

Understanding the politics of recovery in post-earthquake Christchurch: discursive strategies and praxis

Date: Tuesday 22 March 2016

Time: 11.30am – 12.30pm

Location: Room 208, Level 2, Te Ao Marama Building

Presenter: Steven Kensinger

Abstract:

This research project is an ethnographic study of the Christchurch city rebuild. Through in-depth case studies, participant observation, and informal interviewing, I interrogate the concept of “recovery” and what it means for Ngai Tahu, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations involved in both the physical and cultural recovery of the city. Each of these groups possess different discursive strategies of recovery and it is through interrogating those strategies and participating in their practices of recovery that I am able to articulate the processes by which local identities are formed in-situ. Each group hopes to mold the identity of Christchurch to reflect their own. They do this through participating in the rebuild in specific ways and engaging in practices that reflect their value systems. Thus Christchurch’s identity post-earthquake reflects the pluralist values of those who are engaged in rebuilding the city.

This talk will be an informal discussion of some of my preliminary findings and an opportunity for a collaborative discussion about how to make my research useful for the Ngai Tahu community in Christchurch.

Biography:

Steven Kensinger is a PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in Minneapolis, MN, USA. With support from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research and the cooperation of the Ngai Tahu Research Centre, Steven has been conducting ethnographic research on the Christchurch earthquake recovery with a particular emphasis on Ngai Tahu participation in the government-led rebuild. Steven holds a BA in History from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. and an MA in Social Science from the University of Chicago in Chicago, IL.