of the first initiatives to bring an experiential component back to the city after the earthquakes. A central feature of Gap Filler is its use of participatory processes to

involve everyone in creating their own city – including local community groups, artists, architects, land owners, librarians, designers, students, engineers and dancers. On its website, Gap Filler (2015) explains that the initiative:

... proves that the regeneration of the city does not rely solely on large-scale developments by the private or public sectors. Great things can be achieved with community power and resourcefulness; we can be flexible and swift in adapting to our changing city, meaning our projects will always provide contemporary reflection on the state of society. Ultimately, Gap Filler aims to innovate, lead and nurture people and ideas; contributing to conversations about city-making and urbanism in the 21st century.

This description is a good example of what post-disaster planning means and where it must stem from. It is vital to involve people in the future planning of the city because, as Gawith (2011) expresses it, ‘they then talk about what is happening and get excited and committed to the rebuilding’ (p 128).

Gap Filler and another initiative, Greening the Rubble, are the two most popular community recovery efforts started immediately after the September 2010 earthquake (Wesener, 2015, p 6). However, they are only two of several examples of networked projects that have established a foundation for developing many subsequent experiences. These examples, involving both tactical urbanism and creative placemaking, demonstrate ‘the very real effect that even the smallest urban intervention can have on the well-being of a city, be they social, environmental or economic’ (Barber, 2013, p 37).

Public street art

Don Miskell, General Manager, Planning and Design, CERA, affirms the official vision for Christchurch to be ‘a great city to live in, to work in, to visit, and to play’ (Future Christchurch, 2014). Creating a city for people is central to that vision: speaking for planners and designers, Miskell says, ‘we have to put ourselves in the place of the people who we want to attract, and to live or visit or study, or shop, set up business or invest in the central city’. The need to focus on both locals and visitors is strong because they share an enjoyment of the space. In addition, underlining the importance of experience, Jason Mill, Director of Pivnice Architecture (ibid) notes Canterbury and Christchurch offer a unique ‘recreational lifestyle’, allowing an individual to undertake a wide range of activities on the same day. For example, thanks to the location of the city, someone living or staying there could go snowboarding in the morning and surfing in the afternoon.

The best-known experience projects in Christchurch are the Re:START Mall and the murals. For the mall, up to 36 shipping containers have become shopping experiences, including bars, cafeterias, clothes shops and even a post office (figure 1), like a whole community in itself. The murals too have emerged as a very important *partner* for people walking through the streets of Christchurch. A multitude of huge murals on walls across the central city – including images of elephants, a ballerina and lips – have redesigned the city’s profile. Some are located on the back walls of historic buildings, such as the ballerina on the back of the Isaac Theatre Royal.

Until early 2015 the Christchurch Stands Tall sculpture trail was another public arts project in which businesses, community groups, charities, education



Figure 1: A food shipping container.
(Photo: Author's own.)

establishments and individuals participated. It consisted of fibreglass giraffe sculptures (49 large, reaching 2.5 metres high, and 50 smaller ones) standing tall on the streets, parks and public spaces of the city (Christchurch Stands Tall, 2015). Other sculptures were of urban sheep spread throughout the city centre, enhancing the local identity of citizens through this link to an animal that has become such a well-known feature of New Zealand. Innovative street seating provides further examples of street art. Near Christchurch Casino, some park benches are decorated as piano keys (figure 2), and a huge green sofa (figure 3) stands out alongside Cathedral Square. As the headline in a newspaper article by Meier (2015) expresses it, ‘Public art brightens city and improves our mood’.

Such diverse and eye-catching street art is also a significant tourist attraction. George Shaw, co-founder of the Rise Festival, describes it as ‘a magnet for people to come to the city ... a megaphone to talk to the rest of the world’ (Future Christchurch, 2014). In post-quake Christchurch, Shaw observes, ‘around every corner there is a fabulous piece of art work for people to enjoy’. It is not only individual sculptures that stand out in Christchurch boulevards and terraces, but also whole streets. For example, New Regent Street (figure 4) – a 1930s street of Spanish Mission-style buildings – is an attraction for tourists in its entirety, while also functioning as a central location where local people can spend time in their daily lives.

Events and festivals

The number of festivals taking place in the city has been increasing since 2011. The Festival of Transitional Architecture (FESTA) has been celebrated in 2012, 2013 and 2014. More than 30 FESTA events were scheduled each year, ranging ‘from transitional vacant space projects to immersive futuristic installations, sustainable projects and hands-on workshops’ (FESTA, 2015). Another event, Oi You! Rise Festival, featured exhibitions covering more than 1,000 square metres, 15 murals painted around the central city and community events (Street Art Limited, 2015). For example, *On the Street* offered an interactive view of Kiwi street and graffiti art. After opening at Canterbury Museum, its main venue, in late December 2013, it ran for three months, over which time the museum had over 248,000 visitors, more than for any other event previously held there (ibid).

Clearly, buildings such as the museum have been an integral part of such events. Dr Anna Crighton, President of Historic Places Aotearoa, recognises buildings as ‘a really good example for telling the story of our city ... It’s a tangible reminder of what we have, it is a tangible reminder of the craftsmanship that used to happen, and so to go back to the 1870s and get a tangible reminder of the beginning of our city is really huge’ (Future Christchurch, 2014). It is about



Figures 2 and 3: Street art seating (left) and street art sofa. (Photos: Author’s own.)



Figure 4: New Regent Street.
(Photo: Author's own.)

keeping the city's story alive. With that, too, comes a sense of custodianship, as with the project of restoring the Isaac Theatre Royal in which a major concern has been to recover the old glory of the theatre. Neil Cox, the theatre's chief executive officer, talks of wanting to return that feeling of 'wow, that's fantastic' when people walk through its doors (ibid). Similarly, the Arts Centre, the largest collection of heritage buildings in New Zealand, plays an important social role. It is intended to be a place for creative people, for entrepreneurs who are able to produce ideas and, definitely, design.

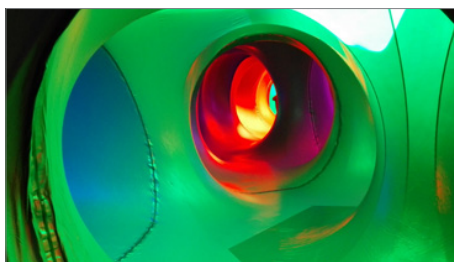
During four weeks in the winter of 2015, Christchurch Arts Festival showcased a programme of arts and entertainment across the city, in both historic buildings and open spaces. The purpose of the festival was to:

... lead the city out of winter and into the lightness of spring. It's a Festival promising a burst of creative energy, vitality, amusement and adventure. Featuring an exciting programme of cabaret and magic, high quality theatre and dance, that sits alongside a diverse offering of classical through to contemporary music and a range of community events. (Christchurch Arts Festival, 2015a)

An example of how the festival brings the city alive through the arts is the luminarium that forms an inflatable artwork called *Arboria* (figures 5 and 6). In *Arboria*:

... the visitor first encounters one of the three 8 metre high domes, each one dominated by a single colour – red, green or blue. Each dome bears its own stylised leaf motif rendered in graphic simplicity ... Travelling on the visitor will arrive at the first substantial tree – a combination of cones and spheres that give rise to a brightly luminous tree trunk and branches that reach over their head. There are three of these tree-like structures that triangulate the magnificent main dome. This 10 metre high dome takes its inspiration from the Chapter House of York Minster and one can see an interpretation of the original tall Gothic windows and the arching columns that culminate in radiant rib vaulting. (Architects of Air, 2015)

It is a structure that emerges as a kind of labyrinth, made only of plastic, which has the power to captivate people of all ages.



Figures 5 and 6: Luminarium, the inflatable artwork Arboria: external view (left) and internal view (right). (Photos: Author's own.)

Another example from the Arts Festival is Rama Tuna: ‘Inspired by Ngāi Tahu stories and customs surrounding mahinga kai – traditional food gathering practices and use of natural resources – Rama Tuna brings alive the excitement of going eeling with rama or fire torches’ (Christchurch Arts Festival, 2015b). Rama Tuna highlights the cultural sense of belonging that Māori people have to the Avon River as a traditional mahinga kai (food-gathering) site for eeling in Christchurch.

Scape Public Art has been installing public art in Christchurch throughout the year since 1998. It describes these artworks as providing ‘a unique point of difference for the city. Ambitious and high impact, they enhance the urban centre and raise the profile for public art in Christchurch’ (Scape Public Art, 2015). Scape Public Art also held a biennial festival in the city in 2015. This festival is supported through a network of partnerships, and it is a showcase for national and international contemporary artists, together with emerging locals. Art and business collaborate closely in creating artworks for the festival (ibid). One of the most impressive projects is Antony Gormley’s sculptures (see figure 7 for his Avon River work), which are set to bring the world to the city as they ‘have potential to put Christchurch on the global artistic map. Public art experts say Gormley’s work has attracted tourists and helped revitalise towns across the globe’ (Meier, 2015).

All of the projects mentioned above, even the temporary or experimental projects, have the power to change the city in the long term. They are able to create new experiencescapes that allow the people of Christchurch, and Cantabrians broadly, to lead a very different life but in the same place, in a brighter city. ‘Adding colour, creativity and events to Christchurch, these projects aim to breathe life back into the city, test new ideas and improve the environment’ (Future Christchurch, 2015).

Concluding remarks

Out of the aftermath of the earthquakes, empty spaces may end up offering a new sort of safe haven one might never have considered ... Consequently, empty vacant spaces, open to the sky and far removed from large buildings, served as more preferable sites for activity than more traditional structures, and thus paved the way for Christchurch’s burgeoning transitional space movements. (Barber, 2013, p 15)

Crucial factors in the success of the wide range of recovery projects described in this paper that have contributed to post-disaster renewal are citizen participation, community-based organisations and planning of regular events. The Christchurch Stands Tall sculpture trail, a project that required widespread cooperation and community involvement, is one example of street art that has changed the city,



Figure 7: Antony Gormley's sculpture on the Avon River. (Photo: Author's own.)

demonstrating how public art contributes to place, community and experience. After a disaster, the response slowly moves from the public sector (such as CERA and the Christchurch City Council) to private and community participatory initiatives or associations founded 'by locals for locals' (Cox and Perry, 2011). Through local initiatives, it is possible to maximise opportunities for residents by producing a design that improves the quality of residents' lives. Spaces are also designed and managed to provide liveability or urban comfort (Tavares, 2015).

The literature to date covers disaster recovery extensively, yet comparatively few studies deal with the role of sense of place and place attachments in the recovery process specifically (Silver and Grek-Martin, 2015, p 33). This is a gap for future research to fill, given that 'the way in which the public perceives place can have a very real impact on communities at large' (Barber, 2013, p 14). Another gap for empirical research is to explore how locals and visitors are (differently) affected by artworks and festivals, and to what extent experiences cause place attachment. One further research opportunity may be to analyse the intersections between identity, preservation and temporary site-specific installations.

Experience projects come from the sum of local initiatives and creativity, so the ideas are developed by integrating them into local organisations. These projects are symbols of a new urban landscape profile and conveyors of local identity, as some of those involved in producing the sculptures and festivals themselves have recognised. Looking at what has been achieved since the devastation of the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes, Bergman (2015) observes:

... the city is experiencing a rebirth with creativity and wit – thanks to the ingenuity of its hardy residents – and is welcoming tourists back again. Though much of the central city has yet to be rebuilt, entrepreneurs and volunteers are finding surprising ways to make temporary use of empty lots and bring life back to the downtown.

This paper has documented many of the community-based initiatives that developed in response to the Canterbury earthquakes, showing how such initiatives contribute to a new experience of the city. They are relevant in terms of urban planning, creative placemaking, public participation, and moving a city towards the future in an experience economy framework. This role, together with

the design of experiences itself, helps to improve trade in the region, diversify activities and create new cultural attractions, entertainment opportunities and tourist activities. In Christchurch, ‘what began as a locally-minded endeavour was able to generate international appeal, and in doing so, contribute to the economic life of the city, without an initial profit motive’ (Barber, 2013, pp 35–36).

Building experiencescapes means transforming the city public spaces with works of art. It means communities moving forward together. It means to ‘stimulate the imagination, broaden the cultural horizons and provoke us into thinking of contemporary art beyond the stereotypes’ (Scape Public Art, 2015). Consumers of today do not simply want to purchase products and services (as they are able to do so in a common mall or online). They are delighted to live experiences and emotions that are well integrated in a combination worthy to remember, and to tell each other about them. A connection between leisure, fun and art can be a recipe for success and happiness. As Lianne Dalziel, Mayor of Christchurch, states, ‘public art is something that is available to everyone’ and ‘sculptures will make Christchurch special. Let them make your heart sing’ (Press, 2015).

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NOTE

- 1 As planned when the agency was set up in 2011, CERA was disestablished in April 2016, marking some shift in responsibility for recovery from national to local agencies.

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