



## Ecovillages In Mainstream Media!



GEN-Europe's Jonathan Dawson.

It has been a powerful few months in terms of ecovillage exposure in the mainstream media, writes GEN-Europe's Executive Secretary Jonathan Dawson.

First, the prestigious Washington DC-based Worldwatch Institute's *State of the World 2008* report, featured the theme 'Innovations for a Sustainable Economy'. It has an entire chapter on 'Engaging Communities for a Sustainable World' and includes many references to ecovillage initiatives worldwide.

In addition, the spring 2008 issue of *The Ecologist* magazine carried a 6-page feature on ecovillages. Both of these, along with many other ecovillage-related articles published in *PM* and other publications, can be downloaded from GEN at <http://gen.ecovillage.org/>

Another important recent development within the ecovillage family is the GEN Manifesto that emerged from GEN's Board meeting at the Los Angeles Ecovillage in February 2008. This proposes that 'it may be of value for us to see

today's ecovillages less as ends in themselves and more as research, demonstration and training centres for sustainable community initiatives in conventional towns and villages worldwide'.

This is an important breakthrough in our thinking, aligning ecovillages strongly with other sustainability initiatives, such as the Transition Towns movement ([www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org)), and seeking to be of service to them.

Now, once again, we are at the threshold of summer and the season of gatherings, festivals and conferences. This year's annual GEN-Europe gathering – which generally attracts in the region of 70-80 people from around 20 countries across Europe – will be held in the German ecovillage of Sieben Linden between 7 - 12 July 2008. Contact Elke Maier-Wiegand at [maier-wiegand@web.de](mailto:maier-wiegand@web.de)

This gathering is preceded by an exciting Communities conference in Berlin that is strongly recommended. We hope to see some of you there. For further details on this view: [www.community-conference.org/resources.phtml](http://www.community-conference.org/resources.phtml)

Finally, the German ecovillage, Sieben Linden, has received a grant from the EU programme, Local Capital For Social Purposes. You can view a list of EU Grant funds and details of how to apply for them at [www.welcomeurope.com](http://www.welcomeurope.com)

Half of the £20,000 grant is to enable expansion of the community's recently founded gardening company. The other half of the grant goes to the young people's group and will pay for the time of the facilitators who work with the region's youth.

## Inspirational Danish Community's 30th Birthday

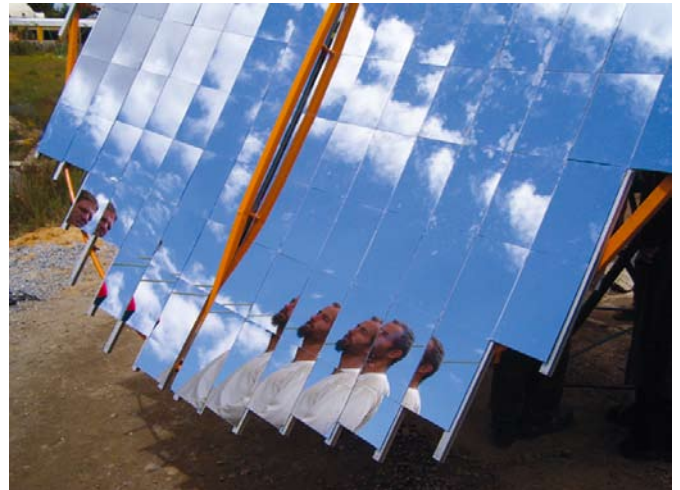
In May 2008, the pioneering, Danish community, Svanholm, celebrated 30 years of community life.

The community, which bought out a manor house and its estate, pioneered the growing of organic vegetables for sale to cooperative outlets in Denmark. It has long been a source of inspiration for groups throughout northern Europe as a model of egalitarian, land-based community living.

Svanholm continues to expand and recently renovated a stable block into living quarters. There are also plans for a new Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plant using a Stirling engine fuelled by woodchips from their own forest and for a new fleet of electric cars that will be charged by their own windmills and/or CHP.

For information, contact Eberhard Bechtle [eberhard@svanholm.dk](mailto:eberhard@svanholm.dk)

## Solar Firsts At European Ecovillages



Tamera's groundbreaking Scheffler solar reflector which follows the sun.

The proud ecovillage tradition of pioneering new technologies and models is being maintained by the Portuguese and Italian ecovillages, Tamera and Damanhur.

From now on, cooking in Tamera will be powered by the sun. The community has just built its first Scheffler reflector, a 10 square meter solar reflector that is easy and comfortable to cook on indoors. The reflector follows the sun automatically during the day, harvesting light that generates heat up to 700°C.

Tamera member, Alec Gagneux, has built many Scheffler reflectors in villages and ashrams in India. His latest one was for a crematorium as Indians are finding it increasingly difficult to afford wood for the burning of bodies.

Meanwhile, the Damanhurian community, Magila, has installed the first solar collector in the Piedmonte region. The collector uses mirrors to direct the rays towards a single point for warming water to a very high temperature. This can then be used for heating homes and domestic use. The water is stored in huge 4,000 litre containers.

This pilot project is a collaboration between Magila and Solera, Damanhur's renewable energy company, to determine the suitability of this technology to the Piedmonte region.

For further information contact Leila Dregger [leila.dregger@snafu.de](mailto:leila.dregger@snafu.de) (Tamera) and Macaco Tamerice [macaco@damanhur.it](mailto:macaco@damanhur.it) (Damanhur).

## Safeguarding Ancient Plant Species

The Damanhurian community, Casa del Lago, Italy, has recently established a new initiative to safeguard and grow ancient species of local edible plants.

The Naiadi Greenhouse project will see the cultivation of many rare and ancient species, with the members of the Casa del Lago community preparing the soil, constructing the greenhouse, researching seeds and writing papers describing each plant's characteristics.

This initiative was formally launched at one of Italy's most important gardening fairs at



Damanhur's edible plant display.

Masino, where it displayed 34 varieties of edible plants to visitors.

For details, contact Macaco Tamerice [macaco@damanhur.it](mailto:macaco@damanhur.it)



## Tori Superiore Aims For Transition



*Benjamin the Donkey will ease the transition of the Torri Superiore community to a less oil dependent future.*

The Italian community, Torri Superiore, aims to launch its own Transition initiative in 2008.

This will begin with a series of awareness raising activities – including talks, film viewings and sharing of literature on peak oil and the urgency of required action. By the end of 2008, they aim for this awareness to be translated into a concrete programme for transition.

The guest house, the community's principal economic activity, will be equipped with a public space for peak oil and climate change information for their guests. It will have educational books, periodicals and a notice board of upcoming

events (talks, film viewings etc).

Initial transition projects will include a demonstration compost toilet, along with a small-scale reed bed to process grey water from the kitchen. Also, a solar oven will be built to bake a portion of the community's bread.

This year, the community is placing a higher priority on food. They aim to increase the production of vegetables, eggs, milk, honey and meat. Efforts will also be made to create links with local farmers for the provision of wine and fruit.

For further information and details please contact Simon Clissold, [sil@jinsearchofslow.com](mailto:sil@jinsearchofslow.com)

## Finally, US Urban Ecovillage Activists Gather

Frankly, I (Diana Leafe Christian) am jealous. GEN-Europe holds an Annual General Assembly in Europe every year, where representatives from many European ecovillages celebrate a schmoozing, feasting, dancing, networking extravaganza. Germany and Italy each have their own ecovillage gatherings. Wunderbar, and Quanto Bello! So do Argentina and Brazil. Bravo!

In fact, ENA (Ecovillage Network of the Americas), is thriving in South America and Mexico, where ENA meetings are characterised by more drumming and dancing than proposals and agendas. And in 2006-2007 Japan has hosted two ecovillage conferences! But when do North American ecovillagers ever get together to drum, dance, feast, celebrate and network?

So it was with great pleasure that urban ecovillage activists, green-leaning housing developers and visionary city officials got together last November to network and explore synergies and strategies. The event, Developing Urban Ecovillages: Towards Ecocities, took place 9-11 November, 2007, at DePaul University in Chicago.

Urban ecovillages are indeed a reality in the US, from Cleveland EcoVillage, Detroit Ecovillage, and Culver Way Cohousing in St. Louis, to organised neighbourhood-style ecovillages: Enright Ridge Urban Ecovillage in Cincinnati, Phinney Ecovillage in Seattle (described in Cecile Andrews' book, *Slow is*



*Diana Leafe Christian.*

*Beautiful*), and of course the grandmama of them all, Los Angeles Eco-Village.

Ecovillages are needed now, said Thomas J Murphy, Professor Emeritus at DePaul and former director of the University's environmental science programme, not only because we need accessible and replicable models of sustainability, but to meet the triple threat of Peak Oil, Climate Change and global economic collapse.

The Chicago event was sponsored by Chicagoland Urban Permaculture, with co-sponsors Urban Ecovillage Network, Beyond Today, Ecovillage Network of the Americas, Global Ecovillage Network, Environmental Research Foundation, Cohousing Association of the United States, DePaul University Institute for Nature & Culture, and 8th Day Center for Justice.

Excerpt from Diana's online newsletter, [www.EcovillageNews.org](http://www.EcovillageNews.org)

## Canada's Network

After a period of less frequent activity, the Ecovillage Network of Canada's (ENC) website has re-emerged as a focal point for ecovillages and sustainable communities across the vastness of the Canadian landscape.

For the latest news view [www.ecovillagenetworkcanada.ning.com](http://www.ecovillagenetworkcanada.ning.com)

## Findhorn On YouTube

Much inspiration, transformation and, well... positive energy was on display at Findhorn's Easter 2008 conference, Positive Energy: Creative Community Responses to Peak Oil and Climate Change.

Pulling together a wide and diverse array of presenters, including Joanna Macy, Richard Heinberg, Richard Olivier, Rob Hopkins, Dorothy Maclean and many others, the event provided a holistic path of exploration and discovery, engaging heads, hearts, hands and spirit.

Several of the presentations have now been uploaded to YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)), the popular free video sharing website which lets users upload, view and share video clips. Search for 'Findhorn' and the name of the presenter whose presentation you wish to view.

Meanwhile, A Positive Energy II conference is being planned for October 2009. This will have the theme of bioregionalism. For more information, email Jonathan Dawson: [jonathan@gen-europe.org](mailto:jonathan@gen-europe.org)

## Zambia Gets Its First Ecovillage

Zambia's Community Development and Social Services Minister, Catherine Namugala, recently launched the country's first ever ecovillage model project – Madimba – an initiative of the Network for Environmental Concerns and Solutions (NECOS).

The initiative is aimed at transforming Madimba's informal peri-urban settlement into an ecological settlement.

Speaking at the launch, Ms Namugala said that Zambians should

strive to pursue developmental activities that will have minimum negative impact on the environment. She further said sustainable development can only be guaranteed when community involvement is encouraged and supported by all.

The launch was also attended by Finnish Ambassador to Zambia Sinikka Antila, who is one of the financial supporters of the initiative.

For information, contact NECOS Executive Director Obed Kawanga at [okawanga2001@yahoo.com](mailto:okawanga2001@yahoo.com)

**SUBMISSIONS**

**DEADLINE**  
for submissions to  
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We would like GEN members to recommend a community/project who you think we should support. Just send us their name, email contact, country and a sentence on the project. We will contact them and do the rest (on a first come, first serve basis). We will prioritise those without access to Western currency.

**Email: [tony@permaculture.co.uk](mailto:tony@permaculture.co.uk)**