

DEFINITION OF ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION*

The term “ecological civilization” was first widely used in the Peoples Republic of China. Related endeavors are proceeding in various parts of the world—the quest for “green economy” in Europe and the United States, the search for a “sufficiency economy” in Thailand, the call for “Earth democracy” in India, the rediscovery of the *cosmovisión Andina* in Peru, the pursuit of *buen vivir* in Ecuador and Bolivia, and the resolve for “degrowth” in France and Italy.**

Here are some understandings that are essential to an ecological civilization:

- Earth is a single sacred community bound together in interdependent relationships.
- Earth is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.
- We learn from creation and from that we learn to live the good and sustainable life in harmony with creation.
- Earth’s processes and components developed over long periods of time. They offer possibilities, impose constraints, and require respect.
- Earth’s special purposes are to create, sustain and enhance life and consciousness.
- The key roles of humans are celebrating and caring for the community of life in conscious self-awareness.

An ecological civilization

- Understands Earth as *oikos* (Greek) or *eco* (English), which means our Earth home. Ecology is the understanding of all the relationships in our Earth home.
- Lives by standards of fundamental justice and fairness for all humans. It places survival and human welfare outcomes above products, profits and markets as means.
- Recognizes the rights of all species to habitat, nourishment, and dignified participation in the community of life.
- Honors all living components and processes of Earth in their qualitative dimensions as well as their functional roles.
- Is grounded in local communities and bioregions, and in historic cultures and classical civilizations.
- Protects the commons at global, regional and local levels.
- Is unified by a shared sense of the sacredness of Earth community.
- Is a process concept, not something to be arrived at, but something ever to be created.

*Herman Greene, October 2010. Prepared for the Interfaith Consortium on Ecological Civilization of the Temple of Understanding, New York, New York.

**Wolfgang Sachs, “Preface to the New Edition,” *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, 2d ed., ed. Wolfgang Sachs (Zed Books: London, UK, 2010), xii-xiii.