

Learning from fractured places: the importance of 'local' in community resilience and development

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Outline

- Christchurch, New Zealand
 - The earthquakes
- Resilient Urban Futures research
 - What we set out to do?
 - What we did?
 - What we found?
 - What this means?

Christchurch

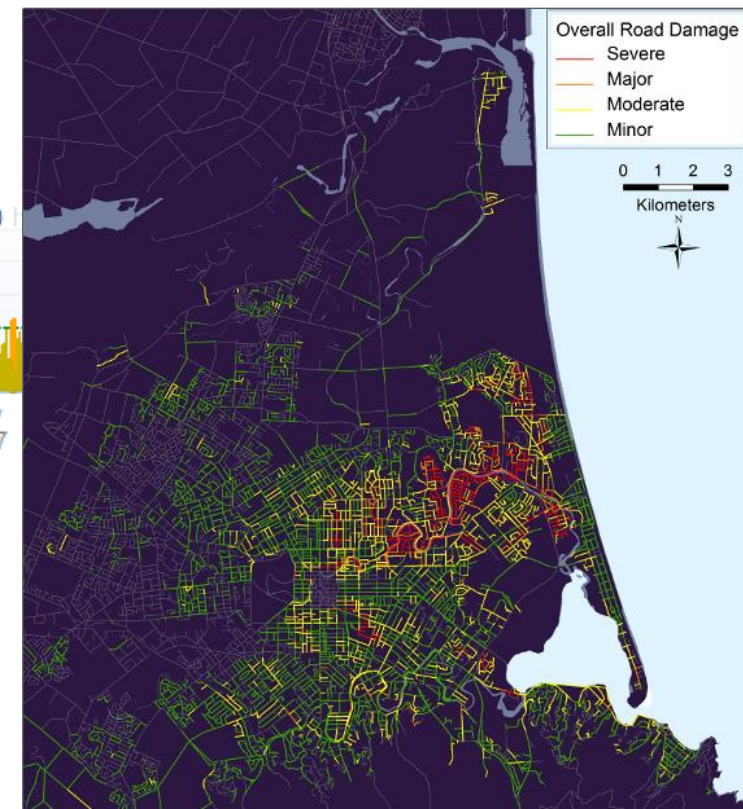
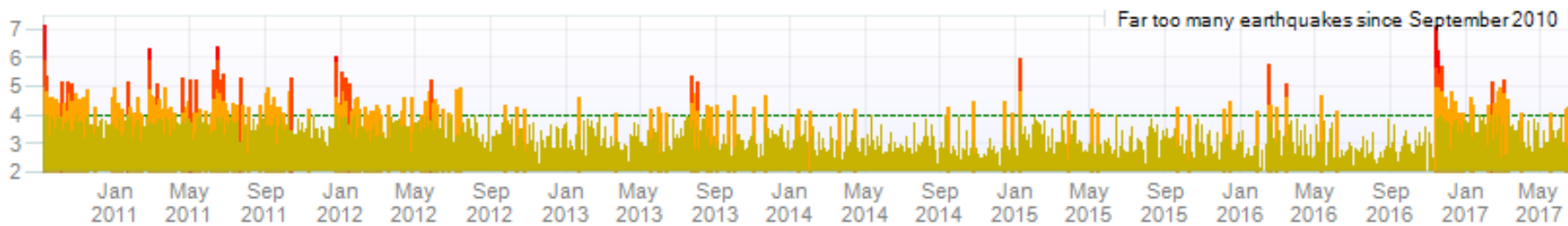
- 370,000 people
- Main city of New Zealand's South Island
- Low population density
- 'Young' city



Christchurch

- Major earthquakes in and around Christchurch since Sept 2010
 - 185 deaths and major damage est. NZ\$40 billion to rebuild (US\$30)
 - 70% of city centre buildings damaged & demolished
 - 895 kms (45%) Christchurch's roads been/being rebuilt
 - 15,000-20,000 residential properties rebuilt
 - Over 120,000 properties repaired

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Resilient Urban Futures project

- New Zealand government funded (MBIE)
- 4 year program
- Multi-disciplinary group of over 40 researchers
- Aim
 - *How do we develop vibrant, liveable, internationally competitive and resilient cities into the future?*

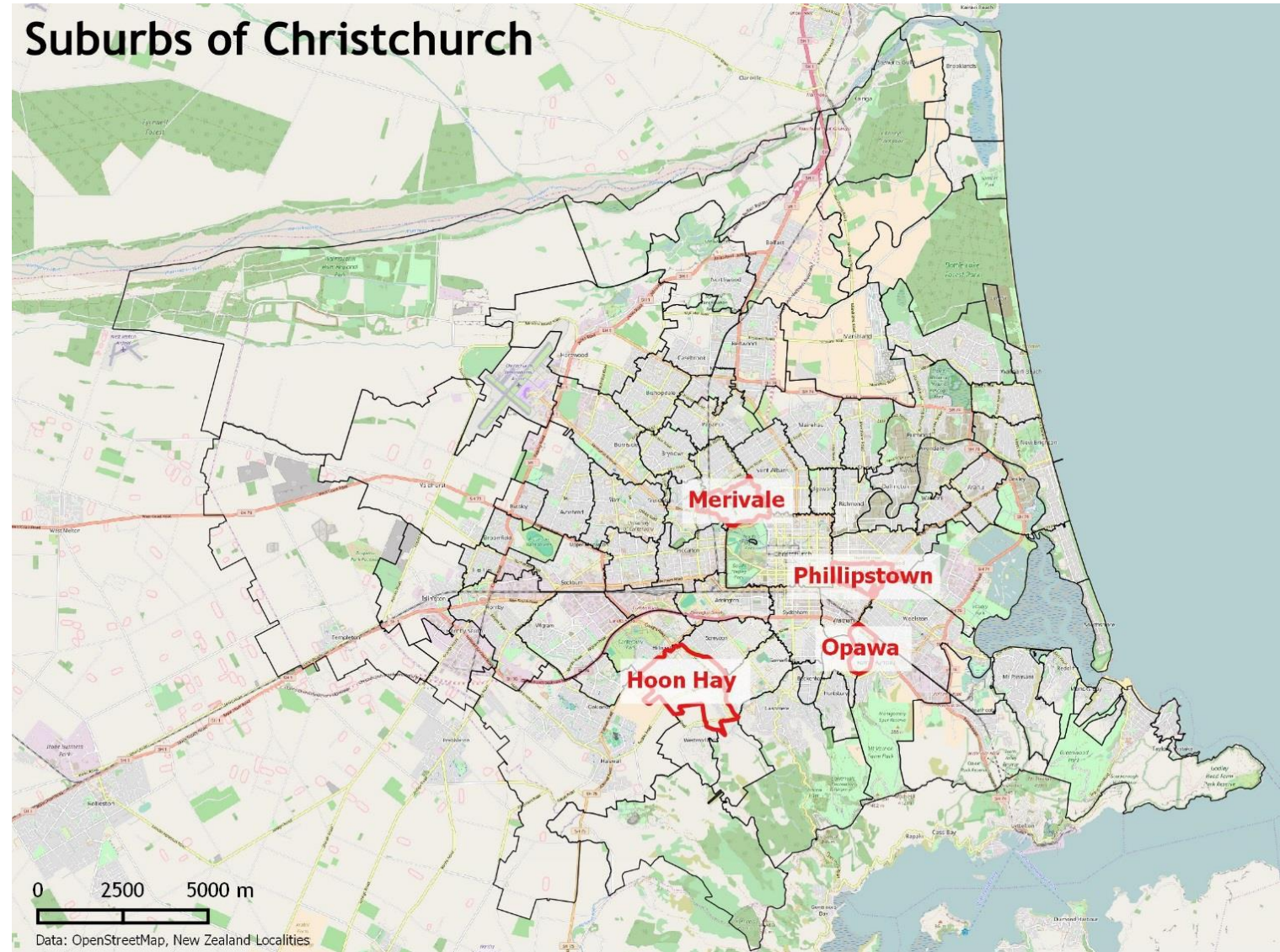
Christchurch study: role of place - local

- Few studies link the relationship between local neighbourhood, social networks and disasters
- What is the role of place or neighbourhood in developing social networks for community resilience?
- What can we learn about community from post-earthquake Christchurch?

Christchurch

Interviews

- Key leaders/stakeholders
- Residents of four suburbs with diversity of:
 - Density
 - Socio-economic status
 - Urban form
 - Accessibility to services and environment



Post-earthquake

- Local - contributes to resilience through informal response
 - Leadership and access to resources
 - A place to organise a response - a community centre or hub
 - Know who to help
- Urban form - well defined or understood boundaries
 - Local places for social interaction and information
 - Clarity of the spatial area to support

Informal response - local

- Individual benefit
 - Needing to help, talk and be with others
 - Getting information – communication
 - Psychosocial gain
- Collective benefits
 - Helping others
 - Supporting and sharing resources



Belonging and residency – becoming a local

- Transience /mobility of renting negatively associated with sense of community
- *'As is where is'* housing increased problem
- Longevity of tenure provides home stability
- Long term renters had connection with neighbours
- Chrissie (KI): *It's the churn in tenancy that is the issue.*

Home and place

- Home territory – and gardens
- Threshold spaces – verandas and porches
- New subdivisions
 - garages and fences, lack of large trees, lack of walkability & local amenity
- Home inextricably linked to place.

“And that is why I say it is more than a friendship, it is whānau - family through a different way..”

“It can take a long time to get to the shops unlike the places with fences and garages”

“I just wonder how lonely some people are behind their private spaces”

Street morphology

- Intimate streets – cul-de-sacs, laneways, back sections
- Noticeable differences among street types in fostering social connections
- Shift to more private spaces – automatic garage door openers and fences

“I really think the type of street is important, the cul-de-sac behind us has been great for us”

“Our street is wide so we don’t know each other”

“People get into their cars and go to work and then come home press the little button for their garage door and they go inside to their private spaces never once turning around”

Walkable – design and distance

- Design: safe, attractive, connected

“Because walking somewhere you see people and that is really important to us to see people and have that eye contact and being human together”

“Because you walk past you know your neighbours so I know most of the people on my side of the street”

“We have Micky the dog, I meet others with dogs, the bumping into people is so important, I think it is what I like and that is what I connect with”

“If you have to get in your car it’s not local”

- Distance: local amenity

“Isn’t that funny how we don’t have a name for them, given how important they [local shops] are to everyone?”

“I like places where people are at rather than places where people have to go”

Natural and green

- Intrinsic quality of place
- Personal significance
- Natural places to be alone, meander, walk the dog, meet others
- Trees as features of the local environment; noted where absent

“Hagley [park] is soul food for me, the natural place, it is my replenishing time”

“My trees, I know them by name”

“I walk by the river everyday as I do my morning perambulation that cuts through a couple of parks that are a vital part of my life”



Gathering places

- Local places of *anticipated/planned* interaction
- Places for purposeful social interaction
- Valued and helped with personal recovery
- Pubs, cafes, community houses, libraries (multiple use), pools, parks

“It’s hard for people to engage with each other when you don’t have a meeting place to come together”



Bumping places

- Local and linked to walkability
- Places of *accidental/unplanned* interaction
- Streets, primary schools, local natural greenspaces and parks, community facilities, local shops, street furniture



*“The school was the only **bumping** place for Phillipstown and then the Ministry closed it.... The Ministry did not see the school as a community hub or the importance for the community”*

*“Schools pop up constantly as **bumping** places for mums and sometimes dads too”*

*“Yes **bumping** into people is so important I think is what I like and that is what I connect with”*



Implications & policy responses

- Importance of local access to amenity and social infrastructure
“If you have to get in your car it’s not local”
- Design/include/encourage *bumping places* (shared space) in new (and existing) urban developments
- Value local community role of existing *gathering places* e.g. schools, churches
- Planning framework needs to translate vision of resilience and sustainability - not just hard infrastructure



Co-benefits of *'local'*

- Supports community development
- Enhances health and wellbeing (saving \$\$ in the long term)
- Saves on infrastructure costs
- Increases community resilience

Final thoughts

- Place (geography) and streetscape affect community development (and health and wellbeing)
- *We can* plan to create resilient, sustainable and healthy local urban communities
- Social infrastructure important for enhancing community and improving health (e.g. *bumping* and *gathering spaces*)
- Multiple co-benefits of investing in local community - health
 - *“If you have to get in your car it’s not local”*

Thanks

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