



Building Resilient Communities

## Seminar Report

### June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016, Wellington

**Start Local.** brought together 160 people from diverse sectors, places and organisations to consider what more can be done to engage, empower and build more resilient local communities. A diverse range of thoughtful speakers and leaders shared locally-led successes, challenges and journeys, and offered their insights, ideas and approaches for working smarter and better together.

This Seminar Report captures key highlights, messages, and discussion threads from both speaker and participant perspectives.

**The BIG BIG picture** – [Shreya Basu](#) opened by sharing progress on the international Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative which is aimed at making governments more open, accountable and responsive to citizens. Shreya noted that while technology is enabling citizen participation like never before, this comes at a time when confidence and trust in institutions and institutional leaders is at an all time low. Shreya also highlighted the growing importance of Local Government in OGP – with many cities and regions now getting involved to create their own action plans. She noted how preparing New Zealand's OGP Action Plan offers a new opportunity to articulate how central government in New Zealand both is, and could be better supporting, locally-led initiatives and change.

**Local Places Leading** – South Waikato Mayor, [Neil Sinclair](#) shared the positive difference that starting by identifying local strengths has made in his District.

#### ***Why OGP is Going Local:***

- *With increased urbanization, the need for effective local government has never been greater*
- *Many innovations and reforms are happening at a local level*
- *Strengthening open government at the local level can directly improve citizens lives because many crucial public services are administered locally*
- *Increased transparency and active community engagement in policy deliberation and decision-making can enhance the responsiveness and accountability of local government*

Source: Shreya Basu

Witnessing his community transform an empty piece of Council land into a Children's Park in just one weekend, confirmed for Neil that "a spirited community of doers" needs to be supported by a Council that's innovative, courageous and imaginative. In South Waikato this has led to the Council putting their hands up to trial new opportunities such as home insulation schemes and actively looking for 'out of the box' collaborative solutions that build on the District's many positive attributes. For example, to create new local youth employment



opportunities, the Council approached local industry and engineering firms to see what skills they needed. \$90,000 of Council funds were directed to purchasing new equipment for young trades trainees and local employers worked together with the Waiariki Polytech to design a new locally tailored syllabus for trades training. The net result of being proactive and collaborative has been 90 -100% pass rates for youth trainees and clear pathways for newly skilled young people into local jobs.

*"We can do, we must do."*

*Mayor Neil Sinclair,  
Start Local 2016*

The importance of passionate long term community leadership was a key theme that ran through the community transformation journey shared by [Aranui Community Trust's Rachael Fonotia](#). Both Rachael (a local resident herself) and 50%+ of their Board have been together for 15 years. This has been important in building trust with local people and holding an overview of community aspirations and needs. The Trust has led many innovations, such as delivering early intervention health services, and has worked hard to support their hard hit community post quakes. With 70% of local people not online, face to face relationships remain key at both resident level, and with other partners and agencies supporting the Trust.

Constantly changing personnel at agency level has been a major challenge. Promises made to keep the community involved and informed are often forgotten. In the case of Housing NZ, previous partnering agreements and institutional memory of community housing preferences and plans negotiated with Aranui locals have been ignored – with recently built housing developments representing everything local people said they didn't want! The need for agencies to meaningfully work **with** local people and community connectors like Aranui Trust – rather than **do for or to** Aranui remains a 'work in progress.' And there's a lot going on – around \$150 million is currently being invested in Aranui, ensuring local people are kept up to date with [what's planned](#) is key.

*"We've worked closely with the Christchurch City Council. We've agreed, we've fought – we've all managed to leave the table understanding a bit more."*

*Rachael Fonotia,  
Start Local 2016*

Keeping it simple was a key message from [Kelvin Hastie](#) of Predator Free Crofton Downs – "we kill things." A stoat running past the end of his driveway was what it took for Kelvin to spring into [community-led action](#). Engaging others in his community to achieve the goal of being New Zealand's first 'predator free' suburb has taken Kelvin on an unconventional journey! Rather than rely on environmental experts to tell them what to do, or getting bogged down in defining high level outcomes, they just got started.

Kelvin and his team quickly realised that if they were to beat the pests, first they had to pause and build a sense of local identity, belonging and connection to 'their place.' Once this connection was firmly made, locals took action to care for their place by proactively trapping rats, mice and stoats. Birdlife has since flourished, with local people now taking on a raft of new activities such as track making, tree planting and watching out for new fledgling kaka chicks. Crofton Downs' community-led approach has since spread into four neighbouring suburbs, with around 900 hectares now under residential control.

*"We gave our community the issue and they wrote the script."*

*Kelvin Hastie,  
Start Local 2016*



Te Ora Hou's **Judy Kumeroa** shared learning from her [Gonville community's journey](#) to become a peaceful, connected community. With initial action triggered by an accidental gang related killing of a young child, their 'Stone Soup' community journey has focused on building relationships. Regular eight week community gatherings (hangi and korero in the local park) have been held, local action plans developed (eg. upgrading the local park) and supports available to assist local families. Judy reflected on the importance of enabling local people to articulate their voice and to work inclusively – for example including local gangs in community processes, rather than excluding them. As a result, recently collected community progress data has shown that 'gangs' no longer feature in local people's top four concerns. Judy reiterated the importance of not 'sugar coating' stories and challenges. Stone Soup community data has shown that there is still much work to be done – triggering Te Ora Hou to ask themselves some hard questions about their processes for supporting local change and new relationships that will need to be in place to enable this.

*"Community ownership sometimes means the hangi pit is built four times too big!"*  
**Judy Kumeroa,**  
*Start Local 2016*

### ***What stood out for Start Local attendees from these local stories?***

- Strong, trusting, reciprocal relationships – **and** making sure these are handed over as people move on
- Building from what local communities do have and doing things together
- Courageous, credible, leaders not afraid to try new things and learn from what does/doesn't work
- 'Having safe spaces to tell 'failure' stories matters. Sugar free story telling is important as this work is inherently messy, takes time, and we have to discover what might work here
- Progress is in small steps - small is okay, important to celebrate what you've done or got.
- Focusing on long term outcomes isn't always helpful.
- Local community needs to lead and where possible do - (local/central) government role is support, leverage, connect, resource and take risks **with** communities.
- Importance of changing the narrative around each community to places and people that can and growing community ownership of change

### ***What's Transferable?***

- Developing good processes and investing in relationships
- Starting with the premise that everyone has something to contribute and working with what you've got first
- Constant and continual communication and engagement
- Using your strengths and knowing your weaknesses
- Sharing experience across communities – learning from story telling
- Local contexts determining how and what develops and with and for who
- Focus on starting actions not just defining outcomes



## *Implications for our Work?*

- Reframe deficit, problem, thinking to understand local strengths and assets
- Understand how as a funder we can empower communities
- Start from areas of opportunity not just need
- Understand how community priorities and fit with our agency ones – and how we agencies may need to adapt
- Review transparency, accountability and flexibility to enable community-led outcomes and approaches
- Fund collaboration and local processes that engage local people in solution making– not just projects
- More proactively engage with ALL the different parts of community
- Ensure institutional memory built from working in and with local communities isn't lost
- Acknowledge how hard and messy this is – that momentum might not always be sustained, how do we support leaders, communities through this?

The second Start Local session focused on **Negotiating Differences** and explored different perspectives on central and government's role in locally-led change.

**Nicola Brehaut** shared [DIA's learning](#) from their community-led development pilots which included:

- the capability development that is needed at both community and government levels to do, and keep doing, community-led development successfully
- the importance of an adaptive approach as what works in each place is 'learnt by doing'
- community-led plans, processes and outcomes take time, which from a government perspective requires urgent patience. Balancing community and government expectations is also challenging.
- understanding 'readiness' of both local communities and organisations to support effective locally-led processes. Key groundwork factors here include identifying and creating the right relationships required to embark on, sustain the journey ahead.
- changing approaches from doing for to lending a hand
- balancing community and government expectations is challenging.

Nicola also outlined four key roles for central government in CLD:

1. **Connect** – enabling connections & brokering relationships between local communities and key partners
2. **Advise** – providing advice and guidance and acting as a neutral facilitator or sounding board.
3. **Resource** – providing tools, resources and information that will help, or facilitate access to these – this may include funding
4. **Inform** – taking a 'forest' view – harnessing learning across a range of communities and contexts and sharing these for mutual benefit.

*"We've changed our internal culture by working with Inspiring Communities on an organisational CLD training programme."*

*Nicola Brehaut,  
Start Local 2016*

Enabling social and community innovation in job rich, high social need South Auckland with its youthful population and high proportion of Maori and Pasifika communities is the task of the Auckland Council-led [Southern Initiative](#). Tired of agencies repeatedly seeing and treating them as a 'problem to be fixed', community leaders from the South are adamant that 'only the hood can change the hood.' Keen not to repeat deficit focused patterns of the past, Manager of Social and Community Innovation **Gael Surgenor** shared how the Southern Initiative is focusing on supporting local community 'eco systems' to be fit and ready for change so that the 'hood can change the hood'. This involves new ways of working for both community and local/central government.

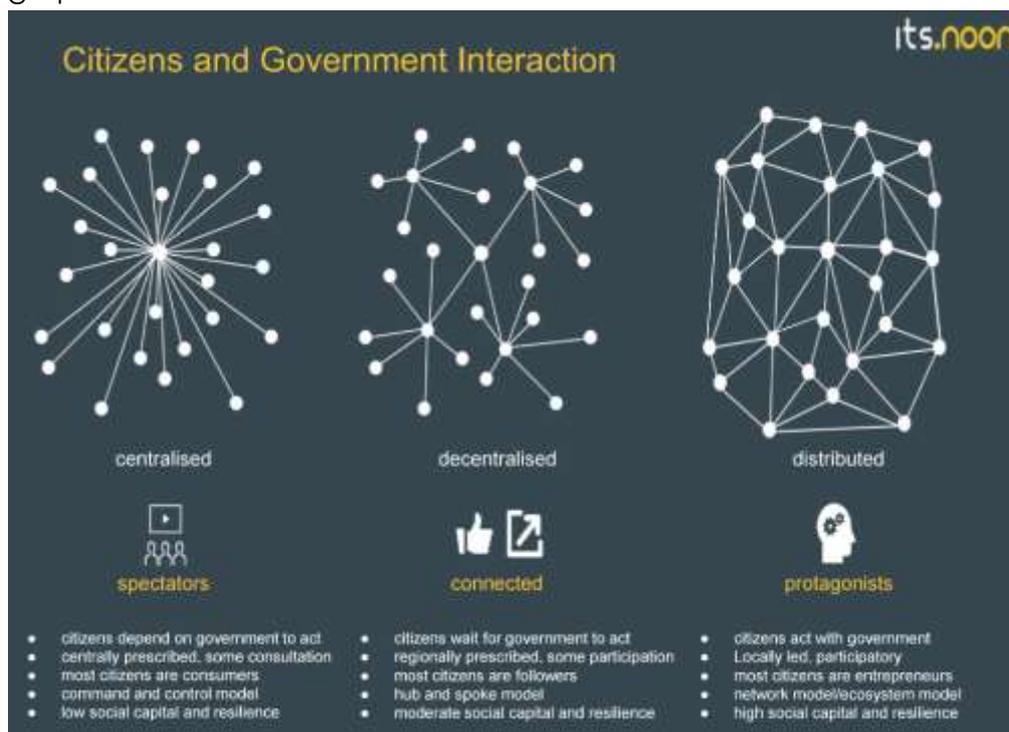
*"The Southern Initiative is learning to be part of the eco system in South Auckland so we can help the hood to change the hood."*

**Gael Surgenor,  
Start Local 2016**

From the community's side this means moving from entitlement and dependency mindsets to being active participants in new co-design processes and taking on entrepreneurial and local leadership roles to champion positive change. Key strategies for building and strengthening locally-led capacity include developing and supporting peer-led networks across diverse communities so that local leaders can proactively leverage and learn from each other. Other actions focus around enabling designers to assist Māori and Pasifika communities to prepare their own master plans, and engaging local people, those with 'lived experience', directly in co-creating, co-deciding new collaborative initiatives eg. early years planning and services.

Social procurement is one new tool the Council is trialling – for example through contracting local people to provide maintenance services in local parks. In the case of Riverton Reserve, this has resulted in five long term unemployed men gaining employment.

Gael reiterated that changing the business of large bureaucracies is no simple task! In the case of the Southern Initiative, positive progress has been supported by employing 'intrapreneurs' – people tasked with deliberately disrupting and challenging existing systems and ways of doing things so that more distributed ways of working can be achieved, as this graphic shows:



The importance of authentic relationships ahead of crises was highlighted by Christchurch City Council's [Claire Phillips](#). Reflecting on her own personal post quake experience, Claire noted that the earthquake "created something significant in common." In the early days, this shared experience transcended agency labels with help often coming from unexpected sources – a reminder that people want to both contribute and belong. The new local leadership that quickly emerged was also 'permissionless' – both at community and agency levels. Local movements and leaders just sprang into action, with new channels created to enable resources to flow to where they were most needed, and political permission granted to bust silos as required. For Claire, this process demonstrated the latent and untapped potential in local communities.

Roles and relationships between local and central government agencies in post quake Christchurch however have been fraught. With the analogy made of the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Agency (CERA) as a 'babysitter', hired by parents to watch and manage a 15 year old (the Council) who they felt 'couldn't be trusted.' This process clearly brought frustration and discomfort for all sides.

Looking back, Claire noted that language has changed, with references now to community-led recovery processes. Youth sector leadership and action has continued to flourish, with agencies also collaborating to resource capacity building initiatives aimed at further growing and supporting new and emerging community leaders.

Starting local and engaging partners that value, support and enhance local capability has been Ōpōtiki's approach to progress their community's vision to "recreate Ōpōtiki's historical marine economy to promote the social and economic wellbeing of the district." Ōpōtiki District Council Chief Executive, [Aileen Lawrie](#) shared how decades on progress has been slow but steady. With 30-50 new aquaculture jobs created this year, local people can finally see that the larger 320 FTE target is possible.

Positive change has been enabled by a partnership with local iwi Whakatōhea, a Council who has mandated taking risk, a 'disruptive' Mayor who's prepared to challenge the status quo, and intentional collaborative leadership and relationship building across multiple parties. Aileen noted that last year alone, she dealt with 62 different government officials in the process of preparing a Better Business Case for government investment in Ōpōtiki's harbour redevelopment. Aileen highlighted the inclusion of a key new factor in the Treasury business case template that enabled a green light for Ōpōtiki – "what is the cost if we do nothing?"

Hurdles along the way have come from a combination of regulatory, funding, credibility and fear, precedence factors. Upcoming challenges include getting the community and its young workforce job ready. Aileen noted the financial impact of capacity building projects that require upfront investment but bring downstream community benefits as difficult for small, budget-stretched Councils like Ōpōtiki. Similarly, maintaining and growing the partnerships required for next stages of project implementation also has major resourcing implications.

[Start Local](#)



## ***What stood out for Start Local attendees from these local stories?***

- Building capacity through 'in house' training – understanding, building the skills required to work in community-led ways
- Encouraging innovation – having space to fail, expecting to take risks
- Understanding no one size fits all– working flexibly
- Thinking long term and beyond electoral cycles
- Value of mandated disruptors within communities and system navigators in govt to overcome barriers to locally-led approaches.
- Permission-less leadership – local government as an enabler and supporter
- Understanding and counting the cost of doing nothing
- Leveraging Council procurement to enable local economic and social change
- The impact of 'siloining' across central government – fragmentation and competition, difficulty of managing relationships when people keep changing
- Not 'driving in' with solutions – waiting for these to come from the hood, and building capability to enable action that follows
- Time, commitment, perseverance and resilience required to stay the distance
- Intentionality, co-development and co-design

## ***How have differences been negotiated?***

- Growing internal capacity to act, work differently to support communities
- Co-design, appreciative inquiry, taking time to really listen to communities, working with honesty and integrity, building trust and respectful relationships
- Accepting, understanding complexity and how to work 'in, with' it
- Stubbornly, with pain and time! Working things through involves hard work and commitment from all parties
- Working out which part of government and who to deal with and building trusted relationships
- Overcoming silos of information across and within government organisations
- Asking for forgiveness rather than asking permission – just getting on with it
- Building on assets, strengths and what's happening already, including existing community structures
- Using different language, finding a common narrative, providing tools (eg. Better Business Case Framework) to frame, present arguments that central govt can understand – noting this sometimes involves having other 'voices' tell the local story
- System navigators, disruptors and leaders ('permissionless' leadership) charged with driving through change and holding the community's vision, connectors/champions who can work between and across agencies, individuals willing to see and change their 'usual' ways of operating (takes personal insight)
- Co-location eg. Auckland Co-Design Lab and TSI
- Trusting community wisdom, vision and leadership – getting in behind it, and providing resource, helping strengthen collaborative local leadership capacity
- Taking a local 'eco system' approach – understanding the roles that many play and the need for many contributors and partners to be engaged, actively participating and connected

## *What does this mean for me and my role?*

- Be prepared to ask 'hard questions' about roles, processes and approaches –
- Stick at it!
- Be disruptive, be prepared to take risks
- Listen to the community, enable them to organise, have their say
- Shift thinking about responsibility and roles – communities can be supported to do more
- Encourage connections at multiple layers and create space for lateral solutions
- Find and mandate the right people to be disruptors, connectors
- DIA helping other government departments understand CLD
- Establish and maintain relationships
- Managing expectations for results in the very short term – doing with, collaborating well takes time
- More intentionally connecting with other of people, organisations, communities who are working in these ways – peer support and advice is there if we look out.

After lunch speakers on the **Thought Leaders Panel** were asked to share some reflections from the morning and ideas on "letting it happen, making it work."

**Ngarimu Blair** (Ngati Whatua) shared some of the opportunities and challenges ahead for Iwi Maori. He noted that treaty settlement processes won't 'fix' things for Maori. That 150 plus years of colonisation has dismantled Māori communities, with time needed for real power, confidence, capacity and confidence to be restored – and in ways that avoid Māori recreating or copying Western governance structures and processes. A key question for Iwi leaders then becomes– how can we empower our own people to be protagonists and change makers?

Ngarimu highlighted the importance of moving beyond charismatic leadership to find and grow new leaders. While producing Māori lawyers had been essential for progressing grievance/settlement processes, different skillsets would be needed for the upcoming development phase. This would require more social entrepreneurs - leaders able to create new development opportunities in and alongside Māori communities.

Looking two generations ahead, Ngarimu outlined his vision for a future New Zealand that is both bilingual and bicultural, reinforcing the need he believes to commit to learning Te Reo as this opens up new thinking, understanding and possibilities. "To truly understand another culture you have to be able to speak the language"

Philanthropy NZ Chair **Kate Frykberg** shared her main take outs from the morning session:

- That everyone wants to belong
- The importance of recognising and building from strengths
- Working with who is there and including everyone - that people really matter
  - That we're talking about a journey not a destination

"We each have more power than we think we do. Those who we think have power, generally have less. It's time to step into our own power."

*Kate Frykberg,  
Start Local 2016*



- Patience and persistence are essential
- Only the hood can change the hood **but** we can all help!

Kate also went on to bust some commonly viewed funding myths including:

- That we can purchase thriving families from the lowest bidder
- That services alone will do it – they can't do it alone, nor should they!
- That supporting children also requires investing in and supporting their constant caregivers

Kate also challenged fellow funders in the room (there were many!) to take a closer look at their funding portfolio and asked “how much is really aimed at community-led development?” She encouraged a rethink of what's being funded and how investment in community-led approaches could have greater long term impact.

In his reflections, Northland Inc's **David Wilson** emphasised the importance of context, systems and layers – that 'local' only works and succeeds when it's part of supportive regional and national frameworks. Wishing to move away from the usual top down/bottom up debate, David put forward the case for 'endogenous development' or development from within. Success in this case requiring a deep understanding of local community context, investment in participatory approaches and proactive integration of local knowledge into development interventions that follow.

David also noted the importance of subsidiarity and the need to take another look to see what best sits at what level – noting that alignments of resources, mandates, functions and decision taking are essential if endogenous development approaches are to succeed.

He also reinforced the need for commitment to collaboration, along with skills to mediate between voices, levels and sectors and time required to both build high trust relationships and get agreement on common purpose.

Starting Local requires all parts of the system to do differently together.

The **Round Up Session** offered encouraged participants to reflect on thoughts and new possibilities that had been triggered for them and to note down what actions they and others might take next. Here's a selection of participant responses:

#### **A small step I will take after today is.....**

- ✓ *Share with others what I've learnt today*
- ✓ *Connect with some of the speakers, other attendees here to find out more*
- ✓ *Be prepared to take my hands off “what we've always done” and look with fresh eyes*
- ✓ *Help get more stories told from our communities, blog about CLD*
- ✓ *Explore disruptive governance and distributed leadership so talent/skills is available at all levels*
- ✓ *Explore local procurement levers and look for opportunities in our policies and strategies to give greater resourcing and support to CLD and communities – how can we create an environment where locals have the opportunity and backing to create change in “their hood?”*
- ✓ *Reconnect with other funders and ask about what they are doing, funding to support CLD*
- ✓ *Thinking, framing how what we could do to support communities to lead locally”*

### An action I'll recommend that my agency/community takes is...

- ✓ *Remind the wider organisation about our role to OUR community*
- ✓ *Support our local eco system to be fit and ready for change - ask what does that look like?*
- ✓ *Sharing stories of success with our partners like Council on a more regular basis*
- ✓ *Forge closer working relationships between social and economic agencies/networks*
- ✓ *Invest in informing, harvesting and sharing NZ community learning*
- ✓ *Stay with the funding of an organisation working on hard issues with hard communities*
- ✓ *Use the "what if we do nothing perspective" rather than being risk adverse*

### One piece of advice that I would give to the PM to "let it happen, make it work" is....

- ✓ *Take risks and let community come up with ideas to fix their own issues.*
- ✓ *Sit with local people, and listen to what they say. Don't just talk to or at us.*
- ✓ *Fund officials to work as navigators across govt. departments to connect related work streams and broker relationships*
- ✓ *Let failures happen and understand the importance, deliciousness that thousands of small acts of change can change*
- ✓ *Small is beautiful – reverse current trend to amalgamation. Act local, think global.*



In wrapping up Start Local, political commentator [Colin James](#) reminded attendees that "messy is democratic" which by nature means it will take longer. Colin reflected how the over the last century we seemed to have lost our way 'with local' citing the downgrading of local government and loss of local community autonomy. He noted broad tensions between what central government says it wants (eg. strong local communities and initiatives, decisions made closest to people) and the actions which follow (eg. tying community organisations down in prescriptive short term contracts, treating local councils as subordinates). The parallels and linkages between localism and globalism were noted, along with implications for national sovereignty.

Start Local Co-hosts Inspiring Communities, Local Government New Zealand and the Institute of Governance and Policy Studies thanked attendees for coming and look forward to continuing conversations around 'what next' to advance effective locally-led change in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

"Central government may need to take more notice of local initiatives, councils, communities and enterprises – like yours – if it is to stay relevant. Which you are."

*Colin James,  
Start Local 2016*

To view speaker presentations from Start Local visit:  
<http://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/start-local-let-it-happen-make-it-work/>

