The year 2020 was unlike any other. For those of us working in the environmental and social justice movements, it represented some of our worst fears coming true — environmental degradation and globalization coming together to create a threat to the wellbeing of every person in the world. As much as COVID and the racist killings have been tragic disasters, they are also wake-up calls.

In the five decades that Local Futures has been promoting equality, community, and biological and cultural diversity through localization, we have seen innumerable social, economic and ecological crises that should have been equally serious wake-up calls. However, COVID hit at our hearts in a unique way, which resulted in a widespread shift in thinking about the links between human and planetary health. Suddenly we had many more people following our work, accessing our resources and asking astute questions about how to change the world for the better.

We are pleased that we had so much to offer to help people understand the underlying forces that have brought about the economic and eco-social problems that keep arising, including COVID. However, COVID also meant dramatic changes in our planned programs, which included altering numerous Economics of Happiness conferences around the world. We were able to turn some of these into online events, but we knew we had more to offer. The time was right for us to launch the first ever World Localization Day (WLD), which you can read more about on page 3.

Although WLD was launched on a single day, its effects reverberated throughout the entire year and our other programs. Using multiple forms of media, we were able to get our message out to a wider audience than ever. We are one of very few organizations offering an analysis of the systemic roots of our crises in the current economic system. Behind globalization’s spread are centuries of slavery, genocide, and the transformation of diversity into monoculture. It is fundamentally racist, misogynist, anti-nature and, in its current form, driven by the deliberate promotion of corporate-controlled global trade and increasing GDP. Yet, somehow this system is still portrayed as “progress”.

I am hopeful that the last false beliefs about economic globalization are falling apart as the current crises reveal the truth. More than ever, I see people envisioning and sharing the kind of futures they want to create — where our economic and political systems treat every human being as equal, and respect all life, both human and non-human. This kind of transformation means forging life-affirming paths, and the most direct path of all is localization. From what we’ve learned over the years, and especially this past one, is that localization really can bring about a better future, where life is supported by a plurality of interdependent economic systems and where real cultural diversity and biodiversity can not only survive, but flourish. At Local Futures, we are honored and excited to be pioneers of this worldwide movement.
Because of pandemic-related travel restrictions and public gathering limits, we decided to hold a major online event – World Localization Day (WLD) – that would take the place of the conferences, workshops, and lectures that would not be possible. Planning for WLD began in April 2020 – giving us only 3 months before the scheduled June 21 launch.

We created a dedicated website that not only described the event and those participating in it, but also provided background information on the theory and practice of localization, and described actions people can take right now. We publicized the event through several professionally-designed adverts that played prominently on social media, and enlisted nearly three dozen other organizations as event partners. In addition to endorsing localization as a strategic goal, the groups also promoted WLD via their networks.

For the program, we interviewed key activists and thinkers from around the world, and asked others to submit short messages of support or descriptions of their own localization efforts. Among the high-profile participants were Noam Chomsky, Vandana Shiva, Russell Brand, Jane Goodall, Satish Kumar, Charles Eisenstein, George Monbiot, Johann Hari, Brian Eno, Iain McGilchrist and Joanna Macy. Many of these were captured in conversation with Helena Norberg-Hodge, who also provided the program’s opening and closing remarks.

We eventually had more than 100 interviews and video messages from people in dozens of countries.
to work with, as well as musical performances, comedy skits and clips from existing films. We found an experienced film editor who was able to condense our 16 hours of raw footage into a coherent 4-hour program (later reduced to 2 hours) that was both informative and inspiring, and that gave viewers a sense of the breadth and depth of the emerging localization movement. Importantly, many of the participants expressing support for localization were well-known visionary leaders in their own right – performers like Brian Eno, Mandy Nolan and V (Eve Ensler), academics like Noam Chomsky and Iain McGilchrist, climate activists like Extinction Rebellion’s Gail Bradbrook and Rupert Read, and spiritual leaders like Satish Kumar and the Dalai Lama, who endorsed the event in a written statement. (Please see below for an excerpt, and go to the website to read the full text of His Holiness’s endorsement.)

Following the pre-recorded program, we also held three live webinars, scheduled at staggered intervals so as to make it possible to join at least one webinar from anywhere in the world. Among the panelists on these live events were permaculture co-originator David Holmgren, alternative education pioneer Manish Jain, filmmaker Damon Gameau, local economy expert Michael Shuman, Brazilian environmental activist Camila Moreno, author Charles Eisenstein, health educator Zach Bush, Local Futures Associate Program Director Anja Lyngbaek, and Local Futures Director Helena Norberg-Hodge.

The huge amount of material we gathered for the event meant that almost everything needed to be edited significantly, but we have now made extended interview footage available on our Vimeo and YouTube channels.

I just listened to the whole 4 hour talk you shared for World Localization Day, I want to say thank you and it was fantastic...we need to hear voices from all around the world.
~David, WLD participant

“The lesson we can learn from the past is to act locally even while thinking globally... I therefore wish the World Localisation Day every success”

WORLD LOCALIZATION DAY
The Economics of Happiness program

The Economics of Happiness continues to be one of our most well-recognized programs, encompassing a multi-award winning film, a companion learning guide, a DIY workshop series, and international conferences throughout the year. Since 2012, we have held 25 Economics of Happiness conferences in eight countries. The program has grown to be very collaborative and the conferences we’ve held more recently have been co-organized with like-minded local groups who want to bring the Economics of Happiness into their communities.

We’ve seen that these conferences have a profound ability to inspire the launching of new localization projects. In South Korea, where the conferences have become annual events, the local and regional governments are deeply involved and the localization strategy is being integrated into local policies.

In 2020, due to the COVID pandemic, our conferences in Spain, Mexico and Brazil had to be postponed. Despite this, we were still able to run our South Korean conference as a web-based event with pre-recorded plenary talks and online workshops. In addition to several speakers from South Korea, international speakers included David Holmgren, co-originator of permaculture; Matthew Brown, senior Fellow at the Democracy Collaborative; Michael Shuman, author of Local Dollars, Local Sense, and Helena Norberg-Hodge. This was our 6th Economics of Happiness conference in Jeonju – an ongoing and fruitful collaboration with the Jeonju city government.

We also were able to work with many of our Economics of Happiness conference partners on the launch on the first ever World Localization Day (see page 3).

The economics of happiness has a lasting legacy [among our] engaged community leaders and business owners. It’s inspiring knowing there are so many community cells all over the world working towards a common goal. Thank you so much for leading, educating and connecting us with the knowledge and with each other.

~Australian rural small business collective
We continued to have a broad audience reach across all our social media platforms. In 2020 alone, we reached an average of 454,876 people per month on Facebook, with a monthly average of 18,250 engagements.

Twitter impressions have averaged nearly 50,000 per month in 2020, and in just four months we had another 50,000 impressions on Instagram. Moreover, we gained an average of 712 new social media followers monthly in the last four months of 2020 across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

**Mainstream media**

Damien Cave of the *New York Times* did a long profile of Helena Norberg-Hodge, entitled *“What if Local and Diverse Is Better Than Networked and Global?”* (October 2020). The article emphasized the importance of local supply chains, especially amidst a worldwide pandemic that saw global supply networks nearly grind to a halt. The article also appeared on The New York Times website – a site with 7.5 million subscribers – and was recommended on the paper’s Daily Briefing email sent to subscribers. All told, the article has had an impressive audience reach.
Over the last six years, interest in localization has increased rapidly in Ladakh. This is particularly clear among younger generations, many of whom have experienced life in corporate jobs and urban centers and have realized that the “modern” path does not lead to a fulfilling life. They have been returning to Ladakh with a strong desire to forge a more localized future – both within their own lives, and for the wider Ladakhi society. It is immensely gratifying to see our four decades’ worth of work in educating Ladakhis and visitors about alternative development paths taking root and blossoming among this generation of youth.

In the past year, taking into account the pandemic and the lack of visitors to Ladakh, we suspended our usual tourist education work and focused more on supporting the region’s emerging local food/young farmers movements. Our Ladakhi Project Associates – Chozin Palmo, Kunzang Deachen and Jigmet Singge – have brought together local farmers and craftspeople with Ladakhi youth to conduct numerous hands-on workshops on agricultural skills. In previous generations, those skills would have been learned by working alongside parents, older siblings, and neighbors, but almost all young Ladakhis were pulled at an early age into western-style schools, where they learned nothing about local food and farming. Workshops included mushroom cultivation, worm farming and composting, and traditional harvesting and processing of grains. The COVID pandemic has highlighted the vital importance of such skills, and these workshops help ensure their continuity.

The Ladakh team has also created and distributed a powerful short film to showcase young farmers’ initiatives and to encourage more young people to join them. You can find the “Young Farmers in Ladakh” film and an accompanying blog on our website.
### Financials

#### Revenue: $552,428

- Sale of publications and videos: $24,334
- Donations: $488,128
- Royalties and writing fees: $9,817
- Screening, streaming and broadcast fees: $9,963
- Lecture fees: $7,956
- Administrative support fees: $2,835
- Conference, workshop, study group and LFL fees: $9,074
- Interest and investment income: $321

#### Expenses: $469,892

- Management and administrative: $51,978
- Fundraising: $38,310
- Global to Local educational programs: $170,225
- WLD and Economics of Happiness programs: $109,199
- Ladakh & other counter-development programs: $72,137
- International Alliance for Localization (IAL): $28,043
- Global interest and investment income: $321
- Administrative support fees: $2,835
- Conference, workshop, study group and LFL fees: $9,074
- Donations: $488,128
- Screening, streaming and broadcast fees: $9,963
- Lecture fees: $7,956
- Royalties and writing fees: $9,817
- Sale of publications and videos: $24,334

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**Local Futures core team**

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