

Research Group „Communicating Disaster“ (2010-2011)

Extended Jour Fixe (One day workshop)

New Social Media and Crisis

April 27, 2011 (ZiF, Plenary Hall)

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Introduction

As recent events vividly document, crisis situations engender intensive information flows not only for official and non-governmental emergency response agencies and the media, but also amongst members of the public. People affected by earthquakes, fires, floods, violence or slow motion disasters such as climate change or soil erosion, their colleagues, friends and relatives, and those who may have helpful knowledge increasingly use social media (Facebook, Twitter) to communicate and make sense of events. This one day workshop focuses on one particular phenomenon of social media use in crises: ‘collective intelligence’.

Collective intelligence is an ambiguous and highly productive, but also potentially treacherous concept. On the one hand, the notion can highlight positive social innovation, including the collective, ‘crowdsourced’ production of intelligence *about* complex problems (Zwass 2010), new ‘means for knowing what we are doing as a group’ (Levy 1997, Malone & Klein 2007, Connected Environments), or new distributed problem-solving capabilities that are ‘best understood as emergent and collective rather than orchestrated’ (Vieweg et al 2007). On the other hand, the concept can mask problematic tendencies. Informational practices and content in social media can fuel confusion in crisis situations, spread simplistic messages with highly affective charge, they can be manipulated by the media or organisations seeking to maximise donations, indeed – far from being emergent and self-organising – some forms of collective intelligence in crisis may be the result of ‘puppetmastering’ to take a term from discussions about totalitarian tendencies in gaming (McGonigal 2006). Alternatively, sensitive orchestration of public informational practices may open up new, genuinely collaborative opportunities for public engagement in crisis response and provide professionals with new resources, resonating with experiences in citizen science (Hemment et al 2010).

This workshop seeks to discuss how members of the public and professionals in emergency response currently use social media in crises. Exploiting the evocative ambiguity of the notion of ‘collective intelligence’, we explore examples of real world practices. Longer term aims are to establish an overview of relevant research, especially within the field of ‘crisis informatics’ (Palen et al 2007, Project EPIC <http://epic.cs.colorado.edu/>), to debate opportunities and challenges for design and to identify needs for new research. Questions might include:

- Are there historical precedents/precursors?
- How is collective intelligence (CI) done in practice? What forms does it take?
- Are different forms of CI associated with different kinds of complex problems?
- What are intended and unintended consequences?
- How do collective intelligence practices evolve over the life-span of a crisis?

Acknowledgements

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References

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Schedule (preliminary)

April 4, 2011		Background readings online at PBWorkspace: "Collective Intelligence in Crisis"
April 11, 2011		Some post extended abstracts/position papers (1-3 pages)
April 26, 2011	19:30	Dinner in town for those already here - (pay yourself)
On the day	09:00	<i>Coffee</i>
	09:30	<i>Introduction</i>
	10:00	Pecha Kucha – Amro, Benjamin, Maria
	10:20	<i>Challenges of using social media for crisis response</i> – Jonas Landgren (IT University, Gothenburg, Sweden)
	10:45	<i>Coffee</i>
	11:05	<i>Crisis Informatics: What we know about collective intelligence (so far)</i> – Video-Presentation by Leysia Palen (University of Colorado, Boulder, US)
	11:45	<i>Communication, Coordination, and Collective Action: Examining Strategies of Collaborative Problem Solving in Alternate Reality Games</i> – Video-Presentation by David Gurzick (Hood College, Frederick, Maryland)
	12:30	<i>Lunch</i> (at ZiF-cafeteria)
	13:30	<i>Emergency Management, Twitter, and Social Media Evangelism</i> – Video-Presentation by Irina Shklovski (IT University, Copenhagen)
	14:00	<i>Social Media for Cities, Counties and Communities</i> - Video-discussion with Andrea Kavanaugh (Virginia Tech, Blacksburg)
	14:30	<i>Coffee and cake</i> with informal group discussion
	15:30	Video discussion with Leysia Palen, David Gurzick and Irina Shklovski
	16:30	What next?
	19:00	Dinner in town for those staying (pay yourself)

Post workshop: Depending on our 'What next?' discussions we may continue our online collaboration.

List of Participants so far (grey indicates online participation):

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