

Building strong, resilient communities: what we learned from the Canterbury earthquakes

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Outline

- Resilient Urban Futures project
 - What we set out to do?
 - What we did?
 - What we found?
 - What this means?

Resilient Urban Futures project

- New Zealand government funded (MBIE)
- 4 year programme
- 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

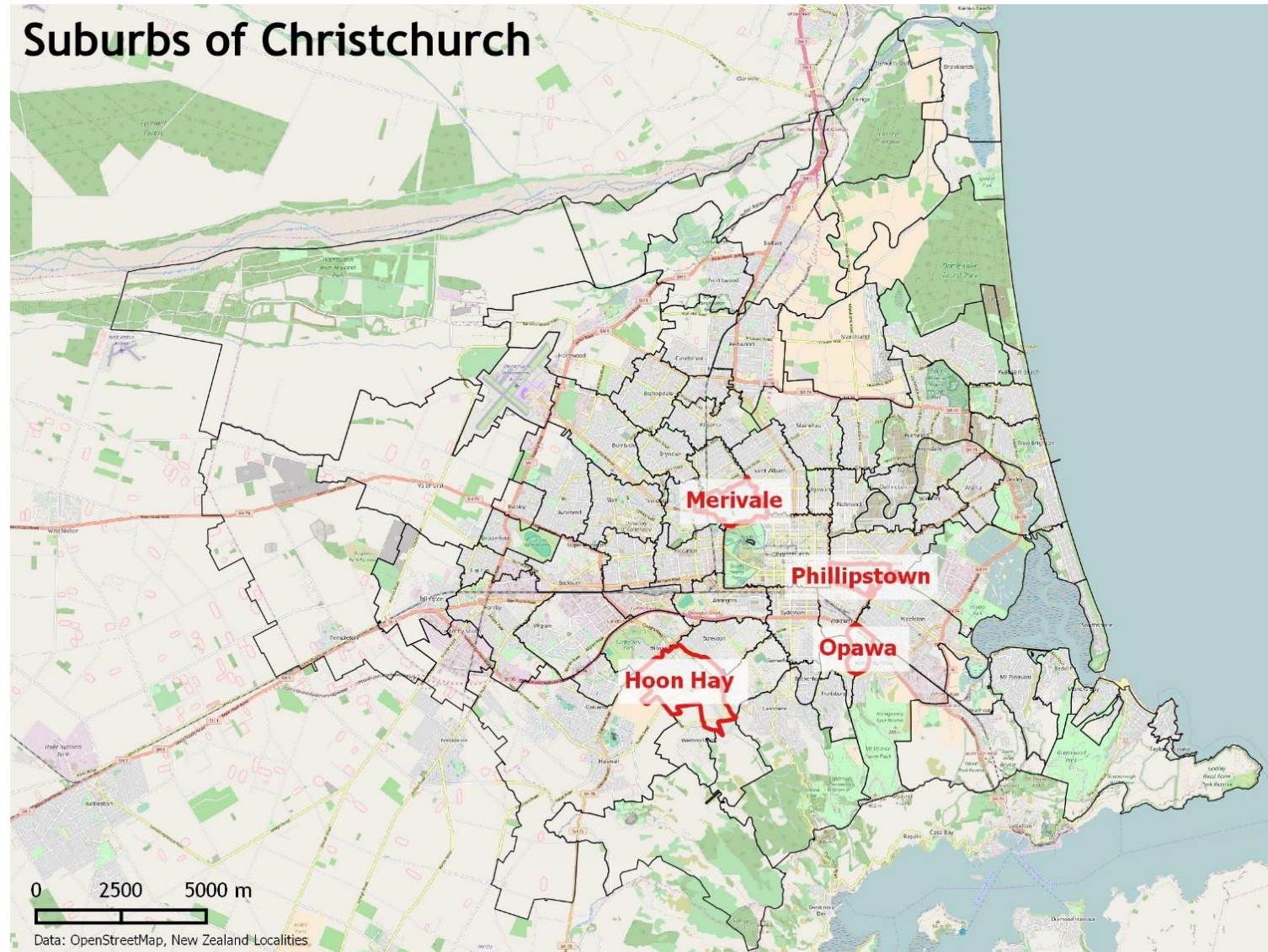
- What can we learn about community from post-earthquake Christchurch?
- Few studies link the relationship between local neighbourhood, social networks and disasters
- What is the role of place or neighbourhood in developing social networks for community resilience?



Christchurch

Interviews

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



Post-earthquake response

- Local - contributes to resilience through informal response
 - A place to organise a response - a community centre or hub
 - Leadership and access to resources
 - 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

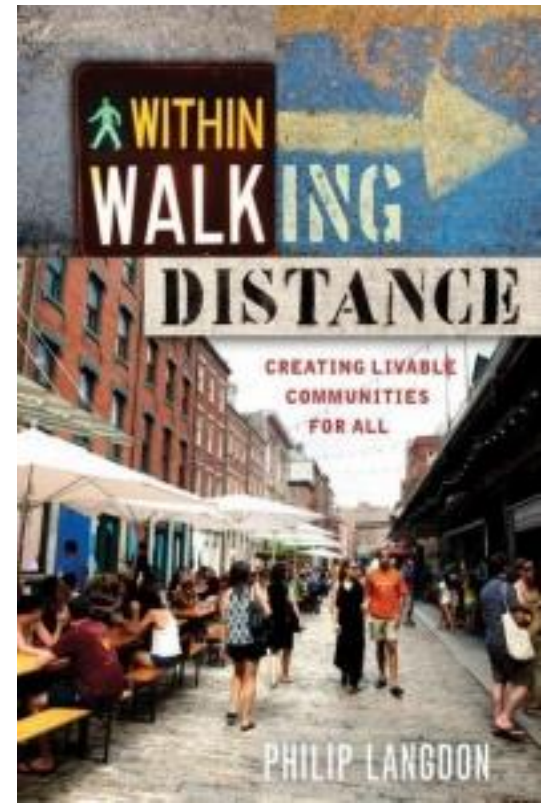
- Individual benefit
 - Needing to help, talk and be with others
 - Communication - getting information
 - Psychosocial gain
- Collective benefits
 - Helping others
 - Supporting and sharing resources



Belonging and residency – becoming a local

- Longevity of tenure provides home stability
- Owners and long term renters had connection with neighbours
- Transience /mobility of renting negatively associated with sense of community
- *'As is where is'* housing has increased the problem

Chrissie: 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 and local amenity
- Home inextricably linked to place.

Denise: It can take a long time to get to the shops unlike the places with fences and garages.



Natural and green

- Intrinsic quality of place
- Personal significance
- Natural places to be alone, meander, walk the dog and meet others
- Trees as features of the local environment; noted where absent
Ginny: Hagley is soul food for me, the natural place.... it is my replenishing time
Carole: We have Micky the dog, I meet others with dogs, the bumping into people is so important
Beth: My trees, I know them by name



Street morphology

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

Frank: *Our cul-de-sac has been great for us*

Sandra: *I realise now how few people I know on the other side of the street; I am thinking this is because it is wide*

Phyllis: *Our street is so wide we don't know each other*



Walkable – design and distance

- Design: safe, attractive, connected

Debbie: Because walking somewhere you see people and that is really important to see people and have eye contact and being human together

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

- Distance: local amenity

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



Gathering places

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

Andrea: 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

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



Community hubs – primary schools

- Ruth: *Schools pop up constantly as bumping places for mums and sometimes dads too*
- Libby: *They are so much the hub for communities, they are so valuable and my bias of coming into this is having smaller community schools*
- Shelby: *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*
- Linda: *Closing schools affects more than the school, it affects the whole community.*



Implications and infrastructure

- Importance of local access to amenity and social infrastructure
- 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
- Roads as community spaces



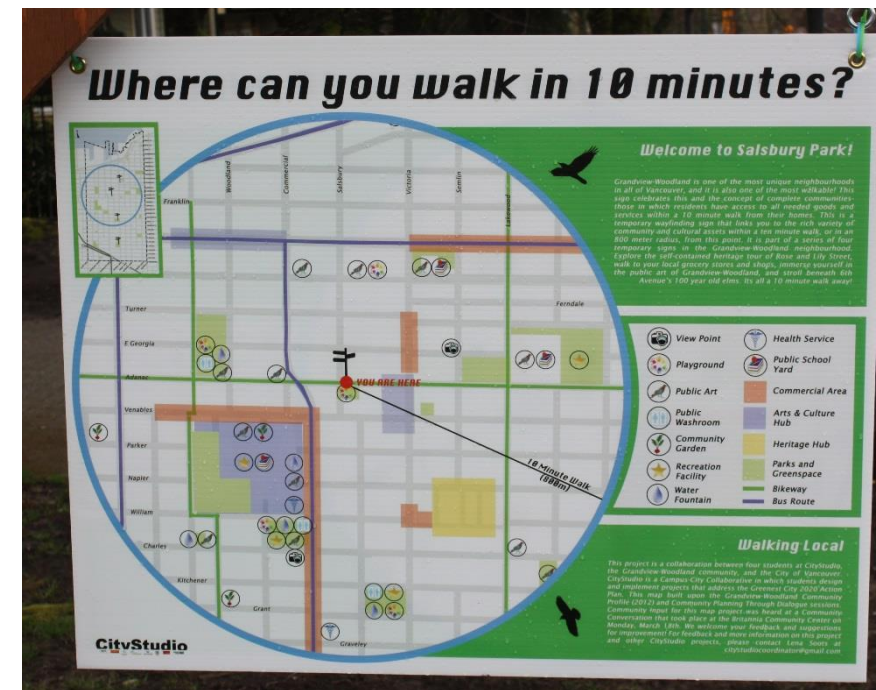
Implications and policy

- Recognise the importance of place in planning
- Planning framework needs to translate the vision of health and wellbeing, resilience and sustainability - not just hard infrastructure
- Readiness for civil defence brought into planning framework
- Stability of home – ownership or renting
- Recognise schools within community context
- Social infrastructure planned for local community
- Slower speeds and reduced traffic encourage community
 - Not just safety – Vision Zero



Co-benefits of 'local'

- Supports community development
- Develops community resilience
- Enhances health and wellbeing
 - saving \$\$ in the long term
- Provides children's access to local environments
- Saves on infrastructure costs
- Works towards environmental and social sustainability



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

Alan: *If you have to get into your car it's not local*



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