



Ecovillage Living

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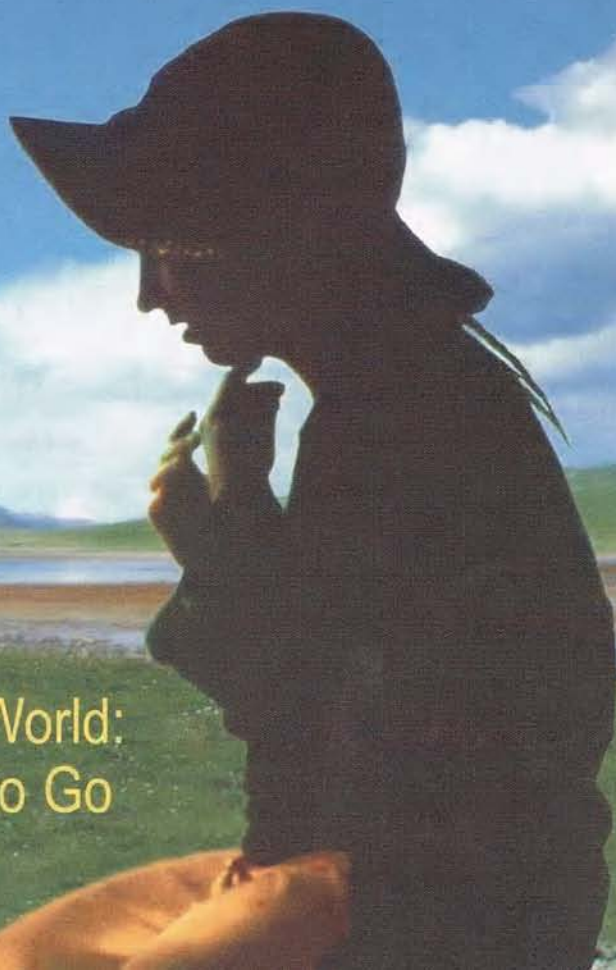
Education for Sustainability

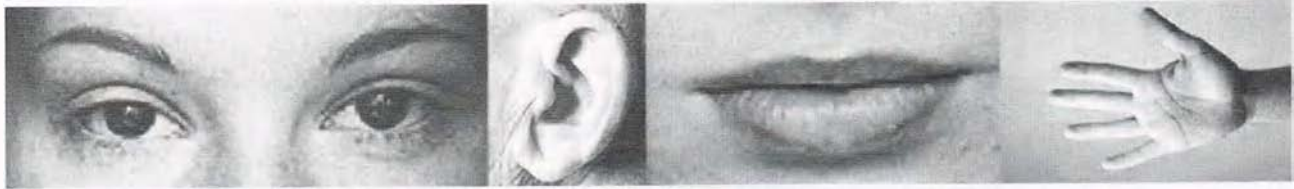
An Ecovillage Curriculum
The Living and Learning Paradigm

Interviews: Patch Adams, Will Keepin
and Helena Norberg-Hodge

News from the Global Ecovillage
Network (GEN)

Education at Ecovillages around the World:
Programs, Places to Go





Mediation: Creating Harmony

Declan Kennedy declan@gaia.org

Declan Kennedy, co-founder of the Global Ecovillage Network and ecological architect, lives and works at the Lebensgarten ecovillage in Germany. He has a long standing experience in teaching courses related to sustainable living. We asked him to tell us about mediation, an important part of any sustainability curriculum, and one of Lebensgarten's areas of curricular specialization. In 2000, the ecovillage celebrated 10 years of mediation.

In our community meetings, before taking a vote on a proposal, a trial vote is called for. Those against the proposal are asked: "Why?" or invited to offer an alternative or revised proposal. New or revised proposals are suggested until former opponents can give their okay or at least feel that they can live with the new proposal. This is what we call qualified consensus.

The result of qualified consensus is that no minorities or split are created within the community in the long run, and that implementation of the proposal can be carried out without blocking.

After all, ecovillages are not only striving for harmony between humankind and nature - but between people amongst themselves as well. This process takes time at first, but practice makes perfect. After a few years it becomes a regular and relatively quick procedure. Out of our qualified consensus system, Lebensgarten developed a new type of mediation: mediation from the heart. In contrast to arbitration or manipulation (which is often wrongfully labelled mediation), we went on striving for win-win solutions. These are possible in strife situations between splinter groups within a community, as well as between partners involved in long-term relationships such as a marriage or a business.

In 1990 four members of Lebensgarten Steyerberg founded the Streit-Light School of Mediation, to offer assistance in mediation within and outside the community (in the immediate region and abroad, as far as Croatia and Bosnia). Nowadays, the school runs 3 to 4 parallel 5-week courses per year - educating people to become mediators. Many members of Lebensgarten have taken this one-year training.



Declan Kennedy with the model which served to plan Lebensgarten Ecovillage in Germany.

ning. Resolving conflicts where both sides win is one way of creating more lasting mutual learning processes. It adds to clarity, openness and happiness on all levels of relationships. It is necessary within this type of mediation to see the conflicting partners as the experts. The mediators (always one female and one male) are just facilitators, who make sure that both parties are actively listening to each other. The mediators, through their clarifying questions, proceed to help the individuals involved express their needs.

Conflicts usually are a cover for unfulfilled needs. Through an understanding of one another's needs, the solution arises of its own accord. In our experience, this never takes more than four sessions. Indeed, we consciously discontinue if a solution has not been arrived at by that time, as we do not want the process to become a sort of psycho-therapy.

This would disempower the parties. For the aim of mediation from the heart is to empower both sides. Only then are lasting solutions possible.

Creating Harmony: Conflict Resolution in Communities

Editor: Hildur Jackson

This book provides a collection of case studies from ecovillages and GEN members around the world. Articles have been written by leading professionals in the fields of decision-making and conflict resolution. Declan and Margrit Kennedy contributed an article on "Conflict Resolution in an Ecovillage" (p. 139) Publisher: Permanent Publications hello@permaculture.co.uk ISBN 1-85623-014-7