

# EDE Final Report

## EDE Damanhur 2023

**Dates: August 5– September 2, 2023**

**Host site: Damanhur**

- **Course Overview: (150 - 300 words)**

*Brief explanation of the background of the organisation, host site. Diversity of participants and facilitators. Main highlights, key success factors and other relevant information that would describe what happened during the EDE. This text will appear at Gaia Education's website to describe your programme.*

This year we are excited to share that we ran the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the EDE at Damanhur, organized by the NGO Damanhur Education APS, in partnership with Gaia Education, the Global Ecovillage Network and Arca Tentyris APS.

Founded in 1975 in northern Italy, Damanhur is a resilient Federation of Communities with its own constitution, culture, art, music, currency, schools and utilization of science and technology. It has about 600 full-time residents, plus 500 citizens in the world. Damanhur is based on the vision of a new model for society based on solidarity, sharing, love and respect for the environment. For over 44 years, Damanhur has developed into a well organized eco-society in continuous change, though staying true to its foundational principles.

Damanhur also became well known in the world because of building the Temples of Humankind, an underground construction, a unique work of art dedicated to universal spirituality.

The Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) program at Damanhur delves deeply into the realities of the ecovillage, drawing on concrete examples and experiences across all four dimensions within the 49-year-old community.

Commencing with the exploration of the Social Dimension in the initial week, the program sets the stage for the formation of a cohesive learning community. Through a variety of exercises and dynamics, participants construct the framework essential for the entirety of the course. This foundational phase is crucial as it establishes a guiding thread and provides the necessary groundwork for the subsequent exploration of other dimensions.

Numerous impactful exercises facilitate self-awareness and foster connections among participants, beginning with the sharing of personal life stories. These dynamics serve as the cornerstone for what often evolves into a transformative experience for many involved. Particularly notable within the Social Dimension are sessions addressing conflict resolution, trauma and leadership, which have consistently stood out as highlights in both the current year and in previous iterations of the program.

Visiting the Temples of Humankind is always an awe-inspiring experience during the



EDE program. Engaging in hands-on activities like straw-bale building and art sessions not only ignites creativity but also fosters a sense of community. Additionally, an experiment in community building within the woods serves as a significant catalyst for group cohesion, serving as highlights across all dimensions of the program.

In the Economic Dimension, discussions span both macro and microeconomics, utilizing Damanhur as a case study to illustrate various economic models. Through this lens, participants gain insights into alternative economic frameworks and explore avenues for creating a more equitable economy. Concrete examples elucidate the challenges faced by communities like Damanhur and offer strategies for overcoming them.

This year's EDE cohort was again relatively small, partly due to visa constraints impacting participants from various African countries, it feels there is a bureaucratic wall between Europe and Africa. Consequently, the group mainly comprised individuals from Europe, Latin America, Canada and New Zealand, totaling 11 people representing 9 different countries, including those with diverse backgrounds. Participants hailed from countries such as Germany, Italy, Canada, Korea, Brazil, New Zealand, Switzerland, Finland and Luxembourg.

In these last years we mostly had also one partner of families with children participate in the program, where one partner participates officially in the course while the other partner and the kids takes part in the communal life and some parts of the activities.

We are living in years of general awakening, so we have observed that every year the participants start already with an always higher level of information and knowledge in the four dimensions of sustainability. With a deep wish to engage, learn and transform themselves the group went really deep, creating the life changing processes, that continue to nourish the participants also after the course when they go back to their everyday life.

Most of the facilitators were from Damanhur, and all were experienced EDE teachers with many years of expertise.

In recent years, it has been common for one partner of families with children to participate in the EDE program while the other partner and children engage in communal life and occasionally join select activities.

Living in an era marked by a widespread awakening, we've noticed that each year, participants come in with increasingly higher levels of information and knowledge across the four dimensions of sustainability. Driven by a profound desire to engage, learn, and enact transformation, the group delves deep into the material, sparking life-changing processes that continue to resonate long after the course concludes and participants return to their daily lives.

The majority of facilitators were drawn from Damanhur, all possessing extensive experience as EDE teachers with a wealth of expertise accumulated over many years. This ensured a rich and immersive learning environment for all involved.

● **Participants: (50 - 150 words)**

*(Basic stats including numbers of participants, age range, gender ratio, countries, ethnicities and backgrounds)*

This year's EDE cohort was again relatively small, partly due to visa constraints impacting participants from various African countries, it feels there is a bureaucratic wall between Europe and Africa. Consequently, the group mainly comprised individuals from Europe, Latin America, Canada and New Zealand, totaling 11 people representing 9 different countries, including those with diverse backgrounds. Participants hailed from countries such as Germany, Italy, Canada, Korea, Brazil, New Zealand, Switzerland, Finland and Luxembourg. The age varied from 28-61.

● **Course rhythms: (50 - 150 words):**

*(A description of the times of daily activities, sessions, free time, social time, interaction with hosts, rest; how many hours in lectures & practical sessions, etc.)*

In the morning before breakfast, yoga and meditation sessions were offered by the participants, followed by breakfast from 8:00 - 9:00.

The morning session was from 9.15 - 12:30, lunch at 13:00, break until 15:00.

The afternoon session was from 15:00 - 18:00, dinner at 18:30, break until 20:00. The evening program was from 20:00 - 21:30.

The program varies a lot, but there are some basic patterns. Usually the morning begins with some kind of sharing, followed by a theoretical part. After the theoretical part, there is often the design part, which continues throughout the entire course. The weeks of the four dimensions are different, as the ecological part also has hands-on sessions. There is art in the worldview dimension, and a community building experiment for the social dimension. There are several moments to contact the hosting community, in addition to the initial visit, such as a dinner in a damanhurian community or hanging out the Damanhur Crea, the central place of Damanhur, where the community members meet. There are several free evenings, every week at least one free afternoon and one completely free day.

● **Highlights & challenges of each dimension:**

**Social (150 - 250 words):** *What happened in this dimension? What were the highlights? What subjects were covered? 1-2 participant quotes from the Gaia Education Evaluations or other sources. A sentence on each core faculty/facilitator.*

**The Social Dimension** In our EDE, the Social Dimension marks the beginning in the first week. It serves as the foundation for fostering a strong sense of community that

resonates throughout the entire course. Through a series of structured exercises and activities, participants forge meaningful connections and experiences. Many find this initial week to be profoundly transformative.

Key sessions in this dimension cover topics such as leadership, conflict resolution, trauma work, group governance, and decision-making, along with the memorable community-building experiment held in the woods. These sessions provide not only valuable insights but also opportunities for personal growth within a supportive group environment.

The community-building activity in the woods offers participants a chance to engage in leadership roles, collaborative decision-making, and personal reflection amidst a natural setting. It underscores the importance of teamwork and collective thinking in diverse environments.

Interacting with the hosting community is another integral aspect of the program. Participants are invited to dine with members of smaller nucleo communities and visit Damanhur Crea, offering them firsthand exposure to community life and fostering a deeper connection with the local community.

#### **Facilitators:**

**Macaco Tamerice** took charge of facilitating the Social and Worldview Dimensions during the program, and she also co-facilitated the Ecological and Economic Dimensions. With 30 years of experience in community living, Macaco's adeptness in guiding groups and facilitating group processes proved invaluable. Her skillful leadership guided the group through intense personal and collective experiences, including various games and activities aimed at deepening understanding. group processes and games.

**Formica Coriandolo** collaborated in co-facilitating the Worldview Dimension, utilizing art as a tool for self-exploration and infusing the sessions with energy and warmth. With 40 years of community expertise under her belt, Formica is recognized as one of Damanhur's talented artists. Her creative approach added depth and richness to the exploration of worldview within the program.

#### **Quotes:**

*“Excellent practical exercises that led us to understand the theoretical content and reinforced group belonging”*

*“One of the highlights were the exercises about Leadership presence, very intense but beautiful.”*

*“Sharing Lifestories and giving each other feedback (tecnarcato) was strengthening the group bonds and definitely represented a highlight for me.”*

*“I was touched by the Conflict resolution exercise inspired by Deep Democracy Process Work.”*

*“State of the art knowledge, modern way of pedagogy, intention to create deep connections , inner work as a priority, location within a community that serves as an example.”*

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Fine modulo

**Include 2-3 pictures**











***Economic (150 - 250 words):*** What happened in this dimension? What were the highlights? What topics were covered? What practical activities were performed? 2-3



participant quotes from the Gaia Education Evaluations or other sources. A sentence on each core faculty/facilitator. Any other information that you consider relevant.

**The Economic Dimension** of the program delved into the intricacies of money ownership, macro-micro economy dynamics, and encouraged participants to explore alternatives to the existing unfair economic system. Concrete examples were used to illustrate new models, with a focus on complementary currencies and local economies, highlighting their relevance to reshaping our approach to economics. Emphasizing solidarity as a cornerstone for a regenerative future, the Dimension underscored the notion that true wealth encompasses far more than monetary value alone.

As the hosting community, Damanhur showcased tangible alternatives and diverse facets of a new economy, illustrating how principles of solidarity can inform the creation of a more just economic framework within a community context. Additionally, practical economic tools such as the balance point and business planning were introduced and examined.

**Lemming Cactus** was the main facilitator of the Economic Dimension, whose professional expertise and wealth of knowledge ensured a comprehensive exploration of economic concepts and strategies.

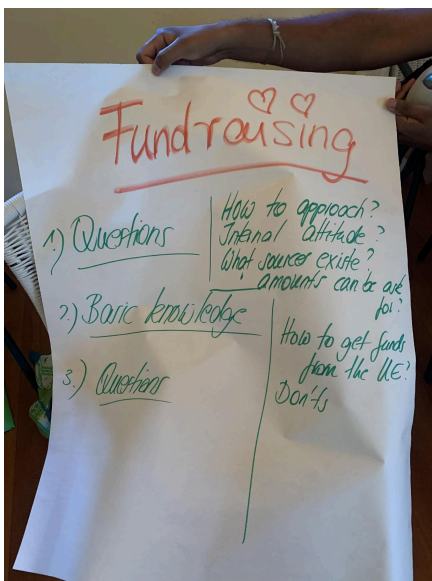
#### Quotes:

“ Very inspiring to see how experienced in all aspects the community in Damanhur is ”

“ The Economic dimension helped us understanding the current monetary system ”

“ Being reminded how little most people understand about the economy. ”

#### Include 2-3 pictures.



**Ecological** (150 - 250 words): What happened in this dimension? What were the highlights? What topics were covered? What practical activities were performed? 2-3

*participant quotes from the Gaia Education Evaluations or other sources. A sentence on each core faculty/facilitator. Any other information that you consider relevant.*

**Ecological Dimension**, During the Ecological Dimension, participants engaged in multiple sessions to explore various aspects of permaculture design. They delved into topics such as organic food cultivation, water and wastewater treatment methods, green building techniques, alternative energy sources, and appropriate technology. Hands-on activities played a significant role, with the highlight being the immersive experience of straw-bale building and using permaculture in one of the nucleos.

The introduction to permaculture principles provided valuable insights into different design methodologies, while visits to sites within the hosting community showcased successful implementations of these concepts in practice. Participants found particular enjoyment in the hands-on aspects of straw-bale building and applying permaculture principles firsthand in one of the gardens of the community.

A visit to the Damanhurian organic farm, which supplies food for the entire community, and the community's organic shop left a lasting impression on the participants, highlighting the importance of sustainable food production and consumption.

Facilitating the permaculture program was *Marco Aicardi*, whose expertise ignited participants' interest in permaculture design and sustainable practices.

**Inti China** led sessions on alternative building methods, particularly focusing on hands-on straw-bale construction, demonstrating various tools and techniques.

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### **Quotes:**

*“very good teachers that showed us concretely and honestly where and how ecological goals can be realized and what the challenges are.”*

*“Learning about the social dimensions of working together e.g. with strawbale.”*

*“Permaculture is a great topic and was a highlight for me”*

*“We so enjoyed building a strawbale wall”*

**Include 2-3 pictures.**









***Worldview (150 - 250 words):*** What happened in this dimension? What were the highlights? What topics were covered? What practical activities were performed? 2-3 participant quotes from the Gaia Education Evaluations or other sources. A sentence on each core faculty/facilitator. Any other information that you consider relevant.

**The Worldview Dimension** is undeniably one of the most profound aspects of the EDE program. It provides participants with opportunities to explore their artistic and expressive talents, forge deep connections with nature, and embark on a transformative journey through the Temples of Humankind. A meditation session within the Temples serves as a poignant highlight, offering a powerful and introspective experience.

The introduction to Spiral Dynamics, coupled with engaging exercises, offers insights into human evolutionary steps, both individually and collectively. This year also the limits of the theory emerged. A captivating sharing session on worldviews enriches understanding and fosters dialogue among participants. Furthermore, an in-depth exploration of Sociocracy with practical exercises sheds light on more inclusive governance models.

A session on health offers valuable insights into diverse approaches to wellness, illustrating how various perspectives can harmoniously coexist within a community setting. Connecting with Nature emerges as a cherished highlight, with exercises drawn from Deep Ecology and Damanhur fostering a profound sense of connection with the natural world and our place within it.

Leading the Worldview sessions is *Macaco Tamerice*, guiding participants through topics ranging from Spiral Dynamics and personal transformation to fostering a deeper connection with nature and understanding collective intelligence.

*Formica Coriandolo* facilitates the art workshop with sensitivity and support, encouraging participants to tap into their artistic potential and embrace the collaborative spirit of creating art together.

Inizio modulo

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#### **Fine modulo**

#### **Quotes:**

*"I really appreciated the beautiful and deep talks with the group and facilitators*

*"I loved the art day in the group, it was sooo needed and great to come out if the head and experience community from this perspective."*

*"For me Socially engaged spirituality was a true highlight"*

**Include 2-3 pictures.**









***Design (150 - 250 words):*** *What happened in this dimension? What were the highlights? What topics were covered? What practical activities were performed? 2-3 participant quotes from the Gaia Education Evaluations or other sources. A sentence on each core faculty/facilitator. Any other information that you consider relevant.*

**The Design Dimension** The Design Dimension of the program employed various designing methodologies, notably utilizing the Dragon Dreaming process to create two distinct projects. Throughout the course, participants seamlessly integrated theoretical knowledge acquired from different sessions into their projects. This hands-on approach has proven to be highly effective, as it allows participants to apply their newfound knowledge directly, resulting in a deeper understanding that remains with them long after the course concludes.

The Design groups serve as a practical learning platform, where participants can directly apply social tools such as leadership and conflict resolution, as well as concepts from other dimensions. This hands-on approach enables participants to experience and apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios.

Of the two projects created during the course, one is already in the process of implementation. One project was able to raise a good amount of financial support to kick-off the project and the progress of this project towards implementation is particularly noteworthy.

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Inizio modulo





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Quotes:

*“A highlight is the preciousness of group dynamics”*

*“ Designing a project together represents the hands-on of all the social tools we learned in the social dimension, it’s so important!”*

*“I discovered myself being sometimes triggered, sometimes completely in flow with the group, when we were designing our project, great experience!”*

**Design Studio Case Studies:** Brief description of the case studies developed during the programme if applicable.

- The first design project is a myth about the creation of a New Era through the creation of an ecovillage:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1\\_oQWpnlFxcdGKPVgHZUeaVtG7x9mko8I](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1_oQWpnlFxcdGKPVgHZUeaVtG7x9mko8I)

- The second project is a fully fledged Temple of Birth in an ecovillage in the north of Italy:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1\\_oQWpnlFxcdGKPVgHZUeaVtG7x9mko8I](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1_oQWpnlFxcdGKPVgHZUeaVtG7x9mko8I)

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**LESSONS LEARNED - notes for future benefit (50 - 300 words):**

*What could help future EDE’s from your experience? What were your biggest learnings? If a re-certified EDE, also list & respond to lessons learnt from your previous EDE.*

This year, we continued the strategy in balancing course time and free time, resulting in participants feeling less fatigued compared to previous years. Building on last year's initiative to provide more free time, we observed positive outcomes, with participants opting to extend their stay for the Training of Trainers (ToT) program immediately after or staying in the community.

Providing initial guidance on self-organization is crucial for fostering a sense of responsibility for maintaining common spaces, particularly in terms of cleanliness and order.

**Describe your EDE** in terms of the know-how and learning obtained, the stories and inspiration that happen to the participants and the organisers during the EDE or a good summary of a project or activity carried out during the program. Take into consideration that this will be circulated among the Gaia Education’s community, so they wish to learn, get inspired and be empowered by your program and your participant’s experiences. (200 – 400 words) . Include 1 or 2 pictures.

This year, we found ourselves with just the right-sized group to proceed with the program, and looking back, it was undoubtedly the right decision. For many participants, this experience proved to be one of the most significant and transformative moments of their lives, providing ample justification for our decision to move forward.

Right from the outset, the group coalesced into a cohesive unit, fostering a strong sense of community that enabled each individual to undergo profound personal growth and transformation. One of the standout communal experiences each year is the community building experiment in the woods, a transformative game that challenges participants to confront and surpass their personal barriers and limitations. This year's iteration was particularly memorable, as it included the participation of two young boys, adding an extra layer of realism and caregiving dynamics to the experience.

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**Summary of projects/activities participants intend to engage in, inspired by their attendance in the course (50 - 150 words):**

All participants are driven by a shared passion for effecting positive change in the world. Some are already immersed in established ecovillages, while others are focused on developing educational programs for children, integrating these teachings into university curricula, or even spearheading the creation of new ecovillages.

A number of individuals have enrolled in various Dimensions of the GEDS, with one person staying on for the Training of Trainers (ToT) session immediately following the Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) program. Their collective aim is to actively contribute to building a regenerative future. One family has embarked on a year-long sabbatical to explore ecovillages worldwide, while others maintain ongoing connections with existing ecovillage networks. Most participants found the tools they learned during the course crucial to bring the change they want to bring wherever they are living.

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***PARTICIPANT QUOTES: Send 3-4 participant quotes from the Gaia Education Evaluations or other sources, please include names and photos (send the photos as separate .jpeg files and properly captioned/named)***

**Quotes:**

**Tania**

*Very impressed by each and every dimension and facilitator!  
Highlights were the broad and complex field it touches and the deep interaction between people...*

**Tini**

*State of the art knowledge, modern way of pedagogy, intention to create deep connections , inner work as a priority, location within a community that serves as an example*

**Pekka**

*I want to express my deep gratitude to Macaco, all teachers, Arca Tentyris, Damanhur, Gaia Education, and the whole ecovillage movement, for working so hard to change and save the world. More people should know about this.  
The strengths of this programme are Hands-on learning. Holistic view. Integration with inner work. Being plain and clear about spirituality, not hiding it.*

**Stephanie**

*It's well balanced, multidisciplinary and holistic.  
The facilitators, the place, the food.  
The wide range between dreaming and putting into practice. Between arts and economy etc.*