MANAGING DISASTERS and MANAGING SOCIAL CAPITAL: HOW TO ENGAGE THE NEEDS OF AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

Centre for Human and Social Capital, University of Wollongong

Employing lessons learned from the history of disasters, the project aims to examine Australia’s two most recent and catastrophic natural disasters, with the intention of influencing policy outcomes that affect the management of natural disasters. In this context it is important to provide cross-cultural comparisons that address risk management, social capital formation, and other elements of disaster management.

Studies of state, local and individual engagement with natural disasters have increasing significance in 2011. Australia has just experienced two of its most devastating natural disasters and the responses by the state and the people have been rapid and significant. The two disasters – the Southeast Queensland floods, and Cyclone Yasi – have severely stretched Queensland and federal government resources. Separated by almost 2000 kilometres, logistical difficulties have slowed the state response to the north, and communities have turned to each other and to volunteers more than in other, recent natural disasters, such as Cyclone Larry.

This study seeks to identify the significance of existing social networks in aiding survival and recovery from natural disasters.

By using the examples of previous disasters, we hope to locate the current disasters and the recovery management in the context of history, at the same time being aware that a greater number of severe weather events are likely to continue to affect Australia and other nations over the next decades. Lessons we can learn about preparedness, then, go beyond preparing our properties for inundation, deluge, or devastation. They also involve preparing ourselves psychologically and socially for the severe dislocations to our normal lives that follow being exposed to a significant natural disaster.

Speakers

Chair: Prof Simon Ville, Associate Dean, Research, Faculty of Commerce, University of Wollongong
Prof Kazuo Ueda, Dean, Graduate School of Commerce, Senshu University, Tokyo Japan
Prof Matthew Allen, Head, School of History and Politics, University of Wollongong
Ms Penny Scott, Acting CEO, Terrain Ltd

For further information please email Matt Allen (mallen@uow.edu.au)