

## Ecotopia Revisited Background

**Evan Berry and Jim Proctor**

Ecotopia Revisited Expert Committee Workshop

Environmental Studies Program

Lewis & Clark College

Portland, OR

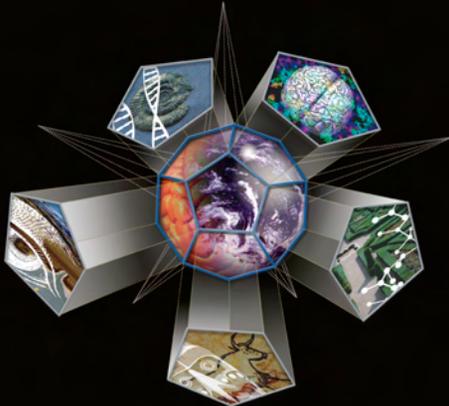
November 22, 2008



## Ecotopia Revisited Background

- **New Visions of Nature, Science, and Religion**
  - One of five visions: Nature as sacred
  - Contemporary nature spirituality (NSF-funded research)
- **Late-modern spirituality**
  - Dwelling and seeking: Cultural and material explanations
- **Contemporary utopias and dystopias**
  - Nature and utopia/dystopia
  - Critiques and reconstructions
  - Utopia: A seeker's idea of dwelling?
- **Our study: Ecotopia Revisited**
  - Intentional communities and other utopias

## Visions of Nature, Science, & Religion



## Contemporary Nature Spirituality

	Environmental Self-Identification			Environmental Issues Concern			Proenvironmental Behavior		
	Beta	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Total	Beta	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Total	Beta	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Total
<b>1. Demographic Characteristics</b>		0.016			0.023			0.020	
Age	0.112**			0.128***			--		
Education	--			--			--		
Gender	--			--			-0.062*		
Income	0.058*			--			--		
<b>2. Political Orientation</b>		0.072			0.058			0.073	
Conservative vs. liberal	-0.194***			-0.169***			-0.208***		
<b>3. Theological Fundamentalism</b>		0.010			0.002			0.003	
Biblical literalism	-0.097**			--			--		
<b>4. Nature Sacredness</b>		<b>0.068</b>			<b>0.120</b>			<b>0.083</b>	
Immanent sacredness	<b>0.267***</b>			<b>0.357***</b>			<b>0.296***</b>		
			0.166			0.197			0.179

\* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001; results omitted where p ≥ .05

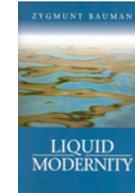
-Independent variables entered as blocks in sequence as above. Note: Political orientation and theological fundamentalism highly correlated (R = 0.343), thus order of entry into regression reduces explanatory power of fundamentalism

## Seeking and Dwelling

"...a traditional spirituality of inhabiting sacred places...has given way to a new spirituality of seeking—...people have been losing faith in a metaphysic that can make them feel at home in the universe and... increasingly negotiate among competing glimpses of the sacred, seeking partial knowledge and practical wisdom" (Wuthnow, *After Heaven* [1998], 3)

## Why Seeking?

- Zygmunt Bauman's *Liquid Modernity* (2000): Seekers as desperate hunters roaming an age of material uncertainty
- Richard Sennett's *Culture of the New Capitalism* (2006): Shift from secure but authoritarian dwelling to insecure, rootless seeking following the flexible new economy



## Nature and Utopia

### Together

We will regain the sustaining harmony  
Of human needs in balance  
With the sacred,  
self-renewing,  
living Earth

## More Nature and Utopia

### Elements of a Sustainable University



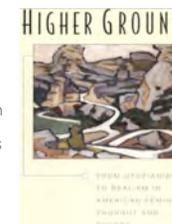
See <http://chronicle.com/indepth/sustainable>

## Nature and Dystopia



## Utopia Rejected: Sally Kitch

- Utopianism and feminism
  - Deficiencies in feminist theory...can often...be attributed to hidden utopianism, which inspires not only idealizations but also a preference for solutions and answers over questions and continuous analysis (4)
- Utopianism and realism
  - Realism...represents a framework for conceptual struggle, self-reflexive scrutiny, and ideological give-and-take within which plans for the future can be assessed. Instead of the utopian certainty of knowing, it approaches knowledge and welcomes revision (9)
  - If utopianism maps primarily uncharted territory, then realism functions mostly in the known, pluralistic, confusing, and inevitably imperfect world. It is immersed in history (9)
  - Achieving higher ground entails recognizing that all plans for social change can harbor unforeseen consequences. On higher ground, no principle or ideology, including feminism, can be immune from scrutiny (8)



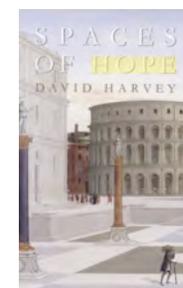
## Hearing Utopia: Russell Jacoby

- Blueprint utopianism
  - The blueprint utopians map out the future in inches and minutes....From the eating arrangements to the subjects on conversations the blueprinters...gave precise instructions....Inevitably, history eclipses or ridicules the most daring of plans....Worse, such plans often betray more a will for domination than for freedom (xiv-xv)
- Iconoclastic utopianism
  - The iconoclastic utopians...dreamt of a superior society but...declined to give its precise measurements....Explicitly or implicitly they observed the biblical prohibition on graven images of the deity (xv)
  - An Ariadne thread runs from [Maimonides'] negative theology of the twelfth century to the iconoclastic... utopians of the twentieth (35)



## Dialectical Utopia: David Harvey

- Process and form
  - The supposedly endlessly open and benevolent qualities of some utopian social process, like market exchange, have to crystallize into a spatially-ordered and institutionalized material world somewhere and somehow (185)
  - The problem is that without a vision of Utopia there is no way to define that port to which we might want to sail (189)
  - Given the defects and difficulties of both spatial form and social process, the most obvious alternative...is to build a utopianism that is explicitly spatiotemporal....The search is on, therefore, for what I shall call 'dialectical utopianism' (182)



## Utopia, Seeking, and Dwelling

A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail.

Oscar Wilde (1905)

Utopia (n): A seeker's idea of dwelling?

## Ecotopia Revisited

- Oregon: Eden within Eden
- Utopian communities
  - Intentional communities
  - Destination resorts
  - Creative class magnets
- Methodology
  - 14 communities total (N ≈ 140)
  - Group and individual interviews
    - Video analysis via HyperResearch
    - Some elements (e.g. favorite quotes) via statistical analysis
  - Post-interview surveys
    - Statistical analysis



## Portland Perfect



**Portland Ranks #1 in Sustainability**

SustainLane, a website resource for sustainable and healthy living, recently ranked Portland the most sustainable city in the nation. Against 49 other metropolitan areas, Portland rose to the top of the list. The study used 15 categories, such as green building, city innovation and air quality, to determine each city's ranking.

Jill Fuglister, the Coalition for a Livable Future Executive Director, was interviewed along with other Portlanders to respond to the news.

While the ranking gives deserved recognition to some of Portland's smart planning and actions, we certainly have much farther to go. We can expect many years of hard work ahead to continue moving toward a sustainable future for everyone.

## Destination Utopias








## Intentional Communities

Intentional Communities: Today's Social Laboratories

### Visions of Utopia: Experiments in Sustainable Culture

A Documentary by Geoph Kozlery



Today many people are looking for ways to bring more community into their lives. Ordinary people with extraordinary visions tell their stories of living and working together to build a better world.

## Research Communities

- A [GoogleMap](#) of all communities
- Intentional communities
  - [Breitenbush Hot Springs](#)
  - [Alpha Farm](#)

