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# Ecovillages as a Model of Sustainable Settlements in Rural Development Context: Principles and Main Elements

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## Introduction

Ecovillage design is created as a response to the environmental and social problems of modern way of life and could be described as a new field of knowledge.

**Definition:** It is defined by GlobalEcovillage Network (2005) as “an intentional or traditional community using local participatory processes to holistically integrate ecological, economic, social, and cultural dimensions of sustainability to regenerate social and natural environments”.

**Objective:** The main objective of this paper is to identify the principles and features of ecovillages and their relations to sustainable rural development.

**Method:** This study is designed as a review research to give a clear description of the elements of ecovillages.

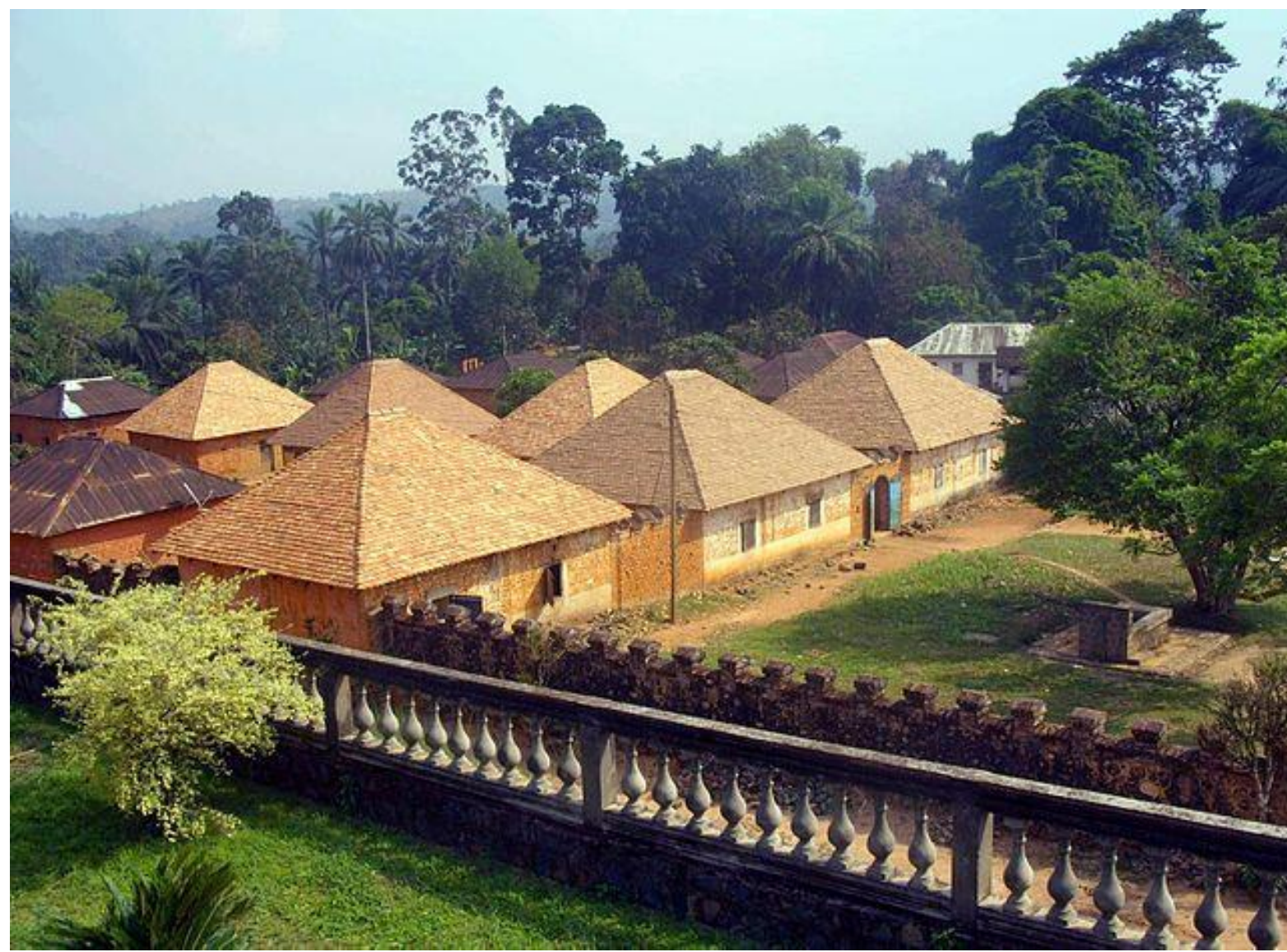


Fig. 1- Bafut Palace EcoVillage\_Cameroon

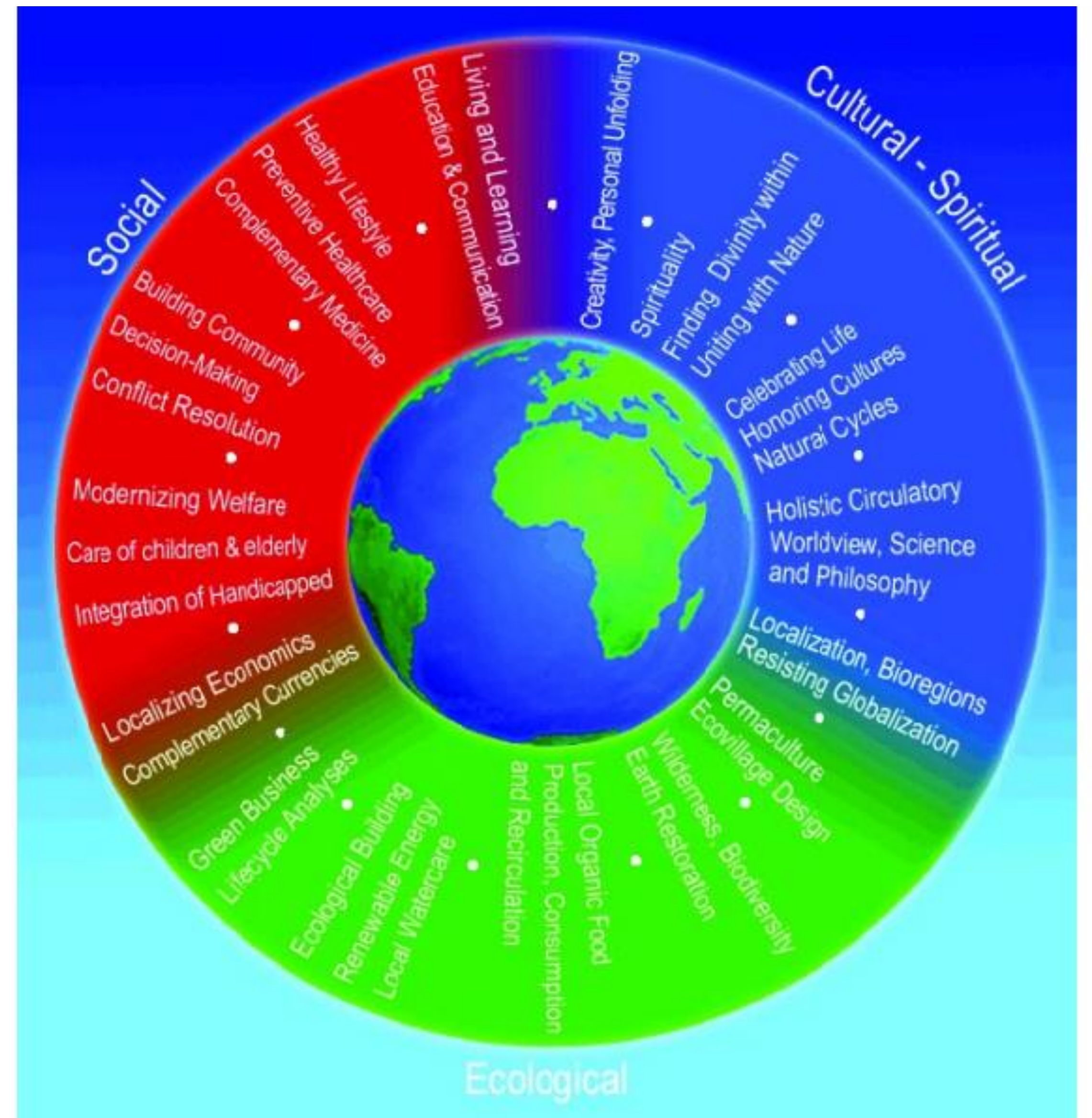


Fig. 2- Different dimensions of Ecovillages according to “Ecovillage Curriculum” of Jackson  
Source: Jackson, 2004

• Literature of ecovillages reveals some basic features or elements.

Ten basic features of the Ecovillages :

1. Ecovillages are aware of the importance of community. Rather, they are designed to meet people's social requirements.
2. Ecovillages make use of cutting-edge technology, such as passive solar energy design, natural isolation housing, methane or biomass gas converters, and so on.
3. There are no standard designs for ecovillages.
4. Ecovillages provide on-site jobs to village residents or visitors.
5. Ecovillages need well-thought-out architecture and landscape.
6. Ecovillages are designed in such a way that vehicles are not required.
7. Ecovillages have social contracts or social management plans that are unique to them.
8. Residents in ecovillages can purchase houses at a reasonable price.
9. Ecovillages are manifestations of nature's consciousness.
10. Local governments are crucial to the survival of Ecovillages.



Fig 3- Hurdal Ecovillage in Norway

Source: <https://www.hurdalecovillage.no/alle-bilder/>

## Conclusion

- Some researches see Ecovillages as a center of sustainable life and a place of organic farming, thus Ecovillages should not be planned just for tourist use.
- Instead, they should be structured to accommodate those who live in the village and/or the surrounding area on a permanent basis.

- It would make a huge difference if only a tiny portion of urban & rural development subsidies were transferred to help those who are working to construct such really sustainable communities.



Fig.4 - Images of an eco-village and activities for its development  
Source: Ardijauskaite & Villma, in: Mahlabani et al., 2016

## Results

- Results of this study show that ecovillages have some main principles that based on them sustainable rural development could take place. These principles are classified in some topics (Mahlabani et al., 2016) such as :

- sustainable living,
- environmental improvement,
- optimal water, and soil management,
- improving health, cultural, social, and spiritual development,
- optimal management of energy resources,
- sewage management,
- and sustainable farming managements.

- On this basis an ecovillage has **three dimensions**, which related to each other in a settlement space, including **ecologic dimension, socio-economic dimension, cultural/ spiritual dimension.**

- Ecovillages can be thought of as rural businesses that combine environmentally friendly technologies, organic agriculture, and other farming and tourism industries. First and foremost, the Ecovillage is a way of life.
- Ecovillages are typically developed and created around the four themes of ecological, social, cultural, and spiritual concepts, according to this ideology. (Adalilar et al, 2015 )