

LIVEWELL YARRA: URBAN LIVING LAB FOR SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS

Research Question

The objectives of this research is to understand how asset-based community development (ABCD) and appreciative inquiry can build capacity for Livewell Yarra participants to take actions that reduce their carbon emissions.

Methodology

This is a four phase action research project. The first 'plan' phase uses asset-based community development to reveal participants' latent strengths and build capacity to take action in the areas of carbon reduction.

The second 'act' phase uses co-design to enable Livewell participants to launch projects trough 'rapid prototyping'.

The third 'observe' phase will use Most Significant Change interviews to reveal Livewell participants' experiences to date and document qualitative changes to their capacity for action.

The fourth 'reflect' phase includes a review of the Livewell Yarra trial and analysis of the data collected to date.

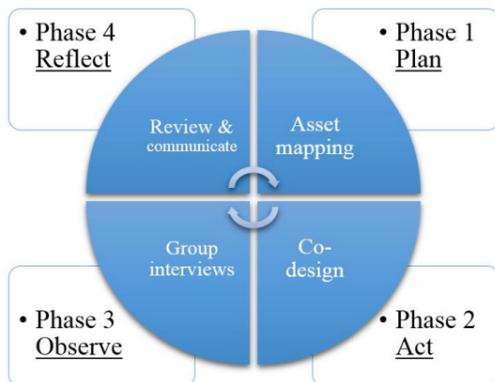


Figure 1: 4 phase action research cycle.

Results

Primary data collection commenced in August 2015 through two asset mapping workshops. Livewell participants mapped individual assets, referred to as gifts of the head (things I know about), heart (things I care about) and hands (skills I know how to do). These gifts can become an anchor for individual and collective decision-making around specific actions and help focus goal-setting based on existing capacities.



Image 1: Asset mapping workshop.

The asset mapping workshops identified the personal skills within the participant group, connections to associations like faith-based and neighbourhood groups, plus institutions like local government, media, schools and universities.



Image 2: Community assets identified via workshop.

16 Most Significant Change interviews have been conducted with participants to document people's stories about their involvement in Livewell and contribute to the monitoring, evaluation and ongoing learning of the program. These interviews are being used for a number of purposes which include capturing the insights of participants; finding out what changes participants have experienced, identifying emerging issues and opportunities; sharing results with participants, partner organisations and other key stakeholders.

Conclusions

This research uses a participatory and action research approach in which participants seek to reduce their own and the broader community's carbon emissions.

It rejects social marketing as being too individualistic for low carbon community trials and instead embraces strength-based approaches like asset-based community development and appreciative inquiry that are focused on capacity-building.

The project is in the midst of the reflection phase and producing journal articles for publication.

Anticipated impacts

This research will provide industry, research and government with a model and case studies of how ABCD and co-design can be utilised to deploy low carbon community programs.

It will develop a collaborative approach

to managing the local governance of carbon reduction through an Urban Living Lab based on multi-stakeholder engagement between academia, local government and the community.

Key statement

This research is using strength-based tools like asset-based community development and appreciative inquiry to reveal the assets of individuals and views communities as the starting point for change and abundant in capacity for sustainability interventions at the grassroots level.



Image 3: Livewell Yarra visioning workshop at AGM.

Further information

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