

Leveraging on Social Media to Support the Global Building Resilient Cities Campaign

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a summary of the main points put forward during the presentation delivered at the 2nd International Workshop on Social Web for Disaster Management which was held in conjunction with WWW 2013 on May 14th 2013 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

J. Computer Applications J.m MISCELLANEOUS

General Terms

Design, Human Factors

Keywords

Disaster Risk Reduction; Social Media; Crisis Mapping.

1. SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

In recent years the international emergency response community has witnessed seminal changes in the way crisis response activities are supported through an emerging variety of non-traditional, creative tools and methods. New actors, new technologies and new processes have entered a bustling scene which is now increasingly characterized by its vibrant dynamism and spontaneous, seemingly uncoordinated creativity.

It was in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that hit Haiti in January 2010 when this dynamic and potential newly formed community was impressively demonstrated on a large scale. Hundreds of experts from all over the world joined forces in a variety of professional and volunteer networks to provide support in deriving crisis mapping products. For the first time also, crowdsourced data, using GPS enabled phones and the internet, was widely used for the generation of information and the production of maps to support emergency response efforts, largely based on all types of geospatial information made available, including satellite imagery. Experience has shown that an enormous wealth of information is being made available but only a fraction of it is actually been used to support better decision-making.

Research now has to focus on how to build bridges between the three types of communities that have to come together in order to ensure that this information is indeed used to support saving lives and property: a) the community that acquires and disposes of the data, including providers of geospatial information and also ordinary citizens who can get involved by participatory data aggregation (crowdsourcing); b) the community that adds value to the primary data and create information by producing maps in both a traditional or creative/inclusive way (e.g. crismappers), and; c) the end-users of the information that are responsible for disaster management.

But more importantly there is a need to extend the focus of crowdsourcing to risk reduction activities. In the long term preventions saves more lives than response. An interesting line of research would be to try and understand why the virtual and technical communities (V&TCs) become so much more involved in response.

This presentation initially focuses on reviewing current and planned developments leveraging on social media that contribute or potentially can contribute to disaster risk reduction including early warning activities. Common aspects of a successful development will also be identified. Then the presentation will focus on social media and risk reduction at the community level.

Risk reduction is best carried out at the community level and the most successful global campaign which is helping communities is the ‘**Making Cities Resilient Campaign**’ being spearheaded by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) ([http:// www.unisdr.org/campaign/resilientcities/](http://www.unisdr.org/campaign/resilientcities/)). Cities, towns and local governments need to become resilient to disasters by getting ready and throughout 2010-2015 and beyond UNISDR is campaigning together with its partners for this to happen. A ten-point checklist of essentials for making cities resilient serves as a guide for commitment during the campaign.

This presentation presents the campaign and reviews the ten-point checklist identifying areas where social media could contribute significantly and proposing new areas of research.