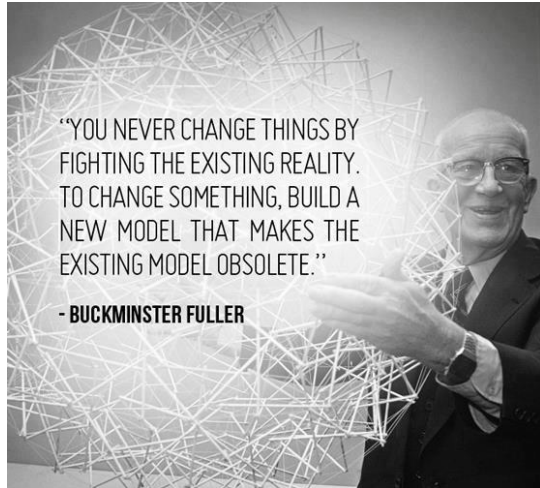


## Permaculture and Extinction Rebellion

*"We are called to be architects of the future, not its victims." - Buckminster Fuller*

There are currently 2 revolutionary responses to the ecological crisis, and the success of these overlapping movements is critical to human survival and avoiding climate breakdown in the 21st century. Our ability as humans to flourish and thrive within planetary boundaries (rockstrom et al \*) may also depend on the extent to which these movements can work together for system change. We need both urgently. On one side of this jigsaw for social transformation is the fundamental work of saying NO to a system that destroys life. At this late stage of the game with climate catastrophe, and political-cultural denial, the only effective strategy for this NO is mass non-violent civil disobedience [enter stage



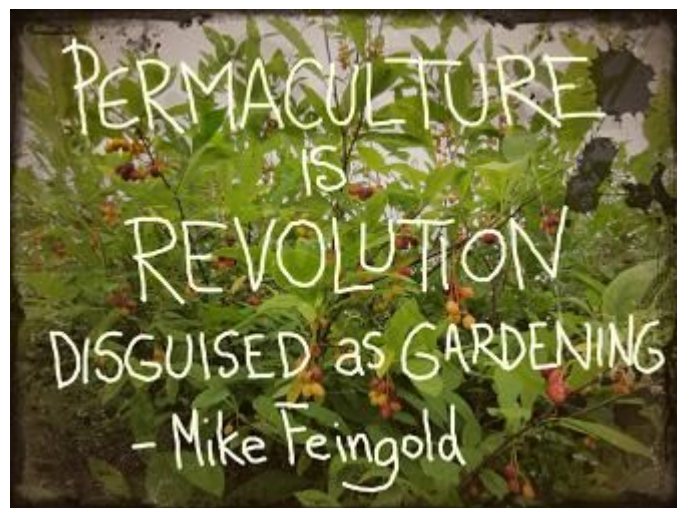
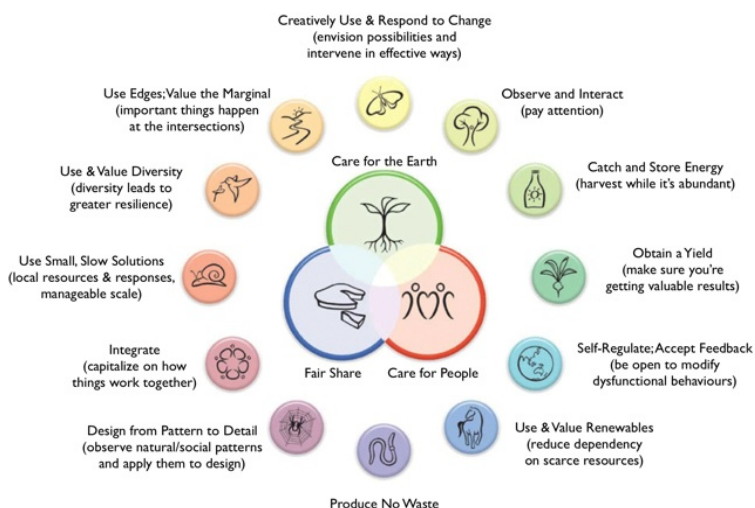
left **Extinction Rebellion (XR)** ]. On the other side of this monumentally challenging jigsaw, is a quieter, backyard revolution, which is imagining, designing and implementing the building blocks of a new society, one that embodies a culture of permanence and ecological viability [enter stage right: Permaculture]. This backyard revolution is the **Permaculture Movement**, which goes far beyond the reach of its little known (and often misinterpreted) name, underpinning circular economy, transition towns, localised economies and eco-social politics. This movement is creating the new, whilst the direct action of XR is dismantling the old.

**Permaculture** is the big YES, to a new era of humanity where we thrive in equality and diversity, valuing rather than excluding the marginal edge, where most creativity (and often productivity) occurs. The Permaculture movement has its origins in agriculture, as a solutionist approach to the intersecting crises of topsoil loss, climate change, peak resources (including oil) and industrial mono-culture agriculture. From this ethically focused and practical solutionist foundation, set by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren in 1970s Australia, permaculture expanded to become a design tool for similar crises in all spheres of society. In this respect it can be defined as a holistic design approach rooted in the ethics of Earth Care, People Care and Fair Share (Equity), in order to implement practical solutions to work with rather than against nature. The permaculture principles and ethics (see graphic below) can be compared harmoniously with XR's 10 principles and values - more on this in Part 2 next week!

**Biomimicry** is a concept used by permaculture designers as inspiration for their solution-based work. For example the designer of a permaculture city perceives the city as a biotope, with flows of water, energy, nutrients and biodiversity (including humans). For the city to be viable, it must mimic nature in its ability to respire (i.e. have net zero emissions), to cycle resources (circular economy) and provide for the needs (material and non-material) of all its human and non-human residents.

### Emergence from the Emergency

The essential and necessary overlap between these two movements of the 21st century occurs in their cultural resistance and work for system change. XR deconstructs violent systems, Permaculture re-designs regenerative systems. Permaculture is in this sense the prefigurative and regenerative culture that XR is working towards. If it continues its success, XR will increasingly create the political and cultural space for permaculture to emerge as a viable alternative, and to have more widespread support. This has already been visible, as towns and cities and countries declare a climate emergency, after which point they ask; "so what the hell do we do to get to zero carbon by 2025/2030/2050?" and



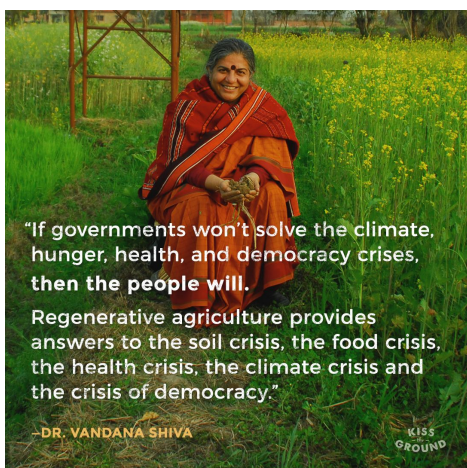
permaculture replies with a tried and tested (but still exploratory and evolving) design tool for regenerative living, in harmony with nature. XR is also affecting policy at national level, which has the incredible potential of removing barriers for permaculture solutions to be adopted at a wider scale. Such barriers of planning permission for sustainable, zero carbon dwellings, barriers to renewable energy, barriers to land for rewilding and reforestation.

Another overlap exists whereby both of these critical movements are direct in their action. Permaculturists do not wait for it to become economically viable to grow local organic food, instead they just do it and create local currencies of gift and mutual support. XR does not wait for the next international climate summit to discuss how many ways they can ignore climate action, instead it takes the message directly to the halls of power and holds the perpetrators accountable. Permaculture can offer integrity to the direct action of XR, especially if Rebels adopt permaculture principles and practice. One benefit of this is that our values and actions in everyday life become more aligned, as we practice the culture that we are aiming to create. The rebel that protests in the streets AND lives a Permacultural lifestyle has the understanding that the system change it is worth fighting for, because there is a more beautiful alternative waiting to emerge from the emergency. A permaculture vision (and lifestyle) is my personal drive for activism, it is every part of my own regenerative culture practice and it is what has made me passionate about these movements for positive change.

**XR is the means, Permaculture is the end.**

By bringing together the means and the ends of systemic transformation, we as rebels can tap into an abundant energy and collective power, to be our greatest and thrive as humans within ecological boundaries. This allows us to say NO to a crisis whilst saying YES to 'the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible' (Eisenstein 2016).

We are now at the stage in this paradigm whereby more people than ever are aware of the climate crisis as the emergency that it is. Many people are struggling internally with this difficult recognition; this internal struggle is also the root of many forms of denial and disavowal, as people cannot bear to face the truth of what we are doing to this Earth, to each other and to ourselves. We are also at the stage of this movement of movements, where government has not responded sufficiently to the desperate calls for action by youth strikers and extinction Rebellion activists... At what point must we consider that the government will not act and that we must begin directly creating the society we need for an ecologically viable future? Vandana Shiva, an activist in the ecological, agricultural and social justice



movement, has come to this conclusion. At this stage of uncertainty, it is clear that we need to be partaking actively in the rapid transition as well as putting political and economic pressure on those in power.

XR has mobilised over 100,000 people through the urgent and refreshingly truthful directness of its message, it aims to reach out to 1 million in 2020. This will not be possible with the same narrative and tactics it has used up until now, as its founders have acknowledged. Non-violent direct action and mass civil disobedience are still vital pillars of this movement, and rightly so. What needs to evolve is the story, the narrative. XR has thus far effectively mobilised a fraction of 1% of the population through effective and honest fear-based messaging. The narrative must now evolve to become one of possibility, of emergence from this emergency, of saying NO whilst creating and embodying the YES (the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible). If permaculture philosophy and practice can be woven into the fabric of the XR story, its mobilisation strategy and its actions, the movement may just succeed in avoiding socio-ecological catastrophe, but more importantly it will have a proposition to fill that void and provide an ecologically viable society.

*Part 2 of this writing will explore the particular overlaps, harmonies and potential tensions between XR and Permaculture, and part 3 will delve into practical suggestions for realising this interconnectedness.*