

A TERRITORY'S IDENTITY

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To recover our national identity means, to a great extent, to make an image of the Catalan territory common and public, But, how are we to draw this image? It has been well-known since the beginning of history that to draw up maps is a mythical act which is only apparently testimonial. The documentary value of the Assyrian or the Pharaonic plans, or the medieval maritime charts were, more than informative guides about the disposition of the lands and seas, acts of possession and knowledge, real ideological creation. It was probably in the Renaissance when the value of cartography had its most highly theoretical moment, when plans of continents or of cities, did more than describe reality, they defined it, and were capable of inventing and proposing the universe in the very act of reproducing it.

This creative component of description is the great theoretical strength of the cartographic image. An important strength, even a key one we might say, at the present moment of our Catalan culture. Because if the whole of the Catalan territory is the unvarying image of an autonomic affirmation with no fissures, the political proposals for internal organisation do not have, for the moment, such unanimous elements on which to articulate a deliberate "arrangement" of the territory.

From amongst the acts of the *Àmbit d'Ordenació del Territori* of the *Congrés de Cultura Catalana*, a contribution of the *Laboratori d'Urbanisme de l'Escola d'Arquitectura* of Barcelona which gathered together a wide group of professionals and students, launched some basic theses regarding this subject, which were synthesized in a large exhibition of plans of Catalan cities and regions: "The identity of the Catalan territory: the *comarques*." The maps, drawn up and published as an atlas, were, due to their scale and detail, a little known expression of the territorial structure of our regions. That is, an inventory vision, of encyclopaedic compilation. The imagining of the territorial idea of Catalonia poses basic problems with a cultural foundation: to build a culture upon an extensive foundation, with the critical capacity to select the past, and with a long term view in its criteria of development and usefulness; like a new illustrated attitude, which may be required by the special historical adventure of culture in our country. It is not accidental, therefore, that the contribution of the University to Catalan Culture tends to be, rather than an immediate resolution of problems, the formulation of objectives and the proposal of methods which might help to attain —we hope!— our long-term cultural future.

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