

# Community, Creative Imagination and Cultures of Peace: A Peace Education and Critical Futurist Perspective\*

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## Re-thinking Community: An Invitation to Converse Widely

In this paper, I would like to take up the theme of the cultural maps or assumptions that we may have about community. More specifically, I am interested in how they may relate to the futures of both education and our social relations locally and globally, including dilemmas over building cultures of social and ecological peace. I would like to explore with you the often contested concept of 'community', and our sense of both individual and collective possibilities about whether we may actively contribute to creating better futures through teaching and learning.

Traditionally, the school curriculum, especially at the primary school level, has been associated with teaching children the skills of the 3 Rs- Reading, writing and arithmetic. Now days, there is a likely addition of computer literacy. Yet, in terms of community-building is this kind of conventional approach to schooling likely to be enough to prepare young people adequately for a changing world and future challenges? How important may it be to encourage also skills and values such as those associated with what might be termed the 4 Cs of empathetic communication-Cross-cultural awareness, Compassionate regard for others, Conflict resolution, and Civic engagement.

## Learning Journeys

I would like to share with you a story that relates to my work as an educator and my community involvement over the years. It tells about past events, links to the present, and foreshadows what I will later return to about curriculum design and development in a globalizing and challenging world. In telling this story, I invite conversations about desired curriculum innovations at both the

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school level and in teacher education and how they may relate to the futures of community-building whether in Taiwan, in Australia or elsewhere.

### **Openness to Alternative Social Knowledge: Tea, Teaching and Learning Sites**

As I arrived in Taipei, my attention was attracted to, among other things, not just Taipei's excellent metro system linking through to the Tamsui (Danshui) campus of Tamkang University, but the skyscrapers giving way to tea houses on the Muzha (Mujha) hillsides. I had heard before my departure from Sydney how these slopes around Taipei come alive each night with sparkling pinpoints of light from the tea-houses as tea lovers drink, eat and chat. Both Lyn Waddell, who shared this journey, love a good cup of tea. We both enjoy the opportunity that it gives to pause, reflect, and learn.

### **Beyond the Colonial Gaze: Visions of Multicultural Futures**

In Sydney, we often visit a teahouse within the Queen Victoria Building which lies in the busy heart of the city. We often meet friends there and chat. It is, perhaps, interesting to note that in the late nineteenth century the tea rooms in the Queen Victoria Building were an active learning site for dissenting futures thinking notwithstanding the colonial naming of the building. Women suffragists regularly met in this community and planned their non-violent action campaigns for the enfranchisement of women. The proprietor, Quong Tart, a leading Asian Australian businessman, extended warm hospitality to all who came to his tea rooms at a time when Australia was busily turning its back on constructive, multicultural relationships with its Asian neighbours.

The Australia of those days was not so much place of hospitality as an exclusivist community. It was still very much an outpost of the British empire in its ways of framing reality and potential reality with its Asian neighbours. When the first federal parliament met in 1901, the fear-laden images of the Asian 'Other' were projected in terms of invasion scenarios and a 'Yellow Peril' future. Such a xenophobic imagination found expression in the highly discriminatory 'white Australia' policy (Evans, Moore, Saunders & Jamison, 1997).

Meanwhile, the original inhabitants of this country, the Australian Aboriginal people, with their deep affinity to the land as 'sacred geography' and systems of knowledge that conflicted with colonial mentalities, were denied citizenship. Such a dominant view of Australian society and the future held firm for some time. It took some generations before newer, more inclusive visions of multicultural futures became salient. However, these newer visions were to be put under some significant strain by the politics of fear surrounding 'the war on terror' in the early twenty-first century (Behrendt, 2008).

In this, Australia is far from exceptional. Arguably, all societies need to reflect honestly on their historical pasts, including learning from some 'uncomfortable truths' about visions past, when envisioning today the kinds of future community life that may be either feared or preferred.

## **Thinking about Global Community: Making Connections in the Classroom**

Part of the ongoing pleasure and interest that Lyn Waddell and I share in tea is also very much educational. Some years ago we were both involved in an educational project for schools that took up issues of peace, social justice and the future. Supported by the Geography Teachers Association of Australia and a fair trade organization, the World Development Tea Cooperative, we developed a range of futures-oriented learning materials for schools. These curriculum materials took up the theme of 'the world in a cup of tea'. Our basic intention was to take tea as an everyday part of life and to extend it so as to invite conversations among our students on issues of community-building both locally and globally. In other words, how might the tea we drink be possibly connected in some ways with issues of human rights, the environment and peace with global justice? (Hutchinson, Talbot & Brown, 1992; Hutchinson & Waddell, 1986; Waddell & Hutchinson, 1988).

So often as teachers we don't invite discussion on the possible links between what is happening in our immediate surrounds and the wider world and what it may mean for the future (Bussey, 2001; Hicks, 2001). In what we teach, how we teach or design curricula, we may neglect to reflect, for example, on major future-related issues. There may be a lack of an explicit futures dimension. The future may be taken for granted rather than being seen as something that is very much in the making now. Neglected, longer-term issues may include questions of 'global community' and building multicultural solidarities or partnerships across diversity with an evolving sense of 'global citizenship' (Beck, 2006; Boudet, 2001; Held, 2002; Kung, 1993).

## **Meaningful Community Living: Connecting and Learning**

Let me invite you to reflect now on the general question, 'What makes for meaningful community living?' and some related critical issues about the future:

What is our sense of community life? How do we imagine it whether locally or globally, whether in the past, the present or the future?

Do our ideas about community say much about our individual and collective learning journeys? Are they something that we may invoke with platitudinous zeal when it suits us without giving much thought to what they may actually mean?

How do our ideas or images of community relations in a globalizing world relate to our sense of what is important educationally? To what extent, for example, may creative learning communities be built in our schools and universities?

Do we, as both teachers and learners, think about whether our educational institutions are more than just for reproducing and adapting to the world? Does accepting a narrow or conventional reproductive role for our learning organizations mean a diminished exploration of alternatives through both the formal and informal curriculum?

## **Education, Community and Foresight**

Through the ways we teach and learn, how important is it to encourage a sense of active hope about the futures of community? Are we interested in questioning assump-

tions that trends are destiny?

Here it is worth recalling the evocative metaphors about education, foresight and action spoken many generations ago by the Chinese poet Kuan Tzu:

*If you are thinking a year  
ahead, sow seeds  
If you are thinking ten  
years ahead, plant a tree  
If you are thinking a hundred years ahead,  
Educate the people.*

### **Communities, Cultural Violence and Dissenting Futures**

Yet, in considering the value of such an evocation for our times, is it important to recognize the risks of one-true world assumptions? Our images of a tree may be focused on what is familiar. Such images may convey a sense of one-true world of development rather than being more open to the principles of diversity and impermanence.

Restricted or repressive images of community may be normalized or condoned through cultural violence in ways that the acts of gendered or other violence are ignored and even condoned. They may be taken to be a 'natural' or 'inevitable' part of everyday community realities. Colonizing assumptions about potential realities may narrow our perceptions of what might be, including leaving unexamined questions of choice and engagement for creating better communities. Coercive community building has authoritarian roots.

### **Critical Pedagogies and Community**

Rather than education being a potential means, for questioning taken – for – granted world views and opening creative spaces for both individual autonomy and collaboration, it may rationalize institutionalized forms of violence and an unequal gradient of power relations. The history of Western imperialism and military expansion provides considerable evidence of how notions of utopia or 'the good community' may turn to dystopias or racist, sexist, militarist, bigoted and fascist communities. Many examples may be given such as the ways in which Indigenous peoples have been violently affected by culturally arrogant and imposed views of what constitutes community, including who is included, who is excluded, who is scapegoated, and what constitutes 'real' progress (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2009; Nakata, 2007; Smith, 1999).

There are many dilemmas and unresolved tensions for us in terms of whether a sense of community is emancipatory or repressive, hospitable or hostile. In our new world of globalization, interlocking economic, military and ecological crises, and still largely inadequate networks of inter-civilization dialogue, these are arguably crucial dilemmas for the ways we teach and learn. Such dilemmas may include critical reflection on whether we may need to rethink our conventional ways of teaching and learning.

## **Questioning Authoritarian Pedagogical Methods**

This may include questioning more deeply, for example, authoritarian pedagogical models such as 'classical' sage-on-the-stage approaches. It may include, too, resisting uncritical adoption of newer banking, commodifying and infotainment models. Among the contemporary educational babble is the continuing powerful push of the neoclassical-economics worldview about 'strategic markets', 'performance indicators', 'customers', and 'efficiency gains'.

There may be, also, some deeper reflections that get beyond any facile assumptions about the place of new educational technologies. Rather there may be a serious rethinking of how we teach and learn. Such rethinking may include whether we welcome diverse ideas about participatory approaches and 'active learning communities' (Francis, 2002; Freire, 1999; Metcalfe & Game, 2008; O'Sullivan, Morrell & O'Connor, 2002; Singh, 2005).

## **A Healthy Skepticism**

To develop a healthy skepticism about top-down prognostications about the futures of both community and education is important. Through uncritical acceptance of some conventional versions of god-like deliverance from current problems, whether in the powerful narratives of technocratic dreaming or the equally seductive visions of consumer paradises is to deny the possibilities of critical pedagogical approaches and for active learning communities. There is impoverished moral and social imagination about responsibilities to future generations.

With such mindsets, there is a silencing of dissenting futures thinking about self, society, and our relations with our planetary environment. Our cultural landscapes of the future may risk becoming self-fulfilling prophecies. Rather than creative imaginings in which the futures of community life embrace diversity and flourish non-violently, we may have the fear-laden flatlands of militarized, technocratized and ecological disaster imagery.

In such social imaginary, too, there tends to be much blame-shifting for societal and global ecological ills, including neo-Malthusian accounts, such as those of James Lovelock (2006). With such neo-Malthusian maps, the affluent, Westernized world may substantially 'adapt' to the projected horrors of global warming and survive aided by nuclear power, a geo-engineering break-through, and military strength in defending borders from climate refugees over the next century. However, for the remaining eighty percent of humanity, the projected future is completely grim with increasing conflicts over scarce resources.

## **Militarized Maps**

Grotesquely high levels of military expenditure have contributed much to the current international financial crisis; yet, remain largely immune to a serious rethinking of priorities either for the poor or the environment. There has been the push of fear – laden imagery associated largely with the 'war on terror' that has helped fuel an enormous increase in global military expenditure over the past decade. This substantial

increase has been a major but largely unacknowledged component of the current global financial crisis. Nearly 60% of the increase of global military expenditure over the past decade has been by the USA, with other countries such as Russia, China and Britain also making large increases in their military budgets. Worldwide military expenditure now stands at almost US\$1.5 trillion, with basic assumptions remaining those of 'preparing for peace by preparing for war' (SIPRI, 2009). Such mental maps define the future through a highly securitized or militarized lens rather than a peace lens.

### Alternative Mappings

The difficulties may be great but there are still opportunities for alternative mappings and pathways. As commented by Vinay Lal and Ashis Nandy (2005, p.xiv):

*...In this new world of globalization where the manifest expansion of space and time is accompanied by a covert shrinkage of the meanings of space and time, the first casualty is the form of utopian thinking that encrypts alternative visions of desirable societies. For utopias may lie neither in the future-in projections of a desirable society and in the foresight of seers-nor in a golden past, as in many Chinese and Indic cultures. They may lie in human minds as explorations in human potentialities, as an ability to envision and play with alternatives...*

### Imagined Community: Questioning Impoverished Mental Maps

In thinking about our sense of 'community' and how it may relate to education and the dynamics of building better futures, I'm reminded of the traditional fable of the blind men and the elephant. Each of us may come to the concept with somewhat different perspectives but each may have something valuable to offer.

I'm also reminded of the analysis of George Lakoff(2004) in his book *Don't think of an elephant*. In this work, Lakoff challenges us to critically reflect on the implicit assumptions and metaphors that we tend to live by. Do we take-for-granted narrow conceptions and images about community relations now and in the future? Do we see a future landscape of gated communities, nationalistic rivalries and destructive conflict? Or do we, for example, envisage that with a growing sense of 'global community', there will be enhanced global governance, including both a strengthening and reform of the UN system?

As a critical futurist and peace educator, I would suggest that is there a need to get beyond narrow or impoverished images of community as we move through the first decades of the twenty-first century (Hutchinson, 2005a, & 2005b). Benedict Anderson (1991) coined the term 'imagined communities' to describe the shift in identity and loyalties to notions of a nation state, especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet, with more aggressive expressions of nationalistic ideology and exclusionary images of rival 'national communities', was there during those centuries an impoverishment of both moral and social imagination?

## **Dynamics of Creating Cultures of Peace**

The twentieth century witnessed over a hundred million killed people in wars. In terms of the dynamics of creating cultures of peace or building preferred futures, to paraphrase the sociologist and peace educator Elise Boulding (1988, 2000, & 2001), if we can't even imagine what more peaceful and equitable community developments might look like, it is very hard to get there.

If TINA(There Is No Alternative) images or mental maps of times to come are taken for granted, then the prospects of self-filling prophecies are likely to be ignored. In such circumstances, there is a lack of questioning of whether there may be colonizing assumptions about 'the future'. Anticipated futures are likely to be ones in which the future is projected largely through the lens of dominant discourses such as dealing with major conflict through military means. In the conventional ways in which the news is framed and communicated, there are plenty of contemporary media accounts about 'the future' in which 'peace isn't really given a chance' (Lynch, 2008; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005).

How do our images of community relate to our individual and collective sense of well-being and social justice? How do they link with our ways of relating to each other, including gender relations? How do they connect with our ways of teaching and learning? How do they affect our ways of dealing with conflict? How do they impact upon our sense of hospitality and perspectives on inclusion/exclusion (E.g. towards refugees, Indigenous peoples, reconciliation and social justice)? How do they influence our values, ethics, politics, and action/inaction?

## **Technocratic Dreaming and Its Discontents**

How does our sense of identification and exclusion/inclusion relate to newer notions of 'virtual community' and new technologies for communicating? Here it is perhaps relevant to reflect on whether the new information technologies are both a source of greatly expanded possibilities for building new connections and global awareness but may be also learning sites in which there are flame-wars, internet stalking, exploitative virtual relationships.

Beyond technocratic dreaming, how important for meaningful education are both the challenges and opportunities to develop critical multi-media literacies? How important is it through both formal and informal educational processes to attempt to build the virtuous and inclusive rather than violent and adversarial in our children's virtual worlds?

How does our sense of community relate to building more equitable relationships, including the impact of the digital divide? After all, we live in a world in which the rich are getting richer and the promised benefits of the trickle-down effects from economic development for the poor or the marginalized are very uneven. Educationally speaking, is it enough to see solutions in new technologies such as the more equitable access to computers in the classroom? Or is it much more complex in terms of community engagement and student empowerment?



### **Non-violence, Compassion and Community**

In what ways might the futures of community relate to the non-violent transformation of conflicts, and to creating inclusive, participatory learning environments? (E.g. the gender divide and access and equity in education, achieving meaningful reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, poverty and youth homelessness, children and specific learning difficulties such as hearing impairment)

How does our sense of community relationships connect with cultures of peace and environmental sustainability? How does it link past, present and future generations? How might it relate to issues of moral imagination, including a compassionate regard for future generations? (Hutchinson, 1996a & b; Wenden, 2004)

### **Enriched Images of Community Life: Resisting Monocultures of the Mind**

Let me talk briefly about images and how they may be indicative of either impoverished or enriched imagination about future possibilities. With the former, hard determinist assumptions may immobilize the creative play of ideas in the classroom and constructive engagement with alternatives. With the latter, the potential for negotiating the future and for participatory consciousness are not denied (Hutchinson, 1996b, 1997a, b, & c).

To take an ecological metaphor, our ideas about the futures of community may be one's in which the seeds of peace grow in fertile soil and with plentiful sunlight and good rain. For healthy learning environments, as with creative community life, there is open-mindedness to diverse ideas and approaches. The risks to creativity from what the Indian eco-feminist and anti-militarist writer Vandana Shiva has termed 'monocultures of the mind' are recognized (Shiva, 2006).

### **Pedagogies of Hope and Meaningful Community**

I'm struck here by the words of the Afro-American peace educator Bell Hooks (2003, pp.xiv, 197), and her plea for forms of education that move beyond colonizing assumptions about the future:

*...Educators who have dared to study and learn new ways of thinking and teaching so as to not reinforce systems of domination have created a pedagogy of hope.*

*Dominator culture has tried to keep us all afraid. Moving through that fear, finding what connects us, reveling in our differences; this is the process that brings us closer, that gives us a world of shared values, of meaningful community...*

### **Cross-cultural Communication and Creative Imagination**

I will take a few examples that may help illustrate the importance of cross-cultural dialogues in deepening our sense of possibility about community-building. Such dialogues are likely to be valuable educationally in attempting to avoid or lessen narrow-



ly egocentric and ethnocentric world-views or guiding images. They may also facilitate some questioning of what we may take for granted about times past, times present and times future. In so doing, however, we need to be mindful of shopping mall mentalities about cultural exchange and merchandising of ideas rather than deeper forms of cross-cultural communication that do not simply seek accommodation or assimilation of hybridized realities within dominant paradigms and assumptions about the future (Lal, 2007; Lee, 2006).

### **Epistemologies, Learning Journeys and Sharing: The Lotus, the Butterfly and Mindfulness**

The lotus is a beautiful flower. The Hindu goddess Lakshmi is depicted as resting on a lotus flower and set among a profusion of lotuses. In India, the sky is sometimes envisaged as a celestial lotus lake that periodically releases its moisture to cause the earth below to bloom in abundance.

I recall a recent visit to China, too, when I went to Luoyang and Suzhou. These are the sites of some beautiful gardens inspired by Taoist philosophy, as well as Confucian and Buddhist principles. The garden rooms in these human designed landscapes highlight the nurturance of lotus ponds. This is particularly exemplified in the garden integrated with the White Horse temple in Luoyang. This temple was erected to celebrate the cross-cultural exchange along the Silk route that introduced Buddhism to China.

By the eighth century, Asian (Nestorian) Christians had come to use in China and south India a distinctive image of the Christian cross joined to the lotus, symbol of Buddhist enlightenment (Jenkins, 2009). Such images relating to past cultural exchange may be further reflected upon in ways that may highlight complex interrelations and stories learnt from both new and old learning sites. Both the intricate and beautiful design of the gardens at Suzhou and the creative contemporary design of the Opera House in Sydney have become in recent years part of UNESCO's recognized sites of humanity's shared cultural heritage. For ourselves as both educators and learners, there are, perhaps, here some lessons or insights for the way we may teach and for how we might design our curricula in a globalizing world.

In Buddhist epistemology, the lotus and related metaphors, such as Indra's jewelled net of connectedness, are richly evocative. In their imagery of reality and potential reality, there are important ideas about dependent origination rather than linear causality. This differs from the much more mechanistic and atomistic world-view of linear cause and effect that has had such a powerful pull on the Western scientific imagination.

### **Complex Interrelationships in A Globalizing World: Beyond A Billiard Ball Universe**

In a globalizing world, imagery of complex interrelationships has come to have a wider appeal. Such mental maps or images may be linked as part of cultural exchange or cultural hybridization with globalization. These have included some of the images

or metaphors in contemporary Western science such as the butterfly effect and unpredictability in chaos theory, the web of interdependencies in complexity theory, and newer cosmological models of our universe as threaded with cosmic string. With such imagery, there is an emphasis on complex interrelationships and intricate interconnections. There are feedback-loops and non-linear systems dynamics rather than the pre-determined trajectories of Newtonian physics, of mechanistic science, and of a long-held guiding image of linear cause and effect in a billiard ball universe.

In reflecting on these diverse images, is there a need for much greater humility implied for what we do as teachers and as community-builders?

If causality is much less clear-cut and predictable in its outcomes, what does this imply for pedagogical practice and curriculum design? Should the time we spend as teachers and students be seen as in some ways as having an important ethical dimension? Is there a cogent argument suggested here for encouraging greater cross-cultural and inter-civilizational communication in schools, universities and the media in developing empathy and futures-oriented curricula? (Chan, 2002; Stephenson, 2004; Teranian, 2007)

## **Maps and Metaphors of Space and Time**

Our imaginative sense of what is the nature of community relations can be looked at along at least two key dimensions. With each dimension, there are considerations of both the images or mental maps we may hold of what is and what might be, including whether our methods or ways of travelling are predominantly violent or non-violent.

## **Images of Planet Earth and Interdependencies**

One is the spatial dimension, along with associated metaphors and dynamics. The images here commonly relate to dwelling places (oikos Greek, ecology), meeting places, secure places, happy places, peaceful places, sustainable places, places of belonging etc. These images of what may constitute a sustainable or authentic community may be framed through relatively narrow lenses as including only or almost exclusively the local or national levels.

## **Spatial Relations: Challenges for Teaching and Learning**

However, especially since the creation of the UN and the growth of International Non-governmental organizations (INGOs) over recent decades, the idea has been extended to include internationalist or cosmopolitan ideas and ideals about multiple identities in a changing and increasingly interconnected world e.g. the idea of 'the Earth as our shared home or dwelling place' is clearly linked to an emergent sense of global community but is still in many ways fragile, given some contemporary countervailing trends and assumptions (Iriye, 2002; Salleh, 2009; Suter, 2006; Unesco, 2008; Wenden, 2004).

Here we might give some thought in our teaching practice, for example, to Martin Luther King (1956) with his idea of a 'beloved community', including empathic com-

munication, social justice, inter-religious dialogue, and non-violent action. We might, too, reflect on the critique by Aung Sun Suu Kyi (1999) of cultures of fear, exclusion, and militarization as destructive of the futures of peace. Similarly, in the context of the rights of Indigenous people in Australia or elsewhere, we might give serious thought to the educational implications of Aboriginal elder Patrick Dodson's critique (2007) of coercive community interventions or bullying forms of 'reconciliation', and of how such top-down approaches are likely to be destructive of genuine community building.

### **Envisioning Alternatives in Spatial Relations: Some Key Educational Issues**

Here it is relevant to reflect on what a questioning of dominant views may mean for envisioning alternatives, including notions of global citizenship and communicating with others non-violently both locally and globally:

- To what extent does the compression of space in a globalizing world argue for greater respect for human rights both civil and economic?
- To what extent do such changes and interconnections raise political and ethical issues not only about human welfare and but about responsibilities to other sentient beings on our planetary home?
- How important are matters of inclusion, hospitality and social justice for building bridges of understanding and meaningful reconciliation whether at the local or global levels? What value do we as teachers attach to building solidarities or partnerships across diversity?
- Why has there been a re-emergence of ideas about 'cosmopolitanism' over recent times? To what extent may a 'cosmopolitan imagination' be important for conceiving possible futures of political community beyond the nation state? Can we learn to live peacefully with each other? What do we share as human beings? (Vertovec & Cohen, 2002)
- Do we prefer top-down or bottom-up ('grass-roots') models of community development? How important are forms of governance, whether autocratic or more democratic, to individual, social and environmental well-being? To what extent do our schools deal adequately with bullying? Do our schools encourage peer mediation, gender equity and social inclusion? Do they encourage both cooperative learning and in-depth learning? (Eisler, 2002; Johnston, Johnston & Smith, 2006)
- To what extent does the current global economic recession risk a return to greater insularities, a lack of hospitality in community relations, the rise of siege-mentalities and fascist politics, including increased scapegoating of others and arms races? Or have some of the lessons of the past been learnt?

### **Temporal Maps and Metaphors**

Let's shift our perspective briefly from our sense of place as a person and in community relations both locally and globally to our sense of time, including our assumptions about times past, times present and times future.

In addition to the spatial dimension, I would like you to consider explicitly the temporal dimension.

What happens with the passage of time? How have ideas about community evolved over time? How has time been conceptualized historically and culturally? What happened with colonial expansion by Western powers and notions of industrial 'clock' time? How have such changes affected education, including notions of schooling and 'discipline'?

In a globalizing world, is there not only a sense of local or national loyalties but an emergent sense of a global community? If this is so, what does it imply for our schools and universities as we move further into the twenty-first century?

### **Some Examples of Time-related Maps and Metaphors**

Let's consider briefly some examples of temporal or time-related metaphors sampled from contemporary civil society and social change movement discourses. Such discourses may differ from widely prevailing images of what is and what might be, including assumptions that condone gendered violence, structural violence and ecological violence (Milojević, 2008). In some ways, they are indicative of the many dissenting voices that are beginning to question hegemonic views about time. Each show a significant degree of moral imagination about how our times relate to future times, and of what may be implied from this for the ways in which we teach, learn, and act in the present.

"Looking ahead, we need to begin to seriously address problems of climate change and ecological justice now"

"Let's explore together options so as to lessen the risks of destructive conflict in the future"

"In our understandings of history, much honesty is needed if a journey of meaningful reconciliation is to occur in the future"

"In building a global community, we need to be conscious of our responsibilities to future generations"

### **Temporal Relations: Challenges for Teaching and Learning**

Notice with these examples, there is a strong plea for a futures-oriented learning so that issues such as intergenerational equity are not ignored. Vital issues of meeting the needs of this generation without impairing the well-being of future generations are raised.

Notice, too, in terms of social imaginary how the idea of 'community' is enriched both spatially and temporally rather than being parochial, narcissistic or xenophobic. As with earlier, non-Western knowledge traditions, such as the Buddhist imagery of the lotus and of Indra's web, the Taoist notion of yin and yang, and the song-lines and Dreaming tracks of Indigenous Australian culture, a deeper sense of interconnection and social inclusion is invited.

These are indicative of an emergent global civic culture. However, the powerful push of conventional assumptions, such as 'time is money', 'the best defense is attack',

'preparing for peace by preparing for war' and 'inevitable winners and losers in the competitive free market', continue to offer an impoverished social imaginary about times to come. The latter is still demonstrably so in neo-liberal economic discourses, notwithstanding periodic crises in the global financial system, as well as in contemporary national security discourses on fighting terrorism (Abbott, Rogers & Sloboda, 2007; Bauman, 2007; Marglin, 2008; Stiglitz & Bilmes, 2008).

Even though we are living in a globalizing world, there are still strongly ingrained habits of thought and short-sightedness that work against rethinking our notions of community in more creative and inclusive ways. Many of the current challenges facing our local communities and the global community call for such a rethinking. These challenges include climate change, international financial crises, poverty, racist violence, sexist violence, religious bigotry and intolerance, human rights violations, the arms trade and armaments cultures. Whilst there are the tentative and positive beginnings of a sense of global civic community and shared humanity (Abbott, Rogers & Sloboda, 2007; Cortwright, 2008; Jones, 2006; Kung, 2002; Lederarch, 2005), there are also the politics of fear, insecurity and xenophobia that work against the non-violent transformation of conflicts (Traynor, 2009).

### **Reflecting on the Futures of Teaching Practice**

Part of my current educational work is in the area of community peace-building, the rights of Indigenous people, and social justice. In seeking to create better futures, it is important to honestly come to terms with past injustices if meaningful respect and reconciliation are to be built now and through the years that lay ahead (Hutchinson, 2001, 2005b).

Like Lyn Waddell, I do some teaching in an innovative and collaborative open learning program offered through OTEN, the Open Training and Education Network of Technical and Further Education in Sydney. Some 200 students from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds are enrolled in the Diploma of Aboriginal Studies program. The students are a joy to teach. Many come from highly disadvantaged backgrounds but the program offers a pathway to further study, with those who successfully complete the course given credit for the equivalent of one year's study when enrolling at university.

### **Global Community and the Future: Some Key Educational Questions**

In this context, I'd invite you to reflect a little further on related educational questions:

- What visions do we have of community and education? What are our feared futures? What are our preferred futures? What are our dreams and hopes educationally and in terms of social policy on community development, social inclusion and peace?
- What constructive part might we play individually and collectively? How do we envisage the relationships between community development and education in

coming decades in Taiwan, Australia or elsewhere?

- What importance should be attached to building through our schools and universities a greater sense of a 'global community'?
- What importance should be given to rethinking our curricula in ways that encourage a compassionate and far-sighted regard for future generations?
- What practical steps may we begin to take now in building an intergenerational sense of community? What are the specific implications for curriculum design and teaching practice?
- To what extent can our schools and universities become 'future-oriented' - or what I prefer to call futures-oriented - learning organizations? In what ways may active learning communities be encouraged in such organisations?

### **Futures Thinking, Alternative Mapping and Educational Innovation**

I prefer the use of 'futures' rather than 'future' in this context as the former clearly implies 'alternative futures'. The latter may risk being confused with the idea of prediction and of a singular future.

I find some signs of practical hope in evidence of innovative approaches to teaching and learning today in various parts of our world. One such area is in environmental education (Unesco, 2008; Wayman, 2009; Wenden, 2004). Another is peace education and the associated field of peace journalism (Harris & Morrison, 2003; Joseph & Duss, 2009; Lynch, 2008; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). A third and related area is futures education (Hicks, 2001; Milojevic, 2008).

Yet, much education is still about driving into the future whilst staring in the rear vision mirror. Too infrequently is there encouragement of anticipatory approaches to teaching and learning. Too infrequently is cross-disciplinary inquiry welcomed. Too often there is either cultural arrogance or insularity about the knowledge traditions of other cultures and civilizations. Far too infrequently is there a consciously explicit, actively engaging 'futures dimension' in the curriculum of our schools and universities. Too infrequently is there active listening to young people's voices on the future (Hicks, 2001; Hutchinson, 1997a & b).

### **Communicating for Cultures of Peaceful Living and Intergenerational Equity**

I return to one of the points that I started with as to the importance of being open to new ideas and to welcome the opportunities to widen conversations in our classrooms, tearooms and beyond. Dominant discourses in the media often ignore or leave invisible alternatives to violence as a means for dealing with conflict now and in the future, including the vast opportunity costs of the diversion of resources to arms manufacture and arms races when the politics of fear rather than cooperation prevail. Yet, demonstrably such approaches say more about what has so often disastrously failed historically than as to what might be possible for successive generations on this planet.

Our learning journeys are likely to be enhanced by critical reflection, especially on what is taken for granted or assumed to be inevitable, for example, in dominant

media representations of reality and potential reality. In some ways more challenging, yet potentially far more exciting is the educational task of attempting to work collaboratively with our students in building learning environments in which creative and diverse ideas about preferred futures may flourish and be shared. Anticipatory action learning is not so much about attempting to forecast the future as in sparking creative imagination on alternatives, communicating for cultures of peace, and actively engaging in building preferred futures (Inayatullah, 2002).

During my years as a teacher both in schools and at university, including my teaching at the University of Western Sydney and more recently at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPACS) at the University of Sydney, I know that I am constantly learning much from my students.

### **Learning Communities and Re-imagining the Curriculum**

To reflect more deeply on what we may take for granted in our teaching and learning, including deep-seated myths and metaphors about our sense of both place and of the future is important. Such processes of critical reflection on both the formal and informal curriculum may be the beginnings of new mental maps and more creative pathways for us as teachers and students (see Table 1 below)

### **Contradictory Community Spaces: Alternative Mental Maps and Active Learning Journeys**

As I have earlier suggested, such reflective processes on our individual and collective learning journeys, may be the start of new action linking educational theory and non-violent practice.

In a globalizing world, there are contradictory spaces in which futures-oriented learning, multiple identities and more open, socially inclusive community relations may develop. Within our schools and universities, important choices are invited. As the Islamic scholar Majid Tehranian has commented in a conversation with the Buddhist scholar Daisaku Ikeda (2003, pp.154-5):

*...We are all now faced with the choice to stay either narrow and parochial in our identities and loyalties or broaden our scope to embrace the rest of the world...If we wish to live in a more peaceful world, we have no other alternative but to accept that we belong to a complex variety of communities, identities, and loyalties. We are all, in this sense multicultural, and we need to negotiate with others and ourselves an identity and a citizenship that is inclusive rather than exclusive...*

Johan Galtung, a leading figure in both peace studies and futures studies, has made a similar point about the need to re-imagine the curriculum, for much greater inter-civilizational dialogue, and for both long-term thinking and practical action in the present:

*...Suppose we could educate our children not just to tolerate, but also to delight in differences and challenges and to prepare them to live in a world where diversi-*



*ty is loved as a condition for self-enrichment? Achieving education of this kind and making it possible not merely to study but to actually learn from other civilizations would be magnificent tasks for schools in general and for universities in particular... (Galtung & Ikeda, 1995, p.127).*

**Table 1**  
*Re-imagining the curriculum: Futures-oriented learning communities*

<b>Thinking ahead, thinking creatively</b>	<b>Some key questions, dilemmas, challenges &amp; opportunities</b>
<b>Pedagogy</b>	<b>Teaching &amp; learning styles &amp; options</b>
(Ways of teaching, learning)	E.g. Pedagogies of resignation & despair vs. pedagogies of critique & practical hope for constructive change & negotiating better futures? Competitive vs. cooperative learning styles & techniques? Teacher-centred vs. children-centred? Shallow learning ('banking methods') vs. deeper, active learning? 'Monological' vs. 'dialogical' classroom forms of communicating? Authoritarian vs. participatory approaches?
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Choosing methods</b>
(Ways of doing, researching, acting; issues of moral imagination and ethical practice)	E.g. Business-as-usual, short-term projects vs. futures-oriented methods & actions? Highly specialized research within established disciplines vs. newer, collaborative cross-disciplinary inquiry? Ethnocentric vs. cosmopolitan/ 'international community' perspectives? Narcissistic/ ego-centric vs. compassionate/empathetic perspectives? Violence-condoning, exploitative vs. life-affirming, non-violent methods?
<b>Epistemology</b>	<b>Reflecting on assumptions about reality &amp; potential reality</b>
(Ways of knowing, interpreting, framing what is accepted or not accepted as useful or valid knowledge, 'windows on the world')	E.g. Intolerance of diversity, suppressing dissenting voices vs. welcoming dialogues & solidarities across diversity? Mono-cultural foreclosure vs. open communication on diverse multicultural knowledge traditions? One-true community/ world vs. multiple true communities/ worlds? Assimilationism vs. epistemological pluralism? Western cartographic imagination vs. intercivilisational dialogues on non-violent future pathways? Linear developmentalism & 'globalization-from-above' vs. alternative futures thinking & 'globalisation-from-below'?
<b>Organisational ecology</b>	<b>Learning environments</b>
(Ways of interacting, organizational cultures, structures, power relations & change processes)	E.g. Inclusive, hospitable learning communities vs. exclusive, inhospitable learning environments? Caring, supportive vs. alienating, unsupportive learning contexts? 'Dominant' vs. 'partnership' learning organizational models? 'Hidden' curriculum of bullying-behaviours condoned or ignored vs. building cultures of peace, reconciliation and justice with peer mediation programs etc?  How much attention is given to encouraging the 4 Cs of empathetic communication?  (Cross-cultural awareness, Compassionate regard for others, Conflict resolution/nonviolent transformation, and Civic engagement)

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