

Alternatives to the present global development pattern

Ecovillages – a model for sustainable living?

Marita Liverød

Supervisor

Jørn Andreas Cruickshank

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Faculty of Social Science

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Acronyms and Key Words

CO2	-	Carbon Dioxide
E2C2	-	Ecology, Economy, Community, Consciousness
GNI	-	Gross National Income
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	-	Gross National Product
GEN	-	Global Ecovillage Network
HDI	-	Human Development Index
HPI	-	Happy Planet Index
HPI'	-	Human Poverty Index
IPCC	-	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MDG	-	Millennium Development Goals
MPI	-	Multidimensional Poverty Index
SDG	-	Sustainable Development Goals
UDSA	-	Universidad de Sabiduria Ancestral
UN	-	United Nations
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Program
UNDR	-	United Nations Development Report
UNEP	-	United Nations Environmental Program
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USD	-	United States Dollar

Key Words:

Ecovillage, sustainability, development, alternative, happiness, ecology, community, economy, consciousness, progress, environment, culture, education, spirituality, climate change, global warming, the good life, ecosystems, nature, Pachamama, change, ecological footprint, ancestral knowledge, circle of life, consumerism, materialism, wealth, simple life, vegetarianism

Abstract

The current way of development is exhausting the planets limitations, the continues increase in consumption are degrading the nature that is relied on for human existence. Thus, it is necessary to define an alternative way of developing. The aim is to achieve happiness for all, sustaining the resources of the planet. Ecovillages are recognized as a sustainable alternative which encompasses a holistic approach to the term sustainability. Through qualitative research in the form of participatory observations, interviews and a survey performed in Gambhira, an ecovillage in rural Colombia, the sustainability, educational mission as a model for change and progress will be investigated. Analysing the dimension of GEN and Litfin; Ecology, economy, community/social and consciousness/culture expose different significance in the various aspects, revealing the idea of nature as building block in the perception of reality.

Receiving volunteers from all corners of the world, Gambhira is compatible with Dewey's theory of learning by doing; exchanging knowledge and the experience of ecovillage life, revealing the importance of sharing; community living, offering ancestral knowledge of the interconnectedness between all living entities and nature. Challenging the understanding of the path to achieve happiness, practicing a simple life, focusing on educational activities. Gambhira is varying in degree of success but offers another way of comprehending nature and how to live. In spite of the limitations and challenges, Gambhira demonstrates a model to learn from when searching for alternatives in a world where values have altered with increasing individualization and modernization affecting the definition of development. Redefining goals and rediscovering the path to reach them, Gambhira, among other ecovillages can be one part of the solution.

Table of Content

Abstract.....	4
1. Introduction.....	7
1.1 Topic and research questions.....	8
1.2 Structure.....	10
2. Theoretical framework, background and concepts of importance.....	11
2.1 The base of the problem highlighted – background for the research.....	11
2.2 GENs four dimensions of sustainability.....	14
2.2.1 The social dimension.....	15
2.2.2 The cultural/spiritual dimension.....	15
2.2.3 The ecological dimension.....	16
2.2.4 The economic dimension.....	16
2.3 Litfin’s E2C2.....	17
2.3.1 Ecology.....	17
2.3.2 Economy.....	17
2.3.3 Community.....	18
2.3.4 Consciousness.....	18
2.4 John Dewey’s Experimental learning.....	19
2.5 Other ideas and concepts of importance.....	20
2.5.1 Ways of measuring.....	20
2.5.2 The ecological footprint.....	21
3 Methodology.....	22
3.1 Case study with a hint of cross-sectional design.....	22
3.1.1 Placement of fieldwork.....	22
3.1.2 Gambhira – The ecovillage.....	23
3.1.3 Challenges.....	24
3.1.4 Experienced Challenges.....	24
3.2 Methods of research.....	25
3.2.1 Participatory observation.....	25
3.2.2 In-depth semi- structured interviews.....	26
3.2.3 Quantitative survey.....	26
3.2.4 Reliability -Triangulation.....	27

3.3 Ethical evaluation	27
3.4 Grounded Theory	27
4 Findings and analysis	29
4.1 Introducing Gambhira –The daily life in the ecovillage.....	29
4.2 Moving from individualistic to collectivistic thinking	34
4.2.1. The Community/Social dimension	34
4.2.2 The Consciousness/Cultural dimension	36
4.2.3 The Ecological dimension	36
4.3 Reconnecting to Mother Earth – the conception of nature	37
4.3.1 The Ecological dimension	37
4.3.2 The Economical dimension	42
4.3.3 The Consciousness/Cultural dimension	42
4.3.4 Pachamama.....	44
4.4 Redefining development – locating essential building blocks in happiness.....	45
4.4.1 The Economical dimension	45
4.4.2 Increase of Happiness = Development?	48
4.4.3 Core values at the heart of development	51
5 How Ecovillages can contribute to change	53
5.1 The Community/Social dimension	53
5.2 The Transformation of Experience	54
5.3 Aspects applicable to the bigger context	55
5.4. The challenges of educating.....	57
5.5 Gambhira/ecovillage challenges	58
6 Conclusion.....	60
Bibliography	64
Appendix 1 – Interview guides.....	67
Appendix 2 – Survey	69
Appendix 3 – Dry composting toilets.....	70
Appendix 4 – HPI 2014.....	71

1. Introduction

While studying development discourse I have realized that the concept of development itself is mostly connected to the so called western, or global north way of living; consumer societies with a focus on material wealth. Modernization theory implies that industrialization, urbanization and the use of technology makes a country developed, the western structure of development (Willis, 2005). It is often stated that capitalism is the form of society that has most successfully achieved progress (Thomas, 2000). Even when entering the synonyms of the term developed in Office Word, you get the options: industrialised, urbanised etc. the form of society that is scientifically proven to be exhausting the planets resources; it is exceeding the planets limitations (Adams, 2009 / Boyd, 2014 / Bjørke, 2011 / Global footprint network, 2010 / IPCC, 2014 / Keeling, 2008 / UNEP, 1972/2012).

However, personal experience from traveling around the globe, living in diverse cultures and communities convey a different reality regarding development. For what is development? Development might not be the same for one person as it is for another. In a quote of Chambers, development means “good change” it is synonymous with progress (Thomas, 2000). How can you make a concept like progress to obtain a universally understood meaning? Who decides what is defined as progress? Winston Churchill once said: “History will be kind to me for I intend to write it”. As the writers of history are the victors of history, how is it possible to know if modernization and growth of capitalism really is a story of success and progress? The ultimate goal must be happiness as a sign of progress. How happy are the “developed” societies today? Progress occurring simultaneously as degradation of the planet, can it be understood as progress at all? Should not progress imply progress for all beings, not solely human beings?

What the idea of development currently is for people living in poverty can be discussed to be a dream of something better, which in reality might not increase their happiness in the actual situation. It is not only destructive for the planet, but can be argued to decrease the mental and emotional health of the individual. Modernization processes are not only degrading ecosystems and natural resources, but alternating values, in addition to human connection to nature. The thesis will be based on the extensive amount of recognized research revealing

the unsustainability of the current way of developing. It is repeatedly proven that the present development pattern cannot continue, it is completely essential for changes to transpire (Adams, 2009 / Boyd, 2014 / Bjørke, 2011 / Global footprint network, 2010 / IPCC, 2014 / Keeling, 2008 / UNEP, 1972/2012). Then the question arises; is it possible to develop in an alternative sustainable way? Ecovillages are recognized by UNESCO as a sustainable community, and is regarded as one solution to the major environmental problems of our time (UNESCO, 2010). *“An ecovillage is an intentional or traditional community using local participatory processes to holistically integrate ecological, economic, social, and cultural dimensions of sustainability in order to regenerate social and natural environments”* (GEN, 2015).

Ecovillages are communities of people who strive to lead a sustainable lifestyle in harmony with each other, other living beings and the Earth. Their purpose is to combine a supportive social-cultural environment with a low-impact lifestyle, which can be summarized in four dimensions (GEN, 2015):

- The social dimension
- The cultural/spiritual dimension
- The ecological dimension
- The economic dimension

These dimensions will be studied and investigated further through a case study and fieldwork conducted in an ecovillage located in a rural area in Colombia. Participatory observation, semi-structured interviews and a survey will be applied as means to answer questions regarding this field of challenges, which will be elaborated further in the following sub chapter.

1.1 Topic and research questions

The topic of the thesis is challenging the current ‘western’ way of understanding development through researching alternative ways of sustainable living and development. Why is it that the consumer and capitalist society has become the universal goal of development? Researching the ecovillage ways of developing, of progressing towards something else,

maybe heading in the direction of increased happiness, but surely not material wealth. It is not only interesting, but contemporarily important when facing the need of sustainable living today. The purpose of the thesis is to reveal and explore if there are aspects of the ecovillage that are feasible alternatives that can be applied in a wider context as well. Is the ecovillage a happy and environmental friendly community? As a provider of education and awareness around sustainability are they succeeding in their goal, are they making a difference in and outside the ecovillage? Should ecovillages be regarded as models of change, and a place of inspiration when planning to reach more sustainable ways of living within already existing rural/urban neighbourhoods?

TOPIC: *“Investigating the sustainability and transferability of Ecovillages as a model and an alternative to the current global development trend: A case study of ‘Gambhira Ecoaldea’ in the Sierra Nevada’s of Colombia”*

Main Objective: To research if ecovillages are a sustainable alternative to the present development pattern, and the possibilities of applying ideas to a wider context, through research in Gambhira, an ecovillage in Colombia.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

Which are the main targets when aiming to change the general lifestyle of the population towards sustainable living, and how can ecovillages contribute to the change?

Sub questions:

- *From the perspective of the residents, GEN and the volunteers, what is Ecovillages and how does it function in the Gambhira community?*
- *How are Gambhira conveying their ideas around sustainability, and are they succeeding in their educational mission?*
- *What are the challenges associated with Ecovillages and the current development trend and their solutions to it?*
- *How does the residents and volunteers of Gambhira define development/happiness and how does it fit within the current global development trend?*

1.2 Structure

The report is divided into six main chapters, introduction being one of them. The second chapter gives an outline of the theoretical framework; which theories, concepts and essential background facts the report will be drawn on and models regarding measurement as well as the main literature that is essential in the field. Reasons behind the designated choices will be elaborated about and connected to the concepts of importance.

The third chapter introduce the methodology; how the research will be conducted and analysed, which tools and methods will be applied and why, the place of fieldwork and challenges connected to the study. The specific approach will be particularised, the practical considerations taken into account as well as the methodological requirements for reliability. Participatory observation as the main method will be supplemented by semi structured interviews in addition to a survey.

The fourth chapter presents the findings, and analyses the empery collected, according to selected themes and methods used. As it was found more natural for the flow of the paper, the results will mainly be discussed as presented. While assessing, the theoretical perspective presented in chapter two will be connected and applied to shed light on discoveries of particular significance.

The fifth chapter elaborates how and which experiences can be transferred to other contexts and the challenges encountered in the educational mission of the ecovillage, reflecting the particular way of learning by experience.

The sixth chapter offers a conclusion, where the theories, methods of research and the result will be summarized to answer the questions raised in the introduction. The connections and significant findings will be summarized and relevant questions will be raised as suggestions regarding further research in the area of subject. Assumptions that cannot be verified with the limitation of one case study, can be ground of future interest in a field where the significance of now cannot be highlighted enough.

2. Theoretical framework, background and concepts of importance

The research field has its roots in a high amount of recognized research reflecting how the current direction of development is not sustainable; the world's resources are being overused, thus, change needs to take place. The initial subchapter gives a short summary of some of this research as a base to define the problem, before introducing GENE dimensions which will be the definition on sustainability used in the report. The following subchapter presents Karen Litfin's E2C2, which are defined aspects essential to ecovillages, and the most comprehensive existing study done on ecovillages. John Dewey's theory on experimental learning will be elaborated about, as a theory applied on the subject of the educational mission in Gambhira. The chapter will end with a short presentation of a selection of different ways of measuring sustainability and happiness, as they are of some importance for the analyses.

2.1 The base of the problem highlighted – background for the research

The last decades are coloured by human's realization of the planet's limitations. Numerous comprehensive research is done on climate change and global warming, the unsustainability of the current lifestyle of the global north, ecosystem depletion among others.

“A point has been reached in history when we must shape our actions throughout the world with a more prudent care for their environmental consequences. Through ignorance or indifference, we can do massive and irreversible harm to the earthly environment on which our life and well-being depend” (UNEP, 1972). The quote is drawn from the UNEP declaration of the United Nations conference on the human environment in 1972, displaying the concern of limited action taken towards sustaining the environment. This recognition was happening almost half a decade ago, but it seems like there is no alternative that is appealing to the mass population of global north, or it can be explained in the lack of information, or too much information numbing people, not revealing the severity of the situation. It is hard to determine why, but one thing is certain; an alternative to the current global development trend is completely essential.

To deepen the understanding of the problem, some examples to particularize the effects on human society deriving from climate change will be presented. A topic that is repeatedly debated in social media is global warming. The temperature of the atmosphere has increased 0,7 Celsius the last 100 years (Bjørke & Ahmed, 2011), and in the last decade the planet has experienced its 10 warmest years ever (Boyd, 2014). The increase of temperature will in fact have several other consequences; Glacier melting and reduction in ice extent, 10 - 15% decrease has occurred in the northern hemispheres spring and summer ice – extent since the 1950s. A widespread retreat of the mountains glaciers are happening in non-polar regions, and all glaciers worldwide are shrinking, affecting runoff and water resources (IPCC, 2014). The snow coverage has been reduced with approximately 10% since the late 1960s (Bjørke & Ahmed, 2011). This consequence is again effecting the global sea – level which once more has certain effects in the global ecosystem. In the 20th century alone there has been a growth of between 0,1 and 0,2 meters (Bjørke & Ahmed, 2011). Even though it might not seem like a great deal, multiplying it with hundreds of years and including the likeliness of accelerating rise, it will do massive damage to millions of people living virtually on sea-level. Not to mention the effect on the weather that has been observed the last years; more dangerous weather conditions; more droughts, floods and storms. The weather is more extreme, where it is dry it gets dryer and where it is wet it gets wetter (Houghton, 2007).

These consequences observed in the climate and the environment are effecting ecosystems on land and in water which again are directly effecting the human environment. Subsequently, some consequences discovered; the infrastructure created by the humans, which human once more are relying on are experiencing numerous concerns regarding agriculture, water resources, human health etc. As there is a limit to resources, it is a natural cause of conflict. Freshwater is a resource human beings are completely reliant on for survival, and are in some of the dry areas becoming an ever increasing scarce resource. An origin of conflict through history as it creates pressure on all the users of a specific water source, and can with that lead to violence, which is recognized by the UN. The intensification of freshwater-related risks has a clear connection to the increase in CO₂, and the decrease of water will most likely effect women-headed household with limited access to land the hardest (IPCC, 2014). *“Climate-related hazards affect poor people’s lives directly through impacts on livelihood, reduction in crops, yields or destruction of homes, and indirectly through, for*

example, increased food prices and food insecurity” (IPCC, 2014). It can often be observed that people living in poverty are the ones effected the hardest from climate change, in spite of their limited contribution to the change itself. Many rural livelihoods are in risk of experiencing insufficient access to both water for drinking and irrigation (IPCC, 2014). Violence occurring as a result of lack of resources might not only be a problem in micro scale, but a problem in macro scale as well. Not merely can climate change generate conflict, but it creates displacement of people as result of extreme weather, and the conflicts that occur on global level regarding resources. *“Climate change can indirectly increase risk of violent conflict in the form of civil-war and inter-group violence by amplifying well documented drivers of this conflicts such as poverty and economic shocks” (IPCC, 2014).* Influencing policies of nations regarding security; infrastructure and territorial integrity are at risk, as well as the necessary requirement of covering basic needs for resources.

Now, it has been argued that the changes occurring has natural causes and are not a result of human action. The climate change can be attributed directly or indirectly to human actions, but it can also be viewed in combination with somewhat natural releases; internal natural processes or external forces like volcanic eruptions, modulations of the solar cycles etc. (IPCC, 2014). Acknowledging the fact that it is also natural reasons behind global warming, it need to be understood that humankind is responsible, and it is essential to change the current way of developing to sustain the present state of the planet, or desirably reverse some of the damage that has already occurred. Currently there is evidence that human activities are causing global warming, formatting too much CO₂; heat – trapping gas (Boyd, 2014). As of 2014, the production of 768 grams of CO₂ would make 1USD of GDP. The number required for sustainability is 6 grams, a massive reduction, not a minor change (Boyd, 2014). The keeling curve is presenting compelling evidence of the rising of CO₂ in the atmosphere. Reflecting the changing global carbon cycle and humankinds imprint on the atmosphere (Keeling, 2008). The power of change lies within the major public, in the market with the consumer. Businesses, producers, the big nations with managing forces will only change with the demand of change from the major public, policies can only do so much (Wielicki, 2011). Primarily the goal should be to create awareness among the individuals, the transformation starts with me and you.

Irreversible changes have already occurred, which should create enough evidence for the general public, policy makers and corporations to react. But instead of seeing the climate change as a threat, it can be regarded as an opportunity for human kind to improve for the better. Relating the idea of development; progress, to sustainability. Now is the time to act. Leading us to the next subchapter, sustainability and its dimensions.

2.2 GENs four dimensions of sustainability

The global ecovillage network is a network that bridges communities and initiatives of ecologically - minded people globally, irrelevant of culture, nationality or continent. It is a network to connect communities for a sustainable world and future, a representation of worldwide paths to a viable future. *“People and communities meet and share their ideas, exchange technologies, develop cultural and educational exchanges, directories and newsletters, and are dedicated to restoring the land and living a cooperative sustainable lifestyle”*, *“GEN’s “big solution” is empowering the millions of small solutions -- people and projects within communities working for a healthy planet and vibrant future for our children and all life”* (GEN, 2016).

People have for decades been living in communities close to the earth and nature, communities that are in the current development trend struggling to survive. The idea is to intentionally reintroduce the concept for people to reconnect to the earth, ensuring well-being not only for humans but all life forms. *“The planet is experiencing the limits to growth, and our lives are often lacking meaningful content”* (GEN, 2016). Sustainability is often connected to an ecological aspect; renewable energy, food self-reliance etc. but are in GEN viewed with a holistic outlook, reflected in the following four dimensions (as well presented in picture 1):



(Picture 1)

2.2.1 The social dimension

The social dimension is essential as the way of living are formed in communities. It is small enough for every individual to be heard, empowered and safe. The community should be a place of transparency, so every person can be a part of decision making as it affects their life and way of living. The feeling of belonging is essential for every person not only to feel supported but to feel responsible towards everyone else (GEN, 2016). The following points are highlighted by GEN:

- *Recognizing and relating to others*
- *Sharing common resources and providing mutual aid*
- *Emphasizing holistic and preventive health practices*
- *Providing meaningful work and sustenance to all members*
- *Integrating marginal groups*
- *Promoting unending education*
- *Encouraging unity through respect for differences*
- *Fostering cultural expression* (GEN, 2016)

2.2.2 The cultural/spiritual dimension

No specific spiritual practice is integrated in the concept of sustainability, but the freedom of any artistic, cultural or spiritual expression and the united feeling of taking care, respecting and supporting the Earth, including all living beings on it (GEN, 2016). It is by GEN summarized in the following points:

- *Shared creativity, artistic expression, cultural activities, rituals and celebrations*
- *Sense of community unity and mutual support Respect and support for spirituality manifesting in many ways*
- *Shared vision and agreements that express commitments, cultural heritage and the uniqueness of each community*
- *Flexibility and successful responsiveness to difficulties that arise*
- *Understanding of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all the elements of life on Earth and the community's place in and relation to the whole*
- *Creation of a peaceful, loving, sustainable world* (GEN, 2016)

2.2.3 The ecological dimension

Not only seeing the nature as means to cover their daily needs, but enjoying the daily interaction with the nature while respecting the cycles of nature. Growing human, personal connections to the living earth, sustainable ecology means to:

- *Growing food as much as possible within the community bio-region supporting organic food production there*
- *Creating homes out of locally adapted materials Using village-based integrated renewable energy systems*
- *Protecting biodiversity*
- *Fostering ecological business principles*
- *Assessing the life cycle of all products used in the ecovillage from a social and spiritual as well as an ecological point of view*
- *Preserving clean soil, water and air through proper energy and waste management*
- *Protecting nature and safeguarding wilderness area* (GEN, 2016)

2.2.4 The economic dimension

Creating exchange systems and local currencies within a community, invites new knowledge around economy and awareness surrounding equality of value that exists between information and money, and that there is no scarcity existing of neither (GEN, 2016). Having a vital economy are supported by the following points according to GEN:

- *Keeping the money in the community,*
- *Circulating it through as many hands as possible,*
- *Earning it, spending it, and investing it in member-owned retail and service businesses,*
- *Saving it in home-grown financial institutions.* (GEN, 2016)

A holistic approach towards the notion of sustainability are essential in the report, as the idea is not only to research an ecovillage through a case study, but to challenge and question the conception of progress and development, related to sustainability. Integrating these

dimensions as parts of achieving sustainability, connecting it with Litfin's E2C2 idea of ecovillages can hopefully assist to analyse the findings in a structured, beneficial matter.

2.3 Litfin's E2C2

Karen T. Litfin has done comprehensive research on ecovillages, traveling around the world living in a representative of diverse ecovillages through one year. She is associate Professor of political science at the University of Washington and wrote the book "Ecovillages; Lessons for sustainable living" in 2014, a collection of information, gathered through truly studying ecovillages, learning by the existing success and failures. E2C2 are the shortened term for four prevailing windows in the sustainability of ecovillages, differently highlighted, but all elements existing. Ecology, Economics, Community and Consciousness, the E2C2 can easily be connected to GENs four dimensions. Litfin's metaphor can shortly be described as a small house with four windows, the E2C2, representing the different perspectives, or vantage points that we can look into an ecovillage, or any human endeavour, seeing not only the window considered, but additionally seeing the other windows through this window. All the components are interconnected, working in a dynamic, self-reinforcing way (Litfin, 2014). In the following the E2C2 will be clarified further:

2.3.1 Ecology

Litfin simplifies ecology to the study of how all living organisms relate to their geophysical surroundings and each other, humans being one out of many. A healthy body needs all its individual parts to be healthy but also the cooperation between every part need to function in harmony. Everything is connected to everything, and the clue is to remove the distinction and nourish the interconnectedness, understanding the interdependent relationship that exists between everything. Litfin explores further aspects vital in ecovillages like permaculture, wildlife conservation, food, water, building, energy, transportation and collaborative consumption (Litfin, 2016).

2.3.2 Economy

Litfin writes: "*Ecology is the household's management of its natural resources, and economics is its management of its financial resources*". As it is not a viable option to buy

cheap goods produced far away on the cost of humans and earths well-being, the economy must reinvent itself. To create harmony in a community's resource extraction, production, consumption and waste, leading to fulfilment of all entities and the earth. Five main principles will explain further:

1. *Full cost accounting*: Paying the price of goods actually reflecting the necessary working wage and the resource usage.
2. *Right livelihood*: Human wellbeing within the ecosystem limits, through first-hand contact with one and another and material resources depending on.
3. *Rethinking ownership*: Combining the prevailing ideas of individuality and private ownership with sharing, and common property.
4. *Re-localize money*: View money as a service for the people and the ecosystem, replacing the social fiction surrounding the dream of money.
5. *Simplicity*: Through sharing, self-sufficiency and the desire of more integrity, time and intimacy, instead off more material goods.

2.3.3 Community

Benjamin Franklin once said: “*We must hang together or we shall most assuredly hang separately*”, and Litfin describes it perfectly as the all-important web of human ties that constitutes the heart of community. Through the one year, Litfin observed the community living; the people were seen as the biggest challenge as well as the biggest reward of the habitants of the ecovillages. Aspects like sharing specific visions, working together internally and externally, child rearing, self-governance, conflict resolutions, cultural expressions, not to mention engaging in each other's joys and sorrows; all are part of a very expensive personal growth workshop, as Litfin is quoting a phrase from one of the ecovillagers.

2.3.4 Consciousness

“*When we set out to transform our material and social landscape we simultaneously – often unwittingly – enrich our inner landscape*” (Litfin, 2016). Living in a community entails a specific effort, irrelevant of your religion, spirituality or secularity. To move away from the ME centred being. A common awareness in ecovillages are the one of humans being inseparable from nature, understanding that it is not about what we can do but how we can

be. There is a consciousness surrounding the fact that the ecological crisis is also a human crisis, our lives need to be co-created with nature, all life is sacred and it is needed to practice conscious relational living (Litfin, 2016). The consciousness can be spiritual or not, but there is cognizance towards nature, and the unity between all living entities and the earth.

Using these definitions or understandings of sustainability in ecovillages, in complementary manner through the analyses, are seeking to truly investigate the holistic sustainability of the case, and see several sides and aspects that without both definitions might not have been considered. Combining GENs and Litfin's dimension with Dewey's theory of learning will expectantly enable a profound analyses of the case of Gambhira ecovillage.

2.4 John Dewey's Experimental learning

John Dewey's theory points out the importance of the environment when learning. Popularly known as learning by doing, the way the individual learn in the society of existence. *“By doing his share in the associated activity, the individual appropriates the purpose which actuates it, becomes familiar with its methods and subject matters, acquires needed skill, and is saturated with its emotional spirit”* (Dewey, 2001).

To grow, it is necessary to obtain experience, which again teaches a person to shape habits, habits that gives power to shape the environment and utilize it for human purposes. *“Habits take the form both of habituation, or a general and persistent balance of organic activities with the surroundings, and of active capacities to readjust activity to meet new conditions”* (Dewey, 2001). Growth is the characteristic of life and are not possible without active habits, applying abilities to new purposes are the never-ending goal, which are not conceivable without education. Teaching and learning are the condition for continued existence of a society. The words common, community and communication displays more than similarity in the word, humans live in communities based on sharing something in common, which is infatuated as common by communication transferred between the community. The very process of living together, sharing experiences, communicating provides revelations on one's understandings, which again stimulates imagination and the possibility to reflect upon one's experiences (Dewey, 2001).

2.5 Other ideas and concepts of importance

When studying sustainability, human happiness, progress, learning processes and the applicability of it to a wider context, it is hard to be precise as the subject of investigation sometimes are diffuse. It is a question of subjectivity, as in qualitative research the idea of complete accuracy is not being reached for. There are several ways of measuring constructed in development discourse, from monetary perspective, to measurement of happiness and ecological footprint.

2.5.1 Ways of measuring

Through time, methods of measuring concepts like economic growth which at some point was seen as the main synonym to development, to concepts like poverty, sustainability, equality, happiness, and multi sided idea of development etc. has been constructed. Some ways of measuring will be applied to Colombia/Gambhira to try to reflect the context relevance and the understanding of development as a concept, thus a further explanation of some of them are given:

GDP/GNP/GNI – Gross domestic/national product/income are used to measure monetary wealth and was for some time highly connected to measuring the development of a country, as of today the GNI are a part of the HDI (UNDP, 2015).

POVERTY LINE – the global poverty line is at the moment 1,90 USD per day. If a person lives under this amount of money per day he/she is considered to be living in poverty (Worldbank, 2015).

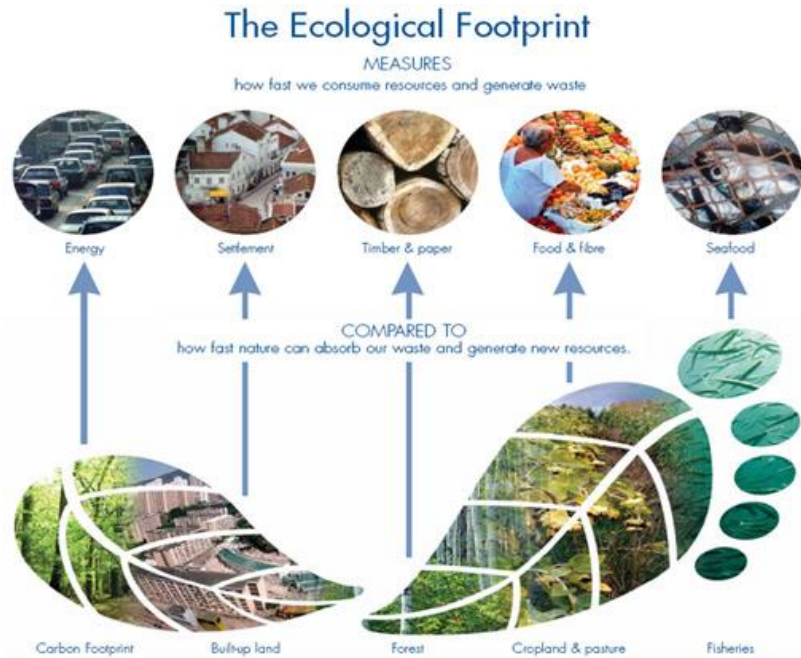
HDI – the human development index has the indicators of life expectancy, expected years of schooling, mean years of schooling and GNI per capita (UNDP, 2015). A further improvement towards measuring the development of a country.

MPI – the multidimensional poverty index “*Reflects the percentage of the population that is multidimensional poor adjusted by the intensity of the deprivations*” (UNDP, 2015). Not only measuring the monetary aspect but the other aspects of the HDI as well as considering the overlapping deprivations suffered simultaneously (UNDP, 2015).

HPI – the happy planet index is a way of measuring sustainable well-being. Using life expectancy, experienced well-being and the ecological footprint, the happy planet index seeks to measure which countries deliver long, happy, sustainable lives for its population (nef, 2012).

2.5.2 The ecological footprint

The ecological footprint is a tool created to let the individual/city/business/nation or all of humanity see their influence on the planet; the consequence of actions and the pressure put on the planet. *“The Ecological Footprint measures the area of biologically productive land and water required to provide the resources used and absorb the*



(Picture 2)

carbon dioxide waste generated by human activity, under current technology. Biocapacity is the area of productive land and water available to produce resources or absorb carbon dioxide waste, given current management practices” (The global footprint network, 2010).

The biological footprint shows as far as possible the demand and supply of nature, biocapacity represent the supply of biologically productive land, and this is compared with human’s demand on nature (Global footprint network, 2015, Picture 2). When assessing the ecological footprint, it can enable higher consciousness around how to manage the ecological assets and live within the earths capacity. The last measurement revealed that it takes earth one and half year to regenerate what humanity use in one year. Exceeding the earth capacity of regenerating has been the trend since 1970s, jeopardising the well-being of the planet, but as well humans by overrunning earth’s resources. This is an issue that need to be addressed in a higher manner, which the ecological footprint as a tool can be utilized for (global ecovillage network, 2015).

3 Methodology

When researching sustainable living and development, there is no better way than actually living in a presumed sustainable community. The fieldwork will be conducted in an ecovillage called Gambhira, a small scale community close to Santa Marta in Colombia. This ecovillage is chosen as it has a strong educational mission, and it is located in a poor, rural area which also creates challenges which will be the reality many places. The approach will be inductive case study; hence changes will most likely be undertaken as the project evolves. The intention is to have both an emic and etic perspective on the whole, including a holistic approach towards sustainability and human happiness. Qualitative method; participatory observation will be the main focus, but will be supplemented by semi-structured interviews and a survey that will be analysed in a quantitative way. As this is a micro scale case study it is natural to use qualitative methods. The goal is to go in depth, to ‘get under the skin’ of the volunteers and residents in Gambhira. The analyses will be presented with grounded theory as a tool, using coding as means of organising.

3.1 Case study with a hint of cross-sectional design

The research design is case study, which demands intense and detailed study of a particular case, or community in this occasion. But as part of the point is to investigate concepts through the specific case, it is more a combination of case study and cross-sectional design. The research design is predominantly qualitative, working mainly with participatory observation, in an inductive way which are suitable with the case study design. As the research are also nomothetic, not mainly idiographic it has elements of both design. But with the limitation of time and the extent of the research it was more practical to stick to one case. The exponents of the case study often favour qualitative research while the cross-sectional one tend to be deductive and often quantitative (Bryman, 2012). Even though the community alone is not the focus of interest in its own right, it will be intensively and deeply investigated.

3.1.1 Placement of fieldwork

There are many possibilities for where to be placed geographically when researching sustainable living in ecovillages, as there are ecovillages existing all over the globe.

Colombia is an interesting option as it is the first country in Latin America to create ecovillages. There are several alternative, sustainable ways of living, but ecovillages are internationally recognized and have a level of global organization, which means that there are some conditions applied to the concept. *“Ecovillages are one solution to the major problems of our time - the planet is experiencing the limits to growth, and our lives are often lacking meaningful content”* (GEN, 2015). The idea is as well to conduct the fieldwork in a developing country in global south where the conditions are not always the easiest, being an example that can be used as a model worldwide, without the preconditions of advanced technology and a certain level of monetary funds. Gambhira is located in a dry area with water shortage, a challenge likely to be a result of climate change, which seemed to be a suitable location.

3.1.2 Gambhira – The ecovillage

Gambhira ecovillage is located about one hour away from Santa Marta on the Caribbean coast in Colombia, close to the Venezuelan border in the foothill of the mountain range of Sierra Nevada's. Founded in 1998, the ecovillage goal is to share the life ideologies: simple, harmonious, ecological, with a high moral and spiritual value, and with this way of living showing a practical and successful alternative to the consumer generated society of today (Gambhira, 2016). The ecovillage is a part of GEN and are cooperating with other organisations, ecological parks, vegetarian restaurants and meditation centre's in more than 25 countries. Gambhira offers a program for people from all over the world to come and volunteer or visit, and experience the community life of an ecovillage. They offer the opportunity to learn about permaculture, organic farming, vegan cooking, eco buildings, ecotourism and for people around the globe to come and exchange cultural experiences. *“We are a community of diverse people living in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere leading a holistic life style with respect and in harmony with the environment, all our projects are environmentally-friendly with the idea of keeping the environment as pristine as naturally possible”* (Gambhira, 2016). The volunteer program includes yoga lessons in the morning, three lacto-vegetarian meals per day and activities in form of workshops in oriental philosophy, meditations, movie screenings etc. in exchange of four and a half hours of work each day as well as a small day based donation. *“Through these daily practices, one can*

experience the peace, tranquillity and satisfaction that can be attained through our ancient traditions” (Gambhira, 2016).

Gambhira is also a part of Universidad de Sabiduria Ancestral, UDSA; the University of Ancestral Knowledge. Which is an institution of knowledge directed to serve the wellbeing of mother nature and all living beings, offering the knowledge of ancestors throughout the planet, tested in the practise of life. Native well-wishers of the planet are globally invited to contribute their wisdom, and to apply the wisdom for every human in their daily life. *“to give us an idea about how different communities of the world appear and evolve over the time while preserving their cultures”* (UDSA, 2016). It is an education to serve all, increasing understanding on how to use the ancestral wisdom to preserve mother earth in this time. They offer several courses online and are developing two university sights, one in Peru and the other one will be on the same property as Gambhira is located (UDSA, 2016).

3.1.3 Challenges

As the fieldwork is taking place in Colombia, the biggest challenge will be regarding language. I have limited Spanish, so a lot of the communication from my side will have to be in English. Not only is it harder to express clear universally understood meanings in the thesis itself, there will also be a task to communicate orally with other people that might also have English as a second language, or do not speak English at all.

Awareness around the limitation regarding the language itself, might assist to avoid misunderstandings with the extra though put on the communication. Even though the primary language in Colombia is Spanish, the ecovillage is a fairly international community as a result of travellers from all over the world coming to volunteer and visit, as well as it is often built by people actively seeking a different lifestyle, thus, it is assumed that many people speak English as well.

3.1.4 Experienced Challenges

When analysing possible sources of error in the data collection, the main source of error is of course me; subjectivity, even though striving to be objective, my culture and life perception will always influence the observations made. Awareness around it, and my

emphasis on being objective can give some advantage. But the relation that is built through living as close and long together cannot be stressed enough, even though intending to distance myself from the experience and the people when analysing, the foundation of error is existing and should therefore be accounted for and acknowledged. Close friendships were made as often is inevitable when living so close and intense as a family for three months.

The language barrier was sometimes problematic, as my level of Spanish was not always adequate to form a decent conversation with the visitors only speaking Spanish. Misunderstandings occurred, and it challenged the interpretation process occasionally. English as a common language with most of the volunteers would sometimes offer difficulty as well with English being the second language of the majority of the visitors. The communication process was sometimes challenged, but would often end in laughter and realization of the misunderstanding.

3.2 Methods of research

The methods selected is suitable for the intention of the research; to understand and see specific in-depth sides to sustainability, learning, and ideas around happiness in an alternative way of living. Participatory observation as the main method will be supplemented by semi - structured interviews and a survey.

3.2.1 Participatory observation

The participatory observation will be conducted over a period of three months, living as a full worthy member of the ecovillage community. It is in high degree participatory, not solely observing, or partly participating, but full participative observation. I will take part in all the activities and function as the other volunteers that are living in the ecovillage. Hopefully this will ensure necessary knowledge about the context, the processes, the people and the dynamics occurring. It might give a frame that can be used later in the other methods, as well as give sufficient background information and data. Living within the community will give a certain level of trust within the social context that can benefit the interviews regarding sincerity, in addition to the advantage when analysing the communication that is occurring during the interviews.

3.2.2 In - depth semi - structured interviews

Semi - structured interview is chosen, as the goal is to reveal more through the interviews than what specific questions can bring. If there is a structure around it, the outcome of the research will only be centred on the information and aspects defined beforehand, unpredictable data will not be revealed (Ryen, 2002). The aim is that the process of the conversation displays sides to the ecovillage and its consequences on people's lives or other ideas around the topic not considered beforehand, or possible to observe. An interview guide (Appendix 1) is applied to declare some information that is needed. It is meant to be used freely, more as a support in the case of stillness in the conversation. It gives a direction around different subjects established as interesting for the research, but the goal is to keep it as close to a normal, casual conversation as possible. Flexibility is a keyword in this method, giving room for questions to follow up on subjects that is discovered (Ryen, 2002).

Before starting with the interviews there will be more than a month with participatory observation, expectantly creating a good relation between myself and the interview objects. A defining element is that the people of subject feel safe enough to be completely honest. The amount of time spent together beforehand will also increase the understanding of the interview objects way of communicating and expressing themselves. The plan is to not make too many notes then and there as it is a disturbing element for the flow of the conversation. Directly after the interviews are completed, everything in memory will be written down in detail.

Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with volunteers and one with the volunteer coordinator, as well as many loose conversations around similar questions as created for the interviews (Appendix 1). It took place in a very relaxed manner, lying in the hammock area of Gambhira, some notes were made during the interviews but most of the notes were written down subsequently to not disturb the flow of the conversation.

3.2.3 Quantitative survey

A quantitative survey is done for complimentary purpose to the other main methods. The way of gathering the data is accomplished with a Likert scale, which is a multiple-item measure, shaped in the form of statements according to a specific area where the respondents

indicate their level of agreement with the statements (Bryman, 2012). This will be used as a check-up throughout and at the end of the research for validating purposes, in quantitative measure. It will be used as it is easy to conduct with all the visitors that come by the ecovillage and it can work as a method of comparison the perception of the ecovillage residents/volunteers and short time visitors.

The Likert scale consist of three statements (Appendix 2), and was conducted at the end of the stay of all the visitors/volunteers in Gambhira. All together 43 Likert scales was handed out and completed during the time period January to March.

3.2.4 Reliability -Triangulation

To create reliability and to validate the research, three different methods will be utilized. Hence, a triangulation will be made use of; the data will be compared to confirm coherence. This will not only validate the result, but also give a deeper understanding around the specific component (Ryen, 2002). If there is a mistake or misinterpretation this might be revealed using the triangulation method. The main means will be participatory observation, but in depth semi-structured interviews will complement the observations. The survey will work as a quantitative supplement. The strategy is to do the observation first, then the interviews when some knowledge are already obtained around the people of subject, ending with the quantitative survey as a hypothesis tester, as it might broaden the context of the already existing qualitative data (Ryen, 2002).

3.3 Ethical evaluation

The research will take place in a society that is generally open about how they live as it is a place to learn about sustainable living. There will not be any major impacts on the informants, and if it should be needed, anonymity will not affect the research. At this point there are no ethical issues or challenges that seem obvious.

3.4 Grounded Theory

As a means to analyse the data, grounded theory will be used, not solely at the end, but from the beginning of the fieldwork it will work as a part of the research design strategy. As the main method is participatory observation, field notes will be taken continuously from the

beginning of the fieldwork. Coding as an essential part of grounded theory (Bryman, 2012) will be applied on the field notes from day one. Even though the data in first round will be categorized with open coding, the goal is with time to use axial and selective coding. Being aware of the danger of losing the context and flow by coding from the very beginning, the data will at all times be re-explored and re-evaluated when new codes are created or dismissed. As Gambhira is off the grid, the data will be written by hand and the idea is to use color-codes. There is a challenge regarding the amount of codes and lack of structure, especially when everything is done by hand, but it can be viewed as a good challenge, and it might limit the number of codes, which often can be the main undertaking in coding. Categories will eventually be created according to the theory and used when presenting the findings. *“The data are treated as potential indicators of concepts, and the indicators are constantly compared”* (Bryman, 2012). It is expected to be a bit fluent, as the data and analysis will be continuously observed with the potential of requiring alteration.

Even though “grounded theory” is used, the aim of actually creating a theory is not the objective. Thus, the essential tool used from grounded theory is the coding, even though a constant comparison will take place to be able to elaborate and expand the notions around concepts or categories constructed. The aim is to critically question the concept of development and the sustainability, and widening the appliance of ecovillage’s ideas to broader contexts. The purpose is to use coding to formulate indicators and further develop, or question, different concepts or hypothesis (Bryman, 2012).

4 Findings and analysis

Which are the main targets when aiming to change the general lifestyle of the population towards sustainable living, and how can ecovillages contribute to the change? This chapter seeks to elaborate around the sustainability, happiness and the feasibility of transference to a wider context of the community form of living in the ecovillage of Gambhira. The problem formulation will be resolved by firstly presenting Gambhira; defining and amplifying the concept of an ecovillage. Some findings will be presented primarily on its own, before merged with analyses of their path concerning shifting the general lifestyle of the population towards sustainable living. Organized and examined in themes obvious to be of significance, the chapter is sorted in the recognition of collectivism replacing individualism, the human relation to nature and the understanding of development. Through the qualitative fieldwork; participatory observations for three months, three interviews with volunteers and an interview with the person in charge of the volunteers and 43 surveys, most of the outcome and analyses will be presented together. The desire is to paint a picture of the way of life in an ecovillage, if and how they are environmental friendly/sustainable in their way of living and the level of progress and happiness they are experiencing. Reviewing the challenge on how to implement the knowledge and worldview outside the bounds of the ecovillage. The chapter is divided in subchapters starting with introducing the observations of the structure and the daily life in Gambhira, before looking into the main matters of change exposed through the research. The educational aspect will be considered throughout as well as elaborated further in chapter five.

4.1 Introducing Gambhira –The daily life in the ecovillage

Gambhira is a community of people that strive to live with a minimal impact on nature, with a collective ideology they share an objective of spreading the knowledge on how to live sustainable and achieve a higher connection with nature. Gambhira is one out of a big network of many ecovillages cooperating across South America and the habitants sometimes move between the different communities. At the moment there is nine permanent residents in Gambhira, mainly Colombian, but the number of people living there differs from day to day, as an important aspect of Gambhira is to educate visitors/volunteers arriving from all over the world. Normally the volunteers are foreign, as well as many of the visitors. There is

a minority of Colombian nationalities visiting, and they are mainly visiting as guests from other parts of Colombia, not volunteering. Volunteers are expected to stay minimum three days but are encouraged to stay for longer periods for the benefits of the person herself and the community. Visitors can stay one night or as long as desired. The visitors contribute towards accommodation and three meals per day etc. with the sum of around 23 USD, while volunteers pay a small amount to cover food basics. The longer a volunteer decide to stay, the smaller the fee, as their contribution to the community will increase with the knowledge they gain. As I stayed for a period of three months, I got accepted as a part of the community after some time, with the benefit of receiving food and accommodation in exchange of an increase in working hours. The highest fee of volunteering, which is for a short time, is the equivalent of approximately 10 USD per day, to cover the expenses of food and basic living costs, the construction of more ecovillages and projects of increasing sustainable consciousness. The way of living is introduced to the visitors, and volunteers are participating in same level as the permanent residents. Daily chores are delegated by one of the permanent residents, as her role in the ecovillage is to function as volunteer coordinator. The habitants share the work of agriculture, cooking, and all the chores for the community to function, without any salary. They have their living expenditures covered, and the work load differs on a daily basis, according to number of volunteers and the natural season.

Gambhira is located in the footsteps of the Sierra Nevada's, close to a village called El Curval, where the nearest city is Santa Marta, in the northern part of Colombia. This area of Colombia has experienced severe drought the last couple of years which are increasing due to the el Niño phenomena, affecting

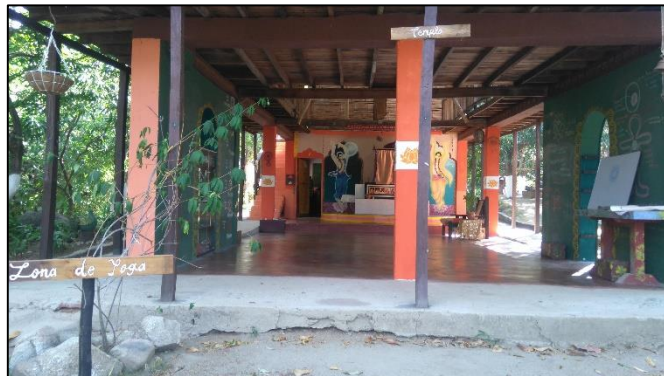


(Picture 3)

agriculture and livestock often ending in malnutrition for the people in the affected area (BBC, 2015). The drought is highly visible in Gambhira; looking at a picture five years ago the ground was green and they had a viable river. At the time of writing the ground has mainly turned into sand (Picture 3), and the river dried out over three years ago. Many trees are dying

and the cultivated area is looking rather sad, with the dire need of water, in spite of the effort that is made to water every other day.

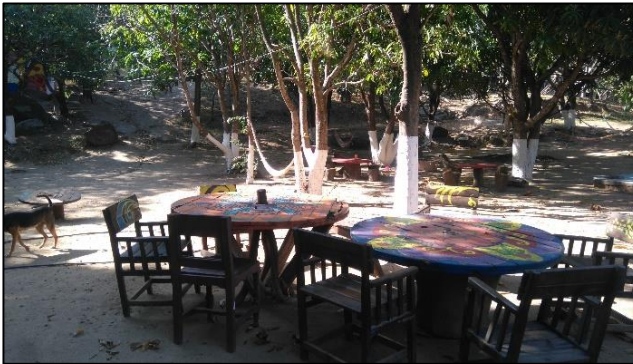
It acquires half an hour walk to reach the farmland of Gambhira. When entering the property, you first encounter a temple/yoga hall (Picture 4) with two bedrooms in the second floor where many of the permanent inhabitants live, sharing the sleeping space. There are three cabins made of mud, earth, clay and locally grown wood and palm trees (Picture 5), rooming all together space for 16 people. Furthermore, there is a camping ground and they provide tent if preferred, complemented with a hammock area which can assist as



(Picture 4 – Top / Picture 5 – bottom)

sleeping space if needed. The property has three toilet facilities with seven toilets and seven showers, the toilets are dry compost toilets (Appendix 3). The laundry facility is a big sink with an attached scrubbing area and they provide biodegradable soap for all the visitor to utilize, so the water from the washing can be reused for the plants.

The kitchen facilities are located in a big open construction (Picture 6) also naturally built of earth/mud and palm trees. Gambhira is off the grid and are relying solely on solar power, as well as their own water well. Food waste, and everything biodegradable is composted and plastic are separated from other waste and transported to El Curval where they have a garbage management system. The cultivated land is located around the living area and a variety of organic fruit and vegetables are cultivated; yucca, plantains, papaya, coconut, mandarin, a huge amount of mango, corn, beans and a variation of aromatics and herbs; basil, oregano, ginger, lemongrass, mint and they have different trees producing fruits and seeds that are



(Picture 6 – top / Picture 7 – bottom)

used for retention and natural soap. They are not self-reliant, hence, they need to buy food from local farms and markets. As far as possible they buy organic goods. All the meals are lacto-vegetarian, no eggs but small amount of dairy products from time to time. It is a community free of alcohol, drugs, cigarettes and other toxins harmful for nature or beings. The meals are shared commune, so all the inhabitants and volunteers eat together (Picture 7). Breakfast and dinner are small, while lunch is the big meal of the day. All the products consumed are wholesome, and fresh as no fridge or freezer are utilized. As there is a limit in the power supply, no food processors or tools using electricity are made use of. There is a blender powered by a bicycle, everything else in the need of grinding, kneading etc. is done by hand. Every day there is at least one volunteer helping in the kitchen as a way of teaching the volunteers about vegan cooking. The dishes that are used by everyone as cutlery, plates and cups are washed in three steps; firstly, a bucket with sawdust where everything is scrubbed to remove fat etc. the used sawdust goes in another bucket which are reused for the dry toilets. Secondly, the dishes are scrubbed in another bucket with water, thirdly rinsed in a third bucket and put in a section for drying. All the water from the dishes are reused for the plants.

Gambhira is open for anyone to come and visit, for a couple of days as a tourist or volunteering as an exchange for food. New inhabitants are welcome to settle down in the ecovillage, but to become a part of the community it is acquired to volunteer for some time to see if everyone gets along and the person herself feel happy living in the community. They have an office and a vegetarian restaurant in the city centre of Santa Marta where they also promote the experience of eco volunteering in Gambhira and their sister village Goloca to travellers from all over the world. Their intention is to spread the knowledge of sustainability

and the importance of taking care of 'Madre Tierra, Pachamama', the mother earth. As presented earlier they are a part of UDSA, where they offer free courses in ancestral knowledge concerning nature conservation. Every Sunday is open to the public and people from the local community, the volunteers and visitors of the area are invited to come and share a free lunch and activities to promote sustainability. A day of socialising, getting to know people with diverse cultures and creating awareness.

Gambhira, as a place with an educational mission has a schedule for all the volunteers visiting. The morning starts with yoga; 07.00 in the morning, followed by breakfast at 08.30. The work starts 09.30 and last until lunch 13.30. Every afternoon it is a workshop around four or five and the dinner is 19.30. Normally everyone goes to bed around nine or ten as it is natural to follow the cycle of the sun. Only relying on solar power creates limitations after sunset as there is not a lot of light. There is one light in each of the volunteer rooms, one in the temple, kitchen and one light outside, but it limits the activities and is a contributively factor to the day's schedule. The work is varying but normally consist of watering the cultivated land which is done with buckets and splashing as a result of the water limitation, gathering leaves for compost, permaculture work for the land, helping in the kitchen preparing the meals for everyone, artwork, agriculture etc. The workshops are very diverse and can be anything from learning macramé to a trek in the mountainous area of Sierra Nevada's. Every person that arrives are asked what they want to learn and what they want to teach. In this way they always try to use the knowledge of all the visitors for the workshops; having the people visiting teaching anything from aerial yoga, Swedish massage, painting, to theory classes about culture and countries. The approach is for everyone living there to share their skills and wisdom among each other.

Through the fieldwork some main targets have been identified as essential for a society to change towards sustainable happiness. As the idea of this type of development is holistically grounded in the ecovillage, the objectives are in high degree symbiotic, and with this interdependence they might seem vague and fluctuating, but are in fact highly contingent on one and another for synergetic effect. As Litfin's windows of dimensions they should be considered together as parts of a whole.

4.2 Moving from individualistic to collectivistic thinking

The thought of collectivism has been dominating societies for centuries, but with the transformation arising with modernization processes, humans are separating themselves from nature and from each other. Building separate houses, putting older family members in retirement homes, building fences, isolating themselves from each other, cultivating the idea of the individual. The individual right to speech, the individual choice and opinion, individual material goods, individual, individual, individual. The underlying perspective in the ecovillage movement is that people should respect each other differences. Acknowledging the fact that society is made up out of individuals do not mean that we should not share, the truth is that there is one planet Tellus, that we are sharing, that we are a part of.

4.2.1. The Community/Social dimension

Community; this can be discussed to be the essence of Gambhira, or ecovillages in general as Litfin suggests. To share; to share resources, to share property, to share material wealth, to share meals, to share the room you sleep in, to share work, to share knowledge, to share ideas, to share decision-making, to share moments, to share smiles and laughter. ‘To share’ is the main experience in Gambhira, as many come from highly individualized societies into a place where there is no yours or mine, it is all ours. To share, but still making room for everyone’s differences, and nurture and appreciate those differences. This is as Litfin expresses, and the volunteer coordinator of Gambhira the biggest challenge but as well the biggest reward. She said with a smile: *“Yes, sometimes you get annoyed that she or he didn’t clean up after herself or something stupid like that, but that isn’t a real challenge”*. One volunteer expressed in an interview: *“The idea of community living creates a positive, warmth welcome to all of us, they are all very generous without needing to get something from you. They have a lot of knowledge, that is simple but functional. You don’t live ON each other, but have space and live WITH each other. The community is very nice”*. Everyone was asked when leaving what they would miss the most, and they all said the people. Observing how close people would get in short periods of time was fascinating. Because you live so close with one another, new close friendships were created in less than a week. When asking one of the volunteers about what she sees as the values in Gambhira she said; *“Generosity is what I feel that I receive, and I know they have strong values to respect the nature. It makes*

sense that with their high respect of mother nature I feel so much generosity here. Mother nature is very generous. They have nothing here, but they give a lot". The feeling of sharing was in Gambhira of obvious importance to the volunteers, and the observations tell that they could feel it, as well as participating in the community way of living, happily. Again coming back to the fact that Gambhira always ask about what the volunteers can teach, in that way gaining knowledge from every person that is there. This is not only to receive the knowledge, but include the person as an equal part of the community. And this is exactly what happens, the observations convey that the volunteers engage more in the village life, and feedback received later is that they feel like a part of a big family.

The challenges of living as a big family is also many, as we all know from experience, sharing a house means to compromise. An interesting episode reflecting the importance of human relations within the community can be illustrated with a period of negative feedback from a couple of volunteers as the only time during the period of the observations. There was one person that came with the idea of changing her life, giving up on toxins she had been relying on earlier. Undeniably this was a tough time for her, and it affected her mood and behaviour towards other people. The new volunteers that arrived when she was already there, had a completely different experience of the place, in a negative sense. While observing her carrying out a lot of the communication with the new volunteers, their image of Gambhira was painted by her emotional state at the moment. She left after a week, and the response from the volunteers regarding their experience went back to the positive. This is also reflecting how vulnerable a small community like Gambhira is with the transferability that are existing, which again is of importance according to GENs dimensions. Every individual are heard, engaged in decision making and should feel supported and with the sense of belonging. It was clear that this person did not feel supported, empowered and safe, thus a challenge would be how to handle situations like this one. Conflict resolution should have a bigger space on the agenda, how to handle the human interaction challenge of living as close as in Gambhira. Trust is a key ingredient in successful human relationships, quoting Litfin: *"Like all good soil, trust is built upon a gift economy of symbiotic relationships, with the key nutrients being honesty and compassion"*.

4.2.2 The Consciousness/Cultural dimension

Culture is often connected to ideas, norms, knowledge, values and opinions which is often connected to teachings and upbringings, what brings people together, the commune in community (Dahl, 2001). Consciousness is a very fluid term with diverse meaning, in Gambhira and ecovillages in general it is the awareness of nature, the respect of the earth, which is the common in the ecovillage communities. Religion, spirituality, secularity is of no importance, as the purpose is the goal of changing human behaviour towards more sustainable living. Gambhira is a part of several networks of environmental movements as well as the Vrindavan institute, a branch with roots from the Vaishnava association, deriving from Vedic philosophy (Vrindavan, 2016). Many of the ecovillages around south America and the rest of the world is connected to this association as one of their main principals are to live in harmony with nature. Even though most of the inhabitant of Gambhira was practising this spiritual way of life it was not of importance in the interaction between volunteers and the practitioners of Vaishnava. Every day they would have their ceremonies and it was open for whoever wanted to join, but no one would ever be asked to attend. The ceremony would consist of singing and dancing as a way of meditation. The message that was shared with all of the people visiting Gambhira was to respect and take care of mother nature. The volunteer coordinator reflects on the aim of Gambhira: *“To provide a place in nature where people have the opportunity to reflect, meditate, practise yoga, eat healthy food and acquire the tools to take care of the nature. To create a space for all of this and for personal meditation”*.

4.2.3 The Ecological dimension

An important point in GEMs dimensions, is the assessment of the life cycle of the products used in an ecovillage, something that was learned in the kitchen. Every day the meals would be created from what needed to be used of the vegetables/fruits before going bad as the lack of a fridge determined a shorter life cycle. Quoting from one interview: *“I learned to live without a fridge, one small thing, but also to get away from the whole world system where you depend on everything, to be independent from something like a fridge”*. Collaborative consumption decreases the waste, as all the meals are cooked and shared between many people there is hardly ever any food that goes bad even though there is no fridge for

conservation. As Litfin points out collaborative consumption are a clue not only to take care of the planet but to care for each other. It is a natural consequence of the individualistic lifestyle many is living to foster high consumption, but it is also a “pursuit of loneliness” (Litfin, 2014). She points out how collaboration can be done with sharing cars, neighbourhood gardens, tools, and why not meals, as in Gambhira. Many good moments where shared over the meals, and more than that, the acknowledgement and appreciation of vegetarian food, which will be deliberated in the following subchapter.

4.3 Reconnecting to Mother Earth – the conception of nature

Under the interviews, when asking the volunteers how they define ecovillages, the dimension everyone emphasized was the ecological aspect. The common word that are repeated when asked for a definition is self-sufficiency. To get as close as possible to be self-reliant, using renewable resources, to be close to nature, integrated in the nature.

4.3.1 The Ecological dimension

The relationship to nature and the natural cycles seem to be one of magnificent value in Gambhira. Everyday there is shown appreciation of natural happenings; taking time to sit and watch the sunset, listening to the birds, watching the centipede chasing a cockroach in the palm ceiling. There is plenty of examples of situation where everyone stopped working, gathered and watched with amazement and excitement the way of nature. As the life is happening in such a close proximity to the nature there is interaction occurring on a daily basis, and it shapes the lives and daily routines/schedule of the people living in Gambhira. As GEN is defining the human personal connection to nature, it can clearly be observed within the coexistence that naturally happens for visitors when they volunteer in Gambhira. The understanding of humans and nature can be illustrated with a quote of Alan Watts: “*You didn’t come into this world. You came out of it, like a wave from the ocean*”. The ideology in Gambhira is based on the comprehension of everything working as one, the planet is a big organism, and humans are part of it, not separated from the nature.

Litfin is highlighting the point of all organisms relating to their biophysical surroundings; cooperation to achieve harmony. This is essential for a peaceful experience of contentment and comfort, and are observed to be a challenge sometimes in Gambhira. Some visitors are

not used to insects for example, and have trouble to coexist with knowledge of the spider that share his/her cabin. Some people left with a bad experience as they were not able to adapt to the simple living conditions, it has to be highlighted that this was very few. Most people came with some constraints and might have challenged their comfort zone but left with a complete comfort and joy from the coexistence with insects etc. Again this can be regarded as the learning experience, as Dewey presents the importance of interaction and communication towards your surroundings. One of the volunteers came with an intense fear of spiders and other insects. After staying for a bit longer than a week he found a scorpion in his bed inside of the mosquito net. The scorpion was collected into a jar and we released it together outside the property. The volunteer with the fear was the one releasing the scorpion with a smile on his face and had no problem sleeping in that very bed the same night. A clear demonstration of adaption and learning process has occurred in a short period of time as he managed to remove the distinction between himself and nature with an elimination of some of his fear.

Permaculture/agriculture was something many of the volunteers where interested to learn about, and many came with the idea to put seeds in the soil and gather vegetables and learn about the connections in nature etc. There was a lot of disappointment primarily in this area as the lack of water created challenges, and expectations and reality were often not matching. Gambhira is experiencing a big challenge in the area of self-reliance as they are not close to producing all the food to cover their own needs. The main reason is due to water shortage, which is out of control of the community. They are still able to produce a lot in spite of their resource limitation, thus, they are displaying a good example of adapting towards the circumstances. Something which was observed and valued by the volunteers after experiencing and living in Gambhira for some days. Even though they are not self-reliant with land cultivation, a lot of the work is based in agriculture and permaculture, but in a different way than many of the volunteers expected.

For two weeks all the mangoes suddenly fell down, and as they have more than 30 mango trees, the work then consisted mainly of gathering the mangoes, composting bad ones and being creative with the good ones, trying to manage to collect all before any would go bad. Then squishing the mangoes to make juice, marmalade that can be conserved, mango pies,

mango deserts, mango salads etc. One of the interviews with a volunteer residing in Gambhira during the mango weeks said: *“I was expecting to learn more about the agriculture, what they cultivate etc. it was all about mango, and it wasn’t even mango season”*. This is the work of agriculture, but as people are expecting to put a seed in the soil the expectation are not always reached in that front. Putting seeds into the ground is a very small part of the agricultural work the volunteer coordinator was explaining. Permaculture/agriculture is often just hard physical labour. Digging a hole in the ground for irrigation system for the plants, or gathering composted leaves to fertilize the soil and cover it with sand. *“Very hard physical work in high temperature, the volunteers often prefer to do something else”*.

One project conducted during the observations was to dig big holes next to the mango trees; a feeding hole about two meter wide and deep. As two trees was already dying due to the lack of water, the decision was made to interfere with the ecosystem, give the trees a little help. The holes were filled with composted leaves, fertilizer created from the excrement from the dry toilets and many buckets of water. As the earth around the trees has turned into a soil mainly maid up from sand, there is not much use in watering above the ground as it will be difficult for the roots of the tree to reach the water. The holes work as nutritive for the tree, but as well as place of watering in the future as it is able to catch the water. This was explained by one of the residents working with permaculture/agriculture. The work was physically hard, and observing the volunteers some absolutely loved it, and they talked about how they felt closer to the earth and displayed a great deal of happiness. Others were obviously tired and thought the work was too hard, and it did not match their expectations and understanding of permaculture. With the process of learning as an outcome of this situational experience many were later very content to work in the kitchen or gather leaves.

Vegetarianism; a highly discussed matter in many ecovillages and a highly contributively factor when assessing the ecological footprint. Vegetarianism is a way of reducing your footprint (Global ecovillage network, 2015/Litfin, 2014), and it is another wisdom that can be applied to a wider context. Animal agriculture was in 2009 responsible for as much as 51 % of all green gas emissions according to advisors of the world bank, while transportation which usually are the focus point are responsible for 13 %, reflecting the animal agriculture as the number one contributor to human caused climate change. Additionally, animal

agriculture consumes 1/3 of all fresh water and occupies 45 % of all earth land, its responsible for 91 % of the destruction of the amazon and are the leading cause of habitat destruction, species extinction and ocean ‘dead zones’ (Anderson & Kuhn, 2014). As many of the volunteers said, they would like to live vegetarian, and Gambhira opened their eyes to a new outlook on food. One volunteer uttered in an interview regarding what she learned: *“the vegan cooking, I am more conscious now, I will try to live in peace with nature, I decided to stop eating meat”*. Not only focusing on vegetarian meals, but making sure to grow and buy locally grown food as far as possible. Accepting that you will not have mango every day when you live in Sweden as another volunteer finely put it: *“We don’t HAVE to have all the tropical fruits in Sweden. So many different types of every grocery... its absurd! We should take better care of our own fruits, what we already grow locally”*. Observing the change that occurred in many in this specific area was more than fascinating. Many stated their worry regarding the vegetarian food on arrival, but left with a completely new viewpoint on how and what to eat. Certainly not everyone left as vegetarians, but the utmost stated their eagerness to integrate more vegetarian meals into their daily life. An experience that can easily be transferred to a wider context. As a French entrepreneur expressed in an interview: *“I want to have a bigger impact, make it fashionable to be vegan. We have to open the consciousness of people for them to change their habits. Buying the food in the supermarket, it is a monopoly. You are feeding something that wants more money, more power. But people need to be aware of this. Not only being vegetarian, but also buying organic and locally grown, instead of supermarkets, it is interconnected. We need to touch the people living in the cities”*.

Water, energy and waste are important aspects to sustainability, and Gambhira as being completely self-reliant using renewable resources makes a good example to the volunteers. The main challenge is of course that they are nowhere near being able to support the lifestyle of an average western energy consumer. But, what they are reflecting is a simple way of living. Where the need of massive consumption is replaced with something else. *“It is possible to live easy, simple, out in nowhere, and still live good, it actually felt very good. The speed of things, no TV, not everyone on their smartphone all the time, the tranquillity, quietness, being close to nature, escaping the noise and light pollution. The star sky is amazing, to hear the bird noises”*. Decreasing consumption has often been looked away

from, as personal and social well-being is highly connected to consumption (Litfin, 2014). Experiencing a real life challenge of not having water made some of the volunteers more aware of the water consumption they normally have. A couple of days there was literally no water, and even though everyone worked hard in the sun the whole day it was not an option to have a shower. In spite of this it was as many smiles and laughter during the evening as any other night. It did not affect the happiness of the community; it was seen as a challenge but not a problem.

An example of a process of learning and appreciating a meal, and the cycle of the meal is demonstrated with the traditional arepa. Arepa is mainly made of corn, so it might seem to be a simple type of food, but as the volunteers experienced, it is a long process and with the participation in the process, awareness around all the work that lies behind a single arepa was highlighted. The volunteers gathered the corn, then they had to pick all the corn of the stem, then the corn was dried over fire for conservation, and before this someone obviously had to cultivate the land and put the seeds of the corn plant, and care for the corn when growing. Then to make the arepa the corn is soaked for a night and grinded by hand before shaping the arepa and frying it for the finished meal to be served. After taking part in this process it was observed between the volunteers a higher appreciation for the meal, and a recognition of the process and the connection between the energy you get from the food, and the nature. Taking part in the cycle.

All the infrastructure in Gambhira is natural buildings, some bricks and cement are used for the temple, but it is mainly made of a type of bamboo that naturally grows in the area, earth, mud and palm trees. The cabins are built using the same techniques as the indigenous people of the Sierra Nevada's used to build. The knowledge from the ancestors are applied by the present community and they are at the moment planning another cabin using the same methods as they used to build the existing construction. The temperature is very high during the day and can get cool during the night. The circular shape of the cabins and the way of structure keeps it cool during the day while keeping some of the heat from the day when the night and chilliness arrives. I experienced surprisingly good temperature throughout the time period there without any climate system as support; in high temperature humans normally rely on a fan or sometimes air-conditioning, and in cold temperature some kind of heating in

the form of fire or electrical/gas heating. But the way the cabins were constructed it was promoting a comfortable temperature, as well as organic design with renewable materials. Shared and basic, for some of the volunteers it might have challenged their comfort to some extent, but also created questions around their normal living conditions, what is it that you really need?

4.3.2 The Economical dimension

In Gambhira they live in close proximity of the resources they are depending on and has the goal of using as little as possible with the respect of the earth. As the volunteer coordinator was expressing the conception of money and resources: *“Instead of exploiting nature, we should connect and flow with the nature. Do what the ancestor showed us. Forget about money. Instead of money there should be exchange, I have something that I grow or make, and I need something else, then we can change”*. She talks about material desires as a blockage between yourself and connection to nature and she has found a spiritual way of connecting herself to the nature with the help of tools like vegetarianism and the release of material desires. She paints a picture of the values of Gambhira: *“To have mercy for all living entities, to live an honest simple life; « Vida simple con pensamiento elevado = Simple life with elevated thought».* *To become a protector of the environment”*. Litfin emphasize that without the close relation to resources/knowledge from other people you acquiring, it might be a problem to see its value, but the village model of living is promoting this close relation. In Gambhira exchange of knowledge is highly valued, as presented earlier there is always initiative taken to see what skills the volunteers have and how they can share this with the other people that are there.

4.3.3 The Consciousness/Cultural dimension

The temple as the first thing you meet when entering Gambhira is a place to cultivate any belief, if you have any religion, spirituality or just want to read, practise yoga, just relax, whatever your cultural or personal expression is, the idea is that it should be a place with room and respect for every individual. Creativity is cultivated as a commune activity, to create; workshops in macramé, in making dreamcatchers, painting, mandalas of natural objects etc. The yoga that is offered in the morning has a spiritual aspect as it is directed towards the idea of energy, all beings and mother nature as a whole interdependent system and cycle. As well

as there is meditation practises on indigenous traditions; meditation on the wind, water or fire, connecting oneself to the nature. All of these activities are offered as a part of the learning experience, but none of them are compulsory. The ancestral knowledge was a part that was highly appreciated by the volunteers reflected in one interview: *“The focus was more on indigenous people than what I expected, I didn’t know about the ancestral wisdom, which I found very interesting. The intentions of this place is really good, building the university to keep this knowledge and to awaken the consciousness, preserving the ancestral wisdom of the indigenous people is good. I was fascinated by the wisdom. I believe that they feel a strong connection to mother earth and they can see the changes that are happening from the climate change”*.

What lies within the heart of Gambhira is the connection to nature: *“We are a part of nature, have respect for all living entities to achieve a higher connection to the creator of what I came from, the mountains etc.”*, the volunteer coordinator tells her story of changing her life, finding happiness from letting go of material requirements which helped her connect to nature in a higher spiritual level. Spirituality is seen as a way of transformation, but an individual choice. It is seen as an inner journey which is for many people hard to comprehend, and in that way challenging the educational mission of the place. Many people are sceptical when hearing words like spirituality, energy, mother nature as she is alive. There is awareness of this limitation as it has been discussed numerous times in Gambhira, but as an integrated part of the life philosophy, not only for Gambhira, but many other ecovillages (Litfin, 2014), it is not possible to exclude it from their way of educating, as it is done by partaking in their way of life. One volunteer talks about her experience: *“Gambhira has a very dry landscape but it’s very fresh for the soul. I had the sensation of dreams being reality and the reality being a dream, because it was not my normal life. But it felt like it was what my soul was asking for. It was a confusing feeling, like I could stay here, which unfortunately is hard with my job, friends and family back home”*.

With industrialization, a separation between human and nature emerged, using Litfin words: *“Our species has somehow developed a way of living that is out of sync with the rest of creation”*. Separation from each other with the increasing individualization of society simultaneously as creating a gap between human and nature are the beginning of the

developing process of this time. A typical day in the US, kids between 8 and 18 years old use around 8 hours on media. Accordingly, there is a deprivation on spending time in and with nature, which has been discovered to have a negative impact on the development of the brain, not to mention muscles and the development of the body without movement (Lokab, 2014). What happened to climbing a tree, running in the fields, playing with the other kids in the neighbourhood, crossing a river, jumping in water, being wild and scratching your legs, connecting to another living being; dogs, cats or a pet rabbit. Letting nature teach you about life, joy, beauty, sleeping under the stars. Consciousness can be understood as awareness of this unnatural separation that is increasing with the current understanding of development.

Changing the outlook on how to live, the consumer behaviour, out of observations of the volunteers, it is not happening without some kind of change also transpiring on the inside. As one volunteer responded when asked if it would be an option to actual live in an ecovillage: *“I would love to share a property with other ‘Pachamama’ (mother nature) people and live in harmony. Ecovillages are harmony within you and all around you”*.

4.3.4 Pachamama

“I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out until sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in” – John Muir. Mother nature, as many times mentioned throughout the thesis, is a term of endearment towards a different view of the holistically integrated world, based on the planet. Using the term implies an idea of being a part of nature and respecting her in a different way than only for ecological sustainability. Unifying ecovillages, and an important base in the communities, it is given this section as an elaboration towards what is observed over these three months as an essential building block. Not only for the ecological sustainability, but for all dimensions. Building the commune in the community as a unifying force, social gatherings revolving around Pachamama, seeing her, mother nature’s value in economic terms, and the consciousness or spirituality evolving towards connecting to mother nature. Being based in many values from yoga philosophy, which are one of the focus points on the educational side, the divine energy, or the cosmic consciousness is part of the word ‘holistic’ in the context of Gambhira, the interconnectedness. Mother nature is the house in Litfin’s metaphor, the dynamic drive, contributing to the self-reinforcement of the four windows, the four dimensions. A sure observation is a change, varying in degree, in

the volunteer's idea of mother nature. From my perspective the clue is this, human kinds perception of the nature. If this perception is changed, the way of living; the consumer society will automatically change, a different lifestyle will naturally develop as a result. The seed is mother nature.

4.4 Redefining development – locating essential building blocks in happiness

Creating a new understanding of what development really is, repainting the image of what the building blocks in development are, this is a significant target to aim for when changing the general public's lifestyle. Reconnecting development with happiness should be at heart when setting goals in development agenda, and fundamentally doing accurate research on what is essentially contributing to an increase in happiness, not in economic growth. The aim behind has to be rooted in human happiness, not capital or proliferating the economic growth of a nation.

4.4.1 The Economical dimension

Colombia is a country considered as an upper middle income country. They had a GDP \$377,7 billion in 2014, as well as a GNI per capita on \$7,970. The poverty ratio at national poverty line was 28,5% of the population in 2014, which is a huge improvement from 42% in 2008 (Worldbank, 2014). In comparison to the majority of Latin America, they have lower income and a higher poverty rate. On the worlds list of HDI, Colombia rank 97 out of 188, Norway rank as number one (UNDP, 2015). According to UNDR 2015 Colombia had 30,6% people living under the national poverty line in the period 2004-2014, 10,2% near the MDP, and 1,8% in severe MDP, with the intensity of deprivation to be 42,2%. As a country in its whole, viewed from this statistics, Colombia is facing some struggles, thus a lot of work need to be done to develop.

Gambhira and its permanent inhabitants, without having exact numbers, would be living on less than the current poverty line. The income they have from visitors/volunteers are used on the daily living expenditures, and the rest is reinvested into their projects of building more ecovillages and expanding UDSA. The consumer side in Gambhira is mainly the food. Looking at Gambhira's economy through the five principals of Litfin, they have an excellent economy. They are paying the full cost necessary as they are buying organic products directly

from the farmers in the area, soap and hygiene products are bought from Spoon, a Colombian company manufacturing all biodegradable products. Money has no value except from covering the basic need of a simple way of living, within the limits of the earth as far as possible. The land is donated, and the ownership of the property are a part of a bigger organization of several ecovillages and are not belonging to any individual, it is common ground of the people who desire to live within the conditions that apply to the context of Gambhira.

Even though they do live within a good functioning economy according to Litfin's principals, they are such a small community in itself that they are not reinvesting in much retail within the community. And they are not in any way contributing to the economic growth of the country, if any, they have a negative influence on the GNP and GNI. So if you look at the annual GDP growth, Gambhira will have a severe adverse influence on the numbers. Analysing the GNI which is an indicator for development, the negative impact that the inhabitants in Gambhira would have on the numbers cannot be highlighted enough. But depending on which values that are correlated to the economic system, the outcome will differ accordingly. If that is right or wrong, are pictures of perception, but the ideal would be the interpretation which increase happiness and support 'the good life' and sustainability.

Many volunteers observe development to be connected to monetary wealth in their home countries, but differ in their personal opinion when defining happiness. The volunteer coordinator defines development in this way: *"To exploit natural resources to gain money. The world is getting worse, while we are not gaining anything, we are only loosing"*. Hence, development is understood as a negative occurrence, thus, it is not development at all, it is the contrary of development. Many volunteers recognise development as productivity, capitalism, money, power. Words never used when discussing progress and happiness.

Economic strategies applied towards development has affected people differently, expected to "trickle down" to all aspects of society, but instead benefited some more than others. The gap between rich and poor in monetary terms are huge in a global context. Especially through social medias, an imaged is created connecting monetary wealth to happiness. Many companies have intentions of creating desires of their products and illusions of life is created with the consumer as the driving force. Looking into development in the terms of money;

money equals happiness because it enables you to buy ‘stuff’, hence everyone wants to have money as it will make you happy. The consequences of the continuous craving for more money is many; people work more and spend less time with family, face to face communication has been replaced by mails, phone calls and Facebook. Materialism is now a form of showing your identity, your value is reflected in the car you drive and apartment you own. Time is money, an idea influencing daily routines. The modern world is becoming more and more superficial. Another side is wealth as food, education, hygiene and health, advanced technology, equal rights, opportunities and much more. So establishing the fact that the consequences of development in terms of modernization are both good and bad is contradictory in itself, according to the definition of development. Maybe it is necessary to review the development theory in itself. Usually development is connected to poverty, and the goal of accomplishing progress, alleviating poverty (Thomas, 2000). Development and poverty are concepts defined by perspectives. Mother Theresa understood it like this: *“Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat”*.

Using technology to decrease the effects of human consumption are of course desirable but might be one part of a bigger goal of reducing consumption in itself. Maybe questioning the connection that is put between consumption and happiness. *“In 1961 we used a little more than half of the Earth’s biocapacity; in 2006 we used 44% more than was available”* (Global footprint network, 2015). The happiness of 1961 and 2006 are hard to compare, but when you compare developed and undeveloped countries using the HPI, the 27 first countries on top are not very high developed countries (Appendix 4, nef, 2016).

Progress is desirable, but progressing towards what? Higher economical wealth, owning more ‘stuff’? Consumerism; maybe it is not offering the best solutions to the western society as it is functioning today. Even though, there are solutions that can be applied from that context as well. But the main message might be to question what is viewed as development, as progress, as the good life? *“The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe, the less taste we shall have for destruction”*, - Rachel Carson. The perception of the visitors in Gambhira are that they are experiencing a high level of happiness without all the commodities many people rely on to create ‘the good life’.

Happiness might be something that need to be searched for on the inside, from mother nature; as you are a part of her and the life circle. Being closer to other humans, the nature and finding pleasure in living simple with the planet, instead of taking advantage of her. A starting point might be to asses our needs. What is actual needs, and what are needs created by companies with the single goal of monetary profit.

4.4.2 Increase of Happiness = Development?

When asked to define happiness, the respondents replied that the most important is primarily to cover the basics; water, food. Then to have a healthy body and good mental health. Having freedom and opportunities to shape your own life, to have the sense of belonging, sharing with other people, to be content where you are. Not a single person that I talked to mentioned owning a house, a car, money, smartphones, computer or anything relating to material wealth.

The HPI has three parts to measure the happy planet: Life expectancy, experienced well-being and the ecological footprint. The data from Gambhira specifically regarding life expectancy is hard to obtain, but the experienced well-being is with certainty high, as well as the ecological footprint is very low. According to the survey (Appendix 2), the volunteer's observations of themselves/visitors/habitants of Gambhira are happy: 76,7 % highly agreed, 18,6 % partly agreed leaving only 2,3 % on neither and 2,3 % on highly disagree. Displaying this in spite of the low economic wealth, the negative impact on the GNI, the fact that they live under the poverty line, they are achieving what is for many the ultimate goal; happiness. Observing the existing numbers on Colombia; HDI, they are ranking 97th, but in the HPI they are ranking 3rd place, while Norway which is 1st place in HDI, are 29th on the HPI (Nef, 2016). Of course these measures are not in any way a perfect reflection of reality, there are important indicators that are not accounted for in both measurements, but with the wide gap in the result, which are more accurate? The HPI is obviously including the aspect of sustainability as an important factor, which is not crucial in the HDI. But they are essentially measuring the same; progress. How you define progress, are to some extent context related. Comparing it to the results from Gambhira, the HPI is a more accurate way of measuring progress.

Concluding from the research results, the people in Gambhira has generally a high level of happiness, generating the question of what are their ingredients for happiness or progress? What is it that the volunteers are experiencing differently there, then in their normal context? Why is the level of happiness experienced to be high? What are the indicators of happiness in Gambhira?

On her last day one volunteer talks about her experience after spending more than a month in Gambhira and a sister ecovillage in Colombia: *“People in Gambhira, and many in Colombia are so happy, they have nothing, but they are happy. I am happy here, being away from the pollution, to be in fresh air. No toxic people. I had so much more before; house, money etc. I never laughed as much as they laugh here. Happiness; it starts with simplicity. Laughter, which starts with love for yourself and for others”*. Laughter, it is not included in any measurement of development, but might be one of the most important indicators of happiness. As she says, as simple as laughter, that is happiness. It is a feeling, something starting with a genuine smile, and even though a concept might be perceived as diffuse, it would in reality be something measurable, even easier than measuring experienced well-being. Laughter is not a subjective perception of your state of mind or about your living situation, it is an act of impulse, measurable through observation. Children are said to be laughing 300 times per day, while the average 40-year-old only four. Research shows that laughter releases health enhancing hormones, and reduces stress hormones (Gerloff, 2011). Why not considering the amount of laughter per day as an indicator, the amount of smiles? Ultimately, what do you do when you feel happy? Smile.

Every morning in Gambhira starts with a yoga class where every individual states their intention, desire or appreciation of the day. The consistent intention was always to be present; to live and be in the moment. While in many western societies, people are often working towards something. A goal, or something to achieve in the future. I cannot count how many times I have heard people talking about how much they hate their jobs, how tired they are, how stressed, but it will only be for a certain amount of time because they are saving for something; bigger house, newer car, some innovative technology on the market, which again will be considered old in half a year when the newer version is released, and you should then desire that new object. While in reality the only place you ever exist is now, you never live

in the future or the past, and there is no one who knows what will happen tomorrow. Why not heading towards happiness today, now, as the now is where you are always existing.

The indicators of happiness in Gambhira can be summarized:

- Basic physiological needs covered, being healthy physically and mentally
- Laughter
- Feeling of belonging
- Harmony - Inner peace
- Freedom from pollution (air/light/sound)
- Accepting to be where you are, present
- Opportunities
- Connection to nature

All are aspects compatible with sustainability, they do not demand a huge amount of material wealth, and with the planets resources it should be possible to cover these demands for the current population. The volunteer coordinator grasps it in this way: *“Happiness is a state of the soul. We can imagine some level of happiness, but the real state is connected to spiritual world. The soul knows happiness but it can only have a small taste of it in the material world. We should seek to always feel satisfaction in whatever we are doing. The things you do, do it for other, and the absolute; which are the people. «not do what you love, but love what you do»”*. Being able to be content and satisfied where we are in the moment, are a state hard to grasp in a society where media feeds you with a different idea, a world of produced desires and an unnatural connection between ‘stuff’ and happiness/life progress. While in reality all this ‘stuff’ is the destruction of the planet.

“Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Natures peace will flow into you, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves” - John Muir. What is it that takes your breath away? Nature is so much more than a resource for humans to take advantage of, human is nature. How to spread the understanding of the nature? This is a clue to many of the current issues regarding exceeding the planets limitations. Freedom to wonder, freedom to be, letting the nature heal you, love, explore, watch a sunset, stare into to the starry sky, climb a mountain, plant a tree and watch the magnificence of growth. There are endless of things that will enrich

you soul, increase your level of happiness without degrading the planet. How is driving around in an expensive new car increasing your happiness in reality? After some time, you desire something newer, nicer. Happiness from within can only transpire when you except yourself as a part of nature.

“I learned to be a better person, thanks to the environment and the people in the ecovillages. I learned that happiness is simplicity, before I didn’t know that. I have developed compassion, determination, patience and of course my respect in general. I had these qualities, but developed them a lot more here. What was impossible in my ‘normal’ life, to feel relaxed and without stress, in Gambhira I learned to not forget, I felt I experienced personal progress... and how to feed mango trees”. As happiness is a state of mind, it makes sense for it to transpire from inside. With the idea of relying on exterior objects, follows the desire of always needing something more, as it is only temporary. The philosophy of less is more is compatible with the values and goals of Gambhira.

4.4.3 Core values at the heart of development

During an interview the response of a volunteer when asking about Gambhira’s values was: *“Trying to protect mother earth as far as possible, to live in truly simple way, humble. In peace with mother nature”.* Residing in the core of the values and goals are the connection with nature, meaning all living creatures, including humans. Human relations are regarded as much more valuable than material wealth, naturally, this is what is subsidised in Gambhira as many ecovillages. Supporting common spaces, healthy shared meals, clean water and as Litfin emphasises, strong relationships. Creating strong social relations and trust are the glue of the community living, but according to Litfin is the glue of a vital economy as well, and should with that be emphasized by national governments.

Yoga, meditation and spirituality is aspects to numerous life philosophies in ecovillages worldwide (Litfin, 2014). Many of Gambhira’s values also resides in yoga philosophy, where the ultimate goal of life it to unify the individual self with the cosmic energy. Vaishnava philosophy has the goal of freedom from samsara, which is the continuous circle of reincarnations (Vrindavan, 2016). Rudolf Steiner once said: *“May my soul bloom in love for all existence”.* In Gambhira respecting the nature does not only imply to reduce impact on

nature and working towards self – sufficiency as a goal, but to enjoy and look to nature for enrichment, spiritual growth and harmony within you.

Holistically sustainability at the core of organizing, governing and building communities/cities/nations and international cooperation should colour the future of development, having the fundamental purpose of happiness for all living entities. Using the ancestral wisdom of the global south, as the current generation are closer to their ancestral village life where there was a different relation to and knowledge about the nature. Finding back to ways of living in harmony with our surroundings, integrating new technology to enhance life quality and sustainability.

To summarize, the ecovillages present a viable alternative by modifying our perception and association concerning nature, understanding the natural cycle and yourself as fragment of it is the first principal on how to transform human behaviour. Recognizing humans as a part of a bigger whole will nourish a collectivistic way of thinking, and the whole idea of development can change with the main ingredients of true happiness is defined. The challenges of development and the environment are ultimately about how we live. Quoting Litfin: *“There are no environmental problems, there are only human problems”*. And as the volunteer coordinator in Gambhira expressed: *“The world doesn’t need to be saved, she has the power to restore herself, we need to stop our unconscious behaviour”*. When realizing that sustainability is not an option but a precondition for human beings to exist, ecovillages can be a model to seek inspiration, and the value of places like Gambhira will be of tremendous importance. Quoting Litfin: *“Ecovillages.... can help illuminate the path. It is, however, a pathless path; we make it by walking forward together”*. Presenting the focus in the following chapter, how ecovillages can light up the direction of future development, how they can function as an agent of change.

5 How Ecovillages can contribute to change

Gambhira's main intention is to try to educate all the volunteers around sustainability and how we can take care of mother nature. As analysed in the prior chapter they conduct social happenings, gatherings every Sunday as well as activities for all the visitors and volunteers. It has been discussed in some degree but will in the following be elaborated further, with particular focus on which aspects applicable to the bigger context and the challenges in Gambhira's educational purpose.

5.1 The Community/Social dimension

The educational aspect of community living is of major importance, as Dewey highlights, the learning is occurring when communicating with others. The knowledge produced in Gambhira is shared with the intention of reaching the bigger community, the global community if you will. As the volunteer coordinator expressed when asked to define what an ecovillage is: *"I am thinking about a community where they are trying to be environmental friendly but also to cooperate with the world around, not only being self-sufficient, but interchange between the rest of the world"*. In her definition of an ecovillage the word community is a natural part, reflecting the importance of sharing, as well sharing this wisdom with the global community. Not only her, but all the members of the community expressed their desire to influence more people, to change the world, to save mother earth.

The current activities in Gambhira include not only to spread the knowledge to the volunteers as new ambassadors but to inspire the local community, spreading awareness. The social gatherings and celebrations are also used to build social interrelation, to gather around the cause of protecting the environment. Within the vision of community living lies the sharing of experiences, hence; strengthening the community by creating social unity. The water day, 22nd of march is an example of an activity that strengthened the feeling of belonging, as well as participating in an important cause, especially for the northern area of Colombia. Many environmental organisations and NGOs working with development, as well as all the community of Gambhira gathered in a plaza in Santa Marta. There was a small performance and information about water, mud from one of the rivers in the area was used for face paint, stands from different organisations was giving information regarding challenges and

solutions towards water resources and free purified water and snacks was handed out to everyone that wanted. After this everyone gathered in circles holding hands and singing songs for water and walked with drums and dancers towards the harbour where everyone collectively gathered all the waste from the oceanfront. Subsequently the march went to the beach to gather again in circles to listen to some of the indigenous people of the Sierra Nevada's, taking part to share their wisdom, rituals and traditions. Everyone joined their dance and chant for water, concluding in the waterfront with our feet in the ocean. The smiles on the volunteers faces, the laughs and conversations that was shared subsequently was painted with joy, love and sense of belonging to the community, as was communicated. Sharing traditions as was done by the indigenous people in the gathering has somehow been lost, or undervalued with the growth of modernization. As Litfin writes: "*Why dance or tell stories when you can watch television?*". The culture of sharing, which is essential in generating knowledge has in many ways diminished in the modern society with the increase of technology and social media. I think one of the reasons the volunteers had such good experiences in Gambhira is that they found human connections, the feeling of belonging and sharing in a different way.

What can be learned from living close and dealing with human relations and interaction every day? Many of the volunteers that was asked expressed their enthusiasm towards living in a community. Why not starting in your current living situation, gather neighbours close to your home and create something together, this can be the start of sharing something more.

5.2 The Transformation of Experience

Experiencing a different way of living which is considered a very happy way of living (appendix 2), is a way of learning as Dewey is presenting in his learning theory. The volunteers are not only being explained that Gambhira have a challenge with water resources, they are doing the dishes in a specific way to save water as explained prior, and they are the ones reusing the water in the morning when watering the plants. They are learning methods to save the humidity in the ground from evaporating with the sunlight; the volunteers will in the morning gather leaves that has fallen during the night, which some are composted and other are used to place around the roots of plants for the sunlight not directly hit the earth and with that evaporating the little humidity that exists. The dry toilets are for many a new

experience and are as well a new way of doing something repeatedly creating awareness around water consumption. Readjusting activity to meet new conditions are core in Dewey's theory and completely essential for the volunteers to practise in their meeting with an entirely different way of living. Many of the work chores that they are conducting are important tools when living in similar conditions but are not transferable to a variety of other situations. Creating feeding holes for the mango trees, watering the plants imitating the rain, at some point a type of plant was attached to the trees suffering most from the water shortage to help them keep humidity. Acquiring this knowledge should not be underestimated, but it is in general not of any use to most of the volunteers that are visiting. How will it be transferred to the context of a person trying to live more sustainable in Berlin, the countryside of Sweden, New York, Barcelona, Melbourne, London, Sandefjord in Norway? There are many limitations but also aspects that are applicable to different circumstances.

5.3 Aspects applicable to the bigger context

The applicability to a wider context was a part of the Likert scale (appendix 2) and was reflecting a high agreement from volunteers that they would apply aspects to their daily lives. 60,5 % of the volunteers partly agreed and 27,9 % highly agreed with the statement. This is in the big picture very good feedback, but are still lower than the response the two other statements regarding knowledge gained about sustainability and the level of happiness in Gambhira. When looking at the setting, a rural area in a tropical climate, for many that are visiting the context are very different compared to their normal life. Most of the volunteers lives in western, urban contexts where it would be hard to integrate aspects like dry toilets for example. As presented in the prior subchapter many tasks where context determined. Growing food for own consumption is a brilliant idea and desired by many of the volunteers, but again harder in urban context. There is some that do have small garden spots and are eager to start their own little vegetable garden as understood from conversations. In spite of the less applicability of some aspects, it has awakened a different view on for example food. Even though challenging to sustain cultivation, buying locally grown and organic is ideas that are viable to many of the volunteers. One of the biggest changes that could be observed among the volunteers was their relation towards vegetarian food, and to the idea of not consuming meat, which are in fact the one behaviour change that will have the biggest

impact. If everyone turned vegan it would have a major effect on the environment (Anderson & Kuhn, 2014). The interviews as well as the casual conversations revealed the desire of becoming vegetarian among many of the volunteers. Many talked about the food as incredible, an eye opener into the world of vegetarianism.

The way of living is as well a learning process of community living, how to share and appreciate moments and the other humans and creatures you are sharing home with. Moving away from the individualized way of living towards sharing. Maybe the effect will not be that people are going straight into community way of living, but creating more things in common in the current living situation. Neighbourhoods can share renewable energy sources, meals, gardens, agriculture, activities, there are no reason why the neighbourhood you normally live in cannot share in the same way as things are shared in the ecovillage. The idea of sharing does not stop there, but reaches toward all living creatures, living with a scorpion in the bed and a centipede in the ceiling reminds you that you share all space with other organisms that has the same right to the space, and roughly the same goal as you; happiness.

Many of the volunteers challenged their normal comfort zone, and experienced simple life as more satisfying than living with the high technology and material comfort they are normally used to. Appreciating a humble way of living where you have a closer relationship to nature and each other. Discovering knowledge exchange between people you normally would not share time with. Quoting one volunteer: *“You learn about people you normally wouldn’t speak to. I am learning so much from people, much more than I ever did from books”*. As well as the fact that we are all the same, not only respecting the nature but every other human: *“When staying in the ecovillage I got reminded, staying with people that are completely different than me, that I might not even talk to on the outside; there are no social difference, we all work the same, have the same food etc. we are the same”*.

All in all, within the limitations that are, there is many aspects that can be made reality, even in urban settings. More than anything else is the awareness and knowledge around the earth and the cycle of all living entities that is the root for the volunteers to create their own ideas applicable to their personal circumstances. The knowledge of the basic principles of ecovillage life is transferred with the experience, which creates the opportunity for the volunteer to scale it up to his/her context. This is the most important knowledge that is

transferred, and it is transferred within Dewey's idea of learning by doing, in Gambhira they are learning by living.

5.4. The challenges of educating

The observation of the room for improvement are numerous, while simultaneously acknowledging why the organisation of the educational side is as it is. Using more time explaining why things are done as it is, would be a huge improvement in itself. But as there is one person in charge of the volunteers and a lot of chores and activities to be done every day, sometimes the time seem to be insufficient in a place where tranquillity is leading mission. According to Dewey, communication is essential, and sometimes it is missing in Gambhira. Not always because of the lack of time, but because somethings are taken as obvious by the inhabitants as it is natural for them in their living situation. Additionally, with the continuous flow of people coming and going the very same things have to be repeated frequently, which sometimes can result in frustration for the person required to handle the recurrence.

The biggest challenge and limitation are the selection of the volunteers. The people are coming there by choice, and often with the intention of learning about permaculture/yoga/spirituality/agriculture/sustainable living. Thus, the people visiting are the people that already have some level of awareness around sustainability and the limits of the planet. Many of them are already living more consciously in their consumption than the average westerner. Arriving with a motivation beyond the average, creates an easier starting point with some common aspects in life ideology. Given this, there is a higher focus on the ability to educate them to become better ambassadors, enhancing their knowledge around methods of integrating sustainable ideas to other forms of living. An advantage is the openness that is generally found in most of the visitors, but it limits the purpose of educating. The people that might be more essential to influence is often omitted, as they do not have the intention themselves. People that do not question their level of consumerism, their use of resources, that do not reflect upon our coexistence with nature etc. this is the people vital to grasp to increase the global cultivation of change. As the structure of the project is today, the majority of people making the choice of visiting is observably the people that previously has an interest in what Gambhira is offering of knowledge.

On Sundays when they are open for the public, few people from the closest local community are participating. The effort is there, but somehow they are not reaching that many Colombian people. Most of the visitors are international, there are some Colombians, but they are a minority of the ones spending time in Gambhira. The idea of Gambhira is that the knowledge will go with the volunteers further to reach national level, international level towards global scale awareness.

5.5 Gambhira/ecovillage challenges

The most obvious challenge in Gambhira is the water. A resource essential for any creature survival, as experienced on daily basis. Adjusting accordingly is done in several ways as demonstrated in the earlier chapters. Ecovillages worldwide will most likely experience challenges regarding a resource or something similar depending on their circumstances, and the need of adapting to the natural conditions are essential ubiquitously. As discussed in the previous chapter there is a challenge regarding spreading the ideas of the ecovillage to the desired target group, which is acknowledged by the volunteer coordinator: *“The challenge is to spread the message to every house, every heart; to take care of the nature. The idea of ecovillages is the solution, you learn what will help, everyone should know”*. As the impact of the climate change is easy to observe in Gambhira for many it was a realization that it is actually happening, and worsening in the very moment, as water scarcity was for many viewed as the main challenge in Gambhira: *“Water is completely disappearing, then it will be even harder. It is needed to have some «fire souls» that burns for running the place or else it will fall apart. The major problem is that it falls on the global climate change, we need to get everyone to consume less and share the resources in a different way”*. This is demonstrating the connection of an experience to developing the knowledge around the global situation demonstrating the efficiency of the way of educating according to Dewey’s theory.

Even though the water was observed by most as the biggest challenge, it was acknowledged by many that when coming from a different level of material wealth it sometimes takes time and it is hard to adjust to the simplicity, as well as proximity you actually are living to the nature, insects and other beings, as demonstrated with examples previously. As revealed in the prior chapters there are challenges regarding all the four aspects; E2C2 and GENs

dimensions as well as the educational part. Summarizing, there will always be challenges in adapting ideas to other contexts, independent on the environment, as there are many human aspects in community living. The fact is that life will always offer challenges, but the important is how the challenges are tackled, and how it is effecting the ultimate goal of your existence; happiness. The main knowledge contributed from Gambhira is the perception and understanding of life and nature, that can transpire within every individual to reach new levels, adapting to other environments.

6 Conclusion

The realisation of what is happening to the planet, to open the eyes of the global population that change has to transpire now, it is not sufficient. The facts are there, presented to a big part of the population, but the general behaviour are not adjusting accordingly. The attitude towards the concept of the nature are a building block in people's reality conception, the worldview is indispensable when choosing how to live, thus, this is where the transformation must take place. The individualization of society is a contradictory to the dimensions of ecovillage living, and the value of nature is not taken into account in many of today's societies. There is a lot of knowledge and traditions that lies within ancestors throughout the planet, and within nature itself that will be forgotten with the direction of the development that are currently connected to progress. Redefining development according to the essence of what is fundamentally the desire of humans; happiness, and valuing all living entities equally might change the goal of development, and with that the path that is chosen towards it. Gambhira offers education by experiencing how to live with nature, in a collaborative manner, where individualization is replaced by sharing, and material wealth is supplanted by spiritual wealth through connection to nature and other humans.

I will include a small paragraph expressing my personal opinion about ecovillages. After living in this type of community for three months I consider it an excellent way of living, and realistically a tangible option for me when settling down. There are of course some challenges, but the level of sustainability is pronounced, and the values and life perception are projecting development of happiness. It felt less egocentric and more genuine than in the global north. I felt an increase in my happiness, healthiness and level of tranquillity. It is a place of inspiration when contemplating on how to sustainable develop society and enrich your life. With innovative ideas fuelled with love for nature and all living entities the borders of imagination, creativity and resourcefulness are non-existing. There is no fear of losing wealth of material goods or property, as wealth is something that only can be gained by sharing; sharing something spectacular with one and another and mother nature. I do not want to sustain the planet in the condition it is now, I want the planet to thrive.

- *From the perspective of the residents, GEN and the volunteers, what is Ecovillages and how does it function in the Gambhira community?*

An ecovillage is a community of people where they are reaching towards self-sufficiency, living with nature holistically integrating the aspects of simplicity, sharing, respecting mother nature with weight on ecological aspects. Integrating the aspects of ecology, economy, culture and consciousness, ecovillage living is a life philosophy integrating all aspects of nature and human existence. Gambhira is living in many ways according to similar principles as GENs dimensions and Litfin's windows, with nature as the glue between the dimensions. They have less focus on the ecological aspect than how the volunteers are defining ecovillages, due to their natural limitations, and a higher spiritual commitment.

- *How are Gambhira conveying their ideas around sustainability, and are they succeeding in their educational mission?*

Gambhira's strategies of sustainability are being transmitted and broadcasted in many ways, with the purest intentions. Using the living experience as a tool of education, they are demonstrating Dewey's idea with excellence. It is not always without struggles, as it is an intense way of living very close to nature, which offers challenges for many of the visitors. The challenges are an important part of the education as it forces the visitors to live differently, without presenting the option of rejecting the knowledge before actually experiencing it. Not all of the knowledge transferred will be used, but many principles and ideas are transpiring from the experience of living in Gambhira. The biggest change that can transpire towards a change of living, is the view of mother nature. The relation to one of the major building blocks that form the philosophy that Gambhira and other Ecovillages are based on. Observing the difficulties of transferring some of the practical aspects does not decrease the value of using Gambhira as a model for change. Gambhira is conveying their ideas in a good way, but are not reaching out to the people most important to influence, the people which are currently not considering their consummation and their abuse of resources. This is a big limitation for their educational mission and are an aspect that should be given more attention.

- *What are the challenges associated with Ecovillages and the current development trend and their solutions to it?*

As in any village/city/nation there is a lot of challenges, but one of the main reasons it is handled in a good way in Gambhira is exactly that, it is perceived as a challenge but not as a problem. Relying on renewable resources under circumstances that often are effected by the climate change, to be completely self-sufficient, it is impossible for many. But accepting to live simple and appreciating small things can be a step closer to sustainability. Consume less, instead of figuring out ways of creating more sustainable ways of building, producing cars and other material goods. Producing new ‘stuff’ reaching for sustainability are unsustainable. To be content and satisfied with less could be an easy solution, but for that the change of attitude of reality conception need to be altered. Valuing human relations, sharing moments, in general sharing more is a way of increasing happiness and decreasing ecological impact. The visitors shared the opinion that it is crucial to decrease human consumption.

- *How does the residents and volunteers of Gambhira define development/happiness and how does it fit within the current global development trend?*

The understanding of the global direction of development is connected to money, power and economic growth, but not understood as desired progress towards happiness. Happiness defined completely differently, can be achieved with respect and connection to nature and other living beings, to be able to present in life with the freedom to choose how to live. It is not functioning with the current global development trend, as it is increasing individualization and material goods, which consequently are creating a bigger gap between human and nature. To cover the basic physiological needs are essential, and are not achieved throughout the world. Simple life with focus on inner happiness and harmony must replace the habit of consuming goods to create temporarily happiness, so resources can be fairly shared in the global community.

Taken into account that the research is based on a single case, it would be interesting researching the value of the educational mission in more ecovillages. As Gambhira has a strong core mission in spreading knowledge, the result might highly differ in other ecovillages. Additionally, their connection to mother nature, which is at the very heart of

Gambhira. Questions that should be investigated further are many. How can we change human relations to Mother Nature? How can we drastically reduce consumption today? How can we reach the most essential target groups? How can we globally redefine the meaning of development and progress? Ecovillages are microscale solutions, but the planet are made up of billions of individuals, so the change start with transforming the behaviour of the single consumer. Love, Share, Appreciate the present.

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Appendix 1 – Interview guides

For the person responsible for volunteers/educational mission:

Questions	Follow up questions
1. Age?	
2. Sex?	
3. Nationality?	
4. Occupation?	
5. Time in the Ecovillage?	5a. How much longer?
6. Why did you decide to come here?	
7. What is the mission of the ecovillage?	7a. Do you feel that that is being followed? 7b. What are the goals?
8. How do you define the concept of an ecovillage?	
9. What are the goals of Gambhira?	9a. Which practices are applied towards sustainability?
10. What are the challenges in ecovillages?	10a. What are the main challenges in Gambhira? 10b. What are your solutions to it?
11. What do you understand from the current global concept of development?	11a. What are the main challenges? 11b. What are your solutions to it?
12. How do you define development?	
13. How do you define happiness?	13a. What are the necessary ingredients?
14. What are the most important values in Gambhira?	
15. In what way can you apply the ideas of sustainability to wider contexts?	
16. What is the educational strategy of Gambhira?	
17. How do you feel about living in Gambhira?	17a. What was the most rewarding aspect?
Other:	

For volunteers:

Questions	Follow up questions
1. Age?	
2. Sex?	
3. Nationality?	
4. Occupation?	
5. Time in the Ecovillage?	
6. Why did you decide to come here?	6a. Are your expectations fulfilled?
7. How do you define the concept of an ecovillage?	
8. Which practices are applied towards sustainability?	
9. What are the challenges in ecovillages?	9a. What are the main challenges in Gambhira? 9b. What are your solutions to it?
10. What do you understand from the current global concept of development?	10a. What are the main challenges? 10b. What are your solutions to it?
11. How do you define development?	
12. How do you define happiness?	12a. What are the necessary ingredients?
13. What do you see as the most important values in Gambhira?	
14. What did you learn while staying in Gambhira?	
15. What will you apply to your daily life?	
16. How do you feel about living in Gambhira?	16a. What was the most rewarding aspect?
Other:	

Appendix 2 – Survey

In which degree do you agree in the following statements (make a circle around the one that suits you best):

1) ‘I have gained knowledge about sustainable living’

Strongly - <i>0 %</i> Disagree	Partly - <i>9,3%</i> Disagree	Neither - <i>4,7%</i>	Partly - <i>41,9%</i> Agree	Strongly - <i>44,2%</i> Agree
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2) ‘I will apply aspects of what I learned to my daily life’

Strongly - <i>2,3%</i> Disagree	Partly - <i>4,7%</i> Disagree	Neither - <i>4,7%</i>	Partly - <i>60,5%</i> Agree	Strongly - <i>27,9%</i> Agree
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3) ‘Habitants/Volunteers/visitors are happy living in Gambhira’

Strongly - <i>2,3%</i> Disagree	Partly - <i>0 %</i> Disagree	Neither - <i>2,3%</i>	Partly - <i>18,6%</i> Agree	Strongly - <i>76,7%</i> Agree
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Appendix 3 – Dry composting toilets

This is an example of Gambhira’s adjustment towards the environment they exist in, and their pursuit of sustainability. Dry toilets are essential as they are in a place with a high pressure on water resources, it helps towards less water consumption as well as they compost the excrement and reuse it as a natural fertilizer for their cultivation.



Appendix 4 – HPI 2014

Country	HPI	Experienced well-being	Life expectancy	Ecological Footprint
Costa Rica	64.0	7.3	79.3	2.5
Vietnam	60.4	5.8	75.2	1.4
Colombia	59.8	6.4	73.7	1.8
Belize	59.3	6.5	76.1	2.1
El Salvador	58.9	6.7	72.2	2.0
Jamaica	58.5	6.2	73.1	1.7
Panama	57.8	7.3	76.1	3.0
Nicaragua	57.1	5.7	74.0	1.6
Venezuela	56.9	7.5	74.4	3.0
Guatemala	56.9	6.3	71.2	1.8
Bangladesh	56.3	5.0	68.9	0.7
Cuba	56.2	5.4	79.1	1.9
Honduras	56.0	5.9	73.1	1.7
Indonesia	55.5	5.5	69.4	1.1
Israel	55.2	7.4	81.6	4.0
Pakistan	54.1	5.3	65.4	0.8
Argentina	54.1	6.4	75.9	2.7
Albania	54.1	5.3	76.9	1.8
Chile	53.9	6.6	79.1	3.2
Thailand	53.5	6.2	74.1	2.4

Country	HPI	Experienced well-being	Life expectancy	Ecological Footprint
Mexico	52.9	6.8	77.0	3.3
Brazil	52.9	6.8	73.5	2.9
Ecuador	52.5	5.8	75.6	2.4
Philippines	52.4	4.9	68.7	1.0
Peru	52.4	5.6	74.0	2.0
Algeria	52.2	5.2	73.1	1.6
Jordan	51.7	5.7	73.4	2.1
New Zealand	51.6	7.2	80.7	4.3
Norway	51.4	7.6	81.1	4.8
Palestine	51.2	4.8	72.8	1.4
Guyana	51.2	6.0	69.9	2.1
India	50.9	5.0	65.4	0.9
Dominican Republic	50.7	4.7	73.4	1.4
Switzerland	50.3	7.5	82.3	5.0
Sri Lanka	49.4	4.2	74.9	1.2
Iraq	49.2	5.0	69.0	1.4
Laos	49.1	5.0	67.5	1.3
Kyrgyzstan	49.1	5.0	67.7	1.3
Tunisia	48.3	4.7	74.5	1.8
Moldova	48.0	5.6	69.3	2.1
United Kingdom	47.9	7.0	80.2	4.7

Country	HPI	Experienced well-being	Life expectancy	Ecological Footprint
Morocco	47.9	4.4	72.2	1.3
Tajikistan	47.8	4.4	67.5	0.9
Turkey	47.6	5.5	74.0	2.6
Japan	47.5	6.1	83.4	4.2
Germany	47.2	6.7	80.4	4.6
Syria	47.1	4.1	75.9	1.5
Austria	47.1	7.3	80.9	5.3
Madagascar	46.8	4.6	66.7	1.2
France	46.5	6.8	81.5	4.9

(Nef, 2014) <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/data/#sthash.D4vsPmXB.dpuf>