

Editorial by Katrien Van Den Berge

We have the happy news to announce you that we have a new supportive member from the GEN conference in Switzerland.

Grundstein in Northern Germany, represented at the conference by Michel René van Amsterdam, is a spiritual community of 7 adults and 2 children next to the Baltic Sea. The residents always felt a strong connection with the countries around the Baltic Sea because they are directly located at and looking over the Baltic Sea. The Baltic Ecovillage Network is what Michel and his community were waiting for.

They started 12 years ago as a

group of artists and healers and concentrated first on a homeopathic research project. They wanted to work interdisciplinary and by surprise could rent a formal youth centre with seminar rooms, kitchens and accommodation for 92 persons partly in 15 cute wooden houses. The accommodation can also be rented by like-minded individuals and groups. Around and in between the houses are 2,5 hectares of land.

They became a formal non-profit association and for the moment they are still more a social-cultural centre than an ecovillage. Currently, Grundstein is planning to become an educative, environmentally friendly project, es-

pecially with the new to build housing. They have plans to revise also the old housing in more ecofriendly buildings.

The residents in Grundstein are continuously looking towards the North over the Baltic Sea and therefore the Baltic is more their natural focus than towards other German communities. A visiting Geomant once said that the energy from the Baltic Sea is entering Germany at their place and from there spreading to the rest of Europe. It is definitely a special place with a strong connection to the Baltic Sea, and now for real connected with the countries around it!

So a warm welcome for Grundstein!

What is Happening

• Baltic Kin's Domain Forum

This event took place from 2nd to 4th August in Latvia. The first day was focused in Anastasia books, the second day had several presentations and talks, meditation, singing and dancing, among other activities and in the final day, participants shared their knowledge about themes like organic gar-

dening, permaculture, natural building, beekeeping, wild herbs, etc..

• Training Opportunity for Nordic-Baltic Ecovillages

One Youth in Action course "Erasmus Plus, What's the fuss? A Nordic Baltic Partner Building Adventure" 1-5 December 2013 in Iceland will increase

knowledge of Erasmus + and increasing the competence of youth workers who have experienced Youth in Action so that they can develop projects and apply in the 1st deadline of 2014. 1 representative per organization, 3 pax per country.

Application deadline: 6 September 2013. Before applying please contact the YiA national agency.

Estonian Ecovillage Network Meeting, Lilleoru by Kadri Allikmäe



This year, from 23rd-25th of August Estonian ecovillage network gathering took place in Lilleoru community nearby Tallinn. This summer we had a little bit smaller gathering than usual, but still altogether 120 people participated. Not all of those 120 people came from communities, but we could say that this was the gathering of all those people who are really interested in establishing

communities.

We all gathered in Lilleoru community, that celebrates also it's 20 years of existence this year. Lilleoru is also a place where Estonian ecovillage network got started in 2006. So it was nice to be back. The organisation Estonian Ecovillage Network was officially formed only at 2008, but the first idea was born already at 2006 in Lilleoru and since then

we have met every year throughout all Estonia. Sometimes in communities, sometimes in community-like places or on the grounds of ecovillage initiatives, learning together about ecovillages, permaculture, social tools and research on this topic.

More cooperation is needed

This year our gathering focused on the theme of "cooperation". We had workshops about cooperation with plants, cooperation with other people and also oneself (based on the experience of Ave Oit from Lilleoru). Also sharing circles of different community initiatives took place and we got a much better picture of all this beautiful change of culture that is going on all around our country. As a network we again realised that we need to support these initiatives much more and help resources reach the people, because there are also people who offered land, but they don't have people with good ideas. That is why we plan to develop a map of all ecovillage initiatives and other related resources in the coming years.

Many performers also brought out how rich the ecovillage movement is and how much more we could share this beauty that is already created either in Estonia in different locations or in international ecovillages abroad. Journalist Riina Luik was sharing her experiences of GEN Europe conference in Switzerland and pointed out that we should cooperate much more also with the media and the schoolsystem (via Gaia Education) to get our message across. Riina also said that Estonian Ecovillage Network should act as a voice of sustainable future and promote the idea of schoolgardens again that used to be in every school once.

Filmproducer Artur Talvik made an inspiring speech about how to motivate a normal, local community and enliven the life in the countryside.

One of our main performers Kaidi Tamm (from Lilleoru) made an interesting overview about different social forces that influence development of sustainability in a society. She was presenting her doctoral thesis about ecovillages and the cooperation of governmental and non-governmental organisations on the example of Estonia, Germany and Portugal. She was saying that NGO-s working towards sustainable future are not cooperating enough to get their message across to the governmental level and that's also a

reason why solutions of sustainability are not widespread. The economic sector is strong in lobbying. On the other hand the NGO sector that supports the values of sustainability and culture is not so strong because of being so fragmental. So governments don't take NGO-s as an equal partner in comparison to the economic sector. That is why good ideas on sustainability (that actually governments seek) don't reach them. "To make a change, NGO-s, also ecovillages and other organisations working towards sustainable world, should cooperate much more", Kaidi said. Actually the government and local municipality have all the readiness to consider the ideas of sustainability that have developed on the grassroots level, but conversations on this need much higher quality and the NGO sector should become an equal partner for governments and economic organisations on the matter of sustainability. "More infosharing and cooperation and the civil society will be stronger. Being just a seminar center and a hub for new technologies is a solution too slow within the ecological crisis of today," Kaidi said. "The task of everyone towards the course of a sustainable future is to build bridges and act as a translator inbetween different sectors of the society. The opposing attitude many ecological communities have chosen does not act as a good base for cooperation for governments where a lot of big solutions could actually come to life."

A rich programme, also for children

This year we had also a self-organising childrens programme. In Lilleoru there is a very nice area dedicated just for children, a strawbale roundhouse with games and toys and a nice terrace where we could do some handicraft with children. In cooperation with the children of Lilleoru we also organised a 2-hour long adventure-game on the territory of Lilleoru, where children (divided into 3 "communities") had to search for pieces of information how to get to the next location and on the way they had to cooperate. We helped a little bit in the garden, did some artwork, went to the lake and sang together in the teepee. The 2 main organisers of the whole event, Ave Oit and Toivo Aalja from Lilleoru also stood up as native americans there in the teepee where we finished with sharing and singing together.

From the social point of view for

grown-ups we had a very rich musical programme, where Kati Lumiste with her strong, yet fairylike voice was singing improvisational earth and community songs together with Silver Sepp who instead improvised and performed his self-written songs with self-made instruments (there was for instance a tree-like instrument made with a thin trunk of a tree and sticks that he played with the fiddlebow (violin stick) and old plastic bowls of different



sizes made into drums with water), then an interesting drum-organ constructed of toilet tubes, a harp attached to a guitar etc. On Saturday night Arne Lauri (MC Arjuna) took us on a musical ride through the ancient cultures of the world and in the cold night of Estonian August (this year almost 0 degrees, though the days were really nice, warm and sunny) a lot of us ended up dancing "eco-disco" until 2:30 am with the improvisational sounds of Arjuna, beats and sounds of different parts of the planet.

On the last day of our gathering we elected a new board for our organisation.

Two of our previous board members Riinu Lepa and Liis Luik stepped down. Ave Oit, Ele Koppel, Liina Järviste, Ullo-Ragnar Telliskivi and Madis Masing will continue and also new board members Kadri Allikmäe and Kristina Paškevičius joined.

What people liked the most about the gathering of this year was of course the atmosphere of the whole event, a real possibility to cooperate on the second day by helping in the garden (everybody was helping). As Toivo Aalja said: "From this year's gathering I liked the positive attitude and readiness of people to act with this new paradigm. We saw how many different people and places are ready to take care of Gaia and also look more into themselves. And of course this meeting gave encouragement to continue with already existing initiatives more actively. Inspiring examples were from Artur Talvik

(a film producer and an initiator in a local village), from a journalist Riina Luik (who also participated at the GEN Europe event and inspired people with sharing how to cooperate more with the media) and also from Lilleoru community itself. An important sign is also that the local municipality representatives were present). This year's gathering offered cooperation in theory and practice in a good proportion, we enjoyed good moments also with great food by the cooks of Lilleoru, experienced many healing moments (with sharings and sweatlodge), the concert of Kati and Silver and an ecodisco from Arjuna. In the end almost 30 people participated also in an excursion of a close-by Pahkla Camphill Village that was following the gathering. Pahkla Village provides milk products for Lilleoru and is also living as a community of people."

This year, out of all years, we came once more back to what we stand for: The main aim of our organisation is still to support the emergence of a just and ecological world by enhancing the creation and development of ecovillages in Estonia. We might seemingly do it very slow but we are very determined. And this has been a good learning process. We have also had to meditate on this beautiful african proverb a lot:

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

In the end we believe that in the right time, when we are all ready, everything will happen. We have shared the idea and inspiration from other European ecovillages, done our own steps to improve this movement in Estonia and we will continue supporting the growth of a new culture.

See more pictures about our event [here](#).

GEN Conference 2013, Shweibenalp by Monika Podsiadła

This year, GEN Conference took place on July, from 7-12th at the heart of the Swiss Centre of Unity in Shweibenalp. Amazing place, with snow-capped alpine mountains on one side and blue Lake Brienz on the other.

The conference was conducted by Macaco Tamerice, Zoltan Hosszu, Robin Alfred and Kosha Joubert. A record number of people came to this meeting (over 300), and also a record number of countries (as many as 51!). This result was received with great enthusiasm and joy of all present.

The weekly meeting was scheduled in parallel with various other meetings and workshops. Many great actors, social activists, academics, trainers, thinkers, writers and designers have shared with us many years of experience, knowledge and skills). Workshops and meetings with these people were so attractive that it was very difficult to make decisions about participating in any of them, and often regretfully resign from the other...

Presented at the conference were wonderful, inspiring projects, activities in different countries and the experience of people in different fields: social, environmental, economic, etc.. Political issues were also discussed, as well as what is currently happening in the countries cov-

ered by the turmoil of riots or wars...

The number of people joining and supporting GEN increases every year. GEN, as an international organization and a center where many strong opinions and ideas are brought, is also in-

creasing influence on local politics in different countries. One of the objectives of this year's conference is even greater cooperation and influence on policy towards greater self-sufficiency, providing environmentally sound poli-



cies and sustainable solutions for environmental, social, technological and economic issues.

The brand-new BEN (Baltic Ecovillage Network), founded in April of this year, was accepted as a member of GEN. A presentation of this unique organization, which reunites ecovillages around the Baltic sea, was made and BEN became a center of attention.

Besides the principal meeting Next-GEN was held – a group of young active people (40!) of ecovillages and beyond who wanted to meet and work together, creating and implementing alternatives to civilization mainstream. Regardless of us they worked out common areas of interest and connected with each other. Each of us felt that this year's Ecovillage Excellency Award will go into the hands of young people who were the inspiration for many of the participants of the conference.



Other result of the conference was the creation of a new initiative: GEN Elders, composed by several experienced people coming from different communities.

Time passed very quickly, with classes, meetings, workshops, shared meals or conversations. Another important element of the conference was the celebration! Every evening we met next to the fire to play together, dance, sing...

The energy has been increasing day



by day and as my colleague Subshasha said "surpassed those mountains in which we find ourselves". We wondered how much, how far, how high we can soar with our emotions, openness, trust, happiness and knowledge. A sense of closeness and unity in the mixture of races, different cultures and religions prevailed. Whatever the divisions that may arise in our minds we felt as one tribe or one big family.

Ecovillage Road to Unite Baltic Ecovillages by Jesús Pacheco



"Human-scale full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development, and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future."

The quote above is the most famous eco-village definition, by Robert Gilman. I will remark on Gilman's reference of "full-featured settlement". It means a settlement where all the major functions of normal living such as residence, food provision, manufacturing, leisure, social life, and commerce are present and in balance. All these activities need to be present, but at the same time ecovillages do not aim to be isolated from the surrounding community. Actually it is the opposite, a settlement must be integrated in the neighbouring area and have social links and commercial interactions with local people. So, to fulfill this ideal state, it is necessary that there should be significant economic activity.

An ecovillage should create jobs within it so that there are employed people living and working in the ecovillage; others ecovillagers can go outside the village to work, and people who reside outside the village can as well hold jobs inside the village.

It sounds simple, but an ecovillage society created entirely by the villagers themselves, could grow so complex as to put stress on relationships within the ecovillage community. So to prevent this situation and to ensure continued harmony and balance between community members ecovillages need to use appropriate social tools. Different methods can be used to achieve and maintain a situation of harmony and balance, but today it is evident that even digital tools can be really beneficial for ecovillage community development. This is especially so for cooperation between ecovillages and with mainstream society.

The Ecovillage Road is such a tool and one of the more important outputs of Ecovillages Project (<http://www.balticecovillages.eu/>) and a good example of it. The website ecovillageroad.eu aims to gather valuable knowledge created by the ecovillage movement around the Baltic Sea and to make it accessible to a broader public. The activities of the in-

formal network will be accessible on the Ecovillage Road website, where ecovillages and related projects can offer their knowledge, services and products for the general public and to each other.

There are many benefits offered by the Ecovillage Road membership:

- The sharing of knowledge about eco-lifestyle ideas, including the possibility for teaching and learning;
- Creating new relationships with other people who share the same values and are involved in similar projects;
- The possibility through a well-structured portal for eco-services to share your knowledge and experiences with a broader public;
- Getting free access to an international e-commerce platform dealing with eco-services and eco-products;
- To unite and strengthen the ecovillage movement in the Baltic Sea Region, which in turn could help to develop an ecovillage, both spiritually and economically.

If you are an ecovillage or eco-project or you have valuable ecovillage-related ideas, services or products to offer to a broader public, we invite you to use the possibility and join [Ecovillage Road!](http://ecovillageroad.eu)

Melkys Ecovillage to Host TESTS Meeting

The second international meeting of the TESTS project and thus the second international gathering of the Baltic Ecovillage Network will be held 18-20 October in Melkys Ecovillage near Vilnius. The TESTS project capitalises on the fact that many ecovillage activists will be in Lithuania for the final conference of the EU Interreg project "Ecovillages for Sustainable Rural Development" to be held 16-18 October in Druskininkai, Lithuania.

The meeting will present the results of the transition pilots and give Baltic

Sea ecovillagers the chance to meet and exchange experiences. Robert Hall, the current Chairperson of Baltic Ecovillage Network sees the meeting as "an opportunity to jointly envision and plan concrete ecovillage-to-ecovillage cooperation" in the near future. Ecovillagers from at least 9 countries are expected to attend.

The host venue, Melkys ecovillage, located just 12 km north of Vilnius city limits, is an ecovillage and training centre in organic farming developing other more social training events and volun-

teering. The farmstead is 15 ha big – 1,5 ha are forests, 0,5 ha is garden, all the rest – fields and farmland. There is a straw and clay House of Crafts to learn wood carving, blacksmithing, textile, organic produce farming practices, eco bread bakery, carpentry workshop, ceramics workshop, felt felting, jewelry and wool, coal processing and others. Cows, sheep, poultry and organic vegetables are produced in a farm as well as grain crops for bread-making and feeding the livestock.

International Seminar without Leaving your Eco-Village

Baltic Ecovillage Network together with a number of other associations is organising an international seminar entitled "Together towards a new sustainable economic paradigm" to take place physically in Visby, Sweden but will be accessible for all via the internet for those interested in place-based sustainability. The seminar hopes the web link will allow ecovillage practitioners in ecovillages and activists in the national networks of the Baltic Ecovillage Network (BEN). Therefore the organisers are offering free access to the seminar specifically for ecovillages.

The seminar will begin at 1 pm (13:00 CET) on 6 September in Municipality's Offices, Visby, Gotland and be sent to those logged into the ecomuna website (https://www.card.coop/ct/ecomuna_en/) – See detailed instructions below.

Åke Svensson, Mayor of Gotland is to open the seminar. Torbjörn Lahti, Chairman, Sustainable Sweden (sustainablesweden.org) will explain how the seminar is a step towards a global grassroots movement for a new sustainable world order to change the world! A mass movement created here in the Baltic and connected to the ecovillage movement, the Let's Do It! movement, focused on cleaning the world, will tell about the concept of viral grassroots action. One of the original Let's Do It! visionaries Toomas Trapido, former member of the Estonian parliament and head of the Es-

tonian Environment Fund will give some perspectives on the movement.

Jan Forsmark of Transition Sweden will speak on the Transition movement, Sweden, Baltic Sea and the world. Robert Hall, from BEN will speak on trends in Ecovillages in Sweden, Baltic Sea and the World. The Swedish Eco-municipality Association will present Eco-Municipalities in Sweden and the world. Finally Dr. Manfred Max-Neef of Valdivia, Chile, winner of the Right Livelihood Award will speak on Defining a new sustainable economic paradigm before Torbjörn Lahti summarised Day 1 and gives a preparation of Day 2's workshop.

Day 2 begins in the morning at 9 am with a summary of the talks of Day 1 but then becomes more interactive with the theme Together we can do it! A presentation of a new Baltic Sea Project will be made. The project concept will be the input for the discussions in the working groups. Each of the break-out groups will report back and make a participatory contribution to the formulation process. Reports from eco-communities around Baltic Sea will also be heard. There will be ample time for common discussions. The seminar concludes at 12.00 CET.

The technical instructions for online participation: For the best meeting experience, we ask you to go through this checklist BEFORE the meeting:

Connect your computer to the Inter-

net (a hard-wired Internet connection is preferred, but a fast WiFi is also ok).

If you have a MAC computer, use the web browser Safari or Firefox (the latter is recommended).

Do this diagnostic test to verify that your computer and your network connections are properly configured. Click http://admin.adobeconnect.com/common/help/en/support/meeting_test.htm to go to test.

Connect a headset with integrated microphone (preferred).

Connect a webcam (built-in or attached).

Then follow these steps to log in to the meeting room:

Go to this page: <http://card.adobeconnect.com/neweconomicparadigm/>.

Enter your name in the "Name"-field. Click on the button "Enter Room".

You can find the seminar program on www.sustainablesweden.org/.

