

Damanhur EDE 2016 Report

August 6 - September 3, 2016

Damanhur, Italy

Course Overview:

This year we held the sixth EDE in Damanhur, organized by the non-profit organization Damanhur Education, in partnership with Gaia Education and the Global Ecovillage Network.

Founded in 1975, Damanhur is a resilient Federation of Communities with its own constitution, culture, art, music, currency, schools and use of science and technology. It has about 600 full time residents, plus a numerous group of non-resident citizens who live in their own homes rather than Damanhur's community houses. Damanhur is nestled in the Alpine foothills in the north of Piedmont, Italy.

Damanhur is based on the vision of a new model for society, one that created an active community based on solidarity, sharing, love and respect for the environment.

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

This year the course was very small, but still very international. Participants came from all over the world, while the facilitators were mainly from Damanhur.

The EDE in Damanhur could draw from the experience of a 42-year old community. This added value was very important for all four dimensions. Damanhur is located in a beautiful natural setting, which made it possible to go on a breathtaking field trip to the Alps. Also an exciting two-day community building experiment was framed by a beautiful forest. There was an outdoor brunch with Damanhurians, and the overall setting offered the perfect environment to hold inspiring exercises connecting to nature.

Art is an important component of the community, and it was also a highlight during the course, opening to the artist within all of us. Hands-on experiences building a straw bale house and growing vegetables gave a perfect counterpart to the theory.

During the course the participants chose two projects through a Dragon Dreaming circle at the beginning of the course, and the projects were designed throughout the different sessions. These sessions were usually divided into a theoretical part and a practical part, starting with the theory. Then the

participants went into their project groups to develop their projects, weaving in the new information. The next step consisted in reporting back to the whole group.

At the end of the EDE, the projects were shared with the hosting community during an evening in a Damanhurian nucleo (a nucleo is a smaller community group of 15-25 people).

Participants:

The 7 participants came from Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Denmark, the Netherlands and Italy, so despite the small number there was a wide range of cultural diversity.

More than half of the people in the course were in their 20s and 30s, and the others were over 40. This year, there were four men and three women. It is interesting that the males were in the majority, which is similar to last year yet different from our previous courses. All the participants were highly-skilled professionals, several were active in education, including at the university level.

Course rhythms:

The course was 29-days, of which about 90 hours were outside the classroom, 20 hours were hands-on, about 20 hours were in direct contact with the community, and the rest of the time was spent on field trips, art, visits to the lands, meditation in the Temples of Humankind, etc. The free time was still not enough; there were eight free evenings, one whole day and three half-days off.

The normal course schedule started in the morning with optional meditation practices from 7:00-8:00, self organized by the participants, followed by breakfast until 9:00.

The first session of the day went from 9:00 to 12:30 with a 20 minute break around 10:30.

At 12:30, there was lunch and a break until 15:00. From 15:00 to 18:00, the afternoon session took place with a 20 minute break around 15:30.

At 18:30 there was dinner and a break, and afterward, either an evening session from 20:00-21:30, a free evening, or special programs like dinner in a nucleo or a party.

Highlights and challenges of each dimension

The *Social dimension* was very strong and brought the participants closer, integrating the cultural diversity with ease. The group went through intensive processes, learning about conflict resolution, how to enhance leadership

presence, and how others can be mirrors for ourselves and help accelerate our personal growth. They learned about different ways of decision-making and were supported by several global tools like World Café and Open Space. This added to the creation of a community experience from very early on.

One of the highlights was a very exciting community building experiment in the woods, which allowed the group to go deeper and understand themselves and others, helping them to grow both personally and as a group. Another highlight was a process for personal growth and reciprocal support developed in Damanhur. Various activities created a warm connection with the hosting community such as: visiting some Damanhurian nucleos, a brunch with Damanhurians, and the presentation of participants' projects in a Damanhurian nucleo to share their experiences.

Macaco Tamerice facilitated the Social dimension, leading the group through many processes, including leadership and conflict resolution, with empathy and expertise, and she facilitated the Ecology and Economy dimensions.

Formica Coriandolo co-facilitated the Social and World View dimension with enthusiasm, empathy and warmth, keeping an eye on the well-being of the participants.

Quotes:

Amazing, knowledgeable, skilled and passionate facilitator. I couldn't ask for a better facilitator. Macaco exceeded my expectations to deliver the course.

This was the most enriching course I have attended.

Amazing facilitators - awaking people's minds

The teachers are the strength of the course and the Social dimension.

The Economy

The Economy section gave insight about how our money system works in a world that is troubled by an unfair global financial system, and it pointed toward possible alternatives. Macro and micro-economy were explored, as well as the importance of complementary currencies and local economy. It also covered the green and blue economy, and how a more just economy can be created in a community inspired by solidarity.

Damanhur as the hosting community showcased concrete alternatives and many different aspects of a new economy. There was also an elaboration about the concept of richness and about the factors that contribute to richness. The newly learned information was immediately woven into the two projects, which developed the aspects connected to economy. One of the challenges of this dimension was that most parts were still translated, requiring a great amount of concentration.

Lemming Cactus managed the Economy section with expertise and know-how.

Husky Vaniglia talked about different systems of solidarity using concrete examples.

Quotes:

The program is perfect although I wish we could have economic classes scheduled for the morning as opposed to the afternoon.

Economy is new.

Ecology

The Ecology dimension offered the possibility to not only learn through theory and design, but also to experience hands-on building while plastering a straw bale house and working in the garden, designing with permaculture principles. The participants also learned about alternative energy, appropriate technology, growing organic food, water and wastewater treatments, green building and retrofitting. Again it was interesting to see how this knowledge has been implemented in the hosting community.

Permaculture design was appreciated very much and used in one of the two projects. The participants had a lot of fun learning by doing, working in the garden, and particularly while participating on a practical level by building a house and getting dirty with clay.

Nicola Savio facilitated the permaculture program, awakening an interest in permaculture design and best practices.

Inti China led the part about alternative building and the hands-on straw bale building with a strong background of experience and a sense of humor.

Quotes:

Great facilitator. I wish we had more time to do practices. I will keep in contact to continue with the permaculture journey. I recommend him for all permaculture courses with EDE.

He walks the talk.

Worldview

The worldview dimension started with the experience of visiting the Temples of Humankind, and it ended with a meditation in the Temples, which was a highlight of this dimension. A beautiful sharing about worldviews was enriching for all. There was an introduction to Spiral Dynamics, which is seen as an interesting tool to better understand both society and ourselves. There was a detailed introduction to Sociocracy and Round talk.

There was a session about health and a Damanhurian theory about how our different personalities are connected to health.

The exercises to connect with nature from Deep Ecology and Damanhur gave the opportunity to perceive and understand nature from a different point of view. A brainstorming about outreach and concrete examples helped in the design of the future projects. Another highlight was two half days of art-making, calling forth creativity and expression through sculpting and painting, as an individual and as a group.

Macaco Tamerice guided the participants through the sharing of the Worldview session, Spiral Dynamics, personal transformation and connection with nature, moving toward an understanding of collective intelligence.

Formica Coriandolo co-facilitated and held the art workshop with sensitivity and support, allowing the inner artist of the participants to be expressed.

Quotes:

I understand that there is a lot to learn in such a short time and everything is really deeply interesting. I cannot imagine doing this course in another place instead of Damanhur. It had been a pleasure to be here and have the chance to do this course. It's totally worth it!

I enjoyed every bit of Formica's art class. In tune with participants, encouraging and overall amazing facilitator.

Design

The course used different design methods, from permaculture and Dragon Dreaming to intuitive design methods. At the beginning of the course, the participants created or shared a dream, and after the Dragon Dreaming circles, two projects were chosen.

In another phase, permaculture design offered a precious contribution, especially to the ecovillage project.

A natural design method brought the different theoretical lessons together to highlight diverse aspects that are necessary for creating an ecovillage, or a different kind of project, and the participants wove them into the new projects. This allowed them to grow and become more and more concrete with every step.

The moments in the working groups strongly empowered the students, because they saw that it is possible to create a dream, and that, together with others, it is possible to accomplish concrete outcomes that would be impossible to reach on your own.

All the main facilitators were part of the design processes.

Quotes:

Very well done, personal transformation, practice, theory.

Design Studio Case Studies

Lessons learned:

- For some people the intense learning activity and social processes can be challenging. For others they are uplifting and life-changing. We still need to find more free time, though we added a free day.
- This year, we had three people out of seven with special needs for food, which was challenging.
- In this part of Italy in the mountains, internet is still a big problem. We hope this can be changed for next year.
- We still have no real solution for the lessons with translation, as the people who are competent do not speak English at all, or not enough. Actually, four and a half days of 29 are translated, but since these are very theoretical lessons, it feels like many more. The facilitators who do not speak enough English are doing their best to have the language skills for next year.

Key trends

More free time

Quotes:

Clearly very much experience, several teachers, the setup was very well thought over, every week had different activities.

One word: AMAZING!

The course works on self as a key foundation, and this is a huge factor compared to other courses.

Experience, care, Damanhur itself, the location next to the forest, personal transformation.

Personal care and involvement, facilitators were warm and caring.

Macaco is just fantastic along with all the teachers who taught classes.

Everything was well-planned and well-taught, but there was too little time to integrate the learning. 20% theory and learning, and 60% where you use or tell about what you have learned.

All well-balanced and delivered.

The balance between the five dimensions was okay. But when you have a teacher who only speaks Italian and needs to be translated, something will be lost in translating. So Economic was difficult because of that. But also because it is complicated stuff where it is an advantage if you know something about the subject in advance.

This was a perfect balance. Each dimensions was well-represented and content was top notch.

Somewhat deeper or more practice in subjects, instead of explanation existing examples, list of "do"s and "don't"s when setting up a community.

Some of the teachers were knowledgeable, but since they did not know English, the participants could not get the most from their experience. Choosing teachers who speak English helps a lot.

I have learned that change starts with me, so if I work on myself, I can easily transform my community. I have learned how everything is interconnected and how all dimensions should be upheld and explored to achieve sustainable development. This will go a long way in helping me to design sustainable projects that are people-centered.

Art dimension, the attitude and how you can organize personal growth. The program gave me a lot of tools and thoughts related to sustainable community.

I will continue working on myself as I am working in processes. I have learned amazing knowledge, skills and tools that could help facilitate processes in my country. This experience has opened so many doors for me. I am forever grateful.

Meditation, many more.