

EDE Report Template

EDE Damanhur 2024

Dates: August 31– September 28, 2024

Host site: Damanhur

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

EDE at Damanhur: A Unique Journey of Learning and Connection

This year marked the 13th edition of the Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) program at Damanhur, organized by the NGO Damanhur Education APS in collaboration with Gaia Education, the Global Ecovillage Network, and Arca Tentyris APS.

Damanhur, founded in 1975 in northern Italy, is a resilient Federation of Communities known for its rich culture, constitution, art, music, currency, schools, and innovative use of science and technology. With approximately 600 full-time residents and 500 additional citizens worldwide, Damanhur exemplifies a society built on solidarity, sharing, love, and environmental respect. Over the past five decades, it has evolved into a dynamic and well-organized eco-society while staying true to its foundational principles.

Renowned for the Temples of Humankind—a breathtaking underground construction dedicated to universal spirituality—Damanhur serves as an inspiring setting for the EDE program. This unique environment allows participants to engage deeply with all four dimensions of sustainability within the context of a thriving 49-year-old community.

The program begins by exploring the Social Dimension, fostering a cohesive learning community through interactive exercises and group dynamics. Sharing personal life stories and engaging in reflective activities lay the groundwork for a transformative experience. Sessions on conflict resolution, trauma, and leadership consistently emerge as highlights, equipping participants with tools for personal growth and collaborative relationships.

Visiting the awe-inspiring Temples of Humankind is a defining moment for many participants, offering profound insights into the spiritual underpinnings of Damanhur. Hands-on activities such as straw-bale building and art sessions further ignite creativity and a sense of belonging. Additionally, a unique experiment in community building within the woods strengthens group cohesion and serves as a cornerstone for the program.

In the Economic Dimension, participants explore macro and microeconomic concepts, using Damanhur as a living example of alternative economic models. These sessions provide practical insights into creating equitable economies while addressing the challenges faced by intentional communities like Damanhur.

The 13th EDE at Damanhur was a transformative journey for participants, enriched by diverse perspectives and guided by experienced facilitators. Each dimension offered opportunities for deep learning, collaboration, and personal growth, making this program a memorable and impactful experience.

This year's EDE cohort was again very international with its 14 participants from The Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, South Africa-Greece, Switzerland, Usa, New Zealand, Australia and France.

In recent years, the EDE program at Damanhur has embraced a family-inclusive approach. Also this year two children of one of the participants were present in suitable sessions and in the daily life during the common food and in the breaks.

We are living in a time of widespread awakening, and it is evident that participants arrive each year with an increasingly advanced level of knowledge and awareness in the four dimensions of sustainability. Their deep desire to learn, engage, and transform enables the group to explore the material in profound ways. This depth of engagement sparks life-changing processes, which continue to nourish participants long after they return to their everyday lives. This year there was a particularly high level of sensitivity amongst the participants, with its pros and cons.

The program is guided by a team of highly experienced facilitators, most of whom are from Damanhur. As seasoned EDE educators with many years of expertise, they bring invaluable insights and a wealth of practical knowledge, creating a rich and immersive learning environment for all attendees.

- **Participants: (50 - 150 words)**

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

This year's EDE cohort continued the tradition of international diversity, bringing together 14 participants from the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, South Africa-Greece, Switzerland, the USA, New Zealand, Australia, and France. The group included 10 women and 4 men, with ages ranging from 20 to 65, creating a rich mix of perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. This diversity added depth and vibrancy to the learning environment, fostering meaningful connections and cross-cultural exchange.



- **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.)

Daily Rhythm and Program Structure

The EDE program at Damanhur follows a balanced and thoughtfully structured daily schedule, offering participants a mix of learning, practice, and connection.

- **Morning:** Each day begins with optional yoga and meditation sessions offered by participants, followed by breakfast from 8:00 to 9:00.
- **Morning Session:** From 9:15 to 12:30, the morning session typically starts with sharing, fostering group connection. This is followed by a theoretical part and often transitions into the design component, which continues throughout the course.
- **Lunch & Break:** Lunch is served at 13:00, followed by a break until 15:00.
- **Afternoon Session:** The afternoon session runs from 15:00 to 18:00, exploring hands-on activities or discussions tailored to the weekly focus.
- **Dinner & Evening Program:** Dinner begins at 18:30, followed by a break until the evening program from 20:00 to 21:30.

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. Throughout the course, there are intentional opportunities to engage with the hosting community. Highlights include a dinner in a

Damanhurian community, moments at the Damanhur Crea (the central hub for community life), and shared experiences with local members.

Participants also enjoy several moments for rest and personal reflection, with free evenings, at least one free afternoon per week, and a completely free day to recharge.

This blend of structure and flexibility ensures a comprehensive and enriching experience for all participants.

- **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

Building Community Foundations

The Social Dimension serves as the cornerstone of our Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) program, commencing in the first week to establish a strong sense of community among participants. Through a series of dynamic exercises and activities, individuals forge meaningful connections, often finding this initial week profoundly transformative. Participants explore various leadership styles, group governance, and decision-making processes to develop effective community management skills. They receive tools and techniques to address interpersonal conflicts and personal trauma, fostering a powerful group dynamic. Additionally, they engage in collaborative decision-making and personal reflection within a natural setting, emphasizing the importance of teamwork in diverse environments.

Key sessions cover topics such as leadership, conflict resolution, trauma work, group governance, and decision-making. A notable highlight is the community-building experiment held in the woods, which offers participants the opportunity to engage in leadership roles, collaborative decision-making, and personal reflection in a natural setting. This experience underscores the importance of working together and collective thinking in diverse environments.

Interacting with the hosting community is integral to the program. Participants are invited to dine with members of smaller nucleo communities and visit Damanhur Crea, providing a hint to community life and fostering a deeper connection with the local community.

Facilitators:

Macaco Tamerice is the main facilitator for 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 and knowledge about trauma guided the group through intense personal and

collective experiences, including various games and activities aimed at deepening understanding.

Quotes:

“Becoming aware about the complexity of collaborating with other human beings, and that there are tools that can have a positive influence on this process (trauma healing, deep listening, tecnocrato, conflict resolution, government/organization style).”

“Learning new processes for personal transformation, conflict resolution and working with trauma (Technacato, Process work and Compassionate Inquiry) and visiting Damanhur nucleos inspired me profoundly”

“I so appreciated Tecnarcato and lifestory to bring trust and understanding into the group”.

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 our program delved into the complexities of money ownership and macro-microeconomic dynamics, encouraging participants to explore alternatives to the existing economic system. Through concrete examples, we highlighted new models, focusing on complementary currencies and local economies, emphasizing their relevance in reshaping our approach to economics. Solidarity was underscored as a cornerstone for a regenerative future, reinforcing the idea that true wealth encompasses more than monetary value.

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. Participants were introduced to practical economic tools such as the balance point and business planning, enhancing their understanding of sustainable economic practices.

Facilitators:

Lemming Cactus, the main facilitator of this dimension, brought professional expertise and a wealth of knowledge, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of economic concepts and strategies. His involvement in Damanhur's economic initiatives, including the development of the community's own currency, the Credito, provided valuable insights into implementing alternative economic models.

Quotes:

"Learning about Damanhur structure and some of the lecture on economics in the big picture of macro and micro economics helped me see alternatives the the current system".

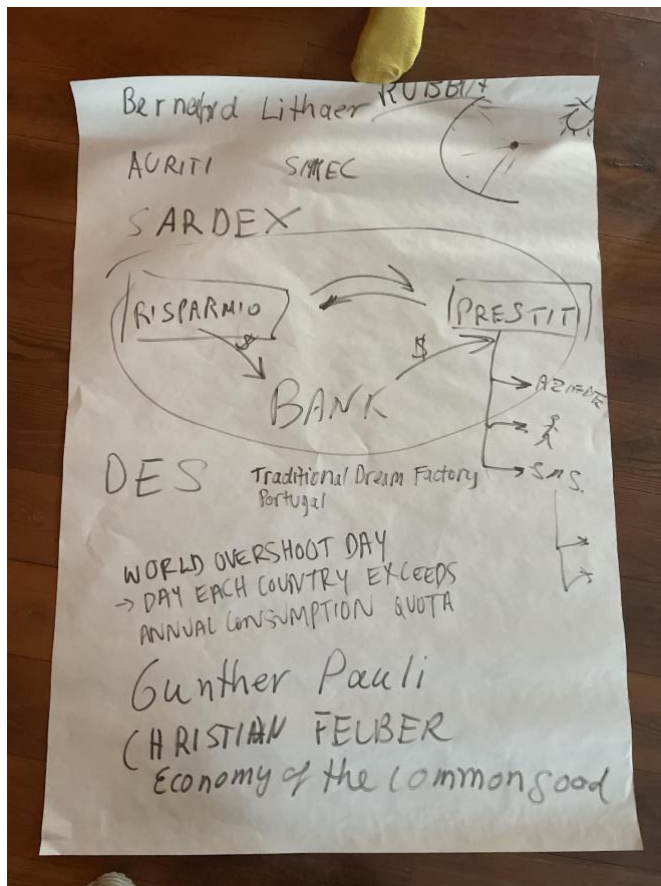
"Great learning about local solutions to live more independently from the global systems".

"It helped me get another meaning to money"

Include 2-3 pictures.

Empowered Fundraising

- Activation of all our networks and a cultivation of abundance and sufficiency
 - Rule of 10% ~~give an~~
- 1) Clarify that you really understand the nature of your project and can explain exactly what it is and why it is important
 - 2) establish your own balance point for the project beyond your time
 - 3) list of people 10
 - 4) when possible face to face
 - 6) After presentation of project talk about your balance point
 - 5) establish that you are going to ask the person to become a participant of the project, who will engage some how.
 - 7) tell them what you think is their balance point for the project and ask for the contribution. Then stay silent.



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 of our program, participants engaged in comprehensive sessions exploring various aspects of permaculture design, green building techniques, organic food cultivation, water and wastewater treatment methods, alternative energy sources, and appropriate technology. Hands-on activities were integral, with a highlight being the immersive experience of straw-bale building and applying permaculture principles in one of the nucleos.

The introduction to permaculture principles provided valuable insights into diverse design methodologies. Visits to sites within the hosting community showcased successful implementations of these concepts in practice. Participants particularly enjoyed the practical and fun aspects of straw-bale building.

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

Lisa Rolfo a seasoned permaculture educator, led the permaculture program, inspiring participants with her extensive knowledge and passion for sustainable practices. Her

engaging teaching methods and practical insights into ecological design principles significantly deepened participants' understanding and enthusiasm for permaculture.

Inti China conducted sessions on alternative building methods, emphasizing hands-on straw-bale construction. Through detailed demonstrations of various tools and techniques, Inti provided participants with practical experience in sustainable building practices, enhancing their skills and appreciation for eco-friendly construction methods while enjoying themselves.

Quotes:

“Natural building lecture, workshop and visit to Damanhurian farm were the highlights of ecology for me.”

“The strawbale building with clay and experiencing a natural built house showed me that it's possible to build naturally.”

“I learned a lot in the permaculture design and the tour of the water system of Damanhur really impressed me.”

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

The Worldview Dimension is a deeply enriching aspect of the EDE program, offering participants the chance to explore their artistic and expressive talents, connect profoundly with nature, and experience the transformative journey through the Temples of Humankind. A meditation session within the Temples stands out as a significant highlight, providing a powerful and introspective experience.

Introducing Spiral Dynamics, complemented by engaging exercises, provides insights into human evolutionary steps on both individual and collective levels. A captivating sharing session on worldviews enriched understanding and fostered dialogue among participants. Additionally, an in-depth exploration of Sociocracy, with practical exercises, also drawing from participant's knowledge, sheds light on more inclusive governance models.

A session on health offers valuable insights into diverse approaches what health means, illustrating how various perspectives can harmoniously coexist within a community setting. Connecting with nature emerges as a cherished highlight, with exercises

inspired by Deep Ecology and Damanhur traditions fostering a profound sense of connection with life through nature.

Facilitators:

Macaco Tamerice leads the worldview sessions, guiding the participants through topics ranging from Spiral Dynamics and Personal Transformation to fostering a deeper connection with nature and understanding collective intelligence, accompanying participants on a journey toward profound insights and personal growth.

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 as a tool for self-exploration, infusing the sessions with energy and warmth.

Quotes:

“Damanhur sacred sites, festivals, sharing of Damanhur worldview and group sharing of worldviews were impactful highlights”

“ Truly loved connecting with nature. Learning to sense nature was one of my best days”

“Compassion. The development of worldviews is a (spiraling) human process, in which everybody can be in a different stage from time to time.”

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 our program was truly engaging, employing methodologies like the Dragon Dreaming process to develop four distinct projects. Participants integrated theoretical knowledge from various sessions into their projects, enhancing their understanding and retention. This experiential approach proved highly effective, allowing participants to apply their newfound knowledge directly, leading to a deeper comprehension that endures beyond the course.

The Design groups provided a practical learning platform where participants applied social tools such as leadership and conflict resolution, along with concepts from other dimensions, in real-world scenarios.

The Design groups are always the part where community building becomes reality with all its challenges; for some groups it is easy and exciting, for others it goes through struggles, but at the end, when the project is fully fledged it becomes a highly rewarding experience.

Quotes:

“ The design studio process was the most rewarding while at the same time being the most difficult.”

“Working in the group moved many parts in me. I learned so much about group work!”

“ Creating the project together with the others was simply amazing! The outcome of working in a group is exponential.”



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

Generations Ecovillage: A place to be born, to live a fulfilled life and to die with grace

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1c3-AYZ0HCoU4x7nD8v_v3PM995D60d1U

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1c3-AYZ0HCoU4x7nD8v_v3PM995D60d1U

The Dandelion Project is a neighbourhood project that aimed to meet certain specific needs of a neighbourhood. The neighbourhood agreed to create a community garden where events would be held, food would be grown, weekly dinners would be had, and skills would be shared. The PDF document outlines the process that was followed and the techniques and strategies that were used. The result was a beautiful community-run garden with garden beds, a compost, a tool shed, and a communal space with a food pantry and a big table to hold dinners and other events.

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1c3-AYZ0HCoU4x7nD8v_v3PM995D60d1U

Garden of EDEN: We would like to create paradise on earth, a living example of life in freedom and abundance, a place where human being connect with nature, love, ancient knowledge – and their higher purpose.

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1c3-AYZ0HCoU4x7nD8v_v3PM995D60d1U

Os Canteiros is a model for a network of ecovillages, each called a **Canteiro** – meaning a bed of flowers or a construction site – located in the mountains of the Portuguese-Spanish border area with an emphasis on healing and growing, caring, transformation and ecovillage connection.

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1yEG80rgaPf1QJb1HRP3pco5-r7nYeKyYKvMustT97ko/edit#slide=id.p2>

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

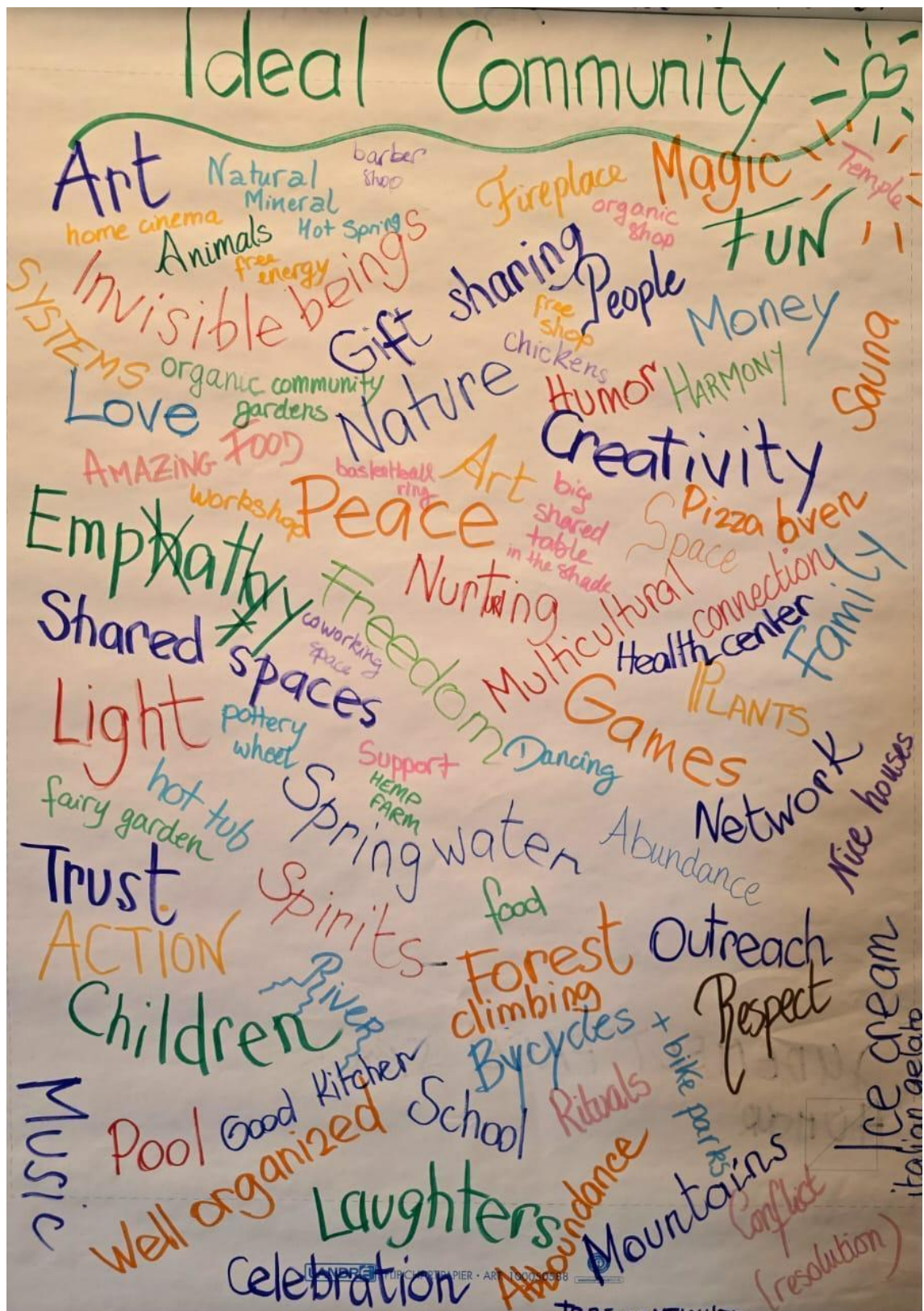
What could help future EDE's from your experience? What were your biggest learnings? If a re-certified EDE, also list & respond to lessons learnt from your previous EDE.

This year we had a combination of challenging factors, that in some moments brought the group to its limits, all linked to personal situations and trauma in which the group was involved. For this reason it took quite longer than usual to reach a real group feeling and experience, but at the end it was a very transformative month for all. We learned that it's really important to set boundaries to how much personal situations can be put onto the group

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.





Balancing individual and group needs was a central theme in this year's Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) program, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding the group dynamic.

A highlight of the program, as all years, was the community-building experiment in the woods—a transformative activity that encourages participants to confront and transcend personal barriers. This year's experience was particularly impactful with the inclusion of two children, 8 and 6 years old, introducing elements of realism and caregiving dynamics that enriched the overall experience.

PARTICIPANT QUOTES: Send 3-4 participant quotes from the Gaia Education Evaluations or other sources.

Quotes:

“Very solutions oriented and it gives practical solutions to current problems. I often feel paralysed when thinking about the challenges humanity is facing, and this programme gave me a lot of hope”.

“Huge amount of content, experiential learning and good mix of theory, practical exercises and site visits”

“Challenging group dynamics meant I really learnt about real life challenges possible in groups.”

“Location and spirituality, beautiful surroundings, strong community and experiences in community building and worldview, dedication, clear and beautiful purpose”

“Interactive, well grounded, the Facilitators were excellent”

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

Participants in the Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) program share a passion for effecting positive change in the world. Some are already immersed in established ecovillages, while others focus on developing neighborhood projects, to bring the tools of the EDE into their environment. Others are spearheading the creation of new ecovillages.

Many have enrolled in various dimensions of the Gaia Education Design for Sustainability (GEDS) program, with some staying on for the Training of Trainers (ToT) session immediately following the EDE program.

Their collective aim is to actively contribute to building a regenerative future and personal connections continue after the course. The family has been welcomed by two participants from South-Africa to visit and stay for a while, while others maintain ongoing connections with existing ecovillage networks. Most participants found the

tools they learned during the course crucial for bringing about the change they desire in their respective communities.