

The 5 Dimensions of Sustainability Designing our ventures and projects in a holistic way



“When we are blind to systemic causes of problems, all the solutions we try will likely make matters worse.”

Esther Derby

“Never give children a chance of imagining that anything exists in isolation. Make it plain from the very beginning that all living is relationship. Show them relationships in the woods, in the fields, in the ponds and streams, in the village and in the country around it. Rub it in.”

Aldous Huxley

Tag/Category: Whole System – Whole System Design

Challenge: Building on a Newtonian worldview, there has been a tendency to focus on particular facets of sustainability in isolation, and, in addition, to equate sustainability with environmental awareness. There are many other aspects of life that require sustainable practices and technologies, and only once we integrate these into a holistic design will we be able to co-create truly resilient futures for our communities, organisations and societies.

Solution: The Ecovillage Design Mandala was created by ecovillage educators in 2004, as the core symbol of the Ecovillage Design Education (EDE). This map describes a holistic map for sustainable design and development, embracing the social, worldview, ecological and economic dimensions of sustainability. The mandala can be applied to systems on all levels: to the life of an individual, to an organization or enterprise, an intentional community, traditional village, urban neighbourhood, region, etc. Over the years, integral or participatory design was more clearly recognised as a fifth dimension and placed at the centre of the Mandala. Also, the word ‘worldview’ has been replaced by ‘culture’ in most contexts.

Ecovillages have a rich wealth of experience, methods and tools to share in each of these five dimensions. The Solution Library is organised accordingly.

While conventional approaches tend to work with three pillars of sustainability (the social, economy and ecology), the inclusion of ‘culture’ as a fourth pillar is currently becoming more wide-spread.

Links:

www.ecovillage.org

www.gaiaeducation.org

www.solution.ecovillage.org

www.sustainablekingston.ca/our-community/sk-plan/four-pillars-of-sustainability/