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Future Cities 2009, Madison  
November 7, 2009  
Political Economy of Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Power

In the conference we are talking about the links between the Nuclear – the global – and our individual lives. As in so many issues and paradigms, that link is most manifest and most real in our imbedded-ness in our community. Unless you are a soldier on your way to war or having come back from war, foreign policy is an abstraction. You only really know it when it has impacts – that you recognize as impacts – in your community. You know it when the neighbor who moves across the street or who moves into the next apartment only speaks Vietnamese.

Jackie once told me how to know that U.S. Nuclear policy was a local issue. She said ask the mayor of Hiroshima. I said, yes, I can see that. Then I got a chance to go to Hiroshima while on a trip to a U.S./Japanese Mayors Conference. Then I really knew, because the consequences were visible to my own naked eyes. Mr. Nakanishi brought that vividly back with his talk and pictures last night. The links come together most visibly at the local level. And, I think, action is most sustainable at the local level.

It was at Riverside Church in New York that Dr. King spoke of the connection – the link – that he had made between the poverty and joblessness in his community and the Vietnam War. I drove him to the San Francisco airport for his flight to New York. I would guess that – at the time – the speech was powerfully because of the true and knowledgeable foreign policy argument it laid out. He had obviously done his foreign policy research and that was part of why he came out against the war. It was in that speech – the Beyond Vietnam speech – that he insightfully looked deeper and found the causal connection between racism, extreme materialism, and militarism. It was this values analysis that made his opposition inescapable. He starts with a quote from John Kennedy on political oppression.

“It is with such activity in mind that the words of the late John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, “Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.”

“Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken: the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to

give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investments. I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin, we must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.”

He goes on to say, “A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies.” “It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.” “A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.” For me these words are more memorable than those of the I Have a Dream speech.

I live in that community that is on the other end of the link that Dr. King made with Vietnam but whose community members are also bludgeoned by the triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism. The Prison-Industrial-Complex and the Military-Industrial-Complex – as defined by the Republican President Eisenhower - are the international and domestic side of the same coin. Torture at Gitmo and Abu Ghraib grew out of the torture in the prisons and Super Max facilities stateside. The anti-SuperMax folks are working to expose this torture connection. The death penalty is the tip of the criminal injustice system in the same way that the nuclear weapon is the tip of the war system. Both are hailed as deterrence when neither deters and both raise the level of violence justification in their own spheres. Fear, oppression, racism, poverty, imperialism, and rapacious capitalism are factors for both. The links are exposed – out in the open for those who have eyes to see.

“We have guided missiles and misguided men.” Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. So we must engage at this values level no matter how uncomfortable we may be engaging our neighbors about values clarification. It is by being deaf, dumb, and blind to values that we get led down the path to be exploited by those who are very adept at pushing those juvenile primitive responses that reside in our reptilian brain. By the time we reach 25 we ought to have enough active connections to our forebrains to forestall those responses to ill

perceived threats, shallow acceptance, and the sparkling baubles of power or superiority.

American culture – especially the imperialist English language – is heavily laden with social-psychological traps that trip us up, numb us and blind us from the consequences of what we are doing. The cult of U.S. “exceptionalism,” manifest destiny, the chosen people coaxes the unsuspecting into a spider’s web that only results in the injection of a paralyzing venom: a cocktail mix of conformity, individual greed based on a false conception of scarcity and juvenile and narcissistic consumer cravings played on by the productions of super talented, highly paid artist and social psychologists. Native Americans disappear out of our consciousness despite their presence in our communities and the evidence of their names for things and their practices that we have appropriated. Like much that is in the Constitution that is derived from the Great Peace Maker of the Hudennoshone. This is just one of many examples of social-psychological traps. Our belief about the natural reality of the survival of the fittest is another. Nature is more about cooperation, symbiosis, and peaceful adaptation as it is about the survival of the fittest.

Imperialism and empire mark and shape our language, habits, and culture. This was most evident during the Bush administration. But the dashing of our hopes by Obama is evidence of our misperception of the forces at play at the national level. The U.S. belief in the power of the individual separate from the community that surrounds them fooled us, again. George Washington was clear that he did not want to be an imperial president but it was forced on him. Subsequent presidents have struggled much, much less with that. But even Kings are caught up in their circumstances. No one gets into those positions by magic; it is a very tight suffocating fit.

Mayors and other activists at the local level have more room to maneuver. I have some debate with professor Jacobs last night. Mayors and Cities have been and are much more creative than the two-choice box he put us in. It is principally at the local level that governance creativity and programmatic creativity resides. It is long after things work at the local level that States and Nations get a clue. And most “higher” level legislators and governmental administrators cut their political, governmental teeth at the local level. As citizens of the U.S. drowning in obscurantist history and illegitimately hierarchical media spotlights, we miss the critical importance of what we think and do at the local level. Shortly after becoming Mayor of Oakland,

thirty year Congressperson, Dellums said that all of that time in congress was just barely preparation for being Oakland's mayor. We have been looking through the wrong end of the telescope.

Many excellent local efforts have been spoken of at this conference. Let me mention a few more and spend some time on the one I have been spending time on that is about to come to fruition.

FIRST in Marin County they are challenging the corporate personhood rule. Corporate rights are secured under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which was intended to give full rights to slaves. Ironically, in an 1886 case (*Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company*) Supreme Court Justice Morrison Remick Waite simply pronounced, before the beginning of arguments in the case, the doctrine of corporate personhood. Although no *real* scrutiny of this conceptual point could conclude that corporate "legal" entities that lack life, can live forever, and that desire unrestricted control and power is a person deserving of rights, this doctrine became stated law without argument or judgment. Out of this unchallenged pronouncement springs *Buckley v. Valeo*, which equated money – corporate money – with free speech thus giving the voices of the monarchial, elite investment class a more powerful voice than each and all the rest of us. In Marin County a group of local folks secured an ordinance that disallows any corporate contributions to local candidates for office. They are prepared to take this to the Supreme Court to test, for the first time, corporate personhood. I think that is huge.

SECOND in the category of learning things from folks in other parts of the world we have the situation in **Bhutan** -- In the thick of a global financial crisis, many economists have gone to this Himalayan kingdom to study a unique economic policy called Gross National Happiness, based on Buddhist principles. When considering economic development, policymakers there take into account respect for all living things, nature, community participation and the need for balance between work, sleep and reflection or meditation.

"Happiness is very serious business," **Bhutan** Prime Minister Jigme Thinley said. "The dogma of limitless productivity and growth in a finite world is unsustainable and unfair for future generations." Gross National Happiness, or GNH, evolved over centuries in **Bhutan** but was launched formally in 1972 as an economic standard of measure. Government policy in **Bhutan** has been guided by GNH principles in a succession of five-year plans.

*grossnationalhappiness.com*

There are extensive study programs in Canada, Australia, the United States and France.

The most significant GNH project, however, appears to be in France. The Quality of Life Commission, initiated by President Nicolas Sarkozy in August, with help from such notable economists as Nobel prize winners Joseph Stiglitz and Armatya Sen, is expected to launch its findings next year. Unlike the gross domestic product index, however, a GNH index measures the quality of life based on 72 standards.

THIRD October 27 in Pittsburgh the Steelworkers formed collaboration with Mondragon, the world's largest worker-owned cooperative. The agreement is meant to establish Mondragon cooperatives in the manufacturing sector within the United States and Canada that adapt collective bargaining principles to the Mondragon worker ownership model of "one worker, one vote." President Leo W. Gerard said, "We need a new business model that invests in workers and invests in communities."

Mondragon Cooperative structure: Mission is to produce and sell goods and provide services and distribution using democratic methods in its organizational structure and distributing the assets generated for the benefit of its members and the community, as a measure of solidarity. Mondragon began its activities in 1956 in the Basque town of Mondragon by a rural village priest with a transformative vision who believed in the values of worker collaborative and working hard to reach for and realize the common good. It is now in thirty countries.

The ONE that I am working on: Local currency.

Alternative Currency for Oakland Residents and Neighbors

Oloni, acorn

No interest, no inflation (Christian, Islam, Jewish, Buddhist)

Ecological – McKibben, import replacement

Sustainability

Community solidarity

Enhanced small business, jobs

Economics education

Reduced cost of remittances payments

Banking the unbanked