Principles Thought Piece

Principle 0

> "Honor traditional ecological knowledge or indigenous wisdom that are already held within a place. Acknowledge and involve its stewards - visible and/or invisible: past and/or present."

Sarah Queblatin's Principle 0 is an invitation to step back and rethink our relationship to the ecology, to the land we find ourselves on.

There are a few statements Sarah makes in her Medium post that resonate strongly with me and where my thinking is at, at this point in my learning:

- *Zoning is about designing a system of energy flows* - The design is about reconfiguring the way energy is in my body. Caffeine has a big impact on my energy. As I have talked about before in design 9, it creates a microclimate in which I can become productive, yet it drains my energy at the same time, sapping my life force.

Caffeine puts me on edge, and the edge is where the action is. It is also where my anxiety is. Caffeine brings creativity. There is no doubt that my diploma has been a caffeine fuelled endeavour. I don't feel alone in this.

I wonder if most Western thinking is caffeine fuelled, if it's cultural. Just as a crow might use a stone to remove a snail from its shell, caffeine is a tool I use for releasing energy, aiding concentration. And as a culture, we are all consumed by its power; and it's not really a thing that is spoken about.

(Caveat - I must acknowledge that not everyone experiences the force of caffeine in their body the way I do. My Mum can quite happily drink a coffee and be fine, she thinks my reaction is related to my perimenopausal hormones. A friend told me she can easily drink tea before bed with no adverse effects on her sleep.)

My thinking is on a path to wondering how we disembed ourselves from unhelpful cultural behaviours, and how we create new cultures that are more earth aligned. For me, freeing myself of my dependence on caffeine is one of the first tentative steps towards that. It is a process of decolonising my mind, so that my thoughts can be free...

- *Ecological wisdom is often embodied* - In his Zoom call on Embodied Permaculture (13 July, PA Digital Campfire event), Dan McTiernan shared

his thoughts on how we might begin 'healing and integrating our inner and outer landscapes'.

He encourages us to:

- *Notice what these ideas feel like in your body. How does it feel to be?* - That's what I want to find out, and I don't feel like I can do that with my body dependent on external forces, like caffeine, but also sugar and alcohol. I can't feelfeelatfleshinside (see Radical Wholeness) with the shroud of caffeine cursing through my blood.
- *Become a wild tracker of your own experience. Through the body you can listen to the world, becoming porous, softening the hard edges between you and the world* - I'm dreaming about a time when I can wake to a day when I can feel this porosity. To wake up free from my addictions.

- *Queblatin invites us to be involved in ritual to honour the spirits of the land* - Throughout the design I have been using my set of spirit animal oracle cards to gain insights into my predicament, a source of encouragement and support. Horse, unicorn, and fox have shown up to share their wisdom.

Looby's Cultural Emergence Principles

How am I going to be participating, inter-be-coming (see Indy Johar) as part of the living world in this design?

I used Looby's Principles as a way to think about how I could create the conditions I need for healing through the design. In the anchor point I looked at the following principles:

Plan the flow - I'm good at planning, but then I have to let go of the plans in order for emergence to surface, otherwise I limit the possibilities.

Move the tools - Be observant, and find ways to disrupt patterns.

Trust the process - There will be ups and downs, highs and lows on the pathway to your centre.

Use the Intelligence of your heart - I modified the principle 'use the intelligence of cooperating hearts' as I feel alone doing this. Which in itself brought insight that has led me to seek out opportunities for healing in community, by becoming involved in a co-counselling process in the New Year.

Your body knows - listen to your body, trust your intuition. Seek connection.

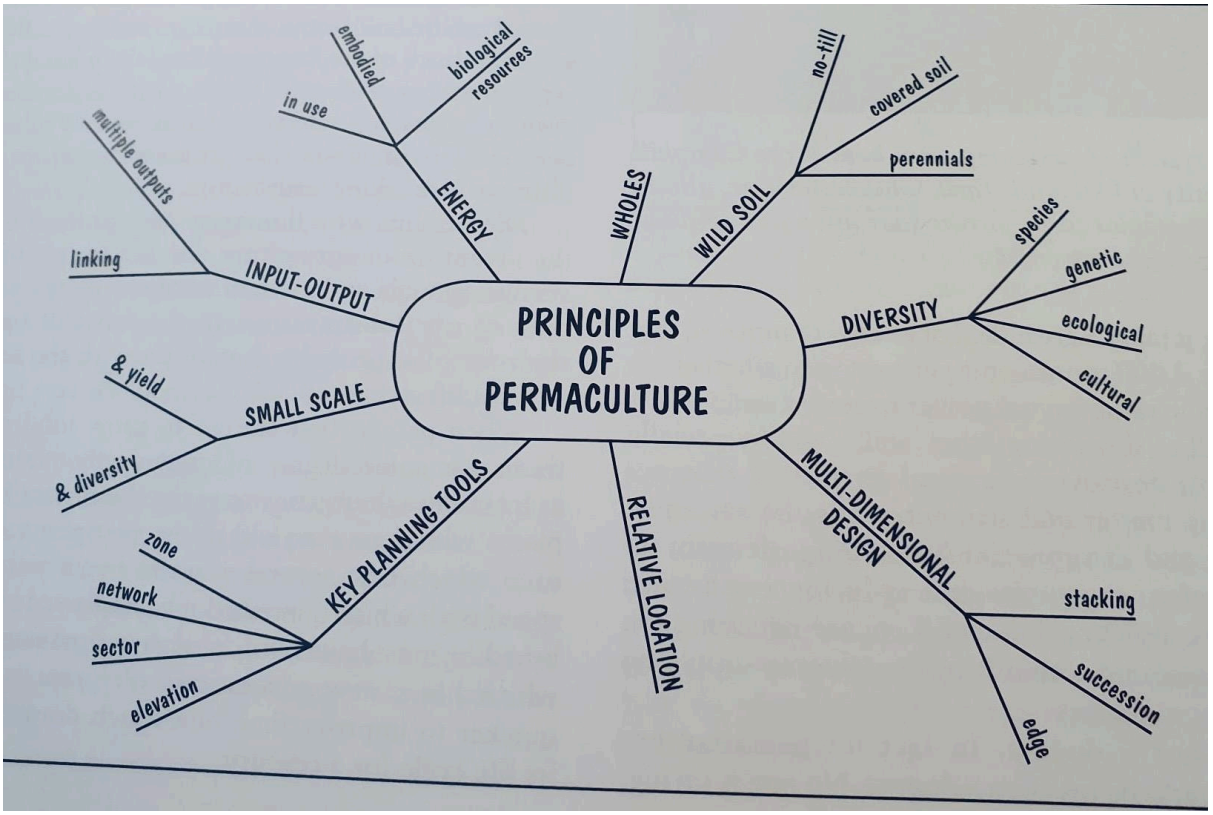
Allow for the possibility of the seemingly impossible - leave space for emergence.

And this is all well and good.

However, Looby's principles enable us to learn more about the way humans show up in the world. For me, the thing I enjoy about principles is how they offer insights into how the living world lives.

Looby's principles show us how humans live, but that doesn't feel like it's enough. It misses some key bits of information that I'm looking for in the principles, something I have been looking for for a long time. I found something useful in Carol Sandford's Regenerative Life Principles. I like principles to hold snippets of ecological knowledge, so I can learn about the more-than-human world from them.

As a turn toward this, in a conversation in Liz's PDC I stumbled upon Patrick Whitefiled's Principles, from his book *The Earth Care Manual.* So I played around writing with them for a bit to see what emerged. The playing uses metaphor, where I draw alignments between the way the more-than-human world lives and my own experience.



Patrick Whitefield's Principles

This is what came up:

KEY PLANNING TOOLS

The living world does not have a plan. It emerges in context in response to conditions, and in relation to its encoding (DNA), which is itself shaped by cultural conditions. This is why I like the design process articulated by Dave Snowden, where you sense the direction, make the next right step, then look again.

This design has been a constant game of probing, sensing and responding, as I delve deeply into my zone 00. I am a node in a network, succumbing to the effects of sectors (external energies/cultural conditionings), in which I find myself using caffeine to create microclimatic conditions (more energy and concentration).

I am aiming to reconfigure the nature of these conditions in order to rebalance my experience of being. This is like pushing myself up a steep slope. Once I reach the top, the peak, at which I overcome my addiction, there may well be an easy enjoyable ride down the slope, until the next slope arises.

Peaks and troughs seem to be in the nature of things; both on land, and in experience. The pattern of the wave comes to mind. Thinking then about wave-particle duality, if I am both at the same time, and the hills and valleys/ups and downs are the waves, what are the particles? Our bodies, of course.

SMALL SCALE
One small aim, to get myself off caffeine, has opened a vast horizon of thoughts and feelings about my place and position in the world, and my relationship with my body.

ENERGY
I'd love to get to a place in my body where I can feel the flows and rhythms of my natural energy, without the sugar spikes and caffeine rushes. If I put a lot of energy into this now, perhaps I'll set myself up for the future in some way. For me, this design is all about embodied energy and potential.

WILD SOIL
My addictions are like perennial weeds that just never seem to go away. I remove the dandelions and the plantain pops up over there. I reduce the caffeine and the sugar arises once more.

You can't get rid of weeds, you just need to learn to live with them, be thankful for their gifts and use the yields they offer, to nourish our bodies and the soil, and they are pretty in a vase too, for lifting the spirit. What's needed then is a way to reframe, just like I have reframed my approach to weeds, welcoming the gifts they bring, maybe it's time to let go, and reframe my approach to my addictions. What gifts do my addictions bring? I'll gently lay compost over the soil of my self and see what grows next. Like a nice warm blanket to get me through the winter.

These principles still don't really satisfy my desire for principles that show me how the living world lives. But I know what does, but that's from outside permaculture. It's the learning I have gleaned from Daniel Christian Wahl and his writing on regenerative cultures and the RSA Regenerative Futures resources, where we know that the living world is:

- Resilient
- Adaptable
- Reciprocal
- Sustaining
- Cyclical
- Sensing/responsive
- Self-regulating
- Collaborative
- Abundant
- Interconnected
- Complex
- Diverse
- Evolving
- Growing
- Energetic
- Networked

I've written enough for now, but wouldn't it be interesting to compare these with the permaculture principles! I can catch sight of my own set of principles emerging here. That's a wonderful way to end this process and begin a new cycle. I'll look forward to seeing how this learning shows up now, in the turning of the wheel of my life as I emerge into the world, no longer an apprentice.