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Permaculture Design

...beyond the edges

a presentation by Calin Radulescu

<https://PermacultureStorytelling.com>

Overview of the presentation



1. Why choose the format of Storytelling ?
2. Storytelling as a vehicle for Human culture, through time
3. Authors, pioneers and sources of inspiration: Augusto Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed / Peter Slade, Child Drama / AS Neill, The Free School of Summerhill / Jean Liedloff, The Continuum Concept / Brad Lancaster, Harvesting Rainwater / Graham Bell, The Permaculture Way
4. My Permaculture journey, and professional evolution
5. The story of the place - the Permaculture demo site in Craaponne, Lyon, France
6. The twelve principles of permaculture, revisited and reinvented
7. The vision and the journey that is only starting: Coppice Agroforestry, Mark Krawczyk
8. Questions and hopefully feedback...

Why choose the format of Storytelling ?



From a sociological point of view, human beings need stories to support their sense of self and their place in the known world; in one way or another, we need story-lines that empower our cultures, our ways of thinking, of doing and of relating to other living beings.

- **Stories in Permaculture: Bill Mollison, David Holmgren and the indigenous communities**
- **Storytelling, or knowledge anchored in songs, in dance, in graphic representations of life and of visible and invisible energy**
- **<https://PermacultureStorytelling.com> as support for my professional work**
- **The socio-political value of Narratives**

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The narrative... or the stepping stones

My journey ...

**...as inspiration for other
people's journeys**



Augusto Boal, Theater of the Oppressed



A method of performing arts for application in education, community work, food production and ecology, social justice and culture in general.

- Augusto Boal and Paulo Freire, in exile after Brazil's 1964 coup
- The education and liberation of indigenous peasants of South America
- Theatre of the Oppressed in Portugal, in France, and the rest of the world
- Forum Theatre: the arena for rehearsing the life Narratives of the landless (Movimiento sin Terra)
- Liberation as an ongoing, participatory process: through critical consciousness, the oppressed not only liberates himself, but also the oppressor
- Author of: Theatre of the Oppressed, Games For Actors and Non-Actors, The Rainbow of Desire, Legislative Theatre, Hamlet and the Baker's Son, The Aesthetics of the Oppressed

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Peter Slade, Child Drama

A pioneer in his field, situated at the crossroads of applied psychology, and drama education.

- Psychological state of mind, general movement of body, patterns of behavior
- The physical imprint human beings leave on their environment
- Learning in Drama through engagement, and from the interactions with others
- Silent observation, from a favorable vantage point, of the interactions between players

Author of: *Child Drama, An Introduction to Child Drama, Natural Dance, Child Play: Its Importance for Human Development, Experience of Spontaneity, Child Drama and Its Value in Education*



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ASNeill, The Free School of Summerhill



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<https://www.summerhillschool.co.uk/>

A.S. Neill, a Scottish writer and rebel, created a community in which children could be free from adult authority. The school and his ideas became world-famous, his books are still read worldwide.

- The “school” as a place for authentic interactions, for real-life doing, and for dynamic learning
- Framework similar to Sociocracy: all children (no matter their age), all youth and all adults each, had one vote in the self-directed management of the Summerhill project
- The incremental design of the functioning of the school
- Through self-directed incremental learning, different patterns of thinking, of doing and of social behaviour were created by the members of this project
- Author of: Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing, Freedom—Not License!, Talking of Summerhill, The Free Child

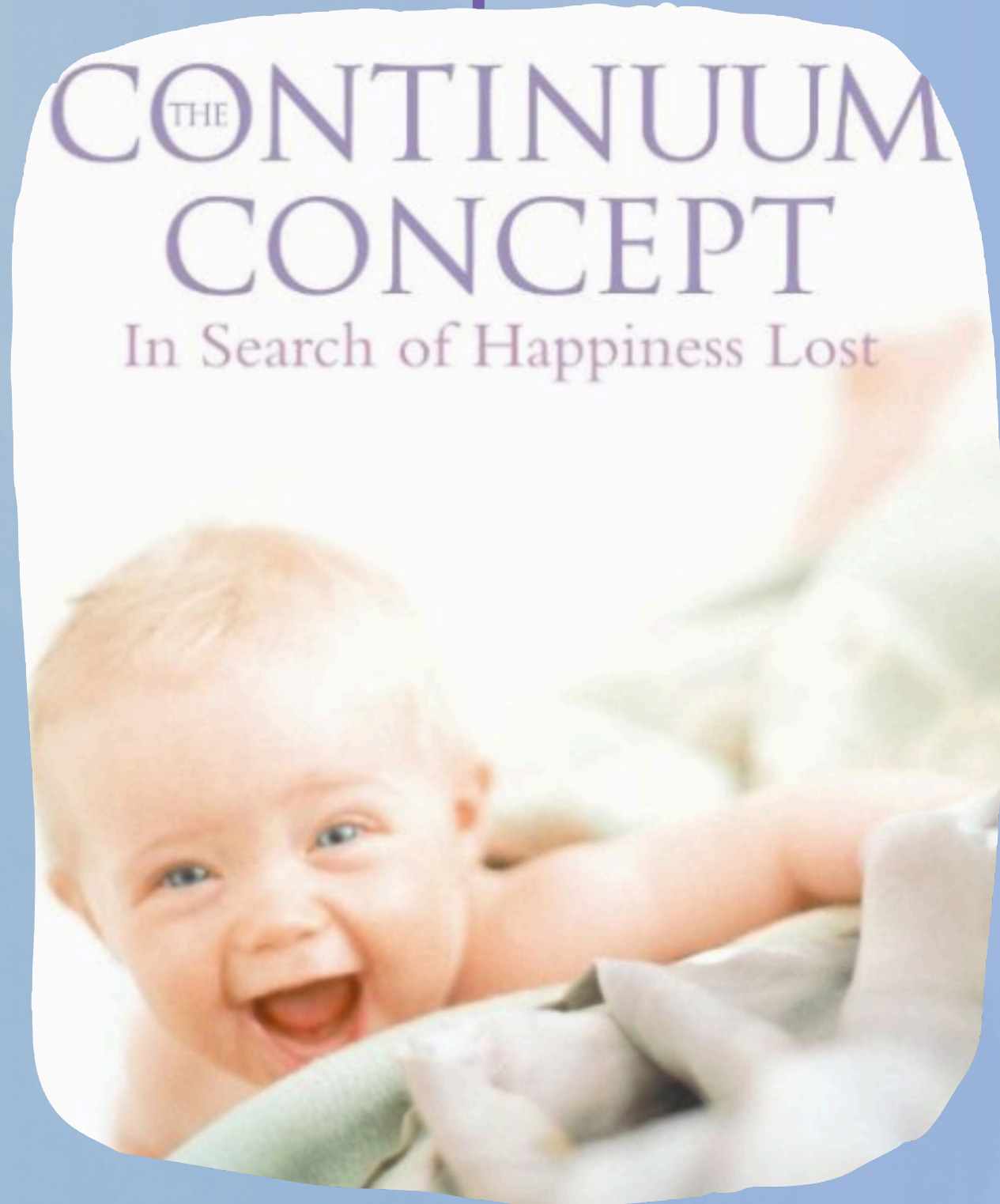
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Jean Liedloff, the Continuum Concept

Jean Liedloff, American anthropologist, author and explorer, known for her work: *The Continuum Concept*. The book was inspired by her time spent living with the Yequana, an indigenous tribe in Venezuela.

- Direct observation of indigenous approach to child-rearing and communal living
- Emphasis on meeting a child's innate expectations for physical closeness, emotional security, and social integration
- Constant physical contact, responsiveness to infants' needs, allowing children to explore the world at their own pace foster confidence, independence, and emotional stability
- Influencing on the attachment parenting movement and natural parenting approaches

Author of: *The Continuum Concept: In Search of Happiness Lost*.



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Brad Lancaster, Harvesting Rainwater



Educator, Permaculture designer, consultant, community figure, public speaker, doer, maker, brother, uncle and so many more things.

- Discovery of Brad and his body of work, thanks to the independent investigative reporting of Kirsten Dirksen and her family
<https://faircompanies.com/>
- Story focusing on his applied design work at his home in Tucson, Arizona; Permaculture design with no physical boundaries
- Designing not only the space, but also the mindsets and the imagination of the members of his community
- The current state of things, the legacy of the stewards of the land, the creative decision making relative to how to regenerate the land and the people
- Author of: Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands and beyond, volumes I and II

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<https://www.harvestingrainwater.com/>

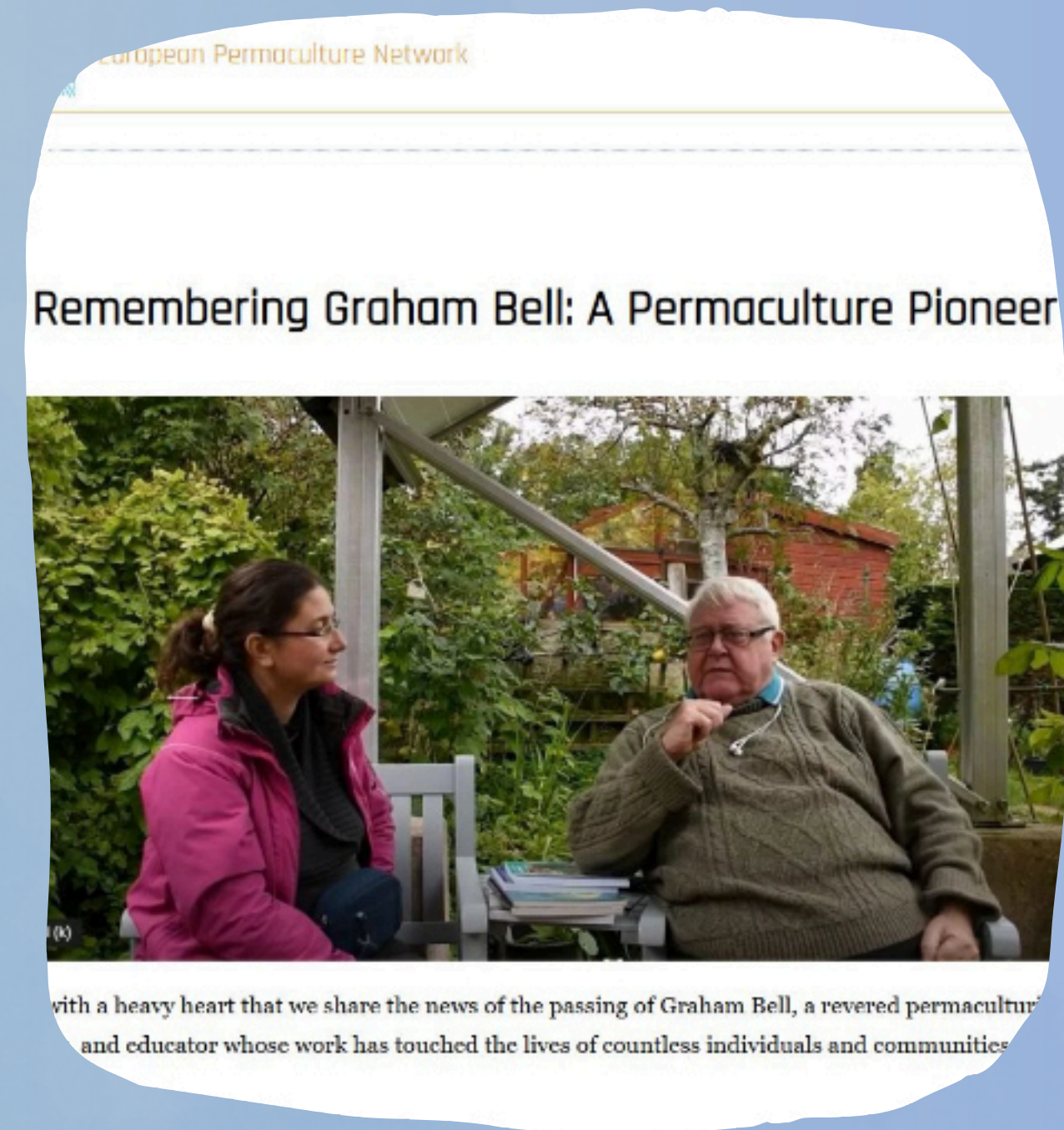
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Graham Bell, The Permaculture Way

Graham Bell was known for his dedication to promoting sustainable living and teaching Permaculture principles through his influential books and work.

- Never came in direct contact, knew of him thanks to online sources
- Advertised putting together an online PDC course that features Permaculture designers, educators from across the world
- He proved his nurturing spirit and patient guidance for a new generation of Permaculture practitioners until two weeks before his death
- Project completed with the continued support of the Soil Food Web School (who invested even more time and resources), under the guidance of Delvin Solkinson
- On Delvin's website <https://www.visionarypermaculture.com/> you can find even more resources, frameworks and ideas for building community bridges

Author of: *The Permaculture Garden* and *The Permaculture Way*



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The storyteller



Permaculture designer, consultant and trainer, I support individuals and small producers in the design and implementation of their regenerative projects in Europe and North America.

Throughout a professional career across 3 countries, I have remained passionate about natural sciences and nutrition. In 2019, I decided to get my hands dirty and follow a professional course in Permaculture Design. Since then, I have continued research in the field of agroforestry through practical trials, and I'm passionately involved in small and medium-scale regenerative projects.

Le Jardin d'un Notre Monde

The project's birth was during the first meeting in 2020 between myself and Brigitte, who was ready to start an agro-ecology project on her birthplace. Today, the land includes multiple cultivation systems: terraces, a semi-buried greenhouse, agro-forestry alleys-cropping, various small ponds, farmyard animals.



On site you can find a forest-garden for a family of eight, a community shared garden, a demonstration and training site for ethical agro-ecology practices. The dynamics of the place focus on permaculture and syntropic techniques.



Resource management starts with water, which is anchored in a design that includes regenerative hydrology, low-tech techniques and a well for drinking water. Bio-waste is also valued by appropriate composting techniques, including dry composting toilets.



Observe and interact... beyond any physical boundaries.

With no property of my own, every opportunity to move or travel between locations would allow me to notice opportunities for accessing resources:

- organic waste (local organic shops, and market gardeners)
- woodchips and brute woody materials from dumping sites, neighbors etc.
- cardboard and wood pallets from community recycle bins
- plants to propagate (cuttings, seeds) from the local landscape / natural areas / other gardeners
- leaf bags from community spaces - in autumn, these resources would be gathered by local agents, easy to collect from street corners



Catch and store energy



The opportunities already mentioned, and many others of diverse sources, slowly became mainstays of our operations and of our strategy.

- Applying this ethical principle to daily opportunities was a slow and intricate process
- As the project grew and integrated more people and more skills, this also became a community process
- The project became not only a hub for accumulating and integrating resources, but also for (re)distributing them
- Our motto: Keep resources in flow

Obtain a yield... or just find it

This permaculture principle can be seen as a corollary of the processes mentioned before.

- We looked to identify, locate, recover and use the existing yields in our community
- We transformed these yields into a community asset: bountiful “dumpster dives” created the opportunities for permablitzes
- We invited community members to participate; with surplus foodstuff on our hands, we were able to offer hot meals to the participants; often times, we would also exchange plants
- These social interactions can have a ripple effect through the community



Apply self-regulation and accept feedback



Having the opportunity to recover, incorporate and transform these energies opened the door for many experiments. Some were in the garden, and others were in the form of social interactions

- I was in position to apply many techniques specifically thanks to surplus organic matter
- Ideas would be trialed by several people in parallel, or even together
- Operating as a group was mutually beneficial, and through time we shared successes and failures, taking the community practices further
- Finding the right balance is always a challenge, yet having so many opportunities was a luxury, from a social point of view

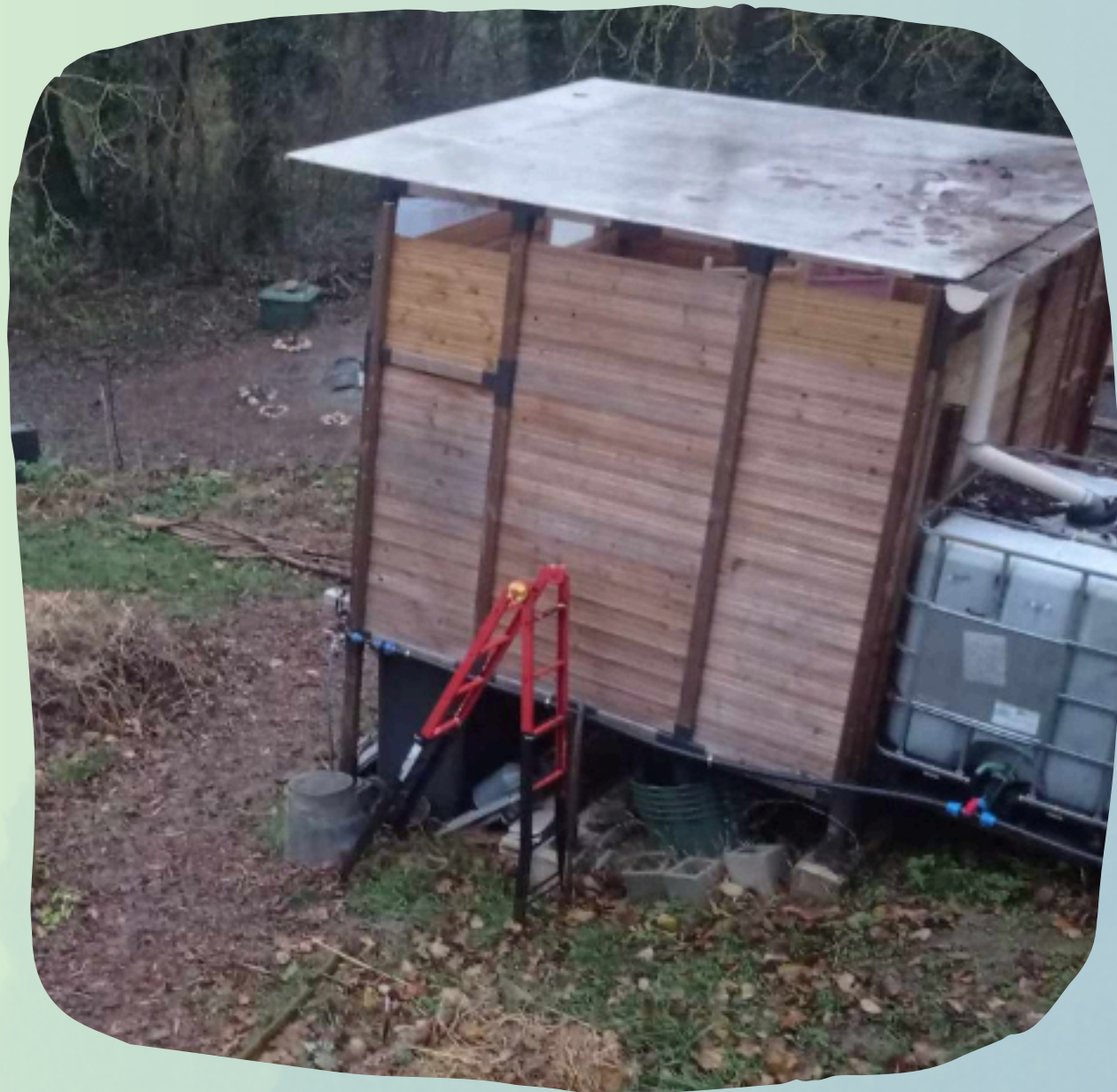
Use and value renewable resources and services

This thread can also be seen as a by-product of resource management and social networking.

- Organic waste from the stores, if not recovered locally by community members or NGO's, actually creates pollutants and entails extra cost for the local businesses
- Through various strategies and techniques, we've captured these energies creatively; our worst case scenarios was to use foodstuff in compost piles
- With so much energy redirected to productive use in a relatively short span, we've also inherently initiated micro-nursery projects.
- Various skills of community were quite often employed to create extra or new values: making food preserves, seed saving, ecological building, light constructions, earth moving



Produce no waste. Let nothing go to waste either.



In not-so-metaphorical terms, I've been on a personal mission while designing and implementing this project, aimed at showing that almost anything is possible even with little or no resources, and especially by addressing more delicate topics of our community and society in general.

- Western European countries are just as much mired in ethical production problems, as they are in the distribution of these resources to its citizens
- The sad truth is that due to social and economic status disparities, a lot of people simply do not have access to these resources.
- We recognized the opportunities to transform waste such as cut grass, tree leaves, spoiled hay, horse manure into learning sequences - a literal ladder to the changes we want to see happen in the world
- We would adjust our goals to fit the circumstantial resources, and turn those into staple elements

Design from patterns to details

There is just as much value in designing Patterns of the land, as it is in designing Patterns of behavior, both on an individual level, as well as a social level.

- This refers to tasks regarding food stuff retrieval: the products are bundled in wood cases, by store employees; the cases are retrieved and stacked in the family car, and then, once arrived on site, special attention needs to be given to each category of foodstuff
- Sometimes, extra value could be extracted, in the form of seeds or fruit pits, either stored separately or taken to swale mounds for onsite nursery projects
- There is another layer of pattern: that of sharing this information and these techniques with community members. Overall, we have adopted a strategy of transparency - in relation to the origin of these resources, but also the specific uses



Integrate rather than segregate



Starting with the situation we found ourselves in - losing our jobs, our income streams, access to resources - we aimed to integrate as much as possible even of the whole experience of being under a lockdown, or in situations where access was restricted.

- We made a conscious choice that we would find ourselves in the garden
- The project started by addressing the weak points: drought stress and dealing with unwanted waste, or misunderstood resources
- Bamboo sticks that had been cut through the years were integrated into “fascines”, a low-tech approach to stabilizing slopes
- Over time, we’ve gone beyond the visible patterns; in situations where extra skills or knowledge were needed, we looked at acquiring those internally
- By staying receptive to the skills of people in the community, we invited individuals to intervene or contribute (terraforming with machines, building etc.)

Uses small and slow solutions

A broadly applied principle on the project, covering the entire range of techniques used, except the half-buried polytunnel, which had to be dug by a small earth-moving machine.

- All other elements of the project have been implemented by hand, and some even with the express participation of community members; permablitz-type events were organized as many times as it was possible, close to 70-80 times until now
- We've been fortunate to work with individuals aged from 16 to 70+ years old, each differently-abled, and with their own perspective and interests
- We've welcomed visitors to the project, even with the project being nowhere near its complete form; this has allowed for the information regarding energy and technique use to flow freely - at the community and even the regional levels.



Use and value diversity

This principle is also quite probably infused in all the examples given until now; I also look at it as a by-product of incremental design.



- Limited monetary resources allowed us to advance only at a slow and steady pace; nothing is ever truly finished onsite
- The project started by digging shallow, mini-swales, in order to improve the site's capacity to absorb water, starting from the highest possible altitude.
- Later, when more techniques had been implemented for diverse productions (gardening and agroforestry), we invited an earth mover to come and site to help us develop the practice, and build extra functions into the system.
- Around 15 people are involved in the elements of the project (family food forest and community garden); some have particular skills, and they've enabled the group to extend the range of plants in cultivation

Use edges and value the marginal

Not having direct access to land led me on a path where I would play an imaginative design game, while interacting with the environment and people around me.

- Oftentimes, I would imagine what could be, based on what already is, and then finding the resources to start the process
- When starting from close to 0, this can be a helpful exercise for anyone; as we gain experience, we learn to recognize the edges that we can play with
- When transferred into physical reality, and applied to designing a project, “extending the edges” and imagining a project that stretches beyond its physical boundaries can lead to many great things, but also to failures
- The most important thing is probably to keep moving forward, and recognize the patterns and energies that we can build with



Creatively use and respond to change



Nature has shown that it has many answers beyond anything we can imagine. As a living being, I can be creative as well.

In this sense, my permaculture story began long ago, and it also manifested itself through a former role: improvisation facilitator.

- Beyond any particular techniques I've learned or practiced in this field, what I learned was that there are many paths forward.
- Having a basemap, a design or even good mastery of a technique, rarely leads to a 100% success rate. What leads to results is moving forward and incorporating feedback in any way possible
- This is to be taken in context, of course. If we plant a tree, we expect it to grow, and to produce; many other things happen along the way. How that journey actually turns out, that is an opportunity to move forward
- In the words of the late Graham Bell, Permaculture is not a destination, it is a direction.

Le Jardin d'un Notre Monde



Various techniques and creative uses of compost

Le Jardin d'un Notre Monde



Various techniques and creative uses of compost

Le Jardin d'un Notre Monde



Terraforming techniques in landscape

Le Jardin d'un Notre Monde



Terraforming techniques in landscape

Le Jardin d'un Notre Monde



Structures to support projects

Le Jardin d'un Notre Monde



Growing through incremental design

Le Jardin d'un Notre Monde



A shared garden for community resilience

Le Jardin d'un Notre Monde



Intensive systems managed with care

Le Jardin d'un Notre Monde



The abundance of diversity

Thank you for your attention

Inquiries and project requests
email: permaculturestorytelling@gmail.com
mobile phone: +33 656 67 66 38