Projecting failure as success: Residents’ perspectives of the Christchurch earthquakes recovery

Greg Simons1,2*

Abstract: In September 2010 and February 2011, the Canterbury region was rocked by a series of earthquakes. The success or otherwise, of a recovery from a crisis can be found in the perceptions of stakeholders. Many different stakeholders exist, including different levels of Government, bureaucratic institutions and state institutions, private enterprise, non-governmental organisations and the public. In this article, the public are the focus and their perception of the recovery is collected. An online survey was conducted, and it demonstrates a significant gap between the Government’s perception and the perception of residents of Christchurch. How do publics react when they feel as though they have been marginalised by the authorities charged with the crisis event recovery? The Government’s account of success is not shared by the majority of respondents, who have mobilised politically using social media platforms. There are implications for Governments and authorities that are seen to fail segments of the public in the age of social media, where crisis management and public relations meet and political mobilisation against officials and official bodies takes place.

Subjects: Communication Studies; Politics & International Relations; Social Sciences

Keywords: Christchurch; earthquakes; social media; crisis; recovery; perception

1. Introduction
Crisis of different natures affect many communities around the world each year. These events, such as earthquakes, cause massive destruction, disruption and casualties. A crisis consists of different stages, each stage carries with it different concerns and considerations that must be taken into account. A lot of attention is paid to the political actors, public officials and emergency responders in

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Greg Simons is a researcher at the Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies (Uppsala University, Sweden), the Swedish National Defence College and the Department of Communication Sciences at Turiba University (Riga, Latvia).

Associate professor Greg Simons specialises in researching the relationships that exist between politics, mass media and crisis/armed conflict. He is on the roster of experts at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and an expert in the Latvian Research Council. Numerous books and journal articles have been published, primarily in English, Russian and Spanish.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
This paper is intended to explore different ways and means that social media are used by residents and victims of a crisis event, which occurred in the recent past. In this particular article, the example of residents’ use of social media platforms, especially on Facebook, is used to gauge the perception of the users of the New Zealand authorities’ management of the Christchurch earthquakes. The findings demonstrate a number of uses of these social media platforms, and opinions that are at odds with officially projected assessments.
cataloguing and analysing crisis events. Less attention is paid to the individual accounts and experiences of those that have endured an event and its aftermath. A crisis passes through different stages in its life cycle, which has implications and consequences for those who experience it and those who are tasked with managing its consequences and recovery.

The earthquakes that struck Canterbury, New Zealand, and especially the city of Christchurch in September 2010 and February 2011 caused a lot of destruction, dislocation and casualties. The phase of this crisis should be firmly in the recovery stage. There is already some literature that hails the efforts of the Government and authorities as being somewhat of a success story (Seadon & Bach, 2015). This takes into account the planning and actions taken by the levels of politics and officials, however, ignores the dire plight of many Canterbury residents almost five years after the first earthquakes struck. To illustrate the issue of “progress”, the New Zealand Army held an eight-day urban warfare training exercise in a red zoned area of Christchurch in March 2015 (O’Callaghan, 2015). There have also been an increasing number of ironic and satirical items appearing on social media sites, for example, the EQC Song¹ and the EQC Weekly Briefing.²

There is therefore a seeming disconnect between those tasked with the recovery process and the local residents as recipients of the recovery. It is easier to test and gain access to the official version of events as these are carried through mass media channels. What is more problematic is to appreciate and understand the residents’ perspectives and points of view. How do Canterbury residents perceive the recovery efforts and progress? Following from these perceptions, how do marginalised (in the perception of the respondents) residents react towards officials and official bodies on social media platforms? There are potential lessons for future crises when the perception of an official response in the recovery phase is lost in a battle of competing perceptions of reality (between authorities and affected residents).

Initially a theoretical framework shall be outlined. This begins with understanding what a crisis is exactly and how it progresses. Focus shall be given to the recovery aspects associated in a post-crisis scenario. An important aspect that also needs to be taken into account is that of crisis communication, which can influence the operational aspects of a crisis (Ogrizek & Guillery, 1999). As this can influence how different groups perceive and react to a crisis (Berry, Jones, & Powers, 1999; Coombs, 2014). A background is then introduced, concerning the nature of the earthquakes and the effects from academic, governmental and mass media sources. The final parts of the article are dedicated to the findings of an online survey that was conducted with Christchurch residents (current and former) concerning their opinions and perceptions of the earthquake recovery.

2. Stages and progression of a crisis
There is a lot of ambiguity with the notion and term of crisis. “In some respects ‘crisis’ is, perhaps, one of the most misused words within modern society and there is considerable ambiguity about what the term means” (Smith, 2006, p. 1). A crisis shall be defined, within the context of this work, as the simultaneous presence of three elements. These are: are a threat to core values and standards of life/living; it creates a sense of urgency in order to reduce the negative “footprint” of the event on society; and ensures a high level of uncertainty as to what is going to happen next and when it shall happen (Boin, ‘t Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005, pp. 2–4). Crandall, Parnell, and Spillan (2014, pp. 4–5) emphasise that a crisis is greatly influenced by perception, where one or more stakeholders consider a process or event to be a threat to their interests and well-being. They also stress that a crisis also rarely occurs without warning. Where a number of preconditions develop that create a ripe environment.

Crises have a life-cycle that consists of four separate stages—preconditions; trigger event; actual crisis and post-crisis. During the preconditions phase, a set of smaller events can interact in advance of the crisis. The trigger event is when events escalate that causes the normal balance and functioning of an organisation(s) to fail. This enables the breakout of the crisis event. Post-crisis phase occurs when the acute phase of the crisis ends, which enables reflection and learning in order to try and
prevent future crises (Crandall et al., 2014, pp. 5–6). This provides an overview of a crisis from before it breaks out to the post-crisis considerations, which enables a better understanding of its evolution.

Different frameworks have been developed that account for and analyse the different stages of a crisis. These were intended to aid the reflection and learning aspects in the wake of an event. Three stage formats addressed a crisis following a pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis delineation (Richardson, 1994; Smith, 1990). Four-stage approach offers a more precise approach to crisis. This begins with a normal operations stage, secondly emergency response, followed by interim processing and finally the restoration stage (Fink, 1996; Myers, 1993). An even more developed framework is the five-stage approach (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993). The stages are listed below.

- Signal detection—picking up and being able to read the warning signs of an impending event.
- Preparation/prevention—addressing those signals detected in the first stage, before a crisis breaks out.
- Containment/damage limitation—the crisis occurs, the goal is to manage and mitigate as much as possible the damage and disruption.
- Recovery—to resume activities as much as possible. Short-term objectives are to attain an acceptable minimum level of service. Long-term goals are aimed at regaining the level that existed in pre-crisis conditions (and even improvements).
- Learning—a focus upon improving the current operational issues and prevention of future problems (Crandall et al., 2014, p. 11).

Of interest to the objectives of this article is the recovery stage of a crisis, both short-term and long-term aspects.

Crisis have a way of becoming politicised rather quickly. […] As stated, this politicisation tends to evolve around two core processes. One is accountability (the other is learning). This relates to office holders rendering account (in public forums) of their actions prior to and following a crisis. (Boin, McConnell, & ’t Hart, 2008, p. 9)

The focus of the article is upon the aspect of accountability in the recovery phase of a crisis event. As Nohrstedt (2011, p. 199) rightly notes, “one defining characteristic of crises is that they are events that call for urgent public action”. This occurs in all phases of a crisis situation. What is more, “post-crisis evaluations are generally appointed to provide an objective assessment or to construe the officially certified version of the course of events and the decisions taken by public organisations in response to those events” (Nohrstedt, 2011, p. 199). Within the context of a crisis and its aftermath, there are those assigned and tasked with the responsibility of managing the effects of a crisis and those that are the recipients, namely the public and the business community.

Perceptions, which can vary for different stakeholders, are therefore an important yardstick of measure of opinion and mood in relation to whether the outcome can be considered a “success” or not. “Expectations are the benchmarks against which crisis performance is judged” (Nohrstedt, 2011, p. 200). There are links between the perceptions of what is considered as good management as also being ethical. “The ethical management of crises has a lot of bearing on people’s trust in their governing institutions. […] Furthermore, the public disappointment, rage, and distrust that emerges when the management by actors in crises is revealed as unethical or is perceived as unethical can be palpable” (Svedin, 2011, p. 225).

3. Mass media response and information in crises
The creation of a scapegoat is far from solely an academic problem and has “real life” interests and applications too. Perception or image is of crucial importance in today’s highly mediated world, where image can be of as much importance as substance. (Buck, 2003) Reputations can be won, lost
or maintained simply through communication strategy. A person or organisation has to be seen as being in control of the situation and doing something constructive. Mass media play a critical role in the process, as is noted by the Swedish Emergency Management Agency's (SEMA's) handbook: “The image that various interested parties have of a crisis is created, to a very large extent, by the media”. (SEMA, 2003, p. 11). The importance was also proposed by Joseph Scanlon (1975): “Every crisis is also a crisis of information. ... Failure to control this crisis of information results in failure to control the crisis, including its directly operational aspects”. (Ogrizek & Guillery, 1999, p. xi). Poor information and media management can exacerbate a crisis and prolong the process. Additionally, communication may on occasion be used in attempts to project an image of progress and success that may not match the reality on the ground.

The former Director of Communications at the British Home Office, Michael Granatt, has devised the progression of media response to a crisis.

- **Mayhem**—occurs in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The media rush to the scene of the crisis to find out what, where, when, why, how and to get images.
- **Mastermind**—relevant background information and history sought.
- **Manhunt**—the media seek to apportion error, fault, blame and a scapegoat.
- **Epilogue**—occurs in the long-term aftermath and follow-up. Inquiries, trials and memorial services are covered, reconstructions of the event and documentaries are produced (Harrison, 1999, p. 106).

If or when a crisis occurs, the authorities and emergency services need to quickly assess and try to take control of the situation. A crisis is interesting news and will therefore attract the attention of the media. According to British journalist John Jefferson, during the initial mayhem period of a crisis, media enquiries are based on a narrow set of questions. These questions are from “[...] the who, what, where, when and how school of interviewing”. And it is not until after the “dust settles” and a period of reflection that has occurred “the questioning is likely to be tougher, challenging and probably political”. (Harrison, 1999, p. 85). Therefore media have the potential to alleviate or exacerbate the situation, to act as judge and jury, and have a tendency to exaggerate and sensationalise (Berry et al., 1999, pp. 55–58). This must all be carefully and professionally managed through effective crisis communication.

Linking the aspects of crisis management and crisis communication by responsible official bodies and politicians, especially bearing in mind the possible politicisation of a crisis and the resulting scapegoating, is public relations (PR) as a means to manage relations with stakeholders and their perception of a crisis event. PR is an art during a crisis, which in order to stand a chance of success requires “the speed of reaction; accuracy of information and transparency of process. In crisis mode, getting all three to line up is one of the greatest challenges PR practitioners can face” (Franklin, Hogan, Longley, Mosdell, & Pill, 2009, pp. 65–66). One of the problems faced by communicators is that concepts such as issue, risk and crisis are very much subject to individual interpretation and peer pressure (L’Etang, 2011, p. 83). This makes the task of managing the perception of the issue, risk and crisis potentially volatile. According to good practice PR during the time of a crisis, communications should have as a priority the concern and safety of the constituents. After this has been secured, then the protection of the organisation can be considered (Coombs & Holladay, 2010, pp. 255–256). This present article, from the responses received, shall explore the effect on constituents when they feel as though they are not a priority and that the Government seems to prioritise its image and reputation instead, taken within the context of a social media environment.

This article shall focus upon the epilogue phase of media coverage of the Canterbury earthquake recovery. Of special interest is the “crisis of information” angle that was discussed by Joseph Scanlon in 1975, where the issue of controlling the nature and flow of information concerning the crisis by those assigned the responsibility of managing the recovery process. One way to look at crisis
communication is found in the above-mentioned text of this section, it can be considered as being an integral part in the phases and process of crisis management—pre-crisis phase, crisis response phase and post-crisis phase. However, another way of looking at the communicational aspect is to not realise that communications do not exist in a political and social vacuum that is devoid of symbolism and meaning. “The crisis communication is linked to behaviour when it seeks to influence how people interpret those actions or events” (Coombs, 2014, p. 8).

The way in which information is communicated, at different phases and cycles of a crisis, is rapidly changing owing to the development of new information communication technologies and platforms. There is an increasing presence and influence of new media and social media that is influencing the communication space during crises and emergencies.

Geospatial technologies 2.0 are now considered as key tools for crisis management and communication by all stakeholders: local authorities, emergency respondents, NGOs and the general public. On the one hand, GeoWeb tools and features improve the centralisation and dissemination of information (authoritative and non-authoritative). On the other hand, VGI, and more generally user-generated contents, represent a great opportunity to support and improve disaster management. (Roche, Propeck-Zimmermann, & Mericskay, 2013, p. 37)

The information environment has changed within the context of communication during crisis situations and the aftermath. Bruns (2014, p. 354) notes that “it has become clear that social media are now an integral part of the crisis communication infrastructure: for disseminating official advice to the public, for gathering information from affected locals, and for enhancing the resilience of communities by providing them with an additional means of self-organisation”.

4. The Canterbury earthquakes

4.1. Background Information
From September 2010, Christchurch and the surrounding area have been struck by numerous earthquakes. At 04:34 on 4 September 2010, a 7.1 earthquake struck along a previously unknown fault line near Darfield. There was no loss of life on this occasion but significant structural damage to residential dwellings. Then at 12:51 on 22 February 2011, a 6.3 earthquake struck at the Port Hills, which resulted in the deaths of 181 people and devastated the city of Christchurch. On 13 June 2011, a 6.3 aftershock struck at 14:20 in the Sumner area of Christchurch and killed one person. In the period from September 2010 to December 2011, there have been some 33 shocks over the magnitude of 5.0 and 2,889 over 3.0 (Gawith, 2011, p. 121). In addition to the dead, there were some 11,432 injured, and from September 2010 until August 2014 some 13,000 aftershocks have been recorded. The rebuilding costs of Christchurch are estimated to be equivalent to 20% of New Zealand’s GDP (New Zealand UPR, 2014).

4.2. Academic literature
The earthquakes have generated a lot of academic material, which approach the event from academic disciplines and perspectives. There is a lot of interest from the engineering and geology disciplines that shall not be discussed in this paper. From 2011 to 2012, a burgeoning literature analysed the earthquakes from a communicational, disaster medicine, organisational, psychological and response perspective.

A number of papers have appeared on the issue of organisational response to the series of earthquakes that rocked the Canterbury region around Christchurch. This includes an account of the New Zealand Blood Service in Christchurch (Flanagan, 2011) and schools in the region (Johnson & Ronan, 2014). These papers conclude that it is necessary to have some planning prior to a major event, such as this, but the organisation needs to remain flexible in their response after an event.
Resilience and coping with the Canterbury earthquakes forms another field of academic interest. A number of studies exist on how people coped physically and psychologically with the earthquakes (Gawith, 2011; Seadon & Bach, 2015; Wilson, 2013) and the impact upon resilience (Crowley Née Donovan & Elliott, 2012). They conclude that there is a precarious balance of tangible (physical environment) and intangible (psychological environment) elements that determine how long or whether a community can move on. The Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies even devoted a special issue to the theme of resilience and recovery. Studies on the earthquakes’ effects upon residents was also given some attention, such as population movements after the earthquakes (Love, 2011) and those who endured earthquakes new perception and sense of reality (McColl & Burkle, 2012). People react differently to a major crisis event, such as the Canterbury earthquakes. The actual and perceived efforts of the authorities and officials tasked with mitigating the effects and then the recovery process exerts an additional affect, depending on the length of time taken and the nature of how those efforts are perceived.

Communication and its role and effect were one of the foci of research. Poole (2012: abstract) noted that “a state of national emergency was declared on 23 February—the first time in New Zealand and the first time that the separate Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) responsibilities of national, regional and local Government came together to provide a single, unified response in a major emergency”. As shall be seen later, in the survey results, there are a number of problems with this statement. Vallence (2011, p. 24) concludes “this research shows that we cannot assume the state is willing or able to effectively engage a public who is also willing to participate. This suggests that in spite of a robust literature outlining the benefits of community engagement, and even in a country with established democratic traditions like New Zealand, the early recovery phase challenges ideals of ‘best practice’”. The aspect of official communication between the authorities and the public was lacking in many essential respects.

One of the aspects of interest for literature was the role and use of mobile communications technology and social media during the earthquakes and in the immediate aftermath. One perspective is the use of such communicational means from an organisational perspective, such as the University of Canterbury’s use of web 2.0 technology to post and share information with staff and students when “traditional” means of communication were disrupted or not functioning (such as landline telephones) (Dabner, 2012). There is also the point of view how geospatial technologies 2.0 are being used by authorities and responders to improve their coordination and management of an event (Merchant, Elmer, & Lurie, 2011; Roche et al., 2013; Yin, Lampert, Cameron, Robinson, & Power, 2012). The role of social media by the public as a means to communicate and build resilience also featured (Bruns & Burgess, 2012; Taylor, Wells, Howell, & Raphael, 2012).

4.3. Reports: official, civic society and media
Communications from officials and politicians carry a narrative of steady progress. At the level of Government and authorities communicating on the recovery process, there seems to be rather a lot of catch phrases and slogans, but less clear is a detailed vision and plan of how to achieve the recovery. For example, the Recovery Strategy vision of the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) is “greater Christchurch recovers and progresses as a place to be proud of and vibrant place to live, work, visit and invest for us and our children after us. The community is at the heart of the vision and the success of recovery”. The page also claims that “much of greater Christchurch functions effectively and safely and is open for business” (CERA, n.d.). After the 2011 earthquake, some 7,857 properties were deemed “red” (unsafe). It was not until 31 December 2012 that all residential property owners knew if they were zoned red or green, and if the Government would offer to buy their house (Statistics New Zealand, 2012). In January 2014, the Minister for Canterbury Earthquake Recovery (Gerry Brownlee) announced that 2/3 of damaged homes had been repaired within the Canterbury Home Repair Programme (CHRP) that had been awarded to Fletcher EQR in October 2010 (Beehive, 2014). Various facts and figures are given by official bodies, where statistics are seemingly used as a means to try and decontextualise and mask the significant time taken to achieve what has been done so far. Projection is another form of communicational strategy that has been used to try
and control the information flows and the wider perception of the crisis. For example, on 15 March 2015 Gerry Brownlee spoke at the United Nation’s Third World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Japan. He spoke of a success story of recovery and the success of the insurance system (Gerry Brownlee, 2015).

The Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act (2011) obliged the Christchurch City Council (CCC) to draft a Recovery Plan for the Central Business District within nine months of the legislation being enacted. Gerry Brownlee established a special unit called the Christchurch Central Development Unit (CCDU) within the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) to collaborate with the CCC and other stakeholders to finalise and eventually implement the plan (Central City, Christchurch City Council, n.d.). There have been problems encountered with transparency in the process at the level of CERA. Christchurch City Councillor, Yani Johanson filed an Official Information Act request for the Cabinet papers on the establishment of the CCDU and the feasibility studies of the Recovery Plan in August 2012, on 30 August he was informed that the request had been delayed 25 working days owing to “necessary consultations”. A subsequent letter informed him that this request was unlikely to be completed until mid-October (Sachdeva & Wright, 2012). Central city plan (2011, pp. 17–18) noted a number of necessary conditions for recovery to take place and function. This includes listening to, communicating with and including all stakeholders, including residents. “A successful recovery is measured by the ability of communities to rapidly regain what they have lost and to catch up to where they could have progressed to through improvements made. The improvement phase is central to recovery”. It goes on to note “throughout our recovery process Christchurch needs to be mindful to strike a balance across all sectors of the community to avoid uneven outcomes”.

A report on the performance of the CDEM to the February 2011 event was sought by the central Government. It covered the period from 22 February 2011 until 30 April 2011 (when CERA assumed responsibility). Work for the report was conducted from November 2011 and ended in April 2012. Early on in the report was a damning statement on aspects of organisational coordination and performance, and recovery from the September 2010 earthquake. “The review has concluded that at the time of the earthquake the local civil defence emergency management structures were dysfunctionally divided and recovery from the 4 September 2010 earthquake had stalled” (McLean et al., 2012, p. 10). Furthermore, the report noted delays in the transition from response to recovery. “However, no legislation was in place for recovery from major events. This caused a delay in setting up CERA and hence extended the Response beyond what was desirable” (Ibid., p. 11). Some of the major findings of the report are—“inadequate planning for a national input into forward control of high impact emergencies, inadequate arrangements to incorporate large numbers of ‘semi-spontaneous’ volunteers from the community into the Response, an Emergency Operation Centre structure devised in the ‘heat of battle’ because of the exigencies of the Response, and without prior planning, to merge disparate groups into a cohesive whole had only partial success” (Ibid., p. 189). A number of problems are seen in the report within the response phase of the event, which has impacted upon the recovery phase.

A lot of material exists in the public information space that contradicts the Government line. For example, there is some damning information concerning the insurance system. Sarah Miles in her 2012 book The Christchurch Fiasco: The Insurance Aftershock and its Implications for New Zealand and Beyond reaches some concerning conclusions. She finds and argues that this was a demonstration of Government administrative failure and financial risk-taking, partnered together with corporate malfeasance. Mass media reports tend to support the claims by Sarah Miles. Some four years after the 2010 earthquake, figures from the Insurance Council of New Zealand were combined with outstanding claims with the Earthquake Commission that about 5,900 at risk/vulnerable claimants were still waiting for rebuild or the repair of their damaged properties with more claimants being discovered each month (Anderson, 2014). Other stories detail accounts of insurance companies offering cash settlements to customers in a scheme that could leave them in a situation that unforeseen costs would be borne by them (Meier, 2015; Steeman, 2013). There are some 23,952 over-cap claims (more than NZ$100,000) handled by private insurers, of which 13,566 have been settled as of
February 2015. 78% of the claims were cash settled and 21% were insurance managed completed rebuilds or repairs. This has led to some expressing the belief that insurers are waiting for claimants to “give in” (Meier & Squires, 2015).

In addition to the performance of the insurance industry, other actors have come in for critique. The knowledge and professional standards of those tasked with assessing the damage and with repairing it have come under scrutiny (Pearson, 2014). This has prompted civic initiatives, such as the creation and circulation of petitions. One such petition that was being circulated in March 2015 called upon the Government to “conduct a truly independent and objective survey of the earthquake repair standards to homes repaired by EQC and/or private insurers, their PMOs and contractors in Canterbury”. There has also been criticism levelled at key institutions that are involved in the recovery process. CERA is one such institution. It has been described as an organisation that makes too many decisions in secret and being “out of touch” with reality. An illustration used to support this is NZ$7 million for Victoria Square renovation, an area not damaged by the earthquake of February 2011. The lack of transparency and accountability led the article to conclude “now is the time to return the task of making detailed design decisions to the Christchurch City Council. CERA is past its use-by date” (Killick, 2015). Environment Minister Nick Smith and Environment Canterbury (ECan) has been the subject of media reports lately too. In 2010, the central Government sacked the elected councillors and replaced them with commissioners ever since, citing apparent mismanagement of water issues. Recently, Smith publicly stated that a fully elected council carried “too many risks given the critical stage of work on the Canterbury Water Management Strategy and the earthquake recovery. […] It may be appropriate to consider these options beyond 2019” (Pearson, 2015). These examples illustrate the presence of a deficiency in the transparency and accountability of the actions of these named institutions and a far cry from any understanding of good, let alone best practice in crisis management.

The earlier mentioned (in the beginning of this section) “generous” offer by the Government to buy red zoned land from landowners has been a source of discontent, which was ultimately challenged in court. This nationalisation of private property has been characterised as being a Government “land grab” and CERA described as a “den of thieves”. Ill feeling was intensified when the Government announced that some of the 840 sites needed for the green frame and civic amenities shall be “re-packaged” and offered to private interests (MCDonald & Sachdeva, 2012). A group called the “Quake Outcasts” took the Government to court over their red zone pay outs and after a two-year long battle, won their case. The pay-out of 50% of the rateable value of their properties was characterised as being arbitrary (Wright, 2015a). In court, the Crown argued that the earthquakes had taken all of the value from the land, and argued that further compensation would create a “moral hazard” as the Government was acting as a “safety net” for the uninsured (Wright, 2015b). The Government was heavily criticised by the Supreme Court for a lack of consultation and communication on the deal. “The court found red zoners’ insurance status should not have been a factor in determining what compensation they are entitled to. It also ruled that the Government had not properly considered the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act and its purpose of social, economic, cultural and environmental wellbeing when making the reduced offer”. (Wright, 2015c). On this particular issue, the Government and CERA not only violated the principles of crisis management but also the wording and spirit of their own legislation. The duration of the recovery phase is seemingly being prolonged through a series of improper decisions and actions.

The recovery has been characterised in media and NGO reports as being very slow, which contradicts the Government’s accounts. Canterbury Employers’ Chamber of Commerce, Peter Townsend, said that 18 months after the 2011 earthquake “the perception runs right through the country that we are well advanced on our recovery. […] I know we are about 10% into the physical rebuild and no one will refute that” (Steeman, 2014). One of the many NGOs that have been created in the wake of the quake, and a symptom of disconnect and lack of trust that exists between the Government and the public is the Canterbury Communities’ Earthquake Recovery Network (CanCERN—http://cancern.org.nz/). Each year they conduct a door-to-door household survey. In May–August 2014 they
surveyed 774 homes. The group has found that the most vulnerable groups in society—disabled, elderly and children—continue to live in damaged dwellings for three years and counting, there is no apparent end in sight for many, which is starting to have a negative impact upon the physical and mental health of those affected groups (New Zealand UPR, 2014). The recovery process may last for decades, according to the Earthquake Commission (EQC) it shall take up to 30 years to repair rough roads and footpaths (EQC, 2015). The question is now, how do the theoretical understandings of crisis management and the different characterisations of the recovery process match the views of the respondents of the online survey?

5. Survey background
A lot of information is contradictory concerning the earthquake recovery process from the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. The responsible Government ministers and authorities tasked with the recovery generally paint a picture of positive progress. However, other sources indicate various and serious problems with the progress. What are the opinions and perceptions of Christchurch residents on the recovery process? Mention has been made in academic literature of the role played by social media for sharing information and mobilisation by residents, which provides an initial starting point. In this regard, the social media platform Facebook has been mentioned in the literature and has been observed by the author as being active in the role of information sharing and mobilisation. A second consideration in the process of choosing particular groups on Facebook was to find the most likely sources/groups that would challenge or at least test the Government narrative.

A number of Facebook groups exist, which are grassroots civic action oriented, they provide members with support, advice and information. These communities are quite insular and seem to fear being compromised by infiltrators. One group the author approached and applied for membership went as far as to blacklist list him from the group. The primary group selected for these reasons is TC3 Residents (named after the zoning for moderate to heavily damaged areas). This is a closed group and the statement of purpose for the group is clear.

This forum was initially for all those owning TC3 land to discuss issues and support each other. Over time it has become apparent many are faced with the same/similar issues be they red zone, Port Hills, TC2 and is now open for anyone personally effected with EQC/private insurance issues.

A lot of material is posted and discussed on the group's page, advice is sought and offered on different issues pertaining to the earthquakes, news items and reports are posted and discussed. The group page acts as a repository of information about the earthquakes and the recovery, and also serves as a site where group members provide each other with psychological support and encouragement. As of 24 March 2015 there are 2,460 members and growing. In March and April 2015 (17 March–8 April), an online survey was created on the platform Survey Monkey (https://www.surveymonky.com/s/D8HBWRK?fb_ref=Default). A total of 613 responses were received during this period. Responses received from the survey were all anonymous. The questions asked are listed below, which were posed as multi-choice or free text boxes.

(1) What is your gender?
(2) What is your age?
(3) How long have you lived in Christchurch?
(4) Were you present during the Christchurch earthquakes or the aftershocks?
(5) Are you satisfied with the earthquake recovery efforts?
(6) Please state your reason for the response to question five.
(7) Are there any aspects to the earthquake recovery that you perceive as being successful? Please state, and why you believe so.
(8) Are there any aspects that you perceive to be unsuccessful? Please state and explain.
(9) What is the timeframe that you anticipate the recovery process to take?
(10) Are there any actors involved in the earthquake recovery that you trust? (You can choose more than one)

Initially, the survey was posted on my personal Facebook page and then forwarded to TC3 Residents (it was not possible to post directly from Survey Monkey to the TC3 Residents page). Respondents were permitted to forward to other people and groups. A feature was added to the survey response that allowed for only one response from each computer in order to minimise chances of duplication and multiple responses from a single person. In addition to posting the online survey, the author was an active participant in the group’s discussions, in order to get a better understanding of the logic, reasoning, perceptions and opinions held by the members. A qualitative analysis will be conducted on typical and representative text answers taken from the pool of responses.

6. Survey results

6.1. Demographics of the sample
Of the 613 respondents, 465 identified themselves as female, 143 male and 5 skipped answering the question. The significant age groups represented among the respondents suggests that they are in the home owning range. 608 answered the question concerning their age range and 5 skipped it. The recorded number of responses in each category of the graphs is provided in brackets. Each of the graphs is intended to give the reader a quick reference to the overall dynamics of sample population demographics and responses as only a fraction of the answers given can be discussed in any detail (see Figure 1 for the spread of age among the respondents). Many are within age groups that are more likely to be home owners.

Figure 2 gives the breakdown on the length of time the respondents have lived in Christchurch and surrounding areas. Many of the respondents were long-term residents. 612 answered the question on how long they lived in Christchurch, one respondent skipped the question.

To clarify the content of the category “other”, of the 68 responses, only one answer was below 10 years (three years), others ranged from 15 years to “all of my life”.

The final answer that defined the demographic characteristics was whether the respondent was present during the earthquakes, which is given in Figure 3. 612 answered, and one skipped the question.

To summarise the demographics of the sample, the majority of respondents were women in the age range from 35 to 64, long-term residents (greater than 10 years) and were present during the earthquakes.
6.2. Perceptions of earthquake recovery

This section shall be presenting and analysing the data received from the respondents to judge the level of perception on the recovery process and associated issues, such as trust in institutions, organisations and individuals. The first question within this category to be asked was “are you satisfied with the earthquake recovery efforts?” 428 respondents answered this question and 185 skipped it. Figure 4, gives a clear impression of the level of satisfaction among the respondents.

Within the “other” category there were a total of 11 answers, most were not satisfied with answers such as, “appalled and disgusted”, “absolutely not” and “it’s a disgrace”. Some longer answers received included: “not at all. I have witnessed bullying, discrimination, and the whole fiasco has been run by totally unqualified egotists. Policies and procedures are totally inept, and the most vulnerable cases were black holed and have been left until last. It is criminal, and it is NZ’s genocide. Just disgusting”. Another answer received was “I have family and friends who are suffering still from their earthquake damaged homes, their long battles with Insurers … to the point their trust in Government, Local Government, and all the long standing fights, I have had family members die, get sick, suffer from ill health and that is not good when recovery efforts are barricaded by people who are paid thousands to those who are suffering and losing thousands and thousands … Its Heart breaking …”.

The next question asked respondents for the reason(s) for their answer regarding their level of satisfaction. This was a free text-based answer, 418 respondents answered and 195 skipped. Many of the answers alluded to slow or lack of progress, and different forms of corruption or incompetence
among those tasked with the recovery (Government, EQC, CERA, reconstruction companies, insurance companies). A sample of the text answers are given below.

The theft of our land by the Government has in affect stopped us building in Christchurch and has forced us out of the city this Government are land thieving scum.

Bridges and road still broken; community facilities that were destroyed have not been replaced; local community looks like a third world country.

Earthquake repairs to our home in 2012 resulted in the dissemination of asbestos through our entire house due to lack of testing for asbestos in stippled ceilings. We asked if asbestos testing should be done and were told by EQR staff that it was unnecessary. In Dec 2014 we found that our house had been contaminated for the last 2+ years with asbestos—our family (ourselves and 2 children) had been living in the house the whole time. EQR/EQC are now remediating the house, but are not following the NZDAA standards or Australian guidelines (there are no NZ guidelines) for treatment of soft furnishings and heat pumps in the contaminated rooms. Asbestos consultants we talk to say these items must be discarded as they will be contaminated due to being in contaminated rooms for 2+ years, EQR/EQC is saying they are fine to be reinstated into the house, and that if we don’t choose to take them back into the house then that is our choice and we have to pay for them ourselves. We have questioned their stance, and quoted the asbestos consultants and staff from the CDHB who all say the items should be discarded, EQR/EQC will not change their stance.

We are still living in a house that is not weather tight with small children, driving on broken roads and now have an infestation of rats due to damaged houses around us that are not being demolished. The priority of repairs is all wrong—without the people, there is no city.

Still waiting after 4 years to learn what repair/rebuild strategy might be offered to fix our home is causing considerable stress to my 82 year old spouse & self. Lack of honesty from city & govt. officials. Employment & protectionism of inadequately trained personnel. Seeing waste caused by “string-'em-along” policies. Watching poor project management at friends and neighbours’ homes. The idiotic practice of starting fixing process with inadequate scoping or failure to fix land first. Needing to become familiar with building practice in order to avoid being duped—so lack of practitioners’ integrity & consumer protection. Insurance companies failing to adequately honour their policies & policy holders having to fight for due entitlement. Persistent civic & Government attempts to browbeat citizens down. EQC minister properties fixed/rebuilt early. Etc.

There are numerous more depressing personal accounts along these lines given in the answers. The majority of answers are negative, and display a distinct absence of faith or trust in the institutions and authorities tasked with the recovery. When asked if there are any successful aspects that they can identify in the earthquake recovery 379 free text answers were given, and 234 skipped the question. Many of the answers were sceptical if there was actually any success to be found, such as “earthquakes are fewer now, that’s what the only success” or there are no successes. However, there were those that did find some aspects that could be regarded as being successful.
Yes—Community strength and spirit.

Initial SAR (search and rescue) efforts

“The renewal of the infrastructure” and “more robust infrastructure. e.g. SCIRT but efficiency still questionable”

FEB 2011 Initially good response with people checking you to see if everyone was ok. The army being deployed to assist with services

recovery of basic services was ok in the circumstances

Employment is high. Also mental health services seeming to be taking good care of people, at least those I know who’ve sought help. And those are really the only positives.

There are a number of answers that indicate some aspects of the initial clean-up and recovery were successful to an extent (such as search and rescue efforts). A number of replies spoke of a community strength and spirit being found in a time of common adversity and hardship. The next question asked respondents to identify those aspects that they consider to be unsuccessful. A total of 387 replies were received, and 226 skipped the question. Some of the free text answers are given below.

EQR/EQC adds to the stress rather than reduces it. The staff are incredibly vague, it is difficult to get through to managers, managers do not back their staff, and managers are incompetent and tend to manage by ignoring emails and making snap decisions rather than following reasoned and substantiated arguments. The company is a farce. I had breast cancer 2 years ago—it was easier to deal with that than it has been to deal with EQC. EQC do act with integrity and are not lead from the top with any moral or ethical values.

The people left worst affected are put in the too hard basket and left to suffer the longest.

2011. Still people without running water, or toilet facilities after 4 years—no explanation should be needed. Ongoing lack of transparency—it is becoming increasingly obvious that the city should have taken a managed retreat from south Brighton regions.

Yes. to all large quakes, Sep 10, Feb 11, June 11 and Dec 11. Over four years on and vast majority of residents that homes that suffered major damage have been ripped off by EQC and/or Insurance or still are waiting. Building guidelines in place before quake have been loosened to suit insurers in most likely trade off to reinsure Christchurch homes. Claimants living in damaged homes some in third world conditions fighting for correct repairs to be done. Stress both mental and financial in fighting for insurers to honour their policy agreements, having to get their own experts assessments at considerable cost to get what should have been done right from the start. This is the biggest fraud by Government and insurance companies ever. Come next large quake any substandard (and most repairs are) will come and cripple homeowners that assumed everything has been done right, but it hasn’t. Homeowners will be crippled financially.

Unqualified people engaged to assess property damage Too much interference by overseas insurance companies slowing down the rebuild No or very little communication between EQC and private insurance companies regarding claims e.g. I had to liaise between the two of them.

The 100 day blue print. Knocking down of heritage buildings with no thought of restoration. Force purchase of land for the frame of which there seems to be no progress on at all.

Priorities were laughable. Very little perception of which areas were hardest hit & where the greatest need was situated.

Too much bureaucracy and political posturing. Lies and more lies.

I observed CEO’s from all State Service Sectors arriving in Christchurch along with the Ombudsman to attend meetings which possibly focused on resilience. It is my opinion the Christchurch earthquake recovery has been a social experiment in resilience.
Almost everything Shocked to find even straight after September earthquakes, had unqualified assessing damage to my house Wrong protocols/wrong people dealing at the frontline/poor communication/no input from homeowners were sought Waste of tax payers money when the builder assessed damage on the day work began No support and assistance for the frail and elderly, people with English as a second language, mentally ill and disabled.

Massive disruption still to family members, houses remain unrepaired, insurance companies fighting with EQC. Stupid and unwanted CCDU projects. Children’s schools closed against community wishes, broken roads and bridges, the whole thing is a JOKE. Huge frauds committed by Fletchers repair company contractors. There need to be an enquiry into the corruption that has occurred … disaster capitalism rules in CHCH”.

Insurance companies seem to be accountable to no-one. My experience of them are they are bullies playing games. The Government has stood by, and even joined in the games. They seem to all be in the same club. Lack of democracy. Lack of real public participation. The council, insurance, Government appear to be either extremely incompetent or sociopathic.

One respondent pointed to the fact that the Minister of Earthquake Recovery, the head of EQC and CERA all have shares in Fletcher Construction, the company given a leading role in the reconstruction of the city. There are many different points of contention, such as stated earlier, issues pertaining to corruption, self-interest, lack of public consultation, lack of accountability and transparency in the process, lack of community input (and democratic practice), slow and shoddy work practices and priorities. The next question asked respondents how long they think the recovery process shall take. 405 answered and 208 skipped the question. This question was intended to discover if respondents thought that their current situation was perceived as being a short-term or long-term issue. One response was 3 years, but most answers were 10 years or more, and a number of answers stated that it “would not happen in their life time” or that it was a “generational” process. Many of the answers displayed cynicism and a lack of faith in the ability of those charged with the recovery to effectively perform their duties.

The satisfaction of respondents appears to be a product of their perception of the crisis, which was defined as being a threat to core values, creating a sense of urgency and high levels of uncertainty (Boin et al., 2005, pp. 2–4). Respondents’ replies suggest that they feel as though their values are still threatened (especially quality of life), there is still a great deal of uncertainty existing (when will the recovery be complete?) and that there is no sense of political urgency or resolve to see the recovery through by the Government. The existing situation is seen as a direct threat to their interests and well-being. Therefore, although the physical crisis is theoretically in the post-crisis phase, another political crisis has certainly emerged where the key values at stake are credibility and trust.

The final question asked respondents to name any actors in the earthquake recovery process that they trust, 416 answered the question and 197 skipped it. Figure 5, concerning the level of trust in earthquake recovery actors demonstrates some clear trends. Answers given demonstrate a tremendous lack of trust in the main actors and institutions charged with the recovery process. More than one answer could be chosen by the respondents.

Some clarification needs to be given to the “other” category, which revealed a number of institutions that were trusted by the respondents. Some answers revealed a lack of trust in anyone or anything. Other mentions included, the Student Army, civil society/action groups (WECAN, TC3 Residents group, Flockton Basin Group, CANCERN, Eastern Vision, Project New Brighton, Insurance Watch, Facebook groups, Empowered Christchurch), some charity groups, the Red Cross was mentioned a number of times, schools, the Salvation Army, individual advocates (Duncan Webb, Zoran Rakovich, Dean Lester, Adrian Cowie, Hugo Kristinsson), communities and families, local community boards, church groups, Lianne Dalzell (mayor of Christchurch after the earthquakes), residential advisory services, earthquake support, individual members of Parliament, Waimakariri District Council and Lumley (insurance company). Those organisations and actors charged with the recovery process...
have rated very poorly in terms of trust. One of the text answers given explains underlying reasons for that lack of trust.

The “powers that be” have consistently ignored what is happening on the ground. They made illegal decisions which are now being challenged in court, Quake Outcasts being one recent win in the Supreme Court. Legislation was passed that allowed up to 49% of a foundation to be repaired without a consent which has allowed extremely shoddy repair strategies. Houses are now showing huge problems and having to be re-repaired as this rule change allowed cowboys to come in with no qualifications and just paper over serious structural issues. This also means the homeowner is left with all the risk as I’d the Council hasn’t inspected the repair it will be up to the owner to try and track down the company responsible and try to get them to take responsibility. Decisions were made by these people to the detriment of the people of Christchurch and I believe a Royal Commission of Inquiry still needs to happen but MO’s are unwilling to touch it. Even the media have been “told” to put a positive spin on our so called recovery and evidence of this is in some released CERA documents. CERA want to shred some of its documents which will make it hard to challenge decisions on the future if they destroy the evidence. They want to destroy documents as they are running scared. The earthquake recovery is now a political issue and we are the victims. The earthquake didn’t make me a victim, the process that followed did, and is still doing that!!

Trust is based upon perception, when the perception of a public becomes eroded, the reaction and recourse can be to politicise an event. What is observed above is in-line with the observations of Boin et al. (2008, p. 9) that this politicisation has evolved around the core process of accountability. But diverging from the idea of this concerning office holders rendering their account via public forums, the respondents demonstrate that they are rendering their competing account (to the Government’s) via sympathetic social media groups as an avenue and means to express their frustration and anger. A number of respondents replied via email and chat, stating that the survey made them think and reflect upon their experiences from the earthquakes and afterwards. On 17 March 2015, Charles wrote a message to the author via Facebook chat, and reflected on the process and experience, which had been jogged by filling out the survey.

I have just completed your survey and I thought your last question was really interesting about the organisations we trust. What is interesting is how my perception of these organisations changed during the quakes. For instance, we were always told that in the event of a natural disaster to listen out for Civil Defence broadcasts on the radio. This never happened in any of the quakes. I remember in the September earthquake listening to National Radio. The information they were getting came from text messages sent in to the announcer and from the Geonet website. As far as councils, the Canterbury regional council has Government appointed commissioners, not elected by the people and the CCC is constantly under threat of heading the same way if they do not tow the Government line. It does make it hard to know who to trust, particularly with organisations associated and
controlled by the Government. However, one great thing which has happened due to the quakes is the formation of so many community based organisations and support groups. It has made everyone closer to their neighbours and really boosted that community spirit.

In the above quote, basic systems that should have functioned during the earthquakes did not, such as the civil defence emergency radio broadcasts. The absence of this broadcast (ordinary radio programming was not interrupted!) left many in “the dark” about what to do in an emergency, bearing in mind that the idea of turning to the radio for this information is reinforced in all New Zealanders from school age. The earthquakes have caused much dislocation and hardship, which is seemingly being compounded by the perceived lack of effective management of the recovery process. These individual accounts are testimony to the plight of many ordinary Cantabrians that have been affected, and continue to be, by the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011.

The report of 2012 (McLean et al., 2012) was an actual demonstration of the Cabinet to employ PR as a means to protect the reputation of the Government by severely restricting the terms of the study. This breaks the fundamental PR rule of attending to the needs of the constituents first, before attending to organisational priorities. Other criticisms include the lack of transparency, accountability and democracy in the recovery, for example, suspending the democratically elected members of the Canterbury Regional Council and replacing them with Government appointees. These actions fly in the face of recognised good practice in crisis management, which was outlined in the literature review of this paper. A likely result from the outset of such actions would be to foment outrage among the residents, given the nature of the survey replies, this is seemingly confirmed.

On the 23rd of March 2015, I sent an email to Gerry Brownlee’s office and asked three questions: In general terms, as Minister for Canterbury Earthquake Recovery, how do you characterise the recovery process and results?; What do you see as being the most successful aspects of the earthquake recovery and why?; What in your opinion are the least successful aspects, and why? A response to those questions was received on the 21st of April (see Annex 1). The UN’s four-phase model of disaster phases was given—emergency, restoration, reconstruction and vision.

It is difficult to characterise the recovery process and results at this stage, as the recovery is still on-going. At present, the recovery process is shifting from the restoration of essential services into the reconstruction phase and achievement of the long-term vision for greater Christchurch. This period will continue for at least 10 years.

According to the answer to the first question, the “recovery” process lies somewhere between containment/damage limitation and recovery as per the scale devised by Crandall et al. (2014). The prediction of at least another 10 years fits with the minimum answers that have been given by the respondents to the survey. In reply to the second question posed, concerning the successful aspects, mentions were made of the different awards and work on the Christchurch Central Development Unit’s Blueprint Plan, cooperation among strategic partners was another identified aspect. A number of the strategic partners identified, such as CERA, rated as the least trusted institutions by the respondents.

The final question on the least successful aspects yielded a number of identified problems, many of which were identified numerous times by the respondents. Three aspects, in particular, were singled out. (1) “Resolving the most challenging insurance claims”; (2) “assisting vulnerable property owners to make decisions on their insurance claims and relocate from their damaged dwellings”; and (3) “progressing shared properties to the repair phase (these properties often have complicated insurance issues and ownership arrangements)”. A number of resident support programmes were listed after these problems, and a commitment to overcome the problems and challenges. There seems to be a significant disconnect in perception between the stated Government commitment to the recovery and the feelings of abandonment expressed in many of the responses.
7. Further research
This study provides an interesting insight into the role and function of social media in the aftermath of a crisis. Many studies focus upon the use of social media in terms of use by Governments, bureaucracies, emergency services or volunteers as a means to inform and mobilise stakeholders. The focus of this paper is on the issue of perception and how social media can provide a platform to disgruntled publics whose expectations have not been satisfied or met by the official response and efforts in the recovery phase. There is a clear connection between the political mobilisation of these groups based upon the issue of official accountability and transparency in the recovery process, which is seen by many as a failure. A deeper understanding of underlying factors that form the connections between official accountability/transparency and public perception/expectations and the tipping point for the politicisation of the recovery phase and the possible implications for the success or failure of that phase as a result. What are the necessary preconditions for creating such a political climate? Can it be forestalled? Is it possible for authorities to have a functional relationship with suspicious or hostile publics? More cases are needed to generate more reliable answers to these questions, which are the result of crisis management failures. Although, there are some preconditions that need to be met. (1) The perception of political and bureaucratic failure of public interest, (2) a feeling of isolation (from the same authorities and from mass media) by publics, (3) politicisation and mobilisation of those publics and (4) resorting to social communities as a means of self-reinforcement, protection and venting.

8. Conclusion
According to Crandall et al. (2014, p. 11), the recovery phase is about resuming activities as much as possible. Firstly, the aim was to attain an acceptable minimum, and then in the long-term to regain (or improve) the level that existed in pre-crisis conditions. Both of these categories are deficient according to the majority of responses received. Does this mean that there is a politicisation of the crisis, according to the aspects expressed by Boin et al. (2008, p. 9)? The answer seems to be no, as there is little recourse in terms of transparency or accountability by the official actors, and the official accounts are given more access to the media space than other dissenting voices. This makes the role of social media and civic society organisations important under these circumstances as they allow people to seek advice, vent frustration and gain some measure of publicity.

Nohrstedt (2011) states that one of the defining aspects of a crisis is a call for public action, the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011 provide a good case in point of that definition. Later he points to the measure of success or otherwise in crisis management/recovery as being perceptions as serving the role as a benchmark. Given that some 80% of respondents gave a negative view of the earthquake recovery, it can be said that the process can be benchmarked as a failure, according to the data received. Gerry Brownlee was asked whether he considered the recovery process as being successful, he gave a reply on 21 April. The official reply to my correspondence was much more nuanced than Brownlee’s public comments at the UN forum in Japan, where he praised (among other things) the disaster insurance system. The Government seemingly (according to a number of the responses received) understands that the failure to control information on a crisis can exacerbate negative aspects, including directly operational issues (from Scanlon, 1975) and therefore attempt to project success (as in the UN meeting in Japan), ignoring a number of very serious failures and issues.

Franklin et al. (2009, pp. 65–66) mentioned that the task of communications professionals to “line-up” speed of information, accuracy of information and the transparency of process as being a massive challenge. In the responses, the Government has failed in its PR message for the following reasons: the response (especially tangible response) has been deemed as very slow; the accuracy of information is regarded as dubious; and the transparency of the process is deemed as being questionable. Therefore, this study represents an example of where a crisis of information and communication on a crisis has resulted in impacts on credibility and trust between authorities and residents, which shall have an impact upon the operational aspects (the increasing number of court cases may be a result of this).
Very long lists of problems and issues have been identified from the responses, some of which affect the core values and functioning of society. Primarily, the resentment and anger felt by the respondents was not directed at the first responders (whom the respondents had a great deal of expressed trust), but at the political and bureaucratic machinery of Government that was seen as self-serving and obstructive to the recovery process. The lack of trust in the institutions and actors that are primarily responsible for the earthquake recovery is a very disturbing trend of the survey. There is a distinct deficit of trust in key officials and organisations, instead respondents trust certain individuals (including the local community), non-governmental bodies and social media much more.

Such trends will potentially make the engagement of stakeholders by the authorities in the recovery process problematic, should they choose to attempt to do so. These social media communities have become insular, defensive and anti-governmental in nature. Some individual journalists are trusted by these groups, but in general, it is felt that mass media tend to tow the Government line and ignore public interest. The observed trends tend to confirm the nature of groups on social media—do not trust organisations or authorities, engage in many-to-many forms of communication for sharing information and experiences, tend to trust and revolve around key known individuals. A result of this distrust is that the recovery phase has bogged down and is locked somewhere in the region of manhunt and epilogue according to Granatt’s media response to a crisis (Harrison, 1999, p. 106), but this is occurring in social media rather than in mainstream media.

Funding
The author received no direct funding for this research.

Author details
Greg Simons1,2
E-mail: greg.simons@ucrs.uu.se
ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1435-0151
1 Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden.
2 Department of Communication Sciences, Swedish National Defence College, Turiba University, Riga, Latvia.

Citation information
Cite this article as: Projecting failure as success: Residents’ perspectives of the Christchurch earthquakes recovery. Greg Simons, Cogent Social Sciences (2016), 2: 1126169.

Notes
1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6UvO0mnKl0.
4. As noted in this report, whose terms of reference were approved by the Cabinet, “specifically excluded by the terms of reference are the recovery process and the whole of Government response” (McLean, Oughton, Ellis, Wakelin, & Rubin, 2012, p. 8).
7. “My MP, Megan Woods, has been fantastic. I trust her. I don’t trust the National Government AT ALL. John Key (New Zealand’s Prime Minister) is a self-centred jerk.”.

References


Annex 1

Office of Hon Gerry Brownlee
MP for Waimate
Minister for Canterbury Earthquake Recovery
Minister of Defence
Leader of the House
Minister Responsible for the Earthquake Commission

21 APR 2015

Dr Greg Simons
Greg.Simons@fms.govt.nz

Ref: CERGB14-15/0324

Dear Dr Simons,

Thank you for your email of 23 March 2015 regarding the progress of earthquake recovery in Canterbury. I regret the delay in my response.

I have answered your questions in the order that you raised them.

1. In general terms, as Minister for Canterbury Earthquake Recovery, how do you characterise the recovery process and results?

International evidence indicates there are a number of phases to recovery. There are also a variety of models used to depict recovery phases following a significant disaster. The Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) has taken the United Nations’ model and adapted it to suit New Zealand’s experience of the earthquake sequence in Canterbury. I have attached diagrams of the four phases of recovery for your information.

As you will note, the model identifies four phases of recovery. These are:

- Phase 1: Emergency
- Phase 2: Restoration
- Phase 3: Reconstruction
- Phase 4: Vision

It is difficult to characterise the recovery process and results at this stage, as the recovery is on-going. At present, the recovery process is shifting from the restoration of essential services into the reconstruction phase and achievement of the long-term vision for greater Christchurch. This period will continue for at least 10 years.
2. What do you see as being the most successful aspects of the earthquake recovery, and why?

The Christchurch Central Development Unit’s (CCDU’s) Blueprint Plan provided a strong, innovative response to the issues facing the city and the urban rebuild. The Plan was developed by a design consortium, which was given just 100 days to produce its vision for the city following the Christchurch City Council’s ‘Share an Idea’ campaign.

In December 2014, the Consortium won the prestigious World Architecture News Urban Design Award for its work on the Blueprint Plan. This Award was an endorsement by leading design experts of the direction the city is heading in.

The Blueprint Plan fed into the wider Christchurch Central Recovery Plan that outlines the future development of central Christchurch. The Plan identifies Anchor Projects, which are being developed to stimulate activity and attract inner-city investment in Christchurch central.

More information about the Blueprint Plan, the Anchor Projects and the wider Christchurch Central Recovery Plan is available on the CCDU’s website at http://ccdu.govt.nz/plan/the-plans-history.

Another successful aspect of the recovery is the engagement between the strategic partners; CERA, Christchurch City Council, Waimakariri District Council, Selwyn District Council, Environment Canterbury and Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu.

For instance, the Land Use Recovery Plan was developed by Environment Canterbury in conjunction with the strategic partners. The Plan puts land use policies and rules in place to assist rebuilding and recovery of the communities (including housing and businesses) disrupted by the earthquakes, helping to achieve the vision of the Recovery Strategy for Greater Christchurch. More information about the Land Use Recovery Plan, including how the strategic partners were involved, is available on the CERA website at www.cera.govt.nz/recovery-strategy/built-environment/land-use-recovery-plan.

3. What in your opinion are the least successful aspects, and why?

There are still some complex recovery issues yet to be resolved across greater Christchurch. These primarily relate to the residential repair and rebuild and include:

- resolving the most challenging insurance claims
- assisting vulnerable property owners to make decisions on their insurance claims and relocate from their damaged dwellings
- progressing shared properties to the repair phase. (These properties often have complicated insurance issues and ownership arrangements)

These challenges are having a major effect on the wellbeing and health of residents of greater Christchurch. The Government is committed to overcoming these challenges, with support from other agencies, through the next phase of recovery.

Central government will continue to support the programmes that exist to help people in greater Christchurch resolve the issues they are facing. Some of the programmes include:

- Residential Advisory Service (www.advisory.org.nz)
- Earthquake Support Coordination Service (www.quakeaccommodation.govt.nz/sites/default/files/files/eq-support-brochure.pdf)

Yours sincerely

Hon Gerry Brownlee
Minister for Canterbury Earthquake Recovery