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CREATING A PERMA-CULTURE

A DESIGN APPROACH TO
CREATIVE LIVING

A FEW PERMACULTURE PRINCIPLES...

- see solutions, not problems
- work where it counts; work with people who want to learn
- use diversity and collaboration to encourage readiness for social, economic and ecological change
- think about the long term consequences of your actions
- bring food production back into the cities
- restore degraded landscapes and soil fertility
- use everything fully; replace the take > make > waste mentality with borrow > use > return
- cultivate the smallest possible area of land; design small-scale, energy-efficient intensive systems rather than large-scale, energy-consuming extensive systems
- design for easy, low cost maintenance
- be effective — achieve what you set out to achieve, engage in self-improvement, respect others, take constructive action, make a contribution
- obtain a yield from what you do
- make use of renewable resources and design systems that regenerate resources rather than deplete them



FACTSHEET PRODUCED BY PERMACULTURE AUSTRALIA
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A BETTER WAY

BILL MOLLISON and David Holmgren had an idea – what if we could describe a way of living, producing and using resources that would make our towns and cities productive and convivial places to live? Places, that is, that create the security of having access to life's basic needs through sharing and exchanging know-how, ideas, tools, technologies and skills... and doing this without damaging the natural systems we rely on.

This was a big challenge. There was a lot of work to do, ideas to discuss, connections to be made, then working out how to bring it all together into a cohesive system of design.

The result is what we know as permaculture, a way of designing for our needs. Permaculture is neither ideology nor dogma. It is a body of knowledge and practice drawn from many disciplines, an approach to obtaining life necessities such as shelter, energy, water, food, a sense of community and convivial company that says we are all designers because we deliberately plan and design to obtain these things. Permaculture continues to evolve.

Something else happened after Bill and David produced the first book on permaculture. Imagine their amazement when what they had set up as a design system became a social movement.

WHOLE SYSTEMS DESIGN

Speaking before permaculture came into existence, designer and inventor, Buckminster Fuller, summed up what would become its essence when he said that, "... to change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete". What he called 'whole systems design' aptly sums up permaculture.

Building something new is the essence of permaculture and it is done by seeing the design system as a platform consisting of a set of ethics, principles, practices and knowledge on which its practitioners develop useful applications that supply our needs without damaging communities and natural systems.

Another way to think of permaculture is that of science fiction writer, Kim Stanley Robinson: "By permaculture I mean a culture that can be sustained permanently... not unchanging, we have to stay dynamic because conditions will change... I like to think the word permaculture implies permutation, that we will make adaptations...".

For another science fiction writer, William Gibson, "The future is already here. It's just not evenly distributed yet". He might as well have been talking about permaculture.

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ETHICS...

GUIDED BY ETHICS, APPLIED THROUGH PRINCIPLES

Permaculture is a system of design that enacts its three ethics of earthcare, peopelcare and fair share through a set of principles (www.permacultureprinciples.com). Through sharing resources and knowledge we create the opportunity for a modest prosperity while regenerating the natural systems that provide the environmental services we rely upon — clean air, clean water and good soil for food production. This is the ethical basis of the permaculture design system — to make available those resources needed by people to create a way of living that is neither deprivation or excess — a middle way. As modern societies we have the wealth, the know-how, the knowledge, and the technologies to do this, and moving towards it is permaculture's core business.

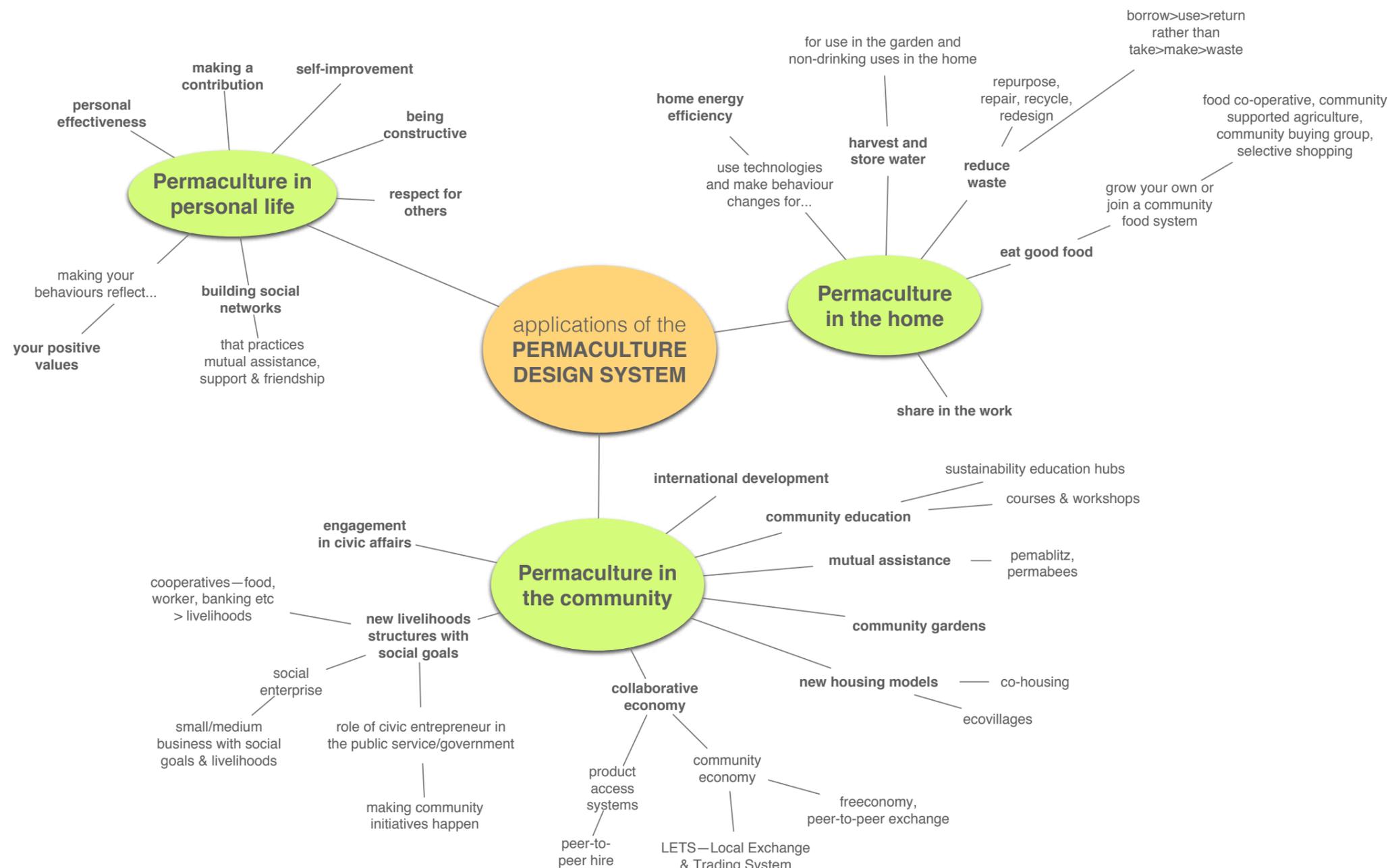
A PLATFORM AND SET OF APPLICATIONS

Permaculture is a grassroots practice, a network distributed around the country that is based on the initiatives of community organisations, individuals, small business and social enterprise to make happen.

We can think of the permaculture design system as a platform consisting of a set of ethics and design principles upon which people develop a broad range of applications to practice permaculture in their lives, neighbourhoods and communities.

The applications that people have developed within permaculture span farming and urban agriculture, community trading systems, international development assistance, community education, media production, small business and social enterprise, village development and building design, among others.

However we choose to apply the permaculture design system, we make a start where we are and with the tools and resources we have at hand.



SUSTAINABLE URBANISM

With three quarters of the world's population expected to live in cities by 2050, applying permaculture in urban areas has become a priority. We have the means to do this but to make them cities of opportunity also requires political will as well as community self-help.

Permaculture works towards this by skilling-up people in tactical urbanism — those small, local initiatives that add up to something strategic... to a sustainable urbanism.

PERSONAL LIFE

What we do, how we live, influences others. People get inspired when they see someone living as they would like to. Creative change begins in our social networks, our family and individual lives.

It's here that we have the opportunity to build a fulfilling life of modest prosperity... to being effective, to self-improvement, respect for others, taking constructive action and making what contribution we can, within our means, so that others may benefit too.

FARM & FIELD

If we are to enact the permaculture principle of earthcare, then we need farming systems that regenerate the soil, use water conservatively, combine cropping and livestock and produce a diversity of farm products.

Fortunately, there are today a range of approaches for different climates and soil types that do this, and selecting the most appropriate is what those permaculture practitioners engaged in farming do.

COMMUNITY SYSTEMS

We can make a better community life and enact permaculture's principle of cooperation rather than competition by collaborating with our friends and those in our social networks to educate people in effective decision making, and by participating in the community-based collaborative economy, setting up our own enterprises with social goals and by advocating open, responsible governance and civic life.

PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

When it comes to producing our needs, the old take > make > waste approach is so tired that it's expired. Now, it's time to replace it with the principle of **borrow > use > return**, and that's just what the innovative among us are doing.

Borrow > use > return is about creative reuse by returning materials and products either to the biocycle, by composting or similar processes, or to the technocycle through recycling materials or using them as inputs to other production processes.

We have the know-how and the technologies to adopt this modern approach to producing our needs whether we do that ourselves in our homes or together in our industries.

FOOD SYSTEMS

When we spend our dollars on foods produced within Australia and, where available, within the region where we live in preference to food imported into the country, we cast a vote for a secure and prosperous food future.

Doing this enacts our right to choose the food we want that is produced and distributed by means we approve of.

Growing some of our own food in home or community gardens and buying our food from small to medium scale, locally owned retailers such as greengrocers, food co-operatives and community supported agriculture schemes supports local economies in town and city.

Before buying imported, why not look for Australian and regionally-produced products first?