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TOWARDS PERMACULTURE 3.0

A new iteration of the Permaculture design system

Permaculture is a world wide network and movement of individuals and groups working in both rich and poor countries on all continents. Largely unsupported by government and business, these people are contributing to a sustainable future by reorganising their life and work around permaculture design principles. In this way they are creating small local changes which are directly and indirectly influencing action in the wider environment.

...David Holmgren, Permaculture co-inventor

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Permaculture for a changed world

THE WORLD WE NOW LIVE IN NOW is not the world permaculture was born into. Nor is it the world in which permaculture spent its adolescence and in which it grew to maturity. Things have changed and we need to engage the world as it is now, and that might mean doing what we do a little differently.

Permaculture is said to use nature as a model for its works and, therefore, nature is a model for the way that permaculture designers think about things. Since evolution is a property of nature, a property that shapes the lifeforms around us and that shapes us — humans — it is necessarily a characteristic of permaculture, or it should be.

(permaculture)... has to compete for attention in the public marketplace for ideas and that, today, is a crowded and busy marketplace...

Organisms, technology and ideas themselves demonstrate evolution in that they change to maintain what in evolutionary studies is called 'fitness for purpose'. Permaculture practitioners would do well, I believe, to understand that permaculture, in following its own evolution to adapt to changing world conditions and to maintain its fitness for purpose, must change too. Just as nature, through evolution and adaptation, sometimes discards old forms, so too must permaculture discard the old and

less effective and adopt new, timely ideas and practices.

As a system of design permaculture needs to display an ability to reproduce itself to remain relevant in the web of ideas and practices that make up our world. It has to compete for attention in the public marketplace for ideas and that, today, is a crowded and busy marketplace. Permaculture can only do this by remaining relevant to its contemporary environment. To do this requires change and adaptation — evolution, that is.

Motivation

My motivation for proposing a Permaculture Version 3.0 is to see the practice of the permaculture design system upgraded so as to position it as an approach, as an intellectual and practical technology, that can be safely adopted by communities, local government and other institutions.

My background for making the proposals in this publication come from my experience in permaculture following my permaculture design course (PDC — led by permaculture educator, Robyn Francis) in 1985, experience in community organisations, international development NGOs, social enterprise and local government in addition to teaching the PDC as a member of the Sydney permaculture teaching team through the 1990s.

This has brought close contact with local government staff, with social enterprise specialising in food distribution and with community-based organisations. For one of these social enterprises, Sydney Food Connect, I operate a weekly City Cousin depot where



members collect their box of fresh, organic food produced for the most part by Sydney region farmers. A good thing about Sydney Food Connect is that it is the creation of a graduate of the Permaculture Design Course, and the good news for me is that the director is a graduate of one of our own Urban Permaculture Design Courses.

Recently, I've had the good fortune to work with PDC graduates on a project steering committee. These permaculture practitioners work in architecture, landscape architecture and in sustainability education roles in both business and local government, and they have integrated permaculture's ethics, principles and concepts into their working lives. The quality of their work creates the credibility that permaculture needs in mainstream society because it is visible to the public and local government and because people regularly make use of it. Their work normalises permaculture.

That's not to say that other permaculture individuals, associations and educators do not similarly contribute to the design system's good image, however for the most part their contribution is as a voluntary community activity. This is valuable, of course, because it is activity of this type that sustains permaculture as a popular practice.

Over the years I have gained insight into how permaculture is perceived by those outside of it and how permaculture practitioners see themselves and their role. Often, there's a disconnect in perception.

With the availability of Accredited Permaculture Training (APT) — what is in effect nationally recognised workplace education — developing permaculture as a livelihood option is important, and to do this the credibility

and reputation of the design system count for much. This makes improving the perception of permaculture among professionals and government a necessary component of Permaculture Version 3.0.


In my work in local government and elsewhere, permaculture people and ideas have often been absent when they should have been present. It has been often people without a background in permaculture who have often come along with innovative ideas that comply with the principles of ecologically and socially sustainable development that would make our cities better places.

Leading questions

Someone who has had much to do with the permaculture design system recently asked whether permaculture has lost its innovative edge because much of the permaculture conversation is about topics, ideas and technologies that are today mainstream. If contemporary permaculture practice focuses more on catchy ideas, mainly those applied in the garden rather than on truly innovative concepts and on acting on big issues in a substantive way, there is a chance that person's question could be answered in the affirmative.

What they asked was whether permaculture had become stale, its ideas and practices no longer on the social cutting edge from where those that are successful spin in towards social acceptance and adoption.

I don't know whether the answer to that person's question is affirmative. That's because it's difficult to track the evolution of permaculture and the roles it fills in society because there is no substantive practice of monitoring and evaluation within the design



system through which we can track progress, redress difficulties and build a picture of the standing of the permaculture design system at any time. Coming from an NGO and consultancy background where monitoring and evaluation are part of the normal project structure, this seems an omission that would stymie organisational learning. Sure, there is opinion but in my experience the opinion of permaculture practitioners usually claims that the design system is moving forward in great bounds, yet those opinions are not based on any objective data.

We have seen the wider adoption of what are ideas central to permaculture. I have been to public consultations where people come up with ideas that I once would have expected from someone influenced by permaculture, yet those proposing them had no links to the design system at all.

Making sense of this was the comment from an educator that much of what is taught in permaculture and what were once its innovative ideas are now taught in tertiary environmental management and science courses. It's that mainstreaming process again, ideas spinning in from the innovative edge to the mainstream core as described by Roger's Ideas Diffusion model. What it means is that PDC participants are now better educated and more critical of what they learn in a design course.


Another influence on thinking about a new iteration of the permaculture design system came from the recent resurfacing of a long-running conversation within the permaculture education milieu — whether the Permaculture Design Course (PDC) remains fit for purpose and whether permaculture education needs a more diversified, nuanced approach to

educating people to act in a world substantially different to that for which the PDC was originally devised to be applied.

Then there was the question and the challenge several years ago that came from social entrepreneur, Mitra Aadron, who said that permaculture, though a good idea, would have to scale-up its work to remain relevant to the realities of contemporary times. He challenged permaculture people to do this. Unfortunately, none accepted his challenge. It was Mitra's work that gave his proposal credibility and relevance.

Yet another factor influencing the idea for a new version of permaculture has been watching it become a respectable term in a still too small number of city councils. This has not been a universal phenomenon and it is the work of a very small coterie of permaculture educated and motivated people gaining positions in council administration. As one put it: "Five years ago I couldn't have used the word 'permaculture' in my work. Now I can. That's change, but it's still not true in most councils". In another example of permaculture becoming institutionally acceptable, in Randwick, in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs, council sustainability educator, Fiona Campbell, was able to use state government grant funds to create the Permaculture Interpretive Garden, a hybrid public park and council education facility, and to retrofit for energy and water efficiency a community centre and install sustainability educational features and offer courses.

I have seen this partial acceptance of permaculture in a sector I once worked in — international development. There, I witnessed a government adviser assuring a meeting that permaculture "has no place in overseas development assistance" to seeing



permaculture ideas become part of the work of a small number of agencies. The adviser saw permaculture as a largely derivative approach based in other, established approaches and, thus, offering nothing new or of value.

Permaculture's absence from important work roused my curiosity as to why this is so. The answer to that has to do with the perceived credibility and the niche in society occupied by the design system. Frequently, local government and design professionals see permaculture as an amateur, garden-oriented practice lacking the rigour and structure of professional work. The idea of it as a design system integrating the elements of sustainable living is lacking. Likewise, local government sustainability educators might on occasion pay lip service to it but commonly have a very limited concept of the design system and its potential role in society and the opportunities it would offer to their work. That is an influential profession that has been inadequately targeted by permaculture organisations and educators.

Permaculture is frequently missing in public affairs and advocacy around sustainability and urban issues. Educators and practitioners talk about urban food security or food sovereignty but there are few permaculture people active in the work of organisations such as the food security alliances around the country and in the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance, work that is important to Australia's food future.

An outcome of this is that those active in advocacy and educational organisations come to see permaculture as only a minor player without much to contribute. It is seen as a small scale approach to food security that does not address the big political and

economic trends that are critical to our food future.

I understand that there's a philosophy of 'doing' that remains influential within permaculture, however this philosophy is often narrowly interpreted as doing physical things like making a vegetable garden. 'Making' is very important because it is how we bring good ideas into existence, however the definition of making needs to be broadened to working with the brain as well as the hands and to working in advocacy. The reality is that it is the intellectual work that usually sets the parameters of the possible and shapes our future.

What I have left unexplored here are the myriad positive influences in which I have seen permaculture work well. These are perhaps more important than those that have been less successful for we can derive learning from them so as to build upon them.

In proposing a new version of the permaculture design system I propose an iteration, not something completely new that would replace that existing. Some of the ideas I propose already exist here and there and could be built upon.

Evolution requires provocation to work, whether that provocation is a changing climatic system forcing adaptation among plants, animals and people or whether it is competitive pressures within the public marketplace for ideas forcing existing organisations to adapt to changing social, environmental and economic circumstances.

Adaption to change — it should come naturally to permaculture because change is what the design system is all about.

Why a new version of Permaculture?

IT'S BEEN 34 YEARS since permaculture was born with the publication of the book, *Permaculture One*¹, in 1978. The work of the permaculture design system's originators, Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, the book conceptualised a new world view and a solution to the social, environmental and economic concerns of the time.

Permaculture, as broadly described in *Permaculture One* and, the following year, *Permaculture Two*², seemed to offer a way forward, a new way to think about what was happening and how we could best react to that through a design-based approach.

Over succeeding years the permaculture idea spread worldwide and evolved into different species of thought, focusing on different themes in different places at different times. Today, permaculture is a diverse practice in city and country.

Even though the focus and practice of permaculture has changed over time, there is a notion that after three and a half decades the design system could do with a makeover... not to change its core ethics, principles and concepts but to update and reiterate it for the contemporary world and to change how it is conceptualised, taught and implemented.

Evolution

I think David Holmgren summed up permaculture's success when he said that the design system has evolved mainly as technology of the household and voluntary community sector.

Having now attained a level of public acceptance, forward thinking permaculture practitioners want to make more of the design system and to take it into the domains of local government, sustainability planning and other workplace situations. If we are to do this then we have to strengthen permaculture's credibility by upgrading its standards of practice so that it becomes acceptable to decision makers working in those domains.

This is something that was reinforced for me as a staff member of a city council. There, in local government, I found that design professionals and decision makers remain largely ignorant of permaculture even though sustainability educators working in councils occasionally offer workshops in permaculture.

A new iteration

To state it briefly, a new iteration of permaculture may be timely because:

- the world has changed substantially from the time of permaculture's birth and the formulation of the Permaculture Design Course; there are newer priorities in sustainability, much research, development and deployment of sustainability technologies and there are people educated at tertiary level now making careers in sustainable development; all of this affects permaculture's future in some way

1 1978; Mollison B, Holmgren D; *Permaculture One*, Tagari Publishers, Tasmania.

2 1979, Mollison B; *Permaculture Two*, Tagari Publishers, Tasmania.

- the sustainability movement has diversified and today ideas and organisations compete for people's time and effort
- permaculture needs to come to terms with these and other trends by broadening its ambit and engaging with compatible organisations, and by adopting for its own benefit new ideas and approaches, some of which you will find in the following pages.



A new vision — Permaculture version 3.0

LET'S THINK about the evolution of the permaculture design system as consisting of three main phases.

Permaculture 1.0

We can think of the first phase — Permaculture Version 1.0—starting with the publication of *Permaculture One* and going forward into the first half of the 1980s.

Permaculture Version 1.0, then, can be envisioned as spanning the years from 1978 through to around 1985 and being made up of the innovators and the first batch of people attracted to the design system

Looked at in terms of Everett Rogers Diffusion of Innovation¹ model, we see the idea starting with the innovators — David Holmgren and Bill Mollison — then spreading to the first coterie of recruits who, through a variety of means got to hear of permaculture, thought it a good idea and wanted to be part of it. They attended the first of the permaculture design courses then went on to teach the courses where they lived.

¹ The model describes how ideas and commercial products are initially developed by innovators, taken up by a small number of early adopters, then — if successful — by an early then a late majority. They then go into decline or, perhaps, revival in an iterated form.

I use this 'version' numbering convention, brought over from digital culture, as it is nowadays common and is used to identify new iterations of a technology (here defining permaculture as an intellectual and practical technology). It is also convenient in comprehending the trends within a social movement over time.

Permaculture Version 1.0, then, can be envisioned as spanning the years from 1978 through to around 1985 and being made up of the innovators and the first batch of people attracted to the design system. We can see this as permaculture's birth and early childhood.

Permaculture 2.0

Permaculture Version 2.0 spans the years from the mid-1980s, when that first batch of recruits went out to spread the word through their own courses, and on to the present day. It can be seen as permaculture's childhood and early adulthood.

Over those years the design system grew, went along different paths for a time and attracted a larger following. In terms of the Diffusion of Ideas model, these years saw permaculture spread from the early adopters into the early mass adoption phase.

The period also brought new iterations of permaculture through the PDC, though these were minor changes more to do with adaptation to local circumstances. In contrast, Permaculture Version 3.0 would be a more substantial version.

Permaculture 3.0

How, when and if permaculture begins its journey into Permaculture Version 3.0 remains to be seen. What would this phase bring to the evolution of the design system?

First, it would accompany the movement of permaculture into a later stage of mass adoption. It would see greater acceptance of permaculture as a design system among professionals such as urban planners, land managers, social planners and those working in local government.

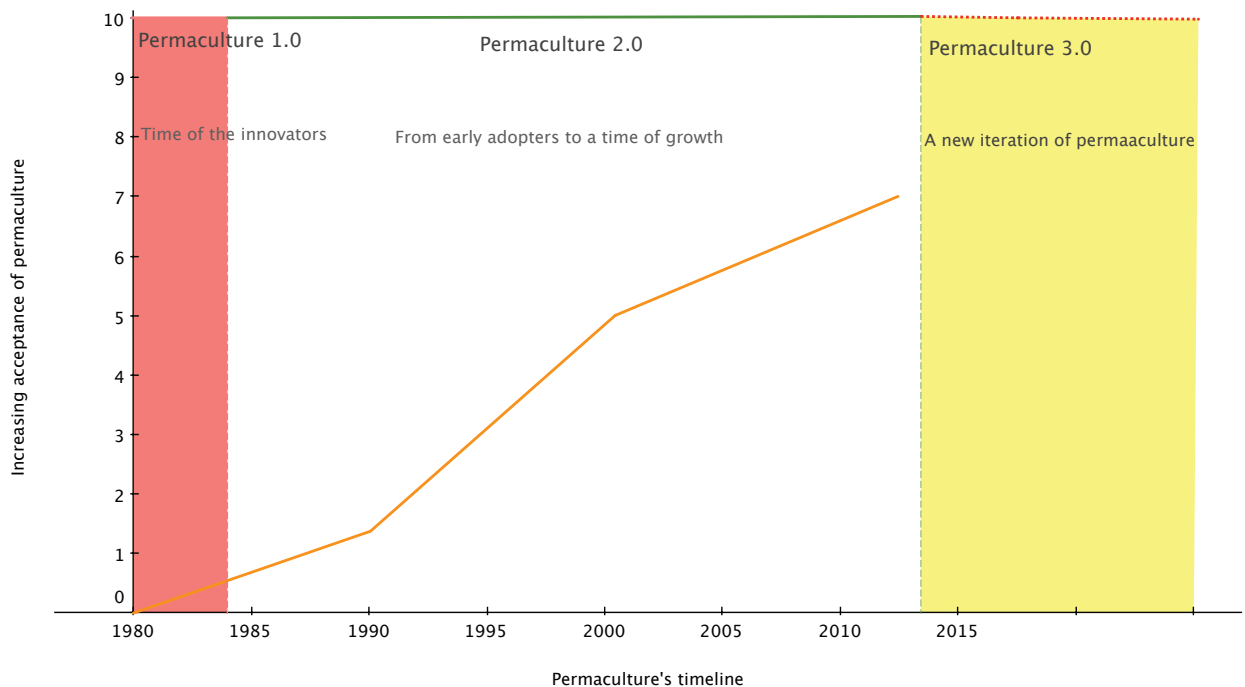
But what would it take for permaculture to achieve this penetration? What within the design system would have to change? What new things would have to come into it?

Making it happen

After nearly 35 years, it's time for permaculture to establish minimum standards for its work in public places, to demonstrate that it is a type of whole systems design (to borrow a term from Buckminster Fuller), that it is not merely a type of organic gardening, and to influence decision makers through good examples.

There's another reason to think about a Permaculture Version 3.0 and it's to do with the design system evolving from a popular towards a quasi-professional practice. What is slowly nudging permaculture in this direction is the Accredited Permaculture Training (APT), the higher level certificate courses and diploma.

APT is permaculture's own attempt at a system's upgrade and recognises that the



The evolution of permaculture

Permaculture Design Course (PDC) lacks sufficient rigour, content and duration to qualify as workplace training. The PDC remains as an informal qualification for those who want to practice the design system at the home or minor community level and is a requirement for APT, which takes several years study to attain. It's certificate three, four and diploma courses offer qualifications akin to those of TAFE courses.

Adaptation now

There's an idea occasionally encountered that permaculture has become complacent, that educators are content to teach what they have always taught or what some permaculture organisation tells them to teach. But there is a lot of competition in the public marketplace for sustainability ideas today and if permaculture doesn't adapt and change, then it could become the loser.

Through its history permaculture has been an early adopter of good ideas such as energy efficient building design, home food gardening, water harvesting, community trading systems, ecovillage development and all of the others, but many of these ideas have now flowed past permaculture into other areas of professional and popular practice. What was once linked to permaculture has become decoupled and taken up by other innovators.

I've spoken to permaculture practitioners, those working as community volunteers as well as those using permaculture ideas professionally (though they remain few in number), and come up with a set of characteristics and ideas that I think permaculture could consider adopting to achieve greater credibility and to grow its numbers as it morphs into its new form of Permaculture Version 3.0.

As I said earlier, this does not imply that we throw permaculture as it is out of the window for there is much there that is successful and positive that we can build upon. What I am proposing is something like a blending, a mashup of the existing and the new so that we end up with an adaptable, diversified and agile design system with an active and clever social movement around it.



Initiatives compatible with Permaculture ethics and principles are based on the imagination and action of creative individuals and collaborations.

Photo: Affordable Organics, a small ethical business started by Tsung Xu.

Permaculture version 3.0

the elements...CONCEPTUAL

Element 1: Permaculture is a platform

IN PERMACULTURE VERSION 3.0, permaculture becomes a platform.

Just as the smartphone or the iPad are platforms of hardware and software upon which independent developers create functionality with apps, so permaculture becomes a platform of ethics, principles and methodologies upon which its practitioners develop their own applications of the permaculture design system.

Doing this is not new. When Bill Mollison and David Holmgren cast the permaculture idea out into the public realm, innovative people picked it up and started inventing applications with it. Today, those applications include the popular mutual assistance scheme, PermaBlitz; educational gardens in schools; community economic systems like LETS (Local Exchange and Trading System); community education; different approaches to growing food; sustainable agriculture and more.

Not all of these are permaculture inventions, but that's alright because permaculture takes good ideas from many sources and repurposes them for use in the design system — it is a synthesis of ideas brought together into a cohesive system of design. Taking and building-on is a valid practice in the development of new ideas — we build on what has been done before.

Building on the platform

In Permaculture Version 3.0, we take the good work already done and build upon it.

Our aim is to tune permaculture as a platform, to clearly define its principles and methodologies and establish minimum standards for permaculture work so as developers or permaculture practitioners can build new and useful things on the platform.

This publication defines some of the characteristics of permaculture as a platform. It proposes new ideas that would enhance the design system that is permaculture and that would uplift permaculture's reputation and standards so as to legitimise it further as a technology for sustainable and convivial living.

The reputation economy

A writer on the sociology of digital culture wrote that we now live in a 'reputation economy'. He was saying that people decide to adopt or not adopt something based on what others say about it. Thus, online, the 'comments' entries on web pages, reader's reviews on Amazon.com and other online book sellers, and what's said on social media matter much, especially for businesses seeking our patronage and organisations our support. Money remains a currency, only now it has been joined by reputation, and there is a clear link between the two.

As a contender in a competitive and increasingly crowded public marketplace for ideas and attention, a marketplace where the reputation economy is at work, were permaculture to lift its game and so increase its attractiveness it could go far, further than it already has. That's why building its reputation by consciously adopting the role of platform for the independent development of useful applications is important. Viewed this way, permaculture becomes an open source of good ideas and techniques.

The platform

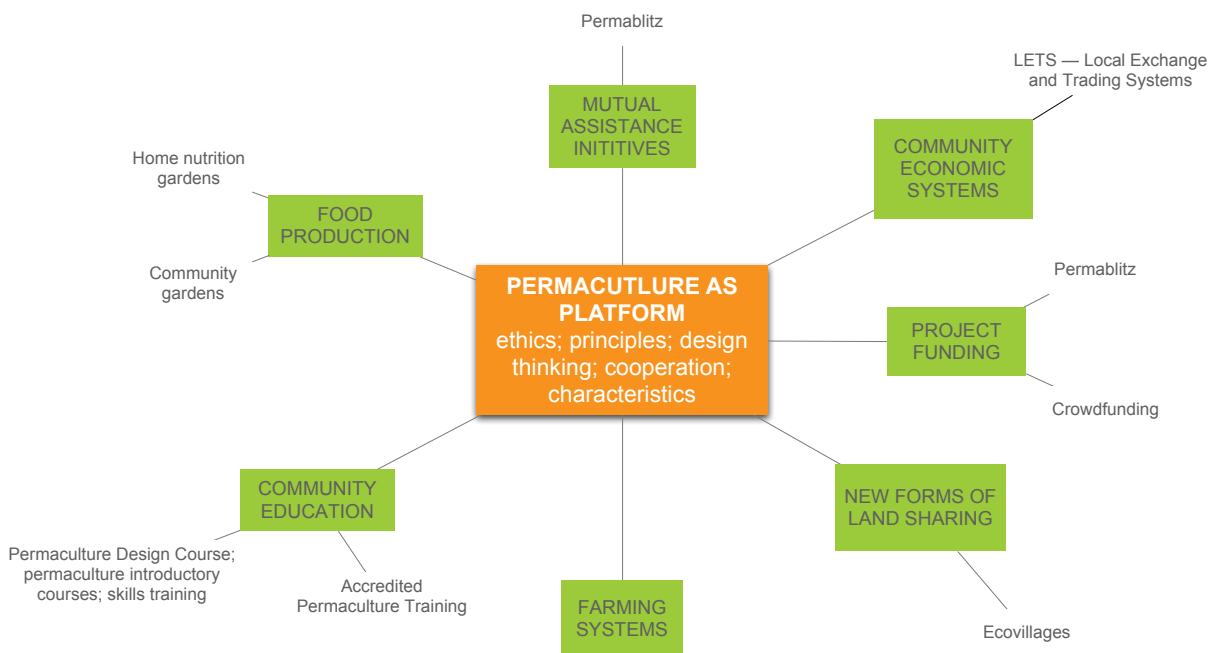
What makes up permaculture as a platform?

Here we're talking about the basics of the design system and maybe some add-ons:

- the **three ethics** of permaculture, which are about the mutuality of providing the needs

of people and natural systems and enlisting cooperation and sharing in doing this

- the different **sets of principles** that are applied in permaculture and from which particular principles are selected as approaches to the work in hand
- the **principle of cooperation** or collaboration in providing assistance to people developing applications of permaculture design; this is bound to the permaculture ethic about sharing of resources, information and knowledge and implies that permaculture is an open system whose contents all can access
- design thinking**, that follows from permaculture being a system of design and which is a basic skill in permaculture
- thinking in terms of systems** rather than seeing components as stand-alone things unconnected to each other or to their larger context, such as a neighbourhood, city or



Permaculture as a platform for the development of applications

society, realising that changes to one part of a system are likely to have an influence, good or bad, elsewhere in the system.

There would be more that we could add, however these few are critical elements of permaculture design. It's the ethics that form the reference for assessing whether something purporting to be an application based on the permaculture platform really is permaculture.

To enhance its role as a platform upon which good and useful ideas are developed, permaculture requires two things:

1. An open knowledge base — a how-to, shared database of knowledge regarding approaches, methods and technologies. At present this is scattered in printed books, over the internet and in the heads of its practitioners. While it may be too late to bring it together in a single site, the multiple locations that make up this collective

knowledge base could be curated on a single site that links to these multiple sources. It would be like a shared knowledge network, a Wikipedia of permaculture. Part of the knowledge base would be a space for the exploration of ideas and concepts and a place where people could ask for help in solving problems and for design solutions.

2. A means of collaboration — which is, at present, perpetuated through regional networks of permaculture practitioners but which requires expanding, perhaps in the form of a social networking site and forum with a catalog of projects and initiatives and the means to link to them, to allied organisations and sources of funding.

Withing the Permaculture Version 3.0 context, the core elements of the permaculture design system become a base for people to adapt to their local needs in developing applications of permaculture ideas, whether those applications are community gardens, community economic systems, the formation of community organisations, planning for sustainable development at the level of the urban precinct, social enterprise or something completely new.

**IT WAS BUCKMINSTER FULLER, the
mid-Twentieth Century polymath,
who gave us the term 'whole
systems design'**

**TO CHANGE SOMETHING, build a new model
that makes the existing model obsolete...
Buckminster Fuller**

Element 2: Position permaculture as a design system

NAMES ARE IMPORTANT because they come to symbolise an idea or practice. The words we use position an idea in the public imagination and creates a sense of what it is. So, in a Permaculture Version 3.0 context, we name permaculture as a system of design and use those words to describe it. It was as a system of design that permaculture was originally framed by its creators, David Holmgren and Bill Mollison.

Using such a term is likely to lead to questions to clarify what we mean, and it is here that we have the opportunity to develop a brief elevator speech describing the permaculture design system. An elevator speech is a general description designed to be delivered in the 20 seconds or so of an elevator journey between floors. An elevator speech describes what/how/where/why/who.

Whole systems design

It was Buckminster Fuller,¹ the mid-Twentieth Century polymath, who gave us the term 'whole systems design'. Fuller is noted for his popularising of the geodesic dome, the Dymaxion house and car and many other technological innovations. He was a major influence on the innovative edge of the 1970s generation, of what was called 'alternative' culture, the generation and culture from which permaculture emerged.

I think it's a reasonable proposition that permaculture is a later implementation of Fuller's concept. At its birth, David Holmgren and Bill Mollison described permaculture as a system of design that included all of the

elements required for the ongoing inhabitation of the Earth in a way that offered not deprivation, but a modest prosperity for all, a prosperity based not on the accumulation of material things but on an experience of life shared with others.

Although not all who contributed to permaculture belonged to that alternative culture of its birth time, as someone who was part of that culture I see a continuity of its core beliefs and approaches in permaculture today, particularly around social justice, technology and experimental ways of living.

A social technology


As an approach to whole systems design, permaculture's focus has been the design of sustainable human habitat inclusive of dwellings, water, energy, food and local economic systems. From its earliest days the design system proposed that permaculture is essentially a social technology² and to implement it its practitioners would have to move beyond the energy/water/materials/food efficient home and out into their communities.

In recent years there has been the realisation that you have to have ways of working creatively with people, as individuals or in groups, to introduce whole system design. This has highlighted the need for practitioners to develop skills in these areas, and this implies a knowledge of people's readiness for

¹ More on Buckminster Fuller:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckminster_Fuller

² 'Technology' understood as a structured approach to some end that can include not only hardware and software but ways of working with people to achieve an end. Thus, 'social permaculture' becomes an integrated, interacting set of techniques to achieve some social goal.



change and how change can be incubated. Robina McCurdy, Robin Clayfield and Fiona Campbell have provided training in the skills of permaculture as a social technology, what has acquired the description of 'social permaculture' — a technics³ — with training in group processes and, in Fiona's case, in that and community/NGO (non-government organisation or civil society organisation) leadership.

What has taken the focus off this whole systems approach and skewed public understanding of what permaculture actually is has been the concentration on food growing in home

3 The broad culture around a technology including its knowledge base, tools, hardware, software and supporting ideas, practices and processes producing some intangible social or tangible material outcome or product. These are described in permaculture as 'invisible' systems and 'visible' systems though the outcome may not necessarily be proper systems, more solutions to some challenge.

and, more recently, community gardens. All too often I come across people whose misunderstanding of permaculture is that it is a type of organic gardening that uses heavily mulched, no-dig gardens made over layers of newspaper and that scatters plants throughout the garden.

It's like Bill Mollison wrote — it is sometimes better to buy your potatoes from someone who has grown them ethically than to attempt to grow your own. That way, you can focus on permaculture as sustainable design for contemporary living, not merely as a method of gardening.

It is thus necessary to define permaculture in terms of whole systems design, as a comprehensive strategy for sustainable living with primarily a community focus and inclusive of the effective design and retrofit of affordable dwellings, water, energy, food and local economic, infrastructure and governance systems.

Permaculture... an ethical design tool, creating sustainability through the integration of diversity, stability and resilience in ecologically sound, economically viable human environments respecting the whole of creation.

...Dawn Shiner

Element 3: Adopt systems thinking

WAY BACK, and here I'm talking before mid-century... Twentieth Century, that is... Buckminster Fuller summed up the essence of the permaculture design system as 'whole systems design'. But wait — how could he do that when permaculture was still decades in the future? He could do it because the term was invented by him to describe his own concept.

Bucky Fuller is credited with inventing the geodesic dome, although author and publisher at Shelter Publications, Lloyd Kahn, says it was actually invented in Europe earlier in the century. Fuller, however, popularised the domes and could do so because a new generation was about in the 1970s and it was open to new, innovative ideas and just happened to be looking for new ways of living which the domes seemed to hold promise of as economic accommodation. In doing this they became something of an icon of that social movement. Fuller produced designs such as the Dymaxion house which was quite revolutionary for the time, as well as other design work.

But back to whole systems design... it's a nice term because it encapsulates in a big-picture way what permaculture is about. As a big picture term it begs more detailed definition and permaculture designer-practitioners already have a collection of these. It leads to another definition of the permaculture design system approach and I will get to that shortly, but let's stay with Fuller's idea for awhile.

Fuller's term — whole systems design — seems to have presaged the development of systems thinking later in the Twentieth Century. That came initially mid-century through the study of cybernetics, the study of feedback and

control in systems and was associated with the development of early computer science. Cybernetics brought new insights and new ideas on how the world might work. Feeding into that later in the century was complexity science, the study of dynamic, complex systems (think of the weather, economies, ant colonies, societies etc) which included an early subset, chaos theory, itself the study of dynamic phenomena in nature.

All that science was very well, but many people struggle to make sense of new ideas that offer alternative explanations of natural and human phenomena. So, to put complexity and systems theory to practical use in the workaday world, an aerospace engineer who also studied philosophy, Peter Senge, coined the term 'systems thinking' to describe his ideas on how these new ideas emerging from cutting edge science could be put to use by people and business. Peter put his ideas down in 1990 in what I recall as a book of dauntingly dense type, *The Fifth Discipline: The art and practice of the learning organisation*, which was reprinted in 1996 because it attracted quite a lot of interest, especially in the corporate world. He went in to become senior lecturer at the System Dynamics Group at MIT Sloan School of Management and co-faculty at the New England Complex Systems Institute.

I don't know what currency the idea currently has in the corporate world and if it has little that wouldn't surprise me. Why so? Because it seems in that world the inhabitants grab at new ideas in the hope they will prove the magical elixir that brings them corporate advantage, internal efficiencies and greater profitability. Magical thinking, in a way, not unlike that of

the New Age movement of the 1980s and the 1990s in which different techniques were practiced because they were seen to offer the opportunity of personal transformation, even planetary transformation. Remember crystals and rebirthing?

What does this have to do with permaculture?

What is the meaning of this for permaculture design and what has Fuller's concept of whole systems thinking to do with it?

One of the main proponents of systems thinking in permaculture design — and remember permaculture has been defined by its creators as a system of design — has been David Holmgren. Listen to David talk and you pick up the idea that he has read systems theory in some form or another, such as in Odum's *Systems Ecology*, for instance. Apart from David and one or two others I don't recall too many in permaculture referring to systems thinking or the science of complexity. Science and theory aside, let me say that I believe systems thinking a basic element underlying the permaculture design system. Systems thinking is closely allied with the 'design thinking' that would be another basic cornerstone of the design system in Permaculture Version 3.0.

It is through design thinking that we apply systems thinking in permaculture. You might recognise this as a somewhat slippery term used by professionals in design industries, so let's attempt a definition of design thinking to bring this concept down to earth.

Design thinking

Design thinking often starts with a definition of the solution required then works out how to get to it. You might have seen this retroactive approach used by facilitators helping groups develop a strategic plan. They start by getting participants to envision where they want the organisation to be in, say, five year's time, then work out the steps that would have to be taken to get there. It's an effective approach sometimes called 'backcasting'.

Information about history and context informs this process by drawing out any useful insights and links that might contribute to the objective and to reveal the connections between things. Considerations of inputs, processes and outputs that would produce a solution help in choosing the most appropriate path to it.


Design thinking includes the principles of:

- adopt and adapt, of taking something that already exists and making it better
- making constructive connections between the elements of design, the parts.

Let's explore these by looking at something beyond permaculture's borders but that will be familiar to many of us.

The error of simply copying but not adapting was exemplified by Microsoft when some years ago they put on the market their Zune MP3 player. There was nothing technically wrong with this device yet it was not a success. Zunes have long ago gone extinct.

Technology writers say that Microsoft merely attempted to copy Apple's successful iPod rather than use it as inspiration to create something truly new and innovative that did something not currently done well by other devices, Microsoft chose the lazy, unimaginative route and attempted to offer



something already being done better by someone else. This was not design thinking.

Apple's was. They reimagined something already on the market and made it better — adopt and adapt. Then they started to make connections between the elements by combining their iPod hardware and software into an ecosystem with iTunes, where content could easily be purchased, music and podcasts and an acceptable digital rights regime. In its own way, Apple succeeded because the company situated the iPod as part of a digital ecosystem of device + software + content + easy legal arrangement for using the music. It made constructive connections between the parts and sold the device as an easy to use package. When the iPod was incorporated into the iPhone as one of many opportunities available to end users, the iPod and the iPhone became a platform on which developers could build new applications of use to buyers.

How do we adopt and adapt this process in permaculture?

Tweaking the possible

The philosophy of continual improvement is part of systems thinking and, rather than the stasis of 'if it's not broken don't fix it', it is a fitting approach for permaculture. Here, we're talking about evolution.

Permaculture is supposed to take nature as a model for its work. Nature continually evolves its lifeforms by producing improved iterations of an idea so that lifeforms adapt to changing environmental circumstances. If they don't, extinction follows.

It's the same with ideas like permaculture which must continually tweak and improve what it does. Sometimes, it has to jettison what no longer works, what is out of date because circumstances have changed too much and replace it with something new and effective. The philosophy of continual improvement, then, is built into permaculture if it really does take nature's patterns and structures as its model.

It is this need to adapt, change and evolve that lays behind the controversial idea of changing the structure and content of the Permaculture Design Course¹. Acknowledging that much content of value remains in the course structure as developed by the Permaculture Institute, proponents of change say that the world the course was originally developed for has changed substantially as have social and sustainability priorities. They see it as natural that course content and structure adapt to the changing social, economic, urban and natural environments and that to do this would be to take the cue from the evolutionary adaptation found in nature.

This type of approach would produce a lot of churn in permaculture, however that is best accepted as a normal condition of adaptation.

¹ The Permaculture Design Course (PDC) is sometimes called the 'Permaculture Design Certificate'. The term 'course' was adopted to distinguish it from the certificate courses offered in formal tertiary education. The term also distinguishes it from the formal Accredited Permaculture Training (APT) certificates, which are nationally recognised as workplace training. The PDC is intended for people wishing to gain a deeper understanding of the permaculture design system to practice it in the home or community. It is not recognised as workplace training. More on APT: <http://permacultureaustralia.org.au/category/apt/>

Design thinking - a model

How to apply design thinking in our work? There's probably many ways, but here's an approach to design thinking that passes through seven sequential phases:

Define: what are we trying to do? What is the problem or design challenge? What do we want to end up with?

Stephen Covey, the author of the influential and still-in-print *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and *First Things First* suggests as one of those seven habits that we "begin with the end in mind". I think this is good advice and it will be a rather basic concept to any who have worked in project management where goal definition is a starting point of planning. If you don't know where you want to go then any course is the right course even though it may take you further from what you desire and end up ineffective at best and a disaster at worst.

Research: What is the history and social/economic/environmental/political /regulatory context of the challenge? What solutions have been tried and what was their result? Who are the stakeholders? What is that they want?

Do not underestimate the importance of context and history.

Context is about understanding those structures, physical and non-physical, in which your project or work is embedded. Included in context is:

- physical — the landform, climate, weather patterns, animal and human communities, urban and natural environments
- regulatory — state and especially local government regulation that would have a bearing on your project or work, including necessary permissions and conditions and

worksafe regulations on the use of volunteers, paid staff and how work is carried out

- budgetary — all projects have budgets and these form a boundary around what you can achieve; some things will be affordable while others, desirable they might be, will fall outside the budgetary boundary
- maintenance — our projects are eventually handed over to their users, so developing their capacity to maintain them by training people in the necessary skills, monitoring formats and, sometimes, by developing funding sources will be necessary. The opportunity for failure increases in proportion to the deficit in meeting ongoing maintenance, budgetary, knowledge and skill needs.

An example of the need to understand the context for a project or work was provided by a group that wanted to start a community garden on public land. They had someone come in to do a design but in their dealings with council they did not discover that there existed a flood plan that would affect any water harvesting earthworks planned for the site and that affected the types of structures permitted. There was a designer-led approach which met a limiting context of the regulatory type.

Understanding history is important as it could disclose what has been tried and didn't work, what did work, and what was tried and didn't work but that might work were it tried again in new circumstances. History can also disclose the connections between things and how these have affected the project.

Ideate: Brainstorm to generate ideas but don't get stuck down in analysis. That comes after brainstorming when you apply the reality filter to the ideas generated.

The reality filter includes those things mentioned above in 'context'.

Prototype: Select an idea and put it through the reality filter of viability, organisational capacity to build and manage, affordability, acceptability etc.

Next comes the rapid prototyping stage and its purpose is to make the thing, trial the idea, monitor it and derive learning from it about what works and what does not.

From that, we tweak and change to improve effectiveness — we define effectiveness as the capacity to achieve what you set out to do.

If we have a new but largely untried idea in permaculture we might trial it with a small application or, if it is something to do with landuse, in a small area to see how it works and if there are any unanticipated outputs that might result in collateral damage, to borrow a term from military planning.

This is an approach used in international development in the PTD process. PTD means Participatory Technology Development with farmers — yet another acronym in an industry groaning under their weight — and it's something the agency I do occasional work with — TerraCircle Inc ²— has used in association with the work of the Kastom Gaden Association in the Solomon Islands.

² www.terrcircle.org.au

PTD adopts the Proactivity Principle of engaging with a technology to assess it before making the decision to adopt/reject/tweak/deploy elsewhere

PTD introduces a new approach, a new idea or agricultural technique in a small area of a farmer's field to assess how successful it is likely to be and to see what needs improving. It's the rural equivalent to the rapid prototyping stage of product development. For the farmer it avoids risking the entire crop were the new idea to be fully introduced, but fail. If successful, the farmer and others participating in the farmer field school adopt the idea.

I recommend this approach to permaculture designers here in Australia within the Permaculture 3.0 context. It's part of the designer-practitioner's own R&D process and is fully compatible with design thinking because it forms the assessment stage of implementation, and all implementations of an idea require monitoring and assessment if ours is to become a learning organisation.

PTD, or a similar approach, engages the Proactivity Principle of engaging with a technology to assess it before making the decision to adopt/reject/tweak/deploy elsewhere.

Implement: The learning of the prototype stage are applied as design modifications, as tweaks or, perhaps, as a complete redesign or even a discard and restart. Now trialed successfully,

the model is ready for deployment and can be rolled out for replication and adaptation.

Monitoring and evaluation: Implementations of the idea are monitored to assess their performance and to continue implementing the philosophy of continual improvement.

At chosen periods — maybe six monthly or annually — the project is evaluated and learnings documented.

More precisely, I see permaculture as a use of systems thinking and design principles...

...David Holmgren, Pathways to Sustainability

Systems thinking

You can see that systems thinking is a broad field and that making use of it is to remain true to permaculture as applied systems thinking.

It requires effort but it offers a way to make the application of permaculture ideas more thorough.

Systems thinking, then, is taking the comprehensive approach of looking at a design or work as situated in its broad environmental, social, economic and regulatory context. It recognises that what we as designers do in intervening in a system can have impacts and create changes elsewhere in the system perhaps at some other time. We cannot always tell what the impact of something we do or make might be — systems contain unknowns — but some potential impacts we can foresee as possibilities and these we take into account in our planning and design.

Systems thinking seeks the connections between the elements or parts of our work or design. It assesses the potential of these connections for being constructive or destructive and seeks to reinforce those that are creative and that would lead to our design being effective and desirable.

Element 4: Move beyond 'peasant permaculture'

ASK A LAYPERSON WHO KNOWS OF PERMACULTURE, what it is, and you are likely to get a response that says something about gardening, about growing food. Permaculture practitioners have been so successful at focusing on food growing that it has become synonymous with the design system.

This is good and bad. It is good because food is a basic human need and its production is increasingly important in a world that will be home to more than nine billion people by mid-century, all of them needing to be fed. It is bad because growing food is only one component of the permaculture design system, a single component that has disproportionately grabbed most of the attention. Here I emphasise the words 'design system', which suggest permaculture is a lot more than gardening.

Peasant permaculture

This term comes from an experienced permaculture practitioner who coined it in proposing permaculture practitioners take a broader view than home gardening and become involved in work in their communities and catchments¹. He was likening a permaculture that focuses solely on gardening and food production to the life of peasants whose main concern is feeding their families and the greater part of whose time is spent in growing the food they eat and producing a small surplus for sale.

¹ A catchment is the drainage basin of a river or stream consisting of the geographical region where rainfall flows into creeks that become tributaries of rivers, and the lands where rivers flow into the sea or into lakes. The catchment is a larger scale geographic division suitable for landuse planning.

Growing food is important but there is more to life and to permaculture. As Bill suggested, sometimes it is better to support farmers in the region than to try to make and maintain a garden when you are time poor or when you don't have access to adequate land.

Access to land for home gardening is an issue in parts of our larger cities where medium density² living is the norm. It's today's reality that a growing number of people prefer apartment living and have no access to land for a garden. If they do, then it's only their apartment balcony or a tiny, perhaps shaded courtyard that they have, or perhaps their apartment building has a flat roof they can use for container gardening.

Community gardens are an option and, fortunately, there is space for them in the suburbs. In the inner urban areas, however, competition to use public land is fierce and community garden proposals come up against opposition. When they do go ahead, they may be quite small. Some councils restrict access to community gardens only to people living within

² Medium density commonly refers to residential areas, perhaps with some commercial enterprises mixed in, where there are a larger number of residents per hectare.

Residents usually occupy detached or semi-detached housing with smaller gardens, contiguous town houses of two to three levels or apartments ranging from two level to high rise. There is usually a limited area of public open space.

Medium density can be found in the older, inner urban areas of most cities as well as in modern housing developments. The model is seen as reducing urban sprawl and as a way of concentrating populations around major public transport nodes.

Medium density is considered a core component of sustainable urban development.

their local government area, thus excluding those who may live close by but over the local government boundary. Community gardens on the sometimes generous areas of land around social housing are usually restricted to residents of the housing units, and those on the sometimes generous areas of school grounds are for the most part restricted to school communities — students, teachers, parents. Taken with other demands on a limited supply of urban open space, these factors limit the potential for community gardens to feed a great many people.

Focus on food to be relevant

If permaculture is to be relevant to urban people, specially those without a home garden, then it has to offer solutions other than growing your own food. It could encourage that practice where people have access to land but it should also take a broader approach to engaging people around their food supply. How? By educating them about the urban food supply chain.³

Permaculture already puts much focus on farming despite the reality that most people doing a Permaculture Design Course live in cities and have little intention of taking up a farming career. Where they do, that should be encouraged because the average age of Australian farmers is something like 60 and fewer young people see farming as a

livelihood. That has implications for Australia's future food supply, where it comes from, who produces it and how. Encouraging farming livelihoods is a good thing in permaculture and it complements the advocacy work of organisations like the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance⁴. It is also an argument to diversify the Permaculture Design Course so that there are rural production-oriented courses taught by people experienced in sustainable agriculture.

Were permaculture educators and advocates to focus more on the urban food supply chain they could educate people about where and how to identify points of intervention — such as do-it-yourself food systems like food co-operatives, organic buyers' groups and community supported agriculture — how organisations have intervened and how to gain leverage in their intervention so as to create positive change.

3 The urban food supply chain describes the journey taken by our food from farm, to food processing and on to distribution through retailers, food cooperatives, community supported agriculture and other connections with eaters.

Food waste is sometimes added as a component of the urban food supply chain as this is a considerable volume of food that goes either to landfill or that is converted into garden fertiliser via composting.

4 <http://www.australianfoodsovereigntyalliance.org>

Putting home gardening in its urban context

David Holmgren's apt description is of home gardening as 'garden agriculture'. Here, permaculture can be seen as a victim of its own success magnified through television gardening programs and gardening magazines.

Whereas it was a good idea when permaculture was unleashed on the world, when it acknowledged home food growing as an idea in revival⁵ (though it had been a tradition in Australia over previous generations), today the practice of home and community food production rests within the broader concepts of food security⁶ and food sovereignty⁷. These concepts would provide the context for food production in Permaculture Version 3.0.

Linking permaculture gardening to broader contexts like food security and food sovereignty repositions it as a design strategy in Permaculture 3.0.

Garden as springboard

A good point about teaching people to grow food at the below-subsistence scale of the home or community garden, about how to grow their commonly-eaten foods so as to supplement their food purchases, is that they become acquainted with what is a basic life skill and they get to participate in a practice with a 10,000 year history.

That done, the educator then has the opportunity to extrapolate the experience into an understanding of the urban food supply and the principles of sustainable agriculture.

In Permaculture version 3.0, teaching how to grow food is put into its broader context of the urban food supply chain, food sovereignty and food security, as well as introducing the important role of urban fringe market gardens and poultry enterprises as well as that of broadacre farming in feeding our cities.

5 Home organic gardening was undergoing a revival in the more developed nation such as the USA and Australia when permaculture was first articulated and had been doing so for at least a decade. This was the time when organic food became the focus of a social movement.

6 Food security is the availability, year round, of a sufficient quality of good food that would support an active lifestyle.

7 Food sovereignty is the freedom to choose the types of food, produced and distributed by means the eater prefers to support. It also includes the right of farmers to use agricultural systems of their choice except where those choices impinge on the freedom or markets of other farmers.

Element 5: Make knowledge open source

OPEN SOURCE is the ideal arrangement through which to implement permaculture's Third Ethic — the sharing of surplus. It also enacts the permaculture principle of cooperation rather than competition, of distributing rather than hoarding.

The open source philosophy quickly spread from its origins in community software development to wider applications, overcoming the limitations of propriety ownership and copyright to open areas to collaborative work. The approach is implemented by placing knowledge in the public domain. The Creative Commons licencing system is another manifestation of this new openness in collaborative work, offering a range of licences to democratise works and to open them to creative reuse.

A clash of aspiration

We can look to the 1990s to see how the third ethic of permaculture — about sharing resources and knowledge — can clash with intellectual property rights.

Copyright protects the expression of ideas for a limited time. It does not protect the idea. To do that, you have to patent it or trademark a logo or something similar.

This came to light within the permaculture movement when the Permaculture Institute attempted and failed to trademark the commonly used verbal and written expressions in permaculture, 'permaculture design' and 'permaculture education'. The permaculture egg design had been used on the cover of Bill Mollison's book, *Permaculture — A Designer's Manual*, in 1988 was adopted by permaculture

organisations around the world as a de-facto symbol of the permaculture design system. The Institute's move to monetise it by preventing free reuse of the copyright symbol was seen by many as privatising the logo — although from the point of view of the Institute it already was their intellectual property as used on the book cover. The Institute made it known that the logo could be used for specific purposes on payment of a fee.

Here, we see a clash of aspirations when it came to intellectual property rights.

Treating knowledge, techniques and information developed by individuals and organisations within permaculture as the open source, collective property of the permaculture movement for the free use of all would avoid clashes over intellectual property and would enable the free access to knowledge by all who could make good use of it. This would not stop people publishing books and writing about permaculture as these would be expressions of ideas, but it would prevent people trying to claim ownership rights over ideas in permaculture.

Consistent with philosophy

Open source knowledge in permaculture could be widely distributed online, in print and on video.

Open source knowledge is the practical way to enact permaculture's Third Ethic of freely sharing resources, knowledge, information, goods and techniques.

As a socially progressive movement, open source would place Permaculture Version 3.0 well as an enabling set of technics and a leader in providing the know-how to build a better future.

Element 6: Introduce permaculture to placemaking

THE CHALLENGE was this: how to combine a public park and council educational facility on a large area of lawn studded with a few young tea trees.

A placemaking approach was adopted to do this and local people and the local permaculture association were invited to participate. A participatory site analysis was organised that included the landscape architect who would design and build the facility. People discussed what they would like on the site. Eventually, the park/educational garden was built and opened to the public. After that, local people started to use the site.

This is how a bland lawn was turned into a multiple-use park/educational park via a placemaking process.

From 'space' to 'place'

In Permaculture 3.0, placemaking becomes part of the design system's basic toolkit.

Let's define placemaking:

Placemaking is a participatory process that engages citizens in the conceptualisation, design and creation of multiple-use urban places.

Placemaking turns a poorly used 'space' into an attractive 'place' that feels comfortable and that becomes a destination in the local area, offering a variety of uses. The practice consists of a variable set of techniques to create a place that is safe and attractive to people, a place where they like to spend time, take their families and friends and engage in the different activities possible

there. Placemaking is not site design in the conventional sense — that is what happens as a result of the placemaking process. Placemaking is social because it necessarily engages people. When practiced by permaculture designers, placemaking forms part of what we call 'social permaculture'; essentially, it's social design — design for and by those who are interested in participating. Placemaking begins and ends with people. Site design becomes a later, intermediate phase. It is not a designer-led process, rather a facilitated process led by participants. The role of the designer is to later draw up plans for any construction work though that happens only after ideas have been tried out temporarily.

Participation is not consultation

To design and offer people a choice between already-drawn-up concept plans for an area is consultation, not participation. Participation starts not with the question about choosing the design you like from those offered, but with the question about whether you want a new design at all and, if it is wanted, then how would people use the space and turn it into a place.

What does this suggest about the permaculture design process as placemaking? It says that it is primarily a social activity. Consultation has a valid role but only after participation has set the parameters.

Placemaking is concerned with multifunctional public places. Occasionally from the mouths of permaculturists you hear the proposal that all open space, all city parks, should be torn up and cultivated as city farms and community

gardens. We did that in World War Two and called them Gardens for Victory because nations had to become more self-sufficient in food. Then, at a time of national emergency, it was a proper thing to do and would become so in dealing with any future emergency that threatened the urban food supply.

That is not a solution for the sustainable city because city parks fulfil multiple roles other than food production that are important to the wellbeing of citizens. Those roles can include food production in community gardens and edible landscapes, as has been done in some locations.

In Permaculture Version 3.0, city parks are recognised as sites of multiple use — for active and passive recreation, children’s play, socialising, solitude, picnicing, community gardening and so on. City parks are necessary to the mental health of city people — they are places for passive or active recreation where people can unwind and distress from a hard week at work or other trying circumstances.

Creating third places

It was Ray Oldenburg who defined the ‘third place’ concept in his book, *Great Good Places*¹. Since then, the idea has become a component within the practice of placemaking.

Oldenburg defined three types of place:

- **first places** are those where we spend most of our time, and this usually means the home
- **second places** are where we spend a lot of time but usually less than in the home — the workplace

- **third places** are venues where people gather socially; they are economical to visit, work best where there is public transport or are located within walking or cycling distance and where people feel safe, can spend time and can meet with others.

...tactical urbanism, the small, local actions that accumulate to contribute to a sustainable urbanism...

Why are third places of interest to designers taking a Permaculture Version 3.0 approach to community development? Because they are important to the conviviality of our cities and towns and because they are necessary to the social cooperation that permaculture values. The opportunities they offer in both social and site design can become a component in tactical urbanism, the small, local actions that accumulate to contribute to a sustainable urbanism.

Third places might be an outside place such as a community garden. They can also be inside places such as cafes and public bars, libraries, hair dressers and even the local park. They must be accessible, safe and inviting to spend time in and offer the opportunity for conversation and engagement with people. A suggestion for a third place emerged from participants in a placemaking session for the Randwick Sustainability Hub when people proposed that space be made available to ‘drop-in’, where they meet informally.

¹ Oldenburg, Ray, 1991; *Great Good Places*; Paragon House, NY. Third edition, 1999, Marlowe and Company, NY.

Third places anchor people in their neighbourhoods. They are places to go outside the house with no greater intention than sitting back, watching people or meeting and talking with others. In a Permaculture 3.0 context, they are important because they facilitate those conversations that lead to good ideas

that in turn lead to figuring out how to make constructive things happen.

Designing the opportunity for third places is a worthy component of Permaculture 3.0, and is made possible through the adoption of a placemaking approach.



Questions answered during placemaking at the Barrett House community centre, Randwick NSW.

Permaculture version 3.0

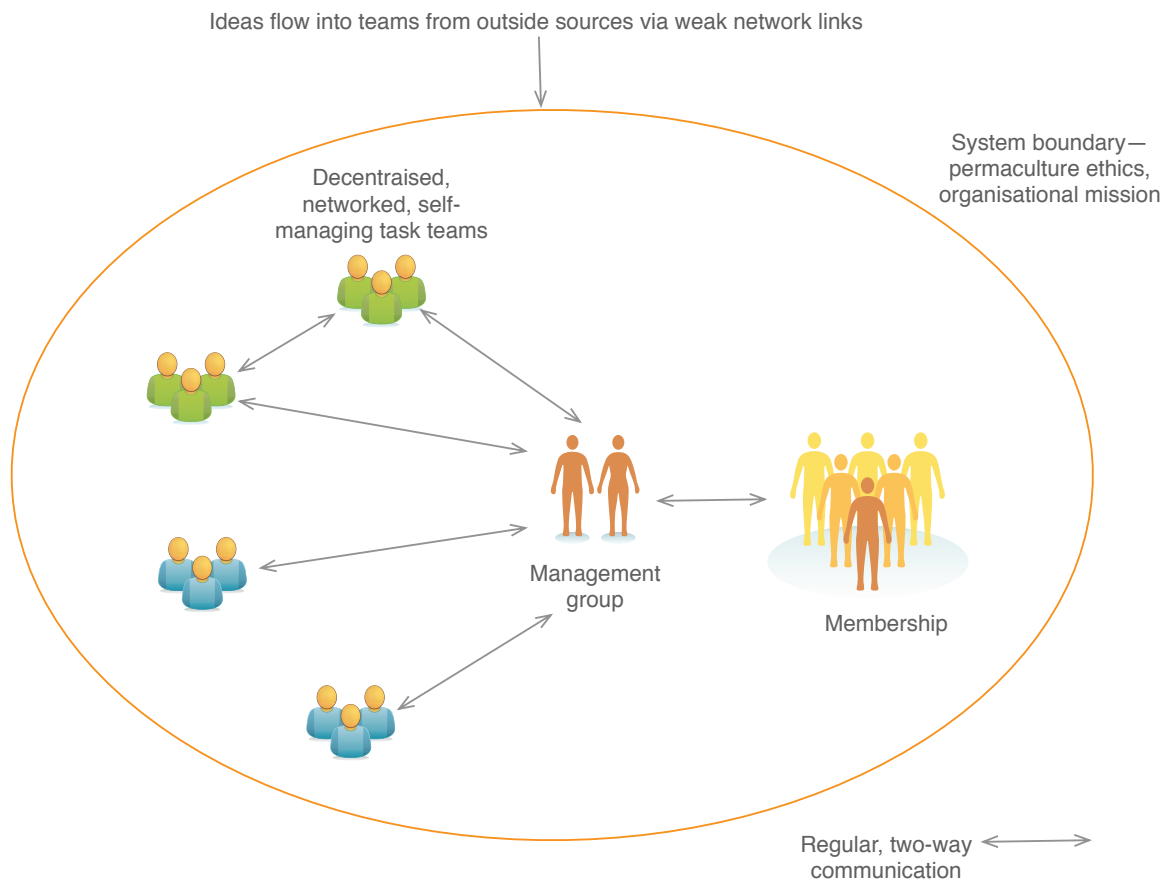
the elements... ORGANISATIONAL

Element 7: Strengthen the networked structure

IN PERMACULTURE VERSION 3.0, we would reinforce the networked structure of the national permaculture milieu and improve the flow of communication between its hubs and nodes.


Permaculture in Australia has evolved as a nationally distributed network consisting of a matrix of nodes, made up of individual

permaculture practitioners or small groups, and hubs, which are nodes with lots of sub-nodes connected to them such that they form a cluster of connections, as do larger, regional permaculture associations with their own network of members, or prominent permaculture educators with their networks of past students.



Operational model for larger scale permaculture organisation

A conceptual model of the distributed network of permaculture in Australia.



Initially, this geographically distributed network was linked by the print publication, *Permaculture International Journal*, until it ceased publication in June 2000. After that, it became linked first through websites during the Web 1.0 era and then social media with the arrival of Web 2.0 technologies. Today, the conversation around permaculture takes place mainly on social media.

The advantage of a distributed network is that it exhibits resiliency. A certain number of nodes and hubs can be lost without collapsing the network, which reconfigures to cope. For example, a regional permaculture association with a large membership might disband but the more active members may remain active within the larger, distributed network as nodes, even though their hub has dissolved.

At times, people have commented that there is too little communication between these nodes and hubs in the distributed network and that, as a result, permaculture has not succeeded in formulating and implementing many larger scale collaborative projects on a state or national scale. Examples of where it has succeeded would be Permaculture Australia's funding arm, Permafund, Accredited Permaculture Training and, perhaps, the mutual assistance initiative Permablitz, though that is more a model that has spread virally and is the initiative of groups in different cities, a serial replication rather than a collaboration on a larger scale.

Militating against better communication between hubs and nodes is the inertia built into the system in the form of the traditional permaculture focus on local activity — regional permaculture associations have proven successful at creating projects in their area but larger scale projects over greater distances and time spans are rare although permaculture has been around now for more than 35 years and has had an online presence for at least 16 years.

Despite the minimum record of larger scale activity spanning different regions, there does exist communication between nodes facilitated by connectors, people who form loose links between hubs and nodes and who connect the permaculture network to other networks, facilitating a two-way flow of information, knowledge and ideas. Today, this occurs mainly in permaculture social media because that media eases conversation and the formation of linkages.

It may be that permaculture is too-locally focused to engage successfully in any larger scale, collaborative effort, however there may come a time when something of the sort is needed as the challenges permaculture would address are often national in scale. The existence of an adaptive, decentralised national network would be a distinct advantage in engaging in collaborative work at scale and for this reason its existence is seen as an asset in Permaculture 3.0.

Element 8: Build a community of practice

PERMACULTURE EVOLVED as the practice of individuals, voluntary community associations and a limited number of small businesses and sole traders operating for the most part in the areas where they live. The exception was where permaculture educators and designers travelled to work temporarily in other places.

Permaculture practitioners are aware that their design system is a diversified and distributed practice. What some now suggest is that its practice, the quality of work done in permaculture's name, gain some cohesion and that experience becomes shared so we can all learn from one another. What permaculture has not developed, some have said, is a community of practice. Local permaculture associations fulfil this role to some extent, however that can be quite a variable extent.

Learning together

A community or practice:

- provides a means of freely and openly sharing information and knowledge among participants so that they can improve their work
- is an organisation, formal or informal, that has learning as its main purpose and that has processes of review, monitoring and evaluation to harvest knowledge from experience; it is a learning organisation
- may also deliberate on policy, practice and other things that affect the design system.

A community of practice would link to the setting of standards for permaculture work. It would be the sort of thing that a national organisation in permaculture would foster.

Community of practice... groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly...

...Lave and Wenger 1991

Element 9: Set standards for permaculture work

A FEW YEARS AGO I took an interstate visitor, a permaculture practitioner and community garden consultant on a tour of community gardens. She was impressed with most of what she saw, however when we stopped by a self-described 'permaculture' community garden we were confronted with materials scattered higgeldy-piggeldy throughout the site. It was not a good impression and it suggested poor site management and little regard for the impression that the garden's neighbours might get. I don't think my visitor was all that impressed.

A similar impression of the standard of permaculture work came by way of unsolicited feedback following a Sustainable House Day — when private homes are opened to the public to demonstrate sustainable technologies and design. A visitor said how she were disappointed with a self-described 'permaculture' house and garden because it was messy and disorganised and didn't have the visual appeal of other homes on display.

These are examples supporting my contention that negotiating and adopting of a set of minimum standards for permaculture work carried out in public places — and in private places periodically opened to the public — would improve the public standing of permaculture, especially among those in professions such as landscape and garden design and in local government.

Those of us who have been around the design system awhile will be familiar with the criticism that permaculture makes 'messy gardens' and that permaculture work is poorly finished. Unfortunately it's sometimes true.

Providing quality assurance

A set of voluntary standards would provide quality assurance for people commissioning permaculture design and construction and for those organisations and individuals seeking voluntary assistance from permaculture practitioners. It would provide them with information on what to expect.

They generally have no idea that permaculture graduates are legally liable for the works they design and build and for the consequences of the advice they give

This would avoid the situation by which people fresh from doing a PDC — and not having spent time acquiring the experience that a permaculture designer-practitioner should have before they offer assistance or educational services (assuming they lack those skills before starting their PDC) — go out full of confidence that they are somehow qualified to offer advice. I have seen this happen and it made a poor impression on the local government people putting resources into a project.

Generally, design course graduates learn little of how design professionals work or of the legislative requirements around design and construction, drainage, consultation or safe workplace practices. Thus, they can leave themselves open to criticism of poor practice that reflects on permaculture in general and

diminishes its reputation. They generally have no idea that permaculture graduates are legally liable for the works they design and build and for the consequences of the advice they give.

Local government is risk adverse and will require unsafe works in public places to be remediated. When working in local government in assisting community garden start-ups, I was put in a position in which I had to do this when a community garden crew that built their own garden left sharp metal edges on their garden beds that could easily have cut and injured the public as well as the gardeners. This potentially exposed the council and the community garden team to litigation had anyone been injured.

It was an example of well-meaning gardeners being unaware of safe work practices, good design and minimum standards of finish, something that in other circumstances a set of standards for permaculture design in public places could help prevent.

Coverage

At the least, a set of standards covering design, construction and finish would serve all permaculture designers as a checklist of what to do. At best, a set of standards would bring permaculture into line with professions that have standards of practice and practitioner behaviour. If Accredited Permaculture Training does eventually create a cadre of professional permaculture designers, the time to devise and adopt a code of permaculture practice will certainly have arrived.

A set of standards for permaculture work would best be drawn up as a participatory process as there would be much to discuss. Standards could cover:

- work done in public places

- work done on private land as a project, a Permablitz or as a business transaction; it might not cover the work of friends building something on someone's property
- permaculture education
- the conduct of permaculture designer-practitioners.

Drawing up standards would necessarily take note of the legal obligations affecting all businesses, such as Worksafe regulations and how, for example in NSW, these also affect volunteers in community organisations engaging in voluntary work, where they are treated as workers.

Standards would provide quality assurance for public permaculture projects, inform permaculture practitioners about the quality of work expected and provide something for those new to permaculture to aim for.

In general, a code of permaculture practice that set standards for permaculture work would include as a minimum:

- provision of design and construction/advice that would make the work suitable for its intended purpose
- quality of finish
- quality of materials
- avenues for input by participants in projects and those commissioning the work
- consideration of impacts on neighbouring sites
- reporting and evaluation
- financial management
- worksafe practices
- assurance that works comply with regulatory requirements
- handover of project at completion.

For an upgraded permaculture such as that proposed as Permaculture Version 3.0, a set of standards for work in public places would be core part of the design system.

Element 10: Adopt a social entrepreneurial approach

PERMACULTURE INVENTOR, Bill Mollison, pointed out years ago the vulnerability of relying on grants to do important work. Grants, he and others have said, eventually run out. Unless the funding has been used to set up a structure that can continue after the cessation of funding, the project is unlikely to continue as the work of managing it and will be beyond the capacity of an unfunded organisation.

If grant reliance is so vulnerable, what then is the solution? For a growing number it is to adopt the social entrepreneurial approach.

The social entrepreneur sets up small business-like structures to self-finance projects and to address social need. A social entrepreneur can also be a grant-seeker, knowing that some kinds of work are only supportable through grant funding, that there are not market solutions to every need. Above all, the social entrepreneur seeks innovative solutions to social needs.

The social entrepreneur can take forms other than starting a small, not-for-profit business to channel funds to some social goal. They might work for an agency of some kind or they might practice their social entrepreneurship as a part-time thing, working with community organisations towards some goal.

The role reaches out to make things happen. It is, by essence, proactive, values innovation and adaptation to changing conditions, and seeks opportunity. It is pragmatic and adopts the best available methods of making things happen, whether that's a small, for-profit business (called a 'social business' because it generates profit and apportions some of that to social projects), a not-for-profit business or NGO or that of a social entrepreneur working

through some other structure. Where possible, where there's wriggle room, government staff could adopt the role of 'civic entrepreneur', not to build things themselves but to clear the way for citizens to create things for themselves. This is the role social entrepreneur educator, Ernesto Sirrolli, suggests I adopt when I worked in local government as I had responsibility for enabling communities to start community food and garden projects.

Another example is that of social business, Food Connect, the CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) scheme. That was established with the dual goal of providing weekly boxes of organic, fresh foods to eaters in the city and of supporting farmers in the region by buying their produce for the weekly boxes. Sydney Food Connect was set up by social entrepreneur and permaculture design graduate, Julian Lee.

Permaculture as social entrepreneur

We have had and still have social entrepreneurs in permaculture. They were perhaps more common when permaculture was young during its formative decade of the 1980s. Why then? I don't know. Perhaps there were fewer grants available then so other means of funding had to be sought. My gut feeling about this is that permaculture appealed to a different type of person then.

Not everyone is suited to the role of social entrepreneur but what is important is familiarising people with it in the hope that it will inspire some to action. In a Permaculture 3.0 approach, the idea would be one of those explored as a means to a social end in a revised, revived and renovated Permaculture Design Course.

Element 11: Develop partnerships and collaborations

COOPERATION is one of the basic principles of the permaculture design system. It proposes that cooperating yields better results than competing.

The principle does not deny the evidence for competition in natural systems, however it recognises that cooperation — what ecologists call ‘mutualism’ — is also a major competent.

It’s the same in human systems. Competition applies competitive pressure that can push individuals, businesses and organisation to continually improve what they do and to start new initiatives and enterprises. Here, it is complemented by traditions and practices of cooperation in moving towards common goals and mutual wellbeing.

Competition — the evidence

Competition between educators

Competition has been evident over the brief history of the permaculture design system. There has been competition for students between permaculture educators, especially at times when a larger number of educators have offered courses to what has always been a quite limited market.

Looking back, we can trace the appearance of educators offering permaculture design courses and of the market for permaculture education reaching saturation, after which some educators moved on to other things. Some diversified their educational offerings. Others dropped out of teaching.

This demonstrates that the market for permaculture education is no different to other markets. It is limited in scale, in the number of people seeking education, and in affordability.

Over the years people have expressed interest in doing a permaculture design course but have said that it was too expensive. Although the cost of courses might exceed willingness to pay for some people, it must be recognised that courses are expensive to organise and that nobody has become rich through offering permaculture education.

There is another factor operating here, too — perceptions of value for money. With no recognised avenue to paid employment following the PDC, there can be a disincentive to invest in education.

Like all markets, that for permaculture education is influenced by the perceived return on investment. This is why teacher track record and reputation is important and why people thinking of permaculture teaching should gain substantial experience before offering courses.


Some educator-course organisers recruit other educators to offer specialised topics in their PDC. This acknowledges that there are probably no educators who understand all of the topics in the PDC sufficiently to teach them properly as much as it demonstrates that collaborative teaching offers a better product.

Competition for attention

Compared to the years immediately following its birth, permaculture today faces more intensive competition for people’s attention. I describe this as ‘the social marketplace for ideas’.

Following the popularising of the term ‘sustainable development’¹ by the Brundtland

¹ *Our Common Future* articulated the generalities of a path that would, to use its words, provide for the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future.



Commission in the book *Our Common Future* midway through the 1980s, the field we know today as 'sustainability' has blossomed and diversified and tertiary courses in environmental studies and management, and in sustainability, have appeared.

A consequence of this has been the emergence of a diversity of community-based groups and small businesses focused on particular elements of sustainability. Local government, too, offers workshops and courses on sustainable living, a development that, reportedly, could have affected the viability of private providers offering such courses although some councils hire private providers to deliver their workshops (council courses and workshops are generally free, unlike those offered by private providers).

We can see that the marketplace for ideas and for offering training around them has become more competitive. For permaculture to survive in this environment it needs a discernible point of difference to the others out there and to simplify and focus its messages on a limited number. Too many messages and you confuse people — they walk away.

Strategy for a competitive marketplace

Partnerships and collaborations multiply the work of any single organisation and thus offer the means to further the spread of good ideas in a context of competition for attention, ideas and education. They also offer an approach to meeting limited sets of goals for different organisations that choose to work together.

This can be done by organisations agreeing to cooperate and share advocacy and education for those things they agree on and setting aside those they disagree on. They do not drop points in disagreement, they simply choose to ignore them because combined campaigns

or programs on points of agreement potentially multiply the work of cooperating groups.

When permaculture educators/advocates/groups cooperate and collaborate on programs with other organisations, they embed themselves in the broader mesh of sustainability organisations. This is a way to get around the perception that permaculture organisations sometimes have a go-it-alone approach that insists everything be labelled as permaculture.

The approach was adopted by a small international development NGO I worked for². As a small organisation it had limited access to funds, however by cooperating with another NGO, a somewhat larger and better-funded one, it was able to fund the installation of a microhydroelectric turbine to bring electricity to an isolated Pacific Island community. The project met the needs of both organisations as well as the community.

Extending the weave

Through collaboration, we extend the weave of the sustainability network because two or more organisations cooperating or forming an alliance or coalition can gain a deeper and more distant reach than any of those organisations acting alone.

Within a context of Permaculture 3.0, individual permaculture organisations would do better by casting off their isolation and seeking partnerships and collaborations. They would seek to lock step with others so all could march forward in unison, achieving their own goals as they achieve those of the collective group.

2 APACE — Appropriate Technology for Community and Environment. APACE provided technology transfer for village energy systems (mainly micro-hydro) as well as training in sustainable agriculture for villages. APACE started the successful Kastom Garden Program and cooperated in the case mentioned above with the Caritas agency in the Solomon Islands.

Element 12: Introduce a culture of evaluation

EVALUATION is a means to learn from our experience, especially when engaged in project work. It has had too little application in permaculture.

Evaluation and monitoring are:

- a means of learning from what we do
- a means of implementing the philosophy of continual improvement.

How to evaluate

There's evaluation and there's monitoring. They go together.

Monitoring can be done at regular, fixed intervals — such as quarterly — or when a particular chunk of work is complete.

Evaluation can be done at longer intervals, such as annually and after the completion and handover of a project. It is a more intensive, more detailed process than monitoring that, in the international development NGO world, is sometimes done by external evaluators.

Monitoring may take the form of a review of work completed during the last chunk that followed the previous monitoring. It will classically produce a narrative report looking at what was done, the quality or usability of that work and whether there was sufficient time to complete it. It assesses blockages and forecasts any likely to be met during the next work chunk. A financial report in the form of a balance sheet provides an idea of how the budget is going and whether adjustments are necessary.

In Agile Planning, there are daily stand-ups and weekly meetings, or meetings following a 'sprint' of work, that fulfil the monitoring function. A community organisation or

consultancy would modify this meeting schedule to suit their schedule.

Community permaculture associations and permaculture educators will be unlikely to be able to fund an external evaluation of their work. All that can be reasonably done, then, is to seek feedback both verbally and anonymously on courses and work. Conducting an annual evaluation of how past students and participants have changed how they live and what they do would further provide useful feedback. Anonymised, publishing the results of evaluations would provide a service to the permaculture design system and the social movement around it.

What to evaluate?

What do we evaluate in our projects and courses?

Evaluating against project objectives is a necessary part of the process and it is done far more in-depth than the periodic monitoring of a project. It is the objective part of evaluation and it is measurable and quantifiable.

There is a more subjective evaluation process that complements the objective and that I recommend as part of any project structure in permaculture or NGO work adopting the Permaculture 3.0 model. It is less quantifiable or not quantifiable at all and it includes asking a number of evaluation questions about:

- **relevance** — has the project proven relevant to the needs it set out to address? Were there more important, higher priority needs that should have been addressed instead?
- **effectiveness** — did the project achieve what it set out to do?

- **efficiency** — were project resources (funds, time, knowledge, skills, equipment, consumables, communication, collaboration etc) used well?
- **impact** — what has been the impact of the project on its participants. Has it affected their lives? Has it had any social/economic/ health/environmental impact? Where these positive, negative or neutral impacts and upon whom did they impact? Did impacts affect social or political relationships in any way?
- **sustainability** — has the project proven sustainable within the skills/knowledge/ budget/organisational capacity of its user group? (assuming it was meant to continue after the project period ended)
- **progress** — has the project succeeded in achieving the original objectives or have these changed? Is the program design relevant to its goals?.

No time to monitor = no learning

If we don't make the time to monitor and evaluate our work, our's will never become a learning organisation. The concept of the learning organisation was popularised by Peter Senge in his 1990 book *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. Senge was writing mainly for a corporate readership, however the principles can be adapted to small business, social enterprise, voluntary community groups and even to the work of individuals.

Doing this can only improve the work of permaculture associations and practitioners, and that is why project monitoring and evaluation, and becoming a learning organisation, is a part of Permaculture Version 3.0. It's a way of lifting the permaculture game and gaining greater credibility and a better reputation for the design system.



Element 13: Adopt sustainability education criteria

SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION is now a specialist field informed by new research feeding in new approaches. At its best, it is marked by the adoption of new ideas, educational and communications techniques. At its worst it devolves into a formulaic approach to a fixed set of topics that eschews new approaches and new information that could improve its work.

Sustainability education is now a recognised livelihood. Some educators work as educational consultants to business and some local governments now employ sustainability educators. Here, though, educators are often employed to work solely within one application of sustainability education such as waste reduction, reducing water or energy consumption or in bushland management. Few positions cater for a more comprehensive approach to sustainability that would integrate those areas and blend them with others.

The idea of the permaculture-trained sustainability educator working in local government or some other agency and taking a truly comprehensive approach to their work is still far off. Only a few councils employ such people, and to employ more would require a different approach for which councils might not have an appropriate structure. Most local government educator's roles are attached to sections dealing with waste, water or assisting small business to use resources better. The silo structure of councils means they do not have sections with a broader brief.

A way in for the permaculture educated with some specialised knowledge is to be contracted by a council to provide specific

educational services. Those doing the hiring for this part-time work are likely to want to see evidence that the applicant does actually possess a high degree of specialised knowledge and the means to pass it on. Sometimes, councils hire people without adequate experience and this can backfire on the council when erroneous information is given, and on the reputation among sustainability educators of the service provider. It pays to remember that there are people out there with a high degree of knowledge who will let council know that their educator is not up to the task.

Sustainability education has been developing as a field of employment and as an activity of voluntary community groups. It has a body of knowledge, much of it based on experience. Adopting approaches developed within sustainability education would update permaculture education and align it with contemporary thinking, making it more effective.

Adopting the body of knowledge

Permaculture educators would improve their work by focusing on behaviour change in the education they offer and less on the passing on of information. The old 'talk-at' lecture style of presentation, sometimes called the 'empty vessel' methodology because it treats people as empty vessels that the educator pours knowledge into, has long ago had its day.

Research discloses that information provision and awareness raising alone do not lead to personal or social change.

What does this mean for educators adopting a Permaculture Version 3.0 approach?

First, it means doing away with the practice of the 'download dump' approach to education where an educator stands before a class and dumps knowledge onto them. That's tired and it's certainly expired as an approach. History. Past. Gone.

We know that people have different ways of learning that span listening, watching, discussing and doing, so the capable educator uses all of these techniques.

The other thing they do is to first of all assess their students' readiness for change. This covers the range from:

- those uninterested in change (the recalcitrant are unlikely to become students)
- those collecting ideas and information for a possible change in future, though as yet having no commitment to change
- those on the verge of change who require a gentle nudge to push them into change mode

- those who have made change in their lives and who attend courses and workshops to build on their knowledge, reinforce their new direction and to meet others on the path.

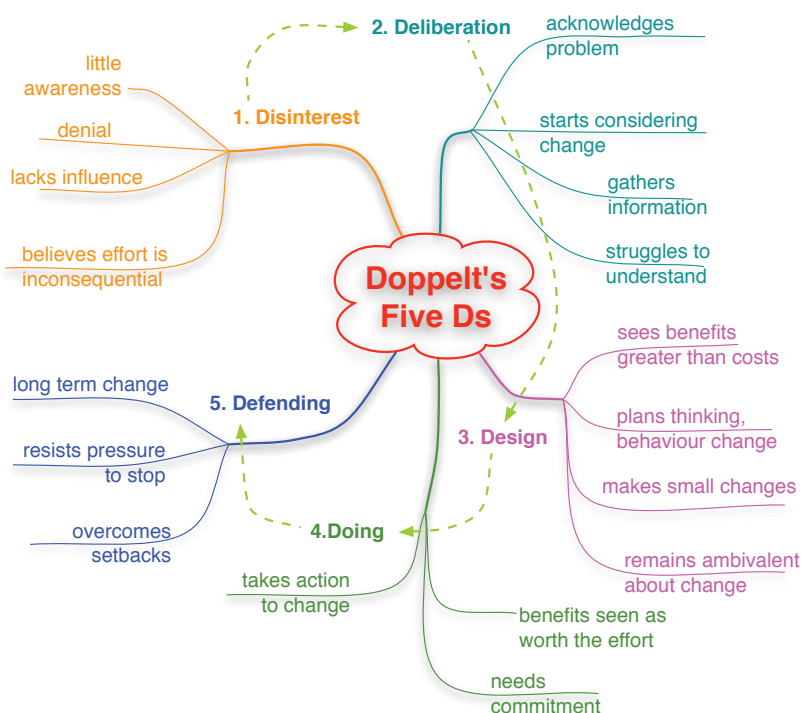
This typology was researched and developed by James Prochaska in the health field and later interpreted for sustainability education by Bob Doppelt¹.

It's about social learning

The focus in Permaculture 3.0 is on social learning, on enlisting students with experience and knowledge in peer-to-peer education in workshops, courses and activities.

This is not teacher-centred learning. The teacher is coordinator and principle educator, however much focus is put on students developing ideas and solutions collaboratively. It is like discovery learning, together.

¹ 2008, Doppelt B, *The Power of Sustainable Thinking*; Earthscan UK.



Bob Doppelt devised a set of five stages involved in behavioural change in regard to sustainability.

Understanding useful models like this could only improve permaculture's contribution to sustainability education and ease the adoption of its ideas.

Element 14: Diversify and adapt the PDC

EDUCATIONALLY, ONE SIZE does not fit all. One course cannot cater to all circumstances. We need adaptable permaculture design courses for different applications of permaculture.

The Permaculture 3.0 model would see design courses specialised to metropolitan cities, smaller centres and rural areas, including farming and market gardening and to the needs of NGOs working in international development. They would all include an agreed set of core content then provide other, specific content tailored to the geographic/demographic/application they cater to.

Doing this would increase permaculture education's fitness for purpose, make it more applicable and make links with local initiatives.

A long-running conversation

Proposing diversity in the design course has been a controversial conversation within permaculture circles.

Some want to keep the course developed by the Permaculture Institute — which they describe as the 'classic' course — and which uses the chapters of Bill Mollison's 1988 book, *Permaculture — A designer's Manual* — as a curriculum structure.

Others say that, like the natural systems which permaculture seeks to mimic, its courses should evolve to adapt to changing conditions if it is to remain fit for purpose. They say the *Designer's Manual* has never been updated and that it was not written as a curriculum, that it serves better as a key text for students. It is interesting that some educators have used Rosemary

Morrow's *An Earthusers Guide to Permaculture* as a text rather than the *Designer's Manual*.

Diversifying the design course would require the collaboration of permaculture educators and practitioners to identify, so as to retain, core components of the design system. To these, specialised components would be added, such as those relevant to farming, to life in a metropolitan city, to working with people in lesser developed countries.

Something of a challenge

Coming to agreement on the core components of permaculture to include as common curricula in the diversified Permaculture Design Course would likely be challenging, given the range of opinion and experience in permaculture.

It may be impossible. If so, that would leave open to individual educators the opportunity to develop their own course content and structure. This has already been done to some extent. Why it has been possible, and why it remains open as a possibility is because there is no legal agreement of what constitutes the content of a design course.

Soon after permaculture education was first offered, the Permaculture Institute, then the dominant organisation in the emerging permaculture design system, produced a simple and brief course curriculum. That was adopted by the limited number of educators at that time. Then, in 1988, *Permaculture — A Designer's Manual* was published and the Permaculture Institute decreed that it was henceforth the curriculum for all permaculture design courses. This too was accepted

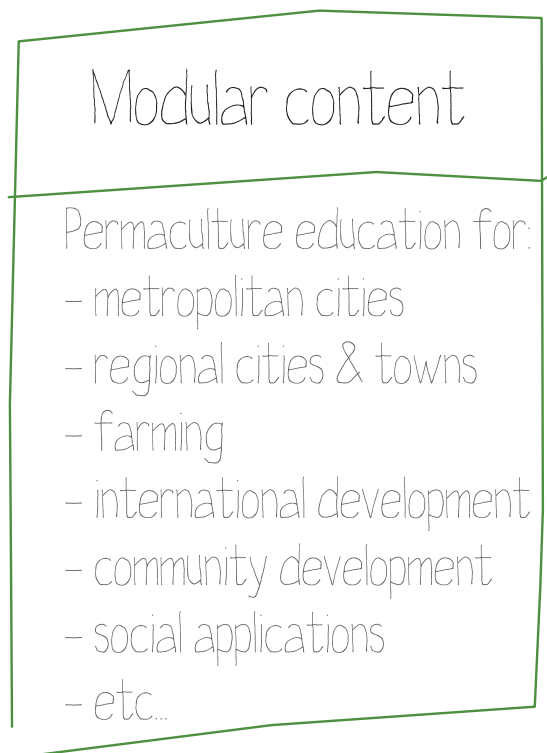
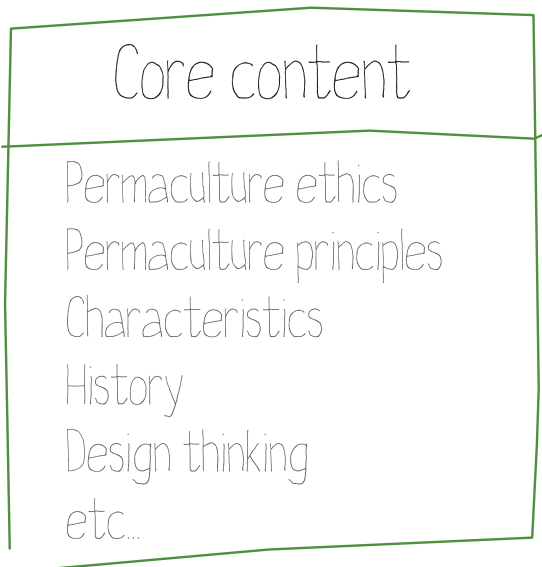
although I recall no negotiation of consultation with educators and practitioners about it. It was when larger numbers set up as educators that the idea of a diversity of design courses targeted to specific demographics and situations emerged.

With the controversy and argument that sometimes accompanies proposals for change in permaculture, and with the absence of any nationally-recognised representative body or central authority for the design system, and

without any major online/offline forum for discussion of change within the design system, I suspect that the adoption of a diversified approach to permaculture education will be driven by the individual initiative of educators.

National consultation has not been a permaculture strongpoint. I suspect that course diversification will come through the old permaculture process about just going out and doing it.

Modular Permaculture Design Courses



What could be the content of a modularised Permaculture Design Course?
Modules could be added to the core content of the course to adapt it to particular applications.

Element 15: Adopt simple structures

COMMUNITY PERMACULTURE ASSOCIATIONS

are voluntary organisations maintained through member's contributing their time, funds and energy. Because these are in limited supply, it makes sense for organisations to adopt the simplest structures that get the job done.

Permaculture adopted what's known as a 'personal' structure in its early days, a structure focused on the knowledge and presence of permaculture co-creator, Bill Mollison. In little over half a decade the design system had morphed into an early version of the distributed network structure we find today. The nodes on that network are made up of individuals, small commercial entities such as professional permaculture educators and community-based associations.

It is those community associations that bring individuals together for mutual learning and to work on projects in the areas where their members live. It is those same associations that are managed by volunteer effort and it is this that has to be fit into life in between the demands of work, family, study and all of those unexpected things that suddenly come up.

Volunteer time and resources, then, are in limited supply so it pays to enact the permaculture principle of making the least effort to achieve the greatest result that is pertinent here. For associations and similar voluntary organisations, that means adopting the simplest effective structure to manage their affairs.

Sometimes we see ambitious permaculture associations adopting the role structure of business, corporations or government. Here, individuals fill formal roles in a hierarchy and all

too often we end up with a command-and-control, or parent-child relationship between organisational leadership and members and a downwards, hierarchical flow of information and authority. The outcome of this arrangement is an artificial division between leadership and membership and a clumsy and excessively formal structure.

Time for the team

The role culture is so tired that it has virtually expired. In contrast, the team culture is inspired.

In a Permaculture Version 3.0 model, old organisational hierarchies are deconstructed and disaggregated and replaced by self-organising, self-managing task teams that are in frequent, two-way communication with an organisation's coordinating team. This coordinating team brings together the work of all the teams and ensures it is compatible with the organisation's strategy and with the ethics of the permaculture design system. It is simply one other team focused on administration and has no more authority than any other team. Likewise, the admin team looks after organisational finances, membership records, reporting and external relationships. Formal roles associated with the association structure or that of the company limited by guarantee belong in the admin team and can be circulated periodically.

An end to boring meetings

Formal, boring meetings have no place in a practice such as permaculture that purports to engage with new, convivial ways of doing things.

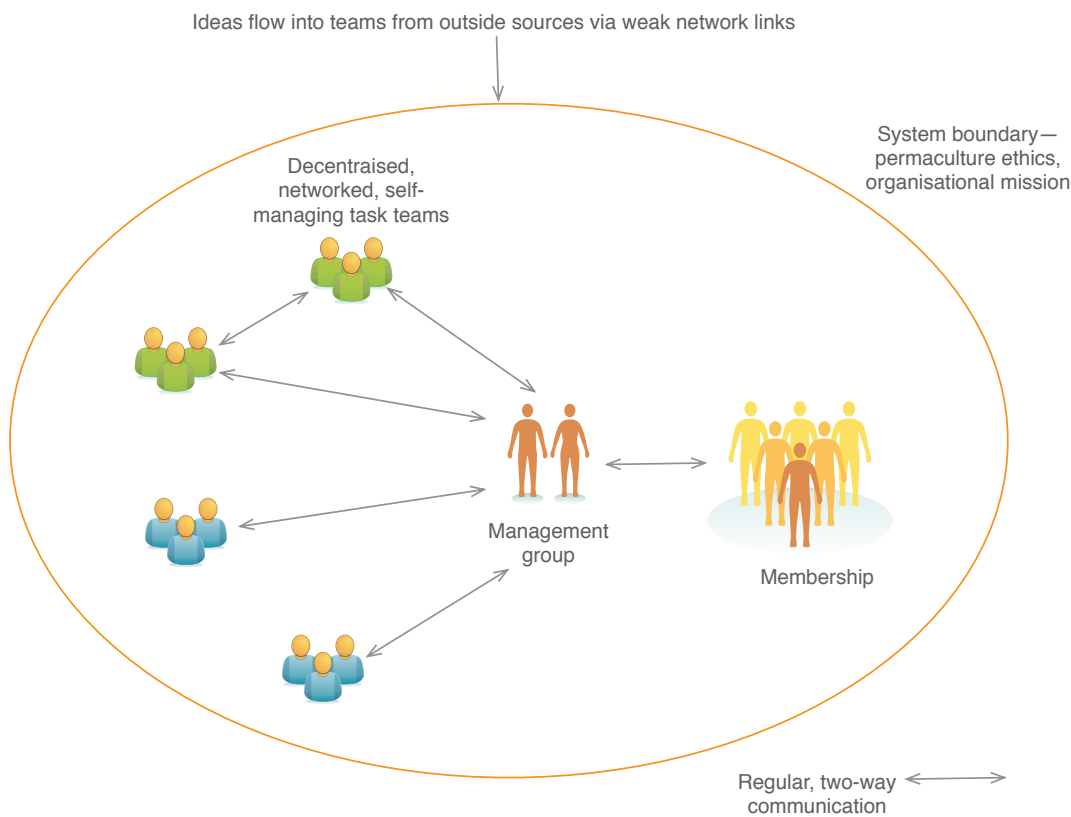
Meetings are necessary, however formal business should occupy the lesser part of the meeting and much time should be devoted to member's networking, trading goods (such as a 'swap' or 'take' table) and sharing food (food and something to drink is an absolute necessity at meetings).

Making decisions collegially

Because member engagement in the affairs of the permaculture organisation is essential, a better structure for meetings and their discussion and decision making are appropriate. There are models for this, such as sociocracy, and it would be a good idea to investigate them and adopt the simplest, least time consuming and most engaging of members.

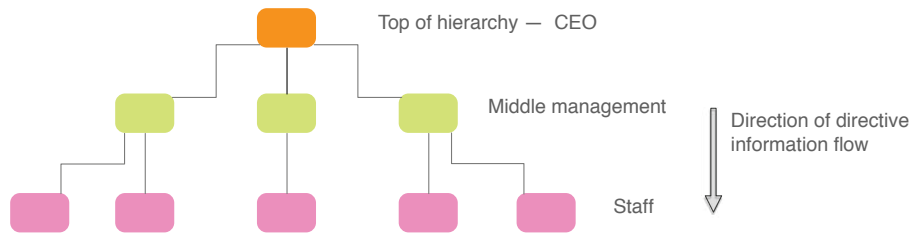
Organisations in permaculture with clumsy, role model forms of organisation frequently fail to engage their membership in running the organisation. In taking on that task on behalf of the membership, leadership engages in managerialism and, thus, offers nothing by way of a new, better model than that commonly found among big organisations. This is not what permaculture is about. At worst, it places too much work on individual role-occupants and risks member burnout and attrition.

In permaculture, the future belongs to smaller, agile organisations with a capacity or rapid response and adaptation. It is this that forms the organisational model in Permaculture Version 3.0.



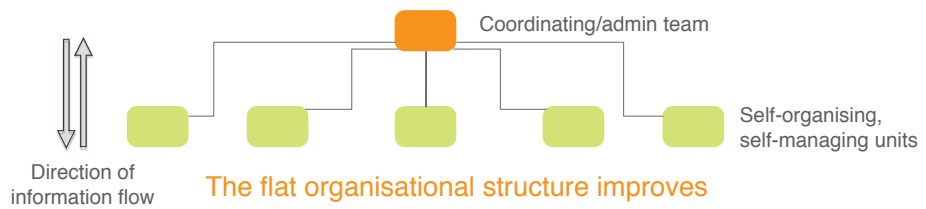
Operational model for larger scale permaculture organisation

Model for a larger sustainability organisation whose operation is based on the activity of task groups and that of the management group, which, as one of the groups, performs coordination.



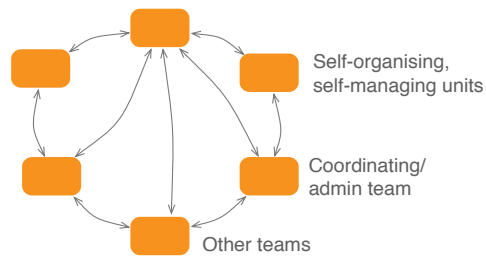
The structure of the conventional hierarchy.

Government, corporations and many community organisations adopt the conventional hierarchy as a model through which to conduct their business.



The flat organisational structure improves communication and accelerates responsiveness.

Two-way information flows



An organisation structured as a network is based on self-generating, self-managing teams linked by frequent, multi-path information flows that create self-correcting feedback.

All nodes in the networked organisation have the same status and carry out specialised tasks coordinated by the coordinating/admin group

Permaculture version 3.0 — the elements... PRACTICAL

Element 16: Address contemporary lifestyles

PEOPLE COMPLAIN that modern life is complicated. The impression is that there has been an acceleration of personal life that has been with us for a few decades now. Compared to the lives of the 1950s generation it's probably true. What is certainly true is that there are new pressures today, pressures on families, financial pressures, pressures from work.

What could a Permaculture Version 3.0 do about this? Probably little at the societal scale as that would be beyond its capacity. Its point of intervention is more likely to be with the individual by offering ideas and examples of ways to reclaim time and life-space by first identifying those things that matter then strategising to enact them. This has much to do with personal values.

What concerns many people is reduced workplace security. That started with the automation of the workplace in the 1970s and continues today. Initially, it was working class jobs that were displaced by automation and, later, by industrial robots. Now, indications are that middle class jobs are soon to be affected. Writing in *Race Against the Machine*¹, Erok Brynjolfsson (director of MIT's Centre for Digital Business and technology and strategy consultant) and Andrew McAfee (principle research scientist at MIT's Centre for Digital Business) say that "The AI (artificial intelligence) revolution is doing to white collar jobs what robotics did to blue collar jobs", and that

a trend is starting that is characterised by economic growth without employment growth. David Rowan, editor of Wired magazine UK² put it this way:

“By some estimates, at the end of the century 70 percent of today's occupations will have been rendered non-human. We're facing some big ethical questions”.

These are serious trends that are likely to affect people attracted to permaculture and are worthy conversation topics for permaculture associations.


Reclaim time

Time poverty — that's the term given to the chronic lack of time experienced by many urban people for anything but the essentials of life. It's a brake on participation in community activities as well as home life and interpersonal relations. It's also a brake on participation in permaculture groups and their activities.

How we address time poverty in permaculture 3.0 is something worth discussing. Perhaps the

¹ 2013, Brynjolfsson E, McAfee A; *Race Against the Machine*; Digital Frontier Press, Massachusetts.

² *Wired*, the magazine of digital culture:
<http://www.wired.co.uk>



first step is to suggest that, for those who want to reclaim some of their time, change is possible but it will require effort to make happen.

What causes time poverty? We have any number of labour saving devices at work and in the home, so where is the extra time liberated by these? Filled up with other stuff, probably. Managing our time is less a technological task than one of personal values, priorities and planning.

Workplace demands can be a time thief. I'm not talking about those who find such fulfilment in their work that they willingly put in long hours, but those who would rather spend time with family, friends, hobbies or just blobbing out instead of attending to work brought home or done in the office after sensible workers have gone home. It's no secret that the average working week in Australia has lengthened over the past couple decades.

Ubiquitous communications — what has become known as the 'always on' or '24 x 7' culture — has made its own contribution to time poverty, especially where employers supply mobile phones and digital pads and workers feel an obligation to check their calls and emails after working hours. While some of us need to be contactable by our workplace seven days a week, others might find a kind of existential liberation by making use of the off switch and voluntarily cutting communications with the workplace until next working day. This is what I found useful in a recent role I filled where I found the desk draw to be a good home for the Blackberry after I left for the weekend.

Reclaiming personal time is more than time management. That's about making the most effective use of time in and out of the workplace and there are a number of popular systems that help you do that, such

as Stephen Covey's *First Things First*, Dave Allen's *Getting Things Done* and Leo Babuata's *Zen To Done*. Time management is a good idea, but reclaiming time steps back to more fundamental questions about personal priorities and values. It asks whether we should bother doing something at all.


As I've said, discussing time poverty would be a good first step to reclaiming personal time in a Permaculture 3.0 context. Maybe a clue on how to do that comes from the late 1990s when Noel Winterburn was running his Conversations for the Twenty-First Century in Sydney. One of the most popular meet-ups was that called to discuss time poverty. Noel planned to hold that session in the living room of his apartment, however when more than 100 people registered to attend he had to hire a hall. What did this signify? It suggested that modern lifestyles were perhaps less fulfilling than people imagined they might be, and they wanted to talk about it with others to get a few clues on how to make changes.

There's nothing like a good example, and for permaculture practitioners planning to subvert the dominant time paradigm, telling stories of people who have succeeded can be stimulating.

The affordability of accommodation

Life in the big cities can be expensive, especially when it comes to rental accommodation and to buying a dwelling. In some places younger people who once would have bought a home have given up on the idea entirely.

Dealing with this is usually beyond the capacity of community permaculture associations, however Permaculture 3.0 could see the setting up of discussion space and educational



sessions to learn about and assess options for affordable accommodation. Like reclaiming time, this could offer something of practical value to people and attract them to permaculture by increasing its utility value.

Some of the options have been absorbed into the permaculture body of knowledge from outside of the design system. Co-housing, which originated in Scandinavia and has seen a modest take-up here is an option worth considering. Essentially, co-housing is a form of urban land and goods sharing, usually taking the form of medium density dwellings with costly items like washing machines shared in a communal laundry, and a common building where meals are sometimes cooked and shared. Because land is held in common with freehold title to a small parcel where the dwelling is built, costs are lower. It takes some organising, however the fact that others have successfully trod that path before makes it easier for those that follow. Co-housing makes for more compact developments, making it particularly applicable to city living.

There are other models of shared accommodation. Selli-Hoo is a 30 year old shared house in Adelaide occupied by owner-occupiers with a couple rooms left for renters. It's perhaps the longest-running share house in Australia and remains a viable abode for those fortunate enough to live there. How would that model be tweaked for modern times?

Another model worth pursuing was pioneered by members of the Institute for Cultural Affairs in the late 1980s in Marrickville in Sydney's Inner West. There, members bought an entire three storey, red brick walk-up apartment building and kept one of the apartments as common meeting and social space. Rather than a community of dwellings scattered across the

landscape, their's was a vertical community and an appropriate model for dense urban living.

Then there is the model that permaculture practitioners developed and that has since left its permaculture nursery for life in society. Here I am talking about the ecovillage.

The precedent to the ecovillages of today are the intentional communities, the multiple occupancies set up in rural areas as new ways of living by participants of the alternative culture of the late-1960s to the early 1980s. The aforementioned cohousing model can be seen as an urban expression of the ecovillage scaled according to the land values and space limitations of cities.

What we would do in a Permaculture 3.0 context is to explore these options, what changes of mindset would be necessary to start or join one and how it might be financed and managed.

Reducing social isolation

In the cities we're surrounded by crowds, yet what many people experience is isolation amid many.

To address this, Permaculture 3.0 practitioners could organise not only the educational events permaculture associations are known for but social events such as shared meals, video screenings and other social activity. The key is conviviality, inclusion and a welcoming ambience. Developing those third places mentioned earlier would be an appropriate strategy.

A valid focus?

Addressing contemporary urban lifestyle deficiencies is not something that permaculture design has focused on so much in the past, but it would be something that becomes a focus within Permaculture 3.0. Why? Because permaculture is whole systems design and the lifestyles people lead, the limitations those lifestyles place on personal time and expenditure and on the opportunities gained or lost are part of the whole system of people's lives.

If permaculture cannot help people address these issues in contemporary living it risks being overlooked and sells itself short as a tool for social transformation. As they said back in the sixties: 'the personal is the political.'



Conviviality is an antidote to social isolation, time poverty and to the stresses of contemporary living. Informal gatherings of friends and colleagues, like this one of local and out-of-town colleagues in the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance, bring people together in a friendly atmosphere where they get to know each others and, as a result, can better work together.

Organisations ignore the social element at their peril.

Element 17: Scale-up permaculture

A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR once said to me that permaculture would go further than it has were it to figure out how to scale-up its work.

In his work creating a solar technology bulk buying scheme for households this is exactly what he had done. Through the economies of bulk buying he and his colleagues had made solar technology accessible to householders by making it cheaper and by offering purchase and installation as a package.

His criticism that permaculture has not moved far beyond the home and its garden was not completely true but is worth considering. Why, his question went, thirty years after it was set upon the world, has permaculture not had wider impact and created larger scale opportunities? Why permaculture does not have greater cache among political and other decision makers has been asked by quite a number of its practitioners and by people from outside of permaculture.

Scaling-up permaculture projects — taking them beyond the home — is demanding of time and requires access to specialist knowledge and skills.

I have experienced this in working with groups to set up community gardens, which in themselves are a small scale example of scaling-up, and on the Permaculture Interpretive Garden and community centre retrofit project in Randwick, which combined the design of a sustainability education centre, construction and the creation of a public park/gardening education facility. It was obtaining a grant and situating the project within the local government framework that enabled this scaling-up of permaculture to happen there.

Community organisations, even with funding, are hard pressed to engage in scaling-up of this type when the design, the work and the project management are done voluntarily. For any substantial work funding needs be of sufficient scale to employ a project manager and skilled workers with the community organisation taking an overall management role. This supports the inclusion of basic project management in permaculture education.

Scaled-up

Walk the paths and between the fruit trees at Northey Street City Farm in Brisbane and you pass through an example of scaled-up permaculture. Northey Street has funding for paid staff, a capacity for raising its own funds and a substantial volunteer corps. The work was carried out over a timespan of years.

Although it was not positioned as a permaculture project, Food Connect Sydney is compatible with the design system, its ethics and principles and was started by a graduate of the permaculture design course who made use of the social enterprise model, a model appropriate to any scaling-up effort. It is self-funding. Similar is the food co-operative and food garden known as The Source, in Hobart, Tasmania.

These are examples of scaled-up projects carried out by people with permaculture backgrounds. What it implies for a Permaculture Version 3.0 is that we may need to scale-up by taking a social entrepreneurial approach, perhaps starting with grant funding and using that, where it is sufficient, to install the infrastructure that allows projects to become

self-supporting. The other implication is that, in a Permaculture 3.0 context, there would be a need is to become adept at writing grant applications. Crowdfunding may another means of raising the funds to get a project up and running and there are now a number of crowdfunding facilities online. For voluntary groups wishing to get things done, there is often little choice other than grant funding because few have the skills and motivation to go to the trouble of setting up a social enterprise or small business to accomplish their goals.

However it is funded, the idea of scaling-up permaculture applications seems a good one. Applying permaculture design in the setting of the private home can go only so far to setting examples — valuable that they are — but scaling-up permaculture projects in publicly-accessible places would do much to popularise and demonstrate the design system in action.



The Permaculture Interpretive Garden, part of which is seen in the photo, is a local government project part of the Randwick Sustainability Hub, is a scaling-up of permaculture design.

Element 18: Introduce greater focus on people skills

SKILLS in working with groups is necessary to carrying out projects in permaculture.

It's arguable that permaculture's weakest element has been in working with people, yet the ability to work constructively with others is the glue that binds project teams. At worse, a lack of groupwork or people skills, whatever you want to call it, is the reasons that projects fail.

There's probably too little time in the Permaculture Design Course to introduce those skills. The courses are crammed full as they are, with perhaps too little time already spent on existing topics to do them proper justice.

This leaves specialised courses and workshops the only option through which permaculture practitioners can boost their people and group skills, and enrolling in them requires that the practitioner become aware of their limitations and makes time available to attend. For some years a small number of educators, mainly New Zealander, Robina McCurdy, Robin Clayfield from Crystal Waters in Queensland and Fiona

Campbell in Sydney have been offering workshops and courses based around people and community leadership skills.

The development of group skills is something that permaculture practitioners could imbibe from the international development industry. There, the acquisition of those skills has come through the necessity of working with people of different cultural, educational and language abilities. The result has been the loose codification of a body of experience, knowledge and practice such as Participatory Learning and Action, Participatory Technology Development With Farmers and other skill sets for working with communities.

Learning from this industry would greatly benefit permaculture and its work in the world. Forming links with international development practitioners skilled in these areas could be a feature of Permaculture 3.0 were organisational effectiveness to become a part of this new model.



The Randwick Sustainability Hub, a scaling-up of permaculture showing the grid-interactive photovoltaic array on the roof which is supplemented by a wind turbine.

Element 19: Develop project skills

PERMACULTURE VERSION 3.0 places greater focus on the acquisition and development of project planning and management skills in permaculture. Project planning and management — PPM in the jargon — is the skillset that enables individuals and groups to achieve what they set out to do.

In the past there has been discussion over elements of PPM such as how do you transfer the skills necessary to sustain a permaculture system to clients of your design service once the designer finishes their assignment. Doing that is one of the end elements of PPM and forms part of the designer's withdrawal strategy from the project at handover.

Planning the agile way

A modification of the Agile Planning methodology is recommended as the PPM approach for use in permaculture. Unlike the more conventional and sometimes bureaucratic approaches to PPM, Agile Planning:

- is based on the work of small teams in frequent communication; there are no team managers, merely coordinators who are ordinary team members with a specialised function and whose role is to make it easy for team members to do their work

- works towards project goals through 'sprints' or workchunks determined by the teams, and that span limited periods; the sprints add incremental value to the project by producing iterations of the work that accumulate towards a finished product but that, because of frequent communication, have the capacity to rapidly detect and rectify faults
- involve the client as team member.

Agile Planning is the methodology of choice for implementing the philosophy of continual improvement. It could also be adapted to the pace of work of voluntary community groups.

Another positive is that for projects to do with installing a landscape or similar physical design, the agile approach would be amenable to the modular development approach of starting small (one work chunk or sprint), consolidating your work in that work chunk (thus completing a functional iteration of the project) and progressing in additional small sprints from the edge of your consolidated work (this producing a succession of useable and completed sprints).

The agile project planning and management approach would be one more tool that Permaculture Version 3.0 adopts from outside the design system to improve its work.

Element 20: Focus more on medium density living

MEDIUM DENSITY DEVELOPMENT is becoming the dominant form in larger cities — the places where most Australians live.

Medium density, especially apartment and townhouse living, is frequently the housing of choice as people can live close to their work, sometimes within walking or cycling distance, and it is accessible to first home buyers. People do not have the responsibilities of having a garden that they might not want and it suits an ageing population. Medium density can place a large number of people within close walking proximity to public transport. High population density in a limited area brings the critical mass of numbers that can support small, specialised businesses, thus it is good for building local economies.

For permaculture practitioners in larger cities to ignore medium density solutions is to ignore a large and growing portion of the Australian population and to render permaculture of limited value to them.

A smorgasbord of approaches

One of the first things permaculture practitioners could do is to acknowledge that the era of the traditional Australian quarter-acre block is gone. Even in the suburbs, infill housing is reducing the open space available to householders. In the newer outer suburbs and the exurbs — the residential developments that are in effect satellite suburbs of the metropolis — detached housing sometimes comes with home garden space little larger than that found in the old, inner urban core.

In a Permaculture Version 3.0, the development of workable and affordable solutions for our medium density cities would focus on:

- energy and water efficient apartment design
- waste reduction, reuse and management solutions
- providing adequate, multiple-use public open space in neighbourhoods
- improved public transport
- designing apartments with useable roof space for recreation, social uses, solar energy arrays and gardens
- the incorporation of workplaces, coworking facilities¹ and small to medium businesses within urban development
- developing third places in neighbourhoods — economic-to-visit facilities, close by, where people can gather and meet (the 'first' place is the household, 'second' place the

¹ Coworking brings together people who work alone into a shared space with shared facilities where they can cooperate and assist each other when needed. Coworking is sometimes called a 'jelly'. Shared resources could include high speed broadband, coffee making, printers, 3D printing.

workplace, the 'third' place cafes, parks, village greens and the like²).

Something else that a Permaculture Version 3.0 approach to medium density living would adopt is precinct, rather than household level sustainable development planning.

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- 2 The idea of third places was developed by Ray Oldenburg and has since found a home in the placemaking methodology of participatory community development. Oldenburg described third places in his book: 1989, Oldenburg, R: *The Great Good Place*; Marlow and Company, NY.

Particularly in the older core areas of large cities, space is limited and this places limitations on what householders can do in their own homes. Taking a precinct or neighbourhood scale approach to developing solutions can be more economic, efficient and effective. Permaculture 3.0, without abandoning its focus on rural and suburban development, would focus on developing solutions to sustainable, medium density living as this is the shape of our urban future.



Christy' Walk in Adelaide demonstrates compact, energy efficient medium density apartment development of a type that could be promoted by permaculture designers.

Element 21: Create a strong urban focus

RURAL PERMACULTURE as practiced on farms has a long history and has brought together a kit bag of techniques. Much of the design system's development has concentrated on its rural application. There are examples of permaculture applied to farmland management on the broadacre scale and these sometimes combine ideas developed outside the permaculture milieu such as Keyline water management, Alan Savory's Holistic Management and Joel Salatin's method of the rotational grazing of chooks. This is proper for a system that is itself a synthesis of ideas from different sources brought together as a coherent system of design.

At the scale of the city fringe market garden there remains work to be done, but even here there are examples such as the mixed farm operated by the Brookmans north of Adelaide—The Food Forest¹.

A rural focus is important because the cities rely on farming for their sustenance, as they have throughout history.

An urban culture

The reality is that most of us — most of the world now — live in cities. So while maintaining a permaculture design focus on farmland makes sense because farms feed the cities, it also makes sense to devote a greater portion permaculture designers' time and effort to making our cities better places to live.

What we need is a cohesive body of knowledge around the application of permaculture ideas and principles in urban

settings. That includes regional cities and towns, although how those ideas and principles are applied in these variable urban settings will necessarily differ.

Australia is a highly urbanised country and permaculture has had an urban component ever since the design system came into being, but in recent times this has not been developed as much as it could have been as a cohesive catalog of approaches and techniques. Even the permaculture design courses billed as 'urban permaculture courses' can fall short of their aim as they sometimes teach content unlikely to be implemented in the city, retaining much of the rural content of the conventional design course as defined by the Permaculture Institute rather than developing a curriculum geared towards life in metropolitan cities.

Urban courses must be specialised

Urban permaculture training would benefit by including:

- how to grow food and raise chooks in small urban gardens and community gardens
- an understanding of community food systems such as community supported agriculture, food co-ops and organic food buying groups, specially now that a growing number of people live in apartments and lack food-growing space
- how to work creatively with others — group decision making, community democracy and other skills for collaborative work; cooperation with others is a key element of urban life
- an understanding of local government and its potential for cooperation with citizens

¹ The Food Forest at Gawler, South Australia:
<http://www.foodforest.com.au>

- an understanding of placemaking for working with communities
- and much more.

Tactical urbanism

To practice permaculture in public places in the cities is to practice tactical urbanism.

Tactical urbanism: small scale, local initiatives taken by people in communities to improve the places they live; tactical urbanism builds sustainable urbanism.

Tactical urbanism is also known as 'urban acupuncture'. Wikipedia sums it up:

**Urban acupuncture
"eschews massive urban renewal projects in favour of a more localised and community approach that, in an era of constrained budgets and limited resources, could democratically and cheaply offer a respite to urban dwellers."**

The notion behind tactical urbanism/urban acupuncture is that making small changes in the neighbourhood contributes to the greater wellbeing through the ripple effect as the benefits of the changes improve local conditions in the public domain.

Tactical urbanism generally excludes works in the home or home garden. Its focus is on the public domain — the parks, streets, footpaths, commercial and municipal buildings, institutional land and other areas accessible to the public. It engages in small works that contribute to neighbourhood revitalisation and encourages citizen engagement with public space in their area. Like any permaculture project in a public place, the practice of tactical urbanism is participatory and stems from local demand.

You can see that some permaculture works already do this, such as the development of community food gardens in public parks. What has been missing has been a context within which to place these works so as to create the awareness that they are less one-off initiatives and more part of a cohesive practice. This done, it becomes possible to start the work of defining strategy and tactics for permaculture designer-practitioners to engage in the practice.

Essentially, this is the work of Permaculture Version 3.0 in the city and it is connected with the practice of placemaking, which we looked at earlier.

Within Permaculture Version 3.0, sustainable urbanism is the proper frame of reference for the practice of permaculture in cities. And to be successful permaculture aims to create resilient, convivial cities that are places of opportunity.

Cities are not farms although food has traditionally been produced within the city and on its urban/rural fringe. Cities are also places of economic and political decision making and administration, places that people come to for education and seeing opportunity. They are places where culture, the ways in which societies do things, is passed on. Essentially, cities are about exchange.

Cities are social venues where initiatives are negotiated with others and, if something is planned in public space, negotiation with local government. This alone necessitates an understanding of the role of local governance and the development of social and people skills a necessity in education for urban permaculture.

in Permaculture 3.0, permaculture in cities is seen as essentially a social activity because cities are essentially social places where cooperation is a necessity for doing most things.

Urban permaculture and education for the practice of permaculture in cities within a Permaculture 3.0 mindset would reflect the essential elements of the city — the food system, economic initiatives (think co-ops, community trading systems etc), politics and culture. This would align with permaculture's self-definition as a comprehensive system of design.



Markets form part of a strong urban culture. They are an example of tactical urbanism — small, local initiatives that accumulate to become trends and solutions within sustainable urbanism.

Element 22: Move beyond the designer-led approach

THE ROLE OF THE PERMACULTURE DESIGNER

has held a central place in permaculture, but when we consider the new, revitalised model of Permaculture 3.0, we have to ask whether this is now the right approach.

The centrality of the designer is an idea permaculture inherited from the design professions. It is essentially a service model — people want to do something so they hire someone to provide the service for them.

Conventionally in permaculture, a designer comes in, talks with people about their needs and produces design options for them. This can become a top-down approach.

Putting design last

Design should not come first. It comes last.

Producing a design drawing on paper or screen is the end product of an intensive period of needs clarification, land capability assessment (assuming it is land and not an economic or

social initiative the permaculture designer is assisting with), legal and regulatory (usually local government) considerations, available funding and trying things out.

The problem with designs and masterplans is that they lead to construction after which the design is set in concrete, foregoing the try-it-and-see approach that can precede the production of a final design. There is much to be said for a period of installing only simple, easily removable components of design. That gives us time to see what works well or what doesn't and to shuffle things around. When we've done that we're ready for the final design on paper or screen.

In Permaculture 3.0, the design process starts with the idea, then defines the needs of the group, trying out ideas in a temporary way where possible and only then producing a final design to guide future implementation. This is the user-led, not the designer-led approach.



Placemaking has had a role in the development of the Permaculture Interpretive Garden in Randwick. Here, people from the community and from a community permaculture group participate in developing design solutions for the site.

Element 23: Financing our work

CROWDFUNDING, a fundraising branch of the broader crowdsourcing tree that is already growing a diversity of branches, is one of those catchy ideas that work so well that it has quickly moved from the creative fringe of social innovators to the mainstream. Now, it is taking permaculture with it.

As it is for many NGOs, permaculture organisations and permaculture people with a good idea have struggled to finance their projects. Grants have enabled some projects to make a start but grants are temporary, here one year and gone the next. They have seldom proven reliable for longer term projects and most are of too short a duration to be used to set up the infrastructure for projects to become self-funding. Philanthropic funding has proven elusive.

...crowdfunding would be embraced as a type of permaculture peer-to-permaculture peer collaborative economics...

Crowdfunding is peer-to-peer funding that well fits permaculture's way of doing things and of enacting its Third Ethic of sharing resources. It's nothing new for the design system. Some early permaculture books were financed this way, by people having trust enough to pre-buy a copy before it was printed so as to raise funds for the printing and distribution.

In a Permaculture Version 3.0 model, crowdfunding would be embraced as a type of permaculture peer-to-permaculture peer collaborative economics. And it's not something that would require inventing, for We The Trees (<http://www.wethetrees.com>) has already done that and is raising funds for a variety of

permaculture projects around the world. It's one of those initiatives that is made possible through the connecting power of online media.

What of Permafund?

If crowdfunding is an effective means of financing projects and products, what of permaculture's long-established fundraising initiative — Permafund¹ — an operation of Permaculture Australia? Is Permafund now obsolete? Would it have life in Permaculture 3.0?

Maybe, though it is at a disadvantage compared to crowdfunding as exemplified by We The Trees. That's because people can put their project description on the WeTheTrees.com website and donors can choose between all of those listed and vote with their money for those they prefer. Permafund's tax deductible donations scheme is regulated by government and does not allow for fundraising for specific projects. It permits raising funds then, when there is a sufficient quantity, calling for applications for funding.

Perhaps a mashup is the solution. Permafund continues to accept donations, calls for applications for funding, posts the applications on its website and polls members on which should receive funding. That would enable Permafund to continue its role in funding permaculture projects but modify it to be more effective in a world of collaborative financing.

Crowdfunding is one of those crowdsourcing initiatives that are enabled by online social media, that well fit permaculture's principle of cooperation and that offer a way to implement its Third Ethic. It's a democratic initiative that well fits the Permaculture 3.0 way of doing things together.

¹ <http://permacultureaustralia.org.au/category/permafund/>

Element 24: Towards a social permaculture

SOCIAL PERMACULTURE is about people and the relationships between them, between people and organisations, people and governance. It is an integral element within a Permaculture 3.0.

If tools and building design, garden and farm design, energy and water harvesting and storage are some of the 'visible systems' that make up the permaculture design system — what we can call 'hard systems' — then social permaculture is made up of relationships, methods of decision making and governance, organisational structures and the intellectual, conceptual and social constructs through which people come together, cooperate in planning and collaborate in making the things that we need to live and to create opportunity in society. These are the 'invisible systems', the 'soft systems' that bring together the ideas, skills and know-how to create that which people need to live lives of modest prosperity. Social permaculture is the glue, the sticky matrix in which our hard systems are embedded.

With more than nine billion people on the planet by the middle of this century, with those in more-developed regions living in big cities and with the growing population of lesser-developed regions mainly in poorly serviced spontaneous settlements around big cities, focusing on providing their basic needs becomes the key to a minimum standard of living for all and for the creation of opportunity. This takes organisation, and organisation is the job of social permaculture. It's about the opportunity to make a livelihood, to improve the quality of life, of getting an education, to obtain a minimum of the goods and technologies that can improve the experience

of life... and the opportunity to contribute to the wider society.

Social permaculture is people-centred. It brings together the thinking, the creative skills and knowledge of people in ways to give them some degree of influence on the shape of, and the opportunities that develop in, the places where they live.

To do this, people must be free to act to change their circumstances and to build something better. Social permaculture acknowledges that this freedom for individuals and their organisations, freedom that does not negatively affect the human and civil rights of others, is a basic human need and that the best way we have found to enact it is through democracy. Not simply the representative democracy of the electoral cycle in which new governmental management teams are elected for a few years, but the deeper civil forms of democracy that offer the opportunity for participation in decision making. Thus, a social permaculture supports and educates on the forms and values of freedom and democracy. Social permaculture is socially libertarian.

A focus for a social permaculture

All new ideas build on the work done before them. Permaculture need be no different and it unashamedly adopts from other disciplines, other schools of thought. It is, according to its inventors, after all, a synthesis of ideas and practices rather than a completely original body of work.

Thus, when we describe what a social permaculture would focus on, we could say that it focuses on strategies and tactics to

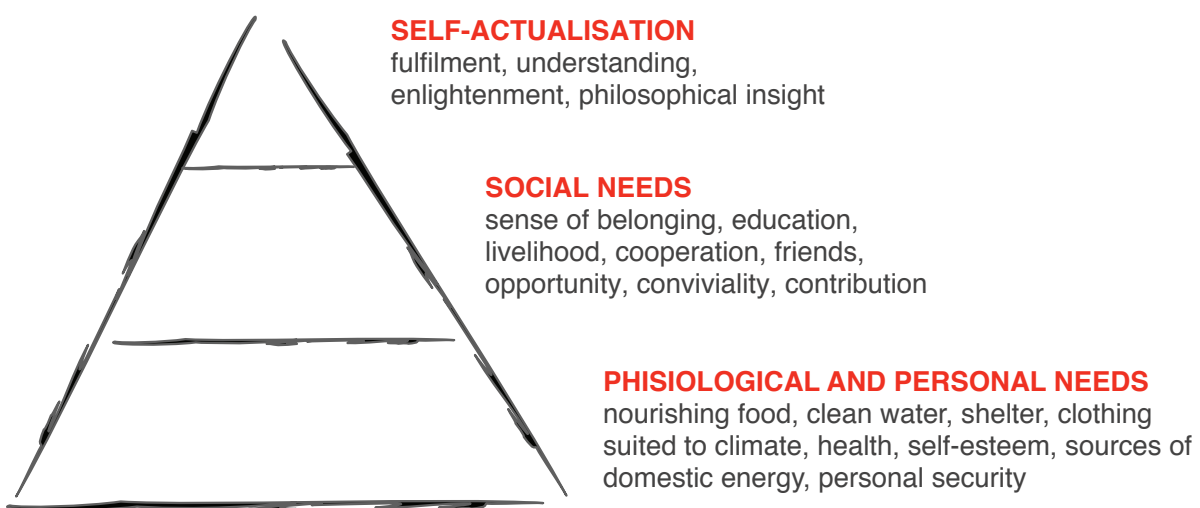
procure the first and second order of human needs as described by psychologist, Abraham Maslow. The first order needs are the basic physiological requirements of life: nutritional food, clean water, shelter, clothing appropriate to climate, health and personal security. Without these, no further personal or social development is possible and without them life is a struggle for survival. Second order needs are essentially social needs: opportunity, access to education, conviviality, cooperation, livelihood and so on.

We can see that Maslow's first order needs mostly equate to permaculture's visible systems, its hard systems of physical things. His second order, which are mostly invisible or soft systems, become available through establishing social, economic and governance systems. Attaining the second order category requires social organisation and this is the business of a social permaculture methodology.

A complete approach to living

Social permaculture seeks to improve the lives of individuals and families (however you prefer to define them) in society and to open the opportunity to develop a modest prosperity. It serves both the individual and that mesh of relationships, practices and shared values we call society... it seeks the cooperation and mutual benefit for the individual or small group in a creative and adaptive matrix of thoughtful planning, decision making, problem solving and organisational governance. In this way we position permaculture as a complete approach to living.

How would a social permaculture suggest individuals live in their society? Let's borrow from beyond the leaky margins of permaculture, from the creativity of author and organisational educator, Edward de Bono. He wrote that to live a fulfilling life connected to a society, five things were needed, each corresponding to a finger of the hand:



Abraham Maslow's hierarchy
of human needs...
an interpretation

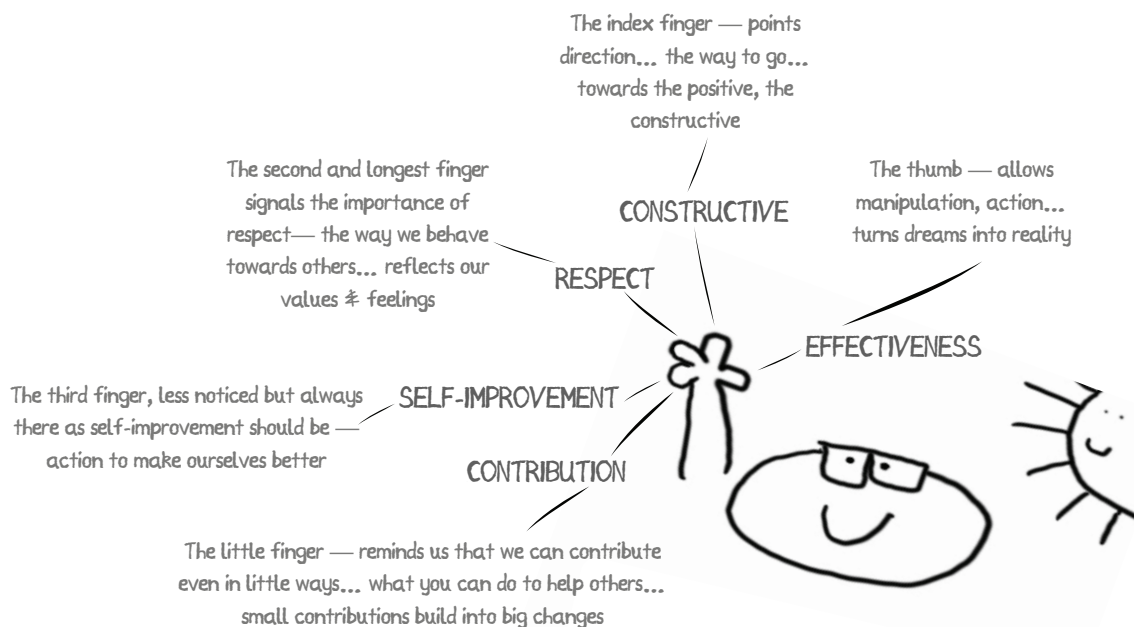
Social permaculture focuses on Maslow's physiological and personal needs as well as on the social needs...

- the thumb makes the human hand a tool for manipulating its environment, for doing things. It represents **effectiveness** — achieving what we set out to do
- the index finger is our pointing finger. It indicates **direction**, the way we should go
- the second and longest finger signals the importance of **respect**, the way we behave towards others; this reflects our values and feelings
- the third finger might be less-noticed but like the **self-improvement** it signifies it should be always-present
- the little finger reminds us that we can **contribute** even in small ways... it's about those little contribution we make, how we enact permaculture's Third Ethic of sharing, that build up into big changes.

This isn't a bad list for a social permaculture to adopt as it proposes both individual and social development. It links the individual to the

society through contribution. And contribution, we in permaculture know, is what Bill Mollison and David Holmgren called permaculture's Third Ethic — that of sharing knowledge and information, skills and funds and those other things we have the capacity to share when we have set up our own system of support. The purpose of sharing these things is to assist others to meet their own needs.

We can look further back for clues about how to live and we can think about how we incorporate these ideas in a social permaculture — the permaculture of human relationships. In ancient Greece the philosopher Epicurus (2341-2271BP-before the present) proposed living a happy, tranquil life characterized by freedom from fear, an absence of pain, limiting your wants and by living a self-reliant life surrounded by friends. Epicurus said that there must be trust between friends, and friends should treat each other as well as they treat themselves.



The five principles of the positive revolution

Edward de Bono's five-finger principles for ordinary people, "people who can make a difference bit-by-bit."

"The weapons of the positive revolution are simple human perceptions"

Epicurus message has been distorted to imply enjoying an excess of luxury and indulgence, food and drink. He did say we should enjoy ourselves but his lifestyle was communal, social and somewhat materially minimalist — it was about enjoyment of life and freedom in life with a focus on friends and conviviality. That's not a bad goal for a social permaculture.

In looking for ideas on a social permaculture we can look back to Guatama Buddha (around 2500 BP) and his idea of living a 'middle way' between poverty and excess, neither self-denial nor self-indulgence. It's about having enough, neither the deprivation of poverty nor the excess of riches. It's what I call a 'modest prosperity' and, like the ideas of Epicurus, I think this middle way is a good place for a social permaculture to live..

One of the contemporary guides to practicing a social permaculture comes from the author and business educator, Stephen Covey and appeared in his popular book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*¹.

Covey's is a values-based, no-quick-fix approach to personal and interpersonal effectiveness. He outlines seven habits — Personal:

- **be proactive** — think and act ahead, in time
- **begin with the end in mind** — have a sense of direction and destination so you can move purposefully towards it
- **put first things first** — act on the most important things first; prioritise your needs
- **self-improvement** — make time for your own learning, physical, social and spiritual needs.

Interpersonal:

- **seek first to understand then to be understood** — listed before speaking or

offering advice; understand where the other person is coming from, their perception and needs

- **synergise** — this is the habit of cooperation, of collaboration, of joining with others to make your collective work more than either of you could have achieved alone; this is the way to create a better product, whatever that product might be.

Putting the social into permaculture

To be truly social, permaculture needs adopt participatory practices when working with people. Participation goes beyond consultation, though consultation retains a useful role in some circumstances. Consultation asks people to select from choices already made by a leadership group or a planner rather than to help develop those choices. Although it can be used appropriately it also fits the top-down approach and can sometimes be seen as elitist.

PLA — participatory Learning and Action (earlier called PRA — Participatory Rural Appraisal or PA — Participatory Appraisal) is an approach used by international development agencies in working with communities and it contains a wealth of different ideas. PLA is something that a social permaculture would do well to adopt as methodology. Likewise, the skills of facilitating groups, collaborative planning and decision making, conflict resolution, direct democracy and PTD (Participatory Technology Development, an approach used primarily in rural development with farmers to trial, choose and adopt improved practices).

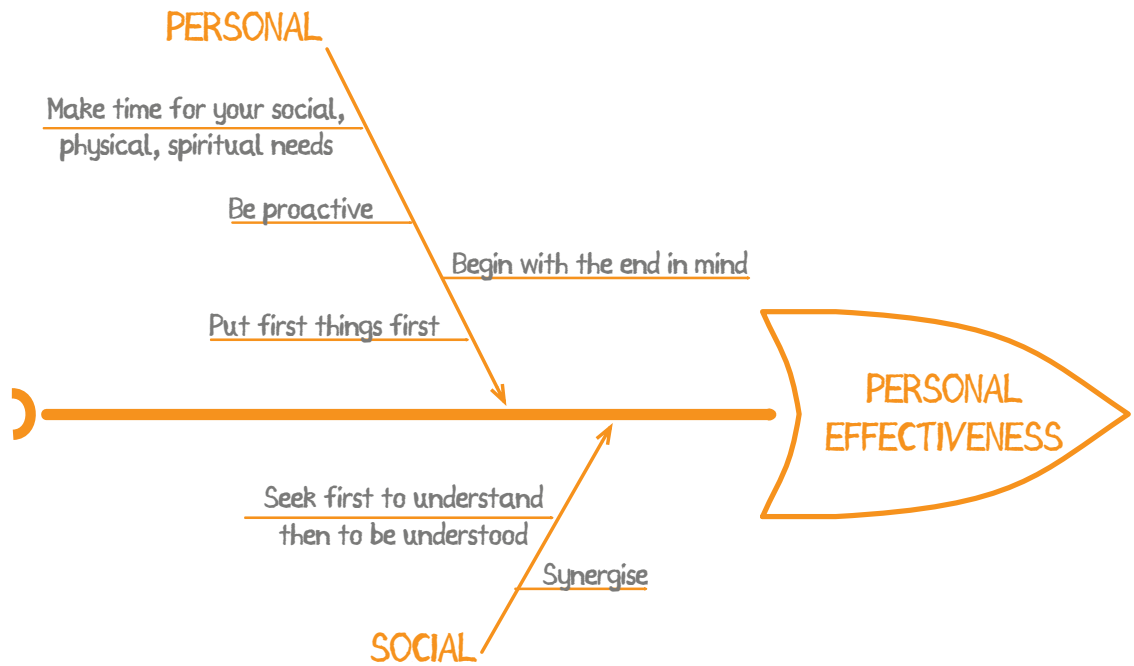
In summary, the practice of social permaculture is open and democratic, participatory and inclusive. It draws on the work of psychologists and philosophers, community builders and

¹ 1990, Covey S; *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*; Information Australia, Melbourne.

educators. It seeks to build the invisible, social ties that bind groups of people in improving their lives and that of the society they are embedded in. Without social permaculture the design system is an unintegrated collection of things, tools, technologies and practices. It is social permaculture that brings these together into a cohesive system of design for sustainable human settlements. It is a necessary part of a Permaculture Version 3.0.



A poster at APC 11, Turangi, New Zealand, 2012.

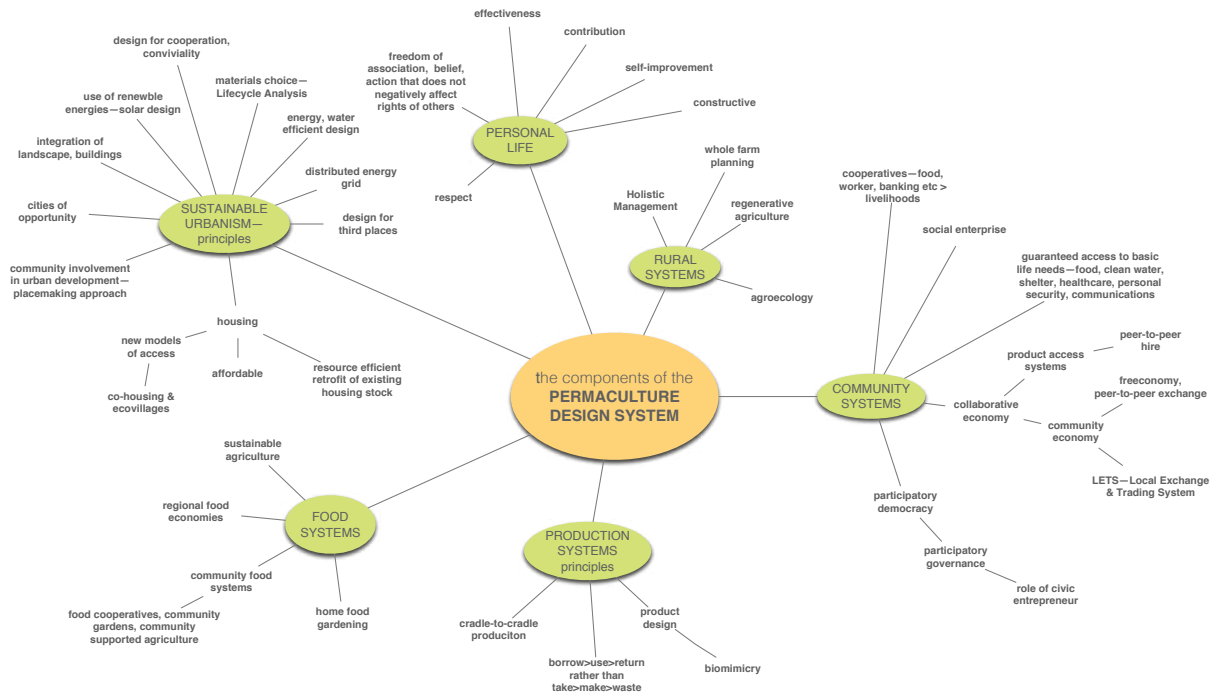


Stephen Covey's personal and social thinking strategy for personal effectiveness

Source: The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

Conceptual map of the permaculture design system

A set of interacting components producing combined outcomes greater than any of the components by themselves.



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