

Travel time use on public transport

What's the link with health and wellbeing?

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CTS Seminar
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My background

Pākehā New Zealander

Work (paid and unpaid):

librarian; community groups; radio/ film
documentary-maker; public libraries lobbyist;
social researcher (health services research, public
health research); mother

Education:

English literature, Library School, Social Science
Research, Public Health

Today's session

Aims:

To present some of my thinking as I near the end of my research and write my conclusions

To seek your feedback on my ideas

Presenting ideas – not 'findings'

(We know that people on public transport *do* things which have meaning for them: window-gazing; people-watching; reading; relaxing; talking; listening on headphones etc....)

Outline

- My research
- Public Health
- Transport and Public Health
- Travel time use and health /wellbeing : some influences on my thinking
- Some theories
- Discussion; questions

My research

How do passengers use and value their public transport travel time and what is its value for health and wellbeing?

Department of Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington

Social research

Mixed methods with NZ passengers:

structured observations; interviews; survey

Final year

Visiting at CTS UWE for six months to sit with transport researchers and travel time use experts

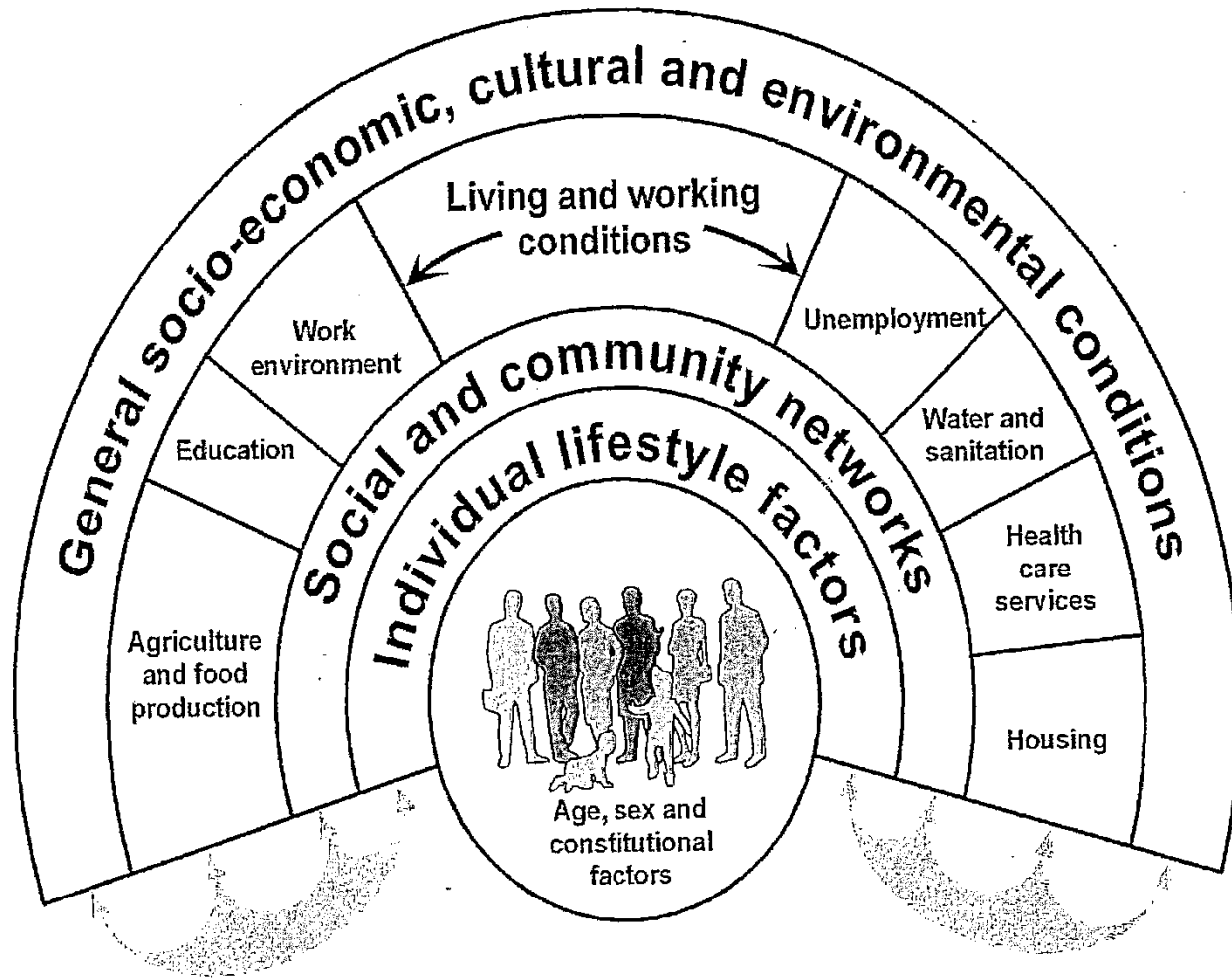
What is Public Health?

'The health of the population as a whole, esp. as monitored, regulated, and promoted by the state (by provision of sanitation, vaccination, etc.). Also: the branch of medicine dealing with this...'

(Oxford English Dictionary)

'the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organised efforts of society' Acheson (1988)

Multidisciplinary



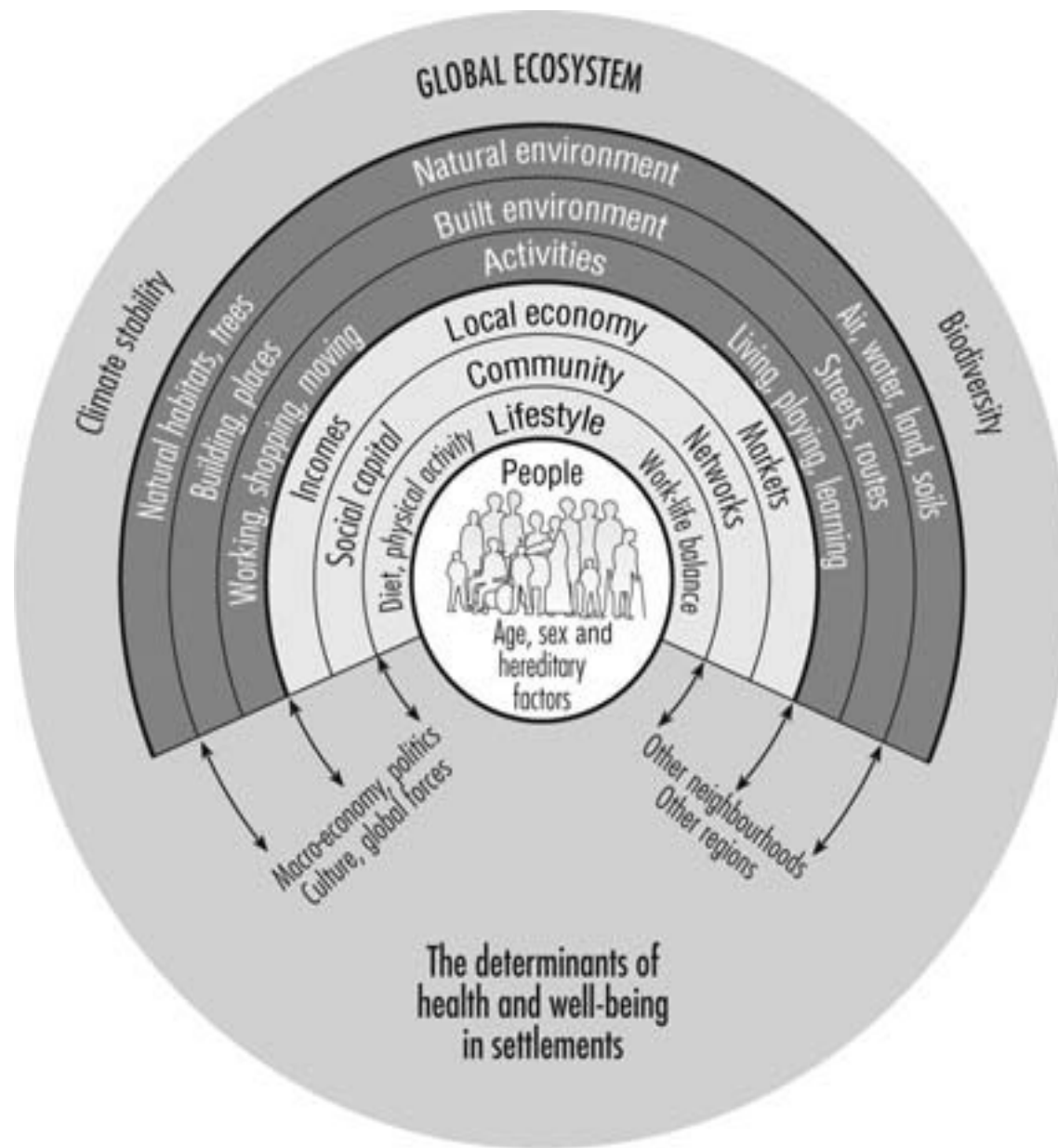
Dahlgren & Whitehead 'rainbow' showing the main determinants of health

(Dahlgren and Whitehead 1991)



Dahlgren & Whitehead 'rainbow' showing the main determinants of health

(Dahlgren and Whitehead 1991)



Barton and Grant (2006)

Transport and Public Health

Physical health and safety

- Road toll
- ‘Invisible road toll’
- Physical activity

Environmental costs

Financial costs

Accessibility, social inclusion, inequalities

A confession

A Public Health PhD about travel time use?

*‘Interesting –
but not **public health**’*

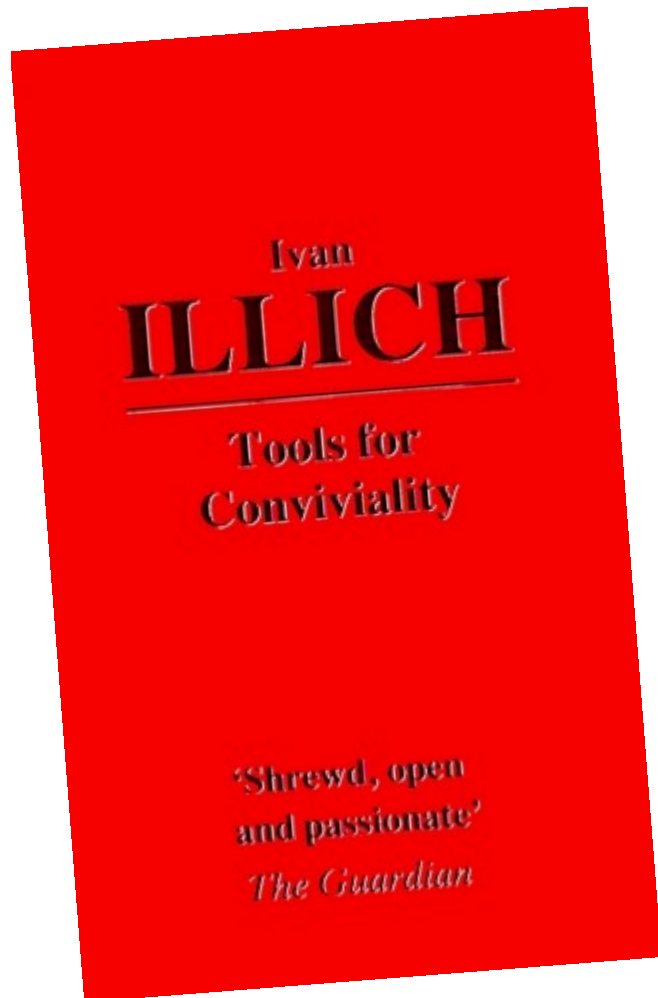
There is accumulating evidence that something is going on in public transport travel time that has significant social and personal meanings for passengers... and impacts on health/ wellbeing

My big challenge:

How can
public health frameworks and viewpoints
encompass travel time use?

Some influences

Serendipity!



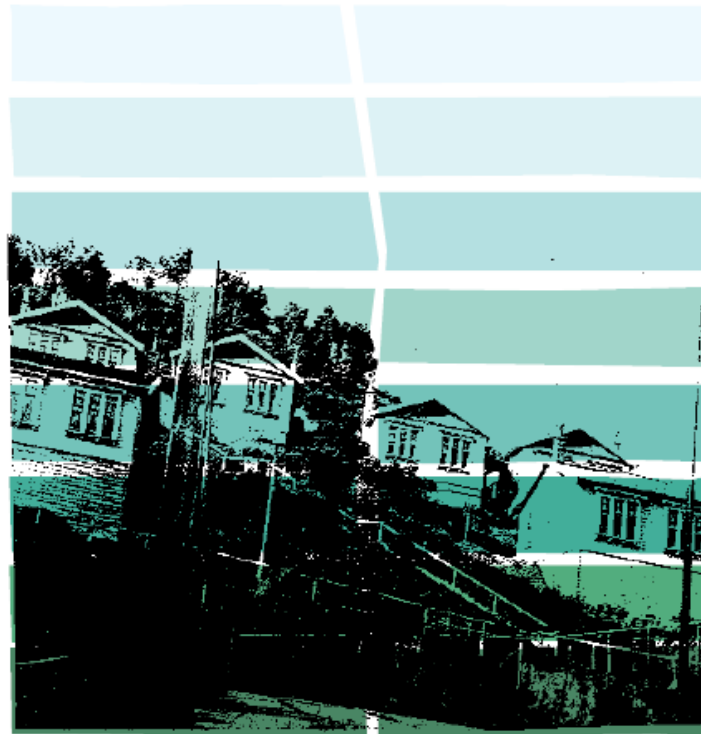
Convivial: English meaning PLUS:
'a technical term to designate a modern society of responsibly limited tools' (Illich 1973:xii)

Counterfoil research: *'clarify and dramatize the relationship of people to their tools'* (Illich 1973:82)

Public libraries

free civic spaces

Documentary film; includes reflection on links between urban design and community, 2009



a place to stay

A FILM ABOUT SALISBURY GARDEN COURT

How does urban design affect community? Through the stories of past and current residents, historical and family photographs, and newsreel footage, this film tells some of the unique social history of Salisbury Garden Court (Wadestown, Wellington), and presents a case study of the various connections between architecture and people.

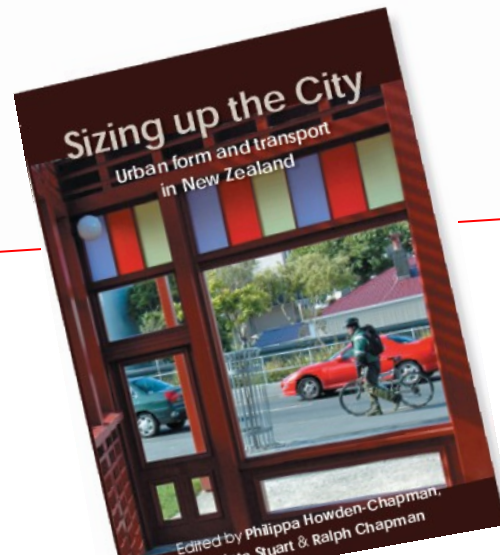
the 35 minute documentary will be screening at:

Travel time use and health and wellbeing

CHAPTER 10

Convivial public transport: Six theories about travel time and social wellbeing

Marie Russell



Theory: sociable 'third places'

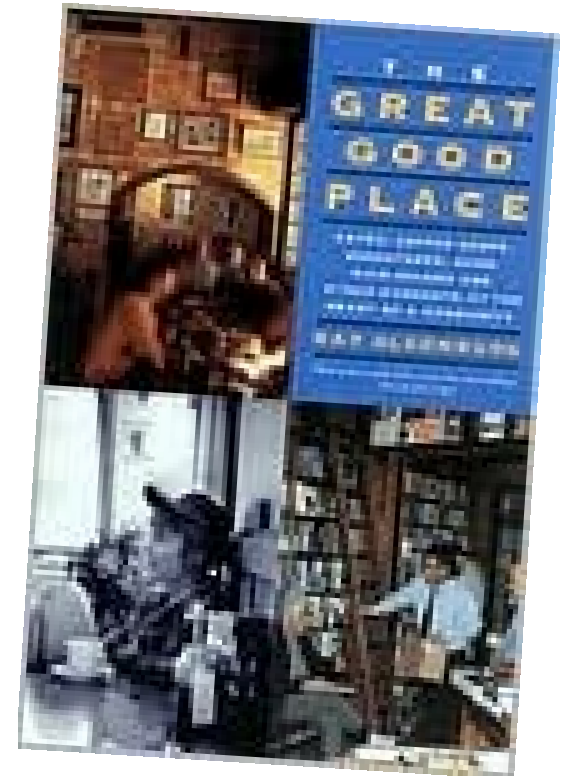
The great good place

*cafes, coffee shops, bookstores,
bars, hair salons and other hangouts
at the heart of a community*

by Ray Oldenburg

Public transport

(stops/stations, vehicles, travel time)
as a sociable 'third place'



Theory: 'information grounds'

Karen Fisher et al.

'social settings in which people share everyday information while attending to a focal activity'

Classic information grounds:

office water cooler/ tea room

Public transport waiting places, vehicles, travel time?

Theory: 'dull routine'

'Lowly, unpurposeful and random as they appear, sidewalk contacts are the small change from which a city's wealth of public life must grow.' (Jacobs 1961:83)

*'residentially based networks ... perform an important function in the **routines of everyday life** and these routines are arguably the basic building blocks of social cohesion – through them we learn tolerance, co-operation and acquire a sense of social order and belonging.'* (Forrest and Kearns 2001:2130)

the 'mundane' – bus trips (Jain, 2009)

the banal, everyday, quotidian, boring, down time, time-out

*It is the **mundane venues of daily life** that ultimately support or inhibit health, at least as much as the illness and injury service provision (Kearns, McCreanor et al. 2006:254)*

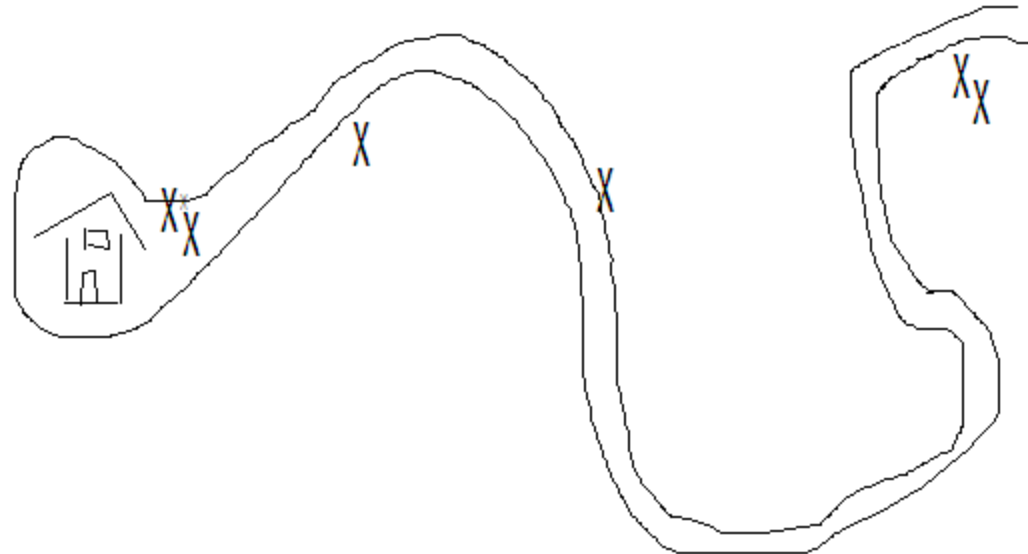
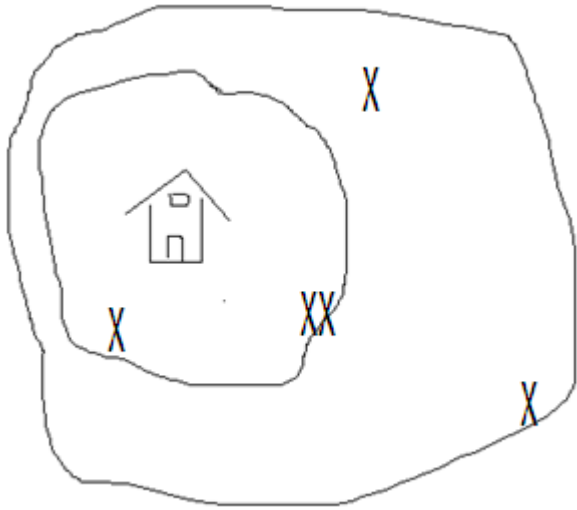
Theory: neighbourhoods

'Neighbourhoods are the localities in which people live. They imply a sense of belonging and community, grounding our lives in a specific place' (Barton, Grant & Guise 2011:1)

Public transport as a *neighbourhood*

Travel time as *time spent in a neighbourhood*

Public transport makes a new kind of neighbourhood



Theory: strong ties and weak ties

'Strong ties' (Granovetter)

'Weak ties'

'Familiar strangers'
(Milgram)

Theory: Public space

'Public spaces play a vital role in the social life of communities.... A shared resource in which experiences and value are created.... The majority of public spaces that people use are local spaces they visit regularly, often quite banal in design, or untidy in their activities... But which nevertheless retain important social functions' ...the social advantages 'may not be obvious to outsiders or public policy makers'. (Worpole & Knox, 2007)

Public space socialises:

'It takes a village to raise a child'

**Travelling on public transport, people learn
how – and how not – to behave**

'The social' and health/ wellbeing

'It is recognized widely that social relationships and affiliation have powerful effects on physical and mental health'

(Berkman: International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, 2004)

Negative effects too

When 'community on wheels' breaks down

When people behave badly

When using public transport is very stressful

Disease exposures...

... Other?

What if...?

What if:

the social values that attach to **public spaces** (1) and to **neighbourhoods** (2) also attach to ***public transport vehicles and waiting places – and to the time people spend there?***

(1) cf. Shaftoe; Worpole; PPS and many others

(2) cf. Jacobs; Barton, Grant & Guise and many others

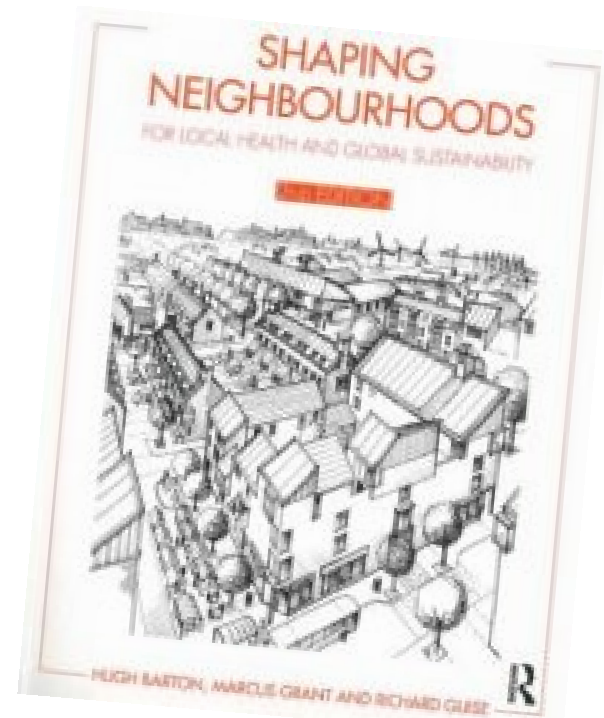
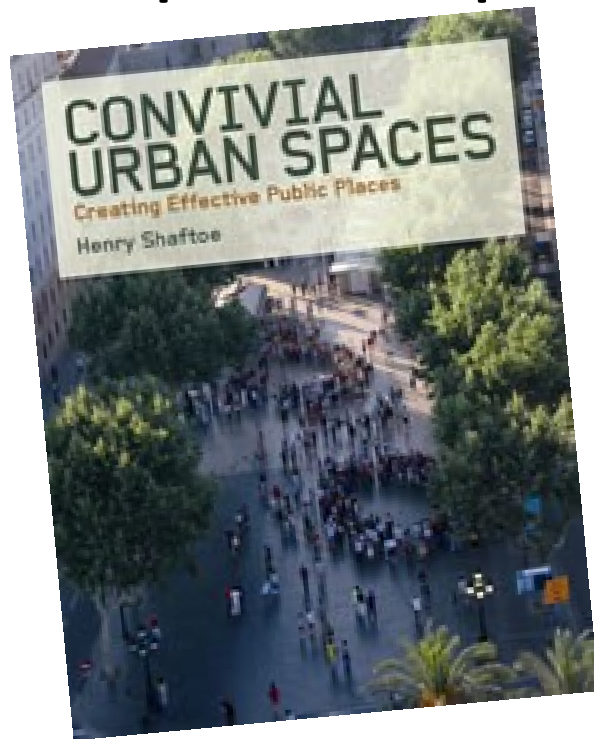
What if:

We put ***the people, their experiences and what they are doing*** at the centre of the picture—

And not **the places, or the sector or silo** to which places have been allocated?

Public transport vehicle, stop and station

as a place /space:



... or as a neighbourhood

A new view?

Not many writers on 'public space', 'third places' or 'neighbourhoods' yet include public transport places (stops/ stations, vehicles, routes) or public transport travel time in their purview....

But:

Fisher ('information grounds')

Lofland (*The public realm: exploring the city's quintessential social territory*, 1998)

Shaftoe (in preparation)

How travel time use affects health/ wellbeing

Positive personal wellbeing through down-time, dull routine, 'time out', travel time activities

Positive social wellbeing effects, through neighbourhoods, third places, social spaces, 'everyday' places; good for community + good for mental health

Some pathways, mechanisms:

Social space at the stop or station; on the vehicle / staff (driver, train manager) / information, social contacts / weak ties, but also site for strong ties / dull routine / social relationships, surveillance, 'eyes on the bus or train' / 'how the other half lives' / belonging, community, solidarity, tolerance....



Dahlgren & Whitehead 'rainbow' again, showing where travel time use fits in
 (Dahlgren and Whitehead 1991)

What next?

My PhD – travel time use through public health lens

Future: working across disciplines: public health, transport studies, urban studies, geography....

How do our frameworks fit together?

How can we work together?

When we work together, what questions can we answer and in what ways?

Some questions: your views?

Are any of these themes and theories more promising than others for exploring links between PT *travel time use* and *health / wellbeing*?

Where are the main weaknesses?

What are the key points of linkage and key pathways?

Acknowledgements

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Hutia te rito

Rangimarie Rose Pere; arr. Laughton Patrick

Hutia te rito o te harakeke
Kei hea te kōmako e kō

kī mai ki ahau

He aha te mea nui o te Ao

Māku e kī atu

he tāngata

he tāngata

he tāngata

Hi!

*Pluck out the heart of the
flax bush and where will
the bellbird sing?*

*You ask me what is the
most important thing in
the world?*

I will tell you -

It is people

it is people

it is people