

Floating Islands, Atlantropa, Mars...

& Other Human Settlements in Inhuman Places

Before the 2016 presidential election, outspoken critics of Donald Trump spoke of fleeing to Canada if he won. After the election, they were disappointed to discover that it was not clear if Canada or any other country would welcome them. Are you stuck looking for a place to run? Don't give up. There are alternatives—not on land, not on an existing continent and not on planet Earth. Read about the dramatic plans for human settlement in inhuman places—from half-baked to downright batty.

- Shimon Rosenberg

Doomsday forecasters have been predicting the end of the world for millennia. Donald Trump's victory last November created a new cadre of "doomsday soothsayers." Convinced more than ever that the world as we know it is about to end sooner rather than later, they have sought places of refuge in case their fears come true. Others fear that, regardless, we will run out of space on the surface of the Earth by 2050.

We Jews, of course, leave such matters ultimately to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. What is of interest to us, though, are the plans under consideration that have been suggested to "save humanity," should the world as we know it cease to exist or become inhabitable. Here are a few of these plans, from half-baked to downright batty.



A city at sea as planned by the Seasteading Institute.



Part of the planned Artisanopolis city.

A Country at Sea

It's been a while since Al Gore, self-crowned prophet of climate gloom, declared that Antarctica's ice shelves and the glaciers of western Greenland would melt in 30 to 50 years, thus raising the global sea level by 20 feet and submerging much of the world's seashores, including cities that are home to millions.

"Picture what a terrible catastrophe it is when the world deals with several hundred *thousand* refugees," Gore declared in a 2006 address. "Now picture what it looks like when the world will need to care for a hundred *million* refugees."

Statistics show that as many as 500 million people are now living in locales that are less than 20 feet above sea level. If the dark predictions come true and the ocean rises by a few feet, the world would face a disaster of unprecedented proportions. The consequences would be tragic, but... what if we could find a way to use the heightened sea level to save the hundreds of millions of homeless?

Let us introduce you to the concept of "sea-steading."

According to international law, the world's seas and oceans are ownerless. Each country has rights to an area of water along its edges for 12 nautical miles (or 13.8 miles). When this overlaps with another country's 12 nautical miles the result is complicated diplomatic discussions. Additionally, countries have limited jurisdiction out until 200 nautical miles (230 miles). Beyond that, the water is open to the public and can be used by anyone to travel, fish, etc. Anyone can even settle there.

What happens if someone sets up a domicile at sea and someone else comes along and wants to sail through that precise point? And if someone does take up permanent residence at sea, are his actions subject to any legal system?

Researchers who were bothered by this question delved into the topic of "seasteading." Like homesteading, they want to create a viable legal framework for establishing



Image of a planned seasteading community named Artisanopolis in the ocean.

communities at sea and clarify how international law would respond. However, the question is not only a legal one.

Living permanently in a home on the sea is not something your gastroenterologist would advise. And that is assuming you could arrange regular shipments of fresh bread, milk, meat, produce and other necessities. Such a settlement would also need clean water facilities, making the practical aspects a work-in-progress.

No Water Shortage

Various experiments were carried out during the 1960s and 1970s to study the feasibility of living on the ocean. For the most part, these projects were driven by libertarians whose ideology calls for minimum governance and laws.

Libertarians argue that the governments currently ruling on land are all corrupt and the only solution is to look to the sea to create a new society. Fortunately for them, fully 70% of our planet's surface is covered by ocean, so the possibilities are nearly limitless. All they need to do is invent a means for humans to live on water.

One person who acted on this idea in 1968 was Werner Stiefel, creator of



Fact or fiction? Signs at sea warn of where sea level will be in 2030 and 2050.



One company plans to build a city 12 miles out from the coast of California to accommodate foreign technicians who want to work for Silicon Valley but cannot obtain the necessary permits from the US government. They will technically live outside US territory, but will be close enough to make short visits easily when necessary for their work.