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Design for Sustainability



Final Report

EDE Schloss

Tonndorf

2022



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Gaia Education  
Ecovillage  
Design Education  
Programme



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# Course Overview

## Course Overview (150-300 words):

This Ecovillage Design Education was a 3-week residential training for 27 participants that took place in the picturesque Schloss Tonndorf ecovillage, located in and around a castle in the German state of Thuringia. It was the first EDE taking place in the community. The EDE was conceived, planned, organized and facilitated by an international team of trainers (Ana Armano Linta, Katja Štemberger, Mieke Elzenga, Thomas Meier, Veljko Armano Linta), in liaison with GEN Germany and the host community, whose member Thomas Meier was one of the ecovillage founders, Mieke Elzenga was the founder of the Liberterra community in the Netherlands and Veljko Armano Linta is a Gaia Education certified trainer. The EDE was financed by Erasmus+ because it was focused on youth workers from six partner countries (Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Slovenia) and helped them delve into the following questions: “How do we support youth in times of multiple crises, with a view to the four dimensions of sustainability? How do we support youth with their regenerative projects and with their activism (such as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion)? How do we support them in building and strengthening their communities and community projects?” The EDE was a great opportunity for youth workers from the North and South of Europe to connect, exchange good practices and design projects together, as well as to explore the connections between sustainability, equality and community. In addition to the training, this EDE included online preparation and introduction meetings before the training, and dissemination activities after it.



### Participants (50-150 words):

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There were 27 participants aged from 25 to 50, with 2/3 identifying as women and 1/3 as men, resident in Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Slovenia. Their ethnicities and citizenships ranged from being the citizens of countries where they reside, to being from other EU countries, as well as Lebanon and Syria. Due to illness, 25 participants completed the training, 1 completed it partially, and 1 did not complete it at all. In general, the participants were youth workers.

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### Course rhythms (50-150 words):

The training lasted for three weeks. Each day had two morning sessions divided by a tea break, two afternoon sessions divided by a tea break, and an evening session that was sometimes mandatory (feedback sessions for dimensions, presentation of 60-sec docs made by the participants, certificate ceremony with design studio feedback) and sometimes not (film evenings, presentations of participants' projects from home, and concerts, parties and rituals organized by the participants). Breakfast and dinner were prepared by the participants, while the lunch was prepared by the community. Before dinner, there was time for personal reflection or, every other day, safe group reflection ("umbrella groups"). There were several thematic evenings where the ecovillage members were invited to participate, and some of the members facilitated several sessions in the ecological dimension. There were visits to another intentional community, a neighboring village, to Erfurt, a lake and a heritage museum.

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### Highlights & challenges of each dimension



### Social Dimension (150-250 words)

The training started with an introduction to the training, to Gaia Education and to youthpass. The Social Dimension included a guided tour of the ecovillage and the neighboring village, a dream sharing session around the campfire, a deep listening sessions, two sessions for sharing life stories, a group agreement session, an evening meeting with community members, a leadership and decision making session, two sessions on facilitations skills, a sessions on rank and power, an arts session with making personal avatars, a conflict resolution session, two sociocracy sessions and two dragon dreaming sessions which helped create design-studio project groups. The insights were applied in two design studio sessions. There was a feedback session. The final day consisted of a visit to Erfurt, meeting with students in the Free School, meeting with youth climate activists and an optional visit to a music festival. Ana Armano Linta is a product designer and a sustainability/teamwork educator. Katja Štemberger is a water-systems engineer and a permaculture designer with completed GEDS. Mieke Elzenga is a social worker and the founder of the Liberterra eco-community in the Netherlands. Thomas Meier is a sustainable architect and a founder of the Schloss Tonndorf ecovillage. Veljko Armano Linta is an architect and a Gaia Education certified trainer. *Photos by Simon Harhues*





## Economic Dimension (150-250 words)

The Economic Dimension included two sessions on the monetary system, a session on global trade and local currency, a session on designing local economies, a business planning session, a session on cooperatives and other legal forms, a session about social entrepreneurship, a session about solidarity and economy, two sessions on empowered fundraising and spiral dynamics, two world café sessions on different aspects of economic, abundance, empowerment, justice and equality. The insights were applied in two design sessions. There was a feedback session. The week included an open space afternoon where the participants hosted sessions for other participants, related to any topic or activity where they wanted to transfer skills and/or knowledge. Ana Armano Linta is a product designer and a sustainability/teamwork educator. Katja Štemberger is a water-systems engineer and a permaculture designer with completed GEDS. Mieke Elzenga is a social worker and the founder of the Liberterra eco-community in the Netherlands. Thomas Meier is a sustainable architect and a founder of the Schloss Tonndorf ecovillage. Veljko Armano Linta is an architect and a Gaia Education certified trainer. There were two guest lecturers, one for the local currencies, and another for solidarity-economy projects.

Photos by Jana Nováková Stará (top) and Ana Armano Linta (bottom)





## Ecological Dimension (150-250 words)

The Ecological Dimension included a holistic sustainability session, and SDG session, a design thinking session and a holistic design session, two sessions for council, a photo excursion with a community member, a guided tour at the bee keeping workshop, two sessions on permaculture, a session on sustainable architecture and quality of space, a visit to the Lebensgut Cobstaedt eco-community with advanced regenerative agroecological practices, six sessions with hands-on activities that included helping in the garden and with the compost, helping with the pond, fencing and caring for trees. The insights were applied in two design sessions. There was a feedback session. The dimension was concluded with an optional hiking trip to the nearby lake and a heritage museum. Ana Armano Linta is a product designer and a sustainability/teamwork educator. Katja Štemberger is a water-systems engineer and a permaculture designer with completed GEDS. Mieke Elzenga is a social worker and the founder of the Liberterra eco-community in the Netherlands. Thomas Meier is a sustainable architect and a founder of the Schloss Tonndorf ecovillage. Veljko Armano Linta is an architect and a Gaia Education certified trainer. Community members helped guide the hands-on activities. *Photos by Simon Harhues*



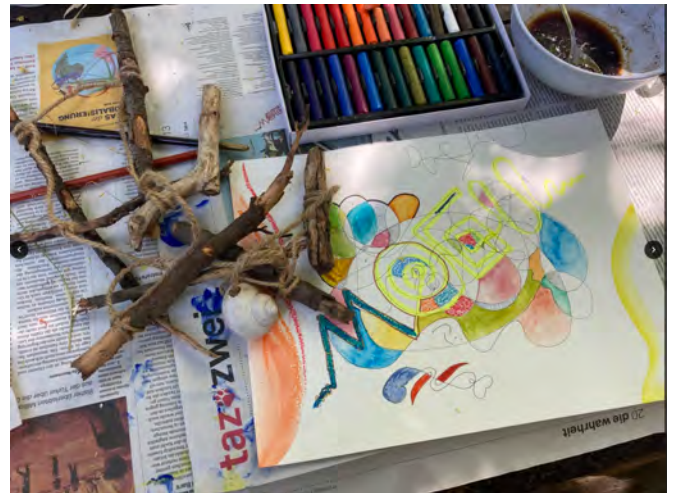




## Worldview Dimension (150-250 words)

The Worldview Dimension included a session on healthy diets and personal sustainability, a session on personal and country-level ecological footprint, a worldview sharing session, two sessions on visual and performing arts, two sessions of nature immersion, a session on wild herbs, a session of cooking, and a forum session. The insights were applied in two design sessions. There was a feedback session. Ana Armano Linta is a product designer and a sustainability/teamwork educator. Katja Štemberger is a water-systems engineer and a permaculture designer with completed GEDS. Mieke Elzenga is a social worker and the founder of the Liberterra eco-community in the Netherlands. Thomas Meier is a sustainable architect and a founder of the Schloss Tonndorf ecovillage. Veljko Armano Linta is an architect and a Gaia Education certified trainer. There were guest lecturers for the wild herbs and healthy diets. After the Worldview Dimension, time was dedicated to design studio presentations, presentations of 60-sec docs made by the participants, to a feedback session for the whole training preceded by a deep ecology experience. Time was also dedicated to the setting of future intentions and filling out evaluation forms. The training was concluded by a certificate awarding ceremony, that included empowering feedback on the studio designs and the teamwork that yielded them.

*Photos by Eliška Šestáková (left) and Jana Nováková Stará (right)*





## Design Dimension (150-200 words)

The Design Dimension was integrated into all four dimensions. The participants grouped into groups of 4-6 people based on affinity towards a project someone proposed. Five groups emerged. All project ideas and their resulting designs had to be regenerative to eco-social contexts, had to be connected with youth, had to integrate all four dimensions of sustainability and had to include the element of building and/or strengthening existing or new communities. The design process was guided by means of guiding questions that helped the participants apply the insights and topics from all four dimensions in shaping their projects and their impact on the real world. The produced documents had to include visual and written descriptions of the designed project, and had to be presented to all other participants and the core trainers. The presentation included a Q&A session. Feedback was given to the design-studio groups by the two design studio facilitators before the group members were awarded their Gaia Education certificates. Ana Armano Linta is a product designer and a sustainability/teamwork educator. Veljko Armano Linta is an architect and a Gaia Education certified trainer.

*Photos by Jana Nováková Stará (left) and Johann Fritz (right)*





## Design Studio Case Studies

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### Case Study One: Community Garden(s)

“Our vision is a place where people and nature grow together. Our mission is to regenerate (sub)urban areas that can again serve the local community: To provide a garden space, fruits and trees for learning and meeting of all generations. This place is cared for by the people who visit it, develop it and maintain it together with respect for Earth and each other. It will be an intergenerational garden center with a focus on youth and the development of their skills. It will offer a space for educational workshops and also for spontaneous socializing. It will serve as a good example of land use and will be replicable in many (sub)urban areas.” – Andreja Iskra, Jana Nováková Stará, Klemen Cesar, Lenka Dvořáčková, Veronika Kozlová

### Case Study Two: Art of Life

“Vision: A world full of ecovillages and communities that are interconnected sharing Abundance. Every human being is a conscious, empowered and responsible part of the web of life. Mission: Work-rest balanced travel to ecovillages and different villages, cities, schools to share a transformative show and workshops and activities to share knowledge, inspire change and build relationships between ecovillages and their surrounding communities. Summary: For 3 months a year the “Art of Life” Family travels in their Mothership (truck) through (for now) Europe visiting both “regular” villages and ecovillages. The Mothership transforms into a stage of wonders when anchoring in a village. A show is performed for children, youth, their parents and all other interested residents of the villages to ignite the remembrance of oneness with Earth. After the show, the visitors are invited to a neighboring ecovillage. Here the Art of Life Family, local ecovillagers and artists are offering a variety of workshops and activities for different age groups from children to adults. The mission of these workshops is to inspire and establish new relations between the residents of the ecovillage and the residents of the surrounding villages/cities. And to inspire for intentional community living, cultural, social, economic and ecological sustainability and regeneration. And to offer youngsters hope, empowerment, connections and support to become a conscious, empowered and responsible part of the web of life. – Katarzyna Patecka, Ines Gorkič, Sophie Kosremelli, Emil Bregnscholdt, David Farum Christensen, Clara Jouaux





### Case Study Three: Ecocommunities Network of CzechoSlovakia

“Vision: The Ecocommunities Network of CzechoSlovakia envisions a region of empowered youth, citizens and communities, designing and implementing their own pathways to a sustainable future, and building bridges of hope and (inter)national solidarity. Mission: We are preserving, empowering and spreading the ecocommunity culture, know-how, values, tools and methods by connecting ecocommunities physically and virtually, and facilitating mutual and external support. We are collaborating with the key stakeholders on a regular basis. Description: This Design Studio project sketches out a concept for setting up a GEN (Global Ecovillage Network)-alike network of ecocommunities in the area of CzechoSlovakia, as there is none yet. One activity, so called project, of the network is to organize “pop-up ecocommunities” tailored and addressed specifically to youth. These non-permanent ecocommunities of the project are used to transfer knowledge and enable experiences in all four dimensions of sustainability in the participants. In addition, it will not only leave a regenerative and community building effect on-site and in the hearts and minds of the participating youth, but also attract the participants to the world of ecocommunities. The “pop-up ecocommunities” project can act as a role model for already existing networks. The network itself will foster the design and creation of further networks by its activities, and is aimed to become an acknowledged partner to public and private institutions regarding sustainable and regenerative questions.” – Eliška Šestáková, Mirjana Grabovac, Šárka Benešová, Simon Harhues

### Case Study Four: Regeneration Connection

“Vision: We live in a world that is regenerative, abundant and joyful within a loving community. Mission: We are supporting the creation of regenerative communities that practice ecosystem restoration, live locally self-sufficient and provide space for the unfolding of human potential and self-realization. Abstract: The Regeneration Connection is a project that focuses on land and marine conservation and regeneration. We aspire to acquire 10 ha of land. Activities will include planting a garden, a food forest, implementing reforestation and rewilding practices, as well as creating a marine protected area. People will live in an intentional community on 1 ha of land. Buildings are built with eco-friendly materials. Next to the land based work, we offer workshops and educational projects on site and online we work with youth to empower and educate them. Our legal structure is three-fold: The foundation takes stewardship of the land. The cooperative implements internal structures and governance. The NGO is responsible for networking and communication (externally).” – Louis Larsen, Tina Kovačić, Lina Brammertz, Marcel Krüger, Tarek Al Muazen, Melissa Shek



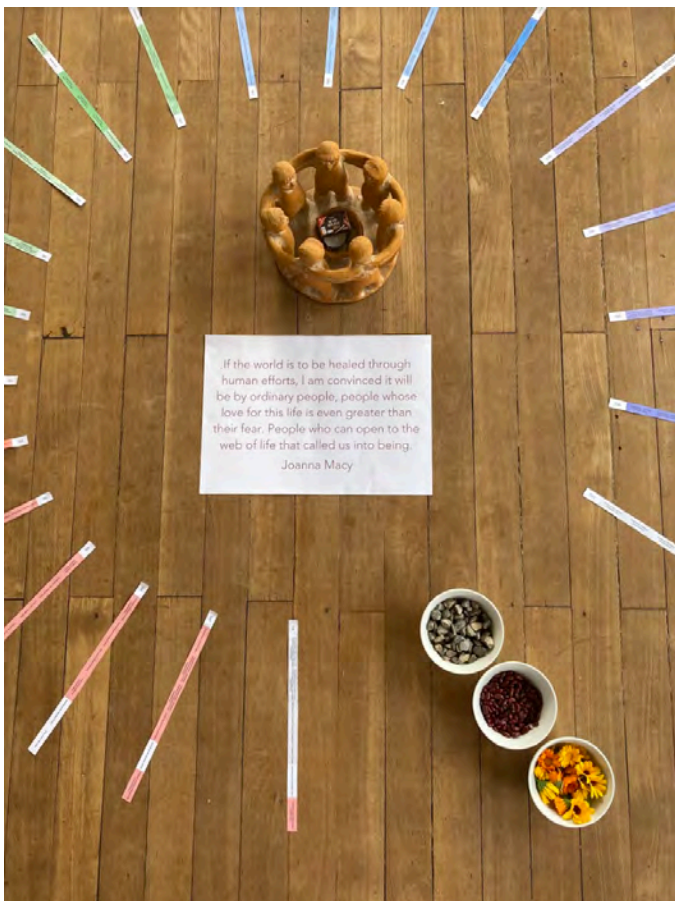
## Case Study Five: Transformity – Transformational Education Center

“Vision: We are living in an interconnected world, from the self to the people around us and to nature. Once we realize our potential, we become aware of our actions and its consequences. Mission: Creating physical & digital spaces that facilitate transformational learning experiences. Project brief: The dream behind our project is to create a transformational educational space for integrating theory and practice of sustainability and regeneration. One of its focuses will be to provide young people with a safe, creative and inspirational space bringing them back to Earth, to people and to themselves. It will be a living model of co-creation as the young people taking part in educational programs will themselves help build the center.” – Florian van Damme, Ivana Kordić, Johann Fritz, Maja Turniški, Nika Poderžan



## Lessons Learned (50-300 words)

We carefully crafted the program to be able to include all the EDE content and link it with the Erasmus+ objectives related to youth and sustainability. This allowed us to get the EU funding and make the training accessible to participants with symbolic fees (€150-350), but made the training more intense (content delivered in three weeks instead of the usual four). It is therefore important that partner organizations select people who precisely fit the intended profile and communicate to them about the training intensity, which is perhaps significantly higher than in a usual Erasmus+ training. The focus on youth workers in connection with the four dimensions of regeneration and with community building yielded amazing project ideas in the design studio process, including an intergenerational replicable suburban community garden, an educational center that practices what it preaches about sustainability and regeneration, an ecovillage network that sets up immersive pop-up ecovillages wherever it presents ecovillages to the wider public, an art group that travels across the continent to raise awareness and build bridges between ecovillages and neighboring communities, and an intentional community focused on nature conservation and regeneration. We were a diverse team of trainers with different backgrounds and pedagogical approaches, which made our process intense and was an asset for facilitating a diverse group of participants on such a variety of topics. For the hosting ecovillage, this was the first EDE and the most extensive training they hosted, so we are grateful for their willingness to jump into it and we hope that it was a useful experience in terms of developing protocols for accommodation, food, housekeeping, guidelines for participant conduct etc. for the future. *Photo by Jana Nováková Stará*





### Key trends from the Gaia Education evaluations:

The participant evaluation survey shows that 2/3 of the participants were female and that more than half of them are currently studying at some level. In their opinion, the course generally met their expectations (average score 3.88/5), delivered what it advertised (4.23/5) and it was rather well organized (3.77/5) and fulfilled learning outcomes rather well (3.88/5). They are very likely to recommend it to others (8.15/10), but with a few participants who might not. The program quality scored very well (4.08/5), as did the organizers (4.19/5), with most satisfaction with the economic dimension (4.38/5) and the design studio (4.35/5), a bit less with the social dimension (4.12/5) and rather less still with the worldview (3.73/5) and ecological dimensions (3.54/5). This is mirrored in the satisfaction with both the content and the facilitation for the respective dimensions (3.77, 4.27, 4.19, 3.69 and 4.46 for the content; 3.62, 4.15, 4.19, 4.08 and 4.54 for the design studio), with the exception that the problem with the worldview dimension seems to be more in the content than the facilitation, and the design-studio facilitation seems to be even better than the content. The participants were quite happy with the accommodation (4.42/5) and meal arrangements (4.12/5), as well as with how their personal needs were met (4.08/5). They were not very satisfied with the general facilities (3.04/5), but were somewhat more satisfied with the learning/classroom facilities (3.48/5), and significantly happier with the support before the program started (4.24/5). The participants felt quite connected to others (4.19/5), but were significantly less happy with the orientation to the host community (3.65/5). Still, they thought it was rather suitable for the program (3.92/5). Health and safety was remarkable (4.69/5). There is room for improvement in connecting to personal learning styles (3.64/5) and the group check-ins (3,76). The participants felt they participated in the development of the group quite well (4.00/5) and enjoyed the group interaction and connection (4.08/5). The participants were rather dissatisfied with how much free time there was in relation to structured time (2.48/5), but there is a wide spread of differing opinions on this, and they were a bit more satisfied with how much practice there was in relation to theory (3.04/5). Nevertheless, they felt the organizing team worked well together (4.28/5) and acted very responsibly (4.6/5).

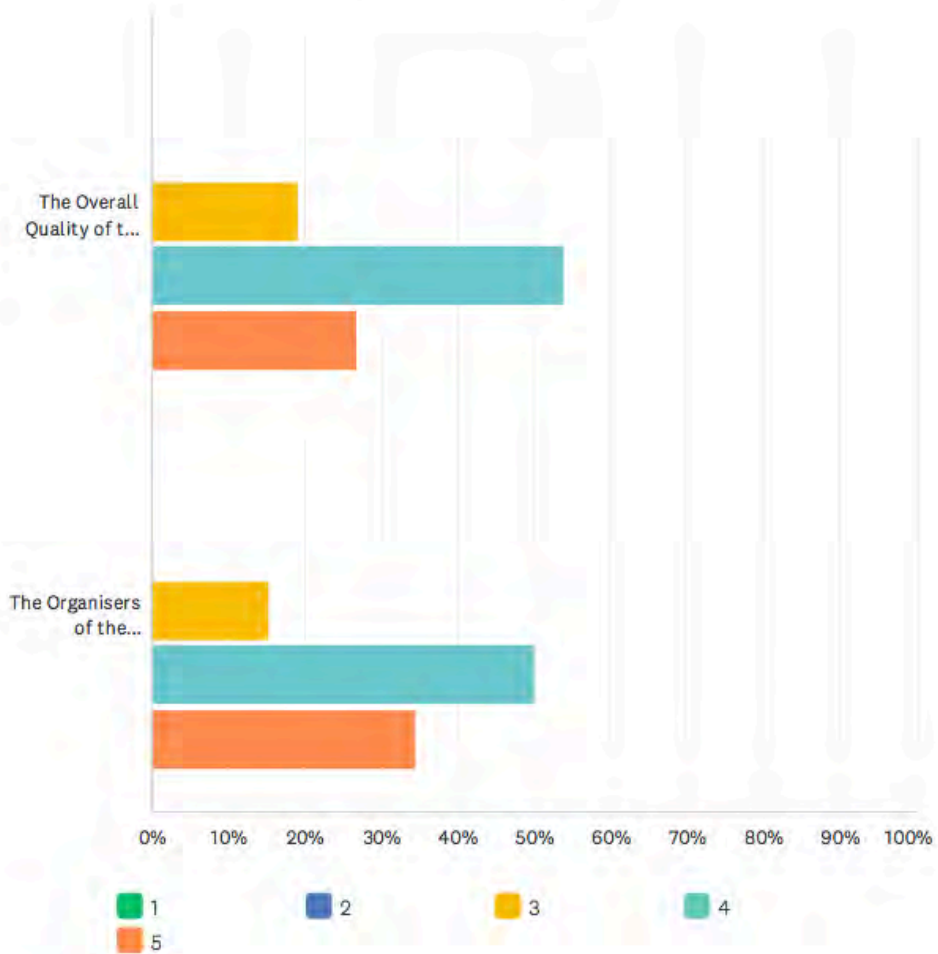




EDE Schloss Tonndorf 2022

Q8 On a scale where 1 = "Very Poor" and 5 = "Excellent, please rate...

Answered: 26 Skipped: 0



	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
The Overall Quality of the EDE Programme	0.00%	0.00%	19.23%	53.85%	26.92%	26
	0	0	5	14	7	
The Organisers of the Programme	0.00%	0.00%	15.38%	50.00%	34.62%	26
	0	0	4	13	9	



Summary of projects/activities participants intend to engage in, inspired by their attendance in the course:

Many participants intend to start their own ecovillages and eco-community projects. Some already live in communities and intend to bring their insights to them in order to develop new projects. Some want to do it through participation in other communities, networks and projects, and giving workshops. Some intend to apply teamwork, facilitation and governance tools and skills in their own organizations and in their private lives. Most importantly for the focus of this particular EDE, many intend to apply the insights and skills in their youth work with school students, scout organizations, transition organizations, Extinction Rebellion and local communities.

Concise financial information showing income/expenditure:

Income:

European Union funding: 44.358€

Participant fees and additional contributions: 5.940€

Expenditure (equal to income):

50.298€





## Participant Quotes

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“The structure and overview it gives – this is just incredible. I love the way it opens up and sharpens the perspective at the same time.” “Keep on sharing this – the world really needs it!” Ivana Kordić



*Photo by Simon Harhues*





“Learning through practical examples and the authentic experience of being a member of a community is a precious personal capital I’ll carry through my life and, hopefully, implement in the local community over the coming time.” Andreja Iskra



*Photo by Veljko Armano Linta*



“... This is a strong and important evolutionary process that is (at least for me), not even remotely finished just because the training is physically over.” Mirjana Grabovac



*Photo by Veljko Armano Linta*