Signs of Hope

by Helena Norberg-Hodge
Director

In these difficult times, the greatest sign of hope is that more and more people are becoming aware of the root causes of our social and ecological crises. This awareness has not yet reached the mainstream media, but independent films, books and articles are ‘trickling upwards’ in what may soon become a powerful, unstoppable stream of information – a stream that will eventually drown out the hype and misinformation that currently shapes people’s thinking. I am more convinced than ever that our globalized political and economic system runs on ignorance rather than evil intent. Access to reliable, honest sources of information can enable people to overcome that ignorance – and to begin effecting meaningful change at both the political and personal level.

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At the grassroots there has already been a very significant shift in thinking. Among other signs, the interest in our work has grown dramatically. During our Tourist Education program in Ladakh, for instance, it was not unusual in years past for someone to complain that Ancient Futures was “too black-and-white”. This summer, instead, people continually came to us with tears in their eyes, saying “thank you for your wonderful work”. On the Farm Project, more people than ever before expressed genuine interest in learning about globalization and its antidote, localization.

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Our local food work is gaining ground as well. As you’ll see in this newsletter, ISEC materials are being translated and put into use around the world (I have also been asked to come to the Czech Republic “to help start a local food movement”), and we continue to get truly inspiring feedback about the multiple benefits of local food initiatives wherever they are undertaken. Thankfully, many people are also waking up to the fact (referred to in Steven Gorelick’s article on page 3) that small-scale diversified agriculture is actually far more productive per acre than large industrial monocultures. This is among the reasons why the government in Ladakh actually promotes organic agriculture – something unheard of in the rest of India. It’s another sign of positive change that the Ladakhi government – greatly influenced by our work over the years – also promotes renewable energy and traditional herbal medicine.

There are broader signs of changes in awareness as well. Despite the opposite trend among our political leaders, there has been a shift towards more holistic ways of thinking: a growing recognition that social, environmental and economic issues are inextricably intertwined. Increasing numbers of people understand that human health and the health of the planet are one and the same, and that the same policies that destroy jobs are also destroying the environment. In addition, many people are moving away from a “them and us” mentality towards a more spiritual and compassionate approach that acknowledges the importance of inner, personal change.

If you look close to the ground, ‘beneath the radar’ of the media, you will also find many inspiring efforts to heal the planet, to heal society. A high proportion of these projects include community-building, and are based on a deep spiritual respect for the living earth. This coming together of a love and respect for nature along with the rebuilding of community is what we mean by localization. In a very fundamental way, localization is about reweaving the fabric of life, of the connections we’ve lost.

Economic localization is also a political path that would allow us to bring economic activity closer to home. As we see it, this would start with insisting that corporations – which have become even more powerful than national governments – are brought under control and ultimately scaled back. At the moment, deregulation of trade and finance gives businesses not only the freedom to expand their activities around the world, it gives them little choice but to grow or die: this is one of the ‘rules of the game’ that extends all the way down to tiny mom-and-pop shops and to the small farmers that are going bankrupt by the millions. Reining in the corporations doesn’t have to mean creating a global government: it can be accomplished far more effectively by taking steps to decentralize economic activity.

This strategy is certainly not going to make giant transnational corporations shrink away to nothing overnight. But subsidies, trade rules, regulations and tax policy all steer the economy in a particular direction – and right now those rules pressure every business towards ever larger scale. This leads to practices that are not only unecological but economically inefficient as well. Among the most glaring is the simultaneous import and export of identical products – something that routinely occurs in the global economy. Those same subsidies are the reason that people in New Zealand, Kenya and Costa Rica don’t eat their own butter or drink their own milk, but instead consume dairy products transported from thousands of miles away. As if this weren’t bad enough, we recently learned that many of the ‘local’ apples in UK supermarkets were first flown to South Africa to be washed and waxed before being returned for sale in the UK. Promoting trade and transport of this sort is sheer madness.

With the era of cheap oil ending and the pace of climate change accelerating, we must all do what we can to end this insanity, and to bring economies everywhere closer to home. As you’ll see in this newsletter, we are working on a major film to spell out this vision. Please support us in raising awareness of the benefits of shifting direction, of strengthening communities and local economies worldwide.
Peak Oil and Localization

by Steve Gorelick
US Programs Director

Whether we’re seeking stronger communities, a cleaner environment, better prospects for the Third World, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions or limits on corporate power, there is a clear way forward: economic localization. Lately a lot of other voices have joined ISEC in this refrain, as the implications of ‘peak oil’ become more widely known.

For those who haven’t read any of the recent books and articles about it, peak oil refers to the point at which global oil production – which has risen steadily for more than a century – finally peaks and begins its inevitable decline. Reaching this peak doesn’t mean that the planet’s oil reserves have run dry, just that the most accessible oil has already been pumped out of the ground – making cheap oil a thing of the past. With fossil fuel consumption in the west continuing to climb and with China, India and other countries of the South rushing headlong down the same petroleum-based development track, demand for oil is about to exceed supply – forever. As students of peak oil point out, this means endlessly rising oil prices, and the consequent demise of virtually everything that people in the industrialized world have grown to expect.

Although the peak oil crisis will affect the entire global economy, the implications for food production and marketing are telling. As we point out in Bringing the Food Economy Home, artificially cheap oil is at the heart of the global food system. Large-scale farm equipment runs on fossil fuels, and pesticides and chemical fertilizers are made from them. Cheap oil makes possible the transport of raw ingredients and processed foods around the world, and enables shoppers to drive to out-of-town supermarkets. Even the plastic packaging so ubiquitous on supermarket shelves is a petroleum-based product. Without cheap oil, in other words, the global food system simply cannot function, and people will soon have little choice but to rely far more heavily on local food.

Virtually every sector of the global economy is similarly dependent on cheap oil: goods that could be produced relatively nearby are routinely transported from far corners of the world, simply to take advantage of lower labor costs, looser health and environmental standards, even swings in currency exchange rates. Take away the cheap oil and globalization is finished.

Given the damage done by globalization, some of its critics are tempted to applaud the peak oil phenomenon and to sit back and wait for the inevitable and necessary shift to the local to happen. This, we believe, would be unwise for a number of reasons:

- Even the experts are unsure when the actual peak will occur. In the meantime our political leaders remain intent on pushing our economies to globalize still further – making the coming crisis more severe when it inevitably arrives. Active resistance to globalization is still crucial.

- Most policymakers are so wedded to the economic assumptions underpinning the global economy that they are likely to make every effort to shore up that system, rather than taking deliberate steps towards smaller-scale economies and local, renewable forms of energy. Without heavy pressure from the grassroots we are likely to see environmental regulations gutted, higher subsidies for nuclear power, and still more wars over oil. In particular, we need to continue to remind our political leaders that destroying the environment to ‘save’ the economy is a lose-lose proposition.

- Even now, the global economy is so distorted by hidden subsidies and ignored costs that fresh produce from halfway around the world can sell for less than local produce. Additional subsidies for oil – provided by borrowing from future generations – is already being proposed in the US in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Such steps might even stave off the peak oil crisis for a few years – or even a decade or more. Given the continuing social and environmental damage caused by globalization, simply waiting for inevitable collapse of this house of cards would be irresponsible.

- Perhaps one of the most important things we can do is to educate ourselves and others about the roots of the coming crisis. If people simply blame greedy oil companies, ‘anti-western’ Muslims or tree-hugging environmentalists for the disruptions to their way of life, little will have been learned that will lead to a better future.

Ultimately, the source of the peak oil crisis is an economy based on jobless growth, in which human needs and natural limits are considered irrelevant. This vision of ‘progress’ could only be embraced by political leaders who are far removed from the impact of their policies.

There is a great deal of uncertainty over what the world will look like decades from now, as the supply of oil slows to a trickle. Taking appropriate steps now – not only the hands-on work of renewing local connections, but the policy-level work to support local economies – could mean a far better world, one comprised of diverse communities with their own intimate connection to place, where real human needs are met with little cost to the planet. In the end, what will be gained is far more than what will be lost.
In Leh, the scope of our Responsible Tourism agenda broadened. Volunteers Alex Jensen and Brian Emerson brought with them a selection of new films to be screened, such as the recent documentary *The Corporation*, so the small ISEC cinema was in use morning and afternoon. Thanks to a lot of cheerful help from Miguel, our on-the-spot Spanish volunteer, posters advertising Ancient Futures were up all over town, and our audiences often exceeded 50 people. Another innovation this year was a parachute to provide shade in the courtyard of the Women’s Alliance, under which visitors could enjoy the local dish *skyu*. Next year we hope to extend both the shaded area and the menu, and to become the only lunch café in Leh to serve exclusively Ladakhi food.

Our annual festival celebrating the knowledge and skills of Ladakh women was held in mid-August this year. Various crafts were on show, including weaving, dyeing, making mustard and apricot oil, as well as traditional dancing, which, coupled with many examples of local cuisine (unavailable to tourists anywhere else in Leh) attracted a large number of visitors over three days. In addition to the proceeds from these activities, donations were collected on the door, and the money raised will go towards the craft workshops the Women’s Alliance runs during the winter, as well as a planned Reality Tour for seven Ladakhis.

I would also like to thanks Wangyal, Alex and Brian for their wholehearted support, as well as the many volunteers who assisted us in diverse ways.
Himalayan Haikus

Each year Farm Project participants are invited to give us their feedback. This year they were also invited to enter the first-ever Ladakh Farm Project Haiku competition. (For non-Ladakhi speakers, note that Phu = high pasture; Balang = cow). The winner, for an entry that adheres strictly to the Haiku form (including a seasonal invocation) is Alan Wright:

Rays from morning’s sun
Warm the face of frozen phu
Sacred waters flow

Alan Wright

The following also deserve honorable mention:

Balang gone crazy
I give chase across the fields
But to no avail

Zoë Hatherley

Working in the field
hearing Gompa sounds and chants
here and now I am

Lino and Line

At the phu, one man
sews flowers onto his hat
sole colour, up high

Carol Tomkins

ISEC/Women’s Alliance Center Goes Solar

by Alex Jensen
Tourist Education Coordinator

For more than 30 years ISEC has been promoting the use of solar energy in Ladakh: with over 300 full-sun days per year and a high quality of solar radiation, the region is an ideal environment for this form of renewable energy. Therefore we were very pleased this year to be able to install a solar-powered system to run the television and DVD player needed for our tourist education program.

We calculated that running the television and DVD for two hours requires 280 watt-hours (Wh). The Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG) sold us and helped install an inverter, charge controller, deep cycle battery, and a 40 watt solar panel (see picture). The system will generate about 200-240 Wh per day in the summer in Leh. This means the panel is slightly too small to support our load, which probably averages about two and a half to three hours per day (three and a half on the day we play Ancient Futures plus The Corporation). On cloudy days this will be worse. So, we still do need to switch on the grid supply once in a while, which the inverter directs into the battery.

With a few more panels, we could totally divorce ourselves from the grid and supply steady, year-round clean electricity to the entire Center. Please contact us if you would like to contribute to purchasing additional solar panels.

Thanks to Jos van den Akker of AURORE for the solar tutorial he gave us in July, and for the technical details in this report. Thanks to Wangchuk at LEDeG for installing the system.
Proposed Farm Project Film

by Victoria Clarke
US Administrative Coordinator

Among the great rewards of my involvement with ISEC is hearing from people who have been deeply affected by our work. This summer, however, I was the one who was profoundly moved, upon seeing a brief video about the Ladakh Farm Project.

The film was made by Frederick Marx, director of the highly acclaimed documentary Hoop Dreams. In 2004, Marx shot preliminary footage for a new film, tentatively called Julay Ladakh!, that he plans to make about the experiences of ISEC Farm Project participants. He distilled those images into a short trailer in the hopes of obtaining funding to make the full documentary. One day this summer, he called to see if I’d like to see the video.

“Well, what do you think?” he asked when the film clip ended.

It took me a moment before I could respond. How could I convey in words how moving it was to see footage that, in less than five minutes, summed up so beautifully my reasons for seeking to work with ISEC? True, I’ve corresponded with Farm Project applicants, answered their questions and read their letters, and so I already had a sense of what they were like. But actually seeing them articulate their motivations for being in Ladakh – their longing for a sense of community and connection to the earth – was like hearing echoes of my own feelings, making me feel very close to these people I’ve never met. As one person in the film put it, “Unique, diverse cultures represent possibilities: human possibilities, possibilities for happiness.” This one sentiment speaks volumes about the emptiness of the consumer culture, in which real happiness – a human birthright – is essentially missing.

Marx says his focus in making the film is twofold. First, he wants to understand why someone from a wealthy modern society would want to give up the familiar comforts of home – not only to live for a month in a ‘less-developed’ society, but to do strenuous manual labor in a challenging environment as well. Second, he wants to see how the Farm Project participants are changed by their experiences and how they apply what they have learned. Marx will explore these questions by following a group of Farm Project participants during their month-long stay in Ladakh, as well as on their return to the west afterwards. “What,” Marx asks, “will inspire these westerners, keep them hopeful, and keep them there? What life lessons will they take home with them? If Ladakh truly represents solutions for Western social problems what are they? How will they be revealed?”

Marx also hopes to shed some light on the Ladakhis’ experience as Farm Project hosts. He clearly recognizes how misleading the advertising and media images are that bombard the South, and knows that one aim of the Farm Project is to balance those impressions through closer contact with people from the industrialized world. What, Marx wonders, is the impact of these westerners on the Ladakhis?

I truly hope Frederick Marx is able to make this film, and very much look forward to seeing it.

The 4-minute film clip can be viewed at www.archive.org/details/julay
The Flow Fund Circle

For the third consecutive year, ISEC received $100,000 from the Flow Fund Circle to distribute to worthy projects around the world. The total amount was divided into equal portions and distributed to five trusted individuals and organizations who share ISEC’s perspective and values; each of these in turn chose several grassroots groups in their region to receive small grants of $5,000 or less. Although ISEC’s administrative costs are not covered by the Flow Fund – all of the money ‘flows’ on to others – it is always rewarding to be able to support such wide-ranging and important work.

Here are a few examples of the projects that benefited from Flow Fund grants last year:

ARGENTINA
Salvador de Semillas
This group works with communities, NGOs, schools, civic bodies, and other social organizations to teach and promote urban organic agriculture. The Flow Fund grant helped them to buy materials to aid their seed saving work, including sieves to speed up the cleaning of seeds and paper bags to isolate flowers for pure seed production. It also enabled them to build isolation cages to work with more species and varieties, build a small-scale seed cleaning machine, and produce a manual to promote seed saving locally.

NEVADA
Tibetan Medicine Project
This project aims to revitalize traditional Tibetan medicine through human resource development and education. Part of the project is a training – organized jointly with the Nepalese government – that combines advanced knowledge and skills in Tibetan medicine with basic knowledge and skills in allopathic medicine (including vaccination, family planning and primary health care).

PHILIPPINES
Mangyan Indigenous Education Program
This small NGO aims to develop forms of education that nurture indigenous culture, protect ancestral domains, promote self-determination and provide people with appropriate knowledge and skills. The Flow Fund grant is enabling the group to compile and publish books and other materials containing Mangyan stories, poems, rituals, beliefs and traditions.

MEXICO
Medicinal Plants Project
Alvaro Obregon is a poor rural mountain community in the state of Vera Cruz, where access to a medical assistance and care is limited. The Medicinal Plants Project aims to improve the health of families in the community by producing herbal remedies for common ailments. The groups is also creating a compendium of local medicinal plants and their uses, and runs workshops – led by experienced herbalists from a nearby community – on how to identify, produce and store herbal remedies.

IRELAND
KEEP
KEEP is an NGO providing practical environmental education to schools and communities in Ireland. It is based at Gortbrack Organic Farm, Ballyseedy, Tralee, where students and community groups come to ‘get their hands dirty’ at environmental trainings. The grant enabled KEEP to improve facilities on the farm, upgrade trails and add wheelchair access, and to update their website.

CZECH REPUBLIC
Seed Saving Project
Petr and Gabriela Dostalek have launched a seed saving network in the Czech Republic, and have gathered extensive information on the many landraces grown in the region. A Flow Fund grant helped them to prepare and distribute a list of these traditional varieties, as well as to produce a Czech landraces poster, including photos and descriptive text. They also held a meeting of growers from all over the country, with the aim of exchanging seeds and seedlings, and sharing local knowledge and expertise.

THAILAND
Living and Learning Center
The Whispering Seed is a village-based living and learning center, as well as a home for orphaned and abused children. The community’s Living & Learning Center provides trainings, workshops, seminars and resources for local villagers in holistic child-rearing, democratic and holistic models of learning, natural healing techniques, traditional arts (including dance, music, spinning and weaving), documentary film making and sustainable models of living (including permaculture, natural house building and organic farming).
Is Local Organic Food Elitist?

by Steve Gorelick
US Programs Director

ISEC helped launch the movement for local food because it is such an effective solution-multiplier: local food helps family farmers and other small businesses survive, thereby revitalizing rural economies; it minimizes the need for a wide range of inputs, from pesticides and chemical fertilizers to preservatives and packaging; it increases agricultural biodiversity, adding to long-term food security; and by reducing unnecessary food transport, it lessens our fossil fuel use and the pollution and greenhouse gas emissions that go with it. What’s more, a shift from global to local food would benefit self-reliant villagers throughout the South, while making healthy, nutritious food more abundant and more affordable everywhere.

With all this going for it, it can be disconcerting to hear some people argue that “local organic food is elitist.” Disconcerting, but not surprising: for more than a decade, a handful of well-funded corporate front groups has been diligently working to link local organic food with “elitism” – particularly in America – and their work is paying off.

One of these groups is the Center for Consumer Freedom (CCF), funded by Coca-cola, Monsanto, Cargill, Tyson Foods, and others. CCF’s avowed mission is “to shoot the messengers” delivering unfavorable news about corporate products. According to a CCF spokesman, the group targets “just about every consumer and environmental group, chef, legislator or doctor who raises objections to things like pesticide use, genetic engineering of crops or antibiotic use in beef and poultry” A favored means of “shooting” these critics is to accuse them of elitism. CCF’s website, for instance, features articles with headlines like “Opposition to Biotechnology: Elitism in its Cruellest Form”; another claims that those working to address America’s obesity epidemic have “the elitist conviction that Americans can’t be trusted to take care of themselves”.

CCF is not the only group spreading the ‘elitism’ message. Dennis Avery of the right-wing Hudson Institute (with support from McDonald’s, Monsanto, Dupont and Exxon) calls environmentalists “affluent elites” who believe that “the world’s poor should stay poor.” Elizabeth Whelan of the agribusiness-funded American Council on Science and Health calls the organic food movement “elitist and arrogant”. “The only thing healthy about organic food,” she sniffs, “is the price.”

Although these groups promote the interests of big business, they attempt to give a humanitarian spin to their arguments. Prominent among their claims is the canard that industrial food is needed to feed the world’s starving masses – even though it has been documented time and again that small-scale organic farms are far more productive per acre than their industrial counterparts. In any case, it is usually not a shortage of food that leads to hunger in the global South, but development and trade policies – largely designed to benefit those same big businesses – that pull people away from self-reliant village economies and consign them to poverty in urban slums.

The elitism argument isn’t limited to North-South relations. Another claim is that even in the North, only ‘affluent elites’ can afford local organic food. Yes, industrial food usually sells for less than fresher, healthier food. But distantly-transported industrial food is actually quite costly if one accounts for all the direct and hidden subsidies our governments lavish on it; and it becomes still more expensive if one accounts for its many social and environmental costs. Local organic food – which is unsubsidized, has significant social benefits and far lower environmental costs – is the real bargain.
In the end, the agribusiness-led assault on local organic food does not really depend on strength of argument, but on a subtle psychological ploy. The subtext of the ‘elitism’ claim is that industrial food is central to the identities of average Americans. Criticizing the corporate-run system that produces this food thus becomes the equivalent of attacking the ‘ordinary people’ who eat it.

This is a clever strategem: simply eating Big Macs or microwave pizza makes you part of the solid, patriotic backbone of America, a defender of Mom and frozen apple pie. Choosing alternatives to industrial food, on the other hand, is equated with believing yourself better than everyone else: only an elitist with no respect for decent Americans or their mealtime rituals would challenge this or any other feature of the consumer culture, America’s sacred way of life.

But there is nothing really sacred about this culture. Unlike genuine traditions and cultural adaptations to place, the consumer culture is largely artificial, the creation of huge corporations that require masses of homogenized consumers for their products. It is the product of mammoth entertainment and media empires, billions of dollars in saturation advertising, and cradle-to-grave immersion in the belief that ever more consumption is the surest path to happiness. Corporate-funded think tanks help maintain this manufactured culture, spreading its ideology through propaganda that passes from pundits to the public like a virus.

ISEC and other effective critics of the consumer culture do not attack those whose lives are embedded in it; instead they challenge the economic and political structures that prop it up. Those structures help make industrial food ubiquitous and artificially cheap, while limiting the availability of local organic food and making it artificially expensive.

Here is ISEC’s prescription for challenging the consumer culture’s food system, while making local organic food more accessible to everyone, including the poor:

- First, eliminate the subsidies and tax breaks currently going to industrial food, and shift them to small-scale production for local markets. The reason giant Slurpees are cheaper than local fruit juices, for example, is that industrial corn sweetener is highly subsidized, while local apple juice gets no support all.

- Shift the massive government R&D funding that goes towards industrial production (biotechnology, pesticides, mechanization, etc.) towards research that would help small-scale organic farmers.

- Scale back the huge subsidies currently devoted to long-distance transport – here and in the global South – which make it easy and artificially cheap for distantly-produced foods to invade the markets of local producers. Devote that funding instead to the infrastructure needs of local food economies, like covered markets, community-based processing facilities, and small-scale renewable energy projects.

- Shift taxation away from labor and onto fossil fuels, thus reducing unemployment and pollution simultaneously. This would significantly raise the price of energy-intensive global food, and reduce the price of labor-intensive local food.

- Re-regulate global corporations. As things stand now, ‘free trade’ treaties and financial de-regulation enable global corporations to invade markets around the world. If communities were allowed to protect themselves from a flood of outside goods, local food economies would have a chance to flourish.

- Change the health and safety regulations that are currently strangling small, local producers and businesses. Though most of these have been enacted because of the abuses of large-scale businesses, they can make it almost impossible for smaller businesses to survive.

Far from elitist, these are steps towards an economy in which even the poor have access to the freshest, healthiest food possible.
ISEC Plans New Educational Tools

Because ISEC is a small organization, an important part of our strategy has been to create educational tools that other organizations and individuals can use, thereby greatly expanding our impact. The Ancient Futures book and video are a perfect example of this strategy: over the years they have been used by thousands of activists, teachers and ordinary citizens to debunk the myths underpinning conventional development and to call attention to the real costs of globalization. Having been translated into dozens of languages by indigenous NGOs all over the world, they have touched many times the number of people that ISEC could hope to reach directly.

Today our materials are widely used at the grassroots level, where they are continually passed from hand to hand, from organization to organization. Just recently, for example, we learned that a Japanese university dedicated to the arts, environment and social welfare has put Ancient Futures up on its website, www.creation.tv. This all came about because Yoji Kamata, a student interested in traditional knowledge, volunteered with us in Ladakh some years ago and then took the initiative to translate Ancient Futures into Japanese – part of his effort to set up an informal ISEC network in Mongolia, Tibet and Japan.

Nothing makes us happier than knowing that our materials are sought out and used by others in this way. We believe that films are particularly well suited to this strategy, and we’re therefore working to strengthen and expand that portion of our educational ‘toolbox’. This year we made our videos available on DVD for the first time, and produced a combined DVD with both Ancient Futures and Paradise With Side Effects. We also arranged with Green Planet Films (an online rental library for environmental DVDs) to carry the films in their catalogue. And in the coming year we hope to add a page to our website that will make it easier for people to locate sources for the many non-English translations of Ancient Futures and other ISEC materials. More importantly, we intend to produce a feature-length documentary that highlights the structural underpinnings both of the global economy and the benefits of the shift in direction we are advocating. We believe that it can provide the hope, inspiration and vision that can contribute to the building of a localization movement. The film will show that globalization is a ‘lose-lose’ strategy for us all, creating financial and psychological insecurity and fear in communities as diverse as Indian farmers and the American middle-classes, while decimating ecosystems and destabilizing the climate. But rather than dwelling on the problems, we will describe the multiple benefits of strengthening community and decentralizing economic activity: a healthier environment, sustainable material living standards, global security, and a smaller human ecological footprint that leaves more space and resources for wild nature. We plan to include interviews with such notable individuals as George Soros, Josef Stieglitz, HH The Dalai Lama, and Mikhail Gorbachev. Future editions of the Local Futures newsletter will keep you posted on our progress.

Global to Local Outreach

Although much of our Global to Local outreach takes the form of videos and books, reports and other written materials, we also take the ISEC message directly to the public through various public events. Our experiences this year leave us with absolutely no doubt that a localization movement is gaining ground around the world, and as a result, interest in our perspective is rapidly growing.

For example, we were very honored that Helena Norberg-Hodge was one of three of the previous 100 Right Livelihood Award winners asked to speak at a conference in Salzburg, Austria, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the award known as the ‘Alternative Nobel Prize’. The Salzburg government specifically asked Helena to speak on shifting from global to local.

One of the more unusual events in our Global to Local program was a debate between Helena Norberg-Hodge and Michael Novak – one of President George W. Bush’s most intimate advisers – on the impact of global economic forces in today’s world. Novak is actually a grandfatherly, soft-spoken man. During the debate, he said he believes that small businesses are essential to solving the problem of poverty, particularly in the Third World. However he hadn’t made the connection between the destruction of countless small businesses worldwide and the rise of corporate power. Similarly, he said that the increase in fundamentalism in different parts of the world is a serious and growing problem, but he failed to recognize that the Christian fundamentalism spreading in his own country stems from the same root causes. Novak also admitted that he hadn’t considered one of ISEC’s main arguments – that government subsidies systematically promote large and
global businesses, while undermining the small businesses he supports. The debate, held in front of 1,000 people at a so-called ‘Youth Olympic’ in Torino, Italy, confirmed our conviction that today’s destructive trends are driven more by the blindness of policymakers than by ill will or greed.

One of the most inspirational conferences was a five-day meeting of the Global Ecovillage Network, at Findhorn in Scotland, where Helena presented a keynote address on the economy. The meeting was a wonderful celebration of sustainable community initiatives around the world, attended by two hundred people from about 20 countries.

Another highlight of the past year was bringing the film *Paradise With Side Effects* to the Mountain Film Festival in Telluride, Colorado. If you haven’t seen it, the film (produced for a French-German television network) features our Reality Tour program, which brings future Ladakhi leaders to the west to see with their own eyes our serious social and ecological problems, as well as the search for solutions. During the three-day festival, Helena also participated in an all-day symposium on sustainability, organized by Patagonia. This high-profile festival was a great opportunity to present ISEC’s ideas and worldview to the filmmaking community, and led to some financial support for our upcoming film.

Helena took part in many other events in our Global to Local program this year, including:

- A World Food Day conference, at which Helena was the keynote speaker. The conference was organized by an alliance of journalists and NGOs working on food issues – including Action Aid, the Food Writers’ Guild, the UK Food Group, and Sustain.

- A conference on Food Security in an Energy Scarce world, organized by the Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability (Feasta). Helena’s presentation was on “Globalization and the Loss of Democratic Control”.

- The AIESEC Ethical Leadership Seminar in London, where Helena spoke and presented *Paradise with Side Effects*. AIESEC is the world’s largest student organization.

Other ISEC staff also brought our message to the public:

- Intern/volunteer Alex Jensen presented ISEC’s Local Food Slideshow in Bologna, Italy, at “The Flow of Local Economies”, a meeting between small producers from the global South, local networks of organic producers and consumers, and organizations working on related local food issues.

- International Programs Director Becky Tarbotton led a workshop at the Eco Farm Conference in Monterey, California, discussing the findings of *Ripe for Change*, our groundbreaking study of the California food system.

- US Local Food Coordinator Katy Mamen presented the “Local Food, Globally” slideshow to 450 Environmental Policy students at the University of California, Berkeley.

- US Programs Director Steven Gorelick hosted a workshop on local food economies as part of the Hardwick (Vermont) Community Learning Exchange. He also spoke at Sterling College on “Steps to a Local Food Economy.”

- A conference on Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social Sustainability, in Oahu, Hawaii, where she was a plenary speaker.

- Helena was also interviewed at length for a Canadian documentary, on the subject of ‘environmental refugees’.
ISEC Publications

- It was a great honor for ISEC that Helena Norberg-Hodge was the only non-Asian to be interviewed for *The Asian Future: Dialogues for Change*, published by Zed Books. The book’s editor, Pracha Hutanwatr from Thailand, said Helena’s profound insights into the psychology of development earned her the right to be considered an “honorary Asian”.

- Elsewhere in Asia, Bangkok publishers Suan Nguen Mee Ma (www.suan-spirit.com) has published a Thai translation of *Bringing the Food Economy Home*. A publisher in Kerala is also planning a Malayalam edition – something we look forward to seeing, since Malayalam is arguably the most beautiful script in the world.

- Attention Francophones: Montreal-based publisher Éditions Éco-Société has just released *Manger Local*, a French-language edition of *Bringing the Food Economy Home*. In 2002 this same group also published a French version of *Small is Beautiful, Big is Subsidized*, titled *Les Gros Raflent la Mise*. These can both be purchased via their website, www.ecosociete.org.

- A pair of beautifully produced publications recently landed on our desk: Polish translations of *Bringing the Food Economy Home* and the Local Food Action Pack. The two were produced by Cracow-based NGO Zielone Brygady (Green Brigade), part of the burgeoning local food movement in Eastern Europe.

- Helena Norberg-Hodge is one of eight visionaries profiled in *Wisdom for a Livable Planet*. This inspiring book by biology professor Carl McDaniel also examines the life and work of David Orr, Wes Jackson, Herman Daly and four others. It can be ordered from our Berkeley office, or via our website.

- *Ripe for Change*, ISEC’s groundbreaking report on California’s food economy, has been selected for inclusion in the National Agricultural Library collection, part of the US Department of Agriculture’s research service. We have just discovered that they are also compiling ISEC newsletters going back a decade and more. Does this mean that officials in the USDA are reading our work? If so, we certainly hope they act on our recommendations!