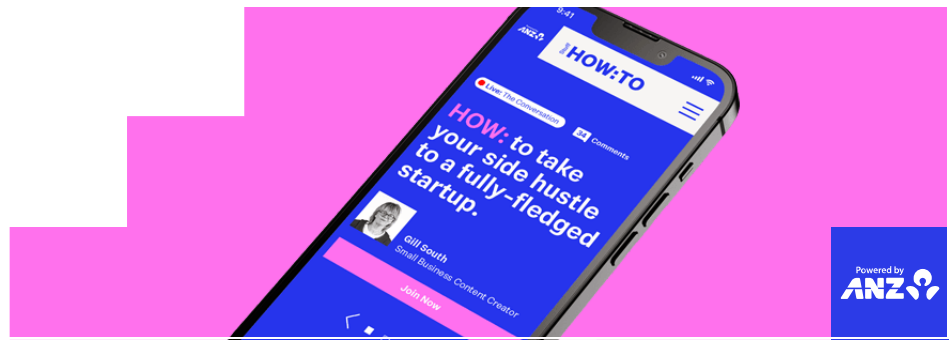


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## Rebuild needs to get moving

March 25, 2014 · 10:44am

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**The rebuild may be starting to ramp up, but a more integrated approach is needed to get things moving, writes LYALL LUKEY.**

The 2013 Festival of Transitional Architecture evening parade featured some ambulatory 4m puppets. Clever examples of jerry-built woodworking, they bore a clear resemblance to national and local notables leading Christchurch's post-quakes recovery .

Unlike normal puppets their interior workings were visible so you could see the strings being pulled and the wheels being turned. Glaring spotlights on the giants did make it hard to discern supporting members of the street theatre cast. The public was left in the dark.

As the parade promenaded from the Bridge of Remembrance past the demolished Clarendon site to the Square the scene became better lit. No longer centre-stage, the puppets were parked to one side.

Near the grim west end of the Cathedral erstwhile spectators now found themselves in the limelight. Were they ready to act or had they been on the sidelines too long?

As Festa reminded us, the Christchurch rebuild is going to take a generation. But transitions are not just about architecture. They involve sharing knowledge and sharing power.

We may like the idea of a city in a garden but more than three years after the quakes of 2010-11 we still have only a shaky grip on the consequences of living in what for many is still a city in a swamp.

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Lest we forget, the collapsed PGG building once housed the old Christchurch Drainage Board. John Wilson's 1989 history of

the board was entitled Swamp to City. A sequel might be called The Swamp Strikes Back. A new council is coming to grips with the implications of recent manifestations of hydrological and seismic natural hazards.

Transitions are also about changing power structures to facilitate collaboration and innovation. What was responsible leadership during the disaster response process may be unresponsive and inappropriate at this stage of the recovery.

Stirred up even more by the impending election, these are the tricky waters which Seismics and the City 2014 - Building Momentum will navigate on Friday.

This is the third annual forum for representatives of public and private sector and community organisations involved or interested in the post-quake recovery process, progress, problems and solutions.

It is being held at the new Rydges Latimer, on the fringe of the new city core, near the Cardboard Cathedral and the proposed Breathe Urban Village. This is an appropriate venue to reimagine the future of new Christchurch, share scientific and business knowledge and build relationships.

The rebuild may be starting to ramp up but there is traffic congestion at the on-ramp and the need for a more integrated approach to get things flowing.

Right now there seem to be more orange and red lights than green, though it was heartening to read recently of progress on the new library and the old Provincial Chambers.

The challenge is to balance speed and momentum with getting the direction right by avoiding the extremes of political pollyannaism and corrosive cynicism.

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This stage of the recovery and renewal process should no longer be a spectator sport. People will support what they help to create, not what is imposed upon them. To improve the quality of recovery implementation it is crucial that a broad range of organisations collaborate.

As Press columnist David Killick points out there is a plethora of plans from different agencies and the need for a more simplified road map. But whence? Where to? How do communities and organisations get from where they are now to where they want to go? How do they shift beyond black and white thinking but also avoid too many shades of grey?

Imagineering needs to precede engineering. Engaging people starts with an initial vision. The way to evolve that is with some big picture satellite views, zooming in on the topography from different perspectives, then the main highways and finally at street level. Bold though it was the initial inner city rebuild plan in 2011 was called a "blueprint", a cut-and-dried label which neither allowed different scenarios nor allayed the suspicions of some inner-city property owners that they had been framed.

At the Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce's 2013 annual general meeting, Ian Taylor from Animation Research in Dunedin showed his animation of the Euan Harkness-initiated concept of a Living Cathedral for Christchurch.

He demonstrated that visual tools can be used not just to sell a series of decisions reached behind closed doors but to openly share alternative visions and designs as part of the decision-making process itself.

It is good to mark positive milestones as the rebuild builds momentum. But if we are to leave a worthy new legacy, having removed much of the old, we need to welcome constructively critical perspectives on the future shape of the city which challenge us to open our minds to a range of possibilities rather than being limited to an a la carte menu.

The recent flooding, made worse by the earlier seismic land slumps, highlights the need to accelerate the pre-quakes evolution of Greater Christchurch as a polycentric city, with vibrant business and community hubs connected in new ways to a leaner and healthier city heart.

The lifeblood of recovery and renewal is the energy of individuals and organisations collaborating, and shaping their own futures in new ways and in new places to ensure the future of New Christchurch.

Recovery Act II: Are we ready or have we been sidelined too long? Lights, action . . .

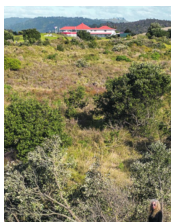
*Lyll Lukey is the convener of the Seismics and the City 2014 - Building Momentum forum to be held in Christchurch on Friday. For more information see [Smartnet.co.nz](http://Smartnet.co.nz)*

## - The Press

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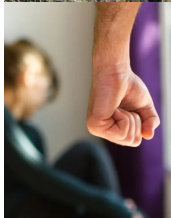
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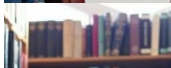
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