

The Permaculture Journey

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What does permaculture mean to you? What do you think about the term? About the permaculture community as a whole? Where is this 'permaculture momentum' taking us? What differentiates the permaculture movement from all other grassroots movements?

These are some of the questions guiding my 6-month journey. In my role as a sustainability professor, I've observed hope in permaculture. I see hope in regenerative design, a conscious effort to better synchronize our relationship with nature, taking accountability for the products we buy and dispose of, and taking better care of our earth as well as each other. In many ways, permaculture has provided light to the darkness often creeping in when researching and teaching about sustainability, a darkness I call 'eco-depression.'

Imagine if we lived in a world where we made long and slow observations before designing communities, our modes of transit, our forms of employment and recreation. Where we incorporated principles such as stacking functions, catching and storing renewable energy, and designed our surrounding landscapes for beauty, harvests, and human and animal inhabitants. Imagine if our political structure was critically analyzed and restructured in a way that positively benefited all of those encompassed. Permaculture provides the blueprint to do these things, and thus, it provides hope.

Of course, as with the yoga community along with countless other grassroots self and earthy healing movements, I've observed also areas of concern. Financial mismanagement, greed, disorganization and more creep in, and the inspired can be left frustrated and wondering what really is the answer. This brings me back to my journey. Where is this movement taking us – how is it doing so, is it the right path, and what – if anything - needs tweaked to strengthen the momentum and solidify the tripart goal of permaculture for earth care, people care, and fair share.

These next six months will involve approximately 20 interviews with many leaders in the movement, at sites ranging from Maui to Massachusetts. My goal on this journey is to discover how to best guide myself and others in repositioning our relationship with nature, which includes ourselves, from parasitic, to mutualistic or even regenerative.



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