

Breakout session

Group 3, Saturday, September 27, 2008

Rapporteur: Karen Hibbard-Rode

We spent most of the session focused on a discussion about leaders:

- Who are they?
- Where are they (academia, communities, businesses, governments)?
- How are leaders trained and educated, and what are the barriers to developing leaders?
- Leadership and uncertainty

The discussion was very rich, based on a myriad of our own experiences in research, work, and community life. Below is a summary of the discussion:

University leadership has changed. The older faculty don't want to be department chairs and younger people are pressured into it. The original idea of Universities is changing so much. People have so many administrative duties, and no priorities, and thus simply don't have *time to think*.

How does leadership emerge? In Canada, some leaders arise out of the Canadian Rangers. To be chosen, a local ranger must be an esteemed member of the community.

We can distinguish between formal and informal leaders. Perhaps, formal leaders are elected or employed, and are ambition-driven. Informal leaders lead through their personalities and the respect of others. Natural leaders in some communities may not want to take formal leadership; they want to go out hunting. How can institutions be more flexible, for example, to understand when leaders are likely to be available? One example might be "subsistence leave" in Northern Alaska.

There is brain-drain from the North. There are few Northern universities, so people go south. Ideally, they complete degrees and return to the north to take leadership, but this doesn't happen. Most of those people are women. Iceland has tremendous brain-drain from people going

to the city, so they've consolidated regions to create one cohesive government that has enough money to make leadership a career. This could be a lesson learned; it's successful.

There are real problems with substance abuse in parts of Iceland. 80% of prospective shipping employees failed drug tests. Many babies are born with fetal alcohol syndrome—that will get worse before it gets better because there is a whole generation affected. In Finland, bright youth go into business, not politics. There is a decrease in talented lawmakers. How to make leadership attractive?

Real, on-the-ground mentoring is important to helping potential leaders. There are systemic structural barriers for some, for example a lack of money for campaigns. A mentoring program in Canada gave women campaign training, to address the lack of women at top levels of formal leadership.

Leadership evolves out of challenges people face (problem solving). Youth have no major challenges, or the challenges are too big. But even when challenges seem big they can be solved. For example, youth led an organizing committee to vote to ban alcohol in one community.

We need empowered people at a local level. There is a sense of great responsibility (maybe overwhelming challenges) but also a sense of hope to fix social problems. Leadership comes from society, so leaders should be supported by society. Education was set up initially to empower and set students up to encounter their passions, which leads to leadership. Education got away from striking a chord in students.

Leaders have always made decisions under uncertainty, especially on an international level. In Norway, the problem is that the IPCC says there are uncertainties, but these are being repressed or disregarded, which is a problem for democratic debate. How can we translate uncertainties to the public without seeming to discredit the science? There's a need to communicate about the different levels of scientific uncertainty; some levels just might be "unknownable".