

Too Local to Be Global



This scenario is based on the following macro-trends: 1) increasing concern for environment causing new conflicts; 2) recognition of need to conserve and enhance human and natural resources in business; and 3) decentralization of human institutions. The facilitator asked for descriptions of a society 20 years into the future.

In the early 1990s, Hawai`i was on the brink of environmental and cultural disaster. Increased environmental degradation led to increasingly violent attacks against those doing the degrading. In addition, tourism had become increasingly mass market, with the development of ever more mega-resorts which depersonalized the visitors' experiences and ironically marred the natural beauty they were coming to see: it was the era of "plastic aloha."

However, the decentralization and humanization movements in business and government gained greater power and, combined with a generation-wide rethinking of environmental values in the 1980s and 90s, gave rise to the society we see today. Hawai`i's rich tradition of respect for the land intensified these trends and led to a complete transformation in the way people viewed their relationship with the land as well as human relationships: with family and community as well as with employees and co-workers. They recognized their role in all relationships to be a combination of friend and steward.

Now, children are taught in community schools linked by an islands-wide underlying curriculum and commonality of values based on the new island ecology. Learning takes place primarily outside of classrooms.

Instead of trying to create a melting pot based on assimilation, the people of Hawai`i have instead celebrated their multi-culturalness by encouraging each group to rediscover their deep spiritual roots, especially with the `aina . By reestablishing these roots, connections have been rebuilt within families, extended families and communities. Although, there was some increased splintering and conflict between different cultures early on in this process, by emphasizing the common base of the islands as the source of life and our critical role as keepers of the environment, the different factions have been drawn together.

The increased flow of outsiders and the havoc wreaked on the land capital system by outside influences in the 1800s and 1900s, pushed Hawai`i to be one of the original fifty United States to declare its independent, confederated status. This independence allowed the creation of stringent controls on immigration and investment from the other North American states as well as the rest of the world. Although Hawai`i is a member of the North American Confederation, it has also fostered stronger ties with Pacific island communities with whom the people feel a deeper connection due a shared focus on island spirituality.

In addition, Hawai`i has negotiated a very advantageous military arrangement with the North American Confederation government (which plays a strategic role on behalf of the Confederation). Since the previous heavy concentration of troops and weapons in Hawai`i was unacceptably damaging to the environment, Hawai`i instead agreed to allow a small strategic, intelligence-gathering force to use the islands as a base. This was allowed with the provision that occupied lands were environmentally restored and returned to the Hawaiian people. (The overall attitude toward the military is "*Fewer* good men.")

Local government is much smaller, people having realized that the demands of big business/government were taking precedence over individuals and leaving them with little control over their lives. Now, each island community has its own form of local government which in turn is made up of independent community bodies making all key decisions on land use, economic development, etc. The confederated state government has the responsibility for ensuring provision of services based on individual community needs.

Communities have developed non-political ties with other communities to enhance their understanding of and interaction with each other. Based on the concept of the 4-H Club and Scouting organizations of the previous century, networks of interaction have developed building strong intra- and then inter-community relationships and providing a forum through which critical issues can be discussed. Each community governing body uses the state government to communicate with other confederated states outside the Hawaiian islands.

In terms of housing and infrastructure, the same philosophy is followed--less is more. Although the population has grown, each individual requires less space for shelter and there is strong societal pressure not to conspicuously consume. The majority of people live in denser urban areas, although there has also been an increase in development over the last decades in rural areas where people live in clustered multi-family residences. Since each island must internalize its own development and energy costs, individual solar energy units and waste treatment facilities are popular.

Each building is designed for its specific location on the island to take advantage of trade winds, sun, and shade without disturbing the natural beauty of the area. Older buildings have been either retrofitted to meet these requirements or removed. In tandem with the increased densities, there is more planned open space and parkland. Buffer zones around environmentally sensitive or aesthetic areas have expanded and penalties for economic degradation increased. To commit an "eco-crime" is one of the worst offenses society can imagine and the "eco-cops" are not gentle.

Of course, all this environmental protection and enhancement has not come cheaply. There was a heavy price, especially in the early years and the cost of living remains high to help pay for infrastructure improvements and to ensure an equitable distribution of resources. There are still income inequities but now that each family is ensured adequate shelter and "sustainable family support," there are fewer differences in *quality* of life.

The much discussed "poor business climate" of the 1980s and 90s (which worsened as environmental conflicts did) forced residents and leaders to reconsider their ways of doing business. The struggle through this period of adversity led to a redefinition of business

practices and regulations to include more human and environmental concern and encouragement of small businesses. The community and state governing bodies are heavily involved in regulating business, primarily through making the old regulatory system explicit and effective, although some stringent new restrictions have gone into place.

There are still some large enterprises, but there is an increased focus on small businesses and production for the local markets. In particular, the emphasis is on preserving indigenous crafts and skills through cottage industries. More use is made of ocean resources, and ocean expertise (especially regarding cleanup) is exported, especially to other island communities. In every industry, resource renewal is the bottom line--not profits.

Tourism has become a community-based experience. With the growing interest in eco-tourism and the move to smaller scale enterprises, many of the mega-resorts built in the 1980s 1990s quickly became white elephants. The new integration of family, community, and workplace led to the reuse of excess resort space to house tourism workers and eventually resulted in communities built specifically to allow people to live and work in the same place and to integrate visitors into the daily islands lifestyle.

The islands motto sums up our approach to the world: "Too Local to Be Global." Burned by the global market of the last century, the people of Hawai`i now concentrate primarily on bettering the lives of all local citizens. They simply cannot afford to open the borders to outsiders and get involved in the global market. The uniqueness of the island ecology and lifestyle is recognized and all policies spring from a reverence for the special connection the people hold with the land and sea.

Too Local to Be Global

(From the Greeter and Cultural Interpreter aboard the cruise ship *Hokulea*)

"*Aloha* . Welcome to Hawai`i. We will be stopping at the outer ocean dock to disembark and proceed to shore in outriggers. This will both give you a taste of our local style of Hawai`i as well as help protect our near-island shores from any residual oils from our ship.

"For those *keiki o ka `aina* returning to the islands, welcome home and may the tradewinds cool you and the mountain rains bless your lands. Please proceed directly to the citizens line.

"For those of you who have never visited the islands or who have not done so since we became an independent state, we also welcome you but ask that you follow our immigration procedures. Those holding identification cards from other North American Confederated

States please follow the red line to your left at the dock. For those from any of the Pacific Island Nations, please follow the green line.

"I would like at this time to personally welcome the our five new brothers and sisters who have been accepted as immigrants to our islands and to wish them and their adoptive communities all the best. Your community *`ohana* representatives will meet you after immigration.

"Please remember as I discussed with you earlier in the voyage, that it is vitally important for you to recognize that our customs are different. During your stay here, please be always aware of this and respect our local laws and customs by embracing our multi-culturalness and sharing *aloha* as it is shared with you. Do not damage plants or trees in our sacred green areas. *Remember* ...any littering or other degradation of the environment will be grounds for immediate deportation.

"Mahalo Nui Loa and Aloha ."

[Home](#) * [Back to Contents](#)