

# LEADERSHIP SERIES

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**P**overty.  
Urbanization.  
Inequity.  
Unmanaged  
population growth.  
Poor environmental  
management.  
Unfavorable global  
challenges of oil, food  
security, housing, and  
other basic needs.



## The Gospel of Bioregionalism

By Francis E. Gentoral

Everyone has to wrestle with these issues. In practical terms, a growing number of people are recognizing that in order to secure the food, clean air and water that we need to healthfully survive, we have to become guardians of the places where we live. We are now sensing the loss in not knowing our neighbors and natural surroundings, and are discovering that the best way to take care of ourselves and to get to know our neighbors is to protect and restore our places.

This is the idea of bioregionalism, a thinking that originated in the works of Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann in the early 1970s. Bioregionalism recognizes, nurtures, sustains and celebrates our local connections with land, plants and animals, springs, rivers, groundwater and oceans, air and community traditions, indigenous farming and trading systems.

It is taking the time to learn the possibilities of place. It is a mindfulness of local environment, history, and community aspirations that leads to a sustainable future. It relies on safe and renewable sources of food and energy. It ensures employment by supplying a rich diversity of services within the community, by recycling our resources, and by exchanging prudent surpluses with other communities and regions.

Bioregionalism is working to satisfy basic needs locally, such as education, health care and self-governance. The bioregional perspective recreates a widely shared sense of regional identity founded upon a renewed critical awareness of and respect for the integrity of our ecological communities. People are joining with neighbors to discuss ways we can work together. Security begins by acting responsibly at home.

Bioregionalism is a comprehensive “new” way of defining and understanding the place where we live, and living in that place sustainably and respectfully. The essence of bioregionalism has been reality and common sense for native people living close to the land for thousands of years, and remains so for human beings today.

Bioregionalists are lifelong students of how to live in balance with our eco-communities. We recognize that we are part of the web of life, and that all justice, freedom and peace must be grounded in this recognition.

Bioregionalism re-connects us into the living biosphere through the places where we live. Bioregionalism acknowledges that we not only live in cities, towns, villages and countryside; we also live in watersheds, ecosystems, and ecoregions. The awareness of those connections to the planet is vital to our own health and the health of the planet. By discovering our connections to the planet, we find a context for our lives to grow in. This context allows us to find ways to live sustainably in our settlements while at the same time provides us ways to nurture and restore the more-than-human community that surrounds us and which we are dependent on in so many ways.

I feel that the face of Metro Iloilo and Guimaras has changed significantly over the past few years. There is a potential to use bioregionalism to shape the region's future by embracing, in a balanced way the three elements of sustainability: economic, environment and social. Integrating all three will be critical to maintaining the region's standard of living and quality of life. Metro Iloilo and Guimaras faces a number of often-interrelated economic, environmental and social issues, and the sustainability framework is a useful way to think about and to address these challenges. To date, however, the discussions in Metro Iloilo has been preoccupied with investment attraction, coal power and, to some extent, infrastructure concerns, with some attention given to the environmental underpinnings of a thriving city region. Yet, public services, the social and economic safety net, health care, education, and culture all rely on strength in the environment.

Sources:

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