QUT Urban Informatics

Building Climate Change Resilience and Adaptive Capacity in Australia's Community Sector Using Social Media and Technology Innovation

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SUMMARY

Public and private sector organisations worldwide are putting strategies in place to manage the commercial and operational risks of climate change. However, community organisations are lagging behind in their understanding and preparedness, despite them being among the most exposed to the effects of climate change impacts and regulation. This poster presents a proposal for a multidisciplinary study that addresses this issue by developing, testing and applying a novel climate risk assessment methodology that is tailored to the needs of Australia's community sector and its clients. Strategies to mitigate risks and build resilience and adaptive capacity will be identified including new opportunities afforded by urban informatics, social media, and technologies of scale making.

NATIONAL BENEFIT

Many climate change impacts are now considered by the scientific community to be unavoidable and will require adaptation over the coming decades, even if efforts to control emissions avoid more serious effects in the later part of the century. Private and public sectors are now moving with increasing momentum to identify risks and implement adaptation strategies. However, the community sector is left behind even though many of the people who this sector supports will be amongst the first and most seriously affected. The process of climate change adaptation and resilience requires information and preparedness. We can often adapt effectively if we know what we are adapting to. Based on this premise, this cross-disciplinary study proposes to make a significant contribution towards exploring and better understanding the opportunities for enhancing and accelerating adaptation using tools, interfaces, methods and practices of social and mobile technology that have already proven effective in enabling participation and engagement in other areas.

AIMS

This study aims to deliver actionable knowledge about the ways urban informatics and HCI can make a significant contribution to build adaptive capacity of the community sector. We hypothesise that new media tools are so effective in driving critical information dissemination and behavioural change that they provide one of the most powerful tools available for facilitating and accelerating grass roots climate change resilience and adaptive capacity as well as avoiding maladaptation. The results of this assessment will be analysed to identify suitable risk mitigation and adaptation strategies that grow the capacity of the sector to face the challenges ahead.

The aims of the study respond to the specific priority research topics outlined in the *National Climate Change Adaptation Research Plan – Social, Economic and Institutional Dimensions* as follows:

1. Develop and test a climate risk assessment and adaptation methodology that is specifically tailored to the needs of Australia's community sector and its clients, and engages and harnesses the knowledge and skills of individuals, communities, and organisations of that sector. (NCCARF SEI RQ #1)

2. Apply this methodology to conduct a national audit of Australia's community sector and its clients, to study and assess:

    a. The relationship between interacting social processes and climate change risk exposure and sensitivity of community sector organisations and their clients (NCCARF SEI RQ #2 and #3);

    b. The adaptive capacity of community sector organisations and their clients (NCCARF SEI RQ #4);

    c. The equity dimensions of vulnerability and adaptation, that is, how and why different social groups within the community sector are differently impacted by climate change (NCCARF SEI RQ #5);

    d. Existing responses of the community sector to climate change risks (NCCARF SEI RQ #11).

3. Employ social media and technology innovation to:

    a. Develop and test adaptation decision support and evaluation tools and resources that are specifically tailored to the needs of Australia's community sector and its clients and include diverse values and preferences. (NCCARF SEI RQ #16).

    b. Explore technologies of scale making that link people through their actions and through the impact of their actions, to other people, groups and organisations, and show how particular actions or concerns link us into a broader coalition of concerned citizens, social groups, and organisations.

    c. Enable a self-critique of the scales at which we act and imagine ourselves.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Climate Risk Pty Ltd is one of Australia's most experienced climate adaptation specialists, with more than 25 local governments and numerous corporations amongst their clients. Its team's reputation for high-quality, independent research and innovation is captured in key documents including: Towards a High-Bandwidth, Low-Carbon Future (Telstra); Climate Change and General Insurance (Zurich); Climate Change and Bird Species: Global Status Report. Climate Risk is a founding member of the Climate Bond Initiative and a member of the Commonwealth Government's Climate Change Risk Management Panel of Service Providers.

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The Making Links conference series is one of Australia's leading forums for web and IT workers in the not-for-profit and community sectors to showcase their work and to explore current and emerging new media and information and communications technology.

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