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J. N. Andrews Honors Program
Andrews University

HONS497

Honors Thesis

An Ethnography of Permaculture in Southwest Michigan

Lily Burke

April 19, 2024

Dr. Stacie Hatfield and Dr. Kristin Denslow

Primary Advisor Signature: Stacie Hatfield

Department: School of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Abstract

Permaculture is a holistic design system for meeting human and environmental needs in a sustainable way, using local conditions and circumstances to shape land use and food production practices. My project questions what it means to practice permaculture in southwest Michigan, and how environmental ideological commitments can translate into action and practice.

Ethnographically investigating these questions through semi-structured interviews and participant observation with individuals in the permaculture community, along with extensive reading of permaculture materials, my study adds to research on applications and adoptions of permaculture in suburban contexts, and sheds light on how ecological ideological commitments can translate into actions.

Acknowledgements

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First, I thank my family for their support of my permaculture journey, from encouraging me to take the trip to Iceland to letting me build a hügelkultur bed in the backyard. Thank you for your unending love and prayers. I love you all!

Many thanks to my primary participant for her immense generosity and welcoming spirit, and for all the time and knowledge she shared. Gracias and merci and thank you!

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We need permaculturalists who push themselves to the limit, who strive to create systems—be them individual or community villages—that can exist in complete isolation from the global status quo, and we equally need those who exist much more interactively, within and outside the boundaries of permaculture communities.

Each tiny step towards a cleaner, more sustainable existence, societally and individually, equates to an improvement to [the] larger concern of humanity surviving on this planet and the planet thriving due to humanity.

- Jonathon Engels

Introduction

Animals, Vegetables, Miracles

A spring day towards the end of the spring semester of 2023, in a conversation with Dr. Denslow about summer plans, I mentioned that I was going to be traveling to Iceland and working on a permaculture project, but that I didn't really know much about permaculture. Seeking a way to stay in Iceland longer, I had found the WWOOF website and signed up without having a clear idea of the goals and point of the organization. She suggested that I read *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver in order to gain an understanding of the motivations behind many alternative agricultural movements. I read the book, and immediately went out to the closest farmers' market and bought asparagus, which is the only local food that was in season at that time. But beyond my asparagus adventures, I was inspired that, while there were many deep, systemic problems with mainstream agriculture, there were viable alternatives that promised to help solve the climate crisis, and restore lots of what is broken across global societies. I wanted to learn more about these alternatives.

Once in Iceland

I was an intern at the Gróandi Community Supported Agriculture project. I spent my days learning about permaculture first hand. We would go to bed with a blanket over the window to block out the midnight sun. After waking up, we interns would alternate days either weeding, watering, and shaking the tomato plants in the polytunnel and being there if the kids needed anything, or being able to visit the small town of Ísafjörður nearby. After lunch, we would walk to the garden site and work for several hours, spreading hay over the beds, planting the seedlings, and helping build hügelkultur beds. After the day of work, we would go back to the house and

cook dinner, then enjoy spending time with the other interns, learning to mend clothes, reading permaculture books, and having conversation. But even while there in Iceland, I realized that while this way of life is conducive to care for the environment and would assist in dealing with the climate crisis, not everyone can live in this way, due to time and financial constraints, and even if everyone could, not everyone wants to live in such a way, spending most of their time growing their own food, opening their home to interns, not having a car, and making environmental considerations paramount in decision making. I wondered if this was the only way that practicing permaculture could look. I wondered what it would look like to practice permaculture in the American, suburban, more capitalist cultural contexts that I come from.

What is Permaculture?

Permaculture is a philosophy and design system that originated in Australia during the late 1970s, developed by Bill Mollison, who was a professor, and David Holmgren, who was his student. As a design system, permaculture is both a guiding philosophy and set of practical steps for crafting sustainable ways to meet needs, based on combining ethics of sustainable cultures throughout history. The philosophy has 12 guiding principles, based around the three ethics of earth care, people care, and fair share, to guide design. The 12 guiding principles to permaculture (see Figure 3 in the Appendix) include observing and interacting with natural systems to inform design decisions, catching and storing energy, producing useful yields, being open to self-regulation, using and valuing renewable resources, producing no waste, designing from patterns to details, integrating rather than segregating, using small, slow solutions, valuing diversity, embracing edges, and creatively using and responding to change.

Since the 1970s, permaculture has taken off, as a growing network of sites on every continent except Antarctica. Beyond physical projects being built, also since the 1970s, much

work has been done to create permaculture content, such as manuals for how to create a permaculture project (Mollison & Slay, 1991), descriptions of many different permaculture projects across the globe (Birnbaum & Fox, 2014), and treaties that describe the guiding philosophies of permaculture (Holmgren, 2011).

Exploring Permaculture Ideology

Beyond the 12 permaculture principles and three ethics, there are some other fundamental assumptions of permaculture from David Holmgren. He argues that the current environmental crisis will transform modern global industrial society, and because of this, the survival of the world's population is threatened. Because of the climate crisis, the impact of global industrial society and human numbers on biodiversity will increase. He points out that humans are subject to the same energy laws as the rest of the universe, including the necessity to evolve or go extinct. He believes that fossil fuel tapping is the primary cause of increase in human population, technology, and other features of modern society. Integral to the philosophy of permaculture, he states that the inevitable depletion of fossil fuels within a few generations will see a return to the general patterns observable in nature and pre-industrial societies dependent on renewable energy and resources. This time of transitioning away from fossil fuels is called 'energy descent' (Holmgren, 2011). Since their inception, these assumptions have gone through developments, importantly facing the question over whether the time of energy descent will come, since fossil fuels are now used along with other energy sources, such as solar and nuclear. However, Holmgren maintains that more than just the environment is degraded by our current fossil-fueled lifestyles, and argues that energy descent is necessary to restore what capitalism and industrialization has broken in society.

Statement Of Research Questions:

While in Iceland, I learned that, since permaculture is largely based on pre-industrial societies and indigenous cultures, it is inherently very site specific and specific to the individual and the community that decides to implement the design system. I also recognized that permaculture is also a positivist response to the world of declining energy and resource availability. These two features of permaculture, its site specific nature and position as a response to the climate crisis, crystallized into my two research questions:

What does it mean to practice permaculture in southwest Michigan?

How do environmental ideological commitments translate into action and practice?

Situating The Thesis

To situate my thesis, some relevant themes present in this work are alternative agriculture, and then because of my participants' age, retirement and aging, then also ideas about ethics, futurity, and economics.

Many ethnographic investigations of permaculture focus on sites like the one I lived on in Iceland, investigating people who are in communes, ecovillages, and self-sustaining projects, largely sites that are off-grid, producing all or most of their own food, clothes, and other supplies (Birnbaum & Fox, 2014; Bakshi et al., 2014). Contrastingly to the majority of permaculture ethnographies, my research investigates permaculture as it can be adapted for use in small scale, casual projects, rather than as a guiding ethic for hardcore permaculturalists. My explanation of my participant's permaculture adaptations can help to widen the understanding of the diversity that permaculture practices can take.

Methodology

To find permaculture practitioners in southwest Michigan, I used the same WWOOF website that many permaculturalists use to recruit workers to their projects to find several farms and projects in this area, and visited these projects until I found my primary participant, who was here in this area during the time I needed to do data collection, and willing to have me learn from her. Ethnographies typically investigate people groups and cultures, rather than individuals and their communities, as this project does, but I was limited by my time and the fact that I am a student with other obligations.

For my data collection, there were three components to my ethnographic activities. The first was extensive immersion in permaculture media. I asked my primary participant and people she introduced me to for recommendations of books to read, checked permaculture blogs, noted what media is often referenced in other materials, and read these books and watched these documentaries, so that I would have the vocabulary necessary to understand the permaculture practices that I would see and understand the design system in its own words. The second component to my ethnography was semi-structured interviews. I took inspiration from other permaculture ethnographies (Thackeray, 2017) in my question development. My list of questions is in Figure 1 in the Appendix. The third component of my ethnography was participant observation, where I spent time with my primary participant working in her garden, sharing meals, going on outings, attending her knitting group, and spending time with other people she introduced me to. I spent time in participant observation so that I could understand her life on her own terms, and try to understand her practice of permaculture from her own perspective.

After the data collection phase concluded, I began my phase of data analysis. I transcribed my interviews, reviewed my participant observation notes, and assembled notes from

permaculture text reading. I coded for themes, then using an ethnographic interpretation approach balancing empirical data with theoretical frameworks to develop an understanding of cultural phenomena (Emerson et al., 2011), I connected my themes to theory both in anthropological thought and permaculture ideology.

To ensure validity, I cross-checked my findings with participants, and checked for triangulation, ensuring that my findings were appearing in multiple formats, multiple times. I also asked for an outside review at times to help become aware of my own biases.

Results

My ethnography yielded several themes. I begin each theme discussion section with an epigraph or two of a poem from the side of her house that encapsulates the ideas being discussed. My primary participant writes poems that she likes in permanent marker on the side of her house. After the epigraph, I open each section with a vignette that illustrates the theme through the data points where it appeared, then discuss other ways that theme appeared in the data. Connecting the observed theme in the data with anthropological theory or theory indigenous to permaculture, I weave the observations together in analysis that references my research questions.

Dominant theme: Agency and Ethics

Sometimes, hidden from me in daily custom and in ritual

I live by you unaware, as if by the beating of my heart.

Suddenly you flare again in my sight

A wild rose at the edge of the thicket where yesterday there was only
shade

And I am blessed and **choose again,**

That which I chose before.

- 'The Wild Rose' by Wendell Berry

“Caminante, **son tus huellas**

el camino y nada más;

Caminante, no hay camino,

se hace camino al andar.

Al andar se hace el camino,

y al volver la vista atrás

se ve la senda que nunca

se ha de volver a pisar.

Caminante no hay camino

sino estelas en la mar.

- 'Caminante No Hay Camino' by Antonio Machado

Data For Agency And Ethics Theme

One afternoon that was as sunny as February gets in Michigan, my primary participant and I spent a few hours fixing the walls of her enclosed vegetable and herb garden, bolstering a fence to keep out the small animals that loved to feast on her vegetables. Afterwards, we enjoyed a light lunch that included a soup she had prepared and frozen in the fall, featuring some of her own homegrown vegetables. As we bustled around the kitchen, microwaving the soup, plating some empanadas, and mixing some iced tea, she proudly related how she came up with the recipe for the soup, combining her own bountiful autumn harvest with some vegetables

purchased from Aldi. Sitting at a small round table on her sun-soaked wraparound porch, we ended our meal by leisurely enjoying the iced tea with little dried lemon slices floating in the pale yellow drink. Curious, I asked her where she got the little lemon slices, since often a question over where some food item had come from was answered with a triumphant story of her figuring out how to grow the plant despite deer and the vagaries of Michigan climate and soil, or a story of getting the food from a friend who also was an avid gardener. However, in this case, with a dramatic stage whisper, she confessed, “Amazon!” We both laughed, as we agreed that although the lemon slices came from overseas, and who knows what pesticides and what not were on them, they were delicious.

Beyond data from our participant observation sessions, from our interviews, I saw that my primary participant conceived of her permaculture practice as “more of a hobby and a small, personal operation.” Further, she gained much of her knowledge about gardening from non-permaculture sources, describing how, “Mostly, I just ask a lot of questions of gardeners whenever I see something that strikes me as wonderful and that I’d like to replicate.” She allowed permaculture practices into her life on her own terms, and learned things from other gardeners that interested her, motivated by wonder, rather than obligation or faithfulness to the ideologies of permaculture.

Early on in my connection with my primary participant, I asked her for book recommendations to help me understand how she understood permaculture. Leading me to a small corner bookcase in her basement, she scanned through some titles of birding books, flower identification manuals, and garden manuals. Suddenly, she snatched a small green volume, handing me Masanobu Fukuoka’s *One Straw Revolution*. “This is the Bible,” she said, and I quickly determined to read the book as soon as possible. A few weeks later, we discussed the

book again, and I mentioned that I had finished it. She mentioned that she hadn't actually finished reading the book herself. She knew that this book was important to the permaculture and alternative agriculture ideology. She just didn't consider it necessary to read the whole thing. She had learned what she needed to from the text.

Theory For Agency And Ethics Theme

Although my primary participant did not always follow the permaculture ideals, of growing one's own food and avoiding supporting multinational corporations, she was aware of them, and made choices about her own life in conscious relationship to these ideals.

Anthropological studies of ethics propose ways of understanding how people may act in accordance to evaluations they make in light of the values they hold (Laidlaw, 2023).

Anthropological ethics suppose that people act in ways that constitute at least partial answers to the questions of how one ought to live and what kind of life is a good life (Laidlaw, 2023).

Anthropological conceptions of ethics explore how both outside influences and personal virtues influence behavior, recognizing that people are often exceeded by their realities – they are often positioned by their circumstances to react more than act. However, it is in these moments of reacting that people can be influenced by the ideologies they chose. As Cook argues, people not only choose, but continue to choose, to act virtuously as a result of conscious self-understanding through on-going reflective confirmation (Cook, 2023). Reflected in the poem my primary participant wrote on the side of her house (this section's first epigraph), my participant continuously chooses to engage in the ideologies and practices of permaculture, but recognizes that she makes this choice on her terms. Reflected in the second epigraph, my participant is blazing her own trail, her footprints making a path, as she assembles her life from choices in how to relate to the object of permaculture.

Analysis of Ethics Theme

Her pride over her homegrown vegetables, coexisting with her knowledge that using Amazon was likely to be frowned upon by more environmentally-minded people is an illustration of an idea from anthropological ethics of how life is lived in between our ideals and our reality. From interactions during our participant observation sessions such as this one, I saw that behaviors such as not using Amazon and growing your own vegetables are integral to permaculture practice. Further, I noted that her interactions with the official ideologies and principles of permaculture, through avenues such as reading Fukuoka's book, happened on her own terms, to serve her own unique exigencies. She didn't need to know everything Fukuoka thought – she just knew the book was important and she had read enough to be content.

The integral principles and ethics of permaculture are the object of permaculture practice, and permaculturalists live in relation to this object, choosing which principles and ethics best serve their circumstances and needs, guided by their personal environmental ethics and life circumstances. My primary participant was aware of the behaviors and abstentions that are inherently expected in permaculture communities – she knew to grow vegetables, to not use Amazon, to read *One Straw Revolution* – but she chose to engage with these principles on her own terms, choosing what worked for her and her life.

To explore another example of how my primary participant interacts with the ethics of permaculture on her own terms, I will explain her practice of soil care and creation. In permaculture (and other alternative agricultural movements that precede permaculture), care for the health of the soil is paramount (Berry, 1977; Fukuoka, 1978; Mollison & Slay, 1991), with much attention given to the regeneration of microorganisms in the soil, using ground cover crops to fix nitrogen into the soil, and no-till farming practices to avoid disturbing the structure of the

soil. My primary participant also heavily prioritizes soil care, with her personal composting system, cardboard and natural ground covers, and other practices, such as making compost tea for her soil. She does not add synthetic fertilizers, or anything other than her own homemade compost or ashes, nor does she use pesticides. By doing these actions and following these abstentions, she is practicing the permaculture principle of soil care, adopting and adapting the permaculture principle and practice to fit her circumstances and goals for her soil.

Semi-Dominant Theme: Futurity And Empowerment

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.

**I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief.** I come into the presence of still water.

And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

- "The Peace of Wild Things" by Wendell Berry

Data for Futurity and Empowerment

We're sitting around a big wooden table at a local organic food restaurant, a close friend group of ladies who are mostly retired or on the verge and me, knitting and crocheting, eating our

organic pizza and pita with hummus, catching up on life since last Monday's knitting group meeting. Someone mentions a Saturday Night Live episode that was joking about a recent State of the Union response video. A lady to my left, knitting a tiny yellow sweater for her first grandbaby (due in April!), mentions how she can't watch the news anymore. She just feels overwhelmed. My primary participant, seated nearby, quickly agrees, referencing a podcast she heard that said "'More news has been produced in the past 30 years than the past 2,000 years.' I can't read the news anymore, I just feel so helpless because there's nothing I can do."

Remembering some of her personal environmental and ethical commitments that I had personally witnessed while working with her in her garden the past few weeks, I somewhat sloppily asked, "But you do things for the climate, you must believe that there's *something* you can do?" Thinking for a moment, she answered, "I'm just one person. But we're all just one person. There's eight billion 'just one persons.' And I can just do what one person can do. Some days I can do what three people could do, but still I'm just one person who can do what one person can do." Other ladies nod and agree, the conversation turns towards an upcoming wedding that many of them are attending, seriousness fading away.

A few days later, while eating lunch at a table in her backyard, we were discussing the tragedy of Gaza that continues to worsen, and how we both felt rather helpless in the face of these horrors. My primary participant pointed out a poem she had written by her backdoor, taken from The Talmud,

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief.

Do justly now, love mercy now, walk humbly now.

You are not obligated to complete the work,

but neither are you free to abandon it.

- The Talmud

Again, she reinforced what she had said at the knitting group meeting. “We can just do what one person can do,” and that is all we can do. She is worried about global problems, but she is also empowered, by her personal ideologies, to have peace and do actions towards good in the here and now.

Theory for Futurity and Empowerment theme

Jane Guyer was an anthropologist who studied American Evangelical ideology, and she noted that evangelicals had a focus on what to do in the here and now, with rules and traditions to guide everyday life, and then they also had a focus on an apocalyptic future, with their ideology instructing them in how to act once this time of apocalypse comes. However, there is an 'evacuated middle ground' in this philosophy, where there were no clear instructions on how to get from the here and now to the apocalyptic future. This theoretical framework for understanding American evangelicalism sheds useful light on the way that permaculture, as an ideology, positions itself.

As we can recall from the fundamental assumptions of permaculture that we discussed at the beginning, David Holmgren believes that a time of energy descent is coming, if not already here. As we can see in Figure 2, Holmgren sees our present fossil-fueled moment as a climax, from which we must descend into a future that is sustainable, both forced by lack of further fossil fuel resources but also inspired by the need to change our destructive-to-the-planet habits. Holmgren calls permaculture a ‘descent culture,’ a way to make a graceful and ethical descent from the peak of fossil fuel usage (Holmgren, 2011). Instead of proposing actions for the immediate here and now and then describing a coming apocalyptic future, with an evacuated

middle period between the two, as Guyer argues American evangelicalism ideology contains, Holmgren distinctly imagines permaculture to be a method of how to get from now to the ideal or imagined future.

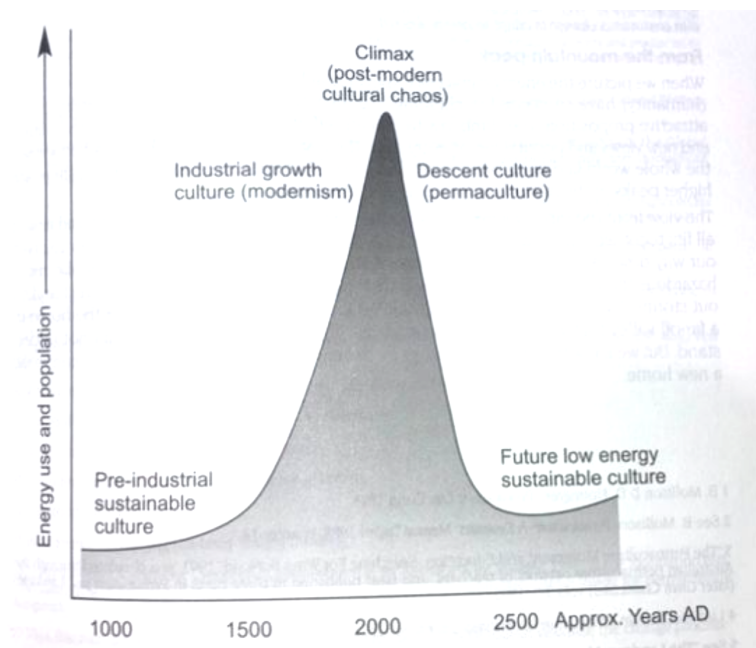


Figure 2: Permaculture as a Way to Live in the Middle Ground

Figure Attribution: *Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability* (page xxix)

Analysis of Futurity and Empowerment Theme

Although my primary participant is not very familiar with the intricacies of the permaculture theory and ideologies, and therefore is not consciously living with the goal of preparing for energy descent time, her own permaculture practice is one area where she feels empowered to take some ethical actions towards the alleviating the climate crisis. She decides to choose to do what one person can do, and not be incapacitated by the enormity of the challenges of the climate crisis and other world problems.

Secondary Theme: Generosity And Sacred Economics

Letting go gives us freedom and freedom is the only condition for happiness. If, in our heart, we still cling to anything, anger, anxiety, or possessions, we cannot be free.

- Thich Nhat Haah

Data for Generosity and Sacred Economics Theme

A primary characteristic of my primary participant that became abundantly apparent in my participant observation is generosity - of her knowledge, time, belongings, and money. Upon my first visit with her, I left with several bags of fresh herbs picked from her garden. Throughout our time together, she shared meals, tea, fresh eggs, seeds, and books. She also was overwhelmingly generous with her knowledge, taking me on trips to the woods to hunt for ramps, introducing me to many of her gardener friends, and taking time to explain her various permaculture practices and answer my many, many questions. Even the fact that she made time to be a participant in my ethnography project is evidence of her giving attitude. Further demonstrating her commitment to sharing her resources, one of her former neighbors is currently going through an economic rough time, and my primary participant gave her some money in exchange for her helping in the garden, in a very unofficial, flexible arrangement.

Theory for Generosity and Sacred Economics Theme

To again use indigenous permaculture theory to explain the phenomenon in the data, a more modern theorist and thinker important to permaculture, Charles Eisenstein, has proposed several ideas about economics in his work *Sacred Economics*. He argues that our current economic system, with its use of currency to facilitate the exchange of goods and services, creates a divide between the social and the material, and as a result, our social relationships lack

substance, and economic relationships are impersonal (Eisenstein, 2011; Birnbaum and Fox, 2014). Our current economic system, he argues further, is based on a circular flow of money that divorces us from the natural world and perpetuates scarcity and competition (Eisenstein, 2021). In the stead of the currency economy, Eisenstein calls for a shift in consciousness, where we recognize the intrinsic value of all beings and prioritize collaboration, stewardship, and the well-being of the whole (Eisenstein, 2021). He proposes several methods of stepping out of the currency economy, replacing conventional relationships with money with local currencies, proxy currencies, time banking, and reclaiming and localizing the credit system. He also encourages embracing little ways of removing oneself from capitalism - facilitated exchange of goods and services, such as prioritizing gift exchange, or encouraging contentment with one's possessions (Eisenstein, 2021).

Analysis of Generosity and Sacred Economics Theme

I argue that my primary participant's immense personal ethic of generosity is a form of removing herself from the currency economy. Instead of solely allowing currency to facilitate her experience of exchange of goods and services, she allows her contentment with her amount of possessions and resources to motivate her to give away her surplus. This personal adaptation of a permaculture ethic to fit her own resources and economic circumstances again can be explained by the idea of the anthropology of ethics. The object, or goal, in permaculture, is often complete removal from the currency economy, replacing the needs that in general society are met with money with self-sufficient production of food, shelter, and other needs. Many of the studies of permaculture focus on these sorts of off-grid, completely self-sufficient properties (Birnbaum & Fox, 2014). However, in American suburban contexts, not everyone can completely remove themselves from the currency economy. My primary participant has a car, owns a house, has a

retirement fund, and has health insurance. She is deeply intertwined with the currency economy, and does not seek complete removal. However, by practicing generosity and deeply prioritizing being giving with her time and resources, she does little acts of removing herself from the currency economy. This is another demonstration of how she adapts the principles and ethics of permaculture to work in her own personal context.

Discussion

To review, my primary theme explores my primary participant's adaptations of permaculture principles in her own life via anthropological conceptions of ethics, where there is an object or goal for behavior, and people demonstrate their agency by reacting to the circumstances through choosing the practices suggested by their chosen ideological system. My participant chooses the permaculture practices, such as soil care and growing many of her own vegetables, that work for her, and then lives in accordance with her chosen principles and ethics, but she also chooses to ignore some of the principles, such as avoiding supporting large multinational corporations or reading the foundational texts, all based on her own circumstances and needs.

Secondly, I demonstrate that permaculture is a philosophy that empowers practitioners to live in the context of the climate crisis, since it positions itself as a way to make a graceful descent from climax of fossil fuel usage to the coming time of needing to live more sustainable lives. For my primary participant, though the challenges of global conflicts and crises are at times overwhelming to her, she still actively chooses to do what she can, here and now.

Last, I position her characteristic of generosity as a way that she is applying the permaculture ethic of removal from the currency economy. She is not off-grid, nor entirely

self-sufficient, the way other permaculturalists may be, but she still has her own way of making that ethic of removal from the currency economy fit what she wants to do with her resources.

In the beginning of the project, my goals were to understand the specificities of practicing permaculture in southwest Michigan, and in general understand how environmental commitments translate into practice. To answer my first research question, as the project continued, and I learned more about my primary participant's practice, I learned that her southwest Michigan permaculture activities stepped into a gap in the literature in regards to permaculture used in small scale adaptations of some permaculture practices, rather than as a whole design system governing one's entire life and choices. My explanation of her permaculture adaptations can help to widen the understanding of the diversity that permaculture practices can take. My project answers the question of what permaculture looks like when people are not intending to make permaculture guide their entire life, more than what makes my primary participant's actions unique to her southwest Michigan context.

Referencing my second research question, noting how her practice of permaculture is tied to her personal circumstances and life exigencies can demonstrate that the way environmental commitments translate into practice is largely influenced by our personal needs and abilities. We may have various objects and goals of environmental action that we obtain from various sources, but the way we emulate these objects happens often as a reaction to our own circumstances.

Suggestions For Future Research Directions

This project, being limited by me being a student while also conducting a semester-long ethnography, had a very small sample size. To more fully answer the research questions, more work is needed to spend more time with other permaculturalists in the area. Further, as my participant observation sessions happened in winter to early spring in Michigan, and the data

collection phase ended right around the time when plants first started to grow, this time of year was not ideal for learning about many farming activities, and a year-long project would likely answer the research questions more fully.

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Appendix

Figure 1: Data Collection Instrument (Interview Questions)

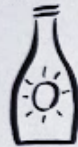
1. When did you find an interest in/begin gardening? What were some influences, whether people, books, movies, places you lived, etc?
2. How do you keep up the motivation to continue gardening?
3. How did you come to find out about permaculture?
4. Do you have your permaculture design certification? Do you want / plan to get it?
5. How did you find out about the WWOOF organization? What made you decide to sign up?
6. What are some of the primary ways you learn the ideologies and practices of permaculture?
7. Who have your mentors been in your personal agricultural evolution?
8. What permaculture activities do you practice daily and long-term at your home?
9. When did you begin to integrate permaculture at your home?
10. Why did you begin to integrate permaculture at your home?
11. What are some inconsistencies between your ideologies and your practice of permaculture?
12. Has your personal environmental worldview evolved since you began practicing permaculture?
13. Has your relationship with the natural world been affected since integrating permaculture into your daily life?
14. How does practicing permaculture affect your social relationships?
15. How has your permaculture knowledge impacted your sense of community?
16. In an ideal world, in what ways would your gardening / permaculture practice be different?
17. How does your race, gender, socioeconomic background, age, level of ability impact your practice of permaculture?
18. What do you think about other permaculture people in this area? Do you know many, do you hang out with them? How are they different from you in their beliefs and practices, how are they similar?
19. Has practicing permaculture provided you with specific ways to contribute/participate in your community?

Permaculture Design Principles

- 1 Observe and Interact**
Beauty is in the eye of the beholder



- 2 Catch and Store Energy**
Make hay while the sun shines



- 3 Obtain a Yield**
You can't work on an empty stomach



- 4 Apply Self-regulation and Accept Feedback**
The sins of the fathers are visited on the children unto the seventh generation



- 5 Use and Value Renewable Resources and Services**
Let nature take its course



- 6 Produce No Waste**
A stitch in time saves nine
Waste not, want not



- 7 Design from Patterns to Details**
Can't see the wood for the trees



- 8 Integrate Rather than Segregate**
Many hands make light work



- 9 Use Small and Slow Solutions**
The bigger they are, the harder they fall
Slow and steady wins the race



- 10 Use and Value Diversity**
Don't put all your eggs in one basket



- 11 Use Edges and Value the Marginal**
Don't think you are on the right track just because it is a well-beaten path



- 12 Creatively Use and Respond to Change**
Vision is not seeing things as they are but as they will be



Figure 3: the 12 Permaculture Principles

Figure Attribution: *Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability*