



Local Futures

The Newsletter of the International Society for Ecology and Culture



Extracting apricot kernel oil

The Time is Right

by Helena Norberg-Hodge

As you will see in the following pages, the reach of ISEC's work is expanding exponentially. I think the reasons are twofold. First, we continue to produce materials that offer a unified and easy-to-understand vision of life beyond the multitude of social, ecological and economic problems that the world currently faces. And second, the time is right for our message. In recent years, there has been a rapidly growing awareness around the world of the importance of both cultural and biological diversity, coupled with a greater realization of the need for more localized economic activity.

The movement for economic localization is particularly strong within food and agriculture circles. As Wal-Mart and other huge retailers go "organic", it is becoming ever more apparent that truly sustainable farming means diversified, smaller-scale production

In this issue:

- Learning from Ladakh
- ISEC's new film *The Economics of Happiness*
- No More Pseudo-Solutions!

serving more localized markets.

This 'global-to-local' argument is at the heart of the new documentary we are currently working on. Based on the interviews we have already shot, the film's strength will lie in the breadth of support this argument can now count on. We hear the same message in eight languages and from five continents: the global economy is killing both people and the planet; we need to bring the economy home.

Our work in Ladakh, now in its fourth decade, is more worthwhile than ever. The Learning from Ladakh program (formerly known as the Farm Project) encourages participants from around the world to question such notions as "progress" and "development", while

continued next page



our ongoing collaboration with the Women's Alliance of Ladakh (WAL) plays a vitally important role in helping to support cultural self-respect.

The essence of our work is to counter the dangerous notion that human and ecological interests are mutually exclusive. Our goal is to show that the steps we need to take in order to reduce global warming and heal the planet are the very same as those needed to restore individual and societal well-being.



India: In the Wake of Development

by Alex Jensen, ISEC Researcher

During the past year I traveled across much of India, assessing the direction of change, interviewing farmers and activists for our new documentary, and helping to expand ISEC's Ancient Futures Network. Not surprisingly, I was both angered and encouraged by what I saw: angered, because globalization and 'development' are being foisted on India more intensively than ever; encouraged, because so many individuals and groups are doing so much to show that other ways are possible.

The avowed purpose of development in India today is to meet annual economic growth targets of 10 percent or more, thereby dangling a shining GDP in front of foreign investors. The techniques employed to do so are sadly familiar. State governments are forcibly removing villagers from their land in order to create regulation-free corporate enclaves known as Special Economic Zones. Giant corporations like Reliance Industries, Tata, and Bharti/Wal-Mart are rapidly consolidating virtually every sector of the economy. Contract farming for export is replacing local food production, while American-style supermarkets are replacing small shops. Through deceitful advertising and state assistance, companies like Monsanto-Mahyco are not only poisoning the countryside with pesticides and genetically-manipulated seeds, they are creating millions of heavily-indebted farmers and an epidemic of farmer suicides. The result of all this can be seen in petrochemical pollution and gargantuan landfills, in mega-cities filled with both swelling slums and glittering shopping malls for the super-affluent, and

in rising rates of depression, anger and conflict.

But there is a growing counter-current, as well, comprised of thousands of groups and individuals challenging the assumptions behind western-style development, and working to rejuvenate sustainable and self-reliant local economies. Below are brief descriptions of just two of the many memorable people I met with—a small sampling of the vibrant resistance and renewal work happening all over the subcontinent:

- Debal Deb is a writer, scholar, environmental activist, and a trenchant critic of the consumer culture. At Basudha, his center in West Bengal, Debal and his colleagues are carrying out organic farming and biodiversity research, and working to revitalize traditional knowledge systems. They run the largest project for *in situ* conservation of native rice varieties in eastern India, all of which Debal and his team are planting, harvesting, and reintegrating into the agriculture of the surrounding villages. According to Debal, West Bengal once had over 5,000 folk varieties of rice; since the Green Revolution, that number has shrunk to about 500, all of which have been collected, propagated, and shared by Debal and his team.



Like the 'counter-development' work we initiated in Ladakh, Debal brings otherwise unpublicized information about the hazards of products like pesticides and soft drinks, and constantly affirms the value of traditional, natural products and technologies. One day, we passed a field where some farmers were applying pesticides with pump sprayers. Debal quickly assessed which pesticide they were spraying, then proceeded to sit down with the farmers for a half-hour discourse on the hazards of the chemical, as well as the organic alternatives available.

- In Tamil Nadu, I spent some memorable days with Balaji Shankar—a software walkout turned organic farmer, and a strong critic of globalization and the consumer culture. His NGO, the Kumarappa Foundation, works to promote "economies of permanence". "Our aim is simple," Balaji says: "to enable sustainable, self-reliant villages, with organic farming as the central hub of each village."

Balaji is keenly aware of the psychological causes

behind the breakdown of traditional ways. As we passed a village of mud brick and thatch-roofed houses, Balaji launched into a passionate lamentation about the disappearance of such buildings. The reason these beautiful structures are being abandoned, he believes, is that people have been convinced by the media and other forms of indoctrination that such houses are “backward”: only for shame and status are people moving into far less comfortable and more expensive cement and tin structures.

Balaji is not only a critic of conventional development, he is already demonstrating the viability of another model. On his six-acre organic farm, he produces an abundance of green gram, paddy, ragi, millet, banana, mixed vegetables and more—enough to feed 35 people and market a surplus. As he is fond of pointing out, small-scale organic farms like his could easily feed India’s millions, and many more besides.

Debal and Balaji are not alone. Thousands of others are saying “No” to globalisation, and “Yes” to ways that are more in keeping with the needs of people and the earth. My hopes and wishes for India’s future reside with them.



No More “Pseudo-solutions”

by **Helena Norberg-Hodge**

When we first started our global-to-local work in the mid-1970s, there was widespread awareness that both policy change and individual action were needed to solve the world’s growing social and ecological problems. In the last two decades, however, mainstream thinking in both the media and academia has focused almost entirely on market solutions rather than political ones. We have been encouraged to see ourselves as consumers instead of

citizens, and to believe that the best way to effect change is through the decisions we make when we go shopping.

Since we hear so little about the consequences of corporate and government growth-at-any cost policies, it’s easy to believe that the health of the environment depends largely on our willingness to buy recycled paper, install fluorescent light bulbs, and opt for hybrid cars. (Along the way, we are also expected to accept the absurd notion that environmentally friendly products will of course be more costly; that potatoes from the organic farm down the road, for example, will “naturally” cost more than a packet of potatoes that have been pulverized, reconstituted, frozen, triple-packaged and shipped to us from several hundred miles away.)

“Yesterday I gave a talk at the US Green Building Council Convention. Several American architects and developers asked me ‘What can we do in the developing world to help?’ I said ‘There is nothing that you can do from the American development point of view that will help. If you want to understand, check out ISEC, no one says it better.’”

—Jonathan Rose, Director, Rose Associates

This blind focus on the market is reflected in a giddy array of what I call “pseudo-solutions”—from corporate social responsibility and debt-for-nature swaps to carbon offsets and fair trade. Virtually all these market-based strategies (and there are many more) ignore the fundamental distortions and injustices of the global marketplace. In the name of trade, the marketplace has been steadily deregulated: ever more power has been handed to global traders, while health, safety, environmental and labor standards have been systematically gutted. In a world where the value of currencies and commodities is determined by speculation, where the price paid to the producers of coffee or timber or wool very often goes down while the price to the consumer increases, and where hidden subsidies promote environmental breakdown on a colossal scale, it becomes ever more difficult—and expensive—for people to change the world simply by voting through their pocketbooks.

Fundamental critique of the global trading system is perhaps most notably absent in discussions about the relationship between North and South. For centuries, colonialism and debt meant that cheap labor and resources were ruthlessly extracted from the South and made available to the wealthier, more industrialized parts

of the world. Even though the injustices of the colonial era are widely recognized today, many well-intentioned people argue that we should effectively accelerate that flow by opening more markets in the North for products from the South. But that step would do little if anything to reduce poverty: long-distance trade primarily benefits a small commercial elite, not poor primary producers in the South. A positive development in this regard is that within the Fair Trade movement there is a growing recognition that producers should not be entirely dependent on export, but should be helped to become more diversified and self-reliant.

A limited understanding of the global economy can tarnish other attempts to alleviate poverty. Take micro-credit, for instance. This scheme, which was first introduced into Bangladesh, is spreading around the world like wildfire, and recently won its creator the Nobel Peace Prize. But not everyone is happy about it. Some months ago, I met Ideh Fesharaki, an Iranian-Canadian researcher who has spent two years studying the effects of micro-credit. She found that it has not succeeded in changing the lives of the poorest of the poor, but it has helped people slightly higher up the socio-economic ladder to “make the leap from the village to the city.”

By fueling the rural-to-urban migration, micro-credit thus contributes to the growth of sprawling Third World cities, in which per capita resource consumption and pollution is vastly higher than in villages, towns or smaller cities. In these mega-cities, every pound of food and the raw materials for every article of clothing and every bit of construction material comes from elsewhere and must be transported long distances. There is no space in a modern concrete high-rise building to turn waste into fodder or fertilizer, nor can trees be used for shade or the sun for warmth. And since urbanized populations are exposed to far more advertising pressure, consumption of everything from electricity to soda pop and Barbie dolls increases exponentially. Meanwhile, the women and their families who have been encouraged to abandon the land and communities that provided for them in the past—however imperfectly—are left increasingly dependent on volatile market forces far beyond their control. The end result is that the pressure on the environment rises dramatically while the vast majority of newly arriving sees a declining quality of life. There are some micro-credit schemes that do not have such a destructive effect—that actually help to strengthen self-reliance—but I am afraid that at the moment these are the exceptions.

Should we ignore the power of the marketplace? Of course not. But market forces can have a far more positive impact in local economies, which are largely free of the distortions and manipulations of the global economy. At the same time, we also need to act *politically*—with a focus on the economy. Rather than allowing our governments to promote an ever more deregulated global marketplace dominated by giant monopolies, we need to collaborate with others to pressure for rules that promote instead the flourishing of multiple, truly free markets closer to home.



ISEC’s Impact: Broad and Deep

by Steven Gorelick, US Program Director

Past issues of this newsletter have described the global reach of our work by pointing to the many languages into which our materials have been translated. But ISEC’s impact has not only been amazingly broad—upward of 50 languages already—it has been deep as well.

Yet measuring that depth is not so easy. For example, *Ancient Futures* was screened in February this year at the University of Montana’s Peace and Justice Film Festival. A few months earlier, *Paradise With Side Effects*, the documentary about our “reality tours” and other Ladakh-based work, was shown in Bangalore, India, at an event for Gandhian-inspired educators. What these two events—and many more like them—have in common is that no one at ISEC was aware they were happening. In other words, aside from events organized by ISEC or in collaboration with others, we know only a small fraction of the ways in which our materials are being used.

For us, this is a sign of success. As a small organization with limited resources, we understand that our effectiveness can be multiplied many times over by creating tools others can use—and that has been our goal. Our materials can be found in scores of high school and

college level classrooms, and are referenced in hundreds of articles, books and papers. They are used as key resources in relocation efforts, in the food sovereignty movement, in campaigns against “free trade”, in the peace

“Your work is spilling over into the public schools in ways that are quite powerful.”

—Greg Smith, Professor Lewis & Clark College, Portland, Oregon.

movement, in cultural preservation movements, and in local campaigns centered on everything from opposition to Wal-Mart and highway-building to promotion of eco-literacy and urban gardening. At the

recommendation of local viewers and activists, our videos are shown again and again on small, public television stations across the globe. Film clips and interviews with Helena are increasingly found on the web, along with blogs that describe and recommend our work.

Almost impossible to track is the way that ISEC materials are passed around, from hand to hand, by individuals who are deeply moved by them and want to share that experience with friends and neighbors. A comment about *Ancient Futures* posted to an online bookseller’s website probably describes the experience of countless others: “After reading a used copy I picked up for free, I bought seven copies of this book for friends and family!” Another reviewer wrote, “Once in a while a book comes along that changes one’s perspective forever. *Ancient Futures* is such a book. I haven’t been the same since.”

It’s hard to measure, but—multiplied a thousand-fold—*that* is the kind of impact we’re having.



Korea and Japan

by Helena Norberg-Hodge

Earlier this year I made my third visit to Korea and Japan. In both countries I was amazed and touched by the impact of our work.

In Korea my first stop was at Seoul’s Hwagyesa Temple, where I gave a talk on “Buddhism in the Global Economy.” The Abbot of the monastery, Venerable Sookyung Munhwa Ilbo, wants to collaborate with ISEC in opposing consumerism and promoting more spiritual and ecological values.

The next day, a talk entitled “The Path to Happiness: A Journey to Ladakh” had been organized at the National Library of Korea. An enormous banner, three floors high, hung from the façade of the building announcing the lecture. A display inside included five of ISEC’s publications in Korean.



Helena and conference organizer at the National Library of Korea

I had a number of interesting and productive meetings—with, among others, Choi Yul of the Korea Green Foundation, the biggest environmental organization in the country, which is interested in showing *Ancient Futures* at their annual film festival, Jungbo Park of the Korea Educational Broadcasting System and Kuyng-Joo Suh of the Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation.

I had extensive discussions with Joong Ang Media Conglomerate, which will be publishing a new edition of *Ancient Futures* later this year. They also arranged for me to have a recorded conversation with Yu-In Chon, one of the country’s best-known actors, which they plan to release as a booklet.



Publicity for the Tokyo Peace Film Festival

The days in Japan were equally busy and exciting. The Tokyo Peace Film Festival featured *Ancient Futures* followed by a day-long workshop; the Japan Foundation organized a lunchtime talk for staff in which I laid out the arguments for economic localization; I gave several public lectures set up by The Ancient Futures Network, an alliance with a membership of 500 writers, scholars and activists; and I did interviews with Eiichi Kubota of the Japan Broadcasting Corporation and Keiichiro Masuda, Executive Director of the Jiyusha Publishing Corporation.

The Ladakh Project

by Nicolas and Ania Louchet, Ladakh Project Coordinators

Learning from Ladakh

As we looked down on the beautiful village of Hemis Shukpachan from a lofty mountain pass, we could see them below. They were harvesting grass, irrigating fields, picking apricots, repairing walls, painting the monastery,

“At a time when Ladakh is poised on the crossroads between cultural systems so dramatically at odds with one another, I think the project provides an invaluable means of communication and exchange, both for the Ladakhi people and the volunteers from all walks of life and areas of the world.”

—Lily Hall, England, LFL participant

change that emphasizes the broad insights gained from the experience. This year we decided to bring all the participants together in one remote village, with the aim of creating a stronger sense of community amongst them. By all accounts, the decision was a good one.



The farm stays were interspersed with ISEC-led workshops focusing on the impacts of conventional development and the global economy, both in Ladakh and in the West. Just as importantly, the workshops explored the multiple benefits of localizing our economies

bringing *dzo* and *balang* to pastures: thirty-six participants, young and old, from nine different countries took part in the Learning from Ladakh program this summer.

Learning from Ladakh (LFL) is the new name for our long-running “Farm Project” — a name

as a key solution to today’s crises. Some of the workshops were held outside in the pristine environment near Hemis Shukpachan, enabling us to combine intellectual discussions with a direct experience of our relationship with nature.

We also organized a meeting that brought together the *goba* (village head), the *ama-les* (village women) and the LFL participants. It was a wonderful opportunity to discuss the changes happening in Hemis Shukpachan



and all over Ladakh. It also gave LFL participants the opportunity to share their views about life in the West. One of the most discussed issues involved the difference between the role of elders in the “developed” countries and in Ladakh. In the industrialized world, where the economic system promotes ever faster technological change and where the extended family has all but disappeared, elderly people have been largely marginalized. Participants expressed their admiration for the close connection between the generations in Ladakh, as well as appreciation for being embraced so warmly — not only by their host families, but by the entire village community.

Among other benefits, the decision to house all the LFL participants in

“I’ve been passionate about agriculture reform and promoting small farms in the US for some time, but this experience makes me also want to get into activist work related to campaign finance reform, subsidy removal, monopoly laws, gene patenting, etc. ... so many inter-related issues!”

—Margaret Worthington, USA, LFL participant





the same village made it possible for work to be shared among them. One day, the whole group picked apricots in the village. They ended up spending the evening in the orchards, cooking together over a fire, making apricot jam for their families and enjoying the starlit sky above Hemis Shukpachan. The lively *ama-le* party at the end of the month was the best evidence of how the whole LFL group became a part of the village, and how language barriers and cultural differences can easily be overcome by cooking, singing, playing music and dancing together.



Tourism for Change

A core part of ISEC's Ladakh work is the Tourism for Change program. The daily showings of the *Ancient Futures* film and other relevant documentaries (*The Future of Food*, *The End of Suburbia*, *Affluenza*, *The Corporation* and *Paradise with Side Effects*) drew more than 2,400 tourists to the WAL Centre. This represents an increase of more than 10 percent over previous years, even though the number of foreign tourists in Ladakh did not significantly increase. All films are followed by

“Every tourist should see the *Ancient Futures* movie and visit the WAL Centre at their arrival in Ladakh!”
 — Visitor to Ladakh, 2007

broad-ranging and often very lively discussions.

Despite encountering ISEC's viewpoint for the first time, the majority of viewers responded positively to the messages of the films. Many of the visiting tourists raised important and challenging questions about development, globalization and our role as citizens in changing the current direction of our respective countries

“Thank you for the movie and the discussion afterwards. Even if we thought ourselves to be educated in environmental issues, the ISEC message opened our eyes to an empowering path toward social and environmental sustainability”.

— Visitor to Ladakh, 2007

Mindful Travel in Ladakh

Our brochure outlining key culturally and environmentally sensitive behavior for travelers in Ladakh has been updated and renamed “Mindful Travel in Ladakh”.

This brochure was also recently translated into French and German. Brochures in all three languages were available for tourists at the WAL Centre, in guest-houses, and in the arrival hall of Leh airport. More than 5,000 brochures were distributed.



Women's Alliance of Ladakh Festival of Traditional Culture

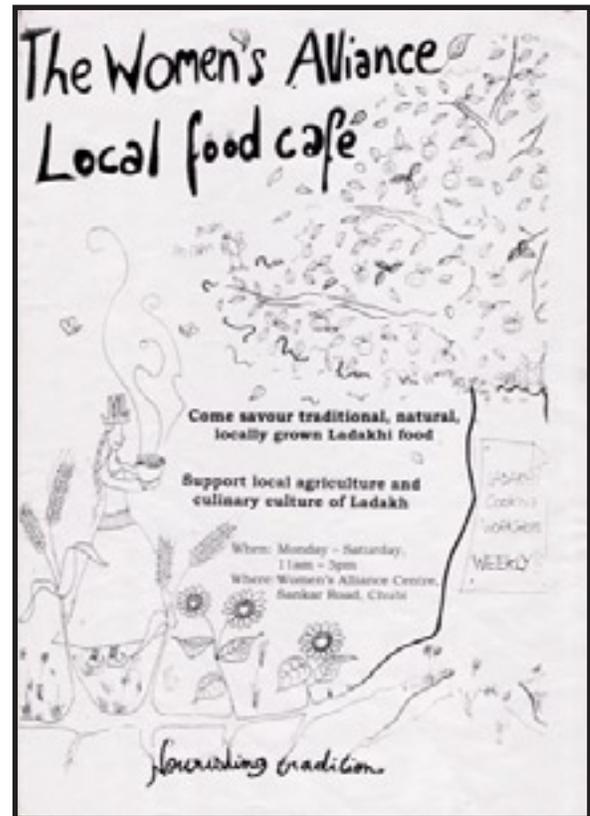
This annual festival, which brings together rural women to demonstrate and share their skills and knowledge, is another means of raising cultural self-respect and ensuring the survival of traditional crafts. This year's festival attracted nearly seven hundred visitors. Villagers from all over Ladakh exhibited various Ladakhi



handicrafts (including pottery, traditional clothes and accessories). Women also demonstrated the preparation of a variety of local dishes. Highlights throughout the two-day festival were traditional Ladakhi dances accompanied by live music.



In 1998, WAL convinced the local government to ban the use of plastic bags in Leh. However, some of the festival vendors—mostly from outside Ladakh—were found to be using plastic bags. The guilty businesses received warnings and all plastic bags were confiscated. WAL members continue to educate the public about the negative impacts of plastic on Ladakh's environment. They also celebrate an annual "Plastic Ban Day", during which members reinforce that message through street plays, posters, and seminars.



Local Food Café

The Local Food café was inaugurated in 2006 with the idea of promoting local agriculture and the culinary culture of Ladakh. Open again this summer, the café offered a wide range of traditional Ladakhi dishes, including *thukpa* (vegetable soup), *mok-mok* (steamed vegetable dumplings), *chutagi* (stew from vegetables and bow-tie shaped wheat dumplings), *khambir* (local bread) served with apricot jam, as well as some more Western fare. All meals are made from organic, locally-grown ingredients.





Traditional Ladakhi Skills Workshops

This summer we organized, for the first time, a Ladakhi skills workshop to encourage greater cultural exchange between Ladakhis and tourists. During the two-day workshop, tourists were able to watch craft demonstrations by *ama-les*, and also take part in the different activities: spinning, weaving, and dyeing wool, extracting oil from apricot and mustard seed, making *mok-mok* (dumplings), and binding grass. Children

especially appreciated getting involved with making mud bricks. The bricks made during the workshop were used to build a waste bin at the WAL Centre with separate compartments for plastic, paper and compost. The workshops gave visitors a unique opportunity to experience and appreciate the Ladakhi culture in a way not usually available to tourists. At the same time, the interest and admiration shown by foreigners for traditional Ladakhi skills helped to strengthen the *ama-les'* sense of pride in their own heritage.



We would like to thank this year's team of enthusiastic volunteers, in particular Clemens Mittermeier (Austria), Rosie Innes (Brazil), Samantha Comelli (Italy), Shir Teper (Israel) and Vika Pavlovska (Slovakia), who supported us

in running the WAL Centre and the Tourism for Change program. Together, they helped make our work in Ladakh both successful and enjoyable.



What We Learned from Ladakh

Since we began running Learning from Ladakh (formerly the Farm Project) ten years ago, nearly five hundred people from twenty-two different countries have come to Ladakh to take part. For one month or more during the summer they live with a Ladakhi family. Participants are given an opportunity to witness directly the tension between traditional and modern — between the local and the global economy — and to see how that tension affects the lives of Ladakhis, from the food they eat and the work they do, to their forms of entertainment and ways of interacting with each other and the natural world. At

“Having a completely self-sufficient healthy and happy life is available in our own hands, not from shopping malls and movies. I still remember what I saw and experienced, I remember the family’s smiles before I left and what they told me. It has opened a new path to me which I’m still uncovering at the moment.”
— Vern Liaw, Singapore, LFL participant.

the same time, participants are also able to experience life in a culture where there is still a strong sense of community, and where the connection to the land is still deep. This type of first-hand experience gives participants a better understanding of the global consumer culture’s impact on local cultures, while providing a rejuvenating and inspirational experience

that stays with them long after they leave Ladakh. Here, two of last year’s participants share their reflections on the experience and how it has influenced their lives.

Dan Frey (Australia)

I stayed in Lower Likir, a friendly village of some 20 to 30 families. The family I stayed with grew primarily barley, as well as mustard (to be refined into cooking oil), alfalfa (mostly used to nourish the livestock during the long winter), and an array of garden vegetables (e.g. potatoes, peas, carrots) and fruits (apples and apricots). The family had three cows (*balang*), one cow/yak hybrid (*dzomo*), one donkey (*bungbu*), and also a pet cat (*bila*). My daily activities included washing the dishes, helping with the cooking, churning butter, gathering water from the stream, milking the cows, taking the livestock to and from pasture, cutting crops in the field, carrying crops from the field to the house, picking fruits, etc.

At the four ISEC workshops I attended I had the chance to learn more about what to expect during the

program, to sound out some Ladakhi language, and to hear different viewpoints on development. Everyone involved at ISEC was passionate not only about resisting the destructive effects of globalisation, but also about making all newcomers feel welcome and doing as much as humanly possible to make the experience for project participants as beneficial and as stress-free as possible.

I was inspired by the kindness and unconditional love shown to me by the Ladakhi people, the mystical Himalayan landscape, the satisfaction of living in almost complete harmony with Mother Nature, the incredible stories, personalities, aspirations, and passion of the diverse range of other project participants.

When people ask me what’s the best thing I have ever done, I never think of academic achievement or sporting success or any of the other traveling I have done. Invariably I think of my time in Ladakh — because of the friends I made, the linguistic and cultural barriers I overcame, the things I learnt about myself and the world, and the new-found direction and purpose I ultimately gained in my life. To whatever cosmic force thrust me away from my unremarkable existence in a sleepy Australian city and drew me to this little known part of India, I am eternally grateful.

Michael Brophy (Canada)

I was with my friend Martine Emond. During our stay in Ladakh we learned much about what living locally means, as well as more about the cultural and economic issues we must consider in our work.

While we were weeding and harvesting, Martine and I started to imagine a local food store and restaurant that we would open once we came back home. Two weeks after we left Ladakh, we wrote a message to our *Aliments d’ici* [literally “food from here”] group email list asking who would like to build this project with us, and 15 people answered. We are now doing research and linking with local farms to bring the project forward.

Recently we organized a viewing of *Ancient Futures* and then a “Living on a Local Scale” event. Eighty people showed up, and our local localization movement was started! We have now rented a huge apartment where we organize activities and experiment with recipes for our future local food co-op. Our recent activities include a “How to Bake Bread” workshop, a collective kitchen using food from local organic farms, and several meetings

about the food co-op project. This apartment is big enough to hold meetings, and has a library, an office, and living space for three people. I live next door.

The food co-op is lots of work (research, networking with farms, etc.)! We have just obtained funding from a youth support government program, which will pay us, for a whole year, to work on the food co-op project and to organize a localization movement!

These actions are not so hard to put together: many people respond to simple invitations, such as "How would you like to know how to... make bread, or collect strawberries, etc."

Localization is a whole *projet de société* and a positive answer to globalization. It's why we organized the "Living on a Local Scale" event and will organize similar activities this fall – all of which will help to build a localization movement in Quebec.



Aliments d'ici workshop on biodynamics and organic farming

Roots of Change

The new curriculum for our Roots of Change study group program is in the final stages of revision. In addition to many new articles and a more cohesive format, it will contain an entirely new section on localization.

For those of you who wonder what it is like to participate in a Roots of Change, Richard Eddleston shares his experience with a group in Nottingham, England:

"We started in 2004 and met monthly for a couple of years, up until 2006. The people in the group were aged between early thirties and sixty, with a balance of male and female. Some were in jobs already related to environmental issues. There were three Quakers, the others of no particular faith. Two were active in politics for the Green Party. We arranged it that one person led

each time. We varied how we divided ourselves up to talk in smaller groups as well as all together. We continued meeting for some months after the end of the programme, using it to look at particular books and issues, such as *Small is Beautiful*, ecological footprints, health and the environment etc.

"It was great as a forum to share experiences, ideas and information with like-minded people. It raised awareness of the issues and opened eyes; this was especially so when looking at the positives. The articles were stimulating and led to reading things that we would not have read otherwise. It promoted much discussion about how to take these issues further.

"The learning has been used in the different things we are involved in, because we are all the type of people to be involved in local community groups of one sort or another. Thus members were already involved in the running of LETS Schemes, community cafes etc. We learnt from each other, and about each other. And it stimulated our thinking about what is possible as ways forward."

ISEC France

By Nicolas and Ania Louchet

In the beginning of 2007, we officially established ISEC France with the launch of a French version of the *Ancient Futures* film. Translated and subtitled, the movie is now available



on DVD to the French public. The packaging of the DVD has been made as environmentally-friendly as possible: recycled paper, organic ink, natural non-toxic glue and plastic-free.

ISEC France is also assisting in filming, researching and translating for ISEC's new film, *The Economics of Happiness*. Future plans for ISEC France include: making all ISEC publications available in French, producing leaflets for the French CSA network, publishing a localization brochure, setting up a French Ancient Futures Network to link up with other national networks, and creating an ISEC Localization Centre in France. ISEC France will soon be online at www.isec-france.org

New ISEC Film: “The Economics of Happiness”

by John Page, ISEC Programs Director

“I think Americans are very interesting. I admire them. They are so different from Chinese people in every way. They are tasteful and fashionable.”

“Money is the most important thing. With money you will be fulfilled.”

These are the words of two young men we interviewed on the streets of Beijing for the documentary film we are producing, provisionally entitled *The Economics of Happiness*. Harmless comments on the surface perhaps, but they are sadly representative of a global con-trick being played on literally billions of innocent people around the so-called Third World. The message is stark: Your culture, your way of life is inadequate. You need to modernize, globalize, join the club; only then will you be happy.

Globaliation is colonizing people’s minds—and not just in the least industrialized parts of the world, but much closer to home too. Giant, mobile and often largely unaccountable corporations are increasingly determining not only what we ‘consume’ but, through near monopolistic control of the print and broadcast media, what we think, what sort of citizens we are.

This film will be looking at the impact of the

global economy on individuals and cultures around the world. We’ve talked to farmers, economists, shopkeepers, writers and politicians in places as diverse as Australia and Peru. We hear about the *hikikomori*, disaffected youths in Japan who shut themselves in their rooms for years on end, unable to face the outside world; the continuing social divisions in post-apartheid South Africa; and the plight of small farmers in rural France.

But this is not a gloom-and-doom film. On the contrary, it points to a much healthier and, yes, happier future based on the relocalization of the economy.

Inspiring examples of grassroots initiatives, from a rural regeneration program in China to community-building projects in Detroit, show the enormous benefits—environmental, social, even spiritual—of bringing the economy closer to home.

As we will show, the seeds of change are already being sown. In those beautiful words of the Indian writer and activist, Arundhati Roy, “Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”

The Economics of Happiness will be featured at the Third International Conference on Gross National Happiness to be held in Bangkok from November 22 to 26, 2007.

“Thank you for your good work. It touches more people than you probably realize.”

—Gianetta Ellis, author of *Stewards of Spirit*

Photos: p1, 6-9 Ania Louchet; p2 Kristen Steele;

p9 Viktoria Pavlovska; p11 Michael Brophy



The International Society for Ecology and Culture
www.isec.org.uk

USA: PO Box 9475, Berkeley, CA 94709, USA (510) 548-4915 infoUSA@isec.org.uk
UK: Foxhole, Dartington, Devon TQ9 6EB, UK (01803) 868650 infoUK@isec.org.uk

Compiled and produced by Kristen Steele