



## Report fra EDE i Findhorn 2015

Date: Oct. 3 – Nov. 6, 2015

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### EVALUATION OF LEARNING

The program was divided into 5 weeks: Facilitator training, social designing, ecological designing, economic designing and worldview designing. There was a good balance between theory and practice with a lot of group and design work. Although there was a lot of content it was always preceded by check-ins, previews and various forms of preparation. It was also followed up with different forms of review and efforts to extract the main points of learning – so it did not feel too rushed. We learned a lot just by being in Findhorn and being able to take part in their routines and rituals, visit their houses, garden and water recycling processes, see their various businesses, observe how they ran and organized their programs, observe their dining and accommodation facilities and procedures, social activities, etc. It was also interesting to meet and talk privately with some of the tutors, to meet other residents and to see how the community had spilled over into the town and how the original village and the ecovillage interacted. It was interesting to observe how the program did not try to cram in the whole ecovillage design education syllabus but rather focused on their strengths. I think they could have even taken this a little further.

Without going over my notes the main learning points I got out of it were:

- **Facilitation Section:** creating opportunities for people to have a voice, sincere efforts to hear and learn the others point of view (and reasons for it), the value of personal preparation and mindfulness, some useful team challenge exercises, usefulness of sociocracy, need for courage, some more willingness and confidence take up leadership responsibility.
- **Social Training:** I got a lot of self-review benefit from this resulting in a clarification of my own goals and desires and again a bit more confidence to continue with community work. The importance of balancing vision, organizing and deep sharing made an impact on me and I realized that putting more effort into communicating ideas and info will be helpful in our community. The design process was useful, highlighting the need to increase opportunities for communication, sharing and interaction between our project development team and volunteers who are working there on a daily basis.
- **Ecological Training:** What I learned from this was the importance of doing calculations and background research when making decisions about things like heating systems, power generation, water-treatments systems, etc. Seeing the Findhorn veggie gardens gave me more knowledge and confidence about what will work in our own place e.g. setting up boundaries and wind-breaks, mulching, etc.. The group competition to build the most effective mini water treatment system was fantastic and I think I won't forget those basic ideas. Finally the usefulness of bio-regional mapping and the resource mapping made an impression on me and we used it in our project design.



- **Economic Training:** This area was perhaps the most theoretical but nevertheless it was good to understand a little more deeply how the current system works and how unfair and unsustainable it is. Alternatives were not so clearly presented – the presenter was clearly excited about her topic but not fully conversant with it. It was nice to have the opportunity to share our own ideas – people appreciated the presentation I gave about the Progressive Utilization Theory. The highlight of this section for me was a day focusing on social enterprise, various business structures and funding possibilities, at the end of which we had to make a ten minute presentation to imaginary investors trying to convince them that our project was socially/environmentally worthwhile, economically viable, and that they could be confident to get their money back. The tutor for this day was one of Findhorn's most active social entrepreneurs and he really embodied his topic. Perhaps the most valuable learning I got in the Economic Area was visiting one of Findhorn's sister projects, Nubold House. It is very similar in size, structure and purpose to our own project and I had a great morning walking around the project with the manager and learning about their system of organization (e.g. how they use sociocracy, etc.)
- **Worldview Training:** This began with two days of Transition Training which was great – it has it's own worldview and a very clear step by step process for community organizing around environmental consciousness raising and creating more resilience. What worldview is and why it is important was not talked about nor was there any discussion about the participants worldviews. There were however, some very nice exercises coming from the native american tradition that gave beautiful insights into their worldview combined with a deep insight into myself. Specifically an exercise where we asked deep personal questions to a tree. This was a great way to connect with nature and oneself at the same time. There were good introductions to Dragon Dreaming and Spiral Dynamics both theoretically and practically. I was invited to share an opening ritual for one of the mornings which included some mantra chanting and meditation which was nice and which also gave everyone some insights into how we might weave the worldview dimension into our community processes. There was no regular meditation with the group itself apart from the first week of facilitator training where the group meditated twice a day. Participants were merely invited to join the daily Findhorn meditations if they wished. As a regular meditator I felt that this aspect could have been explored a lot more with the group, along with discussions about how to design around worldview. As the design topic for this week of the training was also the final design which incorporated all the previous weeks designs, worldview did not receive any individual design attention either. So in general, worldview received less attention, both in teaching time and design time than the other quadrants.

### **Additional learning points from EDE:**

#### **Have you got an insight into good practices that you find relevant to LOES?**

Having good accommodation facilities really enables so much more to happen.

Integrating programs with the daily routine of the ecovillage – eating together, celebrating together, etc. Allows lots of interaction. Tuning in rituals are a great way to create team spirit and alignment. Successful social enterprises – your own currency bank/investment organisation, shop etc. are really helpful.



**How to add something to LØS 'strategy of increased emphasis on training - thoughts and recommendations:** I would recommend more focus on learning design principles – for this we could bring in permaculture teachers. I think the idea of including Transition training in the EDE is great – we could do that here too. I think that bringing in successful social entrepreneurs who also have teaching talent would be good as the economic dimension needs to have more people with practical experience. In the other areas I think we are already doing fairly well – perhaps in the worldview section I would like to include more experiential content from qualified teachers such as from native people's traditions.

**How will you communicate / apply your new knowledge and experience in LØS, in your own ecovillage and externally?** I am attaching the design we made for Ananda Gaorii which includes the most important design ideas from the EDE which I think we can apply here. It also includes a strategy for interacting with our local community and with other progressive organisations. I have already begun sharing this with our volunteers and am already receiving useful feedback. The design presentation is a quick way of raising and clarifying awareness about our vision, goals, problems and means for overcoming them. I will also write articles which I will post on our Ananda Gaorii website and share with other Ananda Marga projects and with our global Prout newsletter. I will also use this knowledge in our own courses, including upcoming EDEs and mini EDEs.

**Considerations about Findhorn as a course site (including the integration of learning activities in Findhorn which ecovillages):**

Essentially, it's a great site. Good facilities, good interaction with the community, actual projects and buildings which we can learn from, many examples of interaction with the local community, lots of rituals, lots of social entrepreneur activities.

**Good advice for others who need to Findhorn:** Very worthwhile to visit and stay for some time. The EDE, probably more than other courses, will really give you an opportunity to learn about Findhorn and have time to interact with the residents. Thinking about all the aspects of ecovillage design while actually in a well-developed ecovillage is an invaluable experience.

**Additional links / documents:** Here is a link to the course documents given to us by Findhorn College: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B7mE30AdALcWYnR5S0FQNVVRQck0>

**For this report:**

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