

SENIOR FELLOWS AND FRIENDS

Alert. Relaxed. Collegial.



Recap of 1/13/21 session on C-RASC and STAR-TIDES

Dear Senior Fellows and Friends,

What a privilege it was to be in conversation with [Dr. Kathryn B. Laskey](#) and [Dr. Linton Wells II](#). Lin says he works at the intersection of policy and technology – an efficient yet radically understated description of his work and the impact he has had. Kathy says that you don't truly learn anything until behavior has changed – nine words that contain a world. Read on!

The Center for Resilient and Sustainable Communities, or [C-RASC](#), oversees two complementary initiatives: Collaborative Community Resilience and the global STAR-TIDES knowledge-sharing network. C-RASC is trans-disciplinary, relying on six academic units at George Mason University, including the Schar School of Policy and Government, and providing collaborative opportunities in:

Narrative & Storytelling	Cybersecurity
Critical Infrastructure Protection	Public Policy
Conflict Analysis & Resolution	Sociology
Business & Economics	Public Health
Geospatial Information Systems	Education
Transport and Logistics	Systems Thinking

The Center is boundary spanning on steroids, seeking to integrate public-private, whole-of-government, and trans-national approaches with diverse technologies and input from practitioners with field experience. So far, engagements have included working with VCU's cyber initiative on complex adaptive threats, an Ethiopian subsistence irrigation project, science and technology work in Puerto Rico with the STAR-TIDES Latin America core group, and work on rural broadband with People-Centered Internet. The **C-RASC slide deck** illustrates a grounded, collaborative, continuous learning approach to resilience.

STAR-TIDES stands for **S**haring **T**o **A**ccelerate **R**esearch – **T**ransformative **I**nnovation for **D**evelopment and **E**mergency **S**upport. According to [*STAR-TIDES and Starfish Networks: Supporting Stressed Populations with Distributed Talent*](#), which documented the state of play in 2009, "STAR-TIDES approaches focus on the needs of a stressed population for shelter, water, power, and other essential infrastructures and services." This mature network is now housed within the Center for Resilient and Sustainable Communities at George Mason. The network walks the resilience talk that appears in **STAR-TIDES deck 1**: one reason for having the annual open field demonstrations is to address the question, "What do you do if it rains?" Also browse **STAR-TIDES deck 2**.

Lin mentioned the People-Centered Internet, one of his board commitments, in the context of internet access and connectivity. What if "migration through the cloud" were an alternative to actual migration? Affordable, reliable access to broadband could enable better futures, although the path to actualizing the possibility may not be straightforward or immediately understood by outsiders. There was quite a bit of discussion about this.

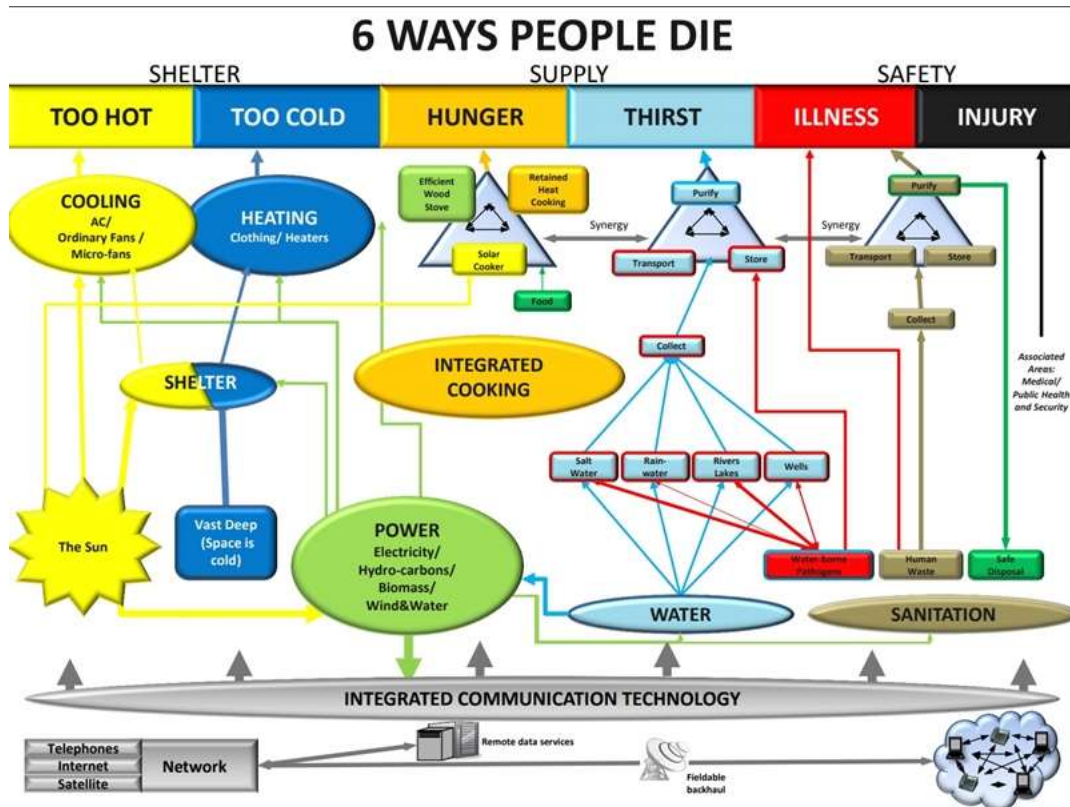
One participant asked whether STAR-TIDES was connected with FEMA's crowdsourcing network, which led to a short discussion of platforms such as Open Street Map and Ushahidi. It was pretty obvious that Wells monitors the maturity of potentially useful technologies. If you visit the comprehensive Knowledge Repository at <https://star-tides.net/knowledge-repository-3/>, you may learn more about that.

A question that came up was, "How do you know things are working?" This led Lin to tell a micro-power project story that illustrated the shortcomings of After Action Reports in favor of dynamic iterations using near real-time data on conditions (if possible) and continuous process improvement. Each

iteration focuses on strengths, not weakness, while seeing the real facts on the ground. The learning that occurs may result in changing the success criteria midstream – which can be a hard sell to budgeteers and bosses but is critical in order to arrive at repeatable, sustainable processes. This illustrates the importance of constant communication and translation in all directions.

A big takeaway is, “the socio-political trumps the technological.”
 A big question is, “How do you incentivize behavior change?”

To grasp the high stakes of much of the C-RASC and STAR-TIDES work, spend some time with Vinay Gupta’s summary graphic, “Six Ways People Die,” below:



Echoing the quote on the final C-RASC slide, the goal is to “Make hope possible, rather than despair convincing.”

Plans for 2021 include the 15th Capabilities Demo beginning Oct. 18-20 at GMU (physical & digital) and proceeding to the Pentagon on Oct. 21-22. If you’re interested, either visit <http://c-rasc.gmu.edu> and select “contact us” in the top menu, or email Dr. Laskey at klaskey@gmu.edu. Dr. Wells can be reached at lwells9@gmu.edu.

Participant affiliations

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Department of Homeland Security
Eyes Up Appalachia
George Mason University
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
TED Conferences
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Participants joined from New Orleans, LA, Chicago, IL, Columbus, OH, Denver, CO, Colorado Springs, CO, and the DC Metro Area.

We noticed interesting overlaps in participant and presenter knowledge and project experience. This happens every time. Aside from making everyone feel welcome, eliciting those connections is why our sessions always begin with a round of introductions. That's also why participants are sent everyone else's email address after each event. Please consider joining us in the future.

Sincerely,
Kitty Wooley

Header photo: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kayakers_in_Redwood_City,_California.jpg