



Ecovillage Design Education 2016 Findhorn

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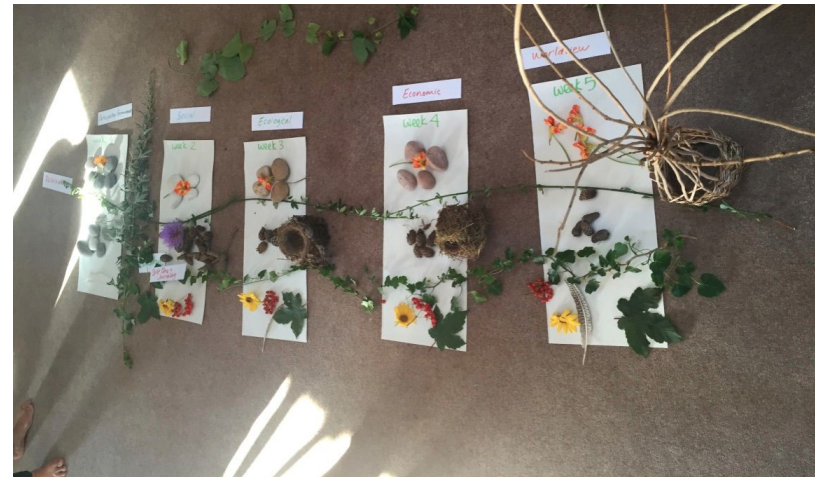
Overview

EDE Findhorn 2016 unfolded with the blessings of unseasonably pleasant weather.

An engaged and diverse group of individuals shared a life changing experience. Local cultural events enriched the our time together, local Ceilidhs, Concerts in the Universal Hall, the Samhain celebrations and bonfire, as well activities organised from within the group, evening bonfires, and excursions to see the Scottish beauty spots, by land or by sea – including visits to Inverness and the Clava Cairns and a West Coast train trip for a mountain walk.

Each week of participants explored facets of what is required to design a full-featured human settlement or ecovillage. The whole picture is, of course, much greater than the parts we can explore; however, many additional resources are provided in our shared online resource library offering leads and indicators for further research and skill development.

Inge wrote in her blog : "The Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) is more than just a course. It is a transformational landmark or watershed for those who participate in it. We sang, meditated, wrote poems, read poems, told stories, made drawings, laughed, cried, hugged trees, plucked apples, plucked flowers, brewed wine, climbed mountains, sailed, looked at green buildings, dreamt, made huge plans, developed design projects, and partied. We experienced on our own bodies and souls the central values of designing and living in eco-villages, and why it today—in light of climate changes and the overconsumption of the Earth's resources - is more urgent than ever for humanity to make an inner and outer transition towards a more sustainable and resilient lifestyle.



Rhythms of the day

Participants start the day in their guesthouses and may join the community in morning meditations or Taize singing. Morning Session generally focus on theory with supportive exercises. Afternoons often include design studio time and other more practical activities. In the evenings there were optional sharing activities organised by group members, course organisers or event for the wider Findhorn community that participants can join.

Participants

18 participants from various European countries, Australia, Myanmar and the Americas joined the journey. As we progressed some who planned to come for one or two weeks stayed to the end and we completed with 15 pro active human beings receive their Gaia Education Certificates: 10 women and 5 men.

Age wise the group ranged from 21 – 66 years, most in their late 30's early 40's.

Course Content Evolutions

EDE Findhorn included the four dimensions of the Ecovillage Design Education course, a Transition training and a week of Participatory Education Facilitator Training.

Design and Process Skills: This year we prototyped a shift in focus towards providing more design methodology and process experience.

Ten plus years ago when EDE was conceived the internet was in its infancy. Now it's possible to find a wealth of information on sustainable and regenerative living online. What our in-person EDE offers is the action-learning experience of working with others in a team, collaboration. We placed an emphasis on the opportunity for participants to develop skills for collaborating as a member of a design team which included designing team agreements, conscious decision-making and conflict resolution.

We also added an emphasis on design skills. While there has always been Design Studio time where participants work together in a team to develop a design project, there hasn't been much in the way of course content that provides participants with design thinking skills.

Another departure for EDE Findhorn 2016 was to provide participants with design projects based in the Park Ecovillage, Findhorn. This decision proved to be fruitful in a number of ways.

- Creating equivalence among the project team members
- Providing thorough project information
- Ability for all team members to visit/survey the site
- Meeting with a designated community liaison for client survey
- Provision of accurate base maps in a range of scales
- The host community benefits from the participant creativity design thinking

- Participants are able to contribute to something that has a possibility of being realised

This innovation led to three outstanding design projects and one faculty member, who's been on the team since the first EDE Findhorn stating that these were the best design projects yet.

Worldview: This year we experimented with weaving threads of the course's four dimensions, especially Worldview. We noticed that in previous EDEs, facilitators of each of the dimensions have included exercises from Joanna Macy's *Work that Reconnects*. We decided to consciously weave that thread through the course from one week to the next and debrief it in the final week. This gave us the opportunity to provide participants with a deeper and developing experience of *The Work that Reconnects*.

Sociocracy: We explored introducing Sociocracy as a team governance and decision-making system. Sociocracy is best learned by using it. The five week course provides the opportunity to introduce it in the early on and then support participants to use it in their design teams. We used the sociocratic process of creating and consenting on proposals for the team agreements.

This experiment worked well, however, for Sociocracy to be really used well throughout the course it would need to be introduced in the first week and perhaps through an organisational analogy. Certainly there is more to explore here.

Week 1 Participatory Education	
The cohort bonded well in this first week of group challenges, inner work exercises, pedagogical insights, and participant lead facilitation sessions with the opportunity to reflect on personal practice. Paola Vidulich and Jane Rasbash facilitated this experience.	
What went well	Learning to apply for the next EDE
<p>The group challenges provide a heightened experience for each participant that brings out tendencies and opportunities for learning.</p> <p>The group challenges were debriefed to provide learning to develop an educational facilitation style that is participatory in nature.</p> <p>Debriefs always begin with the question "How did you feel?" This provided participants with an understanding the feelings are a valued part of their experience.</p>	<p>Based on feedback from participants we are considering placing this week at the end of the four EDE dimensions. This would give participants the opportunity to develop a participatory education session, based on their EDE learning, to deliver when they return to their home.</p>

From the participants: *Excellent management of teaching and walking the talk -- LP*

The Week started with me being very skeptical, but ended with me having a profound appreciation for the experience that the facilitators provided -- MK



Transition Training	
May East returned to Findhorn to lead a Transition Training at the beginning of the second week.	
What went well	Learning to apply for the next EDE
<p>The group surveying exercise provided thorough information for the facilitator team and offered transparency and insight for participants about themselves and each other. .</p> <p>Good overview for what needs to happen to implement effective localisation projects.</p> <p>Back casting is a powerful tool that starts with a future vision and then looks at what it takes to get there. Participants apply their ideas in the areas of Energy, Transport, Food and Community.</p>	<p>Some participants were not aware of Transition movement and this training. It was well received, however, we will aim to prepare participants more thoroughly and would aim to include this extra 'module'. The TT ran over a weekend between the Participatory Learning and the Social/Worldview weeks. And while participants did get an afternoon and a morning off; it proved to be too demanding for most participants to run almost two weeks straight without a full day off.</p> <p>Question for the team : How can we take the exercises learned in the TT and support participants to apply them to their design projects in the following weeks?</p>



Week 2 Social/Worldview Dimension & Design Studio

Communicating from the heart and listening well to another's perspectives were the bedrock for the week. Further session content included understanding the role that power and privilege plays in groups and conflict facilitation. A session on decision-making laid the ground for an introduction to sociocracy.

Design tools were also introduced in this week. And the eco-kit challenge, constructing 'mini' Living Machines was used as a team building process which was debriefed, into leadership and community building as well as it being an introduction into water. .

What went well

Participants received a good grounding in the understanding of how power and privilege can be the source of conflict. They participated in exercises for clearing assumptions in order to create better connection.

The Eco-kit challenge provided a team building opportunity and stretched many participants into areas never previously experienced - particularly technical. We debriefed the challenge into the theme of building community and embracing diversity as well as leadership and empowerment. It provided plenty of food for thought as we drew out the skills needed to be both a leader and a follower as well as develop an awareness of how each person plays a role in building community no matter the size.

Providing time for design teams to agree on how they want to work together - led to minimal conflict, team member transparency and a more authentic collaborative team environment.

Learning to apply for the next EDE

Using "Process Work" practices, participants went deeply into themselves and additional time was/is needed to integrate well, and come back to centre before there could be good focus on group's next steps.

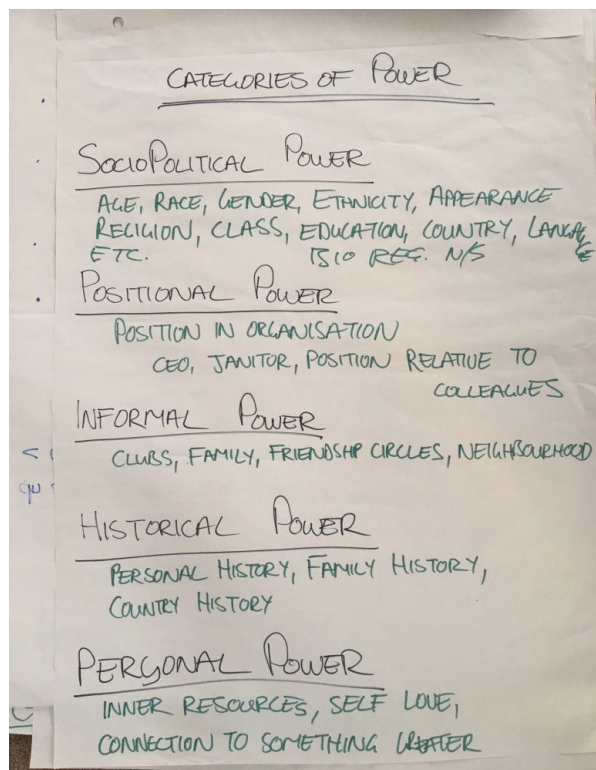
The introduction to the Eco-kit challenge needs to be more precise - the purpose of the exercise and technical terms need to be unpacked in more detail to support the project. Ideally, for continuity and comprehension, we introduce the exercise and tools in the morning and create the kit in the Living Machine that same afternoon.

The Design Projects were introduced with a presentation and site visit with opportunity to raise questions to the local liaison people.

From the participants: Facilitators “are great, I’m learning so much about the way they ‘teach’ and how they interact with the group. They really inspired me” DR

Facilitators are brilliant transparent and generous human beings !!! And very knowledgeable too ... RS

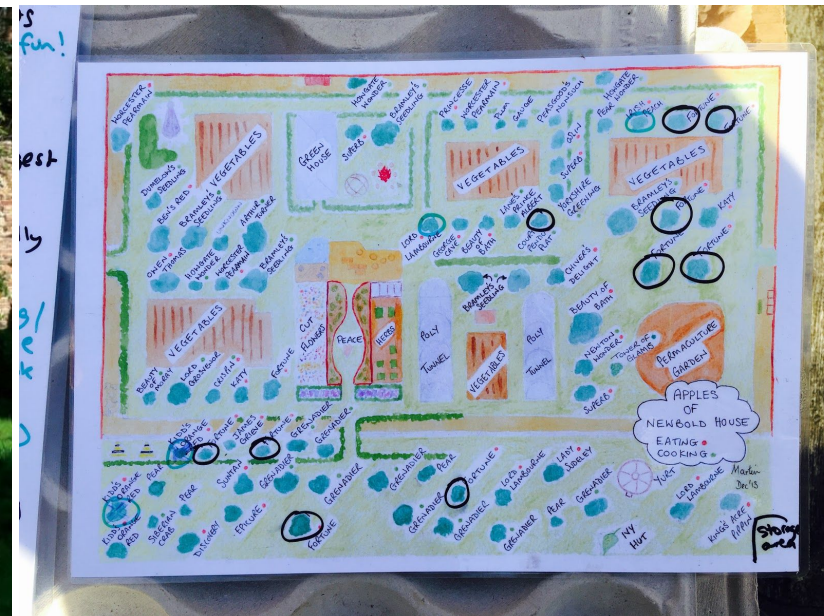
Transition with May East -- ‘a highlight !’ as list by most participants



Week 3 Ecological Dimension	
Sessions were thematically presented on topics of Water, Energy, Soil and Shelter, Bioregionalism and Biomimicry. We visited many of the key eco-houses and facilities at The Park Ecovillage and enjoyed a day at Newbold House where the Soil topic was presented as well as a hands on experience of apple harvesting and processing.	
What went well	Learning to apply for the next EDE
<p>After two weeks of a participatory style of learning, participants appreciated lecture style content.</p> <p>Sessions that were short in powerpoint/informational content - 30 - 45 minutes, followed by an exercise to that offered the opportunity to put the learning immediately into practice was enthusiastically received. For example Bioregionalism designed & facilitated by Lisa Shaw.</p> <p>The hand-on session at Newbold House was a good balance to the informationally dense sessions.</p>	<p>Provide participants with a glossary of relevant terminology or ask them to learn it before coming on the course - for example kilowatt hours.</p> <p>Provide facilitators with clarity about which specific content we want them to deliver. In some cases there was repetition - which can be a good thing, however as we have limited time to provide the information it would be good to be more conscious of where repetition is useful and where it is too much.</p>

From the participants: *Lisa and Michael - great balance of practical knowledge and heart connection ; I was familiar with all the topics and concepts but it was still a great week with new projects, leaders, facts to look into -- all very good -- EH*
Enjoyed the poems and the nature reflection for intelligent solutions AN





Week 4 Economic Dimension

Participants explored money as a personal experience and also a global construct, viewing resource requirements from a wide lens, considering alternative approaches and successful interventions. Economy yields a challenging set of issues to deliver to a diverse international group with varying backgrounds and requirements.

The group enjoyed an additional day at Newbold House Trust, learning about the organisation's social entrepreneurial endeavours with Deborah Benham, and working on personal vision, mission and aims.

In general participants were delighted with this week provided them with tools to ground their ideas in social entrepreneurial/economic reality.

What went well

We used a Dragon's Den (a gentler version of the UK TV show) format and participatory funding allocation to introduce the legal and financial element. Participants learned about social enterprise and the possible legal structures they could assume for their projects. In design studio time they developed an income generating social enterprise as part of their overall project. They pitched their social enterprise proposal in a Dragon's Den at the end of the week. All other participants were giving a notional £10,000 to allocate to the project/s of their choice.

Learning to apply for the next EDE

More time for the Dragon's Den presentation led to well thought out and potentially viable social enterprise projects.

The visit to Newbold House provided tangible social enterprise / income generating ideas. Is there a way we could include more local social enterprises during this week? By working with the local Third Sector Interface?

For the complementary currencies session participants formed research teams tasked with finding out more about the topic and creatively reporting back to the rest of the group.

Participants also attended a session on approaches for grant funding applications.

A gifting circles was introduced in the first week and then carried throughout the course. This provided two rich learning opportunities - the participants learned a complementary form of exchange they could immediately apply at home and

We identified a challenge in this dimension in that there are two major economics threads - and each could really do with a week. The first thread is the economic and finances of actually funding the building of a project and the second is providing information and experience with alternative economic models that could be used once the ecovillage comes into existence.

Provide a fundraising overview that shows all the different types of funding and timeframes needed to succeed, and the pros and cons in relation to each one.

From the participants: *"Strengths of this week were "case example of Newbold Trust, Deep time exercise and all the presentations Social enterprise, right livelihood, localisation and strategic planning LR*



Week 5 Worldview /Social Dimensions

This week began by introducing the participants to a holistic world view through the power of storytelling and meaning making. We explored the many ways we can take action for personal and planetary health and developed a collective wisdom.

What went well

Overall weaving the Joanna Macy thread throughout the course worked and the interactive exercises were a welcome break from being in the classroom.

Participants appreciated the depth of Margot Henderson's offering.

There was more time in nature, including introducing participants to a live experience of local activism.

Learning to apply for the next EDE

For the Work that Reconnects it would be good to introduce the four stages of the spiral and the three responses to current world conditions in the first week and then be more conscious about having an exercise from each of the four stages - one in each week - we ended up doing a lot of Seeing with New Eyes.

Council of all beings - shamanic ancient wisdom. Framing it and showing which traditions we draw on, transparency in the selection we have.

Introduce participants to the local campaigns to provide context before immersing them in the experience.

From the participants: *Level of instruction just right for someone like me not really familiar with rituals and the spiritual dimensions ... I never felt 'being imposed on'... (not) of not understanding something. Felt great. (RS)*
I loved this experience, focusing on the process, relationship and results is so important, I realise. PMW



Design Studio

Design studio provides time for participants to apply the EDE dimension content to a specific project with the intention of deepening their learning through application.

What went well

Making time in the course to provide participants with design and project management tools that they can apply to the design project and take home.

Providing onsite projects (see Course Content Evolutions for details).

Learning to apply for the next EDE

Recap design tools and where they might be applied during the design process. Ask the teams to articulate some of the tools they used in the process part of the final presentation as a way of reinforcing their action learning.

Design Studio Photos:



Process Skills	
We chose to consciously emphasise process skills this year.	
What went well	Learning to apply for the next EDE
Making time for the design teams to develop team agreements and a purpose statement provided them with the structural support for healthy collaboration. This proved essential when team members found themselves in conflict, returning to the original team agreements supported them to find a way through.	Provide more time/space in the day/week for participants to integrate their learning.
Including a set time in the day for 15 minutes journaling was appreciated and used.	Check with all the facilitators that they are aware of the journaling session to make sure it takes place. .

Course Team

We are privileged that our core faculty for the Design for Sustainability course are Practitioners in their fields, with generous teaching experience locally and internationally.

Michael Shaw trained as an engineer and has specialised in the fields of ecological design, particularly purifying water supply, transforming waste and green building. He is a founding member of The Ecovillage Institute at Findhorn, an active director of Findhorn College engaging with research grants in the field of Renewable Energy, and serves on the Gaia Education Board and currently works within the team of Biomatrix Water (link [www.biomatrix-water](http://www.biomatrix-water.com)).

Lisa Mead's background in law, eco-business and Earth Rights activism brings a broad spectrum of experience to the themes of sustainability. She did a post-graduate diploma in eco-building and renewable energy currently is part of a legal drafting team developing a Rights of Nature Directive for a European Citizens' Initiative in the EU. <http://earthlawyers.org>

Ariane Burgess, (MSc Regenerative Design and Leadership) permaculturist, artist, local Green party organiser and Transition Town leader brought her wisdom and insight to the course providing design and process skills this year. <http://arianeburgess.com>

Paola Vidulich, IT specialist and training for an MA with the **Portland Process Work Institute**. Paola has been engaged with Gaia Education for the past 5 years in various ways and international locations.

Jane Rasbash, consultant, trainer and professional fundraiser and Paola Vidulich lead the participatory empowerment, facilitators' Leadership Training at the beginning of the course.

Maria Cooper co weaver, Author of Transition University, permaculture advocate now working for GEN International

Notes for future benefit -- Key insights to progress and integrate in the next round

Create more opportunity for Findhorn based faculty to teach and lead; and for community members to join in the sessions. Further collaboration opportunities among the lead faculty and key presenters, seeking reinforce the course material of each other's dimension, and compliment it in more integral ways will be undertaken.

Further refinements in the case studies selecting process for Design Studio time is desirable. We anticipate a pre course process that brings all the relevant information together for participants and faculty to become well briefed -- before the case study groups are selected.

We intend to offer a more succinct approach to design in general - as required in the Design Studio and as an meta view within the whole course.

In future the Design Studio questions will need to be further refined to provide a clear focus on Design principles discussed as well as the issues raised by each dimension.

Design Projects

Three local projects were offered for the Design Studio focus. Participants had the opportunity to select the project most relevant to their home context. We were fortunate that there was a fairly even distribution of participants for each project.

Duneland Phase 2a

The design project focused on developing housing and an income generating source for ten households on an existing site at The Park Ecovillage. Five participants, including two architects collaborated on this project and developed a cohousing project with a modular type of housing that could be expanded as the cohousing community expanded. The housing design comprised of houses built partially into the ground with an innovative greenhouse system above ground. The social enterprise they designed was an e-bike fleet hiring electric bikes to locals and visitors.

Pineridge Redesign

The participants for this project worked on the redesign/layout of an existing part of the ecovillage. This team did very well considering that most of them had a stronger social and worldview skillset. They were tasked with mapping the site and developing a design to create a carbon neutral neighborhood - with community facilities and social enterprise possibilities. They demonstrated a good grasp of the course content in the way they applied it in their design project.

[Zero Waste Park Ecovillage 2026](#) (click title to go to presentation)

The design project featured the design of a Zero Waste system to handle the waste and recycling streams generated by Park Ecovillage residents. The design included setting up a small scale business upcycling plastic into modular panels for making structures for events. A site was surveyed for a purpose built workshop which also housed a separate upcycling and repairing workshop space for furniture and clothing.

Financial Outcomes

Income – course fees	£ 37,900.00
Income -- bursary donations	£ 100.00
Bursaries offered	-£500.00
NET	£37,500.00
Course expenditures	
Food and Accommodation	£14,120.00
Faculty	£8,500.00
Course Coordination	£5,000.00
Office Overheads	£3,000.00
Extra Meals	£ 175.00
Extra Facilities	£ 300.00
Marketing	£ 750.00
Course Materials	£ 500.00
Faculty Travel	£1,200.00
Course Travel	£ 50.00
Gaia Fee	£100.00
<u>Course development 2017</u>	<u>£ 2,000.00</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>£35,695.00</u>
 <u>NET</u>	 <u>£1,805.00</u>