

Bioregionalism

Bioregionalism is an ecological and cultural philosophy that emphasises the importance of defining human activities and societies in relation to natural ecosystems and geographies, rather than adhering to arbitrary political or administrative borders.

Bioregionalists advocate for a strong sense of place, putting the Earth first and highlighting the interconnectedness of humans with nature. This approach promotes sustainability, local economies, and community resilience by encouraging people to develop a deep connection with their local environment and to manage resources in a way that supports the long-term health of the region. It calls for decentralised, community-based governance and the use of local knowledge to address ecological and social challenges. At the same time, bioregionalism recognises and values cultural diversity within regions. Local cultures and traditions are seen as integral parts of the overall ecological fabric, contributing to the resilience and adaptability of communities.

Bioregionalism can be traced back to the environmental movements of the 1970s and 1980s. During this time, growing awareness of environmental degradation, resource depletion, and the limitations of centralised, top-down approaches to environmental management led activists and thinkers to seek alternatives. Influential figures such as Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann helped popularise the concept, arguing that true sustainability could only be achieved by aligning human activities with the natural patterns and processes of the specific bioregions in which people live. This perspective challenged the dominant economic paradigm of perpetual growth and globalisation, emphasising the importance of recognising ecological limits and working within the constraints of the local environment.

Examples of bioregionalism in practice include the Cascadia bioregion in the Pacific Northwest of North America, where efforts to promote bioregional identity and sustainability have gained significant traction. In this region, initiatives such as community-supported agriculture (CSA), local currency systems, and conservation projects reflect bioregional principles. Another example is the work of the Zapatista communities in Chiapas, Mexico, who have adopted bioregional approaches to governance and agriculture, emphasising local control and sustainable practices. These efforts have contributed to greater community resilience, environmental stewardship, and cultural revitalisation.

Global Wellbeing Economy Themes

Following a series of global dialogue interviews and playback sessions in 2023, six themes of a Global Wellbeing Economy emerged:

Embracing Home

In Service of Life

Respecting Self-Determination,
Sovereignty, Dignity

Learning, Practicing and
Governing Together

Expanding our Time
Horizons

Sharing the Sacred

Questions for consideration

- Which of the themes does bioregionalism embody / give shape to?
- What might further strengthen this initiative as part of building a Global Wellbeing Economy?