EDE Report

Course Overview
The Wandelreise melds an EDE with an individual learning journey by combining the necessity for personal development with structural change of the society. The ten-month program consists of 70 days of attendance in Schernbach, during which the participants experience community, discuss and exchange ideas about different aspects of sustainability, broaden their self-awareness, learn how to take action, and gain methodical knowledge. Equipped with the knowledge and experience of the first month and a learning map, which defines each individual’s learning goal, participants go on their individual learning journeys. During this time the participants can get to know and support projects and initiatives that they have chosen to fit their learning goals. In this way, we want to make it possible for an area of interest not only to be treated theoretically, but also to be experienced practically and thus holistically. The participants are accompanied and supported on their learning journeys by professional mentors. During their individual learning journey the participants come together in Schernbach for several longer and shorter workshops. During these meetings, time is made for personal exchanges, design work, and for gaining more knowledge in the four areas of sustainability.

Participants
In total the EDE Wandelreise had ten participants. Eight women and two men. Several participants remarked that both in the EDE participant list and in the evaluation survey there were only two gender options available. All participants were German. Most of them grew up with a Christian background. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 40 years with a mean of almost 26 years. One of them was a young mother with a two-year old child. In the first four and the last two weeks of the course the partner of the young mother also participated in some sessions and was part of the group during meals and in leisure activities.

Key trends from the Gaia Education Survey Monkey evaluation and participant quotes
According to the survey the course met the expectations mostly well, for some adequately and for others even very well. All participants rated the course as well or very well organized and the learning outcomes as achieved. The overall quality of the worldview and social dimension were ranked very well and slightly more positive as the others. Questions with a scale from 1-5 (very poor/not at all – very well) were always answered with 3, 4 or 5. Overall the feedback was very positive. One participant described the strength of the program like this: “The simultaneity of openness and concreteness. I was able to hold connection to myself, the input and the others who were experiencing with me.” Another participant said: “It has been a surprising journey where organizers and participants learned a lot from and enriched each other.” And we got more nourishing feedback as well: “I am deeply grateful for the dedication and love that the organizers put into the program.”

Asked for a quote to be also published, one participant wrote the following:
"A space of loving and authentic encounter. A journey, full of vibrating inspiration, inviting us to explore and experience our relations to the social/ecologic system - both with the mind and the heart. I want to thank Christiane, Marie and Tian for the beautiful energy that they put into this project."

**Course rhythms**

The 70 days of the Wandelreise in the ecovillage had a daily rhythm from Monday to Saturday, with slight variations. A typical day looked like this:

- 8-9 morning practice
- 9-10 breakfast
- 10:00-10:40 Check In and short organizational round
- 10:45-13:30 morning session(s)
- 13:30-15 lunch and break
- 15-18 afternoon session(s)
- 18-18:30 break and/or reflection time
- 18:30-20 dinner
- 20-22 joint reflection, letting the day quietly settle, telling stories, making music, sometimes an evening session

Sundays were free.

Thursday afternoons we usually worked together with people from the community and had a joint meal with the opportunity to get to know each other.

**Social Dimension**

The Wandelreise is both spatially and intentionally closely linked to the community life in Schernbach. One could say that the Wandelreise is a first attempt to embody the holistic educational vision of the community and make it accessible to others. Embedded in this context, great options arise for the program. Starting with the sharing of infrastructure, followed by many seminars and workshops given by community members.

By reflecting together on the questions which of the methods and practices have proven themselves and how they can be used in everyday life, we believe that a lively exchange and good integration of the input became possible. Social points of overlap such as cooking with the community once a week, social exchanges for specific questions or practically working together in different areas also enabled a deeper insight into the community cosmos.

In order to support the group in dealing with social and group dynamic issues, we placed the acquaintance/examination of certain methods, techniques and models (NVC, emotional
compass after Vivian Dittmar, Forum, Council, Radical Therapy etc) at the beginning of the ten months. Through a recurring deepening of these contents, the use of the appropriate tools for various situations became independent over time.

During the whole time, we were inspired by the most diverse formats and repeatedly asked ourselves socio-political questions about concepts. For example, in an embodied process with Heike Pourian, we researched collective leadership and social inequality. In September the participants also organized a beautiful full moon ritual and invited the whole community.

**Economic Dimension**

We exchanged our experiences, associations, and feelings with regard to the topic “Money”. What does it mean for us? Which images and values does it represent? Few positive, many negative connotations were shared, and a joint reservation against the topic could be felt. In our group the concept was very much emotionally charged.

What are indicators for wealth? Next, we worked with several video and text sources:

1. “Sacred Economics” by Charles Eisenstein, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoFzU3cRE4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoFzU3cRE4) One aspect that is highlighted in this video is the “Story of Humanity”, i.e., the way how a society answers the question “What does it mean to be Human?”. The deficits of the monetary system are connected to the “Story of separation”. 2. “The Story of Solutions” by the Story of Stuff Project, [http://action.storyofstuff.org/signup/growing-solutions/](http://action.storyofstuff.org/signup/growing-solutions/) The authors of this video suggest to change the rules of the game of our society, such that we start to strive for better rather than for more. These references have in common that they put the underlying assumptions in question on which our monetary system is based and which too often seem to be “given by nature”, although they are not. During a lecture by Friederike Habermann about “Ecommony” we dived into the idea of an economy that is based on sharing goods without applying the logic of exchange. Friederike advertised the idea of the commons, and demonstrated with a historical survey that an economy based on commons does work well. According to her
presentation, the often-cited “Tragedy of the commons” is a misconception based on a game-theory analysis in which collaboration and its advantages are utterly ignored (-> “homo oeconomicus”). After the lecture, there was time for an extensive discussion about the topic, in which also the inhabitants of the community in Schernbach and their guests were involved.

On another day, members of the "Academy for Applied Good Life” presented their concept of a common economy. They live together, and personal as well as joint income and costs are shared in solidarity. Another day we had a video call with Tobi Rosswog who lived without money for a while und who build structures which allow to become more independent of money. This creates opportunity to spend time for meaningful things. He also radically criticizes the concept of paid work. We also experienced a gift economy: in the community there was a free gift shop where you can take whatever you need for free.

Ecological Dimension

Ecology and our experience as part of an ecological whole has many facets. We touched many of these aspects in the Wandelreise, tasted, understood, and absorbed them into us. Whether it was the self-harvested vegetables from the field that nourished us over time and finally found its way back into the cycle through a hole in the self-built composting toilet, or the morning practice of standing with the earth. It was a pleasure to live right next to the community's vegetable garden and to enjoy the food we harvested and preserved in autumn, in winter and spring decorated with some wild herbs.

It is only in this fundamental life practice that we came closer to experiencing and understanding coherent relationships on a daily basis. In individual sequences with the Deep-Ecology work according to Joana Macy, we were able to explore our relationship and found expression for this relationship through the help of various formats. We remember a particularly touching moment when a participant told how she realized during a SOLO time in the forest that nature is not only a backdrop of the stage of her life, but that her life and all our lives are part of the history of this world. This picture found great resonance in the group. It was one of many moments in which a holistic understanding of the world took the place of a reductionist world view ("I'm in here and the world is out there").
For more than four years now, the Academy has tested and researched both the interpersonal and the eco-social context, "new" life-sustaining paths and regenerative approaches. Findings from permaculture and regenerative agriculture have been shared with the participants. Among other things, they participated in the creation of agroforestry systems.

World View Dimension

We enjoyed inputs from Ken Wilber’s Integral Theory. Different world views can be arranged in quadrants that are framed by the opposites of inside/outside and individual/collective. The four quadrants are then “I” (subjective), “IT” (objective), “WE” (intersubjective), “ITS” (interobjective). In a role play we chose one of the four perspectives and joined in a discussion about a hypothetical environmental issue. On another day, we were introduced to the concept of Spiral Dynamics – a theory that defines different stages in the development of consciousness. The theoretical input was complemented with a collective dance experiment, where we subsequently expressed the “Mems” of the Spiral Dynamics theory with our bodies. In an emotional moment during a workshop on Pierre Lischke’s Lebenswirbel (“life vortices”), a sentence emerged that found resonance in the group: “I am Human and not a machine”. That theme was picked up in a poem and in an artistic movie that we produced. It should be said that poetry played a prominent role in the way how our world views met and interacted. One module that had a strong influence on our world view covered “System Analysis”. We used the method of cognition-inducing-questions to work on the topics. “What are the paradigms/assumptions for a life-affirming culture?”, “How can humanity develop its potential to serve life?”. We observed that one condition that helps people to fulfil their true potential is open-heartedness. On the other hand, an open-hearted environment requires people who already fulfilled their potential. We concluded that it needs people who “pay in advance”, i.e., people who dare to open their hearts in an environment of lacking open-heartedness. Charles Eisenstein’s book “The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is
Possible” played an important role in the development of our world view. We read from the book during breaks and moved the ideas in our hearts. Often enough, it is not a thought, but an unresolved feeling that lets us be stiff / stick to overcome world views. Beyond all intellectual concepts of “world views”, the loving acceptance and mutual understanding that we gave to each other gave us the security that it needs to open ourselves and slowly shift our world view.

Financial Information
We aimed for a lower participation fee and asked for different kind of donations. The participation fee was on a sliding scale between 3500 € and 7000 € according to ability of the participants. We made our expenditures transparent to the participants at the beginning and the end of the course.

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Specifics for the Wandelreise
One special characteristic of our EDE was that in addition to the four dimensions we included inspirations, methods and structures which helped the participants to navigate their individual learning journeys. Throughout the course key questions were framed for various topics to help them refine their own learning journey and build a road map for it. For instance the
participants discovered what they want to learn intrinsically motivated, how and where, with whom and what worked out and what not and why.

For mutual support and to keep connected to the EDE culture, we formed learning partnerships supported by a mentor. These groups met regularly during the ten months. In Schernbach they met in person and reflected and exchanged about their individual learning journeys, as well as about the group process and about keeping in touch and supporting each other (on the phone, via e-mail, etc) between the modules.

At the beginning of the EDE we invited Pierre Lischke to share his concept and idea of "life whirls". At the beginning of his workshop we worked with the CVs of the participants (the German format presents in chronological order Formal Education and paid jobs) and discussed and discovered the dogmas behind this structure as well as the influence of "the story of separation" on that document which aims to summarize a person. After that discussion Pierre introduced the concept of "life whirls", moments when one felt completely alive. He questioned if there were areas in our lives where we experienced more vivid whirling moments, this is a "string of life". During the process we also used nature as inspiration. The 1.5 days with Pierre at the beginning of the program were a really great start and we invited him for the next Wandelreise.

Another session of the Wandelreise we struggled to put in one of the four dimensions, though it definitely is linked with them, is the session on transformative points of leverage.

During the first month we also had a creative film making project.

The participants were invited to design the course as they wanted it, they took responsibility, included topics they were interested in and hosted sessions on their own. Therefore we enjoyed sessions on Deep Ecology, psychology in environmental protection, Art of Hosting and one session called "panel of the earth" - the power of imagination and the first concert of a participant.

**EDE lessons learned**

As an organizational team, we were able to outgrow ourselves during the planning and implementation of the change journey, reinforced by our vision. We understood ourselves as learners to let go of perfection as best we could which resulted in great experiences, exploring new areas, encouragement, and trust. It was wonderful to experience together with the group how people empowered themselves and used their creative power, especially in an artistic, poetic and musical group like the one of our Wandelreise. It went way beyond our imagination. As a team, we had a strong bond, even in emotionally challenging moments. We highly recommend spending time together as a team that has nothing to do with the organization of the project.

An important part of our program was, after initially strong leadership and fixed program specifications, to gradually invite more self-organization by the participants. Bit by bit, we handed over more responsibility to the participants until they even organized their meetings.
completely independently. We were there as observers and reflected on the process together. We found this process to be very challenging and we still need to figure out whether we will make it a little gentler in the future. Although this approach opened up an incredible field of learning and further development. The self-organization confronts people with their own inner limits that prevent self-organization from happening. Research questions that we moved forward for ourselves: "How can self-organization within the scope of a project be successful if certain content needs to be covered? What is the right mix of self- and external determination?"

Another challenging topic was the formation of learning peer groups. Many issues of pain were touched on here, such as belonging and exclusion.

We are very grateful for all the great experiences and are looking forward to accompanying the next EDE.

Case Studies
During our EDE smaller and bigger projects happened. Some focused on the individual learning journeys and others involved a group of people. Two case studies are sent in separate files. One project is very artistic and tells a story about a "voice in the choir of the earth" including a wonderful song and spreading it with love. The other case study is about a project that accompanied the EDE all over the 10 months: about the story of an event, that never took place but brought a long a lot of learnings.

EDE Article
The Wandelreise was a very special journey for everyone involved. So much happened on different levels that it is hard to summarize in a few words. One participant quoted a friend: "Wow, it seems that your last ten months are filled with what I searched for myself in a five-year long ecovillage journey." Our EDE had a very original structure that is not typical for an EDE. It moved over a period of ten months in which the participants set off on their own learning paths to different places after the six very intensive weeks. The group met every two months to revive the shared spirit and direction. The program ended with two weeks together. This structure enabled the course contents and experiences to take effect over a longer period of time. We were able to focus more intensively on how the EDE content can be carried into the normal environment.

Since the first idea, the Wandelreise was accompanied with a spirit of hope, goodwill and the attitude of "whatever will happen, is the right thing to happen". Everybody involved was very committed which helped to overcome moments of struggle and of "not-knowing".

Until some weeks before the start of the course it was unclear, whether there would be enough participants to run the course. And then finally ten curious people found their way to the tiny black forest village and got to know each other deeper than they might have expected. Embedded in daily rhythm and nourished by colorful vegetables from the field full of insects and flowers around the corner, they dived into individual and group processes, questioned
western society and explored another way of living. The group was very artistic and we enjoyed a lot of poems and music together.

Besides all that the participants followed their individual learning journey between the times in Schernbach and shared their stories, whenever we met again. Over the ten months the organization team handed more and more responsibility over to the participants and together we explored and reflected on the process of self-responsible cocreation.

Overall the Wandelreise was a delightful, emotional and intense journey that definitely influenced the life of everybody involved.