Branding Auckland: Creating creativity and suspending disbelief

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The Big Little City?

• Three economic development initiatives in Auckland, their co-constitutiveness, and their assemblage into a creative city political project with a particular trajectory

• Creative industries, the regional brand, and ‘big little city’ destination branding campaign

• [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCGa9ekx6Mc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCGa9ekx6Mc)
A different centre
Auckland

- Auckland in New Zealand: 1.3 million from 4 million people, 40% of economy
- Eight territorial authorities (4 cities, 3 districts, and ARC)
- Each city has distinctive socio-economy and geographical imaginaries
- All are part of a greater Auckland economy and geographical imaginary
- Relatively young and growing: a city of migrants
- Economy centred on servicing national economy, hub to global economy, tourism, real estate farming
- Privatised many of its land assets
- World’s largest (?) Polynesian city
- Increasingly Asian city (19% of population)
- ARC has range of functions at the regional scale but no unitary authority
- Supercity: Auckland in transition
Starting points

• Detroit, Hamburg, Darwin
  – improbable, interests/politics (who are the creative classes?), differing research focii
• Proliferation of place/nation branding
• On-going research projects
  – Waiheke: building networks with middle-senior managers
  – sustainable Auckland research initiative
  – rooms/moments and knowledge production in Auckland
  – place branding
• Speaking back to the North-Atlantic axis
Speaking back to the policy globalisation thesis

• The thesis
  – neoliberal, creative cities policy has spread outwards
  – evidence in other places of key dimensions, vectors

• Asking ‘other’ questions (agency in other places)
  – how/why/when did we go out and get ‘it’, what elements did we pick up / reject?
  – how are they assembled into local political projects, and by whom?
  – what is special about the time (after-neoliberalism)?
  – what is special about the policy?
Our questions

• What has been mobilized in Auckland’s creative city project, how has it been imagined, resourced, and assembled, what trajectories have been altered?
  – how is the mix of local/global elements assembled?
  – how coherent is the assemblage?
  – what happens to Auckland’s creative city project as it bumps up against other political and economic imaginaries?
  – has the creative city been emptied into a destination branding project in Auckland?
  – what does all this tell us about contemporary city branding?

• Work in progress
The argument in brief

• Tell a familiar story about the complexity lying behind the stories of globalisation and policy transfer
• Tell a story about how the CI project as been mobilised as a platform for reinventing economic development (for a different ‘soft capitalism’) in which city marketing is writ large
• Not sure whether I make this effectively but in trying to do, once again open up some of the challenging questions resonating through this conference.
The Creative G(r)asp

• Efforts to
  – know, relate and theorise post-industrial and knowledge economies and the rise of the global culture industry
  – link cultural revitalisation projects to economic revitalisation
  – account for the relative fates of different cities and establish a new basis for intervention

...have directed attention to the idea of the creative economy, or more precisely creative industries, creative classes, and creative cities.

• A grand political project
Elements of the ‘creative grasp’

• Creative Industries
  – Invented as a policy object to group, measure, know and manage economic activities that add value to objects through creativity, design, brand, place
  – connected later to the idea of the creative city
• Creative classes
  – *somehow* group cultural artists/ producers with new highly educated, footloose, high income knowledge economy elites as ‘class’ held together by theorised symbiotic attraction to ‘culturally rich’ places and bohemian imaginaries at work in production/consumption of post-modern values
  – theorise relative success of cities via argument that creative classes take form in and are attracted to ‘culturally rich’ places
• Creative cities
  – exemplify and foster significant clusters of creative classes and cultural and knowledge economies
  – successful in the knowledge economy
  – an aspirational policy object for city planners
Critique from economic geography

- Positioning cities within globalizing cultural circuits of capital so as to generate rents from a peculiar mix of global aesthetics and local difference has displaced progressive, ends driven material change as the objective
- Portrayed as panacea, operates as placebo or band-aid
- Contagious disease (the Florida/Landry/CIMD effect)
- Poor diagnosis and self-interested therapy for the elites spun into the circuits
- Inextricably linked in policy practice to urban-regeneration and all of the associated issues of gentrification, displacement, over-development
- Side effects and/or treatment of symptoms rather than disease – the dark side of reproducing inequality
Place branding and the creative city

• Global policy wave, with gurus, consultancies, seminars
• Another panacea, placebo, band-aid
• Place branding
  – destination tourism
  – cultivating support for civic boosterism
  – attracting inward investment
  – performing public diplomacy
  – adding value through geographical imaginaries to final product and through reputation along value chains
• Not yet theorised into political-economy critique
  – not as historically distinct
  – more an instrument than an object for management (bundle of cultural/economic relations/activities in itself)
In a globalised world every country, region, city has to compete with every other: for customers, visitors, business, talent, investment, attention, respect.

To compete effectively, every place needs to be *known* for something. Brand strategy recognises special qualities as assets, teaches how to use them …

..nothing to do with logos, slogans and everything to do with creating the right policies, the right economic, social, cultural and educational climate, and stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship in every sector of business and society.

Strong and well known brands allow cities to punch above their weight

None of this happens by accident
• ‘The characteristics of a good are not properties which already exist ... their definition ... their objectification implies specific metrological work...’
  (Callon, Meadel, Rabeharisoa 2002:198-99)

• Brands mediate relations between production and consumption: relate symbolic/material values, frame connectivities

• The branded economy links post-modern consumption values to high-value added production

• Branding is field of expertise

• Entangled in geographical referents (Pike 2008): provenance, circuits of meaning, spatiality of production-consumption

• Logos manifest brands (signs for negotiating globalising economies, production of self for a globalised elite, new status order)
Branding Creative Auckland
Auckland’s creative city initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Creative Initiative</th>
<th>Lead Agency</th>
<th>‘Scale’</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Arts Agenda</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Starkwhite Report</td>
<td>ACC – Consultant</td>
<td>Contracting out</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Snapshot</td>
<td>Economic Development Group</td>
<td>Auckland City</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Blueprint</td>
<td>Economic Development Group</td>
<td>Auckland City</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Brand Auckland (A)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>(‘launched’)</td>
<td>Auckland Plus</td>
<td>Auckland Regional Council</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Big Little City goes to air</td>
<td>Heart of the City</td>
<td>Private CBD group (partnership ACC,</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tourism Auckland)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Rugby World Cup</td>
<td>Ministry</td>
<td>National Government, ARC/Supercity</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Commonwealth Games in Auckland?</td>
<td>Auckland Plus</td>
<td>Supercity, National</td>
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Contexts: a decade of......

- Efforts to address
  - absence of metro-regional oversight, governance or planning of labour market, infrastructure, economic development
  - develop regional economic imaginaries and agencies
  - recognise economic interdependencies, collective assets, and shared fates
  - foster a metro-regional imaginary, stimulate inward investment, and (re)position Auckland within globalising cultural-economies
  - In transition again

- ‘After-neoliberal’ national policy
  - reinvent social, economic intervention through new institutions and practices
  - extraordinarily inventive/productive 2000-2003: plethora of reports, seminars, conferences, symposia
  - economic nationalism
  - globalisation project: compete from edge of world by adding value through design elements (including tourism)
  - Growth and Innovation Framework: make visible, professionalise, promote, institutionalise targeted sectors as export earners and enabling industries
  - regional development initiatives (MRI)
  - Auckland named as economic engine
Starkwhite Report

• Consultancy report – no micro-politics no confusion, idealised arts and cultural landscapes

• Rescripted Auckland’s cultural arts landscapes into the promissory language of the cultural industries

• Series of quotes from gurus and claims about distinctiveness, richness, and potential of Auckland’s cultural arts

• Scripting a cultural cities project in Auckland matching national ‘Cool Aotearoa’
Snapshot

• Confirmed that language had shifted to creative industries in Auckland

• Measured/invented the creative industries
  – work with new ANZIC
  – mapping across Auckland
  – brought the creative to framing/scripting economic policy

• Basis for shifting support from cultural arts per se to creative economy

• Embed cultural programmes in economic policy
Naming, framing, creating creative Auckland
Interview quotes

• So those first few years of the group were set in a whole number of local, national, and global conversations ... the UK Mapping Document ... Chris Smith had been to Wellington ... Richard Florida ... NZTE were developing Better by Design ... a whole focus on the creative sector as an enabler across the rest of the economy ... at the same time as Auckland was just trying to get its act together around governance ... coordinated thinking across the region

• In developing Snapshot we did a whole lot of research internationally ... there’s no point in reinventing the wheel ... we weren’t also in the business of just copying other people for the sake of it ...it needed to be tailored to suit Auckland’s environment, but also reflecting best practice internationally ... obviously UK, but also Toronto and Queensland ... presenting a suite of interventions that were unique to Auckland

• The ANZIC codes were key ... set the benchmark
## Blueprint:
**Agenda for action to implement Snapshot**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investing in signature events</td>
<td>Sponsor New Zealand Fashion Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nuturing Talent</td>
<td>Music in Parks (diverse range of genres - free music to public, life into city, fees to musicians)</td>
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<td>Building a Sense of Place</td>
<td>Street upgrades of K R’d – Auckland’s TAZ</td>
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<td>Design-led place-making</td>
<td>Mayoral Taskforce on urban design, Urban Design Panel, Design Awards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting</td>
<td>Britomart transport hub</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enterprise</td>
<td>Arts Regional Trust and its investment programmes (ART Enterprise, ART Venture, and ART Source)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting</td>
<td>Direct MRI monies to screen production for booming NZ film industry, “make Auckland world’s most ‘film-friendly’ location”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accelerating creative business</td>
<td>CUBEincubator programme co-funded by City Councils, ART and Creative NZ, and Community Employment Group</td>
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Intriguing Observations

• Policy-development networks are important
  – networking as expertise
  – facilitators, managers, creative brains in economic development planning not economists (bought in or in hard industry sector development)

• 19 of 21 officials (local government, government), officials/politicians mentioned are women

• New expertise
‘Frayed A’

• Product of the Metro Project (actioning AREDS)
• Develop and brand regional value proposition, major events (‘bring world to Auckland’)
• Enable inward investment, tourism to “capitalise on Auckland’s offer…”
• Established
  – workshops, Symposium for Auckland, Regional Visitor Plan
  – Greg Clark: OECD Floridian
  – Government’s Auckland Strategy
  – engaged Design Works
• Managed by AucklandPlus (Auckland's regional economic development agency, charged with:
  – regional promotion to attract trade / investment
  – point of contact for investors, including communications and promotion
  – facilitate regional economic development projects (large, multi-agency, cross-boundary/council projects
• Funded by New Zealand Trade & Enterprise
Auckland? When you think of it as a region, more than a city, you start to get a handle on what it's got.

It's like a cluster of islands, each with its own story

With its red colour this brand takes Auckland beyond the New Zealand context and positions us at the very heart of the Asia Pacific region.
Big Little City

• High-end cinematography and production values
  – explicit showcasing Auckland/NZ advertising and screen talent

• Globalised aesthetics/consumption aspirations
  – creative city imaginaries
  – global culture industry (Vodaphone etc)

• Local references
  – celebrity chef/gallery owner/fashion designer/popular music artists (NB no sports stars, no pristine nature)
  – Auckland’s harbour bridge, skyscape, volcanoes, yachts

• Contested
  – Tourism Auckland engaged Colenso
  – HoC chose Colenso over Design Works
"We are honoured to have this movie filmed in Auckland and other parts of New Zealand," says Mr Banks.

Mayor meets Yogi Bear's onscreen mayor, during filming at Auckland Town Hall

• ‘Creative industries grow despite recession’
  – concentrated in design (38%), publishing (23%), screen production (23%).
  – remaining 15% in radio, digital media, performing arts, visual arts and music.
  – From **2006-2008**, employment growth six times national average (2.9% p.a. cf 0.5%), faster than overall employment growth in Auckland city (2.9% p.a. cf 2.1%)
  – contribution to Auckland city's GDP is over $1.8 billion or 6.6% of GDP
  – continue to stimulate economic activity in other sectors.
“Encouraging [the creative] industries is one of the most powerful means of enhancing the city’s identity and distinctiveness, while simultaneously creating employment and generating social capital. In a world where every place is beginning to feel and look the same, cultural products and activities mark one place from the next. And tangible differences creates competitive advantage.”

Charles Landry I The Art of City-Making, 2006

“We’ll be globally established as the hot place to visit, to buy from and to get content from. We’ll have capitalised on our current positioning... Overseas people will be saying, ‘that’s a place I want to partner with, do business with, undertake R&D with, manufacture with’, right across the board and in a high-value context.”

Dame Cheryll Sotheran I Snapshot: Auckland’s creative industries, 2005
Some conclusions

• Creative city/industry projects
  – mobilise local resources, encounter local resistance, take local forms
  – co-constituted by local political projects, global knowledge projects, local socio-cultural economies

• Policy transfer is as much about local assemblage
  – local assemblage is *necessary* and *necessarily provides* local resolution to central contradictions in creative city project (what is creative, artists v. commercial artists, sociability & interaction v. global city, local distinctiveness v. global imaginaries)
  – policy is always messy: multi scalar, multi-layered, public-private interpenetrations

• Place branding is central to creative city projects

• Creative Auckland
  – is being driven towards destination branding
  – has brought different expertise to bear, altered parameters of the political process, constituted networks of expertise
  – Materilality: serving tourism, head offices, real estate farming

• A positive spin?
  – rationale for reprioritising investment: temporary, small sums
  – CI as basis for reinventing urban planning

• An altered, ‘post-development’ evaluation frame
This policy has played out as an ecology of networks – it has its own life, as do we policy makers .... it has changed things ... not necessarily as expected. I am proud of the policy even though I’ve moved on”