

Microtopias

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Introduction

As a gateway to Asia, the Hong Kong International Airport is one of the busiest in the world - servicing over 35 million passengers per year and showcasing some of the latest improvements in transportation, including a high-speed rail system, a six-lane highway, and the world's longest road and rail suspension bridge.

What few people realize is that twenty years ago, there was only an ocean where the airport now stands.

Since it was impossible to build an airport on an island city where every inch of land was already developed with high-rise buildings, the Bechtel corporation devised a solution of grinding down two small remote islands down to sea level, and then connecting them via landfill to create a larger artificial island that would be adequate to support a full airport. Further expansion of the island is under way, as a second runway is now being developed.¹

Creating artificial landmass is not necessarily new technology. Roughly 1/3 of the Netherlands is below sea level, and is kept habitable via a complex system of dikes. Some of the most valuable real estate in the world is literally built on landfill, including most of Manhattan island south of Wall Street. Other types of artificial landmasses abound. Oil platforms, military fortifications, and docks are all examples of freestanding structures in marine environments.

Once an artificial island is built, however, who actually controls it? Is it the domain of the builder, the occupants, or of the nearest recognized state?

Case History

During the Second World War, Great Britain built an artificial island fortress in the North Sea, seven miles

from the English coast. It was occupied by two-hundred servicemen and guarded allied shipping convoys from the Nazis. After the war, the island was abandoned by the British government and stood empty for nearly two decades.

In 1966 the fortress was re-discovered by former English major Paddy Roy Bates, who eventually restored and occupied the island with his family. Because the structure was technically in international waters, it was not under the jurisdiction of the British government. After obtaining legal counsel, Roy Bates declared that the island constituted a sovereign state. The fortress of Rough's Tower was renamed the Principality of Sealand, and Bates called himself Prince Roy and crowned his wife Princess Joan. They began issuing coins, passports, and stamps for their new country. During its 35-year history, Sealand has survived armed invasion, financial hardship, and neglect. It has since been given new life as an internet "data haven" and has won several court cases supporting its legal status as an independent entity.²

What is a nation? Does Sealand, or any other artificial landmass qualify as an independent state?

The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933) was a treaty signed at the Seventh International Conference of American States. The convention was signed by 19 states, 3 with reservations. The criteria for statehood are outline in Article 1.

*The state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states.*³

Considerable room for debate is found within the fairly broad terms of the Montevideo Convention, depending upon one's definition of the terms "population", "defined territory", and "government".

In the 1970's, the Administrative Court of Cologne was asked its opinion regarding the legal status of a Sealand citizenship conferred upon a German national. The court held that the platform was not a legitimate state within the context of international law because it did not have territory, nor people, nor government. According to the court:

*"A man-made artificial platform, such as the so-called Duchy of Sealand, cannot be called either 'a part of the earth's surface' or 'land territory' and only structures which make use of a specific piece of the earth's surface can be recognised as State territory within the meaning of international law."*⁴

The Court however went beyond the guidelines of the Montvideo Convention, and observed that:

*The State, as an amalgamation of many individuals ... has the duty to promote community life. This duty does not merely consist of the promotion of a loose association aimed at the furtherance of common hobbies and interests. Rather it must be aimed at the maintenance of an essentially permanent form of communal life in the sense of sharing a common destiny ..."*⁵

While this description of statehood may be considered by some as constraining, it does establish a very worthwhile objective for aspiring new nations. Notably, they can come to represent permanent communities of individuals mutually relying on each other for collective, survival, growth, and development.

Significance

Microtopias⁶ have the potential for importance from several perspectives. First of all, they can address the problem of resource scarcity. In urban areas where land is fully developed or prohibitively expensive, artificial landmasses become a viable alternative. If land-mass becomes increasingly scarce as a result of global warming or overpopulation, we may continue to see further interest in these technologies.

This idea was explored in the 1960's by Buckminster Fuller's plans for Triton City, a community of floating modules designed to

shelter up to 5,000 inhabitants each. With a center of buoyancy below the deepest wave action, these floating modules would be impervious to both earthquakes and tidal waves.

Made from steel and concrete, these structures were to be built in shipyards and towed towards their destination. These plans were reviewed and approved by both the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). At one point the city of Baltimore, Maryland expressed an interest in such a floating city for the Chesapeake Bay, but the plans were abandoned after a change in city government administration.⁷

A second area of significance for microtopias is that of experimentation. Because of their small size and the fact that they are physically separated from other jurisdictions by a border of water, microtopias have the ability to function with minimal externalities. They make ideal laboratories for the study of social, technological, and ecological experimentation. Their isolation also reduces the impact of outside variables, making them easier to study and control.

Experimentation can occur on several different levels.

Political/Social: Microtopias have the potential benefit of creating a government on an *a priori* basis. With no past history or cultural tradition, microtopias have the ability to develop dramatically new and different forms of self-governance.

Technological: Without an established regulatory environment or entrenched business interests, microtopias have the capacity to experiment with new technologies on a practical level.

Environmental: While microtopias are usually not completely independent from the external environment, they often feature microecologies. This is particularly important to long-term plans for the exploration of environments that are traditionally hostile to human habitation -- including the ocean and outer space. Several years ago, the Biosphere 2 effort attempted to create an enclosed biosystem. While Biosphere 2 was widely considered to be a failure, it did provide insight as to how difficult

is to reconstruct the earth's biosystems within a self-contained environment.⁸

One example of a more successful working model was designed by Japanese architect Kikutake Kiyonori for the Okinawa Marine Expo of 1975. Aquapolis was an 18,000 ton semi-submersible structure that could be raised or lowered in the water as necessary to protect against storms. It also contained a biological wastewater system, a harbor, and its own maricultural fish ranch. Aquapolis remained afloat for over 25 years, before it was scrapped due to a combination of economic difficulty and neglect.

Experiments will not always be successful. Perhaps there is a natural tendency to value our successes more than our failures. However, in order to fail successfully, initial efforts must be made so that the appropriate lessons can be learned and appreciated.

This article will consider several different types of efforts towards building microtopias. The following are in three broad categories, including *Libertarian Paradises*, *Holistic Havens*, and *SuperShips*.

Profiles

Libertarian Paradises

These microtopias are created for the purpose of creating small-scale libertarian societies. The philosophy of libertarianism focuses on minimal government structure and emphasizes personal and economic freedoms. Many of these libertarian microtopias were designed to serve as tax havens.

The Republic of Minerva: In the early 1970's, Nevada businessman Michael Oliver developed plans to build an island platform in the South Pacific for use as a tax shelter. Construction began shortly thereafter, and the independent Republic of Minerva was announced in 1972. The island minted its own currency and maintained a lifetime of approximately six months.

The only nation that responded to Minerva's call did so in a contentious manner. The neighboring government of Tonga considered the new nation state an unwelcome threat

and promptly sent out a hostile force which hauled down the Minervan flag and subsequently annexed the property.⁹

New Utopia was another platform nation scheme promoted twenty years later by Howard Turney (a.k.a., "Prince Lazarus Long") out of a tract home in Oklahoma. The website for New Utopia promises the development of a libertarian haven in the Caribbean with the latest facilities, including:

... the finest hospital in the world, dedicated to the anti-aging and longevity modalities where you may have any treatment you wish, so long as you and your doctor agree. The International University of Advanced Studies, has been founded and is dedicated to teaching the disciplines and imparting the knowledge that will be needed in the next century for survival on Earth, the colonization of the oceans, and the exploration and colonization of space. Access to classes taught by the University may be obtained over the Internet.

New Utopia will be managed by a Board of Governors; managing what we believe to be the most perfect city/state ever conceived, blending the philosophies of both Ayn Rand and Robert Heinlein.¹⁰

Construction on the project was never started. In 1999, the SEC issued a restraining order against Mr. Turney involving the offer and sale of a bogus \$350 million bond offering through his internet website.¹¹

The *Principality of New Pacific* is currently being organized from the southern island of Mindanao (Philippines) with the intention of forming an independent state. The Principality is now raising funds to develop an artificial island from concrete, steel, and dredged material above a coral atoll. The main source of income for the Principality is expected to come from selling handmade baskets, rugs and native jewelry, online marketing, low cost labor, and farming. Prince John Prisco III, will become the sole ruler of New Pacific, and will uphold a constitution that provides New Pacific citizens with libertarian freedoms.¹²

Prince John is currently raising \$250,000 for the first phase of the project, which includes the purchase of a ferry to be used as a tempo-

rary residence for the citizens of New Pacific during the construction of a 100x100' platform. Citizens are being actively recruited with an initial required investment of \$1,000 each.

The economic and financial motivations of most libertarian paradises serve as an interesting contrast to the next category of microtopias...

Holistic Havens

As a broad category, Holistic Havens seek a balance of social, economic, and environmental priorities. They tend to utilize emerging technologies to generate sustainable self-sufficient living environments.

The Living Universe Foundation is a massive online collaborative effort based upon the book *The Millennial Project* by Marshal Savage. In Savage's vision, the establishment of floating cities is just the first of an eight-part program to colonize the galaxy.

The "Aquarius" stage of this plan involves the development of floating islands composed of hexagonal honeycombs made out of a concrete-like substance called Seament. Seament is formed by running small electrical current through a wire mesh immersed in seawater. This accretes minerals dissolved in seawater (calcium carbonate in particular) onto the wire mesh. The resulting material is structurally stronger and lighter than reinforced concrete, and duplicates natural process of shellfish.¹³

The significance of the Aquarius phase is that it will allow developers to better understand the necessary components for the stable ecosystem, and then to build small, mobile systems which could eventually be transported into space. In the meanwhile, the technology can be used on earth to provide living space for several billion more people.¹⁴

Central to the design of Aquarius is the use of Ocean Thermal-Energy Conversion (OTEC) units. OTEC exploits the temperature difference between upper and lower levels of the ocean to provide power. The process works like a refrigerator in reverse, evaporating and condensing a working fluid that drives a turbine and produces energy. This non-polluting ener-

gy source has the added benefit of circulating organic nutrients from the sea floor. This "mariculture" can be used to promote the harvest of seafood for local consumption.¹⁵

The Living Universe Foundation is taking its first preliminary step by creating a land-based colony, the Space Environment Ecovillage (SEE-1), near Austin, Texas. Its first "colonist" has been living on site for several months in a trailer.

Many of the concepts of Aquarius are reflected in the design of the floating city of *Nexus*. Designed by architect and urban designer Eugene Tsui, Nexus was originally planned as a sovereign state. Unlike other floating islands, this would be mobile and self-propelled, using OTECs as a primary energy source.¹⁶

The island would take the shape of a horseshoe crab, with a mountain range at one end of the island to dissipate the impact of wave action during transit.

Multiple self-governing communities would populate the island. These communities would derive their economic sustenance from tourism, mineral dredging, and fish farming. Multiple small communities would be important in suppressing anti-social tendencies by having each member of the ocean city as part of a small extended family. These communities would also provide opportunities for cultural diversity.

Originally designed in 1986, there are no current plans for development.¹⁷

The Celestopia Project is dedicated to the "planned colonization of the earth's oceans through a series of self-sufficient, semi-autonomous, floating cities located in international waters and incorporating innovative new technologies, industries and social organization." The founders of Celestopia envision the colonization of the ocean through a worldwide series of autonomous, self-sustaining floating cities with populations of between 5,000 to 10,000 people each. These cities will also generate their energy needs through the use of OTECs. Furthermore, "Celestopean Elemental Separators" will be used to separate hydrogen, oxygen, gold, platinum and other valuable minerals from seawater.¹⁸

Meanwhile, "seadome" living quarters will be constructed using ferrocement. These dome-shaped structures will also be less vulnerable to wind and other forms of erosion. The ferrocement is created by covering a fine wire mesh on a rebar skeleton with a cement mixture and is invulnerable to rust, rot, corrosion, and fire.¹⁹

While there is no single doctrine involved in the Celestopian vision, it appears to have a distinctively "New Age" flavor. Of unique interest to this project is the founder's commitment to developing a separate community as an experiment in doubling the human life span through a "longevity lifestyle", which includes regular meditation, germ-reduced living areas, a "raw foods" vegetarian diet and regular exercise.

SuperShips

The projects in this category take a different approach and attempt to build permanent self-governing communities onboard nautical vessels. These have the benefits of increased mobility and the ability to use traditional building techniques.

ResidenSea's The World: This posh floating community is now celebrating its first anniversary with over 70 full-time residents and 300 onboard staff. What makes this community different than other "microtopias" is that it is not developed on an artificial island or platform of any sort. Nor, does it claim status as an independent state. Rather, it is a super-luxury cruise liner with 110 furnished condominiums, ranging in price from \$2.3m to \$7.5m each. *The World* features two swimming pools, five restaurants, a full-sized tennis court, a library, health spa and fitness center. Bored residents can also whack biodegradable golf balls from the top deck.²⁰

Is this a utopia or just a floating country club? *The World* is unique in that it is a permanent residence for many of its guests. Worried about one's neighbors? All residents are carefully interviewed and vetted.

For the "citizens of the world", having no permanent on-land residence can potentially generate enormous tax benefits. According to

David Rutnam, a director of Deloitte & Touche's private client group, full-time residents from the U.K. could eventually avoid paying capital gains taxes and income taxes.²¹

An even more ambitious plan is that of the *Freedom Ship*, a two-mile long floating city circumnavigating the globe once every three years. Onboard would be a carefully designed self-contained community of apartments, schools, businesses, parks and hydroponic gardens. The ship would generate its own power and be in contact with the world through internet, satellite phones and teleconferencing. The boat would be too large to dock, but would be capable of hosting helicopters, prop planes and small jets.

Its 25-story deck would host a daily population of 100,000 people, including 40,000 owner-residents. There are currently 100 volunteers working on the project, working an average of 40 hours per week.²² An IPO of at least \$800 million will be required to fund initial construction.²³

Emerging Issues

Many challenges await these developing projects. The first issue is being able to attract a permanent population. It takes an unusual person who is willing to leave his or her present circumstances to live in an experimental environment. Will all of these unusual people be able to live together for any lengthy period of time? Job opportunities will be much more limited, and social interaction may be restricted to just a few (hopefully) like-minded individuals. Many of the conveniences of modern life may be foregone in some of the more basic efforts.

Furthermore, there are also the issues of *governance*. The initial residents of many of these ventures will be self-selecting. Microtopias developed upon certain ideological or religious values systems may find that their appeal may be limited to even narrower segments of the population. Some of these efforts become exclusive to the point of extinction. For better or worse, "there really isn't a corner of the world that wants to be ruled by a band of skinny college students quoting Atlas Shrugged."²⁴

That being said, the likelihood of a microtopia being governed under alternative philosophical premises is much greater than that of a larger country being ruled under similar grounds. If microtopias can ever be developed in a cost-efficient manner, they can serve as laboratories to effectively test principles of decision-making, conflict resolution and policy.

Microtopias have the benefit of not having any sort of pre-history. They are built without pre-existing traditions, laws, or culture. As such, they represent an opportunity for significant leaps in social evolution.

Variance in cultural values and other forms of decision-making can have a dramatic impact on the success of populations with access to similar resources and technologies. For instance, one could compare the economic development of mainland China with the former colony of Hong Kong. Another example would be a comparison of eastern and western Berlin, beginning with the end of the World War II. Other examples are too numerous to list.

Would there not be a benefit to establishing a level of small-scale social experimentation in which the failures can be minimized and the successes copied? Microtopias have the benefit of being physically isolated from neighboring states. So, the impact of various external influences can be identified, and the success of a community can be evaluated on its own terms.

Artificial micronations have always faced significant issues of *acceptance* within the international community. As outlined in the Montevideo Convention, a government can only exist when it has the capacity to enter into relationships with other states. This presumes that other governments are willing to accept it as a legitimate entity. Considerable controversy exists over natural landed territories, including Tibet and Taiwan, much less the Principality of Sealand.

In order for true "citizenship" to occur, local passports need to be accepted by foreign authorities. In order to be economically viable, contracts signed within a new state need to be honored and enforced. Local currency and other mediums of exchange would need to be

acceptable by all of the involved parties. Such simple things such as an effective mail system would be rendered ineffective unless the addresses used are recognizable by foreign postal services.

The simple freedoms offered by artificial micronations are available only if current states are willing to grant them. Unless a new nation is accepted within the global community, many freedoms (such as the freedom to travel and communicate) are sharply curtailed.

Even basic human rights can be sharply diminished if a new nation does not have the ability to safeguard them. How can a new nation be reasonably expected to defend itself? While Sealand was able to ward off attack of a small group of invading thugs with a single shotgun, other artificial micronations have shared worse fates.

Rose Island was a 400 square meter platform built in international waters off the Italian town of Rimini in 1968. It printed local currency, issued stamps and reported Esperanto as its official language. Shortly after its completion, however, it was destroyed by the Italian navy.²⁵ The Republic of Minerva suffered a similar demise in the South Pacific several years later.

Existing governments may view new nations in nearby waters as nuisances or threats. To make matters worse, the nearest neighboring government is now required to consent the construction of any artificial island pursuant to the United Nations convention on the laws of the sea signed on December 10, 1982.²⁶ Furthermore, this convention requires the neighboring state to pull down any artificial constructions immediately after use or to have them removed.²⁷ This convention applies even for areas outside of territorial coastal waters and legitimizes the use of force against nations formed on artificial landmasses.

For many microtopias, the best defense may be to stay as inoffensive as possible. Keeping a low profile, avoiding negative publicity and respecting local laws may keep them off the radar screen from local neighboring officials. Another alternative strategy is to stay on the move. Structures such as the Freedom Ship and Nexus offer some propulsion and naviga-

tion capabilities that could enable them to stay out of harm's way. More controversial microtopias may find that they need to move faster to stay out of arm's reach from competing authorities.

Political considerations aside, there are also many purely *physical challenges* to creation of a floating microtopia. The sea is a harsh and difficult environment for construction. Storms, waves and ocean currents all pose potential design challenges. The ocean is largely a 3% solution of salt water, which has known corrosive qualities. Biofouling from barnacles and local plant life can impair mobility and longevity for any ocean-going craft.²⁸

These issues can turn the creation of a floating paradise into a potentially expensive proposition. Projects such as the Freedom Ship will cost billions of dollars to complete. Countless new country projects have floundered due to inadequate funding. Unless these projects are made profitable (such as at ResidenSea), very few of them will be funded as a matter of philanthropic principal.

Furthermore, there is also the issue of financing. One could hardly expect to apply for a 30-year mortgage backed by the Federal Housing Authority for an experimental seastead. (How would it pass inspection?) This issue alone could place many of these alternative communities out of consideration for many.

Assuming that a microtopia is established, there is also the question of *sustainability*. A microtopia may be responsible for the generation of its own food, energy, raw materials and economic support.

A "balance of energy" is required such that a microtopia should have a self-sufficient supply of energy, or else it will have to rely upon outside sources. Many plans for microtopias rely on OTEC technology (explained earlier). While this is uniquely appropriate for oceanic colonies, it is still a largely theoretical technology. Also, OTECs have some scalability issues. Large OTECS can exploit much greater thermal differential and therefore generate significant levels of productivity. Unfortunately, initial start-up costs increase dramatically with size as well. There are currently no operating OTEC

plants. Several projects have treated OTEC as a virtually free energy source, when it is in reality very expensive.²⁹ Alternatives to this would be solar or wind energy, which are generally competitive with traditional sources of energy only when located "off-grid".

If a microtopia were able to successfully commission an OTEC generator, it would also benefit from many of the positive "side-effects" of producing energy using this method of production.

According to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, an OTEC can also be used to generate electricity, desalinate water, support deep-water mariculture and provide refrigeration/air-conditioning as well as aid in crop growth and mineral extraction. OTEC can also be used to produce methanol, ammonia, hydrogen, aluminum, chlorine, and other chemicals. Floating OTEC processing plants that produce these products would not require a power cable, and station-keeping costs would be reduced.³⁰

Similarly, there may also be some issues around providing raw materials for construction and expansion of a microtopia. Being in the middle of the ocean, trees and other forms of rigid organic material are not readily available. Stone and other mineral resource would be hidden deep under water.

One possible solution built-into the design of many future-oriented microtopias involves the use of "Seament". This process was pioneered by Wolf Hilbertz at the University of Texas in the 1970's. In the process, a power source generates an electrical current in close proximity to a conductive material submerged in salt water. Ultimately, electrodeposited calcareous deposits (solidified calcium carbonate and magnesium hydroxide) form a building material that is both stronger and lighter than traditional concrete.³¹ Seacrete manufacturing facilities require only a conducting surface and an electrical source, making them ideal for oceanic communities.

However, subsequent experiments by Eric Lee at the Millennial Project have found that manufacturing something as simple as a flowerpot could be prohibitively expensive and/or

time consuming using this technique.³² Hilbertz is now directing his efforts towards restoring coral reefs using the technology.

In any event, current technology will require considerable improvement before it becomes economically accessible.

From an *economic* perspective, creating a thriving economy could prove challenging with minimal population mass or access to varied raw materials. Sealand has proven successful with its strategy as designating itself as an electronic data center. The various cruise boat projects, including *The World and Freedom Ship* offer significant entertainment options.

The most common attraction of many proposed microtopias is their potential as tax havens. However, there are some harsh realities associated with this approach.

United States citizens are taxed on worldwide income based upon their U.S. citizenship. Foreign source income only serves as an offset to U.S. taxes. So, an offshore-based business in a tax-free zone producing income for a U.S. citizen would still create a personal income liability at U.S. tax rates. Furthermore there are significant "exit taxes" for those that choose to give up their U.S. citizenship. The U.S. has the ability to tax former citizens for at least ten years after citizenship is exchanged (This presumes, of course, that it accepts the sovereignty of the nation for which new citizenship is granted).

In some cases, the U.S. Department of State can decide to sit on paperwork and never complete the requirements to allow an individual to be released from citizenship. This particular issue made the press several years ago when former President Clinton pardoned international financier Marc Rich for tax evasion during his last months of office.

European citizens, on the other hand, are taxed based upon residency. So, for example a British resident of France will pay French taxes, and so on. This offers somewhat greater tax arbitrage for European subjects. The burden of proof, however, relies upon creating a "critical mass of contacts" to establish the precise location of residency. This includes logging where time is physically spent, sources of earned income, and locations of banking and principal

transactions.

The challenge for European citizens is in finding a location of residency that offers a combination of low taxes, personal amenities and a low cost of living. For many, this location is the United States.

Some tax consultants and newsletter writers suggest that wealthy clients become "perpetual travelers" (also known as PT's) and avoid establishing a fixed permanent residence. Aside from the personal inconveniences of moving every several months, international tax law is beginning to "close in" on this evasion strategy. For many countries, the taxable base of PT's reverts to the domicile of their origin.³³

So there may be relatively few viable alternatives for citizens of established nations. Once a citizen of a country, that citizenship can only be relinquished when it is traded for citizenship of another accepted nation. One potential loophole for this is for those individuals that are actually born in offshore circumstances. For better or worse, some countries (such as the United States) would claim citizenship for a child based upon the legal citizenship status of the parents, irregardless of the fact that the child was born in international waters.

Futures Scenarios

Putting aside the current legal, technological and financial constraints - what might microtopias look like in the future? Will they be self-governing or extensions of mainland jurisdictions? To what extent will they use and promote emerging technologies?

While it is difficult to truly tell how they will be eventually funded, the emergence of microtopias may occur as a result of either public or private funding. They may be praised for their successes, or noted for the audacity of their failure.

Here are several possible "headlines from the future":

'Ship of Fools' Criticized

April 4, 2011

Baltimore, MD. Mayor John Calvert's pro-

posed "New Baltimore" project was wildly derided by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in a press conference earlier today.

"It is a transgression of every personal liberty known to society," said Mr. Stafford of the ACLU. "People will be pushed out of their neighborhood to live in this floating prison. They will be denied freedom of movement, free speech, and access to work. They will be cut off from adequate medical care and treated as second-class citizens."

The New Baltimore project is the latest step in Baltimore's inner city restoration efforts. After extensive meetings with urban planners, and community leaders, the city of Baltimore is offering free housing and social services to residents of this floating city moored in the Chesapeake Bay. As part of this centralized plan for issuing social services, prisons and psychiatric wards will also be located on the same facility - thus lending itself the moniker "Ship of Fools".

"This plan will provide food and shelter for the needy people of this community, and will revitalize our city", said Mayor Calvert in a speech last week. City Treasurer James Hamilton says that New Baltimore "will save our police and social services departments hundred of millions of dollars per year" and will also "significantly reduce violence on our streets".

There has been substantial debate surrounding the project since inception. Some observers feel that the Russe Corporation, a major contributor to Mayor Calvert's campaign, will greatly benefit by purchasing inner city real estate for redevelopment at below-market prices. Others are closely examining the selection of construction and naval consulting firms hired for New Baltimore Project.

Emma Williams, whose home has been condemned for razing by the Baltimore Housing Authority, says that "I'll miss my place more than anything. It just ain't like Baltimore used to be."

Lost Sea Colony Found Surviving and Thriving in North Pacific

August, 2023

Butte, Montana. The navy of Montana has recently encountered a lost branch of old American history as the sailing ship Meridian encountered "an unusual vessel, using unidentified technology", according to Captain Sara Lightfoot. The

Meridian followed the direction of the vessel, and was surprised by its speed. "It reminded me of the old gasoline-powered vessels that existed before *The Shortage* and *The Collapse*. There were no sails or other visible means of propulsion, yet it was perfectly quiet."

The mysterious vessel was later found at dock in what could only be described as a "floating city". The Meridian was greeted by hundreds of frightened, yet intrigued group consisting of several hundred people, including families with small children. After raising up a flag of peace, the crew of the Meridian was allowed on board, where they engaged in a lively discussion with the communities elders and were well fed with a spectacular array of fish, sea vegetables, and hydroponically grown foods.

According to local lore, the Robin Hood was founded in the 00's by the Kevin Costner Foundation as an experimental community. After its initial success, the Robin Hood created four other communities, beginning with the "Field Of Dreams". Each of these communities was named after the film actor's movies.

Kevin Costner has largely been forgotten by the citizens of Butte, yet he has obtained an almost saintly status for the inhabitants of the Robin Hood. "Kevin Costner was a prophet and a savior", said one of their local leaders. "It's just like he predicted in *Waterworld* and *The Postman*. The tyranny of nations has been destroyed forever. Tribes represent the natural state of an integrated society."

The Robin Hood and its sister cities have existed in isolation for the past thirty years. Only recently have rumors of their existence started to circulate on the mainland.

Rogue Database Found, Leaders Detained and Reprogrammed

January 5, 2080

Curacao. In the south pacific, the Global Peace Force identified the exact location of the "Wayfarer" database, an internationally notorious repository of lies, misrepresentation, and illicit code.

While authorities have speculated the exact location of the Wayfarer database, government hackers recently discovered that it was onboard a fast-moving nano-foil in the Gulf of Mexico.

Peace Force marines successfully took possession of the facility in a daring daytime raid. The facility

was immobilized by EMF grenades from the naval cruiser Montreal. Minutes later, the marines met limited resistance from the cybernetically enhanced denizens who were temporarily immobilized by the blast.

The Wayfarer database has been distributing "text-bombs" via a carefully distributed network of nano-clouds. As part of a network of cryptonations, the Wayfarer self-styles itself as a "free state", and subsequently not subject to the laws of The Global Society.

For the past several months, the Wayfarer database has eluded authorities. Clouded by a perennial nano-smog, the Wayfarer disguised itself from satellite observation. Enhanced stealth technology, which was leaked onto the internet earlier last year, provided the necessary radar shielding.

Chinese Delegation Sent to Visit Tokyo Bay City

August, 2020

The Chinese government announced today that it will be sending a Chinese delegation to visit Tokyo Bay City sometime later this month.

Tokyo Bay City is a successful joint venture between the Japanese government and the Mitsubishi Corporation.

Construction on Tokyo Bay City began ten years ago as a way to address overcrowding in Tokyo. At the time, many workers were forced to suffer two to three-hour commutes in order to find affordable housing. Rampant housing shortages were a significant problem, as many of the best and brightest young people were forced to move out of the country - many of them to Korea or the United States.

"Everyone wins with Tokyo Bay City," said Prime Minister Inamoto Mori. "The Japanese people have access to good housing and clean energy, and the Mitsubishi Company opens up a new, exciting market".

Tokyo Bay City is an artificial floating island located just minutes away from downtown Tokyo. It is a widely watched experiment in the privatization of public services.

The Chinese government is purportedly looking at similar models of development.

Best Case Scenario

In a best case scenario, microtopias will receive adequate funding to be built at a reasonable scale. While it is doubtful that they will obtain full status as independent states, it would be reasonable to assume that they may be able to obtain some degree of local authority. In any event, some advances in technology may be required to make these projects economically viable.

Microtopias offer the opportunity to literally design communities "from the ground up", and may be able to integrate advances in energy and food production. In an ideal world, microtopias could be designed to become entirely self-sufficient, and could be used as eventual models in the colonization of the galaxy. Many of the lessons learned in developing sustainable cultures in isolated environments may become critical in our future history.

The development of microtopias lends itself to experimentation and innovation. They also have the potential to solve many of the problems that we are currently facing as a species, including resource depletion, overpopulation and global warming.

Cultural Context and Meaning

What do microtopias mean for us in a broader sense? As a symbol or metaphor, what desires and needs do these places fulfill?

Microtopias seem to project our own dreams and inner landscapes. They represent the "sand castles" of our imagination - they are both malleable and subject to changing tides. For some, microtopias reflect a desire for freedom and material wealth. For others, they represent merely a "day at the beach" - a source of entertainment and leisure. Finally, they can also represent a need to create idealized worlds of our own. For many, this is a vision of living in harmony with the environment.

These "small domains" are very reminiscent of the planets in Antoine de Saint-Exupery's classic story, *The Little Prince*. Each planet is ruled by a single character, who lives out his own desires. Some planets are inhabited by fic-

titious businessmen, counting fictitious profits. Others are ruled by kings claiming absolute dominion over... absolutely nothing. Each planet reflects our own inner desires, and sometimes our madness.

Life on these planets can be precarious. The Little Prince's planet is so small that it could be destroyed by a single baobab tree.

On the Little Prince's planet is a single flower – his greatest pride and joy. So says the Prince, "If some one loves a flower, of which just one single blossom grows in all the millions and millions of stars, it is enough to make him happy just to look at the stars. He can say to himself: 'Somewhere, my flower is there...'"

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Notes

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