Crowdsourcing consensus for climate and disaster resilience

Natural Hazards Research Australia

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Innovations in democracy and technology for community discussions on contentious issues

This action research PhD is exploring **new possibilities for collective decision-making** on climate change, disaster risk reduction and recovery using *Polis* – a **cutting-edge tool** for understanding community opinion and finding points of **consensus on contentious issues**.

The need for new democratic approaches

Communities are increasingly facing the need to make difficult collective decisions about climate change and disasters.

This decision making is fraught with challenges:

- it's difficult, costly and time-consuming to involve **large, diverse communities** in **productive, nuanced** discussions.

- disagreement can seem overwhelming, and it can be hard to find points of **consensus** and **make progress**.

- approaches like community recovery committees have many benefits, but it can be hard for a small group to represent the diversity of community views and deal with the **pressures** involved.

Innovative democratic technologies designed to address these challenges are beginning to be used by leading governments and organisations internationally.
But there has been very little exploration of their use to support communities to make collective decisions around climate and disaster resilience.

Polis

Polis is a cutting-edge, **interactive online tool** designed to enable **large groups** of people to discuss contentious issues and find points of **consensus**.

It is carefully designed to support much **richer discussion** than simple voting or survey processes can, while avoiding many pitfalls of social media platforms.

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People can express their views, vote on what others have said, and see patterns of agreement and disagreement **in real time** as the discussion evolves.

First case study

Over 2 weeks in September 2022, we ran a Polis conversation at the University of Melbourne on the issue of reducing emissions from staff air travel. 173 people voted almost 23,000 times, and the output is being used to inform next steps on this issue. Mixed methods analysis of the process is ongoing.

Opportunity to take part

I am currently exploring opportunities to partner with **governments, organisations or groups who may want to use Polis to support community consultation** on a current climate or disaster related issue.

Please **get in touch** if you are interested.

Further information

For additional information scan the QR code or contact:
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