



## Ecovillage Project Gains Planning Approval In Japan

Following a three-year period of consultation and negotiation with local government authorities, the Kobunaki Ecovillage Project, Japan, was finally granted approval on 22 December 2006.

The ecovillage is to be created in Omihachiman City (near Kyoto) and is the brainchild of We, G-Project Co.

At the heart of the ethic underlying the new development is 'local production for local

consumption', especially the cultivation and consumption of organic vegetables.

The origin of the Kobunaki concept can be described as 'joy of living'. "In Kobunaki, we are going to consider how to enrich personal relations within community and in symbiosis with nature," says Tomomi Takada the community design consultant of G-Project Co. "This can be followed by the discovery of

an alternative vision of society. We would like to propose a lifestyle with enjoyment based on agriculture, food, and Japanese culture, in collaboration with other global ecovillage initiatives."

For details, contact Tomomi Takada: tomomit@chikyunome.co.jp and view: [www.g-project.net](http://www.g-project.net)



*A model of Kobunaki's Ecovillage.*

## Japan's First Ecovillage Conference



*A student planning a design.*

At last the dream of a fully-fledged Japanese ecovillage network is becoming a reality and ecovillages a real buzz word. To prove it, the first ever Japanese Ecovillage Conference was held in Tokyo in October 2006.

The event was co-hosted by the Be Good Cafe, a dynamic media and social planning organization oriented towards youth activities, and the Japanese Permaculture Institute, which has strong university connections.

The main objectives of the conference were to put ecovillages on the map, to network with the major Japanese and international players, and to increase general public interest in viable solutions to Japan's present ills. These include increasing urban density, long corporate work hours, expensive housing, overdependence on food importation from outside Japan, increased Japanese estrangement from nature, and few creative opportunities for youth.

What could be a better solution than the development of communities based on permaculture design

principles, shared resources, and reconnecting to nature – all with the Japanese penchant for ergonomics, natural architecture, and a touch of zen?

The conference was very well attended, with participants including academic professors, journalists, numerous people involved in Japanese co-housing and ecovillage initiatives and many members of the general public. Ecovillage residents from India, Australia and the United States also participated and gave presentations on their own communities.

The conference revealed substantial interest from within Japan in the ecovillage concept on the part of youth, cultural associations, property developers, municipalities and regional prefectures, as well as universities. Moves are now afoot for the formal creation of a Japanese ecovillage network.

There are perhaps around 25 ecovillages in Asia (Japan, Thailand and Bangladesh) – although estimates for Sri Lanka are possibly as many as 15,000 – so there is massive scope for development in this region.

For further details, please contact Marti Muller via email at: [Marti.Mueller@eurorscg.fr](mailto:Marti.Mueller@eurorscg.fr)



*Smile! Enjoying the conference.*

## A New Community In Chontal, Ecuador



*Volunteers at the new ecovillage enjoy the fruits of their labour.*

In a bamboo and palm forest filled with tropical fruit trees in Chontal, Ecuador a new ecovillage has been formed.

Initiated by eco-activist Milton Narvaez who has been working for years in his native town of Mindo on reforestation projects, youth activism and skill building, the ecovillage is now home to a group of international volunteers who are helping it to grow.

The ecovillage concept was fuelled by the visit of La Caravana, a mobile ecovillage project which has been travelling in Central and South America since 1996. During the visit in 2000-1 workshops on sustainable living, permaculture and consensus decision making inspired many residents of Mindo.

After the workshops Narvaez embarked on a tour of ecovillages in Europe experiencing first hand the concepts and realities of

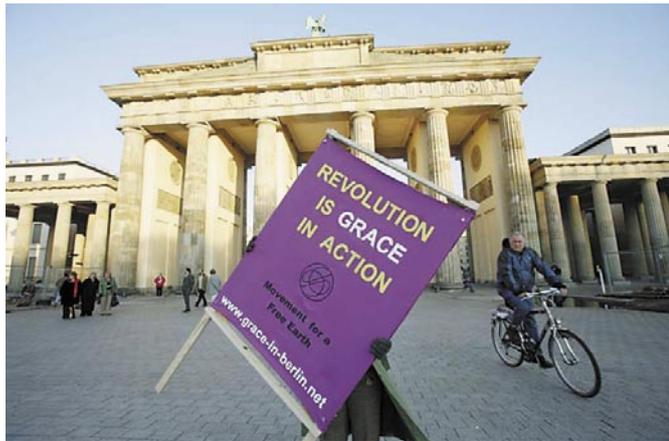
those who seek to live this new paradigm.

It's volunteers are overjoyed with the experience. A young German Svenja writes, "I spent 2 weeks in the eco village in beautiful Chontal and enjoyed it a lot. Even though the project was just taking off, I could sense the genuine enthusiasm and heart the people who are running it were putting into it. Creating an ecovillage is no easy task, and being there and learning about what it implies made me think about a lot of things that I carelessly use at home without thinking (or thinking too little) about its wider implications." The growing project offers opportunities for volunteers who wish to help make this a reality.

Please contact Milton Narvaez: email: [miltnar@yahoo.com](mailto:miltnar@yahoo.com) web: <http://www.freewebs.com/ecoaldeachontal/>



## GRACE – For a Future Without War



Placard-bearing peace meditator at the Holocaust Memorial, Berlin.

On 9th November 2006, the day of the opening of the Wall in Berlin in 1989 and the day of the Night of the Pogrom of the Third Reich in 1938, a group from the Tamera ecovillage held a peace meditation at the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin.

Under the guidance of Sabine Lichtenfels, co-founder of Tamera, Germans, Israelis and Palestinians together with more than 30 groups on all the continents joined them in reading a text "We open our consciousness to the victims of the Holocaust" and thereafter in meditating on it. The full meditation text can be found at: [www.grace-in-berlin.net](http://www.grace-in-berlin.net)

The meditation is part of Tamera's on-going peace work.

Exactly one year ago, Sabine led an international group on a pilgrimage through the Middle East. They helped with the olive harvest, visited Kibbuzim, refugee camps, peace groups and the wall that divides Israel and Palestine.

The ultimate aim of this work is to build up Peace Research Villages in the Middle East and in other parts of the world.

Sabine has now written a book about the life-changing experiences of this pilgrimage, entitled, *Grace – Pilgrimage For A Future Without War*. It will be published in English in early 2007.

For further details, please visit: [www.grace-in-berlin.net](http://www.grace-in-berlin.net) or contact: [verlag-meiga@gmx.net](mailto:verlag-meiga@gmx.net)

## Ecovillage Hosts Russian Strawbale Workshop

Russia's first strawbale building workshop has taken place in Kovcheg ecovillage in Kaluga Region, south of Moscow. This is an important breakthrough in introducing this low-impact building method using locally-available materials.

The workshop participants left very impressed and it appears likely that the technology will spread rapidly in the country.

The seminar also covered a number of other low-impact building methods, including building with wood, timber frame house building and the use of locally-available insulation materials. Kovcheg ecovillage intends to continue running these courses.

For further information, please contact Laysan Mirzagitova at: [laysanm@yandex.ru](mailto:laysanm@yandex.ru)

## Greek Ecovillage Initiative Takes First Steps

Thirty people from all corners of Greece gathered to spend 10 days in July 2006 as the first step in a journey which they hope will lead to the creation of an ecovillage in Greece.

The idea for this initiative was born during the European Social Forum (ESF), held in Athens in the early summer of 2006. At that event the participation of ecovillagers from Scotland and Germany helped stimulate substantial interest and the three sessions held were heavily over-subscribed. This led to the creation of the City Group 'Greek Initiative for the creation and development of ecovillages'.

The ten day gathering, held at the farm of G. Diamantopoulos at Geliniatika Korinthias, provided a wonderful opportunity for the members of the new group to get to know each other better and to begin creating a common vision.

The programme was dominated by voluntary work to improve the infrastructure of the farm. Together, the group constructed an outdoor kitchen, showers, a compost toilet,



Building an outdoor kitchen.

a small bridge over a stream, a canopy and a large dinner table.

Discussions were held, based on the 'Questionnaire for the creation of an ecovillage' a resource which the gathering found very useful during their communal experiment.

For more details, contact Irini Kourdaki: [irinikourdaki@yahoo.gr](mailto:irinikourdaki@yahoo.gr)

## Pioneering Car Share Initiative Spreads

A pioneering car share scheme recently introduced in the Ecovillage at Ithaca (EVI), in New York state, is set to spread to include the neighbouring city of Ithaca.

The EVI scheme arose out of a project involving EVI and students in an Ithaca College 'Sustainable Communities' class taught by EVI resident, Elan Shapiro (as part of a partnership between Ithaca College and EVI, funded by the National Science Foundation).

Out of this project has come a bus shelter (with a living roof) in the ecovillage – designed by Cornell students and built using solar electricity – and the car share programme. The car share scheme has won several grants permitting its expansion to

include the city of Ithaca.

EVI resident, Dan Roth, pulled together a coalition of groups for a successful summit on the initiative in early 2006, and organization for the Ithaca Carshare began.

Steering committee members include members from Cornell, Ithaca College, the City of Ithaca, Ecovillage at Ithaca, and the Ithaca-Tompkins Transportation Council.

This is just one of the numerous initiatives that form part of Sustainable Tompkins County, which seeks to make Tompkins the county with the lowest footprint in the US.

For further details, please contact Liz Walker: [liz@ecovillage.ithaca.ny.us](mailto:liz@ecovillage.ithaca.ny.us)

## Ithaca Root Cellar Funded By College

Ecovillage at Ithaca (EVI) residents are celebrating the building of their first root cellar. This was a multiple semester project (funded by the Ithaca College-EVI mini-grants programme).

EVI resident Tina Nilsen-Hodges co-ordinated Ithaca College students in the design process. It was then built last summer by EVI residents.

The root cellar is an earthbag construction, quite large, and 570kg (1,250lbs) of root vege-

tables are now stored there.

The construction process involved the use of local clay, sand, and earth to pack feed bags for the construction. They are anchored with barbed wire, then plastered with a local lime/clay plaster mix.

The root cellar will primarily be used to store veggies for Common House meals (3-4 a week).

For further details, please contact Liz Walker: [liz@ecovillage.ithaca.ny.us](mailto:liz@ecovillage.ithaca.ny.us)

### SUBMISSIONS

**DEADLINE** for submissions to *Permaculture Magazine No.52*  
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