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A Call for Bioregional Governance in Cascadia: Shaping an Ecological Identity in the Land of Falling Waters

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**A CALL FOR BIOREGIONAL GOVERNANCE IN CASCADIA: SHAPING
AN ECOLOGICAL IDENTITY IN THE LAND OF FALLING WATERS**

by

MOLLY FREED

**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS**

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Abstract

In recent years, as globalization has taken a toll on North Americans' "sense of place," there has been a swelling interest in the identification of *bioregions*: spaces delineated by their natural borders and shaped by the cultures that arise within them. *Bioregionalism*, the movement that arose from this scalar shift, emphasizes the "reinhabitation" of bioregions through a deep understanding and attachment between residents and their watershed and habitat. This thesis argues for a shift to bioregional-scale environmental governance in the Cascadian bioregion (the Pacific Northwest) via an interstate compact. Using the Great Lakes bioregion as a comparable case study, this thesis goes on to examine the effects of neoliberalization on two resulting cross-border institutions, the Great Lakes Commission and the Council of the Great Lakes Region. It ultimately concludes that a shared ecological identity is imperative for preserving the ethos of bioregionalism in future policymaking, rather than just the scale. In an effort to create a tangible path towards the shaping of this identity, a communications framework is presented. Based on lessons from the Great Lakes case studies, this framework utilizes "condensation symbols" and the "triple appeals principle" as possible tools for Cascadian activists to leverage moving forward.

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Introduction: The Cartography of Waste

Around 3 PM on January 1st, 2015, a train two-miles long stationed in Seattle's industrial SoDo region was filled to capacity with trash. This event was not unusual – it's a daily occurrence in SoDo. The waste is generated by residents of Seattle and two of its suburbs. Filled with almost 3,000 tons of trash, the locomotive and its railcars journey south 600 miles to a remote landfill in Oregon. There, the trash comingles with waste from other areas of the Pacific Northwest (Tice, 2007). However, on this particular day, Seattle introduced Municipal Code (SMC) 21.36.082, officially banning food waste and food-soiled paper products from Seattle's residential garbage. This compost, which would have been included in the train's load in the past, is now processed at the Cedar Grove facility and distributed to farmers and gardeners around the state.

Seattle has been a longtime leader of waste diversion; the city began the composting program at Cedar Grove in 1989 and in 2007 adopted a goal of achieving “zero waste” by 2050. Thus far, they have successfully diverted 56% of their waste from the landfill, one of the highest recycling rates in the country (Moving the Needle, 2014). Despite citywide interest in reducing trash, composting in Seattle is widely considered a progressive practice and the new code was viewed as radical because it penalized those who chose not to partake. Environmental groups have lauded the new legislation as a critical advancement in waste reduction. But confronting this issue at the city scale simply doesn't take into account the sprawling and intertwining paths of the region's waste. The railroad track winding down the coast is but one of the paths uniting the region.

The food waste that Seattle converts into compost is sold across the entire state, while the



Map 1. Cynthia Thomas (via Sightline Institute). 2009. Retrieved 2015 from: www.sightline.org/research/graphics/cascadia_cs_05m/

recycling is sorted and shipped to British Columbia as chipboard and cardboard, among other end destinations and products. The trash that eludes these diversions comes to rest in southeast Oregon, along with waste from across the region. How many of Seattle residents who supported SMC 21.36.082 – some 74 percent - knew that the landfill from which they were diverting lay 600 miles away? Would they still have supported the measure knowing that the impact was regional rather than city – or even statewide? Or might they demand a new scale for use in confronting environmental issues such as this one?

What I argue in this thesis is that in moving toward sustainability, citizens and lawmakers must recognize the importance of regional organizing and policymaking in the face of encroaching social and ecological problems. More

specifically, I argue that the scale at which these issues should be confronted is *bioregional*; the geo-ecological scape emerging from political borders based on natural landforms and the human cultures that occupy these landscapes. Emerging from an eco-centric challenge to modern political borders, *bioregionalism* is a relatively new movement based on the relatively old principal: only through informed connection with the natural landscape can responsible and sustainable relationships emerge between human inhabitants and their home.

While bioregionalism is not a new ideology, I argue that it must influence a new scale and ethos of policymaking. Environmental issues tend to follow ecological boundaries, or no boundaries at all, and they propagate without regard to political borders. I aim to demonstrate that an interstate compact based on bioregional logic will thus contribute to more successful sustainable policymaking in the area known to bioregionalists as Cascadia: the Pacific Northwest of North America (see Map 1). As case studies offering comparisons and potential models for bioregional policymaking, I examine The Great Lakes Commission and the Council of the Great Lakes Region. Through these case studies, I explore the question: “how do different interpretations of bioregionalism affect the institutions born from them?”

But what of those citizens residing in Cascadia? Does a stronger “sense of place” – defined loosely as the knowledge and connection one feels with a particular area or region – alter how inhabitants use resources and understand their impacts? Can a bioregional social movement expand what residents consider home? Rather than simply asserting the need for an interstate compact, this thesis presents a communications framework that can be utilized by major players in bioregional advocacy in order to ensure a successful transition. The current momentum from the Cascadian social movement, CascadiaNow, can be harnessed in order to reclaim the symbol of Cascadia from neoliberalization and make the shift in governance more viable. Further,

Cascadian identity-formation is necessary in order to ensure that it's not just the *scale* of bioregionalism that carries over to Cascadian policymaking, but the *tenets* of the movement. It's evident that a shift to bioregional thinking in the next twenty years, driven by a conscientious public shift in identity, is crucial to the preservation of locally intertwined culture and environment and the foundation of a new scale of environmental governance.

The increasingly global and connected world has provided fertile ground for the emergence of a bioregionalism movement, and provides context for the successes and failures of my case studies within the Great Lakes and Cascadian bioregions. There is nothing new residing within the fundamentals of bioregional ideology: know the land, know its ebbs and flows, and engage with them wisely. Yet these ideas coexist uneasily with current neoliberalizing and globalized ideals.

For purposes of this thesis, I will define neoliberalizing policies as those that attribute monetary value to objects or assets that didn't previously have them, in order to submit them to (often global) market forces. Castree (2008) inspired my use of the term "neoliberalization" rather than the more classic "neoliberalism." According to her argument, it is problematic to delineate neoliberalism as any single thing – the way that neoliberal politics play out in different nations and at different scales can radically differ. As Castree (2008, p. 141) identifies, "the clean lines of [neoliberalism]'s conceptual specification does not mirror its messy imbrication in diverse real world situations." Thus, it is more useful to examine the process ("neoliberalization") than the theory ("neoliberalism"). Globalization is the increasingly global and increasingly rapid flow of information, people, and goods. Though globalization is experienced differently depending on the local context as well, those in the Western world have predominately felt an increase in global access and connection, to the detriment of local

investment. Both of these terms will be elaborated upon in later chapters and contextualized within the scope of bioregionalism as applied to my case studies.

A critical discussion of border politics and territoriality will enhance these discussions of globalization, neoliberalization, and bioregionalism. I explore the ways in which these borders hinder progress or inspire creativity in sustainable policymaking, and the potentials of harnessing regional identity. In this vein, I will be examining regionalism, regional identity, and regional environmental governance especially as they apply to Cascadia and the Great Lakes. Before articulating how this institutional shift should happen, it's important to explain why it should be pursued in the first place. How have current environmental governance models fallen short, especially in Cascadia? The literature on the subject of bioregional planning and environmental regional management has been thoroughly documented – I will offer only a brief overview of some authors' findings.

Some of the major environmental issues currently faced by Cascadia are listed below. These problems are likely to be exacerbated in the coming years due to the increasing effects of climate change and other environmental challenges. Further, each issue is intertwined with the others – a bioregional framework demands holistic ecosystems thinking. These issues transcend national or state boundaries, and instead affect swaths of land based on their ecological attributes, which has resulted in overall inefficiency, redundancy, and inadequacy in their handling. These issues include, but are not limited to:

- **Waste management**

There are certain areas that are particularly well suited for waste storage, and these spaces are limited within bioregions. Thus, the EPA has developed a modeling program (WRAP) in

order to allocate waste regionally and responsibly. In addition to this new scale of waste disposal, the perception of waste has shifted in recent years, from a problem to be dealt with to a resource for sustainable development (Smit and Nasr, 1992). If utilized correctly and at the appropriate scale, a closed loop system within the bioregion will help cities grow sustainably and increase possibilities for urban agriculture and waste re-use. This will, in turn, increase the diversity of farmed goods, food sovereignty, and regional independence. Due to the quantity of waste being produced in Cascadia (a quantity which will only grow in the upcoming years as the population increases), the scale of waste management will have to increase. For example, Portland and Vancouver both passed earlier and less stringent composting bills similar to SMC 21.36.082, though all three cities' waste is contained within the same bioregion. There are some places within the bioregion that will have to pay for waste to be shipped out, and some places that will profit from its storage. In Cascadia, there are already strong transportation links across the bioregion that unite the large metropolitan sources of waste with the expansive and appropriate sinks. Keeping the waste in the bioregion creates a stronger sense of stewardship within residents, and incentivizes innovative and maximum reuse.

- **Wildlife preservation**

Modern ecosystem management uses a combination of core habitat preservation and corridor linkages, allowing for maximum species usage with minimum acreage. Thus, the preservation of biodiversity requires an institution that recognizes and regulates all potential habitats through which flora and fauna might move, regardless of traditional political borders. Noss (1994) found that a regional authority was necessary for the holistic expansion to bioregional management – simple cross-border communication is not enough. Buscher and

Whande (2007) claim that habitat management should shift to the bioregional scale in response to the failures of national and international attempts at neoliberalizing ecosystems; attributing to them monetary value and allowing the market to dictate management.

According to Miller (1995, p. 48), “there will be one scale that is most ecologically viable, economically practical, and socially convenient for the overall [habitat conservation] program. Nested within will be other scales suitable for work on specific objectives.” Many endangered species in the Pacific Northwest migrate across the border in the Pacific Northwest, from the grizzly bear to the marbled murrelet, yet the legislation regarding their conservation differs on either side of the 49th parallel (Illical and Harrison, 2007).

- **Water management**

Water is perhaps the most compelling force eroding traditional environmental management structures. Rivers have often operated as borders in and of themselves, complicating preservation efforts with the involvement of two or more distinct jurisdictions (Gupta et. al. 2013). Further, watersheds often encompass areas much larger than districts or states, and decisions made upstream can have profound effects on the quality and quantity of water at the other end of the watershed (Huitema et. al. 2009). As early as 1996, the EPA recognized the importance of shifting to bioregional water management with their document, “The Watershed Approach” (EPA, 1996). This bioregional scale will be crucial in ensuring just and sustainable water use into the future (Raadgever et. al., 2008).

- **Water and air pollution**

Point pollution (a single source pollution generator such as a factory or other industrial structure) has historically been managed at the national level, where combinations of command and control and market-based mechanisms have regulated pollution output. Thus

structure has prevented industry from crossing into states or communities lacking stringency (Field, 1994). However, there is increasing conversation regarding the importance of addressing non-point pollution, which is carried by snowmelt and rainfall from origin points and distributed across watersheds and ecosystems (EPA, 2012). The effects of these pollution points remain inside the bioregion, and are best negotiated by an authority based within the watershed (Adler, 1996). Similarly, nonpoint air pollution remains in the bioregion according to ancient and predictable global air currents and the presence of mountain ranges. In accordance with this information, California has created “air basins” and “air districts” to manage air pollution at an ecologically influenced scale (Air Resources Board, 2014).

Cascadia’s surging population exacerbates these issues. Mainstreet Cascadia, the name that urban planners use to refer to the corridor of dense metropolitan cities Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver, is projected to grow by approximately three million people in the next twenty years (Pivo, 1996). The way that regional governing forces manage this influx of people, their consumption, and their waste will have lasting effects on the region. Thankfully, there are groups within the booming area that have recognized the need for a change.

CascadiaNow, the social movement that’s advocated for bioregionalism within the Pacific Northwest for ten years, is now reaching a pivotal point in its existence. Though the movement possesses little to no political power, it has the potential to serve as a powerful agent in the bioregional path forward via identity-formation. The CascadiaNow movement has blossomed in recent years, as thousands of people across the region joined for a new sense of bioregional identity. Yet, what it means to be of “Cascadia” is still undeveloped and

contradictory. There are specific rhetorical tools that the CascadiaNow movement can use to imbue the term “Cascadia” with an emotional resonance strong enough to motivate political action and detract from neoliberal co-option. In subsequent chapters I present a particular framing of CascadiaNow that will result in the expansion of Cascadian residents’ sense of home. This deeply imbued sense of ecological identity will predispose the movement to political sway, and the pre-emptive commitment to an inclusive Cascadian identity will ensure that bioregionalism is incorporated into policymaking as an attitude, not just a new border.

The literature used in this thesis spans the fields of ecology, policy, economics, psychology, sociology, and philosophy. It is important and timely that these disparate fields be brought together in order to create a more nuanced and persuasive argument for bioregional governance. Though it has been argued for in the past and tentatively accepted by many in the environmental sector, there has never been a more crucial time for a bioregional shift in environmental governance. These ideals must be integrated into sustainable planning; in order for Cascadia and bioregions around the world to be preserved, positive change must operate at a level well beyond one city’s trash.

Chapter 1: Establishing Bioregional Roots

Bioregionalism is not a new concept at its essence – in fact, a whole-hearted acceptance of its associated practices and behaviors was necessary for humans to survive in their habitats for most of human history. What it offers us in the twenty-first century is a tactical response to some of the latest developments in human-spatial relationships, from globalization to neoliberalizing regionalism. This chapter will define and explore the concept and actualization of bioregionalism in its current state within Cascadia, then highlight the most influential spatial concepts necessary for understanding the modern context of bioregionalism: borders and regionalism.

1.1 Bioregionalism: In Search of Home

A bioregion, as defined by Henkel (1993, p. 2), is “a part of the earth’s surface whose boundaries are determined by natural rather than human dictates, distinguishable from other areas by attributes of flora, fauna, water, climate, soils and landforms, and human settlements and cultures those attributes give rise to.” Bioregionalism is the movement that grew out of this scalar ideology, and advocates for education, activism, and governance on the scale and behalf of the bioregion. We can thus view bioregionalism as a branch of regionalism, where borders are defined by a particular set of cultural ideals that arise from ecological attributes. David McCloskey coined the term “bioregionalism” in 1975 (in reference to Cascadia), but many writers, poets, and economists have since expanded on its definitions and tenets. Its emergence can be placed historically as a philosophical response to the rise of Western globalization. Under modern globalization, the speed of information, people, and goods have allowed and occasionally demanded for many citizens to take part in the global economy and the global information stream. Contesting this movement in the spirit of the bioregion, Manuel Castells has said “there is no such thing as a citizen of the world” (Thayer, 2003).

There is something distinct that is lost when one becomes a citizen within a world of people and places one doesn't know, understand, or identify with. One loses a sense of place and sense of identity – a home. According to Robert Thayer (2003, p. 55), the hyper-fast, hyper-connected way that we are now living is not the evolutionary norm. “What sustains us,” he claims, “are finite natural territories inhabited by small bands of humans.” Bioregionalism involves embracing regional identities and *inhabiting* a specific place. Bioregionalists argue that only by achieving this connection with a region can we truly approach living healthy and happy lives within it.

Ryan (2012, p. 83) chooses the word “reinhabitation” over inhabitation, “to stress that our displacement from natural regions is a non-normative phenomenon of modern living... [Reinhabitation] is the realignment of ... culture to the offerings and constraints of the naturally (biologically or geographically) defined region.” He distances the movement from environmental determinism, in which the ecology is the only priority of the culture inhabiting it. Rather, reinhabitation is a “decision (rather than adherence to Malthusian mandate) of a culture to align itself with regional nuances” (Ryan, 2012, p. 84). The ecosystem does not necessarily take priority over the economy – it is just a scalar shift of the *size* of ecology and the *size* of economy that residents consider within the decision-making process. However, once one truly knows and inhabits their bioregion, they are more likely to use its environmental resources wisely and responsibly.

As Raymond Dasmann (1976, quoted in Thayer, 2003, p. 56) argued, there are ecosystem people and biosphere people; “the former being those who live within the ecological limitations of their home area in order to survive and the latter being those tied into the global economy, whose livelihood is not necessarily dependent on the resources of any one region.” Those living

in a bioregion are *ecosystem people*, and their priorities must lie with the strength of their bioregional economy without the heavy influence of the global economy.

Artibise et. al. (1997, p. 65) continues beyond economics to argue that “the role of place and region is vital to the politics and culture of a democratic community.” For how can we protect something we do not love and to which we do not feel vitally connected? Belonging to a bioregion demands civic action, the same way that civic action goes unheeded in a space where residents don’t feel they belong. According to Ryan (2012):

[B]ioregional boundaries are vital because they circumscribe regions of caring, responsibility and possibility. While it is problematic to expect people to act together to protect global abstract things (e.g., the atmosphere), their behavior toward local, tangible, perceivable, familiar, emotionally charged, and engaging things can have significant ramifications for protecting the global ecosystem. (p. 99)

The long-term health of Cascadia is sure to face many challenges in the upcoming years, and these solutions are best generated within a bioregion of compassionate and knowledgeable Cascadians.

1.2 Cascadia: The Land of Falling Waters

Before delving into the regulating structure that will best suit Cascadia, it is necessary to dictate exactly what unites this space ecologically. In the case of Cascadia, the root of its name may offer the best approach to mapping it as a bioregion. David McCloskey (1993, p. 3), one of the founders of bioregionalism, called Cascadia “a land of falling water.” It’s true that this region is defined by its water: the salmon runs are crucial to Native culture, the snowpack provides the

region with fresh water, and (in a more modern iteration) the economy in a large part relies on the stable water levels of important trade routes such as the Ballard Locks and Fraser River.

The waters “cascade” according to the two north-south axes shaping Cascadia – one formed by the coastline against the North Pacific Ocean and one formed by the mountains. Caught up in global air circulation patterns, the condensation rising from the ocean in the west travels east until it collides with the numerous mountain ranges (the Coast Mountains of Canada become the Cascade Mountains in America, and the Rocky Mountains to the east) where it collects and crashes downward, towards sea level. There the water joins the major river systems making up the bioregion: the Columbia, Snake, Fraser, Skeena, and Stikine. These river systems shape the land and provide habitat for countless life forms including the salmon, a popular totem for Cascadia. As they cut through the granite and basalt mountains, these river systems create rich and fertile alluvium soil (Rothstein, 2014). They also provide the drinking water for residents of the bioregion, and power the Grand Coulee Dam that provides electricity to major cities across the region and beyond. This water, even those drops collected at the tops of the Rocky Mountains on the eastern edge of Cascadia, eventually returns to the Pacific Ocean, where it begins its journey anew. As the water cycles through this system, it regenerates and revitalizes those processes that rely upon its presence.

This is not the only force shaping Cascadia. As McCloskey (2010) identifies, “Cascadia is first a verb before it condenses into a noun; a performance or phenomena that generates a form.” Cascadia was actually a geological term before it gained momentum as a sociological or bioregional term – Cascadia rests upon its own microplates which, when they grate up against the Pacific plate, create “collisional orogenesis:” In other words: mountains. Thus, another way to name Cascadia is after its own subduction zone. The value of this definition is recognized in

the fact that “Cascadia Day” is celebrated on May 18th, the day that Mt. St. Helens erupted in 1980. It is a day that any native Cascadian can recall vividly. The tumultuous style of life necessarily formed on a fault is felt especially tangibly as Cascadians move towards and attempt to plan for the next large earthquake, which is expected to hit in the next hundred years (Rothstein, 2012).

While the geographical and ecological traits uniting the region are indisputable, the cultural characteristics are more difficult to pin down. Artibise (2006) delves into the possibility of a Cascadian culture, and concludes that those residing within the Cascadian bioregion are fundamentally aligned with three predominant traits: their commitment to the environment, a quality of life considered “distinct”, and a partiality for citizen diplomacy. Citizen diplomacy is based in a conviction on the part of the citizens that if they enact change, policymakers will follow – this principle fits well with the process of bioregional political action. Cascadia also culturally shares an investment in Major League Soccer (the Cascadia Cup tournament draws hundreds of thousands of fans), microbreweries (Secession Ale, by Hopworks Urban Brewery, has been very popular since its release in 2009), and a strong music scene (perhaps best exemplified by the existence of “Cascadian Death Metal”). It is within the combination of these natural and cultural understandings of “place” that Cascadia’s borders have been drawn: bioregions can be identified “initially by natural science, but the people who have long lived within the region finalize its boundaries” (Ryan, 2012, p. 85).

However, some claim that the ability to create a cohesive bioregion will be hindered by the America/Canada divide. Resistance to bioregional advocacy in the past has been partly attributed to this discomfort. It’s inescapable that Canadian and American ideals differ due to their varying histories, cultures, and governmental structures. Some Canadians tend to feel

uncomfortable with the lack of geographical balance in the bioregional border – a majority of Cascadia falls on the American side of the 49th parallel. There is concern that this would lead to an imbalance of representation when it comes to Cascadian problem solving. Further, the metropolitan and economic heavyweights within Mainstreet Cascadia (Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver) have consistently been rivals economically and in tourism. Power dynamics are often raised as a potential issue – for example, the fear that Washington State would gain an upper hand as the “hinge” between Oregon and British Columbia. The way that Cascadia shapes its identity will go a long way toward how these divergent attitudes are handled. When someone claims to be Cascadian, what will that mean? Can they retain their identity as Canadian or American? How will this new identity category shape the role and efficacy that citizens feel they possess when pursuing long-term sustainability in the bioregion?

In McCloskey’s view (1993), the distinct way of life emerging from shared physical topography, climatology, and hydrology will triumph as a unifying force over any historical or political differences. These characteristics both unite communities across political borders and distinguish their priorities from those within their own political borders. It is crucial for the continued health of the bioregion that these unifying factors take the forefront in developing bioregional governance. If common affection for and commitment to their shared ecosystems take precedent in the language of Cascadian development, bioregionalism will have triumphed in the Pacific Northwest. However, some within Cascadia have recognized these unifying characteristics as an economic opportunity, rather than just an identity-forming one.

1.3 Bioregionalism Within the Greater World: A Schism in the Movement

Cascadia’s historical roots as a self-sufficient regional trade post, as well as the constantly strengthening economic cross-border flows, have made it an especially viable option

for bi-national economic cooperation. The border dividing the Pacific Northwest between Canada and the United States is relatively new in the two nations' histories. The line, drawn along the 49th parallel and down the Strait of Juan de Fuca, was established in 1846 and eroded a long and prosperous trade center that was operating in the region. The fur trade was paramount, and the Hudson's Bay Company (the largest economic power in the region) did business across the world. While it was still a regionally Cascadian company, Hudson's Bay emphasized self-sufficiency in its trade region in order to offset the cost of their goods (McDougall, 2008). This mentality has remained crucial within the area and has been especially prominent in shaping regional policy regarding agricultural goods. Where many states east of the Rockies gravitated towards agricultural monoculturing in order to bolster the rapidly expanding US economy, Cascadia diversified its crops so as to be less reliant on outside trade.

The introduction of the political border hampered this regional insulation, especially as tariffs and the distant priorities of the national governments began to take effect over local governing forces. In the words of McDougall and Philips (2008, p. 7), "state power, manifested in the levels of identity and legal construction, [had a role in] ending the coherence of that regional identity." The introduction of the North American Free Trade Alliance (NAFTA) in 1994 served to recreate some of the economic ties between the two countries, while the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation negotiated on the side attempted to minimize the potential environmental fallout of NAFTA. These arrangements were international in scale, therefore limiting the western bioregion's control over the type of growth and extent of environmental protection that was to be prioritized.

This sort of cross-border cooperation could, at first glance, appear bioregional. After all, the emphasis is on uniting communities based on their common natural resources. However,

many of the first bioregional thinkers are actively opposed to a strengthened bioregion in pursuit of a stronger economy. Where original Cascadians valued the ecological richness of the region for the impact on the local culture, spirit, sustenance, and natural beauty, these new Cascadians value the same resources as a source of profit. With this interpretation of bioregionalism, the end goals and language of the bioregional movement – ecological borders and governance – are co-opted by industry leaders looking to loosen trade boundaries and access natural resources with fewer limitations. Free trade is the antithesis of the original Cascadian foundation, and the calling card of the latter (Henkel, 2001). Free trade encourages open and limitless trade between large national markets, where bioregionalism emphasizes self-sufficiency and limits exports to surplus production (Cato, 2013). Founder and longtime unofficial mayor of Cascadia, David McCloskey (1993), is quick to remind these bioregionalists that “politics and economics are not the foundation for anything. Ecology is.” McCloskey has been vocal in rebutting those who promote Cascadia as a way to access more natural resources and bypass trade routes between Southwest Canada and Northwest America.

In Sparke’s critique of Cascadia’s free-trade co-option (2005, p. 111), he states that the bioregional movement risks becoming a solution that:

seeks to reconcile globalism and regionalism on an arrogantly conjunctive series of ideoscapes, financescapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, and ethnoscapescapes of the region, all of them designed to represent Cascadia as a premier global locale in which to make money, spend money, and manage the making of more money. (p. 111)

In his view, rather than advocating for an ecologically refocused ideological movement, some so-called Cascadians are now advocating for a series of economically strong urban centers that

“cooperate regionally to compete globally” (2005, p. 87). The focus does not shift away from globalism – it just utilizes a regional lens in order to better access the perks of a global economy.

However, the original bioregionalism is distinctly “not-global” at its essence. Though this posturing theoretically removes it from the destructive hazards of the global economy, but also makes it potentially ill suited for global-scale issues. Large-scale release of fossil fuel pollution, nuclear energy, ozone depletion, and even international crises work are all technically beyond the scope of bioregionalism. How does one negotiate between these deserving issues and the importance of maintaining a strong sense of place in the environmental work being done? Durning (1996) struggles with this issue when he tackles the “permanence” of his home and his work. He claims that many of the problems faced by humanity are global in scale, but that they must be approached bioregionally. In his words, “there may not be any ways to save the world that are not, first and foremost, ways for people to save their own places.” In the context of most sustainable discourse, Durning’s perspective seems radical. Does bioregionalism demand an abandonment of the rest of the world? Or is it necessary for the success of global sustainable action moving forward? Though beyond the scope of this paper, these are questions worth pursuing as the movement progresses.

Though political secession is not seriously advocated by any but the most radical bioregionalists, and certainly not by this paper, it is still worth addressing as a potential end-goal for the bioregional movement. In reality, Cascadian activists would be quixotic to seriously propose a secession movement in this era. Sale (2000, p. 472) argued that “bioregionalism is so at odds with the conventional way of looking at the world nowadays that it must strike most people at first as too limiting and provincial, or quaintly nostalgic, or wide-eyed and utopian – or all of those.” Yet, Cascadia is not likely to get more realistic globally until it is too late; until the

global economy has collapsed or our dependence on monoculture has crippling region-wide consequences. Those looking to pursue bioregionalism should not rely on the fear of economic collapse, population growth, or agricultural fallout, for these scenarios will only be visible enough when bioregionalism can do little to help.

Instead, activists should draw on what bioregionalism stands for at its core: a sense of bioregional identity and the stewardship that stems from that. In the words of Aldo Leopold (1986), in his seminal essay *The Land Ethic*: “We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in.” How do the borders we exist between affect our ability to love and understand the land? A historical perspective is useful in understanding this question.

1.4 Borders and Globalization

Our modern conception of borders as fixed and naturalized entities is a fairly new way of understanding our relationship to our surrounding environment. (Sparke, 2005; Popescu, 2011). The relationship that many indigenous groups possess with land is entirely different from the strictly demarcated spaces we now recognize on maps. Indigenous home-spaces are created positively, through movement within space, rather than negatively, through the limits to that movement (Ingold, 2011, p. 149). However, a new concept of land ownership emerged as nations materialized and began to jut up against each other; land ownership was viewed as necessary. Once land could be owned, it could be taken away, stolen, destroyed, and sold. The constant shifting of borders throughout the last few thousand years is a testament to the ephemerality of borders as we know them, and an invitation to innovate the way borders influence our lives.

In Kenichi Ohmae's seminal text *The Borderless World*, the author grapples with the effects of neoliberalizing policies and globalization on the bordering process. In what is essentially an epitaph of the nation-state, Ohmae claims that the compression of space-time brought about by technological advances and global trade has replaced "spaces of places" with "spaces of flows." In his view the global market has increasingly nullified the relevance of current political cartography while nation-states try desperately to cling to some semblance of the old order. Ohmae controversially uses this concept to argue for an increasingly *laissez faire* market (in an argument utilized heavily by the newest bioregionalists), but other authors have taken his hypothesis in different directions.

For example, Appadurai (1990, p. 37) formulates that borders have been replaced by different "*scapes*" representing the different flows of "people, machinery, money, images, and ideas." According to him, the fact that these flows transcend contiguous space has resulted in the destabilization of the nation-state. Moving away from Ohmae's strictly free-trade implications, Appadurai is fascinated with the options for "imagination" that open up in a borderless world. Especially applicable to Cascadia, he states "where the imagination as a social force itself works across national lines to produce locality as a spatial fact and sensibility, we see the beginnings of social forms without either the predatory mobility of unregulated capital or the predatory stability of many states."

In another response to Ohmae's hypothesis, Popescu (2011, p. 21) emphasizes the border as a social phenomenon, wherein borders are "never finished; instead they are always in the making, always being imagined and reimagined." Similarly, the relationship between borders and their enclosed nations is recursive in Sparke's view (2005, p. 12): "maps shape a world that in turn shapes its maps." Because of their social construction, Popescu (2011) argues that the

political concentration on borders should not rest on the borders themselves, but rather on the power relations that are engaged in the *process* of border-making. This approach brings into focus those parties that benefit from certain borders, and introduces a crucial social justice element to the discourse. This must be kept in mind during the process of organizing CascadiaNow: whose voices are being heard? Who is deciding what Cascadia will stand for?

In another vein, Popescu (2011) contradicts Ohmae's vision of a "deterritorialized" future where supplies provided by the global marketplace meet the need for territory and land ownership. Rather, he traces recent history to argue that there is evidence for *reterritorialization*, wherein there emerges "a selective reduction of the barrier role of state borders for specific categories of flows, as well as a restructuring and reorganization of state territorial sovereignty to include other political organizations" (Popescu, 2011, p. 25). In essence, Popescu documents a shift away from the absolutism of nation-state borders and towards multi-layered governance. As "Cascadia" continues to form as a symbol and identity, these political shifts will become increasingly necessary: as certain flows (water, pollution, flora and fauna, etc.) begin to erode the perception of borders as infallible, the creation of a bioregional environmental entity will become an obvious next step for the bioregion.

Borders are one of the many approaches that human beings have adopted in order to place themselves. Bordering land creates distinctly defined places, which are convenient for ease of governance and citizen allegiance. Yet, the dynamic nature of society and its emerging problems requires an appropriately flexible system of approaching both control and identity-formation. A more multi-layered method of environmental policymaking would not have to replace other forms of governance – only supplement them. Combining this scalar shift with the creation of an identity founded in ecological characteristics will create more resilient communities

in the years to come. The shifting scale of environmental policymaking is a testament to this observation.

1.5 Regionalism in Environmental Policymaking

For the first decade of serious environmental policymaking in North America (from the late 1960s to the early 1980s), it was assumed that large industrial and chemical firms would be the targets of much of the work to come (Meadowcroft, 2002). Based on this assumption, the contemporary federalist top-bottom structure of the government was considered adequate to tackle the cleanup and regulatory legislation. In combination with the increasing expectation placed on the national government in the post-Rachel Carson era, the federal government seemed the logical place to rest responsibility for environmental regulation. No state could claim that they were being unfairly targeted, and some sort of minimum standard could be guaranteed. This structure was called vertical federalism: the federal government sets standards and the states can achieve them according to their own ability and innovation. They can then appeal to the federal government for enforcement (Hall, 2006; Engel, 2006).

However, as environmental issues became progressively understood as complex and intertwined, policymakers began to recognize that a new approach was necessary – regionalism seemed a feasible answer. Anssi Paasi (2009) is one of the seminal authors documenting regionalism and its relationship with environmental policymaking. He distinguishes “old regionalism” from “new regionalism” by identifying the former as predominately influencing art and culture and the latter as a response to global capitalism that aims to increase competitiveness within the larger spatial unit (globally or nationally). He delineates four main stages through which a region develops: territorial shaping (boundary making), symbolic shaping (the creation of

cultural icons), institutional shaping (creating formal or informal identity institutions), and establishment (recognition at an appropriate scale).

According to Paasi's framework, Cascadia is a significantly more mature region than the Great Lakes, thanks mostly to the work of CascadiaNow and David McCloskey. Where the territorial shaping of the Great Lakes region is based exclusively on the borders of the watershed, The Sightline Institute (headed by McCloskey) has developed a widely accepted GIS map of Cascadia that takes into account a diverse range of ecosystems, weather microclimates, and flora and fauna movement. Cascadia has numerous cultural icons uniting the region, from the Douglas fir tree to the Coho salmon. The Great Lakes lacks a comparable totem. However, the Great Lakes Compact (which will be explored in later chapters) institutionalizes the bioregion politically at a level that Cascadia has not yet achieved. The recognition and establishment

metric makes for a difficult comparison.

Because some Cascadians have been vocal secessionists, they have received more press than those in the Great Lakes Bioregion. As an anecdotal example of its growing notoriety, Cascadia was even named one of the most likely to secede in Time Magazine's "Top 10 Aspiring Nations" (Webley, 2011). Despite this, the Great Lakes Bioregion has more name recognition thanks to its central biological feature and lengthier history. Both



Figure 1. Balsiger and VanDeveer, 2010.
Typology of regional environmental governance.

bioregions exhibit strong regional traits and areas for increasing coherency. The legitimacy of these spaces as regions will influence the viability of a shift in environmental governance.

Based on the work of Paasi (2009) and many others, there has been a push to organize sustainable environmental governance with this scale in mind. Figure 1, generated by Balsiger and VanDeever (2010), displays the continuum upon which environmental regional organization takes place – one axis displays the way in which borders are defined, the second displays the orientation of the actors involved (state or non-state), and the third displays the thematic focus of the group.

Balsiger and VanDeever (2010) suggest that the approach to regional government has shifted towards the more progressive typology – one of a broader sustainability focus organized by predominantly nonstate actors within ecologically defined territories. This is generally a desirable outcome, as it represents a more holistic (and generally successful) undertaking.

However, this shift has not been without its own contradictions and conundrums. Balsiger (2011) notes that while new regionalism operates at a scale that is useful for *environmental* policymaking, it will always be working with other fields (economic or political) that inherently rely on various other bordering strategies. For example, shifting water management to a bioregional scale still entails coordination with tax blocks broken up by census tract, and utilities that are organized by counties. Thus, the creation of a new regional functional space in order to deal with an environmental issue may result in the “fragmentation of service delivery” in another space (Balsiger, 2011, p. 45). Confronting waste management, biodiversity loss, or the plethora of Cascadia’s other eminent environmental issues is not simply an *environmental* problem, then – or at least there is concern that its management cannot be reduced to this without significantly increasing the complication of enactment.

In response, there have been several attempts at evaluating new regionalism and the effect that rescaling governance has had on the policy process. How effective is environmental regional governance, given the obstacle of mismatched scales? The reports are mixed. While Blatter (1997, 2000, 2004) found that cross-border politics produced “antagonistic communities,” Balsiger (2009) found that this process “strengthened collective identity and citizen-driven policy integration.” Lieberherr (2011) suggests that in evaluating the success of environmental regional policymaking, time-scale must be taken into account as well as spatial scale. Though there may be immediate shifts in the efficiency of certain projects, effectiveness can take longer to achieve, and legitimacy may take even more time (as a result of the first two categories). Thus the true impact of this shift may not be revealed for many years, and is a subject for ongoing investigation.

1.6 Horizontal Federalism and its Potential for Environmental Regulation

One of the most potent possibilities for environmental regulation, especially in Cascadia, is that of collaborative horizontal federalism. In this arrangement, states assume the responsibility for upholding commitments to each other via federally granted authority.

As the pressure for regional guidance has grown, policymakers in America have struggled to find ways to balance state and national governance. Historically, states were not considered a good fit for environmental regulation due to Stewart’s (1977) “race to the bottom” theory. In his conception, if states were left in charge of regulating environmental standards, economic competition between them would drive down the strictness of environmental laws in an effort to retain business and industry. This decreasing stringency would exacerbate externalities and create new ones (Engel, 2006).

However, establishing any sort of clear divide between federal and local governmental

responsibility ends up being inconsistent with the policy process as it plays out in actuality. Even objects that have been designated to local regulation end up involving some federal involvement, and vice versa. For example, the federal government is responsible for preserving drinking water quality and managing solid waste landfills as well as underground storage tanks. Yet, “leaking municipal dumps, contaminated tap water and polluted aquifers beneath neighborhood gasoline stations affect only the local population and seldom affect persons or businesses out of state” (Engel, 2006, p. 160). Engel (2006, p. 160) refers to this phenomenon as “jurisdictional mismatch.”

For example, though widely regarded as the textbook example of an issue demanding national and international attention, Engel (2006) provides a compelling argument for shifting the way that climate change is discussed in the environmental community. She argues that much of the work being done to combat and adjust to climate change is being done at the state and local level – the federal government’s role has predominately been in supporting these endeavors (CEQ, 2013). Large forces causing climate change are best dealt with at a national or international level, but the way that the effects of climate change are best responded to at the level of those experiencing the impact. Climate change will have very different effects on different regions of the country – some areas will experience extreme draught, while others will see an increase in extreme weather events. The EPA lists several state adaptation plans that have emerged with this in mind: from Alaska’s “Adaption Action Workgroup” to Florida’s “Action Team on Climate and Energy,” it is clear that a shift to smaller-scale governance is in order when planning for climate change resiliency (EPA, 2014).

Thus, confronting environmental issues entails the involvement and support of governments at multiple levels. State and local governments have generated some of the most

innovative and dynamic responses to environmental predicaments – for example, Arizona has formed partnerships with Indigenous peoples to map ancient waterways, and collaboratively created a solar hot air balloon which they hope will raise awareness of communities affected by climate change (Balance-Unbalance, 2015). The kind of ingenuity and flexibility provided by local government is especially important when dealing with an environment that is constantly in flux and will likely be affected by the regulation itself (Barker, 1990; Engel 2006). However, these smaller scale governments often run into difficulties when confronting ambiguous property rights between themselves and abutting establishments, and balancing economic development with environmental health (Barker, 1990).

The federal government should in theory be useful in these situations for offering a somewhat more objective and holistic perspective. In practice, however, the federal government has tended to fall short of actually handling those specific environmental cases that it is best suited for, especially in the case of interstate pollution situations (Engel, 2006). The Supreme Court (in *New York v New Jersey*, 256 U.S. 296, 313 [1921]) has expressly discouraged one state pursuing litigation against another in regards to environmental issues. The many technical factors that accompany these issues make them best handled between state officials and experts rather than in the courts.

When bordering states aren't struggling to solve cross-border disputes or appealing to the federal government for assistance, they are being influenced by one another's policy strategies. According to research done by Daley and Garand (2005, p. 5), "states pay attention to and are influenced by the actions of both the federal government and other state governments." These same states have picked up the slack that they perceive in national regulation, and many have advanced more stringent standards than those of the national minimum. Tides are turning against

the era of strict federalist regulation as the problems faced erode a simple vertical understanding of the policy process. No longer is the divide between the national and the local so clear, and no longer is the federal government driving the most stringent environmental policy.

A new future of collaboration across scales and borders is emerging – the most persuasive comes in the form of dynamic horizontal federalism. The Great Lakes Commission, which will be examined in the next chapter, offers a compelling success story for this form of environmental governance. As Engel (2006) aptly claims, “those fighting for a more strict division of state and federal government responsibility are arguing against the grain of the political process.”

Dynamic federalism relies upon a strong dialogue between multiple levels of government. Engel (2006, p. 261) argues that this arrangement provides benefits that single scale jurisdiction neglects, such as “a built-in check upon interest group capture, greater opportunities for regulatory innovation and refinement, and relief for the courts from the often futile and confusing task of jurisdictional line-drawing.” She claims further that this arrangement pushes national and state level governments to assume positions and stringencies that they otherwise would not consider if operating in a vacuum. Engels’ dynamic federalism argues for the acknowledgement and importance of scale-shifting vertically (i.e. between state and federal regulation), and when coupled with horizontal diffusion (i.e. an interstate partnership) it becomes a powerful model for environmental regulation in Cascadia.

Berry and Berry (1990) first hypothesized horizontal (or regional) diffusion in terms of hazardous waste standards: “state policymakers are more likely to adopt stringent hazardous waste regulations if nearby states have also developed stringent hazardous waste programs.” In evaluating Berry and Berry’s hypothesis, Daley and Garand (2005) found that the stringency of

nearby states was one of the most significant variables in predicting the strength of environmental regulations. Political influence (e.g., whether the state was controlled by Republicans or Democrats), the presence of interest groups, and the demography of the state interestingly revealed no comparable or significant effect on the stringency of standards.

Barker (1990) sees the advantage of regional horizontal (local and state cooperation) and vertical (inter-state) integration as the ability to occupy the middle ground between the “quantity” and “quality” of democratic control.

If one accepts the proposition that local government provides the greatest quantity of democratic decision-making control to the local voter, and that regional, state and federal control incrementally diminish that quantitative democratic control, then one might view regional land use control as essentially anti-democratic. With an issue of regional, state or interstate concern, however, the quality of democratic decision-making increases with each level of government. (p. 742)

Basically, residents at the local scale have the largest amount of democratic control, since they don't have to compete with outside groups of people possessing possible opposing motives. However, decision making at a larger scale implies a more holistic understanding of the ecological and economic impacts of any given decision, thus increasing the quality of decision-making. Scaling up beyond local regulation is also important to ensure a uniform approach – because many environmental problems span multiple localities, simply addressing water pollution or species preservation in one area will simply render efforts moot if they are not incorporated bioregionally.

Further, a bioregional approach levels the playing field economically. If two landowners in the same bioregion possess the same resource, they should be subject to the same restrictions.

Any disparity between localities will result in an unfair advantage in the marketplace (Barker, 1990). Along these lines, Hall (2006) points out that a horizontal partnership across state lines makes enforcement more feasible. Whereas the federal government may be wary of challenging a state-run program due to the cost of assuming responsibility if it's out of compliance, states within an interstate compact will have economic incentives to ensuring that other states are upholding the same environmental standards as they are (Hall, 2006, p. 452-453).

Beyond the horizontal influence potential of interstate cooperation and governance, there is the logic of the “matching principle” regarding resource management, as posited by Macey and Butler (1996). They argue that regulatory authority should “go to the political jurisdiction that comes closest to matching the geographical area affected by a particular externality.” When this comes to environmental issues affecting a bioregional scale (which, as has been argued, is most environmental issues), there is a lack of political jurisdiction that matches the area of impact.

The interstate compact, detailed in the next chapter, is a positive combination of dynamic vertical and horizontal collaboration. Utilizing this structure is ideal for bioregional environmental governance, especially in Cascadia. In the next chapter I explore how the Great Lakes Compact can serve as an example of the possibilities that bioregional, bi-national, interstate compacts can offer, and how other interpretations of bioregional management in the same watershed can provide lessons on the potential for neoliberal co-option. It's important that the shift to bioregional environmental governance is not just one of scale, but one of ideology – I argue for this in the third chapter.

Chapter 2: Interstate Compacts and Lessons from the Great Lakes Bioregion

As seen above, there are many different ways that bioregionalism can be interpreted and applied to policymaking. To some, it is an ideology; to others, a tool to increase competitiveness in the global market. To the most radical, it is a case for secession. Still others see the movement as a way to strengthen community or, in the case of Cascadia, to generate merchandise plastered with the Cascadian flag. Most pressingly for the immediate future of Cascadia, bioregionalism should be used to shape a new form of environmental governance.

The idea that interstate compacts could be utilized for environmental regulation is not new. Felix Frankfurter (who went on to become a United States Supreme Court Justice in 1939) and James Landis (his student) first put forward a co-statement nearly one hundred years ago, in 1925:

Even before the Constitution we find that the common interest in natural resources, of a region embracing two States, was furthered by an agreement between such States. . . . Conservation of natural resources is thus making a major demand on American statesmanship. An exploration of the possibilities of the compact idea furnishes a partial answer to one of the most intricate and comprehensive of all American problems.

However, as the federal government began to take strong stances on environmental issues with the Clean Air and Water Act and other provisions in the 1970s, the momentum behind interstate compacts was pushed to the side. Now that federal control is beginning to subside and state influence is rising, the possibilities for this arrangement are reemerging.

In order for the Cascadian bioregional movement to gain ground towards this horizontal federalist compact, it must evolve based on the work that has already been completed in this realm. The Great Lakes Commission (GLC), founded originally in 1955, serves as a compelling example for the possibilities of interstate compacts and bioregional environmental governance. In this chapter, I contrast the Commission's mission, rhetoric, and successes with those of the more recently formed Council of the Great Lakes Region (CGLR). These two case studies establish precedent in the movement towards bioregional institutional change and also demonstrate the way that differing bioregional visions can affect the manifestation of differing bioregional institutions. Lessons from the GLC and the CGLR will then be applied to CascadiaNow's approach for guiding Cascadia forward in Chapter 3.



Map 2. *The Great Lakes bioregion*. 2009. Retrieved 2015 from <http://www.cglg.org/projects/water-management/resources/>

2.1 Great Lakes Commission

The Great Lakes bioregion has been socially united over many decades by civic affection and concern for the waters that help define the region. In the mid-20th century, the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, along with the provinces of Quebec and Ontario entered into the Great Lakes Basin Compact (GLBC) in an effort to maximize regional involvement. The 105 million residents who are represented by GLBC occupy eight American states, two Canadian provinces and over a hundred First Nations and Native American groups. The GLBC was ratified by the states' respective legislatures and signed by their governors in 1955. An altered version of the compact, excluding the Canadian provinces, was passed by Congress and approved by the president in 1968, but the resulting Great Lakes Commission (GLC) lacked the regulatory abilities that were granted by the initial proposal. It continued to function more as a research and advising committee for over thirty years.

In 2001, in response to this perceived shortcoming, the region's governors (and the premiers of Quebec and Ontario that signed the original Charter) agreed to an Annex to the Great Lakes Charter. Commonly referred to as Annex 2001, it recommended that the region develop a "basin-wide binding agreement(s), such as an interstate compact" in order to achieve its goals (Annex, 2001). The language of the Annex was exciting to lawmakers and activists in the region because of its commitment to return water flow (requiring diverted water to eventually be returned to its source) and a focus shift that included all water in the bioregion, not just the Great Lakes themselves (Hall, 2006, p. 433).

After a public comment period of 90 days and the collection of over 10,000 written feedback forms, the working group in charge of balancing inputs from various agencies and

communities released the final proposed Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact in 2005 (Hall, 2006, p. 435). This compact was passed at the sub-national level by the legislature of the eight states and two provinces in 2005 and given American federal approval in 2008 – on the condition that the provinces were not granted voting power. It not only provides the interstate policy structure for regulating water diversions and other major water-related development, but also bestows upon the compact the ability to enforce penalties on any agencies or parties that are out of compliance.

Article I of the Great Lakes Compact (2005) states its objectives as follows:

1. To promote the orderly, integrated, and comprehensive development, use, and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes Basin (hereinafter called the Basin).
2. To plan for the welfare and development of the water resources of the Basin as a whole as well as for those portions of the Basin which may have problems of special concern.
3. To make it possible for the states of the Basin and their people to derive the maximum benefit from utilization of public works, in the form of navigational aids or otherwise, which may exist or which may be constructed from time to time.
4. To advise in securing and maintaining a proper balance among industrial, commercial, agricultural, water supply, residential, recreational, and other legitimate uses of the water resources of the Basin.
5. To establish and maintain an intergovernmental agency the end that the purposes of this compact may be accomplished more effectively.

The Great Lakes Compact made it nearly impossible to divert water out of the basin – all projects that require the extraction of water must apply for a special exception, and the entire Regional board must agree on the exception according to standards developed by the Commission. The Commission must also create and review a set of regional goals every five years to ensure conservation and efficiency within the basin.

To accomplish these goals, the Commission has identified six program areas: clean energy and climate, habitat and coastal management, invasive species, water-dependent economy

and infrastructure, water quality and ecosystem health, and water resources management.

Though technically only tasked with the “development, use, and conservation of the *water resources* of the Great Lakes Basin,” it is clear that the Commission has felt the need to branch out from water management and quality. In true bioregional fashion, the Commission recognizes that water health cannot be isolated from the climate, the flora and fauna, and the ecosystem as a whole. In this way, though the Commission was established as a single-issue organization, it has had to assert its influence in other environmental legislation in order to be fully functional. For example, the Commission supports the Great Lakes Wind Collaborative as part of its clean energy unit – something that Congress perhaps hadn’t considered when granting the states full federal force of the law (GLWC, 2010).

Rather than relying on classical vertical federalism, The Great Lakes interstate compact offers a manifestation of cooperative horizontal federalism. It places responsibility for regulatory standards, obligations, and enforcements in the hands of the states and takes them out of the hands of Congress (Hall, 2006, p. 408). The fact that water so visibly flows across political borders makes it an obvious first choice of mechanisms through which to erode this classical vertical arrangement, but the same case can be made for many environmental problems, as the GLC demonstrates (e.g. forest management, biodiversity preservation, air pollution). As Hall (2006, p. 416) identifies, “in administering their individual programs, states have both the benefits of regional resources and the threat of regional enforcement.” Similarly, the Great Lakes Commission is technically obligated only to consider water, though it has presented research regarding soil and air quality as well. Environmental problems are particularly dynamic, and as such the prospect of regional support as well as the motivating factor of regional crackdowns are sure to make interstate compacts an effective method of dynamic governance.

One of the greatest shortcomings of the Great Lakes Compact is the lack of formal province involvement. Legally, the U.S. Constitution disallows *treaties* or *alliances* between states and other parties, but does allow for the formation of *compacts* between states and “foreign Power(s)” with Congressional approval (U.S. Const., art. I, sec. 10, cl. 3). The distinction between treaties or alliances and compacts has yet to be fully flushed out, and is thus subject to Congressional discretion on a case-by-case basis. In practice, federal decisions have tended towards a more conservative interpretation of the law. When the Great Lake states first attempted to incorporate the Canadian provinces into their original 1955 compact, the U.S. Congress rejected the proposal and only accepted the compact including American states. Acknowledging the difficulties of passing a compact through Congress that included provinces, the Great Lakes Commission passed the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources *Agreement* to complement the 2005 *Compact*, which introduced a non-binding role for the provinces on the Regional Body. As members of the Regional Body, provincial representatives have a procedural influence, but no final say; their role includes the notice, consultation, and public participation in all compact issues but lacks voting power (Great Lakes Agreement, 2005).

Overall, The Great Lakes Commission serves as an important example for environmental governance in Cascadia. From its successes and failures, organizers and activists in Cascadia can derive the best way to ensure responsible environmental management. The first lesson is that the authority of these governance structures relies on an appeal to higher structures – bi-national support is crucial. In this case, exact bioregional borders might have to be sacrificed for slightly larger entities that contain the bioregion at stake – for example, a compact between Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and British Columbia. This encompasses the bioregion within its borders, but still appeals to the larger political borders within which it falls.

The second lesson is that an international compact ultimately relies on dual federal approval. The way that the compact is framed – as a treaty and alliance or a compact – will have a fundamental effect on the role that the Canadian provinces have in the process. In order to operate according to bioregional ideals, policymakers north of the 49th parallel should have full power and authority over the environmental decision-making process.

A third lesson is that these structures will be most effective if they have control over a wide range of environmental issues. GLC offers an example of the ways that bioregional scaling also encourages other aspects of the bioregional ethos. Bioregionalism teaches us that ecosystems are holistic and dynamic entities – those living within a bioregion are part and parcel of a wide range of processes and non-human forces. Thus, the language in the Cascadian Compact should be as holistic and dynamic as the bioregion in which it is based, while using the Great Lakes Compact as an otherwise useful model.

2.2 The Council of the Great Lakes Region

Just three years after the federal approval of the Great Lakes Compact, the Council of the Great Lakes Region (CGLR) was formed. CGLR is a “bi-national organization that works to enhance regional collaboration and cross-border integration to advance effective, coordinated, and broadly shared responses to the region’s common economic, social and environmental policy challenges” (General Info, CGLR). Launched jointly by Canada’s ambassador to the United States and the American ambassador to Canada (among others), the council acts as an unofficial but powerfully supported bi-national voice for the Great Lakes region. Though there were several cross-border organizations and agents in the field before 2011, including the GLC, CGLR claims that “no one existing organization speaks for the region’s interrelated long-term

economic and ecological interests” (General Info, CGLR). They were formed to fill this apparent void.

CGLR seeks to achieve its goals via a three-pronged approach: regional research and solution generation, conference planning, and mediation between economic and environmental priorities. As a fledgling organization, they have only released a few solid results since formation. They have guided legislation through regional-scale reports (e.g. “Low Water Blues: An Economic Impact Assessment of Future Low Water Levels in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River”) and set the date for a conference to ally economic concerns across borders. The Low Water Blues report has been extensively covered in the news and on social media, provoking response from organizations in all states and provinces. The “Great Lakes Economic Forum 2015” features ambassadors from both countries as keynote speakers, truly emphasizing the bi-national support.

While an important case study in the potential for environmental regional governance, CGLR presents a conundrum for those planning the future of Cascadia. First, similar to the GLC, the organization is not technically delineated via bioregional borders. Rather than entirely drawing new borders based on watersheds or ecology, CGLR simply incorporates all subnational entities that are touching the Great Lakes ecosystem. In the end this is a larger scale than bioregionalism would recommend, since many counties in these entities have little stake in the Great Lakes due to natural barriers. It will be interesting to see how this plays out in future policy recommendations originating from GLC and CGLR. Will their bulk hinder their ability to find common ground? Or will utilizing these pre-existing divisions of governance lead to increased efficiency?

Second, CGLR acts as an interesting example of a possible, albeit flawed, union between different bioregional interpretations. They focus on environmental stewardship only so far as it contributes to economic development, but they still advocate for a united watershed. They advocate for bioregionalism as a scale, but don't represent the ideals of the movement. For example, the theme of the Great Lakes Economic Forum is "From Partnership Flows Prosperity." The parallels to Sparke's (2005) incisive critique of neoliberal bioregionalism's theme, "cooperate regionally to compete globally," (discussed in section 1.3) are unavoidable. In the words of CGLR's 2015 press release regarding the conference, the theme "signifies that in today's aggressively borderless climate of global business and trade, the two countries must seek ways to work together more effectively than ever." It is my belief that this rhetoric is purely that of the neoliberalizing bioregionalists, whose priorities are more in line with globalism than original bioregional ecologists, though they share a similar vision of a region united by ecologically influenced borders. This quote also hardly seems in keeping with CGLR's goal of "providing realistic solutions on how best to reconcile the often divergent challenges of economic prosperity and environmental conservation." In fact, nowhere in the press release is there mention of the environment, ecology, or natural resources upon which this economy depends and which act as the basis for the foundation to exist at all.

Indeed, how could this press release emerge from the same organization that released the Low Water Blues report just five months earlier? In that report, CGLR made the staggering claim that without a shift to more sustainable water management practices, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region could stand to lose more than \$18 billion dollars by 2050 due to the impact of current practices on recreation and industry. While this report clearly offers reconciliation between environmental and economic priorities in terms of aligning their values, there is no

similar attempt apparent in the conference announcement. Thus, while the CGLR derives a governing “bite” from the support of both nations and their ambassadors, their focus remains on economic growth. The sense of identity that CGLR promotes is founded in the region’s economy: the natural resources are discussed only as a way of stabilizing and increasing the strength of this economy.

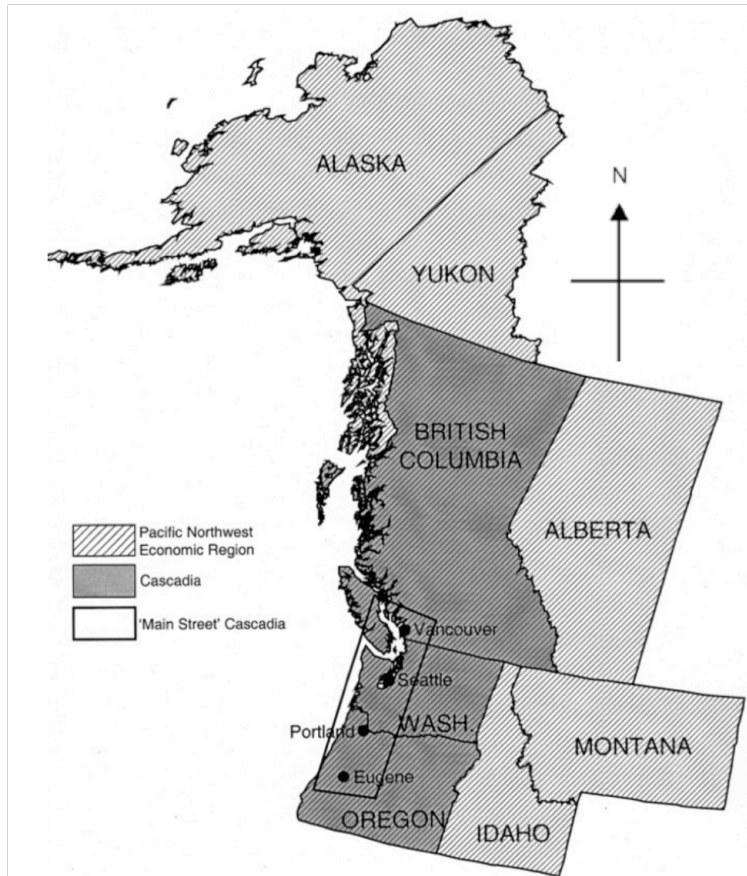


Figure 2. Sparke, 2005. *Scales of Cascadia*.

The CGLR offers a model for the possibility of bioregional policymaking, but there are certain lessons to derive in applying this model to Cascadia. First, if the regional identity is based in economic strength, there is not much weight to the sustainable guidance proffered unless it is in terms of economic gain. Thus, it is imperative to sculpt a regional

identity that finds inherent value in the health of the ecosystem: an

ecological identity. Second, the authority of these governance structures relies on an appeal to higher structures – bi-national support is crucial. In this case, exact bioregional borders might have to be sacrificed for slightly larger entities that contain the bioregion at stake. In choosing which scale to utilize for these actors, I would then argue for the Cascadia outlined by Sparke (Figure 2), rather than that developed by the Sightline Institute that was highlighted at the

beginning of this paper. This encompasses the bioregion within Cascadia's borders, but still appeals to the larger political borders within which it falls. CGLR, in the end, offers a view of what bioregionalism can look like if co-opted by a neoliberalizing mentality – a trend explored in the next section.

2.3 Neoliberalizing Nature: Lessons from CGLR

The bioregional movement formed in a large measure as a response to classic neoliberal environmental policies. According to Noel Castree (2008, p. 136), in her seminal work *Neoliberalising Nature*, “the last thirty years have seen an ever greater variety of biophysical phenomena in more and more parts of the world being subject to neoliberal thought and practice.” Though many scholars in the last thirty years have researched the problematic influences of neoliberal tendencies on human quality of life (as it applies to welfare provision, industrialization, etc.), the effects of neoliberalization on the “more-than-human world” was neglected until recently. In the last few years, there has been a veritable boom of investigation into this subject. In the words of Heynen and Robbins (2005, p. 2), nature's neoliberalization comprises:

Governance, the institutional political compromises through which capitalist societies are negotiated; privatization, where natural resources ... are turned over to firms and individuals; enclosure, the capture of common resources and the exclusion of the communities to which they are linked; and valuation, the process through which invaluable and complex ecosystems are reduced to commodities through pricing. (p. 2)

There are broad strokes of these influences noticeable throughout the CGLR's rhetoric, as well

as that of the new business-minded bioregionalists in Cascadia. Identifying and avoiding these influences are crucial in order to create Cascadian governance that prioritizes ecological and bioregional well-being.

In Castree's conception (2008), there are four main processes that make up the larger project of neoliberalizing nature. The first is privatization: the process by which clear property rights are established for assets that were formerly owned communally or not owned at all. These new owners can be located anywhere around the world. The second, marketization, regards the assignment of prices to assets that were otherwise without them. Global markets often set these prices – this is why the term “neoliberalism” tends to accompany discussions of global “free-trade” (Castree, 2008, p. 142). The final two processes – deregulation and reregulation – represent a stepping down and a stepping up of government presence; on the one hand, state regulation is drawn back so that private agents can take over responsibility for certain public demands, while on the other hand, the state institutes policies that make privatization and marketization easier.

Castree (2008) examines the ways that these processes have influenced environmental governance in recent years. She presents several different “environmental fixes” to be understood within the context of neoliberalizing nature. In the first, natural resources and their accompanying responsibilities are turned over to market mechanisms to dictate best practices, with the understanding that this will result in more sustainable use and management. In the second, nature is understood simply as a “means to the end of capital accumulation” (Castree, 2008, p. 147). An example of this “fix” is at work in agricultural trade liberalization, as demonstrated through her case study of Florida. As Castree (2008, p. 147) observes, “from the perspective of Southern sugar farmers, it is incidental and contingent whether regional or global

environmental (dis)benefits follow from free sugar trade with the USA.” The final fix results from the state’s attempts to manage the internal logic of capitalism – its increasing growth and constant accumulation – and the external realities of a finite biophysical world. In response, the state concludes that offloading or redefining responsibility *away* from the government increases efficiency within the system while encouraging citizen responsibility.

The Council of the Great Lakes Region is noticeably influenced by the neoliberalization of nature, as is evidenced through their structure and priorities. Structurally, the institution is member-based, with members originating not just from within government, but “business, labour, non-profit, and academic communities” (About CGLR, CGLR). This is consistent with the deregulation process of neoliberalization and the final environmental fix that Castree explicates. By spreading out membership to include partners outside of the government, the state is reallocating responsibility and influence to the business world, non-profit world, and academic world. While not automatically negative, this structure must inherently balance the needs of the environment with the economic strength of the bioregion – and crucially, the ability of the bioregion to compete globally.

Regarding this point, CGLR tends to frame natural resources in a way that’s consistent with the neoliberalization of nature. The headline for the Low Water Blues report press release specifies the exact amount of money that will be lost with current water management techniques. The conclusion of the press release states:

Given the high stakes to the regional economy and to many local economies, decision-makers, business leaders and residents of the basin need the best available guidance on the risks associated with different water futures so they can make prudent decisions about adapting to and/or mitigating the impacts of

variable fluctuations in water levels.

The stakes are purely discussed in terms of economic cost – nowhere is there a concern for the ramifications of lowered water level on the environment. Within the CGLR, the environment is spoken of as a means to capital accumulation rather than something of inherent value. Concern regarding low water levels is framed solely around the region’s continued ability to compete in the global market. It is ironic that while recognizing the economic value of this *environmental* resource, the Low Water Blues report neglects further research regarding the consequences of low water levels on other important environmental aspects of the region – including habitats, microclimates, and soil quality. They acknowledge in the report that “indirect impacts” were not included “due to methodological reasons” (Low Water Blues, 2014). Among the acknowledged data not included are the “economic analysis of how low water levels will impact manufacturing, commercial fishing, human health, ecological services, and other non-market goods” (Low Water Blues, 2014).

By prioritizing the effect that low water levels will have on commercial shipping and harbors (\$1.92 billion total through 2050), and solely focusing on market goods, CGLR works towards neoliberalizing nature. In the report, they “marketize” recreational boating and fishing, rural groundwater, and waterfront views by placing a value on these assets that were otherwise priceless to the community – and anything with a value can be entered into the global market. (In a particularly ironic twist, the CGLR warns that coal shippers and producers will be particularly at risk, though they are very forthright about the influence of climate change on declining water levels in the first place).

This report is meant to shape policy decisions in the future – the CGLR hopes that their report “will serve as a foundation for dialogue and future work on possible responses to

fluctuating water levels. Given the high stakes to the regional economy and to many local economies, decision-makers, business leaders and residents of the basin need the best available guidance on the risks” (Low Water Blues, 2014). When the risks of low water levels are only articulated in monetary terms, and when the high stakes are only referenced in regard to “the regional economy,” it can be assumed that the solutions generated will emphasize maximum capital output. The Great Lakes, romanticized in pictures and language across the CGLR website, are reduced to a vehicle for capital gain in the region; their preservation crucial only to maintain a competitive edge in the global economy. There is no room here for a rights-based governing structure, in which residents and non-human life have a right to clean and plentiful water.

To be fair, the CGLR does make some strides in demonstrating a bioregional-scale vision. They recognize and advocate for organizing as a watershed and transcending political borders in planning for environmental impacts. Their framing is obviously compelling: the presence of ambassadors from America and Canada give the organization sway in policymaking, and the involvement of members from Great Lakes stakeholders across the bioregion demonstrate interest and passion in a shift to bioregional scale thinking. However, this organization is primarily unified by the goal of maintaining the Great Lakes’ regional economy as one that can compete globally. This neoliberalization of nature forces policymakers to value all assets in monetary terms, and negates the importance of any natural assets that don’t nicely fit into the global market.

Cascadia, too, faces the risk of becoming an entity founded in this neoliberalizing ideology. As I alluded to earlier in this paper, ecologists and sustainability advocates have not been the only groups intrigued by the possibilities of bioregionalism in Cascadia. Another group

of supposed bioregionalists sees Cascadia as an opportunity to increase free trade between the two countries, a move with the potential to further diminish the quality of the natural environment in the area.

2.4 Cascadia At Risk: Neoliberal Attempts at Co-option

Cascadia's global influence (and especially that of Mainstreet Cascadia: Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver) has increased in correspondence with its growth in population and GDP over the past decade. While the historic regional economy in the Pacific Northwest was relatively independent due to its distance from the developed colonies of Canada and America, the new economy of Cascadia is "highly export oriented, especially to the Pacific Rim" (Artibise, 2004, p. 245). This increasing participation in the global market has resulted in neoliberalizing attempts to become more competitive. From the introduction of NAFTA to the development of the "two-nation vacation" package (which privatizes and marketizes global environmental tourism across borders), business and industry leaders have begun to recognize ways in which they can profit from bioregional collaboration as well.

The most prominent manifestation of this neo-bioregional movement is the Cascadia Project, now split into the Discovery Institute and the Cascadia Center. Founded in 1993 by Charles Kelly, the organization hoped to unite the region in economic growth grounded in environmental limits. The end goal was to strengthen the bioregion's ability to compete globally – as the *The New Pacific*, the Cascadia Project's now-defunct magazine proclaims (Artibise, 2004):

The outside world cannot be wished away. If the future is not to be jeopardized by xenophobia, parochialism or just plain apathy, the New Pacific's leaders must seize and maintain the initiative. They must get to know one another, warts and

all. They must see beyond lines that divide and invest time and human capital in turning a vision into a reality. For the Pacific Northwest the power of one will be more than the sum of the parts. (p. 247).

Charles Kelly (1994, p. 6) states that the region must cooperate in order to “both compete in the international markets and harmonize the area’s sometimes conflicting and counter productive policies and regulations.” As it fits into Castree’s framework of neoliberalization, Kelly is pushing for the state to move towards deregulation and reregulation of policies infringing on trade. Sparke (2002) is highly critical of this interpretation of bioregionalism. He calls it:

... a kind of postmodern, post-Enlightenment return to the notion of living in nature but with an utterly utilitarian and derealized approach that ultimately just uses the notion of nature to metaphorise the capitalist market and thereby provide a geoeconomic rationale for living in it (that is, profiting and growing in it) sustainably. (p. 228)

Though this sort of language is what further drives a stake between the two sides of Cascadian discourse, ecological bioregionalists in the area have taken up Sparke’s critique with ease. One of Sparke’s most incisive observations regarding The Cascadia Project is that when *The New Pacific* offered a \$2,000 prize for creating a Cascadian flag (though David McCloskey had generated one a decade earlier), the winning design did not fly over a government office or the movement’s headquarters, but branded a regional stock fund managed by the Aquila investment firm.

This is not the only way that business-minded bioregionalists have emulated the identity-forming approach of ecological Cascadians. One of the most fascinating aspects of neo-bioregional rhetoric is the way that the poetics of foundational bioregionalists have been co-opted. For example, an article in the 1992 edition of *B.C. Business* summons the same sort of writing style as Thayer, Snyder, or McCloskey, but to a very different end: “Cascadia is neither a place nor a feeling. It’s a right of passage, a sign of maturity. To seek this braver, newer world, a British Columbian would look not on a map, not in his shriveled or competitive heart, but in his bank account – economic man’s most sacred place.”

The goals of the Cascadia Project (now called the Cascadia Center) include increased ease of border crossings, growing tourism, and more cohesive transportation routes between countries. The Discovery Institute, a conservative think tank in Vancouver, in tandem with its American partner The Cascadia Institute, is now responsible for advocating these priorities. The Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) has also had a role in shaping economic bioregionalism in Cascadia. PNWER was introduced to rationalize linkages between the economies of the region for greater global competitiveness. According to Alper, “there is a strong feeling within PNWER that the respective federal governments have not done enough for regional exports and, thus, the region needs to take action on its own behalf” (2004, p. 227).

The ideological and physical distance felt by Cascadian organizers and their respective federal governments is also one of the differences between the Great Lakes bioregion and that of Cascadia. In order to compare the influence of neoliberalizing ideologies on both bioregions, it’s important to acknowledge these differences. There is also comparatively little scope and depth to the institutionalization of governmental and private linkages across Cascadia. Alper posits that this is due to the “relatively late ... onset of cross-border activity by subnational entities in the

Pacific Northwest” (2004, p. 226). Finally, unlike in the Great Lakes bioregion, business and industry across the Pacific Northwest have long competed for capital gain – from natural resources like timber and salmon to port access and tourism (Artibise, 2004, p. 246). The ecological resources shared by Cascadia thus unite the region in its forthcoming environmental problems, but force it to compete in the same markets economically. This situation makes the pressure to organize bioregionally even more pressing, for high rates of competition within an ecosystem will likely result in rapid overconsumption and over-extraction.

Thus, the primary differences between the Great Lakes bioregion and the Cascadian bioregion can be summarized by their distance from the seat of federal governments (both in ideology and in location), the timing of their cross-border cooperation, and their economic competition. The way that these differences will play out in the formation of a Cascadian bioregional identity have yet to be fully studied, but I hypothesize that these characteristics make a bioregional argument founded in the environment rather than the economy likely to prevail in the Pacific Northwest. This is not to say that a bioregional identity successful in generating sustainable governance cannot also incorporate elements of economic priorities, but that the state of Cascadian rhetoric now is so dichotomous that one will seemingly have to “win out.”

In fact, part of the reason that bioregional governance and political organizing in Cascadia has not gained traction can be found in the deep roots of this divide. Because the vision of “Cascadia” has been interpreted *either* environmentally *or* economically, most bioregional progress has been based on the priorities of each sector. This division has slowed the progress of a comprehensive Cascadian identity from which to organize. Sparke (2002, p. 214) claims, “the move from the ecologies of bioregionalism to the economics of strategic regionalism established basal flux that has characterized all of the subsequent streams of Cascadian discourse.”

Economic Cascadians seek to create a bioregion consistent with Ohmae's notion of a borderless global economy. Ecologic or bioregional Cascadians seek to conserve place and community.

Alper quotes bioregionalist Patrick Mazza: "The issue comes down to focus and values. How do we envision our region, as a marketing district or a watershed; a marketplace or life place?"

(2004, p. 235).

All of the environmental issues listed in the introduction and explored by various authors have justified the call for bioregional interstate governance, and the Great Lakes Commission has demonstrated its plausibility. However, to avoid the shortcomings of the CGLR in accordance with the original tenets of bioregionalism, one must locate the roots of its framework. In order to avoid "neoliberalizing nature," the CascadiaNow movement must work to create a bioregional ecological identity. According to Artibise (2004, p. 258), due to the co-opting forces and disparate rhetoric, "many residents become confused about what Cascadia really is." My recommended communications approach to address this issue makes up the following chapter.

Chapter 3: A Communications Framework for CascadiaNow

I vividly remember the first time I saw the Cascadian flag. The black shadow of a Douglas fir stood in stark contrast to the green, blue, and white horizontal stripes of the tapestry's background as it hung on my friend's wall. In response to my question regarding the flag's origin, my friend replied: "It's Cascadia's flag. You should look into it, it's something you would be interested in." As soon as I noted the first flag, I began noticing them everywhere. As I walked the streets of Seattle, I saw them adorning light poles, decorating vehicle bumpers, and strung across bar windows. They came together to form vast tifos (choreographed displays of support from fans in a section of a sports stadium) at the Sounders games I attended. They even encircled the water bottles of my classmates in Los Angeles. Clearly there is momentum behind this movement, and as the creator and distributor of the flags and other Cascadia merchandise, CascadiaNow is the generating force.



Figure 3. Flag of Cascadia. 2006. Designed by Alexander Baretich [CC-BY-SA-3.0] accessed via Wikimedia Commons from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Cascadia.svg

3.1 CascadiaNow – Shaping the Movement

According to their website, CascadiaNow is “cultivating a resilient and inclusive Pacific Northwest community” (CascadiaNow, 2015). Its organizers envision “a unified Pacific Northwest with a recognizable culture of bioregional sustainability” (CascadiaNow, 2015). Founded in 2005, it operates as a Washington state non-profit serving to educate the public about bioregionalism in the Pacific Northwest while providing support for others to do the same. The top five cities of support based on web users and organizers are Portland, OR; Seattle, WA; Vancouver, BC; Eugene, OR; and Bellingham, WA.

CascadiaNow has links to projects in four different categories: arts and culture, sustainable communities, dynamic and transparent governance, and regional association. It is a telling sign of rapid and unexpected growth of the organization that none of these webpages are fully detailed – they all indicate that more information will be coming soon. Regardless, these categories provide an interesting first look into the priorities of this blossoming organization. Regional association, the only category specifically devoted to economic growth, includes projects such as “Made in Cascadia” stickers, and the introduction of a currency that can only be used within the bioregion. Both of these projects emphasize the importance of strengthening the economy *within* Cascadian borders. This presents an important contrast with the economic priorities of the CGLR, where economic gain is presented as a method to be better able to compete in the global market.

CascadiaNow closes every page on its website with the footer “This is Cascadia. We are Cascadian. Join Us.” In this way, CasadiaNow connects “Cascadia” (the space) with “being Cascadian” (the identity). The two are tightly intertwined in the CascadiaNow rhetoric, and stewardship of the space and culture is deemed necessary in order to identify as Cascadian. Because the organization is member-guided, there is a strong sense of investment and collaboration within the social media platforms that CascadiaNow utilizes. Requests for feedback, content, and insight from visitors to the website is almost overwhelming, and there are links on the main taskbar to share “A Story, An Idea, or A Skill.” In this way, CascadiaNow fosters a sense of genuine community between members, and provides for them the opportunity to create what it means to be “of Cascadia” in real time as the movement grows in prominence.

The growth of the movement has indeed been impressive. In its “State of Cascadia” report for 2015, CascadiaNow reports the following data:

Number of FB Supporters January 1, 2014: 1740

Number of FB Supporters January 1, 2015: 8473

Free stickers sent out since June 2014: 100,000+

Largest media outlets featuring CascadiaNow in 2014: *Canadian Broadcasting Company, Vice, National Journal, Time Magazines, KUOW, Swiss Public Broadcasting, National Public Radio, KUOW, Business Insider, Slate, USA Today*

Total #Cascadia hashtags on Instagram: 35,442

Average daily views on the Cascadia Wikipedia Page: 508

Average daily unique views on the /r/Cascadia subreddit: 392

Average daily unique views on CascadiaNow website: 643

New members flock to the organization seeking a variety of resources or support. A Vice article published in 2014 interviewed attendees of Rainingman – a music, arts, and skillsharing festival hosted by CascadiaNow in Washington – in an attempt to document some of these (Sears, 2014). The reporter, Kelton Sears, asked attendees why they identify as “Cascadian.” Founder of CascadiaNow, Brandon Letsinger, replied that part of why CascadiaNow attempts to establish a regional identity is “so that we can stop identifying as American. It’s about reframing things so that ... you can start thinking about what living in *this place* means, both as a cultural identity, socially, and, in the end, politically.” Worth noting is both his effort to distinguish Cascadia as “not-America” and his linear understanding of the order in which the movement will move: social to political. While I disagree with the rhetoric of his first point, I especially support his second.

Lenee Reid, a spiritualist and poet, is especially compelled by the connection that Cascadia possesses with its natural environment along with its open-mindedness. She says that the flag, to her, represents “all the different ideas and cultures coming together, connecting with the Earth and looking to sustain each other” (Sears, 2014). Illona Trogub, a farmer and chef who wrote her thesis at Portland State on bioregionalism, has a unique perspective on Cascadia as an immigrant from the former USSR. When she arrived in America, she found herself overwhelmed by the vastness of the land and the diversity of cultures that occupied it. She claims:

I had to severely question whether or not it's worth it to identify as this giant structure... you know, as American. I'd much prefer to identify with the place where I inhabit, the place I want to learn and know. When I say, 'I'm Cascadian,' it means the Pacific Northwest is the place I want to know deeply, and that has called me home to it. (Sears, 2014).

Again, there is a defiantly “not-American” aspect to a Cascadian identity. One identifies with Cascadia *against* another potential homeland.

While this posture is valid as a catalyst for interest in Cascadia, I believe that it will hinder the movement as a whole. Adopting a Cascadian mentality should not mean abandoning or rejecting other spaces or peoples from one's network of compassion, but strengthening one's connection with and knowledge of a particular space – creating an ecological identity. In order for CascadiaNow to emerge as the dominant voice of bioregionalism over neoliberal interpretations, it must utilize positive rhetoric rather than negative. The communication approach that I recommend takes into account the linguistic and communication strategies of *condensation symbols* and the *triple appeal principle*. In the rest of this chapter, I will explain how this communication strategy harnesses the social momentum that CascadiaNow has begun to garner and converts it into an ecological identity and force for political change.

3.2 Defining Ecological Identity and its Importance for Political Action

Possessing an ecological identity entails accepting one's natural environment as an object of identification. Mitchell Thomashow, in his 1995 book *Ecological Identity: Becoming a Reflective Environmentalist*, elaborates: “ecological identity refers to all the different ways people construe themselves in relationship to the earth as manifested in personality, values, actions, and sense of self” (p. 3). The benefits of creating a Cascadian ecological identity in the

Pacific Northwest are twofold. Most obviously, the formation of an ecological identity is the most logical identity-formation route for a bioregional movement to pursue. After all, it is their distinctive environment that unites the residents of Cascadia, much more strongly and stably than any economy or any single demographic.

Additionally, formation of an ecological identity results in higher levels of civic engagement (Gooch, 2002; Thomashow, 1995). A vocal and united set of constituents transcending arbitrary political borders and invested in environmental sustainability will be the strongest asset in moving forward an argument for bioregional scale governance. A bioregional identity must predate regulation so as to ensure that the new political structure honors the integrity of the unifying ecosystem over the pursuit of global recognition. The original tenets of bioregionalism demand this for the continued health of the life-place.

There are several approaches to building an ecological identity; environmentalists, psychologists, and sociologists disagree on the most appropriate method. Environmentalist Mitchell Thomashow (1995, p. 19) contends that personal environmental education (including revisiting childhood memories and experiencing disturbed wilderness) is the best way to invoke this new identity. Awakening an ecological consciousness is predicated on the shift to ecological systems thinking, which Thomashow defines as “a high level of ecological understanding and awareness and the sense of self as part of a larger system.” He claims that he has observed two processes of unfolding in his students undergoing this education:

Widening the circles of identification proceeds as a form of exfoliation, a peeling away of layers, a breaking of perceptual boundaries, allowing for more expansive circles of awareness... as you widen the circles of identification and realize that your sense of self includes the regional watershed, and you internalize threats to

water quality as you never have before, do you become more involved in politics or talk about your concerns with family and friends? (p. 23)

Simply becoming aware of one's role in a larger system expands one's sense of place and forces one to regard their personal involvement and investment at a different scale.

Amin (2004) believes that a large reason for the need to "re-learn" our place in our ecosystem has to do with globalization. I use the phrase re-learn, because ecological identity on the whole used to be necessary for human survival, whereas globalization has allowed us to ignore ecological limits and restraints by exploiting resources from throughout the planet. Bioregionalism has strong roots in indigenous knowledge: scholars are forthright about the fact that bioregionalism is a mentality that was partially lost or destroyed by Western colonization, not one that was invented. However, globalization and the everyday transnational flow of ideas, information, knowledge, money, people, and cultural influences create a sense of dislocation for many living in this world. What was lost can be referred to as a "sense of place." Carr (2002, quoted in Gooch, 2002, p. 28) defines a sense of place as "oneness or connection with the environment and with the people and local organizations who inhabit those places." According to Carr, this sense of place must be cultivated over time, and its precise manifestation is constantly in flux. Carr (2002, p. 28) also emphasizes the importance of group collaboration in developing this sense of place: "it has to be built in the minds of the beholders and the dwellers in a particular place."

Carr is not the only one who stresses the weight of community and communication in creating a sense of place. In fact, in their critique of the modern discourse of place-identity, Dixon and Durrheim (2000, p. 32) cite the focus on the individual as a primary shortcoming. They propose that research should shift to the study of ecological identity created through

discourse. They claim that the advantage of this model over, say, Thomashaw's individual reflection and education approach, is that it acknowledges the obviously social aspects of place identification. In their view, not only does this emphasize the importance of significant communal spaces, "it also highlights the collective practices through which specific place identities are formed, reproduced, and modified" (Dixon and Durrheim, 2000, p. 32).

Thomashaw (1995, p. 63) does recognize that ecological identity emerges "not only through your identification with nature but with your understanding of community health and wellbeing." He acknowledges the importance of a comprehensive end-product in terms of identity, but feels that the journey to achieve that world-view is primarily a solo one.

I side with Dixon and Durrheim on this particular point – while Thomashaw's educational and introspective methodology is obviously important to creating an ecological identity, the real strength of a bioregional movement will come from the stories exchanged by members just beginning to discover their connection with the land. In the words of Durrheim and Dixon (2000, p. 32), "a discursive approach might begin by relocating place-identity, by removing it from the vault of the mind and returning it to the flux of human dialogue." A collaborative and collective ecological identity will both be more efficient and more cohesive as the bioregional movement gains momentum.

Ecological identity has become an increasingly relevant and researched topic in recent years, as literature on environmental dispute mediation has identified the importance of *framing* as a means to form identity. Gray's (1997) model of identity lists five types of frames that can be utilized to structure identity-formation: societal (one's identity at large, or in one's community), ethnic (affiliation with a racial or cultural group), place-based, institutional obligation (alignment with an organization), and interest-driven (alignment with one's own needs). In a case study

prepared by Samuelson et. al. (2004) regarding water management near San Antonio, most participants involved in the dispute referenced institutional and interest-based identification frames, with some recognition of place-based values. However, these identity frames shifted over time, depending on the progress of the conflict. Concluding their study, the authors (Samuelson et. al. 2004, p. 284) claim that one way to avoid environmental disputes moving forward is to “create a ‘safe’ environment that encourages stakeholders to ‘reframe’ the situation in terms of a superordinate group identity that rises above the respective individual identities of the parties.” This conclusion bears great consequence for the exciting possibilities of a unified place-based group identity in Cascadia.

Fostering a sense of place is just the beginning of the journey for burgeoning bioregional residents. Carr (2002), Milbrath (1989) and Gooch (2002) have all observed that a sense of local place tends to organically lead to a broader interest in and idea of bioregionalism. Beyond this, Thomashaw (1996, p. 65) has observed that even the beginnings of an ecological identity can shape a new sense of citizenship, based in what he terms “the commons.” Essentially, the commons can be described as the ecological home of any particular group of residents. Similarly to Snyder (1990), Thomashaw does not herald the commons with dogmatic potential for tragedy. Instead, he puts trust in the corollary of the commons: the community. He views the commons as ecological (it is literally made up of the ecosystem), political (it’s controlled by collective decision making), psychological (comprehending and acknowledging its existence is necessary), and ethical (“one must take responsibility for it”). Recognizing the existence of the commons via an ecological consciousness, a newfound sense of place, or a conversation with neighbors is imperative to the momentum of developing ecological identity as a means toward stewardship and citizenship.

As this identity momentum continues, it will ideally become rooted in democratic action. In Cascadia, this step will be especially crucial because the end goal is bioregional governance. Kemmis (1992) argues that places must play a role in “the revival of citizenship.” Before people can become citizens, they must see themselves as neighbors – they have to care about the state of life across an entire bioregion before they feel compelled to vote in their regard. Thomashaw (1995) argues that a collective interest and investment in a place results in neighborly affection, and that shared environmental interest is the foundation for true citizenship.

Beyond Thomashaw’s observations, there have been empirical studies that have attempted to qualify reasons for civic engagement. In a study overseen by Gooch (2002), a correlation was discovered between the strong identification that a subject felt for a location, and the location where volunteering took place. This “sense of place” could be cultivated or acquired over time through collective experiences of shared value systems and interests. She concludes, “both a ‘sense of place’ and the development of an ecological identity can be a strong motivator for further volunteering” (Gooch, 2002, p. 1). In a compromise between the ideas of Dixon and Durrheim (2000) and Thomashaw (1995), Gooch (2002, p. 8) believes that identity can be built over time through a combination of local knowledge, story-telling, reflection, and imagination.

Samuelson et. al. (2006) has also claimed that a group identity is one of the best ways to facilitate the conversion of knowledge into action – one of the most frustrating obstacles faced by environmental activists. Action is inspired when someone’s identity is at risk: for example, one might get involved in the debate regarding a new land use bill *because of one’s identity* as an environmentalist or a logger. Knowledge informs how one forms an identity, and one’s identity frames one’s decision to take action. A place-based ecological identity would encourage action *as a Cascadian*.

As far as CascadiaNow is concerned, the creation of an ecological identity is the next step for the bioregional movement. With environmental problems mounting, residents spanning as far south as Oregon must swiftly recognize their relationship with residents of northern British Columbia as neighbors (and vice versa) before they can understand the importance of bioregional management.

3.3 Building Blocks for Creating an Ecological Identity

In order to guide the rescaling of environmental governance, the work of CascadiaNow is twofold: it must shape what it means to be “Cascadian” in a way that expands residents’ sense of “home,” and it must establish itself as a positive force for local connection rather than a globally competitive one. The two tenets that I use to guide my framework recommendations are the triple appeal principle, developed by Harold Lasswell in 1935 to link psychoanalysis with communication appeals, and the linguistic theory of condensation symbols as it applies to political discourse. These are not by any means the only methods by which CascadiaNow might go about creating a Cascadian ecological identity, but they offer a strong jumping-off point for the movement.

Condensation Symbols

Doris Graber coined the term “condensation symbol” in 1976 to refer to words or phrases that arouse strong emotions in a listener based on their basic values (Graber, 1976). The symbols may hold more or less sway when used in different groups of people, may provoke totally different feelings from varied audiences, and may change over time. According to Graber, these symbols are the most “potent, versatile, and effective tools available to politicians for swaying mass publics” (Graber, 1976). For the purpose of CascadiaNow, the term “Cascadia” must first

be sculpted into an appropriate condensation symbol before it can be utilized – however, once poised, “Cascadia” can act as a powerful symbol in shaping political discourse.

In her summary of Graber’s work, J. Hix (2002) lists three main characteristics of condensation symbols: 1) they contain rich and vivid qualities based on direct or indirect experiences, 2) they conjure emotion, and 3) they supply instant categorizations and evaluations (e.g. positive or negative). In Graber’s conception, there are certain political benefits to condensation symbols that make them exceptionally beneficial for communications strategies. They efficiently pack large amounts of meaning and significance into a few scant words (or one, in the case of Cascadia), and they create a phrase behind which people can rally and support.

Kaufner and Carley (1993) usefully compiled a matrix in which certain words can be evaluated as condensation symbols (or on their way to becoming such). In their definition, a condensation symbol “compresses or condenses a network of historical meaning” (Kaufner and Carley, 1990, p. 202). They measure the strength of these condensation symbols according to

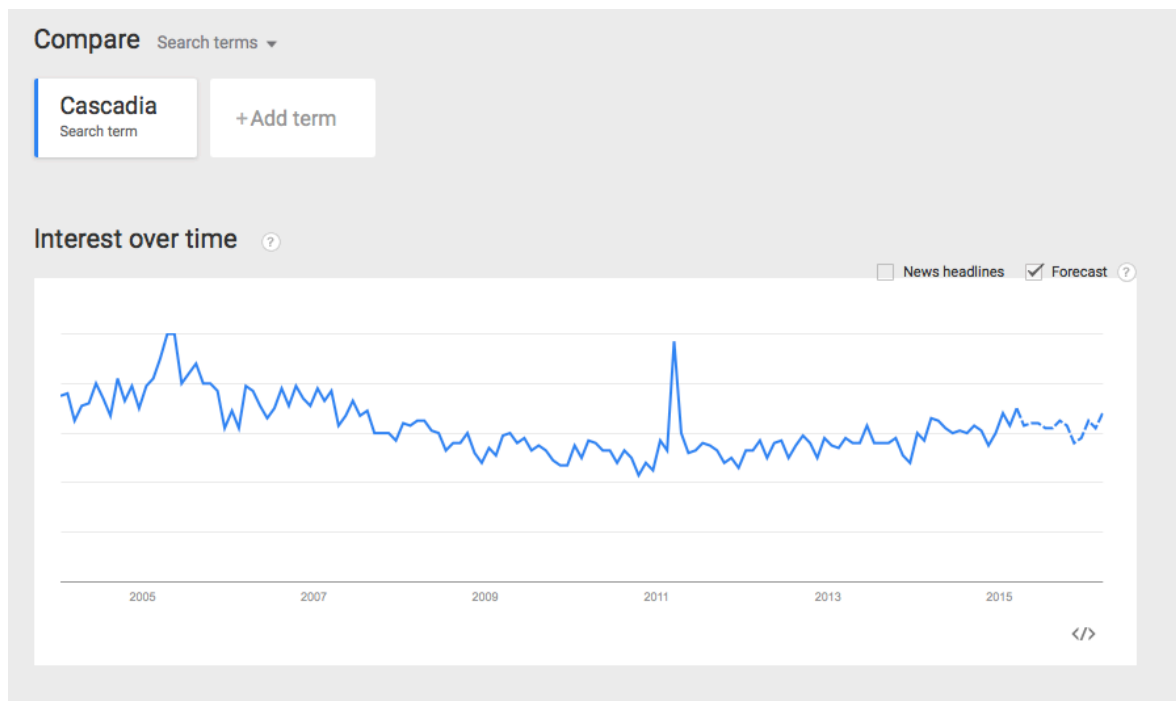
Category	Conductivity	Density	Consensus	three variables: situational
Buzzwords	High	Low	Low	conductivity (how well a
Pregnant Place-Holders	High	High	Low	linguistic concept elaborates and
Emblems	High	Low	High	is elaborated by other concepts
Standard Symbols	High	High	High	in a particular context),
Allusions	Low	High	Low	situational density (the frequency
Stereotypes	Low	High	High	of the concept as it is used in
Ordinary Words	Low	Low	Low	relation to others within a
Factoids	Low	Low	High	particular context), and situational consensus (the extent to which the concept is elaborated in

Figure 4. Kaufner and Carley, 1993. *Matrix of Impact-Laden Terms.*

particular context), and situational consensus (the extent to which the concept is elaborated in similar ways in a particular context). According to this matrix (Figure 4) Cascadia currently falls

short of the condensation symbol status, and instead can be considered a pregnant place-holder: it must strengthen its consensus as a term before taking its place as a standard symbol to be used in political discourse. CascadiaNow may choose any number of approaches to achieve this end.

Pregnant place-holders generally name concepts that have been flushed out as theories, but have been elaborated in contradictory ways without losing their conductivity or density in the discourse. In other words, they “name overarching handles for hot clusters of ideas whose details have yet to be ironed out or agreed upon” (Kaufner and Carley, 1993, p. 207). According to this definition, Cascadia makes a perfect example of a pregnant place-holder. “Cascadia” is used to elaborate and can be elaborated upon by a vast array of “hot” concepts such as bioregionalism, the Pacific Northwest, regional planning, regionalism, cross-border organizing, international trade, sustainability, microbrewing, Major League Soccer, bordering, secession, identity formation, and many others.



The

Figure 5. Frequency of “Cascadia” Google Searches Per Month. Generated by author, 2015 via Google Trends (www.google.com/trends).

density of the term can be measured many ways – above is a graph demonstrating the consistent interest in Cascadia as measured by Google searches since 2005 (Figure 5). The term obviously possesses density within Pacific Northwest audiences, since a majority of the searches originated in Washington or Oregon. Consistent with Kaufner and Carley’s evaluation of a pregnant placeholder, “Cascadia” demonstrates lasting power in the interest of the general public over the last ten years (and is only projected to increase in the next two).

Academic interest in Cascadia has dramatically grown since David McCloskey first applied the term to bioregional use in the 1970s. The results from Google Books Ngram Viewer, which scans through a random assortment of one million books written in English and graphs the frequency of requested words, can be found in Figure 6. In 2008, (the most recent year that Ngrams has the capability to search), the term “Cascadia” appears in literature six times as frequently as 1965, and twice as frequently as 1988.



Figure 6. Frequency of “Cascadia” in English One Million. Generated by author, 2015 via Google Ngrams (<https://books.google.com/ngrams>).

Cascadia clearly has the situational density and conductivity to become a symbol “essential for the growth of a common culture through language” (Kaufner and Carley, 1993, p. 209). What it is missing is consensus. As referenced in earlier sections of this thesis, there is a schism in Cascadian thought between ecologically minded bioregionalists and trade-oriented neoliberals. These two predominant interpretations pull at the entity that is “Cascadia,” weakening its potential as a condensation symbol and leaving it firmly in the state of a pregnant place-holder. When someone says that they are “Cascadian,” what does that mean? The more assertively that question can be answered, the stronger the term will become politically, followed by its increasing the viability of bioregional environmental governance.

The best way for CascadiaNow and other bioregional activists to establish Cascadia as a condensation symbol and reclaim the word from neoliberalizing forces is to cut all references to the “global.” While economic justifications for bioregionalism will likely still predominate in discussions surrounding the movement, it is only within the framework of global competition that these priorities become problematic. What it means to be Cascadian must be placed, ecologically, in a space within which people are firmly connected. When “being Cascadian” means competing globally, that sense of place is partially lost in a tumble of other spaces and priorities. Thus, language used to advocate for the bioregion must be based solely within its borders. This shift in communication will clear up the consensus issue in Cascadian discourse and establish Cascadia as a viable condensation symbol behind which citizens can join together. From this point, a convincing case for bioregional governance can be clearly and convincingly articulated.

Once Cascadia is understood not only as a place but also as a symbol, CascadiaNow must convincingly argue that residents of Washington, Oregon, British Columbia, and other

populations *should* shift their understanding of identity to the bioregional scale, thereby creating an ecological identity. The triple appeal principle, explored below, is a useful tool for CascadiaNow to consider in accomplishing this goal.

Triple Appeal Principle

Harold Lasswell posited the triple appeal principle in 1932 in an effort to apply recent psychoanalytic research to political communication. Inspired by Freud's research into the id, ego, and superego as a tripartite division of the self, Lasswell claims that "in so far as politics is the science and the art of management, politics must direct its means to the three levels of personality structure" (Lasswell, 1932, p. 525). The id, according to Freudian analysis, is the subconscious impulse driving the self – it is generally associated with heightened raw emotions such as anger, pride, lust, affection, jealousy, and competition. The ego refers to the rational, calculating, aspect of self – the drive towards utilitarianism. The superego represents the conscientious self, the self that values rectitude and integrity beyond personal gain.

Lasswell claims that institutions must appeal, at some level, to its audience's impulse (id), reason (ego), or conscience (superego) in any attempt to garner support. With this method, the institution can strategically appeal to certain combinations of aspects of self in order to achieve certain ends. Lasswell further delineates these classifications, claiming that generally economic, political, scientific, and technological appeals cater to the reason (ego) of the audience, legal and religious imperatives trigger the conscience (superego), and aesthetics speak to the impulse (id) of the intended parties.

Though Lasswell did not pursue the tripartite principle further, more recent scholars have taken up his research for further application. Ascher (2009) notes the importance of id and

superego appeals in broadening identifications – a key component of shaping Cascadia into a potent symbol. However, Ascher is careful to note that the ways in which a communicator appeals to these two characteristics are very different. If appealing to the id, one might use “us against them” rhetoric (refer to the non-American-identifying Cascadians in Sears, 2014). Ascher also cites research from Loewenstein and Angner (2003, p. 371) that, although id-centric communication styles are more likely to create immediate change that may be necessary for the beginning of a movement, the aspects that appeal to the id are likely to fade over long periods of time. However, of special note to the case of Cascadia, Ascher states that “eliciting the commitment to long-term goals that are not in the personal interest of the individual may require id-based emotionality as well as superego appeals” (p. 207).

This formation works very well in our case study of Cascadia. The id can be driven by love and aesthetic attachment, as well as a sense of pride. These passions are clearly referenced in the interviews with Cascadian activists – id appeals are particularly effective for stirring nationalistic types of devotion. The natural beauty of Cascadia makes it easy to arouse these feelings in residents and unite them under a common flag. The superego tends to suit environmental appeals, for they generally require some sort of sacrifice in short-term economic growth or development in order to succeed. In the case of Cascadia, a shift to bioregional focus inherently means a shift away from global prominence – something necessary to ensure the continued health of the bioregion. Appealing to residents’ sense of conscience, either for future generations or for the general wellbeing of an ecosystem much larger than their own backyard, is the most effective way to incentivize this shift.

The reason that ego appeals may be particularly ill suited for Cascadian activists is that appeals to rationality tend to take the form of currency. For example, one might say that a

commitment to Cascadian identity will strengthen relationships between the states and provinces, resulting in an economy-boosting increase in regional tourism. One might also examine the amount of state dollars spent on campaigning for and implementing the new composting law in Seattle, combined with the other, less stringent, rules passed in Portland and Vancouver in recent years. How much money could have been saved with an efficient bioregional approach to solid waste management, rather than three separate redundant ones?

The risk in this trend towards valuing identity formation is, first, that it will detract from the strength of the other two appeals. People are unlikely to form an impassioned identity based on rational economic sense. Pride and awe-inspiring beauty, coupled with a heroic sense of sacrifice for the stewardship of this natural landscape, will make a much more compelling argument for a strong connection to Cascadia. Second, incentivizing action only when justified by economics tends towards neoliberalizing nature. There are some things that are simply impossible to fully value in our current market system that should regardless be preserved for the overall lasting health of the ecosystem. Thus, activists should be wary of using ego appeals in advocating for Cascadian identity. CascadiaNow will benefit from this combination of the id and superego appeals in order to convince residents to identify as Cascadian – a necessary step before bioregional governance can succeed.

The triple appeals principle and the condensation symbol framework are two of many communications tools that should shape the way that organizers speak about Cascadia. The goal, ultimately, is to create the optimal ecological identity in the bioregion. A shift away from the “global” will establish Cascadia as a condensation symbol behind which a movement can rally, and combined appeals to the id and superego of residents will result in long-lasting commitment. From this foundation, bioregional governance based in bioregional values can flourish.

Conclusion: A Call to Action

As many have acknowledged and published before me, Cascadia will be confronting a number of critical environmental concerns in the upcoming years, many of which will be exacerbated by the millions of new residents flowing into the region. Confronting these problems is necessary at a bioregional level due to the interconnected ecological nature of the region.

Foremost among these concerns is water. Water flows constantly through the area, as do problems associated with this resource, such as pollution and scarcity. Indeed, in a region whose identity is largely defined by its rainfall, water is an intrinsically precious commodity. Other immediate concerns include the fate of local plants and wildlife, issues surrounding solid and chemical waste, and the ways that climate change will shape the future of the region.

Endangered and invasive flora and fauna are unaware of political boundaries, preferring habitat that is familiar to them (in other words, the bioregion). This unavoidable reality unfortunately complicates the solution-generating process for those attempting to maintain biodiversity. As for solid waste, the question of how to keep up with storing and processing the massive scale of waste being produced across the region doesn't produce an immediate answer. Trash from Seattle already must be shipped all the way to Oregon, and other viable landfills are even further away. Oil spills and nuclear leakage also generate the need for cross-border communication and regulation, as they have the potential to transcend borders even more easily than animals might. Finally, as climate change continues to take effect, the bioregion will be facing many of the same problems: rising ocean levels, less hydroelectricity, more unpredictable weather events, and decreased biodiversity. Given all this, the creation of a bioregional environmental agency is undoubtedly essential for increasing communication and efficiency

within the bioregion, while effectively managing those problems that rise above traditional political borders.

Political, economic, and ecologic bioregional autonomy is not an entirely new or unprecedented idea. Throughout a vast majority of human history, knowledge of and connection with the ecosystem was imperative for survival. Ecological literacy was necessary for understanding when certain foods would become available, what water was safe to drink, and how certain weather events would affect the entire ecosystem. This holistic knowledge, still alive in some indigenous communities of today, intrinsically carries with it a sense of stewardship. Knowing your life-place includes taking responsibility for it.

The introduction of formal political borders altered the way that colonizing humans consider and actuate land ownership. As technology and mobility have advanced, the global flow of ideas, goods, and people has increased in density and speed. Many have made sweeping claims of the emergence of “global citizens” and “citizens of the world.” But how can one belong to the entire world? We have seen in the response to climate change and other worldwide issues that global awareness and compassion is difficult to evoke from residents. Building ties with the entire world involves a lessening ability to truly *connect* through those ties, as well as a lessening ability to understand one’s own life-place.

Now, at a time when traditional borders in some areas of the world are decreasing in strength, a new sort of “reterritorialization” has emerged, manifesting itself in many new forms of identification. Local movements, regional movements, and supranational movements – like CascadiaNow – have fallen in line and taken shape as people try to glean some sense of belonging and community. In tandem, government agencies, private players, and non-profit organizations like the GLC and CGLR have struggled to establish the correct scale at which to

address developing environmental challenges. The literature emerging contains a very persuasive argument for the bioregional scale – with the exception of truly global problems such as climate change’s causative factors and oceanic or atmospheric pollution. Most other environmental problems tend to stay within the land and life forms of the watershed and greater ecosystem affected. However, pre-existing political borders have no regard for these watersheds, which introduces a management problem. How should nations address the water pollution of a river dividing them?

The answer to questions such as these falls on the shoulders of those organizations in charge of bioregional environmental management. As my case study of the Great Lakes Commission demonstrates, cross-border and multi-party governance is a viable option for successful collaboration. Simply gathering bioregional stakeholders to discuss environmental problems can be incredibly constructive: providing this group with the political power to act in the best interest of the entire area ensures the continued holistic health of the ecosystem. However, as discussed in my case study of the Council of the Great Lakes Region, the rhetoric used in forming this bioregional organization is crucial in its success. The Council of the Great Lakes Region provides an alternative look at the ways that bioregional institutions can be enacted in the pursuit of bioregional health.

The difference is simple: though both organizations are committed to the Great Lakes bioregion, the Great Lakes Commission prioritizes the health of the environment for its own sake, while the Council of the Great Lakes Region recognizes the ecosystem only as a resource for the economic strength of the bioregion. Neoliberalization poses a great risk to bioregional movements and has the potential to derail objectives and dilute organization within the construction of identity.

In the Pacific Northwest, the neoliberalization of bioregionalism began only years after David McCloskey coined the term “Cascadia.” Many free-trade oriented thinkers have argued for less trade barriers between America and Canada under the guise of bioregionalism. The end goal for these business-oriented bioregionalists is to guide the region into a more competitive place in the global market. The environment simply becomes a cog in accomplishing this end. Despite the fundamentally different visions possessed by the two groups advocating for “Cascadia,” many residents confuse their goals and priorities, creating a symbol too convoluted for most to fully support.

Thus, a crucial next step in bioregional organizing is the formation of a clear Cascadian identity. Though Cascadian residents are united by a few characteristics – a commitment to the environment, a love of microbrewing, and a general eschewing of national identities – there is still a fundamental lack of understanding in ecological ties shared across borders. It is therefore crucial to shape an ecological identity in Cascadia – a connection with and knowledge of the shape and scope of residents’ natural bioregion. An ecological identity is the best way to overcome the distinctions and competition felt between and amongst various communities in the bioregion. Ecological identity also feeds naturally into ecological citizenship, for recognizing your place in a larger ecosystem inherently implies taking a responsibility for it in its entirety. Only through the possession of an ecological identity could a resident of Vancouver get involved in water issues that would directly affect residents in Oregon – after all, they’re neighbors with a common watershed.

CascadiaNow, Cascadia’s largest social movement, will most likely be responsible for shaping this ecological identity in the coming years. Its influence in the bioregion has grown immensely in the last ten years and shows clear signs of continuing. The way that they shape the

term “Cascadia” and the structure of their appeals to citizenship will dramatically affect their success in creating an ecological identity. The stronger the ecological identity they create, the more viable bioregional governance will become.

The environmental problems facing Cascadia are imminent: millions of residents are pouring into the metropolitan centers as the effects of climate change begin to exacerbate the most serious water, air, and biodiversity issues facing the bioregion. Time is not on the side of organizers. However, if harnessed correctly, this sense of urgency can work to unite the bioregion even more robustly. Planners from across the border can learn from each other and glean inspiration from each other. Residents on either side and in either state can come together in defense of the resources that make their bioregion so unique. An ecological identity, based on what Gary Snyder has termed an “old-new environmentalism,” does not form overnight – but if Cascadia as a concept is implemented effectively, residents should be able to rally around this common cause when the need is greatest.

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