



## Ecovillages Go Mainstream in Brazil

The ecovillage movement in Brazil has developed strong connections with both national and state-level government.

First, La Caravana, GEN's 'mobile ecovillage', was described by Brazil's Minister of Culture, the internationally celebrated singer Gilberto Gill, as "the most original sociocultural project in Latin America".

La Caravana was commissioned by the Ministry to travel nationwide, helping to mobilise and empower the more than 500 community-based 'Living Culture' projects created by the government in 2003. This four-year project is now entering its second year.

More recently, the regional Secretariat of the Environment in Sao Paulo has created a new University for the Environment and the Culture of Peace (UMAPAZ). This is working with the GEN project, Gaia Education, to host a four-week Ecovillage Design Education course.

One hundred participants have been chosen who have the Secretariat of the Environment's financial and intellectual endorsement. It is another example of the doors of government being wide open to the ecovillage impulse in Brazil.

For further information, please contact Gaia Education: [info@gaiaeducation.org](mailto:info@gaiaeducation.org)

## Colombian Peace Village Wins Prize

The Colombian village, San Jose de Apartadó, has won the Aachener Peace Prize in Germany for its work promoting peace in the war-torn country.

The San Jose community, which was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, has made a remarkable stand in refusing to side with either the government or the rebel forces involved in Colombia's civil war and has pioneered a path of non-violent resistance towards the pressures put upon them by both sides.

San Jose has developed a

close relationship in recent years with the European ecovillage, Tamera, whose aim is to help San Jose become a node in an international network of peace education centres as part of its Global Campus Initiative.

Next steps in this initiative include a meeting of international partners in Tamera this summer, a peace pilgrimage in Israel/Palestine in autumn 2007 and a training programme in San Jose in 2008 on issues relating to the survival of autonomous communities in threatened areas.



Members of the San Jose de Apartado village fit solar panels.

## 100% 'Energy Independence' in Israel



Construction of a strawbale building at Arava Valley, Israel.

Israel recently held the First International Conference on Sustainable Energy as a Catalyst for Regional Development and it turned out to be ground-breaking.

The regional government announced a plan to direct Israel's southern Arava Valley and the neighbouring Eilat region towards 'energy independence', defined as the 100% local production of energy through clean, renewable sources.

This is being facilitated by the pioneering work of a number of research and development centres in the region, including Kibbutz Lotan.

The mayor of Eilat announced his desire to turn Eilat into the first solar city in Israel, while the head of the Arava regional council spoke of the natural advantages of the region for solar and wind power along with other innovations already being developed.

The conference attracted around 200 participants, including scientists, industry, NGOs, community groups together with government and municipal officials from Israel and around the world.

Participants heard about the latest developments in alternative energy technology, focused on projects utilising and develop-

ing these technologies and discussed their potential for promoting regional development.

On the last day of the conference, the participants were taken on a tour of sustainable development projects in the region, that included a visit to the new eco-neighbourhood/campus currently being built on Lotan.

The neighbourhood integrates a wide variety of low-tech, hand-made structures and systems with modern engineering to create a sustainable, carbon neutral and healthy environment for education and student life that will become an integral part of the ecovillage's Green Apprenticeship Ecovillage and Permaculture Design Course.

For more details, contact Mark Naveh at: [lotan-ecocenter@ardom.ardom.co.il](mailto:lotan-ecocenter@ardom.ardom.co.il) or visit: [www.kibbutzlotan.com](http://www.kibbutzlotan.com)



A completed building with solar panels.



## ZEGG Ecovillage At G8 Gathering



Members of ZEGG ecovillage take to the streets at the G8 in Germany.

More than twenty people from the ZEGG community and the neighbouring Flämings-network participated in the events running parallel to the recent G8 summit in Germany.

The group stayed at the Rostock camp near the ATTAC barrio where (as happened with the Findhorn contingent at the Gleneagles G8 gathering two years ago) a good number of the ecovillagers cooked for many thousands of activists. What is it with ecovillagers and good food?!

The group also participated in the large demonstration, the alternative summit, the blockades and the various gatherings on 'G8 and War', 'G8 and World Trade', 'G8 and Migration Policy' and others.

The ecovillagers report an overwhelming experience of self-empowerment and solidarity through the blockades: "Massive and determined non-violent civil disobedience is more powerful than water cannons or the attempt to criminalise the social movements," said Sharan Gärtner, one of the ZEGG group.

An important element of the gathering was the live broadcasts of G8-TV that transmitted films made by many video activists live on the Internet. The programme finished every night with the message: "Don't forget: there was a life before capitalism – and there will be a life after capitalism!"

For further information, contact: [g.sharan@t-online.de](mailto:g.sharan@t-online.de)

## Gaia Education Goes Virtual

A new partnership has been forged between Gaia Education and the Open University of Catalonia (UOC), Spain.

UOC is an online university, funded by the Catalan Government, with 45,000 students, 1,000 professors and 600 employees. The main classes are in Spanish, Catalan and English. In the near future, all courses will also be offered in Arabic and Portuguese.

UOC's core vision is to increase the training capacity of NGOs working on the ground with humanitarian and sustainability programmes.

NGOs already using the UOC's e-framework include the Red Cross, Amnesty International and Engineers Without Borders.

Currently UOC runs 30 courses.

The Gaia Education e-learning programme, 'Creating Sustainable Communities', being offered by UOC will adopt the same structure as Gaia Education's EDE programme to include: Social, Ecological, Economic and World View dimensions. Gaia Education's international team of educators are soon to start translating the curriculum into virtual format, aiming to have it online by autumn 2008.

Special credit for facilitating the link between UOC and Gaia Education goes to Spanish activist, Ulises Escorihuela, from the Ecovillage Artosilla in Catalonia.

For information, contact: [info@gaiaeducation.org](mailto:info@gaiaeducation.org)

## Peruvian Loan

Living Routes, the US NGO that partners with UMass-Amherst to run ecovillage-based study programmes around the world, has offered a US\$20,000 construction loan to Oro Verde, a coffee co-operative in Peru.

The loan will support the construction of an ecological training centre that, in addition to housing their students (hopefully by January 2008), will offer tours and workshops for co-op members, and visitors and organisations associated with the Fair Trade market.

The center will also be an ecological demonstration site with features such as rainwater harvesting, grey water irrigation, biogas cooking stoves, a cob oven, composting toilets and photovoltaic panels.

For more information, contact Daniel Greenberg at: [daniel@livingroutes.org](mailto:daniel@livingroutes.org)

## UK Ecovillage Vacancies

The English community, Braziers Park, is looking for new members to fill two posts within the community: a full-time Warden to play a key leadership role within the community and a part-time Director of Studies to take responsibility for educational activities. Modest salaries are available. The community operates as a small independent adult college in idyllic rural setting close to Oxford.

For further details view: [www.braziers.org.uk](http://www.braziers.org.uk) or contact: [admin@braziers.org.uk](mailto:admin@braziers.org.uk)

## Bikes For Life Tour

Mad keen sustainable cyclist, Trish Fenton (*below*), left Findhorn in July on a global tour, equipped with a mobile smoothie-maker and the intention of sharing information and inspiration on sustainable lifestyles.



Trish will be visiting ecovillages, organic farms and low-carbon projects along the way, bringing joy in the shape of freshly cycled smoothies! ([www.smoothiebike.com](http://www.smoothiebike.com)). The route she will follow will be dependent on who and what she encounters en route (follow her progress on [www.bike-for-life.co.uk](http://www.bike-for-life.co.uk)), starting with a tour of Scotland, France and Spain.

Trish is hoping that people will join her for legs of the journey through their countries. During the tour she will be raising money for the Findhorn-based charity, Trees for Life ([www.treesforlife.com](http://www.treesforlife.com)).

Contact Trish on: [trishfenton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:trishfenton@hotmail.co.uk)

## New Ecovillage Book

A new book by the editor of *Communities* magazine, Diana Christian, has been published. *Finding Community: How to Join an Ecovillage or Intentional Community* (New Society Publishers, 2007) covers all the issues relating to how to research, visit, evaluate, and join ecovillages and other intentional communities. Jonathan Dawson, President of Global Ecovillage Network describes the book as "open-hearted and hard-headed in equal measure – and with a delicious sense of humour ..."

To order a copy, see: [www.green-shopping.co.uk](http://www.green-shopping.co.uk)

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To contribute to the Global  
Ecovillage Network pages  
contact:

Jonathan Dawson  
01309 692 448

[jonathan@gen-europe.org](mailto:jonathan@gen-europe.org)

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