

A QUEST FOR MEANING



The story



« How it all began »

When Nathanael goes to visit Marc in New York, it's been 10 years since they've last seen each other and their lives are totally different: Nathanael has just finished an environmental film on water access in India, and Marc works in sales and marketing for a global corporation that exports bottled water...

A small accident brings Marc's «American dream» to a halt. Stuck in bed, he ends up watching a bunch of documentaries on globalisation that Nathanael had left behind. That's when he realizes that he is part of the problem. He resolves to give up his career plans and goes to join Nathanael in India where they will embark on an epic, impromptu journey.

« The quest »

Equipped with nothing more than a tiny camera and a microphone, they will attempt to uncover the causes of the current world crises and discover a way to bring about change. From India to Guatemala, from San Francisco to Southern France, their whole world will be transformed...

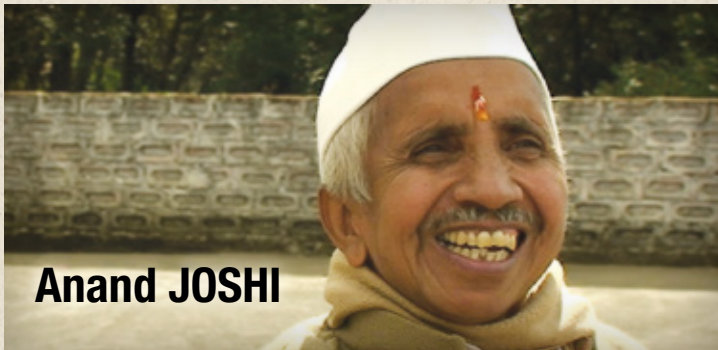
Full of incredible testimonials, moments of doubt and moments of joy, their journey encourages us to reconsider our rapport with nature, with happiness and with the meaning of life. These 87 minutes will help us regain confidence in our ability to bring about change, within ourselves and within society.

The Film in Numbers:

- 6 months of travel
on 3 continents
- 1 amateur video shooting
80% improvised
- 29 interviews
- 32 train rides
(plus 1 missed train)
- 80 hours footage
- 8 different kinds of transportation
- 3 blow-out arguments
- 3 years of writing and editing
- 103 fits of uncontrollable laughter
- 13 highlighters
- 18 make-shift offices
- 1 sprained ankle + 1 tendinitis of the wrist
- 4 periods of self-doubt
- 12379 emails and text messages

Main Players





Anand JOSHI

We arrived at Anand and Prema's after traveling on a train all night long plus a six-hour taxi ride. We had first heard of them in a documentary at the CMS film festival in Delhi and we had decided to go meet them. In his youth, Anand had been injured while working at a construction site, and the doctors had insisted that he had no hope of recovery. Through sheer will power, dedication and the assiduous practice of Kriya Yoga, he managed to recover and decided to use his

inner strength to help the most destitute and underprivileged.

In the village of Kausani, at the foot of the Himalayas, Anand and his wife Prema have opened a center where they assist widows and their children in difficulty. In their workshop, Anand and his son also make a number of very sturdy, useful tools which are in high demand.

They take Gandhi as their inspiration in everyday life and follow very closely the concept of «Swaraj», which means « self-governance ».

Anand told us:

« Life is going too fast, it is going so fast that it is spinning out of control. Gandhi encourages us to take control and to take our seat at the wheel! If you follow the teachings of Gandhi, of course life will be much slower. But it will be full of joy. »



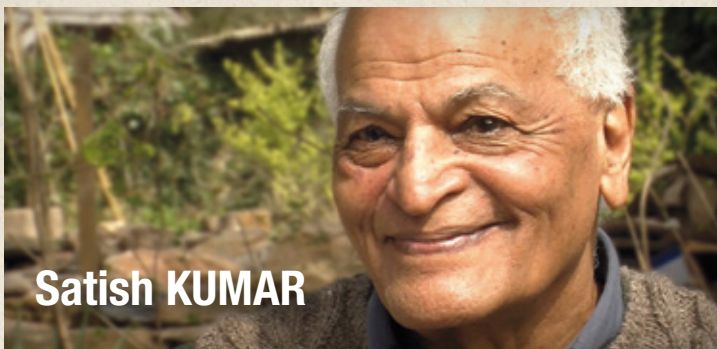
Vandana Shiva, a Physicist and Epistemologist with a PhD in the Philosophy of Science, is one of the foremost figures in the Anti-globalisation movement. In 1993, she received the «Right Livelihood Award»,

also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize. She actively defends and supports the plight of small farmers faced with the aggressive expansion policies of global corporations in the food and agriculture industry.

She and Satish Kumar have founded «Navdanya», an association dedicated to the conservation of traditional grains and seeds. The farm at Navdanya has also trained over 10 000 farmers in organic farming techniques. For over 40 years, Vandana Shiva has been fighting the abusive practices of global corporations, as in Palchilmada, Kerala, where a group of women fought to close a Coca Cola factory that was draining the local source of groundwater. We were lucky enough to be invited to the Vidyapeeth center for their seminar on « Gandhi and Globalisation », where she introduced us to her friends. We were very inspired by her multidisciplinary approach and by her view that living beings are not just mechanical organisms.

Vandana told us:

« Spirituality is understanding your place in this universe, and understanding that we are all connected. Feeling that you are a part of a whole gives you enormous power, because the universe is an incredible creative force. »



Satish KUMAR

A Jain monk from the age of 9, Satish renounced his vocation in his adolescent years and joined Gandhi's movement for agricultural reform. In 1962 he undertook a March for Peace of more than 12 000 km with E.P.Menon. The two companions traveled on foot to Moscow, Paris, London and Washington with no money, in order to speak with the main heads of State about nuclear weapons and disarmament. They gave four of these heads of State a small bag of tea accompanied by the message : «If ever you feel the urge to

press the button, stop for a minute and have a good cup of tea.» The book No Destination tells the story of this adventure. Satish is currently the Editor in Chief of the magazine «Resurgence & Ecologist» and Program Director at Schumacher College in England, where he lives. Far from the Cartesian ideology that divides everything, Satish Kumar has a holistic view of the world and encourages people to live with «elegant simplicity». Our encounter with him totally shattered our preconceived notions about man, nature and the rapport between the two.

Satish told us:

« Pleasure is when you want something that you don't have but that you think you need... Pleasure will always leave you unsatisfied and frustrated, whereas contentment brings happiness. So happiness is knowing that you have enough. »



Surender SINGH

Surender Singh was born and raised in Punjab, India and moved to Rishikesh in 1994 with his family. He began practicing yoga as a way to find balance in his professional life as an engineer, and later went to perfect his yoga practice at the Kavalya Dham at Lonavala.

In the end, he found his true life's vocation in yoga, and gave up his engineering career in order to teach yoga full-time and develop

his own style of teaching. His incredible ability to cater to students of all levels and the quality of his presence have afforded him a certain fame.

Some students of his that we met on the road told us to go meet him, since we were looking for a yoga teacher who could tell us all about this ancient practice and its ties with the West.

Surender told us:

« Pleasure you can get at the supermarket.

Happiness you cannot get at the market.

Happiness you get by looking inside.

Go deep inside, and stay there for a long time. »»



Frédéric LENOIR

Philosopher, Sociologist and Expert in the History of Religions, Frederic Lenoir was previously Editor in Chief of the magazine «The World of Religions» («Le monde des religions»). He left this position in 2013 to focus full-time on his writing. He is the author of more than 40 works, including essays, novels, encyclopaedias, and short stories, many of which have been translated into a variety of languages. He has also written for the theater, the cinema, and for comic strips. In his writings, he gives a general overview of the main streams of thought that have evolved over

the centuries, and encourages his readers to «revolutionize the world in order to heal it». He believes in merging the religions in a way that would transcend the world's main religious faiths, and like the Stoics, his credo could very well be: «You cannot change the world unless you change yourself first, and rediscover your inner dimension». We met with him in 2010 at the headquarters of French newspaper « Le Monde », and his view gave us exactly the historical and philosophical insight we were looking for to help us along on our quest.

Frédéric told us:

« Cartesian thought separated man from nature, and also the body from the spirit (...). The current environmental crises are the result of this way of thinking, as are the fact that Western man is dissociated from his body and is unable to manage his emotions or find inner peace. »



Pierre RABHI

Originally from Algeria, Pierre Rabhi was entrusted as a child to a French couple and received a European education, while also maintaining ties with his roots. In the 1950s he became a factory-worker and began to question the values of productivism and competition; he then decided to move to the country with his wife, to a farm in the Cévennes region of Southern France. For over 40 years, Pierre Rabhi has been tending to his small family garden and fighting against big-industry agriculture. His unusual life path led him to begin writing about his experiences and about his own personal rapport with modernity and happiness. He is one of the forerunners of the

Agroecology movement, which upholds a holistic view of agriculture and of nature as an alternative to the current social system.

In France, he has begun environmental movements like «Terre & Humanisme» and «Colibris». He can often be seen on mainstream media offering harsh criticism of the current system and advocating a return to «Elegant Simplicity». His written works continue to inspire the new generations of readers.

We were lucky enough to meet with him at his home in 2011. His vision of the world and his efforts towards the cause for self-sufficiency had a huge impact on us.

Pierre told us:

«We have to give up our old ideologies - the ideas of unlimited profit, of unlimited economic growth, and all of that. If we can do that, then a whole new civilisation will appear. I call it the "Civilisation of Moderation". There is elegance in moderation, and this is where the future lies.»



Jose Luis TENOCH

Jose Luis Tenoch is an ancient Aztec healer who travels through Latin America teaching the indigenous communities about the ancient spiritual traditions.

We met up with him not far from San Cristobal de las Casas, in Mexico, after having been referred to him by another healer, and his frank way of speaking intrigued us right away.

Having been raised in a Catholic family, Jose Luis Tenoch has blended the spiritual teachings from both the Judeo-Christian faith and indigenous spiritual beliefs.

He encourages us to go beyond our self-centeredness to live «without masks» and to be authentic and open with others.

Tenoch told us:

« We are at the turning point of a great change. To usher in this great change, we have to start by changing ourselves. We have to be centered and coherent in our thoughts, words, and actions. »



Marzo QUETZAL

Originally of the Lacandon people, Marzo Yuk Quetzal is a guardian of the ancient traditions which he transmits to travelers who stay with him on their journey. He and his wife Sylviana, a woman of French origin, have created a living space which offers a variety of activities, including agricultural experimentation, arts and handcrafts, professional training programs, eco-construction and assistance to the local indigenous peoples.

Tenoch had told us about Marzo and Sylviana, and we learned a lot in this traveler's haven. The Temazcal, an ancient purification ritual meant to connect us to Mother Earth, was the highlight of our visit. We had many revelations while listening to the traditional Mexican chants, envelopped in the hot, humid vapour of the Temazcal. According to Marzo, when man accepts this position of humility and gratitude, he is able to achieve a balance with Nature.

Marzo told us:

« Modern Man becomes divided when he forgets that he is part of the cosmos. Human beings become robots, or mechanic beings, if they have no cosmic identity. We are spiritual beings, above all, who are living an experience in the physical world. »



Chaty SECAIRA

She is now the founder of a meditation center near Atitlán Lake, in Guatemala, but Chaty Secaria had once made plans to pursue a career

in Psychology. One day, while reviewing for her exams, she suddenly experienced the sensation of being propelled outside her body and felt as though she were observing her bedroom from the ceiling. This experience had a profound impact on Chaty's perception of herself and of reality. Since that moment, she has built her life around the spiritual search and around teaching meditation.


We arrived at her meditation center to attend a retreat, and we learned a lot about « Sensitive Reality », commonly discredited by the more rational, reductionist vision of the world. Without preaching any kind of dogma, Chaty attracts students from across the world, in search of meaning and of a deeper understanding of the exterior world.

This unusual encounter allowed us to reexamine certain metaphysical ideas that the routine of everyday life prevents us from seeing.

Chaty told us:

« We are all "One". There is no separation but human beings see everything as though it is fragmented. When we enter the dimensions of time and space, everything is divided. We see the past, the present, and the future. We differentiate one person from another, and we divide everything. But really, in the absolute world, the only thing that exists is Unity. »



A photograph of a crowded train. The train is white with a red stripe. A large crowd of people is gathered around the train, many carrying luggage. A man in a white shirt is seen from the back, carrying a large white and green bag. The scene is set outdoors, with a blue flag visible in the top left corner.

*"We have to learn to live together like brothers,
otherwise we'll all die together like idiots."*

Martin Luther King



Trinh Xuan THUAN

A Vietnamese Astrophysician of international renown, Trinh Xuan Thuan studied Astrophysics at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), and then at Princeton University where he obtained his PhD. Specializing in Extragalactic Astronomy, he has become known to the public through his publications, including «The Cosmos and the Lotus». He was awarded the UNESCO Kalinga Prize in 2009, and aims to familiarize the public with the great philosophical questions that

arise from careful observation of the Universe.

His cultural origins have led him to adopt a vision of the world based on Buddhism and on the interconnection between all beings. He enjoys sharing his admiration for the beautiful and complex phenomena he observes. For him, « Nature is not mute. Like a distant orchestra, she constantly reveals fragments of her music. » Our meeting with him taught us that Science can demonstrate an attitude of humility opposite the mysteries of the universe.

Trinh Xuan told us:

« Science is not the only way to observe reality. There are other windows through which we can observe reality, such as spiritual practice, or art. I think that the great spiritual leaders like Christ or Buddha saw things that common mortals do not see. »



**Cassandra
VIETEN**

Cassandra Vieten, PhD in Clinical Psychology, is the Director of the Institute of Noetic Science in California, co-founded in 1973 by Edgar Mitchell, the late astronaut from Mission

Apollo 13 who had experienced a kind of « epiphany » while observing the Earth from outer space. The research conducted by Cassandra Vieten, as well as the articles and books she has published, deal with the themes of awareness and the influence of the emotions on the body.

At the Institute, she has developed a teaching methodology based on the concept of Intersubjectivity, aimed at middle- and high-school students.

Her main interest is the interaction between psychology, biology, and spirituality and their influence over our behaviour.

Meeting with her at the Institute of Noetic Science taught us about the role our personal beliefs play and how they have been influenced by culture and education. She believes that we can change these limiting beliefs that prevent us from reaching our full potential.

Cassandra told us:

« One thing that we learn from introspection is that our thoughts are just our thoughts, our beliefs are just our beliefs, and they are not really who we are. These are nothing but working hypotheses. »



Bruce LIPTON

Bruce Harold Lipton is a professor in Molecular Biology and has taught at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Wisconsin.

At the Stanford University School of Medicine he later developed research which has made him a pioneer in his field. His research on the cellular membrane was a precursor of Epigenetics, one of the « new sciences » which studies the possibility of transmitting the experience of a particular being or organism without touching the sequence DNA.

Bruce Lipton is a speaker of international renown and is known for his innovative work *The Biology of Belief*, which deals with the impact of the human psyche on the body.

When we met with him at his home, he was in the process of getting his new book “Spontaneous Evolution” published.

He mentioned that our quest was reminiscent of the themes in his new book, regarding the uncertain destiny of humanity, and he went off to dedicate it to us!

Bruce told us:

« Evolution is pushing us up to the next step - the step that will force us to recognize that we are all united. Humanity is but one organism and we are all the cells. So when we fight each other, we are killing ourselves. And we are destroying the planet. »



Jules DERVAES

Jules Dervaes and his family immigrated to the United States in 1985. Since 1994, they have tended to their 400m² garden in the backyard of their house in Pasadena, right in the middle of Los Angeles just a few hundred meters from an 8-lane highway. For the past 20 years, they have demonstrated that a limited amount of space and the absence of soil are not necessarily an obstacle for the pursuit of organic agriculture. Each year, they produce over 3 tonnes of fruit and vegetables, which allows them

to be 90 % autonomous in the summer and to sell their surplus to neighbouring restaurants. They participate actively in the national movement promoting organic urban agriculture, and joy and positivity are an integral part of their way of life.

We first met the Dervaes family at the CMS Festival* in New Delhi where they were presenting their film. We were happy to go visit them at their garden home in California for a few days, where we discovered their world and sampled their amazing recipes.

**CMS Vatavaran Environment and wildlife film festival*

Jules told us:

« We are here to take care of the planet like our home. We are guardians of the planet. We're not the owners of the planet, we're just the tenants. »

[Jules passed away in December 2016. With our film, we wish to pay tribute to him.]



Hervé KEMPF

Hervé Kempf is a journalist and writer. Hervé is actively involved in the ecological movement through his interpretation of the powers that be. In his work *No More Oligarchy*, *Long Live Democracy*, he illustrates how the democratic regimes of Western countries have given way to an oligarchy that is unable to manage the current social and environmental crises. In his work *How the Rich are Destroying the Planet*, he explains the link between the current social crisis and the environmental crisis.

In his view, the lack of solution to the environmental crisis stems from the profound inequalities that exist in the present-day system, and from the behaviour of the members of the oligarchical elite. In 2013, he left his position at the environmental column for *Le Monde* (a French newspaper based in Paris), due to differences of opinion with the management, which criticized his dedication to the ecological cause. Since then, Hervé Kempf has been working for the information website *Reporterre*, which he co-founded.

Hervé told us:

« This is a historic moment. We are transitioning into a whole new epoch, and there is a lot at stake. Are we moving towards a more environmentally and socially just post-capitalist regime? Or towards an even more violent, repressive form of Oligarchy? »



**Marianne
SÉBASTIEN**

Marianne Sébastien is a trained singer and vocalist, and founder of the association Voices of Freedom International (Voix Libres International), and has received numerous awards for

her dedication to humanitarian causes. Formally trained in Social Work, in Education, and in Literature, she has considerable experience in entrepreneurial management (Award for Female Entrepreneurs 2007) and as a Voice Therapist.

Her dream of building a community led by young men and women from the mines, the streets, and the garbage dumps in Bolivia has become a reality: in the past 20 years, more than 950 000 people have been able to transition from utter misery to a positive life strategy.

As a voice therapist, she also helps people to liberate their voice. «Let's awaken the sacred fire within us through music. Music helps us resonate with ourselves, with others... and with the world.»

Our encounter with Marianne had a huge impact on us. She encourages us to act through our hearts, rather than focusing on discussion and analysis, which can be time-consuming and lead to inaction.

Marianne told us:

« Laughter and Love are in the hearts of each and every person - they just have to be uncovered. Our lives have covered our hearts with damp, soggy paper, and this is why the fire cannot be ignited. »



Hitoma SAFIAMA

Hitoma is originally from the Amazon in Colombia, and is one of the representatives of the indigenous peoples facing the over-exploitation of their natural resources. We met him, alongside thousands of other representatives of indigenous peoples, at the Terra Madre forum organised by the association Slow

Food. Our encounter with him at the forum was very touching, and ended with a traditional aboriginal chant. At the end of the conference, Hitoma solemnly presented the organisers with his porcupine-tooth-necklace as a gift, and a symbol of fraternity between the indigenous peoples and the Westerners gathered together for the same cause.

Hitoma told us:

« *It is time to stop extracting fossil fuels from the Earth. They are excrements, leave them be!*

Let us admire and love Nature, and this will give us the strength to protect the conditions of life on Earth, together. »

The Bonus Video



Ego Not Bad, 26 mn

*A film by Antoine Meyer,
Nathanaël Coste,
Marc de la Ménardière*

What does the « spiritual path » offer us, and what are the pitfalls that one can encounter when endeavouring to understand the world?

Arnaud Desjardins, who was one of the first in France to make films about the traditions of the great Eastern civilisations, aims to answer these questions alongside other characters from the film *A Quest for Meaning*.

Antoine Meyer,

Co-author, Director, and Editor of *Ego Not Bad*

Antoine Meyer is a freelance video-maker and is passionate about History of Religions. After having spent many years as a lighting engineer in the performing arts, he decided to turn towards the study of Religion and to a career as video-maker. He has followed *A Quest for Meaning* closely, offering the two filmmakers his objective feedback throughout the entire process. He is fascinated by the films of Arnaud Desjardins, and offered to write a documentary about Desjardins' last interview ever given.

Antoine is currently working on a variety of artistic projects and is collaborating with a group of researchers on the religious rituals in Lebanon.



Arnaud Desjardins was Director of the ORTF* from 1952 to 1974. He was one of the first people in France to introduce people to the great spiritual traditions like Hinduism, Tibetan Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, and Afghanistan Sufism (a mystical branch of Islam). Before his death in 2011 at his ashram in Northern France, he gave teachings on Self-Awareness as inherited from his guru Swami Prajnanpad. Author of numerous books aiming to spread

*ORTF: the former French national agency of TV and radio broadcasting.

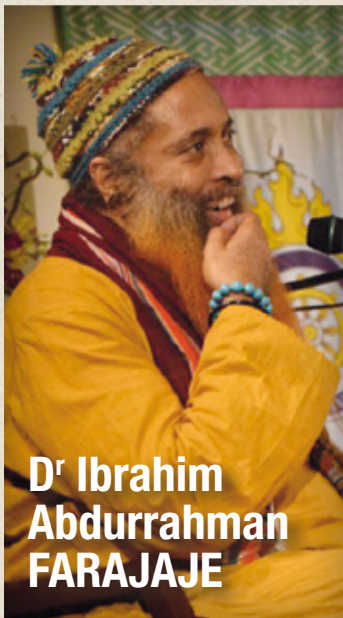
awareness on these schools of thought, he encourages us to open our ego and rid ourselves of compulsive thought so that we can fully embrace the present moment.

Our meeting with him during the summer before his death gave us the chance to show our appreciation to this man who had done so much to spread knowledge about the complex questions that soul-searchers often face.

Arnaud told us:

« The question is, in what way have I been existing at a certain level of consciousness that can be compared to being asleep? What is the nature of this suffering, and in what way am I dead, while still being alive according to the Civil Records Office? »

[Arnaud passed away in August 2011. With our film, we wish to pay tribute to him.]



Dr Ibrahim Abdurrahman FARAJAJE

Ibrahim Farajaje has been a pioneer in helping bring religions together. He is extremely knowledgeable in matters relating to Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and also in Jewish, Christian and Muslim mysticism.

Over the past decades, he has traveled the world and made films on the possible ties between these different spiritual traditions, including themes such as the African diaspora and the relationship between Hindus and Muslims.

He speaks 16 languages, which help him understand the different faiths on a more intimate level, and is currently Professor of Islamic Studies and of the History of Religion at Berkeley University, in California.

Antoine Meyer, co-author of the film, met with Ibrahim in 2009 during his trip to Konya (Turkey), at the annual celebration of the renown Sufi poet « Mawlana » Rumi, founder of the Brotherhood of the Whirling Dervishes. It was an extremely powerful encounter, much like the aura of togetherness which reigned at the celebration that evening. They met once again, several years later, and filmed the interview that you see in the film.

Ibrahim told us:

« It's great to attend workshops on personal development or to experience the "Oneness of Being" for a few moments, but what really counts is for that experience to continue in your everyday life. If it does not, it means that you are living at a limited level of consciousness. »

Kamea Meah Films



The association Kamea Meah Films was created in 2011 for the film project «A Quest for Meaning», which has been a very enriching experience!

To bring the project to completion, from the production stage to the distribution in cinemas, we acquired a lot of skills that will no doubt be very useful in other projects in the future. So we at Kamea Meah have decided to create a platform for the creation and distribution of documentary films, to accompany independent film projects that do not fit into the mould of mainstream production and distribution methods.

We also offer workshops and training programs on documentary film-making. Kamea Meah helps support the «Ad Hoc» events series, organised by a local association in the Drôme region of Southern France, which help to promote independent films and foster cultural exchange on this art form – an art form which is all too often closely moulded to fit the distributor's needs or expectations.

If you have a film project, or an idea for a documentary that you would like to create, contact us at: contact@kameameahfilms.org

www.kameameahfilms.org/

OUR SINCERE THANKS

When we first set off for this adventure, we never would have believed that it would carry us so far.

Inspired by the message of the people we spoke with and in awe of the beauty of the world, we worked for so many years to transmit what we had learned in all those amazing interviews by making a film. It was a passionate and demanding experience that changed our rapport with time, with the world and with ourselves forever.

We would never have been able to do it without the help of all the graphic designers, editors, translators, and technicians that assisted us along the way. It would not have been possible without the 963 cofunders that believed in the project and that supported us patiently and lovingly from the beginning. Nor would it have been possible without the support and advice of the Lunt Foundation that encouraged us to opt for a collaborative distribution method and create an entirely new form of film distribution, in keeping with the main themes in the film. And impossible without our team who worked day after day to distribute the film slowly but surely, and in as human a way as possible. We thank everyone from the bottom of our hearts, and also thank the spectators, the cinemas, and the associations that presented the film. We did it! Together.

Marc and Nathanaël

Reasons behind the film?

A Quest for Meaning is a documentary project that grew from the observation, among citizens across the world, that Western society is trapped in a downward cycle leading us to destruction, injustice and frustration rather than harmony and well-being. The pressing need for financial profit has taken over, to the detriment of the common good and common sense. This predator's mentality has now become the norm, and is casting a shadow on the future of us all.

To free ourselves from this downward spiral, it's not more knowledge, more technology, or more economic growth that we need. What we need is more common sense and more insight - in a word, more wisdom.

Film-makers and authors

Nathanaël Coste

Co-Author, Director, Cameraman, Editor

Nathanael, originally trained as a Geographer, has co-directed several independent documentary films. As a student, he was particularly interested in the social and cultural issues brought about by globalisation (Djembé: From the Savanna to the Asphalt, 2003). He has directed independent films on alternative lifestyles (Agricultural Construction: a handful of helpful initiatives, 2011), as well as several documentaries for organisations supporting Eco-friendly Agriculture, in the wake of Pierre Rabhi (Seeds go undercover, 2012 ; Replenishing the Sahel, 2013). He has recently taken an interest in the issue of the inequity of resources. In addition to his involvement with Kamea Meah, he also works as an independent journalist and as a teacher in Audio-visual studies at university level.

Marc de La Ménardière

Co-author, Director, Narrator

After graduating from Business school and completing a university doctorate, Marc began his career in New York as a Business Developer for Danone. After a small accident at home, and an intense viewing of documentaries on the disastrous state of the environment, he decided to put his professional life on hold and go on a road trip with his childhood friend Nathanael Coste, to make a movie about change. Since returning to France, Marc has spent his time completing the film and organizing its distribution, has been trained in organic agriculture, and has become actively involved with several local associations dedicated to bringing about this new civilisation...