



The Effects of Information Disorder on Societal Resilience: Implications for Disaster Management

presented by

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Research Project Details

ORnet Project – The ORnet is a collaborative initiative between Defence and academia that brings together a network of universities to work on Defence concerns

Funded by Department of Defence



Thanks to the 22 member research team from DST, TRI, Adelaide University, and Flinders University

Note: While the report is not public we are using/presenting only general principles and findings and applying these to the emergency management and resilience context.



Today's presentation

- **Explore the effects of information disorder on social cohesion and societal resilience**
- **Show Information Disorder Model developed by our research team**
- **Show examples of disinformation, misinformation, and conspiracies associated with the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Explore the effects of information disorder on society**
- **Outline the implications of our findings on information disorder for disaster management**



Contemporary risk environment

- Large-scale
- Multi-factoral
- Cascading
- Major disruptive effects on
resilience of interconnected
societal systems



Context

- Managing complexity
- Interconnectivity and interdependence
- Requiring complex physical, socio-technical, and social systems
- Climate change, grey-zone conflict, war, information disorder



- **COVID-19 as case study**
- **Existential threat to society**
- **Fundamental (existential) meaning underpins an individual's sense of ontological security, is deeply connected to and informed by our information environment, and may be effectively and at times deliberately disrupted by influence and interference**

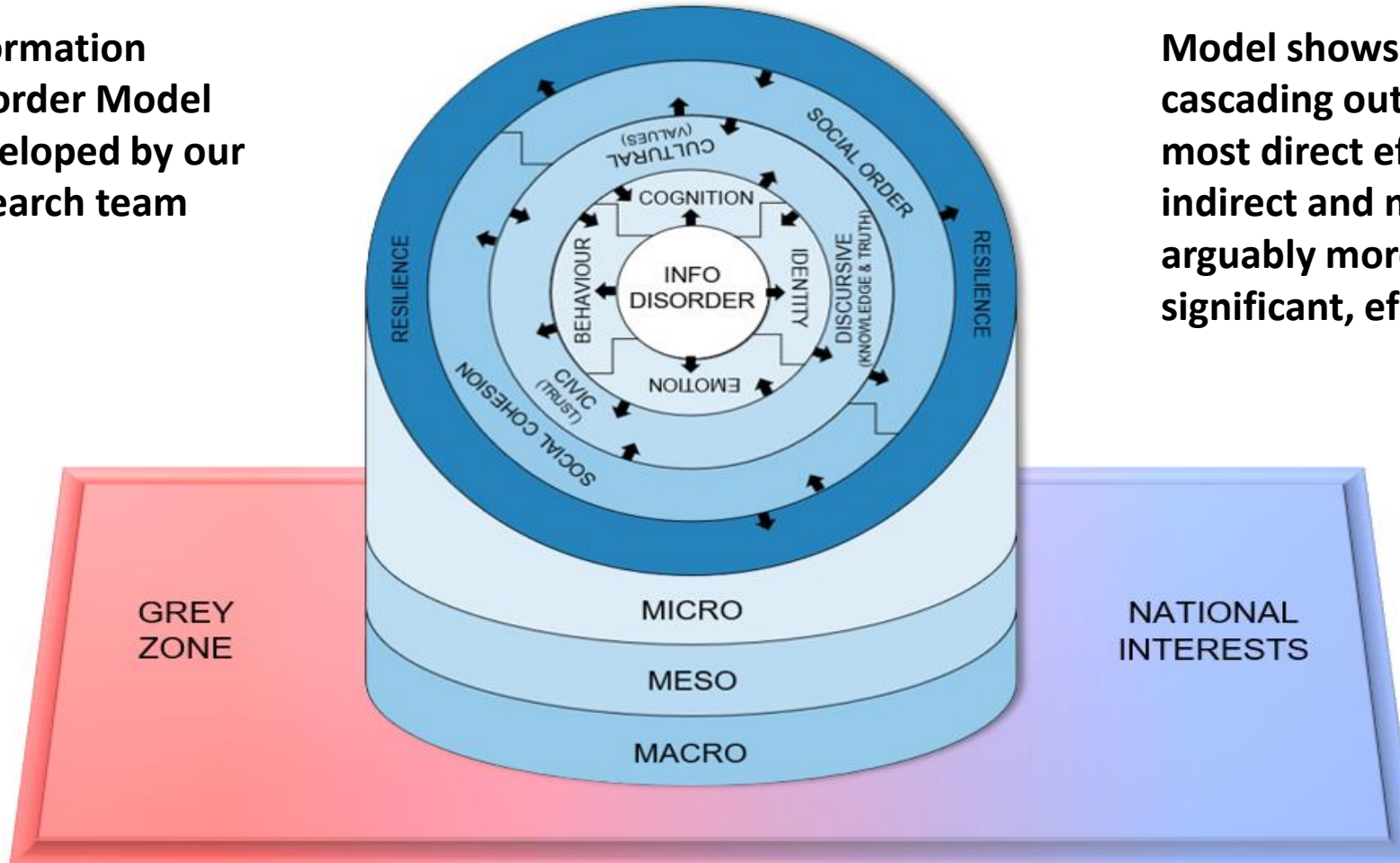


Case Studies: QAnon, and anti-vaccine and anti-lockdown movements



**Information
Disorder Model
developed by our
research team**

**Model shows effects of ID
cascading outwards from the
most direct effects to increasingly
indirect and more abstract, but
arguably more existentially
significant, effects**





Academic expertise of the project team was double-checked through: 1) interviews with a range of mainly defence industry and government stakeholders, and 2) an ABC fact-check analysis.

51 issues of the *RMIT ABC Fact Check Corona Check e-newsletters* from 2020 for possible cases of mis, dis, and malinformation drawn from across the globe.



Origin of the Virus

The virus is not naturally-derived; a bioweapon

Manufactured in the US

Manufactured in China

Manufactured in Canada

Sold to China

Stolen/weaponised by China

Escaped from military lab

Made by Bill Gates

Funded by the Obama administration

A derivative of SARS-1

A flu vaccine biologically weaponised

Patented since 2006



Origin/Meaning of the Pandemic

A hoax

To enforce mandatory microchipping (Bill Gates)

Contrived by Bill Gates and big pharmaceutical companies

Bill Gates bribed the WHO to declare a pandemic

Just a flu-like illness

For global population reduction

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for Global

Population Reduction



Vaccination

Vaccination is harmful

Vaccinations paralyse (children)

Vaccinations kill (children; trial participants; more people than the virus)

Vaccines contain genetically-modified organisms

Flu vaccine increases changes in COVID-19 contraction

Flu vaccine contains coronaviruses

If had flu shot in last 10 years, will get COVID-19

Flu shot recipients are the first to die in a pandemic

COVID-19 vaccination will be used to microchip for population surveillance/ cryptocurrency/control (Bill Gates)

COVID-19 vaccine side-effects are worse than disease symptoms

COVID-19 vaccines cause DNA change/genetic mutations

COVID-19 vaccination can cause cancer

COVID-19 vaccination can cause homosexuality



Consequences of information disorder

Undermining of truth

Undermining of science and rationality

Undermining of authority

Undermining of trust



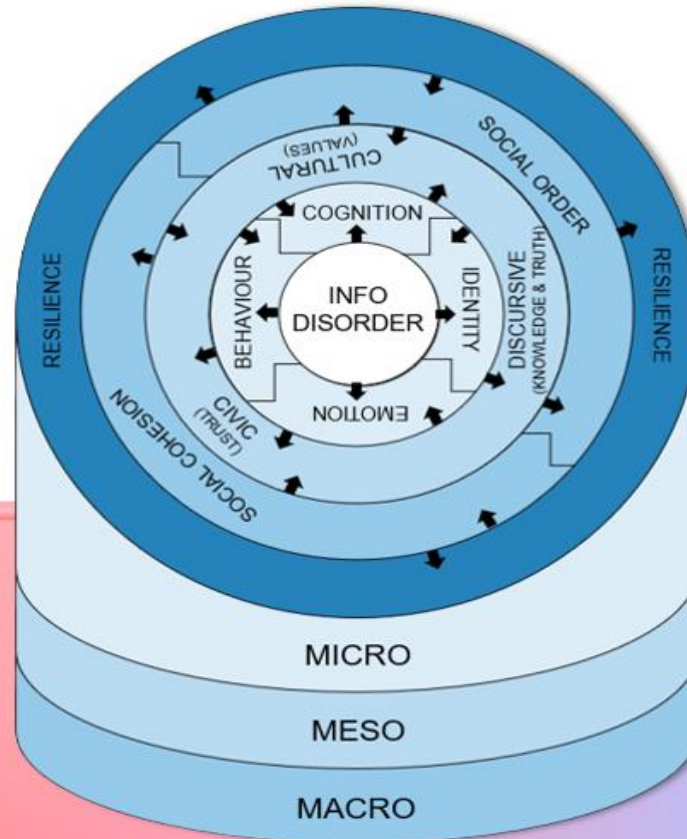
'Visible' effects (2nd ring from the centre)

Undermining of truth

Undermining of science and rationality

Undermining of authority

Undermining of trust



We can see how such effects can apply to any scenario, so let's now apply this to the emergency management context



Information disorder

Negative effects on logistics and management
of an event or disaster

Can lead to cascading consequences



Let me quote an example from ABC News:

“Australia's bushfire emergency is being exploited on social media, as misinformation is spread through cyberspace via hundreds of thousands of posts. Out-of-date photos of survivors and inaccurate fire maps have been widely shared, including by international celebrities. ... QUT researcher Dr Timothy Graham analysed a sample of 315 Twitter accounts posting #ArsonEmergency and said around a third of them displayed highly automated and inauthentic behaviour. In layman's terms, that means they could be bots or trolls. ... Some of the misinformation includes the idea left-wing ‘ecoterrorists’ are behind some fires. The lies are highly sharable, which means they can spread faster than the truth”

(ABC News: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-08/fires-misinformation-being-spread-through-social-media/11846434>)



Undermining of truth

- Misinformation
- Social media and mainstream media
- Confusion in public perception
- Mixed messages

- Flow-on effect on disaster management
- Messaging perceived as being political



Undermining of science and rationality

- #ArsonEmergency hashtag undermined science-based evidence about the bushfires
- Simplified discourse
- Sensational and easy for the public to understand
- Rather than the reality of a complex set of factors and circumstances that led to the fires



Undermining of authority

Communication can become unclear in the face of a concerted disinformation campaign or a misplaced tweet that goes viral.

The lines of authority and the collaboration needed in an emergency event can be seriously undermined

Example: NSW floods in early March when members of the ADF accused of looking for photo opportunities rather than helping community. The images rapidly went viral before the ADF could even explain what the situation was.



Undermining of trust

These examples all undermine trust – trust in the truth, in science and rationality, and in authority.

Disaster management requires clear lines of communication and clear lines of authority. These can be seriously undermined by diminished public trust.



Very few short-term solutions other than education and awareness

Intervening in an unstable system can lead to unintended consequences, so a risky proposition



In the longer-term

We can build more diverse resilient physical, socio-technical, and social systems

Integrated whole of government approaches



Thank you from myself
and the research team.

Questions?