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The contradictions of freedom: freedom camping tensions, tourism governance and changing social relationships in the Christchurch and Selwyn districts of New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

In 2011, the National led government of New Zealand hastily enacted the Freedom Camping Act (2011) in order to accommodate the burgeoning number of foreign tourists expected to arrive for the 2011 Rugby World Cup. This was despite opposition concerns that existing public infrastructure, and particularly sanitation facilities, would not be able to meet the growth in demand. In the years since the introduction of FCA (2011), the popularity of freedom camping primarily among budget conscious Europeans has increased and there has been an ever growing number of freedom campers arriving on New Zealand's shores. Freedom camping is defined in the Act as camping in self-contained and non-self-contained vehicles on public land managed by local governments or the Department of Conservation. Promoted by the national government and tourism industry for its potential to contribute to national tourism revenue, public and political concerns have surfaced around the social, economic, cultural and environmental costs and benefits of freedom camping. Significant points of tension and conflict have come to characterise freedom camping which illuminate multiple contradictions both in its conceptualisation and the way it is experienced by various groups.

Freedom camping is embedded in neoliberal governance and discourse and is a policy directive enacted in national legislation. However, its management is devolved to local governments and its effects are highly localised. In this thesis I examine the different management approaches to freedom camping and the effects of these approaches in two neighbouring areas of New Zealand's South Island: the Christchurch and Selwyn districts. Christchurch is a major urban area and tourism hub and since 2015 has had a freedom camping bylaw in place which restricts freedom camping in its environs. In contrast, Selwyn is a rural district with a rapidly growing urban centre. It has no freedom camping bylaw and manages two large freedom camping areas in its district. Drawing on extensive document analysis and three weeks of qualitative field research involving interviews, observation and site visits in the two districts in late 2018, this thesis speaks to two specific research questions:

- How do people in the Christchurch and Selwyn regional districts feel about freedom camping, the Freedom Camping Act 2011 and its management?
- How is freedom camping and the Freedom Camping Act 2011 reshaping social relations within and between the Christchurch and Selwyn regional districts?

This thesis locates the FCA (2011) and freedom camping within current discourse on tourism governance in neoliberal government structures and in answering the research questions, explores three key areas. First, I examine the governance of freedom camping, the state of the legislation and how different regional approaches to freedom camping create inconsistency and community stress. Second, I consider freedom camping as a contradictory process of capitalism and interpret economic power over nature through the framework of political ecology. The third area is an analysis of tourist-hosts relations which sets a broader framework to examine tensions over freedom camping's visibility seen through the cultural lens of the "New Zealand camper identity". The thesis concludes that freedom camping through the FCA (2011) makes multiple interpretations of freedom compete in, and for, contested public spaces. Four freedoms are identified that emerge from the tensions. *Freedom from cost* relates to seeking free sites and overusing public space. *Freedom of mobility* is the legislation encouraging freedom campers to locate themselves in contested public places. *Freedom as birthright* is New Zealander's interpretation of freedom in nature as a birthright which is utilized by the national tourism industry. *The freedom of regulated responsibility* involves the language of freedom

being removed from freedom camping by the central government after eight years of significant social and environmental stress due to freedom camping. These freedoms are both interconnected and internally contradictory leaving the future meaning and practice of freedom camping uncertain.

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ABBREVIATIONS

FCA/the Act: Freedom Camping Act (2011)

CCC: Christchurch City Council

DIA: Department of Internal Affairs

DOC: Department of Conservation

FCB: Freedom Camping Bill

FNDC: Far North District Council

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

HAPNZ: Holiday Parks Association of New Zealand

LGEC: Local Government and Environment Committee

LGNZ: Local Government New Zealand

LINZ: Land Information New Zealand

MBIE: Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment

MoT: Minister of Tourism

MP: Member of Parliament

NZHC: New Zealand High Court

NZMCA: New Zealand Motor Caravan Association

NZSCS: New Zealand Self-Containment Standard 5465:2001

NZTA: New Zealand Transport Agency

QDLC: Queenstown District Lakes Council

RA: The Reserves Act (1977)

RCWG: Responsible Camping Working Group

RWC: Rugby World Cup

SDC: Selwyn District Council

TCDC: Thames Coromandel District Council

TIA: Tourism Industry Aotearoa

THL: Tourism Holdings Limited

WTTO: World Travel and Tourism Council

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Capitalism generally is about turning everything into a commodity.

Neoliberalism is the extreme version”

Dr. Noam Chomsky, personal communication, February 22, 2019

“Fish and visitors stink in three days”

Benjamin Franklin, 1736

1.1 Introduction

Freedom camping and the Freedom Camping Act (2011) (FCA) is a polarizing social and environmental issue in New Zealand. The FCA was passed in 2011 devised as a short-term solution to accommodate an expected influx of visitors to the country for the 2011 Rugby World Cup¹ (RWC). The FCA as legislation permits freedom camping nationwide, addressing the negative effects of freedom camping through a locally managed enforcement regime, governed by local councils and the Department of Conservation (DOC) (New Zealand Parliament, 2011a). Since 2011 freedom camping has escalated into a significant issue with district councils having difficulty managing the volume, noise, anti-social and environmental stresses freedom camping place on their regions. Through the Act, the central government devolved infrastructure responsibility to local council and ratepayers. As a result, local ratepayers have become angry at having to fund freedom camping infrastructure while living with its negative effects. Media reporting on council struggles with infrastructure and enforcement and resident tensions elevated what was originally regional issues into the national consciousness. Shocking news reports of New Zealanders confronting foreign freedom campers defecating outdoors have made freedom campers a maligned community presence (Cropper, 2018; Gooselink, 2017; Nykia, 2019). Freedom camping has become representative of New Zealand’s growing tourism overcrowding

¹ The 2011 Rugby World Cup was hosted in New Zealand from 9 September to 23 October 2011. The event was the largest sporting event ever hosted in New Zealand. The sport of Rugby is considered New Zealand’s national sport and its team the All Blacks are highly regarded globally.

issues (Comer, 2019; DIA, 2016; Graham-McLay, 2019; LGNZ, 2018; Martin, 2016, 2017; Pannett, 2018; Stuff, 2018; Wright, 2017).

In this thesis, I examine freedom camping's overuse of public space as the basis of an economic activity and its effects on the community, and I connect this to neoliberal tourism governance processes and structures. The decentralisation of freedom camping management through the FCA means differing regional responses have effects on nearby communities. Contrasting the dynamic of a high-profile metropolitan area (Christchurch) which limited freedom camping after a chaotic liberal period, and an adjacent rural district (Selwyn), managing the FCA under the Reserves Act, provides a new case study and approach and contribution to freedom camping research. As the two neighbouring and geographically diverse councils contend with high levels of tourism growth and differing bylaw positions, an inter-district study is timely and worthy of deeper investigation (MBIE, 2019). Looking at how both councils manage freedom camping locally in relation to the national legislation and the dynamics of the councils' connection to each other provides an opportunity to look at freedom camping's effects on the local communities within the wider national context.

The FCA is permissive legislation that allows individuals to camp anywhere unless there is a rule or sign prohibiting it. However, freedom camping through the Act is a contested concept (DIA, 2016) as its overuse of public space has created multiple interpretations of freedom. As I will elaborate on in the thesis, this connects to New Zealand's unofficial "birthright" of access to nature (DOC, 2006). However, the permissiveness of the FCA has led to the misuse of the birthright freedom, as the national tourism industry has promoted freedom camping to an eager market of budget conscious international visitors. In addition, the vehicles used by freedom campers themselves cause tension connected to the national self-containment certification. The self-containment standard for campervans is the Standard for the Self Containment of Motor Caravans and Caravans: NZS 5465:2001 (Standards Association of New Zealand, 1990) (NZSCS). It is the official regulatory standard for motor caravans and caravans in New Zealand and its main function is to certify the containment of wastewater² onboard a mobile vehicle when there are no sewerage

² Wastewater is black water which contains human waste and grey water contains no human waste. Vehicles must have on-board toilets and three days' supply of water to tend to their own sanitation demands until an exchange of water and human waste can take place (Standards Association of New Zealand 1990).

facilities available³. A vehicle which meets this standard is affixed with a blue sticker (seen in Figure 1.1). In the course of this thesis, a distinction will be made between self-contained vehicles which meet this standard and non-self-contained freedom camping vehicles which do not. The standard has been poorly regulated, allowing a burgeoning market of counterfeit blue self-containment stickers for vehicles that do not meet certification (Martin, 2019; McNeilly, 2019). Run down campervans with counterfeit blue self-containment stickers and freedom campers defecating in city streets have become the symbols of a broken system and tourism policy that contradicts New Zealand's image of a clean green paradise (Tourism New Zealand, 2019). These issues have resulted in freedom camping becoming a highly visible and emotionally loaded phenomenon in communities across the country, creating many misunderstandings related to the legislation and the notion of freedom itself which I will discuss throughout this thesis.



Figure 1.1: The NZS:5465:2001 blue self-containment sticker. Source: Backpacker Guide (2019)

1.2 Research aims and objectives

This study aims to examine the different management approaches to freedom camping in the Christchurch and Selwyn districts and their effects on local communities. Freedom camping is a

³ Vehicles must carry four litres of water, per person for three days total, with a total of 12 litres for three days per person for toilet and cleaning purposes. All vehicles must have a tank to carry water, waste and fitted with a sink.

national policy, but is highly localised, so most of its effects are community based. The specific research questions are:

1. How do people in the Christchurch and Selwyn regional districts feel about freedom camping, the Freedom Camping Act 2011 and its management?
2. How is freedom camping and the Freedom Camping Act 2011 reshaping social relations within and between the Christchurch and Selwyn regional districts?

The research questions guided the objectives of this study:

- Objective one is to establish how the FCA and freedom camping is reshaping social relations within and between the two districts.
- Objective two is to establish how people in both districts feel about freedom camping and the FCA and council approaches to its management
- Objective three is to examine how freedom camping as a nationalised economic activity and tourism strategy has impacted the local areas socially and environmentally.
- Objective four is to connect the findings of objective one to the wider national freedom camping issue.

This thesis is a localised case study, but the freedom camping issue has many local-national connections which affect the community, freedom campers, government and economic actors. The relationship between local-national entities, socially and politically, are therefore important aspects of the analysis in this thesis.

1.3 Defining freedom camping

New Zealand has a long history of backcountry “free camping” and access to walks, hunting, fishing and surfing breaks (DOC, 2006). A wide cross-section of the population freedom camp in some form, pursuing it in self-contained and non-self-contained vehicles and other modes of transportation, including motorcycles and bicycles. However, the freedom camping discussed in this thesis is a relatively recent activity in New Zealand over the last 20 years (Hutching & Lim, 2016). Freedom camping is defined in the Freedom Camping Act (2011) as:

(1) In this Act, freedom camp means to camp (other than at a camping ground) within 200 m of a motor vehicle accessible area or the mean low-water springs line of any sea or harbour, or on or within 200 m of a formed road or a Great Walks Track, using 1 or more of the following:

- (a) a tent or other temporary structure:
- (b) a caravan:
- (c) a car, campervan, housetruck, or other motor vehicle

Freedom camping occurs outside of traditional campgrounds as defined in the Campground Regulations Act, 1985 (New Zealand Parliament, 1985) and in this study, a campground is defined as a “holiday park” or any “campsite” requiring the payment of a fee (DOC, 2006). There is a grey area with the legislation with regards to homelessness and itinerant horticulture workers (LGNZ, 2018). Freedom camping in the FCA is defined as individuals who choose to travel and live in a campervan or bus for the purposes of recreation. The FCA and the local bylaw provision was not set up to manage homelessness/temporary workers and territorial authorities are encouraged to link with the appropriate social agencies and horticulture businesses to best manage the accommodation needs of these two groups.

1.4 The origins of the Freedom Camping Act (2011)

The FCA passed through government in a rush prior to the 2011 Rugby World Cup (RWC) Rugby (LGNZ, 2018). The government expected over 85,000 visitors for the event (the actual number of visitors was 133, 200) creating a sense of unease over the available supply of accommodation (New Zealand Parliament, 2011a; Tourism New Zealand, 2012). An aim of the FCA was to balance the regional environmental and social issues associated with freedom camping, while preserving New Zealanders traditional access to the outdoors (New Zealand Parliament, 2011a; New Zealand Parliament, 2011b). Before the FCA, local councils who wished to regulate the growing number of people camping in vehicles in their districts had to go through a lengthy and expensive process in the court system. There was no formal process for freedom camping management before the FCA because the activity was emerging and growing in popularity around

the country. The FCA resolved this, building the legislation around a \$200 fine and a broad interpretation of camping space.

The governing political party at the time, the National Party⁴, considered freedom camping a local issue, providing councils with enforcement tools and the autonomy to manage freedom camping through the FCA (New Zealand Parliament, 2011a). However, the opposition political parties (Labour⁵ and the Green Party⁶) voiced concern that the legislation was rushed and did not allow for the construction of tourism infrastructure, such as the building of toilet blocks for freedom campers (New Zealand Parliament, 2011c; New Zealand Parliament, 2011d). With hindsight, it is clear that the Labour and Green party's concerns about the lack of infrastructure were prescient as this has become the predominant consequence of freedom camping. The emergence of freedom campers defecating outdoors and overcrowding public space is partly due to a lack of dedicated freedom camping infrastructure. This lack of camping infrastructure has become a media focus with freedom campers being publicly shamed if caught in vulnerable positions as they grapple with the dysfunctional freedom camping system. This is seen in an image taken in Christchurch in 2018 (Figure 1.2 below), which was published in a New Zealand Herald article entitled, "Image of people showering naked at Christchurch facility sparks debate" (and in numerous other images and headlines in chapter six).

When the central government introduced the FCA, it walked back its involvement in freedom camping infrastructure while keeping tourism growth at an all-time high. As I will elaborate on in later chapters, the resulting confusion and misinterpretations of freedom led to situations like the one in Figure 1.2, with freedom campers becoming the public scapegoats for the narrow economic interests of neoliberal governance. The difference in the ideological approach to tourism governance between the political parties in 2011 informs many of the current freedom camping issues nationally.

⁴ The New Zealand National Party is a centre-right political party in New Zealand with a mix of social conservative and fiscal liberal and free market driven policy positions.

⁵ The New Zealand Labour Party is a centre-left political party in New Zealand with social-democratic policy positions founded on democratic socialism, the welfare state and the labour movement.

⁶ The Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand is a left-wing political party in New Zealand with four organisational pillars of: ecology, social responsibility, grassroots democracy and non-violence with an ideological outlook based on environmentalism.



Figure 1.2: Two male freedom campers shower naked in Sumner, Christchurch at a public toilet/mixed use facility near the beach. Source: New Zealand Herald (2018)

1.5 Freedom camping today

After the RWC, freedom camping's popularity soared as the market shifted from a Rugby tournament goer to budget Europeans, primarily from Germany and the United Kingdom (MBIE, 2018a). Freedom camping became a cost-effective way to stay in the country longer and circumvent New Zealand's high cost of living (Billante, 2010). The sudden popularity of freedom camping meant annual numbers rose from 60,000 to 110,000, but with many unintended consequences (Hutching, 2018; MBIE, 2018a). The sudden influx of freedom campers has placed demands on local infrastructure, surprising many district councils and leaving them in reaction mode. Certain sites have become overcrowded and freedom campers' pursuit of freedom has resulted in the overuse of public space. Ratepayers who live close to and share public places with freedom campers have become frustrated with funding an activity they perceive as economically questionable (DIA, 2016). Freedom campers spend more over time, stay longer and travel further than all other types of visitors to New Zealand, but only contribute 3% of total annual tourism revenue (Billante, 2010; MBIE, 2018a). Negative media reports have increased every year and public sentiment has turned against freedom camping, with people citing nuisance, environmental damage, open defecation and anti-social behaviour as key issues (Billante, 2010; DIA, 2016; LGNZ, 2018; SDC, 2017). The negative community responses have also put many district

councils into reaction mode, and some councils have significantly restricted freedom camping with local bylaw amendments.

Vehicle based camping recreation existed in New Zealand before, but the FCA is a turning point because its permissive structure created an unregulated and spatially uneven marketplace that is difficult to manage locally. Under the FCA, councils are mandated to provide freedom camping; however, some regions want freedom campers and other regions do not. Territorial authorities can be open to freedom camping, or alternatively restrict it by imposing bylaws. High demand locations such as Queenstown, Otago, Nelson and the Coromandel have an almost adversarial relationship with freedom camping due to the areas' popularity (Billante, 2010; NZHC, 2016; QDLC, 2018; TCDC, 2014). Other regions eager for the economic opportunity of freedom camping can be more welcoming by providing infrastructure to capitalize on the freedom camper's presence. The rush to pass the FCA prior to the RWC meant that key issues, such as infrastructure did not receive adequate consideration, resulting in an ambiguous and ineffective policy that regional councils and the community have had great difficulty working and living with.

Furthermore, the FCA has created a spatially and environmentally unregulated market place of transient campervans that overuse public space which the tourism industry profits from. The FCA and freedom camping, and more broadly, the global tourism industry within countries following neoliberal governance models have been converting public spaces into high-value sites of capital accumulation as part of national tourism strategies (Airey, 2014; Mosedale, 2016). As freedom camping growth rose to unforeseen levels, a national discussion began about the original intent and value of the FCA. Most of the discussion was from residents and local councils reacting to freedom campers in their areas. The sudden growth of freedom camping highlighted the weakness in the legislation and the disconnection between local and central government on the issue. Moreover, the residents were concerned that the central government and tourism industry's approach to tourism was working against the public good, with freedom camping causing significant social and environmental damage regionally. Local mayors suggested the New Zealand tourism industry was quietly selling the country as one giant freedom camping zone (LGNZ, 2017b). International news articles began documenting New Zealand's freedom camping woes linking it to the emerging global overtourism issue (Graham-McLay, 2019; Pannett, 2018). Contradictions exist in the push for tourism growth into new spaces and the misinterpretations of freedom promised in the national messaging and in the FCA. It is against this backdrop that this

study examines the governance and social relations of freedom camping in the local contexts of the neighbouring districts of Christchurch and Selwyn.

1.6 Freedom camping in Christchurch and Selwyn

The study's geographic focus is the Christchurch and Selwyn districts which are neighbouring councils' jurisdictions in the South Island of New Zealand (Figure 1.3). The popularity of freedom camping nationally saw Christchurch and the adjoining Selwyn area become desirable destinations for large numbers of freedom campers. Christchurch is a large coastal city and major tourism hub for the South Island, with a population of 388,400 (CCC, 2016; CCC, 2018; CCC, 2019b). The Christchurch City Council (CCC) also governs the remote Banks Peninsula area, including Akaroa which amalgamated with the CCC in 2006 (CCC, 2006). In contrast, Selwyn is rural and sparsely populated with 61,061 residents, made up of a fast growing urban "commuter belt" and pastoral plains connecting to high country mountains (SDC, 2019). It is also the nation's second fastest growing region (Stuff, 2019), and is an unofficial staging or drive-through region for many tourists. Christchurch has had a freedom camping bylaw in place since 2015 which limits self-contained freedom camping to a two-night maximum (CCC, 2015), whereas Selwyn does not have a bylaw and manages freedom camping under the Reserves Act (RA) (New Zealand Government, 1977). The RA only allows camping with consent from the Minister of Conservation which is now a discretionary position for territorial authorities (LGNZ, 2018; New Zealand Government, 1977). DOC uses ministerial consent through the RA to allow freedom camping to occur on most of its land. The RA's relationship with the FCA is complex because the default position of the RA is no camping on conservation reserves. Also, the maximum stay on a conservation reserve is 28 days and is a lot longer than what many local freedom camping bylaws permit.

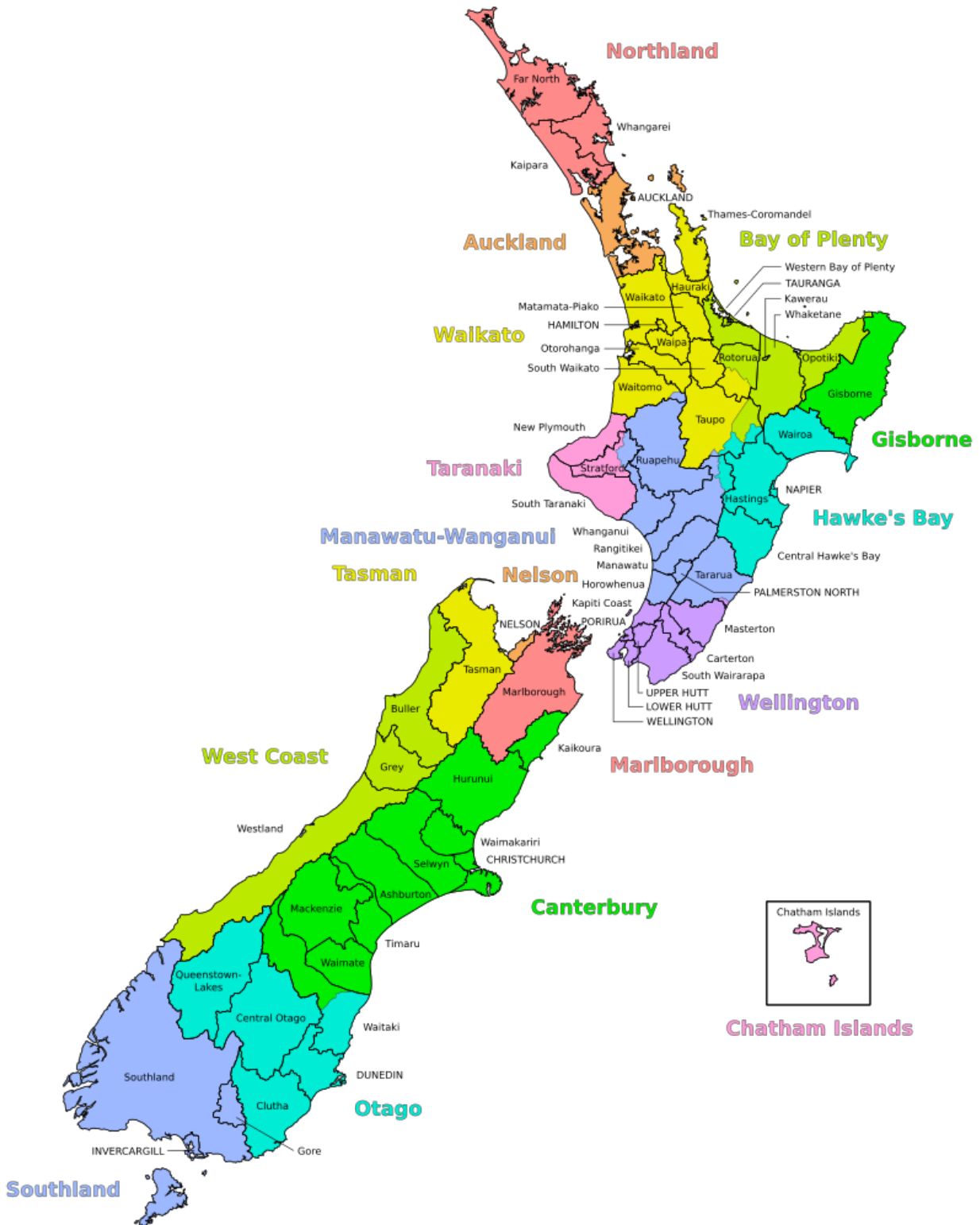


Figure 1.3: New Zealand regional map. Source: StatsNZ (2017)



Figure 1.4: The Selwyn & Christchurch (in yellow) council areas. Source: LGNZ (2017).

Christchurch does not have any formal freedom camping infrastructure and initially allowed a period of liberal freedom camping in its municipal picnic areas and carparks (Billante, 2010; CCC, 2019). However, sites overcrowded very quickly as foreign freedom campers gravitated to the city and urban areas in large numbers for proximity to amenities and cultural activities (LGNZ, 2018). In 2015, after a chaotic period of freedom camping the CCC responded to community pressure by revising its bylaw regulations, banning non-self-contained freedom camping in the entire district and severely limiting self-contained camping (CCC, 2015). The bylaw meant the Selwyn District Council (SDC) had to absorb the extra demand from Christchurch as freedom campers flocked to the available free sites in the city (Angus & Associates, 2017; Hume, 2016; Salmon, 2017). Similar trends were noted by the Hurunui District Council (seen in Figure 1.4), a region to the north of Christchurch, which also raised the issue of council bylaws having environmental and economic effects on neighbouring regions in a submission to the Responsible Camping Working Group (RCWG) in 2018 (MBIE, 2019b; MBIE, 2019c). The trend of districts prohibiting freedom camping was reducing supply and increasing freedom camper numbers in the nearest available areas. This spatially uneven overcrowding of small areas not designed for high freedom camping volume increased anti-social behaviour and environmental damage due to site availability and

overcrowding (DIA, 2016). The relationship local freedom camping bylaws have on neighbouring districts presents an opportunity to examine the FCA's effects on the community as a national policy direction.

Despite the influx of freedom campers after the introduction of Christchurch's bylaw, Selwyn's response to and experience with freedom camping has remained quite different from Christchurch. The SDC has excellent freedom camping infrastructure in its two historical recreational areas, Coes and Chamberlains Ford. Both site's facilities were modified since the FCA to cope with the increased freedom camping demand. Its rural location means freedom camping areas are located away from residents and are mostly invisible to them. The freedom campers I spoke with during fieldwork regard the Selwyn freedom camping infrastructure as some of the best in the country. The provision of excellent freedom camping infrastructure and management is at great expense to the district, yet representatives of the SDC I spoke with were eager to provide for freedom campers. The district employs a full staff to manage the sites and works closely with the local police to ensure user safety. The different approaches to freedom camping management in the two districts create tensions between and within the regions. Throughout this thesis I will explore how the contributing factors such as local governance, geography, population, tourist demand and community views affect social and environmental outcomes of freedom camping, and experiences of communities, freedom campers and neighbouring regions.

1.7 Personal interest and background

My impetus to investigate freedom camping was the frequent negative media attention associated with foreign freedom campers in New Zealand (Kitchin, 2018; Stuff, 2018; Wright, 2017). Although I currently reside in California, I took great interest in freedom camping and the FCA, following the issue closely. The media coverage with endless petty moral violations and outrage over public clotheslines and teeth brushing appeared to me to be loaded with stereotypical and xenophobic based assumptions (seen in Figure 1.5 below). Because I understand the traditions of camping in New Zealand, and the realities of car camping overseas, it was an easy decision to pursue the topic academically. Although, the foreign freedom camping trend in New Zealand is different from my own family camping traditions, I have spent months driving across Europe sleeping in olive and orange groves, so I understand the principles and the appeal of the activity. David and Sutton

(2011) described how sociologist C Wright Mills would collect newspaper clippings each day looking for contradictions in social life, seeing that individual experiences and the media could produce issues that could be fashioned into social research. As an emerging sociologist, I always had this in mind as I waded into the world of freedom camping in New Zealand.



Figure 1.5: Freedom camper's laundry strung on a local jungle gym in Dunedin causing outrage.
Source: McNeilly (2017)

I was born and raised in the Christchurch area and raised in a family whose traditions were based on low-cost camping on the New Zealand coastline. Collins and Kearns's (2010) assertion that "the campground is deeply embedded in the New Zealand psyche" (pg. 62) is representative of my family, doing much to shape my own values today. My extended family would frequent a small number of low-cost campsites in a cyclical and multi-generational pattern, a pattern discussed in chapter two (and see Blundell, 2006; Collins & Kearns, 2010). Freeman and Kearns (2015) characterise the New Zealand campground as an influencer of children's identity, where ideas of space, freedom, family and temporary settlement develop through multi-generational connections. The campground and the freedom to access nature shaped how I understood the outdoors, contributing to my national identity through a sense of freedom in nature or the New Zealand "birthright", freedom as birthright. I find the freedom of camping fulfilling and identity-affirming drawing on my own family experiences, and as Collins and Kearns (2010) suggest, from

my country and culture also. From this position, my study of freedom camping in the Christchurch and Selwyn districts emerges from my personal experiences of camping, anxiety over camping site supply and the social and environmental damage being done by freedom camping and the FCA.

1.8 Knowledge gap

Freedom camping in New Zealand is highly contested and under-researched in the academic literature (Kearns, Collins & Bates, 2016). The authors believe the lack of knowledge both reflects and contributes to a broader tendency for freedom camping to be overlooked in scholarly accounts of outdoor leisure. There have been some local case studies, but there is ample opportunity for more local research (Hutching & Lim, 2016; Keenan, 2012). Angus and Associates (2017) identified major knowledge gaps in freedom camping behaviour, motivations, relationships with the environment, residents and the business sector.

Academic discourse on freedom camping is emerging and studies have focused primarily on region-specific case studies. Kearns et al. (2016) examined the little-known motivations of local and domestic freedom campers by visiting three North Island camping regions of Coromandel, Gisborne and Taranaki over a summer-long period. Keenan's (2012) Otago and Southland case study looked at local management approaches, while, Hutching and Lim's (2016) Taranaki study observed freedom camping behaviour across the region's many popular sites. Keenan (2012) concluded that there are many more opportunities and areas to explore around freedom camping to add to the knowledge base. The significant lack of knowledge and the volatility of the situation presents an excellent opportunity to further examine discourse on the subject in a multi-district setting. Examining the relationships between local councils working with the national legislation connects to the broader freedom camping issue. This thesis will use the social and environmental tensions of freedom camping as the platform to examine neoliberal governance, the political ecology of tourism, social relations between host and tourist and the contradictions which have arisen due to the FCA.

1.9 Structure of thesis

Chapter One: introduced the current situation and explained the development of the FCA. Freedom camping and the NZSCS self-containment standard are defined. The situation in the Christchurch and Selwyn districts was presented and the how their characteristics and responses to the FCA created the opportunity for this study. My personal background and interest in freedom camping is introduced and how it relates to the study. In this introductory chapter, the study's aims and objective were also outlined.

Chapter Two: is a review of literature and is presented in two main sections. The first section connects emerging discourse on overtourism and platform capitalism to tourism governance approaches in neoliberal governments. Political ecology is introduced as a framework to examine the power relations involved with economics, nature and tourism. The second section focuses on the social relations between tourist and host, and analyses how New Zealand's traditional camping background influences attitudes towards foreign freedom camping, including issues of social-moral disgust.

Chapter Three: introduces the methodological and theoretical framework for the study. In this chapter I explain my qualitative case study of the Christchurch and Selwyn districts which includes semi-structured interviews, field observations, site visits, document analysis. This research design was guided by Weber's *Verstehen* approach to locate participants in their own social worlds to understand their relationship with freedom camping.

Chapter Four: is an analysis of the processes associated with the FCA at local and central political levels. This chapter uses two points to discuss freedom camping tensions: its contested passage through parliament in 2011, and the central government's censure of *freedom* from freedom camping to bookend a period of significant tension. A contrast of two different regional responses to freedom camping highlight tension causing elements in the legislation and difficulties for local council and residents.

Chapter Five: examines freedom camping as an economic activity that commodifies public space as a source of capital accumulation. The economic impacts and environmental issues associated with the FCA are analysed and evaluated with informant responses and field observations. I argue

that platform capitalism and the use of technology affects the local freedom camping situation. The recent technology partnership with central government is analysed and I develop an argument that this is a precarious position for the local community.

Chapter Six: examines how the visibility of freedom camping in the Selwyn and Christchurch districts effects social relations. I analyse freedom camping's effects on the community in both districts that evaluates a diverse range of perspectives. I argue that the community tension around freedom camper visibility connects to open defecation issues and how flaws in the regulatory oversight of the NZSCS self-containment standard and the FCA more broadly are a major cause of tension.

Chapter Seven: summarises the thesis and introduces the four interpretations of freedom that are identified and developed throughout the thesis: freedom from cost, freedom of mobility, freedom as birthright and freedom of regulatory responsibility. These freedoms are contextualised as inter-connected and contradictory processes. I argue that each social group's interpretation and pursuit of freedom interferes with other groups and that these interpretations of freedom are at the root of the tensions associated with freedom camping and the FCA at a local and national level.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the key themes and debates around freedom camping specifically related to social relations and tourism governance. It builds an analytical and conceptual framework which the study rests upon. This first section begins with a discussion on overtourism and responsible tourism and the relationship of these to tourist and host. Next, I explore major themes related to tourism governance. I examine the relationship of governance to economic power and capital accumulation. This is analysed through the framework of political ecology to interpret its relationship with community and the environment. This section locates the governance of freedom camping and the Freedom Camping Act (2011) (FCA) within major themes of tourism governance, political ecology and neoliberalism's effects on nature. This section concludes with a discussion of platform capitalism's developing role in the tourism industry.

The second section is a broader analysis of ideas and themes related to the sociology of the tourism and the relationships between host and tourist. A review of emerging freedom camping research looks at the construction of national and cultural identity through shared access to nature. This section introduces the idea of a 'New Zealand camper identity' as a foundational perspective to interpret the current freedom camping tensions seen in New Zealand. Next, I examine freedom campers' motivations and look at how motivations inform freedom camper behaviour. A discussion of tourist-host relations leads into an examination of two concepts: the 'tourist gaze' and the 'mutual gaze', as a framework to interpret social relations between tourist and host. This section concludes with a brief discussion on disgust and socio-moral disgust, which positions the current local tensions over freedom campers and open defecation within a broader theoretical framework of disgust, shaming and contamination.

2.2 Overtourism and responsible tourism

2.2.1 Overtourism

Tourism, if managed sustainably can produce enormous benefits for a country and citizens alike (Dwyer, Forsyth, & Spurr, 2004). However, growth of the global tourism industry and rising visitor numbers overcrowding popular destinations has led to a phenomenon known as “overtourism” which is unsustainable tourist volume at a location (Oklevik, Gössling, Hall, Jacobsen, Grøtte & McCabe, 2019). Overtourism is still a developing trend globally and currently there is little academic attention devoted to it (Koens et al., 2018; Martins, 2018; McKinsey, 2017; Séraphin et al., 2018; Routledge, 2001). Cheaper international travel, changes in tourist behaviour, the overuse of the public realm, poor tourist distribution and narrow marketing strategies drive the overtourism issue globally. Market-driven “hands-off” tourism policies pursued by governments eager for the easy yield Gross Domestic Profit (GDP) and foreign exchange of tourism is also a contributing factor. Increased tourism growth may be profitable for the tourism industry and GDP, but to local communities it has the opposite effect. Tourism overcrowding results in the alienation of residents, degradation of the tourist experience, infrastructure stress, environmental damage and destruction of the unique culture and heritage of a location (McKinsey, 2017). There is also a negative relationship between overtourism and employment, because increased tourism makes local employment conditions worse (Walmsley, 2017). Overtourism creates poor local working conditions because wages drop when tourism increases. This is due to the economy shifting from knowledge to hourglass in structure, with an increase in low-skilled, low-paid positions focused on servicing the tourism economy (Walmsley, 2017). Overtourism is a contested term open to multiple interpretations such as tourismphobia, anti-tourism or “overcrowding” as it is known by tourism industry and government.

Closely related to the overtourism debate is the rise of digital platforms and how they have transformed the tourism industry with their huge global reach. Koens, Postma and Papp (2018) suggest that the use of digital platforms has led to the overuse of local infrastructure and amenities and that tourists’ pursuit of a new ideal or “to see ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ everyday city life means that tourism activities become further intertwined with local life” (p. 1). Destination branding through digital platforms also links to overtourism. Governments are eager to leverage low-cost

social media content as advertising for the countries natural and cultural assets which provide rapid economic return (S raphin, Zaman, Olver, Bourliataux-Lajoinie, & Dosquet, 2019). The unregulated and centralized nature of the digital platforms has led to a range of uneven development and overcrowding issues in tourism hot spots by spatially reshaping the location.

Globally, the tourism industry has been utilizing access to public space and facilities as a core principle of its business model. Goodwin (2017) says that most tourism occurs in, and takes advantage of, the public realm, or public commons and receives funding from local taxpayers, who are also users of nature. The tourism industry sells short-term access to the public realm to tourists for profit. However, tax payers and local communities are being short changed as the industry and tourists overuse the spaces and do not contribute adequately for its upkeep (Goodwin, 2017). The overuse of the public realm by the tourism industry has become a major source of local tension. Local populations have become increasingly agitated by the tourism industry's exploitation of the public realm for economic returns which only benefit a small group of shareholders. Solutions such as the privatisation of services and user-pays models are equally undesirable to residents, as it destroys long-held free access rights, due to poorly managed tourism policy (Goodwin, 2017).

Major tourism organisations such as the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTO) continue to support large scale tourism growth citing its positive economic benefits, employment and foreign exchange value, even as overcrowding and sustainability issues increase globally (Panayiotopoulos & Pisano, 2019). Increasing numbers of tourists lured by the convenience of Airbnb, cruise ships and low-cost air travel have resulted in unprecedented overcrowding at many of the world's most popular locations (Panayiotopoulos & Pisano, 2019). Citizens in Barcelona, Hawaii, Iceland, Dubrovnik and Venice are either relocating or are in rebellion against their central government's liberal tourism policies and the tourism industry's business model (Goodwin, 2017; McKinsey, 2017; Martins, 2018; Panayiotopoulos & Pisano, 2019; S raphin et al., 2018; Routledge, 2001). In a discussion of overtourism in Venice, S raphin, Sheeran and Pilato (2018) believe the city's ecological survival is at the intersection of ecology, economics and culture and is a conflict between human, nature and capital (p. 374). A rising middle class, cheap air travel, government preference for mass tourism growth and the prevalence of digital platforms in tourism have created the conditions for overtourism issues to occur in popular tourist locations. Arguably, freedom camping in New Zealand is one manifestation of contemporary overtourism.

2.2.2 Responsible tourism

Global overtourism tensions have led some governments and tourism authorities to revisit their management approaches to mitigate social and environmental stress. This has led to the emergence of the *responsible tourism* movement to address unregulated tourism growth. Goodwin (cited in Camilleri, 2015) says responsible tourism is sustainable tourism, but with a specifically localized agenda. Responsible tourism is the reversal of open-market tourism approaches and profit focus. It prioritizes the local community and environment above the tourist in planning and policy-making (Francis, 2018). Goodwin (2017) says “overtourism is the antithesis of Responsible Tourism; it occurs when tourism’s priorities override the interests of the local community” (p.10). Responsible tourism provides carefully designed and sustainable tourism infrastructure, while still capitalizing on tourism’s numerous benefits to local and national economies (Goodwin, 2007; 2011; 2017). Addressing the historic inequality of tourism growth, the processes of responsible tourism require more collaboration and closer community relationships which recognize local agency and input (Camilleri, 2015). The disconnection between the central government and the local community is at the heart of the overtourism-responsible tourism debate and many issues in this thesis.

2.3 Tourism governance and neoliberalism

2.3.1 Government and tourism

Tourism has been re-prioritized by national governments as a major driver of GDP and foreign exchange in post-industrial economies (Airey, 2014). Central governments are considerably more interested in tourism policy than ever before (Britton, 1991). However, Airey (2014) says there has been little academic attention given to the policy elements in the study of tourism, often lacking a deep discussion of the politics involved in the decision making. All levels of government are actively involved in tourism planning and development, adopting a “more interventionist approach to tourism relative to other services” (Ruhanen, 2013, p.80). Tourism’s economic ascendancy within neoliberal frameworks has made it an ideal industry to introduce governance approaches. Ruhanen, Scott, Ritchie and Tkaczynski (2010) suggest that “tourism is an interesting context in which to study governance as it lies at the intersection of the public, private

and community sectors” (p. 3). With the retreat or repurposing of the state under neoliberalism (Peck & Tickell, 2002; 2007) and the involvement of new local and international stakeholders, tourist spaces and nature have become desirable sites of capitalist accumulation. What was once a low ranked cultural portfolio, tourism within neoliberal economic systems has become the forefront of GDP goals (Airey, 2014; Mosedale, 2016). Moreover, because of the growth of tourism as a major GDP earner, its policies have significantly more impact on citizens and the environment than ever before. This ascendancy has led to a blurring of public and private roles in tourist spaces (Airey, 2014). As tourism rises in status within government portfolios, the study of policy direction has become an emergent area of research.

Governance is a broader form of government action and resource allocation, where there is social reorganisation including new relationships, actors and economic principles (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). The traditional western capitalist government structure is a “top-down” economic model and regulatory framework which encompasses all civic life within the “state”. However, with neoliberal governance approaches, hierarchies flip to a “bottom-up” model of networks or partnerships with interested economic stakeholders (Wesley & Pforr, 2010). Governance is not government, but the deregulation of the controls of government, the decentralising of leadership and the involvement of new economic stakeholders (Ruhanen et al., 2010). In multi-actor governance frameworks, the state’s role is to engage new stakeholders and actors through favourable policy direction and deregulation while remaining the most influential stakeholder (Hall, 1999; Ruhanen, 2013). The approach mixes corporate management and public-private policy work into government decision making (Ruhanen et al., 2010). There is a decentralising of the state and it is “rolled back” and away from involvement in local issues (McCarthy & Prudham, 2004). Shone (2013) suggests that “governance is essentially about power, or rather the articulation and arrangement of power” (p. 36). Power, in theory, moves from the political space to become a more dynamic and collaborative power which involves more stakeholder input. Local governments are eager to introduce governance approaches that include the community and other stakeholders and take on devolved responsibility for local governance. Shone and Memon (2008) adds, “the present regional development policy framework which encapsulates tourism in New Zealand represents a devolved mandate away from the government towards governance” (p. 299). The processes of governance are market-facing with new networks and partnerships established.

The deregulation and redistribution of power through governance processes often serve economic interests which can erode democratic power and the needs of the public good. Mordue (2007) considers governance partnerships to be invasive forces evoking Foucault's theory of "governmentality" where government power increases through the mixing of institutions, experts and new knowledge to subjugate, normalize and force citizens to become internalized subjects of state power (p. 459). Hall (1999) also suggests the relationship between governance and tourism raises issues over the views of the "public interest" (p. 287) as policy direction often represents the minority view. O' Fallon (1993) discussing governance processes in New Zealand, says the ascendancy of individualist behaviour means that resources can be unfairly distributed amongst a select range of political interests and motivations that serve the "individual", not the "public interest" (p. 272). The combination of public-private financing and a focus on economic development in tourism governance raises questions about whether these processes are accountable to voters, as development and community well-being are often opposing positions (Mosedale, 2016).

Furthermore, the idea of government entities run like businesses, espoused in the "New Public Management" (NPM) approach, capitalizes on the retreating state and new commercial partnerships to develop post-industrial cities as high-value spaces for residents and tourists. "Sustainability" is often used as a code word for business-driven accumulation, sold through an artificial veneer of enticing branding and "tokenistic public participation" (Ruhanen, 2013, p. 80). Place promotion and urban regeneration are central elements where citizens become customers and cities are rapidly redeveloped. Local governments invite the tax revenue, but the profits often do not trickle down as promised, leaving the city into the hands of elites. Mordue (2007) discusses the effects of neoliberal governance processes in the tourist town of York, where increased private involvement in urban development resulted in the dispersal of public power and a loss of accountability (Mordue, 1999; Mordue 2007; Paddison & Walmsley, 2018). Community engagement in York was token at times. The wider economic interests "closed up" the policy direction causing a "democratic deficit" as local elites soon controlled decision making (Mordue, 1999; Paddison & Walmsley, 2018). The working-class community complained they had become excluded from their town as it became a highly regulated and gentrified space (Mordue, 2007). They complained about the lack of real employment opportunities the industry offered and how the town became a space for middle-class tourists. The divergent positions of government, tourism authorities and local communities will be a theme explored in this thesis.

Governance however remains a contested term and process. The role of the state throughout the process remains ambiguous, not absent but rather interested or disinterested depending on its own economic agenda. Wesley and Pforr (2010) characterise governance as a “buzzword in tourism discourse” (p. 775) often mixed conveniently with other terms such as good, public, new, local, participatory or community. In this thesis, I will explore how the term “tourism governance” holds a useful ambiguity for the state to serve its own economic interests. The unidirectional processes of governance enable it to untether itself discreetly from public responsibility. The central government and tourism governance occupy an unusual dichotomy. The state can simultaneously push the local away through the processes of governance, while enacting tourism policy that serves GDP goals, which can oppose the “public good”. Governance is loosening the controls for new economic actors, but the central government still maintains the economic hegemony. More often, the government and stakeholders exclude the public from economic decision making. With regards to tourism, the state has not retreated, it selects where to invest its resources which is it does through policy direction. Governance is managerial positioning for the growth of privatization through deregulation and increased economic partnerships.

2.3.2 The political ecology of tourism within a neoliberal framework

Political ecology and the relationship between nature and capitalism has emerged as a framework for understanding and analysing neoliberalism governance structures, especially in the tourism sector (Escobar, 1996; McCarthy & Prudham, 2004; Mosedale, 2015; Stonich, 1985). Douglas outlines how “political ecology presents an interdisciplinary lens for analysing environmental conflicts concerning the social relations of actors, often dubbed as “stakeholders,” within such conflicts” (2014, p. 8). By looking at relationships in local and international contexts, political ecology seeks to understand the social and environmental implications in relation to economic power and capitalist production and consumption (Blaikie & Brookfield, 2015; Bryant, 1992). Moreover, the relationships between stakeholders and the management of natural resources in relation to existing power structures is an important perspective. Economic interests within neoliberal frameworks have reappropriated the social and environmental needs of local communities as extractive tourism markets grow, as Carrier (cited in Douglas, 2014) explains:

Coastlines and broader tourism destinations throughout the world, for example, have increasingly been transformed from spaces and places imbued with social, political, and historical meaning for indigenous and local peoples to spaces and places of leisure for international and local elites. (p. 8)

Political ecology attempts to interpret relationships when nature, social and economic activities intersect (Escobar, 1996). Escobar (1996) talks about the “death of nature and the rise of the environment” as local and national stakeholders look to facilitate the environment as spaces of capitalist consumption. Mosedale (2015) says power’s relationship to nature is its ability to control, dictate, move, transform, extract or sell it across society and space. Seen in both the global north and south, power over nature contributes to shape outcomes at the expense of local communities and the environment. Britton (1991) adds there has been a gross underestimation of the tourism industry’s function as a source of capitalist accumulation in both production and consumption. The emergence and use of concepts such as ecotourism, green and sustainable describe the relationship capital has with the tourism environment. However, these terms are disputed as euphemisms for the expression of economic power over nature (Duffy, 2015).

Nature is now an economic focus for business opportunities through neoliberal deregulation and power transfer through governance processes. New economic partnerships need new environments for capital growth “under the neoliberal mandate for the commodification of everything” (Kuel, 2014, p. 236). As manufacturing and production has waned, nature has become a coveted resource for neoliberal policymakers and economic stakeholders (Duffy, 2008; 2013; 2014; Kuel, 2014; McCarthy & Prudham, 2004). As a result, governments have tended to intervene in tourism over other areas of industry due to its high economic return and are looking for new markets to serve the tourism industry (Mosedale, 2016; Ruhanen, 2013). Tourism has become a form of “commodification and marketisation” of nature as an object (Mosedale, 2015, p. 507). This process leads to privatization and the removal and abstraction of the object from its social need and value. In time, the economic prioritization of an object or space circumvents the local area, and the object becomes recast as an economic and production entity. Mordue (1999) discussing tourism development applied the Marxist concept of commodification where an object or service’s exchange value is prioritised over its social use value. The result of this process of commodification has been the recasting of the natural world as an economic driver and source of capitalist accumulation through tourism development. Animal encounters and landscapes

become “captured” and commodified into highly emotional tourist experiences (Duffy, 2015). For economic growth to occur, nature must be “flattened and deadened” in order to commodify it, which is harmful to nature and the community (Duffy, 2015, p. 530). It is then sold as a tourism product under the contested terms of environmental sustainability and eco-tourism.

The creation of new tourism opportunities for capitalist accumulation simultaneously create environmental crises in their wake (McCarthy & Prudham, 2004). Duffy (2015) disagrees with capitalism’s relationship with nature being promoted as symbiotic and a win-win situation, suggesting it is a more unstable process. She interprets tourism within neoliberal frameworks as a contradictory process when she explains, “tourism, including the subset of nature-based tourism, produces contradictions because it relies on creating attractions from the very environments it is simultaneously using, changing and reshaping” (2015, p. 539). Duffy (2015) interprets tourism within neoliberal frameworks as a contradictory process. She further introduces the concept of the *“neoliberalising of nature”*, suggesting tourism uses nature to “conceal the contradictions of capitalism” (2015, p. 529). Terms such as green, eco and sustainable present nature-based tourism as a clean industry, but it is brand messaging for capitalist accumulation in the tourism industry.

2.3.3 Platform capitalism and tourism

Technological developments through a range of digital platforms have transformed the travel industry and social media in the tourism industry is a “mega trend” (Leung, Law, Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013). Platform capitalism in the tourism industry has transformed the way tourist sites develop primarily due to location sharing or geotagging by users and sharing images. A platform is digital infrastructure that connects two or more groups and allows them to connect with one another from a socio-technical intermediary position (Langley & Leyshon, 2017; Srnicek, 2017a; 2017b). Digital platforms’ primary focus is collecting data from its users, and it can operate almost anywhere with limited need for infrastructure. At the heart of platform capitalism is the need for constant expansion through collection of data from more users (Srnicek, 2017a; 2017c). Data is this age’s commodity and is more valuable than oil (Srnicek, 2017c). Digital platforms’ data needs mean they must be constantly expanding which is dangerous for society because growth is perpetual and tends towards the monopolization of markets (Srnicek, 2017a). The constant need for data

means that overcrowded tourist destinations have become sites of data accumulation with huge social and environmental impacts. Traditionally, information shared through print and word of mouth meant tourist sites would evolve organically (Munar & Ooi, 2012, p. 2). However, with social media the instantaneous “electronic word of mouth” has become the primary method of information sharing (Tham, Croy, & Mair, 2013). This has led to overcrowding issues at many global tourist locations. Thus, digital platforms fuel overcrowding and overcrowding fuels digital platforms. Part of a broader technology in tourism issue, many tourist locations are struggling to cope with the demands of the centralised digital platforms which now indirectly govern tourist spaces.

Platform capitalism in the tourism industry has been a transformative technology for users and governing tourism bodies. However, digital platforms’ wide distribution of information and location has been an unaccountable and destructive force for the communities and environments who host the tourists. Users can share their location and attract other users to that location on the social network. Therefore, tourist engagement on the platform is a form of destination branding as discussed earlier. Encouraged by governments and tourism authorities, users contribute narrative, visual and audio channels and in doing so produce self-created tourism content and location branding through social media (Munar, 2011; 2012; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). In *honeypot* locations, which are extremely popular sites, this has brought catastrophic levels of tourist visitation aided by the other processes of overtourism (Goodwin, 2017). Dredge and Gyimóthy (2015) discussing the collaborative sharing economy online say it is “spatially uneven” (p. 296). Using Airbnb as an example, they praised its huge success but said it brought major problems with its uneven dispersal of users. The real benefits of the tourism technology economy are currently unclear and Dredge and Gyimóthy suggest, “the scope and distribution of benefits is never quantified and the contribution of the collaborative businesses to national economies remains speculative, suggesting the need for further investigation (2015, p. 296). The major digital platform used for freedom camping in New Zealand and the relationship it has with the local community and the environment will be analysed in this thesis.

2.4 Sociology of tourism: Tourist-host relationships

As a foundation for this study, a broad examination of the current themes and ideas surrounding tourist and host relationships will help make sense of social relations in the Christchurch and

Selwyn districts. Tourist experiences have received significant academic attention (Boorstin, 1987; Cohen, 1972; 1978; 1979; 1984; 1988; Krippendorf, 1999; Maccannell, 1973; 1999; 2002; Urry, et al. 2011). Cohen (1984) identified principal areas in the sociology of tourism as the tourist, host-tourist relations, tourist structures and the tourism impacts, and indicated that there was a knowledge gap in host-tourist relationship dynamics. Krippendorf (1999) in his book *Holiday Makers* outlined the theoretical relationships between hosts and guests. Krippendorf's writing is heavily featured in this section as he carefully evaluates the host perspective in tourist-host relations. He also discusses the host group as being disconnected from centralised capital which is a key element explored in this thesis. Krippendorf indicated that tourist and host motivations inform many complex social relations and believes that the tourism industry is ignorant of local perspectives on tourism, citing the lack of academic research on local perspectives in major tourism research institutes as proof. He also says the tourism industry focuses almost entirely on itself and the tourist but suggests the "silent local" has been a poor advocate of their experiences in the past.

In emerging tourist-host relationships, the relationship is a continuum. Most tourists are welcomed initially and considered a novelty, but when tourists cross a volume threshold, the relationship quickly changes. Cohen (1984) understood tourist-host relationships in two ways; either a "native system which is invaded by tourists" or an "emergent system" co-created by the tourist and host (p. 380). The native system is the first point, and if the system evolves and is managed carefully it will become an emergent system. If it is not carefully managed, relationships can deteriorate. Doxey (cited in Cohen, 1984) interprets the introduction of tourism to a host community as a four-stage process. The first stage is novelty or euphoria, moving to apathy, followed by annoyance and then finally into widespread antagonism in the host community. This fourth and final phase is where the host community rejects the tourist and conflict occurs. Cohen saw the transition from novel guest to large scale tourist commoditization as a process which begins as an invasion of a native system but transforms into a well-defined tourist and host relationship and economic system. Where the relationship is positioned on the four-stage tourist-host continuum determines the condition of the relationship.

Historically, there has been a lack of research on local perspectives on tourism growth as alluded to by Krippendorf above. Woosnam (cited in Sharpley, 2014) discussing the need for host-tourist relations to be located within a specific conceptual framework, suggested, "the present residents'

[host community] attitudes literature does not consider how residents' feelings towards tourists (on an individual level) may potentially influence their attitudes about tourism" (p. 38). Recent research seeks to reevaluate this deficiency and redefine tourist-host relations, shedding more light on the host. Jordan et al. (2019) suggest that tourist-host research has shifted from, "attitudes toward tourism and support for tourism" to looking more deeply at how tourism affects resident's quality of life (QOL), with a range of psychological markers related to emotion, stress, fulfilment and contentment (p. 214). Jordan et al.'s (2019) study found that positive tourism impacts elicited positive emotions, while negative impacts activated negative emotions, such as sadness and shock (Jordan et al., 2019). Negative impacts can only be subjective perceptions, but the emotions experienced are real. Attitudes towards the tourists themselves differs from tourism development issues/impacts and often omitted in wider host-guest discourse (Sharpley, 2014), Host attitudes will be carefully examined throughout this thesis. Global tourism has undergone many changes recently, so the predominance of economic rationalization is slowly giving way to a more considered analysis of the social and environmental effects of tourism on local communities and the environment.

In tourist-host relations, tourists receive a lot of negative attention when visitation numbers rise. Krippendorf found irony in the fact that most of the world travel, yet there is so little appreciation or awareness for the "much maligned tourist" (1999, p. 42). Krippendorf believes perceptions of the tourist are heavily distorted, unfairly labelled as the new barbarians, locusts, golden hordes, the new masters, waste or plague-like in host populations (1999, p. 41). He states that it is common to regard tourists as the "other" and host communities do not easily empathize or identify with them. Therefore, the tourist-host relationship is complex and tension laden. Specific ethnic groups will even dislike themselves when cast as host and the other as tourist. Kim (2003) discussing Korean ex-pats in the diasporas of Hawaii and Queensland, Australia reported that the Korean-born ex-pats dislike the visiting Korean tourists. This indicates that the relationship between host and tourist is subjective and highly emotional. Krippendorf characterizes the tourist as an individualist and egotistical position and not a diplomatic representative of their nation as they are often referred. He says tourists are largely unaware of the damage they do to local economies and environments they visit, as governments and economic stakeholders conceal this from them (Krippendorf, 1999). Suggesting that tourists do not engage in premeditated acts of malevolence and any bad behaviour is mostly out of ignorance. Krippendorf feels it is wrong to blame tourists solely for their behaviour, but he asserted tourists must receive education from the

host community to make them aware of their impacts that policy makers and the tourism industry avoid.

The distribution of tourism's economic benefits influences tourist-host relations. Yang, Ryan, and Zhang (2013) say much of the conflict around tourism is due to the unfair distribution of economic benefits amongst social groups. There is a disconnection between local input and tourism development with economics driving the process and locals having to "conform to the market" (Krippendorf, 1999, p. 45). When the tourism industry comes to town, communities have often accepted the central government and the tourism industry views of the benefits tourism will bring and the negative aspects are often omitted or bypassed. However:

Once tourism has taken hold of the area and the locals realize what they have let themselves in for, disillusionment and more realistic attitudes replace the initial euphoria. But then it can be too late because they have lost control over their own destiny. (Krippendorf, 1999, p. 45)

Money in the tourism industry comes from the cities and flows right back bypassing rural or low-income communities. Krippendorf (1999) says locals supply the environment and the ruling class supply the capital indicating a "division of labour between town and country" (p. 49). Stakeholders often live elsewhere and are not in direct daily contact with tourists. The political mechanisms in most countries support or do not vocally oppose any form of tourism growth for economic reasons. To the tourism industry and government, tourists enjoy an elevated status in a host country as they are essential providers of GDP and foreign currency. Local communities who lack the agency to make decisions on tourism development pay a high price and Krippendorf (1999) adds that the predominant economic rhetoric often drowns out any local concerns on tourism growth anyway.

2.5 Camping and freedom camping in New Zealand

Collins and Kearns' (2010) case study on coastal campgrounds in New Zealand examined the deep relationship locals have with these spaces. Their study is a key discussion on the importance of low-cost camping to New Zealanders as part of the Kiwi way of life. New Zealanders consider coastal camping a major cultural tradition and the most important form of domestic tourism (Collins & Kearns, 2010; Freeman & Kearns, 2015). However, much academic discourse overlooks the

relationship New Zealand families have with coastal camping spaces in the country (Freeman & Kearns, 2015). Collins and Kearns (2010) discovered that New Zealanders consider coastal campgrounds to be areas of democratic public recreation, and spaces of deep social and psychological meaning. New Zealander's relationship with its coastline transcends ethnicity, being equally important to Pākehā and Māori (Campion & Stephenson, 2010). Freeman and Cheyne assert that "the importance of the coast for Māori cannot be underestimated" (2008, p. 40). To the Māori, the coastline is a food source and a place of spirituality and linked to a sense of place extending into the afterlife (Cheyne & Freeman, 2006; Freeman & Cheyne, 2008). Māori feel anxiety about the loss of coastal recreational areas and worry about their own potential alienation from the coast which is central to their identity and culture. Pākehā also feel tension around the loss of camping sites and rising coastal property prices (Blundell, 2006; Collins & Kearns, 2010), that are spaces of significant cultural meaning and multi-generational family recreation.

Coastal camping sites are low-cost and largely egalitarian environments acting as a microcosm of New Zealand's collective identity (Blundell, 2006; Collins & Kearns, 2010). Camping in New Zealand is the seasonal migration of the local population during holiday periods, weekends or for various leisure activities requiring proximity and access to the natural environment (DIA, 2016). Nolan (cited in DOC, 2006) described camping in New Zealand as once a working-class activity for large low-income families. Generational family groups establish geographic ties and build family bonds at the campsite (Blundell, 2006; Collins & Kearns, 2010). New Zealand's coastal camping spaces have become hallowed ground, with Collins and Kearns adding "The campground is deeply in the New Zealand psyche" (2010, p. 62). The campground is symbolic of a shared cultural history and a space where nature, social relationships and nationality intersect (seen in Figure 2.1). New Zealanders consider the coastal campground a place of deep cultural significance and is understood as emotional geography. New Zealand citizens consider public access to nature as a "birthright" (Campion & Stephenson, 2010). Moreover, the DOC (2006) study concluded that "access to camping areas is seen as an indicator of New Zealanders' ability to access the coast, a key heritage right" (p.9). It would appear that New Zealanders and academics consider camping a public good which improves society.



Figure 2.1: Mt Manganui Campground, 1960's. Source: National Library (2019)

Since the 1990s, many campgrounds shut due to rising property values and property development pressure (Cheyne & Freeman, 2006; DOC, 2006; Freeman & Kearns, 2015). Barber (cited in Collins & Kearns, 2010) spoke of the collective panic by the threat to coastal campgrounds by development and the growth of private property. The loss of camping sites that families have visited for generations lost to private ownership and development are real fears for New Zealanders and indicates the deep relationship with camping sites (Collins & Kearns, 2010). New Zealanders have always considered private ownership of the coastline a threat to coastal camping and runs in opposition to New Zealand's way of life (Blundell, 2006; Cheyne & Freeman, 2006; Collins & Kearns, 2010; DOC, 2006). Historically, coastal land was set aside for temporary low-cost campgrounds and shared across class lines before coastal property ownership exploded in New Zealand (Collins & Kearns, 2010). In previous decades, New Zealanders considered owning private coastal property the passé transference of the country's banal suburbia to holiday locations (Collins & Kearns, 2010). However, the increasing value of New Zealand's coastal

property has made campgrounds a poor economic decision which has lessened the supply. Since the 1990's, New Zealanders have seen coastal campgrounds slowly disappear and the loss of these areas resonates with the New Zealand camper identity.

2.5.1 The freedom in freedom camping

The idea of freedom is integral to the understanding of freedom camping. However, it has recently become a contested term in New Zealand (DIA, 2016). Kearns, Collins and Bates (2017) sought to “conceptualise the freedom(s) in camping” by breaking down the motivations of freedom campers, and what drives them to seek this form of recreation. Freedom is a central component of any leisure activity which is engaged in voluntarily (Kearns et al., 2017). Freedom means the freedom of access to nature and the freedom of mobility to locate yourself within nature. In this study, I will conceptualise freedom camping in two ways: the freedom of mobility and the freedom of access, or freedom in nature as birthright. This definition of freedom in nature is connected to the idea of the shared New Zealand “birthright” to nature discussed earlier. The multiple interpretations of freedom related to freedom camping is full of contradictions and tensions and is closely linked to the New Zealand camper identity I introduced above.

Freedom for a tourist is a fundamental element in the travel experience. The freedom of mobility allows them to interact with nature. Caruana and Crane (2011) discussed how tourism is bound to this notion of freedom, or as an escape from daily life to engage in new and forbidden activities. The escape from everyday life to a remote location is liberation from life's external controls and expectations and gives license to seek high-quality experiences and make autonomous personal choices. The two concepts of “freedom from”, or liberation, and the “freedom to”, or license underwrite much of the ideology of the tourism industry and its marketing imagery. The recreational tourist experience through its motivations, activities and experiences is rich in the concept of freedom, and the ways to achieve it (Hassell et al., 2015). This is a connected process where the user's experience becomes the destination branding for the tourism industry of the location they visit and links to earlier discussion of platform capitalism earlier. Tourism media is heavily romanticised and used as a tool to attract users to achieve this condition of freedom and to seek liberation and license (Caruana & Crane, 2011). This promise of freedom is fundamental to the messaging for freedom camping.

But while tourism is an escape from the mundane, tourists must still fulfil regular activities of everyday life such as shopping, travel, bathing, food preparation and housekeeping (Larsen, 2008) as well as seeking shelter (Burch, cited in Kearns et al., 2017). However, tourists who choose freedom camping also have many opportunities to live outside of society's rules, controls and norms. The freedom to select your own place to sleep is part of the escape from the mundane, where the procedures of everyday life reverse into an emotion-rich and autonomous experience. Therefore, the traditional campground often runs in direct opposition to a tourist's pursuit of freedom, as it is a strictly regulated and controlled space with many behaviours closely monitored and monetized (Collins & Kearns, 2010). Freedom campers' main desire, according to Caldicott et al. (2014, p. 431), is to "experience the freedoms of non-regulated, non-commercial accommodation" (p. 431). When a freedom camper stays at a traditional campground, the opportunities for liberation and license reduce, as the camper must again surrender themselves to society's rules and restrictions.

The forces of liberation and licence (Caruana & Crane, 2011) can do much to explain why New Zealand's natural environment, remote location, traditional camping heritage and the FCA have combined to create so many negative situations across the country. There are multiple interpretations of freedom occurring causing tension. Freedom campers seek the freedom promised in the national messaging, or freedom as birthright". Also, they seek the freedom from cost encouraged by the tourism industry in increasingly larger numbers every year, colliding with residents in these shared or public spaces (LGNZ, 2018). Caldicott and Scherrer (as cited in Collins & Kearns, 2010) indicate that the growth of freedom camping is due to a revived interest in unregulated and autonomous travel and recreation. Caldicott, Scherrer and Jenkins (2014) characterize the decision to freedom camp as a lifestyle choice, not an economic necessity or a "product choice" (p. 422).

A highly contested interpretation of freedom relates to the freedom from cost. Kearns et al. (2017) suggested the freedom in freedom camping can represent avoiding payment or capitalizing on ratepayer-funded local services and the use of public land. The authors' multi-district study however did conclude that there was little evidence to suggest that freedom camper's primary motivation was avoiding payment. One lingering ratepayer perception though is that foreign freedom campers wish to avoid paying for local services to extend their travel dollar (DIA, 2016).

Caldicott et al. (2014) suggests that communities who are critical of freedom camping portray it as, “an illegal, destructive and parasitic activity to local environments, communities and economies” (p. 418). This type of perception drives the community idea that freedom campers are “freeloaders” who contribute nothing to the community (DIA, 2016; LGNZ, 2017). Negative perceptions of freedom camping and the contradictions of what the freedom from cost means to the local community contribute to the polarizing views on freedom camping across New Zealand. Freedom from cost has become a contested term in this debate and in the following chapters I consider the ambiguity and contestations around the idea of freedom from various social positions and subjectivities.

2.5.2 Local reactions to freedom camping

Freedom camping sites have become contested spaces in New Zealand (Collins et al., 2017; DIA, 2016) and local communities have become vigilant to the real and perceived threats associated with transient freedom campers. This tension is also reflected in the negative media attention freedom campers receive. Coastal residents are intolerant of freedom camper behaviour and vigilant over land use. In the Collins et al. (2017) study of the high value Coromandel region in New Zealand’s North Island, residents characterised freedom campers as threats to safety, freeloaders, criminal and dangerous outsiders and who would steal tap water. The property owners’ perceptions are highly emotional and indicate tensions in shared public spaces on New Zealand’s coastline. Some local family groups now avoid areas with high numbers of foreign freedom campers (Freeman & Kearns, 2015; QLDC, 2018). There is a local preference for family friendly locations well off the freedom camper tourist track. However, the local aversion to the foreign freedom camping culture minimizes the supply of available camping sites to citizens. The perceived desecration of camping spaces by another social group reveal anxieties about the loss of coastal campsites through property and tourism development, revealing New Zealander’s deep psychological connection to its campgrounds (Cheyne & Freeman, 2006; Freeman & Kearns, 2015).

2.6 The tourist-host gaze and socio-moral disgust

2.6.1 Tourist gaze

Academic studies on tourism theory and behaviour often discuss John Urry's pivotal *Tourist Gaze*, which examines tourist behaviour, motivations and relationship with hosts and tourist sites. The central idea of the tourist gaze is the study of the tourist experience through the eyes of the visitor in gendered, hegemonic and class positions (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Urry frames the concept through the lens of Foucault's medical gaze and clinic (Urry & Larsen, 2011), and suggests that Foucault's clinic was the first instance where the science of the gaze was ever truly organized. The tourist gaze is socially constructed, highly organized and systematised and built around an industry of experts who help "construct and develop" the tourist gaze as medical professionals do in the clinic (2011, p.1). The tourism industry cultivates the gaze and shapes its direction, which connects to society, history and the social construction of place (Mordue, 1999; Urry & Larsen, 2011).

The tourist gaze relates to capitalist consumption, as all spaces upon which the gaze focuses will eventually become commodified and consumed. The tourist gaze is always looking for new places to consume and reappropriate, with different locations ascribing different cultural values and meanings within the gaze (Mordue, 1999). The cultivation of the tourist gaze means that "tourism is an ever-present aspect of contemporary capitalist society and one of the quintessential features of mass consumer culture" (Britton, cited in Mordue 1999, p. 48). Urry (2002) says the tourist gaze, when affixed on landscapes, is a process of visual consumption. Modern tourism is built around large numbers of people in a range of transportation gazing upon or consuming remote geographic environments within large tourism networks. As tourism becomes the world's largest industry, the environmental consequences of the tourist gaze are dire.

2.6.2 Mutual gaze

Maoz (2006) built on Urry's tourist gaze with the concept of the *mutual gaze* between host and guest. The host gaze subverts the class and economic power of the tourist gaze. It positions the host and tourist in a tension-filled space where social relations, economics and space merge.

Maoz studied Israeli backpackers in rural India tourist towns and the relationship of host to tourist, concluding, “a new term is introduced-the local gaze-to discuss the agency and the power of locals in Third World countries” (2006, p 222). The author says tourists do not gaze at locations and hosts in isolation. The host gaze is “not ocular” but relying on a range of mental perceptions and how the host constructs and imagines a way to see tourists, or how “we see them” (Maoz, 2006, p. 222). A specific local agency develops through the host gaze, particularly if there is a power struggle in the relationship. The local gaze is a complex response to the colonial, class and hegemonic positions of the tourist gaze. Agency occurs through the host gaze emerging as a response to host-tourist tensions. When nuisance and aggressive behaviour of the young Israeli backpackers challenged their economic value to communities in Goa, locals responded in direct and indirect ways. Urry and Larsen (2011) suggested the tourist gaze is mutual where “the eyes of the guest and host intersect” (2011, p.63). The tourist gaze is objectifying but subverted and objectified by the ‘local gaze’ (Maoz, 2006; Urry & Larsen, 2011).

Maoz (2006) outlined three primary responses to this tourist tension. Firstly, cooperation remains between host and tourist. Next there can be open resistance to the tourists which can result in conflict. Finally, hosts can establish a veiled-resistance which maintains the economic benefits of the tourists but rejects their behaviour indirectly. This is mild deception or “staged authenticity” as discussed by Macannell (1973; 1999), and the creation of false tourism environments for the purpose of profit. Tourists, governments and commercial stakeholders can forget local communities involved in tourism development. The host gaze is an assertive position which counters Krippendorf’s “silent host” by challenging the hegemonic position of the tourist gaze and the wider industry itself.

2.6.3 Socio-moral disgust

An issue connected to tourist-host relations that I explore in this thesis is the experience and perceptions of socio-moral disgust. Physical disgust has a clear biological purpose as a response to protect humans from contamination and disease. However, sociomoral disgust has little biological function, but more to do with the contamination of social groups through immoral actions or behaviour (Miller, 1997). Socio-moral disgust derives from impure physical violations of the body observed in another person (Rozin et al., 1999). Miller (1997) suggests there is a clear moral

quality to disgust and people who violate social norms or moral codes can elicit disgust responses in others. He links socio-moral disgust to human vice specifically hypocrisy which evokes a strong reaction. Moral disgust also stems from violations of altruism and cooperation in society and sociomoral disgust is the punishment for citizens who violate the “social contract” (Curtis and Biran, 2001, p. 28). Maintenance of the social order of the group is through socio-moral reactions of disgust which govern the collective under agreed religious, hygiene and behavioural morality that maintains social unity. Rozin and Fallon (cited in Curtis & Biran, 2001) suggest at times disgust can arise when there is contact “with unpleasant or unknown people” (p. 18). Socio-moral disgust preserves group order and integrity by protecting itself from individuals or groups who would threaten its cohesion. Curtis and Biran (2001) emphasize the community element associated with socio-moral disgust: “If disgust began as an aversion to physical parasites, it may have come to serve an extended purpose, that of an aversion to social parasites” (p. 29). Physical disgust and sociomoral disgust originate from different stimulus, but the unifying function is the service and protection of a social or cultural group.

2.7 Conclusion

This literature review establishes a theoretical framing to position the study of freedom camping and social relations in the Christchurch and Selwyn districts. There is limited academic literature on freedom camping, so a broad range of themes were investigated. Hart (1998) states that understanding a discourse’s tradition through a literature review will guide the field work by shaping the methodology. The literature review was an ongoing process throughout the research which was responsive to the developing ideas encountered in the field and through data analysis processes. The research related to tourism governance, political ecology, overtourism and platform capitalism that I unpacked in this chapter will be used as a lens to interpret the local and central issues related to freedom camping. My discussion of coastal camping and identity showed the value and meaning New Zealanders ascribe to traditional camping practices. This value and meaning created a space to introduce the sociology of tourist and host relationships and will be used as a framework to interpret social relations due to freedom camping in local and national environments.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This methodology chapter will introduce the case study research approach I used to study freedom camping and social relations in the Christchurch and Selwyn districts. This research approach and methodology was appropriate for the study of freedom camping in New Zealand because case studies focus attention on specific locations which inform wider issues and themes (Yin, 2015). The study focused on the people's perspectives on and responses to freedom camping and the FCA and sought to interpret them through the lens of Max Weber's *Verstehen* (Weber, 1981). Each person lives through their own subjective experiences, so by examining a range of local perspectives on the issue, I aimed to establish a diverse and nuanced understanding of the local situation emerged. By interviewing participants connected to freedom camping and the FCA, my study aimed to understand how the legislation and activity was affecting lives and businesses in the community as well as local governance approaches. The research process also included an extensive literature review and a document and policy analysis that focussed on tourism governance, cross-district interactions and local perspectives on freedom camping. The two adjacent districts' connection and responses to the central government's freedom camping policy was an opportunity to examine the reshaping of social relations through field research, literature review and document analysis to contribute to existing knowledge.

3.2 A qualitative case-study research approach

For this research project, I adopted a qualitative case-study research approach because of its usefulness for examining people and places as well as investigating their perceptions in a fluid and open fashion. Yin (2015) describes qualitative research as a way to study meanings in people's lives and to represent their perspectives. Yin (2002) further describes a case study as an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p.13). Christchurch is a large and densely populated urban area with limited public space. Freedom camping is highly visible there which has exacerbated local tensions. Conversely, Selwyn is rural, sparsely populated with two large historical recreation areas, Coes and Chamberlains Ford.

These two neighbouring, but diverse district councils respond to freedom camping in different ways and have a unique relationship with it. Each regional council manages freedom camping in its own way, so the case study contrasts the two differing approaches under one national freedom camping framework. David and Sutton assert, “case study research gives emphasis to the internal character of the individual case” (2012, p. 168). The single case approach I used looks inside and between the two geographically connected, but diverse districts and how the overarching national freedom camping legislation affects the different areas. Freedom camping is marketed nationally as a singular activity, but regional responses vary. Therefore, the single case puts these two districts together to identify and examine the contradictions and tensions of the local-national approach to freedom camping. Another supporting factor of analysing two adjacent districts as a single case is when one council implements a freedom camping bylaw, the social, financial and environmental effects ripple across to nearby districts (Hume, 2016). The contrast of two neighbouring councils responding to the nationalized activity will bring the social relations of freedom camping locally to the fore. Keenan (2012) concludes their Otago and Southland study by stating that there were many more opportunities and areas to explore freedom camping to add to existing knowledge.

My use of an inductive and qualitative approach enabled me to examine the social relations around freedom camping and the FCA. Yin (2015) states that qualitative research looks for meaning in people’s lives as “experienced under real-world conditions” (p. 9). Qualitative research processes are often flexible, allowing the researcher to adapt their research design and methods throughout the research process (David & Sutton, 2011). Given the diversity of how I wanted to collect data and from whom, flexibility and adaptability to data collection was essential before, during and after the three-week field period I spent in the Christchurch and Selwyn Districts in late 2018. In the field, I was open to the research taking different directions than I may have initially anticipated, including who I would have the opportunity to speak to and observe, what maybe said or observed and where and how this may occur. I elaborate on how this took shape later in this chapter.

As an emergent sociologist, the flexibility of a qualitative approach gave me space to develop and hone my research skills and the focus of the project during the entire research process, and provided me with a chance to explore, engage and respond creatively. David and Sutton (2011) suggests that a qualitative researcher attempts to be more sensitive to the worlds and outlooks

of the people they research and the artefacts they value. Furthermore, they consider the entire qualitative process to be one of ongoing review and adjustment. I used the qualitative approach to give meaning and context to personal worlds which may be isolated but unified under one issue: freedom camping. Yin (2015) discusses how qualitative research will be based on the multiple realities of the respondents. These multiple realities or perspectives were further examined with Weber's *Verstehen*, or understanding approach, which will be explained later in this chapter.

As a researcher, I tried to be objective, feeling alternately connected and disconnected to the topic and place. David and Sutton (2011) discuss *value free* and *partisan* approaches to objectivity in social research. One abandons the pretence of bias, while the other allows for the discovery of “what is” only. Reflexively this is always a difficult position for a researcher to occupy, but throughout the process, I frequently examined the duality of my position as *ex-local, camping enthusiast, now outsider*. I considered my position a strength in the research as I was detached from the community but had experience with the local environment and an understanding of the freedom camping culture. This positionality influenced my decision to select the Christchurch and Selwyn areas for the study because they are well known to me. I share a common vernacular and history with the local people, which I hoped would, and did, built trust with many participants. Moreover, my own foreign camping experiences and understanding of the New Zealand camping culture made communication with freedom campers, campground owners and business people productive and comfortable.

3.3 Methods of data collection

My data collection involved document analysis, a public information request⁷, interviews and informal conversations with a wide-ranging group of interviewees including central government ministries, local government, local community groups, politicians and business people as well as freedom campers, as well as site visits and observations.

⁷ Public information requests to government bodies in New Zealand are made through the Official Information Act (1982) (OIA) which is a constitutional right that enables citizens to freely access publicly held information.

3.3.1 Document analysis

A major part of freedom camping management is policy and position documents produced frequently by various agencies. Kennan (2012) says an examination of freedom camping documents is vital to explore policies related to freedom camping in each respective location. Therefore, a document analysis was integral to the research process before and after the field work. Evaluation of district council bylaws, freedom camping reports, government documents, websites, council contingency plans, amendments, meeting transcripts, council submissions, parliamentary Hansard records, policy documents, and media reports was done in relationship to the regional approaches to freedom camping. Coffey (cited in Flick, 2013) says “qualitative research can be enriched by a careful and critical attention to the gathering and analysis of documents, of various kinds” (pg. 3). Thus, I also undertook an analysis of online content related to freedom camping such as news articles, blogs, freedom camping apps, and related websites. The document analysis enabled me to identify and outline the relationship between local and central governments and the key issues of the freedom camping debate. An information request under The Official Information Act (1982) to the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) on April 10, 2019, requested all documents related to the Responsible Camping Working Group (RCWG). A document analysis was completed on the two large files of 88 and 222 pages sent from MBIE (MBIE, 2019b; 2019c) with a focus on local impacts and social relations as the freedom camping issue moved back to the central government in 2018. These documents included emails, local submissions, service agreements, proposals, internal memos, meeting minutes, draft reports, promotional documents and all the corresponding documents from participating regions. The document analysis supported the literature review and the field work providing a rich context for the participant interview data.

3.3.2 Interviews

The primary data collection method in the field was semi-structured qualitative interviews with a pre-scheduled range of participants (Appendix: 8.3). Data collection took place during the field research period of November 17th to December 9th, 2018. Participants included regional councils, central government, campgrounds, Department of Conservation (DOC), tourism authorities, lobby groups, residents and business leaders. These participants were invited to join the study because

they held some connection to freedom camping. I established email contact and outlined the project including a project information sheet and consent form (Appendix: 8.1; 8.2). If they agreed, I would meet each participant in person for a formal interview between 25-60 minutes. Participants not located in the local areas, I interviewed on Skype. Some participants were identified through snowballing and I sought approval from the original participant before I established contact. David and Sutton (2012) say snowballing can be beneficial to discover a hidden population. Snowball sampling in the scope of this study was particularly useful due to the issues fast evolving nature. The recommendations of others in the field presented many new opportunities for research and indicated an openness and desire to share information. In total, I conducted 23 recorded interviews of 34 total participants (six interviews were conducted in groups) during and after the research period (Appendix 8.3).

The informant interviews were semi-structured which facilitated the free flow of information. I aimed to interpret the informant's perspectives by engaging in long-form interviews that would locate their own beliefs within the wider political and social context of the issue. The research interpreted the perspectives and subjective worlds of all participants in the *Verstehen* tradition (Rosen, 1991; Weber, 1949). Max Weber's *Verstehen* or "understanding approach to sociology" is the interpretation of the world through the subjective perspectives of human beings (David & Sutton, 2011). The interviews attempted to interpret the participant's own subjective worlds and to locate them within the issue. Weber understands social action as the action of individuals engaged in social relationships (Tucker, 1965). The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach was used during the semi-structured interviews. The IPA approach is concerned with individual perceptions of a thing or an event, with the researcher trying to interpret the individual's personal world and reality (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Used to locate a person's lived experience, the "IPA has a theoretical commitment to the person as a cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical being and assumes a chain of connection between people's talk and their thinking and emotional state" (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p. 54). Freedom camping is an emotional issue, so the IPA allowed a positioning of participants in their emotional world. Smith and Osborn (2007) consider semi-structured interviews to be IPA's ideal data collection environment. My interview questions were always used as a guide and I allowed the interview to follow the participant's interpretation of the issue.

As discussed in chapter one, I am an experienced camper and raised in the local area but had long since relocated. In most interview situations, the respondents were trusting of me as I had a firm grasp of the issue and shared a common cultural vernacular while maintaining clear professional and ethical standards. I established trust quickly with participants resulting in a comfortable environment. Denscombe (2010) considers trust and goodwill to be an overlooked and underestimated resource of the research process. A series of question panels were prepared for each social group and a written panel for the Minister of Tourism (Appendix 8.2). Following a conversational mode, qualitative interviews allow for freedom to approach a broad topic with open-ended questions (Yin, 2005). Respondents were free to move into new discussion areas, which I facilitated in the interview design with open ended questioning that could trigger the informant. The question panel was an interview framework, but the interviewer was free to move the interview in any direction. The primary goal of the interviews was to understand every individual's perspectives and experiences related to freedom camping and the FCA.

If the participant agreed, I recorded the interview in full using a Sony digital recorder and uploaded it to Trint for processing. Trint is a dynamic text-audio transcription service which uses AI technology to automatically transcribe audio files into text-audio files allowing annotation and editing across a range of platforms. Each participant received electronically a full transcript to approve or amend after a check for errors and clarity. Some participants wanted minor changes to the transcript, or to clarify something they had said.

A lot of valuable information in the field came from informal interactions counterbalancing the formality of semi-structured interviews. This form of communication was useful for utilizing the *Verstehen* approach and locating people within their own subjective worlds, especially freedom campers and campground owners. The informal encounters produced many interesting interactions, and many are introduced in the following chapters. In the future, I would seek out more unscheduled interactions. At times, the inclement weather during the research period, bar the final day, did affect my ability to freely engage the public when I would have liked.

I found that observations of tourists/host relationships in rural areas were difficult as Selwyn is sparsely populated. However, the people I encountered were friendly and forthcoming. Resident groups in both districts were difficult to contact and engage with. I also found that I missed potential contacts because I did not begin transcribing the material straight away. In future field

work, I would listen to each day's interview recording a second time on the day of the meeting. This would help identify details I missed during the interviews and follow up. One potential contact that a participant mentioned in an interview was missed after I began transcribing the interview when I left the field. Even if a full transcription was not completed, a dedicated review on the day would have caught this offhand comment in the interview which could have been investigated in person.

Some respondent contact was challenging at times and tested my patience and resolve as a researcher. One regional official with the aid of his managing superior was emailed, called on and phoned by their supervisor but they would not engage me or his supervisor for three weeks. His apologetic manager hastily agreed to meet and substituted his position on the final afternoon of the research period at the head office. Whether this reticence to participate was due to organisational disarray, or the onset of the busy summer season or something deeper related to freedom camping is unknown, but this individual would not engage with me on any level, even to decline the invitation to take part. This missed connection was a frustrating experience, but this individual's superior was obliging, and because he had consulted on the FCA in 2011 in the committee process and had excellent insights from a governmental-policy position.

3.3.3 Site visits and observations

During the research period, I visited freedom camping sites, campgrounds and townships to observe the activity and the community's relationship with it. Yin (2005) says observation is an essential method to collect data because another individual's perspective does not filter what you see. Although the interviews were phenomenological in design, the site visits were observations of the actual phenomenon through my own eyes and were often conducted in association with an upcoming interview to ensure they were informed meetings. The site visits allowed for many interactions with freedom campers, locals and park rangers. They allowed many informal encounters with the community away from policy agendas and working partnerships. Some visits and observations were spontaneous with no formal schedule and involved road tripping and calling into several sites. This was the case in the mountain and high-country regions of the Selwyn district near Arthur's Pass and Darfield, and in the urban areas in suburban Christchurch. Yin (2005) cautions reflexivity in the observation process and that you carefully consider your

presence in any environment you wish to observe or interact with. I always identified myself and was mindful not to interfere with anybody's enjoyment or relationship with an area. I entered many unrecorded interactions that occurred in the field into a field journal and catalogued them at the conclusion of each day. I also kept a photographic record of all sites, signage, freedom campers, ablution blocks and any other relevant situations or imagery which would enhance the final research. I obtained consent for any photographs of freedom campers included in the study and blurring of vehicle license plates was done in Adobe Lightroom. The site visits enabled me to observe the issues in real-time and I witnessed many contradictions related to freedom camping (I will discuss this in chapters five and six).

3.4 Data analysis: Coding and themes

The first step in the process was creating a coding memo as a catch-all space for ideas and themes with the raw data. A table of participants with links to the literature, themes and the research questions scaffolded the later coding process. By using the IPA approach taking notes and re-reading transcripts help identify language patterns, phrases, words and feelings. An analogue coding of the interview data in pencil was done before the files were entered into the coding software. Throughout the data analysis and writing process, I frequently referred to these pencil coded transcriptions to look for emergent themes which were grouped into clusters (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The interview data was exported into the qualitative research methods software package Atlas.ti. This program allows for the easy creation of codes, themes and groupings onto any kind of document. The data was colour coded to identify emergent themes around social relationships, tensions, opportunities, and management approaches to the FCA. The code groups were isolated across participants for analysis or by multiple respondents which were then divided into social groups. After several passes with the data, codes within codes emerged. This allowed deeper themes to emerge, especially around the tensions over technology. Coding in such a nuanced fashion allowed for themes to emerge from the data that were not part of the research design or question panel. The codes within codes took my research to a place that I did not expect and using IPA to go over the transcript multiple times led to some interesting findings outside the scope of my research questions. The way I managed the coding process using IPA slowed it down and allowed me to connect more closely to the language and locate the most valuable information for the findings.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The freedom camping issue locally and nationally has developed into a tense social issue. Therefore, my primary ethical considerations were not harming reputations or professional or personal relationships in these close-knit communities. Davidson and Tolich's (1999) Ethics Checklist says that research should be voluntary, anonymous and confidential, do no harm and presented faithfully. As knowledge on freedom camping is an emerging topic, I felt people outside of Massey University may read my study. The issue also has the potential for national reach and inclusion in media reports. Ethically, I had to represent the people involved in the study with fairness, professionalism and maturity. Throughout the research, I carefully considered their public reputation and any risk of harm in quotes and comments I included in the study. All respondents provided consent, either verbally or by signing a consent form, which clarified they understood the purpose and potential range of the study's findings. I made participants aware that the study may feature in the media in future. I could not guarantee confidentiality due to the proximity and interconnected nature of the districts and I informed participants before becoming involved in the study. If there was a situation where I could not get written consent, I got verbal consent before I proceeded. I gave all respondents the opportunity to review a verbatim transcription which I emailed by December 24th, 2018, 14 days after the conclusion of the 21-day research period.

The local and national tension over the freedom camping issue meant some individuals were reticent or unwilling to participate. Some individuals displayed a general resignation over the issue after many years of dealing with it. These individuals although indifferent, had acute understandings of the issue and most agreed to speak with me informally. Some campground owners were suspicious of my intentions or frustrated by my presence. Denscombe (2010) calls this "research wary", which is a fear over the use of research information (p. 49). In this position, I was an *outsider* and I feel my position representing a major academic institution conducting research on an issue that had affected livelihoods made them "research wary". Overtime, I was able to establish *insider* status in the conversation, but it took time to reach this point. I interpreted this as local tension and this changed as I established trust, but the inference made was some campground owners/managers are very unhappy about freedom camping in New Zealand.

3.6 Conclusion

This methodology chapter outlined and summarised the research methodology used for my study on freedom camping and social relations in the Christchurch and Selwyn districts. A case study on two districts operating under the national legislative framework of the FCA produced a wide range of data from the community. Freedom camping and the FCA framed within the scope of this study touched on many social issues in the community. The issue's national prominence and connection to New Zealand's access to the natural environment meant participants offered very personal responses. Using Weber's *Verstehen* or understanding approach, informant responses located them in their own subjective worlds. With freedom camping there was often an agenda based on people's connection to the issue which shaped perceptions and people's willingness to participate. From campground owners, residents, councils, government to tourism authorities each participant's responses were from their own social worlds which produced a diverse data set. By studying a diverse range of participants and analysing a wide range of data from public information requests, policy, parliamentary debates, legislation and online contact it built a framework to interpret informant perspectives on freedom camping in a rural and urban setting. This enabled my study to look at freedom camping from a new perspective that will contribute new knowledge on the topic.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE GOVERNANCE OF FREEDOM CAMPING

4.1 Introduction

In 2018 Kelvin Davis, the Minister of Tourism (MoT) announced an examination of the costs and benefits of freedom camping to communities to help create a new collaborative nationwide approach (MBIE, 2018c). Curiously, his first action was to censure the word *freedom* from freedom camping, announcing, “It is my view that freedom camping should be referred to as *responsible camping* to acknowledge that “freedom camping’ is not free” (personal communication, 17 December 2018). The minister's statement that the camping covered in the Freedom Camping Act (FCA) should no longer be associated with the word *freedom* is a strange dichotomy and significant redirection from the original intention of the FCA. In this chapter, I will use the FCA’s contested passage through parliament in 2011 and the recent censure of *freedom* as bookends to a period of significant social and environmental upheaval due to freedom camping. With evidence from my fieldwork and document analysis, I will show how the permissiveness of the FCA has widespread social and ecological ramifications in local areas. I will present two different interpretations of the FCA that I established during my field research and I will show how the original intent of the legislation is a contested issue. From the legislation’s ambiguous origin and its misunderstood intent, to the final censure of *freedom*, it has been a tense period of contradictions and multiple interpretations of freedom.

4.2 The state of the Freedom Camping Act (2011)

Since 2011, freedom camping as an activity has grown rapidly in New Zealand but is a polarizing social issue and flashpoint of local tensions (LGNZ, 2018; MBIE, 2018a). The current freedom camping situation is best characterised by territorial authorities struggling to manage the expectations and needs of a growing international market of freedom campers. The tourism industry encourages freedom campers to seek the freedom from cost in public space, resulting in spatially uneven distribution of freedom camping and multiple interpretations of freedom. The current local infrastructure does not match up with the goals and messaging of the national tourism industry as local councils and communities have struggled to manage freedom camping’s

spatially uneven volume. Locally freedom campers are not getting the freedom promised them in the national messaging. As regional issues intensified, the FCA's has become a national issue. Through significant community and council reactions, freedom camping pushed back to the central government for further attention.

The recent developments on the issue present an opportunity to examine perspectives on the legislation itself. Most interview participants I met had mostly negative views on the FCA and it provoked lively discussion. The consensus across the participants I met was that the FCA created in 2011 no longer serves its purpose or perhaps it never did. This evolving context was discussed by Mike Davis, Technical Advisor for Tourism/Recreation at the Department of Conservation (DOC) who consulted on the original FCB, suggesting that, "the context for the development of it was clearly around the Rugby World Cup but the context now is different" (personal communication, 6 December 2018).

In 2011, the Labour and Green Parties opposed the rush to move the Freedom Camping Bill (FCB) through parliament for the upcoming 2011 Rugby World Cup (RWC) (New Zealand Parliament, 2011c). For example, Labour MP, the Hon Ruth Dyson, a member of the Local Government and Environment Committee (LGEC), who I formally interviewed for this research spoke about the hurry, suggesting there was much more to consider and at stake:

The rush, I understand, is to make sure the provisions are enabled before the Rugby World Cup. I personally do not think that is a good enough reason to rush legislation and possibly get it wrong. (New Zealand Parliament, 2011a, p. 2).

The opposition Labour and the Green Parties believed the key issue was tourism infrastructure, not enforcement making the FCB a poor solution to deal with the projected growth and sprawling movements of freedom campers. The Labour and the Green Parties believed the phasing out of non-self-contained rental vans and building more public toilets, rubbish and recycling bins and discharge waste facilities was a better approach than the enforcement and infringement regime of the FCB (New Zealand Parliament, 2011f). The opposition parties felt stadia funding for the RWC was being prioritised over much needed tourism infrastructure. After the bill was passed the FCA the cost and responsibility for vital freedom camping infrastructure devolved to local

authorities. This connected to the National party scrapping the Sanitary Works Subsidy Scheme⁸ which offered vital central government funding for smaller authorities and local governments to build ablution blocks and dump stations (Ministry of Health, 2003). Ruth Dyson took exception with the National government ending the scheme and opting out of toilet infrastructure through the FCB. The Hon Damien O'Connor of the Labour Party felt abolishing the Sanitary Public Works Subsidy Scheme while the National government invested hundreds of millions of dollars into rugby stadiums for the RWC was an unwise decision at a time when the country's tourism infrastructure issues grew:

It is quite outrageous that a Government that is prepared to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on stadiums up and down this country has not been prepared to spend any money on basic toilet infrastructure for the tens of thousands of people who come here. (New Zealand Parliament 2011c, p. 12)

The National party built its solution for freedom camping management on an enforcement regime for local governments and the DOC. However, the FCB made no improvement to the existing national infrastructure. Damien O'Connor of Labour looked to the future and foretold the situation that freedom camping is in today:

Mark my words: in 3 years' time, this legislation will not have addressed the issue of events up and down this country, because we have inadequate facilities. It is about time we got on and put them in place. (New Zealand Parliament, 2011b, p. 7)

Many participants I spoke with said the Act went through parliament too fast and the central government did bypass major infrastructure issues. At the time of my research (2018/19) the issue of toilet infrastructure was at the root of freedom camping tensions, especially open defecation, although many opposition politicians had given astute rationales/predictions of the issue and what it would become.

⁸ The Sanitary Works Subsidy Scheme was a Crown subsidy to assist small-medium sized communities fund or upgrade sewerage systems, treatment and disposal to preserve public health. The scheme has two parts: Wastewater Subsidy Scheme and Drinking-Water Fluoridation Subsidy (Ministry of Health, 2003).

The central government enacted through the FCA that local authorities would manage their own jurisdictions as each freedom camping context differed. Ruth Dyson, Port Hills MP for Labour discussed the localized structure of the FCA: “our decision was pretty much to leave it up to the jurisdictions of local councils rather than have too much of a standard, so you got to know basic standards set in the law” (personal communication, 19 November 2018). The government’s decision to give local autonomy to regional councils was to deal with their own unique freedom camping issues, which Dyson explained:

What we decided was quite a light regulatory regime rather than us imposing. There's always a balance for that you know. How much should the central government like, dictate the role of local government? (personal communication, 19 November 2018).

Dyson felt that central legislative authority in this instance should be light, adding:

We wanted to give local authorities more autonomy to make up their own mind in the same way as quite a lot of contentious issues...often councils themselves will say the central government should make the law. (personal communication, 19 November 2018).

This allowed each territorial authority to deal with freedom camping even though the central government mandated freedom camping nationally, which Dyson affirmed, “councils cannot bylaw themselves out of legislation” (personal communication, 19 November 2018). Looking at Dyson’s comments we see the contradictions of the governance process. Firstly, the central government pushed the management of freedom camping funding down to local authorities, yet freedom camping is a compulsory national directive they cannot “bylaw themselves out of”. Decentralisation gives the local authority autonomy, but the central government side-steps infrastructure costs while maintaining a desire for high tourism growth. As I discussed in chapter two, tourism governance has a useful ambiguity because the central government can selectively untether itself from public responsibility, while meeting narrow economic goals (Hall, 1999; Mordue, 1999). The opposition dissent suggest the National party was not interested in freedom camping infrastructure, but was interested in tourism growth, hence the national freedom camping mandate. Pushing the issue down to local government through a discourse of local government autonomy requires local taxpayers to fund the sanitation and enforcement infrastructure for a nationalized market of international freedom campers. The FCA was the central government of

the time walking back from a major infrastructure concern and “public good” while cashing in on international tourism growth through neoliberal policy and governance approaches.

Locally, territorial authorities discussed with me that the fundamental permissiveness of the FCA is difficult to cater for and manage. Freedom campers can park anywhere unless there is a sign saying they cannot. Councils can implement regional bylaws, but between districts this becomes confusing as freedom campers are very mobile. The Selwyn district has excellent freedom camping facilities and no official freedom camping bylaw. It became an unofficial catchment zone for freedom campers excluded from Christchurch in 2015 (see chapter one). However, Mayor Sam Broughton believes the fundamental structure of the FCA is the wrong way around but praised the local bylaw provision: “I think it's too permissive. [But] to allow councils to create their own rules has been good” (personal communication, 6 December 2018). Broughton felt reversing the permissive structure of the FCA and its fundamental element that you camp anywhere, unless you are told not to would have better shaped freedom camper expectations, he explained, “I just think flipping the whole thing around would have changed the vibe of it” (personal communication, 6 December 2018). Many of the nation’s mayors and leaders agree with Broughton’s assertion (LGNZ, 2017b, p. 17). Although, Broughton interpreted the general permissiveness of the FCA as fitting with New Zealanders understanding of freedom in nature or the New Zealand “birthright”: “the premise of the whole act is basically you can camp anywhere unless you are told otherwise, that's probably a lot of New Zealanders’ attitudes towards it” (personal communication, 3 December 2018). However, he did concede this is problematic as it put New Zealand on the map: “as soon as we opened that up to the world, there's a capacity issue with that” (personal communication, 3 December 2018). The marketing of freedom camping as a national activity and the FCA’s general permissiveness is a major issue for local government. The central government wanted to give local government the autonomy to manage freedom camping and carry the burden of such, however, as Broughton discussed, the legislation invites the world into small territorial spaces as part of a national tourism activity that is too permissive for local governments to manage effectively.

Many freedom camping issues stem from conflicting understandings of the FCA. James Imlach, National Planning and Policy Manager at New Zealand Motor Caravan Association (NZMCA) has engaged with the FCA at a local and national level since the Act’s creation. He lobbies for the preservation of freedom camping access rights on behalf of the organisation’s New Zealand-only

membership which is popular with retired *Grey Nomads*⁹ (LGNZ, 2018; NZMCA, 2017). Imlach believed the FCA was very ambiguous in its original intent. This resulted in its meaning being misunderstood, he explained, “I think there's been a bit of confusion about its intent [FCA], I think from what we've learned from and what we've observed over the last seven years or so, that fundamentally it's just a management [of freedom camping] tool” (personal communication, 5 December 2018). Imlach said the FCA was never meant to be a policy direction, even though he felt Parliament presented it as one. The ambiguity of the legislation connects to the rushing of the issue for the RWC and how many oppositional politicians believed the issue needed more consideration. The lack of clarity around the FCA, Imlach felt contributed to many of the issues of the present day, as he noted “In my view there was a disconnect between what Parliament was saying what it was designed to achieve, and what it actually achieved and the reality on the ground” (personal communication, 5 December 2018). Fergus Brown, CEO at Holiday Parks Association of New Zealand (HAPNZ) agreed that the legislation has significant issues, but representing the major organisation of campgrounds in the country, his assessment on the legislation was more straight-forward: “I think most people would agree the Freedom Camping Act is broken, and it was probably broken when it was set up. It has set local authorities [councils] up to fail” (personal communication, 11 December 2018). The FCA is ambiguous legislation and its meaning is contested which has created tension and different interpretations of freedom.

⁹ Grey Nomads are New Zealand citizens mostly aged 50-60 years who travel the country in fully self-contained campervans. Many are NZMCA members and use the freedom camping lifestyle as a retirement plan (LGNZ, 2018).



Figure 4.1: Freedom campers at the Lake Pearson DOC site, Selwyn (the roadside areas freedom campers seek are in high scrub outside this site on the main road). Source: Author

A major unintended consequence of the FCA has been the theft of services at campgrounds by freedom campers entering the property on foot (I will discuss in chapter five). A DOC ranger I met near Arthurs Pass in the Selwyn district, said when he arrives at the campsites each morning about three freedom camper vehicles speed away without paying. The sites are \$8 a night on a self-check in basis and before he can collect any payment, they leave. He also said the roadside areas near the Lake Pearson DOC site (the DOC site is seen in Figure 4.1) are going to be fenced off to stop freedom campers from hiding there overnight to avoid the \$8 site charge. He has no enforcement powers and can only photograph the vehicles, but he opposed enforcement anyway as he considered it to be highly ineffective.

Speaking to small business people operators in my case-study area, their attitudes on the FCA were mostly negative and at times emotional. For some, particularly campground owners, the emotion stemmed from a loss of income due to increased freedom camping. Two campground owners I spoke with both declined to be formally involved with the study but did speak at length on the FCA's effect on their businesses. The first I spoke to on the phone said, the FCA was a failure of policy and they felt rejected by the council with the solutions they presented. Moreover,

they did not want to “fuel the fire” by officially contributing to my study. When asked if the FCA was a local or national issue, they felt it was a national political issue which the local and central government had done a poor job in solving. They also believed blame for the problem rested solely with campervan rental companies. One individual was very frustrated with freedom camping and even over the phone I could feel his anger in the curt responses to my questions. No matter how much trust I tried to garner this individual refused any involvement with my study. Tourism was this individual’s livelihood and the FCA was marginalising it.

The second campground owner I spoke with ran an urban campsite and after a couple of missed opportunities I eventually managed to speak with him at the reception of his urban campsite. This urban campsite looked like most with a closed in feeling and a mixture of permanent residents. His spouse, who I had met twice seemed uninterested in my presence. When the campground owner spoke with me, she even set a time limit for our meeting by enlisting him with a task. She worked quietly nearby, gaze affixed on her computer terminal, but listening to every word. He was initially wary of my motives and seemed strained to speak with me. Eventually he warmed to me and we transitioned into lively discussion of his experiences with the FCA. He surprised me because the first thing he said was, “freedom camping is a load of shit!”, which I responded with an involuntary laugh that shattered the tension instantly. He then went straight into a challenge of the validity of freedom camping as a national tourism strategy. He contested MBIE’s economic statistics (MBIE, 2018a), as justification for freedom camping’s value that they stay longer and spend more over time. He suggested half “the spend” of freedom campers was for the purchase of an environmentally unsound vehicle which was counter-intuitive to the clean, green national tourism messaging (seen in Figure 4.2). He wanted a freedom camping ban for all urban areas and an exclusion zone of up to 5km from any commercial campsite. He believed the central government passed off freedom camping management to local councils, and local management provided too many opportunities for conflicts of interest, given that the CCC operate several campgrounds in the district. At the conclusion of our 30-minute discussion (we ran long, but his wife allowed it), I said to him, “I should have recorded you”, to which he wryly responded, “Yeah, you should have”. He consented to our informal discussion, but I had to earn his trust. Both campground owners’ viewpoints were visceral with a solid understanding of the issue. Fergus Brown from HAPNZ said some campground owners he represents feel frustrated with freedom camping and the Act, and it was indeed an emotional issue for some. He said his job is to filter out the emotion and work towards an acceptable solution for all groups. Although freedom

camping and autonomous travel in general is representative of a shifting trend in travel, these business people are excluded from the country’s fast-growing and vibrant tourism economy. There is an unfair economic advantage between some forms of tourism operators like campervan hire companies who benefit from freedom camping, but local tourism operators like campgrounds who have traditionally held a clear market position in regard to NZ camping have difficulty with freedom camping.

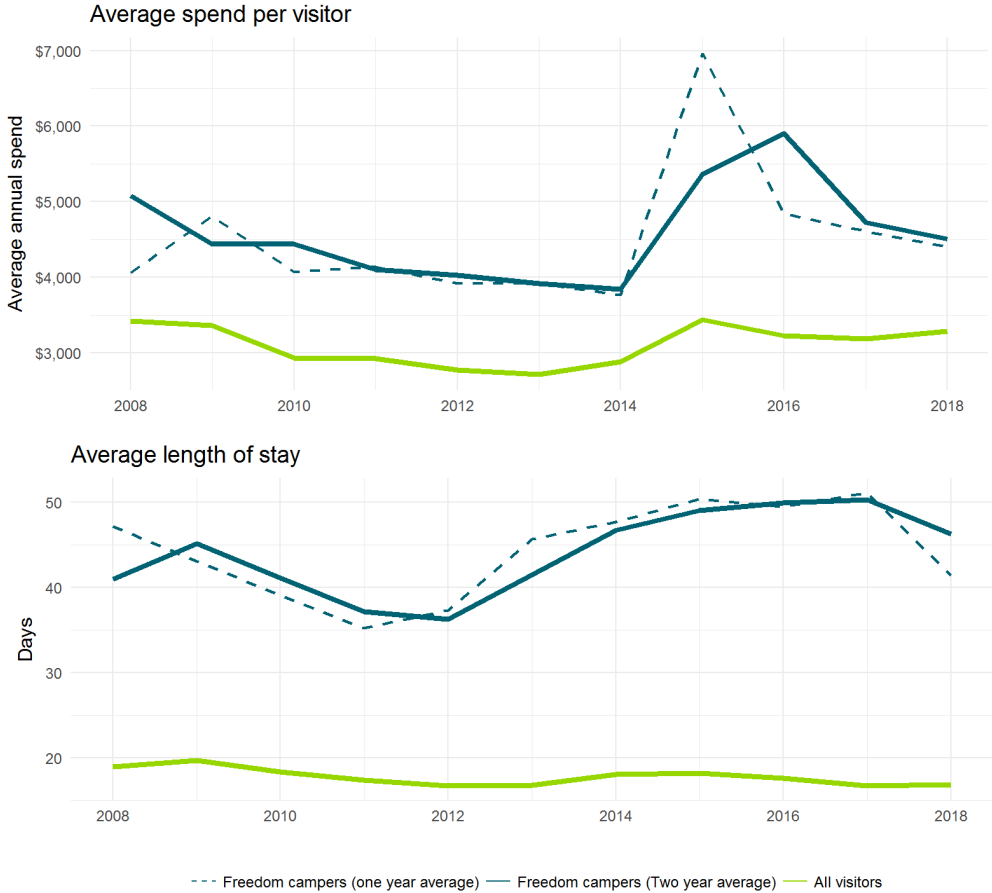


Figure 4.2: Average spend per visitor/length of stay. Freedom campers spend more in the country and stay longer. Source MBIE (2018a)

One of the main themes of the FCA which emerged in informant interviews and in the wider research was a general sense of confusion and disconnection amongst different groups, including regional councils, residents, and freedom campers about what the FCA could and should do. Contrasting the original intention of the FCA to the situation today, we see a public policy that has taken on a life of its own. From the local council perspective, Deputy Mayor of Christchurch Andrew Turner said of the FCA: “the act isn't an easy act to work with, I think the Act itself has driven outcomes that were perhaps unintended or sub-optimal” (personal communication, 3

December 2018). He believes the activity has changed because of the growth in numbers which exposed the FCA's faults, and explained, "It may well have been the right piece of legislation at that time to deal with that expected problem, but is it the right piece of legislation for what we've seen since - I don't think so?" (personal communication, 3 December 2018). The "expected problem" Turner refers to are the fears in 2011 that the 133,000 RWC visitors would have nowhere to stay and the FCA was the emergency legislation to solve the problem. However, Fergus Brown from HAPNZ speaking for his membership was less diplomatic, when he said the FCA is broken legislation that set councils up to fail. The FCA has had a significant role in shaping social relations, however, even its status as a policy is a contested issue, a point made by James Imlach of NZMCA and his assertion that the FCA is only a management tool. Whether the FCA is a policy, management device or an enforcement regime, freedom camping has been a complex social, economic and environmental process.

Through the course of my research, participants had two different interpretations of the FCA. The first is that the original intent of the FCA as emergency legislation for the 2011 RWC no longer applies. The freedom camping market is different now and the infrastructure and management have not adjusted to the change. This interpretation requires legislative review and infrastructure funds to address the issues. However, the second interpretation of the legislation is a little more problematic and closely follows tourism governance themes established in the literature review. This draws on the assertion that the FCA was broken to begin with, as discussed above. This interpretation of the legislation means the government used the FCA to sidestep the major infrastructure costs needed for its own national tourism growth goals. Using the political ecology framework introduced in chapter two to decipher this interpretation, it would appear that the central government pushed the responsibility for tourism infrastructure down to the local government through neoliberal processes of regional rejuvenation or "place competitiveness" (Hall & Wilson, 2016, p. 48). This had set councils up to fail and the many council complaints since 2011 indicates this is the case. The central government was in effect exerting political power over the environment and local taxpayers to free up a tourism market, while disengaging itself from any financial involvement. The FCA allowed large scale economic actors, such as rental firms and fuel suppliers to capitalize on freedom camping and its permissive interpretation of space, while local business people, like the campground owners I spoke to were excluded from financial gain. The assertion that the FCA is not a policy, but the central government presented it as one as a governance process is problematic, because it allowed the central government to

walk itself back from the “public good” of providing national tourism infrastructure while maintaining its own economic goals.

4.3 The Freedom Camping Act: different regional approaches

The regional autonomy granted in the FCA means territorial authorities can manage freedom camping any way they choose but are mandated to provide for service and infrastructure in their districts. Regions can be alternatively welcoming or hostile to freedom camping depending on the local context in small geographic areas. Regional councils could implement a prohibitive freedom camping bylaw like Christchurch did in 2015 after a fractious period of liberal freedom camping (Billante, 2010; CCC, 2015). Alternatively, councils could opt to not have a freedom camping bylaw which Selwyn has done, managing it under the Reserves Act (RA) (seen in Figure 4.3) (New Zealand Government, 1977). In this image, you can see freedom campers can stay for a maximum of 28 days under the RA which is considerably higher than the Christchurch bylaw with two nights maximum. The result is an inconsistent and confusing legislative framework for the freedom campers as they travel the country. The nationally sanctioned transience of freedom camping clashes with the varying regional bylaws of the FCA which governs their movements and accommodation. Each regional council has differing freedom camping needs including the neighbouring regions of Christchurch and Selwyn. Deputy Mayor Turner defended regional diversity when he said, “the bylaw that is appropriate for Christchurch may not be the same bylaw that's appropriate for Selwyn” (personal communication, 3 December 2018). However, regional bylaws and freedom camping approaches have economic, social and environmental implications in nearby regions (Hume, 2016; Salmon, 2017) and neighbouring districts such as Selwyn and Christchurch.



Figure 4.3: Coes Ford signage, Selwyn indicates the district operates under the Reserves Act (1977) (max-stay 28 days). Source Author

Regional autonomy allows councils to manage their own local freedom camping context. However, the national mandate of freedom camping, the permissiveness of the FCA and rapid national tourism growth can leave councils under pressure with no easy choice or quick fix but to implement restrictive bylaws. As Deputy Mayor of Christchurch, Andrew Turner explained to me, there is no golden rule on bylaws and regional complexity would always govern local responses even within a national freedom camping framework.

An English freedom camper, Dom who I met at Chamberlains Ford in Selwyn liked being able to freedom camp in New Zealand as this was strictly prohibited in his own country¹⁰ (personal communication, 26 November 2018). However, Parker felt different regional rules made freedom camping confusing and getting it wrong meant a potential knock on his window at 3am by a policeman or resident. He also discussed how regional freedom camping sites differed massively

¹⁰ In England, transience is a highly legislated and near criminal activity due to the historic movements of the Romani or Gypsy-Traveller people who emigrated hundreds of years ago. Their cultural identity is based on transience and they frequently clash with the state. Sedentary society views the Romani as a threat to the social fabric and they are racially stigmatized and negatively portrayed in the media (Kabachnik, 2009; 2010; 2013; 2014).

in quality from dangerous areas on a busy road to places like Selwyn with good infrastructure. Aryia a freedom camper from Canada I met at Coes Ford in Selwyn said good freedom camping sites, like those provided in Selwyn were few and far between. She was surprised to find when she arrived in New Zealand that much of her national freedom camping experience was trying to find places on the side of the road to park with places like Selwyn a rare find (personal communication, 24 November 2018). These two freedom campers I spoke with highlight how the lack of freedom camping infrastructure and vast regional inconsistencies put freedom campers in an uncomfortable position.

Steve Hanrahan of Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) discussed the need for regional bylaw diversity as freedom camping contexts vary across the country. These often correlate with areas with high tourism demand and appeal. Geography, rate base¹¹, population and tourism growth affect regional complexity and some councils may require a freedom camping bylaw to manage freedom camping, which Hanrahan explained:

What we have also seen is that where councils are being proactive in their responses, for example, they may not have had a bylaw and now have a bylaw, or they've been a bit tougher in their bylaw or they've had more enforcement, that they've been able to address the issues and I think we've seen that happen in the likes of Coromandel and the likes of Tasman and now around Nelson. (personal communication, 28 November 2018)

The freedom campers I met in the field also spoke of differing regional responses but included hostility towards freedom camping as part of this. A freedom camping couple from Canada at Coes Ford in the Selwyn District discussed their experiences with hostile locals in districts they were unwelcome in. Ricky and his partner Aryia (introduced above) said animosity towards freedom campers meant locals entering the freedom area in cars late at night and honking or speeding in shingle camping areas and banging on vans or confronting them. They discussed navigating confusing regional bylaws and how the Campermate app helped with legislative and social risk aversion. Campermate is a digital application and community for freedom campers which locates sites for all vehicle types, dump stations and attractions (Campermate, 2019)

¹¹ Rates is the property tax system in New Zealand. Rates are paid annually from a rate base of property owners within a territorial authority.

(discussed in depth in the following chapter). The app helps freedom campers navigate the sometimes confusing and inconsistent regional freedom camping regulations across the country (I will discuss this in the following chapter). The digital platform kept them away from aggressive locals through warnings from the app's users, as Aryia explained, "using that Campermate app you're actually able to see areas where all the comments are things [they say] don't go here, the locals are going to hate you" (personal communication, 24 November 2018). Ricky echoed Aryia's sentiment and elaborated on some of the antisocial behaviours they had encountered and how Campermate kept them safe from aggressive locals and in legal compliance "you...would avoid an area because of the crap, well, we did in Nelson...all the reviews on the Campermate app said just don't" (R. Moore, personal communication, 24 November 2018). Ricky added what conflict usually meant for campers, explaining "you're going to get really tortured and they're going to be here honking late at night and tell you to bugger off". Two female freedom campers from France in their early 20's who I met in Akaroa said aggressive encounters late at night or banging on their vehicle made them feel in danger, even though they were on the trip of a lifetime. National messaging promotes freedom camping but increasingly each territorial boundary the campers cross means a potentially different reception from locals.

New Zealand is comprised of eleven regional councils and 61 territorial authorities, which includes eleven city councils and 50 district councils. (LGNZ, 2017). Regional boundaries in New Zealand, often partitioned for administrative purposes, are often marked with a small, insignificant weather-beaten sign. However, in the freedom camping context they are significant as each new boundary represents new rules, fines and a potentially different reception from residents. A freedom camper may be aware they are crossing from Otago to Canterbury, but Christchurch to Selwyn for example is a far more obscure distinction, even for a New Zealand citizen. Mayor Sam Boughton of the SDC took issue with the inconsistency of the regional bylaw system from the perspective of a freedom camper, explaining, "people travelling between Christchurch and Selwyn, where is the border, who cares?" (personal communication, 6 December 2018). He discussed how the confusing regional structure did not fit with the nationalized promotion of the activity and that: "having a consistent set of rules and a consistent way of signing, signposting things... If that had been done from the beginning things were a whole lot clearer" (personal communication, 6 December 2018). Freedom camper, Dom also raised the issue of inconsistent or non-existent signage which he worried could lead to that unwelcome knock on his window. Parker was genuinely concerned with doing the right thing, viewing freedom camping as a privilege and he

believed consistent national signage would enable this. Most freedom campers I met were only aware they were in the Selwyn district because the camping was free and close to Christchurch. Freedom campers I met would travel to Christchurch and the surrounding areas in the day and return to the Selwyn freedom camping sites at night. To me, the Selwyn sites seemed like a freedom camping oasis in a complex and confusing regional system for freedom campers. This is how freedom camping is for the user; a marketed nationwide transient leisure activity that is micro-managed in tiny administrative spaces.

Regional bylaws have wide impacts, reaching into neighbouring territories. When Christchurch limited freedom camping in 2015, campers headed to Selwyn, which was the next area they could legally camp. Deputy Mayor Turner spoke of how the 2015 bylaw change in CCC put pressure on Selwyn, he explained “we know that what we did has pushed a lot of the freedom camping activity into the Selwyn district and created a problem for them” (personal communication, 3 December 2018). Chris Burke, Reserves Officer at the SDC discussed the influx of Christchurch freedom campers: “It was a large influx of travellers, Selwyn embraced it...It was these are the areas that we want them to go to and let's do it!” (personal communication, 30 November 2018). Burke is an enthusiastic reserves officer, but his body language and facial expression became especially animated when he described the period of freedom camping management after the Christchurch bylaw in Selwyn. I could literally see the volume of freedom campers he saw in his eyes. Burke explained how the Christchurch bylaw sent hundreds and hundreds of campers to Selwyn for a year or more after the bylaw. The SDC accepted the freedom campers at their major sites, Coes and Chamberlains Ford which has well-established infrastructure (seen in Figure 4.4; 4.5). When one council implements a bylaw, the social, financial and environmental effects ripple across to nearby districts (Hume, 2016). Fergus Brown of HAPNZ spoke of bylaw provision and management and the difficult position for regional councils, he explained “I think the people that have been put in the worst position is local government” (personal communication, 11 December 2018). Brown’s statement referred to the council implementing the bylaw, but also the councils nearby who had to deal with displaced freedom campers. Selwyn welcomed the in-flux of campers, but this is not always the case for other districts with less infrastructure and a lower rate-base.



Figure 4.4: Chamberlains Ford freedom camping facilities-vaulted toilet and large waste disposal. Source: Author



Figure 4.5: Coes Ford freedom camping facilities (sink facilities are behind the left wall). Source: Author

To sum up this section, the FCA is permissive and nationally mandates freedom camping, which means some local councils in popular tourist areas require bylaws to manage freedom camping volume and its spatial unevenness that being, large concentrations of campers in certain popular areas. However, the regional bylaw structure in the FCA clashes with the nationalised transience and messaging around the activity. For freedom campers this creates a liminal space between legislation and the activity they uncomfortably occupy. The freedom campers I spoke with said that in most areas the infrastructure is lacking, and the regional diversity is confusing, so their position is tension filled and prone to negative encounters with the public and enforcement officials. The confusing legislative framework led to the emergence of Campermate which aggregated bylaws, signage, and rules into one digital platform (I will discuss this in the following chapter). This is an essential tool for freedom campers to navigate freedom camping in New Zealand. Deputy Mayor Turner of Christchurch spoke in detail on the issue of territorial authorities and freedom camping bylaws. He said different regional approaches are important in the governance of freedom camping and best interpret the needs of an area, he said, “there are some parts of New Zealand where they welcome as many freedom campers as want to come with open arms, and there are other parts of New Zealand where they wouldn't care if they never saw freedom campers again” (personal communication, 3 December 2018). This highlights another contradiction of the FCA, where respective council authorities have quite different relationships with freedom camping, but the campers are poorly prepared for this and the reality of existing infrastructure when they arrive.

4.4 Censuring the *freedom* from freedom camping

The consensus with participants is freedom camping issues in New Zealand are a nationwide problem, but as I have discussed in this chapter, each district has a unique local context which determines its relationship with the activity (Billante, 2010; CCC, 2015; SDC, 2017). The debate around the impact of freedom camping in local communities, and in shared public spaces has been an ongoing issue in regional New Zealand (Keenan, 2012). The Minister of Tourism (MoT), Kelvin Davis sought to address these localized issues related to freedom camping in New Zealand, with a refreshed national approach. After he announced that freedom camping was to become known as *responsible camping* discussed in the introduction, he coordinated the creation of the Responsible Camping Working Group (RCWG) in 2018 comprised of an equal representation of mayors, government ministries and key stakeholders experienced in freedom

camping management outlined in Table 4.1 below. The representative balance indicates how the issue was affecting all sectors and organisations at both local and national levels. The minister tasked them to address the key issues that have plagued freedom camping in the regions (I will discuss this in the following section 4.5) (MBIE, 2018b; MBIE, 2018d).

Table 4.1: Responsible Camping Working Group Members. MBIE (2018b)

Mayor Hon Steve Chadwick, Rotorua District
Mayor Jim Boulton, Queenstown Lakes District
Mayor Tim Cadogan, Central Otago District
Deputy Mayor Andrew Turner, Christchurch City (CCC) <i>*participated in this study</i>
Chris Roberts, Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA)
Grant Webster, Tourism Holdings Limited (THL)
Bruce Lochore, New Zealand Motor Caravan Association (NZMCA)
A senior official from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)
A senior official from the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA)
A senior official from the Department of Conservation. (DOC)

With the change in government and national movement on the issue through emergency infrastructure funding through the RCWG (MBIE, 2018d), it is useful to examine Kelvin Davis's submissions during the FCB readings in 2011 when he was Labour spokesperson for tourism. I introduced an overview of the FCB process earlier in this chapter and the opposition concern over infrastructure funding. During the FCB readings, Davis presented an impassioned defence of New Zealanders' right to freedom camp, and rural communities' ability to capitalise on the economic opportunity of the foreign freedom camping trend (New Zealand Parliament, 2011b, New Zealand Parliament, 2011c, New Zealand Parliament, 2011d). In his speeches, Davis also agreed the major issue was tourism infrastructure, not the enforcement regime of the FCB. He cited waste disposal and toilet infrastructure as the key issues for the country's successful management of freedom camping and tourism in general. Davis also felt abolishing the Sanitary Works Subsidy Scheme unfairly impacted communities with low rate bases and their ability to effectively manage freedom camping (New Zealand Parliament, 2011b, p. 12). In short, Davis was stating regional councils needed central government assistance to build toilets for the growing number of foreign freedom campers.

Kelvin Davis is from Northland and is the MP for the Māori electorate, Te Tai Tokerau (Labour, 2019). The area is an economically challenged region, but a major tourist hot spot or *honeypot* tourist location (FNDC, 2019; Goodwin, 2017; NZEIR, 2014). Davis was acutely aware of the stress freedom campers can place on hotspot locations, while emphasising the economic opportunity it can provide if infrastructure is in place. He advocated for the slow phasing out of non-self-contained vehicles, which in 2019 is a huge issue (I will discuss this in chapter six) (New Zealand Parliament, 2011b, p. 11). He correctly indicated that the proposed enforcement regime of the FCA would be expensive and difficult to manage in most territories. His example of Northland where he is from is the size of Israel, meaning freedom camping enforcement would be an unfeasible strategy in an area that size (New Zealand Parliament, 2011d, p. 10). Davis and others in opposition expressed a strong interest in deregulating camping legislation and activating new spaces such as sports grounds, rugby clubs, schools and *marae*¹² which is severely restricted under the Campground Regulations Act, 1985 (New Zealand Government, 1985). This was also proposed by the DOC in its *Review of camping opportunities in New Zealand* in 2006 (DOC, 2006). He believed this would provide a direct financial benefit to the local community while giving freedom campers the space they needed in remote locations. As I discussed in chapter two, keeping tourism income in rural or low-income communities has never been a priority of the tourism industry (Krippendorf, 1999). Davis was very pragmatic about freedom camping in 2011 and his speeches clearly evaluated its strengths and weaknesses.

By 2019, time has proven Kelvin Davis's understanding of the freedom camping issue to be very insightful. Many politicians' crystal-ball gazed freedom camping, but Davis pragmatically balanced the attendant economic, social, and environmental factors carefully. His interpretation of freedom camping was rich in the experiences and emotions of the everyday lives of his own constituents, speaking for his *Whakapapa*¹³ when he boldly declared *Kupe*¹⁴ to be the original freedom camper in New Zealand (New Zealand Parliament, 2011b, p.7). Connecting to the major theme of this study of freedom camping's impacts in the community, Davis's discussion of the impacts and opportunities for regular citizens are key points to consider. He understood that freedom camping

¹² A Marae is a fenced in communal Māori meeting place which includes grounds and physical structure that is the central focal point of a tribal group.

¹³ Whakapapa is a Māori genealogical term to describe an individual's identity incorporating family (whanau), tribal affiliations (iwi), place and geographical history recited in a linear and lateral generational fashion.

¹⁴ Kupe was a figure of Māori mythology and oral tradition who navigated to New Zealand from Hawaiki in 925 AD.

could disrupt a community as much as invigorate it, dependent on the level of support it received. Many in opposition spoke against the passage of the FCB in 2011, but Davis's well-rounded interpretation of the specific opportunities and challenges still resonate today.

New Zealand's primary industry has become tourism, so it needs the infrastructure to match (Mackenzie, 2017; New Zealand Treasury, 2019). Other areas of society experiencing high growth like housing and transport are also key infrastructure concerns presently (Interest, 2018; New Zealand Treasury, 2019). The change of government from National to Labour in 2017 represented a turning point and a new openness towards tourism infrastructure. I asked all participants if the change of government had affected the freedom camping situation. While most were tactful, they mostly conceded that this was indeed the case. Andrew Turner commented on the new Labour government's decision to get immediately involved in the local freedom camping issues, he explained "the current government is the first one that we've seen respond to that or begin to respond to that in any meaningful way" (personal communication, 3 December 2018). Kelvin Davis's 2011 freedom camping positions discussed above are the foundation for the recent developments on the issue. New Zealand is a small country and only recently began growing quickly, so it has a blind spot around its own infrastructure needs. No longer can the tourism industry and government rest on the laurels of its scenery, empty spaces, and friendly faces. The recent change with the censure of *freedom* is the central government addressing tourism infrastructure issues by injecting a sense of responsibility into freedom camping in New Zealand.

4.5 Central and local government join forces on freedom camping

In April 2018, the MoT created the RCWG as a partnership between the local and central government and the tourism industry discussed above and in Table 4.1 (MBIE, 2018b; MBIE, 2018c). A change in government and the escalating local issues were the impetus for its creation with many mayors appointed from high demand freedom camping regions. The minister asked the working group to establish where freedom camping fits within New Zealand's wider tourism model (MBIE, 2018c). Following the name change discussed in section 4.4, a full review of all legislation, enforcement and self-containment standards took place to restructure and strengthen the broader legal frameworks to better cope with freedom camping growth. The regions received emergency infrastructure funds of up to \$23 million and a technology-data partnership with

Campermate through MBIE aimed to use data to solve overcrowding issues (which will I will discuss in chapter five) (MBIE, 2019a).

The RCWG established that freedom camping in New Zealand requires collaboration between central and local government and the tourism industry to manage it effectively (MBIE, 2018d). The working group said the national messaging was inconsistent, and the balance of cost and benefits was unfair to council and ratepayers. The compliance regime and self-containment standard were both ineffective and inconsistent across territorial authorities causing environmental damage. The RCWG said the system was inconsistent and “fragmented” which confused campers with different sets of rules or bylaws made in highly localised settings which were often sudden reactions to local community issues (MBIE, 2018d, pg. 7). Sudden knee jerk bylaw amendments have always been unpopular with the central government, but are reactions to community responses (LGNZ, 2018). A contradiction exists here because the tourism industry and central governments oppose sudden reactive bylaws to freedom camping, but in 2011, it side-stepped national infrastructure funding pushing it onto the local community. Therefore, a regional bylaw response is a highly democratic “bottom-up” action, while the freedom camping mandate is representative of narrow economic interests (discussed earlier in this chapter). The RCWG summarized the wider issues:

Responsible camping is changing the use patterns of public infrastructure and spaces by putting increased pressure on facilities, leading to displacement (communities feel unable to use their local spaces due to the volume of campers), and is negatively impacting New Zealanders’ perceptions of the value of tourism to their communities and the social licence of tourism to operate. (MBIE, 2018d, p.7)

This statement connects to the spatial unevenness of overtourism and digital platforms (discussed in chapter two). Like the global examples mentioned, freedom camping is reshaping environments and displacing communities by overloading public space. An analysis of the local issues through the RCWG/MBIE documents (MBIE, 2019b; 2019c), I sourced through The Official Information Act (1982) (discussed in chapter three), indicated widespread social issues nationally related to freedom camping. The *Freedom Camping Forum* submission in the documents summarised 21 councils’ specific issues with freedom camping management and the FCA (MBIE, 2019c). This document presented a detailed account of the complexity of regionally specific tensions related

to freedom camping. Inconsistency, high demand, pollution, permissive structure, infrastructure, infringement, enforcement, reduced local access, open defecation, incorrect app information, non-self-contained vehicles and many more issues were highlighted in the regional summaries (MBIE, 2019c). The Grey Council discussed low-quality camping vehicles and challenged the user's social and environmental conscience for travelling in one. The Far North Council said policing the entire district, instead of specific designated areas was a strategic and practical concern as discussed by MoT Kelvin Davis in this chapter. The overloaded Queenstown District Council suggested that marketing New Zealand as a giant freedom camping area is the wrong message and impossible to deliver. The Hurunui Council, north of Christchurch discussed regional freedom camping prohibition making problems for neighbouring areas, referencing the spill over effect of Christchurch's 2015 bylaw discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to Selwyn (CCC, 2015; Hume, 2016).

Community associations submitting to the RCWG through their regional mayors challenged the entire freedom camping model as not fit for purpose. This is the same position as the campground owners I discussed earlier in this chapter. The Rotorua community submission written for the RCWG also concluded that there was no place whatsoever for the term *freedom* to be associated with freedom camping and campers should pay for what they use leaving New Zealand as they found it (MBIE, 2019c, p.5). Considering Kelvin Davis's censure of *freedom* discussed in the introduction, we see it is consistent with the governmental action coming directly from this community submission I sourced through the public information request. Freedom camping is unfree to local communities who host them due to the civic, environmental and financial stress it causes (I will discuss further in chapters five, six and seven). The national effects of freedom camping are clear in these documents, which align with the community sentiment from my own field research. The submissions also indicated that the voice of the community was at the forefront of the new developments in freedom camping management relating to the shift to the idea of *responsible tourism* which I discussed in chapter two (Goodwin, 2007; 2011), and reflect the real human tension around proximity to high volume freedom camping and this will be expanded on in the following chapters with local examples.

4.6 Conclusion

In 2011 the National led government pushed its involvement and service of public health and tourism infrastructure down to local government. By defunding the Sanitary Works Subsidy Scheme (Ministry of Health, 2003), it directed freedom camping sanitation issues down to unevenly funded local councils and ratepayers. Also, the government's solution was the FCA rushed for the 2011 RWC which has amounted to nothing more than parking tickets and headaches for freedom campers and local councils. The lack of infrastructure and the rapidly growing tourism market created a deficit in the availability of services to freedom campers and is the origin of the open defecation issues and the poorly regulated 5445:2001 Self-Containment Standard (Standards Association of New Zealand, 1990), which I will explore in-depth in chapter six.

Every foreign freedom camper travels a long distance to arrive in New Zealand and their transport is not free or sustainable with many large stakeholders profiting along the way. The local community pays for freedom camping infrastructure while enduring many negative impacts due to the activity. The FCA serves the central government and tourism industry's economic interests. In chapter two, I discussed how tourist governance represent narrow economic interests and a minority view marginalizing the "public good" (Hall, 1999). This has been the case with freedom camping with the community funding and hosting them, while national tourism GDP rises. The interpretation of community dissent as a form of "public good" is relevant here. The community drove the FCA back to central government for the consideration forsaken during the hurried lead up to the 2011 RWC. Through significant bottom-up local reactions to freedom camping, the FCA will be back in parliament soon.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CAPITALISM AND CONTRADICTIONS OF FREEDOM CAMPING

5.1 Introduction

In 2018, a grim description of New Zealand tourism and the “*overtouristing*” of its countryside in the Wall Street Journal suggested that “freedom campers in rented vans leaving trails of waste” were defiling New Zealand’s coveted pristine beauty, with residents agitated at the increasing tourist numbers and substandard infrastructure (Pannett, 2018, p. 1). The publication of this article was at the very beginning of my research. At the time I felt the study I was embarking on was a fringe activity in a highly localised setting. However, the article’s international reach indicates that New Zealand may have unceremoniously joined the growing global overtourism cohort. Moreover, it makes a case for New Zealand being further along the overtourism path than anybody in the government or tourism industry is willing to admit.

This chapter will examine the contradictions around the capitalism of freedom camping and its relationship with social and environmental elements in the local community. As I have already explained, the Freedom Camping Act (2011) (FCA) was set up as an enforcement regime and accommodation solution for an infrastructure shortfall for the 2011 Rugby World Cup (RWC). In this chapter, I argue that the natural environment through the FCA has been repurposed as a source of economic accumulation capitalized on by large profit-seeking stakeholders. The permissive structure of the FCA has diverted money away from smaller stakeholders while framing its benefits in vague trickle-down economics rhetoric. The central government hopes to address freedom camping’s issues by partnering with the digital platform, Campermate through a technology data pilot. Data has been prioritised as a solution to freedom camping management, but high levels of user engagement on freedom camping digital platforms has led to site overcrowding. This partnership will be examined as a form of power over the environment and local community and I will use political ecology as a framework to interpret the local situation. The contradictions around technology in freedom camping will be examined through its relationship to policy, stakeholders and communities impacted.

5.2 The Freedom Camping Act and the Rugby World Cup

The prioritizing of stadia funding for the 2011 RWC and the rapid passing of the FCA are interconnected issues. Although RWC stadia and the FCA differ, certain themes are constant. The economic benefits to local communities are still unquantifiable or indirect. Stadia construction for the RWC and the FCA exemplifies the state “*rolled back*” (Peck & Tickell, 2002; 2007) through governance processes (discussed in chapter two). Both rugby stadia and freedom camping require elevated levels of local taxpayer revenue and support to function. Enabling large-scale stakeholders to develop or explore business opportunities with taxpayer funds, both rugby stadia and freedom camping represent the pursuit of narrow economic interests. Sports stadia initiatives stoke nationalism to achieve community support, while freedom camping dangles the carrot of trickle-down economics and regional rejuvenation. Harvey (2005) says there is a reconstruction of the public’s social outlook to desire market activities such as regional stadia which tap into vague senses of national pride and the notion of being a “good citizen” (Hall, 2006; Hall & Wilson, 2016, p. 48). There is a framing of freedom camping as an opportunity for regional rejuvenation through indirect economic activity and regional stimulus (New Zealand Parliament, 2011a).

Building stadiums and hosting tournaments are “loss-leader” events promoted as a “public good” that will have massive benefits to the community (Hall & Wilson, 2016, p. 52). The “loss” is the public debt through local taxation to build and stage the “mega-event”, while the primary benefits are directed at the private sector who provide the community with a “public good”. The government and the tourism industry serve narrow economic outcomes, marginalizing the “public interest” which I discussed in chapter two (Hall, 1999). Freedom camping can be interpreted as a “loss leader” activity also. The central government granted environmentally questionable access to nature through policy action to attract international budget travellers. They side-stepped infrastructure funding pushing it down to local councils, even though it put local areas under significant social and environmental pressure. The FCA loosened up the campervan market and large-scale stakeholders capitalized on the central government’s aggressive tourism strategies (Graham-McLay, 2019). The government encouraged freedom campers to come and stay longer and the freedom camping market grew. The monetizing of the national pastime meant that local taxpayers had no choice but to fund and live with freedom camping in their towns, parks, streets and parking lots.

5.3 Free as source of economic gain, but not for all

The FCA offers access to nature while directing income into the hands of larger business interests away from communities and small businesses. Through the FCA, the central government and tourism industry have re-appropriated New Zealand's natural environment to entice budget tourists to stay in the country longer. The FCA grants the freedom as birthright to nature in New Zealand (200m from any road), which increases national tourism GDP in real and quantifiable ways, particularly for airlines, airports, rental companies, supermarket chains, and fuel suppliers (Freedom Camping Act, 2011; MBIE, 2018a). However, its economic value to local communities and smaller stakeholders has always been a contested issue (DIA, 2016). The notion of a *free* service, commodity or experience does not sit neatly within a capitalist framework and processes of capital accumulation and profit seeking, and indeed may even be seen as a contradiction. However, freedom camping has value to large-scale stakeholders, therefore freedom camping spaces are sites of capital accumulation. The FCA offers public space as a market stimulus to attract budget conscious travellers, converting areas of zero capital return into sites of accumulation (Duffy, 2015). The central government "rolled back" public space through the policy action of the FCA, freeing up the campervan market to benefit large scale economic stakeholders. The economic justification of freedom camping to the regions is that freedom campers visit more regions, stay longer in the country and spend more over time (MBIE, 2018b) (Figure 4.2; 5.1). However, residents I spoke with could not give an exact accounting of freedom camping's economic benefits to the community. Adam Hutchinson, the founder of Campermate, has used data from the app's users to calculate a standard value of the daily freedom camping spend. He calculated that freedom campers spend around \$160 a day in local areas. Freedom camping's value locally remains a highly contested issue even as large-scale stakeholders profit from the activity.

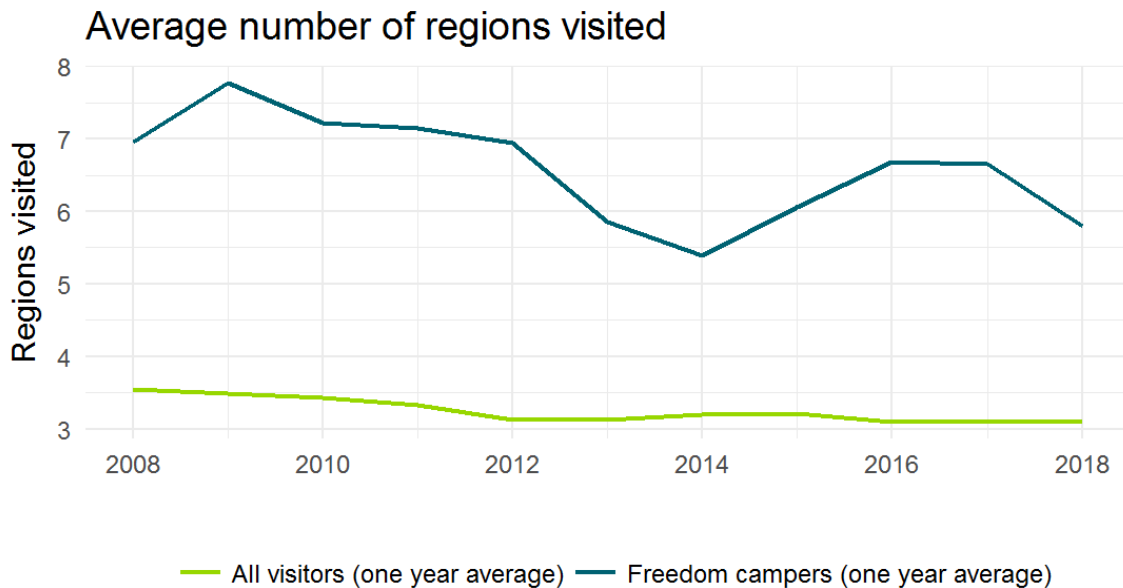


Figure 5.1: Average number of regions visited by freedom camper and tourists. Source: MBIE (2018a)

Freedom camping creates tension and particular tension is the appeal of free accommodation, or the freedom from cost. This attracts eager international budget travellers, while local business people with a smaller stake in the tourist economy miss out. I encountered this perception in the community, particularly from campground owners. A contradiction of the FCA that campground owners frequently discussed was the theft of campground amenities by freedom campers who would park outside and quietly walk in to shower or cook. Freedom camping is free for the campers, but infrastructure costs are passed onto these campground owners. These incidents required campground managers to be constantly vigilant or having to install expensive metering or surveillance systems. Freedom camping perpetuates this kind of “freeloading” activity which causes tension for business owners and the community user of public space (DIA, 2016, LGNZ, 2018). The FCA enables this behaviour which is another freedom camping cost passed down to the local community while larger stakeholders profit. The economic justification of freedom camping the government and the tourism industry promote may not be enough to offset the local social and environmental issues, especially if not everyone is reaping the rewards. Uneven economic distribution of tourism’s benefits in local communities is a common tension (Krippendorf, 1999). Mike Davis from the Department of Conservation (DOC) summarized this point when he explained, “It will benefit some. They are definitely spending money, so there is an economic benefit for some because not everyone gets the economic benefit of it or is interested in the economics” (personal communication, 6 December). As freedom camping’s visibility has become

a tension in communities, the economic justification may be an irrelevant metric to balance negative community perceptions.



Figure 5.2: The Duvauchelle Holiday Park and the narrow grass fringe sought by freedom campers to the right. Source: Author



Figure 5.3: The Duvauchelle Holiday Park and the beautiful ocean facing sites and the narrow grass fringe sought by freedom campers beyond the boundary fence. Source: Author

A campground host I met at a remote beachfront campsite showed me a small grass fringe at the front gate which attracted freedom campers (seen in Figure 5.2). When a freedom camper set up there, she would go out and politely ask them to move on as the local bylaw dictated, but not before extending an invitation to stay. She explained to me with a lot of frustration and disbelief, “we could have taken them no problem...they just refused to pay!” (personal communication, 23 November 2018). This type of interaction with freedom campers was common for her, contributing to the perception that they were “freeloaders” looking for something for nothing. It would appear that this ocean front campground was not considered an option in a freedom camper’s decision-making process, finding a free site was the priority. Seen in Figure 5.3 the campground is beautiful, remote and ocean facing and the type of place that New Zealand’s tourism messaging is built on. The host spoke of receiving phone calls from upset residents who live in the hilly and secluded dead-end streets nearby where freedom campers congregate. The residents called to enquire how much the campground was charging per night, because there were so many freedom campers in their streets, so it must be too expensive. On the phone, the residents were surprised

to learn the nominal price of a night's stay. Unfortunately, this oceanfront campground cannot compete with free, or the freedom from cost granted in the FCA.

As discussed earlier, one intention of the FCA was to maintain access to nature for New Zealanders and foreign visitors, or freedom as birthright. This served as a justification for the FCA's broad and permissive interpretation of camping space. However, the government has set a dangerous precedent by offering enormous swaths of nature and public space for free because it is a destructive force for local business and the community. The experience shared by this campground host is a reality of the FCA. The environmental access that the legislation sought to preserve conceals a contradiction that the freedom campers and the tourism industry fully understand. It is nothing to do with access to New Zealand's abundant natural beauty or nature as "birthright", it is what can be gained for free. This contradiction is well known to the campground owners and managers that I met during my field research period.

In fact, campground managers and owners have much to be upset about (discussed in chapter four). Fergus Brown from Holiday Parks Association of New Zealand (HAPNZ) said many of his members were concerned about freedom camping. They lose potential income when a freedom camper bypasses their site to use accommodation money for activities which the government fully supports. The government and tourism industry justify freedom camping with the economic rhetoric of longer stays and bigger spends (Cropp, 2016a; MBIE, 2018a). However, this position conceals a contradiction around the capitalism of freedom camping: the prioritizing of the narrow economic interests of the government and the tourism industry over some forms of local business. Freedom campers would not be permitted to bypass New Zealand's airports and airlines, fuel providers or food suppliers as a national tourism strategy. The government would not allow them to circumvent large-scale economic tourism operations and infrastructure to have money left for bungee jumps. This would be a ridiculous reason for not investing in national tourism, but this is the position many local accommodation businesses are in currently due to freedom camping. Local ratepayers fund the infrastructure and management costs of freedom camping, while the tourism industry and government yield GDP return and the freedom campers travel dollar can go further. It is a solution where everyone benefits, except the local businesses who are becoming aware that freedom camping is a "loss-leader event", but their loss specifically.

5.4 Freedom camping and commodified nature

The current freedom camping situation is a financial arrangement between the government, the tourism industry and freedom campers at the expense of the local community. Above, I discussed how the freedom from cost impacts local business, specifically campgrounds. However, the local community, in addition to funding the *free* in freedom camping experience environmental and social impacts also, as more freedom campers are pushed into public spaces as part of a national tourism strategy. Rubbish, defecation waste, noise, nuisance, loss of local amenity results in the avoidance of sites by locals and were all issues articulated by residents from a range of locations in the Christchurch district. Through the FCA, New Zealand's landscape has been commodified and sold through its permissive structure. Nature, albeit within 200m from any road and bylaws notwithstanding becomes a space and generator of tourism revenue (Freedom Camping Act, 2011). The tourism industry captures recreational nature areas with support of the FCA to use as sites of accommodation and capital accumulation. As discussed by Mordue (1999) in chapter two, the Marxist concept of commodification in tourism development explains how tourism removes or abstracts the social use or value of an object. In this context, the exchange value of nature appropriated through the FCA indirectly results in economic accumulation for large scale stakeholders such as airlines, hire firms, supermarkets and fuel suppliers. Regional expectations through trickle down economic rhetoric is often not self-evident. Economic decision making has priority over nature's social benefit and value to the community, hence the rising tensions between communities, freedom campers and local councils.

New Zealand has long upheld the availability of nature to all as a core of its tourism strategy (New Zealand Parliament, 2011b). This was a major discussion point during the Freedom Camping Bill (FCB) readings in 2011 and a reason why the opposition parties wanted more time (discussed in chapter four). The preservation of traditional access to nature as "birthright" exposed many loopholes in the legislation as it grew in popularity. Now that the freedom camping market has grown and changed from what it was in 2011, it is impacting the community and environment more. Mark Rykers, Asset Manager from the Selwyn District Council (SDC) Parks Team, explained the market shift:

It [the FCA] was designed for the Rugby World Cup for people to go everywhere and be able to camp because there was an accommodation shortage at the time. And now that

transformed into the influx of tourists, European tourists coming in and it was never really designed for that. (personal communication, 30 November 2018)

As I discussed in chapter four, there are two distinct interpretations of the FCA. The first is what Rykers describes above and Andrew Turner did in chapter four. Its solutions seem like a simple market correction and infrastructure adjustment. However, the second interpretation of the FCA was broken to begin with, I believe is a more accurate representation and the cause of many contradictions and misinterpretations of freedom. Moreover, from a political ecology position, the FCA is the central government disengaging from a public good and reorganizing itself with new large-scale economic partnerships with narrow economic goals. The FCA cannot “market correct” because it is commodifying public space and nature for economic gain even as it causes social and environmental stress. It does this by encouraging freedom campers to enter the country in large numbers and overcrowd nature and public space as part of a tourism strategy presented as the freedom from cost.

Through the FCA, large areas of New Zealand’s landscape are converted into high-value *places* for the rising number of budget freedom camper. Here the landscape is firstly captured then “flattened and deadened” and commodified into high-value tourist experiences (Duffy 2015) and the death of nature and the rise of the environment is a precursor for capitalist consumption (Escobar 1996). The conversion of nature and public space into freedom camping sites occurs through the broad interpretation of space granted in the FCA. This remakes freedom camping spaces as indirect drivers of economic return. The accumulation of economic benefit from access to nature is by large scale stakeholders on the fringes of the freedom camping activity, such as supermarkets, fuel suppliers and airlines or penetrating nature by the campervan rental companies. The word *freedom* also conveniently fits into Duffy’s (2015) contested lexicon of tourism terms, such as green, eco and sustainable used to conceal the contradictions of capital accumulation. Her astute observation that international air travel contradicts any environmental tourism high-mindedness applies also, as New Zealand is very far from Europe, the origin of the majority of freedom campers who come to engage with nature in a “sustainable” way.

5.4.1 The environmentalism of freedom camping

There is also a contradiction between the 100% Pure New Zealand national tourism marketing campaign and the current state of freedom camping (Tourism New Zealand, 2019). Throughout the research period, some of the worst vehicles I observed were freedom camping vehicles. Most were early 1990s vans in varying states of disrepair. I photographed many and have included them to add context to the study. One I observed regularly in New Brighton is shown in Figure 5.4 (which I will discuss further in the following chapter). The environmental reality of New Zealand freedom camping I saw is rows of questionably certified 1990s vans unpacked and sandwiched near a water source. Fergus Brown from HAPNZ interpreted the anti-environmentalism and visibility of freedom camping in a similar way. He feels iconic New Zealand sites crammed with old vehicles damages the country's tourism product and explained, "I don't think anybody wants a situation, as I said the whole front of Taupo¹⁵ is covered by campers or HiAce vans parked there" (personal communication, 11 December 2018). Old freedom camping vehicles congregating in high profile tourist locations and in neighbourhoods represent the anti-environmentalism of freedom camping and a contradiction of the FCA.

The conversion of nature through the political power of the FCA remakes nature as wide-ranging freedom camping spaces. These spaces are now sites of accumulation for the government and tourism industry and beholden to economic power governed under the concepts of clean, green, 100% pure and responsible camping. As Duffy (2015) explained above these buzz terms conceal environmental degradation and economic control over nature. Mike Davis from DOC discussed how the general permissiveness of the FCA has set a default position and expectation which has been difficult to manage. He explained, "part of the problem is, is we've sold New Zealand on the basis of hire a camper van and you camp anywhere" (personal communication, 6 December 2018). As Davis suggests, the environmental contradictions of freedom camping stem from the unrestricted access to nature granted through the FCA often accessed in run-down vehicles under the questionable New Zealand Self-Containment Standard 5465:2001 (Standards Association of New Zealand, 1990) (which I will analyse in the following chapter). As freedom camping's environmental tensions rise, their wide-ranging use of the public space is eclipsing their 3%

¹⁵ Lake Taupo is a large caldera lake located in the centre of the North Island. It is roughly the size of Singapore and is a major tourist town and attraction.

tourism GDP return (MBIE, 2018a). Their physical presence has the community not debating their economic value, but carefully considering the social and environmental costs.



Figure 5.4: A self-contained freedom camping vehicle that appears questionably certified self-contained. It was parked frequently at the South Ramp, New Brighton. Source: Author

In 2017, tourism became New Zealand's biggest industry surpassing the dairy industry as the number one GDP export earner (Mackenzie, 2017). Before this, the agriculture industry was a priority for successive governments selling New Zealand dairy and animal products worldwide. Now, New Zealand no longer trades primarily in dairy products, but in temporary experiences with and in the country's natural environment. Granting short-term access to nature and the public spaces contributes to national GDP. As tourism enters its first crisis of industry requiring the creation of the RCWG, looking at the example of the dairy industry should guide future planning. The dairy industry had wide access to the environment to generate national GDP and now New Zealand has many polluted waterways and rivers, some beyond repair (NIWA, 2010).

Swimming in rivers and waterways, like camping, is perceived as the unofficial New Zealand “birthright” (DOC, 2006). Now as tourism as the nation’s primary economic activity matures, the results for regular New Zealanders are the potential loss of shared cultural history and connection to nature. Indeed, reports of New Zealand citizens avoiding traditional recreation and camping spaces that have become freedom camping spaces indicate the changing face of the activity (Freeman & Kearns, 2015; QLDC, 2018). The understanding of access to the land and water as a collective birthright even though they do not belong to New Zealanders individually is widespread (The Guardian, 2019). As freedom camping’s popularity has grown, the environmentalism of freedom camping through site degradation and overcrowding and faecal matter leaching into waterways has been a simmering anxiety in local communities.

Freedom camping sites are often located near a water source and the spatial unevenness of the activity has seen existing toilet infrastructure pushed to breaking point. The wastewater often ends up in the ocean and in the water supply. In Figure 5.5 below, the signage at the Akaroa boat wash (which is a highly contested area in the town) explicitly instructs freedom campers not to expel their wastewater there. Residents in Akaroa discussed seeing human waste dumped in the streets and in drainage areas not set up to manage it. Moreover, in Figure 5.6, the toilet block at the former overcrowded freedom camping site at the Windsport Park in Christchurch was still closed due to septic tank issues (I will discuss these two sites in more detail in the following chapter). In the Wainui-French Farm area near Akaroa, the public toilet septic tank overflowed and leached into the ocean due to freedom campers overcrowding the area causing an E Coli outbreak (Law, 2016). A local resident described the situation when the outbreak occurred: “they had to shut it down, health and safety wise. It was just diabolical!” (personal communication 23 November). She explained the overcrowded scene when the septic tank breached: “they [freedom campers] were tenting all over the place and it got to the stage where you couldn't drive up the road and the local people trying to get to their houses were being abused” (personal communication 23 November). Mayor Sam Broughton of Selwyn also said that having toilets close to river beds at the districts two major freedom camping sites is not an ideal long-term situation. Nationally sanctioning freedom camping as an economic activity is damaging the natural environment for a slim 3% tourism GDP return. If the New Zealand government fails to learn the lessons of its past and overprioritizes tourism as it did with agriculture before, New Zealanders may lose another part of nature as it has with its rivers and waterways which Urry (2002) foretold (see chapter two).



Figure 5.5: The Akaroa boat launch signage instructing freedom campers not to dump toilet waste in the area. Akaroa residents spoke of seeing human waste expelled in the street by campervans
Source: Author



Figure: 5.6: Windsport Park, Ferrymead, Christchurch. When I visited the site the toilet block was closed due to a septic tank overloading issue (seen in the sign). Source: Author

5.5 Free camping or user-pays?

Many participants discussed the idea of a basic user-pays freedom camping infrastructure model. Freedom campers' use of public space and not contributing to the maintenance of the space they use is a factor in the freedom camping debate (DIA, 2016). The tourism industry leveraging access to the public realm has also been a major issue globally (Goodwin, 2017). In Akaroa, a local resident discussed a user-pays model as a process that could improve the experience for freedom campers and cultivate community relations. Fergus Brown from HAPNZ had similar views on user-pays as an approach for freedom camping: "If someone is using a facility, they should be making some payment for it" (personal communication, 11 December 2018). Selwyn Mayor Sam Broughton expressed his perspective even though his district provides excellent freedom camping infrastructure, management and space:

I don't think that freedom camping should be free. I'm okay with five dollars [per night], I think we should be charging them in Selwyn...I think there would be a better view from the community about freedom camping and freedom campers. (personal communication, 3 December 2018).

The Selwyn District Council (SDC) has one of the best freedom camping areas in the country, yet Broughton still believes the activity should not be completely free. Campermate's Adam Hutchinson looked at user-pays through the lens of the pricing of a premium experience, such as a coastal location and he explained "my personal belief is that if someone is freedom camping and they're not paying for a site, then they should be sacrificing some of that premium experience" (personal communication, 29 November 2018). Hutchinson felt that pricing be set on high value areas such as the coastline. The feeling from the participants I met during the research period was if freedom campers paid for high-value experiences like proximity to nature or water then the "freeloading" perception would change. Even a small amount like a DOC site would help address community issues very quickly and mitigate the environmental and visibility issues of vehicles crammed into free sites. Although as mentioned previously, enforcing payment in open access DOC campgrounds is no easy task.

With a user-pays freedom camping argument gaining traction, New Zealanders must consider how the legislative review of the FCA will affect their perceived access rights to freedom camping.

Angus and Associates (2017) outlined this point, “It would be useful to understand whether or not New Zealanders would welcome the total prohibition of freedom camping, once presented with more information about how this would impact their own relationship with recreational areas” (p. 17). This is a critical point to consider. As I outlined in chapter two, user-pays systems are useful to manage overtourism and community perceptions, but the community may lose free access to its traditional public spaces (Goodwin, 2017). If a user-pays system is introduced, New Zealanders may unfortunately lose what the FCA attempted to preserve. By rushing the FCA for the prestige of the RWC and mixing economics with recreational heritage, it is a complex issue for New Zealanders. A user-pays system would alter traditional and culturally important recreational practices in New Zealand and impact the New Zealand camper identity. If this occurs, New Zealanders will have reason to feel frustrated if GDP goals were prioritised over their perceived birthright discussed in chapter two. Like agriculture before, the government may have inadvertently sold another Kiwi way of life like it did with its rivers and waterways.

5.6 Technology: a solution, or a problem?

Throughout the research period, many respondents discussed the use of social media in freedom camping. My interview schedule did not include any specific technology-based questions, but this topic was frequently brought up by participants. They mostly referenced directly or indirectly to, Campermate, New Zealand’s major freedom camping app that I introduced in the previous chapter. Campermate’s aims are to: “reduce the impact that freedom camping is having on the environment and create a better freedom camping experience” (Campermate, 2019). The huge popularity of Campermate has seen freedom camping sites become overcrowded exposing weaknesses in local infrastructure. However, Campermate is now being presented as a solution to many of freedom camping’s problems. Recently, the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) acquired Campermate to be a partner in a new data-policy alignment strategy through the RCWG (MBIE, 2018d). Campermate, a private start-up and app trading under Geozone acquired by MBIE through Tourism Holdings Limited (THL) aimed to integrate the technology pilot (MBIE, 2018d). However, the framing of technology as a solution is problematic, as many councils and residents believe it has caused problems through location sharing (Dangerfield & McPhee, 2016; Morris, 2016). The demand that location sharing places on certain sites also accounted for the sudden prohibition of freedom camping in Christchurch (CCC, 2015). The Christchurch City Council (CCC) found themselves at an impasse with overloaded

infrastructure and the community in an uproar and opted to prohibit all freedom camping in the city. The ban in Christchurch pushed freedom campers out to the Selwyn district that had to accommodate the influx of freedom campers at their sites, (discussed in chapter four) (Hume, 2016; Stylianou, 2016). The spatial unevenness of digital platforms and user activity has led to overcrowded freedom camping locations, or *honeypot* locations (chapter two). Currently, digital platforms are both a problem and solution in freedom camping which connects to the broader global overtourism and platform capitalism discussions outlined in chapter two.

5.6.1 Technology as solution

When the RCWG presented their report to the Minister of Tourism (MoT), Kelvin Davis, they indicated that technology could assist with future freedom camping management strategies (MBIE, 2018d). They proposed a technology data pilot through MBIE to gather data to better manage freedom camper sites, movements and behaviour. Adam Hutchinson of Campermate praised the new Labour government's rapid response, he said, "It's really cool to see the government supporting us, we're not so much a start-up anymore" (personal communication, 29 November 2018). Although he stressed that Campermate is a small entity, the digital platform is one of the preferred choices for freedom campers in New Zealand. He applauded Kelvin Davis for his engagement with technology as a viable solution, explaining "Kelvin Davis and MBIE just taking a punt and just being like okay, well let's really give technology a decent go to see if we can help try and solve some of these issues" (personal communication, 29 November 2018). The RCWG hoped the acquisition of Campermate and its 2018-19 data pilot would provide a new field of data to better approach freedom camping management to assist local councils.



Figure 5.7: A Campermate sensor installed at the Akaroa boat launch freedom camping area.
Source: Author

The RCWG have proposed detailed data reports for councils on freedom camper behaviour along with site sensors and a dynamic dispersal strategy to address site overcrowding. Steve Hanrahan, advocacy manager at Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA), was supportive of the partnership with technology, he explained that “some councils have already been doing it, volunteer you know, they're doing that in the past and arrangements with Geozone [Campermate], but now it's being rolled out across more councils” (personal communication, 28 November 2018). Hanrahan went on to discuss how the data pilot would provide councils with invaluable location metrics to manage the hot spots and times of high demand with closer engagement with the technology sector. Hutchinson from Campermate was in the process of actively installing site sensors and cameras when we met in November 2018. An installed sensor at the Akaroa freedom camping area is seen in Figure 5.7 when I visited the following week. He discussed the goals of the data pilot, he explained, “what we're essentially doing with this pilot is just creating a blueprint for how you manage a freedom campsite with technology” (personal communication, 29 November 2018). He outlined the development of dynamic dispersal and the redirection of freedom campers to paid

sites through the Campermate app if a site is showing full by a sensor or site camera. The Campermate dynamic location technology is a real time accounting of where freedom campers are and how many (seen in Figure 5.8). Campers would receive a pricing deal which is RCWG's solution to address the economic distribution issues associated with freedom camping that the campground owners discussed in this chapter and in chapter four. However, as the example of the layby outside the campground I discussed earlier suggests, freedom campers are free to move on and seek another free site. As the residents in Akaroa mentioned, this can force freedom campers into secluded neighbourhoods or anywhere outside of community surveillance. The calculus of free and not free is still a fundamental issue with freedom camping and while this technology is ambitious, it does not completely address all the issues.

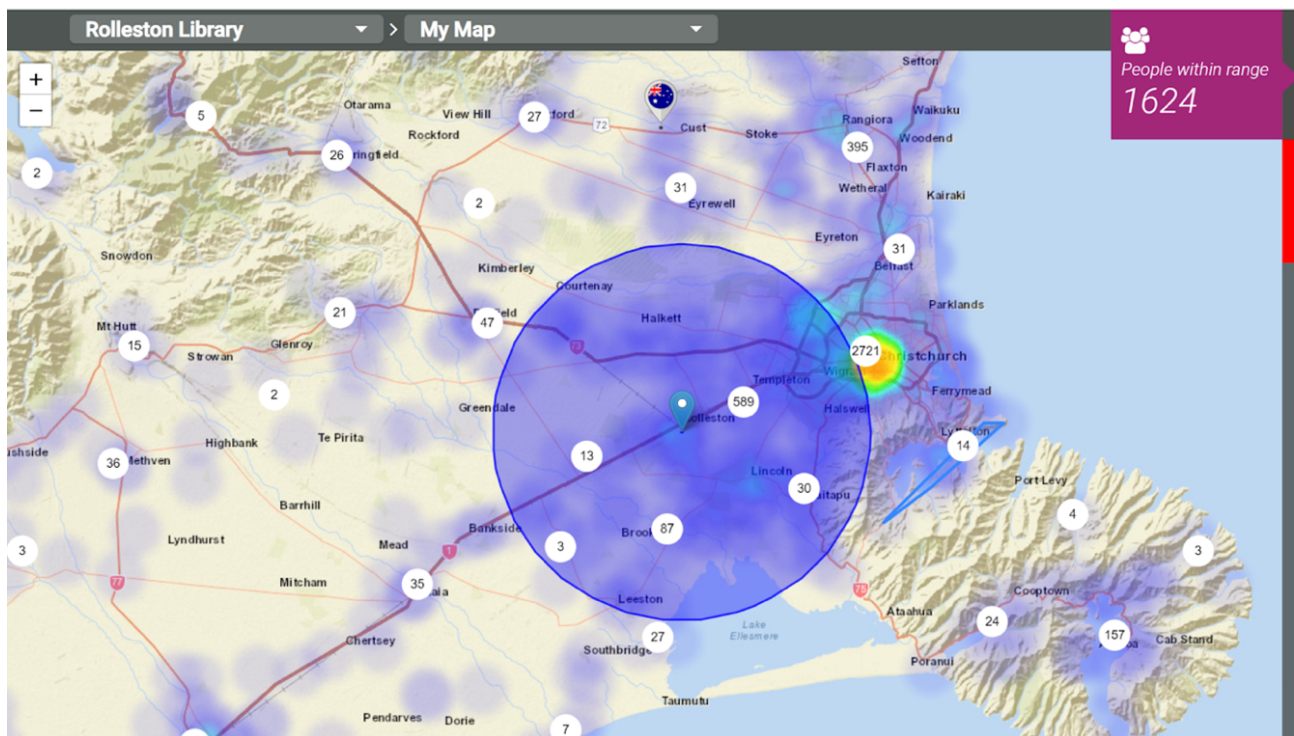


Figure 5.8: Real-time location data of users of the Campermate freedom camping app in Christchurch & Selwyn district. Source: Campermate

The technology and data pilot also plans to quantify and clarify some of the big unknowns around the economic benefits of freedom camping to the regions. Many participants questioned freedom camping's benefits to the community if the primary motivation is free accommodation. Hutchinson said Campermate users who enabled location sharing provided data of what freedom campers were worth to the locations they were staying in "so there's an economic benefit to councils to

support well-managed freedom camping, but that's been the missing link in the chain” (personal communication, 29 November 2018). Campermate’s real time freedom camper daily spend statistics have indeed been the missing link and is the evidence the tourism industry relies on to justify freedom camping. However, freedom camping’s value in strictly dollar terms is disputed as social and environmental tensions rise (DIA, 2016). Hutchinson viewed technology as an approach to solve freedom camping issues through data analysis and managed connectivity. Overall, he was optimistic about the new partnership and hoped both groups would work well together: “I think it will, in tandem with [policy], giving more options, better planning and maybe better policy” (personal communication, 29 November 2018). Although he was not particularly focused on policy, the irony is that the FCA as a policy and its inconsistent regional structure has allowed Campermate to flourish and become indispensable to freedom campers, hence its acquisition by MBIE. As freedom camping’s major digital platform partners with the government and the tourism industry there may be further tension which I will discuss in the following section.

5.6.2 Technology as tension

Deputy Mayor of Christchurch and RCWG member Andrew Turner felt solutions to overcrowding were a matter of establishing the correct visitation equilibrium with the community. I believe the policy-technology partnership does seem to be signalling that freedom camping will become more streamlined. By increasing efficiency and infrastructure through the RCWG emergency fund¹⁶ more campers can will be accommodated (MBIE, 2019a). This will allow national tourism messaging to remain unchanged to ensure a return on the technology and infrastructure investment. These recent movements by the government and the tourism industry through the RCWG still leaves local communities and the environment in a somewhat precarious position. Many participants I interviewed held the perception that Campermate had overloaded the local area with freedom campers through location sharing. However, what is regarded as overcrowded is a very subjective issue. The recent example of a Westland¹⁷ community physically barricading a freedom camping site and limiting daily numbers to 15 when over 50 freedom campers, guided by social media would arrive nightly indicates the tension over the issue of site volume (Comer,

¹⁶ The Responsible Camping Working Group (MBIE, 2018d) immediately dispatched \$15 million in emergency infrastructure funding to local councils, with another \$3 million available for other related projects.

¹⁷ Westland is a district council on the West Coast of the South Island of New Zealand. It is remote, beautiful and sparsely populated and very popular with tourists.

2019). The Akaroa freedom camping area at the contested boat ramp area has 16-18 sites which seems to be an accepted number by the community (CCC, 2018a; Dally, 2014). Hutchinson from Campermate understood the community blamed the app for site overcrowding, but he worked hard to provide substantial data to contest this perception. The media also reports on freedom camping's social media apps use of location sharing leading to freedom camping site overcrowding (Dangerfield & McPhee, 2016; Morris, 2016). Freedom campers using social media and accessing user location data were swamping sites guided by the permissive nature of the FCA which accentuated issues of inadequate local enforcement and regulation created tension.

Local resident and community organizer, Martha Baxendell discussed Campermate as a forum for the “electronic world of mouth” and freedom camping sites in her community in New Brighton, she explained, “snowball effect for places like that carpark [Beresford St, New Brighton] where you get two or three to start with and they're messaging on international camping sites, we've found this place, come and join us up for a party” (personal communication, 29 November 2018). She went on “It snowballs on, there was no way of us as a community regulating that word being spread [on social media], absolutely no way!”. Baxendell's call for specific local regulation of freedom camping was a discussion point raised by other community members, including some local campground owners. The community's desire for local regulation stems from the anonymous and derogatory environment of social media and I believe is an attempt to establish some control over their environment as seen in the Westland example discussed above. In chapter six, I will discuss Labour MP's for Christchurch East and Port Hills, Poto Williams and Ruth Dyson, making personal visits to freedom camping sites in their electoral jurisdictions to meet with the campers over their behaviour and use of the site.

Digital platforms and liberal tourism policies have been a significant issue for many global tourist locations discussed in chapter two. Platforms like Airbnb and Instagram have transformed the tourism industry, altered traveller behaviours and spatially reshaped tourist locations. Deputy Mayor of Christchurch, Andrew Turner, openly linked some of New Zealand's tourism issues to global overtourism issues when he said, “one of the effects of Airbnb in Barcelona, for example, [is] ripping the hearts out of communities and changing their economy” (personal communication, 3 December 2018). Turner characterized the issues in Akaroa with its cruise ships and freedom campers as a “microcosm of New Zealand's tourism issues” and this will be explored in the following chapter. He also discussed how digital platforms in tourism were changing the way users

engage with the environment. He explained, “there are more free independent travellers supported by digital platforms like Airbnb or Campermate” (personal communication, 3 December 2018). As Turner suggests, freedom camping has grown because there are more web-connected independent travellers than ever before. He emphasized that when dealing with affected communities it was important to work closely with them to find acceptable solutions:

There are plenty of examples internationally of where the level of visitation has become unsustainable and has affected communities in a way that those communities have become uncomfortable with, and it's how we find a way of *doing with* rather than *doing to*. (personal communication, 3 December 2018)

Turner works very closely with the Akaroa community and its developing tourism issues. When I was in Akaroa, he was due to give a talk to the community about tourism-based issues in the town (seen in Figure 5.9). He was clear to state that the local community’s relationship with social media and tourism overcrowding can be difficult at times. Turner suggested that more growth may not be the best option, especially when the cost of operation is likely borne by ratepayers and he explained, “simply building more infrastructure so that we can receive more and more visitors may not be the right answer” (personal communication, 3 December 2018). Turner was the only person I met in government who made such clear statements about slowing tourist growth to solve local problems. His point of managing growth, not trying to manage who is there is a significant point in the discussion and was a rare position for an elected official. Tourism development must consider the community perspectives as tourism growth and digital platforms continue to lead to overcrowding discussed in chapter two (Goodwin, 2017).

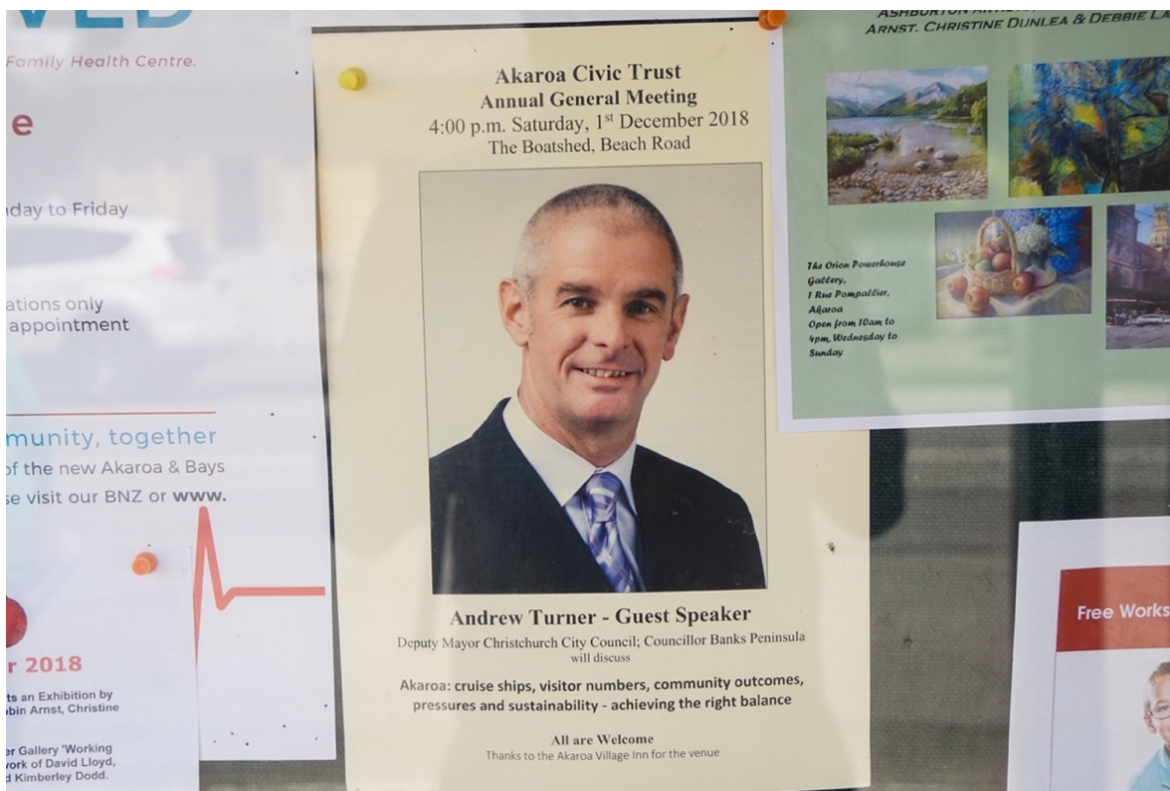


Figure 5.9: Deputy Mayor of Christchurch, Andrew Turner, a guest speaker on tourism related issues in Akaroa when I was there in November 2018 and in the national media. Source: Author

Combining national tourism messaging with digital platform user activity is also precarious for local communities. Hutchinson's understanding of social media's role in the local market place did leave a question around its value to the local community. He conceded it most likely benefited the national tourism industry primarily: "there are two parts to it, there's the local spend which is the freedom campers' sort of supporting the local businesses, the cafe or whatever" (A. Hutchinson, personal communication, 29 November 2018). The second part was social media's relationship to the national tourism messaging as primarily photos posted by freedom campers and explained in that regard, freedom camping "doesn't necessarily benefit the local, it sort of does, but more nationally if they're travelling around and taking photos of New Zealand and selling that New Zealand tourism message back to their family and friends as well" (personal communication, 29 November 2018). Although Hutchinson determined what freedom campers were worth locally there is still a tension around freedom campers' actual value measured against social and environmental impacts. There is the monetary value ascribed to their presence, but app engagement benefits the national tourism industry and the GDP goals of the government and not necessarily the local population. These types of partnerships can lead to a democratic deficit and

the dispersal of public power which I discussed in chapter two (Mordue, 1999; Paddison & Walmsley, 2018).

5.7 Conclusion

Through the FCA, the central government rolled back its involvement in tourism infrastructure, devolving it to local councils. This created an unregulated market place of vehicles overcrowding public space, directly contradicting New Zealand's environmental messaging. Public space through the FCA is commodified to serve an emerging freedom camping market, but these new sites of economic accumulation have caused social and environmental stress. Large scale economic stakeholders' profit from freedom camping, while the benefits to smaller businesses are vague or framed in trickle-down economics rhetoric. Freedom campers' pursuit of the freedom from cost has led to the avoidance of local businesses and the theft of services at times. The contradiction is the freedom from cost granted in the FCA is just pushed down to local taxpayers in the form of freedom camping infrastructure costs. Therefore, freedom camping is not free locally and has a real economic and social cost. Freedom campers guided by digital platforms and the freedoms of cost and mobility make it difficult for the community to regulate its own environment. Freedom campers use digital platforms to access the commodified public space made available to them leading to site overcrowding and community tension. Residents feel powerless to the enormous reach and influence the digital platforms have over their community. The recent data-policy pilot with Campermate and MBIE hopes to attend to some of freedom camping's issues associated with spatial unevenness, location sharing and overcrowding. However, some of my participants consider freedom camping policy and technology to be the cause of the problems.

CHAPTER SIX: THE VISUAL INVASION OF FREEDOM CAMPING

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how the growth of freedom camping has brought the activity into full view of resident populations. With freedom camper numbers rising each year, the activity is more visually invasive than ever before. The permissive nature of the Freedom Camping Act (FCA) has put freedom campers into regular close social and visual contact with local communities. The visibility of freedom camping challenges social norms around the boundaries on public and private life and what camping means to New Zealanders (what I termed the ‘New Zealand camper identity’ in chapter two). I begin this chapter with an examination of how the visibility of freedom camping is affecting communities in both of my study districts, and how these effects depend on geographic characteristics and district management plans. I then expand on the concept of visibility to examine public defecation, an issue that encapsulates the broader tensions over freedom camper visibility. This section leads into a discussion on people’s perceptions of the New Zealand Self-Containment Standard 5465:2001 (NZSCS), and the blue sticker affixed to self-contained vehicles. Ineffective management of the standard has made freedom camper defecation a community issue and made the blue sticker a contested symbol. The chapter concludes by examining the contradictions of freedom camping, focusing on how freedom camper visibility and the national self-containment standard have created a dysfunctional system for locals, councils, and the campers themselves. I argue that the current freedom camping framework is inhibiting freedom for the local community and for freedom campers.

6.2 The visibility of freedom camping as tension

New Zealanders generally understand freedom camping to be a predominantly rural activity that enables people to engage with the natural environment. However, foreign freedom campers become increasingly attracted to urban areas for the proximity to culture, air travel and tourist activities (LGNZ, 2018). These freedom campers also like to spend as much time as they can outside of traditional campgrounds, and this has brought them into full view of local communities. Campgrounds can provide a socially acceptable space to conduct private activities away from

what Moaz (2006) has termed 'host gaze', which minimises visibility tensions, such as the ones I will outline in this chapter. The FCA allows freedom campers to stay in areas that were not specifically designed for them. Some freedom campers prefer free locations with few other qualifying attributes which has seen them labelled as "freeloaders" by the public (DIA, 2016; LGNZ, 2018). Usually, these sites are parking lots or public picnic areas in which regional councils have allowed freedom camping to occur. When campers "discover" the location of new sites, they communicate this rapidly through social media and the sites often become overcrowded. The range territory for freedom camping permitted through the FCA means freedom campers now have daily encounters with residents and recreational users.



Figure 6.1: Windsport Park, Ferrymead, Christchurch. Note the overcrowding and unpacked vehicles in the shared public space. Source: 1news (2016)

Public sites not specifically designed for freedom camping have become contested spaces (Collins et al., 2017; DIA, 2016). In respondent interviews, the visibility and proximity of the freedom campers to resident populations emerged as a key source of tension. Reports of New Zealanders bristling at the private activities of freedom campers in public places have become a common news item. In the media, a recurring topic is the local outrage over freedom campers hanging their washing on a clotheslines in public view (McNeilly, 2017; Sparks, 2018), cooking, cleaning or brushing teeth in public spaces, and emptying their vans in places that encroach on

public spaces and interfere with community use as seen in Figure 6.1 at the Windsport Park in Ferrymead, Christchurch. The public also strongly objected to freedom campers' appropriation of unused spaces as camping space when paid sites are nearby. Fairness is a major part of New Zealand's collective identity (Fischer, 2012). Therefore, the overuse of public spaces or campers occupying derelict sites with no natural beauty to avoid paying challenges this sense of fairness and the New Zealand public's interpretation of what camping is (DIA, 2016).



Figure 6.2: Windsport Park, Ferrymead, Christchurch (in yellow). A sports-picnic recreation area on the Estuary of the Avon and Heathcote rivers Source: USGS LansatLook (2019)

6.2.1 Christchurch: parking lots and the visibility of urban freedom camping

Interview participants in Christchurch frequently discussed their dislike of the visibility of freedom camping. Urban areas with high population density and large numbers of shared public spaces have seen freedom camper's presence become an evolving tension. Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) in its *Good practice guide for freedom camping* stated that, "there is a growing intolerance to non-self-contained vehicles in public areas of cities, leading to their banning in many cases" (LGNZ, 2018, p. 24). Ruth Dyson, Labour MP, whose electoral authority covers the

Windsport Park carpark in Ferrymead discussed the visibility of the freedom campers in this popular recreational space overlooking the estuary seen in overview in Figure 6.2 above:

Well, it's just not very nice, even if things like people hanging their washing out, like making a washing line and stuff. I guess people didn't think of it as a camping area. It is quite a tension, though isn't it there because, I think in New Zealand, we did like being able to just drive and stop up. (personal communication, 19 November 2018)

Dyson linked the campers' visibility and presence interfering with traditional New Zealand recreational habits due to the large groups of freedom campers in the public space seen in news footage in Figure 6.5. She also mentioned how the visibility of foreign freedom camping was magnified due to the city's recovery after the 2012 Christchurch earthquake (Kaiser et al., 2012). The 2012 earthquake was a catastrophic geological event with the central business district (CBD) virtually destroyed, along with enormous tracts of suburban East Christchurch due to liquefaction¹⁸ from the Avon River and adjoining Avon-Heathcote estuary. Large areas of the city were designated *red zone*, which were the tracts of land where entire neighbourhoods once stood after they were demolished (Kaiser et al., 2012; LINZ, 2017; Regenerate Christchurch, 2016). The *redzone* areas in the city's east and northeast were abandoned and fenced off with lush grass and tree life rapidly reclaiming the void (seen in Brooklands in Figure 6.3). The rise in popularity of foreign freedom camping grew alongside the area's protracted earthquake recovery. Freedom campers displaced Christchurch citizens, and construction workers employed for the city's rebuild formed mixed informal settlements, like Brooklands (Figure 6.4) and Beresford St, New Brighton which I will discuss next. Dyson said the city grew remarkably close after the events of the earthquake, but citizens were very intolerant of nuisance freedom camper behaviour during this time as emotions were high and nuisance freedom camping was perceived as insensitive in light of the tragic events. The earthquake displaced thousands of Christchurch residents who lost their homes overnight with many having to live in vehicles for months after. During my field work, I observed families still sleeping in vans and vehicles on private property, including young children years after the earthquake.

¹⁸ Liquefaction during the 2012 Christchurch earthquake caused the low-lying sediment the city is built on to weaken and allow a deeper layer of liquefying soil to reach the surface passing through ground water and surface crust (Munich RE Group, 2019).



Figure 6.3: The Brooklands *redzone* with No Camping signage and fencing. The coastal township was demolished after the 2012 Christchurch earthquake Source: Author

Steve Leiataua, a Christchurch City Council Park Ranger, I met discussed with me how freedom campers appropriated a site at the north end of the abandoned Brooklands *redzone* area, north of Christchurch. The Brooklands township was demolished after the 2012 earthquake and the site seen in Figure 6.4 was located at the mouth of the river near where the town once stood. The site has basic facilities and is popular with locals for recreation and water access with outdoor showers and toilets. It is located 4km from the CCC-run Spencer Beach Holiday Park. Leiataua explained how this freedom camping site rapidly grew out of hand until noise, rubbish and safety complaints led to the site being closed permanently by the CCC. Leiataua noted that any person he felt was homeless after the earthquake he directed to the appropriate services for assistance, while foreign freedom campers were directed to Spencer Beach Holiday Park or elsewhere.

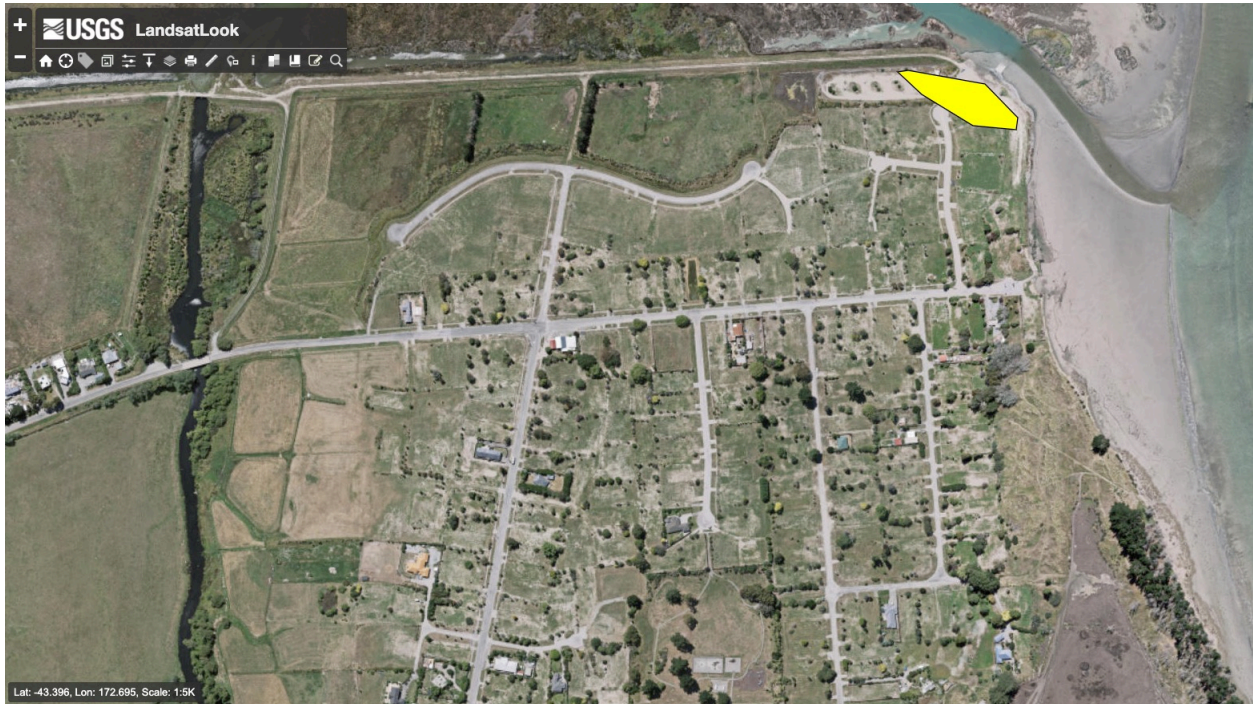


Figure 6.4: Brooklands, Christchurch. The freedom camping settlement formed at the mouth of the Styx River (in yellow). The town below was demolished after the 2012 Christchurch earthquake and designated *redzone* Source: USGS LandsatLook (2019)

The *Christchurch Freedom Camping Management Plan* indicated that high-density freedom camping areas near the coast and impacts on local communities were a top priority (Billante, 2010). As a result of a chaotic period of liberal freedom camping, the CCC (2015) enacted a bylaw that excluded most freedom camping from the city except for fully self-contained vehicles that were allowed to stay for a maximum two-night's stay, as seen in the signage in Figure 6.10. Many of Christchurch's picnic areas and parks had essentially become campgrounds during this liberal period of freedom camping (from 2011-2015) and the response from the community was mostly negative (Law, 2016a). One resident I spoke with believed the CCC cleared up to \$80,000 worth of rubbish from the Windsport Park recreation area in just 90 days due to freedom camping. In Figures 6.1 and 6.5 you can see the site was effectively a campground in a public picnic area with many campers not having vehicles to sleep or toilet in. The site has an outdoor shower and one pre-existing toilet block (in the back of this photo with two portaloos obscured) which were closed when I visited the site during my field work due to a septic tank issue (discussed in chapter five). I spent decades living about 10 minutes from this site and never observed anything like this as seen in the Figure 6.5. The high level of demand and shared amenity issues in the community was why CCC abruptly limited freedom camping within its environs. If you contrast these with Figure

6.6, from when I visited in November 2018, you can easily see the drastic conversion of public space due to freedom camping.



Figure 6.5: Windsport Park, Ferrymead, Christchurch during the liberal freedom camping period in the city. Note the overcrowding and lack of self-contained campervans (physical toilet block in the centre for perspective). Source: 1news (2016)



Figure 6.6: Windsport Park, Ferrymead, Christchurch, November 2018. Closed to freedom camping (contrast with Figure 6.1 & 6.5: physical toilet block in the right for perspective). Source: Author

6.2.2 Beresford St: freedom camping in a low-socio economic community

Beresford St is located in New Brighton, a low-socioeconomic suburb in east Christchurch which has been in a sustained period of decline for three decades (Morgan, 2002). The community are proud of the suburb's unique character and its challenging climate directly in the path of the dreaded north easterly wind. Reports from community members and in the media about defecating freedom campers using public fountains to wash clothes and prepare food were frequent (Cornish, 2018). Freedom campers commandeered a mostly vacant parking lot seen in aerial view in Figures 6.7, 6.8 & 6.9, adjacent to the rundown New Brighton Mall. The New Brighton Pier is visible to the east in Figure 6.7b and the Beresford St parking lot (yellow shape) is in the middle of residential housing and small businesses. New Brighton resident Martha Baxendell said of the Beresford St situation, "It just turned into a party zone" (personal communication 29 November 2018). Her colleague Emily Adcock added, "It just kind of turned into its own little [freedom camping] community, but it was in a very public space. Yes, and it was really encroaching" (personal communication, 29 November 2018). Baxendell was blunt in her description of the campers' re-appropriation of the space and its proximity to everyday community life, explaining, "we're not talking about a random campground, we're talking about a random car park on a street next to residents. What were they [freedom campers] thinking?" (personal communication 29 November 2018). Residents and businesses noticed an increase in noise, rubbish and human waste. Tensions escalated when the campers became indignant over their rights to occupy the site. Baxendell described an emotional scene of sleepless nights for babies and shift workers and nearby retirees struggling with the sheer volatility of the site. She was exasperated at how this impromptu freedom camping site with no infrastructure whatsoever, next to a shopping mall had been allowed to develop, exclaiming, "the house was literally their lounge window is as close as you and I sit, two meters away from these guys squatting down and going to the toilet and hanging their washing up!" (personal communication 29 November 2018).

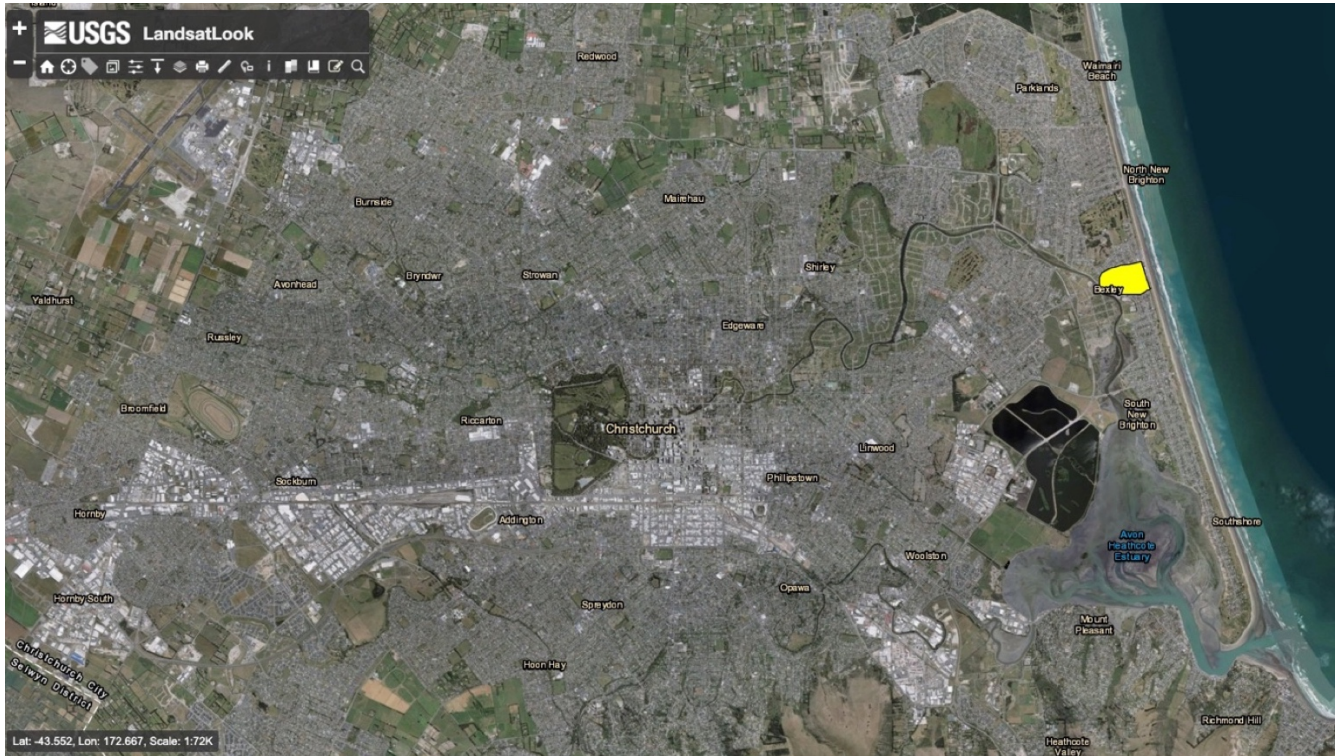


Figure 6.7: Christchurch city with New Brighton-marked in yellow to the east. Source: USGS LandsatLook (2019)



Figure 6.8 Beresford St freedom camping site (yellow shape, centre left). The New Brighton Mall is above, and the site is surrounded by dense residential housing. Source: USGS LandsatLook (2019)

Labour MP for Christchurch East Poto Williams's constituency office is close to the Beresford St site. Her office is so close that on the day of our meeting, her Labour logoed vehicle was parked in the actual Beresford St lot where the contentious freedom camping settlement occurred (seen in Figure 6.9). The irony of this optic was not lost on me. However, Williams was open to what the freedom campers could bring to the economically depressed suburb. Many of her positions echoed Kelvin Davis's (discussed in chapter four) which embraced the community spirit of welcome or *Manaakitanga*¹⁹ in New Zealand, while still establishing boundaries for the community. She supported solutions that could accommodate the campers safely and fairly for the community. Williams spoke at length about how the situation evolved and how she spoke with many residents who visited her office to express their unhappiness with the site. The residents' concerns over safety were actualized when a German tourist drew a weapon on a journalist investigating the site for a local newspaper, and the campers were eventually moved on (Meier & Mitchell, 2015; Mitchell, 2015a; 2015b; 2015c; Stuff, 2015). As a central government MP, Williams responded in her capacity as an elected official but had to work within the CCC's rules and enforcement strategies. She discussed a visit she made to the site to convey community feeling about the freedom campers' presence at the site:

I popped over there [Beresford St] to have a chat to a couple of the groups that were there at the time, and I said "look you know I'm getting complaints it's a bit noisy, [people are] not happy you're not dealing with your rubbish, actually, you shouldn't probably be camping here. We've got a camping ground just a kilometre or so down the road, you could go there". And they said: "But it's not free". (personal communication, 19 November 2018)

Williams's interactions with the freedom campers reveal the frustration many New Zealanders have. My participants expressed confusion over the freedom campers' presence and disbelief in the fact that Beresford St is regarded as national recreation strategy. This recalls my discussion of the New Zealand camper identity and how foreign freedom camping challenges what camping is and where it should occur. Beresford St is a key challenge to the New Zealand camper identity and contradicts what camping is to New Zealanders. She was surprised at how the freedom campers could stay there, and said, "where do they shower? Where do they go to the loo? How

¹⁹ Manaakitanga: is the Māori word for respect, generosity, hospitality and support.

do they dispose of their rubbish? Those are very visceral and the heart of it if you know anything about this community” (personal communication, 19 November 2018).



Figure 6.9: Beresford St parking lot, New Brighton after the ban in November of 2018. It was resorted to its designation of an under-used parking area. Source: Author

Martha Baxendell discussed how the official police and council response to the Beresford St site was unreasonably slow. Examination of the area’s low-socioeconomic status brings forward issues of class because it is highly unlikely that in a more affluent area of the city, freedom camping would have allowed to develop as it did in New Brighton. I am unsure of how many major financial stakeholders involved with freedom camping live on Beresford St, so this is purely speculative, but cities supply the capital, while rural and low-income areas supply the space (Krippendorf, 1999). The Beresford St highlights issues of class, capital and the exploitation of lower-socioeconomic spaces as sites of tourist accumulation. Sleepless shift workers and babies, stressed retirees and campground owners are the collateral damage when the development of airports, the supply of fuel, food wholesale, vehicle rentals and other major industry apparatus which support freedom camping growth are prioritized. The CCC eventually closed the area

(Figure 6.10), but after a difficult experience for the resilient community already reeling from the 2012 earthquake and its aftermath.



Figure 6.10: Self-contained freedom camping area in the CCC district (2-night max), Marine Parade, New Brighton. Source: Author

6.2.3 Akaroa: the visual invasion of freedom camping

Akaroa is another contested freedom camping location. It is a small historic town planned in the French colonial style and a ninety minutes' drive from Christchurch. The town is a popular tourist area and has had significant freedom camping issues. (Law, 2018). A more affluent community than New Brighton, the issues here are reflective of the coastal property owner conflicts with freedom campers I discussed in chapter two (Collins & Kearns, 2010). Andrew Turner, Deputy Mayor of Christchurch suggested to me that Akaroa is a “microcosm” of New Zealand’s tourism infrastructure issues and visitor fatigue. He characterised the visibility of freedom camping as a “visual invasion” that disrupts the historical qualities the town is known for. Akaroa’s narrow footprint and hilly topography amplify the visibility of freedom camping, pushing them into the public spaces of the township and the ‘host gaze’. Many residents discussed how the town’s topography and its lack of flat land made freedom camping highly visible. A bustling, but

controversial cruise ship industry developed in Akaroa after the 2012 Christchurch earthquake when Lyttleton Harbour²⁰ (Christchurch's major port) was not operational (RNZ, 2018; Willisroft, 2018). Therefore, residents were already hyper-alert when freedom campers raised their ire by washing dishes and clothes in a public water fountain (Cropp, 2018a; Lewis, 2018).

Informants discussed the split in the town over the issue of freedom camping using the term “vocal minority” to characterize the anti-tourist sentiment covering freedom campers and cruise ships. The Banks Peninsula District Council, which includes Akaroa, amalgamated with the CCC in 2006 in a close vote with 51% of Akaroa and the neighbouring Wairewa area opposing the merger with the vote swung by the Lyttleton vote (CCC, 2006; Willisroft, 2018). The town's recent tourism issues now have some residents in Akaroa wanting to leave the predominately urban CCC district to join rural Selwyn. When I asked participants if the “vocal minority” would have all the freedom campers gone, they gave vague and non-committed answers not wanting to intensify the situation. The business owners and residents I interviewed just wanted better management and infrastructure from the CCC. An Akaroa resident pointed out that many of the town's homeowners were not year-round residents, but most business people worked full time, year-round. There was a perception with participants that the high-value property owners (sometimes absent) and retirees mostly opposed increased tourism in Akaroa. The town is divided on the issue of tourism and this tension meant some businesses and residents declined to speak with me. Participants who did speak with me were careful about how they would be portrayed and identified in the study. Some participants were incredibly meticulous with the written transcripts of the interview I sent. They were very clear to clarify anything with me that could upset others and be taken out of context or bring negative attention to them. This type of behaviour was only seen in Akaroa and indicated very high tensions over the wider tourism issues in this very close-knit and idiosyncratic town.

When I visited the Akaroa boat launch and freedom camping area (shown in Figures 6.11; 6.13), the tensions in the town were quite evident. In the early morning, an elderly man drove up to me in an old sports car with a fluffy dog resting on his lap and immediately questioned my movements. Coincidentally, my rental car was parked next to the contested water fountain discussed earlier.

²⁰ Lyttleton Harbour is the one of the major harbours on Banks Peninsula (Akaroa is the other) and is Christchurch's major industrial port linked to the city by a road tunnel.

The water fountain had an unofficial notice affixed sternly advising campers not to use it (seen in Figure 6.12). I had also just observed a female freedom camper violate this fountain rule, using it to brush her teeth and expel the waste in the creek which flowed into the ocean. The man asked if I was just packing up, and impatiently asked where I was from when I was halting in my responses being preoccupied with my camera and clipboard. When he finally identified me as a New Zealander his demeanour changed significantly, like air being expelled from a balloon. We briefly discussed the local freedom camping issue, and his view was that freedom campers should be in campgrounds or in self-contained vehicles only. This man held no official capacity with the town, yet it appeared to me he was a retiree monitoring my movements and those of freedom campers. I inferred that this man believed I had slept there and that he was investigating my presence as a concerned citizen. With no prior context, he handed me a worn Environment Canterbury (ECAN) newsletter-pamphlet with environmental news completely unrelated to freedom camping and drove off. This kind of encounter between locals and campers is something Akaroa Senior Constable Tim Johnson, who is warranted to monitor freedom camping and uphold council bylaws in the town by the CCC opposes as he believes it can become emotional and escalate. Locals gathered at the boat launch glared at me as I drove by. This was contested space, even for a New Zealander disguised in a Patagonia jacket and a rental car.



Figure 6.11: Akaroa boat launch and freedom camping area in yellow. Source: USGS LandsatLook, (2019)



Figure 6.12: The sign on the contested water fountain in Akaroa near the freedom camping area. Source: Author



Figure 6.13: Akaroa freedom camping area (highlighted in yellow in Figure 6.11 above). Source: Author

The situation above at the water fountain highlights the double standard over who can freedom camp. New Zealanders are given permission to freedom camp, while foreign campers are met with suspicion which the elderly man showed me when he drove up. Selwyn District Council's (SDC) *Selwyn Freedom Camping Report* (SDC, 2017, p. 43), also discussed this issue. New Zealand citizens, *Grey Nomads* and New Zealand Motor Caravan Association (NZMCA) members have permission and acceptance to be freedom campers in New Zealand. However, the judgement of foreign freedom campers is by a much harsher standard. Predominant negative media coverage supports this assertion and I will discuss this later in the chapter. A DOC ranger I met in Selwyn said when he asks New Zealanders to provide freedom camping certification/credentials they are often aggressive and sometime abusive. This reaction may be due to the perceived birthright of freedom in nature being challenged.

The clear separation of the two groups was especially evident when the NZMCA recently limited its membership to New Zealanders and permanent residents to establish a reputation that distanced itself from the foreign freedom camping culture (NZMCA, 2017). Bruce Lahore, CEO of NZMCA stated in the press release: "our local members live and work in communities just like the ones they holiday in; so, we're confident they have that understanding. But we're not prepared to risk our reputation on overseas visitors" (NZMCA, 2017, p. 1). Lahore felt foreigners did not have the same long-term commitment to the country as an NZMCA member does. I asked every NZMCA member I met whether they agreed with the NZMCA position, which they unanimously did. However, council officials I asked were not so convinced by the NZMCA approach and some even questioned its legality. Although the organisation is protecting its membership and the "New Zealander camper identity" to a degree, the move to distance themselves from foreign freedom campers is a clear statement of anti-foreign freedom camper sentiment. This elevated recently in Northland when two foreign freedom campers were dragged from their van and mercilessly beaten by a New Zealand citizen (Piper, 2019).

An Akaroa resident with long kinship ties to the township identified the non-self-contained vehicles as the primary offenders to the town's visual harmony (seen in Figure 6.14). She spoke of campers emptying out their non-self-contained vehicles in public view, and of some using the water fountain to clean and prepare meals. Low-cost vehicles jammed with camping supplies set against the backdrop of one of New Zealand's quaintest colonial towns, the freedom campers

were potentially damaging to the town’s appeal. Being an NZMCA member also, she approved of the organisation distancing itself from non-self-contained and foreign freedom campers. Her feeling was that freedom camper behaviour was reflecting badly on New Zealand’s *Grey Nomads* and their expensive, large scale campers: “it's not so much the big fully self-contained caravans, it's the cars, sleeping in cars and opening the boot and throwing all the gear out, you know, just degrading” (personal communication, 4 December 2018). There is an interesting local-international and young-old distinction emerging here from the freedom camping subgroups and the contested assumption over who is allowed to freedom camp in New Zealand. Akaroa Senior Constable Tim Johnson was also critical of the visibility of freedom camping and the use of public facilities for freedom camping, “personally, I have a bit of an issue when they are washing the dishes and toilet facilities and things like that, I think that's sort of pushing the boundaries a wee bit” (personal communication, 23 December 2018). Although, with Constable Johnson I could see he had a youthful spirit and just wanted young people to be safe while they were in New Zealand, his major issue was driving safety and at the conclusion of our meeting he spoke of his experiences with foreign drivers on the treacherous road from Christchurch to Akaroa.



Figure 6.14: Private freedom camping vehicle with blue self-containment sticker at Akaroa boat launch and freedom camping area. Source: Author



Figure 6.15: Waterfront residence in Akaroa with No Camping signage in front. Source: Author

Andrew Turner, Deputy Mayor of Christchurch works closely with the Akaroa community (seen in the previous chapter in Figure 5.9) in partnership with its rapidly growing tourism industry (Williscroft, 2018). When I asked him, he prefaced his response by saying, “Akaroa has got a perfectly vibrant tourist economy without freedom campers” (personal communication, 3 December 2018). He went on to discuss the issue of visibility and how local businesses and the town's charm are impacted by freedom camping: “once you get beyond a certain number, then the freedom camping activity becomes very obvious and becomes very invasive, particularly visually” (personal communication, 3 December 2018). He explained the situation in Akaroa and how tensions arise:

The toileting and the rubbish disposal are an issue, kind of proliferating stuff outside of their van, picnic tables and chairs and drying washing and drying wetsuits and having other gear just strewn around the place. In a way that makes the place look untidy, particularly in a place like Akaroa where people have chosen to live there and chosen to visit there because it's a very beautiful little town. That kind of visual invasion is more

obvious in a place like Akaroa rather than it would be in somewhere that wasn't quite so neat and tidy in the beginning. (personal communication, 3 December 2018)

Turner's characterization of freedom camping as a "visual invasion" touches on campers' transience and subtly questions the validity of the activity in public spaces. Akaroa is a major tourist destination and area of desirable high-value coastal property (seen in Figure 6.15). However, freedom campers need and want free places to park and not paid campgrounds. This has made them highly visible and maligned in the town. The relationship is complex as tourism is important economically to the town, but as Deputy Mayor Turner stated, freedom campers are not the town's desired tourist. The quandary for Akaroa is that some property owners don't want the low value, highly visible freedom campers, but the town needs tourism. Property owners, or the "vocal minority" are less tolerant of freedom campers believing the transient campers negatively impacts their way of life. It is like the example of freedom campers in Coromandel and the coastal home owners feeling their property values include the strict policing of the environment, like a gated community (a point raised by Collins & Kearns, 2010). Earlier I discussed how I felt class-based assumptions led to the low-socio economic area of New Brighton being forgotten when its freedom camping tensions rose and culminating in a weapon being drawn and violence threatened. However, in Akaroa, the class issues mean that freedom camping receives far more attention and debate than New Brighton, because Akaroa is beautiful and of a higher socio-economic demographic. The encounter with the man at the water fountain or the feared "vocal minority" of the town do indicate that class-based assumptions are present in Akaroa. As individual citizens and homeowners attempt to "police" the town to preserve their perceived way of life, they may also be halting its ability to grow and change. As Turner mentioned earlier, the situation playing out in Akaroa is a "microcosm" of New Zealand's wider tourism issues developing across the country, but I think freedom camping in Akaroa is bringing something much deeper to the surface. The disconnection between the local reality of freedom camping and the national approach is evident in Akaroa.

6.2.4 Selwyn: Freedom campers are invisible and welcome

Selwyn has no freedom camping bylaw in place and manages their sites under the Reserves Act, which is a conservation act connected to the Department of Conservation (DOC) (chapter one)

(LGNZ, 2018; New Zealand Government, 1977). The SDC funded modifications of their traditional public recreation sites at Coes Ford (seen marked in green in Figure 6.16) and Chamberlains Ford (seen marked in green in Figure 6.17) to accommodate freedom campers in large numbers. The aerial images show both sites are large rural areas located on the Selwyn River, mostly isolated from residents' homes and business. The sites have large-scale vaulted toilet facilities and industrial level rubbish management and collection (seen in Figure 4.4; 4.5; 6.18) and Coes Ford has areas for cooking and cleaning. When I visited the sites, I frequently observed SDC vehicles servicing the sites. All freedom campers I met at the SDC freedom camping areas said it was some of the best infrastructure they had encountered in the country. They were thankful and relieved to be staying there, and most felt the long drive to Christchurch was a small price to pay for the comfort of Selwyn. Ricky, the Canadian freedom camper discussed in chapter four aptly summarised it: "beggars can't be choosers" which I thought was interesting as a freedom camper was positioning themselves within the perception of "freeloading" although a sense of humility and gratitude. Freedom campers and their impacts are mostly invisible to the community, due its rural geography, management strategy and excellent site. The Selwyn freedom camping sites are predominately rate payer funded and the district allocates a large amount of money to ensure that freedom camping is professionally managed. Not all districts are as fortunate to have such a large rate base to draw from, but it is still Selwyn's decision to allocate the funds for freedom camping infrastructure. Selwyn Mayor, Sam Broughton was keen to provide for the freedom campers and after meeting many staff in the district I feel they view them as a responsibility and an economic opportunity. However, Chris Burke, Reserves Officer for the SDC was clear that the management of the district's sites and freedom camping in general was a significant undertaking. As discussed in chapter four, when Christchurch prohibited non-self-contained freedom camping through its bylaw, neighbouring Selwyn absorbed much of the overflow for over a year (CCC, 2015; Hume, 2016; Stylianou, 2016).



Figure 6.16: Coes Ford, Selwyn, in green. Source: USGS LandsatLook (2019)

In 2017, the SDC conducted a significant piece of freedom camping research to assist with their future planning. The *Selwyn Freedom Camping Report* (SDC, 2017) findings indicated that Selwyn locals were mostly tolerant of freedom camping if it did not harm them. They wanted freedom campers to treat the free access to nature as a privilege, not a right, and to be mindful of the environment. Residents mostly agreed with the Selwyn District's approach of active engagement in freedom camping management. However, locals in the Selwyn study disliked campers parking in the towns to use the public library's public Wi-Fi, much like the tensions I saw over the use of Akaroa's water fountain. Selwyn freedom camping is rural, which geographically insulates it from many of the tensions seen in Christchurch or Akaroa. The disconnection between Selwyn residents and its rural freedom camping areas are so great that in the *Selwyn Freedom Camping Report* it indicated that locals had no idea how much rubbish freedom campers left at the Chamberlains Ford site (SDC, 2017). This was not the case in Christchurch where freedom campers were highly visible to the public at many of its sites. Being a rural district, Selwyn has the space to accommodate freedom camping without as many issues as urban areas like Christchurch. Broughton was still careful to express his view that freedom campers should not be in close proximity to local residents as this can cause tensions, he explained, "that's quite a

different feel when there's a field somewhere that's got some basic facilities, a toilet, and some water and we collect the rubbish as well...but it's not right outside my home” (S. Broughton, personal communication, 3 December). Broughton’s hope for the future was a specially designed urban freedom camping site near Rolleston (the main urban area), closer to southern transport networks and sanitation plugged into the existing urban septic system for safety (discussed in chapter five). The rural freedom camping experience is different from the urban, and Selwyn has the space to provide excellent facilities, well outside of the ‘host gaze’ (discussed in chapter two). The Selwyn sites I observed could accommodate hundreds of freedom campers without any significant visibility issues to the community.



Figure 6.17: Chamberlains Ford, Selwyn in green. Source: USGS LansatLook (2019)

Marie Gordon, Property Policy & Strategy Analyst at SDC discussed how Selwyn’s rural location was beneficial to freedom camping management. However, she was sympathetic to people who live close to freedom camping. Her understanding of the visibility of freedom camping drew from her lengthy career in parks management across New Zealand. She explained that unique tensions can develop when campers are close to the community in non-rural areas, and these tensions are difficult to plan for. Gordon said the research in the *Selwyn Freedom Camping Report* indicated that local residents can get upset by innocuous things if freedom campers are close by

or there every day: “we are a rural community and you don't have those residential people living right next door to the boundary. [You] don't hear the door slamming at 10 pm at night...or people are cooking their dinner at 10 o'clock” (personal communication, 30 November 2018). This is a contrasting situation to residents close to the Beresford St, New Brighton site where proximity to freedom camping becomes an immediate tension. Out of sight, out of mind describes the situation in Selwyn, as freedom camping exists well outside of the ‘host gaze’.



Figure 6.18: Coes Ford freedom camping facilities. Source: Author

6.3 Freedom camping and the visibility of public defecation

In recent years, the national media has taken to publicly shaming freedom campers for defecating, sharing images of people caught in the act from surveillance cameras or the mobile devices of vigilant residents and *Grey Nomads* (Cropper, 2018; Gooselink, 2017; Nykia, 2019). The nationalized public shaming of freedom campers defecating can be conceptualised as a process of “othering”. Othering is a process of dehumanizing where a dominant social group will marginalize an outside group and lower their status in the relationship to “other” (Kempner, 2015,

p. 26). The othering of a transient social group is seen in its most extreme form in the restrictive state legislation and social stigmatization of the Romani people or Gypsy/Travellers in Britain which I briefly introduced in chapter four (Kabachnik, 2009; 2010; 2013; 2014). New Zealanders have become forceful in their desire to publicly shame and police freedom campers. In the series of news items seen in Figures 6.20; 6.21; 6.22; 6.23 below, New Zealanders recorded and confronted foreign freedom campers defecating outdoors which was broadcast nationally. Some residents I spoke with during data collection of encountering human waste or witnessing a freedom camper in the act. Freedom campers I met justified their behaviour by pointing to the significant lack of national infrastructure and the confusing regional bylaws. The public toilet block near the Akaroa freedom camping area (290m distance) was an atrocious and unhygienic place. After using it, I felt relieving myself outdoors might have been a better option for my own health and safety (seen in Figure 6.19 below). As I left the toilet, I saw a French freedom camper who I had just met with her three young children walking down to use the facility. I really empathized with her as this toilet block was not a good place for children. The national tourism industry promises freedom campers a ready-made campervan experience of New Zealand. However, when they arrive the reality is quite different from the national messaging with limited infrastructure, confusing regional bylaws and a poorly managed self-containment standard. Many locals also believe this NZSCS (Standards Association of New Zealand, 1990) for motorized vehicles has been poorly managed and enforced. Open defecation and hygiene issues manifest differently in each freedom camping location, but they illuminate general themes around the othering of foreigners, transience and sedentary societies, and the relationship between open defecation and weak policy and infrastructure. As a result, the ubiquitous blue sticker of self-compliance affixed on a run-down campervan has become a symbol of freedom camping and the FCA's growing dysfunction.



Figure 6.19: The public toilet located 290 metres from the Akaroa freedom camping area described above. Source: Author

6.3.1 Local reactions to freedom camper defecation

The fear of freedom campers defecating outdoors, whether real or a perception, was an emotional issue during informant interviews. Many members of the community said they had witnessed it first hand or seen remains. Martha Baxendell expressed how the defecation issue was very visible in her coastal neighbourhood when the CCC's initial liberal freedom camping policy was in place. She recalled, "I was driving home one day, and I was driving down Marine Parade and I just caught something at the corner of my eye and there's a girl squatting, going to the toilet with her back to the road" (personal communication 29 November 2018).



Figure 6.20: The public shaming of a female freedom camper (the van she slept in is just out of picture) caught defecating in a city street in Dunedin at 8:36am. Source: Gooselink (2017)



Figure 6.21: The public shaming of a female freedom (pictured back in her van) caught defecating in a city street in Dunedin and confronted by a journalist. Source: Gooselink (2017)

City Councillor for Christchurch East, David East who represents the coastal region where Baxendell resides shared a similar sentiment as the primary reason for community tensions, he explained, “Issues really are not so much that they park up there, it’s what they leave behind.

There's always a concern about using the sand dunes as toileting facilities, and that's the principle issue that a lot of people raise" (personal communication 21 November 2018). Labour Port Hills MP, Ruth Dyson explained how the Windsport Park carpark in Ferrymead became an impromptu freedom camping area until demand and resident complaints closed it to freedom campers permanently due to the waste left behind by freedom campers:

That was pretty awful because a lot of people were camping there with no toilet facilities, no washing facilities. It's right on the Estuary which we really love. People got pretty angry about pollution and there was a lot of rubbish left around. People were just like using it as a toilet. Most of us wouldn't imagine people doing that. (personal communication, 19 November 2018)

Dyson's response here, although in her capacity as a high-ranking government official was still emotional and included perspectives of a concerned citizen but speaking from an official role. While relaying this anecdote, there was anguish in her expression which I took as a reaction of socio-moral disgust over freedom campers defecating in a public recreation area (discussed in chapter two). An Akaroa business person who discussed the benefits of freedom campers to the business community was critical of their behaviour when they were in less managed rural areas, she explained, "they [freedom campers] will shit in the bush if they're up in the rural area(s). They've got less opportunity to do that when they're on a concrete pad all parked side by side. There are no bushes for them to shit" (personal communication, 4 December 2018). Her feelings about open defecation were blunt and that campers needed to be gathered in a concrete area away from nature and close to ablution facilities. An Akaroa resident told of the situation where the campers were staying close to the town cemetery and the scenic Garden of Tane. Being out of sight of residents, it became used as an "open-air toilet". The media reported on the situation with photographs of faeces and toilet paper left outside this historical site (Cropp, 2018a). Open defecation was a major topic in participant interviews and the national media reports of it are shocking and titillating. It is easy to demonize an outsider when they violate norms activating emotions of socio-moral disgust such as those I discussed in chapter two. However, a deeper analysis reveals evidence that the government has contributed significantly to the infrastructure issue (discussed in chapters four and five). In Selwyn, there was some concern with defecation in remote camping areas, but it was not as prominent as Christchurch, likely due to its rural

geography and distance from resident populations. The Parks staff in Selwyn did discuss some defecation issues and was part of their management plan and mostly kept away from residents.



Figure 6.22: The public shaming of a male freedom camper caught defecating in Kaikoura by a nearby home owner in visible proximity to the “Meatworks” site. Source: Cropper (2018)



Figure 6.23: The public shaming of a female freedom camper caught defecating in Thames by a NZMCA member using the area: Source: Nykia (2019)

6.3.2 The blue sticker and self-containment standard as a source of local tension

Curiously, there was frequent discussion of the NZSCS and the blue sticker (Figure 1.1) during my data collection period. It struck me as unusual that an obscure regulatory standard could become such a lightning rod in the community. The interest in the sticker is in part due to issues of socio-moral disgust around open defecation and violations of the social order. Low levels of enforcement and oversight have resulted in a growing counterfeit blue sticker industry (Martin, 2019; McNeilly, 2019). These tensions connect directly to the legislation and its inconsistency and mismanagement. This has made freedom camping visibility a complex and emotionally loaded phenomenon in communities across the country. People will often defecate in the open when there is no infrastructure, so the *othering* and national shaming of freedom campers is unfair. However, I suggest that this interest and concern also connects to the New Zealand camper identity and camping's prominence as a historic leisure activity. A wide cross section of the country does camp in some form, including in local campgrounds, and the *Grey Nomads* who are often NZMCA members and owners of large, certified self-contained vehicles use the camper lifestyle as a retirement strategy (LGNZ, 2018). Foreign freedom campers were inadvertently breaking the New Zealand camping code and the country was horrified. Many participants I spoke with had acute understandings of the shortcomings of the standard and how it was directly affecting the local environment. During my time in the field and relating to my personal background outlined in chapter one, my presence at the dinner table led to many lively discussions on this issue with some extended family who are keen self-contained campers transitioning into *Grey Nomad* status.

The summary of the NZSCS (Standards Association of New Zealand, 1990) in chapter one indicates the standard is clear and well defined. The self-containment standard appears well designed, but it is poorly managed. A qualified person and/or organisation must issue it. Therefore, following the national standard there should be no open defecation in urban and rural areas by freedom campers. However, the reality of the standard is far different as there is currently no central body responsible for its oversight. The national self-containment standard is in disarray and as discussed above some freedom campers resort to open defecation. I relate this flawed regulatory structure to the governance discussions outlined in chapter five. In 2011, the central government rolled back its responsibility for toilet infrastructure and the "public good" of sanitation,

devolving its responsibility to disconnected local authorities, while forging ahead with aggressive tourism growth (Graham-McLay, 2019). Freedom camping is marketed and mandated as a national activity by the tourism industry, therefore there needs to be a functioning standard and overarching national framework. As the Labour opposition politicians, Damien O'Connor, Ruth Dyson and Kelvin Davis whom I cited in chapter four proposed, if the National government rushes the FCA without any national infrastructure offering, then in three years the country will have a crisis on its hands. The news articles discussed above indicate it has, albeit a socio-moral one.

Contradictions around freedom camping have led to the current situation. James Imlach, National Planning and Policy Manager at NZMCA, remarked that legislative disconnection between the standard and the FCA pushed the responsibility onto councils, he explained, "well, self-containment isn't explicitly recognized in the Freedom Camping Act, but councils still have the legal ability to restrict freedom camping to self-contained vehicles where they feel it's necessary" (personal communication, 5 December 2018). Regarding oversight he stated, "the standard could definitely do with another government department coming in over the top of it and having that oversight" (personal communication, 11 December 2018). He further remarked that, "with the self-containment standard, we feel that at the moment there is a lack of oversight from a governing body to control who issues certificates and to control how certificates in vehicles are issued and the vehicles are inspected" (personal communication, 5 December 2018). Considering the situation, the RCWG made a review of the NZSCS (Standards Association of New Zealand, 1990) a top priority in its plan to tackle the wider issues surrounding freedom camping in the country. The review of the self-containment process determined that: "the current compliance system is ineffective due to the cost associated with monitoring and enforcing, and the fact that international visitors and rental hirers can easily avoid infringements" (MBIE, 2018b, p. 9). The RCWG also felt that the current system was poor with counterfeit issues and difficulty in determining a vehicle's certification status cited as the dominant factors. The working group's recommendation was that a central authority should manage self-containment with a national register and better enforcement of violations, like the current Warrant of Fitness²¹ (WOF) system that exists for vehicles nationally.

²¹ Warrant of Fitness is a nationally recognized vehicle certification it must be pass every six months or annually to be considered road worthy. Checked by police and council enforcement, it is the fundamental vehicle safety certification in the country. Driving without one can lead to large instant fines.



Figure 6.24: Two private freedom camping vehicles with questionable blue self-containment sticker. These vehicles were seen frequently in this area. South Ramp, New Brighton. Source: Author

A black market for counterfeit blue self-containment stickers has grown as people look to cut costs. Seeing a blue sticker affixed to run-down private campers fuelled the “freeloading” tension and the community perception that stickers were counterfeit or didn’t have the paperwork. Disconnected regional districts had to oversee the national standard and enforcement and counterfeiting thrived (Martin, 2019; McNeilly, 2019). Travellers could affix a fake blue sticker on a low-cost van and then freedom camp freely across the country. Freedom campers escaped detection due to the considerable deficiencies in the regulation of self-containment nationwide and differing bylaws and approaches to the FCA. One middle-aged freedom camper from the Netherlands I met in Akaroa was surprised by the lack of freedom camping enforcement he had encountered on his trip around the country. Steve Hanrahan, advocacy manager for Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) added that the blue self-containment sticker, “doesn't hold any legislative authority” (McNeilly, 2019). In addition to the lack of sanitation infrastructure, the disjointed management of the NZSCS has been a significant driver of defecation tensions in the local community. Many participants when I was in their company were quick to point out vehicles driving by with blue self-containment stickers that they disputed were not in legal compliance. As discussed in chapter five, I also observed many old, run-down certified vehicles with the blue sticker and began photographing them to include in the study to support informant perspectives. The Figure 6.24 above of two self-contained freedom camping vehicles that I observed frequently in Christchurch do highlight the absurd reality of the NZSCS and the FCA more broadly. These vehicles are legally supposed to have chemical toilets inside, but as many residents pointed this is only done as legal lip service, as they are never used except to gain certification.



Figure 6.25: Two German freedom campers at Chamberlains Ford freedom camping area, Selwyn District. Source: Author

The national standard without adequate oversight has encouraged and enabled campers to circumvent laws and norms due to a lack of clarity in the messaging and management. A young German freedom camper, Daniel, I met at Chamberlains Ford in Selwyn (Figure 6.25) summarized his freedom camping experience with limited English proficiency, exclaiming emotionally, “toilets, just give us toilets!” (personal communication 26 November 2018). His response was the honest defence and justification for the perceived actions of his maligned social group. This freedom camper had accumulated non-self-contained infringements and within this example, we see defiance of the national standard and the FCA by a foreign freedom camper pursuing freedom of mobility and from cost. Although this German freedom camper was doing it all wrong and had the fines to prove it, the government’s lack of oversight and infrastructure enabled and encouraged him and others to do so at the expense of the local community. When I returned to my car, Daniel came over and asked me to sign a New Zealand flag for him. I did, and at that moment I saw myself in him at that age, young with little money trying to see the world for as long as possible. A class-based argument I observed in the field is freedom campers are low value and the tourism industry should aim higher, but the high-value cruise passengers in Akaroa

are equally as maligned (RNZ, 2018). As I discussed in chapter two, we fail to see ourselves in tourists and this is concerning for a country who travels as prolifically and as proudly as New Zealanders do (Krippendorf, 1999). The mistakes and frustrations of Daniel are an example of how New Zealand have set visitors up to fail but are very quick to blame them for it.



Figure 6.26: A freedom camper's clothes drying line in New Brighton Mall, just outside the New Brighton Police Station. Source: People's Independent Republic of New Brighton Facebook (2015)

6.4 Conclusion

Local objections to the visibility of freedom campers represent deeper issues around the multiple of freedom, fairness and the decorum of public life. The news articles may characterize New Zealanders as petty and prudish, but interview participants indicated strong feelings on this issue. New Zealanders value privacy, although they are known to be openly friendly and engaging. Endless rows of wire farming boundary fences crisscross the New Zealand countryside and this tradition has joined us in suburbia reaching deep into our social lives. The visibility of freedom camping challenges social norms around the boundaries on public and private life and what camping means to New Zealanders. One interpretation is that New Zealand is a wide-open

expanse but also a nation of boundaries, literally and figuratively. The visibility of freedom camping hangs uncomfortably outside of these established social boundaries. To residents their visibility is the inversion of the public and private space, or inverse freedom, resulting in a tension-filled liminal space.

Tourists by nature of their position occupy a contested and visible space in the host community. Urry (2011) likens tourists to modern religious pilgrims pursuing the sacred and their experience is one of liminality and inversion. He also suggested that, “tourism is a liminal state in which conventional calculations of safety and risk are disrupted” (p. 188). As Moufakkir and Reisinger (cited in Sharpley, 2014) assert when discussing host perceptions “perception studies tend to reduce the reality of the...[host]...gaze to what is visible; yet we know what is visible is not the whole truth” (p. 48). That said, seeing a lowly clothesline erected on a jungle gym or a phone box represents much more (seen in Figure 1.5; 6.26) and citizens are unhappy that New Zealand's public spaces are becoming commodified to serve as a tourism theme park for the young, adventurous and frugal. Parking lots, picnic areas or cemetery gates are just stops on the freedom camping theme park and the local residents and small businesses are the blurred faces seen from the moving vehicle.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE END OF FREEDOM CAMPING?

7.1 Different interpretations of freedom

Each social group involved with freedom camping who participated in this study has a different relationship with the idea of freedom. These differing interpretations of freedom have led to the term and the practice of freedom camping becoming highly contested. Throughout my research, I identified four interpretations of freedom involved with freedom camping. First, the *freedom from cost* that is permitted in the FCA encourages freedom campers to seek and overuse public space. Second, *freedom of mobility* is central to the marketing and camper experience of freedom camping; the promise of camping anywhere one wants to go signals freedom from life's responsibilities and routines. Third, *freedom as birthright* is the idea many New Zealanders hold that all New Zealanders should be able to access nature; this idea is now used by the tourism industry to promote freedom camping. The final interpretation is the *freedom of regulated responsibility*; this relates to the shift in language from freedom camping to responsible camping with greater regulation. The removal of the word freedom from freedom camping by the central government is in response to the activity's social and environmental issues. These four different interpretations of freedom create tension and affect all social groups involved with freedom camping, from the central government down to the users of public space (discussed in chapters five, six and seven).

The promise of the freedom as birthright, mobility and cost in the national tourism messaging means freedom campers seek public space in increasing numbers; however, the activity is visually invasive and environmentally damaging (LGNZ, 2018). The tensions in freedom camping emerge where the freedoms promised in the national messaging do not match up with the infrastructure and regional bylaws. The tourism industry and central government leverage public space as a site of economic accumulation through commercial tourist activities. However, local councils struggle to manage the demand and expectations of the foreign freedom camping market driven by the freedoms promised by the tourism industry. There is negative perception about freedom camping's value to the local community, when the primary motivation of freedom campers is most often seeking free accommodation for extended periods (TIA, 2017). Freedom camping benefits larger economic entities such as vehicle rental operations, fuel and food

suppliers and airlines and airports, but some smaller businesses I spoke with feel freedom camping excludes them. Poor infrastructure and freedom camper visibility have led to socio-moral disgust issues over open defecation, the use of public water fountains for cleaning and food preparation and laundering in view of the public. As a result, New Zealanders have become increasingly confrontational over freedom camper's morally questionable behaviour. Photos and videos of freedom campers defecating outdoors air nationally and there are reports of residents barricading and policing remote freedom camping sites to control overcrowding and sanitation (Comer, 2019). In this conclusion, I will elaborate on these four interpretations of freedom and the tensions and contradictions they expose.

7.1.1 Freedom from cost

Freedom for foreign freedom campers is multi-layered but primarily based on escaping life's controls. A major freedom is financial, or the freedom from cost which is both attractive and motivating for budget conscious travellers. Most freedom campers I met in the field were European and had been travelling in New Zealand for a significant amount of time. They said they enjoy the activity and the freedom it allows, with one English camper I met characterising it as "to live the dream a little while longer and escape reality for a bit longer". I interpret statements like this as endorsements of the freedom from cost, and in particular of accommodation, as a way to reduce daily spending to allow for longer periods of travel. To a freedom camper, staying in a user-pays campground is a poor financial decision as their vehicle is the accommodation cost for the duration of the trip. Paid campgrounds limit the freedom from cost that the vehicle, legislation and self-containment certification permit. However, a tension associated with the freedom from cost is the perception that regional mayors have that the FCA and the national freedom camping messaging has promoted New Zealand as one large free campsite (LGNZ, 2017b). This tension was also an issue with community members I spoke with as the infrastructure costs are passed on through council rates. Campground owners also discussed their displeasure that the country was marketed as a campsite, while their campsites struggle under the FCA. They did not like freedom campers using their facilities when they had not paid to stay which is encouraged by the freedom from cost. Moreover, the freedom from cost has made it difficult for local councils to manage picnic areas and parking lots as campsites with some participants believing the FCA has set councils up to fail.

Freedom campers are encouraged by the freedom from cost to seek public space in increasing numbers. This has caused tension in the communities that freedom campers occupy. For the residents who live close to freedom camping sites, freedom camping is “unfree” due to the loss of access to public space and the costs associated with freedom camping management through local taxation. Residents label the freedom campers as “freeloaders” for overusing public space, but they are just pursuing the promise of freedom in the national messaging. Several residents I spoke with discussed how freedom camping’s overuse of public space was encroaching and they could not easily identify freedom camping’s economic benefits to justify the loss of local amenity. The freedom from cost also connects to the tension over freedom camper visibility and their prolonged presence in the community (discussed in chapter six). Freedom campers’ vehicles occupy a large physical and visual presence in public places. The “visual invasion” is a reminder to the community that the financial, social, and environmental burden of freedom camping is theirs. In New Brighton during my field research, I observed the same two or three run-down freedom camping vehicles parked each day at the South Ramp, a popular oceanfront surfing and parking area. What I inferred from this observation is freedom campers occupy public space for extended periods, especially the private self-contained campers. The central government and tourism industry promote freedom from cost as a market approach and tourism strategy, even though it causes tension in the public spaces freedom campers use. Moreover, the legislatively void blue self-containment stickers affixed on rundown vehicles is another reminder that the “free” in freedom camping is at the community’s expense. Through the passing of the FCA, the government rolled back its involvement in freedom camping infrastructure, devolving it to local council while keeping tourism growth at an all-time high. The contradiction is freedom camping is not free at all and it has significant economic, social and environment costs for local council and rate payers.

7.1.2 Freedom of mobility

Freedom campers seek freedom from life’s responsibilities and routines and desire to exist outside of society’s control. This is primarily exercised through the freedom of mobility where a traveller has autonomy over movement and where they locate themselves, including accommodation (chapter two). This freedom is heavily capitalised on by the national tourism industry. The government and tourism industry push freedom camping into public space as a

legitimate leisure activity, but this results in its overuse, causing local tensions. The reality of a national market of freedom campers overcrowding public spaces in unregulated and spatially uneven ways has been a significant issue since the Act was passed in 2011. Freedom camping in New Zealand is essentially state-sponsored transience as an economic and leisure activity, absent of any coordinated infrastructure. Therefore, there is a gap between freedom camping's national messaging and the regional councils struggling to manage spatially uneven distribution of freedom campers. The government and tourism industry promote freedom camping as a legitimate way for tourists to travel in New Zealand for extended periods. However, the experiences of the past eight years and my research findings show that freedom camping turns public space into a highly contested area.

The freedom of mobility has a negative relationship with the community. Tensions are felt by communities close to freedom camping who are impacted by noise, overcrowding and human waste (discussed in chapter six), noteworthy by freedom camping's well-documented high visibility in public space. The central government, tourism industry and hire companies consider the mobility of freedom camping to be a major benefit to the regions. Within the contested economic justification of freedom camping, the central government suggests that freedom campers will rejuvenate regions by travelling further and spending more money over the duration of their stay. However, freedom camping's inherent mobility and its economic promise do not match up with reality. The discussion of freedom campers overcrowding public places and recreational areas in spatially uneven ways has been extensive in this study. In the global context, the overuse of public space by the tourism industry enabled by free market tourism policies is an escalating issue which I discussed in chapter two (Goodwin, 2017).

While participants in this study spoke of how local councils had been set up to fail by the FCA, the freedom campers have also been set up to fail by the legislation. Freedom campers are encouraged by the tourism industry to use New Zealand as a campsite, but the reality for them is local hostility, limited infrastructure and inconsistent regional approaches to freedom camping, like those seen in Christchurch and Selwyn. The community and the freedom campers are having trouble with each other, but it is the tourism industry and central government who leverage public space through the FCA to capture profit for large scale stakeholders. Overuse of public space provides the central government and the tourism industry easy profits versus the infrastructure costs they would have to outlay for a nationalised freedom camping framework. This is a

contradiction because the freedom campers, local council and residents are put in a precarious position by the legislation and market approach of the central government and tourism industry. Moreover, connecting to the discussions of the neoliberal governance of tourism in chapters two and five, the central government rolled back its involvement in tourism infrastructure, while promoting a disconnected and unregulated market place of freedom camping. Side-stepping the public good of tourism infrastructure, while tourism GDP increased has had disastrous social and environmental consequences. The major issue here is that disconnected neoliberal tourism policies that subvert the public good cannot effectively govern nature and society in a way that is satisfactory for all social groups.

7.1.3 Freedom as birthright

New Zealand has a long and celebrated tradition of camping built around access to, and freedom in nature, which I discussed in chapter two (Collins & Kearns, 2010). This freedom is the right to settle temporarily in or interact with the environment without interference. Linked to access to nature as an “unofficial birthright” of all New Zealand citizens, this freedom as birthright is deeply embedded in the national consciousness (DOC, 2006). This type of freedom is part of national recreational culture and the New Zealand camper identity. The tourism industry uses this freedom as birthright in nature as a branding tool to attract tourists to the country. By embedding birthright freedom into freedom camping’s meaning, the tourism industry capitalises on national recreational traditions and public space for economic return. The freedom to use the environment as a substitute for paid campgrounds granted in the FCA connects loosely with New Zealand’s interpretation of freedom in nature, or freedom as birthright. The tourism industry uses the FCA to repackage freedom as birthright in nature to “free up” the campervan market. New Zealand has a long history of renting campervans to tourists, but freedom camping through the FCA created a budget marketplace where the designation of almost any vehicle as a “campervan” became easy. The FCA piggybacks on birthright freedom, and as I have shown through this thesis the manipulation of this freedom to fit an invasive and unregulated economic activity is the source of many of freedom camping’s tensions, in the way it subverts the New Zealand camper identity (discussed in chapter two and six). The conversion of a national cultural tradition to an unregulated and pervasive economic activity is a specific tension felt in the country.

There are fundamental differences and tensions in the application of birthright freedom into the freedom camping market place. Firstly, New Zealanders' traditional access rights in nature are not part of an economic activity, nor do New Zealanders gravitate to urban areas as foreign freedom campers do (LGNZ, 2018). Moreover, the foreign freedom camping culture is new to many New Zealanders, who often have a different interpretation of what camping is, and where it takes place (discussed in chapter six). Local recreational and freedom camping groups, such as *Grey Nomads* and New Zealand Motor Caravan Association (NZMCA) members, distancing themselves or clashing with foreign freedom campers highlights the fundamental differences in the understanding of freedom as birthright (Groenestein, 2017; Martin, 2016, 2017; NZMCA, 2017; SDC, 2017; Wilkinson, 2016). Conversely, these conflicts also highlight the contradiction over the acceptance of New Zealanders as freedom campers, and not foreign campers, as discussed by the Selwyn District Council (SDC) in its *Selwyn Freedom Camping Report* (SDC, 2017, p. 43). I also encountered this when approached by a citizen who thought I was a foreign freedom camper but was deferential when he discovered I was a New Zealander (chapter six). The tension is a form of social permission to freedom camp being granted or withheld which the media frequently highlights. However, both groups interpret the freedom as birthright in different ways and the space between is tension filled.

And in summary of the three interpretations already discussed so far, when freedom campers arrive ready to pursue freedom from cost, mobility and birthright they encounter a lacking or non-existent infrastructure. The reality is freedom camping is micro-managed in small administrative areas by disconnected regional councils with the digital platform, Campermate, joining up the inconsistencies. Freedom for freedom campers is a complicated state they seek outside of rising citizen surveillance and territorial authorities where they are unwelcome. The result is freedom campers seeking to fulfil all the freedoms promised in the national messaging occupy a liminal space between the community, the tourism industry and public space. I believe clandestine freedom camping sites such as Beresford St, New Brighton are the physical manifestation of the dysfunction of the FCA and infrastructure issues. Selwyn is fortunate to have a high tax base and be in a rural location, but this is not a common situation in New Zealand freedom camping. The central government and tourism industry invite the freedom campers, but I believe they do not do enough to ensure their experience matches up with what was promised.

7.1.4 Freedom of regulated responsibility

In chapter four, I discussed how the MoT, Kelvin Davis's response to escalating freedom camping issues was to remove the word *freedom* from the activity and replace it with *responsible*. This I characterise as the freedom of regulated responsibility, where freedom camping is now imbued with new conditions that the permissive nature of the FCA did not prescribe in 2011. The linguistic censure of freedom indicates that freedom camping and the FCA at a national level is in disarray. Certainly, the central government reclassified freedom camping to appease regional councils and ratepayers, but I think it indicates that the multiple interpretations of freedom have become very problematic. This action I believe is the central government scaling back on the promise of freedom of mobility, cost and birthright which my research has shown to be tension laden and difficult to deliver. The national tourism strategy runs on the freedoms of cost, mobility and birthright, so the removal of freedom from freedom camping indicates the government is grappling with a significant social and environmental issue. In future, the freedom of regulated responsibility will limit the freedom from cost, mobility and birthright in freedom camping in New Zealand. However, it is also likely foreshadowing the end of freedom camping in its current iteration.

7.2 Conclusion

As a researcher, I consider Kelvin Davis's removal of freedom from freedom camping a pivotal moment in both the context of my study and in the broader timeline of freedom camping issues in New Zealand. It is also a good place to conclude this thesis. Since 2011, freedom camping through the FCA has been a serious social and environmental issue. Throughout my field work, freedom camping tensions were characterised as a "microcosm" of New Zealand's national tourism issues and the FCA was described as "being broken to begin with" and "setting councils up to fail". Regional mayors feel New Zealand has been sold as a national campground and the consequences of this which I discussed in this study have been mostly negative. If the government did sell the country as a campsite, then devolving infrastructure to local councils was always going to cause regional economic, social and environmental stress. Selwyn, which has the rural space and rate base can provide for freedom campers at great expense to the district. Whereas, Christchurch which has endured a range of issues stemming from the 2012 earthquake could not manage the volume of freedom campers overcrowding its public space. The contradiction is not all regions can respond to freedom camping in the same way which creates a negative experience

for residents, local government and the freedom campers themselves. Neoliberal governance is about rolling back the state and encouraging partnerships and entrepreneurial relationships, but it is the residents who fund freedom camping infrastructure. Large scale businesses benefit from freedom camping as does the central government, but local councils and small business have struggled to manage and capitalise on the growing national market of freedom campers. Freedom camping has been an economic experiment capitalising on wide transportation networks, an established national tradition of camping recreation and under-served regions tempted with the trickle-down carrot of economic rejuvenation. However, as Mayor Sam Broughton from the Selwyn District Council said in chapter four, there is a capacity issue when you invite the world to freedom camp in your district.

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APPENDIX

8.1 Information sheet and consent form



**MASSEY
UNIVERSITY**

The Freedom Camping Act 2011, freedom camping, and changing social relationships in the Christchurch and Selwyn districts of New Zealand.

INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Shannon Aston, and I am conducting a research project about freedom camping and the Freedom Camping Act 2011 in the Christchurch and Selwyn districts. This research is for my master's thesis and will contribute to a Master of Arts (Sociology) at Massey University.

Project Description

My research is a study of how freedom camping, and the Freedom Camping Act has reshaped social relations in the neighbouring Christchurch and Selwyn districts. The research will examine people's attitudes towards freedom camping in both districts. The project will also explore the social relationships within and between the two districts, as they contend with high levels of tourism growth and differing freedom camping bylaw positions.

The study will focus on specific areas within these districts where freedom camping is an escalating issue, or where it was an issue. Key areas are Akaroa and its environs, east Christchurch, Coes Ford/Chamberlains Ford, and central Christchurch.

I would like to invite you to take part in this project.

Here's what's involved if you choose to take part

If you choose to take part in this project, I would like to meet with you in person during my field-work period of November 17th December 8th, 2018 at a time and place that is convenient for you.

I would like you to speak with you about your perspectives on freedom camping and The Freedom Camping Act 2011. With your permission, I would like to use your views and experiences of freedom camping in the Christchurch and Selwyn districts as a perspective in my sociological study.

I would like to invite you to contribute to the study because of your position in the community and your relationship with and/or knowledge of freedom camping in the area.

With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed, and I will also take some notes. After the interview, I will complete a transcription and summarise the key findings which I will email you to review and approve. Only I will have access to this audio recording.

The interview will take between 45 minutes to one hour.

Things to think about

During the interview, you are not obligated to answer all of my questions. You can also decide to withdraw from the project up to two weeks following our interview.

If you wish to protect your identity as a participant, I can offer you a pseudonym. The interview content will be used in my thesis, and any publications or media which may arise after the thesis is published. Also, I will not reveal your identity to anyone or discuss the content of our interview with anyone other than my two academic supervisors.

If you are interested, I will email you a summary of the project findings when it is complete.

Your rights if you choose to take part

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher (Shannon Aston) is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Decline to answer any particular question;
- Withdraw from the study (up to two weeks after our interview has taken place);
- Ask any questions about the study at any time;
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- Be provided with a summary of the project findings when it is concluded; and
- Ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Project Contacts

This research project is conducted by me as a master's student of sociology, enrolled in the School of People Environment and Planning at Massey University. The project is carried out under the academic supervision of, Dr. Vicky Walters and Dr. Alice Beban. If you have any questions or concerns about this project, you are welcome to contact me, Dr. Walters or Dr. Beban using the contact details listed below.

Student researcher

Shannon Aston



Academic supervisors

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MASSEY
UNIVERSITY

***The Freedom Camping Act 2011, freedom camping, and
changing social relationships in the Christchurch and
Selwyn districts of New Zealand.***

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.

My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that information from this study may be used in future publications or media reports.

I agree / do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish / do not wish to have the key findings of my interview transcript returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

I would like to be known as _____ in any written work resulting from this research.

Signature:

.....

Date:

.....

Full Name - printed

.....

8.2 Informant interview questions

POLITICIANS

What is your title and specific role within this organisation?

What is your professional relationship/connection to freedom camping?

What are your professional experiences with freedom camping?

How does freedom camping impact your role/position directly?

What is the specific management approach to freedom camping in your district?

How would you characterize your councils' approach to freedom camping management? How is your approach similar or different to other organisations?

What social issues in the community do you know of occurring or have occurred due to freedom camping?

What are some experiences from your constituents regarding freedom camping?

Is there environmental damage due to freedom camping in your region? Can you explain?

Have any new relationships been formed with your organisation due to freedom camping? Can you elaborate?

Is there community engagement in freedom camping planning/management with your organisation? What is your current outreach strategy to the community?

Have social/working relationships with the community changed since the introduction of the FCA 2011? Can you elaborate?

How has the freedom camping and/or Freedom Camping Act 2011 changed the way you communicate with the community?

Is there any collaboration between your central government position with its local implications with district councils over freedom camping management?

What is your education/non-regulatory approach strategy to freedom camping management in your district?

What was the management plan before the FCA was introduced? What were the main recreational/tourism camping management issues like before the FCA 2011?

What are the solutions for freedom camping in this district? What are your suggestions for improving its management?

Is the current local infrastructure funding model adequate for the management of freedom camping in this region? Is your region advantaged or disadvantaged by this model?

How would you characterize the local bylaw approach for each different council as an approach to manage freedom camping?

How has the increase in freedom camping volume since the implementation of the Freedom Camping Act 2011 altered the way you manage recreational camping?

What is your strategy when working with residents/business owners who are close to high volume freedom camping sites?

How do you manage the negative aspects of freedom camping? Does anybody assist/do you consult with anyone about this?

In your view, has freedom camping and/or the FCA been a benefit to the local community?

What professional relationships have developed due to freedom camping in your region?

Has freedom camping changed daily lives in the community or at hot spots you consult with?

What are your views on the Freedom Camping Act 2011?

How could freedom camping be better managed? Locally and or centrally?

Do you currently regard freedom camping and the FCA to be a local issue or a national issue?

In your opinion, what are the solutions for freedom camping and the FCA at a local level/ and or national level?

Are you aware of the Selwyn/Christchurch City Council freedom camping management strategy? Do you collaborate or share information with them?

Do you engage/communicate with Selwyn/Christchurch City Council over freedom camping issues? Has this changed since the introduction of FCA in 2011?

Do the Selwyn/Christchurch City Councils have a relationship in regard to freedom camping? Currently, Is there any inter-district collaboration?

Could you characterise freedom camping as a political issue?

DISTRICT COUNCILS

What is your title and specific role within this organisation?

What is your professional relationship/connection to freedom camping?

What are your professional experiences with freedom camping?

How does freedom camping impact your role/position directly?

What professional relationships have developed due to freedom camping in your region?

What is the specific management approach to freedom camping in your district?

How would you characterize your councils' approach to freedom camping management? How is your approach similar or different to other organisations?

What social issues in the community do you know of occurring or have occurred due to freedom camping?

What are some experiences from your constituents regarding freedom camping?

Is there environmental damage due to freedom camping in your region? Can you explain?

What are your views on the Freedom Camping Act 2011?

Are you aware of the Selwyn/Christchurch City Council freedom camping management strategy? Do you collaborate or share information with them?

Do you engage/communicate with Selwyn/Christchurch City Council over freedom camping issues? Has this changed since the introduction of FCA in 2011?

Do the Selwyn/Christchurch City Councils have a relationship in regard to freedom camping? Currently, Is there any inter-district collaboration?

Is there any collaboration between your and the central government position over freedom camping management?

Have any new relationships been formed with your organisation due to freedom camping? Can you elaborate?

Is there community engagement in freedom camping planning/management with your organisation? What is your current outreach strategy to the community?

Have social/working relationships with the community changed since the introduction of the FCA 2011? Can you elaborate?

Has the freedom camping and/or Freedom Camping Act 2011 changed the way you communicate with the community?

What is your education/non-regulatory approach strategy to freedom camping management in your district?

What was the management plan before the FCA was introduced? What were the main recreational/tourism camping management issues like before the FCA 2011?

What are the solutions for freedom camping in this district? What are your suggestions for improving its management?

Do you look at other district management plans for guidance? What districts management plans are appealing?

Is the current local infrastructure funding model adequate for the management of freedom camping in this region? Is your region advantaged or disadvantaged by this model?

How would you characterize the local bylaw approach for each different council the best approach to manage freedom camping?

How has the increase in freedom camping volume since the implementation of the Freedom Camping Act 2011 altered the way you manage recreational camping?

What is your strategy when working with residents/business owners who are close to high freedom camping volume sites?

How do you manage the negative aspects of freedom camping? Does anybody assist/do you consult with anyone about this?

How does your council capitalize on the benefits of freedom camping?

In your view, has freedom camping and/or the FCA been a benefit to the local community?

Has freedom camping changed daily lives in the community or at hot spots you consult with?

How could freedom camping be better managed? Locally and or centrally?

Do you currently regard freedom camping and the FCA to be a local issue or a national issue?

What is the central government's relationship to you and freedom camping in this district?
In your opinion, what are the solutions for freedom camping and the FCA at a local level/ and or national level?

ACTORS/STAKEHOLDERS/RESIDENTS

What is your title and specific role (within this organisation)?

What is your relationship to freedom camping?

What are your professional experiences with freedom camping?

What is your organisations approach to freedom camping management?

What are your views on the Freedom Camping Act 2011?

What working relationships do you now have due to freedom camping in your region?

What is the specific management approach to freedom camping in your district?
Is your approach similar or different to other organisations in the area?

What were recreational/tourism camping issues like before the FCA?

What social issues in the community do you know of occurring due to freedom camping?

Is there environmental damage due to freedom camping in your region?

Is media coverage of freedom camping accurate in this region? Is it helpful?

Have any new relationships been formed with your organisation due to freedom camping? Can you elaborate?

How do you work with other residents/business owners who are close to freedom camping?

Is the community engagement/involved in freedom camping planning/management with your organisation?

Have relationships with the community changed since the introduction of the FCA? How so?

Has freedom camping altered the way you communicate/interacts with the community?

Has freedom camping changed the daily lives of citizens in the community?

In your view, has freedom camping and/or the ACT been a benefit to the local community?

How do you capitalize on the benefits of freedom camping?

How do you manage the negative aspects of freedom camping? Who assists/do you consult with you on this?

Are you aware of the Selwyn/Christchurch City Council freedom camping management strategy? Do you collaborate or share information with them?

Is the local bylaw approach that each council must uses the best approach? Is there enough inter-district collaboration currently?

Do you engage/communicate with Selwyn/Christchurch City Council over freedom camping management issues? Has this changed since the introduction of FCA in 2011?

Do you get to contribute input on freedom camping issues in this area?

In your opinion, how could freedom camping be better managed? Locally and/or centrally?

In your experiences, currently, would you characterize freedom camping and the FCA to be a local issue or a national issue?

What are the solutions for freedom camping in this district/area? What are your suggestions for improving its management?

In your opinion, what are the solutions for freedom camping and the FCA at a local level/ and national level?

Freedom Campers

What are your experiences with freedom camping in New Zealand? Can you elaborate?

As a freedom camper, how have your interactions been with local people Can you elaborate?

Do you use differing district freedom camping bylaws to your advantage? E.g. Stay one place/district, access recreation in another?

How do you choose your sites each night?

What surprised you about freedom camping in New Zealand?

How would you improve the freedom camping experience?

What has your interaction been like with members of the community?

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FOR THE MINISTER OF TOURISM, THE HON KELVIN DAVIS.

Since the change of government, who is the Ministry of Tourism currently consulting with on freedom camping management?

How would the Ministry of Tourism characterize the wide range of regional management approaches to freedom camping currently going on around the country?

What local district approach embodies what the Ministry of Tourism would like to see as a nationwide standard of freedom camping management? What approaches in particular does the Ministry regard as successful?

As per the Responsible Camping Working Group's recommendation, what is the proposed timeline for the legislative review of the Freedom Camping Act 2011?

What is the Ministry of Tourism's long-term strategy for freedom camping management in the next five years/ten years as tourism growth continues to grow?

Is the unification of all freedom camping management into a national policy (national zone standard) and the ending of local bylaw amendments currently being considered by the Ministry of Tourism regarded as being necessary for an effective and consistent management approach to freedom camping across the country?

As per the Responsible Camping Working Group criteria, how will the Ministry of Tourism facilitate more inter-district collaboration in freedom camping management plans? Who would the Ministry want to be involved in such collaborations (stakeholders)?

Outside of local district councils, how does the Ministry of Tourism manage local communities' expectations and concerns regarding freedom camping management?

How would the Ministry of Tourism facilitate collaboration between the local and central government branches if a national freedom camping standard was adopted?

Will all regional councils/districts have input into the development of the new national policy (national zone standard) proposed by the Responsible Camping Working Group?

Has freedom camping in New Zealand grown to such a point where central government oversight is required for it to be a sustainable tourism policy?

Would the Ministry of Tourism be supportive of an individual district opting-out of freedom camping, if it was deemed too difficult or expensive to manage effectively in that location? How would the Ministry manage such a situation?

Would the Ministry of Tourism accept that the Freedom Camping Act 2011 has placed pressure on local councils and communities since 2011?

What would be required for changes to the Freedom Camping Act 2011 through the legislative review? Universal ratification by every district, partial ratification (how many districts?) and what would be the proposed time frame for this process be?

How does the Ministry of Tourism position itself between the economic opportunity of freedom camping and the stresses placed on particular communities, as foreign tourism growth in New Zealand continues to reach unprecedented levels?

Does the Ministry of Tourism look to other nations models and management frameworks of freedom camping when considering future policy choices? If so, what nations?

What policies does the Ministry of Tourism hope to implement to ensure that domestic and international persons can continue to enjoy freedom camping, while still maintaining harmony and sustainability in the local districts and communities?

8.3 Informant interview schedule

Informant 1	Elected Official	Christchurch City Council
Informant 2	Elected Official	Christchurch City Council
Informant 3	Parks Policy Team	Christchurch City Council* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 4	Campground Manager	Christchurch City Council* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 5	Park Ranger	Christchurch City Council
Informant 6	Elected Official	Selwyn District Council
Informant 7	Parks Policy Team	Selwyn District Council* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 8	Parks Policy Team	Selwyn District Council* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 9	Parks Policy Team	Selwyn District Council* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 10	Parks Policy Team	Selwyn District Council* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 11	Reserves Officer	Selwyn District Council* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 12	Reserves Officer	Selwyn District Council* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 13	Cabinet Minister	Member of Parliament* (<i>Written Response</i>)
Informant 14	Elected Official	Member of Parliament
Informant 15	Elected Official	Member of Parliament
Informant 16	Technical Manager	Department of Conservation
Informant 17	Local Resident	Christchurch* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 18	Local Resident	Christchurch* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 19	Local Resident	Akaroa
Informant 20	Business Association	Akaroa
Informant 21	New Zealand Police	Akaroa
Informant 22	Policy Manager	NZMCA* (Skype)
Informant 23	Manager	TIA* (Skype)
Informant 24	CEO	HAPNZ* (Skype)
Informant 25	Manager	THL* (Skype)
Informant 26	CEO/Owner	Campermate/Geozone
Informant 27	Freedom Camper	Selwyn* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 27	Freedom Camper	Selwyn* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 29	Freedom Camper	Selwyn
Informant 30	Freedom Camper	Selwyn* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 31	Freedom Camper	Selwyn* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 32	Campground Manager	Christchurch City Council* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 33	Campground Manager	Christchurch City Council* (<i>Group Interview</i>)
Informant 34	Campground Manager	Christchurch City Council