Sustainability of Eco-cities: An Analysis of Masdar City in Abu Dhabi and Portland, Oregon
Ashwini Srinivasamohan
Environmental Studies Honors Seminar
Faculty Adviser: Julianne Warren

Abstract
Burgeoning population in urban centers coupled with dwindling natural resources have given rise to various proposals to make cities more sustainable in order to mitigate ecological impact and improve the quality of human lives. These proposals for different types of eco-cities include walled cities (e.g., tangibly bounded) and policy-driven initiatives (e.g., intangibly bounded). This study analyses if and how eco-city boundaries in one example city of each of these two types affect two essential components of sustainability—ecological durability and livability. It does so with the aim of helping inform plans for other eco-cities. Drawing on written research, policy documents, news articles, and interviews, I analyse Masdar City in the arid landscape of Abu Dhabi—a walled eco-city—and the temperate climate city of Portland, Oregon—a policy-driven initiative. Taking into account their unique locations, Portland’s approach appears to promote more ecological durability than Masdar City’s. Masdar City emphasizes livability, but at the expense of ecological durability making it less likely to be "sustainable." This study raises further questions about how sustainable cities need to take into account the capacities of the unique landscapes in which they are situated in order for them to be both ecologically durable and liveable and in what ways urban templates may or may not be helpful.