Abstract: Bioregionalism is an environmental movement and social philosophy that envisions de-municipalized community self-rule within political boundaries redrawn to reflect the natural contours of differing ecosystem types. Emerging from the religious "counterculture" of the United States it has escaped these enclosures, and has begun to influence contemporary environmental politics and resource management strategies. Its goal is nothing less than to foster an ethics of place and create sustainable human societies in harmony with the natural world, and consistent with the flourishing of all native species. This paper assesses the history, types, impacts, perils and prospects of "countercultural" bioregionalism and its affiliates.

Bioregionalism is a rapidly growing green political philosophy emerging with greatest force from within the "counterculture" in the United States where it now boasts well over one hundred very active regional organizations and conservatively, thousands of adherents. Bioregionalists envision decentralized community self-rule ("participatory democracy") within political boundaries redrawn to reflect the natural contours of differing ecosystem types. The fundamental goal of bioregionalism is nothing less than the creation (some say "remembering" or "borrowing") of sustainable human societies in harmony with the natural world and consistent with the flourishing of all native species. Although bioregional ideas are becoming influential far beyond their counter-cultural birthplaces, I will focus first on their original and counter-cultural forms. Counter-cultural bioregionalism is animated by two central convictions: (1) people within a given ecological region can, by virtue of "being there" and "learning the land" (its climate patterns, native flora and fauna, water systems, soils, and so on) better care for and build ecologically sustainable lifeways than can people and institutions placed farther away; (2) for local communities to revision and construct such lifeways, a fundamental reorienting of human consciousness is needed (at least for modern, industrial humans). This reformation of consciousness is post-anthropocentric, sometimes post-humanist, and usually "deep ecological"—namely it values the natural world intrinsically, for its own sake, rather than merely for its usefulness to human beings.

"Usually the deep ecological conviction is tied to a perception that the land is sacred and all its inhabitants are worthy of reverence (this perception takes many forms and is expressed in plural ways). This axi-ology in turn is based on a belief in the possibility of kinship, and even communication, with the "more than human" world (Abram 1996). Indeed, as the epigraph-poem by Gary Lawless suggests, bioregionalism is often
grounded in what can accurately be labeled an "animistic" or "pantheis-
tic" world view—pointing to the pos-
sibility of interspecies communica-
tion, or even of the planet communica-
cating with us.2 Indeed, we are to
"map" this movement (to borrow an
idea from Martin Marty 1976) within
what Collin Campbell (1972) has
labeled the "cultural milieu" (the coun-
terculture's plural amalgamations of
alternative spiritualities) bioregional-
ism (at least its main streams) could
be viewed as an "alternative" or "new
religious movement." It overlaps sig-
nificantly with a number of kindred
social movements, including neop-
aganism and several forms of "radical
ecology" including the "feminist spiri-
tuality movement" (Eller 1990), deep
ecology (including its militant un-
guard Earth First!), green-anarchism
(including its most important green-
manif~estation, social ecology) and
even sometimes with New Age spiritu-
ality and "transpersonal" psychology.5
In the following pages I will
(1) expand my description of the eco-
logical, political, and religious dimen-
sions of bioregionalism to typify more
fully the bioregional worldview,
(2) describe some of its historical
sources and contemporary manifesta-
tions, including its sometimes tense
relations with the so-called "radical
environmental" movement; (3) discuss
some of the theoretical and practical
problems that inhere to such a green
ideology; and (4) conclude with
reflections on the dramatic impacts of
this fascinating movement includ-
ing how it promotes an important
rethinking of a variety of assump-
tions, thereby contributing to a criti-
cal reappraisal of many aspects of the
nature-human relationship.

A Global Bricolage of Sources

Bioregionalism is a creative
bricolage, namely, an amalgamation of
many bits and pieces of diverse cul-
tural systems. It appropriates ideas
about "regionalism" from the ecologi-
cal sciences, about political decentral-
ization (from certain political ideolo-
gies, and about spirituality from a
variety of experiences, perceptions,
and traditions. In an early bioregional
treatise, Jim Dodge (1981, abridged
reprint 1990) outlined bioregional-
ism's concerns in a similar tripartite
way, writing that it involves and
draws on "regionalism" (such regions
defined by one or another set of ecol-
ogical criteria), "anarchism" (mean-
in "political decentralization, self-
determination, and a commitment to
social equity"), and "spirituality"
(with its key sources, "the primitive
spirit, great spirit tradition, vari-
ous Eastern and esoteric religious
practices, and plain old paying atten-
tion"). An overview of these three
dimensions of bioregionalism follows.
Regionalism—and Ecological Sci-
ence. It is important to recognize the
influence of scientific ecology on the
bioregional movement. From its earli-
est manifestations, some of the pio-
ners of bioregionalism drew heavily
on cutting-edge ecological science.
For example, Turtle Island, Gary Sny-
der's Pulitzer Prize-winning book of
poetry and prose, that doubled as an
early bioregional manifesto, was one
of the first books to discuss the
importance of "biological diversity"
(1969, p. 108). Ecological science has
long been an important bioregional
strategy for "learning the land." A
sum of the bioregional movement have
made ecology their avocation or profes-
sion, and a significant proportion of
these individuals deploy such knowledge as
activists in efforts to thwart environ-
mentally destructive enterprises. Since
the mid 1980s, bioregional activists
have increasingly borrowed insights
from the recently created discipline
of "conservation biology" Some have
developed an expertise in Geographic
Information Systems technologies in
order to inventory and assess the
needed habitats at-risk species and
providing crucial information for law-
based appeal processes and litigation.
The most ecologically sophisticated
bioregionalists have become some of
the nation's most effective wildlands
defenders, through science-dependent
appeals and lawsuits (Taylor 1997),
or have been innovators in the nascent
field of restoration ecology.
Many of the participants in the sub-
cultures of radical environmentalism
are involved both in bioregional
groups as well as Earth First! (includ-
ing its various "biodiversity projects"
and dozens of radical environmental
offshoot-groups around the country).
"Bioregionalists" and "radical envi-
ronmentalists" often draw on similar
scientific literature and employ simi-
lar strategies.6
Several of the scientist-pioneers of
conservation biology have devel-
oped close ties with certain individu-
als and branches of the radical envi-
ronmental movement.7 Perhaps the
best example of such an overlap can
be found in the work of the Wildlands
Project. After a 1990 ochism severed
Earth First! into at least two major
factions (Taylor 1994), Dave Foreman
and John Davis began publishing in
the spring of 1991 a new journal
called Wild Earth. The next year,
a special issue of Wild Earth appeared
entitled The Wildlands Project: Plowing
a North American Wilderness Reentry
Strat-
agy (Foreman and Davis 1992). It
announced an ambitious, long-term,
continental vision for wildlands preserva-
tion and restoration. The project was self-consciously based on
ecological principles emerging from
the discipline of conservation biology
and, to a significant extent, on biore-
gerational assumptions and values as
well. This introductory issue included
articles by nationally prominent con-
servation biologists Michael Soulé, and
Reed Noss (who had also signed-on as
board members for the Wildlands
Project). Noss's contribution provided
a comprehensive overview of the prin-
ciples of conservation biology, and
how they could be applied to "wilder-
ness recovery...the most important
task of our generation." (Noss 1992).8
Also in this issue, bioregionalism
elder Gary Snyder (1992) stressed the
impotence for bioregional thought in
general and the Wildlands Project
in particular, of Systems Theory and two

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Evolutionary and Lifestyle Bioregionalism. The main stream of bioregional thought in the United States can best be characterized as evolutionary or lifestyle bioregionalism (sometimes this kind has a relatively pragmatic vein), even though most of the early proponents of countercultural bioregionalism trace their political ideology to anarchism. Such nuance in interpretation requires careful navigation through the views of early pioneers of bioregionalism, especially Silo Snyder and Jim Dodge. Gary Snyder once acknowledged, for example, although he did not know from where the term bioregionalism came, that he knew that it drew strongly on the history of anarchist thought... (on the conviction) that we do not need a state, and that the state of government is necessarily synonymous with the social order and organization inherent in society. By anarchism I mean a consistent political philosophy that this order is, the possibilities of a free society, and not in any imposed order of a state structure operating with a monopoly on violence... and not... wild-eyed bomb throwers... to North American bioregionalism is an extension of anarchist thought, combined with much appreciation of American Indian culture, the recognition of the virtues of decentralization, and the insights of field sciences... (Sweater in Woods and Schoonmaker 1985, pp.115-116)

Snyder's recollection parallels Jim Dodge's understanding of anarchism, expressing a view able to those I have heard expressed in my green-anarchists during my fieldwork. "Anarchy doesn't mean out of control; it means out of their control" (Dodge 1981, p. 8). For Dodge, like Snyder, anarchism means "self-reliance, the conviction that we as a community... can make decisions regarding our individual and communal lives and gladly accept the responsibilities and consequences of those decisions." Most bioregionalists share the conviction (or hope) expressed by Dodge, that with locally based, face-to-face interactions, "we can act more quickly in relation to natural systems and... hopefully with more knowledge and care" (Dodge 1981, p. 8).
Although bioregionalists such as Snyder and Dodge express a radical, decentralized vision incompatible with nation-state regimes, they also express a more moderate and pragmatic political analysis than do some other bioregionalists. Snyder and Dodge are greatly concerned but appear less pessimistic about their ecological analyses than do their more apocalyptic kin. They yet hope that human societies can evolve to make the needed changes. They seem to believe that it might be possible to avert a catastrophic path to sustainability.

All bioregionalists wish to supplant nation-states in favor of decentralized and face-to-face community polity but evolutionary bioregionalists hope that this can occur without either revolutionary action or ecosphere collapse. Consequently, such activists are less likely to demonize nation-states or their functionaries than are their "revolutionary" and "apocalyptic" brethren. Even though Gary Snyder's most cherished values subvert national regimes (1990, pp. 37-39), he grudgingly acknowledges that such regimes "have their legitimacies." Nevertheless, he is harshly critical of them and envisions their passing:

"Calling this place "America" is to name it after a stranger. "Turtle Island" is the name given this continent by Native Americans based on creation mythology. The United States, Canada, Mexico, are just political entities; they have their legitimacies . . . but they will lose their mandate if they continue to abuse the land. "The state is destroyed, but the mountains and rivers remain." (Snyder 1990, p. 40)

This statement captures the ambivalence felt by many bioregionalists toward nation-states. Clearly, Snyder's exodology also envisions the dismantling of the state, but his longer time frame and less categorical denunciation of modern democracies allows him to promote "through the system" activism as well. Thus, some bioregionalists use federal environmental laws (and strive to retain
Figure 5. Lifestyle Bioregionalism. The environmentally sustainable, bioregional lifestyle begins at home. Source: Our Ecological Footprint (Wackernagel and Rees 1996) published in the New Catalyst Bioregional Series New Society Publishers.

and improve such laws through elec-
toral politics) in defense of ecosys-
tems in their regions. In general, the
evolutionary bioregionalists are more
"realistic," both about the regressive
power of the state (thus eschewing
revolutionary romanticism), and in
recognizing that moving toward
bioregional polity must be a long-
term endeavor. Evolutionary or
lifestyle bioregionalists seem unconvinced that
political and environmental turmoil
necessarily must precede the needed
changes. Such bioregionalists tend to
place their greatest energy into
"learning the lore" of their regions
and how to live presently in regionally
self-sufficient, environmentally sus-
tainable ways, while participating in
politics primarily at the regional level.
(Sade 1991, pp. 44–45, 42) Practicing
organic agriculture or "permacul-
ture" (Mollison 1991), engaging in
ecological restoration projects,
replacing consumer culture with a
more satisfying art-and-ritual infused
bioregional culture, and creating and
utilizing "alternative" housing and
energy, preoccupy the majority of
such activists' energies.

To generalize, those who associ-
ate primarily under the umbrella of
bioregional groups and networks,
attending their congresses, reading
their publications, and promoting the
bioregional movement itself, can best
be viewed as "evolutionary," 
"lifestyle," or even "pragmatic biore-
gionalists. Although strategically ori-
exted more to reform than anti-state
rebellion, such bioregionalism remains
utopian, envisioning the state's event-
tual replacement. Such is bioregional-
isms's predominant stream in Amer-
ica. Its worldview elements overlap
significantly, however, with what I am
calling the revolutionary and apoca-
lyptic camps (Figures 3 and 6).

Figure 6. Home.

Revolutionary Bioregionalism. Some bioregionalists are revolution-
aries intent on dismantling industrial
nation-states. They intend to attack
the infrastructures of industrial soci-
etics in every way possible, including
by sabotage. Some such activists have
recently taken to calling this perspec-
tive "revolutionary ecology," express-
ing themselves primarily in two jour-
nals, Live Wild or Die and Alarmed: A View
of Revolutionary Ecology. These journals
were created by anarchist partici-
pants within Earth First! who felt

An exciting vision and strategy for creating ecologically sustainable
communities and cultures in harmony with the limits and
regenerative powers of the Earth.
that such perspectives were needed but ignored by its premier outlet, the Earth First! journal. As I have focused on such groups elsewhere (Taylor 1996), I will not discuss them in detail here (Figure 7).

Apocalyptic Bioregionalism. A third and differently radical form of bioregionalism shifts agency from human revolutionaries to the laws of nature, and sometimes if not usually, to nature personified as an intelligent, decision-making presence. A belief in earth or some other intelligent being is sometimes grounded upon a scientific theory such as the Gaia hypothesis, and for others, on pantheistic or other organismic religious perceptions, in which earth herself, for example, may be called Gaia, Mother Earth, or even the Goddess. Often, for adherents to such world-views, the science-grounded gnostic view of the earth as a living organism is seen to coalesce with primal religion beliefs of earth's processes as embedded in a sacred cosmos. But whether grounded first in science or an intuitive religious perception, with apocalyptic bioregionalism, the desolation of industrial nation-states is an expected outcome of the environmentally-destructive growth-at-all-costs economies they promote.

Both scientific and overtly religious approaches to bioregionalism often assume an apocalyptic tone; ecologically it is from such an expectation that some activists deduce hope, based on the belief that the envisioned sufferings of the revolutionary period, or variably, the desolation of industrial nation-states as a result of the collapse of over-exploited ecosystems might create the necessary conditions for the recreation of decentralized and sustainable lifestyles.

Fluid Boundaries Among Bioregionalisms. My caution is that the dominant view of America's bioregional movement has an evolutionary-lifestyle orientation can be further illustrated by examining tensions between such bioregionalists and its more revolutionary and apocalyptic kin. Most radical environmental activists are bioregionalists who best fit in the revolutionary or apocalyptic camp. Many of the revolutionaries share the view that ecological degradation will also play a crucial role in precipitating a revolution. And most activist of the more revolutionary and apocalyptic bent aspire to low-impact lifestyles. Yet the more time such activists engage in the lifestyle activism characteristic of the evolutionary bioregionalists, the less closely associated they will be with the anti-state activism, or with the direct-action defense of ecosystems that epitomizes the revolutionary and apocalyptic factions (Figure 8).

Dave Foreman, co-founder of Earth First!, provides an excellent example of the apocalyptic alternative, playing off the important bioregional idea of "rehabilitation," or learning about and living-in-place. Foreman argues that "in rehabilitating a place, by dwelling in it, we become that place" (1987). Therefore, he concludes, "Our most fundamental duty is that of self-defense. We are the wilderness defending itself." He then weaves this notion of self-defense into his apocalyptic thinking, explaining, "Our self-defense is damage control until the machine plows into that.

Figure 7. Premier issue of Live Wild or Die, 1989. Sorted by anarchistic Earth Firstiers. illustrated with what they considered to be its truest tactics; note the Apocalyptic theme.
brick wall and industrial civilization self-destructs as it must" (1987). From this perspective Foreman criticizes the priorities of the central streams of bioregional practice; prior to this collapse, he believes, it is impossible to create sustainable societies.

Despite his affinity for it, Foreman once complained that bioregionalism has become "mired in its composting toilets, organic gardens, handcrafts [and] recycling" while ignoring the duty to defend the biotic diversity of the planet. "Bioregionalism is more than technique, it is reterritorialization and self-defense," Foreman insisted.11 Yet he also sees potential in bioregionalism. In an early bioregional anthology he implored:

There are two things to do right now. One is this self-defense of the wild. More of us need to do every-thing we can to try to ensure that wild places remain, and that’s whether you monkeywrench, or just buy wild land, or whether you work through the political process for better management, whatever. The other is what the bioregional movement is doing: trying to re-connect with our tribal roots, trying to recreate, to go back towards, that kind of society…. I see cooedeefer and bioregionalism as being two sides of the path towards whatever society will become in the future, once we’re through this catastrophic event that’s coming up. (Foreman 1990, p. 65).

This brief excursion suggests that all three bioregional approaches, lifestyle focused, revolutionary direct action, and “nature but last” apocalypticism, are closely aligned and often intertwined. These categories will only illuminate the bioregional landscape if we apprehend that the membranes between these typified groups and emphases are permeable. It is likely that, were we to identify specific individuals as involved in one or another of these factions, objections would arise; a “lifestyle” bioregionalist asserting that she shares the apocalyptic ecological perspective, for example, even though she yet hopes that the transition to sustainability will not involve a great catastrophe. Indeed, revolutionary and lifestyle bioregionalists often share the apocalyptic worldview, and may well await the collapse of nation-states as inevitable or highly likely. The revolutionaries hope to speed their fall, the evolutionary bioregionalists hope instead to create the alternative culture and livelihoods, to supplant industrial lifeways and break trail to sustainable ones. By learning how to live on the land now, when industrial society with its unsustainable agriculture grinds to a halt, they will already have developed livelihoods appropriate to the post-industrial age.

To summarize and speak generally, evolutionary, revolutionary, and apocalyptic bioregionalists recognize the others as kin, and tensions between them, as family squabbles.12

Spirituality—and the Perception of a Sacred Earth

The preceding discussion has already indicated the affinity various bioregionalists express for animistic and pantheistic spiritualities. Such spiritualities are also characteristic of most Earth First! activities, whose religious perceptions and ritual practices I have analyzed in some detail elsewhere (Taylor 1991, 1994a, 1995b, 1997). Such spiritualities I have labeled “prim” or “pagan” to reflect the widespread desire to create the purportedly nature-revering worldview of the world’s remnant primal (namely, small scale, tribal) societies.13 Because the myth-making and ritualizing found in Earth First! overlaps with the bioregional movement I will not here repeat such descriptive analysis. Instead, I will briefly illustrate the importance of such spiritu-
of Ecologism, an important anthology integrating bioregional, deep ecologi-
cal, and ecotopianist ideas. This vol-
ume demonstrates the growing influ-
ence of ecotopia within radical
environmental subcultures during the
1980s.
The Second North American Bio-
gerional Congress, Northern Michi-
gan, July 1986. During the second NABC
an activist proposal from "the com-
mittee for... Asimism, Geocentrism,
and Interspecies Communication"
was adopted by consensus. Drafted
primarily by David Abram (who also
wrote 'South Earth First' and attended its
gatherings), the proposal was to have
four non-human representatives at the
next Congress: "one for the four-
legged and crawling things, one for
the flying people, one for our swim-
ning people, one for our swimming
crust, and one (very sensitive soul)
for the mythical plant brings." The
statement affirmed, in a way that
undermines a belief in interspecies
communication, that it is a very deli-
crate, mysterious process whereby
these representatives are recognized...
we hope that the four representa-
tives will be chosen not just by human
consensus but by non-human consent-
us' (Abram et al, 1986).

To modern ears such beliefs sound
strange, but they are prevalent among
radical environmental and
bioregional groups. In a 1985 inter-
view, Gary Snyder, who through his
writings is probably the most influen-
tial "elder" in the bioregional move-
ments, articulated a similar animistic
epistemology, describing the "digging,
even if overly optimistic" view of a
Crow Indian elder who once told him

I'm not really worried about what
white people are doing on this
continent. If anybody lives here
long enough, the spirits will begin
to speak to them. It's the power of
the spirits coming up from the
land... That's taught on, and
it would touch everyone if they'd
just stay here. The old powers and
the old power aren't lost; people
just need to be willing long enough
in order to initiate themselves and
Schumacher, 1983, p. 115)
Such a spiritual epistemology
reinforces the bioregional commit-
tment to place, for without staying put,
one will never discern the land's accrued
voices. If thereby challenges directly
the hyper-modernity promised by
today's increasingly global economy.
The Third NABC, British Colum-
bia, Canada, 1988. Beginning with
ceremonies drawn from Native
American cultures (a friendship
dance) and the waka-pakau tradition
(a spiri dance), the third NABC got
underway deeply infused with pagan
spirituality. David Abram (1988, see also Zuckermand 1980,
p.4-5, 38-40), for example, an
important mediator during the
Congress and the driving force
behind the previously adopted reso-
novation to recognize four participants representing our "four human
cousins," afterward described this
aspect of the 1985 Congress: "Several
of the intermedialities had prepared
for months beforehand," Abram
wrote, "through both study and
empathy, to begin to identify with
other species, at least to the point of
being able to keep faith with these
other modes of awareness while still
listening... to the human bioregion-
alists." During the meetings,
reading, or crowding, in each of the
four directions, these individu-
als acted as poetic witnesses... when
the needs of their fellow
species were violated. At one strong
moment, a man speaking elo-
cently...to fluid beings angrily
interrupted a compromising pro-
posal by the water committee, star-
ting the assembled circle into
eventual silence, and moving us
toward deeper mindfulness.
(Abram, 1988, pp. xx)

By 1988, a ritual process pro-
motting mystical identification
with non-human species, known as the Council of All Beings (Seed et al.
1988; Taylor, 1994), had begun tour-
ning the country, mosty sponsored
by radical environmentalists. Abram's
report suggests that the Council had
already influenced the 1988 NABC,
for this congress ended as de moost of
these newly invented rituals: "The
gathering culminated with a rollick-
ing masquerade dance, an 'all species
ball,' under the full moon on the last
night... in a full moon ritual (with
chanting)."
Despite great enthusiasm for the presence of non-human interacting species and newly created ritual processes designed to summon them, during NAC III and IV, spirituality committees could not arrive at a consensus statement regarding bioregional spirituality. Gay Marshall (1989) reflects vaguely on this failure without discussing the disagreements. He then argues that David Hahnke’s view of nature as sacred authority is ironic when juxtaposed with Hahnke’s own anticipated ambivalence toward many of the movement’s rituals. Such ambivalence illustrates the complex tension regarding nature between spirituality among bioregionalists, for despite his clear conviction about nature as sacred authority, Hahnke afterward complained about the “contrived” character of some of the ceremonies at the congress. He was especially critical of the “tendency for some to impose pagan pomp” on all others present. His concern was strategic more than metaphysical, however, worrying that such仪式 would hinder “bioregionalism’s ability to reach out beyond its hippie and back-to-the-lander base.” (Klassen in Klassen 1990, p. 7.) Hahnke’s concerns intensified by the mid-1990s.

Among the best sources revealing the earthy spirituality of the bioregional movement are Home: A Bioregional Reader (Andrus et al. 1990), and Terra Wild: Vision for a Sustainable Future (Plant and Urban 1990). The Andras anthology includes, for example, an article by Surohawk (America’s foremost Wiccan pesttess, activist, and writer), envisioning a future of people and nature living harmoniously, whatever their religions, and a message of the Quan-

Figure 9: Of Species Malediction. Bioregionalists often draw their spirituality from religious esotericism in the Far East; eco-mandalas are often used to symbolize their efforts to harmonize human lives with nature.

Source and Manifestations

Praire. The central protagonists to bioregionalism, namely those figures advancing bioregional ideas before the coming of the term include: Alfred Wallace, whose book The Geographic Distribution of Animals was recently cited by Raymond Dartman (1990) as a pioneering effort in bioregional mapping; the Russian Archaeologist Peter Kropotkin, especially his 1914 classic Mutual Aid, which attacked social Darwinism by appealing to the many syndiadic relationships in nature; the anthropologist A. J. Kroebker, whose Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America (1997) became a template for much early bioregional thinking; Lewis Mumford’s critiques of industrial societies, especially The Myth of the Machine (1966) and his two-volume history of technology, Technique and Human Development (1966); E. F. Schumacher’s 1989 essay. American spirituality and politics as an antidote to human ill. This latter aspect concludes by expressing a conviction shared by many bioregionalists, that...
advocacy in Small is Beautiful (1973) of simplicity, even of a "Buddhist Economics," a moral call contributing to the back-to-the-land impulse that fueled the yet unnamed disciplines of ecological economics; early articles by Raymond Dasmann (1973) and Peter Berg and Dassman (1976), which expanded on Wallace's earlier bioregional mapping endeavors, struggling with problems related to identifying the contours of bioregions; and Murray Bookchin's The Ecology of Freedom (1962), which established Social Ecology as an important green ideology upon which many radical environmental thinkers, perhaps especially bioregionalists, would draw.25

Archaeo-Turns of Snyder. To examine the creation and evolution of bioregionalism itself, one must attend to the contributions of its early architects, and especially to their creative play with ideas and language.

Bioregionalism and "rehabitation." According to Parsons (1965) and Alexander (1990) the term bioregion was coined by the Canadian poet Allen Van Newkirk in 1974. (Newkirk attempted to establish a center for bioregional studies,26 but this effort did not succeed and thereafter he had little to do with the evolution of the movement.) Soon after he coined the term, however, it was used (at the time without attribution) by Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann, in the very essay where they introduced another key bioregional term, "rehabitation." This essay, published both in The Ecologist and in the Newsletter of the Friends of the Earth, Not Men, Apart,27 was entitled "Ren-Habiting California." "Rehabitation" captures the bioregional mandate to settle in a place and learn its lore, spirit, and proper lifeways. In Snyder's 1977 book The Old Ways, one chapter is labeled "re-inhabitation." As he put the meaning elsewhere: the central advice of bioregionalists is, "don't move."28

The roots of bioregionalism, as we saw in the previous section, clearly go farther back than even these publications date suggest. Indeed, some of the history of the critical terms remains closely Gary Snyder once stated, for example, that he did not know where the term bioregionalism originated (Wood and Schoonmaker 1965); yet he told me in 1994 that the term was coined by a Canadian whose name he couldn't remember (probably Newkirk) and who subsequently dropped from sight.29 Snyder credited this Canadian with "beginning to use the term in the way we do now," adding a qualification, that the chronology of the term's genesis and adoption remains unclear in his own mind.

On another occasion, during an interview in the Berkeley Oak, Snyder recalls having learned of the term even earlier, "in 1971 or '72," adding that Peter Berg picked up on the term at about the same time. In a 1989 interview, Berg also acknowledged that the term originated with Newkirk (Goddard 1989). What generated the appropriation of the term, Snyder explained, was "an attempt to have some geographical and biologi- cal precision" as well as "the exercise of ignoring the presence of the national state."

Snyder also told me that Kroeb- er's study of the cultural zones of Native Americans had been critical to the development of his own thinking, specifically that these cultural zones paralleled regional zones. Such an understanding of the overlapping of cultural and regional zones, "combined with our idea of begetting to finally have a generation of Ameri- cans who were rooted," Snyder asserted, contributed to the emergence of bioregionalism. When I asked him, "Who coined the idea of "rehabitory people," he answered, "us." "You and Berg?" I asked him.
Indigenous Resistance. Many biogeographicalists view the arrival of Europeans as a cataclysmic, deflating event, and indigenous resistance is seen as something to support and emulate.

"Yes, and Peter Cowper [who became the well-known museum picture actor], and Freeman House. In various combinations [we] came up with much of this language and conceptualization. We were consciously reinventing a language for North America," Snyder continued. Using the term "Turtle Island ... is part of reinventing a language for our time here. It's a political act." A flurry of constructive biogeographical publishing followed such discussions among this small group of friends. Then in the fall of 1973, Peter Berg founded Planet Drum and soon began publishing Raise the Statue, a biannual journal that would become an important biogeographical forum.

Future primitive, totem salmon, and “back to the Pleistocene.” Shortly after Planet Drum was founded, in 1974, Jeremiah Goulaiute and I. Freeman House published "Future Primitive," expressing a hope for a return to primal lifeways emerging from back-to-the-land communities. Also in 1974, House wrote "Totem Salmon." This remarkable essay describes the historic significance—culturally, spiritually, and materially—of salmon to humans and other creatures in the Pacific Northwest. House argues that ceremonies by aboriginal peoples were designed to ensure that the salmon take no offense when captured. Such etiquette, he wrote, was based on the notion that enogenous spirit resides in all plants and animals. Therefore, the salmon is always perceived as a person living a life similar to that of the people who catch it (and the ceremonies have the practical, effect of ensuring the continuity of both species, salmon and human.)

Here and elsewhere, House articulates the vision of the salmon speaking to humans, at least pratically, possess- ing appropriate lifeways. They are telling us, among other things, "please, let's get serious about this business of evolution." (House 1990). House continues:

Salmon is a totem animal in the North Pacific Ranges. Only salmon, as a species, appears in both a series of the vastness and unity of the North Pacific Ocean and its rim. The buried memories of our ancient human migrations, the weak abstractions of our engravings, our struggles toward a sci- ence of language to nothing to inform us of the power and benevo- lence of our place. Salmonism is a method of perceiving your good- ness, and mutation in scale through the recognition of and respect for the vital life spirit, and interdependence of other species.

In the case of the Pacific-North Rim, no other species informs us as well as the salmon, whose migra- tions outline the boundaries of the range which supports us all. (House 1990, p. 68)

This essay is an interesting example of biogeographical appropriations of Native American culture; it also illustrates the peculiar among such groups to revere and emulate indigenous cultures, questing to cre- ate a "future primitive" or to some- how "back to the Pleistocene." Freeman House was not just articulating a biogeographical vision, however, he and his fellows were experiment- ing with it. By the late 1970s, for example, neighbors within the Mat- tole River watershed (where House eventually settled in Northern Cali- fornia's so-called "lost coast") formed a salmon protection group in response to the precipitous decline of salmon populations that had resulted from decades of logging, ranching, and other commercial activities. As they experimented with ways to restore the salmon, it became clear that the problems flowed from the surrounding hillsides. Therefore, the restoration effort was expanded to include the entire watershed, leading to the 1980 formation of the Mattole [Watershed] Restoration Council (Sayer 1989; House 1990). Among their many efforts, participants designed their own backyard hatchery
systems, get elementary school children involved, and even infused the restoration project into the local curriculum. The seeds of the salmon, in House’s words, provided an example of “how salmon can organize human activity” (1990).

From Ecotone to Ectophylology. Other important contributors to the unfolding of bioregionalism include Ernst Callenbach, who, a year after the founding of Planet Drums, published the green-utopian novel, Eco-
topia (1975). Without using the term bioregionalism, Callenbach imagined the recession of most of the Pacific Northwest from the United States and the construction of an environmentally and socially just society. About this same time the term re-

habitation began to gain widespread attention among radical green groups. Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann published “Reinhabiting California” (1977), first in several small tabloids, then in the influential international journal, The Ecologist. A year later Berg published a collection of essays entitled Reinhabiting a Separa
tate Country: A Bioregional Anthology of Northern California (1979), devoting two of the movement’s central terminol-
gical inventions. This volume provided something of a model for a bioregional attitudeness; it included oral history from a Native American elder, short stories (including stories by Jim Dodge and Ernst Callen-
bach), articles on ritual, marijuana and organic agriculture, and an overview of the geography of California. Probably the two seminal articles were Berg’s and Dasmann’s repub-
lished bioregional manifests, “Rein-
habiting California” and Dasmann’s own overview of the bioregion of Cal-
ifornia. This latter article included a striking confession by Dasmann, sug-
gest ing that, despite his scholarly cre-
dentials (as a Professor at the Univer-
sity of California), he shared the ear
then spirituality characteristic of coun-
tri-cultural bioregionalism: “A thousand-year-old [redwood] forest is a unique phenomenon, a holy place, and it takes a thousand years to grow one” (Dasmann 1978b, p. 30).

Meanwhile Theodore Roszak’s 1973 People/Planet: The Creative Disas-
gregation of Industrial Society was pub-
lished, proposing a radical down-sizing of all human institutions and compre-

hensive political decentralization in favor of local control. He would soon extend his focus more deeply into spiritual concerns, widely promoting the kind of pagan spirituality usually found in countercultural bioregionalism, both through workshops and with his popular book, How to Be an Earth (1992). In this extraordinary work he defended the idea of earth as Gaia, an intelligent being, basking his argu-
ment on the anthropic principle. He then forthrightly promoted as an

mistic spirituality and pantheistic worldview. This work represented a significant contribution to the development of “ecophylolog y,” a nascent school of thought (indeed a new religious movement) that traces environmental destruction and soci-
tal dysfunction to a “spiritual” estrangement between humans and nature, prescribing a panoply of spiri-
tual antedotes to bridge this divide. Also critical to popularizing bioregional thought has been the

restingly, counted “sixty groups in North America specifically defining themselves as bioregional” (Sale 1991, p. 45). By the end of the cen-
tury, bioregional groups, of the vari-
ous sorts typified earlier, had prolifer-
ated to a point uncountable and were engaged in a wide variety of endeav-
ors promoting environmental sustain-
ability, including at times dramatic and risky direct action resistance to commercial and extractive enter-
pri ses in natural areas.

Problems with Bioregionalism. Social philosophies generally retain their own set of antinomies and conundrums. Bioregionalism, as a nascent philosophy, has had less time than most to receive such prob-
lems. Nevertheless, it is important to critically analyze the problems that inhere to bioregional thought.

The Difficulty of Identifying Biore-
gions. Perhaps the central problem in bioregionalism is that of fluid bound-
aries and the difficulty of demarcat-

ing what constitutes a bioregion. In his seminal 1981 article, Jim Dodge wrote, “The criteria most often advanced for making bioregional dis-
tinctions are biotic shift, watershed, land form, cultural/phenomenologi-

cal spirit presence, and elevation” (1981, p. 8), abridged reprint in Andrus 1980). He explains these distinctions as follows:

Biotic shift involves the “percent-

age change in plant/animal species composition from one place to another—that is, if fifteen to twenty

five percent of the species change, it is probably a different biological region.” [Dodge believes this] “is a fairly stick and accurate way to make bioregional distinctions” but acknowl-
dges that the arguments then are inevitably “over the percentage, which invariably seems arbitrary” (Dodge 1981, p. 7).

Waterfall are river drainages that can be analyzed through topographical mapping. Although this designation often seems straightforward,

Dodge acknowledges that drainages overlap, making such analysis alone insufficient for identifying bioregions. Clearly, to provide but one example, some drainages are so vast that they pass through a number of regions with very different biota.

Land forms (or geomorphology) can also provide helpful bioregional markers, according to Dodge (1981, p. 8); although singularly these would provide insufficient guidance in efforts to identify bioregions.

Cultural / Phenomenological markers, namely, where people perceive their homes and regions to be can also be important, although Dodge, in deep ecological style, expresses discomfort with such an anthropocentric criterion (Dodge 1981, p. 8). “Spirit Places or ‘psycho tuning know-poses’,” according to Dodge, are places that exercise “psychophysi-

cal influences” on people and their sense of place, and can also be used as a bioregional criterion (Dodge 1981, p. 8).
Elevation often is used by people to demarcate different areas, as reflected in "distinctions [such as] those between hill people and flatlanders." (Dodge 1981, pp. 7-8).

Dodge concludes that "taken together, as I think they should be, [these criteria] can be used to identify bioregions giving us a sense of where we are and the life that euthesia [sic] our own." (Dodge 1981, p. 8).

Dodge's suspicion of cultural, as opposed to natural, criteria is absurd in an important way for what see bioregional provinces but human con- structions, given the many possible criteria and the need for humans to make judgments about their relative importance? This realization, ironi- cally, can be liberating and make pleas- able the possibility of bioregional social organization. For we think that human bioregional provinces are necessarily also cultural zones that are con- tested and negotiated, then we can con- ceive of the possibility of a process evolving for establishing forms of political association that correspond to human-defined bioregional provinces. This might also make pos- sible creative new policies, resource regimes, and economic relations. Thus, by recognizing that any conceivably bioregional identification is a contested and negotiated human con- struction, the prospect of demarcat- ing bioregions and somehow basing hu- man action upon them becomes possible. We can assume that what- ever approach to defining bioregions prevails will be an outgrowth of debates and struggles among individ- uals and groups in various localities, and the various rules of thumb for determining bioregions may vary from place to place and from time to time, as will any normative judg- ments derived through this process.

Ethics is grounded upon assumptions regarding what human beings are like and what they are capable of achieving. Drawing on Kropotkin and his pogonomy, many bioregionalists assume that people are naturally dis- posed to being cooperative, except when corrupted by life in unnatural, hierarchal, centralized, industrial societies. This debatable assump- tion depends on a certain kind of radical environments' myth-mak- ing (see, for example, the fascinating if speculative work of Paul Shepard 1982) than on ethology or ecology. The unduly optimistic anthropologi- cal assumption om misread a social philosophy. The problem is illumin- ated by contemporary sociology which documents not only that coop- eration can be adaptive regarding a species' survival, but so can aggres- sive competitiveness.

Conservation biologist Michael Soulé puts it harshly, "Most interac- tions between individuals and species are selfish not symbiotic." (Soulé, 1995, p. 143). It is also possible, as Dan Deudney argues, that "states in a world organized along bioregional lines would be more prone to conflicts rooted in differences in identity and traditions." (Deudney 1995, p. 254). Yet by basing political assumptions on an unduly rosy picture of human altru- ism (or such human potential) most countercultural bioregionalism offers little antitode to abuses of power by selfish and well-entrenched elites (Schnoeller 1995).

Such a flaw and concomitant naivety about humans is a subset of a larger error: the selective or tacit appreciation of ecological science. Countercultural bioregionalists tend to overemphasize notions such as nat- ural harmony, symbiosis, and fragile interdependence, following what is sometimes called the "Diversity- Stability" theory or the increasingly out-of-favor "community ecology par- adigm." Yet this "popular conception of living nature as a symbiotic, deli- catey balanced, well-intentioned, orderly system" (Callcott 1996, p. 355) has trickled down into the population, becoming a truism-like "cultural model of nature" (Kempton et al. 1985). Such emphasis lag behind recent ecological findings, however, that ecosystems little impacted by humans are nevertheless character- ized by disturbance ("perturbation") and directionless change, rather than by a teleological ascent at some par-}

portedly mature stage of balance and harmony. Moreover, such perspectives of to ignore how ecosystems usually contain significant amounts of "func- tional redundancy" (Kempton et al. 1995, p. 222), an ecological finding that erodes "natural law" type argu- ments for preserving all species. Such revisionist ecology can reasonably suggest that ecosystem balance is a chimera, and that it is silly to strive to sustain each and every species in their present distributions, because the retention of at least this aspect of biological diversity may not be neces- sary to maintain natural ecosystem processes. As Baird Callcott has put it, "The hallowed "law of community" ecology, that ecological stability depends on biological diversity, has been all but repealed" (Callcott 1996, pp. 254-5). To my knowledge, these paradigm shifts have yet to be integrated into bioregional ideology. The problem and status involved become apparent when the question of power is addressed. The Question of Power. The most common critique of all utopian ide- ologies is that they have an unduly optimistic anthropology and thus are naive about politics' power. Such criti- cism can be applied to some if not most countercultural bioregional- isms. Paul Wagner, for example, notes that nainism states governments are unlikely to cede authority (Wagner 1996, p. 38) and Dan Deudney argues that any reorganization along biore- gional lines would be unlikely to occur "without widespread violence and dis- location" (Deudney 1995, p. 287). Few bioregionalist thinkers have wrestled with such facts. Moreover, making an important but often overlooked point, Deudney warns that the size of the bioregionally based states would vary greatly because bioregions vary greatly. This would mean that some states would be much more powerful than others and it is not inevitable that bal- ances of power would emerge to constrect the possible imperial pre- tensions of the larger and stronger states (Deudney 1995, pp. 193-94).
On this point it is instructive to recall that bioregionalism emerged from a particular social context where environmental degradation in northern California was exacerbated by the growing resource needs of its arid southern neighbor. The south easily dominated the north, due to its greater wealth and population. Das- man and Berg's early and influential paper on bioregionalism, "Rehabilitating California," addressed this dynamic. In it they argued that "northern California ... for purposes of rehabilitating the place, [needs] a political identity of its own, [for] as long as it belongs to a larger state, it will be subject to southern Califor- nia's demands on its watersheds. ... From a rehabilitating point of view," they argued, "the export of water to southern California [is a] bioregional death threat" (originally p/7's quote from reprint 1978, p. 220). They concluded by advocating that the North secede from the South.

The bioregion cannot be treated with regard for its own self-communities while it is part of and administered by a larger state government. It should be a separate state. As a separate state, the bioregion could redesignate its counties to create watershed governments appropriate to maintaining local life-places. City-county division could be resolved as a bioregional group. Perhaps the greatest advantage of separate selfhood would be the opportunity to declare a space for addressing each other as members of a species sharing the planet together and with all other species. (Berg and Dasmann 1978, p. 220).

All of this is perfectly understandable given the axis of south-north power differentials in Califor- nia, particularly from the perspective of the resource-rich north. It would be just as easy, however, to discuss places where realignments along bioregional lines would impair the weak and strengthen those already geo-politically privileged.

Globalization and Regionalism. The phenomenon now known as "Globali- zation" is another dynamic to which bioregionalism seems ill-equipped to respond, despite its critique of it and sometime efforts to resist it. As Paul Wagner explains, present trends sug- gest an increasing rather than decreasing globalization of human enterprise, and although "trend is not destiny" (Wagner 1996, p. 37), bioregionalism can seem naive and impo- tent in the face of such trends.

Political theorist Dan Drudey is one of those promoting a greening of international politics and policy. Drudey credits bioregionalism with promoting "Earth-centered identity and community claims" that are "staking or coloring national identities in positive ways; he acknowledges that "scientific communities are funda- mentally incompatible with the parochial orientations of all existing national identities." But he also insightfully argues that an important message from ecological science has too often been ignored or downplayed by bioregionalists: "localist biore- gional ideologies and political prac- tices [that] exist within the radical environmental movement community [fail to apprehend] the unmistakable message of ecological science that the earth is not only integral biore- gion, and that the 'homeland' of all humans is the whole planet rather than some piece of it" (Drudey 1995, pp. 289-90).

Fortunately there are more promising bases for valuing biological diversity than those that rely on a positively natural law grounded in turn on shifting ecological paradigms. The fundamental point arising from the preceding analysis is that, due to the ecologically under-informed and sometimes overly-sanguine view of human potential, as well as its tendency to sever from the busthspere various bioregional ecosystems, coun- ter-cultural bioregionalists tend to abdicate engagement with (or endedly downplay) national and international electoral and administrative politics. They seemingly view these as, in the last analysis, of little importance in the quest for regional and global sus- tainability. As Paul Wagner con- cludes, bioregionalism has little "answer to specifically global environ- mental problems" (Wagner 1996, p. 37).6 Even the movement axiom "small is beautiful" can in this light be seen to have an ugly underside, obscuring or summarily dismissing the beauty—or potential beauty—of larger systems, both ecological and political.

It this critique has merit, biore- gionalism may be insufficient or radi- cal. If bioregional identity displaces, retards, or precludes the emergence of what a number of the authors are calling "global civil society" or "world civic politics" (Drudey 1995; Wagner 1996; Lefkin 1995; Lipschutz and Conca 1995; and Lipschutz 1996), the need of bioregions (Kuban 1991) will not address the largest issu- es, that need concern an entire way the way toward sustainability. It may also be, as Drudey suggests (in a way reminiscent of bioregional spir- ituality) that a planetary civic earth religion, or "Terrapolitization" (forms of political association based on love- lity to earth itself) is needed to legiti- mate international governance grounded in a federal-republican earth constitution (Drudey 1995, 1998).

Such ideas may, at first glance, appear to us far from the origi- nal bioregional theme of this paper. A host of reimagined bioregional polit- ical associations could, however, be well integrated into new and recon- structed institutional resource- and biodi- versity-related governance (Lipschutz 1999). This is crucial if humans are to address the global causes of environmental degradation. Indeed, discovering the path to a sus- tainable future requires that bioreg- ional and international politics not be considered mutually exclusive.43 There are signs that this stance is increasingly recognized. In a recent and ambitious project sponsored by the United Nations, with deep involvement from an ecologic group of religious leaders, an "Earth Charter" is being prepared for possible United Nations ratification. In my judgment, the document reflects the emergence of a nascent (and promising) planetary civic earth religion. The "bench- mark draft" of this document,
Bioregionalism's Challenges and Contributions

Despite its counter-cultural genesis and subversive intent, it is only a quarter century bioregionalism has begun to make significant inroads to the human stage. This situation is, in large part, due to the nature of the bioregional movement. Bioregionalism's proponents have focused on the development of a coherent philosophy and a language that describe a new way of perceiving the relationship between humans and the natural world. The challenge of bioregionalism is to develop a language that is both concise and comprehensive. This language must be able to articulate the complex interrelationships that characterize the bioregional world. The language must also be able to communicate the values that are central to the bioregional movement. These values include respect for the natural world, the importance of community, and the need for harmony between humans and the environment.

Bioregionalization - Case Studies

Many questions can be raised about bioregionalism, particularly about the dubious ecological and anthropological assumptions underlying such a philosophy and the contributions it makes to the larger environmental movement. Some bioregionalists argue that the bioregional movement is simply a reaction to the failures of the modern industrial society. Others argue that the bioregional movement is a legitimate and necessary response to the current crisis of the modern world. Whatever the case, the bioregional movement has the potential to provide a valuable perspective on the current environmental crisis.
necessary to save endangered species, for example, salmon in northern California watersheds.

These events suggest, on the one hand, how difficult it is to reestablish ecosystem management along bioregional lines, especially when local actors "have not been consulted [because] they are unlikely to agree" and thus likely to resist. For such reasons Lipschutz concludes that "the state cannot mandate in such circumstances; it can only facilitate" (1996, p. 124). On the other hand, the California case suggests that severe crises in resource regimes present bioregional opportunities. For example, such environment-related crises have precipitated at least some halting of experiments toward the bioregional- ization of resource management in California. Indeed, despite how little has been accomplished in California thus far, it may be that bioregional- ization will yet create positive transform- ations, perhaps also becoming a central government strategy to manage environmental-related conflict.

It is reasonable to expect more decisive trends toward bioregionaliza- tion for, as Dasmann (1995, p. 84) has argued, there are "obvious advantages to bringing a unified political control over the management of a single ecosystem." Of course, there are formidable "political difficulties involved in redefining longstanding county or state boundaries." Consequently, Dasmann asserts, "it appears more feasible to seek close cooperation among the agencies involved in the management of a bioregion than to attempt the redrawing of political maps" (Dasmann 1995, sp. 84–85). This is, of course, precisely what was envisioned in California.

Writing in the mid 1990s, Lipschutz concluded hopefully, "If these renegotiations are successful—and it is too soon to be sure—they could actually lead to the creation of resource regimes that are protective of Nature as well as of the life and sustainability of human communi- ties" (Lipschutz 1996, p. 125). Despite good reasons for skepticism (includ- ing the long history of cozy relationships and ver- rupation, for example, between the timber industry and the United States government) the initial steps toward bioregion- izationism in Cali- fornia suggest that it may yet play a decisive and salutary role in resolving environment-related conflict and pro- moting sustainability (Figure 12).

Bioregionalization in the Northern Rockies. Another example of a science- based bioregional vision that represents a landmark in the bioregional movement, as well as an example of the mainstreaming of bioregional thought, is Mike Bader's legislative proposal, "The Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act" (more widely known as NREPA). This ambitious legislation, supported by a host of bioregional groups from the Northern Rockies, including Bader's Alliance for the Wild Rockies, employs the latest biological research assembled by conservation biologists in order to advance a proposal for designating as wilderness more than twenty million acres of federal land in five major ecosystem reserves. The proposal includes a plan for linking these reserves with connecting corridors that conservation biologists view as essential for the migration of sub-

![Figure 12. California’s Bioregions. Two depictions of California’s bioregions. From Aberle 1993, pp. 59,70.](image)
Figure 13. NRRA Map. Map Depicting the Proposed Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act's preserves and corridors. From Bader 1992.

Figure 14a. Biological Preserves and Human Settlements. Envisioning how core reserves, buffer zones, and restoration areas can be integrated with human settlements in a way that protects all ecosystem types and species. From Aberle 1993, pp. 65, 67.

Figure 14b. Information from the wild area informs human activities at various intensities in the areas surrounding. Low-intensity activities are designed to buffer core corridors.

political arrangements that must be created if we are to protect the most critical life-region, the biosphere. I have also briefly examined some of the striking ways bioregional movements have already begun to wrest concessions from elites and influence environmental decision-making on local, state, and international levels. Although bioregionalism leaves many
unanswered questions as it is cur-
rently articulated and it will require
substantial modification if it is to
more fully address the complexity of
the world’s current political arrange-
ments, it is already having a salutary
effect by insisting on a widespread re-
visioning of political life.

More specifically, bioregional-
ism proposes that we behave in a way
consistent with an affirmation of the
intrinsic value of all life forms, an
ethic grounded in a felt connection
to all life, especially as it is mani-
ifested in the places we live. Biore-
gionalism promotes a rethinking
about how to design and connect bios-
pheres to arrive in the midst of land-
scapes dominated by intensive human
use. However, it also exhorts us to
radically rethink everything: from
human agro-ecosystems (suggesting
that we replace non-native agricul-
tural monocultures with more
resilient and biologically diverse
native species better adapted to the
places in which they evolved); to fossil
fuel intensive international trade
(suggesting that we strive for
regional or at least continental self-
sufficiency); to hydro-electric projects
(suggesting that moving large
amounts of water between bioregions
and constructing large-scale dams to
do so should be abandoned in favor of
regionally self-sufficient aquatic-
ecosystem systems); to issues such as
transportation and the landscape
design of suburbs and cities (suggest-
ing that richer human and natural
communities are possible where most
people live if the human dependence
on automobiles can be reduced); to
name just a few specific issues.25 And
bioregionalism emphasizes “water-
shed organizing,” namely, environ-
mental education stressing intimate
knowledge of the specific watersheds
in which we live, and citizen action
to protect and restore them.

The core insights of bioregional-
ism can be appropriated and devel-
oped by both state and non-state
actors without embracing question-
able anthropological assumptions,
anarchistic romanticism, or positing
a perfect synergy among all life in
nature. Bioregional sensibilities can
be integrated into a variety of cre-
ative endeavors without abandoning
the equally important task of promot-
ing environmentally-responsible and
socially-just national and interna-
tional regimes that bridge, through
democratically restrained coercive
powers, the abuses that inheres to unre-
strained concentrations of economic
and political power.

Those skeptical of the spiritual
perceptions prevalent in its original
and most countercultural forms
might also, I suggest, have something
to learn from the spiritual aspect of
countercultural bioregionalism. Even
if understood as “just poetry” or “cre-
ative religious invention,” even if ani-
mistic perceptions are anthropoge-
ophic or superstitious, bioregional spir-
ituality might also be a salutary leap
of human moral imagination, an
important moment in the drama of
human moral evolution.26 Perhaps
even those of us socialized primarily
in the Enlightenment tradition could
concede that such green spirituality
might represent a mutation in the
body politic that will prove to be
adaptive. In any case, these move-
ments propose a moral imperative,
namely, that we develop ethics of
place for the regions we inhabit.

Their challenge deserves a thoughtful
and creative response.

Taking a long view, despite his
antipathy toward large states, Gary
Snyder recently wrote, “I am not
arguing that we should instantly re-
draw the boundaries of the social con-
struction called California, although
that could happen some far day.”

Instead, he asks us to consider how
bioregional thinking “leads toward
the next step in the evolution of
human citizenship” (Snyder 1992,
p. 67). This is certainly a reasonable
suggestion. Snyder concluded this
meditation on living in place with fur-
ther words worth pondering:

Watershed consciousness is not just
environmentalism, not just a means
toward readjustment of social and eco-

Notes
1. Literally, bioregional theorist Jim Dodge
has explained, “Bioregionalism is from the
Greek bios (life) and the French region (or
local area).” Perhaps bioregionalism can
also mean “life territory” or “place of life,”
or perhaps by reckless expansion, govern-
ment by life.” (“The I of Bioregionalism,”
Dodge 1988, p. 25).

2. Since I submitted this article in Decem-
ber 1994, David Abernethy (1996)c has
published a great introductory history of bioregionalism
that complements the present analysis, espe-
cially in revealing some of the movement’s ear-
lier expressions. He gives no attention, how-
ever, to the overlapping ideas and perspec-
tives found among radical environmental and biore-

gional groups. The present effort corrects this
omission and expands our understanding of
the religious and apocalyptic dimensions of
these movements while offering more in the
way of critique of the movement’s theoretical

a profound citizenship in both the
natural and the social worlds. If we

...
more than the definition of bioregional ecosystems can stand.

Ferraro: I am not surprised to hear this at all. If you read the Brochure and scan the archives the Rainbow Caravan notes you would have realized that this gathering had an unusually strong commit-
mment toward the new age spiritualism that has unfolded as one of the previous eco-evolutionary... I refer to as the 'anti-
intellectual' aspect of the movement.

Harlak: There has been an em-

inent reoccurrence TRC in Texas to pull the Bioregional movement in under the New Age Rainbow movement, and merge them together. This is not good for either movements. The bioregional movement has the potential to reach, in time, the majority of people on Earth, and to do something constructive under ecological design principles and practices to halt and reverse the destruction of the Earth. It cannot do this if it is believed to be associ-
ated with something as at the counter-cultural fringe as the New Age Rainbow movement. At the same time the rainbow/new age movement(s), if I set it, have serious practical or functional dimensions related to protecting, or restoring Earth or helping human beings to do the same in one place. Using vast amounts of time and effort to move suddenly around the Earth, these new age parties, and then do a good job of cleaning up after-
wards do not qualify as particularly helpful to me. In fact the apparent result is to do a lot of damage to the Earth. Also, to believe— as the New Age and Rainbow seem to do—that Earth healing can come about just through celebration, rituals, and symbols, how you apply the spirituality of the earth with-
out getting down to the nuts and the "counter-cultural fringe. This is some-
thing that has always concerned me with bioregionalism’s "righteous acceptance" of
equality to deep ecology, which is a self-
described religion, highly anti-intellectual that relates more on intuition than history and more than a theory of the earth. (Ferraro is reading deep ecology)"I see a strong association between the bioregional age movement and the bioregional movement to lead to the manipulation of the bioregional move-
ment of existence. If I were working for some government and I was looking for a way to maneuver bioregionalism into a viable force without using violence, this is just what I would do. Why should we do this to ourselves? While Mexico is more open and tolerant than the north, the new age culture is still on the fringe of society and only by a fringe. In my belief, the bioregional movement has better things to do than continue to indulge fantasies of 1960s and 70s counterculture. There are other outlets specifically for doing that.

Ferraro: and an optimistic movement is everything to be attractive to masses of people we need to be more mainstream in the mar-
keting of our product. I would never agree to ignore the Rainbow-caravan but the real movers and shakers are going to be the activists, the architects, the biologists, the geographers, the social scientists, etc. It is these people, IMHO, who will bring about change beyond globally... and... I believe the activists and all the activ-
ists that we do as a bioregional gathering, whether it is as a process of creation, or cul-
tural shaping, should be a result of con-
sciously activated climate, I don’t recall myself or anyone telling me if a major event in the spring breaking the Rain-
bow Cargo and their leaders having nothing to do with bioregionalism as all —would be acceptable to the gathering. (He then described some organizational issues that he felt offended him). Harlak then added...) The relentless assault of the drumming was destructive to the health of all beings subject to it who were unable to sleep through it, and our all retinates in our host community. Some among us believe I condoned and the drumming as we participated in all that suffered. At the gathering of Maruca, (a previous TRC) I have a lot of trouble living with the fact that something to do with bioregionalism we don’t have to... I don’t know if one moves to having anything to do with it... The use of the traditional Mayan-Celtic drum/chanting game for organizing affinity and similar work groups was a highly complicated, undetected relationship to me, an intangi-
tion of another layer of by-age irrele-
vancy, I believe that a lot of older were variously as posed or put up by the whole game as a move, and it is now confused by the question of the whole game in the social game... I intend for this discussion to be informative, and then the planning for formal gathering, if it’s a family and the agreements. I can say three things for the future that I’ll have much more... I care much more about the possibility of realizing the potential for Earth healing ceremonial, restorative, and protection that bioregiona-
ism has had, and then the health of all spe-
cies. I’m happy to continue a dialogue with anyone who cares to about this.

Ferraro Thanks David. I think you opened up an important discussion.

20. At least three, Peter Berg notes that bioregionalists have a "natural affinity" for New Americans as well as renewable and appropriate technology advocates, "earth-spirit women" and "radical environmentalists, natural living advocates and deep ecology adher-
esthe" with others, with all three move "towards a similar bio-centric future" (Berg Summer 1980).

21. All Alexander expressed a related, interest-

ing perception of the 1980 Congress, that it was evolving beyond a deep ecology that "often ignores or belittles human predicament" toward "a new unifying perspective—a radical ecology—

which... human and natural systems are inextricably... the Congress did much to make the thing that I am working... as part of a continuing... movement that is committed to radical change" (Alexander in Zwecker 1989).

22. See Carra (1980) for another such work this focused on deep ecology was even more influential (1994, p. 283).

23. For a broader conceptual of actuali-

ties to bioregionalism than just provided, see Brian Vickers (1980, pp. 104-7) and "Van-

Anders in (And-Wev et al. 2009, pp. 71-75). See also Hewett and Grassman on "the real bioregionalism" (Lawrence 1999, p. 103). For an announcement regarding this effort, see the box at the end of the article by Ry-


24. See Berg and Damuss (1978) for a reprint.

25. For this binder quote, see the New biore-

regional magazine, Observer (Observer #1, 1987) or the reprint in And-Wev et al. 2009. In my own interview with him, Shyder told me that the injury to home does not mean that one does not reside in a house. (Shyder's) description of the summary is drawn from or re-illustrated by Lessons (1983), an essential source, understanding the diverse conceptions of deep ecology, radical environmentalism, and bioregionalism.

26. The "Deep Ecology" concept was introduced by Gary Snyder, Davis, California.

27. In his "Deep Ecology", (Sudbury, 35, 1974, reprinted in Andrews et al. The New Society Publishers has become one of the leading publishers of bioregional books, with its "New Catalyst Bioregional Society." See this, for example, (New Catalyst Bioregional Society, 1999).

28. This was published by Berg's Planet Drum Foundation in North Bay, B.C. Stone #3 and is reprinted in Andrews et al. 1999.

29. These terms were probably intro-

duced by House and the interview with Gary Snyder and Montel McClure (Back to the Pecos), (Morgan 2009).

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