

ASSIGNMENT 1: 'What is Sustainability?'

We want to begin the workshop (for the first 2 meetings) by questioning and exploring some of the multitude of interpretations of 'sustainability'. This is in order for us to comprehend how different contexts, disciplines, regions or institutions are using the terminology to support their particular needs or environmental aspirations. It will also enable us to open a discussion concerning the manner in which 'sustainability' as a force within the professions of the built environment is diverging and developing a more complex nature.

In order to explore this complexity, we ask each group to research the issue through a review of current literature, publications, web sites, assessment methods, products, professions and so forth. Each group should not attempt to review everything that is out there - but rather to concentrate upon a defined area of your choice. For example, you might look at it from the point of view of different design professions; disciplines; professional practices; institutions (academic / governmental for example); corporations; industries; assessment; local initiatives in our region (MIT, Boston, New England), or simply new literature on the market. However, in reviewing the material about sustainability within your chosen area we would like you to be able to bring a critical edge to your investigations, contrast and compare, and eventually to be able to represent your findings in an appropriate graphic form.

Next Tuesday in the workshop, we would like you to informally present and discuss your area of choice for the assignment, what progress you have made and how (for the following week) you might represent your initial research.

As we said last Monday, we will then be moving forward over the next few weeks to look more closely at a series of case studies that are selected by you. So in the process of working on this first assignment, please also look out for work or projects that might make for interesting subjects for a study.