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Design for Sustainability



Final Report

Health, Happiness and Green Living



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Gaia Education
Ecovillage
Design Education
Programme



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Course Overview

Course Overview (150-300 words):

(Brief explanation of the background of the organisation, host site. Diversity of participants and facilitators. Main highlights, key success factors and other relevant information that would describe what happened during the EDE. This text will appear on Gaia Education's website to describe your programme)

Avnø Højskole is an integral part of the aspiring ecovillage, Avnø Oasis, which, in addition to the school, is in the process of developing several other projects including a cohousing community and green entrepreneurship since 2020. This multi-dimensional framework provides a profound learning environment in conscious and active interaction with people who are committed to being part of Earth's regeneration.

During the course, our students, who were from Japan, Portugal and France had a chance to

- become part of and experience the building of a living community with all its challenges and opportunities – this is a learning experience that is not possible to go through in an already-established community.
- be involved in designing and implementing minimum 6 different designs including ecovillage and permaculture designs.
- meet people from all over the world – the community here is truly international consisting at the time of the course of Danish, Japanese, Ukrainian, French, American, Italian, Belgian, Portuguese, Argentinian, and Spanish enthusiasts.

Various parts of the course were led by 14 experienced facilitators from 7 different countries – all of them are activists from the ecovillage, eco-building, permaculture movements and most of them internationally recognized specialists in their fields. The main facilitators of the course, Kristiane and Olha, combined Western and Eastern European approaches and knowledge to deliver an even more wholesome experience to the participants.

The key highlights of the course were, of course, our excursions to several Danish ecovillages and permaculture projects. Together we saw how people manage to build communities and live a more sustainable, meaningful, and satisfying life. These excursions helped the students substantially in developing their own ecovillage designs.



Avnø's charming nature assisted the transformations of our HHGL participants all along the course. A way to reconnect with our own inner landscape and understand the magnificence of the world around us lies through directly experiencing, simply being in it here, in the protected coastal zone of Avnø Oasis ecovillage.

Participants (50-150 words):

Basic stats including number of participants, age range, gender ratio, countries, ethnicities, and backgrounds.

The course was fully completed by 7 students, although some sessions and excursions of the course were attended by up to 20 participants as they were open for the residents, volunteers, and guests of the community. Also, the HHGL course included several mini-courses (PDC, sociocracy, macrobiotic cooking) and some people came to Avnø to participate in them together with the full HHGL students. As for the 7 full participants, they all were women. Most of them were aged between 18 and 30 years old, while one student was 63. 5 students were from Japan, one from France and one from Portugal (originally Argentina).

Course rhythms (50-150 words):

A description of the times of daily activities, sessions, free time, social time, interaction with hosts, rest; how many hours in lectures & practical sessions, etc.

Our standard daily schedule can be seen here: [Daily schedule.docx](#). Every week included at least 5 study days and aimed for 2 days off, though sometimes when it was more contextually logical we had study days at the weekends and days off on some other days instead. Every day the students were usually offered three 1.5-hour sessions. The contact time also included daily morning circles, daily recap time, weekly community and student sharing circles, so the approximate total contact time was 250 hours. Almost every day some community members or students organized various morning practices and evening programs. During the course, we had 10 excursions to nearby ecovillages and eco-projects. In their free time, the students enjoyed spending time in nature around Avnø, going sightseeing in some Danish cities and even visiting other European countries together! The HHGL students actively interacted with Avnø residents and volunteers and got very nicely integrated into the community.



Highlights & challenges of each dimension

Social Dimension (150-250 words)

What happened in this dimension? What were the highlights? What subjects were covered? 2-3 participant quotes from the Gaia Education Evaluations or other sources. A sentence on each core faculty/facilitator.

Include 2-3 pictures.

In this dimension, we went through the following **sessions**: Sociocracy, Leadership and Facilitation, NVC, NGOs around us, Networking, Embracing Diversity, The Art of Ceramics, Structural Conflict, CLIPS, Leadership and Empowerment, Social Permaculture and Group Works, Giving Feedback, Shamanic Drumming Ceremony, Circle Dancing, Cuddle Party. This dimension also included the students organizing some practical tasks they were responsible for, joining our weekly community sharing circles, student sharing circles, and women's circles that took place every full moon and every new moon.

The **highlight** of the dimension: There was a bright conflict between 2 participants which inevitably touched all other course students. The conflict was completely resolved with the help of NVC and Kristiane and Olha's mediation. Both sides admitted that this experience transformed their understanding of conflicts.

Some **quotes**:
"It was interesting to learn about social permaculture and that doing social surveys about people's needs in a community gives a good overview on where to move"; "I learned a lot about compassion, difficulties, and the importance of being emotionally involved with people"; "I could feel proud of myself when I could contribute to the community wellbeing".

The **facilitators**:
Kristiane guided the students through the basics of sociocracy and facilitation, and for some students, this workshop became the highlight of the whole course. Olha facilitated the NVC sessions, many sharing circles, and some other "social glue" sessions and activities which deepened group cohesion and dynamics substantially. All the students were very happy to visit another ecovillage, Hallingelille, meet Camilla and gain a lot of wisdom from her experience-proven sessions on community-building methods.





Ecological Dimension (150-250 words)

What happened in this dimension? What were the highlights? What topics were covered? what practical activities were performed? 2-3 participant quotes from the Gaia Education Evaluations or other sources. A sentence on each core faculty/facilitator. Any other information that you consider relevant.

Include 2-3 pictures.

In this dimension, we went through a full PDC, which included the following **sessions**: Introduction to Permaculture, Water Management, Soil and Sustainable Food, Ecological Building, Mapping Energies, Energy Management, Systems Thinking, Observation, Forest Gardening, Retrofitting, Dream Home, Urban Permaculture, Edible Plants, Upcycling of clothes and furniture, This dimension also included Designing permaculture designs.

The **highlight** of the dimension: Our students had an opportunity to go through the full PDC course certified by Permakultur Danmark in the framework of the EDE course! Many of our students expressed that the PDC course itself, Charlotte Langdon's facilitation, the excursions to other permaculture projects nearby that they had during it, and the PDC design time were one of the most meaningful experiences of the HHGL course.

Some **quotes**:
"It's such a transformative experience full of keys to practice and live according to our ecological values";
"When I return to Japan, I will start designing my own garden, which I haven't worked on yet"; "I guess I had the least interest of us in the ecological dimension but surprisingly it moved me a lot. Now I want to connect with nature much more! Big thanks to Charlotte, our permaculture facilitator."

The **facilitators**: Charlotte was the main person supporting us in the facilitation of the ecological dimension of this EDE, assisted by Kristiane and Helena. Charlotte masterfully designed the full PDC course and with the uttermost care and professionalism shared her passion about permaculture with our students. Rikke and Bernhard taught the students some hands-on ecological building skills. Rikke and Johan taught them clothes and furniture upcycling skills.





Economic Dimension (150-250 words)

What happened in this dimension? What were the highlights? What topics were covered? what practical activities were performed? 2-3 participant quotes from the Gaia Education Evaluations or other sources. A sentence on each core faculty/facilitator. Any other information that you consider relevant.

Include 2-3 pictures.

In this dimension, we went through the following **sessions**: Shifting Global Economy to Sustainability, Green Businesses, Personal Economic Transformation, Ecovillage Economics, Local Social Economies, Wealth and Alternatives to Money, 8 Forms of Capital, Green Market Place, Legal and Financial Issues.

The **highlights** of the dimension: Some people mentioned that they really started to understand economy much more and got interested in it, despite that before the course it seemed to be a complicated, “dirty, and unfair” thing. Another highlight was an excursion to Free Town Christiania and a guided tour of green businesses there made by Ditlev.

Some **quotes**:
“Finding out about local economies and local currencies was something completely new and inspiring for me”; “The course made me aware of different currencies and forms of capital. Now I want to work on my own economic transition”; “A highlight of this dimension for me was to discover that there are different economical structures, and that economy is not just about money”.

The **facilitators**:
All our facilitators of the economic dimension have a university degree in economy and either ran their own enterprises or were involved in academic research in this area. Kristiane added some games and group activities to her sessions to make them interactive and experiential – it was a good decision to do so. Ditlev made a tour around Christiania and presented the students with some alternative economy ideas that are already implemented there. Dicte brought in the experience of various European ecovillages that she visited to explore their economy.





Worldview Dimension (150-250 words)

What happened in this dimension? What were the highlights? What topics were covered? what practical activities were performed? 2-3 participant quotes from the Gaia Education Evaluations or other sources. A sentence on each core faculty/facilitator. Any other information that you consider relevant.

Include 2-3 pictures.

In this dimension, we went through the following **sessions**: Reconnecting with Nature, Systems Thinking, Nature Wanderings, Social Design and Ikigai, Breathing Techniques, Energetic Approach to Life, Creating New Worlds, Macrobiotic Cooking, Meditation Techniques, Daily Healthy Practices, Biodanza, Liberating Exercises, Transformation of Consciousness, Shiatsu, Wadô-atsu, Shamanic Worldview, Viable Actions. Many daily morning circles also included various activities to expand mindsets and delve deeper into oneself.

The **highlights** of the dimension: Our course had a strong focus on personal health and deep self-reflection. As a result, many participants expressed that they now feel more connected with nature and that their general health and well-being has increased considerably. One person stopped drinking coffee despite drinking 3-4 cups of coffee every day before the course. Every meal a question was offered to share and find out more about each other's worldview. Nobody has left the HHGL unchanged personally – that's a fact.

Some **quotes**:
"I learned that it is important to be honest with yourself and to believe strongly in yourself in order to clarify your vision and mission"; "Now I know about not only what I don't want to see in this world but also what I actually want to see and create in it."

The **facilitators**:
Our students especially loved the sessions led by Lucia – Reconnecting with Nature and Nature Wanderings which she guided in the forest and fields close to Avnø. Kristiane facilitated Transformation of Consciousness, Self-reflection and Energetic Approach to Life. Alicia and Kristiane facilitated some sessions on health and wellness together, where they shared a lot of knowledge and skills using simple methods like cooking, movement, meditation etc.





Design Studio (100-250 words)

What happened in the Design Studio? What were the highlights? What topics were covered? what practical activities were performed? 2-3 participant quotes from the Gaia Education Evaluations or other sources. A sentence on each core faculty/facilitator. Any other information that you consider relevant.

Include 2-3 pictures.

We assisted our students in creating their ecovillage designs via offering the following **sessions**: Dragon Dreaming, 9 Stepping Stones, Ecovillage Design Cards, Designing the Design, Creating New Worlds, Planning Tools.

The **highlights** of the dimension: During the course, our students had an opportunity to develop at least 6 different designs: dream home design, NGO design, permaculture design, ecovillage design, final exhibition design, life design. Not to mention all the various mini-designs that they created as parts of some sessions! The students were continuously training their ability to dream and create rather than just copy and paste the standard societal templates of how good life should look. Working in each design group was a profound experience, though quite demanding in terms of mental and emotional capacity. The students absolutely LOVED that we offered them to design and organize a final exhibition and made it a public event. Seeing all the designs made by everybody during the course was sheer delight and really made it clear that a 12-week EDE gives makes this program much more thought through and more detailed than what we've seen on the shorter EDE's!

Some **quotes**:
"I now want to make or join a project to make an ecovillage using the knowledge I got"; "I enjoyed working in a team and it was unusual to see how people can think together, make good decisions together and support each other in it".

The **facilitators**:
Charlotte was facilitating the permaculture design – the students loved her caring attitude and how she organized the presentations of the designs! Kristiane and Victioria helped the students understand what kind of an ecovillage they're dreaming to create and how to make it sustainable and viable – all the students were so immersed in the process!!!





Design Studio Case Studies

Brief description of the case studies developed during the programme if applicable.

During the course, our students had an opportunity to develop at least 6 different designs in small project teams or individually: dream home design, NGO design, permaculture design, ecovillage design, final exhibition design, life design. The idea of the HHGL course was to proceed from mini-designs to more comprehensive designs. As for their ecovillage designs, the final and the most complex designs out of everything that they were offered to design during the course, the students decided to form 2 groups and tried to make their designs as wholesome and regenerative as possible. The participants had around a week to create their designs and therefore both presentations were amazing to watch and listen to. It was also quite touching to see that every participant tried to find or create their own place in the ecovillages that were designed.

One of the groups decided to create an ecovillage the starting point for which would be to buy an abandoned castle or some other form of a big building in the countryside and start living there while creating and regenerating life in and around it. A big part of this project was dedicated to the worldview and the ecological dimensions. For their presentation, the students created a 3-D model of their land and all the structures and landscapes they were planning to have there.

As for the second group, they were more interested in regenerating urban spaces and so they chose to start an eco-center in the middle of some busy Japanese city! Their presentation was quite detailed and primarily focused on ecological and social aspects. It was surprising to see that apart from a beautiful painting they also prepared a magazine issue that their eco-center would publish.

Moreover, both teams agreed that their projects would cooperate and can be seen as one entity containing two branches between which people could move in search of city opportunities or a calmer rural life.





Lessons Learned (50-300 words)

What could help future EDE's from your experience? What were your biggest learnings?

Describe your EDE in terms of the know-how and learning obtained, the stories and inspiration that happen to the participants and the organisers during the EDE or a good summary of a project or activity carried out during the program. Take into consideration that this will be circulated among the Gaia Education's community, so they wish to learn, get inspired and be empowered by your program and your participant's experiences. (200 - 400 words). Include 1 or 2 pictures.

All in all, as the first-ever EDE program organized by Avnø Oasis ecovillage, we all agreed that it was an immensely successful experience, because

- students actually got well integrated into our community
- the designs had greater depth than what we saw in our own EDE's and were very realistic
- there was enough time for the students to integrate the experience
- it totally changed their worldview and for some of them their direction in life
- it turned out that massage sessions along with design sessions increased creativity and productivity and reduced stress

And still, there is always-always room for improvement. Here is a list of some key things that can definitely be done differently or better next time:

- Involve more different ecovillages during the course for 3-5 days where they share practical applications of the theory. This gives the students a possibility of immersing themselves in different projects and it gives our community a break to work on internal matters.
- Encourage more student facilitation of some sessions, activities, sharing circles, etc.
- Add more body-oriented practices/sessions/discussions, also at the beginning of the course
- Review our common agreements at specifically determined time
- Make the economy dimension more practical, add more engaging activities to it. This was the least integrated dimension in the designs – probably because it was more theoretical.
- Try to not mix parts of different modules, but to have one module at a time next time to have a better continuity and course logic (maybe only add elements of others, like various morning circle activities)
- Add small dimension-related designs at the end of each dimension, just like we did with the PDC.
- Introduce sociocracy at an earlier stage of the course and let them use it in areas that concern them.

- Make a photo/video strategy and follow it, have a responsible person. This time students were responsible for making photos, but many of them, unfortunately, turned out to be low quality. Moreover, not all the important moments were captured.
- Make our best to stabilize the schedule before the beginning of the course and make as few changes as possible in the process.
- Plan the excursions in detail and make agreements about the excursions to other ecovillages with the hosts as soon and as detailed as possible.
- Have all the main organizers (main facilitators that are going to stay in Avnø for the most part of the course) come to Avnø minimum of a week before and leave a week after to land, rest, synchronize and celebrate.
- Promote the final exhibition as an open public event from the beginning of the course. Let the students design the actual event.
- We decided to not offer 3 person rooms next time to get a bit better economy. Given that we have to compete with Danish Folk High Schools who are state-subsidized on price, there isn't much leftover for wages, materials, excursions etc. All 14 facilitators donated their time.
- Increase the leftover student-paid costs, such as excursions, materials etc. This time we ended up having quite a bit of cost on it.





Summary of projects/activities participants intend to engage in, inspired by their attendance in the course (50 - 150 words):

Two of the participants intend to become permanent members of the HHGL organizing team, they were also inspired to join the European Ecovillage Gathering this year and already bought their tickets 😊 Two students from Japan decided to stay in Denmark for some time and try volunteering in other ecovillages or permaculture projects. Some students told that they felt empowered to come back to their homes and help their families work with their orchards and vegetable gardens. Many students also mentioned that they would like to visit different ecovillages and eco-projects in their countries and around the world. One of the Japanese students will come back to Avnø Oasis to volunteer when the next course finishes to find people to co-create a project with back in Japan.

Participant Quotes

Send 3-4 participant quotes from the Gaia Education Evaluations or other sources, please include names and photos (send the photos as separate .jpeg files and properly captioned/named) – please make sure that the people in the photos have given their permission to be included.



Misato Hayashi

“I loved this intense time with a small number of students. At my university, we often have 200 students per teacher. Here I was able to ask questions right away and spent a lot of time in discussions with my teammates.”

“We had around 10 different excursions and I took the experience of the ecovillages we visited as inspiration for myself. It made me actually want to design my parents’ house garden.”



“In my personal life, I will live more based on nature. I have learned how we should relate to nature and what we can get from it. For example, in terms of our food habits, I can now appreciate the natural taste of vegetables and beans without relying on chemicals and stimulants. Until recently, if I was tired, my main solution was to watch YouTube videos, but now I prefer going for a walk in nature to refresh myself.”



Mizuho Terasawa

“My favorite part is the sharing circles. It’s my first experience with them and I appreciate this time when we can talk honestly about what we feel and what is going on in our lives. It’s valuable to have this space.”



“I have never lived with a lot of people. Sometimes we had difficulties in our communication. But the way we dealt with them using NVC and sociocracy touched me a lot. I want to try to communicate with my family and friends more deeply and share this knowledge with the world.”



Victoria Mouton

“In my future work, I will definitely use and practice more permaculture to regenerate biodiversity and people. It transformed me! I feel way more connected to my values now.”

“Living in Avnø is a big community experience. Everybody is living together and working together, so we need to have systems that work. It’s a really good experience for those who want to learn how to work and be with others more harmoniously. Also, I enjoyed that we were surrounded by nature – we have a forest and the sea nearby. We often see hares, deer, and many birds.”