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Information Statement for the Research Project:
Re-imagining Quality of Life – Phase I: Surveying Alternative Futures
Document Version 3; dated 24-05-2021

Your initiative/organisation is invited to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by a research team (see below) from Alternative Futures Research Hub (AFRHub), at the University of Newcastle, in partnership with the *New Economy Network Australia* (NENA).

This project has been funded by the *College of Human and Social Futures*, at the University of Newcastle, Australia.

Why is the research being done?

The purpose of this research is:

- First, to gain an understanding of the groups, movements, organisations, networks, and practices (called “initiatives” hereafter) that are actively involved in promoting alternative futures for Australia at a societal or community level. These alternative futures may be oriented towards greater levels of ecological health and sustainability, social justice and equitability, cross-cultural solidarity, participatory economies, moral integrity, peace, and real democracy.
- Second, to explore the potentials of these initiatives to work more closely with one another to pursue their goals more effectively.
- Third, to expand current concepts and measures of ‘quality of life and wellbeing’ by hearing from critical and transformative voices of disadvantaged groups, grassroots movements, activist initiatives, and community networks.

Ultimately, this project will result in a better understanding of the evolving next socio-economic ecosystems, their major players, their interrelationships, their theories of change, principles, values, and practices, greater cooperation between initiatives as well as influencing public and policy debate about alternative approaches to evaluating ‘quality of life and wellbeing’.

Herewith, you are invited to take part in the first stage of the project that aims to “survey” these initiatives and explore their potentialities to work more closely with one another to pursue their goals more effectively.

Who can participate in the research?

The participants for the social survey component of the project are sourced from a directory of potential respondents co-created collaboratively with NENA based on their existing list of affiliates and publicly available information. One representative from initiatives can complete the online survey. The person completing the survey should be over 18 years of age and considered by the initiative to have the best knowledge of the initiative. The person completing the survey on behalf of the initiative, if necessary, is expected to consult other members at any point to help provide the best information and answer the survey

questions most effectively. The survey can only be completed by current members of the initiative/organisation.

It is possible that your organisation/initiative has received the email to participate in error. Please only complete the survey if the initiative/organisation meets the following criteria:

- The initiative has an explicit purpose or mission statement which supports or implies systemic change
- The initiative work area or focus pertains directly to some kind of generally acknowledged social, economic, ecological, political, or cultural subject matter
- The initiative is aligned with one or more of the following broad ultimate outcomes:
 - Ecological health and balance.
 - Social well-living and flourishing quality of life.
 - Economic democratisation and cross-communal solidarity economies.
 - Deep Democracy and participatory planning.
 - Liberation ethics of cultural diversity, perpetual peace, conviviality, autonomy, and knowledge democracy.
- The initiative is currently favourably impacting multiple demographics or locales in an observable manner
- The initiative has an accessible online profile or homepage and distinctive identity

What would you be asked to do?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer the online survey questionnaire. The survey is thorough and may take up to 45 minutes to answer. The survey may take longer than this if you need to consult other members of your initiative in order to answer questions.

A link to the online questionnaire will be forwarded to you by email. The survey will be live for three weeks, from the date when the link to the online questionnaire is sent to the participants.

The survey questions invite you to represent the work of the initiative against a series of pre-set fields, most of which have pre-set options. These are not definitive but seek to create a baseline for considering initiatives and potential relationships between them. Comments and feedback are encouraged at the end of this survey form.

The resulting data will be used to create online infographic and graph-based visualisations of networks of surveyed initiatives for distribution by NENA and AFRHub under Creative Commons license.

The name of the individual completing the survey is requested at the beginning of the survey for record-keeping purposes only. Except where this may be required by law, the identity of the person completing the survey will never be disclosed and in association with the research data or research results. While names of participating initiatives will be published to show contributors to the project any data or resulting analysis will not be presented as an official position of the initiative.

Towards the end of the survey, you will be asked if your initiative would be interested in participating in an in-depth interview or focus group as part of the second phase of the research. If your answer is positive and the analysis of the survey results indicates the need for interviewing your initiative, we will then approach you again for the next phase.

What choice do you have?

Participation in this research is entirely your and your organisation's choice. Only those initiatives that give their informed consent will be included in the project. Whether or not you decide to participate, your decision will not disadvantage you.

By agreeing to participate, you and the initiative you are representing are agreeing to make your organisation identifiable on the web-based net-mapping platform and data visualisations and research publications.

If you do decide to participate on behalf of your organisation, you and/or your organisation may withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason and have the option of withdrawing your data up until one month after the completion of the survey. In this case, please contact the chief investigator to notify

them of your decision. If you begin the survey and decide not to continue with it, your answers will still be included unless you contact us to request to 'discard' your responses.

How much time will it take?

The whole survey should take about 45 mins to answer all questions if no further consultation with other members of your initiative is required. You will have the opportunity to save your answers and come back to them later to complete them until the due date (i.e., three weeks after the receipt of the survey link via email).

What are the risks and benefits of participating?

The survey is not designed to benefit any individual respondents from any initiative. The survey will lead to better knowledge about how different civil society actors like yours contribute to broader social transitions and how they perceive good quality of life. Further, as per research intention 2, above, the research may lead to improved cooperation and collaboration between initiatives.

The project will produce a number of outputs that may have a range of non-material benefits for participating initiatives, including:

1. All the participating organisations will be informed of the results of the social network analysis of the survey data through a publicly available web-based net-mapping platform that clearly shows their location on the map and how they are potentially and actually connected to other participants. This can help them extend their actual networks of mutual support and collaboration to achieve their common goals more effectively. Using online programs like <https://kumu.io/> we will produce an interactive web-based platform through which the cumulative knowledge, aims, and resources of the participants can be drawn together to seek common ground and drive coordinated actions.
2. Net-mapping the relationships among a broad array of NENA-affiliated organisations, innovations, and experiments encompassing the many organisations engaged in alternative societies and new economies will create a rich source of information to be shared with participating organisations through co-creating a P2P data commons source.
4. This project helps the ideas and voices of the involved initiatives to be heard more widely, thus increasing their influence in the public debates and policy reform discourses and helping them improve their impacts on the current and future societal changes.

There are no direct physical risks involved in participation in this online survey. There is no psychological harm anticipated from participation in this research.

How will your privacy be protected?

The survey does not aim to collect any confidential information, from the research team's point of view. However, the participants may choose not to answer any questions that require or may result in revealing any information perceived as confidential by them. The researchers commit to representing all participating initiatives with integrity and in the spirit of their participation.

Also, only organisations/groups that have given their consent through the consent form section of the online survey questionnaire for making their organisations identifiable on the web-based net-mapping platform, and data visualisations and research publications can take part in the survey. Names of individual respondents are not included in published materials, and the data will not be presented as an official position of the organisation in question.

The collection of data is through a secure web-platform survey via RedCap. The collected data use is limited to the purposes of this research project only and will be stored within RedCap's password-protected data reports until they are processed for analysis and for constructing the web-based network visualisation and mapping platforms. The name of the individual completing the survey is requested at the beginning of the survey for record-keeping purposes only. To learn more about RedCap and its security and privacy policies, please consult: <https://projectredcap.org/wp-content/resources/REDCapTechnicalOverview.pdf>. Since the survey is administered by NENA, we advise you to also consult NENA's privacy policy at: <https://www.neweconomy.org.au/about/privacy/>

Data will be retained securely for a minimum period of 5 years from completion of the research and managed/stored in accordance with the University's Research Data and Materials Management Guideline (see <https://policies.newcastle.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=72>) or any successor Guideline, and applicable University of Newcastle policy provisions (as amended from time to time).

Access to any identifiable data will be restricted to members of the research team, unless:

- you have consented otherwise; or
- disclosure is required by law in order for us to comply with our regulatory obligations.

How will the information collected be used?

The responses to the survey will be analysed using computer programs and written up into a research report. The final report on the survey results and its summary will be available from the website of *The Alternative Futures Research Network (AFRN)* at the University of Newcastle. We are aiming for these to be available from 1st Oct 2021. A link to the full report and summary will be sent to all participants by email. Inquiries about the whole report and its summary can be made anytime by email to the chief investigator at hamed.hosseini@newcastle.edu.au.

By using free international platforms like Metamaps.cc and online programs like Kumu, we will create an accessible open data source that visualises the networks of connections between the participants. This online visualisation helps the participants to detect their location on the mapped network and explore the potentialities for collaboration with other participants over their shared values and objectives to promote quality of life and transform communal life for the better. The results of a rather similar project conducted in the United States can be found here: <https://kumu.io/realeconomylab/rel-ecosystem-2>

The findings of this survey may be used in academic articles, book chapters, webinars, and conferences. Links to these publications will be made available on the project webpage and be promoted via the NENA website, regular email lists, newsletters, and social media sites. The seminar presentations that draw on the findings are open to the participants who are interested in knowing more about the outcomes.

The university would have to share the data with law enforcement bodies if required by law. This does not change the confidentiality statement above. Non-identifiable data may also be shared with other parties to encourage scientific scrutiny, and to contribute to further research and public knowledge. This is common practice in Australian survey research.

What do you need to do to participate?

Please closely read this Information Statement and be sure you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have questions, contact the Chief Investigator at hamed.hosseini@newcastle.edu.au.

If you would like to participate, please complete, and finally submit, the online survey questionnaire including its Consent Form section (the first section) where your organisation agrees to take part in the survey and authorises you as the individual respondent(s) to answer the questions on behalf of the organisation.

You don't have to answer every question. You can click through to different sections of the survey if you wish to skip parts and still submit your answers. You do have the option of leaving the survey and doing it later.

Further information

If you would like further information, please contact Dr S A Hamed Hosseini, the Chief Investigator (hamed.hosseini@newcastle.edu.au), and/or Dr Michelle Maloney the Director of NENA at mena@neweconomy.org.au

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Seyed Abdolhamed Hosseini Faradonbeh

S A Hamed Hosseini
Chief Investigator
On behalf of the Research Team:
Dr Michelle Maloney,
A/Prof. Penny Buykx,
A/Prof. Daniela Heil,
Dr Chris Krogh

Complaints about this research

This project has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-**2021-0143**.

Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research & Innovation Services, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia, telephone (02) 4921 6333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au.