

- Reconnecting with the Essence of Being Human -  
**Analysis of the Potential of Lifestyle Change**  
**with regard to**  
**Sustainability and Transferability**  
- a case study of the Community Los Portales in Andalusia, Spain -



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## Abbreviations

BMU	German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety [Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Reaktorsicherheit]
CSA	Community Sustainability Assessment
CSCP	UNEP/Wuppertal Institute Collaborating Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production
e5	European Business School for Sustainable Energies
EDE	Ecovillage Design Education
EMDR	Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing
EMF	Electromagnetic field
EU CCXG	European Union Climate Change Expert Group
LI	Lithium treatment
FIC	Fellowship of Intentional Communities
FQS	Forum on Qualitative Social Research
GEN	Global Ecovillage Network
GEN-Europe	Global Ecovillage Network for Europe
GSG	Global Scenario Group
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
RCC	Rachel Carson Center
RIC	Research in Communities
RIE	Red Ibérica de Ecoaldeas
UBA	German Federal Environmental Agency [Umweltbundesamt]
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNJSPF	United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund
UNCSD	United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development
WBGU	German Advisory Council on Global Change [Wissenschaftlicher Beirat der Bundesregierung Globale Umweltveränderungen]
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Political and social context

In times of globalisation, economic crisis and the still on-going ecology crisis, the search for lifestyles that are sustainable becomes more and more important and relevant. Natural ecosystems, such as oceans, soils, primary forests and wildlife are endangered because of the modern consumption pattern's tendency towards destruction (cf. Annan, 2000: 5ff.). The industrialized countries are responsible for a disproportionate share of the worldwide exploitation of natural resources, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and pollution of air and water. Despite being well-known that “this lifestyle is neither bearable nor sustainable”, globalisation is spreading this way of living (Kunze, 2009a: 8 [own translation]). Climate change, resource depletion and urbanisation are only a few of the Great Transition<sup>1</sup> challenges, The Great Transition, according to Raskin et al. (2002), is “a transition [that aims for] a future of enriched lives, human solidarity and a healthy planet”. To limit the dangerous impacts of climate change, which is already taking place, the EU Governments agreed in 1996 on a 2°C climate protection target. This was also reaffirmed by the Environmental Council 2003, and European Council 2005, 2007 (cf. EU CCXG, 2008). According to the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC, 2007) – CO<sub>2</sub> emissions must be reduced worldwide by at least 50% and in the industrial countries by 80 – 95%. This cannot be achieved by technical means only. Thus an adaptation of lifestyles is necessary to obtain this target (cf. SPREAD, 2012: 9ff; e5, 2013).

The past and current international financial and economic crisis, has increased the interest in new economic systems, “which are ecological and resource efficient, fair and sustainable in a comprehensive manner”. Economic systems are linked to lifestyles and “depend on a multitude of social circumstances”, therefore there is “a need for new sustainable lifestyles that secure modern ecological closed-circle-economy, sufficiency and affluence, but are no longer relying on the economic growth strategies of state and market” (e5, 2013).

Furthermore, several studies show strong environmental awareness among the present generation but there is hardly any actual environmental acting (cf. Poferl,

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<sup>1</sup> The term Great Transition was introduced by the Global Scenario Group (GSG), which was convened in 1995 by the Stockholm Environment Institute as a diverse and international body to examine the requirements for a transition to sustainability (cf. Raskin et al., 2002)

2000 in Kunze, 2009a: 28; Kunze, 2012b: 52) which emphasizes the assumption that people are scared of losing the quality of life by changing their lifestyle and consumption behaviour (cf. Kunze, 2004: 23.).

The research so far puts the focus on technical innovations and efficiency. But this is not sufficient for the necessary cultural change to become a sustainable society (cf. Forschungswende, 2012; Kunze, 2007: 34). “There is little research and knowledge concerning the possible structures for a society that is sustainable on all levels. In general, research focuses on single aspects of sustainability and not on the entirety of such a collective lifestyle” (Wagner, 2012a: 57f.). Also part of a sustainable society are attractive social coherences that combine the individual freedom with responsible cooperation and a harmonious coexistence (cf. Kunze, 2010a: 54). “The level of ‘non-sustainability’ within the ethics, the political and economic power structure and the (social) lifestyle is not touched by present discussions about efficiency- and eco-technology” (Kunze, 2007:34 [own translation]). Modern society came along with the liberation of social structures as it was customary in traditional family structures. But today’s individualism<sup>2</sup> also has its down sides and can result in “depressions, anxiety neuroses and spacing out into unrealistic worlds” (Kunze, 2010b: 56 [own translation]). The modern small family approves less stable as a picture-book model and does not seem fit for the future anymore (cf. Sahling, 2010). “In concrete words, the solution of current social problems like the difficulties of balancing families and jobs, demographic changes, multicultural relations, criminality, and injustice need to be included in discussions about sustainable development” (Kunze, 2012a: 52). “The highest need lies in the culturally underestimated fostering of social and ecological awareness as well as social competences of communality” (Kunze, 2012: 66f.).

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<sup>2</sup> Excerpt “Individualism” (Kunze, 2012b: 55): “Evidence for the ‘colonialization of the lifeworld’ (Habermas, 1984) and the loss of community can be found today—at the end of modernity—in the social conditions caused by the separation of ‘lifeworld’ and ‘work world’, the differentiation of economic, political, and cultural subsystems leading to significant changes in communality: a divorce rate of more than 50 percent seems to reveal dramatically that the contemporary models of living together—marriage and the nuclear family—cannot fulfil the needs and requirements of an individual in a post-modern society (see for example, “World Divorce Statistics,” *Divorce Magazine* (2002), <http://www.divorcemag.com/statistics/statsWorld.shtm> (30.09.2013)). At the same time, loneliness and psychosomatic illnesses are increasing, and postmodern singles yearn for social contacts, communication and interaction. As a result, diverse forms of communities are emerging, in the forms of self-help groups or internet communities, diverse religious subcultures, in networks of specified lifestyles, and in intentional communities.”

There is an urgent necessity for the research of lifestyles that are in harmony with the basic human needs and which reconcile and satisfy social needs. A research for lifestyles in which human cooperation is appropriate and carried by respect and empathy, a search for lifestyles without moral appeal and demand for abstinence (cf. ebd.). According to Kunze (2007: 34; 2012a: 19) the “potential lies within the development of the social dimension” and that it is now time to produce “mutually enjoyable and relevant collaborative research” (Andreas, 2012a: 6). This includes community-oriented lifestyles that extend beyond the small family group (see also Chapter 3.1). It is about a socio-ecological research to “develop strategies for social sustainability by connecting ecological transformation with social justice and economic demands” (Wagner, 2012a: 61).

## 1.2. The social dimension of sustainability

The Brundtland Report (1987) initially presented the interconnectedness and dependency of the three components of sustainability: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and social sustainability (cf. Hauff, 1987 in Kunze, 2009a:12) (see Figure 1).

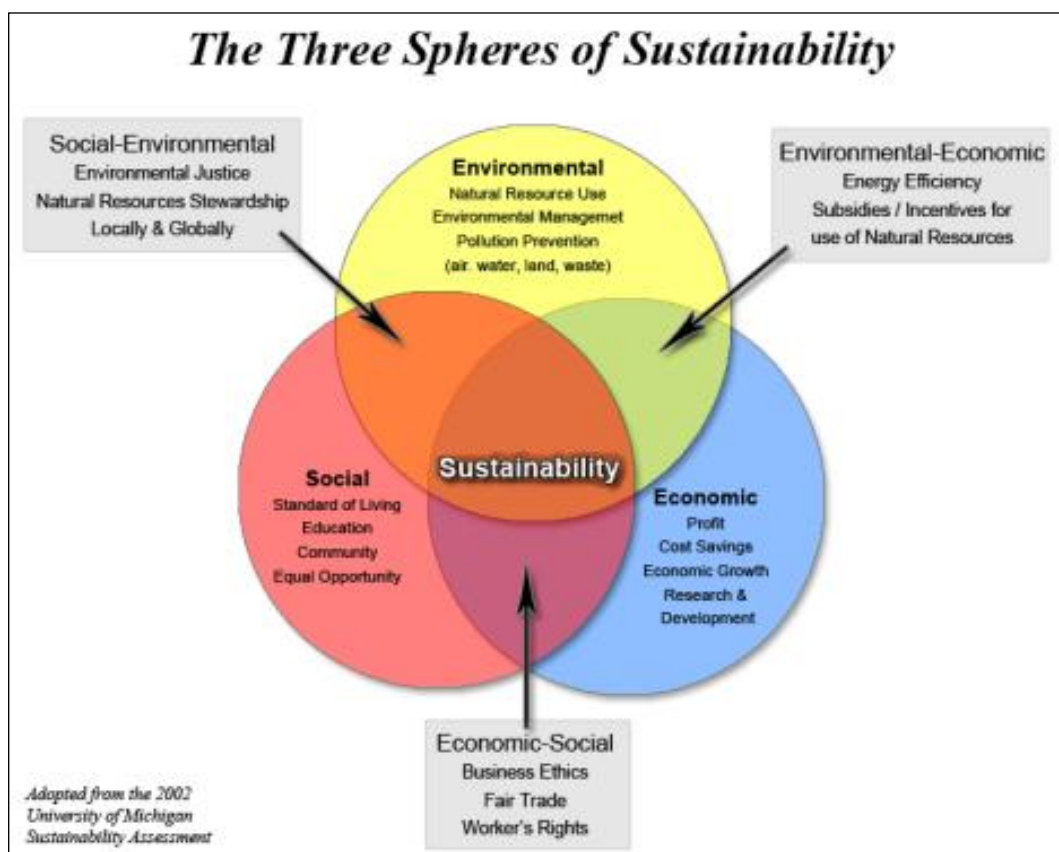


Figure 1: The Three Pillars of Sustainability (Source: Berwyn, 2010)

Environmental problems can no longer be seen as spatial or thematically definite phenomena, but with social and economic reference which puts emphasis on the recognition of the world as an interconnected system in which the three pillars of sustainability are dependent on each other (cf. Kunze, 2009a: 12 and Meadows, 2008). “Systems thinking is an essential part of schooling for sustainability. A systems approach helps young people understand the complexity of the world around them and encourages them to think in terms of relationships, connectedness, and context” (Center for Ecoliteracy, 2004-2013).

According to the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987: 43), "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

The non-binding, voluntarily implemented action plan of the United Nations, Agenda 21, also refers to sustainable development and was produced at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro 1992. This document identifies non-sustainable consumption and production patterns, mainly deriving from the lifestyles of industrialized countries, as main drivers for the negative impacts of global change (cf. Principle 8<sup>3</sup> in UNCSD, 1997.). Its consequences lead to suffering of many people, which in turn leads to social conflicts (cf. BMU, 1992: 22 in Kunze, 2009a: 12).

Therefore a change in lifestyle to support sustainable development is seen as a necessity and ecological problems are no longer seen isolated from cultural, economic and political coherences (cf. ebd.).

Summarising, “sustainable development is development that meets the present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, encompassing the three main principles – *“Environmental, Social and Economic”* (UNJSPF, 2005: 3 [italic in the original]).

According to Embacher et al. (2002: 38ff.) social sustainability can be defined by the following four key elements:

1. Basic (human) needs (quality and satisfaction of life)
2. Social resources

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<sup>3</sup> “To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies” (UNCSD, 1997)

3. Equal opportunities (distribution of income, Gender Empowerment Measures)

4. Participation

“The common scientific approaches to the social dimension of sustainability consist of discussing models and evaluating present institutions” (Kunze, 2009b). But these elements and indicators do not have the potential to analyse the underlying prevailing structure and cultural paradigms of institutions, which makes their revision based on sustainability requirements impossible (cf. Kunze, 2009a: 15). “[...] These methods [of discussing and evaluating] cannot evaluate or improve the underlying societal structures like the spatial and organizational differentiation of societal subsystems or the economic system” (Kunze, 2009b).

In general it can be said, that the basis for social entities needs to be constructed in a way “to take care of the integration, socialisation and motivation of its members, to appropriately react to changed environmental conditions” (cf. Parsons 1972 in Kopfmüller et al. 2001:67 in Kunze, 2009a:13).

Deriving from this introductory chapter and the demand for sustainable lifestyles, the question arose which social structure could build the basis for such a social dimension of sustainability. It also posed the question what the real potential of lifestyle change is and how certain approaches could be made transferrable to any social system.

## **2. Conceptual background**

### **2.1. Culture of sustainability**

The introductory part above rises the questions “How do the three pillars of sustainability come together in the daily routines of a society?” (Wagner, 2012a:58). At Research in Community<sup>4</sup> (RIC) and other institutions (e.g. Interventional Research and Cultural Sustainability in Austria) this societal way of living is called a “culture of sustainability” (cf. ebd.). Also in the national strategy of the German Federal Government (2002 in Wagner, 2012a: 58) one chapter is entitled “Developing a Culture of Sustainable Development” in which “sustainable development has a lot to do with the imaginative and creative vision of how we want to live in the future. In this sense, it is a creative task, which challenges the creative potential of our society on the basis of values, social models and our cultural tradition as a whole. “Culture in the broad sense refers to the aggregation of all social lifestyles and it encompasses how human beings treat themselves and each other, as well as how they treat the natural and the human-made world, [including] values, norms, attitudes, and worldviews, which in turn affect human lifestyles and daily routines” (Wagner, 2012a: 60).

According to Wagner (cf. 2012a, 63), guidelines are necessary for the process of reflection, negotiation, alignment, and the resulting implementation and evaluation to ensure the success of this organizational task.

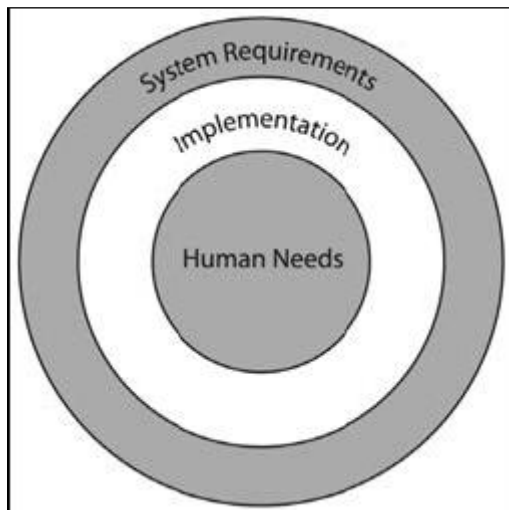
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<sup>4</sup> Research in Community – <http://www.researchincommunity.net/index.php?id=9&L=1> (08.10.2013)



## The Wheel of Sustainability

The challenge of a culture of sustainability is “to bring human needs and lifestyles in alignment with the system requirements of sustainable development” as they have been defined since the publication of the Brundtland Report (see Chapter 1.2) (Wagner, 2012: 63). The research at RIC developed the Wheel of



**Figure 2: The three levels of the Wheel of Sustainability (Source: Wagner, 2012a: 63)**

Sustainability (by Felix Wagner and Sandra Mende) in which this challenge is represented as three levels (see Figure 2). The intention of RIC is to support an illustration of the elements and the dynamics of a culture of sustainability and “thereby give guidance for the societal organizational process, which includes reflection, negotiation, implementation, and evaluation.” (cf. ebd.)

The specified content of the Wheel of Sustainability is displayed in Figure 3 and briefly described in the following section (cf. Wagner, 2012a: 64ff.):

The level of ‘System Requirements’ comprises the requirements of social sustainable development (including the three traditional areas of the sustainability debate: Environment, Economy and Social). The level of ‘Human Needs’ symbolizes “from the individual’s perspective, those socially shared human needs and living conditions necessary for a certain quality of life”. As displayed in Figure 3, these conditions are ‘Subsistence’, ‘Autonomy’, ‘Participation’, ‘Understanding’, ‘Well-Being’, ‘Activity’, ‘Connectedness’ and ‘Self-actualization’. Some of these aspects of human endeavours are amplified in Chapter 2.2. In between these two levels lies the level of ‘Implementation’, which corresponds to the “design process towards a culture of sustainability”. The research at RIC classifies six elements of social organization that can provide a connection between the levels of ‘System Requirements’ and of ‘Human Need’. Those elements are the following: ‘Social Structure and Living Together’ which focuses on human coexistence in terms of “dealing with each other, communication, rituals, and daily activities” as well as social cohesion referring to

cooperation and connectedness. ‘Technical and Physical’ includes all technical transformations (i.e., supply, mobility, information technology, etc.) and physical transformations (i.e., urban planning, product design, etc.). ‘Arts and Aesthetics’ refers to the “deliberate inclusion of creativity in the organizational process” (i.e., the artistic exploration and mediation of the complexity of sustainable systems, the relationship between humans and the environment). ‘Values and Norms: Collective Representations’ takes into account “the explicit and inherent values, norms, and ideals upon which social existence and action are based” (i.e., different worldviews, perspective on natural world, rules and patterns in society). ‘Education and Knowledge’ focuses on the exchange of transformational knowledge on sustainable lifestyles and last ‘Institutional and Political’ deals with the question “Which institutions and what kinds of governance promote sustainability?”

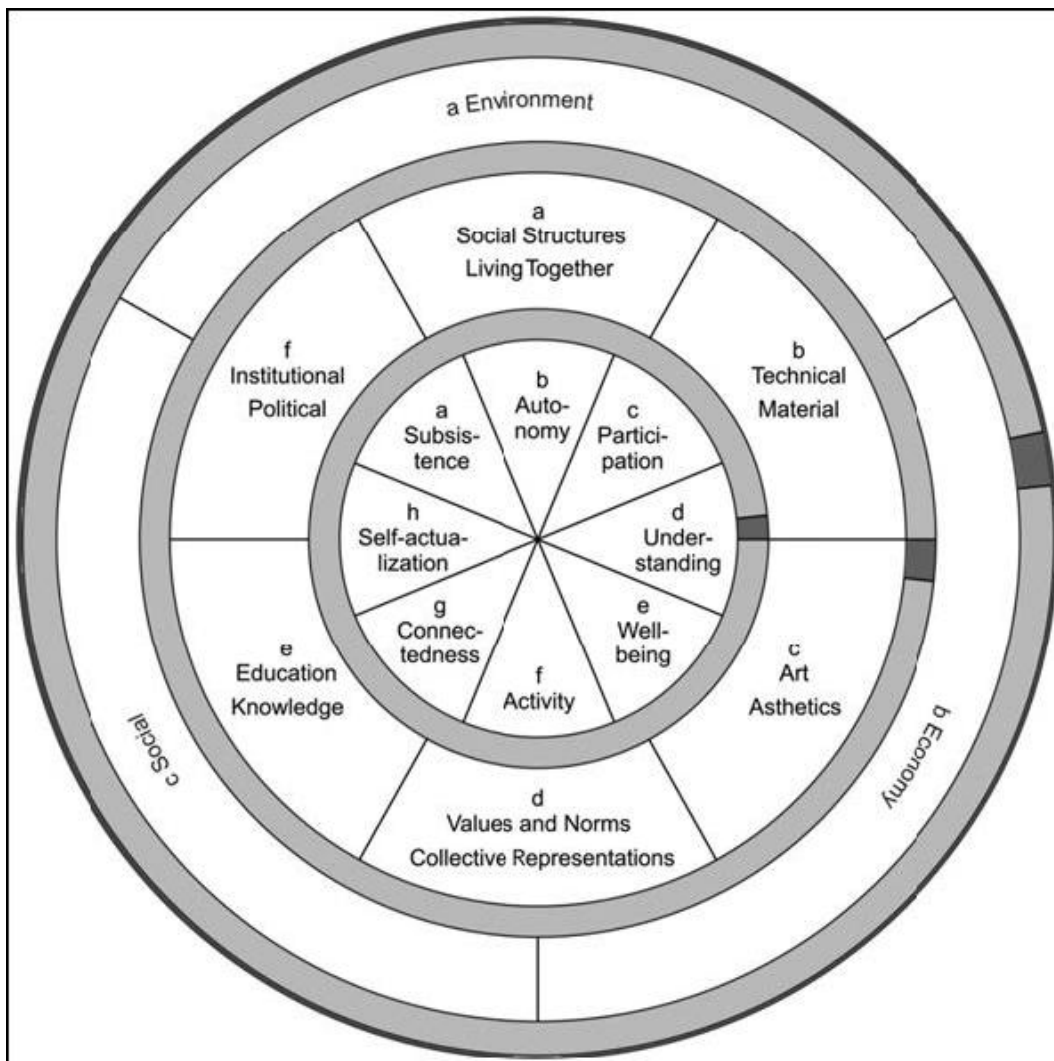


Figure 3: Conceptualization of the Wheel of Sustainability (Source: Wagner, 2012a: 65)

Wagner (2012a: 66) adds that “the three levels are considered flexible with respect to one another” which highlights the option of creating new combinations “which can provide impetus for reflection”. Amongst others, he gives the following example to clarify the model: “The combination of “connectedness” from the inner circle, “social structure/living together” from the middle ring, and “environment” from the outer ring is a thematically very appropriate template, because ecovillages are a perfect example of this” (cf. ebd.).

## **2.2. Liveable sustainability**

To clarify the dimension of the term ‘sustainable lifestyle’, Kunze (2009a: 28) researched what the criteria for a sustainable lifestyle are and what the difficulties are that lead to non-sustainable actions. She thereby elaborated an “initial *set of social-sustainable principles*” (Kunze, 2009a: 51, 184 [italic in the original]) in which she debates about sustainability itself, individual and structural barriers, basic social and community building processes, as well as spatial formations and settlement planning (cf. Kunze, 2009a: 28f.). The Wheel of Sustainability (Figure 3) also displayed several “socially shared human needs and living conditions” (inner circle) which, according to Wagner (2012a: 64), are “necessary for a certain quality of life”. These conditions are closely related to the principles of Kunze (2009a: 51).

In the following subchapters, the different principles and human endeavours that have the potential to positively influence socio-ecological sustainable behaviour are outlined and explained. When talking about positive influences on socio-ecological sustainability, clearly some of the existing barriers also need to be addressed.

### **2.2.1. Autonomy and self-respect**

According to Scherhorn (1997 in Kunze, 2009a: 29), only autonomous people can develop an intrinsically motivated, ecologically responsible behaviour because they also acknowledge self-determination to their fellow human beings. The Wheel of Sustainability (Figure 3) also considers ‘Autonomy’ as a human need. Out of this position a feeling of empathy and affinity can be developed. People with heteronomous conviction have restricted access to their personal needs and

therefore to others as well and to the requirements that are needed to act in an ecologically sustainable way (cf. ebd).

Furthermore, according to Kilchenmann (1991 in Kunze, 2009a: 29), there is only a small amount of people who have a respectful attitude towards their body. “Most people ruin [their body]” (Kunze, 2009a: 29 [own translation]) and people have a similar indifferent relationship to the environment as to their body. This leads to non-sustainable actions and the destruction of the human environment. The discrepancy between environmental awareness and the actual environmental acting (also mentioned in Chapter 1.1) does not only lie within thinking and acting but within the missing connection of both (cf. ebd.). According to the family therapist and author Jesper Juul, this aspect can also be related to family life in which most people propose to oneself to “treat others the way oneself wants to be treated” (Juul, 2004: 20 [own translation]). But “since generations there is the existing problem that most of the people haven’t got things straightened out with themselves and treat themselves in a bad way”. “In [Juuls] experience this has nothing to do with laziness or individual immaturity but with a kind of collective immaturity – it seems that our psychological and social development cannot keep pace with the development of the world” (cf. ebd. [own translation]).

### **2.2.2. Connectedness and non-dualistic spirituality**

This chapter revisits the relevant statement in the chapter above which points out the discrepancy between environmental awareness and the actual environmental acting (cf. Kunze, 2009a: 29).

The qualified engineer in land-use and nature conservation and wilderness educator Elke Loepthien<sup>5</sup> addresses in her thesis<sup>6</sup> the deep relation to the natural world and the integration of this connectedness (cf. Loepthien, 2011: 18f.). Furthermore she debates about its role in history and also outlines the consequences of separation, isolation and dualism as opposite to connectedness which became the prevailing and determining values in culture (cf. ebd.).

The scientist René Descartes (“I think, therefore I am”) coined the term of dualism of mind and matter, in which both is to be seen as something separated

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<sup>5</sup> Circlewise – Zentrum für Verbindungskultur [Centre for a culture of connectedness – own translation] <http://www.verbindungskultur.org/> (25.09.2013)

<sup>6</sup> Based on the diploma thesis of Elke Loepthien (2011): *Verbundenheit als Aspekt einer Ökologie des Lernens* [Connectedness as Aspect of an Ecology of Learning].

from each other. This was accompanied by the separation of body and soul (cf. Descartes, 1641 and Jung, 2011:10). “With this perception; sense, meaning and awareness and therefore ethics and spirituality take a backseat” (Jung, 2011: 10 [own translation]). Capra describes this ecological, cultural, political, scientific and moral crisis of the modern worlds as a “crisis of perception” (cf. Lüpke, 2007 in Loepthien, 2011: 19 [own translation]) followed by Gregory Bateson who said that “the major problems in the world are the results of the difference between how nature works and the way people think. What is there about our way of perceiving, that makes us not see the delicate interdependencies in an ecological system that give it its integrity? We don’t see them and therefore we break them” (Bateson, N., 2011).

The “desecration of the world” therefore forms the basis for technological-industrial destruction of the natural world, with which we are confronted now (cf. Lüpke, 2000 in Loepthien, 2011: 24). With the assumption that humankind seemed superior to nature and that the mind seemed to have a higher value than the body, “men felt authorized to dominate women, whites felt legitimised to own black people, noblemen felt justified to rule over farmers” (cf. ebd.). This resulted in centuries which were characterised of racism, class domination, and sexism. In place of nature; dominance, control and exploitation became the leading values of western humanism (cf. ebd.). “This separation-myth displaces humankind into an isolation, divisiveness and fear to which the reaction is always the same: defence, control, competitive behaviour to gain security, stability and shelter in a world that humankind is foreign to and to which it – mythologically - doesn’t feel related” (Lüpke, 2000 in Loepthien, 2011: 24f. [own translation]).

According to Macy (2013), today’s danger lies within the repression generated by fear, which is part of a psychological process of defence in relation to environmental destruction. But through allowing ourselves to feel the pain that is created by facing the world’s destruction, this at the same time allows us to open up to a much greater comprehension of life.

The core of this new viewpoint “lies in perceiving the world in a bigger living context” [own translation]. With this perception, which incorporates a holistic and non-dualistic spirituality, the separating line between the individual self and the surrounding world becomes indistinct just as between god and human, internal and external, heaven and earth. (cf. Macy, 2013)

Wagner (2012a: 64) also includes ‘connectedness’ into the Wheel of Sustainability and associates it with a living condition that is necessary for certain quality of life.

The above described separation-paradigm can also be found in the current economic system. Jung states that “our economic system generates the opposite of quality of life” (Jung, 2004: 2 in Loepthien, 2011: 25) and the economist Daly and the social theologian Cobb point out that “the dominating economic theory is build on the assumption that we are all independent individuals, whose only relation to each other is the market” with values such as the pursuit of profit and competition (Cobb in Lüpke, 2007 and Felber, 2010: 10f. in Loepthien, 2011: 25). A successful economy has to be based on the same behavioural qualities and values that also make our human and ecological relations work which are confidence building, appreciation, cooperation, honesty, listening, empathy, solidarity and sharing (cf. Felber, 2010: 10f in Loepthien, 2011: 26). According to Felber (cf. ebd.) it is a catastrophe that “the legislature favours the wrong guiding star – it agrees with it and therefore supports values that we all suffer from”.

Real freedom is not arbitrariness but optimal realisation of the human potential, which can be realised through a respectful and vibrant relation to the natural environment, to other people and to ourselves” (Steiner, 2004 in Loepthien, 2011: 26 [own translation]).

### **2.2.3. Sufficiency and abundance**

When talking about sustainable lifestyles, often the question for sufficiency comes into play. In the field of sustainability research, sufficiency is understood as „lifestyle and economic behaviour that puts an end to overconsumption of goods and therefore of substances and energy” (Winterfeld, 2007 in Kunze, 2009: 30). Many people would interfere with the argument that sufficiency refers to reduction in consumption and is square with losing the quality of life (cf. Kunze 2009a: 30; Kunze, 2004: 23). But nowadays and also in older studies (cf. Hirsch, 1987 and Kaltenborn 1997) the aspect emerges that over consumption does not lead to an improvement of the living quality but only serves for the enhancement of the personal status in society. This would imply that the satisfaction of immaterial needs such as social and psychological contentment and self-realization are relevant not only for a sustainable way of living, but also for an

improved quality of life, (cf. Kunze, 2009a: 30). Focusing on the quality of life, Wagner (2012a: 65) also includes sufficiency (respectively ‘subsistence’) and ‘self-actualization’ into the Wheel of Sustainability and defines these two elements as a human need and living condition.

Another factor that influences the actions on sustainability is the access to resources (cf. Kunze, 2009a: 31). The “tragedy of the commons<sup>7</sup>” (cf. Hardin, 1968) is relevant for the social question for sustainable lifestyles and the research concerning this topic shows that the communication between the different users of the resources has the potential to improve the behaviour of the users (cf. ebd.).

Kunze (2009a: 31) therefore also captures social ordinal and control structures as socio-ecological criteria for a sustainable lifestyle in which the responsible people for cause and effect are treated in a congruent way.

Furthermore Kunze debates about basic social and community building processes in which a voluntarily and deliberately originated commitment of the actors can be a constitutive force to support ecological sustainable behaviour (cf. Kunze, 2009a: 33). And finally she discusses findings about spatial formations of social movements and principles in settlement planning. “The principles consist of such elements as flexible rules of democratic governance and closely clustered, associated basic elements of living” (Kunze, 2009b: 2).

Important aspects that are incorporated in these processes and principles and which can be found in the level of ‘Human Needs’ in the Wheel of Sustainability, are ‘activity’, ‘participation’ and ‘understanding’ which, according to Wagner (2012a: 64f.), lead to human well-being and contentment.

Strünke (2000) examined the above mentioned supposed connection between autonomy and ecological behaviour and concluded that this correlation can be observed in communities (cf. Wagner 2012b:88). Also Kunze (2009a: 184) was conducting empirical research to observe the socio-ecological principles, such as “flexible rules of democratic governance and closely clustered, associated basic elements of living”, in action. She came across “the growing international movement of *intentional communities* and *ecovillages*” (cf. Kunze, 2009b: 2 [italic in the original]). Furthermore Wagner (2012a: 66) agrees with these

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<sup>7</sup> The tragedy of the commons is the depletion of a shared resource by individuals, acting independently and rationally according to each one's self-interest, despite their understanding that depleting the common resource is contrary to the group's long-term best interests (Hardin, 1968).

observations and the research of RIC manifests that “the social form of a community, [meets] human needs for connectedness with others and the natural environment. Studies have shown life in communities is significantly more ecologically sustainable than the usual individual households” (cf. Tinsley et al., 2006 and Simon, 2004).

Concluding, Paul Raskin, founder of the Great Transition Initiative and author of the influential essay ‘Great Transition: The Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead’ (2002: 52ff.) emphasises these aspects with the statement that social movements play a central role in the transition to a sustainable global society (cf. ebd.). Schehr (1997) argues that “contemporary intentional communities are indicative of a social movement, seeking as they do a progressive redefinition of fundamental aspects of politics, economics, and culture”.



### 3. Scientific approach

#### 3.1. The potential of collaborative research

The term ‘community’ evokes dichotomous feelings; on the one hand there is the irrational longing for fellowship and affiliation but on the other hand there are anxieties to be manipulated or to lose personal individuality within a community (cf. Kunze, 2007: 35). “[The] internal conflict between longing for and scepticism about community characterizes individualized societies” (Kunze, 2012b: 55).

According to Kunze (2007: 35) this discrepancy is evidence that this so far undiscovered field of intentional communities is of concern. There is missing experience and knowledge which can liberate this field from irrationality (cf. ebd.).

According to Lüpke (2012: 73) the research of ecovillages started “at a time of cultural evolution, when the purely materialistic, profit-oriented society had clearly approached its long-foreseen limits.” As long as the fossil fuel-based growth model was successful, the alternative path was provoking the connotation of “counterdevelopment”. “Ecovillages seemed to be almost ‘third-world islands’ in the middle of ‘oceans of unlimited possibilities’” (cf. ebd.). “But times of crisis open up the possibility to change perspectives and to look beyond the limits of the current paradigm” (Lüpke, 2012: 73).

The interest in organic agriculture, sustainable energies, alternative medicine, meditation, traditional knowledge and community has increased rapidly (cf. Dawson, 2009: 19). Those are exactly the areas and topics which have been developed and explored by ecovillages and community projects. So after “decades of ‘invisibility’ and irrelevance”, ecovillage projects are finally approached by conventional organisations and taken seriously as discussion partners (cf. ebd.).

When the Global Ecovillage Network<sup>8</sup> (GEN) was founded, the objective was to build an alternative to the mainstream: “green islands, rescue boats, places of hope in a world of destructive capitalism” (Joubert, 2009: 15). The Eurotopia directory (see also Eurotopia, 2009) had the goal to establish ecovillages, as fast as possible and as many as possible. Today people are longing for more community sense in their direct environment and for more voice. The role of ecovillages and

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<sup>8</sup> Global Ecovillage Network – <http://gen.ecovillage.org/> (08.10.2013)

communities as ‘outsiders’ is changing towards more self-sufficiency concerning food, water and energy supply on all levels: in rural municipalities, in urban quarters, in regions (cf. ebd.). According to Joubert (2009: 16), the main function of existing ecovillages today is to “serve as a place of inspiration and holistic education” by applying the developed principles to the social context. “It is not about establishing alternatives anymore – it is about the transformation of the whole” (ebd.). Iris Kunze also stresses out that the main value of intentional communities is not seen in their ecological practices but in their experimental scope of development – “there is a need for fields of socio-ecological transformation” (cf. Kunze, 2007: 34 [own translation]).

Recommendations concerning the reduction of the ecological footprint, such as restricting of consumer goods, of mobility, energy consumption as well as vegetarian diet are difficult to apply for the masses and they haven’t led to any change so far (cf. ebd.). In her dissertation about Social Innovations, Iris Kunze (2012b: 52; 2009a) defines intentional communities as “social movements and experimental learning fields” which, by now, are able to “deliver first experiences of liveable sustainability” based on social-ecological and cooperative ways of living. (cf. Kunze, 2009b).

According to the chairman of “Community research” at the Department of Sociology (2013), University of Münster, Germany, Matthias Grundmann, intentional communities can be considered as “adequate solutions for socio-ecological development” and serve as ample examples for the “transformation of societies characterised by individualisation to ecological living space”. As pioneers of real change, ecovillages reveal the materials, mechanisms, and ideals behind the Great Transformation<sup>9</sup>. They demonstrate that a good life with a low ecological footprint is possible, even in industrialized countries (cf. Tinsley et al., 2006 in Andreas et al., 2012: 5).

According to the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU, 2011: 7 in Wagner, 2012a: 62) a constitutive state and pioneers of change, which produce social-ecological innovations in social niches are the key players for the Great Transformation. “Therefore, a combination of ‘good governance’ models (i.e.,

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<sup>9</sup> The WBGU calls this “incipient powerful structural change as the ‘Great Transformation’ from fossil to post-fossil society – comparable to the transition from agricultural society to coal-based mechanisation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century” (D.I.E., 2011). The Great Transformation includes deep changes of infrastructure; production processes, regulatory systems and lifestyles, as well as a cooperation of politics, society, science and economy (cf. WBGU, 2011:1).

top-down) and the commitment and participation of civil society (i.e., bottom-up) is necessary” (Wagner, 2012a: 62).

Kunze (2007: 35) calls for social research that forms a bridge between society and science which is based on a different worldview (cf. also Lüpke, 2012: 75 and Macy et al., 2007: 27 and 2013). “The bridge should consist of research that not only sees people as objects but as equal partners and not only illustrates the perceived reality but outlines possibilities of designing. Additionally the ‘liveable results of research’ from communities should not only be described but also utilized in a constructive way and be linked to other fields” (Kunze, 2007: 35 [own translation]).

Another newly upcoming inter- and transdisciplinary research network which was created to promote research on and education for “pioneers of change” is Research in Community (RIC). “RIC has given itself the goal of building a network to investigate and promote a culture of sustainability” (Wagner, 2012c:58) (see also Chapter 2.1) and hence developed the Wheel of Sustainability which was already described in the same chapter (cf. Wagner 2012a). This network in particular focuses on those who integrate ecological, social, and economic sustainability into a communal lifestyle and who are interested in working more closely with scientists and researchers (cf. Wagner, 2012c: 95). RIC was founded in 2007 and in 2011 acquired non-profit status and is establishing itself as an institution. The network has extended their focus beyond ecovillages and intentional communities. They started incorporating other social and ecological projects, such as Transition Town initiatives<sup>10</sup> (cf. ebd.).

RIC created a database of all ecovillage research that has been conducted so far in order to facilitate research efforts and “to overcome the clear deficit in the evaluation of ecovillages’ performance and their relevance to other social contexts”. (cf. Wagner, 2012b: 89 and Wagner. 2012c: 96).

As already used several times as reference in this thesis, Iris Kunze, who studied intentional communities in a seven-year-long research, designed a “socio-ecological transformation experiment which is meant for constant further development” (Kunze, 2007: 35; Kunze, 2012b: 50; as well as Kunze, 2009a).

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<sup>10</sup> Transition Towns are existing communities that are trying to make the transition toward more sustainable lifestyles and resilience, especially in response to climate change and peak oil (cf. Wagner, 2012c: 96). See <http://www.transitionnetwork.org> for more information (05.07.2013).

Kunze defines these transformation experiments as “terrains of resistance<sup>11</sup>” (cf. also Fischetti 2008; Lockar 2007; Meijering et al. 2007 in Wagner, 2012b: 88) as well as places of development of alternative, socio-ecological lifestyles and structures. At the point where a project with elements of self-organisation is stable, the contact to the external needs to be maintained to extravert practices of the project. Through mutual dialogs, both sides could profit from this collaborative research (cf. Kunze, 2007: 35).

Media, science and politics are searching for approaches and models for a transformation of society (cf. Stengel, 2009: 9).

The latest collaborative action between science and society in Germany is the project “Models for sustainable living” which was implemented on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. It is sponsored by the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) and the German Federal Environmental Agency (UBA) for a period of two years. The project is conducted by the Global Ecovillage Network of Europe<sup>12</sup> (GEN-Europe) in cooperation with the European Business Council for Sustainable Energy (e5). The first thematic strand is hosted by GEN Europe and will introduce ecovillages as models for ecological, economic, social and cultural sustainability to the public. Via internet presence, flyer and educational events, GEN-Europe itself and several ecovillages in Germany and their concepts are presented. Additionally, an ecovillage database and an interactive online map are created (cf. GEN-Europe, 2013).

The second thematic strand “Sustainable Lifestyles and Commons”, held by e5, will focus on the field of the commons economy and bring together actors from ecovillages, the commons movement and business in Germany to look for potential technological, social or economic innovations. The intention is to create an atmosphere for mutual understanding, in which actors from these different areas may develop together ways of mainstreaming sustainable lifestyles (cf. ebd.).

This chapter is concluded best with the words of Wagner (2012a: 62): “Science and research can act as both a facilitator and a catalyst by conducting interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary transformation research”. And it seems that this mutual potential has finally been accepted and actuated.

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<sup>11</sup> “space of resistance” as part of the “countercultural movement” (cf. Meijering, 2006: 16; Wagner, 2012b: 88)

<sup>12</sup> GEN Europe - <http://www.gen-europe.org/> (16.09.2013)

### 3.2. Rational of the study

The above described results justify the focus on intentional communities in this thesis, as communities supposedly are the places in which the necessary changes for a transformation to sustainability take place and where the above mentioned principles and aspects are implemented which, according to Kunze (2009a), Lüpke (2012:74), Macy et al. (2007:27) and Wagner (2012a: 62), have the potential to lead to sustainable ways of living.

Personal interest and preliminary considerations in the field of intentional communities and sustainable lifestyles led to my personal assumption that a change in consciousness and hence behaviour change is the first priority for liveable sustainability. A barrier for this approach is the “widely held perception of well-being as intimately linked to a high level of material consumption in the dominant consumer culture of the twentieth century” (SPREAD, 2012: 10). But according to the psychologist Abraham Maslow (1987) who developed the hierarchy of needs<sup>13</sup>, the satisfaction of material needs (psychological needs) lies right at the bottom, followed by safety needs and belonging whereas self-actualisation forms the tip of the pyramid. My above mentioned assumption is also substantiated through the “socially shared human needs and living conditions” that have the potential to lead to socio-ecological sustainability and are considered “necessary for a certain quality of life” (Wagner, 2012a:64 and cf. Kunze, 2009a: 51). These conditions are listed in Chapter 2.1 and are further explained in Chapter 2.2.

According to Lüpke (2012: 74) and Macy et al. (2013 and 2007: 27) there are three different stages of change towards sustainability and by focusing on the current discussions and approaches towards the Great Transformation, humanity is already “in the very midst of that change”. Lüpke (2012: 74) argues that what humanity is experiencing at the moment “are the symptoms of change, the elements of crisis that always occur when a system goes through a major transition”. The first stage of change “consists of all actions that slow down the process of destruction and collapse”, the second entails “the analysis and the understanding of the structural causes of the present crisis and the creation of alternative patterns”; and the third stage is “a fundamental shift in values and worldviews”. This shift in values and worldview can

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<sup>13</sup> The hierarchy of needs (acc. to Maslow) –  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s\\_hierarchy\\_of\\_needs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs) (01.10.2013)

be realized through “adopting a different perspective on reality [and] a new self-perception as humans [which includes] new values regarding society, the environment, and future generations. And “even new forms of spirituality” support the realization of this shift (Lüpke, 2012: 74, cf. also Kunze, 2007: 35 and 2010b and Macy, 2013). “It is in this third and most fundamental stage that whether we can transform our unsustainable society into a life-sustaining culture will be finally determined” (Lüpke, 2012: 75 and cf. with Chapter 2.1).

This supports the ‘conditions’ outlined in Chapter 2.2 and especially the statements of Juul (cf. 2008: 20) and Kilchenmann (cf. 1991 in Kunze, 2009a: 29) in Chapter 2.2.1, who represent the point of view that self-respect and psychological and social development, in line with the development of the world, are two factors of great importance.

### **3.3. Objectives and research questions**

The topic, respectively the field of research, within this thesis aims to contribute to the scientific sustainability research by addressing the social dimension of sustainability. The results of this thesis are supposed to build on the collaborative research between society and science.

Of great support for the preparation and conduct of the thesis was particularly the dissertation of Iris Kunze (2009a) which had the objective to “generate *transformative knowledge* towards the *social dimension of sustainability*” (Kunze, 2009b: 1 [italic in the original]). Her approach was the compilation of an “initial *set of social-sustainable principles*” which were deduced from various aspects described in Chapter 2.2. After empirical research in the field of intentional communities and ecovillages, in which these principles were found, Kunze developed the theoretical-derived principles further and identified “five areas of social-sustainable experiences, practices and learning processes” which were then generalised in the form of “*transformative knowledge* [which] is translated to be applied to any kind of social formation” (cf. Kunze, 2009a, 184) [italic in the original]):

1. *Motivation (Objectives of sustainability, intentions and experiences)*
2. *Reconciliation and synthesis between individual freedom and social cooperation*
3. *Flexible-responsive principles of organisation*

#### 4. *Capacity of development*

#### 5. *Social-ecological construction of space and settlement*

During the research semester, I spent three months (December 2012 till March 2013) in the Community Los Portales in Andalusia, Spain. The matter of interest was to analyse the lifestyle within this Community and to put a special focus on its potential regarding the aspects of sustainability and transferability. The “*transformative knowledge*” elaborated by Kunze (2009a) served as guideline throughout the analysis and evaluation of the Community.

A special attention during the analysis was not only put on the ecological sustainability but on the social sustainability within the Community, respectively the ‘Human Development’ which forms “the central theme of [their] evolution” (Kevin Lluch, in litt, 02.11.2012) (for more information, see Chapter 4.3 and Chapter 6).

In general, Meijering (2012: 39) stresses out that “besides ecological sustainability, [...] communities [generally] also strive for communal sustainability, which refers to sharing one’s life with other people and practicing a common ideology together”. In Los Portales “searching for personal growth, is the motor that everyone needs to have if he/she want to be part of the community” (Expert 7:35). The essence of the group is the manifestation of the individual self in all its aspects in life, a manifestation in its highest potential. This is their reason for being and why this Community was founded (cf. Expert 12:43). In Chapter 4 and Chapter 6, these aspects are explained in detail.

The interview sessions and personal participation in the dream work, which represents the main tool for personal development in Los Portales, profoundly contributed to my understanding of the Community’s ‘Human Development’. This understanding is accountable for the change of the focus from ecological sustainability to social sustainability. It fundamentally contributed to the recognition that personal development is the key element on the path to a Great Transformation. The social sustainability, respectively the communal sustainability forms the decisive aspect why Los Portales was chosen as the case study. It is in my personal interest and the objective of this thesis to demonstrate that the consciousness and social coherence, generated through personal development (respectively ‘Human Development’ as practiced in Los Portales) could represent the missing link for the facilitation of the Great Transformation

(cf. Lüpke 2012: 74 and Macy, 2007: 27 & 2013 in Chapter 3.2). Furthermore it is in my personal interest to highlight further benefits deriving from community life, other than just the improvement of ecological sustainability.

### **Objectives**

The objective of the thesis is not to evaluate the Community Los Portales, but to assess the potential of the Community, regarding the following aspects:

- Emphasise the importance of personal development (change in consciousness and hence behaviour change) as motivation for socio-ecological sustainability
- Facilitate the “third stage of change” (Lüpke, 2012: 74) by displaying possibilities to achieve a shift in values and worldview (as found in Los Portales) through:
  - “adopting a different perspective on reality”
  - “a new self-perception as humans”
    - “new values regarding society, the environment, and future generations”
  - “and even new forms of spirituality”
- Extract sustainable principles and possible approaches of community life in Los Portales that can be transferred to any community or social system including families, neighbourhoods, municipalities, and business networks.

### **Research questions**

To assess the above mentioned objective the following research questions have been developed and analysed:

- In what way does the ‘Human Development’ in Los Portales has a positive influence on the socio-ecological sustainable behaviour of the community members?
- Perception of vulnerability in the face of global change amongst the community members of Los Portales
- Can possible positive aspects and principles of community life (small-scale) be transferred to any social system?



## **4. Intentional Communities and the case study Los Portales**

### **4.1. Intentional Communities**

#### Definition and numbers

Grundmann (2006 in Kunze, 2009a, p. 53) clarifies the difference between ‘intentional communities’ and ‘natural communities’; in which intentional communities are “deliberately formed through out an oppositional attitude towards society to experimentally explore new ways of coexistence between people and the environment”. A “common coexistence, a shared living environment and as a consequence thereof, the lifestyle” are the linking elements of the groups identity. ‘Natural communities’ tend to accept a subordinate role to social aspects of action whilst ‘intentional communities’ aim at an intervention in and of the organisation of society” (ebd.) [own translation].

Gering (2012) elaborated the Intentional Community Encyclopaedia, in which two lists of existing communities with only more than 100 residents are provided. It also gives a brief summary of each community. According to this Encyclopaedia (cf. ebd.), in the year 2012 there exists a total of “some 314 umbrella organizations and networks, about 3,986 individual communities and some half a million people living together”. In the dissertation of Kunze (2009) the numbers of the year 2005 were published which summed up to 208 networks, in which 3782 intentional communities are captured. Hence a number of 367.000 people were listed as members of intentional communities. This emphasizes the statement of Marks (2012) that “at no time in history have so many people lived communally and never has there been such a variety of forms of communal living”. The rough numbers are much higher and a knowledgeable estimate is 12,000 communal groups in the world (cf. ebd.). The statement above refers solely to communities and not to the modern communal way of living in families or monasteries. To the contrary, the lifestyle in single households is a phenomenon caused by individualism and there have never been so many single households as today (cf. Jacobsen et al., 2012).

A comparable document for only Europe is the Eurotopia (2009) directory which provides information about existing and newly founded communities within Germany and Europe.

### Organisations and networks

Probably the two most familiar networks are the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and the Fellowship of Intentional Communities (FIC).

According to the FIC (2013), *“The Fellowship is increasing public awareness of existing and newly forming communities. We offer information and referrals for those who are actively seeking or simply curious about, alternate lifestyles for themselves and their families.”*[Italic in the original]

The idea of the founders of GEN was to establish a network in which the vision of a functioning different lifestyle, composed of various facets, was presented. According to the co-founder of GEN, Ross Jackson “this network was a necessary requirement for the success of a global strategy” (cf. Richter, 2000 [own translation]). He also realizes, that “the problems that are connected with the intention to live more sustainable, are too complex and too diverse, to be solved with a traditional top-down perspective. A general complete solution could not possibly consider the huge differences between north and south, city, suburbs and countryside, neither the different cultural traditions. The one ideal ecovillage, applicable to all ecovillages, cannot exist but the diversity is what counts” (cf. Richter, 2000 [own translation])

Over the years the GEN has changed its focus from the structure of a village “[...] which is small enough for people to know and be known by each other in the community, and in which each member of the community feels he or she is able to influence the community’s direction. [...]” (cf. Bates, 2003: 423f. in Kunze, 2009a: 55f.) to a model that is “[...] going beyond today’s dichotomy of urban and rural settlements and representing widely applicable models for the planning and reorganisation of human settlements in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Findhorn Network News No. 32, 2002:18 in Kunze, 2009a: 56, cf. Dawson, 2006). During the conference of GEN (Ecovillages - New Frontiers for Sustainability) in October 2005, the members of ecovillages were even described as “research, education and demonstration centres of sustainable lifestyles” (cf. Kunze, 2009a: 56).

The GEN also developed the Community Sustainability Assessment (CSA) which is “[a] concept of sustainability auditing to provide measuring rods for individuals and for existing villages and communities to compare their current status with ideal goals for ecological, social, and spiritual sustainability” (GEN, 2013b). The

CSA was also applied to the Community Los Portales. The method is explained in Chapter 5.3.3 and the results are displayed in Chapter 0.

As this thesis focuses on the outcomes of the data assessment of the Community Los Portales in Spain the Iberian Ecovillage Network<sup>14</sup> (RIE), might be of interest.

## **4.2. Community Los Portales**

The Finca Los Portales lies in the foothills of the Serra Morena, some 50km north of Sevilla. The property covers an area of 200ha, which are mainly remaining in its natural state. The main vegetation type is holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) and rock-rose (*Cistus ladaniferus*), additionally wild herds of deer and wild boars are frequent visitors. The rocky and dry soil, mixed with volcanic rock, is crossed by some seasonal rivers and mainly serves as pasture for the herd of goats, consisting of around 80 animals. Furthermore, the scrubland supplies the community with firewood during winter time.

The community planted several fruit and olive trees, as well as other trees that provide shade during the hot summer.

There are five big greenhouses, one seed bed, as well as a big vegetable garden on the Finca in which seasonal vegetables, aromatic herbs; medicinal plants and strawberries are cultivated. Furthermore the Community covers its necessity with respect to hay and cereal (an old variety of wheat), through their own harvest and they produce their own wine, honey and olive oil which is manufactured with an on-site mill.

The Finca is not connected to the electric grid; therefore the energy supply is based on solar power. Since recently, a small water turbine supports the energy supply.

The majority of the constructions on site were built by the community members themselves; with the initial priority “to give sufficiently comfortable shelter for all the participants in the project”. Today the Community strives for a more ecological way of construction, based on organic and more energy-efficient materials. (cf. Los Portales, 2013a). There is a big communal house, with a huge patio in the middle, and three additionally houses within 600m distance. Most of the residents live in the communal house. Whereas a few residents are divided on

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<sup>14</sup> Red Ibérica de Ecoaldeas – <http://rie.ecovillage.org/> (01.10.2013)

the two additional houses and the third one is reserved for Woofers and visitors. The meals are partaken communally in the big kitchen which also holds the dining-room.

Los Portales is a project which consists of around 40 members (currently including 9 children) permanently living in the Community. The main languages are Spanish and French. An interesting aspect is the interaction between city and countryside, as the Community splits up into 25 people who are living on the Finca Los Portales (located in the countryside close to Sevilla) and 15 people who are living together in two houses, in Spain's capital Madrid.

In Madrid the Community founded a formation and therapy centre "Crealliance<sup>15</sup>" in which "teachers, therapists and artists integrate their experience and activities with the objective to share and offer information, formation and therapies for human sustainability" (Crealliance, 2013; own translation). Additionally the Community established the "Bolingen Institute<sup>16</sup>", which represents a centre for communication in which languages can be learned in a creative way.

Until recently, the community members interchanged between Madrid and the Finca very often. Almost all of the community members have spent several years living and working in the Community in Madrid and on the Finca Los Portales. For the ones living on the Finca now, the time in Madrid was an important period of their life, connecting with society, taking part in the struggle for work, gaining money and feeling valuable just on one's own behalf. This period is understood as an enrichment and progress concerning personal development (cf. Resident Finca 1:10). The majority of people with younger children are also living on the Finca, as the Community places great importance on the contact with nature, especially for children (cf. Los Portales, 2013e).

According to a resident on the Finca (13:48ff.), there is no frequent interchange between the residents of the Community in Madrid and the Finca anymore, only frequent interaction based on visits and seminar activities on both sides. The people now living in the Community in Madrid have all voluntarily decided on living in the city and vice versa.

The Community was founded in 1984 in Brussels, Belgium and then moved to southern Spain. "Thirty years might be nothing in the scale of the evolution of the

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<sup>15</sup> Formation and Therapy Center Crealliance – [www.crealliance.net](http://www.crealliance.net) and [www.creasalud.net](http://www.creasalud.net) (10.08.2013)

<sup>16</sup> Communication Centre Bolingen Institute – <http://www.bolingeninstitute.com/> (23.10.2103)

cosmos, but in the scale of durability of communal projects in our modern society, we can say without false modesty, that it is a lot of years”(Lluch, 2012; p. 40, [own translation]). The Community formed itself around a therapist and Jungian analyst and dedicated itself to a growing commitment to internal work, to a path of self-knowledge and personal development (cf. Lluch, 2012; p. 40, [own translation]). “The **community** was conceived not as an end in itself but as a **medium for creation and evolution**” (Los Portales, 2013b [emphasis in the original]). The objective of the Community was to create an innovative way of living which includes the following fields of action: Organic Agriculture, Cooking and Health, Education and Pedagogy, Art and Creation as well as ‘Human Development’ (cf. Los Portales, 2013c). “Definitely a commitment to personal and global development and harmony through respect to oneself, others and Mother Earth” (Creasalud, 2012; own translation).

The above mentioned five different field of action contain the following aspects:

#### Agriculture

Los Portales practices **organic and biodynamic agriculture** as one of the main objectives of the participants is “to honour and **respect the earth** that welcomes [them]”. They have the “desire to produce [their] **own food** and therefore be as **self-sufficient** as possible” and already succeeded with this intention with respect to vegetables and fruit, aromatic herbs, wheat, hay and oats for the animals. Approximately 25% of the food is produced within the Community; another 25% is obtained from local/bioregional food producers, outside of the Community (cf. Community Sustainability Assessment (CSA) ‘Los Portales’ in Annex B). Additionally Los Portales has their own herd of goats which enables them to produce their own cheese and yoghurt. And as mentioned above they make wine from their own grapes, honey from their own beehives and own olive oil made with a traditional stone mill on-site.

It has to be mentioned thought, that self-sufficiency in southern Spain is very difficult due to the hot Andalusian summer in which water is very scarce and the conditions for cultivation are extreme (Resident Finca 16, personal communication). Furthermore the variation in the crop yield has an influence on the self-sufficiency especially referring to wheat and olives (Resident Finca 3: personal communication).

Since 2010 Los Portales is member of WWOOF España<sup>17</sup> (Willing workers on organic farms/Worldwide opportunities on organic farms) and welcomes volunteers that are willing to help and experience life on a farm. (cf. Los Portales, 2013c, [emphasis in the original]).

### Cooking and Health

**“We are what we eat and therefore, we eat what we will be”** (cf. Los Portales, 2013h [emphasis in the original]). The people in Los Portales are on a vegetarian diet and they place value on healthy nutrition. Occasionally, the group consumes fish and home-reared meat. When the season and weather conditions allow it, the ingredients come from the vegetable and herb garden. The vegetables are “treated with care and respect” and cooked in a gentle way, so that the important ingredients are conserved. Approximately 65% or more of the food, consumed in Los Portales, is organically grown (cf. CSA ‘Los Portales’ in Annex B).

There have been two cookbooks elaborated; *Concina sabrosa para la salud* (2007) and *Los sinsin se dan un homenaje* (2010) from Lisby Boisnard who got inspired by the discoveries of Jean Seignalet (*L’Alimentation ou La Troisième Médecine*, 2004).

Additionally to the healthy vegetarian diet, the Community cultivates many medicinal plants and uses them for natural cosmetics and own cleaning products. (cf. Los Portales, 2013d)

### Education and Pedagogy

Los Portales puts value on a holistic education for their children, “which aspires not only to the integration of the academic content but also to opening doors to **self-knowledge**”. The academic education for the children is based on the official remote training education program ‘CNED francés’. Practicing home schooling, various community members act as tutors.

Additionally to the academic education, it is important for the community members, that the children “find **their own place in the world**” which includes the “understanding [of] the society in which [they] live as well as the importance of **good human relations**”. The children in Los Portales are brought closer to nature and brought into contact with the “animal world” which encourages a life

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<sup>17</sup> WWOOF España - <http://ruralvolunteers.org/WHOSTS/> (10.08.2013)

“in creative harmony with their surroundings”. (cf. Los Portales, 2013e [emphasis in the original]).

### Art and Creation

As a supplement to the above section Education and Pedagogy, the Community emphasizes artistic creation which has the potential “for channelling and strengthening determined moments in [the] evolution, as much individual as collective”. Meant by art, is the art of living which includes “to honour, respect and care for the environment in which [they] live; to develop **harmonious, intense and creative personal relations**; to create **beauty** where [they] live and through the way [they] develop [their] lives; to create **consciousness**, as much individual as collective; to encourage the maximum development of [their] children’s **potential**; to prepare [their] food so that it’s tasty and pleasing as well as being healthy; to manage conflicts with total **respect** for the people involved (cf. Los Portales, 2013f [emphasis in the original]).

### ‘Human Development’

Within the Community Los Portales, the ‘Human Development’ forms “the central theme of [their] evolution”. Their basis does not lie within an ecological or alternative awareness but within an internal work which develops the “*human ecology*” of the group (Kevin Lluch, in litt, 02.11.2012 [italic in the original]). Therefore the ‘Human Development’, respectively the spiritual basis of the community deserves a separate chapter (see the following Chapter 4.3).

### **4.3. Ecological and ‘Human Development’**

*„The basis of the community are the relations and linkages between the people – thus beauty is created; inner beauty that is transmitted. Creativity, art, love and happiness are created which can be felt and seen”.*

(Expert 12, personal communication [own translation])

The field of the ‘Human Development’ with all its different aspects and diverse tools represents the social sustainability of the Community.

“**Human development** [sic] lies at the heart of our project. Life in **community**, life in **harmony** with nature or organic agriculture only makes sense as long as it

encourages said human development in symphony with the times of deep change humanity is living” (Los Portales, 2013g [emphasis in the original]).

The inspiration of the founder was influenced by the Jungian Psychology and „its conception that dreams are a magnificent medium through which to access, know and transform [the] subconscious“. With the help of the dream work, the Community has created a secure framework in which “each person can show themselves in their totality, as they really are, without receiving anything other than empathy and support from the others”.

As their experience shows, spirituality is not formed by belonging or “adhering to a school, a church or system of beliefs”; the spiritual dimension of the human being is developed by interpersonal relations that become “creative and are based on confidence, respect and collaboration [sic!]” (Los Portales, 2013b). The Community represents the point of view that through human relation and coexistence, where experimentation and artistic creation takes place, “each human being is able to progress in their individuality” and thus become “more unique, more complete” but, at the same time, be brought closer to the others.

The people in Los Portales are searching and experimenting and are open for new „knowledge and tools in very varied dimensions“, including the evolution of the members of the groups as well as the people who visit them. (cf. Los Portales, 2013g)

Said knowledge and tools cover areas such as “natural health techniques (homeopathy, reflexology, nutrition), horse riding and equinotherapy [sic!], **work with different energies** ( EMF [Balancing Technique], Chi-Kung, Shiatsu, meditation), **work with the body** (Pilates, massage, Tai-Chi), **techniques for emotional liberation and healing** (LI [treatment], EMDR, Art-therapy, Essences [such as Bach flower remedies]), **group and systemic work, conflict management** (psychodrama, family and systemic constellations)” (cf. ebd. [emphasis in the original]).

The resident Kevin Lluch (2012) wrote a newspaper article about the Community: “La comunidad como camino. Los Portales, una experiencia de ‘permacultura humana’” [The community as a path. Los Portales, an experience of ‘Human Permaculture’]. According to this article, Luciano Farcas, a well-known distributor of the agricultural system of Permaculture, called the ‘Human Development’ within Los Portales “Human Permaculture”. The article



emphasizes through some basic principles of Permaculture (cf. Permaculture Principles, 2013) how to draw parallels to “Human Permaculture” as it takes place in Los Portales.

According to David Holmgren, co-creator of permaculture (2013), “[Permaculture] is ‘Consciously designed landscapes which mimic the patterns and relationships found in nature, while yielding an abundance of food, fibre and energy for provision of local needs.’ People, their buildings and the ways in which they organise themselves are central to permaculture. Thus the permaculture vision of permanent or sustainable agriculture has evolved to one of permanent or sustainable culture.”

The deduced principles illustrate the lifestyle in the Community and the Community’s spiritual dimension of existence. Therefore this article represents an important document for the elaboration of this thesis and is incorporated in the qualitative analysis.

‘Human Development’ on the group itself and their relationships has generated, with the passing of the years, a larger opening towards the “**spiritual dimension of existence**”, understood as a capacity to be “open and receptive to the mysterious and the unknown; ready to integrate a greater part of their being; to transcend their limits; to allow the ultimate sense of every experience to emerge” (Los Portales, 2013g [emphasis in the original]).

The Community Los Portales, with its lifestyle and approaches towards socio-ecological sustainability, are represented in more detail in the evaluation Chapter 6.

## 5. Methods

To achieve the objectives of the study, the following research methods have been applied:

- **literature research and analysis of documents** concerning empirical social research (qualitative approach), sustainable development and research in the field of intentional communities and ecovillages
- **field research** via data collection from participant observation and free dialogue (ero-epic dialogue) (cf. Girtler, 2001)
- data collection through **semi-structured interviews** with the community members for concrete information
- Community Sustainability Assessment “Los Portales 2013” (GEN, 2013c)

### 5.1. Literature research

The results concerning the theoretical background, the social dimension of sustainability, the information around the topic intentional communities as well as collaborative research are based on specialized literature research (in the library of the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development as well as on the internet to get a quick overview about the relevant literature). Determining for the above mentioned subjects were the current discussions about the Great Transformation and Sustainable Development (cf. WBGU, 2011; WCED, 1987; UNJSPF, 2005; UNCSD, 1997; Raskin et al., 2002; IPCC, 2007; Lüpke, 2012 and Macy et al., 2007, etc.), the approach concerning qualitative social research (cf. Punch, 2005; Girtler, 2001 & 2004; Mayring, 2002; Forum on Qualitative Social Research<sup>18</sup> (FQS)) as well as the current research in the field of intentional communities, their potential and the demand for collaborative research (cf. Kunze, 2009; 2007; 2012; 2004; Embacher et al., 2002; Grundmann, 2006; Meijering, 2006; Dierschke, 2003; Andreas et al., 2012; etc.).

### 5.2. Qualitative social research

The qualitative social research tries to distance itself from widespread social-scientific research approaches such as scales, test and questionnaires (cf. Mayring,

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<sup>18</sup> Forum on Qualitative Social Research - <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs> (07.08.2013)

2002: 9f.). However it tries to approach the social reality via unstructured observations and open surveys in natural, daily situations (cf. ebd.). According to Huberman et al. (1994 in Punch, 2005: 141) “qualitative research is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a ‘field’ or life situation.” These situations reflect “the everyday life of individuals, groups, societies and organisations”. Qualitative data is data from observation (participant observation), interviews or documents – or, in the words of Wolcott (1992) from “watching, asking or examining” (cf. Punch, 2005). The objective is to gain a holistic overview of the field of study and to capture data on the perception of local actors who form part of the study field (cf. Huberman et al. 1994 in Punch, 2005: 141). According to Mayring (2002: 19) there are five principles for qualitative approaches:

Postulate 1: Relatedness to the subject

Object of the research are always people (subjects). Those affected are seen as a whole and their point of view and perspective form the origin and objective of the study.

Postulate 2: Description

In the beginning of an analysis, the subject area needs to be described in a detailed and comprehensive way.

Postulate 3: Interpretation

The actual meaning of a field of research is not made fully accessible until an interpretation is made.

Postulate 4: Research in the daily environment

Investigations should be made in the natural, daily environment of the subject.

Postulate 5: Process of generalisation

According to qualitative thinking, the generalisation of research findings needs to be substantiated in a specific case. Arguments need to be presented why the presented results can also be applied to other situations and periods. These postulates are supposed to contribute to an enhanced application of qualitative thinking within the research and cognitive process (cf. ebd.).

### 5.3. Grounded Theory

The method of Grounded Theory (Glaser et al., 2005), turned out to be the appropriate study design for this thesis. It is a general method which discovers theory from data systematically obtained from social research and aims for diminishing the gap between theory and empirical evidence (cf. Glaser, 2005: 2). It is a matter of deductive research process in which the empirical research phase is more than just a review of the theoretically driven research questions. In addition to it, it is about the enhancement of them. Likewise the data collection is an inductive process which, in turn, is aligned to the theoretical approach and accounts for the cognitive process between theory and empirical evidence (Kunze, 2009a: 52). Thus Grounded Theory tries to confront what theoretically or probably is considered possible with the cognitive process and what is found in the field (Glaser et al., 2005: 257 in Kunze, 2009a: 52).

Within this thesis, the following qualitative methods have been applied in the inductive process of during data collection to assure the integration of qualitative thinking: Individual case analysis, analysis of documents and descriptive field study.

Individual case analysis is about emphasising the complexity of the whole case, the coherences of areas of activity and life as well as the historical and autobiographical background (cf. Mayring, 2002: 42). The subject of a case analysis does not have to be an individual but it can also be a complex social system (family, social subgroup etc.) (cf. ebd.). In this thesis the subject is represented by the Community Los Portales.

Analysis of documents is applied to complement as well as to complete the view of the author. It encompasses all figurative testimonials, which can serve as source for the explanation of human behaviour (cf. Atteslander, 1971: 53). The literature research that was conducted within this thesis includes the analysis of documents. Descriptive field study involves participant observation as main method (cf. Mayring, 2002: 54f.). The advantages of this method are the avoidance of biases which can emerge through the interference of research methods, as well as through the external perspective that can be out of touch with reality (cf. ebd.).

In the following chapters the different procedures for the data assessment, applied in the field, are explained in detail.

### 5.3.1. Participant observation and ero-epic dialogue

According to Girtler (2001: 147ff.), participant observation in the relevant environment, is the main method for descriptive field study. Girtler (cf. ebd.) adds the ero-epic dialogue with the people concerned, as a second important method for descriptive field study. These two methods allow the researcher to actively take part in the social situation in which the subject is embedded. The researcher is in direct personal relation with the situation observed, whilst participating in the living conditions - at the same time data collection is possible (cf. Mayring, 2002: 80).

The ero-epic dialogue<sup>19</sup> is an open and free conversation which arises out of natural and daily situations in which the subject as well as the researcher open up to each other (cf. Girtler, 2001: 55ff.).

The participant observation can mainly be divided into (cf. Kunze, 2009b: 64):

- Introduction to and tour through the Community
- Assistance in areas which are relevant for the Community such as kitchen, administration, self-subsistence, etc.
- Participation in meetings and events that are relevant for the Community such as plenum, general meetings, meditations, dream interpretation, etc.
- Living alongside with the community members referring to accommodation, meals and encounters during daily life.

Through the active participation in the daily community life, profound insights in the different fields of action and administrative districts of Los Portales were possible (see the five different fields of action listed and explained in Chapter 4.2). The acquired research questions (in Chapter 3.3) deal with the field of socio-ecological sustainability. Therefore the areas of ecological agriculture (self-subsistence), energy supply, the general administration and organisation emerged as the focus of the field research. Added to this is the spiritual basis of the Community, respectively the field of 'Human Development' which reflects the social sustainability of the Community. Kunze (2009a: 184) stresses out that

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<sup>19</sup> In the word "ero-epic" you will find the following classical Greek words: *erotan* – to ask and *eipon* (epos) to talk, inform (narrative) (cf. Girtler, 2001)

“social dynamics such as decision making processes, communication culture and the learning of social competences [are] important to examine”. In Los Portales these aspects are embedded in the field of ‘Human Development’.

As guidance and mnemonic device during the participant observation and ero-epic dialogues, a road map with important aspects under investigation was elaborated. According to Mayring (2002: 81) this is an advisable approach but the ability to give detailed comments and to extract new aspects needs to be obtained. Mayring calls it therefore a half-standardised approach (cf. ebd.).

Aspects for guidance and mnemonic device within the elaborated road map for the data collection in Los Portales were the following:

- Questions concerning self-subsistence
- Organisation and leadership
  - o Division of labour
  - o Responsibilities of community members
- Basis/objective of the Community
- Role of ‘Human Development’, respectively dream interpretation
- Group processes and conflict management
- Differentiation between internal and external work
- Different aspects of social, spiritual and ecological life
- Relation to the Community in Madrid

Supported by the data that was collected through participant observation and ero-epic dialogues, the construction of detailed mind map was possible that serves as a conceptual model of the Community. It also reflects the basic situation within Los Portales. The mind map is displayed in the evaluation Chapter 6.2.

The field work in the Community Los Portales was facilitated through the personal interest of the community members in the results of the study. The Community was highly interested to what extent they contribute to socio-ecological sustainability and possibly serve as a positive example and learning platform.

### **5.3.2. Semi-structured interview**

Additional to the information gathered during participant observation and ero-epic dialogues, it became obvious that more specific information through interviews with the community members would be helpful to complete the data collection.

The method of the semi-structured interview falls under the term ‘problem-centred interview’ in which the respondent is able to answer freely (cf. Mayring, 2002: 67). At the same time an atmosphere similar to an open dialogue is generated but the interview questions are still focusing on a specific problem to which the interviewer always returns back to (cf. ebd.).

Therefore a list of interview themes was elaborated, based on previous literature research and hitherto existing data. The list was divided into the following five different fields of interest. The full list is displayed in Annex A.

1. Personal questions
2. Questions concerning structure and organisation of the Community
3. Questions concerning social and ecological sustainability
4. Questions concerning external contacts (amongst others regional-economic aspects)
5. Questions concerning global change

Within the scope of this thesis the interview themes were conducted with 11 out of 18 community members, which permanently live on the Finca Los Portales (in the evaluation referred to as ‘Resident Finca’). Additionally the themes were conducted with two people who frequently travel between the Community in Madrid and the Finca (in the evaluation referred to as ‘Resident Madrid’) as well as two people who live close to the Finca and spend every weekend there as full community members (in the evaluation referred to as ‘Resident close-by’).

The length of the interviews varied between 30 to 135 minutes (the average amounts to 60 minutes) depending on the time and disposition of the respondent. There are two interviews which amount to 109 and 135 minutes and therefore differ greatly from the average conduct of the interviews. One of these two interviews was conducted with the guardian of the Community’s vision and current leader regarding the dream work and ‘Human Development’. The other long interview was conducted with my supervisor during the internship in Los Portales who also embodies the representative for the dream work and ‘Human Development’ in the Community in Madrid. These two respondents are categorised as ‘Experts’ during the evaluation.

During the accomplishment of the interviews, information material with a total length of ca. 900 minutes was collected and recorded with a digital dictating machine.

The statements of the respondents were anonymised in the evaluation of the interviews. The reference of the citations is marked with the origin of the respondent ('Resident Finca', 'Resident Madrid', 'Resident close-by' or 'Expert') and with numbers, e.g.: 'Resident Finca 2:9'. The 2 signifies that the citation is from the second interview document in the Program MAXQDA11, the 9 represents the section of the marked citation within this document.

### **5.3.3. Community Sustainability Assessment (CSA)**

The Community Sustainability Assessment (CSA) was applied to the Community Los Portales to enable the comparability of the outcomes of the analysis and also to justify the quality of the assessment. The CSA is "a comprehensive checklist that anyone can complete to get a basic idea of how sustainable their community is. This assessment tool is applicable to **any** community. While it requires good knowledge of the life-styles, practices and features of the community, it does not require research, calculation and detailed quantification" (GEN, 2013b [emphasis in the original]). The CSA is constructed like a "Three Legged Stool [and] the overall sustainability is upheld when each of the three legs is strong and balanced. In the CSA the three legs, each as important as the other, are the Ecological, Social and Spiritual aspects of community" (cf.ebd.). It was developed to "provide measuring rods for individuals and for existing villages and communities to compare their current status with ideal goals for ecological, social, and spiritual sustainability" (GEN, 2013c:3).

The results of the evaluation are briefly outlined in Chapter 0. The full document CSA "Los Portales 2013" can be retrieved on the attached CD under Annex B.

### **5.4. Transcription and Coding**

The next step after the completion of the interviews is the processing of the collected data. According to Mayring (2002: 94) the collected data needs to be processed, classified and at the same time the amount of data needs to be reduced. As a first step of the evaluation, the existing recordings of the interviews were transcribed in a summarising protocol. As the main interest was placed on the thematic and content-related information, empty phrases and statements that are not relevant for the objective of this thesis were excluded. Citations of particular significance, which were considered as useful in the course of evaluation, are



being transcribed and translated literally. After transcription, the data is prepared for the actual analysis.

As additional information, it should be mentioned that the interviews were carried out in Spanish language as only a small part of the community members speaks English. During transcription, the filtered information was translated into English. Verbal changes due to translation from Spanish into English are not marked in the evaluation but importance was put on an exact translation without changing the content of the statement.

The objective of the summarising analysis according to the content is to analyse the text systematically by revising the collected material in stages with the help of theory-driven and a, adhered to the material, developed category system (cf. Mayring, 2002: 114). Not only the interviews, but also the results from participant observation (memos), conversations, as well as notes taken during assemblages were analysed. Additionally, the newspaper article “La comunidad como camino” (Lluch, 2012) is also incorporated in the qualitative analysis. This article represents an important document, as it includes interesting information about the lifestyle in Los Portales and draws illustrative parallels to the Principles of Permaculture.

The respective aspects which are supposed to be filtered from the material are defined and divided into categories (cf. ebd.).

“The coding procedure is complemented by categorization and conceptualization. At this point, the purpose of analysis is to reduce the material even further, at the same time raising its level of abstraction” (Bendassolli, 2013).

The different categories are linked to a selection criterion which is a deductive element and needs to be justified with theoretical considerations about the subject and the objective of the analysis (cf. Mayring, 2002: 116). With this definition in mind, the material is analysed line by line (cf. ebd.). In this case, the predetermined objectives of the thesis and the defined research questions form part of the selection criterion of categories. Additionally, as Bendassolli (2013) refers to, categories (here referred to as themes) “can assume both categorical (an instance of the experience, a unit of meaning), and frequential (repetition of themes or their location in networks or schemes) forms”. Especially concerning interview material “themes can be identified in similarities among units that make up the analysis material [...]” (cf. ebd.). The “*transformative knowledge*”

according to Kunze (2009a) also served as selection criterion for the categories and was kept in mind during analysis of the material.

The described working steps are facilitated through the use of the Qualitative Data Analysis Software MAXQDA11.

MAXQDA is a professional software for qualitative data analysis. The software allows analysing interviews, reports, tables, online surveys, videos, audio files, images, and even bibliographical data sets. The data can be organized and categorized, and the results can be retrieved as well as illustrated through various visual tools and displayed in reports. MAXQDA is equipped with transcription tools and multimedia functionality to directly analyse all kinds of media files. The results can be transformed into variables for further statistical analysis.<sup>20</sup> (VERBI, 2013)

The result of the analysis is a set of categories that refer to a certain subject matter to which specific passages are allocated (cf. Mayring, 2002: 117). The elaborated category system can now be evaluated (see Chapter 6). Furthermore the category system can be interpreted in connection with the objectives and the research questions of the thesis and compared to the results of the prior literature research and precedent theoretical investigations (see Chapter 7).

As a brief explanatory excursus before presenting the results in Chapter 6, it seems helpful to state that a system, such as the Community Los Portales, “is a set of [things,] people, [cells, molecules, or whatever,] interconnected in such a way that they produce their own internal dynamics.” (Meadows, 2008: 3). This short digression is introduced to justify the overlapping of categories through the Community’s ‘interconnectedness of the whole’. It also explains the appearance of same statements in various categories.

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<sup>20</sup> MAXQDA11 - <http://www.maxqda.com/products/what-is-maxqda> (24.08.2013)

## **6. Evaluation of the results**

### **6.1. Evaluation of the analysed information material**

During the analysis of the Community Los Portales importance, from the side of the community members, was put on the remark that the statements and impressions, captured during data assessment, are only a snapshot of the actual situation within the Community. “There is always change” (Resident close-by 15:46) and “the Community is [also] changing all the time” (Resident Finca 3:27) and “was conceived not as an end in itself but as a **medium for creation and evolution**” (Los Portales, 2013b [emphasis in the original]).

The analysis of the collected information material generated a total set of 8 categories that include several subcategories. The elaboration of the filtered information is evaluated according to the different categories.

#### **6.1.1. Objectives of the Community Los Portales**

##### **6.1.1.1. Main objectives**

Lluch (2012: 40) mentions that “the Community formed itself around a therapist and Jungian analyst and dedicated itself to a growing commitment to internal work, to a path of self-knowledge and personal development [respectively ‘Human Development’]”.

That the internal work, as in personal growth, after 30 years is still the first objective of the Community is reflected in the responses of the members. Different terms were used, such as “to get to know oneself better”, “to achieve becoming more human, to become more who you are” (Resident Finca 11:13). “The idea in the beginning was not to be a community, or to be ecological; the main objective was “to have a place that allowed us to explore and work on the inside” (Resident Finca 3:18). “Life in community, always with the internal work as the central theme” (Lluch, 2012: 41) is still what forms “the cement of the group” (Expert 12:25). As a quick preview of the elaborated categories, the following chapters represent the relevant topics that emerged during the analysis. The different categories deal with the approach and objectives of ‘Human Development’ and its implementation in and influence on the daily life of the community members. Through a life in community, the residents are practically educated in social competences which allow them to become communally

competent beings. Humans are communal animals (cf. Resident Finca 3:52) but the unconsciousness of personal behaviour patterns and projections generate conflicts through which harmonious coexistence is aggravated. Thus personal development is inevitable to contribute to the harmony of the group (cf. Resident Finca 4:39). The residents of Los Portales, over the years, have developed a new self-perception as human beings which among other things is manifested through a change in consciousness and the exploitation of the full human potential. This work is supported by various tools such as dream interpretation according to C.G. Jung and family/systemic constellations (cf. Chapter 6.1.3). Said work among the residents in Los Portales generated a deep connectedness to oneself but also to other humans and the natural environment.

As a further objective to 'Human Development', it was important for the community members that "the children were able to grow up in nature, being aware of the interaction that humans have with nature – giving them a holistic education, including the capacity of curing and healing themselves; knowing the plants, the anatomy, the Chinese medicine – everything that would allow the children to change themselves into their own personal therapists" (Expert 12:17) (see also Chapter 4.2 about Education and Pedagogy). So the second objective was "to give their children a solid basis in which they find their potential, their resources and that they can develop their personality just as they are" (Resident Finca 9:40).

A new challenge for the group, that has started a few years ago with the opening of the Community to the external (see also Chapter 6.1.6.4), is the aspect of being useful to the rest of the people who are not part of the group (cf. Expert 7:16). Through an opening to the external it is possible that these people can resonate with the internal work and also with the form that this group has created (cf. Expert 12:43). "Useful, in a way that people from the exterior benefit from our seminars and our experience [on consciousness-raising] but also in a way that an experience like this here forms part of a social movement in a broader sense" (cf. ebd.).

Resident Finca (11:36) describes the lifestyle within Los Portales as "a way of living in peace and with love between the people". Taking into account the aspect of "usefulness on global level" (cf. Resident close-by 14:35), it is the desire of the

group “to share this [know-how] with [others]” and “to give tools to the maximum of people” so this way of living can be distributed.

#### **6.1.1.2. Ecological sustainability in Los Portales**

To describe the state of affairs concerning ecological sustainability, it seems important to outline the formation of the Community in the initial phase since their arriving in Spain. When looking at the aspect of ‘Human Permaculture’ within Los Portales, Principle 8 of Permaculture “Integrate rather than segregate” can be used best to illustrate these processes that have been taken place within the Community, regarding ecological sustainability (cf. Lluch, 2012:41). After the initiation process of the Community in which necessities such as construction of living space and education of the children were covered, the aspect of ecological sustainability came into the focus. This aspect facilitated a “progressive consciousness raising of the groups’ connection with the environment” and the linkage between the land and the group which allowed the emerging of the places’ spirit. There was a lot of work involved referring to “working the dryness of the land and removing the rocks from the fields” (cf. ebd.). Today the land surrounding Los Portales is a lush countryside.

Right from the start “the general spirit of the agricultural practice in Los Portales is based on Rudolf Steiner. But today there are changes towards permaculture and the connectedness of all elements including the spirits of nature” (Resident Madrid 8:45).

“Since the beginning nature was an important part for us but maybe not taking into account the aspect of sustainability” (Resident Finca 2:17). “The awareness for ecological behaviour came along with the inner process and consciousness raising” (Resident Finca 1:39) – “before we needed a lot more energy to explore ourselves – now we are more balanced and we can put more energy in the surroundings” (Resident Finca 3:21).

Today, ecological sustainability goes hand in hand with the internal work - so before making changes or taking actions externally, they are aware to work the aspect internally and relate to the certain element (cf. Expert 12:100f.).

### 6.1.1.2.1. Self-sufficiency

Also brought in to context with the Permaculture Principle 8 “Integrate rather than segregate” is the topic of self-sufficiency (cf. Lluch, 2012: 41). In Los Portales there has been a movement towards self-sufficiency (cf. Chapter 4.2). But this movement does not involve the intention to be isolated from others or to give up being in contact with the surrounding. It rather aims to be “more autonomous; to take the full responsibility for live, as co-creators as [they] see [themselves] and stop complaining and playing the role of victims: victims of the economic-political system, of the past, of [their] families, bosses, schools....” Being more autonomous in all the above mentioned aspects helps to make towards others, motivated by desire and interest, not for necessity. (Lluch, 2012: 42).

Therefore, in Los Portales ‘self-sufficiency’ not necessarily refers to the ecological aspect but also to the psychological aspect of each member.

Referring to the ecological aspect of self-sufficiency, “[they] didn’t want to depend on the world...[they] wanted to be self-sufficient!” (Resident Finca 2:48) and a great part of the community members values seasonal, regional and ecological produced vegetables and considers it to be an “essential aspect for the improvement of the quality of life” (Resident Finca 5:20). And it is understood as “a privilege to know [and be part of] the whole process from the beginning [preparing the soil and seeding] till the end [harvest and processing]” (Resident 3:16). But it is difficult to become 100% self-sufficient because of the seasons (Resident Finca 16:34). “We only produce what is needed for the moment” (Resident Finca 5:23). They put importance on varieties that are used to the conditions of the region, especially concerning the water supply in summer. “But in autumn and beginning of winter it is difficult for [them] as there are hardly any vegetables because the hot conditions make cultivation difficult” (cf. ebd.).

Additionally, the Community uses solar panels and a small water turbine for the energy supply “because it is [an implicitness] when living in the countryside and with a lot of sun all year around. But [they] also had the ecological awareness to use renewable energies” (Resident Finca 11:24 and 3:5). Most of the energy is used “for domestic consumption and pumping up water [from the wells] but it coincidences with the period in which there is a lot of sun” (Resident Finca 11:64f.). “We are always just on level zero with the energy we produce” (Resident Finca 3:9).

### 6.1.1.2.2. Improvements

Concerning the question what the members would like to improve in Los Portales, regarding the aspect of sustainability, several fields were addressed and the main ideas for improvement are listed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Main fields and ideas that are considered for improvement (Source: personal investigations)**

Improvements in the field of ...	Frequency: Addressed in ... of 15 interviews	Main statement
Water	7	Recycling of waste water as well as “Keyline Farming and Water harvest”
Energy	7	More solar panels and reduction of cooking gas
Food production	5	Improve food production on-site
Communal life	4	More people and improvement of coexistence with children
Economic improvements	4	Selling products and giving seminars
Constructions	3	Ecological and energy efficient housing, more accommodation for visitors
Consumerism	2	Less usage of cars

#### Water:

As can be extracted from Table 1, the aspect of water is very present in the Community at the moment. To improve the ecological sustainability of the Community, four people mentioned that the recycling of the waste water from the sediment basin needs attention and a solution could be the construction of terraces with specific plants for the purification of the water.

To improve the water supply for the garden, the Community decided against the construction of an additional water reservoir with the help of machinery. “We wanted to create a reservoir but the I-Ching<sup>21</sup> was negative” (Resident Finca 16:58 and Expert 12:100). This meant that the group had to “enter in a loving relation with the water without technical help, because that wouldn’t have helped [them] internally” (cf. ebd.). After the decision supported by the I-Ching, Resident Finca

<sup>21</sup> See also Chapter 6.1.6.3 on decision-making

(16:58) received a mail about the “Keyline System” (cf. Chapter 6.1.5.2.1 about synchronicities).

The method of the “Keyline System” according to the Australian Percival Alfred Yeomans (1954), was then favoured instead of creating an artificial water reservoir. This method is used to improve the water supply of a terrain. The agricultural system aims “for the development of better soil structure, increased soil fertility and greater actual depth of fertile soil. [...]The first aim of Keyline is to provide simple means of conserving all the rain that falls on the land into the soil itself, retard its evaporation, rate and use this conserved moisture for the rapid production of soil fertility over both small and large areas of land” (Yeomans, 1954: Chapter 1). In the Community this techniques was referred to as ‘water harvest’. Two of the community members went to a seminar about this topic and the vision emerged to create a terrain which is suitable for this technique and at the same time suitable for Permaculture (Resident Finca 16:61f. and 11:70f.).

Further ideas for improvement concerning the aspect of water are the purification of the swimming pool, by changing it into a natural swimming pool (through using plants for cleaning instead of chemical products); additional construction of water reservoirs and the construction of a double system to use the rain water instead of pumping up water from the wells.

#### Energy:

Taking a look at the energy supply of the Community, five people mentioned that it is necessary to improve the energy production from the solar panels to become independent from the generator and thus fossil fuels. This could be realized either through replacing the old ones with new ones that are more efficient or through buying additional panels. According to Resident Finca (11:55), “[they] would need double the amount of solar panels to cover [their] expenses”.

According to several members, the gas consumption in the kitchen is immense and therefore also an aspect that needs improvement. A reduction of gas consumption could be realized through the use of solar cookers (Resident Finca 11:67). Two prototypes have been constructed so far but are not in frequent usage. Further ideas concerning the energy supply are the production of biogas through organic material and the faeces of the goats (Resident Finca 3:40 and 9:30) as well



as additional production of energy through a wind mill and a second water turbine.

One person was concerned about the onward supply with firewood (Resident close-by 15:40), especially since a new bread oven was constructed which increases the wood consumption a lot.

#### Food production:

Five residents of the Finca mentioned that they would like to increase the food production and “dedicate more time to [their] land” and “benefit from what [their] land can offer [them]” (Resident Finca 13:52).

One person stated that “to become self-sufficient you have to create a species of a village” and he mentioned the idea of “sharing agricultural land with other people to improve food production and enhance the exchange of labour and material” (Resident Finca 11:49). “They cultivate their land with what they want and we do ours and at the end we exchange – problems, solutions, materials, machines...like that we can become self-sufficient” (cf. ebd).

The ‘Network of Producers and Consumers’ in which Los Portales is involved was also mentioned, which supports the idea of exchanging products and putting them on the market (Resident Finca 5:74).

#### Communal Life:

Concerning the communal life within Los Portales, it was definitely perceptible that there was a strong connection between the community members. This was perceivable on the interpersonal and spiritual level, but also on the basis of daily life and everyday work. The basis of the group is formed through transparency and values that are appreciated by each member (cf. Chapter 6.1.2). “People [from outside] feel that something is special - in how the members are open to others and how the general flow is amongst them; but people also realize that there is a lot of internal work behind it” (Resident Finca 5:65).

Nevertheless three people mentioned that they would like to make the place “more indwelled” with new people (Resident Finca 11:46f.) or through the exchange with other communities or fincas (Resident Finca 2:50). On the one hand, with people who share the place and the labour (Resident close-by 15:41ff. and 11:46f., 74) and on the other hand with people who share the objective of the group - the

internal work - and who want to commit themselves to this “lifestyle” (Resident close-by 15:47).

One person also mentioned a necessity for improvement concerning the coexistence with children “because everyone has or has had children and everyone still is dealing with the personal inner child” (Resident Finca 9:56).

#### Economic improvements:

“Money is not what is missing, of course it is missing but that is not the difficulty for improving sustainability...the aspect of money makes you think more profoundly about the idea and lets the idea ripen” (Resident Finca 11:53).

Here, it should be mentioned that Los Portales practices a common economy. “Everybody is aware of what the things are worth and nobody is checking on each other who is spending more” (Resident Finca 3:46) and “we respect the principle that everyone gives according to his/her possibilities and everyone receives according to his/her needs. It has worked out fine so far [...]” (Expert 7:63f.). But “[the group] realizes that money is a weak aspect of [them]” (Resident Finca 1:64) and that “sometimes money is just necessary” (Expert 12:107).

A very new project in Los Portales that was established, just recently (March 2013) to improve the economic situation of the Community; the group bought a professional bread oven for selling bread and sweet pastry. So when I left, this project just started to take shape and a definite conclusion about its success cannot be made yet. Additional sources of income are the seminars on dream interpretation and family/systemic constellations (see Chapter 6.1.7.1). Further ideas for improving the financial situation were the selling of additional products produced on the Finca, such as olive oil, vegetables and goat cheese (Resident Finca 5:79 and 3:44). One person mentioned the “planting of trees to sell afterwards” (Resident close-by 15:43) as an option. And another person mentioned the idea of “giving seminars and coaching on issues concerning nature and personal development for executives and enterprises. A meeting of these two worlds would have a great impact; [...] these people have influence and when they change their minds, it would be like planting a seed of a different vision of the world” (Resident Finca 3:44).

In general, it can be said that “on the cultural level, social, and economical level [concerning the issue of improvement] everything goes towards diversity...from a

proposal of one person towards many people. Life in community is one result that comes from this diversity” (Resident close-by 14:28). Additionally, the whole issue of improvement is sustained by confidence (cf. Chapter 6.1.5.2). “We have what we need. Of course there is a lot to improve but everything happens when it is time for it” (Expert 7:108). The “faith [of the Community] in synchronicity and that nothing happens for coincidence” helps them to have confidence in the processes as they are taking place: “So when I ask myself what we could do – the answer is ‘exactly what we are doing’ – so if you ask me what we could improve here I tell you ‘a lot of things’ but this is not the most important” (Resident Finca 11:53f.).

### **6.1.2. Basis of the Community**

This chapter is divided into three main categories, ‘New self-perception as humans’, ‘Transparency’ and ‘Objectives of the ‘Human Development’. During the analysis of the material it became obvious that it would be the most appropriate to categorize, what turned out to be the basis of the Community, into these three terms, even though there is some overlapping between the categories. The first two main categories rather represent the basis of the Community whilst the third category illustrates the objectives of the ‘Human Development’ and goes into detail concerning the various approaches and components of it.

#### **6.1.2.1. New self-perception as humans**

Lüpke (2012: 74) says that there are three different stages of change towards sustainability (cf. Chapter 3.2) and the third stage is a “shift in values and worldview” which can be realized, amongst others, through “a new self-perception as humans”. This justifies the choosing of this term as category in the analysis. During the analysis of the collected material, the following three aspects turned out to profoundly contribute to a positive self-perception as humans within Los Portales.

### Finding the essence of being human

The people in Los Portales are committed to “the search of the essence of being human – a search for the most important things to grow in a human way” (Expert 7:33f.). “What we are purely looking for is the highest level of being human” (cf. ebd.) which includes “exploring and developing everything you are; your whole potential; and getting to the point where you express it and live it” (Expert 12:12). According to Lluch (2012: 40), the first Principle of ‘Human Permaculture’ “Observe and Interact” (Principle 1 in Permaculture) can be useful to illustrate what is meant by this ‘search’: To observe means to accept all the components of a human soul, without anxieties, nor prejudices. When the conscious mind intervenes humans tend to identify themselves with the positive side of their soul and it is so easy to forget that in each human soul there is also a dark side<sup>22</sup>.

The internal work is the tool to find out what the aspects of being human are and “the more you are searching- the positive essence of each one – the better you are from the outside” (Expert 7:33).

“The objective of internal work is – in this moment – living in harmony with the purpose of your soul. Arriving at the point where you are able to adjust the desires of the laymen [the conscious mind] with the desires of the soul [the subconscious mind] - without having an incompatibility of the two levels.” (Expert 12:12).

The concept of Permaculture Principle 10 “Use and value diversity” also talks about “**layering, complementing and generating synergies**”, therefore the opposite of compartmentalizing or separating cultivations. Referring to ‘Human Permaculture’ in Los Portales, the reality shows that the more aspects of the human soul are involved in a group, the more the group is enriched and the more stable is the groups’ ‘ecosystem’” (Lluch, 2012:42 [emphasis in the original]).

“If a group is only based on the visible or on what people have in their conscious mind, ideological affinity or systems of faith are necessary to unify people in a communal project”. In turn, if all the “invisible, all mysterious and the subconscious” is included in the group process the “connection between the people establishes on a soul level and in the outer dimension diversity is tolerated

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<sup>22</sup> As C. G. Jung discovered (cf. Jacobi, 1971: 50), humans tend to suppress aspects which they do not want to be aware of or which they are not able to perceive because they are still unconscious. As a result of repression, these aspects manifest themselves as ‘dark sides’ (collective archetype) in our conscious mind. Hence, according to C.G. Jung, the engagement with archetypical attributes can be a helpful method to access such suppressed issues and to integrate them (cf. ebd.) (see Chapter 6.1.3.3 for more information).

on a higher basis". (Lluch, 2012:42). "We are working towards the objective, that each time there is more diversity in this sense" (Expert 7:70).

The connection between people "based on harmony and love through working on yourself and your relation with others" (Resident Finca 9:9) is seen as a part of the essence of being human: "The reason for being human is being connected with everything, with the universe, with god..." (Expert 7:55). This connectedness and appreciation of diversity represent important aspects of the basis in Los Portales. The group understands that through human relations and coexistence, people advance to something that Jung called the individuation<sup>23</sup> (cf. Lluch: 2012:40).

### The attributes of male and female

"Every person has the male and female attributes inside" (Expert 12:52) (Archetypes of 'Animus' and 'Anima'<sup>24</sup>) and according to Jung (in Boeree, 2006: 9) "we only have developed one part of our potential". In other words, this means that in each person, regardless of gender, one of these two attributes is more pronounced and the internal work "aims for an internal balance" - an equilibrium between the 'animus' and the 'anima' (Resident Finca 16:32).

"[Today] it is important that men and women work hand in hand, cooperating, complementary because we are different but no one tries to take the power over the other" (Expert 12:52f.).

"In the essence there is no difference between men and women, referring to dignity and respect, or to awareness/consciousness. But on the surface we are different which is great and [in Los Portales] we try to maintain that. [...] we try to preserve the attraction through working the polarities. We maintain the activities in which women and men do something separate but we also maintain the moments in which we are united" (Expert 7:85).

"The difference between women and men is the salt of life! If there would not be differences there would not be polarity and if there is no polarity there is no attraction. And if there is no attraction - life wouldn't continue" (cf. ebd).

"The male and the female attribute is something internal - it doesn't need to be expressed on the outside" (cf. ebd.) but it is a "condition of being human" (Expert

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<sup>23</sup> "In general, it is the process by which individual beings are formed and differentiated [from other human beings]; in particular, it is the development of the psychological individual as a being distinct from the general, collective psychology" (Jung, 1976, par. 757)

<sup>24</sup> Animus and anima: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anima\\_and\\_animus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anima_and_animus) (12.09.2013)

12:98). “If you are a woman, live to be a woman; if you are a man, live to be a man” (Expert 12:98). Accepting this condition and manifesting it by well-living everything that is on earth was not the purpose [of the Community], but it just turned out to be an important aspect which created this new self-perception as humans and forms part of the basis within the Community (Expert 12:52).

### Celebrating life

Following up the last category, every Saturday there is a big dinner in Los Portales, everyone is dressing up nicely and it is the only night of the week where there is alcohol consumed (apart from events such as birthday parties or Christmas and New Year). For the people in Los Portales “it is important to maintain the art of living, celebrating life instead of dressing each day the same or coming to dinner in working clothes” (Expert 7:86f.). “Today there are people who say [they] are angels incarnated on earth and not poor humans who have to wait a lifetime to become angels - the time is over to look up to god and say ‘I am a poor sinner’” (Expert 12:96ff.). The people in Los Portales share the opinion in a way that “you have to enjoy the pleasures of life” and that “[humans] are no monks.” This new self-perception as humans “gives you self-esteem, you feel better and it helps you to connect with something sensual because you benefit from the fruits of life.”

“Maintaining the art of living creates a lot of happiness” and the people in Los Portales have incorporated this perception in their daily life. (Expert 7:86f. and cf. also Chapter 4.2 about Art and Creation))

### **6.1.2.2. Transparency**

By now, it should be transmitted that “[the] group connects through the invisible” (Expert 12:67). Especially the “dream work creates a very particular connection between people” (Lluch 2012:40); it is a “privileged tool to observe and interact with the dark sides or the ‘sleeping potential’” which form part of the human soul (cf. ebd.). And the dream teller takes the others on a journey and they follow – “it is our resonance that makes us feel addressed by a certain aspect and makes us feel connected: ‘I know the same feeling; this touches me in a profound way’” (cf. Expert 12:66).

Transparency is a solid part of the basis in Los Portales and by “knowing what is happening in the inside of each member”, this enables you to “be aware of the other person and its emotional state” which “creates peace” (Expert 12:67). “There is nothing more valuable/fertile than being in contact with your personal vulnerability – like it is happening in a group. When you open up, the only thing that you receive is support and empathy” (Expert 7:68).

Like that, transparency has the potential to avoid misunderstandings, “referring to your own personal state but also referring to the inner state of other people that are in contact with you” (Resident Finca 4:22).

One member put it that way: “The base is to live with people that you share profound things and experiences with, that there is transparency, understanding, respect, confidence and that the values [each individual appreciates] are existing” (Resident Finca 3:25).

### **6.1.2.3. Objectives of the ‘Human Development’**

*Human development lies at the heart of our project. Life in **community**, life in **harmony** with nature or organic agriculture only makes sense as long as it encourages said human development in symphony with the times of deep change humanity is living.*

Los Portales, 2013g [emphasis in the original]

The ‘Human Development’, more generally, the internal work in Los Portales is “the commitment to a path of self-knowledge and personal development” (Lluch, 2012:40). “The things [in Los Portals] are working as they are because there is an internal work. The people [...] have obliged themselves in which they question themselves and form part of the problem and of the solution. There are values like confidence and tolerance, things like horizontal relations, the fact that everyone is aware of their personal strength, that they know they belong to somewhere and that they are of value” (Resident Finca 3:23). In the opinion of the Community “the internal work is important so that a community survives”, thus “it has an influence on the durability of a community” (Resident Finca 2:20).

In the following categories the objectives of the internal work are illustrated and the various approaches and components of the personal development are explained in detail.

### **6.1.2.3.1. Creating consciousness**

‘Human Development’ is all about creating consciousness of your personal abilities and weaknesses (cf. Resident Finca 16:37), consciousness towards yourself which can be put equal with ‘getting to know you better’ (cf. Resident Finca 1:24).

“The internal work never stops – within the personal subconscious mind there is collective subconsciousness and you have a part of it that never stops” (Resident Finca 2: 15). This means, committing to an internal work “is a life-long project” (Resident Madrid 8:19f.) and either “the internal work attracts you [and becomes part of your life] or it scares you [and you suppress your subconscious mind]” (Resident Finca 2:24).

It is also about “creating consciousness about the connection between internal and external work” (Resident Finca 16:58ff, 9:31, Resident close-by 15:18 and Expert 12:100ff.) which is the subject in the identically named Chapter 6.1.4. Being conscious about this connection - having the awareness that everything is connected - changes the perspective on reality and has the potential to change actions that have an impact on the surrounding (cf. Expert 7:55,59 and cf. Lüpke 2012:74). The interaction with other humans is the field in which personal behaviour patterns and projections are revealed. It is the field in which consciousness-raising comes into practice and in which each human is the most vulnerable. But exactly this vulnerability has the potential to result in a change in consciousness and thus behaviour change (cf. Chapter 7.3.1.1). In Los Portales, this process of consciousness-raising is fundamentally supported by dream work through which the archetypes (according to C.G. Jung in Jacobi, 1971) can be accessed and integrated in the conscious mind. Additionally, to access even deeper information or to take a look at a certain aspect from a different point of view, family/systemic constellations, through which subconscious knowledge about the family background can be accessed and integrated, also is an effective tool (see Chapter 6.1.3.3). Out of personal experience and observations, the fact of having integrated these aspects in the conscious mind contributes to a mindful coexistence with others.



### 6.1.2.3.2. Getting to know oneself

Getting to know oneself is about facing challenges in life instead of hiding (cf. Expert 7:27ff.). It is about becoming aware of hidden patterns and the consequential projection of the origin of problems to external factors (cf. Lluch, 2012:43). It is about exploring and exploiting all the potential that is inherent in the subconscious mind and it is about developing and expressing the divine attributes that mostly lie dormant in a person (cf. Expert 12:12 and Resident Finca 1:24).

#### Challenges

Concrete examples in this case could be the consciousness-raising of personal weaknesses, such as i.e., the inability to coordinate and delegate. Maybe a person assumes that ‘by just quickly doing the task myself’ or assuming that ‘no one is able to do the task as good as I would do it’, a person easily is misled to exceed personal capacities because it would seem easier to do it oneself instead of asking for help or delegating. At the end, by not being conscious about this weakness other people are made responsible for the consequentially emerging personal difficulties in life. In Los Portales, dream work (see Chapter 6.1.3.3 for more information) enables people to create consciousness of such personal dark sides and the external work, regarding the different fields of actions and responsibilities, is often assigned to a person that needs to work on the abilities and attributes that such a position requires. In Los Portales, the coordination and distribution of the work in the garden is assigned to the person that has difficulties with making decisions or the organization of working processes: “The leadership in the garden with all its aspects and challenges is a tool for personal development - it was a personal challenge to develop attributes such as confidence, decision-making, organizing” (Resident Finca 16:38f.). Those are attributes associated with the archetype of the ‘animus’ (cf. ebd.). Another example is the administrative work or the representation of the Community to the outside. The person with a low self-esteem or who is shy with other people and who would prefer to spend the whole day in nature taking care of the goats, is assigned to this field of responsibility. Being confronted with the personal weaknesses on a daily basis is the best practice in becoming conscious about personal weaknesses and it

implies the highest potential to result in a change of behaviour. Resident Finca 13, the person responsible for the communication with the external and organization of seminars and workshops, appears like a person full of self-esteem and overflowing with energy. I could hardly imagine that she described herself as very reserved person; withdrawn into herself, before having been assigned to the responsibility of external relations.

Furthermore, “every member of the Community has worked in the city and lived in the Community in Madrid to prove oneself” (Resident Finca 2:26). “The challenge of life is feeling valuable just for yourself so it is important to prove yourself which includes to connect with society, fight for work and gain money” (Resident Finca 1:18).

Referring to ‘Human Permaculture’ and the Principles “Produce no waste and catch and store energy” (Permaculture Principle 6 and 2), ‘recycling’ or converting the human traumas or sufferings, the defensive or aggressive actions [which are considered to be waste] into sources of experience, knowledge or creativity; “frankly this is [a challenge] and resulting in a lengthy process” (Lluch, 2012:42). “Internal work is a choice for life and hard work. The personal development is a challenge and sometimes your path might be something different than what you had in mind for yourself” (Resident Finca 2:47). This becomes clear in the example above in which the person rather would have spent time with the goats instead of communicating with the external or organizing seminars and workshops.

People who are doing an internal work by facing challenges are “like stones that you throw in the river – they get formed and rounded up on all sides” and become smooth and gentle (Resident Madrid 8:19).

### Projections

According to Sigmund Freud, psychological projections are a “defence mechanism in which one attributes to others one’s own unacceptable or unwanted attributes, thoughts, or emotions” (cf. Freud Psychoanalysis, 2012). Los Portales represents this approach through the opinion that “all conflicts with other people are projections of yourself, so it is important to find out what your projections are - which one of your personal aspects you don’t like and you project it onto the other person? – and it is about working on that aspect” (Resident Madrid 8:18f.).

Also “what we have missed in life [on the psychological level], we project to the outside and we compensate with material or that we want more and never have enough” (Expert 7:110). This especially refers to the experience people have made in their infancy, e.g.: “[missing] support from the father, [lack of] love from the mother” (cf. ebd.). “Everyone projects into the group what [they] have lived in [their] families. The group [and the internal work] help [each one] to create consciousness of what [they] have lived within [their] family and what [they] are going to repeat with all the people surrounding [them]” (Resident Finca 1:29). Through conflicts that emerge between people, and especially in daily encounters, people are forced to face their behaviour patterns and personal aspects they don’t want to be aware of or which are still subconscious. In community there is no space to escape from these confrontations and it is a perfect environment to create consciousness about projections and personal weaknesses (see also Chapter 6.1.3.2).

“Becoming aware of hidden patterns and the consequential projection in which other entities (parents, teachers, superiors, the system, etc.) are made responsible for personal difficulties in life” (Lluch, 2012:43) also enables you to “set your children free and to give them the opportunity to live in a different way” (Resident Finca 16:54). This is cited here, as one of the main objectives of the Community is to provide a solid basis for the children in which they are supported in their personal development (Resident Finca 9:40 and Resident close-by 15:55) (cf. Chapter 6.1.1).

#### Development and exploitation of the full potential

Through getting to know oneself by taking into account the conscious mind as well as the subconscious mind, you become capable of revealing and expressing all your potential” (Resident Finca 1:24). “And to develop this potential, sometimes you have to confront yourself with the dark side to be able to develop your positive side after that” (Resident Finca 2:47). “You always have to clean out the dark stuff before you arrive at the good stuff” (Resident Finca 1:47f.).

This whole chapter is closely related to the subject “expressing and manifesting everything you are” (Expert 12:12) which is incorporated in the essence of being human (see Chapter 6.1.2.1).

The Permaculture Principle 11 “Use edges and value the marginal” can also be assigned to the development of the highest potential within Los Portales and illustrates this process in other words: By learning to sustain the view towards the conscious images and at the same time towards all the information that appears out of dreams, synchronicities, suffering and body symptoms, signals from the outside and more; it is possible to generate a high creative tension. “This tension allows the rising of resources in ourselves that remain unrevealed if we only put the focus on our socially acceptable profile or by only looking at one side of the threshold” (cf. Lluch, 2012:42).

#### **6.1.2.3.3. Responsibility, self-respect and self-love**

The vision of the leader concerning the dream work and ‘Human Development’ involves “that the people start taking their own responsibility, and start making their own elections” (Expert 12:30). “People need to stop thinking that the solution would come from other people [leaders]”; it is important to create “the awareness of the necessity to take back the own personal strength” (Expert 12:38). According to Lluch (2012:42) “taking the full responsibility for live, as co-creators and stop playing the role of a victim (of the economic-political system, of the past, of the families, bosses, schools....)” can lead to the desire of becoming self-sufficient - self-sufficient not only on the ecological level, but also on the psychological level (cf. Chapter 6.1.1.2.1).

In other words “the approach of doing a work about oneself is a form of becoming more responsible for personal acting. [...]. With an internal work you take possession of what is happening to you – you don’t make others or society responsible” (Resident Madrid 10:18). Humanity has adapted to the demand of society, to receive love and appreciation from the external and thereby has lost self-esteem and self-love: “we nourish ourselves through the view of the others, we are always waiting that the other tell us who we are and what we should do” whereas “what really is of value is to have the strength to fill your empty space yourself, to really be able to give and not asking for things all the time” (Resident Finca 3:30). ‘Human Development’ is all about “connecting with love” (Resident Finca 1:24); love towards yourself and love towards others (Resident Finca 9:9). But this involves a great deal of internal work which involves becoming conscious of the patterns that you created during infancy and which you stay loyal to (cf.

Lluch, 2012:43) and it “implies completely letting go of all projections in which other entities are made responsible for personal difficulties in life” (cf. ebd.).

#### **6.1.2.3.4. Equilibrium**

Another component of the ‘Human Development’ is the development of equilibrium. During the interview, several community members talked about the equilibrium within “the energetic field of the group, which is the subconscious part of the group” (Expert 7:77). The statement that “within the personal subconscious mind there is collective subconsciousness and you have a part of it” (Resident Finca 2:15), illustrates the connectedness of the energetic field of the group. Amongst the residents in Los Portales there exists “a dynamic equilibrium [which implies] adaptation; there is movement from one side to the other, it is nothing rigid” (Resident close-by 14:24). The internal work is the “source for equilibrium” and when the group is in balance there is a collective intelligence which allows the rising of leaders or the generating of rules and decisions that are based on the necessity of the group (cf. Expert 7:77 and Resident close-by 14:24). In Los Portales this collective intelligence, or collective subconscious mind, is also acknowledged through the interpretation of collective dreams. A collective dream will present archetypes from the collective unconscious and has significance for others as well as for the dreamer (cf. Dotson, 1996). Consulting these collective dreams contains creative solutions which the group has already elaborated on a different level of consciousness (cf. Poskin, unpublished) (see also Chapter 6.1.6.3).

Additionally, Chapter 6.1.2.1 looks at the attributes of male and female and highlights that the ‘Human Development’ “aims for an internal balance” - an equilibrium between the archetypes of ‘Animus’ and the ‘Anima’ (Resident Finca 16:32). This in turn generates a “balance of the personal energy” (Resident Finca 1:24) and results in “equilibrium [and connectedness] with yourself, others [and nature]” (Resident Finca 16:32).

### 6.1.3. Measures and tools used (to support the internal work)

*“The inspiration of the founders was fed by the **Jungian Psychology** and its conception that dreams are a magnificent medium through which to access, know and transform our subconscious. As in the Senoi tribe, the act of telling our dreams in a group creates a secure framework in which each person can show themselves in their totality, as they really are, without receiving anything other than empathy and support from the others”*

(Los Portales, 2013g [emphasis in the original]).

This statement reflects the importance of dream work within the Community and that “dream interpretation is the one [tool] which was used from the beginning and which is the most important” (Resident Finca 1:24).

The analysis of the information material revealed that, apart from dream interpretation, “it is through the human relations and coexistence [...], that each human being is able to progress in their individuality” (Los Portales, 2013g). Therefore the Community itself and also the contact to nature are considered to be the most important tools that support the internal work. According to their frequency in appearance these three tools and their relevance are explained in detail:

#### 6.1.3.1. Nature

Away from stimulations and distractions that occur in a city, a life in a place surrounded by plain nature provides the ability to a deep exploration of the self (cf. Expert 12:17). According to Expert (12:44ff.), “[being in contact with nature] is part of becoming a complete human being again”, hence to reconnect with the essence in being human, it is a crucial implication to foster the contact to nature. “To do our work we knew we had to live together in a group and in a place where we could really dedicated time to [the internal work]. It was obvious that this environment had to be in nature, the closest possible to a natural state” (Resident Finca 11: 19ff.). Through disturbances in a city, (such as alcohol, materialism, noise) people are easily distracted and “could miss out on the internal process that could bring [them] further” (Expert 7:66f.). Nature provides the atmosphere and

the tranquillity which supports the expression of feelings and enables people to make an “introspective process, like a purification” (cf. ebd.).

### **6.1.3.2. Community itself**

“The life in community is a great catalyser of the internal work, for the creativity and evolution. The group understands that through human relations and coexistence people [start the process of individuation]” (Lluch, 2012:40 and also cf. Chapter 0 The Essence of being human, p.50).

“A life in community appears like a perfect environment to learn how to [...] make use of all the human aspects hidden in traumas or in defensive actions” (Lluch 2012:42) and “there is nothing more valuable/fertile than being in contact with your personal vulnerability – like it is happening in a group. When you open up, the only thing that you receive is support and empathy” (Expert 7:68).

The following metaphor visualizes perfectly how community can be a tool for personal development: “In community there are more frictions and people are like raw diamonds and through frictions the diamonds are polished” (Expert 12:10). Community therefore is at service for the internal work of each one and “the support of the group is very important so that one can take a look inside” (Expert 7:2).

### **6.1.3.3. Dream interpretation**

According to the leader of the dream work (Expert 12:63ff.), “dreams connect us with our profound self, everything you are, the beautiful as well as the ugly. Dreams are the unlimited source of who you are, of what is your process of life/or in a moment in life, what is the natural flow of your life. Dreams can tell you about your state of connection with the source and with people around you. Dreams are the medium to communicate between your source and your actual state. They also have the potential to protect your integrity – when your integrity is in danger; your dreams are going to tell you. And dreams show you that you can be a lot more than the picture you created.”

To observe and interact with the dark sides or the “sleeping potential”, the dreams are a privileged tool. To share dreams creates a very particular connection between people. Within the Community Los Portales first years of “intense

introspection, especially through dreams, resulted in a fundamental consciousness raising” (deduced Permaculture Principle 1 in Lluch 2012:40).

To understand the message of a dream it is important to first understand the oneiric language. The oneiric language of each person can be found in the area in which the person is most interested in or a person is most occupied with. After that there is the collective unconscious mind with an immense repertoire of available symbols and images which represent the collective archetypes (cf. Poskin, unpublished). Archetypes which have already been addressed in previous chapters, are the ‘Shadow’ (dark side) and ‘Animus’ and ‘Anima’ (cf. Chapter 6.1.2.1 about male and female attributes). Facing the ‘Shadow’ is considered to be a moral effort and to absorb this ‘Shadow’ alone is a great challenge. This is why the residents in Los Portales define community itself as a tool for personal development (cf. section above).

In Los Portales the residents meet in pairs throughout the week to practice ‘mindful listening’ in which dreams are told and its essence is extracted. Also on a weekly basis the dreams and their essence is shared in a group meeting through which transparency is created which contributes to the harmony of the group. Sometimes the message of a dream is deepened by re-enacting the occurrences in the dream. Additional tools are applied if the information out of dreams seems not sufficient. Some of the other tools used in Los Portales are briefly presented in Chapter 4.3, however the most frequent enumerations, apart from the above mentioned ones, have been the following: the attributes of male and female (see also Chapter 6.1.2.1), kinesiology and the Essences of Perelandra and Bach (see Category 6.1.5.2), ‘mindful listening’ as well as family/systemic constellations.

Furthermore the residents of Los Portales and of the Community in Madrid meet several times over the year, mainly during holidays such as the Holy Week. In these intense meetings the whole group works on interpersonal relations and internal processes to strengthen the connection between the members and to further create consciousness about the individual processes of each member. But, as mentioned above, these meetings also create transparency between the residents which prevents the arising of conflicts.



### Fields of application

Dream interpretation is applied in several areas in Los Portales. First of all, it is used to support the personal development of each one; but it can also be applied in conflict solutions, in the issue of leadership (cf. Chapter 6.1.6.2) or decision making (cf. Chapter 6.1.6.3).

Expert (12:63ff.) says that dreams, step by step, accompany the processes that we are in (cf. Poskin, unpublished). Examples of collective dreams are found in groups of people who share a common project, such as the Community Los Portales (cf. ebd.). Conflicts are a part of life, especially in groups in which people are confronted with each other on a daily basis. But especially in the issue of conflict management, it is important to be aware of personal behaviour patterns (cf. 6.1.2.3.2 about projections). When conflicts arise it is good to consult dreams to facilitate the consciousness-raising about the conflicts' origin.

From personal observations, social conflicts in Los Portales are mostly dealt with in the group. It includes the consulting of dreams, synchronicities and other tools or signs that occur through the subconscious mind of the group and the people in conflict are supported by empathy and trust. So at the end it might not be the most important aspect to solve the problem, and in most cases this is not possible anyways. But in Los Portales the most important aspect is to accompany the conflict and the affected persons with a 'feeling of not being alone' and 'not being judged' because the group is able to acknowledge and to resonate with the people in conflict, either in the very moment or through other similar experiences in life.

So even in conflict situations, the group takes strength out of the people's connectedness that is established "on a soul level" based on the "invisible, all mysterious and the subconscious" (Lluch, 2012: 42). Including these processes and methods in a group results in a higher toleration of diversity in the outer dimension and thus represents a great tool for conflict management (cf. ebd. and also Chapter 6.1.2.1 about finding the essence of being human).

#### 6.1.4. Connection between internal and external work

According to Lluch (2012:41) the internal work [is] strongly connected with the external work, as by “working the dryness of the land, [the people in Los Portales] became more aware of [their] personal aridity inside [themselves]” and by “consciously taking the rocks out of the fields, [they] also removed the rocks from [their] hearts”.

This can also be associated to the current engagement with the element water which was briefly addressed in Chapter 6.1.1.2. Expert (cf. 12:100ff.) explains this approach as follows: “[The group] had to expose [itself] profoundly to the topic of water” instead of just creating a reservoir with the help of machinery. This means that “on the internal level [the group] had to cure [itself] referring to the topic of water and on the external level we had to do little things at a time”. For explanatory reasons; water is associated with emotions and earth is associated with the inner balance and connectedness (cf. Resident Finca 16:59). This approach is also illustrated through the metaphor used above.

Before making changes or taking actions externally, the group needs to work the aspect internally and relate to the certain element, that is to say, that the fruits of their internal work are growing in harmony with the fruits coming from the fields and from the garden. Based on these metaphors, Luciano Furas (in Lluch, 2012: 40), refers to ‘**Human Permaculture**’ [emphasis in the original] when talking about Los Portales.

“Change always starts from the inside and when you start making the effort to put yourself above egoism and individualism and laziness [...] you start supporting and helping and you start developing empathy and like that the quality of connection [between people and also with the environment] generates and grows” (Expert 7:57ff.).

In other words, the internal work “reflects in everything - in your relations with people, with nature and in your perception of the physical/materialistic world” (Expert 12:50). “It is all connected, when you experience something inside you reflect it to the outside!” (Resident Finca 4:20). Nevertheless, the following three subcategories emerged by analyzing the connection between internal and external work:

#### **6.1.4.1. Respecting humans and nature equally**

This chapter can basically be described just by one sentence: “We don’t want to contaminate ourselves so we are not going to contaminate our land” (Resident Finca 1:32). This statement reflects perfectly the attitude in Los Portales and stresses out the groups connection with the environment and other people as well as the group’s awareness of the mind and matter balance. In Los Portales the dualism that was addressed in Chapter 2.2.1 seems to be abolished.

#### **6.1.4.2. Expression and facilitation of internal work**

In Los Portales the “external work is a tool to facilitate and support the internal work” (Resident Finca 2:18). “The internal work has to be expressed in every moment of your life and behind every work there is something more sacred and creative” (Resident Finca 1:26). This relates to the topic that was introduced in Chapter 6.1.2.3.2 about challenges, in which the different responsibilities in Los Portales are often assigned to the person who needs this external work with its specific requirements to support his/her internal work (cf. Resident Finca 11:44; 5:8f. and 1:41). “The specific external work “helps to develop your potential” (Resident Finca 5:13).

The represented results with reference to the connectedness of internal and external work implicate the description of the Community’s relation to nature and the value the Community assigns to the environment.

#### **6.1.4.3. Relation to nature / Value assigned to the environment**

The people in Los Portales perceive nature as a tool to support the internal work and therefore assign a high value to it (cf. Chapter 6.1.3): “The relation to nature is something very strong and it connects me. When I feel lost, nature brings me back and calms me down” (Resident Finca 5:17). The majority of the community members feels connected with nature and perceives nature as part of themselves: “[Nature] connects you with all the elements, it forms a part of you, and I feel bigger when I am out in nature” and “the more you are anchored in the earth, the more you can connect yourself with the superior” (Resident Finca 1:16).

Furthermore, nature has a balancing and soothing effect (cf. Resident Finca 9:7; 13:59; 16:24;5:17; et al) and is perceived as harmonious in itself (cf. Expert

12:46). In Los Portales nature is experienced as an energy source (Resident Finca 13:59) and acknowledged as a living organism (Resident Finca 16:14, 63).

### 6.1.5. Perspective on reality

According to Lüpke (2012: 74) humanity needs to “adopt a different perspective on reality” to realize “a shift in values and worldview” which represents the last stage on the way towards the Great Transformation. The new self-perception as humans and the ‘Human Development’ (in Chapter 6.1.2) profoundly contribute to the Community’s perspective on reality. The following subcategories, describe how this new perspective on reality also influences the worldview of the Community and thus illustrate the group’s perception and approach concerning an opening towards the “**spiritual dimension of existence**” (cf. Los Portales, 2013g [emphasis in the original]), its incorporation into daily life but also referring to the actual ‘global situation’.

#### 6.1.5.1. Spirituality

“Our experience shows us that the **spiritual dimension** of the human being is not developed by adhering to a school, church or system of beliefs, rather that spirituality comes when our **interpersonal relations** become **creative**, based on **confidence, respect and collaboration**” (Los Portales, 2013b [emphasis in the original]). The homepage of Los Portales refers to the “**spiritual dimension of existence**” as a capacity to be “open and receptive to the mysterious and the unknown; ready to integrate a greater part of [human] being; to transcend their limits; to allow the ultimate sense of every experience to emerge” (Los Portales, 2013g [emphasis in the original]).

“Being spiritual, [in Los Portales] is [shared through an internal work by] manifesting [a person’s] highest potential” (Expert 12:50). This is also reflected in their perception of the physical/materialistic world (cf. ebd.).

Expert (12:96ff.) exemplifies that “people, before, looked above when looking for spirituality and they had to live isolated because the sexual energy of humans was too strong to concentrate only on spirituality. Today the mind is much stronger than before, stronger than the lower chakras, and also people start remembering indigenous spirituality”. Indigenous spirituality honours and respects mother earth and “it is about looking down and being aware of the connection with earth and

nature". At this moment "spirituality happens on horizontal level", which means, that "I look at all my surrounding, above and below, and all around me, realizing that there are other humans and in each human is see god". Today there are people who say "we are angels who are incarnated on earth and not poor humans who have to wait a lifetime to rise to heaven to become angels". "Spirituality means enjoying life on earth!" (cf. Chapter 6.1.2.1).

"Spirituality is more life! It is a deeper connection to nature and an attitude towards life" (Resident Finca 5:50) Ecological agriculture follows the same principles – it brings you closer to nature and you have the urge to treat nature with respect and you generate more respect to the people who produce. Little by little, in an obligatory way you start respecting yourself more, and others. "The source seems the same". (cf. Resident Finca 5:50).

The above described attitude "comes along with the new energy" – the female energy, which "is present at the moment" (Resident Finca 16:44 and Expert 12:98). Enjoying life on earth is associated with the feminine and "when people relate to spirituality, to nature, to communities, this all builds on the basis of this new energy" (cf. ebd.).

#### **6.1.5.2.Connectedness**

In Los Portales "the awareness of 'being one'" is the prevailing perspective on reality (Resident Madrid 8:46). This perspective is reflected by the Community's practices which recognize the interconnectedness of all life, and by the internal work that stimulates an awareness/consciousness that leads to sustainable choices for the community members and for humanity as a whole (cf. Expert 7:55,59;cf. Lüpke 2012:74). The issue of connectedness was addressed several times, in the categories above (cf. Chapter 6.1.2.3.1; Chapter 6.1.4, Chapter 6.1.5.1; etc.) and will be further addressed in following chapters.

Summarizing about connectedness, one resident (Finca 16:10f) contemplated about the work in the garden: "Sometimes when I do my work I have the thoughts that I don't just do it for this place here – but that is has a broader impact on a different level. [...] I feel that I am doing this not just for me, but for the others as well and finally it contributes to something bigger."

Another community member (Resident Finca 1:71) reflected about connectedness and described: "I knew that I could only connect with superior things in the

universe when I am deeply connected with myself [...]”. In other words “the more you are anchored on earth, the more you can connect yourself with the superior” (Resident Finca 1:22).

According to the people in Los Portales (Expert 7:55), “the reason for being human is being connected (with everything) with the universe, with god...” and “we need this connection [with the spirits of nature] more than ever with all what happens in nature [climate change and global change in general]” (Resident Finca 1:21).

The following subchapters reflect the Community’s awareness of the connectedness of all life. The below displayed perceptual fields and approaches, either emerge out of this recognition of interconnectedness or lead to its recognition, respectively manifest this recognition.

#### **6.1.5.2.1. Universal Intelligence**

Before presenting the Community’s perspective on Universal Intelligence, it could be helpful to outline the definition or the modern use of this term.

As Einstein states in his book “The World As I See It” (1949) “Some people believe that human intelligence is the pinnacle of natural evolution and can outdo anything nature has to offer - and that there is no God, and that nature has nothing remotely resembling consciousness or intelligence. Others say that nature's (or God's) brilliance is greater than any human intelligence - ultimately awesome in its scope and endlessly surprising in its details - and that human intelligence is a small but elegant expression of this larger intelligence and has much to learn from it.” “The more we are conscious of universal intelligence and connect ourselves to it, the more intelligence (and wisdom) we will have to work with. One might also describe Universal Intelligence as the mind or will of God or Spirit” (The Co-Intelligence Institute, 2003) or “the governing power of nature” (Allen, 1914). The perspective of the Community is best described with the one statement of Resident Finca (11:53): “At the end it is not you who commands!” which goes in line with their “confidence in life” (Resident Finca 1:65) and with their “faith in synchronicity” (Resident Finca 11:53). The Community’s belief in something superior also becomes visible when asking about the future of Los Portales: “People come when the universe wants it like that. If not then this is its [the Community’s] destiny (Resident Finca 1:65) (see also Chapter 6.1.8.3).

Referring to the Human Permaculture Principle 6 ‘Creatively use and respond to change’ (Principle 12 in Permaculture), Lluch (2012: 43) also describes Universal Intelligence and how it is acknowledged in Los Portales: When the “interpersonal relations are turning creative, based on confidence, respect and collaboration”; a superior reality [universal intelligence] manifests itself and guides people. In these moments limits are able to be overcome, when the “deep sense of life appears and when [people] are able to accede to the mysterious infinity in which [they] live and that surrounds [them]”.

### Belief in the spirits of nature

By acknowledging the “governing power of nature” (Allen, 1914) the Community represents the point of view that mother earth is a “living being” (Expert 12:47, Resident Finca 4:12) and that “[she] is the responsible entity [...]” (Resident Madrid 8:28). The people in Los Portales take the view that “through nature you are able to embed vibrations of love into the earth” (cf. ebd.) so “it is important to take care of the land you own” and effectively this means “take care of the energies that you bring into nature” (Expert 12:48). The energy should be “correct and respectful” (Resident Madrid 8:27).

Referring to this statement, some people in Los Portales appreciate “permaculture [as] what the earth is asking you for. It is her who decides and you observe”. Machaelle Wright, founder of Perelandra, explains (in Rueckert, 2009) that “the desire of the intelligences within nature to touch in with us, to communicate and work with us, is intense. [...]” Hence a lot of the work in Los Portales is based on “intuition” that emerges through the deep connection with nature (cf. Resident Finca 16:63 and 22) and through the co-creation with the spirits of nature.

“Conscious work with the material lets you gain awareness of its real value” (Resident Finca 1:14) and in Los Portales, they use various tools to deepen this consciousness (see also Chapter 6.1.3). “It is difficult to always stay present” so by demonstrating cooperation and co-creation with nature and the environment through e.g. the use of the Essences of Perelandra<sup>25</sup> and by using the self-test of kinesiology<sup>26</sup>, you become more conscious and connect with the elements that you are working with (cf. Resident Finca 1:12). In Los Portales, such conscious work

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<sup>25</sup> Perelandra - Centre for Nature Research: <http://www.perelandra-ltd.com/> (24.09.2013)

<sup>26</sup> Empower Life – How To Self-Test with Kinesiology: <http://www.empowerlife.com/selftest.html> (24.09.2013)

with the material and the application of the tool, mentioned above, is implemented in several different working areas. I. e., the Community consults the spirits in the process of baking bread. Through the test of kinesiology and the application of the Essence of Perelandra, the residents connect and interact with the spirits and thus ask for advice concerning the texture of the sourdough or the amount of time that it needs to rest. Another field of application is the work in the garden. The specific tasks follow the biodynamic calendar (according to Maria Thun<sup>27</sup>) in which astronomical factors, such as the cycles of the moon, are integrated. The Community is also planning on establishing a separate garden in which every activity is carried out after having consulted the spirits of nature. Comparable approaches can be observed in the Community Findhorn in Scotland<sup>28</sup>.

“I think it is the truth that we need to co-create and that there are spirits of nature that we don’t see. They [the spirits of nature] need us so that we act and specify certain things – it is an interaction between the two [us and them] – they can give us proposals that we don’t know of” (Resident Finca 1:12).

By following the system that Machaelle Wright developed, it is possible “to benefit from nature but at the same time being in accordance with the spirits of nature” (Resident Madrid 8:29)

Resident Finca (16:25) describes the conscious work with the elements as “magical moments [...], sometimes alone in nature but also in group, when people are working together in silence and communicating on a different level”. And referring to the work in the garden, there are community members who “see more behind the vegetables” and who not only want to improve the quality on the ecological level, but also on the energetic level (cf. Resident Finca 16:48f.).

### Synchronicity

The term “synchronicity” is coined by C.G. Jung. Jung defined synchronicity as “meaningful coincidence”, “acausal parallelism” or “an acausal connecting principle” (cf. Main, 2004: 12). “More fully, he defined it as ‘the simultaneous occurrence of a certain psychic state with one or more external events which

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<sup>27</sup> Mari Thun has explored the interaction of plants, bees and food processing dependent on the cycles of the moon. Based on her research, she elaborated a calendar with specific days that are dedicated to plants according to roots, leaves, flowers and fruits. For more information see [http://wiki.astro.com/astrowiki/de/Maria\\_Thun](http://wiki.astro.com/astrowiki/de/Maria_Thun) (24.10.2013) or Thun et al., 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Findhorn Community – Co-creation with nature: <http://www.findhorn.org/aboutus/vision/co-creation/#.UmjsyT9EJIs> (24.10.2013)



appear as meaningful parallels to the momentary subjective state' ” (cf. ebd.). This coincidence does not always take place simultaneously but partly in great delay (cf. Loepthien, 2011: 152) and can be grouped under three categories (Main, 2004: 12):

1. The coincidence of a psychic state in the observer with a simultaneous, objective, external event that corresponds to the psychic state or content, where there is no evidence of a causal connection between the psychic state and the external event, and where, considering the psychic relativity of space and time, such a connection is not even conceivable.
2. The coincidence of a psychic state with a corresponding (more or less simultaneous) external event taking place outside of the observer's field of perception [...].
3. The coincidence of a psychic state with a corresponding, not yet existing future event that is distant in time and can likewise only be verified afterwards.

As already mentioned, “the Community formed itself around a therapist and Jungian analyst” (Lluch, 2012: 40) and therefore the group has a strong “faith in synchronicity; that nothing happens for coincidence and that it is wrong to direct the things” (Resident Finca 11:53). One resident of the Finca (2:28) explained her coincidence with the Community through synchronicity: “There are calls from the soul that take you here and not there!” An example on how synchronicities influence the daily life of Los Portales is explained in Chapter 6.1.1.2.2 about the improvement of the water supply. Concerning the decision about the construction of an artificial water reservoir, the I-Ching was consulted and the answer was negative (cf. Resident Finca 16:58 and Expert 12:100). After that, Resident Finca (16:58) received a message about a more natural way of improving the water supply in Los Portales, the “Keyline System”. The group assigns this event to synchronicities.

Loepthien (2011: 64) assigns synchronicity to ‘spiritual connectedness’ according to which “spiritual connectedness can be experienced through a conscious awareness/perception of synchronicities” [own translation].

### Confidence

“The more we are conscious of universal intelligence and connect ourselves to it, the more intelligence (and wisdom) we will have to work with. (The Co-Intelligence Institute, 2003) and the more confidence will be send out to what happens in life (cf. Lluch, 2012:42).

Taking a look again at Chapter 6.1.1.2.2, the concluding statement reflects exactly this attitude of the residents and highlights that “everything happens when it is time for it” (Expert 7:108).

People need the most confidence when they are facing change, this especially became obvious when asking the community members about their perception of Global Change (see also Category 6.1.8.1). In Los Portales, people are aware that “there is always change” (Resident close-by 15:46) but with the acceptance in mind that “nothing happens for coincidence” (Resident Finca 11:53). And by looking at the deduced Permaculture Principle 12 (Principle 6 in Lluch, 2012: 43), creatively using and responding to change is a “key element in the durability of a living system, such as the Community Los Portales”.

#### **6.1.6. Structure of organization**

To get an overall impression of Los Portales, it is also important to take a look at the organizational structure of the Community. In the following subchapters the social dynamic aspects in Los Portales, such as the balance of individual and collective, the aspect of leadership, as well as decision making processes are evaluated.

##### **6.1.6.1.Reconciliation and synthesis between individual and collective**

To initialize this topic of the balance between individual and collective, Lluch (2012: 41) deduces the eighth Permaculture Principle ‘Integrate rather than segregate’ and transfers it to ‘Human Permaculture’ in Los Portales in which life in community, always with the interior work as the central theme, formed the “engine for a profound integration of each one into a collective each time more creative.”

In general “things work out on the basis of a communal sense – coming from the heart” and “our intention is to make decisions that go along with the well-being of each one and that put the highest human aspect of each one in the first position (Expert 7:63f.). It is within the objective of the Community to “create harmony so it is important that everyone feels good with the work that he/she has and feels in place” (Resident Finca 5:7) “The group can’t proceed if not everyone has got his/her place – everybody is very important – it is about the energy of the group” (Resident Finca 1:45). Expert (7:77) also stresses out this energetic field of the group and refers to it as a “collective intelligence” that manifests itself “when the group is in balance”. This balance corresponds to a “dynamic equilibrium” which allows the rising of leaders or the generating of rules that are based on the necessity of the group (Resident close-by 14:24).

It can be said that in Los Portales “the important aspect is that the person wants to work on him/herself” and through this process of consciousness raising the person strives for self-actualization and autonomy through which he/she automatically “contributes to the harmony of the group” (Resident Finca 4:39).

#### **6.1.6.2. Leadership**

Concerning the question of leadership in Los Portales, the members gave a consistent answer, which is reflected by the following statement: “There are as many leaders as persons in the Community. Each person has capacities that others don’t have. The ideal is that “people don’t create that maternal image of the leader but start taking their own responsibility” (Expert 12:30). Each person can reach the possible maximum of his/her potential and be a leader in the field where his/her potential lies” (Expert 7:70). These statements also illustrate what already was described in Chapter 6.1.2.3, in which creating consciousness of your personal abilities and weaknesses (cf. Resident Finca 16:37), respectively consciousness towards yourself is the overall objective.

The Permaculture Principle 7 ‘Design from pattern to detail’ (Principle 7 in Lluich, 2012:43) allows reflecting about the coherence of a living system, the common vision, and the perception of its evolutionary global process; definitely it helps to tackle a sensitive and difficult topic, the topic of leadership.

“In this generation leadership is always brought in context with power – for me those are different things” (Expert 7:74). “Power fills an empty space, so what

you have to understand is where that empty space comes from” (Resident Finca 2:55).

The suffering generated by the abuse of power has evoked the “desire for a society without leaders, without authorities”. But to advance in this direction, the hidden patterns to which people stay loyal need to be made conscious to realize the role that leadership and authority takes in life.

By unknowingly obeying to “patterns that sustain infantilism or irresponsibility, leadership is easily mistaken by taking over power over others with which automatically abuse takes place. “

By obeying the “patterns of insurgence, it is difficult to accept natural leadership within the area in which a person has its talent”, or people become entangled in “endless arguments with their fruitless egos”, only pursuing ‘to be justified’, which means to get one’s own way. In the article Lluch (2012: 43) states that “ironically, the patterns of rejection of authority keep people involved in the power struggle”.

In turn, by achieving to connect with the patterns that make each person unique, with the creative potential of each person, by making oneself entirely responsible for their life (‘empowering oneself’); people are able to fully accept their personal leadership and naturally people are able to accept the leading role of others, without repression or the abuse of power.

As an example to reinforce this approach, one of the residents, with a strongly developed ‘animus’, identified through dream work and revealed through difficulties in accepting leadership of others, was sent to Madrid to work as a secretary for many years. It implied a great effort for the person to accept the personal dark side which was addressed through this challenge and hence to acknowledge the leading role of others. But today this period is appreciated as enrichment for personal development.

The general approach to reveal and connect with personal behaviour patterns is not an easy task and implies to completely letting go of all projections in which other entities are made responsible for personal difficulties in life. “By projecting the origin of problems to external factors, the expectations are that only the external can provide a solution for the problem”. In case of the person responsible for the garden, or the person responsible of communicating with the external (cf. Chapter 6.1.2.3.2 about challenges), the raising of consciousness and the

consequential change in behaviour manifested itself through a higher self-esteem and the acknowledgement of personal strength in these areas in which the people before saw their weaknesses.

The Community Los Portales holds the view that in reality a leader is invisible, in the subconsciousness of the collective where the roles are designed and the 'patterns' are formed. The energetic field of the group elects the leader with the measure that it is him or her who has the best 'antenna' for the moving forces within the collective field, and the field pushes and expresses this. When the leader is not able to carry out its functions in a given moment, another person displaces the leader because the energetic field of the group pushes to intervene. Most often people are not aware of the change in roles since the topic (of leadership) is discussed in terms of abilities and competences and not in terms of power.

In Los Portales the leader chooses a role such as the others. This role previously exists in the energetic field of the group and is expressed or is manifested through a person, whose personal psyche allows the concretion just as it was formed by the group in the collective field.

"But how does the group know that the energetic field chooses a person as a leader?" In Los Portales it is never made through a scrutiny of elections but through dreams, synchronicities and other signs coming from the invisible world, the subconscious mind of the group. Based on this, the power can never be associated to the person who assumes the leadership. In the words of the I-Ching<sup>29</sup>: "The leader or the chief is there to make sure that nobody takes the power." (cf. Lluch, 2012: 43).

The leader of the dream work and 'Human Development' in Los Portales puts the aspect of leadership this way: "You need to be forged in the furnace of a leader, some may know how to do it better but they are not forged in the furnace of a leader" (Expert 12:28) .A lot of leaders are "only hiding behind an image of power" (Expert 12:33). The qualities of leadership are: "patience, confidence without knowing where this all goes, capacity to quickly resonate with the positive potential of the people so that a person can find its place in the group" (Expert 12:56). According to Daniel Goleman (2007 and Expert 12:55), these qualities can be found in the characterization of 'resonant leadership': "Resonant

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<sup>29</sup>I-Ching: The Book of Change, from the Chinese culture – [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I\\_Ching](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Ching) (27.09.2013) and also Jacobi, 1980: 290

leaders, who exhibit attributes of emotional and social intelligence, are better able to connect with others most effectively – and so lead well”. According to Expert (cf. ebd.) a resonant leader explores the path and the others follow, opening up the path even more. A resonant leader provokes that everyone else wants to take their own leadership and a resonant leader talks about the difficulties to not create the image of a ‘guru’: "I don't want them to see me like someone who knows everything. So I expose myself to be an example for the internal work so that the others can resonate." Resident Finca (1:42) describes this resonant leadership of the experts (7 and 12) as follows: “The leaders of the internal work are constantly doing internal work, and they can take us to where they have arrived already but not further” which resonates with the statement of the leader (Expert 12:33) itself: “The more responsibility you have, the more internal work you have to do because you are exposed to the abuse of power that you can practice on others”. Resident Finca (2:53) also stresses out that "the leader was the one who worked the most and who was at service for the tribe. This is the essence and a very important aspect” but also something that is forgotten or eliminated in modern society (cf. ebd.)

### Flexibility

The above outlined topic of leadership already describes how leadership is acknowledged in Los Portales. The important aspect of flexibility within leadership based on the demand of the energetic field of the group and perceived as abilities and competences instead of power (cf. Lluch, 2012: 43), can be further expressed by the following statement: “The leader is the person who, in a given moment, is the most adequate/appropriate for the group. But sometimes it shifts and we don't notice that and in that moment no one will interfere because it is in harmony with the energy of the group” (Expert 12:56 and cf. also Expert 7:77). This way of perceiving leadership avoids power struggles and maintains the important aspect of flexibility within the group.

### 'Human Development'

In Los Portales “each person accepts leadership, not for taking the power, but to personally develop and to make experiences” (Resident Finca 1:41, also see Chapter 6.1.2.3). For example there is a great potential for conflicts, when a person, with difficulties in decision-making, is responsible for the garden and another person, with difficulties of accepting the leading role of others, is waiting for the instruction of that specific person. The only possibility to avoid a conflict is when each person is aware of the counterpart’s weaknesses. In this case, transparency, consciousness and mindfulness profoundly contribute to a harmonious coexistence. In Los Portales “every sector has a leader and the others have confidence in the person responsible because [the group is aware that] on the internal level it is important that everyone has his/her strength” (Resident Finca 5:70). “[The group] is working towards the objective, that each time there is more diversity, in this sense” (Expert 7:71).

Referring to ‘Human Permaculture’ (Principle 3 ‘Use and value diversity’ in Lluch, 2012: 42), the reality shows that the more aspects of the human soul are involved in a group, the more the group is enriched and the more stable is the groups’ ‘ecosystem’.

#### **6.1.6.3. Decision-making**

In the Community the profound decisions concerning the internal work (on personal level) or decisions that have a direct impact on the whole group are made “through dreams, synchronicities and other signs coming from the invisible world, the subconscious mind of the group” and are “supported by the leader concerning dream work” who also guards the vision of the group. Like that “the power can never be associated to the person who assumes the leadership” (Lluch, 2012:43, Expert 12:41 and Resident Finca 4:26). The group also uses “various tools for decision making, such as I-Ching<sup>30</sup> and kinesiology<sup>31</sup>” (Resident Finca 4:26 and Resident close-by 15:24) which reflects their belief in a “superior reality [...] that guides people” (Lluch, 2012: 43). The Community quite often used the I-Ching for decision-making processes and as Jacobi (1980: 290) states; this book is based

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<sup>30</sup> See 29

<sup>31</sup> See 26

on the Chinese philosophy of Taoism and Confucianism and it is used for oracular inquiries which asked for clarifying directions and guidance.

In the different fields of action, the person responsible makes the decision and the “decision is made for the good of the Community” (Resident Finca 5:72).

Generally, after the weekly group meetings on dream work and also every Sunday after the communal meditation the different organizational and administrative aspects are discussed and decisions are made “on a consensual basis” (Resident Finca 4:26). As described above, a consensual basis in Los Portales is achieved also through consulting dreams, synchronicities and other tools or signs that occur through the subconscious mind of the group.

#### **6.1.6.4. Community Madrid**

As briefly quoted in Chapter 4.2, the community members are divided into 25 people living on the Finca Los Portales and 15 people living and working in the Community in Madrid. In Madrid the Community founded the formation and therapy centre “Crealliance” that offers, amongst others, natural health techniques (homeopathy, yoga, reiki, etc.), psychological consultations, art therapy and creative scripture. The Community also founded a ‘school of languages’, the “Bolingén Institute” in which the residents teach “creative languages” which means that the students “learn in a creative way” (Resident Madrid 8:3ff.)

The Finca Los Portales is financially supported by the formation and therapy centre in Madrid. (Kevin Lluch; in litt. 15.11.2012). Generally, the Community (in Los Portales as well as in Madrid) practices a common economy and in the initial phase every member started off by contributing the personal assets to the communal objective. This allowed the Community the construction and establishment of the places as they are today. There have been some fluctuations amongst the composition of the community members, especially after the death of the founder who represented the “fundamental axis” and who followed a “very traditional form of leadership” (Expert 12: 29). Such a “traditional form of leadership” provoked that unconsciously people mistook the founder for a mother figure or guru and felt comfortable in the Community because “someone else was making their decisions for them” (Expert 12: 30). Expert 12 had the level of consciousness and the abilities to assume the follower of the dream work and ‘Human Development’ (cf. Resident Finca 1:41) which was accepted by the group



(cf. Chapter 6.1.6.2 about Flexibility). As mentioned in Chapter 6.1.6.2, it was important for Expert 12, “that the people do not create a maternal image of [her]”. She “wanted people in the Community to start taking their own responsibilities and making their own elections” (Expert 12:30). The change from a traditional way of leadership to a resonant leadership provoked that many people left the Community: “During that time many people left but the ones who are here now are really motivated [and committed to personal development]” (Expert 12:39).

Before, the Finca received all money from the Community in Madrid, but through the smaller number of residents after the change, the residents in Madrid had to work really hard to financially support the Finca (cf. Resident Finca 13:48f.). To diminish inequities, the people worked in turns in Madrid and on the Finca but “swapping every year doesn’t allow you to foster your work [internally as well as externally] which makes life really hard” (cf. ebd.).

By now this has changed and people who live in Madrid want to live there and vice versa (Resident Finca 13:49). This distribution is also based on the requirements that are necessary for the personal development of a member; and for some the circumstances in a city foster the certain aspects that a person needs to work on (cf. Chapter 6.1.2.3.2): “Everyone has lived in the city and on the Finca but there are some people who feel better and more useful (referring to their internal work and personal potential) in the city” (cf. ebd.).

Even though part of the Community lives in Madrid, there exists a “strong connection” between the residents in Madrid and Los Portales. Over the year there are several weeks in which the residents are “working together in an intense way” (Resident Finca 1:60). These periods not only refer to intensive individual processes and group processes (cf. Chapter 6.1.3.3) but also to the external work (e.g. harvest season of the cereals).

### **6.1.7. External relations**

The Community holds the view that “it is important to have an impact on society, to be part of an organism and to collaborate with others” (Resident Finca 2:14). “You can’t live isolated from society in your little world, ignoring the rest” (Resident Finca 4:37).

In the following subchapters the different reasons for opening up to the external are outlined.

#### **6.1.7.1. Being useful**

“Once you have found a way of living in peace, with love between the people, clearly you want to share that with [others]” (Resident Finca 11:36). This statement reflects the general opinion of the Community: “It is time to share what we have created, if not it would have been for nothing” (Resident Finca 1:54). According to Expert (12:94) “this here is beautiful and if we would keep it to ourselves the essence would die”. “It is within the essence of the group to be useful to the rest of the people” (Expert (12:43). So the group decided that “all this here in Los Portales can be useful in a way that people from the exterior benefit from our seminars [on dream work and family/systemic constellations] (Expert 7:16) and our “experience [in this field] can help people a lot” (Resident Finca 9:33). “An experience like this here forms part of a social movement in a broader sense, towards a social change - just like the Transition Town Initiatives” (Expert 7:16). “We don’t want to be an isolated island, we want to form part of the network of people who are trying to create this broad movement of change” (Expert 12:16f). In this movement of change “it is about everyone taking the responsibility for oneself and we want to give tools to the maximum of people (Resident Finca 5:67).

Since the opening to the external the Finca offers several seminars and workshops on a monthly basis. The number of participants varies between 5 to 20 people, depending on the topic. Among other things there are seminars on ‘The Energy of Dreams’ supported by systemic/family constellations, ‘Hormonal Yogatherapy’, ‘Cosmetic Alchemy’ and ‘Living Cuisine’. Additional to the seminar costs, the Community charges 30 Euros a day for accommodation and food. Accommodation is available in two of the houses and the meals are partaken with

the residents in the communal dining-room. Since the offering of such seminars and workshops, the Finca is able to carry a great amount of the costs incurred themselves without being dependent on the Community in Madrid.

According to some residents (Resident Finca 5:67 and Resident close-by 14:34), “there [is] an external demand for ‘Human Development’” which is confirmed through the number of participants and feedback the Community receives from the exterior (cf. Resident Finca 16:52). The positive reaction of the people “makes us realize that we are able to change something [with our work] and that people who spent time here are stronger to make changes and feel enriched” (cf. ebd.).

Opening up to the external “[...] is an adventure of the heart!” And the Community manifests this through “being at service for others” (Resident Finca 1:54).

Apart from offering seminars, the Community also joined the organisation WWOOF España (see Chapter 4.2) “so that people from outside were able to come here” (Expert 12:115). Continuously, there are between four or six woofers visiting the Finca. The average time of volunteers living and working on the Finca is between one and three months. During the different harvest season of olives and wheat, there is double the amount of volunteers participating.

#### **6.1.7.2.Exchange**

The offering of seminars and people visiting “creates connections to people that enrich [the group’s] life [...]” (Resident Finca 9:44f). In Los Portales there is a lot of correlation and “the richness lies in the exchange” (Resident Finca 16:51).

Apart from giving seminars and sharing experiences, many community members mentioned that they would also like to offer products that are produced on the Finca, such as bread, olive oil and dairy product (cf. Resident Finca, 9,33; 2:33, etc.). Additionally, the Finca is very isolated and the Community is looking for regional producers “who sell more than one product” so that it would be worthwhile for them. These are all reasons why the group joint meetings of a ‘network of producers and consumers’: “We are searching at the moment to find producers in the region and also to find people who are interested in our products”. (Resident Finca 5:26)

### 6.1.7.3. Acceptance

The external relations are also “about creating a good relationship with the surrounding and maintaining a good relation and interchange of vicinity” (Expert 7:13ff.). In the early years of the Community’s existence in Belgium, the group was involved in difficulties. According to Resident Finca (11:17 and Expert 7: personal communication) “[the group] left Belgium because people accused [them] as a sect and [the residents] started having problems at work and with the people. The way of looking at a community at that time was very different to the perception today. “20 years ago it was like going to a sect when entering a community” (Resident Finca 9:26) and “people had prejudices of this lifestyle” (Resident Finca 4:44). Spain was already more advanced and undeceived in this point of view (Expert 7: personal communication).

This is also one reason why it is so important for the Community to be involved in external relations. Like that the people get to know them. People know that they are here and they know what the group is doing”. And this positively contributes to the general acceptance of the Community’s lifestyle (cf. Expert 7:13f. and 33): “There are very positive reactions of the people. And with the crisis in the back, the people start realizing that what we are doing makes sense”.

Of course, the opening up to the external is also seen as an approach to deepen the personal development of each one in the group. “We were ready to face the next challenge. [Opening up] was a stimulation which made it possible that different parts of ourselves could be manifested – some good ones and some bad ones” (Resident Finca 2:37f.). In the beginning, it was difficult for the group not to feel overrun and invaded by people (especially by wwoofers) and it was a challenge for them to get to know their limits (cf. Resident Finca 3:35). Of course, new conflicts emerged through external relations and through new people living and working on the Finca. But according to the community members “conflicts happen on purpose and when you don't confront them they will repeat themselves until you face them. So people come here for a reason, they come here to show you something (Expert 12:111ff.)

Another important aspect for the Community was also “to internally get over the fear of being accused as a sect. and it was important to open up to really eliminate this inner fear” (Resident close-by 14:36).

### 6.1.8. Vulnerability

The vulnerability question was mainly included in the list of interview themes to analyze the Community's perception of global change. This issue also represents one of the research questions.

During the analysis of the information material two additional subchapters emerged in which the Community perceives itself in a vulnerable position. These two aspects are the financial situation of the Community and the interest of people to join the Community out of the 'wrong' reasons.

#### 6.1.8.1. Global Change

By associating global change with changes in economy, urbanization, globalization, health, land-use, etc. the Community's perception of risks caused by these kind of changes can be described as relatively low. The residents gave a consistent answer concerning the vulnerability question if they perceive themselves in a vulnerable position: "It is the opposite" (cf. Resident Finca 4:42; 9:36; 16:65 and Resident close-by 14:38, etc.). "Los Portales is a safe place because it goes along with the sense of time, the sense of change" (Expert 7:103). The Community perceives itself in line with the movement of change towards cooperation and new values (cf. Resident Finca 3:50; 4:43 and Expert 7:104). As outlined in the last chapters, the residents of Los Portales put human relations into the focus (cf. Resident Finca 9:36; 5:77) and therefore consider themselves in a good position. Whereas they perceive the dominant system with its 'wrong' values and its destructive way of functioning as vulnerable (cf. ebd. and Resident Finca 16:65). One resident even pictured "communities [as] a danger for the government, because communities have the ability to change the old patterns that the government is using as a basis" (Resident close-by 14:38).

This perception changes slightly, when directing the focus on climate change. According to the perception of Expert (7:107) "Climate Change will not definitely happen like the predictions and scenarios are saying...it won't stop raining here in winter". But what is obvious to the group is that they "have to adapt to Climate Change" (Resident close-by 15:53 and cf. Chapter 6.1.1.2.1). But at the same time this statement is relativized through the words of Resident close-by (15: 53 and 46): "But we have to adapt to everything" because "there is always change".

Concluding I would like to stress out again the Community's confidence in a higher power which was already illustrated in Chapter 06.1.5.2.1 and their acting according to this principle: "We did well to the place so the place is going to give good to us" (Resident Finca 2:59).

### Resilience

'Resilience' can be associated with the Permaculture Principle 12 'Creatively use and respond to change' (Principle 6 in Lluch, 2012: 43). Referring to Human Permaculture, Lluch (cf. ebd.) describes resilience as the "capacity to live positively to changes, to learn from them and to accompany the confrontation and the dismay with which life stimulates people and changes people". Life in community creates a save space in which people can open up, let go of competitiveness and start to learn to create without rivalry. But this "inevitable includes an internal work that transforms the power of the inner armour to the inner being. The armour protects people from their fragility but its harshness results in the fact that changes are perceived as threat."

The Permaculture Principle 10 'Use and value diversity' highlights that "diversity reduces vulnerability to a variety of threats and takes advantage of the unique nature of the environment in which it resides" (Permaculture Principles, 2013). As several times described in the chapters above, this can also be transferred to the communal life in Los Portales: "The more aspects of the human soul are involved in a group, the more the group is enriched and the more stable is the groups' 'ecosystem'". This explains why the residents of Los Portales do not assign major importance to the issue of climate change and global change in general.

#### **6.1.8.2. Money and manpower**

The Community underwent an investigation which is called 'Spiral Dynamics'<sup>32</sup>. It "displays the position of each person within the Community and displays the peoples' weaknesses" (Resident Finca 1;64). For Los Portales, the weak aspects turned out to be money (cf. ebd.). The group is aware that they need money to improve the ecological sustainability of the Finca (i.e., referring to the supply with renewable energies in Chapter 6.1.1.2.2) (Resident Finca 9:3).

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<sup>32</sup> Spiral Dynamics – <http://spiraldynamics.org/what-is-spiral-dynamics/> (02.10.2013)

“Money is always the problem” (Resident Finca 13:48), so the Community developed some ideas to improve the financial situation which are currently in the implementation phase (i.e. selling of bread; see Chapter 6.1.1.2.2). But “generating money meant that [the residents] had less time to work in the field” so the Community wasn’t able anymore to handle the workload that a 200ha property requires. This was another reason why the group joined the organization WWOOF España (cf. Expert 12:115).

All these changes happened in the last three years, since the Community’s opening up to the external. And this process claimed some of the routine within Los Portales: “at the moment everyone is busy and doing his/her own things [to adjust to the new division of work and dispersion]” (Resident Finca 13:55). Maybe this is one ‘sacrifice’ that the Community had to make “but the coherence is still there and the project with the bread can help [the group] a lot referring to the financial situation, but also “this project helps [them] to get together again” (cf. ebd.).

### **6.1.8.3. New people / Refuge**

Especially with the economic crisis in Spain, there are a lot of people at the moment who are interested to join the Community Los Portales (cf. Resident Finca 13:15ff.). “But most people who are interested, in fact just want to live in nature and escape from society and its challenges” (cf. ebd.).

According to Expert (7:27), there are a lot of people in this world that are “passing through difficulties”; especially with the actual situation [economic crisis]. There are people who are against the system, against alternatives and these people are looking for refuges. “The difficulty to manage oneself in the system, to relate to the system makes people look for refuges.” (cf. ebd.)

This, “probably subconscious” attitude of finding a refuge to live in peace and away from society is not in accordance with the vision of Los Portales: “Searching for personal growth, this is the motor that everyone needs to have if he /she want to be part of the Community” (Expert 7:35). “This base has a value that needs to be maintained” (Resident Finca 4:40). “The important aspect is that the person wants to work on her/himself and like that you contribute to the harmony of the group” (cf. ebd.) and “to making this place useful for humanity” (Expert 7:29). According to Expert (7:97) there are still communities that have been

created “because [their residents] are against the system, against everything” but these communities “created islands” and this does not go in line with the objective of Los Portales (cf Expert 7:29 and see Chapter 6.1.1 and Chapter 6.1.7.1).

Serving as a refuge does not interest the people in Los Portales (cf. Expert 7:30 and Resident Finca 1:75). They take the view that “you don’t come to live in a community when you can’t live outside” (Resident Finca 2:26). This attitude is reflected through the internal work of the group in which it is important to know how to prove yourself and how to feel valuable just for yourself (cf. Chapter 6.1.2.3).



## 6.2 Mind map based on participant observation and ero-epic dialogue

Based on participant observation and ero-epic dialogues (see Chapter 5.3.1), a mind map (see Figure 4) was generated that serves as a conceptual model of the Community and that reflects the actual situation within Los Portales. Figure 4 shows the different fields of action that exist in Los Portales. These are divided into internal work and external work. The internal work within Los Portales creates the social sustainability within the group and aims for the generation of personal growth of each individual. The external work serves mainly as a tool to support the personal development of each member and therefore nurtures the energetic field of the group. As a matter of course the external work also represents the basis of existence for the Community, referring to the supply with food and employment; and it is both fulfilling and inevitable in the country side.

Figure 4 displays how internal work with its different methods and tools, such as dream interpretation, family/systemic constellations, mindful listening and ‘Human Development’; contributes to the social sustainability in the group. Chapter 6.1 described how the different approaches are integrated and applied in the daily life of the Community and it illustrates the potential and impact such work can have on a harmonious coexistence of a group as well as on its surrounding.

Furthermore Figure 4 displays the different fields of action within Los Portales. Chapter 6.1 stressed out to what extent, an external work supports the raising of consciousness and to what extent the internal and external work is connected.

“It is not for the tools you use but more for the emotions and the empathy you show” (Expert 7:60). A change in consciousness puts yourself “above egoism and individualism and laziness [...], you start supporting and helping and you start developing empathy and like that the quality of connection [between people and also with the environment] generates and grows” (Expert 7:57ff.). The method on how external work is implemented therefore reflects the process of personal development. Hence the ecological sustainability can only develop in line with the social sustainability. It is the same with the leaders of the dream work and the ‘Human Development’: “they can take us to where they have arrived already but not further!!” (Resident Finca 1:42). Thus ecological development can only progress till the point where internal development has arrived.

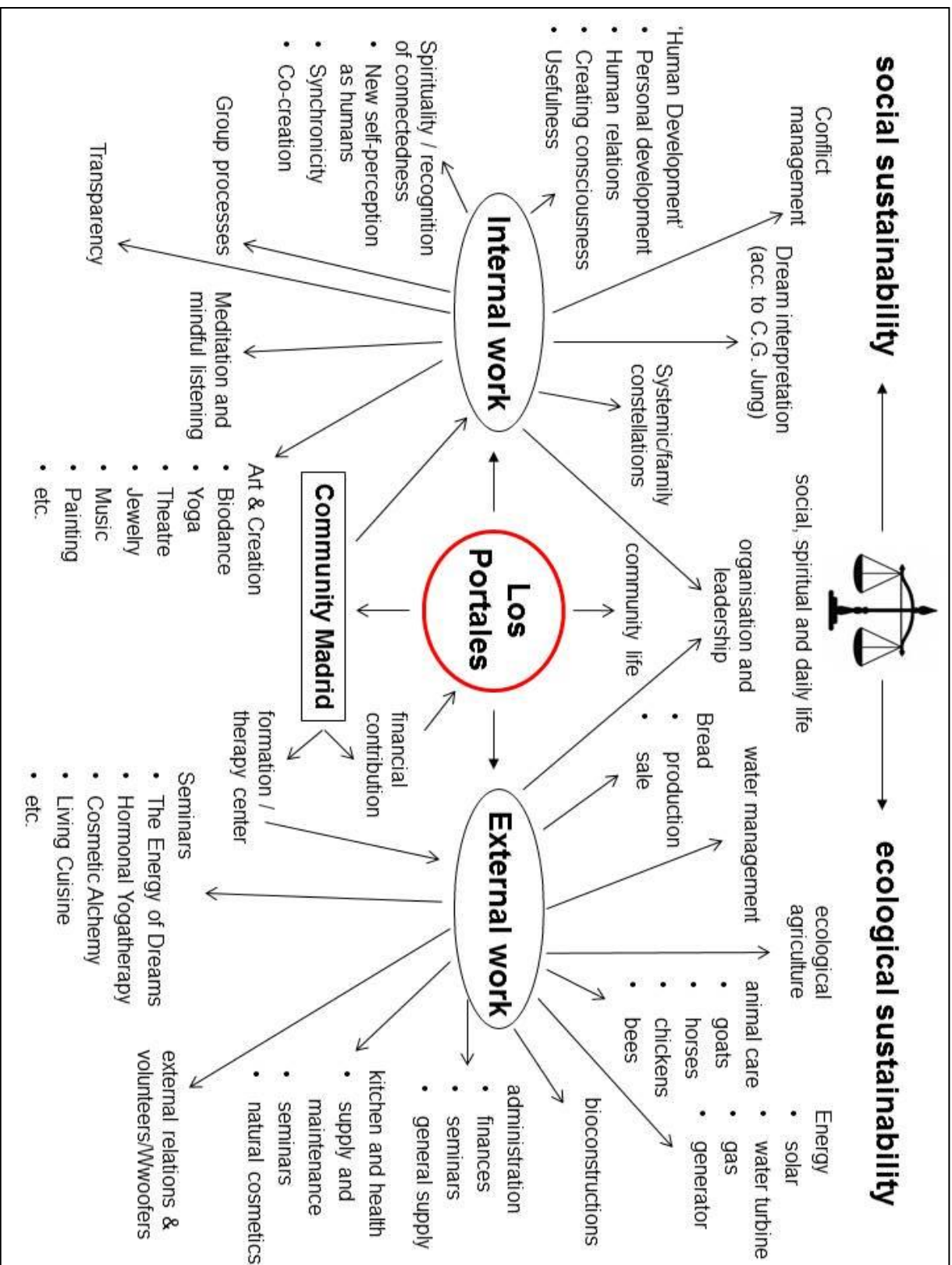


Figure 4: Mind map of the Community Los Portales (Source: personal illustration)

### 6.3 Visions and Anecdotes of the residents

During the interview phase, I came across all kinds of different characters. Despite the broad variety of people, they share the same values referring to personal growth, nature and life in community itself. In Figure 5, some of the visions and anecdotes of the community members are presented that were expressed during the interviews. The statements, in a way, sum up the general attitude and motivation of the group and their spiritual dimension of existence. The visions and anecdotes serve as an inspiration and as matter for reflection and amusement.

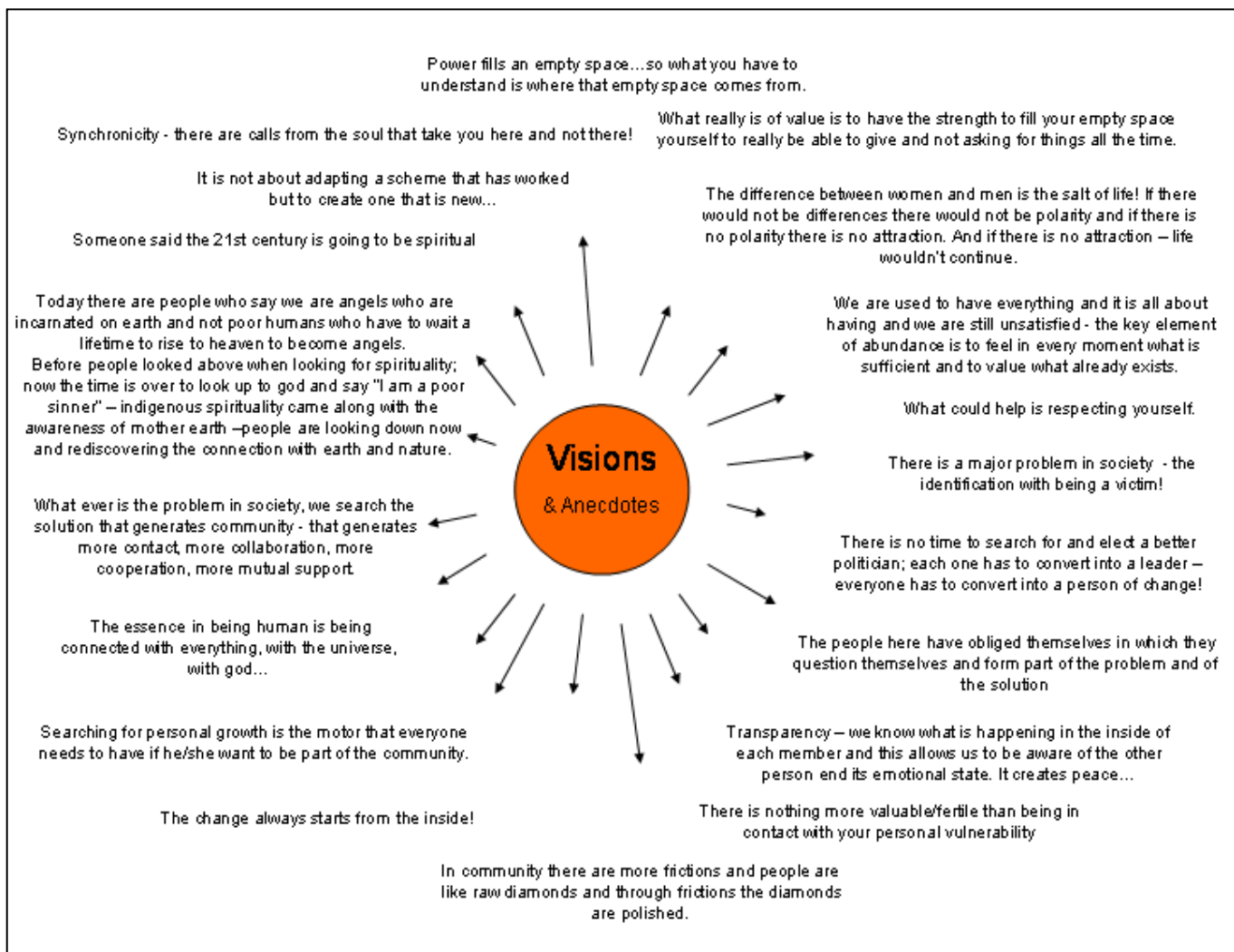


Figure 5: Visions and Anecdotes of the residents (Source: personal illustration)

#### 6.4 Evaluation of the Community Sustainability Assessment (CSA)

The CSA was conducted by one of the community members after my stay in Los Portales. According to Expert (7), it was completed on the best of the group's belief.

As mentioned in the methodical chapter, the assessment was conducted to verify the comparability of the results from Los Portales with other communities. It also underlines the validity of the results concerning ecological, social and spiritual sustainability in the evaluation chapter and at the same time substantiates them. The full assessment is included in Annex B on the attached CD.

Each of the three sections is divided into seven, so-called 'Checklists'. For the overall score, as well as for the three sections, and the different checklists, the following grading system (Table 2) is applied:

**Table 2: CSA Grading system (Source: GEN, 2013c)**

<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>Section Score</b>	<b>Checklist Score</b>	<b>Indication</b>
999+	333+	50+	Indicates excellent progress towards sustainability
500 - 998	166 - 332	25 - 49	Indicates a good start towards sustainability
0 - 449	0 - 165	0 - 24	Indicates actions are needed to undertake sustainability

Taking a look at the Ecological section in Los Portales, Table 3 shows medium deficits in Checklist 1. 'Sense of Place'. This deficit refers to the "community location and scale as well as to the topic of restoration and preservation of nature" (GEN, 2013c). Further medium deficits can be observed in Checklist 7. 'Energy Sources & Uses', this mainly refers to the insufficiency of the supply with renewable energies and the aspect of energy efficient use. A mayor deficit can be observed in Checklist 6. 'Waste Water & Water Pollution Management', especially concerning the "negative waste water side effects and the decreased quality of any water leaving the community, as compared with when it entered" (cf. ebd.).

Comparing these results with the ideas for improvement (see Chapter 6.1.1.2.2) it becomes obvious that the awareness of the community members corresponds with reality and that the members are conscious about their impact on the environment. The described deficits still lead to an overall rating of 301 points in the Ecological sector, and according to the CSA, this still **“indicates a good start towards sustainability”**.

The Community’s “awareness for ecological behaviour came along with the inner process and consciousness raising” (Resident Finca 1:39) which was the reason for the community’s establishment. This might explain why Los Portales, regarding the ecological aspect is not as advanced/established as maybe some other communities with the same durability (see Chapter 6.1.1.2).

**Table 3: CSA “Los Portales 2013” - Ecological section**

<b>Checklist for the Ecological section:</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Sense of place	36
2. Food Availability & Distribution	57
3. Physical Infrastructure, Buildings & Transportation	43
4. Consumption Patterns & Solid Waste Management	56
5. Water – sources, quality & use patterns	46
6. Waste Water & Water Pollution Management	27
7. Energy Sources & Uses	36
<b>Total points for the Ecological section</b>	<b>301</b>

The Social section in Los Portales (Table 4) shows minor deficits in Checklist 3 ‘Networking Outreach & Services’. According to the CSA (GEN, 2013c), this refers to the improvable “internal and external resource exchange”. Chapter 6.1.6.4 describes the Community’s relation to the external and displays that the residents are trying to improve the situation (also see Chapter 6.1.1.2.2). The minor deficits in the resource exchange or in the ‘local economy’ (Checklist 7) might be attributed to the quite recent opening of the Community to the external. Giving this process a few more years, the overall economic situation and the resource exchange in Los Portales could be enhanced.

The mentioned deficits only have a minor impact on the overall score in the Social sector. The total points sum up to 411, which **“indicates excellent progress towards sustainability”**.

**Table 4: CSA “Los Portales 2013” - Social section**

<b>Checklist for the Social section</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Openness, Trust & Safety; Communal Space	58
2. Communication – the flow of ideas & information	58
3. Networking Outreach & Services	51
4. Social Sustainability	55
5. Education	68
6. Health Care	68
7. Sustainable Economics – healthy local economy	53
<b>Total points for the Social section</b>	<b>411</b>

The Spiritual section in Los Portales (Table 5) does not show any deficits and therefore reaches a total score of 449 points which also **“indicates excellent progress towards sustainability”**.

This is also substantiated through the results in Chapter 6.1 which reflect the Community’s “support for inner development and spiritual practices” (GEN, 2013c) and the extent to which the Community values and encourages human diversity. According to the CSA (cf. ebd.), the group’s recognition of the interconnectedness of all the elements of life displays that the group “knows its place in and relation to the whole” and “contributes to the creation of a peaceful, loving, sustainable world”.

**Table 5: CSA “Los Portales 2013” - Spiritual section**

<b>Checklist for the Spiritual section</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Cultural Sustainability	85
2. Arts & Leisure	51
3. Spiritual Sustainability	53
4. Community Glue	53
5. Community Resilience	71
6. A New Holographic, Circulatory World View	62
7. Peace & Global Consciousness	74
<b>Total Points for the Spiritual section</b>	<b>449</b>

Summing up all the three sections (Table 6), Los Portales reaches a total score of 1161 points which “**indicates excellent progress towards sustainability**”.

**Table 6: CSA “Los Portales 2013” - Overall Score**

<b>Overall CSA Score</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Indication</b>
1. Ecological Checklist	301	a good start towards sustainability
2. Social Checklist	411	excellent progress towards sustainability
3. Spiritual Checklist	449	excellent progress towards sustainability
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>1161</b>	<b>excellent progress towards sustainability</b>

## 7. Discussion

### 7.1. Critical reflection

As a critical reflection after the evaluation of the results, amongst others I would like to emphasise the challenge that on the one hand emerged through the overlapping, but on the other hand through the differences of the role requirements during fieldwork.

During the research semester in the Community Los Portales, I took the role of the investigator or (research) scientist and at the same time I took the role of a visitor and private person. These different roles demand different requirements.

In the role of the investigator and during field work it is important to generate few normative presuppositions to adopt a neutral position to capture the specific characteristics of the Community. On one side it is important to keep one's distance to not lose sight of the research project and to maintain the structuring of the fieldwork but on the other side it is important to gain the group's trust to ensure openness to the situation that would contribute to a positive outcome of the analysis.

In the role of the private person, I wanted to incorporate myself into the Community the best possible; and I wanted to support the Community in the different work areas. At the same time, it was important for me to feel comfortable without being perceived as someone who was investigating all the time. Through my personal interest in sustainable lifestyles and approaches to personal development, I was personally very involved and motivated, which made it difficult in some situations to maintain the role of the investigator.

Another challenge that emerged during the analysis was the fact that the real heart of the thesis evolved during the interview sessions and participation in the dream work. These processes profoundly contributed to my understanding of the Community's 'Human Development' and their consequential objective – that of self-knowledge and usefulness on global level. With this new understanding, the focus of my thesis shifted from the analysis of practical ways for ecological sustainability towards the awareness that personal development is the key element on the path to a Great Transformation. This realization confronted me with the next difficulty; to scientifically prove that spirituality or 'Human Development' supports socio-ecological sustainable behaviour.



The whole issue is a very complex topic, which justifies the volume of this thesis whereupon I was still trying to reduce the content to the essential.

## **7.2. Motivation and barriers for socio-ecological sustainability**

In the following chapters, the evaluated information material is interpreted in connection with the objectives and the research questions of the thesis. The results can be compared to and discussed with the results of the prior literature research and precedent theoretical approaches of the introductory part of this thesis (see Kunze, 2009a, Wagner, 2012a, Lüpke 2007: 74 and Macy 2007: 27; 2013).

According to Kunze (2007: 35), a stable project with elements of self-organisation, needs to maintain the contact to the external to extravert practices of the project and to support collaborative research. With its 30 years of experience and recent opening to the external, the Community Los Portales represents an excellent example for this purpose. The results in Chapter 6 confirm the extent to which 'Human Development' in Los Portales has a positive influence on the socio-ecological sustainable behaviour of the community members (see research question in Chapter 3.3).

The internal work, as practiced in Los Portales, even represents several approaches to gain awareness of the importance of the human needs that were displayed in the Wheel of Sustainability in Chapter 2.1.

To further demonstrate the potential of 'Human Development', it appears reasonable to discuss this approach taking into account the social systems outside of Los Portales. The following chapter describes different motivational aspects for socio-ecological sustainability and at the same time the barriers that stop people from acting in a socio-ecological sustainable way. The motivational aspect was not part of the official list of interview themes, but it evolved during several interviews due to the fact that the respondent was able to answer freely (cf. Mayring, 2002: 67). Within an atmosphere similar to an open dialogue (cf. ebd.), the respondents tended to talk about barriers and motivational aspects in society and how 'Human Development' has an influence on them. On the one hand this issue reflects the opinion of the community members concerning the socio-ecological behaviour within the Community itself, but on the other hand this aspect also invited community members to think about the motivation of people who do not live in Los Portales and maybe not even in any other community.

### 7.2.1. Dissatisfaction with the system

The most frequent suggestion of the community members, concerning the motivation issue, was the dissatisfaction of people with the dominant system “in which the individual was deleted in favor of some interests [mass conformity and compatibility]” (Resident close-by 14:21). “There is the necessity of counteracting to the scale of the excess of individualism and competitiveness of the modern society” (Expert 7:39). The dominant system got tangled up in the pursuit of profit and competition (cf. ebd.) and in the wrong values of leadership (cf. Expert 12:32). It is difficult to break these misleading values; especially when the leaders, “from the pope to the chief executives are all not very shiny examples” (Resident Finca 4:29). Therefore one decisive aspect that can be displayed as a barrier for socio-ecological sustainability is that “in [the current] generation leadership is always brought in context with power” but for the people in Los Portales “these are two different things” (Expert7:47 and cf. also Chapter 6.1.6.2). In the article about Human Permaculture, Lluch (2012: 43) states that “ironically, the patterns of rejection of authority keep people involved in the power struggle”. “Today people are looking for a different path because they realize that the other one doesn’t have a lot of future” (Resident Finca 16:65). The great economic crisis (especially in Spain) makes people realize that they cannot maintain the accustomed structure anymore (materialism, individualism, consumerism) (cf. Resident Finca 9:25). “That opens their eyes and changes their mentality” (Resident Finca 13:25) towards a “different way of life” (Resident close-by 15:26). People have started to realize the negative aspects of materialism and the abuse of power that takes place in the dominant system (cf. Resident Finca 2:53). The suffering generated by the abuse of power has evoked the “desire for a society without leaders, without authorities” (Lluch 2012:43). The excessive demand of the system and its incapacity of solving global problems generated some kind of fear which either results in repression (cf. Macy, 2013 in Chapter 2.2.2) or in the desire to live a life outside of this system. According to the residents in Los Portales (Expert 7:27 and cf. Chapter 6.1.8.3), this is what “makes people look for refuges”.

### 7.2.2. Human relations vs. materialism

The motivation towards socio-ecological sustainability seems to be driven by a change in society away from modernism and capitalism towards a different lifestyle carried by human relations (cf. Resident Finca 13:28).

“In the global life, the feeling of affiliation does not exist” (Resident close-by 14:39). According to Resident close-by (cf. ebd.) the danger in society, therefore is the feeling of non-membership and individualism which keeps people away from getting involved in cooperation and bilateral support. “There is an immense solitude of people in the city and this [individualism] is what modern society has created (cf. Expert 7:39). There does not exist any team spirit and “everything is about being first and personal gaining” (Resident Finca 13:37f). Most people only work to be able to go on holidays and not for the objective of the enterprise (cf. ebd.). But to change that, the enterprise would have to adjust its values and principles to the same behavioural qualities and values that also make human and ecological relations work which according to Resident close-by (15:30) are “respect, love, openness, solidarity/coherence, honesty and the aspect of sharing. Society needs to create a collective objective to make people cooperate (cf. Resident Finca 4:28). People who strive for a socio-ecological sustainability strive for a lifestyle that incorporates these values. Furthermore the generational structure which got lost in today’s society is regaining value (cf. Resident Finca 2:22): “There are no grannies, daughters, big families anymore and this family environment has been very important and supportive”. Now people are searching for this kind of collaboration again in which people support each other, in which they feel that they belong to somewhere and that they are of value (cf. Resident Finca 3:31). Especially with the economic crisis, it becomes more and more difficult for people to maintain the structure of “having a house and two cars” (cf. Resident Finca 9:25). Hence the difficulties of balancing families and jobs gain the upper hand.

Therefore, the aspect of sharing, both for economic reasons as well as for social reasons becomes more attractive and motivates people to take another path towards socio-ecological sustainability.

Furthermore, there are a lot of distractions and disturbances that occur in a city. These stimulations hinder you from seeing what is essential in life (Expert 12:17 and 7:67): “In the city you can drown your sorrows in alcohol or materialism [...] and you miss out on the internal process that could bring you further.” Resident Madrid (10:22) does not perceive materialism as bad itself “but if it is materialism that outweighs everything and there are many excesses that are not in favour of the evolution of humanity.”

But “reducing consumerism is associated with losing the quality of life” (Expert 7:95, Resident Finca 5:36 and also see Kunze 2009a: 30; Kunze, 2004: 23 about sufficiency in Chapter 2.2.3). The misperception of sufficiency “is a common illness in society in which we feel that something is missing. But this has to do with what we are missing on the psychological level [...]; what we have missed in life we project to the outside and we compensate with material or that we want more and never have enough” (Expert 7:110 and cf. also Resident Finca 5:35). “Material can nourish you and people have exchanged humanity through materialism. We don’t feed ourselves anymore through human relations but through materialism” (Resident Finca 3:52).

Human relations are a “fundamental aspect” within the personal development (cf. Resident close-by 14:15) and people realize that [cooperation and relations to other people] make you more satisfied than materialism [and individualism]” (Resident Finca 5:48).

Today “material starts to lose value [...] and the importance of human relations comes back into the focus” (Resident Finca 3:52, 54).

### **7.3. Transferability on the psychological level (internal work)**

Generally, the reaction of the community members concerning the aspect of transferability was accompanied by scepticism: “People would have to change a lot on the human level” (Resident Finca 4:28).

This statement already describes roughly the requirements that are needed to implement sustainable principles and possible approaches of the community life in Los Portales to any social system.

One of the objectives of this thesis (see Chapter 3.3) is to facilitate the “third stage of change” (Lüpke, 2012: 74) by displaying possibilities to achieve a shift in

values and worldview through “adopting a different perspective on reality”. According to Lüpke (cf. ebd.) this demand requires “a new self-perception as humans” which is based on “new values regarding society, the environment, and future generations” and even “new forms of spirituality”. Also the statement of Steiner (2004 in Leophtien, 2011: 26) in Chapter 2.2.2 goes in the same direction: “Real freedom is not arbitrariness but optimal realisation of the human potential [...]”. This correlates exactly with the objectives of the ‘Human Development’ in Los Portales in which the development and exploitation of a person’s full potential is embedded (see Chapter 6.1.2.3.2).

Furthermore, Steiner (cf. ebd.) adds that the optimal realization of human potential “can be realised through a respectful and vibrant relation to the natural environment, to other people and to ourselves”. Chapter 6 revealed in what way the “third stage of change” is already implemented in the Community Los Portales and to what extent it contributes to socio-ecological sustainability.

The approaches and perceptions displayed below show how certain aspects of the lifestyle in Los Portales can be transferred to any other social system and empathize how the implementation is dependent on personal development.

The approaches’ dependency on personal development justifies a few overlappings and repetitions that occur in the chapters below. Nevertheless it seemed reasonable to divide the transferable options into several categories to stress out to what extent external factors, such as behaviour and its impact on the surrounding, are linked to internal causes, such as unfulfilled psychological needs or the feeling of inferiority. Resident Finca (4:28) describes this connection in other words and adds that people would have “to accept and believe in personal responsibilities and accept their personal subconscious mind” to realize the impact that external work can have on the surrounding.

The presented approaches and suggestions not always represent new ideas but maybe the Community’s approach and perception puts another complexion on the ‘old’ matter.

### 7.3.1. Different perspective on reality

The objectives of the ‘Human Development’ (Chapter 6.1.2.3) demonstrate an approach on how to create a new self-perception as humans through personal development.

#### 7.3.1.1. Personal development

In the evaluation chapter, the different approaches and objectives of the ‘Human Development’ in Los Portales were demonstrated. Additionally the impact that this internal work has on the coexistence of the Community and its contribution to environmental connectedness was made obvious. It should be conveyed that the ‘Human Development’, described in Chapter 6.1.2, represents a crucial element for any social system regarding the sustainability and transferability question.

To intensify this understanding, the following sections display the urgency in which personal development is needed, how it can be approached and in what way it can result in behaviour change towards socio-ecological sustainability.

#### The “Power of Vulnerability”<sup>33</sup>

As Macy (2013) points out in Chapter 2.2.2, the greatest danger in society today is repression - repression of the fear that is generated by helplessly looking at the destruction of the planet. “We are scared of taking a look at the feelings that we have about the condition of the planet” (Macy, 2013). So people suppress this feeling of fear and pain which results in inaction.

According to Resident Madrid (8:19f. in Chapter 6.1.2.3.1), committing to an internal work “is a life-long project” and either creating consciousness becomes part of your life or you are scared of your “hidden patterns” and tend to suppress your subconscious mind instead of acknowledging it (cf. Resident Finca 2:24). This spells out the similarities of repression caused by external factors

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<sup>33</sup> The term is coined by the vulnerability researcher Brene Brown. In a short speech at TEDxHouston about “The Power of Vulnerability” (see [http://www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability.html) [15.10.2103]); she talks about her research and a journey in which she was getting to know herself better and at the same time, started to understand humanity even more. She now is using her work to explore a concept that she calls Wholeheartedness. (cf. TED Conferences, 2010 and Brown, 2010)

This reference is cited here to scientifically substantiate the “Power of Vulnerability” as acknowledged in the Community Los Portales.

[destruction of the environment] and caused by internal factors [subconscious mind]. But the approach to tackle these reasons for repression is the same: “when we accept the pain [generated by the destruction of the planet or generated by raising awareness towards the subconscious mind]; when we acknowledge it and talk about it, it will turn into the living prove of our connectedness with all life” (Macy, 2013 [own translation]).

In the words of C.G. Jung (in Macy et al., 2007: 141 [own translation]): “A new consciousness is not born without pain.”

But it has the potential to change the perspective on reality. The Community’s commitment to personal development and the described results, confirm this approach in which allowing oneself to be vulnerable leads to a connectedness with a person’s ‘Higher Self’ and with everything in the surrounding. “There is no better school then to find courage in the cause of fears, to gain self-esteem by accepting envy and rivalries, to look back on solitude and reappraise linkages and connections, to calm down the rage by developing empathy and compassion.” (Lluch, 2012: 42). According to Expert (7:68) “there is nothing more valuable/fertile than being in contact with your personal vulnerability” and this is exactly what is practiced amongst the group in Los Portales (cf. Chapter 6.1.2.2) and what any social system needs to support sustainability: “When you open up, the only thing that you receive is support and empathy”.

#### Influence of personal development on the relation to nature

Internal work, respectively personal development, can be motivating, referring to the aspect of sustainability, because it “helps to develop awareness and thankfulness” (Resident close-by 15:19) “towards yourself but also with respect towards others [social aspect] and what surrounds you [ecological aspect]” (Resident Finca 9:15). “Internal work is important for a harmonious coexistence [social sustainability]” (Resident Finca 2:20). And with nature as a supportive tool, internal work helps you to return to the awareness that “[it] is a living being” (Expert 12:47). “In one way this obliges you to respect her and to do the most possible to integrate yourself in where you live” (Resident Finca 9:11).

“The motivation for socio-ecological sustainability comes with the internal connectedness that you create with nature; it is like an opening of the heart to the earth that you inhabit [...]” (Expert 12:81).

Hence, on the one hand, the residents of Los Portales represent the view that an internal work influences a positive behaviour regarding socio-ecological sustainability. But on the other hand, some of the residents also point out that “the time is calling for [a change in behaviour]...we are obligated to act [in a sustainable way]” because “global warming is omnipresent and you see that there is a problem” (Resident Madrid 10:29). It is evident that the main reason for people to live in a community or to practice sustainability, is for the ecological awareness concerning the actual state of the planet (cf. Resident Madrid 10:49<sup>34</sup>). Consequentially, there are “people who are not doing an internal work but who have chosen to live in nature. These people value nature but they are still against the ones who don’t respect the planet” – this means they still have ‘war-like’ energies inside themselves (cf. Expert 12:48). With an internal work people become more conscious, they become aware that they have to take care of the energies that they bring into nature (cf. ebd. and also Resident Madrid 8:27). This makes me draw the attention to Chapter 6.1.4 in which the following statement appears: “Change always starts from the inside and the more you are in contact with yourself, the more you have an impact on others” (Expert 7:57). Along with it, Chapter 6.1.4 expresses the importance to “create consciousness internally before acting externally” (Resident Finca 16:58f, Expert 12:111).

Following the approach of Los Portales, conflicts and insurgencies, such as i.e., rebellious acting to encourage ecological sustainability, evolve because of personal projections. So without an internal work, conflict solution and a peaceful path towards sustainability is difficult (cf. Resident Finca 9:36; 13:29 and Resident close-by 15:38). The lack of internal work, thus the unawareness of the subconscious mind, keeps these people away from realizing that they are in a ‘fight’ and that this “war-like energy” they spread, makes nature feel bad and does not have the potential for improvement (cf. Expert 12:48 and Resident Finca 16:38). “Descriptively, radicalization means change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defense of the group” (McCauley et al., 2008: 415ff.).

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<sup>34</sup> In September 2012, the annual “Encuentro de Ecoaldeas” [Meeting of the Ecovillages], organized by the RIE, was hosted in Los Portales. Concerning the motivation of people to live in community or ecovillages, the following reasons were listed according to their frequency (cf. Resident Madrid 10:35ff.): 1. Ecological aspects, 2. Social aspects, 3. Economic aspects, 4. Spiritual aspects.



Taking into consideration the people who live in cities, the approach of the Community is that “People in the city have forgotten that [they are part of nature] because they are not in contact with it anymore” (Resident Finca 9:23 and see also Chapter 7.2.2). According to Resident Finca (5:39), this contributed to the loss of awareness towards nature and a misperception of reality. “Humans are also nature so it is something natural to [feel the desire to] be in harmony with it” and “to integrate yourself in it” (Resident Finca 9:22 and 11). Furthermore “you can’t exclude the contact to nature if you want to return completely [to becoming human again]” (Expert 12:44). “[This] contact obliges you to respect [mother earth] and to care for her” and “the ecological method is more in accordance with nature and seeks a balance” (Resident Finca 16:30).

#### Influence of personal development on personal behaviour

Taking up the topic of sufficiency again that Expert (7:110) brought up for discussion (see Chapter 7.2.1); it represents a great example to demonstrate how personal development has the potential to improve socio-ecological sustainability in society. The issue that “you are never happy with what you have [...] can be traced back to rejections and unfulfilled needs on the psychological level, such as “support from the father, love from the mother; so what we have missed in life we project to the outside [...]!”(Expert 7:109). And according to Expert (7:108f.), this is something that you have to work on internally”. “The key element of abundance is to feel in every moment what is sufficient and to value what already exists”. Internal work helps to reveal the patterns that determine a person’s actions and thus it helps to stop projecting on others (see Chapter 6.1.2). Because by projecting the origin of problems to external factors, the expectation is that only the external can provide a solution for the problem (cf. Lluch, 2012: 43).

Expert (12:87) describes this ‘common illness’ with different words: “The major problem in society is the identification with being a victim. The role of the victim often is linked to projections and you stick with what happened to you: ‘my father did this so I am [or the situation is] like that and I can’t change it<sup>35</sup>’ - it is like an excuse for not being able to change” (cf. ebd.).

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<sup>35</sup> This is just one example but the character of the father here, can be replaced by any other entity (i.e., boss, government, system, etc.)

So the real value is “to have the strength to fill your empty space [that might come from rejections and unfulfilled needs and thus results in abuse of power, rejection of leadership or the identification with being a victim] yourself and to really [feel your personal strength and thus manifest your aspiration for self-determination and autonomy] be able to give and not asking for things all the time” (Resident Finca 3:31 and see Chapter 6.1.2.3.3).

Expert (12:85) considers the consciousness that “[one person] can and [one person] makes the difference” as an essential approach that needs to be transferred. “So if you decide to change, everything around you will change”.

An internal work helps to make the hidden patterns to which people stay loyal conscious and thus helps them to realize the role that leadership and authority takes in life (cf. Lluch, 2012: 43 in Chapter 6.1.6.2). According to Expert (12:85) “there is no time to search for and elect a better politician; but each one has to convert into a leader – everyone has to convert into a person of change”. But this involves a lot of personal development and as C.G. Jung says (in Macy 2007: 141); developing a new consciousness, such as represented through the case study of Los Portales, is accompanied by pain. But it has the potential to result in a new self-perception as humans (see Chapter 6.1.2.1) and a new perspective on reality (see Chapter 6.1.5). In other words it can be an unpleasant and long process. But according to Lüpke (2012:74), this process is what represents the third stage of change and what humanity needs, to facilitate the Great Transformation (see objectives and research questions in Chapter 3.3).

#### Self-love and self-respect

The topic of self-love and self-respect comes along with the dedication to personal development (cf. Category 6.1.2.3.3). “When you respect yourself and when you feel worth it; you treat yourself better and that resonates with the surrounding” (Resident Finca 5:34). Such an attitude to life supports both social sustainable actions as well as ecological sustainable actions. By loving and respecting yourself, you nourish yourself in a healthy way on all levels (cf. Resident Finca 5:50). This includes not only ecological alimentation, but also the appreciative value assigned to nature (cf. Chapter 6.1.4.3) and a new self-perception as human being (cf. Chapter 6.1.2.1).

And “people who are well nourished from the inside will have the strength to go through the difficult times [of global change] and are able to confront [this] change” (Resident Finca1:75). It is all about “connecting with love” (Resident Finca 1:24); love towards yourself and love towards others (Resident Finca 9:9). This can also be compared to Chapter 6.1.4 in which Resident Finca (4.20) stresses out that “when you experience something inside [e.g. love] you reflect it to the outside”.

Another example for this approach is represented by the issue of alimentation. In Chapter 2.2.1, Kilchenmann (1991 in Kunze, 2009a: 29) highlights the disrespect of people for their body and often this is manifested through a bad nourishment. “We are not rubbish but we eat rubbish” (Resident Finca 5:34). If people would respect themselves more, they would feel worth it and would treat themselves better – i.e., with a healthy diet based on ecologically produced food. According to Resident Finca (5:32) “often when people want to change something, they start with the alimentation”. All of this again has the potential to lead to a desire for self-sufficiency (see Chapter 7.3.1).

The approaches described above demonstrate how personal development creates the basis for transparency and a new self-perception as humans and it empathizes how essential such a changed perspective on reality is for socio-ecological sustainability.

### **7.3.1.2. New forms of spirituality**

Chapter 6.1.5.1 illustrates how spirituality is perceived in Los Portales and reveals how “new forms of spirituality” in social systems could look like. In Los Portales, “Spirituality [is perceived as] a way of living and an attitude to life [such as the belief in Gaia, the intelligent universe, synchronicity and even ecological agriculture]” (Resident Madrid 10:39). ‘Old forms of spirituality’ are characterized through “looking above [to god]” and “living isolated [as monks or nuns] because the sexual energy of humans was too strong to concentrate only on spirituality” (Expert 12:96ff.). Or spiritual or religious people perceived themselves as “poor humans who have to wait a lifetime to rise to heaven to become angels” (Expert 12:96ff.).

But this has changed today. In the opinion of Expert (cf. ebd.): “Today the mind is much stronger than before, stronger than the lower chakras, and also people start remembering indigenous spirituality”. Indigenous spirituality honours and respects mother earth and “it is about looking down and being aware of the connection with earth and nature”.

At this moment, spirituality is something that happens on horizontal level, which means, that “I look at all my surrounding, above and below, and all around me, realizing that there are other humans and in each human I see god”. This is exactly what Macy (2013) points out in Chapter 2.2.2 in which she states that the separating line between the individual self and the surrounding world becomes indistinct through a holistic and non-dualistic spirituality.

Social systems need to understand spirituality as “enjoying life on earth” and as humans represent the major components of a social system; they need to accept the condition of being human to acknowledge a life on earth. This can only happen, when people start to perceive themselves and humanity in a different way (cf. Chapter above and also Chapter 6.1.2.1). It is important to accept the condition of being human and according to Los Portales, the essence in it is “manifesting your highest potential” (Expert 12:50) and “being connected with everything, with the universe, with god...” (Expert 7:55).

Resident Finca (1:22) stated that “[she] knew that [she] could only connect with superior things in the universe when [she was] deeply connected with [herself] [...]”. In other words “the more [a person is] anchored on earth, the more [a person] can connect with the superior” (cf.ebd.). So by drawing the line back to the issue of spirituality, this means:

The more humanity is enjoying life on earth and the more humans are developing and manifesting their highest potential; consequentially, the more they will be connected with their personal strength and consequentially with the ‘superior things in universe’ that represent the unlimited source, the cosmos, the big picture, the Higher Self or god.

Enjoying life on earth is associated with the feminine and “when people relate to spirituality, to nature, to communities, this all builds on the basis of this new energy” (Expert 12:98). According to some residents in Los Portales the female energy “is present at the moment” (Resident Finca 16:44 and Expert 12:98) and

also Macy (2007: 61f.) refers to ecofeminism and ecopsychology as related movements to the ‘process of reconnecting’<sup>36</sup>.

### **7.3.2. New values**

A system that has the potential to support and manifest the perspectives on reality described above has to be based on “new values regarding society, the environment, and future generations” (Lüpke, 2012: 74).

#### **7.3.2.1. New values regarding society**

Chapter 7.2.2 highlights, to what extent the aspect of cooperation can contribute to socio-ecological sustainability. Cooperation is an essential aspect for sustainability. But cooperation can only become the leading role in society, if it is based on the adequate values and manifested with the right intention (amplified in Chapter 7.4.2).

Hence, in today’s society it is important that “interpersonal relations are turning creative, based on confidence, respect and collaboration” (Lluch, 2012: 43). It is important to acknowledge people as your equals and as equivalent member in the group of humanity (cf. Resident Finca 13:37). This raises the consciousness that the planet is “our world, our mother earth” and reveals that at heart “we all have the same objectives: a better life in a world that is good and in which exists peace (cf. ebd.). Manifesting the essence in being human, respectively representing “the most important things to grow in a human way” (Expert 7:34), (cf. Chapter 6.1.2.1) is carried by values such as “respect, love, openness, solidarity/coherence, honesty, sharing” (Resident close-by 15:30 also in Chapter 7.2.1).

In a successful system, there are values like confidence and tolerance; importance is put on horizontal relations; and on the objective that everyone is aware of their personal strength, and the awareness that they belong to somewhere and that they are of value (cf. Resident Finca 3:50).

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<sup>36</sup>Drawing from deep ecology, systems theory and spiritual traditions, Macy also refers to “the Work That Reconnects (WTR)” through which motivation, creativity, courage and solidarity is build for the transition to a sustainable human culture. <http://workthatreconnects.org/> (17.10.2013). It seems like the appropriate choice as term, because the approach of Los Portales also highlights the importance of ‘being connected’ (see Chapter 6.1.5.2) and has humanity has lost this connection it is about ‘reconnecting’.

### **7.3.2.2. New values regarding the environment**

Chapter 6.1.4.3 describes the value that the residents in Los Portales assign to the environment. Furthermore the results in the evaluation chapter show, that nature itself is perceived as a tool to support the ‘Human Development’ of the group (see Chapter 6.1.3.1): A life in a place surrounded by plain nature provides the ability to a deep exploration of the self (cf. Expert 12:17).

This perception assigns a new value to nature. It is not just anymore the intrinsic value that is attributed to nature just because of its beauty and because of the value of environmental services provided by it (cf. Callicott, 1985). Furthermore it is the additional value assigned to nature by acknowledging it as a living organism and a source for energy and internal balance. The results in Chapter 6 show that these attributes can mainly be recognized and acknowledged through the raising of consciousness and personal development. Consciously acknowledging that nature has the ability to connect you with all the elements (cf. Resident Finca 1:16) at the same time opens up the ability to connect with the superior (cf. ebd. and also Chapter 7.3.1.2). This deep relation to the natural world nurtures the understanding of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all the elements of life which has the potential to diminish the discrepancy between environmental awareness and the actual environmental acting (cf. Loepthien, 2011: 18f. and Kunze, 2009a: 29 in Chapter 2.2.2).

### **7.3.2.3. New values regarding future generations**

In the Community Los Portales, the issue of guaranteeing “a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations [...]” (cf. WCED, 1987: 43 in Chapter 1.2), not only involves the availability of natural resources; it mainly involves the availability of ‘human resources’. The evaluation of the results revealed that one of the objectives of the Community (see Chapter 6.1.1.1) is “to give their children a solid basis in which they find their potential [personal strength], their resources [responsibility, self-respect and self-love] and that they can develop their personality just as they are [without building up patterns created through negligence on the psychological level]” (Resident Finca 9:40). This is what ‘human resources’ refers to in this case. And to allow children this kind of development, it is important for the parents (and other adults)

to create consciousness of personal projections through an internal work (cf. Chapter 6.1.2.3.2 about projections). The gained awareness enables parents [and supervising adults] to “set their children free and to give them the opportunity to live in a different way” (Resident Finca 16:54). It is important to add a comment here, in which the Expert (12:18ff.) stresses out that “the ‘tribe’ [community] can never replace the parents, thus the children absorb the aspects of the parents even when other people take care of them”. In other words: “A community cannot eliminate the neurosis of the children entangled with the parents” but “the ‘tribe’ is able to compensate what the parents are not able to give to the children or what they are giving to them in an overdose”.

This approach emphasizes the high value that the Community assigns to future generations: “The children are the future generation so it is very important to give them a solid basis [in which they experience the values described above]. The children here, are children with a lot of heart – the children have a communal vision” (Resident Finca 16:55).

Also the intergenerational aspect was addressed by a community member (Resident close-by 15:34) by highlighting its importance for the “exchange of experiences and traditional knowledge.”

#### **7.4. Transferability on the physiological level (external work)**

Another objective of this thesis is to extract sustainable principles and possible approaches of community life in Los Portales that can be transferred to any community or social system including families, neighbourhoods, municipalities, and business networks. This objective is partly covered by the psychological approach above, but after displaying a more or less theoretical approach that points out new values and worldviews, it seems helpful to outline some practical approaches through which socio-ecological sustainability can be improved. Although the suggestions below are supposed to serve as practical possibilities, it is obvious that, to really implement and manifest these approaches on a deep level [in the subconscious mind], a personal development is inevitable.

#### **7.4.1. Self-sufficiency (on the psychological and ecological level)**

The Community's attitude towards self-sufficiency is displayed in Chapter 6.1.1.2.1. The overall opinion on self-sufficiency in Los Portales is best reflected through the statement: "People can live a lot more autonomous than they think" (Expert 7:94). The Community follows this principle through retaining the responsibility "in all the areas in which [they] can go without delegating [their] power to others [i.e., to the government]". This is manifested through a movement towards self-sufficiency on the ecological level, but also the psychological level through self-determination and autonomy (see Chapter 6.1.2.3.3).

According to Scherhorn (1997 in Kunze, 2009a: 29) in Chapter 2.2.1 and Kunze (2009a:30) and Wagner (2012a: 65) in Chapter 2.2.3, this is also something that, would lead to an increase in socio-ecological sustainable acting in society. If people would follow the impulse of governing their own personal life, and this can be projected on all fields of society, people would not assign so much power over their life to the government anymore (cf. Expert 7:94). This in turn would result in a higher willingness and capacity to act (see Chapter 7.3.1.1 about the influence of personal development on the behaviour of people).

#### **7.4.2. Cooperation**

In Chapter 7.2 it becomes clear "that there needs to be an equilibrium between the competitiveness [stimulation to go further] and the cooperation [bilateral support]" (Expert 7:39). "Cooperation is an important aspect of sustainability" and there are people who already start initiatives for collaboration by forming networks and organisations (cf.ebd.). It is necessary to generate movements that leave individualism behind and which create new forms of community, including a respectful relation to the individual but taking into account that human beings need to belong to and form part of an extended system or structure in which their talents, their creativity and generosity is protected, stimulated and channelled (cf. Crealliance, 2013 [own translation]). There are people who find their motivation for socio-ecological sustainability in the values that are accompanied by this lifestyle and that can be found in community life [cooperation through human relations, see Chapter 7.3.2.1] and in a harmonious relation to the environment [connectedness, see Chapter 6.1.4.3 and 7.3.2.2] (cf. Resident Finca 13:25).



“Whatever is the problem in society” (Expert 7:89), the important approach would be to “search the solution that generates community” - a solution that “generates more contact, more collaboration, more cooperation, and more mutual support” (cf. ebd.). In the introductory part (see Chapter 2.2.2), Felber (2010: 10f. in Loepthien, 2011: 26) agrees with that by saying that “a successful economy [the dominant economy, here referred to as the problem] has to be based on [...] confidence building, appreciation, cooperation, honesty, listening, empathy, solidarity and sharing” (see also Chapter 7.3.2.1). Thus away from the dominant economic system which is based on individualism, with its assumption that the leading values in society are “the pursuit of profit and competition” (Cobb in Lüpke, 2007, and Felber, 2010: 10f. in Loepthien, 2011: 25f.). But to convince humanity, that the pursuit of profit and competition does not contribute to an improvement of the living quality but only serves for the enhancement of the personal status in society (cf. Kunze, 2009a: 30 in Chapter 2.2.3) is difficult. According to the Community (see Chapter 6.1.2.3.2 about projections), it involves a great deal of internal work, to understand that materialism is only compensation for something that is missing on psychological level (cf. Expert 7:110). With this understanding, social and psychological contentment and self-realization become relevant not only for a sustainable way of living, but also for an improved quality of life (cf. Kunze, 2009a: 30).

In Los Portales, “the richness is in the exchange” (Resident Finca16:51), but not only in the exchange of products and information, but also in the exchange of human diversity (cf. Chapter 6.1.7.2). The movement of cooperation is essential (cf. Expert 7:47) because this kind of exchange already creates community (cf. Expert 7:92) in which the relations are based on confidence and trust (cf. Resident Finca 3:50). But the desire to live in a dynamic and vivid contact with other people also evokes deep-seated fears. “Will I consist in a group? Will I be accepted as I am? Will I lose some of my personal freedom?” (Nolte, 2009: 27 [own translation])

These questions can be answered in the words of Macy (2013) and Brown (2010), in Chapter 7.3.1.1 about the Power of Vulnerability, in which acknowledging and talking about this fear makes a person feel the connectedness with others (and all life) and results in nothing more than support and empathy (cf. Expert 7:68). Such

a transparency has the potential to avoid misunderstandings and thus creates peace (cf. Chapter 6.1.2.2).

According to Resident Madrid (10:19) and Resident close-by (15:51) sharing is a way of facing the future problems. Exchange might become the most important tool but people would have to be very responsible to act that way (cf. Resident Finca 1:53). In other words, an approach like this would include a confrontation with the ‘hidden patterns to which people stay loyal’ and thus a confrontation with the personal “dark side or the ‘sleeping potential’” of each one (cf. Lluch, 2012). Hence cooperation, exchange and sharing on the basis of confidence building, appreciation, honesty, listening, empathy and solidarity is about creating consciousness through an internal work (cf. Chapter 6.1.2 and 7.3.1.1).

### **7.4.3. Resilience**

Only through a basis, which is premised on the values described above and in Chapter 7.3.2, the perceived inequity amongst humans can be diminished without losing the differences between individuals (cf. Resident close-by 14:26). It is important to accept differences and acknowledge that diversity contributes to the resilience of a system (cf. Chapter 6.1.8.1).

The ground for such a system could be established through resonant leaders (cf. Expert 12:92). In Chapter 6.1.6.2, this term is explained in the words of Expert 12. Probably one of the most important qualities of a resonant leader is “the capacity to quickly resonate with the positive potential of the people” (Expert 12:56). In this way, human diversity is valued on a higher basis and there is a lower risk that the individual is “deleted in favor of [mass conformity and compatibility]” (Resident close-by 14:21 in Chapter 7.2.1). A resonant leader takes care that a person is able to find its place in the group and thus provokes that everyone strives for the recognition and acceptance of personal strength and responsibility (cf. Expert 12:55f.). A resonant leader takes care that diversity is valued and acknowledged. According to Lluch (cf. 2012: 42) reality shows that human diversity contributes to the enrichment and stability of a group [or any system] (cf. Chapter 6.1.8.1).

Kunze (2012: 66f.) stresses out that “using ‘unity in diversity’ with sustainable communality as basic principles rather than profit” is an applicable approach to any community or social system including families, neighbourhoods, municipi-

palties, and business networks. By accepting differences, competition and comparison will disappear (cf. Hay, 1999: 101f.).

Furthermore, resilience is defined as the capacity to creatively use and respond to change (cf. Lluch, 2012: 43, in Chapter 6.1.8.1). Change is generally perceived as a threat, because of the “inner armour” that people have created as a protective shield (cf. ebd.). People stick to what they know and to what they are used to. Hence, habit is a strong barrier that hinders people from changing or taking actions. Through the approach in Los Portales it becomes obvious that if a group is only based conformity and compatibility, “ideological affinity or systems of faith” are necessary to unify people in a communal project (cf. Lluch, 2012: 42). The protective shield sticks to systems of faith because you never know if what comes after the change is better than what existed before. Whereas if all the different aspect of human soul are included in a system [which is then based on diversity and transparency], a “connection between the people establishes on a soul level and in the outer dimension diversity is tolerated on a higher basis” (cf. ebd.). Thus change, including flexibility in leadership, can be perceived as something positive (cf. Chapter 6.1.6.2 and 6.1.6.3. about leadership and decision-making in Los Portales). Resilience also is defined as the “capacity to learn from changes and to accompany the confrontation and the dismay with which life stimulates people and changes people” (Lluch, 2012: 43). The result chapter reveals that in Los Portales decisions and flexibility emerge through the collective energy of the group which avoids conflicts and power struggle. Kunze (2012: 66f.) includes a flexible and responsive organization based on consensus decisions and collective ownership in the basic principles that represent applicable approaches in social systems.

## 8. Conclusion

### 8.1. Potential of personal development

Taking a look at the influence of globalisation on the psychological state of humanity, the impression is left that humanity's main reaction is fear and paralysation (Macy, 2013). The psychological defensive mechanism of repression hinders people from taking actions that support socio-ecological sustainability (cf. ebd.). Similarly, the psychological attributes of oneself that we do not want to acknowledge or that we are not aware of also provoke a defensive reaction in which people suppress these attributes, project them on other people and only connect with their positive sides (cf. Lluch, 2012: 43). The social conditions of individualism caused by the separation of 'lifeworld' and 'work world' lead to a significant change in communality in which the contemporary models of living together, such as marriage and the nuclear family, cannot fulfil the needs and requirements of an individual in a post-modern society ((Kunze, 2012b: 55 in Chapter 1.1). It becomes more and more obvious, that today's individualism creates an immense solitude of people resulting in "depressions, anxiety neuroses and spacing out into unrealistic worlds" (cf. Expert 7:39 in Chapter 7.2.2 and Kunze, 2010b: 56 [own translation]). As Nolte (2009, 27) points out, the desire for social contacts, communication and interaction is connected to deep-seated fears (cf. Chapter 7.4.2). This thesis shows that such deep-seated fears can only be tackled through the consciousness-raising and acknowledgment of the personal dark sides. The Community Los Portales has made the path of self-knowledge and personal development its objective.

"Without a fundamental change in the human consciousness, the suffering on earth is a bottomless pit"(Eckhart Tolle, 2005 [own translation]).

I argue in this thesis that humanity needs is a different perspective on reality based on a new self-perception as humans and new forms of spirituality which is characterized through the acknowledgement of the condition of being human and the practice of a full, vibrant and happy life on earth.

It involves a lot of strength to create the consciousness to honestly look at the personal patterns and dark sides created in life; and to accept and acknowledge the pain that probably emerges through this process. In my opinion humanity is (just about) ready to tackle this confrontation because the pain generated through the destruction of the world and generated through the individualism that the

dominant system has created is hardly bearable anymore. So maybe just because humanity has gone so far, to such an extreme, we are now able “to look back on solitude and reappraise linkages and connections, to calm down the rage by developing empathy and compassion” (Lluch, 2012: 42). “Maybe it was important to lose all these values to remember what they are worth” (Resident Finca 2:56). System theorist Donella Meadows (1995) describes her vision of the world she want to work for and live in as follows: “It contains components of spirituality, of community, of decentralization, of a complete rethinking of the ways we use our time, define our jobs, and bestow power upon governments and corporations.” It contains creating consciousness and thus personal development.

Chapter 6 and 7 illustrate which importance needs to be assigned to personal development and how it contributes to a different perspective on reality. Personal development, sooner or later, reveals the highest potential in each human which give people self-esteem and results in the acknowledgement of personal strength and responsibilities. Being in connection with the personal strength is equal to being connected to the ‘superior things in universe’ that represent the unlimited source, the Higher Self or god. It is characterized through a respectful relation to mother earth and to fellow human beings in which the dualism of heaven and earth or god and human is reversed. This new perspective on reality, respectively this new lifestyle puts new values into the focus through which human relations are nurtured and cooperation is generates.

## **8.2. Potential of intentional communities**

In the comment of Andreas (2012b: 71) on a culture of sustainability (cf. Wagner, 2012a: 57ff. in Chapter 2.1), he argues that “[humanity] will reach a complete, utopian societal transformation<sup>37</sup> when we no longer need to talk about a culture of sustainability. Instead, we will be guided by the ideal of sustainability, without stopping to think about it, just as we are guided by the ideal of peace, without talking about a culture of peace.” It might be utopia to reach the Great Transformation (cf. Lockyer, 2007 in cf. ebd.), but nevertheless, humanity “needs to build up resilience and sustainable pathways” (cf. ebd.).

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<sup>37</sup> Andreas (2012b: 71) “uses the phrase ‘societal transformation’ in reference to the concept outlined by the German Advisory Council on Climate Change [...] (cf. WBGU, 2011).”

Many studies have pointed out already (cf. Kunze, 2009a; 2007; 2012; 2004; Embacher et al., 2002; Grundmann, 2006; Meijering, 2006; Dierschke, 2003; Andreas et al., 2012; Lüpke, 2012; etc.) that intentional communities and ecovillages are “places of wide potentials for CO<sub>2</sub>- reduction and resource efficiency, that can be used for a transformation of society” (e5, 2013) by “revealing the materials, mechanisms, and ideals behind the Great Transformation” (cf. Tinsley et al., 2006 in Andreas et al., 2012: 5). But Kunze (cf. 2007: 34) stresses out that intentional communities and ecovillages should not only be valued because of their ecological practices, but also because of their “experimental scope of development”.

My personal interest in the field of intentional communities was also to point out further benefits deriving from community life, other than just the improvement of ecological sustainability (see Chapter 3.3). The results in Chapter 6 and 7 emphasize in what way social coherences and especially a life in community support personal development and to what extent “this spiritual dimension of existence” in the Community Los Portales contributes to socio-ecological sustainability. Surely this potential can also be assigned to other intentional communities, but according to Litfin (2009: 25), there is a notable trend in which spiritual communities are more engaged in the world whilst political communities assign more importance to the ‘inner process’. It is important to stress out, that the ‘inner process’, referred to by Litfin (cf. ebd.), does not refer to personal development but to the activities inside the community, such as ecological practices or a countermovement with the attempt to distinguish oneself as ‘islands’ that dissociate themselves from the dominant system. Whereas Los Portales, specifically, puts importance on the contact to the external and on the requirement of each member to connect with society and to acknowledge personal strength and responsibilities (cf. Chapter 6.1.2.3.2).

In Los Portales ‘Human Development’ is the shared objective; and such a collective alignment to a greater vision seems more important for the community glue and the utopian energy of each one than collective ownership or specific rules and customs (cf. Expert 7:35).

The residents of the Community also transfer this objective to their children by giving them a solid basis in which they can develop just as they are. Like that the group assigns new values to future generations (see Chapter 7.3.2.3) and “the

children in Los Portales have a communal vision” (Resident Finca 16:55). According to Kunze (2012b: 66) this is something “which is lacking in the education systems of the individualized societies. Intentional communities, thus, provide fields of practical education for social competences, in which members can learn and are socialized as communally competent beings” (cf. ebd.).

Lüpke (2012: 77) says that intentional communities, especially spiritual communities, are pioneers in combining inner growth with social and ecological project building by collectively discussing and dealing with processes of personal growth in communication and spiritual awareness. In doing so, the Community Los Portales combines what is usually separate: personal development and social change (cf. ebd.). In this thesis the characteristic approach of Los Portales shows under which conditions sustainable and environmentally lifestyles can be established, while increasing the quality of life. Thus it becomes clear that the establishment of a different consciousness (cf. Chapter 6.1.2.3.1) through the enhancement of an individual’s personal potential (cf. Chapter 6.1.2.3.2) is, according to Lüpke (2012: 77), a precondition for a collective transformation.

*There are those when they see a tree,  
see a tree*

*There are those when they see a tree,  
see life*

*There are those when they see a tree,  
see a being*

*There are those when they see a tree,  
listen*

*There are those when they see a tree,  
understand*

*Yesterday I saw a tree,*

*I wanted to listen and understand,*

*But the tree hugged me and*

*Took me to her roots*

*And from her roots to the roots*

*Of all the trees*

*And from there*

*To the vibration of the minerals*

*And to the song of the deep waters*

*And then took me to dance*

*In the heartbeat of the Earth*

*There are those when they see a tree*

*Are a tree*

*Angela Boto (Los Portales)*



## **Abstract**

### **- Reconnecting with the Essence of Being Human –**

#### **Analysis of the Potential of Lifestyle Change with regard to Sustainability and Transferability**

- a case study of the Community Los Portales in Andalusia, Spain -

In times of globalisation, accompanied by economic crisis and climate change, it becomes obvious that the western lifestyle cannot be maintained anymore if a Great Transition towards a future of enriched lives, human solidarity and a healthy planet is the overall objective. The industrialized countries are made responsible for a disproportionate share of the worldwide exploitation of natural resources, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and pollution of air and water; but still the associated lifestyle is spreading its way. The question arises how the Great Transition can be facilitated and what is still missing to overcome the challenges of global change, resource depletion and individualism. The Great Transition cannot be achieved by technical means only but an adaptation of lifestyles is also necessary to obtain this target. Sustainable lifestyles include attractive social coherences that combine the individual freedom with responsible cooperation and a harmonious coexistence. There is a great demand for sustainable lifestyles; a way of living in which human cooperation is appropriate and carried by respect and empathy; a search for lifestyles without moral appeal and demand for abstinence. The field of intentional communities represents direct response to the questions and problems of social conflicts, environmental crises, and uncertainty at all levels.

In this thesis, the Community Los Portales in Andalusia, Spain was chosen as the case study to display approaches and methods that aim for the improvement of socio-ecological sustainability. One of the objectives of this thesis is to demonstrate that the lifestyle of Los Portales based on consciousness-raising and social coherences, and generated through a path of self-knowledge and personal development, can represent the missing link for the facilitation of the Great Transformation.

Based on research methods of participant observation and semi-structured interviews, special emphasis was put on the importance of social dynamics such

as the feeling of affiliation, the aspect of self-actualisation, self-respect and the developing of social competences. The approach of the Community includes specific methods, such as dream interpretation, which are used to create consciousness about personal behavior patterns and projections through which other entities are made responsible for personal difficulties in life. The Community's perspective on reality is described, which is based on a new-self-perception as humans and manifested through a deep connection with oneself, others and the environment. The Community thus acknowledges that social sustainability (internal work) cannot be dissociated from ecological sustainability (external work). In doing so, the Community Los Portales combines what is usually separate: personal development and social change.

These research results are analysed for their transferability, on the psychological and physiological level, to any social system. A number of approaches and suggestions is elaborated which have the potential to contribute to socio-ecological sustainability. Finally the potential of personal development and intentional communities is discussed to highlight under which conditions sustainable and environmentally lifestyles can be established, while increasing the quality of life. A fundamental shift in human consciousness seems to be a precondition for a collective transformation.

## **Zusammenfassung**

**- Wiederverbindung mit der Essenz des Menschseins -**

### **Analyse des Potenzials von Lebensstiländerung bezogen auf Nachhaltigkeit und Übertragbarkeit**

**- eine Fallanalyse der Gemeinschaft Los Portales in Andalusien, Spanien -**

In Zeiten der Globalisierung, begleitet von Finanzkrisen und Klimawandel wird deutlich, dass der westliche Lebensstil nicht mehr tragbar ist; vor allem wenn die „Große Transformation“ hin zu einer Zukunft von bereicherten Leben, menschlicher Solidarität und einem gesunden Planeten, das übergreifende Ziel ist. Die Industrieländer werden für einen Großteil der weltweiten Ausbeutung von natürlichen Ressourcen, CO<sub>2</sub> Emissionen sowie Luft- und Wasserverschmutzung verantwortlich gemacht. Aber der damit verbundene Lebensstil verbreitet sich weiter. Die Frage danach, wie eine „Große Transformation“ vorangetrieben werden kann, kommt auf und was noch fehlt um die Herausforderungen von Globalem Wandel, Ressourcenverknappung und Individualismus zu überwinden. Der Große Wandel kann nicht allein durch technische Mittel erreicht werden. Eine Anpassung der Lebensstile ist notwendig um dieses Ziel zu erreichen. Nachhaltige Lebensweisen beinhalten attraktive soziale Zusammenhänge, welche persönliche Freiheit mit verantwortungsvoller Zusammenarbeit und harmonischen Miteinander kombinieren. Es besteht ein großer Bedarf an nachhaltigen Lebensweisen; Lebensstile in denen eine angemessene Kooperation überwiegt, welche durch Respekt und Empathie getragen wird; eine Suche nach Lebensweisen ohne moralischen Apell oder der Forderung nach Verzicht. Der Bereich von Intentionalen Gemeinschaften repräsentiert eine direkte Erwiderung auf die Fragen und Probleme von sozialen Konflikten, Umweltkrisen und Unsicherheiten auf allen Ebenen. In dieser Arbeit wurde die Gemeinschaft Los Portales in Andalusien, Spanien als Fallanalyse ausgewählt um Herangehensweisen und Methoden darzustellen, die darauf abzielen die sozial-ökologische Nachhaltigkeit zu verbessern. Eines der Ziele ist es darzustellen, dass die Lebensweise in Los Portales die fehlende Verbindung zur Förderung des Großen Wandels darstellen kann. Die Lebensgrundlage in Los Portales basiert auf

sozialen Zusammenhängen und dessen Bewusstwerdung, hervorgerufen durch einen Weg der Selbsterkenntnis und Persönlichkeitsentwicklung.

Durch die Forschungsmethode der teilnehmenden Beobachtung und der Durchführung von halbstrukturierten Interviews, rückte die Wichtigkeit sozialer Dynamiken wie das Gefühl der Zugehörigkeit, der Aspekt der Selbstverwirklichung, Selbstachtung und die Entwicklung von sozialen Kompetenzen in den Vordergrund.

Die Herangehensweise der Gemeinschaft beinhaltet spezielle Methoden, wie die Traumdeutung, die dazu dienen Bewusstsein zu schaffen über persönliche Verhaltensmuster und Projektionen durch die andere Instanzen verantwortlich gemacht werden für persönliche Schwierigkeiten im Leben. Der Blickwinkel der Gemeinschaft auf die Realität wird dargestellt, welcher auf einer neuen Selbstwahrnehmung des Menschseins basiert und sich durch eine tiefe Verbindung zu sich selbst, anderen und der Umwelt offenbart. Die Gemeinschaft erkennt an, dass soziale Nachhaltigkeit (innere Arbeit) sich nicht von ökologischer Nachhaltigkeit (äußere Arbeit) abspalten lässt. Dadurch vereinen die Bewohner der Gemeinschaft Los Portales etwas das normalerweise getrennt ist: Persönlichkeitsentwicklung und gesellschaftlicher Wandel.

Diese Forschungsergebnisse werden auf ihre Übertragbarkeit, auf psychologischer und physiologischer Ebene, für jegliche soziale Systeme untersucht. Es werden einige Herangehensweisen und Anregungen dargestellt, die das Potenzial haben zu sozial-ökologischer Nachhaltigkeit beizutragen. Abschließend wird das Potenzial von Persönlichkeitsentwicklung und intentionalen Gemeinschaften diskutiert um zu verdeutlichen unter welchen Bedingungen nachhaltige und umweltfreundliche Lebensstile aufgebaut werden können, welche gleichzeitig auch die Lebensqualität erhöhen. Die grundlegende Veränderung des menschlichen Bewusstseins scheint eine Voraussetzung für eine kollektive Transformation zu sein.

## **Resumen**

### **- Reconectado con la Essencia del ser Humano -**

#### **Análisis del Potential de Cambio del Estilo de Vida con respeto a la Sostenibilidad y Transferibilidad**

- un caso de estudio den la Comunidad Los Portales en Andalucía, España-

En tiempos de globalización acompañado por la crisis económica y el cambio climático, se hace vidente que el estilo de vida occidental no puede mantenerse más sin una Gran Transición hacia un futuro de vida enriquecida, con la solidaridad humana y un planeta saludable. Los países industrializados se hacen responsables de una parte desproporcionada de la explotación mundial de los recursos naturales, las emisiones de CO<sub>2</sub>, la polución del aire y del agua. Pero los estilos de vida asociados están extendiendo su camino. La pregunta que surge entonces es: ¿Cómo se puede facilitar la Gran Transición? y ¿Qué falta todavía para superar los desafíos del cambio climático, la escasez de recursos y el individualismo? La Gran Transición no se puede obtener solo por medios técnicos, sino que es necesario una adaptación de los estilos de vida para llegar a este objetivo. Una vida sostenible incluye atractivas coherencias sociales que unen la libertad individual con la cooperación responsable y la coexistencia armónica. Hay una gran demanda por estilos de vida sostenible, una forma de vida en que la cooperación humana es adecuada y realizada con respeto y empatía. Una búsqueda de estilos de vida sin apelaciones morales y que demanda abstinencia. El campo de las comunidades intencionales representa la respuesta directa a las preguntas y problemáticas de los conflictos sociales, la crisis ambiental y las inseguridades en todos sus niveles. En esta tesis, la Comunidad Los Portales en Andalucía, España fue seleccionada como caso de estudio para mostrar los enfoques y métodos que tienen como objetivo la mejora de la sostenibilidad social-ecológica. Uno de los objetivos de la tesis es demostrar que la manera de vivir en Los Portales basada en crear consciencia y coherencia social, generada a través de un camino de auto-conocimiento y de evolución personal, tiene el potencial de representar el vínculo ausente para facilitar la Gran Transformación. El método de investigación se basa en la observación participante y entrevistas semi-estructuradas, donde el especial énfasis esta en la importancia de la dinámica

social como sentimiento de pertenecía, el aspecto de realización personal, el auto-respeto y el desarrollo de competencias sociales.

El enfoque de la Comunidad incluye herramientas y métodos específicos, tales como la interpretación de sueños, que se utilizan para crear consciencia acerca de los patrones de comportamiento personal y proyecciones, a través de las cual las gente de hace responsable de las dificultades personales en la vida. La perspectiva de la Comunidad sobre la realidad está basado en una nueva auto-percepción de ser humano que se manifiesta a través de una conexión profunda con su mismo, con otras personas y con el medio ambiente. La Comunidad revalida que la sostenibilidad social (trabajo interior), no se puede desvincular de la sostenibilidad ecológica (trabajo exterior). De este modo, la Comunidad de Los Portales combina lo que normalmente está separado: el desarrollo personal y el cambio social.

Los resultados de la investigación, se analizan para su transferencia a nivel psicológico y fisiológico, para cualquier sistema social. Los enfoques y sugerencias elaborados tienen el potencial de contribuir a la sostenibilidad socio-ecológica. Por último, el potencial de desarrollo personal y el de las comunidades intencionales trata de poner en relieve que bajo las condiciones y estilos de vidas ambientalmente sostenibles pueden ser establecidos al mismo tiempo, que aumenta la calidad de vida. Un cambio fundamental de la consciencia humana ser una condición previa para una transformación colectiva.

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**Annex A: List of interview themes ‘Community Los Portales’**

- List of interview themes ‘Community Los Portales’ -

**Analysis of the Potential of Lifestyle Change  
with regard to  
Sustainability and Transferability**

- a case study of the Community Los Portales in Andalusia, Spain -

1. Personal questions

- What is your area of responsibility in the Community?
  - o What is your motivation?
  - o How do you perceive this work?
  - o In what way do you accomplish this work?
- How do you perceive nature and how would you describe your relation with it?
- What is your personal motivation to live in community?
  - o Which values do you assign to a life in community?

2. Questions concerning structure and organisation of the Community

- What forms the basis of the Community?
- What are the past and current objectives of the Community?
- Is there a connection between internal and external work?
  - o If yes, can you describe it?
- What is the structure of the Community or how is the Community organised?
  - o Are there any principles or rules?
  - o How would you describe the existence and perception of leadership?
  - o How are decisions made?
- Are there a lot of people who are interested in joining the Community at the moment?

3. Questions concerning social and ecological sustainability

- How would you describe the environmental awareness within Los Portales (also concerning energy and water use and consumerism in general)?
- What measures are already implemented to improve ecological sustainability in Los Portales?
- Do you have any ideas for further improvements?
- Could you name any principles of the way of living here in Los Portales, that could be transferred to something bigger (e.g. enterprise, network, society)?

4. Questions concerning external contacts (amongst others regional-economic aspects)

- What are the reasons for opening up to the external?
- How important are the external relations for the Community?
- Does the external accept the lifestyle in Los Portales or even shows an interest in it?
- How would you describe the financial situation of the Community?

5. Questions concerning global change

- How do you perceive the risk of vulnerability in times of Global Change?
- In your opinion, does the Community contribute to a better world?

**Annex B: CSA “Los Portales 2013” (attached on CD)**

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**Statement of authorship**

I hereby certify that this master thesis, submitted to the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development, Faculty of Forestry and Environment, on the subject of:

**- Reconnecting with the Essence of Being Human –**

**Analysis of the Potential of Lifestyle Change with regard to  
Sustainability and Transferability**

**- a case study of the Community Los Portales in Andalusia, Spain -**

has been composed by myself, and describes my own work, unless otherwise acknowledged in the text. All references and verbatim extracts have been quoted, and all sources of information have been specifically acknowledged. It has not been accepted in any previous application for a degree.