

THE IDEAL REGION

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When one manipulates a series of plans of regions in order to make up, by means of the composition techniques of "collage", the ideal shape of a territory, an exercise of discipline is possible which seeks to value and establish relations between fragments of different regional realities.

From the exhibition of plans presented by the *Congrés de Cultura Catalana* in the year 1977 the plans of Segarra, Baix Ebre, Anoia, Maresme and Baix Penedés have been chosen. The uniformity of size and dimensions of the regional units described, the common scale which has been used for all and the homogeneity in the description and in the representation make these plans of the shape of the territory into an extensive material with which to try out and evaluate the new fictitious relationships which would exist in the ideal region.

This region is made up by taking sections which are representative of different physical realities and juxtaposing them in an effort to link the texture of agricultural small-holdings and the network organized by the systems of rural pathways, as regional substructures and nuclei of settlement.

The interest of this exercise is not so much in the finished product, the resulting particular ideal region, as in the concepts, criteria and instruments which have been taken in to account and which have allowed different situations to be recomposed and rebound. This is the reason why it is presented as a series of plans which explain the different systems which are articulated and are placed in continuity.

— The geographic insertion (1) offers a first and potent image of the region. It underlines, on the one hand, a wide inland plain broken up by irregularities of relief and crossed by a network of running water which runs together in line with the coast, at the lower edge of the plan. On the other hand an important line of mountains acts as the upper topographic limit of the new plan.

— The position of the nuclei of population (2) show the distribution and the form of occupation of the region. The main nuclei are placed in advantageous positions: near the sea, at strategic points of topographic change or inland on the plain. The paths which join these nuclei bear a series of smaller settlements.

— The fabrics (3) which organize the systems of rural paths, irrigation canals... form a system which relate the different points of the region to each other and bring us nearer to their uses and fluctuations. Along the coastal belt there is a fabric with a fishbone like structure which is perpendicular to the coast: in the inland areas on the plain these systems take on a more concentric character, like a spider's web; at the upper border of the plain the direction reinforced by the

mountainous limit is dominant.

— The textures which form the irrigated small-holdings (4) and unirrigated small-holdings (5) both contrasts and homogeneities appear when continuities are forced upon them.

— The structures (6) which penetrate and articulate different territorial forms show both the axes connecting the main urban nuclei and the directives of interregional relationship of this regional unity.

It is on the wide inland bank where the two main directions of the substructures converge: one goes from the mountain to the sea, backed up by the system of rivers and torrents which establish connections between the main urban nuclei, and the other, which is more important, runs lengthwise through the region reinforcing the littoral sense from the inland positions and permits this region to relate itself to other more central regions.

However, it is necessary to underline the great value of the textures and fabrics which, as diffused systems, relativise the objectual impact of the structural elements. The defense of the fabrics and textures is made mainly from the point of view of their syncretic capacity: a summary of present day situations and the sediment of processes of formation which can still be recognized.

This series of plans which are explanatory of elements, textures, fabrics and structures, which converge and are articulated forming an ideal region are interesting in as far as they can suggest concepts and ways of checking the transformations — so often ignored or unforeseen — which different choices of proposal produce in the constructed form of the territory.

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