# Ecotopia WebAssistance

## The Internet as enabling technology for dematerialisation of the world economy.

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### 1. About Ecotopia

- Ecotopia is the first virtual corporation in Belgium. A virtual corporation is a network of autonomous partners that work together on a project basis. The different Ecotopia projects are all related to sustainable development.
- Ecotopia is a global hub for sustainable consumption and production initiatives, connecting 7 networks: EPE, INEM, ORCA, IBPMA, EDMA, the Van Melle Group and Ecotopia.
- Ecotopia is an eco-innovation and new media network. Our new media activities include building networks for other networks.

For more info, please visit our website http://www.ecotopia.be/

### 2. About some of the most important challenges for our civilisation

The world we live in faces some important challenges, among which the rapid population growth and the bad distribution of wealth. This also leads to many social and environmental problems. If we want to distribute wealth in a more equal way and do more with less, we have to find ways to be more efficient and do things differently.
As Mahatma Gandhi said: "the world is big enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed".

Researchers of the Wuppertal Institut have calculated that the world economy needs dematerialisation with a factor 10.
What will an attractive society look like that uses its resources in such a drastically different way? Where will Nigeria get its income when all the oil is pumped up and sold?

Ecotopia promotes an experience based knowledge economy. One of the enabling technologies to bring about this new economy could be the Internet. We envision a world economy in which to a large extent:

- oil refineries will be replaced by information refineries
- warehouses will be replaced by data warehouses (databases)
- and churches will be replaced by telecentres and knowledge plaza's

The individual participant in this economy - every human being - will become a knowledge retailer, enriching his/her worldview with just in time, customized experiences, which can be produced and sold in various ways.

The experience based knowledge economy is an intermediate step to a learning society.

**3. The WebAssistant Factory**

We are drowning in information, but starving for knowledge. In 1945 Vannevar Bush, technology adviser for president Roosevelt, described the workdesk of the future: a tool in which you can store all the text and images that you encounter in your life. He called it 'Memex'.

Today, the Internet promises to put people in contact with the knowledge they need. But with 800 million web pages, projected for 2000, the chance of quickly finding what you really want is getting smaller and smaller. And even if you do find what you want, how are you going to process the information? And how about sharing it with others?

Ecotopia has developed a Knowledge Factory that produces small files of databases, thematically pre-screened and organized in a user-friendly point-and-click interface. We call these little database files WebAssistants, because they help users to find their way more easily to the web experience they want.

**What do you want TO DO today?**

Our research has indicated that there are basically 4 steps in working with information: searching, extracting, processing and communicating.

- step 1: searching information, usually involves search engines such as Altavista, Hotbot, or indexers such as Yahoo, LookSmart etc.

- for step 2: extracting information, the user usually makes use of applications, such as WebWhacker and WebSnake

- for step 3, processing information, a user often uses the OS on his hard disk (storage in directories and folders), and makes his/her own summary in a word processor application.

- in order to communicate his/her work, the user usually prints out the work, or may publish it again on the Internet.


The WebAssistant Factory features an integrated approach, that covers all the above steps. The user extracts the information semi-automatically, and processes the information in a flexible database layout. Bookmarks can be imported; new links, categories, text snippets and pictures can be added...

In short: a personal, networkable database allows him/her to distill and share his worldview. One push on a button allows him to publish (parts of) it on the Internet or to export it as protected knowledge code, that forms the basis of a commercial transaction.

**4. Demo of WebAssistant products**

[WebAssistants](#) come in different flavors: WebGuides, PowerScans, Shiopping Guides, HyperBooks, WebConsultants...

WebDesks: CEO, CIO, CFO, Marketing, Eco-manager...

**Warning: these sites are experimental and parts may not be operational yet.**

**5 . Q&A**

If you have any questions, please contact [Garsett Larosse](#)