# The Continental Compact

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The drought crisis in California is first and foremost a political crisis. Decades of public policy have created a system of massive water conveyance, fostering and maintaining a fundamental misalignment between the supply and demand of water. The untenable status quo in California is maintained through an elaborate slew of public policies, designed to support a system of water-trading between western states in areas like the Colorado River Basin.

The Continental Compact proposes to fundamentally alter the culture of water-trading: re-legislating water distribution, first in California and ultimately throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico. The new laws will be based on four principles: Don't transfer water. Do guide population growth to water. Do allow regions to shrink by attrition. Do return the river to its natural course.

California has maintained itself through an elaborate mechanism of water conveyance via aqueducts for decades. Unfortunately, the financial and environmental costs of this strategy are high. Currently the financial costs are being borne by the State and Federal governments, while the environmental costs are simply externalized, thereby delaying and intensifying their impact. This is an infrastructural shell game that California cannot win.

The Continental Compact provides a long-term solution to the contradiction that is California, incentivizing urbanism in water-rich basins near dams, rivers and deltas. The 3 types of hydro-urbanisms leverage existing water resources to create a conurbation at the scale of the river basin. Locally, each responds to the specific characteristics of its riverine, geographic and landscape environment. The hydro-urbanisms are capable of accommodating diverse programs including agriculture, residential, ecology, industry, recreation and tourism.

The Continental Compact replaces hydraulic urbanism with hydrological urbanism. Simply put, the Continental Compact stops moving water to the people and starts moving people to the water. The Continental Compact incentivizes a series of Hydro-regions, each leveraging a piece of new infrastructure in an existing water basin. The resulting megalopolis allows new water-rich urbanism to grow over a period of one hundred years. Conversely, it allows existing water-poor urbanism in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Phoenix, and Denver to slowly shrink via attrition. The positive environmental and financial benefits of the revised policy will be significant, saving energy, reducing carbon emissions, slowing subsidence, lowering infrastructure costs, and regenerating California's deltas.

The history of Westward Expansion in the United States was an epic success, leveraging cheap land and abundant natural resources to grow the country. Things are very different today: land is expensive, resources are scarce, and state and federal governments are increasingly unable to afford the spiraling price tag associated with infrastructural obligations.

Current 2050 growth projections in the U.S. don't factor what will likely become the most critical determinant of successful urbanism: water supply. The Continental Compact re-directs growth from Mega-regions to Hydro-regions, investing in water-rich urban conurbations built around dams, rivers and deltas. The Compact re-invests the massive resources that currently support the construction and operation of aqueducts into the construction of new infrastructure to support water-rich sustainable urbanism.

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