Introducing The Economics of Happiness

ISEC’s new film, The Economics of Happiness, looks at the root causes of our many crises—climate change, resource depletion, economic instability, conflict and violence, social breakdown—and shows how localization is a systemic solution multiplier that addresses all of these problems and more. The film features a chorus of voices from six continents, including (among others) Indian activist Vandana Shiva, UK Member of Parliament Zac Goldsmith, American authors Bill McKibben, David Korten, and Richard Heinberg, Bhutanese film director Khyentse Norbu, South African activist Mohau Pheko, Indian organic farmer Balaji Shankar, Australian economist Clive Hamilton, and the first Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, Samdhong Rinpoche.

The film also highlights local initiatives already underway, ranging from urban gardens in Detroit to hands-on education in Japan; from the Transition Town movement in England to community farming in India; from cultural preservation in Peru to farmers’ markets in
Australia. Producing the film took more than five years and a large share of our resources, but we hope you will agree it was well worth the effort.

The Economics of Happiness was launched earlier this year with an international tour of premieres: Seattle, Berkeley, Portland, New York, Toronto, Oslo, Dublin, London, Bangkok, Tokyo, Seoul and Hong Kong. Reaction to the film has been overwhelmingly positive. At most of the launch events the film played to standing-room-only audiences, and at many of the screenings hundreds of people had to be turned away. We believe that the insights and inspiration offered by the film are urgently needed in order to avoid a further polarization and fragmentation of society. Many people who see their jobs and economic security threatened blame government, the left, or the greens for their hardships, and see labor unions, environmental protection, and “soft treatment” of immigrants as threats to their livelihood. A lack of economic literacy prevents them from recognizing how the deregulated global marketplace promotes reckless speculation and jobless growth, and leaves almost everyone’s livelihood in jeopardy. The continuing process of globalization is scaling business upwards, into the lawless, deregulated global marketplace. In this arena, corporations become de facto monopolies that behave like authoritarian states.

But as people rebuild community and the local economy from the grassroots, they are discovering that localizing is a strategy that can heal the environment and the economy simultaneously, thereby helping bridge the divide between left and right. What’s wonderful about this emerging movement is that it enables people to start taking action right now, at the local level, while also providing a basic blueprint for fundamental policy change. Shifting subsidies, taxes and regulations to make business “place-based” or localized, means scaling business down, rather than increasing the scale of governance. With the impact of their activities more visible at the local and regional level, businesses would become more accountable, thereby reducing the need for government bureaucracy.

ISEC’s mission has always been to promote economic localization through “education for action”, and we are delighted that The Economics of Happiness has been so well-received: every day, we receive screening requests from local activists, food-and-farming organizations, churches, schools, libraries, and a wide range of localization groups. It has also been wonderful to see what a high proportion of people buy the DVD after seeing the film – often as many as one in three.

Over the coming year, we will continue with our global to local outreach, including organizing an “Economics of Happiness” conference in Berkeley on March 24th and 25th. Along with other inspiring advocates for a shift to the local, we’ll bring together many of the people featured in the film in order to encourage international collaboration for localization. To keep up-to-date with our activities and to get involved, please check out our film website: www.theeconomicsofhappiness.org

“My wife and I attended a screening of The Economics of Happiness at a friend’s house. It was attended by a dozen people, and everyone felt the impact of the video. After we watched it, we had a wonderful, engaging, open-hearted discussion. For a long time, I’ve been wrestling with this question: How can we address the colliding belief systems that seem to keep people from finding agreement, from working together for a healthy future? I believe The Economics of Happiness is one powerful answer to that question.”

Lance Bisaccia in Locals Guide, Ashland, Oregon

“We have just watched it and are so impressed. It is very strong on the solutions and gives a very clear picture of where we can head without delay. This film is much broader in audience scope than its predecessors I think which gives it such strength.”

Su Dennett, Australia

“I went to a film festival and watched The Economics of Happiness. I was so moved by the film’s message that I bought a copy of the DVD and the following week, I showed it to all of my students at the school. In the course of three days, I watched that film seven times from start to finish and engaged in discussions of it with students and adults. I had little idea of the damage that is wrought by the insidious effects of globalization. Moreover, I was overwhelmed by the effect it had on my students. There are now plans to start an organic garden on campus and develop a field-to-table program at the school.”

James Hart, Teacher in Ojai, California
Ripples Around the World

The film has now been shown in hundreds of public venues around the world. Hosts and sponsors have included food groups, universities, local governments, private companies, churches, cooperatives, Transition Towns, credit unions, libraries, business networks, radio stations and more. The diversity of these screenings demonstrates the creativity that is at the very heart of localization. Here are a few examples:

In Japan, Kenji Sekine, who is helping us spread the word about The Economics of Happiness, organized 113 screenings of the film on a single day, May 22 - International Biodiversity Day. In all, more than 5,500 people turned out to see the film. To view a map of the screening locations, go to http://shiwaseno.net/100-2

The Tidewater Peace Alliance, a network of groups in Virginia working on peace, justice and environmental issues, organized a screening at a local cinema on May 18th. The alliance is part of the Peace, Justice and Environment Project, which connects over 1600 organizations, covering all 50 states. The film was followed by a discussion with four panelists representing Gaian, Capitalist, Marxist and Libertarian viewpoints. When we asked who "won" the debate, the organizer had this to report: "The Marxist had the most informed criticism of globalization; the Libertarian was useful in showing his faulty and contradictory belief system; the Capitalist said that changes must be made in the system but offered no solution; the Gaian said that this was a true Gaian film."

In Australia, the film was shown in Parliament House in Sydney and more than a dozen local councils have hosted screenings and purchased DVDs. Most recently in Starcourt Cinema in Lismore, the film was the launch of a Community Planning Forum, to be held in City Hall two weeks later. This forum was sponsored by Lismore City Council and the goal is to "identify local solutions to the challenges we face, economically, environmentally, socially". See here for more details: http://www.futurelismore.rainbowregion.com/

Wanstead Transition Initiative, in the UK, hosted a screening on May 31st. Here's how the organizers described the event: "Our public meeting was lively, well attended, and was a highly enjoyable and productive occasion. It felt as if WTI has had a slow gestation process and it finally came into birth... The room was buzzing. Groups were encouraged to decide on practical steps to put some of this into practice. We all want this enthusiasm and creativity to burgeon into action." Here are some of the action points that came out of the evening:

- Develop a community garden
- Make connections with local producers and encouraging veg boxes
- Set up a LETS scheme for exchanging services
- Create fun events to draw people in: barn dance, poetry and music, theatre, space for local artists, sewing groups, carnival.
- Create a local skills register
- Offer films and talks to local groups

Several Christian colleges and churches hosted screenings during the film's tour of Michigan in February. Events were also held at community and permaculture centers and the stop at Wagbo Peace Center was a particular highlight. The organizer reported: "All in attendance were impressed with the film. One local, a non-profit and small business consultant who is already somewhat familiar with the issues, said, "I came tonight not expecting to be blown away by the film. But I was blown away!"

"A powerful film that cuts deeply to the heart of the global crisis. Magnificent!"  
David Suzuki,  
Environmentalist and broadcaster, Canada

"It is good news indeed to find so persuasive an explanation of our ailing world as The Economics of Happiness."  
Joanna Macy,  
Eco-philosopher, United States

"It is a great honor for me to endorse such an historic work."  
Samdhong Rinpoche,  
Prime Minister, Tibetan government in exile

ISEC p.3
Transition Network, City of Darebin • Moreland City Council • Mixed Up Reels Film Club, Southern Cross University, Lismore • Permaculture, Melbourne • Yes! Magazine • Living Economies Forum • Permablitz, Melbourne • Bay Area Community Exchange • Food First • Shareable • Other Worlds • New Economy Network • New Rules Project of The Institute for Local Self-Reliance • Transition Banyule • Permaculture Inner North • Transition Brunswick • The ISIS Foundation, Rozelle • Boonah Organisation for a Sustainable Shire • Harvard Student Labor Action Movement • Go Local Melbourne • Sunshine Coast Council • Nambour Transition Town • Adelaide Hills Climate Action Group • Monash IPHU • Alfalfa House Community Food Cooperative, Sydney • Manly Council • Byford Healing Arts • Serpentine Jarrahdale Shire • Surf Coast Energy Group • Wake Up Sydney • Maroondah City Council • Sustainable Tompkins • Green Resource Hub • Sustainable Enterprise & Entrepreneur Network (SEEN) • Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) • Sustainable Fawkner, Seattle • Good Business Network • Community Alliance for Global Justice • Sunrise Festival and Green Innovations • Wanstead Transition Initiative • Redbridge Strategic Partnership • Change4Chalfont • Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB) • 350 Washington State • Cross National Happiness World Project • Compassionate Action Network • Ideal Network • Sustainable Seattle/Seattle Area Happiness Initiative • Nambour DE Flicks • Elliott Bay Book Company • 88.5 KPLU Radio •

On these pages are listed some of the many groups that have hosted a screening of The Economics of Happiness. For our international premieres, we worked closely with several of these organizational partners. Their involvement enabled audiences to make a direct link between the message of the film and the issues facing their own communities. Many more screenings have been organized independently by local groups, helping them raise awareness of their own activities while putting their work into a more global context. It has been a pleasure to collaborate with these organizations, and to connect with so many inspiring local initiatives. The movement for economic localization is broad and inclusive, transcending

Post Carbon Institute • Bay Localize • Sustainable Economies Law Center • Berkeley Student Food Collective • Buddhist Peace Fellowship • KPFA Radio • The Center for Earth Leadership • Social Justice Council • First Unitarian Church • New College (University of Toronto) • KBOO Community Radio • Sustain Ontario • Hart House Social Justice Committee • FoodShare Toronto • Local Food Plus • Toronto Food Policy Council • The Stop Community Food Centre • Meal Exchange • Sheridan College • The Garrison Institute • The Cooper Union Institute for Sustainable Design • Grace Communications Foundation / Sustainable Table • Slow Food NYC • Brooklyn Food Coalition • New Economics Institute • Awakening the Dreamer • FEASTA • Grow It Yourself • Transition Towns Ireland and Northern Ireland • Slow Food Ireland • Happenings • Green Works • Future in Our Hands • Navdanya • Suan Nguen Mee Ma Social Enterprise • The Australian Conservation Foundation • Victorian Eco Innovation Lab (VEIL) • Right Livelihood Foundation • Green Market Network • BioThai Foundation • Institute for International Studies, Meiji Gakuin University • Korean Green Foundation • Green Film Festival in Seoul • Wallingford Neighbors for Peace and Justice • Little Artshram & The Permaculture Presenter Series • Green Spaces • Plumas Arts • Transition Colorado • Transition Van Buren • Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit • Simon Fraser University Certificate Program for Community Economic Development • Transition Albany • Sonoma Ecology Center • Sierra Club • Sustainable OKC • Transition Perth • Transition Santa Cruz • Lawrence Films for Action
political, cultural and ideological boundaries. Since we began highlighting the problems of globalization more than thirty years ago, we have seen a steady increase in the number of groups addressing these issues. There are now thousands of organizations, in every country on every continent, collectively embodying the diversity of the localization movement. Most focus on particular parts of the problem, effecting positive change from the grassroots in food, energy, law, the environment, media, small business, banking, education, climate change, transport, currency, governance... *The Economics of Happiness* encompasses all of these perspectives. Find out how to get involved on our website: www.theeconomicsofhappiness.org
Translations

Since being released in English, The Economics of Happiness has already been translated into ten languages: Chinese, Croatian, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Romanian. The translations have been undertaken by groups and individuals on a volunteer basis. The film is also available with subtitles in English.

“In the beginning I thought that it is only going to re-tell the same depressing story, but soon it captured me and held me to the end, which surprisingly opens the possibility of some hope. Although today we all are more or less aware of bits and pieces of those truths, to see and hear them in the way you put them in the film is really eye-opening.”

Davor Vukovic, Filmmaker and Croatian translator

During the first three weeks of August, ISEC staff members Becky White and James Miller took The Economics of Happiness on the road.

Setting off from the San Francisco Bay Area, they travelled by sustainable transportation – primarily bicycle – through Northern California. Along the way they visited communities for collaborative events including screenings of the film.

Many of these communities are already creating local food systems, strengthening their local economies, and implementing sustainable alternatives.

During the tour, Becky and James shot footage of these emerging localization initiatives to be used in video blogs. Read more about the Localize! Bike Tour on their blog: http://theeconomicsofhappiness.wordpress.com/
The Economics of Happiness in the Media

Even before the first premiere, The Economics of Happiness was a hot topic and has received attention from alternative and mainstream media alike. Check out the websites below for articles about the film and interviews with ISEC staff:

Interviews with Helena Norberg-Hodge, Producer of The Economics of Happiness and Director of ISEC, include:

~ “Your Call”, KALW Public Radio, San Francisco, California  www.yourcallradio.org


~ “Dylan Ratigan Show”, MSNBC, USA
Available to view on our website:  www.theeconomicsofhappiness.org


~ “GritTV, USA with Laura Flanders”, USA
Available to view on our website:  www.theeconomicsofhappiness.org

~ Yes! Magazine, USA. Interviewed by Brooke Jarvis
www.yesmagazine.org/happiness/localization-is-the-economics-of-happiness

~ Cindy Sheehan soapbox” radio program, posted on the Dandelion Salad blog.
http://dandelionsalad.wordpress.com

~ The Ecologist magazine, UK. Q and A with Jemima Roberts
www.theecologist.org/green_green_living/Q_and_A/794238/qa_helena_norberghodge.html

“What An Inconvenient Truth did for understanding climate change, a new film, The Economics of Happiness, is sure to do for understanding localization versus globalization. I know of no other film that so clearly explains both of these divergent paths into the future.”

Catherine Ingram in The Huffington Post

~ The Mainichi Daily News, Japan
http://mdn.mainichi.jp/

~ “Life Matters”, ABC National Radio, Australia

~ New Matilda, Australia
http://newmatilda.com

Interview with Steven Gorelick, US Programs Director:

“Equal Time”, WDEV radio, Vermont.
http://equaltimeradio.com/?q=node/330

Film Reviews:

Rob Hopkins in Transition Culture Blog.
http://transitionculture.org


Catherine Ingram in The Huffington Post www.huffingtonpost.com/catherine-ingram/localization-the-film_b_810155.html

Shirley Mak in Sierra Club’s The Green Life

“It’s a superb movie. I think it ought to win an Academy Award for documentary.”

Rob Kall, exec. direc. of OpEdNews.com

“It has enough moments when the hairs stood up on the back of my neck for me to know that this is a powerful film...This passionate and articulate film presents a clear vision of what a shift in the scale at which we do things would look like, and of the many other benefits it would bring.”

Rob Hopkins in Transition Culture

ISEC p.7
The Economics of Happiness Conference

As our economic, environmental and social crises converge, it is becoming ever clearer that lasting solutions will require more than band-aids: we need fundamental change. The Economics of Happiness conference will explore the potential for economic localization to provide systemic solutions to our many global crises.

The conference will cover many of the themes explored in ISEC’s new documentary film, The Economics of Happiness, which has inspired audiences from the US, UK and Australia to Peru, Thailand and Japan. We intend to bring together a wide range of insightful and impassioned speakers for the conference, including many of the voices from the film. Invited participants include Vandana Shiva (India), Annie Leonard (US), Andrew Simms (UK), Keiko Oiwa (Japan), Joanna Macy (US), Manish Jain (India), Judy Wicks (US), Michael Shuman (US), and many others.

Date, location and other details will be posted on our website soon. Come share, learn, connect and help build the movement for positive economic change!

www.theeconomicsofhappiness.org

Help us spread the The Economics of Happiness message!
Please consider making a donation by check or online at: http://www.theeconomicsofhappiness.org/donate-now

ISEC
The International Society for Ecology and Culture
www.isec.org.uk
USA: PO Box 9475, Berkeley, CA 94709 (510) 548-4915 infoUSA@isec.org.uk
UK: PO Box 239, Devon TQ9 9DP (01803) 868650 infoUK@isec.org.uk