|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Speak Up - Kōrerotia  Placemaking  20 March 2019 | |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana,  E ngā reo,  E ngā hau e whā  Tēnā koutou katoa  Nau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”.    Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.  Welcome to “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. I’m really excited to say that today we’re talking about “Placemaking” with three guests in the studio. Ethan, we might start with you. We’ve got Ethan Kent - who is visiting Christchurch from New York, and it sounds like you travel all the way around the world as well - Senior Vice President of the Project for Public Spaces. Perhaps just to start off with, if you could explain a little bit about what is the Project for Public Spaces? |
| Ethan | Thank you so much for having me here, it’s a really a great treat to get to be part of this conversation in a wonderful part of the world. So, Projects for Public Spaces is a not-for-profit organisation, we’re lucky to get to work all over the world helping communities improve their public spaces. We’ve developed an idea we called placemaking as a process to support communities shaping their places and doing so in a way that builds ownership and creates health, more equitable economies, sustainability and so forth. |
| Sally | We’ll talk a lot more about that as we go on. Ryan Reynolds, Ryan it’s so nice to see you, it’s been a long time. Ryan and I have worked together quite closely in the past but that was a few years ago now. If you could please introduce yourself, that would be great. |
| Ryan | Sure. So I’m one of the founders of Gap Filler organisation, we started up after the September 2010 earthquake and really initially we were just running a few community-minded projects on privately-owned sites where buildings had been demolished. So we saw that Christchurch lost a lot of its social fabric - a lot of the building, the built fabric but within that, that it contained a lot of the social fabric - and so we just had this idea to turn these vacant private sites into temporary public spaces and to recover some of the social life of the city. I guess we ran a few projects and after the February [2011] quake it grew and morphed and what started as a post-disaster thing as we encountered the work of Ethan and people like that all around the world, we sort of realised oh this isn’t just a disaster response thing but actually this could be a new way of being for the city full stop in the longer term and so we’re starting to play in that space a little bit, trying to get involved in longer term developments. |
| Sally | Exciting for the city, that’s for sure. And tying into that is the City Council and we’ve got a representative here, Caroline Ingles. Your title is Head of Urban Design, Regeneration and Heritage, that sounds amazing. If you could tell us a little bit, what does it actually entail? |
| Caroline | So I lead three amazing teams who are involved in citymaking, really, and placemaking and work with Gap Filler, Greening the Rubble, Life in Vacant Spaces, Te Pūtahi and community groups to really help them shape their places in the city. We’ve been doing this pre-earthquake but much more deliberatively, I guess, post-earthquake. Actually Ryan did some work with us very early on after the earthquakes to start shaping how we might take some of our tools and our funding forward and we’ve continued to do that in the last seven years. |
| Sally | I think it’s important to think about what is placemaking. I don’t necessarily want a definition, as such, but just to kind of bandy around some concepts, some thoughts behind it. |
| Ethan | It’s an ongoing conversation of what it is and the process of defining it and debating it is, I think, really useful in of itself and of course we’re learning whole new dimensions of placemaking from the Māori communities here and indigenous communities around the world.  But we see it also as a new environmentalism. Placemaking is about: How do we create a world that thrives, where we can better address issues like environmentalism? We do think that the most effective placemaking builds the capacity of communities to take on challenges and engages them. There is something magical about the focus on place that brings together many different causes and skillsets for broader collaboration. |
| Ryan | It’s not a term that I used when we started up Gap Filler, it’s a term I’ve encountered along the way and to be honest it’s a term that I’ve embraced mostly to be understood because when I’m talking to local governments now… If I ring up a council in the North Island and say, “Hi, I’m from Gap Filler, we do these sort of community projects and people participate and it’s a bit creative and it’s this sort of thing,” they might transfer me to a planner, they might transfer me to their events team, they might transfer me to someone in the arts team or whatever and they don’t really know what to do with that. And if I say, “Hi, we’re a placemaking organisation” they go, “Oh OK, I understand what it is that you do and we do a bit of that in our council and this is the person you need to talk to.” So for me it’s a sort of a tool in that way.  But if I were trying to define what it means in a personal sense… So after the September 2010 quake, it felt really disempowering and there was one thing in particular then for me which was actually the Manchester Courts building in Christchurch - the first Chicago-style skyscraper built in New Zealand, I think all of New Zealand… I might be wrong in that - but anyway, beautiful six-storey, seven-storey building and it was damaged in the earthquakes and therefore all of the shops in that block were closed, those buildings were inaccessible and there was such urgency to hurry up and demolish this building because we need to get things open again and I thought these drastic irreversible decisions were being made so quickly. And so the idea for me of placemaking was actually a way of buying a bit of time. Saying we don’t have to make permanent decisions now, we can do something temporary, we can do a little pop-up garden on this site right here, we don’t need to rush to rebuild a building immediately, let’s just take our time about this and find ways that more people can have their voice rather than one or two people making these emergency decisions. For me those were the two factors actually about testing things out: Buying time and getting more people to be involved. |
| Caroline | I was just going to reflect that we perhaps in the past talked about public spaces and that is still, I guess, a phrase that is used, but when you change the ‘space’ for ‘place’ it kind of reframes the whole context and I think it enables people to relate better than just talking about a space, talking about a place gives them a connection. |
| Sally | It somehow sounds more personal, doesn’t it? |
| Caroline | Yes. |
| Sally | You’ve been talking a lot about the earthquakes, not surprisingly, and not all your work obviously is in Canterbury or Detroit where there’s a different kind of a crisis if you want to term it that. Do some factors enable or facilitate placemaking, or can it happen anywhere? |
| Ethan | We see placemaking emerging from different parts of the world, different sectors are often leading it. Gap Filler, these other community based groups that transform public spaces has gone viral around the world and really inspired all kinds of placemaking but yes it definitely can start from anywhere. In some parts of the world it’s the private sector that’s leading it, the US it actually has been more community groups and foundations, more volunteers but we’re really excited actually to learn in many respects from people in this part of the world… I’ve gotten to come down to New Zealand and Australia a couple of times a year for over a decade now and I find how councils are supporting placemaking is really exciting and is offering models that I think could be very powerfully replicated globally. And that’s why we were here these couple of days is to really learn how Christchurch is advancing, to learn from you all and to facilitate conversation on how placemaking can further facilitate collaboration amongst council departments with the community more effectively, how we tell the stories of the great things that are happening with Gap Filler and making sure they’re sustained and supported to go to another level of impact as well. |
| Sally | Does placemaking have to take place in an urban context? I guess when I first heard the term - and I hadn’t really heard it before I heard you were coming to Christchurch - it seemed to me like people make their place wherever it might be and it doesn’t have to involve doing something, maybe it’s just a connection to a land and so that to me was kind of intensely rural but the examples that we hear are mainly urban. So I guess, is it an urban thing? |
| Ethan | New Zealanders, I found, have a really deep connection place through indigenous connections and for everybody and there’s a lot more to learn and support and uncover in those communities in place. Then of course many New Zealanders have come from elsewhere and have deeper connections to those places and resources and the ideas and creativity for a placemaking because of that. So definitely a lot of people come to New Zealand because their connection to place, their experience of place here, and certainly our connection to place is how we add purpose and meaning to space. We think placemaking is basically creating a goal to add purpose and meaning to space and there is a proactive aspect to it, there’s a doing aspect to it. Gap Filler is about doing and adding life and adding purpose and meaning to these spaces that maybe had lost some of it after the earthquake, to get people to come downtown to renew that attachment, showcase that attachment, showcase the humanity.  Great places can be in urban centres, suburbs, communities. I often think when you go for a hike in the woods, you stop in the places that have a range of things to do in them, they have a range of purposes and a range of meaning but it’s in these places where we connect deeper with each other, with people we don’t know, people we know well. With the land, places also support us to become more ourselves to reach our potential in many ways as well. |
| Caroline | I was reflecting on some work that we have done with the Little River community - and Banks Peninsula is actually part of the city so we have an amazing rural and urban context for Christchurch. The last couple of years we’ve been working with a community group and they’ve produced a plan called Little River Big Ideas. Little River is a little township but it’s surrounded by a rural environment and one of the other things that we’ve done with that community is that we’ve given them a grant to help them with some of their pest control because that’s something that for their place, is really important. I think that while that may not seem like a natural connection to placemaking, when you think about it, it is because that’s what is important to that community. |
| Ryan | To be clear yes, when the term placemaking is used, 99.9% of the time we’re talking about it in an urban context as the term is used today but obviously the principals can and should be a bit more holistic than that or something. I feel like maybe the urgency is more urban, putting it in the context of increasing urbanisation and more and more people moving into cities and the environmental issues. Most of the carbon generated in the world is coming from urban centres and so on, so I feel like that’s where the urgency is if we have to address and push a different way of being, let’s focus on cities where you can get the greatest returns. |
| Sally | I’m really glad to hear you talking Ethan about the indigenous connection to land and how that might be entering your thinking as well. I really wanted an indigenous voice on this panel actually but due to pulling it together quite quickly it didn’t happen. So just another way of looking at it, isn’t it?  Anyway, we might have our first break and Caroline you chose a song for us, ‘This Must Be The Place’ by Talking Heads, pretty appropriate for today’s topic. |
| Ryan | And David Burn is coming to Christchurch. |
| Caroline | And David Burn is coming to Christchurch. And the other thing that people might not know about David Burn is he often packs a folding cycle into his luggage and experiences the cities he visits from a cyclist’s perspective and there’s some great You Tube clips actually of him cycling and commenting on cycleways in New York. And I really like the fact that he’s a little unconventional and placemaking can be unconventional as well. |
| Ethan | He’s been a great advocate in New York and his reflections on his travels around the world are very informative to placemaking conversations as well. |
| Ryan | The Free Range Press book that I co-edited a few years back, *Once in a Lifetime*, steals the name from a Talking Heads song and actually we kind of… All of the chapters in the book we did rifts on Talking Heads songs and we got in touch with David Burn and got his blessing to use the title and so on because he is a city activist and interested in lots of urban issues so I’d like to think he’s read our book but… |
| Caroline | He might like to try a cycle in the city or maybe even a lime scooter while he’s here. |
| Sally | Well there’s certainly lots of synergies, good choice. |
|  | **MUSIC BY TALKING HEADS – THIS MUST BE THE PLACE** |
| Sally | Kei te whakarongo koe ki te hōtakaSpeak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. You’re listening to “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” on Plains FM 96.9. We’re talking “Placemaking” today with Ethan Kent, Ryan Reynolds and Caroline Ingles. I thought we might do this segment looking at some successful placemaking examples, both locally here in Christchurch and also internationally or elsewhere around New Zealand. Ethan, perhaps we’ll start with some of the ones you’ve been involved with. |
| Ethan | So we’re lucky to work all around the world. The city that we’ve actually worked the most in is actually Detroit and I think there’s some similarities with how Detroit has been recovering from a crisis of course a very different type of crisis, an economic crisis, but also left a lot of vacancies throughout the city and there’s obviously lots of big issues there as there are here in Christchurch but there’s been this really sort of exciting narrative of creativity where people in the city and people moving to the city are feeling like they can help shape the city. So Detroit is not delivering the same, perhaps, liveability that other cities in the US are delivering but it’s the way that it is inviting people to shape it, is creating this energy, this creativity, that’s shaping the economy, the culture, identity of the communities and there’s strong tensions between existing populations and new populations but I think that’s also adding to a lot of creativity as well. So placemaking is becoming the shared narrative. We’ve worked for about 20 years on some of the key public spaces at the centre of the city but also in some of the poorer neighbourhoods that have really been hurt the most and it’s offering a model where it has attracted a lot of economic development. The turnaround of Campus Martius in the central square in the city and attracted new companies to move downtown from the suburbs but it’s also created this sort of innovation culture where there’s a lot of new start-ups and a lot of artists that are being supported that are there and artists that are moving there.  I think it’s creating this larger model - that I see Christchurch supporting as well - where the cities, I think, that are going to thrive most in the future are the ones that don’t just deliver good cities to their communities but empower and challenge their citizens to actively create them and how we can actually all create… We can build the capacity to do much more and there’s this unfolding where you don’t quite know where it’s going to go. This informality in the cities and again it’s the informality, the human-centred activities that councils have been supporting that have really gotten the attention globally you know, where the unique identity and culture that’s emerging through that that’s so powerful. So I think we have to learn from these models, we have to support them further, and I think all cities can start to replicate.  Unfortunately most cities are copying the worst mistakes of the US and Australia and New Zealand. We’re doing a conference in China - we’re running placemaking conferences in every habitable continent - and we’re using these stories to inspire China to do development very differently. |
| Ryan | To talk a tangible example from my experience: I think our Pallet Pavilion project that we did would probably be the stand out for me and really because of a couple of aspects, a multi-layered thing. We got offered a really large site where the Crown Plaza Hotel had been - must be a 4,000m² or something like that, and up until that stage the largest project that we’d done was the Dance-O-Mat which was about 5x8m - it was a piece of Council-owned land and we actually almost said no because we thought what can we possibly do on a site that big that would not feel pathetic. We came to this idea that if we do something on this site, we have to do something that attracts loads and loads of other people to come in and participate and so what could we do that would bring energy from lots of people outside who aren’t participating in the city now so that they could feel like they could. So we built this temporary community venue and in part it was a response to the Re:Start Mall and notions of modular architecture and temporary architecture and Re:Start Mall was unquestionably successful in almost every respect but in terms of the sort of architectural principles, we thought there was a bit to challenge there so it was made out of shipping containers but they were brand new shipping containers brought in from China, they were gas-axed open, plumbed in, and effectively it was a permanent development that was done with new materials from China that gave the appearance of being very resourceful and done on a shoestring with available materials.  We thought let’s try to do it a bit more genuinely so we borrowed pallets out of circulation, made a structure out of them and then a year and a half later deconstructed it and 90% of the materials went back into circulation. And so the values of the core of that, I think, attracted a lot of people who wanted to be part of it and then yeah, it was just kind of the right thing at the right time. So over those one-and-a-half year life of that Pavilion we hosted… I think it was, like, 212 events and less than 10% of those would have been events that Gap Filler generated ourselves or initiated and just so many people suddenly, I guess, can see themselves in a place, can see themselves participating. |
| Sally | I like what you’re saying about placemaking being successful when there are multiple reasons for people to attend. So there might be food, there might be events, there might be a shady picnic bench to sit on, whatever it is, different things that attract different groups. |
| Caroline | While the Council actually does placemaking itself, quite a lot of what we do is give funding to communities and try to stand beside them while they do their own placemaking. Some of the examples that I think that have been really successful are because they’ve then gone to be bigger and better and the ones that spring to mind for me are Cultivate Christchurch, Kākano and Imagination Station which now has a home in Tūranga, the Lego place. So council has supported that funding for a number of years and it’s now got a home. I often reflect that good things take time so sometimes we need to be patient about how the capacity is built and where a project might land. Those are three that I would point to as being great successes. |
| Sally | Why do you see them as successful? |
| Caroline | Cultivate, Kākano and Imagination Station have all gone from being what might have been conceived as something more temporary and while their future may not necessarily be completely worked out, they’ve become more of a fixture in our city and in our lives. |
| Ryan | 100% agree with the examples that you just gave, I think they’re great examples. I would also throw out there… I mean I come from a theatre background and specifically looking at theatre that tries to provoke social change and so inherent in that is this idea that things don’t have to have a long life in order to be transformative and so just alongside those great examples I want to say that some of my most memorable things are one-off events like the Eyes on the City series where we put up the grandstand around the city and kind of critiqued some of the urban development and got an Ōtākaro Development Manager speaking to the Manager of Calendar Girls, it’s a striptease club, things like that where we opened up conversations and those have had follow-on effects. Not as tangible as Imagination Station but nonetheless there can be a lot of value in that as well. |
| Sally | If we’re thinking about these successful projects and the reasons why they’ve been successful, a lot of it is to do with community buy-in and talking about the temporary becoming more permanent. I know from some of the stuff we’ve talked about before, Ryan, that you can’t just replicate and expect something to work the same as, or as well as, previous projects. So what is it that can be replicated and what could you look to replicate, and what doesn’t necessarily replicate so well? |
| Ethan | So indeed, the images, the elements are very inspiring and there’s a lot of interest to replicate those. We think it’s really important though to work with a process of which these projects come out of, being the inspiration. That’s where the authenticity is, that’s where the ownership really comes in and then how they’re sustained and managed. So obviously the Council has really pioneered a lot of creative ways to support these efforts and a big part of that is how they facilitate the community to take ownership and responsibility so the local governance of these places, formal governance or informal.  We have a lot of placemaking principles and such on our website but one gimmick we use to sort of make sure places succeed is this idea of the power of ten and I guess that’s really what you were saying before, Sally, is it’s a range of different reasons to be in a space that make it work and it’s when a range of different groups of people feel comfortable in it. So we think a good place has at least ten reasons to be in it. You focus on the uses, the functions, the purposes to the space before actually what the design is and that drives creativity and demand for design. Then we think a great destination has at least ten places in it, each with ten things to do it. Your main square, it’d be a great place, it’s not just a function of the design but the smaller places where you really connect, you make eye contact with people, smile at people and that’s where memories occur, that’s where place attachment emerges and perhaps where a city realises its potential you need at least ten great destinations, each with ten things to do it. Makes it big but also manageable. |
| Ryan | I’d say the single most important aspect to me, at least in the work that we’ve done, in whether a project will prove to be reasonably successful or not, is actually how well you sniff the wind in a way or have your ear to the ground or whatever sort of metaphor like that. I think you have to understand what’s motivating people at any given moment, what are people excited about, what are they fearful of, what are they angry about, where is the need. |
| Sally | Design for the use rather than for the design as such. |
| Ryan | I can think of some other examples of projects that haven’t come off, one of our own in Tauranga, a company got in touch a couple of years back and said we want to put a Dance-O-Mat in Tauranga and will you help us do that and we said no, we can’t do that, that’s not really what we do and they said well we’re going to do it anyway and we kind of had a little bit of an argument and we ended up creating a sort of ‘How to’ manual that gave them step by step instructions. We said we’ll licence the instructions and the rights to use if you involve the local community actually in the construction of it, we insisted on that, they worked with the Men’s Shed, but the process by which it came about, the particular location they put it and so on - it looks actually a bit slicker than the Dance-O-Mat here, they used better materials and things like that - but it doesn’t get used, it really just doesn’t get used. The Dance-O-Mat here, it came out of a very particular context and need and conversations with dance groups and the Body Festival that was still around then and so on and so forth. Yeah, there was just a whole series of factors that made that the right thing for that point in time and even five years on, six years on, that’s still in the DNA of it in a way and that’s why the Dance-O-Mat worked or works here… Replicating projects - you want to replicate the principles or the process, not the end result. |
| Caroline | That was going to be my kind of message, was it’s about process not result and learning from process, taking the successes but checking that that process will work with the community that you’re working with and not blindly stumbling forward and assuming that what worked here will work there. |
| Ryan | And the other thing I’d say that Ethan touched on is the holistic thinking, it’s not just what the thing that you build and walk away but who is responsible for ongoing operations, maintenance, I guess governance is a term that you use a lot. And that was another problem, say in Tauranga, is this company built it, it got vested in council, walked away and no-one actually has responsibility for reflecting on it and going, “Gosh, no-one ever uses it, shall we get rid of it? Shall we try to kick start some activity by doing this? Shall we do some programming on it?” No-one has responsibility for that so it’s just a thing that sits there. |
| Caroline | I’d reflect that one of our learnings is that we’ve created quite a lot of assets over the last seven years and you have to make the call that this asset is no longer serving the purpose and dispose of it, whether that’s to a community group who might love it or repurpose it or whether it’s just reuse towards disposal. Yeah, you just have to make those calls, those tough calls sometimes. |
| Sally | That was pretty tough at the time of the dismantling of the Pallet Pavilion, I remember, there was a big call to think yes, the time is right, we’re going to take this step. |
| Ryan | I mean that was absolutely built into that project, it was meant to be a temporary venue and in fact it lasted longer than it was intended to. In fact because the narrative of that was the reuse of the materials - that we were just borrowing the pallets actually the whole point of the structure - it wasn’t complete until it was deconstructed so that was very deliberately built into it. So for me that wasn’t a tough call at all. Much tougher with something like the Dance-O-Mat where we sort of threatened three or four times to get rid of it and always experienced some backlash and angry people saying you can’t get rid of it. |
| Sally | It still gets used quite a bit though, it’s still got its purpose there. OK, well we might have our next song then. |
|  | **MUSIC BY THE BEATLES – THERE’S A PLACE** |
| Sally | This is “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” on Plains FM and we’re talking today about “Placemaking.” In this segment we’re going to think about what are some of the benefits and how do you see them being enacted, I suppose, in society. |
| Ethan | A lot of placemaking is started at a very small scale and there was actually an MIT study recently that found one of the biggest benefits of placemaking isn’t the improved place but it’s the improved social capital that’s created through the process of placemaking so again the process is increasingly understood as central not only to the outcome of the results but to the benefits.  There’s also increasing amounts of research that shows how focus on place and placemaking can more fundamentally address many goals that we’re achieving around health and equity and social challenges and economic development and you can create more fundamental, more systemic change and innovation in systems in governance. How this focus on place can draw more people into help solve problems and build our capacity to take on larger challenges is becoming this new movement for not just sustaining what we have but building the thriving convivial communities that realise our potential and sustain humanity on this planet. |
| Sally | No small ask then! |
| Caroline | In the Christchurch context, one of the perhaps more unique things is that we told people not to come into the central city for two years after the earthquakes and we actually prevented them from doing so by putting barriers up and so the head and heart connection and the habits of the people of Christchurch… to be connected to the central city became strained and in some cases, broken and we find that there are people who haven’t been back into the central city. A central city is really important because it actually improves the wellbeing of the whole city and beyond, so one of the jobs that I think we’ve got to do is actually continue to connect people back into the central city, give them a surprise and a delight and an experience of coming back to the central city for a whole range of reasons that they can’t experience in the places that have become their new habits and new regular haunts. There’s real benefits here that maybe aren’t experienced elsewhere. |
| Ethan | I think that’s a really good point and increasingly we’re seeing place attachment as an important outcome and goal for placemaking. We’ve gone through this era where liveability - everyone wants to be the most liveable city in the world, we want liveability for everybody - but lovability is at the heart of this, the softer side of it sometimes is actually showing real hard outcomes in many ways and through focus on loveable places we’re actually achieving liveability where inclusively, sometimes more quickly in shorter-term type projects, the Dance-O-Mat and these things really open up our hearts and connect us with each other in different places. Informality has been lost in many of our cities and in much of our culture and most of urban planning is with the head not with the heart.  We’re seeing placemaking as a tool for challenging and inspiring people to sort of support this informality, the connection to people and place and reinvigorate the love that they often have for their places but express that, challenge everyone to compete to contribute to the shared value, to the stories of these places and it’s something that can go viral and be a model for many cities because it’s missing. Our love of place and people’s ability to contribute to it. |
| Ryan | I have this amazing experience, that I think not so many people get unfortunately, which is I walk around this city and I can see my fingerprints in places and feel my values reflected back at me and say oh here’s a thing that I had some involvement. Often my involvement, even in Gap Filler projects, is I was responsible for 1% of that but it’s still something that I feel very much connected to. And so there’s all these places in the city where I feel - it’s fragile, it’s precarious - but there are places that reflect me and my values. Most of the time, I think the people that get that feeling are property developers. We’ve done a lot of work with school groups over the years and one in particular, a group of students designed and built a sort of obstacle course and we hosted it at the Commons for quite a long time and over 18 months or something the number of students that came in and dragged their families along with them to say that’s my thing, I helped make that and here’s this feature in the city that other people use that they can drive by and have a look and see that there are complete strangers interacting with something that they helped to design and build and come up with, and the joy and empowerment and connection and place attachment that that grows is priceless. |
| Sally | Yeah that’s great, really cool. Caroline, something I was wondering about - particularly, I guess, given your title as Urban Design but also Regeneration and Heritage - I wondered about the relationship between placemaking and heritage because placemaking seems to be about regeneration and doing new or bringing new into existing places and how does that sit alongside heritage which… Depends how you look at it, but in many respects it’s old. |
| Caroline | True, I’m going to make a shameless plug for the Heritage Strategy that we’ve just released and in a sense I think that that is a process I think we could put into the basket of placemaking because before we put pen to paper we actually went out to the community and said, “Tell us what you value, tell us why you value it and give us some stories about that” and so the whole Strategy has been built on that premise and also working with Ngāi Tahu to embed their values into the Strategy and it’s been written actually in partnership with them. And we’re hoping that as we implement it that the notion of stories and the layers that place has can become much more evident, whether that’s through some digital technology or trails or curating events and installations, that’s the kind of opportunity that I think the strategy in the way we’ve pulled it together brings.  We’re very keen to stop thinking about tangible heritage but start thinking about intangible heritage and I think the value of that is that it also enables us to start to shape and think about what our identity for the 21st century might be and what the 20th century identity, what that might change is we move into the 21st century. |
| Sally | Did you notice that many people were talking about Gap Filler, Greening the Rubble, these types of things when they were talking about heritage or was that not yet coming in? |
| Caroline | There were a number of cultural stories but the other thing that seemed to come through which again I think is an outcome of placemaking, is that people reflected on the social interaction that they had in a place: “I met grandma here” or “We would as a family go to this place and we’d experience this and that” added to the richness of the story. |
| Ryan | We’re doing a bit of work in the East Frame development as and after the apartments and townhouses are being built and we did a pretty extensive although quite quick engagement process and we talked with all the inner city residents groups, people who used to live in that exact area who live a block away now just to the east, inner city east area and I would say place and heritage really go hand-in-hand. One of the strongest things that we heard from those groups was this fear with the East Frame development, that it would be just an entirely new neighbourhood airlifted in with no attachment to either the existing neighbourhood a block away or the history of that place and so that’s become a really important part of the programme we’re running: How can we weave some of those narratives and make sure those stories are still there, the memories aren’t lost and actually the values contained within those memories are still honoured in some way? |
| Ethan | Preservation is, we find, often really adopted to placemaking, place-anchored advocates and we find that the best way to support many of their goals is to bring in other partners by focusing in on use not just on the form. The best way to preserve a lot of these buildings is to bring in life and engaging placemaking process and the governance and financing structures that are possible to support that. These old buildings are obviously anchors to the past but also anchors to the future. Jane Jacobs who’s sort of one of the patron saints of placemaking says that new ideas need old buildings, this is where innovation occurs, where new culture emerges as well and a healthy new culture that respects the old culture as well. |
| Sally | Quite a good way of looking at it, actually. Well we might have our final song then. Ethan, you’ve chosen ‘Dancing In The Street.’ |
|  | **MUSIC BY DAVID BOWIE AND MICK JAGGER – DANCING IN THE STREET** |
| Sally | This is “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” and we’re talking about “Placemaking” with Ethan Kent, Ryan Reynolds and Caroline Ingles. Just to finish off: We’ve been talking about the positives that placemaking can bring but there are bound to be difficulties and challenges, possibly even some dangers or some negatives. One that springs to mind is, I see Gap Filler trying to reach out to new migrant groups but not necessarily always succeeding. Placemaking, I think, strives for inclusion, inclusiveness, but perhaps doesn’t always necessarily manage it - so that might be one, but any other thoughts you’ve got would be great. |
| Ethan | We see a focus on place and placemaking as a means to really turn upside the shaping of cities, reinvent that is more inclusive, more looking at cities, more porous, more open but certainly it can miss the mark or it cannot be as open or as engaging. I do think we need to go where there is some momentum and then figure out how do we keep inviting new people in but if placemaking is just seen as one-off stuff but not thought of as how it can create larger systemic change it can perpetuate some existing issues and challenges. Do we think placemaking has to evolve to be looking at place-led development, financing, things like governance and there’s great innovations going on in Christchurch on all of these and to really create more systemic change that address the bigger issues. |
| Caroline | I think if we get something wrong then the important thing is to fail really fast and to not keep flogging what is obviously something that is not going to succeed. I mean, that’s quite a difficult process to go through but something that we do need to keep in mind if it’s clearly not working. Get over it, move on. |
| Ryan | I think I have quite a particular view on this and that the best outcomes that we see in any given project is actually when the individual project does not strive to be inclusive in the broader sense but actually doesn’t strive to be exclusive, I would say fairly narrow in its focus. And so when we develop a project with a specific community - often a community of interest or something - you get the best attachment, you get the best buy-in, you get the best flow-on effects in terms of the ongoing custodianship and governance and things like that. And so for me the inclusivity happens over time and at the sort of city-wide scale. So OK, for the Dance-O-Mat we worked with these particular communities of interest and this group of people and they grew some attachment and so on, so for the next project let’s not do something for them, let’s do something with an entirely differently group. And so the inclusivity happens actually through diversity and through a range of projects not trying to be inclusive in one single project.  I’ve reflected a lot on the lack of ethnic diversity participation in Gap Filler’s projects and over time I’ve come to feel less fault for that. One: A lot of the groups that we would like to be collaborating with in principle actually have very strong communities - much stronger than my own sense of community in the place where I live - and it’s centred around their church or it’s centred around a certain set of shops in the suburbs or something like that and so they don’t need a new place. And so it’s not a failing of our project that we’re trying to do with them, that it doesn’t attract them, it’s actually that they already have their own place or places or that the central city is not a place that they feel attachment to or need. And so for me, it’s more for the sake of the central city I would want them to come in and participate and feel the central city… Not for their sake, it’s actually for the sake of the city. We’re not failing them in not attracting them to participate, it’s actually a failing of the city. |
| Sally | That’s a really good way of looking at it.  Ethan, you’re talking about the ability of placemaking to generate systemic change - or the possibility, anyway. If it fails to generate systemic change, is there a potential danger there that it’s just upholding whatever the status quo is at the time? |
| Ethan | Definitely yeah, it can be just used as a tool to perpetuate the way things are… Oh we prettied that up a little bit to sell property and engage people in a tokenistic way and talk about changes that are place-sensitive, professions are still holding onto the… controlling the process and it may reflective of local culture and identity and local needs and it may even be in some ways what communities want and need but if we’re not at least having the goal to build the capacity of communities… We want private value to happen, we want to build momentum for models, build a higher proportion of shared value to private value. For placemaking to go viral, to have a real big impact and make systemic change, we need all sectors involved. Ultimately we need unleash a conviviality where everyone is competing to contribute to place, to shared value. I mean that’s if you’re a pedestrian in a space, a shop owner, a property owner, it’s how we treat the governance structures informal or formal to facilitate this viral place facilitation that can unleash it and make it go around the world. In the way that examples of Christchurch have and Gap Filler had that it really inspired a lot but now I think people are still looking and they want to see how does this get sustained, how does it really change a city systemically and the models that can be learned that can be replicated elsewhere. |
| Ryan | Your question was, can placemaking incidentally reinforce the status quo and I’d say it could even be a lot worse than that at its worst. In my darker moments I feel that a real injustice was done to the people of Christchurch around Share An Idea and how that engagement exercise and the Draft Council Recovery Plan - which was, I think quite an inspiring and amazing document - got taken over by the central government and turned into mostly a hard infrastructure plan and the connection between Share An Idea and the Blueprint that’s been guiding much of the central city is not apparent to the vast majority of people who participated in that process. In my darker moments, I think that actually that lack of involvement of the people in the government Blueprint which was sort of alibied by Gap Filler in our work and it’s like, oh, if we didn’t have these projects that people are participating in, these small scale things, that probably they would have been a lot more anger about that process and that anger may have bubbled over into a stronger demand for participation in other ways. So I think I don’t believe that’s actually the case and I mean if you go down that path too much you kind of get in this mind-set that the best thing we can do is make life as miserable as possible for everyone so we’ll get angry about everything and demand… It’s kind of not really productive so I’ll back away from that. |
| Sally | So just to finish up then, do you see placemaking as genuinely enabling greater level change? |
| Ethan | Yeah it’s challenging and building capacity for everybody to take responsibility for the world beyond their home. We need to give people the tools and the opportunities to do that. People have forgotten how to participate; we’ve receded back into our homes, into our private spaces, into our cars, and we’ve relied on government even doing a good job to do these things for us. And simply, we can create liveable places but to truly create places that reflect and build our identity, build our potential individually and collectively. Christchurch is really onto something. You’re going to create a great community here that we’re all going to want to live in but more importantly you’re going to create the models and inspiration that can save the world. So thank you and no pressure! |
| Ryan | Yeah we and Council, one of the things we’ve been talking about for a few years now, are terms like ‘active citizenship’ and it’s actually now built into our grant funding agreement with Council that that’s one of the things that Gap Filler has to be trying to achieve in the city, building on what Ethan said. Most people kind of sit back and wait for the government, the Council, to solve the problems for them and yeah, I’ll voice my opinion on it and then the government makes the right decision, the wrong decision, and I’m limited to voting every three years and that’s my participation. So we’re really trying to broaden that notion and empower people to think, “OK, it’s not just the government’s issue to solve the problem but actually let’s find a million different ways of partnering and experimenting and being proactive” and using all that community expertise. |
| Caroline | Council has been very clear that it really is wanting citizens to step up, be more active in the city and actually determine the future, shape their place, and that was part of the rationale behind the funding agreement with Gap Filler. But I would say that sometimes some people don’t want to do that but we hope that simple things like when we do projects and we put up a Facebook vote and what actually gets voted on Facebook is what we deliver. Hopefully that is a way for people to begin to be more engaged in how their city might be shaped. |
| Sally | That’s a nice positive note to end on, then, which is really lovely. I’d like to say, Kia ora, thank you so much for taking the time to come in today. Especially you Ethan, I know you’ve got a very crammed agenda while you’re here. It’s been a really interesting and hopefully this will inspire people to go out and make their own places, get involved. |