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Adaptation of Local Knowledge Societies and Systems to Global Change

Members of local communities are the global citizens best placed to confront environmental and social change. They constitute a decentralized and dynamic knowledge society capable of adapting to local transitions. Their role in creating anthropogenic forests, agro-ecosystems, and post-agrarian landscapes is rooted in their knowledge systems and lifestyles, which are the world's largest repertoire of dynamic approaches to landscape management and resource use. Their contemporary efforts to engage in cultural rediversification, decolonize their minds by questioning Western education and formal religion, and hybridize traditional and newly acquired beliefs, are all testimony to their resilience in the face of global change.

Indigenous peoples and local communities are on the frontline of the struggle against ecological imperialism. Loosely networked through international policy processes and venues, they are amassing an impressive amount of experience by implementing multilateral environmental agreements, codes of ethical conduct, and conservation practices. As a sector of civil society that is largely carbon neutral or carbon negative, they bear the brunt of global climate change while innovating new modes of prevention, adaptation, and mitigation.

I would like to explore these propositions which are vociferously advocated and vehemently challenged in contemporary discourses. I will write about multi-local and transnational communities in centers of biological, cultural, and linguistic diversity. I propose an international study drawing upon case studies in Mesoamerica, North Africa, Southeast Asia, and southern Africa that the Global Diversity Foundation has been developing since 2000. I will expand this focus into a qualitative meta-analysis that incorporates comparable experiences in other regions that I have visited over the last twenty years and that have been well-documented by colleagues in academic publications or gray literature.