Permaculture: A Vision and Strategy for Sustainable Development?

A Malawian Case Study.

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of perceptions of sustainable development and whether permaculture contributes to sustainable development in Malawi. Underpinning this thesis are two key contentions: that there is insufficient exploration of the broader societal and cultural values orientating current sustainable development theory, practice and policy; and permaculture, as ethically informed social movement network that promotes a design system for sustainable interaction with the environment, is both a vision and strategy for sustainable development.

A qualitative, ethnographic case study approach was employed, using semi-structured interviews, in-field observation and permaculture document analysis. Research revealed perceptions of sustainable development were very similar to perceptions of permaculture, suggesting that most people saw permaculture as significantly contributing to their understanding of sustainable development. A key finding was involvement in permaculture arose from a plurality of instrumental goals and identification with social movement values, which in turn influenced perceptions of sustainable development. Several factors emerged as influential in perceptions of both sustainable development and permaculture: culture, level of involvement in permaculture, degree of initiative activity and the role of leaders and committed individuals within an initiative.

These findings are seen to have implications for future sustainable development policy and practice. The universality of sustainability issues within perceptions of both sustainable development and permaculture, and the establishment of independent projects and spontaneous adoption of instrumental aspects of permaculture in an area surrounding one research site suggest permaculture has potential to effect sustainable change in individuals and culture both within and outside of initiative parameters. Likewise, demonstrated embodiment of permaculture values in identity, action and lifestyle opens space for the inclusion of personal development and personal responsibility within the concept of sustainable development.
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Abbreviations

AFROL  African Online News
AFSI   L’Aquila Food Security Initiative
AGRA   Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
AIS    Agriculture Input Subsidy (Programme)
ANAMED Action For Natural Medicine
CFC    Chlorofluorocarbon
CFSVA  Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis
CIA    Central Intelligence Agency, United States of America
COP    Conference of Parties
DESA   Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations
EAD    Environmental Affairs Department, Government of Malawi
FANRPAN Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network
FAO    Food and Agriculture Organisation
GTZ    German Society for Technical Cooperation
IAASTD International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development
IFAD   International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFOAM  International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
IPCC   The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IUCN   The World Conservation Union
MAWO   Maziko Amoyo Wabwino Organisation (Foundation for a Better Life Organisation)
MDGs   Millenium Development Goals
MGDS   Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MoEST  Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Government of Malawi
MVAC   Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee
NAPA   National Adaptation Programmes of Action, Government of Malawi
NGO    Non-governmental Organisation
NSCM   National Seed Company of Malawi
NSO    National Statistics Office, Government of Malawi
PC     Permaculture
PRIA   Permaculture Research Institute of Australia
SDNP   Sustainable Development Network Programme, Government of Malawi
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SFN</td>
<td>Sustainable Food and Nutrition (Programme)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHN</td>
<td>School Health and Nutrition (Programme)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCSD</td>
<td>United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNSD</td>
<td>United Nations Division For Sustainable Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNEP</td>
<td>United Nations Environment Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNFCCC</td>
<td>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCED</td>
<td>World Commission on Environment and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme, United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSSD</td>
<td>World Summit on Sustainable Development</td>
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