



FOREWORD

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Watch the commercials on prime time CNN and you'll see enticing images of globalization. Slender yuppies of both sexes stride from airplanes into conference rooms in London or Zurich. Executives in company headquarters confer by computer with engineers in Frankfurt or bankers in Hong Kong, agonizing over how best to preserve the rain forests or develop a life-saving new drug. Cell phones dialed in muddy backwaters of the Southern Hemisphere ring in elegant corner offices. Investments zip through modems at the speed of light. On our television screens, the tantalizing visual clichés flash by one after another—the Eiffel Tower, the Taj Mahal, palm-lined beaches, locals dancing in native costume. We are all connected now, is the message, in one big vibrant, pulsing, global adventure.

There are other, not so pretty images of globalization that seldom appear on television. While the corporate managers fly business class from one financial capital to another, laborers risk their lives sneaking across borders in search of a few dollars more a day in pay. While executives plot corporate strategy over room-service meals, teen-aged girls stitch garments and assemble toys for twelve-hour shifts in airless sweatshops. In this far less glamorous stratum of the global economy, Brazilian and Philippine villages are destroyed by logging companies, while towns in Michigan and Ohio are wiped out by downsizing and plant relocations. You won't find many commercials set around the maquiladoras of northern Mexico or the ramshackle factories of Mumbai, India, where globalization means anxiety, long hours of hard work, and shantytowns with open sewers.

The *Field Guide to the Global Economy* connects the dots between these two worlds of globalization. The problem, according to the authors, is not so much that the world is so tightly linked now—by trade, investments, and high-speed telecommunications—but that the links converge in such a small number of

hands. There are 193 nations in the world, many of them ostensibly democratic, but most of them are dwarfed by the corporations that alone decide what will be produced, and where, and how much people will be paid to do the work. In effect, these multinational enterprises have become a kind of covert world government—motivated solely by profit and unaccountable to any citizenry. Only a small group of humans on the planet, roughly overlapping the world's 587-member billionaire's club, rule the global economy. And wherever globalization impinges, inequality deepens. From Mexico to Japan, the rich are getting richer while the poor are becoming more desperate and numerous.

The solution does not lie in a retreat to nationalism and rigid protectionism, or in hermetically sealed economies like that of North Korea. Potentially, globalization could lead to a safer, more peaceful and—who knows?—more interesting world, if, for example, international trade agreements were designed to promote human rights and preserve cultural diversity, instead of just to ease the accumulation of wealth by those who already have more than they know what to do with. But that would be a very different kind of globalization, one in which people who are not "players"—investors or executives—also have a voice.

There's only one way to get there, and it's through even more connectedness, this time among the millions of people at the grubby end of the global economy: labor unions in Mexico linking up with religious groups in Europe; students in California protesting on behalf of workers in Vietnam; women's groups in Massachusetts exchanging information about pharmaceuticals with their counterparts in India or Peru. What you get, as the grassroots networks expand and link up across national boundaries, is something far more exciting than the dash for profits glorified on CNN commercials. It's called solidarity, which is an old-fashioned word for the love between people who may never meet each other, but share a vision of justice and democracy and are willing to support each other in the struggle to achieve it. This is our adventure for the new millennium—recapturing the global economy from its corporate hijackers. Don't be left out.

Leaders Recognize the Social Impact of Globalization

KOFI ANNAN, UN Secretary-General:

Throughout much of the developing world, globalization is seen, not as a term describing objective reality, but as an ideology of predatory capitalism. Whatever reality there is in this view, the perception of a siege is unmistakable. Millions of people are suffering; savings have been decimated; decades of hard-won progress in the fight against poverty are imperiled. And unless the basic principles of equity and liberty are defended in the political arena and advanced as critical conditions for economic growth, they may suffer rejection. Economic despair will be followed by political turmoil and many of the advances for freedom of the last half-century could be lost.¹

POPE JOHN PAUL II:

There is an economic globalization which brings some positive consequences. . . . However, if globalization is ruled merely by the laws of the market applied to suit the powerful, the consequences cannot but be negative. These are, for example, the absolutizing of the economy, unemployment, the reduction and deterioration of public services, the destruction of the environment and natural resources, the growing distance between rich and poor, and unfair competition which puts the poor nations in a situation of ever-increasing inferiority. . . .²

MARY ROBINSON, former president of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights:

If the recent history of Latin America teaches anything, it is that unregulated open markets, rapid import liberalization, and the absence of essential government regulation and public services is bad for growth, bad for stability, and disastrous for poverty reduction.³

