

Design 9: Writing Programme

1. Background

I originally began thinking about this design in late 2020, and wrote a first version as a live design in February 2021 following my IPA tutorial. I began implementation immediately after, but found that I had overestimated the time and energy I had available for implementation alongside my work for ECOLISE. This and other feedback led to various life changes, which are reported in Design 10. Following completion of that design I updated this one with a revised implementation schedule. I added this revision to the design as an addition to the Habits section, rather than replacing the original schedule, in order to make this process visible.

Implementation will take place during the rest of 2021 and throughout 2022, and is anticipated to build incrementally in the longer term.

Design Process and Tools

Looking ahead to my final four designs during my IPA tutorial, I decided to explore some new design processes in my final designs. My tutor Wilf suggested trying GROW(TH/ER), which seemed to suit this design well as I already had a goal in mind, which is the main condition assumed by this process. Following some light touch background research on GROW, which has its own Wikipedia entry and is summarised on several coaching and mentoring websites, I decided to adopt the **GROWTH** variant (Goals, Reality, Options, Will, Tactics, Habits) as most suitable for this design.

In the design process, I employed the following tools:

- Goals: SMART Goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-limited); permaculture ethics;
- Reality: PASTE survey, SWOC analysis;
- Options: permaculture principles; design pattern;
- Will: shamanic journeying;
- Tactics: branding survey; client interview; functions, systems & elements;
- Habits: implementation plan;
- Evaluation: six thinking hats

2. Goals

My overall goal related to finding my path and voice as a writer, and specifically to be writing material that:

- Integrates my interests in science, activism and spirituality
- Draws upon my full range of skills, insights, knowledge and experience
- Complements and supports my other work.

Specifically, I want to be making an original contribution to thought and practice at the interface of shamanism and environmental activism, grounded in intellectually robust thinking while not constrained by conventional academic boundaries. This will complement my other work as follows:

- Raise the profile of and provide background material for my training programme in Shamanic Political Ecology (Design 9), helping me develop my thinking on the topic, publicly share it with others, connect with other teachers and practitioners in this area, and help create a community of interest in the topic
- Provide an intellectual basis for a possible future academic research project on social and cultural innovation in grassroots environmentalism, and specifically the enabling roles of self-organised spiritual practice
- Push the intellectual and thematic edges of my work with ECOLISE - exploring interests that lie beyond its current scope, working towards a possible future integration

From this overarching goal, I derived the following **SMART Goals**:

- Complete my shamanic permaculture book: concretely, have a final text delivered to the publisher by the end of 2021, in order that the book can be released in 2022
- Deliver a series of four articles on shamanism and activism, proposed to and accepted by Indie Shaman Magazine for 2020 but not actually done
- Begin work on the Earth Punk Chronicles, a new writing project that updates my previous academic work on indigenous knowledge and adapts the theoretical perspective developed there for application to understanding non-indigenous grassroots environmentalisms such as permaculture. Concretely, by the end of 2021 to have written and self-published three articles on the topics (Earth Jazz, Babylon and Earth Punk), investigated their submission for formal academic publication, and identified future articles in the series (individual and in collaboration) for release during 2022
- Begin work on my following book, under the working title Sacred Political Ecology: concretely, have written an outline and writing plan and begun to explore publication options by the end of 2021, with a view to beginning work on the book during 2022

Applying the **Permaculture Ethics** to these goals, I derived the following criteria concerning the appropriate way to achieve them, and their relationship to wider outcomes:

- **Earth Care:** Developing, sharing and applying a philosophy and practice of deeper connection with and service to nature, and conscious recognition of and alignment with our role as part of nature. Modelling sustainability in the manner of writing and its dissemination, as well as being subject matter.
- **People Care:** nurturing my self - my development, growth and self-expression - through writing, and creating materials and formats that allow others to do the same
- **Fair Shares:** supporting my own livelihood, directly and/or indirectly, at reasonable levels, and ensuring my work is accessible to all those who are interested in it, regardless of their means

3. Reality

I mapped resources using a variant of the **PASTE Survey** (Published writing, Anticipated writing, Supports, Topics and Emerging possibilities), and evaluated the situation in relations to my goals with a **SWOC analysis**.

Published writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two academic books on indigenous knowledge and human ecology, plus a small number of academic papers • Two books and several academic papers on community-led action, plus the first ECOLISE Status Report • Occasional articles for popular audiences, including in Communities Magazine and Indie Shaman
Anticipated writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books on Permaculture and Shamanism and Sacred Political Ecology • The Earth Punk Chronicles - three articles setting out the theoretical ground, starting an open-ended series of individual and collaborative articles on specific topics, perhaps forming the basis of a new academic research project
Support available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent Publications are very supportive of the shamanic permaculture book, and have already agreed a contract. The idea has been well-received in informal conversations with diverse people in the permaculture community, many of whom are keen to see that type of space further opened up • Indie Shaman Magazine have agreed to publish a series of four articles on shamanic activism, possibly extending longer term if further contributions are available • The ECOLISE Status Report and books are collaborative endeavours, needing approval by colleagues and other collaborators and also drawing on their support and input • My contacts networks include numerous potential collaborators, and mechanisms to share and connect my work with others

Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking indigenous ecological knowledge with environmental activism in industrialised/urbanised societies (Earth Punk) • Exploring the roles of shamanism and other forms of grassroots spirituality in activism, particularly whether and how they translate into more effective action • Understanding scientifically the social and cultural dimensions of sustainability transitions and societal transformations
Emerging possibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Editing an anthology on permaculture and shamanism, including contributions from recognised writers/practitioners/teachers • Breaking out of the permaculture/community action niche by working with a publisher with global reach, but still sufficiently small to be ethical (e.g. Sounds True, Hay House, Bear and Company, New Society, North Atlantic) • Assembling a community of practice on shamanic permaculture, connected with my Shamanic Political Ecology training programme (Design 9) • Developing a new academic research project on social and cultural dimensions of sustainability transition (the science of the Earth Punk Chronicles)

SWOC Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established track record as a writer • Proven ability to write well for different audiences, from short articles to lengthy and complex books • Depth, breadth and rigour in knowledge of multiple fields • Excellent skills in research and organising information • Great intellectual precision and attention to detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty with boundaries: my interest in exploring a topic deeply or more widely can make it difficult for me to set the appropriate scope for a piece of writing • Excessive perfectionism can be a barrier to completion: I need to learn when to accept something as good enough, and when to give it further work • A tendency to work on multiple projects simultaneously, spreading myself too thin and slowing each of them down • All of the above can be good excuses for delay and prevarication
Opportunities	Constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My key area of interest represents an important and under-developed edge: several people are doing similar work, but nothing quite like it currently exists • My academic track record and reputation for robust thinking makes me, within the permaculture and community action field, a good person to develop areas that are often perceived to be 'unscientific' or otherwise intellectually suspect, like spirituality • The scientific framework developed in my book Edges, Fringes, Frontiers is unique, to my knowledge; however, its further development resonates with recent developments in attention to inner dimensions of sustainability transitions • My area of core academic interest also aligns well with practical advances like Inner Transition, the cultural dimension of ecovillage design, and Zone 000 permaculture) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have limited time available for writing: my current three-day-per week commitment to ECOLISE leaves two days to share among my other projects, if I am to keep weekends free for rest and domestic/community matters • The reading necessary to keep up-to-date on current thinking, across a broad range of interests, is also time-consuming • I also find that writing often demands a lot of energy, which can limit my capacity • Writing is not currently a significant source of income, nor anticipated to be, so needs to combine with income-generating activities, unless I was to redesign my livelihood strategy • I have little enthusiasm or aptitude for social media, which is an important medium for promotion and audience engagement for any writer

My overall conclusion is that my plans are entirely realistic in relation to my capacities and resources. However, achieving them requires me to overcome a number of habits and predilections that limit the effectiveness of my action. This way, I can transform my weaknesses and constraints from barriers to effective action, and instead make them productive boundaries that help me to focus my energies and target my activity to maximum effect.

4. Options

I assessed my options in relation to most of the Holmgren Principles and a number of Mollison Principles:

Observe and Interact: be in dialogue with interests, ideas and practice in the areas on which I write, including through my writing itself.

Capture and Store Energy: record and share my ideas through regular writing, allowing my work to build incrementally upon a growing body of visible work.

Obtain a Yield: every project, activity and experience can inform my thinking and writing; everything I write can also contribute to wider goals - writing is not an end in itself, but a vehicle for helping bring about concrete change in the world.

Integrate rather than Segregate: my writing has previously been dispersed, across different subjects, fields and formats. There is a common theme there, but it is unlikely that this is evident to anyone but me (even if anyone could and wanted to track down all my different work). I need to make this coherence visible and plan, organise and present my work with it in mind.

Produce No Waste: Draw upon all my background and experiences, and let all that I write contribute to a coherent bigger picture as well as feeding into my other work.

Use and Value Diversity: I draw on diverse fields and write for audiences with a range of different backgrounds, interests and perspectives; my writing can draw upon, reflect and nurture this diversity.

Accept Self-Regulation and Apply Feedback: Be conscious of my own limitations, particularly in terms of capacity, and find ways to work creatively and productively within them. Also, incorporate feedback loops that allow me to monitor and respond to peoples' reactions to my writing.

Use Small and Slow Solutions: When working towards large-scale and ambitious aims - including major project like books, find ways to build towards them incrementally via more bounded and short-term activities such as shorter articles, discussions and talks.

Design from Pattern to Detail: I have already identified Sacred Political Ecology as the pattern that connects all my work thematically, and The Earth Punk Chronicles as a catchy name for a narrative account of Sacred Political Ecology in practice. All my other projects can be approached as more detailed elaborations on this integrating theme.

Each Element Supporting many Functions: each piece of writing should not only work on a standalone basis, but also complement and illuminate others, as well as wherever possible supporting my wider work and other projects. Writing also offers a route to designing multifunctionality into my other work.

Everything Gardens: make my writing regenerative of itself, and my other work, and ensure my other work nourishes and stimulates my writing.

Learning from Nature: I realised that the Ecological Keystone provides an ideal **design pattern** for this project, allowing me to apply insights from my previous research on Cultural Keystones. Keystones (although commonly simplistically equated with species) are ecological or social-ecological processes that define the structure of an ecological or social-ecological system at a particular level of scale. My research had shown that this is of particular importance in structuring

cross-scale interactions: a keystone formation at one level of scale can provide integration and coherence among disparate elements at a lower level. In this case, I realised that integrating my writing and connected projects around a coherent online identity, based on a website, would be the best way to create a focus for my work and organise my writing and other work in systemic fashion.

5. Will

I undertook a shamanic journey on the question: *How can I ensure the will to deliver on my writing plans?* The journey involves using a recording of repetitive drumming (or drumming for myself) to enter the 'shamanic state of consciousness', a trance state in which I can engage with various helping spirits I have met and cultivated relationships with over my time as a shamanic practitioner. In this case, I chose in advance to meet with a specific shamanic teacher whose main role is to advise and support me on practical matters relating to my intellectual and professional life.

The key teachings that arose from the journey were as follows:

- Approach writing as a sacred duty
- Sharing my ideas and insights through writing is as natural to me as the life of any animal or plant, in its chosen habitat
- Honour the ancestors - those whose ideas have influenced me take on new life through my work
- Keep my mind clear and uncluttered, with a constant flow of expression
- Draw on shamanic tools and methods to support my writing: journeying for inspiration, power and guidance whenever I need

The tactics and habits sections below describe the concrete steps through which I am acting on this will.

6. Tactics

As the keystone for my writing, I developed a website and social media strategy. To support this, I have contracted my former ECOLISE colleague Maja Vrcon, a specialist in digital marketing who is now working freelance. We have a good working relationship and shared interests that in some way touch upon all the key areas of my work.

Based on a **branding survey** and **client interview**, Maja suggested the following:

- An author's website registered at tom-henfrey.net and based on Wordpress
- A blog on Medium, under the title The Earth Punk Chronicles, linking back to longer pieces posted as articles on my website
- A minimal social media strategy focused on directing people to my website and/or Medium blog

To examine in more detail how to use the site and other communications channels, I mapped **functions, systems and elements** using a method suggested by my diploma tutor: a spreadsheet with each row representing a function and each column an element. The cells where they intersect are coloured black if the element strongly supports the function, grey if it supports it indirectly or partially, white if the element is not relevant to the function:

Elements		Website					Blog and Articles				
Functions		Bio	Books	Articles	Comments	Training	Contact	SPE (*)	Earth Punk	Other Topics	Joint Pieces
Shamanic Permaculture Book	Support writing										
	Generate dialogue										
	Promote book										
Sacred Political Ecology Book	Scoping										
	Writing outline										
	Exploring publication options										
Push edges of ECOLISE work											
Create academic grounding for Earth Punk											
Support Shamanic Political Ecology Training Programme	Advance my thinking										
	Share with others										
	Connect with teachers										
	Connect with practitioners										
	Create Community of Interest										
Promote trainings											

*SPE = Shamanic Political Ecology

This analysis identified several key systems through which my use of the website will support my writing and links with other works:

- Exploring ideas and connecting with others during production and dissemination of my books through regular production of thematically linked articles published via my blog and the articles space on the website. Initially, this will focus on my Shamanic Permaculture book (SP in the implementation plan below)
- Generating interest, collaboration and participation in the Shamanic Political Ecology Programme through thematically linked content, supporting by interactive features allowing comment and contact (SPE)
- Developing, sharing and discussing ideas that explore the academic potential of Earth Punk, largely through individual and collaborative pieces in the Earth Punk Chronicles blog (on Medium) and article series (on my website) (EPC in the implementation plan)

7. Habits

Integrating the above, I developed an **implementation plan** for writing during 2021 and early 2022, based on a rhythm of one new article per month.

Month	Output	Main outlet	Secondary outlet/s	SP(*)	SPE	EPC
Jan 2021	Initial scoping of website					
Feb 2021	Website texts	Website				
Mar 2021	Earth Jazz article (EPC1)	Website	Medium		X	X
Apr 2021	Shamanic Permaculture Article 1	PC Works or Mag	Website	X		X
May 2021	Final Diploma Designs	Website		X		
Jun 2021	Shamanic Political Ecology Article 1	Indie Shaman	Website	X	X	X
Jul 2021	Babylon Article (EPC2)	Website	Medium		X	X
Aug 2021	Shamanic Political Ecology Article 2	Indie Shaman	Website	X	X	
Sep 2021	Shamanic Permaculture Article 2	PC Works or Mag	0	X		X
Oct 2021	Shamanic Political Ecology Article 3	Indie Shaman	Website	X	X	
Nov 2021	Shamanic Permaculture Article 3	PC Designer	Medium, website	X		X
Dec 2021	Shamanic Permaculture Book	Permanent		X	X	X
Jan 2022	Earth Punk Article (EPC3)	Website	Medium		X	X
Feb 2022	Shamanic Political Ecology Article 4	Indie Shaman	Website	X	X	

* SP: Shamanic Permaculture Book. SPE: Shamanic Political Ecology programme. EPC: Earth Punk Chronicles.

Articles will be published in full on my website, with shorter versions on my Medium blog that point to the website. Some articles also will be developed for other outlets, to be later republished on my website by agreement with the publisher. In addition to the series of four articles on Shamanic Political Ecology agreed with Indie Shaman, I will seek to publish on shamanism and permaculture in the three main specialist permaculture magazines - the Permaculture Association's

Permaculture Works, Permaculture Magazine (produced by Permanent Publications, prospective publishers of the Shamanic Permaculture book), and Permaculture Designer. The schedule also includes time to finalise my diploma designs, which will also be published on my website. All articles will feed into one or more of the three major projects, indicated with an X in the table. This allows their production to run in parallel with work on the books.

I quickly fell behind on the implementation plan, which both overestimated my capacity for writing in my circumstances at the time and did not anticipate changes that left me completely without time and energy for these tasks (my decision to resign from my ECOLISE job and consequent need to give that complete focus during my last months, and extended period of rest and recuperation following that), described more fully in Design 10. Following completion of Design 10, I therefore created a revised implementation plan. This will be supported by an activity schedule developed in Design 10 in order to support implementation of both this design and Design 8.

The revised implementation plan incorporates the following main changes:

- Pushing back the timeline to fit my new circumstances
- It becomes less precisely specified over time: milestones for the first few months (until the end of 2021) are very clear and concrete, with an increasing number of details left more vague during 2022. This allows scope for adjustment and emergence, while leaving some key milestones, including the schedule for the Shamanic Permaculture book, well defined.
- It includes a wider range of outlets for supporting articles related to the Shamanic Permaculture book (which also contribute to promotion of the Shamanic Political Ecology course), while leaving details of the timing and content of these open to discussion with the publishers at Permanent Publications. Possible outlets I have in mind at this point include: Permaculture Magazine, Permaculture Works, Permaculture Designer, Indie Shaman, Society for Shamanic Practitioners, Shift Network and Watkins Magazine.

Date	Target Output
Aug 2021	Complete Diploma Designs
Sept 2021	Correct Diploma Designs for Final Portfolio Assessment Complete website texts and publish website
Oct 2021	Diploma accreditation and website launch Complete draft version of EPC1 and circulate to collaborators Resume communication with Permanent over Shamanic Permaculture book
Nov 2021	Complete draft version of EPC2 and circulate to collaborators Agree revised outline and delivery schedule for Shamanic Permaculture book Agree strategy for publication of supporting articles with Permanent Publications
Dec 2021	Complete draft version of EPC3 and circulate to collaborators Create detailed writing schedule for Shamanic Permaculture book and supporting articles
Jan 2022	Launch Medium blog with final version of EPC1. Begin drafting Shamanic Permaculture book and supporting articles
Feb 2022	Final version of EPC 2 on Medium blog Continued work on Shamanic Permaculture book and supporting articles
Mar 2022	Final version of EPC 3 on Medium blog Continued work on Shamanic Permaculture book and supporting articles
Apr-Jun 2022	Complete and submit first draft of Shamanic Permaculture book Identify and begin planning future EPC articles (individual and collective) Adapt any of EPC 1-3 for formal academic publication Begin preparation of EPC research proposal Outline and concept note for Sacred Political Ecology book
Jul-Dec 2022	Finalise Shamanic Permaculture book for publication Prepare supporting articles for pre- and post-publication release Submit funding proposal for EPC research Continue planning, writing and releasing further editions of EPC Create full proposal for Sacred Political Ecology and make contact with potential publishers

8. Evaluation

My design evaluation used the **Six Thinking Hats** method.

White Hat (facts): the design appears to fulfill all the basic assessment criteria: it employs an appropriate design process and set of design tools to respond to the design brief and associated goals, resulting in a clear plan of action.

Red Hat (feelings): I feel happy with the outcome in all respects: as a piece of design work, as a systemic analysis and action plan.

Yellow Hat (positives): the design process and design tools fit well with each other, and the design brief. At each stage in the design process, the respective tools process inputs from previous stages in ways that build towards an action plan that operationalises the needs to which the design responds.

Black Hat (negatives): while the ethics and principles are both present, each are mentioned at just a single point in the write-up: they probably exerted an ongoing influence, but this is not explicit or visible in the design itself. The three functional systems identified are described only in outline terms - they may well become better defined as implementation advances, but for now their effectiveness in practice is assumed or hoped for rather than defined.

Green Hat (creative possibilities): there is already a collaborative element in the involvement of a professional website designer and digital marketing consultant. The design anticipates further collaboration in implementation: of co-writers, readers, publishers, and others. These collaborators might also contribute to its further iterative evolution through input at design level.

Blue Hat (decisions and action): the first version of the action plan was ambitious, particularly in relation to its timescale, and quickly proved to be over-ambitious. However, none of the actions were time-critical, which meant it was simple enough to create a new action plan with revised timings and greater flexibility. Within this, the systemic vision, strategy and action plan remain valid: following them can ensure sustained progress, over the new timescale, towards the overall goals.

9. Reflection

I really enjoyed writing this design, and found it much easier going than others. I feel more confident in my use of design tools and understanding of their relationship with the design process, and pleased with my progress in this respect. This was the first design I wrote up following my Interim Portfolio Assessment, and I think shows the benefits of experience, reflection and the guidance of my tutor. Having written it up as a live design, I can already see concrete benefits for my work, which are likely to grow considerably as implementation proceeds.

I originally intended for this design to focus specifically on my planned book on Permaculture and Shamanic Practice. However, by the time I started work I had realised that it made sense to consider this project within a wider ecology of writing. I could still do a separate design for that book, and any other specific writing project, which could nest within this larger overall design. This created benefits when I realised I needed to revise the action plan; I also like the way that this showed interaction and mutual reinforcement with Design 10.

I found use of the GROWTH design process interesting and rewarding. I had felt a bit limited in my choice of design processes, so felt it made sense as a learning exercise to explore something new to me. In the context of an identified goal and existing capacity and resources for working towards this goal, the preceding steps provided a useful framework to gather, integrate, consolidate, critique and advance upon these.

Comparing GROWTH with a more familiar design process like SADI, I initially anticipated that the Tactics Step would correspond to the Design phase and Habits to Implementation. My tutor Wilf Richards shared with me a Day of Rest design in which this was the case, and to a large degree the same seemed to be the case while writing this design. However, when reviewing the design tools used at the end, I noticed a significant difference. My application of the permaculture principles and consequent identification of an overarching design pattern during the Options stage were a crucial design step, whereas the Tactics stage applied functions, systems and elements as an analytical tool. This seems to me consistent with the Design from Pattern to Detail Holmgren principle, which is central to this design. This demonstrates the diversity of actual pathways a design might follow, and shows the need to be able to choose from multiple design processes that can accommodate different requirements.

This design was also my first explicit use of shamanic journeying as a design tool. In the context of this design, it fitted excellently with the Will step, as a bridge between the earlier stages that map and assess resources and possibilities in relation to goals (close to the Survey and Analysis stages) and the later stages that integrate this material as a design and action plan. However, shamanic journeying can potentially be used at any stage in the design process. I intend to explore this versatility in future designs.

I feel I could still make better use of the ethics as a design input, rather than context. I feel the ethics are always in the background as pillars of my own ethical orientation. While this is valid and important, it can also be something I take for granted, perhaps as an excuse for not using the ethics more explicitly, and effectively within the design process itself. This is something I can strengthen in future designs. There is also a good potential fit with shamanic journeying: at any stage in the design, a journey can address the question, 'How can I apply the permaculture ethics at this stage of the design?'

I think this design also applies permaculture as a philosophy - of consciously designing in ways that apply learning from nature - more effectively than any of my previous designs. There is a clear systemic vision, influenced by the principles and ethics and an appropriate living systems metaphor (in which respect, I am glad to be able to draw on my academic background in social-ecological systems). I also feel a strong sense of aliveness - in the sense of autopoiesis or generative unfolding - that for me is the crucial quality, both life-reflecting and life-enhancing - that permaculture aspires to produce.