

The Sustainable Organisation

The Change Leaders, Oxford Conference 2017

Friday September 22nd started with key note speaker Ian Billick, the Executive Director of the Rocky Mountain Biological Lab (<http://www.rmbl.org/about-us-2/our-staff-2/>). Both Ian and RMBL are involved in critical scientific research related to climate change.

RMBL is an independent lab/ field station that was founded in 1928. It provides access, logistical support and community building (support, training) to scientists. The lab enables genome research and biological research and has a high level of scientific publications. The challenges they have:

- Infrastructure costs are rising, while the science budget is flat.
- Lack of virtuous cycles: there are no financial incentives for the research, e.g. it doesn't result in intellectual properties that can be capitalized.
- Provincialism of place: the (unjust) perception that field research is only locally applicable.
- Identity politics: environmental interest nowadays identifies whether you're conservative or progressive in politics.

Friday afternoon presented a kaleidoscope of tCL speakers.

- Rowan Gillies made us aware of the ongoing loss of species, with the extinction of numerous birds and their beautiful sounds.
- Kit Lykketoft shared with us the sustainability aspects of tourism in Copenhagen. The city is using a benchmark tool to compare with other cities, it stimulates accommodations to go for the green key certification and it aims at including the Sustainable Development Goals in their policies.
- Shekhar Pula presented the Stop the Ecocide Foundation. He works together with international lawyers to include environmental crimes at the International Criminal Court (ICC). To reach that goal they work on public awareness building, political leadership and legal advancement (so lawyers learn how to deal with ecocide law). In addition they work on including more island states in the ICC (impacted by the rise of sea level), so they will have a larger share of voice.

Next was a presentation by tCL'er Jacob Mayne of a unique new study that presents the voices of 130 senior and middle managers working for leading corporations in 25 countries, half in CSR roles, half not. Jacob shared hopeful stories with us about companies that really make an effort to be more sustainable. Main conclusions (self-reported by managers, compared to 5 years ago):

1. Business case finally recognized;
2. Sustainability becoming part of management;
3. Business outcomes seen as more important than PR and compliance;
4. Middle managers take the lead;
5. Barriers are short-term focus and top management ignorance.

There is more interest in the change aspects of CSR.

The day ended with drinks, to thank Rick Torseth for his commitment to the tCL Board.

Saturday September 23rd started with a talk by tCL'er Lars Thuesen, who has been working with the UN Women Program in Moldova. He presented together with Ulziisuren Jamsran, the UN responsible for the project that focussed on violence against women. This project evolved from first working for women and gender equality, to then working with women and then facilitating champions as the key change agents. This focuses on building adaptive leadership, using positive deviance approaches and implementing innovative collaborative spaces in the UN office, which was a huge change in the way of working of the UN. The project not only works with PD champions amongst violated women, but also amongst the police and other stakeholders. Now they've even started working with one of the spouses of the women. With the help of the PD's government has changed the law and also the women's rights law has been adapted into an easy-to-read version for women. Challenges for the future are to scale up and disseminate the project and to empower the women in the program to educate themselves, to find work, housing, childcare, etc.

Next was a session with tCL'ers Martin Thomas on the Multicapital Scorecard, based on a book that he co-authored. Martin presented Larry Hirschhorn's Psychodynamic Framework, which takes into account the facilitating process for change by the legitimate authority, the inhibiting process for change due to inadequate authority resulting in anxiety and the developmental process for change to create new rules. To come up with Context Based Sustainability Norms, an organisation has to define, together with stakeholders, what represents sustainable performance in their context. Next step is to see how the organisation performed and then to define what they're going to do about that. The biggest challenge in this process is to get the economics people to talk to the sustainability people.

After lunch we all moved to Egrove Park for the CCC 15th anniversary celebration event. Marc Thompson welcomed us and invited us to split up in working groups to define the core elements in teaching, training and consulting on sustainable change for leaders. Facilitated by tCL'ers Dorthe Sorensen, Lisa Francis-Jennings and Judith Campbell, we split up to work in teams that share a common idea of how such a program would look like. Late in the afternoon the teams presented their ideas in a market place.

Saturday ended with keynote speaker Gareth Morgan. He presented three key sets of ideas for understanding the challenges of sustainability: Complexity Science, "Field" theory and Critical Realism. He then proposed a "min specs" approach, defining the minimum simple rules. His claim: significant change likely has to be driven locally, from the bottom up, because major institutions tend to be locked in fields of relations that are entrenched and tend to block major change unless there are major shared crises.

After this inspiring talk we enjoyed drinks and dinner, to celebrate CCC's anniversary.

On Sunday tCL's Haje Schutte introduced us into the world of Public Private Partnerships for enabling a more sustainable society, based on the OECD publication "Investing in Climate, Investing in Growth". Partnerships are at the core of sustainable development goals implementation, for example through blended finance, combining public money (to reduce risks for private sector) with private investments – no grants, but investments with a return on capital. These public private partnerships require a

different way of working that bridges different cultures and interests, with a need for capable cross-sector leadership, able to deconstruct complex problems, articulate a long-term vision, build trust, leverage differences and empower people. For these changes to happen, change leaders will be in high demand.