



A story of the Heathcote Community,
Heathcote Village Project,
and the Christchurch Earthquakes



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INTRODUCTION

In the early hours of 4th September 2010, Christchurch residents were awoken to a 7.1 magnitude earthquake, centred to the west of the city. Residents experienced damage to homes and property, inconvenience from delays in accessibility of services to parts of the city, and infrastructure damage. In the months following, Canterbury residents experienced a large number of aftershocks. However, the most significant aftershock occurred on February 22nd 2011, with a magnitude of 6.3. It was centred between Heathcote Valley and Lyttleton communities, killed 185 people, and devastated large parts of the city.

The Heathcote Valley, the first established settlement in Christchurch, has always been known as a place with a strong sense of community, and has often been called a 'village'. This is the story of how this community came together in an even greater way after the earthquakes and have faced the many challenges with courage, positivity, creativity. This is also the story of Heathcote Village Project, the community forum that became a central hub in this response.

THE HEATHCOTE COMMUNITY

Heathcote is a small urban community situated at the foot of the Port Hills in the city of Christchurch. It includes 4 valleys; Avoca Valley, Horotane Valley, Morgans Valley and Heathcote Valley.



Satellite view of the Heathcote Valleys

Heathcote is a unique place. Often described as a rural community within a city, it is not uncommon to see horses from the local riding school walking down the road, and sheep grazing the surrounding hills. It is a community proud of its history, most notably as the first settlement in Christchurch, with the Bridle Path at the head of the valley, the first access of the early settlers to Christchurch.

People describe Heathcote as having a village feel, with the original main road, Station Road providing a focal point, and neighbours knowing neighbours. It is a small community that has a safe feel, where children still walk and bike to school. It has a strong sense of belonging and community, which centres around the Heathcote Valley School, the Valley Inn, St Mary's church, the Heathcote Cricket Club and Upshot (a coffee roaster and café). It is nestled in the beautiful Port Hills, and provides a large range of recreational activities including walking, running, and biking tracks, paragliding, model boats and planes, horse riding, golf and train riding.



Values of the Heathcote Community identified at Epicentre@Heathcote 1.0

There are many wonderful events, groups, clubs and businesses that contribute strongly to the valley's identity and character. Our Anzac day parade and breakfast at the Valley Inn; our school gala; our gathering spot at Upshot; the riding school; the Valley Hall at St Mary's; Friday night cricket club family night; and the BYO pub are just some examples.

EPICENTRE HEATHCOTE

THE CHRISTCHURCH EARTHQUAKES

The epicentre of the February 2011 earthquake was situated within 500m of Heathcote. Our community was significantly affected.

Impacts of the earthquakes on Heathcote

- temporary or permanently uninhabitable homes
- Many Heathcote residents were without water for approximately 3 weeks, and used portaloos situated on the streets for up to 6 months.
- Heathcote school was closed for 3 weeks.
- Residents lost all shops in the community including a dairy and café.
- They lost many recreational spaces including, the Valley Inn, the bowling club, the local library, access to recreational walking and biking on the surrounding hills, access to a community swimming pools, and access to natural water features such as the harbour and beach for more than a year due to water quality.
- Heathcote was fortunate to still have the St Mary's church Village Hall which has become a vital 'community facility' since the quakes.
- Heathcote has had 70 of its approximately 1000 homes become 'red-zoned' which deems their properties unsafe to live or rebuild on. Many others remain uncertain of their future with ongoing outstanding insurance claims, and increased flooding since the earthquakes.
- Emotional stress of ongoing aftershocks.
- Many people leaving the city in the early weeks and months.



Tofu Shop, Station Rd



Portaloos lining Station Road

In the immediate days after the February 2011 earthquakes, our Heathcote community sat stunned. We lacked many basic needs such as water, toilets, and fresh milk, but we also lost many of our facilities, access, and structure. Many of us craved connection. But as the days stretched to weeks we began to find ways to move again. Over the last four years Heathcote has been a community that has responded to our adversity with positivity and courage, where neighbours and strangers have become friends, where the future is being faced with creativity and a strong value on relationships and belonging.

EPICENTRE

HEATHCOTE

These forums, swelling to 60 people at times, met weekly initially, moving to fortnightly and then monthly later in 2011. Hot drinks and home baking were essential components of these meetings, from which we all left encouraged and energised. The meetings were facilitated by Sooze and other local residents including Alanna Harrington, Sara Templeton, Sandie Chamberlain, and Jos De Kort. The purpose was three fold:

1. Connect and get to know each other
2. Share challenges,
3. Find collective solutions.

These purposes seemed natural and intuitive in those early days. Solutions and proactive responses to building and re-building Heathcote flowed. Immediate needs and solutions were addressed first; sufficient portaloos around the valley, access to water through council supplied water drums and people making their backyard wells available, activities for kids including Natural Magic pirates coming to BYO Pub, rubble removal and dumping, access to information and support with photographing damage and making insurance claims.

We had wonderful support from local Labour MP Ruth Dyson, and City Councillor Yani Johanson, and the Council Strengthening Communities Team, for which we were so grateful. However, the focus of these forums remained how we could support each other and find solutions within ourselves and our own community. Slowly the focus moved beyond the immediate needs and many innovative projects were birthed. Some of the early projects are shown below.

The **BYO Pub** This was started around the same time as the first HVP forum, by our local vicar, Mary Giles, in response to our Valley Inn and café being destroyed. 80 – 100 people gathered in the St Mary's Village Hall on Friday and Saturday nights for months.





Communication – in addition to social media and email we felt there was a need for more traditional communication methods throughout the valley. A local cabinet maker, Keith Jenkins, made 5 fabulous noticeboards which remain in place and are well utilised by our community.

Book Fridges – we lost our community library so one response was putting in place three book exchange fridges by Jos de Kort. They are still in place, and are well utilised.



There was a need for events to celebrate and have fun. Two of the many events organised included **'Carols in the Park'** (now an annual pre-Christmas event) organised by Lyn Jansen and Catherine McKie, and a giant pumpkin festival organised by Keith Jenkins, attracting some interesting entries.



Water Issues – Residents John and Judy formed the Water Issues group to lobby EQC and CCC to action after 60 home owners found springs spontaneously erupting throughout their properties. Within 9 months they had a resolve, with all homeowners receiving a settlement pay-out.





Recreational opportunities were very limited in the year following the February quake, with all tracks on the surrounds hills closed for safety reasons. A number of people initiated recreational opportunities. Local resident, Thea Mickell organised for Mahla Mantey to run **Zumba** at the school two evenings a week with costs being donated to the school.

Who Is Heathcote Village Project?

The HVP does not have any formal members or roles, and exists as a forum and support structure for all the community of Heathcote. However, a number of people have played important parts in the development and running of HVP over the last 4 years. These people include; Sooze Harris, Alana Harrington, Anna Russell, Chris Jansen, Sandie Chamberlain, Peter McKie, Jos De Kort, Danny Squires, Barrie Woods, Margaret and Keith Jenkin, Rosemarie Gutschmann, Sara Templeton, Prue Stringer, Catherine O'Sullivan, Jackie Maurice, and Jackie Foulkes.

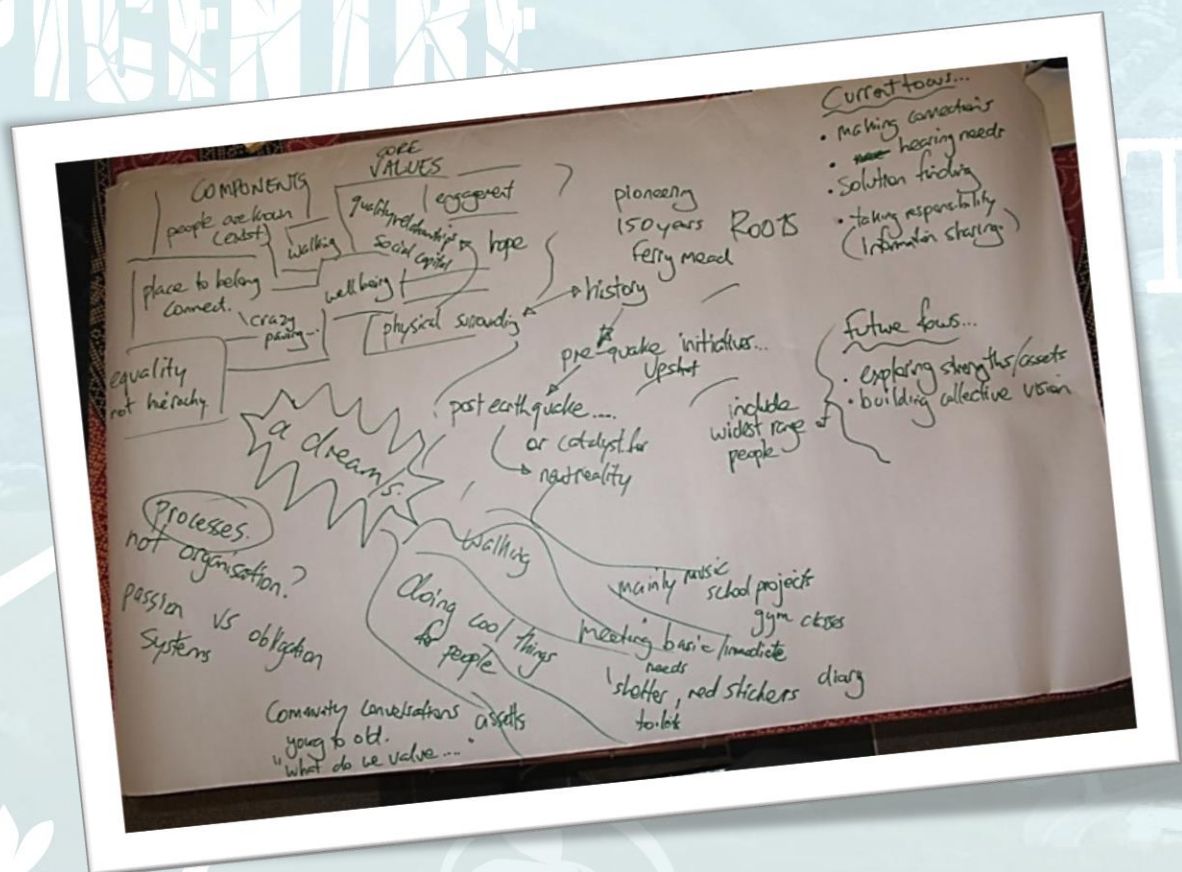
These people are all local residents, mothers, fathers, children, and grandparents. These people bring a wide range of working backgrounds including, occupational therapy, teaching, organisational change, leadership development, event management, architecture, small business, information technology, social work, counselling, community development.

The Engine Room

In the second month of HVP, a group of residents began meeting on the alternate week to the HVP forums to explore what was happening as the Heathcote community responded to the devastation, through the vehicle of the Heathcote Village Project. This group became affectionately known as 'the engine room'. This group of people with diverse working backgrounds were particularly interested in exploring the values and processes that were developing within HVP. There seemed a natural draw towards formalising the HVP forum, establishing roles, rules and 'working groups'. However, many of

us felt that there was an opportunity here to explore the way change happens and groups form. We felt that more formal organisational structures had potential to limit individuals coming together in relationships of genuine care and concern.

We attempted to name and conceptualise this different way of being that we saw and over time we developed the vision, values and guiding principles we saw being demonstrated in HVP. We also created some direction for community engagement beyond the focus of post-earthquake recovery. Much of the work done by the engine room is detailed in the following section. It includes the vision of the Heathcote Village Project, the values that lead our practice, and the guiding principles that flow from our values.



Engine Room Musings, 2011

Vision of Heathcote Village Project

To see Heathcote Valley as a community where people feel a sense of belonging, safety and hope, where we have many connections with one

another, and we feel a sense of shared identity connected to the history and physical environment that makes this area unique.

To support and foster idea creation and connections within one another, that enables people throughout our community to have the confidence, support and relationships to do something about the challenges and ideals they have for where they live.

Values

In retrospect it feels as if naming the values, we saw at work within Heathcote Village Project, was an attempt to 'bottle' some of the richness of that post-quake period, where our defences dropped, and genuine care and concern for other, alongside a new found creativity and openness.

These values have remained the heart-beat of HVP, guiding our interactions and development.

Relationships are at the core (empathy, shared concerns)

There is well known [Maori proverb](#) that reads:

*He aha te mea nui o te ao?
He tangata! He tangata! He tangata!*

What is the most important thing in the world?
It is people! It is people! It is people!

This value is vital. First we are people, with joys and hurts, histories and futures, lives to live. Then we are people coming together to achieve, plan or create.

Everyone is valued

Regardless of age, ethnicity, employment, or life stage, everyone is valued and valuable.

We own our solutions

Our lives are dominated by systems, bureaucracy and professionalisation, which create an environment that makes it easy to rely on others to fix our situations. The earthquakes took all this away and we realised we were the ones who cared most, and knew most about our lives and our community. Therefore, we were and still are, the ones who can make change.

Hopeful action

There is always potential and possibility. What can we do rather than what can't we do?

Shared Power

Shared power allows many people to 'lead' in their own areas of interest, passions, and part of the community. No central body dictates what can or can't be done. We all are responsible for our own futures. We want to create an environment where many leaders can emerge and flourish.

Guiding principles

The above values informed some of our guiding principles which include:

Champion concept: This concept was adopted from Project Lyttleton, a very active and effective organisation in the neighbouring suburb of Lyttleton. The 'champion' is usually the person who has initiated an idea for a project, and provides energy, and leadership. They are much like a motor in a car, helping to keep the momentum as volunteer energy and time waxes and wanes. The champion concept helps to empower local residents to 'run' with their vision. When a resident shares their idea with Heathcote Village Project in an informal or formal setting, the idea is explored, and then the onus is put back on to the resident to take their idea and put it in to action.

HVP doesn't take credit for initiatives: HVP aims to be 'barely there', working in the background to support and empower people in what they are passionate about. Therefore, HVP doesn't

take credit for any of these projects as it is important to the empowerment process that the individual residents receive the recognition for their contribution.

Building relationships remains at the core of all meetings: All meetings run by HVP have some component of connecting as people. First of all, we are people with our own lives, concerns, and interests and meet here first. After this we connect over 'business'. Food and drinks helps to create this, as does the physical structure and locality of meetings.

Flat structure: There are no formal positions in HVP. Different people, volunteer to facilitate, collate minutes, follow up projects etc. Everyone's ideas and contribution are valued and encouraged.

Unincorporated / permissive: HVP is unincorporated which means it is not bound by any formal processes such as voting. Therefore, if a resident feels an idea is worth pursuing and it reflects the values of the community (see Epicentre@Heathcote Vision Document) then HVP will support them.

Functions of Heathcote Village Project

During 2012, Heathcote Village Project shifted in its early focus on Earthquake response, to development of our community. We established HVP as a support entity within the community, where a culture of belonging and possibility is fostered, where individuals and groups are supported in what they hope for the community, and where barriers are removed or decreased. In this form our roles included:

Listening for ideas: One of the core values of the HVP is relationships. Relationships are the place where the energy and ideas emerge most significantly. We keep our 'ears to the ground' picking up on passions and ideas in the natural context of relationships around the valley, and encouraging people to 'champion' their own ideas.

Development of ideas: whether a person wants to come along to a HVP monthly meeting or just meet with one of us in person, we

can help them catch up on any history of their idea in the valley or help with developing their ideas.

Linking with others: The value of relationships being at the core, means we prioritise discovering links between people's passions and hopes, and connect people to one another.

Help with promoting ideas/projects and gaining support from others in the valley interested in similar things. We have worked hard over the last 4 years to decrease communication barriers within the community. People can now use the Google Group (group email list) to send information out to the 400+ residents on this list, or use the 6 noticeboards around the valley, and post on our online forums.

Online platforms: We have developed a strong online presence using the social media site of Facebook. Our Facebook URL is www.facebook.com/heathcotevillageproject The HVCA also maintains a webpage: www.heathcotevalley.org.nz

We can support with **advertising and promoting projects** through local newspapers such as the Bay Harbour News.

Help with any **liaison with relevant groups/clubs/school/associations** who may want to or need to hear about what a resident is exploring.

Help with **connecting residents with the right people at our local council** and working out when and how to present ideas to the community board. Help with finding funding, in particular accessing funding from the council grants.

We also have a '**Heathcote community Fund**' which works similarly to crowd sourcing funding models, where residents can gather local financial support for their project.

We encourage people to use the reputation of HVP and legal status of HVCA when **endorsement** of their projects is needed. We can also support residents with getting feedback from community members about their project if needed.

We encourage '**champions**' to get together **a group of other people** interested in their project who can share the load and keep up enthusiasm for the project.

We use a range of ways to **increase communication and collaboration between groups** and organisations within our community

We have recently acquired funding for, and have employed a local resident to the role of **Heathcote Community Administrator**. The role of this pilot position is to further decrease barriers around paperwork and administration for residents pursuing projects, and promote increased connections and communication throughout the community.

Additional to these support roles, we took initiative in providing opportunities for the community to develop a greater sense of identity and vision. The most significant ways we have done this so far, is through running two community wide visioning events, **Epicentre@Heathcote 1.0 and 2.0**, the only events the HVP has 'championed'. Out of the work the community created at the first visioning event, we also put together a **Heathcote Community vision and identity document**.

The role of Heathcote Village Project within the Heathcote community remains responsive, fluid, and emerging. The roles described may change and flex, however the values that guide the way we work and live with one another retain their central importance to those who continue to be involved in HVP.

Local led projects and activities

Heathcote community has been a fertile ground for innovative projects and events over the last 5 years. For more detail and photos of these www.tobeconfirmed or read the *Heathcote Community to be confirmed* as an eBook at this link www.tobeconfirmed

Status as an organisation

In August 2012 the Heathcote Village Project forum formally became affiliated with the Heathcote Valley Community Association (HVCA). The HVP remains an unincorporated group sitting under the incorporated HVCA. The association remains a formal forum focused on wider issues in the community in particular infrastructure issues, while the project is a more informal dynamic forum that supports creativity and generally focusses more on the social fabric of the community.

We have found the two groups to be very complementary to each other and the diversity in the groups has allowed more people to engage in our community in the way they feel most comfortable.

Relationship with other community organisations including council

Consistent with its values, Heathcote Village Project has actively endeavoured to build positive and proactive relationships with all community groups and organisations within Heathcote, with neighbouring communities, the Christchurch City Council (CCC), and the Hagley Community Board. HVP receives some financial support from the CCC, however most projects are run at a low budget, or are community funded.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is the theory we used to structure Epicentre@Heathcote 1.0, and has infiltrated all our ways of operating. It is a way of 'seeing', learning, discovering, and appreciating everything that gives life to our community, building and innovating out of that. It is based on the premise that change needs to be imbedded in relationships, that there is huge power in sharing about the positive that we have experienced, and that there are many ways for any organisation or community to develop¹. A simple expression of the AI approach is through the 4 I's.

Initiate a desire for change and a question or questions that helps to explore.

Inquire into what we value and what works well.... tell stories about the best in the Valley

What do you love about this community and what drew you to live here?

Imagine a preferred future designed from the best of what has been discovered from the past.

Imagine a time in the future when people look to the wider Heathcote Valley as an exceptional example of a thriving, attractive, and sustainable community.... What would you see happening?

Innovate and create new events, activities and projects, ways to keep what we love and value it more, and ways to realise the future we desire.

We worked through the first 3 stages at Epicentre@Heathcote 1 and produced the vision document. The 'innovate' stage has occurred organically throughout the community, and has been supported to happen through the work of the Heathcote Village Project. Epicentre@Heathcote 2.0 provided further space for innovation.

EPICENTRE@HEATHCOTE – COMMUNITY VISION

EVENTS

More than 40 community members, facilitated by a core HVP team, put together two visioning events or hui, Epicentre@Heathcote 1.0 and Epicentre@Heathcote 2.0, which occurred on the 1st and 3rd anniversary of the February 2011 earthquake.

Epicentre@ Heathcote 1.0: February 2012

Epicentre@Heathcote 1.0, was a community hui based on Appreciative Inquiry process ([see previous section](#)), which brought local people of all ages together to talk about our identity, and our vision for the future. Over 250 people gathered, talked, laughed, connected, remembered, ate, shared, bathed in the sun, listened to local musicians, dreamed and imagined.



Plenty of activity at Epicentrea@Heathcote 1.0

During the afternoon, 2 questions were creatively explored.

What drew you to live in Heathcote Valley and what do you love most about this community?

Imagine at time in the future when people look to the wider Heathcote as an exceptional example of a thriving, attractive and sustainable community. What would you see happening?

Despite being in different groups, spread throughout the hall, people were surprised to see how similar the ideas were and a real shared identity and vision for Heathcote emerged.

It was commented that there had been a real sense of community since February's earthquake and that it was fantastic to see that the energy and motivation was still being generated, not by any emergency situation now, but by the community itself.

This event wasn't just a talkfest. Consistent with the values of HVP, the ideas were all focussed around things that the community could work on, not just a wish-list for the council and government.

Some of the future possibilities that emerged on the day were; "Fruit and nut trees on spare land and roadsides," "Light rail serves us regularly to CBD and Lyttleton," "Heathcote has lots of walking tracks and cycle ways," "New architecture is interesting and green," "A revitalised 'town centre' with music, art, a gathering place with local businesses," and "A community sports facility with activities for young and old alike."

Author of Epicentre@Heathcote 1: Sara Templeton. Heathcote

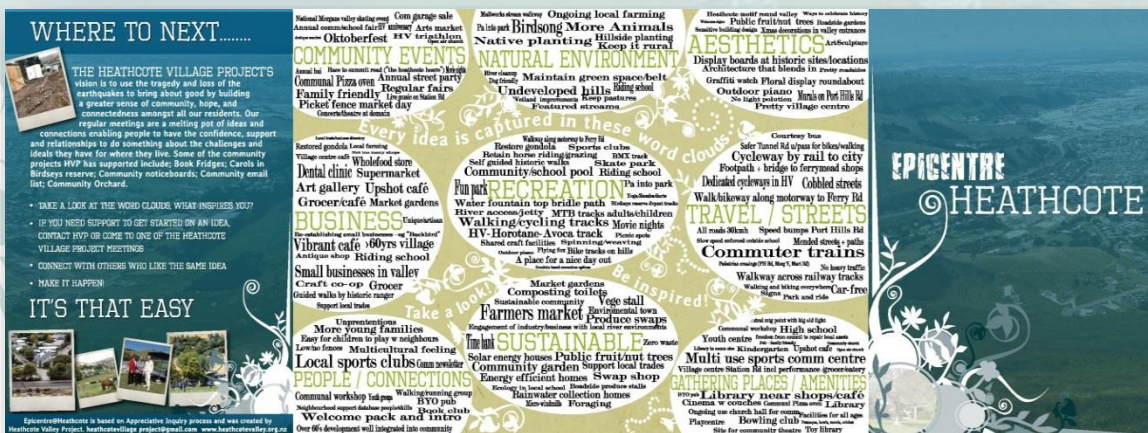
Vision Document

A small group of residents took on the task of collating the information that was gathered at Epicentre@Heathcote 1. Working with graphic designer, Clare Freeman, they developed a vision document launched in 2013.

It is an inspirational document that is intended to be referred to for the next 5 to 10 years as the community walks into their shared future. It was created to strengthen our sense of local identity, stimulate locals to action about what matters to them in their community, and inform council decisions impacting this area.



The document communicates values of our community... those things that have drawn many of us to this community such as; the village feel; the natural environment including the rural aspects of the valleys; the history; the strong sense of community; the positive approach. It also communicates our hopes and dreams as we answered the question "Imagine Heathcote in 5 years' time. What would you see happening?" Hundreds of ideas sprung out of our stories of what we value about this community and included retaining much of what we have such as the riding school, horses walking the streets, market gardens, protecting our undeveloped hills and enhancing with more native planting, our Valley hall at St Mary's; renewing what we have lost such as Station Road becoming our village centre again, regaining a school pool; as well as new ideas such as a communal pizza oven, public fruit and nut trees, a cycle way beside the train line, and solar panels on large numbers of homes. Consistent with the values of HVP, all ideas shared at the Epicentre event were included on this document ensuring that all ideas are valued and that it is up to residents themselves to decide what they want to see happen.



The document was widely distributed: to all households in the wider Heathcote community, displayed at key venues around the community, shared with CERA and council, discussed with key groups within the Valley, and shared with all groups and neighbouring businesses.

Epicentre @ Heathcote 2.0: February 2014

About 100 adults and children participated in Epicentre@Heathcote 2.0 run in February 2014, an inspiring and interactive programme that built on the 2012 hui of the same name, and on the vision document created from this.

The afternoon started by listening to 9 short and snappy talks about projects local and nearby, in the style of Pecha Kucha

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PechaKucha> These included Peter Mejende, the artist behind the [185 white chairs](#) on Madras St, Wendy Everingham from [Project Lyttleton](#), and Tim Lindsay from [Christchurch Coastal Pathways](#). Alongside these speakers, we also heard from locals, Jos De Kort speaking about the Martindales book fridges, Judy Stack and John Kelcher on the water issues group, Sara Templeton on the community garden and orchard, Lyn Jansen and Catherine Mckie on the Carols in the Valley, Danny Squires founder of [Wikihouse](#), and Callum Templeton on the water slide and the Ministry of Fun.

These speakers however represented only a small snapshot of all the projects that have taken place in Heathcote since the 2010/11 earthquakes. Over 40 projects have occurred in this time, and a written and visual summary of each of these made an impressive display around the perimeter of the school hall, showcasing the Heathcote community as wonderful, innovative and positive community.



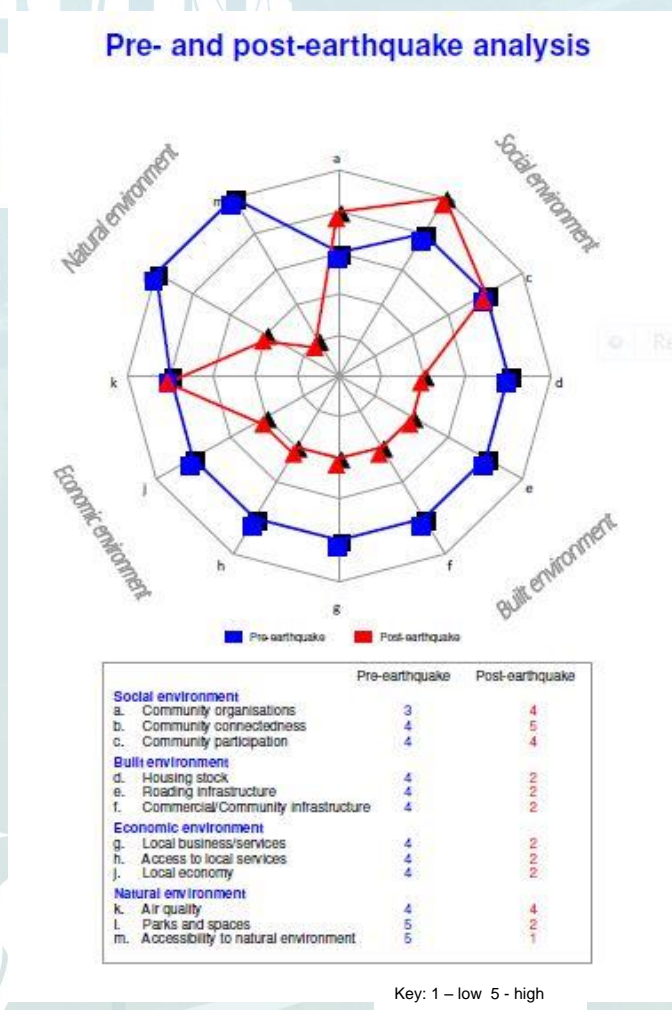
Epicentre@Heathcote 2.0

After a break to enjoy local coffee, entertainment and baking, the second part of the afternoon was spent talking about all the things that people had been inspired by in the first session, or had come hoping to talk about. The 'open space' session began with 13 enthusiastic locals sharing

their ideas and hopes with us, leading on to much enthusiastic discussion. A number of projects crystallised from this. These projects include; artistic installations at each of the valley's bus stops (including a large metal umbrella to shelter under); a skate half pipe; welcome packs; surplus vegetable supply take and enjoy table; Heathcote's own cardboard chapel in collaboration with Peter Mejende; a community garage sale; a book club.

HEATHCOTE THEN AND NOW

The Christchurch City Council puts out a community profile every 3 years. The 2011 community profile for Heathcote is of particular interest as it shows the community pre and post-earthquakes. Of particular note is the graph (shown below) which demonstrates how the community has suffered significant losses in the natural, economic, and built environment, while the social environment has moved from a position of moderate strength to very strong. Heathcote has always been known as a place with a strong sense of community. However, our experience over the last 5 years is mirrored in this diagram, showing the community coming together in an even greater way after the earthquakes with the Heathcote Village Project being a central hub in this response.



<http://www.ccc.govt.nz/cityleisure/statsfacts/communityprofiles/hagleyferrymead.aspx>

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

'The point is not to welcome disasters. They do not create these gifts, but they are one avenue through which the gifts arrive. Disasters provide an extraordinary window into social desire and possibility, and what manifests there matters elsewhere, in ordinary times and in extraordinary times.'

Rebecca Solnit²

The Heathcote community response seemed intuitive and natural at the time, but as we reflect now, our response may have been more important than we realised. A review of international literature found that community-led-activity evidenced in the Heathcote community and through Heathcote Village Project, is indeed seen as best practice in both disaster response^{3,4,5,6,7}, and in individual and community well-being⁸.

A review of international understandings of disaster recovery, carried out by the Christchurch Earthquake Recovery Authority, describes how

"positive, inclusive, self-organising, often spontaneous, diverse and satisfying responses at neighbourhood and community levels"⁹ are an important factor in psychosocial recovery.

Klinenberg¹⁰ describes much better outcomes in a post disaster environment for communities with increased connectedness. Silove, Steel and Pschol¹¹ describe how the most comfort comes from people we know, and how raising expectations of outside agencies increases passivity and resentment. In contrast, positive collective action is an antidote to embitterment and feeling overwhelmed, creating more sustainable recovery. Their model for psychosocial recovery following disasters, ADAPT (Adaptation and Development after persecution and trauma) places supporting and encouraging community initiatives at its forefront. The Australian psychologist, Rob Gordon¹² describes how communities can provide such things as an increased opportunity for fun and gathering, leadership at a local level, and opportunities for community and culture specific spiritual responses to disasters.

Community led initiatives are not only vital in assisting recovery following a natural disaster, but also have ongoing value to the wellbeing of the individual and community. Stone¹³ describes how helping others, gives people a sense of purpose and connectedness with others, a view that is

supported by the work of Thornley and colleagues¹⁴. The 5 Winning Ways was a campaign promoted by the All Right? campaign in Christchurch after the earthquakes¹⁵.

Two of these winning ways, 'Give' and 'Connect' reinforce how strong connection and giving to one another within a community context can have positive impact on an individual's wellbeing.



One of the many poster resources produced as part of the Allright? Campaign

Another study measuring neighbourhood social fragmentation in New Zealand, describes how local neighbourhoods are an important context for how we live, and healthy neighbourhoods have a strong correlation with increased health and wellbeing of individuals in those communities¹⁶.

Rebecca Solnit¹⁷, authored 'A Paradise Built in Hell: the extraordinary communities that arise in disaster'. She spent a number of years interviewing people from 5 disasters including the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, the hurricane and flood in New Orleans, the Halifax explosion in 1917, and the September 11th 2001, and provides an interesting view point. What she found during her investigation, was that as people described stories of their experiences in the weeks and months following a disaster, she noted a 'joy' or 'lightening up' when people speak of disaster. She describes this as

'an emotion graver than happiness but deeply positive (p. 5)'

Other authors write of this response but describe it as a 'honeymoon' period that soon is superseded by reality and a challenging journey of recovery¹⁸. Solnit views this in a different light.

To describe the phenomenon, she uses the analogy of a city's street and commercial lighting. These lights are all we are usually aware of as we go about our lives. When a power cut occurs or we go into the country we suddenly notice the other, brighter lights of the starry canvas above. She describes the street lights as a picture of the usual social orders that influence the way we live. These include individualism, capitalism, power, economics, fear and scarcity. When a disaster occurs, it is as if the street and

commercial lights are switched off, and we find we see what else the world could be like. We see the latent characteristics of altruism, bravery, empathy, resilience, generosity, and people acting together in solidarity, with a sense of purpose, love and hope. She writes,

'In its (the suspension of the usual order) place appears a revision to improvised, collaborative, co-operative and local society. (p.10)'

A statement from Foucault found in the book 'Christchurch the Transitional City Pt IV'¹⁹, also echoes this sentiment,

"As soon as people begin to no longer be able to think things the way they have been thinking them, transformation becomes at the same time very urgent, very difficult, and entirely possible" (p. 35).

Solnit sets before us a challenge:

*"Disaster may offer us a glimpse, but the challenge is to make something of it, before or beyond disaster... to bring them **(the latent characteristics)** into the realm of the everyday"²⁰.*

NOTES

Appreciative Inquiry

¹ Ludema, Whitney, Mohr, & Griffin. (2003). *The Appreciative Inquiry Summit: A Practitioners guide for leading large-group change*. C.A.: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc.

International Perspectives

² Solnit, R. (2009). *A Paradise Built in Hell: The extraordinary Communities that arise in Disaster*. USA: Viking Penguin. P.4

³ Gordon, R. (2004). The social system as a site of disaster impact and resource for recovery. *The Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 19(4), 16 – 22.

⁴ Klinenberg (2002), In Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA). (2013). *Community in Mind: Hei Puawai Waitaha – a flourishing Waitaha*. Sourced from: <http://cera.govt.nz/recovery-strategy/social/community-in-mind>

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⁶ Solnit, R. (2009). (See note 6 for detail).

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