

Economics of Happiness Pilgrimage - Tawny Buck

“How have you been empowered by Newkind 2019 to increase the GDH of your local or regional community.”

‘The Global Village.’

This is a term that has always stuck with me since I read the book, ‘War and Peace in the Global Village’ in my early teens. Until I was 18, I was always involving myself in my local and wider community, with action groups, volunteering with charities and even just opening conversations with all walks of life about social/environmental issues. It was this that led me to the decision to travel the world when I had finished high school, instead of rolling straight to a university campus. I wanted to study Ecology, Fine Art and Community Development, but not from a sterile classroom in a UK city. It seemed so removed.

Never in a million years did I expect the threads of my learnings to weave together in the way they have now, rooting in multiple continents. It still feels like this is just the beginning.

It seemed that I continued this involvement with the community, immersing and connecting with communities and grassroots projects around the world. This paired with my ever expanding fascinations with ecology, community development and the arts, and how they interplay and influence the wellbeing of people and our planet, has drawn me to particular places to learn particular lessons.

Travelling through extensively through Asia, I began to really see the resilience of communities, particularly those in developing countries, and was amazed by the resourcefulness they displayed. I observed and wondered at the ways these people ‘got on with life’ with big smiles and peace, and in the regional areas would inherently take care of their local environment that they often would depend on. I found myself reflecting these lifestyles and relationships, comparing to my home town, and to my newly settled community of Sydney.

Here in Australia I would seek out local and Indigenous knowledge (if appropriate) relating to wellbeing, and how that is deeply interconnected with taking care of country. I would always be humbled and astounded by the answers that would present themselves so clearly to why our societies in the West are so dis-eased. There seemed to be a pattern forming, what I was witnessing in each community (that I was lucky enough to form relationships with and stick around long enough to gain insight) was a simple equation for community wellbeing. I began to realise that even amongst the NGO’s and the ‘do-gooder’ organisations, there could sometimes be an attitude prevalent that was causing more hindrance and harm than progression, and this attitude could also often be rooted in the transient traveller communities in the form of a new-wave of ‘voluntourism.’

I believe that one of the the most powerful things we can do fundamentally for any community is to listen. We can empower by coming with an attitude of, ‘What can I learn from you?’ as opposed to, ‘What can I change here?’

‘Localisation’ was a term I wasn’t aware of until I first discovered the ‘Economics of Happiness’ concept whilst viewing my potential future MA in Ecology and Spirituality at Schumacher College last year. I had a lightbulb moment and felt I had to explore this more when I had the chance, which led to an interesting series of synchronicities when six months later I was back on my travels. I happened to meet an inspiring engineer/community

developer in India, who ran a grassroots NGO in Ladakh with Helena, and a few months later I was back at my third Newkind to be part of the team and be of service where I could.

Newkind since the beginning has catalysed and impacted my global village 'localisation' journey. Each year moving in circles and going back out into the world feeling more inspired and connected, asking more and more, 'What can I learn here?'

From permaculture-food-forest-cooking schools to mud-building-community-cultural-arts projects; the threads of my community GDH tapestry are each year taking a more interesting and stronger form.

At Newkind 2019 I felt particularly empowered to increase the GDH of my communities. Whether that be local, local global or global local, I feel affirmed that there is a place and a level of service for all.

Unfortunately I missed the 'Economics of Happiness' presentation during my volunteer hours, but I felt inspired by the serendipitous scenario that this was present - it seems that many signs point to Ladakh!

I feel affirmed to keep finding creative and inventive ways to localise on a global scale, and not to be afraid to be a creator if there is a niche gap in the community - change can be incredibly effective when started humbly. Pre-loved clothing markets, community composting groups, pressure to bring back local produce shops/farmers markets where supermarkets have killed local communities, and having those cups of teas and important conversations with individuals.

I feel a particular calling to stepping into the role of a 'bridger' or a 'connector' that I have seemingly been playing for a while, exchanging and translating ideas from happy and health-wealthy global communities I am connected to. These ideas can manifest into the forms of start-ups, workshops, transformative educational programs or community eco-art groups; whether it be about ways of wellbeing, waste free living or permaculture introductions. I believe this can be very empowering for both the communities the ideas are inspired from and (for example) one of my local communities back in the UK, improving cultural and health capital, fostering creativity, inclusiveness and positive globalisation!

In nature there is no teacher or student, only symbiotic relationships where exchange happens. I feel inspired to create environments where people can slow down and connect with each other and nature, a space to talk about social issues and things that matter.

I feel strongly that I must continually strive to better design my lifestyle so that I can use my creativity and resilience to help improve the wellbeing of others and the planet. The power of connection and collaboration is exponential, and that is why Newkind continues to empower me to evolve on this journey; be it as a shapeshifter, a connector or a global village yarner.

Thank you!