



Sector39 Permaculture design

Steven Jones, Sector39 founder and director:

I come from a farming background and studied a mix of economics and ecology at university: sustainable development. I knew we were on course to ecological crisis in 1984 when I graduated and have been working hard to find creative solutions ever since.

Dissatisfied with opportunities in 80's UK I ended up in Zimbabwe immersed in the emergent permaculture and regenerative agriculture scene there, which was vibrant, full of optimism and opportunity. I learned many new skills and saw possibilities I never knew existed, I am forever grateful to that beautiful country and its people.

In 1994, two years after the '92 Rio summit I realised that working in mainstream education, as I was at the time was not the best course to create the change and experience the alternatives required for my journey. I quit my job to begin a permaculture themed intentional community in Wales, this become home for many years and a testing ground for many permaculture related ideas, it is the bedrock of my experience.

During that time, I also worked at the Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth for 7 years, immersing myself in the environmental world and gaining skills and contacts. I left to begin my own permaculture consultancy and teaching enterprise, Sector39 in the early 2000's

What I have learned is this; capitalism is flawed as it does not value ecological repair or bare the cost of the environmental and social damage it causes; it has no ethical steering mechanism. Permaculture design by contrast is based on ethics that seek to expand productivity whilst also building soils and enhancing biodiversity, it is regenerative. Production in harmony with community and environment not at the expense of it. Yes, it is possible, and I have experienced how well it works on many occasions.

As a community we have stepped outside the mainstream economic models to create a series of ecological and affordable housing co-operatives, using low interest, ethically sourced loans. Tenants managing their own housing can invest in energy efficient and renewable generation as a priority, not an afterthought.

Localised food production is the next area of investigation, this we did in Newtown Powys, teaming up with a local waste management company that made compost from food waste. We developed a community farming model that utilised neglected urban and suburban space, bringing them into productivity using strictly organic methods. We



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know we can't feed whole cities like this but if we can generate fruit and veg on a scale that supplies maybe 30 - 50% of local need using only the waste-flows within settlement then we can greatly reduce waste, eradicate food poverty and build a much more interconnected community at the same time.

Currently Sector39's work has two strands, one working with our local high school and funded by the EU and the other working with partners in East Africa. We are developing curriculum-based teaching resources that address our Paris commitments in response to the climate emergency and show schools a way to meaningful action, beyond scary rhetoric alone.

Returning to Africa in 2014 we have inked into grass roots farmer networks in Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya teaching a series of permaculture courses there before winning a 6-month contract in 2018 to teach permaculture as a tool for resilience to South Sudanese refugees in the North of the Country. This experience offers priceless insight into the next steps for both local and global responses to the climate challenge.

I sense a rising crisis in farming here in the west, our food production models are not resilient to climate disruption or unstable energy supply and costs. The reality of rapidly vanishing biodiversity desperately needs addressing too. We urgently need to form strong coalitions of partners who have the vision and drive to create new approaches, new opportunities, viable alternatives that address the root causes of our problems.

Join us, we run courses, we develop projects, offer talks and workshops for all occasions, we are seeking investors for bold new projects, we are a rapidly growing network of highly motivated individuals dedicated to creating positive change, we are Sector39.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steven Jones', written in a cursive style.

Steven Jones,
Llanrhaeadr Ym Mochnant
Wales, July 2019