



Ecotopia

Ernest Callenbach

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A novel both timely and prophetic, Ernest Callenbach's **Ecotopia** is a hopeful antidote to the environmental concerns of today, set in an ecologically sound future society. Hailed by the *Los Angeles Times* as the "newest name after Wells, Verne, Huxley, and Orwell," Callenbach offers a visionary blueprint for the survival of our planet . . . and our future.

Ecotopia was founded when northern California, Oregon, and Washington seceded from the Union to create a "stable-state" ecosystem: the perfect balance between human beings and the environment. Now, twenty years later, this isolated, mysterious nation is welcoming its first officially sanctioned American visitor: *New York Times-Post* reporter Will Weston.

Skeptical yet curious about this green new world, Weston is determined to report his findings objectively. But from the start, he's alternately impressed and unsettled by the laws governing Ecotopia's earth-friendly agenda: energy-efficient "mini-cities" to eliminate urban sprawl, zero-tolerance pollution control, tree worship, ritual war games, and a woman-dominated government that has instituted such peaceful revolutions as the twenty-hour workweek and employee ownership of farms and businesses. His old beliefs challenged, his cynicism replaced by hope, Weston meets a sexually forthright Ecopian woman and undertakes a relationship whose intensity will lead him to a critical choice between two worlds.

Ecotopia Details

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Author : Ernest Callenbach

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From Reader Review Ecotopia for online ebook

Michael Scott says

I wanted to read Ernest Callenbach's Ecotopia since early 2009. (It took me almost four years to get there.) I had heard about it that it was introducing an utopian society, that it was exploring near-scientific explanations to how a sustainable society can exist, and that it practiced what it preached (the book was printed on-demand, sustained by the demand of interested consumers rather than publishing economics). Having finally read it, I am impressed in the way that I was after having read Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash, that is, not about the validity of the ideas, but about how this book seems prescient in listing important topics for the 2000s world.

Now about the actual book. Ecotopia is written around the premise that a near-socialist society, in which capitalist endeavors are tolerated but everything else is communal, is sustainable and desirable. (As such, this book can be easily mistaken as a more recent version of the Communist Manifesto, Mao's decrees, and similar proletcultist material.)

The story is quite coarse. To implement the premise, Callenbach sets William Weston (the journalist with Wild West-sound-alike, sic!-, capitalist ethics) on a journey through the secessionist country of Ecotopia, which occupies roughly the West Coast of today's USA. Will, who is an honest, generally likable journalist, manages to learn very quickly the ins and outs of the Ecopian society, to which he becomes smitten over the first week-end. He also gets laid very often, perhaps to sweeten the pill. The ending includes the only real cliff-hanger in the story line, so I will avoid spoiling it here. The characters are not much to talk about, and in resistance speak they would be easily called megaphones for the main message of "Ecotopia is great, long live the Great Leader of" ... oops, wrong movie. There's also quite a lot on racial and gender segregation, enough to fuel a raging talk about racism and feminism, and how Callenbach is this and that.

But. But! BUT! Ecotopia (the book) talks about technology, such as on-demand printing. And about clean energy. And about schooling systems. And about the tenuous relationship between entertainment and advertisements. And about cleaning our lakes, and meadows, and mountains. And about efficient agriculture, factories, and even government. And about social relations. And. And! AND! There are many topics, with enough detail each, to start a meaningful discussion (this is 1974!). Perhaps not surprisingly, discussion on many of these topics is still raging in the Western world, and had barely started among the Nouveau Riche countries; there's much to wait until such discussion can even begin in places such as Somalia, North Korea, etc.

Overall, recommended reading. Think of this as going to the museum to see the Atlas Maior of Joan Blaeu, the Declaration of Independence, or whatever is your favorite old document. It's antiquated and may even have offending inscriptions, but it's important to remember.

Sandyssandersatt.Net says

In brief: Ecotopia is a brilliant story illuminating a possible, bright sustainable eco-future where No. Cal, Oregon and Washington secede from 'Merica and are isolated for decades and a NY journalist visits for the first time since secession. The writing is not that great but the story and the vision of a sustainable high quality communal egalitarian life is brilliant. A must read for minds open to fighting for and having a sustainable, enjoyable life based upon sharing and enjoying Earth. Among the wonderful features of Ecotopia are: all organic food and products, free public trains and transportation, banned personal automobiles, work restricted to 20 hrs a week, neighborhood townhall meetings and what seemed to me a form of direct democracy ... and ... without any influence from the American capitalist empire.

Ecotopia is my go to suggested read for all i meet who have been buried by the existing capitalist 1% dystopic paradigm and are having a hard time visualizing a sustainable future. I've been reading Franco Berardi lately and his take is that around 1977 the world transformed from a place of optimism to a place of no future and that now we are surrounded by a hyperaccelerated virtualized financialized reality that does indeed, have no future. There are unlimited numbers of dystopias in book and film but almost no eutopias. Eutopia is Greek, for the good place, the total opposite of Utopia a fake paradise and punching bag of capitalism to "prove" there are no paradises, except the rotten capitalist pyramid schemes the 1% are running now.

I chanced onto this page to copy a link to a Goodreads' review of Ecotopia and was amazed to see a sizeable minority of people with one star or negative reviews and started reading them. Whoa! Here's the No Future community Berardi has partially been addressing. The reviews were imaginationless, blinderized by "pragmatics" as determined by the corporate PR that has filtered through our textbooks, media and social engineering for the last 40 years. I made comments and was immediately swarmed by thought police Mr. Smiths (see the film "The Matrix"). Whether paid trolls or not their responses were self-policing trollisms on behalf of the neoliberal tyranny. The very opposite of the beautiful future envisioned by Callenbach. **READ THIS BOOK!**

Mike (the Paladin) says

It would be very easy to make fun of this book, but I shall do my best to refrain from that. It would be like the proverbial shooting of fish in a barrel. Also, I'm sure that this book means a lot to many well meaning people. So... "bear" with me.

I suppose the book (for me) might be summed up in 3 words, "oh come on." From the opening scenes where our story teller rides in a "green" eco-friendly wooden train car, as everyone passes around legal marijuana and we see the people of Ecotopia wearing "loose bright colored clothing" and (of course) sandals (in winter), to the close where the same story teller, the reporter is "suddenly" repulsed by his own reflection as an "ugly American" and realizes he's become an Ecotopian himself. This 1970s read is a hippie Utopian vision. I'm sorry, but it's so full of nonsense (well meaning and ideological nonsense, but nonsense nonetheless) as to be unintentionally humorous at times. The writer's use of language speaks to the era (the common use of the great "F" word to be daring for example. There are other words for the act of physical intimacy, but I think he thought he was going for shocking and "anti-establishment").

This was written at (arguably) the beginning of the modern eco movement and shows it's "colors" throughout. Unfortunately, aside from the political agenda with the subtlety of assault and battery, the story (such as it is) isn't that interesting or told all that well. You get a litany of "how it would work if we'd all just get with program" inside a coating of predictable prose.

I know that a lot of people believe in this radical view of ecology that is still out there and making it's way steadily into law. Oddly if you'll take a look at the attempt at a story here you'll see that even here told by someone who believes it...it's ridiculous.

I apologize if you hold this book and/or the ideology behind it but it is fatally flawed. A boy is not a rat, a dog or a fish. That very approach is self defeating as humans must take the responsibility for the ecology that is set up in this book as a sort of object of worship. This approach just as much as unrestrained strip mining and clear cutting lacks balance and in the end is (believe it or not) a failing set of ideas.

So, poor story, only fair story telling wrapped around a creamy center of political claptrap. 1 star.

Nuno Ribeiro says

This is a jewel. A good friend offered me a worn out paperback, that was probably read by many people. Mine was already read by others. It is good to get a hold of utopian scenarios. This stories makes this utopia feel real. And why shouldn't we dream of a better world? It is interesting the way it was constructed. An outsider visits Ecotopia for the first time since it was created. A visitor from the USA. Ecotopia is a new country, its territory consists of Northen California, Oregon and Washington. He describes what he sees, as a reporter, and with some degree of skepticism, because Ecotopia has had its borders closed and almost not contact with its neighbour. What he sees is a eco-friendly nation, that was able to change habits, and create a new society. The society is described with detail, the way things are connected, resources are used, technology is thought of, transportation, food, every aspect of civilization. What made me, at the time I read it, sensible, is how much the author invested in showing that people actually changed. In maybe two generations. That was probably the aspect that I did not think, at the time, was realistic. But maybe I got it wrong. Maybe people change, and quickly, if society changes around.

Quinton says

I liked this book very much. I very much enjoyed the way it was structured, with different 'articles' describing different aspects of life in this imagined Ecopian society. I always enjoy when books about alternate futures focus on the way people live instead of a dramatized plot. I thought the interspersion of journal entries and articles was an excellent balance between these two aspects of the greater story of Ecotopia.

It is unfortunate to say that the book has not aged well. It is no longer feasible to the reader that this could exist in the present or future. There is far too much extremely dated technology and references to a long by-gone era. Even without regard to the antiquated technology, the terms used are hopelessly dated. The technology and terminology of sustainability have evolved so much, and the language of Ecotopia has been left behind.

One of the most telling signs of a future written in the 70s is the idea that "even in this advanced future society, they have not been able to eliminate smoking." To a modern reader, or at least to myself, it seems ridiculous to imagine a future where smoking is widespread. And yet authors of that time period could not imagine its demise, as I have seen in at least three books before this one. This, along with the novel's hopeless view on the future of race relations, give the reader some sense of hope that maybe our present is

better than Callenbach's imagined future, at least in some small ways.

There were several ideas expressed regarding Ecotopia that today would be considered inappropriate for a green future. The total absence of and failure to even consider the today taken-for-granted-of trend of vegetarianism, for example, was shocking. The casual discussion of nuclear fission and fusion was surprising. The absence of computers and artificial intelligence was, although completely understandable, very distancing and trivializing. The portrayal of religion, the hunger-games-by-another-name, and hippyism all seemed dated and passés.

In the end, I can only say that author was correct in his afterword, that although Ecotopia is remarkable as a first vision of such a green society, it is no longer a convincing or viable vision and is important mostly for being the first of its kind rather than the most persuasive, likely, or accurate. But I still much enjoyed reading it!

Tim says

Northern California, Oregon, and Washington secede from the US. What's not to like? Five stars for imagination, given that this was written back in the 70s. This is a flawed masterpiece, an original vision that sticks to the inside of your head (OK *my* head) for decades. Callenbach shows us an alternative to the corporate- and profit-dominated world we live in now. Having read the book, I can't hear pundits talk about rising GDP and the need to increase our standard of living without wondering whether all economic hocus-pocus is hooey. And that's a good thing.

That said, other reviewers have rightly said that the book is sexist, racist, and naive. I imagine it is, and I hate to think what influence it may have had on my adolescent mind back then. On the other hand, millions of us boomers survived the animated *Peter Pan* only to shudder in horror when showing it to our children.

Richard says

This is one of the most important books ever written -- no joke. Callenbach, writing in the early-mid 1970s, imagines that Washington, Oregon, and Northern California have seceded from the Union to form Ecotopia, a new nation based on "stable-state" (today, we call it "sustainable") practices in manufacturing, agriculture, construction, transportation -- the whole gamut.

Some of Callenbach's ideas are dated, and feel like they should have been -- and were -- left behind in the 70s. This is a novel, but its structure is a gimmick, really. The protagonist is Will Weston, a reporter for the New York Times-Post who is the first American to travel to Ecotopia, nineteen years after secession. Half the chapters are his formal reports for the newspaper, the other half -- in italics -- are his personal journals.

The formal reports lay out how the society runs -- this is the more important stuff in the novel. The journals cover Weston's inner conflict -- he is very skeptical of the whole thing, but the lumberjack girl with the "animal" sexuality, well, she breaks that down a bit. These chapters sometimes devolve into puerile hippie sex fantasy. This isn't just an ecological utopia, but the Full Berkeley -- free love, ganjaburning on the high-speed mag-lev train from Tahoe to SF (suck it, Bobby Jindal!), even a 1:1 nurse-patient ratio in hospitals, complete with happy ending.

Much of what's here we take for granted today, at least in San Francisco -- sorted recycling bins (check), biodegradable plastics (check), round-the-bay electric rail link (check), female political leadership (Boxer -- check! Feinstein -- check! Pelosi -- check!) legal marijuana and a Market Street closed to cars and replanted with trees (coming soon!)

What's so incredible is that I last taught this book maybe in 2002 -- and much, much more of reality has aligned with Callenbach's vision since.

Ecotopia is, for environmentalists, what Star Trek has been to physicists and astronomers and astronauts since just a few years earlier -- the map that points the way to the next frontier.

Read it, and read Obama's recent joint address to Congress. Start at "it begins with energy" on page 3 of the NYT transcript, linked below:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/24/us/...>

Ratings: five stars for the vision, three for the fiction.

Citra says

a story from the perspective of a journalist who gets permission to enter Ecotopia, a country that was seceded from the US. It is interesting to read a story of how people live in harmony with nature from a different view from what we have now. A must read.

Fil says

Terrible, just terrible. Demeaning to men and women alike, very dated with racist and sexist overtones, seemed written by a pre-pubescent idiot with zero understanding of basic human emotions and motivations – with very little political and economic acumen to boot. This fool equates superficial sex to deep feelings, likens it to true love and thinks a strong, powerful woman would 'tolerate' being raped (*and* is glib about it), disgusting!

Almost everything here is a stereotype of some kind (70s style), coated with a thin gloss of what passes as innovative and progressive thought. Save yourself some time and scratch your ass for a few hours instead of reading this 'novel'.

ryan says

fun because it takes place mostly in the San Fransico bay area, this is an increadible vision of the future for people who have ever had a dream of living sustainably. California, Oregon, and Washington, secede from the USA and become their own country. after 20 years of no contact and a small defensive battle for independence (hard to hear for pacifists that this is probably what would happen), a reporter from the East part of the remaining USA visits "Ecotopia" (the name of the new nation), to report the new countries lifestyle and to make reparations for relations. The philosophies are wildly ecentric, and idealistic, but often very inspiring and uplifting.

Allison Green says

Racist and sexist. Mediocre writing. But a cultural timepiece.

Wes says

The story as told by a reporter from the remaining United States visiting Ecotopia -- the seceded northwest bio-region of Northern California, Oregon, and Washington -- after 20 years of isolationism. His objective skepticism is quickly eroded by this green Utopian playground in which respect for living things is the society's primary value.

A bit naive. It is like Callenbach paved the way for our current silly belief in green capitalism. The message: We can do everything we do now in more or less the same way, but we can do it differently and sustainably and green.

And yet, the longer its been since I've read this, the more it works on me. Things I thought were silly in my youth seem to make more sense as time goes by. I think about this book frequently. And since books that present our almost certainly bleak future as having the possibility of positive chance are rare, it is worth reading.

For a very different, though hardly as positive viewpoint about future direction, check out Derrick Jensen. Or better yet, for a ecologically-aware, anarchist-friendly, and compassionate future vision against all the odds of militaristic, industrial society, read The Fifth Sacred Thing by Starhawk.

Malaika Sutter says

Although the novel is a typical example of its genre 'utopian fiction' which means that the story consists only of the protagonists descriptions (journal, columns, diary, stream of consciousness), I was surprised to be so immersed in the story ! Considering that it was written in 1975 the book tackles substantial issues that are more topical than ever. Sustainability, which (the title tells you) is the overarching topic, is looked at from various angles: politics, gender, anthropology, arts, media, love, ethnicity, etc. Although some passages could be questioned (groups, societies, ethnicities depicted in a stereotypical manner, sometimes sexist and racist although it feels like the novel tries not to be), the novel is still very progressive in trying(!) to avoid

dichotomous thinking. The fact that many elements of 'Ecotopia' not only appear strange to the protagonist but also to the 21st century reader (behavior, work ethics, etc.) shows the novel's force of depicting the 'other' and making the reader aware of alternative ways of living!

Headphonerecord says

The great thing about this book is it thinks through all your West Coast Succession dreams. There is a lot of fake future trivia you can relate to and all the Eco living standards are wonderful to think about. I rate it with a 3 because it is no literary masterpiece but I highly recommend it to anyone who has ever dreamed of West coast succession. Independent Eco living.

Monica says

If you have read (as I have) Charles Eisenstein's "The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible"; If you are tired of living in "the world of Separation" and long for living in "a world of Reunion"; if you wonder what that world might actually look and feel like - have a look at one man's vision of it by reading "Ecotopia."

The book was written in 1975 and it reminds me that, as bad as I think inequality is today between the sexes and the (so-called) races of human beings, it was much worse back in 1975 when this was written from an unmistakable and often quite objectionably privileged white male perspective.

If you are looking for excellent and artistic word smithing in a work of fiction, stop looking here: this is not about the beauty of our written language but about the beauty of a utopian ideal made as real to imagination's eye as this author can manage, for all his flaws. Try to read on and ignore the flaws because the landscape of a possible World of Reunion that he lays out is magnificent in many ways.

The scheme of the novel is quite juvenile but workable: a stranger from what is still recognizably our world comes to visit Ecotopia to write newspaper columns explaining its ways to the people back home in an America still recognizable as the "world of Separation" in which we all mostly still live. Part of the novel is his private journal entries; the other parts his published columns. In this way, we get his internal private dialogue about what he experiences as well as his external public reports. This is the old archetype of The Stranger exploring and explaining The New World, struggling for objectivity while not really having any at first.

I was amused that what started the Ecopian succession from the United States was yet another desperate financial meltdown. That certainly makes this work of fiction extremely relevant to the uncertain world we live in today with "too big to fail" financial institutions, billionaires using "Citizens United" to buy our government (and even running for office!) and turning our citizens into modern debt serfs in a world-wide New Feudalism, and nation-states bankrupted or nearly so around the world!

I've seen reviews on this site that excoriated this novel due to the "free" sex and the "free" marijuana featured as a part of Ecopian culture, and I'd like to comment on these things as well but not to excoriate them.

As human beings we are sexual creatures by nature. The author answers a question: what would human sexuality look/feel/be like in a "natural" world where human nature regarding sex is not hemmed in with legal fences of the sort taking prominent place in public dialogue today (such as the legal definition of 'what is a marriage' and 'who gets to be married') and also without the cultural constraints in our alas still current world of male domination and religious restriction(s)? What would "natural" human sexual behavior actually look/feel/be like in nature-oriented Ecotopia? The author does his best to answer this question, and I enjoyed reading about it and thinking my own thoughts about the nature of human sexuality, and admiring the author's chutzpah for trying this one on.

As for "free" marijuana, we are in the midst of a world where many if not most people I know have tried marijuana, many people I know still love to enjoy it whether or not it is 'legal' to do so, and where many states have begun acknowledging that marijuana smoking is often far less dangerous to society or to individuals than, say, consuming alcohol, by easing laws and restrictions despite continuing federal opposition. I do not consider it impossible even in our society that one day it might be possible for people to grow marijuana in window boxes and smoke it or bake it into brownies or other things if they so please as described in this novel. The so-called "War on Drugs" is a complete failure of policy and waste of treasure whose chief success is that it has served to wrongfully poor public treasure into the pockets of villains to the greater expense and sorrow of our society. Some good people fear that total legalization will encourage having "addicts" among us, but addicts exist whether or not forbidding laws exist, and it is easier, far less expensive to society, and far more compassionate and scientifically rational to treat addiction (in the very small percentage of our population where addition becomes a problem) as the medical issue it actually is rather than as a crime.

Creating even a pale version of Ecotopia in our real world of separation is my personal dream; it is a difficult work but not to take this path is a certain ride on a downward spiral into a destroyed ecosystem filled with bitterly embattled survivors trying to secure what's left for themselves alone.

Rob says

...*Ecotopia* is very much a novel of its time. I suspect that if it had been published as little as five years later it would have sunk like a stone. This is likely true for many successful novels though. As a novel I wouldn't rate it too highly. The characterization in particular is not very well done. His struggle is obvious from the beginning and not particularly well portrayed. The society Callenbach describes, despite the obvious problems with it, is a fascinating one though. I can see why people would want to try it. I can also see that with a world population of more than seven billion - that's 3 billion more than in 1975 - it would not stand much of a chance. So read it as a source of inspiration and you may well get something out of it. Look for a roadmap to Ecotopia and you'll be disappointed.

Full Random Comments review

Neil Browning says

Apparently this book was rejected by many publishers, and became a counterculture classic when it finally circulated in the 1970's.

Reading this was a priority for me because I have known many who speak of this book as a revolutionary, holistic blueprint for a sustainable society. It was ahead of its time, though not so far ahead of its time that it didn't immediately resonate with a broad audience.

Don't expect a good story, because that's not the point. *Ecotopia* is written by a journalist, and it's a lot of exposition, "tell-don't-show" world building. Some parts read like a comprehensive textbook, and others read like a love letter to the many branches of hippy counterculture. It contains both deep and shallow futurism, gets dry for significant intervals, and attempts to tackle many unexpected and controversial subjects head on.

The strangest thing about the book is that I can see the echoes of its language and philosophy in certain people I know in my personal life. In a way, it felt like I was reading a foundational manifesto for a very specific environmental philosophy that has existed in the periphery of my understanding for quite some time.

Ecotopia itself has most of the things you would expect to find in a hippy utopia; fairly comprehensive social services, emotional expressiveness, a veneration of creativity and nature, and the widespread decentralization of authority. But there are some passages that will knock you straight back to the 70's, and others that are clearly passing ideas and fantasies. Race and gender roles are likely to raise an eyebrow for modern readers.

Overall I don't know if it's worth a cover-to-cover read through. I had a hard time. But the chapters (which are supposed to be discrete news articles, interspersed with personal journal entries) are broken up nicely into segments you can flip to if you're interested in the Ecopian answer to a particular social ill or sector.

Example chapter names: "COMMUNICATIONS IN ECOTOPIA: PRESS, TELEVISION AND PUBLISHING," "THE ECOTOPIAN ECONOMY: FRUIT OF CRISIS," and "DECLINE WITHOUT FALL? THE ECOTOPIAN POPULATION CHALLENGE."

Also he uses the adjective, "novel," way way too much.

Terence says

I went into *Ecotopia* not expecting much in the way of serious character studies or deeds of derring-do. What I expected was a typical utopian/dystopian novel where the author focuses on describing the virtues or faults of their imagined society at the relative expense of all else; and I wasn't disappointed.

I was pleasantly surprised, however, at how well the novel read.

It's constructed as a series of articles and diary entries written by William Weston, the first American (officially) allowed to enter Ecotopia, the nation created 20 years previously by the secession of Washington, Oregon and northern California. The articles describe Ecopian society, which is based around the ideal of a sustainable, modern society radically different from the growth-oriented, extractive society we're currently saddled with. The diary chronicles William's immersion in Ecopian life and culminates in a near-religious epiphany, where he realizes he can't return to the United States.

Strictly speaking, *Ecotopia* is neither a utopia nor a dystopia. It's quite clear which society Callenbach prefers but there are numerous instances where the narrative points out the problems that persist in this new society, and the struggle to achieve a constantly shifting balance. And there are some aspects that may be problematic to the reader:

Segregation of races/cultures (side effect [in the book] of the drive toward decentralization and regionalism)

Ritual warfare (though compare Ursula K. Le Guin's Always Coming Home or the Wild Continents of Olaf Stapledon's Last and First Men/Star Maker)

Moving too far toward communalism? (for which I'm personally ill-suited but which seems preferable to the ultra-atomization of modern culture)

Continued flirtation with nuclear power

Callenbach's effort doesn't attempt to explain Ecotopia's economy or schools or social relationships in great detail but it does compel readers (whatever bias they bring to the book) to think about the costs that our consumption-driven, growth-oriented, violent culture extracts from both people and planet. (I will admit that the author is preaching to the choir in my case - given the choice, I would happily emigrate.)

Not "highly" recommended, perhaps, but definitely recommended if your interested in the utopia/dystopia genre or environmental concerns.

Kelly H. (Maybedog) says

I'm a die-hard lefty and I still think this is a terrible book. It's poorly written, biased, and short-sighted propaganda. I read as much of it as I could before I just had to throw it down in disgust, and this was at a time when I was young enough believe I had to finish every book that I read. For decades this was the only book I couldn't finish.

It's really not even worth my time to review thoroughly so I'll give you just one example of how stupid and ill-conceived it is: The people are environmentalists and yet they refuse to paint or upkeep their houses because it's natural to just let the wood fall back to its natural state. Hunh?? Since when is it environmental to waste wood by letting it rot away? Oh yes, let's cut down even more trees than we already are.

I also was upset with the weird violent arena thing they had going on. I didnt get far enough to find out what that was about but it disturbed me.

About a decade ago I told a friend who loved it how much I hated the book. Years later he came up to me and told me that he had re-read it as a "full" adult and he now agreed with me: the book is junk.

Don't waste your time, read something about real change and real activism.

Fordon James says

Reading Ecotopia today is like watching men trying to invent a flying machine by flapping big finely crafted wings, as they did so for hundreds of years. Man can't fly that way! We are too much dead weight, we have to have a fixed wing and lots of power. We have to fire our jets against gravity. We need power, not a carapace of balsa wood and a bag of feathers. But oh, do I wish it weren't so! Ecotopia is hard evidence that good solutions only go as far as the people with good sense can carry them. The idiot hordes are immune to

them. And Idiot hordes procreate faster then the former. All Callenbach's great notions are but a bridge made of popsicle sticks over a deep chasm. I applaud him until my hands hurt for having the optimism and naivety and general courage and fortitude to propose all these wonderful things. Forty years ago, maybe I could see some of his enthusiasm. In 2011 anyone with his brain not fried on prescription drugs or television news should have 20/20 vision that PEOPLE are simply the problem. Period. Collective, co-operative, low impact! It all sounds good to me and most, but the second it comes down to true sacrifice, people jump ship as though it's on fire. Try suggesting today to someone that if he want a burger, he slaughter the animal. If he want a chair to rest his fat ass in, then he has to cut the tree and build it themselves. He would eat grass and lie on the floor.

My negativity here is by no means at this book!!!! I loved it. Callenbach has done a marvelous thing. It's because it is sooo thoroughly knowledgable and loaded with great suggestion that it is entirely unrealistic and 'absurd'. Like building a sand castle with dry sand. Not to mention the tides on it's way in. Truly a must read, though, because Callenbach surely also knew as much himself. And I quote:

"I mean we don't try to be perfect, we just try to be okay on the average- which means adding up a bunch of ups and downs. But it means giving up any notion of progress. You just want to get to that stable point and stay there..."
