Resilience for Public Health

Supporting transformation in people and communities

Pete Seaman, Valerie McNeice, Gregor Yates, Jennifer McLean

Glasgow Centre for Population Health

Definitions of resilience

- An ability to withstand stress and challenge

- *Preparedness, planning and mitigation*

- For public health needs to take account of social disease conditions: e.g. poverty, inequality, worklessness, isolation, decreased mental health

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Applying resilience to public health

- We live in an age of change
  - **Demographic change** (e.g ageing population)
  - **Austerity** (having to do more with less, effects on services
  - **Technological** proliferation (opportunities, new inequalities, new vulnerabilities)
  - **Climate change, peak oil, financial instability** (expose vulnerability of our established systems)

This map is not working!

We need a framework for supporting individuals and communities against upheavals and crises which are difficult to predict

The capacity for populations to endure, adapt and generate new ways of thinking and functioning in the context of change, uncertainty or adversity

Challenges within resilience

- Resilience is an outcome. Can it be demonstrated in the absence of challenge?

- Does it mean we can blame individuals and communities for lacking resilience?

- Does it mean we cease to focus on the structural causes of challenge and vulnerability?

- Does resilience replace other current policy and practice agendas (e.g. asset-based approaches, early years)

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Supporting transformational resilience

- How do we support the capacity of communities and people to adapt when existing ways of living are no longer possible?

- "Within us, between us and beyond us" - various forms of social capital are necessary and require investment

Social capital: Bonds between us and beyond us

- **Bonding capital-** links with similar people, similar outlooks and values, Strong ties, good for "Getting by" or *"bouncing back"*
- **Bridging capital –** links with people with different outlooks and values, weak ties, good for "Getting on" and *Transformation: adapting to changed circumstance and crises.*
- **Linking capital –** links with those who make decisions that effect that community

How might policies look to support transformational resilience?

- *"Within us"* - The economy

- *"Between us"* – Infrastructure

- *"Beyond us"* - Governance

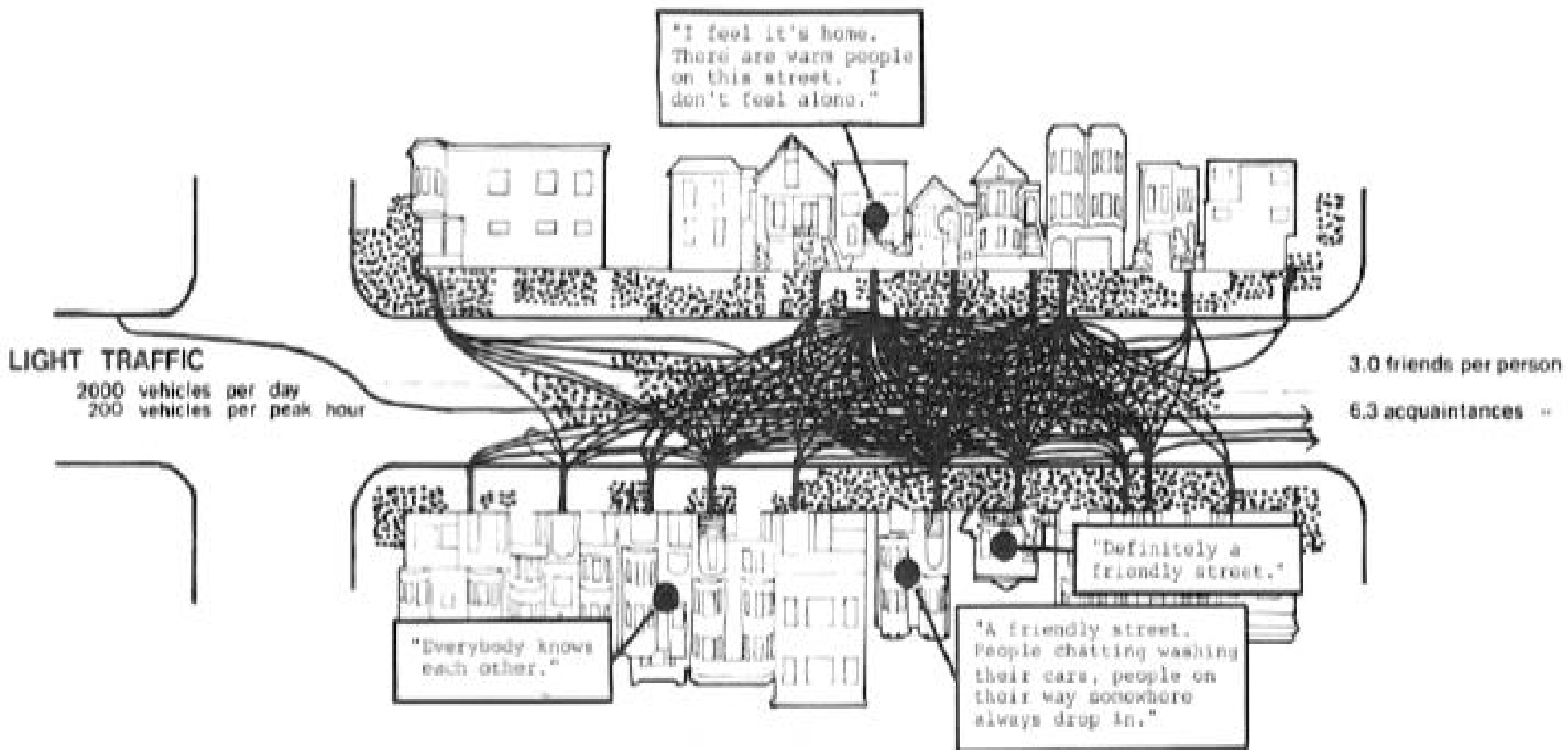# Economic activity to support transformative resilience

- Not *'what makes the economy resilient?'* but *'how does the economy support the resilience of communities and individuals?'*

- Make work pay *psychosocially* as well as materially

- Employment as a source personal meaning and growth - *What is within us*

- Work as source of social solidarity- *What is between us*

Current strategy

- GCC's focus on SMEs a stronger foundation for resilience than 'picking winners' approach (e.g. life sciences, financial services)

- Less vulnerability to global trends

- But also grounded in individual aspirations and strengths, more aware and responsive to local conditions and likely to produce a diversity of roles and solutions

Infrastructure to support transformational resilience

- Mindset shift required from *"What makes infrastructure resilient?"* to *"How does infrastructure support resilient communities?"*

- Infrastructure should allow people and communities to meet their everyday needs *(status quo r)* but also to promote capacity to bind and connect *(transformational r)*

- Increases bridging capital

Livable Streets by Donald Appleyard . Social interactions in light traffic situations

Governance to support transformational resilience

- Should establish networks of citizen activity *before* crisis emerges

- Participative and promotes devolved decision making

- Develops linking capital between decision makers and communities effected

Current examples

- Cooperative Councils, Community Empowerment Bill
  - Change of values: doing with, not to.
  - Shared decision making
  - Transfer of control of community assets
  - Cooperative service delivery (service user ownership)
  - All serve to reduce gap between user and provider

Beginning the conversation

- Resilience is at risk of being understood either as a personal capacity or as technological solutions to predictable events

- Our understanding locates community *support for transformation* as crucial for adaptation in times of crisis

- What do you do already?

- What is missing?

- What support do you need?