

In Search of Localism:
Local Identity and the Transition to Sustainability

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Social relations make places, make communities... The social relations that constitute a place - a place that almost by definition is unique - are not confined to that place... This complex geography of relation is dynamic, constantly developing as social relations ebb and flow and new relations are constructed. And it is the combination over time of local and wider social relations that gives places their distinctiveness (Meegan, 1995, p. 55).

The global and local are linked, as the local cannot be described without reference to the global. In *Local Worlds* (1995), Richard Meegan claims that the representation of place is constructed around opposition to others. A place is not homogeneous; there are numerous varieties of localities, adhering to distinct cultures in different contexts or situations (Voisey and O’Riordan, 2001). And such localities or local characteristics are shaped by global influence and make people aware of a sense of place that takes into account multiple identities based on social and cultural relations. Localities

can be translated into the idea of multilayered governance, the capacity to frame strategies and responsibilities that connect local and global. In this sense, global outcomes are nothing but the accumulation of ceaseless local actions (O'Riordan, 2001). Accordingly, the transition to sustainability, or the global environmental change, has to resonate with and interconnect local actions. The role of local communities is increasingly becoming important as globalization is now the integral part of the way society works.

Traditionally, the emphasis on local communities has been considered backward in the favor of universalism from the time of the European empire and even to the present. Historically, European leaders worked from the idea that all people around the earth should be raised under the same civilized standard and that the European civilization was to become the world's only civilization. However, the ideology of globalization, which intoxicated historical leaders, was not in reality in all ancient empires.

It was not until the middle of the 8th century when Portuguese seafarers set to the ocean when the concept of globalization came into reality. As Europe developed sea routes that linked ports increasing commerce, it deepened the contact between different parts of the world, stimulating the mobility of people, exchanging goods and ideas, and creating a web of information. In the process of globalization, people in European states gradually experienced technological development and increased their influence over the ocean

(Strassoldo, 2004). At the same time, globalization in this early stage created the convergence of the power between spheres, which European empirical states such as Portugal and Spain symbolized through colonization. They aimed to build a New Europe conquering territories and subordinating or clearing indigenous people.

In the 20th century, with the end of the Cold War, globalization plunged into a new stage. The dissolution of Soviet empire meant the end of the “nation-states” in a classic sense. The elimination of organized militaries and the victory of the United States resulted in a historical transformation in the basis of globalization theory. This was emphasized in an economic and even cultural and social sense, rather than by the projection of military power (Shaw, 1995). In the last few decades, technological leaps and the development of telecommunications have made the world a much smaller place, “encompassing cultural domain” (Ray, 2000, p. 37) in the phase of the world economy.

Globalization has been in the sense of the integration of factors such as people, technology, capital, and ideas across territorial boundaries. Globalization has many dimensions. In one view, globalization can lead to a greater solution for underdevelopment and world inequity (Cassen, 1997). However, whether it is good or not, globalization has a strong impact on the perception of progress in the people’s mindset as well as in the socioeconomic outcomes. Associated with the concepts of globalization are “ideas of the

promotion and domination of Western culture and capitalism to the exclusion of all other cultural systems, a loss of social diversity and the disappearance of distinctiveness and community in favor of global culture and society” (O’Riordan and Church, 2001).

Behind the persistent enthusiasm for the sustainable development based on “technocratic strategy,” lies the presupposition that is grounded on favor of greater homogeneity. It is supposed to offer a pathway to a kind of moral obligation between people and nature for the purpose of sustainability; however, in reality the outcome remains uncertain. There is a clear reason for that: lack of awareness of localities, or local characteristics.

There is a necessity to reassess the role of local community, which interprets and adapts the principles of sustainability in the context of ecological and cultural realities, as well as the role of collective identity that frames such strategies at the local level (Voisey and O’Riordan, 2001). Accordingly, it is important to make local people the focus of their own community regarding the welfare of communal life. However, the process of globalization has affected all societies more or less, destroying cultural diversities through unification of cultures, and the relationship between people and community has withered.

The concept of “localism,” therefore, involves the need to rediscover one’s own locality as a “subjective center, -a home, a community, a locale from which to move and to

which to return and rest” (Strassoldo, 2004, p.7). Localism is, for this reason, contrasted with globalization; however, these two ideas are complementary rather than opposed. Although, old localism is constructed on the idea of enclosure from the rest of the world, new localism, which emerged after the collapse of Soviet Empire, maintains boundary, yet is quite open (Strassoldo, 1992). The new localism encourages the interaction between communities establishing unique identity and definition for themselves. The concepts of globalism and localism are now integrated as a “glocal” perspective in the field (Carr, 2004).

Ever since I came to Eugene, as an undergraduate student at University of Oregon, I have admired the beautiful landscape in this region and, at the same time, the people’s high consciousness toward their community. Eugene is certainly unique among most cities in the United States because people in this community share the strong sense of belonging. Every person I have met here, at the university, at the café, and even on the street, considered Eugene as his or her subjective home. I have studied many cases in which the power of local residents influenced the local environmental policies in their community. As I realized the strong connectedness between local residents and their natural environment, I became conscious about the source of the locality, which binds people in the community together.

One of the aims of this study is to explore these meanings of the sense of place, which I will argue, are essential to establishing effective strategies for sustainability at the local level. The transition to sustainability should be based on citizen participation and democracy. In order for these changes to take place, people must be empowered to make differences. Eugene, Oregon is one of the communities in which the process of localization has been successfully taking place in response to globalization. Therefore, the paper seeks to answer in part the question of how and under what circumstances can the collective identity of local people process localization and frame strategies for the transition to sustainability, focusing on Eugene as the main unit of analysis.

CHAPTER II: The Concept and Ideology of Localism

Globalization and Localization

The last two decades have witnessed a remarkable upsurge of globalization, speeded up by a number of crucial economic, social, and technological developments. The tendency of globalization, which encompasses all human societies, already has brought destructive effects on both culture and nature. The world is increasingly becoming a borderless place with the constant flow of capital, new technologies, information, people and ideologies (Lockwood, 2004), driven by the omnipresent free market system.

The concept of globalization refers to both the compression of the world and the intensification of connectedness of the world as a whole. (Speth, 2003). In this sense, globalization can be a dual arrangement: actual events taking place in the world (i.e. ever increasing telecommunications) and through cultural transformations (Voisey and O'Riordan, 2001). Globalization from the point view of the cultural force represents

homogenization in all parts of the world, threatening to extirpate local culture. Local culture includes all forms of place-based cultural expressions, such as regional food, dialect, music, and folklore that are grounded on the community of life (Griswold and Wright, 2004). With homogeneous products offered by Multinational Corporations, with global expansion of media, and with division of labor and specialization in the capitalist mode of production, global culture in a uniform world has diminished these distinct forms of local culture.

As people become “cultural consumer” as everything is planned and prescribed beforehand, “the human creative spirit, which is invariably individual and local, would be crashed in a uniform world of global culture where even personal identity would be severely restricted in the forms it could be assumed” (Render, 2004, p. 2).

The cultural damages brought by globalization are convoluted with the ecological consequences. As Raymond Dasmann explains in *Environmental Conservation* (1976), traditional society was organized in accordance with ecosystem culture, which conditioned the relation between human existence and the most closely connected ecosystem. For instance, traditional ways of agriculture were maintained in the sustainable way of production, creating rural landscapes through human interactions with nature since the time of the Neolithic revolution. Globalization, on the other hand, is only a matter of power.

With application of a whole range of technology, forms of monoculture in the capitalist mode of production are made possible by the reduction or simplification of the ecological varieties, through the extensive land use. In this sense the loss of ecological diversities, such as species of plants and animals, paralleled the loss of the distinct cultural form, which was established in the context of the natural environment (Redner, 2004).

Dissolving these forms of diversities with the onset of globalization, people are less likely to recognize their own locality in relation to particular environmental and cultural realities. As a result, people are increasingly losing the sense of place. In *Conserving Culture* (2004), Harry Redner argues, "It is only local or traditional culture that makes for identity and meaning through communities of belonging that give a purpose for living, that establish personal relations, that confer worth and standing, that include morals and manners, that give faith and hope, and so on" (p. 7). In contrast with all forms of global culture, local culture makes people acknowledge the importance of connectedness among people and their own locality, as a source of their enlightenment, fulfillment, happiness and self-realization.

Conceptualizing Localism

The emphasis on the local, which is now seen throughout the world, is derived from the greater sense of insecurity that people face about their future than ever before, in the process of globalization. As a result, “people feel the need to embed themselves within the familiar, the safe past that they had, the place that they called home” (Voisey and O’Riordan, 2001, p. 37). Therefore, the essence of localism lies in the emphasis or value of local and small-scale phenomena in order to rediscover one’s own locality. Localism represents one of the possible ways out of the anomy, alienation and identity loss as a consequence of globalization (Strassoldo, 2004). “Localities, if you will; they can relate to; tightening the circle in which they feel secure” (Voisey and O’Riordan, 2001); this can be seen as localism, the promotion of local over any other level of social interaction.

The anatomy of localism can be understood in two ways: *residual* and *localization* or old localism and new localism. The first view of localism, residual, is based on the study of Raymond William (1977), which distinguishes four types of culture: dominant, alternative, residual, and emergent. According to this idea, local culture is whatever is leftover from the dominion of global culture. Localism therefore is in opposition to global culture, seeking recourse to every cultural form that has remained untouched, which withdraws symbolic meanings and values from it (Redner, 2004).

The second line of thought, on the other hand, involves the process of localization, emphasizing how local people convert global cultural into their daily practices or even resist it. For instance, the slow food movement is riding on global culture; however, by using diverse, seasonal, natural food that is grown locally, it certainly reflects the locality. Accordingly, the very movement of people and cultural objects creates a persistent pattern of local culture (Griswold and Wright, 2000; Smith, 1992), which establishes local identities.

There are two essential differences among these views. The first is that the former is “necessary and natural;” while the latter is the “outcome of freewill conscious choice.” The second difference is that the former is constructed on the idea of enclosure from the rest of the world, maintaining a strong closed boundary; while the latter is quite open to interaction with other communities (Strassoldo, 1992, p.7).

The qualifiers draw clear distinctions. The latter view of localism as new localism, the former view as old localism. The persistence of local culture is, in many cases, not simply residual or whatever is leftover, rather, something that has successfully and consciously localized. In this sense, local culture can be traditional or modern and even progressive. Therefore, the defense of any one local culture involves acts of supporting one’s own community as well as others because no single local culture can exist on its

own. It is only through the “mutual cooperation of a collective of cultures,” which upholds and distinguishes each other. Similarly, a defense of the local culture, as well as other forms of localism does not mean to exclude other cultures nor heterodox components within the culture (Redner, 2004, p. 58). In order to maintain active cohesion of local culture, however, certain degrees of commonality, such as shared values or assumptions, are required. These forms of commonality are usually inherent in ordinances and institutions that constitute the “civil core” of local culture (Redner, 2004, p.59).

Localism emphasizes the “local side of globalization,” which has been ignored and considered less important. It gives rise to specific localities or local characteristics that are shaped by global influence, in response to cultural and ecological damages brought by globalization. In this sense, localism, as well as other forms of local cultures, is not opposed to, but rather, is a complement to globalization. Therefore, localism is not a struggle to counter globalization, but is the “restatement of identity within multiple identities” (Voisey and O’Riordan, 2001, p. 35).

Frameworks for Localization

Rather than merely inferring localism as deducible local practices from economics or politics, I begin by assessing why local characteristics or localities may be

more or less important in light of local sustainability. Local characteristics or localities (as well as the term “communities”) are the concepts that describe differences between places at different times. In the last decade, the notion of “local” is increasingly seen as the cure-all of sustainable development; however, approaching the local with merely an ideological view, such as native or isolated, is an exercise in futility. Local communities are, in a sense, dynamic because there are multiple local-social networks. Therefore, such transitions to sustainability require a deeper understanding of localization, which frames strategies for sustainable development at the local level. The process of localization never takes place in a homogeneous way as it reflects localities of a particular community.

There are three theoretical components that determine the degree of localization, or how successfully the process of localization is taking place 1) global-local links, 2) contributions of human capital, and 3) local history/ environmental imagination.

The first component, global-local links, is perhaps the driving force for localization. As I mentioned earlier, the persistence of local culture, as well as other forms of localism, is, in many cases, something that has successfully and consciously localized in response to globalization. In this sense globalization and localization are reciprocal: not only are local characteristics or localities shaped by global forces, but also local people are actively engaging in constructing a global awareness of the interconnectedness of places,

places and people as well as their relationship to each other. Theoretically, the more a community is exposed to global forces, the more processes of localization take place.

Second, in order for localization (transitions to sustainability or any sort of changes) to take place, attributions of human capital are integral. Human capital often refers to the “analytic and information skills critical to capacity to innovate and diffuse useful ideas” as a key element for wealth creation (Clarke and Gaile, 1998, p. 25). Human capital is essential for nourishing the local economy (or providing economic capacity to enjoy a reasonable standard of living). However, there are also sociological attributes of human capital for the local community. Human capital, in terms of expertise and skills, brings innovations in channeling information (data-gathering) and interpretation, capacities to recognize the local contexts, and organizing skills in order to implement necessary changes (O’Riordan and Church, 2001).

Finally, local history/ environmental imagination refers to the sense of continuity grounded in the local community, as a form of local culture or expertise. That is, in a sense, a ceaseless relay of commitments, people to people, over time, through their identification with the place (as local identity). Such processes generate the sense of place, providing the individual a role in society and the opportunity to contribute and be appreciated, as well as aspirations for the future (Rhodes, 2002). It is all about respect for others, cultural

diversity and the environment in the local community, as well as other communities on the earth.

Glocalism as a Premonition of the Future

The “glocal” perspective is the product of the two interacting forces of globalization and localization (hybrid). According to Stuart C. Carr in *Globalization and Culture at Work: Exploring their Combined Glocality* (2004), “glocalization is already established itself as a concept in tourism and marketing” (p. 4). Carr continues that tourism and marketing industries often adopt a strategy that emphasizes the local uniqueness of a local product or locality to attract global customers, as a source of comparative advantage.

At a community level, according to Carr, glocalism is integral to and infused through much of people’s behavior. For instance, global cultural norms tend to encourage individualistic self-promotion; while traditional local norms tell the importance of the collective value. As these two norms conflict with each other, a rational decision falls somewhere in between. Accordingly, there is always a tension between global and local; however, it does not necessarily resonate in a negative way. The interaction of two cultural norms highlights new opportunities, stimulating the human creative spirit and enjoyment.

Further examples of glocalization include the process of global reforms, such as

pay diversity, project teams, and boundary-less careers. Each of these ideas in principle interacts with local culture, regarding equality or selecting local over foreign. In this sense glocalization is the process of adjustment, which makes global culture fit to the local cultural context at the time, whether it happens to be local or global.

Regionalism, Bioregionalism and the Sense of Place

In response to globalization, which is a process of integrating not just economies but also cultures, environments, and government, “various competing centers have brought about shifts in the global balance of power between states, non-state actors that together forge new sets of interdependence” (Kinnvall, 2002, p.6). In this sense localism is one of the actors that demands to be heard locally; while others might demand to be heard regionally and bioregionally.

Localism, regionalism and bioregionalism are closely related ideas, giving rise to the specific local or regional problems that require “specially tailored solutions” rather than relying on the national strategy (Brenner, Jessup, et al., 2003, p. 4), emphasizing the importance of the local dimension of the community. However, the qualifiers draw clear distinctions between them. Localism is a set of ideas that reasserts the small-scale phenomena in order to make people aware of their own locality that takes into account

various social relations and cultural diversities. On the other hand, regionalism and bioregionalism tend to involve the actual process of reconstructing a whole society, regarding the community as a minimal unit of the change (Peet, 1989). In this sense both regionalism and bioregionalism are ideological challenges for the political process of democracy to better represent organizational structure and sustainable concerns. Accordingly, they involve the creation of "new forms of civil society, aided by specific measure to create empowerment" (O'Riordan, 2001, p. 20) with recognitions of rights at the local and regional, as well as bioregional level.

The concept of regionalism emerged through the struggle against the exploitive nature of Fordism, the regime of intensive accumulation with mass consumption under monopolist regulation, and struggle for the possibility of forming an anticapitalist social bloc. Regionalism therefore refuses any projects of multinational capital that fragment manufacturing functions or state administration in the Fordist compromise, aiming for industrial restructuring in order to gain control at the local or regional level (Lopietz, 1995) and a maintain sustainable mode of production. Shifting its perspective to the local and emphasizing the economic and political roles in the community leads to autonomy and local empowerment. Accordingly, a regional movement denotes the democracy through collective feelings of identity that are grounded on a particular socio-economic reality in

the region.

On the other hand, bioregionalism primarily puts emphasis on one's identity within the collective to a particular bioregion. Ideologically, bioregions are the place where people can be self-sufficient, satisfying our basic needs locally and developing local enterprises and organizations based on local skills and strength (Dodge, 1993). People living in the community have much more expertise concerning their natural environment than the bureaucracy that constantly pushes information and promotes practice in a homogeneous way (Toadvine, 2004). Therefore bioregionalism proposes to protect bioregions by giving more political power to those living within it, encouraging their active participation in the process of decision making, rather than giving this power to outsiders.

Although political boundaries may be becoming more permeable, such socio-economic, cultural or ecological boundaries can be strengthened as place-based expertise and identities are defined in relation to other communities. At the same time, such processes of regionalism and bioregionalism can create localism "in which sharp distinctions are drawn between insiders and outsiders, shaping response to local issues" (Voisey and O'Riordan, 2001, p. 38).

Definitions of the terms local, region and bioregion, all refer to place and the

distinctiveness of the place. The concept that underlies regionalism and bioregionalism, as well as localism, is the sense of place, being aware of belonging in a certain place as one's subjective center and consciousness. In *A Place In Space* (1995), Gary Snyder argues that any paradigm for a truly healthy culture must begin with surmounting narrow personal identity and finding a commitment to place. According to Snyder, commitment to place is the acceptance of responsible stewardship, and this way people are able to find their own communities.

Sustainable Development: Putting Localism into Practice

For the past decades, many environmentalists, as well as socio-economists have expressed their concerns that "there are biophysical limits to humankind's productive prowess" (Davidson, 2000, p. 296). In the United Nation Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, changes for "sustainability" were seen as imperative dealing with global ecological deterioration and firmly on the global agenda (Goldfarb, 2001). The general agreement on sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In this sense, sustainability is the normative goal that sets the parameters of economic development regarding its ecological consequences.

The discussion of sustainability often involves political and economic subjects as “human productive activity and its relationship to ecological integrity” and is determined by its “contestability.” Such contestations create political struggles over the access to the resources, as well as the direction of socio-economic development. Therefore, in one perspective, the sustainable development involves ethics that provide the basis to establish the world’s democracy (Davidson, 2000, p. 298), and these processes often include constitutional reforms.

In *Sustainable Development: Business as Usual or a New Way of Living?* (2000), Julie L. Davidson describes that the transition to sustainability or the means of sustainable development involves two approaches: “top-down” and “bottom-up.” According to Davidson, the former approach limits the participation for the policy making process only to major stakeholders, such as businesses and local governments. It is often described as “technocratic strategy” because the government set the objective through the assessment made by technological experts, concerning the issues of waste production, recycling, energy conservation, or so on. These bureaucratic approaches inherently have problems because the existence of local characteristics is not taken into account. Such approaches could be an exercise in futility unless people find a commitment to a particular issue as their own.

In contrast, the latter approach involves public participation not only in the stages of implementations, but also in the stage of policy-making. This “bottom-up” approach of sustainable development constructs the basis of environmental activism at the local level, as well as at the global level.

Local sustainability is not just sustainability undertaken at the sub-national rather than national or international scale. The phrase, “think globally, act locally,” encourages people to make changes from their own local community, reflecting both “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches. Such processes require “a global awareness of the interconnectedness of places, places and people as well as their relationship to each other” (Voisey and O’Riordan, 2001, p.40). According to Voisey and O’Riordan in *Globalization and Localization*, there is no standardized approach for the transition to sustainability. Instead, just as the other processes of localization, the principles of sustainability are interpreted and adapted to the local level. A sustainable community requires equal participation in community and social life. The experience of sustainability and the choices that are made in adapting to change are influenced and determined by the social processes that exist within that local community, and the impact upon real people at this level (Voisey and O’Riordan, 2001).

There is a distinction between the words, localization and localism. Localization

is the process of change that local people make, as strategic choices about resistance, accommodation, and adaptation to global forces (Clarke and Gaile, 1998); whereas localism is socially and politically framed interpretations of these changes. Unlike regionalism or bioregionalism, localism does not directly work for democracy or sustainability. Rather, it is about the opportunity that localism provides, and the mechanism through which democracy and identity reveal themselves, that ultimately determine their values.

The next chapter involves the empirical study of how localism is embodied in local community. Eugene, Oregon is one of the communities in which the process of localization has been successfully taking place in response to globalization. Through socio-economic reviews and in-depth interviews with local people, I will investigate how and under what circumstances can the collective identity of local people process localization and frame strategies for sustainable development.

CHAPTER III: Local Identity and the Transition to Sustainability A Case Study of Eugene, OR

Introduction: Community Profile

Oregon would make anyone's list of states illustrating Americans' commitment to environmental values; it offers prime examples of natural landscapes that served as compelling sources of local identity. Oregon also represents an interplay basic to environmental thought and policies in urban-rural areas. Environmental debates often focus on rural landscapes, however, the movement's core ideas typically radiate out from urban centers (Judd and Beach, 2003).

Situated in the Willamette River Valley in western Oregon, Eugene is 110 miles south of Portland and 60 miles from the Pacific Ocean. The mild climate, with an average temperature of 53 degrees, is one of the attractive features of Eugene. The Eugene area offers a variety of landscapes: the Willamette River, which flows through the center of the city, the Cascade Mountain Ranges, forests, and farm lands.

For years, Eugene has been home for liberal minded people who adopted

alternative lifestyles. The Saturday Market, a weekly outdoor craft and farmer's market, presents the works of many of these colorful and creative spirits. Nationally, the city is portrayed as a ground for local activism, because of the high level of citizen participation in public policy settings.

Although, Eugene is the second largest city in Oregon with 136,490 residents in 1999 (Lcog, 2000), "tie-dyed T-shirts are more common than silk ties on the downtown streets..." (Samson, 2004, p. 42). This unique characteristic of Eugene is due in large part to the presence of the University of Oregon (UO), the state's liberal arts university. The founding of the University of Oregon and several other institutions have influenced Eugene's development, adding a rich cultural and educational environment.

In the city of Eugene, more than half of the population is economically active. A high percentage of this labor force is well educated, with a wide range of background and skills. For example, 2000 census figures show that more than a quarter (32.6 percent) of Eugene residents who are 25-years-old and above have completed four or more years of college. This compares favorably to the national figure of 20.3 percent (CensusScope, 2000).

Historically, Eugene was a community dependent upon activities related to the primary sector, mainly rooted in its "staple-based economy." Oregon's postwar economy

was promising; therefore, its basic environmental consciousness was cultural rather than economic, part of a longstanding preoccupation with distinguishing the state from its more worldly neighboring states, such as Washington and California (Beach, 2003). In terms of employment, the contributions of the timber industry have declined tremendously in the 1980s (Lcog, 2000), and the community faced an economic downturn as well. In the same period, the growing importance of the high-tech sector has been clear. However, the attitudes, concerns, and strategies for the environment that surfaced in Eugene have descended from people's identification with forests.

Today Eugene's economic base appears strong because it does not rely on one industry; the local economy is supported by a number of small industries and business. The local business is very diverse and stable; there are more than 10,000 businesses around the Eugene area (EACC, 2001). Most of these businesses employ few workers. From cooperative bicycle shops to second hand clothing shops, from organic grocery stores to cafés, Eugene's small business is diverse, active and essential to lives in the community.

The largest employers in Eugene are government agencies, PeaceHealth Corporation, University of Oregon (UO), Lane Community College (LCC) and Eugene school district (Lcog, 2000). Government and education combined provide more than

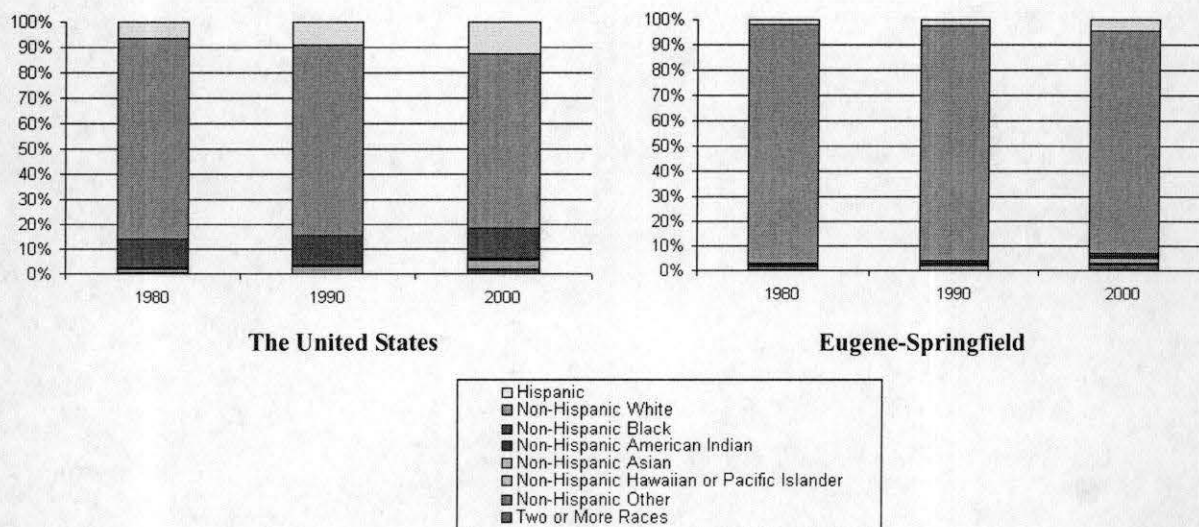
20,000 jobs. Health care providers add some 5,000 jobs (EACC, 2001, see Table 1). Other sources of employment are wood product industries, high-tech industries, and information/technology firms (Lcog, 2000).

Employer	No. of Employees
PeaceHealth Oregon	4,125
University of Oregon	3,676
U.S. Government	2,000
Lane Community College	2,000
Lane County	1,786

Source: Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce (2001)

Table 1 Top 5 employers in Lane County and numbers of employees

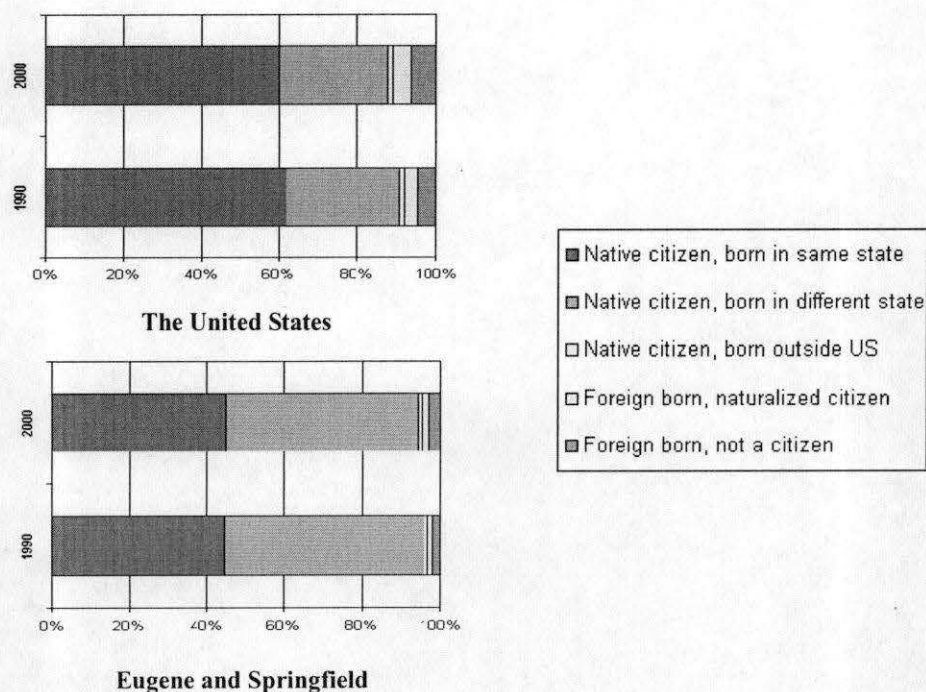
In recent years, University of Oregon has had the highest percentage of international students compared to all other public universities in the nation, according to a survey by the Institute of International Education. While the university enrolls students from all over the world and Hispanic and Asian cultures are increasing, ethnic diversity in the Eugene-Springfield area is relatively low (see figure 1). For instance, according to 2000 Census data for Eugene-Springfield area, 4.6 percent of the population is Hispanic, 2.2 percent Asian, 1.1 percent Native Americans and 90.6 percent white.



Source: CensusScope (2000)

Figure 1 Ethnic Composition (in percentage) in the U.S and Eugene-Springfield area
1980- 2000

Eugene residents also use the term diversity to describe their viewpoint. Chuck Hunt, a professor of Sociology at University Oregon describes that “Eugene is quite international.” According to Hunt, it is not so much about diversity of ethnicity, but rather a diversity of attitudes that tolerate different opinions, cultures and the way people look. Interesting to note, Eugene has a relatively low percentage of population who was born in the state; more than half of the population moved from other states (see figure 2). This data implies that many residents have made a conscious choice to live in Eugene, not because they were born in the city. Perhaps, Eugene particularly appeals to those who share a sense of liberalness: the slower pace of life and a relaxed, pleasant lifestyle.



Source: CensusScope (2000)

Figure 2 Percentage of Nativity in the U.S and Eugene-Springfield area

1980- 2000 appreciated.

Local Identity and Transition to Sustainability

In *Decay and Revitalization in Two Swedish Communities*, Svedin, Ornas, et al describe that small-scale enterprises and organizations that include non-profit organizations and locally owned businesses, are “an entry point into the social and cultural principles that are part of the community” and which form the basis for local identity (2004, p.113). In Eugene, Numerous small-scale enterprises and organizations are nourished, allowing the local people to express/ practice their ideas and thoughts for social,

economic and environmental sustainability within the local community. A sustainable community is one that has livable neighborhoods, a celebrated local culture, and an interest in improving the natural balance of the environment (Rhodes, 2002). Eugene certainly shares all of these characteristics.

The purpose of this paper is in part to answer the question of how and under what circumstances can the collective identity of local people process localization and frame strategies for the transition to sustainability. Creating a local sustainability requires “innovation, risk taking and the communication of sustainable ideas and practices to individuals and communication of sustainable ideas and practices to individuals, firms, communities and government” (Rhodes, 2002, p.2). In the previous chapter, I made an assumption that there are three theoretical components in order to determine the degree of localization or how successfully the process of localization is taking place in the local community: 1) global-local links, 2) attributes of human capital, and 3) local history/environmental imagination. Therefore, the rest of the paper is dedicated to investigating how each of these components actually works, creating the “stream of local” in the local community.

Numerous small-scales enterprises and organizations in Eugene are in a sense the response that local people made for globalization through the process of localization.

Therefore, I interviewed several people who work for non-profit organizations (Aprovecho, Country Fair, and Bring Recycling). The main foci of the interviews are: 1) the processes of how and under what circumstances these organizations came to be established reflecting the local identity, and 2) their considerations about the sense of place, as well as definitions about local community, and 3) commitments to local sustainability.

Aprovecho Research Center

Aprovecho Research Center is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization for the purposes of research and education on appropriate and alternative technologies for simple living. The means of finance come through overseas development work and donations. Of particular interest are fuel-conserving cook stoves for developing countries.

Aprovecho was initially started back in 1976 by international travelers who visited Guatemala City after a devastating earthquake. They banded together to try to help, making simple and useful tools in "third world" situations. They eventually ended up working over the world, teaching about appropriate technology (such as the efficient woodstoves, cisterns, solar cookers, windmills, etc). In 1981, the group (later known as Aprovecho) created the research center in Cottage Grove, 25 miles south of Eugene. Their common interests were related to a sustainable future: the reduction of energy and natural

resource use, and the development of technologies and systems to assist people worldwide in adapting to diminishing resources.

Aprovecho is a Spanish word meaning, "I make best use of." Seven staff members (plus two dogs and two kids) are the inhabitants of the "intentional community," practicing and experimenting the sustainable way of living. Aprovecho offers intensive ten-week internships in sustainable living skills. Each of the staff members is an expert in his/her field; they study and teach the element of one approach to a more eco-centered lifestyle in the rural landscape, focusing on organic gardening, sustainable forestry, and appropriate technology.

Price Sheppy, the coordinator of internship program, describes the reason that made him work for Aprovecho, "I wanted to feel that I was empowered to influence changes over what I was doing." After he graduated from college, he worked in a commercial bank for several years; however, he could not help feeling a sense of disconnectedness. He says, "I could not figure out how my day-to-day live, my job or what I ate, connected to me the rest of the world."

Currently about 80 percent of food, electricity and timber consumed in Aprovecho are produced in self-sufficient ways. Sheppy describes, "If you are in touch with production at the local level, the process of growing food and raising animals, it

makes you aware of what it takes for you to live, or to sustain yourself to be. It is something extremely fulfilling to have connections what you.” He says the greatest thing about Aprovecho is that they are creating (not structuring) something new: the way that they can live alternatively, providing a positive view of change.

“I don’t feel like I can cause the greatest amount of change even though I go and stay in Africa,” Sheppy continues, “But here, in my community, my home, I know that I can cause better change with least amount efforts because I know here better than anywhere else in the world.” He uses the phrase, “rings of community,” offering insight into his dynamic view of community. “Aprovecho is as my community or home. Then, my social group is Cottage-Grove. But then we are hooked to the international community as well, sending information to third world countries about what we are doing on stoves. And they send us back their information. We have dialogues through the internet. In this sense we are connected to the international community.”

Sheppy believes any changes that he makes at Aprovecho more or less affect other communities or the world as a whole. “We need to create a positive solution, which naturally makes people come to it. Not saying ‘bad, bad, bad,’ like ‘do not throw trash.’ We just show other people that if you lived this way, you would be happier and the world would be a better place.” According to Sheppy the way to change the world is not through

the gigantic global corporations, but through local people affecting their own local communities. At the same time, he emphasizes the importance of creating networks between communities in order to exchange information and skills, through phone, Internet or even with flow of people. Sheppy says social relations are also the part of sustainable concerns; "we can not be sustainable if we are disconnected from others."

Sheppy emphasizes the uniqueness of places in order to frame the strategy for local sustainability. "Each places is different even within Oregon. We have different bioregions, and we have different people, different cultures and different needs, and that is a way to cause changes by looking at unique individual characteristics." Sheppy compares his idea of local sustainability with stove making; a stove works for the best is the one designed for individually each community. If the stove was foreign to the people, they are not likely to adapt the stove in their daily practices. He says that there is no single paradigm for the transition to sustainability; what Aprovecho is doing is to present other people that there is a way we can live alternatively without harming the world. "Aprovecho is not a unique community. Certain specific-ness may be, like our stove making. We are all unique; in this sense our uniqueness is all the same."

The Oregon Country Fair

The Oregon Country Fair is an annual festival that offers the finest entertainment, hand-made crafts, delectable foods and information-sharing to be found anywhere else. The fair is open only for three days of the year, but over the years, it has contributed to the community's diversity, building mutually cooperative relationships with the neighbors and providing a solid niche for local artists and businesses. It is run by a non-profit, charitable and educational organization with four full-time, year-round employees and a family of thousands of volunteers.

The fair started in 1969 as a benefit for an alternative school. The decade of the 60s was a time of great cultural and moral shift for the people in the United States: the civil rights movement, the opposition to the Viet Nam war and the struggle over women's rights and the environmental movement. All of the movements happened during the time. Then new a world opened; everything seemed possible creating a network of people. Many people radically changed their life-styles searching for a new meaning of the American dream. Such changes became somewhat self-absorbed with its eternal realities and relationships and led to identity questions: who are we really to each other? How do we think of our community and what is our responsibility to it? Reflecting the very time of the society, the Oregon Country Fair was born.

The fair now holds about eight to nine hundred artists, and all of them make a

living doing their arts. It invites also a fine craftsmanship that makes shoes, furniture, herbal products, clothing and so on. Leslie Scot, director of the Oregon Country Fair, describes, "Everything that a person needs to live is made by someone at the fair; you buy it from the people who made it." According to Scott, such interactions create a very different relationship between producers and consumers of the product. "It is not a personal commercial transaction, it is a personal relational experience with the artists. And that is a part of the design and is huge for creating local culture. Space, experience and realization of local culture keep people employed here"

"The farmer's market is for people growing food locally, organically and sustainable, so people have a direct experience of what it means to buy local and to participate in sustainability." Scott continues, "Similarly, one of the real contributions of the fair is that you are the real participant in the fair by coming to the fair, and creating the culture." She says the fair provides the place with some of the creative materials, but that somewhat requires their participation to make it all happen. She compares it with the notion of Dadaism; there is no separation between arts and audiences; we are a art of the act.

According to Scott, the fair land used to be a gathering place for Native Americans, and there is a whole other way to think about local. She defines local culture

as “relationships to the place and the people, all the people who came before us and how all threads are carried on.” Local culture is something that is lived, taken over from people to people, with its knowledge and appropriation. She raises the example of Native American’s dancing; “It is not merely about authenticity, but is about how that is brought into the life and stay connected to that place.” That is the sense of continuity grounded on the local community.

Scott emphasizes the uniqueness of places as a source of local identity. “When we turn everything into a huge spectrum, that could be anywhere in the world the same. It could be a Disney Land anywhere and has nothing to do with a particular place.” Something unique about the place, the people and their relationships to others, make up a community, which provides them the sense of identification with the place. “However we identify home, whatever our cultural memory is, this is the home, this is where we belong, this is where I feel connected, and that is what local community is all about.”

Eugene shares a diverse culture; the University of Oregon is a big cultural piece itself. There are many people who come for the university and decide to stay because they are fond of the beauty of Eugene and the sense of freedom that Eugene offers. Growing up in Southern California, Scott is one of these people who ended up in Eugene: “I feel Eugene as home because I can be who I am.” There are so many people who come here as

refugees, cultural refugees from other parts of the country where they felt oppressed, denied and could not live their own lives in mainstream culture. The term “hippies” could refer to lawyers, farmers and doctors. It is about all of these people who wanted to live a life differently, who wanted to live a life with integrity and aesthetic. Scott says, “Because of people, because of all the amazing people who come for University of Oregon, a culturally rich ground, things like country fair are going on here.”

“A cultural shift came out of the 60s is thriving here; that is a co-operative movement, sustainable agriculture, huge number of non-profits in Eugene” The Country Fair continues to inspire people to start living simply, but aesthetically. According to Scott, the idea of local sustainability has been interpreted differently over time; however it is coming to be understood as an ethos, rather than a movement or issue. The fair encourages people to know that differences are not something to be tolerated, but as an incredibly creative medium that enhances our imaginations, cultivating sustainability and aerating their local culture.

BRING Recycling

BRING Recycling is one of the nation’s oldest non-profit recycling programs.

BRING initially started in 1969, as a student project at University of Oregon. In 1971, it

was incorporated as a non-profit organization. Oregon consistently ranks as one of the top states in the nation for the percentage of material that they recycle, and Lane County is consistently among the top recyclers in the states. Locally, BRING's name has been synonymous with recycling and conservation for over 30 years. BRING processes recyclable materials brought by the public to Lane County's Glenwood Central Receiving Station or collected at four public drop sites, crushing, sorting, baling and sending to market more than 200 tons of cans, glass, plastic, cardboard and milk cartons every month.

BRING recycling center, located in the southern part of Eugene, is a large reuse center for building materials. "People bring their unwanted materials and shop here for their new needs," Sarah Grimm, education coordinator, describes the unique system of the recycling center. Each month, the Warehouse takes nearly 40 tons of building materials and other reusable items donated by the public, contractors and businesses. These reusable items (that were supposed to go to landfill) are brought to the Warehouse and sold to the public at a great cost savings over new.

"Most people are proud of BRING as it gives a flavor of what is Eugene." According to Grimm, in Lane County recycling is the most popular civic activity practiced by thousands of citizens for all income levels, social backgrounds and political beliefs. Grimm says nine out of ten households in Lane County participate in recycling programs

to some degree, and it has become a part of communal lives.

“If we reduce the need to produce new materials, we can eliminate some need to poison or destroy the life sustainable system.” According to Grimm, if all-government, business and individuals reuse what they can and continue to keep recycling the rest, there is no need for landfill. She says that landfill is not sustainable, not only in terms of spaces, but also of the way people think about their resources.

Grimm thinks the reason that something like BRING is so important is to provide foci for change. Wasteful use of resources is not just a problem for resource conservation, but it relates to many problems at the global scale: economic inequity, global warming, human health issues, desertification and so on. In a sense BRING provides places that help people to think differently about their waste, which makes conservation relevant to people and inspires greater changes. “We can do only what we can do, although every individual action is a part of changing the world.” Accordingly, small changes that are made by a lot of people, in aggregate, significantly reduce human impacts on the earth. BRING encourages people to make different choices and new solutions, asking the question of what is really necessary for their lives and what is not. According to Grimm, one of BRING's important missions is creating an echo: from the local to the communities all over the world.

Discussion

The purpose of these interviews was in part to investigate how each of these components for localization (global-local links, attributes of human capital and local history/ environmental imaginations) actually works in establishing strategies for local sustainability.

The first component, global-local links, explicitly appeared throughout the interviews. Global-local links refer to the reciprocal relation between globalization and localization; it is not only about how localities are shaped by global forces, but also how local people are actively engaging in constructing a global awareness of this interconnectedness. In his interview, Sheppy emphasizes the importance of creating networks between communities in order to exchange information and skills as these expertise are essential for establishing the foundation of the communal lives through the process of adapting and discarding. He also recognizes the unique characteristics of all the places and there was no single paradigm for the transition to sustainability; however, he believes any changes that he made at Aprovecho more or less affect the world as a whole showing a possibility for change.

Scott and Sheppy's idea are similar in that they both emphasize the local

characteristics that differentiate the community from others at the regional or national level, as well as at the global level. Scott says only such differences of localities (mostly inherent in the local culture) make people aware of home in the global society and cultivate the soil for local sustainability. In contrast, Grimm makes a linkage between global and local through the idea of succession; she thinks even a small thing such as recycling, in aggregate, reduces many environmental problems on the earth and contributes to sustainability at the local level, as well as at the global level.

The second component, human capital, is somewhat self-evident as all the people I interviewed have a clear vision of how they approach local sustainability. They have at least completed four-years of college. This factor more or less contributes to their ability to think logically in framing objectives and strategies and to educate, regarding their approach to local sustainability. Even though each of them pursued their degree in different fields, such a high level of education provides them a set of skills and knowledge to develop a framework or program that calls other community members to participate (i.e. internship programs). In addition, the presence of the University of Oregon enhances the role of human capital as the university collaborates with these organizations.

Local history/environmental imagination, which is the final component of localization, involves the process (or the capacity) of how local people change their

assumptions with the creation of a vision of how they want life to be; in this sense the decade of the 60s was significant for how Eugene is today. The seed of movements has been nourished by the people in the community and has created a huge stream of local culture. Scott says this notion of local culture can be expanded to all the relationships of the place and the people. This idea also connotes the Native Americans' culture established on the land for hundreds of years. In this sense, Eugene provides a strong sense of connectedness to the land (in terms of the community and natural environment) with a rich cultural ground; it enables a sense of place to be established.

In Eugene, many people who are searching for alternative lives actively engaged in the process of community making. In a sense those small-scale enterprises and organizations emerged as a sign of localization; however, they are now perpetuating the stream of localization, creating a web of social networks in order to utilize internal resources (i.e. making people involved in the process) and creating the basis of local identity.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

The title of this paper, *In Search of Localism*, comes from the difficulties I faced trying to extract the main characteristics of localism from the literature. In spite of common usage of the term, it seemed too ambiguous to grasp these characteristics. As I kept researching, I came up with several reasons. First, the term is often described as opposition to globalization, rather than its compliment. Second, old localism and new localism share very different characteristics. Third, the literature is often unclear about the difference between similar terms, such as regionalism and bioregionalism, and the discussion of localism only involves decentralization and local autonomy. Forth, localism does not have a theoretical structure as it is all about social or political interpretation of how local people respond to global forces.

The main focus of this paper was the process of localization, especially how the local people frame strategies for sustainability at the local level. One of the important characteristics of Eugene, which differentiates it from other communities, is its richness of

local culture. Local culture is a critical component of sustainable concerns because the transition to sustainability more or less involves the change in people's assumptions of vision of how they want life to be. Therefore, any strategy for sustainability has to begin with reassessing the importance of local culture, which enables local identity or a sense of belonging to be elaborated on creatively. The idea of local identity provides the basis for community, making people aware of the localities, while it builds the capacity of local communities to create positive changes.

There is no single strategy for the transition to sustainability. Instead, this transition is only possible through the process of localization, emphasizing how the local people interpret and adapt the principle of sustainability to their lives in the community. Because the process of localization reflects localities, it never takes place in a homogeneous way. There are certain components inherent in the local community determining the degree of localization (global-local links, contributions of human capital and local history/ environmental imagination).

The interviews I conducted indicated how each component of localization works in framing strategies at the local level, focusing on small-scale enterprises and organizations in Eugene as the main unit of analysis. First, global-local links are essential not only in terms of practical sense (i.e. exchange of information and skills/ the external

side), but also theoretical sense (i.e. shaping local identity/ the internal side). Second, human capital involves creating a clear vision of how they approach local sustainability and a framework or program that calls other community members to participate. Third, a sense of continuity grounded on the land makes their commitments more meaningful, strengthening their sense of place.

Proponents of localism do not assume that local policies automatically resolve policy issues at other levels. Nor does localism imply a utopian faith in communities to come up with solutions for communal well-being. Localism is, in a sense, based on the idea of democracy (or equality); however it does not mean treating all individuals in the community the same. Rather, it is all about celebrations of diversity that inspires people's creativity and imaginations in order to tailor solutions for the community.

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