Demystification and Reenchantment (14)

For vast numbers of people, virtually every social, political, economic, and technological system has become mystifying in its complexity. On the other hand, some of humankind’s most deep-seated mysteries have become disenchanted in the sense of no longer conveying profound meaning and connection with other people and the natural world. This reduces political discourse to a battle of special interests, allows the marketplace to dominate in the determination of value, and limits the creativity and energy available to address fundamental challenges.

This pattern addresses the ethical application of communications systems, processes, and tools to clearly distinguish that which is conditionally unknown—gaps in understanding or perception that can be addressed by gaining new knowledge, skill, or experience—and that which is essentially unknowable as the source of profound mystery and fascination. The intent is to convey meaning in a way that invites, encourages, and supports free and unfettered engagement in the human enterprise.

Written by Kenneth Gilmour

Cyberpower (25)

Digital inequality often affects the same people as traditional inequalities such as poverty, oppression, discrimination, and exclusion. But the new tools are so powerful that not using them sets individuals, groups and communities even further back. When Cyberpower is wielded, the “goods”—power—are delivered in the real world, in a cycle from actual to virtual to actual.

Cyberpower means two related activities related to empowerment: 1) individuals, groups and organizations using digital tools for their own goals, or 2) using digital tools as part of community organizing and development. The general idea is that people can use cyberpower in virtual space to get power in the actual space. Cyberorganizers help get people cyberpower just as community organizers help get communities empowered. The idea from Putnam that we’re “bowling alone,” not connecting with other people in an atomized world, can, as Lin asserted, be trumped by the fact that we are not computing alone.

Written by Kate Williams and Abdul Alkalimat

Spiritually Grounded Activism (24)

Some social change agendas and strategies are derived from sacred texts, religious doctrines and traditional spiritual practices. Grounding one’s public engagement this way can lead to productive and insightful action but such efforts are often highly charged. Contemporary societies vary widely in how well they receive such initiatives—a martyr to one group will seem like a dangerous radical to another. Intermingling politics and religion can taint both, leading to false pieties in politics and making mundane the prayers and rituals which were originally spiritual in purpose. By all means ground your own work in the values, the mysteries and the heritage of a religious community. At the same time, hesitate to judge others whose motives and practices are different. If secular values justify and guide your actions assume the best of those driven to act by religious convictions and likewise, if you are religious, give credence to the secular. Remember that ritual, sacred or secular, can strengthen bonds among organizers and provide the respite necessary to keeping on with the work of change.

Written by Helena Meyer-Knapp

Earth's Vital Signs (26)

The increasing complexity and chronic nature of today’s environmental problems requires a revolution of decision making—the systematic integration of earth’s vital signs. Signals detected by scientists about earth’s natural patterns and processes and the impacts of humans on these processes are earth’s signs—indicators of what can be seen as either ecological health or the earth’s capacity to accommodate human demands. The conditions of earth’s systems tend to be worsening on a global scale, but vary dramatically from place to place. Human decisions about how to live on earth drive these trends and can potentially reverse their course.

Integrating earth’s signs throughout decision making requires that environmental information is widely available, connections between management practices and environmental outcomes are understood, environmental implications of policies are translated to the public and policymakers, and that the environmental performance of governments and companies is publicly disseminated. Replication of successful initiatives and further innovations can help ensure that decision making balances human impacts with the health of the planet.

Written by Jennifer Frankel-Reed