

EDE Azores 2015



The EDE Azores took place on São Miguel island in Portugal, an island where plants grow verdantly out of the volcanic soil, where the air is fresh and clean, where people live naturally in community and the ocean is alive with dolphins and whales. Our course was located in Sanguinho - a tiny village usually reached by foot through a steep trail winding past Kahili ginger flowers, junipers, banana trees, Japanese cryptomerias, ginkgo biloba and acacia trees. Our course took 5 weeks and it had 21 participants - 14 women and 7 men - who were between 17 and 48 years old and were coming from Portugal, many European countries, South & North America, Israel, and New Zealand. Participants' backgrounds were in the areas of healing, permaculture, cooking, marketing, workshop facilitation, travelling, woofing, farming, peace work, book writing, science, yoga, documentary filmmaking, ecopsychology, medicine, dance, academia, anthropology and flute making. Our participants were dreamers, nomads, change makers, students, visionaries, activists, couchsurfers, frustrated workers, some a little lost and somewhat depressed, truth seekers, nature lovers, treehuggers and ecovillagers, some with a predilection for nonhierarchical and participatory spaces, yearning for a new way of being, and calling for a new form of education.



For five weeks we all lived together, tents on the rich soil, cooking pumpkin soups and sweet potatoes, beetroots and yummy salads with homemade dressings, massaging each other's backs while in line for food, having our meals together perched on rocks or on the grass. We had course sessions inside a wooden gazebo, digesting worlds of knowledge, participating in multiple activities that integrated learnings, sitting on

mattresses and handmade wooden benches, we laid out in the sun and we were grateful for shelter when a storm pummeled us with rain for days, we walked down to the ocean to dive from the pier, we swam in the lagoon at the base of the pounding waterfall, we poured our hearts out in councils, forums and sharing circles, we co-created dreams and discovered new wishes, lying under the stars conversing and exploring the panorama of human relationships.



Daylight came over the green hills, and the participants crawled out of their tents, some in time for morning walks or sunrise Qigong, others straight into the taste of oats and island bread, olive oil, tomatoes and delicious yeast extract. Morning circle followed in the beautiful green field, with a card from the Gaia Oracle and then went into the gazebo, where we would sit as the soft wind blew, the vista of the ocean spread below us, and we would have one or two facilitators speaking, then getting everyone up to do activities, to dialogue in pairs, supporting our learning process. An exercise where we kept equidistant from everyone would be used to illustrate the systems effects

in a community, a journey where we walked backwards in a circle as if backwards in time would open our senses to a wider perspective of time. Participants had time to bond in a variety of different groups, in work groups and then in our EDE design groups. Circles permeated the whole gathering, small circles, big circles, pedagogically oriented circles, logistic circles, playful circles, self-organized circles, pre-meal circles, work circles, and sharing circles, and we often found ourselves going from one type of circle to another type. The course was split into four dimensions (Social, Ecological, Economical and Worldview) with each week focused mainly on one topic, while interweaving elements from the other dimensions in. We had a free half day during the dimension, and then a day of rest between each dimension to integrate, and see the island.

Our course attracted interest from local and national media, local social entrepreneurship organizations and the supportive town council. Local friends came during the course to support and play hang drum, sax, cajón and sing with us under the stars. We had sessions open to the Azores community during each of the dimensions, leaving many to be inspired, the trails of what transpired rippling long after the course ended.



The four dimensions

The main holders of the EDE Azores space were Rita Tojal - originator of the project, founder of Olhos Verdes and facilitator of transformative processes, Taisa Mattos - co-founder of Terra Una ecovillage and organizer of multiple EDE's in South America, and Filipa Santos - co-founder of O Fojo Permacultura and workshop leader. During each dimension there were main facilitators who held the space, and led most of the sessions, as well as other facilitators who would come and lead one or two sessions, and once in a while a participant would help co-lead a session.

SOCIAL

The Social dimension was co-led by Ethan Hirsch-Tauber who works for the Global Ecovillage Network and who taught and directed the university-accredited sustainable community program Living Routes, and Taísa Mattos. During the week the question of how we build functioning community became clearer as we went through the basics of decision making models, the importance of group agreements, the power of conflict transformation, and the potential of Non Violent Communication and Shadow work. Participants also went through the insightfulness of Permaculture from the inside out, the joy of conscious nutrition, the expansion of Reconnecting with Nature, and the experience of deep listening in the Way of Council. In the sessions we would alternate between listening to the talk, and standing up and engaging each other in pairs or small groups. There was juiciness and curiosity. There was the paradoxical tension of the coursework feeling full and packed, and at the same time the sessions leaving a number of participants wishing for more. Participants also organized women and men circles that kept on inspiring vulnerable sharing for the 5 weeks.



The Transition Town session was open to the local community, which allowed for a closer connection with Azorean friends, and the energy of the EDE to flow into the island.

The EDE organizers were also running the food and hosting site logistics and these additional roles created a demanding workload. Participants formed small groups which helped with kitchen, bathroom, and classroom cleaning, which helped them integrate into the flow of the gathering.



We formed **three design groups** to work on eco projects during the course:

dreamland is a holistic project bringing a high vibrational field of collective consciousness onto Earth. It does so by creating a culture of peace and beauty in connection with nature, by self-organizing, forming temporary communities that can double as participatory educational platforms, through a network of land based eco-communities in the Azores, by high vibrational networks of beings, and nomadic vision quests.

Red Pill Project aims to create a space where people could temporary gather, live together and go through a process of inner and outer discovery, both as individuals and collective. Without external facilitation and without any clear pre selection the tools they would use the group would come together in the nature diving and playing with the unknown using the resources among them and offered by the local environment.

Cavalcante Verde will be a permaculture settlement open to members of the local community, functioning as an educational center and platform for social justice. It is based in Serrado, Brazil.

ECOLOGICAL

Ethan, Jorge Sanchez-Cruzado, who works for Biomatrix - a natural wastewater treatment organization, and Filipa were the holders of this week. Our location offered a close connection to nature and an experience in eco-living. A way to see the world not through a linear Newtonian clockwork lens but rather through a more permacultural, systems thinking lens was presented, a way of seeing which allows one to design in a more holistic fashion our gardens and living environments, to find inspiringly organic ways of treating wastewater and restoring our ecologically devastated lands. The work was exciting and useful for participants. We applied this paradigm in hands-on activities like composting, digging ditches to guide the rainwater, and building raised beds which provide in the self-maintaining permacultural way, continual high quality soil for the plants as it decomposes. Some were happy with the practicality of this week, and others felt it was too theoretical still, and wanted even more hands-on activities. Participants were also taken on a journey of deep ecology, into the poetry of nature, conscious connection to plants and animals, and deep time. We had a council of all beings, where different nature forms were given a voice. Later in the week we dived into the world of the dolphins, peering through our snorkels at their sleek bodies arching through the wild water, downloading their ecstasy.



One of the nights we had an Honesty Circle initiated by participants, during which a wish to have more participatory spaces was expressed. There were participants who wanted to not simply learn material, not simply learn how to create community, but instead to create the community, knowing that in doing that we are all learning.

ECONOMICAL

Filipe Alves, social entrepreneur, co-founder of Biovilla sustainability learning center and Economics researcher/PhD student at the University of Lisbon, held this week with infectious enthusiasm. The participants had a chance to look at economics as a subset of ecology, were offered a perspective broadening paradigm to see how ownership models give rise to our exchange systems which give rise to ways of measuring and storing value. Different exchange systems were experimented with like holding an exchange fair and being assigned to create our own alternative currencies. The dreamland design group created the dreams - a new type of complementary currency where we can all create coupons for our

services, which we then trade for other coupons, leading quickly to a flow and abundance throughout the EDE community. A startlingly revealing money game where we could give and take actual cash from each other allowed us to explore our emotions around money. Participants learnt the alarming fact that it's not our governments that are in charge of money creation, but rather privately owned banks, who create money by loaning money in a process which leads to exponentially increasing debt in society. Different social entrepreneurship models were presented. We experienced the connecting depth and beauty of Gift Economy and we ran a gift circle and a deeper needs circle. Our EDE had a community-weaving economic system, which used various ownership models and exchange systems, made of services we were giving to each other. This economic system can be seen as a way to express love.



We had a session on Dragon Dreaming, a project management tool that helps us to manifest our dreams by embracing the four stages of a project: dreaming, planning, doing, and celebrating.

At the beginning of the week we had a huge storm which led to a lot of logistical challenges. That week the Way of Council worked as a looking glass for us, facilitators and participants, to see the weather landscapes inside of us.

Anger Work, in the framework of Possibility Management, was offered in some of the nights by one of the participants. Sweat dripping off of us, we embraced the power of anger, learning not to use it to fight something, but instead to make use of its force for something.



WORLDVIEW

Ina Meyer-Stoll, co-founder of ZEGG ecovillage, former executive secretary of the Global Ecovillage Network of Europe, held the space this week. Ina arrived as the storm subsided. She brought with her the Forum process, which was developed at her community as a way to bring transparency and understanding to group processes, and for people to build more trust with each other. Forum opens space to deal with conflicts in a safe way so we had the possibility to deal with some tensions present in the EDE in full transparency and trust with team and participants. Forum brought people to the middle of the circle to reveal what was going on inside, and then for others to give perceptive feedback on what they saw, feedback which provided connection and empathy, feedback which helped create the space for transformation. We experienced how a community works better when the internal motivations and needs of its members are known. Ina guided us to tap into collective intelligence, to value the different worldviews we each brought, and took us on a journey

through the different memes of Spiral Dynamics, grounding the field of holistic worldview.

There had long been urges by some to have Open Space Technology (OST) processes, which crystallized into being this week. The OST allowed the group to self organize into what activities they wanted to do around a particular subject, and sessions about bodywork, video creation, Facilitator Improv and relationships were organized. There was a session about envisioning what EDE 2.0 might look like. As Ina noted, when the EDE program was first conceived participants were usually at the orange level, and the goal was to help them get to green (in the spiral dynamics scheme). Now they were coming in at green, and so the goal can shift to getting them to yellow and turquoise. Achieving such a goal probably requires more self-organizing processes. Meeting a wish that was very alive in the initial dream of the EDE Azores, we explored how the EDE could be a more open participatory process where people bring their projects, knowledge and gifts in an emergent collective field. We explored the possibility of having EDE 2.0 done mostly in OST and other co-facilitator formats.



Jorge Mello, Zen Buddhist monk, working on Voluntary Simplicity, brought his meditative energy to guide people to look at how to be well and happy with whatever is present, to be non-attached, and live more simple and socially responsible lives. Mariana França, part of Terra Una Ecovillage, and Rita created a space for Personal & Planetary Health where we all accessed our healing powers and contacted the children from the future, asking them a series of questions, such as how they want education to be and what insights they can give us at this time.

INTEGRATED DESIGN

At the end we had two days of free time and blue skies to digest and integrate, with space where each design group could work on their project, to take a deep breath, and interweave the different dimensions and various threads. Each group presented their design projects in their own expressive way, one with a participatory process, one with drum and song, and one with an embodied timeline. We gave feedback, then we celebrated and danced, our bodies and feet moving to the sounds of the drum.

We had our last council and then a fire ritual to close our EDE Azores. We journeyed back through the steep trail, hugs in our hearts, heading home filled with the richness of the EDE Azores experience.



What participants say about the EDE Azores:

There are experiences in life that change me for good — doing the EDE Azores was definitely one of those! It was inspiring, challenging, transformative and awesome. It gave me a new perspective of the world that allows me to engage with the planet in a healthier happier way. I feel the world is (also) in my hands and I am now capable to contribute to build a better place for us! I recommend this course to everybody. ~ Ana Filipa
Participating on the EDE Azores has been a wild journey. For me the 5 weeks felt like 5 months. In my experience, moments of joy, gratitude and excitement were alternated with sadness, frustration and fear. Sometimes the rhythm was calm, relaxing, even boring, sometimes intense, stimulating and even

exhausting. It was beautiful to see the group, with different forces taking the quite tight and rigid structure of the EDE and bent it, melt it into what was serving most for the growth of the group itself. At the end I believe what I and we experienced was far beyond an EDE, we experienced community, in all its lights and shadows. ~ Matteo

The EDE journey was deeper than i ever expected it to be. I learned on all levels for my life. I enjoyed the ride through the 4 dimensions, but even more i learned out of the group dynamics, the friendships and conflicts i faced during this time. What I enjoyed most during the time, were spaces for artistic expression. Feeling very consciously how nurturing this is for me, the course empowered me to set my focus for my projects there again. EDE Azores empowered me to face the world as it is, and to make steps towards what i want it to be. ~ Ramona



Participants' exciting new projects:

As a result of the course I've decided to give myself a "walk on Earth" for a year. ~ Ana Filipa

With the connections I've made I now have the opportunity to be involved in Eco Projects in Brazil, Portugal, Spain and beyond... ~ Colin

I have my head boiling in new ideas and dreams right now after the EDE! The first and most easily grounded project is to permeate all my learnings into the school where I am working in Tarragona. As we have a flexible curriculum I will definitely try to implement dynamics inspired in deep ecology and permaculture, bring nature into the class, or bring the class into nature :) Bring more beauty to the already existing garden in the school, maybe try some bioconstruction techniques, implement social currency! Second, I want to bring an EDE to Spain! Because for me, it is the future. To really bring this motivation, this sparkle, to the young people of this country who feels hopeless. Who feels that the only way to have a choice comes with leaving the country. To create a space where inspiration can come, where we remember where we come from and where do we want to go. Probably coming next October 2016! ~ Gemma

More lessons learned:

- . doing food and hosting site logistics is too much to do along with EDE organizing
- . we need to start organizing visas for participants and team at least 6 months in advance
- . next time we will co-create more activities with the local community
- . very important to clarify visions, expectations & deeper motivations when organizing an EDE, to make sure they match or combine well
- . it's essential to work with a team who believes in the same thing - make sure to clarify that
- . it's important to have good facilitators who can hold conflict transformation in systemic ways
- . clear communication and being able to see things from each others perspectives is important
- . good to hold more spaces to deeply share to help create community
- . EDE participants are asking for new things - the exciting challenge of answering new needs

- . it's ok to include some new EDE changes each time, instead of wanting all changes at once
- . if trusted and given time, the collective can help each other when challenges occur
- . need for more space for people to integrate learning
- . have even more days for field trips for the group to bond - space for many things to unfold
- . we can make useful short 2 min videos of different EDE content and spread them
- . notes from the EDE can be propagated out to a larger audience to learn from them (as it is happening with the EDE Azores community Facebook group)

The EDE Azores was a deep transformative experience for all!



Financial report:

Expenses

Preproduction expenses	3924,50 €
Production expenses	2996,17 €
Coordination & preproduction team	1914,00 €
Facilitation	870,00 €
Kitchen team	279,00 €
Travel costs	3094,37 €
Food	3797,47 €
Materials	217,00 €
Olhos Verdes Admin	250 €
Money donated	200 €
TOTAL	17542,51 €

Revenues

from participants	17097,00 €
from indiegogo	255,51 €
from open sessions	190,00 €
TOTAL	17542,51 €

Net income after expenses

TOTAL received	17542,51 €
TOTAL spent	17542,51 €
Net income	0 €

By the end of the EDE Azores we managed to cover all our expenses, to meet all financial needs presented beforehand by the team, and we still had a little money to share! Gratitude to everyone who contributed to make this project financially possible!! We believe this is a material reflexion of support at all levels. Thank you!

**Another world is not only possible, she is on her way.
On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.
~ Arundhati Roy**