

LEARNING COMMUNITIES IN RURAL EUROPE

A HANDBOOK

EMBERCOMBE • FOCUS ECO CENTER • GARDEN OF GENERATIONS • KLEIN JASEDOW • SLUŇÁKOV

This handbook is part of the results of the three-year's Erasmus+ project »Strategic Partnership ›Learning Communities in Rural Europe« and was co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

WWW.LEARNING-COMMUNITIES.EU

Learning Communities in Rural Europe
A Handbook

© copyright 2017 Drachen Verlag GmbH, Klein Jasedow, Germany
Published under a Creative Commons (Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0) license.



All photographs were contributed by the individual projects.
Edited by Lara Mallien, Matthias Fersterer, and Johannes Heimrath
Book design by Johannes Heimrath

ISBN 978-3-947296-01-9



LEARNING COMMUNITIES IN RURAL EUROPE

A HANDBOOK

COMPOSED BY

EMBERCOMBE—UNITED KINGDOM

FOCUS ECO CENTER—TRANSYLVANIA/ROMANIA

GARDEN OF GENERATIONS—AUSTRIA

COMMUNITY OF KLEIN JASEDOW—GERMANY

SLUŇÁKOV—CZECH REPUBLIC



PART I—TELLING OUR STORIES		PART II—SHARING OUR EXPERIENCES		PART III—SHARING INSIGHTS	
9	1.1 INTRODUCTION	122	2.2.5 Ways of Cooperation within Each Organisation—Commoning	183	2.5 EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE
23	1.2 HOW WE BECAME WHAT WE ARE	128	2.2.6 Ways of Integrating Different Personalities, Abilities, and Levels of Commitment	184	2.5.1 Sharing Examples and Principles of Transformative Learning
24	1.2.1 Embercombe, England	134	2.2.7 Coping with Stress, Finding a Balance Between Dynamic Development, Silence, Recreation and Celebration	190	2.5.2 Approaches of Formal and Informal Learning
28	1.2.2 Focus Eco Center, Transylvania	141	2.3 REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS	196	2.5.3 How Do We Enable Learners to Lead a »Good Life« in Rural Europe?
34	1.2.3 Garden of Generations, Austria	142	2.3.1 Regional Relationships to the Local Social Environment	201	2.6 CONTINUITY AND EVOLUTION
42	1.2.4 Klein Jasedow, Germany	148	2.3.2 Regional Relationships to Local Authorities	202	2.6.1 Fragility: Why Are LCRE Endangered Species?
50	1.2.5 Sluňákov, Czech Republic	152	2.3.3 Regional Relationships to Local Educational Institutions	210	2.6.2 How Can the Spirit of a Project Evolve and Stay Connected to the Initial Vision?
57	2.1 PREREQUISITES FOR STARTING A LEARNING COMMUNITY	156	2.3.4 How Do We Contribute to the Resilience of Our Regions?	216	2.6.3 Next Generation and Elders
58	2.1.1 Ethical and Philosophical Background	163	2.4 BEING NATURE	220	2.6.4 Approaches to Achieving Economic Stability, Dealing with Growth
64	2.1.2 The Call—Power of Vision	164	2.4.1 Agriculture, Growing Food, Nurturing the Land	226	2.6.5 How Do We Avoid Burnout and Self-Exploitation?
70	2.1.3 Legacy and Tradition	168	2.4.2 Perception of Landscape, Shaping Nature, Allowing Wilderness	231	2.7 STRUCTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE
76	2.1.4 Political Situation that Enabled the Start	174	2.4.3 Genius Loci, Resacralisation of Landscape	232	2.7.1 Ownership, Legal Structure
80	2.1.5 Enablers, Facilitators, Initiators	178	2.4.4 Rootedness, Becoming and Being Native, Bioregional Identity, Finding and Losing »Heimat«	236	2.7.2 Fundraising Approaches
86	2.1.6 Synchronicities and Lucky Situations			240	2.7.3 Economic Sources (Companies, Fundraising, Subsistence)
92	2.1.7 Academic Support			244	2.7.4 External Accountability
94	2.1.8 Means of Communicating the Vision				
101	2.2 WORKING TOGETHER				
102	2.2.1 What Does Community Mean for Each Organisation?				
106	2.2.2 Leadership, Power, Decisionmaking				
112	2.2.3 Audience and Resonance				
116	2.2.4 Attracting Collaborators, Supporters, Friends, and Networking into Society				
251	3.1 WELL-TRIED TOOLS, METHODS AND PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING AND ORGANISATION				
252	3.1.1 Embercombe				
256	3.1.2 Focus Eco Center				
264	3.1.3 Garden of Generations				
268	3.1.4 Klein Jasedow				
278	3.1.5 Sluňákov				
281	3.2 CHALLENGES AND ECOURAGEMENTS				
282	3.2.1 How to Read this Chapter				
284	3.2.2 Searching and Finding				
286	3.2.3 Visionaries and Followers				
288	3.2.4 Economics				
290	3.2.5 Local Relationships				
292	3.2.6 Endurance				
295	APPENDIX				
296	A Brief Digression to Values				
300	Further Reading				
302	The Authoring Group of LCRE				

PART I TELLING OUR STORIES

	EMB	EMBERCOMBE
	FEC	FOCUS ECOCENTER
	GDG	GARDEN OF GENERATIONS
	KJ	KLEIN JASEDOW
	SL	SLUŇÁKOV



1.1 INTRODUCTION

How We Started this Project

When five socio-ecological educational organisations from five different European countries decided to cooperate under the motto »Learning Communities in Rural Europe« (LCRE), they started a research journey to unravel the meaning of this term. It had been coined in the hamlet Klein Jasedow in North East Germany where numerous variations of formal and informal ways of learning are taking place. In spring 2014 the community running this place of learning had asked themselves how these diverse and intertwining activities might be called, when viewed as a coherent whole. None of the usual terms, such as »centre for environmental education«, »cultural centre«, »ecovillage«, »social business«, »organic farm«, or »centre for regional development« seemed to fit. »What do we end up with, when we combine all of these aspects?« was the question. »And why do we have the impression, that all our various activities actually have the same core, being inspired by the same motivation, making all these aspects combine and form a large single one organism?«

With these questions in mind, the people from Klein Jasedow contacted a number of other projects whom they imagined to be in a similar situation and eventually came to the idea of setting up a »Strategic Partnership« according to the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, thus making meetings and teamwork between these partners affordable. During summer the group of five manifested itself, and in September 2014 the project was ready to be officially launched.

The now joined five »strategic partners« aimed to find out whether there would be a common denominator in all their complex activities and whether the designation »learning communities in rural Europe« (LCRE) would, in fact, work as an adequate description. Could it be a role model for other multifaceted eco-social educational projects in the countryside? Are LCRE able to bring about positive societal change and, if so, how do they provoke such change and how can they share their experiences?

This handbook is the main visible result of our common research on these questions. It was co-authored by all of the five organisations introduced below.



Embercombe

Embercombe is the name of a valley in a secluded region of county Devon in South West England. It was formerly used by a millionaire as a private airfield, so it includes two former hangars which today provide room for workshops, the main kitchen, meeting spaces, and offices for an unconventional social educational project. Embercombe offers various workshop-programmes that invite people to find their true purpose and meaning in life through deep experiences in nature. Only a small number of people are permanently living on site, but groups of up to 30 volunteers— young people from all over the world— live there for a period of three months to take care of all the practical work in the gardens, the kitchen, the workshops, or setting up new and refurbishing

existing infrastructure and meanwhile reflect on their future learning journey. Embercombe also offers programmes for children in cooperation with local schools and organises public events. It is managed by a trust.

Focus Eco Center

In the valley of the river Niraj in Transylvania the members of Focus Eco Centre have established a number of pioneering projects to demonstrate that traditional small-scale agriculture is ecologically and economically sustainable and should be the general orientation for the future development of rural regions. They show that the human-made landscape of their valley has stayed so rich in biodiversity exactly because of the farming activities that have taken place there for centuries, and that the social climate in the villages is so positive because people are used to helping each other in various areas of agricultural work. Educational activities try to promote this new paradigm for rural spaces. Focus Eco Center is based in a former school house in the village of Adrianu Mic. It mainly assists young locals in finding a job perspective in their rural area, but also connects city dwellers with local farmers as well as young people from all over Europe.



Garden of Generations

Garden of Generations is an emerging community in Lower Austria. It combines multigenerational co-housing, ecological building activities, participative organisation, ecosocial entrepreneurship, gardening as well as care for the youngest and oldest. Apartment houses, offices, and communal spaces are currently planned according to the principles of Christopher Alexander's pattern language. The group organises itself by the method of sociocracy, so that overlapping circles of responsible people work on decisionmaking in different fields.

The founder of the project has developed the innovative tool »wealth pool«: A fund for short term and long term loans which is only used for investments into property that equal the value of the loans. A liquidity-reserve of 10 percent is kept for back payments. This makes financial resources, which are not needed anywhere else at the moment, available for the investments of a meaningful project.



Klein Jasedow

In the community of Klein Jasedow, a hamlet belonging to the municipality of the small town Lassan in North East Germany close to the Baltic Sea, today 28 persons of four generations are sharing life and work in the form of commoning. They run the »European Academy of Healing Arts«— a non-for-profit educational center for health care professionals and artists, a free Democratic School for children, and several social business— including a publishing house issuing a magazine for sustainable livelihood, and a workshop for crafting musical instruments—, are performing artists and have started a long term hands-on research project focusing on the





Sluňákov

question of how—given the present conditions of climate, soil, and lifestyle—a life-fostering, sustainable, subsistence agriculture can be established within the the local region. Members of the community are participating in communal affairs, and the community is well connected with relevant NGOs throughout Germany and Europe.

Sluňákov

Located in Moravia in the Czech Republic, Sluňákov is a centre for environmental education founded by the municipality of Olomouc and initiated by ecological activists in the years following the Velvet Revolution of 1989. The central building of Sluňákov with its organic architecture provides accommodation for groups and space for workshops, conferences, and administration, but the main educational work is done outside on excursions to the nearby Litovelské Pomoraví Protected Landscape Area or other destinations, including Sluňákov's own premises: a large area of low-lying fields close to a stream just behind the main building. Some of Czechia's most interesting and eminent land-art artists have created large installations there. This land-art park is part of Sluňákov's »House of Nature« and is open to the general public, with inhabitants of the nearby village Horka nad Moravou going for walks on the grounds; visitors can also participate in guided tours.

Embracing diversity

At the beginning of our collaboration, we realised how different all of our projects were and are. Their infrastructure is very different—with our projects being based in a village, in a cluster of rural communes, on the outskirts of a town, in a classical educational centre or out in the pale in a valley with former hangars and yurts. Some are run by classical management structures with various employees, others use unconventional participative methods of organisation, at some places the people responsible are living on the site, while others are relying on temporal communities, or even regional or supra-regional networks. And the educational activities widely differ from one place to the other. None of these outward characteristics seemed to be the decisive criterion for a »learning community in rural europe«, but the more we five partner organisations collaborated, the more common ground we detected.

What is a »Learning Community in Rural Europe«?

Words commonly used in everyday language may, at first, not seem to ask for definition. However, frequently it is exactly words we take for granted that may require us to take a closer look at the meaning we attribute to them in a given situation. So, what exactly do we mean when referring to »learning communities in rural Europe« (LCRE) with an »eco-social« and »transformative« orientation?

► *Learning*

Just as we cannot not communicate (Paul Watzlawik), we cannot not learn. We learn as we live, and we live as we learn. It is a token of industrialised, highly specialised modern societies that »learning« has been institutionalised and refined to institutions such as kindergartens, schools, universities, etc. But even in such institutionalised settings, some of the most important learning may happen outside and between official classes. In traditional, indigenous cultures, learning was and is not separate from everyday life. Granted, in modern European societies we live in settings considerably different from those of non-engineered cultures. Nevertheless, as learning psychologist Peter Gray has convincingly argued, we are carrying in our cultural memory many traces of such informal ways of learning.

Despite the great diversity in terms of organisational aims and structures, one common feature characterising the LCRE authoring this book is that they attempt in rather different ways to reintegrate learning into everyday life. The five partner organisations are learning organisms in as much as they are themselves dedicated to constant learning. From a perspective of constant learning, there is no such thing as absolute failure but only rich opportunities of growing and becoming experienced. In fact, »failure« may be the best teacher, as long as we learn from it. Another common feature is that there are no instructors and students in the conventional sense, but every person involved in our projects—placekeepers, volunteers, programme attendees, etc.—is in some way or another a lifelong learner, meeting other learners on eye level.

► *Community*

Community may refer to a basic quality of life or to a particular form of organisation. At the very basic level, every multicellular being forms a community. According to estimates, the human body is comprised of about 30 trillion cells and at least the same number of microbiota. In this regard, the paradoxically sounding phrase »I am a community« starts to make sense. When it comes to human organisation, community may refer to groups of humans bonded together by affection, necessity, environment, values, work, etc. In all these cases, community will be a complex interplay between personal freedom and connectedness to a larger whole.

In as much as it describes the various relations between individuals and their environment, community is closely linked to the concept of being-at-homeness or »heimat«. We feel at-homeness, when we experience a maximum of congruency between ourselves and our natural, social, and cultural environments.

As used in this book, »community« mostly refers to one of the following phenomena: village communities, regional communities, intentional communities, temporary learners' communities, or community of placekeepers and co-workers. In a wider sense, it may also refer to the life-sustaining communion between man and nature or to any spontaneously arising moment of community between two or more beings. After all, »com-



Embercombe: Inside the dining yurt.

munity is where community happens», as philosopher and theologian Martin Buber wrote. And it happens, we might add, within the spectrum defined between freedom and connectedness.

► *Rurality*

More than half (51.3 percent in 2012) of the EU's land area is classified as »predominantly rural«. However, large areas—in cities and in the country alike—are characterised by far-reaching urbanisation. Tokens of urbanisation, such as sealed soils, extensive farming (resulting in depleted soils and poisoned environments), consumer lifestyles, species extinction (with urban biodiversity sometimes outnumbering rural biodiversity), are phenomena to be found also in many rural settings of Europe.

Historically, mass migration from rural areas into European cities was connected to the enclosure of the commons, the onsetting process of industrialisation. Large numbers of ousted, formally subsistent peasants were forced to move to cities, ending up as beggars, workers, and consumers.

The devastating consequences of social, mental, and physical forms of dislocation and displacement associated with industrialisation, privatisation, disappropriation, or persecution were termed »deracination« or »uprootedness« by French philosopher Simone Weil who described »rootedness« as »perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul«.

For international development experts Robin Broad and John Cavanagh »rootedness« is a more appropriate term than »resilience« or »sustainability« for describing the preconditions and structures of local self-determination. They distinguish between »economic rootedness« (economic subsidiarity, prioritising local over national over international production), »environmental rootedness« (community control, i. e., commoning, over natural resources), and »social rootedness« (furthering equity, personal health, and community).

In the context of this book, our notions of rurality—and community—are strongly informed by the concepts of rootedness, subsistence, subsidiarity, and sufficiency. Defined in this way, rootedness does not contradict international cooperation and transnational integration. On the contrary, one thing that is common to all project partners is that they are deeply rooted in their given rural environments while being well aware of global issues, very well informed on planetary boundary threats, and proactively maintaining international cooperation as well as exchange between rural spaces and neighbouring cities.

► *Which Europe?*

Elusive to define, »Europe« may refer, among other things, to the geographical area of the European continent with contested outlines, to continental European mainland—excluding the British Isles—, to the evolving policy of the European Union, or to a set of values and cultural concepts dating at least back to European Enlight-

enment. In the latter sense, Europe is frequently used synonymously with Western civilisation and taken to include neo-European states in North America, South America, and Australia. According to Algerian-French writer Bernard-Henri Lévy, »Europe is not a place but an idea«.

In any event, Europe is the place where ideas of universal humanitarian rights originated as well as (neo-)extractivism, colonial empires, and countless wars, including the Great War and World War II. »Eurocentrism«—epitomised by centering maps of the world around the European continent—refers to a form of cultural chauvinism based on the assumption of »European exceptionalism«, propagating Europe as the navel of the world and Western civilization as a universal yardstick for measuring any culture.

Although the process of building an economic and political union between European nation states—starting with the European Coal and Steel Community—was itself a means of maintaining peace and democracy in the aftermath of the two World Wars, it is wise to bear in mind that democracy is a delicate creature and that the history of Europe is by no means free from complacency, chauvinism, and colonialism.

Transnational integration brought along both chances and challenges. As German Historian Philipp Blom suggests, for instance, with an increasing »sense of space«—expanding not only to supranational political entities and other continents but even into outer space—we have lost our »sense of place«. Losing this sense of place and being-at-homeness leads to feelings of dislocation and uprootedness; such feelings, in turn, lead to constant fears of losing something when instead it would be appropriate to welcome refugees fleeing existential threads. Addressing such sensitivities and feelings of loss, is one of the tasks connected to European integration. Turning away from these issue may lead to further separatist, right-wing populist, and neo-nationalist movements which may put at risk the continuation of the European project. Therefore LCRE encourage critical reflections and debates about European integration and musings about supportive alternative place-centred visions for the European Union such as a Europe of the Regions.

► *Eco-Social*

Derived from the Greek word »oikos« (household), »ecology« may refer to studying the intricate network of relations between agents, places, and resources of a given »oikos« (ecosystem) or to the entire »oikomene« (in ancient Greek the entirety of the »inhabited world«), that is, the grand household of the biosphere. Interestingly, the semantic meaning of »ecology« and »economy«—frequently taken to have conflicting interests—are virtually identical. Viewed from a consequent care-use attitude, the tasks of ecological and economical stewardship are intrinsically intertwined.

Of course, the contemporary realities of economic and ecological practices are nowhere near this ideal of collectively caring in responsible ways for our common earthly household. Instead, humanity is constantly over-



Sluňákov: Inside the »Solar Mountain«.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

exploiting the resources available on our planet, with current global resource consumption equaling 1,7 (hypothetical) earths.

Just as ecology is concerned with that which constitutes an ecosystem, sociology—derived from Latin »socius«, companion—is concerned with social relationships, interactions, and orders established within and between human communities on various levels. Sociology may also be concerned with factors connected to preserving, finding, and building-up an environment we may call home and the conditions of establishing feelings of being-at-homeness. On another level of meaning, »social« characterises deeds which are beneficial to society as a whole and, in particular, to social groups who have been marginalised by mainstream society.

LCRE are, in their own unique ways, characterised by eco-social approaches on numerous levels in as much as they are countering social inequity in structurally weak areas of rural Europe; are integrating into their work marginalised groups of people; are integrating the socio-cultural environment of their respective place; testing new ways of communal working and living; are furthering sustainable ways of living, connecting traditions with future-viable lifestyles; are promoting life-fostering relations between man and nature; are concerned with the preconditions and possibilities of preserving or creating places that may provide sources for feelings of being-at-homeness.

► *Transformation*

All of what has been stated above is leading to a point, where learning communities in rural Europe do not aim to prepare the participants of their educational programmes to perfectly function in the current growth-oriented economic system, but instead aim at equipping them with experience, questions, and insights that encourage change to happen. Such change may begin within each individual by finding out what they themselves really, really want in life and how they can feel deeply connected to other—human and non-human—beings whom they share life with. It may continue with questions about the state of the world, regarding the global context but, particularly, with a very close look at the place where I live—what can be done right here, right now? What is my contribution to my home place? Often, self-development, the wish of unfolding one's potential, is regarded as a psychological process, as something inwardly, which is not necessarily connected to political activism, an outwardly visible activity. LCRE provide examples that personal transformation and courageous action in the world may very naturally go together by connecting yourself with your surroundings, with a region, a landscape, a village, or even a district of a town. A long term commitment to the wellbeing of a place is transformative by itself, creating rootedness—another concept that transcends the delineation between inward and outward activities—, and providing a source of energy to make things happen you might never have dreamed of.

In May 2016—after we had met already in Klein Jasedow and in Embercombe for intensive workshops—this insight into the transformational nature of our work manifested itself during a discussion at the place of our Transylvanian friends. Sitting together under a weeping willow tree next to a pond—home of a bunch of big green lazy frogs—and after having experienced a most beautiful landscape, shaped and accentuated by man over centuries in rural Europe we put it in words as follows:

»If you want to write a handbook about how to empower people to live a sustainable life in rural parts of Europe, you have to be aware of your starting point: the predominant paradigm, which does not, by any means, lead towards sustainability. So you have to question this very paradigm and explore a new one, jumping in at the deep end, into the unknown, working for a paradigm shift.«

Paradigm Shift

What kind of paradigm shift are we referring to? The media are full of testimonials of politicians, company directors, and NGO-leaders of every colour declaring that they want to bring about societal transformation, make the planet worth living for future generations. They promote strategies as differently as investing in green technologies and green growth, various models of degrowth, redistribution of prosperity, or development cooperation with the countries of the global south. For us, »transformation« does not come about by applying this or that strategy, but begins, on a very basic level, with the way we see our role as human beings in relation to our fellow non-human beings cohabiting with us the biosphere.

Today, ecologists often speak of »ecosystem services«. We acknowledge that this has raised awareness of the invaluable assets nature is providing to humanity's existence as it is connected to the predominance of economic thinking and puts a price tag to everything that humans call a natural »resource«. But we resist using this term: It is too deeply steeped in a mechanistic view of nature as something to be exploited for an exclusively human sake. By using the term »gifts of nature« or »nature gifts« instead we want to appreciate that nature is far more than just our servant. On the contrary, human beings are nature too, and thus should behave like her servers and grateful caregivers instead of her masters. Consequently, in the context of this handbook we use the term »nature« in a way that does not exclude but integrate human beings and human culture.

The form of organisation suited best to such an inclusive approach to nature is »commoning«. Deeply rooted in human history, commoning refers to the practice of caring for, making use of, and conserving for future generations a commons—clean air, water, soil, meadows, forests, knowledge, traditions, etc. »There is no commons without commoning«, as historian Peter Linebaugh pointed out the procedural nature of commons. Commoning could be called a natural attitude in as much as it does not put human profit first, but takes into consideration the needs, requirements, and interests of all of nature, including human nature.



Garden of Generations: Festivity at the seminar house.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

A core characteristic of LCRE is, that they develop ways of commoning in the way they organise themselves, in the way they learn and teach, in the way they work with the land that sustains their places. As the late commons researcher Elinor Ostrom demonstrated in her work, commoning, by its very nature, is never and nowhere the same. There are no panaceas. Commoning is the result of negotiation processes between various agents (commoners) meeting on eye level—their solution will be whatever a given community of those directly affected agrees upon. And as the interests of all participants are equally important this will be, most likely, a just and non-exploitive solution, because non-human agents, such as, e.g., plants, animals, places, landscapes, and traditions, have also a role to play in commoning processes. As a result, commoning structures are always polycentric as opposed to monocentral, centralised structures. This is the way in which the cultural landscape of Europe has been created—as long as local commoners were left in peace from excessive greed, exploitation, and repression. This is also the way in which indigenious communities worldwide organise themselves and digital communities create large knowledge commons, such as Wikipedia.

The ways of commoning developed by LCRE is, of course, limited by the necessary interfaces with capitalist market economies and authorities asking for hierarchical structures. And, needless to say, it is dedicated to constitutionality and universal human rights. But, by their very nature, such places of learning have self-conceptions of being a commons.

None of the currently existing forms which the commercial laws of the European countries provide for constituting a legal entity is suitable for representing a commons, therefore LCRE may use different forms of integrating themselves legally into their respective world of business. Generally, there is a tendency of searching for ways of shared ownership in the form of trusts or associations or pooling various private resources in a network of mutual support. A commons perspective replaces the principle of ownership with the principle of belonging: I do not own this land, I belong to it, I may shape it, but it also shapes me, there is constant interplay between human and non-human agents, instead of relationships characterised by domination or exploitation. Instead of assimilating a place, I can assimilate myself into the place. I can be at home.

At-homeness

This leads to a common denominator we gradually discovered among our five projects during our mutual visits: Every time, almost instantly we felt at home in each of our places in a very similar manner. This was a much more profound feeling than just being welcomed by a hospitable community. It was a feeling connected to the long term commitment we all gave to our projects—not only to the organisations in a narrow sense but to the regions and landscapes where they are located. Be it the large wooded Litovelské Pomoraví Protected Landscape Area, the sloping Embercombe valley, the extended Niraj region, the grassy building site in the outskirts

of the Garden of Generations or the gently rolling coastal landscape of Klein Jasedow, the land—cultivated or wild—is an essential source of inspiration and commitment, and it is—in a literal and a figurative sense—the very basis of all the work carried out at LCRE. It is worth any effort to keeping, restoring, and unfolding its beauty and abundance for present and future generations, it is worth any effort whatsoever. This boundless commitment creates a profound sense of rootedness, of being-at-homeness. It is something that guests—including young people, coming from urban backgrounds on their individual learning journeys—can feel, too, when visiting a learning community in rural Europe. Against the backdrop of a century of horrible wars, having resulted in millions of people being displaced, persecuted, and killed in Europe and elsewhere; of a »five-century war against vernacular subsistence« (Ivan Illich), having systematically destroyed decentralised, regional means of sustenance; and of a global war being fought for natural resources, putting at risk the wellbeing of future generations and the continuation of life on Earth itself; against this backdrop, the current task of people in Europe may very well be to create places of at-homeness—not in an exclusive sense of nationalism and separatism, but rather in an inclusive sense of rootedness and groundedness from which a culture of welcoming generosity may arise.

Complete at-homeness is an ideal we may strive for but hardly ever attain. Interestingly, in its current meaning »heimat« is a relatively young term. In German-speaking areas, it came to the fore in the 19th century. The increasing loss of heimat due to dislocation, displacement, uprootedness, persecution, pogroms, persecutions, war and other atrocities of the 19th and 20th century seems to be related to the frequency the term is used. As German-English writer W.G. Sebald pointed out: »As is often the case, the term ›heimat‹ is reciprocally related to the phenomenon it refers to: The more we talk about ›heimat‹, the less it is to be found.« When using in the context of this book the terms »home« or »community« in a sense related to being-at-homeness, we are doing so not in a nostalgic, retrotopian sense but out of the conviction that »rootedness« is an essential precondition for bringing about truly sustainable, life-fostering cultures. Rootedness brings about ease of mind and feelings of security, keeping people open to change, friendly to strangers, preventing them from developing irrational fears about »foreign infiltration«. The notion of home is also connected to ecological concerns in as much as at the most basic level home, first and foremost, refers to our common earthly home: the natural world we live in and are a part of, consisting of nothing else than nature.

What to Expect from this Book

If you, dear reader, feel resonant with these lines of thoughts, you are very welcome to take the following pages as an inspiration for creating yourself something like a learning community in rural Europe. We call this book a handbook, but it is not, in fact, a how-to guide. There is no panacea, no one-fits-all solution. Each situation is



Klein Jasedow: Detail of a gong from the manufacture.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

unique—groups of initiators, political situations, places, challenges and opportunities, etc. are never the same. Therefore, we devoted a considerable part of this book—part 1 and 2—to sharing with you the histories and stories of our individual journeys, of how each of us has acted differently in different contexts, of how each of us faced difficulties and tried to solve them in very different ways. Owing to the great diversity of our five partner projects, chances are that there will at least be small overlaps with the individual situations of other LCRE initiators. We hope that this may inspire others to find their individual, unique ways which are bound to be as unlikely, adventurous, tedious, and wonderful as ours.

Having worked on our Erasmus+ project for three years, we are yet far away from an exact definition of a LCRE. We may be able to draw some outlines, but we still regard this as an open research question we would like to further pursue together with you, dear reader.

The structure of part 2 is based on a set of questions that any project which regards itself as an LCRE may have to answer. We heartily invite readers who are part of similar projects to write down their own experiences following the outline we have suggested here, i. e., about the situation that enabled the start, aspects of community and organisation, regional impact, agriculture and landscape, educational practice, continuity and evolution as well as infrastructure and legal basis. In this way, we may continue to exchange experiences of projects that may be unique but share a lot of common ground in terms of their visions, values, and attitudes.

Part 3 of the book presents detailed methods, tools, and practices we are using to run our projects and to make our daily lives more and more become »good lives« in the sense of »buen vivir« or »right livelihood«. These methods are adaptable to any given context. Feel free to vary and modify them according to your requirements and to tell us about your own approaches.

If you do not want to read too much, you may skip to chapter 3.2: It contains a list of challenges you might face in setting up a LCRE as well as encouragements for dealing with them.

October 2017, at home in Europe

- ▶ The main contents of this handbook are conveyed in a webinar by the authors. You may check for the next dates on www.learningcommunities.eu.
- ▶ If you happen to be a policy maker or want to address a politician with some concise material about the essence of your LCRE project, we recommend our »guidelines for policy makers«, available from our website.



Focus Eco Center: Farmer's market.



1.2 HOW WE BECAME WHAT WE ARE



The timber framed building hosts a hall.



Entrance to the dining yurt.

Embercombe is located in a valley on the fringes of Dartmoor National Park. Alongside many other diverse projects around the world, it is here that the threads of a new story are emerging. This new story asserts that every human, child or adult, possesses a gift which if developed and generously offered forward will take us one step closer to the world of our longing—a just world, ecologically diverse and bursting with health, spiritually uplifting and life-affirming. Our mission is to touch hearts, stimulate minds and inspire committed action for a truly sustainable world.

The Founding of Embercombe

Early in 1997 Mac Macartney, author of the book »Finding Earth, Finding Soul: The Invisible Path to Authentic Leadership«, received an extraordinary gift from the founders of an enterprise that his executive leadership development company had assisted over a five-year period—the means to purchase land and create »Embercombe«. At that time Mac was pregnant with the vision of a land »to grow people«. His own background included 20 years in leadership coaching, balanced with living and training with Native Americans, combining this wisdom with his work as a coach.

So when his wife Valerie discovered this naturally stunning 50 acre site, located in a beautiful valley in Devon, UK, with own woods, possible farm land, an own lake, and a huge old Devon cottage, there was no doubt, that they had found what they had been dreaming of.

The site belonged to a millionaire who had used it as a weekend retreat, with two air hangars for his airplanes and a runway.

Having been a gardener himself, Mac Macartney envisioned a place where he could grow food, and create a community, with children running and workshops where people could find their true purpose and meaning in life and from there would go out into the world to take action.

In the beginning, there was only his wife, Valerie, her son and himself. He often tells the story, how he wouldn't know where to start on the land, but it didn't really matter where. Everything was to be created anew: The whole land needed to be fenced in order to keep the deer off, before the garden could be created. The runway needed to be demolished, the hangars had to be transformed—one into a kitchen and dining area, the other into an office space and a workshop room. The cottage had to be transformed to host three living spaces. The lake and the woods were waiting for revival. Eventually a huge ringed permaculture garden was created, with a sitting area in its heart enclosed by roses and medicinal herbs. The subsequent rings were planted with vegetables and salads, and in the outer rings fruit trees were put in.

Who will Come will be Right

Mac's trust that like-minded folks would appear at the gate and offer support to his vision, was unshakable—and it proofed him right.

Soon Joey appeared, someone—as Mac often

tells in his stories—anyone would have denied access. Joey, a huge man, tattooed up to his tongue, with a long history in prison, looked rather intimidating than inspiring confidence. However, Mac trusted: the ones, who would appear at the gate, were the right persons. Today, Joey is still there and has become one of the most loved elders.

More people showed up, and slowly a community was forming, at that time with a strict horizontal decision structure.

Embercombe's Educational Concept

One of the first programmes Valerie and Mac created, was the »Journey«. Embercombe's unique teachings are based on the »Twin Trail« as well as the »Children's Fire«.

All of the programmes are based on these principles, even though the educational programmes for school children were developed by Jo Clark, a Steiner teacher who had grown up on a farm.

Kanada Elizabeth Gorla, who once had worked with Mac in his coaching company, became an essential part of the team, especially as facilitator in the »Journey« and in many other programmes. Kanada preferred living outside the community.

Of course, many people came on board, enthusiastic to bring new ideas, but besides of some being not realistic at all, not all did go well with Embercombe's mission, and many people left again.

One staying was Fiona Barnes. She arrived with her little daughter Asha feeling deeply connected with the earth of Embercombe. She became some-

how the »mother« of the place, hosting people, taking care of the volunteer community and the live stock. Through her initiative, the »Natural Learning Programme« started, and every week young children with her mothers and fathers learn by playing, gardening, walking, sitting and eating on the land.

Today, Embercombe is a social enterprise that runs experiential leadership programmes built on nature-based and indigenous wisdom and drawing from coaching and psychological models.

Our Purpose

Embercombe's vision is based on our belief that the world of our longing will come about as we choose to demonstrate authentic, courageous and active leadership. Often one hears Mac saying: »Hopefully in 100 years, Embercombe does not exist anymore, because the whole world has become the world of our longing.«

Embercombe's purpose is to be a powerful and innovative catalyst for the emergence of leaders and change agents who will take courageous action for a just, peaceful, and sustainable world. This purpose is embedded and transmitted in its philosophy, programmes, and energy. Even a weekend visitor can feel that something different lives here—it may be through joining the morning circle or experiencing the way people engage, or simply through being with the land. We call it the magic of Embercombe.

What Do We Mean by Leadership?

Leadership is an important subject at Embercombe: In Mac's words: »How can you lead someone else if

you don't know how to lead yourself?« When we think about leadership, we think of big names, but leadership is how you walk every day with the person next to you. We do not live alone in this world. We can only choose leadership when we know who we really are and what our purpose is. We believe that true leadership is available to all and is a choice and responsibility that is renewed from moment to moment as we face the challenges in our own lives.

- ▶ If we know what we deeply love, this choice is liberating.
- ▶ If we know what our gifts are, this choice can take form.
- ▶ If we know what our responsibilities are, this choice becomes a necessity.

We at Embercombe try to awaken the deeper meaning about leadership in organisations and individuals, equipping people of all ages and walks to stand up as leaders, and energetically contribute their gifts and talents towards creating the world of our longing.

How Does Embercombe Convey its Mission?

In our work we try to connect to the depth, wisdom and authenticity of indigenous spiritual traditions. Everything which is ordinary in our world is appreciated and acknowledged as something extraordinary. »Everything is known to be alive and part of our family circle. There is no need for belief in this way of living. Recognition is more accurate. It is the recognition of the rational and mysterious fact of our interconnectedness and belonging«, says Mac. ▶▶

1.2.1
EMBERCOMBE, ENGLAND



The former hangar now is the center fire.



Inside the center fire.

The range of programmes we have created, are using elements of nature-based and indigenous wisdom, blended with transformational, psychological and coaching models. Mac and his team is still holding most of the adult programmes, but others are held today by younger people, like the education team or the catalyst team, which shows a beautiful continuation and evolution.

These programmes include:

- ▶ residential programmes in authentic leadership for adults of all ages;
- ▶ residential programmes for young people at school, university and those who educate them;
- ▶ volunteer and assistantship programmes;
- ▶ bespoke facilitated programmes for teams and groups.

Our two guiding principles at Embercombe are the »Twin Trail« and the »Children's Fire«.

Twin Trail

Everyone in the Embercombe team is invited to follow the twin trail, comprising inner healing and spiritual deepening as one of its two paths, and outer action to bring about change to the world as the other. By uncovering our true gifts, responsibilities and passions we are able to bring ourselves fully to the world, leading ourselves and others on a path of positive action.

Children's Fire

The children's fire is part of the Earth teachings of the elders of ancient America. Over time, the elders

came to understand that all human-created institutions needed to reflect the balance and wisdom observed in nature. The children's fire was a reminder of the first promise: No law, no action of any kind, shall be taken that will harm the children seven generations hence.

Honouring and remembering the children's fire is an essential part of our decisionmaking process.

The Next Stage of Embercombe's Evolution

As a progressive learning organisation, Embercombe is constantly evolving. The current stage of that evolution is the transition from our early innovative pioneering days to the emergence of a professional, effective, and financially sustainable social enterprise.

Since our founding, Embercombe has enjoyed consistent growth in terms of reputation and impact. We recognise that there remains considerable work to do if our exciting enterprise is to achieve its potential and realise its ambitious mission. We now have to successfully transform ourselves by moving from organisational adolescence to adulthood.

We are returning to our original mission, and are serious about achieving it. In order to create the world of our longing, we need people from across the spectrum—including the political, military and corporate sectors—to awaken to, and act from, their own authentic leadership potential, to reconnect to themselves as human beings and as part of this world and nature. We can't support them in this without having dialogue and partnership.

Our vulnerability

During the past three years Embercombe has faced many challenges, from losing our main sponso, losing our chair of trustees, to constant change in management and a constant struggle between community and management to move from organisational adolescence to adulthood and to a professional, effective, and financially sustainable social enterprise. The community has its own vision about how the place should be and run, while the management cares for its financial survival.

We hope, that our story may help other learning communities to prepare for these issues and learn from our—at times painful—struggles to ideally avoid these. **EMB**



1.2.2 FOCUS ECO CENTER, TRANSYLVANIA



Village community cooking plum jam.



Kaláka – neighbours rebuild a burnt house.

In Romania before 1989 no informations concerning the new developments in the world—especially concerning the environmental problems caused by consumerist lifestyle and globalisation—were not available. The Romanian society was characterised by low consume and a low level of waste production, for example for beer, oil and mineral water the same half litre glass bottle—100 percent recycled—was used. After the changes from 1989 the Romanian society—like in many other former communist countries—began to adopt consumerism without being aware of the disadvantages and dangers of this kind of lifestyle with its huge amount of waste produced day by day.

At that time some environmental organisations from Western Europe—mainly from the Netherlands, Germany and France—visited Romania, and thus we received the first informations about the environmental problems as well as about organisations of the civil society—NGOs—working in this field. People from our region interested in these subjects were invited to seminars and conferences abroad, and eventually in Târgu Mureş—a larger city in Transylvania—a group of people decided to establish an environmental civil organisation.

Zoltan Hajdu, founder of the organisation, applied for a grant for a master degree in environmental analysis and management in Strasbourg. After finishing the studies he became member of the French association of environmental counselors, and when he returned to Romania initiated together with colleagues from the newly formed

NGO the establishment of an environmental information and counselling centre. The group of initiators—21 persons altogether—believed that the most important task would be to collect informations about environmental issues and to distribute these to the society. Thus the group founded an organisation which intended to be in the focus of all the information about environmental problems and called it called Focus Eco Center. The first activities of the organisation were campaigns in water management and sustainable agriculture in the Niraj valley.

In the 1990s concepts of development in Romania were focused on following the economical growth model of Western Europe. Most people had no idea about the risks of this model, and by raising awareness of the detrimental effects to society and nature the Focus Eco Center soon found itself opposing the mainstream trend. The dominant public opinion at that time considered environmental issues as »luxury« for idealists—something for the Western Europeans who were rich enough to deal with these questions. So the conclusion was »let's get rich first, and then we will deal with the environmental questions«.

Structural Conception

One field of action of the Focus Eco Center was to initiate the realisation of participative decisionmaking structures in the Niraj valley which would work out regional development strategies, especially

- ▶ creating the microregional association formed by the mayors of the ten villages and other stake-

holders from the area, as well as

- ▶ establishing the »Niraj River Committee«, which became responsible for the water management issues. The valley traditionally was rich in water but then got poor due wrong water management practices. This structure should help to coordinate the activities of water management in the area and offer a local partnership to the national water authorities

In that time the mayors were elected in behalf on their charisma and commitment to the local community—without a major influence of the central political structures. In this spirit of freedom and creativity the influence of the civil society was rather significant. So both of the structures started to work on a participative basis and were strongly committed to improve the future of the communities.

Since about the year 2000 the pressure of the central political structures on the local communities increased and the financial resources were more and more distributed in relation to proven loyalty to the governing party. In this situation the role of civil society decreased, and the participative planning process was replaced by measures realised by those who had the political and financial power. Although the structures which we implemented still exist the impact of the civil society and especially of the Focus Eco Center dwindled down to a rather low effect. The main initiative was taken by people with only a very superficial knowledge concerning the actual socio-ecological challenges. They don't think about sustainable development the way we do,

but rather adopt to attitudes of the Western European countries from the 1970s when environmental problems were not taken seriously—and which destroyed a large part of the natural resources. It seems that the mistakes made in the western countries during the seventies will be repeated in Transylvania since 2000.

Establishing Pilot Projects

In this situation the members of the Focus Eco Center decided to continue their work by conceiving pilot projects which could demonstrate that sustainable lifestyle models are realistic and people can generate income by maintaining the ecosystems and the ecosystem services. One of these was an eco-agro tourism programme which involved five local families who would host guests interested in working in traditional agriculture and enjoying trips into nature. The income was reinvested in the development of the farms. A second pilot project was the realisation of a short distribution chain which made direct contact between the local producers and the consumers from the town. A third one was the implementation of wetland restorations in the area in order to create a water reserve which as well could serve as a tourist destination and would evolve into a high spot for biodiversity.

Water Management in the Niraj Valley

After the first years of activity, the organisation identified the Niraj valley east of Târgu Mureş as the main area for its future activities. The Niraj valley is

a complex ecosystem whose population during history had maintained a high level of autonomy concerning food and water supply. This fact was characteristic for many of the small and middle sized watersheds in the Carpathian basin, but the Niraj valley is more special because here a complex and very ingenious system of integrating water management with agriculture was practiced, which had turned the local community into one of the most successful in the region.

Each spring when the snow in the high mountains started to melt the Niraj river flooded the valley ground and deposited high quantities of lime and other nutrients on the farmland. Thanks to the fine lime particles carried by the tributaries, the water of the river has a yellow color. Due to this color the Niraj River received the popular epithet »blond«. Due to the calcareous and nutritious soil of the flood plain it is very suitable for growing vegetables, which gave the middle and lower part of the Niraj valley the name »Carrot Country«.

More than 300 years ago a channel was dug parallel with river, called the Vecke channel which truly was a very clever device: From documents we know, that the Vecke channel was part of a production system which reflected a remarkable conception for that time as it was not only a simple water channel as it is today. By this system the villagers were able to direct the nutritious sediment carried by the river during the floods only to the left side of the valley where they had their vegetable fields, thus diminishing potential damage through heavily flushing ▶▶

1.2.2 FOCUS ECO CENTER, TRANSYLVANIA



New water retention in the Niraj region.



Restored river bed in the Niraj valley.

water—and simultaneously protecting the villages which were built only on the right side of the valley ground or up the relatively long valleys of the tributaries on the left side.

So the structure of the villages proves that in the past the central ground of the valley between the Niraj river and Vecke channel—up to two kilometres wide—was considered a flood plain, and the production structure was adapted to this topography. This farming system, besides the mentioned vegetable production, included fruit and animal farming. In history, this specific form of production had made the Niraj valley to one of the most densely populated regions of Transylvania.

Unfortunately, with the increasing cereal production during the socialist period the former agricultural practices were no longer employed. Part of the 79 kilometres long Niraj river was »regularized«: for example, the segment between Miercurea Nirajului and Cinta was shortened by 35 percent. The dams created to prevent flooding were erected only 100 metres from the river bed and do not follow the existing meanders, reducing the area prone to flooding to only 7 percent of its original size.

Before those means were applied many watermills existed along the Niraj river, some villages had more than one. To ensure the water supply of the mills small dams were built, which prevented the erosion process and smoothed out the water level in the river. Due to this the ground water and the living river were in permanent contact with each other, ensuring good water quality for the population of

the villages. The small dams—realized with natural materials—wood, stones—improved the water quality of the springs and wells, allowing the farmers to reap the benefits.

Due to the specific water management practices, the whole valley was rich in water, the local people could find everywhere good quality drinking water in springs, so they didn't have to take water with them when they went tilling their fields. The valley was also rich in wetlands and small lakes, which were habitats for many species, the whole area enjoying a high biodiversity.

But unfortunately due to the recent water management and agricultural practices the actual situation is very different. The wetlands and small lakes have been drained, and the springs have dried out.

Restoring the Resources

We at Focus Eco Center had identified this worrisome situation, so more than ten years ago we started to evaluate the area in order to classify the places where former small lakes and wetlands had been.

We were convinced that the situation could be changed, and if we would restore the wetlands and small lakes the water would come back to the area providing the local people with good quality water again. So they no longer would have to buy bottled drinking water which is expensive—and in the future probably increasingly harder to come by.

In many discussions with the people of the valley we explained the situation. The mayor of the village

Gălești together with some local opinion leaders—like the owners of the pension »Tunder Ilona« in Valea—became favorable to the idea of restoring former ponds and wetlands. The main problem was to convince the land owners to change the destination of the land and make them aware that a lake or wetland can be more important than a pasture or an arable field. This made difficult as our idea was at odds with the usual practices to dry the wetland in order to obtain more territory for agriculture.

Eventually we decided to start with a pilot project and agreed to carry out the first restoration work in the village of Adrianu Mare. We started the restoration work with volunteers using only local materials. At the beginning the local people were concerned about our work because it was unusual for them and they were afraid that we would increase the risk of flooding. From the authorities they had always heard that flooding is a scary phenomenon and not a normal natural process. They didn't make a connection between the loss of wetlands and the decreased quantity and quality of the water. Many wells in the region then had already high nitrate values.

After the realisation of the first wetland restoration in Adrianu Mare we organised information sessions about the positive effects: the restored small lake had made a remarkable positive contribution to the conservation of the water resources, to the improvement of the local micro climate, to the better regulation of the small water cycle, to the prevention of the erosion, to the increasing of the biodi-

versity—and soon it became a local destination for tourists.

Slowly the local population understood the benefits of our work, and once an old man came to us and said: »You did very well! Now we have water to irrigate our vegetables and for the animals again.«

Today, after fifteen years of continuous efforts, several people have followed our example, and eight small lakes have been restored since. We hope that this trend will continue and secure good water for everybody in the Niraj valley.

Restoring Community Life

Besides caring for water management the second main occupation of our association was to create a local community which would promote a sustainable lifestyle, sustainable agriculture, and landscape protection. The commune of Gălești, especially the small hamlet Adrianu Mic—50 inhabitants—belonging to Gălești, became the main focus of our activities. Due to the heavy migration of the local population to the cities, the old schoolhouse of Adrianu Mic was abandoned. The locality is situated in a beautiful valley presenting all the elements constituting the valuable cultural landscape resulting from traditional agricultural practices.

The members of the association together with the mayor and the local council decided to establish the headquarters of Focus Eco Center right here in the old school. Thus we established an »Environmental Information and Development Centre« with the goal to organise trainings and other pro-

grammes for the members of the local community and distribute information about the best practices of a sustainable lifestyle. We hoped that the location would evolve into a space for debates concerning the development of the whole microregion.

In short time the center became a kind of citizen's agora where many debates concerning the ways of development we all should follow in the whole area took place. One question soon got prevalent: How could a synthesis of the rules dictated by contemporary market economy and the wish and necessity to preserve the valuable landscape and the ecosystem services be brought about?

We became convinced that the most powerful argument would be the personal example, and several members of the association purchased a property in Adrianu. The guiding idea was to reinterpret the social structures of the traditional village, to create family based units networking in the realisation of different tasks, helping and supporting each other in challenging situations, and thus restoring a joyful community life. We were very careful to support the integration of the newcomers to the local circumstances in order to avoid being seen as »colonists« by the local people, but rather as people who want to learn and to be part of the local community.

The networking structure which was created within the framework of the association resulted in a very interesting community structure, based on the shared values and common activities. The association has very little own property, all the goods are owned by the members, for example even the build- ▶▶

1.2.2
FOCUS ECO CENTER, TRANSYLVANIA



Ready to start an excursion at Focus Eco Center.



Learning how to make bread the traditional way.

ing of the information centre is not owned by the association but by the local authorities. Maybe one of the strongest assets of the association is the continuously flowing amount of voluntary contribution with material goods and human resources made by the members in order to fulfil our common goals.

Today, we have established different work groups—which are also small communities—focusing on different activities, like agriculture, tourism, and education. The machines for tilling the fields are owned by individual partners but shared among all members. The tourism activities are also bringing cash money to the members, and the guests enjoying the natural beauty and values of the Transylvanian landscape are also »shared« between the members of the network: Each host offers two days lodging to the guests, so for a period of ten days five farming families are involved. This is in the benefit of both the tourists—who enjoy an indepth encounter with the rural region—and the hosts—every family in the network gains a little income.

It's All About Education

However, the most visible part of our activities is the information centre in Adrianu Mic, where we organise programmes for children and adults. The »Agro Biodiversity Trail« is very popular among the children, and many families enjoy walking the footpath through wonderful divers types of landscape. There is a one-day programme offering a complete overview of the main agricultural and ecological systems in the area—forest, pasture, arable land,

abandoned arable land, orcharda, wetlands, farms—and the participants can understand the interconnections between them.

In conclusion the complicated history of the Focus Eco Center and its connection with the local communities in the Niraj valley can't be explained in a simple way, and the future is very much dependent on the dynamic processes we all are a part of. We hope that the almost 50 dedicated people who are active in our communities in different ways and shape the framework of our association will have some positive impact on the sustainable development of the Niraj valley and thus give a good example of a learning community in rural Europe. **FEC**



Farmhouses in the Niraj valley.

1.2.3
GARDEN OF GENERATIONS, AUSTRIA



Vegetable garden at the building site.



Performance in the open air amphitheater.

It all began in 2005. Some 20 years before I, Markus Distelberger, had founded the co-housing project »Dörflein« (hamlet) in Herzogenburg and had been living there in great satisfaction together with ten families. Our children had grown up in this little colony and had begun to walk their own ways. The co-housing group consisted of the families comprising adults of fairly the same age and a considerable flock of 28 children. It was a kind neighbourhood, and occasionally we celebrated and had common activities throughout the year. Most of the time, to their parents' great comfort the children felt at home in their neighbours' families as well. Via the children the adults had many opportunities to keep close contact, especially that half of the adults who were not engaged in »Lernwerkstatt« (learning workshop)—a free school I had founded shortly after »Dörflein« was built. The other half together with two more families from another co-housing project in the vicinity had formed the initiative group that brought Lernwerkstatt to life.

15 years ago, just after Dörflein had started, we had founded in our hometown Herzogenburg »Lernwerkstatt«—a school where »children should not be taught anything«, but instead were free to learn autonomously, following their own rhythms and inner plans.

The youngest of our four daughters—currently aged 36, 34, 32, and 28—had just turned 16 and was about to leave this »school«. With roughly a hundred pupils Lernwerkstatt had firmly established itself as a landmark in the regional school land-

scape; and seven years perviously it had rented as its school building a Renaissance water castle with 1200 square metres usable floor space, a surrounding moat, and a castle park in St. Pölten-Pottenbrunn, roughly six kilometres away from Herzogenburg. We, my wife and I, were about to retire from our engagement for Lernwerkstatt. Having given us an incredibly rich experience and assurance that children will learn an amazing amount without being directed by a syllabus or educational material, Lernwerkstatt had shown us that children will turn into very promising, independent, and socially competent young adults without any of the elements conventionally referred to as »school«. In addition, out of Lernwerkstatt and its vicinity there developed a social biotope, which found its most vivid expression in an annual one-week conclave in Istria at the beach of San Polo in Bale/Valle: A group of then 150 (and now more than 250) people of all ages—parents, grandparents, former pupils now in their teens, school staff, and some friends—travelled together to this camp site and together developed an increasingly sophisticated camping and cooking infrastructure to provide the group with three meals a day for a whole week. This was a convincing example of how practical life could be facilitated through community: Just do the dishes and the cooking a couple of times a week, pay a modest contribution for food—and what you get is a week's full board. And one more time it became clear that community came to life, in particular, by doing practical work together.

The atmosphere that was created between and among these very different people at this beautiful place, showed me clearly how a community of well over a hundred people created real (social) wealth. It was a local European example that proved true the African saying: »It takes a village to raise a child.«

The history of Lernwerkstatt—by then 15 years and by now all but 30 years in the making—convinced me strongly that a determined intentional community with a clear aim may achieve a lot, independently from the support of large institutions or the state. After all, 95 percent of Lernwerkstatt was enabled by the parents' pecuniary and active contributions.

Grasping the Bigger Picture

During these 15 years my wife and I had been part of the network of Anne Wilson Schaef, an indigenous teacher and representative of the alternative healing approach »Living in Process«, which taught us a lot more about community and the associated power of healing:

Via Schaef we got access to basically two traditions of community and healing:

- ▶ The »Living in Process« approach, which in building upon indigenous worldviews counters the static or mechanistic (machine-like – »where's there something to be repaired?«) ways of thinking so frequently found in our culture by trusting in life processes in general and giving in to the »deep process« that is alive in every human being. An essential part of indigenous cultures is

an attitude of mindfulness, respectfulness, and very natural inclusiveness in respect to the elders of a community.

- ▶ The experience of anonymous »Twelve-Step Communities« for healing addiction (based on Alcoholics Anonymous), based on a spiritual programme and the power of community (a community without any gurus or professionalists, consisting solely of the people affected and that does not charge any fees and is open to everyone).

Back to Dörflein: By then, most of the children had moved out. This raised questions of this neighbourhood's future and of whether young families would be moving into this area soon in order to prevent it from ending up a retirement home. As chance would have it, directly across Dörflein a larger piece of land was on sale at that time. I got interested in the possibility of starting there a deeper and wider version of Dörflein or a new project pursuing new approaches altogether.

These new approaches were:

- ▶ New forms of communal life based on experience made by indigenous people and cultures (Sobonfu Somé) and, partly, from Matriarchal Studies (by Heide Göttner-Abendroth and others).
- ▶ Insights on realising and fostering healthy relationships between people by »Living in Process« and confronting individual and social systems of addiction (Anne Wilson Schaef).
- ▶ Modern subsistence thinking (Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen).

- ▶ Gifting economy (Genevieve Vaughan).
- ▶ Subsistence- and community-oriented money and economic system (as suggested by Bernard Lietaer, Alfred von Euw, Margrit Kennedy and many others).
- ▶ Open and non-directive learning (Maria Montessori, Rebecca and Mauricio Wild among others).
- ▶ Criticism of the prevailing system as levelled Ivan Illich as well as modern indigenous authors, such as Vine Deloria (»We talk, you listen. New Tribes, New Turf«), Anne Wilson Schaef (e.g., »Living in Process«, »Addictive Society«), or authors who have been inspired by indigenous wisdom and traditions, such as Daniel Quinn (»Ismael«) or Jerry Mander (»In the Absence of the Sacred«).
- ▶ Approaches to architecture based on Christopher Alexander's »pattern language« and related permacultural site design.

For the practical implementation of the project, five main threads emerged:

1. Nature: Communal gardening, vegetable and herb growing, permacultural (edible) landscape.
2. Community: Establishing a meeting and event venue: also suitable for celebrations and is open to and may be used by all members of the intentional community as well as neighbouring groups, both in terms of vicinity and affiliation. Building up a community garden: permacultural garden, mandala flower garden, grounds for playing and doing sports, for relaxation, outdoors meditation, health care and recreation (sauna, bathing pond, etc.). ▶▶

1.2.3
GARDEN OF GENERATIONS, AUSTRIA



Plastering the walls of the seminar house.



Workshop in the almost finished seminar house.

3. Settlement: Building a settlement, consisting of
 - a) permanent dwellings (built from timber, straw bales, clay, and recycling glass in ecological cycles);
 - b) temporary dwellings (tents, caravans, yurts, temporary tiny houses, etc.).
4. Economics: Pursuing a community and subsistence approach
 - a) when it comes to housekeeping (e.g., communal vegetable garden and communal cooking and eating); or
 - b) self-employed professions (e.g., shared offices or doctors' surgeries, sharing marketing and other administrative functions such as accounting, etc.).
5. Social Life: Building care communities
 - a) for children and teenagers;
 - b) for the aged, the sick, palliative care, etc.;
 - c) for neighbours in need (e.g., refugees, people in hardship, etc.).

We understand the community and subsistence approach as something to be gradually widened and strengthened. The current projects are meant to be realised as a combination of professional work as well as state and institutional assistance (e.g., when it comes to caring for the aged a combination with state-funded 24-hour mobile nursing services may be advisable).

Getting started

The property mentioned above turned out to be too small for such a comprehensive new project ap-

proach. However, at the edge of the settlement area of Herzogenburg, close to a train station, we found a new piece of land that unfortunately was a designated agricultural zone and according to the town's area zoning plan was not to be used for any other purpose than agriculture.

However, after lengthy negotiations with the land owners on the one hand and the municipality on the other hand a rezoning process of the area was launched. The land owners were interested in achieving a higher price for building land, the municipality was interested in attracting a new settlement, and we were interested in an attractively situated, contiguous plot of land that was very well suited for such a multifaceted project. Our plan worked out. After four years' preparations—during which we could lease the land from the landowners—the first portions of the land could be acquired in 2011.

A snapshot from the practical side of our nascent community during the first few years: Early in October 2010, we were lifting potatoes for the second year at Garten der Generationen. Ten palette crates we had crafted ourselves were slowly being filled with potatoes by volunteers of all ages. Sitting on his tractor, Reinhard Engelhart was constantly surrounded by a flock of children while digging up yet another line of potatoes. Many hands dug with pleasure in the loosened soil searching for golden bulbs. No matter in what ways and how much each individual had contributed, it was yet another special, satisfactory, and even inspiring feeling to be

standing, working, and chatting in such a large community of about 50 people of all ages and to finally see the stowed crates without being able to tell exactly whether this had just been »labour« or rather a »gregarious get-together on, in, and with earth« or maybe a bit both. At the end of the day, our agricultural community had dug out roughly 2000 kilograms of potatoes, which could now be freely taken by all the participants, according to each individual's needs.

In 2010, we had for the first time a harvest-yourself vegetable field on which 17 vegetables were sown and grown in 100 metre long rows. The field had then been divided into 25 strips with a length of three to four metres each, with every parcel including all of the 17 vegetable varieties. Each parcel was then entrusted to »godparents« who were responsible for tending and harvesting »their« piece of land. The whole year round, the godparents had pleasure and joy in experiencing the plants growing and prospering and finally harvesting an abundance of super tasty vegetables. It seemed as if our community had begun to come to fruition.

Towards a Humane Economy

Meanwhile Garden of Generations had laid the foundation for an innovative humane economic system by introducing the cooperative financing tool »wealth pool« (www.vermoegenspool.at/eng/).

Our economic system constantly gives systemic advantages to those who are financially wealthy already: Through interest rates, rents, dividends, and

sales proceeds they may constantly increase their wealth. As a society we have tolerated that an increasingly small number of individuals has accumulated gigantic wealth and by pursuing risky speculations on a global level is putting at stake whole economies and the world economy as a whole to the great detriment of humans seeking to fulfil their basic needs. At the end of the day, those who do not have such wealth are those who pay for the wealthy's incomes on investments.

Therefore, it is necessary to recover lifestyles that start to transform this economic system on the local level. In doing so we may become by the power of community ever more independent from the internal and external constraints we have created ourselves by living the prevailing lifestyles.

What does this mean on a nuts-and-bolts level? Our vision as well as some of our practical actions are based on various human basic needs, such as securing the provision of food, shelter, learning, and human care increasingly from within the community according to the principle: »I give what I can, and I take what I need« without offsetting one against the other.

Communal Building – Building Community

Finally, in early October 2010, the municipality of Herzogenburg could finalise the rezoning of approximately 14,000 square metres of building land. In February 2011, the association »Garten der Generationen« acquired the first portion of 7000 square metres.

To our surprise the wealth pool proved to be particularly successful for financing the land. A circle of now almost 30 persons, members as well as supporters of the project, have pooled in a custodial account administered by lawyer Elisabeth Hauptmann-Höbart from Herzogenburg savings that for the time being they will not need urgently themselves. In this way, we could raise as starting capital as much as 300,000 euro to finance the acquisition of the first portion of land. Via the custodian, all financiers are, at a pro-rata basis, secured by land registry charge on the project's ground and buildings. The community guarantees to all the financiers that they may withdraw from the pool their money, if need be.

At the same time, we found a way of building that requires less industrially prefabricated materials, as these materials are very capital intensive. So the straw-clay method of building was just the right choice for us. We started with a community project of storing about 1300 straw bales from Reinhard Engelhart's field that were to be used as building material for the communal house.

Building dwellings is, next to agriculture, the activity concerned most with providing the most basic human needs. Modern building industry has become too dependent on or entrapped with capitalist systems and does not sufficiently provide this basic need. Just as many other industries, the building sector has become dominated by an urge for limitless growth; human beings are no longer central to this system but have become mere means to ends. ▶▶

1.2.3 GARDEN OF GENERATIONS, AUSTRIA



Uprooting potatoes.



Family ceremony in the gardens.

Therefore, building up new subsistence-oriented systems that place »people first« using the power and capacity of human community is a particularly beautiful and exciting challenge in an industry that, by its very nature, is connected to creating long-term assets and would otherwise be relinquished to the capitalist economic system.

With increasing insecurity in terms of income and financial worth it is about time to develop subsistence-oriented ways of building. In my opinion, this requires ending dependencies from large financing institutions, bureaucracies, and capital-intensive building materials (produced in highly industrialised ways) and building processes; and instead opening up to people whole new possibilities of personal development and craftsmanship abilities by integrating in the way we build in industrialised countries the one-world-principle. Among other things Garten der Generationen aims at becoming a pilot project for developing such new, cooperative, subsistence-oriented ways of building.

In the years to follow, I had organised a number of educational and public events to gain expertise in order to realise this large-scale vision and to find people who wanted to join in. In 2012, there was a two-day international symposium with 120 participants themed »Simply Building Simple Together« as well as a permacultural planning workshop based on »pattern-language principles« by Sonja Hörster und Jascha Rohr.

Right after we had acquired the first portion of land in 2011 we got started with building in the

straw-clay method. We found a place for a preliminary community house and had architect Johannes Breitling develop a building application. In addition to this first building site we built from large straw bales a builder's hut that was not only to give shelter to tools and machinery but also to provide room for a kitchen to cater for the many volunteers that were to work on the construction site and to be used by people who occasionally camped on our site. At that time, Wilfried König and Lisbeth Löffler were very active in our association. My eldest daughter Teresa was a great support in public relations and for a short period she even chaired the association.

It was her who had actually discovered the plot of land on a walk with me. She simply said: »Look, daddy, this is a nice place for the project.« I objected that this would hardly be possible on agricultural land. But then it occurred to me that I might at least ask the land owner and the mayor—and things started to get going.

At that time, our association's building group comprised a few too many cooks and too few ancillaries, so that another planning and building process with our architect Mr. Schania came to a halt, the more so as our planning workshop came to the conclusion that the community house should be built at a different place altogether.

Trial and Error

Then two young builders, Gerhard Scherbaum und Paul Adrian Schulz, came to us. We had gotten to know them at our building symposium. They were

all enthusiastic for the do-it-yourself style straw-clay way of building and brought a breath of fresh air to the group. Gerhard was a self-taught building practitioner, who had done a degree in hydraulic engineering; having worked several years for a biotope pond constructor, he did not have any real building practice yet, except for a small half-timbered straw-bale-clay building project in the Viennese district Aspern (»Kettenlinienhaus«) where a group of people had built from waste wood, straw-bales, and clay a sort of DIY style pavilion to be used as a meeting and workshop room; during the building process the group had constantly reimagined their plans. In addition, he and his partner Adrian Schulz, who had a degree in architecture and worked as a drafter for an architectural firm, had gained some straw-bale practice from Austrian straw-bale master builder Herbert Gruber.

Inspired by their verve, we started our first substantial DIY building process with these two young men and—in hindsight—fall flat on our face. Granted, doing manual work together had a lot of beauty, made as feel good as we had the feeling of making a difference, and the contact with natural building materials such as timber, straw, chalk, brick stones, and concrete had something nicely gentle to it—an experience we had not had so far in a building context. At the same time, this was sheer overload on many levels: Mostly, the many volunteers (mostly recruited online by our builders) were more of a burden than a real help. The most part of the work was done by a core group formed by

members of our association; and one of our young builders, Adrian Schulz, was not an experienced craftsman but a building planner. Safety on the construction site was not provided according to the relevant building regulations.

In their juvenile intransigence, our young builders clashed over and over again with the responsible building manager appointed by us who tried to put things straight with the building authorities. The construction site was characterised by a process of trial and error and constantly reimagining solutions.

We finally had to realise that we would not be able to keep to the prospected budget and schedule. Originally, the two young builders had planned that the house would be built by organising DIY building courses and that their financial needs would be covered by the course fees. Feeling unable to organise the courses while constantly reimagining the construction plan, those courses never happened.

In late 2013, at least the 50 square metre skeleton construction of our straw-clay house was finished and winterised, so that we could have a large celebration in November. Despite all vicissitudes it had turned into a fine house and we were satisfied with the result.

Whither from here?

Consequently, the question of how to proceed led to serious conflicts. The available capital for building this house of roughly 60,000 euro was spent. (We had been given 40,000 euro as a gift by gift-

ing-economy researcher Genevieve Vaughan whom I had invited to several symposia to Austria.)

I did not feel like continue working with our two young builders and was looking for new possibilities of having the house finished by professionals, also in view of our special wealth pool system that required that the capital invested had a real counter-value in form of a sound and solid building.

A large part of our group was unable to see our conflict on a matter-of-fact level but instead saw it purely on a (heavily loaded) relationship level. In 2014, the association's work was, therefore, mostly characterised by dealing with the structural and relationship level and, among other things, with introducing sociocratic structures.

To me the whole process increasingly felt like a struggle for power and the project's leadership. Various other old lines of conflict came to light again, particularly as to whether the large picture I had propagated was merely a »good vision« that had to be knocked out of the skies now or whether this vision could, indeed, be the basis of concrete planning and implementation. Since I kept insisting on sticking to the broad vision I had developed I was accused of behaving authoritatively. Finally, all the other members of our association's board – who were identical with the active members – left the association.

A New Beginning

In January 2015, there was a relaunch of our association. Ronald Wytek und his partner Silke MÜNKEN- ▶▶

1.2.3 GARDEN OF GENERATIONS, AUSTRIA



Family afternoon at the building site.



Receiving the Future Award from the government.

warf—who had worked for many years on planning and realising a large ecovillage project in Burgenland which had shortly before run aground due to lacking cooperation and support on the part of the municipality—moved with their one-year old daughter Loana to Herzogenburg and started to get interested in our project. They had moved there especially because they wanted to allow her daughter to grow up in a setting of alternative child care and schooling. In our region they saw a paradise in this respect because of the high density of alternative contexts for children (in addition to Lernwerkstatt there is a number of alternative schools and child care groups, forest kindergartens, etc.).

Ronald Wytek joined me on the board and together we rebuilt the association. The two of us brought along substantial learning experiences from our experience. We went to lengths to clearly describe the aims and plans of the association, the membership conditions and the process of admittance. All this was recorded in a handbook handed out to all new members. Once a month, there is a regular weekend meeting for all members and members-to-be. We have a wonderful new group of currently ten fix members (with new members arriving constantly) and three board members. Rosa Maria Eglseder was elected sociocratically as a delegate by our association chapter »Lebens- und Lernort der Generationen« (Multi-Generational Living and Learning Site).

The area »Lebens- und Lernort der Generationen« (abbreviated LLG) is our new accomplishment.

Based on our considerations concerning »care« we came to the idea that the areas daytime community, garden, children, and care are best integrated into one area, as all of these activities are located in the same rooms and terrains and are also open to persons who do not live or work on our premisses. Accordingly, the association is divided in the following three areas: LLG, living space, workspace.

Currently, our project includes four children who have just started to discover the multifaceted opportunities provided by the community. The adults meet regularly for exchange and support in men's and women's groups. In July 2017, our newly formed group came together for its first on-site camping event at Garten der Generationen, connecting us more deeply with one another and the place.

Our architect Gernot Mittersteiner was truly a lucky find, with whom we all but finished a master plan based on Christopher Alexander's pattern language. Soon we will start with planning our »guest house« (the future large community centre), the first rooms for living, working, and meeting and we will start with partially reconstructing the area.

In the past ten years, the land's atmosphere has significantly increased. On fields that used to be ploughed by heavy machinery a large number of rare plants and animals has found a home again. Sometimes we can spot rabbits, goshawks, falcons, hamsters, and sometimes deer, too—the gardeners, for their part, would prefer them to keep a bit more distance. Incidentally, the fence around the vegetable garden urgently needs to be redone. **GDG**



Garden of Generations: Installing a compost toilet.



The musicians on stage.

1976—1978: Prelude

The community of Klein Jasedow was founded by four initiators: Christine Simon, Beata Seemann, Klaus Holsten, and Johannes Heimrath, who met in 1976 and share life ever since. They were young professional musicians in their early twenties searching for ways of a meaningful life beyond their artistic career, and when they found a small old farmhouse in a tiny hamlet in Upper Bavaria one hours drive south of Munich, they decided to move to the countryside.

It was the high time of the world-wide protest movement, which in Germany bifurcated into extreme leftist terror groups on one side, and into the »new social movements« on the other side. Part of the latter was the rising environmental movement, and this together with a longing for a self-determined life—free of the constraints of bourgeois establishment—among the young generation gave rise to many intentional communities. Today, of those which continuously exist since then in Germany the Klein Jasedow community is the oldest one, and it's the only one where all of the founders still live together.

The four young people did not follow any particular ideology or spiritual path, only in their approach of understanding music—drawing from Early Music as well as from the Fluxus movement they created their unique art of improvisation—they felt a common call to find out by themselves how they could live together in a harmonious way, that would support every individual in unfolding

her or his full potential and at the same time nurture the community-organism as a whole. Grasping the essence of a present situation and developing their music out of the relationship between the performers and the listeners was the basis of their artistic work that created an audience closely related to them and interested in their community process. Of course, this way was not free of conflict, but the way the four—and soon seven including their three children—handled their growing together attracted many friends.

1978—1992: First Movement—Bavaria

So the community started to grow to a circle of eventually 20 people that had moved into neighbouring villages and began with the setup of a number of projects: a kindergarten, a homeschooling-project, an organic foodshop and homeservice, a studio for intuitive music and an office for media-projects in the nearby town. This coregroup had a common economy—all income of their companies was regarded as one large household. At the high time of the project in the late eighties about 50 people were connected. Many were absolutely happy with what had been achieved, for others—especially the founders—this was only the very beginning of a lifelong endeavour to develop new forms of living and learning together.

It came to a point when the group of pioneers—the founding group and the teacher of the homeschooling project, Anke Caspar-Jürgens, began to realise, that their ideas had become more radical in

the course of time and that they wanted to move on. At this time a friend from Switzerland persuaded the core group to build up a new project in a very special place: the village Caux overlooking the town of Montreux and lake Geneva 1000 meters above sea level. He was a software engineer and a musician too, and he convinced the Germans to start an experiment: establish a software company to create a stable financial basis for social and cultural projects. Money had always been short, so the experiment seemed worthwhile trying.

1992—1996: Second Movement—Switzerland

A suitable house was found in Caux, and eight members of the initial Bavarian community moved there in the course of the year 1992. The attempt to earn money with software and documentation was very adventurous and instructive. It resulted in a company called ShakeHands Software—which still is run by the former distribution partner—that produced administrative applications for small businesses.

After three years, at the point when the company began to be successful, it became apparent that the Swiss software engineer wanted to quit the team but at the same time was not ready to let a follower take over. This resulted in a severe conflict in autumn 1996. From one day to the next he disappeared to India, and the group of—now ten—Germans was sitting all alone high on a mountain in a country where they had no official work permit, where they did not officially own the property although they

had invested all their money into it, and where they had established a company which was shortly before the financial breakthrough—a real crash.

1996—1997: Interlude—Limbo

Only two things were clear in this confusing situation: The community wanted to stay together, and it was only possible to go somewhere where life is cheap, maybe to Portugal or the East of Germany.

Directly after a meeting, where the danger and uncertainty of the situation—no one knew where to go and how to make a living—was discussed, Johannes Heimrath was caught by the headline of an article in the German magazine »Der Spiegel« that read: »Irgendwie der Arsch der Welt« (Somehow Out in the Boondocks). This had an ultimate resonance with the rather desolate situation, and he started to read.

Within the first lines he suddenly »knew« that he was reading about the community's future home: A rolling landscape close to the Baltic Sea in the German part of Pomerania, small villages suffering from emigration of many inhabitants to the West, and the desperate mayor of a municipality who had tried everything to keep his commune alive was cited: »Unless some artists or otherwise crazy people will show up we can turn off the lights here.« Johannes felt as if this person was directly talking to him.

The article created such a strong call in him that he hurried to get an atlas—no internet yet at that time—, looked up the place, asked the directory as-

sistance for the phone number and in the next moment called the mayor, Matthias Andiel, to organise a visit.

The first stay up there in the North on 2nd November 1996 left the group with mixed feelings. Some were immediately caught by the magic of the beautiful countryside and the potential of the half ruined villages. Others were frightened by the destruction visible in parts of the landscape by industrial agriculture and in the villages that had lost many of their inhabitants after the end of the GDR regime.

But without doubt all felt attracted to the region and thus shortly after during a second visit they inspected other places too—manor houses, castles, abandoned factories, farmhouses. But none of them matched the potential of Klein Jasedow, the village next to Pulow: Only five families lived there, the seven other buildings of the hamlet of fifteen houses altogether were empty or temporarily inhabited by four alcohol dependent people who had no place to go. There were three large barns and the one next to the lake of the village seemed the perfect building to be turned into a concert hall.

The inhabitants of Klein Jasedow were stunned that some strangers from far away Switzerland obviously liked their place. They usually heard that Klein Jasedow was rotten and dirty, should be demolished and turned into agricultural fields. So they were very friendly and welcoming to the newcomers who could see the beauty of the landscape, the wild orchards and old buildings.

1.2.4 KLEIN JASEDOW, GERMANY



Keeping endangered livestock.



Harvesting herbs for tea production.

In December 1996 the community of pioneers decided that Klein Jasedow should be their new home. This was also influenced by the young generation. The three children of the four founders, Lara, Katharina and Tilmann as well as the young couple Alex and Nadine who in the meantime had joined the extended family, had all been travelling abroad in their teens and still were looking for their place to stay. Now it became thinkable that Klein Jasedow would be a place for both generations—those in their forties and fifties and those around twenty, in fact it would only be possible to successfully start living in Klein Jasedow if all generations helped each other.

In June 1997 three removal trucks rolled from lake Geneva to Klein Jasedow. By having borrowed money from a friend and received a small heritage from the parents of Christine and Beata the community had been able to buy three derelict residential houses, three barns and the former »culture house« built in GdR times.

1997—present: *Third Movement: Klein Jasedow*

A fireplace in between nettles and thistles, very few provisionally prepared rooms in ruined houses, and a small holiday appartement from the neighbours was all that we could use to make a start. Everywhere around the place there was rubbish left behind by the last inhabitants, old fences and shacks full of empty bottles of schnapps and beer tins. Surprisingly, from the first day friends from all over Germany came to help getting rid of the rubbish and to

renovate the »Schnitterhaus« (reaper's home)—a low cottage built for Polish field workers in the 1920s—to host the first basic infrastructure for the community to make it through the harsh winter. The numerous helpers in this first year turned Klein Jasedow inevitably into a community project larger than the chosen family actually living there. People came, felt at home and promised to stay connected. Four of the young helpers, friends of Tilmann including his girlfriend Nele, decided to join the community in 1998. A baby was born in November 1997, Nadine's and Alex' daughter Sarah, and so there were three generations, and the chosen family had grown to sixteen members.

Due to the total breakdown of the project in Switzerland, in the beginning of the Klein Jasedow phase of the community there was almost no budget for renovations. It was necessary to set up sources for income and to find a bank for a loan enabling construction work. The musical activities—which had been kept on the back burner during the Swiss period—were successfully reactivated with concert tours and workshops abroad, and there were a few clients from Switzerland in the field of software documentation. Alex, one of the young members of the community, had self-developed into a brilliant software engineer in the then pioneering field of content management for websites, and soon a solid software branche in our business units earned money again. Two magazine-projects were set up by Lara and Johannes, and all this gave the chance to create apprenticeships in media de-

sign, office administration, and software development for young people from the wider neighbourhood. When we came to Klein Jasedow, there was 80 (!) percent unemployment in the region—due to the collapse of the big regional GDR farming cooperative and the socialist shipyard in the nearby town, which had caused a loss of more than 6000 jobs. So we endeavoured to create more jobs for locals in the field of administration, acquiring ads for the magazines as well as in the metal workshop started by Johannes to develop instruments for therapeutic use.

Already in the first year the head of the local job-center had discovered us new entrepreneurs, and he offered to organise a job creation measure with 25 locals that could be managed in our office. Johannes allocated a group of them to a herbal garden which had already been initiated by an earlier job creation scheme. Having tested the herbs for quality it seemed promising to him to develop a professional herb company out of the gentle beginnings. Other groups were busy with dismantling abandoned barns and sheds, tidying the landscape or constructing bus shelters. This helped a lot to integrate the new settlers. The job creation project only lasted for one year, but it laid the fundamentals on which we could start the cooperative »Kräutergarten Pommerland« to commercially grow and produce herbal tea—an organic agricultural project functioning as a tiny counterbalance to the industrial farming in this region of Northern Germany. As things developed Kräutergarten Pommerland could be handed down to a team of friends who—encour-

aged by our example and supported by us—had moved to the neighbouring village of Pulow in 1999.

Developing Roots—Allegretto

In the year 2000 the eco-social GLS bank agreed to be a partner in financing, and so reconstruction of the main residential houses could begin. Easter 2004 finally saw the inauguration of the »hall«, our large dining room and kitchen in an intermediate building between the main house and an adjacent former barn. This was an important step as the community had grown and the Schnitterhaus was about to burst at all seams.

Step by step the three generations settling in Klein Jasedow had cultivated their living space and their way of life which more and more developed as a successful synthesis of rural subsistence economy, hightech in the office and artistic activities abroad: growing vegetables in the garden, keeping sheep, chicken, rabbits and draught horses, organising a children's playgroup together with other neighbours, running a metal workshop for all the steel work necessary in construction and beginning to manufacture musical instrument, performing conferences for regional development, doing a lot of political work, executing a lot of publishing work and software programming in the office to pay for the employees, the own living expenses and the bank, Klein Jasedow had turned into a busy place—and into a beautiful one where children grew up in the middle of nature, and in autumn 2004 the first great grandma moved into a second renovated house.

Weathering the Storm—Furioso

The contact to the neighbours in Klein Jasedow remained extremely positive over the years, but in the adjacent villages there were also lines of conflict. They had its sources not in the local people themselves but in the agroindustry. In early autumn 2001 the first harvest of the newly founded cooperative Kräutergarten Pommerland, a field of melissa, suddenly turned white, all the leaves had died off and so did many other plants in the gardens of Klein Jasedow. The herbicide Clomazone, used to fight weeds in a seedbed of oilseed rape, had drifted from a large field nearby and destroyed the chlorophyll in the leaves of the many sensible plants. Everyone in the village was upset, and it became apparent that about 50 other ecological farmers in the whole country had encountered the same problem—yet were unaware about the reason. As we made the accident public it turned out as a huge scandal in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern which was discussed in the media until the ministry of agriculture intervened and silenced the press. They did not want modern agriculture to be criticized. All of a sudden the group in Klein Jasedow was no longer regarded as the victim of the scandal but as its cause—crazy eco-freaks who wanted to disparage conventional agriculture!

The local industrial farmer who tilled 5000 hectares of land seized the moment to start a mobbing campaign against our community. From the beginning on he had not liked our ambition to buy land for the herb-growing company and to reactivate historic bridleways and walking paths—properties of ▶

1.2.4

KLEIN JASEDOW, GERMANY



Tilling with the horse.



The Minister of Environment visiting a building site.

the municipality anyway—, so he made up various rumours, for example that the radical ecologists in Klein Jasedow wanted to erect a green dictatorship where everyone would be forced to go barefeet, eat nettles and won't be allowed to use cars. This he let spread through the families of his employees. Fearing for their jobs, they organised demonstrations and distributed pamphlets calling for the community members and all the new settlers to go back to where they came from. A large stone was thrown through a window, and we were threatened of having our houses set on fire—which in another case not far away actually had happened—and probably we wouldn't have survived this unless our projects had not been rooted so well already. We were surprised by the many supportive friends in the neighbourhood, especially among »ordinary« people who had observed us only from the distance during the first years.

Unexpected Twist—Intermezzo

It was not possible to talk to the mobbers, they refused all ways of communication, so the only way to deal with their aggression was to remain silent. The main spokesperson of the mobbers' group, a lady from the neighbouring village Waschow called Ms. Bliese, ran for the regional elections of 2004 to become mayor of the comune. Johannes Heimrath—who had been deputy mayor since 1999—was the opposing candidate. The population of the comune Pulow, which meanwhile had grown from 330 to 360 inhabitants, was split into two groups who

respectively supportet their candidate—a situation that could evolve into a political paralysis. Realizing this, Johannes took heart and visited Ms. Bliese on the afternoon before the elections. Of course she also knew that her chances were fifty-fifty, and because of this insecurity eventually she was ready to talk. Johannes promised her to make her the deputy mayor in case he would win. He convinced her of his strong will to cooperate for the good of the comune's citizens—otherwise nothing would be accomplished in the coming years. At the end of their meeting Ms. Bliese promised to him the same.

The other day 97 percent of the inhabitants went to the polls, and Ms Bliese won with seven votes more. So Johannes could visit her again, this time with a bouquet of roses to congratulate, and from this moment on the mobbing had an end. It was not easy with Ms. Bliese as a mayor as her vision was completely different from that of the progressive groups. But more and more she got aware that many of her prejudices were ill founded, and eventually she even took part in one of the conferences on regional development organised by Johannes.

This dramatic story of the herbicide accident was a lesson in our personal interpretation of Aikido, the Japanese martial art following the saying: Don't fight your aggressors but take them into your arms dancing, and let them go again.

The Academy Gets off the Ground—Minuetto

In 2007, after ten years of intensive fundraising of 1.3 million Euro donated by foundations and pri-

vate sponsors and a tremendous effort in building work finally the Klanghaus was inaugurated. The old barn where pigs had been kept in GDR times had been transformed to a state of the art concert hall with great acoustics—a place to conduct concerts and teach music and dance, but also an opportunity for the neighbours to celebrate birthdays and weddings. To establish a regular training programme ensuring the permanent utilisation of the Klanghaus a cooperation with the University of Music and Theatre in Hamburg was initiated. From 2009 on the university was partner in offering a two-year vocational training in music therapy in the Klanghaus. This turned out to be very fruitful. The teachers from Hamburg were mainly responsible for the psychological and therapeutic parts of the curriculum, those of Klein Jasedow for the artistic aspects. The visiting teachers enjoyed the atmosphere of the Klanghaus and the holistic approach. All this was carried out within the framework of the European Academy of Healing arts, the non-profit association as the legal body for the educational activities of the community.

But in fact the educational activities of the academy had started much earlier with only a minimum of infrastructure on the campground of Klein Jasedow. The young community members organised summercamps for kids and camps for their large circle of friends where they discussed the core-questions asked in the present book: How can we lead a »good life« in rural Europe? How can we—as settlers out in the pale—contribute to the change of so-

ciety? In the beginning they dreamed about reerecting a ruined village some kilometers away, but after a few years it became apparent that this would be impossible. The national politics would not allow new settlements on that place. This of course was dissapointing especially for Tilmann who from the beginning on did not plan to settle in Klein Jasedow for the rest of his life but to find a new dwelling place to set up his own pioneerig project.

Budding—Affettuoso

Over the years it became more and more obvious that there was a gap between the visions of the younger and the older ones. The latter were ready to invest a huge amount of energy in social entrepreneurship and communal engagement, while the younger had difficulties with the growing dynamics of the process. They also invested an immense amount of work in reconstructing the houses and running businesses to fund the whole project, but they naturally were focussed strongly on their family life as well. Klein Jasedow was growing quite fast in the first ten years, mainly young people were joining, eager to contribute and happy to live at a place offering space to develop themselves. The vision of Klein Jasedow was discussed and renewed every year in retreat times with palavers (see section 3.1.4), and for a long time it felt indeed that there is a common vision shared by all generations. As of 2012 it became more and more visible that most of the young people wanted to start their very own projects after some time of nesting in the commu-

nity, and some of them moved to neighbouring vil-

lages. By the end of the year 2013 it was finally clear who would grow old in Klein Jasedow and who whold head off for new shores: Nele and Tilmann would leave the place together with the family of Nadine and Alex to whom they were very closely related. Those two families had remarkably characterised the place, Tilmann had been the main coordinator of the building work and started together with Nele a social project on a traditional sailing boat they had renovated since 2005. Alex' internet company WebJazz eventually had gained the highest turnover of all business projects in Klein Jasedow, and Nadine did the catering of the workshops in the Klanghaus. If they would leave there would be only two people from the middle generation left—Lara as a member of the community since her childhood, and Matthias who joined in 2008 to help setting up the cultural creative magazine »Oya«. He lived together with his partner Katja in the multi-generational house, which was was newly built from 2008 to 2010 to host more elderly people in the village.

Another Tree Ring Grows—Andante

The remaining core of the community held a retreat over wintertime 2013/2014. After 17 years the first pioneering period seemed to have come to an end. What would be next? The root vision of Klein Jasedow as a »place of learning« emerged in renewed way. How could the place open up and make its experiences available to more people than in its first ▶▶

1.2.4 KLEIN JASEDOW, GERMANY



The Klanghaus once and now.

phase of development where construction work, the setup of small companies and the formation of families were central focuspoints? How could Klein Jasedow develop into an open place to investigate into the question how life in a rural setting could be comprehensively sustainable and fulfilling at the same time?

Music would still be an essential part of this research as a way to experience empathy, mutual listening and inner growth, but also practical fields of learning should evolve like gardening, agriculture, crafts and building with natural materials. After many years of futile effort for the first time there was a chance to buy a few hectares of agricultural land from our oldest neighbours—this would enrich the range of possibilities for Klein Jasedow remarkably. Two large old barns owned by the community still were in ruins and waited for a future purpose.

The remaining group decided to devote the year 2014 fully to the renewing of the Klein Jasedow vision and to the invitation of new community members. So four weeklong »Festivals of the Learning Place« as a forum to get to know and to rethink Klein Jasedow took place, each with about 50 participants. The founders of the community talked about their experiences and made clear that they were ready to let go all existing concepts about the future of Klein Jasedow and invest into an open process of research together with new people. During these festivals it became apparent, how important it is to get into a mode of »listening to the place«,

»listening to the quality of the time« as well as »listening to yourself«. This can bring about visions and decisions that are on the one hand in tune with a spirit, that is already there, and on the other hand an openness to new emerging perspectives and qualities that allow this spirit to evolve into an unknown future. It seemed important to go into a very slow mode of development: It takes time to be able to listen. This was a difference to the first years of Klein Jasedow with its extremely high speed in project development.

New Game, New Chance—Scherzo

During the year 2015 altogether 16 new and old friends moved into Klein Jasedow to become part of the community, amongst them three families with small kids. It was a phase to peacefully say good buy to those heading for new shores and to reinvent the community on a larger scale. This process is still going on. It was astonishing how fast the new group began to feel like a large family again. Because it is larger than before there are different levels of intimacy among different people but it is still one complex organism based on affection, mutual trust and a common household. It is a learning process in itself to integrate longterm settlers and newcomers into a new larger whole that develops its own collective intelligence, its speed of development and forms of communicating and organising. Part of this is documented in this book.

Besides this main learning process going on in Klein Jasedow new forms of sharing and learning

together with people from all over Germany and Europe are about to develop. On the campground a timber-framed house made only from local materials was set up with the help of many groups of volunteers coming from abroad. This group shared much more than just knowledge about traditional building work but all the questions of how to lead a meaningful life and contribute to the wellbeing of nature and society at the same time. In a similar way we would like to integrate experts and learners in the evolving agricultural project: seven hectares of fields and three hectares of pasture will be turned into a longterm permaculture-experiment to develop full self-sufficiency for the community and other villagers. Another 15 hectares of rented arable land will be an experimental field for restoring humus on a depleted industrially farmed land. The teaching work in the Klanghaus is also in a constant evolution. Instead of music therapy the main training course is now called »facilitation through music«. Most of the Klanghaus students did not want to work in a clinic but to learn creative approaches of musical work, mainly in the field of preventative health protection. Therefore a new curriculum was set up enabling students to use music to support individual and group processes of all kinds. The community reflects about integrating the various fields of learning more and more and is open for new ways to develop.

A significant transformation was going on in Klein Jasedow in summer 2017 when the European Academy of Healing Arts was permitted to run an

alternative primary school. The school will reside in the former office in the very centre of the village opposite the Klanghaus and will start with about ten children. The office moved provisionally into a container. This move took place at the very weekend of the closing festival of the EU-project enabling the existence of this book. This weekend marked a moment of transition—the end of the story of Klein Jasedow where the development of businesses to create an economic basis for the project and generate jobs for unemployed neighbours was at the centre of affairs with the office as central building of the village. In the future the learning of children will be in the centre which is inextricably linked with the learning process of the grown ups who ask themselves how to contribute to the wellbeing of the seven coming generations—as the indigenous people from North America use to say.

The EU-festival represented another aspect in the reinvention of Klein Jasedow as a place of learning: to exchange with people from all over the world, young travellers who look for their meaningful contribution to society as well as pioneers who care for eco-social rural projects. There is no ready made plan yet how to continue with international networking, but it is for sure that this process of exchanging with friends from all over the world will continue. They contribute to a paradigm shift which is underway at every place in Europe where people realise that it is possible to live as an earthly creature peacefully within the community of non-human creatures, be nourished by the abundance of

the gifts of the land and to unfold all human potentials without any of the imperialistic, extractivistic excesses of modern consumer society.

Light and Shadow—Grave

Of course, what may sound so nice here so far, is only one gentle voice in the otherwise cacophonous drama of the world—yes, not just outside of us! We are inseparately connected to everything what happens all over the planet, and whatever terrible takes place is as close to us as the beauty of our heimat. Of course we cannot positively contribute to the drama of the world without deeply knowing about our entanglement with all the present processes many of which are impending to lead humankind into very dire straits—and most probably in our lifetime.

But—although being a tremendous motivation for our efforts to create best conditions for a good life of the seven generations to come too—this definitely is a chapter in another book ... **KU**

1.2.5 SLUŇÁKOV, CZECH REPUBLIC



Sluňákov before it all started.



Outdoor excursion at the House of Nature.

Sluňákov: A Place to Meet for a Debate Over the World We Share

In the eastern part of the Czech Republic, on the flat lands near the Morava River, lies the beautiful historical town of Olomouc. It takes only a little while to walk from Olomouc Town Square to the river side, and then, upstream, for approximately 5 kilometres north of the village of Horka nad Moravou, where we have established Sluňákov—a centre of ecological activities, at the end of the village, by the local cemetery. We took our name after *sluňák*, a type of a local stone—quartzite.

Surrounded by low-lying fields near the river, right on the border of the Litovelské Pomoraví Protected Landscape Area—an ecologically significant area of floodplain forest, inland river wetland and rich flora and fauna—we run environmental education programmes for schools and for public, and maintain a unique visitor centre: the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature. It originated from the idea of creating a place, where people could meet and debate the world we share, from different perspectives, with emphasis put on environmental issues. Exhibits by Czech artists are situated in places to enable visitors to pause and reflect. The artists have attempted to connect their art spatially to the landscape to enhance appreciation of both their art and nature. Each exhibit provides a unique perspective from which to reflect and meditate.

Founder of Sluňákov in the legal sense is the City of Olomouc. The Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature walking trail was founded by the Nature Con-

servation Agency of the Czech Republic (*Agentura ochrany přírody a krajiny*)—mainly using EU funds. Sluňákov is the author of the idea and we manage the site.

Historically the Haná fields, on which the House of Nature is sited, were fertile, but after the political changes of 1989, they were abandoned. The field got water-logged, and nobody wanted to cultivate the land. We had the idea to create a centre of environmental education dedicated to the development of a closer relationship between man and nature; a gateway to the Litovelské Pomoraví easily accessible, along with a major cycle trail, serving the 100,000 citizens living in and around the city of Olomouc.

Our first plan was to construct three buildings: an alternative school with a curriculum focused on environmental education; a farm where we would both manage the land and provide children with week-long educational courses; and a hotel to offer environmentally friendly forms of tourism—hiking, cycling, canoeing, and horse riding. This plan was not put into practice.

Nonetheless, the biodiversity of the 15-hectare field was transformed by creating five distinct habitats: wetland, meadow, flowing water—branches of the Morava river—, stagnant water—ponds and pools—, and a cultural landscape—the local village, housing development, archaeological finds.

Eventually in 2007 came the first big success, when we opened our low-energy house. The house is divided into two parts: a visitor centre with a re-

ception desk, and a hall and accommodation facility, enabling us to organize the day and weeklong residential environmental education programmes for all types of schools.

In 2014 there was another step forward when the area around the low energy building underwent major changes. The walking trail was enhanced by some of the most significant contemporary Czech artists who created their interpretations of meeting places: František Skála created a Garden of Eden in the form of a ship, Miloslav Fekar created a Forest Temple dedicated to the powers of the Sun and the Magical Forest playground; Miloš Šejn made his Solar Mountain topped with a Solar Bell and inside of it a Cave of Dreams, a well with a Well's Bell; and Marcel Hubáček, created the Fireplace of the Golden Spiral.

The Roots of Growth

The success of the educational area in Horka nad Moravou is the result of a great deal of preparatory work, long-term explaining and lobbying. The main areas of our work are:

- ▶ environmental education programmes for all kinds of schools;
- ▶ the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature visitor centre's programme for public;
- ▶ public campaigns—e.g. waste reduction and recycling;
- ▶ public lectures;
- ▶ debates;
- ▶ events for the public;

- ▶ field trips to interesting landscapes;
- ▶ exhibitions and competitions;
- ▶ concerts, theatre performances and artistic performances.

We also organise educational events taking place in the town of Olomouc.

Timeline

The first ideas to establish a centre of environmental activities occurred immediately after the upheaval of social revolution in 1989. In the beginning, there was only a growing desire germinating in the heads of a clerk and a few students from the local university. The seed idea was to find a place in farmland at the edge of a nature protected area, which would enable environmental education to be combined with a visitor centre. Gradually this seed germinated, and the fields by the village of Horka nad Moravou were transformed into meadows with ponds. Then in 2007, after almost twenty years, the Joker was played, and the seedling started to bud with the building of the low energy house. Over the next seven years the park matured with the creation of the artistic displays on the walking trail.

Both projects—the low energy building and notably the House of Nature with artworks—were difficult in their gestation. There were several possible interpretations of their usage. The use of art for environmental education raised a range of questions, and how the art objects would fit spatially into the reclaimed landscape proved difficult for investors to visualise. This concept was not easy to explain in

the brief, and that was why initially our concept of combined artworks with nature appeared incomprehensible to possible investors. The implementation of the project was postponed several times, due to the length of the approval process, and constant changes in negotiations with investors—City of Olomouc, State Environmental Fund, and Ministry of Environment—also aroused tensions amongst project implementers: architects, companies and artists.

However, the current state of the art strongly confirms that ideas of enabling the creation of good things usually take a long time to get realised, and often they encounter a large number of obstacles standing in the way. In our case, long-term project implementation meant seeking support for the project across the political spectrum, and in the end this fact led to some stability in the support from local political figures, who often significantly interceded in critical disputes about the project.

The People

Staff numbers have gradually increased to twenty. Strong personalities dedicating a lot of time and energy to supporting the organization and its ideas have been a key element in our success story. They have attracted more and more people and have been an important support for all the employees. Volunteers were vital to us, their enthusiasm was obvious, and they helped to develop the organisation after its institutionalisation. They boost the spontaneity and joy of the events we organize. ▶▶

1.2.5 SLUŇÁKOV, CZECH REPUBLIC



Workshop on waste recycling.



Receiving the Grand Prix for the House of Nature.

The Town

The project has been strongly supported by the local municipality. The City of Olomouc contributed 40 million CZK to the low energy building project—half of the grant. This is an unusually high level of financial support for an environmental project to be given by an individual municipality. The City of Olomouc's support strengthened the credibility of our projects when negotiating at State or EU level. The support of local politicians also helped us to overcome widespread mistrust.

The University

The Palacký University in Olomouc means a lot for Sluňákov and our activities. It is our strong partner in professional consultations and is closely linked to our environmental education programmes. Close cooperation has developed with the departments concerned with ecology, environmental sciences, natural sciences and pedagogy. University students make up a significant part of the Sluňákov workforce, volunteer centre staff and supporters of the environmental education programs.

Concept of Environmental Education

The mission of Sluňákov is to provide an experience and understanding that—combined—develop a more respectful relationship between nature and individuals. The aim of our environmental education programmes is not to replace current school environmental education programs but to supplement them and to give them the opportunity to de-

velop in a unique way. Our environmental education programmes aim to achieve our mission by

- ▶ containing at least a pinch of wisdom;
- ▶ viewing information and problems within their contexts and from different standpoints, thus enabling a better understanding of the place of humanity in the universe;
- ▶ providing time for reflection, in a space for pre-meditation, to enable individuals to search and solve problems, with time to create their own ideas and make their own mistakes, thus enabling them to develop better orientation within a complex world;
- ▶ putting emphasis on posing interesting questions, rather than giving clear answers;
- ▶ intentionally providing escapes from the virtual world to the natural world, with all its physicality, smells, sounds, surfaces to explore, walk, perceive the natural elements, obstacles, ...;
- ▶ taking into account the feelings of enchantment, adventure, playfulness, search, emotional passion, empathy for the others to develop individual communication skills;
- ▶ viewing the landscape and nature around us as the world worthy of respect and love.

On the Way from Institution to NGO And Back?

Establishing Sluňákov—a place of education in the rural area—had unusual beginnings. The first steps within the Department of Environment of the City of Olomouc were covert attempts to stimulate informal discussion with the general public and the

students of local schools. Gradually, the concept of environmental education was established and a separate Department of Environmental Education was formed. This department established close connections to the regional and national ecological movements and organized the festival Olomouc Ecology Days, up to the present one of the biggest festivals of its kind, now with more than 20 years of tradition.

In 2007, the City of Olomouc set up a separate organisation, Sluňákov—the Olomouc Centre of Ecological Activities. It manages us through the administrative board and supervisory board.

The origin of the separate organization is closely linked with a gradually growing environmental education program, that outgrew the usual official constraints. As a non-government organization, Sluňákov could apply for a wider range of financial subsidies. After a while, Sluňákov was able to stand on its own feet. The City of Olomouc's contribution to the budget is now only 20 percent of the overall budget of the organisation.

As a consequence of the huge scale of our activities, a large flow of funds throughout the year is now needed to support the administration and bureaucracy—all these factors have gradually forced us to professionalise and institutionalise.

The scope of our activities is varied, and we offer high-quality services, so we have successfully gone through the financial crisis—at the same time as the grant opportunities are decreasing to a minimum. However, the future is still uncertain, despite

the great demand for our services among schools and the public.

Freedom is Within Our Reach

There is a huge amount of administration connected with Sluňákov. There is a constant tension between financing provided by many different institutions, decisionmaking in the hands of the administrative board appointed by the City of Olomouc, and all the activities organised on the premises which are not owned by Sluňákov. Despite the tensions the feedback we are receiving from all our visitors makes it apparent that all they are aware of is the attempt of Sluňákov employees to provide quality service, accompanied by enthusiasm, a smile, willingness to meet programme participants' needs, provide them with an environment where they feel good, where they have time for themselves and the things around them, and have a place where they can meet and discuss. Sluňákov is and continues to be a meeting place with a positive atmosphere, a space with freedom to perceive the important aspects of human life: with an emphasis put on a healthy environment and development of a good relationship with nature, the landscape and home.

Usually, Sluňákov lecturers come to work at the organisation after previous voluntary or external work experience with us. They become a part of the team and tune in with the programme offered. It is important for Sluňákov to build a free space with a creative atmosphere, where people can engage with their own ideas and contribute to their diversity. **sl**

PART II

SHARING OUR EXPERIENCES

	EMB	EMBERCOMBE
	FEC	FOCUS ECOCENTER
	GDG	GARDEN OF GENERATIONS
	KJ	KLEIN JASEDOW
	SL	SLUŇÁKOV



2.1 PREREQUISITES FOR STARTING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

Mac Macartney is the founder of Embercombe, which seeks to inspire committed action for a truly sustainable world.

It started with a story of a man, who was on his search of »Finding Earth Finding Soul«, the story of search for meaning and purpose in a society that is captivated by values and beliefs that are assaulting Earth's life-systems and collapsing society in upon itself. Over a period of twenty years Mac was men-

tored and coached by Native American medicine people. During this training and ever since he has attempted to bring two worlds together—an ancient world view that emphasises relationship, interdependence, and reverence for life with the huge challenges and equally huge opportunities of the 21st Century.

In his teachings and stories, Mac intertwines several themes which in our society are rarely per-

ceived as being in close relationship—the quest for meaning and purpose, organisation and leadership, nature, conformity, and the role of ordinary women and men in seeking and securing a future that will serve our children well. Embercombe is a call to people who find themselves standing on the sidelines. As an outcome, we at Embercombe realise that mainstream culture has led man away from nature. Nature can live without us, but we cannot live with-

out nature, our mother Earth.

Mac shares over and over again, how pain, loneliness, and some measure of suffering can become doorways to courageous acts that have the potential to illuminate our lives. His vision of Embercombe is: a social enterprise which seeks »to inspire committed action for a truly sustainable world«.

Embercombe is also a place of story. It not only tells a story but it also holds storytelling as an im-

portant ingredient for being connected to our ancestors, to the land, to Mother Earth, to the ones we encounter, to ourselves and to the future generations. It is in fact an important part of our educational programmes. **EMB**

When we started our project we were looking for an existing traditional community in Transylvania—a still traditional rural area—which could serve as a model of transition of the rural areas from past to future. This transition model should try to find answers to the problems of consumerism and offer solutions to the different crisis of modern society—food, identity, degradation of eco-system services, etc. One of the challenges was to find the right size of the territory and of the community for our project. We believe that our initiative has to be based on a well-defined and stable community because individual initiatives resp. good practices will have low chances to offer a suitable model for building up a successful model. In the Niraj microregion, where the Focus Eco Center started its initiative for rural development, we identified such a traditional community based on the Niraj river watershed. However this community was split into three subcommunities, based on the geographical situation and

on the basic activities of the people from the villages: On the upper side of the valley the people use to work in the forest and in the wood industry, in the middle in handicrafts and agriculture, and in the lower part of the valley people are focusing on agriculture, mainly growing vegetables. But we perceived all these activities as complementary to each other, and so we handled the Niraj valley as a single community—if ever the inhabitants would define themselves as »people from the Niraj valley«. In that area like everywhere the modernization process has begun, and our aim was not to stop the change, but we wanted to help avoiding widespread mistakes like the degradation of community life and identity, degradation of the natural environment, and loss of the traditional knowledge and self-sustainability.

The basic philosophy of our project is to support the traditional, sustainable agricultural practices and the rural lifestyle, which is based on three pillars:

- ▶ a life close to nature with high biodiversity;
- ▶ an active community life;
- ▶ a high level of self-sustainability—especially concerning food.

Today, this way of leading a »good life« is endangered by consumerism and a consumerist lifestyle which is not at all sustainable.

We know that even if we would have a theoretical basis for our activities based on rescuing of the valuable local knowledge and the preservation of the agricultural practices—which created the fabulous landscape of Transylvania with its enormous biodiversity—we would have to prove the viability and sustainability of our theoretical approach by practical examples.

In that area respect for domestic animals, and generally for the nature, still can be identified. Animals are treated as part of the family, and they are not considered as a mere source of profit. People say that the animals have to eat first and the humans

after them. This special relationship with their animals makes the local people understand the interdependency between human society and nature. Also the wild animals are treated with respect, and their habitat is preserved, which ensures a high biodiversity in the area. The community life is actively supported by the church and the local priests—the locals are catholic and protestant.

We are convinced that all these elements have to be preserved for the future if we want to avoid an urbanisation and industrialisation of the rural areas. We think that rural areas have to keep to be different from urban areas, and in this respect we have to preserve the key elements which make the difference between the urban and the rural space. Otherwise we cannot preserve the rural areas as resources for life and elements of stability in the society of the future.

We started the project by elaborating a sustainable development strategy for the community—con-

sisting of three municipalities—from the middle part of the Niraj valley, and we adopted a participatory methodology which involved the local people. Of course we were aware that we wouldn't have the capacity to implement this strategy entirely by our own forces. So we decided to start implementing our strategy at a first stage by small scale projects focusing on agriculture and water management.

We were aware that we were initiating something contradicting the actual mainstream trends. So our philosophy was to make our initiative as attractive as possible for the members of the larger community, and in case of success we expected that the initiative would extend itself like an inkblot along the whole microregion, offering a model of sustainable rural development for whole Romania and maybe even for other countries. **FEC**

2.1.1 ETHICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

For Markus Distelberger, the founder of the Garden of Generations (GdG), there was no special philosophical or spiritual call to start this project. Markus sees it as a live-task to find and create solutions for the question »how can I play a positive role in society in order to find and create new ways of living? «.

On the other hand spirituality is an important factor in all different kinds of projects that try to find good ways of living together without harming nature. People who develop their spirituality have more power to actually change something. Feeling the connection with something greater than

us, gives everyone a lot of energy. Or the other way round: It is very hard to create change, when you just make it up out of thin air.

Markus Distelberger often emphasizes that in developing any project it is important to accept that we will never know everything. We will always be confronted with mysteries. We will never know why exactly we live. If you feel that way, it is likely that you as a founder of a project develop an open system without fixed ideologies.

To talk nowadays about spirituality is a touchy subject. Just by using the word you will have many

different interpretations, concepts and misunderstandings.

If you trust in life it can happen that you are deeply touched by a a mystic experience—maybe even awestruck. As an example: Walking in a forest touches Markus deeply. For him this is a good example of spirituality.

In that sense spirituality is as important as the air to breathe. Many problems in this world develop because of lack of spirituality. Even in religious contexts spirituality might be lost. This loss is often connected with becoming a secluded system ruled by

thoughts like: »We know what is right and wrong«, »There are no alternatives«, »We are the good people, outside are the bad ones«. It belongs to the ethical basics of the GdG to practise an attitude of openness and awareness towards the deeper levels and sources of inspiration and energy of human existence.

The name of the project »Garten der Generationen«—Garden of Generations—is inspired by the saying of the indigenous people of North America that you should judge each of your steps according to the question whether it may harm or benefit

the seven generations to come. This attitude is part of the ethical basis of the project: Can we leave the earth in a better state to following generations? Of course this should not create pressure to make everything perfect—there will be enough work left for the people to follow. In many indigenous traditions children and elders are the main pillars of society while in modern culture the young and the elderly are locked away in public institutions. Therefore it is an important aim of the project to create a space where all generations can live and learn together. **GdG**

The community of Klein Jasedow doesn't follow any specific ideology or spiritual tradition. The reason why the four founders—as young musicians in the mid seventies of the past century—came together was the simple fact of them falling in love with each other. They wanted to share their life, their music and their search for a way to be in the world without exploiting others and nature—which seems to be impossible amidst a society following the western lifestyle. In this search it helps to have an open mind and to be ready to question everything—and an attitude of asking instead of answering is certainly

one of the ethical basics of Klein Jasedow: to deeply listen to each other and to listen to the world as it is—and then try to follow the »call« that emerges from this attention. This may not be a »philosophy« but very much the foundations of the Klein Jasedow project, and it may be rooted in the fact that it was founded by professional musicians who—improvising—developed their own musical language which made it necessary to learn how to listen.

In a mode of listening there is interest for everything around you. It is important to clearly communicate about your individual situation as

well as it is essential to hear and feel the others, so there is a constant play between individuality and community, individual freedom and commitment for the whole. Maybe it is this musical attitude towards life that attracted others to join the community. Everyone may have his or her own philosophical background, but there is an unspoken common commitment to practice this attitude of active listening. So although all of us have our personal theoretical background, we share the one background of our common life experiences.

An attitude of questioning and careful listening

brings about an egalitarian approach to all fields of life. We are different and may have different energy or authority in different circumstances, but we try to avoid hierarchies wherever we can. This doesn't mean that everything has to be discussed and decided by everyone all the time—which is not needed as long as the basic notion among us is to welcome each person, whatever their age, as an equally worthy being. To overcome adultism, recognizing children as selfdetermined beings, belongs to the basic essentials of the community since its beginnings.

And this is true for nature too: That man is a con-

queror and tamer of nature is an obvious destructive cultural pattern, and we aim to cherish the »more than human world«—as the philosopher David Abram names nature—as in no way inferior to human culture. As humans, to live in a small planet not only as a »part of nature« but as unique expressions of the living planet itself brings about an attitude of humbleness. And at the same time it demands to develop our full personal potential, may it be artistic, intellectual or in our relationships.

Our motto is: »Better than a bunch of likeminded people is a community of not-likeminded ones.« **KJ**

Vision And Mission

Sluňákov's vision is developing a respectful relationship between nature and the human. We aim »to provide an experience and understanding which,

when combined, develops a more respectful relationship between nature and individuals.«

Why is nature a value for us?—Because we are natural beings and cannot exist without her. We

perceive nature as an environment that transcends man. It is a unique and life-giving environment. Man is dependent on the state of the environment, we cannot exist without nature. On the contrary, na-

ture can manage without mankind. All we have are nature's »gifts«. The idea of Sluňákov and its activities is tied to the efforts of strengthening the bonds between people and nature and the environment in

which they live. To quote Michal Bartoš, one of the centre's founding members and its director: »I believe this pursuit is important because people are natural beings rooted in the living world and bound **►►**

2.1.1 ETHICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

by a fragile web of relationships to everything they create. To put it simply: Nature would manage just fine without human beings. There is hardly anything in the living world about which we can say the same. And this is precisely where I find the meaning of Sluňákov's mission – about the sense to be humble and remain preferably silent.

What is Sluňákov? It might be easier to say what it is not. It is not green; after all, nature is full of colours. It is not a political party; Sluňákov is an advocate of everything that lives in nature, with an awareness of its fundamental life-giving role. Sluňákov is not a movement; it doesn't want to promote something at any cost, it doesn't aim to twist anybody's arm. Instead, it would prefer to sensitively appreciate and cautiously offer a concept of nature in which all creatures exist in a web of intricate and variable relationships. In such a way, na-

ture offers people its full bounty.

Sluňákov's goal is to remain an organisation that reminds us that all of our strengths and weaknesses, joys and sorrows, all of our buildings, inventions and activities are based on the possibilities provided by nature.«

We do not put culture in contrast to nature. Both culture and nature are evolving in mutual relationship while nature is the foundation—because it is self-sufficient—and not the other way round. The landscape that surrounds us has many different features—from an untouched wilderness to agricultural land. All these are part of nature.

Philosophy

Members of the Department of Philosophy and Natural History of the Faculty of Sciences at Charles University in Prague—reopened after 1989—have

strongly influenced our organisation. In particular, it was the philosophy of nature in the work of biologist and philosopher Zdeněk Neubauer. His texts were initiatory, opening our view of nature in its diversity as a bundle of admirable stories—like an adventure. The book he wrote together with Tomáš Škrdlant »The Hidden Truth of the Earth. The Elements as Archetypes of Ecological Thinking« (*Skrytá pravda Země. Živly jako archetypy ekologického myšlení*) has had a significant impact on the design of The Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature—our interpretative park with works of art.

Another member of the Faculty to influence Sluňákov's philosophical and intellectual background is Zdeněk Kratochvíl. In the first version of his book »The Philosophy of Living Nature« (*Filosofie živé přírody*) we read: »And why does nature like to hide? So that we do not fear its abyss. [...] the phy-

sis enables its beauty, to be not always terrifying, and enables also all of the dullness and the beauty of philosophy and science. It hides partly in order for actuality/reality to be alive and capable of surprising us, even in spite of all our efforts at gaining knowledge.«

Pedagogy

In pedagogy, we are interested in different alternative education approaches. However, we are not following certain pedagogical trends. Rather, we are inspired by certain attributes, such as playfulness, work in groups, emphasis put on contexts, development issues, leaving activity to pupils or communication between learners.

Landscape

Our understanding of landscape has been influ-

enced by geologist Vaclav Čílek and botanist Jiří Sádlo. They perceive landscape through the perspective of humanities, as a cultural and historical complex, a kind of story, narration, rather than exploring landscape's scientific features.

Ecology and environmentalism

Ecology as a transdisciplinary science, environmentalism, nature conservation and protection is another pillar we are based on. Our programmes aim to popularize and make people familiar with the relations and interactions between organisms and their environment. In our activities, we fall back on abundant knowledge of course, but the education itself is more based on feeling. **sl**

»There is a wind blowing and it's calling us, I feel, it's calling me. And I think that question, what can I do? There's another question alongside it. Who, me? Who, me? Me that is just an ordinary person with a rather average intellect, nothing very special about me, I don't look so hot, I've got an average kind of background and an average kind of job or I'm averagely unemployed.

Who, me? No I don't think that includes me I ... I'mmm ... I'll ... do my little bit, I'll ... I'll follow. But the invitation to us that is carried on the wind at the moment says yes you, yes you!

Our corporations are filled with people who are exactly the same as us, the same proportions of those that are stupid, ignorant, slothful and all the rest of it and those that have energy and vision.

We can change them, we can be extraordinary at this great time. Were we to reframe from deciding that we are the good guys and some other identified group are the bad ones?

But we are called to be courageous, courageous. There is no middle ground, there's no flying under the radar. No, we locate what's at the core, at the centre of our heart, in our true knowing of what we

know to be true and then we stand by that and we speak it out, and we sing it and we create businesses folded around it and we are artists around it and we are everything around it. There is no middle ground, we have no time to play no sort of games ...

Is a pathetic little song that's sung by an old paradigm. If we are going to speak of a new paradigm then it is we, we take that knowing in ourselves that life is sacred and we walk it forward, we walk it forward.

And the implications of this are huge, are huge.«
(Taken from Mac's speech »Who me?«)

Our young people need to observe and see us and know that we are embodying this change and not leaving it to them.

And when they see us, then they will know that the same longing exists inside them and they will bring their wonderful bright youthfulness forward.

And the elders, those in their 50 plus and all the rest of it, who our society has decided are somehow redundant to the present and certainly to the future, will understand that they too are called to be courageous, that they too are called to be brave like they have never being brave before and speak, and

rap, and write poems, and create businesses, and do stuff.

A leader is someone who is brave enough to act on what he or she knows to be truth. This is the kind of leader we need anyway.

Who, me? **EMB**

Before the political change in 1989 we used to spend a lot of time with friends in nature, in rural areas. We didn't have access to a lot of possibilities which were accessible and normal for a young person in the democratic countries. This fact—the time spent in nature—created a special feeling concerning the natural environment, and we used to have long walks in the rural areas and get food from the local people. We got used to the taste of the natural products, products which today can be purchased from the »bio«-sections in the supermarkets. For me personally it was very important to spend time in that special landscape, with a large biodiversity, meadows with wild flowers, a lot of species of birds, butterflies, and at the time I was thinking that this would stay forever.

After the change in 1989—bringing about personal freedom—through market economy all the problems of consumerism arrived in Romania, but the country and its people were not prepared for this. Meanwhile, the degradation of the natural environment proceeds very fast, the rivers and forests fill up with wasted packaging materials and plastic bottles. I was very disappointed about this evolution, and I got involved in the environmental movement trying to fight against these processes. I believed in the possibility to have a combination of human freedom and the preservation of the natural environment.

In the nineties the question was debated in Romania, where rural life and rural space would go? Would we follow the European model of industri-

alisation of agriculture and the urbanisation of the rural space? What would be the ideal size for a local community to survive in a relatively autonomous way? Following these debates a vision evolved that ecologically relatively closed systems—in our case small river basins—should be considered as the basis for a communal development strategy, as the villages proved to be too small in order to serve as a basic cellule within the new social tissue of sustainable development. In our vision only microregions would be able to develop a larger scale of self-sufficiency concerning food, water and energy, and active exchange with other regions would be rich in quality albeit limited in quantity. At that time some visionary politicians proposed a structure which overlaid the region Central Transylvania by a mi-

croregional structure. This served as a guideline for our further actions.

In the nineties, I was spending a lot of time to study the development of the rural landscape in Western European countries, especially during my studies in France, and I understood that there is a movement resisting mainstream trends and wanting to restore the rural space in Europe. I understood also that for the people being part of this movement the high diversity especially from our landscape is much desired, so our landscape could be a model.

I tried to start discussions about how to save our Transylvanian landscape. We were thinking that in order to implement our theory we would need a territory to demonstrate its viability in practice. I grew up in the largest locality of the Niraj microregion, in

Miercurea Nirajului, and I knew the rich biodiversity from the area and the sustainable agricultural practices as well as the community life in the villages. I was sad about having to watch the degradation of the natural environment which reduced also the economical capacity of the area, for example its potential for tourism. Furthermore, I worried about the increasing dependency of the local people from the large supplier chains and the supermarkets. So my main motivation to start a rural development project was that I wanted to save the place of my childhood from the degradation. **FEC**

2.1.2 THE CALL—POWER OF VISION

In 2002 Markus Distelberger decided to pause his career as a lawyer and to close down his law firm in Herzogenburg after many years of busy work. From this point on he decided to devote all his energy into exploring new ideas of economy, community living and organisational forms. He also got trained as a mediator. With this radical step Markus continued what was very important for his family 20 years before—community. The needs of being a young family and the desire to offer a great environment for his four children motivated him at that time to initiate the co-housing project »Dörflein« (»hamlet«) and later the alternative school »Lernwerkstatt«

Since the early 1970s, the founders of the community that since the past twenty years has settled in Klein Jasedow have had the vision of a place, where people can devote themselves to a gentle way of cultivating the earth and to a peaceful way of cultivating community and the authentic expression of their own creativity—and of course engage with the challenges of our times and connect with movements of social change. Then they had visited many places, were about to acquire half of a mountain in Eastern Austria, but for many reasons—one of it being the usual lack of finances—the right place never was found, and one reason also was the perpetual lack of finances. In the early nineties there

(»learning workshop«, following the pedagogy of Rebeca and Mauricio Wild.

Having quit his former job he used his newly acquired freedom to read everything about transformative approaches for bringing about eco-social change. In 2004 he began to organise symposia in Herzogenburg on topics like »Alternative Money and Economics« or »Building with and for Community«. These events under the motto »7 Generations« which lasted for three days each had a great response: About 150 people visited them, and interesting speakers were ready to contribute like the founder of nonviolent communication Mar-

was a phase when a Swiss friend had convinced the core group of the community to start a software-business in Switzerland—he was a software developer—in order to earn enough money to invest in a plot of land. Out of many reasons this ended up in a severe conflict—the project totally crashed, and the group of Germans was left alone on their Swiss mountain and did not know where to go. In this absolutely desperate situation there was a strong call to the group to stay together—no matter what happens. This call did exist from the beginning on, but it was strongly renewed in this extreme situation. Connected with this commitment was an openness to find a new place to settle, and this place showed

shall Rosenberg, the experts for regional currencies Margrit Kennedy and Bernard Lietaer and also people from South America who shared experiences from indigenous economic approaches and the idea of »buen vivir«.

The outcomes of these yearly symposia influenced greatly a growing vision of Markus Distelberger: to initiate a community project which was more than just co-housing, but a place where people bring about and realise cultural transformation in a way that was discussed during the 7-generations-symposia. As a lawyer he had supported a lot of community projects all over Austria and knew their

up immediately after the decision to stay together was made. It showed up in an article in the magazine »Der Spiegel« (see also part II, history). When Johannes Heimrath read about the village Klein Jasedow and the surrounding landscape he was so caught by the sound of the village's name that he instantly knew that he was reading about the new place to go to. Of course there would be numerous challenges waiting there—a village surrounded by industrial agriculture, but there was a readiness in him to meet these challenges, to react to the call coming from this place.

The other members of the community did not hear this call so strongly, and some were afraid of the

problems. One of them was to deal with money, debt and property and therefore he had the vision to develop a different model of ownership and fundraising. This eventually led to the invention of the »wealth pool«.

In the year 2007 work on the GdG project started with Markus' strong wish to create a community with a comprehensive transformative approach. The following vision was developed: »The Garden of Generations is a social biotope for researching and practising a positive culture with a subsistence strategy of connectedness. By mutual support we widen the degree of self-sufficiency, bundle re-

demolished infrastructure when they first visited Klein Jasedow, but all of them fell in love with the landscape—it resembled the former dwelling place of the community, a lonely valley in upper Bavaria with round hills, small lakes and forests nearby. Over a few months the certainty grew in everyone that Klein Jasedow definitely was the place they had been looking for through all their lives. It almost felt as if the place itself had called us here. This taught us to trust in the power of a call. It had been active in the hearts of the community members for twenty years before, and because it constantly had stayed alive it inevitably led to a realisation of a place where the vision could unfold. It still is a vision and although

sources and create free space.« In the year 2016 the six sectors of this vision were defined:

- ▶ Living;
- ▶ Working;
- ▶ Parenting and children;
- ▶ Gardening;
- ▶ Care;
- ▶ Outer Community.

In all of these areas there should be activity on the site. As the project still is in a pioneering phase and no residential houses have been built yet, only in one of the sectors—gardening—there is already practical work going on. **GdG**

many details have been realised by now, there are some deeper aspects waiting for some next decades to come. It is not important how much you can realise, it is important to stay connected to the call and to stay in the process of constantly recreating your vision anew. **K**

2.1.2 THE CALL—POWER OF VISION

Michal puts it simply: »Nature makes me feel good.« When he speaks about the call, he remembers back to his childhood and the times he spent at his grand-ma's, in the Litovelské Pomoraví, where he went through experiences of closeness to nature.

The study choice he made was a bit of a rebellion against his father, who was a historian. Michal decided to study at the Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences of the Palacký University. He focused on ecology within its scientific framework—nature conservation, landscape protection, land-use management, and restoration activities.

He did not wish to continue within the scientific approach, so he decided to work in the Department of Environment at the local municipality. Working there, he sowed seeds of cooperation between the department and schools and also got to know other

environmental education centres in the Czech Republic. He had the vision to keep the topic of the relationship between man and nature as a part of public discourse while using different tools—at the right moment, with a favourable political situation, a great portion of luck and with great numbers of volunteers, collaborators and colleagues enthusiasts, who all kept trying to put this vision into practice—to bring it to life. So finally, Sluňákov was born. At the same time, Michal felt that understanding response to environmental problems by monitoring the damage needs to be complemented by studying mankind's interactions with the world. He, therefore, went on to complement his master's degree with a doctoral programme in social studies at the Department of Environmental Studies of Masaryk University in Brno.

Nature does not speak the human language. Sluňákov creates activities, through which nature speaks to people in a nonverbal way. Often it are the arts that serve as keys to understanding nature. We are trying to uncover the forgotten forms of the relationship between man and nature.

The composed landscape at the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature contains some of the components that were used by the gardeners and the architects on the grounds of the mansions of Czech nobility, at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. They composed English parks—romantic gardens, close to nature. Our House of Nature can be perceived as a miniature romantic—emotional, dreamy—garden, which was created for other purposes—environmental education—and at other times.

Our House of Nature is also about the Litovelské Pomoraví landscape, in which once Liechtenstein strengthened the genius loci of the countryside around river Morava by building a number of romantic edifices and constructing follies. One of them was a U-shaped cave called Podkova (»horse-shoe«), which resulted from connecting two natural limestone caves. For many kids it was a place of adventure when they entered this cave with or without flashlights and courageously went through the underground world. Michal once climbed through the cave when he was a young boy: »I got lost in one short corridor. I suddenly reached its end. Although I knew I just had to go back and carry on in the darkness, with spiders and bats, I had lost my orientation. Yet, while in great fear and struck by the sense of awe, I crawled towards the exit.

But it didn't show up. I experienced something like timelessness; the twenty meters under the ground seemed infinite to me, and when I emerged into the daylight I was no longer the same.« (When Michal told this story to Miloš Šejn, it inspired him to design a dead corridor in the walk through the cave of the Solar mountain, ending with a polished basalt mirror.)

When one strolls through romantic parks of the past, it is like an encyclopaedical walk through centuries and continents. People's emotions are awakened to a stronger, deeper connection with nature. In many ways, The Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature is similar. **sl**

The roots of our Five Guiding Principles are based on indigenous wisdom and traditions:

The Children's Fire

The Children's Fire is part of the Earth teachings of the elders of ancient America. Over time the elders came to understand that all human-created institutions needed to reflect the balance and wisdom observed in nature. The Children's Fire was a reminder of the first promise: No law, no action of any kind, shall be taken that will harm the children seven generations hence.

The Twin Trail

We invite people to follow the »twin trail« of inner healing and spiritual deepening and of outer action to change the world. By uncovering our true gifts, responsibilities and passions we are able to bring ourselves fully to the world, leading ourselves and others on a path of positive action.

Connection

Connection to nature, community and ourselves underpins everything we do at Embercombe. By connecting to the very essence of what it means to be

human, we will be more effective communicators and leaders for change.

Sustainability And Permaculture

Linked to the idea of the Children's Fire, is the need to live and work sustainably. By thinking about how we use our time, money, resources, energy we aim to limit the harm to our immediate community, to the global community and to future generations.

We strive to live and work sustainably. On the Embercombe site we grow much of our own biodynamic food, manage our waste using compost toi-

lets and support our electricity use with solar power. We still have a long way to go to become fully sustainable, but every year brings new ideas and progress.

Community

We seek to build a community where we live and work in an authentic and courageous way with each other. Our community is not just formed of our volunteers and assistants, our staff team, our facilitators and our trustees, but also of those far beyond the Embercombe gates. We aim to engage others in

dialogue, to welcome different perspectives and to learn from others and share our experiences with them. Embercombe is a bridge that we hope will connect those who are used to live and work in a way that is different to the norm, to those of other sectors such as the political, military and corporate. We seek to remember that underneath we all have beating hearts that care. **EMB**

Several members of the team which started the implementation of the project were deeply rooted in the community, so they were familiar with the local traditions. The traditional rural communities are generally conservative communities, and for an outsider it is very difficult and takes time to be integrated. So for our team theoretically it should have been easier to be accepted. From this starting point the question was whether the initiating team had the power to influence the events against the mainstream trends. Would it have the power to influence the developments in the way that the traditions—which still exist in the rural Transylvanian areas but are under strong pressure—were also maintained?

Our intention was not only to conserve the traditional lifestyle, landscape and activities but to adapt to the actual needs and conditions. In our vision traditionalism cannot be considered as some-

thing directed against the opportunities for development, which are much needed by the members of the community. So the main question was, how we should understand »development«. Is maintaining the traditions hindering development? Or could we create a modern vision of development by maintaining the traditions and reconsidering the mainstream definition of development? Does development mean merely economical growth or does it mean the qualitative improvement of life? Mainstream development tries to achieve economical growth by sacrificing the ecosystem services and the natural environment, and thus the ecosystem services—which are free of charge—have to be replaced by human system services—which cost money and can be evaluated in the GDP.

What kind of traditions should be continued? Firstly the special and respectful relation to nature.

The traditional rural communities were used to live in harmony with the natural environment and to respect the animals on which their life was dependent. The traditional lifestyle was also linked to the natural cycle of the seasons, the community's celebrations were linked to this cycle too. This lifestyle has a lot of benefits which raise the quality of life—something people who don't have this experience and who grew up in an artificial environment can hardly understand. The traditional rural communities understood that it is harmful to go against the natural systems and it is more productive to cooperate. We have hundreds of examples, but just mention one: If the local community takes care of the springs in the area they always have fresh water when going to work on the agricultural fields. This may seem a small thing, but it shows the difference between a member of a community who is taking

care of a territory and a worker who is going to the factory for his daily work.

Compared to some other regions from the Transylvanian rural space, the community in the Niraj valley is in a very special situation. This microregion, being close to Tg. Mures—the biggest city of the area called Seklerland—, was always open to modernization. This trend has had positive effects—the fruit species increased by adopting a lot of new species in the nineteenth and early twentieth century—but also negative effects to the traditional way of life—the area was the first where the watermills disappeared. On the psychological level the negative effects of modernization were stronger, and today the local people are very reticent to any innovation. So changes are happening mostly in uncontrolled ways, based mainly on local initiatives and not on a sustainable development strategy. Unfortunately

in this process the traditions are going to be lost. Our project was meant to add a modern aspect to the traditional lifestyle and to take in view the future of the rural space, which can organically encompass tradition and contemporary development.

The Niraj valley, where we started our project, has a very special relationship between the water management and vegetable production. The Niraj river basin traditionally has been one of the most densely populated areas of Transylvania. The catchment of the Niraj river basin is entirely situated in Mures County. Due to the lime rich nutrients the soil of the flood plain is very suitable for vegetable production which gave this part of the Niraj valley the name »Carrot Country«.

Due to the Vecke channel a very specific way of production in the Niraj valley was employed, water management was linked with the production struc- ▶▶

2.1.3
LEGACY AND TRADITION

ture of vegetables in the fertile lime. From documents we know that the Vecke channel was part of a production system which reflected a remarkable conception for the time given, and the Vecke was not the simple water channel which it is now. This

production system used the sediment rich in nutrients carried by the river during the floods on the right side of the valley for the production of vegetables and also to reduce potential damage caused by large water outputs. From the Niraj valley the vege-

tables were sold on the markets from Tg. Mures, and the small vegetable farms created a very special and valuable landscape and a very special relationship between the population of the town and of the rural area.

We think that the tradition of this relationship and the traditional landscape has to be preserved for the future. **FEC**

Markus Distelberger initiated not only the Lernwerkstatt with its community of children, parents and pedagogues about 30 years ago, but also a co-hous-

ing project in Herzogenburg. Looking from this perspective there is a tradition of community with the GdG. The project can be seen as part of the commu-

nity movement beginning in the 1960s with the rise of alternative culture all over Europe.
The project also feels connected to indigenous

traditions of community. The GdG will combine learning and living—both in all stages of life and furthermore working on the site. **GdG**

Klein Jasedow could be seen in the tradition of the Lebensreform movement around the year 1900. Lebensreform classifies the many movements starting to look for alternatives to industrialisation, capitalism and the rigid patriarchal society of that time, and it was a melting pot for emancipatory move-

ments such as women's rights as well as back-to-nature-, community-, and spiritual movements of all kinds. Unfortunately the longing for connection to nature and the longing for community was usurped and perverted by the Nazi regime, and thus the positive aspects of the Lebensreform had trag-

ically been rejected by post-war society. This makes it difficult to speak of a tradition connected to Klein Jasedow. It certainly has many roots in the so called alternative movement of the 1960ties and 70ties, when people again questioned the industrialised consumer lifestyles, when resistance against the

use of nuclear energy grew, the »limits to growth« were discussed, when free education came up or when Joseph Beuys developed the idea of art as a »social sculpture«. Klein Jasedow is influenced by all these emancipatory and ecological movements, but not devoted to any special ideology in this field.

We have always tried to make up our own mind and stay close to the question: How is life on earth possible without exploiting nature and without hurting or exploiting others? Today this question is globally asked by the degrowth movement, and Klein Jasedow certainly can be seen as a part of it too. **KJ**

Activism

The current Sluňákov has been influenced by the atmosphere and spirit of non-governmental movements. It originated within a movement of environmental protection activists—a local group of Czech Union of Nature Conservation (*Český svaz ochránců přírody*). In the course of time, having left their student years behind, they were no longer able to devote as much time to volunteering. The new civil association—Sluňákov—has arisen from what had been left of the original movement. Michal Bartoš, the founder, had been working as a clerk at that

time—the organisation became an unusual combination of office employees from the Department of Environment, and others, mostly students and volunteers, helping with the preparation of events, such as public campaigns and the Olomouc Ecology Days festival.

Environmental Education—Public Office

The Department of Environment employees attended a number of internships and study visits in environmental education centres. This was a great inspiration in the process of establishing the De-

partment of Environmental Education within the Department of Environment of the City of Olomouc.

Environmental Education—Sluňákov

We do not follow any specific educational concept. In a figurative sense, our approach is based on the same principles as the concept of an English park in its relation to naturalness (physis), including for example

- ▶ nature, closeness to nature, approaching nature (natural wood left to itself, flowering meadows, bushes);

- ▶ unevenness, unsteadiness, irregularity;
- ▶ emotions, feelings, sentiment, senses;
- ▶ rather than order and rules chaos is the pattern;
- ▶ freedom, liberty;
- ▶ threat;
- ▶ mystery, surprise.

Landscape Structure

The Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature interpretation of the landscape, using the arts to enhance the genius loci, is patterned on the English park. The romanticism of the mid 18th and 19th century glori-

fied nature, and emphasized emotion as an authentic source of aesthetic experience. The Liechtenstein family hired the architect Josef Hardthmuth to design a composed park in the Litovelské Pomoraví landscapes (Nové Zámky and Mladeč around the Morava river). The landscapes do not have sharp cut lines. Their edges curl and bend in waves and smoothly mingle one environment with another, transitions are blurred. The once splendid area with a range of views, meadows and romantic buildings in the countryside, is completely immersed in dense forests nowadays. Still, walking through this coun- ▶▶

2.1.3 LEGACY AND TRADITION

tryside, visitors might experience mystery and surprise.

It is possible to find many connections between English romantic composed landscapes and our House of Nature as an environmentally composed education biocentre—less as a clear intention, more subconsciously, as the Morava river is the natural landscape of Michal Bartoš' boyhood memories; and he is the author of the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature conception.

»Hunting and demonstration of power by nobility is gone, replaced by leaving the area and the walking trail open to the wide public. It is meant to help the understanding of the value of local nature and at the same time to educate. It is a gate that opens the world of illusions and dreams, embodies the desires of visitors to connect to nature. The gate is becoming imaginary arms, paradise on earth ... intimate, spiritual, fashionable, philosophical, social attitude«, Michal adds. [SL](#)



Adrianu Mic, home of Focus Eco Center

2.1.4
POLITICAL SITUATION THAT ENABLED
THE START

At Embercombe, we did not need any political support since there was a private land, which was bought by our sponsor. **EMB**

After 40 years of communism the change in 1989 surprised the rural communities in Transylvania in a very controversial situation. The farming system was owned mainly by the state and the so called co-operatives, and the private land was very small, reduced to the gardens around the houses. The need for ownership of land was great, so one of the first laws after the revolution was the law of restitution of the land (Law nr. 18). This law created a lot of conflicts in the rural area, and a large number of people who had moved to the towns during the communist era became owners of agricultural land and forest. In that period a reorganisation of the rural territory began, but the allocation of the proprietries wasn't easy because of lacking cadastres.

From the ecological point of view the rural space was in relatively good condition, with a relatively high biodiversity, due partly to the lack of financial resources to invest in a concentration of land and an intensive agriculture. The local people had a good life with healthy food, clean water, fresh air and an active social life with a community which integrated all social categories—with the old people having their active role in community life. But the locals had a problem with cash money, because the agricultural produces were sold very cheap on the markets in the nearby cities, and they needed more and more cash money to satisfy the wishes and challenges of the consumer society—mobile phones, different goods—which got to be more and

more attractive and familiar through the increasing number of TV channels. In this situation the rural communities were looking for development possibilities, and thanks to the free elections they elected the most active, promising people from the community. These people were independent leaders because the political parties in that period didn't have enough financial resources to support the local politicians. In the early nineties a colleague from the »more developed Hungary« praised us lucky, because the mayors and other local leaders were full of initiative opposed to the Hungarian rural areas, where the local leaders »are expecting support from the political friends from the centre or they are expecting that the multinational companies will solve

the economic and social problems«. Well, after a few years we now have arrived to a similar situation.

The nineties had created an atmosphere in which the local leaders and politicians were open to new ideas, and these new ideas were coming mainly through NGOs, which were the most dynamic agents of the society. In this situation the organisation Focus Eco Center was bringing a lot of new information, projects into the Niraj valley and became quite influential. The proposed development strategies which resulted from the Rio conference (Agenda 21) and from examples from the most developed EU countries were welcomed by the local political actors. So some really progressive ideas and methods could be implemented like the sustaina-

ble water management—later formulated WFD—practices. So the political situation was favourable to start cooperation between the organisation and the local communities with the involvement of the local leaders. Another favourable circumstance was that—before Romania joined the EU—several private foundations supported the programmes of NGOs, and this gave us the opportunity to implement pilot projects. This proved to the local leaders that the proposed way of development was realistic and sustainable.

Unfortunately, these favourable political conditions changed during the following years in favour of the urbanisation of the rural area and of industrial agriculture. **FEC**

There was only one point when politics were important in the course of the project so far: When Markus Distelberger applied for a reclassification of

the land he wanted to buy for the Garden of Generations from agricultural into building land: The city council of Herzogenburg had to agree. To con-

vey his ideas in advance, Markus had several talks with authorities and politicians. As a former lawyer he was wellknown and widely seen as credible and

trustworthy, and there was no reason not to believe in the benefits of the project. Especially the idea of integrating elderly people generated positive feed-

back. So in the end all members of the city council agreed to the proposal. **GDC**

The start of the community in Klein Jasedow was only possible because of the political situation of the post-GDR-times. There were a lot of cheap empty buildings in the Northeast of Germany, mostly abandoned infrastructure formerly used by the ag-

ricultural collectives. This was the case also in Klein Jasedow, where the former »house of culture«—as the GDR called the cultural centres in the villages—, three old barns and three small residential houses of farmworkes had been vacant since the

so called change. Luckily the commune council of Pulow—Klein Jasedow was one of the four villages consisting this small municipality of about 330 inhabitants—supported the moving in of our group. The commune was ready to sell the empty former

»house of culture« which was the only building where we could install our office after a short period of renovation. In exchange we promised to establish a new cultural centre in the barn directly next to it. Without this we wouldn't have managed to install

our economic basis in Klein Jasedow. The mayor of the commune was also of great help, as he introduced Johannes Heimrath to many officials and gave us good advice. **KJ**

2.1.4 POLITICAL SITUATION THAT ENABLED THE START

The Velvet Revolution in 1989 brought significant changes. After the collapse of the totalitarian socialist system, the Czech society moved towards democracy. A number of new possibilities appeared in the public life, including an increased interest in the environment. There was hope, expectations, people's activities were getting ahead of control mechanisms, and administration and bureaucracy were in transition, often very weak.

Thanks to these circumstances, it was possible that the Department of Environment could include environmental education in its operational field. Michal explains: »The Department dealt with topics such as waste management, quality of air, and water etc.—like all the departments of environment do. One day I gave fishermen a study about the state of watercourses and stagnant waters of the Olomouc region. They were surprised about the high level of pollution. I got an idea out of the following discussion that we could organise public talks about the current studies, findings and problems that were not being discussed but of great importance to us. The first ecological evenings had almost no visitors. Jaroslav Kadula, the head of our Department believed in the concept, so he let it take its natural course. After a while, people started to attend the evening talks, also thanks to the fact that we had invited publicly interesting speakers. Meanwhile, Mr Kadula enabled me to organise discussions with

pupils at schools. He allowed me to visit the existing environmental education centres as well. In this way, the idea of establishing a similar centre of environmental education in Olomouc was born.«

After approximately six years this political situation had settled, but Sluňákov had managed to prove itself, and thus became a natural part of the Olomouc public life. Nowadays such an unrestricted, bottom-up emergence of something so free, set up by the officers of the council, would be hard to imagine. It seems that Sluňákov still gains its vitality and viability from this freedom of the early nineties.

In 2007 the activities of the Department of Environmental Education were so broad and offered such a wide range of services, that it was no longer possible to keep them within the framework of the local authority. In this situation and after positive feedback from the public, the local government decided to establish a public benefit society, managed by the Administrative Board, whose members were picked to represent a wide spectrum of political parties.

Last but not least, the process would have been much different if it were not for the EU funding opportunities. Our low energy building—the Litovel-ské Pomoravi House of Nature—as well as some of our innovative educational programmes, have been co-financed by EU grants. **sl**



Orchard in Embercombe.

From working as a gardener in a management training centre, Mac went on to become Head of Consultancy there within three years, and then started a »people and organisational development« company, working with the leaders of multinationals. His inspirational approach to leadership develop-

ment resulted in him helping a client to become incredibly successful. In his gratitude, he asked Mac »What is your dream?«, offering Mac the money for buying »that« piece of land and to fulfil his dreams (see section 2.1.6).

Mac's first wife, Azul Valerie Thome, permacul-

turist and activist, had found the land by chance, it was offering all they were looking for: forest, a lake, an old cottage, a 50-acre Devonshire smallholding, which was used as a private airstrip.

Mac's attitude once standing on this land by himself was that »people will show up on the gate«.

He totally trusted, and so his first supporters showed up—the first one being a charismatic man, who has been in prison almost all his life, tattooed up to his teeth and »not a man you would trust on the first look«, as Mac tells. But he trusted. Nowadays, Joey is one of the most loved and appreciated elder in Em-

bercombe. His influence in creating the space has been immense. That was only the start of people showing up at the gate ...

The learning curve: TRUST. **EMB**

The initiators of the project were founding members of the organisation Focus Eco Center, and representatives of the local community from the Niraj valley, mainly from the village Găleşti.

One of the main initiators, Zoltan Hajdu, became president of the organisation; he was from the Niraj valley (from Miercurea Niraj) and deeply rooted in the community. His father was physician and his mother was teacher, well known people in the community. He was spending his childhood in the amazing natural environment—in that time the river was rich with fish, and animals and birds today considered as rare and protected like bears or certain eagles were very common. Zoltan's fascination of nature remained in spite of his professional career as a chemist in a research institute. After 1989 he decided to change his career and started to

be deeply involved in environmental and sustainable development issues. He followed studies in this respect: In Strasbourg he obtained the master degree in environmental management and analyses and the title of eco-counselor, and later he obtained the PhD title in environmental sciences at the University of Godollo, Hungary. After the founding of Focus Eco Center he was working with several international environmental NGOs like EEB or Milieukontakt Oost Europa (Dutch foundation). He had a strong motivation to work in the Niraj valley, and was well informed about possible developments of rural space in Europe. Thus he got to be one of the main initiators of the Niraj valley sustainable rural community project. Another important person for the project was a hydrologist, who was working for the water management author-

ity. He was convinced that the conventional water management practised by the authorities—based on hard measures of water regulation—are harmful to the ecological system and to the future. Because of his convictions he came in conflict with the officials of the water management authority and left his job, joining the sustainable Niraj valley project. He was participating in the elaboration of the general water management strategy, a document called »River Contract« which was based on several individual projects with the goal to restore the ecological system, among them several wetland restoration pilot projects. The right water management in the Niraj valley was a key element of the restoration of the traditional agricultural practices. Another key actor in the project and founding member of the organisation was a teacher, involved mainly in

the educational component of the project. In her vision the formal and non-formal education are both important in the effort of changing the mentality. She organised a teacher's team which elaborated educational programmes at the Information and Education centre in Adrianu Mic, educational programmes which were followed by many children from the community of the Niraj valley microregion and from other areas. The mayor of the commune Găleşti—to which Adrianu Mic belongs—was an important enabler of the project, supporting the sustainable Niraj valley project from the beginning. He was actively participating in the elaboration of the development strategies for the whole microregion and in the implementation of the pilot projects within the wetland restoration project, sustainable agriculture, and the realisation of the Centre in Adri-

anu Mic. The project was joined by a relatively important number of local people who facilitated the implementation of the project. These people were farmers who were interested in the preservation of their traditional lifestyle, as well as local politicians interested in developing the area and local people who sought income from the sustainable tourism or just were interested in new ideas. **FEC**

Starting in the year 2004, Markus Distelberger organised symposiums dealing with topics which were important for developing the GdG vision. Many of the international speakers supported the vision in different ways. Two of those were the »pro-

ject mentors« Sobonfu Some and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen. The late Sobonfu taught principles of community building, inspired by here experience in traditional African communities where the connections between the generations are much

more important than in the individualised Western societies. Social anthropologist Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen coined the term »subsistence-perspective«; she argues that a paradigm shift in the relationship between man and nature means to un-

derstand Earth not as an exploitable resource but as a source of nourishment that needs to be cared for, and that everyone should have the right to develop regional food sovereignty.

In an early stage of the GdG, in the year 2008,

Genevieve Vaughan was speaker at the symposium »Kostbarkeit Leben« (preciousness of life). As a linguist by her writing she greatly contributes to an evolving concept of gift economy, based on studies of matriarchal cultures carried out by feminist re- ▶▶

2.1.5 ENABLERS, FACILITATORS, INITIATORS

searchers like Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, Heide Göttner-Abendroth and others. They base their theories on the fact, that everything what enables life is gifted unconditionally by nature and by caring humans, especially women—it cannot be sold on the market. Therefore it should be possible and meaningful to rethink economy: Can it be based on gifting without expecting a return, without charging each other different sums for products and ser-

vices, but on contributing what is necessary? The large field of gift economy that already exists in daily life is often overlooked in the perspective of conventional economy. Geneviève is the founder of the platform gift-economy.com, and was excited about the vision of the project. So she gifted \$50,000 to the association GdG. That was a great help and reinforcement for the project.

There were numerous other forces that helped

the project. The former owners of the fields agreed to have long lasting purchase option contracts with the GdG association. These long lasting contracts are very important for projects which have many uncertainties regarding participating people and money. The local government helped by converting the fields into construction land—even though the locality is in the outskirts of the city.

Regional private facilitators helped a lot as well,

especially in the first years. A family running an organic agriculture close by supported with the first agricultural activities on the site, so that a first harvest was possible. The cultivation of the first garden on the site gave the early GdG project great community-building events with harvesting a few hundred kilos of potatoes.

Last but not least, Markus Distelberger had been well known as a lawyer and successful devel-

oper of alternative projects. So from the beginning of the project many people had the confidence that the GdG would have good chances to develop into something great. **GdG**

One main facilitator of the start of the Klein Jasedow project certainly was the then mayor Matthias Andiel—already mentioned above. In the mid eighties he had moved to the old manor house of Pulow with a group of young dissidents who tried to hide from prosecution by the GDR regime which accused them to be an anarchist group of public enemies. After the change he was one of the few people who were ready to go into politics and who had not been involved in the intrigues of the state security service »Stasi«. So he got elected and was able to set the course for the basics of a sustainable ecological

development of the commune. One important step was to prevent the continued use of a large pig fattening plant in Pulow. Instead of industrial livestock farming these buildings today host the organic tea manufacture Kräutergarten Pommerland, a small healthfood store and two workshops for music instruments where altogether more than 30 people have found work. This would not have been possible without Matthias Andiel's initial struggle against industrial farming.

He introduced us to people in the region who dealt already with regional development. This in-

cluded the head of the local jobcentre, who in 1998 enabled us to employ 25 people from the neighbourhood financed by the state. They would work repairing communal infrastructure and caring for communal greens as well as in a local herb garden which later turned into the professional tea company Kräutergarten Pommerland. Although this worked for only one year it was of enormous help for our integration in the neighbourhood and an intense field of learning.

Other important enablers of our beginnings were our next neighbours. They welcomed us with open

arms when they realised that we were not the typical wealthy Westerners who wanted to build their little paradise, but do-it-yourself-people in need of help—and willing to help with our entrepreneurial and fundraising abilities to create new infrastructure in the village that would benefit all. That many of the neighbours trusted in our willingness to contribute to the village in a positive way was a great gift. Essential facilitators in the first years were also many friends from all over Germany who came and helped with the cleanup of the messy land and the building work.

We could not have bought the now existing estates in Klein Jasedow if not Peter Knapp, father of a young new community member, would have borrowed us €100,000 for 15 years. This and a heritage from two community members enabled us to acquire the first pieces of land and some of the houses. **KU**

The biggest help in developing and establishing our environmental education centre, together with the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature, came from the staff. At minimal financial motivation, the employees have been carrying out high-quality work, always full of enthusiasm and joy, which has been appreciated by the attendants of our programmes.

A number of colleagues from the municipality of Olomouc had shown interest in the project. It is highly unusual that such a project originates within the town council offices. It was the result of many fruitful discussions and of the support of many people, who have been helping us throughout the whole time. The project was unique; there-

fore many different obstacles and challenges came up to be dealt with. Thanks to the support from people of the Department of the Environment, as well as other departments—investments, building, European projects, public relations, education, economy, legal, property-rights and others—the project could be implemented. It was especially due to

► the head of the Department of Environment of the City of Olomouc, Jaroslav Kadula, who had immigrated to Canada and after the societal changes in 1989 had come back to the Czech Republic. He came to the Department of Environment as someone not experienced at the white-collar position. He was very open to new

activities; he had a wide range of knowledge and a great sense of humour. He liked the idea of greater communication with the public. For a period of nearly one year, he gave Michal Bartoš freedom to do environmental education within his working hours and only when these activities had positive responses from the public, he ►►

2.1.5 ENABLERS, FACILITATORS, INITIATORS

consulted the option of including environmental education with the town council members. Thanks to him, the Department of Environmental Education was established. He supported this work strongly and helped to push through the idea of the centre of environmental education in Horka nad Moravou. During the low energy building construction works, he had already retired and passed away before the centre in Horka nad Moravou was opened.

- ▶ the Secretary of the City of Olomouc, Jan Večeř, who has been in this role since 1989 and sympathised with Jaroslav Kadula's approach towards the public. They got on well professionally as well as personally. He had supported environmental education from the start; he was a great support at the time when our project was endangered through financial difficulties, and he had taken steps to resolve them.
- ▶ the head of the Department of Environment of the City of Olomouc, Petr Loyka, who followed several others. He felt environmental education was a positive activity and supported us actively.

He initiated a complicated, but necessary transition from the Department of Environment's Environmental Education into a separate organisation—Sluňákov—a public benefit society founded by the City of Olomouc. Since then he is vice-chairman of our administrative board.

- ▶ the Deputy Major of Olomouc, Miroslav Petřík, has always been close to the topic of nature protection. He is the chair of our administrative board. He played an important role by supporting the low-energy building at our seat in Horka nad Moravou, together with Martin Tesařík, mayor of Olomouc at the time, and Marcela Hanáková, then Secretary of the City of Olomouc. Czech environmental education centres were also a valuable inspiration source; they provided us with advice and suggestions. In particular Chaloupky (Květa Burešová and Josef Zetěk), Dřípatka Prachatice (Aleš Záveský and Helena Klimešová), Lipka Brno (Aleš Máchal and Hana Korvasová), Alcedo Vsetín (Iva Koutná), Horní Maršov—Rýchory (Jirka Kulich).

The Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature would

not have been possible without the work of some of the most influential contemporary Czech artists:

- ▶ František Skála, a well known and popular sculptor, painter, children's book illustrator, musician, and dancer. His approach is very thorough; he got lured especially by the idea of painting frescoes in the Garden of Eden interior. Eventually, he withdrew from the frescoes so that their colours do not shatter the beauty of »nature's paintings«.
- ▶ Miloslav Fekar, a sculptor building objects in landscapes, gardens and parks. When he was a kid in the church, he was longing to visit a temple in nature. His dream came true in Sluňákov in his Forest Temple. He devoted a lot of time and energy to the project, including the playful corners of the Magical Forest and designing the overall concept of the entire area.
- ▶ Miloš Šejn, working in the fields of visual art, performance and study of visual perception, with probably the most original approach. In his artwork, he focuses on the relations between historical human-made landscapes and intact na-

ture, and the borderline between the human body and nature resp. landscape. He calls the Solar Mountain also the Mountain of Dreams. He placed a »sluňák« stone (a Czech word for quartzite) in the mountain. He responded to our needs very sensitively. Like Milos Fekar, he considered the entire complex, including the surroundings, when designing his phenomenal proposal.

- ▶ Marcel Hubáček, Michal Bartoš' long-time friend. For him the process of creation is what really matters: »It is not so important to find but to keep searching.« After a period of searching for the concept, eventually, his Fireplace of the Golden Spiral became a part of the landscape in the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature. Other enablers of the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature are
- ▶ the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic (*Agentura ochrany přírody a krajiny*) with project manager Lenka Šoltysová—a great supporter of working with the public, responsive to our unconventional proposal—; and the head of the Protected Landscape Area Litovelské Po-

moraví regional office (*CHKO Litovelské Pomoraví*), Michal Servus, who gradually developed a taste for the design plan and, together with a number of local politicians (Jan Holpuch, Martin Novotný, Markéta Záleská, Bořivoj Šarapatka, Miroslav Petřík), had been speaking up for the project until it was approved and implemented;

- ▶ architect and urban planner Tomáš Lampar - whose studies and ideas contributed to developing our ideas of the whole area's design solution;
- ▶ Projektil architekti studio, who knew the territory well and completed the entire project into the proposal, which was later endorsed by the grant.

What is worth noting is the great number of people, who have been helping us with environmental education. They like the way we work and help us as volunteers or external lecturers. There are too many of them and it is impossible to enumerate. **sl**

The story of the »very appreciative client«, who sponsored the money to buy Embercombe and to support it for many years after, is this one:

After having led this client and his team to the mountains for a vision quest to find new meaning and purpose in life, the grateful client asked:

»What is your dream, Mac?« Mac always tells and teaches that story, especially to the young, »to always know what your dream is in case one day someone asks you«.

Mac's vision comes from his youth. He loved the outdoors, playing wildly with his two brothers out-

side. He »knew that happiness«. One day he envisioned to own a place to grow people upon.

The appreciative client asked: »How much do you need? I will write you a cheque that is for you, your own money. If you feel that this is not enough, give it back to me and I write you a new one, but

then we will create a charity, and I'll be the chair.«

Mac tells: »When I saw the first cheque, I almost fainted. I have never seen nor owned so much money. I felt a huge impulse inside of me saying ›Mine! Mine!‹ like Sméagol in Lord of the Rings. I held it, tasting it like I had gold. Then I ripped it up

and handed it back. My dream was bigger than owning this money.« **EMB**

In the early nineties several foundations from abroad came with financial support to the Niraj valley. One organisation who came with support was the Unitarian Church from the USA. The representative of this foundation was Eduard Lichfield, an American in his sixties, with his wife, who got inspired by the political changes in Eastern Europe. He wanted to make a contribution to these changes. After his visits to Transylvania he was very inspired and decided to buy a house and establish his »hometown« (*Heimat*) in the small village of Adrianu Mic. The village of Adrianu Mic has had good perspectives to develop in 1950s, and the locals decided to build a school. Unfortunately and against this hope, the village developed differently. People from the village moved to the town, mainly due to the poli-

tics of Ceausescu who decided to destroy the small villages. The schoolhouse remained empty. Now the American settler intended to renovate the school building and was looking for a good use of it. After some discussions with the mayor of the village they decided to do something in the environmental field. The mayor already knew about the Focus Eco Center as an organisation which was active in the region in the field of the environmental protection. The mayor and Ed Lichfield visited the office of the Focus Eco Center and talked to the president of the organisation, Zoltan Hajdu. The three persons agreed that Zoltan would elaborate a proposal and present it to the commune council from Găleşti—who owned the building. According to this agreement Zoltan elaborated a proposal concerning the establishment

of establishing an environmental information and development centre in the building. The main goal of the centre was to promote the idea of sustainable development, to offer trainings, educational programmes and to realise pilot projects which could be applied at larger scale. The Găleşti council approved the proposal, and thus the Focus Eco Center stated to develop there. This was a very lucky situation because the initiators of the project now had a headquarter for the coordination of the project. Without this resource it would have been hard to integrate into the region. Since then the organisation Focus Eco Centre became influential throughout the Niraj microregion.

Another lucky situation was that our ideas and initiatives were going on with some similar initia-

tives in the region. In that period the president of the Harghita County Council conceived the microregion strategy based on voluntary participation, with the microregions being free to work out their own development strategies.

The change of laws during that period was also a lucky situation, because some of them—for example the law which implemented the water framework directive—was in favour of our ideas.

Another favourable conjuncture was the synchronicity with other similar initiatives, the feeling that we were not alone going against the mainstream development ideas. As a team, we organised visits to similar initiatives in Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and exchanged experiences about our vision of developing the rural space. Central

questions were: How can we generate a higher income in the rural area and at the same time preserve the traditional lifestyle and the natural values? Is it a realistic perspective or it is illusory? We got confirmed that other people had the same preoccupation and everybody achieved some results, so we were on a good way, and we learned also that—although we can learn from each other—every single project has to find out its own way, based on the experience of others. We learned also that this kind of pioneer work is not easy, but we were lucky to meet people with similar ideas, and this strengthened our believe that together we can achieve good results. **FEC**

That the place where the GdG is about to be created could be found, the interaction of two persons from two generations was essential. Markus' oldest daughter Teresa visited him in the year 2007. He told her about his ideas to set up a new community project. There was some building land on sale just

at the back of his co-housing place »Dörflein«, but it seemed to small for his vision. Later Teresa and Markus went on a walk along a bridleway in between the fields adjacent to the outskirts of Herzogenburg, a path they had often enjoyed in Teresas childhood. It leads up a hill where small wine cel-

lars are built into the sloping ground. Just before it meets a road leading into town it reaches its highest point overlooking a large field sloping downhill until it meets the first houses of the town.

»If I was to choose a place for something like a Garden of Generations, I would choose this very

hill!«, Teresa said. »But it's impossible«, Markus replied. »This is an agricultural field, not a construction land, and I think the city council will never agree to a reclassification.«

Teresa told her father how much she had enjoyed in her childhood living at the border of Herzogen-

burg—it was only a short way into nature and also a short way to the market place. The Garden of Generation on the field they were looking at would have the same advantages, it would be a bridge between the rural area and the town.

They did not talk much more, and Teresa went ▶▶

2.1.6 SYNCHRONICITIES AND LUCKY SITUATIONS

to live in Mexiko for a while. But in Markus' mind a mental anchor was now hooked in the piece of land they had looked at together. Several times in his life he had experienced that nothing is impossible.

»Why not giving it a try?«, he thought and started discussions with landowners and the local government.

When Teresa returned in 2009 the association of

the GdG already owned the fields which now were the very building land she had dreamed of during the walk with her father. This made her accompany the process of developing the GdG in its first

phase—so from its origin it was a multigenerational approach. **GdG**

The story of Klein Jasedow could be told as an endless chain of synchronicities. But it seems that the phenomenon of synchronicity is very normal, and it is only amplified by a process that does not develop mainly through precise planning but rather through intuition. The first story of how we discovered the commune of Pulow has already been told in the chapter about the call (see 2.1.2). It happened that two weeks after Johannes Heimrath had discovered Klein Jasedow in the article in the magazine »Der Spiegel«, five of us—four musicians and a dancer—had to perform in Lübeck. This made us drive from Switzerland all the way to Northern Germany, and on the day after the performance we took the chance to drive over to the East to get to know Matthias Andiel. The concert had been organised

many months before when none of us would have even dreamed about living once in Western Pomerania. Without that concert it is very unlikely that we would have found our way to Klein Jasedow in such a short time.

Half a year later, after three lorries with all our stuff, instruments, and computers, had been rolling from Switzerland to Klein Jasedow and we had moved into very provisional rooms we decided to invite our new neighbours to a welcome party. Surprisingly they in turn had already planned to do the same, and so it happened that we had a first small festivity altogether. The neighbours wished that we would play some music, and we were very uncertain about that—what would these country folk expect? Would anyone like our experimental, impro-

vised music? It turned out to be a most wonderful summer evening with a full moon rising above the lake of Klein Jasedow. Everyone was enchanted listening to the large gong, the Indian esraj, the harpsichord and the flute, and later we had a lot of bratwurst, beer and much fun. The evening was just made for this warm encounter to happen.

Since then a series of roaring celebrations with all of the villagers came into life. After one of them, carnival 2001, Johannes saved the life of an elderly lady called Adele. She suffered from the messie-syndrome and lived all alone in her house while hardly accepting any help. The evening of the party the light in her corridor would not fade, and only because Johannes got suspicious he realised that Adele was in dire straits. After hours of trying to get into

the house we found her lying half way frozen on the garbage, squeezed between frame and blade of the door which wouldn't move for another millimeter because of all the waste piling up from the floor one meter high. While a severe blizzard raged she could be taken to the hospital, and Johannes found her a place in a good nursing home, where she spent seven nice years with Johannes being her caretaker.

To make this possible we agreed to pay her a rent for her house and garden no matter how long she would live, but wouldn't make use of it during her lifetime, as on one side she wanted to hand her property down to us but on the other side she felt uncomfortable with the thought that somebody else would know about her secretly kept syndrome. So after she had passed away in 2008 her property

came into our possession.

Adele was a very intelligent and special lady. In our hearts she is still alive, and she is a good spirit of the place. We see her house as a gift to us, it is situated right in the middle of Klein Jasedow next to the building which was our office for a long time and now hosts the small free school project. If we would have set up a plan to once acquire the house we would have failed, Adele would not have agreed as long as she lived there, and after her death it could have been sold to anyone. The only way was to follow the flow of the time unintentionally and be there at the right moment. **KU**

Sluňákov

The establishment and development of Sluňákov are tied to the atmosphere of transition, political, social, and economic changes, and essential reforms of political organisation and values after 1989. The ecological problems played part in the transition of power. People were more sensitive to environmental questions during and after the Velvet Revolution.

In the first year of the Olomouc Ecology Days festival four ministers of the government attended the event. The first—after 1989—freely chosen mayor of Olomouc, together with the secretary and head of the Environmental Department, came to visit us at Sluňákov's children's camp and even performed a play for kids. In the era after 1989, leaders of the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Repub-

lic were people with a strong connection to environmental initiatives. They were either involved or aware of the role of non-governmental movements for the development of a democratic society. Further on, the town council was undergoing changes too—norms and rules were being modified, and it was possible to introduce innovations into the administrative work.

Low-Energy Building

At the time of newly applicable rules of the European Union we started to look out for architects who could design the low-energy building we were dreaming of. This process was monitored and inspected on the highest level. Projektil architekti studio, picked through public procurement procedure, turned out to be a great choice. They stood for

respect for the environment, ecological thinking, modern solutions for the low-energy building, willingness to participate in visits to existing environmental education centres, willingness to cooperate with us—the user—from the very preparations up to present. Fortunately, the coordination of the design of the entire 15-hectare area was in the hand of one architect. ▶▶

2.1.6 SYNCHRONICITIES AND LUCKY SITUATIONS

Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature

The authors of the artistic objects on the site had made their draft designs in the project's preparatory studies for free. Thanks to this fact, we had managed to maintain the authorship of their artistic displays later in the selection procedure of the tenders as copyrights. Thus, public procurement directives did not apply for this part of the project.

When the original architect backed out of the contract Projektil architekti— the studio of the authors of our low energy building—applied again and was selected, so they could design a plan for the whole area around the already existing low energy building.

The implementation of the intended plan did not meet a lot of understanding on the government level—meanwhile the Ministry of Environment

had been taken over by people who considered such projects as meaningless and purposeless. Sluňákov found support in the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic (*Agentura ochrany přírody a krajiny*), and also among local politicians across the political spectrum. This helped us to complete the planned proposal for the entire area as seen in its present form.

Location

The location in Horka nad Moravou also helped us greatly. The village is situated close to the internationally important wetlands of the Litovelské Pomoraví Protected Landscape Area. It is the main entrance gate to this nature-priced area, with a major cycling trail and within reach of public transport from Olomouc.

Unlucky Situations

Our approach is unusual in environmental education as we have created a learning place in the rural area by transforming a field into a centre of environmental education, which is surrounded by a landscape that makes people question themselves on the purpose of their being in nature and in the landscape they live in. It is too emotional; it connects arts, pedagogy, and natural philosophy. Rather than being purely knowledge based, it focuses on creating experience and relationships, it emphasizes physicality and staying in nature rather than textbook and internet education. We are not giving up on older concepts relating to nature: through natural elements, stories, mythologies, fairy tales. Our approach is attractive in a way and raises attention. On the other hand, it is not classifiable into common

social patterns of perception, and this has brought us many problems and several attempts from outside to cancel our projects. Even today, it seems that environmentalists consider it cultural, and people from cultural fields as environmental.

The House of Nature buildings are so unusual that it was almost impossible to obtain a building permit as the authorities were hesitant about how to categorize it—playground gaming elements, buildings, works of art, or educational aids? How to approach the safety of their users? A lot of controversies over the concept have arisen: a central statue in the form of Adam and Eve was removed from the project, even after Michal had explained that they were the first people to name all the plants and animals. The Garden of Eden had to be formally called the Garden of Litovelské Pomoraví Animals and

Plants in the project to be approved by authorities. The swing for the flies in the Garden of Eden of František Skála was removed as inappropriate. Miloš Šejn's Solar Mountain aroused suspicion of having occult roots, and despite the lengthy explanation the principle idea behind the object was still not understood. To get accepted Michal was told to deny any occult background, if anyone asked, because the EU could not promote occultism. [SL](#)

At Embercombe, we did not have academic support, and didn't need any. **EMB**

Academic support to our project was ensured by the universities where the project initiator had studied during the implementation phase. Firstly the University of Strasbourg (ENSAIS) supported the evaluation of the ecological status of the Niraj river. The used methodology was the same as it was used in

the elaboration of the management plan for the l'Isch river basin. A team from the Institute Eco Conseil supported the evaluation of the ecological status of the Niraj river, and after the elaboration of a document concerning the problems and proposals for the solution of these problems an information

campaign for the local people was organised. Later the University SzIE of Godollo, where the project initiator had continued his PhD studies, supported the project by recommending good practices in agriculture and landscape preservation, as the university has several faculties specialised in agriculture.

Several professors participated in the realisation of studies and organised seminars and conferences to support the implementation process. The people from the University of Agriculture of Godollo considered that our area could be a demonstration area for sustainable agricultural practices, and in this re-

spect participated in the preparatory studies. Thus the theoretical basis of the project was very well prepared, and the realised pilot projects could demonstrate the viability of the proposed activities. For the future the political will to implement the proven results at a larger scale is needed. **FEC**

There was no academic support to the project so far. Of course most of the speakers of the 7-generations-symposia had an academic background and

contributed with their knowledge to the concept of the GdG, but there was no scientific monitoring carried out during the development of the project. **GdG**

Academic support was important for us in the time we started the study courses in music therapy in the Klanghaus. In 2009 Hans-Helmut Decker Voigt, one of the pioneers in this field and professor in Hamburg, was ready to set up a cooperation (see also sec-

tion 2.5.2). He supported two members of the community in writing their dissertation in applied musicology—one a pioneering work in community music therapy by Christine Simon, the other a motivational research in the field of music therapy

by Beata Seemann. Of course, the academic grade of two of our members added much to the reputation of our professional trainings. But the greatest effect so far was the permission to open up a free democratic school for children. In the state Meck-

lenburg-Vorpommern no such licence was granted by the ministry of education throughout the past 20 years. The innovative quality of our pedagogic concept alone would not have been sufficient to make this success possible. But having two PhD graded

members of the chair of our academy did prove the scientific excellence of our initiative. **KU**

Olomouc is the seat of the Palacký University. It is our strong partner in professional consultations and closely linked to our environmental education programmes. We have developed partnerships in several projects on state and European level.

The successful connection of academic theory to educational practice is mutually beneficial. We cooperate closely with several departments: develop-

ment education, ecology, environmental sciences, natural sciences and pedagogy. University students make up a significant part of the Sluňákov workforce in the volunteer centre and as supporters of the environmental education programmes.

Volunteers help us with the distribution of promotional materials, preparation and organisation of events, or help us with clean up of the outdoor gal-

lery. External lecturers, mostly from the Faculty of Science (Department of Ecology and Department of Development Studies) and Faculty of Education, teach day-long educational courses. Cooperation works vice-versa—our staff teaches courses at both faculties. Sluňákov lecturers share their practical experience with environmental education in schools and the general public. Close contact with students

brings about even bigger interest in Sluňákov and its activities and usually there are some of them, who cooperate with us on a regular basis.

Together with the university, we organise events for children, where students help with preparations and organisation of various events, such as Earth Days, or the Waste Olympics competition.

Occasionally, university professionals help us

with expert opinions, discussions, advice, professional editing of our texts, legal advice as well as with sociological questionnaires.

Academics, not only from the Palacký University, are our regular guests on the Olomouc Ecology Days festival and on ecological evenings, where they popularise results of scientific research. **SL**

Our guidelines for our vision are our Five Core Principles (see also section 2.1.3): Twin Trail, Children's Fire, Connection, Sustainability, Community.

Until now this is what Embercombe has done, but its efficiency needs evaluation. Mac has been speaking first at festivals and events, then at major international business conferences, TEDx events, universities, schools, prisons, and small local gatherings. He is adept in aligning his language, stories, and concepts to his audience, and the originality of his content and delivery is exceptional.

We offer each month an Experience Weekend where anyone can book themselves into that experience of connection, by working on the land, cooking, eating and sharing around the fire. It's a way for

people to try out what Embercombe is about, to experience a community of people who come together for some hours and who nourish the place and each other. This has a huge impact on people who then become supporters, clients, participants, and recommenders.

In 2014, an ambassadors network was created with the idea to deliver Embercombe's message to the world. Many of the ambassadors have long held connections with the charity, having been volunteers, friends and trustees.

However, if we consider it truly anyone who has been to Embercombe is our ambassador. Each person having been to Embercombe can share it with friends, colleagues, educators and businesses, help-

ing us to raise much-needed funds and inspiring others to engage with the charity.

Embercombe hubs have been envisioned in every county to be a place where those inspired by our mission can gather, connect with like-minded people and share ideas for action. So far, we have hubs in London and the New Forest, and plans are afoot for hubs in Bristol and Stroud.

Collaboration and partnerships have been existing since our conception. We have collaborated with organisations and universities such as the University of Exeter's One Planet MBA, inviting masters students to explore the relationship between business, leadership and sustainability at a time when environmental, financial and social changes are

challenging traditional business models. Developed in partnership with WWF International, the One Planet MBA is training a new generation of business leaders equipped with the knowledge, skills and understanding required to create, build and develop sustainable, profitable businesses capable of succeeding in a fast changing international business landscape.

Engaging with the business leaders of the future, giving them space to really connect with themselves, align to their true values and vision what a more sustainable way of business could look like, has been key to Embercombe's mission.

One of our core expressions is »Walk your talk!«, and we have not fully achieved it ourselves. It is a

true goal for us Embercombers, and of course we also need to accept that there is a gap between theory and practice.

Often we have attracted people coming to Embercombe who's »talk« was not the »walk« we wanted, and it may have been a gap of time in between to realise that. People come to Embercombe's gate with their own vision and passion and try hard to install an own idea of how things shall evolve here. It has caused pain and confusion and led us now to review how we communicate our vision. **EMB**

To communicate the vision is a very difficult task in the case of a such a project, because there are a lot of differences in using the same words by different people. For example when we are talking about development in Romania the average rural people are understanding it as the urbanisation of the rural space and the implementation of industrial agriculture. For us »development« means to go directly to the post-industrial era and skip industrial agriculture as well as the extreme urbanisation of the rural space. This theoretically would be possible in many areas in Romania, especially in Transylvania where the rural people are still practising a sustainable agriculture close to nature. But how to communicate this vision to people who hear a different

message when we use the word »development«? They firstly want development because it is trendy everywhere—and we want development too, but for them this word has a different meaning as it has for us. This was the first gap in our communication. At the beginning of our project our intention was to pass the message about our vision by traditional ways of communication—articles, publications, seminars, etc.—and the local people got confused. For them at the first look what we proposed was a return to the past and not a development like they had learned from the media. In Romania of the 1990s it was a very popular idea to stop the so called subsistence farming and pass on to the industrial agriculture era. For us a traditional farm with a large

scale of products was a good production model—just the efficiency of the production and the ways of selling the products had to be improved. So keeping the traditional small farms and the nature friendly agriculture should be modern? This should be development? These were their questions.

The idea was strange for them because in mainstream media this kind of agriculture was called »subsistence agriculture« which was to be eliminated. And of course the power of the mainstream media was much bigger as our possibilities using the traditional communication paths. So we were getting a problem of communicating a vision which was so logical for us having all the up-to-date information concerning the global situation. We under-

stood that the local people don't have this information and for them the model they wanted to follow was the western development model with permanent economical growth and the industrialisation of agriculture. We understood that it's no good way to use the conventional communication methods. We rather had to find alternative ways and firstly utilized the power of example—which proved to be the most powerful communication tool for us.

In this respect we implemented small projects with the idea that we can prove that the sustainable way of producing in agriculture and the maintaining of the ecosystems are profitable from the financial point of view too. We keep going on with our small scale pilot projects and we are presenting

these through different methods—workshops, videos, discussions, exchange of experiences. The most powerful way of communication was the personal contact with the local people. The informal discussions and the personal examples were very efficient ways of communication. The methods used by us, for example the direct distribution system of the products or the agrotourism programme offered direct contacts to the rural people with people from the town and even with people from abroad. These people, who are well informed about global problems and who are determined to purchase their food directly from the farms because they want healthy and fresh food or the people who want to spend their holiday in rural area, by direct discus- ▶▶

sion with the people from the rural area offered valuable information. After these discussions the people from the rural area understood the value of their

work and knowledge and the value of the landscape and the natural environment in which they are living. So we found out that in these kinds of projects

the most valuable ways of communication are the power of the personal example and the personal contacts and discussions. **FEC**

In the first phase of the project it was not easy for Markus Distelberger to communicate his vision of a comprehensively transformative project to people who wanted to be part of the community building process. On the one hand there were some basics he had discovered as essential for a paradigm shift to take place—like the necessity to rethink the usual ways we deal with money and ownership, to

rethink consumption and production or education. On the other hand he wanted to open up for a participatory process to collectively substantiate these ideas. Within this process it was a challenge to keep the large perspective in mind and not to get lost in the many wants and needs of the individuals. Those who were looking for a nice place to live with their families were eager to start with the building of res-

idential houses while others had the feeling that the larger whole was not visible enough at the very point of the development and suggested a longer process of planning and community building. This led to conflicts in the group so that only a small team was left. Within this team it became clear that the basics of the GdG vision which are not debatable should be written down and communicated clearly

to everyone interested in the project. Only from such a clearly defined basis a fruitful participatory process could start. Nowadays a small handbook about the GdG vision exists which is handed out to every interested person. This helps a lot to communicate the essence of the vision.

To communicate into a larger audience Markus used his mailinglist created by participants and

speakers of his symposiums to inform about the new developing project and the new vision to attract people who resonate with these ideas. After some years the GdG created an own mailinglist and newsletter, today received by about 700 people who subscribed actively for the »GdG-News«. Additionally we regularly publish articles about the GdG in different magazines. **GdG**

Instead of parading our long term vision of a good society like a monstrosity we rather keep it in the background. It serves as a fundamental tone in all our undertakings, and we believe in the power of the deeds. Thus our means of communicating the vision is our practical work, which we try to perform as sustainable as possible, and where we cannot go

far enough because of the limitations of the modern lifestyle we simply tell the truth. For instance when we travel by car to a conference we speak about the fact that we have to use the products of the oil industry and all the technical means of contemporary mobility—and even question the carrying out of the conference itself. By being aware of the limitations

of our efforts and making this visible we try to help nurturing a growing consciousness about these very limits and hope to encourage an attitude of scaling down events which usually are considered as »very important«. In fact, in our vision the most important thing to achieve is to return to a lifestyle which fully respects the planetary boundaries and enlivens the

social abilities of us humans. This cannot be done in theory, it demands concordant action.

Of course there are plenty of other means of communication—our magazine Oya, the concerts and seminars, conferences, lectures, film and video, meetings with our readers and so on. But these are not tools we use to communicate our project in the

first place. They rather are containers we use to transport the questions and answers which circle around the whole cultural creative subculture. As a side effect of course our different audiences get to know who we are, where we live and what we do in our effort to »walk our talk«. **KU**

At the time, when Sluňákov was being set up, we all lived the vision; it did not have to be articulated. This would be different nowadays. The phase of the formation was characterized by a unique flow of energy; everything was unrestrained—however unsustainable at the same time.

The vision is a crucial element of everything we do; it is our underlying principle. As the organisation

is still changing and developing, we need to communicate this internally. And of course, fostering the relationship between man and nature guides all our activities and events for the target group—we communicate it externally.

Internal Communication of Our Vision

Our vision serves as a guide in the ongoing process of realisation of Sluňákov's objectives. In our strate-

gic planning meetings, which we organise twice a year, we develop strategic and tactical plans for our objectives.

Besides this official platform, the vision is being communicated between the employees and founders. Newcomers and volunteers often demand additional information related to the spirit of the place. Communicating the vision is present at our meet-

ings; it often arises during the discussions in various contexts.

External Communication of Our Vision

Through our events and visual identity, we communicate our vision towards the public. Communication tools include

- ▶ online presentation of the organisation on www.slunakov.cz and other websites;

- ▶ new media;
- ▶ promotional posters, leaflets, brochures;
- ▶ e-mail offers to our sympathisers;
- ▶ corporate letters, e.g. for fundraising;
- ▶ cards, clothing, stamps;
- ▶ annual report;
- ▶ promotion in media;
- ▶ methodological materials and publications;

- ▶ press releases;
- ▶ information panels and labels in the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature.

So much for the theory; communicating the vision is often spontaneous, or even unconscious, not systematic. What seems to work best, is to convey experience through emotions and feelings.

Michal adds: »Each encounter with the public brings to us the issue of how to transmit our experience. How to share our knowledge and feelings? Communication is simple when an ecologist meets another ecologist. They use the same language which other people may not understand. But these other people—they are those most important in public education on environmental issues: The ›non-greens‹, otherwise minded, with a different set of values—with those I should debate! I need to consider the language I use for this purpose. How do I explain complicated scientific facts like biodiversity to a simple fisherman? Scientific knowledge transferred into a kind of modern myth might be the key. Notice, how refreshing the language of symbols, metaphors, similes in the scientific language is.«

There are two core activities through which we

believe that we communicate our vision significantly: the Olomouc Ecology Days festival and the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature gallery.

Olomouc Ecology Days

The Olomouc Ecology Days is an annual event where we debate with the public the state of the world. It was in 1990, at the time of change after the totalitarian regime had collapsed in 1989, that the festival was the first step towards establishing Sluňákov.

In the first year the festival had the form of a public happening in the Olomouc town centre. The totalitarian socialist system used to abuse the May Day for its propaganda. Therefore, after the societal changes, people were not really in the mood to celebrate. A group of nature protection activists seized the initiative and organised a gathering of environmentalists with the public on the town square. The May Day turned into the Earth Day. There was a podium right on the baroque monument »Holy Trinity Column« listed as UNESCO World Heritage—demonstrations for the societal changes also had taken place there. The professors of the Faculty of Sciences at the Palacký University, Otakar Štěrba,

Vladimír Panoš and Vratislav Bednář, protested there against the intention to build a Danube-Oder-Elbe (D-O-E) water corridor in view of the nature conservation in the Litovelské Pomoraví Protected Landscape Area. Their performance was complemented by the concert of Iva Bittová with the Betula Pendula band.

In the course of time, the event became annual and turned into an ecomarket with traditional craftsmen, nature conservation, human rights and social movements, information about the environment, promotion of waste reduction and recycling. The public debates have now moved to the venue of the Olomouc Museum of Modern Art.

There was a demand to organise discussions on a more regular basis, so we held so-called ecological evenings every month except for summer holidays. The festival events also include field trips and exhibitions. The basis of the festival is an open communication process with the public:

- ▶ We invite leading popularizers of science to the Czech Republic, academics and researchers who are experts in their fields, as we aim to share information in wider contexts.

- ▶ For the discussions, we always invite all the parties involved in cases presented—not just to present the case from the »green« point of view.
- ▶ We include topics of possible environmental manipulation, narrowing problems, environmentalists' mistakes and misunderstandings.
- ▶ We aim to attract the »non-green« audience.
- ▶ We still try to have a positive approach, offer interesting information, including enchantment by the beauty of nature and landscapes. With the festival we aim to
 - ▶ develop democratic discussion over serious societal issues;
 - ▶ keep the topic of the relationship between man and nature—and landscape—as a part of public discourse;
 - ▶ offer a space, where environmental issues are shared freely between people;
 - ▶ create a communicative space for environmentalists, civil servants, scientists and citizens

Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature

An important channel to communicate with our audience is opened through art and culture. Art is used

as a means of bringing issues we deal with to life and provide a different point of view. Sometimes art makes these issues more accessible and also enables their deeper perception. A concrete example is our venue—the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature.

What is the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature? It is an outdoor gallery with pieces of art of some of the most significant contemporary Czech artists. It is not a house. It is a gateway to the nature of the protected landscape area we are surrounded by. It is a natural recreational area for families.

The buildings and installations are designed to encourage visitors to a sensory perception of nature. Visitors can experience the place on guided tours, educational programmes, workshops, or simply by walking around, exploring on their own and letting the house of nature speak for itself. **sl**



2.2 WORKING TOGETHER

2.2.1 WHAT DOES COMMUNITY MEAN FOR EACH ORGANISATION?

Community is a key foundation on which Embercombe is built, both in terms of its structure and the learning opportunity it offers. Embercombe aims to offer a vision of a future we know is possible—a world where people live in communities that care for each other, who are connected to nature and enable each member to lead an empowered, fulfilling life. Change needs to happen throughout society to create communities that care for each other, and anyone can take a lead in bringing about change regardless of their social or financial position.

Community is one of our guiding principles (see also section 2.1.3), relevant to the day-to-day operation of the community, particularly the importance

of human connection in society. In the founding years a small community formed organically to create the space needed for the organisation. But this community was always transient and temporary, with people bringing in what support they could give when they could.

When the social enterprise was established to take Embercombe's work into the world, the intention very clearly was to establish a social enterprise with community as a key element of the programmes to facilitate group and individual learning. The idea of the model was to invite people in for periods of a few weeks or months to support the organisation through volunteering, and in the process

experience some aspects of community living. This then created a community-type environment as a backdrop for the learning of those that joined programmes for a few days. Within that learning were always embedded the morning circle, the dreamer role and listening partnerships fostering the spirit of the inner path of walking the twin trail: understanding oneself, becoming more true and authentic with oneself and with others.

The morning circle was the start of a normal working day. Whatever the weather, the community assembled around an open fire outside, and after a minute of silence, whoever wanted to share his or her true feeling that morning began to speak.

The sharing circle followed the sun run. Afterwards the tasks of the day were distributed: cleaning, cooking, gardening, woodwork, etc.

Listening partnerships was used once a week formally and at any time informally to help people to come to their own conclusions just by being listened to. The holder of the space—time was agreed upfront—was not required to answer or do anything else than listen with full presence.

The dreamer is part of our role description. Every day during the morning circle, a person volunteers for being the dreamer. »Our world can not evolve without vision, and for a vision you need time and space to dream.« All great ideas have come from a

dream. Embercombe encourages people to wander through the land, find a sitting spot and dream.

In 2013 we started to create a programme for the temporary volunteers coming as wwoofers to support them in their self-development. In addition to the morning check-in around the fire, they learned »courageous conversations«, ways of council, they had group coaching and individual mentor sessions and time to reflect on their learning experiences to become more aware of their own learning process. **EMB**

The community in our understanding has several levels or circles. The basic element is the community of a village which is a traditional community, the people in these communities have interdependent relationships, and each village has its own cultural specificity. The traditional communities of the villages were—and in some cases still are—well organised with divided responsibilities between the members of the communities, and they have a great autonomy over the external world. The community is ruled mainly by unwritten laws, which are established by tradition. Each village has a large system of unwritten laws which rule the main parts of their life. These laws are covering the agricultural production, the social and the economic life. For newcomers to these rural communities integration takes time

because they have to learn all these unwritten laws. Today, these traditional communities are more and more in dissolution, and our goal is to stop this and give them a modern vision. The unwritten laws express a set of values and a lot of practical knowledge. We think that it would be very important to formulate these values and the knowledge and communicate it to newcomers. The village communities are changing and in many cases the local people are not eager to communicate their unwritten laws to newcomers because they consider these to be not modern, not trendy, which in consequence encourages the newcomers to impose their values and rules to the villagers. This causes a rather confuse situation. The local people are still using their unwritten laws, and in many cases two parallel communities evolve

which don't understand each other. One community consists of the locals for whom the place is their »heimat«, the other being the »community« of the newcomers, who often come because of their disappointment from their life in the city, because they are looking for a healthy environment, or because they are in search of their own »heimat«.

In our understanding the rural community has to keep the traditional structure, which is based on families as individual social and economic units, and these families—often newcomers to the rural community—have to understand the unwritten laws of the local community, because these guarantee the balance and ensure the compatibility and complementarity between the individual units—families—which make up the village community.

The second level of community is the larger territory in which several local communities cooperate in order to complement their needs and services in the most important issues, for instance water regulation and the distribution of products.

The involvement of our organisation Focus Eco Center in this complicated structure was more as a catalyst. The members, volunteers and employees of the organisation were interacting with the members of the rural community. The question is how deep was the integration of these people? The employees were from different categories, environmentalists, young people who were looking for a job, local people. The experiences with all these people were very different. Most of the former employees purchased land in the Adrianu village, but didn't

settle there—didn't become members of the local community in the sense of participating actively in the daily activities linked to food production and social life. They have had the idea to move there but postponed this decision yet. I can say that all people who participated in some way in the elaboration of pilot projects or development strategy documents were somehow touched by the ideas, and all these people do form a certain community, which is difficult to express, but it does exist and hopefully can be activated in the future. **FEC**

2.2.1
WHAT DOES COMMUNITY MEAN FOR EACH ORGANISATION?

The words of Sobonfu Some express the attitude of the GdG very well: »The concept of community is based on the fact that each person is invaluable and truly irreplaceable. Each person has a gift to give, a contribution to make to the whole. The kind of gift a person brings, the kind of being a person is, is very unique to him or her and is valued by the community.«

Within this meaning everyone in our community can receive a lot from all others. Focusing on

what you can give with joy helps yourself and the project. To perceive community from this perspective prevents that I see the others at first place as people who have to help me solving my own problems. Living in community does not mean to hand over responsibility for one's own live to others, it rather means to get to know yourself in relationship with others and to contribute to the flowering of these relationships and the community as a whole.

To lead a responsible life with a small ecologi-

cal footprint is much more possible if we share resources. Therefore community life has not only a social but also an ecological dimension.

An important element of community building are men's- and women's-circles for the members of the GdG. They meet regularly in a protected space to exchange personal belongings. Everything spoken in this circle will be held confidential.

In the GdG there are different levels of intensity of a multilayered community. The core is the

co-housing community which actually is going to live on the site. At the moment there is a group that regularly meets. To become part of it there is a 6-months trial time. In order to get to know each other sufficiently it is important for the aspirant to live near the place of the GdG at that time so that attendance in formal and informal meetings is easy.

Another layer of community comprises the network of supporters and sympathisers in Herzogenburg. Some of them take care of a small garden-plot

on the site. And last but not least there are the participants of the 7-generations-symposia from Austria and Germany who feel connected to the project and help fostering the community spirit during a symposium. **GdG**

The European Academy of Healing Arts is one project of an intentional community of more than two dozens of individuals from small children to great grandmas. They all share daily life with each other. This influences our work as we day by day are faced with the beauty and the challenges of community life. Although our community consists of families, singles and couples, who all have their own private space, we feel like one large family-like organism that shares the household on the basis of a common economy. It is not possible to become a »member« of the community after a trial period—usual in many ecovillages. It is rather a process of adoption that lets

new people grow in. There is no ideology that has lead to our form of life, but a living practice of more than 40 years based on experiences and attitudes. One of these attitudes is maintaining a basic trust in the goodwill of everyone involved. Also in a case of conflict we try not to doubt the underlying trust in each other—the believe, that no one would act in bad faith. Freedom and individuality on the one side and connectedness and cultivation of a common spirit on the other side are two polarities that seem vital for us to make community flourish. Can I find out what I really, really want, and can I see this in relation to the larger community-organism?

Each Wednesday evening we hold our palaver, where there is space to talk about everything important (see chapter 3.1). We try to keep this exchange in a mode of »listening to each other« and rather not »debating«. Listening is a core-principle of our understanding of community. It does not only mean to listen another person but also to something which may be called »spirit of the community« and »spirit of the place« and in this sense to the land we live in, the plants and animals as members of our extended family. Caring for everything that enables a good life—may it be the garden, the buildings or a flock of sheep—is an expression of community, which does

not end at a certain point, because all beings live in relationship to others.

Within this meaning there is another layer of community: the network of about hundred neighbours and friends in the nearby villages who share our aim of trying to find an ecologically and socially sound way of life. People from this network care for a lot of communal infrastructures like a herb-garden accessible for disabled people, a forest kindergarten, a community supported agriculture and many more projects and places including those of Klein Jasedow. The community of villagers and »normal« people in the town of Lassan are equally important

as well as our network around our magazine »Oya« which reports on encouraging ecosocial projects, the network of students who take part in the musical trainings, or the international network created by an EU project. Within all these layers of activities the quality of community remains the same: It is all about listening to each other and letting emerge common action from this listening—from what resonates not only within me and you but in the space between us. **KU**

Our aim has not been to create a community that would live on the land, shape and form the place. The aim was to establish an environmental education institution accessible to the locals as well as ac-

cessible to people from cities and elsewhere. It was supposed to be a place who's genius loci would lead a person to think about her or his place in the world. The site and activities have philosophical character

rather than wanting to be a particular example of a kind of a landscape inhabitation.

The community is present; it just has a different form. We are a community of staff, volunteers,

friends, families, former employees and sympathisers. After almost 30 years of the Olomouc Ecology Days festival, a community has formed from the audience of the discussions as well. It is our particular

interest which we have in common, and we meet regularly in different groupings to share. **SL**

What Does Leadership And Guidance Mean to Us?

Leadership is at the core of Embercombe's work as a social enterprise, so we have a clear definition of leadership, which informs why we come to Embercombe, how we work together and how we deliver our programmes.

Embercombe's mission is to be a powerful and innovative catalyst for the emergence of a new generation of leaders and change agents who will take courageous action for a just, peaceful, and sustainable world. We believe that the world of our longing will come about as we choose to demonstrate authentic, courageous and active leadership.

What Do We Mean by Leadership?

We know that change needs to happen throughout society and that anyone can take a lead in bringing about change. We choose leadership when we know who we really are and what our purpose is. We believe true leadership is available to all and is a choice and responsibility that is renewed moment to moment as we face the challenges in our own lives. If we know what we deeply love, this choice is liberating. If we know what our gifts are, this choice can take form. If we know what our responsibilities are, this choice becomes a necessity.

To facilitate each individual's understanding of

their own leadership and where they might apply it, we invite programme participants, staff and volunteers to follow the »twin trail« of inner healing and spiritual deepening and of outer action to change the world. By uncovering our true gifts, responsibilities and passions we are able to bring us fully to the world, leading others and ourselves on a path of positive action.

Whether a volunteer or a member of the permanent team at Embercombe, individuals are expected to walk this twin trail daily to inform how they contribute to the project and to develop themselves in whatever way necessary to take action in the world,

while at Embercombe and beyond. To facilitate this the organisation provides a monthly coaching session for everyone involved, where possible places on programmes are made available for team members, and as mentioned above, the volunteer programmes in particular have a degree of structure to support people in their development.

However, a key aspect of the leadership model is responsibility, both personal responsibility and responsibility to the group. There is therefore an expectation for an individual to take a lead on how they use their time at Embercombe to facilitate the development of their own leadership, and to work

within their learning group to provide peer support. There is equally an expectation that individuals step forward and ask for what they need to facilitate their journey, rather than expecting the organisation or a manager to guess and provide what they need.

Then there is the question of leadership and structure within the organisation in the more traditional sense. (See also section 2.6.2) **EMB**

The distribution of power and the process of decisionmaking is very complicated in our case, according to the situation. In the rural communities the traditional decisionmaking structures after 40 years of communism are broken, and the leadership was taken over by the people with financial and/or political power. These people were not very much interested in sustainable development. The Focus Eco Center in the village community of Găleşti—and the larger community of the Niraj valley—became an important actor mainly because of the projects initiated by the organisation. These projects showed that the ideas proposed by the organisation are financially reasonable and can contribute to the survival—and to the development in our understanding—of the rural community. This happened especially in the 1990s and at the begin-

ning of the 2000s, when these financial resources were relatively high in comparison with the financial resources of the local people. In this situation two persons, the mayor of the village and the president of the organisation, had formally the leadership, they initiated activities and projects. But the leaders of different pilot projects were also very influential persons because the conditions of the projects varied greatly, and the project leaders had to manage these projects—they were responsible for the use of the money, and having control over the financial resources they became influential. So in fact the power was distributed between the mayor, the president of the organisation, the project leaders and some opinion leaders. These distribution of power was very sensitive but developed gradually in an informal way to a democratic structure which

was functional, and the leading idea in the community became the preservation of the natural and social values as well as the sustainable development.

This sensitive balance of power was broken, when the political influence increased in the area. The formal structures which were created—microregional association, Natura 2000 administration, LEADER group administration—were named by the political forces, people without experience in the region became responsible for distribution of huge amounts of money for projects, mainly for projects which didn't have any coherence in the community development—of course according to our vision—and in the long term sustainable development of the area. In these situation the leadership of our organisation in community development for the Niraj valley got lost. Even in Găleşti the chal-

lenge increased because many of the important stakeholders received very different inputs, and in some cases together with our common effort—our organisation and the local community—couldn't stop harmful projects like the regularization work of the Niraj river. The structures which were influenced by our ideas became smaller. So we turned our focus more to the small community in Adrianu. We reconsidered the function of the community building and changed it from an »Environmental Information and Development Centre«—with the intention of influencing strategical decisions in the microregion—to a »House of Nature« with the idea to develop educational and demonstration projects as well as offering space for a think tank of the microregion. So the leadership concept was transformed very much during this process from having

had real influence on the development of the area to a »presenting ideas which can lead your life« process. Today, the team of the Focus Eco Center, involving employees who are working on projects as well as volunteers from the city and from the countryside, elaborates small scale pilot projects which can show the reality of a sustainable lifestyle. These projects are implemented together with the members of the local community and the local politicians, opinion leaders from Găleşti and with individual partners from the Niraj valley. **FEC**

2.2.2 LEADERSHIP, POWER, DECISIONMAKING

In the Garden of Generation decisionmaking takes place in a sociocratic structure which consists of several circles (see part III methods and principles). Each section of the project is represented by a circle of elected delegates, one of them will be the leader of the section. Currently three of them exist: »living and learning in all generations«, »housing« and »business«, while the living-and-learning section again is arranged in several sub-circles like »garden- ing«, »care for children«, »finances«, »organisation« or »information«. Each section sends its leader and

another delegate into the next higher ranking circle. Part of the main leading circle on the highest level are also the architect of the project, the accountant and the fiduciary of the wealth pool (see section 2.7.2).

The people in the leading circle constitute the official executive board of the legal association »Garten der Generationen«. It is responsible for coordinating the project as a whole.

To become a member of this sociocratic structure a person has to be part of the GdG project, live near

the place to be able to attend meetings and other events and subscribe to the vision layed down in the small GdG handbook. This book also documents former decisions which the current group builds upon.

A sociocratic election differs from normal anonymous ones. Everyone can suggest anyone to be a delegate and explain why she or he sees someone suitable for the job. Thereby the qualities of this person are appreciated. To be a delegate in a circle is not in the first place a position of power but a position of a caretaker. All decisions in a circle are agreed on

by systemic consensus, that means that no one has serious, justified objections against a suggested procedure. If there are such objections no decision can be made yet.

The leading circle has the right to close down existing subordinate circles and initiate new ones. In such a case the main framework of the new circle is formulated by the initiators—its aims, its budget and the areas in which this circle can decide by itself. Moreover a circle-leader will be designated to find members for the new group. In the follow

up the new subordinate circle will decide autonomously within the set frame and cares for all the details.

The fact that two people from each subordinate circle take part in the leading circle ensures a smooth flow of information from the bottom to the top and back again.

Working with circles has the effect that there is never a singular figure acting in a dominant position, but instead a circle of elected, trustworthy members who search for consensus. **GdG**

A basic principle of our community is that everyone deals with everyone else on an equal footing. There are no hierarchies, and where external authorities ask for a leadership-position like an executive board of the European Academy of Healing Arts these positions are held from some people as a service to the community, not as positions of power.

This does not mean that we deny the existence of power or authority. The voices of people with special knowledge in one field or with a lot of life experience quite naturally have a certain weight in decisionmaking—although we listen equally careful to the quiet voices too. Dealing with authority is a wide field, because many have had traumatizing experiences with people who wielded power over them, specially during their childhood and in school. How to deal with these injuries? How do they affect our perception of each other? This is an ongoing field of research in our community. For example

if a person has a lot of experience, energy and persuasive power—can she or he take care of not dominating a process of decisionmaking but still authentically contribute to the process? How can such a person gain the trust of the others that she or he does not act for the own ego but for the wellbeing of the larger whole? How can the others gift this trust? How can someone be heard who feels overrun by someone else or by the dynamic of an intensive process? How can all this be expressed without hurting each other—and without constantly devouring precious productive time?

We are no experts in solving all problems around the subject of authority, but we experience that looking at it thoroughly helps to get rid of all fears that prevent an authentic perception of the other. In our attempt to reframe improper conceptions of power we experiment with the term »eldership«. In indigenous cultures elders are honorable members of so-

ciety who serve the community through advice. In Western cultures there is no positive role-model for eldership. Typically, leading figures get elected, who dominate a group rather than serving it.

In Klein Jasedow, decisionmaking doesn't follow formalised structures. Far-reaching decisions that influence the community as a whole need a collective process. This can happen in one or several talking circles, but sometimes decisions also emerge in a longterm organic process where at the end nobody can say who actually took the decision—suddenly it is clear which way to go, and it feels right for all. Trusting in this kind of emergence requires a lot of patience as nothing will happen unless the decision is »born« during this fluid dealing with the subject. It pops up in a second when the time is ripe. In the long run cultivating this common attitude has shown to be highly efficient. Of course, it requires the commitment of everyone to actively

join into the process and contribute without letting any objections unspoken. And it is not necessary that everyone totally agrees like in a usual consensus-process. Maybe one person has strong doubts, but realises, that she or he can live with these doubts in order not to block a development which is generally felt positive by most community members. As we are revising our processes at certain milestones anyway, this gives everyone the chance to recheck her or his opinion at any given time. For this principle of decisionmaking we coined the expression »commoncordantly« instead of concordantly—resp. »commonanamous« instead of unanimous. Only if someone feels a strong »no«, we take this as an indicator that the decision is not ready to be born yet. Such a veto will be accepted by everyone.

Complementing this practice of emerging decisions we follow the principle of management by competence: If a person is challenged to decide

something in his or her field of activity, we all trust deeply that he or she knows what to do. This also applies to a working group that deals with a particular project: The group will take decisions without asking the collective for every step. This is a sensitive area, because they might come to points where a decision has far reaching consequences, but they might not be aware of this. In these occasions a lot of goodwill and awareness is required from everyone to find the point where the entire community needs to be involved again.

To work in such a fluid way of course can cause misunderstandings, but we feel that it heightens the awareness for community values and supports the collective intelligence when there are no fixed rules on decisionmaking, but the necessity of using our personal intuition how to act in each new situation again and again. All in all this keeps us vibrant. **KJ**

2.2.2
LEADERSHIP, POWER, DECISIONMAKING

At our beginnings, a small group of the members of staff was lead by the head of the department. After the transition to an NGO, we had a flat structure—Sluňákov was lead democratically, with a leader resp. director. This brought freedom, but at the same time a number of difficulties: complicated negotiations with the constant increase of questions to deal with, a huge amount of time dedicated to group discussions, the loss of effectiveness—in terms of maintaining the spirit of the organisation—, and ambiguity of decisions.

The hierarchical system has now been developed from the scheme director—employees to a two-stage management structure: director and mid

management—employees. It remains under constant review and is subject to modifications. By now, this process brings more efficiency, and more qualified decisions are made.

Concerning the leadership, Michal Bartoš is the founder and author of Sluňákov and the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature idea. He is the director of the centre from the outset. He manages the education centre, is part of creative processes in the organisation and leads political lobbying and public relations. All that is possible only because of the strong loyalty and dedication of the great team he is surrounded by. [SL](#)



Center Fire in Embercombe.

Throughout Embercombe's life, we have put messages out, sometimes they may have not been aligned. Often people have misunderstood Embercombe or interpreted different things on to it.

Recently, audience has become more homogenous which had put off others. People who have

been involved in the past or have become aware of Embercombe and interested in it, started to drop away, feeling not aligned with the evolution of Embercombe.

One of the main reasons for this dropout is that they felt Embercombe was not asking them what

they needed, and how Embercombe may support them versus telling them what they needed.

The other reason they felt, Embercombe had a resistance of working with so called bad organisations and only wanting to work with organisations who already think the same way.

Embercombe learned that this is not helpful, and it wants to face this subject courageously.

How?

Opening the gates and going out, expanding the range of people of interaction and truly asking how Embercombe can serve. That way Embercombe will

attract more diverse audience. Its outcome will be an increased learning for all and for the future generations. **EMB**

According to our experience in Romania only a small percent of the actual society is aware of the problems created by industrial agriculture and urbanisation of the rural space. But some people already get information from Western Europe concerning this problem, and they know that it would be good to avoid all these mistakes which were made in other countries and lead to the loss of biodiversity in many European countries. Some people are interested to have healthy food, and they are informed that the food from the supermarkets obtained mainly by the industrial procedures is not so healthy—and not so tasty—as the food from the

small farmers. The main target audience with resonance to this kind of projects is formed by these people who are already aware concerning the importance of maintaining the rural communities and they are looking for such experience. So far we have some people who resonate with our ideas, and we expect the involvement of these people in different levels. For the beginning we clarify that we don't expect our audience to move to the countryside and start farming. This is a first confusion which has to be clarified. In our conception each person who has a resonance with our ideas can be part of our project and can find his and her role and place. If it is a group

who produces vegetables, they will produce for sure more as they can consume, so they need people who will buy these products, and together they will form a community of mutual support. The most important criterion is that all these relations have to be based on solidarity and on the will to carry risks and responsibilities commonly. If the relation between agricultural producers and urban consumers is based only on the commercial rules the producer will be pushed to go for quantitative production instead of quality.

Another category of people who can be our potential audience is the group of people who didn't

have any information concerning the problem of changing the rural space into an agro-industrial area. A big problem of our times is that most of the people even don't know how a natural environment looks like, they spend their live in the town, missing this experience. In Romania, when the generation now in its sixties was young, the natural experience was common. Children at that time could spend their days in nature at rivers, in meadows, and forests. During the past 40 years the natural environment changed in such a dramatic way that the new generation hardly knows its meaning any more. So the young generation has no real information how

a natural rural environment with integrated activity to the nature has to be. But we think that in this group of people there are many individuals who want to learn about the meaning of the natural environment and healthy food. So we consider that our second potential audience is formed by people who don't have practical experience in rural life but want to have this experience. They can decide later whether they will stay in the countryside—which they do in many cases—or rather support other people who are going to change their life and to stay in countryside, and be part of the process. **FEC**

People who resonate with the ideas of the GdG are concerned with alternative life plans outside of the consumer- or dog-eat-dog society. The possibility to

garden on a small plot of land on the site of the GdG project creates a bridge to middle-class people from Herzogenburg who do not have an explicit eco-so-

cial background. The aim of the project is to not reduce its communication to a special audience but to be as open as possible.

Another reason for the positive resonance of the local people is an open footpath leading across the site. It enables the city dwellers to have a nice cir-

cular route through the northwestern fields behind the town. **GdG**

There are several activities that create the »audience« of Klein Jasedow, one with a strong impact are certainly the concerts, music-workshops and trainings. They have a long tradition as four of the

founders of Klein Jasedow have been and still are professional musicians. In the early 1980s they developed their own musical language in intensive performances with mainly improvised music on

historical, ethnical and experimental acoustic instruments. Playing music that comes from the attention to the very moment—to yourself, the other musicians, the room, the place, the audience—cre-

ates an atmosphere that allows the music to deeply touch the listeners. This led to a strong feeling of connectedness between the audience and the artists. A regular newsletter to visitors of concerts who

wanted to stay informed did not only tell about upcoming musical events but also about the ecosocial projects of the early community. Another medium of establishing longlasting contact to people all over ▶▶

2.2.3 AUDIENCE AND RESONANCE

the German speaking world were guided tours to megalithic monuments in England, Ireland and Poland, regularly organised by two members of the community during the summer seasons from 1992 till 2007. These journeys to our cultural European roots were deep experiences for the travellers, and most of them wanted to stay in touch and receive our yearly newsletter.

Regular storytelling was essential to stay in contact. When we moved to Klein Jasedow in 1997 the newsletter had about 2000 recipients who were all eager to get to know how we would get along restoring a small ruined village in the wild Northeast of

Germany. It was this audience that financed a large part of the budget for renovating the »Klanghaus« (House of Sounds), the transformed old barn which now hosts concerts and workshops in the field of music and creativity. Many friends all over Germany were ready to be part in a »Leih- und Schenk-gemeinschaft« (community of lending and gifting) in order to refinance with small monthly amounts a loan given by the ecological-ethical German bank »GLS-Gemeinschaftsbank«. The overwhelming solidarity of our audience was vital for the evolution of Klein Jasedow. When the Klanghaus was finished its concerts and conferences created a regional au-

dience, and it soon became known for high quality classical, experimental or Jazz music. To have a place in the middle of the countryside which is beautiful, professionally built and offers excellent performances had the effect that we were taken more serious by local players, also by the authorities. It seemed important to us to communicate at the highest possible standard of quality.

On the other hand the Klanghaus ist very down to earth: neighbours celebrate birthdays or weddings and once a year in early summer the »Elderflower-Festival« takes place as a big family-event with a small fair of local arts and crafts—a low-

threshold-event open to everybody which attracts hundreds of visitors.

The magazines published in Klein Jasedow on subjects like deep ecology, ecovillages, permaculture or solidarity economy created another kind of audience. We offered these media as platforms for all kinds of projects and rarely reported on our own activities which made us a trustworthy partner in the networks of ecosocial projects. Today the Oya magazine has a strong community of more than 4000 subscribers and about hundred authors.

In the year 2012 about 300 readers came to celebrate the »Oya-Festival« for networking, playing

music, storytelling etc. which supported our connections to young people in the degrowth-movement.

So if it is a music-lesson, a summercamp for children, a meeting with readers of our magazine or a workshop on mudbrick building—all events have something in common that creates a special resonance between us and the people who are visiting. We actually don't see them as an »audience« in the common sense as we never try to sell them anything. We invite them, because we want to search with others for ways to lead a good life on a small planet, and this creates relationship on an equal footing and a sense of community. **KJ**

The audience of our environmental education programmes and events is the general public and schools—children, families, academics, scientists, activists, students, young people, senior clubs, teachers, psychologists, artists, craftsmen, politicians and

decision makers, seekers ... We aim to address the »non-green« spectrum of society.

Generally speaking, it is difficult to catch one's attention when there is no interest in the topic. We are trying to do our best in looking at ecologi-

cal problems comprehensively, in wider contexts, with scientific as well as non-scientific approaches. We try not to simplify the complicated natural processes. We do not want to persuade anyone to our truths, we aim to discuss the relationship between

mankind and nature, publicly. We create situations where people feel togetherness and deal with environmental issues. In the low energy building, we bring attention to ecological solutions, energy and financial savings, but also to the disadvantages like

noise from the ventilators of the recuperation system, heat in summer, or dry air caused by the constant ventilation of the insulated house. We wish to avoid radicalism, and prefer deep debates and questioning. **SL**

We need to reconsider whom we attract and how. So far we never have done an evaluation, but it is needed! Do we attract the very same people or new ones?

Which are the markets we want to attract? We have been passive in the past about who was approaching us, instead of becoming active with whom we want to engage.

Our main audience for our purpose is between 18 and 30 years old, a range of people who will be the next generation of leaders. And within this age group which profile of individuals, wealth, diversity, organisations do we want to attract? We need to start actively identifying them.

In that process the first stage is recognizing that we need to do it—that's where we are at. Next to identify the markets we are interested in.

How we do it?

By opening our gates, by listening to what they need, not telling them what they need as we have done so far.

It's important that we can look for an exchange with anyone we meet, and that we need to be able

to offer an exchange for a wide range of people. Having an openness to that is vital now for Embercombe, and we have to make sure that it is a fair exchange for both sides. That means that all parts are feeling it is fair.

Until now this is what Embercombe has done, but it's efficiency needs evaluation:

Embercombe offers each month what we call experience weekends where anyone can book themselves into the experience of working on the land, cooking, eating and sharing. It's a way for people to try what Embercombe is about, to experience a community of people who come together for some hours and who nourish the place and each other. It has a huge impact on people who then become supporters, clients, participants, recommenders.

In 2014, an ambassadors network was created with the idea to deliver Embercombe's message to the world. Many of the ambassadors have long held connections with the charity, having been volunteers, friends and trustees.

However, if we consider it truly, anyone who has been to Embercombe is our ambassador. Each per-

son having been to Embercombe can share it with friends, colleagues, educators and businesses, helping us to raise much needed funds and inspiring others to engage with the charity.

All of these activities below need refreshing and activating:

Embercombe hubs have been envisioned in every county to be a place where those inspired by our mission can gather, connect with like-minded people and share ideas for action. So far, we have hubs in London and the New Forest, and plans are afoot for hubs in Bristol and Stroud.

Bringing Embercombe's Voice into the World

Mac Macartney, the founder, speaks at major international business conferences, TEDx events, universities, schools, festivals, prisons, and small local gatherings. He is adept in aligning his language, stories, and concepts to his audience, and the originality of his content and delivery is exceptional.

Whilst Mac speaks for free at countless grassroots events, he does require professional speaker fees for his contribution to business and profes-

sional association events. This is linking back to a succeeding question: He is speaking on behalf of Embercombe and we hope that more people of Embercombe are starting to go out and talk, expanding the number of people talking about our work in the world, not only the founder.

Collaboration and Partnerships

Since its conception, Embercombe has collaborated with organisations and universities such as the University of Exeter's One Planet MBA, inviting masters students to explore the relationship between business, leadership and sustainability at a time when environmental, financial and social changes are challenging traditional business models.

Developed in partnership with WWF International, the One Planet MBA develops a new generation of business leaders equipped with the knowledge, skills and understanding required to create, build and develop sustainable, profitable businesses capable of succeeding in a fast changing international business landscape.

Engaging with the business leaders of the fu-

ture, giving them space to really connect with themselves, align to their true values and vision about what a more sustainable way of business could look like, is key to Embercombe's mission

Embercombe's partnerships include social enterprises such as Edventure, Eden Project, an on-going collaboration with Schumacher College; speaking, joined programmes and exchange with other universities such as Plymouth University, with the idea of developing short courses or delivering part of their courses at Embercombe.

The approach of the current MD is meeting anyone who is interested and having a conversation and getting involved with networks who are interested in new paradigm ideas, e.g. the Academy of Chief Executives.

He is also interested in exploring a partnering resp. linking assistant programme to local community organisations. **EMB**

In our opinion networking is a key issue for developing a community project. In the rural communities the mutual support was one of the main instruments which supported and maintained the social structure. In Transylvania this instrument was called »kalaka« (Hungarian) or »claca« (Romanian), and the meaning of this word was that all the

difficult works were done together by the members of the community. Each member of the community offered his support and received help when needed, e.g. building a house or difficult work in agriculture. Participation in these activities was on voluntary basis, and apparently no official rules existed—but in reality very strict unwritten rules applied.

The basic principle of the participation was mutual help, so who expected to receive support had to contribute to activities of the other people. But the performed work hadn't have to be the same, for example if one person needed help in building a house, he could participate in other tasks, like work in agriculture and not obligatory in the building another

house. In special cases, for example if an old lady needed help with reparation of the house, the members of the community helped her in spite of them knowing that she never could help back any more. The philosophical background of this relationship was rather ethical and moral than commercial. It was what we call today »networking«, a complex

interaction and mutual support between the members of the society. In our times this mutual support is disappearing and everybody tries to work individually, even in rural communities, and the relation between the members of the communities became more and more commercial. In our project we tried to reintroduce this kind of approach which consid- ▶

2.2.4 ATTRACTING COLLABORATORS, SUPPORTERS, FRIENDS, AND NETWORKING INTO SOCIETY

ers the interaction between the members of the society more as a »gift« which doesn't have fixed priced or must be returned later as a »service« which has to be paid immediately on a negotiated price. Of course we were aware from the beginning that the structure of the society changed so much and the inter-human relations are now dominated by the commercial concept, and the old, very functional structures can't be reintroduced as they were in past. But we believe that the full introduction of the commercial urban style of relationships in the rural

space is not suitable for it, especially in the future when all services will be more expensive and will be hardly affordable for the rural population, who is less wealthy than the urban population. So we believe networking between the individuals and small communities in the future has to be strengthened. In this respect all our pilot projects are based on networking between individuals and groups. For example for the sustainable tourism group we identified five families who are sharing the responsibility to take care of the people who want to learn about the

Transylvanian rural lifestyle and agricultural practices. In the framework of the programme of ten days the guests learn about the different activities in the five different farms, how the rural landscape is maintained, how the vegetables are grown and how the animals are handled. The five families are networking closely in leading the guests through this experience and in sharing the rural life experiences, and in this way they can establish personal relations, exchange experiences—which is much more attractive than to have only commercial rela-

tions. The five families learned that networking, the cooperation between them, is much more valuable and productive than the competition which exists in the usual tourism business. In our other pilot projects cooperation and networking are also very important. Besides networking inside the community networking with other similar initiatives and similar projects is essential. To reconsider rural life in Europe and to offer valuable models which can stop the definitive destruction of the European manmade cultural landscape

and the transformation of this landscape into an agro-industrial landscape is a very important issue now in Europe. In our vision, it can only be solved by intensive networking between the many similar initiatives. Since we are working in this issue, during the past 15 years we learned that in Europe there are many similar initiatives—and like we they too feel alone and powerless, so we hope networking between these initiatives will change the deplorable situation. **FEC**

The fact that the GdG vision is very broad attracts a lot of people who are interested in alternative living and working. Additional practical work carried out on the site activated many people to come and to get to know the GdG vision. From 2009 on two shelters were built—a summer kitchen and a meeting-room—using natural material like straw, clay and wood. This attracted especially young people. Moreover the GdG infrastructure is used for childcare, table-tennis and events like public workcamps or festivities.

Many ecologically and socially oriented people wish to reduce their ecological footprint, because it

is almost impossible to reduce it sufficiently if you live a a singular family in a normal modern building. The prospect to use communal resources in the GdG and to realise a certain level of subsistence motivates many people to think about becoming part of the group, to live on the GdG site or to support the project, e.g. by depositing money in the »wealth pool«. The wealth pool is attractive because it is different to giving a loan or a donation to a project. The money still belongs to the person who gave it into the pool; she or he can have it back after a certain period of notice, because never all the money in the pool is spent—a liquidity reserve is kept to

be always able to pay people who leave the pool again. People who deposit money in the pool have the good feeling that their capital serves a meaningful eco-social project they personally feel connected to. This greatly differs to the feeling of depositing money in a bank account even it may be an ecologically oriented bank.

Supporters from all over Austria, Germany and even other European countries got to know the GdG through the symposia organised by Markus Distelberger and his 7-generations-network. Wellknown speakers were ready to come because they realised Markus' authentic interest in their work and his

wish to set up a creative laboratory during the days of the symposium where all participants can learn from each other and inspire each other. To open up such spaces for research about »right livelihood« without a fixed orientation on a certain ideology is highly attractive.

Networking into society is a very important factor for successful projects. Since its start the GdG cooperates with regional media and the regional government. Both were regularly invited to events of the project so a good relationships developed.

Results were articles in the regional media and most important: the reclassification of the site of

the GdG from agricultural into construction land. Another layer of networking is Markus Distelberger's newsletter to his 7-generations-network of about 4000 recipients, mainly made up of the participants of his symposia. There, he regularly comments in short essays on what is going on in the world, and of course also reports the developments in the GdG. Moreover Markus takes actively part in the public debate by writing letters to politicians and journalists. **GdG**

When our community moved to Klein Jasedow in 1997 some of the members feared that on such a remote place out in the pale no one would help us. The opposite was the case – in the first years we had

so many friends visiting and helping us like never before, and there were collaborators in the field of regional development like mayors, the CEO of the local jobcenter and many more. Klein Jasedow con-

veyed a force of attraction from the beginning on. This may have its roots in the fact that we never wanted to create this place at first as a place for our own wellbeing but as a contribution to bring new

life into a neglected area and to be a place of learning about and inquiring the great question of how to contribute to a positive change towards a grandchildren-proof society—a society that reflects its de-

isions in the light of seven generations to come. If a place has a basic radiation of giving, supporters will be there. As a giving person you will meet others who have something to give on an egalitarian basis. ▶▶

2.2.4
ATTRACTING COLLABORATORS, SUPPORTERS,
FRIENDS, AND NETWORKING INTO SOCIETY

One of the most important prerequisite for finding helpful collaborators may be courage – courage to approach anyone who could be of help without feeling small or inferior. If you allow yourself to believe

that you do a good job you can ask any other person to help you or to join you, no matter how »famous« she or he might be.

Potential collaborators mostly realise soon, that

the projects of Klein Jasedow are set up in a co-creative way so that they can be part of shaping the common process. This invites them to join in an active way—it is not in the first place that we ask them

for help, we offer a chance to be part of something new, created through commoning. That we have something to offer—the creative spaces of our projects, where no external authority dictates rules, but

the people involved set up their own way of realisation—gave us the self-confidence to trust that we always will find the right people and vice versa they will find us. **KU**

The biggest group of our collaborators is made up by students. Volunteering works very fine as we incorporate our supporters in the organisational processes and events. Often our volunteers become external employees and sometimes even full-time staff members. We have strong connections to the Palacký University, and some of our staff members even run lectures there. It is a platform to meet new possible sympathisers; we have presentations for students, run activities on student fairs.

We are open—anyone can come over. We do not focus on a specific part of the society but always invite everyone. Since our site has no fence or entrance fee, we give visitors the opportunity to self-explore our work by just visiting us, letting the House of

Nature leave an impact on them. We organise various kinds of public events, often for different target groups. Every year we balance what we have achieved and this festive gathering is culminating in a concert in Olomouc for the public.

Networking Within Society

Establishing Sluňákov has been aimed as looking for a place, where visitors and environmental programme participants will have an option to get closer to nature. They will get an opportunity to be in nature physically; to be in nature that shapes the landscape they live in or they visit.

Our goal was not to integrate into a certain landscape or a particular village. Instead, we wanted to create a place that would exude respect to the rich-

ness and beauty of nature in a way that the idea would be understandable to participants of the programmes organised in such a place.

Of course, we try to get on well with our local neighbours. Sluňákov is located in the village of Horka nad Moravou and it is still a bit alien there. It has been established by people who did not live in the village. There was an attempt to offer our programmes to the locals, even create some special ones for them, connect our activities with local feasts, screen historical movies about the local affairs, invite local kids to our clubs and camps, help people after the floods, plant trees in the village ... Truth is that it was always a bit unclear how Sluňákov has been accepted among the locals. There were voices

for as well as against us. The local government has always been helping. Sluňákov has never experienced open hostility. Some of the villagers became our employees, and some of our employees became inhabitants of the village. The locals were not interested in our activities, but lately, local families have started to show interest in our programmes for kids and parents. And the House of Nature made a great step forward in our networking into the society and has become a place where people come for a walk and spend their time in a nice environment that leads to own contemplations.

We cooperate with many organisations focused on environmental education—environmental education centres in the Olomouc region, ZOO, Regional

Museum in Olomouc (*Vlastivědné muzeum v Olomouci*), Czech State Forest Management Company (*Lesy ČR*) etc. We associate schools with an interest in environmental topics at the elementary level (*Mrkev network*) and at nursery level (*Mrkvička network*). We have trained a group of environmental education coordinators from different schools, and we keep on working together closely.

We engage with ideas and activities of our befriended organisations: a local network of family and children's centres, forest nurseries, NGOs, art galleries, public institutions and so on. We do not end up lost in our visions but try to communicate with others and cooperate. **SL**

2.2.5
WAYS OF COOPERATION WITHIN EACH
ORGANISATION—COMMONING

The purpose of Embercombe's core team was to facilitate shared information and coordinate among the organisation. It worked while Embercombe was small and growing slow, but with the huge growth in the past few years, and with it its growing associated burnout, we realised it was not effective.

Originally the education team was set up and running as a separate organisation and worked on the principle that everyone else needed to support them should be working on their terms. This of course is not feasible.

Morning circle, now an essential part of Embercombe, had a practical part to it: to share information and growing deeper together.

The wider team meetings were created to discuss issues important to the organisation every six weeks. The wider team had also some involvement with decisionmaking.

At the current time and with the goal to change Embercombe around we have a senior management team which displaced the core team. Four members of the management team represent the whole or-

ganisation, but on a different level. Embercombe at its origin had no hierarchy before—but also had no management. Now there is a hierarchy level and we have management talks and decision.

We tried to keep some aspects of the former core team, called the operations team, who is responsible that they day to day operations go smoothly and the management team can focus on finance, business development, marketing etc.

For six weeks, starting in January 2017, we came together every week as a whole team for a half day,

to raise awareness to the question how we are going to work together, what is working and what not.

The initial outcome was that finally assumptions and hidden accusations were put out openly on the table and more useful conversations started. We ended up clarifying what a decisionmaking process looks like, to make clear that not everyone needs to be involved in a decisionmaking process. And management had to become directive in setting the right to override any decisions if they would be harmful for Embercombe.

Ideally, if the environment is working well, we would not need to have any decision overridden.

Our intentions are to create an enabling environment for the future. **EMB**

Our aim was to rebuild the trust between the people and »reinvent« the traditional way of commoning and networking. At the beginning of our project we faced major difficulties, because individualism was so strong that it seemed almost impossible to rebuild trust. In a human community it is always a parallel process: cooperation and competition are going together, and traditional rural communities find a balance between both qualities. In Romania as well as in the other former communist countries, the forced establishment of the so called collectives (common agricultural enterprises) created a bad feeling concerning commoning so strong that it was very hard to start such a project which needed to be based on the cooperation between the different members and actors. The changes after the rev-

olution created also a lot of conflicts, because the land restitution law gave possibilities for different interpretations and was the source of a lot of struggles concerning the restitution of different pieces of earth. All this historical background, but also the Romanian interpretation of capitalism which got out of control, a wild competition for resources, in many times far beyond democratic principles and sometimes beyond the law, generated a general atmosphere of distrust in society. In that atmosphere it was obvious for sociologists and environmentalist that the degradation of the social tissue and the environmental conditions will be inevitable. In this situation several NGOs, sociologists and other people from universities were thinking about ways of changing this kind of development. When we

started our project we were thinking firstly to reconsider the interpersonal relations in the local community and to rediscover the healthy balance between cooperation and competition inside it. To achieve this target we fixed common goals together with the members of the community, and we agreed on the activities which would lead to achieve these goals. The elaboration of a common strategy was already very helpful because during the elaboration process, the way of sharing ideas helped us to understand better each other's way of thinking. For instance, we had a leading idea, which was based on the restoration and maintaining of the natural environment and the ecosystem services and in promotion of the sustainable economic activities. So we agreed that the most suitable way to implement the theory into

practice would be to start with some pilot projects, which would force the people to work together and to understand that cooperation can be more productive as wild competition. When we started to implement our projects concerning water management, eco-agrotourism and agriculture, we were successful to identify people who were interested to join this community. The community was growing, and we arrived to a very interesting structure. We have a group of people in the Niraj valley who form a community, and have a good cooperation not only in the field for which they joined as a group, but they support each other in many fields of activities and share a common philosophy concerning the development issues of the rural space. The rural community was supported by people from outside the rural commu-

nity but who became member of this community on ideas and goals. So we can consider that inside of this community the cooperation is based on informal relations, of sharing common ideas and implementing common activities.

This community was growing, but we must know that the general social environment is very hostile to this kind of approach. In our working area were several other projects which promoted individualism and the commercial approach, and this fact is a strong barrier to generalise our approach concerning the community development. **FEC**

2.2.5 WAYS OF COOPERATION WITHIN EACH ORGANISATION—COMMONING

At the beginning of the project, gardening was very important. When the GdG bought its land it was an agricultural field, and the first idea to start with some activity there was growing potatoes. All people connected to the project wanted to help to create a first potato-harvest, and with the support of a local organic farm this worked quite well. Doing practical work on site should be a way to get to know each other and to think about how to build houses and form a community. The potato field eventually was turned into a vegetable garden where everyone could have a small crop to grow vegetables during

summer, and additionally a field for winter vegetables for everyone was set up. This shared field was an experiment in commoning and gifting economy, managed on the basis »give what you are able to give, and take what you need«. No rules were set up who should work at which times in the field for the winter vegetables, people who were ready to contribute would do so, and everyone would take a part of the harvest with a sense of proportion. Nothing would be measured or compared. This was a very instructive experience which still influences the way of cooperation in the GdG.

Another commoning experiment was the building of a small straw-bale-house for meetings of the GdG community. This was done mainly by laypersons who wanted to learn about building with natural material which was very instructive and fun, but also a lot of mistakes were made. So for future building projects professionals will be hired for all complex parts of the work, but still volunteers will contribute where it is possible, and share the experience of working together practically on a construction site—which helps a lot with community building.

Every now and then the GdG organises a camp to work on the site—make firewood, cut grass, plant new trees or whatever is needed. Mainly members of the GdG core team participate, but other volunteers are welcome. The group organises itself by the method »open space«: In an opening circle everyone can suggest an area of work to be done at a certain time, and others can join. All these possibilities are noted down on a board so that the participants know what is going on. This is an easy way to organise commoning.

In the first phase mainly plenary rounds were

used as a forum to talk about ways of cooperating and organising the project. The attempts to find a consensus were not easy, sometimes a veto blocked the process. Therefore the GdG today uses the method of systemic consensus: not everyone has to agree fully to a decision, it can be made in case there are no heavy and well-founded objections. Also sociocracy (see section 2.2.2) as a non-hierarchical decentralised method of organisation helps a lot to proceed smoothly with the process of planning the first buildings on the site. **GdG**

The way of cooperation realised in Klein Jasedow could best be described by the verb »commoning«. There are no fixed rules of how a cooperation should look like, it is invented by everyone involved. The emerging forms of cooperation are based on the individual abilities and potentials: There are people who are talented in setting up structures, other are talented in giving impulses, others are good in communicating in a team, again others work best all by themselves, and depending on this an organic form of cooperation will arise.

Commoning is not only a way of self-organisation on an egalitarian basis but a way of dealing with resources. We name it »careuse« to express that care always comes before use. To care for is the basic attitude on which we try to base all our work.

Most members of the community of Klein Jasedow work in rather specialised fields: teaching

music in the Klanghaus, writing and designing articles, translating and publishing books, building houses with local natural material, fundraising, beekeeping, woodwork or making musical instruments, do the accounting etc.—all this requires professional skills. Everyone works very self-reliant, possesses a high grade of autonomy in the particular field of work and knows what she or he has to do. Small teams care for different projects and have their own way of communicating about what should be done. This can differ widely from one project to the other—the founding-group of our free school works with weekly meetings, while the teachers of the music-trainings in the Klanghaus put a lot of energy into the postprocessing of workshop-sessions. As all projects are quite complex, it is important to find ways of staying informed about the whole and keep in mind that each project is nothing but one

fractal of a larger process, and each fractal will mirror the others if we all stay in resonance with each other. To maintain this ability of seeing the whole in each small activity is quite challenging and needs careful communication. For this kind of exchange and for far reaching decisions we have our weekly evening-meeting, which again is not compulsory, but everybody who can will attend it of course.

Because of this structure of specialised projects cared for in small teams we enjoy a lot doing practical work in larger groups—sometimes all hands are needed to set up a pile of firewood, to carry hundreds of barrows of sand into a building site, to harvest berries or to cope with a huge cleanup-session in an old barn. This always creates a joyful atmosphere, it is so much easier to feel the potential of good cooperation while working with your hand in nature than when sitting in front of a computer.

Next to large common activities there are many small groups—always in different constellations—who pursue subsistence-activities throughout the year: picking wild herbs in spring, working in the vegetable garden, harvesting and storing the harvest, cooking. This down-to-earth kind of work teaches cooperation in a very simple way: nature tells you what to do and when, and how to do it, and you try to do it as good as possible to enjoy good local food all over the year. This kind of work is not regarded to be inferior to artistic or pedagogic activities—quite in contrary it is greatly honoured by all members of the community.

What makes collaboration easy is a constellation where nobody has to prove himself to someone else but everyone is accepted with all personal abilities and limits. It is essential that there is complete freedom to decide to be part of a common ac-

tivity. Of course there are many factors that don't allow a laissez-fair attitude: The magazines have to appear at a certain day, the music trainings need to be prepared, a meeting will take place and needs organisation etc. Who has taken over responsibility for something will happily live with the limitations that lie in the nature of the task. In the past we have developed more and more sensitivity to excessive demands and the effect of self-exploitation caused by a demanding project. Much more than in our first years, when we often had the feeling that we had no other choice than overburden us completely, we ask ourselves what we really, really want and look for ways of caring for ourselves as well as for the whole in a healthy balance. **KJ**

2.2.5 WAYS OF COOPERATION WITHIN EACH ORGANISATION—COMMONING

The concrete topics of our environmental programmes, festivals and public events, are usually chosen by the founder, Michal Bartoš, as well as by the staff members. The way we work in Sluňákov puts emphasis on free and independent creation, based on personal interests and professional background of individual employees. The introduction of environmental education to the public municipality office, the production of environmental programmes, later the establishment of the low energy building, the creation of the educational biocentre and outdoor gallery, all this has been demanding, fully engaging all employees, often beyond the usual framework of environmental education. None would be possible without strong dedication and cooperation. To quote Michal Bartoš: »Abundance of nature is immense to me; it is diversity that goes beyond my imagination. Environmental education is more a thing of formulating questions about the relationship between people and nature, rather than

a description of the world and how it should be. Questions, rather than a list of correct answers. Not all the programmes are of this kind, there are employees, who prefer informative schooling similar to that at schools. Instead of determining, we keep considering. We offer rather than convince. It seems to me that people, who come, always see environmental education in this way, and so far we have never struggled in finding ways how to deal with raising environmental awareness.«

Every few months we organise public events involving all the staff—then e.g. the accountant establishes contact with visitors when selling tickets at the entrance during the open days, the financial manager chitchats with a father while selling a glass of grog, the janitor smiles at kids playing while grilling, the project manager prepares coffee to band members just about to play at the Ecomarket—we all work together, and these moments are valuable to get to know each other from a new angle. **sl**



Sluňákov: Seminar at the House of Nature.

2.2.6
WAYS OF INTEGRATING DIFFERENT
PERSONALITIES, ABILITIES, AND LEVELS
OF COMMITMENT

Embercombe is having a belief that it is very inclusive and welcoming, but the reality is not reflecting this entirely. It seems to be true only to a certain kind of person. The current MD noticed that there is a general culture of excusing poor performance. The flipside is: there is an overall expectation of management needing to be perfect.

So far, there is no culture of management performance to be able to integrate different abilities; one

needs a culture or at least a structure to help them to facilitate improvement. That is empowerment.

Among volunteers we have taken in people of a wide range of backgrounds and therefore a wide range of issues—which we have absorbed—but it wasn't beneficial in economical and safety terms for Embercombe.

The learning is to attract and recruit a wide range of staff who are generally stable and—on their given

potential—know what they could become, and we are supporting them in their growth.

Another huge learning field is to be able to say »no« when necessary.

Commitment or Level of Contribution:

There has been confusion around these terms too. We understand that a volunteer or assistant is contributing and committing more than a paid staff.

However, we need to keep in mind, that when we come to Embercombe, we have made a free choice to commit to the place as long as it feels right for each of us. And within that choice we are just giving and contributing differently. It's an ongoing question and there is no answer to it. It is important to just keep bringing it in to the open and challenging it, especially when stories such as »why is the management team not washing up« arises ...

»As an MD I need to ask myself: Do I put the management salary into washing up? But this is a very alive issue.« **EMB**

We believe that a community is strong if it consists of a high diversity of people with different personalities, abilities, and levels of commitment. The structure of our project is capable to integrate different people. The initiators of the projects are mainly people with high education who understand the problems of the actual global context, the problems which will be caused by climate change and the social and environmental consequences of global warming. They also concerned about the globalisation process, about reduction of the diversity of the agricultural products, about the domination of a few multinational companies which are dominating the food industry and the possible consequences of this domination. The industrialisation of the agriculture

and the urbanisation of the rural space is another concern of these people. Some of these people who initiated the project are convinced environmentalists, who are concerned about the loss of the biodiversity, the degradation of the valuable manmade landscape and the reduction of the water reserves. These people are working together very well with local people who understand the dangers of the so called modernization process which is going on in the rural space. The latter are concerned about the fast changing of the rural communities, and they want to care about the traditional way of rural life. The people from the rural areas in Transylvania desperately awaited the modernization of their life, but they didn't expect the upheaval of the whole social

system and the consumption pattern. For these people it would be very welcome to get a higher price for their products, like milk, or vegetables, and they can't face competition with the prices offered by the big foodprocessing companies for the lower quality products based on agrochemicals and hybrid species. Small farmers can't cope with the challenges of the forced »modernization« of the rural space. So the cooperation between the people who initiated and joined the project because of idealistic motivation and the people who have a strong personal interest and motivation to keep the rural space alive by a sustainable modernization was a natural process of integration in the case of our project. These people hope that by cooperation and a good distri-

bution of tasks a rural development model acceptable for all parties can be elaborated.

The multitude of the tasks which arise to be fulfilled and the variety of the activities which have to be performed during the implementation of the pilot projects needed a lot of people with different backgrounds. This fact shows that all the people can take a role in the project, and we were open for integrating all interested people. We believe that the best way for integrating people with different personalities, abilities, levels of commitment is to make the goals of the project clear to everybody and clarify also the tasks and activities which have to be fulfilled. We must understand that a lot of people are looking for their own way in life—especially the

young generation—and we can't expect from them a longterm or even lifelong commitment. Some of them are participating for a shorter time in activities, but during this time they learn something and maybe they will use that knowledge in the future. We think that the community has to be open, but the rules—also the unwritten ones—have to be very clear. Our goal is not to obtain a closed community, but we would like to experience together a new way of life in the rural space and spread our experiences as far as possible. **FEC**

For people engaged in a project it is important to experience the unfolding of their own potentials and possibilities. This means something different to everyone else, so it is necessary to take on personal

responsability for this process of unfolding and at the same time respect the freedom and the needs of others.

In every project there are different personali-

ties and abilities—this is the abundance or the true wealth of it. On the other hand it is a challenge, because that means that there are different abilities to assume responsibility. In the last years the GdG

group could not handle this problem very well. People were attracted to the coregroup of the team but not ready to overlook the project as a whole.

Today we know how important it is to commu-

nicate the basics of the project very clearly and precisely, also in written form, so people with corresponding interests, abilities and attitudes towards the project are attracted. On the other hand we need ▶▶

2.2.6 WAYS OF INTEGRATING DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES, ABILITIES, AND LEVELS OF COMMITMENT

to keep in mind, that the project becomes unique just because of the people taking part. The vision is a collective basis, the shape that the project will have however is the result of many different individuals implementing this vision in a yet unknown way.

In the Garden of Generations we have certain visions for specific areas which address different people with different needs and interest. Young people or those with young children need a good housing

for their families, older ones may be in need for geriatric care or a good prospect to what might happen when they will be in need of such care. People longing to be close to nature and self-subsistence will find different areas of work on the site of the GdG than entrepreneurs who look forward to share creative co-working spaces with others. As there are so many fields of work possible—from social and educational carework to agricultural activity, con-

struction, crafts, social enterprises, organisation or administration—a broad range of people with different abilities can find their place.

To deal with different intensities of commitment there is a multilevel-system of getting closer to the project. The first level is to take part in an »community expansion day«, where people interested in living in the GdG can get in contact with the existing group. Those seriously interested are invited for

a trial time in at least two of the sociocratic circles for six months. Within this time they commit themselves to live near the place and attend the meetings of the circles and to take part in the main activities on the site. The last level is to apply for full membership in the Garden of Generations. Members pay one percent of their monthly income to the GdG-association, so only people who have a serious commitment to contribute to the project will do so. They

also agree to take part in two yearly trainings in alternative pedagogy so that all members have the chance to enlarge their abilities in living and learning with children in a way that benefits all generations. **GdG**

»Much better than a bunch of likeminded people is a community of not-likeminded ones« is one of the mottos of Klein Jasedow. But what does it mean to be a *community* of very different people?

During our long common biography we had plenty of opportunities to learn that individual differences are natural, essential for our resilience as a group—a sociotope of rich biodiversity—and in no way a reason for separation. Some people in the community may be pioneers and visionaries, others are more concerned with keeping and cultivating what already has been achieved. Both aspects are equally important, and if they are regarded as complementary forces, they will nurture the community beyond any conflict. To perceive a different opinion as a counterpoint stimulating one's creativity—and not as an expression of antagonism—is derived from a musical understanding of living together. To share life in a harmonious way—that is: not without tension, not without dissonances, not without a multitude of seemingly incongruent layers of com-

plex conditions, but with the ability to give all these exciting elements a gravitational meaning circling around a cherished common center—seems to follow the same pattern like a successful musical improvisation: deeply listening to oneself, the others and to the music as a whole, creating one's actions out of the flow without any resistance to the ever unknown that may emerge.

It is challenging to find balance between people with strong visions, ideas and energy to design and realise new projects, and others, who are devoted to caring for what already exists and developing things more slowly. The idea of a music that we all play together is helpful in finding this balance.

Another challenge: Do we see the older ones as authorities simply by their age? Is it possible to live eldership in a supportive and not in a dominating way? What are the ingrained habits, negative mechanisms and traps we unconsciously can fall into in this field? This is an ongoing research within the inner growth of the Klein Jasedow community.

Conditionings from our achievement-oriented Western society stand heavily in the way of such a fluid practice. There are people in our community with a tremendous amount of energy, they never bother working all day long. This can cause stress in others, who—sometimes only unconsciously—feel that they should show the same performance, although nobody is demanding such. It needs attention to discover these destructive mechanisms and support each other in the effort to liberate themselves from the paralysing custom of comparing oneself with all the others.

It is important to understand that a commitment to contribute to the whole of a place like Klein Jasedow includes the call to carefully take care of oneself. This is not easy when there is so much work gazing at you from every angle—it needs a kind of Central European zen or aikido practice to keep calm and easy, leave some things unfinished and trust that there will be the right time to do it or to find a solution sooner or later. It's a matter of trust-

ingly connecting to Kairos—the god of the right moment—while unescapable floating in the stream of Chronos—the god of passing time.

We try to honour every kind of work the same, may it generate money or not, may it be in the office, in the house, out in the world, in the garden or with the kids or the older ones. In the same way we honour all abilities the same. Of course it is tempting to regard the ability to do a lot of fundraising or a lot of intellectual or artistic work more valuable than the ability to care for the chicken, but since long we have realised this as one of the destructive traps the conditioning conventional society has set.

Another such trap is to think that one cannot realise what one really, really want—especially in a project like Klein Jasedow because there are so many practical constraints seemingly standing against what we call a good life—right livelihood. Maybe I have taken over responsibility for a certain area of work and want to stay committed to this, but I realise that it is not the right thing to do any more.

It needs quite some inner courage to question this and to find a new way or organising things.

Of course there are different levels of commitment to the project according to the individual story that brought someone to Klein Jasedow. The founders will stay committed in a different way than young people who are searching for what they really, really want to do in life. Commitment is nothing you can demand from anybody, to us it seems to be a very deep and subtle phenomenon. It is a gift to a place and its people, and a process leading into the unknown. It may be different to everyone—there are people who envision a large span of life lying in front of them where they will stay committed to Klein Jasedow, others don't see into their future longer than two years in advance. But nevertheless in all our diversity we all try to cultivate an attitude of dedication to what we are about to set up here together, and how this dedication is expressed is as different as each individual is a different person. **KJ**

2.2.6 WAYS OF INTEGRATING DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES, ABILITIES, AND LEVELS OF COMMITMENT

Different approaches towards nature are important to us. Many of our programmes have been enriched by various aspects of the non-classical education of natural sciences, for example by drama education, art education, development of mutual communication, social sensitivity, etc. We create programmes freely, complementing school education; there is no need to follow specific school curricula because we are not a school facility. This system enables our lecturers to develop programmes based on their personal interests, and then they really enjoy the work and have a wide background knowledge, which enriches the programme. Children feel this personal dedication. The lecturers then feel satisfied; their work covers their areas of personal interests. This difference in approaches resulting from the diversity of lecturers proves the similar perception of the relationship between people and nature—not everyone wishes to become an expert, ecologist, or scientist. We want to mediate education, which later enables communication about nature conservation between ecologists and other professions, between scientists and amateurs.

Michal asks himself: »Is it possible to consider the creation of programmes of environmental activities for the schools and the general public as a forever changing and never ending process of searching for the right format? Is it possible to achieve such a final form of the programme of activities—developed through the process of discussions, reflections, past experience, views of all participants—that it will be attractive for those who created it, for those who will carry it out and above all for those who will take part in it? I feel that this way of constantly changing the form of activities offered, as an outcome of past experience, including views of all the participants, is the path which brings us in close proximity to the actual living processes of constantly transforming—never quite the same—state of nature. Being open within the topic, being open to critical feedback, and having the capacity to see the detail within the greater picture, within the relevant contexts—all these are elements of such an approach of searching.« He continues: »Nowadays, we often hire people, who already know us, attend our events or even participate in their organisation as external

lecturers and volunteers. Their integration is easier. The work is very diverse and enables self-development. The friendly and open atmosphere makes the integration easier. What makes it more difficult is the relatively loose interpretation of the rules on mutual workloads of individual posts and negotiations about their exact borders.«

Deputy director Přemysl Heralt adds: »Different personalities are integrated differently. Some people come and want to work for us because they are already integrated, some deal with this only when getting to know the collective and our operation. After being hired, everyone gets the broad picture.«

Martina Andrýsková Paluchová—head of economic department—adds: »Our vision is clear and well defined, it is easy to understand and I think very well accepted by most of us. It is a bit more difficult to get involved in the organisation's operation. Often there are no defined rules, and it is necessary to search for the way things are being done. It is unrestrained and involves many discussions.«

Administrative assistant Jana Vyhňáková comments: »Communication and developing friend-

ships are keys—then there is mutual support in the team and even the toughest things are easier to cope with. People need to be given a sufficient amount of time, to get to know our organisation, not to judge it, need to be offered enough information and support, and after a while—within months—have a friendly talk, if they identify themselves with the organisation, if what we do fits them, if they as newcomers and people from the outside see something that is possible to be improved. At the same time, they must feel secure to share their views without having fear of losing their job. Definitely having a positive attitude is a way to integrate and be integrated.«

Romana Pálková, head of the education team, explains how the newly coming lecturers are being integrated: »It is an advantage when they have previous experience as our external lecturers—then it goes gradually by itself. We choose such employees whose personalities match the spirit of Sluňákov—then the integration largely somehow arranges itself. When a new lecturer is hired, we have a document to remind us which fields not to forget about

when inducting them. Integration is simple thanks to competence sheets and with the patient help of the team. Integration to the visions includes introducing our mission and function, strategic plan, attending our team field trips and meeting key people who maintain the spirit of Sluňákov.«

Martina Kellarová—one of our newcomer lecturer confirms: »I will explain my own fresh experience. I first came to Sluňákov with a family centre to attend a programme. The programme and the atmosphere left a trace; I started to be more interested in Sluňákov and later became an external lecturer. The collective is friendly, always willing to help, and makes my integration easier. Of course, we are all on the same wave—we all hold the mission of Sluňákov in common, even when we are all different, we share it and this is why we are all there.« **sl**

2.2.7
COPING WITH STRESS, FINDING A BALANCE
BETWEEN DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT, SILENCE,
RECREATION AND CELEBRATION

At Embercombe we teach »Walk your Talk!«, the »twin trail«, inner work, the children's fire in order to prevent stress and finding the balance. Do we really live it?

In intention and aspiration—yes. However, we lose it when we get stressed out, fixed, too triggered by our own wounds. And that has increased much over the past few years.

Embercombe is still a male dominated organisation. There is a strong male power struggle going on, to hold on their views and values. It's not allowing change yet. In the years I spent at Embercombe this influence was strongly felt. It caused a lot of stress, I felt, among the volunteers, staff and rest of team.

Nevertheless, Embercombe offered the beautiful space of morning circle, the dreamer role as part of inner work, and there was always time for special celebrations, either equinox, or assistants graduations, celebration of council besides many others, brought by the community or the wider team. All

of these involved a fire in the stone circle to honour Mother Earth.

The subject of the »feminine principle«—the being—has been an increasingly hot topic at Embercombe. At my beginnings, I felt, it was very sublime. We all talked about »stepping into our female power is necessary for all of us«, and it is still on the plate.

In 2014 we introduced the volunteer scheme, which offered much more support to the volunteer community in aspects of coaching, breath work, meditation, listening partnerships, courageous conversations among others. People came in to offer us conflict solution techniques such as sociocracy and restorative circles among others.

We then also introduced the choir, which became the joy of the week for almost all Embercombers, and it spread out to the village people coming along. The volunteers themselves started to create evenings to celebrate and enjoy, such as cabarets, film shows, story telling—some of these were held

by Mac and Joe, the elders of Embercombe—or just games. These often emerged spontaneously after lunch or dinner. Even the washing up started to become a play, while dancing along to amazing music, singing, drumming ... Of course, these did not involve all and the critic often was »still missing inclusion—we are a scattered community, people with different types of engagement, people of short-term and long-term community. Inclusion is still an issue. Celebration as a whole team is missing too.

We could also do better in our intention of holding ceremony. Ceremony is such another important part of our life.«

Silence has always been an integral part of Embercombe's day-to-day: silent check in on Tuesday; we hold silence before meetings, then a check-in, and across the team an individual practice of meditation.

Non-stop doing is forming burnout. People need to learn self-care, to take a break and ask for it. If it

isn't embedded in the structure, it is not sustainable. Someone may choose to have a silent day, but it is about creating space. We should all make time to make space. We make better decisions and we keep the energy better.

The critical aspect of do we walk our talk regarding the twin trail and the children's fire still remains. The aspect of communication and how we communicate is another discussion point. In 2016, it became even more eminent that we allocate plenty of time to talk but it's hard to find solutions with it. Everything needs to be talked through and be heard by everyone. That has caused a huge strain on the efficiency of the place. The feeling of »Embercombers are navel gazers« arose.

The new MD, who arrived in October 2016, feels that one important aspect of coping with stress is getting out of place—leaving Embercombe, spending some time in another environment to broaden the horizon again, to see things in perspective. He

says: »If the management team lived and worked on site, we would be sucked even more in all the discussion, so getting out is very important. The management team is very supportive of each other. We need to have friends, coaches, mentors outside of Embercombe to discuss.«

He feels that part of problem of not dealing with stress is that most people on site discuss their stress with people on site only, which makes the problem even bigger. »Now, we encourage people to be more active in the community outside of Embercombe and we as the management team have a board in the office, to which we put up words worth celebrating. In meetings I ask what we have achieved.«

»What I would like to see is ways of integrating milestones in the volunteer programme to celebrate more their growth instead of having only a final celebration and leaving dinner.« **EMB**

Stress can be avoided in the best way if we stop the source of the stress. In nature and as well in the rural world the harmonic development of the events avoid the stress. In normal situations everything is going on in a harmony in nature and in rural life linked to nature, and stressing situations are very rare, caused mainly by extreme situations like drought or flood. In the urban world stress is part of everyday life because of the permanent competition between the different persons and groups, the in-

security of daily life and the fear about what may come tomorrow. Unfortunately, with the urbanisation of the rural space this feeling is transferred to the rural world too. In our vision the urban life and consumerism are going together with stress, and till now everywhere in the world only the symptoms of the stress are treated—in many cases with medicines or alcohol, or in the case of young people often with drugs. The strange mixture which in Europe now is called »rural world« experiences all the prob-

lems of urbanisation, and the situation is getting even more difficult. So in our vision in order to cope with stress we have to avoid the stressing situations and we have to understand together with the members of the community that we are not looking for a cheaper version of the urban lifestyle and neither for a romantic illusion about life in the rural area. What we want is the integration into the natural cycles. Agriculture is linked to the natural cycles, and there are tasks which have to be fulfilled at the right

time. If we miss these tasks we can compromise the whole year's production. So there is a natural order and a certain predictability of our day to day actions. This question has to be understood by all partners and members of the community, especially by the persons who don't work as farmers but purchase the agricultural products through our community. They have to understand that agriculture depend on seasons and they have to consume seasonal products. The tomato will be ready up to the season and they

have to be patient, and shall not stress the farmers to produce earlier only because in the supermarket they can buy tomatoes in January. No, all members and partners of the community have to accommodate to the natural cycles and don't force the local people to keep to artificial deadlines.

We have to reconsider our words also because when we think about development we usually have a process of economic growth in mind, so this is stressful without the possibility to avoid it. We have ▶▶

2.2.7
COPING WITH STRESS, FINDING A BALANCE
BETWEEN DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT, SILENCE,
RECREATION AND CELEBRATION

to reconsider what we think about development, and if this development is part of the natural cycle then this can be without harmful stress.

In the rural communities, celebrations and recreation were also linked to the natural cycles and in most of the cases they are linked to the religious

events. The religious celebrations are linked also to the seasons—Christmas in winter, Easter in spring, Pentecost in summer. These celebrations offer recreation but also spiritual refilling, which helps the local people to gain new energy for the next period. The problem in the rural areas is that there are a lot

of artificial celebrations like village day, vine festival, etc., which are very tiring and are also a source of stress. In many cases the traditional celebrations are neglected because of these artificial occasions for celebration. This is a good example how the consumerism way is taking us away from the natural

world and pushing the rural societies into the artificial world we proudly call »urban lifestyle«.

So in our vision stress can be avoided if we can find a modern way of rural life, and this rural life will be linked to the natural cycles. Recreation and celebrations also have to be re-linked to the natural

cycles—in our opinion this is the only way to avoid the consequences of stress which leads finally to the use of drugs and pills in the urban world and as well in that »new« rural world. **FEC**

This is a very important social issue. It is an illness of our society generating too much of work and stress. But not just that, nowadays stress is worn like a shield to assume an air of importance.

Watching others relax and do nothing seems to frighten many people. On the other hand if it is

about arranging duties in a group there often is an unconscious fear of being exploited or socially disadvantaged. All these feelings and emotions surface even stronger if one is unsatisfied with one's own live and work. In the GdG we regularly have discussed this problem and asked ourselves how

to overcome the current ideology of constant work and urge to be »productive«. This ideology produces strange effects. But if you are overly busy, you don't work as effective as you could—not even in terms of productivity. So the opposite happens of what actually is intended.

Is there a reason to work all the time as long as your basic needs are secured? In the GdG team we ask this question and try to design a setting where people living on the site don't have the pressure to earn a lot of money to make a living. The rent for the appartements will be on a low standard, and sub-

sistence activities will supply part of the food. Of course subsistence work is a lot of labour too, but if it is well organised—for instance according to permaculture principles—a lot of effort can be saved, and working in and with nature can also help to relieve oneself from stress. **GdG**

As there is so much to be done, there is a danger that Klein Jasedow is perceived as a place of nothing but work—many events, many visitors and very seldom time for silence. This in fact is true and hardly avoidable, and that makes it even more important to care for a calm moment or some quiet days. After the summer months of 2016 we realised for example that it all had been too much, specially too many guests. Therefore we decided to practise an abstinence of visitors—besides from family or close friends—over winter time. This helped to calm down. Very important for our recreation is the time between winter solstice and the Twelfth Day—January 6—where we will not work, but celebrate Christmas and the shortest days of the year. We sleep a lot, go for walks, cook exceptionally good

food, play with the children, rehearse our favourite 4- to 6-part madrigals and chorals and spend time in the living room together whenever we feel like. After this winter sleep in the first half of January we find time to talk about important subjects on several evenings. Each season has different qualities—it is an ongoing research project how we can adjust our live more and more to the rhythms of the years. Celebrating the changing length of the days for example at solstices and equinoxes is a wonderful way to connect with the flow of the time and to slow down from demanding work in all kinds of projects.

Another important element of slowing down are three weeks at different times during the year we call »conclave«. We use the evenings to hold our »palaver«, talk about deep and personal topics—some-

times also in the afternoons—and during the days we try to do only the very necessary work in order to spend time with each other, play improvised music in the Klanghaus, go for an extended walk or work on special tasks in the garden that need many hands. Each conclave helps evolving and nourishing the community.

The balance between dynamic development and recreation is every now and then subject of our discussions. At one point one of the new members of the Klein Jasedow community questioned the existence of three parallel studycourses of »facilitation through music«—students coming to Klein Jasedow for 16 sessions from Thursday to Sunday each during the course of two years. This imposed a rather rigorous structure on life in Klein Jasedow,

as up to seven people are involved with teaching, cooking, and caring, and it occupied most weekends of the Klanghaus so that there was almost no room to think about the future evolution of teaching and learning in this beautiful house. So we decided to reduce the training to only two parallel groups, and we decided not to make new plans how to fill these weekends straight away but to give us time to reflect on the Klanghaus as a commons. Is this place only important to a few of us or to the entire community? How can we care for and finance the Klanghaus altogether? Are there some new ideas we have not even yet dreamed of? This was an important impulse to slow down the current everyday business.

It led us to create a selfmade-calender showing all the planned activities within all activities on one

large sheet, including our—many—birthdays, to have a better overview of the year and to take care for silent times every now and then.

Luckily there are so many reasons to celebrate over the year: Public events like the Elder Flower Festival—a family festival and small arts-&-crafts-market for locals and tourists in early summer, the come-together of the greater network of friends in our »microregion«, the concerts in the Klanghaus, the festivities of the seasons like midsummer or just a birthday of a community member. We like to cook good food on birthdays. During the course of the time new and diverse ways of celebration develop—some quiet ones, some lively ones. It seems important to us to pay attention to a culture of festivities that really suit the place and its people. **KJ**

2.2.7 COPING WITH STRESS, FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT, SILENCE, RECREATION AND CELEBRATION

Work in Sluňákov has always meant a large workload, overtimes, weekend programs, plenty of activities, while receiving relatively low wages, since its beginnings. We have received a wide range of grants and grew from five employees to the current twenty. It meant a transition from friendly relations and a certain degree of »activism« into a fairly large educational institution. This transformation is ongoing. Parallel to that we constantly work on our programme, develop space to realise the programmes and try to maintain the quality and range of the programmes offered. Long term work's excessive demands might result in burnout. We face this by an attempt for a relatively diverse work schedule so that the activities of the employees are varied. Also, projects are often very diverse, with different focuses, and enrich our everyday work routines. The employees have a degree of independence and, if possible, can manage the scope of their workload

themselves. Currently, we are also facing relatively low motivation to return to work from employees on maternity leave. Many lecturers and other staff members change their jobs after maternity leave, as the tempo is hardly manageable with family responsibilities. At present, we are trying to make the range of activities and organisation of work more efficient so that this does not happen in the future. For maintaining the spirit and remembering what we all have in common we have a team field trip, where we rest and share our non-professional areas of our lives.

Michal Bartoš: »Contemplating, stopping. Work that makes you happy, work that is diverse, the work in which you are doing what you want, work where you fulfil your dreams, work where you are surrounded by nice people ... To me, stress at work is largely depending on myself and not on others. And when the head does not work, what helps is playing

the guitar, walking in the countryside with or without a camera, staying in nature and working in the garden.«

Přemysl Heral: »Balancing. Always be looking for a balance between work, family, friends, hobbies, and leisure. Accept the fact that you can not do everything. Think actively and act the way none of the most important areas prevails in the long term. Occasionally, not sleeping for a couple of nights, work overtime, spending the weekend working, etc. is possible, but it must not be a norm. Doing things you don't like must be counterbalanced by doing things you like, and it is important not to forget about the rest when doing both.«

Martina Andrášková Paluchová: »It depends on the situation—one technique never works universally: watching sunset and sunrise, blue sky, climbing the hill, music, hot tub, meeting up with friends.«

Jana Vyhňáková: »Having a hobby, where one

forgets about one's problems—whether it is sport, walking in nature, or painting; and being aware that most important is health and love of the closest ones—this makes you realise that stress from other things is useless—and like this, one finds inner consolation.« Jana continues: »Discover sense in work and remind yourself why you do it—if the stress concerns the work. I see it similarly, when stress is caused by something else; looking for the positive, not focusing on and repeating what's bugging me. Being able to make time for oneself and consider it as important as what we do for the others. There is no point blaming yourself for sitting on the bed and reading a book—»I am doing nothing, should I cook, clean«, etc. Listen to yourself, to realise what you really enjoy, while not being lazy and fulfilling the tasks given without delay. Like this, you have time to rest, rather than fret over what needs to be accomplished.«

Romana Pálková: »I really don't know. Probably not being overburdened and having enough time for resting. In the education team, overworking appears during working on projects simultaneously with teaching. So does the balance lie in a reasonable degree of involvement in projects? I do not know ...«

Martina Kellarová: »A difficult question ... I am starting to rediscover having stress from work, I've had a long time off. Otherwise, when something stresses me, I try to find the source and deal with it, so that it simply does not exist. And just a simple realisation I have my kids and I am so happy for that—works for sure and brings back my well-being.« **sl**



2.3 REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

2.3.1
REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS TO THE LOCAL
SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Over the years we have sometimes had a difficult relationship with the immediate social environment, in terms of immediate neighbours and the local village community. This has largely improved over time as initial fears about what Embercombe would be and bring have been allayed, but there are still sensitivities.

Since Embercombe's beginnings, we did not have much interaction with the local community, either

in terms of local villages or into the nearest city of Exeter, less than ten miles away. While we were known through reputation or experience in certain circles, most people of the area would still be unaware of the place. There had been a degree of awareness raising in local communities through promoting and hosting events, and people are invited in to volunteer for the day or attend open day events or to sing in the choir.

Glyn B., the new MD, noticed rightly when he arrived that this all seemed to be about inviting people in to Embercombe rather than Embercombe going out into the community and meeting people.

In 2013 Embercombe won the funding to build a new training centre in the form of a traditional farm building specific to the region. The project involved a contractor who employed ex-offenders in order to train them up traditional building skills,

and involved a significant element of community build through many people volunteering their time and effort. The funding was partly dependant on the building being available to the local community. This has been partly true in terms of the building being used to host programmes, but there is more that needs to be done to fulfil this aspect of the building. In any case, this was still another example of Embercombe wanting to welcome the commu-

nity in rather than going out into the community.

Glyn is now looking how to get more balance into this, and for Embercombe to become a more integrated part of the local community, both on its site and off. He would also like Embercombe to better meet the diverse needs of the local community, including the elderly, and those with mental health challenges or physical disabilities. This is a new and on-going process. **EMB**

The local social environment plays a major role in the acceptance of the innovative projects. In the rural areas the social environment generally is conservative, and any project hardly can be implemented without the acceptance of the local people. In Transylvania due to the urbanisation process of the rural area—a process which is following the general European trends—this is considered somehow as a less developed urban area and most of the young people try to escape from this environment, so we have to take into consideration that in this environment has accumulated a lot of frustration and tension. Mainly because of this preconception the young people are leaving, and the rural population is getting old and they are looking suspiciously to the people who want to be integrated in the rural

communities. They are asking why they want to come here while everybody wants to go away—in many cases abroad. In these situation the initiatives which come from outside are hardly accepted. Because of this situation the initiators of any project firstly have to gain the trust of the local people. The best way for this is to demonstrate the utility of the project and its performers for the local community. In our case for example one sign of getting this trust was when after the realisation of a pilot wetland restoration project the local people said that »this is good because we have water now to wet the vegetables«. Of course before the restoration project we encountered a strong opposition, the local people hardly understood why we wanted to restore the wetlands as they had learned for years

that the drainage of the wetlands is the good approach. Of course they had already noticed that they didn't have enough water in the wells, but they didn't make the link between the wetlands and the groundwater reserve. The mayor, who supported our project finally, explained the situation and the wetland rehabilitation project was accepted. After the first wetland restoration project the local people realised more restorations which was a clear proof that they appreciated the results of our pilot project. Another example is another pilot which was focusing to reduce the energy use of the local community, and in the framework of the project the public lighting system was changed from the conventional light sources to LED lighting. So they got a much better illumination of the village at half price. It clearly

demonstrated that the sustainable practices are able to improve the conditions of lifes. Slowly in this way we earned the trust of the local community, and at that time we as organisation and we as individual members we were considered as local people, and now we are part of the social environment.

But we have to face challenges each day because of the many influences which are against our project. If we want to be an important player in the local development and we want to have an influence we can't be satisfied with a small scale success and with some successful pilot projects, we have to influence the local social environment, which is bombarded with offers concerning the urbanisation and the industrialisation of agricultural practices. The consumption patterns of the consumer society are

gaining terrain each day in the rural area, and there are processes on the way which hardly can be returned. The traditional agricultural practices cannot withstand the industrial agricultural practices, and the valuable, very important local knowledge concerning traditional agriculture are going to be lost. This is a big problem, because more and more people are looking for the products of traditional farming, and if the knowledge is lost, it will be very difficult to cultivate these products again. If the local species are lost—especially the vegetables—they will be lost probably forever. The local social environment is in change, and we hope that our project will have a positive influence to the sustainable modernization of the social environment in the Niraj valley. **FEC**

Since the beginning of the GdG we tried to cultivate social relationships. Local politicians from all political parties were invited frequently to celebrations,

planning sessions all started with becoming connected with the politics. If there is a public event like a summercamp or an open community day people

from Herzogenburg know that the GdG is a friendly place where children are integrated easily in all activities, so they are motivated to come.

In addition we invited local »elders«. It was important for us that elderly people had a chance to take part in our community events, so wie ap-

proached senior citizens and encouraged them to come. They enjoyed being part of the lively community days. ▶▶

2.3.1 REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS TO THE LOCAL SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The possibility to garden on one of the vegetable patches of the GdG was communicated publicly. Among others the owner of the bookshop, who is the chairlady of the economic committee of our municipality, made use of this. So local opinion leaders were involved and benefited from the project.

We invited also the youth-center of Herzogenburg to the vegetable garden. Youngsters enjoy cultivating their patch or light a bonfire for celebrations. We also cooperate with our next-door neighbour. He is using a part of our property to keep his sheep. In return he mowes the lawn path of the site.

Another neighbour visits us often and uses the playground with his grandchildren. From time to time he offers his help in various jobs. The straw for the do-it-yourself building-experiment was delivered by local farmers. With one of them we get along very well, and he brings along straw whenever it is

needed. This will be an interesting resource for our future larger building-project. The organic farmer Reinhard Engelhart and his father in law have also been important in establishing local contacts.

The GdG is regularly visited by refugees. They sometimes join us playing ping-pong, visit the play-

ground or sit at the bonfire. With our support some of them cultivate vegetables for self-subsistence.

Last not least the bridle way running through the GdG is important for our connections with the social environment. It is actually not a public path, but we have permitted a right of way for everyone. **GdG**

In the beginning of our settling in Klein Jasedow we were told that people in the Northeast of Germany are close-lipped and not open to strangers or newcomers. We experienced the opposite—our neighbours were happy about people coming to restore the ruinous half of the village. They understood that we were not the typical wealthy westerners, but rather needed support ourselves. Listening to their stories we learnt about how much almost all families suffered from unemployment. Together with a cooperative CEO of the local jobcenter we managed to set up a job creation scheme over one year for 25 unemployed people from the neighbouring villages. This put us from start into the position of entrepreneurs who were able to create jobs—not in first place for our own benefit but for the benefit of the small commune consisting of three other little villages besides our hamlet Klein Jasedow.

This created mutual trust between us and many of our neighbours. The job creation project mainly focused on landscape management and on a small herb garden originally created by a small non-profit association that already existed before our arrival. The founders of the garden had asked for our support, and we considered creating a sustainable small business around the issue of herbal tea. So we founded what today is the association »Kräutergarten Pommerland«, a company of 15 local employees producing organically grown herbal tea and selling it all over Germany. Other jobs were created in a workshop of innovative musical instruments made of metal—one of our neighbours happened to be an unemployed metalworker—and this, together with our ambition to create instruments for music therapy, was the start of the gong manufacture »Sona Sounds«. Not least in our office we created jobs for

people from the neighbourhood for accounting, the acquisition of ads for our magazines and reader service. In cooperation with the local chamber of commerce we trained apprentices in graphic design and software development. Our role as entrepreneurs opened many doors for us, but it also frightened some people who were not used to such an amount of activity, foremost the local authorities responsible for the distribution of EU-funds. We never received any of these funds—they were mainly used to finance feasibility studies for projects that were never realised ...

The most difficult relationship was towards the local industrial farmer who by then cultivated 5000 hectares of land. During the rather chaotic years after the fall of the wall he had taken over the land from the former GDR agricultural cooperative using dubious methods and partly beyond the laws. Virtu-

ally all transformations of the roughly 460 former GDR farms larger than 1000 hectares into western-style companies were acts of landgrabbing, many of them carried out illegally, but tolerated by the German government. Where formerly 300 people had found work on the land, it was now cultivated with less than 30 employees and heavy machinery. Our intention to acquire at least a small piece of land for our organic herb company and to reestablish some of the walking trails that had vanished in favour of large agricultural fields caused a line of heavy conflict. Although we tried to start a friendly, open dialogue we did not succeed and became victims of a severe mobbing-campaign in the years 2001 to 2004 (see section 1.2.4). Only very recently we succeeded in our try to normalise this contact as the younger generation now takes over the business and is interested in dismantling the old frontiers.

This process could only happen because of the engagement of one of our members, Johannes Heimrath. Since the beginnings of our settling in Klein Jasedow he was part of the municipal council, many years as deputy mayor, and when the original small commune merged with the small town Lassan he became a member of the city council. Thus he worked as a link between the new settlers and the local citizens, trying to bridge the different cultures, and now, as many new families are moving to our small region his abilities to successfully communicate the different needs of the new and old citizens to both sides is all the more valuable. Having established close cooperation with some foundations and other sustainability organisations in the federal state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and throughout Germany he is able to support the regional development in many ways. **KU**

The Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature has become a new oasis on the suburb. People are more attracted to go out into nature. The outdoor gallery with the walking trail has encouraged the local in-

habitants of Horka nad Moravou to come and visit us regularly, to get to know us, to realise that we are not strangers, and come and spend some time on the grounds. Nowadays it is often full of visitors.

As for the low energy building facilities, we have the premises booked several years in advance—people organise weddings, workshops, family gatherings and anniversary celebrations. It is similar to the

education programs we offer—the demand from schools to come and experience our programmes is bigger than we are able to offer. We organise cultural events, community open days and workshops

for families—these are also attended in great numbers. Like this, children learn, parents learn and we develop relationships to the social environment. However, this is not necessarily tied to the imme- ▶▶

2.3.1
REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS TO THE LOCAL
SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

diate local environment and includes many people from the surrounding towns.

Undoubtedly, we are a part of Horka nad Moravou and yet considered a separate unit. According to Michal, we need to give people enough time: »It will take two generations to become local.« [SL](#)



At the lake in Embercombe.

Embercombe has a reasonable relationship with local authorities on issues such as planning, environmental issues etc., and those authorities are generally supportive of Embercombe and the oper-

ational challenges it faces. There has been some interest from the local council in using Embercombe as a space for meetings or team days as a way of exploring different ways of thinking by changing the

environment. We had interest from the local health service and there is potential to explore this further. Glyn is also exploring partnerships with local authorities to see how Embercombe could support de-

livery of local services, particularly to the most disadvantaged and marginalised parts of society. **EMB**

The relation of our team with the local authorities generally is good but not always without conflict. At the beginning of our project it was logical for them what we proposed, and their interest was very high, but during the years with the increasing consolidation of the consumer society patterns and with the growing influence of politicians from the regional and central structures of the parties who are understanding that development means economic growth this relation began to suffer. Some local politicians are also thinking that development lies in industrial agriculture, highways and urbanisation, and they hardly want to understand our way of thinking. The majority of the politicians wants to be re-elected by showing this kind of results of their mandate, and that puts pressure to our efforts. But there are also some politicians who are think-

ing differently. In the village of Găleşti the mayor was interested from the beginning, and he is keeping to support the project. The village is going to be a »climate friendly« village, by implementation of several pilot projects. For the mayor and for several members of the local council community life is also very important and they are supporting the community actions. The support of the mayor and of the local council from Găleşti was crucial in many aspects for the project. The wetland restoration projects couldn't be realised without this help because the land on which these projects were carried out was in the propriety of the municipality, so without the participation of the municipality the project couldn't be realised. In the case of other pilot projects, like the project which was focusing on reduction of the emissions of CO2 by changing the classic

light sources to LEDs the participation of the municipality was crucial. The most important cooperation between the organisation and the local authorities from Găleşti was in the case of the realisation of the Environmental Information and Education Center in Adrianu Mic. This building became a very important place in the education and learning process concerning the rural community from Găleşti commune but also for the other communities in the Niraj valley. Here, an important part of the learning process took place—we organised seminars, trainings, educational activities which contributed consistently to the learning and educational process in the Niraj valley. We feel that the implementation of any learning project can't be successful without the support or even of the involvement of the local authorities. If we want to experiment for the sake of a

good future of the rural space this process has to be a real one, and for this we need the representatives of the local authorities. We as theoreticians and practitioners on small scale of the development processes in the rural area know what would be sustainable for the rural space. We even can experiment with pilot projects and we offer these for implementation on larger scale to the authorities. But unfortunately the general trends are still not developing in favour of sustainability, against the announced political agenda of the UN and the EU (SDGs, Agenda 2030). The local politicians in the majority of cases didn't have any information about these high level political agendas, and they follow the economical growth model. If we can find partners among the local politicians who are interested and who can understand the high level political trends and who are inter-

ested in experimenting with local models to implement these agendas and to prove that the sustainable way of development is the right way we would have a chance to elaborate models which can be offered for the future learning process of the local authorities. We have had the chance to find a partner in the mayor of the village Găleşti and in generally in the local politicians from that place. We can say that we elaborated functional models and we are ready to share our experiences to other local authorities and participate in this way in the learning process of the rural communities. **FEC**

In the current city administration a »red-green« coalition has the majority, and especially two green members of the city council feel very positive about the project.

Certainly there are some people, to whom the GdG appears a bit unusual and therefore breathe some strange words, but we don't care, and our activities do not depend on local authorities. **GdG**

2.3.2 REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The one person who was essential in the phase of our community finding a new home in Klein Jasedow was Matthias Andiel, since the turnaround mayor of the small commune of Pulow. It was a lucky opportunity to make friends with the head of the local municipality, which at that time counted 330 inhabitants in four villages, Klein Jasedow with 25 inhabitants being the smallest hamlet. Matthias Andiel was a great support for our settling process, as in his role as mayor he could open doors which would have stayed locked if we would have shown up as the mere »Wessis«, as newcomers from the old federal states were called pejoratively. For instance he made it possible that we could negotiate about and finally acquire two properties which were not yet put out to public tender by the fiduciary com-

pany, which the German government had implemented after the fall of the wall in order to privatize the former people's property of the GDR.

The contact to the next higher level of local authorities, the administrative district of Ostvorpommern, was more difficult. We realised that many former functionaries of the repressive GDR system had managed to keep powerful positions in the civil service, sometimes hidden in seemingly mediocre jobs but the more effective in pulling the strings from behind. Their aim was to concentrate as much influence and subsidies in their own circles and not letting any newcomers come up. One of the worse things we encountered from these people was the accusation of our community being a sect, cleverly disguised behind normal looking businesses. Be-

cause of this killer defamation we lost subsidies worth half a million Euro which we had raised in order to restore an old barn and transform it into our »Klanghaus« (»House of Sounds«)—a great hall for concerts, trainings, study courses, workshops, conferences, and studio recordings. Although we had established a fruitful partnership with a hospital and other institutions in Poland eager to cooperate with us in the field of music therapy we had to start the whole project from the very beginning when the county commissioner withdraw us the EU funds. The restart of the Klanghaus project took us two years, and since then we raised money only from private sources in different methods of crowdfunding, which consist of donations, grants from foundations or gifted money for specific puposes.

The relationship to the county authorities normalised only very slowly, but in the end they realised that our projects succeeded and in fact had a positive impact on the region. During the years 2006 to 2008 we organised a series of conferences on regional development in the Klanghaus, where members of the local authorities were invited to participate and learn from experts, who as friends were willing to support us pro bono.

In 2015 Johannes Heimrath was appointed by the District Administrator to a thinktank focusing on the specific educational challenges in the district with its high rate of unemployment, high rate of migration, high rate of school dropouts and the demographic change. During two years this group formulated a 15-point guideline for the ministry of

education addressing these problems and stressing the need of political support for regional pioneers willing to settle in our rural area. It was possible to introduce some innovative aspects into this paper, which originated in our extended experience as a community. For example the guideline emphasizes the necessity to encourage alternative free schools in order to attract young urban families willing to settle in the countryside and be part of the cultural transformation which we called according to the motto of some of our conferences »Renaissance of a Region«. **KU**

We have developed a sustainable partnership with local authorities on the municipal and regional level. The City of Olomouc is our founder, and we cooperate deeply in public education as well as in the field of waste reduction and recycling. With the

Olomouc region, we are partners in fulfilling goals for environmental education, and we have helped to define its strategy for environmental education.

We are often invited to formulate and offer solutions when specific topics are being discussed. Fur-

thermore we often serve as a mediating party between the NGOs and officials. We see how complicated it might be when it gets to the bureaucracy. This is why we are glad about being able to be a part of the bigger picture.

The trust we have built is mutual. In face of donors, it is helpful when authorities publicly support us. We also get regular grants from these institutions. During the times when our future was insecure, the authorities, especially the City of Olomouc

stood up for us and helped us to overcome the challenges we had been facing. **SL**

2.3.3
REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS TO LOCAL
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

For a number of years we had provided programmes to local schools and universities, both on-site and off-site. With universities there are ongoing relationships with both Plymouth and Exeter Universities by providing support to teacher training courses and courses in areas such as environmental science.

Our relationships with local schools tend to be with the same schools each year, mainly Waldorf or Steiner Schools, with the occasional new partner coming along. These schools include primary and secondary schools, and through its programmes Embercombe has positively influenced the lives of

many young people and their teachers, with some of the learning going back into the schools and influencing how they teach.

We have been exploring other avenues and hope to expand our relationship with local universities, potentially providing modules on undergraduate

and postgraduate courses, contributing to online and distance learning programmes, and providing short courses.

What has been an important move forward was the establishment of a continuous relationship of Embercombe with the very known Schumacher Col-

lege. It's a mutual beneficial exchange by being able to participate in some of their courses. Schumacher in return runs some courses at Embercombe, and Mac, our founder, is contributing to some of their courses too. **EMB**

The relation of our team with the local school is a key issue. The Environmental Information and Education Center in Adrianu plays an important role in the education of the young generation from the village and from the larger community. Our project team developed several educational projects together with the teachers from the school, and the headmaster of the school—who is the wife of the local priest—is deeply involved in the development and implementation of educational projects. The philosophy of our educational projects is that nature is the only one functional organic system and if we want to have a sustainable society we have to learn from nature. In this respect our educational programme starts with the observation of nature. The children learn how the ecological system is

functioning, what is the difference between human systems and the natural systems—for example the human economy is a one way linear system, based on the take-use-waste principle, and the natural systems are circular systems, and in nature waste practically doesn't exist. Our educational programmes are supporting the students to develop even green entrepreneurial skills and competencies.

We consider that the education is a key issue in rural areas for the children from these areas but as well for children from the urban areas because they have to learn how the rural space is functioning. One of our most important educational programme is the agro-biodiversity thematic path. The thematic path shows the different biotopes in the rural area and explains the values of these biotopes as well as

the importance of biodiversity not only for nature but also for the human economy by the ecosystem services offered for free. The thematic path goes through the main elements of the rural ecosystem which is formed by the cooperation between nature and man, all the landscapes being manmade landscapes. The thematic trail starts at the little creek near to the Environmental Education and Information Center, and continues through meadows, pastures, forest, orchards, wetlands, arable land, abandoned arable land. The thematic path is ending at a farm, and the students meet the man as the main actor who is managing the area and who is responsible for the changes of the use of the territory, and in this way he is responsible for the changing of the landscape and the biodiversity in the landscape.

The students have to understand the complexity of the rural space and the interconnections between man and nature. The landscape around Adrianu Mic, where the Environmental Education and Information Center is situated, is an almost unchanged landscape. This landscape was formed by the traditional agricultural practices, and these practices were able to maintain the high biodiversity and to sustain the village with all the goods needed by its inhabitants. In our experience most of the children in our days have a very limited experience concerning nature—even the children from the rural area—and we can't expect them to take care for something which is almost unknown by them. So we hold it as one of our most important task to share this experience with as many children as possible, and we ex-

pect that after this experience they will understand better how nature is functioning and how the rural life can be integrated in the natural environment and in the natural cycles. Many teachers from the educational institutions are very interested in this approach, and they appreciate and support our efforts to offer a rural life experience to the children which is a more complex experience as simply an experience in nature. Unfortunately, the educational system in Romania supports this approach in a very little measure, but we hope that in the future the interest of the educational system will increase and our experience will be appreciated and used. **FEC**

One of the aldermen from the green party in the city council is Franz Gerstbauer. He is a residential teacher who often expressed that it would be a benefit for his pupils to have a free space like the GdG-site, a place in nature for school projects outside the classroom where you can work with »dirty« mate-

rial like clay or wood. We will establish a cooperation with his school.

With the organic vegetable farmer Richard Mogg, one of the first ones to establish a community supported agriculture (CSA) in Austria, a pedagogical cooperation already exists. Together with

the classmates of his son he tilled a field on the site of the GdG. The harvest was distributed by the pupils at the local market—the buyers had to decide on their own which amount of money they would like to pay for the vegetables.

In fact, the Garden of Generations as a whole will

be a school for children itself—not a school in a separate building with classrooms but rather the whole site of the community with its workshops, gardens, and offices will be a learning space for children growing up there as well as for kids from the neighbourhood. A part of the GdG vision is that learning

does not have to take place in institutions but can be a part of »real life«—also for children. This concept is already written down in a basic form and communicated to the »Lernwerkstatt«, the alternative school founded by Markus Distelberger. It says that the GdG officially will be a satellite of the Lernwerk-

2.3.3
REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS TO LOCAL
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

statt. Pupils who attend school in the main building of the Lernwerkstatt—a small moated castle in the nearby village Pottenbrunn—will visit the GdG for practical projects. Infrastructure for crafting and

gardening are much better in the GdG than in the castle. Those pupils who constantly stay in the GdG as their place for living and learning benefit from being a satellite of the Lernwerkstatt by the right of

this alternative school to conduct official exams. (In Austria, homeschoolers have to pass a yearly exam on a state school.) Grammar school pupils from the GdG probably will be studying in Pottenbrunn.

To integrate the learning of children in daily life is a challenge for adults who are used to the tradition that children are sent away to an institution every morning. To find out different, more inte-

grated ways of living with children is a large field of learning, especially for grown-ups. **GdG**

The relationship of our academy in Klein Jasedow to local education institutions developed quite slowly. Due to building work, it took us until 2006 to open up the Klanghaus and to start our own educational practice in the field of music therapy and improvisation skills in the performing arts. Our first partner

was the Institute for Music Therapy at the University for Music and Theater in Hamburg. Local partnerships became alive when we started to offer workshops for children in need of support, for example with a school in the nearby town of Anklam for mentally and learning-disabled children or with

the Albert Schweitzer Familienwerk and other organisations running homes for children who cannot stay with their families. In programmes for smaller children we cooperated with local kindergartens, and for our annual children's circus-camps we started a partnership with a secondary school in

a village near Anklam. All these cooperations helped a lot to perceive the Klanghaus in Klein Jasedow not as a place for a small elite but open and helpful for everyone. Music workshops were carried out at the local grammar school, and a very interesting cooperation with the University of Applied Sciences Neu-

brandenburg led to a Summer University in our hometown Lassan and further conferences focusing on regional development. We have good connections to the faculty of social geography at the Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-University of Greifswald. **KU**

The offer of our environmental education programmes for schools is made public in the beginning of September every year. Just a few hours after the announcement, all are booked out, where possible even years in advance.

We have developed strong cooperation and partnerships with schools. They help us in the process of creating and testing programmes, teaching methods and our teaching resource packs. We have been training teachers in soft skills and enhanced their qualifications by different programmes. They can

attend our field trips to visit interesting school systems as well as experience staying in nature. We have created a number of books about teaching methods and other teaching resources.

We have been cooperating with regional schools

at elementary, secondary, as well as nursery level within the international Ecoschool initiative that encourages young people to engage in their environment by allowing them the opportunity to actively protect it. It aims to start in classrooms, ex-

panding to the whole school and eventually foster change in the community at large. On the academic level, the Palacký University is our strong partner. **sl**

2.3.4
HOW DO WE CONTRIBUTE TO THE RESILIENCE
OF OUR REGIONS?

Resilience is one of Mac's favourite topics. He keeps saying: »No one who makes it their business to be informed about the state of the world can deny that we face a hugely challenging future. However the Chinese character for challenge also means opportunity. Transforming these challenges into opportunities will require immense resilience. You have this resilience within you, but you may have forgotten that you have it. We'd like to remind you.« (There are several TEDx Talks of Mac around this subject.)

So, Embercombe likes to remind not only our region, but also the whole world. How do we stay resilient? How do we pick our battles? And how do we avoid burn-out?

All programmes at Embercombe hold the aspect of resilience and finding the way of leading »across the threshold of a new paradigm«.

»Where resilience lives« will be an exploration of individual and community resilience, the ability to bounce back from natural disasters, financial crises and personal circumstances. The teaching of resilience includes the ancient indigenous wisdom of the way of council, which creates sacred co-creative space for groups of people to open up to the wisdom of the heart within a communal atmosphere of empathic sharing, non-judgement and acceptance. In council, people sit in a circle and commit to being fully present by really listening to each other from

the heart, free from distractions, judgements, opinion forming or preparation of a response.

Council invites empathy, stillness and honesty, vital ingredients for a successful culture of transformation. Embercombe had its own council, which included members from the village. It has been dissolved in 2015 to be re-formed.

Nevertheless, we teach and preach it, we believe that this powerful practice is applicable to all human interrelations whether it is a board meeting, a team discussion or diverse stakeholder dialogue. Applying the practice of council in our work as leaders crossing the threshold encourages authentic environments of listening and speaking from

the heart to occur. The more we create such environments the more people embrace the way of the heart in their relations whether engaging with difficult clients or tackling the strategic challenges of shifting to a business model that goes one step beyond doing »less bad«. It is from within that we find the power to transform.

Developing resilience in individuals, organisations and society is a key part of what Glyn, the current MD, wants to keep building at Embercombe, in particular the resilience to deal with uncertainty and change within Embercombe versus teaching it. He strongly believes that building this resilience will enable us all make better decisions about how

we look after each other and our environment. Fear of the other and fear of change are what fuels many of society's problems. Accepting that change is natural, inevitable and beneficial will help us all flow through that change more easily, taking better advantage of the opportunities that present themselves on the way.

Glyn believes that only by building Embercombe as a business that is resilient to change and uncertainty, it will walk its talk. When Embercombe starts to model that way of being to the world, then it truly enables it in others. **EMB**

Even if our initiative is implemented in the small community of the village Adrianu Mic and mainly in the commune Găleşti, we hoped from the beginning to influence the larger area of the Niraj valley and even the Mures county. We hoped also that our ideas will expand like an ink blot and will influence the development of the region. But this is not so simple, because there are so many different influences in the region and the long term positive outcomes of our project are not so clear and evident for the local people and for the decision makers. At the time we started our strategy—and this strategy is valid also for the future—was to

- ▶ develop small scale models of sustainable practices;
- ▶ extend our social network in the area;

- ▶ spread information about our values and our practices and make our way of thinking attractive, by demonstrating that what we are doing is for »normal« people, not something exotic—just a different way to have a fruitful, happy life.

Our society right now is focusing more to hedonist than to universal values, so we have to focus our messages to tell that the way of life that we promote doesn't need a lot of sacrifice in the name of some universal, abstract values. This way of life will change the dependency of the local community in the Niraj valley from external resources, and here we refer firstly to food, water, and energy. The Niraj valley microregion is a watershed which means that it is a relatively closed ecosystem. In the past it was characterised by a large scale of autonomy

from external resources. In the last period the dependency from external resources increased significantly like everywhere in Europe. This happened because of the changing of the agricultural practices, the wrong water management and the irrational exploitation of the forests. If we want a rational and logical modernization and increase the resilience of the rural area we have to change these three wrong practices. We have to motivate the locals to buy local food, because if it is demanded the local farmers will produce local food again. The knowledge to produce a large variety of healthy food still exists, but the distribution mechanisms have to be established in a convenient way. Today it seems easier for the small local markets to provide food from the big suppliers, but in long term this is not sustainable. We hope

if we can offer a good example on small scale that the good example will spread in the region. Another important issue is water. The water was reduced in quantities in the area and it was changed in quality too. Currently there are only a few wells left in which the concentration of nitrate is below the standard value, and the springs have disappeared. In this situation the local people are drinking bottled water which is costly and in no way sustainable. If we think deeply we can understand that this is one of biggest absurdity of our times. We destroy the local water resources by a wrong water management, and we import water from far away. So our efforts are concentrating to the restoration of the water reserve by the restoration of wetland. We hope that our example will be used also in the re-

gion. The energy needs of the community can be ensured by good management of the forests. The over-exploitation and the export of the wood can cover some costs for the moment but will have long term effects by causing erosion processes, changing the microclimate, and reducing the water retention capacity and of course cutting the local community off from energy resources. Of course there is a lot of information about climate change and environmental problems, but the population is afraid that the solution of these problems will need big sacrifices from their side. So we are setting up sustainable practices which show a new, modern vision about rural space and a sustainable, resilient life. We hope that by spreading this good practices we can have a contribution to the resilience of the region. **FEC**

2.3.4 HOW DO WE CONTRIBUTE TO THE RESILIENCE OF OUR REGIONS?

The GdG wants to give an example how to substantially lower the ecological footprint through using ecological architecture and communal resources. This is a precondition for becoming resilient, and we hope that our example will have followers in the region.

To be resilient in times of a crisis means for example not to depend on hightech, but to be able to repair the buildings and the housing technol-

ogy with simple tools and a basic technical expertise. The heating system of the houses to be built on the site are a good example. Thermal solar energy will collect the heat of the sun by black watertubes, and this heat will be stored in an underground accumulator by heating up the ground underneath the houses. As the walls will be made of strawbales with a high insulation value the underground accumulator will be sufficient to supply enough heat

during wintertime. This is a simple system that uses mainly lowtech and does not burn any precious resources.

Resilience is created by a circular flow of material within a system of production and consumption. Therefore the organic water treatment plant of the GdG will have a filter system using strawbales to collect all the solid material. This straw will later be composted and used to enrich the earth of the

site. Such a system allows to compost human faeces with no need to use individual compost toilets. There will be normal water toilets in the house.

Regarding vegetables, the GdG has the potential to become self-sufficient, but autarky is not a central aim of the project. A resilient region needs a network of many ecological projects that are able to support each other. Therefore cooperations with local organic farms are essential for the GdG.

The most important resilience factor is community-support across all generations. Also the financial concept of the GdG—»wealth pool«—contributes to the resilience of the project as it is nearly independent of the credit institutions. **GdG**

Resilience is usually referred to as the ability to regain health in spite of stressful situations. When we arrived 1997 in our village in the northeast of Germany we encountered many aspects of decline but also a great potential for resilience, recreation or even health. The vast agricultural fields of several hundred hectares were an expression of constant exploitation of the land, first in GDR times and even to an extremer extent in the capitalist system of the West, as one big company took over all the land formerly owned by hundreds of local people. Among the people we experienced also various traumata of exploitation, beginning in the Second World War for the elderly ones—many arrived in this region as expellees from regions that today belong to Poland or Czechia—leading to the dictatorship of the GDR and then to a life in constant fear of losing the job or being treated badly by the local jobcentre after the

change, when thousands of people who before had worked in the fields of agriculture, carpentry, fishery or at the dockyards for shipbuilding did lose their jobs. The situation is better today, but people still feel rather as victims of an oppressive system than as framer and shaper of a flowering rural region. By our experience resilience has its origin within an individual, who understands that she or he is not a victim, but a creative designer of her or his own life and more generally life in the local community. We tried to empower people in this respect, and meanwhile more than 50 formerly unemployed people have found work in our contexts or got inspired to start their own little business with our support. According to our experience, the process of awakening resilience is a very subtle one, and often it takes many years. But if a person finds her or his inner strength this can have a tremendous effect on the personal-

ity. But it was also hard to see that sometimes traumata are so deep that seemingly there is no way leading out of the position of the victim, especially and most regretfully also by those persons who had been prosecuted as dissidents by the GDR regime.

Since the beginning of our project in Klein Jasedow we attracted many new settlers to come to the region, and these again attracted their friends so that now more than 100 new citizens who fit into the sociological pattern of cultural creatives live in the villages around Klein Jasedow. This brought new life to the region, but also caused some problems of integration. It is still a task to bridge the worlds of the long-established local people, those who were already running alternative projects in GDR times and those following later, bringing along a western entrepreneurial spirit or an urbanised cultural creative lifestyle. There is a huge potential for resilience

and recreation in the concurrence of people from these different worlds.

During the last twenty years modern agriculture was responsible for the loss of 50 percent of biodiversity in the landscape. In the light of resilience it is most important to address this complex challenge. On the one hand we support the various campaigns which demand a change towards an ecological peasant agriculture and run our own campaign against the use of pesticides »Pesticides? No, thanks!«. On the other hand we do not blame the local farmer—he is just one part of a large industrial system, and we try to get into a dialogue with him. Our second strategy was to acquire some land, which proved to be extremely difficult. Only after 20 years of constant effort we were able to buy 10 hectares of land, and at the moment half of it is available to start a pilot project focusing on the question: Is it possible

to provide food for our village all around the year from the adjoining fields—like in former times? In the case of a crisis of whatever kind access to land and skills for making a living by farming this land may be crucial for survival, but even without such a negative perspective self-sufficiency is an important strategy to lower the excessive ecological footprint of our consumer society, and this again is essential for strengthening the global resilience. We hope that our attempt to recultivate this piece of land will bring about various processes of learning that involve many regional people and partners from all over Germany and bring strong impulses to stabilize the rural structures within our region of the Lassarner Winkel. **KU**

2.3.4 HOW DO WE CONTRIBUTE TO THE RESILIENCE OF OUR REGIONS?

Sluňákov as an organisation, implicitly for the purpose it has been set up to, does not contribute to the resilience of Olomouc region. However, figuratively, we are an important player in contributing to regional resilience, as we, directly and indirectly, empower the ability of the region of Olomouc to respond to challenges of ecological, economical and infrastructural substance.

Education, Infrastructure, and Governance

Sluňákov is an education centre. Our programmes' topics for schools and for public include a wide variety of fields covering scientific as well as evidence-based practice, consumer behaviour and development issues relevant to informed life paths or

governance decisions. Thus our contribution to the resilience of our region is indisputable and often makes us partners in societal discussions and decisionmaking processes.

We have created a pleasant place to spend leisure time in the suburbia. Our activities often bring in aspects of a healthy lifestyle. We run an environmental club for the local children and our education programmes include field trips and bike trips. Thus increasing the use of regional hike and cycle paths and showing their importance in the context of worsening smog situation of the region and over limit values of airborne dust in the air unambiguously caused by car transport. The active leisure time in pleasant surroundings strengthens the

bonds in families—they spend a lot of time together outside, without computers and multimedia.

For our public events, we often invite policymakers, who get the opportunity to have a taste of issues from new perspectives.

Ecology – Biocentre and the Low Energy Building

The Sluňákov building is a demonstration of low-energy housing. It is made of wood, concrete, glass, stone and adobe brick. Its design utilises the principles of solar architecture, heavy layers of thermal insulation, mechanical ventilation heat recovery and centralised computer control, sustainable water management system with a service water line. The crescent-shaped building has a green roof with an

observation deck. The northern section is covered by an earth mound which, in addition to its insulation qualities, also helps the building blend into the landscape when viewed from the natural grounds. The sunlight enters the building through the glazed southern wall. It has an underground heat exchange system. The main energy savings are achieved through heavy layers of thermal insulation on walls, floor and the roof. Rainwater is collected and used for flushing toilets when enough water.

In our surroundings, we have transformed the monoculture fields back to wetlands and ponds. This makes the area of a former flood zone a landscape more sustainable for living. In small scale introducing natural elements also implies climate

change mitigation and reduces weather extremes.

Education in these fields heightens environmental awareness and inspires for practical and technical hands-on steps, thus empowering the ecological and economic resilience.

Social Resilience

We support kindergartens, family centres, maternity centres and offer to the public a meaningful way of spending their free time. This has a natural and easy impact on the wellness and well-being.

All these factors help to build a sustainable region. **SL**



2.4 BEING NATURE

We strive to live and work sustainably. We grow much of our own biodynamic food, managing our waste using compost toilets and supporting our electricity use with solar power. We still have a long way to go to become fully sustainable, but every year we incorporate new ideas and progress.

Most of the grown food is for self-use and some is sold to the local village in form of veggie boxes.

We still need to buy in a lot of food, however, we have arranged an agreement with big local biodynamic food growers, that we can pick up their surplus and outdated products as a donation.

We hold chicken, lambs, ponies and bees, debating for long, if we should have cows too.

And we make our own cider. **EMB**

One of the main goals of our project is to support the survival of the small scale farming practices in the Niraj microregion especially and in Transylvania, generally. Small scale agriculture is based on a huge knowledge which was accumulating over many generations concerning the best way of combination of productivity and maintaining the ecosystem services. The structure of the agricultural exploitation, the rotation of the cultures allowed a high diversity of products which ensured self-sufficiency from the point of view of alimentation of the community. We consider that the small scale farming with a high diversity of products is essential for the future of rural life. The high diversity of species makes the fruits and vegetables more resistant and ensures a diversity of the alimentation for the local community. However we consider that the old way

of production can be modernised using new techniques, for example permaculture can be a way of production which is suitable with the traditional way of production. Most important is to avoid the industrial agriculture techniques and the resulting monocultures.

In Romania, since the nineties the small scale agriculture is devaluated as outdated subsistence agriculture which has to disappear, and subsequently the agricultural policies were going in the direction to support the big exploitations. Fortunately, in Transylvania the ownership structures of the land makes this process difficult because the land is divided in small pieces and many owners don't want to sell their land. In this situation it is possible to start a movement concerning the revitalisation of the small farms. The way of making these farms sus-

tainable is to change the production structure and to support the processing of the products. If a farm is producing vegetables on two or three hectares a family can make its life. So the small farmers have to change their production structure from cereals to vegetables as demand for vegetables increased very much in the last period. During the past decades the industrialisation process of agriculture widened the gap between the urban and the rural areas—an industrial agricultural exploitation, i.e. a farm producing only one product in monoculture hardly is attractive for the people from the city. But a mixed farm with animals and a certain diversity of the products can be attractive for families from the town, who will spend their free time there and purchase their food contributing in this way to the general income of the rural area. The traditional link be-

tween the city and the surrounding countryside has to be rebuilt—this is one aim of our project.

In the past this organic link existed, and the local markets from the towns were fed by the local farmers. Of course the local farmers had—and will always have—only a decent income, but the rural life has its specificities, and it was—and will be—a realistic life option. The local markets in our times are not a solution for these problems because they face the hard competition of the supermarkets, so we will have to establish new ways of contact between the city and the rural area. These contacts have to be a personal one and must be based on mutual trust and mutual responsibility. The demand for a great diversity of products supports the local farmers to keep to the traditional species of vegetables which don't need chemicals and are tastier. For a

sustainable agriculture a balance between animal keeping and vegetable growing is necessary, because the vegetables need natural fertilizers, and also a production structure which allows rotation. The basic principles which are applied in our agricultural project are the use of local species, the use of natural fertilizers, and to process the product locally in traditional way. In the last years we learned that in this way a rural family—and a local community—can ensure its food necessity and can have a decent income because the need for such products is increasing day by day. The agricultural production which is re-integrated into the natural cycles, which combines the traditional knowledge with new techniques is the key element of the revitalisation of the rural space. **FEC**

A good way to realise »being nature« is to deal with all aspects of the earth underneath our feet, the fertile soil, and to understand all the cycles of life connected with soil. It is a basic experience that all organic wastes from the kitchen and from the toilets

can contribute to good earth, therefore the wastewater management will be connected with a composting system. Gardening will follow permaculture principles. There is enough space on the GdG site to grow vegetables, fruit trees, and berries, but

for grain or oilseed additional fields would be necessary. If a person would become part of the GdG who would like to do agriculture on a larger scale this is welcome but not essential. In such a case it would be an option to buy or rent additional fields. Otherwise,

the existing cooperations with local organic farms will ensure the food supply. Animal farming as well is only possible on a small scale basis.

An important step to improve the quality of the land was to plant trees at an early stage of the pro-

ject, so today we can already enjoy a nice harvest of walnut, cherries, apples and other fruits.

2.4.1 AGRICULTURE, GROWING FOOD, NURTURING THE LAND

Klein Jasedow is surrounded by hundreds of hectares of industrially farmed land. Only on the north side in the hilly landscape there is a small stretch of inarable land surrounding three little lakes. The local agroindustrial corporation owns 4500 hectares of land, and so it is clearly not a farm, but rather an industry, run with big machinery, leaving behind impoverished, depleted near-deserts. Every year we suffer from the use of agrochemicals that cause health troubles of all kinds, but scientifically proving a direct causal connection between the chemicals and the symptoms is notoriously difficult. Therefore, we started the campaign »Pesticides? No thanks!«. It is not directed at the local agribusiness but at the government's and the EU's agricultural policies that allow such poisoning and depletion. In 2015, our campaign succeeded in having tested for glyphosate—hich is the agent of total herbicides like »Roundup«—the urine of more than 2000 German citizens, and 99,2 percent of the tests were positive. This result considerably substantiated campaigns all over Europe fighting for a ban of glyphosate.

In addition to this political work we are on the way to realise a true contemporary subsistence agriculture in Klein Jasedow and our microregion. From the very beginning we had a large vegetable garden, poultry, sheep and rabbits. »Adele's field«—as we call the plot of land where our late neighbour Adele had grown her potatoes—is cultivated according to permaculture principles and yields the major part of our vegetables. A newly arrived settler who started a community supported market garden in the neighbouring village Pulow supplies us with potatoes, onions, carrots and cabbage for winter. One of our family members is a beekeeper, and all over Klein Jasedow there are plenty of gooseberry, raspberry, and currant bushes as well as apple, pear, quince and walnut trees.

In the next few years, we will start a larger agricultural experiment. In 2015, with the help of the Schweisfurth Foundation we fortunately succeeded in acquiring seven hectares of land from one of our neighbours adjacent to Klein Jasedow. It is a wonderful piece of land in the West of the hamlet, a hill

sloping down towards the South next to a meadow situated between two ponds. In the next few years, we will transform it step by step into an edible landscape with small fields, hedges, agroforestry systems, a fishpond, vegetable gardens and many compost heaps. When it comes to husbandry, we will experiment with »symbiotic agriculture«, a system developed by Karl-Ludwig Schweisfurth where different kinds of animals that support each other—such as pigs, chicken, and donkeys—are kept together on one field. They move from one area to the other while creating fertile soil where, in turn, the plants they feed on can grow. One of the experiment's main goals is to improve the soil fertility and biodiversity of the land by means of farming in order to demonstrate that humankind does not necessarily have to act exploitive towards Earth but can instead integrate itself as a beneficial organism into the natural cycles of growth and decay. Realising food sovereignty in a region dominated by the agroindustry is, of course, also a political act to prove that there are viable alternatives to consumist, ur-

banised lifestyles. This experiment will bring about considerable changes for everyone involved. It will be an important field of in-depth learning within the years to come. A main part of this learning process will be the economic conception: Our agricultural experiment will be a non-commercial project based on commons principles rather than a conventional ecological farm where a famer's family makes a living by selling their yield. The land is meant to be nobody's property but belongs to itself. The decisions on how to till the land will not be influenced by any commercial pressure but instead by the need to care for the earth to the best of our abilities. This attitude seems to us an essential prerequisite for working in a non-exploitative way. Of course this requires quite some fundraising effort and a lot of expertise and manual work. We will invite friends from the worldwide networks of permaculture and regenerative agriculture to share their experience with us as well as volunteers to help with seasonal tasks. This will also happen in a commons-based manner: Instead of looking for in-

vestors, employing consultants and field hands, and offering workshops we will invite people who feel deeply connected to such an experiment and aim at contributing on an equal footing whatever they have to contribute. If money is needed, we will find a way to acquire funds through voluntary contributions, donations, endowments or non-commercial loans. Hence, this experiment includes the dissolution of the typical hierarchical structures between teachers and students, between employer and employee, between producers and consumers. We will all be learners who will be learning from each other, learning by doing and, first and foremost, learning by listening to the teachings of the land. **KJ**

The original project of Sluňákov included the Hankian farm, where the agricultural land would be managed and we would organise courses for children. We did not implement this part of the project plan, and nowadays agriculture and growing food

is not our intention—although we have an educational programme about compost.

As for nurturing the land, around our seat in Horka nad Moravou and in the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature, we have re-introduced the original

ecological conditions. The fields were waterlogged and nobody wanted to make use of the place after the revolution. We turned the land back to the original wetland forests, pools, ponds with beavers, and meadows grazed by sheep. **SL**

2.4.2
PERCEPTION OF LANDSCAPE, SHAPING NATURE,
ALLOWING WILDERNESS

Originally Embercombe's 50-hectare land was owned by a multimillionaire who used it for his weekend stays with an own air strip and airplane hangars. Since the land is in a beautiful rural area with extensive woodlands—Haldon Forest, 1500 ha—and adjoins Dartmoor National Park—954 square kilometres—, Mac's intention from the very beginning, is giving this land back to nature. Natural banks were built, planted with wild flower seeds and native shrubs. The air strip was loosened up and only the part of the entrance was kept, down into the valley to the hangars.

Mac was also eager to plant more native trees again, for which we needed to cut down—thoroughly selected—a part of the neglected woodland. This caused uproar in the village, and we needed to explain that it was necessary to plant new trees and to give the wild life more space to expand.

Because of the massive invasion of deer in Devon, we did need to fence the whole site.

The initiators of Embercombe, mainly Mac, Joey and then Jo, have invested hugely in bringing back natural wildlife in the form of berries, seeds, flowers, foliage, insects and small mammals.

At the bottom of Embercombe's small valley site is a beautiful wildlife lake, marking the eastern edge of the mature broadleaf woodland, which takes up thirty acres of our site.

Through careful management to exclude the large number of local non-native deer, our woods are a thriving ecosystem with areas set aside for human activities and for wilderness, supporting two endangered species: the dormouse and the pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly.

North of the lake are our organic market garden and polytunnels which are tended by the many vol-

unteers, visitors and course participants who visit Embercombe, providing ample fresh food throughout the year.

We have a newly planted forest garden and apple orchard comprising hundreds of trees, which will create an impressive, abundant canopy in years to come.

The intent was to keep this land as close to nature as possible. The hangars were transformed: one is holding a huge open space, we call it centre-fire, able to hold up to 200 people. It is really that: Centre-Fire, and it is not only used for our courses

or any other events, it is that part of Embercombe where people find each other in the colder months. A smaller part of this hangar holds the offices, toilets and showers and a small mezzanine room.

The other, a smaller hangar is holding the kitchen and dining room, plus the joinery and carpentry.

Accommodation is provided by our two yurt villages. Each yurt has a wood-burning stove, and both villages have compost toilets, demonstrating sustainable living. Volunteers live on the land in caravans or other wooden huts made for them. **EMB**

The landscape as far as we have in Europe is a man-made landscape; it was created over the centuries by the agricultural practices of the local population. The landscape is also the reflection of the vision, the spirituality of the community which is living in the area. The materials used, the relation between the local community and the water, the forests, the elements of the landscape—like hedgerows—reflect the relation of the community with the natural environment. In the Niraj valley microregion over the centuries a landscape was formed which is very valuable from an ecological point of view, with a very high biodiversity and an impressive cohabitation and cooperation between nature and the local community. This landscape is formed by cultivated parcels, pastures, meadows, orchards, forests, and a lot

of valuable small landscape elements. Each category forms an ecosystem with higher or lower biodiversity, but the whole landscape has a very high biodiversity. We think that the actual structure of the landscape ensures a harmony between the local community and nature. It allows wilderness and a suitable cohabitation between the rural communities and nature. But now this landscape is in change, it is threatened by big infrastructure projects and industrial agriculture practice. Some projects introduce elements that fragment the landscape—like a highway or the river regulation—, and the industrial agriculture destroys some valuable landscape elements like old trees or hedgerows.

The basic principle of managing the landscape for the local community was that it was a place for

everyone, and the agricultural practices had to be in harmony with the natural cycles. According to these principles wilderness was present everywhere in the landscape. Over the centuries some cohabitation rules with the wild animals were established, even with the big carnivores.

The bear is a permanent presence in the landscape in spite of possible conflicts between humans and animals. The conflicts arise especially when the humans are going to the bear's habitat, for example to the pastures for grazing sheep. In this situation the possibility exists that the bear might attack the sheep. But this is prevented by the big Carpathian shepherd dogs which are taking care to the sheep. Thus all are part of the Transylvania landscape: bear, sheep and dogs, and together they are maintaining

the beautiful pastures. Another example is the traditional water management, when the local people used the fertile sludge after the spring's floods to grow vegetables. In this fertile deposit from the flooding the vegetables grow very well. This agricultural practices which have been in harmony with the natural cycles maintained the wetlands which offered home for many birds and breeding space for several species of fish. The integration of the natural elements into the agricultural practices was a very common practice. For example the fabulous landscape elements, the old oaks and beeches are offering shadow for the cattle during the hot hours of the day during the grazing period.

This landscape with its fabulous biodiversity which offers each season different aspects, from

early spring when the forests and meadows are full with wild flowers, in many places with protected species like *Leucojum vernum*, *Iris Siberica* or *Fritillaria meleagris*, to summer when the meadows are full with colourful flowers is natural for local people. The mushrooms from the forests, the medicinal herbs which can be collected everywhere, the birds, are all normal elements of this landscape. But unfortunately, this landscape is in change and one of the aims of our project is to to make the people aware about these values and to avoid the degradation of this landscape. **FEC**

2.4.2
PERCEPTION OF LANDSCAPE, SHAPING NATURE,
ALLOWING WILDERNESS

A small town like Herzogenburg offers a lot of possibilities to create, design or shape places. In spring 2017 Markus Distelberger initiated a project called »Kostbare Jubiläumsrunde« (sumptuous jubilee round walk) to realise a circular route through Herzogenburg flanked by many many fruit trees. A part of it will lead through the GdG. Such a project needs the goodwill of municipality, farmers and other landowners.

The Garden of Generations is embedded in the landscape of the lower valley of the river Traisen flowing towards the Danube. During the last ice age it formed a large glacial valley, and the GdG is just located on one of its rather steep slopes, so the topog-

raphy is a challenging factor for planning houses on the site. In the early phase of the project some terraces were already designed, and this transformation of landscape will continue, even a little lake will be dug out at the lowest part of the site. On the other hand some areas will be reverted to wilderness. Since tilling of the land was stopped, innumerable wild plants and animals invaded and contribute to a high biodiversity that should be sustained even when a lot of construction work will go on in some parts. In other parts we will have the chance to learn what happens with no or minimal human input on this site.

Architect Gernot Mittersteiner designed a mas-

terplan that will shape the landscape of the GdG site within the next years. The plan was set up in a participatory process with members of the GdG based on the system of »pattern language« developed by Christopher Alexander. Alexander discovered that the quality and atmosphere of architectural spaces—be it a room, a house or a marketplace in the city—is determined by interconnected patterns. According to him a harmonious process of designing architecture begins with looking at the patterns which are already present at the given space or which the involved people would like to create.

Given patterns at the site are for example the rather steep slopes, the adjacent road leading down

the hill or the entrance area or points with a great view across the valley. In the planning workshop several patterns were detected as essential for the GdG, for example »different levels of intimacy«. That means that there must be strictly private spaces as well as shared spaces for the community and even spaces open to the public. How entrance areas to the different buildings are created will be influenced by this pattern. Another pattern is »old people everywhere«—they should not be set aside but have a chance to experience community life and enjoy the beauty of the gardens and views. »Roofs everywhere to stay outside independently from weather conditions« was a pattern invented in the

planning process—to inhabit not only the houses as cosy spaces but the GdG landscape as whole by creating many shelters in the different areas was important for everyone.

During the planning workshop each of the patterns was discussed by the group in a fishbowl style: Three people would be talking in the middle of a larger circle, a free chair next to them invites those from the outside circle to join. Those in the middle get up eventually when they feel they have talked enough and offer their seat to others to enter the conversation. In this way the entire group was able to engage deeply with the shaping of the GdG's landscape. **GdG**

The landscape around Klein Jasedow is our home. We do not only inhabit our houses and gardens, we live in the landscape with its small hills, lakes, alleys, forests and the glacial valley stretching from Pulow to the Peenestrom, the strait separating the mainland from the island of Usedom situated just two kilometers eastward of Klein Jasedow. Some of us have lived here already for 20 years, and year after year we are witnessing the changing of the seasons, the blooming of the trees, the ripening of the fruit

and the silence in the wintertime. We are witnessing the vanishing of insects in the air and amphibians in the lakes due to the extensive use of pesticides all around us as well as the effects of climate change and the constant erosion of topsoil on the industrially farmed fields. All this creates a strong desire to relate to the landscape in a way that goes way beyond romanticised views of nature on the one hand and economic exploitation on the other hand. We do understand that virtually all of Central

Europe is a cultivated landscape, there being almost no wilderness left, and we believe that there is nothing bad about man-made landscapes in general. The essential question will be: Is it possible to develop a new understanding of humans as shapers of landscapes that does not turn Earth with its plants and animals into a commodity?

The shaping of the gardens and meadows belonging to the houses of the Klein Jasedow community was a slow process. Only after a long time of

observing did we take decisions to plant trees and shrubs, build fences or establish pathways. It has always been important to us to leave some spots wild and undisturbed. Sometimes a transformation also happened very fast when time was ripe. Working intuitively without a masterplan, being in a dialogue with the land in order to see what can unfold from there has taught us an attitude of humbleness towards the place. Maybe this is missing in the way cultivated landscape are usually created. Etymo-

logically, the words »culture« and »to cultivate« are connected to »tending«, »fostering«, »honouring«. Cultivation is not necessarily connected to domination and exploitation, it is instead about upholding a meaningful dialogue between all beings present at a place. **KJ**

Litovelské Pomoraví—Landscape of the Elements
Michal Bartoš takes a moment to think: »Imagine yourself as a heron flying above Litovelské Pomoraví. Feel the flow of the air, look at the woods

beneath you. Surprising, how river Morava suddenly turns wild—elsewhere a channel regulated by man. The inland delta between Mohelnice and Olomouc is chaotic, some river branches flow away

from the mainstream; it meanders and, seen from above, it forms pools— windows to the landscape's soul. Now, join the lowland on foot—you will be surprised by the power of the primeval nature, the

lush greenery with water everywhere around. The vegetation is remarkable—ecosystems are rich both in quantity and diversity. The floors of the forest consist of deep vegetative parts, such as leaves and

branches, with a carpet of flowers in the spring and wild garlic, nettles and liana-like rising hops in summer. This forest is different from the one we usually visit when hiking in the mountains and walking in ▶▶

2.4.2 PERCEPTION OF LANDSCAPE, SHAPING NATURE, ALLOWING WILDERNESS

foothills. Its light, scent, and sounds are different. All is intensely supported by a high level of groundwater. One feels as if being in a daze of senses, experiencing that one could get lost at any point. And it happens. One can get stuck in the river bays, voyages may end up in a blind corner of a forest, or between two rivers if one leaves the hiking trails.

Has the landscape been shaped by a duel of Earth and Water—or their hugging? Above their intertwining in the lowlands, a lazy wind murmurs something about Hankian slowness and homesteads. Only sometimes the wind wakes up and breaks trees. The water rushes through the countryside every spring and floods the landscape.«

The Park

In Horka nad Moravou, we have transformed floodplain wilderness into a park—a tidied Litovelské Pomoraví for people not wanting to be attacked by mosquitoes or to wade through nettles. They now have all natural attractions assembled on one route. We have built bridleways and wooden walkways to make everything more accessible and easy to follow so that people find order even in the wilderness. Otherwise, they would avoid it and there would be no one to persuade them and educate them.

Our landscape perception includes manmade landscapes as well as wilderness. We use the language of arts to bring our topics to life and provide a different point of view—which must be accessible to people. »Meeting places« invite visitors to perceive the landscapes they are walking through.

Garden of Eden

Shaped like a ship, it looks as if it had been brought by water in ancient times, remotely resembling Janův hrad in the Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape. Its inside is playful, a rich multi-layered blend of sensory experiences, protecting »endangered kinds of thinking«. According to its author, František Skála, it is »a garden of contemplation where the time stood still. The garden for all senses, gophers and nonsense. The garden of sustainable decomposition. Multiple meanings to develop children's imagination, as a prerequisite for creative thinking. Harmony of original building materials together with nature. The human dimension of architecture connecting with folk buildings. Irreplaceability of unpretentious handiwork, and deliberate inaccuracies adjusted by instincts, the opposite of the dictates of technology. Space, game, proportions, life, detail, light, shade, smell, sound. The aesthetics of rural tinkering at the monastic backyard.«

Forest Temple

Miloslav Fekar's Forest Temple of oak poles tells the journey of the sun, from east to west, from light to darkness, from birth to death. A figure points to the power of the sun on the bottom of the lookout basket. A circle is formed by four benches inside the temple. We recognize four seasons, four cardinal points, four elements, and explore our personality according to our date of birth. We can find our assigned trees, according to Celtic tree astrology or our own animals according to the classical and

Sluňákov zodiacs. The vertical poles show the position of the solstices and equinox. The temple serves as a natural classroom and also for relaxation in a place consecrated to nature.

Solar Mountain

Miloš Šejn describes: »The Solar Mountain of Dreams is an artificial landscape structure inviting us to stop, penetrate into its inner gloom, and climb the grassy peak. It overlaps a brook and contains a labyrinthine access corridor to the cave with a well and a number of places and objects designated for various forms of dialogues. Two bells are hung above the surface of the water well and above the peak of the mountain—one of them dedicated to earth and water, the other to sun and wind. You can look around the historic landscape of Pomoraví from the peak. You can experience a variety of sensory contacts in the underground area, such as walking, stopping, sitting or lying. The artistic rendition leads to the touch of human bodies providing quite fundamental visual, tactile, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and other experiences. Places for standing are actually beds for human feet; the human back fits snugly into the shape of the stone. Gloom, darkness, humidity, cold, murmur of the brook, flickering reflections of lights, a presentiment of silhouettes and multiple echoes—these all have the power to lead the visitor to the source of their own childhood and the childhood of the world. It is a mountain of questions which occur to people: Who am I, what am I doing, where am I going?«

Fireplace of the Golden Spiral

The fireplace is circled by a stone wall curved in the »golden ratio«. You can sit on the wall which gradually elevates to a tree at its end. The tree is a symbol of the unity of life and fire. Conversations, stories, songs and dances expand by an awareness of your own unity with nature. This feeling is enhanced by the spiral, whose shape we can see not only around ourselves but also in plants, animals and even in the structures of the universe. Marcel Hubáček says: »Fire has accompanied mankind from time immemorial. Only when man learned the secrets of fire and was able to use it, did he become human in the true sense of the word. The fire has become a part of all the rituals, sacred ceremonies and initiatory processes. And everyone subconsciously carries it within themselves, as if they secretly knew that fire was at their beginning and it will be at the end. The fireplace is becoming a kind of sacred place of the modern ritual of creation on the one hand and destruction on the other hand. Transformation occurs and new energy and a new reality emerge. And that is why the fireplace is in the shape of the golden spiral. Fire, which is in the centre of the spiral, evokes a small Milky Way and confirms the constant repetition of the microcosm in the macrocosm—as below, so above.«

The Magical Forest

Miloslav Fekar's Magical Forest is divided into three lobes, sinking into forest cover at the far side of the park, near the forest temple. In the first one – Mag-

ical Forest of Knowledge, there are mostly wooden objects which serve the purpose of identifying individual nuances in sound and touch, but also to recognise the richness of trees, the creation and destruction of matter. They show the natural transformation cycle of natural material. In the second lobe Magical Forest of Sounds, there are mainly metal and combined objects, which encourage empathy with movements of birds, animals, water and wind. The third lobe is a path through a willow tunnel to bring about feelings of passage, of greenery, shade, relaxation.

Bridges and a Carbonized Tree Shelter

Miloslav Fekar is also the author of a shelter for the carbonized tree trunk, with a peephole exhibition and soil profiles of different places in Litovelské Pomoraví, and of a group of oak bridges. Bridges are dedicated to the elements—fire, air, earth, water—and senses—sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch. The signs placed on the surface of each bridge refer to the scope, power and spontaneity of the topic it is dedicated to. The encrypted signs in Braille are a kind of a game of seeing, of the hidden, of the known, of the unknown ...

Michal concludes poetically: »Ship, Mountain, Temple, Fire. Enlighten the Inner. Create Home. Floodplain Forest. River. Earth and Water, The Wind, Fire. You and Me. We are One. House of Nature.« **SL**

2.4.3
GENIUS LOCI, RESACRALISATION OF
LANDSCAPE

There are two main places, which may be called genius loci, »spirit of place«. One is our own stone circle, called the Magpie Wheel, created by the Native Americans. This stone circle has 16 stones which all represent an aspect of our world. They have been set in a traditional and ceremonial way. It is a special place, and we invite visitors to walk around it three times before entering it. The other is our medicine garden—a spot for quiet reflection, storytelling and the cultivation of healing herbs.

Our newest project The Linhay was another genius loci project, to create a media suite, music, theatre, and workshops in natural weaving, fermenting, beekeeping, pottery, animal skin curing, tanning and many others, which individuals already offer at Embercombe.

Moreover, the building of the house, which was carried out over an intensive 3-year rehabilitation and up-skilling program for vulnerable people, became a community-learning centre offering former

addicts and offenders »a second chance«.

»This building is about »up-skilling«—about building people more than they're about building a building«, says the project and design manager Philip Ireland.

The Linhay build became a community outreach project, with many volunteers joining in for days to help and work side by side with these young offenders and addicts, helping these individuals to gain vital skills and qualifications that enable them to

build new futures and to reconnect to nature and themselves.

The timber frame was created from oak trees felled as part of the thinning and coppicing cycle of Embercombe's woodland. The walls are constructed with cob made from the same clay and gravel that has been dug from the site for the foundations.

Many of the materials used were stripped from old buildings, recovering 30,000 clay tiles for roof and floorboards, lathes for our plaster walls, plus

many other natural, sustainable and recycled materials—combined with the latest technology in solar power, heat retention and water saving.

In other areas, we had to use plastics, mesh and steel in order to fulfil building regulations. Other things which are not green are the diggers and dumpers on site; these are being used for cob walls, foundations, etc. In an ideal world this would all be done by hand, however, the financial implications and physical toll means this is not sustainable. **EMB**

In our case the genius loci is still alive, but it is on the way to be lost. There is high pressure on the local communities to increase the productivity of the agricultural practices, which tendency can harm the landscape. For example it is demanded to increase the number of cattle and the number of sheep per hectare. This fact can change dramatically the structure of the vegetation of the pastures. Actually the

meadows and pastures are full with medicinal herbs from the spontaneous flora which is—and can be in the future—a valuable resource. If this fabulous biodiversity from the pastures and meadows will disappear once, we hardly can talk about the »ecological reconstruction« and even less about the re-sacralisation of the landscape. Another example is the cohabitation of the local population with the

large carnivores. In the past a fragile balance was established which allowed the survival of the large carnivores—bear, wolf, and lynx—in this man-made landscape. In our days by the intervention of external factors—hunters, forest managers, agricultural policies, nature preservation policies—this balance is going to be broken and the conflicts between humans and large carnivores are more and more fre-

quent. In our opinion the best way to preserve the ecological value of the landscape is to study the genius loci, to maintain the traditional practices and to adopt the offer to the market according to the existing situation. To adopt the local conditions to the needs of the market—more milk, more products—is a wrong way of development because it will sacrifice the genius loci and the valuable landscape.

In our case we consider that we have to use the genius loci to maintain the landscape as it is with all elements, and we don't need a resacralisation, we just must not allow us to miss the moment when the damages are not yet irreversible. This is an important goal of our project. But we know that it is like the fight of David against Goliath, we have a little chance, but we want to make use of our chance. **FEC**

To develop a feeling for the genius loci or spirit of a place is a process which needs a lot of time. In its early phase, when the GdG site was only a steep slope open to the western winds, it seemed to be a place of passage: Many people were attracted to the

site and the project, but only a few were committed to stay and become rooted. When a first permaculture-design workshop took place at the site the question arose where the centre of the site might be, and in fact there was a place where the quality of

»centeredness« was perceived intuitively by many of the participants. This place was marked with a stick, and later a part of the hill was shaped like an amphitheatre around this centre, and today it's the fireplace and a nice windprotected area.

The process of using Christopher Alexander's pattern language in the process of developing the plan for the construction work and the further shaping of the landscape was a good way to communicate with the spirit of the place, to deeply lis-

ten to the qualities of the land and to ask which new qualities could be established here. **GdG**

The name of the village Klein Jasedow is of Slavic origin and means »place of the ash-tree« or »the bright or fair place«. »Jasny« in Polish means »bright« and

»jesion« is the ash—the bright tree—, and this parallel is also found in other modern Slavic languages. The famous Polish pilgrim site in Częstochowa de-

voted to an icon of the Black Madonna is called »jasna góra«—»the bright hill«.

The name of a place can tell a story about its

spirit, its genius loci. There is a certain bright and fair intensity about Klein Jasedow's atmosphere, and inhabitants and guests feel that it is part of a

very soft, female, and gentle landscape. Two round hills at the northern edge of the small lake of Klein Jasedow resemble landscapes that were associated ▶▶

2.4.3 GENIUS LOCI, RESACRALISATION OF LANDSCAPE

with the breasts of the Earth Goddess by early cultures worldwide.

The few megalithic sites from the late stone age and bronze age in the landscape surrounding our village—heavily weathered remnants of cairns and dolmen—tell a stories about prehistoric humans who connected places in this landscape in meaning-

ful ways. We can only guess what it meant for them to build a cairn on the highest ridge in the north of Klein Jasedow where the view stretches out from the Peenestrom across the glacial valley to the far away forests. How does it feel to stand there and listen to the land?

Coming from the village with all its hustle and

bustle you only need to cross this ridge to enter a »different world«. The hill leads down towards the glacial valley where a small stream runs towards the Peenestrom. When watching sea eagles up in the air gliding on the thermal lift of the steep slopes, you could be anywhere in the world: England? Ireland? New Zealand? South Africa? No, you are in the

far northeast of Germany, but there is this sense of being lightyears away from civilisation although the modern earmarked cattle are visible on the far side of the valley, and a large industrially farmed field stretches out to the south. To realise this special quality could be part of a resacralisation, a reenchantment of the landscape—not in the meaning of

neo-pagan rites but as part of a homecoming, of becoming a humble inhabitant of a landscape organism much larger and more mysterious than we can grasp with our small mind. **ku**

Michal Bartoš contemplates about the respect for the place and nature on examples of two stories of landscape perception in Litovelské Pomoraví: »From the times immemorial, people had always intervened in nature. We influence it in various ways and transform it. Sometimes we even teach about her. Teaching about nature makes ground for its future changing: 1) The Liechtenstein family related to the floodplain forest complex by reshaping it into the picturesque landscape around Nové Zámky with a set of arranged small romantic buildings. 2) We relate to nature by creating a natural outdoor gallery in the countryside with a walking trail and works

of art. It matters, what language we choose to speak about nature.«

When we were digging the pond in Horka nad Moravou we discovered a carbonized tree trunk underground on the premises. The oak was pulled out, examined, and we have built a shelter over it – a picture of how we respect the trees and the time. People do not have time, nature as a whole has plenty. The conflict between a park and a field is just a minor insignificant episode to nature, whereas to us, it is a decades-long effort to shape a landscape to return it to wilderness in a way.

Our House of Nature is dedicated to the land-

scapes of the Litovelské Pomoraví region. The area pays tribute to the local nature. The low-energy building is a shelter for visitors, a place to get information, refresh oneself, stay by the fireplace, and spend a night. But we motivate them to go out, to take a walk in the nature of Litovelské Pomoraví. They can pause at the »meeting spots«—places, which empower the genius loci and generally the relationship with nature, using works of art. The purpose is to motivate visitors to stop and share their experience. The walking trail encourages playfulness, physical experience of contact with nature, meditation, contemplation on the relationship

with nature and how the life of an individual is connected to and influenced by what surrounds them. Garden of Eden, Forest Temple, Solar Mountain, Fireplace of the Golden Spiral—all these encourage a spiritual journey to explore the landscape, bring insight into the landscape, and awaken the human connection with the surrounding world. They are observation towers, and at the same time they are guides on journeys to our own inner, where nature is projected in the given places at that moment.

Michal explains: »These environments provide one with time to experience one's own surroundings—and so understand the words of Ovidius, the

legendary Roman poet: »Each one of us has our own likeness and so it is true of places.« The endeavour of Milos Sejn is somewhat similar in the descriptions placed at the central gates of the Solar Mountain. The visitor, as he enters, is welcomed with the words: »Welcome I am Darkness, Light, Water, and Earth and so you too have your own belonging here.« And the one who is to leave should remember: »Return whenever, though I am within you always. You and I are One.« Orff's brothers sing: »I pick the pears from the apple tree, no these are not pears, it is me.« **sl**

In the film *Ancient Futures* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPT3ILCYGfk) and the superb book which I'd recommend to everyone, Helena Norberg-Hodge explores the realities of an indigenous culture, which, due to isolation, created something imperfect, but sustainable, and the loss of sustainability caused by the importation of western modern culture. Becoming local to your place, creating a culture that can go on, not just »a bit after the fossil fuels run out« but for generations, and one that results in a life worth having.

So at Embercombe, we raise the awareness of the language of the soul, rooted in the soil.

What does your community, your birthplace or your country, mean to you?

How do you express your own belonging? Do you feel you belong at all?

What is the language of your soul, and how would you like it to be heard?

Where is the homeland of your heart?

The loss of connection from self, and in a wider sense, from community, is one of the root causes of societal sicknesses. Feeling that we not only belong to our community but that we have authority and autonomy to live within it, is a birth-right increasingly denied to many. Community ties are powerful, magical, and meaningful. They bring beauty when they are nurtured, but can also inspire violence and hurt when they are not honoured. In communities where individuals do not feel bound to each other in any meaningful way, crimes against each other and their environment soar. Conversely, in even the poorest and most challenged communities if there are strong bonds, people flourish.

What can we take from the indigenous wisdom to inspire to live in a way that benefits the seven generations to come?

- ▶ Importance of love to the land.
- ▶ Valuing elders, integration of all ages in the community.

- ▶ High value placed on getting along, accommodating others, working together, sharing and resolving conflicts, which starts with self-awareness, self-responsibility, self-leadership.
- ▶ A truly local diet, including foraging wild foods and growing in ways that do not deplete the soil.
- ▶ Importance of minimal waste creation, and to focus on natural resources, on making full use of what comes easily.
- ▶ Value of a culture of music, art, literature, storytelling and spiritual or religious celebration, as well as other projects that bring beauty and joy. That is, it isn't just focused on subsistence activities, but has pleasures that are available to all, that are participatory and fulfill human needs for good stories, song, beauty, uplift and a sense of connection to something greater.
- ▶ Understanding the value of our ancestors. Sustainable cultures focus on the ways that the present, future and past are linked to one another.

Through the Eyes of an Elder

»Falling in love with nature again is falling in love with ourselves. And the invitation is to take our true place. »Real challenges are within people!«

Who are you?

What can you really fully give when you get to any gate? Your home? Where is your home—»heimat«? Where is your rootedness?

What do you come to do here?

It's like looking into a mirror and knowing, I need to come back to the land to come back to myself. To bring myself fully to this world, even if I fail.

It's a song for me, I need to speak and live it. It's my challenge. To be true to myself and feel fulfilled not matter what.

To work alongside young people, that's what Embercombe is here for.

Don't give up your hopes and dreams.

Even if all goes away, I still stand in my own shoes with my fire burning in my heart.

If I am in the city, I walk for the forest—consciously.

There is no time anymore to wrap blankets around oneself or others!

Kneel down on the land, clear a little space for you, see if it's ok. Ask if it's ok. Set a fire and place your wishes and hopes and say thank you.

Then your work begins.

Invite the people in to help you grow this place.

Be open, don't turn anyone away.

Don't forget the fire. Kindle the fire constantly.

And hopefully this place does not need to exist or be created anymore in the future because we All live it.« (From Joey, Elder of Embercombe, October 2015) **EMB**

In any rural development project rootedness, the strong relationship with the area, with the landscape and with the local community are essential elements which have to be taken in consideration. The rural space is different from the urban space mainly because the personal man-nature relation is much stronger and the interdependencies within the community are stronger too. To understand the rural world we have to compare it with the urban world, and we can say that the urban world is an im-

personal world—anybody can live an anonymous life, without any interaction with the exterior (of course if he can pay the bills for the services). The rural world is a personal world, everybody is in permanent interrelation with the exterior, with the natural environment and with the community. In the area where we started our project around the year 2000 we then understood that the people had a strong local identity. Some people from our project team who came from the urban world were also

rooted to that area, so the integration wasn't at all difficult, and for the local people and as well for our team the places were the real »heimat«. The landscape, the natural environment express the relation established over the centuries between man and nature and express also the mutual dependency. The man-made landscape created a special biotope, which is very valuable, and many species depend on human activities, the prey birds—for example the Aquila Pomarina, the emblematic bird of

the region—need open space, meadows and pastures to procure the food; several wild flowers need the maintenance of the meadows. The local people with a strong bioregional identity and with the necessary knowledge are able and have the willingness to maintain all the characteristics of the area which for them is a suitable life space. The land, the traditions, the local knowledg inherited from their parents, all these together for them means heimat.

When we started our project the first activities

were oriented to identify all these elements, and we—based on local knowledge—identified the special species, the protected wild flowers, and the water management practices. After the identification of all these elements we understood that the main task for us is to maintain the traditional activities in the new context where there are strong pressures from many parts. We understood also that the economical profitability and the need for cash money of the local people has to be a criteria in the

2.4.4
ROOTEDNESS, BECOMING AND BEING NATIVE,
BIOREGIONAL IDENTITY,
FINDING AND LOSING »HEIMAT«

development programmes. We don't have to promote an idealistic vision wanting to keep all the old traditions, but we have to find out a way to reinvent rural space while maintaining all the values of this lifestyle.

But during the years with the obvious changes—urbanisation process, industrial agriculture, migration of the young people to the towns—we have the growing feeling that although we keep staying in the same place our heimat is taken away. Slowly

many elements which make the feeling of heimat of a place are taken away, and the characteristics of the urban world—uniformity, high level of standardization—leave their marks on the landscape. All our efforts are aiming now to keep our heimat in

the place, to strengthen the bioregional identity of the local people, to save the characteristic landscape and the cultural and natural patrimony, the valuable local knowledge. There are key elements which make a place so special and different from others

and make the local people or the people who came from outside to have this special feeling: This is my heimat! We try to identify all those elements and keep them for the future for ourselves and for the local community. **FEC**

The Garden of Generations is meant to create »heimat«—a place where people can get rooted and grow old in a community without the fear to end up in an anonymous retirement home. But it takes

time to develop roots, and the only person who already spent so much time at the place to really feel at home is the founder Markus Distelberger. He explains that he is aware of his rootedness espe-

cially when he is planting trees on the site. He enjoys walking around the place feeling a close relation to nature as a way to meditate and to perceive intensely all living beings around him. To nourish

and cherish this relationship to the place strengthens his rootedness.
People who garden since many years on the GdG site feel a strong connection to the place too—if you

cultivate plants season after season you can develop a very intimate relation to the soil, to Earth. **GdG**

Cultural ecologist David Abram coined an alternative term for »nature« by speaking of the »more-than-human world«. This radically questions the usual division between the world of nature and the world of humankind. In fact we live in a more-than-human world, and to fully understand this, to accept man's deep bodily entanglement with all kinds of organisms that are not human—from the bacteria in our intestines to the microorganisms in the earth that feed the plants we eat—can basically change our conception of being in the world. The cultural history of modern Europe is all about the illusionary

emancipation of man from its dependence on nature. The concept of individual freedom developed in the era of enlightenment is the very basis of our human rights and cannot be valued enough. But it is incomplete when this freedom is not perceived together with the total interdependence of a self-determined human being with other organisms, humans as well as non-humans. At the core of the »learning place« Klein Jasedow is this interplay between individual freedom and comprehensive connectedness with other beings. It is not easy to learn this in a human culture based on separation, the separation

of body and mind, matter and spirit or nature and man. Is it possible at all to »be nature«—not in the sense of degrading oneself to animalistic drives but to augment everything alive to an animate, meaningful, dignified subject in a world that is much larger and much more complex than one's own understanding can reach? Some of us would describe this transformative learning-process as »becoming native« or »becoming indigenous«. Indigenous people worldwide usually do not have a concept of land propriety. The land does not belong to them—they belong to the landscape that gives them nourish-

ment and shelter. By living in Klein Jasedow—some of us since 20 years—this understanding of belonging has begun to grow among us, and we start to realise its transformative power. It reconceptualises the notion of »heimat«—it is not about defending one's own possession from strangers, but to radically devote oneself to the living processes all around. It radically reframes the concept of propriety towards custodianship. We are asking ourselves whether such a mode of being in the world can be translated into political concepts. Poets and philosophers such as Gary Snyder or Wendell Berry talk about home-

steading and bioregionalism as an alternative to nationalism as well as the uprootedness of modern society—named humankind's most severe illness by French philosopher Simone Weil as early as the 1930s. Can we develop a political understanding of Europe as a wonderfully diverse, nourishing landscape as a home for all beings—human and otherwise—, instead of a bunch of conflicting nations? We have no answers to these questions, but they are an integral part of all the agricultural and creative learning processes in Klein Jasedow. **KJ**

To be native, in the case of Sluňákov, means to be natural, aware of human's dependency on nature and its wealth. Being aware of what connects man to nature, as well as what is man unique at. Delib-

eration about nature not standing opposite to culture, but evolving in mutual relations, where nature is the base, because it is self-sufficient, but not the other way round. **SL**



2.5 EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

2.5.1
SHARING EXAMPLES AND PRINCIPLES OF
TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

The children's fire is at the heart of Embercombe, influencing all our work. It's a concept of governance that holds children at the centre of all our actions in our decisionmaking process. Nothing we do at Embercombe should harm the children for seven generations hence. This attitude of consideration and reverence for the rights of our children is part of our education offerings across the full range of our programmes. Our home education groups honour all children's right to learn and grow in a way that best supports their development.

»Our mission is to inspire a new generation of

changemakers to take courageous action for a just, peaceful and sustainable world.«

We believe that humanity is deeply affected by disconnection from nature, self and community. We seek to inspire action in many different ways. At the heart of our work is the knowledge that when people feel connected with who they are and what they love, with nature and community, amazing things can happen. This sense of connection protects the well-being of future generations of all life forms.

The core questions Mac brings to all his speaking events and programmes are:

»What is it that you most deeply and profoundly love? And go deeper than the obvious, our partner, family ...

What are my deepest and profoundest gifts?—not our qualifications, not the obvious either, it needs some enquiry, maybe they are not even known to us, or appear scary, but when we find these gifts and connect to the implications of these gifts, develop these and bring them into the world generously, this is transformational ...

What are my deepest and most profound responsibilities?—not only to what is close to us, but

further away and that again, needs exploration ...« (https://wn.com/3_questions_mac_macartney)

Another main principle of transformative learning is teaching sustainability leadership through lessons from indigenous traditions, which Mac has learnt over 20 years being trained by them. Mac shares endless examples and stories in his speaking events, in our courses and events offered at Embercombe.

Through this, we believe to develop a powerful sense of connection and ownership in each person. We invite people to follow the »twin trail« of

inner healing and spiritual deepening and of outer action to change the world. We believe that everyone can make a difference in the world, whether in their family, in their home, in their community, in their workplace, in their business or in their society. That we all have something which we can bring in to create a more beautiful world. Because of this, we welcome and work with people from all walks of life. **EMB**

If we talk about the development paradigm we have to recognize that we are facing—maybe for the first time in human history—a time where the future might look in many aspects like the past, in the sense that the postmodern era in many aspects will look different from the modern era and may have similarities with the pre-modern era, concerning food production and community life. From this perspective we indeed need a paradigm shift. We need a new paradigm concerning the development of the rural space. This new paradigm has to reorient all development theories and practices from the forms we have learned a few years ago. The development paradigm which was based on economic growth, the urbanisation of the rural space and the

industrial agriculture which uses a lot of chemicals is going to change and to destroy the ecological systems, the ecosystem services and the local communities. Our main problem to explain the paradigm shift is that when we are talking about development, most of the people from the rural areas in Romania are thinking about the industrial era as a target, probably because our region is behind the Western European countries in this respect, and our big challenge would be to skip the end of the industrial era and go directly to the postmodern society. We are living in an area where the still existing agricultural production methods and community life patterns can be transformed easily to a postmodern lifestyle suitable to the existing landscape structure.

The traditional educational methods which are based on knowledge transfer are failing to convey this new paradigm, for this we need an experience based learning methodology. But so far we don't know exactly how the new paradigm looks like. We have to experience it together, we need to experience transformative learning practices in which the learning process and the experiment are going together.

We tried by our personal examples and by other ways to promote the paradigm shift, mainly with the goal to avoid the mistakes made by the Western European countries—but probably the mistakes done by other modern societies will be repeated by our society too. How can the negative effects of

the actual actions be reduced? We see the chance to avoid some mistakes by creating »model« islands which can expand as an ink blot, and maybe these islands will once form a continent—in a long term perspective.

But right now all our transformative learning practices go together with our practical activity. We experiment our ideas in practice concerning different domains—water management, agriculture, landscape preservation—together with our community members, but also together with interested people from all over the world, and we document our experiences. One method was the realisation of a movie with five protagonists who had decided to change their life and to be happy in a different way

as the mainstream people. Their life experience is a documentation about the sustainability of the new rural paradigm. We don't have to search for the past in the rural space, but we rather have to reconsider the meanings of the rural space and look for the future of this space. The movie was a basis for discussions in small groups about the future of the rural space. For the implementation of the paradigm shift we need motivated and informed people, and right now we try to find these people and learn and practise together the future of rural life. **FEC**

2.5.1 SHARING EXAMPLES AND PRINCIPLES OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

In the GdG transformative learning is at the core of all processes of the project development. A main learning experience is to reflect on participatory decisionmaking in the sociocratic circles. In mainstream society we are used to hierarchical structures: the management or the politicians decide and the employees or the citizens have to follow or to revolt. To come to decisions in a consensual process where every voice is equally important challenges conventional mental infrastructures—this is not about a minority fighting a majority but about an appreciation of every thought and objection and the emergence of collective intelligence. In the process of the last year we had a number of aha-experiences

when we felt that together we came to a solution which none of the single persons involved could have created.

Transformative learning means for the GdG to trust in the ability of every human being to follow her or his path of individual evolution—this applies to people of all ages. If you are allowed to follow your inner path of development you will be doing well and contribute to the wellbeing of others. »Someone who is well off behaves well«, said the eminent pedagogue Rebeca Wild.

Markus Distelberger describes his approach as follows: »I don't like to talk about ›learners‹ because this expression tempts me to see myself in a supe-

rior position towards someone who does not know, whom I have to teach something. My short-term description of the ›Lernwerkstatt‹, the alternative school I initiated 30 years ago, is the following: The children are teaching themselves what is important for them and are learning by doing, the school itself doesn't teach anything. This spirit of trust in the intrinsic motivation of every individual is what I can see at the core of learning processes also in the GdG. I ask myself: What keeps people from learning? What disturbs a learning process of a human being? Our 30 year experience with the Lernwerkstatt shows that learning happens by itself, you can't stop it. It is a natural process because every organism is con-

stantly trying to orient itself and to unfold its potentials. Living is learning. «

The main obstacles of learning are stress, fear of failure and fear in general. All this keeps people of all ages from being in a good relationship to themselves, and prevents learning. Mainstream concepts of learning still claim that something has to be achieved and examined. Additionally the concept of comparing, abstract assessments and competition generate fear.

Therefore it is important for us to realise a »culture of errors« that encourages everyone to take chances. It is okay to make mistakes and see them as a feedback in an ongoing learning process, not

as a failure. Many mistakes have been made by amateurs for example during the building of the first community straw-bale house, therefore we now work with an architect and other experts in the field of construction. To introduce tools for community building like the women's- and men's-circles and the sociocratic system are results of a long learning process with many mistakes we have allowed us to make. **GdG**

For a long time learning and teaching followed top-down principles—and in many cases still do: The teacher is the one who knows, the disciple is the one to follow, and the latter often suffers from violations due to this situation of inequality. Often they happen in a subtle and unconscious manner, rarely reflected by modern society. In Klein Jasedow we share the experience that by breaking up this top-down principle at its very core and coming to an understanding that learning takes place in an interplay between equally valued partners a tremendous healing potential is disclosed.

This is the »strange attractor« in all learning processes in Klein Jasedow, be it in the training of exter-

nal students or within the processes of the community itself.

In the case of studying a craft or art it certainly is most valuable to follow a master's advice, but this does not necessarily need to take place in a classical hierarchical relationship between the two of them. The master is nothing if he doesn't have a masterly apprentice willing to carry on his tradition, and the tradition will die out if it does not encompass an evolutionary and innovative quality spanning together one generation and the next. This by itself establishes an eye-level relationship between the different ages and experiences.

Of course one great field of learning in Klein Jase-

dow is the intentional community of—at the time of writing—27 members of four generations. Our ambition is to walk our talk and develop together as a constantly learning organism. Can we learn from each other and value all our experiences, those from the longterm community members—and the five founding members share their community since more than 40 years now—as well as those who have joined only in recent years?

One thing we constantly try to cultivate is the art of commoning: together co-creating the structures, objects, projects and guiding ideas of our way of living as commoners.

We try to cherish the rich diversity of all of our

personalities, our different ways of being, feeling and doing things, and never understand this as a threat but as a nourishing abundance of qualities. Some of us are made for teamwork, others need to follow their own rhythms, some are made for creative chaos, others for structured planning, and it is an everyday challenge not to fall into the trap of judging which way of life is better than the other. Learning to accept and appreciate the others in their own personal nature and not merely tolerate them, and to relate to them in a co-creative way is a vast field of constant research. Equally important is the task of developing a feeling for the »whole« of us as a group of humans within the more-than-human world.

The whole of the community is more than the sum of its parts—it has its own intelligence and rhythm, it evolves in a continuously emerging process guided by everyone. For us, to be an actively contributing part of this co-creative process of emergence is a core-principle of transformative learning. It forms not only the heart of our community process but also determines and shapes our work with students in the Klanghaus, our work with volunteers at the building site or the creation of our gardens and our farming project. **KJ**

2.5.1 SHARING EXAMPLES AND PRINCIPLES OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

Nature and landscape are Sluňákov's communication tools. Interpretation of landscape is a real art of the interpreter or translator to deftly explain its characteristic features, revealing its deeper meanings. Visitors enter the unknown landscape the same way as readers enter the story of a book.

Our House of Nature offers a simple story about a person's encounter with a unique landscape through a narrative; enriched by complex questioning, constant diversions to the places hidden away. One always finds something new on each visit. Repeated visits are welcome and one possibly develops ever-new bonds with nature.

Michal compares to J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy *Lord of the Rings*, which invites to repeated reading: »Initially, a fairly simple and clear story, around which there are many other adventures, and which then combine the intricate, mysterious, entrenched and

ever-appealing world of Middle-earth. Each reader can find something else, something that is their own, and finds similarities with their personal experience, with the stories they are discovering.«

The way one experiences their first encounter with the unknown landscape is somehow influenced by their previous experience, a sort of »pre-understanding«. Knowledge and experience are somehow already set by previous life experiences, staying in other places, other countries, reading and debating.

When watching visitors of modern technical and solution-based environmental education centres, we had decided to prefer free physical movement through landscapes by walking or making a pilgrimage. Technology is progressing faster than ever and modern technology-based expositions get old quickly. We wanted to create environs that en-

able attentive and playful contact with nature, enhance sensitivity to the environment while involving all our senses. What is important in modern society is knowledge and its effective absorption, adoption and practical application as quickly as possible. Sluňákov's conception of environmental education is, therefore, more focused on offering original experience leading to enhance the conscious and responsible relationship with people to nature and to themselves. A merely intellectual reinforcement of the connection to nature does not seem enough to us. Equally important is the care of development and cultivation of our feelings, experiences. We believe this is not offered enough to learners within the contemporary school system and the society in general.

We decided that rather than offering our learners a more effective way of sharing information

and knowledge, we offer them instead experiences based on disconnection from virtually created worlds, with the intention of supporting physical—direct and immediate—contact with the real world and its natural and constantly changing manifestations. Our learners get time: to understand, to solve tasks by their own efforts and mistakes, to cultivate their emotional world and the art of talking about the feelings. Our visitors may not become specialists but get the opportunity to look into the secrets, beauty and power of nature. The exhibition of the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature does not invite visitors to grasp nature according to a one and only interpretation. The programmes are diverse, including research, experiential, artistic, physical and many others. Still, we put more emphasis on being in the wild and changing landscape, where after every bend of the road further questions keep aris-

ing, where we have doubts and sometimes get lost. All this is in comparison to pedagogy with precisely defined formulas, patterns, numbers and rules.

The interpretation of the nature of Litovelské Pomoraví through the House of Nature is based on the opening questions rather than on text instructions or on a coherent, simply memorable interpretation of »translator«. Using art is an original interpretation allowing to perceive the sounds and language of nature, to experience different ways of how nature speaks to us. **sl**

2.5.2 APPROACHES OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Embercombe offers a combination of formal—planned and intentional—learning and informal—unplanned and spontaneous—learning.

We see Embercombe as a place that grows people, and we are offering programmes where the land is the teacher. All our programmes are built on nature-based and indigenous wisdom. The idea behind is to create a model of learning and growing which is replicable, a way of being in the world.

Volunteers e.g., who have come here during the last four years, have taken a conscious decision to leave the known environment and look for a new challenge, feeling Embercombe provides this in a

safe and managed environment. Skills and knowledge learnt include wildlife identification, bio-dynamic land cultivation and permaculture, sustainable woodland management, foraging, coppicing, green wood working, blacksmithing, contemporary and traditional carpentry and joinery skills and a wide range of practical skills applicable are part of any course and friends weekends. Additional skills being learnt are how to harvest, cook, bake and ferment organically grown food and cater for vegan and vegetarian groups.

A huge part of this learning is by the existence of our community, staff and volunteers, a merg-

ing of young coming here who want to learn what a community feels like and making connection to the land. The land is part of the community and we learn how to integrate our lives into a full relationship with the natural garden environment

We don't create programmes full of content. We build in a lot of reflection time on experiences they had. We build in time alone, an hour out there alone in the woods. Maybe for most people that is the most challenging thing they have done in the days being at Embercombe and to bring these reflections openly.

We are teaching the young of »The Being« by

sleeping out, e.g. get the boys to lay their heads around the fire. That is inner work. Not naming it, just allowing that space. Creating space for dream walking, or just watching sheep—just watching them for ten minutes, or staring into a well or river or laying on a field feeling the rain.

They are going slowly into a dream state. Then we sit down around the fire, each of them make up their own fairy tale story. We help them to use their imagination, allowing them to discover their own dream state, to allow their mind being outside the box of content: »What must I bring?« We help them to get in touch with their own wonder and creativ-

ity and allow the children to discover themselves. As long as we create the culture of being—which is sufficient spaciousness—there is the opportunity for the inner work to take place.

Indigenous people don't create these polarities of giving and taking, doing and being, work and play. The twin trail is a »weaved in path« of being in the right action.

In order to bring this into the world, we have created an outreach programme, going into schools, universities and organisations, but we would love to have a much stronger influence on this world. **EMB**

Approaches of Formal Learning

Even if the Romanian education system is centralised one and is based too much on theory and less on practice, we can have an involvement in the formal learning by our excellent relations with the local schools. We elaborated several teaching materials, in cooperation with partners from other EU countries which makes the students familiar with circular economy and green entrepreneurship. We don't give only sectorial information like the classical materials do—biology, physics, etc. The analytical approach which is reflected in the formal educational materials are changed to a synthetic approach which considers nature as system. In the last years several teachers included our material elaborated by us in the framework of an EU project called »Lessons from Nature« into their curriculum.

For education of adults we are cooperating with the Corvinus University which has a branch in Miercurea Nirajului, the central locality of the Niraj valley. Here students interested in agriculture and gardening follow a formal training for three years, including courses on weekends. They become professionals in gardening and the cultivation of fruits and vegetables. Beside these courses we are offering for adults regularly trainings concerning different subjects in the fields of sustainable development, socio-economic questions, water management and many others. We specially try to focus on the questions which are of interest for the members of the local community. For people who are moving from the town to the countryside we offer educational support to help their integration in the local rural community.

Approaches of Informal Learning

Our informal learning approach is based on the practical experiences at our centre in Adrianu Mic. There we offer experiences through nature based activities, including work in agriculture. Over the years we organised several summer camps for students to practise wetland restoration, to maintain orchards or to get information and practice concerning sustainable energy use. Firstly we started with the environmental education programmes, in which our goal was to get the students familiar with nature, to make them know the flora and fauna from the area in which they are living. In this case we followed the general trend in Europe which is based on the principle: »If the children will know the environment better they will respect it more.« We continued with programmes concerning educa-

tion for sustainability. In this framework we were teaching the students about sustainable agricultural practices, how to recycle and reuse different things, we made a solar fruit dryer from beer cans.

Our intention is in the future to have programmes concerning the philosophy of development, to teach the students how to integrate the small practical achievements to a holistic vision. Rural life needs special knowledge concerning the daily practices and the cooperation with the natural systems. We intend to transfer these knowledge to the interested people—students and adults—to enable them with knowledge and experiences if they want to be integrated in any rural development project in the future.

Our international informal learning programmes for adults have a large audience. French

students come yearly to learn about traditional rural life. They spend three weeks at families in the villages where they participate in daily activities. Another programme targets young adults from the German transition town movement who come in autumn to learn how to preserve food for the winter. The group learns how to collect vegetables and prepare traditional Zacusca, or how collect fruits and prepare vine and palinka (a local schnapps). They also learn how to bake homemade bread and cook jams or how to pick mushrooms. It is not just a training but a complex life experience which is very appreciated and strongly influences the participants. To create storage from homegrown products in large style has died out in most areas of Europe. To experience this as a lively tradition deeply inspires the young people. **FEC**

2.5.2 APPROACHES OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Approaches of Formal Learning

In the current state of the project the Garden of Generations members themselves are the main learners, there is not a programme yet for regular trainings offered to the public although occasionally workshops have taken place on the site. In the future there will be a seminar programme and guestrooms for students. The content of teaching will include many aspects of eco-social approaches like permaculture, alternative models of financing, so-

cial entrepreneurship or alternative pedagogy and parenting.

To contribute to the further education of members we cooperate with the »Institute for Alternative Pedagogy« (Institut für Alternative Pädagogik) connected to the »Lernwerkstatt« in Pottenbrunn. This institute offers a multiple-part course on pedagogical basics, and this course should regularly be held for new members of the GdG to enrich their understanding of the learning processes of children.

Approaches of Informal Learning

Learning is constantly happening—in daily life as well as in societal processes. All relationships, all interactions between humans and between humans and nature are fields of learning.

The GdG adopted a few pedagogical principles from the »Lernwerkstatt« as a basis of its concept of informal, lifelong learning, for example »respectful learning«—to show respect for every individual's learning journey following the inner voice in

the course of growing up and growing older. Another important principle is non-directivity: Instead of trying to teach a given content in a given time a so called prepared environment is created where inspiring material is available and the learner is invited and challenged to get involved with it by her or his intrinsic motivation. Supporters are present and ready to help when they are asked. It will be a challenge to adapt these principles from a Montessori school into a setting where all generations learn

together in daily life, including small children and elderly people. The »prepared environment« will be nothing but the reality of the GdG community and all the activities in the gardens, workshops and offices. How can people be supportive to each other in learning processes in daily life? This will be an important field of research in the GdG. **GdG**

Approaches of Formal Learning

Formal learning takes place in Klein Jasedow within trainings and workshops in the Klanghaus. We offer two types of trainings: One addresses professional and semi-professional musicians who would like to widen their repertoire and ways of expression. Students choose their personal educational objective, and according to these personal goals the curriculum of the group is made up from the real needs of the participants. The range of learning-subjects therefore can be wide, from classical chamber music to experimental improvisation, from connecting music with breathing and bodywork to learning basso continuo on the harpsichord or deepen one's mastership. This approach creates a strong commitment of everyone involved.

The other training is called »facilitation through music«. It addresses students who would like to integrate musical approaches in various fields like preventative health care, social work, mediation,

moderation, conflict management or support the integration process of migrants.

The curriculum of this 30-months study course is a matrix of nine fields covering the areas of personal support, community building as well as sociopolitical work—for all nine fields musical, artistic, theoretical as well as social approaches of facilitating positive human interaction are explored, and this is mirrored in reflections about one's personal attitude and the development of our globalised society.

The key competence we want to convey is the ability to facilitate a creative process—which is demanding, as each process is new. You can teach methods, but they are of little help if you are not able to grasp the essence of a situation and intuitively make the right decision. Studying the very process of the students itself is an effective way of learning in a life situation—the observer is the observed. The students have to switch between the different roles: one being the learning subject, the other being the

professional coach supporting the learner, the third being the »second grade observer« who impartially notes down what is happening, and the fourth being the student reflecting on the universal aspects of his or her holistic learning experience.

We came to this kind of fully participatory learning practice after some years of training classical music therapists. In our effort to lead support them leading a self-responsible life, we realised that we no longer wanted to support the repair-mechanisms of an otherwise pathogenic society. Although we had a perfect cooperation with the excellent University of Music and Theater Hamburg and thus were highly regarded in the scene the career aspirations of our students more and more contradicted our deep conviction that our work is—and ought to be solely—all about salutogenesis. It seemed vital to us to find innovative ways of supporting people to live a healthy life and thus in the long run to act as change agents able to add a curative momentum to the evolution

of society as a whole.

Approaches of Informal Learning

Informal learning in Klein Jasedow happens in daily life among everyone who is present at the place, may it be a longtime member of the community or a visitor. Everyone has her or his own field of learning. This may be a very personal inner subject, where somebody goes her or his very own way or seeks support among other community members, or it may be a very practical subject like to learn the craft of forging or spinning, to learn how to build an ideal compost toilet or a solar dryer for fruit and nuts. It may be a challenging organisational or financial subject like learning to write an application for support, to organise the bookkeeping for a new project or to cope with an unpleasant political decision on the local level.

We regularly host university students or young people on their self-organised learning journey

who pass internships at Klein Jasedow. Their focus often is the magazine Oya where they learn basics of journalistic work in a practical way, but they also help in the house and the garden and care for the children. Others come with a focus on the practical work. They become part of the community for a few months or half a year, and this is for most of them a formative experience for their future life.

Since 2015 we organise workcamps at our building site of the »Lehmhaus« (house of clay). Hosting a kitchen, a small workshop room, showers and compost toilets, it will be the centrepiece of our campground where we host summercamps for children and youth as well as small festivals and project-meetings. Small groups of about a dozen people of all ages come every month during the summer season to work on the site for board and lodge. They are eager to learn traditional techniques of mud-brick building, using mainly clay, straw, wood, sand and stone as local materials. This is a wonderful ▶▶

2.5.2 APPROACHES OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

learning experience in the spirit of a gift economy: Everything is done by free choice, the helpers don't consider what they do as a »job«, but rather as something they enjoy. They are dedicated to contribute to a wonderful experiment. They learn to organise themselves as a group as they cook for themselves in the summerkitchen, and they love to get familiar with the natural material. One evening we invite them for dinner to our main diningroom where a

lot of interesting exchange between them and the whole community takes place. The end of the week is always celebrated with a small presentation of what has been done, and if there are music students in the Klanghaus at the same time they would contribute a song or a musical happening to honour the great work and the wonderful house. Often they in turn invite the members of the Klein Jasedow community and the helpers from the building site to an

informal concert or dance-evening with live music in the Klanghaus. These are examples of our attempts to connect the areas of learning—the practical and the artistic ones—in a playful way.

Another area of informal learning are our different workshops—there is always something to be made from wood or steel, or do some repair work on the fences etc. On the professional level a lot of informal learning takes place too. For example, in

the gong workshop there is an ongoing quest for increasing the vertical range of our manufacture. Our external co-workers have grasped that in order to establish a subsistence-oriented way of earning their money we all have to think about improving our procedures to make them as resource-conserving as possible. This learning usually takes place during the opulent breakfasts after the first three morninghours of work ...

What people learn in Klein Jasedow »between the lines« is a feeling of being accepted the way you are and to be challenged at the same time to contribute to a larger whole. Therefore there must be a rich environment of people, opportunities and infrastructure—and not least quiet spaces in nature where one can sit and digest the multitude of impressions one takes in here day by day. ■

Sluňákov perceives environmental education as a way of cultivating the relation of a human being and nature, as an attempt to understand one's existence between heaven and earth—as an evolution of human being in nature. There are many other explanations and definitions on how to relate to education—ours is one of them.

Involvement in environmental education and pedagogy means to us: awareness, understanding, resp. realisation that

- ▶ we enjoy learning to understand all the changeable shapes of all that is alive—the world of life, we are all part of and which exists on its own and has not been created by a man. We may become translators in the uncertain space between nature and man-made culture.
- ▶ people and teachers often view nature materialistically, in simplified definitions. But she is more than a sum of constructs. She is being created and woven. She cannot be built according to our plans, repaired and then treated the same way—

mechanically—over and over again. It is impossible to describe her by a single figure, model or description. Nature is being created thanks to mistakes, coincidences and may be chaos from time to time. She is not nice and romantic as we often imagine. She is different and beautiful as she is in everything that we know. We want to allow our pedagogical efforts to experience mistakes, the consciousness of coincidence, let's welcome spontaneity so the educational process becomes richer.

- ▶ the most important application, meaning and purpose of natural events might be the continuity of life—just simply as it is. Life also takes on the fact that everything that is born will die. Nature protection is not only protection of life, but also a protection of death. With humility and respect, we seek together the complex art of explaining the value of this »just being«.
- ▶ while seeking a common understanding of how nature is transforming over time, the generally

accepted and shared understanding of these transformations changes as well. Even science and understanding of the world have their own evolution. Environmental education is a search for situations where we can realise and appreciate that this home becomes our own when we specify ways in which it is possible to live in it—together with all living creatures.

- ▶ we only teach about parts of the whole—space and time go far beyond our wildest imagination. Our interpretation of any part or expression of nature is only one of the possible ways how to approach it.
- ▶ when teaching about nature, together with the learners we look for more and more »buts«. We keep questioning ourselves about all the absolute truths we unknowingly present. And so we encourage our learners. Why?—In order to preserve the diversity of the world and its secrets.
- ▶ we draw attention to the fact that nature would do just fine without mankind, but it is not the

same vice versa. We are parts of nature, together with all living creatures. We are not masters, not even custodians or administrators of this living entity. (But we have to care for them anyway.)

- ▶ we are trying to find the right time and place to create opportunities for the learners to develop their own rendition of relating to nature.
- ▶ we pay great attention to the physical experience of nature in the open landscape, i.e. to the opportunities of developing an intimate relationship with the living nature. We use teaching methods, media technologies and administration only where it is essential to understand natural processes and changes or to be able to remain the »translator«.
- ▶ we use a wide variety of approaches to nature—facts, scientific findings complemented by the knowledge of humanities, social studies, arts and artistic experience, dramatic education, storytelling, fairy tales, myths, faith and belief, or a simple pilgrimage through the landscape. This

variability is a path leading to a more colourful world, to preserve the rich biodiversity of life's manifestations. Such a variety of teaching can be perceived as a step towards the liberation of nature and the self, in the sense of living in an »ecologically« rich world, full of alternative resources and possibilities for its preservation, its duration.

- ▶ we prefer the understanding of connections and relationships, rather than collecting data and application of knowledge.
- ▶ we prefer the educational content rather than the method.
- ▶ we find important that the learners feel that we are living what we teach.

We follow these principles in our activities: environmental education programmes for schools, Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature programme for public, public campaigns—e.g. waste reduction and recycling—, public lectures, debates, events field trips, exhibitions and competitions, concerts, theatre performances and artistic presentations. ■

2.5.3
HOW DO WE ENABLE LEARNERS TO LEAD
A »GOOD LIFE« IN RURAL EUROPE?

Embercombe aims to inspire people to contribute towards the emergence of a socially just, environmentally sustainable and spiritually fulfilling human presence on earth. We enable this by reconnecting people with nature, community and themselves through transformative experiences.

Besides what is already shared above, we offer learners from Europe to learn and grow by either attending one of Embercombe's programmes such as The Catalyst—18 to 25 years old—and The Journey—18+—, or staying longer as a volunteer—3 months—or apprentice—12 months. All programmes are fully supported by several mentors, coaches and facilitators.

One of the most attractive programmes in Embercombe is the catalyst course for young people

resp. the journey. Catalyst has by its composition and methodology the potential to reach young people at their heart, enlarge their skills to be local leaders for sustainable change and community action and enrich them with a unique experience during their time of orientation. It combines land based education, outdoor activities, leadership training, story telling and working in an intergenerational team in nature.

Within seven days the catalyst programme makes a remarkable contribution to the awakening of the young people and their finding of a responsible role in life. Participants of other countries such as Spain, France, Poland, Germany have participated, and we feel the urge to bring the methodology and course concept to other countries to sup-

port youth leadership, development of a conscious active citizenship; to enable engaged young people who want to keep society together and help to get their communities through hard times.

Europe is in an alarming state: The financial crisis since 2008 has eroded a feeling of European solidarity and for some young people—especially in the countries Spain and Italy—has broken any connection between educational achievements and a later safe economic status as an adult. The young generation for example in Spain is highly skilled—and unemployed. It has reached high turnouts in academic diplomas—and sees no outcome on the labour market in it. As one's position in life is strongly described by the professional position achieved unease and a feeling of a lack of personal coherence can occur

for these young people. It comes in line with lower health statuses, higher probability of depression and in general even a higher mortality as recent numbers in Greece indicate. The catalyst course aims in this context to support young people's resilience and their ability to work as local change makers in support with struggling communities. It's a necessary and wanted connection of a »journey of heart, mind and body«.

Learners walk the twin trail of inner and outer development where everything begins and emerges from our values. This is true whether we are conscious of those values or not. The inner state is reflected outwards in behaviour, attitudes and mindset. It is only when you align the inner with the outer that you can wholeheartedly bring your gifts

forward and have real effect in the world. We believe deeply in the morning check-in around the fire, to really understand »what's going on in me right now?«. Through peer group reviews, group coaching and individual mentor sessions learners have time to reflect on their learning experiences and to become more aware of their own learning process.

In addition to the specific skills that learners acquire here, the main benefit that we believe they gain from their visit to Embercombe is being more self-aware and able to take responsibility for their thoughts, actions and the impact they have on self, others and the world. **EMB**

To our learners we can give two tools: We can make them to understand »Why to do?«, and we have to teach them »How to do«. In our days there are so many informations about climate change, global crisis etc., that most people get confused and understand that anyway something wrong will happen, so they say let's have a good time till then, we are powerless anyway. Those people are completely de-

pendent on the consumer society value system, and they believe that if they would give up this lifestyle they can't be happy. We have to make our learners to understand that the future depends on our actions and if they don't follow the value system of the consumer society but another value system they still can be happy without having to renounce to something. If they see the way they will try to follow.

The second question is the how to do, and this question has the same importance. The people who grew up in urban areas lost the knowledge linked to nature, they have to learn how to grow vegetables etc., and this is not easy if they don't have experience and knowledge. If they try and they are not successful, this can lead to frustrations and they will give up. So we have to transfer the knowledge in a new

way—in the rural societies this transfer of knowledge was made in families—and our learners have to have the determination but also the capacity to contribute to the reconstruction of rural Europe.

In the framework of our project we are open to receive learners for short term activities but as well for long term programmes. The learners have the same responsibilities in the daily work as the local

people. They can stay at families, members of our community, and they are integrated in the families. We believe that in this way, which is called learning by doing, we can achieve the best results. Till now we have more than hundred people who took part in our programmes—long term and short term—and we believe that in this way we have made a small contribution to reinvent the new rural Europe. **FEC**

It is difficult to separate learners from teachers. This distinction is based on a dualistic concept we rather don't support in the GdG.

Markus Distelberger says: »My motivation which

makes me look for something is the essential motor for my learning process. We learn from our relationship to others. If I am fascinated by someone else's abilities I will get in contact to this person, ask ques-

tions and learn from her or him, and this will be an eye-level relationship, not the usual top-down relationship between teachers and students. «

By this the GdG understands itself as an open

place of research about how to lead a good life with a reasonably small ecological footprint in good social relationships. We will not present one-size-fits-all solutions but cultivate an attitude of questioning,

trial and error and sharing of knowledge and experiences.

Markus Distelberger again: »Everyone has her or his own way how to make certain topics, rela- ▶▶

2.5.3
HOW DO WE ENABLE LEARNERS TO LEAD
A »GOOD LIFE« IN RURAL EUROPE?

tions, issues or knowhow available for others. If I want to transfer a specific practical skill or intellectual knowledge, didactic principles of learning mat-

ter for sure, but they can be applied without being directive or patronising towards the person who would like to learn. I can say from my own experi-

ence that inner motivation of a person is always the main guide of a learning process, this should never be underestimated. If someone is really interested

in a specific skill she or he will acquire it in any case, no matter how the so called teachers behave. « **GDG**

Single persons can't lead a »good life« by themselves, it only becomes possible within a large societal transformation. A good life in the meaning of right livelihood would be one that respects the planetary boundaries, that does not exploit but nourishes Earth and at the same times leads to happiness and fulfillment. If you experience empathy and love from the ones who share your life, if you are able to play a part in a meaningful setting and cultivate your own abilities there is no great need for material wealth. Can we find ways to fulfil the basic material needs for a »good life« in rural Europe without relying on all the comfort of the modern industrial society? Is it possible to realise a level of subsistence—not only regarding food but also regarding the tools we use to work in the household,

gardens and on farmland? How can we create the prerequisites for fulfilling conviviality? These are unanswered questions which open up the huge discussion about growth and degrowth and the socio-ecological transformation of society. Klein Jasedow does not teach answers to these questions in a classroom, it is very important for us to make clear, that no one can answer them in a concluding way, that ideologies won't help, but open research in any respect, may it be personal, practical or philosophical will do. We think it is fruitful to constantly keep these questions in mind in daily live and exchange about them with students, visitors and volunteers alike. Some of the young people who stayed as volunteers at Klein Jasedow over a few months were encouraged to found their own community in rural

Europe or to visit many other places that are dedicated to the above questions. For them it was an important learning experience to follow this question so deeply that it became apparent how very different a lifestyle with an agreeable ecological footprint would be compared to the »normal life« everyone leads. We believe that to create a space to radically question the existing ways of life is one of the duties of places like Klein Jasedow. It opens up the mind of young people or even people of all ages to detach from the common goal, that life is about being »successful« and to »function« in the existing society. Nevertheless it is necessary to find a balance between a pragmatic way to make a living in the money-based society, your own interests and desires and the changes you would like to see in the world.

What learners experience in Klein Jasedow for example is, how much dedication, persistence and commitment is needed to build up a place like this. They can pick up something from this energy of commitment and be inspired and empowered to awaken it in themselves.

We see Klein Jasedow on one side as a place to encourage individual people, and on the other side as a place that can draw people together to discuss ways towards right livelihood in rural Europe. Via the Oya magazine we are connected to more than 4000 readers dedicated to all the questions around right livelihood and degrowth. To invite them as well as the audience of our artistic projects to think-tanks and festivals is one way to find a larger forum. Another way of creating a larger forum of learn-

ing are conferences on regional development in the Klanghaus.

A most important part of our vision of a right livelihood is our effort to establish a good functioning subsistence economy. Being able to live from the land is something we try to achieve during the years to come. Not only in the field of gardening and organic agriculture but also in building and in re-inventing methods of non-electrified storage and preservation of food as well as processing fibres for textiles is a vast area of research which we understand is essential for a good life in a world to come, which simply has to respect the planetary boundaries. This will demand us to largely scale down our need of goods from mass production. **KU**

In relation to nature, especially while teaching about its parts, consciousness about the whole is important. This consciousness is our motivation for relating to our own naturalness or relating to the naturalness of our close ones with whom we share life. Every possible interpretation is always some form of reduction of the living world. We believe that it is essential to be constantly aware of this reduction. Specific practice is always different. It's not easy to

fully pass on to life everything that one is aware of.

We have focused on the issue of the possible direction of environmental pedagogical efforts. It is a reflection around its meaning. This attempt is a possible way that does not have a clearly feasible goal, it is just an idea in the dim, indistinct footpath, mysterious and thus rare.

Michal asks himself: »What is this ›being aware of‹ for when it has no practical measurable applica-

tion? I believe that this reflection of the relationship between man and nature is always somehow manifested in what I am saying, what I am doing, how I teach. That's why it can make sense. At the same time the search for forms of environmental education is a footpath dangerous to those who really think radically serious. Thoughtful and understood distance is vital. This effort is never complete. In addition, understanding of nature is woven from the

undermining of confidence in the absolute human power. This will probably always be a »civilisation underground«, a subversion of human dominance over the world. With all the consequences for a personal position and recognition of the ›polis‹.«

Michal reminds us that if the journey appears too long and dangerous, we can always go back to what we know and feel familiar with. It can be very easy to get lost: »Follow specific ideas or methods,

or go your own way—it is all at one's own risk. Still, I highly recommend traversing one's own trails.« He concludes: »I would be pleased if finding a way of environmental education, or even generally looking for a way of life, would people not lead to scepticism, but on the contrary, to joyful delights while experiencing the »nature in thought«. To a complex and never-ending search for an own, personal way.« **SL**



2.6 CONTINUITY AND EVOLUTION

Yes, we are endangered species, if we don't evolve in the right direction. Evolution is adapting to the environment to survive, but if you don't adapt and evolve quickly enough, you won't survive.

Evolution is not always positive.

Our Conclusions and Learnings—what had happened at Embercombe?

1. *Strong Vision of Initiator*

Many of these projects such as Embercombe's are guided by a strong initiator. The fragility lies in how to pass the vision on and create a team-driven structure. Initiators tend to be in fear of losing the original version or spirit of the project when others come in or take over and it is their role to care for the spirit—the idea of founding is very different to running it.

Embercombe is still a male dominated organisation and there have been strong male power struggles going on. It has not allowed the necessary change.

Even though Mac stepped back from the core team in 2013, the culture of decisionmaking disguised the real power lines that existed underneath. The process was not clear. Too many got their way into decisionmaking without being held responsible or accountable for it.

2. *Relaying on a Sponsor -*

There is a danger if a community is depending on a sponsor, and it is not coming to terms with economics.

We always have been struggling with becoming economically sustainable. We just relied on him. When he announced to withdraw his money, Embercombe went into panic.

In August 2015, I interviewed the chair of the trustees, who shortly died after my interview. He expressed his worries:

»This is a major issue for us. It has caught up in the struggle we have to make decisions and follow them through. I think a lot of time gets wasted because people do not feel confident and enabled enough to pick things up and run with them. Work on the theory of change is an example, and getting this articulated would help in some ways to spread the job of carrying the mission.«

Relying on a sponsor, we had a tendency to undersell our programmes on one side, we cultivated a non-abundance-thinking on the other, and we overspent. Overspending was mainly because of a) attracting more international volunteers than needed, all of them drawn to this particular experience of community and who wanted to develop it and grow it, which cost Embercombe more money than budgeted, and b) decisions and expenditures were often taken by individuals without being held to accountability (see also section 2.7.3). Unfortunately, this model did not support the financial viability and sustainability of the business, and over time even started to be detrimental to Embercombe.

At current date, March 2017, Embercombe is facing a major financial crisis, and Glyn, the current MD, is trying hard to »create magic«.

3. *Lack of Expertise—and Rejection of it*

»If you start off as a family unit and learn over time and then become experts in it, great, but just playing around will kill it. Someone has to know how things work. Either develop or buy someone in. And then if someone has been brought in and offers new solutions and ways to work, the reply ›you can't tell us what to do‹ is pure arrogance. Sitting on a branch ›We are new paradigm!‹ does not work.« (Quote based on reflections from the past two and the current manager.)

In its early years we simply involved a small number of dedicated individuals who worked together to form Embercombe into something that would serve the world. As this developed and the social enterprise was born, there was an increasing need for some degree of management, including the formation of board of trustees. For several years the day-to-day management was provided by the early team members, who had formed a core team and had responsibility for different aspects of the operation, of which Mac, the founder, was a member. Theoretically our core team then operated as a flat structure with everyone having a say in decisions ranging from day to day operations to strategy, with decisions theoretically being based on consensus. While a desirable approach in theory, the practice became increasingly difficult. Dominant voices would push decisions in certain directions, or issues were discussed repeatedly and at length without a clear decision, or no clarity on who would implement the decision. Our core team also lacked many of the core

skills required to run and develop the business. This worsened during 2014 by a growing divide in opinion of Embercombe as a community or a business, with many people involved not being comfortable with the business aspect, which included more business and less educational programmes, hiring Embercombe as a venue and leaving the community only as a support for programmes.

Of course the reflection arises, did the instability come from a capitalistic reality when Embercombe in the beginning was a gift, which marked the place? Many times voices tried to introduce the female principle, for example allowing other ways of governance and ideas, but these were not heard. A classical business structure has nothing to do with gifting but with achievements and profits, a male competitive model, still very valued in our economy.

It's obvious that our core team developed the organisation, the place, themselves in ways that interested them, but lacked the necessary skills and understanding of the different forms of governance and which one to choose. In addition, Embercombe lacked a wise and widely experienced trustee board to be guided in these decisions.

4. *Misalignment of Community Versus Business Purpose*

To be a functioning community, it would need to sustain itself for all basic needs, e.g. money, food, housing etc., as well as a diverse range of community members. In addition, it needs the nourishment of the local community of neighbours, local villages,

town council etc. It includes the network of local, national and even international organisations with which it can collaborate and form partnerships.

What makes a community is how the community interacts, the care it takes of its members, and the positive impact it has on its environment.

Confusion crept in over time regarding what is meant by »our community«.

It became less and less clear that there was really a common purpose for people working in Embercombe at different levels—living on the land or not.

Tension was evidenced by decisions that were made, the look and feel of the space, the increasing homogeneity of community members, the amount of time given to discussing internal community matters, the tense nature of those discussions at times and the lack of feasible sustainable solutions.

Increasingly people came to Embercombe to experiment with living in community, and there was growing resentment of what the business asked of them. As the founder, Mac Macartney, put it in 2016: »Embercombe was founded as social enterprise with a community element. It has become too much of a community with a social enterprise element.«

The main divide may have come exactly from this idea: Embercombe was founded as social enterprise with a community element. However over time, community became a vital learning aspect at Embercombe, to which many volunteers were drawn. The need for the inner growth or the inner path of the twin trail became more dominant, forgetting the outer part—daily work activities—in

2.6.1 FRAGILITY: WHY ARE LCRE ENDANGERED SPECIES?

the eyes of management. Being focused on solving inner issues created a seemingly more and more »closed« community, causing a sense of exclusivity to external people, even those who had been involved in the past.

There was also a growing sense of the community influencing business decisions away from engaging with people or organisations, which, in their view, were not aligned with Embercombe. There was also very limited interaction with the local community or engagement with the outside world, which emphasized this false sense of the community on site being the true purpose of Embercombe. The lack of engagement with the outside world and different perspectives also led to internal issues becoming disproportionately sensitive and difficult to manage as people's whole world became limited to one small place.

In the eyes of the new management, arriving in May 2016, it looked that the organisation was being pulled in at least two different directions, that the emphasis on community over business had led the organisation down a perilous path, that the time and energy dedicated to community matters distracted hugely from the necessities of running the business, and that the widening difference in belief about the organisation's purpose was slowly strangling the organisation. The management perspective here is that economic subjects »shouldn't been discussed« with a moving and often not skilled community—volunteers live at Embercombe between three and 12 months.

The divide in community alignment with business or business with community has caused an abyss at Embercombe and has definitively endangered the project.

5. *Decisionmaking Process, Governance and Communication*

»We made the mistake in avoiding difficult conversations«, says Mac Macartney. »We made mistakes adopting the old paradigm systems which are not applicable for an organisation which tries to do things different«, says Jo C., interviewed in October 2015, »and we had too many power struggles and conflicts. We did not have systems in place to deal with struggles and conflicts, such as

- ▶ a willingness to deal with difficulties;
- ▶ courage and
- ▶ ability to let go of our individual agendas;
- ▶ agreement of all to allow to differ;
- ▶ understanding that the needs of the organisation is paramount, more than the individual Ego«

During the months January and February 2015, the pain of women who have felt »driven« out of

Embercombe became more dominant, and a group of women tried to propose ways forward in the sign of »feminine—a multiple energy« vs. »masculine energy—singular«.

Curious enough, the indigenous people set a stone in Embercombe, dedicated to Mary Wollstonecraft for all her work and as a sign to rebalance the feminine and the masculine in this valley—this was 2001 or 2002. (Mary 1759–1797 was an English writer who advocated for women's equality. Her book »A Vindication of the Rights of Woman« pressed for educational reforms.)

I wonder, if there was never a real trust in the feminine at Embercombe and that the real change of leadership has to and can only come from Mac himself, allowing the feminine principle in.

As a reflection: would it have been healthier to develop a gifting economy model here at Ember-

combe, based on the feminine principles? Nothing ever can survive looking into the past. The experiences may be useful but you need to be looking forward, transform them to evolve.

Nature just takes its course. Everything dies at one point. Every project will die eventually. It's the ego based which tries to keep something alive which is meant to die. If you try to keep it alive in one form, you strangle it, you don't allow it to transform. You can't tell a caterpillar to stay a caterpillar. **EMB**

Our project is going against the mainstream development ideas. The paradox in our situation is that the rural people still have determination and capacity to live a sustainable life but in their mind this lifestyle is not trendy, so they think that they have to forget all this knowledge. In their vision our project is about the past and they hardly can believe that is about the future. There are two major factors which are getting in the way of our project. One is the short term vision—we can say lack of vision—of the majority of the politicians, including local politicians. The development policies are considering small

scale agriculture as outdated and the so called subsistence agriculture as something which belongs to the past and has no future. This message is demoralising the people who are still living in the rural area while the money invested in the region by different programmes is sustaining urbanisation and industrial agriculture. The other problem is that there is no coherent development policy from official side which could be debated or questioned from our side. For example in the Niraj microregion the construction of a highway is planned, with the promise that the highway will bring jobs to the area. At the same

time there is a project which in theory supports the protection of nature protection and sustainable tourism. Officially this project will be not disturbed by the highway because the protected species like brown bear or a rare eagle species—according to the leaders of that project won't be affected. Now, how can our project with its holistic and long term vision be implemented between these contradictory and incoherent development projects, which moreover promise to bring a lot of money to the region? This is a great challenge for us.

What we are doing is a pioneer work, and od

course all these kinds of initiatives are risky, but sometime they can show the right way. We believe that in the case of our project we are on the right way and even if we don't succeed with implementing our vision in the larger territory, the small scale projects will remain as good examples for the future. It is somehow a rule that the pioneers, the visionary people are appreciated only later, and we hope that the trend will be favourable to our projects before it may be too late, i.e. that the general direction of the societal evolution will turn around again before the valuable landscape and ecosys-

tems in the Niraj valley will be definitely destroyed. All projects of our kind have enemies and supporters, and in our case we are an »endangered species« because most of the people want to be trendy, want to be in the mainstream line and they are afraid of supporting such pioneer ideas. Even the local politicians assume a risk by supporting our project because the long term goals in many cases can be in contradiction with their short term goals. These short term goals are represented by the industrial agriculture and by the urbanisation of the rural area. In the last year we got a lot of enemies because ▶▶

2.6.1
FRAGILITY: WHY ARE LCRE ENDANGERED
SPECIES?

we were against a water regulation work which was supported by several local politicians, and even the administration of the nature conservation area approved that harmful project. In long term we are

sure that we are right because by the regularization works the quantity of water is reduced in the whole area, the water retention capacity is reduced as well, and the water scarcity will be visi-

ble in short time. By the way in the area was no significant flooding for the past 30 years but the effect of the water scarcity makes the local people suffer each year. Of course the people who are addressing

only one problem—here flooding in the minds of the politicians—or to a specific fish species—in the minds of the nature conservation administration—don't have in mind the whole picture. In conclusion,

as in the case of all pioneer projects, it is difficult to survive between small numbers of supporters and large number of enemies. **FEC**

We don't live in isolation but in systems. In current times a project like GdG and many others based on a larger community is a pioneering work. History shows that each time something new is emerging it won't be accepted overnight. Processes that change society substantially are natural and develop organically. Certainly there can be sudden changes. But also cultural, political, economic or technical revo-

lutions didn't happen out of the blue, they all had roots. Forces gathered in a slow process, and in a certain situation something radically changed. Today's society in Europe still seems to be rather stable, but we never know about the next financial crisis, and we can't estimate the effects of climate change in the next years, so nothing is safe, human culture as a whole is endangered by the constant worldwide

overuse of natural resources and growing social imbalances. What will change in the next years radically and what will happen after such changes? We don't know, we can only plant our apple trees in spite of all gloomy future prospects and be ready to create something new in a different situation.

Ecological projects usually are endangered because of a lack of money. The GdG tries to overcome

this problem by collecting a budget for the building work in its wealth pool where people can deposit excess money over a chosen period of time and get it back again from the liquidity reserve of the pool. So there is a constant process of acquiring money for the wealth pool going on, but there are no negotiations with a credit institute necessary, and there never is a danger that credit expenses can't be

paid. All economic activities on the site will be carried out at the own risk of the individuals who start the business, therefore there is no risk for the project to go bankrupt. **GdG**

Ecosocial projects in the countryside that are based on their own economy are always very fragile beings. What they do usually is economically not very successful in the conventional sense of economy, because their aim is not profitmaking, but creating meaningful processes, relationships and sustaining or to building up infrastructure. As Klein Jasedow and the other examples in this handbook show, they have a transdisciplinary approach: nature and agriculture, human relationships, arts, regional development and international networking all matter at the same time, and it is impossible to concentrate only on one field, because they are all interconnected in the organism of the project. This opposes the main principle of success in a capitalist

economy: become specialised, focus on your unique selling point. And it opposes the structure of official funding of NGOs, because programmes for support also ask for a clear focus like nature conservancy, youth programmes etc., but if an infrastructure or educational programme serves many fields of activity at the same time there is the danger of falling through all. We all have experienced this at many occasions.

Although the founders of our community have accumulated more than 40 years of experience and have realised many very successful projects, after 20 years of experimenting with different models of financial sustainability Klein Jasedow still is a fragile organism in respect of economics. We have learned

to accept that we never will be able to cover all the costs through self-generated commercial income and that there is nothing bad about asking for regular support from our friends and networks—for example to sustain the infrastructure of the Klanghaus or to finance members of the editorial board of the cultural creative magazine Oya. Both projects are meant as gifts to a meaningful development of a village and a larger field of communication, and if we do our best according to this meaning they simply cannot become »successful« in a conventional sense because the construction of our society doesn't pay a lot for these gifts. So we experiment with models of gifting economy and ask for support with a greater self esteem: There is nothing

bad about being not profitable moneywise, but is it important to communicate your needs to your audience and everyone who wants to ensure that you can continue your good work. That we have a large network of friends and supporters helps us to leave the state of fragility in slow and small steps.

Another aspect that leads to fragility is the specialised and at the same time comprehensive know-how in their fields of activity some of the longterm members have acquired through their rich biographies. If some of us suddenly would be a victim of a lethal car crash the existence of some of the Klein Jasedow projects would be in fact endangered. Therefore we constantly work on trading down knowledge from the older members of the com-

munity and establish new fields of safeguarding the livelihood of the younger generations. But in fact, the different projects are not the core of Klein Jasedow. Businesses as well as non-profit projects all have their lifetime and they may die if circumstances change. What we hope to sustain instead is Klein Jasedow as a place that is devoted to the well-being of the world in any respect. That everyone at the place shares this wish and sees this transpersonal aspect beyond the striving for individual happiness as part of every kind of work gives us a feeling of stability in spite of all difficulties we face day to day. **KJ**

2.6.1
FRAGILITY: WHY ARE LCRE ENDANGERED
SPECIES?

Being an endangered species means being likely to become extinct. Factors influencing our fragility are

- ▶ a huge amount of work being done by a few people;
- ▶ need to diversify the income.

The challenges we are currently facing include:

- ▶ the transition from visions and development to sustaining the vast array of activities we offer, and maintenance of facilities—the low energy building and large adjacent site;
- ▶ complement a complicated transition from a department of the local municipality office to an NGO, with a transition of an NGO to an educational institution;
- ▶ secure sustainable funding for our activities, especially wages for approximately 20 employees.

Our approach is very unique—it's impossible to »put us into boxes«. Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature visitor's centre is different from other houses of nature. It is not a passive house built using the latest information technologies. It is an outdoor exposition using arts. It is a walking trail through the nature of floodplain forests, with viewing points, ponds, bridges and places of rest.

Our approach to environmental education is also different from the current general trend in environmental education in the Czech Republic. We don't monitor and measure the impact of our programmes' »outcomes«. Rather than on effectiveness, we put emphasis on influence through emotions. The support on a government level is, however, based on analyses and data evaluation. **SL**



Baking oven in the Niraj valley.

2.6.2
HOW CAN THE SPIRIT OF A PROJECT EVOLVE
AND STAY CONNECTED TO THE INITIAL VISION?

I remember what drew me to Embercombe was its vision: Embercombe, a place where we can grow people and where we can create the world of our longing, a social enterprise that seeks »to inspire committed action for a truly sustainable world«. The unofficial phrase following the vision was equally powerful to me: »We hope that in 100 years, Embercombe does not exist anymore, because we all live like this.«

In my early times at Embercombe as a volunteer, especially in the first half of 2013, I noticed how people—volunteers and helpers—were drawn to Embercombe because of its vision, but then often felt jealous or unsatisfied of not »receiving« what programme participants did. The »energy« of the paying participants finding their quest for meaning and purpose, re-connection to Earth and a future honouring the seven generations to come, caused curiosity and jealousy in the volunteers, who were seekers but standing on the sidelines.

On one of these mornings around the fire, I asked Mac, how we could bring his teachings to these people too. It was clear that they will be here for several months and they are the best advocates for Embercome, the best role models going back out into the world living what they learnt.

Mac answered: »Just do it.«

The evolution of our project depends on how we can convince the local people that what we are doing it is the right way—and it is about the future. How can

From there we developed the volunteer programme, the twin trail, intertwining the day-to-day work with inner work—coaching, courageous conversations, listening partnerships, meditations, breath work, men and women circle among others—, times for play, music and celebrations, with story telling by Mac and Joey.

First it caused resistance in some of the core team members of allowing some time from the daily activities for the inner work, but soon it manifested to be beneficial, and time was scheduled in for these activities. For me, it was a beautiful time at Embercombe, where you could really feel the fruits of that work.

We also created the ambassador network and established more collaborations, partnerships and international connections.

In the beginning of 2015, things changed. I felt the vision of Embercombe got slowly lost, and everything was just fixed in how to sell more, with huge power struggles in the team and endless meetings which often ended with no decisions or actions.

In my perspective it was due to the new role of the MD, who was not embedded correctly in organisational structure, nor was the governance clear.

»Governance is the key—how Embercombe manages itself and how people work together. That

the local people feel that it is their project as well? We don't have the intention to work on a project for ourselves, we want to have a project which can

is the critical factor for the future of the planet, not only for us. The way we can align people to our vision and pass on leadership even down to the working volunteers is by an open, transparent authentic communication. How is that done? Start well, proper agreement, alignment, but sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. We have not achieved it here yet«, said Mac Macartney.

During these months, a lot of exhaustion and despair was felt at Embercombe due to miscommunication, and mistrust was building. Embercombe was standing for authenticity and integrity; for self-awareness, self-responsibility and self-leadership. Were we »walking our talk«?

In May 2015, I decided to express my perspective in regards to governance to the board of trustees, and I proposed some solutions. I also called on the Hopi message (see further below), taught so often in our leadership programmes.

The effect was that many more people started to express their perspective too, groups formed for offering solutions and ways going forward. After a reflection time, the chair of the trustees called a full day to announce the next steps in Embercombe such as the current MD was stepping down, an interim manager would lead until a new idea of governance would emerge.

serve as a model for the rural area in Transylvania, and why not for other parts of Europe. Our project like any project has an organic development pro-

Meanwhile, in November 2014, Mac had proposed at a council meeting to close the current council down and to create a new one, led by female elders, who knew Embercombe well and they would choose the men they would trust to lead alongside them, like the natives do. It suddenly re-inspired me, since I felt he was coming back to the wisdom and his original influence of the Native Americans.

»Evolving means letting people go, even the ones who have brought so much to the place. Ideally they may see for themselves to move on, or we can engage people in a process of conversation to move on in a conscious compassionate way. It may be more time consuming; involving more people and energy but it is more empowering. It's important for them to understand, that they can be brilliant in another place.«

Almost two years later, in March 2017, I am sitting with Glyn, the current MD, looking at the current situation of Embercombe. He has made clear proposals to the head of land-based learning to move on and to Mac, the founder, to be independently involved at Embercombe.

On my question concerning vision and purpose he states: »I need to find an answer first on the financial situation before we can significantly review vision and purpose. We are in a challenging

process, and this development depends always on the external conditions and on the people involved in the project in certain periods. In the beginning of

financial situation at the moment, so the immediate focus is achieving financial stability from which we can grow. There is a still lot of uncertainty. Nevertheless we have experienced a big shift from last year to now.« By big shift he is meaning letting people go, getting skilled people on board who are taking responsibility and operate in a team, plus getting the community in a certain workflow again.

»We are needing to grow up and mature. The core purpose of leadership has not changed. What we are doing is looking at how we work with that purpose, and getting back to the original purpose. We also need to look at the role of community in supporting the business«, he continues.

And I quote here the Hopi message:

»The time for the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves! Banish the word struggle from your attitude and your vocabulary. All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration. We are the ones we've been waiting for.« **EMB**

the project we were very optimistic about obtaining quick positive developments. In that period in Romania all the partners were open to progressive ►►

2.6.2
HOW CAN THE SPIRIT OF A PROJECT EVOLVE AND
STAY CONNECTED TO THE INITIAL VISION?

ideas, and we as initiators of the project understood the great opportunity to initiate a rural development project. The changes during that time were inevitable, and it was a time for changes anyway. So we hoped that the changes will go in the wanted direction. The original vision wasn't a very complex, elaborated one, we just wanted to establish a community life in a way close to nature, using the traditional rural community life as model. This was looking easy even though we didn't have any property. The partners and the local authorities offered enough space to start the project. In time the con-

ceptions and methods became clearer and more sophisticated. We as initiators of the project got more experience and learned a lot, and we became desperate to see the difference between the development process wanted by us and the other »modern« development concepts. Exchanges of experience with similar initiatives from the country and from abroad back us up in our activities. After the elaboration of a strategic paper, some people doubted whether our proposals would be functional. So we started to implement our theories and achieved a lot of results which demonstrated the solid back-

ground of our project. By the openness of our vision we attracted a lot of supporters and all the people who joined us contributed to the evolution of the project. So out of a simple idea a complex rural development project evolved with a lot of realisations and examples which can be offered for other people who want to initiate similar projects.

Our partners from Western Europe contributed much. Some of these partners came and participated in the learning process and in this way the local people started to understand the value of their own knowledge and their way of living better—this

substantially increased the self-appreciation of the locals. Right now our project has a great potential and can grow—but again there is the danger that it might be absorbed by the general trends and our Environmental Information and Development Center will stay one of the small scale experiments.

While our project unfolded we understood that the most important thing is to convince our partners about the rightness of our goals and our approaches. If they are convinced they will find practical ways to implement the concrete elements of the project. The methods elaborated during this learning pro-

cess were called »Green Agenda«. They focused on setting the green goals—nature friendly agriculture, lifestyle close to nature—for all our partners and give them the freedom to find their own practical ways for implementation. Rural life is so complex and the spirituality is so free that it is very hard to fix standard activities as it is usual in urban projects. So we moved from fixed activities concerning the implementation of good practices to the free implementation of the agreed goals. This on one side is more difficult to be managed but on the other side the whole project can achieve better results. **FEC**

A vision should not be a rigid static image of the future, but it should be clear and focussed not to get lost. Basics of the GdG vision are written down in a booklet which is handed out to all new members, and the most important aspect of the trial time of prospective members is to become acquainted with the basic values and aims of this vision.

The realisation of a vision is always an organic process created by people from one moment to the next. There will always be a movement, a flow. Visions must be challenged by reality to evolve and to stay alive.

On the other hand a pioneering vision can be regarded as a young plant that easily can be torn out

of the earth if it is not kept well. It is important that the plant is not disturbed too often in order to grow strong. Dealing with the vision of a project means to hold a balance between evolution and protection.

Markus Distelberger as a founder of the project acts as a keeper of the spirit, supported by Ronald Wytek who joined the project in 2013. Ronald

took initiative to create the vision-handbook after he had experienced a number of misunderstandings between Markus and former members. Today much attention is given to explore the vision and discuss its implementation. For Markus alternative economy is very important. To base a project not on individual ownership but on a public fund like

the wealth pool is one of the essential GdG basics which should not be changed. But in the way different models of social businesses and areas of gifting economy and commoning will develop in the GdG a wide range of different approaches will be welcome. **GdG**

The vision of the community of Klein Jasedow has never been written down—and this may be one of the reasons why we still exist and all of the founding members still share the same degree of affection to each other like in the first days more than 40 years ago. When the four young musicians in the mid-seventies decided to share their life it was clear to them, that—like in an inspired piece of improvised music—they wanted to stay open for all what

would surprisingly approach them. Once Johannes Heimrath put it simply: »I want to be free to wake up the other day and realise that I was wrong until now. Then I don't want having to change our papers, our name, our mission. I want to withstand the many contradictions of life within this super complex present, and if I'll perceive a hitherto unheard sound I want to be free to react to it adequately without being bound to my past experiences or long

time trained habits—even if it means to lay aside the instrument I was masterly playing up to now.«

The commitment of the four to a common path was the nucleus of all further developments that lead to the today existing community of more than two dozen pronounced individuals. Since the beginnings there is an aphorism ascribed to St. Augustine on the wall of our livingroom, written in French, a tiny sheet in a golden frame: »La mesure

d'aimer, c'est d'aimer sans mesure.« To us, there is not much more to say—all spiritual traditions of the world come to this point in their very essence, and everyone has to decide by her- or himself what this means in regard of our daily decisions, how we relate to each other, to mankind and the more-than-human world, to the seven generations to come.

Ceratinly, over the years something we could call the »spirit« of Klein Jasedow did develop. Each

member of the community would describe it in different words, but we all realise the dynamic of it as it oscillates in long waves like in a long breath, inhaling in phases when there are so many guests and projects and to-dos simultaneously and seemingly no gap to take a rest, exhaling in peaceful moments and phases of convergent activities that nurture us through feeling each other, ourselves, and the place. And in phases when many feel overburdened or dis- ▶▶

2.6.2 HOW CAN THE SPIRIT OF A PROJECT EVOLVE AND STAY CONNECTED TO THE INITIAL VISION?

sociated someone will take the initiative to find a new focus or do something to reconnect to the spirit—which simply can be cooking a good meal.

Certainly, the Klein Jasedow spirit has something to do with the lifelong commitment of its founders to dedicate all their physical, mental, and spiritual energy into the flowering of the place and into a common path of life—on the basis that we totally accept each other's individual freedom, and if someone would discover that she or he has to leave tomorrow to find his or her way somewhere else, this would be unconditionally accepted. This was the case with some younger members during the decades, and some founded their own communities in other places as well.

Members who joined in later of course don't nec-

essarily have this lifelong commitment, but for all of them it is clear that Klein Jasedow is not just a brief, transitional phase in their life but something serious in the long run, an open process of research how to live a »good life« in rural Europe.

When 16 new members of all ages moved in in the course of 2015 it was a great challenge for everyone involved and it still is. To honour and accept what is already there and to welcome new ideas and developments is a big task. The longtime members prepared themselves by imagining they would come to Klein Jasedow equally new in order to not impose their concepts and ways of doing things to the newcomers—to keep to the often cited »beginner's mind«. Nevertheless it happens automatically that longtime members of the community are re-

Throughout the whole Sluňákov's history, university students were enthusiasts and liked the idea of pedagogical work for schools and public, while developing the respectful relationship between man and nature.

The arrival of new people has always been a matter of the heart because we could not offer exceptional financial benefits, and the work is ever time-consuming. Volunteers had become local government employees and later NGO employ-

garded as »authorities« or unconsciously behave as such, and if we realise this we try to reflect the underlying mental mechanisms. The existing projects like the Klanghaus all have their yearlong way of functioning and this can convey the feeling that everything is already set and there is no space for development. A rather trivial example: In 2015, one community member questioned the fact that there were always three study-groups for music and facilitation through music running parallel at most of the weekends during the year. This swallowed up a lot of time in the Klanghaus. From one second to the other it was clear that we need to change this if we want to allow new processes to unfold. Everyone was ready to bear the consequences of scaling down—it did mean a financial loss of course—, and

ees working with schools and the public. The other work positions, such as caretakers and facility staff, accountant and project managers have been hired on recommendation or through careful selection procedures. **sl**

we decided to take on responsibility for this altogether. In the case of the Klanghaus it shows that it needs time to let ideas for new workshop formats or financial models evolve. We feel that it is essential to deeply listen to the rhythms of development, and if a rhythm seems to be slow it is not a good idea to speed it up, otherwise there can't be no true evolution of the spirit and no real co-creation of everyone involved. For example, we all feel that it would be great to connect the fields of learning in Klein Jasedow more intensively: music, nature, traditional crafts, inner growth—but nobody has a clear vision yet about how this could look like and connect to »real life« in Klein Jasedow. We carry this question with us and trust that ideas will evolve together with the Klein Jasedow spirit.

Of course there are also many fast developments. For example, the initiative to set up a free school for children in our former office building clearly had the goal to start in 2017. This brought a lot of dynamics to the place including building work, and at the moment nobody knows how it will affect the spirit of the place when there will be up to 30 schoolchildren in the heart of the village. We believe that everyone will be ready to practise the art of listening to the place as a large organism of people, plants, animals, stones and earth, houses, projects, neighbours, supporters, and yes—adversaries—, and friends. We will practise the art of listening every day again, and eventually feel the spirit of the place anew. **ku**

The children's fire is the heart of Embercombe, brought to Embercombe by Mac McCartney, the founder, from the elders of ancient America and taught by the elders of Embercombe. The children's Fire, as described in section 2.5.1, is part of the earth teachings of the elders of ancient America. Over time the elders came to understand that all human-created institutions needed to reflect the balance and wisdom observed in nature. The children's fire was a reminder of the first promise: no law, no action of any kind, shall be taken that will harm the children seven generations hence. Embercombe aims to inspire people to care for the communities they are part of, local, national and global.

Therefore Embercombe had created a council—originally a council based on the ancient council of law. Our old council were a group of people who stepped forward, seeking to find a way in the changes that are happening within our daily lives,

with the many complex issues surrounding Earth, whilst holding open a gateway to our future generations. The unseen council of the future observing us from beneath the ground is often in our mirroring of a future imagined.

However, in February 2015, the council made a decision on its own behalf influencing itself to transform in order to grow.

Two years later, six chiefs—three women and three men—have formed the new council. It will hold a spiritual alignment and long term view of all aspects of Embercombe. Holding ceremonies, gatekeeper stone circle, people's circle, creation of round-house dwellings, are among some of the representations going forward. This council will be seeking the wilder nature of our existence, within ourselves and in the land. Our challenges at this moment are:

- ▶ Where do our edges lay?
- ▶ What do we mean by wild?

- ▶ What is truly free? What is honestly cultivated in us as we cultivate our gardens and lands, seeking to follow a heartfelt magical life?

Critical Current Reflections we Have at Embercombe (March 2017)

What are we really doing about the children's fire? How many people who have passed through Embercombe can tell a story about making a stand for it? If Embercombe can't see four months into the future, how can this serve the children's fire?

Standing in the middle of the stone circle for three days, by storm, hail and snow—as Joey did—is making attachment to celebration and ritual, it is very noble, and the question arises: What are we actually teaching others to make the children's fire working out in the world. Where is the action? Where is the action to spread it into the world? Where is the action to make Embercombe survive?

What is the role of an elder? Who are they? And where? Our next generation is claiming them!

We need to redefine of what we think are elders. We tend to make it age related when it shouldn't be age related. There is a risk of an older person—elder—to fall into the category of being wise, and all they know is true. Which is not the reality. Often it is a supposed wisdom. Elders often do not act as elders when they do not react to challenge. Eldership is about wisdom, which can come in any form, at any age and with any amount of experience.

The issue of next generation is the succession of leader, of trustees, and facilitators. We would need always to ask ourselves—when someone leaves—, assessing and reviewing of what we really need, and how this can be transformed. Does this place really need to be filled or can we do it differently?

That would link back to the endangered species subject: Risk that all these projects become too much

as a family. Risk because people avoid challenge and difficult conversations, don't want to make difficult decisions and find it difficult to let go of members of the family, which naturally is going to happen.

If there is an attachment of holding on to members, there is no evolution.

If a founder or others who have shaped how the project looks like and then become an important part of it, the rest of the system can get too attached that they have to be there, and that does not allow for a next generation or doing things differently.

Whether it is new trustees, staff, etc., we need constantly developing relationships and inviting people in to this conversation to see what is possible and then allow these people to do their work. If we expect that they fill in the space the other had filled, and they fill it in their own way, then you create something new. If not, it will fail if you expect them to do the same as the other. **EMB**

In traditional rural life all the generations have their own functionality. The elders can do less work but they can have a useful and productive activity till the end of their life. The traditional activities of the elders are linked to the works around the house, to take care of the chicken, keep the fire, etc. and educate the children—they are taking care of the children since the parents are working on the field. The next generation is naturally integrated in the activities, and they get the knowledge by doing things. The three generation family model has been a work-

ing model for centuries, and we believe that it will function in the rural space also in the future.

The structure of the farms is suitable for this kind of social arrangement. The young family is staying in the big house and the old people are staying in their house, for the grandparents exists a smaller house in the courtyard. In this way the different generations have independency and they can have an independent social life, but the family as a whole has a functionality, and all the tasks are fulfilled by the most apt member of the family. The tasks are

not fixed, they have a dynamic development according to the health situation and the ability of the different persons from the family. The most important learning from this model is that all the people have their own functionality and they are useful and helpful for the family. For the older people the most terrible thing is when they feel useless, and this feeling doesn't come up in the rural family model.

Unfortunately, in the rural area the urbanisation process is going on, and this family model is endangered. The elders risk to have the same destiny as the

seniours from the towns—to be useless and powerless, to finish their life alone, and to have the feeling that nobody needs their experiences and knowledge. In the rural family model the experience of the elders are very valuable.

For the next generation according to the general mainstream trends to stay in the rural area is not an option. They want to go to the town and if is possible to abroad. This is in many cases against all logic and rational judgement; it is like an illness, an epidemic, which can't be stopped. Fortunately in the case of

some families, members of our project, the family model of three generations is still working. The best case is the family Szasz, who are combining the agricultural activities with the managing of a small guesthouse and camping, the grandparents have their own role, and the two daughters want to stay at home. From the guesthouse they have enough cash to fulfil their needs and they have a good life in the rural area. The family as a member of the community of our project is a very valuable partner. **FEC**

2.6.3 NEXT GENERATION AND ELDERS

»One of the quotes of Sobonfu Some I like most is, that children and elders are the pillars of society«, says Markus Distelberger. »We have to treat them best and care for them very thoroughly so that they are able to be such pillars. Life is like an arch between, an intermediate state. Children emerge from eternity, and elders return, they are the closest ones to the unknown entirety of existence. «

If we create a society which is aware and fo-

cused on this special position of youth and elders it establishes a spiritual connection throughout the whole social framework, and this is essential for a healthy society. This is why children and elders are so important. Markus is convinced: »The spiritual quality of children gets visible within their undisturbed play. They are very present in their attendance in every single moment, they have a clarity in their whole being, in the way they articulate their

wishes and needs. Grown ups can learn a lot from them.« Decadent experience is the treasure of the elders. They have an amazing overview of complex interrelations and many valuable informations and abilities that tend to get lost if they have no chance to pass them on to a younger generation. This is a treasure for the entire society. Elders who feel that they lead a meaningful, good life are also a source of inspiration to the younger ones so that they learn to

trust in their own course of life. If you interact with an elder who is well grounded and fulfilled, who conveys to you that life is really fantastic, it is easy to develop such a trust in life.

That someone is fulfilled even under physical hardships at an older age demonstrates to young people that there is no need to fear the process of growing old. If people deal with age-related limitations in a positive way, this is a huge treasure.

The Garden of Generations will establish apartments suitable for disabled and elderly people so that they can be cared for on the site ideally until their death. Professional caregivers are members of the project, but it is clear that not only professionals but all people living on the site will interact with and care for the old as well as for the children. **GDG**

At the time of community's settling in Klein Jasedow in 1997 it was a project of three generations: The elders were in their forties and fifties, the young people just turned twenty or were in their mid-twenties. A child was born shortly after we moved in. Soon it became apparent that it needs the energy of all generations to revive the ruined half of the village: The power of the young people to do building work and to start the media-business which— next to the music business with concerts and seminars abroad—formed the financial basis for the start; the power of the older ones to engage in regional pol-

itics, fundraising etc. After a few years we decided to build homes for members of the great-grandparents generation, and only then the village felt »complete«. Klein Jasedow was kind of a nest for quite a few young families who stayed for a few years and later started their own community projects in other villages. Two young families who belonged to those who were part of the community long before the beginnings of Klein Jasedow were uncertain for quite a time whether this was their place to grow old or not. Their final decision to go their own way in Winter 2013/2014 was a turning point for the Klein

Jasedow community: The crew of the elders still was complete, but only two of the younger generation shared their longterm commitment for Klein Jasedow. Those who left expressed that although it never was the intention of the older ones, their vision of Klein Jasedow seemed to be so formative for all developments at the place that they did not see the space to let their own ideas grow. Both sides were touched by noticing this, because our common goal always had been a co-creation of all generations. But it is very difficult to realise whether everyone involved truly feels the inward freedom

and energy for finding out what she or he really, really wants to bring into the world and find ways to embody it in practice. Since then we are very careful regarding this point. Over the year 2014, the remaining crew invited friends to rethink Klein Jasedow as a »place of learning«. The longterm caretakers of the place tried to question everything they had in mind about the future of Klein Jasedow to be able to look at the place in a fresh way and to find a common initial point for a new phase. This led to 16 new members aged from 28 to 59—including five children—to move into the community in 2015. Since then

we altogether are reflecting the role of the elders—and still feel that we are learners in this field: Can we avoid the stressful mechanism of executing authority or regarding someone as an authority who does not want this role to be imposed on her or him? What does everyone need to find her or his power to act self-determined and at the same time sees the needs of a complex community organism? There seems to be no patent remedy but the necessity of great care, reflection and the cultivation of a »beginner's mind«—also among the elders. **KJ**

How about the next generation? Michal sees it this way: »Considering my age I wanted to find a successor. I aimed towards finding someone, who would

follow up on the ideas, what we have achieved. More and more I am convinced I am unable to fulfil it. I am reconciled that if we do not perish because of eco-

nomic reasons, a new person will show up. I hope, that if this person will be able to maintain the plan we have created, the house and the site, the more

she or he will feel able to contribute something new that might change the essence. And I feel it is all-right this way.« **SL**

»Embercombe needs continuity of information, of soul, spirit and leadership, which is brought by new, especially people with fresh ideas«, thus a recommendation made by one of the past managers of Embercombe. Embercombe's purpose is founded on a principle of accountability to the world and future generations, but we are aware, that we did not walk our talk consistently.

Due to the lack in decisionmaking and accountability capacity of the core team, in 2014 our trustees decided to create the position of a managing director to provide direct leadership. Unfortunately, this was not well received by most of our core team nor by the community, as it went against the principles—flat structure and consensus decisionmaking—people believed had worked well, so they challenged the informal power that had taken hold over time.

It was decided that our core team continued to exist with the MD as a member.

1. Change in Organisational Structure, Leadership and Decisionmaking, Bringing Skilled People in

While this change opened the debate about the organisation's structure, leadership and decisionmaking processes, and some change occurred, it was becoming clearer that »our community« was resistant to this change, at hindsight making it very difficult for the MD to act. In addition, our board of trustees at that time were equally unsure of the new model, therefore lacking support towards the MD, resulting in the MD to resign in summer 2015.

By early 2016, Glyn, the current MD arrived—in between, Embercombe was led by an interim MD. Prior to his arrival the board, now including many new members, had agreed to some significant changes in the business model, including the creation of a new management team made up of people who would bring the relevant expertise to develop and grow the business and dissolving the existing core team.

This caused considerable upset over several months as people perceived it as a loss of power and influence—like people use to deal with the natural discomfort of such a major change—, and because there was a widespread categorical opposition to what many perceived as a very conventional hierarchical structure.

Glyn aims now to work towards a more self-managed model with distributed leadership and decisionmaking. Embercombe works on these principles to some extent, but there is not yet a sense clear enough of the individual responsibility required to make this work, and decisions continue to be made without taking into account the whole organisation's needs. It is therefore a work in progress, but the intentions are clear and positive.

The heart in leadership is an important aspect of Embercombe's founding principles and the mission to connect people to their hearts and to each other, and therefore there was considerable emphasis on the heart in decisionmaking.

What needs to be watched out for is that it does not lead to either subjective decision with little evi-

dence to support them, and to decisions, which can be detrimental to the business. The misconception of heart in business often is the right of everyone to express their feelings, without consideration of different perspectives or without care for how that may be received. Another danger is that this can also result in individuals having very emotional reactions to differing opinions, which do not facilitate constructive discussion or enable good decision-making.

»I fully believe in the importance of bringing the heart into decisionmaking, rather than the strong rational head focus which is dominant in the world. And I strongly believe it is not a question of either or, it is a question of balance. I believe that we have three minds at play: head, heart and gut—intuition. We have to give space to each of these and be able to flex between them, putting emphasis in different areas at different times depending on the situation. This is the balance I am working to bring to decisionmaking and leadership at Embercombe«, says Glyn.

2. Community

Over the summer months the intake of volunteers was huge due to many programmes running at the same time and due to the fact that educational programmes with children were massively exhausting and little beneficial in economic terms. However, it did fulfil Embercombe's purpose.

Now Glyn is looking to see at the community in terms of how programmes are designed and how

people contribute to the project. The community element of programmes remains essential to the learning, but is emphasising the need to focus on sustainability first and exploring the possibility of bringing in the community element in different ways.

In terms of sustainability the world is our global community, and Embercombe has to engage with it in all its forms to be effective. Glyn has been focusing since his arrival on the outer world. Now Embercombe has a dedicated paid part-time fundraiser. Glyn also has been making new contacts and inviting old friends back in. He has become involved in local and national networks. And he is developing an outward facing culture, no matter what the individual's role in the organisation or how long they will be involved. His view is that Embercombe exists to serve the world.

3. Economic Stability

»We are in a challenging financial situation at the moment, so the immediate focus is achieving financial stability from which we can grow«, says Glyn.

Did Embercombe ever have a sustainable business model? From my years at Embercombe, I knew the turnover should come in from educational programmes and business programmes in equal terms. The latter was always budgeted in, supposedly bringing high figures, but it never manifested and it was laborious in promoting. The educational programmes with schools grew constantly, however was far too low priced and was also resource intensive in regards of people being involved, food etc.

Where are we at? Since Glyn's arrival

- ▶ we have developed new detailed financial models to support business planning, cash flow forecasting, budgeting, financial reporting and general decision making;
- ▶ we are reviewing expenditure and procurement policy, and have already found significant savings in some areas;
- ▶ we are reviewing all aspects of operations in order to make best use of all resources—e.g. finance, time, space, people etc.; as a result the current team is significantly smaller than last year for the same level of activity;
- ▶ we are reviewing our staffing structure to ensure that salaries are focussed where most needed;
- ▶ we have employed a part time fundraiser for a fixed term to develop and implement a long term funding strategy;
- ▶ we are reviewing all aspects of business delivery to establish sustainability of individual elements, and identify potential new markets and services which make best use of all our assets;
- ▶ we are engaging with a wide audience to establish what they feel Embercombe could support them with;
- ▶ we have reduced the focus on an area of business which was resource intensive to deliver but provided little profit.

»Right now, we need a lot of listening to the world and customer. The ability of sensing and responding. Something, which was not so much done in the past. We need resilience and accountability. ▶▶

2.6.4
APPROACHES TO ACHIEVING ECONOMIC
STABILITY, DEALING WITH GROWTH

Planning takes a flexible framework, path dependence leads to death. Constant adjustment is needed. In some approaches to complexity theory it's re-

ferred to as the point of bifurcation, the critical decision point where you can maintain the status quo and slowly die or radically shift and make space for

new growth. Embercombe is on that point of either surviving and changing, or dying. If you start acting, then some plan will emerge», says Glyn. **EMB**

The economic stability of any structure depends always on the balance between the financial needs and the financial possibilities. The economic stability of the rural areas is damaged in our days by the adaptation of the urban value system. The values and goods of the rural areas which are for free and can't be measured on money are not appreciated, and the less income in cash is compromising the financial stability of the rural structures. The economic stability of the rural structures is depending also on how the rural community can be integrated to the larger systems. In rural economy the goods always are produced for the needs of the community, but usually a surplus is produced which can be

transformed in money. In our working area, traditionally this surplus was sold on the markets in the nearby town—in the case of the Niraj valley in Tg. Mures. Today, the local markets have changed, they are full with products which come from far away and from the industrial agriculture, and they compete with local products in price. So the traditional way of valorisation of rural products can't be suitable for our days. We have to use new methods for valorisation, the direct distribution of the products to people who are living in the town but can understand the importance of sustainability of the rural space. We consider that obviously not everybody will move to the rural area but the rural area as we

wish to see in the future can't be sustained without a large number of supporters from the cities. These people can have a direct contribution by having a benefit from the services offered by the rural communities, which can be goods, but also can be services. The services can be very different—from the weekend rural experience for urban people spending a few days in the local community being integrated in the village life, to trainings for people who want to start a rural community. The economic stability can be achieved exactly due to the diversity of the products and the activities—one of the principles on which nature functions: diversity give strengths. Growth it is regulated also by a principle

on which nature is functioning—grow within the limits—, and is regulated by geographical limits too. The leading principle of rural Europe in the future should be networking between rural cells. Each cell will grow between its geographical, and ecological limits, but the key of success is the growing numbers of cells and the expansion of the network. In the case of our project the income for the activities are from external and internal sources. The external sources are mainly project based, financed by foundations or EU project calls, and these sources are very important for us because they support the activities which ensure the coherence of our project—trainings, seminars, pilot projects, studies, in-

formation materials. The internal sources ensure the background of our project, and they are the economic activities of our project partners. All partners support each other to a certain measure. Although each partner has to sustain himself independently in the economic respect, there is a solidarity between us, and we hope that this financial structure will ensure a economic stability for our project. So far we don't have a common financial background. But even if some partners will have less financial possibilities the flexible financial structure that we have will be a guaranty for the future. **FEC**

An important aspect of the GdG is the »approach of subsistence«. The community is striving to satisfy its needs through local resources and to be productive on site by agriculture and handcraft. Together with the low rent for the appartements this

will contribute to the economic stability of the individuals living in the GdG. To have free time that is not occupied by having to earn money is a prerequisite to carry out subsistence-work. The main economic activity of the association GdG will be to

rent the houses to members of the project group and to fundraise for the wealth pool to finance investments for further infrastructure. This economic activity is generally free of risks. To strive for subsistence need not mean becoming

fully self-sufficient, it means to rely on local resources in a sound network. Markus Distelberger says: »In my view it is nonsense to say: local is good, global is bad. We shouldn't cut ourselves from the possibilities of globalisation. People are now able

to invent good products which can be produced locally all over the world and distribute this information via internet. We have to see society as open. The foundation of securing one's livelihood is community, and this can be a local and a global one. « **GdG**

For many years Klein Jasedow was a most fragile project regarding its financial basis. To be able to buy and renovate the buildings our main company Human Touch GmbH had to take up loans from the

bank and from friends, and from the beginning on we had a hard time to pay them back. One of the eight buildings we now own, an large old barn, created the biggest debt but no income as it was not

possible to raise money for its renovation yet. Nevertheless we saw it as an essential resource for future developments in Klein Jasedow and tried to earn the money through selling the services of our com-

pany in the field of website programming, graphic design, editing and translating texts, consultancy etc. This caused extreme pressure, and in 2014 we had to call our banker and ask him, what would hap-

pen if we were not able to pay one of the loans any longer. All financing of Klein Jasedow has been done through the GLS Gemeinschaftsbank, an eco-ethical bank, its roots lying in the movement for an- ▶▶

2.6.4
APPROACHES TO ACHIEVING ECONOMIC
STABILITY, DEALING WITH GROWTH

throposophy. They have a special fund for projects in danger and sent us two counsellors who should develop a reclamation concept. It happened that during this time one of the members of our community could sell the house of her father in Munich and donated this money to the »Stiftung Zukunftswerk«, a small charity foundation set up by the Klein Jasedow community. This income inspired us to suggest the GLS bank the following plan: The Stiftung Zukunftswerk would buy out all the properties of Klein

Jasedow from our company, and thus the company could pay back half of the loans to the GLS Bank—and the bank would resign from the other half. All community members would on their part resign from their receivables—all had put out money to the Human Touch GmbH in the past to enable the company to cope with difficult situations like the early phase of Klein Jasedow. The miracle happened: The bank agreed upon this suggestion! The banker's argument was, that it would be not useful to have

a bankrupt Klein Jasedow, they would rather like to see us carrying on with the meaningful projects they unwavering had supported through all the years. The Stiftung Zukunftswerk is a charity organisation, administered by our association European Academy of Healing Arts. We still work on making it an independent foundation with its own administration. This would assure that our real estate is no owned by any organisation or person, but is a public good, directly subordinated to the state of Germany,

bound to the statutes of the foundation. This should make it possible that Klein Jasedow serves the goal we always intended for the times after the passing away of the founding generation. Of course the future is uncertain in every aspect, but the step of taking our property—altogether four hectares in the village and ten hectares of farmland—out of a company always in risk of bankruptcy into the Stiftung Zukunftswerk was an important step from a highly fragile state into a increasingly sound structure.

There is still much work to do until the small companies of Klein Jasedow and specially our academy—as educational project running lots of non-profit projects—will have reached financial stability. The academy has its own turnover, but it is not enough to cover all the running costs. We still rely on a great deal of donations from different sources, and from year to year it is uncertain whether we will be able to raise them. We look for a longterm solution to stabilize this situation. **KU**

To achieve economic stability, we currently aim to give more space to fundraising, because in order to be sustainable we need to diversify the incomes. Also, the offer of grants is decreasing and the project administration is often time-consuming.

As explained in section 2.7.3, it is always necessary to consider, whether the activities eco-social enterprise offers are supposed to touch the widest possible target group, or have to generate income in the first place. We are doing our best to walk the

golden mean and seek to find a sustainable way to finance our activities. **SL**

2.6.5
HOW DO WE AVOID BURNOUT AND
SELF-EXPLOITATION?

»This requires a skilful process for guiding them though their time here at Embercombe«, said Steve Onyett in August 2015. If the system is leading you to feel burned out and exploited, change what you are doing. If you believe it's up to management to change what we do, it does not help sitting there complaining all the time—you will keep feeling exploited. Suggest actively what can be changed or be done differently, recognizing it is necessary and possible. If you keep resistant to change, that leads to burnout.

The first step is self-care. And that is one's own responsibility. We talk about the twin trail at Embercombe, the inner and the outer Path.

If you don't feel valued, and you nonstop complain, learn to value yourself.

The ego is a really strong thing needing to appear being busy all the time, making yourself look indis-

pensable. A critical learning is: that is it what fed the core team at Embercombe.

Wanting to be involved in everything is a status, an ego. Attachment to status had its importance in the old concept of work ethic; you are only valuable if you are busy.

The new one is that you are not expecting others to fix your problems or others coming to you to get their's fixed. Asking for help is taking responsibility in the same way as it is how you ask and what you ask for. You need to be really specific.

A fundamental aspect of the leadership journey is identifying when you come up against harm and act on this, ask for help or learn how to set limits.

The second step to avoid burn out is taking care of others, is being responsible to plan and not leaving things for the last minute, because then others need to pick it up.

In the traditional rural areas burnout is unknown because there is a good distribution of the tasks and a link of life to the natural cycles. So burnout as we know it from the urban world it is not a danger for the rural communities and can happen only if we can't follow the natural cycles and the natural way of task distribution. So for our partners who are successfully integrated in their communities we don't

worry for burnout. Maybe self-exploitation can be a danger, which means that some people are working too much.

But in the case of the initiators of the project and in the case of the people who support the project and are not integrated in a rural community—for examples who are writing projects—burnout and self-exploitation is a real danger. In the case of pio-

We hope to learn from our past—our tendency to focus on the negative—and instead learn to focus on the positive parts of our individual and joined journey. We also need a change of our mindset to trusting abundance. There has been a culture of fear at Embercombe for years!

»The gift is to look for what are the positive traits of people I am with and what is my learning here«, shares Glyn.

And a third huge step: a mindset of gratitude and appreciation, ability to sit with discomfort, and to learn with it and from it. Just focusing on these two points: gratitude and appreciation would avoid burnout and self-exploitation.

In my interviews in October 2015, I asked main people at Embercombe: What advice would you give Embercombe now or any other community facing the similar hurdles?

- ▶ Look after your people, first and foremost. In our case the community is transient and provides the huge element of inspiration, which the participants experience and appreciate. And if the community is looked well after, its effect will radiate out. Community members will become ripple effects. Don't follow the corporate model where the client comes first. If you set the community first, the client will benefit.
- ▶ Challenge continuously your own methods and approaches, management structure, land, world affairs. Never become complacent. Never believe you are right and got all the answers!
- ▶ Make sure you know different forms of governance and choose wisely before you start.
- ▶ Have a wise and widely experienced trustee board.
- ▶ Use any form of ways of council, sociocracy, re-

other possibility would be to be integrated in the rural community but in this case they would have to delegate their work to another person. Thus the project couldn't survive in the long term—it wouldn't have a coherence in the social conditions of our days without this kind of work.

It is another—even bigger—danger to feel alone and losing hope because of the enormous difficul-

storative circles, courageous conversation and peer review for all members of the staff.

In March 2017, I asked Glyn, the current MD: How can we at Embercombe allow ourselves to the possibility of doing things differently?

»Someone may choose to have a silent day, but it is about creating space. We should all make time to make space. We make better decisions and we keep energy better. I would really like to create it even for the management team, paid staff. Right now it is still difficult since fighting fires, addressing last minute issues, due to insufficient planning.« **EMB**

ties to go against mainstream. Even if you know that you are on the right way you can have doubts if you feel alone—even as a community—on your way. This can be avoided by intensive networking between the different initiatives. **FEC**

2.6.5 HOW DO WE AVOID BURNOUT AND SELF-EXPLOITATION?

Burnout and self-exploitation can happen in any work-environment. What helps us in the GdG to deal with this phenomenon are the reflections in our men's- and woman's-circles. There we talk freely and authentically about subjects that move us. Very

Self-exploitation is an omnipresent phenomenon amongst alternative projects. How can this be as their aim is to find a way of living that avoids the exploitation of others as well as natural resources? Isn't self-exploitation a terrible contradiction to this goal? In Klein Jasedow the fact that we run several small companies to be economically self-dependent has many positive effects but of course creates a lot of financial and time pressure, for example when there is a deadline for a book or a magazine that must be printed and published at a certain date. Also in the field of non-profit work there are deadlines for applications for support or reports on expenditure of funds. The public relation for our educational offers needs to be done in time, a lot of projects need to be coordinated, this requires meetings of the teams in charge, on top of this the grass needs to be cut and the vegetable garden and the farm animals ask for

often this reflection leads to a heightened awareness for the personal current state of mind—this is a first step to change a stressful setting.

The members of the GdG support each other to find a sound way of being productive. Co-working

care, and the responsible person is out for a conference or lecture—and very quickly the days are full of liabilities and the feeling may arise that life is a rat race—yes, also in Klein Jasedow.

Since many years we have the strong wish to slow down this race, to reduce the number of projects running simultaneously—but that means that we need to reduce our entanglement with the capitalist world with its tight timetables and financial necessities.

Therefore the agricultural project we will start on our ten hectares of own and 15 hectares rented farmland in 2018 will be a non-commercial one. It will be a research-project on regional subsistence and a way of working with the rhythms of nature and with the needs of the land without the pressure of reaching a special goal in a given time. We will try to find a way of cultivating the fields which is close

spaces will support this. To mix practical work in nature and office work is a good way to avoid burnout, and the setting of the GdG will support this. **GdG**

to tradition but including all the innovative knowledge we have accumulated through the practice of our partners—not least our wonderful partners from Transylvania.

We could spend endless time with building projects as there still are two barns and two houses that need to be thoroughly refurbished, but the energy to do the fundraising and the steering of the building site among the members of the community is not always available for all the tasks. So we have learned to agree to a slow rhythm in the transformation of the village. It is another field of research how to reconstruct houses with traditional craft and local material, low budget and without time pressure. A first attempt is the »house of clay« on our campground, but as it is co-funded by state organisations it again needs to be finished at a certain date ...

Practical work with earth, wood, plants, animals,

children or elderly people follows a different drum than the ever accelerating modern world. We feel that there is a strong transformational effect to follow this drum, and some of us have the long-term ambition to organise in a way, that the intellectual work is a matter of wintertime, and during the warm season they can follow the rhythms of nature. This still means that there is a lot of work to do—and there is nothing wrong with that. Burnout comes about if you lose the feeling of self-efficacy, coherence and meaningfulness, not mainly because of much work.

What helps us a lot in times of challenges and time pressure is to feel the connectedness with the place and its people. To cope with such challenges it is essential that we accept each other's individual energy supply—some need more time for recreation than others, some are deadline-surfers, others

well organised. If we would accuse each other of not working enough in this or that field, it would cause so much interrelational stress that the whole organism of Klein Jasedow would breakdown within days. So it is essential to accept individual limits, and if practical constraints exceed these limits it is important to find another solution to organise work.

It is also essential to value artistic and intellectual work the same as work in the field of administration or crafts, politics, and agriculture or care-work for children, for elderly people and for the household. What I do is valued by the other—whatever it is—this is an attitude we try to cultivate in Klein Jasedow, and it helps a lot to get along with stressful situations. **KJ**

See 2.2.7—Coping with stress. **sl**



2.7 STRUCTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

2.7.1
OWNERSHIP, LEGAL STRUCTURE

Embercombe is registered as a charity and a limited company, and operates as a social enterprise. As such it is responsible to the Charities Commission in terms of its charitable activity, and to tax and financial authorities in relation to its business and financial activity. Our organisation is not strictly owned by anyone. Embercombe is governed by a board of trustees, which currently includes the founder. The structure and membership of the board is under re-

view to ensure it meets the developing needs of the organisation.

Embercombe's Structural Elements:

We have hosted long-term volunteers—placements of one month or more—for the last four years and have operated on a volunteer apprentice scheme for the last six years. The management of volunteers is the task of the volunteer co-ordinator, cov-

ering recruitment, induction, support throughout the placement, co-ordination of work programmes with other departments, performance review, programme design and evaluation. In 2013, we introduced also the role of the volunteer project manager to support the internal work of the volunteers supported by a team of mentors.

The overall organisation of our organisation is overseen by the managing director, supported by

the senior management team which includes the volunteer co-ordinator as well as the lead staff in marketing, finance and administration, site management and programme delivery.

Since 2016 the following structural changes have taken place:

- ▶ Volunteers: 9 to 15 depending season.
- ▶ Assistants: 7 to 8.
- ▶ Paid staff: 6 in management, another 4 paid staff.

- ▶ Trustees: 3 plus chair and associate.
- ▶ Associates, outside facilitators: 10.
- ▶ Kitchen facilitators for programmes: 3.
- ▶ Support network (coaches, helpers): 4. **EMB**

The project initiator was the association Focus Eco Center, a regional environmental organisation with headquarter in Tg. Mures and with background in the Niraj valley.

The local partners from the Niraj valley are independent entities; together they are forming a network, a community with the goal to implement sustainable development projects in the Niraj valley in

order to offer a model for rural development. So far there are more participants; the responsibilities in the partnership are shared. The association which has initiated the project doesn't own any material

goods—land, buildings, animals—, all the material goods are owned by the partners.

The Focus Eco Center is initiating most of the pilot projects with the goal of creating examples of

best practice, and ensures the communication between the partners. **FEC**

The GdG is organised as an association which owns the property and will build the houses. The board of the association is liable for all activities. Part of the association is the wealth pool used for investments

in infrastructure. It is administered by a fiduciary. The members of this pool—all people who deposit money there—have the right to recall their contributions so that they can still access their assets.

This contrasts to other approaches in the intentional community scene. Usually money for buying a property or for building is raised by the community members—sometimes with the involvement

of a bank or donations. As for the GdG the community and the wealth pool are two different circles; the members of the pool still have their deposits at their disposal after a period of notice.

If there is a huge surplus within the association or within the wealth pool, other projects will be supported. **GdG**

The owner of most of the premises of the learning place Klein Jasedow is the charity foundation »Stiftung Zukunftswerk«. This organisation rents the two main residential houses to the members of the community and donates all of its surplus to the nonprofit association European Academy of Healing Arts. The latter is a charity association and responsible for the educational work carried out in

the Klanghaus and on the campground. It therefore owns these two sites as well as the multigenerational house that we built before the »Stiftung Zukunftswerk« was established. The members of the association are part of the community to keep the organisation small and easy to handle.

We have already transferred most of our real estate to the foundation and will do so with the rest,

so that neither private persons nor an organisation governed by democratic decisionmaking is owner, but an independent trust that is bound to its statutes, also regarding coming generations.

All economic activities of Klein Jasedow have their own independent structures. There are several small companies located in Klein Jasedow. The bimonthly magazine Oya is organised as a coopera-

tive owned by about 500 readers, but the other companies are private limited companies owned by the people who are responsible for the particular project—these are the book publishing house »Drachen Verlag«, the organisation for trainings in the field of arts »Klang & Körper«, a registered organic farm, and »Sona Sounds«, a manufacture producing gongs as musical instruments and therapeutic tools. All of-

icial owners of our companies act als placeholders for the whole community.

We hold shares in the cooperative »Kräutergarten Pommerland«, a manufacture of organically grown herbal tea which we founded and made stand-alone, and in a co-housing cooperative in the vicinity. **KJ**

2.7.1 OWNERSHIP, LEGAL STRUCTURE

Sluňákov—the Olomouc Centre for Ecological Activities was founded and has developed thanks to support from the City of Olomouc dating back to 1992. First as a part of the Environmental Department of the Olomouc Municipality; since 2007, we have moved to the low-energy building and the educational bio-centre in Horka nad Moravou, and we have been operating as an NGO. The City of Olomouc is the owner of the low-energy building and the educational bio-centre, where we are based since 2007.

The Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature has been opened to the public in 2014. The site itself is owned by the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic. The low-energy building has become a part of the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature complex. We rent the low energy facility from the City of Olomouc for a symbolic price and we are partners of the Nature Conservation Agency to run and operate the House of Nature Litovelské Pomoraví visitor centre.

In legal terms, Sluňákov is a public benefit society, which is a form of an NGO. We are independent from the authorities in our activities and their con-

tent; however, all our activities need to be connected to the following types of publicly beneficial services we have been set up to offer:

- ▶ educational activities with an environmental focus;
- ▶ educational programmes for schools, students, teachers and the general public, including the provision of catering and accommodation services;
- ▶ organisation of leisure time activities for the public;
- ▶ providing consultancy services to the public;
- ▶ the operation of a tourist information centre.

We are a non-profit organisation and we are founded by the City of Olomouc. To manage the organisation transparently, we run an organisation accounts audit every year by an independent certified auditor. There are two controlling bodies the organisation comes under the Administrative Board, which approves all the activities including their finance, and the Supervisory Board, which controls the use of the finances. The statutory representative is our director, Michal Bartoš. **sl**



Klein Jasedow: Summer kitchen at the camp ground.

Historically fundraising has not been part of anyone's job and did not have any focus, mainly to »poverty thinking«—»we can't afford anyone to do this«—which I experienced at Embercombe. Fundraising was sporadic and low level. There were small donations from visitors and supporters, some support for bursary places on programmes, and occasional small funding for specific programmes.

Due to a strong donor right from the very beginning, we were relaying on him like children on their father. He however, was waiting for us to grow up and become financially sustainable, and in the end, he announced to withdraw his support in 2015 and it stopped in April 2017. The one major piece of funding came in the form of the new training centre built in recent years. Glyn, the current MD, sourced

his own salary provided through external funding. As of August 2016 we have a member of the management team with considerable experience and expertise in fundraising, and the board has also agreed to fund a 12 month part time position to focus specifically on bid writing and developing the fundraising strategy. This will include a focus on trust fundraising, individual giving, crowd funding,

major donors, legacy fundraising and community fundraising. Some of this will support the ongoing development of the organisation, some will support specific projects, e.g. facilities development, or programmes with partners who work with groups of disadvantaged people. Thanks to that effort, we have just won funding for a paid internship to develop a specific part of the business.

Ultimately Embercombe aims to become a self-sustaining business as the model we want to present to the world, but that will take time. For now we need external funding support to develop the business and to reach that point. Ongoing funding will help ongoing development and enable us to provide services to people with limited resources. **EMB**

Our fundraising approach is based on the implementation of our strategy. We have the pilot project ideas and we try to get funds for the realisation of different pilot projects. We are mainly focusing to

EU project calls, but we also try to get funds from local sources, from people and companies who support our project. We definitely want to do our work without external funds, but of course the external

funds are very welcome and helps a lot in realising our activities. **FEC**

With the wealth pool—invented by the initiator Markus Distelberger—the Garden of Generations follows a very special fundraising approach. In the last years the project collected about 1 million Euro, mainly for buying the property, but there was no campaign for raising the money. The need for money was simply communicated in Markus' email newsletter to his network »7 generations« and to some private contacts. People were not asked for do-

nations but were invited to deposit money into the pool with the option to get it back after a notice period. It was communicated that the money will only be spent for investments into property, so there is a real value created. In a worst case szenario, if all people who deposited money would recall it at the same time, it would be possible to sell the property. But usually deposits are recalled time after time and can be paid back by a liquidity reserve of 10 percent

of the entire value of the wealthpool. Markus' publicity and trustworthiness helped convince people to join this innovative model of financing that works without any loans from banks. This model is accepted officially by the Austrian banking supervision authorities. The GdG is ready to help transferring it also to other European countries.

In the near future the new members of the project will deposit their own savings into the wealth

pool to collect money for building the infrastructure. They will also spread the word in their circles that there is a possibility to deposit money which is currently not needed in an ecological fund. This is an attractive offer— quite different from asking someone for a loan or a donation.

- ▶ The money in the wealth pool serves the regional welfare;
- ▶ is transparently invested with a countervalue;

- ▶ supports important innovations;
- ▶ is secured by a trustee and the land register;
- ▶ is liquid with the 10 percent liquidity-reserve of the total wealth pool amount;
- ▶ »grows« according to the consumer price index, which is more than saving books can offer. **GdG**

The most important fundraising approach for the educational projects in Klein Jasedow is the so called »Leih- und Schenkgemeinschaft« (community for lending and gifting), a financing tool offered by the German GLS Bank. The bank gives out a loan which

is payed back by small monthly donations of a large group of supporters—the gifting community. To set up such a community a fundraiser has to ask many friends of the project if they would be ready to pay a monthly sum in between 15 and 50 Euros for a pe-

riod of three to five years. If enough people are ready to do so, a large sum, for example €100,000 can be payed back within five years. The gifters all sign a contract with the GLS bank which in turn gives out the loan in total to the non-profit organisation.

Large parts of the Klanghaus, infrastructure on the campground and the new primary school built in Klein Jasedow have been co-financed in such a way.

Next to this approach we apply to all kinds of foundations that support ecological and social pro-

jects. What we don't do is applying for money from the state—the relation between administration and amount is simply too bad.

Of course we use income of our companies extensively to cross-finance our non-profit projects. **KJ**

2.7.2 FUNDRAISING APPROACHES

Sluňákov income consists of

- ▶ earned income—fees charged for services we offer and revenue from goods we sell;
- ▶ project and grant fundraising—Sluňákov, in general, raises funds through competing with other NGOs for grant funding; these are offered by governmental units, charitable trusts, embassies etc.;
- ▶ individual fundraising by attracting individual support and donations;
- ▶ corporate fundraising—we are seeking corporate partners, usually for specific events;
- ▶ special fundraising events, auctions, concerts.

Project and grant fundraising rules are specified in contracts with donors. Sluňákov is very successful in this fundraising field. On the other hand, the individual and corporate fundraising is more an ongoing intention of our organisation. At present, it does not represent a significant portion of the organisation's income. This kind of income includes financial support, material support and support in form of services. Generally, we encourage people to come and experience to build a relationship and come up how we can mutually enrich each other.

Fundraising tools

- ▶ Online tools connecting donors and organisations, e.g. an application called GIVT, which con-

nects e-shops and organisations—a given percentage of the value of the purchased is sent to support a picked organisation.

- ▶ Donor programmes, e.g. Techsoup—products and services from IT companies.
- ▶ Non-anonymous online fundraising, e.g. Darujme.cz with a fundraising application that connects a user directly to a pay gate.
- ▶ Corporate volunteering in form of CSR, directly contacting organisations to volunteer for specific events or in specific fields, e.g. grass cutting.
- ▶ Auctions.
- ▶ Personal letters.
- ▶ Personal meetings.

Fundraising Rules

- ▶ The donor and Sluňákov are in equal position.
- ▶ The support is spent according to the mission of the organisation and the will of the donor, formulated orally or in writing.
- ▶ The received support is not tied to a service performed by the donor or persons given by the donor.
- ▶ We inform about the received support openly, truthfully and completely.
- ▶ The support is used transparently and economically. **SL**



»Klanghaus« green in Klein Jasedow.

2.7.3
ECONOMIC SOURCES (COMPANIES,
FUNDRAISING, SUBSISTENCE)

So far, the majority of revenue has come through the delivery of our programmes. However, these have been consistently undervalued and undersold over the years, which I believe again was out of fear, not to be too »expensive«. This of course has limited the revenue coming in and set an expectation of cost,

which limits future revenue. Glyn noticed immediately that there has also been an increasingly narrow and homogenous client base, which has limited opportunities for increasing revenue and diversifying services.

Therefore he decided—together with the new

management team—to look into expanding the diversity of services on offer, in terms of the nature of the programmes and where and how those services are delivered, and expand the range of people we work with. This includes possible online services, off-site programme delivery, venue hire—e.g.

conferences or weddings—, partnerships, speaking at events, short courses and distance learning, and small events, e.g. talks, film screenings, music events etc. The idea is to make full use of all of Embercombe's assets, i.e. place, people, knowledge, without exhausting those resources.

In addition, we need to develop our fundraising capacity. **EMB**

The economic sources for our daily activities are raised by the partners through economic activity, e.g. agriculture or tourism. We have also some consultancy activities, we are organising trainings and

seminars for interested people. We don't have any core funding from companies or from institutions. All our financial resources are coming from the economic activities or from projects. **FEC**

So far there are no companies in the GdG established yet. **GdG**

As Klein Jasedow is a multilayered project there are many economic sources for different purposes. The most complex economical organism is the European Academy of Healing Arts, set up as a non-profit association. It has its own commercial activities like renting the Klanghaus out for workshops and trainings. Next to this it carries out fully funded youth projects like music and dance workshops or circus-camps for children, the money is supplied by public organisations. To sustain the administration and the development of the infrastructure of the academy—the campground and the Klanghaus as a concert hall and workshop-space—fundraising among private supporters and foundations is necessary. All

members of the community share the responsibility to acquire the yearly needed budget.

The multigenerational house needs to refinance loans taken up for its erection and is not yet able to contribute to the finances of the academy.

There are four small companies based in the community of Klein Jasedow—Drachen Verlag (book publishing), Oya (magazine publishing), Klang & Körper (teaching music, movement and other arts) and Sona Sounds (gong manufacture). Only the latter is able to generate profit. This is partly donated to the academy and partly invested in useful infrastructure for the place that could not be afforded otherwise like agricultural machinery or tools.

The companies are the economic basis for the income of most of the members of the community. Others work for the European Academy of Healing arts in the field of accounting and building-work, and a few have external jobs or receive a pension. All members of the community pay an amount of around 250 Euro monthly for the common economy of the household—food and products of daily use as well as energy, water and ancillary costs of the residential houses. The founding members still have a common economy, the others share their income in a cooperative way and will enter the common economy in due course.

The vegetable garden, our chicken, geese and

sheep are a contribution to subsistence, but still a lot of food has to be bought from organic wholesalers.

A nascent agricultural project is the »Allmendhof Klein Jasedow« (commons-farm Klein Jasedow). We plan to grow more and more food, also grain and oilseed within the next years to raise our level of subsistence and lower the amount of money needed. The Allmendhof—besides being a research project—is not meant to become a profitable farm but to lower the dependence on products from abroad.

The rent the community members pay to the Stiftung Zukunftswerk, the foundation owning the residential homes, helps to maintain the buildings, and a small part is also donated to the European

Academy of Healing Arts. That means that some of the money earned in Klein Jasedow flows in a circle: First it is generated in one of the companies, then it is paid to a member of the community, this person pays the Stiftung Zukunftswerk which then donates the money to the Academy which in turn pays the salary of some of the community-members ...

So although there are many corporations it is in fact one organism. If one part is in trouble it affects all the others, so there is a common responsibility to care for all the economic sources.

Any building work needs to be paid by donations fundraised either by the foundation or the academy. **KJ**

2.7.3 ECONOMIC SOURCES (COMPANIES, FUNDRAISING, SUBSISTENCE)

The main activity of Sluňákov is organising educational courses for schools of all kinds. We offer week-long courses with accommodation, daylong educational programmes, single-day field trips, seminars for teachers, extracurricular classes for children and summer camps. One source of income is the fee the attendants pay. However, to have these services available, they are subsidised by state and regional sources. We have a regular grant from the local municipality, the City of Olomouc, which we receive on a yearly basis, and we also receive support from the Olomouc region. Also, we supplement these with state and other funds, if possible. State funds usually redistribute EU funds within the state budget and are targeted to specific fields and topics. This support is not an automatism, we need to fall into the areas covered and apply for them. Also, to receive these funds, extending the already wide field of our activities is usually necessary, e.g. create a new educational programme, organise a new course to train teachers or write a new methodical book. The funds we supplement the public grants with are not sustainable; they boost growth and don't support the already existing activities.

Under the framework of the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature, we receive a regular support from the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic. It partially covers the operation of the site.

We organise events for families and the general public as well. These are mostly enabled by grants, funds and corporate fundraising. Most of the events are free of charge, or there is a symbolic entrance fee. Regular contribution to the Olomouc Ecology Days festival and for running the tourist information spot is the Olomouc region grant we receive on a yearly basis. Other donors include the Ministry of Environment, State environmental fund of the Czech Republic, or individual donors.

The competition for the sources is fierce, so we do our best to diversify our incomes. What is more, the public funding support is usually managed according to strict rules, which is good to ensure there is control over how funds are used and that the money is spent transparently. However, this also means heavy administration. To be more independent, we offer commercial products and rent our facilities out. This includes accommodation, facility rentals for hosting company tourism events, seminars, courses, and additional special activities for the public, such as weddings, or even meditations in the House of Nature objects. We run a retail shop which is a tourist information spot and offers environmental information, also sells books, souvenirs, local products, organic and fair trade food, and light refreshments. **sl**



Barbecue in the Niraj valley.

When Glyn arrived at Embercombe—after having three different managing directors within a time of 11 months—the question of internal accountability, which has always been in the community discussion, was brought up on the table, to finally name the elephant in the room, particularly with respect to the accountability of the board and the management team to the rest of the organisation. For years,

the question regarding individual accountability towards the organisation or each other has caused conflicts within the organisation resp. community.

Embercombe's purpose is founded on a principle of accountability to the world and future generations, but we were aware, that we did not walk our talk consistently. Having a strong sense to care for our customers, a desire to ensure they had a good

experience, but we applied in a rather ad hoc way. Our attitude to complaints has often been dismissive, suggesting a lack of accountability. Similarly there has been a lack of accountability to potential future customers. We have heard feedback, that people had experienced a feeling of having to do things the Embercombe way or not at all, rather than Embercombe asking how it can serve its customers.

Trustees and management are very aware of accountability to relevant authorities such as the Charities Commission, Companies House, the tax office, local authorities etc. This accountability is met through regular statutory reporting, governance and reporting through the board, and meeting standards on health and safety, hygiene, fire safety, child safety, etc.

Glyn is keen to address all of these subjects and to foster an awareness of external accountability as a priority in all members of the team. **EMB**

Our external accountability is ensured differently in different cases. In the case of economic activities we rely on the existing laws which are governing that specific activity. In the case of the projects we

always have to relay to the project rules and on the project contract. **FEC**

As an association the board is accountable at actual fault. **GDC**

At first place the members of the community of Klein Jasedow are accountable to the many private supporters of the project who trust in the good intentions of everyone involved—not to act selfish

but to invest in the common good, to realise a transformative kind of work and to make the results accessible in public events and publications.

Foundations that give donations for certain pro-

jects want to see that their money is used in the way described in the application.

Regarding the multigenerational house Klein Jasedow is accountable to the GLS Bank to pay back

the loan taken up for the building. Apart from this the community of Klein Jasedow is free to make their own decisions, it does not depend on any further external force. **KJ**

There are two possible categorizations of external accountability of Sluňákov and both overlap; those are accountability based on geographical influence and accountability based on subject.

The Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic has built a network of Houses of Nature

in Czech protected landscape areas. Litovelské Pomoraví, where Sluňákov is located, is a wetland of international importance and Sluňákov has become the agency's local partner there. Sluňákov is the author of the conception of the Litovelské Pomoraví House of Nature. It operates this public awareness

and information system, information boards, educational trails and viewing points all year round.

We are one of the founding members of Pavučina («spider web»). It is an umbrella network of environmental education centres that cooperate with schools in the Czech Republic. It has been set up in

1996 to boost deeper cooperation between environmental education centres. Now there are almost 50 member organisations. Within this network, members set the guidelines for environmental education and help each other to fulfil them. The overall aim is to learn from each other, exchange experience

and go through professional development together. Pavučina has a strong position in negotiations with different levels of governance and in lobbying as it speaks for a big group. It also strengthens the role of environmental organisations in the face of the public and helps with promotion and public relations. ▶▶

2.7.4 EXTERNAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The conception of environmental enlightenment, education and public awareness of the Olomouc region has been formulated in close cooperation between the regional authority and Sluňákov, and NGOs. It aims to raise environmental literacy amongst Olomouc region inhabitants, stimulate their involvement in ecological problem solutions and raise their quality of life. Also, we are one of the most important organisations in the Olomouc region to implement the conception to practice.

The Real World Learning Network has been established in 2012 by seven European organisations. It aims to explore and share successful approaches to real world learning through the outdoor classroom that leads to action for sustainable development. The network is investigating different approaches to outdoor learning across Europe, understanding why they are effective and how they can be shared with others.

The Moravská cesta MAS is a local action group, representing tripartite cooperation between public authorities, business and the voluntary sector. MAS has its own development strategy, through which it wants to develop their region. Sluňákov is a member of MAS Moravská cesta, the local action group of the Haná region was established in 2005 as a local partnership of entrepreneurs, municipalities, non-profit organisations.

Certified tourist information centres are publicly accessible points offering objective and valid information on destinations, leisure and culture. We operate a certified information centre providing tourist information about the surrounding landscape of Haná and Litovelské Pomoraví, monuments as well as leisure-time tips. We also offer information materials, souvenirs, books and light refreshments. **sl**



Cheers! Egészségedre! Zum Wohl! Prost! Na zdraví!

PART III SHARING INSIGHTS

	EMB	EMBERCOMBE
	FEC	FOCUS ECOCENTER
	GDG	GARDEN OF GENERATIONS
	KJ	KLEIN JASEDOW
	SL	SLUŇÁKOV



3.1 WELL-TRIED TOOLS, METHODS AND PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING AND ORGANISATION

DEEP CONNECTION TO NATURE

Connection to nature and ourselves underpins everything. By connecting to the very essence of what life and nature mean, we are able to grasp what it means to be human.

How can we find back to nature when we find ourselves separated from nature? How can we foster this connection again?

One important aspect of being in and reconnecting to nature, is finding your own »sitting spot« and going there every day for 20 to 30 minutes, just being the observer of the daily change. Another one is sleeping out—under the sky, by the sea, in the woods. It may first take some courage and preparation but the payback is huge. Often it seems that you sleep less but are full of energy nevertheless. A simple daily walk in nature—at least 20 minutes—in silence and presence is another way to create deep connections with Mother Earth. And what many people who have a background of office life have observed: Getting your hands into the earth—yes, dirty fingernails!—, working in a garden for some hours is having a huge transformation impact on yourself.

All of the above will lead you to the daily appreciation of Mother Earth and her gifts. Reconnecting to nature is a daily conscious practice that enables you to see all the dysfunctional behaviour that goes with extreme egotism, hybris, and visions of grandeur. Nature teaches us belonging, relationship, interconnectedness, and interdependence.

Only in a state of being connected to nature will

we be able to make the right choices for our communities, our organisations, and our future.

THE TWIN TRAIL—TRAVELLING THE INNER AND THE OUTER PATH

The inner and the outer paths are closely intertwined: Travelling the inner path prepares us for the outer path, travelling the outer path strengthens the inner path. In Embercombe, this intertwining is called the »Twin Trail«. Underlying both pathways are essential human capacities: the capacity to love, to create, to collaborate, to reflect, to organise, to build, and to bring forth the world collectively.

The Outer Path

The outer path is the engine for the way we drive change in consciousness and behaviour. It's our capacity to realise future possibilities with our experience, knowledge, and skills—practising courage and risk-taking, trying things out, facing fear, and doing something anyway. Challenging the impossible and always seeing new possibilities is a faculty that can be cultivated. We need to develop our capacity to spot innovative solutions—we cannot walk into the future with our minds being focused on problems. We need to learn from the past. But if we try to solve problems using solutions that are mere variations of the mindset that created these problems, we won't be able to bring about truly sustainable solutions. Acting as a role model and inspiring others to access their creative potential for acting sustainably will then follow as a natural consequence.

Reflecting upon the two paths will foster your personal and strategic abilities to create a culture of collective leadership, of building commitment, of fostering dedicated actions, and of enhancing collective responsibility for change.

The Inner Path

The inner path is the basis for the way we place ourselves in the context of a given task and for our way of leading ourselves and other people. This requires that we develop our capacity to access our own humanity, with its potentials and limitations. Only then can we open up to the underlying humanity that connects all of us with the world, no matter how much we may differ in approach, opinion, colour, culture, skills, or wealth.

Walking the inner path may have many different forms for different people: It may be based on introspection, self-inquiry, and meditation, or it may come through counselling, therapy, and any other ways of inner work available. The essential outcome is to become self-aware, self-responsible, and self-leading. And it means recovering our true gifts, responsibilities, and passions, enabling us to bring ourselves fully to the world.

Walking the inner path also leads us into our growing ability to not only conceptually understand the fact that the world is based on interdependence, but the ability to fully grasp this web of interdependent relationships: a faculty that can be described as our growing capacity to sense the whole picture.

At Embercombe, fostering the spirit of the inner path of walking the twin trail includes:

► *Morning Circle*

At the start of a normal working day, the morning circle is a tool of learning to check in with the self, of becoming true and authentic with your own self as well as the selves of others, listening in silence to our true beingness. The idea is to openly speak what really goes on inside of us, whether we are feeling vulnerable or courageous, tired, or enthusiastic. The impact of learning to show yourself to others and being witnessed in doing so, leads not only to losing your fear of being judged, but also opens the way for becoming a true community member. It creates a deep level of trust within the group.

Whatever the weather conditions may be on a given morning, the community assembles around an open fire—outside, if possible, if not, anywhere, if need be, sitting around a candle—, for approximately one hour. After a minute of silence, who ever feels first inspired to share, will start to speak. Then the sharing goes in a sunrise—clockwise—circle. When everyone has shared what she or he wants to share, the circle can be used to arrange the tasks of the day, e.g., cleaning, cooking, gardening, wood work, etc.—and the dreamer role.

► *The Dreamer—a Daily Job*

The dreamer is part of anyone's role description, whether they are volunteers or staff members. Every day at the morning circle, a person volun-

teers for being this day's dreamer. All manifestations have come from a dream turning into a vision turning into actions. We need to dream to have visions to make change happen. We need time and space to dream. The dreamer takes a day—or at least half day—to wander the land, to find a sitting spot and to dream. Her or his dream, idea, or vision will be shared in a the »Dreamer Book« and in the next morning circle.

► *Listening Partnerships*

This is usually a seven-minute exercise, practiced once a week formally—but can be done more often or for longer or shorter periods, as required—and at any time informally to help people to come to their own conclusions, solutions, and actions, just by being listened to. The holder of the space—a certain period of time is agreed upfront—is not required to answer or do anything else than listening to the speaker with her or his full presence and undivided attention. After the agreed time is over, a grounding question is asked, e.g., »What did you have for breakfast?« and the roles are switched over.

► *Ways of Council—Problem Solving, Decisionmaking, and Courageous Conversations*

Council sets a container for empathy and honesty. It provides a way of bearing witness and of peacemaking that accepts diversity in ourselves and in each other, helping to cultivate non-hierarchical power. We experience the deep connectedness of all life.

Council is not about fixing things or about being ► ►

3.1.1
EMBERCOMBE

right or wrong. It is a practice of speaking and listening from the heart—a means of opening to heartfelt compassionate expression and non-judgemental acceptance of how and who and where people are. Council is a practice of witnessing—one's self, others, and the environment at one and the same time. Council is a teaching that brings intention, acceptance, and authentic speaking to the centre of one's heart, creating the possibility of truly engaged relationship, of a deep understanding of community, and of opening up to wholeness.

The basic practice of council is simple: a group of people sit in a circle. Drawing on indigenous traditions of using a talking stick, an object is passed from person to person which grants the holder solid permission to speak. Everyone has a voice, everyone speaks from their heart while the others are listening. The way of council can be used for problem solving, for finding new solutions or for decisionmaking processes, on questions such as: »Shall we allow alcohol in the community or not?« It can also be used for »courageous conversation« and naming the »elephant in the room«, for group processes dedicated to personal growth—giving and receiving feedback—, or for any other delicate issue.

► *Storytelling Evenings*

Storytelling is an integral part of life at Embercombe. Storytelling is a very powerful practice, which has been lost and vastly underestimated in our high-speed, output-driven society. Storytelling brings people together in magic and wonder, in inspira-

tion, in laughter and sadness. Gathering around a fire for storytelling encourages people to share their own stories, to listen empathically, to cuddle up, to connect, to lie down, and to relax. At storytelling evenings, stories of our own personal lives can be hugely empowering. They stay with you for a long time and are passed on, as in the old days, before television, cinemas, or computers were invented. Storytelling is a means of reconnecting and deepening human relations, getting to know other perspectives, and developing a sense of community. **EMB**

<http://waysofcouncil.net/the-council-path>
www.ancienthealingways.co.uk/way-of-council



Water lillies in Klein Jasedow.

Kaláka: Working Together

In rural life, there are tasks and works which can hardly be done by any one person alone or even by a small group of persons. Typically, these tasks are linked to unique one-time activities such as building a house or to periodic agricultural activities.

Human beings are both biological entities and social entities. The biological survival of humankind was supported by their social behaviour. In human history, all the tasks that could not be done by individuals alone were done by communities. In our days, in many cases the social dimension of humans has been replaced by technical solutions, with the support and the force of the community being replaced by the force of machines.

But in Transylvanian villages, a social phenomenon called »Kaláka« is still alive and vivid and is even experiencing a renaissance. »Kaláka«, as it is called in Hungarian-speaking communities, or »claca«, as it is called in Romanian-speaking communities, developed in the rural communities of Transylvania. Being an archaic term for »working together« in Hungarian dialect, kaláka is a form of commoning, a mutual non-written agreement between the members of a community that they will help each other when need be. For example, if one member of the community starts to build a house, the members of the community are participating in this work without special request and without any expectation of being paid.

In rural communities, communication is working very differently from usual daily communica-

tion, with information being spread orally. In this way, everybody knows when someone is building a house, everyone knows all the phases of the construction process, and knows in which phase her or his help will be needed. The relevant information is available in the village and every person can decide whether she or he will participate or not—there is no obligation to participate. It is not so much altruism that motivates people to participate but rather the feeling that they are members of the community and as such are connected to the community with its unwritten duties and benefits. Organising kaláka typically starts by telling some villagers—usually relatives or neighbour—in an informal chat: »Next Wednesday I will organise a kaláka to build my house.« This information will then do the rounds in the village. This way of spreading information tells something about the transparency of rural communities.

The beneficiary of the work has the duty of providing food and drinks to the participants. If other members of the community need help, persons who once benefitted from kaláka will support them. Of course, nobody will force them to do so, but in rural communities there is a strict unwritten moral code that every member of the community has to be useful to the community in some way or another. If a person who received support from the community were not to return this service without a good reason, this person would lose the respect of the community—in modern language, they will lose their image. In the long run this would be harmful to this

individual and her or his family. In rural communities, value, be it social or monetary, is linked to work. This is very different from modern urban societies where people can be very wealthy—and respected—e. g., by working in financial speculation without doing anything useful for society.

The work done in kaláka is »priceless« as it cannot and will not be converted in terms of money. It is a kind of gifting economy. All participants are well aware of the fact that they may never get anything back from their services—for instance, if the beneficiaries are aged people. But everyone knows that the whole community will somehow or another benefit from the work done. This tradition is especially useful in cases of emergency like fires, floods, etc., when the person suffering a damage could never mend matters on her or his own. While such emergency situations are exceptions, kaláka is mainly working in common everyday situations. Kaláka is a kind of insurance system or safety net within the rural community that will not lose any of its members, as each member is important to the community. And work that is done together has a very powerful effect in strengthening the community's social cohesion. In addition to being a useful activity, kaláka is also an occasion for celebrating: Because people volunteer for kaláka, work is always followed by a festivity, and when the work is done, the participants are singing and dancing together. This makes it very different from work done for money.

Sociologists consider kaláka to be a highly efficient and complex form of organising common

work due to its complex division of tasks and labour between the participants, including all connected activities, such as, e.g., the provision of building materials. It is also a great opportunity for young people to learn skills and to be involved in different activities, ensuring inter-generational cohesion. The principles of kaláka also spread to neighbouring regions, in Slavic areas it is called »koceta«, for instance. Because of its efficiency and its potential for creating social cohesion, this and other traditions of commoning can play an important role in community development in rural Europe.

The Annual Katalin Dance of Găleşti

Informal communication plays an important role in the development and the decisionmaking processes of a community. Traditional rural communities used to organise various events and occasions where community members of different social ranks and age groups could communicate with each other. Celebrations such as religious festivities and village fairs offered great opportunities for such informal communication. In our days, celebrations in rural—as well as urban—areas have turned into commercial events, with spiritual and social contents being replaced by commercial strategies. Authentic local products are replaced by commercial kitsch, and local musicians, dancers, artisans etc. are replaced by commercial service providers. This global phenomenon has also transformed Transylvanian villages, and with these changes great opportunities for informal communication have been lost.

This loss has been understood everywhere, and people working in organising communal life are looking for new methods, attempting to make up for this loss. One such attempt is the »World Café« method, supporting the exchange of information and giving all members of a group the chance to express their opinions. The community of the village Găleşti made an attempt of offering an occasion for informal communication by introducing the Katalin dance event. And, as it happens, there are quite a few similarities between this dance event and the world café method.

In rural communities, celebrations are closely linked to seasonal agricultural work. Autumn is considered an ideal time for celebrations. Katalin—a form of Ekaterina or Catherine in English—is a very popular women's name in Găleşti and its saint's day is on 25 November. So this is the perfect date for a social community event which honours women who have worked very hard during the summer. The event starts at 7 pm with every family bringing a basket of nicely decorated food to the local restaurant. Families are sitting together at tables, sharing the food and drinks they have brought along. As the evening proceeds, people will go to the other tables, contributing their opinions to the debates and discussions that have unfolded there. Practically everyone will visit all of the other tables, getting familiar with the community's current topics and problems. The mayor and other leaders may also be approached in informal ways. Then the locals perform little sketches reflecting in a comical way the prob-

lems the community has dealt with during the past year. The atmosphere is very relaxed and no one—not even those who are the targets of the sketches, e.g., the mayor—will get angry or upset.

Once food and information have been shared, the most important item on the programme follows: A local band plays music and people will dance and party until the morning.

The Three Days' Kingdom

In rural communities, leadership is a key question. Living right in the middle of the community, the local leaders have to constantly prove themselves and are challenged every day. Electing the leaders of a rural community is a constant process, with voting day being just the final act of an ongoing selection process in which the person suited best for a given position will be identified. During the year, there are several occasions where the community leaders—e.g., the mayor or the members of the local council—will be challenged in playful ways.

One such occasion is the »Tree Day's Kingdom« event which takes place on Easter. In rural Transylvania, many celebrations are linked to religious events. This event is linked both to a Christian holiday and to an old tradition of inspecting the village's territory and cleaning its springs, which are vital resources for the villagers and their agricultural work.

This celebration has three layers of meaning: firstly, the community's young people will be allowed to playfully exercise leadership; secondly, a message about morality—or, in modern terms:

about sustainability—will be conveyed to the young generation: »Take care of your land and your territory!«; and, thirdly, an important spiritual holiday is linked to the community's life.

The Three Days' Kingdom is a very old tradition in Găleşti and although it was stopped during communist times, it was revitalised in our days. The Three Days' Kingdom starts on the first day of Easter when the young people will elect a king between them, who will rule the whole community during these days. The king elects his counsellors and a »crazy man« or »jester« who makes all kinds of provocative and embarrassing statements, e.g., criticising the priest or the mayor.

On the first day of Easter, followed by the young villagers, the king will go around the edges of the village. At the village's border stones, the king will symbolically spank the young boys with a stick ten times in a playful way, ensuring that none of the boys will get harmed. The meaning of this ritual is to remind them where the borders are and that they must not give up any land from or incorporate to the village's territory. They will inspect and clean up the springs so that they will provide good drinking water for the agricultural season to come. Upon the group's return to the village, the king will announce his opinions about the events in the village, with the »crazy man« commenting on the king's remarks. The next day, the young men from the village will visit the girls to spray them with spring water—these days, most of the boys will use perfume rather than water—and will get in return eggs, bacon, and

wine from the girls. This is an ancient ritual of fecundity, and it is a great honour for the girls to be visited. At night, at the village's cultural house, a big feast of scrambled eggs will be prepared from the eggs and bacon the boys were given by the girls, and they will dance and celebrate until the break of dawn. On the next day, the Three Days' Kingdom will end.

This playful ritual of youth ruling the community for a few days is very important in rural tradition and also exists in numerous other cultures. A transfer of responsibility from one generation to the next is part of rural culture and of inter-generational communication. These traditions have been lost in our modern school systems in which students have to be obedient to the system. (An exception may be alternative participatory and self-determined educational systems.) We consider it very important for rural communities that the voice of young people is heard, and it is important for each community to find the best way of creating occasions and renewing traditions which makes this possible.

Vintage Dance

Vintage dance is a traditional autumn event that traditionally contributes to the social cohesion of the community. In the Niraj valley, there are villages with vineyards but in mountainous areas at higher altitudes, grapevines cannot be cultivated. Whether they have their own vineyards or not, most of the villages organise a »vintage dance«. The organisation of the vintage dance starts several weeks before the

event, with the young villagers electing an organisation committee, and two teams of wardens of the grapes, one consisting of boys and one of girls. They elect a warden king and a warden queen who will rule the festivities and organise various presentations and scenes to be performed. The warden teams will collect donations from the community to fund the festivity and will invite the whole village to the dance. The boys are riding horses—the king a white one, the other boys horses of different colours—and the girls are travelling in a wain pulled by a pair of horses. The team will start in the morning and stop several times in the village to offer grapes to the people and invite everybody to the dance. The boys' and the girls' warden teams wear traditional folk costumes.

On the evening of the vintage dance, the village's cultural house is nicely decorated with bunches of grapes hanging everywhere. All generations of villagers are participating in the vintage dance. The warden team is responsible for organising the programme with dance performances and presentations and they ward the grapes hanging in the room. If someone takes away some of the grapes, the warden will catch her or him and the warden king will render a verdict. He may pardon the person, may make her or him pay a fee, or assign certain tasks. People from other villages are trying by all means to »steal« grapes and to successfully fulfil the tasks in order to make a name for themselves in that village. The dance will continue late into the night. The vintage dance is one of the most important tradi-

tional events in village life and is deeply rooted in the community. The inter-generational transfer of knowledge and traditions is very important, and this event is an ideal occasion for inter-generational communication. These kinds of traditional events—rituals—have to face competition with new events, such as discos and night clubs, which mainly serve the distraction of young people but are missing the inter-generational dimension. Although rituals may change and develop in each community, the inter-generational dimension and the link to agricultural traditions connected to seasonal cycles—like vintage—are important factors in strengthening a community's social cohesion.

Taking on a Shepherd

In Transylvanian villages, most of the farmers have a few sheep which are kept in the stable during winter time. These sheep are herded to the communal pastures from spring till autumn. Sheep have very important functions not only in maintaining the pasture but also in the village's social life. Farmers owning just a small flock of sheep associate and will jointly take on the services of a shepherd who will herd the sheep during the summer.

Each year, several farmers band together and announce that they want to take on a shepherd. On St. George's day—24 April in Transylvania—the associated farmers select the shepherd for their sheep. The candidate shepherds will make their offer, negotiating details, such as how much cheese the shepherds will be given for each sheep and at what conditions ▶▶

the cheese will be delivered, etc. The farmers will negotiate with the shepherd the delivering conditions of the lambs and conditions for damages, if, for example, sheep are attacked by wolves or bears. After the negotiations have been completed, the farmers nominate by consensus the shepherd whose service will be shared equally by all the farmers, regardless of the size of their flock. What they agreed upon, is binding until the end of the season. It is an oral contract which is respected by all parties. If this verbal agreement is to be violated, the associated farmers will come together and talk about the problem in question. Taking on a shepherd is a long and powerful tradition which is endangered now because the big agricultural corporations own large numbers of sheep and are not interested in community life.

This example shows that rural communities are based on strict rules that are based on a natural interest to manage natural resources efficiently and sustainably. In his way, the wrongly termed »Tragedy of the Commons«—which is, in effect, a »Tragedy of the Unmanaged Commons«—is avoided and ecological systems are maintained and community needs satisfied in the long term. Rural communities which are managing renewable natural resources, such as soil, forest, and pastures, cannot be successful, if the members of the community follow only their own personal goals. Instead, the community members realise that their individual interests are intrinsically connected to the interests of the community, and in order to set community goals together there need to be efficient communication

and decision-making systems within the community of course.

Social Event at the Palinka Distillery

In traditional rural societies, the voice of elders was respected and they were involved in decision-making processes. Some villages set up a »council of elders« as a consultative body in the community. In modern societies, elderly people tend to be marginalised. In rural areas of Transylvania, the local palinka distillery is a place where the elderly—who are usually experts in this process—are very welcome to express their opinion.

»Palinka«, the traditional fruit brandy made in Transylvanian villages, is very different from industrially distilled alcohol. In traditionally structured rural areas, each farmer has a little orchard with a large variety of fruits—in a village, there may be found as many as 50 traditional apple varieties. The farmers are picking their fruits individually, depending on which species they have in their garden and what fruits they choose to mix to obtain their unique, individual blend for fermentation. In late autumn, when the usual agricultural works are finished, the palinka distilleries will open in the villages. The farmers are going to the distillery and make their own palinka assisted by a person who is taking care of the distillation process. As the process is slow and the distillery is full of people who are waiting for their turn, there is enough time to debate community life. It is a kind of non-formal village meeting, where each participant may express

freely her or his opinion about hot community issues. Of course, they also debate about the quality of each individual palinka, regardless of the social status or the age group of a given community member. This is, in fact, a good opportunity for people of low social standing to obtain the respect of their fellow villagers. It is probably due to this democratic atmosphere that all the problems are debated in a very open and direct way. Of course, this is not the environment to take formal decisions concerning community life. But the discussions from the distillery will influence further decisions and actions in the village.

Collecting Mushrooms and Medicinal Herbs in Groups

Taking benefits from the gifts of nature has a long tradition in Transylvanian villages, collecting mushrooms and picking medicinal herbs from the local woods and fields are particularly rooted in local culture.

Every woman from rural areas used to know about the healing effects of medicinal herbs. The pastures and meadows are rich in officinal plants, with some people calling them »natural pharmacies«. To prevent this knowledge from dying out, villagers are organising walks with people who still know their herbs. These herbalists will teach the community members how to pick and use various herbs.

There is a similar situation with mushrooms. Wild mushrooms are very tasty—much tastier than culti-

vated mushrooms. But if you are not a mushrooming expert, you are running the danger of mixing up edible with poisonous varieties. So the members of the group rely on the knowledge of the leading person and completely trust her or him, because their life depends on this person's knowledge and experience. These walks are organised during the spring, summer, and autumn seasons up until the point when mushrooms and plants are collected. Usually, small groups of family members, friends, and neighbours are going on a walk together and are sharing the collected goods afterwards. Such walks are very important in building cohesion within the community, because very rarely does it happen these days that we trust someone so much that we put our lives in their hands. These walks are very popular among people who moved from the city to the countryside to become members of a rural community. Typically, these newly arrived villagers are looking for strong connections to nature and want to learn how to benefit from the gifts of nature.

Building a Sustainable Development Strategy for the Niraj Valley—The Green Agenda Method

The development of any community depends on its vision about the future. In rural communities in Transylvania, there are to be found many elements of sustainability. On a visit, the Prince of Wales called Transylvania »the last corner of Europe where you see true sustainability and complete resilience and the maintenance of entire ecosystems to the benefit of mankind and also of nature«. However, the vi-

sions of these communities are mainly about western-style unsustainable developments. The people working at Focus Eco Center were asking themselves how this trend could be changed in the Niraj valley. How to propose a sustainable development vision to the local community? How to establish a small group of people who promote ideas of sustainable development? Initially, we used the methodology based on public participation that was proposed by the UN—in the documents elaborated after the Conference of Rio de Janeiro in 1992—to implement the Local Agenda 21. Our own development strategy is based on the common development vision of community members who participated in elaborating this strategy. In the first phase, we established workgroups.

While elaborating the development strategy, it became apparent that the mainstream vision of development based on economic growth was conflicting with the preservation of ecosystem services, for example, a clash between extensive and intensive farming systems, etc. We realised that if we wanted to preserve the ecosystem services while achieving economic sustainability, we had to build the development strategy around the sustainability of ecosystem services. By elaborating a strategy of cooperation between human and natural systems, we can have both: economic sustainability and sustainability of ecosystem services. Consequently, we were looking for the most endangered ecosystem services in the area and identified the water ecosystems.

3.1.2 FOCUS ECO CENTER

We termed this methodology of linking the development strategy to ecosystem services or natural systems »Green Agenda«. The group formed by members of Focus Eco Center and local people, started a series of meetings and site visits to identify problems and ways of action. We then elaborated a vision concerning the restoration of the wetlands and the preservation of the water ecosystems. All the other development plans linked to agriculture, tourism, etc. were now attuned to the vision of preserving ecosystems linked to water.

Our conclusion from this process was: If we want to implement a sustainable development strategy for a community, the preservation of the ecosystems has to be central to our vision. On the other hand, if economic development had been central to our vision, the problems linked to preserving ecosystems had been considered to be secondary or even insignificant. The green agenda method has proved to be a useful methodology in working out sustainable development strategies for rural communities.

Networking for Landscape Preservation and Sustainable Tourism Programmes

The community formed around Focus Eco Center was concerned about the degradation of the landscape in the Niraj valley which has a very high ecological value. The degradation was mainly caused by a lack of information available to local people about the ecological value of their landscape. The locals took their local ecology for granted and were not aware of the transformation processes going on.

So we organised a workgroup to find a solution to this problem. The result of several discussions was that the most efficient way of protecting this landscape was to create awareness among locals that this landscape could provide them with an income through sustainable low-impact tourism, but only if the landscape was maintained properly. Many tourists appreciate the high level of biodiversity which is hardly to be found in any other part of Europe.

The workgroup established a network formed by nine farmers willing to offer their houses as tourist accommodation. Representatives of these nine families started to intensely communicate and share experience about integrating visitors who were interested in learning more about local rural lifestyles. The network established a number of programmes, such as putting up young people who wanted to be integrated in the farm's activities for a limited period of time—from 3 weeks to 6 months—or tourists staying for two days at one farm before hiking to the next one, experiencing the magnificent landscape. Another programme was about welcoming city people who were interested in learning the traditional ways of preserving food for winter.

The network is open to other farmers who want to join. For the locals, it was very interesting to have an »external perspective« on the values of their landscape and to welcome external people who were eager to learn the traditional ways and methods of rural life. The members of the network have an annual meeting, usually in September when the main agricultural work is done, and other oc-

casional meetings to share lessons and learnings. On the one hand, the network is a virtual community of people who do not personally meet on a daily basis but share the same values and a common vision about the future. On the other hand, it is a real community that shares a lot of common activities during the course of a year. In our experience, these kinds of networks can influence substantially larger communities' visions about the future. And to the extent that such networks are integrated in village life they can influence people's general vision, spreading the importance of preserving ecosystem services for the future. **FEC**

Interview with the Prince of Wales: www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAcHyl62hoU

Dragon Dreaming

We do not only learn from the past—but also from the future, by becoming aware of a desired future through visualisation. Searching for a vision for the Garden of Generations, we found a simple tool for doing so: Dragon Dreaming. It can give a framework, an image, and a life spark to a project group. In a common four-part process—dreaming, planning, doing, and celebrating—the vision, the realisation process, and the responsibilities will be defined. By defining these pillars, the group can avoid many »structural conflicts«.

Every Dragon Dreaming process starts with dreaming. Every individual member of the groups asks her- or himself the same inspiring question that may, in short, sound something like this: »Imagine, it's the summer of 2022 and you've got the feeling, working on this project was the best you could have possibly done in those years—so, what does the result look like?«

The formulations of all the group members' dreams will be gathered and »distilled« to a vision of three to five sentences. This creates an anchor point in the future that will pull the group towards it—»in prosperity and (above all) in adversity«. Then, intermediate goals will be formulated and the roles of each individual agent will be defined.

Consequently, the funds and time needed for the first intermediate goals will be identified, using the »fast budgeting« method. Intuitively, all group members will knock out some figures to get a first—(and sometimes eye-opening—estimate. Depend-

ing on the group, afterwards there may be a question about the commitment of each group member: »If worst came to worst, would I be prepared to accept partial liability for the sum estimated?« The answers will give the group a clear image of who, at this point in time, is a responsible decisionmaker—accepting liability—and who is a supporter of the project.

Dragon Dreaming invites us to make our dreams come true in a playful way. A dream can never be too fanciful—on the contrary: Only when each individual member and the group as a whole are wholeheartedly enthusiastic about something and a project makes them sing out their innermost wishes, can the project become sustainably successful.

In many countries, there are professional Dragon Dreaming trainers who teach this method in seminars or may be invited to facilitate group processes.

Systemic Consensing

Systemic Consensing, a technique for efficient decision-making that is also applied at GdG, was developed by Austrians Siegfried Schrotta and Erich Vitschnig. Currently finding its way into the global community movement, systemic consensing is easy to use and reflects authentically a group's opinion.

Put in a nutshell, this is the essence of the process: Let's assume a managing board is to be elected. At first, the factors characterising a good board may be gathered. It should, for instance, be based on good cooperation, both genders should be represented, the group members' qualities should complement

each other, etc. Now, it is the general assembly's turn to suggest constellations such as the following—or any other combination deemed sensible—: »John for chair, Mary for treasurer, Paul for keeper of the minutes«. The beauty of this phase is that there are no limits to the group's creativity, with each suggestion inspiring further suggestions.

Then every member will evaluate all options by giving them zero to ten »resistance points«. In departure from convention, it is our negative opinions and uneasy feelings that are expressed here. The option with the lowest score of resistance points—from the total of all voters—comes closest to a balancing of interests, that is, the consensus of everyone involved. Particularly, when it comes to personnel decisions it is commendable to convert—using a simple formula—at least the lowest score of resistance into a score of acceptance.

In our experience, beginners tend to be somewhat reluctant in expressing their resistance numerically. Usually, this will change after a few exercise rounds. In addition, acceptance of this method will be furthered by the good feelings the group will almost always get from taking decisions by systemic consensing. Among other factors, this has to do with the fact that there tend to be no »losers«—contrary to decisions taken by yes or no or veto votes. When voting »for« an ideal solution, we can easily get the feeling we have to fight for as may yes votes as possible, leading at worst to an opponency between yea-sayers and nay-sayers. Any kind of opponency is highly destructive for group processes.

On the other hand, it can be very relaxing, if we are not looking for yes or no votes, but for a levelheaded review of the solution that provokes the least resistance. This way, it is more unlikely that the whole process will be blocked by a veto.

Co-Coaching

Co-coaching is a low-threshold method for increasing wellbeing and goodwill in projects and organisations. Drawing lots, co-coaching teams of two will be formed. In larger organisations, it is helpful not to leave everything to chance but to include further selection criteria, such as the distance between individuals in terms of organisational structure, everyday life, or age groups. This will lead to the organisation being better linked and hence wisening up.

The co-coaching teams will meet approximately every fortnight—ideally on a jour fixe—to talk about various questions, with the team partners having 30 minutes of speaking time each. And this is all there is to do.

This can have healing effects: When people with different positions within an organisation meet to exchange thoughts, understanding for each other will be created. Reliability, self-responsibility, and efficiency will increase, without having to apply the costly and time-consuming management tools that are used by large cooperations.

Twice a year, new constellations will be formed. Even though team partners will often find it hard to part, this helps to foster trustful contact between a variety of different people.

Sociocracy

The more responsibility a group wants to jointly share the more important will be a sustainably viable organisational model. At Garden of Generations, we work with a model called »sociocracy«. This is a participatory form of organisation with clear feedback loops, basically consisting of four essential principles.

- *Consent Principle*—The first essential principle guarantees equality between all members in the decisionmaking process. The consent principle is an agreement that decisions will only be made, if no member of the competent workgroup has »grave and substantiated objections«. Other forms of decision-making—e.g. systemic consensing—may also be applied, provided this is decided by consent. A vital difference to the better known »consensus principle« is that in decisions made by consent it is not possible to block a decisionmaking process by putting in an unsubstantiated veto.

In sociocracy, not every trifle will be discussed with everyone: Landmark decisions will be made by consent, but the implementation of these decisions may be delegated to workgroups who freely realise it within the framework defined.

- *Circle Structure*—A sociocratic organisation consists of a structure of linked circles. Each circle represents a group responsible for realising a common goal that is attuned to the project's overall vision. The basic decisions about how such a goal should be reached are taken by con-

3.1.3 GARDEN OF GENERATIONS

sent in the respective circle. Such a circle is relatively autonomous while being committed to the larger vision. Generally, within an organisation, there will have to be more circles as there are various areas working on goals that complement each other.

- ▶ *Double Linking*—Enlarging the dynamic process of leading, doing, and evaluating to all existing circles, requires a special kind of linking—double linking. This means that there are always at least two persons, one leader and one delegate, from one circle involved in the decisionmaking of the next higher circle.

Sociocracy furthers equality. It creates an atmosphere of cooperation, intrinsic motivation, self-responsibility, cohesion, and honesty. Instead of power hierarchies, there are functional hierarchies, establishing a culture of »as well as« instead of »either or«. There are consent decisions in the circle as well as linear hierarchical implementations with clear agreements.

- ▶ *Open Elections*—Electing persons who are responsible for certain tasks and functions starts by giving a well described job summary. Then every member of the circle nominates her or his favorite candidate, stating arguments why she or he thinks this would be the ideal person for a given task. In a second talking round, everyone is free to change their opinions and subscribe to the arguments of other members. In this way, a common denominator will soon crystalise and the moderator will formulate a suggestion. If

there is no grave objection by any member of the circle against the person suggested, this person is deemed to have been elected.

Members of Garden of Generations have worked with sociocracy not only in the context of their community building processes but also on behalf of external organisations. We recommend this tool for organisational development. It may be applied in participatory and emancipatory projects as well as in corporations seeking for ways of giving more co-creational leeway to employees who were born between 1977 and 1998, belonging to the group of Millennials or Generation Y who are strongly questioning social norms and hierarchies. **GOG**

www.dragondreaming.org

www.systemicconsensus.blogspot.com

www.sk-prinzip.net

Austria: www.sociokratie.at

Germany: www.sociokratie.com

Netherlands: www.sociocratie.nl

United Kingdom: www.sociocracy.co.uk

Storehouse in the Niraj valley.



Palaver

»Palaver« comes from times of early colonialism, when Portuguese traders used this term for endless disputations with their African commercial partners. Derived from Greek *parabolé* and Latin *parabola*, meaning »parable, allegory, tale, report«, it has found its way into African languages—referring to councils for all sorts of sharing, exchange, and debate—and back into European languages. The palaver developed in Klein Jasedow is a culture of communication: a weekly talking-circle in which every member of the community is free to participate. Viewed from the outside it may not differ from any plenary in any community, but there are some principles that turn a talking round into a palaver.

Every Wednesday night after supper, we meet for two to at most three hours. The main purpose of getting together and talking is to get and renew a feeling for each other and the community as a whole rather than achieving results and making decisions—although this does happen too. When talking to each other, there is a common understanding that we attempt to stay in a mode of deep listening, of affection, placidness, and serenity, even when diverging opinions arise—which often is the case.

Palavers start with an informal chat, having tea until everyone dropped in. Someone will then suggest a subject or share how this evening feels for her or him: Maybe it has been a busy week with many people being involved in demanding projects or having just returned from journeys, so that it may feel good to devote the evening to personal storytelling.

Maybe an important question has come up during the past few days or a long-term topic has popped up again and needs to be given attention. Generally, a palaver is not the suitable occasion for a lot of detailed organisational questions. Although organisational matters can never be fully avoided, it is helpful to keep these topics as short as possible. Palavers are rather a place for deep exchange about all kinds of issues, sensitivities, joys and grievances for which there is not enough time and space in everyday life. At a palaver, we may share long-term plans or visions, reflections on important events or developments, impulses on the use of and care for common resources, thoughts on common responsibilities for financial aspects, and reflections on very personal subjects or conflicts.

A palaver does not use a special technique of talking, except the readiness to listen to each other with an open mind and heart, to speak authentically in one's own personal way and the attempt not to interrupt others. When it feels important to hear each and every voice on a given issue, a talking circle will start where everyone clockwise one after the other speaks as long as she or he wants to, without being interrupted or asked by the others. Often we choose to have what we call a »round« which keeps to the same manner of deeply listening to the speaker—who again is only speaking once—but without holding to the circular succession of the talking circle. This allows to directly react to someone's talk—or stay silent—, and is a very peaceful form of thoughtful commoning. Whoever feels

the impulse to speak, will speak up. To some, the frequently long pauses between individual contributions are felt to be just as important as the content that has been shared verbally.

A palaver is a protected space. Everyone can feel safe that she or he will not be hurt, interrupted, or accused. If there are strongly diverging views, the group tries to look at them as complementary parts of a larger whole. It can be compared to a piece of music with a drone bass underlying many melodies floating above this solid ground, sometimes breaking into a dissonant ecstasy but always finding back to the fundamental tone of mutual goodwill. Such music could not unfold, if the persons involved tried to convince the others of their opinion or tried to overrule them by any means. Creating lobbies and fighting power struggles between minorities and majorities will destroy the essence of a palaver. Instead it challenges everyone involved to neither judge nor accuse but to delve into the diversity of perceptions and feelings of all the different personalities and to authentically express their own perceptions—which at times may also be challenging ones, such as anger, pain, or overload. Everyone taking part in a palaver is invited to open up as far as possible, while at the same time everyone's limits and boundaries are respected. This leads to the perception of a collective field that is more than a mere collection of individual feelings and sensitivities—a collective organism in its own right that has its own intelligence and wisdom. In order to become receptive for this collective field it is important to

step back from one's personal position and to enter into an intensive mode of collective listening. The palaver is a commons, and its particular outcome is achieved through true commoning. It is a shared space created by everyone involved, in which the spirit of the community can unfold.

Breakfast Meeting

Usually, on Tuesday mornings, there is a breakfast meeting in Klein Jasedow. Those who are not busy otherwise and like to join speak in the morning about their tasks during the coming week, mainly practical tasks or work that needs to be coordinated with others. We are talking in a circle, with one after the other being listened to. Some will share how they feel towards certain tasks, others will keep their statements short and pragmatic—all kinds of information on work to be done is welcome. If someone would see a challenging task during the week that needs to be done but there is no person in charge yet, this is the place to find one.

In a community where everyone works in very diverse fields—and most of the time most of us work a lot—, the breakfast meeting can enforce a sense of coherence. If I know what the others are up to, it is much easier to get to feel the whole picture. The breakfast meeting frees the palaver from many organisational topics. Coordination is easy after everyone knows what will be going on. The caretaker of the Klanghaus also joins this circle regularly, which is a good way of strengthening connections between community members and employees.

Conclave and Cloud-Time

Two or three times a year, the community of Klein Jasedow declares a »conclave«, a retreat period of usually one week. During such times, there will be no external guests—only occasionally visiting family members are welcome. These days are dedicated to sharing time with each other. The work that needs to be done is continued, but everyone tries to avoid travelling and putting more tasks on the personal agenda than is absolutely unavoidable. The evenings are used for palavers, non-verbal communication such as playing improvised music together, for relaxing at the fireplace, for playing games, or reading to each others stories in the living room. Each conclave may be structured differently: Maybe there is a plan for the first two or three evenings, while during the other nights a common activity may develop spontaneously. There may be a common commitment that everyone tries to stop their work at 4 pm, making tea and spending the rest of the afternoon and evening together with all the kids. Sometimes all members of the community have agreed upon a subject that needs attention in talking circles, sometimes the essential questions will show up only after a few days of rejuvenating. It is important not to try to pull through a fixed programme but to enter into a common field of emergence, keeping oneself open for things that may or may not come up.

Complementary to the conclave are periods of »cloud-time«, which are symbolised in our communal calendar by clouds, indicating that nothing else ▶▶

takes place during these periods. Like in a conclave we will not invite guests during cloud time, except for close family members. We are slowing down the daily hustle and bustle, trying to find time to go for walks together, to go on sailing trips, to harvest fruits and berries, or to go on a mushroom foray. But there may as well be no activities in a larger group with only a few people doing something together while others are enjoying a quiet time. Although cloud time is rather dedicated to personal relaxation than to intense group processes, these periods can strongly nourish the community as a whole. During cloud time, we have our usual weekly palaver but not a series of talking circles as in a conclave.

Commoning

Commoning is a basic principle underlying many of the structures, endeavours, and activities within and around the Klein Jasedow community. Using a verb rather than the noun »commons« emphasises the fact that commons are not simply there but have to be continuously cared for, nursed, tended—even created—, and used in ways appropriate for a given resource—as historian Peter Linebaugh famously put it: »There is no commons without commoning.«

Although commons have a long tradition in European culture, they differ considerably from contemporary capitalist concepts of property and ownership. In commons thinking, humans are not the owners of resources but rather perceive themselves as belonging to a certain commons. A commons is any material or immaterial resource that is

not the property of certain individuals but are commonly created by being cared for and made use of by a community of people. As Nobel prize laureate and commons researcher Elinor Ostrom pointed out, although the specific rules governing its care and use are defined individually for each commons, these rules are always negotiated on eye level between the people affiliated with a given commons. Peter Linebaugh even goes a step further. In his book »The Magna Carta Manifesto«, he describes commoning principles as being agreed upon by human beings entering into a dialogue with a natural commons:

»Common rights are embedded in a particular ecology with its local husbandry. For commoners, the expression ›law of the land‹ [...] does not refer to the will of the sovereign. Commoners think first not of title deeds, but of human deeds: how will this land be tilled? Does it require manuring? What grows there? They begin to explore. You might call it a natural attitude.« According to Linebaugh, further characteristics of commoning are that it »is embedded in a labor process«, hence »common rights are entered into by labor«, that it is »collective«, and that it is »independent of the temporality of the law and state«.

An exemplary commoning process is the clay-straw house that has been built for the past two-and-a-half years on the camp ground in Klein Jasedow (see section on »Working Week«). The building design and the materials to be used have been negotiated in dialogue with the surrounding landscape. It has a traditional half-timbered structure,

filled with mud and straw—the way people built houses in sparsely wooded areas of Central Europe over many centuries. It is being built using traditional craftsmanship and a lot of manual labour, rather than prefabricated standardised industrial building solutions. Electric machinery has been reduced to a minimum—except for some pipes, accessories, and screws at those places where traditional joinery techniques were not an option—and it is being built exclusively from building materials that was harvested locally: boulders, timber, mud, straw, and lime. There is no wiring. Rooms and hot water are heated by wood-burning stoves. It is, in short, an experiment in what we have come to call the »post-collapse way of building«.

Taking the luxury of building this house over such a long period in such a slow and organic manner was made possible by many people who regularly volunteered in working weeks, contributing countless hours of manual labour. The funds required to pay for those building materials that were not »free« gifts of nature and for the work of expert builders such as two local carpenters were funded by about 100 friends and supporters from all over Germany who gave on a regular basis small amounts of money in the context of »Leih- und Schenkgemeinschaften« (see section 2.7.2). Once completed, the house will be mainly used by children and youths participating in annual children's circus camps or by the pupils of the free primary school recently initiated by a group of community members and local friends and neighbours. The rules governing the

care and use of this small house of nature will be formulated jointly by the place keepers designated by the community and the children and youths who will populate it.

Inviting Emergence

In systems theory, the term emergence describes the appearance of something new in a given system that could not have been predicted by looking at the existing parameters. Life as such is a phenomenon of emergence, developed surprisingly from substances of the earth. Translated into social interactions, processes of emergence bring about positive new ideas, structures or activities in a way that cannot be analysed or regulated. This can happen in times of crisis or relaxation, it may be triggered when a burning question is really worrying many people involved in the project that leads to an intensive brainstorming or it can bubble up spontaneously at a celebration. There is no such thing as a method to trigger processes of emergence—but there are ways of inviting it, for instance, by opening up inwardly to the possibility that such a dynamic may unfold and by refraining from any expectations that something specific should happen or by freeing oneself from the fear that surely it will all be way too much, will go wrong anyway, will go the same stupid way as always, or whatever the personal fears may be that we are all carrying around with us. And—with increasing experience with this mysterious phenomenon one slowly learns how to make conscious use of the many synchronicities that accompany emer-

gent processes, thus keeping a certain alertness for the unexpected alive in oneself. Sometimes the urgency of a situation can be very supportive to positive co-creation, and if there is an underlying trust that eventually there will be a solution, no feelings should be held back. Certainly, complacency and fear are discouraging emergence processes.

The strength of an emergence process is its collective nature. What comes up in such a way is usually not perceived as the idea of a single one person or a small group of persons, but as having emerged from a common ground. One person may be the first one able to verbally express the new insight, but at that time its gestalt had already been present—although not in a linguistic form—in other people's minds. It is supportive to the creativity of an emergence process if both those who are the first ones to find words for emerging phenomena and those who are still in the mode of trying to grasp what is going on have a shared understanding of the nature of this process: It is not a competition of individual ideas but a common process of empathically fathoming the intelligence of the collective field. Some emergence processes are fast and spontaneous, others take years to appear; so, working with emergence means to be very patient when stepping into a field where at the moment there simply does not seem to be happening anything. Obviously, it is not the right time yet. Emergence is linked to the quality represented by the Greek god Kairos, the god of the right moment. He is depicted as a bold man with a shock of hair hanging in his forehead: the saying ▶▶

that you have to take an opportunity by the forelock is derived from this representation of Kairos. If you are too slow, you will slip off the bold and shiny skin on the back of his head. And if Kairos simply does not appear, there is absolutely no sense in trying to surge ahead.

Delving Into Not-Knowing

According to our experience in Klein Jasedow, the more a person thinks she or he knows what should take place or should be done in the future the more unlikely it is that a positive process of emergence will take place. Allowing emergence means cultivating an attitude of not-knowing. Not-knowing does not mean that you have absolutely no idea about anything or that you are unwilling to set up a proper plan when this is required. It is rather an attitude of humbleness—letting go the idea that you can control your life or even other people's lives, letting go the idea that you as a human being are much wiser than the beings of the more-than-human world, commonly referred to as nature, and that you are able to fully analyse and scientifically describe the world. Not-knowing as an attitude is part of the Chinese concept of the Dao, but it can also be seen as part of a European tradition, for instance, the tarot card showing the fool or jester is dedicated to this universal quality.

Cultivating the Power of Letting-Be—»Lassenskraft«

The spirit of our age is a spirit of being active and doing: starting new projects, trying to get things

done or even trying to save the world. There is a spreading feeling that we are already in the eleventh hour and that if we don't get going right now everything will be lost. This often goes along with feelings of burnout and helplessness. As an antidote to this stop-and-go between high activity and frustrated powerlessness, the community in Klein Jasedow has begun to play with the German term »Lassenskraft« which could be translated as »power of letting-be« or »letting-be-ability«. We have discovered that it requires a lot of energy to refrain from doing certain things—not to give a lecture at the next conference, not to organise the next meeting, not to set up the next website or project-application, not to build the next house, or whatever it is that you have thought you are supposed to do; instead, you may feel an urge to follow the things that are really calling you, things that seem meaningful, relevant, fulfilling, the thing that just seems to be the right thing to do at a given moment. There are many small and large occasions where you can allow the power of letting-be to take over. Another layer of meaning of this multi-faceted term is the ability to simply leave things or people as they are without intervening in their own rhythms, processes, or styles, trusting that they are perfectly fine the way they are and do not need our improvement suggestions, however well-intended these may be.

The power of letting-be is a very active capacity and has nothing to do with giving up, being passive, loafing around, or acting irresponsibly. It is an inner practice in a world that is being constantly

overwhelmed by the dynamics of limitless economic growth, the eurocentristic fantasy of everlasting progress, the delusional assumption that everything in the world is feasible, manageable and fixable, or desperate attempts of fixing things that may be described as »helper syndrome«. Stepping back from this hybridic assumption on a personal level seems to be an important step in disintegrating the mental infrastructure of »faster«, »better«, and »more« that everyone socialised in western cultures has internalised from childhood on.

Letting-be can also mean to let something happen or develop which would have no chance in a thoroughly planned and organised setting. So it is closely related to inviting a process of emergence. Allowing the power of letting-be to unfold is rather an attitude than a method, but we list it here anyway, as a method of finding out what is really essential for each member of a learning community in rural Europe.

Guardianship

A way of organising the various fields of activities in Klein Jasedow is to take over guardianship for a certain area. There can be one guardian or a circle of several guardians, and the areas they look after can be rather small such as »I care for the laundry of the kitchen towels« or quite large such as »I care for the construction site of our half-timbered clay-straw house«.

A guardian feels a responsibility towards her or his field, but is not necessarily a »general manager«

who is always responsible for everything going on in a certain area or who needs to get it done all by her- or himself. Others are welcome to contribute, and the guardian will show them how to care for given resources and how to use them (see section on »Care-Use«). She or he will set up the rules of the game in that particular field. Guardianship is in some cases connected with specialised expertise, so the guardian will be able to guide others willing to help. Sometimes only a small circle of people have the ability to be guardians in a particular field. But generally if someone feels attracted to any area it should be possible to take over guardianship and learn what needs to be done. This means that guardianship is not an exclusive function, it does not mean carving out clear territories or »holding« an office—rather it is a mothering attitude towards a field of activity, and this is always something inclusive. But of course it is possible to wish to work alone for some time, and of course this often happens anyway as at a rural learning community there are potentially unlimited areas to care for but only a limited number of possible guardians.

Contributing guardianship is always a donation to the project, never a paid job. If there is money to be generated in one project that happens to provide a circle of its guardians with a basic income, this is welcome, but it is helpful to not directly relate this income to a certain amount of work that has been done in a given area; this makes it possible for us to stick to the principles of voluntariness and gifting which are essential aspects of the attitude of guardi-

anship. Guardians are invited not to overwork themselves and to call for help, if it gets too much, and to take responsibility to check whether their contributions feel like voluntary or compulsory work.

This, of course, is pure theory—in practice there are many situations where a guardian feels alone or overstrained with all the work that needs to be done in a given area. Asking the community for help in such situations and finding new guardians for areas that need more care—sometimes it may help already, if a sub-area can be taken over by someone else—are important fields of learning. It also eliminates the idea of failing: If a conventional manager doesn't get his job done she or he is a bad manager, but if a guardian is overstrained with the tasks that need to be done, she or he is not the one to blame or to feel bad about it—this simply calls for a change in the situation. Everyone defines her or his level of commitment to guardianship individually, and experience will show whether a specific area receives enough energy or asks for more care.

Another challenge is to refrain from honouring guardianship in a commercially or otherwise productive field of activities more than guardianship in fields of everyday chores.

Care-Using Resources

In Klein Jasedow, we have coined the term »care-use« to point out that, firstly, »caring« and »using« are inseparably intertwined activities and, secondly, that caring for a given resource necessarily precedes using its wealth. »Resource« (from Latin *resurgere*, ▶▶

welling up) is used here in the broadest sense. It does not only refer to soil, water, or money, but to any source from which nourishment may well up, including creativity, ease of mind, relationships, etc.

On the one hand, the guardian (see previous section) of a given field of activities may be understood to be its main care-user, may it be upkeeping the vegetable garden, caring for the heating system, doing accounting, ordering organic food from a wholesale company, baking bread once a week, keeping and tending the bees, running a workshop or a company, etc. On the other hand, caring personally for a given resource is not a prerequisite for using it. The contributions of individual community members are not directly linked to the fulfillment of their basic needs; and guardians are attracted to certain areas of care and responsibility by their personal inclination for and competence in certain activities. Everyone cares for certain areas to the best of her or his abilities and uses resources according to her or his needs, while being connected to the overall vision. Care-using also includes caring for yourself and not overusing your personal resources. This fine balance of care-using one's own personal resources is a constant field of learning in the community.

In indigenous subsistence cultures, care-use was a means of survival. A consequent attitude of care-use prevents humans from over-exploiting resources. The »Tragedy of the Commons«, as microbiologist Garret Hardin called a highly influential, albeit erroneously argued essay, is not, in fact, a tragedy of the commons but rather a tragedy of the

»un-managed commons«, as Hardin corrected himself in a follow-up essay, which, unfortunately, received considerably less attention.

Working Weeks in the Spirit of Gifting Economy

Since the community of Klein Jasedow started to build a traditional half-timbered clay-straw house, we have established a tradition of working weeks in the spirit of gifting economy. The setting is very simple: volunteers come for a limited period of time—one week, ten days, or longer—and help with practical work. At least one guardian of the project stays with them all the time and shows, instructs, and teaches them what needs to be done—and of course learns from them too. Another person accompanies the group all the time and cares for the social aspects, for example starting the day with an energiser or suggesting a storytelling-round in the evening. The group uses its own summer kitchen so that it will not interfere with the rest of the community, but on one evening the community invites the workers and will cook a nice meal for them. Also, on the first day, one of the community members will cook for the arriving group, but the rest of the time cooking will rotate among the volunteers. On the last day, the achievements of that particular small construction phase will be presented and honoured with a great »Thank you!« from the community, which benefits from all the voluntary work that has been done. Each group invents its own way of turning the presentation into a little ritual or celebration.

Usually, there is an ambitious goal for such a working week, but there is no pressure, if the goal cannot be reached. Although the guardian of the group asks for a high level of commitment, she or he would never boss around people and will invite everyone to find out which kind of work suits her or him best. The time spent together is about learning and integrating everyone's expertise and experience—and about enjoying the wonderful place and doing meaningful work in a group of likeminded people.

It is essential for such working weeks that no fee is paid by the volunteers. Although they learn a lot, for example, in the field of building with straw and clay, although the community supplies food and camping infrastructure this is not a paid workshop but a true voluntary service. This does away with the danger of unconscious expectations on the part of the organisers—Do the participants work enough?—as well as on the part of the participants—Is the programme worth its price? Have I learned enough?—, which can create pressure and all kinds of tensions. The fact that in this week everything is gifted creates a tremendous feeling of connectedness among everyone involved as well as between the volunteers and the place. They fully identify with their work and its results while keeping connected to the future steps of the project. Many participants have returned to another working week or have contributed to other projects of the community. Therefore, we strongly recommend that working sessions in the context of a learning community be organised

in such a spirit of complete voluntariness, commitment, and thankfulness. It will nourish both the place and those who have gifted their work.

Godparents to Visitors

A practice that turned out to be very useful in Klein Jasedow is to define a godparent for each visitor. If you do not have a general guest-programme in a learning community, there will always be the question of how to deal with guests who want to get to know the place for the first time. Having experienced that guests sometimes may feel lost in the midst of all the various activities and that the community members may not feel at home anymore when there are too many guests at one time, we only invite a visitor we do not know yet, if someone from the community is willing to be her or his godparent. Godparenthood includes caring for the guest-room, showing guests around, integrating them in practical work, and being attentive to questions or difficulties that may arise. Another advantage of defining changing godparents for each individual guest is that this will spread among the community members responsibilities of hospitality and that it will give everyone the feeling that guests are welcome and well cared for.

Re-Inventing Celebrations

Celebrations are a vital part of learning communities—may they be public or personal, spontaneous or based on long traditions. Creating enough room for the celebration may be difficult at places where

so much work needs to be done, but it is simply an essential part of life. Every place has to find its own styles and patterns of celebration. In Klein Jasedow, different layers have evolved: Once a year, the »Elder Flower's Fest« invites the local public as well as tourists to a small crafts-market, a café with homemade cake, and a creative childrens' programme. Attracting several hundreds of visitors, this is the most public festivity that strengthens connections to locals and attracts people from all social backgrounds. Then, there are celebrations that have become traditions of the region's alternative culture, such as the »Fish Soup on Midwinter's Eve« cooked over the campfire in the garden of an active elders-lady in the neighbouring village. To everyone involved in this regional network of alternative projects it is clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that this is the place to be on this night of the year. Establishing such traditions or taking part in such events set up by others is important in order to integrate a learning community in its socio-cultural environment.

But private feasting is no less important and meaningful for creating a protected, quiet space and finding out how exactly each individual goes about in making something happen that is joyful, nourishing, or even sacred for the whole community. In Klein Jasedow, there is a tradition of watering all the trees that we have planted for newborn children of the place—14 so far—in a silent procession all over the community's campus before having breakfast on Easter Sunday. This is a very simple act—loosely based on a German folk tradition—, but very pow- ▶▶

3.1.4 KLEIN JASEDOW

erful and connecting on many levels. Celebrating birthdays in different ways—more than two dozens throughout the year—can also be a playful way of creating wonderful meals, colourful events, and interrupting the daily business. Ways and styles of celebrating birthdays may be as diverse as the people who have them and are a wonderful opportunity of expressing and experiencing diversity.

Celebrations have always connected human beings to the change of the seasons. In western culture, there are not many traditions that have survived from times when rural life was not only a series of tasks and chores to be done but also a flow of celebrations around the year. Midsummer, midwinter, the equinoxes, or the cross-quarter days in between, which have been celebrated in Celtic traditions, provide occasions for reinventing small rituals or extensive celebrations. It seems helpful to pause at these moments of the year and to realise the changing vegetation and light—all this can connect people to their place and it can be done in simple and playful ways that do not need a religious context. **KJ**



The »Solar Mountain« in Sluňákov.

DECISIONMAKING AND ORGANISATION MANAGEMENT*Winter Staff Meeting*

This is a meeting of all the internal staff. Winter meeting is facilitated, includes a participatory impact analysis and reflection, setting goals, discussion on problem solutions and planning. Employees inform each other and the management about accomplishments and challenges. The meeting takes place on our premises and usually takes a whole day. The programme is set in advance and all the employees can contribute suggestions or run separate sessions. We always come back to the organisation's action plan and update it together. All the hard work culminates in an evening celebration with music and talks, good food and drinks.

External Tool: Umbrella Network Pavučina

Sluňákov is a member of the environmental education centres' umbrella organisation Pavučina (meaning »cobweb«). This network is a platform for feedback and discussion, and it is an important advisory organ. When a member organisation is facing a problem, they may address it through Pavučina's network mailing list or approach another member directly with a specific query. The exchange is very fruitful. We often submit grants or approach government organs together. Pavučina has regular member meetings in order to inform and to keep track of each other.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT*Lecturers' Skills*

Twice a year, a soft skills weekend training for volunteers as well as internal and external lecturers takes place on our premises. Lecturers will suggest topics they would like to deal with and together with the organisation's management they set the agenda. Lecturers, scientists, pedagogues, and expert professionals will be invited to give lectures or workshops.

Interviews with the Management

Once a year, in late autumn, there is a personal interview with each employee and the management. For each personal talk, a specific date and time, a personal supervisor and an agenda is set in advance. First, the employee gets an overall evaluation from the supervisor, then there is a discussion, which is lead by the director. The interviews are a secure platform for suggestions, evaluation and feedback from all the parties involved.

External Tool: Environmental Education Fair

Every year in September, the lecturers have an opportunity to attend an environmental education fair. It is a gathering of people from other environmental education centres, exchanging their experience, sharing news in the field of environmental education (e.g. grant opportunities, new legislations, pedagogical approaches). The centres can run a programme at the fair and test it with their fellow colleagues.

FACILITY AND VENUE MAINTENANCE*Vetřani*

All the staff, external lecturers, volunteers, and sympathisers are invited twice a year to help with a general cleanup and maintenance of our premises and facilities. In participating in this commoning event (see section on »Commoning«), they bring a breath of fresh air to Sluňákov, hence the name: *větrání* (ventilation). The premises of the Litovelske Pomoravi House of Nature, as well as our methodic materials and teaching resources are maintained, fixed, or tested. The evenings are dedicated to celebrations, interesting talks, and leisure time.

CSR

The venue is also maintained with the help of external corporations. This is managed directly, when a business approaches us, or via a web tool, that connects businesses with NGOs. Corporate employees who come for team building measures to Sluňákov may contribute manual as well as expert work. Such events are organised spontaneously, when a business contacts us or when a specific need arises (e.g. grass cutting before a community open day).

COMMUNITY BUILDING*Summer Staff Meeting*

The summer staff meeting is an informal gathering of all employees including the maintenance and the economic department. The aim is not to work but to spend time with each other.

Ball

Each year in February, we organise a masked ball at the Litovelske Pomoravi House of Nature. All current and former members staff are invited. The ball is also open to the public. There is a motto and a competition of masks. The event is the culmination of the annual community open day, which takes place during the day.

Christmas Dinner

Before the Christmas vacation, all members of staff meet for a Christmas dinner. All former employees and their children are invited as well. Everyone brings one present that is distributed by lottery, so that everyone will get a present from somebody else. Later in the evening, there will be a gig in Olomouc town centre, where we reflect on the previous year's accomplishments. The gig is open to all external lecturers and volunteers, our friends and partners as well as the general public.

Birthdays

We keep track of all employees' birthdays, have a fund for birthday presents, and celebrate birthdays together with tea and coffee.

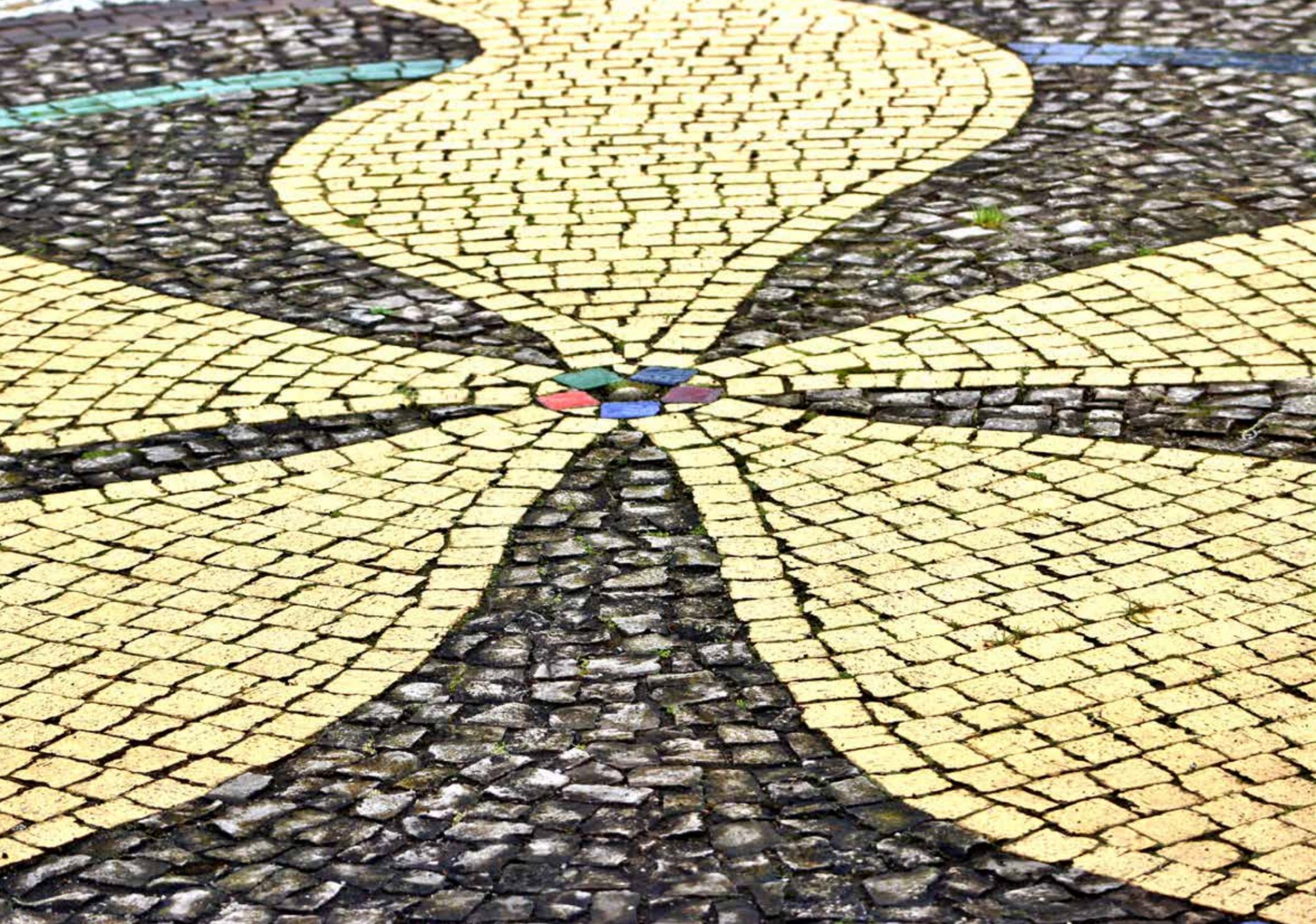
External Tool: Do Práce na Kole

The employees also attend various team happenings, e.g., the community competition »Do práce na kole« (bike to work) aimed at promoting sustainable means of mobility. The members of staff form several teams and compete with other organisations in various categories (distance, speed, looks, etc.).

Environmental Education

Sluňákov does not follow a specific methodological approach. The intention is to provide enough freedom for individuals to be able to carry out excellent work informed by personal interests while conveying a uniform vision of the organisation. We believe that our members of staff love to participate and co-create and that their joy is shared by visitors, pupils, and programme attendees.

However, we have participated in developing a learning tool: Real World Learning Model—a flexible approach to outdoor learning for sustainability, where each individual element of the educational process is important, but when delivered as a coherent whole, the tool might offer an even deeper learning experience. A detailed description is available at: www.rwlnetwork.org/rwl-model.aspx. **sl**



3.2 CHALLENGES AND ENCOURAGEMENTS

The examples of the five organisations authoring this handbook show that an ecosocial place of learning in rural Europe can have many faces: It can be based upon a non-profit organisation, upon a social business, upon a community or combine all three aspects. It may be part of a traditional rural culture or establish something new, it may use one central building or various infrastructure located in neighbouring villages.

What these places have in common is their holistic approach and their aim to be not in the first place a business or a community that cares for its own needs but a place that contributes to the resilience and wellbeing of the region as well as to the global research how to lead a fulfilling life within the boundaries of our small planet.

People of all ages are currently on their way all across Europe in order to visit such places, and some are inspired to start their own project of that kind. The following sections address challenges that founders of learning places usually meet. The encouragements and recommendations of how to deal with such challenges in a constructive way are derived from day to day practice. They are not meant as recipes to follow, because each situation is different and needs its own approach. They rather show which questions need to be answered in order to find individually coherent solutions.

Warning

Be aware of the danger of »retrotopian« romanticism! Develop historical awareness and find out who worked in the same field before you. You will learn a lot from their examples. Try to learn from those who tried but failed. Why was it, for instance, that the »life reform movements«—*Lebensreform*—of the 1920s and 1930s in Germany and other European countries could so easily be coopted, exploited, and perverted by the nascent fascist regimes of that time?

Be aware of the constant possibility of failure! But do not let yourself be paralysed by fears of failure. Failure can be the best teacher. There is nothing wrong in failing as long as we learn from it. What may seem as a failure at one point, may prove to be a chance at another point in time. This is a lesson history can teach us. This may, in fact, be one of the reasons why humans developed historiography.



Adele, ancestor of the commons-kitchen in Klein Jasedow.

How do we find the right people to start? How do we find a good place? What comes first—people or place?

Many small groups or individuals who dream about setting up an eco-social place of learning circle endlessly around these questions without ever getting started. Here are a few recommendations for this situation.

- ▶ Let go all expectations, but keep your vision alive. A vision can be differentiated from a fixed idea—with a set idea about the ideal people and the ideal place nothing creative will happen. However a vision can unfold into many forms. In case your vision is already too elaborate and tends to become a fixed idea you will not be able to see the most obvious possibilities that could open up the next door.
- ▶ Find out what you really, really want—what you feel should be your contribution to the world—and get started within whatever improvised or only temporal infrastructure there might be. Don't wait for ideal conditions. Any kind of activity that points towards the right direction will create resonances towards supportive friends or other visionaries who can join you.
- ▶ »We all want the same, therefore we are the perfect group to start a project«—this is a widespread myth! If it is all about what you and others want, and even if this is very similar—it will never be exactly the same—there will be conflicts about the common goal. Social cohesion grows from a different source than from what

you or others want, it grows from a dedication to something transcending the individuals. So investigate into the larger whole that the initiators feel they have to serve. This can be something very subtle, complex and multi-layered that is not written down anywhere but rather a spirit of the project.

- ▶ Nevertheless talk intensively about the wants and needs and invite everyone involved in the starting crew. What do you need to feel personally satisfied? Is your ability and possibility to give, to invest energy into something very demanding in harmony with your wish to create a paradise for myself? Setting up a place of learning, may it be an educational centre or a community, is always a gift to society. So each person involved will have to deal with the balance between the readiness to serve the project and the necessity to care for your own needs and wellbeing. It is helpful to look at both sides of this polarity—not as contradiction oppositions but as complementary aspects.
- ▶ Trust in the intelligence of places. They might find you instead of you finding them. Ask yourself which kind of attitude you may have to cultivate in order to be able to hear the calling of a place. Refrain from any missionary idea of you knowing exactly what is good to realise right here—only if you are able to deeply listen you may find out what the place is longing for.
- ▶ Trust in the flow of the time and in the power of Kairos, the classical Greek god of the »right mo-

ment«. Take him by the forelock as soon as he appears, and be patient if he is not yet in sight—even if it seems to take longer than you feel you can stand.

- ▶ Try to understand the history of the development of the place. You are not implementing your project in a virgin land, your actions have to be in harmony with the past actions which have happened on that territory before you came. It doesn't matter if you like or not what has happened there before you arrived—your future life is built on that foundation which physically and spiritually will influence your life.

3.2.3 VISIONARIES AND FOLLOWERS

If you have a strong vision about creating a project like a learning community in rural Europe this will create followers—people who join you on your way, who would not have started something like this by themselves but who want to be part of the project. This will inevitably raise all questions around leadership and can be an endless source of conflict.

- ▶ Be aware of this phenomenon. Even if you prefer non-hierarchical structures and co-creative processes: there will always be gradients in commitment or in energy-levels among the people involved. As in any challenging project there will be strong personalities who have their rough edges. The situation may be easier for a non-profit situation with a clear leading team than for a forming community, but in whatever constellation you may be it will be challenging to balance the energies of the initial pioneers and the consolidators—those who join later. Be aware, that pioneers and consolidators essentially need each other.
- ▶ As a founder, be clear about how far you are ready to let your initial ideas change and evolve and about the essential basis that must not get lost! Ask the others for their accordance of your role of being a guard for these essentials.
- ▶ As someone who joined in later, respect the original vision but don't hesitate to unfold your own power of creation! Trust in a constructive process of different creative impulses.
- ▶ Some will prefer a faster pace, others a slower mode of development. Address the question of

speed so that neither the fast people feel totally blocked nor the slower ones feel overrun.

- ▶ Enjoy the different talents and energies of the team or community members, celebrate diversity! Don't try to make everyone the same, but value all qualities the same—even if they seem to be opposing. Someone who is able to talk and represent the project is not more important than someone who cares for the integration of different personalities or is good at organising practical things. Create an atmosphere of appreciation of all the contributions to the project.
- ▶ Reflect on decisionmaking processes! No matter if you choose a clear structure or enter a co-creative, fluid process: invest into the culture of finding good decisions in your project as much as you can.
- ▶ Ask from the very beginning how the project can be inherited to a younger generation! If you create infrastructure in rural Europe and establish a way of care-using it, this can be the beginning of a tradition that carries on much longer than the lifetime of the founders.
- ▶ Be prepared that the project will have his own life! The impact of the project might be bigger, and the outcome may be different from your initial expectation. As more people will be involved you'll have less and less control over the developments, and you just can hope—like in the case of your children—that the »first seven years« will have a deep formative influence on the biography of the project.



»Klanghaus« Klein Jasedow

To set up a place of learning in rural Europe from a capitalistic point of view is—plainly speaking—economical nonsense. What these places have to »sell« usually does not have a price on the market. It is in no way a means of creating a financial return on investment. Its founders have a different intention than making money. Nevertheless they want to achieve economic stability. This usually proves to be very challenging.

It is helpful to differentiate between three economic approaches: social entrepreneurship, funding for charitable objectives, and gifting economy. All three are helpful, and depending on the structure of the project it may be appropriate to use all three approaches. But it is important to consider that they all have their own logics and laws and it will become difficult if these logics get mixed up.

- ▶ Gifting economy comprises all the unpaid care-work that is given to the project, and it is the very basis of most learning communities in rural Europe. Residents at the place and volunteers or interns contribute invaluable loads of work. Find good conditions for this voluntary work through appreciation, thankfulness, board and lodge and participation of everyone gifting. Make sure no one feels exploited. It may be necessary to organise a basic income for someone who wants to contribute all of his or her energy for a longer period of time. This can have different sources, it may come from the non-profit as well from a business area—and that it is paid does not mean that the mode of gifting has to change. For people

connected with the project who work idealistically it may be helpful to decouple payment and work. This helps to stay in the voluntary mode of contributing and to establish relationships on eyelevel instead of having a boss and employees. Thus money can also be part of a gifting economy, but this needs a lot of reflection on the mental patterns usually connected with money.

- ▶ Get clear about which areas of the project do charitable, non-profit-work—may it be nature conservancy, streetwork or the education of children—and ask for donations for these parts of the project among your supporters. Private donations are always best as there are no strict liabilities connected to it. If you apply for public money or donations from foundations you will have to spend it in a given time in a specified way which demands considerable administration. If however you can handle this it is of course advisable to invest in fundraising and to apply for grants in any programme that matches your activities.
- ▶ If there are products, trainings or other services to sell, apply all the rules of social market economy: Design a solid business plan, do regular controlling, invest in marketing. Research all the possibilities of solidarity economy—business models like community supported agriculture can be very inspiring to establish financial sustainability without necessarily having to compete on the market. Be aware that your business is risky and think twice before you take up a loan from the bank. A social business in a rural area

indeed can sustain itself but usually will have a hard job paying debt service. If large amounts of money are needed, try to fundraise them or try crowdfunding. Keep your business as small and clearly arranged as possible, don't allow a risky situation endanger the entire project.

- ▶ The most important economic investment is into relationships, into the network of supporters, friends, volunteers, participants of trainings or other learning-events and all other areas that create connectedness. In case of a crisis many people in your well cared for networks will be ready to help if they identify with the project and trust in the people running it.

Property

An eco-social place of learning usually owns property. Carefully design the owning corporation: Is collective or individual ownership appropriate? Who takes over the responsibilities connected with ownership? Should the place be owned by a democratic structure like an association or a cooperative? What happens if the intention of that corporation changes over time so that it starts to oppose the intention of the founders? Who will inherit the structures? A possibility to detach ownership from changing interests of individuals or a collective is to set up a trust which is only bound to its aims written down in the statutes. Depending on the political situation it is rather demanding to set up such an independent structure, it requires a considerable amount of administration and fundraising.

Jobs

Working with employees paid freelancers raises many questions. Initiators need a sound concept of how to make a living financially—especially if they want to live on the site of their learning project. Will they have companies or charitable organisations which employ everyone? Will people work mainly for other clients to make a living and contribute their energy to the project for free? Which jobs generate money, which don't? Are there differences in the amounts of salaries and fees? Will it be appropriate to engage employees who are not part of the project's core team and most certainly have a different vision than the group of founders?

In order to answer these questions it will be helpful to consider that the person or the group who is responsible for paying others—like the GM or members of the management—will be in a position of power. A relationship which was on an eye-level basis in the project's initial phase of voluntary work will become different as soon as one of the team becomes responsible to pay the others. Then it is important to check: What does this situation mean to you? Is a payment bound to a certain amount of work or is it a »basic income« that helps to survive and to contribute to the project on one's own authority? Who is responsible for generating income? How does the group react and interact if the income is too small to feed everyone? Is everyone her or his own boss or are there leadership structures? Who takes on leadership responsibility for external employees who have to be guided in a responsible manner?

Economic Responsibility

In a group of founders there will be different abilities to take on economical responsibility. There is nothing bad about it. Some are natural born entrepreneurs, others not, some have experience in accounting for large sums, others never have had money in their account. Try not to value one experience higher than the other, but embrace diversity. If the courageous and the cautious put their intelligence together a good solution will come up. Don't urge someone into a responsible position she or he can't cope with. Be aware of power structures that may evolve around people who have the ability to take on economical responsibility. Can their work be understood as a gift to the community? How are decisions made that have financial consequences for everyone or a certain group of people?

Be sure that whoever joins the project is ready to turn over the switch in his mind from the consumer society vision to something else. People who join the project have to be ready to accept the hard reality of rural life. It is not about romantic evenings watching the sunset—like many city dwellers are misunderstanding life in the countryside—, instead it is hard work in cooperation with fellows and nature, albeit less stressful than in the town.

The economical integration of the project into the larger societal circuits it is also a big challenge. It may be essential to develop smooth relations with the surrounding economical system. But rather beware of becoming dependent from them!

How will our neighbours react to a new learning place in the countryside? Will the local authorities support or fight you? All over Europe there is the saying that rural people are stubborn, close-lipped and conservative, not welcoming newcomers—which in fact is not true at all as long as you don't intend to colonise them. Put down any prejudice about rural people—each village, each community, each person is different, and barriers can easily be overcome by practising direct contact.

In most cases good neighbourhood will develop with people you daily or weekly interact with in a friendly, inviting manner, without confronting them with a any kind of ideology and without any special method—just be who you are and open up for the others. Problems may rather arise with people that don't have close contact with the new group. They will ask, are you a sect? What do you want to change? What kind of folks will you attract? Be prepared for any crazy rumour, but don't try to fight it—it will cease when people experience that nothing happens that worries or bothers them.

Consider the following recommendations and take them as an inspiration to find out about your particular ways:

- ▶ Engage in local politics and local associations like the fire brigade. If there is someone in the group of initiators who is a good moderator she or he is predestinated to become part of the parliament of the municipality or a member of one of its committees. Be ready to contribute your knowhow to the municipality. This can be quite

timeconsuming, but it is a perfect door opener—as long as you refrain from pressing your mission upon your colleagues.

- ▶ Identify the visionaries among the local people, listen deeply to their dreams and find out the match between your and their visions. Offer your support and make yourself trustworthy while you participate in their projects.
- ▶ Find out about local powerstructures established by large companies like the agricultural industry or a mining corporation. Landgrabbing is a heavy issue in rural Europe. Don't underestimate these powers, you need a large network of confederates if you plan to negotiate with them or to organise resistance.
- ▶ Organise events that are attractive to different groups of neighbours. Find out what people would like, maybe there is a tradition which was lost in the past and can be revived together with the older people of the village. Offer programmes for local kids and youth and connect with their parents.
- ▶ Connect with other eco-social groups, honour and respect what they already have achieved, try to integrate in existing structures and facilitate exchange and networking. People who build up ecological or social projects in the countryside often are overworked and therefore don't have a lot of time to spend in external meetings—especially as long as you haven't proved that you are able to bring things down to earth. Nevertheless newcomers sometimes can offer new oppor-

tunities to meet in a wider context, e.g. suggest an open space workshop to think about possibilities of exchange and support among »space pioneers« in the local region.

- ▶ Be aware that we are living in a changing world. It is clear that the urbanisation of the rural area sooner or later will touch its limits. Get conscious about the possibility that then you might represent a model for your neighbours, and take this into account for all your actions. But do refrain from trying to convince anybody about this—you are not a missionary! Do your job and love your neighbours.
- ▶ Buy land.

To start a new project like a learning community in the European countryside will be demanding in any respect. It will especially ask for a high level of commitment and persistence from everyone involved. What can help to not run out of steam?

- ▶ Examine yourself thoroughly if you are ready to root yourself in the place. How does it feel to grow old here? This does not in every case mean that you should commit yourself once and for all to stay at the given place but rather that you are ready to see no fixed endpoint—you are ready so spend many years here. Will the landscape, the people, the work that can be carried out at this place nourish you in a way that you can imagine to stay for many years, to see no end on the timeline in front of you? Many things evolve only during decades—are you ready to let this happen?
- ▶ Not everyone is made for settledness. Accept that there are travellers who have to move from place to place to follow their rhythm of life. Don't be disappointed when they leave. If only a small group connects to a place in an open-end-way this is already a great achievement. Rootedness will give you the energy to sustain and to cope with any crisis.
- ▶ Think regularly of your death. What would this mean for your project at any given time? Have you cared for successors younger than yourself? Are you ready to let go—or are you addicted to the idea to fulfil everything by yourself? Plant trees and watch them grow—can you stand the truth that you will never see them in full size?

Imagine the many people enjoying them in 100 or 200 years.

- ▶ Celebrate your achievements in a way that nourishes your community and the place. Be grateful to everyone who and everything that enabled a next step and express this in a wonderful festivity. This helps to see that the glass always is half full and not half empty.
- ▶ Practise unending patience. Everything will take much longer than you expect.
- ▶ Be prepared that you will have a lot of frustrations—but never give up! If something doesn't work—find new ideas! Be sure that you never run out of ideas. Remember that you are on the right side of history—and that you have many fellows all over the world. Try to stay in contact with those people, and you will get the power to continue.



Noting down ideas for the handbook.



APPENDIX

Millions of change agents worldwide including LCRE like ours are eagerly trying to find viable ways for the transition from the present consumerist world—based on overuse of the planet's resources—into a sustainable world of a good life for all which keeps within the planetary boundaries. Encouraging headway continues to be made in many areas, and the progress achieved—and damage prevented—are undoubtedly important. Yet the many global challenges reflect systemic, structural problems that remain stubbornly intact, in spite of many efforts to spur lasting change. The power of vested interests and the inertia of entrenched political institutions often prevent major inroads.

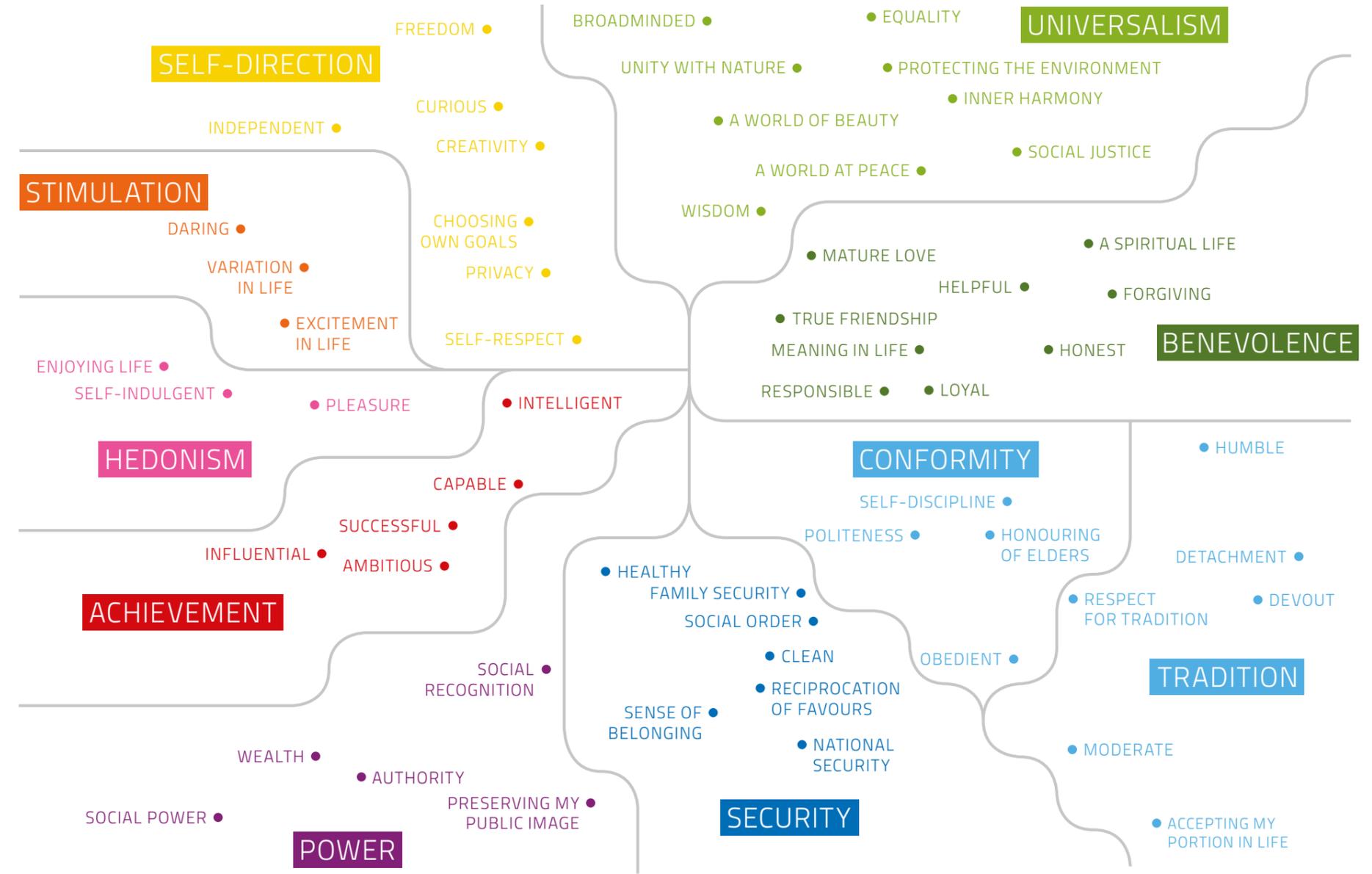
One of the most neglected factors in pushing for change is the set of values that motivate people—which represent a strong driving force behind many of our attitudes and behaviours. Repeatedly in this book we speak about our values, and we are convinced that any learning community to successfully bring about change at least in their home region has to define their set of values on which they base their attitude towards life.

Examining these values more closely reveals some deep connections between seemingly different issues—and a wealth of opportunities to bring about lasting, systemic change. In both action and thought, people are affected by a wide range of influences. Past experience, cultural and social norms, and the money at our disposal are some of the most important. Connected to all of these, to some extent, are our values—which represent a strong guiding

force, shaping our attitudes and behaviour over the course of our lives. Our values have been shown to influence our political persuasions; our willingness to participate in political action; our career choices; our ecological footprints; the amount of resources we use, and for what purpose; and our feelings of personal wellbeing. Following decades of research and hundreds of cross-cultural studies, psychologists have identified a number of consistently-occurring human values. Early researchers into human motivations discovered a surprising consistency in the things people said they valued in life. After testing this finding many times and across many countries and cultures, they put together a list of repeatedly occurring values. Rather than occurring randomly, these values were found to be related to each other. Some were unlikely to be prioritised strongly at the same time by the same individual; others were often prioritised strongly at the same time.

The researchers mapped this relationship according to these associations, as presented opposite. The closer any one value »point« is to another, the more likely that both will be of similar importance to the same person. By contrast, the further a value is from another, the less likely that both will be seen as similarly important. This does not mean that people will not value both cleanliness and freedom, for example—rather, they will in general tend to prioritise one over the other.

Although this map is rather general it fits in many respects to what we as LRCE came across during our work.



A BRIEF DIGRESSION TO VALUES

Based on these patterns of association—as well as their broad similarities—the set of values were then classified into the ten groups listed here.

The ten groups of values can be divided along two major axes, as shown on the right:

- ▶ Self-enhancement (based on the pursuit of personal status and success) as opposed to self-transcendence (generally concerned with the well-being of others);
- ▶ Openness to change (centred on independence and readiness for change) as opposed to conservation values (not referring to environmental or nature conservation, but to »order, self-restriction, preservation of the past and resistance to change«).

Much of the ongoing research on values simply supports some commonsense, intuitive ideas. Some values or motivations are likely to be associated; others less so. When we are most concerned for others' welfare, we are very unlikely to be strongly interested in our own status or financial success (and vice versa). When we are at our most hedonistic or thrill-seeking, we are unlikely simultaneously to be strongly motivated by respect for tradition. But it also reveals that these relationships are not unique to our culture or society. They seem to recur, with remarkable consistency, all over the world.

We have excerpted this short overview from »The Common Cause Handbook«, published under a Creative Commons license by the Public Interest Research Centre (<http://publicinterest.org.uk>).

Universalism
Understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.

Benevolence
Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact.

Tradition
Respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self.

Conformity
Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.

Security
Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self.

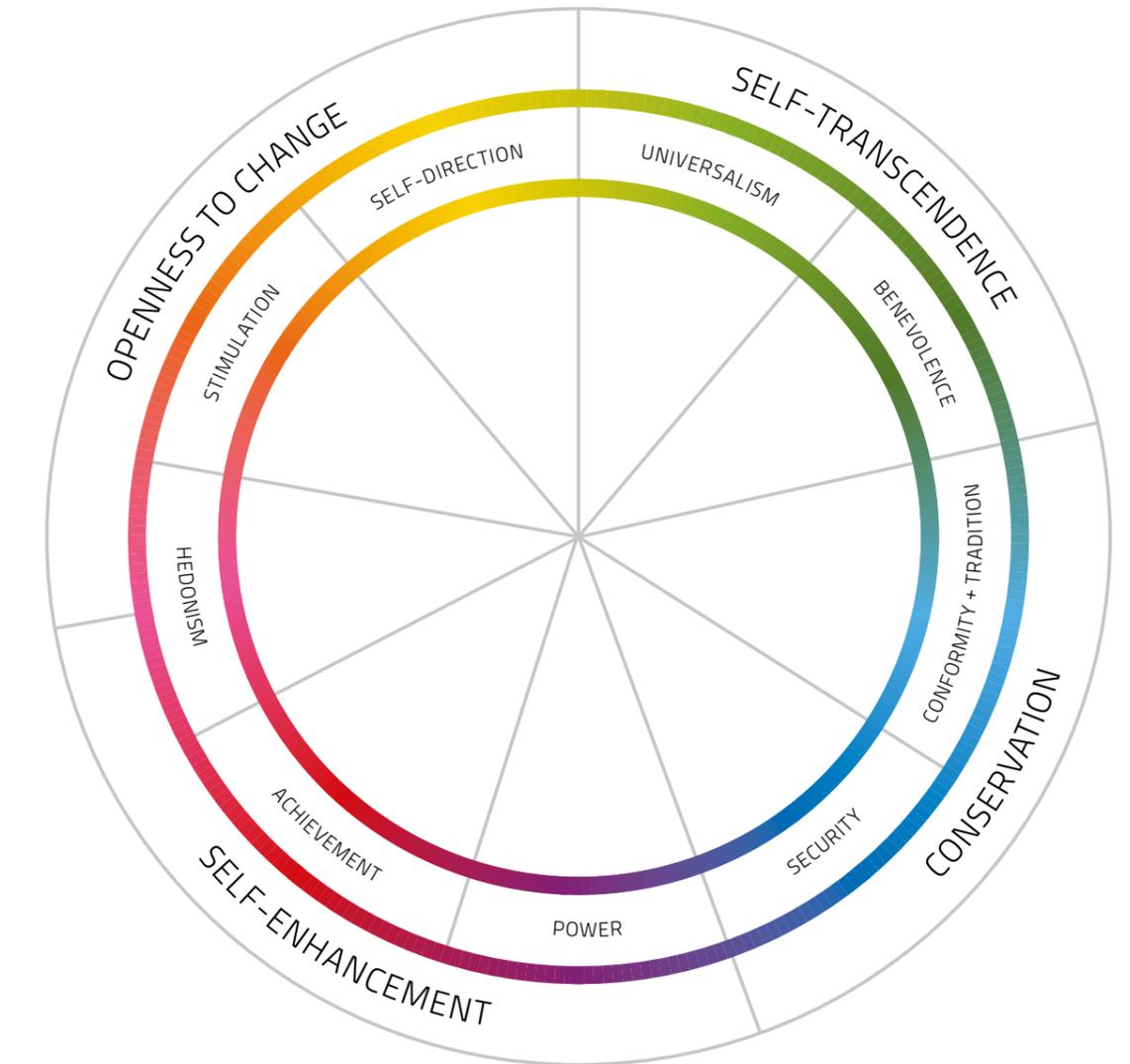
Power
Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.

Achievement
Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.

Hedonism
Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself.

Stimulation
Excitement, novelty and challenge in life.

Self-direction
Independent thought and action—choosing, creating, exploring.



- Abram, David: *The Spell of the Sensuous. Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, New York: Vintage Books, 1996.
- Alexander, Christopher et al.: *A Pattern Language. Towns, Buildings, Construction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1977.
- Barlow, Maude: *Our Water Commons. Toward a New Freshwater Narrative*, Ottawa, Canada: Council of Canadians, 2008. (available online from: www.canadians.org/sites/default/files/publications/water%20commons%20-%20web.pdf)
- Bauman, Zygmunt: *Community. Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001.
- *Retrotopia*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017.
- Bennholdt-Thomsen, Veronika/Mies, Maria: *The Subsistence Perspective. Beyond the Globalised Economy*, London: Zed Books, 2000.
- Berry, Wendell: *The Unsettling of America. Culture and Agriculture*, San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1977.
- Blom, Philipp: *Was auf dem Spiel steht*. München: Hanser, 2017.
- Bollier, David and Silke Helfrich (eds.): *The Wealth of the Commons. A World Beyond Market and State*, Amherst, MA: Levellers Press, 2013.
- *Patterns of Commoning*, Amherst, MA: Levellers Press, 2015.
- Broad Robin/John Cavanagh: *Reframing Development in the Age of Vulnerability: from case studies of the Philippines and Trinidad to new measures of rootedness*, *Third World Quarterly*, 32: 1127–1145, 2011.
- Brown, Katrina: *Resilience, Development and Global Change*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Carlow, Vanessa Miriam/Institute for Sustainable Urbanism ISU, TU Braunschweig (eds.): *Ruralism. The Future of Villages and Small Towns in an Urbanizing World*. Berlin: Jovis, 2017.
- European Conference on Rural Development: *The Cork Declaration («A living countryside»)*. Towards an integrated rural development policy, LEADER magazine, issue 13, winter 1997. (Available online from: www.ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leader2/dossier_p/en/dossier/cork.pdf)
- European Union: *The Cork Declaration 2.0. A Better Life in Rural Areas*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016. (Available online from: www.enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/cork-declaration_en.pdf)
- Fischer, Andy: *Radical Ecopsychology. Psychology in the Service of Life*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2013.
- Fremaux, Isabelle/Jordan, John: *Les sentiers de l'utopie*, Paris: La découverte, 2012.
- Graber, David: *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value. The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*, New York: Palgrave, 2001.
- *The Utopia of Rules. On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy*, New York: Melville House, 2015.
- Gray, Peter: *Free to learn. Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life*, New York: Basic Books, 2013.
- Hardin, Garrett: »The Tragedy of the Commons«. *Science*. 162 (3859), p. 1243–1248, 1968.
- »The Tragedy of the Unmanaged Commons«. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*. 9 (5): 199, 1994.
- Holmgren, David: *Permaculture. Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability*, Holmgren Design Services, 2002.
- Hopkins, Rob: *The Transition Handbook. From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience*, Cambridge: Green Books, 2008.
- Hyde, Lewis: *The Gift. Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, New York: Random House, 1983.
- Illich, Ivan: *Energy and Equity*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.
- *Shadow Work*. Salem, New Hampshire, and London: Marion Boyars, 1981.
- Kurt, Hildegard: *Die neue Muse. Versuch über die Zukunftsfähigkeit*, Klein Jasedow: thinkOya, 2017.
- Linebaugh, Peter: *The Magna Carta Manifesto. Liberties and Commons for All*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.
- Macartney, Tim: *Finding Earth, Finding Soul. The Invisible Path to Authentic Leadership*, Cambridge: Green Books 2007.
- Ostrom, Elinor: *Governing the Commons. The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Sebald, W.G.: *Unheimliche Heimat. Essays zur österreichischen Literatur*, Frankfurt/Main: Fischer 1995.
- Snyder, Gary: *The Practice of the Wild*, Berkeley: Counterpoint, 1990.
- The Prince of Wales: *Harmony. A New Way of Looking at Our World*, London: Harper Collins, 2010.
- Wampole, Christy: *Rootedness. The Ramifications of a Metaphor*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.
- Weber, Andreas: *Enlivenment. Towards a fundamental shift in the concepts of nature, culture and politics*, Berlin: Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2013. (available online from: www.boell.de/sites/default/files/enlivenment_vo1.pdf)
- *Biology of Wonder. Aliveness, Feeling and the Metamorphosis of Science*, Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2016.
- Vaughan, Genevieve: *For-Giving. A Feminist Criticism of Exchange*, Austin: Plainview Press, 1997.
- Weil, Simone: *The Need for Roots. Prelude to a Declaration of Duties towards Mankind*, London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1952.
- Of some of the authoring LCRE movies can be downloaded from the websites indicated:
- »A Learning Community in Change«
Documentary about Embercombe by Alexander Post
<https://youtu.be/nwZOXDsT6d8>
- »Whom Guided By The Stars«
Documentary about reviving the rural areas of Transylvania
www.kurzlink.de/GuidedByStars
- »The Children's Fire«
Talk by Mac Macartney
www.youtube.com/watch?v=otrkAY39M5g
- »The Twin Trail«
Talk by Mac Macartney
<http://youtu.be/izkLOvJaRVg>



Embercombe
Higher Ashton
Exeter
EX6 7QQ
United Kingdom

<https://embercombe.org>
info@embercombe.org
+44.1647.252983



Focus Eco Center
Crinului 22.
Târgu Mureș 540343
Romania

<http://en.focuseco.ro>
focusecocenter@gmail.com
+40.0265.262170
+40.0744.774897



Garten der Generationen
Dörflein 10
3130 Herzogenburg
Austria

www.gartendergenerationen.net
info@gartendergenerationen.net
+43.676.9221433



Europäische Akademie der Heilenden Künste e.V.
Klein Jasedow
Am See 1
17440 Lassan
Germany

www.eaha.org
cs@eaha.org
+49.38374.75227



Sluňákov

Sluňákov
centrum ekologických aktivit města Olomouce, o.p.s.
Skrbeňská 669/70
783 35 Horka nad Moravou
Czech Republic

www.slunakov.cz
info@slunakov.cz
+420.585.154711



