



Earth Rise. NASA

**European Permaculture Teachers Partnership 2012-2014**  
**EXPLORING SUSTAINABLE WAYS OF SHARING KNOWLEDGE**  
**A GENERAL INTRODUCTION**



Leeds, UK



Trenta, Slovenia



Senior Teachers' Circle

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Courgette Moment\*





Life Long Learning: Education in Sustainable Development

## 1. Editorial

**Permaculture\* is a design philosophy for creating sustainable systems that has been used worldwide for the last 35 years. It brings knowledge from various fields (horticulture, agriculture, architecture, economics, etc.) together under a set of ethics and principles to enable people to create sustainable homes, neighbourhoods, farms, businesses and more. It has a strong emphasis on practical action, personal empowerment, community and seeking creative solutions to seemingly intractable problems.**

Today there is a worldwide network of Permaculturists\*, and thousands of Permaculture sites have emerged. It is practiced in landscaping and consulting companies, Transition initiatives, community gardens and other urban settings, and more and more people have heard about the Permaculture approach and philosophy.

In many countries it is possible to get the internationally recognised basic training: the Permaculture Design Certificate. Permaculture\* is being taught at universities and further

education colleges, kindergartens and schools. Permaculture diploma pathways, which present the opportunity to learn in depth about the theory, practice and application of Permaculture, are also now being offered in many countries.

As Permaculture grows, teachers around the world increasingly need to discuss teaching methods, quality standards and curricula. At the same time, students want a lively mix of theoretical knowledge and practical applications. There is a growing need for courses to be fulfilling



*“Observing that there is a strong community-building effect above all, and the organisational structure started providing its fruits, I hope that these will keep on developing even without Leonardo Da Vinci or Erasmus+ funding.*

*Time will show.”*

(and thus sustainable) on many levels:

intellectual, emotional and practical. A focus on lecture-style teaching is becoming less popular as its shortcomings become increasingly well understood.

Our vision was to address these issues and to learn from and mutually support each other as teachers and course providers across Europe. That is why the European Permaculture Teachers (EPT\*) Partnership was founded. This is one of the largest Leonardo Da Vinci partnerships that has ever been created and it has proven to be a huge asset in moving Permaculture, and especially teaching Permaculture in Europe, forward.

We are happy to present the aims, results and future visions of the EPT Partnership here!

## HOW TO USE THIS BROCHURE

This brochure gives an overview of the project with links to more detailed findings and results on our website, [permateachers.eu](http://permateachers.eu).

The website is a work-in-progress, and will continue to be the main repository of information about, and generated by, the partnership beyond



the EU co-funded period.

**Text in blue are hyperlinks.** Clicking on the text will take you to an external website, provided your device is connected to the Internet. Clicking on an email address will open your email client programme.

Words with an asterisk\* are glossary terms explained at the back of this document.



## 2. History and Original Aims and Objectives of the EPT

The idea to create a European network of Permaculture teachers emerged at a Permaculture Educators' Course in Denmark in June 2010. After a number of meetings and online discussions, 12 partner organisations successfully applied to the **Leonardo Da Vinci-Partnership** stream of the **EU Lifelong Learning Programme**. They were awarded funding for a two year project between August 2012 and July 2014. Non-funded partners from a number of other countries also joined the project.

We designed the EPT to support the professional development of both Permaculture teachers and of the quality of Permaculture education generally across Europe.

We addressed this aim on a number of fronts including:

- Training Permaculture teachers and improving the quality of vocational education and training that they deliver.

- Supporting Permaculture organisations to improve their structures so that they can better deliver courses and through these mechanisms employ Permaculture teachers.

The most important function of the EPT is to act as a network connecting Permaculture teachers with each other and connecting the many national organisations, in order to exchange knowledge and skills.



Permaculture Teachers on a Tour of Mas Franch, Spain

Included in this exchange are:

- Improving teaching methods, structures and contents of courses.
- Widening participation in courses.
- Sharing information about national organisations and their educational structures (including qualifications systems).
- Discussing and possibly working on the development of a European curriculum.
- Spreading information on best practices through visits to Permaculture projects and special talks.
- Creating a rich collection of online resources that can act as a Teacher's Handbook\* as well as resources for anyone wanting to learn about Permaculture.

By bringing together the Permaculture community across Europe, the EPT is helping to support Permaculture practitioners and teachers to deliver high quality courses and trainings.





Leeds: sharing our stories and methods

### 3. What We Worked on and Created

***“This is a large partnership, which will create project coordination challenges. However, the partner organisations are united by a common ethical framework, set of guiding principles and working practices. The individuals are united by a passion for their profession and a can-do attitude, and we firmly believe that we will succeed in making such a large partnership work.”***

This quote from the application form proves that we were aware of the challenges that might come with the size of this Partnership. In the “Lessons Learned” below, we reflect critically on the fact that we commenced our kick-off meeting without having previously decided on a structure to organise our work. On the other hand, the question of how to deal with such a big and diverse project turned out to offer significant solutions for many people involved in the Partnership. Also, it was valuable to witness how the quality of our collaboration changed and

evolved substantially over the course of the two year project phase.

#### HOW WE STRUCTURED OUR WORK

We used an approach based on the observation of natural systems called the [Viable Systems Model \(VSM\)\\*](#) to design the organisational structures of the EPT. This ensured that the work of the Partnership was shared out amongst the participants and that there was cohesion between the groups working on the different objectives.

*“The meetings have created a consistent connection both among people who are already teachers and those who are training to become teachers. This connection is positive both on a personal and a professional level.”*

The study of ecosystems and the way muscles, organs and the nervous system of the human organism interact, were the inspiration for the Viable Systems Model, originally developed by the English management cyberneticist, Stafford Beer. The VSM is used as a tool for diagnosing problems in social organisations, and to help to improve their functioning.

[See here on our website](#) for a more detailed description of how we adapted the Viable Systems Model for the Partnership.

## HOW WE FACILITATED OUR MEETINGS

The process team of the EPT Partnership was formed to ensure that each meeting flowed and was well facilitated. It prepared and hosted each meeting in collaboration with the host and coordination teams and facilitated each session using a number of techniques or active learning methodologies. Many of the process team members had previous experience in using [Art of Hosting\\*](#) or [Art of Mentoring\\*](#) approaches and each method used was explained (using a technique called a ‘courgette moment’ to reflect on what was happening process-wise) to maximise the learning of all participants.

For a more detailed description of how we facilitated the meetings of the Partnership see [here on our website](#).

## EXCHANGE ABOUT EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURES AND MUTUAL SUPPORT IN SETTING THESE UP

One important aim of the Partnership was to exchange ideas about, improve and support the creation of educational structures for Permaculture education in the partner countries.

A small group worked on how to facilitate this communication. Right at the beginning of the Partnership, they sent out a questionnaire to collect information about the educational structures and the pathways to the Permaculture diploma in the partner countries.

At the second EPT meeting in Slovenia, various partners presented their [educational structures](#) that can be viewed by country on our [website](#). We then applied various methods such as [SWOC\\*](#) [analysis](#) and [needs and yields analysis](#) in order to understand and compare the different approaches to Permaculture education. A live example of how the Portuguese diploma system works was also presented.



Towards the end of the Partnership, follow-up interviews were conducted with those who filled in the questionnaire in 2012, to trace the [evolution](#) that the different educational structures made over the course of the last two years. Witnessing the dynamics of this progression was one of the reasons we decided against creating one PDF\* brochure that



presented all educational structures: the EPT has accelerated changes in its member countries and thus, a more flexible format of presentation seemed more appropriate.

On our website there are links to the overall results and their interpretations on the [educational structures](#) page. The subpages of educational structures are organised by country. For each country, one or more Permaculture organisations present themselves and their educational structures. There is also an online form, so that organisations that are not yet represented can add their data. All entries can of course be amended according to on-going developments.



An exercise at Spain meeting

Large or small participating organisations as well as individual participants lacking significant (or any) backup of a national body, have greatly benefitted from the Partnership through the exchange with other professionals.

On one hand, countries like Finland, Bulgaria, The Netherlands and Czech Republic have started working on creating national organisations and setting up educational structures. On the other hand, building teacher tandems or teams with other national and European colleagues has been an important result for other EPT countries and participants.

The diversity of approaches and educational structures present in the Partnership has been widely appreciated and viewed as an asset rather than presenting some sort of problem.

## DEEPENING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT PERMACULTURE BY SEEING PROJECTS AND PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

During our meetings, we selected the places for both the meetings and the site tours in order to contribute towards the improvement of subject knowledge and practical experience regarding basics of ecology and sustainability, as well as applied Permaculture design in different climatic and social conditions. These learning opportunities and site visits were hugely inspirational. And inspiration for a teacher means greater capacity to inspire students.

To make much of this subject knowledge available to others who could not participate in respective meetings, one of our small groups focussed on the presentation of Permaculture

*“Again I have learned a lot personally and been inspired by other teachers and organisations. It made me reconstruct the diploma process for Scandinavia which I think is a huge step.”*

projects that hosted us during the EPT Partnership. This group both interviewed representatives of each project based on a [questionnaire](#) and, towards the end of the meeting, collected feedback from EPT participants about the project.

Thus, an overview of applied Permaculture design at seven projects in seven European countries (Germany, Slovenia, Portugal, Britain, Spain, Denmark and Bulgaria) was created, which can be

*"The pre-set objectives were simple and powerful. It was good to have something common and concrete to work on – the networking (which was the most valuable outcome) happened on the side, and was for real. It was good to have regular meetings on actual permaculture sites"*

found on our website under the heading [Best Practice](#). Here are the links to these case studies:

- [Gastwerke in Escherode \(Germany\)](#)
- [Ekokmetija Pri Sustarju in Hotemaze \(Slovenia\)](#)
- [Quinta do Vale da Lama in Odiáxere \(Portugal\)](#)
- [UK Permaculture Association in Leeds \(UK\)](#)
- [Mas Franch in Girona \(Spain\)](#)
- [Friland in Feldballe \(Denmark\)](#)
- [Ecocamping Batak in Tsigov Chark \(Bulgaria\)](#)

We identified a need for more sites that can act as examples of applied Permaculture and at the same time act as learning and networking centres, as well as the need for better access to this kind of information. We see the [LAND\\* Network](#) of the [British Permaculture Association](#) as a good example of how to take networking to the next level, and highly recommend visiting their website for more information. The best practice group recommended starting a similar networking project on a European level, and this work has indeed begun with the [PLANT\\* project proposal](#) (extending LAND throughout Europe).

We are also looking beyond Europe to identify sustainable projects in the global South and to see what can be learned from them, or shared with them. For this purpose we recommend the website and exhibition [Do ut des](#) (New Latin, *I give in order that you may give*) of the German NGO [SONED](#) (Southern Networks for Environment and Development).

## UNDERSTANDING AND DISCUSSING COURSE FORMATS AND CURRICULA

The content of what is being taught on a Permaculture Design Course (PDC)\* is based on the chapters of the Permaculture Designers' Manual, written by Bill Mollison in the 1980s. Since then, Permaculture has been applied to many more fields and thus has widened its scope of application. At the same time, there is a growing alertness and concern as to whether the quality of what is being taught on Permaculture Design Courses (and other delivered formats) is



being kept to a high enough standard.

As a network, the EPT Partnership agreed that discussing the [curriculum](#) of PDCs and standards of Permaculture education in general is an important part of our work. We expect that through peer learning and building a strong network of high quality Permaculture offerings, a high standard of teaching can be achieved.

To support this process, a workgroup focused on discovering what the Core Curriculum of a PDC is (among the participating Permaculture teachers in the EPT), by doing a survey on this subject. The baseline offering was considered the [PDC Core Curriculum](#) of the Permaculture Association of Britain. The survey showed that regional differences in topics exist, as well as extra curricula topics developed by various teachers.

Afterwards, there was an exchange on how the discussion about core curricula in the different organisations can be stimulated and what steps need to be taken for this.

To enable teachers to decide on the course format that best fits the content they want to deliver and to then be able to design a timetable, this workgroup also facilitated an exchange about course formats and timetables for full certificate courses, introductory courses, workshops and specialised courses. They also gathered the 'pros and cons' of these formats. A number of [timetables](#) can be found on our website.

## PRACTICING TEACHING METHODS

One of the main incentives to create the EPT Partnership was to widen the scope of methods that Permaculture teachers use to deliver their content and thus to better meet the needs of students.

The methods used in the meetings widened the possibilities to teach effective courses in



Kirsty Heron giving a microteaching session on 'Patterns'

participants' own countries. This was especially beneficial for the representatives of the countries where teaching Permaculture is just starting. For example, new teachers learned from more experienced teachers how they take into account

*"Skills improved include organisational design (e.g. VSM), interpersonal skills, group dynamics, international organising, event management, and of course intercultural learning.*

*Permaculture teachers are now much more connected and all have had a chance to learn new knowledge and skills, and partner organisations have been able to compare ideas and models - the ultimate aims of the partnership."*

the learning styles of their students. Also, how topic-specific vocabulary is used gave new viewpoints to teaching Permaculture.

The sheer variety of new creative teaching and group facilitation methods presented and applied strengthened the methods toolbox of all EPT participants. While a lot of this was shared at the meeting in Leeds, such as using Open Space Technology\*, Storytelling (the technique), and discussing apprenticeship opportunities for teacher trainees, one focus of the meeting in Spain consisted of conducting [microteaching\\* sessions](#) in front of other participants, that were filmed, edited, uploaded to YouTube and shared in the [Teacher's Handbook](#) on the EPT website (including session plans that correspond to the microteaching sessions).

At all meetings, both apprentices and experienced teachers had multiple opportunities to practice a variety of teaching and facilitation methods in a safe, supportive environment. There were many opportunities to apply newly learned skills in the small group sessions.



*"I have learned a lot about the challenges of being a fleeting bunch of people, some coming back, some not. I very much encouraged the idea of being able to address as many as possible, being open throughout for newcomers, and I have learned the value of integration: The ones who were quickly jacked into the partnership have enjoyed and "performed" much better than the ones who didn't."*

## ROLE PLAYING GAMES AS A LEARNING METHOD IN PERMACULTURE

A team of Bulgarian, Dutch and UK participants worked on developing the concept of [Role Playing Games](#)† as a new learning method in Permaculture education. The idea is to use the immersive and reinforcing aspects of game play in learning new skills and attitudes in the *safe* environment of the virtual world of the game. The group developed several [games](#) and explored both table-top and screen-based games. Some of the games are based on existing role-playing games such as "Pathfinder" and "Settlers of Catan." The game development is an ongoing effort that will continue after the funding period of the EPT Partnership has finished. The "character sheet" concept from role-playing games is being adapted as a method for profiling student and teacher abilities, skills, knowledge and attitudes.

## DISCUSSING HOW TO WIDEN PARTICIPATION

Permaculture education should be accessible to everyone, if we, Permaculture teachers, are aiming to steer society to a new way of thinking and acting in the near future. Therefore it is a big question and a real challenge: "How to reach out to as many diverse groups of society as possible?"

We acknowledged the issue of reaching out to beyond the usual target groups from the very

beginning of the Partnership, as seen in this quote from the [rationale](#) section of the application form: "The demographic profile of students on Permaculture courses in western countries often has a good age and gender diversity, but tends to be disproportionately middle class and white. There is a challenge to broaden participation so that courses attract a student body that more accurately reflects the social, ethnic and economic mix of Europe's population and promote diversity within the Permaculture community." Therefore, one of the project's objectives was: "To promote cultural exchange, diversity and inclusion within the Permaculture network and to exchange information about how to widen participation in Permaculture training."

Obviously, different strategies can and perhaps should be used to reach different target groups such as unemployed people or disabled persons. In order to investigate this issue in some depth and to come up with solutions, the focus topic of the [sixth EPT meeting](#) in Denmark was **widening participation**.



We now feel that the scale and importance of the issue of participation was pretty unclear until we began this exercise. The same applied to the range of strategies and already existing solutions within the Permaculture teachers community. Therefore we conducted an initial survey to get an overview of the situation in EPT partnership countries. From the [results of this survey](#) we

developed a session for the EPT meeting in Denmark, selecting strategies to be presented at this meeting and then to be discussed by the participants in small groups. The results of this session have been published in a special section on our website dedicated to [Widening Participation](#).

## PUBLISHING A TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

The original Permaculture education programme was designed as a series of lectures on a variety of relevant subjects, presented in an integrated context. Additions since the 1980s are, for example, the inclusion of games, practical exercises, creative and dramatic expression, and reflection and dialogue as core methods. Learning by doing (or action learning) has gained importance as a pedagogical principle. Working from observations in the field to supplement abstraction and theory has become a core



Practical Design Work in Portugal

didactical principle. There is also a movement towards more generalised design theory and practice, like random assembly and action centred design.

We originally intended to publish a printed Teacher's Handbook, which would comprise the latest pedagogical ideas, methods, curricula and strategies for widening participation. While trying to settle on the details of such a handbook, we

*"It took a lot of time to understand AND apply the model properly. Especially to newcomers (who did not attend the previous meetings), it was somehow difficult to adapt to the model. I felt that we did not entirely understand the role of the primary activities (not to be related to PERSONS), which dragged me at the end. It was difficult to stay connected to the work of the PAs in between the meeting while the distributed workload between coordination, process and outreach did work very well - on AND in between the meetings. In general, I feel comfortable to use this model with a big (and changing) group of people like ours."*

decided that, once again, a dynamic online 'handbook' that continues to grow and improve would be a much more appropriate and satisfying product than a static handbook.

[The Teacher's Handbook](#) on our website, [permateachers.eu](http://permateachers.eu), is a living, collaborative publication (currently with eight administrators and over sixty editors) with a growing body of materials on: [pedagogy](#), [didactics](#), [curriculum](#), a [multilingual glossary of terms](#) and [further reading](#).

Permaculture teachers can add their own materials and use contributions from their colleagues under Creative Commons BY-SA 4.0 license for free. Many posts have teaching methods or subjects presented via a video, an interview or a presentation and/or as a downloadable PDF (or other document type) that can be printed as a handout.

*"It was a good choice and i have learnt a lot about the viable systems model but i would need some more guided practice to get used to it. But it seems to be a perfect model to work in a large team across large distances on complex topics in a non hierarchical way"*

## (RIGHT) LIVELIHOODS

The term **Right Livelihood** originates in Buddhism and "(...) means that practitioners ought not to engage in trades or occupations which, either directly or indirectly, result in harm for other living beings." This is in line with the Permaculture ethics, and in 1981, Bill Mollison was awarded the **Right Livelihood Award** for his work. At the same time, *Livelihoods* is what we live on and usually, Permaculture teachers have to make some sort of a living too. Including our livelihoods in our design to professionalise our work and taking their global implications into account, are truly Permaculture and *right livelihood* in action.

To support this, a workgroup focused on conducting interviews: *Telling our stories of livelihood*. They asked a number of people with a questionnaire and in interviews to tell their personal story as an active Permaculturist. How do you earn your livelihood through Permaculture? What do you do? Teach, design, build communities? How do you relate your work to the Permaculture ethics and principles? Can you survive on Permaculture based activities alone?

This group set out to find these good examples, to share highlights and to provide inspiration and some certainty: Permaculture *can* be an integral part of our **whole** life. These stories are also being shared on our website.

## CREATING A STRONG NETWORK OF PERMACULTURE TEACHERS ACROSS EUROPE

The central aim of the Partnership, to create a European network of Permaculture teachers, was reached very early on, as the size of this project instantly instigated collaboration and cooperation from the outset.

Being able to meet on a regular basis for two years formed an important basis for this cooperation to continue. Thus, in addition to the methods and teaching techniques that were shared during the meetings, a strong social and professional network of both personal and organisational connections was created. This network serves as a strong foundation for opportunities to connect beginning teachers with experienced mentors, as well as for newer teachers to provide each other with peer support as they advance in their work.

Becoming familiar with existing organisational structures in countries where Permaculture teaching, diploma processes and teacher trainings are established offered invaluable insights into developing such systems in countries where structured systems are not yet in place. The online resources created during this process also provide a growing resource base for sharing skills, successful practices and pedagogical knowledge.

With such a strong foundation in place, this network will be able to grow and to continue into the future.





## 4. What Happened at the EPT Meetings?

**During the funded period of the EPT, we had the chance to have seven *big* meetings of all funded partners in different countries. At these meetings, an average of 45 individuals per meeting from 18 countries got together to work on the EPT subjects. Other get togethers (e.g. bilateral / for specific topics) have also been held. Here is an overview of where we met and what happened at these meetings.**

### GERMANY



The kick-off gathering of the EPT Partnership took place in the intentional community and [Ecovillage, gASTWERke](#) in Escherode, Germany, in August 2012. It happened right after the European Permaculture Convergence, so many partners used the opportunity to arrive early and also participate in the Convergence, to listen to the great number of speakers and attend workshops that were offered. There was a site tour to downtown Kassel between the two meetings, where the world famous [DOCUMENTA \(13\)](#) was just taking place.

At this first EPT meeting, the basic foundation of the Partnership and its working structures were laid. After a presentation by Davie Philip from the EPT partner [Cultivate](#) in Ireland on the [Viable Systems Model](#), we decided to implement this as our organisational structure. In doing so, we identified the working groups we would need to share the work of the Partnership's aims and objectives and to develop the different materials that we had in mind.

## SLOVENIA



Trenta Lodge, Slovenia

The second meeting happened two months later (October 2012) in Trenta, Slovenia, and focused on [Educational Structures](#): How do the partners organise training options for Permaculture in their countries? Along with presentations of the diploma pathways of various countries, we analysed how well they work, using SWOC analysis (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Constraints - and Solutions). We also created a mind map showing the possible desired formats and structures of a teacher's handbook. There was also work done on the vision of the EPT project; what connects us and what we want it to become in the future.

During this meeting we also had a diploma presentation from Helder Valente, that offered some in-depth insight into the Portuguese diploma system.

The venue, [Trenta Lodge in Triglav National Park](#), was a beautiful setting for this meeting. One of the site visits during this meeting was a tour through the national park with a ranger who helped us to read the landscape and understand historical developments in that part of Slovenia. On the last day, there was a site tour to a [beekeeping museum in Radovljica](#), presenting the Carniolan bee, the most geographically widespread indigenous Slovenian domestic animal breed present on all continents. The last stop of the tour was the Permaculture homestead and organic farm at Šuštar's that practices Community Supported Agriculture. This meeting was followed by a Slovenian Permaculture Convergence and National Diploma meeting of Permaculture Teachers.

## PORTUGAL

At the third meeting in March 2013, all partners gathered in Portugal at the educational centre for sustainability, [Vale da Lama](#). Here, the main subject of the exchange was **Content and Curricula**: which subjects and topics do teachers deliver in their courses and what kind of formats do their courses have?

During this meeting, we had several presentations and guest speakers: Jan Mulreany (UK) spoke about Permaculture Education and



Portugal: content and curricula



the Open College Network in UK, Uwe Heitkamp and João Gonçalves showed their film project, [Revolutionary Roads - On Foot To The End of The World](#), about a 328 km walk across Portugal, and Ana Digon Elsdon from *Regen Ag Iberica* talked about [Holistic Management](#).

For site visits, we went to the [Portimao Museum](#), which displays activities of the region over the last 5000 years, especially about the rise and fall of the fishing industry, and to the [Varzea da Gonçala](#) Permaculture project. Some of the EPT participants went afterwards to the Ecovillage [Tamera](#), which has implemented a huge water retention landscape over the last years.

Before this meeting, a National Diploma Gathering took place.

## BRITAIN



Leeds: Cultivating Learning

In May 2013, Leeds (UK) was the place to be for the fourth meeting, at the [Headingley Enterprise and Arts Centre \(Heart\)](#). Here we spoke about **Cultivating Learning**: How does *learning* work and what methods and approaches do teachers use to deliver their content? A lot of Open Space time was used to share in small groups the many experiences. The meeting was added to by talks on [pedagogy](#) and the introduction of the courgette moment, which meant that the facilitators stopped what they were doing to explain what they were doing and why.

*“Preparation: project developed after we started.  
Commitment: overestimation of time and resources  
available”*

This meeting was enriched by an evening of presentations by people from the Leeds Permaculture Network, including Suzi High speaking about the design for her Permaculture home, Alan Thornton speaking about the [LAND Network](#) in the UK, and a representative of the Heart Centre presenting the work of this community run enterprise. Also, we invited [Jon Walker](#) to hold a workshop on the Viable Systems Model, in order to help us use this framework more effectively.

The site tours took us to [Offshoots Permaculture Project](#), a community garden and part of the network of LAND centres in the UK, and to [Edibles](#) Permaculture project. The pre-event for the meeting in Leeds was a two and a half day Teachers' Training with Looby McNamara of [Designed Visions](#).

## SPAIN

The fifth meeting was organised to be in Northern Spain and Barcelona in September 2013. A combination of microteaching sessions and the discussion of the content of the Teacher's Handbook were the focus points of this week. The [microteaching sessions](#) make up for a lot of the



Taking in the urban culture of Barcelona



*"Skype meetings with more than 6 people are a really challenge, I think they are not very operational because of people participation and internet connection problems. Maybe skype meetings with maximum 6 persons can be more effective."*

content of the Teacher's Handbook on the website and support the understanding of how to teach certain topics by being able to watch and listen.

The venue was [Mas Franch](#), a non-profit cooperative focusing on sustainable living and transformative education. During this meeting, there were two guest speakers: Jordi Pigem, who talked about paradigm change and Jon Walker, who offered a follow-up workshop on the Viable Systems Model.

Site visits were to: the Ecollavors Seed Bank that has an impressive collection of seeds and a productive garden; to [Permaculture Montsant](#), the flagship of Catalanian Permaculture in a semiarid area; to [Can Masdeu](#), a former leprosy hospital that has been transformed into an intentional community with a Permaculture garden and activities for locals; to [AureaSocial](#), a multifaceted project promoting health, food, political engagement and equal opportunities for all; and last but not least, to [RAI](#), an association promoting education, art and political engagement.

Again, this meeting was accompanied by a Teachers' Training, held during the week before the EPT meeting by long-standing Permaculture teacher [Rosemary Morrow](#) (Australia).

## DENMARK

During the sixth meeting at Friland, Denmark in May 2014, the partnership concentrated on

finalising it's various outputs for online publication. The focus topic of this meeting was **widening participation and outreach to marginalised groups**, which again included work in small groups with interactive approaches and a wide variety of target groups being addressed.

The venue of this meeting, intentional community and ecovillage [Friland](#), was an inspiring site. It's founder, Steen Møller, was invited to give the group a tour of his innovations including an innovative rocket stove, a factory for prefabricating strawbale homes and his greenhouse with black water sewage treatment. A very special event at this meeting was the accreditation of the Friland-based Permaculture homestead, [Permakulturhaven Myrrhis](#), to the



Danish LAND Network.

Site visits during this meeting included a tour of the Ecovillage Friland, a bike ride to and visit at the historical site Kalø Slotsruin, a tour of [Byhaven 2200](#), an open community Permaculture garden project (part of the Danish LAND network) in Copenhagen city centre and of [Christiania](#), the self-governing community of 800 inhabitants also in the center of Copenhagen. Part of the group then went to Sweden to visit [Holma forest garden\\*](#), an old folk high school and



community run forest garden and Mulberry Hill forest garden, a young forest garden project on a hill on the outskirts of Malmö, both supported by the well-known Swedish Permaculturist Esben Wandt.

## BULGARIA

The last of our series of funded EPT Meetings took us to [Eco-camping Batak](#) in Bulgaria in July 2014. A group of young Bulgarian volunteers participated in a Permaculture Design Course free of money and in exchange made a Permaculture design for the site and event, and made all of the preparations along with the course organisers.

During this meeting, the EPT was wrapped up, we evaluated our work, discussed future options and prepared for the presentation of our results at the [European Permaculture Convergence](#). This Convergence happened in conjunction with the EPT meeting and addressed about 250

Permaculture activists and teachers from all across Europe (and beyond), enriched by a vast number of workshops led by literally over 100 participants using Open Space.

In between the two meetings there was a site tour of the local forest and to a [Pliocene park](#) nearby with bones of animals living in the territory five million years ago. Also, many participants visited a cob house built by a member of the Association of Builders with Natural Materials.



## 5. Lessons Learned

**We asked for feedback on the Partnership and for lessons learned in an extensive evaluation questionnaire, that most of the EPT participants filled in. We want to share parts of this with a wider audience, in order also to learn from these lessons. A more extended article with quotes can be found on our website.**

### THE EPT PARTNERSHIP: THE STORY OF ITS EVOLUTION

There was a steady improvement in the self organisation of the programme, agenda, process and facilitation of the meetings from one gathering to the next. The efficiency of getting work done in the workgroups improved throughout the project, as well as the Partnership's ability to work between meetings, continue to stay in contact, remain focused and productive.

Many people observed a story that underpinned the formation of this Partnership told by the very different dynamics and atmospheres that existed

at the various meetings. A closer look at the data from our evaluation questionnaire shows a definite dip in ratings for *organisational structure*, and *productivity and effectiveness* of meetings during the Slovenia and Portugal meetings. Over half of participants rated these sections from *poor/average* to *good*, with opinions on the rise again for the UK, Spain and Denmark meetings, to an almost unanimous *good to very good* rating.

The process of going through this dip together, that is, working through the difficulties and challenges presented by organising such a large and diverse group and becoming a cohesive



*"We are not alone! Strong structure doesn't guarantee best outcome. Stochastic design is a valid and productive strategy. Permies are "good people". Wide range from 'magical' to scientific/skeptical minded people, all have a place. Resilience in diversity."*

working network is an achievement that served greatly to solidify the Partnership.

## WHAT TO DO DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME

The sheer size and diversity of the partnership presented some challenges and difficulties that were hard to imagine before the start of the project. The partners could have benefited from, and missed out on deciding before the first meeting:

- how the Partnership and especially the work on the aims would be structured;
- how results would be collected and how much capacity there would be to process these results and;
- how conflicts that come up while running the project would be resolved.

Although the decision to use the VSM was taken at the first meeting, most of the participants were unfamiliar with this model and becoming familiar with it took considerable time, especially during the first half of the Partnership.

In any case, the Partnership addressed two different levels: the organisational level of teaching and organising Permaculture related education and the actual teaching process itself. At the meetings, participants represented both levels: some were project coordinators and interested in working out good structures for collaboration and to achieve the aims of the Partnership, others came with their Permaculture

teacher hat on and were mainly interested in the exchange of teaching skills.

Similarly, one of the big lessons learned (and foremost on many people's reported Learning Outcomes) was concerning the use of the Viable Systems Model as a way of organising our working structure. It split the group at first, in relation to people's feelings about its effectiveness. Those interested in exchanging methods and skills were frustrated by discussions about the VSM, while those who coordinated the project were in search of a good middle way between working on the subjects *and* ensuring



An Open Space Matrix

that the project aims were being met. The latter could have pointed out more clearly how valuable it might be for the teachers to capture the *secondary learning* that comes from improving project management skills as well as internal organising and community building processes. This preliminary step, had it been taken, could have bridged the gap and created more mutual understanding and appreciation.

Nonetheless, the majority of participants felt, by two-thirds of the way through the project, that it had been worth the effort to discuss the VSM and, more importantly, that it was producing the desired results. There was also the strong opinion amongst people who completed the questionnaire that any system we had chosen to

employ in this situation would have met with resistance from a proportion of the group, and could perhaps have presented an equivalent challenge.

Time constraints at the meetings were an issue. It took a while to come to terms with the reality of how long it takes to organise a Partnership of this size and diversity into a working productive outfit. Getting organisational structures into place also took longer than we had originally imagined.

Meanwhile, getting work done in between the actual meetings proved to be another challenge. The commitment of the workgroups depended especially on their own understanding of their tasks, and not all of the groups created an effective mechanism for following up on what had happened and been decided at the meetings. This meant that towards the end of the Partnership, a big workload awaited some workgroups to finalise their contributions and meet the aims of the EPT. This in turn put a lot of pressure on those that were to work with these contributions and publish them.



Part of the difficulties that the workgroups faced was due to one specific design feature of the Partnership: notably, that it was designed so that at each meeting, a large number of newcomers attended. Generally, one-third of the 45 participants that attended each meeting were new to the project. This was both an asset to the

*“My ‘aha moment’ was when I realised that although I was probably the youngest person to participate in the partnership, and the only with the least experience, we were all there to learn and I discovered I had something I could contribute. That was very inspiring and helped me to stand up to take part more actively in the EPT.”*

network and a challenge to the Partnership: newcomers had to be introduced to the VSM and they had to understand the work structure and to find their place in the Partnership where they could learn and contribute best. A big effort was made to do this, but at the third meeting, the ratio of integrated participants to newcomers appeared to be too unbalanced, with the number of newcomers nearing half of the total participants. That said, how quickly a person was integrated into the process also had much to do with their personality and choices (and thus, was beyond our collective influence).

This may also be due to another significant challenge that presented itself during the Partnership: the language and cultural differences within the group, that often had the effect of slowing matters down. It required a steep learning curve to accommodate the extra time and space for everything the Partnership did. Unexpected lengths of time were required to allow for translations, for example, as although those who initiated the EPT were very comfortable using English as a working language, this was not the reality for the majority of participants in the project.

## WHAT TO REPEAT

According to participants (from questionnaire responses), much of the value from the formation of a European Partnership and the creation of a network of Permaculture teachers would come from two main sources: Firstly, the forming of relationships and bonds between teachers and secondly, the mobilities themselves, i.e. the actual physical act of visiting another organisation or Permaculture project. In these days of virtual reality and social media, participants' responses indicated that some things just cannot be replaced. That is, site visits had the highest impact and made the greatest impression on them personally and as such offered the greatest benefits as well to their organisations.



It seems that no matter what phase of development the partnership was at there was always an atmosphere of intense productivity and drive to improve and to reach desired goals. This enthusiasm and activity was a dynamic created especially by bringing a diverse group of Permaculture teachers from across Europe together for a week at a time. Despite the challenges that the size of the Partnership presented, having workgroups focused on the different aims of the Partnership and then working in small groups on these subject during the meetings, worked very well and supported productivity and efficiency.

The cultural exchange and rich diversity of such a large partnership lead to several key themes as to what participants felt were the positive benefits of the Partnership. They reported that they:

- Learned to build a functional schedule and to enjoy well facilitated sessions and group processes, on a grand scale.
- Experienced a great diversity of working methods, both in small groups and in the large group, as well as changes in those methods and settings throughout the meetings.
- Witnessed a variety of teaching methods and styles, providing them with a rich source of inspiration for their own teaching.
- Enjoyed the very different venues and combinations of people at the meetings (although a mostly continuous core / facilitation team provided essential stability)
- Relished in intercultural evenings, dance, talks and presentations from local people and the local flavour of this pan-European network shining through at each location.
- Appreciated site tours, a big asset to the meetings and to their learning experience.

Furthermore, the use of cloud services such as Google Drive for sharing documents and data, and VSM for problem-solving and organising large working groups, are things that many people felt greatly supported the Partnership, and in fact are tools that we could not have done without.

These results show that in spite of perceived challenges (the size of the Partnership, diversity, work structure) those very challenges had solutions to be learned, appreciated and repeated.





Alan Thornton - LAND coordinator

## 6. Visions for the Future

**What is the best way to follow on the work done in the last two years? How do we strengthen the links created so far and how to build, at an European level, a network that can support the continuous development of teaching standards and the initial core curriculum of Permaculture courses?**

Over the course of the Partnership, we have considered these questions continuously, both at meetings and with online [collections of ideas](#). We also used our evaluation questionnaire to gather the latest ideas and developments.

A number of proposals are on the table, with concrete steps being taken towards many of them. These include:

### VISIBILITY AND RECOGNITION OF PERMACULTURE IN EUROPE

- Founding a [federation or alliance of European Permaculture associations](#) to support visibility of Permaculture and networking in Europe.
- Establishing a [Permaculture College\\* of Europe](#) that will accredit and work towards higher standards of education.
- Joining [ECOLISE\\*](#) to collaborate in approaching decision makers.
- Various approaches to creating a network of Permaculture demonstration and learning centres (such as LAND) both on [regional](#) and on [transnational](#) levels and with a vision to extending this network beyond Europe by creating networks of mutual support with Permaculture initiatives in the Global South.

## EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONALISM

- Developing a trans-border Permaculture education system (so that students are not bound to one country for Permaculture education).
- Setting up a mentoring system for people that are new to teaching to work with more experienced teachers.
- Offering teacher training courses.
- Collaborating across Europe on the topic of Teaching Permaculture to Children.
- Integrating approaches of Permaculture and nature awareness including creating special teacher trainings for this.
- Establishing a professional global Permaculture designers consortium.

*"Really, really inspiring for me was the facilitation and coordination work and the opportunity to see how other countries and cultures apply permaculture to their land and organisations."*

## NETWORKING

- Deepening collaboration among teachers both in a certain country (e.g. Spain) and in specific European regions (e.g. Northern Europe).
- Creating stronger links to [like-minded networks](#) ([Transition Town](#), [Global Ecovillage Network of Europe](#), etc).

Are you interested in any of these ideas? Please follow the links above or [contact us!](#)





## 7. Our Network

**We created a directory of Permaculture Organisations and Teachers in Europe. Here we will give an overview of the partners who were involved in the EPT Partnership. Please follow the link to the name of the country or the name of the organisation for more information about them!**

### EU CO-FUNDED PARTNERSHIP ORGANISATIONS

**Germany:** [Permakultur Institut e.V.](#), Sandra Campe, [s.campe@permakultur-akademie.net](mailto:s.campe@permakultur-akademie.net)

**Britain:** [Permaculture Association](#), Joe Atkinson, [learn@permaculture.org.uk](mailto:learn@permaculture.org.uk)

**Spain:** [Asociación Cambium](#), Antonio Scotti, [antonio@permacultura-es.org](mailto:antonio@permacultura-es.org)

**Sweden:** [Permaculture Association](#), Maria Svennbeck, [maria.svennbeck@hotmail.com](mailto:maria.svennbeck@hotmail.com)

**The Netherlands:** [Aardwerk Academie](#), Leo Bakx, [leo@aardwerk.org](mailto:leo@aardwerk.org)

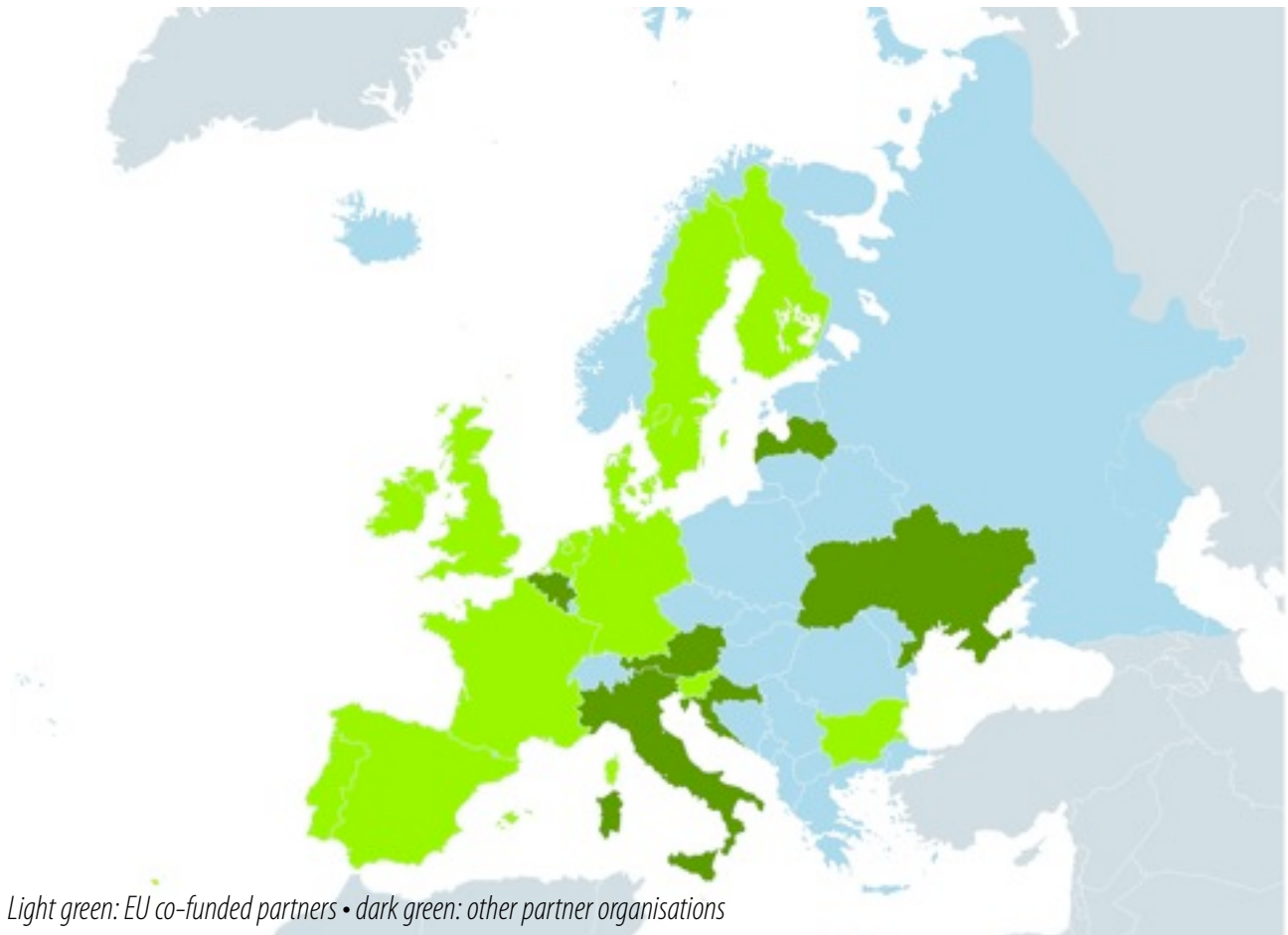
**France:** [Université Populaire de Permaculture](#), Ben Burnley, [upp@permaculturefrance.org](mailto:upp@permaculturefrance.org)

**Bulgaria:** [Green School Village](#), Mihaela Tzarchinska, [tzarchinska@gmail.com](mailto:tzarchinska@gmail.com)

**Denmark:** [Permakultur Danmark](#), Catherine Dolleris, [catshop@gmail.com](mailto:catshop@gmail.com)

**Portugal:** [Projeto novas descobertas](#), Nita Barroca, [info@projectonovasdescobertas.org](mailto:info@projectonovasdescobertas.org)





*Light green: EU co-funded partners • dark green: other partner organisations*

**Finland:** Elävän Kulttuurin Koroinen, Joel Rosenberg, [joel.ruusuvuori@gmail.com](mailto:joel.ruusuvuori@gmail.com)

**Slovenia:** Društvo za permakulturo Slovenije, Domen Zupan, [domen.zupan@ekovas.si](mailto:domen.zupan@ekovas.si)

**Ireland:** Cultivate Living and Learning, Philippa Robinson, [philippa@cultivate.ie](mailto:philippa@cultivate.ie)

#### OTHER PARTNER ORGANISATIONS (NON-FUNDED / FROM OTHER COUNTRIES)

**Portugal:** Vale da Lama, André Carvalho, [andrenscarvalho@gmail.com](mailto:andrenscarvalho@gmail.com)

**Italy:** Accademia Italiana di Permacultura, Elena Parmiggiani, [e.parmiggiani@googlemail.com](mailto:e.parmiggiani@googlemail.com)

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**Ukraine:** Permaculture Association of Ukraine, Pavlo Ardanov, [pavlo.ardanov@gmail.com](mailto:pavlo.ardanov@gmail.com)

**Spain:** The Integral Permaculture Academy, Stella Strega-Scoz, [hola@permaculturescience.org](mailto:hola@permaculturescience.org)

The EPT network is open for other Permaculture organisations to link in, join, present themselves, collaborate, contribute and support each other. If **you** are interested, please [get in touch with us!](#)



## 8. More Information and Contact

**The website of the EPT network informs the public about the EPT Partnership and presents the results of the process. It can be found at [permateachers.eu](https://permateachers.eu).**

### ABOUT

- The About-section of the website gives a general overview of the EPT-project and it's parts!
- What we want (Aims and Objectives of the EPT)
- [Who we are](#) (Partners and People)
- [How we collaborate](#) (work structure, meeting reports, and more)
- [Funding opportunities](#) (project applications for inspiration and collaboration)
- Beyond EPT (further initiatives that evolved from the EPT)
- How to join (contributions, networking, information)
- Links (related networks)

### EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURES

A guide to Permaculture education across Europe, including overviews of existing structures in the Partner countries, assessments of the difference of these structures and update interviews on how the Partnership has influenced and instigated changes over the course of the 2 year project phase.

### TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

A collection of practical resources for novice and experienced Permaculture teachers or anyone interested in teaching sustainable development and designing sustainable and resilient lifestyles and communities.





Our hosts at Mas Franch, Spain

The handbook has sections on

- [Pedagogy](#) (which includes texts on educational science),
- [Didactics](#) (about how knowledge and skills are taught, this is a collection of material like timetables, course formats, session plans, etc.),
- [Curriculum](#) (the content of Permaculture education),
- [Widening Participation](#) (how to make Permaculture design education accessible to under-represented target groups),
- [Multilingual Glossary of Terms](#) (comprising currently 26 European languages) and
- a list with articles and suggestions for [Further Reading](#)

## BEST PRACTICE

Reports on selected [learning places](#) in Europe as well as case studies for [right livelihoods](#) of Permaculture teachers that are part of the EPT-network.

## SIDEBAR

On the sidebar of the website, you can [subscribe to the EPT-Newsletter](#), which is being issued every 2 months to communicate European wide about the Partnership, and also to inform about educational and structural developments within the national organisations and the European Permaculture network. The EPT-Newsletter now has subscribers worldwide and will continue as a media to service the growing Permaculture teachers' network in Europe and beyond. Past issues of the Newsletter can be downloaded on the sidebar of our website, too.

## LICENSE

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## CONTACT

If you want to join the EPT network, find out more about it, contribute to our website or translate posts, please [get in touch with us!](#)



# APPENDIX

## GLOSSARY

### **Art of Hosting†**

An approach to leadership that scales up from the personal to the systemic using personal practice, dialogue, facilitation and the co-creation of innovation to address complex challenges

### **Art of Mentoring†**

A curriculum that draws on a combination of approaches from modern education, indigenous wisdom, and principles observed in nature.

### **Colleget**

From collegium: body of (professional) colleagues formed around a common interest, in this case professional development in permaculture education.

### **COMPOST**

Collection of Materials about Permaculture in Order to Support Teachers (i.e. our website)

### **Courgette moment**

Facilitators stops what they are doing to explain what they did and why.

### **ECOLISE†**

European Network for Community-led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability

### **EPT**

European Permaculture Teachers

### **EUPC**

European Permaculture Convergence

### **Forest Garden**

An edible garden/landscape modeled after the structure of a real forest, which has up to seven levels of vegetation, plant guilds, functions, etc.

### **LAND**

Learning And Network Demonstration (project of the UK Permaculture Association)

### **Microteaching† Session**

Short session where a teaching method is put into practice for other teachers to learn from. Also refers to making a video of the session in order that it can be reviewed after by the presenter, etc.

### **Open Space Technology† (or ‘Open Space’)**

An approach to purpose based leadership, including a way for hosting meetings, conferences, corporate-style retreats, symposiums, and community summit events, focused on a specific and important purpose or task but beginning without any formal agenda, beyond the overall purpose or theme.

### **PCoE**

Permaculture College of Europe

### **PDC**

Permaculture Design Certificate

### **PDF†**

Portable Document Format - rich content documents viewable on Windows, MacOS and Linux computers as well as iOS and Android devices. With free reader applications like [Adobe Reader](#).

### **Permaculture**

A design philosophy for sustainable development - at human scale, setting limits to

population and consumption, based on available resources and continuous innovation.

### **Permaculturists, permanaut**

A practitioner of permaculture design philosophy

### **PLANT**

Permaculture Learning Action Networking & Training. Extension of the UK LAND project to the European Continent

### **SWOCT†**

Name of an analysis tool which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges/Constraints

### **Teacher's Handbook†**

One of the main products of this partnership. And a [web based repository](#) of teaching methods, pedagogical guidelines, course timetables, session plans, etc.

### **VSM†**

Viable Systems Model



† Words with a dagger indicate a concept that technically does not belong to permaculture design ethics or principles but **you** may find it useful in your lifestyle. *Your mileage may vary.* Please make up your own mind.

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