

# Report EDE Damanhur 2014



This time we made the EDE happen despite serious financial difficulties, because we really wanted to. We give scholarships to under 25 and to people from developing countries and this time it was financially so difficult that we had to make some changes: we could not afford to have facilitators from outside the region. In exchange there was a young, dynamic and open atmosphere due to the young average age of the course.

There were definitely more female than male participants: eleven women and only three men.

This year the fourth EDE in Damanhur took place organized by the Non-profit Association “Damanhur Education”, in partnership with “Gaia Education” and the “Global Ecovillage Network”. Founded in 1975, the Federation of Damanhur is an eco-society of about 1000 citizens: a federation of communities and ecovillages with their own social and political structure in continual evolution in the north of Italy in the foothills of the Alps, 40km from Turin.

The Ede had fourteen participants out of which five were younger than 30, seven from 30-40 and two in their forties. As the last years it was a very international course, people coming from Brazil, Usa, Canada, Norway, Switzerland, Greece, Germany and the Netherlands. Many of the participants had already a very good background in the “green” movement.





Macaco Tamerice facilitated the social dimension and world view and cofacilitated the ecological and economic dimensions.

For the ecology there were several facilitators, Nicola Savio held the main part, from permaculture to appropriate technologies, Inti China lead the strawbale and alternative building part, Gorilla Eucalipto and Uria Sedano sessions on renewable energies. As the previous years Lemming Cactus took care of the economy part with the help of Husky Vaniglia for sessions linked to economy and solidarity.



Several damanhurian facilitators were present in specific sessions: Formica Coriandolo held the art workshop, Stambecco Pesco talked about politics and showed the integration with the bioregion, Daina Albicocca about health, Naiade Corniolo took care of the local food session.

Several participants had experiences in the ecovillage world (from participating actively in GEN International and Gen-Europe to periods in different ecovillages) or had a permaculture or spiritual background.

As last year the EDE was held mainly in a Damanhurian nucleo, that was already used during the previous EDEs. This added to building a family feeling and support since the beginning of the course.

This fact allowed to reach an incredible depth in a very short time and a profound learning experience in all four dimensions, skipping many phases that are usually needed to create a strong group. The social aspect has shown in the previous EDEs to be the base for a creative and fulfilling learning environment for all four dimensions and this year's EDE proved this even stronger.



The highly appreciated Italian food increased the “happiness” of most of the group, though this time we had some difficulties in providing nice and safe food also for people with food allergies.

The weather was not good all the time, but still allowed the participants to profit from the natural swimming pool right outside the course room, in the garden of the nucleo.

***The course had a 29 day program:*** 9.00-12.30, 15.00-18.00, 20.00- 21.30, there were some free afternoons and some free evenings. Often there were meditations or exercises organized by the group before breakfast.

The lessons started mainly with information and hard facts about the subject of the day to then be elaborated in design groups.

The program includes three days hands-on experience, two half days of art, fieldtrips and two days building community practically in the woods.

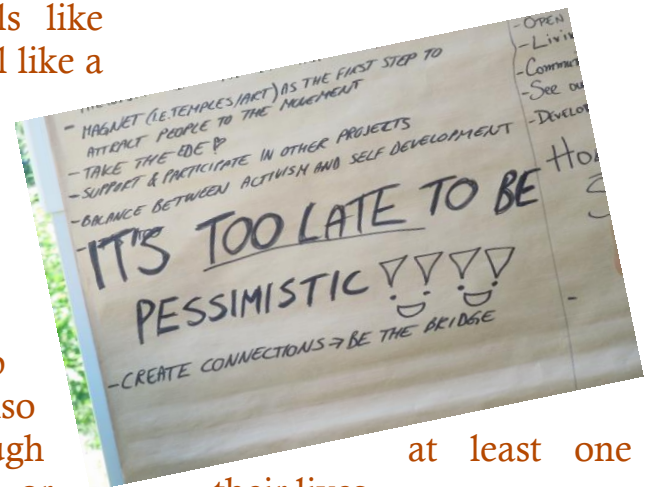




*The social dimension* was very strong and helped the participants to understand the strength of community and many aspects of the individual itself, the group and the individual being part of the group .

Many group building exercises were experienced especially for leadership and personal development supported by more global tools like World Cafè and Open Space. This added to feel like a community since almost the start.

As mentioned above, most participants had already quite some knowledge, trainings and experiences with social tools in their personal baggage, which lead to a very harmonic exploration of the individual and the group processes. The intensity of the processes were also challenging and most participants passed through moment in which they questioned themselves or



at least one their lives.

One of the highlights was a very exiting community building experiment in the woods, which helped the group to break down balances and to create a new ones, and made them grow both personally and as a group.

Another highlight was a process for personal reciprocal support developed in Damanhur.

Visiting some damanhurian nucleos (smaller communités of 15-25 people), a brunch with damanhurians and the presentation of participant's projects in a damanhurian nucleo to share the participant's experiences created a warm contact with the hosting community.



growth and



*The world view dimension* started with the experience of visiting and ended with a meditation in the Temples of Humankind, both perceived as a highlight of this dimension.

There was an introduction to Spiral Dynamics, seen as an interesting tool to understand our society and ourselves better on one hand, but it also triggered some discussions. A detailed introduction to Sociocracy was held by one participant.

The exercises to connect with nature from Deep Ecology and Damanhur represented another highlight and a morning was spent on observing our world from a holistic point of view and understanding how spirituality can give motivations to engage socially.

A brainstorming around “outreach” helped designing outreach for the projects.

Another highlight were two half days, spent on art, calling the creative parts to come out and express through sculpturing and painting, as an individual and as a group. Beside a deep experience, it was also much fun.



*The ecology dimension* allowed the participants to learn about alternative energy, appropriated technology, how to grow organic food, water and waste water treatments, green building and retrofitting.

It was particularly interesting for the group to see much of the theory concretely applied inside the community during field trips. Permaculture design represented an important tool to design the three projects of the participants.

Hands-on experiences building and plastering a strawbale house, and working in the garden, seeing many different permaculture principles applied, made the ecology session concrete.

As the previous years the hands-on days were very appreciated balancing the emotional and mind work of the rest of the course.



*The economy section* showed hard facts around money in a world that is troubled by a global, unfair financial system, but also showed that new economic solutions are possible. Green economy and Blue economy were compared and systems built on solidarity and sharing.

The hosting community supplied concrete examples to show and explain many different aspects of a new economy.

The three projects of the group were developed and designed in small groups from the point of view of economy looking at different important parts: income sources, a complementary currency, a fair economy and solidarity. One of the challenges of this dimension is that most parts are translated, requiring a great amount of concentration.



## Outcomes:

- An ecovillage in South America starting in the next two years
- An ecovillage in Greece with a strong accent on therapy also starting in two years
- A green map in Norway making green businesses available to the public



## What went well:

- Strong group building
- The participants could design their project from many points of view with different design tools.
- Many new social tools, songs from the world and games were learned.
- The meditations in the Temples added a deep spiritual dimension.
- The community building experience in the woods gave the group the opportunity to try out by doing.
- A field trip in the town of Vidracco allowed to see how a community can integrate with the bioregion.
- The art workshop triggered sometimes unexpected creativity .
- The sessions for leadership strengthened the participants.
- Beautiful environment with a natural swimming pool and great food added relax and well-being.
- The evenings in the nucleos allowed the host community and the EDE community share and come close.
- Hands-on days added a practical dimension and the experience that together you can accomplish a lot.
- The sharing between likeminded change makers gave the awareness of being part of a bigger movement
- Contacting nature gave strong experiences of inner transformation to many.
- Important tools for conflict solution and leadership.

## Weaknesses:

- Limited Internet access.
- Too little free time because of tight schedule.
- The economy session was mainly with translation, asking for a high level of concentration.
- We underestimated how difficult it is to deal with heavy food allergies.



## Quotes:

It was truly an outstanding program and I am very grateful. The area of Leadership and personal development was very strong. Learning from the experience of Damanhur was very strong. The group dynamics and activities were very strong (for example the weekend in the Woods, the songs and games, etc). The economic dimension, especially alternative currencies, was very strong. The worldview dimension was also very strong.

My view of the whole has developed, my sense of the complexity of a community project. I feel that I have a better vision of what it takes to really make communities work, especially in the economic area, and also to create a cohesive group. Damanhur is a fascinating model of a large community, which helped a lot to broaden my vision of what is possible and achievable in a community. Also, how important it is to have goals and projects that go far beyond just living together.

All in all, it was one of my most deep experiences of my life and it has changed me on many levels, although I am sure it hasn't had a chance to all sink in. I have a clearer view of who I am, what community is, what i would like to build and the fundamentals on how. I will definitely recommend this course and in the future look for other in depth courses as well.

Wonderful, well-balanced, educational programme giving an overview of all the important issues and topics for community building. Highly inspiring! I have already recommended the EDE in Damanhur to many people and will continue to do so. A life changing event! I love the group, the teachers and the curriculum. A lot of personal growth and change has also happened during the time here!

I take from this program not only the design and social tools it gave me, but it helped me actually visualize the ecovillage community. It is not just a dream anymore. i can see the voting structure and the houses. After this course i have found the value of community and what are some ways and values that construct it. I have also found much potential in myself that i had never tapped into before.