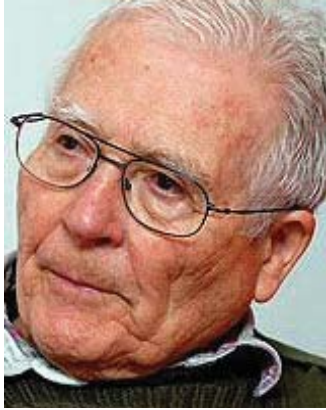


Dear readers of the Scandinavian Homes webpage...

We would like to present an interesting interview made by our dear friend and Scandinavian Home owner Nina Witoszek. Nina met with the eminent scientist, inventor and environmentalist, Professor James Lovelock in Oslo in 2007.



James Lovelock

Professor Lovelock represents the great cross boundary thinking of the renaissance. He is greatly critical of the compartmentalized and narrow-minded thinking of today's academia and authorities.

His views are considered controversial by many, but he is beautifully fearless, and will never bow to the politically correct. Professor Lovelock invented the electron capture detector. With this instrument he was the first to detect unexpectedly high levels of CFCs in the atmosphere in Ireland in the late 1960ties. This assisted in discovering the persistence of CFCs and their role in stratospheric ozone depletion. He is however most famous for proposing the Gaia hypothesis that the entire earth works as a living organism. He did this while working for NASA, trying to detect life on Mars.



Nina Witoszek

Nina Witoszek is professor of Cultural History at Oslo University, assistant professor at the European University in Florence, and researcher at the Center for Development and the Environment,

Oslo University. She is the author of many books, including "Nature Mythologies: From the Eddas to Ecophilosophy" (Blackwell) and the editor of "Rethinking Deep Ecology" and "Culture and Environment: Interdisciplinary Approaches".

Nina's Scandinavian Homes house is a Baltica 99 located in Galway. House No 66, built in 1993

Apocalypse in 2040?

The World according to Professor James Lovelock

by Nina Witoszek

If there are any heretics or dissidents left in the world of science, Professor James Lovelock is certainly number one. When you talk to him you get a sense that you are wrong almost about everything: climate, the future of the earth, accepted strategies of dealing with environmental degradation, the green movement.

Here are Lovelock's five heresies:

- 1. The earth is a self regulating super-organism that he calls Gaia: a theory that Richard Dawkins once dismissed as "bad poetic science;"**
- 2. Cutting greenhouse gases is wrong;**
- 3. Nuclear energy is the fastest and safest way of ensuring that part of the world will have electricity in 2040;**
- 4. The Greens foster the illusion that if the planet were farmed organically all would be well. It won't;**
- 5. A minor apocalypse is coming by 2040, and we cannot do much about it. But hear hear: Norway will be one of the safest places after the Armageddon.**

In 2007 James Lovelock has been selected as the first international scholar to hold Arne Næss chair in Global Justice and the Environment. He shares several things with the Norwegian philosopher. Like Næss, he dropped a brilliant academic career and went for independent research. Like Næss, he deeply cares about the fate of the planet. Like Næss, he is suicidally fearless and controversial. And like Næss he is amazingly productive, even in his eighties. But unlike Næss the sunny boy, Lovelock is

a doomsday man. We sit at the Center for Development and the Environment, which is Jim Lovelock's partial base this year, and talk about science, Gaia, and the coming Apocalypse.

UNIVERSITY

NW: You hold a professorship named after Arne Næss. How do you feel about it?

JL: I'm deeply honoured and I respect Arne a lot. But to be quite honest, he and I would have a great difficulty conversing. Arne gives a council to perfection: lead a pure life of utter unselfishness and practice deep ecology. You can't do it, but it's useful as a moral blackmail.

NW: You are not a university man...

NW: Most of my research has been self-funded and done from home. I could never get a grant, which is no surprise, because if you start any large theory, such as quantum mechanics or evolution, it takes some 40 years for mainstream science to come around.

NW: Why don't you like the university?

JL: The sad thing is that in recent years, particularly since World War II, there have been too many scientists trained for a job or career. I was brought up as a socialist but I think that one of the fundamental flaws socialism is the belief that we are all equal intellectually. All this nonsense about "you can train anybody". Well, you can't. The university is full of dumbos and cronies. And science is increasingly fragmented. If you find a strange wild flower and show it to a professor of biology he'll say: I don't know

this one, you have to go to a botanist. So you go to a botanist and he says: wonderful, but I am a cryptogamic botanist, go to a specialist. This is reductionism gone mad. There are huge research councils in Britain that are totally useless.

NW: *Apart from being a scientist you are also an inventor. In 1957 you devised the famous electron capture detector which enabled other scientists to understand the dangers of DDT and to figure out the erosion of ozone layer. And then the US government seized the patent rights. Aren't you mad at the Americans that they cheated you out of 20 million dollars?*

JL: I don't mind really, though I do think it's been a bit unfair. You see, inventors rarely get rich, it's the entrepreneurs that do. But the joy of invention is so much in the doing that money is not really an issue, provided that you get enough to get to the next invention.

GAIA

NW: *How did you hit upon the idea of Gaia?*

JL: I was employed by NASA as an inventor to make instruments for them to go to Mars back in 1975. It was seeing the Earth from space, especially what Mars or Venus were like, that convinced me that our planet was something special. It dawned on me that the earth is a self-regulating system made up from the totality of organisms, the surface rocks, the ocean and the atmosphere, all of them interconnected and striving to regulate surface conditions so as always to be as favourable as possible for life. I discussed the idea with my friend, the writer William Golding – who, by the way, had been trained as a physicist – and he suggested that we call it Gaia, from the Earth goddess.

NW: *Your theory created havoc ...*

JL: They said it was rubbish and anti-science because it was contrary to Darwin who said that things just adapt to a world that's determined by geology.

NW: *But then they gave in.*

JL: Oh yes! Even Dawkins did, though I wish he had the guts to get up and say he was wrong. But the only one who did was Dawkins' mentor, William Hamilton.

NW: *The New Age afficionados loved your theory...*

JL: Which didn't exactly help because everybody was talking like mad about planetary consciousness and will, and that kind of rubbish, and this is not what Gaia theory is about.

NW: *It's certainly not about religion.*

JL: It just helps us to understand how the earth has managed to remain hospitable for life over billions of years even as the sun has become hotter. Through a series of processes involving, among others, ice ages, ocean algae, and weathering rock, the earth has managed to keep the amount of heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and hence the temperature, at a relatively stable level. Now this system has been in existence some 3,5 billion years. Don't you think that it's utterly amazing to produce at the end of that a conscious communicating animal that can actually go out and show the planet what an incredibly beautiful organism it is!

NW: *Do you have any theory on how it all started?*

JL: No, and I don't want to tangle with it. The evidence is almost zero. Look at the Earth here and now! If we were more awake to the

Earth's needs, we wouldn't be in the mess that's happening.

THE REVENGE OF GAIA

NW: *In a famous article published in January in 2004 in the Independent you wrote that the earth's homeostasis is now being disrupted by our unrestrained binge of fossil fuel consumption. You hold that "We have no time to experiment with visionary energy sources; civilization is in imminent danger." What made you shift from a rather optimist view of Gaia as being able to heal itself, to the angry Gaia that takes its revenge?*

JL: I trace my change of mind to January 2004 when I went with Sandy to Hadley, our climate Centre in Britain, where a lot of ICCP reports come from. We talked about various pathologies occurring all over the world as a result of higher temperatures - the death of ocean algae, the death of tropical forests, the release of large amounts of methane - and it suddenly dawned on me that all the changes were interactive and making each other worse. So we brought the scientists together at a meeting at Dartington in Devon three months later and it confirmed my worst fears. The Earth is having a high fever and here we go, doing cosmetic things like reducing greenhouse emissions.

NW: *What's wrong with reducing greenhouse emissions?*

JL: Everything! The governments should be listening to their scientists but they prefer to listen to the green lobby. Sir David King, our government's chief scientist has been haranguing the British government solidly, so has Chris Rapley, director of the British Antarctic Circle, but they won't listen.

NW: *Why do you think they prefer to listen to the Green lobby?*

JL: Because the lobby is more political. The problem with scientists is that, apart from few exceptions, they can neither speak coherently nor without constraints. Besides, if you are a good scientist you can't be certain about things. But the lobbies are certain and the politicians must have definite answers, so they believe the lobbies. Hardly a single scientist in Britain is properly independent. He knows that his funding, his promotion, his position depend on keeping his nose clean, so he prefers to steer the cautious, middle course.

NW: *Let's get back to cutting CO2...*

JL. It's up the creek. You see, if you cut back emissions totally, it will get worse! Curiously, aerosol pollution of the northern hemisphere reduces global warming by reflecting sunlight back to space. If, by act of magic, there no more carbon burnt any longer, what would happen in a month would be that all that aerosol would drop out of the air, and the cloud density would drop quite substantially, and in would come uninterrupted sunlight. This would mean that we would be in the situation as in 2003 when 20.000 died of heat exposure.

NW: *As usual with you, we have a bit of a problem with political correctness here: for if what you say is right, then President Bush and his gang know what they are doing by refusing to sign the Kyoto Agreement.*

JL: They are doing the right thing, though I think its' by chance. Look, Kyoto was in 1997 and I didn't see the light then! And I had an enormous advantage in that I've been living with Gaia for 20 years and seeing the planet as an entity. Most scientists see it in bits. Now I'm afraid that Kyoto agreement is a liberal flim-flam.

NW. *So the answer is nuclear energy?'*

JL: Wind power, hydrogen or solar power – all of these may be OK but they are quite expensive and cannot be advanced fast. Biofuel production entails yet more damage to the natural biosphere. Nuclear option is the only way to meet our energy needs on the timescale we have available.

NW: *You write that the fear of the nuclear energy is fed by the irrational Hollywood style scenarios.*

JL: I know, everybody hates it, except the Finns and the French. But after all, the whole universe runs on nuclear energy, so why should we be aberrant and burn carbon monoxide? That's the truly harmful thing.

NW: *There are lots of fears, of a terrorist network taking control over atomic reactors..."*

JL: Nonsense. You want to go to some of these plants and see for yourself

NW: *George Monbiot writes that we can't go ahead with nuclear energy until we've cleaned the old mess, namely nuclear waste.*

JL: What's the fuss about the nuclear waste? There isn't any of it! The energy you get from a ton of uranium is something like two million times like the energy you get from a ton of coal – and the waste is like the twenty millionth part of the mess produced by a ton of coal. So George Monbiot has got it astronomically wrong. And he's not an engineer; he only speaks to his friends in Green Peace. This is not science. This is propaganda. The Royal Academy of Engineering in Britain don't base their ideas on prejudice but on hard engineering facts. And they say that renewable energy is an appalling waste of time and money. But people like the catchy green things.

NW: *How is the Armageddon going to*

happen: bit by bit or all at once?

JL: What is going to happen is that by 2040 – if not sooner – the whole of the middle part of the world most of Europe will have temperature like in Baghdad. People will adjust to it, but plants won't. The crops will suffer – and not just in Europe but in America, China, and India. In some thirty years the world will change rapidly to scrub and desert.

NW: *Should we work on adaptation?*

JL: But can we adapt? Think: how would you irrigate Europe, even if there's all good will in the world? We have to adapt in the sense that we have to be prepared to move enough survivors to the Arctic. We should be prepared to receive these people and feed them - this should be the project.

NW: *Is that all we can do?*

JL: Yes, retreat. We should be like good generals to sound a retreat and save as many as we can. But good generals don't hit the headlines

NW: *Isn't the notion of retreat promoting defeatism? And isn't it a bit immoral to ask people to do nothing?*

JL: I know it is a weakness. The students are asking me if they should buy real estates in Canada.

NW: *What would be your advice to the lucky Norwegians?*

JL: You really have to search your heart and decide how many you'd like to come on your lifeboat. And you do have to be pragmatic; you mustn't take more than you can feed.

NW: *Do you think you could be wrong?*

JL: Yes, sure.

NW:?

JL: I think the probability is I'm about 80% right. And I think there's going to be an awful mess, and some 80% of people in the South will die. But there will be survivors and a new civilization will emerge. If it degenerates into war and warlords, let's hope that there will be a few monasteries that will keep the story going.

NW: *Why do you call yourself a "planet physician" if you have no cure?*

JL: (Laughs) I feel like a Roman in 418 seeing a civilization ready to fall apart. And I say to my wife: oh, isn't there a handyman around to fix electricity? Winter is coming and we're going to freeze. And the wife says, "Well, you can always hire a barbarian!"