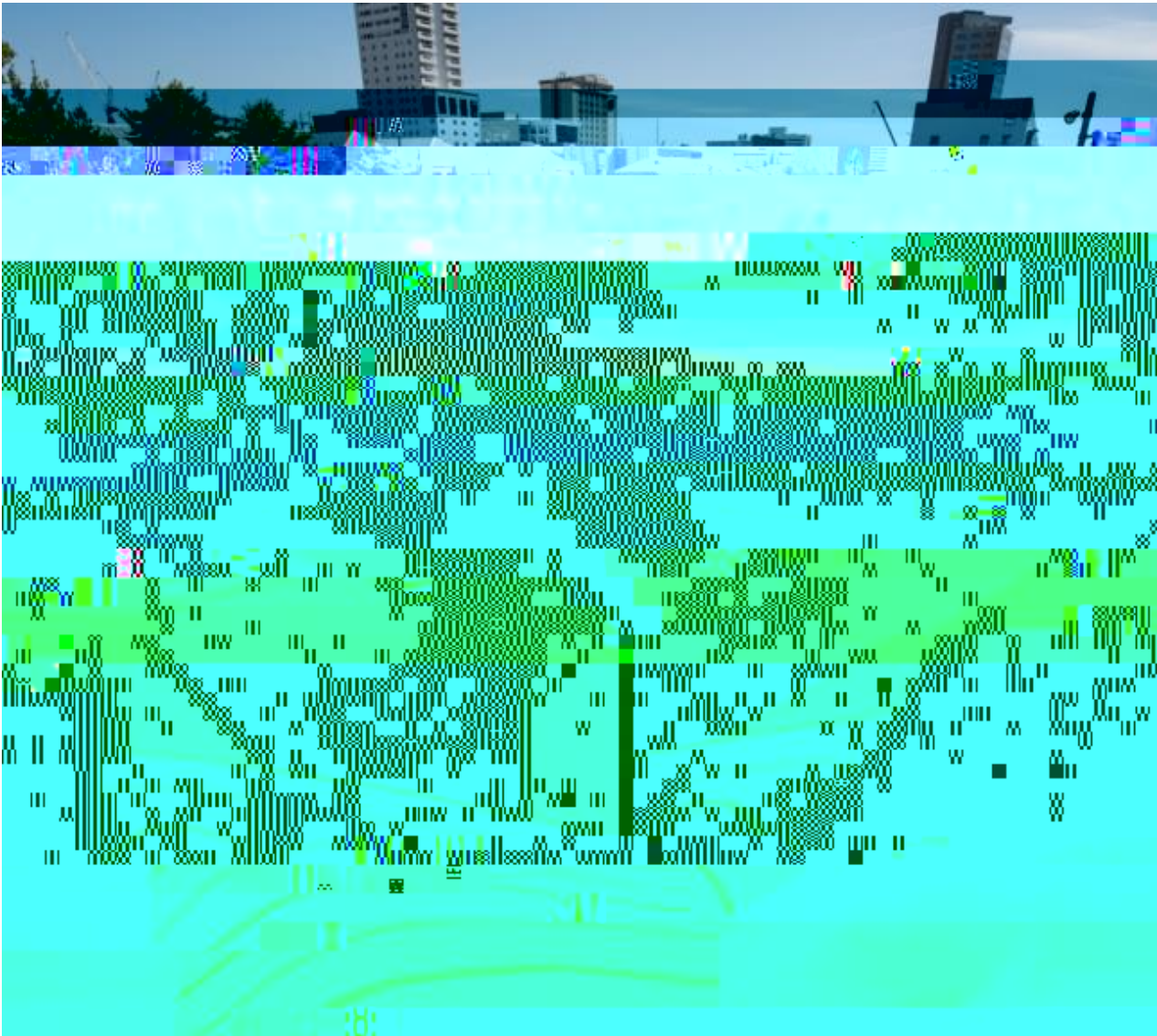


# Youth Engagement in Post-



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## 1. Abstract

An overall success identified from global literature recognises treating youth with respect and as valued citizens aids in enhancing the success of urban planning and development for both youth and society more widely. The post-earthquake context of Christchurch, New Zealand demonstrates the importance of meaningfully engaging with youth in the midst of undertaking a large-scale disaster recovery. To understand how youth engagement could be done better in Christchurch, we focus our research on certain themes of youth engagement. These themes are international youth engagement exemplars, the issues faced in engaging youth in post-earthquake Christchurch, and the relationships with mental and physical health. Through this we







The consensus from those that offered their contributions was one of young voices being frequently ignored or excluded by a top-down recovery approach. This led to shared feelings of frustration at the continual stifling of their attempts at action. Brake interviewed eighteen young people between the ages of 13-24, and fourteen of them were already active in some form with youth action groups in the city such as Christchurch Youth Council, leading to what could perhaps be considered somewhat biased responses from those with the strongest views and drive to action within the subset of that age bracket in the city. Research bias towards politically engaged youth fits into wider issues of what voices are privileged when youth are engaged that can often work to the benefit of existing power structures. The work of Christens & Dolan (2011) worked to

## 7. Discussion

The majority world in this example South Africa, have historically faced issues of discrimination, uncertain governments, and overall lack of fundamental human rights. It is through youth engagement and recognising youth as current and future citizens in urban design and development that will allow cities to create communities with long term benefits (Bolay, 2020). Similar to the UNCROC legislation, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, specifies the fundamental values of human dignity through the achievement of human rights and equality, including rights of children as citizens (Dubow, 2012). South Africa, like many majority



they wish to use to be placed in a transitional use lease. LINZ expressed its desire to “be as flexible and supportive as possible under the current policy to enable and encourage activation projects in the RRZ” (Stuff 2019), showing a willingness to listen to and work with youth for action that has not been especially apparent so far in the context of the rebuild process. Earlier this year, approval was granted for Adventure Avenue to proceed (Stuff 2020). However, the cost of implementing Adventure Avenue is estimated to reach around \$30,000, and due to the absence of funding from government and/or the appropriate agencies, the Banks Avenue student group are currently having to foot the bill themselves through their own fundraising efforts. The project, expected to take two to three years to complete, has a good chance of success with its school and community backing and the indication of support from LINZ. However, international literature that we present earlier shows the advantages in external funding of these types of initiative.

Christchurch demanded clear action on issues that had stalled at all levels of traditional governance for decades (Sutherland, 2020). Creating a collective sense of place within a fractured city would allow for young people to be engaged with the rebuilding efforts and create a city that works for a greater range of people than would be without youth involvement, both now and in the future.

For youth in Christchurch a strong sense of place can come out of access to communal spaces that are made both by and for youth. When connections to place are created at a young age it is more likely that there will be a longer lasting, stronger connection to that place and the communities around them (Hayward, 2012; Freeman & Tranter, 2010). Preserving a sense of community by reclaiming the places that people connect with is important to foster a sense of shared experience (Engwicht, 1999). As youth in Christchurch have noted, there is a particular lack of spaces which they can call their own, especially in economically marginalised areas, such as public parks and communal areas (K. Prendergast, Personal communication, May 15 2020; Farrell, 2015). This means that a range of spaces are needed for different age ranges and communities that fit within what their community needs and created with their input rather than through a top down decision-making process. The inclusion of indigenous elements and voices in the design process can also help to create a sense of identity and connection to place, even when incorporated into largely Pkeh structures (Gray & Hoare, 2010). Within the LGBT community many of the community spaces are similar to those for many of the youth population: bars, clubs, and rainbow community centres. With the loss of most of the city centre due to the earthquake many of the places that gave both the queer and youth communities a sense of place and somewhere that was their own, was lost (Gorman-Murray, Mckinnon, & Dominey-Howes, 2014). Due to the nature of social stigmatisation of the queer community there is often a greater need for non-familial communities (Choudhury et. al., 2009). However, all young people are affected by the loss of space that even to this day has not been able to return fully. Through rebuilding a variety of places that support a wide range of communities, youth can feel more included within the urban design process, as well as to the communities around them.

The concept of youth engagement can oftentimes become tokenistic as voices that fit into the predominant structures of planning are those who are able to participate in this process. Marybeth & Thompson-Fawcett (2010) noted the way that certain voices are privileged and how

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Experiencing a traumatic event such as the Canterbury earthquakes at a youthful age can be detrimental with further mental and physical development. Following the earthquakes, significant support was essential in targeting youth who were both directly and indirectly distressed by this event. For the purpose of this post-quake study, youth has been defined as between the ages of 6-18 years (Liberty, 2017). Depending on age and severity of the experience, health impacts such as nightmares, the need to have someone around and behavioural changes such as anxiety, depression and stress can result (Shirlaw, 2014). Physically, children can experience headaches, stomach aches and changes in appetite, all of which can dramatically affect an individual's personal environment (Shirlaw, 2014). Post-

trust and a sense of community. Youth are the people who will have to live in the cities that are designed today and will have to deal with the consequences of poor planning or execution. Involving a broad range of voices gives power to marginalised communities and creates better outcomes. Reinforcing the power structures that have created our current cities would do little to provide meaningful change and development. While at first it will not be a complete process and every voice will not be heard, engaging with a range of youth communities in a meaningful way will develop that sense of trust and connection to the city. Cities such as Christchurch have a great opportunity to promote youth mental and physical health and continue the work being done post-earthquake. These opportunities should not be lost as communities look to the cities of the future and how they can reduce the chronic and acute stressors in people's lives.

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