

Amble Towards Continent Congress

The studiously unknown continent of North Amerigo Vespucci.

European explorers only found what they already understood. Columbus found India. Never quite straightened out, he discovered New Spain.

The continent was millions of years old and alive with unique wrinkles but to the edge-of-the-Earth sailors from the Old World it was mostly strange and they remained strangers to it. Somehow past their limit. Unfamiliar coasts jutted out blankly until they became labeled as extensions of Europe. Maryland (for Queen Mary), New Jersey, New England, Maine (for a section of northern France).

It wasn't a trackless wilderness to "Indian" inhabitants. Carved conch shells were traded up from where the Mississippi ends to near the Great Lakes. Abalone shells from the Pacific were brought over mountain ranges to the Great Basin deserts. Tribes on both coasts sent canoes up and down the continental edges. Caribbean Islanders knew there were cities of gold a thousand miles across the gulf. They were neither ignorant of the continent nor savage towards it.

Europeans came as invaders clearing terrain for an occupation civilization. After Cortez took the gold from a city admittedly more beautiful, with taller buildings and cleaner streets than any he had

seen in Europe, his followers burned the source texts of the intricate culture which had built it.

Colonists were coming. Miles Standish would flounder ashore, nearly drowning in full armor and sword, to steal the first Pilgrim corn from a spirit-offering left in the Cape Cod woods. The Mayflower would have to abandon its first landfall and sail on another hundred miles to Plymouth Rock to avoid spears and arrows provoked by that theft.

Colonies took shape on a gameboard of New Europe with boundaries drawn up in London, Paris, Madrid, and Amsterdam. Pieces changed hands. Neieu Amsterdam for the Dutch became New York for the English. King Georgia was winning.

Empires before this had established a classic technique of domination over foreign places; skim the cream off captive states (slaves, products, taxes), secure their borders from competing empires, and leave them stable enough to keep producing. From early Pharaohs of Egypt to Genghis Khan's reign over a huge portion of Eurasia, imperial rulers had usually been content with economic and political control over regional cultures.

In North America, discovery of native peoples was the first step towards their extinction. The Carib tribe which met Columbus had virtually vanished before the end of 18th century. The new continental immigrants had been hardened by years of ruthless absolutist national and religious wars. They came armed with a technology of conquest (ships, horses, steel, cannon) which totally baffled their initial opposition. Inhabitory populations were displaced & annihilated with a ferocity beyond any previous merely imperial intention.

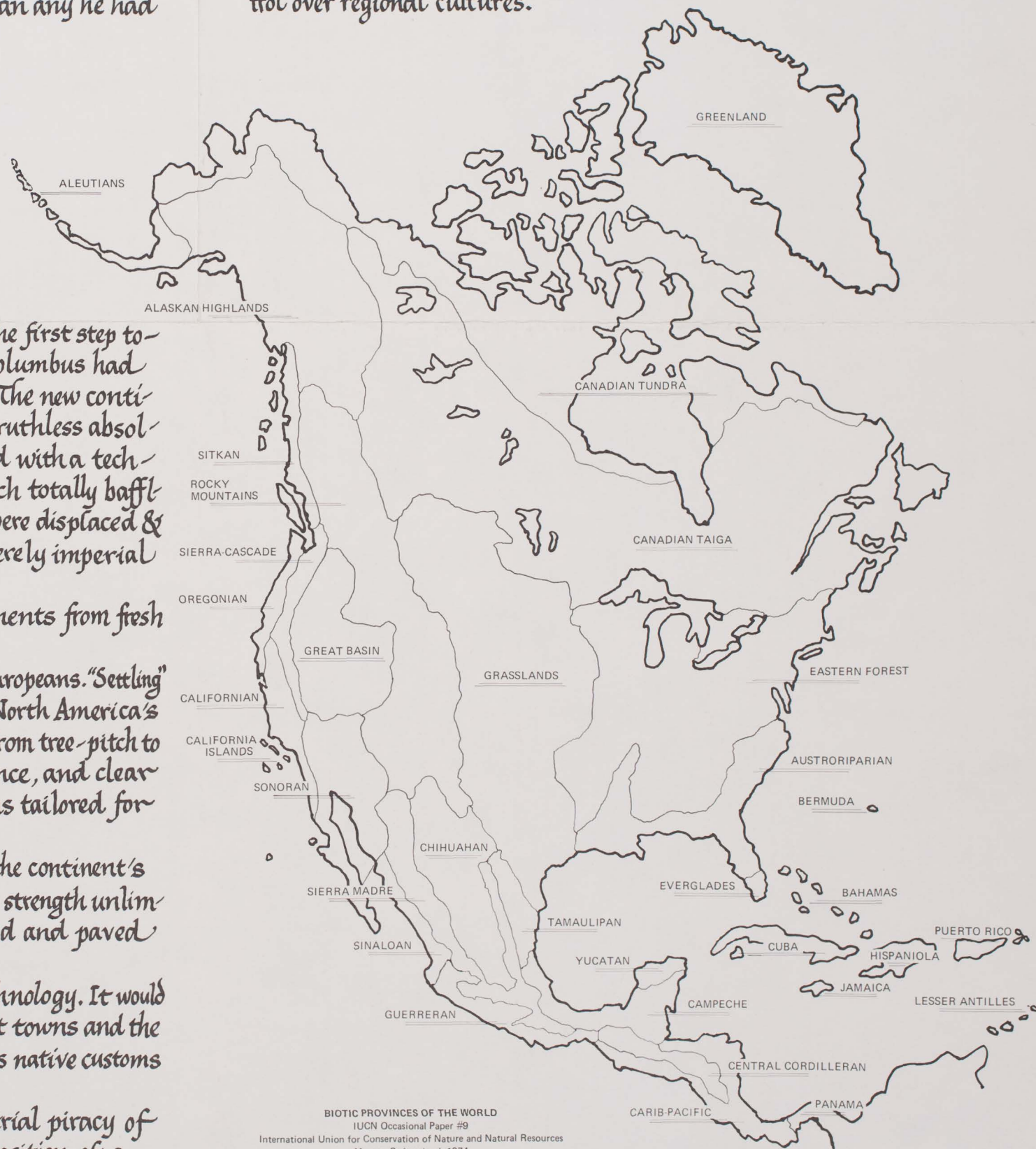
A tradition of scrubbing out the human components from fresh ranges of biotic life on the planet had begun.

The colonies were repopulated with trustworthy Europeans. "Settling" proceeded under a new rule of domination; devastate North America's ecosystems and ship back whatever seems valuable (from tree-pitch to furs), hold the land against surviving native resistance, and clear indigenous life off the rich soil to create plantations tailored for European markets.

It was the last of the Mohicans and the last of the continent's lived-in skin. Full reach barely measured, potential strength unlimited, the giant was underfoot waiting to be stripped and paved over.

A laboratory had been found for world-scale technology. It would be fitted with straight-lined corridors between port towns and the frontier. It would be sterilized to remove mysterious native customs and spirits.

What's new about the New World is the terrestrial piracy of global mono culture. Massive and inexorable imposition of a roughly unified alien world-view over regions as diverse as South America, Australia and the Pacific Islands, parts of the Asian coast, and Africa - a total area of the Earth's living surface vastly larger than Mother Europe - would follow until the "unknown" planet was completely under the carpet.



"Biotic province boundaries are determined by significant changes in vegetation, plant species or animal species. The map is preliminary and needs to be modified with increasing knowledge of human involvement in the biotic life of each province."

Raymond Dasmann

AMBLE...

LOCATING WEST

USA, first new nation born in the New World, confirms a global monocultural legacy with its birth-cry. The 1776 Declaration of Independence is not a statement about inhabiting North America as a unique part of the planet. It is a document addressed to Europe concerning the take-over of British possessions by their colonists. It does not declare independence from European cultural traditions. A higher or more enlightened synthesis of precisely those traditions for that time can hardly be imagined. There is nothing of North America's obvious dissimilarity to Europe—largely uncharted territory, still-predominant natural life-systems, and majority native population. It is a declaration of the governing spirit for a new nation of Europeans. No specific land-based considerations are necessary. It is the handle for a pot which will melt away differences between Europeans and mold de-naturalized universal citizens.

Americans are children of the Flying Dutchman, rootless migrants off on a voyage of lethal global tourism.

The toddling nation quickly outdoes its English parent at concentrating human and biospheric havoc within the 13-States theater of operations. Natives are randomly executed, wiped out with untreated diseases (sometimes deliberately inflicted), and tricked into trading away their life-resources by ambitious citizens. Forcibly dispossessed African peoples are brought over as slaves in greater numbers. Penniless new immigrants sign themselves into years of indebtedness and servitude to gain a foothold on citizenship. Shortages of locally produced goods and high foreign import prices demand incomes which only a few in the ports of debarkation can strain to afford. Any natural thing that can be turned into a commodity is plundered. Forests fall to provide fuel and building material for houses, timbers and planks for trading ships. Even beavers vanish to be manufactured into hats.

The Myth of the West is a biocidal beacon beyond Cumberland Gap.

A dazzled young central government buys the Midwest from France and doubles its sovereignty. Lewis and Clark set off on a game-hunting expedition and return with scouting reports for an invasion even more complete than what has preceded it along the Eastern seaboard. The last vestige of Spain's empire in California crumbles on contact and the US stretches from Atlantic to Pacific. The whole steamroll across the heartland of North America takes less than a century.

By then global monoculture has spread back across the Atlantic to transform home-based Europeans.

The conquest of the new world and the colonization of Africa and Asia made clear the confrontation of multiple human histories with A History that we call western and white. These multiple histories were absorbed into our history... because it is important for the uniqueness of the west to give occupation to our consciences and our knowledge, to be everywhere, absolutely the Sole Survivor... and we made them our "ancestors" or else the attempts and errors which made possible our own existence, even partial and ridiculous expressions of Human Universality.

This absorption... of the other, distant, civilizations into the identity of the west, was certainly a means of unifying Europe at the level of politics and ideology.

... This loss of ourselves does not bring us happiness only, we doubt our happiness, we are even seriously sickened by it.

This "we," with our longing for being, is the other great fact that the west suppresses. The implication is that it is well and truly dead, dead of itself, almost to our great regret—for are not museums, folklore and ethnology our expressions of condolence?

—Robert Jaulin

Inhabitants of Europe began losing their own regional identities. Some remnants persist even today. Miles of Kentish farms from before the American Revolution remain productive in England. Pyrennes mountain shepherds in high roadless villages still refer to valley-folk below as "Visigoths." A pig-truffle-white oak economy (pigs sniff out truffles in the deep soil beneath white oak trees; truffles are exported, pigs are eaten, and white oaks provide wine-barrel staves) has remained viable and left parts of southeastern France unchanged for perhaps a thousand years. But these only hint at the full rich range of diversity among regional cultures which has been obliterated. A standardized global culture (eventually in airport-supermarket style) was coming to universalize everyone even if they weren't going anywhere.

A march of more than a dozen wars fills the next hundred years. Any ideas about regional autonomy or separatism that may grow within the US must face all the terms of Federal victory in the horrendous Civil War. Infamous military campaigns against natives west of the Mississippi conclude with decimated skeleton tribes crowded onto bleak reservations in virtual life imprisonment just one miserly step short of total genocide. Foreign conflicts culminating in World War II extend the influence of consolidated US power to fence in nearly two-thirds of the planet.

Less than 200 years old, the United States has become the center of the United West. It is geopolitical West with almost no relation to directions on the round planet. (Asia is the Far East of this West even though the US is itself more accurately east of Asia.)

The West is a state of mind that arose through displacement of people from their regional identities: Europeans transferred to America; indigenous people exterminated or removed from their land in America, Australia and the Pacific Islands; Africans snatched from their continent and enslaved in America; home-based Europeans losing their regional cultures to global monoculture.

The West is no place on the Earth.

BACKTRACKING THE CIRCLE OF THE POSSIBLE

All human beings have a common identity. We are a single species on this planet. We inter-mate.

Our species history stretches back millions of years, long enough to have exerted an active force in the development of the whole biosphere—certainly the most active recent force since the last Ice Age.

Our species heritage includes the pool of genes from which each of us is dipped and the threads of culture which clothe our reality in the present. The hunter of woolly rhinoceros and the high brow-ridged Neanderthal woman who carried a smooth-skulled child are within us. The advantage of chipping flint to razor sharpness and the live-or-die lessons of forgotten stories are still with us.

All species share the planet interdependently. We ultimately depend on all the others for our existence. Both for food and for illumination. Spirit and survival species-to-species are essentially connected. Our species is still learning from the others: silent conversations of plants, controlled conception among wolves and deer, the sensitive social order without coercion that turns a flock of birds or school of fish.

This is our circle of the possible.

Globalism, monoculture, and displacement (human beings bereft of their own and other species) are fatal. They are at the truncated tip of the impossible.

CONTINENT CONGRESS

There needs to be Continent Congress so that occupants of North America can finally become inhabitants and find out where they are.

(The 1776 Bicentennial Celebration of the US Declaration of Independence will be a hollow burp to salute 200 years of mindless gluttony, a travesty on the planet unless it becomes an opportunity to recognize reinhabitation of North America.)

This time congress is a verb. Congress, come together. Come together with the continent.

Continent Congress isn't a simple exercise. It's an enormous effort to overcome the politics of extinction, the Earth-colonist globalism which exhausts whole continents, their peoples, and moves now to devastate deep floors of our planetary oceans.

Continent Congress is a life-long exploration.

OFF THE HARD-TOP AND THERE'S A PATH

If supremacy of some human beings over others, some cultures over other cultures, and *Homo sapiens* over all species are dominant assumptions for relationships between ourselves and to the planet, globalist monoculture seems inevitable. Super-technology can always progress us out of more of what we already have into less than we ever want. Centralized government and witless state authority will always move further away from their deathsome consequences, remotely "back at the capital" in constantly elevating towers of bureaucracy.

But the power-full riddle of the New World is being broken and the rug of the West is rolling back up. The ancient living planet underneath is revealed. There is a delicate partnership between each of us, a deep continuity among species, and a necessary identity with processes of the Earth itself which we can fail to share only at our peril.

Globalism tears prehistoric life-forms from their niches within a few years, takes down mountains, and eradicates harmonic local cultures when they block its feedings. It requires a protected base somewhere and ranges on deadly forays everywhere. It assumes The World. It doesn't get off the highway.

The Earth expresses itself in such contrast and immeasurable ways as to humble any human consciousness, but even the ridiculous globalist mecho-mind recognizes and depends on one undeniable characteristic of the biosphere: It is regionally diverse and unique. Different places have different forms of life and things.

Globalists may assume that the tourist photos of other places they take to show back home (including Earth-shots from space) give them The World, but the multiple eyes of the planet remain within unduplicatable regions.

Reinhabitants of the continent are off the hard-top, and the paths lead to essential food and water, a sense of life-in-place, an understanding of native peoples' names for things and local-cosmological spirits.

Everything that pertains to the feeling of belonging to a place has almost nothing to do with county, state, province, and national boundaries surrounding them in the region they will defend. Even when those lines had some original mountain range or river valley or soil composition or "natural resource" (there's a monocultural appraisal!) reality, the immediate exploitation of regions within them by distant empire-engineers trampled natural life-zone boundaries contemptuously: Railroads given authority to lay straight lines across incredibly rich buffalo and antelope migratory routes through the Great Plains, with rights to clear out trees for ties in hundreds of mile-square checkerboard sections across forests as far west as the Pacific Coast Range.

Now...

Doubling of James Bay lowlands surface water behind dams over Cree land in Canada for Manhattan's electricity a thousand miles away

Countless rows of tobacco robbing 30 million years of nutrients from Piedmont soil to deliver the US nicotine tax base

Eastern Woodland lushly productive farm valleys flooded to provide nuclear power plant coolant

Terminally destructive grain monoculture on the Great Plains' irreplaceable topsoil

Hundreds of miles of Ozark hardwood deliberately poisoned through US Department of Agriculture of provide fast-growing pine "cash crops"

Strip-mining of Upper Missouri foothills and plains, the Hopi's Black Mesa, and spinal-column-sensitive Appalachian Mountains

A thousand-mile pipeline through the Brooks and Alaskan Ranges

... All death-inducing region-wide debacles.

To carry out Continent Congress, it is necessary to transfer loyalty from the state which violates it to the region which requires it.

City and country people—even suburbanites—are all on the same planet. They all live in distinct life-regions, absolutely unique creases of the planet's skin. Their interdependence in a regional life-circle isn't an esoteric proposition reserved for globalist bio-engineers and corporate environment planners. It is their life, their spirit, their species heritage.

Native people already know this. The struggle to regain and hold traditionally inhabited native lands is an inspiration for North American reinhabitants.

A place pronounces itself in each consciousness as an ultimately personal realization, an individual vision that is everyone's birthright and realm of human species/planet integrity.

Sharing a regional identity with other people reveals—Unique inhabitory culture: indigenous, small self-sufficient early homesteaders, "new settlers"

Extent: biotic province, land-form characteristics, major watershed; geology, climate, plants, animals

Priorities: natural succession (the steps leading to regional stability of plant and animal populations with the greatest diversity of species—climax), restoring natural systems, present exploitation threats

Manufacturing and agriculture justified by non-exhaustive use of labor and renewable soil, energy and materials within the region

Regional roles for urban centers, interactive events shared by city and country dwellers (trade of regionally produced goods, planting and harvesting, availability of stored city information and tools, mutual communications)

Spirit of inter-species relations in the region; totems, ceremonies to ensure biotic diversity and richness

Partnership with nearest distinctly different bioregions, trade systems

Form of planet-wide regional address, celebration of whole species in the biosphere, a look through all the eyes.

Simply remaining alive requires food, water and air. Start with those basics. (For anyone who has one, forget the illusion of a back-up bank account; even if it was "honestly gained" it can't stand any real pressure.) Some of what we eat and drink comes from only a few hundred miles away—most of it could originate that close—and is vulnerable to immediate local conditions: weather, flood, contamination. The rest of our meals come from other places but they all have similar sets of constantly varying and sensitive home-region conditions. The quality of air is determined entirely on-the-spot.

The roots of moment-to-moment survival are sunk deep in close-surrounding life processes, and they are everywhere as thin on the planet as our own skins. All of our skins:

Urban laborers whose senses-robbing shops and factories, designed to accommodate the requirements of machines rather than people, leave them more psychically, spiritually, and physically deprived than the poorest medieval serfs.

Office Workers and Managers handling abstract and remote information from 9 to 5 without physical activity, victims of bad health and insecurity who are no less spirit- and senses-deprived for their daily escalation to tedious offices above the city racket.

Country People dominated by the force of city demands on their labor and surroundings, who sadly watch the agonizing encroachment of suburbs, coerced to live closer to parasitical highways and eventually made bereft of their authentic regional cultures except as empty tourist attractions.

Native People still carrying the sting of attempted ethnocide and fighting to retain their traditional cultures and lands.

New Settlers and their vulnerable fledgling communities which are often extinguished by intrusions of centralized legal authority or only permitted to continue as long as they don't assume responsible regional roles.

Surburban Dwellers whose cold communities-of-consumption hold them ruthlessly alienated and condemned to acts of soft-shoed planet murder.

A region holds the power to sustain and join disparate people: Old ground charged with common wholeness and forces of long-growing life. All people are within regions as a condition of existence, and regions condition all people within them. But monotonous labor, up-tight closeting of the senses, crippled health, amputation of spirit, cold distance in crowds of perpetual strangers, and gloomy anxiety about the fate of the Earth, are hold-overs of globalism, they aren't inherent in the beneficent soil of the continent's naturally life-transforming regions.

All people can emerge from enforced degradation to hold their life-in-common ground.

Regional reinhabitants are forming Committees of Correspondence to explore shared identity within life-places. Models of organization are already there in constantly revealed seasonal cycles and the interplay of life-forms wholly specific to them. Their vision goes beyond frustrated provincialism, which feels inferior to "cosmopolitan culture," the endless array of bought and sold exclusions. Reinhabitants have gained the dimensions of planet-sense. They are including themselves in

the longest tradition available to human beings, the successful adaptation of our species on the planet.

Committees of Correspondence are defending their life-zones from geopolitical invasion; forming alliances to share inhabitory culture, study indigenous natural continuities, assign priorities for restoring life-systems, work within regional energy and materials limits, develop land-based and city-based forms of interaction, and create bonds of support between regions.

They are coming together in Continent Congress.

PRINTS & SIGN

Around us, the actual manifestations of the biosphere, its development and the effects of our demands on it.

Within our minds, sets of ideas about ourselves; the test of their validity ultimately lies with the biosphere.

There is a mental space filled with World News, World Affairs, World Events. Although the places and persons described are remote, and the details are staggering—numbers of dead, barrels of oil, dollars in debt, miles across land, sea or in space—we are exhorted every day to absorb this information, come to decisions or opinions, and (most importantly) perform correct responses to it. Is this an animal behavior control experiment?

Let the light shift. Full moon and a single glaring searchbeam fades out-of-center in the silver night sky. Walking through shimmering woods without a flashlight. The circle of the possible fills with soft diffuse luminosity.

The World's electric-relay box empties into a small part of that circle. Our miraculous genetic heritage, the amazing cultures which have preceded, each human being alive now—all are connected in a species identity which has barely been explored. And it is only part of the life-identity which carries through all the other species and to the planet itself.

We are relocating ourselves from world-nation to planet-region, joining the biosphere by participating in local ecosystems with all the species in them. We are accepting our human species identity.

Geopolitical opportunists are becoming even more globally extended in their attempts to retain an exploitative advantage over "the rest of it." Multinational corporations jump political boundaries in pursuit of raw materials and cheap labor. Nuclear power plant schemes move through bought government officials over protests from regional people who must live near lethal radiation hazards. Binational deals deliver ripped-off water and minerals in return for payoffs to central government treasuries which people in the regions-of-origin seldom see. National armies recruited from regional populations are called out to defend globalist interests abroad.

Whoever fights the planet loses: our species loses the rich diversity of multiple indigenous cultures to thin out-of-place monoculture; the biosphere loses its vulnerable moment-to-moment capacity to sustain us in regions where we live. If one region is injured or exhausted, the burden of carrying its human population falls on life-support systems of other regions.

Reinhabitants of North America see the bright colors of inhabitory people in tree-tiered Amazon jungles, ocean-spirited islands of Micronesia, dances of African forests and rivers; hear Basque, Breton, Provençal tongues revive to pronounce their places in Europe; share the affirmation of self-determination with delta-farmers in Southeast Asia, Yaponesian and Hokkaido Islanders, Altai Mountain nomads; feel the strength and seek the long-time vision of people native to the continent we are learning to share. There is a one-to-one balance between our own decentralized regional integrity and the survival of Kurdish mountain autonomy, Xingu jungle homeland, and Lapp reindeer range.

There is the union of Earth's biosphere holding us in common, and the promise of human species consciousness to gain.

Pete Berg