**Sustainable Places**

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**Introduction**

On its website and in its marketing materials, Bishop Hill, Illinois refers to itself as a “Utopia on the Prairie.” This descriptor, “utopia,” is historical as much as it is aspirational; the village is one of dozens of towns originally founded in nineteenth-century America as experimental communal societies. Bishop Hill has survived into the 21st century because it has the benefit of a somewhat sensational origin story (charismatic leader murdered by interloper in romantic dispute) and striking architecture, and the community has spent the past several decades trying to reinvent itself as a tourist destination.

Indeed, Bishop Hill has sought to capitalize on its unique and colorful past by preserving, memorializing, and marketing itself to outsiders since at least the 1960s. It has been more than modestly successful in this endeavor; in 1946 it was designated a State Memorial by the State of Illinois, and in 1984 it was named to the National Registry of Historic Places. A National Historic Landmark District, Bishop Hill has managed to preserve 13 pre-Civil War buildings, and has received state, federal, and even international funding (from Sweden) to support its conservation and promotion efforts.

Over time these efforts have focused less on Bishop Hill’s specific history *per se* than what the village represents: a place-full place in a world increasingly characterized by placelessness, a unique interruption of a depressingly monotonous, and often economically ravaged, landscape. As such, despite its origins in a radical religious movement, the ethos of Bishop Hill – what it has been and what it hopes to be – has no small kinship with other attempts to reclaim place as crucial to people’s sense of identity, indeed their very humanity. These attempts include the movement for ecological sustainability; the historic preservation movement, after all, was itself a reaction/response to the burgeoning suburbanization and mall-ification of America in the 1960s and ‘70s – developments that have no doubt accelerated our ecological crisis (Datel 1985). Other incarnations of place-based intersections of politics and culture include self-conscious experiments in slow eating, local foods, “artisan” products, and a do-it-yourself (DIY) prime directive. All of these are present in some form in Bishop Hill, which then markets its particular locale, history, and set of traditions to tens of thousands of tourists every year.

Yet cultural heritage preservation and ecological sustainability are not at all equivalent, as the recent introduction of a sizable wind farm immediately surrounding the village of Bishop Hill makes clear. In this paper I examine what happens when one version of sustainability (specifically, cultural heritage or historic sustainability) runs up against another (ecological sustainability). I explore a point in Bishop Hill’s history when these competing versions of sustainability clashed, and how the community has negotiated both the conflict and its aftermath.

**Methodology**

My research employs a combination of historical and archival research, hermeneutic interpretation, and ethnographic inquiry. Collaborating with a colleague in Anthropology, we have conducted about a dozen formal interviews with local stakeholders in Bishop Hill, ranging from artisans and business owners to one of the local wind farm managers. (I have included a selection of interview questions in Appendix A.) Interviews were conducted between September – December 2014, and ranged from 45 minutes to over two hours in length.[[1]](#footnote-1) We have also had numerous, informal, “off-the-record” conversations with locals, which inform my perspective here. Finally, we have examined about two dozen key artifacts from the Bishop Hill Heritage Association (BHHA, or The Heritage, as the locals call it) archives. Over the course of the next year and into summer 2015, we hope to conduct at least a dozen more interviews, and spend more time both in the BHHA archives and in the archives of VASA, the Swedish American fraternal organization.

**“This Land Flows with Milk and Honey:” Founding Bishop Hill[[2]](#footnote-2)**

In order to understand contemporary Bishop Hill and its current identity as a (modest) tourist destination, it is essential to understand why it was founded, and how it has survived intact at all. In some ways, Bishop Hill’s history is utterly mundane by mid-nineteenth century standards: it was one of literally dozens of utopian communities founded by people seeking a clean slate (and inexpensive land) in the United States, and the profile of these new communities ranged from radical religious sects to flat-out experiments in alternative economies and sexualities. During nineteenth century, over a hundred different communities with a combined membership of over 100,000 people were scattered across the American landscape (Holloway, 18).[[3]](#footnote-3)

Bishop Hill’s particular flavor of utopianism was religious, a dissident offshoot of Swedish Lutheranism founded by lay preacher Eric Jansson. In the mid-nineteenth century, Lutheranism was the official religion of the Swedish state, but by that time dissatisfaction with and corruption within the church had led to a significant dissident movement, known as Läsare (or lay readers) who emphasized learning about the Bible outside of the confines of state doctrine. The Läsare appealed to direct and divine inspiration for salvation (O’Neill, 10; White 161). Jansson’s beliefs became even more radical than that, culminating in the assertion that the Bible was the only true religious text, meaning that even Luther’s writings, for example, “ ‘ought to be burnt’” (White, 165). This was not merely hyperbolic sermonizing; Jansson did, in fact, organize a number of book burnings of Lutheran hymnals, church tracts, and other sacred texts, including Luther’s catechism itself (White, 165). At the same time, Jansson began to argue for his own divine authority. Jansson’s contentions were considered a threat to the state’s religious interests, and he eventually landed in prison on several occasions, and then went into hiding in Norway (White, 166). Fleeing state persecution, Jansson fled Sweden for the United States in 1846.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Jansson’s exodus from Sweden was not at all spontaneous or ill-considered. By the time he left the country, he had attracted literally thousands of followers, a few of them quite wealthy. Jansson sent follower Olof Olson ahead to the United States on a scouting expedition to locate suitable land. He found it in Bishop Hill, Illinois (named for Jansson’s birthplace in Sweden, Biskopskulla), and the community pooled their resources and made the journey to their new world. All told, over 1,200 people (”Janssonists”) arrived in Bishop Hill between 1846 and 1854, making it the first and one of the largest centers for Swedish immigration in the United States. In fact, emigration researchers have referred to the Bishop Hill as “the mother colony of Swedish America” (quoted in O’Neill, 9).

The Janssonists accomplished an extraordinary amount in the first few years in America. While the colonists initially lived in mud dugouts, they quickly transformed their initial purchase into a fully functioning village and twelve thousand farmed acres, and at least one new construction project was completed each year of the Colony’s existence (White, 225). Villagers lived, worked, and worshipped communally, sharing residences and common spaces. As a result, the wealth that the settlers brought and the wealth that they generated was treated as Colony, as opposed to individual, property.[[5]](#footnote-5)

As the Colony grew, it experienced what was a common tension for such experimental communities: between spiritual integrity (maintaining close and devout allegiance to each other and their leader Eric Jansson) and economic prosperity (engagement with the outside world, and assimilation to the culture and values of the United States). Eventually this tension manifested itself in an interpersonal dispute between Jansson and an “outsider,” who had married a Bishop Hill Janssonist, Eric Jansson’s cousin Charlotte Lovisa. Root attempted to leave the colony and then attempted to kidnap the young woman away from Bishop Hill against her will. When the two men encountered each other at the local courthouse, Root shot Jansson twice, killing him.

Because Jansson had taken to referring to himself as the second coming of Christ, suggesting in fact that he was an improved version of Christ (White, 175), his devoted followers fully expected him to rise from the dead. As such, they waited three days and three nights before finally burying him (O’Neill, 15). Jansson did not rise from the dead, and there was no obvious heir to the leadership. The colony was eventually governed by a seven-member board of trustees, and developed quickly as a center of commerce in the area. By 1861, however, corruption in leadership and social pressures to assimilate, combined with the exodus of young men who left to fight the Civil War, led to the colony’s demise. A long and divisive dissolution of the Colony took place over the next thirty years. By the early 1890s, Bishop Hill’s population had diminished to around 330 citizens (O’Neill, 20; see also Mikkelson).

**The Birth of a Destination, or Investing in the Heritage Economy**

“We have a full agenda today and a full afternoon of shopping to do, so let’s get to it.”

Illinois Workforce Development Meeting

held in Bishop Hill, IL, September 18, 2014

For many years, the town’s residents did not have any particular interest in preserving their history. Like many immigrant groups, Bishop Hill villagers concentrated on assimilation rather than memorialization, and in many ways sought to distance themselves from their storied past.[[6]](#footnote-6) Or as one long-time Bishop Hill area resident told us, “They weren’t preservationists in the early years. They turned their back on Sweden and all things Swedish”(I1; see also Horberg 2011).

Despite their best efforts, though, the past never really became past in Bishop Hill. In fact, the colony’s commitment to communal living made it rather difficult to pave the way for anything new. When the colony was officially dissolved in 1861, a complicated set of rules governed the distribution of communal property: anyone who had belonged to the Colony for five years or more was given a share of the property, with the value of that share determined by age (White, 219). In the end, a total of 415 shareholders received various amounts of “land, livestock, right to occupy parts of the communal buildings, and personal property” (White, 220). The result was dozens of owners for single plots of land and individual buildings.

In other words, the communal nature of the Colony had the unintended consequence of ensuring historic preservation, as in subsequent years it was practically impossible to locate all of the owners for a single structure, let alone convince them to agree on what to do with it. For example, the Steeple Building, one of the largest and most impressive buildings in the village, had to be purchased from over one hundred heirs, with 38 “owners” for one room (Nelson). As a result, the buildings certainly fell into disrepair over the years, but they stayed standing as they passed from one generation to another, and the fundamental integrity of the original colonists’ vision remained intact. The agricultural lands surrounding the town, too, have remained largely undisturbed in the intervening century; they are small farms by today’s agro-conglomerate standards, often passed down from one generation of original colony families to the next.

Thus despite the relatively short duration of the colony, Bishop Hill left an impressive and rather outsized cultural and architectural legacy in rural Illinois: thirteen, quite visually distinctive pre-Civil War era buildings set around a central square, and a surrounding physical landscape characterized by quaint barns and rolling hills. Indeed, that legacy was the basis for the village’s eventual nomination to the National Registry for Historic Places:

The visual and physical flow the colonists would have experienced between the agricultural lands and the communal heart of the colony is present today. A typical view presents a loose weave of nineteenth century clapboard dwellings interspersed with coal and cob houses, weathered privies, perhaps a small barn, an edge of picket or board fence, a patch of garden, … Although the pattern unravels at the edge of town, dissolving into fields, it is firmly fixed at the square in the solid regularity of the original colony structures…

The hills are dotted with small farmsteads, many owned by descendants of the Colony, and some bearing strong marks of their Swedish vernacular origins. Thus, the proposed Landmark District exists in a landscape setting which not only evokes but bears extensive physical evidence of the historic past. (U.S. Department of the Interior, 3-4)

While the Colony’s Descendants (yes, that’s a capital D) had taken to gathering in the village annually starting in 1896,[[7]](#footnote-7) genuine interest in preserving the colony’s history and legacy was only sparked at the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the colony’s founding. In 1946, the village donated its central park, the Colony Church, and a collection of Olof Krans paintings (we’ll come back to him later on) [[8]](#footnote-8) to the State of Illinois. The State of Illinois named the village a State Historic Landmark, and began restoring the Colony Church as a state historic site. The State (yes, that’s a capital S) has maintained what can best be described as an uneasy presence in Bishop Hill ever since.[[9]](#footnote-9)

The preservation movement gained momentum and Bishop Hill’s status as a tourist destination was cemented with the founding of the Bishop Hill Heritage Association (the BHHA, or “The Heritage,” as it is known locally) in 1962. Galvanized by the destruction of an important colony building on the square, the Heritage’s founding members joined together to locate funding for the acquisition and preservation of other key structures.[[10]](#footnote-10) Over the next decade, the group had raised enough funds and had contacted enough Descendants to acquire three central buildings in town and open a museum that continues to serve as the BHHA headquarters today. In 1968 the town of Bishop Hill passed a series of zoning ordinances in the town to ensure that “the 19th century flavor of the village will be preserved without the distraction of inappropriate modern structures” (Nelson, 6).

It is important to recognize that this desire to preserve or restore buildings and artifacts from the past in Bishop Hill has never simply been about the intrinsic value of maintaining a connection to its history; the business of preservation here has always been, bluntly, a *business*.[[11]](#footnote-11) In places like Bishop Hill -- where manufacturing either never took root or has collapsed, and where most farming has become a largely industrialized affair --historic preservation and the tourist dollars that are hoped to follow are often seen as providing a solution to economic woes (Ashworth 2014; Bendix et al. 2013). Even as early as 1968, the Heritage Association referred to tourism as a key vehicle for preservation and economic sustainability (Nelson), although fewer than 10,000 tourists a year were visiting the village at that time (Historic Bishop Hill). By the early 1970s, Bishop Hill was attracting around 30,000 visitors a year (Hobbs); by the mid-70s this number had doubled, and the village had aspirations for greater numbers of visitors still.

Certainly by the time Bishop Hill was vying for a spot in the National Historic Landmark program in the 1980s, references to the economic importance of heritage tourism were plentiful. One particularly lucid example: “[The congressman] strongly believes in Bishop Hill for a number of reasons,” his spouse intoned at an event advocating for the designation, in what is a typical characterization. “First, there can be no doubt about the potential value of Bishop Hill to our economically hard-pressed region. The significant contribution that Bishop Hill already provides in visitors and tourist dollars can only increase in the future. In fact, [we] cited Bishop Hill… as a prime example of how to develop and tap this area’s tourism potential. The National Historic Landmark designation that Bishop Hill so richly deserves will certainly add to that potential” (Evans, 1).

By any measure, the community has been successful in its goal of generating tourist interest and bringing in tourist dollars. It was granted a National Historic Register designation in 1984, providing federal legitimacy to its claim as an important cultural landmark. The number of tourists reached over 80,000 by the early 1990’s (O’Neill, 29), and more recently “the number 100,000 gets tossed around,” although that number seems to have dipped a bit during the recession (I6). A recent transplant to Bishop Hill cites Bishop Hill’s draw as part of the reason she moved her business there: “Bishop Hill gets tourists from all over the country. Not a lot, but a great diversity” (I3).

While most visitors to Bishop Hill come from other parts of Illinois (HMRRI), it is significant that Bishop Hill also has long served as an *international* tourist destination. As the “mother colony” of Swedish immigration, Bishop Hill is better known to most Swedes than it is to many Americans; it is mentioned, for example, in Swedish school books (I6, I7), and it is featured as a “must-see” destination for Swedes on popular tourism websites [[12]](#footnote-12) (USA Today). One interviewee estimated that she had several hundred Swedish visitors per season (I7), in part due because the town also boasts the North American archives of the Swedish American fraternal organization VASA. The town’s appeal is not limited to Scandinavian travelers, either; the director of one of the main tourist destinations reported:

Coming into this job, I didn’t realize how extensive of an influence Bishop Hill has… We get visitors from all over the world. Mostly Swedish, mind you, but this past fall we got people from Japan, and Spain, and Brazil (I6)

Without a doubt, tourism has become a major driver in the local economy. In 2011 (the most recent precise data available), Henry County generated $41.4 million in visitor spending (Hargrove) – an incredible number given that the total population of Bishop Hill stood at 128 in the last Census.[[13]](#footnote-13) And the economic boon from tourism has only increased as the recession has eased; the town has had a record year, according to the director of the BHHA, with attendance at both buildings and events up over previous years (Ruthhart, 2). “Some said they had all-time high for visitors and receipts,” the director reported (quoted in Ruthhart, 2).

But what exactly is Bishop Hill selling and what exactly are tourists buying when they visit? Why come to Bishop Hill at all?

The seemingly simple answer, certainly the answer provided by the Henry County Tourism Bureau, is “cultural heritage.” In its glossy publication and on its website extolling the virtues of the area, the HCTB lists “Cultural Heritage” as the second attraction in Henry County (second only to “Rural Recreation,” and before “Shopping and Dining”), and the Bishop Hill community is the primary example thereof. The fact that Bishop Hill’s largest, best-financed, and most politically powerful community organization is known as “the Heritage” speaks volumes; it commands more respect and has far more influence than the local government, for example. “Cultural heritage,” though, is a fairly slippery idea when one begins to unpack it (Albro 2005), and trying to get at what it means is crucial to understanding both the town’s identity and the conflict presented by the introduction of the wind farm. I want to spend a bit of time, then, exploring what Bishop Hill’s “heritage” entails, emphasizing both its complex and contested nature.

The State of Illinois’ early involvement in Bishop Hill’s preservation efforts reinforce the point that “heritage” is, quite literally, a political production; to claim something as “heritage” requires a complicated assemblage of regulatory steps, actors, institutions, and processes that transform a practice into something defined, certified, and managed by the state (Bendix et al., 18). A state designation also means that “heritage” is subject to political whims and legislative priorities; Illinois’ financial difficulties, for example, have meant drastic budget cuts in recent years, resulting in serious reductions in staff and hours the sites can remain open. This past year, most heritage sites took a hit of over 20% (I8).

Moreover, when the state certifies something as “heritage” and commits to funding it, it does so with the expectation that the site, practice, or community will help it accumulate both symbolic and economic capital (Bendix et al., 37). What might that symbolic capital entail? On its face, “heritage” might seem to be synonymous with “history.” Surely part of Bishop Hill’s attraction is its longevity, and the BHHA puts preservation of and education about Colony history at the forefront of its mission (I6). But even this component of heritage is not as simple as it seems. Not surprisingly, the actual history of Bishop Hill (a history that featured religious extremists --book burners!-- who for over a decade lived in what was, for all intents and purposes, a communist enclave in the U.S.) gets thoroughly sanitized in its tourist-friendly iteration, which I would argue has become largely synonymous with the town’s understanding of itself. Religious extremism --some might even say “fundamentalism”-- becomes “a quest for religious freedom.” Economic communism is most often characterized as communalism, but is even more frequently ignored entirely in favor of a focus on the “frontier ethics” of hard work and ingenuity.[[14]](#footnote-14) And despite the fact that the Blackhawk War had happened just over a decade prior, any Native American presence in the area is erased from virtually all accounts of the Colony’s founding, in a powerful example of what Robert Fletcher calls “imperialist amnesia” (2012).[[15]](#footnote-15) As one interviewee – a professional historian, no less-- told us:

There wasn’t any native American presence here… [backtracks a bit] Not a permanent Native American presence… The Black Hawk Wars pretty much cleared ‘em out (I6).

In other words, the story of Bishop Hill becomes a more generalized, and more palatable, immigrant success story; in fact, several of our interviewees characterized it as such: e.g., “It’s not just a Swedish story, it’s like the classic immigration story” (I6). In a “classic” immigration story, apparently, the “immigrants” in question are nonthreatening whites, whose ethnic signifiers (tomte dolls, dala horses, lutefisk) are seen as quirky and nostalgic rather than alien, menacing, or invasive. This dominant version of the Bishop Hill narrative, then, has become “the story of the brave and determined Swedes who became brave and determined Americans” (Nelson)

Famed folk artist Olof Krans’ paintings are a quite perfect, material example of how the “history” of the Colony has been produced over time. Krans’ family emigrated to Bishop Hill when he was a boy, and he lived in the Colony for a decade before serving in the Union Army during Civil War. In 1896, Krans began painting scenes from the Bishop Hill Colony from memory. His first few paintings were so commercially successful that he continued to paint these scenes – over 90 in all before his death in 1916. What is fascinating about this is that Krans’ artistic depictions of his memories – 36 year old memories by the time he began, no less – have become in many ways “the record” of what life was like in the Bishop Hill Colony. That Krans’ paintings have become, in some sense, synonymous with Bishop Hill’s history gives us our first clue about the nature of heritage in communities like this: that heritage is, in some important sense, an *aesthetic* endeavor, though it is not only that:

What do you want tourists to get out of it? It has been here and hasn’t been torn down. That makes Bishop Hill quite unique. It is a small, rural, lovely community. You go away with a sense of *beauty*. Because it *is* beautiful. It’s a community lost in time. You can hear chickens, roosters, and cows when you wake up in the morning. You take away a sense of craftsmanship, of work done prior to machines. (I3)

The notion of heritage as history is further complicated by the fact that Bishop Hill is – proudly, and almost defiantly -- a living community. This is a fact driven home in promotional materials about the town, and is something repeated by many of the residents we spoke with. That is, Bishop Hill is emphatically not a Williamsburg, Virginia or a New Salem, Illinois – places where the past is constructed, interpreted, and re-enacted by personnel whose paid employment requires them to convey historical information and teach visitors about the place (Bruner 1993). Instead, Bishop Hill emphasizes that it is a place where people raise families, get their coffee, and pick up their mail at a central post office. Its residents have village meetings and participate in community organizations, and celebrate the (rare) births of new children in town. In short, it is a place where people live their lives against the backdrop of a designated National Historic Landmark. As one interviewee put it,

Bishop Hill is an *authentic* historic village. So many others like New Salem are re-creations. Colonial Williamsburg. Naperville Settlement. I could name a dozen of them… They may have done a great job, but it’s not real. This [Bishop Hill] is what the Swedes built and what the Swedes saw in 1855. … We’re a functional village that just happens to be very in touch with its roots. … We are very much an authentic town (I5).

Just as important to the town’s identity is the fact that roughly half its current population is descended from the original colonists, making its history literally flesh and blood. When I asked one respondent if being a Descendent still carried cultural cache in town, she responded:

Yes, especially if you are one! Cultural cache- yes, and it’s important to the tourists. It’s important that we live here and are part of the community here… There’s both cultural cache for the tourists and for in town (I4).

This “living community” approach to history means that (for example) “historical accuracy” in the strict sense of these words does not have the same importance in Bishop Hill that it does in other, more museum-ified towns (Gable and Handler 1996). One particularly rich example of this phenomenon can be seen in the town’s Lucia Nights and Julmarknad (or Christmas Market) celebrations, held annually in December. Lucia Nights and Julmarknad are two of many events that claim their origins in the community’s Swedish heritage; the entire village is lit by candlelight, children dressed as Tomten (Swedish elves) run through town providing entertainment, and businesses stay open late and offer treats to the groups of tourist-shoppers who visit. It is as beautiful as it is always bitterly cold… but according to the one recent Swedish immigrant who lives in town, this tradition bears almost no resemblance to the Lucia festival as practiced in Sweden. When we asked her whose heritage was being represented in this place, she responded:

It was Swedish in the beginning, but it is American as well. … It’s *supposed* to be a Swedish heritage. … Some of the traditions over here in Bishop Hill have changed a lot. They’ve changed it here. Lucia is really different over here. … It’s very unique over there [in Sweden]… most of the time companies close down because of Lucia… it’s very important. You can see it all over. … They vote [about the Lucia] over the whole year. It’s very important.

[During Lucia Nights in Bishop Hill] they have a goat [a person dressed in a goat costume] running around and scaring people. What is that? I’ve never seen that before in my whole life [laughs]. The tradition over here has changed a lot… I don’t even know what kind of heritage it is.

…I told them about Lucia. I told them it’s a little bit far away from how we celebrate it over there. I put in a proposal that we should do it the Swedish way, and they didn’t really want to listen to it (I7).

So Bishop Hill’s “living community” status means that heritage and history are at once meaningful *and* malleable, long-standing traditions that able to be willfully transformed to suit the village’s own idiosyncratic interpretations of Swedish culture. Preservation here is not, in Peter Cannavò’s phrase, “an exercise in geographic taxidermy” (2007, 6), but rather an ongoing negotiation with the built environment, with history, and with everyday life.

Even building preservation is not as simple as one might think, given the zoning ordinances that have been in place for decades. While the codes stipulate strict compliance with the preservation standards established by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, the understanding in the town emphasizes adaptability:

There’s this gentlewoman’s agreement that the *external* of the building cannot change. That we want to keep the buildings and the look of the town the same. …But at the same time, the building committee, when you go for approval, it’s perfectly fine with what you do *inside* the building … That’s both an actual example and a potent metaphor for how this town has managed to move forward and thrive, maintaining a real integrity of the buildings but being able to adapt the interior for modern uses (I5).

In fact, local residents involved in the tourism industry know that focusing too much on history, even on its highly sanitized Swedish version, is a risky bet. As the manager of Bishop Hill’s web presence told us: “[The] Heritage is selling the Swedish story, but … Ten years of answering emails, I know that people don’t want to eat the lutefisk… [The Heritage] insists on calling [things] by their Swedish names… it’s like a club you don’t belong to…” (I9) In other words, historical accuracy and authenticity may make the place more exclusionary than it can afford to be.[[16]](#footnote-16) Thus we see that “cultural heritage” has less to do with historical precision or even with history per se than one might initially assume. In fact, as G.J Ashworth writes, heritage “is not about a special category of artifacts, objects, sites, historical events, or personalities: it is a process, an outcome, and a consumable experience… created in the present to serve contemporary needs” (Ashworth, 6).

*Consumable experience* gets closer to what heritage means in the context of Bishop Hill and the many other sites like it – heritage-based tourism is, after all, a quickly growing share of the tourism market (Kreyling 2006). Stakeholders in Bishop Hill recognize the fundamental importance of creating experiences for attracting tourist dollars, and a tremendous amount of time and energy are spent in that endeavor. Despite the fact that Bishop Hill boasts only 128 citizens, the community supports multiple energetic civic committees that organize over four dozen annual events; participation in these is a necessity and an expectation of citizenship. As one recent arrival to the town described it:

On a good day we are all very conscious of the fact that we are all in a service industry. Part of my job is to be an ambassador for this town; most people feel that way… You choose to move here because you want to participate. You have to choose to be a participant in this town. There might be someone standing outside your house staring at your home because you live in a historic home… You need to put a candle in the window for Lucia Nights and that’s expected. You need to be willing to be part of the community. … If you want to be successful, it helps to make sure you are “on.” (I3)

The experiential nature of the community is certainly what is emphasized in its marketing materials: “The town keeps many of these traditions alive with working potters, a blacksmith shop, broom makers, rug hookers, weavers, a glass blower, a luthier, traditional carpenters, and quilters still producing the fine hand crafts.” (Henry County Tourism Bureau, 18) And village business owners are aware of and cater to this desire: “People are looking for an experience. … we are a community of makers…That’s going to be the saving grace of Bishop Hill” (I9). Or, as another interviewee told us:

Every other weekend through most of the year there’s this wonderful diversity of events… and these events draw different kinds of crowds. …Each of the small businesses, each of the entrepreneurs in town, has created their own event. … Each of these events helps feed all of the businesses in town (I5).

The same resident continued: “Bishop Hill really gets it: What are people going to *do* here? It used to be people liked to look and shop and passive tourism was more popular or prevalent. But now people are looking for an authentic experience. They want to come and *do*, they want to participate, and I think the town is adapting in a lot of wonderful ways.”

This potent combination of aesthetics and experience gets at the heart of what Bishop Hill is selling to its visitors. It is selling an *aura*, in the Benjaminian sense; it is selling Bishop Hill as the answer to some kind of human longing, a longing that can be sated --or at least appeased-- through a particular sort of consumption (Bendix, 473). Bishop Hill is selling, for want of a better phrase, a *sense of place* (see Jackson 1994; Hiss 1991). This is certainly at the forefront of the community’s promise to visitors, as well as its understanding of itself. Indeed, the importance of Bishop Hill has never simply been about the buildings that have been preserved or the history those buildings represent, but the effect of the entire Bishop Hill landscape on a viewer and its ability to put some distance between the visitor and her everyday existence. The documents that make the case for the village’s historic landmark status are replete with references to this dynamic:

While driving Henry County back roads, you will see rich farmland with picturesque agricultural vistas that seem to stretch forever. The fertile farm ground and the promise of the good life drew early pioneers to settle in Henry County. Dotting the scenery are small towns and villages telling the stories of the land. … A visit to Henry County will conjure thoughts of a simpler time (Henry County Tourism Bureau, 12).

As Ashworth notes, “Place is more than just a location in which heritage happens: the place may well be the heritage itself. It thus is inextricably involved in the shaping of place identities, at all spatial scales” (Ashworth, 7).

This leads to one tension inherent in Bishop Hill’s identity: it is a place that defines itself through and relies on its differentiation from a homogenized, mass-marketed, mass-mediated, globalized society while at the same time it is thoroughly enmeshed in and dependent on the very same. A few examples drive the point home: One of our first interviews in Bishop Hill was with two craftsmen who make their living making and selling “colony-style” brooms in a central arts and crafts center in town. During the heyday of the Colony’s existence, its broomcorn and brooms were known far and wide, and were much in demand. These days, the Bishop Hill broom makers often practice their trade with a small throng of tourists gathered outside their shop, and they are rightly proud of the craftsmanship their work embodies; their work is part of the “community of makers” ethos that attracts people to Bishop Hill. The broom makers explained to us in some detail what a “traditional” broom “should” look like – and the elder of the two men was clear about how, to him, “it’s a craft, not an art:” the goal is to make their brooms as close to the Bishop Hill originals as possible (I2). These men are not professional historical interpreters, and their work is not mere demonstration or showmanship: every day they actually produce high-quality, beautiful brooms made with the materials traditionally found in Bishop Hill.

But in looking around their shop during our interview, we noticed something interesting: the broom makers import their broom corn these days from Mexico, because (as they explained) no one grows and harvests it as cheaply in the states (I2). Bishop Hill has a small “demonstration plot” located near the broom makers’ shop where a bit of broom corn and other traditional crops are grown, but the actual stuff used in broom making is shipped in bulk across thousands of miles and is subject to international trade agreements.

Similarly, one of the Bishop Hill artists relayed this anecdote about the local Colony Store, which features Swedish-themed gifts and foods:

I can buy anything Marie has on her shelf [elsewhere] because I know how to source it, and there are smarter people than I am out there… The tomte dolls come from China. … My friend asked me to get her granddaughter a little tomte doll. And Marie wrapped it, and she did take the price off, but she didn’t take the Made in China tag off it (I9).

These anecdotes are reinforced in a tourism study conducted by the county last year, where the consulting firm chastised the area: “It was difficult to find ‘locally made’ items, except in a few art galleries and stores” (Hargrove, 2).

One might argue that this tension between the local, particular, and emplaced and the global, indistinguishable, and unmoored is actually a cause-and-effect relationship (Lavin 2013). In this case, our desire for place-based consumable experiences and “local” products actually results from the acute anxieties induced by the disruptions inherent in globalization. Simply put, the greater the threats to our identities and borders, the stronger our desire to reinforce those identities and borders via place-based consumption.

That Bishop Hill is in the cultural heritage business means that it is selling a consumable experience, which can be characterized as a sense of place. Its identity as a community – both in a personal and an existential sense – is bound up in its ability to offer this experience to visitors, even as the village embodies the challenges with trying to enact this difference in the context of a global economy largely indifferent to particular places, histories, or ecosystems. That backdrop is what is necessary to understand how and why some in the community objected when the Invenergy corporation introduced its plan for a 183-turbine wind farm to the area in 2006.

**Enter Wind**

“It’s a *wind-wind* situation all the way around.”

From Invenergy promotional video, “Harvest of Wind”

They don’t bother me per se but they generate a lot of strong feelings.

Bishop Hill resident (I3)

There’s still someone who… if he’s in the post office, I don’t go in. Because it’s all my fault. He didn’t start attacking verbally until [the wind turbines] had been up for over a year, and then he suddenly went off: “It’s your fault! You could have done something and you didn’t!”

Bishop Hill resident (I8)

While its overall share of energy markets is still quite small (~4%), wind power is among the fastest growing sectors of energy production today, averaging between 24% and 28% growth per year. Because of its comparatively small environmental impact especially when compared with fossil fuels, wind energy is seen as one of the most promising sources of future energy production.[[17]](#footnote-17) And while wind farms can occupy quite a bit of real estate, in rural areas they can often coexist with existing agricultural uses, making them attractive to farmers who benefit from annual subsidies paid by wind energy companies to lease land for siting turbines. The wind farms also provide tax revenue to local governments that have not seen that kind of cash infusion in ages. Pasqualetti sums up wind energy’s attraction nicely:

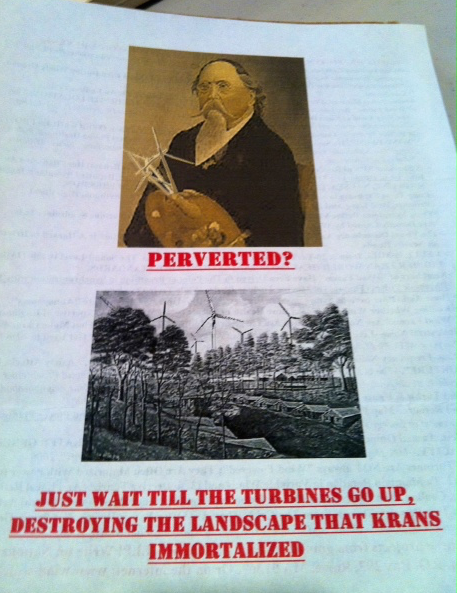
Producing no global warming, wind power floods no canyons, demands no water, contaminates no soil, and leaves no permanent and dangerous waste. Wind generators can be installed and removed quickly; they are well suited to isolated, off-grid locations; and the cost of the electricity they produce is now comparable with conventional sources. In short, wind power is too good to ignore (2000, 382).

Over the past decade, the state of Illinois has significantly transformed its energy generation profile, resulting in wind energy’s growth from zero megawatts generated in 2002 to over 3,000 megawatts produced at over 20 utility-scale wind farms in 2012 (CFRE 2011, 6; CFRE 2013, 34). One important cause of this shift was the Illinois Power Agency Act passed in 2007, which included a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) of 25% by 2025 (i.e., by the year 2025, 25% of the energy procured by utility companies must be from renewable sources.) Of that 25%, a full 75% of the energy resources must come from wind. As a result, in recent years, Illinois has ranked in the top five states in the U.S. in installed wind capacity, and energy companies installed 404 new turbines in the state in 2011 alone (CFRE 2013, 34).[[18]](#footnote-18)

One significant developer of wind energy in Illinois is the Invenergy corporation. Headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, Invenergy is the largest provider of wind energy in North America. It is a multinational corporation currently operating 51 sites that and produce and sell wind energy in the United States, Canada, and Europe. And in 2006, Invenergy became publicly and legally a significant part of the Bishop Hill story.[[19]](#footnote-19)

On September 20, 2006, the Henry County Zoning Board of Appeals held a public hearing at the Henry County Courthouse in Cambridge, Illinois to consider a Special Use Permit application by Bishop Hill Energy LLC C/O Invenergy Wind LLC, for the construction and operation of 266 wind turbines across six townships. The official record of the hearing notes that the mayor of Bishop Hill expressed support for the project and “a few Bishop Hill residents and business owners expressed concern about protecting the historic nature of their community” (Special Use Permit, 2). Within five years, Invenergy completed financing for the Bishop Hill project. And within six years, the two phases of the project (named Bishop Hill I and II) were fully operational, consisting of 183 turbines sited across 33,000 acres. Bishop Hill I (133 turbines) sells all the power it generates to the Tennessee Valley Authority under a long-term contract, producing enough renewable energy to power about 120,000 homes (Galesburg article), while Bishop Hill II (50,000 turbines) sells to Ameren Illinois, and generates enough power for 25,000 homes (CFRE 2013, 20).

It is true, as the public hearing minutes noted, that the opposition to the proposed wind farm amounted to a small number of people. But what the antiseptic nature of the permit documentation does not convey is the passion of those opposed. One interviewee told us that “the windmills were the thing that got most people pulled together and at the same time…” -- and then she made a cleaving motion in the air with her hands (BAM). As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words:



What I want to think about here is the nature of this conflict, and why exactly antagonism to the wind farm became so intense that it threatened to divide the community. (That did not in fact happen, as I will make clear later on.) Given all of the obvious benefits of wind energy, which even the company’s most vigorous detractors recognized, why did the proposed farm generate such heated opposition?

The opposition to the wind farm is particularly interesting given the wide range of statutes and agencies to which wind farms are subject, and the admission from many that Invenergy has been a good steward of the land. The original documentation from the hearing clearly specifies that the proposed wind energy center was expected to comply with county, state, and federal regulation regarding building codes, storm water, airport zoning, pollution (land, water, air, and noise), and threatened and endangered species; in addition, it would also need to comply with “Illinois Historic Preservation Office requirements including those for the protection of the Village of Bishop Hill” (Special Use Permit, 3). In short, the development and operation of the wind farm was, from the start, bounded by a set of stipulations designed to protect the site, including the environment, the community, and its inhabitants.

The first source of dissatisfaction with the wind farm – and the easiest to convey here-- is a critique of the process by which the site was developed, and the less-than-democratic nature of the proceedings. Because the wind farm is situated just outside of town, the actual residents of Bishop Hill had virtually no input into or influence over its development, despite the fact that the town would be completely encircled by the turbines upon their completion. Each individual land owner (farmers who live in the surrounding area) made a private and singular agreement with Invenergy, and the energy company representatives did little to engage the public writ large or consult the Bishop Hill community.

…Contracts were ongoing with farmers and things before most people even knew. It was only at the point that company wanted it to get out that it got out. By the time you get to the review stage, contracts have already been signed … It was way down the road (I8).

This perception was no doubt intensified by the fact that Bishop Hill has very little in the form of municipal government; the mayor and the Village Board are positions whose charge is quite minimal. As one interviewee told me:

The Village Board… their charge is streets and garbage and recycling and water and that’s kind of how they’ve always been. They’ve never been out there trying to sell the vision (I8).

Another added:

I don’t know how city government fits in. From my understanding, the councilors and the mayor are not involved in businesses directly involved in tourism, other than helping with vendor permits. It is interesting. I think there is quite a gulf there. I don’t know if there were times when city government was more involved. There’s a disconnect (I3)

As a result, as one respondent said, “The village board never met to discuss it. Because… Invenergy said they’d take care of it. All of the information was provided by them” (I9).

In other words, much of the significant work of the town – namely, attracting tourists – is done by the incredibly involved, committed group of volunteers who staff the village’s vigorous civic organizations. It is obvious that none of these organizations (the Heritage, the Arts Council, the Old Settlers Association) is in a position to negotiate with a multinational energy corporation, and the local government had little incentive to do so either, especially since Invenergy was promising a sizable cash payment to the city for allowing the wind farm’s operation. [[20]](#footnote-20)

As a result, more than one person told us that from the beginning, the wind farm very much had the feeling of a “done deal,” in part because of the arrangements that had already been made with individual land owners and in part because of Invenergy’s intense lobbying efforts in D.C. and Springfield long before the first public meeting on the wind farm was held. As one particularly vocal opponent of the wind farm told us:

The very first meeting [run by Invenergy] was held in restaurant in Woodhull and it attracted quite a crowd… [My friend] and I kept asking questions and finally we were led out of the meeting by our elbows. [The Invenergy representatives said], “You seem to have some concerns, let’s discuss them over here…”

“All of the information” provided at the meeting, the same respondent told us derisively, “Was brought by the windmill company. … [They had] the grizzled old lawyer and the young hip guy (pause) … and it was all so *choreographed*” (I9). Another interviewee agreed that “The consultation method was poorly handled. … You hear stories about they gave so-and-so money… don’t know if any of that is true” (I3).

The opponents’ reservations deepened when it became apparent that the initial setback for the wind farm – i.e., the distance between the wind turbines and the town itself—was going to be significantly reduced, from the initially approved three miles to one-half mile, putting the turbines literally in Bishop Hill’s back yard. The process by which this transpired was also viewed with great suspicion, as it began with Invenergy requesting a change to the stipulations it had originally agreed to. After a ruling by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency that no wind turbines should be closer than three miles to Bishop Hill (Hammer 2011), things began to get thorny:

Our [preservation] agency… came down wanting, requiring a three mile setback. And then suddenly all the people who had contracts signed and thought they were going to get money went straight to the governor’s office. I don’t know exactly what happened but I was told by someone in preservation services that the governor called and said, “Can’t you help them with this?” … This is just what you hear and what you’re told and what’s explained to you (I8).

Invenergy requested public hearings to change the language regarding historic preservation in the original special use permit. While the original permit directed Invenergy to *comply with* “Illinois Historic Preservation Office requirements including those for the protection of the Village of Bishop Hill,” the revised language indicated that the company “shall *consult with* the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) regarding the effect of the project on the Village of Bishop Hill” (Notice of Public Hearing 11-01 SU, my emphasis); in other words, the company would not be bound by IHPA regulations, and the setback could be significantly diminished.

At the request of Invenergy, the village council called an emergency town meeting to debate on the changed setback. One resident complained,

They had a meeting in a blizzard… I could see them going to meeting in their trucks… They called it an emergency meeting… We had to change the ordinance. But again, one person one vote, that’s all I was asking for, really (I9).

The mayor saw things quite differently; he didn’t see “why the village should have a say anyway" in “what happens outside village limits” (Hammer 2012).

The same resident quoted above wrote about this event in a complaint to the federal Advisory Council on Preservation:

The only town meeting in which this wind farm was ever discussed over the past six years was improperly posted and held this past February [2011] in the aftermath of a blizzard – before the town was even plowed! No members of the community were informed; only Village Board members were present. …It was at this meeting the Village Board moved to approve a half mile setback for siting turbines. [The town of ] Bishop Hill is less than a mile wide [I9 letter draft].

A fairly neutral observer of the conflict noted that “The distance from town is what makes people very angry. There is a noise that you hear from them on some days. I can appreciate the concern …” (I3). And the most vocal opponent of the wind farm felt that the deck was stacked against her from the beginning: “I’m not an opponent of green energy, which is how I’ve been portrayed… But every time I opened my mouth, the farmers thought… And then it became if you opposed the windmills, you opposed the farmers” (I9). She concluded that more meetings were held on the potential closing of the village post office than were held on the wind farm.

The second reason the wind farm generated so much controversy is harder to communicate if you have never lived in an historic community, and/or never visited a wind farm. It is difficult to convey the enormity of a single wind turbine in a photograph, and just as difficult to appreciate their size from a distance. And when you are up close to a turbine, it is difficult to appreciate the magnitude of the impact of dozens of them across the landscape. Each wind turbine’s hub is 100 meters tall, and each blade is 50 meters long, meaning that from turbine base to rotor tip is roughly the length of two football fields. The turbines used at the Bishop Hill sites are state of the art: they are “smart” turbines that have sensors that seek out the wind’s direction every few minutes, and adjust the direction and angle of their blades automatically. Occasionally engineers “pilot” these turbines manually, climbing 100 meters up narrow ladders inside the turbines to sit perched above the corn fields (other more upscale versions of these same turbines have internal elevators rather than ladders).

Residents noted to us the whoosh-whoosh of the blades that can be heard occasionally emanating from the turbines; more notable to me was the utterly otherworldly sounds that come from the turbines when you are right next to them: the sounds of metal creaking, groaning, and pinging… all give the impression of an alien spacecraft that’s come to earth. This impression is only amplified when one takes a panoramic view of the farm. “It’s like being on another planet,” a friend said to me when I drove her to Bishop Hill. “It makes me feel so *terrestrial*.”

The visual effects of the turbines can be surprising. My colleague and I spent a good deal of time in Bishop Hill this past fall, and were continually reminded of the presence of the turbines in interesting ways: while conducting an interview, a turbine blade would catch the sun at a certain angle and suddenly the light in the room would change (a phenomenon known as “shadow flicker,” which has not been shown to have any sort of negative impact on human health, but which subtly changes one’s experience of a place). As the leaves fell off the trees around town, the turbines appeared juxtaposed in interesting ways against historic landmarks and bucolic vistas. As one resident told us:

It just made me sick. I’m not opposed to wind energy. I thought – I thought there should be a five mile setback. …”You won’t be able to see it from downtown Bishop Hill”—well, when they said that, I knew it was a lie (I8).

More than one interviewee mentioned the mesmerizing presence of the turbine landscape at night:

I was at a meeting in Galesburg the other night driving home, you get to this point, and you see the whole expanse of it, all the red lights… It’s when I get that view of all those blinking lights… (I8, also echoed by I3)

One might think that the second concern expressed about the wind farm is simply about the impact of the farm’s siting on Bishop Hill’s status as a tourist destination. The vocal opponent to the farm expressed this to the Advisory Council on Preservation:

I’m afraid that our legislators in Washington, have never been to or heard of Bishop Hill, Illinois. Our only industry is tourism. Our only chance at recovering from the current economic downturn is to boost visitation [I9 letter draft].

Indeed, given the sheer number of references to the pristine landscape that surrounds Bishop Hill in both the marketing literature and the site’s application for historic landmark status, this is no small matter. This same resident conducted a survey on the impact of the turbines on the community. One survey response summed up this objection nicely: “Part of the historic experience in Bishop Hill is the ability to imagine how it was 150 years ago, and that begins as your drive into town, seeing virtually the same scene as it was for the settlers. To say that massive wind turbines would not adversely change that experience is patently ridiculous” (From survey, comment #12).[[21]](#footnote-21)

In short, this objection might be simply anxiety about the possible economic consequences of the wind farm’s introduction on a town that relies on tourism to survive. This comports with what Brannstrom et al. found when they investigated support for and opposition to wind power in west Texas: “We found broad support for wind-power development because of perceived increased employment and economic activity….These place based experiences, not foundational aesthetic or moral values, framed discourses of support… We found no opposition to wind power based on aesthetics” (849).

But it’s also possible to see the opponents’ concern as something greater than economic interest at work, and that “aesthetics” has a broader meaning than perhaps Brannstorm et al. might have found. The introduction of the wind farm has changed, in an important sense, the nature of the place and residents’ relationship to it. Contrary to Brannstrom et al., Pasqualetti and others have noted that “Despite the benefits of wind power and even its acceptance… the more vocal public reaction is one of hesitation and resistance to the distinctive landscape signature of wind power” (2000, 383).

Environmental geographer Martin Pasqualetti suggests that the large and obvious footprint necessitated by wind energy runs contrary to how most of us think – or, to the point, do *not* think- about the impact of our energy production and consumption. Fossil and nuclear fuels, he points out, provide most of our energy but do so on “lengthy and dispersed fuel chains” where “no single place must absorb or suffer cumulative – including aesthetic- insults” (2000, 383). When a region does absorb a variety of these costs (e.g., strip mining in Appalachia), they are not always immediately apparent, such as air and water pollution and long-term health costs for the local population. Wind, Pasqualetti argues, is much more similar to wood as an energy source than coal or nuclear power, because “the consequences of its use [are] immediate and local. … The emergence of coal as a substitute for wood produced substantial changes in the spatial arrangement of energy impacts” (2000, 386). Wind energy, in short, “is an energy resource that reminds us that our electricity comes from somewhere” (381).

Pasqualetti goes on to argue briefly that one reason wind turbines cause so much controversy is because people expect permanence in their landscapes (2000, 389); as he states elsewhere, “It is part of the human condition to believe that the landscapes with which we are most familiar… will not change over time. Such faith in ‘landscape permanence’ is common in all cultures” (2011, 390). Part of the reason the wind farms threaten is that they remind us that landscapes aren’t static, and that we are always rewriting our history. Or as Peter Cannavò argues, “places provide a sustaining, reassuring permanence that enables individuals and communities to rely on the world for usefulness, meaning, and affirmation of identities” (41). Disrupting the landscape in such a profound and permanent way rewrites residents’ and visitors’ understandings of the place and of themselves.

In the case of Bishop Hill, changing the landscape to include a massive wind farm means that instead of being transported to “a simpler time” (in the parlance of the tourist and historic preservation literature), tourists will now experience an interesting juxtaposition of time embedded in the landscape – or radically different temporalities at work in one place. On the one hand, the village’s 19th-century architecture and traditions keep Bishop Hill grounded in its utopian past. But the wind farm is there as an obvious reminder of our uncertain present time, a present where energy production is fraught with political and ecologic strife, whether that is fracking, climate change, or the Keystone XL. The existence of the wind farm makes it difficult to sustain the fantasy of “a simpler time,” and makes the business of heritage and nostalgia significantly more complicated. In other words, it is much more difficult to be nostalgic when you are looking at the future.

**Negotiating Sustainabilities**

Bishop Hill endures. It morphs, it changes into something else.

Bishop Hill resident (I9)

I thought it would divide us. I was *really* concerned. When I went to our hearing, I just thought… I was going to see the town explode. Because you knew where everyone was positioned, but this was going to be on the record. But everybody remained civil. …When it was over, I was relieved that it seemed like we were going to be okay.

Bishop Hill resident (I8)

The two phases of the wind farm project, Bishop Hill I and II, became fully operational in 2012, and so the community has been living with the turbines in action for over two years. By all accounts, the conflict over the wind farm has receded. Despite dire predictions, Bishop Hill had a record year in tourism last year, and there is no evidence that the wind farm has had an adverse relationship on the town’s ability to attract visitors.[[22]](#footnote-22) Being a small and close-knit community, even those most adamantly opposed to the wind farm have recognized that they “have to live here” and have made their peace with the turbines’ presence.

Some residents look back with some regret on the missed opportunities in the wind farm’s development. In nearby Geneseo, Illinois, the town negotiated an arrangement by which the town itself would own and operate two turbines, allowing it to produce approximately 10% of its own energy. Bishop Hill did not pursue this option. But many in the town have given some thought to how Bishop Hill should incorporate its new identity – site of major wind energy production- into its storied past. Several residents pointed out to us that the wind farm might actually be *in keeping with* the town’s historic character. They note the colonists’ willingness to embrace new technologies as a significant part of Bishop Hill’s early economic success. As Nelson described, in its first few years the Colony purchased an innovative, steam-operated grist mill and were also the first in the area to use the newly-invented mechanical reaper; they were “amazingly adaptable to the unfamiliar physical and economic circumstances of their new milieu” (Nelson quoted in White, 185). More than one resident suggested that the village should highlight the colonists’ love of innovation in promoting the town. “We should tie it [the wind farm] into the history… look at what the Swedes did, we’re still doing that” (I4). She continued:

Why not use it to our advantage? I asked [Invenergy], “Why aren’t you open for tours?” The guys would be thrilled with that sort of thing. But the company wasn’t open to it. I think it’s a reaction to the negative publicity. Why not make it part of the attraction? I think [the wind turbines] are kind of graceful looking.

Another resident also commented on the aesthetic appeal of the turbines: “I actually think that the wind turbines themselves are quite a lovely form, better than electrical wires… Many, many people ask about wind turbines when they come into town. Not just men. It would be great if we had more information available for them” (I3). In fact, this approach is precisely what Pasqualetti suggests: “No matter how much we do to reduce the impact of wind turbines on landscapes, nothing can render them invisible. The most sensible remaining step, then, is to embrace wind’s visibility not as a problem but as an asset” (2000, 391).

Such a perspective will require a broader, more clearly articulated vision for the area that, to date, its individual civic organizations and its local government have been unable to muster. It will require some thought about the intersection of heritage and environment, between people’s land and people’s lives. And it will require eschewing the town’s “simpler time” mantra (which is not particularly accurate anyway) in favor of a more nuanced version of what “utopia” in this day and age might mean.

**Appendix A: Sample interview questions:**

* What is your occupation?
* How long has your family lived in Bishop Hill? If they are not from here, where are they from?
  + If you have not lived in Bishop Hill your whole life, what were the reasons you moved here? Is it what you expected? How has your life changed since moving here? How easy/difficult has it been to integrate into the local community?
  + If you and/or your family have lived in Bishop Hill for a long time, how has the local population of Bishop Hill changed over the years? Why do new incoming residents move here? Are there misunderstandings or tensions between newcomers and some of the older families?
* How much of the economy of the village is based on tourism? How much of the local economy should be based on tourism? Should it increase or decrease? Why?
* What is it like to live in a town that is also a tourist destination?
* What are the most important things for tourists to learn about Bishop Hill when they visit?
* What are “Bishop Hill people” like? Would you say that people from Bishop Hill have a particular set of characteristics? Why?
* What are the various internal social groups in the community? What are these groups based around? (e.g., race, class, occupation)
* Are there community events that are off-limits to tourists, or events where it would be unusual to see tourists? Why?
* What do tourists want when they come to Bishop Hill?
* How have you been involved in the life of the village during your time here?
* Which groups/people/offices make decisions about what gets done in the village? Do you feel like you have a say in how things get done here?
* How does a person come to serve or participate in these groups? (E.g., elections, etc.)
* How involved are external bodies (e.g. the state of IL) in shaping decisions in the village? In your opinion, is this too much influence? Too little? What are the positive and negative effects of this?
* Are the groups involved in decision-making in agreement about how the town should function, and what the town’s priorities should be? What are the major points of agreement and disagreement?
* Tell me about the wind farm.
* What are the benefits and drawbacks of the wind farm? Is the controversy still “alive” in the village in your opinion?

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1. As per our confidentiality agreement with our subjects, the names of those interviewed and their businesses have been omitted for the purposes of this draft. The interviews are identified simply by number (I1 = Interview 1, etc.) As our research progresses, we will give our subjects the choice of using a pseudonym or their own identity in the text, and follow their preferences in the final version. Similarly, the quotes in this draft are a bit abbreviated from the respondents’ original statements; in the next draft I will work to ensure more precision and accuracy in these quotes. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. From an 1847 account of the new Bishop Hill colony, quoted in White, 167. The land also flowed with cholera, as it turned out, leading to the deaths of 140 colonists in the first year of Bishop Hill’s existence. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Holloway refers to this time period as “the golden age of community experiments.” It is worth noting that although Bishop Hill is the subject of a great deal of academic interest, the vast majority of scholarship on the community is on its founding period and often covers only the lifespan of the colony, i.e., 1846-1861. Thus my colleague and I had some difficulty convincing people that we wanted to talk to them about the present, and about their own lives in Bishop Hill, as opposed to the lives of the community’s founders. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For a more detailed biography of Jansson see Elmen 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. It is unclear from the evidence if Jansson’s communism was based in his understanding of Christian scripture or in sheer practicality, given the needs of the Colony at the time (White, 172-4). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Interestingly, Bishop Hill does have a long history of hospitality: “From the beginning visitors were welcomed and special accommodations made for them. Already in 1847, there was a lean-to attached to Jansson’s frame house where guests were housed. By 1850, seven rooms in the largest colony building were set aside for visitors, and one member’s assigned job was to see to their welfare. By 1854, work had begun on an impressive new building facing the central square that was to serve as a hotel for travelers. Although on its completion the Colony decided to put the 1854 building to other uses, another hotel was created on another corner of the square” (White, 193). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This event is known as Old Settlers’ Day, and it is an annual occurrence in Bishop Hill. Various sources told us it used to attract literally thousands of people; now that number has dwindled significantly. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Olof Krans (1838-1916) was a Swedish American painter known as Illinois’ best-known folk artist, and a collection of his works is exhibited in a small but lovely museum curated by the state of Illinois in Bishop Hill. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. There is one full time employee who manages the three properties that belong to the State of Illinois. She has lived in Bishop Hill since 1981. She is referred to either by her name, or by the un-ironic moniker The State. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Interestingly and tellingly, the Heritage has always been comprised of people who live outside of Bishop Hill proper. (E.g., NM interview: “Residents in Bishop Hill have never been major players in restoration and preservation.”) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into this issue, it is safe to say that cultural heritage production in this moment is very much a creature of neoliberalism, and thus all of the same dynamics we see when we discuss neoliberalism apply here: pervasive economic rationality and market logic as a justification for expenditures; accelerating state disinvestment from cultural resources; increasing reliance on public-private partnerships and private organizations for preservation efforts, etc. For an extended discussion of this dimension, see Rosemary Coombe’s “Managing Cultural Heritage as Neoliberal Governmentality” in Bendix et al. For a more general discussion of the contours of neoliberalism see Brown 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See, for example, Swanson’s traveling agency: http://www.swansons.se/sv/destinationer/usa/illinois.htm. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. U.S. Census Bureau 2010. While Bishop Hill is not the only attraction in Henry County, it is certainly one of the most important. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. For example, when the historic preservationists began making their case for Bishop Hill in the 1960s and 1970s, they were sure to distinguish between the Colony’s version of communal living, and the contemporary iteration (Nelson). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Fletcher argues that imperialist amnesia presents “a sanitized version of colonialism from which evidence of exploitation, subjugation and genocide has been effectively erased” (423). I say “virtually” erased here because of one particular story that gets circulated in Bishop Hill lore: according to locals, at one point some Native Americans roaming around the Colony were frightened off by a particularly tall colonist who had dressed up like a bear. Olof Krans painted a picture of this “event” – a large man with crazy eyes covered in bear skins-- and the painting is one of the stranger pieces in the state-owned Olof Krans museum in Bishop Hill. To me, the existence of this story and the painting that accompanies it are much more intriguing than a simple “absence” of Native Americans would be, because these are markers of a kind of obvious anxiety about the Native American presence, rather than complete erasure from memory/history. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Again, in a telling example of the malleability of the village’s heritage, we can look at one of the prominent community organizations, called The Old Settlers Association, which owns and manages Bishop Hill’s historic school house and organizes some of the town’s events (O’Neill, 58-59). The Old Settlers, as you might imagine, used to be comprised exclusively of people descended from the original colonists. These days, however, the organization has realized that “it needs new blood” (BM) and has issued invitations to many newcomers. Thus one new member of the “Old Settlers” is a lesbian potter from Canada.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. I won’t parse the literature on bird and bat mortality here, but wind farms are attempting to address these persistent issues through wildlife conservation plans and the like. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Illinois’ goals and incentives are very much in line with the Department of Energy’s own goals and projections, as outlined in the recently released report *Wind Vision: A New Era for Wind Power in the United States* (2015). In 2012, 29 states had RPS mandates that included wind power. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Of course, Invenergy had been working with individual landowners long before this point securing the rights to lease their land to site the turbines. By the time of the public hearing, “One hundred sixty-eight (168) landowners [had] agreed to include 377 tracts of land covering approximately 31,500 acres in the wind farm project.” (From AG-Special Use Permit 06-23 SU/1-266 Henry County Board Ordinance, 2). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. In the end, Invenergy donated $500,000 to Bishop Hill, and the money was split equally between the village, the Heritage, and the Arts Council. The Heritage used the funds for the preservation of one of the largest buildings in town, the Steeple Building, which serves as both their headquarters and a museum of Colony history. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. There is, of course, a sort of fetishization or landscape essentialism at work here; as another colleague pointed out to me, “Well, it’s not like the original settlers would have seen hundreds of acres of genetically modified corn, either.” [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Of course, only time will tell regarding the long-term impact of the wind turbines on tourism. Given that most of Bishop Hill’s visitors are repeat visitors, it remains to be seen if tourists who came to the town after the construction of the wind farm will return in subsequent years. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)