“In this Great Turning we shall learn to lead in love.”
– MaMuse

“There is no wealth but life.”
– John Ruskin
A GLOBAL MOVEMENT COMES OF AGE

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For more than four decades, Local Futures has been helping to build a movement for fundamental economic change. I’m convinced that humanity can still make a U-turn: away from today’s global, high-tech consumer culture towards strong local economies rooted in deep interdependence with community and Nature.

Working across four continents, I have had the extraordinary privilege of coming to know countless community groups that, while invisible in the mainstream media, are actively transforming their communities and economies from the ground up. This regular contact with the grassroots has kept me inspired and motivated.

Everywhere I go, I see a proliferation of small-scale, local and inspiring beautiful alternatives to the dominant system.

Community-led projects – in food, business, holistic medicine, alternative education, cultural renewal, and more – are proliferating. Against the odds, they are reweaving the fabric of interdependent relationships between people, and between people and the earth.
The institutions of power are pulling us in a very different direction. Governments on both left and right are wedded to an outdated economic path based on growth through global trade.

They dole out ever larger subsidies and tax breaks to big corporations while strangling smaller enterprises with senseless regulations and heavy taxes. For them, ‘progress’ means commercialised technological expansion, while ‘free trade’ means freedom for global businesses and banks. ‘Economic growth’ today means massively enriching an ever-smaller handful of billionaires while actually making the vast majority of us significantly poorer.

While the economy ‘grows’, we have to work longer and longer hours just to put a roof over our heads and food on the table.

And not only is this globalising system leading to poverty and deprivation, it is also using ever more energy and resources, decimating biodiversity and ravaging the climate.

The scale of the problem can feel overwhelming. But in reality we have a powerful weapon on our side: us. This is a contest in which the vast majority of the human population – North and South, black and white, left and right, young and old, rich and poor – truly share a common cause. It is in the interest of all of us to resist the outdated ideologies and Orwellian algorithms of the dominant economy that benefit only a tiny minority. It is in the interests of all of us to actively support fundamental change.
As the dominant system continues to spasm and mutate, a quiet revolution is emerging. Here at the Planet Local Summit, we hear from a wonderful array of writers, farmers, educators and grassroots activists from every continent that are helping to give voice to this revolution.

Bringing together earth-based wisdom with clear political strategies, hands-on initiatives with the seeds of a new worldview, the Summit is a precious moment for those who, like me, still believe in the possibility of real systems change.

‘Real systems change’ can sound vague, Utopian, anachronistic. But call it what you will, it’s already happening. Across the world, local food systems are pushing back against agribusiness; independent shops are winning the hearts and fierce support of their neighbourhoods; community-based networks are proving they can do a much better job caring for people in crisis than big companies or government institutions.

From San Francisco to Seoul, from rural India to the UK, people know that the new world will grow from the bottom up.
While celebrating this movement’s inspiring achievements, the Summit underlines the need for a structural, systemic shift towards the local. It raises a united call to rein in the unfettered profiteering of global corporations and financial institutions, and to redirect economic support to smaller players, local markets and local infrastructures.

An understanding is dawning: not only is a global economic order responsible for almost everything that’s going wrong in the world today, but almost everything that’s going right – everything that’s truly meaningful for the restoration of human and ecological health – is happening locally.

The Planet Local Summit gives us the opportunity to celebrate these successes, to share our stories and to build a movement for change. It is a chance for us all to send a simple yet profound message far and wide: local is our future.
"When production and consumption both become localised, the temptation to speed up production, indefinitely and at any price, disappears."

– Gandhi

"Only a healthy local economy can keep nature and work together in the consciousness of the community."

– Wendell Berry
GLOBALISATION = INSANE TRADE

Overwhelming and vast as the global economy may seem, the truth is that behind it lies a single central thread: the increasing transfer of power to global corporations and banks through ‘free trade’ treaties.

These agreements even include Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provisions, which explicitly give corporations the right to sue governments if environmental or social policies get in the way of profit. Wedded to the notion of ‘growth’ through more global trade, national governments on both left and right have signed away their own power and rolled out a red carpet of global infrastructures for trade in both goods and finance.

As a consequence, countries routinely import and export near-identical amounts of identical products:

- In 2021, the UK imported around £200 million worth of butter… and exported around £200 million worth.
- The USA imports 1.5 million tons of beef per year… and exports around 1.5 million tons.
- Fruit from Argentina is packed in Thailand and sold in the USA.
- The UK sends seafood to Thailand to be processed before bringing it back again to be sold in the UK.

CLIMATE ACTIVISTS:
Let’s talk more about this!
Insane trade is one of the key contributors to climate chaos.
LOCALISATION

A cultural turning towards Nature, towards community, towards diversity – towards life.

An expression of our need for connection – both to others and to all living beings.

A renewed respect for the feminine, the indigenous, the embodied, the whole.

An embrace of the small, the slow, the humble, the everyday.

SO WHAT DOES THAT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

Shifting from dependence on global corporations towards local and regional economies.

Building or supporting place-based institutions or cultures.

Shortening the distances between producer and consumer.
WHAT CAN I DO?
THE FIVE Rs

RECONNECT
Find a small group of like-minded individuals near you. Change the ‘I’ to a ‘we’. Start a journey of deep reconnection for personal as well as planetary healing. Ask, “What can we do, together?”

RETHINK
Together, question deeply held assumptions about ‘progress’, ‘wealth’, ‘happiness’ and ‘human nature’. Dare to reimagine the future.

RESIST
Perhaps the most important resistance today is to join and strengthen a chorus of voices saying a clear, collective ‘No’ to the global economy.

RENEW
Rebuild the foundations of community: restore intergenerational relationships, protect local resources for basic needs, support local markets, small businesses, human-scale democracy.

REJOICE
Tune into the wonder and beauty of life itself – experience a sense of oneness. Rediscover the joys of a participatory culture – sing, dance, cook, craft, and make music together.
ABOUT LOCAL FUTURES

Local Futures is an international non-profit organisation dedicated to renewing ecological, social, and spiritual wellbeing by strengthening communities and local economies worldwide. For more than four decades, we have been raising awareness about the root causes of our multiple crises, while promoting policy change and grassroots strategies for “the economics of happiness”, or localisation. We are the convenors of World Localisation Day, creators of a Localisation Action Guide, and founders of the International Alliance for Localisation.

As a think-and-do tank, Local Futures has undertaken a range of grassroots initiatives in both the global North and South and created ‘education for action’ tools: podcasts, books, study group curricula, films, campaigns, conferences and other activist-oriented events. Our materials have been translated into >40 languages and are helping to unite social and environmental activists, thinkers and academics, farmers, business owners, local government leaders and indigenous communities across the world.

One of the first NGOs to promote local food from an international perspective, we have established farmers’ markets in Europe, the US and Australia. We’ve produced several books and numerous reports critiquing the industrial food system and promoting local alternatives. Our multi-media Local Food Toolkit won the Derek Cooper Award for Campaigning Journalism in the UK.

Our work started with supporting the Himalayan regions of Ladakh, Bhutan and Nepal by bringing information to balance the idealized images of the consumer culture flooding into the region. Today, Local Futures operates from offices in the US, UK, Mexico, India and Australia.