



Spaces of relocation and trauma: **Affect and proximity after the Christchurch earthquakes, Aotearoa New Zealand**

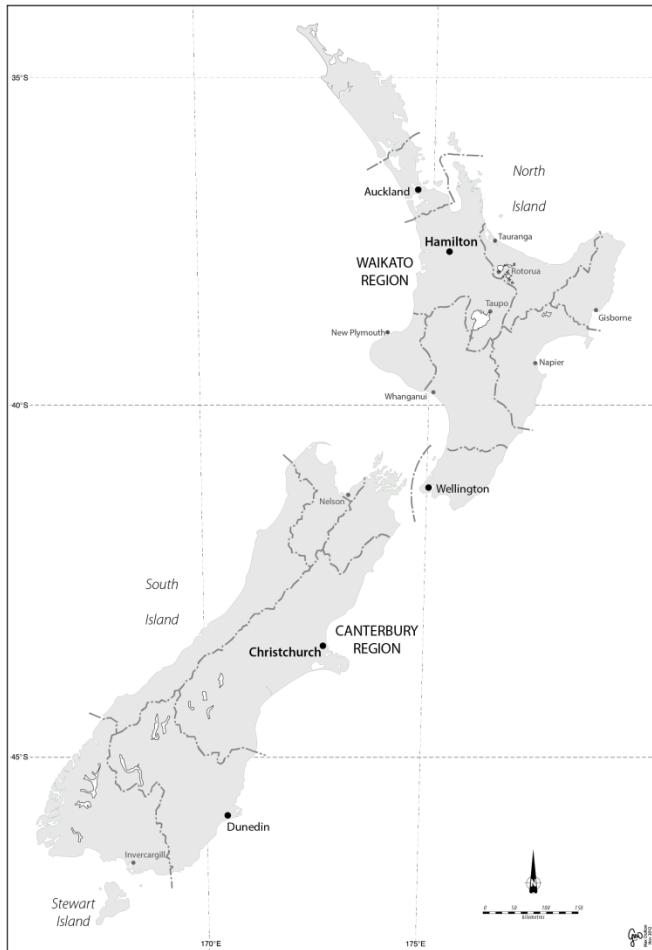
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- This project combines established areas of geographical thought on disasters and natural hazards with emerging work on emotion and affect
- Why relocation? Insider/outsider, placing the research
- Emotion and affect = focus on collectivity

Christchurch's Earthquakes





*When I say I couldn't get to my son and I was terrified and I was crying and I didn't know if my son was OK—I mean, there were power-lines down and silt [from liquefaction] with raw sewerage up to my waist in parts—it was just a nightmare! And I don't think people can understand what it's like to not know if your child is OK, or to weigh up risking the child in your arms for the child where you don't know what's happened to them! That's one thing about moving up here [relocating to Waikato], it's like a different world. **The reality is people just don't know, they don't realise, that it's not over quickly—it's not like you move away and everything's OK, that it's finished** (Interview 2 February 2012).*

Context: Leaving Christchurch

- Predominantly families with children who were renting in Christchurch and lived in severely damaged areas
- Three strikes and you are out!
Almost half of respondents relocated after third major earthquake
- No.1 reason for relocating to Waikato – the perceived geological stability of the region

- Collectivity – aligning bodies with the wider milieu (after Spinoza)
- Ahmed (2004) *Cultural politics of emotion* to explore how emotions and affect create surfaces and boundaries that people are shaped by
- Proximity and connection: what bodies are *doing*

- Semi-structured interviews and focus groups
- Changing spaces of research, moving closer – being closer
- Empathy, bodily affects and non-conscious ‘communication’, intense analytics

Discussion: bodily proximity

- *Because buildings had fallen down, we were all driving in the centre of the road and I looked at her when we stalled, she looked so afraid and so fragile, I just reached out and held her hand for a while ... Just connecting with her and getting comfort somehow from holding her hand (Interview 7 October 2011)*



Proximate bodies:

Christchurch

- Essential service meeting areas
- Checking on neighbours
- Living with family and friends



Waikato

- Desire for face to face interaction
- Hamilton Botanical gardens picnic
- Memorial 22/2/2012 Standing as 'one'



When bodies move away

- Abandonment of Christchurch and rebuild
- Leaving family and friends, work colleagues and neighbours
- Removing children from loved ones and familiar environment (home, school, sports)
- *I mean she [daughter] pretty much got taken away—it wasn't just the whole earthquakes which was pretty scary—but I had moved them away from everything they had known and everyone who had loved them [trails off] (Interview 2 February 2011)*

- **Affect encompasses the dynamic connections between psychosocial, physical and unconscious dimensions of experience**
- **Cannot neatly separate out emotions and affect from places**
- **Being proximate and connected to other Cantabrian people has been desired and important for respondents because trauma continues into relocated space**

Any Questions?

