

GLOSSARY OF SUSTAINABILITY

A very abbreviated list of examples and manifestations of sustainability

BIOMIMICRY: the study and imitation of nature's forms, processes, and ecosystems to create more sustainable and healthier human technologies.

<http://biomimicryinstitute.org/>

<http://www.asknature.org/>

BIOREGIONALISM: An approach to natural resource management and to human society that emphasizes an intimate connection with one's distinctive bioregion. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources recognizes thirteen unique "ecological landscapes" in the state of Wisconsin. Bioregionalism is also a social movement that seeks to create a sense of deep connection to one's local region, activities that are in harmony with the local ecology, a sense of self as an integral part of local nature, and diverse decentralized societies that are characterized by social egalitarianism, local self-reliance, and ecological sustainability. See also "Place."

<http://www.planetdrum.org/>

<http://wp.bioregionalcongress.net/>

<http://www.ilsr.org/>

EARTH CHARTER: An international declaration based on the sixteen principles of respect and care for the whole community of life. The four key categories of principles are:

1. ecological integrity
2. social and economic justice
3. participatory democracy
4. peace and nonviolence

In 2002, UW Oshkosh became one of only a few campuses to officially endorse the Earth Charter.

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org>

<http://earthcharterus.org/>

<http://www.uwosh.edu/earthcharter/>

ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS: "Ecological economics is a transdisciplinary field of academic research that aims to address the interdependence and coevolution of human economies and natural ecosystems over time and space. It is distinguished from environmental economics, which is the mainstream economic analysis of the environment, by its treatment of the economy as a subsystem of the ecosystem and its emphasis upon preserving natural capital." (*Wikipedia*) *Related terms:* natural capital; steady state economics

<http://www.ecoeco.org>

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: A branch of ethics and environmentalism that focuses on disproportionate environmental harm done to differing social groups and individuals. It is a significant principle in the U.S. E.P.A, for which "Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."

(<http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/>) Environmental injustice often takes the form of "environmental racism."

<http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/>

<http://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html>

FAIR TRADE: Fair Trade is an alternative system of trade that aims to improve lives and protect the environment by empowering poor farmers and producers in the developing world, creating a trade system that is more fair and transparent, while creating a framework for ecologically friendly practices. In 2008, UW Oshkosh became the first university in the country to declare itself a Fair Trade University. Since then eight other campuses have followed suit and a national Fair Trade University Steering Committee has been formed. There are also Fair Trade Towns, including Milwaukee and Madison.

<http://www.uwosh.edu/fairtrade>

<http://www.fairtradefederation.org/>
<http://www.fairtraderesource.org/>
<http://www.fairtradeuniversities.org/>
<http://www.fairtradeusa.org/>

GREEN ENERGY, ALTERNATIVE ENERGY: Energy produced without fossil fuels. Prominent sources are wind, solar, and biomass. Some consider nuclear power “green energy,” while other strongly reject that inclusion.

<http://www.greenenergycouncil.com/>

GREEN PARTY: A political organization and international political movement that is explicitly aimed at the three pillars of sustainability. The Ten Key Values of the green movement are: grassroots democracy, social justice, ecological wisdom, non-violence, decentralization, community-based economics, feminism, respect for diversity, personal and global responsibility, and future focus and sustainability. Note the similarity between the first four key values (known as the Four Pillars) and the main principles of the Earth Charter. In some European countries, the Green Party has significant political power.

<http://www.gp.org>

<http://www.globalgreens.org/>

LEED: “Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design” consists of “a suite of rating systems for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings, homes and neighborhoods. Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) . . . LEED is intended to provide building owners and operators a concise framework for identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building design, construction, operations and maintenance solutions.” (*Wikipedia*) Several grades or degrees are recognized: LEED, LEED silver, LEED gold, and LEED platinum. UWO’s Sage Hall is rated as LEED gold.

<http://www.usgbc.org/>

NATURAL STEP: “The Natural Step is a non-profit organization founded with the vision of creating a sustainable society. For two decades, The Natural Step has been at the forefront of international research and dialogue about sustainable development. We have developed a proven, science based model that helps communities and businesses better understand and integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations.” (<http://www.naturalstep.org/>) Several Wisconsin municipalities have adopted The Natural Step as a guide to policy.

The Four System Conditions...	. . . Reworded as The Four Principles of Sustainability
In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing:	To become a sustainable society we must...
1. concentrations of substances extracted from the earth's crust	1. eliminate our contribution to the progressive buildup of substances extracted from the Earth's crust (for example, heavy metals and fossil fuels)
2. concentrations of substances produced by society	2. eliminate our contribution to the progressive buildup of chemicals and compounds produced by society (for example, dioxins, PCBs, and DDT)
3. degradation by physical means	3. eliminate our contribution to the progressive physical degradation and destruction of nature and natural processes (for example, over harvesting forests and paving over critical wildlife habitat); and
4. and, in that society, people are not subject to conditions that systemically undermine their capacity to meet their needs	4. eliminate our contribution to conditions that undermine people’s capacity to meet their basic human needs (for example, unsafe working conditions and not enough pay to live on).

PLACE. “Place” indicates a distinctive local area that is infused with human meaning (unlike mere “space”). Developing “a sense of place” is often considered an essential part of realizing oneness with nature and leading a sustainable way of life. The term has become important in environmental philosophy, ecospirituality, ecopsychology, human geography, environmental sociology, and ecological anthropology. It is central to the ideal of “place-based education,” while modern society is seen as characterized by “placelessness” and alienation with the natural world one lives in. Closely related to bioregionalism.

PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE: The Precautionary Principle (or Approach) is a perspective that, when human or ecological health might be in danger, the burden of proof is on those actors or organizations that might render environmental and social harm, rather than being on an agency to prove that the danger is real.

- “When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically.” (<http://www.sehn.org/wing.html>)
- The February 2, 2000 European Commission Communication on the Precautionary Principle notes: “The precautionary principle applies where scientific evidence is insufficient, inconclusive or uncertain and preliminary scientific evaluation indicates that there are reasonable grounds for concern that the potentially dangerous effects on the environment, human, animal or plant health may be inconsistent with the high level of protection chosen by the EU”. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precautionary_principle)

SUSTAINABLE FOOD: Four principles are recognized as elements of sustainability in food production and consumption. These four are explicitly recognized in UWO’s contract with Sodexo.

1. Locally grown.
 2. Organically grown.
 3. Humanely raised (animals)
 4. Fair Trade
- It is possible that there may be conflicts between them, such as the question: is it better to buy food produced by a local family farmer but that is not organic, or organic food that is grown far away.

Related terms

- sustainable agriculture
- community sustained agriculture
- agroecology
- slow food
- permaculture
- organic farming
- sustainable forestry & forest stewardship

Some academic fields related to sustainability

Conservation Biology
Environmental Chemistry
Environmental Geography
Environmental Geology
Environmental Health
Ecological Anthropology (Cultural Ecology)
Environmental Economics and Ecological Economics
Ecopsychology
Environmental Politics
Environmental Sociology
Ecocriticism (literature)
Environmental Communication
Environmental Philosophy & Environmental Ethics
Religion and Ecology, ecospirituality