

# EXCAVATING THE FUTURE IN CASCADIA:

## *Goeconomics and the Imagined Geographies of a Cross-Border Region*

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The historical accidents that shaped the division of the Hudson's Bay Company's Oregon Territory and that resulted in the purchase of Alaska, detached from the "Lower Forty-Eight" by a sovereign state in between, have no bearing on the economic realities of the region, which has become known as Cascadia. The national and state borders that cross the land between the Arctic Ocean and Oregon's southern border are simply political artifacts, hiding a harmony of interests and opportunities that makes Cascadia as meaningful an economic entity as California.

Michael Goldberg and Maurice Levi<sup>1</sup>

Like Manchester in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and New York and Los Angeles in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Cascadia may be the "shock city" of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But it will not be shocking in the old ways.

Robert Geddes<sup>2</sup>

**T**he claim that Cascadia is as meaningful an economic entity as California carries within its bold pre-emption of the future an indication of the imagined geographies on which this much touted cross-border region has been built. This indication is buried in Goldberg and Levi's own explicit assessments of the "economic realities" shared by British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon. However, even

<sup>1</sup> Michael A. Goldberg and Maurice D. Levi, "The Evolving Experience Along the Pacific Northwest Corridor Called Cascadia," in *Enterprise for Americas Initiative*, ed. Roy Green (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 99-119, at 99. A shorter version of the same article was also published as "The Evolving Experience Along the Pacific Northwest Corridor Called Cascadia," *New Pacific* (Winter 1993): 29-32.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Geddes, ed. *Cities in Our Future* (Washington, DC: Island, 1997), 148.

the short quotation from the two University of British Columbia economists can be excavated for clues as to what is behind the Cascadian project. Their emphasis on economic opportunities, their suggestion that Canadian sovereignty on the West Coast amounts to a “historical accident,” and their insistence that the national borders dividing the region “are simply political artifacts” all give some indication of the wider mindset out of which the economic promotion of Cascadia has sprung over the last ten to fifteen years. In this article I argue that this mindset and its associated assumptions about the end of the nation state need to be understood as a form of *geo-economics*. This neologism, which I adapt from more strategic usages elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> serves to name new forms of describing and inscribing territory that are increasingly common in the context of globalization – forms of description and inscription that treat spatial relations with the same top-down, view-from-nowhere, visual preoccupations of classical geopolitics but that are also characterized by a wholly different, *non-state-centric* identification with the border-crossing cartographies and deregulatory dynamics of today’s transnationalized economies. It is because Cascadia has been promoted through precisely these kinds of geo-economic gestures that it might justifiably be understood, in Geddes’s language, as a “shock city.” Put another way, I am arguing in what follows that whatever shock city-region status Cascadia may have attained is attributable to a localized form of millennial geo-economics.

Illustrative of the shift from geopolitics to geo-economics, the promoters of Cascadia often seek to allay British Columbian fears about the loss of Canadian sovereignty by downplaying the geopolitical nature of their cross-border regional construction. In this way they argue that it is not a fixed and spatially fixing vision and that it does not in any sense constitute some new autonomous state, let alone a new member state of the United States of America. Charles Kelly, for example, the Canadian publisher of *The New Pacific* (one of Cascadia’s main promotional organs before it went defunct), insisted to a reporter: “We’re not talking about political union here.”<sup>4</sup> Likewise, Alan Artibise, the foremost Canadian academic promoter of Cascadia,

<sup>3</sup> See Edward N. Luttwak, “From Geopolitics to Geo-Economics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce,” *National Interest* 20 (1990): 17-23; and idem, “The Coming Global War for Economic Power: There Are No Nice Guys on the Battlefield of Geo-Economics,” *International Economy* 7/5 (1993): 18-67.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Robert Gilbert, “Erasing National Borders to Build a Trade Region,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 20 July 1992, A9.

ends his long essay “Cascadian Adventures” by quoting two US promoters, Paul Schell and John Chapman, to the effect that:

[Cascadia] is a shared notion, and one in active evolution. We’re still inventing ourselves as a regional culture. Cascadia is a recognition of emerging realities, a way to celebrate commonality with diversity, a way to make the whole more than the sum of its parts. Cascadia is not a State, but a state of mind. But a state of mind can have important practical consequences.<sup>5</sup>

Not a state, but a state of mind, then, Cascadia is in this way presented as a fluid, evolutionary, and quite plastic notion capable of morphing into different shapes and sizes according to the particular needs of particular “practical” visions. Reflecting this plasticity, mappings of Cascadia range from depictions of a narrow “main street” running from Vancouver south through Seattle to Portland and Eugene; to the two-state, one province agglomeration of British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon; to a much larger, more grandiose vision of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, including Alaska, Alberta, Montana, and Idaho (see Figure 1).

Such mappings of variously scaled partnerships may well be strategic insofar as they reflect specific projects aimed at shared economic development, but they are not geopolitical in the traditional sense of representing areas of influence, zones of danger, and fields of conflict. In this formal respect, my argument therefore concurs with the claims of the promoters, and the first section following this introduction seeks to explain what is distinct about the geoeconomic fashioning of the region by briefly contrasting the nineteenth-century geopolitical dispute over the “whole of Oregon” with today’s far more pacific and comfortable conversations about Cascadia’s hidden harmonies. Understood, however, not as a geopolitical formation but as a geoeconomic one, the contemporary construction of Cascadia represents a neo-liberal, market-oriented, anti-state transmutation of what is generally understood as democratic political sovereignty.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Alan Artibise, “Cascadian Adventures: Shared Visions, Strategic Alliances, and Ingrained Barriers in a Transborder Region,” paper presented at the symposium, *On Brotherly Terms: Canadian American Relations West of the Rockies*, University of Washington, Seattle, 1996, p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> “Neo-liberal” has come to be used in recent social science treatments of globalization as a bracket term for the whole panoply of deregulatory, decentralizing, privatizing, and market liberalizing policy measures associated with free trade. The *American Heritage Dictionary* cites the following quotation from Jonathan Alter as part of its definition: “Old liberals esteem big institutions (except big business); neoliberals disdain bureaucracy and champion

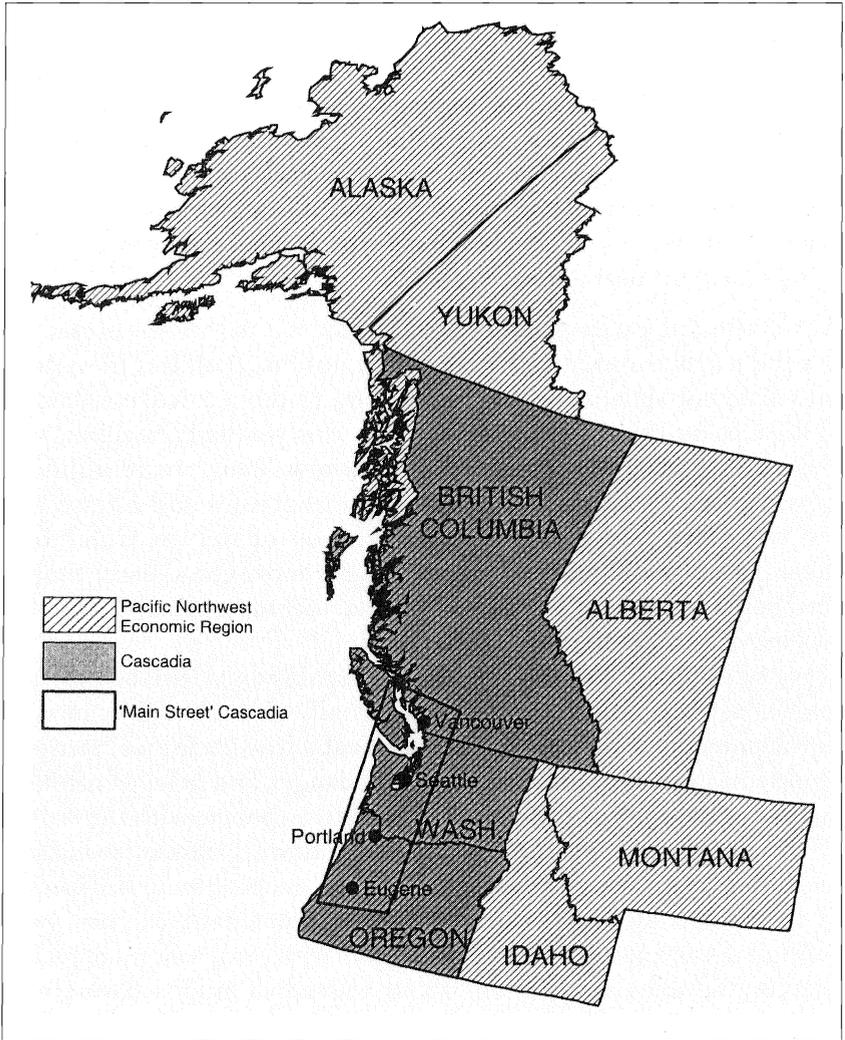


Figure 1: Cartographic visions of Cascadia (compiled in this map by the author).

Indeed, Kelly followed up his assertion to the reporter that Cascadia does not represent a political union with a statement suggesting that, for him, politics itself represents the problem against which Cascadia is conceived as both reaction and solution. “We both have capitals 3,000 miles away that don’t consider our interests a priority,” he said,

the entrepreneur.” It might be noted, however, that neo-conservative leaders such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher also pursued and, in many ways, led the advance of neo-liberalism, all the while combining it with support for socially conservative and militaristically aggressive policy making.

linking the rationale for Cascadia with the neo-liberal common sense that decentralized development autonomous from national governance is a natural good.<sup>7</sup> Such comments and inferences reflect a broader pattern of argument shared amongst Cascadia's promoters. They repeatedly argue that the region embodies the spirit of globalization and, in particular, the spirit of the neo-liberal dogma of smaller, less interventionist government. Yoked to the spatial supposition that Cascadia's eclipse of the 49th parallel will enable it to capitalize on the benefits of free trade, the resulting geoeconomic argument asserts that, because British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon have all shared a similar experience of historical alienation from faraway federal capitals, they are all inclined to distrust big government. Bruce Agnew, for example, the director of the Cascadia Project at the conservative, Seattle-based Discovery Institute, put it like this: "We are finding borders and national government policies increasingly irrelevant and even crippling."<sup>8</sup> Or, in the words of David Johnson, US Consul to Vancouver and a participant in some of the early 1990s meetings on Cascadian cooperation, "[t]his area is unified by a common hatred of their central governments."<sup>9</sup>

The references to shared alienation from national governments in Washington, DC, and Ottawa are only one part of the geoeconomics underpinning the promotion of Cascadia. Many other such appeals – all of them stressing border-transcending commonalities and opportunities in the context of free trade – are buried in the debris of the cascading conferences, books, promotional pamphlets, and business magazines that were dedicated to Cascadia in the 1990s. As well as attracting other academics,<sup>10</sup> and the attention of mainstream policy-

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Gilbert, "Erasing National Borders," A9.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Vincent Schodolski, "Northwest's Economy Defies National Borders: History, Trade, Climate Define Vibrant Region," *Chicago Tribune*, 1 August 1994, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Jim Francis, "Cascadia Isn't Just for Dreamers Anymore," *Sunday Oregonian*, 20 September 1992, R4.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example: Don Alper, "The Idea of Cascadia: Emergent Transborder Regionalism in the Pacific Northwest-Western Canada," *Journal of Borderland Studies* 11, 2 (1996): 1-22; Joachim Blatter, J. "Cross-Border Cooperation and Sustainable Development in Europe and North America," mimeograph, *Fakultaet fuer Verwaltungswissenschaft*, Universitaet Konstanz, Germany, 1996; Thomas Courchene, "Globalization: The Regional/International Interface," *Canadian Journal of Regional Science* 18, 1 (1995): 1-20; David Edgington, "Trade, Investment and the New Regionalism: Cascadia and Its Economic Links with Japan," *Canadian Review of Regional Science* 18, 3 (1995): 333-56; Larry Swanson, "Emerging Transnational Economic Regions in North America Under NAFTA," in *The Impact of NAFTA: Economies in Transition*, ed. M. Hodges (London: LSE, 1994), 64-95; Scott Relyea, "Trans-State Entities: Postmodern Cracks in the Great Wesphalian Dam," *Geopolitics* 3, 2 (1998): 30-61.

oriented think tanks like the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,<sup>11</sup> this material was picked up and carried along in popular media outlets ranging from *BC Business* to the *Economist* to the *Atlantic Monthly* to the *Seattle Times* to the *Christian Science Monitor*.<sup>12</sup> In an attempt to unravel the meanings of these materials, the second half of this article focuses, in turn, on three interlinked modes of imagining the region. Following the example of Mike Davis's brilliant excavations of "the future in Los Angeles," I argue that the promotional projects work in part by using a series of imagined geographies to envision a natural future for the region out of a succession of supposedly natural histories.<sup>13</sup> Thus, just as Davis shows how the economic *meaning* of southern California was built upon obfuscatory visions of diversely dark, multicultural, and golden capitalist landscapes, so, too, I argue, can an archaeology of the "economic meaning" of Cascadia unearth overlapping imagined geographies (albeit rather more green ones) held together as a form of anticipatory geoeconomy of the future.

#### NOT GEOPOLITICS, BUT GEOECONOMICS

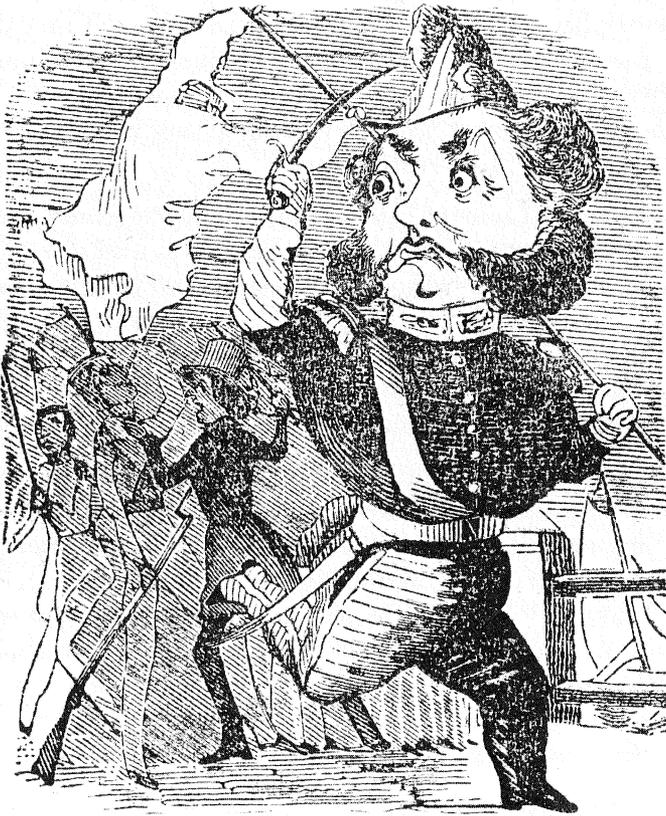
Reader, you perceive that little spot of earth back of that gallant officer to the right hand, that looks like a saddle of swine, or the lower extremities of a man cut in half; well that's the whole of Oregon, including hills, hollers, rocks, rivers, vallies, ponds and prairies, wild-woods and wild-cats, wild-opinions and wild Indians, bears and buffaloes, that's the figure of the leetle spot about which there is so much legislation, negotiation, speculation, comboberation, preparation, declaration, disputation, roundaboutation, emigration, fabrication, explanation, little moderation, consternation, humbugation, confederation, including a firm determination of Uncle Sam's nation to defend every station, from all molestation, or innovation, subjugation, or separation up to 54 degrees and 40 minutes, in which the entire twenty-seven states will second him.

*Fisher's Comic Almanac*, 1847

<sup>11</sup> Demetrious Papademetriou and Deborah Meyers, "Of Poetry and Plumbing: The North American Integration Project," paper presented to a workshop entitled Managing Common Borders: North American Border Communities in the 21st Century, held at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> See C. Hathorn, "Cascadia: A Regional Partnership," *BC Business*, September 1993, 31-42; "Welcome to Cascadia," *Economist*, 21 May 1994, 52; Robert Kaplan, "Travels into America's Future," *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1998, 37-61; Bruce Agnew, "Connecting Cascadia's Communities," *Seattle Times*, 14 July 1998, 17; Elaine Poterfield, "Emerging Cascadia: Geography, Economy Bring Northwest Cities Ever-Closer," *Christian Science Monitor*, 26 July 1999, 3.

The comic picture beneath which this American *Almanac* epigraph ran features a strange flag-turned-map of the “Whole of Oregon.” The flag-map is held aloft by the sword-waving figure of “the gallant officer,” who, presumably, is meant to be President Polk bravely defending “every station, from all molestation, or innovation, subjugation, or separation up to 54 degrees and 40 minutes” (Figure 2). To anyone familiar with the mutating mappings of Cascadia, the “little spot of earth” depicted by this billowing but river-defined region looks quite similar. Although it would never be described by its contemporary promoters as “the lower extremities of a man cut in half,” Cascadia nevertheless is likewise evoked by supposedly natural commonalities:



**54-40,  
THE WHOLE OF OREGON OR NONE.**

Figure 2: Fisher's Comic Almanac graphic, Special Collections Division, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle, WA, negative #uw18216.

hills; rocks; rivers; valleys; ponds and prairies; wildwoods; and even, as we shall see, objectified Natives who are rendered part and parcel of Cascadia's natural history turned natural future. Moreover, the playful description of the 54-40 struggle with the British for the "whole of Oregon" seems equally pertinent today. However, in stark contrast to the mid-nineteenth-century posturing and diplomacy between the United States and Great Britain over where to draw the border, today's struggles in and about the region are not geopolitical. The tirade against John Bull that followed in the *Almanac's* jeremiad is not only anachronistic, but also discordant when compared with the 1990s Cascadian mantra of "cooperating locally in order to compete globally."<sup>14</sup> Instead of the border-fetishizing slogan with which the jeremiad closed in 1847 – "remember the sons of the great 76 will take nothing short of 54-40" – the promoters of Cascadia wax eloquent about a borderless world. Here, for example, is a representative quotation from Paul Schell (now the mayor of Seattle), writing in 1995 with John Hamer, a fellow of the Discovery Institute:

The lines imposed over 100 years ago have simply been transcended by contemporary cultural and economic 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 twentieth-century realities of the nation-state, with guarded borders and nationalistic traditions are giving way.<sup>15</sup>

Schell and Hamer's argument is paradigmatic of what I am referring to as geoeconomics. I cannot discuss here the theoretical differences between my critical usage of the term and its more strategic and state-centric operationalization by the US defence intellectual Edward Luttwak.<sup>16</sup> For him, basically, it is just a name for what he sees as the now dominant forms of inter-state rivalry conducted through commerce. By contrast, I am using geoeconomics as *a name for more generalized struggles over positionality in the global economy, struggles that deploy spatial tropes and arguments to advance the interests*

<sup>13</sup> Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> Bruce Chapman, "Cooperation Not Competition, Key to Cascadia Region Success," *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, 14 June 1996, A16.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Schell and John Hamer, "Cascadia: The New Binationalism of Western Canada and the U.S. Pacific Northwest," in *Identities in North America: The Search for Community*, ed. Robert Earle and John Wirth (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1995): 140-56, at 141.

<sup>16</sup> For this, see Matthew Sparke, "From Geopolitics to Geoeconomics: Transnational State Effects In the Borderlands," *Geopolitics*, 3, 2 (1998): 61-97.

of particular cities, regions, and continents. It is not that Luttwak ignores such struggles, he simply does not think through the challenges they pose to the foundational assumptions – including the normativity of the nation state – of modern geopolitics. To describe the challenges posed by geoeconomics, as well as to register the different contexts of its emergence and distinct modes of spatial representation, I have developed the following table of contrasts (see Table 1). The table is designed only to expedite the presentation of my theoretical argument. It should not be viewed as a historical statement designating a strict temporal passage from one era to another. Much more could be said about the implications of these contrasts for considering how state power and diverging scales of governance can and should be theorized in the context of different rounds of globalization.<sup>17</sup> Certainly, geoeconomics is consistent with a wider turn towards free market-led and market-oriented entrepreneurial development and policy making.<sup>18</sup> But the article would have to be much longer to address the diverse ways in which these tendencies are given quasi-academic justification in the geoeconomic platitudes of contemporary business gurus like Kenichi Ohmae (who says, for example, that at the millennium we are witnessing the end of the nation state, the rise of region states, the increasing importance of nodality in globe-spanning networks, and so on).<sup>19</sup> Here, I will simply note that, whereas today's

<sup>17</sup> For this, see Bob Jessop, "The Regulation Approach, Governance and Post-Fordism: Alternative Perspectives on Political-Economic Change?" *Economy and Society* 24 (1995): 307-33; Gordon MacLeod and Mark Goodwin, "Reconstructing an Urban and Regional Political Economy: On the State, Politics, Scale, and Explanation," *Political Geography* 18 (1999): 697-730; Ngai-Ling Sum, "Rethinking Globalization: Rearticulating the Spatial Scale and Temporal Horizons of Trans-Border Spaces," in *Globalisation and the Asia-Pacific: Contested Territories*, ed. Kris Olds (New York: Routledge, 1999), 129-45; Erik Swyngedouw, "Neither Global Nor Local: 'Glocalization' and the Politics of Scale," in *Spaces of Globalization*, ed. Kevin Cox (New York: Guildford, 1997), 137-66.

<sup>18</sup> See David Harvey, "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation of Urban Governance in Late Capitalism," *Geografiska Annale* 71B (1989): 3-17; Bob Jessop, "The Entrepreneurial City: Re-imaging Localities, Redesigning Economic Governance, or Restructuring Capital," in *Transforming Cities: Contested Governance and New Spatial Divisions*, ed. N. Jewson and S. Macgregor (New York: Routledge, 1997): 28-41; and Erik Swyngedouw, "The Mammon Quest: Glocalization, Interspatial Competition and the Monetary Order: The Construction of New Scales," in *Cities and Regions in the New Europe: The Global-Local Interplay and Spatial Development Strategies*, ed. R. Dunford and K. Kafkalas (New York: Wiley, 1992): 39-67.

<sup>19</sup> Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation-State: The Rise of Regional Economies* (New York: Free Press, 1995). But for a detailed critique of Ohmae that reads his arguments against Luttwak's, see Sparke, *Geopolitics to Geoeconomics*. In addition, see Gerard O. Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); and idem, "At the End of Geopolitics? Reflections on a Plural Problematic at the Century's End," *Alternatives* 22 (1997): 35-55.

TABLE 1  
*Contrasting Geopolitics with Geoeconomics*

GEOPOLITICS	GEOECONOMICS
<i>BOTH GEO-GRAFICAL DYNAMICS INVOLVE PROCESSES OF:</i> Managing complex changes through territorial representation, thereby spatializing political-economic processes and struggles, <i>BUT...</i>	
Origins in the end of empire	Origins in the end of the Cold War
Develops at a time of declining free trade and increasing national autarchy	Develops at a time of increasing free trade and decreasing national autonomy
Reflects struggle between territorial states over hegemony <i>over</i> the world system	Reflects struggles for nodality <i>within</i> a global hegemonic system within which the United States has imperious but not fully imperial dominance
Theoretically propounded by writers linked to the military: e.g., Halford Mackinder Friedrich Ratzel	Theoretically propounded by writers linked to business: e.g., Edward Luttwak Kenichi Ohmae
Demarcates the domestic and foreign with a language of sovereignty, allies, and enemies	Blurs the foreign/domestic distinction with a language of “intermestic” politics, perforated sovereignty, and joint ventures
High politics focused on dominance and alliance-building for “security”	High politics focused on competition and partnering for “economic leverage”
Employs spatial assumptions of neatly nested and compartmentalized scales from city to nation to globe	Employs spatial assumptions about networks that relativize discrete scales and accelerate scale jumping between the global and local
Idealized subjects: citizens and soldiers	Idealized subjects: customers and investors
Territorial imaginary organized around blocs, nation states, and boundaries like the “iron curtain”	Territorial imaginary organized around nodality, region states, and linkages like “the web”
Fixates on borders, frontiers, and place	Fixates on borderlessness, networks, and pace

geo-economic posturing about cross-border regions like Cascadia takes place within a context where borders are in fact fixed, stable, and agreed-upon, old geopolitical struggles such as the one over the “Whole of Oregon” took place within a context where it was precisely the lack of a fixed and stable border that was at issue.

As Jeremy Mouat has pointed out in a canny Canadian gloss on Patricia Limerick’s argument that western (read, western US) history is “a story structured by the drawing of lines and the marking of borders”:

the forty-ninth parallel is one of the more significant western structures. And yet it began as an imaginary line, born of Euclidian geometry and geopolitics, most notable for the way in which it imposed European definitions of space on the landscape of the Pacific Northwest.<sup>20</sup>

Only gradually, shows Mouat, “did this imaginary line become real.” Focusing on the actual geopolitics of the boundary dispute itself, Daniel Clayton documents with great nuance the different ways in which international diplomacy initiated this “realization” of the 49th parallel in what was effectively a blurry borderland of conflicting geographical imaginations.<sup>21</sup> “The diplomatic correspondence about the Oregon Territory,” he also notes in an earlier essay, “illustrates that distinctions between fact and fiction, truth and error, [were] made rather than given. Geopolitical meaning was fluid, and British and American claims to Oregon were not adjudicated from any single point.”<sup>22</sup> Out of this geopolitical flux, nevertheless, came the fixity of the border established in the treaty of 1846. “The Oregon Treaty,” argues Clayton, must therefore be seen as “a rationalization of 70 years of spatial experience, an attempt to press a range of geographical meanings onto a map that solidified who owned what and where.”<sup>23</sup> It is, of course, precisely such solidification that Cascadia brings into question. This inversion is instructive, I think, because both moments “point to global economic forces that have painted over regional distinctions.”<sup>24</sup> But while the nineteenth-century geopolitics created

<sup>20</sup> Jeremy Mouat, “The Forty-Ninth Parallel: Defining Moments and Changing Meanings,” paper presented at the Region in Transition Conference at Oregon State University, Corvallis, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Daniel Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Clayton, “Whole Kingdoms for the Sake of a Harbour: Why Britain Lost Oregon,” *Columbia* (Spring, 1995) : 38-44, at 44.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

a border by deploying an “abstract spatial language of rapacious monopolies, hunting grounds and ports of call [that was] devoid of explorers, traders and natives,”<sup>25</sup> today’s Cascadian geoeconomics seeks to “bulldoze the border”<sup>26</sup> by deploying an abstract spatial language that downplays internal regional distinction by imagining geographies that are, ironically, chock-full of touristic explorers, foreign traders, and commodified Natives. In other words, while the geopolitical abstractions that produced the border were of the classical Cartesian and modern kind – preoccupied with universalistic projections of space, property, and nation – the geoeconomic envisioning of trans-border regionalization, by contrast, employs postmodern gestures of abstraction. These gestures abstract particular local details into the symbolic currency of commodified global exchange. They still involve attempts to press a range of geographical meanings onto maps, but today these maps are used to niche-market the region in global circuits of investment and consumption rather than to divide it up in the interests of imperial and, on the US side, national manifest destiny.

It might still be protested that the promotion of Cascadia as a special sort of networked gateway or world-class region represents less a general trend towards something called geoeconomics than a creeping Americanization of West Coast political speech and practice. In this sense, the historical reference is not so much the geopolitics of the “Whole of Oregon” as the Peace Arch, the large white monument built, appropriately enough, by a Seattle entrepreneur on the 49th parallel between Blaine and White Rock. Peaceful like the Peace Arch, Cascadia may thus be interpreted as deploying the symbols of common roots – “Children of a Common Mother” is the inscription on the south-facing side of the Peace Arch – to project a common future, while the architecture on which the symbols are placed reflects a proprietary American ambition. Leonard Evenden and Daniel Turberville note in this regard that even the classical motifs of the Peace Arch may be read as an Americanism.<sup>27</sup>

Yet with such tendencies noted, it should not be forgotten that there has rarely been a shortage of willing British Columbians eager to embrace these border-transcending projects. As Don Alper points out in a valuable overview of contemporary Cascadian projects, even back in 1869 a group of pro-annexationist British Columbians signed

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Schell, “Bulldozing Borders,” *New Pacific* (Summer 1990): 5-10.

<sup>27</sup> Leonard Evenden and Daniel Turberville, “The Pacific Coast: Borderland and Frontier,” in *Geographical Snapshots of North America*, ed. Donald Janelle (New York: Guildford, 1992).

a petition that “bear[s] a remarkable likeness to the current discussion of what binds the region:”<sup>28</sup>

It would result [say the petitioners] at once in opening to us an unrestricted market for our produce, bring an influx of population and with it induce the investment of capital in our (mining and forest) industries. It would insure us regular mails and communication with the adjoining states and territories and through them with the world at large. It would lessen the expense of government, by giving us representative institutions and immediate control of our domestic concerns.<sup>29</sup>

Likewise today, it has been British Columbians like the UBC economists cited in the introduction who have most enthusiastically promoted Cascadia. Another example is the following, almost spiritual, evocation of the region from the *BC Business* magazine:

Cascadia is neither a place nor a feeling. It’s a rite of passage, a sign of maturity. To seek this braver, newer world, a British Columbian would look not on a map, not in his shrivened or competitive heart, but in his bank account – economic man’s most sacred place.<sup>30</sup>

It has also been yet another Canadian voice, that of Alan Artibise, that has done most to bring a scholarly tone to this call for a braver, newer world. Before he recently left to take up a position in St. Louis, Artibise founded the Vancouver-based Cascadia Planning Group and, from this authoritative-sounding office, repeatedly articulated the natural future of Cascadia’s economic development in the urban planning language of sustainable development. “The Cascadia Region,” he says in a typical rendition of his argument,

offers a spectacular array of natural and built environments, with wilderness coexisting in relative harmony with sophisticated urban centres. Its geography has few boundaries, and while the international border has produced two different cultures, the citizens of the Region have much in common. The Region is increasingly attracting attention, for the quality of life and relative prosperity it offers.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Alper, *Idea of Cascadia*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Bruce Buchanan, untitled essay, *BC Business*, September 1992, 36–7. See also Ben Parfitt, “The Believers: Cascadia Boosters Share Their Visions of a Region Taking Shape,” *BC Business*, September, 1993, 35–42.

<sup>31</sup> Alan Artibise, *Opportunities for Achieving Sustainability in Cascadia* (Vancouver: International Center for Sustainable Cities, 1994).

The appeals to the special human-environment harmonies of Cascadia are notable not only because of the way in which they serve geoeconomically to downplay the international border, but also because they reenact – whether wittingly or not is unclear – earlier environmentally inflected geographical imaginations of the region. In this respect it should be noted that probably the most significant historical precedent for the present promotion of Cascadia is neither the Oregon Boundary struggle nor the building of the Peace Arch but, rather, an early twentieth-century attempt at city-region boosterism that was articulated in the language of environmental determinism. In 1924 the Seattle Chamber of Commerce published a booklet: *In the Zone of Filtered Sunshine: Why the Pacific Northwest is Destined to Dominate the Commercial World*.<sup>32</sup> While the title used the American language of the Pacific Northwest, the accompanying map shows a pencil circling the same Cascadian core region dubbed “mainstreet Cascadia” by the promoters today (see Figure 3). Moreover, the explanation of the region’s special destiny, its natural future, is delineated by the author, Erwin Weber, through direct appeals to natural history and, in particular, to the region’s climate. “Intense and prolonged sunshine,” Weber explains, “is detrimental to the highest human progress ... The most energetic human types and highest and most enduring civilizations have evolved in the cloudiest region of the world, Nordic Europe.”<sup>33</sup> Extending this racialized model of environmental determinism to North America, Weber asserts that the Pacific Northwest, with its limited sunshine, was another of the Earth’s “few favored regions” – a region “which possesses all the basic requirements necessary and desirable for the development of the most virile types of humanity, and the highest attainments of civilization.”<sup>34</sup> Citing early twentieth-century environmental determinists such as Ellsworth Huntington, Weber then presents page after page of climatological data, all with a view to clinching his point that the region, thanks to its clouds and rainfall, has a special destiny as a White site – a “natural” base from which the White races can pursue their “natural” talents for conquering the commercial world.

Today’s neo-liberal boosters of the region would no doubt be horrified by Weber’s scientized racism; instead, with a view to articulating Cascadia’s special destiny as a center of Pacific Rim trade, they often

<sup>32</sup> Erwin L. Weber, *In the Zone of Filtered Sunshine: Why the Pacific Northwest Is Destined to Dominate the Commercial World* (Seattle: Seattle Chamber of Commerce, 1924).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

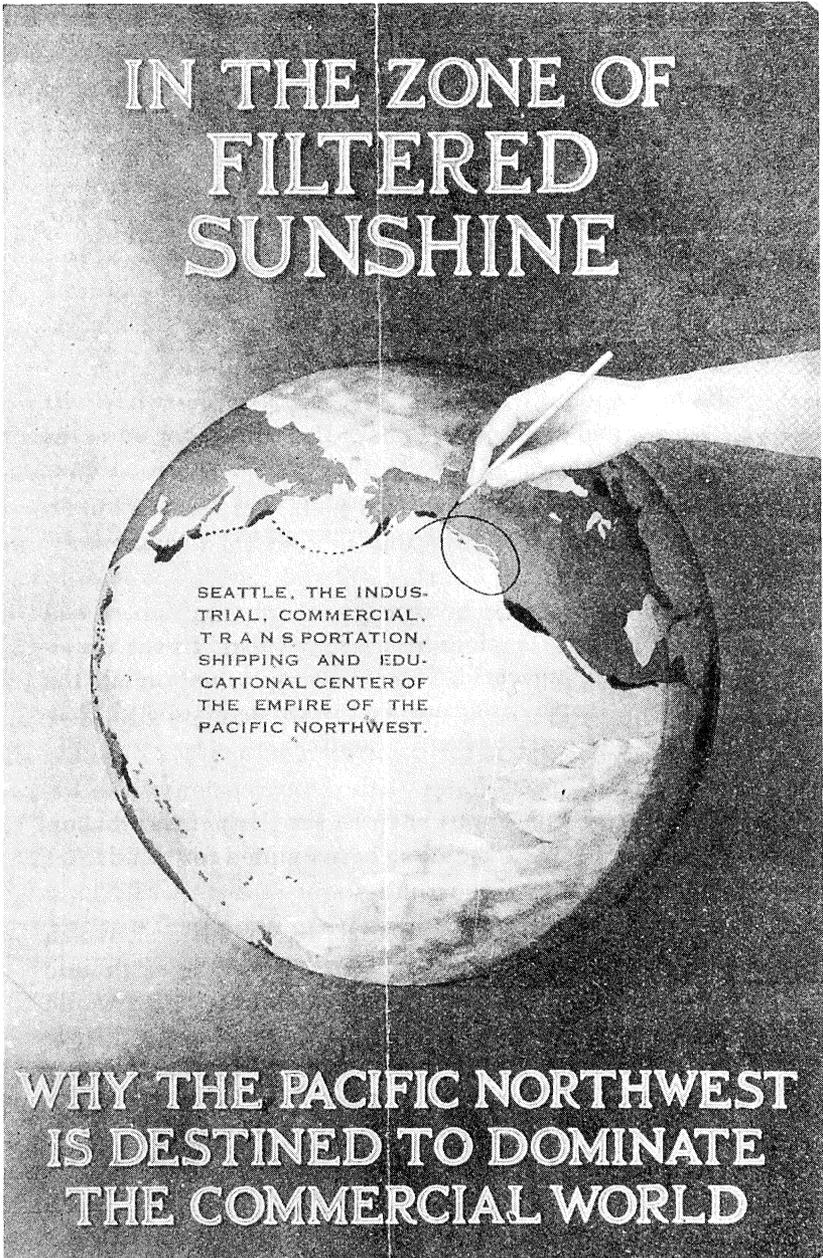


Figure 3: Seattle Department of Commerce pamphlet cover from 1929, Special Collections Division, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle, WA, negative #UW17081.

invoke descriptions of the region's cultural diversity, albeit, as we shall see, sometimes putting race to commercial work in arguments that Cascadia's Asian-Americans and Asian-Canadians provide a pool of go-betweens for trans-Pacific trade. Nevertheless, in terms of the environment, the appeal to nature as a basis for arguing that the region has a special and natural future remains as strong as it was in the 1920s. Today the appeal is based less on charts of climatological data than on the symbolic manipulation of the Cascade mountains, their rainforests, and salmon-filled rivers. In this respect it is important to note the displaced origins of the name and space of the booster's economic Cascadia in an ecotopian vision of the region. This vision has its own imagined geography of an integrated bioregional polity within which the inhabitants are envisioned as ultimately living in harmony with an integrated ecosystem. Initially, evoked as the site of environmentalist resistance in Ernest Callenbach's book *Ecotopia*, the ecotopian vision linked northern California with Oregon and Washington and was not transnational.<sup>35</sup> Later, with the publication of Joel Garreau's *The Nine Nations of North America*, a less literary and less politicized ecotopia stretched from Monterrey through western Canada to Alaska.<sup>36</sup> During the 1980s this sweeping transnational region was redrawn by Seattle-based bioregionalist David McCloskey, who produced maps of a more ecologically grounded transnational region based on the watersheds of the Cascade mountains and their rivers.<sup>37</sup>

These relatively autonomous environmentalist imaginings of the region are far from history. Bioregional mappings continue to be produced, there are ongoing discussions about a North Cascades cross-border international park, and there are environmentalist websites such as *Cascadia Planet* devoted to the bioregional vision and its eco-centric politics.<sup>38</sup> However, as William Henkel noted in an early critique of the more boosterish Cascadian constructions, the *eco-logics* of these bioregional visions have been coopted into the *eco-nomics* of the boosters' Cascadia. "It is strange," remarks Henkel with irony, "when fiscal conservatives start employing the language and labels once used by a dispersed group of radical bioregionalists, but if crossing the border

<sup>35</sup> Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston* (Berkeley: Banyan Tree, 1975)

<sup>36</sup> Joel Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981).

<sup>37</sup> See also David McCloskey, "On Ecoregional Boundaries," *Trumpeter* 6, 4 (1989): 127-31.

<sup>38</sup> See P. Schoonmaker, B. von Hagen, and E. Wolf, *The Rain Forests of Home: Profile of a North American Bioregion* (Washington, DC: Island, 1997).

is the goal, an evocative symbol like Cascadia may well be the ideal Trojan Horse.”<sup>39</sup> “This [new] Cascadia is all business,” noted the *Sunday Oregonian*, in a report on a regional cooperation conference that also noted the provocative re-use of the name. “The suits are conservative, and the talk is pragmatic. Out in the parking lot, the cars are German all right, but they’re not Volkswagons. These people can afford to drive Mercedes and BMWs.”<sup>40</sup>

Building upon, yet simultaneously paving over and even driving over, the earlier ecotopian imaginings of the region, the promoters of “mainstreet” and other economic visions of Cascadia created a fundamental disjunction at the very inception of their concept of cross-border regional development. Call it cooptation, a trojan horse, a rebranding, or just a discursive innovation: the move from the ecologies of bio-regionalism to the economics of strategic regionalism established a sort of basal flux that has come to characterize all the subsequent streams of promotional Cascadian discourse. In the second half of this article I argue that the resulting basal instability of the contemporary Cascadian constructions has led to an ongoing project of geoeconomic crisis management. This project, it appears, is inevitably unfinished, with the promoters repeatedly attempting to cover over the insecure foundations of one cross-border vision with another. But holding this whole unfinished Cascadian landscape of overlapping imagined geographies together is clearly something more than “a state of mind.” Something more systemic is at work too, something that powerfully and repeatedly connects envisioned economic benefits with the actual political energies poured into border-crossing Cascadian constructions. This something, I am arguing, constitutes a decentred political-economic project to entrench neo-liberalism locally – a project that ties a geoeconomic focus on borderlessness and economic positionality with a particularly entrepreneurial approach to development and planning.

#### CRYSTALLIZING GLOBALIZATION

In 1993 the Discovery Institute, the main American promoter of Cascadia, issued a report that crisply articulated the geoeconomic rationale for the new strategic regionalism. “In the new global economy, metropolitan regions – even more than states, and perhaps

<sup>39</sup> William Henkel, “Cascadia: A State of (Various) Mind(s),” *Chicago Review* 39 (1993): 110-8.

<sup>40</sup> Francis, “Cascadia Isn’t Just for Dreamers.”

more than nations – are the key entities that compete in world markets ... These regions simply must cooperate and coordinate their efforts more closely to be competitive in the new global economy.”<sup>41</sup> The next year, 1994, saw the implementation of NAFTA and, with it, a further boost to arguments linking free trade with Cascadia’s natural trajectory and future. Increased Canada-US trade, it was averred, would bring more and more Cascadian integration. Overcoming the anachronistic obstacle of the border would release untapped economic potentialities, and Cascadia would become one of the booming gateway region states celebrated by the likes of Ohmae. (It might be noted, however, that Ohmae himself referred only to the American Pacific Northwest in his chart of examples of region states.<sup>42</sup>) John Miller, a former Republican member of Congress, put it like this in “Riding the Cascadia Express,” an opinion piece for the *Vancouver Sun*.

As the 21st century approaches we are entering the era of the region. This is not to say that nations with all their political, security, monetary and cultural concerns will not remain prominent – they will. But when it comes to economic and environmental concerns, global currents are already lifting the region into prominence. As Japanese economist Kenichi Ohmae has pointed out, sometimes the region involves part of a country – northern Italy; sometimes parts of several countries – the Asian city triangle on the Malacca straits of Medan, Penang and Phuket; or sometimes parts of two countries – Hong Kong and southern Guangdong province in China. But always the same phenomena are present: a geographically coherent market where millions of people have common economic and environmental interests, as well as large ports which provide links with the global economy. That’s Cascadia or at least the main street of Cascadia from Vancouver to Eugene, Oregon. We are an internal market of seven million people all living between the Cascade and Pacific Coast mountains, all sharing an interest in trade and the environment far exceeding our eastern and southern neighbors.<sup>43</sup>

Quite how the realization of the region would happen hardly needed to be specified. Geoeconomics à la Ohmae had already answered the question tautologically: “[region states] make such effective ports of entry into the global economy because the very characteristics that

<sup>41</sup> John Hamer and Bruce Chapman, “Lead, Follow or Get Out of the Way,” *New Pacific* (Summer 1993): 52-5.

<sup>42</sup> Ohmae, *End of the Nation-State*, 143.

<sup>43</sup> John Miller, “Riding the Cascadia Express,” *Vancouver Sun*, 18 August 1994.

define them are shaped by the demands of that economy.”<sup>44</sup> Created as a borderless market in the image of free trade, a region state like Cascadia had a privileged future precisely because of its capacity to internalize the liberalized logic of the global marketplace. Doing so, the argument ran, it would become a key node and portal in the new global networks. Such, at any rate, was the geoeconomic script, one that Cascadia’s promoters read from repeatedly. Charles Kelly, for example, typified this approach when pointing to the “obvious” benefits of greater regional cooperation and harmonization. Such cooperation and harmonization, he noted in the vernacular of geoeconomic common sense, amounted to a “New Regional Order.”

People in the greater Northwest are moving to establish some semblance of a regional order. Movement on the political scene represents a public realization that business is more and more looking to cross border opportunities. The shift, from business transactions to policy formation, makes official what many in industry and small business have known for some time – there must be greater cooperation if the region is to both compete in international markets and harmonize the area’s sometimes conflicting and counter productive policies and regulations. The benefits in the long term are obvious. In all probability, the New Regional Order will have more staying power than the much hyped New World Order.<sup>45</sup>

To date, the most graphic illustration of how the promoters of this New Regional Order envisage it as embodying globalization while evolving organically out of new high-tech business interdependencies across the border has, appropriately enough, come in the form of a business advertisement for Cellular One (see Figure 4). Owned by the Seattle-based McCaw family, who themselves have significant business interests in British Columbia, Cellular One makes a pitch to be the cellular company of choice for Cascadian business travellers. The Cellular One catchment area is shown to span the border, taking in the whole of main-street Cascadia from “Vancouver to Portlecouver.” These plays on the city names illustrate the inventiveness and lightness of touch involved in the promoters’ envisioning of the region. Such playfulness not only underlines the imagined nature of Cascadia itself, but it also illustrates the way in which the flux and plasticity of the

<sup>44</sup> Ohmac, *End of the Nation-State*, 7.

<sup>45</sup> Charles Kelly, “Midwifing the New Regional Order,” *New Pacific* (Spring 1994): 6.

# Call Anywhere From Vanscooma To Anywhere In Portlecouver.



*Cellular One's Northwest coverage area  
is over 370 miles long.*

With cellular service from Cellular One,\* your Northwest calling area represents a city over 370 miles long. That's bigger than some states.

So you can hit the road and speak with Seattle and Salem or converse with Clallam and Cottage Grove. You can yak with Yakima, talk with Tacoma, even palaver with Portland. Because Cellular One is the largest cellular service

in the country, you can banter with Boise, filibuster with Philly and discuss with Denver. And because we're expanding our coverage every day, you can talk with more cities down the road. Coverage. It's one more sound reason to consider Cellular One.

 **Cellular One**  
Making Communication Easy

For more information about cellular service from Cellular One, call toll-free 1-800-567-5355.

Figure 4: Cellular One advertisement (reprinted with permission of Cellular One).

inventive process can be put to commercial use. The New Regional Order of Cascadia, as expressed in the sound bites and paper-thin advertising imagery, crystallizes something quite elemental in the current round of neo-liberal globalization. Market-based, market-driven and market-oriented, it reaches its imaginative apogee in an advertisement for a hi-tech, border-transcending business service. No wonder, then, that the other most significant promotional use of the Cascadia name and concept has not been to launch a movement for more meaningful regional democracy but, rather, to brand a regional stock fund, the Cascadia Equity Fund, managed by the Aquila investment firm.<sup>46</sup>

A report on the Aquila mutual fund put it this way: "Some folks may just see trees, rugged mountain ranges, and a few famous companies like Boeing and Microsoft. But when Lacy Herrmann looks at the Pacific Northwest, he sees 'Cascadia,' a mythical but geographically-linked land region stretching from Nevada to Alaska."<sup>47</sup> This formula – a "mythical but geographically-linked land" – is notable both as an example of the geographical imagination at work and also for its frank acknowledgment of Cascadia's myth-like qualities. Such an acknowledgment, I would now like to argue, accords with the fact that, despite all the appeals to the impact of borderless free trade, Cascadia's promoters are unable to point to any widespread *regionalizing* impact of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (implemented in 1989) and NAFTA. Certainly, truck crossings of the border on the Cascadia corridor have increased dramatically in both directions since the start of the impacts of free trade in the early 1990s. In 1991 annual combined southbound crossings were 348,009 and annual combined northbound crossings were 285,225. By 1994 these two figures had already climbed to 434,316 and 433,858, respectively. By 1997, when the phasing in of NAFTA rules had really begun to have an impact, the same figures were 585,875 and 503,493 respectively.<sup>48</sup> But these increases in north-south flows do not indicate the rise of *regionalizing* tendencies in supply networks that cross the border and integrate Cascadia economically; instead, the trucks cross the border and then frequently drive on to many other distant places. The main BC exporters export to the whole of the United States, not just to

<sup>46</sup> G. Halverson, "Regional Road Maps Guide Some Mutual Funds, *Christian Science Monitor*, 8 October 1996, 13.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>48</sup> Figures provided by Whatcom County council of governments based on US Customs and Statistics Canada data.

Washington and Oregon, and US companies like Seattle-based Microsoft and Boeing deal more with Ontario and Winnipeg than with British Columbia.<sup>49</sup> There are few of the densely intermeshed input-output networks that have comprised the much studied agglomerative effects in regions like Silicon Valley, Baden-Wurtenburg, and the Third Italy, the other regions highlighted by Ohmae and studied by researchers of the new economic and regional geography.<sup>50</sup> In other words, while the promoters can add up the GDPs for all the component parts of Cascadia and lyricize about its economic size and clout, they cannot point to an integrated economy or even to a set of economic complementarities. With the exception of the logging industry, which is logging the forests that are supposed to give Cascadia its ecological integrity (Weyerhaeuser, a Washington-based wood and paper company, just bought out British Columbia's MacMillan Bloedel), there is only disarticulation. And in the postindustrial knowledge economy sectors, which are the most frequently touted by Cascadia's boosters, the disconnection is especially marked. British Columbia's growing film industry (dubbed "Brollywood" because of the rain and its connection to Hollywood) has almost no connection to Washington and Oregon, while Microsoft, Adobe, Amazon.com, and other Seattle-based high-tech firms (not to mention Boeing) have few, if any, links with British Columbia. Indeed, Alan Artibise noted that the main reason why the *New Pacific* went defunct as a magazine was that it could not find enough advertising revenues because companies on one side of the border or the other did not see a clear rationale in advertising *across* the 49th parallel.<sup>51</sup>

The absence of the economic integration in Cascadia that Ohmae's region states are meant to have is further confirmed by data on province-state trade. While the volume of trade between the United States and Canada is greater than that between any two countries in the world, while US trade with Canada exceeds its trade with all the countries of the European Union put together, and while, in 1998, Canada imported \$137 billion worth of goods from the United States, which was 68 percent of total Canadian merchandise imports and 22

<sup>49</sup> Although, according to Goldberg and Levi, "Evolving Experience," Microsoft did purchase British Columbia's Consumers Software because it needed the company's network management systems.

<sup>50</sup> For an overview of this literature, see Michael Storper, "The Resurgence of Regional Economies, Ten Years Later: The Region as a Nexus of Untraded Interdependencies," *European Urban and Regional Studies* 2/3 (1995): 191-221.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with the author in Vancouver, July 1998.

percent of total US merchandise exports, federal reserve bank economist Howard Wall notes that all this trade “is still small when compared with the level of trade between states or provinces within [either of the] countries.”<sup>52</sup> To make his point, Wall lists British Columbia’s trade with various states and provinces as a percentage of their gross product (see Table 2).

TABLE 2  
*British Columbia’s Trade, 1996*

TOTAL TRADE WITH BC AS PERCENT OF GROSS PRODUCT OF SELECTED PROVINCE/STATE			
Alberta	6.9	2.6	Washington
Manitoba	2.0	0.3	California
New Brunswick	2.3	0.2	Maine
Ontario	1.9	0.2	Ohio
Quebec	1.4	0.1	New York
Saskatchewan	2.4	1.0	Montana

Source: Wall 1999

The resulting table is further evidence of the absence of north-south integration, Cascadian style. These findings are also borne out in a book-length study by University of British Columbia economist John Helliwell, who shows, in great detail, what he calls a significant “border effect” in the inter-province/state trade data.<sup>53</sup> Helliwell concludes that, while the border effect has been reduced in the period from 1989 to 1996, and while trade between Canada and the United States has increased dramatically over the period, the inter-provincial trade flows *within* Canada still remained, even in 1996, far larger in value than the *cross-border* provincial-state flows once the effects of distance and economic size are taken into consideration. “That is, even after accounting for the expansion of trade between the United States and Canada in the wake of the Free Trade Agreement ... interprovincial trade linkages are still twelve times tighter than those between provinces and states.”<sup>54</sup> Likewise, with a study focused solely on the location decisions of Japanese trading companies in Washington,

<sup>52</sup> Howard Wall, “How Important is the US-Canada Border?” *International Economic Trends*, August 1999, 1.

<sup>53</sup> John Helliwell, *How Much Do National Borders Matter?* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1998).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

Oregon, and British Columbia, David Edgington found no Cascadia-wide integration and rationalization patterns in the business of coordinating exports to Japan.

Apart from Kanematsu-Gosho and Nichimen, each of the nine major trading companies had at least one office in the region's main centres. This distribution suggests that while the trade favoured Cascadia's resource hinterland, important trading functions were conducted close to the ports in each major metropolitan region.<sup>55</sup>

In other words, the trading companies replicated functions in each part of the region rather than organizing their operations in a way that might attest to a singular pattern of Cascadian economic integration.

Given the absence of Cascadian regional integration effects, one might expect the promotion of Cascadia as a site for entrepreneurial development would break down. However, it is precisely in the face of such obstacles that the flexibility and force of geoeconomics as a political-cultural discourse shows itself. While the region may not be quite the embodiment of globalization it is meant to be, while agglomerative region-state dynamics may not be materializing, and while regional governments like the left-leaning New Democratic Party of British Columbia may not be toeing the neo-liberal party line, the promotional project barely misses a beat; instead, other geoeconomic arguments are launched – arguments that link the ambitions of entrepreneurial development to other, less grandiose but more practical, projects for marketing the region as a site for sustainable business growth.

#### COOPERATING REGIONALLY TO COMPETE GLOBALLY

The slogan of cooperating regionally in order to compete globally would appear to be a commonplace of entrepreneurial planning and, as such, a measure of a growing geoeconomic consensus for strategizing regional development in many parts of today's world. However, in the case of Cascadia it has been repeated with peculiar force and with particular entrepreneurial visions of cooperation in mind.<sup>56</sup> Part of the forcefulness would seem to stem, like the ecotopian idea of Cascadia

<sup>55</sup> Edgington, "Trade, Investment and the New Regionalism," 343.

<sup>56</sup> E.g., Chapman, "Cooperation Not Competition."

itself, from an instrumental naturalism: a kind of postmodern, post-enlightenment return to the notion of living in nature, but with an utterly utilitarian approach that, ultimately, uses the notion of nature as a metaphor for the capitalist market and, thereby, lays out a geo-economic rationale for living in it, which is to say profiting and growing in it, sustainably. In this way it is said to be natural for the separate parts of Cascadia to cooperate locally and build a regional alliance in the context of global interdependencies. Here is Artibise's version of the argument:

As nations have responded to the restructuring of the global economy, natural regional alliances have been stimulated. In a North American context, for example, the Pacific Northwest/Alaska is a small player. If that regional market is expanded to include British Columbia and Alberta, however, it then ranks as one of the largest in North America. On an international scale the same principle applies. The two nations and the two regions can bring complementary strengths to the international marketplace.<sup>57</sup>

Part of the naturalism of this appeal for cooperation would also appear to spring from the logic of what might be described as a geoeconomic form of social Darwinism. The global economy is a harsh wilderness, this script seems to read, but by hanging together as a kind of bi-national regional wolf pack Cascadia can beat off the competitors and win a larger slice of planetary resources. Two rhetorics of entrepreneurial development are supported by this larger social Darwinist geoeconomics. The first is a rhetoric about developing "critical mass" in international competition; the second is a rhetoric about advertising the region's natural advantages, its ecological niche, as it were, on the global economic landscape. Both of these have come together in some of the practical development projects for attracting investment and consumption dollars to the region. In terms of "critical mass" the phrase is found frequently throughout the promotional writings on Cascadia.

Border disputes, custom duties, punitive tariffs and inter-city rivalry will pale into significance in the cold, competitive light of the new world order. Cooperation will enable the Pacific Northwest to reach critical mass and be taken seriously in a world where trade will often amount to war by another means.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Artibise, *Opportunities*, 4.

<sup>58</sup> Editorial, *New Pacific* (Spring 1992): 7.

Articulated here with geoeconomic sensitivity to the marketplace as the new field of battle, the argument also underlines the wolf-pack idea of abandoning regional rivalry in order to take on the giants of the global economy. Although some sceptics have worried about the practicability of marketing the region, they nevertheless agree with the premise that “critical mass” is needed. Glen Pascall, for example, another voice from the Discovery Institute, believes the promoters of Cascadia too quickly forget that it is products, not regions, that sell: “Yet, there is something to the boosters’ claim that making the region aware of its own critical mass in fields such as biotechnology and environmental systems can lead to cooperative joint ventures and more effective marketing.”<sup>59</sup> Part of the attraction of the “critical mass” rhetoric is its easy connection to another concept-metaphor from physics that has been displaced to the marketplace: leverage. The resulting way in which “critical mass” and “leverage” come together in the broader cooperation initiatives is illustrated in the following Cascadia Planning Group call to forge a Cascadia Corridor Corporation. “Co-operation in a corridor context has numerous, clear advantages,” the document notes under the heading “cooperating regionally to compete globally”:

- It is an effective way to add leverage to investment strategies. The rationalization of functions corridor-wide and corridor-long can eliminate redundant activities and site them in the most cost-efficient, least disruptive locations.
- Corridor coalitions on border, trade, and environmental issues can raise the Cascadia Region’s profile as a competitor for funding and can achieve collateral benefits such as improvements that serve local users as well as through traffic, and border and gateway (port and airport) staffing that encourages commodity flow through congested areas.
- A Corridor context can also create an idea sharing forum that offers leverage in innovative, comprehensive use of non-capital solutions: intelligent transportation systems, telecommuting, regulatory harmonization, work rules, and hours of operation at key facilities.
- Corridor cooperation can create a larger, more secure financial base that allows access to funding under the most favorable conditions. The benefits include stronger credit ratings, use of the

<sup>59</sup> Glen Pascall, “Delusions of Grandeur?” *New Pacific* (Summer 1992): 20.

full-range of current and evolving financial mechanisms and public-private partnerships, and the possibility of a distinctive Cascadia Corridor Corporation as a focal point for organizing the financial resources that support major investments.

- The result of corridor cooperation can make Cascadia one of the world's premier, cross-border regions, and define new economic, social, and environmental realities for the 21st Century.<sup>60</sup>

This bulleted list illustrates the connections that the visionaries see between their constructions and such practical matters as credit ratings and easing border congestion. It is also shot through with telling appeals to the neo-liberal common denominators of entrepreneurial planning; namely, eliminating redundancy, increasing cost efficiency, regulatory harmonization, and the development of public-private partnerships. Ironically – especially given the tendency to trace Cascadia's neo-liberal credentials to a history of western alienation – much of this strategic cooperation argument is aimed at the very federal governments of which Cascadians are supposedly so suspect. In the area of federal transportation funding, for example, the Cascadia Planning Group believes that applying cooperatively as a binational region will lend more credibility to its proposals for road improvements and for a high-speed rail development between Vancouver, Seattle, and Portland.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, such appeals for federal resources are not envisioned in terms of national democratic governance. They, too, like the plans for attracting more private capital, are situated in the decentralized landscape of the larger neo-liberal struggle for competitiveness. It is in this social Darwinian landscape that the concept of Cascadia's special position, or niche, comes most actively into play. Artibise and his colleagues note that

Cascadia is strategically positioned on the Pacific Rim and, in fact, is geographically closer to major Asian markets than any other metropolitan region in North America. We're also in an ideal spot to broker international business between Asians, North Americans and

<sup>60</sup> *Cascadia Planning Group*, "British Columbia-Washington Corridor Task Force," mimeo, January 1999, 3-4.

<sup>61</sup> Such hopes are not unrealistic. In 2000 the International Mobility and Trade Corridor Project announced that federal US monies had been allocated to one of the Cascadian planner's pet projects: cross-border commercial vehicle technology improvements. The announcement of this one million dollars in funding came with the note: "The project will use U.S. federal, Canadian federal, Washington State and B.C. Provincial funds to design and build a southbound information network for transmitting freight movement data to border inspection agencies for pre-arrival processing." *IMTC News*, 2000, 1: 1, p. 1.

Europeans. Cascadia is at the epicenter of the global economy, equidistant between Pacific Asia and the European Community.<sup>62</sup>

While such claims might be treated with raised eyebrows elsewhere, Artibise is nothing if not consistent in his appeal to Cascadia's special position. In 1994 he noted that: "Located on the great circle route, midway between Asia and Europe, Cascadia's ports and airports are strategically located as gateways to North America. North/south corridors support trade and travel within the Region, and with other US states and Mexico."<sup>63</sup> Schell makes the same kind of argument, adding a certain historical finesse by comparing Cascadia to the old Mediterranean city-states that historians such as Braudel have seen as key nodes of governance prior to the rise of the nation state. "As Venice once was to the Mediterranean economy, Seattle/Vancouver could become to the emerging New Pacific economy."<sup>64</sup>

This argument about being well positioned for trade around the Pacific Rim is a particular favourite of the promoters as they compare Cascadia's competitive position to California's (especially in terms of container and bulk-cargo shipping days to east Asia). Holding this argument together is the additional geoeconomic appeal to the role of local Asian-Americans and Asian-Canadians who are considered to provide the crucial services of "go-betweens" and "middlemen" in setting up Cascadia's special trans-Pacific linkages. No matter that Japanese immigrants in both British Columbia and Washington were imprisoned in internment camps in the Second World War, no matter the long legacy of anti-Chinese racism. These real commonalities north and south of the border can now be ignored, while people of Asian background can be touted as part of the "diversity" that gives Cascadia its special niche in a Pacific Rim future. As Gordon Price, a Vancouver City Council member and Cascadia sympathizer, told Robert Kaplan:

Vancouver is attracting the young of the world's most dynamic middlemen minorities ... Look at these Asian kids – many of them are sent here to study by their families. For them, Vancouver must be like Paris in the twenties – an earlier, modern capitalist culture, compared with the overnight glitz of the rest of the Pacific Rim.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Alan Artibise, Anne Vernez Moudon, and E. Seltzer, "Cascadia: An Emerging Regional Model," in *Cities in Our Future*, ed. R. Geddes (Washington, DC: Island, 1997): 149-74.

<sup>63</sup> Artibise, *Opportunities*, 9.

<sup>64</sup> Schell, "Bulldozing Borders," 10.

<sup>65</sup> Kaplan, "Tavels," 54.

The Cascadian project that perhaps best exemplifies how the appeals to the region's natural environment and critical mass converge in practical initiatives is the so-called Two Nation Vacation. Launched primarily at the instigation of the Port of Seattle with support from the Discovery Institute's Cascadia Project, the Two Nation Vacation has been passively supported by BC tourism agencies and marketed to long-distance tourists from the United Kingdom, Germany, and Australia. The purpose of the marketing concept is to twin the "natural" notion of a borderless Cascadia with the pocketbook notion that Cascadian tourists get two nations and their collective recreational diversity for the price of one long-distance plane ride. The idea now has a fair history as a favourite of Cascadia's economic promoters.<sup>66</sup> "We are competing for tourists in a global market," Artibise explained in 1995. "To maintain our market share, and indeed increase it, we can do very well by marketing a region that crosses international borders."<sup>67</sup> At a conference in June 1996 at the new Port of Seattle Conference Center in Seattle, the Two Nation Vacation concept was revitalized with the unveiling of glossy marketing posters and a magazine entitled *Cascadia: Your Two Nation Vacation Guide*. The assembled images in the poster serve at once to evoke an ancient and enduring history and a sublime naturalness in a region rooted deep in the soil, indeed, rooted naturally like the forests on the slopes of the Cascades (Figure 5). Here, the whole panoply of iconic commodification has been put together with a map that lends a sense of objectivity and, in this version, a copper-plated sense of historicity to the geoeconomic construction of Cascadia. Native peoples, waterfalls, bears, eagles, salmon, trees, and orcas are all packaged into the advertisement. While serving in this spectacularizing way as objects of the touristic gaze, they also function for the promoters as a means of fashioning a natural Cascadian future out of the region's supposed natural history. The special promotional pamphlets later produced by the promoters for tour agents reveal how the Two Nation Vacation also connects such marketing of Cascadia's special position and natural future with other appeals to the region's immigration-based cultural "diversity."

Cascadia, gateway to the Pacific North-west and the Two-Nation Vacation, consists of the American states of Washington and

<sup>66</sup> A. Webb, "Promoting the Two Nation Vacation," *Puget Sound Business Journal*, November 1995, A5.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, A5.



Oregon and the Canadian province of British Columbia. It's an advantageous location of international tourism and trade; London and Europe's other great cities are as little as nine hours away by air, and a similar ease of access by land or sea puts the rest of North America and all of the Pacific Rim virtually at Cascadia's doorstep. There's something magnetic here for a certain kind of soul ... one who appreciates natural beauty, limitless recreational opportunities, and the vibrant blend of international influences that have produced Cascadia's diverse culture and thriving economy. Many people have decided to call this region home which is a decision you'll understand once you see Cascadia for yourself. The merging of continent and ocean that defines Cascadia gives the region a diverse geographical climatic face. Waves that have traveled all the way from Asia crash on Pacific beaches, while inland – just beyond Cascadia's thousand-mile-long spine of snow-capped mountains – sun-kissed deserts and rolling farmlands are split by canyons carved during the greatest prehistoric floods in all of North America. The weather in Cascadia is as varied as the land and the people. It is entirely possible to sunbathe and snow-ski here in the course of one short visit, and today's gentle rain shower is almost guaranteed to lead to tomorrow's bluebird sky. Washington, Oregon and British Columbia. That's where Cascadia is. But once you've experienced this magical place, its going to be somewhere else as well. It'll be in your heart and on your mind ... forever.<sup>68</sup>

Clearly, here is a plan to disseminate the Cascadian “state of mind.” Monied tourists, it would seem, with their own spectacularizing approach to nature, their love of “diversity,” and their yearning for soul are envisioned in this material as constituting the future Cascadian citizens. This vision fits in well with the larger project of entrepreneurial development insofar as tourists bring money and desires that respond to price signals without the bothersome bureaucracy of democratic institutions, governments, courts, welfare systems, and so forth. However, the vision does not accord so neatly with the actual structure of intraregional relations on the ground. While tourism may well be one of the areas where the economies of Cascadia's component parts are most similar, it is also one where the geoeconomic preachings of regional cooperation are most difficult to practice. An interview with Rick Antonson of Vancouver's tourism agency in the

<sup>68</sup> *The Cascadian Traveler*, pamphlet, Seattle, n.d.

summer of 1998 revealed the following sentiments beneath the glossy appeals to regional harmony: “Cascadia and all that *Two Nation Vacation* talk is pretty much an attempt by the Americans to get a slice of BC’s international tourism pie.” Asked about whether the project could nevertheless perhaps increase the potential draw of British Columbia as well as Washington and Oregon, Antonson was more deeply critical of the project. “It hasn’t really been thought through as a business plan,” he said.

It seems more of a tactical approach they’re taking, than a strategic one. What I mean is that they are always doing these maps and brochures, you know, various “point-to” things where they can say look here’s Cascadia on the map; but there’s no long term strategic planning behind it, no serious market analysis. So we’re not against the idea, but we are still to be persuaded it’s of any use. Basically we respond to the customer base and currently we don’t see any customers clamoring for something like the two-nation vacation.<sup>69</sup>

These concerns about the failings of the Two Nation Vacation might be dismissed as the personal feelings of one Canadian tourism manager. However, the remarks about internal competition shoot to the very heart of devising a sustainable system of entrepreneurial development in Cascadia, and they cannot be so easily dismissed. Across the economic board, in sector after sector where the economies of British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon share the most, competition is fierce. The Ports of Vancouver and Seattle-Tacoma vie for each other’s container and luxury liner trade. Likewise, the airports of Vancouver and Seattle, the “gateways” to the Two Nation Vacation, are very competitive – a competition that would only be heightened if a high-speed rail link were built between the two cities (giving travellers the option of landing in either Seattle or Vancouver even when that city might not be their final destination). It is not as if the visionaries of Cascadia do not know this. Artibise, for example, is candid about the competitive stakes:

Unlike the highly integrated regional economies of the Great Lakes Region, built on the automotive and manufacturing sectors, the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia have traditionally been competitors. The ports, airports and railways serving the Region compete fiercely as gateways for international traffic to North America. With parallel resource bases, many of the region’s products

<sup>69</sup> Interview with the author in Vancouver, July 1998.

are similar, and competitive, in sectors such as forest products, agri-food, wines, and seafood.<sup>70</sup>

Indeed, some promoters of cross-border integration, such as Roger Bull, the former director of PNWER in Seattle, argue that increasing intraregional competition is precisely the point of building a main-street Cascadia. In an interview, he noted that pitting the two airports into a still fiercer competition for long-distance customers by linking them with a high-speed railway would make it easier to push through new developments like the planned third runway in Seattle.<sup>71</sup> This runway is still being fought by local communities concerned about increased noise, but Bull suspected that, with the threat of losing business to Vancouver hanging over their heads, their resistance could easily be overcome. In other sectors of the regional economy, such unabashed entrepreneurialism does not carry the same potential for neo-liberal harmony. Most notably, competition over the Pacific salmon fishery has only hampered the long-term sustainability of the industry Cascadia-wide. No other icon of the region is more frequently put to use in marketing the Cascadian landscape, yet no other aspect of Cascadian "nature" is more threatened by the increased investment and growth that are the goals of entrepreneurial development. Moreover, the salmon crisis contradicts all the geoeconomic talk about regional cooperation. As a Canadian reporter noted in 1997:

Throughout the 90s, groups on both sides of the border have worked quietly, but methodically, to establish ties and push political action on issues of mutual concern – transportation, environment, growth management and border access. But for all the behind the scenes goodwill, the public perception of Cascadia remains fuzzy, and support from political leaders is crumbling. The collapse of the Pacific Salmon Treaty and the cross-border name-calling has helped ensure that.<sup>72</sup>

Today a new, but fragile, Salmon Treaty has been developed; but in a sector in which the parts of Cascadia undoubtedly have strong economic ties and interdependencies, cooperation is elusive, even when it promises to protect the long-term survival of the most energetically border-transcending element of the Cascadian ecosystem.

<sup>70</sup> Artibise, *Opportunities*, 7.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with the author, April 1998.

<sup>72</sup> L. Pynn, "Without Politicians, Cascadia is Just a Dream," *Vancouver Sun*, 12 November 1997: A1 & A8.

Another major threat, and for a time, a particularly worrisome one for such projects as the Two Nation Vacation, has been recent US immigration policy. While in the early 1990s the promoters of Cascadia were successful in implementing expedited border-crossing lanes for frequent travellers (the PACE and CANPASS lanes), in 1996 they saw these small achievements completely overshadowed by the threat of massive border delays posed by an act of the US Congress.<sup>73</sup> The legislation in question was the 1996 Immigrant Responsibility and Illegal Immigration Reform Act, of which Section 110 ruled that all aliens, including Canadians, would have to file both entrance and exit papers when entering and leaving the United States. The sheer number of border-crossers from Canada, combined with the lack of infrastructure and the lack of inspectors, meant that the likely impact of Section 110 would have been traffic jams trailing into Vancouver and Bellingham from the border – and auguring ill for the future of a borderless world. Pushed through a Republican-dominated Congress as part of Newt Gingrich's Contract with America, and designed specifically as a conservative response to the alleged threat of illegal immigration based on overstayed visas, the section slipped into the act with few legislators knowing about it. When Republican representatives from northern border states and counties realized the embarrassing economic implications – the threat to the very north-south free trade that so many of them had previously championed – President Clinton had already signed the bill into law. For the promoters of Cascadia, it represented an unmitigated disaster. "It's more than a slap in the face," Artibise told a reporter. "It would bring business between Canada and the US to a grinding halt."<sup>74</sup>

In the years since its passage, Section 110 became a major focus of lobbying by a whole set of businesses from across the continent, including a lobby group called Americans for Better Borders. This effort was successful. Section 110 was put on hold, then rewritten so as to be effectively toothless in June 2000. In the meantime, however, the impact has been to force rearguard actions by groups like the promoters of Cascadia. This, in turn, obliged them to put on hold their other efforts to expedite border-crossings through expanding pre-clearance schemes like PACE and CANPASS, while forcing them to

<sup>73</sup> A thorough overview of the controversy is provided by Theodore Cohn, "Cross-border Travel in North America: The Challenge of U.S. Section 110 Legislation," *Canadian American Public Policy*, 40 (October, 1999): 1-70.

<sup>74</sup> Pynn, "Without Politicians."

suspend their more radical dreams of bulldozing the border altogether. Perhaps these efforts will now be revived,<sup>75</sup> but in the meantime the shine has been taken off Cascadia as a model of localized transnational cooperation. Yet even while plans for regional cooperation and coordinated policy making have been overshadowed by competition and discordant national policy, other environmentally inflected entrepreneurial imaginings of regional identity have glossed over the crisis.

#### POSTINDUSTRIAL ENVIRO-DETERMINISM

The last and perhaps most superficial of all the modes of imagining the geography of Cascadia as a site for entrepreneurial development emerges as a geoeconomic form of environmental determinism. When the practical projects of cooperation have broken down, promoters have always been able to return to the ecological imaginings from which they first took the Cascadian template. However, this return is rooted in the connections of capitalism as much as it is rooted in the ground. Like the environmentally determinist arguments that underpinned geopolitical concepts of the early twentieth century, these imaginings also naturalize a political-economic project. But unlike, for example, Mackinder's heartland, with its links to imperialism and ideas about resource industries and the potential for supporting war making, the geoeconomics of Cascadian environmental determinism are conceived in postindustrial and post-Cold War terms. It is not, however, post-capitalist – far from it. The goal of the promoters is to invoke a set of entrepreneurial possibilities rooted in the soil. Here is another quotation from an article in the *New Pacific*.

Across the Pacific Northwest, from Burnaby to Boise, from Corvallis to Calgary, high-tech companies have sprouted up like mushrooms in a rain forest, emerging from the lush soils of the region and attracting an inflow of technical talent from across the continent. Cascadia is not yet the heart of the technology world. But as the glow in Silicon Valley fades, it's right where the high-tech sun is rising. And it has what many regions wish they could replicate: a natural environment where entrepreneurs thrive and techies long to live.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup> See Papademetriou and Meyers, "Of Poetry and Plumbing."

<sup>76</sup> Doris Jones Yang, "Magic Mountains: Attracted by Pristine Mountain Beauty, the Pacific Northwest's High-Tech Wizards Are Aiming at Conquering World Markets," *New Pacific* (Autumn 1992): 19-23.

The aim of such claims is to present Cascadia as the perfect place for hi-tech business: perfect not just because of the position of the region or its supposed population of Pacific Rim go-betweens, but also because it provides a postindustrial recreational landscape filled with the environmental amenities that will enable the new masters of the hi-tech universe to thrive. An economic rather than militaristic project, it remains strategic all the same.

A sign of the strategic aspect of Cascadia imagined through this postindustrial, environmentally determined lens is the vision's exclusivity. Just as the circle of belonging imagined in the "diversity-rich" advertising for the Two Nation Vacation is actually comprised of monied foreign tourists, so the recapitulation of Cascadia's environment as a space for hi-tech investment and growth imagines the region state as a kind of gated community. Here, for example, is a description of what a contributor to a coffee-table photo book on Cascadia describes as the region's business "pilgrims."

[Cascadians] have seen idealistic, if feckless, communism fall, sensible but uncaring capitalism triumph, and the dawning Information Revolution threaten to wreak as much social havoc in the twenty-first century as the Industrial Revolution did in the nineteenth. They know where they want to spend the next few decades of change, and it's the same sort of place that a lot of other smart people are starting to crave: a pleasantly isolated region rich with food, water and plenty of natural resources, where they can find a good job and a nice life. That's why, although compromises will be made and growing cities will sprawl alarmingly, the dominant ethic of this region will continue to revolve around environmentalism. The New Ecotopians have seen the rest of the world. In fact they help run it. And now they've moved to the suburbs – Cascadia, that is – they'll do whatever has to be done to keep its troubles away from their neighborhood.<sup>77</sup>

It would be hard to find a better example of geoeconomics as I have been using the term. Classic geopolitical and strategic concerns are all repeated here, but they are all rearticulated in the language of the postindustrial marketplace. Cascadia, in these geoeconomic terms, becomes a suburban gated community writ large as a cross-border landscape with hi-tech business campuses, golf courses, shopping

<sup>77</sup> J. Sutherland, "Natural Selection," in *Cascadia: A Tale of Two Cities, Seattle and Vancouver, B.C.*, ed. M. Beebe (New York: Abrams, 1996), 40-3.

malls, and manicured gardens and mountains. As the coffee-table book itself made clear, Cascadia thus makes for an appealing, environmentally diverse set of photo opportunities. The book contains page after page of glossy photos, from cities to wilderness areas, all playing up similarities across the border. The resulting landscape of postindustrial similitude may well comprise an ecological concept, but it is a controlled environment made material for commercialization. Thus Paul Schell can conclude, without any sense of contradiction: "Cascadia is the ultimate in the environment experience coupled with shopping."<sup>78</sup> Indeed, the late 1990s saw the publication of that prototypical, post-industrial, environmentally aware recreational commodity – a gardening book entitled *Cascadia: Inspired Gardening in the Pacific Northwest*.<sup>79</sup> The related ambient sense of depoliticized environmental sensitivity is captured by Artibise. "For Cascadians," he says, "environmentalism has become a sort of secular religion. Residents might not always do the right thing, but they do know when they or someone else has sinned."<sup>80</sup>

This vision of Cascadia has sent academic commentators in different directions. Some repeat the exclusivity of the vision even as they critique its commercialism, while others point to the contradictions between sustainable business growth and a sustainable environment. Thus, on the one side, Loretta Lees concludes that "the problem with this ecotopian image is that it is attracting too many immigrants to cities on both sides of the US-Canada border."<sup>81</sup> On the other side, Wallace and Shields note that:

The selective silence of the Cascadian myth is ... well demonstrated in the tensions that exist within the built environment. Vancouver has emerged over the past twenty years as an archetypal, second tier "world-city" ... But the rapid economic growth and the influx of off-shore wealth have [led to such challenges to the utopian picture as] astronomical housing costs, increasing polarization of household income, suburban sprawl, growing incidence of automobile-induced smog, and political paralysis.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Webb, "Promoting the Two Nations Vacation."

<sup>79</sup> A. Lovejoy, *Cascadia: Inspired Gardening in the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: Sasquatch, 1997).

<sup>80</sup> Artibise, "Cascadian Adventures," 12.

<sup>81</sup> Loretta Lees, "The Pacific Northwest: Rural Backwater to Urban Ecotopia," in *North America: A Geographical Mosaic*, ed. F. Boal and S. Royle (London: Arnold, 1999), 239-48.

<sup>82</sup> Ian Wallace and Robert Shields, "Contested Terrains: Social Space and the Canadian Environment," in *Understanding Canada: Building on the New Canadian Political Economy*, ed. Wallace Clement (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 386-408.

This second critique, however well taken, misses the way in which the promoters repeatedly combine the exclusivist concerns expressed by Lees with candid acknowledgments of “the negative externalities of growth” in order to mobilize support for the very cross-border infrastructural development projects that integrated cross-border businesses would want. Artibise’s articulation of this utilitarian syllogism is exemplary. After noting that the region’s quality of life and relative prosperity are attracting increased attention, and that the resulting in-migration is contributing to rapid urban growth, he makes a case for a Cascadian transportation corridor:

The impetus for these [Cascadian corridor] initiatives has come from traffic gridlock in the metropolitan centres, long delays and congestion at the border crossings. There is a growing awareness that rapid urbanization throughout the Region is placing severe stresses on the transportation systems, and that bi-national co-operation is essential to attract federal funding and support for the Region.<sup>83</sup>

Clearly this kind of argument is flexible.<sup>84</sup> It can tolerate the absence of actual cross-border economic integration and can even tolerate policy-making differences on either side of the border. But it, too, ultimately rests on a massive contradiction: that throughout these imaginings of cross-border development the notion of sustainability is repeatedly reduced – as in the discourse of entrepreneurial development throughout much of the rest of the world – to the project of sustaining private business development with public monies. Geoeconomics offers no way out of such contradictions, but it does offer a way of keeping them in play in a cross-border region such as Cascadia, enabling its promoters to backstep and sidestep repeatedly in order to restart the project once again.

## CONCLUSIONS

More than just a state of mind, Cascadia is, at the least, a complex congeries of many states of mind and vision. Furthermore, the resulting imaginations of the cross-border region clearly have practical

<sup>83</sup> Artibise, *Opportunities*, 10.

<sup>84</sup> Indeed, it should also be noted in this regard that Artibise himself earlier applied the same logic to Greater Vancouver to advance exactly the same kinds of projects at the metropolitan scale. See the critique of this by the urban geographer Katharyne Mitchell, “Visions of Vancouver,” *Urban Geography* 17, 6 (1996): 478-501.

consequences. They may not fit with actual developments in the regional economy, they may de-politicize and transmute the ecologies of the region into imagined economies of cross-border redevelopment, and they may face numerous discordant policy-making obstacles on either side of the border. However, repeated again and again through different geoeconomic registers, they have proven to have a remarkable staying power through the 1990s and into the new millennium. As a result, they are indeed practical in the sense that they provide local policy makers with a set of initiatives and ideas predicated on market-friendly neo-liberal sensibilities that are difficult to ignore. This, it seems, is the ultimate end of the stream of Cascadian constructions: a reservoir of images and ideas that will serve to advance and legitimate a panoply of neo-liberal initiatives well into the coming decade. Perhaps in the end Cascadia really will become the integrated cross-border economy that its promoters envision. If this does happen, it will increase the competitive pressures for regional cooperation, thereby further threatening with "harmonization," "efficiency," and "rationalization" the actual ecosystems and lifeways that once provided the outlines for a dream of ecocentric governance.

To put this argument back in the register of the debates over the changing nature of geopolitics, Cascadia does not signal the end of the nation state; rather, it represents a set of loosely articulated strategies that serve to entrench at the sub-national level the kinds of policy shifts towards neo-liberalism that free trade regimes have introduced at the supra-national level. As I have shown, it does so in part by appealing to a constructed natural history of the region, a natural history that is then put to work entrenching a natural future for neo-liberalism in local cross-border space. Excavating the imagined geographies of this future at least enables us to see how the neo-liberal common sense of sustaining business development is being put in place. By continuing to study this actual place (rather than the one that is geoeconomically envisioned) other imaginings of its future can, one hopes, become realized instead. In this respect, it should be emphasized once more in closing that, while the economic visions of Cascadia took their regional template from earlier ecological imaginings, the ecoregional and bioregional visions still persist. Many groups, including the People for Puget Sound, the Georgia Strait Alliance, and the Northwest Ecosystem Alliance, continue thus to imagine other alliances and futures for the region. They too may well represent a challenge to national sovereignty on either side of

the 49th parallel, but an investigation of this challenge calls for more research and another paper.

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