

## Baudrillard "Updates"

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### \*INC Environment Link\*

**Nature is dead, replaced by the affirmative simulation of environment which both predicts its own demise and possibilities of restoration. Ecological capital becomes the ultimate basis upon which life is sustained, allowing for imperial intervention in order to prevent its demise**

Timothy Luke, Poli Sci at Viginia Polytech, 1997

[www.cddc.vt.edu/tims/Tim528.PDF](http://www.cddc.vt.edu/tims/Tim528.PDF)

V. Environmentalism as the Highest Stage of Capitalism All of these environmentalizing initiatives reveal different aspects of Nature's infrastructuralization in the disorganized and incomplete transnational campaigns of environmentalized capital's terraforming programs. The actions of the Worldwatch Institute, the Nature Conservancy, or the World Wildlife Fund, or the Sierra Club are frameworks within which a new habitus with its own environmentalized social relations of production and consumption can come alive by guarding habitat as the supremely perfect site of habitus. As Baudrillard observes, "the great signified, the great referent Nature is dead, replaced by environment, which simultaneously designates and designs its death and the restoration of nature as simulation model...we enter a social environment of synthesis in which a total abstract communication and an imminent manipulation no longer leave any point exterior to the system."<sup>115</sup> Rendering wildlife, air, water, habitat, or Nature into complex new systems of rare goods in the name of environmental protection, and then regulating the social consumption of them through ecological activism shows how 45 mainstream environmentalists are serving as agents of social control or factors in political economy to reintegrate the intractable equations of (un)wise (ab)use along consummational rather than consumptive lines. Putting earth first only establishes ecological capital as the ultimate basis of life. Infrastructuralizing Nature renders everything on Earth, or "humanity's home," into capital-land, labor, animals, plants, air, water, genes, ecosystems. And, mainstream environmentalism often becomes a very special kind of "home eco nomics" to manage humanity's indoors and outdoors household accounts. Household consumption is always home consumption, because human economics rests upon terrestrial ecologics. Here the roots of ecology and economics intertwine through "sustainable development," revealing its truest double significance: sustainably managing the planet is the same thing as reproducing terrestrial stocks of infrastructuralized green capital. Whether or not environmentalists prevent the unwise abuse or promote wise use of natural resources is immaterial; everything they do optimizes the sign value of green goods and serves to reproduce global capital as environmentalized sites, stocks or spaces—an outcome that every Worldwatch Institute State of the World report or Club Sierra ecotour easily confirms. Likewise, the scarcity measures of Nature Conservancy or World Wildlife Fund scare campaigns show how everything now has a price, including wildlife preservation or ecological degradation, which global markets will mark and meet in their (un)wise (ab)use of environmentalized resources. Newer ecological discourses about total cost accounting, lifecycle management, or environmental justice may simply articulate more refined efforts to sustainably develop these bigger global processes of universal capitalization by accepting small correctives against particular capitalist interests. Admitting that poor people have been treated unjustly in siting decisions for environmental bads lets rich people redistribute these ecological costs across more sites so that they might benefit from the material and symbolic goods created by being just so environmental. Environmental justice movements perhaps are not so much about attaining environmental justice as they are about moving injustices more freely around in the environment, assuring the birth of new consumerisms for increased efficiency at risk management and broader participation ecological degradation in our terraformed Nature.

## Sustainability Link 1

### Simulations of sustainable ecological projects allow for discipline and the regulation of populations.

Timothy Luke, Poli Sci at Viginia Polytech, 1997

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A political, economic, and technical incitement to talk about ecology, environments, and Nature, first surfaced as the social project of "environmentalism" during the 1960s in the United States, but it plainly has become far more pronounced in the 1990s. Not much of this takes the form of general theory, because most of its practices have been instead steered toward analysis, stock taking, and classification in quantitative, causal, and humanistic studies. Nonetheless, one can follow Foucault by exploring how mainstream environmentalism in the United States operates as "a whole series of different tactics that combined in varying proportions the objective of disciplining the body and that of regulating populations."<sup>3</sup> The project of "sustainability," whether one speaks of sustainable development, growth or use in relation to Earth's ecologies, embodies this new responsibility for the life processes in the American state's rationalized harmonization of political economy with global ecology as a form of green geo-politics.

These interconnections become even more intriguing in the aftermath of the Cold War. Having won the long twilight struggle against communist totalitarianism, the United States is governed by leaders who now see "Earth in the balance," arguing that global ecologies incarnate what is best and worst in the human spirit. On the one hand, economists, industrialists, and political leaders increasingly tend to represent the strategic terrain of the post-1991 world system as one on which all nations must compete ruthlessly to control the future development of the world economy by developing new technologies, dominating more markets, and exploiting every national economic asset. However, the phenomenon of "failed states," ranging from basket cases like Rwanda, Somalia or Angola to crippled entities like Ukraine, Afghanistan or Kazakhstan, often is attributed to the severe environmental frictions associated with the (un)wise (ab)use of Nature by ineffective strategies for creating economic growth.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, environmental protection issues--ranging from resource conservation to sustainable development to ecosystem restoration--are getting greater consideration in the name of creating jobs, maintaining growth, or advancing technological development.<sup>4</sup> Taking "ecology" into account, then, creates discourses on "the environment" that derive not only from morality, but from rationality as well. As humanity has faced "the limits of growth" and heard "the population bomb" ticking away, ecologies and environments became something more than what one must judge morally; they became things that state must administer. Ecology has evolved into "a public potential; it called for management procedures; it had to be taken charge of by analytical discourses," as it was recognized in its environmentalized manifestations to be "a police matter"--not the repression of disorder, but an ordered maximization of collective and individual forces.<sup>5</sup>

## Sustainability Link 2

**Methods of ecological sustainability allows for biopolitical strategies of consumptive survivalism. Power invests life with the necessity to be sustained, allowing for new means of social control**

Timothy Luke, Poli Sci at Viginia Polytech, 1997

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Sustainability, like sexuality, would become another expert discourse about exerting power over life.<sup>81</sup> What the biopower strategies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries helped fabricate in terms of human sexuality now must be reimagined for humanity in worsening global conditions of survival as a perfected consummative survivalism. How development might "invest life through and through" becomes a new sustainability challenge, once biopolitical relations are established, in making these investments permanently profitable as consummational systems of objects.<sup>82</sup> Thus, the Worldwatch Institute issues pamphlet after monograph after book on the supreme virtues of bicycles, solar power, windmills, urban planning, or organic agriculture to reveal the higher forms of consumer goods perfection attainable by the system of objects. Moreover, sustainability more or less presumes that some level of material and cultural existence has been attained that is indeed worth sustaining. This formation, then, constitutes "a new distribution of pleasures, discourses, truths, and powers; it has to be seen as the self-affirmation of one class rather than the enslavement of another: a defense, a protection, a strengthening, and an exaltation...as a means of social control and political subjugation."<sup>83</sup> Sustainable development means developing new consummative powers through defining a new model of green subjectivity organized around sustaining both new object worlds in a more survivable second nature and new consummational systems for their surviving subjects.

## Crisis Management Link 1

**Nature has been replaced by the environment, a crisis ridden simulation which requires panoptic surveillance and management in order to ensure its survival**

Timothy Luke, Poli Sci at Viginia Polytech, 1997

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The wild autogenic otherness or settled theogenic certainty of "Nature" is being replaced by the denatured anthropogenic systems of "the environment." The World Commission of Environment and Development admits humanity is unable to fit "its doings" into the "pattern of clouds, oceans, greenery, and soils" that is the Earth. The hazards of this new reality cannot be escaped, but they "must be recognized--and managed."<sup>26</sup> Through astropoanoptic technoscience, "we can see and study the Earth as an organism whose health depends on the health of all its parts," which gives us "the power to reconcile human affairs with natural laws and to thrive in the process."<sup>27</sup> This reconciliation rests upon understanding "natural systems," expanding "the environmental resource base," managing "environmental decay," or controlling "environmental trends."<sup>27</sup> As the Rio Declaration asserts, Earth's "integral and interdependent nature" can be, and then is, redefined as "the global environmental and developmental

system" in which what was once God's wild Nature becomes technoscientific managerialists' tame ecosystems.<sup>28</sup> The hazards of living on Earth cannot be avoided or escaped, but Earth itself can be escaped in rededicating human production and consumption to hazard avoidance by reimagining Nature as terrestrial infrastructure. The astropoanopticon's epiphany of seeing the Earth from space--remember the Brundtland Report's opening line, "In the middle of the 20th century, we saw our planet from space for the first time" has ironically become a self-fulfilling prophecy by exerting "a greater impact on thought than did the Copernican revolution of the 16th century."<sup>29</sup> Like those humans of our spacefaring future who will not let Mars, be Mars, Luna, be Luna, or some other off-world, be a world-off, Earth no longer can be allowed to just be the Earth. Instead Terra is being terra(re)formed by seeing for the first time from

space its "natural ecosystems" and "environmental resource base" which humans can see, study and manage in their quest to optimize the processes of surviving and thriving. The Preamble to Agenda

21 reverberates the impact of these thoughts for the Brundtland 10 Report's future historians: Humanity stands at a defining moment in history. We are confronted with a perpetuation of disparities between and within nations, a worsening of poverty, hunger, ill health and illiteracy, and the continuing deterioration of the ecosystems on which we depend for our well-being. However, integration of environment and development concerns and greater attention to them will lead to the fulfillment of basic needs, improved living standards for all, better protected and managed ecosystems and a safer, more prosperous future. No nation can achieve this on its own, but together we can - in a global partnership for sustainable development.<sup>30</sup> Plainly, the Preamble to Agenda 21 could as easily be named the Terraforming Compact inasmuch as its basic sentiments sum up "humanity's" managerial imperatives in the Earth's infrastructuralization.

Integrating environmental and developmental systems in "global partnership" to better protect all ecosystems and improve living standards for all through technoscientific terraforming. Under this terraforming horizon, what seems little more than an aside in Agenda 21, in fact, reveals a great deal more. When this document would have us recognize "the integral and interdependent Nature of the Earth," it emphasizes how the Earth is "our home."<sup>31</sup> Terraforming, then, is a form of globalized "home building," whose processes and progress should be monitored from two sets of now commonly-denominated books: the registers of oikonomia as well as the ledgers of oikologos. The

infrastructuralization of the Earth reimagines it as a rational responsive household in which economically action commodifies everything, utilizes anything, wastes nothing, blending the natural and the social into a single but vast set of household accounts whose performativities must constantly weigh consumption against production at every level of analysis from suburbia to the stratosphere in balancing the terrestrial budgets of ecological modernization. The infrastructuralization of Nature through environmentalizing movements and discourses propels contemporary societies and economies beyond the autogenic givenness of Nature into terraformative anthropogenesis, dissolving the formal boundaries between inside/outside, Nature/Culture, or earth/economy. As Baudrillard observes, "it implies practical computation and conceptualization on the basis of a total abstraction, the notion of a world no longer given but instead produced--mastered, manipulated, inventoried, controlled: a world, in short, that has to be constructed."<sup>32</sup>

## Crisis Management Link 2

**Discourses of the environmental crisis create risk conditions which allows for environments to be subjected to disciplinary management and commodification**

Timothy Luke, Poli Sci at Viginia Polytech, 1997

[www.cddc.vt.edu/tims/Tim528.PDF](http://www.cddc.vt.edu/tims/Tim528.PDF)

This is our time's Copernican revolution: the anthropogenic demands of terraforming require a biocentric worldview in which the alienated objectivity of natural subjectivity resurfaces objectively in managerial theory and practice as "ecosystem" and "resource base" in "the environment." Terraforming the Earth environmentalizes a once wild piece of the cosmos, domesticating it as "humanity's home" or "our environment." From narratives of world pandemics, global warming, or planetary pollution, global governance from the astropanopticon now runs its risk analyses and threat scenarios to protect Mother Earth from home-grown and foreign threats, as the latest security panics over asteroid

impacts or X-File extraterrestrials in the United States express in the domains of popular culture. Whether it is space locusts from Independence Day or space rocks snuffing out Dallas in Asteroid, new security threats are casting their shadows over our 12 homes, cities, and biomes for those thinking geo-economically in the astropanopticon. From such sites of supervision, environmentalists see from above and from without, like the NASA-eyed view of Earth from Apollo spacecraft, through the enveloping astropanoptic designs of administratively controllable terraformed systems.<sup>35</sup> Encircled by enclosures of alarm, environments can be disassembled, recombined, and subjected to expert managers' disciplinary designs. Beset and beleaguered by these all encompassing interventions, environments as ecosystems and terraformations can be redirected to fulfill the ends of new economic scripts, managerial directives or administrative writs.<sup>36</sup> How various environmentalists might embed different instrumental rationalities into the policing of ecosystems is an intriguing question, which will be explored below.

## Environmental Management Link

**Environmental management IS discipline. Protected spaces are created so that they can be policed, managed, and surveilled**

Timothy Luke, Poli Sci at Viginia Polytech, 1997

[www.cddc.vt.edu/tim/tims/Tim528.PDF](http://www.cddc.vt.edu/tim/tims/Tim528.PDF)

An environmental act, even though the connotations of most contemporary greenspeak suggests otherwise, is a disciplinary move.<sup>33</sup> Environmentalism in these terms strategically polices space in order to encircle sites and subjects captured within these enveloping maneuvers, guarding them, standing watch over them, or even besieging them. And, each of these actions aptly express the terraforming programs of sustainable development. Seen from the astropanopticon, Earth is enveloped in the managerial designs of global commerce, which environmentalize once wild Nature as now controllable ecosystems. Terraforming the wild biophysical excesses and unoptimized geophysical wastes of the Earth necessitates the mobilization of a worldwatch to maintain nature conservancies and husband the worldwide funds of wildlife. Of course, Earth must be put first; the fully rational potentials of second nature's terraformations can be neither fabricated nor administered unless and until earth first is infrastructuralized.<sup>34</sup>

## Environment Link

**Environmental movements are not shifts away from consumerism, rather they merely replace mass consumption with new sign systems of environmental calculus and globalized capitalism**

Timothy Luke, Poli Sci at Viginia Polytech, 1997

[www.ccdc.vt.edu/tim/tims/Tim528.PDF](http://www.ccdc.vt.edu/tim/tims/Tim528.PDF)

It is through these object-codes and their aestheticized means of mass propagation that art and activism influence the ecology of global fast capitalism. The real facticity of transnational capitalism gains continuous (re)expression through the number, style, design, shape and color of mass produced material objects adduced by the imagination of commercialized arts and design. Likewise, the codes of desire, need, and want are (re)denominated moralistically in ethical terms, first, to attract and, then, to keep individuals expressing their personal desires in terms of scientifically designed and organizationally produced material satisfactions.<sup>63</sup> Without artists and activists, the consummative society could not endlessly redynamize its unrelenting production of newer goods, tamer products, and fresher images consumptively. Yet, as the efforts of many environmental activists indicate, it also need not be grounded upon the superexhaustive use of Nature and its ecosystemic resources.<sup>64</sup> The destruction of Nature, in part, begins in every individual instrumentalized imagination mobilized by the market or the firm to make individuals always desire more, want everything longer, and wish it better in purely consumptive terms. Mass consumption is consumptuous consuming by the masses of massed materiale. Yet, this sort of mindless mass consumption by consuming masses is precisely what many environmental movements want to moderate, if not obliterate, by interposing new signs systems in the more mindful cost/benefit environmentalized calculus of consummational perfection. As the activities of the Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy, or the Worldwide Wildlife Fund illustrate, environmentalism can adduce new kinds of consumer reports for consummation, highlighting the virtues of ecologically enhanced consuming, environmental savings, or ecotouristic buying to find new functionalities for fast capitalism's objects and needs. Developing a unique personal identity or purpose under a consumptive cultural horizon essentially has boiled down to reassembling pre-packaged purposes imputed by the aestheticized 23 codings of one's income level, occupation, residence or material possessions in psychodemographic discourses about national economic development. The corporate plan for greater sales, for example, served in part as an individual behavioral map for loosely programmed personal development. General Motors produces cars, and it wants to dominate the autoworld of global automotive markets. Through focus group research, it discovers what one or more demographic blocs of buyers desire. And in concretizing their desire for "freedom," "excitement," or "practicality," it fulfills its purposes of producing profits by selling the identity/commodity of Oldsmobiles, Pontiacs, or Geos to individuals who "succeed" by mapping their desires in/with these products. What is good for Americans, then, is good for General Motors. This process, however, goes beyond automobiles: all psychosocial development for any given person's mazeway in life is defined broadly in terms of accumulating standardized objects or consuming conventionalized experiences produced within the marketplace. However, the terraforming imperatives of transnational capitalism acknowledge the need for a more regulated environment by accepting environmental regulations, albeit often kicking and screaming in the process, which moves new sign values into consummativity's equations. On the one hand, GM "builds excitement" at Pontiac, while it, on the other hand, promises "to do something nice for your mother," or Nature, by planting a tree for every Geo it sells. Seeing Earth from a spacecraft is forcing many capitalist concerns to approach mass production and consumption with new forms of space crafting which recast industry as industrial metabolism, product lifecycles as lifecycle production, and corporate marketing as green consumerism. Putting Earth first on the world watch of terraforming, then, leads to new green sign values for global fast capitalism. Slowing down, getting more organized, simplifying things, or scaling back become semiotic goods or sign values to acquire, display or practice. Indeed, environmentalizing exchange at times begins to look like a capitalist global fast. Yet, environmentalized consumerism is not insignificant, "far from the individual expressing his needs in the economic system," as Baudrillard claims, "it is the economic system that induces the individual function and parallel functionality of objects and needs."<sup>65</sup> Consummativity read postconsumptively through consummational consumer reports also will be no more than "an ideological structure, a historical form correlative with the commodity form (exchange value), and the object form (use value)"<sup>66</sup> required by the green goals of terraformative sustainable development. Environmentalizing consumption along the lines tested by some environmental movements is an intriguing attempt to transform raw consumption into refined consummation.

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Environmentalism, then, should not be automatically assumed to be opposed to mass consumption, as many in the "wise use" movement have claimed. Of course, there are factions among the environmental movement, ranging from voluntary simplicity to deep ecology, who tout the virtues of consuming less, consuming differently, or consuming nothing.<sup>71</sup> However, they typically take these positions as part of a more general rejection of modern production as well. Their anti-industrial pretensions, in turn, are often not well-supported in either their theories or practices inasmuch as producing/consuming nothing soon would cause mass economic chaos, producing/consuming differently often boils down to defending certain privileged artifacts or crafts against mass market pressures, and producing/consuming less frequently seems like a new rationing scheme to reallocate poverty. While most environmental rhetorics sound anticonsummative, many of them upon closer reading perhaps should be more rightly understood as pro-consummational in their postconsumptive reasoning.

## MPA Link

**The affirmative reduces the environment to a series of strategically manageable consumable spaces, allowing for the exercise of biopower over populations with the justification of preventing environmental destruction**

Timothy Luke, Poli Sci at Viginia Polytech, 1997

[www.cddc.vt.edu/tim/tims/Tim528.PDF](http://www.cddc.vt.edu/tim/tims/Tim528.PDF)

No longer Nature, not merely ecosystem, the terraforming of our world under this kind of watch truly reduces it to strategic spaces. As "an environment," ringed by many ecological knowledge centers dedicated to the rational management of its assets, the global ecosystem is to be understood through the disciplinary codes of green operational planning. The health of global populations as well as the survival of the planet itself allegedly necessitate that a bioeconomic spreadsheet be draped over consummativity on Earth, generating an elaborate set of accounts for a terraforming economy of global reach and local scope. Hovering over the world in their scientifically-centered astropoanopticon of green surveillance, the disciplinary grids of efficiency and waste, health and disease, poverty and wealth as well as employment and unemployment. Fusing geo-economics with geopolitics, Brown, Flavin and Postel declare "the once separate issues of environment and development are now inextricably linked."80 Indeed, they are, at least, in the discourses of Worldwatch Institute as its experts survey Nature-in-crisis by auditing levels of topsoil depletion, air pollution, acid rain, 29 global warming, ozone destruction, water pollution, forest reduction, and species extinction brought on by excessive mass consumption. Worldwatch terraforming would govern through things, and the ends things serve, by restructuring today's ecologically unsound system of objects through elaborate managerial designs to realize tomorrow's environmentally sustainable economy in the ecologically perfected objects of that environmentalized system. The shape of an environmental economy would emerge from a reengineered economy of environmentalizing practices vetted by worldwatching codes. The individual human subject of today, and all of his or her things with their unsustainable practices, would be reshaped through a consummational environmentality, redirected by practices, discourses, and ensembles of administration that more efficiently synchronize the bio-powers of populations with the geo-powers of environments. To police global carrying capacity, in turn, this environmentalizing logic would direct each human subject to assume the much less capacious carriage of disciplinary frugality instead of affluent suburban abundance. All of the world must come under this watch, and the global watch would police its human charges to dispose of their things and arrange their ends--in reengineered spaces using new energies at new jobs and leisures--around these post-consumptive agendas.

## MPA Link 2

**The Creation of marine preserves signifies certain waters to be more significant than others, allowing for the commodification of large segments of the environment**

Timothy Luke, Poli Sci at Viginia Polytech, 1997

[www.cddc.vt.edu/tim/tims/Tim528.PDF](http://www.cddc.vt.edu/tim/tims/Tim528.PDF)

In the Nature Conservancy's operational codes of land consumption, a triage system comes into play. Some lands of Nature are more "ecologically significant," some regions are much more "natural areas," but some grounds are far less "protectable" than others. The methods of the Conservancy show how it implicitly sees Nature as real estate properties inasmuch as its chapters must constantly grade the acreages they receive-- labelling some as truly ecologically significant, some as plainly natural areas, some as merely "trade lands."<sup>85</sup> The latter are sold, like old horses for glue or worn-out cattle for dogfood, and the proceeds can be used elsewhere to promote conservation. In seeking to preserve Nature, the Nature Conservancy strangely <sup>31</sup> oversees its final transformation into pure real estate, allowing even hitherto unsalable or undeveloped lands to become transubstantiated into "natural areas" to green belt human settlements and recharge their scenic visits with ecological significance.

## Biodiversity/Natural Resources Link

**The project of preserving biodiversity defines new ecologies in the context of economic and living value. Nature is dead, only natural resources need to be preserved**

Timothy Luke, Poli Sci at Viginia Polytech, 1997

[www.cddc.vt.edu/tim/tims/Tim528.PDF](http://www.cddc.vt.edu/tim/tims/Tim528.PDF)

Over the past two decades, The Nature Conservancy has grown by leaps and bounds by sticking to the operational objectives of 32 "preserving biodiversity."<sup>87</sup> As powerful anthropogenic actions have recontoured the Earth to suit the basic material needs of corporate modes of production, these artificial contours now define new ecologies for all life forms caught within their "economy" and "environment." The "economy" becomes a world political economy's interior spaces defined by technoscience processes devoted to production and consumption, while "the environment," in this sense, becomes a planetary political economy's exterior spaces oriented to resource-creation, scenery-provision, and waste-reception. Natural resources exist, but Nature does not. Economic survival is imperative, but the commodity logics driving it need to be grounded in sound ecological common sense lest the limitless dynamism of commodification be permitted to submit everything to exchange logics immediately. Time is now what is scarce and centrally important in the highly compressed timespace continua of contemporary commodity chains. It is no longer a question of jobs versus the environment, because fewer jobs will not resurrect Nature. Nature is dead, and the environment generating global production assumes that jobs are necessary to define it as the space of natural resources. Doing jobs irrationally and too rapidly, however, is what destroys these environments, making jobs done rationally and at an apt pace ecologically acceptable. Consequently, the agendas of environmental protection must center on the "question of the short-term vs. the long-term," and this is "what the Conservancy is all about."<sup>88</sup> Nature, in all of its wild mystery and awesome totality, is not being preserved by the Nature Conservancy. It is, in fact, dead, as McKibben and Merchant tell us.<sup>89</sup> Nonetheless, its memory might be kept alive by the Nature Conservancy at numerous burial parks all over the nation where glimpses of its spirit should be remembered by human beings in a whiff of wild flight, the scent of a stream, or the aroma of surf. This goal may be a very well-intentioned one; but, in many ways all that the Nature Conservancy does boils down to serving as a burial society dedicated to giving perpetual maintenance and loving care at a variety of Nature cemeteries: Forest Glen, Mountain Meadow, Virgin River, Jade Jungle, Prairie View, Harmony Bay, Sunny Savannah, Brilliant Beach, Desert Vista, Happy Hollow, Crystal Spring. As Nature's death is acknowledged, more and more plots are needed to bury the best bits of its body in gardens of eternal life. Thus, the call for members, funds, and donations always will grow and grow.

## Environmental Protection Link

**The protection of the environment is the new ground of biopolitical control.  
Individual normalization at the level of populations is justified in the name of  
the ultimate environmental protection agency**

Timothy Luke, Poli Sci at Viginia Polytech, 1997

[www.cddc.vt.edu/tim/tims/Tim528.PDF](http://www.cddc.vt.edu/tim/tims/Tim528.PDF)

In conclusion, Foucault is correct about the network of governmentality arrangements in the modern state. State power is not "an entity which was developed above individuals, ignoring what they are and even their very existence," because its power/knowledge has indeed evolved "as a very sophisticated structure, in which individuals can be integrated, under one 46 condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns."<sup>116</sup> Producing discourses of ecological living, articulating designs of sustainable development, and propagating definitions of environmental literary for contemporary individuals simply adds new twists to the "very specific patterns" by which the state formation constitutes "a modern matrix of individualization."<sup>117</sup> The emergent regime of ecologized bio-powers, in turn, operates through ethical systems of identity as much as it does in the policy machinations of governmental bureaux within any discretely bordered territory. Ecology merely echoes the effects from "one of the great innovations in the techniques of power in the eighteenth century," namely, "the emergence of 'population' as an economic and political problem."<sup>118</sup> Once demography emerges as a science of statist administration, it is statistical attitudes can diffuse into the numerical surveillance of Nature, or Earth and its nonhuman inhabitants, as well as the study of culture, or society and its human members, giving us ecographies written by the Worldwatchers steering effects exerted from their astropanopticons through every technoscientific space.<sup>119</sup> Government, and now, most importantly, superpowered statist ecology, preoccupies itself with "the conduct of conduct," particularly in consumerism's "buying of buying" or "purchasing of purchasing." Habitus is habitat, as any good product semanticist or psychodemographer knows all too well. The ethical concerns of family, community and nation previously might have guided how conduct was to be conducted; yet, at this juncture, "the environment" serves increasingly as the most decisive ground for normalizing each individual's behavior. Environments are spaces under police supervision, expert management, risk avoidance, or technocratic control. By bringing environmentalistic agendas into the heart of corporate and government policy, one finds the ultimate meaning of a police state fulfilled. If police, as they bound and observed space, were empowered to watch over religion, morals, health, supplies, roads, town buildings, public safety, liberal arts, trade, factories, labor supplies, and the poor, then why not add ecology--or the totality of all interactions between organisms and their surroundings--to the police zones of the state? The conduct of any person's environmental conduct becomes the initial limit on other's ecological enjoyments, so too does the conduct of the social body's conduct necessitate that the state always be an effective "environmental protection agency." The ecological domain is the ultimate domain of unifying together all of the most critical forms of life that states must now produce, protect, and police in eliciting bio-power: it is the center of their enviro-discipline, eco-knowledge, geo-power.<sup>120</sup> Few sites in the system of objects unify these forces as thoroughly as the 47 purchase of objects from the system of purchases.

## Nature/Protection Link

**The search for unexploited nature is a cloaking game of hyperreality. In the search for unconstructed social space, we create nature as a simulation that is both original and fragile, requiring intervention as protector instead of conqueror**

Ross McNary, MFA candidate at Washington University in St. Louis, April, 2002

<http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/~photo/mcnary/thesis.html>

Living with (and in) artifice does have repercussions. The knowledge that much of what is looked at is artificial drives us to search for the real. When we mentally look backward through the simulacra, we try to find what the original experience was. People need to feel that the artifice is based on reality.

The search for reality often leads us to nature. In the attempt to avoid the technologically mediated aspects of the world, our culture holds nature up as a primary source for the real. Back to nature movements have come and gone with various cultural waves, but the idea of nature as a source of reality persists. Contemporary culture uses the idea of nature as a refuge, a place to become grounded in reality.

Nature itself is subject to the mediation of hyperreality. This is something that contemporary culture tries to deny. The concept of nature is held up as an absolute, unchanging force. Our concept of nature defines it as something opposite than people and the human altered environment. This implies that nature is original and the opposite of hyperreality. We convince ourselves that by getting back to nature we are reacquainting ourselves with reality and escaping the technologically mediated world.

Nature as an unchanging force is an illusion, no matter how much people would like to believe in it. The cultural construction of nature evolved, influenced by other cultural developments. The connotations of wilderness changes based on the perspective. People look on 19<sup>th</sup> century photographs with 21<sup>st</sup> century eyes, and look for the modern incarnation of the primal nature. The concept of nature is founded on the pastoral tradition and artistic representations, as well as industry and tourism.

Historically, nature was understood as a dangerous but bountiful environment. The powerful wilderness existed to be tamed and shaped by human hands. The elements of nature existed as either evidence of God's power or as agents of Satan, designed to test God's people. These perspectives draw upon the Judeo-Christian Eden recovery myth. It was God's will that people tame the land and make it productive in an attempt to regain the Garden of Eden.

The Edenic recovery myth starts with Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden. They were banned from paradise and forced into wilderness because of their sinfulness. For survival, they needed to cultivate the land, turning the wilderness into paradise. The transformation of the land was an attempt to recapture the idyllic life of the Garden of Eden. The pastoral ideal has elements of the Eden recovery myth.

The introduction of Europeans into America gave renewed strength to the recovery myth. The New World was an untamed and wild land, ready to be harvested. America was a dangerous wilderness, ripe for transformation. With hard work and God's will, the New World would become a new Eden. This perspective of nature emphasized the physical relationship between humans and the environment. People felt the impact of the elements on the body, and physically used their hands to alter the environment. The nature experience was tactile.

Current conceptions of nature are different. Western culture holds nature to be something powerful, but fragile.

Nature is less a wild beast to be tamed, and more of the nurturing mother. The nurturing mother role is what we ascribe to the nature that is a provider. The wilderness aspect of nature has taken on connotations of being virginal. By defining nature in these terms, our role shifted from conqueror to protector.

The primary sense for experiencing nature changed as well. People removed the dangers of extreme temperatures and hazardous journeys with air conditioned and heated cars. The physical impacts of the natural elements on us were minimized. People viewed nature instead of feeling it. Our removal from the tactile environment was the first mediation of nature.

### Conservation and Nature Management

The origins of the conservation movement began with wealthy landowners wishing to preserve land and game to hunt for sport. This was the original purpose of game preserves and even the National Parks. This motivation evolved into a widespread ecology movement. Natural history museums originally served as a cabinet of curiosities designed to make the exotic available. These institutions helped create the idea of preserving the land.

Landscaping nature failed to recreate the Garden of Eden, so our culture has convinced itself that America was an Edenic paradise before the arrival of the Europeans.

The uninhabitable land is now perceived as more valuable than the cultivated one. This puts people in the role of protecting what little bits of the original wilderness are left. Prairie restorations, wildlife preserves, National Parks and Forests, and waterways are maintained or in the process of being reverted to the pre-Columbian ideal. These spaces then become certified as original nature, and have more value as a source for reality.

The need for original natural spaces exceeds the supply. The natural world must appear to be untouched by human hands to conform to the concept of nature. These spaces are incredibly scarce in the contemporary landscape.

Increases in the number of people "getting back" to nature and the increased ease of accessibility leave few spaces untouched. But the desire to experience the wild, primal aspect of nature is a widespread demand. To increase the supply of natural environments, people have created spaces that appear to be untouched by humans.

## A2 You Prevent Resisting Bad Things

This is descriptive of the plan, not the alternative. Our argument is that a strategy of positive head-on resistance to environmental destruction is doomed to both failure and cooptation because of the way empire simulates that resistance in order to justify its own further control. Rather than attempt to fight the system we should be positively indifferent, thereby *denying* empire the signs of power which it requires in order to legitimize its existence and forcing it to collapse under its own weight

And, heres evidence from William Bogard,

For sociologists who have accepted the humanist premises of their discipline, such a project will appear as the height of irrationality and irresponsibility, and we can imagine their incredulity: Can Baudrillard really be serious about this? Is it rational to think that mass indifference, if this indeed truly characterizes the climate of modern culture, is a form of resistance which itself must be met with indifference? And if so, to what conceivable end? How can one remain indifferent to a world full of poverty, racism, and other forms of social injustice? Wouldn't this only make matters worse, or at best allow these problems to continue to fester? Doesn't Baudrillard, rather than creating theoretical possibilities for "conquering" a world which has become indifferent, in truth only succeed in making both himself and theory indifferent to, and thus at the mercy of, all possibilities?

Baudrillard himself does not address, let alone ask, these kinds of questions, and rightly so, because they identify indifference with passive nihilism or a lack of caring, neither of which is intended in Baudrillard's meaning of the term. Baudrillard's indifference, I shall suggest, is of an altogether different type, and I can think of no better way of describing it other than as a *positive* indifference, a kind of stoic posture that invites attack by "playing dead." What he proposes is not passivity, but an *active* strategy designed to lure its opponent into making a self-defeating move, in effect turning the opponent's own force into a weapon against it.<sup>15</sup> Contrary to

Whitman College, in 1990. Sociological Theory Vol. 8 Iss. 1.

what a literal reading of Baudrillard might infer, indifference does not signify an uncaring attitude, nor is it inauthentic (that is, Baudrillard is not just espousing a position he in fact does not hold). Rather, his indifference is an ironic—and, one might add, tragic—response to a world which he believes has closed off virtually all other forms of resistance. For Baudrillard, care, however highly we value this virtue, is sacrificed in order to oppose an enemy for whom care no longer has any meaning. At best, one can only challenge the present order—the simulated order—with a *simulated* indifference. Only such a strategy manages to avoid, for the time being at least, the overwhelming capacity of this order to coopt the power of resistance for its own ends.

## Alternative 1

Direct resistance cannot avoid being coopted and destroyed because it is expressed within a system of simulation. Only an embrace of *positive* indifference can reveal the ridiculous nature of empire and force its collapse

William Bogard, Whitman College, in 1990. Sociological Theory Vol. 8 Iss. 1.

Despite their halting and uncertain expression, Baudrillard's reflections on theory are the key to understanding his reasons for adopting a deliberately provocative style of writing. Theory, he holds, no longer functions as a representation or mirror of the real, but rather must be the discursive intensification of its object, a wresting and seduction of the object from its conditions in order to make it stand out in a kind of "over-existence which is incompatible with that of the real" (Baudrillard 1988c, p. 98). For Baudrillard, this calls for a kind of stylistic excess or, as he terms it, "theoretical violence"—a hyperbolic and ecstatic analysis whose function is to be as "extreme" as the object itself. In the

intensification of writing which for Baudrillard becomes something of a perverse and "evil" game in which the stakes are continually raised (cf. Baudrillard 1988d), theory renounces its distance and merges with its object:<sup>12</sup>

[Theory] must become excessive and sacrificial to speak about excess and sacrifice. It must become simulation if it speaks about simulation, and deploy the same strategy as its object. If it speaks about seduction, theory must become seducer, and deploy the same stratagems... And thus it becomes its very object (Baudrillard 1988c, p. 98).

For Baudrillard, the "fatal strategy" of theory (if indeed it can be called a strategy) is that it must continually destroy itself in the process of realizing itself in its object, i.e., in becoming an event in the very universe it describes. This endless auto-destruction of theory has nothing in common with the classical method of critical dialectics which attempts to transform both itself and its object in revolutionary praxis. Although a superficial reading of Baudrillard will discover a

number of "theoretical" concepts which, judging from their general tone, are highly critical of contemporary mass culture, he nevertheless claims to have abandoned conventional forms of theoretical critique, particularly those embedded in the master discourse on society which function dialectically by negating their object. For Baudrillard, the function of theory is not negation—he doubts that theory in any way can annihilate or substantially transform the existing state of affairs. But neither does he believe that theory can simply reconcile in some positive sense what is real with the ideality of theory (Baudrillard 1988c, p. 99; 1987, p. 124). For Baudrillard, "the real"

does not exist,<sup>13</sup> at least in the conventional sense as an objective state of things that could enter into a relation of correspondence or exchange with theory in such a way that theory could transform the world. Rather, "the real," if it can be given a positive sense at all (and Baudrillard is quite ambiguous on this point), is "the insurmountable limit of theory... the point at which theory can do nothing" (Baudrillard 1987, p. 125).

Baudrillard notes with some sympathy George Bataille's conception of social science as a "virulent myth," a challenge to the very nature of the social and society—a challenge, so to speak, for society to exist in a way that is incompatible and irreconcilable with its own principle of reality (Baudrillard 1987, pp. 122–123; cf. Bataille [1967] 1985). But "the social" is properly speaking no longer the object of Baudrillard's challenge. It has, in fact, "disappeared." To be consistent with his demand that theory keep pace with its

## Alternative 2

object; that object, in the present context, can be nothing other than the fragmented pieces of mass culture itself, i.e., the residual that remains after having absorbed the positive energy of the social. What then, comprises Baudrillard's theoretical strategy in the face of an object which consumes the social? It is not, as I have suggested above, simply to become "anti-theoretical." Instead, theory must take up the same strategy as its object, and this means that it must reduplicate and intensify, without necessarily valorizing, the modern "strategy" of the mass—a strategy of hyperconformity<sup>14</sup> and indifference.

(ence) and ultimately, if I read Baudrillard correctly, of silence) the fatal strategy of resistance offered by the masses to all social forms of meaning and domination, which is to say to the world itself:

... if the world is fatal, let us be more fatal than it. If it is indifferent, let us be more indifferent. We must conquer the world and seduce it through an indifference that is at least equal to the world's (Baudrillard 1988c, p. 101). ↗

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