Resettled Refugee Communities' Experiences of the Canterbury Earthquakes and the Role of Belonging

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- Forcibly displaced (people of concern) – **51.2 million**
- **11.7 million** refugees
- **27 countries** have formal refugee resettlement programs
- In 2013, there were **98,400 refugees resettled**
- New Zealand takes up to 750 refugees per year
Context – February 22, 2011
Study Design

Total: 112 Participants
11 Focus Groups; 32 Interviews (15 Men, 17 Women)
Afghan, Bhutanese, Ethiopian, Somali, Kurdish, Eritrean
Over Time

Pre-Quake – Belonging was a ‘civic’ sentiment -- often through jobs and education (or the possibility thereof), being resettled and rights entitled to all New Zealanders

Phase One (early 2012) – Belonging also became an ‘ethno’ sentiment not experienced previously; ‘civic’ belonging still there and the promise of further ‘civic’ belonging

Phase Two (late 2012, early 2013) Ethno-belonging not spoken about as much; The promise of ‘civic’ belonging in terms of the rebuild/recovery has lost much of its lustre

• It would be hard to say that they will move back because now Christchurch is in a rebuilding state and in that rebuilding state, what part are they going to play in terms of employment? Are they going to find a job easily? (S)

And across diversity – intersectionality of Identity...

Resettlement and Some Markers of Identity
Conversations about men
Conversations about women
Conversations about older community members
Findings

Refugee Background Communities
• Most helpful responses were intra-ethnic (short and longer term)
• Belonging as a complex and changing construct but important for disaster mitigation and recovery
• Gender, age, time resettled and size of ethnic community
• Community plans, community driven and (collectively) agency supported

Future Directions and Possibilities
• Nearly 900,000 refugees resettled over last ten years
• Critiquing ‘vulnerability’
• Pro-active community responses and communication systems
Hope

So if people work together... maybe the city might not be that beautiful but what makes a city beautiful is not really the buildings. Mostly the people actually make the city beautiful. As long as the people stay friendly and you feel you can belong then there’s hope in it.
Thank you

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