

What is Ecological Economics?

Ecological Economics is a science of sustainability. This transdisciplinary approach to studying the integration of economic, social, and ecological systems brings together academics and practitioners from a variety of natural and social science disciplines. The common goal of Ecological Economists is to improve theoretical models and practical solutions to achieving long term economic and social well-being without undermining the absorptive, regenerative and resource capacity of the natural environment.

Who is USSEE?

The United States Society for Ecological Economics is intentional about advancing dialogue across different disciplines, backgrounds and professional contexts to address pressing social and ecological problems. The society is particularly interested in advancing work that seeks to identify concrete solutions and actions to bring about a more just and sustainable future. The USSEE plays a key role in setting the research agenda for Ecological Economics in the United States, and in communicating the development of effective economic, social, and environmental policies. In engaging both academics and practitioners as its members, the USSEE is committed to ongoing research and analysis as well as identifying policy tools and practical solutions that can be implemented at the national, state and community level.

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ECONOMICS**

*Advancing a just
and sustainable
society within
the biophysical
limits of global
ecosystems*

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Ecological Economists generally take the following views:

1. Economics and the environment work together.
2. Humans are one species interconnected to biodiversity without which humans cannot survive.
3. The economy is a subsystem of the environment; all inputs to production, in one way or another, come from the environment.
4. There is absolute scarcity—there are physical limitations of our resources.
5. There is irreversibility; the environment does not change marginally and there aren't always substitutes. Once something in our environment is extinct, it is lost forever.
6. There is individual and group choice.
7. Environmental problems are failures of the markets.
8. Look at the Earth from space, leading to a holistic approach to our environment and economy.

Transdisciplinary v. Interdisciplinary

Ecological Economics is a transdisciplinary field; a key difference from other fields. What does this mean? **Transdisciplinarity** moves beyond working across disciplinary lines. It involves creating a common space for a ground-up collaboration among various academic disciplines and non-academic stakeholders (such as government, policy makers, and community members), all working on equal footing to generate new theoretical frameworks and solutions. This approach fosters the innovation and intentionality essential for solving the kinds of multifaceted problems that ecological economists seek to solve. Solutions are co-created, making Ecological Economics socially relevant and solution-oriented. In contrast, **interdisciplinarity** involves collaborators working together to integrate methods and perspectives taken from distinct academic disciplines to solve real-world problems from across disciplinary lines.

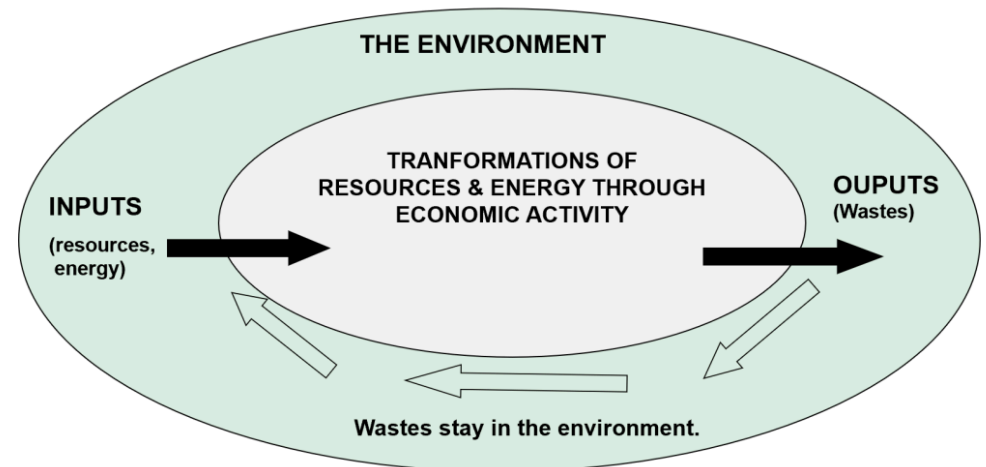
Sources:

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Transdisciplinary means we are:

- Driven by real-world problems
- Transcends the boundaries of different disciplines
- Involves stakeholders
- Solves complex problems



www.susansantone.com. Adapted from Daly, H. (1980). "Introduction to the Steady-State Economy." In *Economics, Ecology, Ethics: Essays Toward a Steady-State Economy*. Herman Daly, editor. San Francisco: W.H. Freeman.

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