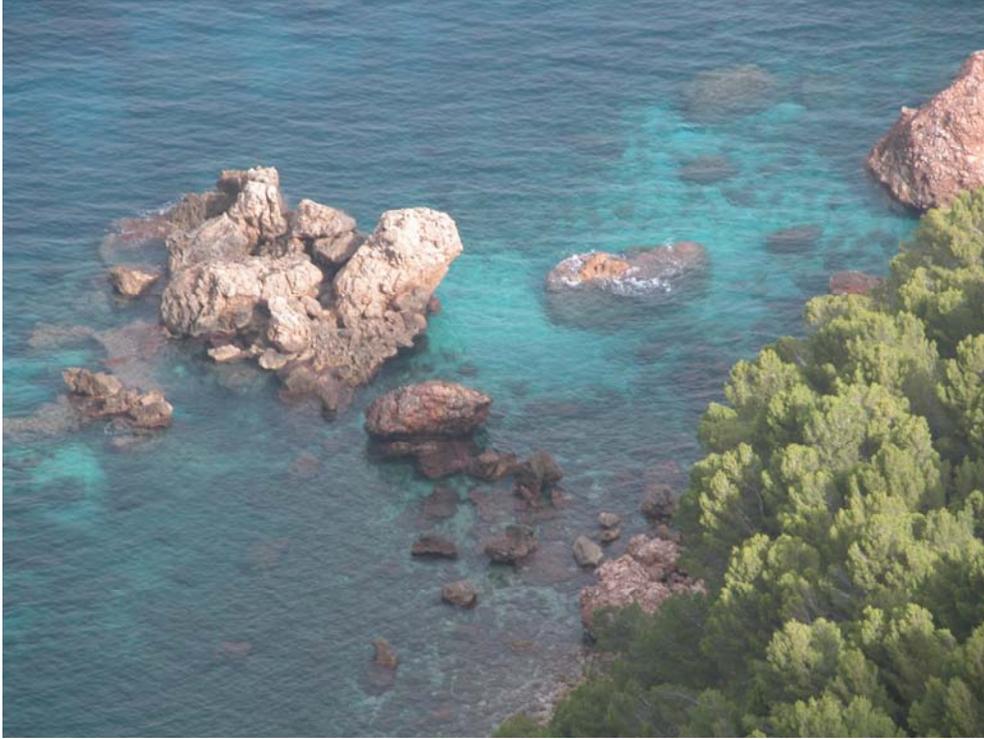


Dreaming Mallorca

Hildur and Ross Jackson



View from the mountainous West coast.

Many Mallorcans these days fear “peak tourism” more than peak oil. Will the tourists stop coming? How will that affect the island? What will Mallorcans put in its place? This thinking was behind an unusual initiative: “Dreaming Mallorca” which took place Oct 16-18, 2008 near Selva, the ancient capital of Mallorca in the middle of the country, with an impressive huge 12th century church in the centre of town

Introduction

For several years, Satish Kumar, editor of Resurgence Magazine, and Vandana Shiva, Indian environmental activist, have been meeting with a local group under the banner “Soil, Soul and Society” in preparation for “Dreaming Mallorca”. Inspired by Ghandi’s philosophy, they are working for a future which values natural farming and a deep respect of nature in order to create a truly healthy society. In October 2008 they, and the local activist group, invited a group of international visionaries to brainstorm with a group of 100 or so Mallorcans from all walks of life on the question of how to achieve a sustainable Mallorca. The group included various NGO’s, farmers, business people, including the tourist industry, foreigners having settled on the island, filmmakers, journalists from Eco-habitat and Namaste, two eco-magazines— a famous Mallorcan comedian and clown, and even a deep sea diver wanting to build an ecovillage on the bottom of the sea.

When world leaders meet in Dec 2009 in Copenhagen to negotiate a successor to the Kyoto Protocol they may or may not succeed. In either case, local people all over the world will soon have

to adapt to new, more sustainable conditions. This meeting is a way of finding a model for local development in a new holistic way, which might eventually be replicated in other localities around the globe.

The Visionaries

Invited as visionaries were: Susan George from Attac France, Herbert Girardet, leading UK ecocity designer, José Bové, peasant leader from France, and Ross Jackson, Denmark, one of the leaders of the global ecovillage movement. Hildur attended initially as Ross' partner to document this experiment, but upon arrival was invited to join the panel of visionaries in recognition of her pioneering work in education for sustainability.

Similar Initiatives

Many other initiatives around the world have a similar impulse. For example, ecovillages are experiments in a new, yet ancient form of human settlements. Considerable experience has now been accumulated over a period of 50 years or so in all parts of the world. Samsø, Green Island in Denmark has demonstrated that it is possible to make an area totally self-sufficient with renewable energy. Many municipalities in the USA and the EU have declared themselves to be "green" or "climate towns" or have the goal to become CO₂ neutral. For example, "Sustainable Tompkins" is such a project in Upper New York State. They want to become the greenest county in the USA. "Transition towns" is a movement to engage citizens in local projects to transform their towns to a more sustainable state over a number of years. The time has come to consolidate and implement these experiences in sustainable living in all local areas, be they islands, regions, cities, suburbs, towns or rural areas.

Mallorca Background

The local group on Mallorca has printed a booklet describing where Mallorca is now, called: *Mallorca Awake 2015*. Some of the highlights: Mallorca is slightly smaller than Cyprus, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica and Crete. It is one of 17 relatively autonomous regions of Spain. In general it has been a closed and static society suffering a lot during the Franco years with lack of civil rights, political parties and unions. In the 1970s tourism started booming with all its benefits and associated problems. Population has grown dramatically to 1.5 million with several waves of immigration, more recently with many refugees from Africa. Many wealthy people have bought land and built big villas and have yachts and sailing ships in the many harbours as the island is considered a safe haven compared to other similar places. Schools are suffering from integration problems while the wealthy have made their own private schools. The problems with recent developments can be summarized as:

- An economy 85% total dependent on tourism, with entry through the enormous Palma airport (ca. 12 million per year)
- High energy dependence on gasoline and coal coming from distant places by ship. Mallorca has the highest number of cars per person in the world.
- 99% of the food is imported. Traditional agriculture and fishing are disappearing.

Satish Kumar, Indian born, for 25 years editor of Resurgence, a British magazine uniting spirituality, environment and art, decided to become a Jain monk at age nine but left monkhood at 18 to spread spirituality in all walks of life. He walked 8000 km. around the planet, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. He has published several books, the latest being *Spiritual Compass*.

Vandana Shiva, Indian activist, flew in from Frankfurt after launching her latest of many books on the environment, *Soil not Oil*. She founded a women's movement in India hugging trees to prevent them from being cut down (The Chipco movement) and initiated seed saving among traditional Indian farmers. She has increasingly become one of the most outspoken defenders of the global environment.

Susan George, French activist, co-founder of ATTAC France, has long been a very vocal critic of neo-liberal economics and the exploitation of the developing countries. She is especially critical of tax havens and currency speculation, where she recommends a "Tobin tax" on transactions. She has written several books, including her most recent, *Hijacking America: How the Religious and Secular Right Changed What Americans Think*.

Herbert Girardet lives in Wales but is constantly travelling and advising on how to make cities sustainable. Initially a filmmaker, he later wanted to understand and change the metabolism of cities so that they did not need to destroy forests, the lungs of the planet. He is a consultant to the zero CO₂ eco-city Dongtan in China near Shanghai, which is soon to be built. He is chairman of the Schumacher Society UK, and has done 20 books and 50 documentaries on environmental themes.

José Bové is an anti-globalisation activist, leader of the French peasant movement and spokesperson for Via Campesina. He is a sheep farmer on the Larzac plateau in Southern France, and ran for president of France in 2007. He is especially known for his civil disobedience actions (among other things to prevent GMO foods from entering Europe), which put him several times in jail, but that has not stopped him. Along with many other books he wrote *The Food for the Future: Agriculture for a Global Age*.

Ross, Jackson is a PhD in Operations Research and former management consultant. As chair of Gaia Trust, Denmark, he has been the funder of hundreds of sustainability projects around the world and prime mover of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and more recently of the Gaia Education project, where ecovillage educators from 6 continents wrote a common curriculum called the Ecovillage Design Education on how to create a sustainable future. In 2000, he wrote *And We Are Doing It: Building an Ecovillage Future*, on his transformation from businessman to sustainability activist and why neo-liberal economics is doomed to crash.

Hildur Jackson, coordinated the Nordic Alternative Future project in the 1980s. 100 grass roots movements and the scientific community created a vision of how to tackle the global, social and ecological problems and find ways to realizing the vision. As co-founder of Gaia Trust, she has worked with Ross on many projects, especially her baby—Gaia Education. She collected the best experiences from ecovillages all over the world, systematized them and co-edited the book *Ecovillage Living: Restoring the Earth and her People*.

Visiting Mallorca

We decided to spend a few days as tourists before the meeting as we had never been to the island before. Swimming in crystal clear, lukewarm water at Sant Elm made our bodies relax and come to life. We understood the attraction for tourists from Germany, England and the Scandinavian countries. Driving through the west coast mountain range in lovely warm sunshine on an autumn day was exhilarating. The road wound its way from one gorgeous view to another through lush light green pine trees. Far below we saw hundreds of geese flying in formation northbound with the turquoise water as backdrop.

But we also saw how ancient stone terraces were falling apart everywhere, 1000 year-old olive trees were not being taken care of. Their incredible twisted shapes were reminders of a forgotten culture. Some places like Port Andratx have been taken completely over by wealthy foreigners with huge villas and yachts with good restaurants and shops to provide for them. There was quite a fresh wind but no modern windmills—although there were many ancient ones. This was a slight surprise as Spain is number two in Europe after Germany in introducing windmills. In the restaurants we had to

look hard to find local wine, local water, local fish, olives and oil. We were surprised to only hear American music everywhere and very little Spanish. We saw very few artefacts from Mallorca compared to what one sees on Cyprus or Crete.



Portochristo on the East coast. Yachts, big villas and cars dominate

The Meeting 16th-18th October

The meeting took place in a private home with a permaculture design in the mountains near Selva in mid-island. The first evening we met with the local Dreaming Mallorca group. The “visionaries” insisted on being called: “common sense people”. At an exquisite dinner of delicious organic food we all had questions about Mallorca to clarify the state of the island right now. We learned:

The political system. There is a balance between left and right with a small party in the middle which changes sides (typical European!). Right now they have chosen the left.

Renewable energy. There is a proposal to lay down an underwater gas and oil line from the mainland, which the participants saw as a short-sighted and expensive solution, and they will fight it.

Wastewater. Most wastewater is dumped directly into the ocean. We were a little shocked on behalf of the tourists.

Land is very expensive and ownership is concentrated, with many absentee landlords. Unlike Denmark and many other countries, no residence or cultivation requirement follows with ownership.

The Activist group. The host, former shoemaker Guillem Ferrer, told us how he had been working with Michael Braungart (“Cradle to Cradle”) to produce cheap rubber boots with a completely organic biodegradable inset, which could be turned into mulch when worn out.



The host Guillem Ferrer listening to translation. Vandana Shiva showing products from Indian women. Satish Kumar



José Bové and Satish Kumar in Guillem's Permaculture garden.. Susan George and Ross Jackson listen closely.

The meeting itself was organized in several rounds of discussions where the panel first expressed their immediate ideas for a sustainable Mallorca. Later this was deepened and the second day the panel told their own stories of what made them what they are today and the relevance of these stories to Mallorca. Dialogue with the locals was very lovingly and diligently directed by Satish Kumar. The last day smaller groups were formed on four topics to come up with concrete ideas: Cities/ tourism with Herbert Girardet, Food security with José Bové and Vandana Shiva, Economics with Susan George and Education/ecovillages with Ross and Hildur Jackson.

Visionary Ideas

Here are some of the ideas that came up for Mallorca's future:

Agriculture

Food security is going to become a must as peak oil makes industrial agriculture and long distant transportation uncompetitive compared to local production. This will require a land reform along the lines of what Denmark has, where owners have a residential obligation and must cultivate the land following permaculture principles. Today the land is used as an investment by absentee landlords or bought by tourists. This reform will keep the prices down and make it possible to get lots of young people to cultivate organic food. Vandana, quoting from her new book, described how

organic farming can build up and mulch carbon in the soil in huge amounts. She and José predict that in the future culture the centre will be in the countryside and not in the cities as today. Vandana emphasized the importance of handicrafts.

Renewable Energy

A Future Mallorca Fund was proposed based on an airport tax and donations, with the money used to make Mallorca greener and cleaner, for example with improved waste water treatment. Everybody should contribute to this new organization. Discussions with the tourist industry should be instigated as it is in their interest. The fund could perhaps be associated with the World Future Council, (Herbert Girardet). We have to analyse the material and economic circulation of cities in order to create urban systems that mimic natural systems. Cities are here for good, but we have to make them sustainable. It was seen as a necessary thing to introduce wind and solar energy. Ross pointed out that Mallorca's geography was ideal for introducing micro hydro systems in the mountains to provide electricity for households and electric cars, and thereafter for drip irrigation in the plains and valleys. The gas and oil line has to be stopped.



Probably one of the windmills Don Quixote fought against, now in the middle of a town with traffic all around

Tourism.

A study should be made to make clearer the import/export patterns to and from the island with a view to measuring how much tourism actually benefits the island, and how much it benefits the foreign tour companies. Some researchers pointed out that a lot had been done but that facts were repressed. There was general agreement that mass tourism will decline as oil prices increase. The whole sector needs to reinvent itself. The industry is quite aware of this. Also, the many very wealthy residents should contribute, perhaps through a property tax. Susan George suggested a new tourism concept based on: Mallorca, Celebration of the Mediterranean. Every month a new theme could be featured, for example:

- 1, Marine biology,
- 2, Mediterranean archaeology
3. Navigation since Ulysses,

4, Ecological technology

5, Literature

Exhibitions and sustainability centres might be established in parts of the huge airport. One suggestion was to sell or lease a part of the island to the Chinese. Satish very movingly described how Gandhi convinced many rich farmers to give one sixth of their land to the landless in India. Tourism could focus on longer stays, retreats for seniors, health tourism, and bicycle tourism. Also some hotels might be transformed into ecovillages with pools, village centres etc.



Participants from Mallorca. In the middle Marcus, who together with his wife funded the meetin.. In the front Sybilla, who will organize an EDE in Mallorca in 2009.

Economy

Sitting in Mallorca in the middle of the worst financial crises of our lifetimes made it easier to talk with conviction of the need for new solutions. Ross explained that local economies must be given priority in a time of crisis. He suggested a focus on local banks and on establishing a local Mallorcan currency that would have the effect of reinvesting the wealth created here on the island rather than leaking local savings to Madrid, London and New York. He mentioned also the approach taken by the “transition towns” movement to organize local groups like this one. We need to take the EU into account also. It can be a hindrance to protection of local values. The Lisbon Treaty is going to make it difficult to do what we need to do. Broader coalitions need to be built to support a new way of thinking. Other regions in the EU will have similar problems.

Education.

Mallorcans have a need to educate themselves on the whole question of a designing a sustainable future. Ecovillages have for experimented for many years and have a wealth of experience to pass on. These experiences have been gathered and systematized by an international ecovillage group and are now available for others to use in a new organisation called Gaia Education, supported financially by Gaia Trust, Denmark. May East from Findhorn is the program director. There are three ways that anybody can benefit from this material:

1. Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) is a 4-week course—preferably but not necessarily in a functioning ecovillage—where you live what you learn. It has been taught 33 times in six continents over the last 3 years and is endorsed by UNITAR. One participant remarked that what took him 20 years learn can now be learned in 20 days. The group decided to run an EDE in Mallorca next summer. It could be an occasion to continue the work of Dreaming Mallorca.
2. Gaia Education Design for Sustainability (GEDS) is an on-line version of the course, modified for the Internet in cooperation with OUC, the Open University of Catalonia. The course is spread over 8 months so it can be taken in English or Spanish on evenings and weekends by working people. Many of the ecovillagers who developed the material will also be on-line teachers. See www.gaiameducation.org for more information and application procedures.
3. The EDE curriculum (about 70 pages) is available on the Gaia Education website gratis and in 6 languages for anyone who wishes to learn about a sustainable future through self study.

Conclusion

The enthusiasm was contagious and the Dreaming Mallorca initiative will continue for sure. Everything was videotaped and will be made available. They have two magazines which may facilitate communication: Ecohabitar and Namaste. Most importantly they are a wonderful group of people dedicated to the purpose and capable of creating a dialogue between all walks of life. Thanks to all of them for some inspiring days and for initiating local development. Perhaps the approach of Dreaming Mallorca could be a template for other regions to start thinking about making their localities sustainable also.



*Leo Bassi demonstrates how easily people can be manipulated.
We were all duped.*