

A Green Glossary

The purpose of this glossary is to explain words and phrases often used when talking about climate crisis. It is also intended to encourage the use of clear language when talking about climate crisis, so that everyone can join the conversation and knows what is being intended. Its primary recommendation is to avoid the word '*sustainable*' or '*sustainability*' and instead to talk about taking care of the environment in clear accessible language that is more easily understood.

'*Sustainable*' is often used in business to mean that the activity will continue to be possible in the future (the actual meaning of '*sustainability*') – because it isn't using resources in a way that will become impossible because of environmental destruction/climate change. This is quite complicated, allowing companies to get away with environmental harm whilst claiming to be green. As a catch-all term '*sustainable*' often therefore ends up being vague or even to support greenwashing. What is a '*sustainable*' theatre production? How sustainability is measured is so complex it means that two different people in the same conversation might mean very different things without being aware of it.

What follows are some terms that can maintain clear dialogue, and centre ideas of care and the minimization of harm, when talking about climate crisis and responses to it.

Green – general term to mean that the action/activity/resource will cause little environmental damage / might help the environment in some ways

Climate justice / environmental justice / environmentally just – protecting the natural environment in ways that don't cause harm to people, in particular disenfranchised groups who – for example – are endangered by large scale energy or reforestation programmes designed to lower carbon emissions. It also means not prioritising environmental care in relation to nature, over care for people.

Environmental responsibility – taking responsibility for the potential/actual harm an activity or resource does/might do. E.g. "*moving to digital programmes and ticketing is environmentally responsible*".

Environmental care – aiming or designed to promote the protection of the natural world and therefore not having any negative impact on nature. E.g. "*we are being environmentally careful on this production, which means every decision will be scrutinised for potential environmental harm*".

Sustainable source / sustainable material – a material that can be replenished and/or regrow – i.e. won't be used up. For example, wood from a source that isn't destroying

established biodiverse forests, because trees can be replanted. (see broader principle above.)

Environmental impact – i.e. ‘what impact will this activity have on the environment?’ (this can be the local environment, or elsewhere in the world, or in relation to the planet as a whole (e.g. through fossil fuel emissions). E.g. *“we’ve reduced our environmental impact by insulating the building so that we have to heat it less”*

Environmental harm – this can either mean doing the activity/using the resource contributes to fossil fuel emissions, or that it will damage the environment in other ways (e.g. single-use plastics).

“The fabric is reuse-able so we just need to make sure we pass it on to prevent it being environmentally harmful”

“We can’t use that (plastic/steel etc.) because its environmentally harmful”

Rather than asking *“Is it sustainable?”* – ask: will it cause environmental harm? Can we create this effect from a less harmful source? How else might we mitigate the effects of our actions? E.g. *“We are planting trees with local school kids to offset the environmental harm from carbon emissions for the international flights we are using this year”*

Offset – this means to pay for or undertake an activity that will absorb as much carbon as has been put into the atmosphere by another activity you are doing, e.g. flying.

Beware: offsetting can often involve greenwashing, e.g. when new trees are planted but which are all the same species, or when land is taken from local people, in order to be planted with trees.

Resource-efficient – describes an activity/item that uses little in the way of materials or energy. E.g. Doll’s House had a ‘*resource-efficient*’ design, through having reused materials and a minimalist aesthetic.

Greenwash – word used to describe businesses or activities that are used to make a company look like it is not doing environmental harm, or that it is promoting environmentally careful policies, when in fact the company is causing environmental harm in other aspects of their work.

Single-use – this means it can only be used once, and then must be thrown into landfill, and can’t be recycled.

Recycle – the material can be recycled. This isn’t as efficient as reuse.

Reuse – the item/resource can be reused (with or without repurposing)

Repurpose – reusing/adapting an existing item/material for a new purpose - e.g. the floor of Marys Seacole became a floor for a café.

Climate care – means the same as being 'environmentally careful', but also includes paying attention to environmental justice – “We’ve been climate careful in how we’ve organised waste management, to prevent pollution” / “Our policy of climate care includes our anti-racism programme”

Low carbon – hasn’t released much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere in being made/extracted/used

‘TAKE MAKE USE LOSE’ – (as described by Kate Raworth in *Doughnut Economics* (2017)) – the standard system of extracting resources, using them up and throwing them away. Against this, circular systems prioritise keeping resources circulating.

Circular / closed loop system – often used in the term '*circular economy*' – meaning that the materials or resources in the system can be re-used many times over. I.e. a closed-loop system based on the principles of minimising the use of resource inputs, and also the creation of waste, pollution and carbon emissions. Via reuse, sharing, repair, refurbishment, remanufacturing and recycling, the aim is to create a closed materials loop.

‘Cradle to cradle’ – another way of describing reuse of materials rather than them being used up and disposed of.

Net zero – a target of completely negating the amount of greenhouse gases produced by human activity, to be achieved by reducing emissions and implementing methods of absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. I.e. an activity/item is 'new zero' if it absorbed as much carbon dioxide as it produced, or was offset in some way by a different activity that took the same amount of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. A concept developed by Environmental Climate Lawyer Farhana Yamin (*Force Majeure & Henry V* podcast)

Ecodramaturgy – forms of theatre that about ecology, plants, nature within the theatre work – that doesn’t place humans centrally.

Climate dramaturgy – all the relationships within and between the theatre work and every aspect of its context, explored in relationship to the wider context of the climate crisis. Climate dramaturgy asks challenging questions in relation to environmental responsibility, to sharpen the ideas and invite artistic ingenuity.

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