GEDS Online Course
Gaia Education Design for Sustainability

Social Dimension
(100 hours, 2 months)
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Welcome

by Giovanni Ciarlo

Welcome to the Social Dimension

Welcome to the social dimension of the virtual course “Design for Sustainability”, offered by Gaia Education and the Open University of Cataluña.

My name is Giovanni and I will be the facilitator of the social dimension of this four part course. My hope is to focus on the social aspects as we learn to design sustainable systems together during the next eight weeks.

I have been researching sustainable development, and especially eco-village design and socially responsible governance for the past 30 years. In 2008 I finished a Masters degree in Sustainable Communities with the intention to facilitate, train, and consult with people and organizations globally who would like to shift their lifestyles and organizational practices to a more sustainable and just society. I am a founding member of an aspiring ecovillage in Mexico (www.huehuecoyotl.net) and have been living there part time since 1982. I also live in the Northeast USA, where I deliver Arts in Education programs through my own organization, called Sirius Coyote Music, to schools and public venues. I also work as a group facilitator, course trainer, and musician for a variety of private and public clients. I am passionate about bridging the gap between the arts and ecology through public participation, empowerment, and diversity. I love to work with people, and to celebrate life through the arts (music, dance, theatre, hand crafts), and hard work. I also like to recharge my spirit by being alone in nature.

I am very excited to get to know you through this forum and to explore what we can learn about living on this Earth, with a view far into the future. For all our relation in this and every generation.

Tutor’s Biographical Information

Giovanni is an educator, sustainability consultant, musician, composer, and change agent for a more just and responsible world. He graduated from the University of Connecticut, USA, with a BA degree in education (1975) and Goddard College, VT with an MA in Sustainable Communities and Socially Responsible Businesses (2008). He has facilitated group work for community organizations, artists cooperatives, schools, students of all ages, graduate students, and international NGOs. He has worked with small, medium and large groups and organizations. His work emphasizes sustainability training, team building, group facilitation, diversity, deep democracy, and the principles of environmental and social responsibility. He has collaborated with Gaia Education and the development of the EDE curriculum since 2005. In 1982 Giovanni co-created an international ecovillage in central Mexico to explore and implement sustainable living practices in a small community setting, integrating the arts and ecology as basic values in the development and every day life of the community. He currently (2009) serves as president to the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) He is multilingual and multicultural.
Introduction to the Social Design

The archaeological evidence shows that the primordial social pattern for human beings is to gather together in relatively tightly-knit, egalitarian, clan-sized ‘bands’ closely coupled with Nature. Today, we need to consciously reinvent cooperative and harmonious ways of living and working together. Therefore, seeding, growing, and rebuilding meaningful groups, communities and networks are vital steps towards a more livable, sustainable future.

Building cooperative groups, organizations and communities is an endeavor whose immense challenges should not be underestimated. Reconnecting with one another across barriers and borders of misunderstanding and miscommunication calls for clear, calm, firm intention. One of the most cited common reasons for the break-up of intentional group projects is conflict. And so, propagating successful community will necessarily entail a healing process in which we step out of the cycles of pain and violence that have run through human history and take responsibility for initiating new patterns; the fact is, this healing process is needed, and healthy, constructive social skills can be taught and learnt! Peaceful, productive relationships can be a conscious, deliberate choice rather than left to capricious, random chance.

Rediscovering the beauty, compassionate nature and innate power of human beings is part of our journey through this module. It also has a very practical orientation: to give an answer to questions like

- What will be the rallying call – the vision that will help our projects be coherent and inspiring?
- How will decisions be made and conflicts resolved?
- How will we walk that delicate line between being an individual and growing in a sense of personal empowerment, and surrendering our aspirations and desires to the collective we are part from?
- Will we be able to celebrate our diversity or will we find our differences too challenging and uncomfortable?
- How will we do to reconnect with the creativity source embedded in the web of life, and bring sense and beauty to everything we do?
- Finally, will our group, organization or community be a world unto itself, a self-sustaining bubble on the face of the Earth, or will it reach out the local and bioregional community, building bridges, learning and teaching, giving and receiving?

Designing for Sustainability implies holistic design processes that pay good attention to the people side of things, alongside the work on economics, ecology and our worldviews. On the threshold between vision and reality, an integrative design can set the course for a healthy and sustainable reality.

The Social Design dimension begins with

- **Module 1 – Building Community and Embracing Diversity** – which discusses the basics of building community, and teaches values and skills that help foster an atmosphere of trust.
• **Module 2 – Communication Skills: Decision-Making and Facilitation** – is a journey into learning the art of decision-making and the facilitation of groups. It talks about redirecting the energy of conflicts towards growth, inspiration and a deeper mutual understanding.

• **Module 3 – Personal Empowerment and Leadership** – offers lessons in distinguishing between ‘power from within’ and ‘power over,’ and developing leadership skills that serve the group and the world as an important part of taking responsibility.

• **Module 4 – Celebrating Life: Creativity & Art** – reminds us all that in community there is celebration, and in creative artistic expression there is re-unification with the source; and finally,

• **Module 5 – Local and Global Outreach** – helps to broaden our perspective and see the value of networking. Looking at the dimensions of time and space, strengthening the threads that connect us to past and future generations, as well as to communities and organizations all around the globe.
### General Objectives

#### 1. Building Community & Embracing Diversity

- Appreciating the immense power for social change that lies in the building of community
- Learning about starting a community, including: organizing a core group, forging a common vision, creating community glue, and instilling an atmosphere of trust and goodwill
- Learning to incorporate the issues of the human heart into everything we do
- Acquiring the qualities of forgiveness, empathy, and reconciliation in our relationships
- Embracing diversity and being ready to witness the richness it brings to our lives

#### 2. Communication Skills, Decision Making & Facilitation

- Discussing the range of definitions of “consensus” and why consensus is the decision-making process preferred by sustainability organizations
- Understanding the role of the facilitator in participatory processes and how it differs from traditional, autocratic leadership
- Investigating the basics of compassionate communication and how to deal with conflicts
- Considering the relationships between planning, feedback, reflection and evaluation in community life
- Experiencing the making of a facilitated, consensus decision

#### 3. Personal Empowerment & Leadership Skills

- Exploring the differences between ‘repressive power’ and ‘creative power’
- Embracing the concept of self-empowerment and the empowerment of others
- Learning how a group of powerful individuals can work together in organic patterns of shared and interdependent responsibility
- Fostering awareness around the issues of rank, power, and privilege
- Taking on leadership in groups: integration of leadership skills

#### 4. Celebrating Life: Art & Creativity

- Presenting Art as a wonderful medium for personal growth, healing, and transformation that can be used by people of all skill levels
- Recognizing and reclaiming unbounded creativity as our true nature, as a flow from a universal source, as natural as the blossoming of a flower
- Creating beautiful and stimulating environments in which inspiration and intuition are enhanced, and in which creativity may flow unencumbered, as a celebration of Life
• Designing and performing community celebrations as an expression of group Art, feeling the bonding that occurs, and learning from experience that living in community allows members to develop a culture of celebration
• Teaching that the highest form of creativity, both individually and in community, is for our lives to become works of Art

5. Local, Bioregional & Global Outreach

• Learning to respect the community of those that have lived before, those that live now and those that will live
• Learning to build friendly relationships with our neighbours and visitors: overcoming the concept of “us” and “them”
• Designing for a social ecology, balancing public and private space
• Seeing ways of catalysing sustainability in our region: bioregionalism
• Broadening our scope: networking, exchange and education, support and solidarity on a global level
Planning the Learning Activities

Social Design – Approximate Distribution of Hours

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<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Week 3</th>
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<th>Week 6</th>
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Module 1 – Building Community and Embracing Diversity

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<th>Hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>Understand the immense power for social change that lies in the building of community</td>
<td>The importance of community in our life</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 1</td>
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<td>Notes: The power of building community</td>
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<td>Understand the way groups work, the influence of group field and the different elements of a group culture</td>
<td>Stages in group evolution</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 2</td>
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<td>Notes: Stages in group evolution</td>
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<td>Group culture and its elements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Activity 3 – Group Activity</td>
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<td>Learn about starting a community, including: organizing a core group, forging a common vision, creating community glue, and instilling an atmosphere of trust and goodwill</td>
<td>Essential elements for creating community from an integral perspective</td>
<td>Activity 4 – Reflection</td>
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<td>Notes: Essential elements</td>
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<td>Activity 1 – Question 5</td>
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<td>Vision, mission, objectives</td>
<td>Activity 5 – Case study: common vision</td>
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<td>Activity 1 – Question 7</td>
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<td>Embrace diversity and being ready to witness the richness it brings to our lives</td>
<td>Unity in diversity</td>
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<td>The role of cooperative games in the process of embracing diversity</td>
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### Module 2 – Communication Skills: Conflict, Facilitation & Decision Making

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<th>Hours</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Week</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigate the basics of compassionate communication and how to deal with conflicts</td>
<td>Active and deep listening</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 1</td>
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<td>Notes: module 2a</td>
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<td>Activity 1 – Question 3</td>
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<td>Giving &amp; receiving feedback</td>
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<td>Compassionate communication</td>
<td>Activity 3</td>
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<td>Understand the role of the facilitator in participatory processes and how it differs from traditional, autocratic leadership</td>
<td>What is facilitation Facilitators skills and tools</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 4</td>
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<td>Notes: module 2b Facilitation Skills</td>
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<td>Consider the relationships between planning, feedback, reflection and evaluation in community life</td>
<td>Government and Governance</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 5</td>
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<td>Notes: module 2b</td>
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<td>Deep democracy</td>
<td>Activity 4 – Case study</td>
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<td>Working with conflict</td>
<td>Activity 5 – Reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss different decision making processes and why consensus is the decision-making process preferred by ecovillagers &amp; sustainability organizations</td>
<td>Different decision making processes How to make good decisions</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 6</td>
<td>0,75</td>
<td>Notes: module 2b Different decision making processes How to make good decisions</td>
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<td>Activity 4 – Case study</td>
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<td>Activity 5 – Reflection</td>
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<td>Experience the making of a facilitated, consensus decision</td>
<td>Consensus process</td>
<td>Activity 4</td>
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<td>Notes: module 2b</td>
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*) Note: activities 4 & 5 have many objectives

**TOTAL** 29

### Module 3 – Personal Empowerment & Leadership Skills

<table>
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<th>Hours</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Week</th>
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<tr>
<td>Explore the differences between ‘repressive power’ and ‘creative power’</td>
<td>Change in the culture of power- the power triangle.</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 1</td>
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<td>Notes: Repressive power &amp; creative power and the power dynamics</td>
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<td>Embrace the concept of self-empowerment and the empowerment of others</td>
<td>Cornerstones and Components of Coaching and Emotional Intelligence Features</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 2</td>
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<td>Notes: Dynamics of power, Coaching &amp; Emotional Intelligence</td>
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<td>Activity 1 – Question 3</td>
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<td>Activity 2 – Ind. Dynamic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learn how a group of powerful individuals can work together in organic patterns of shared and interdependent responsibility</td>
<td>Components of Holistic Leadership &amp; Leadership Skills</td>
<td>Activity 4 – Case study</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Notes: Coaching &amp; Holistic Leadership and Elder- ship</td>
<td>5-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foster awareness around the issues of rank, power, and privilege</td>
<td>Rank differences and Power abuses</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 4</td>
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<td>Notes: module 2b – Conflict, Rank differences and power abuses Types of Rank</td>
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<td>Activity 3 – Group Dynamics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take on leadership in groups: integration of leadership skills</td>
<td>Leadership skills “I” relationships Elders’ compassion</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 5</td>
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<td>Notes: Holistic Leadership and Elder- ship</td>
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**Total** 18
## Module 4: Celebrating Life: Creativity and Art

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<th>Activities</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Week</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present Art as a wonderful medium for personal growth, healing, and transformation that can be used by people of all skill levels</td>
<td>Art as a useful tool for personal and community growth and transformation</td>
<td>Activity 3 – group dynamics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Notes: Art and creativity</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognise and reclaim unbounded creativity as our true nature, as a flow from a universal source, as natural as the blossoming of a flower</td>
<td>Methods for unleashing creativity</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Notes: A creative attitude towards life</td>
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<td>Activity 1 – Question 2</td>
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<td>Activity 2 – Ind. Dyn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create beautiful and stimulating environments in which inspiration and intuition are enhanced, and in which creativity may flow unencumbered, as a celebration of Life</td>
<td>The creative process in daily life. Beauty in sustainability.</td>
<td>Activity 4 – Case study</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Notes: The creative process &amp; Three stages of the creative process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design and perform community celebrations as an expression of group Art, feeling the bonding that occurs, and learning from experience that living in community allows members to develop a culture of celebration</td>
<td>Importance and meaning of transcultural rites and celebrations in the social design</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Notes: Celebrating and Honouring Life</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Activity 4 – Case study</td>
<td>*)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching that the highest form of creativity, both individually and in community, is for our lives to become works of Art</td>
<td>The creative process in daily life</td>
<td>Activity 5 – Reflection and dialogue</td>
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<td>Notes: Celebrating and Honouring Life</td>
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*) Note: activity 4 has more than one objective

TOTAL 14

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## Module 5: Local, Bioregional and Global Outreach

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<th>Activities</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Week</th>
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<tr>
<td>Learn to respect the community of those who have lived before, those who live now and those who will live</td>
<td>Community integration: the vertical and horizontal dimensions of sustainability</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Notes: Local, Bioregional and Global Outreach</td>
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<td>Activity 2 – Ind. dynamic</td>
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<td>7-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeing ways of catalysing sustainability in our region: bioregionalism</td>
<td>The importance of fostering the social and environmental knowledge of sustainability projects. The bioregional dimension.</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Notes: Bioregionalism – What is? &amp; Organizing Bioregionally</td>
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<td>Activity 4 – Case study</td>
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<td>Learning to build friendly relationships with our neighbours and visitors: overcoming the concept of &quot;us&quot; and &quot;them&quot;</td>
<td>Value the relationships and enrichment that emerges with diversity. Observation of the bioregional with open attitude</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 3</td>
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<td>Notes: Building effective networks – Knowing the networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Designing for a social ecology, balancing public and private space</td>
<td>Design for connectivity with other groups and with the surrounding region.</td>
<td>Activity 3 – Group dyn.</td>
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<td>Notes: Building effective networks – Weaving the networks &amp; Global Networks</td>
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<td>Activity 5 + dialogue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broadening our scope: networking, exchange and education, support and solidarity on a global level</td>
<td>The importance of effective networks that foster economic opportunities and reinforce social cohesion.</td>
<td>Activity 1 – Question 4</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 14

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Evaluation

All the proposed activities are needed for the satisfactory progression of the course. In order to receive the certificate of completion, of the 27 proposed activities listed for the five modules of the social dimension (5 modules with 5 types of activities per module plus two dialogues), students must participate in all activities related to their particular Case Study (Activities 4), plus submit documentation for at least another 12 of the listed activities, including some group dynamics and at least one of the two dialogues.

In order to make reading the input and feedback easier for students and instructor, all students will submit every type 1, 2, 3, and 5 activity in each module in a single document within the time limit allotted for each module.

The case study design document (activity 4 in each module) must be presented in a single document per study group at the end of each module (in total each study group shall present 5 design documents during the social dimension of the course). If a group is short on time for completing the assignment during a particular module, they can submit a first draft of the activity in order for the tutor to see if they are going in the right direction. All study groups will have an additional 20 days at the end of the course (after completing all the course work), to complete their Case Study design. The 20 days applies to completing the design for all four dimensions.

Following the week after completion of each module, the tutor will send each student a narrative evaluation of the completed activities for that module, highlighting the most positive aspects and what needs changing or improving.
Social Dimension Learning Activities

Overview

This is to introduce the different activities proposed for the Social Design dimension. In most of the modules we will be working with four groups of activities:

1. Activities that work with the content through questions- reading, connecting ideas, assimilating.
2. Activities that work with the content through dynamics.
3. Design activities, including observation, data collection, analysis, organization, design and implementation
4. Reflection activities to be done through the learning communities- virtual or real.

Each module will also offer an opportunity for a Dialogue.

MODULE 1 – Building Community & Embracing Diversity

Activity 1 – Questions addressing the content

Description

After reading the text of the module Building Community & Embracing Diversity and based in your experience with groups please answer the following questions:

1. Read the text "The Power of Building Community". Where do you think the "power" of community resides?
2. Think about a group that you know. From the four main stages of group development described, identify in which stage this group is working through. Why?
3. What constitutes a “Group Field?”
4. List and describe the main elements- values, rules, guidelines, prejudices that inform the culture of a group that you are part.
5. Think about a group that you know well. Which is its common vision? Why a common vision is important for groups/communities/organizations?
6. From the "Essentials Table", can you describe a structural conflict that has emerged with a group that you know, due to lack of clarity between the four quadrants.
7. Reflect on the phrase “Communities focus on the idea of unity in diversity”.
8. Which of the links of this module has caught your attention. Why?

Objectives

The objective of these questions is to promote a reflective reading of the material and to support the assimilation of the concepts, searching for connections between theory and the personal experience of the student with groups.
Resources

Texts from Documentation

Criteria of Evaluation

The adequate use of the concepts, the depth of the reflection and the association with real life cases will be evaluated.

Activity 2 – Individual work: Finding Values

Description

Each person identifies 5 important values in her/his life- only 5 even if the selection turns out to be difficult. Each person identifies now 5 activities in which he/she is involved- family, profession, friends, activism, sport....

Build a table with the activities in the left column and the chosen values in the upper row.

From 1 to 5 (where 1 = very well and 5 = very badly), give a number, which reflects how this activity embodies/ expresses the value.

Finally, the data of each activity is analyzed, and in the last column of the table we add and write down the total for each activity.

For example, in the table below, if in my work I do not have so much freedom I will give a high score, for instance number 4. I then continue identify how each value reflects itself in the activity in question. In the example below I added all the numbers and obtained an 11 for the activity 1 – Work.

If the final number is close to 5 means that that activity reflects my values. If the final number is close to 25, means that my values are not reflected in that activity/aspect of my life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value 1 – ex Freedom</th>
<th>Value 2</th>
<th>Value 3</th>
<th>Value 4</th>
<th>Value 5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1 – Work</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
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<td>Activity 2</td>
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</table>

Note: If numbers 4 and 5 predominate in the table, means that the chosen values are not represented in the daily life. This may have happened for different reasons: your daily life may not harmonize with your internal convictions, or you may have identified a belief but not an embodied authentic value.

Objectives

• To know better our values and in which way we reflect our identified values in what we do.
• To reflect on the importance of maintaining an internal coherence between what we value and what we do.
Resources

- Use the glossary for a precise definition of the word "value".
- Use the virtual class to generate among all students a possible list of values.

Criteria of Evaluation

Each student will write a report (maximum a page) on the relevant results of this exercise and his/her reflections. There is no need to deliver copy of the table.

Activity 3 – Group Work

Roles

Divide the virtual class in groups of 3 people. First step - each person carries out individually the exercise. Once this is completed, the group of three share and reflect on the results and design proposals on how to work those parts of each one who are not yet sufficiently developed.

Description

Put an X in the square that better express the frequency that you perform each one of the following roles:

(VO = Very often, O = Often, R = Rarely, N = Never)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>VO</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>N</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiator: you initiate plans, take initiatives, suggest solutions</td>
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<td>Follower: you listen, support, collaborate with what others decide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Animator: you raise the spirit of the group, focus on the positive aspects, bring consolation, make others laugh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opponent: you disapprove, criticize, resist, at times impede the group advancing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carer: you protect, take care of others, give up- if necessary</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Center: you seek recognition, admiration, do not pass unnoticed, speak about yourself and your feelings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitator: you maintain the focus of the meeting, propose solutions for opposing positions, offer to mediate difficult cases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dominator: you demonstrate authority, in some cases- manipulate, give orders, at times can be aggressive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evasive: you hold back, observe, do not commit, adopt at times an indifferent and passive attitude</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undecided: you do not know what you want, express uncertainty, at times lose yourself</td>
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Objectives

- To know the different roles that one can play in a group, and that other people can play.
- To recognize that it is possible to play different roles in the same group, according to the moment and the existing energy in the group.
- To design strategies which will enhance the ability of playing roles of leadership or facilitation.

Resources

Use web research to seek more information on roles.

Criteria of Evaluation

Each student will edit a report (maximum a page) on the relevant results of the exercise and her/his reflections.

Activity 4 – Case Study: Finding a Common Vision

Description

1. The sponsoring student presents the project (case study) to the rest of the group. The other members of the design team ask relevant questions to obtain the necessary information.
2. Design team develops a common vision for the project, following the steps 1-3 of the Futures History found in the Documentation.
3. Design team translates the common vision in one phrase (vision statement), inspired by the examples of the Documentation.
4. Design team identifies which would be the mission of the group so that the vision can be grounded.
5. Design team identifies three specific objectives that will transform the vision into reality.

Objectives

- Learn to design a common vision for a collective project, detaching/suspending our individual perspectives.
- Recognize the importance of a common vision as frame of reference from where to work from.

Resources

- Information on the case study presented by the sponsoring student
- GEDS Material on Common Vision
- Internet
Activity 5 – Reflection

Description
Present a report (of maximum 3 pages) of the ideas and impressions that emerged during this module, from your personal reflection and from the comments and opinions that were shared in the virtual classroom.

Objectives
• To reflect on the main elements involved in a collective process of social design, that may serve as source of inspiration for future projects.
• To reflect on the dance between our collective and individual responsibilities in the context of sustainable social design.

Criteria of Evaluation
It will be evaluated the capacity to recognize seed thoughts, to establish connections between ideas, to synthesize, etc.
Overall Objectives of Module 2

- Investigating the basics of compassionate communication and how to deal with conflicts
- Discussing the range of definitions of “consensus” and why consensus is the decision-making process preferred by sustainability organizations
- Understanding the role of the facilitator in participatory processes and how it differs from traditional, autocratic leadership
- Considering the relationships between planning, feedback, reflection and evaluation in community life
- Experiencing the making of a facilitated, consensus decision

Activity 1 – Questionnaire

Description

Answer these questions after reading the texts they refer to and from your experience in groups.

1. Read the text under the heading "Active and deep listening" and reflect on the meaning of these sentences: "Honour people’s boundaries" and "See your teacher in every person, in every situation”. Do you feel identified with these attitudes? Is it easy or difficult for you to maintain this kind of approach in your daily life? In what situations or what people is it more difficult for you? Try to think about why.

2. After reading the material on Critical Feedback, look for assertive answers to the following situations:
   - The boss says: "Why do you always arrive late at work meetings? I expected more from you and thought you could be an example for the rest of the group”.
   - At home, your partner tells you shouting: "I’m tired of you always leaving everything thrown out there!"
   - One of your workmates makes a comment like: “I can’t do anything with you. You do everything wrong!”

3. Try to remember a situation where you have criticized someone. Reflect on the reasons that prompted you to speak to this person like that. Can you see any desire for revenge for something that happened previously to you connected with this person? Can you recognize in your criticism any unmet need that creates in you the desire to change that person so that it meets you need? Describe how do you feel now about these memories. Think about it, close your eyes to internalize the situation and try to articulate your criticism from the perspective of compassionate communication. Has anything changed in your feelings?

4. Once you have understood the basic principles of compassionate communication, express the following situations in a non violent and compassionate way:
   - Someone has taken something from you without asking for permission and it is not the first time that happens. When you know who has been, your reaction is aggressive:
"I'm tired of you taking my ... without asking for permission. I'm going to have to put my name on all my stuff to make it clear that are mine, or what?"

- Your child’s room is dirty and messy despite you asked him/her to clean it. Your reaction: "Your room is a mess! I don’t know how you can live there. For God’s sake, why can you not have your room tidy and neat?“
- Addressing a friend: "It is the third time you let me down with bad excuses when I have asked you to do me a favour. I wish you took me in a little more consideration!"

5. Once you’ve read what facilitation is and learned some of the skills and tools you must know and develop to become a good facilitator, in what situations do you think it may be useful for a group to have a facilitator (someone of the same group, rotating role, or someone from outside)? Why do you think so? What do you think should be the function of the facilitator in each case? Have you ever played any of them in the groups you are part of? How did you feel? Which skills and tools were available to you? Which ones did you really need, miss or think you should know for the future? Write a little plan of how you might get or develop them.

6. Once you have read about different types of decisions and some of the different ways to make them, describe how decisions are made in two different groups you belong to (family, work, neighborhood, community, association, etc.). Try to classify the types of decisions made in the chosen groups and think about whether you would like to change the way in which decisions are made. Think about how to suggest possible changes in each group.

7. See the table about “Attitudes toward conflict.” Is there anyone you feel more identified with? Why do you think so? Try to remember and describe different situations in which you reacted in each of these ways. Think about your reaction, could you change it? Why?

8. Of all the links to other Web pages that appear in this module, which one would you highlight? Why?

Objectives

The aim of these questions is to foster a thoughtful reading of the material and favour the assimilation of concepts, looking for connections with the personal experience of the reader to make content more real.

Resources

Documentation pages

Assessment

To be considered: the adequate use of theoretical concepts in the answers, the depth of the thinking, and the descriptive richness of the real cases brought up to illustrate the answers.

Activity 2 – Individual work: Listening Back to Back Exercise

Description

To do this exercise you must seek the cooperation of another person close to you, and if possible, invite another couple to share the activity and have a dialogue at the end.
Participants sit first in pairs looking at each other. Each person speaks for 2 minutes, while the other listens. The theme to talk about is "the qualities of a person whom I admire". There are no comments on the change, or at the end. In the next round, the person who listens sits with her back to the person who speaks. The theme will be "what I most like to do". In the third and final round both sit back to back, touching their heads, to talk about some happy memories of childhood.

Discuss the activity with your friends in the "real" room where you are doing the activity. Ask yourself in what position you felt better to talk and why. And in what position you felt better to hear? Why? What has been difficult? Do you remember any situation in your life where you had the feeling of talking to the back of someone?

Make a brief summary of your impressions (1 page maximum) and comment on the experience in the virtual classroom with your classmates.

**Objectives**

To implement the suspension of our inner dialogue practicing deep listening, attentive to gestures, sensations, feelings, etc.

**Resources**

You will need a quiet space and at least one person to make the exercise.

**Assessment**

The student will submit a report (maximum one page) about how the exercise has gone, along with their personal reflections on what s/he has learned.

**Activity 3 – Group Work: Learning to Suspend our Thoughts**

**Description**

Find a pair within the classroom to work with. Once the exercise is done, reflect on the results.

Try to find two or three themes or issues where you have a strong opinion. For each of them, answer the following questions:

- Why am I so sure of my opinion?
- What makes me hold on to this idea in such a strong a way?
- Does it benefit me in some way?
- What would happen if I stopped thinking or believing so?
- What could I lose?
- What frightens me?

Share with your partner your feelings doing the activity, if you have experienced any block or change on the perception of yourself, if it has been difficult for you, and so on.
**Objectives**

To detach ourselves of the image we have build of ourselves. Practice suspension of our thoughts and feelings, trying to see them as "things" that are there, something with which we do not have to identify ourselves.

**Resources**

Notes on Suspension (see Documentation).

**Assessment**

The student will submit a report (maximum one page) about how the exercise has gone, along with her/his personal reflections on what s/he has learned.

**Activity 4 – Case Study**

**Description**

Each student will work on a real project, brought by himself or by other students, in collaboration with other students in the virtual classroom. You will work in groups of 3-5 persons.

In your working group, create a booklet containing several documents related to the governance of your case study, including:

1. A membership protocol
2. A procedure to make decisions, based on the following questions:
   - Are all decisions equal in importance, scope ...?
   - Who should decide what decisions?
   - What decision-making method must be used for each type of decision?
   - How often do we want to gather to make decisions? For how long?
   - What are our basic agreements for meetings?
   - How will we ensure that our decision-making process is truly participatory, inclusive and fair?
   - How will we solve conflicts arising in decision-making?
   - How will we communicate the decisions to the group?
3. A procedure for the prevention and management of conflicts in the daily activity of the group.

**Objectives**

To learn to design and develop useful documents for the governance of a group.

**Resources**

- Information on the case study.
- Material on facilitation skills, decision making and conflict resolution
- Internet
**Activity 5 – Reflection**

**Description**

Write an essay (no more than 2 pages) reflecting upon what you think are the main axis of the module (for example: compassion, trust, etc.) Connect this reflection with what you have learned about deep democracy.

Try to integrate all this with the fundaments of the decision-making by consensus - "the best decision everybody can accept".

Think of a possible way for a community to deeply learn and internalize what making decisions by consensus really means and how to ensure that it will become a solid and well-founded practice.

Develop your own reflection upon consensus: strengths, weaknesses, etc.

**Objectives**

To reflect upon consensus and how to implement it in our local groups and communities.

**Evaluation Criteria**

To consider: the ability to collect ideas, establish connections, etc.
MODULE 3 – Personal Empowerment and Leadership Skills

Overall Objectives of Module 3

• Explore the differences between ‘repressive power’ and ‘creative power’
• Embrace the concept of self-empowerment and the empowerment of others
• Learn how a group of powerful individuals can work together in organic patterns of shared and interdependent responsibility
• Foster awareness around the issues of rank, power, and privilege
• Develop leadership skills in order to take on leadership in groups

Activity 1 – Questionnaire

Description

After reading the texts of Documentation and based in your experience with groups answer these questions:

1. Without much thinking, describe what are your feelings and ideas that emerge in connection with the word Power. How comfortable/ uncomfortable do you feel when you think about the word Power? Why?

2. There is often a difference between victims addicted to their victimization and victims who really want to transform their situation. What makes a person addicted to its victim condition? Have you ever been involved in a situation where you managed to completely transcend your role as victim? Why do you think it is difficult to stop being a victim, even when one is aware of it?

3. Of the five key components of Coaching, which one is more integrated/ present in you? In what aspects / situations of your life is this component manifested? Which component is more unfamiliar to you? How do you think it could be better integrated in your life?

4. The internal oppression is clear in groups that accept the rules of the dominant majority as if they were their own rules, even when this is not convenient. This is the case for many women in a male oriented culture. Now think of yourself. What rules of the dominant culture may be acting through you, even abusing you, without you being aware of it? Could you do something to change them? Why / why not?

5. Think about a group you are part of it. Is leadership distributed among all members of the group? If not, what should be done to make it happen?

6. Of the four different types of leadership skills (the “I” skills, the relationship skills, the strategic thinking and systems thinking), which ones do you have well developed? Which skills do you need to develop?

Objectives

The aim of these questions is to foster a thoughtful reading of the material and to promote the assimilation of the concepts. The questionnaire promotes the establishment of connections between the concepts and the personal experience of the students.

Resources

Documentation pages.
Assessment

The adequate understanding of the theoretical concepts in the answers, the depth of thinking, and the descriptive richness of the real life examples presented to illustrate the answers.

Activity 2 – Individual Work:
Exercise to Develop Emotional Intelligence: Emotional Allergies

Description

Identify a person who causes you feelings of rejection by what he/she does or says. Someone who makes you easily angry. Then, answer the following questions:

• What is the behavior, characteristic or words that make you feel upset or rejecting the person? Describe the feature of the person that provokes you anger and/or rejection.
• What is the rule that this person is breaking that causes you an allergic reaction? A rule is a principle or a standard of conduct important to you, something that is so important that is impossible to accept the contrary.
• Where did you learn this rule from? In which circumstances? Recall who was the first person in your life that has broken this rule and you had the same reaction.
• Think now in the rule itself. Why is it so important to you? What benefits do you get by living under this rule? What disadvantages or limitations do you see?
• Imagine you now free you from the rule. What would it change in your life? What would you do differently?
• Think back on the person who is causing you an emotional allergy. Do you see the aspect that causes your emotional allergy also present in you? Do you see this person now with different eyes?

If you want, share this activity with somebody close to you, comment your answers with this person and ask for help in case of difficulty in addressing the questions.

Objectives

Learn to control and understand our emotions of anger and/or rejection. Understand what others do or say sometimes are only the trigger and not the cause of our emotions.

Resources

Notes on Emotional Intelligence. See also compassionate communication: taking responsibility for our feelings and the theme of empathy.

Evaluation Criteria

Each student will submit a report (maximum one page) on the relevant results of the exercise, along with their personal reflections.
Activity 3 – Group Work: Exercise on Rank and Privileges

Description

Answer these questions, share and discuss in the virtual classroom by posting in the Forum.

- What social and ethnic group do you belong to? In which of them do you include other people? What is your gender? Profession? Religion? Education level? Economic class? Age? Physical condition?
- What social privileges do you have? What do you have that others may want? Do you have some kind of social, economic or intellectual power? Do you feel at ease within the community you belong to? What are you privileges for being well physically, for having your gender, for having the partner you have, for the language you speak, for your education? Is it easy for you to travel? Do you have ease in public speaking? Are you a leader with trust in yourself?
- What do you think is missing which others have and you don't? Do you have economic problems, problems of social recognition, self-esteem problems, physical problems? In front of whom do you feel powerless? In your journey what privileges and power did the people who have abused you had?
- Remember your psychological and spiritual privileges: Did you have a happy childhood? Do you wake in the morning waiting with pleasure a new day? Do you feel centered, without any anxiety about the future? Do you solve your tensions and problems with ease? Do you feel strong in your relationship with others? Do you feel connected to your beliefs in this life or in another life after death? How does this affect your daily life? Does it give you strength to confront with decisiveness and firmness your life?
- Celebrate your privileges. Be grateful for your luck, for all the pain that you don’t suffer. Are you aware of that? Are you happy about it?
- What tensions and problems arise in your relationships with others? How are these tensions related to your consciousness about your privileges? Are you able to use your rank and privileges to change the way you socialize, to change your community, and change the world?

Objectives

To be aware of one’s own rank dynamics and use differences of power and privilege for our mutual growth and learning.

Resources

- Notes on differences in rank and abuse of power.
- Book "Sitting in the Fire," Arnold Mindell

Evaluation Criteria

Each student will submit a report (maximum one page) on the relevant results of the exercise, along with their personal reflections.
Activity 4 – Case Study

Description

It is not easy to find someone who has developed the 4 types of leadership skills to their full potential. Within your project identify who are the good leaders in every aspect. If these people do not yet exist, think about what kind of people do you need to attract, or what skills do you need to develop.

Establish a plan to find these people or develop the necessary skills. How could you distribute the leadership in a fluid and dynamic form?

Create a procedure that will be part of the protocols of the group, to help your project members to find their power and offer it in service to the group.

Objectives

• Observe and celebrate your gifts, abilities and singularity and those of others.
• Design a plan to acquire the skills and qualities needed in order to be a better leader, to encourage self-empowerment and mutual support in personal growth.
• Learn how to take leadership and develop models to sharing power.

Resources

• Information on the case study provided by the sponsoring student.
• GEDS material on empowerment and leadership.

Evaluation Criteria

Each student will indicate what has been his/her personal contribution in the final document, which will be evaluated by its clarity and systemic thinking.

Activity 5 – Reflection

Description

Now that you have studied enough about power and leadership, write a narrative or other literary expression with which you feel comfortable, on the two concepts (maximum 2 pages). What are the main questions that are important to be addressed. Develop your narrative in the context of time: past, present and future. Share if there has been any change in yourself in relation to these concepts, recall the sensation that these words had in you, think of where they came from...

Describe whether this has now changed and how, or if you have any fears regarding these concepts, that you recognize in today’s society. Do you think power and leadership are denied or taboo subjects in groups in which you participate, or are they valued and promoted.

Explore ways in which power and leadership can play a transformative, constructive and positive role in the world and how to prevent abuses resulting from power over. Write this narrative based on your own experience of empowerment and inner journey of leadership.
Objectives
To become aware on the need for a paradigm shift with regard to the concepts of power and leadership for social transformation.

Evaluation Criteria
The ability to associate ideas, establish connections, synthesize, and so on.
MODULE 4 – Celebrating Life: Art and Creativity

Overall Objectives of Module 4

- Presenting Art as a wonderful medium for personal growth, healing, and transformation that can be used by people of all skill levels
- Recognizing and reclaiming unbounded creativity as our true nature, as a flow from a universal source, as natural as the blossoming of a flower
- Creating beautiful and stimulating environments in which inspiration and intuition are enhanced, and in which creativity may flow unencumbered, as a celebration of Life
- Designing and performing community celebrations as an expression of group Art, feeling the bonding that occurs, and learning from experience that living in community allows members to develop a culture of celebration
- Teaching that the highest form of creativity, both individually and in community, is for our lives to become works of Art

Activity 1 – Questionnaire

Description

Answer these questions after reading the texts and based upon your experience with groups.

1. Read the document "A creative attitude towards life." In contrast to the creative attitude towards life, what do you think a reactive attitude might be? What is the main assumption in the reactive attitude? Name two or three things you do in your life in a reactive attitude. If you do not find any, ask for help from someone close to you.

2. Read the document "The creative process." Did you consciously put in place a creative process in your life? Describe it briefly (vision, starting situation, taken actions, stage where you are currently: germination, assimilation or completion, etc.).

3. Two important principles of the assimilation stage in every creative process are: "learning to wait" and "taking steps forward". Why are they not contradictory?

4. Finally, at the completion stage of every creative process is important to celebrate. Do you often celebrate your individual and collective achievements? How do you celebrate them? Do you know any ritual to celebrate your achievements? If so, could you briefly describe one?

5. Of all the links to other Web pages that appear in this module, which one would you choose? Why?

Objectives

The aim of these questions is to foster a thoughtful reading of the material and favour the assimilation of concepts, looking for connections with the personal experience of the reader to make content more real.

Resources

Documentation pages
Assessment

To be considered: the adequate use of theoretical concepts in the answers, the depth of thinking, and the descriptive richness of the real cases brought up to illustrate the answers.

Activity 2 – Individual Work: Learning about your creative process

Description

Make a little art work expressing some aspect of what this course has meant for you so far, in relation to your expectations, your learning, how do you feel in the group, etc. Use the artistic means of your choice (sculpture, drawing, photography, writing, audio, etc.).

Once you’ve finished, answer these questions:

• Can you identify in creating your piece the different stages of the creative process?
• How do you feel now that you have finished in relation to your work? Do you really feel it is finished?

Try to put an end to your creative process, by “exposing” your work in the classroom and “celebrating” with the group the completion of your work.

Objectives

• Going deeper in the development of our creativity
• Recognizing the functioning of our own creative process

Resources

GEDS materials, suggested links to other web pages, materials to do the work

Assessment

To consider: the realization of the work and the description of the experience.

Activity 3 – Group Work: Exercise for the creative expression of our feelings

Description

To do this exercise, make first a provision of all materials needed for the best expression of what you want to communicate. In the virtual classroom invite someone to work with you – in pairs.

For the first person (A): think about an issue that makes you feel worried at this moment. Describe the issue briefly to your partner (B).

Now for B: After reading the description, close your eyes and try to connect with your own feelings at the time. From this connection, think about what things come to your mind? Is there any symbol or picture? Is there any sound or melody? Any movement or still image? Try
to notice all the details and when you think you have all in your memory, open your eyes and try to express what you feel using any expressive technique, with which you feel most comfortable: drawing, making a collage, using words, video filming, song, etc.). When you finish your creation, send it to your partner (A).

Again for A: What does work made by tell you? Does it have any connection with your personal situation? You can also incorporate new elements in the work, to enrich it or express aspects or nuances not included regarding your initial worry.

For both A and B: Comment how did you experience the activity and the role you have played.

Objectives

• Gaining confidence in our creative abilities.
• Experiencing a shared creative process.
• Exploring our own creativity as a vehicle for the expression of our emotions, feelings, and hidden parts, gaining awareness and knowledge.

Resources

GEDS materials, suggested links to other web pages, materials to do the work.

Assessment

The student will submit a report (maximum one page) about how the dynamic has gone, along with their personal reflections on what s/he has learned.

Activity 4 – Case Study

Description

Celebrations and rituals are of great importance within groups and communities, but they cannot be imposed on their members, they have to go in line with the group culture, different in each project. In your case, what kind of celebrations might be appropriate? What kind of rituals? Think about what events would be celebrated, describe the resources required for each one, choose a particular feature in one of these events that you would like to highlight, and explain why. Develop a calendar of celebration events for your group.

Objectives

Gaining awareness of the importance of rituals and celebrations as a vivifying and cohesive element in the communities and groups. Learning to observe and create rituals for celebration in accordance with the sensitivity and culture of the group.

Resources

• Information on the case study provided by the person who presented it.
• GEDS material on art and creativity
Activity 5 – Reflection

Description

Notice the place where you usually work the contents of this course. Is it a harmonious place? Does it transmit you beauty and serenity? Is it comfortable and enjoyable for you? Does it inspire you?

Close your eyes and imagine how you would like to see this place. Look at the details, shapes, smells, light ... When you have all this in your mind, open your eyes and write a list of things you could change in your actual place of work to be more similar to that site imagined. You can focus only on a small corner and get to work! This is not about doing a great reform, but about paying imaginatively attention to small details that can make you feel more comfortable in your work place!

You can take a picture before and after the changes and share it in the classroom.

Now, and from your past experience, write a short essay (2-3 pages) addressing the following questions:

• What is art for you?
• After this module, have you changed something in your conception of art?
• How is art present in your life?
• How does it affect your life and the environment around you?
• Do you think you could enlarge your circle of influence through art? How?

Please, use diagrams, drawings, photographs... whatever you want to make your essay not an academic piece but something more creative.

Objectives

• Incorporating our appreciation of beauty and art in our everyday life.
• Acquiring an active attitude in this aspect of our life.

Evaluation Criteria

To be considered: the quality of intention and the comments on the experience.
MODULE 5 – Local, Bioregional and Global Outreach

Overall Objectives of Module 5

• Learn to respect the community of those that have lived before, those that live now and those that will live
• Learn to build friendly relationships with our neighbors and visitors: overcoming the concept of “us” and “them”
• Design vibrant and efficient networks
• See ways of catalyzing sustainability in our region: bioregionalism
• Broaden our scope: networking, exchange and education, support and solidarity on a global level

Activity 1 – Questionnaire

Description

After reading the texts of Documentation and based in your experience please answer these questions:

1. Do you know anything of the recent history, customs or traditional features of the neighborhood, town, city where you live? Describe briefly. Are you interested in and think it is important or do you think they are things that do not affect your life and current environment? Why?

2. After reading the documents on bioregionalism are you able to identify and describe the various aspects of the bioregion in which you live? Research the information needed to describe it. What are the characteristics and strengths of your bioregion? Do you know of any group in your area that organizes itself considering the four aspects listed in the document “Organizing Bioregionally”? Explain which elements are considered and which are not and why this is so.

3. Diversity and inclusion of all groups, individuals and organizations are key in the promotion of a bioregional attitude. How are your relations (and the relations of the groups and projects you are involved) with individuals, groups and organizations in your area, including with those who have a very different vision from yours? If the relations are not good or inexistente, what are the reasons? How do you think these relations could be improved?

4. It is difficult to keep network structures alive and dynamic over time. Why do you think this is so?

Objectives

The aim of these questions is to foster a thoughtful reading of the material and to promote the assimilation of the concepts. The questionnaire promotes the establishment of connections between the concepts and the personal experience of the students.

Resources

Documentation pages.
Assessment

The adequate understanding of the theoretical concepts in the answers, the depth of thinking, and the descriptive richness of the real life examples presented to illustrate the answers.

Activity 2 – Individual work:
Knowing the past of the region where we live

Talk to an elderly person in the region where you live. Beforehand explain the reason for your interview and the idea of the importance of horizontal and vertical dimensions in sustainable communities.

Ask the elder to tell you how things were 50 years ago. You can prepare few questions to guide your interview:

• How were the relationships between people then?
• How did they relate to the environment?
• What services were there?
• From where did they get food?
• What were the basic needs and how did they meet the needs? What is your perception of the neighborhood or village today?
• What has most changed?
• Do you feel integrated and participate in the transformation?
• What do you like and what you don’t like about the changes?

Make a brief summary of your interview, what have you learned, and a personal assessment of something that has drawn your attention.

Objectives

To awake the interest in the past and traditions of the region where the students live and to understand the importance of developing relationships with people beyond usual circles.

Resources

It is necessary to find a person seventy years old or older, who has lived in the area since childhood and want to share their memories.

Evaluation Criteria

The student will submit a report (maximum one page) on the relevant results of the exercise, along with their personal reflections
Activity 3 – Group Work: Design and implement a network of ecovillage designers

Description
In groups of two or three people, discuss how to establish a network of ecovillage designers. It should be an effective and vibrant network of support. Identify all the elements necessary for the structure of the network.

- What are your interests and goals?
- How do you communicate?
- What is the role of the nodes?
- How will you implement the first phase of this network?
- How would you expand the network?
- Who – individuals, groups, organizations, local governments – are you hoping to influence through the network? How can you include them in the process?
- With whom can you work directly? Who is within your reach?
- Who are the natural allies of your project?
- Who could support the network and, equally, who could oppose?

Objectives
Practice the design of a network a taking in consideration the elements outlined in the module.

Resources
- Notes "Building effective networks"
- Use the Internet for more information on network operations, caordic organizations, etc.

Evaluation Criteria
The student will submit a report (maximum one page) on the relevant results of the exercise, along with their personal reflections

Activity 4 – Case Study

Description
Describe how your project considers the fundamental aspects of a bioregional organization: scale, economics, political and social organization. Identify, if needed, corrective measures so that your project can be better integrated in its bioregion.

Once you have given this step, map the network, which your case-study belongs to. To guide you please answer the five questions in the document "Knowing the Network. You can also consider the elements described in the documentation "Mapping out the Network"- experts, leadership, innovation, access to funds, authorities, interest, provision.
After drawing the mind-map, try to assess whether the network has the fundamental characteristics that are found in effective networks and how this could be improved.

**Objectives**

Learn how to contextualize a project in its surroundings, applying aspects of a bioregional organization. Observe, design and establish the connections with the surroundings at different scales: local, global and bioregional.

**Resources**

- Information on the case study
- Internet
- Notes on Bioregionalism and Building Effective Networks

**Evaluation Criteria**

Each student will indicate what has been his/her personal contribution in the final document, which will be evaluated by its clarity and systemic thinking.

**Activity 5 – Reflection**

**Description**

Based in the documentation of the module make a mind map of the different organizations that you know that somehow are developing a new vision of the world linked to the values of sustainability and bioregionalism (which may appear in the list of global NGOs and / or others that you know). Describe what features they share and make a list of the various topics they cover. With the help of the mind map, make a small presentation of what all this means in relation to your own worldview.

**Objectives**

Develop a deep reflection and own thinking of what you have learnt in the module and become aware if something has changed in the way you act and interact daily with our bioregion.

**Evaluation Criteria**

The ability to associate ideas, establish connections, synthesize, and so on.
Cross-Dimensional Activity

Dialogue

Description
For each module, students are expected to carry out a dialogue in the virtual classroom on a theme set by the tutor, relevant to the module in question. The topic will be introduced through a brief essay written by an expert in the field. From there on it becomes free and spontaneous participation. Each student may intervene as many times as they think it necessary, as long as it is focused on the topic at hand, and in an attempt to build upon what others have contributed, without trying to convince others. The tutor will moderate the dialogue.

Objectives
- To develop the ability to deepen on a topic, while connecting to the wisdom of the entire group.
- To practice the communication skills presented in this dimension.

Resources
Personal notes and own knowledge, thinking, assumptions...

Evaluation
Dialogues will be evaluated according to the quality of interventions by each participant, how do they contribute to what has been said, and to what degree they invite others to bring their voices to the group discovery process.
1. – Building Community and Embracing Diversity

Community
Traditionally a "community" has been defined as a group of interacting people living in a common location. The word is thus often used to mean a group that is organized around common values within a shared geographical location (local community). However, the definition has evolved and been enlarged to mean individuals who share characteristics, regardless of their location or type of interaction (community of interest).

Finally, in regard to the stages of evolution in a group, community is an advanced stage of a group characterized by its cohesion, interconnectedness, and harmony; productivity is high, and the group works well in achieving its goals, with flexible roles and leadership distributed among all members.

Diversity
Community focus on the idea of ‘unity in diversity’, which combines the growth of strong individuals with the ability of synergizing their unique gifts, so that they may realize dreams together.

Group
A group can be defined as two or more humans that interact with one another, accept expectations and obligations as members of the group, and share a common identity. By this definition, society can be viewed as a large group, though most social groups are considerably smaller. A true group exhibits some degree of social cohesion and is more than a simple collection or aggregate of individuals, such as people waiting at a bus stop. Characteristics shared by members of a group may include interests, values, ethnic or social background, and kinship ties.

Group Agreements
To work with consensus, avoid chaos in meetings and prevent conflicts a group needs to adopt some ground rules. Each group must choose the norms, which best meet its needs and values. Some possible ground rules are: Use a facilitator - Everyone participates - Speak only for yourself - No interrupting - Seek a solution - Begin and end on time - Have an agenda and stick to it - One speaker at a time - Listen with respect - No personal attacks or blaming - Confidentially (when appropriate) - Silence = assent (If you do not say anything, it means you agree) - No one may speak twice on a subject until everyone who wants to speak for the first time has had a turn, etc.

Group Culture
It is the specific collection of values and norms shared by members of a group or organization. They control the way members interact with each other and with stakeholders outside the group or organization.

Group Field
Every group, together with its dreams and undercurrents, constitutes a field that is manifest in physical structures, human feelings, a particular atmosphere, and specific jobs and roles.

Structural Conflict
Problems that arise when founders don’t explicitly put certain processes in place or make certain important decisions at the outset, creating one or more omissions in their organizational structure.
Values
A value is a reference principle shared by a group of individuals. The values identify those objects, conditions or characteristics that members of the group consider important; that is, valuable. Values are related to the norms of a culture, but they are more general and abstract than norms. Norms are rules for behaviour in specific situations, while values identify what should be judged as good or bad.

Vision
Vision is the shared future you want to create, your shared image of what's possible. It is often expressed as the “who”, the “what” and the “why” of your endeavour. Ideally it’s described in the present tense, as if it were happening now.

Mission
Mission or Purpose expresses the vision in concrete, physical terms. It’s what you will be physically doing as well as experiencing as you manifest your shared image of what’s possible.

2.a – The Art of Compassionate Communication

Active Listening
Active listening is a structured way of listening and responding to others. It focuses attention on the speaker. Suspending one’s own frame of reference and suspending judgment are important in order to fully attend to the speaker.

Assertiveness
A person communicates assertively by not being afraid to speak his or her mind or trying to influence others, but doing so in a way that respects the personal boundaries of others. They are also willing to defend themselves against aggressive incursions.

Dialogue
David Bohm originated a form of dialogue where a group of people talk together in order to explore their assumptions of thinking, meaning, communication, and social effects. Dialoguers agree to leave behind debate tactics that attempt to convince and, instead, talk from their own experience. As a group technique, “it is a way of taking the energy of our differences and channeling it toward something that has never been created before. It lifts us out of polarization and into a greater common sense, and is thereby a means for accessing the intelligence and coordinated power of groups of people” – William Isaacs.

Empathy
Empathy is the capacity to recognize or understand another's state of mind or emotion. It is often characterized as the ability to "put oneself into another's shoes", or to in some way experience the outlook or emotions of another being within oneself. Empathy is distinct from sympathy, pity, or emotional contagion.

Feelings
The second principle of NVC is to learn to develop a vocabulary of feelings that allow us to clearly and specifically name or identify our feelings. It is important to distinguish the expression of actual feelings from words and statements that describe thoughts, assessments, and interpretations.

Needs
In NVC is important to acknowledge the needs behind our feelings. What others say and do may be the stimulus, but never the cause, of our feelings. The more directly we can connect our feelings to our needs, the easier it is for others to respond compassionately.
2.b – Facilitation Skills

Consensus
“Consensus is a decision-making process, which strives for non-violent resolution of conflicts and the cooperative development of decisions that everyone can support” – Bea Briggs

Deep Democracy
Unlike "classical" democracy, which focuses on majority rule, Deep Democracy — a term introduced by Arnold Mindell — suggests that all voices, states of awareness, and frameworks of reality are important. Deep Democracy also suggests that the information carried within these voices and frameworks are all needed to understand the complete process of the system.

Facilitation
Facilitation is a diversity of tools, techniques and skills to help a group of people work well, both in defining a common vision, making decisions, and achieving their goals, and in creating a relational climate where trust prevails and communication is fluid, empathic and honest.

Governance
Is the action or manner of governing. It implies to answer the following questions: Are all decisions equal — in importance, scope...? Who should decide on what decisions? Which decision-making method do we want to use for each type of decisions? How often do we want to meet? How long do we want our meetings to be? Which are our common agreements for meetings? How are we going to ensure a fair and participatory decision-making process? How do we handle conflicts arising in the decision-making process? How are decisions communicated to the whole group?

Polarization
It is the process whereby a group of people is divided into two opposing sub-groups with fewer and fewer members of the group remaining neutral or holding an intermediate position. When polarization occurs, there is a tendency for the opposing sides of an argument to make increasingly disagreeable statements.

Process
In a group it is important to pay attention no only to what is being said, the matter under discussion (content), but also to what is happening to the group itself, the way things are being accomplished (process). The content may be seen, as the part of an iceberg out of the water, while the process is the part under the water, not easily seen but very important and influential.

Process Work
Process work is a set of concepts and techniques developed by Arnold Mindell and others aimed to cultivate attitudes, awareness and skills needed to facilitate an interaction among all parts of ourselves. It can be applied to a wide range of situations, including team work and organizational development, as well as with large groups and community forums.

Rank
In Process Work, “rank” means the power we have relative to one another in relationship, groups, community and the world. This power depends on us having a quality appreciated by others like money, beauty, creativity, etc

Role
A role is a set of connected behaviours, attitudes and opinions as conceptualized by actors in a group situation. Within each group situation people often take distinct positions. Each of these positions can be called a role, with a whole set of functions that are molded by the expecta-
tions of others. Formalized expectations become norms when enough people feel comfortable in providing punishments and rewards for the expected behaviour.

3. – Personal Empowerment and Leadership

Coaching
Coaching is a set of communications skills and processes designed to empower those with whom we are communicating.

Compassion
In the Buddhist tradition, compassion means wanting others to be free from suffering. This compassion happens when one feels sorry with someone, and one feels an urge to help. Compassion thus refers to an unselfish, detached emotion, which gives one a sense of urgency in wanting to help others.

Eldership
In Process Work, an elder is a role in a group (it can be acted out by any person) that welcomes and gives space to all voices, the silent ones and the critic ones, those with power and those without power. This means putting one’s personal psychology—including feelings, moods and thoughts—to the service of all the others in the group.

Emotional Intelligence
Emotional Intelligence describes the ability, capacity, skill or a self-perceived ability, to identify, assess, and manage the emotions of one’s self, of others, and of groups.

Empowerment
Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities.

Leadership
A classical definition of leadership states “a leader is anyone who influences a group toward obtaining a particular result”. Currently the idea of “servant leadership” is gaining impetus: “the fundamental choice that enables true leadership in all situations is the choice to serve life. My capacity as leader comes from my choice to allow life to unfold through me” - Peter Senge.

Power Triangle
The power or drama triangle is a psychological and social model of human interaction in transactional analysis, that posits three habitual psychological roles, which people often take in a situation: the person who is treated as, or accepts the role of, a victim; the person who pressures, coerces or persecutes the victim; and the rescuer, who intervenes out of an ostensible wish to help the situation.

4. – Celebrating Life: Art and Creativity

Art Project
A collaborative art project can be a useful team building exercise and also a challenge and therefore opportunity for practicing tools for conflict resolution and leadership skills.

Celebration
Celebrations are important social glue in any group or community. They are group-identity activities that we need to relearn, reshape, and revive in accord with the new worldview that is emerging. They are a group expression of art and creativity.
**Creative Attitude**
Developing a creative attitude towards life means focusing our lives in what we want to be manifest, without utilizing external circumstances as an excuse for no action or for permanent reaction. It means as well recovering our power, individually and collectively, to co-create our future, and to manifest a vision that becomes real often questioning our self and what is considered politically correct.

**Creativity**
Creativity is a mental process involving the generation of new ideas or concepts, or new associations of the creative mind between existing ideas or concepts. An alternative conception of creativity is that it is simply the act of making something new.

**Lateral Thinking**
Creative Thinking is the ability to think of original, diverse and elaborate ideas. Lateral Thinking is a similar term introduced by Edward de Bono in his book The Use of Lateral Thinking (1967). Lateral thinking is about reasoning that is not immediately obvious and about ideas that may not be obtainable by using only traditional step-by-step logic.

**Ritual**
A ritual is a set of actions, often thought to have symbolic value, the performance of which is usually prescribed by a religion or by the traditions of a community. The purposes of rituals are varied; they include compliance with religious obligations or ideals, satisfaction of spiritual or emotional needs of the practitioners, strengthening of social bonds, demonstration of respect or submission, stating one's affiliation, obtaining social acceptance or approval for some event — or, sometimes, just for the pleasure of the ritual itself.

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### 5. Local, Bioregional and Global Outreach

**Bioregion**
A bioregion is a way to describe the natural geography where one lives. It also identifies a locale for carrying out activities that are appropriate for maintaining those natural characteristics.

**Bioregionalism**
Bioregionalism is a comprehensive “new” way of defining and understanding the place where we live, and living in that place sustainably and respectfully.

**Local Community**
A local community is a geographically defined community of place, a group of people living close to each other. The term suggests that its members have some relationships that are communal - experiences, values, and/or interests may be shared, they may interact with each other and are concerned about mutual and collective well-being.

**Networks**
To build sustainable communities we have to improve our connectivity, internally and externally. We have to create network ties to foster economic opportunities and reinforce social cohesion.

**Social Ecology**
While the field of ecology focuses on the relationships between organisms and their environments, social ecology is a philosophy concerned with the relationships between humans and their environments.

**Transition Town**
Transition Towns is a movement founded by environmentalist Rob Hopkins in 2005 with the aim of preparing communities for the two challenges of climate change and peak oil.
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