

# Nature itself as our guide: A resilience perspective on permaculture and an empirical investigation of its use in three case studies in British Columbia, Canada.

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Nature itself as our guide: A resilience perspective on permaculture and an empirical investigation of its use in three case studies in British Columbia, Canada

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## Abstract [en]

In general, small farms have significant social and ecological advantages over industrialized large farms. However, a combination of complex pressures is making it difficult for many small-scale farmers to stay in business – including in Canada, where this thesis is focused. The consequential loss of many small farms results in a general loss of diversity and a decreased flexibility for future options for food procurement for many communities. Creating more and increasingly sustainable options for food procurement is progressively more important in the face of rising food and fuel prices, degradation of ecosystem services, and the increase of extreme climate fluctuations. For these and other reasons, creating social-ecological resilience in small farming systems is key to ensuring more options for long-term food procurement. Permaculture – the design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems based on the patterns and relationships found in natural ecosystems – has been identified in the literature as a potential tool to build social-ecological resilience in small scale farming systems. This study evaluates permaculture from a resilience perspective, and compares the analysis to permaculture use on three farms in British Columbia

(BC). This has been done in order to understand whether or not the practice contributes to the social-ecological resilience of the small farming systems in which it is used, and if so, how. Results imply that permaculture use does in fact increase social-ecological resilience of small farms by encouraging ecological, social and economical diversity â “ creating buffer zones that allow for flexibility and augmented future options for the farm and also potentially for the community in which the farm operates. It has been shown that the key actors in each case study fundamentally place a strong emphasis on the importance of human and environmental health â “ while recognizing the need to address the interrelated nature of social and ecological issues. A strong social connection in the local community and connections in the global community are of high importance because of the support provided to actors, and diverse sources of income that are related to the structure of the farm are also shown to be key elements in each case. It would be valuable for continuing study to aim to uncover how permaculture can be used on a larger scale without losing its social and ecological benefits.

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