

John Lewis: A plan of personal commitment and action

There are three spheres that I will commit to acting in as a result of my participation in the GEGF – my practice, my communication and my teaching.

My practice

As the founder and President of Intelligent Futures, I have committed my professional life to the pursuit of a more sustainable future. The learnings and outcomes of the GEGF will influence my work by increasing my knowledge and tools to move the communities and organizations that I work with to more sustainable forms of governance.

Action: Integrate the findings of the GEGF into the governance of my projects and processes. My list of clients varies, but a current project that would align with my participation in the GEGF would be my work on a climate change adaptation plan for Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada. This can provide an interesting local case study for the application of the governance concepts that will be discussed in Switzerland in July 2009. As the arctic is the proverbial canary in the coalmine, the application of these concepts to the adaptation of communities in the north will be especially timely and informative to a much broader audience.

Measures: Through our process design, we can demonstrate the divergence between new governance models and the traditional model. Additionally, we can identify the relationship between the varied issues of climate change adaptation and relate this to the connected / empowered actors in the community. Finally, we should be able to relate the new model to the local cultural context – specifically the reflection of the Inuit traditional values and the alignment (or misalignment) with the ideals of governance that come out of the GEGF.

My communication

Through my newly formed blog, I have been increasing my writing on issues of sustainability and am trying to demonstrate new ways of looking at these topics. The procedures of the GEGF and the resulting network would provide excellent fuel for new writings. Additionally, the network itself could act as a catalyst to “spread the word.”

Action: Use the Intelligent Futures Insights blog to distribute the message of international environmental governance to audiences that might otherwise not understand or care. The proceedings, learnings and conversations of the GEGF will be a key focus of my blog during the event and afterwards. In addition, I will commit to connecting with participants from around the globe and across sectors to share their experiences as they attempt to apply their learning from the GEGF.

Measures: Through tracking of readership, we can easily measure the extent that the word is getting out. Building off the network established in July 2009, the expectation would be that the blog would grow significantly in the second half of 2009. An additional measure of the level of engagement the writing achieves is the amount of replies or responses that the entries receive.

My teaching

I teach courses for both professionals and undergraduate and graduate students. I would commit to integrating the key messages of the GEGF into my curricula for these diverse audiences.

Action: Integrate issues of global environmental governance into my course “Planning the Canadian City” at the University of Calgary. This course provides an overview of issues in planning cities and introduces the concepts of complexity, integrated thinking and connections as overarching themes. Issues surrounding environmental governance relate to all these areas and how cities are built. I will integrate the findings of the GEGF into the curriculum for the 2010 version of this course. Additionally, I will commit to integrating these concepts into future teaching opportunities as they arise.

Measures: The initial measure is obviously whether or not these concepts are integrated into the course, but the more meaningful measure is the reflection of these ideas in the projects of the students. Rather than use exams, I use a semester-long group project on a particular community to build the students’ understanding of cities and community building. The integration of these governance concepts into their projects would be an excellent way to demonstrate the level of understanding.