

PBL exercise

My thought process after the first class:

- I started out doing general searches in online databases and on the Web on **science policy and disaster management**.
- First I ran across a RAND report titled *Assessing Federal Research and Development for Hazard Loss Reduction*. It had an intriguing idea in the summary and conclusions section that read:

...Within such a dynamic system and given these uncertainties, policymakers faces less a geophysical problem than an inherently *societal* problem with a geophysical underpinning. (p.56)
- Soon after this, I came across the Oxfam America report called *Cuba - Weathering the storm: lessons in risk reduction from Cuba*. Upon reading both of these reports, I became interested in the social aspects to disasters and how some countries appear to be organized more advantageously in terms of the overall ability of their citizens to respond to disaster planning and evacuations. I was stuck with how localized and community-based much of Cuba's civil defense is and how different it seems here in the U.S. where, at least in the Katrina disaster, people were expecting and relying on large government bureaucracies like FEMA, etc., to rescue them.
- I came up with my initial wording for my 'identity' thus: *I am the person who is looking at the contrast in approaches to "risk reduction" that is exemplified by Cuba, on the one hand, and the United States through FEMA, on the other. Can it be discerned whether science has informed the policies adopted in these two countries?*
- Went to a number of government web sites and drilled down into them to try to find a division or department that I might be able to use as the contrasting agency in the U.S. to what I had read about how the government agencies function in Cuba.
- I uncovered a very interesting counter-report to the Oxfam report written by B. E. Aguirre of the Disaster Research Center at the University of Delaware (a very comprehensive and active web site) called *Disaster in Cuba*. His analysis of the same features that Oxfam glowingly reported upon was instead more critical and had the view that it works in Cuba because of the repressive regime there (in his opinion).
- Due to the fact that I could not find a way to characterize and analyze the various organizational units that make up FEMA and contrast that with the national and community agencies that make up disaster preparedness, mitigation, and recovery in Cuba, I cast about for some other "social" link on which to concentrate. Particularly vexing – in my mind – was how to connect science research and policy with the kinds of reports and articles I had been reading, e.g.
 - National Science and Technology Council. Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources. Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction. (2003). *Reducing Disaster*

Vulnerability through Science and Technology.

http://www.ostp.gov/NSTC/html/SDR_Report_ReducingDisasterVulnerability2003.pdf

- Federal Emergency Management Agency. (n.d.). *Report on Costs and Benefits of Natural Hazard Mitigation*. http://www.fema.gov/pdf/library/haz_cost.pdf
- Congressional Research Service. (2005). *Science and Technology Policy: Issues for the 109th Congress*. <http://www.ncseonline.org/nle/crsreports/05mar/RL32837.pdf>
- Bozeman, Barry and Sarewitz, Dan. (2002). *Public Failures in U.S. Science Policy*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Science Policy and Outcomes. http://www.cspo.org/products/papers/Pub_Fail.PDF
- Weimer, David. L. (2004). *Institutionalizing Neutrally Competent Policy Analysis: Resources for Promoting Objectivity and Balance in Consolidating Democracies*. La Follette School Working Paper No. 2004-2006. La Follette School of Public Affairs, University of Wisconsin-Madison. <http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/publications/workingpapers/weimer2004-006.pdf>
- Rodriguez, Havian, Wachtendorf, Tricia, and Russell Carla. (2004). *Disaster Research in the Social Sciences: Lessons Learned, Challenges, and Future Trajectories*. Disaster Research Center (DRC), University of Delaware. http://www.udel.edu/DRC/Preliminary_Papers/PP338-Disaster%20Research.pdf
- Quartantelli, E.L. (2002). *A Half Century of Social Science Disaster Research: Selected Major Findings and Their Applicability*. Disaster Research Center (DRC), University of Delaware. http://www.udel.edu/DRC/Preliminary_Papers/PP336%20HALF%20CENTURY%20.pdf
- Steger, Philipp. (2005). *Pandora's Box: Bringing Science into Politics: the Debate on Scientific Integrity in the U. S. Policymaking*. bridges, Vol. 5, April 14. http://www.ostina.org/html/bridges_archive/article.htm?article=1211

- I have now started reading about community based disaster management – which seemed to me to incorporate some of the noteworthy features of the Cuban model; however, it now appears that CBDM is primarily used in non-American disasters and is a major thrust of the United Nations

Community Based Disaster Management (CBDM) has been a popular term for the last several years³. However, in only a few cases has it been successfully incorporated into policy issues. It has been a common notion that CBDM is the responsibility of grass-roots organizations and/or NGOs. There are two major aspects in this regard: First, the best practices of CBDM initiatives become local initiatives, and are not properly disseminated. It was observed that even though there have been good examples of CBDM in specific locations within a country, these lessons are not transferred to other parts of the country, neither do they reach adjacent countries of the region. The other aspect is that due to a lack of recognition of CBDM initiatives at the national level, there are often limited resources devoted to these activities. Thus, in most cases, CBDM is seen in isolation, and distinct from national disaster mitigation practices, neither it is included in national development policy. Therefore, there is an increasing need to understand the basics of CBDM, and try to formulate a framework for incorporating CBDM into national policy issues with special focus on sustainability. http://www.hyogo.uncrd.or.jp/publication/documents/CBDM_report.pdf

