



Journey of the Global ARC 2010

*Bridging
Sustainability Solutions
Across the Urban-Rural
Divide*

On Sunday, September 12, 2010, The Global Action Research Center (aka, The Global ARC) celebrated the successful conclusion of a two-month, 1800-mile Journey by bicycle from Vancouver, Canada to Tijuana, Mexico. The closing celebration included storytelling, sustainability exhibits, organic local food, music and dancing in the beautiful Institute of the Americas plaza located at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). UCSD's Urban Studies and Planning Program, Center for US-Mexican Studies, Calit2, Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies, Superfund Research Program, Sustainability Solutions Institute, plus Superforest.org sponsored the event. On display at the celebration was the Journey's follow on support vehicle: a converted 28' motor home with solar panels on the roof, solar water heater, composting toilet, rain water collection system, interior space retrofitted with all green building materials, small spice garden, composting pile with worms, and an engine that runs on used French fry oil and other forms of biodiesel fuel. Quite the rig!

Over the course of 1800-mile Journey, July-Sept 2010, we made stops in 18 cities, many rural towns, tribal lands, and hinterlands spanning 75 watersheds along the west coast of North America. The Journey's film crew video documented a wide range of municipal, university, regional and community-based sustainability initiatives in Canada, the USA and Mexico. We did over 40 in-depth video interviews and action packed site visits focused on food, water, land, energy, the built environment and transportation. Considering

the rising importance of multimedia in communication and social change, we launched our Journey from Professor Leonie Sandercock's Cosmopolis Laboratory at the University of British Columbia, School of Community and Regional Planning. Leonie and her colleagues, including Maged Senbel, are doing an excellent job using multimedia and participatory methods in planning practice and research. We are grateful that they hosted our Journey's very first stop.

The Global ARC's use of multimedia and storytelling situates community-based solutions in their local contexts. At the same time, we are careful to relate localism to larger challenges emerging at regional scales (e.g., watershed and foodshed management) and global scales (e.g., climate change adaptation). Whenever we probed for the degree of global mindedness among those doing local, place-based projects, we nearly always got a robust and detailed response. Some of those we interviewed expressed concerns about global issues ranging from climate change, energy, flows of invasive species across national borders, and the globalization of disease vectors. Others expressed concern about the complexities of global demographic shifts and multiculturalism, accelerated flows of capital investment/disinvestment, the globalization of knowledge, and the need to pool learning across boundaries. Based on the anecdotal evidence we gathered there seems to be a much more sophisticated understanding of global dynamics emerging among many progressive front-line organizations struggling to improve quality of life and place.

The Journey of The Global ARC's video and supporting documentation provides a comparative perspective across diverse landscapes and cultures (coastal, foothills, inland valley, urban, rural, and tribal). We have stories, interviews, and place-based action shots involving community gardens, stream restoration, bicycle advocacy, green building,

constructed wetlands, alternative energy, fisheries, farming, forestry and working landscapes. I hasten to add, however, that only 10% of our video, image and data archives is processed (i.e., transformed from raw unedited stuff into multimedia products that are accessible, user-friendly, and integrated within a meaningful framework). The 10% we've managed to process thus far, on a very limited budget, can be seen inside The Global ARC's YouTube Channel, Vimeo Channel, Flickr Photo Gallery, and sustainability database. We are now seeking funds to do justice to this material. These resources will help us advance the ARC's long term mission to promote self-reliant, yet globally-minded, bioregionalism. One of our key objectives is to help institutions of higher education engage more directly with communities in need worldwide.

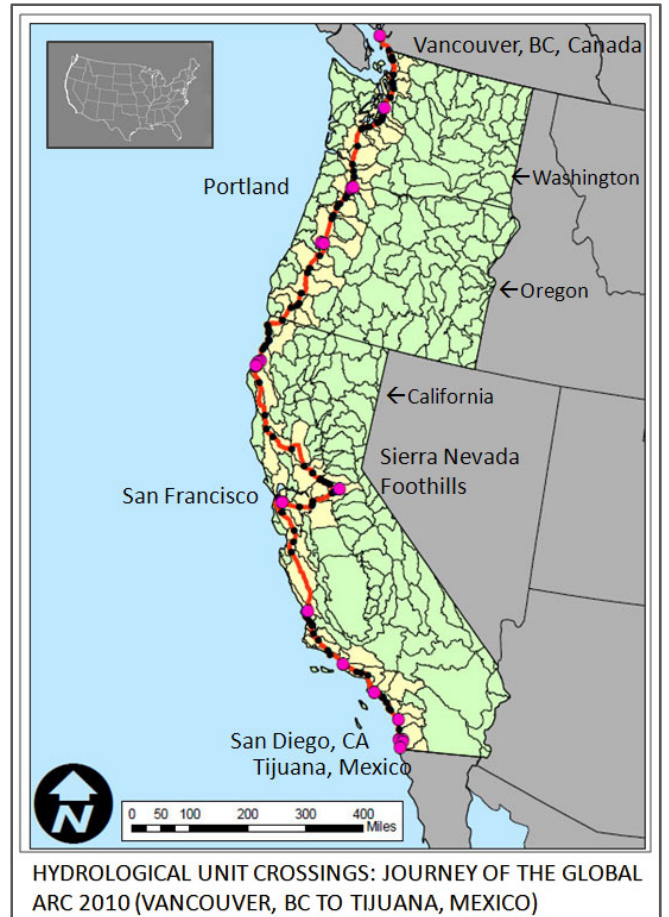
* The Global ARC : <http://theglobalarc.org>

* Sustainability Solutions Database:

<http://www.theglobalarc.org/programs/database/>

* Journey Photos:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/theglobalarc/sets/72157624940075878/>



A few Journey highlights

- Basking in the joy of folks doing community gardens, creek restoration, green art from salvaged scrap, sustainable forestry, historic preservation of rural cultural heritage.
- Bearing witness to the human drama of abandoned logging towns, depressed fishing villages, migrant farmworker camps, and urban poverty.
- Riding along the Oregon Coast –moving through misty forests to ocean views of craggy rock and steep cliffs, many uphill climbs with narrow and winding fast descents.
- Scale of the extraction economy: rock quarries, logging, fishing (mountains of oyster shells, fishing fleets, lumber mills and pulp processors, scrap yards).
- Cattle ranching,—stopping by bicycle on the roadside in the middle of a field with 1000+ cows, branded with large painted numbers like 026-A4 on their sides, all staring at me with cud chewing curiosity.
- Riding 28 miles with no development along the way, no buildings, no cell phone access, nothing but misty sky, road and trees and cliffs; Not getting run over on blind curves.
- Realizing I never need to stop at a gas station using the bicycle as my means of transportation.
- Appreciating the exquisite mechanics and efficiency of the bicycle as a machine.
- Meeting other riders, by themselves, in groups, all wanting to be outdoors feeling the wind in their face, exertion peaking their senses, making their bodies alert with a combination of survival instinct and awe for the majesty of natural wonders.



Journey of The Global ARC cyclists about to cross over from Imperial Beach, California into Mexico, Sept. 10, 2010. Tijuana, Mexico can be seen in the background over the fence. Vehicle on the right is the follow on biodiesel support vehicle mentioned in this article. Photo by Janice Pezzoli