

Ecovillage Design Education

Creating a Transformative Culture

Schloss Glarisegg

2025



Contents

- **Course Overview**
- **Participants**
- **The Team**
 - The Organisers
 - The Assistants
- **Course Rhythm**
- **Highlights and Challenges of each Dimension**
 - Social Dimension
 - Ecological Dimension
 - Economic Dimension
 - Worldview Dimension
 - Design Studio
- **Design Studio Case Studies**
- **Lessons Learned**
- **Financial Overview**
- **Participant Quotes**

Course Overview

Creating a Transformative Culture's EDE 2025 took place at Ecovillage Schloss Glarisegg for the 10th year. Creating a Transformative Culture has designed a program based on the Gaia Education's curriculum and includes material that falls into the 5 dimensions of sustainability. There was a strong focus on the social and cultural/worldview aspects; on building strong social cohesion and a shared cultural understanding. The ecological and economic aspects were not forgotten and all 5 dimensions informed everything that took place during the EDE 2025. The course used this curriculum to create not just a strong in course culture, but a shared culture that can be accessed by all alumni of the EDE in Glarisegg, and which can be shared with individuals and communities who have not taken part in the course but whom are a part of the extended network. In this way Creating a Transformative Culture's EDE aims to build bridges and connections both inside and outside of its network.



The Dimensions of Sustainability and GEN cards used in a session

The venue was Ecovillage Schloss Glarisegg which was founded in 2003. It is located in Switzerland, and has around 50 members, both adults and children, living in the old castle and school house buildings that make up the site. The community shares decisions in their regular community meetings, they also have a communal permaculture garden, and frequent social events. This thriving community also informs the curriculum of the EDE Glarisegg.



Schloss Glarisegg school house and castle by night

This year 45 participants joined the course from a wide variety of countries. In addition to the participants there was a team of 11 people who were facilitating and running the course. This team consisted of two of the Creating a Transformative Culture's founders, and a team of 8 past EDE alumni. A selection of outside facilitators also joined to teach specific sessions and tools.

Participants

There were 45 participants from 19 different countries. The countries that they came from were the USA, Germany, Austria, Italy, Ukraine, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Switzerland, North Macedonia, England, India, Israel, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Turkey, South Africa, and Greece. The age demographic of the participants was from the late teens, with two participants being 19, through to the late 50's. The gender divide was leaning more towards a female demographic with 28 female participants and 15 male participants, there were also at least 2 participants who were non binary and trans, with several of the others being gender non-conforming in some way. Throughout the time of the course 4 participants had to leave early, 3 of them left due to ongoing health conditions, and the 4th had to return to their home country to finish their academic studies.



Participants after an evening session

The Team

This year the team that hosted the Creating a Transformative Culture's EDE consisted of 11 people. The two founders and organisers, eight assistants who were all past EDE participants, one social media archivist, also an alumnus of the EDE, plus external guest speakers.

The Organisers

Sonja-Vera Schmitt

Glarisegg, Creator & Trainer

Since 2003 Sonja-Vera has been one of the founders of the Schloss Glarisegg community. As a member of the Board of Directors of Schloss Glarisegg AG, she familiarized herself with the long-term financial and construction planning of this property, coordinating the maintenance, renovation and expansion of the large, historical property.

In 2010, the discovery of the Global Ecovillage Network was a very important milestone in community development.

Since 2016 she brought the Ecovillage Design Education course named "Creating a Transformative Culture" to Schloss Glarisegg.



Jashana

Hawaii, Creator & Trainer

Jashana has always had an intense desire to figure out how humans could live in harmony with the natural world.

For this goal, she got degrees in Anthropology and Environmental Science which lead to a Masters in Social Ecology. She began exploring intentional communities 'to be part of the solution', eventually moving to the Findhorn Community in Northern Scotland. She has immersed herself in the world of awakening consciousness studying every offer from Holotropic Breathwork and Yoga, to Deep Ecology and Contact Dance. In Preparation for the world to collapse she helped found a reforestation community in Hawaii.

Assistants



Teri
Italy
EDE 2024



Sina
Germany
EDE 2022



Timon
Switzerland
EDE 2020



Rémi
France
EDE 2020



Amneh

Germany
EDE 2022



Matthias

Switzerland
EDE 2023



Adrian

Australia
EDE 2024



Avena

England
EDE 2023



Elodie

France
EDE 2024
Social media manager

Course Rhythm

The first four weeks of the course had a clear rhythm, with the fifth and final week being a networking week where alumni were invited to come back to meet the new Creating a Transformative Culture EDE graduates, and to share skills.

The first four weeks had 6 days of programmed sessions, with the weekends having a slightly different structure.

The schedule for week days followed this framework.

8am-9am Breakfast

9am-9.45am Morning circle

10am-12pm First session

12pm-1pm Home Group time

1pm-3:30pm Lunch and break

3.30pm-6pm Afternoon session

6pm-6.30pm Integration Time

6.30pm-8pm Dinner break

8pm-10pm Evening session

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
20-01-25	21-01-25	22-01-25	23-01-25	24-01-25	25-01-25	26-01-25
Conflict Resolution on Annabelle. Team meeting	* Feedback Jashana, My story about you Sonja-Vera	* money/struct. Glarisegg? & matriarcal societies, Ihawaii permaculture, Online Claudio Climate	* privilege	* Joana Macy: the work that reconnects Jashana	* indiv. mid term reflection & sharing about it in home groups time	10:30 morning circle Brunch
sharing in home groups	share with 4 friends	sharing in home groups	sharing in home groups	* emotional release ritual	13:45 clean. earth	13:00 free Open Space Technology
Vulnerability Brene Brown	strands permaculture foodwaste, Team meeting	Jana & Matthias Stimm-volk	Global & Local Food	14:00 lunch	* fishbowl frying pan	
* sociocracy voting				* 15:30 buddies dialog nature walk		
						18:00
State of the World	cult	contact beyond contact	Impro Theater / 5 rhythms Jashana	* intergration, holding	free & Sauna	free

Screenshot of the schedule

Saturday morning was a time for group decisions and group process spaces. Some of the tools that were practiced on the Saturday mornings were sociocracy, the fishbowl technique, and way of council.

Sundays were a free day with brunch and then an opportunity to take part in an Open Space Technology where participants could offer each other workshops and skill sharing.

Every morning there was an optional morning practice slot before breakfast where participants could offer things like yoga, meditation, or lake dipping. The days would begin with a morning circle which was inspired by a practice that is performed by the Glarisegg community, it was a moment to come together and begin the day in an intentional way. After the first taught session the participants would meet in “Home Groups” to have a sharing circle, or practice tools that they had been taught that morning. After lunch was the second, and usually longer, input session, which would end half an hour before dinner to allow for some personal integration time, which was self-directed and could take the form of journaling, nature walks, solo time, or even dancing. The day concluded with dinner and then a final session which was often more celebratory, or fun, or relaxed.



A morning circle

All participants had buddies with whom they could go through the course.

This buddy system served as emotional care, and helped people get to know each other early on. In addition to this, participants were organised into “Home Groups” based around project ideas which were then used for the Design Lab later in the course. This “Home Group” was formed in the first days and spent the course together practicing the tools learnt and deepening bonds with daily sharing circles and also practically taking care of the course community by working in a rotation to do the cooking and cleaning for the whole group. One of the team members was present in each one of these “Home Groups” which made sure that participants had solid peer and team support around them for work, study, and care.

Highlights and challenges of each dimension



Integrating by the lake

Social Dimension

Creating a Transformative Culture's EDE has a high focus on the social dimension of sustainability, with a strong emphasis on integrating this dimension into the rest of the course. Some key aspects that were looked at in the social dimension of the course were tools for social cohesion like Looping, and how to give constructive and useful feedback, to help participants to learn to communicate well and co-regulate their nervous systems. Sociocracy was also studied and explored in depth early in the course and was then put into practice so that communal decisions could be made. Ample time was given to subjects like social permaculture, mediation, inclusion, and privilege. The Scott Peck community building tool was a highlight for many participants and had a whole day dedicated to it so that they could really understand and integrate the process. Incorporated in the social dimension, and then throughout the rest of the course, was also the practice of sharing circles to promote group cohesion and foster deep listening skills. Fun and celebratory activities, such as Biodanza, contact improvisation, and playfight were also included to create strong group dynamics and emphasise the importance of celebration and play in a community.

A participant said this about the Social Dimension of the course:

“The main focus was, in my perception, on the intra- and inter-personal level. Tools - such as Possibility Management, box and being, my story about you, 4 emotions - were shared to move towards self-responsibility and to show up to others without fear of judgement, trusting my own and others' power”



Participants using Sociocracy to share out chocolate

Ecological Dimension

During the Ecological dimension there were sessions on Permaculture theory and several opportunities to do practical work in Schloss Glarisegg's permaculture garden with the head gardener. Which was a favourite session of many participants, one said

On the side of environmental sustainability, I loved to create a compost pile with the kitchen leftovers, that will nourish the soil in the permaculture garden for the years to come.



Participants build a Hügelkultur bed



Participants connect with nature

A speaker from Halba, an ecological Swiss chocolate company that is working to promote agroforestry, offered a more global view of the production of luxury foods. Another speaker who is an expert in food waste, offered his perspective on how to help the food waste situation from an individual perspective to a more commercial one. Jashana gave examples of how ecology can be present by explaining the projects that she has founded in Hawaii, which include a reforestation project, an ecovillage and community project. There was also a session on the state of the world, inspired by the book *Hospicing Modernity* by Vanessa Machado de Oliveira, where the ecological, biodiversity, and climate crises were looked at alongside themes of social justice and coloniality to highlight the intersectional nature of the climate crisis.

Economic Dimension

In the economic dimension the course dove into topics such as empowered fundraising, where participants were invited to explore their relationship to money and how to ask for money for their projects from financial powers who might want to support ecological initiatives. Sadly, due to schedule changes that needed to happen to meet the arising needs of participants the session on Degrowth did not happen. However, the participants were invited to experience a form of gift economy through the practice of a gift circle where someone enters the circle with a specific request or offer and others join to meet the need or accept the offer. It was a beautiful and celebratory experience of how economy can work in community. The structures and economics of Schloss Glarisegg were explained and also compared to the very professional coachings of “Les Pas - Sages”, who support worldwide communities to develop into the same economical structures. Towards the end of the course the organisers made the whole of the budget for the course transparent so that the participants could understand where their money was being used and address the topic of finance in a healthy and transformative way. Slightly less direct focus was given to this dimension but the course wove a curious inquiry how to reframe the topic of economy and look at it through a different lens into the learning journey and there were many resources available. On the topic of reframing economy one participant said of the course

“I got a lot of inspiration from the idea of shifting from product oriented systems to process oriented systems. It made me zoom out and notice what is actually happening whilst I am working towards something. I realised how much I can already harvest during the process of doing something and adapt to the different steps.”



Participants discuss in smaller groups

Worldview Dimension

The Worldview Dimension informed all of the other dimensions and was woven through the whole of the course as well as having specific sessions dedicated to it. One of the aims of Creating a Transformative Culture is to practice a culture which is highly influenced by the worldview dimension.

There was a session on embodied leadership which asked participants to feel how healthy leadership feels in the body and to look at where they tend to place themselves in group dynamics. A session on privilege was given, where participants were given input on the subject of privilege and then asked to perform a privilege walk to look at the differences and similarities in the room. Many tools from the Global Ecovillage Network were included, such as the session on the aspects of sustainability that participants felt most draw to working on, which used a GEN framework and the sustainability cards from the GEN network. The participants had the opportunity to meet with members of the Glarisegg community to ask how it is to really live in a community and to have a change to network with the people who are already living in an ecovillage. Additionally, a local music duo, Stimmvolk, who collect songs from around the world and use them to promote community cohesion, perform rituals, and join protests, were invited and gave a session in how to use songs in community and in a wider setting, through this they taught and sang songs together with the participants. A participant said about the shared culture that was created:



Practicing a Flocking exercise

“The feedback culture nourished my need for authentic and transparent relating. I found a lot of care in the idea that the reason for giving feedback is to deepen the connection to the other person. The collective field of relating that was created was really powerful to me. The tools, ideas and principles that were shared allowed me to experience deep and trusting relationships whilst learning about myself and getting more courage to speak my truth. I experienced that as we were collectively engaging towards it, we helped each other to relate with authenticity and depth.”

Design Studio

This year the Design Studio element of the course started early in the program with participants choosing which project they wanted to work on the very first week. However, the project work itself did not start until the third week, and for those first two weeks participants were in the smaller groups that were chosen early for sharing circles and building connections and trust so that working together became easier when the Design Studios started. Once the sessions on Project Design were held the energy and excitement really picked up, and participants used the tools they had learnt to work on their Design Studio projects. The Project Design sessions were given a lot of thought and attention and had three outside facilitators collaborating to deliver a tailor-made design tool and experience, which served to allow participants to create complete and satisfactory projects. The final presentations were a huge success and highlighted the importance of giving the Design Studio enough attention and creating bespoke processes that work in the context of this EDE, the challenge is to sustain the energy throughout the course but the final results speak for themselves.



Participants joined the Glarisegg Community for Mantra singing

Design Studio Case Studies

Each of the groups wrote the following summaries of their projects



Participants enjoying the sunshine

Alter Edge

Elias, Iva, Smurf Village, Simon, Teri, Vedika, Yana,

This project, based around nature art, can be seen as a mirror of nature weaving components together and finding a way through diversity and complexity. It started with not knowing what it is really about with half of the group not signing up for it specifically. In the first steps this group of very diverse people bonded and created connections of trust through different ways of sharing, revealing to each other their inner landscapes. Also through cooking together and getting confronted to figuring out how to put various desires and ambitions into reality.

We decided to spend a few hours in nature, seeking inspiration. And so, we began. Our journey started in the forest, where we formed a circle, found a sacred spot, and allowed the project to unfold naturally. With just one phone, one camera, and six people, we immersed ourselves in the experience.

For an hour or two, we wandered through the forest, discovering elements of nature—stones, sticks, and moss. Breathing deeply, feeling, and listening, we documented the process through photos and videos. As the sun set, we gathered for a final circle on the riverbank.

We took our treasures, and created a altar up a slope— a sacred space of power —using sticks, stones, and moss. As twilight settled, we stood within it, breathing deeply, filled with satisfaction at what we had created.



The group connecting with nature

Hatay Crafts Market

Daniel, Florian, Indrè, Zuza, Elodie, Barış

The Hatay Crafts Market project evolved from an unexpected opportunity into a meaningful initiative that connected the EDE community to recovery efforts in earthquake-affected Turkey. By leveraging traditional craftsmanship and cultural heritage, we created a bridge between communities while generating tangible support for rebuilding.

Beyond the financial contribution, this project demonstrated how cultural preservation can serve as a powerful vehicle for community resilience and recovery after a disaster. It also provided valuable lessons in group dynamics and adaptive methodology that will inform our future community-building efforts.

This collection of traditional garments presented us with a tangible way to support recovery efforts. The proceeds from selling these items would directly contribute to Cembo's initiative to establish a Sufi culture center in the Hatay region, helping to revitalize the community and cultural heritage in the aftermath of the disaster.



The project group

This group raised a hugely successful **€1,960** for the Sufi center and ongoing restoration in the Hatay region.



the group at the craft market

Journey of a Lifetime

Sina, Issi, Benjamin, Kiran, Marian, Laura, Pohema

As part of the Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) program, our facilitation group, The Seven Green Sages, was given a three-hour time slot to create an interactive and immersive experience for participants. Over the course of four days, we worked collaboratively to conceptualize, design, and facilitate "A Journey of a Lifetime," a sensorial rebirthing experience aimed at deepening participants' connection to themselves and the collective.



The group preparing to host their session.

"A Journey of a Lifetime" was a powerful exploration of birth, discovery, and community. The experience demonstrated the potential of sensorial immersion as a tool for transformation, allowing participants to navigate their own inner landscapes while also stepping into deeper collective engagement. As facilitators, we learned valuable lessons about communication, timing, and the delicate balance between structure and flow. Despite minor challenges, the session was a profound success, leaving a lasting impact on both the participants and our facilitation team.

Social Toolkit

Anna, Sivan, Lisa

The topic of our project was proposed by the EDE-Team. The idea is to give an overview of the social & psychological tools learned and applied during this course. The calling question we landed on was “What supports me to apply these tools in my life?” So, we tried to find a structure in order to develop a compact tool box package containing the whole diversity of tools while being easy to reference and use. Therefore, we built four tool-categories. The end product should then be a card deck, consisting of one card per tool and each card assigned to one of the categories to enable fast searching of the right tool for a certain context.



The group working on the project

Public Love

Matthias, Daniella, Michael, Giulia, Annik, Aric

We came with different understandings of the concept of “public love”, but we gathered around the shared intention of offering to people outside of the EDE the nourishing connection we experience in the EDE and in our lives in general. Our aim was to explore how to express love, compassion and care to strangers in public spaces, without making assumptions about their needs, and while respecting our own boundaries and capacities. We also wanted to research what we would need to embody a loving attitude outside and how we could support each other as a group.



The Public Love event in Konstanz

Red Tent

Lia, Ina, Fancesca, Ellen, Sabine, Jade, Amneh

The red hearts homegroup formed after one of the soon to be members expressed her interest in and pitched her project proposal for a red tent in the frame of the Ecovillage Design Education Course 2025 in Schloss Glarisegg, Switzerland. A Space where the topic of menstruation could be researched, held, supported, experienced, made visible for everyone and possibly be reframed. In an initial project session each of the six group members shared their initial impulse to join the project proposal. Every member had a personal connection to the topic of menstruation through their uterus - most had heard from the concept of a red tent for menstruating people to retreat to, be supported and celebrated in their bleeding. And so, in the beginning we briefly shared our stories concerning the topic. For example one of the members was already in menopause and was looking forward to the project in regards of integrating their own experiences with bleeding in modern society and to be in service to a new generation where the cycle and menstruation can be acknowledged and appreciated in a new (and at the same time old) way.



The group enjoying nature



Presenting the project

RegeNerATION

Jolin, Anna, Helena, Lina, Timon

A holistic regenerative approach to not only save humanity's survival on earth but also allow us to become part of a regenerative ecosystem. We want to see our planet flourishing and also all the beings living on it. So we need to treat ourselves in a regenerative way as well. That's why it's important to reverse the degenerating approaches like monoculture that we've brought to this earth and to acknowledge us humans as part of nature. Treating ourselves, each other, as well as the planet mindfully with love and compassion. To bring this into practice and involve a wide range of people the idea is to create a foundation which is organising holistic regeneration camps where we regenerate landscapes and water cycles, while learning to be with each other and ourselves in a regenerative way. The name regeNerATION comes from the idea that people from all over the world could create a "Nation" (an organisation), with the common goal to embody a regenerative culture. It creates a feeling of belonging due to shared values, actions and the places that will grow and regenerate through the organisation. Given this is a huge project for the EDE our facilitation team suggested that we could create a framework of tools, which can be used to create these holistic regenerative events.



Presenting the project

Inclusive Gardening

Oscar, Mag, Becki, Rach, Jess, Nathan, Avena

The EDE Project 2025, titled Inclusive Gardening, was initiated by us, a 7-person group at Schloss Glarisegg. The project aimed to explore the intersection of gardening, inclusivity, and community building, with a focus on creating a model for inclusive gardening practices that could be applied both within Glarisegg and beyond. Our journey was marked by deep discussions around inclusivity, power dynamics, and group processes, as well as practical engagement with the garden and its needs. Our process had challenges, and key learnings, with a particular focus on inclusivity and group dynamics. It also highlights our efforts to create a space where every voice was valued and where the principles of power-with and small is beautiful were central to the project's development.



Celebrating the gardening work

Inclusive gardening feels like a space where every voice is heard, where differences are celebrated, and where the rhythms of nature guide our actions. It feels like a community coming together to nurture the soil, the plants, and each other, creating abundance for all.

Lessons Learned

The Creating a Transformative Culture's EDE 2025 ran well, and was able to adapt to the feedback as it arose. That being said, there are, of course, lessons that were learnt from this years' experience.



Taking an energiser break between sessions

One major success from this year was combining the “Home Groups” and the “Project Groups” so participants were with the same group of people throughout the whole course, and had the opportunity to explore deepening the connections within this group, as well as working on a Design Studio project together. It is definitely a framework that will influence the creation of future EDE's.

While it was a success to have the Home Groups form around a project idea, this meant that projects needed to be chosen early and there was not enough space given to the process of choosing ideas or understanding the requirements for the projects. Several participants felt rushed and expressed feeling unclarity around the projects early on in the course. It is clear that this process of selecting project ideas needs more time to allow participants the space to fully invest in the process and the project. It was also very important that this year there was a whole day dedicated to “doing” the project and it is clear that this is a lesson that should be taken forward.

The way that the Home Groups worked together to serve the collective course community with cooking and cleaning was an aspect that was deeply appreciated by everyone. Working alongside others to provide for the whole helped to foster a deep sense of community and commitment to each other and the course process as a whole. Several people also expressed how this aspect of the course helped to ground them with practical work and allowed them space to integrate the intellectual and emotional learnings.



A Home Group meeting in the sunshine

Having eight assistants was a huge success and meant that work could be fairly distributed, it also allowed for eight home/project groups to form and for each one to have a dedicated member of the team to hold group and collect feedback and listen to any concerns, either interpersonal, or with the course as a whole.

However, because some participants left during the course some of the home groups shrank in size and became very small which made doing the tasks such as cooking very challenging, at one point several groups merged to allow them to perform these tasks more easily, but the projects remained separate. This led to one group in particular being too small and struggling with interpersonal dynamic as well as creating a project. In the future it is clear that groups must be appropriately sized so that there is not undue pressure on any of the participants. Groups of between 5-7 people seemed to work well.

There were several sessions that the participants helped to co-create, such as the session of global food, and the session on privilege and having the participants input was invaluable and brought a real sense of creativity and excitements. Going forward it is clear that more opportunities for participants to co-create the sessions should be made to best access their knowledge and energy.



Class of 2025 group photo

The final lesson that the organisers learnt was to step back and not interfere too much with the minor conflicts or perceived failings, to not try and save the course because there is some discontent but to listen to the feedback and then give the tensions space and see what is needed rather than rushing in with a quick fix that could create more tension.

Participant Quotes

“This EDE has been a huge experiential learning for me. The course gave me the opportunity to grow in to the different parts of my individuality, to more fully serve the community and the project I was helping bring alive. I learnt tools that allowed me to work with conflict in a constructive way, something I had previously shied away from. We also worked on recognising the importance of every individual opinion (including my own) in tools like sociocracy. This showed me how the diversity of opinion and experience in the collective helps create meaningful decisions and actions. We explored the different ways 'power with' not 'power over' organising can be done - I was very inspired by the permaculture principles in this social context.

In the future I'll use these tools in the community and workplace organising I do with the hope to create long lasting, meaningful change that the community is committed to and passionate about.”



~ Jess Thomas



Mag Angjelovski ~

“Roses are red, violets are blue,
I'm still wondering if this experience was true.
Widely open minds and hearts full of love,
I just simply couldn't get enough.
The way I felt heard, the way I felt seen,
those moments erased everything mean.
At times I did struggle, not gonna lie,
and other times I felt like I was gonna fly.
Forever grateful I will be,
the EDE family, I carry them with me.”



Ellen Fröhlich ~

“To me the 5-week long EDE was like fertile soil, where my needs for living, eating, community, authentic contact, educational input, transformative experiences and room for slowness were met and I could thrive and prosper in a supportive and loving environment. I especially loved how the embodiment of experiences was so presently woven into the schedule through dance, voice and music, that I was constantly invited to integrate what I was learning on multiple levels.”

“'My 5 weeks of learning about and living within a community setting at the EDE Glarisegg were some of the best weeks of my life. Not only did I meet life-long friends and community connections, the social tools I learnt, such as 'Looping', 'My Story About You' and Sociocracy 3.0, will prove invaluable for me to take forward in my next community living adventures. Thanks to everyone, especially the wonderful facilitators, for their wisdom and care'”



Rach Cooper ~