GLOBAL CONNECTIONS, LOCAL TRANSFORMATIONS: WOMEN, AGRICULTURE AND ACTIVISM IN LADAKH, INDIA

by

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The University of British Columbia

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the connections between the impacts of the globalization of food and farming on women, nature and farming communities and cultures in North and South and the growing movement of resistance and renewal, in the case of the Ladakh Farm Project (LFP). In Ladakh, the development of agriculture is having detrimental effects upon community, ecology and women farmers, and women are taking an active role in revitalising and protecting their local agriculture. The LFP is a project that is jointly run by the Women's Alliance of Ladakh (WAL), and organisation that was created specifically to give voice to Ladakhi women's perspectives, and the International Society for Ecology and Culture, a U.K.-based Non-governmental Organisation (NGO). The LFP aims to support Ladakhi agriculture and cultivate greater understanding about how conventional growth-oriented development has affected cultures and communities all over the world and about possible solutions, by fostering deeper connections and dialogue between Westerners and Ladakhis.

A SWOT analysis of the LFP was conducted based upon data gathered from in-depth interviews with Ladakhi hosts and reports written by participants as well as group meetings and discussions with organisers. Each phase of the project cycle was then analysed in terms of potential solutions to the challenges. The analysis reveals that communication barriers and differing expectations about the project create challenges for participants, host families and organisers. Despite these obstacles, the LFP is found to have a profound impact on participants and is considered by their Ladakhi hosts to be beneficial, both practically and in terms of cultural exchange and dialogue. The strength of the WAL as a decentralised women's organisation still firmly rooted in local cultural and ecological values combined with the ISEC's long history in Ladakh provides strong foundations for the LFP and for the potential to scale-up the project. A similar project could be replicated in a different context but its efficacy would depend largely upon strong partnership between a local and international organisation. There is however potential for the model to be adapted and used in different contexts such as urban centres.
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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DDT</td>
<td>Dichloro-Diphenyl-Trichloroethane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>(United Nations) Food and Agriculture Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>GMO / GM</td>
<td>Genetically Modified Organism</td>
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<tr>
<td>HYV</td>
<td>High Yield Variety</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISEC</td>
<td>International Society for Ecology and Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAHDC</td>
<td>Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEDeG</td>
<td>Ladakh Ecological Development Group</td>
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<td>LFP</td>
<td>Ladakh Farm Project</td>
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<td>LNP</td>
<td>Leh Nutrition Project</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>AR</td>
<td>Action Research</td>
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<td>SCF</td>
<td>Save the Children Fund</td>
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<td>TNC</td>
<td>Trans-national Corporation</td>
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<td>WAL</td>
<td>Women's Alliance of Ladakh</td>
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<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organisation</td>
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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.0 The Study and its Purpose

From May until September of 1998 and 1999, I carried out research with the Ladakh Farm Project (LFP) in Ladakh, India. As a researcher concerned with feminism and ecology, my intention was to explore the reasons why and how women agriculturalists are organising in Ladakh to preserve their agriculture and culture. I was specifically interested in the possibilities and potentials of using a strategy of transnational activism towards meeting their goals of local social transformation, and in the lessons learned from this women's environmental project. I am also involved as a staff member in one of the founding organisations of the Farm Project, thus have a commitment to improving and developing the project, consistent with the aims and objectives of the organisers and participants.

This thesis explores the opportunities and constraints facing the Ladakh Farm Project, situating it in the context of the globalization of agro-food systems, its impacts on women food producers, and their emerging strategies for resistance and renewal. The study uses a combination of Action Research (AR) strategies and is located firmly within the Transformative and Radical Planning traditions given its explicitly transformative intent and execution. The case study project itself has evolved over the course of the study period as the researcher played an active role in project development as the research progressed.
1.1 Background

There is a growing realisation in both the North and the South that the planet is facing a social and ecological crisis in which we are all implicated. This understanding emerges at a time of unprecedented global economic integration alongside with global ecological breakdown, rising levels of absolute poverty, a widening gap between the rich and the poor, and increasing levels of political unrest.

Development planning, long seen as a tool to bring about positive change, is deeply implicated in the global socio-ecological crisis. Well-formulated critiques of development theory and practice, coming from ecological economics, political ecology, post-colonialism and ecofeminism, highlight the faulty assumptions of development theory: that there is one singular, correct way to develop; that it is a linear process from 'primitive' to 'modern'; and that economic growth equals development. These critics suggest that the generalisability of any model is questionable, and that the development model based upon oppressive and exploitative relationships between cultures, genders and with the ecosphere is deeply flawed. There is a call for a radical transformation of the accepted development paradigm and a rejection of the notion that the current system can simply be fine-tuned for sustainability.

Emerging from these critiques is the conviction that as development practitioners and as global citizens, we must work towards the transformation of development institutions, values and behaviour so that they respond to our social and ecological realities. What will this transformation and look like, and how are planners implicated? The transformations needed are far-reaching and could take place at many different levels -- from macro-policy initiatives to personal change. They will differ according to cultural
and ecological contexts, but with the common goal of empowering people to control their own futures free from oppressive and dominating structures and practices. Economic growth will be rejected as the sole measure of progress and the values of community, and connection with nature and place will become central, explicitly valued elements of sustainability. This study is conducted from this value-base and examines development from outside the industrial-scientific paradigm.

Traditionally, planning practice has been closely tied to the state and private interests. As such, planners have necessarily been concerned with improving the current system as opposed to replacing it. However, Feminist and Radical planners argue that planning is, and must be, a transformative tool. Since the transformations needed to move us into a globally sustainable future cannot be accomplished simply by improving the current institutions, planners must create alternative avenues for translating theory into practice.

Growing threats to local and global food security provide a clear example of the global nature of the environmental crisis, and the need for deep transformations. In developed nations during the 1970's, while environmental and social movements were taking shape, a reaction against chemically dependent, large-scale agriculture began to grow. Concern about the negative impacts of industrial agriculture upon both human and ecological health fostered an interest in sustainable, or alternative agriculture. Many individuals, local communities and advocacy groups in the West began struggling to revitalise agricultural communities and farming practices (for example, through fostering organic, local food systems). The growing momentum of this grassroots work has in part
led to the appearance and increasing popularity of the concept of agricultural 'sustainability' in planning.

However, despite these positive signs, the prevailing policy direction in every country that embraces market-oriented strategies, is still towards increasing agricultural productivity (usually for export) through technological means such as biotechnology. These policies are encouraged and supported by international financial organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and mainstream development agencies such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). In developing parts of the world, traditional, often sustainable agricultural systems are rapidly and intentionally being integrated into the market system and replaced by chemically intensive, unhealthy and often mechanised agriculture. Due to heavy subsidies, and monopolies, imported food (from other regions and countries) is often cheaper than locally grown products, and self-reliant food systems are rendered unviable under these conditions. As forced specialisation increases, the option to pursue a self-reliant lifestyle in terms of basic needs such as food and shelter, is removed. This process of modernisation creates social stratification based upon success or failure in the money economy. Women, peasants and the land often bear the heaviest negative consequences of integration into the market system, as their reproductive work is not accounted for in the economic system.

The term 'sustainable' is a thesis in and of itself, but for the purposes of this chapter I refer to Herman Daly's (1996) definition of the term. He says: "We should strive for sufficient per capita wealth - efficiently maintained and allocated, and equitably distributed - for the maximum number of people that can be sustained over time under these conditions" (220). Inherent in this definition is the conviction that an ethic of 'enough' must supplant the rather more commonly held principle of 'as much as possible' if we are to attain ecological (including human) health and happiness. I distinguish between this concept of sustainability and the often quoted Bruntland Commission (1997) definition of 'sustainable development' as "development which meets the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of the future to meet its needs". This latter version of sustainability masks the inherent valued nature of sustainability and in doing so succeeds in rendering the term palatable to almost everyone. But in the process leaves it open to any interpretation whatsoever, and thus effectively useless as a policy tool.
This example reveals the deep irony of development: that while in the rich parts of the world such as North America and Europe, there is a growing recognition of, and support for, sustainable agriculture and a revaluing of community and reproductive work, places in the world where these types of systems still exist are unable to maintain them. The irony is made all the more vivid by the fact that globally, there is a dramatic decrease in cultural and biological diversity, and that as cultural histories and genetic material are lost, so are possible solutions and lessons for the sustainable future.

However, wide-ranging projects of resistance and transformation are attempting to challenge this path. People in communities around the world are resisting the spread of current unsustainable and oppressive practices and systems and others are searching for viable alternatives. Because they challenge the system, most of these projects occur at the local or grassroots level and are initiated by non-governmental organisations. In countries like India and the Philippines, such movements often take the form of struggles to maintain local culture and traditions. In the developed parts of the world, aboriginal communities and environmentally and socially aware urban populations, individuals and community groups are seeking to regenerate and renew sustainable practices and lifestyles that have long been lost. These movements have become a very strong force for change but unfortunately, there is little communication between and among proponents of such small-scale projects around the world. Despite the fact that global communication has become faster and easier, the beneficiaries of technologies such as telephones and email tend to be those who have a vested interest in the current system, rather than those who seek to change it. Given that transformation is unlikely to happen from the top
down alone, a strong dialogue between those working for change in both the North and South needs to be nurtured in order to share experience, information and strategies.

1.2 Problem Statement/Objectives

This thesis examines the opportunities and constraints facing one grassroots development organisation attempting to foster local transformations by establishing global connections through an education and exchange project. I explore these issues by focussing on women agriculturalists roles in non-governmental organizing using the case of the Ladakh Farm Project. This project is an example of an attempt to foster transformation at global, local and personal levels through education and exchange and creating connections between North and South. It also actively seeks to raise awareness about resisting the negative effects of development and seeking viable, sustainable alternatives. This thesis addresses the following research questions:

- What are the Global and Local conditions giving rise to and the rationale behind the Ladakh Farm Project?
- What are the opportunities and constraints facing the Ladakh Farm Project in its attempt to foster local sustainability through fostering global connections?
- How can the organizations involved improve the operation of the project?
- What lessons can be learned for planners?

Little planning research has looked at how the theories of transformative planning translate into practice and this is a contentious topic because it falls outside planning norms and conventions. The explicitly political and social-change oriented nature of transformative planning is contrary to the conventional role of planning as a tool for
change within the existing governance system. It takes seriously the role of non-governmental and people's organisations as initiators of change and asks how planners can learn from and participate in their struggle for resistance and search for renewal outside of, and in opposition to the governance system as well as alongside it. This thesis contributes to planning theory and practice by looking at one example of a project that is working explicitly for social transformation towards the goal of ecological sustainability and social equity.

1.3 Case Study: The Ladakh Farm Project

Ladakh is a high altitude, isolated, region of the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir (see Map 1) that has traditionally been economically dependent upon small-scale agriculture, and trade with Tibet. Ladakh's economy in the 1990's has become based less and less upon agriculture and increasingly upon the spin-offs from the large-scale military presence. This trend accelerated with the opening of Ladakh to tourists in the mid-1970s and the extension to Ladakh of India's ambitious program of economic development. In this process of economic development, men and children have been drawn into the money economy and women been left with the heaviest burden of farm and reproductive work that is increasingly devalued as Ladakh modernises along Western lines.

The Ladakh Farm Project was initiated as part of an attempt by an international NGO and a local partner organisation, to resist the negative effects of development in Ladakh, specifically the effects upon Ladakhi women, traditional culture and agriculture, as well as to foster positive change. Non-governmental organising of this kind has a
Map 1. Ladakh, India

Source: Norberg-Hodge 1991
relatively long history in Ladakh. A strong community of environmental organisations working with foreign organisations and individuals has been working for 'Alternative' or 'Ecological' development in Ladakh for the past twenty years, and the results of their work are widely visible in the forms such as solar panels and greenhouses. Recognition of the negative effects of development on women has been part of this work, but it is only with the recent inception of the Women's Alliance of Ladakh that women have started to take on the issue independently.

The Ladakh Farm Project is organised and run jointly by two non-governmental organisations, the International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC) and the local Women's Alliance of Ladakh (WAL). ISEC is an international non-governmental organisation based in the United Kingdom, that has been initiating and participating in ecological development projects in Ladakh, the UK and the US for over fifteen years. It's expressed aim is to “promote critical discussion about the impacts of industrial development and economic globalisation, while supporting policies and local strategies for ecological restoration and community renewal (ISEC 1998)”. The WAL, is an alliance of approximately 4000 Ladakhi farming women from 82 villages in the Leh District of Ladakh. (See Map 2) The aims of the WAL are: (a) to enable the voice of women - and, in particular, women who are actively involved in agriculture - to be heard more clearly in the process of decision-making, (b) to raise awareness within all sections of Ladakhi society of the values which such women represent, (c) to raise the status of agriculture and the farmer, (d) to encourage respect for Ladakhi culture and (e) to bring Ladakhi women together, so as to share concerns and plan appropriate action to address
Map 2. Leh District, Ladakh

This map shows the portion of the Leh District of Ladakh which is the project area for the Ladakh Farm Project. Its placement within Jammu and Kashmir is indicated on the inset map below, left.
those concerns. In working toward these aims, the WAL holds annual village educational seminars and general meetings where members' opinions and ideas are heard. The WAL also participates in and organises a variety of activities, from popular educational theatre, to traditional cuisine exhibitions to, most recently, a ban on plastic bags in Leh and a local seed-saving campaign.

The Ladakh Farm Project is one of the projects that the WAL's projects. ISEC works with members of the WAL to place Western participants on Ladakhi farms for a minimum of one month, to work and live with a family. Since its inception in 1995, the Ladakh Farm Project has involved participants from all over the Western world, including Germany, the US, Canada, Switzerland, the UK and the Czech Republic. The project has been expanding each year - in 1995 there were only five participants, and in 1999 there were forty-five in total. Participants were generally placed in villages that could be reached within a day's bus journey from Leh. Families in approximately 20 villages participated in the Project in 1999. Several host villages do not have road access and require that participants hike in by trail or path. But the road system is expanding yearly and it is likely that in the near future, few villages will be without roads. Participants are usually placed in host families where the woman (usually the mother) is a WAL member who requests to host a participant. However, WAL membership is not a requirement and non-WAL members can and do request to host volunteers.

The aims of this project are to cultivate greater understanding about how growth-oriented development has affected cultures and communities all over the world, raise awareness about possible solutions, support traditional Ladakhi agriculture and culture.

\[2\textsuperscript{Taken from the "Constitution Incorporating the Rules and Regulations of the Women's Alliance of Ladakh"} \]
and foster positive social change in the West. The project meets the aims in several different ways: (1) Westerners' participation and desire to learn actively counteracts the declining image of agriculture in the eyes of Ladakhis; (2) Practically, the participants help out with farm work at a time when the tradition of co-operative labour is breaking down (3) Through action and to a lesser degree conversation, participants give Ladakhis a more accurate image of life in the West; (4) The experience of working and living in a traditionally sustainable culture that is 'modernising' as well as the educational component of the project, gives the Western participants insights and understandings that inform their activism in communities in their home countries.

1.4 Approach and methods

This thesis explores the opportunities for and constraints in achieving the goals of the Farm Project, by looking at the challenges and possibilities faced by both ‘Western’ participants and their Ladakhi host families throughout the project period. Throughout the research, I used qualitative research methodology based on action research (AR) principles. AR locates the researcher and the research itself as part a transformative project emanating from a political stance and explicit value base (Maguire 1987; Sohng 1995). While many the techniques used during the field work were participatory, the project itself cannot be categorised as participatory action research (which locates the researcher and researched as active participants in the investigation), as the research subjects were not involved in designing the study itself. The field research intends to elicit project participants' situated knowledge based on interpretation of their own experience, necessary to understand and analyse the opportunities and constraints facing
the project in meeting its goals. The techniques of participant observation, informal discussion, key informant interviews and questionnaires were used. The participant-respondents in this research are both volunteers on the Project and the Ladakhi women farmers who host volunteers. Additional context and background information was gathered from key informant interviews with Project founders, participants, staff and leaders (approximately 10 people) and analysis of primary Project documents. My own experience and relationship to the project both as a researcher and as an active participant, provide a rich source of data, and necessarily form the lens through which I explore further my own positionality and its advantages and disadvantages in the course of the research.

Primary sources of data for understanding women’s perceptions of development in Ladakh and the opportunities and constraints facing the project are in the form of feedback from Western participants and WAL members who have hosted participants. Participants in the LFP completed 17 reflective reports in 1998 and 8 in 1999. They were asked to complete these reports for two purposes: (1) to provide feedback to ISEC and the WAL about the contributions and challenges of the project and to serve as information for future participants, and (2) to provide information and insight for my research work. Each participant was provided with a set of open-ended questions to ‘guide’ his/her report, and was encouraged to add any additional relevant comments or information. Completion of the reports was not mandatory. To supplement these questionnaires, informal, in-depth discussions were held with approximately ten participants in the two research periods. These discussions ranged from 30 minutes to two hours and of these ten, 6 were Western participants and 4 were Ladakhi hosts. While this
sample is not representative of project participants, the intention is to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of a small group of participants, rather than a surface understanding of the entire group's experience. In participatory (and especially feminist) qualitative research, value is placed upon the individual's experience as much as the need for generalisability to a larger social sphere (Maguire 1987: 112). In this case, there is no 'typical' participant in the Farm Project. While lacking the breadth and generalisability of a huge sample, the small sample is useful in providing texture and learning details about how the organization and project's structure works and doesn't work for different people, the variety and commonality of experiences and participants that the project attracts.

Data from WAL members who had hosted Western participants was gathered through structured interviews and group meetings. Questions for the interviews were developed by my Ladakhi colleague Stanzin Tonyot and myself, and carried out primarily by Tonyot for language, cultural and timing reasons. Time and resources limited the number of interviews to 5 in 1998, but a further 22 interviews were carried out in 1999. The primary purpose of the interviews was to gather feedback about the project from the perspective of Ladakhi host families in order to assist ISEC in improving the project. Their feedback also provided useful information for this research.

Additional data was collected from primary documents of the ISEC and WAL, and through key-informant interviews. Information about the project rationale, inception and role in the community was gathered through informal and formal discussions and interviews with my WAL colleagues, ISEC employees and volunteers (including the founder and director of ISEC, Helena Norberg-Hodge) and with other NGO administrators and employees in Ladakh. Where possible, these interviews were tape
recorded and transcribed, but where this was not possible or appropriate, I took notes and then discussed the information with the interviewee to assure that his/her views were accurately recorded. Finally, I kept detailed notes of the proceedings of Farm Project and WAL meetings in the form of field notes and personal journal to record my own experience and perceptions using participant observation techniques.

In analysing the data, I made every attempt to allow the participants and hosts of the project speak for themselves. This presents two challenges: First, many of the Ladakhi women organisers do not speak much English, and my Ladakhi is rudimentary. Second, the thoughts and perspectives of formally-educated Westerners translate much more easily into academic language, than those of differently educated Ladakhis. It is a challenge to actively reject the privileging of Western voices over non-western ones.

1.5 Thesis Structure and Content

The thesis is organised as follows: The first chapter introduces the topic and case study, situating the research in a global and local context. Study objectives, methodology, relevance and limitations are presented. The second chapter first explores the globalisation of food and farming and women’s changing roles in agriculture, especially in India. It examines the strategies for sustainable, alternative agriculture and food security emerging in both North and South from the grassroots as a response to the globalisation of agro-food system. In looking at these possible strategies, the chapter makes a case for the necessity of North-South dialogue when looking at local issues of sustainable food and farming.
The third chapter provides a brief introduction to the case study: the Ladakh Farm Project and the region of Ladakh, India, including a brief overview of the project's social, ecological and political context. It examines how the globalisation of agriculture and critiques of development have affected Ladakh and its people. This is accomplished by looking at first in general at development in Ladakh, and especially alternative development initiatives led by the burgeoning NGO movement. Secondly, women's changing roles in agriculture in Ladakh are explored as well as the involvement of women in planning and decision-making in the region to date.

The fourth chapter explores the emergence of the Ecology movement in Ladakh and specifically the development of women's activism and the formation of the Women's Alliance of Ladakh. The challenges facing the Ecology movement in Ladakh are examined, specifically the difficulties facing women's activism.

The fifth chapter introduces the Ladakh Farm Project, and explores the background and mechanics of the project, ie. why and how was the project conceived. The backgrounds and current status of the founding organisations, the International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC) and the Women's Alliance of Ladakh (WAL) are explored as well as the Farm Project itself. Data for this section was gathered from informal interviews with the organisers and staff of both organisations and the Farm Project as well as primary documents of ISEC and the WAL.

The sixth chapter explores the opportunities and challenges for North-South dialogue on the Ladakh Farm Project by looking at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) faced by the Project. It emphasises how the experiences of participants and organisers reveal the struggles facing this project that is
attempting to bridge cultural, linguistic and class differences to work together towards
global sustainability. The practical and theoretical challenges facing the Farm Project, as
well as how the organising agencies are attempting to deal with them are examined. Data
for this chapter is taken from participant reports/questionnaires, participant-observation,
interviews (formal and informal) with Ladakhi WAL members, and field notes taken
during farm project meetings and WAL meetings.

The seventh and final chapter links together the case study with the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2 and provides recommendations for the project itself, as well as a discussion about how the lessons learned can be useful to planners.
CHAPTER II  MAKING CONNECTIONS: THE GLOBALIZATION OF FOOD AND FARMING AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN FARMERS, THE ENVIRONMENT AND FARMING CULTURES IN NORTH AND SOUTH

"To forget how to dig the soil is to forget one's self"
- Ghandi

2.0 Introduction

The globalization of agro-food systems has had grave impacts upon women food producers and the environment in every part of the world. Women farmers in both the North and South are particularly faced with increased workloads and marginalisation from community decision-making at a time when food security and soil fertility are declining, threatening the very foundations of their livelihood. Paradoxically, while small farmers are struggling to protect their livelihoods in the face of globalization of the agro-food system and industrialization of agricultural production, there is also a growing interest in organic, local and small-scale farming in many parts of the world. This global movement aims to support and revitalize local, organic and small-scale agriculture. There is a growing synergy between those peoples who are trying to protect their subsistence lifestyles and those who are struggling to recreate them - and it is this connection that I aim to explore. As Maria Mies puts it: “One group of people did not want to be ‘developed’ into the modern industrial society; others wanted to get out of it”. (Mies 1999, 16)

To lay the framework for such an exploration, this chapter explores how the globalization of the economy and agro-food system is affecting food production and farming in both the North and South, and especially women farmers in the study region.
of Ladakh, India. It also looks at the growing movement for local, organic food in the many parts of the North and how this relates to mainstream development efforts (such as those aimed at women in agriculture etc.) In failing to connect worldwide declining access to healthy, organic food, the fate of women agriculturalists and local farm-based cultures to the structure and institutions of the global economy, agriculture development efforts often fail to offer sustainable solutions.

The question inevitably rises - why focus on women when dealing with such a global issue that affects all of our lives? The debate about the precise nature of the connection between women and nature has shown that this connection is contentious and that its interpretation differs across cultures and ecological contexts. However, there is a strong body of ecofeminist literature that clearly demonstrates the links between women’s struggles and the fate of the environment in many different cultures. In many places, it is women and the land that suffer disproportionately from the breakdown of traditional agricultural systems (Mies and Shiva 1993). Feminist activists and scholars have been the most vociferous advocates of creating global connections in order to foster informed local transformations towards ecological sustainability (Thomas-Slayter et al. 1996). Thus, for community and development planning to be effective, the connections between women and the environment and between struggles for sustainable futures in all parts of the globe, must become and remain central.

2.1 The globalised agro-food system: a geography of separation.

Questions about global food supply, ecological health, hunger, malnutrition and access to food, matters of human and ecosystem needs, are often separated from research
and discussion about the profitable production of food, or agriculture and trade in agricultural goods (LeHeron 1993; Friedmann 1994). It can be argued that in the academic world, agriculture and food have taken on two distinct meanings, one economic and the other cultural. This theoretical separation also reflects a very real material separation that has occurred between the production and consumption of food. The great distances entailed in global food trade necessitate high levels of chemical preservatives and packaging, forming real geographic and material barriers between the original produce from the soil, and the food that the agro-food industry produces for consumption. The separation is so complete, that in some places, children have absolutely no idea how food is produced, or where it comes from (Newton 1999:3).

Since the rise of industrial capitalism, history can be seen as a pendulum moving between self-regulation by markets and self-protection by society. Food and food security become important as the pendulum reaches either pole (Polanyi 1957). We are now in an era where the pendulum has swung with unprecedented momentum towards self-regulation of markets forcing people and the earth to adjust entirely to market forces (Friedmann 1994). Indeed, in this phase of economic liberalisation and centralisation, agricultural production is increasingly driven by global organisational forces, and agriculture, once an intimate and localised relationship between people and nature, has now become an "agro-food system" in which wealth trickles up.

The turning point for agriculture came in 1986 during the 'Uruguay Round' of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Until this time, agriculture had been exempt from free trade policies, in order to protect local farmers. With the signing of the agreement, food and agricultural trade were globalised and liberalised (Mies 1999, 39).

3 For a review of this body of literature, see Rochleau, Thomas-Slater and Wangari (eds.). (1996).
Countries that signed on to the GATT, no longer had the option to protect local farmers or consumers by prioritising their own products over those of foreign companies. When the rules and regulations of the GATT were institutionalised in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1995, we entered an unprecedented era of globalisation, where it became illegal for countries, regions and local economies of any kind to put the needs of their citizens above the interests of global economic entities.

In return for entering into such agreements, members of the WTO are theoretically granted access to the inner circles of global economic decision-making. Many of the government representatives and advisors of the WTO are closely tied to multinational corporations, and thus have a vested interest in promoting the liberalisation of trade. But nations also face a catch twenty-two when it comes to membership in the WTO. The alternative is to remain marginal to the global economy and possibly suffer the inevitable consequences of losing jobs and foreign investment, both of which are essential for survival in the liberalised economic system.

The increasingly globalized agro-food system is characterised by energy-intensive food production, massive global trade in foodstuffs, specialization of cropping and large-scale agricultural production. In most countries, export-oriented agriculture is the norm, and most importantly, the whole system is becoming more and more centralised at a global level where it is shaped by a small number of very large, powerful multinational corporations and the men who control them. (Anderson 1999).

For example, even in 1992 transnational corporation (TNC) Cargil controlled 60% of the world cereal trade, while the largest three TNCs had 80% of the banana market and the biggest 3 had 83% of the cocoa trade and 85% of the tea trade (Madden
1992). Given the rate of mergers since that time, their shares have no doubt increased even more.

The term 'industrial' or intensive is often used to describe the agricultural system that has both spawned and benefitted from the globalisation of the economy. Industrial in this sense refers not only to the size of farms, or the use of machinery, but also to a type of agriculture that relies upon highly energy-intensive processes at all levels, from the production of seeds, to their distribution, to the machinery and fuel used in cultivation, and finally, to the massive processing and transportation infrastructures that support the whole system. As well, the term 'industrial' alludes to the culture of agriculture. Production of food is becoming increasingly industrialized: fast-paced, impersonal and commodified. The next section looks at how the industrial agricultural system is affecting ecosystems, self-reliant farming cultures, and women in both the North and South.

2.1.1 Impacts on the Ecosystem

Post-war development policies aimed at increasing economic growth above all else translated into a drive to increase production at all costs. In general, this has meant the industrialisation of agriculture, through chemical and mechanical means. The high yield variety (HYV) seeds which were introduced in India during the so-called 'Green Revolution' of the 1970's were one of the first instances of a mass-scale transformation of agriculture from subsistence to industrial agriculture with the view to increasing production (Shiva 1988). Despite the increases in biomass production and absolute food production that have resulted from the Green Revolution, and more recently the Genetic Modification revolution, large-scale, chemically-intensive monocropping has proven
extremely harmful to the land. With the Green Revolution, farming became petro-chemical dependent. Although some seeds do not require heavy chemical inputs to get the best results, the HYV seeds that were the hallmark of the Green Revolution, require the right combination of fertilizers, pesticides and water. In most cases, there is also a shift to mechanisation of agricultural production, which further increases the dependency of farmers on petro-chemicals.

In the 1990s, agro-technologies such as genetically modified seeds further increased our distance from the natural processes that have formed the basis of agriculture for centuries. Some of these new seeds are resistant to extremely high doses of pesticides, and others cannot reproduce naturally. The effect of these seed varieties and inputs are unknown at best, and extremely harmful to ecosystems and people at worst. An intense debate has grown around the question of what threats genetically modified crops themselves pose while still in the ground, and then as part of the food we eat. There are no clear answers as of yet, but there are striking parallels between the widespread adoption of GMO technologies and the way in which HYV seeds were accepted prior to comprehensive testing or study into both ecosystem and social system effects.

Another result of the adoption and intensive use of "manufactured" seed stocks, mono-cropping and reliance upon chemical inputs that has come with the increasing industrialisation of agriculture, is the reduction in seed varieties world-wide. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that in the twentieth century, three quarters of all genetic diversity of agricultural crops was lost, and that of the one hundred and fifty plant species now cultivated, just three (wheat, maize and rice) supply sixty percent of all calories that humans derive from plants (Shand 1997). In India, historically,
30,000 varieties of rice were grown. Now a mere ten varieties cover 75% of the whole cultivated rice area. Statistics such as these are cause for concern, especially when we consider the fact that large tracts of singular crops are especially vulnerable to disease. A virulent disease affecting one species could potentially wipe out one third of the world's food stocks (Shand 1997).

The cycle of industrial agriculture is vicious and unrelenting. Farming methods that rely on large amounts of chemical fertilizer do not replenish the soil's natural fertility. All over the world, traditional methods of maintaining soil fertility, such as the use of livestock manure or human nightsoil, have been abandoned in favour of chemical methods. Farmers are then required to use ever more fertilizer and pesticides in order to merely maintain levels of production. Studies in India and the Philippines have shown that after dramatic increases in yields in the early stages of technological transformation, they soon begin to drop steadily because of declining soil fertility. (Sharma 1999; World Game Institute 1996 in Moore Lappe et al. 1998)

When you take into account the full ecological costs of industrial agriculture, including reduction in the world's plant genetic resources, salination and desertification of agricultural lands, depletion of groundwater and soil loss, there is no question that the current system of large-scale, intensive farming is unsustainable. There is also growing evidence to show that small-scale, diverse organic agriculture is actually more productive overall than intensive monocropping (FAO 1980). Certainly, if only biomass output is measured - the intensive monocrops do produce more than small-scale organic farms (at least in the early stages of their adoption). However, the production, has much greater

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4 In 1970, India used an average of 12.7 kg/ha of fertilizer, by 1999 the figure stood at 76.6 (World Game Institute, 1996 in World Hunger 1999 p.68).
costs, both social and environmental and economic, which are often hidden from the consumer due to extremely large government subsidies to research, development and transportation infrastructures. It has been shown by Cambridge geographer Tim Bayliss-Smith that traditional rice farming in Asia, for example, produced ten times the energy in food than was used to grow it (Moore Lappe 1998). By contrast, the Green Revolution rice production cuts this net gain in half and there is absolutely no gain at all in fully industrialized agricultural systems such as the USA.

The most common argument in support of industrial agriculture and against traditional, small-scale farming, is that such intensive farming is a necessity in the face of such enormous population growth. There is no doubt that with a global population nearing 6 billion, and by some estimates, 40 children born every minute - the issue of more mouths to feed is very real. However, the leap from this problem to a solution involving highly intensive, chemical and fossil-fuel based agriculture is logically tenuous at best. Most literature attests to the fact that the environmental degradation caused by farming is a factor of simply too many farmers trying to eke out a living on too little land (D.H. Meadows et al. 1992). In 1998, contrary to neo-Malthusian warnings of overpopulation and scarce food resources, the world was actually producing enough grain alone to provide every human being on the planet with a diet in excess of 3500 calories, each day (Moore Lappe et al. 1998).

India ranks among the top of Third World exporters of agricultural products, and yet, according to the FAO (1996) more than 200 million Indians are chronically malnourished. The same pattern can be seen in the industrialised countries such as the

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UK, or the United States, where 30 million Americans cannot afford to eat a healthy diet and 20.1% of children are at risk of hunger. Food production has kept up with population growth, but equitable distribution has not (Lang 1996). To understand how such an unequal situation can exist, we must look at the socio-cultural ramifications of the global agro-food system.

2.1.2 Impacts on farming cultures

The global economic system and the globalisation of food and farming is not only affecting ecosystems, it is also incorporating rural places and people on unfavourable terms, in most cases, rendering their livelihoods untenable. (Sachs 1996)\(^6\) In the business of producing large quantities of single crops for export, there is no question that large-scale intensive farms are at an advantage, and in almost every region of the world, export-oriented agriculture (whether it is export from the region, or from the country) is the direction of agricultural policy. As farmers are being encouraged to produce monocrops for export, they are giving up producing food for their own needs, to produce food for others and to receive money in return. As one Indian author pointed out, "The person who needs food to eat is important only insofar as he has the requisite purchasing power to pay the price asked for, whatever his nationality (Rajesh 1999, 38)". This switch from self-sufficiency, to a fully commodified and mono-crop system, where access to food is only assured to those who have the money to purchase what they need, is one of

\(^6\) Sachs (1996) makes the point that the global economy incorporates rural places and people on unfavourable terms in comparison to their 'urban counterparts' because people in rural areas have fewer and less remunerative income-earning opportunities. I think this is a debatable point given that there are many benefits to being rural 'poor' rather than urban 'poor' - eg. there is usually some access to food in a rural area - family is more likely to be present, some sense of community etc.. Sachs does not make it clear who exactly the 'urban counterparts' are, that she refers to - and this seems to be a crucial point.
the most devastating effects of agricultural transition from subsistence to industrial production, and is at the heart of the breakdown of rural societies.

As the amount and cost of agricultural inputs increase, and yields increase concomitantly, profit per acre diminishes and only a small proportion of farms can survive. In the simplest sense, an agricultural system involving vast tracts of mechanically and/or chemically tended crops is biased towards the large-scale farm and involves fewer farmers. The bio-industrialisation of agriculture leaves farmers with little option, but to remain on the technological treadmill of mechanical and chemical dependence, and this has proven untenable for many producers (LeHeron 1993). All over the world, the gap between large, commercial farms and small, marginal farms is widening (Friedmann 1994, 22). This is leading both to the breakdown of rural communities and cultures, and to the complete destruction of rural livelihoods.

In the North, the process of transformation from small-scale, decentralised farming to a fully industrialised and centralised system is almost complete. Large-scale farms have all but obliterated the once prosperous family farm sector as small farmers struggle to compete in the increasingly competitive global market-place by intensifying and mechanising their production. Concentration of farmland has been steady since the 1920’s (Sachs 1996, 51). In 1998, only 1% of the population in the USA lived on family owned and operated farms, while less than a century ago, more than 50% of North Americans lived on farms. The United States Department of Agriculture Commission on Small Farms reported that in 1998 there were 300 000 fewer farms than in 1979. Pointing to the fact that only 4 firms now control over 80% of the beef market, the Commission
stated that "the ownership over agricultural assets is increasingly concentrated in fewer and fewer hands (USDA 1998, 8)."

In India, as in other parts of South Asia, the industrialisation of agriculture is still in the relatively early stages - but this means that the effects of the global agro-food system on the small farming sector are even more stark. Between 1956 and 1991, there has been a decrease in the agricultural workforce from 70% to 65% and while this may not seem like a drastic reduction, even the conservative Indian publication, the Financial Express, states that "this in turn makes the rural population environmental refugees who head towards metros, resulting in increasing incidences of dissatisfaction, frustration and violence (March 30, 1999)."

In both the North and South, farming families are being continually forced to relocate to urban centres where, more often than not, they join the ranks of the unemployed. Migration to the cities is in part fed by, and in part feeds, the marginalisation of rural peoples and their subsistence livelihoods (Ecologist 1993). The decline of rural communities and the incredible pressure on small farmers is leading to tragic results. At a meeting of farming organisations in the U.K., one woman stood up to say that she knew many farmers wives who could not leave their homes for fear that their husbands would kill themselves. Another farmer spoke about the increasing pace of farm bankruptcies. In the past twelve months, the area where he farms which used to support 55 people, now only supports 12.7

The same pattern can be seen in India. In 1998, more than 400 farmers across Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra committed suicide because of debts and

diseased harvests. In 1999, farmers in Kolar, Karnataka threatened similar suicides because the harvest was too bountiful. In both cases, these farmers became indebted in order to grow one crop for export, and when the crop failed in one case, and in the other case, when there was a glut in the market, they were left without the capacity to provide even the most basic needs for their families. This debt-trap has also led to suicides and despair in even the more agriculturally prosperous states such as the Punjab (Ibid).

2.1.3 Impacts on Women Farmers

This well-documented break-down of rural communities and cultures, has different effects on men and women. There is an established feminist critique of the gender-differentiated effects of growth-based development policies in the Global South, which draws examples from South Asia, Africa and elsewhere (Moser 1993). Similar (though less numerous) studies in Northern countries such as the USA, come to similar conclusions (Sachs 1996). In both cases, it is clear that there is an increasing reliance on women workers in both the formal and the informal economy in both rural and urban areas, and as Sachs (1996) points out "lives of women that are entirely different, are tied together through global economies (p.141)."

Studies of growth-based development in the South show that as subsistence economies are broken down and money replaces food as the basic human need, males are driven out of agriculture, and into urban centers or other regions in search of industrial (or non-agricultural) employment (Agarwal 1992; Koopman 1997; Metha 1996). The absence of male members of the household increases the workloads of women farmers,

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8 "Tomato price fall forces Assam Farmers to Commit Suicide". New Indian Express (New Delhi, India), March 23, 1999.
who are left with the burden of household and farm work (Arunachalam 1998). Women have always held important, often primary, positions as agriculturists, and in fact women produce the majority of the world's food (Boserup 1970; Mies 1988; Sachs 1996, 45).

For example, in India, it is estimated that women constitute three quarters of the agricultural labor force, and this proportion is increasing (Alka, Janaki and Archana 1997, 22).  

Even though women's workloads and the importance of their work are increasing, their participation in decision-making, and the value of their roles are not rising accordingly. In subsistence-based economies, the household is an important nexus of decision-making, and so women have a great deal of influence on decisions that affect their families and communities. With the break-down of subsistence systems, the household is no longer an important centre, and decisions that affect communities are now increasingly made in city-centres, and even at a global level, by agricultural and economic officials. Women are thus marginalised from decision-making and their realms of influence are rendered relatively meaningless. Thus, as Metha (1996) suggests, there is a growing dissonance between women's roles as agriculturists and the social recognition accorded to them.

The importance of women's roles in agriculture and farming has been well-documented since Boserup's study in the 1970's. Despite this, in development projects that focus upon agricultural production, women's role in agriculture has often been 

9"Problem of Plenty." International Herald Tribune (New Delhi, India). March 15, 1999

10 The same estimates are made about women's role in agriculture in the USA, but there is very little data to support this. Whatmore (1991) points out how difficult it is to gather meaningful information about women's roles in agriculture when the women subjects everyday activities and ways of making sense of the world are structured within and reproduce the ideological apparatus of a patriarchal sex-gender order. For example, women may do multiple tasks and work exceptionally long hours, and still refer to all of their work as 'helping'.

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overlooked (Mies 1988; Sachs 1996). There is also an implicit assumption that women’s role and position can be improved in most ‘agricultural development’ projects, despite or even because of the structural changes in agriculture that we have discussed. Women’s education projects proliferate, as do income generation schemes designed to ‘liberate’ women from the prison of rural communities and households. This focus, while important for its recognition of women’s existence and centrality, does nothing to question the breakdown of the communities themselves and to change the inequalities and suffering that now characterise so much of rural life.

Most agricultural projects and programs have been aimed at the male-headed household, as if it were a homogenous unit (Koopman 1997) and at farming, as if it was merely a technical function, the objective of which is simply to produce as much food as possible. In fact, there are definite gender differences in the distribution of subsistence resources within most rural households (Agarwal 1992: 137) and farming is a complex activity which is deeply interconnected with all other aspects of life. In remaining blind to these issues, projects and programs intended to improve agricultural conditions as a whole have tended to benefit men, while ignoring women’s knowledge and skills and the multiple dimensions of food production.

2.2 Responses and Forms of Resistance

The ecological, cultural and societal changes occurring as a result of the globalisation of agriculture have not gone unnoticed or unchallenged. In both North and South, there is a growing and diverse movement of individuals and groups who are trying to regenerate healthy agri/cultures. However, the sustainable agriculture movement in the
North is rarely depicted as a "women's issue", but rather as a general social and environmental concern. Nevertheless, women play a prominent role in the sustainable agricultural movement in the North, and indeed a study by Sachs (1996) shows that women are believed to do most of the work in the movement, while men attain the formal positions of authority and leadership. She shows that while women pursue the practical aspects of issues and contribute to the success of the sustainable agriculture movement, rarely do they introduce feminist concerns as key issues.

The 'sustainable agriculture' movement began in North America in the 1970s to address problems associated with conventional, industrial agriculture. In the late 1990s, this movement enjoyed a new burst of popularity. Non-governmental organisations critiquing industrial agriculture and promoting various alternatives are proliferating. Consumer-based initiative such as ‘Green box schemes’ and farmers markets are appearing in cities and towns in North America and Europe alike, and there is the tremendous surge of interest in organic farming and a concomittant rejection of genetically modified food. Friends of the Earth reports that the “staggering growth of interest in organic food is nothing less than a revolution (FOE 1999). There is growing interest among producers themselves in ‘new’ techniques such as permaculture and organic growing as well as direct marketing.

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11 I use the term ‘sustainable agriculture movement’ loosely in this context to refer to any and all groups, individuals and organisations working for an alternative to industrial-style agriculture and food production. This ranges from production-based initiatives such as permaculture, or organic farming to consumer-driven projects such as farmers markets, green-box schemes and community-supported agriculture to policy-level action such as the ‘International Forum on Agriculture’ or RAFI. Of course there was not one consistent movement, in the same way that there is not ‘one’ environmental movement, or one ‘women’s movement’.

12 According to the Soil Association (a UK-based organic certifying and campaigning organisation), from the spring of 1998 to the spring of 1999 the number of farmers markets grew from 30 to 140 (“The Organic Food and Farming Report” Soil Association 1999). The same trend can be seen in the USA, where 2400 such market are visited by one million people each week and gross US $1 billion each year. In addition,
The connections between women and sustainable agriculture, as well as between women and the environment, have been made much more clearly in the South. This may be because women's survival is most directly affected by the globalization of agriculture in countries where subsistence agriculture systems still exist to some degree. There is a growth of social movements in the South such as the Chipko movement in India and the Greenbelt movement in Africa that are examples of women promoting their own livelihoods and resisting the processes of development that they perceive as threatening. In both cases, they reject the notion of 'development' as defined by government and development institutions. (Sen and Grown 1987). Other examples of women's activism around agriculture are the proliferation of 'seed-saving' initiatives such as Navdanya in Dehra Dun, India, and permaculture projects such as Jajarakot Permaculture Project, both of which aim to preserve local seed stocks and to promote sustainable forms of agriculture based upon local traditions and techniques. The much-publicised success of these movements has inspired many writer and activists both in the South and the North.

The growth in the ‘sustainable agriculture movement’ globally is also connected with the global intensification of civil society activity that are increasingly moving planning out of an exclusively state dominated field. Dealing with the latter of these

25000 households participate in Community Supported Agriculture Schemes and the same upswell in direct marketing initiatives can be seen occurring in Japan (Pretty 1998).

There is a real danger of reifying the activism of Third World Women when it suits the purpose of Western and Western-educated feminists and environmentalists and supports the notion that the needs and desires of all women suffering under patriarchal oppression are the same (Hirschman 1995). Despite the validity of this claim, there is an equally substantial argument in favor of celebrating the similarities rather than the differences between women’s experiences. Wieringa (1995) suggests that there are more similarities than differences between northern and southern women, specifically pointing out that women in southern countries have a long history of activism and are not only concerned with survival issues, but also political analysis and activism. Udayagiri (1996) takes this idea further and points out that the political mobilization of women requires the recognition of common problems and shared values among them.

See Shiva (in Mies and Shiva 1993) as well as Agarwal (1992) for two very different treatments of this movement.
points, Peet and Watt point to "the explosive growth of organisations and civic movements around sustainability with an implicit critique (and an alternative vision) of development (1996, 13)". Writing about globalization and democracy, Sakamoto (1991 cited in Sreberny-Mohammadi 1996: 19) calls on us to "express our full humanity by identifying ourselves as citizens of the globe".15

The process of globalisation is also presenting new opportunities for transnational communication and cooperation. The growing network of communication around the world gives us a new perspective on the interconnectedness of our planetary well-being. Poverty in one area does not occur without affluence in another. Excessive resource use in one part of the world must necessarily result in ecological degradation in another.

15 These are heartening words, but feminists and environmentalists alike have been amongst the first to point out that the increasing visibility of civil society at a time of market triumphalism is deeply ironic (Peet and Watt 1996). The rise of civil society is good for both the market liberalists and the social activists (Krut 1997). The devolving of responsibility to civil society organisations is happening all over the world, in concert with the move towards privatisation in many Northern countries. Many aid agencies are utilising NGO's as implementing organisations and in the North, social services are increasingly being left up to charity and voluntary organisations. Given the majority of people staffing these organisations are women, and that many of them are volunteers, this calls into question the emancipatory nature of the global civil society.

Nevertheless, for the first time NGO's are being given access to UN agencies and decision-making power. On the one hand, this signals a democratisation of the development process, and a real attempt on the part of the major aid agencies to listen to the views of the people. Indeed, concepts originally intended to challenge the conventional structures of growth-oriented, industrial development are now in regular discussion in mainstream agencies such as the World Bank and the United Nations. As with 'sustainability' movement in general, 'sustainable agriculture' has now entered the mainstream agriculture and development policy-making, as well as popular consciousness. Despite the fact that the agenda for 'sustainable agriculture' and other environmental issues has necessarily become narrow, and technical in order to be included in mainstream policy-making (Sachs 1996), there is no question that the inclusion of such categories of analysis such as 'women' and 'environment' is a step forward. However, the real irony is that just at a time when these issues are being addressed, and civil society is being welcomed into the mainstream development and government agencies, these institutions are at their weakest in terms of real influence.

As Krut (1997) points out in her analysis of NGOs role in governance, with all our heady enthusiasm for the growing influence of civil society, it is easy to forget that most of the 'important' decisions that affect peoples lives are made behind the closed doors of the international financial organizations such as the WTO. These institutions are showing absolutely no interest in broadening the debate to include NGO's but they are reversing the process to their advantage by assuming the identity of Business NGO's in order to be included in the benefits of a broadening civil society influence, and being included in governmental decision-making. So, while the emergence of a strong global civil society is enabling and informing new forms of resistance and organising in both the North and the South, it is also playing into the hands and pocketbooks of the very forces of globalization that it opposes.
However, there are many challenges facing collaborative action between the North and South. In development literature, there is rarely a connection made between the upsurge of sustainable agriculture movements in the North and the struggles to maintain subsistence/sustainable livelihoods in the South. A common view amongst mainstream development agencies is that consumers and producers in the North can 'afford' to think about organic food, about returning to smaller-scale production and even going 'back to the land'. In the South, communities need more development - and more often than not, this is equated with economic growth. It is perceived as self-indulgent for the North to talk of self-sufficiency when small farmers in other parts of the world are struggling to survive. The implication of this argument is that farmers in every part of the world will be better off if they cease producing for their own needs and begin to produce for export, an argument we have seen to be untenable.

Despite the rhetoric of 'helping' the poor farmers in the South, many development in the North adhere strictly to a double standard. For example, while the British government is putting legislation in place to protect the British public from the potential hazards of crops grown with genetically modified seeds, these same seeds are being given away to small farmers in India. The justification for this is that the farmers in India are in such dire need of increased productivity because the only way to overcome their poverty is to sell more products to the North. This same justification was used ten years

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In a discussion with the Chief Agricultural Officer in Leh, Ladakh, I mentioned the debate over genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Canada, the US and Europe. He had never heard of GMO’s, nor was he aware that there was a controversy over their use. Given that Monsanto has recently taken over the biggest seed laboratory in India, from which all government supplies of seeds are issued, it seemed possible that farmers in Ladakh are being sold and given genetically modified seed. I have since learned from investigating this matter further that it is unlikely that Ladakhis are receiving GM seed yet, as there are no GM varieties of barley in India yet - however with the way things are going, it is only a matter of time.
ago when farmers in India were given and then sold DDT for pesticides, after it had been banned in most Northern countries (DDT is now banned internationally).

Despite of and because of these challenges, there is no question that a deeper dialogue between grassroots actions for sustainable agriculture in the North and South is needed. But how do the movements for sustainable agriculture interact with each other, and what are the limitations and opportunities for their cooperation? This thesis examines one attempt to create such a dialogue.

2.3 Conclusion

The globalization of agro-food systems is deeply affecting women's livelihoods and the ecosystems upon which we all depend. This brief review has shown how the globalisation of the agro-food system is affecting us all, particularly women, rural communities and the environment, in all parts of the globe. In Ladakh, India, Ladakhi women activists, organising in cooperation with an international non-governmental organisation, ISEC, are experimenting with very localised forms of resistance that are based upon the premise of global civil society and the possibility of transnational activism through dialogue between North and South. The opportunities and constraints faced by these initiatives provide insight into the potential for such activism to lead to positive, transformational social change by supporting the existing land-based rural culture in Ladakh and in inspiring and catalysing a shift in perception of non-Ladakhi participants that will lead to deeply informed renewal initiatives in their own communities.
CHAPTER III 'WHAT IS THE POINT OF GROWING YOUR OWN GRAIN THEN?'
AGRICULTURE AND CHANGE IN LADAKH, INDIA

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief introduction to the case study region of Ladakh, India, including an overview of the social, ecological and political context of the project. It examines how the globalization of agriculture is affecting Ladakhi agriculture, culture and environment. This is accomplished by examining, first, the general political and economic development of Ladakh and secondly, the changing roles of women in agriculture in Ladakh, as well as their involvement in planning and decision-making in the region to date.

This study is concerned with the Leh region of Ladakh, which is a predominantly Buddhist area (though there are some Muslim Ladakhis in the Leh district, most reside in the Kargil district to the southwest)\(^{17}\). The Buddhist influence is what immediately strikes visitors to the region - from the long mani walls that line many village pathways and roads, to the ubiquitous presence of prayer flags strung from roof-tops and high passes. Monasteries are visible on the stark hills above many villages, and the low chant of prayers can be heard drifting across the fields. This cultural heritage is what has primarily interested scholars of the region, as Ladakh is the last remaining example of indigenous Tibetan Buddhism. Recently, more attention has focused on the changes occurring in Ladakh since it has been opened to the outside world. This chapter draws on this latter body of work, as well as interviews with women farmers and government agricultural officials.
3.1 Ladakh - geographical, political, cultural, economic context.

Ladakh is geographically located high in the Western Himalayas, in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir. The region covers 82,665 square kilometers at altitudes of between 2500 and 8500 meters. The area accounts for almost half the area of the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir, but the population of 171,541 (1991 Census) comprise less than 2% of the state's population. It is surrounded on all sides by the vast and complex folds of the Himalayan Mountains that form the divide between continental Asia and the sub-continent of India. Chinese-occupied Tibet lies to the north east and east, Pakistan to the northwest, the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh to the South, and Jammu and Kashmir to the southwest. The high altitude landscape is barren and dry, and the climate is extreme with temperatures ranging from 30 degrees centigrade in the summer to -50 degrees centigrade in the winter.

The human population of Ladakh has traditionally lived widely dispersed in small agricultural villages (Norberg-Hodge 1991). For centuries, Ladakhis pursued a relatively self-reliant existence, economically based upon subsistence agriculture and trade with Tibet in pashm, salt and dried apricots. Small communities based upon formal and informal systems of cooperative labor, lived in delicate balance with the harsh environment and severe climate of the Himalayan desert. Villages grew up in valleys where the melt-water from glaciers provided sufficient irrigation to sustain barley and wheat fields. This limiting factor also determined the size of villages and populations that

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17 In the Leh District 81% of the population is Buddhist, 15% is Muslim and the remainder are Hindu, Sikh and Christian (Handbook of Statistics 1997-98)
18 When speaking of "traditional" Ladakh, it is with the recognition that Ladakh (like every other culture) has been in a process of constant change and refinement of response to the existing climatic and environmental conditions. In the case of Ladakh, these involve severe limitations brought both by the climate and the carrying capacity of the land and social and economic systems. Patterns of work and family life have developed to cope with these in a holistic manner (Rizvi 1998 173).
were necessarily kept stable through the practices of polyandry, primogeniture and monasticism (for both girls and boys). Animals such as sheep, goats, donkeys, cows and dzo (a cross between the cow and yak) played an important part in Ladakhi agriculture, providing dung for fuel, labor transport, wool and milk. The firm agricultural base in Ladakh allowed for a flourishing of culture, arts and religion.

Despite the peaceful village existence, Ladakh has been the site of political conflict for as long as recorded history. Despite being remote, and relatively resource poor, the region has acted as an important trade center for centuries. Due to its strategic position at the confluence of five major trading routes, Ladakh has been buffered by the age-old attempts of Buddhist Tibet and Muslim Kashmir to gain political control. Before the creation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1846, Ladakh was a kingdom of its own. Today, in terms of culture and religion, Ladakh's bond with Tibet is still paramount, but politically and economically, Ladakh is fully integrated into the Indian system (Kaul and Kaul 1992; Rizvi 1998, 75). Trade between Ladakh and Tibet came to an abrupt end when the Chinese invaded Tibet in 1959 and since then, the economy of the region has undergone rapid and deep changes. Ladakh's agriculture and culture have been transformed by India's ambitious program of economic development combined with the burgeoning tourist industry (Rizvi 1998 93).

3.2 Developing Dependency: Forces of change in Agriculture in Ladakh

The four major agents for development and change in Ladakh are the State government's economic development policies, tourism, the large-scale military presence in the region, and the growing NGO sector. All are interconnected (e.g. the government
participates in tourism development). In a region such as this, which is still predominantly agricultural, all development changes have an impact upon agriculture and upon women’s role in farming. Education, technological changes, road building and outside influences all impact upon the local economic system which is still primarily based upon small-scale agriculture.

3.2.1 Government Policy and Agriculture

Agricultural development in Ladakh is driven by the Jammu and Kashmir government, which in turn is directed by Central Indian government policy. The Indian Central and State governments hold paternalistic views about the region and there is the sense that government agents feel that Ladakh is economically backwards and in need of great change. This perspective is evident in the language used to describe economic development in the region. One Indian scholar writes that Ladakh must emerge “from its economic swaddling clothes” (Kaul and Kaul 1992, 314). Uniquely, the Leh district of Ladakh has its own regional government, which was formed in 1991. The Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) has the final say on projects and

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19 Small-scale agriculture is still the predominant characteristic of the Ladakh, local economy. According to the J&K Handbook of Statistics 1997-98, in the Leh district there is a total of 112 inhabited villages, of which 28 have a population of less than 200. 80% of land-holdings in the district are 2 ha or less and of the ‘working’ population the district, 66% are classified as ‘cultivators’ (a small percentage of those are ‘agricultural labourers’). Interestingly, 49% of the rural population is classified as ‘non-working’, which leads to the question of how a ‘working cultivator’ is defined. In addition, only 39% of the ‘cultivators and agricultural labourers’ are female. Every other piece of data gathered during this research, including interviews with government officials and women farmers – as well as my own observations – contradict this statistic. It is common knowledge that women make up the majority of the agricultural labour force. I can only assume that the census data is not sufficiently accurate, or that very few women farmers are actually included in the 1991 Census from which this data was derived.

20 The powers of the LAHDC are somewhat unclear and much debated – the regional government theoretically has power over basic planning, such as education, urban planning and agriculture – however in reality the capacity of the LAHDC to implement its own programs is very much tied to the political climate and specifically the relationship with the J&K State government. According to Executive Hill Councilor Thubstan Chewang, in the past few years the LAHDC has been unable to operate effectively
plans relating to agriculture, but according to the agricultural officers themselves, this relationship is more or less cursory.\textsuperscript{21}

In general, government agricultural policy at all levels is in line with the Central Indian government's policy of intensive capital investment and export-oriented development. This translates locally into policies and programs aimed at increasing agricultural productivity in the region as well as the cultivation of export opportunities and the implementation of a Food Grain Distribution program designed to provide food grains at highly subsidised costs to Ladakhis.

Concern with the productivity of Ladakhi agriculture has arisen partly because of the supposed malnutrition of Ladakhis 'proven' by the fact that the average Ladakhi is relatively short. Despite intense international debate about the desirable standard for physical fitness and nutrition, the official perceptions of an unproductive agriculture have paved the way for the introduction of subsidized chemical inputs and the importation of subsidized foods (Osmaston 1989:6). In addition to this, rising population caused concern that Ladakh would not be able to meet its food needs. The indigenous population of Ladakh rose steadily during the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century\textsuperscript{22}, and the numbers of outsiders living in the region have also grown substantially due to military expansion and government services.

Direct agricultural productivity projects undertaken by the District Agricultural Department\textsuperscript{23} in Leh District include the introduction and subsidizing of High Yield

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\textsuperscript{21} Mr. Tsewang Dorje, District Agriculture Officer, J&K, Leh, Personal Communication, August 1999.

\textsuperscript{22} The population of the Leh District has grown by 45% between 1951 and 1991 (1991 Census data).

\textsuperscript{23} The District Agriculture Department is a branch of the Jammu and Kashmir State government Agriculture department. This Department works closely with the Shree Kashmir University Research Station – an agricultural research branch of the Shree Kashmir University which is funded by the Central Indian Government with World Bank Funding (Mr. Wazir Ali, Shree Kashmir University Research Station, Director. Personal Communication, August 1999)
\end{flushleft}
Variety seeds, chemical fertilizers, agricultural technologies (such as threshing machines and mechanical tillers), irrigation and various export-oriented projects such as floriculture, vegetable production and mushroom production. The aim of these programs is both to increase the volume of food crops in the region and create substantial cash income for Ladakhi farmers through the export of excess produce and other agricultural products.

Since the introduction of such government programs, the area under High Yield Variety (HYV) cultivation has risen from 16 ha in 1981-82, to 4130 ha in 1995-96 (Rizvi 1998). Chemical fertilizer use is also on the increase. In the Leh district, (with a total cropped area of 17,000 ha), the annual consumption of chemical fertilizers has risen from 3000 Quintals to 8000 Quintals in the last two years (Hyder 1999). Productivity has also risen in this period from 16 000 MT to 22 000 MT. According to the Chief Agricultural Officer, most of this increased productivity is due to the introduction of HYV seeds (as is the concomitant increase in chemical fertilizers – the HYV varieties of seed, particularly wheat, are high-feeding and require fertilizer supplements)\(^{24}\). The technicians of the Agricultural Department estimate that HYV variety seeds contribute around 30% to the productivity of the district (Rizvi 1998). The mechanization of agriculture is another central program of the State Government. This includes the introduction of threshing machines, mechanical tillers and bundling machines at a 50% subsidy rate to farmers. The final agricultural development program is aimed at ‘diversification’ - accomplished

\(^{24}\) Mr. Gulam Hyder Chief Agricultural Officer, J&K, Leh District. Personal Communication, August 1999.
through the distribution of new seeds, both for food crops and in the last two years, for ornaments.\textsuperscript{25}

A development program that indirectly affects agriculture in Ladakh is the Central Government Food Distribution program that distributes subsidised foodgrains (rice and wheat-flour) at subsidised rates to feed Ladakh's growing population.\textsuperscript{26} The Public Distribution System was originally set up in the 1950’s to provide food supplies to poor areas of India, as part of the Indian government’s five year plans to promote self-sufficiency at a national level (Sharma 1999). In 1962, when the Leh-Srinagar road was opened, the program was extended to Ladakh because J&K was considered to be a ‘food shortage’ area. The program has indeed provided cheap food to Ladakhis \textsuperscript{27} but at the expense of Ladakh's self-reliance in food, as farmers find it is cheaper to purchase imported food grains than to grow their own. This has created a dependence on handouts, and depressed agricultural production through price competition (Rizvi 1998; Osmaston 1989). Mr. Wazir Ali, Director of the Shree Kashmir Research Station commented on the multi-faceted impacts of the Food Distribution System:

Now, with the new Distribution System of food grains, people prefer to plant the fodder crops rather than the food grains. People are not worried about their own food, more for the fodder for their animals. Of course this has been a negative setback for our agriculture also....If things are easily available, why should we go out into the fields and work hard?

\textsuperscript{25} 'Floriculture' is an agricultural program of the Indian government nation-wide (Sharma 1999). In 1999 several farmers in Sabu, Ladakh planted gladiolas on what had been barley fields - the flowers were to be sold to a Delhi agent, for export to Holland. The plane bringing the agent was delayed by several days due to bad weather conditions and by the time he arrived, the gladiolas were unsaleable. The farmers lost all of the capital they had invested and were left with fewer food stocks for the winter.

\textsuperscript{26} Kerosene is also provided at a subsidized rate under the Public Distribution System

\textsuperscript{27} The Director of Food and Supplies, Leh District estimates that the PDS supplies 100 000 people with basic foodstuffs in Ladakh. That means that every Ladakhi is in receipt of subsidized food (as well as many outsiders). The subsidy level fluctuates according to income level.
Ironically, the long-term plan of the Central government (in line with the WTO directive to phase out direct subsidies to agriculture and food) is to reduce the subsidies and eventually eliminate them, leaving Ladakhis with very little choice but to purchase their food at full cost (see Appendix 3 for details of subsidy levels).

Research shows that pre-chemical input agricultural yields in Ladakh are very good by international standards and exceptional for a Third World country (Osmaston 1989:4) (See Appendix 1). The traditional system attains these yields without the use of artificial fertilizers, by a careful system of recycling essential crop nutrients through human and animal consumers (i.e. use of manure and night soil). This is supplemented by rotational cropping with peas (except in highest areas) to provide additional nitrogen. Livestock plays an essential part in the agricultural cycle, especially for the production of dung, for ploughing and threshing. In spite of the proven excellence of Ladakhi traditional agriculture, the Indian government has taken it for granted that it could be improved by the introduction of chemical fertilizers and the introduction of HYV crops (Rizvi 1998) as well as the importation of low-cost food grains.

Some farmers are beginning to challenge the value of chemical inputs and one farmer who has reverted completely to organic, traditional methods of cultivation says that others are beginning to do so as well.\textsuperscript{28} Pesticides are now hardly in use at all in Ladakh (Hyder 1999). DDT was phased out when the international ban was put in place, but even other pesticides are now not often used by farmers. Says District Agricultural Officer Mr. Tsewang Dorje:

Farmers come to me and ask for these pesticides and chemicals and these sorts of things. But I always tell them -- don't use these things. It's not good. From the religious point of view and

\textsuperscript{28} Aba-LaGruk, personal communication July 1998.
scientific point of view it is also not good. After all, it is poison. Poison is not good. It is a health hazard. It will have implications in due course of time. So we have reduced it now. But still it is a problem (personal communication July 1999).

Mr. Dorje attributes the growth in awareness about the negative effects of pesticides to the Ecology movement in Ladakh - but despite this growth in awareness at the grassroots (including in this case the District Agriculture officer), government policy is still to subsidise pesticides as well as fertilizers.

Apart from specific government programs for agricultural development, and the Public Distribution System, one of the greatest impacts on Ladakhi Agriculture has been the demographic changes in the region in the past fifty years. Both the military presence and the tourism industry have brought more people into Ladakh, creating new and different demands for produce. As well, education and the introduction of wage labour into Ladakh have had significant influences upon agriculture.

3.2.2 Military conflict and development

The Military has always been an important factor in the development and change of Ladakh. Serious development interest in Ladakh began when military conflicts with Pakistan heightened in the 1960s (Rizvi 1998; Crook and Osmaston 1994). In order to provide access for the military and supplies, the first road accessible to motor vehicles was built from Srinagar to Leh in 1962. Many development efforts since then have been driven by a perceived need to assert a strategic presence in the border region as much as by the altruistic desire to ‘improve’ conditions in Ladakh (Michaud 1993). One researcher states:
The Janus face of politics makes it plausible that an increase in the political security of this touchy region would almost certainly reduce the heavy investments currently being made in this remote sub-provinc. (Crook 1994 807).

The formal government investments however, only account for a fraction of the impact that the army has on Ladakh. By 1998, there are an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 Indian army personnel in Ladakh and this has many ramifications for the social, economic and ecological fabric of the region (Rizvi 1998 184). The full-time presence of the army has led to an increased demand for market vegetables.²⁹ The business has grown to be very lucrative. It is estimated that the total value of business done in 1994-95 was an impressive 74 lakhs of rupees³⁰ (Rizvi 1998, 184). However, the resulting increase in household income is not the only effect of the increased vegetable production. It has also come at the expense of family self-sufficiency in food. Cultivation of fruit and vegetables for the army is creating more work for women, as they are the primary farmers, and some families are turning barley fields over to potato cultivation in order to capitalize on the demand for this popular tuber (Hyder 1999). In addition to the direct impact upon agriculture, the Indian army is one of the largest employers in the region, employing an estimated one in three Ladakhi men³¹. This employment again contributes to an increase in women's workloads on the farm.

²⁹ Vegetables were first introduced to Ladakh by Christian Missionaries (Mr. Wazir Ali, Director Shree Kashmir University Research Station, personal communication July 1999).
³⁰ 74 lakh rupees is equal to approximately $257,400.00 (CDN).
³¹ Employment data does not include 'military' as a parameter so the specific numbers of Ladakhi men in army employment are not available.
3.2.3 Tourism and development

Another factor influencing development and change of agriculture in Ladakh is the tourism industry. In 1974, Ladakh was opened to tourism, and since then, the pace of development has sped up:

Since 1974, various government developmental measures and the impact of tourism have caused large-scale upheavals in the socio-economic system. This has led to changes from an economy involving traditional barter to the growing diversification and monetization. It has also led to changing social values and the emergence of an entrepreneurial 'upper class' in the erstwhile homogenous social structure. (Chatterji 1994, 788)

In 1978, the first Indian Airlines planes began flying to Leh, the capital of Ladakh. The extreme weather and isolated location of Ladakh keep it relatively isolated for more than half the year. In the winter, the roads close and in bad weather, planes cannot fly in or out. However, during the 4-5 months of the year when roads are accessible, Ladakh is flooded with tourists coming to experience the unique culture, environment and terrain. Tourism reached its peak in 1988 when 25,000 tourists visited Ladakh during the summer months (Jayapal 1995:2).

The government has done little to formally promote tourism (Rizvi 1998), leaving it mostly to private enterprise. But government policy has been directed towards encouraging tourism, and government projects to improve infrastructures are, at least in part, a response to the growing tourist demand for services. The Indian government formulated a National Action Plan for Tourism in 1992, highlighting tourism as a means for earning foreign exchange. Under this plan, Ladakh was designated as a 'special tourism area', which means that the region receives "tax concessions and fiscal incentives

This central government plan was supplemented by the Jammu and Kashmir State Government State Plan for Tourism, drawn up at the beginning of 1994 which aims to promote Ladakh as the "new tourist destination of the year". Towards this aim, the Ladakh Festival, which takes place in late August to early September, was developed. Tourism development in Ladakh has led to many spin-offs -- from a construction boom, to the importation of consumer goods to service tourist demand, to the opening up of restaurants and shops, to the inevitable explosion of tour companies and travel agents. One hotelier estimated that there were 100 registered travel agents in Leh alone, not including those who operate without registration. Many families are building guesthouses on to their existing houses - often building directly over prime agricultural land. In these guesthouses, especially the small ones, it is often the women who bear the additional workload of serving the tourist guests.

3.3 The impacts of change - Women, agriculture and community in Ladakh

In Chapter 2, we saw the globalization of agro-food systems and more generally, how development has affected women producers all over the world. Increased workloads, exclusion from technological changes and the devaluation of home and reproductive work are just a few effects of development. In Ladakh, this process can be seen very clearly as it is only in the past twenty-five years that development has reached the region. Preceding sections, have briefly touched on how various development policies have directly and indirectly affected women and agriculture in Ladakh. This section focusses
more closely on the conditions of women farmers in Ladakh and how they are affected by these developments. Data, is drawn heavily from the interviews conducted with Ladakhi women, as well as reports from NGOs working in the region.

The status of women in Ladakh is particularly interesting, as there is general agreement amongst Ladakhis that there is equality between men and women, especially since the situation for women is considered far better in Ladakh than in other parts of India (SCF 1995). The status of women has been described as "almost complete emancipation" (Rizvi 1998 133). However, this general agreement, is usually quickly followed by comments about how this is changing. In a study conducted by the Save the Children Fund (SCF) it was found that:

Most respondents would start by saying that women enjoy an equal status in Ladakhi society, and then immediately contradict themselves by saying that there is no participation of women in development and decision-making (SCF 1997 30)

While development has brought more educational opportunities for girls, it has also brought TV and cinema and idealised images of womanhood, which is felt to lead to declining self-esteem. In addition, there is a higher school dropout rate for girls, as many are kept home for household work and farming.

As development draws men and children into the money economy (through the army, government service, tourism and education) women are left to shoulder a major part of the farm and housework. In a work analysis conducted by SCF, it was shown that while 65% of men sell their labor outside the village for six months of the year or more, women generally work twice as hard as men do:

They not only have to undertake domestic chores, but also have to look after agriculture and animals and involve themselves in marketing as well. This is happening because of work outside (the
house/village/region) is available for men only and they go to these places leaving women to look after children, fields and animals (SCF 1997: 14)

This division of labor has always existed to some degree. Traditionally, women were responsible for household and farming tasks and men participated in the public domain. Norberg-Hodge (1991) points out that this difference in and of itself does not constitute inequality. In Ladakh, the household has always been a location of power. She says:

Most significant of all for the status of women in Ladakh is the fact that the "informal" sector, with women at the center, plays a much larger role than the "formal" one. The focus of the economy is on the household; almost all-important decisions to do with basic needs are settled at this level (Norberg-Hodge 1991:69)

Today the household is decentred, and with it, the involvement of women in decision-making and planning for the community.

In a study conducted by Save the Children in Ladakh, women claimed that they have little decision-making authority (SCF 1995), and have control only over work that they perform directly i.e. kitchen and fieldwork. Although they may participate in village meetings, it is found that their perspectives are often not taken into account (especially in land and water based activities). Generally, mostly male members attend the meetings.

Contrary to what is indicated by this previous research, the women farmers interviewed for this study believe that women’s influence and decision-making power are increasing. This difference may be due to the fact that the majority of women interviewed in this study are members of the WAL and there is a general agreement amongst members that this organisation is improving women’s ‘power’ in Ladakh. However, all agreed that women’s workload has been increasing. The reasons they identified were: (a) children being away at school during the agricultural season; (b) men participating in the
wage sector; (c) the increased demand for vegetables creating more work; (d) the tourism industry fueling a lack of interest in agricultural work.

The increased cash income from vegetables and the consumption of vegetables themselves is seen as a positive development, except that several women pointed out that the increase in vegetable production has meant that people are ceasing to cultivate using traditional methods and species, particularly the use of wild species.

Women felt strongly that the changes in agriculture brought on by development are impacting negatively upon communities as a whole, and that relations between people are deteriorating because they do not meet as often. There is an agreement among the women interviewed that it is worrying that the children are not learning agricultural skills. One woman described her perspective on the threats to agriculture:

In many families, fathers and sons work in Leh in the money economy – nowadays with the need for labourers which is increasing year by year it is very difficult. The price of labourers is also increasing – last year it was Rs. 120\(^\text{32}\) per day and this year it is Rs. 130-140. This is difficult because we don’t make much money and then we have to spend it on labourers. For families who don’t have money this is difficult because the co-operative labour system is breaking down. It’s breaking because children go to school – even if they do have time, it doesn’t seem that they would want to help in the fields (Jingmal Ama-le, 1999).

There is no question that the changes in agriculture in Ladakh are having a serious impact upon women farmers and the research shows that they have strong feelings about not only their own fates, but the impact of change upon Ladakhi culture and society in general.

\(\text{32} \) The average exchange rate from Rs. to US dollars is 40 Rs. to the Dollar.
3.4 Conclusion

Development interventions, usually intended to improve or change one particular sector of society, rarely have such singular effects. The interactions between various initiatives are often as important and telling as the individual changes themselves. For instance, the importation of cheap subsidised white rice, made possible by the government built and financed roads, has led to a dependence on this product. It is artificially cheaper to purchase imported products than to cultivate barley, so the incentive to continue this traditional agricultural practice is diminishing, and along with it, a way of life. Development interventions, however simple they may seem, lead to cultural change, and it is this unquantifiable change that emerged during interviews as the most significant to the women farmers. One Ladakhi woman described her feelings about the ‘improvement’ of agriculture and its many ramifications:

I think our customs are actually being destroyed, the way people used the threshing machine this year shows that they have been destroyed. Some people say, “Don’t worry, we’ll have a Jersey Cow for milk, and then sell the rest of the animals. We can do threshing without the help of the animals”. So, if they do the threshing by machine and milk the solitary Jersey cow, it isn’t happy is it? Now they try to do things as quickly as possible. I don’t know where they have to go?!....In the end, those who did it with animals had more time to rest and relax, while the ones who used machines took a lot of time. They ended up with straw like a mountain and they had to pay people to carry it. It ended up as being the same as buying grain because they had to pay for the machine and the labour. So what’s the point of growing your own grain then? (Tongskil Ama-le September 1999)

This statement stands out in stark contrast to the direction of government policy as expressed by the District Agricultural Officer:

This year we purchased some power tillers. In fact we want to replace the dzo. It is an unproductive animal. If you could replace with a power tiller you could keep a Jersey cow instead of dzo.
You need this *dzo* for at most fifteen days, but you need to feed it for the whole year. If we could replace this *dzo* with a power tiller it would be good (Mr. Tsewang Dorje, personal communication, August 1999).

The implicit assumption of this statement is that one element of the agricultural system can be eliminated and replaced with a machine at no cost. Indeed, replacing an animal with a machine is seen to increase self-reliance and save time because Ladakhi farmers will no longer have to look after an animal, or walk behind it -- they will simply turn on the machine, nothing more or less. But the commodification and resulting competition for resources is leading to the breakdown of traditional cooperative and communal structures. People who had been accustomed to sharing harvesting labor with their neighbours now often hire cheaper outside labour often from Nepal or the Indian State of Bihar.33 This is seen to be eroding the sense of community. One Ladakhi man described the process this way:

Before, people in villages were like a family. In June everybody watering, in August, everybody ploughing in the evening, if one person was drinking *chang*, everybody was drinking *chang*. Now, I am resting and I see that my neighbour has built three stories and suddenly everyone is coming to him, saying hello and ignoring me. Very quickly, I have no worth (SoSo, personal communication, August 1998).

Such testimony is easily reinforced by a stroll through the main bazaar of Leh -- streams of diesel belching trucks and the glittering array of plastic consumer items are difficult to see as signs of ‘progress’. Yet the increased consumer choice and accessibility to transportation represent positive impacts on lifestyle in the eyes of many people. Likewise, the network of roads crisscrossing the desert, the large though largely

33 There is no data available to support this claim - however it is readily observable in and around Leh and backed up by testimony from all the women interviewed for this project as well as the agricultural officials.
ineffective Stakna hydro-electric project\textsuperscript{34} and burgeoning ranks of guest-houses and ‘German Bakeries’ made to order for the growing tourist market, are never the simple modifications that they first may appear to be. Each change contributes to the complex negotiations between the old and the new.

\textsuperscript{34} The Stakna hydro project was built on the Indus River to supply electricity to the Leh district. However it has been largely ineffective as it freezes over during the winter months and is full of silt in the summer and requires Swiss expertise and parts to repair. In the summer of 1999, the dam was providing no more than two hours of electricity every three days. The spin-off benefit of this is that the failure of the infrastructure renewed interest in solar energy especially amongst shopkeepers, hoteliers and other tourist services.
4.0 Introduction

In response to some of the negative effects of conventional development, such as erosion of culture, ecological health and self-reliance, a group of Ladakhis and concerned outsiders in the 1970's, began to question the development path of the region, and called for an alternative, ecological development based upon Ladakh's own traditions and culture. This chapter introduces the Ecology movement in Ladakh and then introduces the Ladakh Farm Project and critically explores the rationale behind the project. The Farm Project was initiated by two organisations: the Women's Alliance of Ladakh (WAL) and the International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC). The backgrounds and aims of these organisations are explored, focussing on the WAL. Data for this section is gathered from informal interviews with the organizers and staff of the WAL, ISEC and the Farm Project as well as primary documents of the organisations.

4.1 The emergence of an 'Ecology' movement in Ladakh.

Since the 1970s there has been a large growth in NGO activity in Ladakh. The first NGO to set up in Ladakh was the Save the Children Fund (SCF). In 1978 the Indus River flooded leaving many Ladakhis homeless. In response to the crisis, the UK based SCF stepped in and created the Leh Nutrition Project to provide relief. The organisation has continued to operate in Ladakh ever since (Iqbal, Director, SCF Leh, personal communication, 1999). SCF also started a Kargil based development organization under
the name of 'Kargil Development Project.' From their inception, both these projects attempted to operate as locally based NGOs, and in fact the LNP has now gained independent registered NGO status. There appears to be a conscious effort on the part of project managers to integrate the newest development practices and theories into their projects. For example, gender (as opposed to simply 'children' as the organizations name suggests) is becoming a central focus, just like capacity building and community participation (SCF 1995, 1997). However, despite this, the emphasis of the SCFs work continues to be based upon the conventional aims of development aid: poverty alleviation through income generation.

In contrast to the more conventional 'aid' work of the SCF, an ecological development movement has emerged, informed by critiques of development that were developing in the West in the 1970s. These critiques questioned the underlying assumption of development theory that economic growth is the fastest and most desirable way to improve lives and reduce inequality. Instead, they argued for a revaluing of small-scale, decentralised, place-specific and ecologically-sensitive appropriate development practices (Schumacher 1973; Shiva 1988). They also point to the implication of the growth model and its proponents in the exacerbation of global ecological and social crises. Several organisations were formed in Ladakh based upon these ideas -- the Ladakh Ecological Development Group, the Students Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh, the Ladakh Environmental Health Organisation and the Women's Alliance of Ladakh. We will focus on the Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG) the

35 The term 'West' is used throughout this chapter because it is the term used by both the WAL and ISEC to describe the industrialised, or developed world. I use it while recognising that it is a generalising term.
Women’s Alliance of Ladakh (WAL), as they are directly linked with the case study project.

The Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG) was formed in 1983. Its founding was directly inspired by Swedish writer and activist Helena Norberg-Hodge, who was one of the co-founders of the organisation, and specifically based upon the philosophy of E.F. Schumacher. The LEDeG attempts to formulate an alternative development path for Ladakh, one based upon small-scale, appropriate technology, a valuing of traditional culture and techniques and local grass-roots participation in decision making. Its original philosophy is based upon the idea of challenging the premises of blind economic growth and moving beyond the rhetoric of sustainable development that has infused government and non-government organisations.

The original goal of LEDeG was not to prescribe an ecological development path for Ladakh, but to demonstrate (through small-scale projects and education) that something other than the dominant model was and is possible (LEDeG 1994). The organisation worked on the premise that people (in this case, Ladakhis) are not always aware that they have such a choice -- that large dams and urbanisation combined with a deterioration of traditional lifestyles and culture are not the only possibilities. LEDeG's work focused upon bringing information about ecological development movements in the West to Ladakh. This primarily involves appropriate technology such as greenhouses, solar panels and small-scale ram pumps, and information about the rise of organic farming in the West, and the negative health effects of industrial, chemical agriculture.

Helena Norberg-Hodge is author of the book Ancient Futures, Learning from Ladakh and acted as director of the Ecology Centre for several years. She is currently director of the International Society for Ecology and Culture and is one of the founding members of the International Forum on Globalisation.

36 Helena Norberg-Hodge is author of the book Ancient Futures, Learning from Ladakh and acted as director of the Ecology Centre for several years. She is currently director of the International Society for Ecology and Culture and is one of the founding members of the International Forum on Globalisation.
In keeping with the focus on ecological alternatives to conventional development, the organisation has attempted to operate in as decentralized manner as possible, emphasising the role of villagers in projects, and fostering village-based economics. A handicraft program was set up to revitalise and encourage the production of Ladakhi goods and allow women (predominantly, though not exclusively) to remain in their villages while earning an income. LEDeG has become a source of pride to Ladakhis, and of inspiration to scores of Westerners who visit the region.

However, fifteen years after the inception of the Ecology, it has ceased to be (or failed to become) a real political force. Part of the struggle to create an ecological development model in Ladakh has been due to the challenges faced by its leaders, both local and foreign. As members of the middle class, the local leaders of the LEDeG are firmly rooted in the new consumer culture and this is seen by some as a direct contradiction to the values which they espouse in their organisational roles. The influence of founder, Helena Norberg- Hodge is now minimal, a fact that would seem to indicate that LEDeG is now an autonomous organisation. But since she has removed herself from the organisation, it has moved away from the original aims of decentralisation and ecological development. The rhetoric of LEDeG still reflects these values, but the practice often does not. One ex-director suggested that the problem is that "LEDeG has become too big, it has no heart."\(^{37}\) This comment reflects the general view that the organisation has become too large and is increasingly hierarchical and bureaucratic.

In 1998, several staff members decided to seek alternative employment as they were disillusioned by the top-down operation of LEDeG. This concern was also felt by

\(^{37}\) Soso Personal communication August, 1998.
the major funder of the organisation (the Swedish International Development Agency), who requested that restructuring occur before funding was continued. Ironically, the one director of the organisation who took it the furthest away from its original aims by focussing upon large scale building projects and the cultivation of an Indian government-style bureaucracy, was the individual who gave LEDeG the most legitimacy in the eyes of Ladakhis. LEDeG's failure to maintain its original objectives lies partly in its reliance upon the vision and decision-making authority of a single person, and partly in the popular perception that a centralised bureaucratic organisation is the most efficient. In addition, the major funding agency pushed the LEDeG in a more conventional direction of promoting 'income generation' (with measurable results), thus minimising the political aspects of the project. In the early stages, the strong vision of the founding members held the organisation together, and assured that the central philosophy of decentralization and small-scale projects, ecologically sensitive projects was maintained. When this influence was removed the organization was ill-equipped to operate independently, indicating a lack of preparedness for the transition and reflecting growing support in Ladakhi society (at least certain sectors of it) for conventional, large-scale development.

In contrast to the LEDeG, the Women's Alliance of Ladakh (WAL) is perceived to be gaining public respect and political influence yearly. This next section will look at the WAL, its founding assumptions aims and the challenges it is facing in meeting its objectives.
4.2 Women take the Lead: The Women's Alliance of Ladakh

The Women's Alliance of Ladakh is Ladakh's first indigenous women's organisation. The initiative to create the Women's Alliance of Ladakh (WAL) came from a group of Ladakhi women together with International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC). The WAL was formed in 1991, beginning as a small group of Ladakhi women concerned with preserving Ladakhi tradition, culture and agriculture. Today, the organisation has approximately 4000 members, from 82 villages around the Leh District of Ladakh.

The WAL is founded upon several assumptions about the nature of the relationship between women, culture, environment and development. In the organisation's own literature, it is posited that in many ways, development and modernisation in Ladakh has affected women less than men. This is evidenced by the fact that many women still farm, wear traditional dress, speak only Ladakhi and for the most part are untempted by the glamorous consumer culture that development is bringing. However, women's closer ties to traditional culture (and by association, nature), means that women are also the first victims of "progress". In this formulation, women are portrayed as victims and simultaneously as natural caretakers of culture, therefore strong.

The WAL supports the claim made by other scholars and historians of Ladakh, that traditionally, relations between Ladakhi men and women were equal. In their view, the strong position of women was supported by the fact that the household (women's domain) was the center of economic life, and the location where most important community and family decisions were made. With development, women's voices have become marginalised and the household decentred from family and community decision-
making, planning and economics. This has had two distinct, but related effects. (1)

Psychologically, women have been devalued:

Ladakhi women are traditionally outspoken and confident, in the modern sector today they rarely speak up in mixed company. Women with a Western-style education have much less self-confidence than traditional women, and their influence is also minimal. Yet the perspective of women, keenly aware of the impact of development on the land and on the psyches of their children, need to be voiced in Ladakh more than ever (WAL Constitution).

(2) Economically, women have been marginalised, and their workloads increased, even as their status and self-confidence has fallen.

To counter these negative effects, women have started to organise by forming the WAL. The intention of the organisation is to give Ladakhi women a collective voice in the modern sector. But

This is not an easy task, since these women are not accorded a great deal of respect in the modernised parts of Ladakh. They do not speak English or Hindi, and are generally "illiterate". However, they are extremely strong and powerful and are respected within the household for their wisdom and skill. (WAL Annual Report 1997)

In connecting the declining position of women to the erosion of traditional culture, and by extension nature, the WAL works to raise the former by preserving the latter.

Towards this end, the long-term goals of the organisation are:

a) To enable the voice of women, in particular, women who are actively involved in agriculture to be heard more clearly within the process of decision-making;

b) To raise awareness within all sections of Ladakhi society of the values which such women represent;

c) To raise the status of agriculture and the farmer;
d) To encourage respect for Ladakhi culture;

e) To bring Ladakhi women together, so as to share concerns and plan appropriate action to address this concern (WAL 1997).

To meet these aims, the WAL engages in a variety of projects and activities. Initially, the organisation was intended to cooperate closely with LEDeG, bringing parts of their program to villages that have not yet been reached. The two organisations have shared a building for the past five years, and this has fostered a very close relationship between the two. However, in actual project planning and implementation, I did not see much evidence of cooperation or dialogue. Regardless of the 'real' relationship between the two organisations, in Ladakhi's popular imagination they are certainly linked together. Both are associated with Helena Norberg-Hodge, and with the 'Ecology' (the phrase that refers to anything and everything that has to do with LEDeG).

Among the activities that the WAL carries out are: educational general meetings and village meetings during which information about traditional versus chemical agriculture is shared and problems women are facing discussed; participation in cultural festivals; popular educational theatre, created and performed by the women in local schools and on the streets; local environmental campaigns (such as a ban on plastic bags in the town of Leh, and river clean-up campaigns in villages); the Ladakh Farm Project and a local seed propagation and saving project. In addition to these activities, the WAL has participated in a number of other projects, including the writing of a 'Ladakhi Kitchen Cookbook', and a weaving exchange. In the 1999 interviews with women who had hosted Farm Project volunteers, we asked directly about their opinions of the WAL. Every
woman (both members and the non-member) felt strongly that the WAL is doing essential work, and almost all expressed a great deal of pride in the organisation.

4.3 Challenges for women's activism in Ladakh

The WAL has a permanent paid staff of three women who are responsible for calling meetings, facilitating campaigns and dealing with funding issues. In addition to this, there is a working committee of eight women who are responsible for the creation of by-laws and the regulation of the workings of the WAL. The organisation is very much tied (both financially and practically) to ISEC. ISEC fundraises for the WAL and assists with project proposals and administration as well as working as a partner in project development and implementation. Many of the women members have strong emotional connections with Helena Norberg-Hodge, and her visit to Ladakh is eagerly awaited each summer. Helena's relationship with the organisation is not viewed simply as that of a funder by the women themselves or by Helena. Her role is seen as much 'friend' and inspiration, as colleague.39

The WAL both challenges and supports current academic assumptions about 'Third World Women's organisations', and there are many layers of meanings within the organisation that preclude any attempt to fit it neatly within a predetermined category. To

39 As ISEC's representative in Ladakh, my own impression of the connection between the two organisations wavered dramatically throughout my stay in Ladakh. I was responsible for working with the women, on various projects and at times, felt that ISEC (i.e. myself) was more or less dictating to the WAL what should and should not happen, which activities were appropriate and which were not. This perception was heightened by the fact that my position and involvement was tied to funding, and therefore my opinion about important decisions was usually solicited. It was often difficult to know when I was being listened to because of my role as an ISEC representative or when my status as an educated, western woman was more important in garnering respect. To counterbalance this perception, there were times when it seemed that the WAL was very much independent, when it didn't appear to matter in the least what I said, and when my presence was more a source of humor and fun than influential in any way.
begin with, although it is an organisation expressly concerned with livelihood, there is no mention of 'poverty alleviation', or income generation in its mandate. It is a strategic, as opposed to a practical project, and this challenges the idea that women in developing countries are primarily concerned with survival as opposed to political action. This focus on empowerment and education as opposed to income generation or poverty alleviation, on support of traditional culture as opposed to strategies for involvement in the modern sector, are the central features of the WAL that make it unique, and also difficult to reconcile with deeply held notions of what development should be (and what funders want).  

Other assumptions that are challenged by and within the WAL are those surrounding the concept of 'womanhood' and 'power'. The negotiation of these categories is always complex, and especially in a rapidly modernising culture such as Ladakh where the notions of what constitute such categories is increasingly fluid. Is a farmwoman

40 The deeply held assumptions that I held about the nature of aid and development, that it is about 'helping' and 'improving' life along Western lines, were driven home to me when a donor came to visit the WAL with a proposal for a weaving project that could potentially bring in a lot of money for the women. I was very enthusiastic. Huge sums of money were being discussed, as well as the potential for the WAL to 'corner' markets 'and 'drive out the competition'. I was completely taken in and it wasn't until I described the meeting to my (male) colleague, full of enthusiasm and excitement - and he returned my exuberance with a sobering "what do the women want?", that I realized that I hadn't even asked. I had just assumed that the WAL would want to participate in such an ambitious project. So I went back to ask - and was shocked by the answers I received. I wrote about the episode afterwards in my field journal:

After the meeting with a funder about the Pashmina shawl project (where the funder - all but threw a quarter of a million dollars at the WAL), one of the WAL members and I spoke about the appropriateness of the project for the WAL. I was admittedly enthusiastic (and had been a bit miffed by Mike's suggestion that the project did not fit with the aims and objectives of the WAL), and was quite surprised by her (the WAL member's) reaction. She said: "I think she (the funder) is like a business woman, always money and profits", and when I asked outright if the project fit with the aims of the WAL, she said"I don't think so - she was even saying that we should forget the traditional way - we wouldn't have to be on the farms if we did this Pashmina project".

At that moment, I realized that I had been harboring suspicions that the aims of the WAL were not really internalised by its members, that given the choice they would choose success in the modern world over the preservation of the traditional. In this case, I was the one who could not imagine turning down the offer of such a large amount of money, not the women. My own position as a western woman in this case prevented me from truly valuing the traditional even though I did so intellectually.
'powerful', or 'marginalised'? Does modern 'womanhood' necessitate participation in the money economy and education? These are questions that are being faced, not in an academic, or theoretical sense, but in the everyday workings of the organisation, by the WAL. The WAL is, directly translated, the 'Mothers' Alliance (or Organisation) of Ladakh, and as such fits into a spectrum of women's environmental activism that is founded upon the primary role of women as nurturers. This leads to particular difficulties, as described by Bellows (1996) in her description of women's environmental activism in Poland:

Women have unique access to public political space as mothers and guardians of family welfare, for as long as they are perceived as victims, and as activists without salaries or political backing. As their radical projects become mainstreamed, however, the right of access is reclassified as a presumption, making it difficult for women to maintain their leadership within the new stable institutions they helped form (p.255).

The members of the WAL, by virtue of their position as mothers (therefore, generally older women), and as members of an organisation, garner a great deal of respect from the community. However, this respect is tempered with suspicion as the organisation continues to grow in numbers, financial capacity and thus power.

In addition to outside suspicion, there are contradictions in the women's feelings about their identity as a women's organisation. Beneath the strength in numbers and abundant humor about the 'fear' that they invoke in Ladakhi men, there is an undercurrent of uncertainty about their new roles and identities, as revealed in comments such as: "We are just donkeys", while referring to money matters, or an insistence that in business matters, a man's help is required. This contradiction is especially difficult to respond to given that in general, the women do have little formal education, and when it comes to
accounting, it is men in general who have the expertise. Here, there are also generational issues. Many young women are formally educated and quite capable of doing accounting. However, some WAL members, generally of the older generation, express concern that 'modern' young women will not understand the WAL aims and objectives, and moreover, that village women members will not respect the word of a young woman as much as that of an older man.

To further complicate (or enrich) matters, there is a strongly held conviction amongst the WAL members that men and women must work together, and that gender difference in roles and responsibilities does not necessarily mean inequality. The question is of course where is the line between difference and inequality drawn? When does deference to men, become an admission of inferiority, and when is it simply an expression of cultural values?

4.4 Lessons learned: The challenges for alternative development in Ladakh

In the public eye, the WAL continues to grow in influence and garners more and more respect. This section explores briefly the similarities and differences between the challenges faced by the WAL and LEDeG.

The challenges in leadership and vision faced by the LEDeG is a very common complaint amongst NGOs in both the North and South (Chapman and Fisher 1999). The WAL has not faced a crisis of leadership to date, nor does there seem to be any concern about wavering vision. One of the most obvious reasons for this relative success of the WAL is the youthfulness of the organisation, however the aims and structure of the WAL may well contribute to its cohesiveness. The fact that the target group and the organisers
of the WAL are women who still remain tied to the land (they are all farmers) gives this organisation's aims and objectives a legitimacy that has perhaps been lost in the LEDeG. In addition, the institutional structure of the WAL is relatively horizontal, and while there is a certain hierarchy in decision-making, most decisions affecting the group as a whole are taken in the annual general body meeting. Other factors contributing to the success of the WAL are its membership orientation, giving all women members a sense of shared purpose and ownership of the projects. Finally, there is no doubt that the identity and power of the Ladakhi Ama-les (mothers) themselves, who are seen as holders of the culture and are openly proud of their aims to preserve Ladakhi culture and agriculture, garner respect and influence amongst the wider Ladakhi population.  

There is one respect in which both the LEDeG and the WAL face similar challenges. Ecological development is a hard sell in an area where the negative consequences of the dominant model are only just being felt. The principles of and arguments for an alternative development are by no means universally accepted, even in parts of the world where the ramifications of a massively centralised, modern industrial, system are increasingly apparent. Few Ladakhis have experienced the realities of life in the West, and thus have only the word of organisations like LEDeG and the WAL to go on. LEDeG has become mired in bureaucracy and is beginning to lose popular support, especially among young people who have begun to see it as an outdated institution that is only securing the sustainability of its own funding. The WAL is not as large, nor as

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41 This is not to say that the WAL does not face criticism - it does. However, in my experience the criticisms levelled at the WAL have come mostly from peripherally involved academics rather than from Ladakhis themselves. Criticisms that are voiced occasionally by non-WAL members, are that the organisation focusses too much upon outward expressions of 'traditional culture' such as traditional dress and that it is exclusive (ie. its membership is primarily Buddhist and all members must be farmers).
institutional as the LEDeG, and so does not yet face such difficulties, however there are some commonalities with respect to popular expectations.

Because of the history of 'development' in Ladakh, many Ladakhis expect 'projects' to 'give' them inputs. Even though the goal of the LEDeG, and now the WAL, is to increase self-reliance, both run the risk of having created another form of dependency (SCF 1997). The final and most important reason for LEDeG's weakness, and probably the greatest threat to the continued success of the WAL, is the growing feelings of resentment of Ladakhi young men who are expected to get an education and a job in the formal economy.

The growing, radical resistance against the old and new political elites (including the Ecological Development elite) is carried primarily by the unemployed or underemployed, but well educated youth. They do not generally want sustainable development, a healthy environment, or culture, but jobs (and not as farmers please!). They want Ladakh to be more like Delhi in terms of bright lights and 'facilities' (Van Beek, unpublished).

The attraction of Ladakhi youth to a 'modern' lifestyle is as undeniable as it is disheartening. They have been 'educated' for wage jobs in a 'modern' economic sector, these jobs do not exist in Ladakh and many young people are leaving the region in search of employment in Jammu, Srinagar and Delhi.

The Ecology movement in Ladakh has a relatively long history and the lead organisations, the LEDeG and the WAL have had a significant impact upon the Ladakhi popular imagination despite the challenges they face. However, the LEDeG faces some serious challenges of public opinion and direction. The WAL is a relatively young organisation compared to the LEDeG and this possibly accounts for its relative success and popularity at the time of writing this thesis. However, the strength of the Ladakhi
women also plays a role in creating and maintaining popular support for the organisation even as their identity as women create some challenges.
CHAPTER V CONNECTING THE GLOBAL TO THE LOCAL: THE LADAKH FARM PROJECT.

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapters have outlined the rationale behind working to forge meaningful global connections while working against the economic globalisation of food and farming. We have seen how both global forces and local resistance are meeting in Ladakh, India and briefly explored the ways in which women of the WAL in particular are working within the Ladakh Ecology movement to both resist the negative impacts of growth-led conventional development and renew and preserve local, land-based sustainable Ladakhi livelihoods. This chapter introduces the case study of the Ladakh Farm Project (LFP). The LFP is a project organised by ISEC and the WAL aimed at providing information about the unsustainability of the global economic system to both Ladakhis and non-Ladakhis. It supports existing Ladakhi livelihoods and culture, and provides a wholistic educational experience for non-Ladakhis by giving them the tools, information and empowerment to take positive, transformational action in their own communities and lives based upon a deep understanding of sustainability.

As we saw in Chapter 3, tourism has been major force for change in Ladakh, both because of the government investment and private enterprise it has spawned, and also because of the cultural and psychological impact of 25,000 tourists travelling and living in the region each summer. The idea for the Ladakh Farm Project was formulated by ISEC, and grew out of a recognition that many Western tourists were visiting Ladakh because of the continued existence of a traditional, sustainable culture, but that in general their exposure to Ladakhi culture was mediated by the tourist - touristed, or producer -
consumer relationship. This, combined with the fact that the most Ladakhis only saw tourists passing through, meant that the process of exchange between tourists and Ladakhis was minimal.

ISEC felt that Ladakhis only saw the rich tourists buying souvenirs and taking photos, while the tourists themselves gain very little real understanding of the local culture and ecology. Hence it viewed the presence of tourists in Ladakh as a factor in eroding pride in the very culture the visitors were drawn to.

5.1 Background of the Ladakh Farm Project

The Farm Project was initiated in the summer of 1995. At that time, two Westerners were placed to live and work with Ladakhi farm families. The project proved valuable for both the Westerners and the Ladakhi families, and so has continued in this format, growing in numbers every year. It was found that Westerners' participation and desire to learn actively counteracted the declining image of agriculture in the eyes of Ladakhis. Practically, the participants were able to help out with farm work at a time when the tradition of co-operative labor is breaking down. Through action, and to a lesser degree conversation, participants gave their Ladakhi hosts a more accurate image of life in the West. The experience of working and living in a traditionally sustainable culture that is 'modernising', gives the Western participants insights and understandings that inform their community activism in their home countries.
5.2 Coordinating the LFP - Staff and organisational involvement

The LFP is co-organised by ISEC and the WAL. ISEC has two staff members devoted to 'Ladakh Programmes'. The author is the overall Ladakh Programmes Co­ordinator, which is a full time position. Because of this connection, The LFP and this research have co-evolved from 1998 to the present (with even the thesis-writing stage being instrumental in planning for the 2000 project season). The Co-ordinator's work includes co-ordinating the Ladakh Programmes, including the LFP and Tourist Education Programme, and working with our NGO partners in Ladakh such as the WAL, Amchi Association and, to a lesser degree, the LEDeG. ISEC also employs one full-time Ladakhi Farm Project Co-ordinator, Stanzin Tonyot. His work is predominantly to co-co-ordinate the LFP and assist with other ISEC programmes in Ladakh, in cooperation with ISEC's Ladakh Programmes Co-ordinator. The work is roughly divided between the two, with Tonyot focusing on the Ladakhi host families and the author providing the administrative, fundraising and the non-Ladakhi participants support and co-ordinating the workshops. The Ladakh Programmes Co-ordinator is resident in Ladakh from June to October each year, and in the UK office during the rest of the year. The LFP comprises approximately 40% of the Ladakh Programmes co-ordinator's time both in Ladakh and in the UK office.

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<th>Organisations</th>
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<td>Advisors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Becky Tarbottin, Ladakh Programmes Co-ordinator</td>
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<td>Becky Tarbottin, LFP Co-coordinator</td>
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<td>Becky Tarbottin, Farm Project Co-coordinator</td>
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<td>Stanzin Tonyot</td>
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Table 1. Ladakh Farm Project Personnel and Organisational involvement
The Ladakh Programmes Co-ordinator and the Ladakhi Farm Project Co-ordinator work closely with the WAL Working Committee to organise, develop and operationalise the LFP. The WAL is involved in the selection of host families and dissemination of information about the LFP in Ladakh as well as evaluation and problem solving with Ladakhi host families. Whenever possible, the Ladkhi Farm Project Co-ordinator combines LFP activities with WAL events and activities, in order to strengthen the relationship between the two. WAL staff-time spent on the LFP varies each year. In the early stages of the LFP, the WAL Director was solely responsible for the selection of LFP host families, but this proved to be too labour intensive and didn't leave her with enough time for other WAL commitments. With this in mind, it was decided that a Ladakhi Farm Project co-ordinator would take over this role. The Director of the WAL remains very involved and is often approached by interested families seeking participants or simply requesting information about the Project.

The two ISEC co-ordinators of the LFP seek input and advice from the WAL Working Committee and the Director of ISEC (when possible) at every stage of the Project, from the selection and communication with host families, to development of Project structures (such as meeting times and when and how to involve host families) to evaluation. The WAL Working Committee and the ISEC Director form the advisory committee of the LFP, with the Co-ordinators being responsible for on the ground operations. The headquarters of the LFP is the Women's Alliance Centre in Leh, and both Co-ordinators are based there during the Project season. Throughout this chapter I will use the term 'Project team' to refer to both advisors and staff of the project.
5.3 Aims and Objectives

The goals/aims of the Project are fluid, and have grown as the project matures. When the project first began, the labour aspect was highly emphasised. The primary aim of the project was to provide extra labour on farms, especially on those farms where the women were facing an increasingly heavy burden of work. However, Helena Norberg-Hodge explains that it has now become clear that the main benefit of the project is not in the labour that foreign participants provide, but in the psychological benefit to the Ladakhi families and the participants themselves and the educational aspect of the LFP. The focus has therefore shifted from the labor power that the participants can provide, to the educational experience for the participants who take pride in agriculture and provide their Ladakhi hosts with an alternative view of the 'West'.

Throughout the course of this research, the Project team have worked to clarify these objectives and create a set of activities and systems that to achieve them. The LFP attempts to use global connections to foster local transformations - the local being both Ladakh and the home communities of the volunteer/participants.

Box 1. The overarching goals of the Ladakh Farm Project.

- To raise awareness amongst Ladakhi and non-Ladakhi Project participants about the inherent unsustainability of the global economic system (particularly the globalisation of food and farming), and present information about existing and potential alternatives.
- To provide a wholistic learning experience for Farm Project participants that will give them tools, information and empowerment to take positive, transformational action in their own communities based.
5.4 Mechanics and Activities

The goals of the LFP are met through a combination of education, experiential learning and facilitated exchange. This section describes the mechanics of the project, and stages of the project cycle, from the application process to the evaluation stage. The LFP is regularly evaluated internally as external feedback is sought both from participants, host families and advisors. Whenever possible, how and why changes have been made to the LFP are indicated throughout the chapter.

The mechanics of the project can be broken down loosely into two major categories: activities aimed at meeting all three goals that are oriented towards the participants, and activities oriented towards the Ladakhi host families. The LFP can be further broken down into three stages (although they are all interlinked):

1. **Pre-season activities (publicity and selection of participants and host families),**
2. **LFP activities and guidelines (activities that occur during the course of the LFP season)**
3. **Evaluation and Project development.**

The Project team attempts to use every aspect of the project, from the application procedure, to final evaluation and feedback, as a forum for learning and exchange.
5.4.1 Pre-Season Preparation

5.4.1.1 Fundraising

Funding for the LFP is partly covered by the fees that the participants pay prior to taking part in the Project. The fees in 2000 are £225 or $350 USD per participant, and in general cover only a fraction of the administrative costs of running the programme. ISEC itself heavily subsidises the programme (through staff time and direct funding when necessary), and the WAL also donates staff time during the season. ISEC is not a funding organisation itself but raises funds during the off-season for the Ladakh Programmes. ISEC is the primary fundraiser for the WAL. To date, ISEC has been unable to provide formal bursaries for people who are unable to participate due to financial difficulties. Any requests for financial assistance are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and fees have been waived when appropriate and feasible. Participants can for example, offer to do work-exchange in return for reduced fees. In 1999 ISEC adopted a policy to waive fees for any 'Third World' Nationals, or members of minorities in 'First World' Countries.

5.4.1.2 Publicity

Information about the Ladakh Farm Project is communicated to host families through WAL meetings and village visits by the Ladakhi co-ordinator. There is no shortage of interested families and WAL and ISEC have had to turn away many families who request participants. In 1998 40 families in one village requested a LFP participant. Because of this, the organisers did not see the need to engage in any further publicity activities in Ladakh. Word of mouth has proven to be a very effective form of advertisement, as is the physical presence of participants in the villages each summer.
Box 2. Farm Project Publicity methods

2. Helena Norberg-Hodge and other ISEC staff publicise the Farm Project in speaking engagements and other public events (on average, approximately 25-30 per year with audiences ranging from 10 to 1000 people).
3. The ISEC website (www.isecuk.org) contains a brief summary of the project, as does the Global Ecovillage Network site (of which ISEC is a member).
4. ISEC brochure copies are disseminated to various networks
5. The Tourist Education Programme in Leh, Ladakh, reaches approximately 3000 tourists in Ladakh each season and the Farm Project is presented as one of ISEC/WALs projects in Ladakh.

The Farm Project has no formal advertising strategy outside of Ladakh. In general, most publicity has been aimed at individuals who are already sympathetic to the aims and objectives of the project through having contact with like-minded organisations or groups, or having prior contact with ISEC and/or the WAL. Thus, most publicity has been through an ecological publication and ISEC public events and materials (see box).

In the years when an advertisement appeared on the back of the Ecologist, there was a surge of interest in the Farm Project. People had to be turned away due to lack of human resources and uncertainty about the appropriateness of scaling-up the project without further research into impacts. It is not possible to isolate the effect of the advertisement from any other factors but in the project year 1999-2000, no such ad has appeared and there have been substantially fewer inquiries about the Farm Project. This suggests that the advertisement indeed have a significant effect.
5.4.1.3 Selecting Participants and Host Families

The ways in which participants and host families become involved in the project after they hear about it, differ substantially. The application procedure for non-Ladakhi individuals wishing to join the project involves three stages. This procedure was developed following the 1999 field season, based upon feedback from previous participants and discussion amongst the Project team members. All stages of the application procedure for non-Ladakhi participants takes place in ISEC's UK and USA office. by the Ladakh Programmes Co-ordinator (myself) and the administrative team in the UK and USA offices. ISEC has chosen not to accept participants in Ladakh itself, unless there is a cancellation in any given month. This policy was adopted in order to control the number of participants, and to ensure that all participants have the same level of pre-project preparation. In theory, all participants must have applied, been accepted and paid prior to arrival in Ladakh, however in reality there is some flexibility and ultimately, the decision rests with the LFP Co-ordinators.

The selection of 'ideal' applicants is extremely tricky, as many different people from a wide variety of backgrounds have the potential to benefit from and benefit the project. Although we use a standard application form, each case is treated individually as far as possible. In some cases the applicant will show no interest (in his or her application form) in the philosophy behind the project. There may be many reasons for this, varying from lack of skill in written communication to true disinterest to misunderstanding of the aims and objectives of the Farm Project. Rather than rejecting such a person outright we make every effort to obtain as much clarification from them as possible through dialogue. The application procedure can be summarized as follows:
Table 3. LFP Participant Application Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Stage</th>
<th>Action</th>
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</table>
| **First contact** *(phone, fax, post or email)* | A Farm Project information pack is sent out. This includes:  
- An information brochure about the project itself  
- Organisational materials about ISEC and the WAL.  
- Application form  
- A letter detailing the application procedure. |
| **Application form received by ISEC** |  
- Application form is reviewed by Ladakh Programmes Co-ordinator and/or the ISEC USA programmes co-ordinator.  
- If there are any questions about the suitability of the applicant for the project, the Ladakh Programmes Co-ordinator makes personal contact to discuss concerns and clarify questions.  
- Application accepted or rejected |
| **Application accepted** | Second pack of information sent including:  
- Acceptance letter  
- Additional information (a 'manual' of sorts including practical information from travel to health to a list of 'what to bring')  
- Personal information form (for ISECs records)  
- Liability release form  
- Suggested reading list  
- Ecologist magazine (an edition co-edited by ISECs director in May 1999 that has specific relevance to the project). |
| **Cheque received from applicant** | Confirmation pack sent out including:  
- Confirmation letter  
- Any resources the participant has requested from ISEC  
- Ladakhi Language materials (a brief learning guide compiled by ISEC staff)  
- Map of Leh, Ladakh  
- Tourist Education Brochure (produced by ISEC as part of the Tourist Education Programme). |

The selection of host families for the Farm Project takes place entirely in Ladakh and is co-ordinated by the Ladakhi Farm Project co-coordinator (Stanzin Tonyot), in collaboration with the WAL. Any family can request to have a Farm Project participant.
Usually the request comes to the WAL or directly to Tonyot via a WAL village committee member or a member of the interested family who is in Leh and visiting the WAL centre. From this point there is no 'formal' application process as such. The WAL Director discusses the project with the interested person or persons if they come directly to the WAL office. In addition to this (or if the message is received second-hand that a family is interested), Tonyot visits all prospective and past host families twice annually to discuss the aims and objectives of the project, to distribute a written brochure (in Ladakhi), where appropriate and to communicate the practical ramifications of being a Farm Project host family.

5.4.2 Ladakh Farm Project Activities

The Farm Project season runs from June 1st to September 30th. When the Project started, there were few guidelines to the project, and participants were free to stay for any length of time. However, feedback from participants demonstrated the need for some increased formality in the structures of the project as misunderstandings were occurring between participants and hosts, particularly with regards to payment of money and length of stay.

In 1998, participants were expected to pay the families directly, but some host families refused to accept payment - saying that they had been working and therefore it was not necessary. In some cases, host families demanded payment upfront, and this made several participants felt uneasy. In 1999, the project team decided to experiment with ISEC staff paying the families at the end of the entire season, after the participants had left. The theory was that this would set up a more formal link between the project itself and the payment, rather than the relationship between host family and participants.
being complicated by monetary transactions. This method worked well, and it will continue in 2000.

Likewise, with regards to length of stay, families and participants often had difficulty communicating their needs and wants to each other regarding how long the participants could or should continue. In some cases, the family members were too shy to say that they wanted a participant to leave, and in others, they were offended when they did leave (as they had not understood that the participant only intended to stay for a brief period). At the organisational level, it was difficult to control these situations, as participants desires often changed during the course of the project and it became nearly impossible to keep track of which participants' intended to stay for two months and which ones were planning to leave after one month.

To overcome this challenge, in 1999 we emphasised that the formal Farm Stay period would last for one month and that any stay beyond that had to be communicated to the family through one of the Farm Project co-ordinators prior to the commencement of the farm stay. Alternatively, any extensions had to be discussed with the host family, participant and a co-ordinator together during the first month. Tonyot ascertained from families how long they wanted to host, prior to them taking on a participant. This system worked quite well, but still created room for problems and misunderstandings, so in 2000, the Farm Project will be strictly one-month long. Host families and participants have been informed that any extension in the stay beyond that could no longer be organised through the WAL or ISEC. However, the Project team will continue to mediate, or translate if there is any need for extension.
The following is an outline of the activities and procedures that are undertaken with every LFP participant and the Ladakhi host families. Together, the activities aim to mitigate as much uncertainty (such as described above) as possible, throughout the LFP stay in order to facilitate a positive learning experience for both participants and host families. Some of these activities are not yet solidified for the 2000 project year as the Ladakhi Farm Project co-ordinator is working with the WAL in May 2000 to make final decisions. There is a constant process of experimentation and then feedback with most aspects of the project, and the Project team frequently comes back to the participants and host families with new ideas and for feedback on whether certain modifications are appropriate.

5.4.2.1 Participant-oriented activities

Table 4. LFP Participant-oriented activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>When and Where</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Orientation    | 1st of each month, 10am at WAL centre. (The duration of the orientation varies according to the needs of the participants) | • To welcome Farm Project participants to Ladakh and the Project.  
• To build community amongst participants, staff and volunteers.  
• To give participants an overview, history and rationale behind the project and ISEC’s work in general.  
• To prepare the participants practically and psychologically (as much as possible) for their Farm Stay. |
| Placements     | 2nd or 3rd of the month, at the WAL Centre and subsequently in the | • To choose an appropriate host family for the individual. |

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Type</th>
<th>Date and Location</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Mid-Month meeting        | 10th of the month (with WAL?) - Under discussion as of April 23, 2000             | • To introduce the participant to the host family and facilitate them settling in.  
• To give participants a forum for sharing their experiences and to help them with problems if necessary.  
• To create connections between the WAL and the Farm Project participants.  
• To prepare participants for the end-of-month workshop. |
| End-of-Month meeting/workshop | Last two days of the month, WAL Centre.                      | • To share experiences of the Farm Project (what participants have learned, challenges they have faced, new perspectives gained etc.)  
• To provide an intellectual/theoretical framework for the project - placing it in a global context (connecting development in Ladakh to the broader picture of colonialism - development - economic globalisation).  
• Economic literacy.  
• To provide some tools, concepts, empowerment and practical ideas for personal, local action in the participants own communities.  
• To action-plan with participants. |
To get feedback about the project and suggestions for the future

End of the month celebration
Whenever is convenient (usually a dinner at the WAL centre or the home of one of the Co-ordinators)
To complete the wholistic learning experience by having fun together (sharing skits, music etc.), ideally with as many members of host families as possible.

5.4.2.2 Ladakhi host-oriented activities

Table 5. Ladakhi host-oriented activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with village WAL committees, village headmen and host families</td>
<td>October 1999 and May 2000 (pre and post LFP season)</td>
<td>To provide written and verbal information about the objectives and philosophy behind the farm project. To obtain feedback from village committees, host families and head men about the project and how it can be improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint meeting between host families (Ama-les) and Farm Project participants</td>
<td>During Farm Project season (specific time to be determined - possibly during mid-month meeting, possibly at a party at the end of the month, possibly both)</td>
<td>To improve and facilitate communication between Project participants and their host families. To deepen the cultural exchange between hosts and participants. To foster stronger linkages between Farm Project and WAL. To have fun!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits to Farm Project</td>
<td>During the first or second</td>
<td>To provide support to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
participants during their stay | half of the Farm Project month (to be determined according to staff availability and needs of the participants) | the Farm Project participants and families (psychological and practical, if necessary) 
- To facilitate and encourage communication between participants and hosts 
- To help with any immediate challenges experienced by either hosts or participants.

5.4.3 Evaluation and Monitoring

The process of monitoring the LFP happens informally throughout the LFP season, in meetings between the Project team and participants as well as during visits to participants and meetings with the wider WAL community. Participants are asked to write a report of their experience to be submitted to ISEC. In addition, women who had hosted LFP participants are interviewed by one or more members of the Project team and meetings with headmen of participating villages and the village WAL committees were set up and an annual meeting of all WAL members and non-member families who had hosted participants during the preceding summer was instituted. This more formal 'evaluation process has been developed partly for the purposes of this research. These evaluation strategies have proven to be valuable and will be continued in 2000.
5.5 A Profile of LFP Participants and Ladakhi Hosts

Since its inception, the Farm Project has involved participants from all over the world, but mostly from Germany, the US, Canada, Switzerland, and the UK. The project has expanded from only 5 participants in 1995, to 52 in 1998. There were approximately 15 villages affected by the project in 1998. Several host villages do not have road access and require that participants hike in by trail or path, but the road system is expanding yearly, and it is likely that in the near future, few villages will be without roads.

5.5.1 Background of the participants

During the summers of 1998 and 1999, there were a total of 89 participants from all over the world. Of these, 37% were from North America, 51% from Europe and the remainder from Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Eastern Europe. The participants in 1998 and 1999 were 56% female and the age range of participants was from 14 to 60, although most participants were in their 20's or 30's. Occupations varied from doctors and lawyers to accountants to social workers and farmers. Most participants stayed on a farm for one month (which is the required commitment), however some approximately 10 participants stayed for up to 3 months.

Many participants were in their early twenties, having just left school or university. This group tended to combine the Farm Project with a more extensive program of travelling and volunteer work in other NGOs. Another group were individuals (and some couples) who were making lifestyle changes and saw the Farm Project as part of a learning experience that would give them insight into alternative ways of living. The third group, broadly speaking, consisted of people who saw the Farm Project as part of a
‘career move’, either academically, or as a step in the direction of working in the field of development. The final group of participants were those who saw the Farm Project as a form of ‘alternative tourism’ in order to experience Ladakhi culture in a more intimate way. Many individuals in all of the above categories had heard of Helena Norberg-Hodge’s work (especially her book *Ancient Futures*), prior to their application for space on the Farm Project. The majority of participants in the Farm Project came from middle-upper class backgrounds and were generally well educated. There has only been one 'Southern' participant, from the Czech Republic. There has been interest from other Southern countries, such as Korea, but due to the volatile political situation in Kashmir, these people decided not to take part.

**Box 3.**

**Profile: Farm Project Participants - Catherine Porter and Graeme Burt**

Graeme Burt (27 years) and Catherine Porter (27 years) were Farm Project participants in September 1999. They are a Canadian couple, originally from the city of Toronto who have spent the past two years living in Vancouver. Graeme was working for an environmental consulting firm and Catherine was working as a journalist for a major newspaper. They both hold undergraduate and post-graduate degrees and have worked and travelled in South America.

They heard about the LFP through a friend who was involved, and as they were planning to take a year off to travel in Asia and wanted to do something different than simply being tourists, they decided to apply for the LFP. The two were placed in separate families, in the village of Likir and found the LFP rewarding, though physically and sometimes psychologically exhausting. The experience solidified feelings they already had about the need to create deep changes in their own lives and to work for broader political and social change.

42 One single mother participated with her six year old son – Ben was officially our youngest Farm Project participant!
5.5.2 Background of the host families.

In the two years of field research, there were a total of 48 host families that participated in the Farm Project\textsuperscript{43}. These host families were scattered around 20 villages all within the Leh district. The project is limited to the area surrounding Leh for practical reasons. It is too difficult and time-consuming to take participants to far-flung villages. They would not be able to return for the meetings which are considered very important. Safety is another consideration. The political situation in Ladakh is tense, given its position close to the borders of Pakistan and Tibet. In the 1999 project season, we chose not to place volunteers very far from Leh because there was shelling and very strong military action happening in the region during the summer.

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Box 2. Profile: Host Family: Jawoo Family}

Jawoo family live in Stagmo village which is one hour walk from the main road at Thiksey. Tsering Dolma (48 years), the Ama-le of the household is a WAL member and does not speak English. Aba-le Tsering Namgial (57 years) speaks some English and works as a guard for the Forest Department. They have 4 children, two of whom live and work in Leh town. Tashi Landhol (26 years) works at the Ecology Centre and her brother Jigmet Namgial (24 years) is a member of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police. The other two children, Stanzin Lhamo (21 years) and Dorje Namgial (15 years) are studying in Chandigahr and come home to Stagmo in the school holidays.

The family home is a large, traditional house and the family own approximately 30 barley fields, 5 Alfalfa fields, 4 potato fields and 2 pea fields. They do not use chemical fertilisers on their crops and do sell some produce in the Leh market. Their livestock consists of 2 cows, 1 dzo, 9 calves (in 1999) and 2 donkeys.
\end{quote}
5.6 Conclusion

The LFP has changed a great deal since its inception in the summer of 1995 and it continues to develop each year according to feedback and evaluation of participants, hosts and organisers. The greatest changes have been in organisational strategy. The LFP begun as an informal project, and over the years, the Project has gradually become more structured and planned. The educational component of the project has become emphasised and elaborated, and the mechanics of the farm stays have been modified to better meet the needs of both hosts and participants. There are still questions and gaps in the project cycle of the LFP, such as in fundraising and publicity, where as of yet there is no strategy developed by ISEC or the WAL, and in specific aspects of the project mechanics such as the mid-month meeting. These aspects are being experimented with during the 2000 season. The mechanics of the LFP are designed to facilitate a dynamic and effective educational experience for both the participants and to a lesser degree, their Ladakhi hosts. The next chapter examines what opportunities and challenges are faced by the organisers, participants and hosts in meeting this goal.

43 60% of the host families that participated in the Farm Project in 1998 or 1999 hosted more than one volunteer (i.e. either they had two consecutive participants in one season, or they had one each year).
6.0 Introduction

Chapter 5 outlined the procedures, mechanics, aims and background of the LFP as well as the project cycle. Chapter 6 looks more deeply into the impacts of the LFP on both participants and Host families. The strengths and weaknesses of the project as well as opportunities and threats to its improvement are explored with a view to formulating both specific suggestions for the LFP and general principles for planners, activists and community organisers attempting similar kinds of work. The data in this chapter is based upon feedback reports submitted by LFP participants, in-depth informal discussions with six participants and four host family women and interviews conducted with the women heads of households in 27 (60%) of the host families that participated in the Farm Project in 1998 - 1999. The majority of the women interviewed are members of the Women’s Alliance of Ladakh and tend to be between forty and sixty years of age. They are all farmers, none have ‘urban’ jobs outside the home, although some of them sell their vegetables in the market and otherwise participate in the informal economy.

6.1 Strengths of the Ladakh Farm Project

The specific, internal strengths of the LFP revolve around how it is structured and the impact that it has on both participants and host families. The strengths of the LFP include: the labour that participants provide to host families; the company that participants offer the host Ama-les; personal connections forged between the participants and hosts; the transformative impact on the participants of living in a rural, land-based
culture; validating the local knowledge of Ladakhi host families, particularly the Ama-les and lastly, deep cultural exchange.

The labour the participants provide is a great help to the host families, particularly the women.

They do all kinds of work. Nowadays we have a shortage of people in the village. So it's very kind on their part, even when they get water it is so helpful. I told them, “thank you so much, you have worked hard and been a great help”. We also learn about their way of life. Until now, no one had told us about their way of life, or their customs and traditions. If there is a volunteer at your home, she tells you all these things about their countries. In return they learn about our way of life, culture and traditions. This exchange has also contributed to the understanding of the ama-les, who used to be ridiculed by the younger generation who said: “What do you know? You haven’t been to school”. The volunteers learn about a way of life that they’ve never seen before. (Tongskil Ama-le 1999)

One woman said that the extra help during harvest time meant that she didn't have to hire Nepali labour that year. The degree to which the women see the participant as an extra labourer, or pair of hands has changed dramatically - even in the past two years. From 1998 to 1999 the ‘labour’ aspect of the Farm Project went from being relatively unimportant to being the primary reason why families wanted a participant, and the greatest benefit of the project from the perspective of the women interviewed. I can only speculate on the reasons for this, but it seems reasonable that as the project has grown, more and more families have begun to look at volunteers as a labour source. This is probably because the labour shortage has become more acute and also because of increased knowledge of more families about the project as it has entered the popular imagination in Ladakh.
Many women find remarkable the fact that the volunteers do not ask to be paid for their work, but that they actually pay the families.

Yes, they have been very beneficial for us. They do work and we don't have to pay them. If we wanted someone else to work for us, we would have to pay them, whereas the volunteers pay us instead. (Umla, Nangso Ama-le 1999).

This is seen as a great help, considering the financial burden faced by many families who need to hire paid laborers to help with the harvest. Some women felt that the money that participants pay to the family is not enough, but there seems to be no consensus on this. One of the interviewed women suggested this to be a concern, and another commented that other people (but not her) had similar thoughts. In general, when asked how the project could be improved, the women's answers centred around how their treatment of the participants could/should improve.

The participants are company for the Ama-les, who are often at home alone.

I feel they are my children, and good company too. (Likir, Garaskit Ama-le 1999).

Some of the Ama-les interviewed saw the Farm Volunteer simply as company around the house. Said one woman: "Women are now so often alone in the house and in the company of paid labour (as opposed to family and neighbors) in the fields and an extra person around who is interested in daily activities and willing to help out, is seen as a benefit". This aspect of the project was picked up on by several participants as well. One woman commented that: "When I came to my new family Dolma (WAL director) told me that the Ama-le had been asking for a volunteer every day. I got there, and there was very little work. I wondered why she wanted a volunteer. And then I realized that it was
because she had to work alone. Hard work is work you need to do alone. It’s not that it’s too much work for her, it’s that she’s feeling alone” (Wiebke, Germany, Farm Project meeting 1998).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The LFP creates the space for the forging of deep cross-cultural connections between participants and Ladakhi hosts.</th>
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I would sometimes sit and wonder, what are these people honestly getting from my stay here besides clumsy labour! I’d see clearly what they were giving me - not only teaching me how to farm and milk cows, but also sharing their home and lives with me, something that in Canada takes years of friendship. But nearing the end of my month’s stay, I was making my way down from the gompa, hot and dirty after a full day of threshing, still wearing my same dirty salwar kameez and carrying a zepo full with the remains of the family’s lunch, when a group of school children waved me to a stop. They asked me where I had been, where I was going, how my family was. And, as they mentioned each member of my Ladakhi family, and brought up my Canadian boyfriend as well - who, incidently was staying in the same village - it dawned on me that all fifteen or so of these children knew exactly who I was and what I was doing. Just like the women in the village who would put down their rakes for a moment while I passed, to ask how my family’s harvest was going. It's subtle, but I can now see that my extended presence and interest in their culture might not have affected only my family, but the village. (Catherine, Canadian, 1999).

The moments that participants report as being the most valuable, are those when they made a personal connection with someone in their family, or in the community where they were staying. Many participants felt that they really ‘connected’ with their host family in a way that would have been impossible during a regular tourism or travel experience. While most participants felt some sense of helplessness in the face of development and the disintegration of agriculture in Ladakh, there was also a concomitant re-valuing of small successes.
The LFP provides participants with an understanding of the value of the Ladakhis' land-based indigenous knowledge and puts the Ladakhi (women, in particular) in the position of teachers.

I think it's a good way of exchange between foreigners and us. They learn a lot from us and we learn some of their way of life. (Ama Tongskill, 1999)

Earlier when I see foreigners, I used to think that they have so much money that they didn’t find a place to spend their money, so that’s why they came here. Now since the volunteers came to my house, I realized that they have come here to observe and learn our way of life. Seeing the volunteer working in the dust on the fields and with the animals, I understand that they are also interested in learning farming. They don’t consider it dirty work. Earlier I used to think that because they have too much money, they don’t do such work. (Skara, Korpon Ama-le 1999)

The Amales themselves feel that the participants learn a great deal - that they don’t know how to do the simplest thing when they arrive and they have to learn everything. The women interviewed (with the exception of one) said that they had also learned more about the West from the volunteers. Things that the ama-les said they had learned from volunteers were: that farming is done by machines, that extended families don’t often live together, that many people don’t own land, less of a sense of community than in Ladakh, that farming in America is the same as in Ladakh (?), that many people don’t have the opportunity to farm and that people don’t work and cook together like in Ladakh. One woman described her impressions of life in the West as told to her by Farm Project participants:

They don’t have land of their own. They are busy making money, they have lots of work. They have to work according to schedule, and they are paid by the hour. They are not so social and they have a busy life. Here when there is a work or community ceremony, lots of people come together. There they don’t have cooperation like this among people. They have many vehicles. Most of them
buy their food, and some don’t know how to cook. They like our way of life, especially the cooperative relationship in the family and with the community. Last year I took the volunteer to the high pasture. There I was invited to all the families for tea or food. The volunteer said: “You’re famous”. I told him it’s just a way of life, a custom, and he was impressed. (Tia, Sarapa Ama-le, 1999)

The ama-les usually say that the volunteers don’t ‘teach’ them anything, or that they don’t learn anything from the volunteers - but when prompted they will usually talk quite extensively about what they have understood about the ‘West’ from the volunteers. This aspect of the project is, however, much less important from their perspective than the knowledge that the participants acquire.

The active and enthusiastic presence of the participants in agricultural work has a positive impact on Ladakhi children

The volunteers work in the fields and gardens and with animals. They carry tsepo (baskets) on their back, they carry a spade, even though they have so much money. I think there is a realization in our children that they should do more work. When foreigners do their work, the children like to work with them and show them how things are done. They like being with the volunteer. When this year’s volunteer used to come back from Leh the children were always happy to see her. We are also able to say to the children “Look, these volunteers have come such a long way and they are working in the fields and with the animals, and they eat our food, so why don’t you? You should do that more, since you were born here”. (Phyang, Hanugun Ama-le, 1999).

The ama-les felt that the LFP had a positive impact on their children, pointing to the fact that the participants can teach the children English and help them with their homework. There is a general feeling amongst the women that the presence of the volunteers who have come such a long way to work on Ladakhi farms, has led some Ladakhis to re-value, or at least think about their own traditions and farming. This effect is especially noted with regards to the children, who are now more hesitant to do farm
work because of greater value placed on formal education. One woman however, said that the volunteers had little impact on the children because she already expects the children to work, and in fact saves all the hard farm work for Sundays when they do not have school. Having a Farm Project participant in their community is believed to positively influence Ladakhis' feelings about their traditional agriculture and culture. Every Ama-le interviewed thought that this did result from the project - either for the children, the community at large or her own views on farming.

The experience on the LFP is transformational for participants - helping them to make connections between: sustainability and culture, women, connection to the land, the connection between human-scale and natural scale living and the connection between the value of doing with the hands and thinking with the head (as well, hopefully of feeling with the heart).

[The Farm Project had] A big impact, in short. It was great to re-aquaint myself with issues of development and globalisation. It was fantastic becoming part of Likir, a part of that place, for a month. People there live so openly and generously - it reminded me to live more that way at home. They are also much more in tune with their environment - waking and going to bed with the sun, paying close attention to the weather, knowing the phase of the moon. This I also found valuable and will try to maintain in my life. They also underscored the importance of family and community - things I will also try to emphasise back home. Finally, they live so much more sustainably and close to the earth. Again, I plan to try to do this back home. Most importantly though, this program introduced me to people who are at the same place as me in their thinking and exposed me to a whole range of new possibilities. This I found to be incredibly empowering and exciting. (Graeme, Canadian, 1999. Farm Project Report)

For some participants, their experience on the Farm Project caused them to re-evaluate their own lives, and gave them a new perspective on their own culture and how the struggles faced by Ladakhi farmers were similar to those faced in their own
communities. Specifically, the example of small-scale sustainability (everything being used, no garbage cans in the house), the experience of community (co-operative labour) and the role of women were the aspects of life in Ladakh that participants felt they had the most touching and greatest learning experiences.

The LFP gives participants a unique view of gender relations, that are still embedded in functioning land-based communities where women's roles and work are valued.

I'm starting to think that revolutions start with Mothers (Jones, American, Farm Project Meeting, July 1998)

The relationship between men and women in Ladakh was an aspect of the local culture that made an impression on almost every participant. All volunteers noted that the women in the households bear the burden of house and farm work. This is complicated by questions of generation (and of course, personality). From the perspective of Farm Project participants, the older generation seemed to have more 'equal' interactions between genders, whereas the younger men and women were more segregated in terms of tasks and communication. Younger men were more likely to not want to participate in farm or house work. The initial impression that many volunteers had was that the Ladakhi household was very patriarchal. This was modified as they became more integrated into the family and realised that it is the men (in some cases) who are 'marginalised' from family life, and that the women are in effect the 'heads' of the household.

I am so impressed by the women in the family. It has made me really appreciate my own family and feel quite ashamed about how I was at the age of fourteen. Seeing the young Ladakhi women just taking initiative. (Jones, American, Farm Project Meeting 1998)
With time, the complexities of gender and social realities became evident, as opposed to the 'realities'. The value placed on distinct gender roles and the experience of living in a culture where 'house-work' still commands some sense of respect had a profound impact on many participants, male and female. One male participant said:

Refreshingly equal status observed. Ama-le very powerful, sometimes quite frighteningly so. Wonderful to see men not in the slightest feeling threatened by the women’s power and neither being subordinate, but acting utterly respectful and admirably towards them....Nice to see women so powerful - sometimes seemingly more than men. (Roy, British, 1998)

Several participants commented that the experience of being amongst women who are proud of their distinct role in the community had caused them to 're-evaluate what it meant to be a woman'. Almost all participants felt that it made them re-value house-work and farming and that their experience with the Ama-les was an inspiration and a lesson.

The LFP gives participants the opportunity (and indeed requires them) to live for one month according to nature's rhythms and within human-scaled structures - working when the wind blows, or walking only as fast as a dzo can plough a field. For many, this is the first time in their lives they have slowed down and stepped out of the electronic culture.

I walked out to help Meme-she water the fields on the Western end of the village where hardly any houses are visible. through the trees, even the gompa seems far away. He tells me: “Rainer, ibo bas” and we open a couple of channels. Then we wait, resting on our shovels. Maybe he checks how the water is distributed or cleans some channels. I do my best to help. Then we wait and he says “Ika chuk” and I close the channels while he opens some others. I watch him. He is waiting, resting on his shovel. I too, wait. Suddenly an army helicopter appears, noisily hovering over our heads. Meme-she watches it, resting on his shovel and watching. He clears another channel entry from floating grass, enlarges some of the openings, so the water can flow faster. I try to get the idea and check some remaining channels for it. “Aka bas, Rainer”. I open some and he closes the former ones. He lays down and rests. Since I got a bit tired, I welcome it and follow his example. He gets up and checks some channels while I’m still resting. Suddenly he calls me “Rainer!”. As I approach he points to
the wall of a main irrigation channel. A mouse mother and five young ones are escaping their flooded nest. Carefully we observe and help the young mice into safer realms and being close to each other since it is cold. Meme-she picks up one of them by the fur, softly feeling its stomach, if water has entered its lungs. “Chu! Chu tung!”. He puts it down. Then we open and close some channels again, checking every once in a while what the mice are doing and how the mother builds a new house for her family. Meme-she fishes an apple core out of the main channel. “Sabilik kushu tong!” He puts it near the mice’s house. We open and close some more channels and as he decides the work is finished we take our shovels and some other utensils and walk home. (Rainer, 1998)

One of the deepest effects that Farm Project Participants report is in witnessing sustainability in an culturally embedded form. The systems and techniques that have long since disappeared in most ‘developed-world’ communities are still very much alive in many Ladakhi households. For example, one participant pointed out with astonishment that his host family did not have a single receptacle for garbage. Still another commented that “it was fascinating and a great learning experience to see the simple, self-sustaining lifestyle of these people and how contented they were (Jessie 1999)”. It is not only the contact with nature, but the holistic experience of being in a culture that is still embedded in their natural environment, which seems to have the impact on participants. There is also a sense that the different pace of life in Ladakh has a great effect on participants who are used to the fast pace of the industrialised world.

6.2 Weaknesses of the LFP

Addressing the clash between expectations and reality: LFP participants often arrive in Ladakh with unrealistic expectations about both the region and culture as well as the project.

When I came, I thought I could learn a lot of new skills, which wasn’t true. The need for information about the West is bigger than I thought, but language problems made it difficult....I think the
influence the project has is bigger in the West than in Ladakh. (Wiebke, German, 1998)

It’s completely different than I expected...I had an image of a pretty little clean place, and being here is completely different. The effects of development and tourism are shocking. (Natasha, British, Farm Project Meeting, 1998)

One of the greatest challenge faced in organising the Farm Project lies in dealing with the expectations of the participants and how this conflicts with the (relative lack of) expectations of the Ladakhi hosts. Participants understandably wish to feel a sense of solidarity with their Ladakhi hosts, but this is very difficult for many reasons. Some of the reasons revolve around the participants themselves, and some around the Ladakhi hosts, both of which meet at the structural level of the LFP. This section looks briefly at the different elements contributing to the dissonance between expectations and reality experienced by participants.

One element that hinders the development of solidarity is the inherent privilege-based foundation of the project. Most Ladakhis will never see the realities of the West (good and bad) that the participants are attempting to communicate to them. ISEC has run 'reality tours' for Ladakhis annually for approximately 20 years and many of the people who have participated have indeed gone on to become local leaders. However they are a tiny minority of Ladakhis. In addition, the inferiority of rural, non-Western livelihoods is deeply internalised by most Ladakhis, making it difficult to communicate an alternative vision effectively within the short time-period of an average LFP stay.

I suspect that part of the reason why the clash between expectations and reality occurs (for participants) is because Ladakhi Ama-les themselves rarely express interest in the ‘whys’ of the Farm Project. The participants on the other hand, are extremely
concerned that their personal motivations be communicated to their hosts, and in return they wish to understand how the family perceives the project and why they wanted a participant. This does not, however, mean that the ama-les do not understand or indeed feel interest in the objectives of the project.

In 1998, we asked Farm Project participants whether they thought that their host family ‘really understood’ the aims of the Farm Project. Almost 100% of respondents said that they didn’t think so. According to the participants themselves, some families (especially those who had volunteers for the first time this year) did not understand the project in the same way the volunteer did, or understand the concept of volunteering (e.g., some volunteers resented being treated like guests). There was a feeling that those families who had hosted volunteers before, seemed to have a fairly good understanding of the project, and of what the volunteer was doing there (there is at least one notable exception to this). During the research period 59% of host families were ‘repeat’ families, hosting more than one participant over the course of the two years. Of these, 35% had participants in consecutive years, while 24% had more than one participant during a season. To ensure a positive experience for both participants and hosts the LFP plans to work over several years with a small group of families who are committed and interested, in order to build up a solid foundation of host families who are familiar with the aims and challenges of the LFP.

The research shows that in fact most of the Ama-les themselves do at least know the aims of the Farm Project, they rarely choose to engage in discussion or communication about the more esoteric aims of the LFP, partly due to language barriers, and according to Dolma Tsering (Director of the WAL), partly because of cultural
reasons. Philosophising is not a natural part of daily life for most Ladakhis, and even religion is approached practically as part of daily activities. Part of the challenge for the LFP organisers is to ensure that the participants are aware of this, so that they will not be disappointed or surprised by a lack of intellectual engagement on the part of their hosts.

This, and other realities of life in modern Ladakh (as opposed to the travel-guide interpretation) came as a shock to many participants. Several participants expected an idyllic peasant-village experience, whereas the reality is much messier. Some were unprepared to witness alcohol abuse, or young Ladakhhi girls singing ‘Barbie girl’ song which they had learnt in their English lessons at school. Exposure to the realities of modern life in Ladakh brought up a range of emotions in the participants. Some felt resentful being confronted by the very worst excesses of consumer culture, in a small, remote Ladakhi village. Some participants who had not previously perceived television, for example, as being particularly harmful in their own lives, were shocked to see how it had such a clear impact on the social and community life of their host family.

The reality of their own role in the village and their host families also caused concern for some participants. Many participants entered into the Farm Project with a mentality of ‘helping’ the Ladakhis in some practical way on the farm, or in a more ephemeral sense, to demonstrate their respect for Ladakhi culture. Almost every participant arrived with the expectation of being able to 'help', and consciously 'do' counter-development – by communicating with their host families about the reasons why they had come to Ladakh. Through time, many of the participants realised that the LFP had a more immediate and obvious effect upon themselves than upon the Ladakhis whom
they were living with. This factor caused some concern and was a recurrent theme in the Farm Project meetings and in the written reports submitted by participants.

A minority of participants did not meet their own expectations of being able to ‘help’ their Ladakhi hosts in a practical sense. They felt that they had little to offer around the farm and in the house and since they needed to be taught how to do farmwork, they felt ‘less’ useful than a Ladakhi. Conversely, a few participants felt over-worked. This was a very infrequent experience in 1998, but in 1999, more participants felt that they were seen primarily as a labour source, and little else. There was a compulsion amongst some to do something else as a way of helping, such as teach English. The perception that participants were gaining so much more from the experience than the families led some participants to wonder whether the LFP was the ‘best’ thing that they could be doing. Male participants tended to be much more concerned about this aspect of the work. Indeed, the only participants who left the project during the two seasons were two American males - and the primary reason they stated was that they felt that they could be more “useful” doing something else, although it is likely that their disease with house and farmwork was also a factor.

Based upon these findings, we asked ourselves how could the LFP actively minimise the gap between expectations and reality, and see this as an opportunity to increase the level of communication about the project to host families and to better prepare participants in this immersion experience. The dissonance between expectations and reality is partly useful from the perspective of the organisers because it leaves a space for mutual learning. Participants could be encouraged to ask why they are surprised by the conditions in Ladakh and to draw connections between the 'obvious' impacts of
development in Ladakh (for example, how clearly the television impoverishes family
life), and the same elements in their own lives and communities.

Specific modifications to the LFP structures and activities have included: (1) Providing a Ladakhi version of the project description, aims and objectives to all interested families as well as to the village WAL representatives and headmen to supplement the verbal briefing; (2) Instituting meetings with each WAL village committee and headman regarding the LFP aims and objectives; (3) Changing the pre-project literature that participants receive to make the goals and realities of the Project more explicit, as well as instituting a more thorough application process to better assess the interests and level of preparedness of the participants before they are accepted; (3) Instituting specific exercises in the orientation designed to encourage participants to reflect on their expectations critically; and (4) beginning in 2000 by encouraging participants to keep a journal so that they can trace the evolution of their expectations through the course of the Farm Stay.

In addition to the theoretical expectations, participants often underestimate the personal challenges they will face on the farm. At the beginning of their farm stay many participants report feeling lonely and isolated. This presents two challenges: how to adequately prepare them in handling these feelings, and how to deal with other problems when they arise. As a remedy, it was proposed in 2000 to place two or three participants close to each other in neighboring families so that they can provide each other with support. However, there might be resistance to this proposal because most participants believe that they would have a more 'authentic' experience if they are as far away as possible from other Westerners. To give the participants an understanding of the rationale
behind this change, more attention could be given to psychological preparation during the orientation, and of validating (in advance) feelings of loneliness and isolation. This relates to the next interrelated challenge that is faced by participants and to some degree, the host families: Communication.

Communication or dialogue between participants and their host family is difficult and this could potentially lead to misunderstandings poor implementation of the LFP. Differing interpretations of what constitutes 'communication', the value placed on dialogue and who in the family the participants are able to communicate with can also present challenges.

As there was no one speaking more than only a few words of English it was especially in the beginning of my stay, even difficult to communicate about the daily duties and things that were going to happen. I picked up some Ladakhi for that reason. But this was not sufficient for a deeper conversation about Western culture...With my presence in the fields during harvest time I could express in a non-verbal way much more my interest and support for their way of life. (Nicola, German, 1998)

Communication was another common challenge that participants experienced. Again, this was a case where the concerns of participants and their host families were not the same. Most participants tried to learn some Ladakhi, but felt that language was still a significant barrier between them and their host families. About 50% of participants stated that language specifically was a problem, and that they wished they had learned more Ladakhi before and during their stay. Less common was the sentiment that the host families should have spoken more English - but one participant did say that she was shocked by the lack of English ability. Communication challenges ranged from the practical to the philosophical.

Examples of common communications problems were:

- not knowing what to do;
- misunderstandings about how the participant was feeling;
• inability to communicate deeper ideas and feelings, especially with regards to the 'reality' of life in the West;
• many participants felt that they were reinforcing stereotypes of the West because they were unable to explain their motivations for being in Ladakh;
• the feeling that the family didn’t understand the aims of the project and why the participants were in Ladakh in the first place (this was seen as an lack of communication between project staff and host families)

On the other hand, most of the women interviewed did not consider communication with participants to be a particular problem. In their view - even though there was a language barrier, most things could be communicated 'practically' (ie. through body language). They also commented that their own English had improved, and that the participants' Ladakhi did too (which made things easier).

When I had a volunteer for the first time, it was a problem. It was like the saying “two stones meeting together”. We were unable to communicate, except by gestures. Now I can communicate some basic things like eat, drink, sleep, work etc. Also, they learn very quickly. After a week they got adjusted to the routine and then there was no problem communicating. (Likeer, Garaskit 1999).

Only two of the women who were interviewed felt that communication was a serious problem. In both cases, the women were frustrated that they could not give the participants instructions about what work to do.

The flow of information in the opposite direction, from the participants to their host families, is much more problematic. As we have seen in the previous section, the cultural differences that divide the Farm Project participants from the Ladakhi hosts, as well as the lack of a common language, make the project of forging intellectual connections difficult. Therefore there is a need to stress the value of non-verbal communication which is in any case considered by participants to be one of the most rewarding elements of their LFP experience. Indeed, one of the learning outcomes of the LFP is the greater appreciation of participants for 'other' forms of communicating.
One common observation from participants about communication with their host families was that the one or two persons (usually men) in the house who spoke some English, were the people whom the volunteers were least likely to speak to. The English speakers tended to be out of the house most of the time and did not participate in farm work. Most participants spent their days working with the women and children, who spoke very little English. One participant describes the intricacies of communication in his host family:

Most of my communication (verbal, that is) was in English. But I couldn’t say that therefore I communicated most with those who spoke the most English. Aba-le, Namgyal and Ringchen Angmo spoke very good English; Dolma and Chundol spoke a little; ama-le and meme-le, none (except “rest” and “sleep” - imperative forms). However, the more English someone spoke, the less farmwork they did, and therefore the less we had to talk about when we did meet, and the less I saw of them. (Peter, British, 1998)

Communication was an issue for all of the participants, but in many cases this was not just a simple question of language. Thus, many participants did not feel that Ladakhis were particularly 'interested' in hearing about 'ideas', or theorising in a typically Western manner. The same participant expressed his feelings about this aspect of communication:

My intuition was, as far as my family was concerned, that to those who still live in the tradition, working the farm, there was nothing to say: they were so engaged in being who they were, that the thought of losing that life did not occur; while those who had left it for education and office jobs and made a decision which, once made, was no longer available for discussion (perhaps because of their ambivalence towards it was something they sought to repress, in order to be able to press forward). (Peter, British, 1998)

A few participants found ways around this difficulty by having specific phrases translated into Ladakhi by Tonyot (the Ladakhi Farm Project co-ordinator), or communicating 'ideas' through charades and humour. Others concluded that the aim of 'exchanging
information' was inappropriate or unrealistic, given the structure of the project and vastly different backgrounds of Ladakhi and Western participants. For some participants, their inability to communicate intellectually left them feeling helpless.

Some participants fear that their presence and inability to express their motivations may serve to reinforce cultural stereotypes, no matter how hard they try to present an alternative, realistic picture of Westerners.

We are, like it or not, a picture of affluence in the midst of rural Ladakh...are we just foisting Western influence on them? (Robert, British. Farm Project Meeting 1998)

Some project participants noted that they found it difficult to portray the complexity of their feelings about development, and specifically about their home. They found it frustrating that their communication often became narrowed to the basic positive or negative which did not reflect the intricacies of the issue. For example: “machines are bad”. Some felt “stupid” saying such things, and suspected that their host families saw them as stupid, or crazy. Another expressed concern was that their presence may have a negative effect due to their possession of enviable material goods. Three participants expressed deep concern over the fact that, despite their ‘example’ of happily working in the fields, the greatest impact they seemed to have had was to be seen with their camera, or gortex jacket.

The host families often have difficulties being open about criticisms of the project. This presents challenges to conducting an accurate project evaluation.

Despite many challenges raised by the participants, in general, the Ama-les interviewed said that they had not experienced any challenges at all with having a Farm
Project participant in their home. This, in and of itself, could prove to be a weakness of the LFP if it hinders effective evaluation and monitoring of the Project. It is possible that the host families do have few questions or concerns, but attention needs to be paid to the possibility that cultural norms may prevent them from being open about any challenges that do arise.

None of the women who were interviewed in 1998 said that they had any problems with the volunteers (most of them commented on the fact that the volunteers ate, and lived just like Ladakhis, so no special arrangements had to be made). Some mentioned practical issues and occasionally there have been serious misunderstandings. For instance, in one case the participant went away for days without informing their family. Sickness is also a concern, but otherwise there is a sense that having an extra person in the house is not a problem, nor anything to be particularly concerned about. The same pattern was born out in the 1999 interviews, except that the women were a bit more candid about some of the idiosyncracies of the participants and the impact of their presence in the village.

### 6.3 Opportunities

Given all of these strengths and weaknesses of the LFP, what are the opportunities available for the scaling up and replicability of this model? The LFP has opened new opportunities that lend it to success. In Ladakh, the connections between culture, land, humans and the rest of nature are still evident. Women hold distinct and powerful positions, the interconnections between people and their environment are visible daily.

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I imagine that this reluctance to mention negative aspects of the Farm Project is to some degree politeness – knowing that we are responsible for the project, the Ama-les would likely not want to offend
and rural culture still survives to some degree. The unravelling of these connections is also very evident and has deep ramifications both psychologically and ecologically. Ladakh provides a wonderful learning environment for participants, one where there is already an awareness of Ecological issues, thanks to the relatively long history of the movement in the region. The LFP attracts participants who in general have great enthusiasm and commitment to communicate their convictions about the need for social change and who, in general are open to learning. This openness to learning means that the experiential lessons of the LFP give depth to the participants intellectual understanding of the 'issues'. The interest of participants indicates there may be scope for replicating the LFP model in different contexts.

To complement this, there is a great deal of enthusiasm from Ladakhis to host participants, which shows potential for scaling-up the project. Organisationally, there is a commitment from both ISEC and the WAL to continue to support the LFP both through personnel, input and financial resources. There is also a commitment to improving, modifying and continually reflecting on the Farm Project structures and goals which leads to a dynamic and flexible project.

6.4 Threats to the Ladakh Farm Project

Before considering whether or not scaling-up the project is possible or desireable, internal and outside factors that affect the success and potential of the LFP also need to be considered.

Tonyot or myself.
Criticism of the LFP coming from both Ladakhis and non-Ladakhis and based on misinterpretation of the Project, or differing perspectives on development could threaten the future of the project, as it undermines the confidence of both participants, hosts and the organisers in the validity of their work.

Outside criticism of the Project could be a potential threat, especially because most participants and other foreigners could only speak to the most modern Ladakhis (who are not the constituency that the project most appeals to). In addition, formal power within the community is held by the modernised Ladakhis who are most likely to be skeptical of the radical philosophy behind the project. The positive impact on Ladakh is not something that can be easily quantified or seen during a quick trip to a village, and non-Ladakhis particularly are understandably suspicious of anyone speaking 'for' Ladakhis. Given that, outsiders just like the participants themselves, will not likely be able to talk with the women who are the greatest supporters of the project, the LFP can be difficult to explain and justify to outsiders.

There is skepticism amongst foreigners and many modernised Ladakhis about the whole project of 'transformation for social change'. Many are not convinced that social transformation is necessary, so the project is constantly defending and explaining its very philosophical foundations as well as trying to operate effectively. Most participants and other foreigners cannot speak directly to the Ama-les in their host family (the very people who generally are most closely aligned with the philosophy of the project), and so they often end up speaking with the men in the family who have invested in the money economy and less sympathetic to the Ecology movement. This challenge of communicating an underlying philosophy is one that is faced by many social change-oriented projects and organisations around the world. Critics assert that the global
ecological and socio-cultural crises are 'matters of opinion', and that propagation of information about this is 'biased' and not an accurate picture of 'the world out there'.

Ladakhis and Foreigners alike are accustomed to a style of 'development' that appears politically neutral such as building things, generating income, and generally improving 'welfare' in a conventional sense. The fact that the Ladakh Farm Project does neither of these things (except for the small degree to which labour is considered 'help', and the fee paid by the participants is considered 'income generation), leaves it open to criticisms of irrelevance and idealism. Beyond these criticisms, there are varied opinions among Ladakhis and foreigners alike about the LFP itself. Some feel the Ladakhis are exploited for a 'nice cultural experience -- that they are, in the words of Arturo Escobar, 'consumed' by the participants-- others feel that the foreigners are exploited as free labour.

The long-term sustainability of the LFP could be threatened by the relative lack of formal education and political clout of the Ladakhi women who are the greatest supporters of the philosophy behind the LFP.

This skepticism about the objectives and implementation of the LFP is understandable, given the fact that the disintegration of the local systems is already well underway in Ladakh, and there is a lack of knowledge about 'how it used to be'. This makes it difficult for participants and Ladakhi or non-Ladakhi outsiders to judge for themselves which characteristics of Ladakhi culture have been damaged by the impact of development, and which are not. Instead, they are forced to rely upon the opinions and testimonies of the organisers (including the WAL and Helena Norberg-Hodge herself, when she is present) as well as the Ladakhis who can speak English, in order to paint
their own picture of how Ladakh is changing (as opposed to how they see it in the moment, or month that they are there).

It becomes increasingly clear that some form of consistent, facilitated communication between participants and host family is necessary if participants are to hear a balanced view of how ‘Ladakhis’ feel about development and change in their communities and vice versa. Making this thesis (in a summarised form) available for any interested outsiders may also be useful in the process of providing open information about the development and background of the LFP.

Organisers need to face the long-term sustainability of the LFP. Because it developed in an ad hoc way, no attention has been paid to this aspect of the Project. Ladakh is already so entrenched in 'development' in the conventional way that there is a possibility that it will not continue to be a place where a project like the LFP can continue to run. As long as conventional growth oriented development and the concommitant breakdown of the Ladakhi rural culture continue, it will become more and more difficult to find positive experiences for the participants, and skepticism for the aims of the project will no doubt grow. This brings into question the sustainability of the LFP in the long-range in terms of Ladakhis continued interest.

The volatile political situation in and around Ladakh could also prove to be a threat to the continued safety of the project. The long history of political volatility in the region leads to suspicion about the motives of the participants, on the part of villagers.

Three women from more remote villages pointed out that one problem with the LFP was that other villagers did not understand why the volunteer was there. This is a particularly interesting point that came up three times in interviews and often in casual
conversation with host families. There is some concern that other families in the village think that the volunteers are spies - especially because the volunteers like to ‘walk in the hills’. One good quote from an Ama-le that sums this up: “He had a habit of walking too much. I think most foreign men are like that” - Nimoo, Tongskil. This is likened to the way the Chinese infiltrated Tibet “first they came like friends”.

It is difficult controlling the individual experience of the LFP, as there are many variables (the host family dynamics, the personality of the participant, the political situation and the physical conditions) that cannot be controlled.

The political situation in Ladakh is one example of a related and larger potential threat to the LFP. Most Farm Project Participants (approximately 80%), arrive in Ladakh, convinced that they wish to be placed in a remote village. This presents a classic double-bind. In a more modernised, urban-influenced village their labour is more likely to be needed and where they will likely witness the keenest examples of the impacts of development (allowing them to feel useful), but in a remote village they are likely to experience a more intact, healthy family and community (and thus will likely feel more happy). The problem is exacerbated by the absence of any sure-fire formula that would allow one to predict how an individual would relate with a particular family. Indeed, over the course of the two research seasons, participants were placed in families where previous participants had had fantastic experiences, only to have a completely different, negative experience.
The LFP takes place during the busy agricultural season in Ladakh. This means that there is limited possibilities for increasing the level of individual Ladakhi involvement Project activities such as meetings.

A further threat to the success of the LFP is that the project season runs during the busy agricultural season and this makes it difficult to increase involvement of the host families and particularly the women, as they are already very occupied with their farming work. This points to the need to reconsider the timing of the project. However, if the agricultural component is to stay central there is no other choice but to hold the LFP during the farming season.

Scaling up the LFP could lead to conflict if participating host families consistently have an advantage getting free labour.

There are also possible market failure issues that might arise if the LFP is scaled up (ie. giving some families an advantage in terms of labour) but at this stage, the number of volunteers is so small relative to the total farming population that such concerns are (a) irrelevant and (b) unvoiced as of yet.

6.5 Conclusions

Given this brief analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the LFP, what conclusions can be drawn about the future of the project, its structure and mechanics, including the possibility of scaling-up (internal operations) and replicating this model in other contexts? Furthermore, what lessons can be learned from this case study that may be useful for other planners, activists and community organisers.

The testimony of the participants and the host family women illustrates that there are many strengths inherent in the LFP. Despite some communication difficulties and
clash of expectations with reality, the experience overall is still considered to be immensely valuable by both participants and hosts. The Ladakhi WAL members who still represent and uphold many of the rooted values of a land-based, ecological society are powerful teachers for the participants, as is the slower paced way of living that is inherent in a subsistence-based agricultural lifestyle. The awareness that has been generated by the Ecology movement in Ladakh, over the past twenty-five years as well as the survival of a close relationship between humans and nature in Ladakh provides a relatively supportive context for the LFP, despite the skepticism of some outsiders and more modernised Ladakhis.

The LFP is unique in combining a wholistic educational experience (uniting learning through doing, thinking and feeling) with an opportunity to actively support in a practical and psychological way the continued existence of a land-based sustainable livelihood and culture. Could the same objectives be achieved differently, or in a much-changed project? It is plausible that any radically different project may not be able to meet the same objectives, however there is room for improvement of the LFP. It is possible that a tourist informally staying with a Ladakhi family for one month could well be a very interesting and moving experience, but the value of the LFP is in the context that it provides to this connection. Participants and hosts are given information and support that broadens their connection with each other beyond the personal and politicises the nature of the exchange. In this way, what could be simply another eco-tourist activity becomes a politically charged and potentially transformative or deeply supportive experience for both participants and hosts.
We have seen how improvement have and can continue to be made in preparing both Ladakhis and participants for the project and in disseminating more information to the wider community about the aims and objectives of the LFP. In addition to this, tracking and monitoring of the long-term impact that the LFP has on participants needs to be undertaken if we are to fully understand the impact of this work (both positive and negative). Until now the feedback we have obtained form participants has been immediate feedback, written while in Ladakh itself or shortly after they left. In order to gain a better understanding about the catalysing potential of the LFP in inspiring change back in the home communities of participants, follow-up communication and collaboration with this group is necessary. Unfortunately a significant limitation to this development is funding and human resources.

Besides funding, the LFP faces considerable threats simply by being a project based upon a radical philosophy of what could be called 'counter-development'. The tenuous political situation and rapid changes that are occurring in Ladakh due to conventional development threaten the long-term sustainability of the Project. However, it is these very threats that make the project of social transformation and radical planning undertaken by the LFP, WAL and ISEC so timely and important.

Given the interest on the part of Ladakhis and foreign participants and the benefits associated with the Project, there is every possibility that the LFP could be scaled-up, but considering the limitations explored here, it is unlikely that this will occur in the near future. The structural issues are the most serious limitation There is a danger that increasing the volume of participants could dilute the experience and necessitate a more complicated organisational structure, larger staff numbers and more resources which are
unavailable at this time. On the other hand, given the interest in and benefits to the project, it is a shame to pass up an opportunity to expand upon a valuable and unique educational experience. My recommendation is that the project be developed more fully on a small-scale before scaling-up is attempted, but that every effort be made to explore the possibility of scaling-up. Specific recommendations for this project development follow in the concluding chapter.

Replicability of the LFP model is less straightforward and many factors would have to be in place in order for a similar project to function in a different context. There is certainly a great deal of interest in this project, which would indicate that there are opportunities from the participant side, for replicating this model. The LFP is one element of a larger spectrum of activism (the LEDeG, the WAL and ISEC) that exists in Ladakh and it plays an important role because it is the only project that explicitly takes cross-cultural exchange, communication mutual learning as a goal. However, without the support of other organisations and the important work they are doing to create an Ecological alternative based upon Ladakhi values and tradition, the LFP would not be a sufficient mechanism for supporting Ladakhi local agriculture and culture. It would be difficult to obtain support for such a project in areas where there is little or no exposure to the questioning of development.

The social learning that the LFP provides for participants (facilitated by the three meetings each month) could still take place in an area where there are no other organisations working and no other NGO involvement, it might be less rewarding and the challenges faced by participants would be magnified many times. Similar farming projects can and are being run in different parts of the world (for example the popular
Willing Workers on Organic Farms), but no other projects that I know of combine the elements of education, farming, cultural exchange and women's organizing as explicitly as the LFP.

The most important factor for the success of a LFP in a different context are the existence of a strong partnership between a local and a foreign organization, both of whom collaborate to run the project. Without such a partnership it is unlikely that the both administration and the on the ground running of the project would be able to be carried out effectively. It is much preferable if the local organisation is a member organisation with farmers as the primary constituency, (like the WAL). Such an organisation can provide essential communication networks upon which the project depends. One of the most important factors of the LFP and the most difficult to reproduce is the role of Ladakhi women. The majority of the world's farmers may be women, but few of them still have the confidence and strength of Ladakhi women, and thus it would likely be difficult to actively engage them in a Farm Project.

It would be very valuable to attempt to reproduce the Farm Project model in a different context and indeed it has been suggested in the past that there may be the possibility of such an experiment working in the Andes with PRATEC, but this has not moved beyond the conceptual stage. The interest in and success of the LFP demonstrates that there may be interest in other agricultural areas and more research needs to be done in order to corroborate this speculation.

Another exciting idea that ISEC is developing at the moment, is that of taking the template goals and guidelines of the LFP and attempting to build a series of exercises and activities which could be done by community groups in other contexts. The idea has
been experimented in Bristol, UK by one community organiser who used the concept of learning from existing rural communities and cultures as a foundation for what was dubbed the 'Global to Local Community Building Project' involving inner city residents. As one of the advisors to this project, I witnessed an incredible transformation in the group from a motely crew of skeptical individuals who were initially convinced that economic globalisation was inevitable and that they had little if anything to learn from rural societies to a group that just months later came up with the following mission statement:

Our main purpose is to urgently educate ourselves and others about the effects that globalisation has on breaking up communities, and the importance of traditional communities in other parts of the world in showing us in the urban 'North' wise and sustainable ways of living. (GLCB Newsletter, March 2000)

Through a process of getting the group to look at their own communities (the good and bad elements) and working with Southern 'experts' (including Ladakhi LFP co-ordinator Stanzin Tonyot) the group made a deep shift in their perception not only of the problems in the global exonomic system but also in their ideas for what positive action could happen in urban centres.

The main advantage of this non-farm project (based upon similar principles as the LFP, is that this group of individuals live and work in the same community and the learning they do together as part of the GLCBP can inform group action in the long-term. It is a place-based transformation that holds great promise. Despite the fact that LFP participants do go though significant transformation and learning process on the LFP, they often return to communities where there is no one to whom they can easily share their ideas and inspiration. The workshop format in the
GLCBP however would not involve a farm-stay, a component that makes the LFP so rich and challenging as a project of two-way communication rather than simply self-development.
7.0 Specific recommendations for the Ladakh Farm Project

Over the course of the two seasons during which this research was conducted, I was a position of being able to influence project policies and implementation based on my findings. This was a unique position to do ‘action-research’ where I was able to effectively test out my findings through discussion with participants, co-coordinators and WAL members and also do programmatic modifications. Unfortunately, the research was not designed to analyse how these changes impacted upon the project, as in most cases, the modifications will not be felt until the next season.

I have attempted to indicate throughout the preceding chapters where changes and modifications have been made to the LFP based upon this research, but I summarise these changes here in the format of a list of recommendations for each element of the project cycle. An indication of whether or not the suggestion has, or is in the process of being implemented is included. My general recommendation for the LFP is that it be developed further as a small-scale project before attempting to scale it up, or replicate it in another context. The following recommendations summarise the project development strategies that I suggest.
The LFP Project Cycle: Challenges and Recommendations.

Table 5. LFP Publicity and Fundraising: Challenges and Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Element &amp; Challenges</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Implementation Stage</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>Seek outside funding</td>
<td>Approach regular WAL and ISEC donors with specific proposal</td>
<td>Not implemented</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavily subsidised by ISEC, making scaling-up difficult</td>
<td>Raise fees to cover costs, and scale fees so that reduced fees can be offered to economically disadvantaged</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity</td>
<td>Determine whether publicity strategy is necessary.</td>
<td>Create outline publicity strategy including target group, and optimum number of participants</td>
<td>Not imp.</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No strategy for non-Ladakhi participants therefore little idea of who and how many interested people will apply in any given season.</td>
<td>Ensure that as many villagers as possible know about the project and have the option to express interest.</td>
<td>Ladakhi co-ordinator attend village WAL meetings and meet with village headmen to discuss the LFP. Ask these two groups to disseminate information.</td>
<td>Implemented 1999-2000</td>
<td>Outcome will not be known until 2000 season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Element &amp; Challenges</td>
<td>Recommendation</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Implementation Stage</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recruitment and selection of Participants</strong></td>
<td>Participants had different and sometimes unrealistic expectations of the LFP, esp. with regards to communication</td>
<td>Improve preparation of the participants by giving fuller information during the application procedure</td>
<td>Implemented 1999</td>
<td>Challenge still existed (expectations still not meet reality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Application package updated to include more explicit description about aims and objectives of project as well as limitations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants not prepared for the challenges of the LFP</td>
<td>Be selective about participants so as to weed out inappropriate candidates</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td>Outcome will not be known until 2000 season evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Selection procedure for participants improved through use of more detailed application form and requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide some basic Ladakhi language instruction</td>
<td>Ladakhi language sheets compiled and sent to participants prior to their LFP stay</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recruitment and selection of Ladakhi host families</strong></td>
<td>See publicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Element &amp; Challenges</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Implementation Stage</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation of participants</strong></td>
<td>Improve orientation process so that participants are better prepared for the LFP experience</td>
<td>Explicitly deal with 'expectations' as a group and encourage participants to unpack and look at their own expectations.</td>
<td>Implemented Spring 1999</td>
<td>Valuable, but did not overcome the problem entirely. May work better now the preparatory literature is improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations coming to the LFP are high and often unrealistic. Participants often underestimate practical challenges.</td>
<td>Provide a 'reality check' talk to help participants foresee the challenges they will face – both psychological and practical (use past participants who are still in Ladakh for this when possible). Offer personal time to participants to supplement the group orientation meeting, so that participants can share more personal fears and/or feelings about the project.</td>
<td>Implemented Spring 1999</td>
<td>Not yet implemented</td>
<td>Outcome will not be known until 2000 season evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation of Host families</strong></td>
<td>Improve orientation process for host families so that they are as informed as possible.</td>
<td>Institute formal meetings with interested families where the goals and rationale behind the project are discussed.</td>
<td>Implemented Spring 1999</td>
<td>Very valuable, Potential misunderstandings were mitigated. Spin-off of the formal meetings with families was that the Project team could then tell the participant more about the host family's motivations for having a participant.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 8. LFP Education: Challenges and Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Element &amp; Challenges</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Implementation Stage</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information dissemination and Education</td>
<td>The wider Ladakhi community are not aware about the goals of the project. This can lead to suspicion</td>
<td>Provide more information and open communication about the LFP with the wider Ladakhi community.</td>
<td>Implement meetings with WAL village committees and village headmen to spread understanding about the LFP. Encourage them to communicate the goals of the Project to their constituencies.</td>
<td>Implemented Autumn 1999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participant presence alone is not sufficient to educate the host families about the inherent unsustainability of the global economic system and the threat it poses to their sustainable livelihood.

The more formal educational aspect of the LFP has not been fully developed and as such is lacking.

Supplement the discussion of the goals of the LFP with a more strategic education programme aimed at raising the status of agriculture in Ladakh.

Develop and refine the 'formal' ideas-based educational aspect of the LFP.

Use creative workshop techniques to communicate the theoretical framework of the project. E.g. Tools from popular...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication and interpretation</th>
<th>Improve communication between participant and hosts.</th>
<th>Provide at least one translated conversation between host and participant, preferably at the beginning of their stay.</th>
<th>Our intention is to implement this idea, and indeed we have attempted to do so in 1999 but in reality it is difficult to co-ordinate with limited staff resources.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants are challenged by their inability to converse with their hosts regarding the goals of the project.</td>
<td>Prepare hosts for the needs of the participants and Give the participants some basic language tools.</td>
<td>Provide written and verbal guidelines for Ladakhi hosts regarding the needs of the participants. Provide written language materials. Provide a Ladakhi language workshop during the orientation.</td>
<td>Implemented Autumn 1999 Implemented 2000 project season Implemented the language workshop in 1999 project season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication about practical matters can be challenging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outcome will not be available until 2000 project season evaluation if it is implemented this year. When we have tried this approach it has been immensely valuable for both hosts and participants. Outcome will not be known until 2000 evaluation Participants responded favourably but only wished a brief overview - more complicated lessons were better organised privately as participants had varying degrees of interest in learning Ladakhi.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 9. LFP Monitoring and Evaluation: Challenges and Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Element &amp; Challenges</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Implementation Stage</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>Work with a small number of Ladakhi host families in a variety of villages who are interested and committed to the aims of the project. Add new families each year if necessary, but focus on creating a strong base of Ladakhi host families who will then be able to help inform new families as and when they join the project.</td>
<td>Meet with 'repeat' host families at the beginning and end of the project season to discuss this rationale and obtain their feedback.</td>
<td>To be implemented in Spring 2000</td>
<td>Outcome will not be known until 2000 evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Use strategic evaluation tools to obtain reliable feedback from both Ladakhi hosts and participants about the value of the experience and areas for improvement.</td>
<td>Create a replicable evaluation strategy based upon the tools used during this research (regular interviews with participating women and other members of host families, participant written feedback reports etc.)</td>
<td>Implemented over the course of this research 1998-1999</td>
<td>Very valuable in providing a coherent picture of the LFP, its strengths and weaknesses, but the process could and will be refined to be more efficient (less data and more specific questions asked of participants and host families).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.1 Conclusions and Lessons for Planners

The globalisation of agriculture and food is affecting farmers, rural communities and consumers all over the world. We have seen how in the case of Ladakh, development of agriculture is having detrimental effects upon community, ecology and women farmers. The direction of development in Ladakh does not take into account lessons being learned in the North and likewise, the direction that development is taking in the North is blind to the impact it has on cultural and biological diversity and the lessons from existing traditional agricultural systems.

Ladakh still has a relatively intact though threatened land-based culture, that is highly valued by the local women farmers who comprise the majority of farmers. From the perspective of the Ladakhi women interviewed, the changes occurring in agriculture are cause for concern and organisations such as the WAL is one forum where such concerns are voiced. The WAL and ISEC's Ladakh Farm Project is one aspect of the Ecological development movement in Ladakh that aims to cultivate greater understanding about how conventional, growth-oriented development has affected cultures and communities all over the world by fostering deeper connections between Westerners and Ladakhis. It does face challenges due to its orientation as a women's organisation and because of its political agenda. Despite these factors, the WAL is rapidly becoming one of the most respected organisations in Ladakh.

The Ladakh Farm Project, has a profound impact on many participants, and is considered to be a benefit to both participants and the Ladakhi hosts. The specific context of Ladakh provides a rich learning ground for Westerners who wish to explore alternatives to the globalised economic system as well better understand the impact of the
global economic system upon land-based cultures. Likewise, the relatively long history of ecological awareness and activism in Ladakh, as well as the existence of the strong Women's Alliance and their partnership with ISEC, create strong foundation for meeting the aims of the project.

There is the interest and infrastructure to scale-up the LFP in Ladakh, but such a scaling-up would be premature without further project development at the current scale. Particular attention needs to be paid to the educational aspect of the LFP, both with regards to the participants and the Host families. In addition, scaling-up would involve resources unavailable to ISEC and the WAL at this time. Replicability of the LFP model in another context is possible and could be very valuable, but again, further refinement of the LFP model is advisable before taking the structure to another context. In addition, in order to meet the educational aims of the project, a strong partnership between a local and international organisation would be essential, as well as ideally a farmers organisation as the local host organisation. Such a combination could be difficult to find.

The Ladakh Farm Project, and the broader context of development in Ladakh holds many lessons for planners. In one sense, the change that is occurring in Ladakh can be seen as a microcosm of what is occurring all over the globe - and as a warning to planners. The lack of information about long-term ramifications of specific developments, as well as lack of access to viable alternatives (and the encouragement to create them), are leading Ladakhis along the same path of unsustainable development and community break-down occurring all over the world. In another sense, Ladakh can be seen as a region where alternatives are flourishing - where people are questioning the
wisdom of rapid development and fighting for their own freedom to choose the direction of change. In this way, Ladakh is an inspiration to planners.

The Ladakh Farm Project offers learning opportunities about the challenges that will face planners in the coming century as they work to build sustainable solutions to the ecological and social crises facing the planet. The LFP is a politically motivated project which takes long-term social transformation, connection with nature and across cultures as key educational goals in and of themselves. As such, the LFP is not based on conventional planning but is influenced by 'radical' and transformative planning which takes seriously the role of civil society forces as initiators of change. Transformative planning asks how community and international planners can learn from and participate in their struggles and search for solutions that work (e.g. Friedmann 1987, Sandercock 1998).

Both forms of planning have developed alongside Feminist Planning as a response to the depoliticisation of the planning discipline. In the early days of social science, disciplines such as social work and planning were closely and clearly linked to community organising and social reform (Lee Sohng 1995). But with the professionalisation and 'scientisation' of these disciplines, the goal of "objectivity" and detachment (planner as scientist, social scientist as objective observer) became paramount. Political motivations came to be considered 'bias' as opposed to 'conviction' or 'responsibility'. It was the job of the planner to scientifically and dispassionately apply the "truth" of economics (Escobar 1995, 86), divorced from any analysis or appreciation of the individual ecological, cultural or social context.
Indeed, the detachment and separation mindset, brought to us by those early architects of the modern era, e.g. Descartes and Galileo, and refined through modern science, have become reified to such a degree that "excessive emotion about the object of one's study is in some institutions sufficient reason to banish miscreants to the black hole of committee duty or administration on the grounds that good science and emotion of any sort are incompatible." (Orr 1995, 43). The result of this illusory separation of human emotion and intellect is "the creation of a system that is both blind and blind to its own blindness; a system that is fundamentally irrational from a human perspective, one that threatens to overwhelm and destroy the connecting relationships of life itself (Norberg-Hodge 2000, xxii)".

This blindness can be seen in education, bringing us to the point where an education based upon the belief that "we must prepare the young only to compete effectively in the global economy" is considered to be 'unbiased' despite the inherently political nature of such a commitment. Disciplines have become so compartmentalised and individuals specialised into 'experts' that we have become detached from events in the 'real world'. The same trends can be seen in food and farming, as farmers are forced into specialisation of production, often at the expense of broad-based ecological knowledge. Indeed, attempts to forge connections laterally between events, professions or disciplines (never mind between mind and body or soul and intellect) are regarded with great skepticism and often cynicism. One of the greatest insults to a social scientist is that she is a generalist. And yet, it is precisely the lack of a big picture analysis that is our downfall as planners and as a species on the planet.
American educator Gregory Smith says of this phenomenon: "one of the consequences of the compartmental thinking characteristic of the modern era is that it is very difficult to imagine the impact events in one area have on another (1993)" And so a student may obtain perfect grades at school, or a planner may be able to explain with precision how the by-law regulations in their town work, but neither will know where the bananas they eat at lunch come from, let alone under what conditions they were produced.

Thus, faced with environmental breakdown and social collapse, there is great need to reconnect both laterally between nations, regions, disciplines and professions, as well as with nature. Emotional detachment and disconnection from nature - the very ground beneath our feet - are a significant elements of the malaise that have led us to the social and ecological crisis we are now facing.

The need for reconnection to the ecological and social realities around us and the need to dramatically rethink (or re-feel) our perception of the human place in the world, as much as our techniques for dealing with it, are being articulated from many different disciplines. Ecologist E.O. Wilson calls this reconnection 'biophilia' or "the connections that humans subconsciously seek with the rest of life" (cited in Orr 1995, 46). Ecofeminists broaden this to include relations between the masculine and the feminine, as well as between humans and the rest of nature, and across cultures. However, all of this must be entertained with caution, lest we fall into old patterns exemplified by the power-over relations inherent in the lineage of colonialism to the development 'industry'. Agroecologist Miguel Altieri, cautions that "social movements, intellectuals and activists
have the opportunity to create discourses in which the problematisations of gender, food and nature are not just reduced to one more problem of development". (1987, 211).

It is possible that new advances in science will help this radically new approach advocated by scholars and activists alike. Perhaps, now more than ever, we are coming to the point where science can be "changed and used differently, not abandoned" (Watt and Peet 1996). Scientists are now discovering what indigenous peoples have been trying to tell the Western world for generations - that all life is interconnected and that the notion of separateness is an illusion that we maintain at our peril. The 're-enchantment' with nature (Berman 1981) is becoming increasingly possible, aided to some degree by the 'magical' realities being revealed by science, as well as greater opportunities for communication across cultural divides. There is more possibility now than ever before in human history for us to know about other cultures and thus value diversity in all its cultural and biological manifestations. But, as Arturo Escobar rightly warns, even though the "struggle for cultural affirmation must be carried out in conjunction with the struggle against exploitation of and domination over", we must not "give into the temptation to 'consume' grassroots experiences in the market for alternatives in the Western Academe". (1995, 170).

And so armed with such inspiration and caution, planners, scholars, activists and community organisers march out into the messy world of application. As planning and social science research becomes reunited with the practice of social change, new exciting possibilities emerge exemplified in the field of Action Research and Participatory Action Research (PAR) where the explicit aim of social research becomes transformative. Participatory Research is "grounded in an explicit political stance and clearly articulated
value base - social justice and the transformation of those contemporary sociocultural structures and processes that support degeneration of participatory democracy, injustice and inequality". (Sohng 1995, 5). As co-coordinator of the Farm Project, I was in the unique position of being able to apply to the project lessons learned from my research. This immediate ‘implementation’ aspect of the research and the ability to iteratively work with colleagues, participants and Ladakhi host families encapsulates the goals of AR was valuable both for personal (professional) and organisational (project) development.

The fates of people and the environment all over the globe are becoming increasingly intertwined. As people and nature labor under the strain of the increasingly globalized economic system it is imperative that information about the inevitable failure of this system is made readily available and that alternatives and success stories from different areas are shared. However, such sharing is not as simple as one might think. The clean, neutral space of the internet provides us all with the illusion that communication is easy and fast. In reality, when we are face to face with others - be they planners in a professional sense, or on-the-ground planners and activists such as the WAL members and Farm Project participants - the effort of communicating even the simplest feelings or ideas can seem insurmountable, and is never fast.

The process of social transformation, a project embraced by feminist and radical planners, requires that such complexities are taken seriously and that all of us slow down to truly communicate, not only between decision-makers but with mothers, nature and especially those people who still live connected to the earth. Only by engaging these connections and embracing the complexity will planners be able to create the space for true alternatives to flourish.
REFERENCES


Friends of the Earth. 1999. The Real Food Book. London; Friends of the Earth UK.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LADAKHI</strong></th>
<th><strong>ENGLISH</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Aka bas'</td>
<td>'Enough there'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ama-le</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chang</td>
<td>Barley Beer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chu</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dzo</td>
<td>Cross between a Yak and a Cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Ibo bas'</td>
<td>'Enough here'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Ika chuk'</td>
<td>'Close this one/place'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kushu</td>
<td>Apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meme-le</td>
<td>Grandfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabilik</td>
<td>Mouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salwar Kameez</td>
<td>Indian Women's Dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tong</td>
<td>see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tungs</td>
<td>Drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zepo</td>
<td>Sickle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX II. COMPARATIVE CROP YIELDS IN LADAKH, INDIA.

### COMPARATIVE CROP YIELDS IN TONNES/HECTARE
(rewritten from Osmaston 1989:5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Average yield (t/ha)</th>
<th>Crop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STonge (3,900m)</td>
<td>4 t/ha</td>
<td>Barley and wheat (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padum (3,900m)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Barley (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padum (3,900m)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Barley and wheat (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karsha (3,900m)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Barley and wheat (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shad-e (4,500m)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Barley (contin.) (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STongde (3,900m)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Peas (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENGLAND</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-1945</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Winter wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Winter wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Spring barley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Peas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rothamsted, (100 years continuous cropping)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Barley, no manure or fertiliser (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Barley, 35 t/ha/yr animal manure (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NORTH AMERICA AND CANADA</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Barley and wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDIA AND AFRICA</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Barley and wheat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**References**

1. Crook and Osmaston (in press)
2. Chalmers and Ramm, 1984
3. Crowden, 1977
4. Rothamsted, 1966; Warren and Johnston, 1967
5. Li Ji-you, 1981
APPENDIX III. SUBSIDISED FOOD-GRAINS IN LADAKH

The Subsidised food-grain program was initiated in Ladakh in 1962 when the Leh-Srinagar road was first opened. The Food and Supplies District officer estimated that the program was providing foodgrains for 1Lakh (100 000) people in the Leh district including outsiders (this means that virtually everyone is receiving subsidised grains).

The total produce imported into Ladakh each year is:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>6000 Quintals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>6000 Quintals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>800 Quintals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fuel is also imported and subsidised by the Central government. The total amount brought in each year is:

Kerosene = 13,000 barrels (each barrel is 200 Litres)

All of these goods are subsidised by the government at 30%. Rations arrive each year when the Srinagar road opens for traffic in June or July.
APPENDIX IV. LIST OF INTERVIEWS AND PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS


27 Interviews with Women's Alliance members who have hosted Ladakh Farm Project participants

*Other:*

Frequent informal discussions with Dolma Tsering, Director of WAL and other members of the WAL working committee. Daily contact and discussion with Stanzin Tonyot, Co-coordinator of LFP. Discussion with Mr. Namgyal Jora, Director of LEDeG. Informal in-depth discussion with six LFP participants and four host ama-les.