



Universiteit Utrecht

Research Master's programme: Cultural Anthropology: Sociocultural Transformations (CASTOR)  
Utrecht University, the Netherlands

MSc Thesis: Sophia Ramirez (5616417)

Title: Back to our Roots: Re-imagining Everyday Environmental and Social Relations in BaToRo Ecovillage, Tenerife

26 August 2021

Supervisor: Dr. Kees Koonings

Second assessor: Dr. Hans de Kruijf

Preferred journal of publication: *American Anthropologist*

Word count: 5,855 (including boxes: 15,465)

## Abstract

**Key words:** Ecovillages, Sustainability, Nature, Community, Well-being, Permaculture

This thesis explores Ecovillages as heterotopias, or other-spaces, constructed by diverse cultural actors shared desires of re-imagining environmental and social relationships. Precisely, I examine how these spaces foster an intimate way of co-living and co-depending on nature and belonging social actors in ways that stimulate re-imagination of everyday relationships but also envisioning beyond internalized habitus. My research location was Batoro community on Tenerife island, and it consists of participant observation, a focus group and 16 semi-structured interviews. Ethnographic data overall revealed that Batoro fosters a symbiotic lifestyle whereby environmental, communal, and individual wellbeing are seen as intrinsically linked. This lifestyle is driven by a relational sustainable paradigm that is embodied through certain practices of permaculture, particularly those of reducing waste, using natural and renewable materials, composting, and polyculture spatial and social designs. Batoro members are immersed in an intimate lifestyle with nature and community in ways that stimulate actors' reflexivity of normalized habitus back home and create opportunities for them to learn beyond these internalized structures through the confrontation of heterogeneous lifestyles. Consequently, these experiences provide actors with a greater sense of agency in the natural and social field as it increases their familiarity with nature, but also of co-existing and tolerating diverse ways of living, perceiving, and enacting in the world.

\*\*\*

## Part 1: Introduction

It's 8:00 am and I hear the footsteps of volunteers walking through the sandy path as they ring the morning gong. I'm still a bit sleepy. It was another long night with Frida the mouse exploring what left over snacks are within the pallet room. As I lay in bed contemplating all my duties for today I hear the birds chirping, the ocean rising and the smell of fresh coffee lingers through my nose. I open the pallet door, the sunshine lights up the room and I see outside the clear blue sky. Guanche the cat jumps out of my bed to do his morning stretches and my neighbour Anna opens the curtain door of her yurt. With a smile on her sleepy face she greets me in Dutch: "Goede morgen schatje"! We walk together to the communal area as other volunteers slowly step out of their tents. The breakfast table is covered with a rainbow of fruits freshly harvested from the garden: papaya, tomatoes, avocados, pitanga, apples, bananas, pears and home-made bread. Some volunteers greet us in Spanish, "buenos días", others in German, "guten morgen", a few in Estonian, "tere hommikust", and two in french, "bonjour". As we indulge in a delicious breakfast prepared by volunteers, we collectively ask each other how we slept and how we are feeling for the day. We discuss what our day will look like, what our duties are and whether some need an extra hand from others. This is another day in Back to Roots (Batoro) Ecovillage, a space where diverse social actors unite with a shared desire of re-imagining a sustainable community.



In the wake of dire social and ecological crises linked to globalization, discussions about sustainability have become increasingly popular in global and local public domains (Helne & Hirvilammi, 2015; Bendor, 2017; Hansen, 2021). Dias (2017: 79) suggests that sustainability in itself "has largely been appropriated by capitalist models" as the term is "frequently used as synonymous with 'sustainable development'". Helne and Hirvilammi (2015) also questions the degree to which sustainability practices and discourses have been moulded to hegemonic capitalist agendas, thus omitting the recognition of modern societies' abusive dependency on the natural environment. Sustainability nonetheless, in discourse and practice is exercised across a diverse range of social actors and agendas. In Ecovillages, sustainability discourses and strategies are popularly driven by diverse actors' shared interests of re-connecting with nature and human-scale communities (Burke & Arjona, 2013; Hong & Vicdan, 2016; Veteto & Lockyer, 2008). LeVasseur (2013: 254) posits that Ecovillages "reflect the growing ecological consciousness that is permeating the global commons; and they are constituted by unique regional and cultural identities, concerns, and responses to neoliberalization". With globalization increasing intercultural exchanges, ecovillages have turned into increasingly rich multicultural and intersectional spaces for experimenting alternative and sustainable community models.

Casey (2020: 1659) describes Ecovillages as "unique contexts, explicitly designed to critique hegemonic relations via the re-imagination and articulation of alternative social structures" thus being "utopian projects". These spaces are born from growing collective dissatisfaction towards hegemonic spaces and institutions negligence of a particular problem, in this case increasing environmental and communal deterioration. Correspondingly, Ecovillages are "sites of social experimentation and new cultural forms" (Casey, 2020: 1659) born from a collective utopian impulse that is moulded by the hegemonic society they critique. Several

scholars (Farkas, 2017; Hong, 2016; Pickerill, 2012 & 2020) have noted how Ecovillages commonly position themselves isolated from mainstream cities, and articulate their space and social relations by accentuating ethics of collectivity and collaboration that simultaneously contest urban designs of private and exclusive. Moreover, permaculture typically functions as the ethical basis for translating the ecological utopia into environmental and social practice, for example through practices of composting, reducing waste, and (re)using natural and renewable materials (Aistara, 2013; Haluza-DeLay, 2013; Pickerill, 2020; Veteto & Lockyer, 2008). These social practices and spatial configurations foster an intimate lifestyle that both brings members closer to nature and community, and considers environmental and communal well-being as intrinsically linked (Pickerill, 2020).

Having this said, the central questions explored is: *How are Ecovillages heterotopias, constructed by intersecting diverse cultural imaginaries and desires of re-imagining sustainable environmental and social spaces, relations and practices?* By using Batoro Ecovillage in Tejina, Tenerife, as a case study for heterotopias, a concept I will outline below, I wish to redirect attention towards the dynamics of individual and communal agencies stemming from emerging global imaginaries. Through an ethnographic method, the perspectives of multiple social actors involved in Batoro are explored in order to uncover the multi-vocal (social) construction of sustainability in Ecovillages. This thesis therefore adds to existing literature on the globalization, multi-vocality, and imaginative agencies of Ecovillages, but also more generally counter-hegemonic, bottom-up initiatives for sustainable action. Due to Batoro's young existence, this research also contributes to existing debates on Ecovillages sustainable resilience by elucidating on the everyday challenges faced in the early stages of these spaces and actors' strategies for over-coming these.

\*\*\*

## From Hippies to Glocalized Eco-Laboratories: A History of the Eco-Village Epoch

The rise of the Ecovillage epoch dates back to the 1960s and 1970s, times where the Western world was reigned with strongly identified themes of post-war austerity, technological development, economic growth, and a standardized path of modernization (Dawson, 2006; LeVasseur, 2013). The 1960s and 1970s were years characterized with emerging collective disagreement towards dominant social narratives, such as the hippie, environmental and feminist movements that represented a "rejection by youth of mainstream materialist values"(Dawson, 2006: 220), and a desire to reconnect with both nature and human scale communities. Similarly, the term 'Ecovillage', or Okodorf in German, was first used by German peace activists to label the camps organised next to the nuclear power plants they were protesting against (Dawson, 2006). These counter-hegemonic movements rejecting mainstream societal narratives of rationalism and materialism pushed forward a "renewed interest in meditation, spiritual enquiry, and the merits of voluntary simplicity" (Dawson, 2006: 221).

From these movements, the eco-village milieu was birthed worldwide as living social laboratories imagining and experimenting alternative models to hegemonic ones, and "providing solutions both urban and rural; both in the northern and in the southern hemisphere; and on every scale, from the family nucleus to local communities and global organizations" (LeVasseur, 2013: 253). The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) was then created in the 1990s in an attempt to unite these uprising global concerns, with many members claiming that: "...the modern consumer lifestyle championed by neo-liberalization is imperialistic and leads to a destructive and rampant individualism, such that our communities are breaking down, leading to spiritual and ecological anomie" (LeVasseur, 2013: 254). Up to date, the most often used definition of eco-villages is Robert Gilman's interpretation, namely: "a human-scale, full- featured settlements in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development, and which can be successfully continued into the indefinite future", and that each should have "multiple centres of initiative, consisting of governance structures, autonomous enterprises, associations, and projects of its residents, whom collectively compromise the physical, economic and social fabric of the village"(Dawson, 2006: 218).

Contrastingly, Greenberg (2013) and Dawson (2006) reject Gilman's definition claiming that it describes a product rather than a process; an end state rather than a 'strategy of realization'. Both authors contest Gilman's tendency to hegemonize or standardize Ecovillages worldwide, and highlight the role that globalization and modernization play in the heterogeneisation of everyday experiences and interactions across ecovillages'. Despite their shared counterhegemonic roots and their latter formalisation among global systems in the 90s, until today 'ecovillages' continues to be a loose concept. In the GEN website, they posit that: "each ecovillage is unique and there is no one strict definition of an ecovillage" (GEN, 2021). Other scholars (Dawson, 2006; Hansen, 2021; LeVasseur, 2013, Schiffer, 2018) also elaborate on the dynamics of (global) ideologies being interpreted with local cultural and material realities across communities, a process that Robertson (1995) coins as *glocalization*. Ecovillages worldwide are thus fluid and diverse because different cultural and environmental matrixes lead to different communal strategies of imagination and realization.

Rather than seeing eco-villages through a standardized gaze, I explore how Batoro re-imagines its spaces and interactions uniquely in relation to their contextual reality, and on the

interaction of diverse social actors participating in this community. Moreover, I argue that Batoro is a counterhegemonic space facilitated by globalization. That is, a physical space where social actors from diverse spheres of the world unite to experiment, imagine, and practice an alternative sustainable community model. To further understand how Batoro and its members exercise an alternative imaginary community, I propose to first explore the ramifications of globalization on the contemporary forms of imagination, and how sustainability has become a collective imaginary, driving and shaping everyday spatial and social dynamics in Ecovillages.

\*\*\*

## **Globalization and Contemporary Forms of Imagination: Agency and Resistance**

The social or collective imaginary is a modern concept developed to understand the symbolic dimensions through which people represent collective life and perceive the world. It is defined as the set of values, laws, institutions, and symbols that people use to imagine their everyday lives and their belonging to a social group (Taylor, 2004). Social imaginaries have been extensively explored across localized forms of belonging, particularly as static imaginaries fixated to national and cultural boundaries. However, globalization as the reduction of time and space has intensified sociocultural interconnections and unfolded new forms of modern (global) imaginaries in which people consciously perceive themselves as belonging to a single global whole (Taylor, 2004). Attempting to comprehend contemporary cultures as sovereign, holistic or consistent thus deems futile because culture is no longer fixated to static imaginaries of territorialized nationhood. For Appadurai (1990), it is the ‘global flows’ rather than sovereign nations that distinguish present cultures, their interconnections and emerging modern imaginaries that are configured in disjunctive, intricate, and increasingly interrelated manners.

To some extent, the interaction and exchange of cultures is not new. However, innovative technologies such as expeditious mass media, and increased ethnic mobility have escalated intercultural dynamics, ultimately replacing stability with diaspora and diffusion as the new normal (Appadurai, 1990). The intensified dispersal of individuals and media worldwide has transposed the role of contemporary imagination, causing self-identities to become increasingly unsteady and subjective to continuous reconfigurations. Contemporary beings have access to overwhelming amounts of diverse narratives and visuals that they imaginatively reorganize into multitude nexuses (Appadurai, 1996). Consequently, imagination is empowered to freely extemporize across a diverse range of global and local public domains. The rising global imaginaries are products of social and symbolic processes that are nonetheless deciphered at local and individual sites of reception into the ‘sound judgement’ of the global. They are multifaceted and multidimensional; despite envisioning belonging to the world as a single whole at the individual level global imaginaries are bound to “deeper cognitive, cultural, and ontological structures” (Bendor, 2017: 6). Global imaginaries are thus linked to local imaginaries in a bidirectional manner whereby they continuously reconfigure each other. The implications of these new imaginaries are divergent, with globalization increasing the complexity of social dynamics in ways that

Appadurai (1990 & 1996) suggests can stimulate social productive forces. The modern ways of imagination are “now central to all forms of agency” and “is the key component of the new global order” (Appadurai, 1990: 297), allowing for the “conscious choice, justification, and representation” (Appadurai, 1996: 44) of internalized cultural habitus’.

Ecovillages have re-emerged as products of globalization and the emerging global imaginaries. They are built on shared global concerns regarding environmental and sociocultural devastation, and a need to take action. Ecovillages are spaces where diverse local imaginaries intersect and re-define one another in a collective pursuit of a revolutionary sustainable societal model. Sustainability hence functions as the collective imaginary driving and shaping everyday spatial and social configurations. Re-imagining an alternative sustainable community is “a process that involves challenging the status quo of an organization and gaining new insights about the contemporaneous subject matter (either knowledge, routine, or values) which requires possible renewal due to changes in internal mode of operations or external environment” (Donnoghue 1998: 510). Imagination in Ecovillages is hence an everyday exercise of subjectivity and sympathy because the capacity to imagine different realities encompasses “to enter notionally and experimentally upon experiences we have not had, ways of life other than our owns” (Donnoghue, 1998: 16). The confrontation of diverse realities within these spaces functions then as conduits for unlearning internalized cultural habitus and relearning possibilities beyond what we know as normal. Bourdieu (1977: 86) conceptualizes habitus as “internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action” that shape an individual’s perception and experience of the world. While Bourdieu’s framework untangles the unconscious and almost pre-reflexive implications of these internalized structures, this thesis re-directs focus towards the capacity of unlearning habitus through the conscious confrontation of it. I want to further elaborate on actors’ motivations and capacity of envisioning beyond internalized structures through their everyday participation in Batoro.

Adding to this body of literature, I explore Batoro as a glocalized space of intersecting imaginaries of agency. That is, a space constructed through a collective imaginary of sustainability interpreted heterogeneously at individual levels. Sustainability is hence approached as an umbrella term encompassing environmental dimensions, but also social, spiritual, and ideological ones (Baker, 2013). I want to further illuminate the inherent multivocality and multi-practicality of sustainability as conduits for preserving Ecovillages. Particularly, how the intersection of varying imaginaries of sustainability motivates individuals to unlearn and redefine their internalized cultural habitus’ as they collectively pursue to re-imagine and enact a sustainable community. I thus argue that imagination of social actors is an everyday exercise of unlearning and relearning. To further understand the transformations and implications of intersecting local imaginaries of sustainability at spatial and social levels, the next section elaborates on Ecovillages as heterotopian spaces.

\*\*\*

## The Heterotopian Ecovillage and Intersecting Imaginaries of Sustainability

Having their roots in global narratives concerning environmental and sociocultural devastation, Ecovillages are heterotopian spaces where diverse social actors unite to re-imagine and re-shape everyday modern practices. Foucault (1986) describes heterotopias as isolated spaces governed by 'other codes' that are not standardized by disciplinary social orders. Residing in the limbo of reality and imagination, heterotopias borrow from both mundane and utopic realms for their overall spatial configuration. They are liminal spaces commonly embodied as a thematised model of what society requires and imagines. Similarly, for Lefebvre (1974: 22) heterotopias are undetermined by the state system's spatial hegemony, and instead governed by public power or private entrepreneurs. The occupation of these other-spaces is hence driven by resistance to an existing organized space, in this case mainstream unsustainable and consumerist societies (Dias, 2017; LeVasseur, 2013; Pickerill, 2021). Coupling Foucault's (1986) and Lefebvre's (1974) work, Ecovillages are manifestations of counterhegemonic agency because building an 'other-space' in the margins of a dominant one is an act of opposing the latter.

Despite being isolated other-spaces, Ecovillages are not completely immune to hegemonic power because they attempt to create a sustainable community in the gaps of an inherently unsustainable context. Baker (2013) illustrates the financial struggles arising in the pursuit of self-sustainability whereby only a 5% of Ecovillages in the global-north survive, as well as the confrontations stemming from diverse approaches to 'sustainability'; whilst some actors vouch for technological and free market solutions, others prefer traditional, anti-capitalist, and locally based strategies. Hegemonic power is certainly hard to escape, especially because it is unconsciously embodied by social actors and the external unsustainable context. Ecovillages are nonetheless guided by common interests in re-imagining hegemonies into more inclusive and sustainable ones, and "in full consciousness of the failures of the past and the need to heed those lessons" (Schiffer, 2018: 69). Particularly, these spaces re-imagine sustainability through a relational paradigm that holistically considers the well-being of nature, society and individuals as intrinsically linked.

Permaculture functions as the blue print for translating the collective imaginary of relational sustainability into social practice. It is a holistic scheme for reconfiguring agricultural and social configurations based on "direct observation of nature, learning from traditional knowledge and the findings of modern science" (Veteto & Lockyer, 2008: 48). Ecovillages consciously reconfigure their environmental and social configurations through several principles of permaculture such as those of no waste, composting, reusing materials, and designs of polyculture, which simultaneously contest mainstream societies hegemonic practices of monoculture and linear forms of producing and relating to the environment (Pickerill, 2012 & 2020). Polyculture embraces ecological (bio)diversity for building long-term resilient natural and social ecosystems (Eliades, 2021). Rather than promoting an egoistic and anthropocentric gaze, permaculture has at heart a vision of ecological interdependence whereby every organism is contributing to the ecosystem (Veteto & Lockyer, 2008). Every organism has something to contribute and learn from one another regardless if it's a plant or a human 'other'. The permaculture and relational lifestyle therefore entails a lot of unlearning modern practices of relating and relearning everyday relations to the natural and social environment in holistic and reciprocal ways.

Taking the above into consideration, I argue that relational sustainability serves as the collective imaginary of Batoro embodied through permaculture. Ecovillages are seen as

living social laboratories where diverse social actors and their imaginaries of relational sustainability interact and re-define each other while simultaneously enacting a counterhegemonic societal model. Batoro is therefore explored as a heterotopia created through the everyday intersection, co-dependence, and contribution of diverse social actors' imaginaries and desires for change. Considering the existing literature on the detrimental effects of globalization and the spread of neoliberalism worldwide, I aim to redirect focus towards the various ways that modern actors employ individual and communal agency through the translation of ecological utopias into physical other-spaces.

\*\*\*

## Fieldwork Context & Methodology

Batoro is situated in the North of Tenerife Island near Tejina village and the national nature park Anaga. Its location is ideal for developing an Ecovillage isolated from the big cities and swarms of tourists. As a young eco-community, and projecting to develop into an ecovillage, Batoro attracts a variety of social actors worldwide yet primarily from Europe. Throughout its four years, Batoro has hosted an average of 400 volunteers, commonly from 18 to 30 years old, and occasionally middle-aged members and families. Batoro's space encompasses 6000 m<sup>2</sup> of land with 8 different fields (3 green-houses), a volunteer area, community lab, and a shared cave for events. My central research participants were both female and male volunteers from mainland Europe (e.g., France, Austrian, German, Estonian, Belgian, British & Dutch). I also spoke with previous Batoro members, neighbouring farms and locals. Living and participating in Batoro allowed me to gradually establish rapport with members as well as their digital community of previous volunteers who resided there prior to my arrival. Most participants were eager to collaborate with interviews, however, due to some language barriers some difficulties emerged among some.

I spent most of my days actively participating as both a community member and researcher. I woke up every day at 8:00am from Monday to Friday and worked with the community until 3:00 pm. After lunch (4:00pm) I focused on conducting interviews and/or gathering sensorial data, such as pictures, videos, and noises symbolic to Batoro's lifestyle. By doing so, I wish to move beyond a unidimensional strategy of translating ethnographic data and immerse the audience of this research into my field-work experience (Nakamura, 2013). During the working schedule I occasionally switched between my roles as community member and researcher so to record any symbolic practices related to the Batoro routine. Throughout my 3 months stay I conducted 16 semi-structured interviews and one focus group interview. These interviews focused on the everyday experiences of volunteers, their perspectives on the role of nature, community, permaculture and sustainability in Batoro. This allowed me to further grasp the multi-vocality of members, the challenges they faced throughout their stay and how they tackled these.

During my stay in Batoro, I continuously oscillated between identities of researcher and community member. This was challenging because of my immersed participation in Batoro and similar age as most volunteers, which led to them forgetting that I was also there conducting ethnographic research. Consequently, I continuously reminded members of my

dual positionality in Batoro. Similarly, I arrived in Batoro with personal desires of experiencing an alternative self-sustainable lifestyle, so I employed a degree of reflexive auto-ethnography to grasp how my overall personal experiences influenced my cultural experiences and vice versa (Ellis, 2011). I relied heavily on both a personal and data notebook. In the former notebook, I reflected upon personal interpretations, epiphanies and transformations that I experienced throughout my stay; whereas in the latter, I unveiled practices and actors' descriptions about these practices by implementing 'thick' ethnographic description (Geertz, 1973). Data interpretation is thus done without claiming objectivity.

Although I employ the term 'Ecovillage', it is important to note that Batoro is still in the early stages of becoming such. Many members including the founder don't position the community as an ecovillage despite their digital labelling of being a template for "the creation and development of ecovillages". Considering that the concepts of eco-community and villages are used interchangeably I prefer to stick to the concept of eco-villages while recognizing that Batoro is still relatively young and therefore actors don't perceive it as such. The difference between villages and communities lies on the degree of self-sustainability, which is one of the biggest challenges that communities like Batoro face in their early developmental stages.

\*\*\*

## Ethnographic Analysis

This section is divided into four chapters that elaborate on Ecovillages' dynamics of re-imagining everyday social and environmental relations. First, I explore Batoro as an eco-heterotopia. That is, an isolated space created from diverse actors' coalescing desires of reconfiguring the unsustainable hegemonic external by borrowing on both utopic and mundane realms. Subsequently, I unravel Batoro's alternative collective imaginary of relational sustainability as a symbolic umbilical cord that connects diverse actors in this shared green space. With these first chapters, I establish the analytical basis for then illuminating how Batoro actors use permaculture practices to translate the relational paradigm of symbiotic well-being. The third chapter thus elaborates on how these practices are reflected in Batoro's spatial arrangements and how they motivate actors to re-imagine their relationship with nature. Lastly, I focus on Batoro's everyday dynamics of co-living and co-depending with nature and with diverse actors, and how this enables for the expansion of internalised cultural horizon.

\*\*\*

## The Eco-Heterotopian Space: From Imaginative to Physical Agency

As I'm waiting on highway TF-161 surrounded by banana farms, a young blonde man opens the green gate across the road and approaches me with a wide smile on his face: "Welcome! You must be Sophia?". He greets me as if we were long-time friends, and proceeds to hug me. Wearing my face-mask as a reminder of covid protocols, I was unsure if to hug or simply greet each other with social distance. By the time we hugged all these concerns disappeared as I eased into a comfortable feeling of belonging despite my recent arrival. My first thought was "wow, I haven't hugged anyone outside my household for almost a year". It was a weird and yet heart-warming feeling to hug a stranger. Joshi, a 19-year-old German boy arrived two weeks before me and yet talked about Batoro as if he had been there for a life time. We walk into Batoro and a young woman approaches me barefoot with a cup of tea and ecstatically asks: "You're the Chilean girl that Charly has been talking about? I'm so happy that I can finally speak some Spanish". I felt at home in a place I had never been before and surrounded by strangers that nonetheless welcomed me as a returning family member. Jasmine, a 20-year old German and Argentinian mix continued to show me a tent where I could rest for that night. It was late and dark so we agreed there was no point in setting up my tent until the following day. I thought to myself, wow, I am in a green paradise surrounded with mesmerizing plants and all these beautiful beings welcoming me in such a touching manner.



Batoro's Entrance

Meanwhile, another young tall woman approaches me: “Welkom in Batoro! I am Anna but some call me Doctora”. Anna a 22-year-old from Amsterdam had been living in Batoro for already a month, her nickname “Doctora” derived from her biologist background and her role in the community lab. Together we walked towards the private space of another volunteer, namely Nadja a 24 year-old German woman who was already there for five months. Nadja was living in a pallet house created by a family who resided in Batoro three years before. There were decorations made out of caña sticks and second-hand couches gathered from the streets where a couple other volunteers were sitting and conversing in English, German, and Spanish. I was exhausted from the trip, however the energy from volunteers’ excitement of a new incoming member was contagious. Before I could yawn I was revitalized by all the languages spoken and diverse life stories of each member. For a moment, I was speaking Spanish with Jasmine and David, a 25-year-old long time Batoro member from Barcelona who spontaneously visits the community every year. Suddenly I was switching between English and Dutch as I spoke with Anna and other volunteers. It seemed so natural to bounce back and forth between languages, and volunteers even encouraged to do so. As a native Spanish speaker, I was immediately asked if I could help Jasmine with creating Spanish lessons for the community. Most volunteers were willing to learn some basics as they projected to stay long in the community and deemed it practical to move around the volcanic island.



Pallet-House

We hear a bell ringing and volunteers proceed to collectively clean up Nadja's area. "The bell, it's dinner time" claims Jasmine explaining that it is a symbol of routine and unity, from waking up for breakfast to communal meetings and cleaning together. We head to the communal dining area and the smell of beans and tomato lingers through my nose. From my back I hear, "bienvenida beautiful", and I turn to see Charly, the founder, with his arms wide open inviting me for a hug. Again, it felt as if we knew each other for a long time although we had only phoned two times prior to my arrival to overcome certain covid travel restrictions. Before arriving, I was uncertain whether to join Batoro because of an auto-immune disorder (alopecia aerata) I developed from extreme stress. I feared that going to a new environment might worsen my condition and that eventually I would go completely bald. Nevertheless, Charly was always there, digitally reassuring me that Batoro could heal me both internally and externally. My first hours in Batoro already confirmed such claims as I felt comfortably at home with a family of strangers.

"Don't worry, we have talented cooks here", said Charly, as Tony a 25-year old French man, and Jarne a 25-year old Belgian man, greet me while cooking dinner: "Bienvenue"! Two other German men show up, Lawrence 23 years-old and Johannes 19 years-old, both welcoming me again with a hug. I see Jasmine and Anna setting the dinner table so I ask if I can help somehow but they suggest that I relax since I just landed. Suddenly Odyssey's song "Going back to my Roots" is playing in the background and volunteers are collectively hugging as Jasmine grabs me to join them: "come you are part of our Batoro family now"!

Batoro originally derived from a lucid dream of Charly, the founder and private entrepreneur of this intentional community. After years of traveling and experiencing diverse communities, Charly dreamt of establishing a utopic societal and environmental model based on his multicultural and spiritual experiences. For him, it was not just a dream that pushed him to envision Batoro but also a need to take action, or in his words to see what he could do in this world outside:

*"Batoro started actually like more than 30 years ago when I was living in South Spain, in caves and completely nature naked for more than half a year and I realized how simple and beautiful life is. Until I came to the point of understanding that there's more to do than sitting in a cave and enjoying myself. So, I decided to move on, to see what I can do in the world outside from the cave, from this little beautiful beach where I lived. I started the next journey traveling to Africa, Canary Islands, Europe, Turkey, Greece, etcetera. I met groups where we actually decided in this time to create a kind of community, but somehow it never happened. ... Now 30 something years later I decided to make a new step in my life, and before starting a new step, I prefer always to calm down my mind system and my body. So, I decided to go for meditation and fasting for a while and spent two months in this state of meditation and fasting. Through the end of this time I got a lucid dream, the Batoro project came to me through this lucid dream. I saw like a movie inside myself and I knew what I had to do. So, I decided to finish this phase of meditation and fasting, create a new home and start with the project, and that's what I did" – Charly, 52*

Batoro was born through the external translation of an internal imaginary of agency. It is a physical place constructed upon Charly's imagination and beliefs of what society lacks and necessitates. Stemming from a utopic imaginary and translated into an external physical place, Batoro can be understood as a heterotopia, or 'other-space' (Foucault, 1986). It is an isolated space designed to re-imagine hegemonic practices of relating to the social and

natural environment in ways that contest hegemonic mainstream societies (Lefebvre, 1974). However, despite its counterhegemonic roots, Batoro is not the absolute contrary of what society currently observes and experiences but “rather a place more conceivable, livable and sustainable” (Hong, 2016: 121):

*“What we do here is that we create something out of the system, or at least we say as far as possible being influenced from the system so that we are able to live what we think and desire to live. I believe the system in general is not orientated to live close with nature and away from pharmaceutical ideas, from political ideas, from democratic ideas, etc as it’s taught. By not doing this doesn’t mean that we’re against the system. At least, I’m not because the system is there we are born into it. It’s created so we are part of it but as we say finding a gap to realize yourself as you believe or what you feel to do where you are inspired to do. This gap, how we use it? We are not pro or against, we just use this gap to realize ourselves. .... Eco communities are created as part from the system too. What means there’s a lot inside any system that is great, fantastic, delicious, beautiful, powerful, and endless words that I can find for what is created inside the system. So why not use these tools to make a better life? The tools are there for use, from my perspective I’m not here to live for the tools. So, what I said before, let’s find a gap inside the system where we are able to realize our own issues without being enslaved to all these ideas of the system. This is a level or space what is there, it depends how you want to move, how you want to live it and create it but it’s there”.*

– Charly, 52

By positioning themselves in the gaps of the hegemonic system, Batoro draws from both mundane (e.g., external unsustainable society) and utopic (e.g., imaginaries of sustainable alternatives) domains for its overall realization. Its’ configuration derives from re-interpretations of the external mundane with utopic ideals of an alternative better. The opposed place, or mainstream society, functions then as a starting point for reimagining how the heterotopia should be constructed (Farkas, 2017). Without the unsustainable system Batoro members would not have a reason and/or drive to escape and re-imagine such through the creation of this isolated ‘other-space’. Rather than being governed by spatial and state hegemony, Batoro is ruled by ‘other codes’ (Foucault, 1986) established by both Charly and members collective participation in the community. The constitution and codes of this functional heterotopia therefore emerges from civic discussions and strategies of realization triggered by institutional and systematic blockage (Gaffric & Heurtebise, 2016). That is, a problem or debate without an answer from hegemonic institutions will be reproduced in an alternative space created by civilians attempting to take matters to their own hands. Heterotopias therefore entail ecological dimensions of a living rather than geometric space because members collectively discuss and decide reconfiguration of space and relations in ways that deem necessary (Gaffric & Heurtebise, 2016).

At a macroscopic level, eco-heterotopias project themselves as collectively homogeneous, however, they are microscopically composed by heterogeneous individual imaginaries of sustainable realization. While the roots of Batoro can be traced back to Charly’s imaginaries, its survival is also dependent on the varying community members’ diverse imaginative power. That is, their everyday participation in re-imagining and enacting this other space. Although sustainability discourses function as the utopic umbilical cord connecting heterogeneous local imaginaries in this ‘other-space’, its interpretations are bound to “deeper cognitive, cultural, and ontological structures” (Bendor, 2017: 6). This is particularly exhibited across actors’ understandings of Batoro as a heterotopia. For some, Batoro is a tool

for learning how to balance their interests with the external unsustainable mainstream context:

*“It is a community to live in and in nature and to find a nice balance to what I'm doing at home, which is more into the city and studying” –Jasmine, 21*

While for others, Batoro is a tool for escaping the modern prison so to find, develop, and heal yourself:

*“Batoro is a place for people who want to live an alternative way out of the cities, out of the system, and it's about freedom and sharing, and going back to yourself and developing yourself” – Johannes, 19*

On a superficial level escaping from versus building self-resilience for surviving the unsustainable context seem contrasting. For Johannes sustainability presuppose practices of escapism and complete isolation from mainstream systems. Whereas for Jasmine, sustainability does not imply complete marginalization from the external but rather developing sustainable practices as a buffer and coping strategy. These different reasons to be in Batoro are nonetheless connected through a discontent towards the outside dominant conditions and a need to take action. When normalized structures feel chaotic and uncertain, individuals and groups are motivated to seek alternatives that bring clarity and certainty. Appadurai (1996) views these as acts of imaginative agencies stemming from globalization. Chaos derived from global imaginaries, or the experience of the world as a whole being environmentally destroyed pushes actors to consciously reconfigure their external situations.

Veteto & Lockyer (2008: 48) describe Ecovillages as “... one of the main tools for building bridges between global, social and environmental awareness and concern and the development of local, sustainable practices”. Suitably, Batoro can be understood as a glocalised eco-heterotopia; a space constructed to unite and tackle global and local concerns of environmental devastation and sociocultural anomie. It is a manifestation of contemporary intricate, disjunctive and interrelated cultures coalesced by common desires of re-imagining an alternative sustainable community. Batoro is indeed composed of diverse social actors, ranging from cultural, to generational, and experiential backgrounds. During my stay, our Batoro ‘summer family’ had social actors from Germany, France, Spain, England, Netherlands, Belgium, South Africa, Austria, Estonia, and Argentina. The age groups were also mixed, with Momo being the youngest (3 years old), Darren and Charly being the oldest (40 and 52), and the rest of volunteers ranging from 18 to mid and late 20s.

Alike a modern garden, plants from diverse spheres of the world and at different stages of life are planted together in a space that portrays itself as homogeneously consistent. However, because of their varying properties, in the real natural environment these plants are unlikely to be found together under the same ecosystem. Throughout this thesis, I employ this metaphor of Batoro as a modern garden facilitated and maintained by globalization as the reduction of time and space across cultural realities, and the intersection of emerging imaginaries of sustainability.



Batoro family posing for a picture

In this chapter I illustrated Batoro as a glocalized heterotopia whereby diverse cultural actors unite to address shared global concerns of environmental and sociocultural deterioration. Particularly, how Batoro is constructed by translating coalescing heterogeneous imaginaries of an alternative sustainable community through the creation of this isolated other-space, which simultaneously contests mainstream hegemonic societies. Before delving into Batoro's everyday social and environmental practices producing and sustaining this alternative re-imagined community, I propose to first explore the collective imaginary of sustainability that Batoro cultivates and how it contests hegemonic mainstream assumptions.

\*\*\*

## *Re-Imagining Sustainability through a Relational Paradigm of Symbiotic Wellbeing*

*“I was looking for people who want to get self-sustainable and at one point I crossed then Batoro. I was reading it and the description was really nice and there was also the thing that Charly was looking for people who are open minded and also have a spirit of making something”. – Lawrence, 23*

The increasing prominence of sustainability discourses worldwide is an example of global imaginaries moved from global to local spheres, precisely in Batoro. Sustainability discourses have certainly become popular in the global domains, however it’s understanding is “inherently tied to how we understand the world, ourselves, and others, and to the ways in which we render those beliefs actionable” (Bendor 2017: 6). In mainstream contemporary societies, sustainability discourses have reproduced a static division of three distinctive pillars: the economic, social, and environmental. This customary divide of sustainability is controversial as it suggests the “separation, or even autonomy of economy, society, and nature”(Helne & Hirvilammi, 2015: 169). Even so that “their equal treatment is illusory, the economic dimension overshadowing the other two dimensions” (Helne & Hirvilammi, 2015: 169). Due to mainstream societies’ dominant capitalist and corporate agendas, the social and economic dependency on natural ecosystems is not really admitted in such categorical division, eventually resulting in the long-term marginalization of nature.

Sustainability in discourse and practice is not limited to the hegemonic corporate world, but also used across a diverse range of social actors and their agendas. In Ecovillages, sustainability discourses are popularly used to envision an alternative isolated space to mainstream unsustainable ones (Dias, 2017; LeVasseur, 2013). Isolation and collective desires of an alternative space however does not grant Batoro complete immunity to the external capitalist agenda. This is particularly the case in the early stages of developing a self-sustainable community that aims to become de-commodified from the hegemonic economic system (Baker, 2013; Dias, 2017). Batoro is still a rented space that must pay monthly bills covering the rent, use of water, gas and electricity. To meet these bills, volunteers paid a monthly fee of 160€ covering domestic uses and weekly food the community was not able to produce yet (e.g., butter, milk, olive oil etc). Exceptions were made if members did not meet these financial requirements so that they could still participate. While members attempted to dismiss the role of money in Batoro, handling the communal finances was nonetheless an everyday challenge to address and overcome. For example, some volunteers requested certain products that they considered necessary for the community, yet not everyone agreed as actors spoke from different positionalities and priorities. This was also the case with diverse projects developed for establishing future stable incomes for becoming self-sustainable in the long-run whereby actors shared different positions on which project should be prioritized:

*We spent a lot of money for developing Biotonix and the laboratory area and materials for this and all the money we make from our products, which we create here by ourselves needs to be used to pay out this this outstanding money for now. Why can't we use it for us? For buying food, building new yurts, building new pallet houses, stuff like this. So, this is the point where the vision is going in different directions because our vision is to put effort in creating these teas, planting Artemisia, planting lemongrass, cutting this lemongrass to make tea so that we can stay here without being worried about our own personal money. From this*

*we could provide the food or provide a new water pipe system so that the plants get more water. But the vision of Charly is to make this company happen to get a lot of money”.*

In this extract Nadja exemplifies how volunteers and Charly share different financial priorities. Biotonix is a side company created by Charly for the production of natural tinctures, teas, and luffa sponges produced simultaneously by volunteers’ work in Batoro. The raw materials for tinctures were either grown and harvested in Batoro or gathered by communal field trips in the nearby mountains. While being legally separated, Biotonix was created to finance Batoro in the future, however throughout my stay it seemed like the other way around; volunteers work and personal budget was being used for sustaining the start-up of Biotonix. The community lab was envisioned by Charly as a project that would bring a long-term stable income to Batoro, however, several actors began to feel that its construction and successful running was more costly and time-consuming than initially thought. Some volunteers saw this as problematic because the financial sustenance of Batoro and its projects was primarily stemming from their personal budget. Most actors arrived in Batoro desiring to escape the unsustainable capitalist context in which money drives everyday interpersonal relations and opportunities, and this was not completely the case in Batoro. Escaping the evils of money is certainly not an easy task in the gaps of an unsustainable context, especially in the early stages of a community that is still building the infrastructural basis for becoming self-sustainable. Actors are nonetheless eager to find ways around these financial obstacles which were seen as challenges rather than problems. They did so by striving to live in simplistic ways whereby they depended on nature and community as much as their circumstances allowed them to:

*“I love the philosophy that we can grow what we eat. I also like the extra side on it, that we can make money from nature like the luffas and other things. But I don't know, this place needs a bit more money. If there was more money it'd be easier. But the philosophies? What more could you want? Basically, the things that are here, you can clean yourself, you can get better, and you can feed yourself well. What more would you want? You don't have to go out. Like I said even with the corn we can make our own flour, and then you don't have to go out”.* –Darren, 40



Batoro Luffa Sponges

Although Batoro is impacted by the external capitalist context, actors nonetheless share a desire of becoming decomodified from such through simplistic lifestyles that prioritize nature and community. The construction of this alternative imagined community is therefore also the production of a counterhegemonic discourse, because “what is opposed to the hegemonic space is not simply another space but also another discourse” (Graffice & Heurtebise, 2016: 134). In Batoro, sustainability is more than a categorical division or a corporate strategy. Instead, it is an invitation to collectively re-imagine our relationships to our surrounding environment and social communities in holistic ways that encourage an alternative lifestyle to mainstream capitalist ones. Several Batoro members commonly translated sustainability into living in and more connected with nature and community, and this was certainly what attracted them to this space:

*“I wanted to live in another way that I lived before like out from the city. I wanted to learn how to grow my own food, how to live with a lot of people in a community, and how to spend most of the day outside in a nice environment”. - Nadja, 25*

*“I didn’t feel that I was where I belonged I think. So yeah, I wanted to discover a new way of living so I came here to learn how to be more connected to earth and to learn how to cultivate. Also, I wanted to live in a community because I lived in a shared flat and I think it’s really interesting to live with other people and learn from each other”. – Margaux, 25*

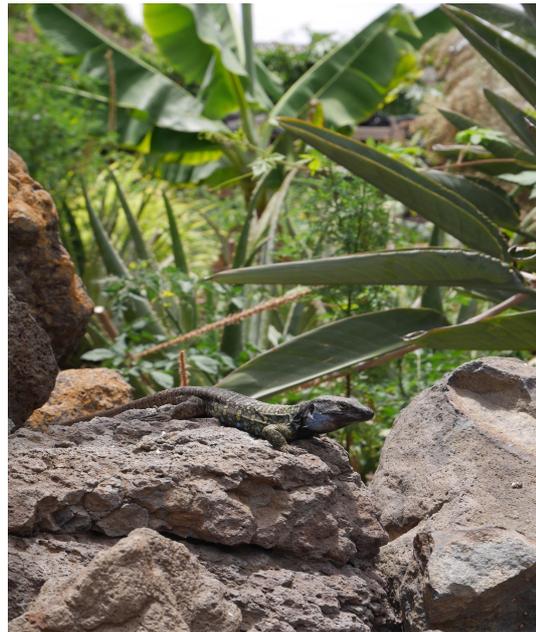
Living connected with nature and a human-scale community is addressed as something that is not strongly present in mainstream societies, but rather quite unbalanced and fragmented. Batoro was hence described as a tool for re-connecting with nature and community, and for balancing the natural environment with social and individual ones. Unlike the mainstream customary divide of sustainability, Batoro fosters a relational sustainability paradigm in which the wellbeing of nature, society and the individual are seen as inherently linked (Helne & Hirvilammi, 2015). Consonantly, in the words of Joshi: “*if the nature is sick then the people and community around this nature are sick too*”. Relational paradigm holistically considers and respects all relations between the environment, social, and individual dimensions. Rather than reproducing anthropocentric gazes that position humans at the top of a food chain or in between social hierarchies, humans are seen as belonging to a greater ecosystem and on egalitarian levels with other organisms. The relationship developed with the natural and social environment is accordingly “not one of domination or parasitism but of reciprocity or symbiosis” (Helne & Hirvilammi, 2015: 170). Relational sustainability paradigm serves as Batoro’s emerging collective imaginary, encompassing shared ecological and egalitarian values, goals, and ways of interrelating in this heterogeneous community.

In Batoro, relational paradigm is translated through several practices of permaculture. Alike sustainability, permaculture has also become an increasingly popular strategy worldwide and yet interpreted differently across diverse social actors and their contexts (Aistara, 2013). While there are various ways of exercising permaculture, in this thesis I explore how Batoro selects principles and practices that align with their collective imaginary of relational sustainability. Particularly, those of minimizing waste through composting, (re)using natural and renewable materials in their infrastructures, and polyculture designs of environmental and social configurations. The following sections will further elaborate how these permaculture practices translate the collective imaginary into environmental and social practice, and the transformative implications these practices entail.

\*\*\*

## Back to Roots, Back to the Cycle of Life: Re-Imagining Eco-Spatial Configurations

Nights in Batoro were loud and naturally chaotic. When the sun descended and the moon ascended a wild jungle awoke in Batoro. I remember the first nights struggling to fall asleep with the midnight rowdy cat fights that commonly triggered a collective orchestra of howling dogs and bleating goats from the neighbouring farms. I could also hear the male frog in the nearby tank relentlessly calling for female frogs. There were geckos and lizards everywhere too, and little did I know that these little creatures can scream loud enough to keep you awake through the wild night. Oh, and how to forget Frida, the popular mouse co-living in the pallet house who really enjoyed going on night adventures seeking for any leftover snacks. Most of us became so used to encountering these small wild creatures at night, either while heading to the toilet, kitchen or sometimes near our tents, that they unavoidably became part of our shared home, of the Batoro ecosystem. The adjacent ocean however compensated for the first boisterous restless nights with the crashing waves providing a soothing and comfortable feeling. Mornings in Batoro were not that quiet either, yet certainly more peaceful. With the sunrise birds eagerly chirped morning melodies while the bees collectively buzzed as they gathered pollen from the flowers surrounding our tents. At 8:00 am the Batoro alarm was rang, either as noises from gongs built by Johannes or guitar songs played by volunteers in charge of preparing breakfast. It is another day in Batoro, and volunteers arise to collectively maintain and participate in this thriving living ecosystem.



In this chapter I explore how Batoro's overall spatial arrangements are designed in juxtaposition of mainstream societies' urban configurations of exclusive, private and isolated spaces. Precisely, how practices of permaculture translate the relational paradigm into spatial configurations that bring social actors closer to both the natural and social environment by accentuating everyday sharing of informal and formal life, and the implications that these have on social actors.

Ecovillages are moulded by shared interests of mitigating environmental impact, maximizing the use of natural and renewable materials, and becoming self-sustainable in ways that reshape spatial and social configurations with "an emphasis on mutual aid, sharing of spaces and resources, and an ethics of collectivity" (Pickerill 2020: 2). Living structures in Batoro are undeniably minimalistic compared to certain Western structures. Most volunteers slept in either tents or mattresses outside covered only by thin layers of nylon. Whereas a few volunteers, particularly those who had stayed longest in the community resided in yurts made from caña-sticks by previous volunteers, and two in a pallet-house designed by a family who was no longer in Batoro. Incoming volunteers were encouraged to go through the outdoor tent or mattress experience so as to adjust to this feeling of 'being outside' 24/7. With our tents set up really close to one another and only thin layers of nylon dividing us into a limited

sense of a ‘private space’, Batoro’s spatial compositions emphasized an interconnected lifestyle of nature as a shared home providing for all residing organisms:

*“We are basically nearly living in nature mostly outside, nearly nobody has a real house or it's not real stone full concrete house. It's really open and we feel all the energy and are just connected. We are part of the garden and we are depending on the garden. That's also the next step that we want to reach that we are fully sustainable on our own and that we can live from the garden and don't have to go to the supermarket so often ” – Joshi, 19*



Volunteer area where members resided



Communal dining area



Guanche & I coming out of Anna's yurt



Joshi's water-proof roof & pallet-bed



Johannes self-built out-door 'private' area from second hand materials

Batoro constructs its space through a design of co-living and co-dependence whereby actors are frequently interacting with diverse natural and social beings. The spatial configurations are designed in consciousness of our species' detrimental impact on nature and driven with a collective imaginary of 'relational sustainability' embodied with permaculture. Through designs and practices of minimizing waste, (re)using natural and renewable materials, and composting, Batoro fosters ecological mutualism. Infrastructures embrace an inherent link and bi-directionality between environmental, social, and individual well-being (Haluza-DeLay, 2013; Helne & Hirvilammi, 2015). For example, most infrastructures are designed in environmentally friendly ways that symbolize a symbiotic 'circle of life and energy' but also an ethics of co-living and co-depending with nature (Haluza-DeLay, 2013; Pickerill, 2020). From natural to unnatural materials there is always remaining energy we can re-use. Communal infrastructures were commonly built through either bio-facturing (e.g., use of natural materials for construction) and/or re-using second hand materials thrown away on public streets. To the extent that one of the green-houses had an area filled with second-hand materials gathered across Batoro generations, and actors were encouraged to use for any personal or communal construction project. Similarly, composting practices are also symbolically prominent in Batoro's everyday whereby actors are inspired to re-use any natural material, such as rotten vegetables, fruits or leftover seeds to provide these a second life:

*"I think you have to include the permaculture system because that's like the base of everything. I think it's pretty much about like everything you grow, you eat, and then you compost it and then it's like an endless circle. I mean, definitely the things that we eat, like, for example, we're taking out the seeds and stuff. I've never done that before. At home I'm just like, okay, it's all trash, trash, trash, trash because I don't have a compost at home. And I mean just taking out the seeds and planting them and then having baby plants, and watering them ... it's just amazing to see how everything grows" – Vivi, 18*



Vivi collecting seeds

By designing infrastructures and everyday practices with permaculture, social actors are pushed out of mainstream and comfortable habitual lifestyles and witness first-hand the amount of time and effort provided in our everyday products. These permaculture practices nurture a symbiotic gaze of maximizing natural energy and minimizing waste and impact on the environment. They invite actors to re-imagine environmental relationships as one of continuous and holistic reciprocity, or in Vivi's words an "endless circle". Consequently, this alternative lifestyle triggers questioning of normalized mainstream practices of intense environmental extractivism, linear production systems, and excessive consumption and waste (Haluza-DeLay, 2013). As Vivi further described her Batoro experience, she could not understand how cheap organic products are in the supermarkets considering the amount of time and energy required for a plant to grow from a seed to a fruit. In parallel, Jakob shared similar feelings regarding his experience with both the permaculture toilets and communal showers, expressing how these infrastructures encouraged him to envision beyond his 'typical western lifestyle':

*"I think a big part was the hygiene standard which is definitively not the typical Western hygiene standard. I don't want to say if it's better or worse, but it's just different. I think it's definitely more natural and this was a very big learning for me. I think everyone should try this at least once in their life and have this experience to not have a warm shower every day or to worry about where his waste goes. So, we all kind of have this in mind what happens to our waste, for example, and this is just such a big learning and I think I can really use these learnings for my later life. ...It means pretty much what is going on here which is living more connected with nature and not having these disconnecting factors like living inside all the time, having warm water all the time or not worrying about where your waste goes. So, because we don't have this luxuriousism this implies that we all really think about our behaviour more. I think this really connects us with nature more, and I think this is what back to the roots means, connecting with nature".*



Dry Toilets



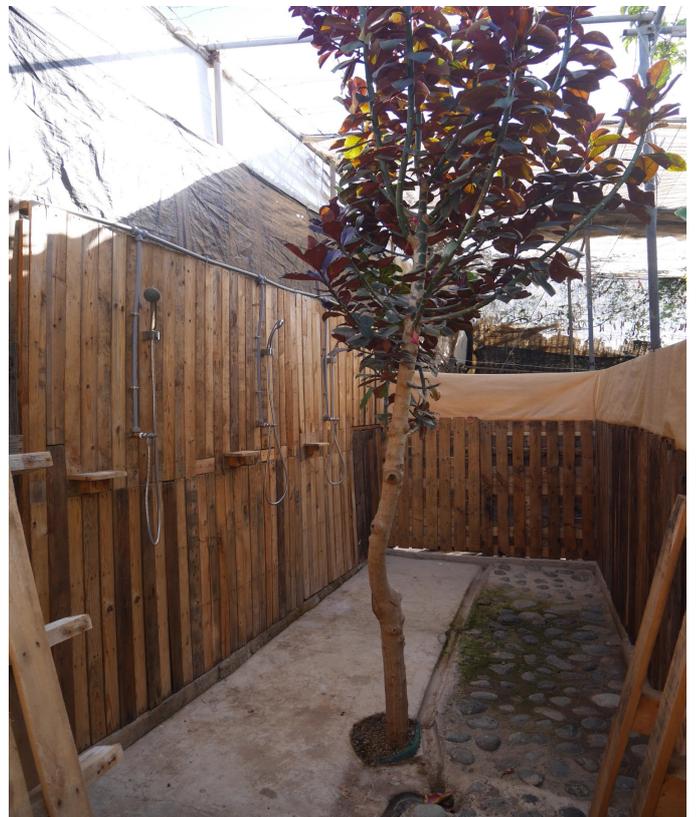
Wet permaculture Toilet



Dry-Permaculture Toilet



Individual communal shower before development of communal showers



Communal showers built by Joshi and Lawrence from 2<sup>nd</sup> hand pallets

The permaculture (wet and dry) toilets and communal showers were designed in ways that require minimal usage of water. The communal showers were constructed upon actors' demands of having a more intimate communal experience but also to reuse water by positioning the drains next to the Banana plants in the volunteer area. Actors were requested to not use any chemical body products as this would contaminate the water and hence our future food. The permaculture toilets were also designed in ways that both minimize waste of water and re-conceptualize notions of 'waste', particularly those of urine and feces. The wet toilet was one big bucket filled with 1/4 of water where all members would urinate, and the dry toilets two buckets with hay. Once these buckets became completely full, which occurred on a daily basis, two members were in charge of emptying the dry toilets in the composting bins and using the urine from the wet toilet to fertilize the plants. With the adequate ingredients and timing, and depending on the weather, after 3-6 months the feces is transformed into nutrient-rich fertile soil for the next generation of Batoro plants:

*It starts with someone preparing the ground or no way further. We're using the dry toilets and when we are not using them in the right way we can't create compost. If we can't create compost in the right way then we can't prepare the ground, and if we can't prepare the ground we can't plant veggies and if we don't plant veggies we can't cook, and finally, we can't eat. So, every task or every field is depending on another field, and if some people or teams are not doing it in the right way, then other teams are not able to continue the work or to make it work, or then like altogether. – Nadja, 25*



Charly encouraging Vivi to smell the 'earthy' smell of composted soil

The wet and dry permaculture toilets are a symbolic umbilical cord that connects all organisms in Batoro and accentuate both ecological mutualism and egalitarianism. The symbolic interdependence of these toilets is intrinsically related to the natural environment as members commonly expressed that *“when you give back your feces to the plants they know exactly what the community needs and is missing”*. Through practices of composting, actors are encouraged to re-conceptualize the concept of body waste into something functional for the future, such as fertile soil, but also a message of gratitude to the nature that provides us. Indoctrinated 'feces-phobias' are consequently dismantled through the reconceptualization of waste as knowledge given to the plants, of what the community needs for bodily functioning. Composting fosters a view in which actors are seen as deeply intertwined with their natural environment that not only provides a sheltered home but also basic necessities such as food and energy. They invite actors to 'go back to their roots', or in Jakob's words, of being *“connected to what really matters which is of course food and just what we need for living but also the social aspect of living together in a community”*. The toilets functioning and maintenance stresses the community's and environment's symbiosis but also reminds each actor of their egalitarian existence. In Charly's words, these toilets demonstrate to us that *“we all have the same basic needs of eating and defecating regardless of our age, ethnicity, or religion”*. The permaculture toilets thus remind actors that behind all the social layers we all have a body with the same needs, and contribute equally to the sustenance of Batoro's ecosystem.

Moreover, composting not only triggers actors' questioning of normalized commodification practices back home but also provides them with practical knowledge that can be translated into a sense of natural agency. For example, upon my interview with Jakob, he discussed insecurities stemming from mainstream society's dependence on electricity in parallel to the current pandemic situation. As he was reading Marc Elsberg's book *Blackout*, which portrays the diverse dystopian scenarios that could emerge in Europe with a complete electrical power outage, Jakob wondered:

*“What would happen? How would I behave with my family and my friends? Would I be able to make it through this intact? So, this is maybe why I always come back to this big city versus self-sustainable community and I think that time here really gives a more realistic picture and gives me more competence in that field. ... . So yeah, in that sense again, I'm thinking about how could things work out? Why should I learn something or what should I learn? And then yeah, I definitely should learn something like making compost or I don't know growing vegetables”*.

Jakob describes the compost experience as a learning lesson of agency. It is reassuring for him to have some basic practical knowledge about these practices as he fears that mainstream societies could soon witness Elsberg's dystopian scenarios. Especially after the pandemic serving as a reminder of our inherent commodified dependency of the system for basic necessities (Buheji, 2020). By living in and depending on nature, actors become familiarised with their natural surrounding environment. It teaches them practical knowledge of how to survive in any kind of situation, whether it's a pandemic or a blackout, therefore providing a greater sense of agency in the uncertainties of artificial mainstream societies (Haluza-DeLay, 2013). Composting is correspondingly a lesson that there is creation beyond destruction; that you can turn shitty situations into opportunities of agency. As Nhat Hanh says: *“with negative energy you can make the positive energy. A flower will become compost someday, but if you know how to transform the compost back into the flower, then you don't have to*

worry. You don't have to worry about your anger because you know how to handle it – to embrace, to recognize, and to transform it. So, this is what is possible”.



Jakob's daily harvest for cooking lunch

By building infrastructures with a design of relational sustainability embodied with specific practices of permaculture, Batoro fosters an everyday experience of egalitarian co-dependence and co-living that is deeply intimate with both community and nature. From the use of the dry toilets, to showering outside together, social actors and nature are brought closer together in ecologically mutualist ways that contest mainstream private lifestyles. The lifestyle cultivated in Batoro is one of conscious symbiosis whereby our behaviours and energies contribute not only to our own survival but to that of the whole ecosystem. The relational paradigm is hence manifested through their infrastructures that are built in consideration of a healthy environment and social community. Accordingly, it triggers questioning of internalized mainstream habitus stimulating actors to re-imagine their relationship with the natural and social environment through a symbiotic gaze of holistic well-being, which also provides actors with a greater sense of agency in the natural field.

\*\*\*

## From Perma to Social Culture: The Cycle of Knowledge and Re-imagining Cultural Habitus

The previous chapter explored how Batoro's relational paradigm is translated through specific permaculture practices and exemplified with spatial configurations that bring social actors closer to the natural environment. Although I mentioned that spatial structures also bring actors closer to the social environment, I did not elaborate on such social dynamics and transformations. Therefore, this chapter will focus on how Batoro implements a social polyculture design whereby everyday interactions across diverse social actors allow for the expansion of internalized cultural horizons, which concomitantly fosters a resilient and healthy social environment.

Batoro's ecological and social systems are designed through practices of polyculture, one of the inherent principles and strategies of permaculture that contests artificial human settings of monoculture, whether agricultural or social, by returning to the natural status quo of biodiverse ecosystems (Eliades, 2021; Veteto & Lockyer, 2008). The interaction of diverse organisms (polyculture) is considered to build resilient permanent ecosystems (permaculture). All the fields in Batoro are built with this strategy. For example, the baby-field where I was mostly working had a variety of African corns, wild and domesticated tomatoes, local papaya trees, artemisias, variegated native and foreign salad, kale, and many more plants. While each field had rows of prepared grounds for planting, rows were nonetheless populated with a variation of diverse plant species. The same was for the green-house, luffa-land, which prioritized luffa sponges and yet had a variation of plants, as well as the dream-land and kitchen garden. Polyculture practices mirrors nature by building agricultural spaces with biodiverse organisms regardless of their origin, and to the extent that monoculture is no longer present (Eliades, 2021). It considers nature as adapting to the introduction of diverse migrating organisms, and their interactions in-turn results in thriving and resilient ecosystems and belonging organisms (Eliades, 2021). Nature's polyculture is not only mirrored in Batoro's garden but also in the social configurations:



*“...it would go to exactly what you say to the social monoculture, and even why people believe that's the healthiest way of life after now 33 years of traveling, I'm completely like in my point of view aware that diversity is the best way of lifestyle ever. It gives strong results in children and in community, in exchanges, in culture, in any direction. It doesn't mean that I need like culture or like a country with all their organized cultures. As we can call like any kind of culture with the British culture or French culture or German culture or Italian culture, Spanish culture or Japanese culture. In old African tribes, there were always exchange with other tribes, and as we've seen, even like in Europe and the world, they're always opening the doors for other blood types to come through inside the country by politics, by war, by any way. They exchange and invite people from outside to have a blood exchange and this is the same as diversity. So, people meet people from other countries and this enforces the quality of the blood and they still face the same culture”. – Charly, 52*



Batoro community posing for a picture

The polycultural Batoro ecosystem is dynamic, fluid, and ever-changing. There is always a continuous flow of diverse social actors and their cultural horizons incoming into this shared green home. Batoro's social composition is hence miscellaneous with each actor bringing their personalised imaginaries of perceiving, experiencing and doing. Not only are social actors diverse and fluid but also everyday roles that are commonly selected by actors' interests and/or experiences. These roles are designed in consideration of the continuous flow of actors, whereby depending on the social composition and communal needs actors might switch upon roles. These decisions are nonetheless done through socio-cratic practices whereby every Sunday evening members would gather in the communal area to discuss Batoro's flexible social composition in relation to the roles and communal demands, as well as the experiences and feelings of each member. Likewise, every morning volunteers would address their daily duties, Batoro priorities, and whether anyone needed help in their roles. These roles are divided into four main categories: construction, gardening, kitchen-team, and office-team. Construction-team focuses on building and maintaining communal infrastructures such as the showers, the garden's water-pipe systems, or water-resistant roofs. The garden-teams are involved in tending the fields, seeding, harvesting, watering, and preparing the grounds. Whereas the kitchen-team aids in harvesting, organizing and cleaning the kitchen, setting weekly shopping-lists, and preparing daily communal meals. Lastly, the office-team manages Batoro's social media (e.g., Instagram, facebook, & crowd-funding), bureaucratic paper-work (e.g., financial organization & communication with local authorities), contacting potential investors, and lab-work (e.g., producing tinctures & teas). Every team is intrinsically linked to one another, and despite having different tasks, each one equally contributes to the Batoro ecosystem:

*"I'm the gardener, so the kitchen is depending on me but the kitchen team makes the meal so I'm depending on the kitchen team. And the kitchen is build up from the construction team so the kitchen is depending on the construction team. So, everything is in a circle when you go*

*through all the stuff that's here. You begin at the garden because I think the garden is the most important thing to have because when you have nothing to eat then people start getting crazy. And yeah, then the office work is also a lot of promotion of this place to get new people and that's all a circle because the new people are coming here because of promotion and they eat from the garden and the meals that are cooked by the kitchen team and the kitchen was built by the construction team. So, we are all depending on each other” – Johannes, 19*

As Johannes describes Batoro’s roles as a ‘circle of life’ we return to permaculture practices of ecological mutualism. However, now I focus on the social interdependence cultivated through these diverse roles, and the opportunities they provide for actors’ expansion of internalized cultural habitus. The symbiotic culture of Batoro views everyone as contributing equally to the overall ecological and social system rather than positioning certain roles or actors above others. Like the mitochondria’s electro-transport chain, if one group of cells doesn’t finish their duties, the following group of cells can’t begin theirs, ultimately prompting the organism’s apoptosis. By constructing the heterotopia as a social ecosystem of relational sustainability embodied with permaculture, implies then that each actors’ imaginative and physical contribution regardless of their cultural or financial background is fundamental for the long-term physical and imaginary architecture of Batoro. This entails that actors are continuously exchanging through formal practices such as their everyday roles, and through their informal intimate ways of living. The circle of life in Batoro is hence translated into an everyday circle of interpersonal learning:

*“Yeah to make the circle of life that you do something with your body in a community and the others are learning from you and you're learning from them and so that the knowledge is not getting lost. That's a good feeling that the knowledge is not getting lost”. – Lawrence, 23*

*“Everything is working kind of together. Everybody has his space and if someone needs help for his space, he comes and asks and every time the people are willing to help the others. This is the base of the community, let's say. Otherwise, you cannot do a community with just one person, so that's why we need the help of the others through their hands through their knowledge through their time”. – Tony, 26*



Tony & Jakob preparing fields



Communal Tomato Harvesting

For Tony alike Lawrence, a sustainable community is not only one in environmental dimensions but also entails continuous exchanges of knowledge and practices among belonging social actors. By living and working together in nature, Batoro members have the opportunity to learn from each other's different experiences and knowledge systems. For example, Joshi was interested in building a natural stone oven, however he did not have experience in this field. Upon Darren's arrival, whom has been constructing since he was a child, Darren taught Joshi how to use the natural clay beneath the fields for constructing this oven. Darren and Joshi were everyday working and exchanging together to the point that Joshi had learned enough to continue the oven alone.



Team-work clay making



Joshi continuing the oven alone

Batoro's everyday exchanges between social actors confronts actors with different ways of doing, living and thinking. Nature is accordingly not the only teacher in this eco-heterotopia because every member has something to teach and learn from one another, ultimately adding to the imaginative composition of Batoro's social ecosystem:

*"First of all, the people that come here, they bring a lot of knowledge which is so beautiful like making bread or learning about chess more or, yeah, just different types of teachers like even playing a DJ set. Every person who comes here has a skill, like learning Spanish. Then of course the knowledge that is here already, which is maybe personalized through Charlie and Maru and maybe Lolo, or even the people who are here for a long time. Of course, you get so much from them as well, like how to make a compost, how to use the stuff here like some people here learned how to weld or how to cut with a flex, or show some cooking tips and tricks. So, you get so much from the people who come and so much from the people who are already here, and this you just learn by living with the people here and doing the activities we do here" – Jakob, 20*

*"When you have different cultures, you can learn a lot from each other. You have different ways of living and you can improve in a lot of ways. I think it's quite nice to have different backgrounds in the same place because people who come here want to have another experience as they had" – Nadja, 25*



Joshi teaching Maelle how to bake bread

Co-existing with heterogenous organisms and positionalities thus entails that we are learning about different worldviews, practices, experiences and/or boundaries every day. Social exchanges are then conduits for re-imagining and re-learning internalized cultural habitus. We can learn from small little details, such as phrases like thank you in different languages, to bigger details such as making cultural recipes (e.g., bread, jam, chilli-sauces) and even alternative diets. To illustrate, most of the community was vegetarian with a few vegan volunteers. The community meals were nonetheless cooked mostly vegan so that everyone could eat more or less the same. Those few members who were not originally vegan or vegetarian, by the end of their journey had changed their diets to vegetarian. These diet changes were also because of knowledge trade-offs between social actors, whereby actors became aware of the detrimental environmental impacts of industrial meat markets. Similarly, because the garden provided access to an abundance of vegetables and fruits, actors realized that there was no need to contribute to these deleterious markets:

*“I think when I was where in Germany I wouldn't be able to because for me it's kind of an addiction and you are surrounded by it because you go more often to the supermarket and look at it and then your ego says, like yeah, look at this piece of meat it looks so delicious. And yeah, then you start to take it. ... It's basically also trying to get as much from the garden as we can and we don't need so much things from the supermarket. Of course, we buy some beers and stuff like this. Butt yeah, it's very different than when you were living in society and going every day or every second day to the supermarket then you are in this wheel of consuming 'cause the things in the supermarket are just like... all the things that are there are for reason there to make them look like this because you buy more when you see them”*

Through the confrontation of alternative diets and actors' reasons behind these, members like Johannes certainly question and reflect upon their internalized cultural habitus, or taste for meat. The everyday experience of living and working together in Batoro is thus a continuous exchange of both formal and informal practices that allows actors to expand their imaginative

horizon and embody a more sustainable life than the one they have normalized back home. This was also reflected with everyday disparities of how to approach Guanche the Batoro cat adopted by a previous volunteer who found him abandoned in a dumpster nearby. While some actors considered Guanche ‘untamed’ because of growing up in such a wild ecosystem, others considered him a domestic pet. These different perspectives were conveyed on a daily basis with some actors preferring to not feed and subjugate Guanche to human dependency and alternatively let him fend for himself; whilst others considered this problematic as it prompted Guanche to hunt down the emblematic and endangered local lizards. For example, when Guanche fractured his leg after a rowdy cat fight, actors shared contrasting solutions, with some suggesting a vet visit and others encouraging the use of natural healing techniques. These differences were nonetheless communicated collectively as much as interpersonally, allowing actors to listen and consider others’ positionalities, and ultimately arriving at communal decisions upon these exchanges.



These everyday exchanges invite social actors to expand their ways of knowing in the garden but also in their everyday practical interpersonal dynamics. Working and living with diverse social actors can indeed bring tensions among different strategies of realization and lifestyles. However, due to the everyday interdependence of community roles, and the collective imaginary of relational sustainability embodied with polyculture, actors are invited to see these tensions as personal challenges for learning to expand their tolerance about other ways of knowing and doing:

*“Yeah, it’s a bit disturbing the flow, I would say of the work. I think the work could have been done faster. For example, when it’s work that it’s not so funny I just want to get it done and don’t like hanging around too much and looking into thinking what’s unnecessary. But hmm, otherwise I get used to it and I just like learning different ways of doing stuff and different thinking patterns from people to learn from them. But you also don’t want to take out his way of doing something and instead just adapt around it”. – Joshi, 19*

In this fragment, Joshi expresses the challenges that surfaced from working together with Lawrence in construction. Both actors had different strategies for building a water-collecting roof in the community. As Lawrence has been in the community for a year and had experience with construction, he continuously positioned himself as the one leading the project. This became a struggle for Joshi who felt that their working styles were contrasting and despite continuous expressions of discontent, Lawrence continued to dismiss his claims. The roof had to be finished and Lawrence was not an easy person to communicate with but rather struggled a lot with interpersonal verbal exchanges, so Joshi opted for understanding his ways alike others rather than remaining in conflict:

*“I mean, from all the experiences and their way of thinking from all the other people it’s now maybe easier to understand other people and to try to understand their way of thinking about the world”*

Everyday exchanges in Batoro are not just regarding the garden, but also about adapting to diverse ways of perceiving and enacting in the world. The knowledge gathered from interpersonal interchanges is thus more practical than theoretical, because Batoro fosters a living rather than academic community (Greenberg, 2013). The interaction of diverse social actors and their knowledge systems creates opportunities for members to learn new ways of doing, and living that also contributes to the Batoro's overall sustainability because upon the departure of the longer-stayed and skilled actors, those whom have learned from these actors can continue to pass this knowledge to the new incoming volunteers. The sustainability of Batoro is also social as actors learn to coexist with heterogeneous imaginaries and lifestyles in ways that actors can learn to either tolerate or adopt these if they personally find it beneficial. As actors have to co-work and co-depend on each other daily, actors are pushed to find ways around interpersonal disparities that consider the communal well-being because as Joshi said the energies, good or bad, are always felt in this intimate environment. Indirectly, this also entails interpersonal learning and individual well-being as actors envision beyond their normalized perceptions by learning to co-exist with heterogeneous lifestyles. Inevitably, by living and working with different individuals and their varying imaginaries, there is always something new to learn in Batoro, whether it is about the garden, others, or yourself:

*“Batoro is a place where you can learn many things and also where you learn how to live with people from all over the world. And just in general you can get to know new sides of yourself” – Vivi, 18*

*“I'm a bit like an introvert, I don't like to talk a lot with a lot of people. I'm opening too and learning that it's not the worst thing in the world no? To talk to five people at the same time, but it's not my nature. So, it's really going out of my comfortable zone”. – Maru, 29*

By building Batoro as a social polyculture, actors are invited to envision beyond their cultural habitus and comfort zone. Confrontation of heterogeneous lifestyles and imaginaries provides opportunities for actors to either learn to reject and yet tolerate these differences, or alternatively adopt others' perspectives to expand their ways of being and knowing:

*“It's easy to forget yourself here because you are inside this bubble, so you forget who you were before outside of this bubble. You are not becoming something completely new, but you are creating something around you and around the people living with you, kind of a new identity. So, that's important to have this step back. I just want to tell this about this this challenge you were talking about. This challenge is not about the people, it's not about the people that are surrounding you, it's about yourself. How to manage what's going on with the people and yourself but it's about yourself, how to manage yourself. If you lose the control then you leave after two weeks. If you keep the control and you have this step back and you know how take a step back and how to ask yourself the good questions and to find the answer to these good questions then you will be happy. It's the same in general in all the conflicts you can have in your family and everything like have a step back and try to understand yourself. Try to understand the other side and try to just like make it nice no?” – Tony, 26*



The Batoro experience entails a lot of confrontation with heterogeneous cultural lifestyles, but also with yourself, internalized habitus, and interpersonal dynamics normalized by your comfort zone. By being positioned in a shared home of diverse strangers social actors are pushed out of their comfort zone, which is certainly not an easy experience but neither a problem. Instead, actors view these tensions as challenges for re-learning their habits, their ways of knowing and envisioning a better self for one-self, but also the community and nature. These everyday experiences push actors to not only re-imagine their everyday relations through co-living with diverse imaginaries but also to see themselves as belonging to a greater thriving ecosystem rather than through an egoistic gaze:

*I really like the way Charlie describes Batoro as a sort of a self-thriving organism and that it doesn't need people necessarily. It does need people, but it's just for the maintenance of it. So, I don't feel I have a feeling of I'm Anna and this is my role and I make this and I do this. I think we all are just parts at the moment in time helping this place or tending for it and giving it our love and giving people here our love. And what you get back is a lot of love, knowledge, and life lessons. So yeah, I don't think I have an important position here it's just in the cycle of this project. Im just here at this moment now. - Anna, 22*

Batoro is a living ecosystem imagined and sustained by diverse social actors and organisms, and their everyday interchanges of formal and informal practices. These everyday exchanges function as conduits for actors' questioning of internalized cultural habitus and their possible expansion through either learning to tolerate alternative ways of experiencing the world, and/or adopting these. As an alternative imagined community Batoro thus not only re-imagines spaces but also everyday lifestyles that result in individual transformations whereby actors are consciously aware of their belonging in relation to the environmental and communal well-being. Whether it is through taste, ways of doing and/or interacting, actors are pushed into an environment of strangers where they have to explore and navigate new ways of communicating and co-existing with others. The relational paradigm embodied with

permaculture is hence reflected through Batoro's overall spatial configurations and everyday social practices.

\*\*\*

## Conclusion

This thesis explored Ecovillages as 'other-spaces' created by diverse social actors' shared desire of re-imagining environmental and social spaces, relations and everyday practices in ways that deem necessary, in this case sustainable. I specifically focused on how globalization has facilitated the creation of Ecovillages as spaces that bridge diverse social actors' imaginaries, agencies, and lifestyles through common interests of addressing rising global environmental and sociocultural concerns. This was done by subsequently reflecting on how Batoro's collective imaginary of relational sustainability is translated through ethics of co-living and ecological mutualism, and certain practices of permaculture, such as composting, reusing natural materials, and designs of polyculture. Accordingly, Batoro articulates its environmental and social configurations in ways that bring actors closer to nature and community, simultaneously inviting them to perceive well-being in a symbiotic manner that considers environmental, communal, and individual dimensions.

The aim of this thesis was to redirect focus towards the opportunities that globalization create for the intersection of diverse cultural actors and the emerging forms of individual and communal agency. I aimed to move beyond Bourdieu's pre-reflexive view of habitus and elucidate on the various ways that actors are motivated to transform these through an experience of living intimately connected with nature and community. Ethnographic data revealed that the co-living and co-depending lifestyle of Batoro pushes social actors to exchange every day in ecologically mutualist ways that can also stimulate envisioning beyond normalized habitus. Actors' possibility to envision beyond what they've normalized back home often stemmed from Batoro's minimalistic and sustainable spatial and social configurations. By having actors living out-doors and deeply connected with nature and community, members could witness first-hand the energy, time, and waste behind our everyday basic facilities back home (e.g., shower, eating, toilets). These practices also provided actors with a sense of agency, as they became increasingly familiarised with their natural and social surrounding. Similarly, social practices encouraged collaboration between diverse social actors, thus providing opportunities for the exchange of practices, knowledge-systems, and imaginaries. Everyday confrontation of diverse lifestyles thus served as conduits for actor's envisioning beyond internalized habitus as they would either adopt practices/worldviews considered as beneficial, and/or learned to tolerate other's alternative ways.

This thesis opens up doors for future research on sustainability and agency in the rapid globalization of modern societies and the detrimental consequences linked to such. Considering the COVID circumstances, this research did not explore the connections that Batoro has with mainstream societies. Although there is existing research (Baker, 2013; Dias, 2017; Greenberg 2013) on the bidirectional relationship of Ecovillages and mainstream societies, not much has been shed on the implications that Ecovillages can have both amidst and post a global pandemic. With COVID19 serving as a reminder of our societies' lack of self-sufficiency for the provision of basic products (e.g., food & toilet paper), Ecovillages designs of spatial and social sustainability can render as inspirational lessons for re-designing

urban spaces. Although the Ecovillage model cannot be copy-pasted into the grand-scale of a modern societies, certain practices could still be integrated in urban spaces. For example, constructing communal composts and gardens in the urban margins where food and social security are extremely limited and public spaces are poorly kept due to state absence (Bohle, 2002; Das, 2004). Whether there is a pandemic present or not, incorporating communal composts and food gardens could deem beneficial in the margins by providing both a sense of agency and security (Buheji, 2021). Communal composts and gardens could also contribute to individual, communal and environmental well-being as well as resilience since public space would be re-designed through collaborative participation, thus bringing individuals closer together, and in consideration of their natural environment.

\*\*\*

## References

- Aistara, G. (2013). Weeds or Wisdom?: Permaculture in the Eye of the Beholder on Latvian Eco-Health Farms. In Lockyer J. & Veteto J. (Eds.), *Environmental Anthropology Engaging Ecotopia: Bioregionalism, Permaculture, and Ecovillages* (pp. 113-129). Berghahn Books.
- Appadurai, A. (1990). Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 7(2–3), 295–310. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327690007002017>
- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 103(5), 1-219.
- Baker, T. (2013). Ecovillages and capitalism. In J. Lockyer & J. R. Veteto (Eds.), *Environmental anthropology engaging ecotopia: Bioregionalism, permaculture, and ecovillages* (pp. 267-284). New York, NY: Berghahn Books.
- Bendor, R., D. Maggs, R. Peake, J. Robinson, and S. Williams. 2017. The imaginary worlds of sustainability: observations from an interactive art installation. *Ecology and Society* 22(2):17.
- Bohle, H. G., Downing, T. E, & Watts, M. J. 2002. Climate change and social vulnerability: Towards a sociology and geography of food insecurity. *Global Environmental Change*. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0959378094900205>
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. Structures and the Habitus. In *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 72-95.
- Buheji, M., Korže, A.V., Eidan, S.M., Abdulkareem, T., Perepelkin, N.A., Mavrić, B., Preis, J., Bartula, M., Ahmed, D., Buheji, A., Beka, G., Kakoty, P., & Das, R. 2020. Optimising Pandemic Response through Self-Sufficiency – A Review Paper. *American Journal of Economics*, 10, 277-283.
- Burke, B., & Arjona, B. (2013). Creating Alternative Political Ecologies through the Construction of Ecovillages and Ecovillagers in Colombia. In Lockyer J. & Veteto J. (Eds.), *Environmental Anthropology Engaging Ecotopia: Bioregionalism, Permaculture, and Ecovillages* (pp. 235-250). Berghahn Books. Retrieved June 11, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qcp8c.21>
- Casey, K., Lichrou, M., & O'Malley, L. 2020. Prefiguring sustainable living: an ecovillage story, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36:17-18, 1658-1679.

- Das, V. and Poole, D., 2004. The state and its margins, in V. Das and D. Poole (eds), *Anthropology at the Margins of the State*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 3–34
- Dawson, J. 2006. From Islands to Networks: The History and Future of the Ecovillage Movement. In Lockyer J. & Veteto J. (Eds.), *Environmental Anthropology Engaging Ecotopia: Bioregionalism, Permaculture, and Ecovillages* (pp. 217-234). Berghahn Books.
- Dias, Maria Accioly. 2017 . The Meaning and Relevance of Ecovillages for the Construction of Sustainable Societal Alternatives. *Ambiente & Sociedade*, ANPPAS - Revista Ambiente e Sociedade,
- Donoghue, D. (1998). *The practice of reading*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Eliades, A. (2021, April 9). *Permaculture design principle 9 – diversity*. Deep Green Permaculture. <https://deepgreenpermaculture.com/permaculture/permaculture-design-principles/9-diversity/>.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T., & Bochner, A. (2011). Autoethnography: An Overview. *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung*, 36(4 (138)), 273-290.
- Farkas, J. (2017). 'To Separate from the Umbilical Cord of Society': Freedom as Dependence and Independence in Hungarian Ecovillages. *Etnofoor*, 29(1), 81-100.
- Foucault, M., & Miskowiec, J. (1986). Of Other Spaces. *Diacritics*, 16(1), 22-27.
- Gaffric, G. & Heurtebise, J. (2016). Mouvements sociaux et éco-hétérotopies: Une analyse structurale des mouvements sociaux taiwanais entre 2011 et 2014. *Écologie & politique*, 52, 127-142.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic books.
- Greenberg, Daniel. 2013. Academia's Hidden Curriculum and Ecovillages as Campuses for Sustainability Education. *Environmental Anthropology Engaging Ecotopia: Bioregionalism, Permaculture, and Ecovillages*, edited by Joshua Lockyer and James R. Veteto, 1st ed., Berghahn Books, 2013, pp. 269–284. *JSTOR*.
- Haluza-DeLay, R., & Berezan, R. (2013). Permaculture in the City: Ecological Habitus and the Distributed Ecovillage. In Lockyer J. & Veteto J. (Eds.), *Environmental Anthropology Engaging Ecotopia: Bioregionalism, Permaculture, and Ecovillages* (pp. 130-145). Berghahn Books.
- Hansen, Anette Høite. 2021. "It Has to Be Reasonable': Pragmatic Ways of Living

Sustainability in Danish Eco-Communities.” *The Role of Non-State Actors in the Green Transition: Building a Sustainable Future*, by Jens Hoff et al., Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2021, pp. 35–38.

Helne, T., & Hirvilammi, T. 2015. *Wellbeing and sustainability: A relational approach*. Wiley Online Library. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/sd.1581>

Hong, S., and Vicdan, H. 2016. “Re-Imagining the Utopian: Transformation of a Sustainable Lifestyle in Ecovillages.” *ScienceDirect*, Journal of Business Research, [www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0148296315003173](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0148296315003173).

Lefebvre, H. 1974. *The Production of Space*. L’Homme et la société, 32, pp. 22

LeVasseur, T. 2013. Globalizing the Ecovillage Ideal: Networks of Empowerment, Seeds of Hope. In Lockyer J. & Veteto J. (Eds.), *Environmental Anthropology Engaging Ecotopia: Bioregionalism, Permaculture, and Ecovillages*, 251-268. Berghahn Books.

Nakamura, K. 2013. *Making sense of sensory ethnography: The sensual and the multisensory*. AnthroSource. <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1548-1433.2012.01544.x>.

Pickerill, J. (2012). The Built Ecovillage: Exploring the Processes and Practices of Eco-Housing. *RCC Perspectives*, (8), 99-110.

Pickerill, J. 2020. “Eco-Communities as Insurgent Climate Urbanism: Radical Urban Socio-Material Transformations.” *Taylor & Francis*, Urban Geography,

Robertson, R. (1995) Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity. In: Featherstone, M., Lash, S. and Robertson, R., Eds., *Global Modernities*, Sage Publications, London, 25-44.

Schiffer, S. 2018. “Glocalized” Utopia, Community-Building, and the Limits of Imagination. *Utopian Studies*, 29(1), 67-87.

Taylor, C. (2004). *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham; London: Duke University Press.

The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). 2021. About GEN, bridges countries, cultures, and communities! Global Ecovillage Network. [https://ecovillage.org/about/aboutgen/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw5uWGBhCTARIsAL70sLLU-DrgjxJZoLlfjXMy-A\\_LHPEAPyI5qcEtpf3NBkyoTCcttq22AMaApSGEALw\\_wcB](https://ecovillage.org/about/aboutgen/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw5uWGBhCTARIsAL70sLLU-DrgjxJZoLlfjXMy-A_LHPEAPyI5qcEtpf3NBkyoTCcttq22AMaApSGEALw_wcB).

Veteto, J. R., & Lockyer, J. 2008. *Environmental Anthropology Engaging Permaculture: Moving Theory and Practice Toward Sustainability*. Wiley Online Library.

## Popular Summary

In the wake of dire social and ecological crises, Ecovillages have re-emerged in the 21st century as living social laboratories for experimenting alternative and sustainable community models. Having their roots in global narratives concerning environmental and sociocultural devastation, Ecovillages are both counter-hegemonic and heterotopian spaces facilitated and maintained by globalisation. On the one hand, they are manifestations of individual and communal agency derived from systematic blockage; Ecovillages are created upon hegemonic spaces and institutions' dismissal of rising global and local concerns of environmental devastation and sociocultural anomie, and actors attempt of tackling these concerns through the creation of sustainable 'other-spaces'. Unlike mainstream societies sustainable agendas driven by corporate and capitalist values, sustainability in Ecovillages is driven by actors' desires of living more connected with nature and community. Precisely, Ecovillages foster a shared imaginary of relational sustainability whereby humans are seen as belonging to a greater eco-system rather than positioned at the top. In turn, well-being of nature and community are considered as intrinsically linked. Permaculture often functions as the blue-print for translating the ecological utopia into environmental and social practice, for example through practices of composting, (re)using natural and renewable materials, minimizing waste and using designs of polyculture. Through these practices, the ecological utopia is translated into a shared space where actors live intimately connected with their surrounding nature and community members, thus fostering an alternative lifestyle to mainstream societies' spatial practices of private, exclusive, and alienated from nature.

On the other hand, although Ecovillages are built on shared interests and portray themselves as collectively homogeneous, they are nonetheless characterised with diverse sociocultural actors, their imaginaries, and lifestyles. Correspondingly, their spaces are constructed upon a shared desire of re-imagining and re-shaping hegemonic practices into more sustainable and inclusive ones through the intersection of diverse social actors' imaginative participation. Imagination plays a crucial role in these spaces, as actors not only attempt to re-interpret mundane hegemonic practices with utopic imaginaries of a sustainable better, but also are confronted with heterogeneous actors, their imaginaries and lifestyles that function as conduits for expanding internalised cultural horizons. By creating a shared space of living intimately with nature and community, actors are invited to envision beyond mundane mainstream practices and consider how their behaviour contributes or hinders environmental and/or communal well-being.

To sum up, in this research I attempted to unveil the various ways in which Batoro ecovillage re-imagines mundane hegemonic practices through utopic ideals of a sustainable better stemming from diverse social actors, and how their spatial and social configurations motivate actors to envision beyond internalized structures normalized in their mainstream contexts back home.