



COMMUNICATING VALUE OF THE EAST BY EAST AREA



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Executive Summary

Life in Vacant Spaces (LIVS) is a charitable trust who are currently managing 'East by East' (ExE) which is a section of red-zone land in Christchurch which is dedicated to community projects until plans for a wetland are finalised. Already on this site is a disc golf course, a drone club, a pump track for BMX, fruit tree orchard and more. LIVS wanted to find out how people value the ExE area. The research question of 'How do site stakeholders value the ExE area?' was developed to investigate how people use the space and how they value the projects. Stakeholders include Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), Dallington residents association, Burwood East residents association, the drone racing club, disc golf association, Seeds of love, the Foragers Whare and a local rugby team. We interviewed all of these stakeholders to find out what they value about the space. We then analysed the data by separating it into political, societal, economic, cultural and environmental to find what these groups valued in this space. It was found that the people who use the ExE space value it in terms of engagement, purpose, opportunities, revitalisation and inclusivity. There were a few shortcomings associated with this research, which were unable to have focus groups, failure to receive desired replies and Mana Whenua engagement. A tool is currently being developed to give to LIVS as a way to see how the ExE space is valued into the future.

Introduction

The Christchurch earthquakes were responsible for the creation of over 600ha of unusable, derelict, 'red-zoned' land across the garden city. LIVS is an organisation that saw an opportunity to take the spaces, and regenerate life back into them through a community partnership and collaborative ventures. Using an 8ha plot in Burwood, the organisation has created a social initiative project that harnesses societies desire to interact, learn and contribute, this goes by the name of East by East. ExE boasts club bases, activities for all ages, and a range of workshops whilst providing an open and accessible green space. Our work with the space has surrounded helping LIVS communicate the value of the project to external parties for future licensing and funding purposes. To do so, we connected with as many stakeholders as possible to reiterate what the true value of ExE is in regards to their purpose for using the space. Using our generated values of engagement, revitalisation, opportunities, purpose and inclusivity, we are able to express just how valuable projects such as ExE are in uniting recovering and redeveloping societies. This work is also beneficial in understanding what evokes stakeholders in the community to use projects of this style and why they see them as beneficial. The following report outlines; the data collection methods used, the results of this data, a discussion of significance surrounding these outcomes as well as final recommendations and evoking future thoughts for LIVS.

Literature Review

Literature reviews were completed to gain a greater understanding of the basis of our project. These were split into the displacement of people after a disaster, community projects that are implemented after a disaster and the resilience shown by the community, social benefits of community projects, methods to assess the value of community projects and looking at the history of wetlands and wetlands themselves.

Research was undertaken on displacement and return migration which aided in understanding concepts of societies behaviour post-disaster. Due to ExE site's history of housing over 3000 Burwood residents, concepts of the significance of primary qualitative data and the relationship between economics and societal behaviour were used to understand the sensitivity of the area to some. Angeningsih (2019) concept of societies prioritising social and cultural associations of a location, denotes a direct response to how our stakeholders perceive ExE value. The concepts developed a baseline for creating strategies on how to communicate with stakeholders in a non-provoking way and the reasoning behind the range in value perceptions.

People do not get the chance to pick and choose where and what gets ruined in the face of a disaster. However, they have the potential to choose what to do with that space (Campbell, Helphand, Kransy, Svendsen & Tidball, 2010), which is what LIVS have done with the ExE space. Disasters can allow for people to perform at their best and can create spaces for people to take part in temporary opportunities to develop better spaces for themselves and their communities (Wesener, 2015). These vacant spaces provide the opportunity for flexible spaces which are not of traditional nature, have a small amount of regulation and are available to everyone and anyone to use (Carr & Dionisio, 2017). This allows for more community voice and the community can get what they would like to see in the particular spaces. The community projects in vacant spaces become a home for community engagement which therefore strengthens a communities resilience, positive emotions and engagement, this, in turn, creates positive interactions between people and the environment (Cretney, 2018).

Reviewing social literature covered many concepts which showed up in our results. From our responses, we interpreted inclusiveness as a key societal benefit from the space. The fruit orchards located on the site were identified as a key source of this community interaction. This is consistent with our literature as "Cultivating health and wellbeing: members' perceptions of the health benefits of a Port Melbourne community garden" of the journal *Leisure Studies* suggests a relationship between community togetherness and the presence of public gardens at community sites (Kingsley, 2006). The concept of social capital was a significant idea from this literature review. Applied to social data social capital considers the benefit from community interaction generated by a project. Due to some literature considering there to be a limited scope from this form of evaluation, we chose not to use this framework for our data.

In Christensen (2019) they used qualitative and quantitative mixed methods study of fieldwork, semi-structured interviews, and survey data. This method was used for an urban integration community garden project in Copenhagen. The interviews were transcribed and compared to field observations. They focused on social capital, bringing different groups in society together and forming community. Through interviews and questionnaires, they gathered people's personal experiences and opinions. There were examples of these in the reading as they provided quotes from the interviews. This method was effective as they found

that everyone who was a part of the community garden felt they were “like a family” (Christensen, 2019). There is no one size fits all method for valuing community projects. In (Dombroski, 2018) it discusses finding a set of indicators with different scales of value that could be used to develop a valuing tool.

The significance of the ExE area in terms of geological history but with a cultural aspect was introduced as well. The benefits of a wetland restoration will have a great influence on the ecology and hydrology of the area. This will not only benefit the wealth of the area but will also abide by the goals that local mana whenua would like to achieve. This has relevance to our project as the area used to be a wetland that was used for mahinga kai (Wiederholt et al, 2020; Tau, 2016). It is discussed in these articles why Burwood cannot return back to urban infrastructure due to the 2011/12 Christchurch earthquakes (Hughes et al, 2015). Mana whenua and their “grand narratives” taking the opportunity to rebuild post-earthquakes is also incorporated into the literature in what they aim to achieve after seizing the opportunity to rebuild Christchurch (Tau, 2016).

Methods

We formed our main research question with the guidance of our community partner and group supervisor. The question we came up with is 'how do site stakeholders value ExE projects?'. We identified stakeholders of the projects and made a brainstorm of potential sub-questions to ask them.

We began our research with a literature review. Which included reading and analysing journal articles so that we could find out the background information about our research project and how other people have conducted research about similar topics. Our literature review was divided into five parts, for each of our group members to research. The five topics were the displacement of people after a disaster, community projects that are implemented after a disaster and the resilience shown by the community, social benefits of community projects, methods to assess the value of community projects and looking at the history of wetlands and wetlands themselves. A literature review is crucial to research as it helps you to understand your subject matter, justify your research, develop methodology, support and reference your own findings and build upon existing research.

We visited the site of the ExE projects on three different occasions, to meet our community partner, to have interviews with stakeholders and to observe the space at peak times. This was beneficial as we grasped a deeper understanding for the area, the projects and understood the aims of our research.

The main method used to address our research question and objectives was interviewing. From our community partner, we identified stakeholders of the ExE projects. These included government bodies such as LINZ and Christchurch City Council. Project partners include giving seeds of love, the drone racing club, the disc golf club, and the forager's whare. Locals included Dallington and Burwood East residents associations. The types of interviews we conducted were via email, in person, over the phone and posting on residents association Facebook pages. Getting responses from residents association facebook pages was valuable as we received feedback from a variety of people in the community. We contacted all of these groups via email and got responses from all but one which was the Christchurch City Council. Some were easy to get in contact with, others we had to send multiple emails to get a response. In hindsight, we should have called the stakeholders that were harder to get ahold of instead of emailing them. We found that with interviewing government organisations there are restrictions on what they can and cannot say, therefore sometimes you have to read between the lines to get an answer. Stakeholders that we could not have in person interviews with, still provided a sufficient amount of information for us to draw results from. The in-person interviews were successful as we could engage in a conversation where people would have elaborate answers to our questions and we could ask follow up questions. The interview questions were tailored to specific groups of stakeholders; community project partners, government organisations and residents associations. Most of our questions were opinion-based. The types of data we will receive are impressions, feelings, assertions, statistics and guesses (Hay, 2016).

We used interview prompts such as probing questions to find more specific and in-depth information. This nodding, smiling and yes etc. as well as summaries such as "so the people

in your community that use this space are more families with young children?”. Our interviews were structured and semi-structured. We asked pre-determined questions and open-ended questions which left room for discussion. We used open questions such as ‘why’, ‘what’ and ‘when’, which helps us receive detail and effective oral history (Hay, 2016). The technique of voice recording gave us the benefit of being able to fully take in and engage with the conversation as we were not rigorously trying to write down notes. We typed interview notes and voice recordings on the day of the interview, and summarised these. According to Hay (2016) recorded interviews should be transcribed into a typed format on the day of or as soon as possible after the interview. Transcribing interviews is useful for analysis (Hay, 2016). Once transcribed making sense of our data included the method of coding of particular phrases to extract values and annotating parts of the transcript. We could then make summaries of the interviews. We assigned each group member a theme to identify which themes were common among the interviews. A way in which we could improve this process is for every one of our group members to identify all themes in all of the interviews (Limb, 2001). We read through all of the interview transcriptions we had with the stakeholders and highlighted parts that resonated with the themes of the value we identified and then created a tool for stakeholders to rate these values.

Results

Upon analysis of our data, the system categories of political, cultural, environmental, economic and societal were derived from Carl Folke's 1996 work 'Rights to nature'. The literature states that human activities and large-scale movements/trends move in the systems mentioned above (Folke, 1996). Not only do these connect and interact, but provide a clear structure for result interpretation. We decided to incorporate these categories to express our research in order to clearly group outcomes by their general theme. This meant that making inferences about each theme was easier as all data surrounding this aspect was collated together and interaction could be assessed.

Economically, responses valued and admired the transformation of the land in terms of direct economic value. Previously a red-zoned area, there was an appreciation for the increased site value the social initiatives have given. Concepts of increased property value in the surrounding area provided insight into the communities positive economic perception. The minimal cost was also a notable theme as the usage of the space is free for club and public use, as well as access to facilities such as the rugby field and fruit from the orchard. A Burwood residents association member noted that the free available produce was a large pull factor increasing ExE attractiveness denoting; "we've been collecting grapes and peaches there for years." Free land space for clubs such as the Redzone Drone Racing Club has provided them with an opportunity to grow their population and racing area without extensive monetary commitment. The club themselves stated that without the ExE area, they would struggle to find a suitable location to support the predicted growth of the club. From an organisational view, LINZ themselves are behind the funding for some of the current and future projects and suggest that the initiative is a beneficial use of their license and funding as it provides community-wide benefits.

From a societal focus, ExE promotes inclusivity, collaboration and interaction. The variety of people using the space from families, club members to elderly dog walkers has seen the creation of a societally inclusive and non-discriminatory environment. A local resident explained that "it's so meaningful to many residents, I know there are proposals for how to use the land but it would be a shame to lose what we have" which elaborates on the meaningful connection many community members have with the site. The project 'Seeds of Love' elaborated that variety in the projects brings people together. They have received feedback that people are happy to know that community projects such as their own, have a space to use. Engagement levels in the area have increased as well as the reduction in disturbing behaviours such as rubbish disposal. Dallington residents association representative, stated that the positive reputation has increased those to purposely travel to the space. This shows just how inviting the projects are as well as representing the varying calibre of demographics that see a purpose in connecting with ExE.

An environmental focus on the project at the ExE had considerable impacts on air quality, regeneration and teaching. The projects have significantly made an impact on the environment both directly and indirectly. This can be shown by the decrease in pollution and rubbish as quoted by Dallington Residents Association, "it used to be an empty space for boy racers and people to dump rubbish now turned into an active place". There are signs of nature regeneration, whilst caring for the environment through projects like Foragers Whare. "We

must accept what nature is going to do to this land, the attempt to fight that is expensive and pointless. We are encroaching on nature" stated by the Dallington Residents Association. The ExE projects promote a strong sense of revitalisation as projects not only focus on physically restoring the area back into a wetland but also restore the lost community that this land once was. This again reinforces the value of inclusivity as the environment built by the ExE projects not only creates an inclusive environment but the projects allow everyone to be involved. For example the redzone drone racing club and disk golf.

Cultural responses were that the ExE space is valued in terms of its heritage as the space used to be a large wetland that was heavily used by Ngāi Tahu for mahinga kai. Kaitiakitanga values can be seen with native planting, the tiny huts marae reference and the notion of future restoration to the original tapu state of a wetland. Although there was no engagement with mana whenua, we note that the values that the mana whenua seek are abundance, beauty, preservation, sustenance, provision and reflection (Tau T M, 2016), which we considered throughout our project.

Political aspects regarding the ExE space are in regard to the council's maintenance and the license LINZ provides. Responses were largely in support of councils maintenance of the area and reduction of disturbing activities such as rubbish and dumping. There were also positive regards surrounding the accessibility of the area by multiple transportation methods such as public transport, vehicle and cycling. "It doesn't feel close by even though it is, maybe not walking distance but bikeable" said by the Dallington residents association. LINZ themselves have stated "LINZ has funded some of the activities that LIVS have installed or are installing shortly," which indirectly shows their support for the projects and see them as a beneficial use of funding. They stated "the community is very lucky to have such an awesome place to go.", which positively reflects on LIVS work as well as the variety and inclusivity of the area. Without the licenses such as the one active at ExE, social initiatives like this would lack facilities, space and opportunity to regenerate and revive non-active community spaces. The red-zone's expansive land area has provided the perfect opportunity for projects such as these, and political support aids in maximising community usage.

Discussion

Through analysing the data by splitting it into political, cultural, societal, economic and environmental it became clear that the addition of the ExE projects to the red-zone land is not necessarily valued in monetary terms. However, it is immensely valued by the stakeholders who use it. The stakeholders have built a relationship with the land now, as the projects have been built upon it. To answer the research question of, 'how do site stakeholders value the ExE area?', five main themes and ways to value the land came out of the data analysis. These are inclusivity, opportunities, purpose, revitalisation and engagement. Inclusivity is about how inclusive the projects that are on the land, and how inclusive the land truly is. Many people mentioned that they found value in the space as there was something for every person to do. Such as young children had the pump track, adults had the ability to 'let nature in' and those with unique hobbies such as disk golf and drone racing have a place to play and race. The opportunities associated with the land was another value, as the land offers a space for these unique hobbies to go ahead with no complaints from other people. For example, the drone club experienced noise complaints at their previous base, which they don't experience now as no one lives in close proximity to the ExE area. Opportunities also include a promotion, such as people walking in the space get to see the projects that are going on which is a form of advertising for them. Purpose is another value that came out from the data analysis, as the ExE area gives people a reason to go into the red-zone. People also experienced a sense of purpose from the tree plantings and pruning workshops. We also found that revitalisation of the land came through in what many people said. As the space used to be empty and used for boy racers and a place to dump rubbish. Now it has many projects on it and is being well looked after. The last value that came through was engagement. People really valued engaging with the space as it feels inviting for them. They engage with the space in such ways as dog walking, walking, frisbee golf, using the rugby and football field, volunteering, the pump track, drone racing and using the land for picnics. The ExE area has been developed from an empty red-zoned piece of land, to a now well-utilised area of land with a range of different projects for everyone to use.

These results were similar to what we found in the wider literature. Community projects are shown to support community well-being and both social and ecological benefits (Campbell et al, 2010), which is clearly shown through in the data we collected. The land is now more looked after that there are projects on the land, which shows ecological benefits. There is also a vast amount of social benefits, with new friendships and hobbies being formed and encouraged. The once red-zoned area, now the ExE space is a prime location for people to involve themselves with the land, before it becomes a wetland. This idea was shown in Wesner (2015) where a disaster can sometimes create spaces for people to take part in temporary opportunities to develop better spaces for themselves and their communities.

Outliers in Results

The feedback from stakeholders varied in quantity, ranging from single sentence responses to full paragraphs in regards to the questions. Data was collected from groups such as Burwood East residents association and others were represented by an individual such as the disc golf club. Groups which gave multiple responses allowed us to collect a wider range of opinions. This allowed for a more balanced set of feedback. Individuals that spoke on behalf

of a group may have been influenced by their personal views. We noticed most groups were consistent with their feedback. The most unique responses to our questions was the local rugby team. This may have been due to them being slightly more unfamiliar with the site due to the distance from ExE to Linwood, where they are based. However they did have a broadly positive view of the benefits of the site, consistent with other groups.

Limitations and Shortcomings

Thematic analysis was a clear way to evaluate the priorities of our survey participants. However it does come with some flaws. Our interpretation of a response may not directly be what the participant intended. We may also sub-consciously inflict our own biases onto our categorisations. During in-person interviews there is the risk that we could have influenced our participant's responses, as our presence could have made them feel pressured to respond in a way that would match what they may perceive as our perspective (Anderson, 2010). To reduce this possibility, we attempted to make our survey questions as neutral as possible. Although, we cannot assume we have completely eliminated this influence, we must always assume some error when interpreting qualitative data.

The Burwood East resident's association were self-selective as we posted our questions to their community Facebook group. This could have given us compromised results as our responses were limited to individuals who made use of the Facebook page. This could have led to an underrepresentation of some sub-groups, such as the elderly who are less likely to use technology. We also had the risk of groups declining to answer our questions, however we did not experience this.

We also did not manage to receive a response from the local council, which meant we were unable to gain a response from all groups we had wanted to. Many other larger organisations took longer than community-based groups. We believe this is because of the corporate nature of some larger organisations, statements may have been required to conform with company policy which could explain these delays.

We were also limited by the everchanging pandemic situation. We had initially planned to run focus groups where possible to get a variety of opinions from different groups to gain a more balanced representation. Because of this, we chose to use smaller face-to-face interviews emails rather than larger focus groups.

We were unable to fully engage with Mana Whenua for our project. This was due to difficulty in establishing communication between us. Having this perspective could have helped us to develop our methodology and interpret our results. We also did not manage to collect any quantitative data such as observation.

Tool Analysis

We decided that as part of our project we wanted to give a useful tool back to LIVS so that they could have an easy to use tool to see how people value the ExE space in the future. This tool has the five themes that were evident in the data collected (purpose, engagement, revitalisation, inclusiveness and opportunities), a rating scale and a radar graph which shows the results in an easy to understand format. When a theme is clicked on, a short explanation of what that theme means shows up, so that the people rating the area can see what the theme truly means. Then once the person rating is ready to rate, they can find a drop-down menu next to the theme where it will give four options as to how the person rates the space. For example, when rating 'engagement' the four options are 'Don't feel safe and never use the space', 'Sometimes use the space and feel comfortable', 'Feel safe in some activities' and 'Frequently engage in the space'. These ratings all correlate with a number, which then shows up onto the radar diagram. This tool was trialled between our group, and once we were all happy with it we sent it off to our stakeholders. At this stage, we have received a reply from LINZ, Drone racing club and Dallington residents association. In Figure 1, the results we received are shown. We have also sent this tool through to LIVS and received very positive feedback. They commented that the tool 'seemed very interesting and a good source of feedback about the projects'. There are a few limitations that we found with this tool. The tool is directly and only made for LIVS to use for the ExE space. It has been designed from the data we collected from the ExE stakeholders, and will not be applicable for other projects. Another limitation is that the stakeholder's responses are limited to those four ratings, when a stakeholder might be across two ratings. To improve this tool, we would like to make it more attractive and be more adaptable for other organisations to use it. We would also like to make the tool more flexible for the stakeholders to use if they want to add their own answer or don't completely agree with the answers that are possible to select, so that we gain the most accurate answers.

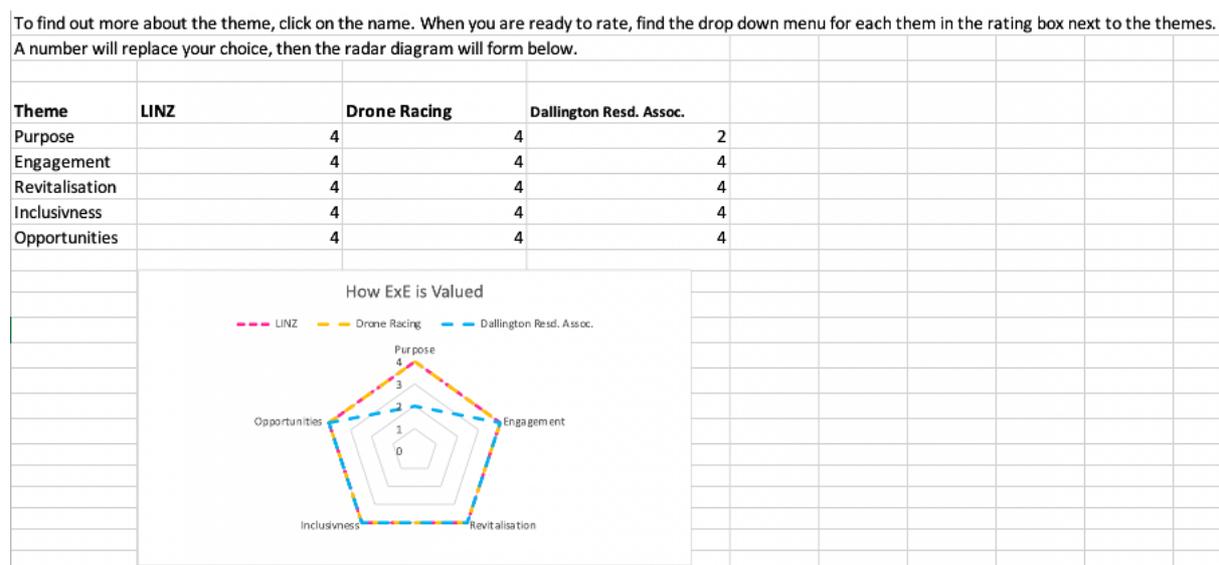


Figure 1: The tool; Combined results from LINZ, Drone Racing and Dallington Residents Association.

General findings and recommendations

Throughout our data collection and analysis, there were some general findings that did not answer our research question but could benefit LIVS. Firstly, lack of signage. Stakeholders had concern around the lack of direction the area had in terms of directing where each individual community project was located. A designated dog park was mentioned a number of times by stakeholders who walked their dogs as it would be nice to allow the dogs to run freely through the space. Some stakeholders did not like the locations of the vegetable boxes and some stakeholders were not aware of their purpose. Lastly, the comment of the projects being too far apart. Comments from stakeholders were that projects are too far apart, making the space seem bare and accessibility a slight concern.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we found that stakeholders of the ExE projects find them valuable in multiple descriptions. The themes of value that stood out to us from the analysis of our data were purpose, revitalisation, engagement, inclusivity and opportunities. Stakeholders have built a relationship with the land and everyone from all demographics have something to do in this space. Everyone that we interviewed all agreed that the land is more valuable to the community now with projects on it than without them. The area has been revitalised from a red-zone into a community space for social, recreational and ecological activities to flourish. Future work in the area of this research could include gathering more qualitative data such as the number of park users per day, this would be valuable information if people had enough time to conduct this research. The conclusions that we have made are reliable and can be tested with the tool we have designed in figure 1, which we have received positive feedback about.

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