

# Intro to Permaculture Building Community Video Transcript

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## *Music*

Remember in the section on site analysis, we addressed the question: “Where am I?” In this section on community, we start by asking the question: “Who am I?”

In a large part, who we are is defined by our relationships with others, our community. I am a father, a husband, a beekeeper, a stonemason, a gardener, a designer, a builder, a teacher, a helpful neighbor, and other things. Each role I play connects me to some part of my community and builds the fabric of a society. When you practice Permaculture, you become a part of the community that shares seeds, sells eggs, gives farm tours, plants trees. Permaculture is a beneficial thing that creates abundance where you live, enhances the local ecosystem, and creates surplus yields, which are great to sell, trade, and give away. It’s easy to make friends when you have way too many figs.

There are also individuals and families who tuck themselves away and live a simple, peaceful life of Permaculture remote from society, and some who are radically self-reliant and want nothing to do with society at all. I say to each their own; living connected to the land and providing for oneself while enhancing natural systems has intrinsic value regardless of whether or not that is shared with other people.

Remember again how we learned about the grid that is superimposed over the watershed tree. The grid not only disturbs the natural hydrological cycle, but it defines the way cities and towns are arranged. At least in the US, the land has been subdivided and commoditized into blocks, with the spaces in between controlled by cities and counties. Public gathering areas are in short supply, and people are discouraged or forbidden from altering the landscape outside of their property boundaries.

I’m going to show you a quick series of slides from the excellent work of my friend, Mark Lakeman, in Portland, Oregon. Mark founded an organization called City Repair, where they recreate the commons in public spaces. Mark and the Planet Repair Institute have been transforming their urban block with block repair, where you now see slides. They’ve taken down the fences, created pathways between homes, created communal gardens, integrated water systems between properties, built a neighborhood sauna, and transformed the adjacent intersection into a public square. You can see Mark’s visionary illustrations of the future Permaculture Republic of Portland. That’s where I want to live!

Here are some other images of communities that are laid in more dynamic patterns. I want to remind you of the Permaculture Principle “Integrate Rather Than Segregate.” We should design our systems around harmonious social interactions between people. My Permaculture teacher, Brad Lancaster, called it placing “nets in the flow.” People flow around a site like water. In the same way that we want to spread water out across the landscape, so it has more contact with the earth and can soak in and move more slowly through the watershed instead of rapidly flowing downhill. We want to make places for people to pause in public spaces, so they can meet their neighbors and community, instead of rushing

from work to home back to work without being connected to the people around them. So every bench and signboard becomes a net in the human flow, a place of potential relationship.

A Permaculture design system is strengthened by the number of connections between elements. The rainwater harvesting tank blocks the wind and noise from the road, while acting as a trellis for an edible climbing vine. In the same way, a community is strengthened by the number of connections between people. When you design with people in mind, then community will emerge.

Function follows structure. If you build a bench, people will stop and sit. And if grapes hang over that bench, then they'll sit and eat. And when someone else comes by, they'll stop and talk. And that's the beginning of world peace!