

Ecovillage Design Education

Schloss Glarisegg

2024



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Course Overview

The EDE Glarisegg 2024 took place at the ecovillage Schloss Glarisegg for the 9th year. The program of EDE Glarisegg is based on the Gaia educational program and includes material that falls into the 5 dimensions of sustainability. There is a focus on the social and cultural/worldview aspects but at no point do the ecological or economic aspects get forgotten and all aspects inform everything that takes place during the EDE Glarisegg.



Schloss Glarisegg in the snow at night Jan 2024

The venue is the ecovillage Schloss Glarisegg which was founded in 2003 at the Glarisegg castle. It is located right on the edges of the Lake of Konstanz with forest spreading up the hills behind it and little streams rushing to join the lake. Schloss Glarisegg has around 50 members, both adults and children, living in the old castle and school house buildings that make up the site. Together the community shares decisions for how to run the ecovillage in their regular community meetings, they also have a shared permaculture garden where many of the members share work, and events that they offer to each other such as 5 rhythms dance.

Into this ecovillage environment the EDE Glarisegg 2024 invited 36 participants from 15 different countries ranging from far away places, such as Australia and Hong Kong, to the much more local areas of France, Germany, and Switzerland, to come together to form a temporary community.

The course was facilitated by two of its founders and a team of 8 past alumni, the team was made up of people from 7 different countries. Key focuses of the program were social cohesion through different tools such as sociocracy, looping, Scott Peck community building tools, social and practical permaculture and much more.



Participants shoes in the entrance to the seminar centre

Participants

There were 36 participants from 15 different countries. The countries that they came from were Australia, the USA, Germany, Austria, Italy, Croatia, Ukraine, France, Sweden, Spain, the Netherlands, Kyrgyzstan, and Switzerland, Macedonia, Hong Kong. The age demographic of the participants was in the range of the early 20's through to the mid 50's. The gender divide was roughly half with 17 male socialised participants and 18 female socialised.



Participants enjoying the sun

During the course close bonds were formed and people were met and worked together in a way that inspired them to work together on future projects.

The Team

This year the team that hosted the EDE Glarisegg was mad of ten people. The two founders and organisers, and eight assistants who were all past EDE participants, plus guest speakers.

The Organisers



Sonja-Vera Schmitt

Glarisegg, Creator & Trainer

Since 2003 Sonja-Vera has been one of the founders of the Schloss Glarisegg community. As a member of the Board of Directors of Schloss Glarisegg AG, she familiarized herself with the long-term financial and construction planning of this property, coordinating the maintenance, renovation and expansion of the large, historical property.

In 2010, the discovery of the Global Ecovillage Network was a very important milestone in community development. Since 2016 she brought the Ecovillage Design Education course named "Creating a Transformative Culture" to Schloss Glarisegg.



Jashana

Hawaii, Creator & Trainer

Jashana has always had an intense desire to figure out how humans could live in harmony with the natural world. For this goal, she got degrees in Anthropology and Environmental Science which lead to a Masters in Social Ecology. She began exploring intentional communities 'to be part of the solution', eventually moving to the Findhorn Community in Northern Scotland. She has immersed herself in the world of awakening consciousness studying every offer from Holotropic Breathwork and Yoga, to Deep Ecology and Contact Dance. In Preparation for the world to collapse she helped found a reforestation community in Hawaii.

Assistants



Emmy
Netherlands
EDE 2023



Rodan
Switzerland
EDE 2022



Timon
Switzerland
EDE 2020



Madleina
Switzerland
EDE 2023



Amneh
Germany
EDE 2022



Jan Margen
Estonia
EDE 2022



Matteo
Italy
EDE 2022



Avena
England
EDE 2023

Course Rhythm

The first four weeks of the course had a clear rhythm, with the fifth and final week being a more informal networking week where alumni were invited to come back to meet the new EDE Glarisegg graduates and to share skills. The first four weeks had 6 days of programmed sessions, with the weekends having a slightly different structure. Saturday morning was a time for group decisions and group process spaces. Some of the tools that were practiced on the Saturday mornings were sociocracy, the fishbowl technique, and way of council. Sundays were a free day with brunch and then an opportunity to take part in an Open Space Technology where participants could offer each other workshops and skill sharing.

21-01-24	22-01-24	23-01-24	24-01-24	25-01-24	26-01-24	27-01-24	28-01-24
Timon		Rodan	Madleina, Emmy		Avena	Emmy	
	Yoga Mara						
					Australia inv.		
10:00 morning circle Brunch	Week overview spark	social permaculture	ecovillage design Project Hawaii, activism Jashana	world chocolate production Alexander Brunner	* Scott Peck	indiv. mid term reflection & project groups time	10:00 morning circle Brunch
12:30 Open Space Technology free	sharing in testing groups dancing outside	Jash & Sylv dancing outside	project group meeting Jana & Matthias Stimmvolk	project group meeting J & Sylv dancing outside	project group meeting * Scott Peck in project groups	13:45 clean. meeting fishbowl free	12:30 Open Space free
18:00							18:00
free	sharing project group	gift circle	Glarisegg community evening	* Scott Peck Sonja-Verona	Playfight Team meeting	shamanic dance Shakya	free & Sauna

Screenshot of the schedule

The schedule for week days followed this framework.

8am-9am Breakfast
9am-9.45am Morning circle
10am-12pm First session
12pm-1pm Group time
1pm-3pm Lunch break
3pm-3.30pm Dance
3.30pm-6.30pm Afternoon session
6.30pm-8pm Dinner break
8pm-10pm Evening session

Every morning there was an optional morning practice slot before breakfast where participants could offer things like yoga, meditation, or lake dipping. The days would begin with a morning circle which was inspired by a practice that is performed by the Glarisegg community, it was a moment to come together and begin the day in an intentional way. After the first taught session the participants would meet in smaller groups to have a sharing circle, or practice tools that they had been taught that morning. When people met after lunch there was an optional half hour of dancing to get back into the body before another session of input. The day concluded with dinner and then a final session which was often a more optional session or something more relaxed.



Participants gather for morning circle

Highlights and challenges of each dimension

Social Dimension

The EDE Glarisegg has a high focus on the social dimension of sustainability, and much of this dimension is integrated into the rest of the course. Some key aspects that were looked at during the social dimension of the course were tools for social cohesion like Looping to help participants to learn to communicate well and co-regulate their nervous systems. Sociocracy was also studied and explored in depth early in the course and was then put into practice so that communal decisions could be made. Ample time was given to subjects like social permaculture, mediation, and Scott Peck community building tools.

Incorporated in the social dimension and then throughout the rest of the course was also the practice of sharing circles in groups to promote group cohesion and deep listening skills. Fun and celebratory activities, such as Biodanza, contact improvisation, and playfight were also included to create strong group dynamics.

A participant said this about the Social Dimension of the course:

“The EDE at Schloss Glarisegg does a major deep dive into the Social Dimension: with expertly facilitated modules on Sociocracy, Forum, Embodied Leadership, Conflict Resolution, and Mediation – as well as embodying good social hygiene throughout every aspect of how the course is run: from students having “buddies” and “landing groups” for personal support for the duration of the course to “temperature checks,” fishbowls and frying pans as needed.”

Ecological Dimension

During the Ecological dimension there were sessions on Permaculture theory and several opportunities to do practical Permaculture work in the permaculture garden in Glarisegg with the head gardener. A speaker from Halba, an ecological Swiss chocolate company that is working to promote agroforestry, came to talk about the company and offer a more global view of the production of luxury foods. One participant said;

“For me one highlight was the presentation from the chocolate production together with a session about world economics where I realised the perversion of the “aids” for poor countries. To see the both sides that my money privilege can push. On one hand is exploitation on the other side is it paying agroforestry projects.”

Jashana gave an in-depth session about the projects that she has founded and been involved in in Hawaii. These projects include a reforestation project that is offering relief after the massive fires that devastated Maui last year, an ecovillage and community project, and other environmental projects. There was also a session on the state of the world, inspired by the book *Hospicing Modernity* by Vanessa Machado de Oliveira, where the ecological, biodiversity and climate crises were looked at alongside themes of social justice and coloniality.

Economic Dimension

In the economic dimension the course dove into topics such as degrowth, where participants who were knowledgeable about the subject were invited to join Jashana to co-create the session. They explored what degrowth is and explained different economical structures and how they might benefit the world. The course also touched on economic structures such as Doughnut Economics and local currencies. There was a whole session dedicated to Empowered Fundraising, in which participants examined their relationship to money and how to ask for money for their projects from places that might want to support ecological projects. About the Empowered Fundraising session one participant said

“The Empowered Fundraising module was expertly facilitated by Theodora. She distilled how to fundraise down to its essence and then through role playing had us knowing we will be able to finance our projects because we can succinctly and sincerely solicit support”

Many of the participants and project groups wove the economy into their learning journey and there were many resources available. Towards the end of the course the organisers made the whole of the budget for the course transparent so that the participants could understand where their money was being used and address the uncomfortable topic of money in a healthy and transformative way.

Worldview Dimension

The Worldview Dimension informed all of the other dimensions and was woven through the whole of the course as well as having specific sessions dedicated to it. One of the aims of the EDE Glarisegg is to practice living in a transformative culture which is highly influenced by the worldview dimension. There was a session on embodied leadership which asked participants to feel how healthy leadership feels in the body and to look at where they tend to place themselves in group dynamics. A session on privilege was given, where participants were given input on the subject of privilege and then asked to perform a privilege walk to look at the differences and similarities in the room. Many tools from the Global Ecovillage Network were included, such as the session on the aspects of sustainability that participants felt most draw to working on, which used a GEN framework and the sustainability cards from the GEN network. The participants had the opportunity to meet with members of the Glarisegg community to ask how it is to really live in a community and to have a change to network with the people who are already living in an ecovillage. Additionally, a local music duo, Stimmvolk, who collect songs from around the world and use them to promote community cohesion, perform rituals, and join protests, were invited and gave a session in how to use songs in community and in a wider setting, through this they taught and sang songs together with the participants.

When talking about the Worldview Dimension a participant said:

“The best part of the experience was being able to practically use the skills we learnt in our project groups and with the wider community.”

Design Studio

This year the Design Studio element of the course received more attention earlier on in the program with participants choosing which project they wanted to work on and beginning to think about what how to work together from early in the second week. However, some of the energy fell a little flat after the initial excitement because after choosing projects there was a period of less attention. However, once the sessions on Dragon Dreaming were held the energy and excitement picked up again and participants used the tools they had learnt to work on the projects. The Design Web, a permaculture design method, was also taught and employed by several of the groups. The final presentations were a huge success and highlighted the importance of starting the Design Studio early, the challenge is to sustain the energy throughout the course but the final results speak for themselves.



Participants practising the Fishbowl technique

Design Studio Case Studies

Blindfold Dinner

Raphael, Madleina, Anna, Sarina, Anja, Jan Margen, Laurence

This group came together with the project idea of creating a food event for the whole course during the final week when alumni arrive. This event would be a blindfolded culinary experience where people were taken through different stages of life with different foods to eat, and music and meditation and even dancing accompanying them. The group had some challenges as one participant left the group. They were able to create a healthy working culture and came up with a beautiful event they could share with the rest of us. The event took place on February 14th and was created by the team, with volunteers from the rest of the course and the alumni who had joined for that week. It was a fantastic experience and highlight the power of collaboration and the strength and passion of the team.



The group working on the project



Participants at the blindfold dinner

Project E.A.R.T.H

Bruce, Gustaf, Michael, Tracy, Caro, Amneh, Emmy, Caro

This team decided to create the concept for an online database that would bring together people looking for ecovillages with the information they would need to start one. This included all sorts of information from zoning rights, financial and legal information, to promotional material and even a place to meet other people who want to start ecovillages. They were aware of the different rules that apply in different countries and wanted to have the database be opensource so that people from a diverse range of places, projects, and backgrounds could add their knowledge. By the end of the course they had a clear concept, including concept art, and a solid beginning to the research needed, they were all very interested in continuing this project further and seeing if they could launch this website.



The group celebrating the finished presentation

The Naked Oranges

Cassie, Al, Elodie, Adrian, Isabel, Yannick, Timon

This team was brought together by a shared interest in education. The project was to use the learnings of the EDE course & transform them into a game-like experience for young people. The game would then be able to be scaled up or down and taught different situations. They were very clear that they wanted to bring nature connection and, most importantly, fun, into their game concept. For their final presentation they took the rest of the participants outside and had everyone running through the gardens of Schloss Glarisegg to illustrate how their game might feel, they then harvested from everyone what emotional responses had come up and presented their findings in a graph. While they did not finish the concept for a totally new game, they were able to incorporate elements from existing games and combine them with the lessons of the EDE, presenting results that were clear as well as fun.



The group working on the project

Financing Sanko-Ji

Gianluca, Daniel, Nurzat, Anouk, Franka, Mona Lisa, Avena

This group formed around one of the participant's existing project. Rather than try to reimagine the whole project, which was a piece of land and with the aim to start a community, the idea was to work on how to get funding and finance this project and find ways that this information could be transferable to other projects. The group worked on how to make financing more fun and applicable in different settings. Using tools that they learnt in the Empowered Fundraising session they looked at how to ask for money in a sustainable and empowered way. The final presentation of the group involved a dragon mask made from their notes taken throughout the process, to represent their journey with Dragon Dreaming, as well as an online mind map to disseminate their findings as well as to continue the work of this project.



Meeting in the sunshine



The Dragon Dreaming mask

Busha Toloka

Svetoyara, Luc, Lara, Petar, Jesus, Rodan

This project was based around an existing ecovillage in Ukraine that has welcomed many refugees from the war and the aim of the project was focused on connecting the existing community with the new members and refugees who have arrived over the last few years. The group worked on ideas for how to integrate volunteers, members of the community, and refugees/new community members, connecting them with the land and with each other in different ways. They came worked on an application form which categorised skills and needs of new and existing members. They also worked on a calendar of events that would bring the different parts of the community together, and a “toolbox” of different social tools that could be transferable to other projects.



The group presents the project

Sunny Side in Belica

Sofija, Cati, Niko, Matija, Anika, Matteo, Davide

This project involved an already existing community in Belica (or Belitsa), a village in Northern Macedonia. The vision is to revive the place by gathering people who are interested in community living, permaculture, self-sustainability, and protecting the existing eco-system. To do this the group came up with the plan for holding a series of community events and educational projects that would take place regularly throughout the year. A brochure with general info about the land and the project was created and included a full calendar of planned events that could be run in Belica. Alongside this, participants had the opportunity to get creative and wrote a poem about Belica.



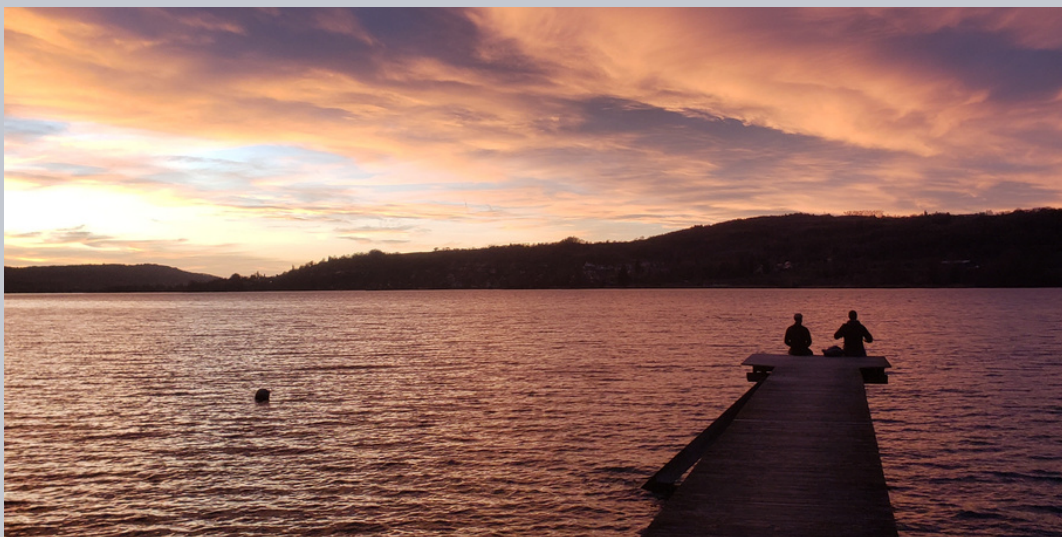
The group gives each other feedback



Taking a break from planning

Lessons Learned

The EDE Scholss Glarisegg 2024 was a year where there were several experiments to better meet past participant feedback. This year the participants started off in “Landing Groups” where they were encouraged to have sharing time once a day and the schedule for cooking and cleaning shared spaces was divided between these groups. An assistant was present and holding each of these groups. After 10 days of the course the participants had to decide of what project they would like to work on and so the groups changed from “Landing Groups” to “Project Groups”. This transition was quite challenging for several of the participants who did not want to leave their original group, but there were also participants who were happy to move groups and have a chance to meet other people more deeply. However, this struggle of transition was one of the most challenging parts of this year’s course for the team.



Enjoying the sunset over the lake

Another element of the challenge was that the new groups were called “Project Groups” and based around projects that participants had presented but work of those projects did not begin straight away and so there was frustration at the amount of time that was given to work on the projects. By the end of the course and the project presentations the participants were well satisfied with the experience in “Project Groups” and the tensions that arose had been given space and allowed for deeper connections to form.



Sunday morning food circle.

As the course runs on a tight schedule so that all of the content can be covered there were times when participants felt that their time was too full. This feedback has been taken on and is already informing the creation of the EDE Schoss Glarisegg 2025, which will have more reflection and integration time, while at the same time offering a rich and exciting schedule.

One of the major successes of this year's course was the quality of work that was produced by the project groups. Their presentations were of a high quality while at the same time offering realistic and achievable outcomes. This highlighted the importance of giving more time to the projects and that starting discussing what participants care about and want to bring early on in the course. It also allowed for the projects to be more outward looking and applicable to the wider world.



Class of 2024 EDE Glarisegg

Going Forward

Participants from this year's course left feeling inspired to continue working and operating in the ecovillage field. Several people land based community projects that they were starting with others and they took the tools that they learnt, and the resources that were gathered, back to their projects. Others took the teachings of the EDE Glarisegg back to their workplaces and planned to use the tools to inform the way they interact with colleagues and friends. Several of the projects from the design studio are planning to implement the work that was done during the EDE Glarisegg, and participants have invited each other to visit or join them which builds a strong network.



Participants sitting by the lake

Financial Overview

This year many of the participants were able to attend the course because a lot of reduced scholarship places were given out to amazing people from Ukraine, Kirgizstan and Italy, who otherwise would not have been able to come. This was made financially possible because the EDE Glarisegg received a large donation from an unknown donor, for which the organisers were very grateful. As there were slightly less participants this year and several of them were there on scholarship, there wasn't enough income to cover the cost of the rent of the seminar centre, and so it was necessary to use reserves that had built up from previous years. Due to this the organisational team has decided to invest a lot more time, and recourses into outreach this coming year, with the aim that more people can get into the delight of doing this course in 2025.

Participant Quotes

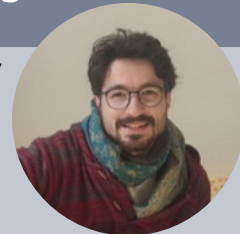
“I thoroughly enjoyed exploring all the content shared during the EDE course, however diving deep into the social aspects was profoundly interesting for me. The best part of the experience was being able to practically use the skills we learnt in our project groups and with the wider community.”



~ *Cassandra Moss*

“I love to compare my experience to a magnetic or electric field where I, as a human being, feel safe and seen and with all the tools and knowledge in hand enabled to just be there, in trust, upright, present, and able to increase my capacities in facing the struggles in life, on earth that I see for me. I came out of it with more courage, that's what I mostly felt lacking of beforehand.”

Gianluca ~





Adrian Black ~

“The EDE ‘24 at Glarisegg was a life changing experience. I traveled across the world from Australia with just enough information to trust that this course was right for me. What I didn’t expect was it would transform my understanding of myself, others and the world around me, in such a way that upon returning to Australia, I now carry myself in the world in a whole new way.

The story of needing to heal the earth has been retold to me. Rather than problems at its heart, I now see a world where healing oneself, and reconnecting to others will allow us all to reconnect to the earth; creating systems that are life centric and driven by growth of living things, rather than inequitable economics.

I am profoundly grateful for all of the community of participants, assistance and trainers who guided me on my EDE journey. The EDE has changed me. Change which didn’t happen to me, but happened through me. This is an experience that I will carry with me in every word, every relationship and every interaction.”