Introduction: Region, or, Terms of Relation

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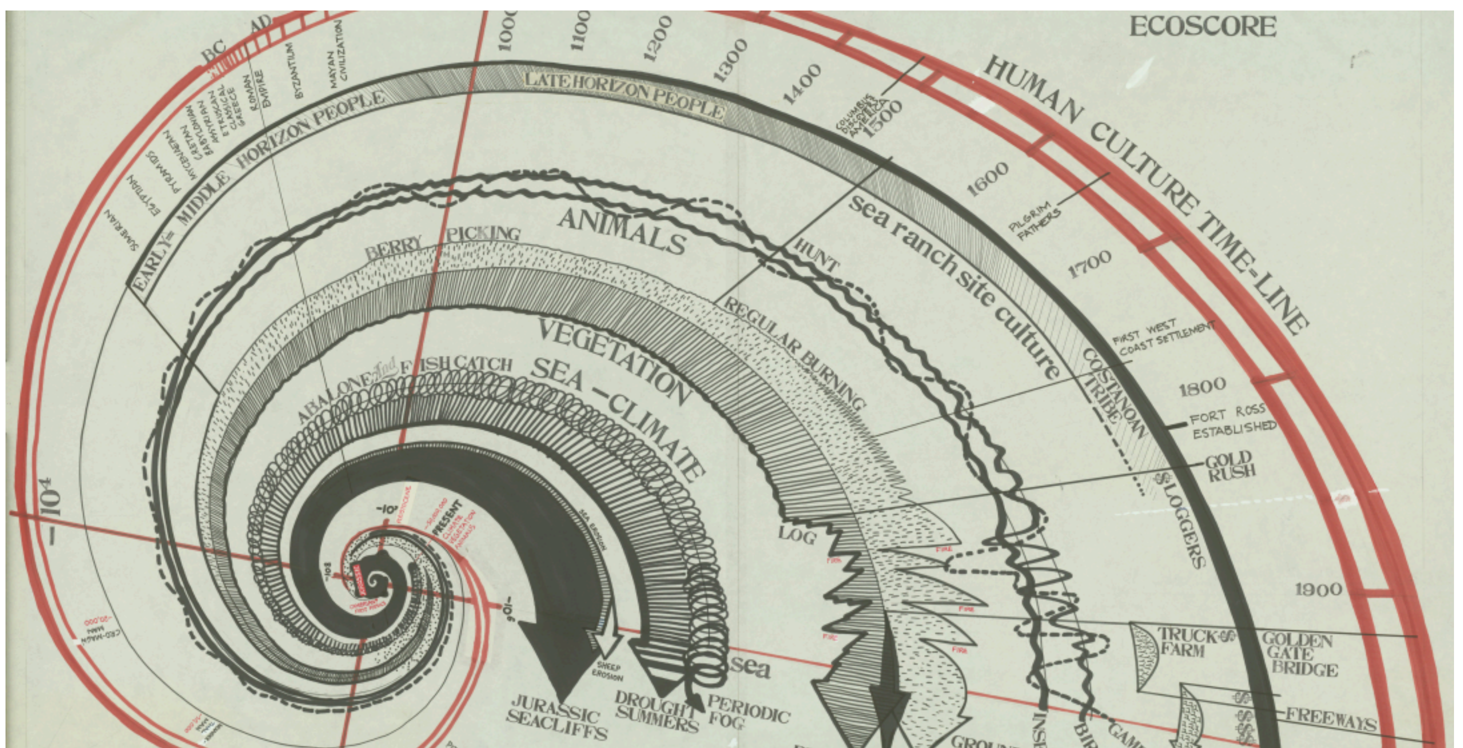

Lawrence Halprin, The Sea Ranch Ecoscore.
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> There is an evident tension within the word [region], as between a distinct area and a definite part. Each sense has survived, but it is the latter which carries an important history. Everything depends, in the latter sense, on the term of relation: a part of what?
>
> —Raymond Williams

The intellectual genealogies of the region, including specific discourses of design since the late eighteenth century, contributed to the concept's reification as a natural entity. A historical

Region, or, Terms of Relation

Somewhere between the scale of the site and the scale of the territory lies the "region:" an ambiguous term that subsumes notions of geography, ecology, economy, planning, culture, and jurisdiction. From projects for colonial "improvement," to large-scale state planning, through bioregionalist ambitions of ecosystemic balance, to decolonial struggles of self-governance and autonomy, regionalism often appears as a constant—and often unexplained—variable. How did the region obtain such a diverse following? From where does its legitimacy as an epistemic category come? And what are we to make of it as a tool of architectural expertise—a seeming lingua franca of global territorialization?

These are some of the questions framing the essays that constitute this *Aggregate* project which offers multiple avenues and examples probing how the region was historically constructed as a seemingly self-evident entity within design discourses. The project does not offer a comprehensive or definitive account, but rather episodes and moments when architecture and planning appeared to naturalize the region as a conceptual paradigm and an apparently empirical object already "out there," almost magically bringing together disparate representational elements by symbolic means—diagrams, drawings, styles, national identities, cultural movements—into seemingly coherent synthesis.

In this introduction, we trace some of the intellectual genealogies of the region as a naturalized concept and relate them to specific discourses of design since the late eighteenth century, touching on the roles of urbanism, regional planning, and architecture. As we show, as both a concept and as an analytic, the region systematically militates against clear-cut definitions, always-already inscribing other places, actors, disciplines, and associations even as it claims its own autonomy. We close the introduction with a brief gloss of our guest contributors' essays in this project.

Situated both within and beyond the nation-state, regionality is a powerful tool of spatial practice for variously subsuming or undermining administrative boundaries. Its epistemic instability offers functional stability, grounding both top-down technocratic planning as much as bottom-up claims to participation. Similar to other broad concepts linking place and politics, such as "community," the concept of the region is as vague as it is influential, mediating multiple and often heterogeneous instances and actors, including the workings of the state, geopolitical relations, diverse economic frameworks, ecological processes, myriad

interrogation of regionality as a set of techniques intimately associated with the nation-state shows how the region's ambivalences are rooted in the state's genealogy as a product of both modern colonialism and the emergence of capitalism.

articulations of technical expertise, and changes in social formations such as class, race, gender, and ethnicity.[1]

Regions appear everywhere in the humanities and the social sciences. There are "world regions," "ethno-regions," and "mega-regions," to mention a few of the term's contemporary usages.[2] According to the Marxist geographer David Harvey, the region's hypersemiotic quality lies in its capacity to encompass both material and metaphysical claims—in some discourses it "is defined in purely materialist terms (physical qualities of terrain, climatological regime, built environments, tangible boundaries) but in others it depends on ideas, loyalties, a sense of belonging, structures of feeling, ways of life, memories and history, imagined community, and the like."[3] The region's sprawling career as a concept lies in this ability to always mean both material and metaphysical things at once, while never being fully determined by either.

Following Harvey and others, in this collection we define "region" as a positivist notion typically referring to a bounded space that is techno-scientifically construed as an objective, physical-ontological reality and made governable through diverse techniques and technologies, from cartography to jurisprudence. This materialist definition, however, must be dialectically understood in relation to the notion of "regionalism," which underscores the constructivist nature of "region" as a shared, imagined, metaphysical reality—spaces produced historically through social, political, cultural, aesthetic, and ideological processes.[4] We collectively refer to both senses of region and regionalism via the generic term "regionality," or the conceptual apparatus of region-thinking. We also use the term "regionalization" to refer to active processes of region-making.[5]

The region's capaciousness, however, often obfuscates its intrinsic historicity as part of the development of the modern nation-state.[6] Indeed, the region's spatial and semiotic elasticity within and beyond the state and its mobilization for various political ends lend it to radical political imaginaries. In the United States, for example, W.E.B. Du Bois and the urban sociology that emerged in his wake have theorized the importance of understanding regional processes for Black reconstruction and for the planning of more socially- and ecologically-minded communities since the 1920s.[7] In the wake of colonialism in Africa, supra-state federations were imagined as a postcolonial challenge to the international order.[8] More recently, regionalism has been mobilized as a prominent epistemic device for framing

decolonial spatial processes—from Chiapas to Kurdistan—and as a recurring keyword in bottom-up technocratic plans at the intersection of racial, economic, and environmental justice, such as in projects for a Green or Red New Deal.[9] Given regionalism's association with emancipatory politics, it is not surprising that the term "critical regionalism," first coined by architecture historians in the 1970s, gained so much traction, even beyond the field of architecture.[10]

It is precisely regionalism's discursive ubiquity, however, that we seek to critically unpack in this project. Historians of different stripes have long thematized the ways in which both oppressive and emancipatory planning and design efforts centered around related notions of equality, community participation, or organic growth, often unwittingly reproduced the very power relations they sought to resist.[11] In the process, not only were categories such as class, race, gender, ability, ethnicity, or nationality reified *through* the region, but the attendant geopolitical relations that produced these reifications were fortified, rather than disrupted. Rather than instrumentalizing or merely asserting regionality, we propose the careful genealogical and historical work of understanding how concepts and modes of expertise such as region and regionalism co-emerged with modern architecture and planning in the first place.

This genealogical work requires a historical interrogation of region-thinking as a set of techniques of knowledge fields intimately associated with the nation-state. To do this, we need to distinguish between *the region*, as an analytic/techno-scientific category, and *regionalism,* as an ideological and cultural/aesthetic position, as noted above. The region as an epistemic category appeared only in the nineteenth century with the formation of geography as a discipline and was intricately linked with the rise of the nation state, denoting a unit of governance at the sub-national level.[12] By the end of the century, however, it grew an independent meaning, becoming a flexible territorial unit that could attach itself to manifold political and administrative boundaries, seemingly of its own accord, with its own agency. The expansion of region-thinking beyond the state to encompass climatic zones such as the tropics or the arctic, or geopolitical imaginaries of East versus West or North versus South, enabled imperial and neo-colonial expansion.[13] This paradoxical, passive agency and strategic ambiguity still holds true today, with the region at times traversing international borders to designate geo-strategic economic or military alliances, or, in other cases, serving to broaden the constellation of "the local" as a vehicle for

claiming legal rights and self-determination battles within and against the state.

Region and regionalism, therefore, belong squarely within the history of modern states, even as, in cultural theorist Imre Szeman's formulation, they "rub raw the[ir] self-certainties."[14] As Raymond Williams perceptively argued, this dualism at the heart of the concept of the region served to naturalize and bridge over the inherent disjunctions between the different parts of nation-states, while also systematically denoting the supremacy of the organic whole. Regions became intrinsically subsidiary to the state, both in an administrative sense—subject to higher, centralized political authorities—and in a cultural sense, as a term "of relative inferiority to an assumed centre."[15] As Williams noted, this hierarchy "overlaps with the important *metropolitan-provincial* cultural distinction [which] had developed from the simple political distinction: *metropolis* [and] *province*—administration or region of (conquered) territory. In the mid-eighteenth century and especially the nineteenth century, metropolitan and provincial were increasingly used to indicate a contrast between refined or sophisticated tastes or manners, and relatively crude and limited manners and ideas."[16] Yet the region's inherently subsidiary valence created what Williams called a nineteenth-century "counter-movement, attempting to make the distinctive virtues of regions the basis for new forms of identity or degrees of 'self-government'," which is what came to define the positive notion of "regionalism" in contradistinction to the larger nation-state.[17]

The gap between these two declensions of the state—regions and regionalisms; the former upholding the state as such through its constituent parts, the latter challenging the state's unitary dominance—is marked by what Williams called their uncertain and contingent "terms of relation."[18] How the state internally configures itself, whether through smooth administrative aggregation, violent external conquest, internal colonization, forms of federalization, modes of economic exploitation and dependency, or through the state's cultural recognition "of a valuably distinctive way of life, especially in relation to architecture," opens up an immense and contradictory set of self-definitions and narratives.[19] What "region" does in this context is to artificially simplify and coalesce this diversity into a seemingly homogenous epistemology of congruent parts and wholes. Yet the "terms of relation" embedded within this equation are anything but natural or self-evident. Indeed, as "possibly the most entrenched of all geographical concepts," in Harvey's assessment, the region can be understood as a

mediating cultural, scientific, and linguistic figure for *all* the possible ways in which the modern state narrates and organizes itself.[20] The region's hypersemiotic quality in relation to the state thus challenges its seeming completeness and self-sufficiency as a historical and political category.

In contrast with liberal idealizations that would equate this hypersemiosis with a positive pluralism of representation—the nation-state as a perfect mirror of political and geographic diversity—"The Region: Architectural Histories of a Naturalized Concept" shows how the ambivalences of material regions and metaphysical regionalisms are rooted in the state's historical genealogy as a product of both modern colonialism and the emergence of capitalism. As historians like Ellen Meiksins Wood and Cedric Robinson have traced, the artificial separation of the political and the economic spheres that became a hallmark of early European colonial capitalism created a need for new, mediating, cultural concepts between them.[21] The region is one such key, mediating cultural concept—a rhetorical terrain through which figurations such as "liberal democracy" or "decentralization" are rationalized and imagined.

Before the consolidation of capitalist social relations and the colonial nation-state, hybrid political-economic institutions such as religious orders, guilds, councils, and communes performed the core managerial functions in society—channeling occupations, surpluses, and the social production of meaning through labor, arts, and rituals. With the rise of capitalism and colonialism, however, a reterritorialization of both space and epistemologies took place. The exclusionary concentration of political power and capital in increasingly industrial metropolises paralleled the increasingly subservient status of rural and newly colonized places, both within nation-states and beyond them. At the same time, liberal political philosophers from John Locke to John Stuart Mill rationalized the twinned exploitations of capitalism and colonialism, fragmenting coalitions of peasants, artisans, workers, and what would later be called Indigenous and racialized peoples, as a set of logical and desirable separations between civic, social, economic, judicial, and political levels.[22] In their telling, the modern state would guarantee a harmonious integration of individual *and* collective sovereignty, without disjunctions or exclusions, within the now contiguously bounded space of the nation-state. In fact, however, tensions and conflicts over this model persisted, as shown by countless rebellions, revolutions, and wars. As Williams noted, the concept of "the region" (and later "regionalism") was born with the modern state to mark

the possibility of incorporating disparate, unruly, or ungovernable places and populations within the hegemonic conceptual and discursive apparatus of the nation-state as a sovereign, indivisible, material whole and single geographic space with clear borders.[23]

Historian Paul Kramer focuses on this disjunctively synthetic nature of the region as a mediating concept intrinsic to the rise of nation-state territoriality, arguing that regions offered modern states a particular spatial epistemology to "homogenize space, registering (and sometimes institutionalizing and tapping into) differences that either are to be exploited, or cannot be made to go away."[24] Thus, for example, the American "West" became a core economic, political, and cultural region for the ideology and project of Manifest Destiny in the nineteenth century that sought to constitute the United States as a continental empire.[25] Before the institutionalization of the nation-state form, heterogeneous and overlapping modes of governance had less use for the region as a category that classified difference.[26] In this sense, the region as a conceptual paradigm offers a kind of Rancièrian correlate to state theory —a part that has no (determinate) part in the configuration of state territorialization.[27] The region marks a deviation from state normalization and therefore can only be understood through its singularities. Paradoxically, the modern drive for states to homogenize space thus props up the region as a cipher of the state's inability to do so—a supplement that the state, as an ostensibly fully enclosed and self-sufficient entity, can never fully absorb.

This supplemental quality of the region is what makes it a productive space for the state's work "typologizing its diversities and harnessing its resources."[28] The region is not merely a space of exclusion, but a material and conceptual resource frontier that both feeds and justifies the nation-state. Kramer thus concludes that regions are historically and operationally "critical" to "the triangulation of states," giving them a particularly constructed vantage point from which to define, see, and articulate themselves in cultural, political, and economic terms.[29] Their core work, then, is as devices for producing state relationality as such.

Regionalization and Regionality

How does the region produce state relationality? The two strands of regionality, or region-thinking, alluded to above help to refine this question further: "region" as an objective, material, physical-ontological reality; "regionalism" as a

shared, imagined, metaphysical reality. This division can be further unpacked if we consider how feminist geographer Doreen Massey and her co-authors outline the two interrelated aspects of region-thinking: first, they claim, regions and regionalisms are "constituted out of spatialized social relations—and narratives about them—which not only lay down ever-new regional geographies, but also work to reshape social and cultural identities and how they are represented."[30] Secondly, they argue, the mobilization of region-thinking through various disciplines is "always done for a purpose, with a specific aim in view. Whether theoretical, political, cultural or whatever, there is always a specific focus … 'regions' only exist in relation to particular criteria. They are not 'out there' waiting to be discovered; they are our (and others') constructions."[31] Following this dual formulation, the essays in this project underline not only the constructed character of regions, but also their inherent instrumentality. Building on Massey and collaborators, we argue that regionalism cannot be dissociated from the purposeful, utilitarian, utopian, and at times cynical deployment of the region as a constructed object for particular ends.

To highlight the embedded instrumentality of "region" and "regionalism," we propose the terms *regionalization* and *regionality*—the former referring to *active processes* of region-making; the latter to the *conceptual apparatus* of region-thinking—as critical lenses to interrogate the terms' implications with state or colonial power, as well as their historical construction to mobilize various political aims. Regionalization and regionality are discrete, historically-developed devices and fields of study. Though these terms are just as enmeshed with positivist and constructivist dialectics, attention to them as active spatial and epistemic processes can help to show how they came to structure the seemingly self-evident notions of *region* and *regionalism*. These processes have roots in fields including economics, geography, landscape, ecology, and history, among others—and they are entangled with the ways in which such fields of knowledge and their devices were mobilized and produced within particular geopolitical conditions.

As a terrain of academic and governmental discourse, the rise of *regionality*, the conceptual apparatus of region-thinking, became hegemonic in the postwar period after the violent geopolitics of empire had resulted in multiple neocolonial conflicts over territory and genocides since the late nineteenth century, culminating in two world wars.[32] In this context, regionality came to be seen as offering a more sober, social-scientific set of knowledges to explain and

rationalize dynamics across geopolitical and geophysical phenomena—a scientifically-grounded epistemological pluralism to offset the chauvinistic blood-and-soil nationalisms of the interwar period. Regionality thus became a vehicle for regrounding geographic knowledge from essentialist characteristics tied to race and nation, to a set of seemingly aseptic, factual bases and relativistic forms of identitarian attachment. Thus, the promise of regionality was to safely organize the state's geographic heterogeneity while maintaining two key dynamics: the romanticism of place and identity implicit in the metaphysical idea of *regionalism*, and the potential for instrumentalizing geographic knowledge through expert analysis and policy. This marked a new bargain between political power and geographic epistemologies, one grounded in the region as a plane of negotiation among competing interests that implicitly hedged against the risks of conflagration inherent in both great power politics and secessionist, anti-colonial, nationalist movements.

The conceptual apparatus of regionality was amenable to this capacious role because it accommodated methods of cultural analysis as much as functionalist approaches to geography, thus combining the apprehension of regions as both aesthetic *and* empirical social, economic, and ecological phenomena. This conjunction between regionality as an aesthetic, cultural field of study on the one hand, and as the core "base" for economic and social analysis on the other, has also affected the design study fields, from Lewis Mumford's regionalist syntheses to J. B. Jackson's social histories of landscape, all the way up to contemporary debates about the distinctions between vernacularity, landscape, architecture, and planning.[33] Indeed, regionality, perhaps more than any other area of spatial inquiry, points to the recursive links between design fields and political epistemologies. This doubling of design *as* politics, or design governmentality,[34] in architecture and allied fields (such as urban planning) occurred in large part because design in the postwar period came to be seen as a central arena for mobilizing national and world "development" via approaches to regionality.[35] Shedding its romantic and culturalist associations, regionalization in this context was pitched as both the object and method of development-by-design, informing early computational design approaches and aiding in the formulation of ever more abstract empirical frameworks of spatial inquiry such as locational analysis and the quantitative spatial sciences.[36] Empowered by military-industrial investment and state-sponsored academic research, regionality became the privileged geographic

imaginary of the Cold War, leading to the proliferation of "Area Studies" in universities as well as regional approaches to applied economic experiments for geopolitical stabilization around the world by the US and Soviet blocs.[37]

Yet the seeming hardening of regional studies as functional elements of these geopolitical blocs cannot occlude the fact that regionality, or region-thinking, was never just the result of cold rationalisms, but was also deeply invested with its own mythopoetics—aesthetic and cultural imaginaries of the nation-state, of belonging, and of science and technology themselves. In this sense, the challenge posed by regionality is to hold this dialectic in place without sublating it in either direction—neither naturalizing the material quality of "the region," nor dismissing the metaphysical, ideological currents in the notion of "regionalism" as merely superficial, aesthetic, or stylistic.

In the following two sections, we trace some of the research fields that gave rise to the region's concepts in design professions, paying close attention to the tools and devices that made regionality into a fungible object of design expertise—devices of regionalization from regional planning to architecture.

Planning the Region

How regionality, or region-thinking, is mobilized into forms of regionalization, or the active processes of region-making, is especially evident in regional planning, a subfield of urban planning that developed in tandem with the latter since the 1920s and reached its peak as a separate field in the 1960s in parallel with the "scientification" of the region.[38] Extraction and management of resources are immanent to the field, whose planning scope encompasses extractive and productive territories beyond the limits of cities. This emphasis on the relationship between resources and the organization of territory is rooted in the genealogies of the field that can be traced back to regional geography on the one hand and to spatial economics on the other. These subdisciplines are historically linked due to regional geography's strong economic bias: its underlying assumption was that regions were differentiated according to their economic base. How humans interacted with natural resources was primarily imagined in economic terms, rather than in terms such as social and spiritual relations with the environment.[39] Whether considering the region as a physical unit determinant of human activity, or as geographer Paul Vidal de la Blache influentially posited, in terms of dynamic

interrelations of possibility,[40] the various strands of regional geography consider natural resources to be formative of regions, serving as economic bases of their societies and cultures.[41]

Along with the emphasis on resource extraction, and symptomatic to it, was regionality's interest in human settlements. Presenting a "history of slow motion," to use historian Fernand Braudel's phrasing, human settlements, like landscape features, bring geographic time to bear on historical time.[42] The privileging of the former over the latter, however, risks considering human settlements in organicist or biological terms, as was the case in structuralist thought.[43] In the framework of regional geography, with its cultural and human geography strands, settler colonialism can be naturalized as part of a long history of human migration in ecological terms; or, inversely, it can be narrated as a radical break in long durée settlements, justified by economic and racial logics, as in narratives of Manifest Destiny.[44] In this respect, it is illuminating that Friedrich Ratzel, the German theorist of cultural geography who fathered the idea of *lebensraum* that would be central to National Socialist ideology, spent his formative years in the United States, showing how one settler colonial project may inform another.[45]

The correlation drawn between forms of settlements and their biophysical environments naturalized labor division through spatial ordering. This is expressed in the work of Scottish polymath Patrick Geddes, who introduced the regional survey to the fields of architecture and urban planning. In his famous Valley Section diagram of 1909, a linear section through a stylized landmass shows how the seemingly natural occupations of miner, woodman, hunter, shepherd, peasant, and fisher correspond to forms of landscape across a river valley, from foothill to shore. Complementary to Geddes's diagram was the Outlook Tower that he proposed for the city of Edinburgh, from which visitors could be informed of the social and physical features of the surrounding area, using the Edinburgh region as a link between the local, the national, and the global.[46] By using the sectional approach, echoing Alexander von Humboldt's geological cross-sections, Geddes's diagram also implicitly alludes to subterranean sources in addition to the surface of the earth, and can be expanded to the development of further occupations, such as by linking metallurgy to the presence of a metal depository.[47] In Geddes's formulation, in other words, the observable landscape articulates the interrelations of natural resources with the earth's surface which are expressed through human labor and underlie a

design logic articulated through technics. The latter technics are symbolized by the tools associated with the "natural occupations:" "pickaxe, axe, bow, and crook represent miner, woodman, hunter, and shepherd. Hoe, plow, and spade refer to peasants working the land, while a fishing net closes the sequence at the coast."[48] According to architectural historian Volker Welter, Geddes's spatial taxonomy borrowed from French botanist Charles Flahault, "who in the 1890s had surveyed the regional distribution of plants by identifying dominant tree species—'social species' that fostered a defined set of subordinated plants, increasing benefits for all plants in the region."[49] In this analogy, the geographic distribution of occupations and settlements did not produce hierarchy and competition, but was a balanced system of harmonious interaction; regionalization can thus be considered a necessary precursor for the field of ecology. At the same time, however, Geddes's correlation between the development of technics and factors such as altitude, climate, and topography is also reminiscent of Enlightenment thought that ordered societies along a civilizational development ladder, a racial epistemology through which Europeans justified colonization and the displacement of local divisions of labor across metropolitan centers and colonial peripheries.[50]

The division of labor across geography is also prominent in spatial economics, regional planning's other disciplinary antecedent. Unlike regional geography's emphasis on natural resources and their relationship to human landscape, spatial economics uses geometric abstraction in attempts to distill spatial economic laws, which can then be projected onto specific territories. Economist Johann Heinrich von Thünen's influential diagram of 1826, for example, depicted cost relations of rent and transportation for agricultural production in concentric circles extending from the city center.[51] This diagram of conditions in an "isolated state," while abstract, had nonetheless significant material implications: it materialized in visual form the idea of a rural hinterland, which served as a powerful tool of geopolitics in the European powers' scramble for Africa.[52] In his Urban Growth diagram (1925), Chicago School economist Ernest Burgess translated von Thünen's emphasis on rural economics, emanating from his studies in an agricultural college near Hamburg, to relations of center and periphery in the city and its region. In this diagram, the rural hinterland was further displaced out of the city rings and supplanted by residential neighborhoods of commuter workers. Echoing the positivist reification of social processes and subjectivation found in Geddes but now deployed in the

urban realm, the abstracting methods of spatial economics shifted the logic of racialization found in regional planning to the scale of the neighborhood—quasi-ecological regions of "ethnic" peoples within the city, to be managed by a new set of experts in the search of an elusive socio-ecological balance.[53]

Another defining diagrammatic representation of spatial economics is Walter Christaller's Central Place Theory (1933) that became influential in regional planning in the postwar period. Like Geddes's idealization of a harmonious relationship between locations, Christaller's model assumed a balanced distribution of settlements in various scales, from hamlets to cities to regions. According to this theory, the settlements' networked distribution reinforced economic relations, while the network's geometric projection in nested hexagons communicated an image of economic and social stability. Like in the case of von Thünen's diagram, this mathematical abstraction derived from concrete historical conditions, in this case of Southern Germany, which Christaller distilled through "games with maps."[54] Christaller's abstraction, in turn, served as a spatial model for the distribution of settlements in German and Israeli occupied territories. It naturalized German occupation of Poland under the National Socialists, and was adopted in Israel to "root" Jewish immigrants in its contested territories following the 1948 war.[55] Emerging as economic units that encompass the territory in between local governments or their overlapping spaces, the regions that emerge in von Thünen's and Christaller's diagrams give the rural an economically-legible form useful in the hands of state planners and policy makers. In other words, spatial economics gave the region a calculable form, making it a tool for economic projection and intervention beyond and across political and administrative lines. By the 1960s, regions became explicit units of economic state planning, with François Perroux's Growth Poles concept (1949) as the dominant model. This model replaced Christaller's balanced distribution of resources with an approach that encouraged economic competition through capital infusion and concentration of industries in chosen areas, seeking to rebalance the geographies of national economies. While Perroux considered economic space in abstract terms, policy makers and regional planners applied the concept to specific regions that they singled out as engines of economic growth.[56]

The early twentieth-century work of geographer Alfred Hettner, a pupil of Ratzel, was also formative to the postwar focus on regions as biophysical entities with particular

economic potentials. Hettner developed "chorology," or the study of regional differentiation, in a positivist mode—representing empirical, physical relations. This contrasted with another branch of German geography, *Landschaftskunde*, or landscape geography, embodied by figures like Otto Schlüter and Siegfried Passarge, who proposed instead to study the historical, cultural, and social manifestations of regions and places—seeking a dynamic sense of changing landscapes rather than descriptions of static regions via empirical data. The notion of "regional landscape," embodying these two approaches, the empirical and the cultural, continued to structure the dialectics of regionality in both its technocratic and romantic tendencies even as the former appeared hegemonic in the postwar era of development.

In the United States, these dual empirical and cultural origins of regional landscape studies developed via two schools: the Midwestern approach to regional geography advocated by Richard Hartshorne and the Berkeley approach to cultural landscapes of Carl Sauer. Sauer criticized regional geography as "utilitarian, economistic, and universalizing," while Hartshorne charged Sauer's approach with veering into "*völkisch* mysticism."[57] While materialist regional geography—coalescing as an academic discourse of regionalism by the 1920s and 30s—focused on economic spatial relations, cultural landscape studies focused on the processual dynamics affecting spaces that would primarily be apprehended visually and then decoded culturally. According to geographer Nicolas Howe, "Landscape, with its inherent emphasis on processes of cultural transformation, seemed to offer an escape from the 'rationalist' confines of regionalism."[58] Sauer's concern with culture often involved recovering the natural structures behind dynamic processes —in this sense, it was also idealist, but from a romantic rather than a rationalist point of view. His analyses tended to fetishize and exoticize the "premodern," salvaging authentic spaces and places from the "monstrosities" of capitalist modernity.[59] By contrast, for Hartshorne, all geographically relevant cultural features were merely superstructural efflorescences from core economic features.

If cultural geography used regions to provide a thick description of place, then spatial economics, with its use of diagrams, gave place a functional meaning and purpose, which could be translated into physical plans for specific territories. However abstract, diagrammatic representations in spatial terms are often conflated with concrete plans, providing a seemingly easy fix to the problem of rationally organizing resources and settlements. Importantly, this did

not mean that the metaphysics of regionalism were fully evacuated in technocratic planning. Rather, these were sublimated into new configurations—of the metropolitan and the provincial, the techno-industrial and the organic-pastoral—through regionalist design discourses and practices. The most famous example of this dialectic in the history of urban planning is Ebenezer Howard's Garden City (1898). Organized concentrically to optimize living conditions on relatively cheap rural land, Howard's Garden City proposed a series of medium sized towns connected via rail to an urban center. As such, it is emblematic of the discourse that gave rise to the planning profession; beyond its abstracting, diagrammatic functionalism, it was a key metaphysical imaginary through which reformers in Britain and the U.S. tried to rationalize the spatial dimensions wrought by the upheaval of rural to urban migration characteristic of capitalist industrialization.[60] Like Ratzel's cultural geography, Howard's Garden City may have been inspired by his sojourn in the U.S. in 1871-1876, where he experienced firsthand "pioneering" life in Nebraska and later, the discussions of Chicago's post-fire rebuilding.[61] By the 1920s, the Garden City became central in the debates over the "Regional City" in the United States. While it served as an influential model for decentralization for the members of the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA), they did away with the metropolitan center altogether, which was at the heart of their contention with the contemporaneous regional plan for New York City.[62] Picking up on Geddes's diagrammatic use of civilizational "technics," RPAA founding member Lewis Mumford became a leading figure in twentieth-century regional planning.

Another, earlier example, of a conflation of diagram and plan is architect Claude Nicolas Ledoux's Ideal City of Chaux, published in 1804, which is an extension of his design for the Royal Saltworks from 1774.[63] In the Ideal City, the saltworks' semicircle is expanded to a circular city, punctuated by symbolic buildings that articulate the relationship between industry and natural resources, the city and its hinterland—an adjacent forest. Operating in his administrative capacity as adjunct to the Inspecteur des Salines for the areas of Lorraine and Franche-Comte, Ledoux relocated saltwork production by building a canal from the salt mines to a location in proximity to its energy supply, the forest of Chaux, to reduce the costs of wood transportation. Locating the city in proximity to the forest entailed a frontier relationship that affected the territory beyond the city's borders by forcing forest dwellers into the market economy and subjecting them to state surveillance.[64]

In other words, in this early example of spatial economic planning a few decades prior to von Thünen's diagram, the ideal geometry of the city stood in symbolic and functional relation to what was outside of it. The perfect geometry carved out the city boundaries in isolation from the biophysical environment. At the same time, however, it folded its constitutive other, the forest, into its system of production, representing another materialization of the center-periphery metaphor and the dependency relations it creates. Imposing timber and labor extraction as well as affecting social change, the Ideal City represented the regional control of the state through infrastructure and market relations, showing architects' extensive power when applying their expertise as managers of resources at a regional scale—a trend that would reach its peak in the twentieth-century postwar era.[65]

Indeed, by the mid-twentieth century, static geometric representations like Ledoux's and Howard's had given way to dynamic modeling in parallel with the region losing its meaning as a distinct place with clear borders in favor of a manipulable entity, a function within a system. Spatial economics' influence on physical planning marked a turn from place to fungibility, which is demonstrated in the shift in terminology from "locations" to "nodes."[66] Geography, too, was affected in the process, with social-science quantitative analysis supplanting qualitative descriptions of topography and regional character. Writing on this shift in France, Kenny Cupers describes how "regions were no longer seen as irreducibly differentiated or unique; instead they came to be understood as internally structured and interrelated."[67] Borrowing from economics, "geographic abstraction, quantification and modeling helped to turn the notion of the region into a projective instrument" for considering "the study of existing territories as complex fields of relations, force lines, and attraction poles."[68]

This projective capacity through diagrammatic imagination of space was facilitated by the changing conceptions of cartography from static to dynamic, with significant implications not only for state planning, but also for the geopolitical imagination. In the 1960s, semiotician Jacques Bertin argued for the use of information graphics to turn maps from "dead" to "living" entities.[69] Historian of cartography William Rankin locates this shift in WWII mapping, when wartime maps "dispensed not only with the Mercator projection, but also with long-held conventions like north being 'up' or place-names taking precedence over topography and linework."[70] Using "bold graphic arrows, pictorial symbols, dramatic representations of relief,"

wartime maps “showed the war taking place in a new kind of space” with no static state borders.[71] Regions came to play a constitutive role in this dynamic reconfiguration of territories. Defining the edges of maps by “the receding horizon of a spherical globe rather than geographic boundaries,” these maps supplanted state borders with “regional experiences” based on the partial viewpoint of “an active participant.”[72] Redefining relations of proximity and distance and multiplying relations of connectivity, such maps allowed for the emergence of shifting, fragmentary, and overlapping alliances. According to Rankin, this led to the emergence of an entirely new global system, where “thinking globally meant thinking regionally, and global collaboration meant regional collaboration.”[73]

Regionality in Architecture

While Ledoux’s Ideal City foreshadowed the possibility of deploying architectural design at the regional scale, tying the political demands of territorial control to the management of natural resources and labor, his project was also deeply invested in developing an architectural semiotics that would naturalize these new regional relations for the subjects living and working on the site. Ledoux’s designs for the various programmatic functions at the Ideal City were explicit attempts at communicating presupposed links between utilitarian needs and social identities via architectural form —an *architecture parlante* (speaking architecture). Thus, the house of the carpenter was shaped as a monumental, chiseled block of wood, the house of the shepherd as a monumental ball of yarn, and so on. As such, the project also marked a key turning point in architecture’s concern with producing particular subjects, in this case not just as productive workers, but more insidiously as willing *users* of the architecture who would be able to decode their own roles in the system by visually recognizing their occupations in the buildings they inhabited. In this sense, Ledoux’s project combined both strands of regionality discussed above: the desire for enacting a particular material, political-economic world via regionalization (the management-by-design of territory, resources, and labor at a co-articulated urban-rural scale) with the desire for a distinctive cultural and psychic self-recognition, producing a particular metaphysical, regionalist identity borne of the relations between subject, labor, and land that the architecture sought to both house and convey.

These twinned—sometimes opposed—architectural desires for material and metaphysical regionalization ran through most nineteenth-century utopian architectural projects, as shown by the many settler colonial experiments in self-sufficiency and communalism across the world.[74] More often, architecture was called upon to formalize and define the character of rising national-states, stylistically deploying racial, ethnic, gender, and other tropes borrowed from ancillary emerging fields such as biology, anthropology, and archaeology in public buildings and world's fairs to epitomize the particular traits of various nationalities.[75] Thus, for example, Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc sought to locate the "original" source of French identity in Gothic techniques of construction, while Gottfried Semper sought to trace the origins of architecture to core material processes, such as weaving, through quasi-ethnologic analyses of Indigenous architectures. While these discourses drew from regional studies—in the sense of tying stylistic and material genealogies to the cultures of particular places and populations—the region was not yet understood as a malleable instrument of policy made fungible by architectural processes.[76]

The development of sustained architectural discourse on regionalization and regionalism would have to wait until the early twentieth century. As discussed above, Ebenezer Howard's Garden City spawned a global following, eventually influencing disparate tendencies including the organicist regionalism of Lewis Mumford, the modernist towers in the park of Le Corbusier, the *heimat* discourse in Germany (a paradoxical intellectual basis for modernist *seidlungs*), and the rationalist functionalism of Soviet architects working on regional planning.[77] In the interwar period, a new wave of modern architects were chiefly concerned with how to functionally rationalize the expansive growth of cities. In the work of influential collectives such as CIAM, regionalization thus appeared as an attempt to visualize and map urban and rural functional locations such as areas of industry, agriculture, housing, and recreation.[78]

The modernist concern with spatial rationalization thus bifurcated discourse on regionality, with the social-scientific regionalization tendency gaining traction over more romantic regionalist approaches, especially after World War II. Pivoting away from glorifications of racial identity, previously proud regionalist architectural historians such as Rexford Newcomb—author of influential treatises on California's Spanish Colonial Revival style, including what he described as its "definite racial" characteristics[79]—shifted their analytical lens from rationalizations of white

supremacist architectural styles to the tracing of "cosmopolitan vernacular" styles after the war.[80] Yet architectural regionalism did not disappear with the rise of regionalization discourse. Rather, architects sought to develop ever more detailed syntheses between these realms, attempting to root architectural design and pedagogy in particular regional identities and cultures, while using these analyses to deploy designs at ever grander scales of ambition, both intellectually and in practice. Thus, the postwar period saw a rediscovery of regionalism by a plethora of different architects and thinkers: Alison and Peter Smithson and Team 10 (an offshoot of CIAM), the elevation of Frank Lloyd Wright as the United States' foremost organic regionalist, the "New Humanism" (decried by Reyner Banham), Aldo van Eyck's ethno-architectural investigations of the Dogon, and Christopher Alexander's designs for rural Indian villages, among others.[81]

In 1954, one representative of the humanist tradition, architectural historian Sigfried Giedion, claimed to have found the key to resolving this contradictory dialectic of designing globally while addressing human particularity. His "New Regional Approach" sought to synthesize modern architecture's internationalism of the 1920s—an architecture which "hovers in mid-air, with no roots anywhere" as represented by De Stijl's experiments with abstract planes—and the environmental and cultural specificities of "primitive" and "Eastern" cultures, thus encompassing "both cosmic and terrestrial considerations."[82] Via this synthesis, modern architecture would be able to continue its never-ending process of change and development while becoming "humanized" through the authentic ways of life of Indigenous peoples. The mental processes of geometric abstraction and projection (key concepts in Ernst Cassirer's ethnological interpretations, which inspired Giedion's thoughts on this matter[83]) were thus pitched against an archetype of Indigeneity which was suspended in time—"the natural rhythms of the lives of primitive peoples, which have been the root cause of their bodily and mental persistence since prehistoric times"—and locked in "concrete" representations of space.[84] In Giedion's formulation, the "new regional approach" of modern architecture would thus magically synthesize the metaphysical and material realms, even as it reinscribed racialized understandings of geopolitical difference. Giedion's claim that regional architecture could harmonically settle the relations between identity and space through representation was symptomatic of the power that discourses of regionality had accrued at this time.

The same year, the Smithsons published their own notion of "habitat," which developed and expanded Geddes's Valley Section as an analytical architectural tool, seeking to place "the house" in an organic relation with the whole environment. As they wrote in the Doorn Manifesto (1954), "Habitat is concerned with the particular house in the particular type of community," noting that "[t]he appropriateness of any solution may lie in the field of architectural invention rather than social anthropology."[85] Through this notion of "habitat" as something not just to be studied, but to be designed, architecture was pitched as a practice that inverted Geddes's Valley Section—architectural technics determining the region, rather than the other way around. This inversion consciously sought to change the terms of Le Corbusier's famous dictum —"Architecture or Revolution. Revolution can be avoided"[86] —from the ethics and aesthetics of the machine to a seemingly more humane ground for architectural modernity: Architecture or ethnology. Ethnology, the Smithsons surmised, could be *sublated* through the very design of the regional habitat.

Giedion's and the Smithsons' references to ethnology and social anthropology pointed to the underlying structuralism influencing their thinking—an intellectual framework that came to define regionalist approaches of the period as part of the critical response to the hegemony of high modernism, visible in state-sponsored and corporate projects around the world.[87] Structuralism enabled the seeming grasp of both polarities of regionality at once: the region's entity-like, metaphysical reification of underlying, material, dynamic forces and regionalism's hermeneutics of sensory perception, mobilized by architects through attention to specificities of place, culture, histories, and their unique processes of spatial cognition, apprehension, and production. In both tendencies of reification and perceptualism, the combination of structuralism and regionality minimized the role of the architect as a singular authorial figure, instead heralding the idea of architecture as the result of larger organic processes —whether historical, computational, or vernacular. This kind of *structural regionalism* grounded both the meta-organic processes of design put forward by top-down visions such as those of Japanese metabolists and the celebration of localism and bottom-up emergence implicit in the vernacularist ideas of "native genius" and "architecture without architects" popularized by Sybill Moholy-Nagy and Bernard Rudofsky, respectively.[88]

This latter hermeneutic, vernacularist discourse was entwined with rising interest in phenomenology in

architecture, as the particularity of places and regions was elevated by critics in opposition to the homogenizing processes of capitalist globalization.[89] This combination of phenomenology and world-systems theory became hegemonic at the end of the twentieth century, especially as theorized in Kenneth Frampton's "critical regionalism," who built upon Alexander Tzonis' and Liane Lefaivre's earlier conceptualization of the term.[90] This theory was alluring as both a diagnostic of the relations between an architectural avant-garde and global capital, as well as a prescription for how architects could square this particular circle of culture and capital. But, in historiographic terms, the tension that critical regionalism sought to sublate was not new. Rather, it was a symptom of the longstanding tension between regionalization (the active processes of region-making) and regionalism (shared imagined realities) as aspects of the dialectic by which states seek to materially construct and metaphysically legitimize their own identities through "invented traditions," including architectural projects and narratives.[91]

Perhaps the most critical architectural historian to address the invented traditions of architectural regionalism was Alan Colquhoun, who addressed his critique to both Frampton as well as Tzonis and Lefaivre's concept of critical regionalism, claiming that they all "invoked the model of an organicist society."[92] As he noted, "Regionalism has always been implicated in a metaphysics of difference, rejecting all attempts to generalize cultural values into systems based on the concept of natural law or other such universalizing theories."[93] In other words, for Colquhoun, the terrain of regionalism is determined by the antithesis of romanticism and rationalism; the metaphysics of individual (or regional) experience versus the physics of universal measurement. Depending on how the concept is deployed, then, it can signify a return to nature and the irreducibly metaphysical qualities of specific places, or the objective particularities that make such places unique, but also commensurable with other variables. The use of the term "regionalist" therefore upholds the irreducibility of certain places, while also suggesting that their specificities are mappable according to a larger framework—the "whole" that "regionalizes" the region.

Addressing this classic modernist antithesis of romanticism and rationalism, Colquhoun suggested that it could no longer hold true for, in a "modern postindustrial world," the regionalist conceit of irreducible difference is "largely obliterated" by modern modes of communication and capitalism's drive toward technical homogenization.[94] For

Colquhoun, the architect cannot stand outside of the system of late capitalism, just like "the region"—however it is defined—does not stand outside the forces of history. According to him, the alleged prior autonomy of regions was fully subsumed within two other registers that took over with the advent of modernity: "individualism and the nation-state."[95] While the former affected the conditions of architecture as "a matter of free choice" and of architects themselves having become—and expressing—"the product of modern rationalization and division of labor," the latter scale of the nation-state provided a universal, techno-economic foundation that necessarily flattens out all differences:

> In a sense, the nation-state is the modern "region"—a region in which culture is coextensive with political power. But this culture is of a different kind from that of the regions of the preindustrial world [when, supposedly] national boundaries were dictated by language, race, religion, or any other "natural" factor. … [W]hat creates a nation is a will towards political unity rather than any preexistent set of customs. These two functions may be coextensive but they do not have to be.[96]

Thus, Colquhoun argued, the modern nation-state, the ultimate instance of political will and organization built primarily around economic rationality, makes the conceit of regionalism in the modern world objectively untenable. Yet while Colquhoun's claims may be defensible at a theoretical —specifically Hegelian—level, we argue that his account of the relation between the region, the nation-state, and modernity leaves out the material dynamics by which regions and nation-states as such came into existence in the first place. Regions and nation-states were neither the result of pure political will, nor the free play of individual interests —the economic morality at the root of liberalism. The architectural histories of the region compiled in this volume show that the naturalization of regionality, as part and parcel of the history of the nation-state, was inseparable from material processes of colonization, political domination, and forms of exploitation and resistance that were *designed* to be constitutively exterior to the modern system of laws and institutions which Colquhoun described. Indeed, by looking at the different ways in which architecture produced the variegated, conceptual terrain of regionality, we may better apprehend its actual historical antinomies and conceptual contradictions.

Themes & Contributions

This collection features a variety of approaches to historicizing the relation between architecture and regionality, covering the years roughly between 1760 and 1980, a period when regionalization and regionalism were deployed by states and architects as conscious design discourses and processes. The selection of essays does not attempt comprehensiveness or generality, but is rather a function of our own academic (and, to some degree, regionally-defined) frameworks: we developed the project in a series of workshops as part of a University of California Humanities Research Institute Multicampus Faculty Working Group on "Decolonizing Regionalism," which then expanded with a double panel we hosted on the subject at the Society of Architectural Historians annual conference in Pittsburgh in 2022. Both the Working Group and the SAH panels were motivated by what we saw as a need to theorize architectural history methods on regionality beyond the seminal—and some would say, architecturally hegemonic—concept of "critical regionalism." Rather than dwelling on the aporias of "critical regionalism" per se, this edited volume critically unpacks the very premise of the "region" that underlies regionalism.[97] Instead of thinking of the region as a spatial-cultural given, the essays collected here interrogate its historical construction, asking how and why this ambiguous notion came to prominence in architectural and planning discourse and practice.

The essays develop a series of themes that collectively denaturalize normative modes of categorization attached to the region, such as similarities in climate conditions according to geography or top-down, geopolitical cartographies. This episodic approach also reflects the genesis of the project as a series of academic events that enabled comparative perspectives on the subject among the contributors. While not providing an exhaustive overview, we have tried to provide some conceptual coherence with the following three guiding principles.

First, we have focused on critical analyses of the role played by the region in the formation of the fields of architecture and planning, situating it at the conjunction of colonialism, the development of the modern state, and colonial techniques of governance. Second, we have sought to displace the problem of style as merely "ornamental" or "cultural"—a paradigmatic trait in discourses on regionalism—shifting instead toward analyses of the visualization and infrastructural techniques that have been employed in the construction and shaping of territories,

including the various materialities and environmental formations to which these gave way. Third, we have tried to understand regionality, or region-thinking, in architecture and urban planning in relation to the development of the term "region" in the social sciences, primarily human geography and economics.

With these considerations in mind, four general themes have emerged as we attempted to frame the essays in this collection:

Typologizing Difference

The region has been a formidable tool for commensurating diverse regimes of knowledge and epistemologies, helping to turn architectural or urban types into governable models or forms. Thus, for example, **Alla Vronskaya** provides a typology of rationalist functionalism of Soviet architects working on regional planning in the first half of the twentieth century, encompassing various physical and epistemic terrains from the rural to the metropolitan. **Martin Hershenzon** similarly engages with rationalist functionalism in the German-derived discourse on Israeli architecture, showing how it developed in relation to the figure of the rudimentary shelter as a source for regional rootedness. **Kelema Lee Moses** shows how oceanic epistemologies were typologized as part of the US project of governing Pacific islands as postcolonial nations, figured through architectural types such as the Samoan *fale*. **Phoebe Springstubb** investigates the formation of a type of construction suited to the "cold regions" of North America, displacing Indigenous ways of building and living with the cold through a settler biopolitics of regionality. **Swati Chattophadyay** examines how British colonists in India grappled with the literally shifting terrains of the Gangetic Plains, regions that appeared to resist typological formalization through their seeming ecological indeterminacy. **Pamela Karimi** explores "bioregionalism" as an idea that emerged from US counterculture while also revealing how its emphasis on decentralization was later taken up by certain strands of neoliberalism. At the same time, she shows that many of its practitioners have continued to design and live according to the principles of ecological regionalism into the present.

Affective Translations

As regionality maps differences and seeks commensurations, it also operates as a tool of translation, providing homogenous variables such as geophysical characteristics, but also more qualitative ones, such as trust in particular methods of expertise, or ways of formalizing rites of kinship and belonging. **Samaa Elimam** wrestles with the ways in which encapsulating the Nile as a singular region amenable to engineering expertise translated notions of postcolonial nationalism as an infrastructural problem even as this process questioned the very problem of translating *watan* ("homeland") itself. **Daniel M. Abramson** shows how political desire for architectural and urban monumentality has been rationalized as a function of strategic regional locations and flows, thereby translating a liberal, logistical imaginary in built form. **Patricia Morton** examines the ways in which Lawrence Halprin's design for Sea Ranch translated ideas of "cultural landscape" in a series of visual diagrams that borrowed from a variety of sources, including from Indigenous traditions and ecological science. **Micah Rutenberg** and **Avigail Sachs** analyze the visual culture of the Tennessee Valley Authority to show how the technocratic regional diagrams produced by designers and policymakers functioned as a plane of translation between political legitimation and cultural naturalization, seeking to ground the initiative in the local traditions of the different constituencies that the TVA brought together.

Scaling Relations

The region's spatial malleability makes it a particularly useful tool for economic projection, intervention, and negotiation beyond and across administrative lines, as well as an instrument for blurring territorial definitions and identities through relations of embeddedness and interconnectivity. **Anna Vallye** situates the birth of the regional planning administration in the Ruhr valley within the genealogy of Prussian cameralism, where limited territorial jurisdiction rendered planning a tool for negotiation between various constituencies. **James Graham** shows how race and region became co-articulated categories in the project of Soviet expansion through infrastructures of cultivation and extraction. **Ayala Levin** demonstrates how postcolonial African governments employed the region as a device to both capitalize upon and transcend the inherited colonial system of indirect rule in negotiations of metropolitan-periphery relations. **Seçil Binboğa** explores the employment of radar mapping and satellite imagery as vehicles through which the United

States fashioned Turkey's territory as a strategic springboard to reterritorialize the Middle East. **Ginger Nolan** frames the Five Nations' nineteenth-century civic buildings as a political project of non-subsumptive regionality through critical engagement with Frampton's critical regionalism.

Technologies of Inscription

While techniques of representation are pervasive and immanent to regional thinking, regionalization requires the employment of technologies to inscribe territories and populations into systems of jurisdiction, disciplinary authority, and capitalist social relations. **Laila Seewang** shows how anxieties about middle class security drove the settlement and ecological transformation of the Murray basin in nineteenth-century Australia. **Can Bilsel** demonstrates how interwar, American, archeological excavations spanning from Egypt to Iran were used to define the borders of ancient civilizations and thus determine their developmental potential in the postwar era. Similarly, **Albert Narath** analyzes the extraction of plants from Mission-era adobe structures in California as an evidentiary base that legitimized its settler-agricultural transformation by the University of California. **Manuel Shvartzberg Carrió** and **Diana Martinez** trace continuities between regional craft education in the United States's internal empire and its colonization of the Philippines and the production of a racialized division of labor of disenfranchised citizens. Relatedly, **Gregory Cartelli** explores how ethnographic surveys in architectural production under the French Vichy regime served as a central tool in the co-production of architectural techniques and racialized, rural populations.

It is particularly the region's capaciousness and spatio-temporal elasticity that interest us in this volume, as well as how these have been mobilized to advance different political ends. The range of papers presented in this project speak to the potency of the region as an epistemic construct, a heuristic device, and in terms of expanding architectural history investigations to the territorial scale.

While some essays consist of short articles centered on a particular archival object or visual representation aiming to illustrate the different historical valences and uses of the region, the bulk of the chapters offer longer theorizations of regionality in relation to architectural history. These different formats allow the contributors to showcase their

thinking at different scales of research—from the body to the architectural and the geopolitical—and to develop their own methods and lines of inquiry for interrogating the promiscuous career of a singularly large and elusive concept: the region.

Coda: When is the Region?

If there is any overarching goal in this volume, it is to challenge the ahistoricity attached to the region, its seeming stability as an empirical entity—in David Harvey's formulation, "the most entrenched of all geographical concepts."[98] In its ahistoricity, regionality, or region-thinking, has stifled critical interrogation of the various ways in which the nation-state as a political project remains incomplete: geographically, as a never fully mappable set of imaginations and imaginings, and historically, as part of the unfinished project of modernity. In this sense, the dominant ways of thinking the region through architecture—including via critical regionalism, but also in newer and worryingly ahistorical discourses such as specific trends in ecological architecture and Indigenous design—continue to reproduce some of the pitfalls that material processes of regionalization and metaphysical imaginaries of regionalism have wrought the world over, as many of the essays in this collection show. When regionality, or region-thinking, is inflated as both method and goal, or even concretized in this or that ideal architectural object or project, it forecloses contradiction and contestation, the seeds for other forms of political organization and design.

Yet this foreclosure of contradiction and contestation can be seen as a key feature too—a symptom of the ways in which regionality evacuates historicity. In its attempt to cover all possible avenues for explaining historical causality, whether ideological or empirical, the region, as a concept, offers a crucial epistemology of modern time, when the structural conflicts at the core of modernization appear to have been extinguished, pacified, or overcome. This marks the region as a time of perfect historical synchrony between places—when, and whereby, the political architecture of the world has finally been settled as universally plural: a geographic fantasy in which all parts of the world have found their place as regions in all their irreducible particularities.

Thus, rather than trying to locate and fix the region once and for all, whether geographically or conceptually, as the remit of this or that particular group of people, experts, or professionals, we aim to rethink the terms of regionality

itself. To ask not *where* is the region, but *when* is it? What modes of historicity is it part of, and what other historicities could a critical genealogy of the region, through architectural history, open up?

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✓ Transparent peer-reviewed

Manuel Shvartzberg Carrió and Ayala Levin, "Introduction: Region, or, Terms of Relation," *Aggregate* 14 (April 2026), https://doi.org/10.53965/YGUC3243.

1 Miranda Joseph, "Community," in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies,* 3rd ed., ed. Bruce Burgett and Glen Hendler (NY: NYU Press, 2000). ↑

2 On "world regions," see: Martin W. Lewis and Kären Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 13–17. On "ethno-regions," see: Catherine Boone, *Inequality and Political Cleavage in Africa: Regionalism by Design* (Cambridge University Press, 2024), 26–30. On "mega-regions," see: Weifeng Li, Weiqi Zhou, Lijian Han, and Yuguo

Qian, “Uneven urban-region sprawl of China’s megaregions and the spatial relevancy in a multi-scale approach,” *Ecological Indicators* 97 (February 2019): 194–203. ↑

3 David Harvey, “The Sociological and Geographical Imaginations*,” International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 18, no. 3/4 (April 2005): 245. ↑

4 See: Harvey, “The Sociological and Geographical Imaginations,” and Paul A. Kramer, “Region in Global History,” in *A Companion to World History*, ed. Douglas Northrop (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 201–212; and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (*London and New York: Verso, 1991). ↑

5 These declensions of region bear a parallel to those drawn by Perry Anderson on the concepts of modernity, modernism, and modernization. See: Perry Anderson, “Modernity and Revolution,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 144 (March 1984): 96–113. ↑

6 As Michael Goebel explains, “[t]he term as such has rarely been at the center of the debate [about the possible links between globalization and regionalism], and yet the cumulative effect of work on such different types of ‘regionalisms’ has been to complicate older more direct notions about the competitive, antagonistic, or mutually exclusive relationship between the nation, on the one hand; and sub-, supra-, or trans-national identities, loyalties, or sovereignties, on the other.” Goebel identifies two points that are key to our discussion: the negative definition of region and regionalism, often in relation to the state, and their fuzziness compared to “older more direct notions.” Michael Goebel, *Overlapping Geographies of Belonging: Migrations, Regions, and Nations in the Western South Atlantic* (American Historical Association, 2013), 2. ↑

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10 Kenneth Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance” in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (New York: New Press, 1983), 16–30; Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, “The Grid and the Pathway,” *Architecture in Greece* 15 (1981): 164–7; and Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation State?: Language, Politics, Belonging* (London: Seagull Books, 2007), 77–84. ↑

11 See, for example: Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Alyosha Goldstein, *Poverty in Common: The Politics of Community Action during the American Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); and Brian D. Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance: Gentrification and the Struggle over Harlem* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022). ↑

12 Antoine S. Bailly, “The Region: A Basic Concept for Understanding Local Areas and Global Systems,” *Cybergeo* (1998), https://doi.org/10.4000/cybergeo.333. ↑

13 Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*. ↑

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15 Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 266. ↑

16 Williams, *Keywords*, 265. ↑

17 Williams, *Keywords*, 265. ↑

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19 Williams, *Keywords*, 266. ↑

20 Harvey, “The Sociological and Geographical Imaginations,” 245. ↑

21 Ellen Meiksins Wood, “The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism,” *New Left Review* 127 (May 1981): 66–95; Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). ↑

22 See, for example: Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). ↑

23 See, for example: Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, “Sovereignty: Outline of a Conceptual History,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 16, no. 4 (October 1991): 425–446; Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). ↑

24 Kramer, “Region in Global History,” 202. ↑

25 Paul Frymer, *Building an American Empire: The Era of Territorial and Political Expansion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017). ↑

26 This is analogous to the history of jurisdiction, a premodern concept in jurisprudence that was often deployed to define legal regimes across sovereign units rather than merely within them, as with the modern concept of nation-state sovereignty. See, for example: Mariana Valverde, “Jurisdiction and Scale: Legal ‘Technicalities’ as Resources for Theory,” *Social & Legal Studies* 18, no. 2 (June 2009); Manuel Shvartzberg Carrió, “Towards an Architectural Theory of Jurisdictional Technics: Mid-Century Modernism on Native Land,” *Architectural Theory Review* 27, no. 3 (September 2023): 391–415. ↑

27 Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). ↑

28 Kramer, “Region in Global History,” 202. ↑

29 According to Kramer, the “region’s implicit reference point is still the theoretically integrated, homogeneous, Westphalian state… . [W]hile both the region and the modern state are ‘surface’ formations – bounded, cartographic imaginaries – they are, by definition, not coterminous: regions are critical enough to the triangulation of states that they cannot be rendered identical to them.” Kramer, “Region in Global History,” 202. ↑

30 John Allen, Doreen Massey, and Allan Cochrane, “Introduction: A Space of a Neo-Liberal Heartland” in *Rethinking the Region: Spaces of Neo-Liberalism*, ed. John Allen, Doreen Massey, and Allan Cochrane (Oxford: Routledge, 1998), 1. ↑

31 Allen, Massey, and Cochrane, “Introduction,” 2 See also: Harvey, “The Sociological and Geographical Imaginations,” 245: “it is important to recognize that regions are “made” or “constructed” as much in imagination as in material form and that though entity-like, regions crystallize out as a distinctive form from some mix of material, social and mental processes.” ↑

32 Harvey, “The Sociological and Geographical Imaginations,” 246. ↑

33 See, for example: Dell Upton, “Architectural History or Landscape History?” *Journal of Architectural Education* 44,

no. 4 (August 1991): 195–199; Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, eds., *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986); Tiffany Kaewen Dang, "Decolonizing Landscape," *Landscape Research* 46, no. 7 (October 2021): 1004–1016; Kent Mathewson, "Landscape Versus Region – Part II" in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Human Geography*, ed. John A. Agnew and James S. Duncan (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 130–145; Peter Ekman, *Timing the Future Metropolis: Foresight, Knowledge, and Doubt in America's Postwar Urbanism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2024); and Ryan Walker, Ted Jojola, and David Natcher, eds., *Reclaiming Indigenous Planning* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013). ↑

34 Aggregate Architectural History Collaborative, *Governing by Design: Architecture, Economy, and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012). ↑

35 Ayala Levin, *Architecture and Development: Israeli Construction in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Settler Colonial Imagination, 1958-73* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022); Aggregate Architectural History Collaborative, ed., *Architecture in Development: Systems and the Emergence of the Global South* (New York: Routledge, 2022). ↑

36 Mathewson, "Landscape Versus Region – Part II," 131. ↑

37 Trevor J. Barnes and Matthew Farish, "Between Regions: Science, Militarism, and American Geography from World War to Cold War," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96, no. 4 (December 2006): 807–26; Kramer, "Region in Global History," 207–8; Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Unintended Consequences of Cold War Area Studies," in *The Cold War and the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years,* ed. Noam Chomsky et al. (New York: New Press, 1997), 195–231. ↑

38 See, for example: Brendan D. Moran, "Toward a 'Nation of Universities:' Architecture and Planning Education at MIT circa the 1940s," in *A Second Modernism: MIT, Architecture, and the 'Techno-Social' Moment*, ed. Arindam Dutta (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013) and Walter Isard, *History of Regional Science and the Regional Science Association International: The Beginnings and Early History* (New York: Springer, 2003). ↑

39 On these countervailing imaginaries, see, for example: Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1973) and Tuck and McKenzie, eds. *Place in Research*. ↑

40 Leading to Georges Canguilhem's assertion that "in a human milieu, man is obviously subject to a determinism, but it is the determinism of artificial constructions." Georges Canguilhem, "The Living and its Milieu," trans. John Savage, *Grey Room* 3 (March 2001): 18. ↑

41 The various definitions of the region Antoine S. Bailly detects in regional thought in geography since the end of the nineteenth century, from the "natural region," through "cultural region," to "functional region" consider the natural resources of the region as one of their determining factors. Bailly, "The Region," 5. ↑

42 The term is used to describe Fernand Braudel's history of the Mediterranean. James R. Hudson, "Braudel's Ecological Perspective," *Sociological Forum* 2, no. 1 (January 1987): 146–165. ↑

43 Jeanne Haffner, *The View from Above: The Science of Social Space* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013); Paula Amad, "From God's-Eye to Camera-Eye: Aerial Photography's Post-Humanist and Neo-Humanist Visions of the World," *History of Photography* 36, no. 1 (February 2012): 66–86; and Alexander Campolo, "Signs and Sight: Jacques Bertin and the Visual Language of Structuralism," *Grey Room* 78 (February 2020): 34–65. ↑

44 See, for example: James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). ↑

45 Carl Sauer, "The Formative Years of Ratzel in the United States," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 61, no. 2 (June 1971): 245-254; Hollyamber Kennedy,

“Infrastructures of ‘Legitimate Violence’: The Prussian Settlement Commission, Internal Colonization, and the Migrant Remainder,” *Grey Room* 76 (June 2019): 58–97. ↑

46 Volker M. Welter, *Biopolis: Patrick Geddes and the City of Life* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002). ↑

47 Filippo De Dominicis, “From Humboldt’s Chimborazo to Geddes’ Valley Section and Beyond: How a Cross-Section Oriented World Scale Ecologies,” in *The Landscape as Union between Art and Science: The Legacy of Alexander von Humboldt and Ernst Haeckel*, ed. Alessandra Capuano, Veronica Caprino, Liliana Impellizzeri Laino, and Athanassia Sakellariou (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2023), 79–97. ↑

48 Volker M. Welter, “The Valley Region: —From Figure of Thought to Figure on the Ground,” *New Geographies* 6 (January 2014): 80. ↑

49 Welter, “The Valley Region,” 80. ↑

50 On the displacement of the division of labor, see: Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 279–288; and Robinson, *Black Marxism*. ↑

51 On von Thünen’s economic theory, see: David Harvey, “The Spatial Fix - Hegel, Von Thünen, and Marx,” *Antipode* 13, no. 3 (December 1981): 1–12. ↑

52 Matthew Unangst, “Hinterland: The political history of a geographic category from the scramble for Africa to Afro-Asian solidarity,” *Journal of Global History* 17, no. 3 (November 2022): 496–514. ↑

53 Light, *The Nature of Cities*. ↑

54 Trevor J. Barnes and Claudio Minca, “Nazi Spatial Theory: The Dark Geographies of Carl Schmitt and Walter Christaller,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 103, no. 3 (May 2013): 678. ↑

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56 D. F. Darwent, “Growth Poles and Growth Centers in Regional Planning—A Review,” *Environment and Planning* 1, no. 1 (June 1969): 5–31. ↑

57 Nicolas Howe, “Landscape Versus Region – Part I” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Human Geography*, ed. John A. Agnew and James S. Duncan (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 116–117. With thanks to Pat Morton for this reference. ↑

58 Howe, “Landscape Versus Region – Part I,” 118. ↑

59 Howe, “Landscape Versus Region – Part I,” 119. ↑

60 Ayala Levin and Neta Feniger, “Introduction: The Modern Village,” *Journal of Architecture* 23, no. 3 (April 2018): 361–366. ↑

61 F. J. Osborn, “Sir Ebenezer Howard: The Evolution of His Ideas,” *Town Planning Review* 21, no. 3 (October 1950): 225–227. Like in Ratzel’s case, literature on Howard often occludes critical discussion of the settler-colonial experience. ↑

62 Robert Fishman, “A Century of Regionalisms: The Regional Plan Association of New York and The Regional Planning Association of America in Comparative Perspective,” *Planning Perspectives* 38, no. 4 (July 2023): 779–797; Andrew A. Meyers, “Invisible Cities: Lewis Mumford, Thomas Adams, and the Invention of the Regional

City, 1923-1929," *Business and Economic History* 27, no. 2, (January 1998): 292–306. ↑

63 Claude Nicolas Ledoux, *L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation* (Paris: H.L. Peronneau, 1804). ↑

64 Anthony Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Social Reform at the End of the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990). ↑

65 Anthony Vidler, "The Theatre of Production: Claude-Nicolas Ledoux and The Architecture of Social Reform," *AA Files* 1, no. 1 (January 1981): 54–63. Applying infrastructural thinking and territorial resource planning, Ledoux heralded the expanded role some architects would assume in the twentieth century, first in visionary plans and later as state planners. More specifically, Ledoux's intervention in the reorganization and management of resources and production through the relocation of production next to energy sources foreshadows the application of a similar economic logic in Tony Garnier's speculative "Industrial City" project (1904) and later, Soviet geographer Nikolai Kolkovskii, who in 1932 envisioned the "territorial production complex." This concept entailed the introduction "of mining, hydroelectric construction, and heavy industry into sparsely populated territories gridded into regions based on available natural resources and types of energy." See: Kenny Cupers and Igor Demchenko, "Projective Geographies between East and West" in *East West Central: Re-Building Europe, 1950–1990*, vol. 2, ed. Ákos Moravánsky and Karl R. Kegler (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2017), 138. ↑

66 John Friedmann and Clyde Weaver, *Territory and Function: The evolution of Regional Planning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 125–129. ↑

67 Kenny Cupers, "*Géographie Volontaire* and the Territorial Logic of Architecture," *Architectural Histories* 4, no. 1 (March 2016): 4. ↑

68 Cupers, "*Géographie Volontaire*," 5, 9. ↑

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and the Immunization of Nature," *Environment and Planning. D, Society & Space* 32, no. 1 (February 2014): 12–29; and Tom F. Peters, *Building the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996). ↑

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90 Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism;" Tzonis and Lefaivre, "The Grid and the Pathway." See also: William J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982), 331–343; "Towards an Authentic Regionalism," *Mimar: Architecture in Development* 19 (January/March 1986): 24–31. ↑

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94 Responding to Tzonis and Lefaivre's conceptualization of "critical regionalism" as harboring the potential for avant-garde "estrangement" by defamiliarizing regional architectural elements, Colquhoun argued that its dual mission to preserve *and* resist proves its impossibility: "it draws attention to the fact that the postulated organic world of regional artifacts no longer exists. Far from resisting the appropriations of rationalisation, it confirms them by suggesting that all that remains of an original, unitary body of regional architecture are shards, fragments, bits, and pieces that have been torn from their original context." Colquhoun, "Regionalism 1" in *Collected Essays in Architectural Criticism* (London: Black Dog Pub, 2009), 280–286: 283. ↑

95 Colquhoun, "The Concept of Regionalism" in *Architectural Regionalism,* 152. ↑

96 Colquhoun, "The Concept of Regionalism" in *Architectural Regionalism,* 153. ↑

97 For debates on this concept, see: Keith L. Eggener, "Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism," *Journal of Architectural Education* 55, no. 4 (May 2002): 228–237; Carmen Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not so Critical Theory," in *The Figure of Knowledge: Conditioning Architectural Theory, 1960s-1990s*, ed. Sebastiaan Loosen, Rajesh Heynickx, and Hilde Heynen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020): 211–223; Charles L. Davis II, "Blackness in Practice: Toward an Architectural Phenomenology of Blackness," *Log*, no. 42 (January 2018): 43–54; and "Critical Regionalism Revisited," ed. Tom Avermaete, Véronique Patteeuw, Léa-Catherine Szacka, and Hans Teerds, *OASE* 103 (May 2019). ↑

98 Harvey, "The Sociological and Geographical Imaginations," 245. ↑