



As we step into the year of 2012 – this mysterious year in which ancient calendars end and for which large-scale shifts have been predicted – it seems as good a time as any to look around and take stock of where the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) stands and where we might be heading...

GEN's focus is on **building meaningful connections for a sustainable earth:**

- Linking worldworkers and eco-communities to one another, giving them the support, inspiration and visibility that come with being part of a global network.
- Strengthening collaboration with like-minded NGO's like Gaia Education, Permaculture Network, Transition Town Network and many others, growing beyond our organisational egos and searching for those synergies that strengthen the impact on the ground.
- Building bridges that allow for top-down support to reach and nourish the bottom-up approaches that are integral to our movement: linking to academia, green business, governments and the UN and allowing them to see the work that is happening.

GEN has jewels of hope to offer, showcasing human generosity of spirit, new pathways and local solutions. GEN opens windows unto unfolding networks of high integrity, which expand friendships across all borders. The power of our movement lies in its roots – in all the people and communities on the ground dedicated to acts of beauty, peacemaking and healing. The diversity here is rich, the approaches personal and intimate – as we walk our talk, we dare to make mistakes and learn from them. The exquisite preciousness of GEN springs from **your** courage and dedication. My heart is full at this time – overflowing with gratefulness for all the good intentions and intelligence we are allowed to witness within our networks, in the individual ecovillages; in the Eastern European countries, where GEN-National networks are on the rise; in the emerging networks of GEN-Africa; in South America, where the Ecovillage Gathering in Columbia is taking place; in Asia, where the headquarters of GENOA have just moved to Japan and in all those known and unknown places where people are ready to engage for their communities.

While interest in GEN grows and the numbers of visitors to ecovillage centres increase steadily, all around us times feel increasingly uncertain and political response disappointingly inadequate. We have followed the painful dance of mediocrity and adherence to short-term interests from Rio to Copenhagen to Durban and find ourselves on our way back to Rio. The deep and thorough transformation of heart and actions needed to chart a different course are unlikely to come from those in power – as a loss of monopolised wealth and power is an integral part of the necessary change. If we believe the predictions of those who measure climate change, human life on this planet might become extinct within the next 150 years. The consequences of our mindless actions are becoming visible as never before. Our friends in Asia, to speak of just one region, experienced one disaster after another in 2011; mega-earthquakes in Japan and



New Zealand, big storms in the Philippines, long-term flooding in Thailand and Cambodia, flooding in Australia and, just days ago, a cyclone in South India and Auroville, devastating many of the trees that were meticulously planted there over the last forty years. Hope and inspiration, despair and crises lie closely together.

The level of awareness is rising. Mothers, fathers and grandparents who look into the eyes of our coming generations on a daily basis; youth who long for a meaningful future; politicians and entrepreneurs wishing to be of service to their societies; none of us are willing to look on quietly as the beauty of our world is destroyed. The Occupy movement from the North African and Middle East's Arab Spring protests, over Greece's and Spain's anti-austerity protests to the Occupy Wall Street movement, has filled the streets with people's voices calling out for a more equitable and loving world.

From all these protests there leads a quiet but direct path into positive action. Once the protests are over, and especially where old systems battle to stay in control, the ecovillage movement offers possibilities for the manifestation of the new within the old, strengthening communities and local solutions. At the Ecovillage Conference in Egypt last November the hunger for ecovillage projects and networks across the North African region was palpable – and already, many projects have started.

The initiation of change is truly up to all of us! Today, every village needs to become sustainable and every city needs to go green. If we are awake and able, it is our responsibility to take courage and action. Above and beyond the search for intelligent, appropriate solutions, there is the magic that springs from individual and collective intention and commitment. We need the magic of communities and networks that create biotopes of support for the flowering of the new. We need the power of collective wisdom in which small, inspired acts of beauty and love add up to something beyond our imagination.

What GEN offers:

- Tapestry of life stories of those creating and living in sustainable communities, engaging in a meaningful life rather than in consumerism
- Circles of sustainable communities and ecovillages ready to serve as places of inspiration and models for low-footprint living
- The recognition and enhancement of existing traditional and indigenous villages that are consciously celebrating and enhancing their sustainability in all four areas (social, cultural, economy and ecology)
- The richness of experience and quality of educations and conferences offered through our networks
- A network of integrity with an invitation to join
- Increasing access to funding



What GEN is developing:

- A consolidation of our networks across all regions, making GEN more visually recognisable and easier to join
- The emergence of GEN-Africa as an independent regional network
- Online interactive maps for all countries and regions that make visible the players and projects on the ground – making travelling and connecting to like-minded people easy and fun
- Online resource database with a pattern language approach for easy access to solutions – a Wikipedia for Sustainability
- Descriptions of the processes of transition to sustainable communities for traditional villages and resettlement communities
- Online-game in which a virtual practice of permaculture and ecovillage-design slowly but surely links up with the real world of change-makers as players proceed through the levels of a game

GEN seems better placed than ever to contribute in meaningful ways to a world in hope for a transition to resilience. In such a world, village life is ready for a comeback! Nowhere can a sustainable lifestyle be more readily realised and nowhere can children and elders be integrated in safer and more nourishing ways than in human-scale settlements. With Internet on the rise, we no longer have to move to urban centres to connect to global culture. The vision of a world in which human communities act as guardians of their environments, enhancing and restoring the ecosystems they are a part of, is neither impossible nor far away – it can be touched, tasted and toasted on within the networks of GEN!

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