

## Editorial by Kadri Allikmäe

This year the BEN annual gathering took place at Esna manor in Estonia from 17.-19. April. It was a fruitful time in an inspiring atmosphere for future cooperation between people from ecovillages of the Baltic Sea area. There were about 30 people participating from Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia, Russia and Estonia.

Among other things also the new BEN board was decided. The new board is Liina Järviste (Estonia, chairwoman of the board), Kalle Randau (Sweden), Clara Cortadelles (Sweden), Ansa Palojärvi (Finland), Mihai Hodrea (Latvia), Ed Bychow (Russia) and Ditlev Nissen (Denmark).

In the following newsletter you can read more about what happened in Esna and the Polish cooperative meeting, what is Swedish Climate Parliament and how 5 Danish eco-communities organised a beautiful common coop. You can also make some notes in your calendar about nice ecological events coming up in the BEN region. On behalf of the editorial team we wish to thank everyone who contributed to this issue and celebrate that this newsletter is a cooperation of all BEN countries.

We wish you all nice moments with reading about inspiring events and our common efforts towards a sustainable world.



Ditlev Nissen



Toivo Aalja



Ditlev Nissen

# What is Happening

## • Network of Estonian Eco-communities got funding!

In April Network of Estonian Eco-communities (NEEC) got funding from the National Foundation of Civic Society (NFCS). Mainly we asked support for to enhance our communication activities (newsletter, building a new website, map all community initiatives in Estonia), organising 4 evening events for the public about ecovillage topics and 7 Gaia Education hort seminars, organising the course „Rising together“ in Estonia and send 4 people to the GEN conference, make a short movie and engage also the opinion leaders on environmental matters. Our 2 newsletters are out and also the first evening seminar has happened in Lilleoru about the existing community initiatives in Estonia by Liina Järviste and her community initiative „Small footprint“. We had a surprising 40 participants at the seminar and hope for even more participants in the future. We added all of them to our newlist and got also many good individual members for NEEC.

The total budget of the project is 11 432,67 euros and the support of NFCS is 9992,32 euros. We are happy to be able to share the ecovillage idea with the state support and share the idea of sustainability with wider audiences!

## • ERO Sweden, anual meeting

The smell of the boiling water of the rocket stove, tea, laughs, guitar tunes or people talking. Cold hands, fresh wind, persistent bright sunset. Silent tour, a deep lake, singing to vibrate our hearts. Planting potatoes, making a new hugelbed, yoga in the field at Sunday

morning. All this feelings and impressions are from the weekend 13-15 June in Stjärnsund, a small village in East Sweden, a community in a village with a center of courses learning permaculture: Permakultur Stjärnsund. There we meet people from the Swedish Ecovillage Network, ERO.

Co-creation was the method, with Open Space and sharing circles: what we see most relevant, inspirational and interesting? Also a World Cafè, thinking and sharing how we create the conditions for sustainable communities? What do we need for sustainable communities to thrive? The complicated connections with all other networks must nourish each of us, that is why we want to network, we are all going in the same direction. It was inspiring to share our experiences with each other to see what we want from the network in the future. Saturday afternoon was held the annual meeting of the organization, with the result of two new members in the board. Everything went smooth and gratitude and empowering were the most relevant words. Thanks for making it possible! And we will continue, a new year for ERO, singing and sharing. As the chorus of the blackbird in one forest garden.

## • The gathering of Estonian ecovillage movement

This year the gathering of Estonian ecovillage movement takes place at Sänna in South of Estonia from 22nd-24th of August. The main topic is community schools and how to teach sustainability on all levels of education. More information com-

ing up soon at [www.kogukonnad.ee](http://www.kogukonnad.ee)

We also welcome foreign guests. Please write to [kadri@kogukonnad.ee](mailto:kadri@kogukonnad.ee) if you wish to participate!

More about Säna here: [www.kultuurimois.kultuuritehas.ee](http://www.kultuurimois.kultuuritehas.ee)

See more about our activities: [www.kogukonnad.ee](http://www.kogukonnad.ee) and [www.facebook.com/kogukonnad](https://www.facebook.com/kogukonnad)

## • Meeting and Festival Polish Alternative Societies

Guests from all over the world, including, in particular, members of ecological and alternative communities (however large or small, recent or long-established), are warmly invited to attend the Wolimierz Summer Festival.

Let's meet, hug, get to know each other, share experiences and HAVE FUN together! RURAL MARKET of IZERY MOUNTAINS, WORKSHOPS, THEATRE PERFORMANCES, CONCERTS, D.J.s & M.C. , CAMPAIGNS! More info about Meeting of Polish Alternative Societies: [www.facebook.com/events/666509640086018/669256299811352/?ref=notif&notif\\_t=plan\\_mall\\_activity](https://www.facebook.com/events/666509640086018/669256299811352/?ref=notif&notif_t=plan_mall_activity)

Welcome! More information you can find here: Stacja Wolimierz Polska Izery Mountains: <http://stacja.wolimierz.info.pl/festiwal-2013/festiwal-2014>

## • TESTS II International Meeting

At 5-7 September 2014 in Turku, Finland. The TESTS II Project will cover travel costs for two representatives from each BEN country. Detailed invitation and information mail will follow soon.



Clara Cortadellas



## Impressions about the BEN gathering at Esna by Anne Moloney



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The annual meeting was arranged at Esna Manor, a most beautiful and inspiring place 100 km south of Tallinn. The event was arranged by the BEN board and Network of Estonian Ecovillages.

Esna Manor is a country house from the 1700s with a long and checkered history. Lovingly and beautifully renovated, so that the different eras style and decay could be seen. Lake and park, beaver, wild boar and the stork, yes, we were in the countryside of Estonia. Among many other things we were offered a wonderful guided tour of the place.

The program included meditative dance and body exercises in the morning and swimming in the pure spring, that wells out under the farm's former dairy. In addition, opening and closing circle with an introduction to who we were and what we took with us from the Annual Meeting.

The official meeting with the report, accounting, election of new board and action plan for 2014 - this comes in a separate appendix to the official record. The activities are financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers through TESTS funds sought each by the project secretariat in Suderbyn.

The Network's activities were discussed and determined by a well-designed Open Space. The topics were :

- BEN's new website
- Ecovillage Design Education in BEN auspices
- The common history and roots of the Baltic region
- Seed collection and agroforestry as a basis for bio-regional self-sufficiency
- Heating of houses
- TESTS III, a new application to the Nordic Council of Ministers, which will finance activities in 2015.

We had an inspiring excursion to a private settlement near Esna by Sven and Hele Aluste ([www.equilibre.ee](http://www.equilibre.ee)). It was an impressive site of 30 hectares, which the family had owned since 2008 and built up from scratch. They were husband and wife, 4 children, 15 horses and assorted chickens, rabbits, cats and dogs. Sven Aluste was the craftsman; he had organized courses and building workshops and thus had built two large straw houses with clay plaster, partly family's house and partly a seminar and workshop facility. In addition, many smaller houses for animals, tools, humus toilets and more. The woman was a therapist and worked with horses as a therapeutic tool, for example in relation to children with autism.

There was also time for an inspiring visit to the eco-village of Lilleoru who is 20 years old and based in yoga and spirituality. There were several meditations and a moving circle Friday evening.

### Laysan, Russia

We liked the atmosphere very much, it was warm, friendly and a little bit fairy-tale due to this wonderful place and old house which was like an old wise person participating in all our meetings.

At the meeting the fact became evident that regional co-operation (if compared with one on global and european level) is more concrete and fruitful with some real results, common projects, closer relationship and deeper understanding. Real enjoyment was also visiting Sven's beautiful place and common work there, and it was very nice to visit Lilleoru ecovillage ([www.lilleoru.ee](http://www.lilleoru.ee)) and be acquainted with their experience on the last day. Thank you to everybody!

### Kalle, Sweden

The meeting really increased the connection between the countries and induced a feeling of unity. It gave me the feeling that we are able to help, support and inspire each other on our similar quest, even though we are located on different sides of the sea.

### Anne and Ditlev, Denmark

The annual BEN gathering at Esna Manor was a beautiful experience with an inspiring programme. We enjoyed every minute of it, not to speak of the company, the food, the nature and bathing in the spring. Thank you Estonia!

### Kadri, Estonia

Thank you everyone for coming to this beautiful location. It was so heartwarming to see so many people with whom we have shared the connection already for some years. I felt grateful to see so many people believing in similar simple values and regardless of our different backgrounds find a common language and a common grounds so easily. And thank you to everyone who was part of the organising team.



Ditlev Nissen

Who wishes to see more pictures, please see:  
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.778723358825686.1073741828.109016969129665&type=1>  
 (images by Ditlev Nissen and Toivo Aalja) and:

[https://www.facebook.com/moni.podsiadla/media\\_set/?set=a.831159936898761.1073741843.10000142884561&type=1](https://www.facebook.com/moni.podsiadla/media_set/?set=a.831159936898761.1073741843.10000142884561&type=1) (images by Moni Podsiadla)



# The Sustainable Cooperative Community by Ditlev Nissen

An example of coop between 5 Danish associations working for sustainability



Ditlev Nissen

The Danish Ecovillage Network (LØS) has formalized a cooperation with four other NGO's working on the sustainable future. These are: The Danish permaculture Association, The Danish Transition Network, The Practical Ecology network and the Danish Network for Ecological Housebuilding. The main subject in the cooperation is a common conference (the annual meeting) every second year. In April this year more than 400 people met with great enthusiasm to start cooperate on the local and national level.

Another part of the cooperation are on the political level. In March we have sent a statement to the ministers of Environment, Climate Change and Employment in the Danish Parliament considering climate and environment in the employment plan.

We suggest the following can be obtained via a green employment plan:

- Unemployed will gain skills within the area of climate and environment, an area where we will see a growing demand in the coming years.
- Unemployed, while waiting on jobs, can become a resource in the local processes of change.
- Unemployed will be able to contribute in the creation of new sustainable jobs.

Our experience during the years show us 3 pillars of relevance:

## **1st Pillar: Education towards sustainable development**

How do we educate people for a future that will be radically different from what we know today? A future where we need to reduce the consumption of resources as well as the environmental impact – and at the same time maintaining a high quality of living. A future where many citizens will be working in a labour market characterized by transition.

The idea is to link education for sustainable development with very concrete activities, which practitioners and our enthusiastic members are already working with. In this way the unemployed gain unique skills that will turn them into attractive employees in those businesses, municipalities and local communities that chooses to focus on sustainable change.

## **2nd Pillar: Creation of green jobs**

In municipalities that have put green transition on the agenda, businesses and initiatives with a potential for green jobs are emerging.

The instruments in the creation of jobs is learning-through-action, which



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takes place where the transition is actually happening, job-match between businesses and unemployed, and local growth-houses, which are the framework for green and innovative entrepreneurship.

## **3rd Pillar: The unemployed's waiting time can be a resource**

The training takes place where it is possible to work practically with transition, and the students learn through interdisciplinary projects based on concrete activities of transition. Examples of these activities could be an organic farm, an industrial symbiosis or a municipality/local community making changes towards a higher degree of sustainability. The involvement of the students will provide the local practitioners with new inspiration through a feedback of ideas and input on the subject, which in the end could lead to innovation and creation of new job possibilities.

The "transition agent courses" is developed and run by volunteers from our 5 associations. Next step is to get the necessary political/financial support to develop the concept of the courses.



Ditlev Nissen

## Attending “Climate Parliament” in Sweden by Kalle Randau

Prior to the upcoming Swedish national election in September the event “Climate parliament” was organised by some of Sweden’s grass root environmentalists. The ambition of the event was to bring the climate and environmental issues back on the political agenda, after being pretty much absent for a long time. Over 300 motions were sent in beforehand and the task of the over 500 participants was to prioritise 7 of those to forward to representatives of the “real” Swedish parliament to consider and to hopefully actualise.

Overall the event was a very positive experience filled with enthusiasm, intelligence and the great experience of a truly functioning democracy. I really enjoyed myself while still keeping soberly attentive on the seriousness and importance of our situation. I think everyone felt the same. From an ecovillage perspective it is important to highlight Emilia Rekestad’s motion “Encourage the build-up of sustainable social communities for transition and climate resilience”. The motion, pointing at practical measures for facilitating ecovillages and similar initiatives got a lot of support and went through to the second round as one of the 35 most popular motions. Unfortunately it failed to get to the top 7 final motions

# KLIMATRIKSDAG 2014 NORRKÖPING 6-7-8 JUNI

being directly handed to the politicians. Still it is a positive sign, showing that many people environmentally concerned realise the importance of supporting positive lifestyle changes.

Apart from the political work in bringing forth the motions, the event also entailed an exhibition where various associations and companies displayed their activities and products, as well as dozens of presentations, seminars and workshops by some of Sweden’s most renowned lecturers, scientists and activists on the environmental arena. Though enlightening and insightful in many ways there seemed to me to be something missing to the picture. What it is is hard pinpoint, but it could be described with words like culture, spirituality, wisdom, transformation... or rather bluntly the forth dimension of the Gaia Wheel, called “worldview”. Without this forth dimension

the transition process that we all know is necessary is easily reduced to a sterile, “inside the box” process only directed at changing visible external things.

Here I see how the ecovillage movement and the surrounding alternative movement can enrich the general discourse immensely. For the emphasis and tools for personal and cultural transformation are affluent in the movement. And it seems to me that more and more people are getting receptive to these kinds of ideas. In the same way as this knowledge is spreading through the network it must also be actively communicated to the rest of the world. Attending the “Climate Parliament” really inspired me and gave me more clarity in which role to play in the greater scheme of things. How to play that role is not easy but it surely is a very meaningful challenge.

## National Meeting of Cooperatives 2014, Poland by Monika Podsiadła

Since few years we are observing wonderful and still growing movement in Poland: cooperatives. Cooperatives are informal networks of people living in cities who organize themselves and buy organic products directly from farmers. Till now we have few cooperatives functioning in the biggest cities in Poland.

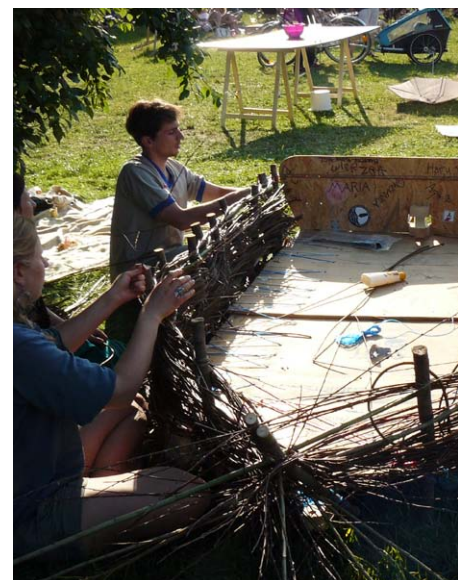
The benefit is on both sides: for city people and farmers. Farmers have customers who will buy their products, and people from the city will have cheap and healthy food. Besides it stimulates a lot of farmers to convert to organic farming!

We were invited on 2 days meeting of cooperatives in Krakow this month. We were presenting Ecovillage Movement in Poland and talked about Balitic

Ecovillage Network too. Permaculture workshop - strawbale gardening - we provided next day.

A lot of new initiatives and interesting people were invited who talked, lectured, presented or provided workshops about ecological solutions, permaculture, cooperation, connections, crowdfunding, ecovillages, group processes, sharing tools and ideas, alternative economies, ethnobotany, and many, many more.

In the meantime we could go on huge organic market with lots of delicious, local products.





## Interview with Magalie Bonneau-Marcil by Kadri Allikmäe

From 18th to 24th of July Estonia welcomes a unique course on the social aspect of communities in the beautiful manor house of Esna in Central Estonia. The course is called: „Rising together- An inner path of collective leadership to build thriving communities“. Here you can read the interview with one of the course facilitators - Magalie Bonneau-Marcil.



### What is this course about?

In these times of great potential and challenge on planet Earth, we are being invited to rise up and live life with radical authenticity, aligning inner and outer truths for the well being of all.

How do we do that, knowing the inner complexity that arise within ourselves and in community?

Rising together is an intensive 7-day leadership gathering for community builders who share passion for personal and community transformation. Participants will be invited to engage this inner path from a framework grounded in earth-based wisdom and the healing arts. We will explore ways that support the building of a field of trust, authenticity and mutual understanding – laying down the foundation for the co-creation of something much larger than any one of us.

### Why did you start teaching a course like this?

Because I believe deeply that to create peaceful and thriving communities at this time of great global complex challenges we, humans, need to learn to be co-exist together in ways that are healing, builds our capacity as resilient beings and support the emergence of a life-sustaining society. Creating alternative models such as eco-villages is an important step in that direction. In order for those to sustain and thrive, examining how we relate to ourselves and one

another is essential.

### Why is it important in the world to have this kind of knowledge and skills that you teach?

To create a life-sustaining society, we must learn to express ourselves authentically, create safe places to do so where the fullness of our humanity is welcome, honored and celebrated, examine consciously the new story we want to live by in our community and truly care for one another. This communal approach that connects our hearts and soul is a reflection of how natural eco-systems flourish as they are well tended.

Such way of engaging life supports us in moving from a transactional, disconnected way of engaging life that is not sustainable and leads to suffering, whereas the former brings us right back to our source.

### For whom is this course meant?

This training is a vibrant place for personal and collective development for people of all generations dedicated to build intentional communities. By intentional communities, we mean groups who are working towards actualizing a shared mission together that supports life.

If some one is not currently part of such community though resonate with the values of authenticity, integrity, personal responsibility and mutual support, you are at the right place.

### What do you do?

I support healers, artists, entrepreneurs and community builders of the new culture in embodying the change they want to see in the world. I do that through facilitating dance journeys, leading transformational workshops, coaching individuals, and organizing transformational public dance events such as flash mobs.

### What can a participant expect at the course? What do you do at those courses? What kind of transformation people usually go through?

We will: Learn the Way of Council, a conscious communication practice for communities.

Develop skills and capacity to build greater trust and transparency within your relationships and community.

Engage in Shadow Work, transforming inner patterns that keeps us in fear or in need to control, limiting our ability to

support what wants to emerge.

Experience Conscious Creative Self-Expression Approaches: supporting greater inner freedom, mindfulness, creativity and emotional intelligence.

Address questions such as...

Who Am I?

Who Am I As a Creative Being, Creator of A New Story for my Community?

Who Am I in Relationship to Others?

Who Am I as a Woman, or as a Man – carrier of both feminine and masculine energy?

Who Am I As an Intimate Being in relation to Community?

How can I help revealing the collective intelligence of my community?

How Can I shift from a Me to a We perspective in ways that respects my true nature and personal vision, so as other's?

Bring greater consciousness of feminine/masculine dynamics, supporting greater integration and trust between genders and within yourself.

Learn Ritual Practices: Creating in your community a field of trust that honors the natural cycle of life and celebrate our humanity and magnificent collective capacity.

Read more: [www.kogukonnad.ee/sotsiaalne](http://www.kogukonnad.ee/sotsiaalne)

Event on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/289361521230882/?fref=ts>

Registration: <http://dancingwithoutborders.org/signup-risingup/>

More info:

[liina.jarviste@gmail.com](mailto:liina.jarviste@gmail.com)

This BEN poster was presented in the Baltic Sea NGO Forum 2-3 June 2014 at Turku, Finland by Ansa.

**Baltic Ecovillage Network**

**The Vision** of BEN is to work through ecovillages in order to integrate human activities and the use of environmentally-friendly lifestyle to promote sustainability and the holistic development of human society.

**The Mission** of BEN as part of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) is to network in Baltic Sea Region, to carry out outreach for societal transition and support socio-cultural, economical and ecological sustainability.

[www.balticecovillages.net](http://www.balticecovillages.net)

Facebook Twitter LinkedIn

The boxes with names of members show the actual **full members**. Supportive members from Germany, Lithuania and Poland.

**FINLAND**  
SKEY Suomen kestävän elämäntavan yhteisöt ry  
GEN Finland Network of Finnish Eco-communities  
[rihmasto.fi/skey](http://rihmasto.fi/skey)

**RUSSIA**  
СЭЭИМ Сеть Экопоселений и Экоинициатив  
REEN Russian Ecovillage and Eco-Initiative Network  
[gen-russia.ru](http://gen-russia.ru)

**ESTONIA**  
EÜÜ Eesti Ökoloogikondade Ühendus  
NEEC Network of Estonian Eco-communities  
[kogukonnad.ee](http://kogukonnad.ee)

**LATVIA**  
LEIA Latvijas ekokopien un iniciatīvu apvienība  
Latvian Ecocommunity and Initiatives Association  
[ekociemati.lv](http://ekociemati.lv)

**SWEDEN**  
ERO Ekobyarnas Riksorganisation  
Swedish Ecovillage Network  
[ekobyar.se](http://ekobyar.se)

**DENMARK**  
LØS Landsforeningen for Økosamfund  
Danish Ecovillage Network  
[okosamfund.dk](http://okosamfund.dk)

**Map Labels:** NOR, SWE, FIN, EST, LAT, BEL, POL, GER, BEN.

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