



## Going Local: Life after Globalization

by Aline Marie Steuer, CSC

In remote lands high in the Western Himalayas, lies Ladakh or “Little Tibet” – a place that for thousands of years was home to a rich, thriving culture based on cooperation, sharing, frugality, and an intimate knowledge of the local environment. Then came Western-style economic “development” and with it, pollution, unemployment, divisiveness and intolerance, and greed - centuries of harmony with Earth and one another a victim of corporate globalization.



Photo credit: Koshyk

The Ladakhis are not alone. In industrialized countries, we often view globalization as benevolent - one big world united by technology, with all the benefits inclusion brings. However, for the majority of Earth’s peoples and for Earth itself, globalization is hardly a positive force. Instead, it’s an extremely impoverishing system.

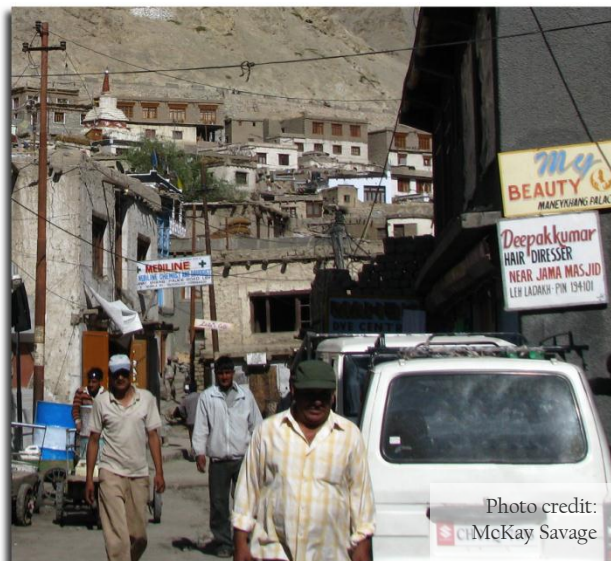


Photo credit: McKay Savage

Here’s a sample of what many have experienced as a result of globalization. Throughout the world, people have seen land, water, wildlife and other natural resources lost to corporate exploitation. They have watched as employment opportunities disappeared; local factories closed; and small businesses succumbed to the competition of industrial and commercial giants.

Unable to compete with cheap imports, small farmers have lost their lands to agribusiness. Previously self-supported families have

migrated to urban areas in desperate search of work and housing, producing an explosion of immense cities without the capacity to provide housing, water, education, medical care or other basic needs for the population.

**Is there any realistic way to stop or impact this process?**

The answer is “Yes!” Around the world, more and more grassroots people are realizing the most effective way to counter globalization is **localization**: rebuilding and strengthening our local economies and communities.

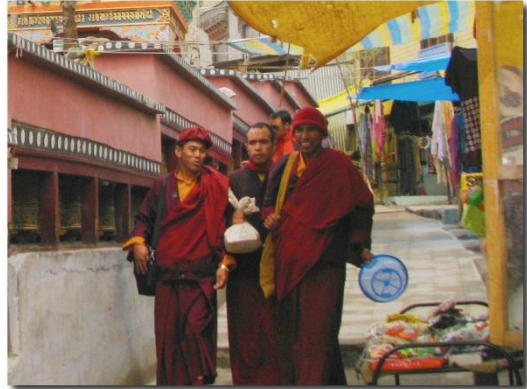


Photo credit: McKay Savage

There are countless ways to “go local” as Amy Cavender, a Sister of the Holy Cross, explored in her earlier article [Cultivating Sustainable Communities: Practical Ways to Build Local Economies](#). Buying locally produced products and foods grown at local family farms, patronizing locally owned businesses rather than giant chain stores, banking at community banks or credit unions, and using local currencies where available to name just a few.



Photo credit: McKay Savage

**Advantages of “going local” are many; let’s look at a few:**

- ◆ Purchasing locally produced goods and services from locally owned businesses strengthens the local economy by keeping money circulating within the community and supporting local jobs. Studies show that for every dollar spent at a local business, 45 cents is reinvested locally; for every dollar spent at a corporate chain, just 15 cents is locally reinvested.
- ◆ Typical supermarket produce travels 92 times farther than produce that is locally grown. All that transporting of agricultural and manufactured goods cross-country or internationally generates a huge carbon footprint. Buying goods produced locally minimizes both fuel use and our CO2 emissions.
- ◆ Fertilizers, insecticides, and hormones used by agribusiness create an array of toxic foods harmful to health. This is especially true in developing countries where governments are often pressured to accept unsafe practices to be part of the global market. Purchasing food from small, local farmers makes it possible to find out exactly how the produce was grown or the animals raised.



Photo credit: Mopop

But perhaps the greatest benefit of “going local” is that it helps rebuild the sense that “we’re all in this together.”

Localization creates relationships; it helps reweave the social fabric that has become so frayed in many of our communities.

As Helena Norberg-Hodge puts it in the film *The Economics of Happiness*, “...at the deepest level, localization is about connection.”

It’s about re-establishing our sense of interdependence with others and with the natural world – and this connection is a fundamental human need!”



Photo credit: McKay Savage

Interested in learning more? Copies of *The Economics of Happiness* may be borrowed from the Holy Cross International Justice Office library by contacting Dana Taylor at [dtaylor@cscsisters.org](mailto:dtaylor@cscsisters.org) or (574) 284-5500. A study guide for this film will be available from the office soon.