

Summary

A PERSPECTIVE ON THE EFFECTS OF STRESS ON DECISION MAKING FOLLOWING DISASTER

Appendix

What happens in decision making after disasters?



Community decisions can be affected, excellent ideas may not translate well in practice, tensions naturally emerge between communities, government, and other decision makers.

How can we meaningfully engage and communicate?



It's time to question the assumptions we make about decisions being made post disaster, and what we think is true.

What is this about?



This model was developed after summer bushfires of 2019/20, as the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded. It helps to explain how stress, trust and decision making are influenced after major disruption, and a guide for decision making during these times.

Explaining the model



When there is a major disruption (bushfire, drought, flood, pandemic), stress and uncertainty escalate. Unchecked this will lead to an increase in grief, burnout and breakdown in communications will increase. This affects the communities ability to communicate what they want to decision makers. It's possible to decrease stress and uncertainty by increasing the community's feelings of being heard and resourcing (funding) any supports that are needed. Trust plays a critical role in all relationships, and as trust is built, community members are more likely to influence decisions and communicate what they want.

It's critical that the gap between the perception of decisions being made with community input and the actual decisions being made with community input is recognised and reduced (where possible), or it risks eroding trust. Overtime, an increase in trust at all levels leads to more decisions being made with community input, where it becomes 'normal' for the community to influence decision making. These changes lower uncertainty and increasing the feelings of being heard, substantially decreasing stress and burnout.

So what?

Paying attention to insights and taking action where needed will have an important impact on:

- increased collaboration and cooperation at many levels (locally, with organisations and government);
- community members will be more prepared and better able to articulate and communicate what they want;
- stress, grief and burnout, with an increase in community wellbeing as trust and relationships are strengthened; and
- increased confidence and successful advocacy increasing funding that better meets the needs of community.



What now?

THIS CAN BE USED BOTH AS A REFLECTION TOOL AND A PROBLEM -SOLVING TOOL

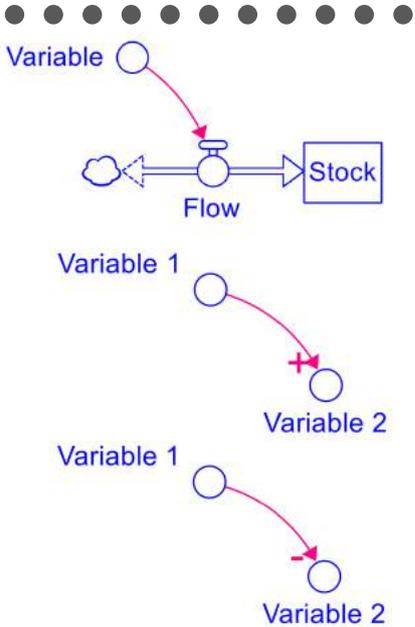
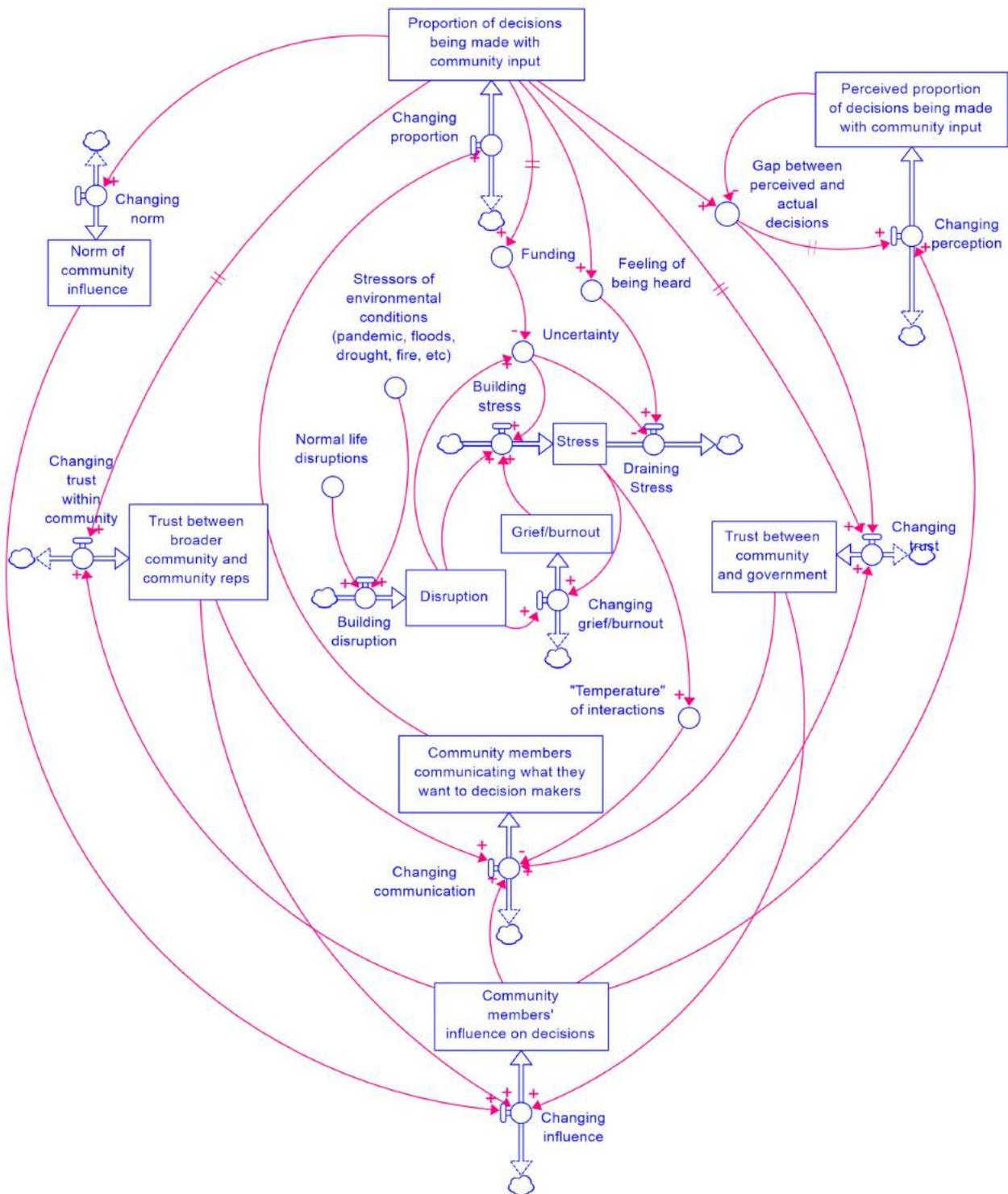
- Share this document with your team/group.
- Reflect, and identify if there are parts of the model that reflect your own experiences.
- Look at the stocks (boxes) and consider the inflows and outflows to identify what is relevant for your situation or example.



- Where do you have power to change things, and do you need to engage others in making these changes?
- Is your example or situation changing over time? i.e. community consultation following disaster is important, but repeated consultation can be exhausting and stressful. Community needs to see clear effects from their input over time.
- What assumptions are being made about what is happening in your example or situation?



- Gather different perspectives about what is happening.
- What community driven action is already happening? What can be done to ensure the best outcomes? i.e. breadth or depth of community representation, perceptions versus what is really happening, or observations about security of funding.



Stock: something that builds up in a system
Flow: something that makes a stock go up or down
Variable: speeds up or slows down the flow

Positive connection: change in the same direction. Increase in Variable 1 causes an increase in Variable 2 AND a decrease in Variable 1 causes a decrease in Variable 2.

Negative connection: change in the opposite direction. Increase in Variable 1 causes a decrease in Variable 2 AND a decrease in Variable 1 causes an increase in Variable 2.