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Contents

III. Globalizing Indigenous Identities

IV. Post-multicultural Identity Politics

Conflicting Constructions of Cross-Border Regional Identities in the Cascadia Region (Seattle/Vancouver)

JENS MARTIN GURR AND OLAF KALTMEIER

Introduction

Cross-border regionalism, like hardly any other spatial and identitarian concept lends itself to analyzing the contradictory nature of transnational integration processes in the Americas: Here, questions of political, economic and cultural belonging are negotiated beyond the frequently naturalized borders of nation states. The formation and fostering of new regional identities is here closely connected to hemispheric processes of integration and with economic competition between locations in attempts to attract business (Storper 1997; Ohmae 1995). On the other hand, the construction of new regional identities is connected with re-traditionalizing strategies seeking to oppose and evade the process of globalization (Castells 1997, 269-73). But while there have long been innumerable scholarly contributions dealing with the U.S.-Mexican borderlands, cross-border integration processes along the U.S.-Canadian border have recently also received increased scholarly attention.[1]

We are here particularly concerned with what has variously been called "Cascadia" or "The Pacific Northwest," a cross-border region around the main cities Seattle and Vancouver. Economically, "Cascadia" has to be conceived as one of the most dynamic regions in the Americas. It hosts the world's biggest aerospace enterprise, the Boeing Company, and it is one of the main clusters of computer and software development, being the headquarters of Bill Gates' Microsoft. The region is also home to a number of post-Fordist enterprises that appeal to life-style and consumer-culture, such as Starbucks Coffee and Nordstrom, a high-end clothing chain, and it is the center of a booming television and filmmaking industry. "Cascadia," including the provinces and states of British Colombia, Washington and Oregon, "contains over 16 million citizens and has a gross domestic product (GDP) of more than $490 billion (USD, 2004), which would place it as the world's 21st-ranked 'country'" (Smith 2008, 65).

[1] Cf. Alper (2004); Brown (1988); Brunet-Jailly (2008); Brunet-Jailly/Smith (2008); Evans (2006); Evenden/Turbeville (1992); Gorodnichenko/Tesar (2009); Miller (2006); Ricou (1989, 1997, 2002); Schell/Hamer (1995); Smith (2002, 2004, 2008); Sparke (2004, 2005); Taylor (2007); Tomblin (2004). For comparative studies of various aspects of the US-Mexican and the US-Canadian borders, cf. Andreas (2003); Brégent-Heald (2006); Lee (2002); Sadowski-Smith (2008); Taylor (2007).

In varying definitions proposed by a diverse group of actors, the proposed region encompasses merely the highly urbanized corridor Vancouver-Seattle-Portland—often referred to as "Mainstreet Cascadia"—, the entire Canadian province of British Columbia and the US state of Washington (sometimes also including Oregon), or even the entire Pacific Northwest from Alaska down to Northern California, including the Yukon, British Columbia, Alberta, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. Since the late 1970s, the name Cascadia has come to be used for various conceptions of this region,[2] in which conflicting constructions of an emerging regional identity overlap. Depending on the group which advocates them, these constructions invoke indigenous traditions of a borderless habitat, utopian or ecological conceptions of a cross-border bioregion, increasing economic integration or a historically evolving process of cross-border regionalism, which occasionally even bore separatist traits. More recently, there has been a tendency for neo-liberal advocates of economic integration to resort to originally oppositional bioregionalist and indigenous traditions in order to endow the development of a cross-border economic region with measures suggesting a common identity—an endeavor which might be termed an "invention of tradition" (Hobsbawm/Ranger 1983). This coupling of post-industrial economic and ecological discourses as well as the growing Pacific trade from important ports such as Vancouver and Seattle further adds to the complex dynamics of cross-border integration.

However, despite a lot of recent scholarly interest especially in economic integration in the region, there is as yet no sustained analysis of the formation of new regional identities and landscapes, an analysis which integrates cultural, political, economic and ecological aspects and which focuses on semantic transfer processes, discursive conflations and translations. What needs to be analyzed here are the complex processes of negotiating such cross-border regional identities, taking into account—in all the mutual interdependencies—economic integration processes, cultural imaginaries of urban and "natural" landscape, bioregionalist conceptions and their impact on the politics of a regional identity.

We particularly aim to study the constellations of actors and the layering of different, frequently conflicting constructions of a cross-border regional identity promoted by several groups, as well as the diverse narrative constructions of a regional community and the use they make of history, traditions and, above all, of landscape.

What we are especially concerned with is the narration of space and landscape and its contribution to the construction of bioregionally founded identities. We thus take our cue from Kent Ryden's observations on the close connection between narrative and imaginaries of place:

[2] For the different conceptions of Cascadia, cf. Artibise (1995, 2005); Artibise/Bradley/Warren (1998); Brunet-Jailly (2008); Brunet-Jailly/Smith (2008); Cold-Ravnkilde/Singh/Lee (2004); Crane (2004); Dupeyron (2008); Edgington (1995); Findlay (1997); Henkel (1993); MacDonald (1987); McCloskey (1994); Ott (2001); Pierce (1996); Ricou (1997, 2002); Schell/Hamer (1995); Smith (2002, 2004, 2008); Sparke (2004, 2005); Todd (2008).

> Unlike simple geographical locations, which exist objectively, places do not exist until they are verbalized, first in thought and memory and then through the spoken or written word. Only when they have coalesced in the mind, and then achieved narrative expression, can places have anything more than an idiosyncratic private existence. Only when place has achieved verbal expression, in turn, can it have any sort of permanence and its meaning remain secure. (Ryden 1993, 241)

This is in keeping with Cosgrove's influential assertion that "landscape constitutes a discourse through which identifiable social groups historically have framed themselves and their relations both with the land and with other human groups, and that this discourse is closely related epistemically and technically to ways of seeing" (Cosgrove 1998, xv). What needs to be analyzed here are the complex processes of negotiating such cross-border regional identities, taking into account—in all their mutual interdependencies—economic integration processes, cultural imaginaries of urban and "natural" landscape, bioregionalist conceptions and their impact on the politics of a regional identity. Drawing attention to the political implications of landscape imaginaries in the region, Richard Pickard argues:

> In 1990s BC there is no such thing as keeping out of environmentalism. The ongoing confrontation over land-use issues is an especially clear example of [this]. Natural description has been openly adopted as a political tool in this debate, and no one describing the woods can pretend any longer to neutrality. … If one group can gain control of language use, then it will control perceptions of the forest, and the battle for the forest as a resource base will be all but over—control the perception, control the reality. (Pickard 1997, 98 p.)

We will first outline the importance of landscape in the construction of a cross-border region. We will then outline three different constructions of such a cross-border region, namely indigenous conceptions, ecologically inspired bioregionalism and neoliberal economic integration. We will show how various constellations of actors here use differently motivated imaginaries of landscape in order to construct divergent notions of a cross-border community. We will then point out how these different conceptions increasingly overlap and how landscape continues to be central to the entire discourse of a cross-border Cascadia. Finally, we will comment on the implications this has for the conceptualization of borders. In order to do so, we seek to combine approaches from literary and cultural studies with methods from social sciences in order profitably to study the narrative construction of identitarian spaces, the contrast between ecological bioregionalist imaginaries on the one hand and the strongly urbanized everyday lives of most people in the region on the other hand, as well as the strategies employed by different actors in the field of identity politics. We thus also want to contribute theoretically and methodologically to the analysis of narrative identity constructions in transnational integration processes.

On the Construction of Regional Identities through Imaginaries of Landscape

Although the ongoing economic, administrative and infrastructural integration in the region can largely be attributed to strategic economic goals, the role of narrative conceptions of new cross-border regional identities and spaces for the shifting of boundaries in the field of identity politics in transnational integration processes must not be underestimated: Literary texts on both sides of the border contributed to the formation of cross-border regional identities (cf. Deringer 1996; Ricou 2002). Arguably even more important, however, are the varying constructions of a Cascadia region and their political implications. Following Appadurai (1996, 32), this construction of a community by means of different imaginaries of a cross-border region could be designated as the "ideoscaping" of Cascadia.[3]

Bringing to bear our different disciplinary competencies in literary and cultural studies and social sciences respectively, we thus aim to combine questions of spatial theory with issues of identity politics and the analysis of identitarian self-positioning. This connection between space and identity historically was conceptualized in geodeterminist approaches. Throughout much of the 19th and into the 20th century, sociocultural norms, values and ways of life were believed to derive from climatic and landscape features. Here, space was regarded as externally given material environment independent of social relations. In some ways, the naturalization of borders, spaces and territories as discussed in cultural area approaches—most recently advocated by Samuel Huntington—can also be seen in this vein. As a counter-movement, sociodeterministic approaches regard space as not only socially produced but even as mirroring social structures. Here, one should particularly mention approaches ranging from the social ecology of the Chicago School to Bourdieu's homology of social space and appropriated physical space. In our analysis, we share the constructivist assumptions of the latter approaches. However, we also consider the transposition of social position and positioning in imaginations of space into representations of self and other. Finally, we also assume an intrinsic spatial logic which shapes behavior.

This view closely connects representation and imaginations of space and landscape with the politics of identity.[4] Since the early conceptualizations of landscape in the Renaissance, the concept has been seen in perspectivist fashion (Cosgrove) in that it is closely tied to the discovery of linear perspective and to the subjective observer position. Taking our cue from the geography of perception, we assume that this perspectivism and cognitive mapping can also be transferred to group-specific positioning in the field of identity politics. In this sense, narrations of landscape can be studied as expressions of positions and positionings in field-specific constellations and with regard to specific logics of practice (e.g., field of cultural production, political field, etc.). It is important to note here that narrations of landscape are not closely circumscribed but are at work on different and partly overlapping spatial scales.

In order to analyze such identity constructions through the imagination of landscapes, we propose a multi-disciplinary approach that draws on methods from sociology, social geography as well as literary and cultural studies. "Landscape" is here conceived as a highly ambivalent construct transgressing binary categorizations such as "culture/nature," "urban/rural," or "inside/outside." In this view, landscape is both signifier and signified and cannot be ultimately fixed. Like the concept of "myth" with Barthes (1972, 109-137), landscape is viewed as "in circulation," with circulation in processes of translation and transmission between different social fields being of particular interest here. This circulation refers both to material dimensions as well as to norms, values, attitudes and "ways of seeing," as Mitchell (2002) pinpointed them in postcolonial contexts.

Landscape here cannot merely be read as a text (Cosgrove 1998; Duncan/Duncan 1988; Wylie 2007), but also has a performative dimension. This becomes especially clear in processes of active landscaping, for instance in the sense of "Imagineering" and "Theming" (cf. Zukin 1991; Gottdiener 2001). In the sense of non-representational approaches (cf. Thrift 2007), landscape here also has an affective dimension in that it acts upon feelings, actions and perceptions. Landscape has therefore recently also been seen in connection with questions of morality and governmental practices—even in the sense of an ethics of existence (Matless 2000). Thus, we are not merely concerned with studying the meaning of landscape but also with analyzing the role of landscape in power relations (Matless 1998; Mitchell 2002).

Therefore, the tradition of "literary bioregionalism"[5] and thus questions and methodological approaches of ecocriticism are highly relevant to this endeavor. What we are especially concerned with is the narration of space and landscape and its contribution to the construction of bioregionally founded identities. We are less concerned, however, with questions of environmental justice or ethical concerns than with the narrative representation of space, landscape and ecosystems (Duncan/Duncan 1988; Gruber 2006; Gurr 2009; Meeker 1997) and the narrative constructions of a regional identity they enable.[6]

[3] For initial thoughts towards an analysis of the "ideoscaping" of Cascadia by means of harnessing ecological conceptions, cf. Sparke (2005, 65 ff)., who also draws on Appadurai's notions in *Modernity at Large*.

[4] For the connection between landscape and identity, cf. *The analysis of landscape and Englishness* in Matless (1998); cf. Bingham/Love (1979); Bunce (1994); Castells (1997); Cosgrove (1998); DeLue/Elkins (2008); Deringer (1989); Duncan/Duncan (1988, 2004: 68-99); Findlay (1997); Mitchell (2002); Olwig (2002); Ryden (1993); Wylie (2007).

[5] Cf. Buell (2001, 64-77); Buell (2006, 62-96); Dolezal (2008); Lindholdt (2003); Prajznerova (2006); for bioregionalism, cf. Aberly (1999); Baym (2004); McGinnis (1999); Sale (2000); Snyder (1995); Thayer (2003); Watson (1965).

[6] On narrative identity, cf. Bruner (1987, 1990); Gruber (2006); Linde (1993); Neumann/Nünning/Petterson (2008); Ricœur (1991).

Conflicting Constructions of a Cascadia Region: Indigenous, Ecological and Economic Views

The indigenous peoples of the region, before the arrival of Europeans, naturally regarded the area as a borderless habitat, a conception which—as we will see—continues to be influential and is frequently invoked in different present-day constructions of a borderless region. Even after 1818, when the 49th parallel was agreed upon as the border between the United States and British North America, the border in the West remained unsettled until the Treaty of Oregon in 1846 and remained largely meaningless even after 1846.[7] Instead, we can observe various attempts to create a border-crossing new state, may it be called "Jefferson," "Colombia," "Siskiyou" or, in recent decades, "Cascadia" (Pierce 1996, 13). In the context of increasing economic integration of the region in the 20th century, North-South cross-border trade between Canadian provinces and US states came to surpass domestic trade between provinces and between US states respectively (cf. Alper 2004; Andreas 2003; Gibbins 2004; Taylor 2007[8]). Thus, what has frequently been called "a border with many gates and no fences" (Andreas 2003, 7) remained highly permeable and did not play a large role economically or as a point of crystallization for a "border culture," as did the US-Mexican border (cf. Evenden/Turbeville 1992; Resnick 2000; Taylor 2007). All in all, although even the boundaries of a putative Cascadia region differ greatly between different conceptions, there is little doubt that the region "possesses a definite geographical and historical unity" (Taylor 2007, 40). Let us consider in more detail these different views and how they overlap.

Indigenous Landscape

Cascadia is a region with an immense diversity of indigenous peoples. At almost 200, British Columbia has the largest number of officially recognized First Nations in Canada. Of particular importance are the so-called Coastal Salish people, which include some fifty bands in British Columbia and twenty-four tribes in Washington (Miller 2006, 55), as their territory was divided by the colonial frontier between Canada and the United States in the Treaty of Oregon in 1846 or even later in 1871, when the border in the Puget Sound region was determined.

The indigenous societies of the Coast Salish were based on kinship relations, while the relation to the space can be conceived of as relational, constituted of "itineraries of places" (Thom 2005, 43), and not as absolute spaces fixed by borders. The region is understood as a multidimensional space that is constituted by yearly, cyclical migrations and that implies economic resources, reciprocity with other clans, spiritual

[7] In the Puget Sound/Georgia Basin region, it even took until 1871.

[8] For an opposing view, cf. Sparke (2005, 84 p.), who appears, however, to underestimate significantly the degree of existing economic integration.

places and mythological narrations. The salmon functions as an integrative symbol of the region, as it reveals the cyclic itineraries of the Salish water-landscape.[9]

Against the logic of property, the logic of use is central; therefore one area may be used by different clans. Furthermore, a broader sense of region is constituted by a network of communities that perform their identity by potlatches, canoe-contests and the aforementioned itineraries. This means that there does not exist an exclusive link between a homogeneous territory and a corresponding unified identity, as is the case in the imagination of the nation-state. Rather, territory is characterized by its overlapping, permeability and changing borders as it is represented in this auto-ethnographic map of the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group.

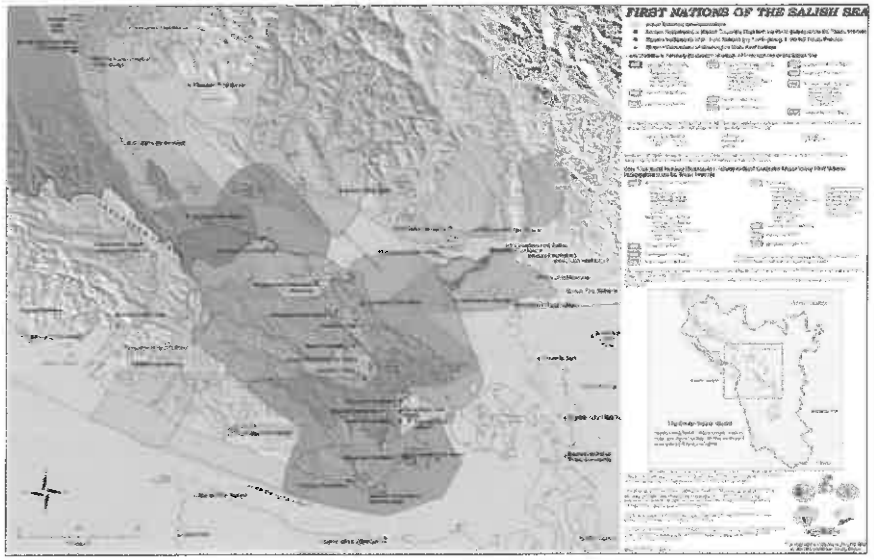

Fig. 1: First Nations of the Salish Sea, http://www.hulquminum.bc.ca/pubs/overlaps-salish_sea-web.pdf

Ecological Bioregionalism

In keeping with Joseph Meeker's assertion that "ecology is an ancient theme in art and literature, however new it may be as a science" (Meeker 1997, 7), there had been powerful narrative constructions of a regional identity in the Pacific Northwest

[9] For the symbolic role of salmon in the region, cf. Findlay (1997); Ricou (2002), especially the chapter "Salmon File" (2002, 98-116); Alexie (1993: 109, 190 and cover illustration), as well as Tracy Bonneau's documentary Magic on the Water (2007).

founded on a sense of connection with nature[10] long before bioregionalism or ecology ever explicitly became a matter of scholarly concern. Since the 1970s, however, ecological movements have increasingly conceptualized the region as a cross-border bioregion. Ernest Callenbach's utopian 1975 novel *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston*, though only projecting a territory encompassing Washington, Oregon and northern California, was highly influential here in its projection of a civilization using "soft" high-tech in order to combine a high standard of living with a sustainable way of life. Thus, Joel Garreau's widely studied conception of *The Nine Nations of North America* (1981) took from Callenbach's novel the name *Ecotopia* for an entity along the Pacific Coast from Northern California to Alaska founded on ecologic principles. Finally, the work of Seattle sociologist and bioregionalist David McCloskey since the late 1970s has been a major influence on ecological conceptions of Cascadia. In a short manifesto of Cascadian bioregionalism, he stated:

> Cascadia is a land rooted in the very bones of the earth, and animated by the turnings of sea and sky, the mid-latitude wash of winds and waters. As a distinct region, Cascadia arises from both a natural integrity (e.g. landforms and earth-plates, weather patterns and ocean currents, flora, fauna, watersheds, etc.) and a sociocultural unity (e.g. native cultures, a shared history and destiny). (McCloskey 1994)

Rather more drastically, poet Gary Snyder, expressed a bioregionalist conception as follows: "The salmon don't give a fuck which border it is" (cit. in Ricou 1989, 52). Thus, this region has for a long time had a strong ecological movement, and it is hardly accidental that Greenpeace, arguably the most influential ecologically oriented NGO, was founded in Vancouver in 1971.

Economic Regionalism

Especially since the late 1980s, in the course of progressing economic integration, spatial concepts of the region came to be more and more economically and politically grounded (Ott 2001; Sparke 2005, 53-112; and Smith 2008). These attempts to further economic integration in this booming region and to ease cross-border flows of people, goods and capital have been propagated by economically oriented interest groups such as Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER), PACE (Pacific Enterprise Corridor Commission), Cascadia Corridor Commission, the Cascadia Project, the Discovery Institute's "Cascadia Center for Regional Development" as well as cross-border tourism and traffic boards. Finally, the Olympic Winter Games 2010 in Vancouver also further the integration of the region, for instance by the extension of traffic infrastructures. It is important to note here that while economic integration progresses and there is a significantly greater awareness of cross-border bioregions, the US-Canadian

[10] Some key texts are Carr (1941); Hodgins (1977); Keeble (1980); Kesey (1964); Stafford (1987); for studies of the connection, cf. Prajznerova (2006); Ricou (1997); Deringer (1996); Nordström (1985); Stafford (1986).

border since 9/11 has increasingly been regarded by the US-government as a dangerously open border in need of tighter control and more surveillance.[11]

It is interesting to note the rhetoric of the economic boosters of the region. An essay by Paul Schell (mayor of Seattle from 1998-2001) and John Hamer, a fellow of conservative think-tank Discovery Institute, one of the most important promoters of economic integration in the region, as well as of an infamous Intelligent Design campaign, is representative here:

> The lines imposed over 100 years ago have simply been transcended by contemporary economic and cultural realities … Cascadia is organizing itself around what will be the new realities of the next century—open borders, free trade, regional cooperation, and the instant transfer of information, money and technology. The nineteenth- and twentyeth-century realities of the nation-state, with guarded borders and nationalistic traditions, are giving way. (Schell/Hamer 1995, 141)

Overlapping Conceptions: The Role of Landscape

Recent years have seen an increasing tendency towards the convergence of these partly conflicting views. Thus, economic interest groups and the tourism industry increasingly also argue in terms of sustainable development. In this vein, PNWER states as one of its goals: "Achieve continued economic growth while maintaining the region's natural beauty and environment" (PNWER-Website). Agents associated with economic integration can here be seen to draw on other discourses in ways which frequently appear to be strategically motivated. While this may appear as the harmonization of originally conflicting views, critics of this development (cf. esp. Sparke 2005) rather speak of the strategic appropriation of ecological discourses by neoliberal supporters of free trade. In this vein, Henkel has called the bioregionalist discourse a "Trojan horse" for plain economic interests (Henkel 1993, 112-113).

Similarly, advocates of ecological conceptions of a cross-border region frequently refer to traditional indigenous conceptions of the region as a borderless habitat. Thus, the close combination of an ecologically sensitive view and treatment of nature and of natural resources is already closely associated with indigenous views in one of the founding texts of Cascadian bioregionalism, Callenbach's 1975 *Ecotopia*:

> Ecotopians a little vague about time, I notice—few wear watches, and they pay more attention to things like sunrise and sunset or the tides than to actual hour time. … "You'd never catch an Indian wearing a watch." Many Ecotopians sentimental about Indians, and there's some sense in which they envy the Indians their lost natural place in the American wilderness. Indeed this probably a major Ecotopian myth; keep hearing references to what Indians probably would or wouldn't do in a give situation. Some Ecotopian articles—clothing and baskets and personal ornamentation—perhaps directly In-

[11] Since September 11, 2001, the various separatist movements and parties, which existed from the 19th century to the early 21st century and which urged secession of the region from Canada and the US, have further lost ground. In comparison to, say, Quebec, these separatist tendencies had always been marginal anyway.

> dian in inspiration. But what matters most is the aspiration to live in balance with nature, "walk lightly on the land," treat the earth as a mother. (Callenbach 1975, 31 p.)
>
> Mysteriously, the Ecotopians do not feel "separate" from their technology. They evidently feel a little as the Indians must have felt: that the horse and the tepee and the bow and arrow all sprang, like the human being, from the womb of nature, organically. Of course the Ecotopians work on natural materials far more extensively and complexly than the Indians worked stone into arrowpoint or hide into tepee. But they treat materials in the same spirit of respect, comradeship. (Callenbach 1975, 51; [sic—the clipped style simulates the notebook of William Weston])

What this citation makes clear is on the one hand the possible combination of ecology and technological progress, which is clearly a leitmotif of economic regionalism, and on the other hand the symbolic importance of the idealized indigenous in the imagination of the region, while the "real" Indian, at that time locked in reservations, is absent.

More fundamentally, indigenous and ecological views of the region overlap in that indigenous conceptions of the region are inherently based on what we would today call ecological conceptions. In that sense, imaginaries of landscape play a crucial role in constructions of place identities in Cascadia. As an example, one might cite Kim Stafford's poem "There are no names but Stories," which alludes to Franz Boas' *Geographical Names of the Kwakiutl Indians*:

> When the anthropologist asked the Kwakiutl
> for a map of their coast, they told him stories:
> Here? Salmon gather.
> Here? Sea otter camps.
> Here seal sleep.
> Here we say body covered with mouths.
> How can a place have a name?
> A man, a woman may have a name, but they die.
> We are a story until we die.
> Then our names are dangerous.
> A place is a story happening many times. (Stafford 1987, 11)

What the poem makes clear is the inextricable connection between landscape, history, narrative and identity (cf. Ryden 1993, 242).

The recourse to indigenous traditions in the conceptualization of a regionally based ecological consciousness can—in a combination of all three strands—also be found in the rhetoric of leading promoters of economic integration today, who strategically make use of indigenous and ecological views: "We have a love of the outdoors and a relatively high level of concern for the environment. The Native American regard for nature in Cascadia is a clearer influence than in the East" (Schell/Hamer 1995, 144). Thus, economic regionalism relies on indigenous and bioregionalist concepts in order to create the necessary authenticity for the making of the region.

Despite its neoliberal bias, the economic-ecological imagination of a borderless region offers new strategic possibilities to the indigenous movement. From the perspective of the indigenous peoples, the border is an artificial creation, which since its institution has given rise to numerous conflicts. One main conflict over borders in the

region arose in the negotiations between the first nations and the state of British Columbia in the context of the BC Treaty Process, where the state urged to define clear borders, while the Salish argued that borders are permeable, overlapping and permanently renegotiated.

The complex border-conflicts, which found their major expression in the reservation policy, are revealed in native-American filmmaker Tracey Kim Jack Bonneau's 2007 documentary *Magic on the Water* on the role of water in the lives of her people, the Syilx, who traditionally inhabit an area now divided by the border between British Columbia and Washington. The film foregrounds the role of shared waterways, of the salmon as an integrative symbol and of symbolic canoe voyages traversing the border, as well as the role of a multiplicity of shared traditions and customs closely associated with the landscape and particularly the water in fostering a sense of unity among bands on both sides of the border. The film makes clear how the modern logic of creating borders conflicts with the logic of a relational itinerary-space and with the inherently unbounded waterways of the region.

The imagining of an identitarian indigenous landscape that is based on interconnections, especially by the waterways, reveals a new spatial strategy of the indigenous movement, although the border still imposes consequences on the indigenous communities (for an overview, cf. Miller 2006). In *Magic on the Water* the canoes are seen as the "unifying force" (6:38) to (re-)unite the dispersed people. The tribal canoe journeys between 2001 and 2006 from the Canadian part to the US, referred to as the "Syilx nation—Unity Track," can be understood as a performative appropriation of the identitarian landscape. Similarly, in 2001 the Hul'qumi'num-people designed a cartographic representation of their identitarian landscape, which included not only the existing reservations but also the maritime coastal areas and the waterways.

Recently, indigenous peoples of the region, the Coast Salish, more and more clearly formulate a cross-border group identity based on ecological discourses and which projects an indigenous cross-border region under the name of "Salish Sea Eco Region," with the "common goal to protect the environment and the natural resources of the Salish Sea for the sustainability of the Coast Salish Peoples" (*The Coast Salish Gathering*).

It is interesting that the term Salish Sea was first generated by a maritime biologist in 1988 and has afterwards disseminated in the indigenous discourse, while there still remain mutual interchanges which reveal the growing importance of an ecological bioregionalism (*Salish Sea Map*). In this context, there is also cross-border cooperation between indigenous groups and ecological movements. This intersection of ecological and indigenous discourse and imaginations of landscape since the mid-1990s has become a common theme in the world-wide indigenous movement (cf. Ulloa 2004; Bengoa 2000). This intersection of ecological and indigenous discourse and imaginations of landscape since the mid-1990s has become a common theme in the world-wide indigenous movement. The indigenous-ecological imagination of the regional landscape, however, comes into conflict with economic regionalism, especially with

Fig. 2: Salish Sea, Stefan Freelan (2009)

regard to ecological key items like water pollution, forestry, fishery, land rights and conflicts about tourism and retail industry. Despite the common strategic use of a kind of "ecological regionalism," we here see conflicting visions about ecology and regional identity as well as conflicts between the "imagined" and the "real" indigenous peoples.

What further complicates the connection between identity construction and landscape in this region is the discrepancy between imagined, represented and narrated landscapes on the one hand and the lived landscapes of everyday life on the other hand (cf. Bunce 1994; Olwig 2002; Lefebvre 2008). This becomes especially apparent in the contrast between what is economically, demographically and in terms of settlement patterns a strongly urbanized metropolitan region—Vancouver-Seattle-Portland—on the one hand and the dominance of bioregionalist ecologically founded imaginaries and narrations of pristine nature between the Pacific and the Rocky Mountains on the other hand. This contrast, though it has been described as "one of the enduring paradoxes of modern western civilization" (Bunce 1994, 1)[12], in this region is particularly striking in that highly diverse groups of actors make use of it in their attempts at narrative and imaginative constructions of regional identities based on landscape. This emphasis on nature in the region may well be part of the deeply ingrained symbolic geography both of Canada and the US, according to which "the West" is thought of as "wilderness," a

[12] For the phenomenon of rural imaginaries especially in strongly urbanized societies, cf. Bunce generally.

profoundly "naturalized" symbolic geography which may also contribute to accounting for the split between lived urban reality and imagined rurality.[13]

Conclusion: Imaginaries of Landscape, (Bio-)Regionalism and the Naturalization of Borders and Communities

While especially economic regionalism needs a "sense of place" and the affective relation to a shared regional identity, the concrete elements of the construction of cross-border regional identities are highly conflictive in regard to their imaginary and material dimensions. As we have seen, most constructions of a cross-border region and of a regional identity inextricably link regionalism with landscape, narrative and indigenous traditions and in one sense or another work by means of the "assertion of space as a source of meaning" (Castells 1997, 124). Castells' view on the connection between transnationalism and ecological endeavors is pertinent here. Speaking of the ecologists' aim of creating "*a new identity*, a biological identity, *a culture of the human species as a component of nature*" (Castells 1997, 126, italics in the original), Castells comments:

> This socio-biological identity does not imply a denial of historical cultures. Ecologists bear respect for folk cultures, and indulge in cultural authenticity from various traditions. Yet, their objective enemy is state nationalism. This is because the nation-state, by definition, is bound to assert its power over a given territory. Thus, it breaks the unity if humankind, as well as the interrelations between territories, undermining the sharing of our global ecosystem. (Castells 1997, 126)

In contrast to the ability of this new ecological identity to "be easily superimposed on multifaceted, historical traditions, languages and cultural symbols" (Castells 1997, 126), ecological conceptions are here more specifically used precisely to *construct* a new regional identity.

Linking cultural identity to a "natural" habitat is a powerful strategy to stabilize the identitarian construction in that identity is thus naturalized. This raises the question whether the construction of a new regional identity founded on bioregional categories leads to a homogenization of identities. An essentialized regional identity may well be argued to lead to processes that make invisible other, especially migrant identities. It may even foster racist attitudes: There is some evidence that imaginaries of pristine natural landscapes in Cascadia for a white urban middle class—otherwise not clearly demarcated as a group in Cascadian discourses—may function as a form of compensation for what they perceive as the "threat" of an ethnicization of urban life in metropolitan areas marked by a strong influx of Asian immigrants.[14] Interestingly, even those

[13] Cf. Love, who argues that in the American West, "nature continues to occupy a much larger place than it appears to in the eastern and urban imagination" (1992: 196).

[14] For indications of racism-motivated imaginaries of Cascadia in the 20th century, cf. Sparke (2005). There is further evidence in blogs and discussions forums, cf. www.discovervancouver.

seeking to commodify multiethnic cityscapes in the interest of promoting the region occasionally fall back on the rather revealing rhetoric of "floods" of immigrants: "We also share an openness to Asian, as well as European, influences. … Indeed, immigration—particularly of Asians, who have flooded into Vancouver, and to a lesser extent, Seattle and Portland in recent years—has become a major influence in Cascadia" (Schell/Hamer 1995, 144).[15] Class-based conflicts, too, can be made invisible in the discourse of a new emerging regional identity, as they disturb the image of a harmonious eco-system and of an economically successful region.

In summary, our findings here lead us to take a third position in between the affirmation of borders as boundaries between nation states on the one hand and the claim that borders are dissolving in the global community. We here see the material and discursive multiplication of borders. While international borders in some places appear to lose importance, they reappear in more dynamic, less locally circumscribed and graspable, but often ethnically connoted form—as borderlands, checkpoints and margins of society *within* the state, as is the case with the urban citadel (Marcuse 1997; cf. Das/Poole 2004, 17). Thus, here as elsewhere, we see how cross-border regions create new borders *within* the region and how they cover up internal lines of demarcation (as in ethnic segregation in Vancouver or Seattle), thus foiling the official Canadian policy of multiculturalism and further complexifying the issue of identities and of borders in the Americas.

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com/forum/Mexican-People-Vancouver-Latelyt293166.html [11.5.2009]. For racism in the region, cf. Egan (1990, 253).

[15] Interestingly, Sparke (2005), otherwise highly critical of Schell and Hamer's booster rhetoric, appears to overlook this.

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