

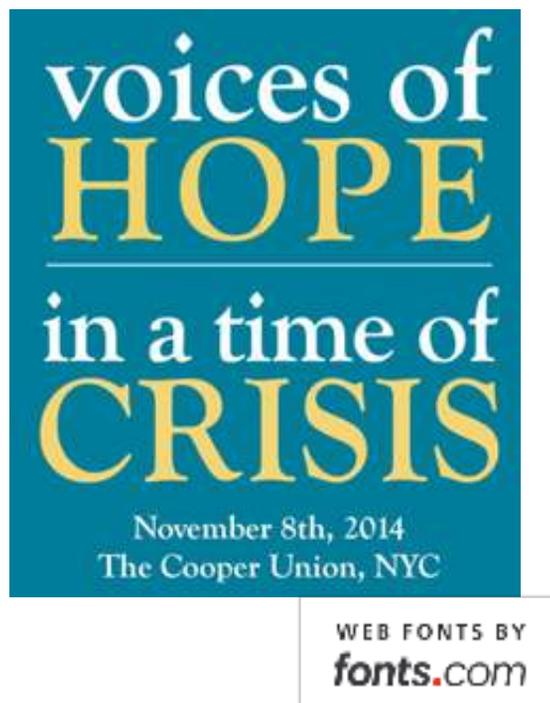
# Charles Eisenstein

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## Localization Beyond Economics

*A Short Reflection by Charles Eisenstein*



On November 8 I'm going to be speaking at the launch of the International Alliance for Localization (IAL). [Voices of Hope in a Time or Crisis](#). Those of you in the New York area might want to consider coming. Among the other speakers are some I consider my dearest allies, including Manish Jain and the rising Nigerian intellectual Adebayo Akomolafe, speaking in the United States for the first

time. He is not to be missed. There will be lots of other dynamic, edge-pushing speakers there too.

When we hear about “localization” these days, it is usual in an economic context. The word brings to mind issues of restoring local economic autonomy, supporting local farms and business, and perhaps revitalizing local financial institutions or even complementary currencies. All important, but the reasons I’m drawn to localization go deeper.

Localization is much more than the economic issue of reclaiming life from the grip of global capital. The global monoculture extends into every realm of life: the homogenization of food, of agriculture, of education, of media, and most perniciously, of our ways of knowing and our basic understanding of what is real, important, and valuable. To reclaim these things is more deeply radical than – yet inseparable from – merely reversing economic globalization.

Let me offer an example to illustrate. Helena Norberg-Hodge, IAL's founder, has for decades been drawing a connection between schooling and the introduction of globalized market economies. For one thing, schools typically offer a curriculum designed by distant authorities that normalize the lifestyles and modes of production of the global economy, while implicitly (and often explicitly) devaluing local artisanal and agrarian production. Secondly, through the regime of standardization, artificial competition, and submission to authority, they foster the habits of the mass consumer.

Third, through their pedagogy and the global system of knowledge production that embeds them, they condition us to believe that knowledge is a universal thing that can be abstracted from land and community. To be sure, certain kinds of knowledge are abstractable in this way – mathematics comes to mind as the primary example – and for those whose natural talents and passion calls them to such realms, joining the system of global, universalized knowledge production is a fine thing. In general though, what this planet needs is the opposite. We need to reconnect to the local ecosystems and bioregions around us, reestablish intimacy with the land; we need to know exactly how to grow food in each unique microclimate in a way that serves the unique human and ecological needs of that area. We also need to develop culturally-specific, place-based solutions to our social problems. Whether in the engineering of the land or the social engineering of humanity, globalized solutions imposed from the outside are not working.

Globalization is not only an economic force, it is also an ideological movement with roots in Newtonian mechanics and, even deeper, in atomistic cosmology. If all the differences in the world are the illusory result of various combinations of the same generic building blocks, then universal solutions to problems, universal technologies, and a global commodity economy of mass production and consumption make a lot of sense. In other words, globalized metaphysics goes hand in hand with globalized economics, culture, medicine, agriculture, education, and politics.

It is these deeper reverberations that draw me to the

cause of localization. Localization is a profoundly revolutionary idea that calls into question the fundamental narrative underpinnings of our civilization. I am not calling for the abandonment of everything global. Certainly there are problems today that call for a global response. Certainly we are uniting in a tribe of all humanity, all of us brothers and sisters. Unfortunately though, what globalization has meant has been the imposition of one particular system and ideology – and a failing one at that – upon everybody else. A new kind of globalism would seek to learn from, and not dominate, the millions of tribes, human and otherwise, that are coming together to form the tribe of all life on earth.

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