Could Twitris+ Be Used for Disaster Response?

I recently had the pleasure of speaking with Hermant Purohit and colleagues who have been working on an interesting semantic social web application called Twitris+. A project of the the Ohio Center of Excellence in Knowledge-enabled Computing (Kno.e.sis), Twitris+ uses "real-time monitoring and multi-faceted analysis of social signals to provide insights and a framework for situational awareness, in-depth event analysis and coordination, emergency response aid, reputation management etc."

Twitris analyzes, in most cases in real-time, any type of event or activities from multiple facets: temporal (10), spatial (3) thematics/topical (1,12), people (6), content including social media, news, Wikipedia, multimedia (7, 8), network (6), sentiment/emotion (5), coordination, engagement, and linguistic analysis etc. and also provide Semantic Search Interface (2). Please see Twitris http://twitris.knoesis.org for a live system (past events monitored include natural and man-made disasters).

Twitris+ packs together quite an array of social computing features, integrating spatio-temporal-thematic dimensions, people-content network analysis and sentiment-emotion subjectivity analysis. The tool also aggregates a range of social data and web resources such as twitter, online news, Wikipedia pages, other multimedia content, etc., in addition to SMS data, for which the team was recently granted a patent.

Unlike many other social media platforms I've reviewed over recent months, Twitris+ geo-tags content at the tweet-level rather than at the bio level. That is, many platforms simply geo-code tweets based on where a person says s/he is as per their Twitter bio. Accurately and comprehensively geo-referencing social media content is of course no trivial matter. Since many tweets do not include geographic information, colleagues at GeoIQ are seeking to infer geographic information *after* analyzing a given stream of tweets, for example.

I look forward to continuing my conversations with Hermant and team. Indeed, I am particularly interested to see which emergency management organizations begin to pilot the platform to enhance their situational awareness during a crisis. Their feedback will be invaluable to Twitris+ and to many of us in the humani-tarian technology space.