

BIOREGIONALISM

Two basic meanings

- **SCIENTIFIC:** biogeography. How is nature different in different areas, and how does that impact what we should do?
- **CULTURAL:** an ecosocial movement. How should we conceive of nature and relate to it?

Basic insights

- “The world is made of places.” (Gary Snyder)
- “You are a part of a part and the whole is made of parts, each of which is whole. You start with the part you are whole in.” (Gary Snyder)
- “Think little.” (Wendell Berry)

Terms in bioregionalism

- Bioregion (ecoregion)
- Watershed
- Natural communities
- Place
- Identification
- Reinhabitation
- Scale
- Bioregional/watershed consciousness

Definitions of “Bioregion”

“A bioregion is defined in terms of the unique overall pattern of natural characteristics that are found in a specific place. The main features are generally found throughout a continuous geographic terrain and include a particular climate, local aspects of seasons, landforms, watersheds, soils, and native plants and animals.” (Peter Berg)

“A bioregion can be determined initially by use of climatology, physiography, animal and plant geography, natural history and other descriptive natural sciences. The final boundaries of a bioregion, however, are best described by the people who have lived within it, through human recognition of the realities of living-in-place.” (Peter Berg & Raymond Dasmann)

“People are also counted as an integral aspect of a place’s life, as can be seen in the ecologically adaptive cultures of early inhabitants, and in the activities of present day reinhabitants who attempt to harmonize in a sustainable way with the place where they live.” (Peter Berg)

“A bioregion refers both to geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness -- to a place and the ideas that have developed about how to live in that place.” (Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann)

Aspects of bioregionalism

- BIOGEOGRAPHIC: geology, geography, biology
- RESOURCE USE: agriculture, resource management, technology
- SOCIAL: culture, social system, politics, economics
- PHILOSOPHICAL: conceptions of nature, spiritual awareness,

Scientific

- What is the geology and geological history of this region?
- What is the physical geography of this region: topography, soils, water?
- What is the climate of this region and how does that impact what lives here?
- What are the natural flora and fauna of this region, and what is their phenology?
- What grows well here, and what are the limits?

Resource management

- What kind of agriculture should we have in this region?
- How should natural resources be managed? Should we reconceive the ideas of “natural resources” and “manage”?
- What kind of technology should we have in this region?

Social

- What kind of social system and social structure should we have in this region?
- What kind of political system should we have in this area?
- What kind of economic system should we have in this area?

Humanitistic

- How should we conceive of nature and our relationship to it?
- What is the ethical, spiritual, and aesthetic value of nature?
- What is our ethical responsibility to nature and social responsibility to other people?
- What are the ways of knowing nature – from science to mysticism?
- How should we live in this region, as individuals and as a society?

Bioregional knowledge 1

SCIENTIFIC (combined with other aspects)

- **Geology**: includes sense of deep time
- **Geography**: includes the feeling of the place
- **Biology**: includes native flora and fauna and a sense of intimacy with them as fellow members of a community

HUMAN ECOLOGY

- Indigenous peoples: culture and use of land
- Euro-American history and use of land
- Current society and politics
- Our use of water, electricity, garbage, etc.

HUMANITIES

- Ethical sense of responsibility as a “plain citizen of the land community.”
- Spiritual sense of identification with the land.
- Aesthetic sense of the special beauty of this region.

Bioregional movement: two dimensions

- **Personal dimension.** How should we as individuals live in this bioregion? What will make my life more bioregional? What is required?
- **Community dimension.** What social, political, and economic structures should we develop to be in harmony with this bioregion?

Bioregional movement: two levels

- **Short-term reform movement.** What can and should we do now to live more bioregionally?
- **Long-term, radical, “utopian” movement.** What is the ideal way of living here with nature and with other people?

Reform bioregionalism

- Buying local & knowing who sells what
- Forming alternative social/economic structures: co-ops, CSA’s, etc.
- Building real neighborhoods
- Forming land trusts
- Restoration ecology
- Use natural resources as sustainably as possible.
- Activism in local politics.

Utopian bioregionalism

- Learn about alternative social and political systems, especially anarchistic and communalistic.
- Learn radical political and social philosophy.
- Support radical politics that are in line with bioregionalism.
- Form alternative communities.

Bioregionalism and Environmental Studies

- **Conservation biology**
- **Resource management**
- **Land use planning**
- **Environmental policy and politics**
 - connecting politics of bioregional realities (100th meridian; watershed policies)
 - radical politics
- **Environmental economics**
 - sustainable local economies
 - radical economic alternatives
- **Environmental values**
 - philosophy, ethics, religion
 - nature writing