

# The Relationship between Pre-Collaboration and Community Resiliency: A Case of Housing Renewal Project in New Zealand

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## Abstract

While collaborative governance and planning are often criticized for exacerbating power imbalances, failing to be inclusive and/or impartial, and for ignoring historical conflict, some scholars have found an informal but foundational phase/pre-collaboration critical in mitigating contextual and historical factors that often lead to marginalization during more formal negotiations. Building such foundations is considerably money and time intensive, so this paper aims to investigate outcomes of pre-collaboration on the ground and whether it contributes to long-term community adaptation and resiliency. Using qualitative methods and based on a case study of housing renewal project in a community described as “deprived”, we found a direct connection between informal pre-collaboration, community resiliency and long-term adaptation. We argue that the pre-collaboration phase may shape the ultimate success or failure of the endeavour as it enables communities to become “collaboration-ready” in a situation where the context is hostile, and there are power and capability inequalities. This research shows that the benefits of pre-collaboration arguably outweigh the costs, particularly over the long-term.

## Keywords

Foundations of Collaboration, Pre-Collaboration, Local Community, Adaptation and Resiliency

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## 1. Introduction

Over recent decades, the modern rational planning model has been strongly criticised for being ineffective in responding to urban challenges in both the “developed” and “developing” world. One important criticism of planning as a top-down process was the reliance on the knowledge of planners, which made

planning expert-driven and state-directed, and led to the “exclusion” of the main constituents of urban communities. Communities played a passive role in planning and were seen as recipients of the decisions and actions of planning experts (Sandercock, 1998). Since the 1960s, one response among planning theorists has been to think much more specifically about planning as a “multi-party collaborative” process concerned with public participation and community involvement (Allmendinger, 1998; Dryzek, 1994; Forester, 1982; Friedmann, 1973; Healey, 1992; Lane, 2005). This was driven in planning theory by Sherry Arnstein’s well-known Ladder of Citizen Participation, published in the *Journal of the American Planning Association* in 1969 (Arnstein, 1969). At the same time, a shift in policies from government to governance occurred as a result of improvements in knowledge and understanding about the diverse interests, and conflicts of interest, in societies (Dryzek, 1994; Habermas, 1984; Innes & Booher, 1999), the interdependence of interests (Dryzek, 1994; Dunn, 1993; Innes & Booher, 2010), the complex nature of problems and improving state and non-state capacities (Booher, 2004; Eppel, 2013; Folke, Hahn, Olsson, & Norberg, 2005). Consequently, new “collaborative” approaches with many advocates have emerged in planning and policies, such as collaborative planning and collaborative governance. These collaborative approaches often offer “a process” (that can be regarded as a “stage”) that is often “formal” and aims to meet a number of indicators, such as inclusiveness, impartiality, equal power sharing, transparency, consensus building and conflict resolution. Subsequently, the purpose behind “investment” in collaboration seems to be building these qualities.

In this paper, we question why bother trying to meet these qualities as they have been heavily criticized as difficult to achieve in the real world. More importantly, in the earlier research Karaminejad, Vallance & Montgomery (2020), criticized the collaboration theory for giving less attention to the context, history and future of collaboration. We argued that collaboration happens over different stages, so different outcomes are achieved over different timescales. These stages include informal pre-collaboration, collaboration (or formal collaboration) and post-collaboration. We showed that pre-collaboration is a critical phase and has to happen first and then collaborative governance (more formal phase) can be started. In this current paper, we focus on the “foundational phase” or “pre-collaboration” to see the returns and outcomes of the investment in pre-collaboration on the ground, if there is any. We aim to explore if it is worthwhile investing in pre-collaboration. In our investigation, we focus on collaboration of public agencies with the communities, so “the communities” are distinct from other sectoral actors. In exploring this idea, we undertook research on a large project that was widely regarded as a “successful” example of collaborative housing renewal as it had a pre-collaboration stage. This project was a central government initiative in New Zealand for one of low-socioeconomic suburbs of Christchurch called Aranui. The project was implemented through a collaboration between Aranui local community, Housing New Zealand Corporation (as

the central government agency) and Christchurch City Council (as the local government). For this paper, we have conducted a qualitative research and interviewed representatives of these organizations as well as representatives of Aranui local community.

## 2. Literature Review

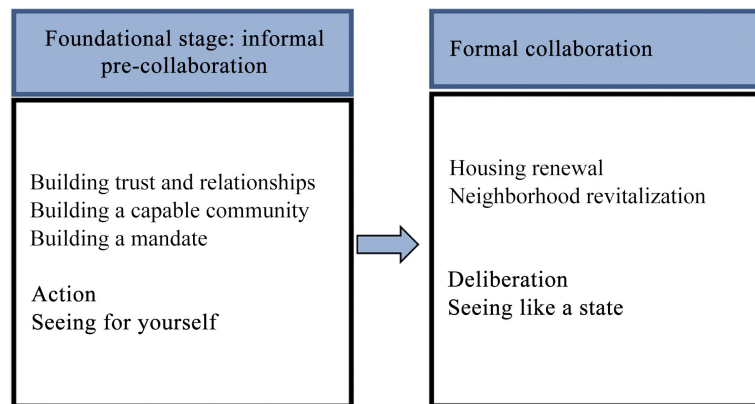
While there is little literature that suggests building a foundation for collaboration, some scholars clearly acknowledge that collaborative initiatives often involve a history of antagonism, conflict and distrust between actors (Andranovich, 1995; Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012; Gray, 1989; Gunton & Day, 2003; Karaminejad et al., 2020; Margerum, 2002; O'Flynn & Wanna, 2008; Warner, 2006). For example, where there is already distrust between a local community and government agencies because of agencies former top-down plans and projects in that community, marginalisation and community exclusion. The context and history of antagonism can present real challenges for practitioners. Moreover, other scholars have highlighted a history of power and capability imbalance between actors who are intending to collaborate and work together (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012; Karaminejad et al., 2020). For example, when collaboration begins officials and stakeholders from well-established groups may already have a mandate, experience, information and a wealth of other resources. In contrast, communities might be little more than a set of diffuse actors or collection of disparate individuals. Consequently, in the real world, the context may not be ready for actors to work together and, in spite of that, most theories and scholars who write about collaboration, often define it as a process that starts directly with sitting around the table and working together (often formally) to address an important issue that is often called public affairs. In response to this dilemma, in our earlier work Karaminejad, Vallance & Montgomery (2020), we highlighted the importance of addressing the issues of pre-existing conflicts, power and capability imbalances between participants before, rather than during, formal negotiations or by actual collaboration to address a key issue. We suggested sufficient attention being given to what is called the “pre-collaboration” phase where a “foundation” is built before more formal processes.

We studied two collaborative housing renewal projects, in New Zealand and Iran, where local and central government agencies worked together with local communities to make decisions and implement the projects. These two projects were implemented in two low-income and vulnerable communities that had a history of distrust and conflicts with local and central government agencies. While the projects were initially initiated to focus on housing renewal, before doing any work related to housing, the public agencies patiently spent a considerable amount of time and money on building trust and relationships with the local communities, building community leadership, community capability and collective mobilization, building a mandate (Memorandum of Understanding),

and letting the public define the key issues or projects. Accordingly, we Karaminejad, Vallance & Montgomery (2020) claimed that these factors are critical “pre-conditions” that build a “foundation” for any sort of collaborative activity where local communities are a type of “stakeholder”. This foundational phase or pre-collaboration stage makes the actors and the context collaborative-ready and this can be achieved through addressing small problems that may be seen to be in a tangent to the larger project but build trust, relationships, leadership, capacity and capability (Karaminejad et al., 2020). As shown in Figure 1, suggested that collaboration on the main problem or according to Ansell and Gash (2008) public affairs could more appropriately be seen as the second stage of the process that should be differed until adequate levels of trust, relationships, leadership, capacity and capability have been achieved.

However, the concern is, although pre-collaboration seems to be very important, it is highly time and money-intensive, which makes a collaborative process that is already being criticised for being long and expensive, even longer and more expensive. In addition, this raises the question whether pre-collaboration is only going to facilitate the rest of the collaborative process or if it has some longer-term results on the ground or outcomes, contributions and consequences to the project, to those involved, and to the local communities and public organizations, so we can say it is worthwhile to invest in pre-collaboration. To define outcomes, it is important to note that in recent years planning and policy theorists and academics have often talked about “transformation ability”, “resiliency” or “adaptation” of the communities and organizations as the ultimate goal of urban planning, collaboration and urban governance (Adger, 2003; Aldrich, 2012; Bull & Jones, 2006; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Healey, 1997; Kapucu, 2014; Kapucu & Garayev, 2011, 2012; Montgomery, 2016; Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004; Shaw, 2003; Smit & Wandel, 2006; Tompkins & Adger, 2004; Waugh & Streib, 2006). Consequently, in this paper we look for the evidence of community adaptation and resiliency to see if the investment on pre-collaboration is worthwhile. Therefore, for us the criteria for worthwhile relate to outcomes of resiliency and adaptation such as having a well-connected community in long-term, a community that has strong relationships and connections with public agencies, strong and trustworthy leaders, it also related to the benefit for the government such as saving money and time in the long-term.

Adaptation is different from the concept “coping”, which is “a *participation in response to an event or initiative to get through the immediate circumstances and it does not necessarily reflect or predict individuals or communities’ adaptation over a long-term period*” (Montgomery, 2016: p. 3). Adaptive capacity is a more durable notion and a long-term adaptation to challenges at the individual, group and community level. We introduce the term “durability” interchangeably with adaptation and resiliency, and these terms refer to developing collaborative relations, durability and strengthening those relations in the long-term, and even when shocks and unexpected situations happen. According to the literature of



**Figure 1.** Informal “pre-collaboration” and formal collaboration in the context of collaborative governance and collaborative planning (Karaminejad, Vallance, & Montgomery, 2020: p. 616).

collaborative planning, collaborative governance and adaptive management, building resilient and adaptive communities is what matters at the present time when natural and man-made disasters (such as earthquakes, Covid-19, and global warming) keep hitting us unexpectedly. Therefore, this paper investigates whether it is worth investing in pre-collaboration, and if it has any outcomes or returns on the ground in terms of community resiliency and adaptation to disasters. Worth or value for us is a more empowered and resilient community that only demands government’s help when it cannot address the problem on its own. We assess worth through finding the evidence of resiliency and adaptation in the community.

Criteria for worthwhile are the outcomes of resiliency and adaptation for the community, benefits for the government.

### 3. Research Methods and Cases

This study adopted qualitative research methods and a case study approach to explore possible outcomes, contributions or consequences of pre-collaboration. Qualitative methods were deemed most appropriate because the questions demanded an exploration of the subtle nuances in attitudes to examine social process over time (Babbie, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A case study approach involves achieving an in-depth understanding of the setting with individuals, organizations and groups over time, and allows a better appreciation of the web of relations and diverse activities in each context (Neuman, 2011; Yin, 2009). Although case studies do have limitations, Flyvbjerg (2001) uses the term “power of example” to illustrate the utility of this method in generating concrete, practical and context-dependent knowledge.

We chose one case study to deeply analyse the possible consequences of pre-collaboration on a community and highlight the theoretical contributions. Case selection was based on certain criteria: first, a case associated with claims that it was collaborative and that the community participated in the project; secondly

and, most importantly, a case that has already been shown to have had a pre-collaboration stage before initiating formal collaboration on the key issue or main project; and thirdly, a case at the neighbourhood level that had already been implemented, so allowing a retrospective evaluation.

The Aranui Community Renewal Project is the case study in the current paper. Aranui is a neighbourhood located in the east of Christchurch city and, from socio-economic data, it is represented as being “deprived”, resulting in low educational levels, employment and income statistics (Karaminejad et al., 2020). Until the first half of the 20th century, Aranui was predominantly a rural area (Montgomery, 2016). Consequently, in the 1950s and 1960s, a large number of state houses were built in Aranui, largely through the (then) orthodox welfare state model characterised as “top-down”. Later, there were some attempts to decrease building costs and this resulted in the introduction of new designs, including duplexes, non-detached houses and multi-unit buildings (Boyd, 2011). Such housing was unusual in the New Zealand context because the “ideal” house was, and still is, a detached single dwelling with a garden (Schrader, 2005). The multi-unit buildings resulted in huge dissatisfaction because they had privacy issues and limited private outdoor spaces. They looked the same and the proximity of several multi-unit buildings increased territorial gang wars and created safety issues for the local community (Montgomery, 2016). Therefore, the area had a history of marginalisation, poverty and deprivation and “top-down” project management. By the 1990s, Aranui had the highest rate of transient population in the whole city and was over-represented in violent crime statistics (Statistics New Zealand, 2001).

In 1999, New Zealand’s newly-elected Labour government initiated a programme of “housing renewal” projects to be implemented in different neighbourhoods across New Zealand that had a high percentage of state houses and a history of social problems. Aranui was chosen as a pilot project that aimed: “To foster strong communities in areas of predominantly state houses and to exhibit a sense of social responsibility by having regard to the interests of the communities in which it operates” (HNZC, 2000: p. 4). Critically, soon after the project’s inception, senior managers at the Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC<sup>1</sup>), which is the central government institution responsible for building, maintaining and managing state housing in the country started to understand that “housing” was just one of the many issues residents were facing. In taking a more holistic approach, HNZC started involving other agencies, such as the Christchurch City Council (CCC) and also residents from Aranui. Therefore, Aranui housing renewal was a collaboration between three main partners: Christchurch City Council (CCC), HNZC and the local Aranui community. Early in the project, the partners changed the project name from housing renewal to Community Renewal project. The project started in 2000 and was terminated in 2008. Originally, the project was supposed to focus on rebuilding state houses

<sup>1</sup>Now it is called Kāinga Ora Homes and Communities

but the agencies ended up spending considerable time (around one year) and money on building and making the context and community ready to talk about the large issues, such as housing. Thus, formal collaboration about housing came second and pre-collaboration happened first (Karaminejad et al., 2020). In this article, we now go through what happened in pre-collaboration (2000-2001), then present the rest of the project that happened afterwards (2008), and also the future for it (from 2008-2018), to monitor the partners' activities especially the Aranui local community and find any positive or negative changes in their short-term or long-term capacity, capability and resiliency.

Fourteen in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of public agencies, the community, developers and others involved in the project. In Christchurch (NZ), three planners, as CCC representatives, three HNZC managers, the East Christchurch Member of Parliament (MP), an adult educator from the Ministry of Education, five community representatives and a private developer were interviewed. We used purposive sampling to choose the first interviewees and snowball sampling thereafter. The interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically. A second source of data was drawn from relevant documents, including reports, correspondence and meeting notes, and media releases. The third source of data were observations of any physical and social changes in the neighbourhood, monitoring the residents' behaviour and their adaptation to the new developments, community events and ceremonies and, finally, interpretive walks through the neighbourhood accompanied by a HNZC representative.

#### 4. Results

In early 2000, representatives of HNZC and the CCC approached key local people or trustees in Aranui to talk about the housing renewal project, but they found a substantial lack of trust in the community towards these agencies because of their negative history of relationships and their ignorance of the Aranui community for a long period of time. Local Aranui people confronted the officials very seriously and asked them to go away and leave them alone. They said "*We don't trust you, you are a government organization you have been here before, promised to work with us on other things but you haven't. You said something really good and then you left and [things] fell over*" (Aranui Community Trust Incorporated Society (ACTIS) manager, 17 Jan. 2017). Apparently, there were pre-existing conflicts at the beginning of the project. In such a situation, HNZC and CCC representatives did not leave, rather, they spent some time on how to make the situation work. They knew that there were distrust issues because of their previous work but they honestly wanted appease the communities and reassure them that this project was going to be different and the organizations had a commitment to involve the community. As explained in detail in Karaminejad, Vallance & Montgomery (2020). The agencies spent almost a year (from late 2000 to late 2001) undertaking some activities that were not pre-defined

or pre-planned but, instead, were defined and initiated on the spot. Their actions during the first year encompassed four important aspects that, together, formed the pre-collaboration phase.

The first one was trust and relationship building. HNZC and the CCC started to do things differently, they would patiently listen to what the community wanted and act in the way they wanted. One of the earliest requests of the community was wanting the agencies to be based in Aranui, to open a local office and to make a commitment to stay for a long time. Although the agencies were not totally in agreement with that, they accepted this and turned a HNZC house into an office, and appointed two project managers and several staff to stay in Aranui full-time. Moreover, local people raised many of the community small and immediate issues that they had had for a long time, such as the mess and rubbish around Aranui. Consequently, HANZ and CCC initiated and jointly funded a number of small and medium-sized projects to address these issues. Local people led most of the projects; for example, several projects were implemented to clean up the area. One of the important concerns and complaints of the community was the behaviour of HNZC tenants in Aranui. To address this problem, HNZC appointed two tenancy managers to stay in Aranui full-time and take care of their tenants' behaviour. Also, by community request, some family fun days and events were held to bring the community together, entertain children and inform families about the project. Altogether, around 23 small and medium-size projects and events were implemented very early in the project that responded to the community's immediate needs and, more importantly, helped to build a foundation of trust and relationship between the agencies and local Aranui residents.

The second aspect of the pre-collaboration phase was building a community or community capability building. Early in the project, the agencies realized an important fact was the lack of community togetherness. The community had no leadership or representative body, but was a collection of fragmented groups, families and individuals who were not necessarily working together. HNZC and the CCC encouraged and supported local residents to get together and form a leadership group, for themselves from themselves, a strong group that would lead the entire community, link all the groups and represent them in the whole project. Subsequently, local residents nominated and chose local people who they felt were suitable and capable of doing this job. This resulted in the official formation of the Aranui Community Trust Incorporated Society (ACTIS) as a genuine bottom-up leader, which became the leader for Aranui throughout the project. Most ACTIS board members had lived in Aranui for years, so they had a great knowledge and commitment to Aranui. Even though the chairperson was not from Aranui, he was highly regarded and trusted by the local people. They had targeted him and worked hard to appoint him as chairperson. HNZC and CCC supported ACTIS in two ways: first, by providing an office courtesy of HNZC; and secondly, by providing resources and funding to employ two

full-time workers to work for ACTIS, this was done via the CCC. This made the community more of an equal partner, although it did not guarantee equal partnership, this community was more capable of having conversations, communications, and collaboration with the officials.

Another aspect of the pre-collaboration phase was building a mandate and formally providing equal rights for the community to have influence on the project. ACTIS asked the agencies to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with them which, officially, would count the community as an equal partner and offer formal and equal rights to have a say, to be listened to and have information, knowledge and awareness about the whole process (Karaminejad et al., 2020). HNZC and CCC agreed to do that, so a MoU was designed and signed by the three equal partners (HNZC, CCC and ACTIS).

Finally, when there was already some level of trust and relationships built between agencies and the community, HNZC and CCC asked the community to define the main problem or issue to address. Although housing had initially been defined by HNZC as the key issue, the agencies decided to ask local residents about their main concerns in the area that needed special attention and budget. In this regard, a large survey known as Needs Analysis Survey was conducted by an independent researcher funded by HNZC and the CCC. They surveyed local homeowners, HNZC tenants, primary and high school students, the police and other local people. The results of the survey showed that the community had made an informed decision and raised housing and the lack of safety and facilities in Wainoni Park as the two top priorities to focus on (not just housing) (Kelly, 2001). As a result, the agencies officially started working and spending money on these two large projects, housing renewal and upgrading Wainoni Park.

Therefore, after almost one year of pre-collaboration that led to significant small and early wins, work on the main projects started; it took seven years to finish (2001-2008). Over this time, ACTIS and the broader local community were actively involved in every step of these two projects, including the design, demolition and monitoring of the new houses and the Wainoni Park upgrading projects. Alongside what happened regarding to the new houses and Wainoni Park by HNZC and CCC, ACTIS developed some new connections with some other public and private agencies. Subsequently, some new development projects came to Aranui as a result of ACTIS's new relations. The new projects were one part from the main projects (housing renewal and Wainoni Park upgrade) and they had not been defined or planned previously in the renewal process but they were implemented at the same time as the main projects. They are presented, below, in detail.

As soon as ACTIS was formed in 2001, it tried to get connected to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). The Ministry had a scheme where MSD would allocate money to some community organizations that had an objective and a defined operational plan for strengthening their community. This scheme

was called the Strengthening Community Action Fund (SCAF) (The Christchurch East MP<sup>2</sup>, 13 April 2017). In 2001, when ACTIS had not been formed yet, the MP applied for Aranui to win this fund but the application failed “*because there was no capacity of organizations to do this*” (the MP, 13 April 2017). In 2002, when ACTIS had already been formed, its board members used their grassroots knowledge to design a plan with clear objectives and strategies for strengthening Aranui community. They applied for SCAF again and won funding, which was \$200,000 a year for four years (ACTIS chairperson, 7 Feb. 2017). This money helped ACTIS gain financial autonomy to a high degree (because ACTIS had no control over the renewal budget). The first thing ACTIS did with the money was buying a building in the neighbourhood (for \$95,000) and turned it into an office, so they secured a permanent place for themselves (ACTIS chairperson, 7 Feb. 2017). They employed a full-time manager for ACTIS (paid for by CCC), started to grant money to small co-operative groups who wanted money to do something for the community. For example, they supported Richards Starling’s group who would help children with complex problems to prepare for school (ACTIS chairperson, 7 Feb. 2017). Previously, these groups had to submit their plans to CCC and wait to be funded but from now on they would ask ACTIS for funds (ACTIS chairperson, 7 Feb. 2017). The MP believed that Aranui won the fund because the Community Renewal had already given them the ability and confidence to collaborate with the other organizations (13 April 2017).

ACTIS also initiated close relations with the Ministry of Education (ME) early in the project. In 2002, the ME had some adult education centres around Christchurch. ACTIS communicated with the head of East Christchurch Adult Education Centre and negotiated with him about opening a centre in Aranui. ACTIS even offered the use of part of their own office to the Education Centre for free. An adult educator said: “*I became really well-connected with the Aranui Community Trust (ACTIS) because they were really a place, a hub for the community. So, we started delivering adult education programmes through the trust*” (17 April 2017).

*Adult education has a very sort of strong approach to community development and empowering those that don’t have strong voice in the community ... There were a lot of issues with learning and education in Aranui and that [had] been for many years. A lot of people had not succeeded in learning or education and had a really bad experience in education and didn’t value education as being positive or good. So, part of what we wanted to do and work with the trust to deliver the programmes that supported communities but also gave adults some key skills ... so just connecting with each other and doing learning things* (17 April 2017).

<sup>2</sup>Aranui’s MP is the Christchurch East MP who is in Parliament to represent Aranui and other suburbs of east Christchurch. Within this text, “local MP” or “the MP” refers to the Christchurch East MP.

ACTIS and the Adult Education Centre in Aranui employed some local tutors and other people with special skills to teach literacy, numeracy, cooking, carving and social skills. They held variety of programmes for five years (until the ME policy changed), the funding would come from ME and SCAF, which was ACTIS money. Adult education classes would be held in Aranui High School at night and in the ACTIS office. Kelly (2008) reported, in 2007, that there had been a significant drop in the number of residents who held “no qualification” (41.3%) in comparison to the 1990s. ACTIS named a day on September 2002, “Aranui Independence Day” to “*reflect a sense of independence to be gained through education*” (Aranui Community Renewal Accomplishments, 2001).

Heartland was another project that ACTIS was able to gain. As mentioned, above, SCAF was the only income that ACTIS had and it was provided by MSD. In 2005, a new Minister was appointed for MSD who, unfortunately, did not believe in strengthening communities, so he cut the SCAF fund (the Christchurch East MP, 13 April, 2017). ACTIS board members were very disappointed and their chairperson said, “*The ideal of this pilot (SCAF) was to succeed and it is a way of experimenting and devolving funding to local communities to work for themselves. So, our vision was to continue on and to develop all this amazing stuff and it was stopped. Because the officials didn’t prioritize it*” (7 Feb. 2017). ACTIS asked the MP to negotiate with the Minister and advocate for Aranui, the MP negotiated with him but the Minister did not agree with continuing SCAF funding. However, he gave Aranui the Heartland Project as a compromise, which the MP believed was “*a recognition that Aranui had succeeded with the SCAF funding but the project was not continuing so they found another project for Aranui*” (13 April 2017). Heartland was about government services going to local communities instead of local people going to where the services were; for example, the Inland Revenue Department, Social Welfare and Community Law. The Heartland Centre rented part of the ACTIS office and one ACTIS staff undertook the coordination for them. All Heartland centres around New Zealand are managed by government departments while the one in Aranui is the only one managed by the community, so ACTIS invites service providers to come to Aranui (CCC Community Development Advisor, 23 Feb. 2017). According to the CCC Community Development Advisor, Aranui’s Heartland Centre, which is still active (in 2020), was one of the most successful and busiest, with the most service providers and walk-ins in the whole of New Zealand (23 Feb. 2017).

As a result of this, in the 2000s, there were many organizations in Aranui working on different things, such as HNZA, CCC, MSD and ME. In 2007, ACTIS decided to develop a strategic plan for the next five years for Aranui and, by doing this, make government agencies co-responsible for the outcomes and the future of Aranui (Adult educator, 17 April 2017). The plan was called Outcome-based Measurements and had five goals to achieve over five years: a community that was socially and spiritually strong (high participation); a community full of knowledge and learning; a great physical environment; no family

violence; and a community that was healthy (ACTIS, 2010). ACTIS conducted a door-to-door survey and asked every family about these indicators “[W] hat we wanted to do was presenting a form of the community perspective saying [for example] we want to improve access to primary health care locally” (Adult Educator, 17 April 2017), so the agencies would feel a greater responsibility to assist Aranui. Importantly, ACTIS used the same indicators that government departments would use, so they could easily have a dialogue with them. They then created a network of relationships with the police to reduce family violence; with the schools, to reduce the number of students leaving school without qualifications; and with several health providers. ACTIS would get the data on health, education and family violence every year for three years (2007 to 2009) and compare them to see if there were any improvements (adult educator, 17 April 2017). In 2009, a year after the government change (NZ), the budget for the adult educator who would work for ACTIS on this project stopped and this project also stopped at that time.

While this illustrated the community empowerment, there was clear evidence of individual progress and empowerment in Aranui during and after the renewal process. Some local men and women who did not even have a high school education gained hope and confidence to progress, to go on with education. Some became leaders, spokesmen and women, strong ACTIS board members, and students at college. One example was a Maori woman who tells her story: “*When we started the Community Renewal, I was just a mum of five, that’s it ... but since doing that it has given me confidence, I have just graduated ... I learned that determination can carry everything through, I learned that I was a lot stronger than what I thought I would be. I have learned that I am a lot more than just a mom and that carries a lot more than that. I now run the Otautahi Maori wardens, I have 23 people under me ... we do patrols at night ... we care of whole of Christchurch ... and we also do daytime patrol(s) and scraps to make sure that the walls are ok ... it is just for the safety of the community ...*” (10 April 2017).

Aranui’s journey was not always smooth or happen in a normal situation but was faced with some massive shocks, challenges and disasters, so we now clarify the community’s reaction to them.

In 2008, as a result of the government’s change in New Zealand, the Community Renewal Project was terminated and formally finished. HNZN left Aranui, the local office was closed; therefore, the CCC also did not have a physical presence in the community. Although this looked like a disaster for Aranui, ACTIS had already bought the office for itself, and had many connections with different organizations, so it stayed in the community and continued strongly to develop and strengthen its networks.

In February 2011, a massive earthquake occurred in Christchurch, and the eastern suburbs, including Aranui, were the most affected. Against popular expectation, the Aranui community although hard-hit, responded very well. On

the first day after the earthquake, while the city was still in shock and no help had yet been received by public organisations, the Aranui local people gathered at Aranui Primary School, a state school, and converted it into a *de facto* civil emergency response hub (a local community representative, 19 Sep. 2107). They brought a large generator to the school and a container for water, and their spare washing machines so people had access to water and could even do their laundry. A church in Aranui, who had contact with Foodstuffs NZ Ltd., used the school to give out food where the cost had been reduced by government subsidies (a local community representative, 19 Sep. 2107). People from all around Christchurch would come to Aranui because “*there was water, food and entertainment ... they came down to entertain kids for a while and also [for the] washing machines*” (a local community representative, 19 Sep. 2107). All participants of this research believed that Aranui was one of the most resilient communities in the whole city. CCC Community Development Advisors said:

*We got official responses ... while that was getting sorted, the communities were on their own [for three days]. So, Aranui was a community that responded really, really well. Statistically they weren't supposed to [because] the worst areas the poorest, that is where you get the disease and whatever, it didn't work because of how connected that area was, and I think predominantly through the agencies that were there and through the people that working there and have all been there for decades* (2 Feb. 2017).

Just after the earthquakes, ACTIS conducted another door-to-door survey in Aranui: first, to see how families were coping and what they needed; and, secondly, to use the results for preparing a result-based accountability plan. At that time, some public and private agencies jointly had some recovery funds (called the Metropolitan Fund) to give to community organizations that had a clear plan for their community's recovery. ACTIS prepared a result-based accountability plan, submitted it, and was able to win \$150,000. ACTIS was the first organization in Christchurch with Metro funding (ACTIS chairperson, 7 Feb. 2107). This survey clearly revealed the trust and the close relationships between Aranui residents and ACTIS. The ACTIS chairperson noted:

*There were illegal migrants in the houses .... So, surveyors would ask how many people are in the house? People would say, “Oh I don't know, who wants to know?” I am from ACTIS, if you want to verify it, ring Elizabeth (ACTIS manager) and then they would open up [and tell the truth]. They trust us because the organization (ACTIS) has a reputation in the community for being trustworthy .... Yeah. We don't squeal to the authorities, we don't pass the information to the authorities. We work with our partners but we are very clear about our obligations in here. At the end, we were asked through the authorities for the information ... and we said we would not give that to you, It has been given to us on trust* (7 Feb. 2107).

The connections that ACTIS already had with different organizations before the earthquakes were reinforced after earthquakes: “[*Previously*] whilst we didn't

*have an earthquake, we were working towards a model which was based around really strong relationships and partnerships ... So, whenever things happen when you have those links previously which are well-connected when you need to be resilient you have got those links already*" (Adult Educator, 17 April 2017). After the quakes, a private health provider that ACTIS was already connected to, had new technology for detecting diseases and wanted to apply that in the poorer areas of Christchurch. The company had meetings with ACTIS as Aranui leaders and Nga Tahu (the local iwi) leaders to choose one of them, and they chose Aranui (ACTIS chairperson, 7 Feb. 2017). It was a three-year contract worth \$500,000. ACTIS employed a nurse and a social worker, bought a van and turned it into a health van (ACTIS chairperson, 7 Feb. 2017). ACTIS has been able to keep the health van and the nurse, who is still working very actively in the area.

Although, in 2008, HNZC, one of the original partners had almost completely left Aranui and did not sign a MoU with ACTIS and CCC anymore, ACTIS strengthened its relationship with the CCC more than before. ACTIS and CCC have been signing the MoU every year and they have had a durable and long-lasting relationship, which resulted in building a public library and also a large community hub in Aranui. In the Needs Analysis survey that was conducted in 2001, building a library was one of the needs identified in the community but the CCC did not have a budget for it at that time. ACTIS continued to communicate with the CCC about that for almost 10 years and, finally, in 2011, CCC allocated money to building it. The community was very happy to receive such a facility, *"that's an amazing facility and I know it is focused on the needs of the community and it is opened and encouraging"* (ACTIS chairperson, 7 Feb. 2017).

Aranui had two community centres that were demolished because of the damage from the earthquakes. This led to ACTIS's constant negotiations with CCC and some other public and private organizations about building a community centre for Aranui (ACTIS chairperson, 7 Feb. 2017). Finally, an international organization called Lion Clubs International, some central government organisations and CCC jointly funded building a large community hub in Aranui (ACTIS chairperson, 7 Feb. 2017). It is important to note that the major part of the funds was from the CCC. The new community centre is double the size of the original one (it cost \$6 million) and it was designed by a young, local architect (ACTIS chairperson, 7 Feb. 2017). The community centre is highly used: *"It is used by many different groups, churches, youth groups, dance lessons, community groups, after funeral functions, weddings, birthdays, car club and other groups"* (Baker, 2007: p. 158).

All the examples, above show how resilient and empowered Aranui has become, it has learned to react quickly and appropriately to any new challenge they were faced with. A recent example is a bottle store that CCC had issued a licence for this and was going to be located in Aranui. Local people were not happy with that so, with the help of ACTIS, they signed 60 written submissions and objec-

tions to the council (ACTIS manager, 17 January 2017). Eventually, the CCC cancelled the licence and the community was able to quickly react and address this challenge. Another recent example was when ACTIS wanted HNZN to demolish some damaged houses in Aranui that were vacant after the Canterbury earthquakes, as they would attract bad behaviours. HNZN pulled them down and designed new ones without involving ACTIS and the local community (ACTIS manager, 17 January 2017). They designed high density houses with communal spaces that ACTIS was very unhappy with. Although HNZN had less interest in community engagement, ACTIS still insisted and involved the police, the fire service and, finally, were able to persuade HNZN officials to change some of their plans, although only minimal changes (ACTIS manager, 17 January 2017). The ACTIS chairperson added: “*We had lots of meetings, meeting after meeting to get them to agree to consider some minor changes. Eventually they agreed to lessen the density, they took a couple of units out and they reconfigured the driveways to remove most of the communal stuff. So, they made it less intensive*” (7 Feb. 2017). Therefore, Aranui had the capability to make the government change its plans, although in a limited way.

## 5. Discussion

There are claims that pre-collaboration is an important stage to be implemented in collaborative initiatives before the actual (often formal) collaboration on the key issue start and where local communities are a kind of “stakeholder”. This paper investigated whether it was worthwhile investing money and time on pre-collaboration and if it had any returns or outcomes on the ground especially in terms of community adaptation and resiliency in long-term. Pre-collaboration in Aranui took almost one year and it was not pre-defined or pre-planned. A large number of small and medium sized projects were implemented to build a foundation of trust and relationships, local community leadership (ACTIS), and a MoU gave the local community equal rights to have an influence. All of this happened before even starting to initiate the housing project or the Wainoni Park project.

Pre-collaboration led to small and early wins, such as trust building, which not only facilitated the rest of the process but also community adaptation, resiliency and empowerment, these were the most important outcomes from this process. ACTIS was formed in the pre-collaboration phase; it tied all the community groups together and immediately started building connections to many public and private agencies, and these connections are still durable after almost 20 years. HNZN and CCC were original partners of ACTIS, but MSD, ME, DIF and private organizations started working with ACTIS from 2002, implementing many projects. Through these connections, Aranui got access to government funds (SCAF), to government services (Heartland), to five years of empowerment and adult education classes so, alongside building new houses and upgrading Wainoni Park, the community was receiving many more projects through

ACTIS's connections with other agencies. This indicated that pre-collaboration had given the community confidence and capability to initiate negotiations and participate with government and non-government organizations, to seek for new relationships and new development projects. These new relationships and projects were the outcomes of pre-collaboration, evidence of resiliency and adaptation and how we assess worth or value of pre-collaboration.

Although, in 2008, HNZC, one of the main partners left Aranui and the Community Renewal officially finished, ACTIS remained alive and empowered and it is still strong and active. Since then, Aranui has faced massive shocks and disappointments that can be good tests of community capability and resiliency. For example, earthquakes or building the new high-density houses in Aranui by HNZC using a top-down approach. This evidence here shows that the community was empowered enough to react quickly and appropriately to these challenges in a way that even other rich neighbourhoods would rely on to receive some help from Aranui. In fact, the case of Aranui demonstrated that only one year of investment on pre-collaboration before starting larger projects, can make the most vulnerable communities capable of taking care of themselves, standing on their own feet and, even, becoming a response or emergency hub for other neighbourhoods in times of disasters while they were expected to be in most need themselves. Normally, government agencies need to provide a considerable amount of help and money to the most vulnerable communities at times of disasters, but the current research showed that doing pre-collaboration makes these communities capable of solving many of their problems themselves without asking for governmental help. It eventually saves money and time for the government agencies in the long term and also the communities as they do not need to ask, and then wait, for government help. The Aranui case shows one year of investment and around twenty years of ongoing community progress and empowerment and, arguably, twenty years of money saving for the government. That is what makes a pre-collaboration not only necessary but worthwhile. Since then, there has not been a direct plan or project for Aranui renewal or redevelopment, the CCC and HNZC are not bothered about Aranui anymore as Aranui is taking care of itself and, at the same time, it has durable relationships with these organizations. Investment on pre-collaboration also reduces the need for ongoing government investment on community development that the government agencies are expected to undertake every year. This is a costly and hard task, and government agencies do not normally prioritise it. However, this research indicates that investment on pre-collaboration helps communities to be empowered, to seek for development projects themselves and then create access to government's funds. The agencies do not need to make exact plans or projects for communities because they undertake planning themselves and then ask for government money to implement their plans. Such a community becomes demanding, informed, strong and its own problem solver to a high degree and so it does not need the same ongoing government investment every year. Therefore,

while the first year of investment on pre-collaboration is expensive, it pays off in the long-term.

Another outcome of pre-collaboration was a durable and well-maintained neighbourhood, physically and socially, where local people have a sense of pride, belonging and ownership towards their area. In the pre-collaboration phase, many projects related to cleaning the neighbourhood, some events were initiated to bring the community together were implemented. These projects are still ongoing with the help of ACTIS, the neighbourhood is well-maintained and the festivals are held every year. The renewed houses built by HNZA are well-maintained by tenants because it was the community's idea to spend money on houses and they designed them, so they had a sense of ownership towards them.

Another outcome of pre-collaboration was facilitating communication between public agencies and communities. Having a local and collective leader such as ACTIS that all local residents trust, made communication of public and private agencies with this community so much easier. For example, Aranui won a \$500,000 health budget because communication with ACTIS was so much easier for the private organization who owned the budget. Building a community or collective leader saves time and, eventually, money for the agencies to communicate with the community. In relation to that, going where the communities are and setting up "good offices" in the community may seem unconventional or threatening to local or central government staff, but it brings those in power and the weaker actors onto common ground and new planning arenas, gives agency representatives a better understanding of the community's issues, wants and needs in context, significantly facilitates mutual communications between agencies and local citizens, builds trust, friendly and informal relations, and puts the power in the hands of the locals in an informal manner.

## 6. Conclusion

The case study detailed in this research indicated the need for increased attention to be given to what is called informal pre-collaboration. Collaboration is often described as "a process", which is more "formal" and focused on addressing public affairs or important issues. So, process contributions, such as conflict resolution and consensus building, are highlighted as the end results regardless of what the actual outcomes on the ground are. Although the ultimate goal of collaborative planning and governance is to build transformative capability or adaptation, this research illustrates that regardless of what happens in formal collaboration, pre-collaboration is not only critical but worthwhile. Because worth is building resilient and adaptive communities that are less demanding and can solve their problems. Pre-collaboration that happened before the start of formal collaborative governance helped to build community resiliency and helped the government save money in long-term. This reveals that there is a direct connection between informal pre-collaboration, community resiliency in long-terms.

Planners and public agencies when working with the communities are sug-

gested to start from pre-collaboration even at times of difficulties, when there are time and money pressures. It is suggested to go as far as they can, but never bridge pre-collaboration unless there is already trust and community capability in place. How much effort and expenditure are required before moving to a more formal phase will, of course, vary across the different contexts.

In fact, the “pre-collaboration” phase may shape the ultimate success or failure of the endeavour as it enables communities to become “collaboration-ready” in a situation where the context is hostile, there is distrust among actors and there are power and capability inequalities. While building a community before formal engagement was found to be crucial, along with implementing many small and larger projects that are achievable, these are not easy tasks and can make the process expensive and long. This current research showed that the benefits arguably outweigh the costs, particularly over the long-term.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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