

Contentious Representations:
Interpretations of the Representation of French Regional Architecture 1914-1939

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Abstract

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This work attempts to trace the evolution of French regionalism during the first half of the twentieth century from the Great War into the interwar period. By examining key social and cultural factors surrounding architecture during this period, it is possible to identify key subtypes of architectural regionalism that demonstrate the effect of larger themes such as modernization and nationalism on rural architecture. Using regionalist publications and international exhibitions to anchor this discussion in the interwar period, this work argues that French regionalism was in fact a more complicated and diverse architectural movement than previously described, undergoing transitions in order to respond to modernity and the growth of France in the wake of the Great War.

To my Mother Frances.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	vi
Acknowledgments	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Great War (1914-1918)	5
Ch 1.1 Policies of the Great War	5
Ch 1.2 Expositions of 1916 and 1917	12
Ch 1.3 La Maison des Pays de France: Les Provinces Dévastées	16
Chapter Two: The Postwar Period (1919-1925)	33
Ch. 2.1 Léandre Vaillat, Charles Letrosne, and Le Corbusier	36
Ch. 2.2 1925 Exposition des arts décoratifs et industriels moderne	45
Ch 2.3 Murs et toits pour les pays de chez-nous	54
Chapter 3: Interwar Period (1926-1939)	71
Ch 3.1 La Collection de l'art regional	73
Ch 3.2 Expositions of 1931 and 1937	89
Conclusion	96
Bibliography	98

List of Figures

Figure 1: Dignitaries at the inauguration of the 1916 Exposition	13
Figure 2: Title page of La Maison des Pays de France, 1922.	16
Figure 3: Table of Contents in La Maison	20
Figure 4 and 5: Images of a Flemish Farmhouse (left) and an Alsatian streetscape from La Maison, 1917	22
Figure 6 and 7: Images of a Flemish town square and an Alsatian town square from La Maison 1917.	24
Figure 8 and 9: Images of Belgian Flemish streetscapes from the 1917 Exposition, 1917.	25
Figure 10: Image of Alsatian streetscape from the 1917 Exposition, by Hansi, 1917.	26
Figure 11: Maison Dom-ino, Le Corbusier, 1914.	37
Figure 12: Title Page for Murs et toits, 1923.	41
Figure 13: Construction of the “Big Rock”, Vincennes Zoo, 1934.	43
Figure 14: Plan of a Flemish Mairie, Murs et toits, 1923.	59
Figure 15 and 16: Elevation and Perspective of a Flemish Mairie, Murs et toits, 1923.	60
Figure 17 and 18: Elevation and Plan for an Alsatian Mairie, Murs et toits, 1923.	61
Figure 19: Perspective of an Alsatian Mairie, Murs et toits, 1923.	62
Figure 20: Plan of a house for an Alsatian farm laborer, Murs et toits, 1926.	64
Figure 21: Perspective of a house for a Flemish laborer, Murs et toits, 1926.	66
Figure 22 and 23: Plans of a house of a Flemish laborer and an Alsatian laborer, Murs et toits, 1926.	67
Figure 24 and 25: Perspective of a house for an Alsatian artisan, Murs et toits, 1926, and streetscape from La Maison, 1922.	68
Figure 23: Plan of a house for an Alsatian artisan, Murs et toits, 1926.	68
Figure 24: Title page, L’Habitation Alsacienne, 1928.	73
Figure 25: Title Page of L’Habitation Flamande, 1927.	76
Figure 26: Villa of M.T., L’Habitation Flamande, 1927.	80
Figure 27 and 28: Rear Elevation and Plan of M.T. Villa, L’Habitation Flamande, 1927.	81
Figure 29 and 30: Photograph and Plans of the Turcas Villa, L’Habitation Alsacienne, 1928.	83
Figure 31 and 32: Photograph and Plan of Remy Villa, L’Habitation Alsacienne, 1928.	84
Figure 33 and 34: Photograph and Plan for the Hermann Villa, L’Habitation Alsacienne, 1928.	86

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Introduction

This thesis examines the evolution of regionalism in France during and after the Great War, and presents the case that this concept underwent significant changes during this time period. What once differentiated between the excessive villa and the necessary farm would now provide an umbrella under which they could both be classified as regional works. Because of the Great War, regionalism transcended its folkloric origins in order to accommodate the demands from the French government to apply modern hygienic practices that were supposed to improve living conditions and the welfare of French citizens. Based on the reality of reconstruction, regionalism became a tool for projecting nationalism to the periphery of France as distinct from the influence of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the emerging Modern Movement.

However, this transition did not take place due to one pivotal event, but through a process of transformations that will be the focus of this thesis. Each of the three stages of regionalism bounding these transitions, from the Great War to 1931, will be the focus of a chapter. The discussion begins with the conception of regionalism during the Great War, when it was a set of ideas carried over from the 19th century. This ideological regionalism transforms into what Jean-Claude Vigato calls progressive traditionalism, which was the initial attempt to apply the principles of ideological regionalism to built works during the period of reconstruction, particularly in the regions affected by the Great War from 1919 to approximately 1925. Progressive traditionalism then evolved into regional rationalism, which became an overarching concept that encompassed both the ideology of 19th century regionalism and progressive traditionalism from 1926 onward. During these stages the 19th century concept of regionalism did not disappear, but was instead a concept of architecture perceived by the population outside of the architectural circles.

These transformations were documented largely in the published work of regionalist architects and supporters of regionalism, and this thesis will examine three primary sources: *les Maisons des Pays de France* by Léandre Vaillat (1917), *Murs et toits pour les pays de chez-nous* by Charles Letrosne (1923-1926), and the series of publications called *Collection de l'art régional* (1923-1930s). The second type of source used to examine these transformations is

the representation of French regional architecture within a series of exhibitions that took place in Paris during this period. These range from small exhibitions during the Great War to the Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes in 1925 and the 1931 Exposition coloniale internationale. Sources from the era document the evolution of regionalism as it first adapts to modernity, and then becomes an opposing style to Modernism while it becomes more and more closely associated with the national government. In its final evolution, regionalism becomes isolated from the French government as the administration changed focus to development in the colonies, causing tension between the regions and the centre, especially in regards to regional representation on a national and international platform like the exhibitions. The link to French government policy, both in response to the Great War and colonialism, reveals that regionalism was uniquely situated during the early twentieth century, and that further investigations into the topic are needed.

Currently, scholarship on this topic has been made by a small number of individuals from various fields of study, and so this thesis references the work of several scholars who either address architectural regionalism directly or indirectly in their discussions of other trends from the early twentieth century. The earliest work referenced in the thesis, *After the Ruins*, was published in 1996 by Hugh Clout, a geographer whose subsequent work has illuminated the reconstruction of France following the Great War as well as the rural geography of France during the same period. *After the Ruins* provides insight into the legislation concerning reconstruction of the Great War as well as an informed perspective on the realities of reconstruction from an economic standpoint.¹

The next work is *The culture of regionalism: Art, architecture, and international exhibitions in France, Germany, and Spain 1890-1939* published in 2010 by Eric Storm. As a cultural historian with a focus on regional and national identities, Storm's book discusses the general concept of regionalism as it relates to nationalism, and it is this idea of regionalism from which the three types of architectural regionalism discussed in this thesis evolve. The use of

¹ Hugh Clout. *After the Ruins: Restoring the Countryside of Northern France after the Great War*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996.

the international exhibition as a source for evaluation the relationship between nation and region is carried over into this thesis from Storm, as the architecture present in the exhibitions serves as primary representations of the perception of the nation of the regions and their architecture.²

The final source is the work of Jean-Claude Vigato and two of his primary publications on the topic of architectural regionalism. The first source, *L'Architecture régionaliste. France 1890-1950* was published in 1994 and provides a comprehensive survey of architectural regionalism in France during the given period. *L'Architecture régionaliste* covers the spectrum of regionalism in architecture, as well as identifies key influences during each of the time periods outlined in the book. As one of the earliest examples of contemporary scholarship on regionalism, it is a quintessential resource for many scholars of regionalism regardless of primary field of study.

This thesis positions itself at the nexus of these sources, by discussing architectural regionalism relative to these overarching influences. Each version of regionalism outlined in this thesis is described relative to the surrounding influences of modernization and nationalism, and explicitly linked to contemporaneous work in order to reinforce how architectural regionalism evolved into a strategy that could be applied to the built environment. The publications and exhibitions that each iteration of regionalism is tied to serve as primary sources for the analysis of each form of regionalism, especially with regards to the application of regionalism in design as well as in built work. The method for this thesis is grounded in primary sources from the period in an effort to demonstrate the strong ties between modernization, nationalism and regional architecture due to the project of reconstruction that occurred after the Great War.

This thesis posits that the connection between architectural regionalism and key themes of French society during this time, particularly recovery after the Great War and the project of nationalism, are stronger than described in previous work. By discussing three key forms of regionalism, the significance of this thesis is not to name the individual subtypes of regionalism, but to assert the relevance of these trends which were discussed by participants in the dialogue

² Eric Storm. *The Culture of Regionalism: Art, Architecture and International Exhibitions in France, Germany and Spain, 1890-1939*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2010.

of architectural regionalism in France not only within architecture but on a larger cultural scale. The fact that these types of regionalism were influenced by the same factors as modernism as well as modernist architects themselves reveals that the opposing binary typically ascribed to regionalism and modernism was in fact more complicated and nuanced. The catalyst of reconstruction during and after the Great War propelled regionalism into the center of discussions concerning how France would be rebuilt after large-scale devastation, a discussion that was perpetuated into the interwar period as the development of the colonies prompted the same strategies to be applied in new locations. While this thesis begins its discussion of regionalism with the Great War, it by no means suggests that regionalism in architecture did not exist prior to 1914, but instead asserts that the Great War was the primary catalyst for the development of regionalism that would occur in the postwar and interwar periods.

Chapter One: The Great War (1914-1918)

Ch 1.1 Policies of the Great War

Architecture in France during the Great War and the period of reconstruction that followed has often been overlooked due to more central themes of industrial and economic recovery. When it has been studied, typically it has related to the rebuilding of cities versus rural areas. However, it is within the rural setting, and the rebuilding of small towns and individual houses that the role of reconstruction is most informative. It is within this environment that the effects of wartime and postwar legislation most impacted discussions of architecture and its subsequent manifestation. By looking at rural reconstruction, tensions between competing architectural ideologies as well as the overarching disconnect between the centre and its regions become evident. Urban centers did not share these tensions as the urban principles of the centre were easily applied to major urban centers in the regions. In this small-scale setting, the objectives of the national government, which were presented as being in the best interests of the region, were detrimental to the welfare of rural inhabitants. Economic efficiency and improved sanitation overshadowed the restoration of regional cultures, and the cultural identity of the region was sometimes sacrificed in order to garner support from the national government.

Reconstruction policy enacted by the centre overlooked cultural considerations that would have enabled quicker rebuilding and motivated displaced individuals to return to their former homes and required exhaustive bureaucratic procedures preventing those who lived in the war torn regions from moving past the devastation of the Great War. The goal of these policies was to strengthen the bonds between regions and the administrative interior while modernizing the *départements* in the name of improved living conditions. Unfortunately, the realities of reconstruction prevented many of these improvements, and ultimately resulted in tension between the centre and the regions and a slowed reconstruction process. As such, these policies greatly influenced discussion of architecture during this period and, it could be argued, they resulted in the tension between regionalists and modernists during the interwar

period. At the outbreak of the Great War, the tension between regionalism and modernism was not so precise, and ideas on rebuilding covered the spectrum between traditional and radically new styles.

By discussing the policies of recovery enacted from 1914 to 1919, it is possible to understand how the distinction between the nation and the region became more ambiguous, simultaneously malleable and rigid. The political and cultural discourse would set the tone for the discussion of architecture as it pertained to rebuilding both during the latter half of the war and into the interwar period.

The recovery from the Great War follows a similar sequence to that of recovery from catastrophic events such as earthquakes, and can be divided into four stages: initial emergency work once areas are no longer occupied, a brief restoration phase to establish basic infrastructure deemed necessary, followed by a longer period of replacement reconstruction concluding with a final commemorative phase.³ From the onset of the Great War the process of rebuilding and the work of architects informed and shaped what would become the policy of *reconstitution* after the Armistice. Architects participated in all four stages of the recovery of the northern *départements* and were included on commissions as early as March 1915 to determine the method for allocating war damages.⁴ Not only did architects assess possible and actual damage perpetrated on the *départements* during the war, but also they began to investigate the various means by which reconstruction could take place which ranged from large-scale planning to acquisition of materials and actual construction in order to facilitate what was hoped to be a relatively fast recovery period.

The outbreak of the Great War led to three legislative actions that would shape the rebuilding of the northern *départements* and attempt to negotiate the tension between national and regional identity.

³ Clout, *After the Ruins*, xii.

⁴ Clout, *After the Ruins*, 177.

The first policy, announced two and half months after the outbreak of war on October 27, 1914, provided the general principle of awarding compensation in devastated *départements*. It stated that the government would assist all those suffering due to the war with any means at its disposal.⁵ The missive further related that the *départements* of the interior would help in the assistance of affected *départements* based on the principle of national solidarity.⁶ This notion of reimbursement for war losses and the inclusion of the whole nation as a contributor to this aid had never been adopted by a previous government. Prior war losses were taken on by those who had experienced the damage and any aid given by the government was considered “an act of grace, a favour by which the state acknowledged the sacrifice which the citizen made on its behalf.”⁷ It is this new policy that for the first time explicitly positioned the nation as responsible for its regions, as well as requiring the interaction between interior regions and their rural periphery. However, any tension or backlash from this policy due to the financial burden of reconstruction was countered by the assumption that “Germany will pay.”⁸ Citing Germany as responsible for the damage allowed, the Ministry of Finance to avoid heavier taxation of the unimpacted *départements*, and head off the possibility of discontent due to an increased economic burden by *départements* that had little connection to the north.⁹ This initial statement regarding compensation would be further outlined in the Sinistrés Charter, the definitive legislative document regarding reconstruction in the devastated *départements*.

The Sinistrés Charter, or loi Cordunet, was adopted on April 17, 1919, and outlined the administrative structure and process by which war damages would be assessed and compensation allocated. Its goal was to fully repay those affected by the war while providing enough economic incentive for displaced citizens to return to their *département* and re-establish

⁵ *Ibid.* 175.

⁶ *Ibid.* 176.

⁷ William MacDonald. *Reconstruction in France*,. New York: Macmillan, 1922. 59-60.

⁸ D.W. Brogan. *France under the Republic: the Development of Modern France (1870-1939)*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1940. 589.

⁹ Clout, *After the Ruins*, 180.

their lives. As such, restrictions concerning re-employment required inhabitants to return to their *département* and to create a comprehensive dossier by which their compensation would be determined. Allocation of compensation was not overseen by the mayor of a town, but a commission consisting of various people who reported to the *département* administration or the national administration depending on the size of the claim. Due to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, the exhaustive nature of the dossiers required for compensation and the small commissions assigned to a given canton, the process of compensation in some cantons only reached 50% completion of its dossiers three years after the Armistice.¹⁰

One way many coped with the process of compensation was to create collectives, consisting of a town or other group that could submit a dossier in bulk in order to speed up the approval process. Although this could speed up the claims process, a fundamental aspect of regional identity at odds with this process was the connection to a particular geography, which at its most basic level connected a person and their family to a certain land plot. Land which had been cultivated or possessed by a family for generations, if submitted as part of a group dossier, could be reorganized and redistributed according to new boundaries. Essentially there was no guarantee that any land conferred to you by the committee would include former familial holdings. Subsequent laws would then tie the physical reconstruction of an individual's buildings to the rest of the group, and if there were any problems with a particular submission, the other submissions stalled as well. In effect, the individuals included in these collectives lost their individuality through these reparations and thereby sacrificing a fundamental part of their regional identity. The detachment from particular land plots weakened regional identity of many in the northern *départements*, and the rigid reparation process generated a constant administrative presence in the regions, allowing the centre to further render these regions dependent on the French government and the nation of France.¹¹ This reliance on the interior

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 184.

¹¹ Clout, *After the Ruins*, xvi.

and the national government produced discontent in the regions, which was exacerbated by the slow progress made towards rebuilding.

With regards to the physical rebuilding of the devastated villages and farms, the inefficiency of the compensation process effectively crippled any immediate rebuilding, and temporary structures were repurposed from the Great War and used to house inhabitants. Those who did not live in the temporary housing were forced to live in the ruins left by the conflict. Ironically, the Sinistrés charter of April 1919 advocated that all reconstruction should conform to national regulations regarding public health and sanitation due to the perception by the Conseil Supérieur d'Hygiène Publique that the rural villages and farms as having 'deplorable' living conditions. Thus they advocated damp-coursing, higher ceilings, better lighting and increased ventilation while the inhabitants of the northern *départements* lived in squalor awaiting compensation and approval to rebuild.¹² These recommendations on improving living conditions referenced in the law passed on March 14, 1919 that mandated all "architectural schemes had to be reconciled with formal rules of reconstruction and translated into village plans which then had to receive official approval before definitive work by cooperative reconstitution societies might commence."¹³

One facet of this Parliamentary law was a requirement that each town create a comprehensive plan to guide any future construction. As it pertained to the devastated regions, no permanent reconstruction could take place until this land-use plan was approved— unless it received special authorization by a prefect. Once this plan was adopted, all building projects had to conform to it and be approved by the local mayor before construction started.¹⁴ Not only was a devastated *département* dependent on the nation for aid to rebuild, but the town planning laws of 1919 further tethered the revitalization of its towns and villages to the nation by acting as the deciding factor in how a region could reconstruct and eventually grow. This integration of the approval of the national government to every scale of reconstruction provided further tension

¹² *Ibid.* 188.

¹³ Clout, *After the Ruins*, 184.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 186.

between regional identities and the national identity because designs for the reconstruction of individual houses had to be approved by an entity acting on behalf of the national government rather than on behalf of the inhabitants of devastated départements. This structure established by the national government created the opportunity for architects all over France to provide input as to how these départements would be rebuilt, an opportunity that was only investigative during the war.

These exploratory ventures into the potential paths of the rebuilding process are often categorized into two positions, the modernists and the improvers. While those characterized under the modernist category advocated the use of new designs and materials, improvers sought to rebuild using better versions of traditional rural housing.¹⁵ What is crucial to note is that architects involved in reconstruction plans and policies acknowledged that the appearance of such new villages would be drastically different from what had previously existed but stressed that “the aesthetic point of view would not be neglected.”¹⁶ Not only were they aware that reconstruction would not restore the settlements to their pre-war state, but also they acknowledged the potential of the reconstruction to be in a form that did not draw inspiration from the traditional building styles of the *département*. The emphasis on economic efficiency led to the support of pre-fabrication which would decrease the amount of labor required in all the depopulated northern *départements*. Ultimately, this approach sacrificed the unique character of each regional building, and revealed the ambivalence of the centre towards the final outcome of reconstruction.

The tension that formed between those proposing modernist construction and those seeking improved versions of traditional housing manifested itself in two expositions during the war— the Exposition de la Cité Reconstituée in 1916 in the Tuileries Gardens in Paris and the 1917 exhibition on *L’architecture régionale dans nos provinces envahies* in the Galerie Groupil

¹⁵ Clout, *After the Ruins*, 190.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 185.

in Paris.¹⁷ While the earlier display attempted to show architects and contractors what could be achieved in the northern *départements*, the latter prioritized drawings by architects that showed houses that had existed before the war as a way of presenting the historical precedents from which architects might find inspiration. However, both modernizers and improvers participated in these exhibitions. Modernizers generally believed that what was lost in the war should be replaced with new buildings indicative of the time as opposed to trying to restore what was now a lost memory. The improver on the other hand acknowledged the impossibility of restoring a building perfectly, and embraced a combination of traditional character that was familiar and improvements to the living conditions such as new technology and hygiene practices. While the central government was initially in support of the modernizers, the realities of implementing these strategies would prove inefficient, leading to a shift in support to the improvers who would also gain the support of inhabitants in the devastated regions. While the 'improver' philosophy would become the primary mindset for rebuilding, it is important to note that in a similar manner to the policies that integrated the opinion of the nation into the rebuilding of individual livelihoods the discussion of architecture of the devastated *départements* took place outside of the *départements* themselves before their results were publicized and distributed in those regions.

¹⁷ G.B. Ford, "The Facts on the Devastation and the Present Reconstruction Efforts in France." *Engineering News Record* 82:218-27. Accessed December 18, 2015. doi:1919.

Ch 1.2 Expositions of 1916 and 1917

In Paris, preparation for the aftermath of the Great War quickly advanced from the government to the committees that were created to discuss strategies for the revitalization and reconstruction of the devastated regional economies. In the physical reconstruction of buildings, an emphasis was initially placed on cities due to their relative importance in establishing connections to Paris and their higher levels of population density. In rural areas, initial repairs and reconstruction focused on restoring livestock and storage facilities in order to revive agrarian production as quickly as possible. As such, engineers, planners and architects who worked for the government were often consulted and participated on committees. By 1915, privately practicing architects would begin to participate more actively in the project of reconstruction in an effort to re-establish their position in the building industry.

It is within this environment that architects presented regionalism as a plausible method for reconstruction; not only did it fit the context in which rural reconstruction occurred, but it was a topic on which architects could reinforce their knowledge and expertise over an engineer or hygienist— whose focus aligned with efficiency and science rather than architecture and aesthetics. This tension between functional reconstruction— or reconstruction as a necessary response to the war in as efficient and economic manner as possible— and regional reconstruction— or reconstruction sensitive to regional cultural variation as well as climatological variations— is evident in two expositions presented in Paris during the Great War. The first, the Exposition de la Cité Reconstituée focused on cheap temporary housing and urban improvements, while the second, the Exposition de l'Architecture Régionale dans les Provinces Envahies, presented images of the devastated regions to convey what the architecture of the different regions looked like for those who would work in the provinces. The first of the exhibitions was described in a publication from the latter exhibition:

“last summer, we had a terrible scare. The terrace of the Jeu de Paume in the Tuileries was suddenly bristling with strange constructions...Small houses, huts, hovels, dugout, as we say on the front. And even including a chapel, they had constructed the semblance of a town in every artificial material imaginable, cement, plaster tiles, tablets of all sorts,

imitations of imitations, all of which, neatly trimmed of the picturesque, seemed to have suddenly appeared from the ground in hours, like a tuft of mushrooms after a rain shower; they sought to demonstrate that we could, in no time at all, reconstruct a destroyed city with iron and flames.”¹⁸

The Exposition de la Cité Reconstituée was open from May to July 1916 on the terrace of the Jeu de Paume in the Tuileries in Paris and sponsored by *La Construction Moderne*. Much of the content of the exposition was overseen by the Association des Hygiénistes et Techniciens municipaux de France, reinforcing the functional nature of the materials and construction methods used.¹⁹ At this time, reconstruction had not officially started, and committees tasked with rebuilding the devastated provinces were still open to the potential of using pre-fabricated building systems, at least in a provisional capacity. As such, this exposition received a variety of responses from architects. For the most part documentation concerning this exposition appeared in engineering and construction journals as opposed to architecture journals, although a few, such as *L'Architecture*, printed articles on the exposition (Figure 1)²⁰.



Figure 1: Dignitaries at the inauguration of the 1916 Exposition

¹⁸ “Logis et Maisons de Champs” 46

¹⁹ Jean Vigato. *L'Architecture Régionaliste: France, 1890-1950*. Paris: Editions Norma, 1994, 90.

²⁰ "Inauguration De L'exposition La Cite Reconstituee." May 24, 1916. Accessed December 18, 2015.

A majority of the architects who were proponents of regionalism responded poorly to the exhibition due to the exclusion of sections on housing or rural buildings within the exposition in favor of topics like urbanism, cleansing and provisional buildings.²¹ However, there were a few regionalist proponents such as Paul Léon who believed the exposition to have “gathered, on the terrace of the Tuileries, models of ingenious assemblages of huts, made of various lightweight materials that are economical and easy to assemble.”²² What seems to be clear is that the 1916 Exposition was perceived to facilitate temporary reconstruction in the northern *départements* rather than present permanent solutions to rebuilding after the Great War. Nonetheless, it became a catalyst for regionalist architects to participate more actively within discussions of reconstruction and to present regionalism as the solution for reconstruction in a more formal manner, ultimately leading the 1917 Exposition de l'Architecture Régionale dans les Provinces Envahies.

Rather than present innovative materials and construction strategies in the 1917 Exposition, the Société des Architectes Diplômés par le Gouvernement (SADG) created an exposition that included images of regional architecture from before and during the war. The intent of the SADG was to present the rural architecture of the provinces in order to provide a cursory look at the trends and styles of the regions. The idea was to educate architects who would work in the provinces, inspiring projects that would be both durable and regional.²³ The exposition was open in January and February in the Galerie Groupil in Paris. The main feature was a series of drawings by André Ventre, a Beaux-Arts trained architect, who before the exposition was asked by Paul Léon to travel in the northern *départements* to document the houses of the invaded regions. Drawings also came from the Archives des Monuments Historiques or by other prominent figures, such as Hansi, Risler, and Viollet-le-Duc. There were even a large number of photographs that were taken by the French army that were shown at the event but never published in the subsequent publications.

²¹ Vigato, *L'Architecture Régionaliste*, 91.

²² *Ibid.* 93.

²³ *Ibid.* 93.

The broad variety of images documenting the regions contributed to the relative success of the event, which could be considered the inaugural moment regionalism in Paris. It also defined the popular methods for reconstruction, as it led to a dramatic spike in discussions of regionalism and reconstruction in architectural circles. The two most prominent results of the 1917 Exposition were an architectural competition and an important book on regionalism. The competition was held later that year; it invited architects to develop regional building designs specific to an area in the devastated regions. Selected designs would be included in a publication that the SADG believed would serve as a handbook and guide for architects designing in these areas during reconstruction. The publication included model buildings that were believed to accurately embody regional variation while incorporating improvements based on sanitation and hygiene guidelines. The second major consequence of the 1917 Exposition, and a main focus of this thesis, is the formal book of André Ventre's drawings published in late 1917 under the title *Les Maisons des Pays de France*. Its text was written by Léandre Vaillat, a prominent advocate for regionalism.

Ch 1.3 *La Maison des Pays de France: Les Provinces Dévastées*

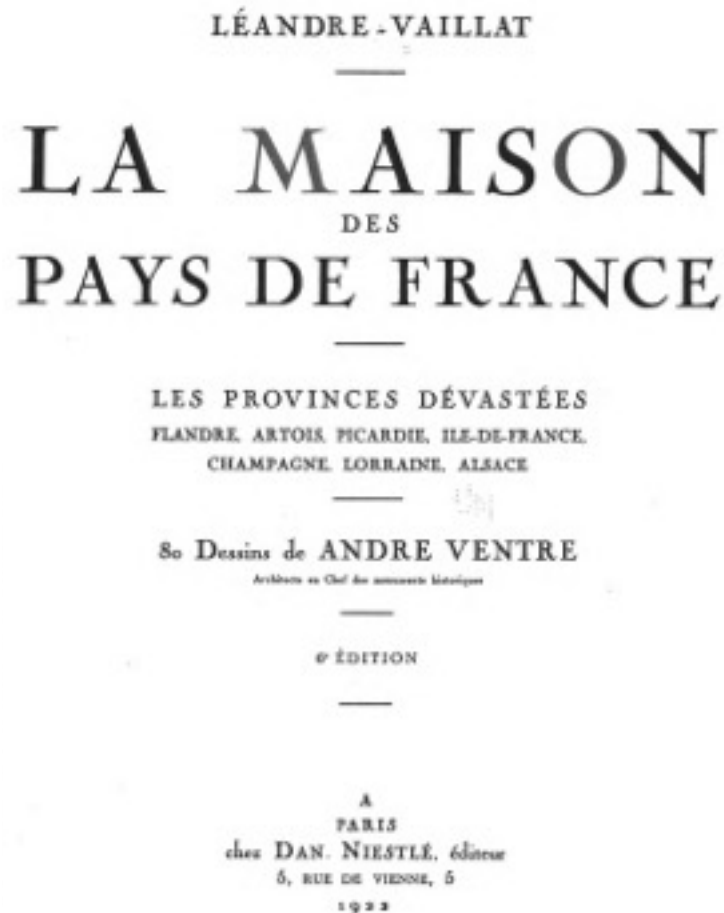


Figure 2: Title page of *La Maison des Pays de France*, 1922.

As the earliest text on Regionalism in wartime France, *La Maison des Pays de France: Les Provinces Dévastées* (Figure 2)²⁴ shows evidence of the interplay between nationalism and regional identity that would develop in the aftermath of the Great War. There are two components of the publication, the text by Léandre Vaillat and the images by André Ventre, both of which are crucial to the understanding of regionalism during this time. The images, collected from the archives des monuments historiques, were drawn by André Ventre, a Beaux-Arts trained architect who was interested in the vernacular forms of France. Léandre Vaillat's text

²⁴ Leandre Vaillat and Andre Ventre. "A Chaque Pays, Sa Maison." In *La Maison Des Pays De France Les Provinces Dévastées*. Paris: Galeries Groupil, 1917.

reveals the issue faced by authors on regional and domestic architecture as they attempted to reinvigorate discussions about French regionalism, particularly as it pertained to the formerly occupied regions of France that faced mass reconstruction after the war. The overall intention of the book, as described by Vaillat, was to show the vernacular forms of these devastated regions as a means of inspiring regionally specific reconstruction efforts that relied on the distinct style of a given region for inspiration, rather than forms that “are rebuilt without spirit, conforming to a type established without consideration of the context or the individual, unconcerned for the inhabitant and ignorant of sentimental preference.”²⁵

Examining three aspects of the book—its structure and organization, the text by Vaillat, and the images by Ventre—it becomes apparent that this discussion of regionalism sought to position regional architecture within the project of nationalism as it pertains to the healing of France in the aftermath of the Great War. The drawings of Andre Ventre provide a visual aid for the text portion of *La Maison*; rather than integrating the images into the text, the book presents the text by Vaillat first and the images by Ventre second. The text of *La Maison* presents the goals of Vaillat to foster an interest in regional architecture. The images act as a source of inspiration and a visual foundation for architects before they participate in the reconstruction effort. While the first goal is more explicit, the text reveals an attempt on Vaillat’s part to construct a cohesive description of the various regions in order to create a familiarity between his audience and the regions described.

Before analyzing the work itself, it is important to outline the context surrounding this text. From January to February 1917, the French Sous-secrétaire d’état des beaux-arts and the Société des architectes diplômés par le gouvernement held the “Exposition de l’architecture régionale dans les provinces envahies.” With a focus on rural and village houses, the exposition was an effort to show the results of regional field studies for the reconstruction of rural areas in the regions devastated by the Great War. Among the participants in the organization of the Exposition was Léandre Vaillat, who was the head reporter for the Exposition

²⁵ Leandre Vaillat. *La Maison Des Pays De France Les Provinces Dévastées*. 8.

and wrote the préface for the Exposition's publication. While the goal of the Exposition to inspire architects with regional architecture seems to be mirrored by *La Maison*, parts of Vaillat's text were explicitly reused in its introductory section, "A chaque pays, sa maison."

This text can be divided into two parts, one that was reused from the préface of the Exposition and the subsequent text that embodies Vaillat's discussion of regional architecture in relation to France. The reused portion of the préface consists of a fictional scene described by Vaillat of a typical encounter with a provincial town. The visit is described as unintentional— as the traveller is waiting for a train at the local train station— and sought out only due to the lack of activity at the station. Vaillat's description distinguishes the visitor as a stranger to the region or area. As such, he positions his narrative as an explorative venture into the country town, resulting in the fictional visitor finding himself enchanted with the simple and ordinary nature of the village. The intentional distinction between the foreign visitor and the inhabitants— whom the visitor never encounters— highlights an important aspect of regionalism as it relates to nationalism. Both of these concepts were applied to populations that did not always play an active role in the representation of their region, for example, discussions concerning reconstruction were often held in Paris by selected committees rather than in the regions. This reflected the burgeoning acknowledgement by regionalists, and in particular Vaillat, of a disparity between the perception of the regions by those living in the centre and the actual identity embraced by regional inhabitants. The visitor described by Vaillat represented those who would either implement or disregard the information presented in the Exposition and Vaillat's *La Maison*.

The implication of the descriptive portion of "A chaque pays, sa maison" evolves with the second portion of the introduction as Vaillat defines region in relation to natural geography rather than political boundaries, effectively distancing his discussion from French nationalism. The borders of the *départements* drawn after the French Revolution divided France into relatively equal administrative districts, and their grouping into what is referred to as regions sometimes overlaps with the historical provinces. Because these boundaries were an integral

part of the organization of the French Republic, any explicit elevation of provincial designations over regional boundaries could be seen as a challenge to the French national identity. In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War and leading up to the Great War, there was constant pressure to reinforce rather than criticize any component of French nationalism. For Vaillat “one should understand region more so by a natural connotation, outlined by geography, further substantiated by human instinct, the tracking of settlement and habitation tendencies as well as the names they adopt.”²⁶ For this reason, Vaillat situates his discussion of regionalism within a political framework by avoiding— at least in his textual references— the use of the province or the *département* as the definitive border of the region. He refers to these areas of discussion as the “pays”, “campagne”, or “champagne” surrounding a well-known reference point like a major town or city.

Following the introduction, Vaillat writes short descriptions in which he follows his method of defining regions by non-political boundaries, referencing instead the traditional provinces of early modern France. However, the political conventions of the province and the *département* are not absent in the text, and are used to organize the plates. This use of the political demarcation methods is where the interplay of terms associated with regionalism and nationalism becomes apparent, as Vaillat emphasizes the provincial divisions over the use of the boundaries used for the *départements* because they were easier reference points for his readers in terms of connoting regional cultures. They were also geographically more accurate than the *départements*. For example, the province of Artois at this point in time was technically a part of the Pas-de-Calais département and no longer considered an independent administrative region, yet in *La Maison*, Artois is treated as a distinctive region.

The categorization of the works included in *La Maison* explicitly reveal the tension between nationalism and regionalism in France, particularly as it relates to architecture. Not only are the works identified by their historical province, but they are also classified by their

²⁶ Leandre Vaillat. *La Maison Des Pays De France Les Provinces Dévastées*. 9.

département and location (Figure 3).²⁷ The fact that the organization of the text uses a cultural/historical identifier as well as an administrative one demonstrates the problem of discussing regional architecture without a nationalist lens. This is also why in “A chaque pays, sa maison” Vaillat expresses the idea that a region is most closely attributed to natural boundaries rather than political ones. The genealogy of any given regional style in France would trace its origins to a point before the French Revolution, and rather than finding its origin within a political boundary, would reveal that the location of the necessary materials matches the presence of a style in a particular region. This meant that any discussion of regional architecture, in order to be accurate, would need to reference naturally bounded areas that transcend French administrative boundaries due to their response to environment and cultural influences. Because these borders more closely relate to the province than the *département*, discussions of regionalism could potentially undermine the strength of the idea of the nation of France.

TABLE DES ILLUSTRATIONS

Provinces	Départements	Localités	Numéros
FLANDRE	Nord	WALLON-CAPPEL	1
---	---	EUCK-HOUT CASTREY	2
---	---	---	3
---	---	WALLON-CAPPEL	4
---	---	---	5
---	---	---	6
---	---	---	7
---	---	BROUCKERQUE	8
---	---	---	9
---	---	PETITE-SYNTHE	10
---	---	---	11
---	---	LOON	12

Figure 3: Table of Contents in *La Maison*

Vaillat's text diffuses the possibility of undermining French national identity because he explicitly ties regionalism to geography much in the same way the national borders of France were justified by bodies of water and mountain ranges. By treating regional boundaries in a similar manner to the national borders of France, Vaillat created continuity between the national boundary of France and its regional borders. The choice of images by Ventre included in *La Maison* provide the visual evidence to support his claim. Due to the proximity of these regions

²⁷ Leandre Vaillat. *La Maison Des Pays De France Les Provinces Dévastées*.

along the border of France, the choice of images creates a fluid and relatively homogenous representation of the regional styles of this part of France. In the images of rural houses, similar construction methods and materials result in an austere exterior finished with a simple roof, the descriptions of the buildings reveal that many homes had one space that functioned as a communal room while the rest of the home remained private. Distinctions emerge as the separation of the entrance from the street vary, Flemish rural housing often incorporated a garden to distance the house from the street, while Alsatian homes typically included a courtyard so that there were two points of entrance, a public one from the street into the communal room and a private entrance within the courtyard. The compositions and general treatment of the drawings by Ventre emphasize the similarities of the styles of the regions by downplaying their unique attributes.

By comparing images from within the collection of Ventre drawings to one another, it will become apparent that the similar treatment of each rendering and the consistency of representation from image to image among each of the regions led to a relatively homogenous representation of the northern *départements*. This coherence is misleading however, as a closer study of the images reveal varied construction methods and building forms, a byproduct of other cultural identities encroaching on the region, as well as the oversimplification of northern France as an idyllic rural landscape. This latter aspect, seen in the drawings by Ventre, is further challenged when these images are compared to others from the 1917 Exposition. By studying these earlier images, the singular vision of Ventre and Vaillat is evidenced, as well as the ability of regional identities to violate political boundaries. Participants in the discussion of regionalism were somewhat ambivalent towards the transgressive nature of regionalism as some regional identities were implicitly accepted for their shared heritage such as Flanders while others, the primary example being Alsace, were misrepresented. This misrepresentation is tied to the fact that architects had very little current information on the architecture of the region as it had been part of Germany for the past forty years. Alsace, for example, had been part of Germany for the past forty years. These generalizations were fortified in an effort to cultivate a French national

identity. In Alsace, for example, they acknowledged regional identity in so far as it included regional characteristics that lacked any traceable ties to distinctly German construction.

The comparison of images from Flanders and Alsace reveals that in 1917, the application of regionalist thought and their representation at a national level, was more or less in its infancy. It also reveals that the desire to use regionalist thought was a direct result of the devastation of the Great War. Although the authors used precedents to provide a comprehensive view of the regions, their representation of them often resorted to cultural and folkloric traditions in an effort to project a strong French identity rather than to document physical examples of regionalism, such as in built works. By focusing on a small enough part of France, *La Maison* successfully applies regionalist thought in its text; however, the images reveal the inherent challenge of documenting regional architecture.



Figure 4 and 5: Images of a Flemish Farmhouse (left) and an Alsatian streetscape from *La Maison*, 1917

In a general comparison of the representation of Flanders and Alsace in *La Maison*, it appears that Flanders reflects the treatment of the other regions, while Alsace is an outlier. Fourteen images by Ventre describe buildings in Flanders, while only two images represent buildings in Alsace. The images of Flanders spread across five documented towns and cover housing for farm laborers, factory workers, and other building types such as farms, inns and a town square. By comparison Alsace, only features streetscapes in unidentified towns, with no prominent features to identify their site. The first set of compared images relates to this differentiated treatment of the two regions. The image of a Flemish farmhouse in Wallon-

Cappel (Figure 4)²⁸ shows the typical format for representing architecture in publications during the interwar period. The perspectival rendering is the most prominent of the drawings, while a site plan and floor plan appear in the unrendered areas of the page. This explicitly contrasts with the first image of Alsace included in *La Maison* (Figure 5)²⁹ which only includes a perspective rendering of a street in a town.

The disproportionate amount of information included in the drawings relates not only to the realities of travelling during the last stages of the war, but it also reveals an underlying reluctance to engage with Alsatian architecture and its overtly German characteristics. Despite these differences, both of the drawings show the idyllic representation of the regions that characterize Ventre's drawings in *La Maison*. The Flemish farmhouse has what appears to be a thatched roof and partially exposed partially cobbled half timber frame while the Alsatian street scene includes only half-timbered buildings, the construction method most closely associated with Alsace. Despite their differences, the image of the Flemish farm house and the Alsatian street embody the authors' intention to present the French regions as untouched by modernity, and their compositions reflect a continuing trend to romanticize rural regional architecture.

The next set of images depict buildings on the periphery of a town square in each region. Unlike the prior images, which provide an idealized representation of regional architecture, these images begin to show that one particular construction model does not define the style of a given region. The Flemish town square of Wallon-Cappel (Figure 6)³⁰ depicts a series of houses that are in keeping with the aesthetic Ventre documents in his other drawings of Flanders. However, it is this representation compared with the other images of Flanders included in the 1917 Exposition that reveals the ability of regional style to transgress political boundaries, and how French regionalists did not consistently acknowledge this trait in the wake of the Great War. In the case of the Alsatian town square (Figure 7)³¹, roughly half of the

²⁸ Leandre Vaillat. *La Maison Des Pays De France Les Provinces Dévastées*. 50.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 80.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 56.

³¹ *Ibid.* 80.

buildings included in the composition are half-timbered, while the others appear to be stone. The stone buildings seem to make stronger reference to the French architecture found in the Ile-de-France than to what was considered typical Alsatian architecture. It is also noteworthy that the street scene of the Alsatian town square depicts a more urban environment than many of the other street scenes included in the *La Maison*, particularly in comparison to the Flemish town square.



Figure 6 and 7: Images of a Flemish town square and an Alsatian town square from *La Maison* 1917.

The catalogue for the 1917 Exposition includes four images of urban Flemish architecture, two images by Victor Gilsoul (Figure 8 and 9)³² as well as one of the drawings by Ventre of a grande place in Flanders (Figure 6). Although these images both depict what is considered Flemish architecture, they are clearly different styles of architecture. Not only are the architectural styles distinct from one another due to the scale their respective towns, but the town scenes by Gilsoul are actually of locations in Belgium rather than France. This explicitly acknowledges that Flemish architecture crosses the border between Belgium and France. It also shows that urban Flemish architecture is distinct from Flemish regional architecture as well as other forms of urban architecture in Europe. A comparison with the treatment of other multinational styles highlights that the authors were less hesitant to acknowledge shared regional styles in areas that did not pose a threat to the French national identity than in areas, like Alsace, that did. This can be seen in the completely different treatment of Alsace and is a theme that will continue throughout the interwar period.

³² "Vieux Logis: Maisons Des Champs." *Le Logis Et La Maison Des Champs*, 1917. 30.



Figure 8 and 9: Images of Belgian Flemish streetscapes from the 1917 Exposition, 1917.

Compared with the images included from the 1917 Exposition, the two images of Alsatian streets by Ventre (Figures 5 and 7) noticeably lack the urban density and impact of medieval fortification building that seemed essential to depicting Alsatian regional architecture in the earlier publication (Figure 10)³³. Even when the images from the 1917 Exposition catalogue contain buildings that do not use half-timber framing, there is a continuity between the images in their presentation of Alsace that does not occur between simple rural drawings of Ventre and the urban images from the exposition. While the unfamiliarity of Ventre with the region of Alsace may account for much of the differentiation between his treatment of its architecture and that of the other regions, his distanced engagement with Alsatian regionalism reinforced the distinction France sought to establish between itself, at a regional and national level, and Germany. By glossing over some of the attributes of Alsatian architecture that distinguish it from other French regional styles but explicitly reference German architecture, architects interested in Alsace could begin to document Alsatian architecture as part of the reconstruction effort during and after the war. However, in doing this, regionalism with its strong emphasis on acknowledging the heritage of regional characteristics was not fully applied to Alsace. This distinction is even more apparent in the text by Vaillat, who simultaneously promotes regionalism and its role in reconstruction while attempting to redefine the regional architecture of Alsace as wholly exempt from German influence.

³³ "Vieux Logis: Maisons Des Champs." *Le Logis Et La Maison Des Champs*, 1917. 87.



Figure 10: Image of Alsatian streetscape from the 1917 Exposition, by Hansi, 1917.

For example, Vaillat varies the registers of prose depending on the relative familiarity of the reader with the region. For regions that are well-known and well visited, like the Ile-de-France and Champagne, Vaillat's descriptions play upon pre-existing perceptions, and the narratives reinforce these associations. For other regions, like Flanders, which are less visited but hold strong associations with industry, Vaillat supplies fewer narratives and his descriptions are less imaginative than for other regions. For unfamiliar and unknown regions, Alsace in particular, Vaillat's descriptions rely strongly on narrative to create an idea of a region that had not been a part of France since before the turn of the twentieth century.

For all of his descriptions Vaillat uses geographical and contextual references that originate in historical discussions of regionalism. For example, he refers to geographic areas, such as plains or mountainous regions, and distinguishes between the town, the village, and the campagne when discussing architecture. True to contemporary regionalism, Vaillat references cities but does not describe or discuss them in detail, and he also avoids discussing familiar building types that belong to formal French architecture, such as cathedrals. When mentioned,

these sites reinforce the sense of familiarity Vaillat creates between his audience and the region, while his descriptions fill in the surrounding context. These shared characteristics provide the structure in which Vaillat, using specific language and narratives, can differentiate between the various regions and discuss regionalism in connection to nationalism, modernization, and industrialization. By looking at the descriptions of Flanders and Alsace, it becomes evident that Vaillat is aware of the environment in which he is attempting to promote regionalism, and that *La Maison* is one of the first formal attempts to discuss regionalism relative to its context in a proactive rather than reactive manner.

The descriptive language Vaillat uses establishes a narrative on each region following the style of the introduction, as if the audience were strolling through a typical town. In the description of Flanders Vaillat writes,

“The house is set back from the street, separated by a hedged in garden with a little gate. The picturesque streets of the village are lined with rows of these gardens in front of gabled houses. A singular well-proportioned skylight with a pediment fits into the roof, and the powerful trunk of the chimney completes the general silhouette. The entrance does not open onto the street but into the sunny courtyard, where we enter via a large vaulted carriage port. In the middle of the courtyard, a turreted pigeon loft completes the structure of the farm for us.”³⁴

A similar description appears in the section on Alsace; however, the varied language and integration of narration renders an entirely different understanding of the regional town. Vaillat writes:

“In this facade where everything seems to be as hospitable and pleasant as we expect of our friend Fritz, you search for the door in vain. This is a charming trait and a constant observation of the indifference country folk regarding the street in that they do not desire the spectacle that the street offers, but the radiance of what Master Sebalus, innkeeper of the *Jambon de Mayence* tavern, calls the Sun God. They open their homes towards the light, towards the warmth rather than the passersby. Perhaps in this there is also a character trait present; their doors, like their hearts, do not reveal themselves at first with easy and fleeting effusion: to win them over, one must overcome if not ramparts, the smallest of obstacles...”³⁵

The juxtaposition of the two descriptions reveals striking differences between Vaillat's attitude toward Alsace and the other regions. Despite the strong contrast in the narratives, the two buildings described are similar in layout. Both feature courtyards that frame the main

³⁴ Leandre Vaillat. *La Maison Des Pays De France Les Provinces Dévastées*. 20.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 43-44.

entrance to the house, yet the difference in language suggests that the two buildings are nothing alike. While the description of Flanders captures an image of a village farm in a picturesque manner balanced with pertinent architectural information, the description of the house in Alsace is entirely anecdotal (and somewhat derogatory) and includes very little information on Alsatian homes. Although Vaillat supplies more information later in each regional description, the use of anecdotes and general references to the local people is more frequent than with the other regions.

The cultural ties to France are also treated differently in the case of Alsace. While other regions are discussed relative to their present cultural connections, Vaillat uses historical links for Alsace in order to connect it to France and avoid German references. In both instances, Vaillat describes picturesque scenes that refer back to the time of the French monarchy, citing Louis XIV³⁶ and Louis XVI³⁷ as contextual references to complete the image for the reader. This use of historical associations is interesting given when Vaillat published this book, which was a time when the nation of France needed to strengthen its identity among its citizens, particularly in areas affected by the war. On the one hand it follows Vaillat's effort to cultivate nationalism through familiarity, acknowledging that throughout most of French history, Alsace was a part of France. By referring back to early modern France, readers can connect Alsace to what they know about the past, reinforcing their perception of Alsace as a French region with similar traits to others. On the other hand, references to a distant point in history during the French monarchy, rather than a time after the French Revolution, seems to separate Vaillat's regional discussion from the realities of the French government at the end of the Great War. Rather than posing a challenge to French national identity, these references reveal that regionalism was still transitioning from its nostalgic and bucolic origins into a modern concept. They also suggest that regional styles can be traced to before they were even discussed by regionalists. However, in the descriptions of the other regions that share a cultural heritage with central France

³⁶ Leandre Vaillat. *La Maison Des Pays De France Les Provinces Dévastées*. 42.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 43.

historical references are kept to a minimum. In those narratives, the cultural associations attempt to extract the French regional character out of a pre-existing style rather than connect a culturally disparate style to France.

One such example is the description of Flanders, in which Vaillat writes, “all of French Flanders has its unique character, distinct from Belgian Flanders.”³⁸ There are several problems with this method of distinguishing French regional styles. The only evidence the book provides to support this statement relates to the styling of the exterior of houses in towns, which could be the result of natural variation due to the preference of the craftsmen rather than a national difference. In Ventre’s images, it is difficult to perceive a substantive difference between Belgian and French characters of Flemish buildings, and very few images of towns are included so that the reader can make this comparison. Vaillat’s statement seems even more suspect, when considering that, of the images of Flemish architecture featured in the 1917 Exposition that prompted the publication of this book, more than half are of Belgian rather than French examples. This description of Flanders suggests Vaillat was concerned that when regions shared heritage with other nations it undermined the solidity of French nationalism, and in the wake of the Great War he prompted efforts to curb cultural ties to other nations. In this regard regionalism provided a means to tie border regions physically and visually to the nation of France, despite their connections across political borders. The longevity of French regional styles provided an additional link, in the case of reacquired regions whose recent past and cultural identity had become strongly linked to another country, as in Alsace.

The connection between regionalism and nationalism was one important tie Vaillat established in *La Maison*. With regard to several regions, Vaillat also discussed the impact of industrialization on local architectural styles, touching upon a topic that would ultimately lead to linking regionalism to modernization.

The development of industry in the northern regions primarily involved mining and manufacturing. Flanders was of particular importance because of its access to the North Sea,

³⁸ Leandre Vaillat. *La Maison Des Pays De France Les Provinces Dévastées*. 19.

and its well-developed pre-war industrial centers and coal mining towns. The revitalization of industry in the devastated regions was of the utmost importance to the French government, once the areas were no longer war zones. The level of devastation in these regions required large scale rebuilding of nineteenth and early twentieth century industrial settlements. As with their discussion of rural agrarian housing, regionalists advocated the de-standardization of worker housing as a way to improve living conditions in industrial developments. When discussing Flanders, Vaillat argues that the creation of *cités* in which worker housing was standardized and lacked individual character led to alcohol abuse and general misery.³⁹ Not only did he critique the character of the proposed new housing, but Vaillat considered its organization flawed because of its inclusion of a salon, a room which was not present in traditional regional homes in the northern regions. He argued that this revealed the detrimental influence of urban, and more specifically, Parisian culture on regional construction.⁴⁰ Vaillat voiced similar criticisms concerning mining towns in Flanders, but also wrote that a couple of towns had integrated a local style into pre-existing conditions to counteract the desolation of these housing developments and improve living conditions.⁴¹

Contemporaneous discussions of industrial towns revealed the various factors affecting post-war reconstruction --- the economic necessity to revitalize industry in devastated regions, the attachment of modern architecture to industrial centers, and the prioritization of modernization over restoration during the course of reconstruction --- and more explicitly demonstrates the problems faced by the French in rebuilding the devastated regions. The emphasis on modernizing the regions proved to be the hardest of the three goals of the French government to achieve, and also could be considered the most detrimental to the local culture. While revitalizing the regional economy did not necessarily interfere with cultural developments, the quest to modernize suggested the feasibility of modernist design as a replacement for traditional design. It also served as a platform on which regional culture and lifestyle could be

³⁹ Leandre Vaillat. *La Maison Des Pays De France Les Provinces Dévastées*. 18.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 18.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 19.

criticized by urbanists and regionalists alike. Even Vaillat in his discussion of Alsace wrote “despite the use of questionable hygiene practices, the Vosgienne farm has a lot of character, because we sense it is closely tied to the soil, the landscape, and their customs.”⁴²

This critical view of the lack of hygiene in the regions originates from the same cultural position as the inclusion of the salon in worker housing: the critics and designers who commented on and participated in reconstruction often led relatively privileged lives in cities like Paris or in wealthier, more developed regions. This attitude is prevalent in texts on architectural regionalism as well as writings on the regions. This implies what in the next chapter will be made more explicit, that the contrast between the French centre and the peripheral regions would become more conspicuous and more contentious during the interwar period.

The examination of postwar regionalism reveals the struggle the French government faced in the aftermath of the Great War to heal and to unite the French people within a modern state. While the loss of life in the Great War took a toll on the nation of France, for those who survived, reconstruction after the Great War also posed a daunting obstacle to overcome physical and emotional loss. Although some level of national solidarity existed due to the suffering of the French in the war, the French government needed to unite its citizens under an identity somewhat distinct from the collective loss, one that was founded on the strength and power of France as a modern state. The need for a distinct identity became even more imperative with the return of regions that had been under German rule for the forty years leading up to the war. A strong French national identity would not only reinforce the prewar political boundaries of France, but would allow for the reintegration of former regions Alsace and Lorraine. In order to foster this national identity, France needed to integrate political policy into daily life— policy that would almost certainly come into conflict with the historical identities of the regions of France. By focusing on architecture, the French government could shape regional life by altering infrastructure and town planning, consequently diluting the regional character of the towns and villages in order to heal and develop all of France rather than specific regions in

⁴² Leandre Vaillat. *La Maison Des Pays De France Les Provinces Dévastées*. 40.

need of support. In regions devastated by the war, this integration of national policy was most felt because entire towns and villages were rebuilt according to an approach that was not sensitive to regional variation. The results of these initiatives were mixed, but they allowed for the modernization and the pastoralization of the French peripheral regions, an effect that would be exaggerated by expositions and the rise of tourism. These actions led regionalists to publicly promote the use of regional architecture as an inspirational source for those partaking in the reconstruction of the devastated regions, efforts that for the most part helped motivate architects to consider regional architecture in their designs.

Reconstruction was fraught with tensions of identity because the French government chose to pursue regionalism instead of modern design using new materials and building systems. By supporting regionalism, the French administration demonstrated that it needed to integrate a national agenda into a pre-existing regional condition. Due to the impractical nature of applying modern architecture to the war devastated regions, regionalism gained further favor due to its presumed ability to integrate the nationwide scheme for modernization into buildings that would also reflect the unique character of a particular region. The selection of regionalism as a tool for nationalism in France established three prominent architectural styles during the interwar period: Regionalism, Modernism, and Neoclassicism. Until the Great War, regionalism as a term was still strongly connected to its nineteenth century origins in art and cultural history, yet the widespread emergence of new building types, integration of modern building techniques in rural locations, and the rise of the middle and upper classes as the French economy recovered changed the definition of regionalism. As Henri Algoud wrote in 1926, “tradition and modernity, regional peasant traditions and modern programs and techniques, farms and villas were bound together yet in mutual opposition”⁴³ under the name of regionalism.

⁴³ "Between Progress and Tradition: The Regionalist Debate in France." In *Regionalism and Modernity: Architecture in Western Europe, 1914-1940*, 15-38. Leuven, 2013. 16.

Chapter Two: The Postwar Period (1919-1925)

The reconstruction that occurred during the Great War primarily responded to necessary emergency work and the restoration of crucial buildings and infrastructure. The small scale nature of this work expanded during the postwar period as general replacement reconstruction could take place following the Sinistrés Charter. However, this work was not fully completed in the few years following the Great War due to the inefficiency of the reparations process, resulting in tension between the northern *départements* and the administrative centre. What was outlined in the Sinistrés Charter and subsequent planning laws concerning infrastructure and hygiene could not be successfully applied to regional towns and villages because of the nature of the physical site and the general devastation of the regions. This stalled reconstruction and ultimately leading to the abandonment of the more ambitious schemes the centre had required in town plans. Many reconstruction plans were asked to integrate new plumbing and sewage systems that would never be implemented due to the impossibility of reorganizing the foundations of towns according to the required plan with the given resources. Reconstructed towns returned to prewar conditions concerning infrastructure, and the few improvements concerning hygiene were superficial relative to the buildings. Farms were reorganized to distance livestock from living quarters, and in many regions larger windows were constructed to improve air circulation.

These improvements created a distinction between regional buildings according to date of construction. Pre-existing regional structures whose similarities could be tracked within their region were visibly different than the new buildings, which were built according to regional styles. The new building also featured standardized elements that could be found across the nation, creating a fluidity in regional architecture across the nation that had not previously exist. As an example, in the northern regions windows were often oriented towards sunlight and varied in size to keep out drafts during the winter, but in order to follow the new hygiene and sanitation laws, windows were required to be a certain size and oriented in order to cross-ventilate the interior, an extreme change from what was typically found in the region.

These changes along with the attempt by the French administration to integrate modern building materials into regional architecture redefined regionalism. What resulted is what Jean-Claude Vigato referred to as “progressive traditionalism.”⁴⁴ In this thesis, this term refers to an architecture that references traditional architecture while featuring progressive concepts concerning living conditions and modern building systems. While wealthier regions could embrace all of these changes, the regions recovering from the Great War would reveal the juxtaposition of progressive traditionalism promoted by the centre and the realities of the periphery. Basic economic realities in the northern regions, as well as fundamental differences in views about how rebuilding should proceed, inhibited the implementation of new systems. The cost to transport new pre-fabricated systems to these regions, for example, exceeded expectations because of the poor state of transportation systems following the Great War. In addition, the importation of materials and building assemblies from other regions would not support local industry or contribute to the revitalization of local economies.

Although the French administration during the Great War advocated regionalism as the style in which the devastated regions would be reconstructed after the war, the reality of reconstruction revealed that the centre actually supported progressive traditionalism as the style in which the regions would be rebuilt. This choice fomented conflict among architects, as progressive traditionalism would be considered distinct from traditional concepts of regionalism as well as modernism and disliked by supporters of both styles. During the postwar period, the physical distance between discussions of regionalism in administrative circles, which occurred in the centre, and the regions continued to increase. A leading cause for this was the developing reputation of the French nation, which became increasingly tied to Paris, causing a shift in focus of the French administration to supporting Paris over the welfare of the regions. This was particularly evident in the international exhibitions that occurred during this period, as well as publications that glorified Paris as the center of French culture, leading to increased investment in the Parisian economy to the detriment of the regions. At this time, progressive

⁴⁴ "Between Progress and Tradition: The Regionalist Debate in France." In *Regionalism and Modernity: Architecture in Western Europe, 1914-1940*, 15-38. Leuven, 2013.

traditionalism held promise for many architects who wanted to engage with French regional architecture whose formal training in the Beaux-Arts sourced its inspiration from Italy rather than from their native soil. For others, it presented a point of criticism in French design because it did not fully embrace the building traditions of France nor the new building technologies that emerged during this period.

Ch. 2.1 Léandre Vaillat, Charles Letrosne, and Le Corbusier

By the 1920s, regionalism was a widely discussed topic, not only by those who believed it was the future of architectural design in France, but also by those who criticized it. Rather than explore the numerous conceptions of regionalism proposed in the 1920s, this chapter examines the work of three important contributors to the debates about regionalism and highlights the shift in the meaning of the term “regionalism” as demonstrated by their work. In particular, it illustrates the close, but short-lived, ties between regionalism and modernism, ties that would be for the most part entirely severed by the late 1920s. Léandre Vaillat and Charles Letrosne, two important authors on the subject of regionalism, and a preeminent modernist in France during the 1920s, Le Corbusier, all attempt to negotiate between the pre-war ideas of regionalism and modernism in its earliest manifestations. Le Corbusier’s attempts to integrate regionalism and modernism are perhaps the most assertive, while Léandre Vaillat and Charles Letrosne demonstrate more nuanced approaches.

Although Le Corbusier is most well-known for his work after 1927, but works from his earlier years, particularly before 1914, show the influence of regional building typologies, national styles, and some interest in neoclassicism. As a Francophone Swiss designer, he participated in the intense debates about how to maintain French superiority in design over an increasingly assertive German system of design education, production, and promotion, a tension that would continue to affect him until the 1920s. Although it is during this period that Le Corbusier begins to explore the work of Adolf Loos, Nancy Troy posited that Le Corbusier was also “working through the problem of decoration [that] led Jeanneret to the threshold of an international, or non-national, style”, the Great War would inevitably draw his attention and work back towards a method of design that established a balance between form and ornament in order to position his work as distinctly French.⁴⁵ During this time, it was of the utmost importance that modern artists and architects in France could legitimize the French-ness of their work by citing historical precedent and inspiration. Le Corbusier’s key work in relation to

⁴⁵ Nancy Troy. “Le Corbusier, Nationalism, and the Decorative Arts in France, 1900-1918.” *Studies in the History of Art* 29, no. Symposium Papers XIII: Nationalism in the Visual Arts (1991): 80.

reconstruction was the Maison Dom-ino, a system which combined modern building technology to facilitate expedited construction with regional materials and ornament to aid in restoring the regional fabric. The Maison Dom-ino (Figure 11)⁴⁶ consisted of levels of concrete slabs supported by thin concrete columns. This structure could be assembled on site due to the use of concrete, and its open plan and minimal structure allowed for the design to be adaptable to the needs of the inhabitant. Not only that, Le Corbusier believed that the plan and facade of regional architecture could be applied to this structure. Le Corbusier advocated this system as a solution to reconstruction and developed the concept during the Great War.

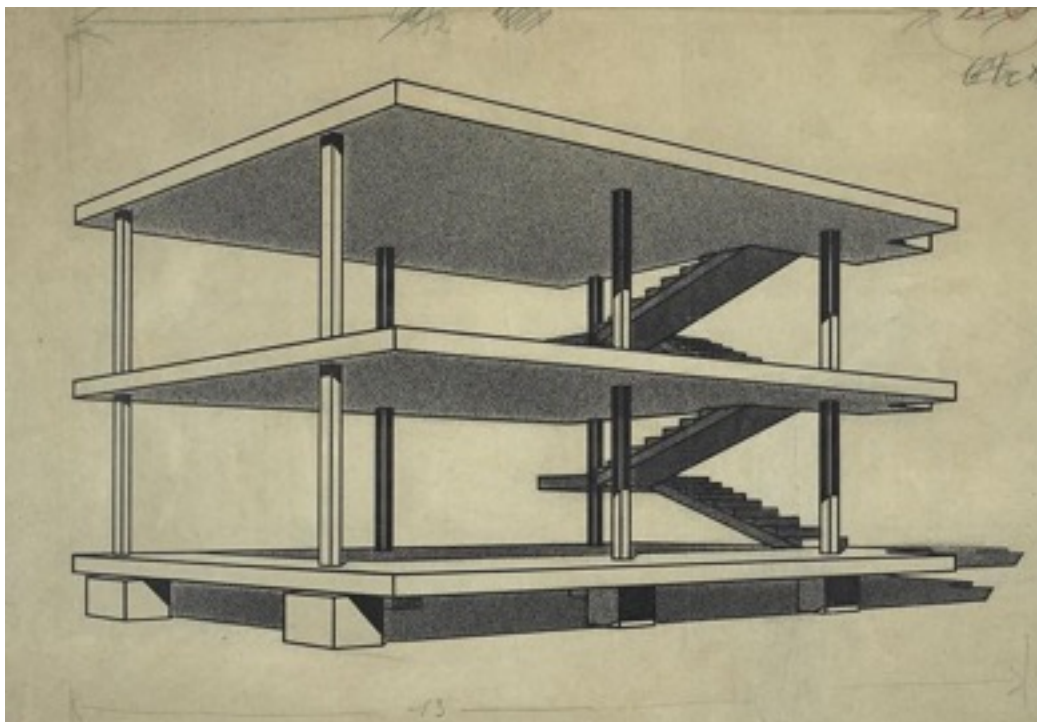


Figure 11: Maison Dom-ino, Le Corbusier, 1914.

Le Corbusier focused much of his attention on developing the Maison Dom-ino system during the Great War, and his investment into its development reflects his belief in its applicability to reconstruction in the wake of the devastation of the Great War. The Maison Dom-ino never culminated in actual construction, and it seems clear that the overarching principles attached to the concept by Le Corbusier might have proven difficult to reconcile with

⁴⁶ "Maison Dom-ino, Not Located, 1914." Fondation Le Corbusier. Accessed December 18, 2015. <http://www.fondationlecorbusier.fr>

the realities of the project of reconstruction, especially within France. The revolutionary aspect of the Maison Dom-ino system was that it did not interfere with an architect's ability to realize a design vision both on a functional and aesthetic level.⁴⁷ However this freedom depended on architects being involved in reconstruction, and although many would engage in the discussion of reconstruction, the majority were located in Paris and thus not directly involved with the actual reconstruction of the north other than in an advisory capacity.

The second principle used to justify Maison Dom-ino was the economic efficiency of the process and the use of cheap building materials.⁴⁸ The extreme level of devastation in the northern *départements* included not only villages and towns—prompting the need for reconstruction—but also it involved the manufacturing facilities for the needed building materials. Furthermore, transportation networks had yet to be reestablished, so even if the materials were produced elsewhere it would have proven nearly impossible to efficiently deliver them. Although Le Corbusier envisioned the Maison Dom-ino as a universal solution to reconstruction, in reality, it could not be realized within the unique circumstances that the Great War presented to France.

Regardless of the relevance of the rationale for the Maison Dom-ino, Le Corbusier was very motivated to implement the building system during the Great War until the project was dropped in 1916. Three possible reasons why the project was dropped were the lack of enthusiasm of one of his partners, DuBois, the missed opportunity of participating in *La Cité Reconstituée* in 1916, and the unpredicted prolongation of the war until 1918.⁴⁹ These three factors followed the inability of Jeanneret to build an actual prototype of the Maison Dom-ino by 1916 in order to secure a firm for manufacturing the construction system. DuBois had worked with Jeanneret from the project's infancy and was tasked with finding firms who would produce Maison Dom-ino, a task he never completed and appeared unmotivated to achieve. Although Jeanneret had initially been encouraged to participate in *La Cité Reconstituée*, the exposition in

⁴⁷ Eleanor Gregh. *The Dom-ino Idea*. 1979. 61.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 71.

the Tuileries in 1916, Auguste Perret dissuaded him from participating because he believed that the exposition “being in the hands of a clique, [would] achieve nothing” and the action via private enterprise would be a much more successful avenue to pursue.⁵⁰

These two factors along with the general underestimation of the duration of the Great War contributed to Le Corbusier’s fading enthusiasm for the Maison Dom-ino project, although aspects of the design would permeate Le Corbusier’s later work. Although what would become Corbusian modernism was in its inception with projects such as the Maison Dom-ino, the work of Le Corbusier reveals a general trend during this time in France of hesitancy to accept new ideas that were too disparate from French tradition. This hesitancy stemmed from the government’s inability to accurately predict the requirements of reconstruction and led to a dependence on tradition and regional precedent rather than a holistically modern approach to rebuilding. What could be considered as a choice to pursue regionalism over modernism proved to be dissatisfying to Le Corbusier, who would later write in 1921:

“just think, we are just coming, completely breathless, to r-e-g-i-o-n-a-l-i-s-m! Phew! And the most ludicrous thing about it is that it’s the destruction in the occupied areas that has got us there. Faced with the immense task of total reconstruction, Pan’s pipes have been taken down from their display case. They’re being played here, there and everywhere by committees and commissions.”⁵¹

By end of the 1920s, the tension between Modernism and regionalism would transcend the commentaries of participants in discussions of reconstruction to become a defining characteristic of understanding either ideology. To understand regionalism it was common to compare it to Modernism and vice versa. One such rivalry was between Le Corbusier and Léandre Vaillat, author of *Les Maisons des Pays de France*.

Léandre Vaillat (1876-1952) was a prolific writer and art critic. He not only published novels and tourist literature, he also wrote numerous articles for a variety of publications. Vaillat’s primarily focused on art and architecture, and he voiced his most vehement support of regionalism in articles on these subjects. Vaillat’s writings parallel the evolution of regionalism;

⁵⁰ Eleanor Gregh. *The Dom-ino Idea*. 70.

⁵¹ Vigato, “Between Progress and Tradition”. 31.

his earliest discussions of regionalism relate to ideals outlined by nineteenth century authors like Viollet-le-Duc and Lebrun, while in the first half of the twentieth century his definition of regionalism shifts to encompass modern demands. Between 1912 and 1913 Vaillat outlined three fundamental points of regional design: that regional differentiation must be respected, that regional architecture's merit came from its successful adaptation to its landscape and climate, and that it was impossible to construct regional buildings that continued the archaic and unsanitary living conditions of their peasant inhabitants.⁵² These premises, particularly the last one, transform the pre-war ideas of regionalism to allow architects to build contemporary housing under the umbrella of a regional style. Acceptance by critics of modernizing elements into regional housing contributed to its adoption as the official reconstruction style.

In 1917 during the earliest stages of emergency work and restoration, official documents noted that destroyed houses were being “rebuilt with no thought at all for progress or improvements which are acknowledged as necessary today.”⁵³ To counteract this form of reconstruction, committees for regional reconstruction in Paris sought out those interested in regionalism to link the technical modernization of the household to regional architecture in order to guide the rebuilding of the northern *départements*. By this time, Vaillat was established as an authority on regionalism, as demonstrated by his appointment as the general reporter for the Exposition de l'architecture régionale dans les provinces envahies and his book *Les Maisons des Pays de France* published shortly after the exposition. His support of regional aesthetic values and modernization closely aligned with the project of reconstruction, as well as villa construction in other regions of France. His contributions to numerous publications allowed his ideas to be transmitted all over France.

⁵² Vigato, “Between Progress and Tradition”. 16.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

One such publication was a series of three books by Charles Letrosne, called *Murs et toits pour les pays de chez-nous* (Figure 12)⁵⁴, for which Léandre Vaillat wrote the preface. In his preface, Vaillat predicts that this work:

“...will be read by all architects and will have a considerable influence on them, because it will help to ensure that a period of confidence and regionalist logic will take over from one of uncertain curiosity about the past, and to substitute a relish for and a thorough grasp of the lands of France through the building of France, instead of the face picturesqueness which has hung over us as a result of the recent emergence and poor understanding of provincial archaeology.”⁵⁵

Vaillat suggested that all architects would read these volumes not only because of the value of the material included, but also because of the prominence of the author. While Vaillat was closely aligned with regionalist beliefs, Letrosne operated in a middle ground between regionalism and modernism that allowed for his work to be widely accepted.

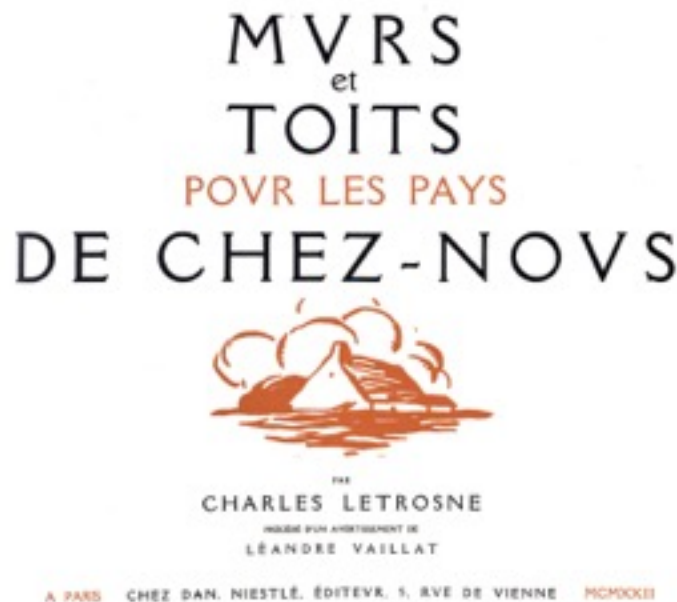


Figure 12: Title Page for *Murs et toits*, 1923.

⁵⁴ Charles Letrosne. *Murs et toits pour les pays de chez-nous*. 1st ed. Vol. 1. Paris: Chez Dan. Nestle, 1923.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 20.

Letrosne (1868-1939) was an architect whose father and grandfather were also in the profession. During the 1920s he served terms as the president of the Société des architectes diplômés par le Gouvernement and as the Chief Architect for Civil Buildings and National Palaces. Rather than demonstrating support of a particular movement, Letrosne's work was known for its ability to fit within its surrounding context. Because of his prominence within affluent Parisian design circles, Letrosne not only had the ability to travel but to work on projects in a variety of areas of France and Europe. As a result, his projects in Paris, which vary by decade, differ from his projects where regional styles thrived. In general Letrosne's work was lauded for its refined response to context, often emphasizing structure and the physical integrity of the building over aesthetic details. In the preface of his series *Murs et toits pour les pays de chez nous*, Vaillat wrote that "he [Letrosne] is neither one of those [architects] whom other architects say 'he is a poet', nor one whom poets say 'he's an architect'. He remains above all a master of construction."⁵⁶ His most well-known built work is the Zoo at Vincennes in Paris completed in 1934; he also served as the Chief Architect for the 1937 Paris World Exhibition.

As an influential figure in the politics of architecture in France, his built works are noteworthy because of their manifestation of both regionalist and modernist ideas. His 1928 project for the Festa Country Club in Monte Carlo employs regional materials as a response to the mediterranean style architecture of the region with new building programs, the country club and tennis courts, which were both modern building programs that did not develop until close to the twentieth century. The use of labor from as far away as Paris also suggests the influence of modernity in that the restrictions typically imposed on regional structures are moot, and it is now possible to bring workers from all over France to complete a project. In an article about the country club in "L'Architecture", one of the committee members for the project was quoted saying that "Letrosne makes modern [designs], it is true..., but he makes good modern

⁵⁶ Letrosne, *Murs et toits*. 20.

[designs],” relating that Letrosne was able to successfully produce an aesthetically pleasing work of architecture despite the constraints of a new type of program.⁵⁷



Figure 13: Construction of the “Big Rock”, Vincennes Zoo, 1934.

Letrosne’s position between regionalism and Modernism becomes more apparent during the 1930s, when in 1934 the Vincennes zoo in Paris opened. Designed in collaboration with his son, the zoo was noted for its artificially constructed habitats, including the 213 ft high “Big Rock”, which served as a landmark and overlook of the zoo (Figure 13)⁵⁸. Most pertinent to this discussion are the housing structures adjacent to the habitats. The interiors feature rectilinear forms, bands of windows and skylights, all of which were considered Modern elements. As the first zoo constructed in Paris since the 1793 conversion of the Jardin des Plantes, not only was this a relatively new building type, but it also featured Modern elements. The use of these forms in the interior spaces suggests that Letrosne, despite his interest in regionalism, embraced Modernism as well. It could even be argued that his rationale for using Modern elements in a

⁵⁷ Laurent Doillet. “Tennis De La Festa Club De Monte-Carlo.” *L’Architecture* 41 (1928): 339.

⁵⁸ “Le Nouveau Jardin Zoologique: M. Letrosne, Architecte.” *L’Architecture* 47 (1934). 239.

Parisian project was due to the exclusion of Paris and the Ile-de-France from traditional regional discussion. It is also clear that there was an effort to distance contemporary works from the aesthetic of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Known for assessing the surrounding context of a project, Letrosne's choice to use a restrained Modern style for the Vincennes zoo as well as its complex structural systems suggests that in his evaluation of the context surrounding the zoo, Modernism now contended with traditional Parisian styles such as Neoclassicism and Art Deco. As such, Letrosne's work situates Modernism within the discussion of regionalism because he used both modern and regional elements in his projects throughout his career, and his work further suggests that he may have considered this blend of styles as the characteristic style of the Ile-de-France.

Though by 1930s the work of Le Corbusier began to have an international impact, the style attributed to the administrative center of France was neither Modernism nor regionalism, but what would be referred to as Art Déco. There is one instance in France where all three styles were simultaneously present, the 1925 Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs.

Ch. 2.2 1925 Exposition des arts décoratifs et industriels moderne

The 1925 Exposition des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes in Paris provided the backdrop for an important moment in the discussion of regionalism in the 1920s. Not only did the exposition show France's transition away from reconstruction towards the revitalization of its economy by re-establishing the reputation of Paris on a global scale, but also it reclassified French regionalism in relation to the country's national identity. Rather than representing regionalism as a fundamental element of French architecture integral to reconstruction and urban development, regionalism was recast as a component of French culture under the lens of tourism—a steadily growing industry in France. This is apparent in the style and location of the various regional pavilions included in the exposition. Not only does the representation of regional architecture indicate the transition that occurred by 1925, but the work of Letrosne, Le Corbusier and Vaillat support this claim, as these three figures participated in the exposition in various roles. Each of their contributions reveals that, although regionalism was considered a tool of national government in reinforcing French nationalism, the focus of the centre had shifted away from reconstruction toward securing the position of Paris in global industry—a shift that caused dissatisfaction among regionalists and Modernists alike. By examining the layout of the 1925 Exposition, the Escalier d'Honneur by Letrosne, the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau by Le Corbusier and the tripartite essay series on the Exposition by Vaillat for *L'Illustration*, it is possible to see the complete absorption of regionalism into the representation of France. It will be argued that this evolution situates regionalism in opposition to the Modern Movement.

The plan of the 1925 Exposition features one main axis with several smaller perpendicular arteries containing secondary pavilions and themes of the exposition. The main entry gate, the Porte d'Honneur, is located to the north by the Grand Palais, and the general progression south highlights themes central to French identity and its connection to Paris specifically. At the corner of the Grand Palais next to the Porte d'Honneur is the Pavillon de Tourisme by Mallet-Stevens. This building emphasizes tourism as a central component in World Exhibitions and a primary focus of the French administration. On the north bank of the Seine,

European pavilions were situated to the west of the main axis, with the Alsatian pavilions, the Village français and the centre coloniale located further west. Behind the Grand Palais near the Alsatian pavilions is the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau, obscured from view of the main axis. To the east of the axis pavilions of more prominent regions such as Normandy, the Franche-Comte and Provence are located, along with a large pavilion devoted entirely to Paris. Crossing the Seine, pavilions of industry featuring French products as well as the shopping pavilions are followed by the pavilions of Nancy, Lyon, and Mulhouse, of which only the Mulhouse pavilion was constructed following a regional aesthetic. While the other urban centers such as Nancy and Lyon were rendered in a refined Art Déco style, the fact that Mulhouse was presented following regional characteristics perhaps refers back to the history of Mulhouse as an autonomous city before joining France. It could also suggest the influence of André Ventre, the architect, who as a dedicated regionalist, sought to create a visual connection with the Alsatian pavilions, which were located a substantial distance away despite the geographic proximity of the two regions. The axis concludes at the Place des Invalides.

While it is self-evident that pavilions located closer to the main axis were considered of primary importance, it is important to note that regional representation was defined by their contribution to the luxury goods industry, in that pavilions displayed the goods produced in their regions, which was considered the primary industry of Paris, and therefore France. The pavilion d'Alsace and the Village Français are relegated to secondary sites, suggesting that aside from the larger and more powerful regions, pavilions dedicated to French industry, rather than acknowledge the contributing regions, reinforced Parisian and French national identity. This notion gains strength with the inclusion of pavilions dedicated to cities rather than regions. This is particularly the case with Nancy, which was formerly the capital of Lorraine and Mulhouse. Indeed, despite its geographic location adjacent to Alsace, the city of Nancy was considered a distinctive cultural entity. Although many of the peripheral regions contributed raw goods to the various industries, it was the finished products that were valued at this exposition. This representation of French industry focused on Paris as its capital:

"Paris, *la ville lumière*, is not only the political metropolis of France, but also the center of the artistic, scientific, commercial, and industrial life of the nation. Almost every branch of French industry is represented here, from the fine-art handicrafts to the construction of powerful machinery; but Paris is especially known for its *articles de luxe* of all kinds."⁵⁹

This focus on luxury and consumption of goods in general prompted criticism from participants and visitors to the Exposition that it did not realistically relate to the current conditions of France. This criticism took both implicit and explicit forms. One of the implicit criticisms could be found in the Escalier d'Honneur by Charles Letrosne, located in the Grand Palais.

The Escalier d'Honneur was constructed inside the pre-existing Grand Palais on the main axis of the Exposition and was described as follows:

"the doors of the Grand Palais led to the monumental Escalier d'Honneur, which occupied the whole of the central court and was erected over a forest of carpentry solely for the exhibition and to be dismantled at its close...The scale of its basically simple forms was most impressive, with decoration in low relief and the source of both day and artificial light concealed."⁶⁰

While this monumental staircase was consistent with the work of Letrosne and its commission reflective of his high position in French design circles, its overall composition suggests a divergence from the elaborate and extravagant intentions of the Exposition. The refined use of Neoclassical elements and the minimal use of ornamentation in such a large, prominent space departs from the opulence of the pavilions constructed specifically for the Exposition, although it fits within the design tendencies of Letrosne. Furthermore, it reveals his attention to context, as despite the widespread embrace of Art Deco in Paris, the predominant architectural style in Paris remained Neoclassicism. Rather than infuse the project with Art Deco, which was predominantly situated in the decorative arts, Letrosne designs the Escalier d'Honneur to correspond to its Parisian context, transcending the context of the exhibition. Despite its temporary existence, the "forest of carpentry" used to build the work coincided more with the utilitarian nature of modern technology than the other temporary pavilions constructed with plaster. Other criticisms were often more explicit, like Le Corbusier's *Pavilion de l'Esprit Nouveau* and *Les Arts Decoratifs d'aujourd'hui*, which was published in response to the 1925 Exposition.

⁵⁹ "The French Sections at the Exhibition." *Les Arts Decoratifs*, 1925.105.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 22.

The Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau was erected "in face of a mass of difficulties -- without a penny"⁶¹ as one of the few Modern works included in the Exposition— other than the projects of Melnikov and Mallet-Stevens. Le Corbusier stated that "we had undertaken to put up a pavilion of *L'Esprit Nouveau* which would indissolubly link the equipment of the home (furniture) to architecture (the space inhabited, the dwelling), and to town-planning (the conditions of life of a society)."⁶² The pavilion included mass-produced furniture, such as Thonet bentwood chairs, and artworks of Braque and Picasso it also include a diorama of the 'Contemporary City of 3 million inhabitants'— a scheme presented in 1922 in the Salon d'Automne. The pavilion's inclusion in the Exposition was contentious; at one point, a palisade 7 meters high was constructed around the pavilion obscuring it entirely from view, only to be taken down minutes before the opening of the Exposition.⁶³ In opposing the aesthetic of the Exposition, the pavilion accurately represented the ideas of Le Corbusier, who considered "architecture [as] the necessary condition for human creation."⁶⁴

To coincide with the Exposition, Le Corbusier published *Les Arts decoratifs d'aujourd'hui*, a collection of essays and excerpts that had been published in his journal *L'Esprit Nouveau*. In it Le Corbusier criticizes many aspects of the decorative arts, from its production to its connections to folk culture to museums and the architecture influenced by it. In his writings Le Corbusier criticized the "exposition's emphasis on the show, highly ornamented *arts decoratifs* and architecture inappropriate to the needs of contemporary France. Like other critics, he argued that ephemeral displays of expensive commodities constituted a refusal to address the pressing issues of housing and urbanism."⁶⁵ This sentiment can be found within *Les arts decoratifs d'aujourd'hui* by its comparisons between the decorative arts tradition and a budding Modernism. In his discussion of "Plagiarism Folk Culture" Le Corbusier describes folk culture as

⁶¹ Le Corbusier. *Les art decoratifs d'aujourd'hui*. Vincent ed. Paris, 1925. xiv.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.* xv.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 129.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 105-106.

an evolution of a past idea/concept/notion that was now being plagiarised by “the idle and the sterile, [who] fill the air with the deafening cry of crickets, and sing out of tune with the poetry of others.”⁶⁶ This artificial interest in the revitalization of the folk culture of France was evident in the impact modernization had on regional architecture after the Great War. While simplified regional types were developed to guide architects, modernizing elements affected the design of regional homes, and the necessity to rebuild quickly and efficiently resulted in a somewhat diluted form of regional architecture. According to Le Corbusier the evolution of regional architecture as a component of folk culture of the past was tainted, whereas he describes “the folklore culture of today” (Modernism) as “in the process of formation...born of unanimous collaboration”.⁶⁷ The discrepancy Le Corbusier identified within regional architecture was two fold. Not only were newly constructed buildings in the regions perceived as a degradation of their precedents, but at the 1925 Exposition, Le Corbusier found the regional pavilions lacking in substance as well due to their lack of authenticity in representing the regions. This sentiment was shared by regionalists. In fact, Vaillat came to a similar conclusion in his series of essays on the Exposition for *L’Illustration*.

Contemporaneous to the 1925 Exposition, Vaillat published four articles in *L’Illustration* discussing the trends he observed in the architecture of the exhibition on a variety of scales. Starting at the smallest scale, Vaillat examined the French Village, proceeding to regional, national and then international trends. Although only the last three were acknowledged as an intentional series, each of the articles builds off themes from the preceding article, and gradually the themes become more conceptual as discussions of regionalism morph into its relation to nationalism, culminating in an examination of the underlying rationalism connecting all of the architecture in France at this time. Even when discussing foreign nations’ pavilions, Vaillat consistently refers back to how these themes apply to France. The interplay between regionalism and nationalism is a prevailing theme in all four essays.

⁶⁶ Le Corbusier, *Les arts decoratifs*, 25

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

“Le Village Français à l’Exposition” focused on the observation of Vaillat that its organizers had confused the village with the garden city.⁶⁸ In other words, organizers of the exposition in Paris had incorrectly equated what was observed in the suburbs of Paris with the reality of rural areas in the regions of France. While Vaillat explicitly references the disconnect between the perception of the regions in Paris and the reality of the regions, he begins to link the project of reconstruction to the uncertainty of the centre. For Vaillat, the Parisian representation was evident in the generic treatment of the French village, where regional elements were simplified into a pastiche and applied to forms that did not reference a particular regional town nor a particular region. As an example, an inherent quality of regional architecture was the use of local materials, due to the temporary nature of exhibition pavilions, permanent structures could not be constructed, causing the material composition of the pavilions to be drastically different from what would be found in the regions. This ambivalence towards the representation of a regional town appeared to be reinforced by the modern program of many of the pavilions, such as the town hall, bazaar, and the *maison de tous*, programs which for the most part would not be found in a regional town. Even pavilions dedicated to regional houses revealed that “it [was] not the goal [of the Exposition] to accurately present the buildings of the country, but to present the buildings of the bourgeois living in the countryside.”⁶⁹ This apparent contradiction supports Vaillat’s claim that the French Village of the exposition was in fact more closely related to the garden city. Vaillat’s criticism of the general characteristics of the garden city such as its economic motivation and short construction period parallels descriptions of the initial concept for reconstruction after the Great War, in which economic revitalization and efficient reconstruction were the primary goals.

Vaillat continues to draw parallels between post-war reconstruction and the 1925 Exposition in “La Tendence Régionale” by stating that he believed an opportunity was missed, “a unique chance presented to them [the French] for an architectural renaissance...the profiteers

⁶⁸ Vaillat, Leandre. “Le Ville Francais a L'exposition.” *L’Illustration*, no. 4301 (1925): 131.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 133.

and politicians won out against the artists, and the few people who were qualified to have a view on this tricky business hardly got consulted at all.”⁷⁰ Not only did he consider the French Village as evidence of this, but other regional pavilions as well, particularly the Alsatian oratory. Vaillat cited the Alsatian oratory as a reflection on the failure to embrace the artistic and architectural opportunities that grew out of the commemorative efforts of the regions after the Great War. While other more explicit works relating to the Great War were prohibited, the selection of an Alsatian oratory was a symbolic reference to those who lost their lives in the conflict. This limitation of commemorative works prompted Vaillat to criticize Paris for its lack of empathy towards the regions and what they experienced during and after the Great War.⁷¹

This comparison reinforced the disconnect between Paris and the regions, to a degree that Vaillat asserted that “there is a concept of regionalism unique to expositions, a way of representing it in the same frame as the exposition, of installing and creating a radiance about it, distinct from its surroundings so that each pavilion and garden upon taking its place in the ensemble, plays its part in the whole.”⁷² By severing the ties between the representation of the regions and their origins, the 1925 Exposition presented them in a way that reinforced Parisian perception, which embraced the pastoral conception of the regions from the nineteenth century, and ultimately resulted in the pavilions serving the goals of the Exposition to revive the reputation of Paris, over the regions themselves. Vaillat carries this theme into the next essay for *L'Illustration*, wherein he compares the disunity of French identity with those of the other nations present at the exposition.

Unlike the prior articles for *L'Illustration* that presented the disparity between centralized Paris and the regions, “La Tendence Nationale” attempts to reflect upon the precarious presentation of France at the exposition relative to other nations present and justify its perceived position of power in the world— a position which can only be retained with support from the regions. In this article, Vaillat observed that the foreign national pavilions passionately

⁷⁰ Leandre Vaillat. “La Tendence Regionale.” *L'Illustration*, no. 4303 (1925): 188.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

represented the artistic expressions of their respective nations, and that their comprehensive representation also reflected the fact that these expressions were not particular to any one social class, but could be found and embraced in each level of their societies.⁷³ Although Vaillat attempts to rationalize this by citing the relative size of the nations as the reason why they could achieve such a cohesive presentation of their nation— implying that their relatively homogenous culture allows for such achievements— he once again identifies regional diversity and the importance of Paris as factors preventing a cohesive French identity. While he alludes to regional diversity as a factor, he focuses on the international reputation of Paris as the primary reason why a cohesive cultural identity had not formed. The international platform on which Paris exists has both positive and negative effects on France for Vaillat. Indeed, he notes:

“...the exceptional position of Paris assures its position in global centralization [regarding commercial goods/decorative arts], but it also creates inconveniences as a consequence; it comes with a general panic, due to torn curiosity and incessant renewal of ideas, a scattering of focus that only, to our minds, can the tenacious regions counter-act and the invincible provinces resist.”⁷⁴

So long as the luxury goods of France were sought after solely in Paris, regional culture would ebb in such a way that these same high-quality crafts exclusive to France would begin to disappear, such as the lace unique to Valenciennes or the tapestries of Gobelins which source its materials from the French regions. Vaillat, describing regionalist ideas that connect the success of the whole of France to its roots in the regions, asserts in “La Tendance Nationale” that Paris will retain its position in world industry so long as French products continue to be of the highest quality. He further argues that this position can only continue if regional sources are maintained and honored rather than overshadowed by the opulence of Paris. In this article Vaillat begins to address the disconnect between the regions and the centre by describing the necessity of the regions to the centre, and subsequently tying the success of regional industry to a strong national identity and presence in the world economy. However, Vaillat retains his regionalist position that acknowledges the importance of tradition and the subsequent evolution

⁷³ Leandre Vaillat. “La Tendance Nationale.” *L'illustration*, no. 4307 (1925): 274.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 273.

of regional craft in both art and architecture, a theme which is further outlined in his final article for the series, "La Tendence Internationale".

The exploration of the effect of perception and identity at each scale of the 1925 Exposition allowed Vaillat to develop a critique of the Exposition that exposed the disconnect between Paris and its regions as well as the vulnerable nature of Paris and French industry on an international scale. In his last article, rather than juxtaposing Paris to its regions, Vaillat uses the mutual dependency between Paris and its regions with regards to industry outlined in the previous article to situate them in opposition to the encroaching Modernism of German and Swiss origin. Arguing that rationalism can be found within current design both in regional and urban environments, Vaillat asserts that such an extreme form of rationalism proposed by Le Corbusier and his Pavilion de L'Esprit Nouveau goes against French design. While Vaillat agrees to a certain extent with the underlying rationalism of the Pavilion de l'Esprit Nouveau, he denounces Le Corbusier's assertion that a house is a machine for living, "a house is not a factory where we work or where we accomplish...mechanical acts...A house should respond to logic, reason, sense, and we hope to find, thank god, plenty of our regional and national tradition, without referencing Germano-Swiss rationalism."⁷⁵

By differentiating between French rationalism and Germano-Swiss rationalism, Vaillat could successfully unify Parisian and regional design, despite its differences, against a common threat, the influence of Germany in France. What Vaillat considers French rationalism follows his ideas surrounding regionalism. While honoring and evolving from tradition, design could integrate modernizing ideas to create a new form that would simultaneously embrace regional diversity while it cohesively presenting a French national identity. It is within this frame of thought that the published work of Letrosne, whom Vaillat supported as a fellow regionalist, would document the various building types found in the regions, both modern and traditional in program, while revealing the ability of each region to successfully derive forms indicative of their particular environment and culture.

⁷⁵ Leandre Vaillat. "La Tendence Internationale." *L'illustration*, no. 4313 (1925): 459.

Ch 2.3 Murs et toits pour les pays de chez-nous

Following in the wake of discussions of reconstruction during and immediately after the Great War, *Murs et toits pour les pays de chez nous* attempted to familiarize architects with the styles found in the many regions of France. Unlike previous publications and competitions, which which were somewhat distanced from the regions themselves, *Murs et toits* was first published five years after the Armistice in 1923, when general reconstruction started to come to a close and the ability to travel throughout the regions of France resumed. As such, *Murs et toits* presents a familiarity with the regions of France previously unseen in discussions of regional architecture. The luxurious quality of each volume made this a known and covetable item in architectural circles.⁷⁶ *Murs et toits* evolved even further from preceding regional texts in that its material was organized by building type, which was a departure from discussing regionalism in a strictly residential capacity. It did this in order to discuss the effect of modernization and nationalization on the regions. The building types were divided into three published volumes by function relative to their connection to the centre, and although a fourth volume is mentioned in the preface, it was never published.

In volume one (1923), Letrosne discusses town halls, schools, police stations, and courthouses, which were services overseen by the government. Volume two (1925) contained village halls, train stations, post offices, banks, clinics, baths, inns and hotels, which were building types that were part of traditional town life. The last published volume (1926) featured what Vaillat in the preface described as the building types least impacted by the centre, the farms, the rural houses and the houses of laborers.⁷⁷ Each chapter discusses the building type in general followed by numerous regional examples, categorized either by province or region, that receive their own description, orthographic drawings and a colored perspective. Similar to previous publications like *Les Maisons*, Letrosne uses both historical names and contemporary names for the various regions. As an example, Flemish style architecture could be included

⁷⁶ Vigato, "Between Progress and Tradition", 17-18.

⁷⁷ Letrosne, *Murs et toits*, 1923-1926.

under examples of Flemish buildings as well as architecture indicative of the Nord, which is the administrative region that Flanders was grouped into after the reorganization of France.

Murs et toits also attempts to depart from its predecessors, situating its discussion of regionalism as much within the realm of architecture as possible. Rather than provide a cursory look at regional architecture, it attempts to provide a comprehensive understanding of the predominant trends in regional buildings. Letrosne further situates *Murs et toits* within the realm of architecture as opposed to art or history by using projects that are based on pre-existing works. Rather than including images of actual buildings as in *Les Maisons*, Letrosne does not specifically identify the works by name or location, other than the region, suggesting that they are his own designs for the various regional building types. While this results in a more informative study of regionalism from an architect's perception, *Murs et toits* also more explicitly criticizes the impact of the centre on the regions, and the subsequent tension between national and regional identity.

This criticism is clear in the preface of *Murs et toits*, written by none other than Léandre Vaillat. This preface shows that the 1925 Exposition and interaction with fellow advocates of regionalism like Letrosne shifted Vaillat's work from responding to traditional concepts of regionalism and opposing the teachings of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts to relating regionalism to the contemporaneous socio-political concepts of regional and national identity. Evolving from his discussion of regionalism relative to human geography, Vaillat connects regional identity to this concept, writing that "a landscape, that picturesque aspect that encompasses, in the eyes of a writer or an artist, a country is also the indication of a secret and invisible structure."⁷⁸ Rather than situating the importance of regional works relative to the education of an architect, Vaillat discusses architecture as it relates to social and political boundaries. He suggests that the architecture of the region is a physical marking of cultural boundaries and that political boundaries are relatively independent of these pre-existing markers.

⁷⁸ Letrosne, *Murs et toits*, 1923, 17.

This leads to the supposition that in the postwar period, the tension between regional and national identity increased because of the growing presence of the French government in the regions as it implemented reconstruction and economic recovery. Despite the prioritization of constructing administrative buildings in the aftermath of the Great War and an increase in civil structures to serve the French nation, regional identity remained a strong part of daily life in the regions as it was upheld by regional inhabitants, and certain aspects of a given region's identity were further preserved in their architecture. Whether their regional style of building was not affected by the Great War or if reconstruction fostered a desire to return to life before the outbreak of war, regional identity continued to be an integral part of daily life despite the encroaching presence of an overlying national identity that was closely aligned with the interests of the centre, as evidenced by the work of regionalists like Vaillat who wrote tour guides for various regions.

The other reason why tension increased between regional and national identities was the rise of Paris as the symbol of France. During the Great War, the Ile-de-France region experienced some of the devastation that occurred in the northern regions. While planning for reconstruction, all of the affected regions were considered in a similar manner. The primary goals for reconstruction were to repopulate and revitalize the economies as quickly as possible. Furthermore, during this time, the identity of the nation of France was as much attributed to the regions as it was to larger urban centers. Because of the damage of the Great War, agrarian economies were as crucial to France as its industrial economies.

By the postwar period however, the composition of national identity had changed— as evidenced in the 1925 exposition. Due to the French government's objective to reassert the power and vitality of Paris after the war, Paris eclipsed the regions to become the primary symbol of what it meant to be French. The luxury and glory conveyed by the Exposition of France could not be traced back to the daily life of the regions; Art Deco, while embraced by the urban classes, would not be found in the homes of farm and factory laborers. While the

Exposition presented a pastiche of regional life, it failed to capture the essence of regional life because its primary goal was to serve in restoring the reputation of Paris.

The postwar period however marks only the beginning of the schism between the regions and the centre, as the project of defining French national identity would distance the two entities further. The publication of *Murs et toits* can be situated at an early point of this growing tension as it reflects the changing ideas of leading regional advocates. While Letrosne's work reveals the presence of this tension, Vaillat explicitly refers to it in the preface in two ways, first by describing the changes found in regional life, and second in his support of Letrosne's work.

Following the projects of modernization that occurred after the Great War, not only was the influence of Paris seen in the physical changes made to towns and villages to facilitate new infrastructure, but it was also seen in the changes to society. Vaillat observed that:

"a countryman of 1921 is no longer the countryman of 1914; he has his mechanical tools that simplify and reduce his craft; he wants to live comfortably...his farm, he looks at it like an engineer looks at his factory; he makes money there in a perfected rapid manner; in two hours he does what he would've accomplished in two days."⁷⁹

Not only were jobs affected by modernization, but social norms shifted, imitating larger cities, particularly Paris, with the drive for luxury goods and public venues such as cinemas and social clubs. While these developments did not explicitly reinforce a national identity, there is a distinct difference in lifestyle from before and after the modernization of the first half of the twentieth century. These new possibilities contended with traditional regional activities, potentially diluting regional identity as an interest in a new type of lifestyle developed. While preserving regional culture was not a specific interest of regionalist architects, figures such as Vaillat and Letrosne saw a need to position regional architecture within the present so it would not be overcome by the influence of the centre, thus promoting progressive traditionalism over the folkloric regionalism of the prewar period.

Murs et toits was an attempt to present the relevance of regional architecture to an educated and influential audience, not only in reconstruction but in securing the future use of regional concepts in architecture. In the postwar period, regionalists began to emphasize the

⁷⁹ Letrosne, *Murs et toits*, 1923, 15.

importance of experiential knowledge of the regions; unlike the years before and during the Great War, when information and images of regionalism were relayed to Paris for analysis and discussion. The 1920s thereby brought a shift in procedure for regionalists. As Vaillat wrote of Letrosne, “his projects concerning the idea of the province was not born in Paris; his regionalism is not a Parisian dilettantism like that of so many others.”⁸⁰ Due to his experience as an architect, Letrosne provides a legitimacy to *Murs et toits* that books like *Les Maisons* could never have, due to the need to substantiate regionalism in an increasingly modernized world.

The substantiation for *Murs et toits* comes not only from the reputation of the author, but in its variety and organization by building type. Works from the town hall and rural housing chapters clearly illustrate the effect of modernization on regionalism during the postwar period, as well as the more explicit interaction between national and regional entities. More generally, *Murs et toits* provides a laudable attempt to reorganize the components of regional architecture in order to accommodate modernization and the increasing presence of national civil structures in regional towns.

The first chapter of the Volume One of *Murs et toits* presents a selection of town halls, or *mairies*. The format of each chapter begins with an introduction followed by various regional examples, each of which includes a description of key attributes followed by drawings. Of particular importance is that Letrosne demonstrates these new regional building types relative to surrounding issues. The *mairie* is the epitome of the presence of the French administration in a regional town; Letrosne describes it as the convergence of “the conditions of contemporary life, new social laws, the development of collective works, the blooming of regionalism and this new spirit that embodies our hopes of a national rebirth, giving *mairies* increasingly more importance.”⁸¹ Given the level of importance ascribed to this structure, Letrosne includes implicit criticism of the building type and its ties to the centre, as opposed to the region, writing, “too often, municipalities move away from simplicity by making a design that overanalyzes a

⁸⁰ Letrosne, *Murs et toits*, 1923, 17.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 25.

style or too sumptuous.”⁸² In a similar manner to the overgeneralization of the various regional styles of the 1925 Exposition, civil structures in French regions often imitated rather than contributed to regionalism. By incorporating their programs into the regional discussion, it is clear that Letrosne hopes to prevent this method of design in the regions in the future. By designing and including hypothetical *mairies* in various regions, Letrosne, in a similar manner to Vaillat and Ventre in *Les Maisons* hopes to guide and inspire architects to create “beauty that resides in a distinguished simplicity, in the judicious utilization of material and a skillful application of modern principles, themselves based on the lessons of the past.”⁸³ The designs published in *Murs et toits* reflect the intention of Letrosne to educate his readers; however, his writing follows Vaillat’s in *Les Maisons* by treating different regions according to social characteristics rather than remaining objective in his descriptions.

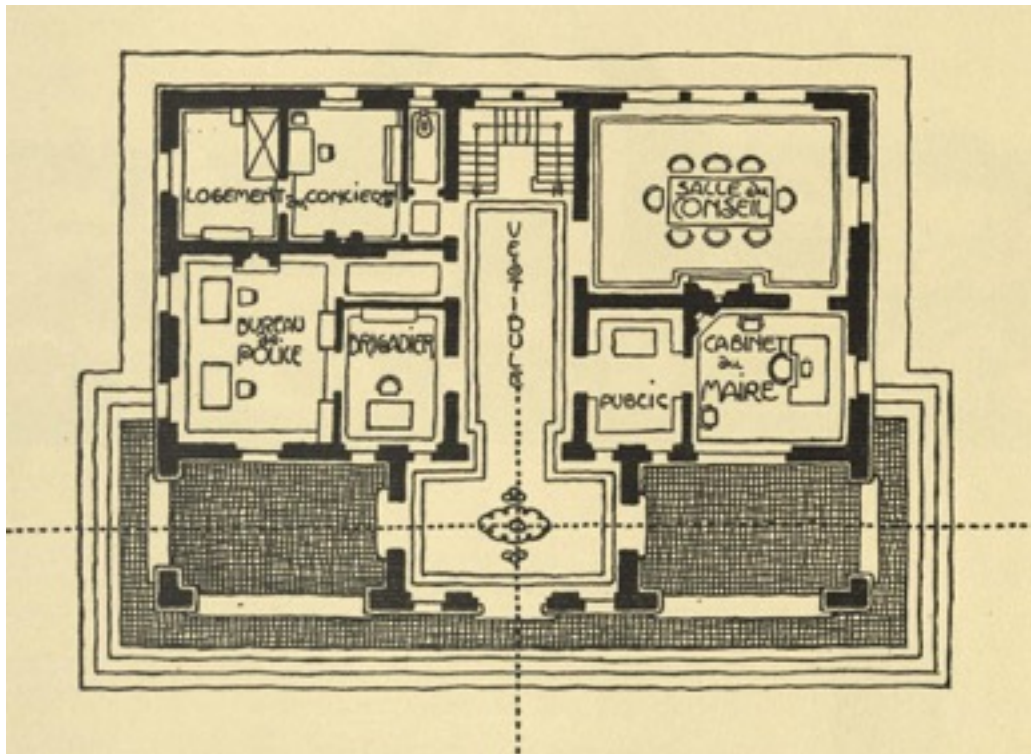


Figure 14: Plan of a Flemish Mairie, *Murs et toits*, 1923.

⁸² Letrosne, *Murs et toits*, 1923, 25-26.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 26.

In his discussion of the Flemish *mairie*, Letrosne's tone references the national perception of Flanders as a heavily industrialized area. He writes, "in a small industrial town in Flanders, the communal building commands a particular importance in the center of a public square. The plan (Figure 14)⁸⁴ is symmetrically composed along one axis, in a manner to endow the building with a relatively official and imposing character."⁸⁵ Somewhat surprisingly, there is no reference to the vibrant brickwork typically associated with Flemish regional architecture, and the images included for the *mairie* show a refined use of the sculptural edges of the facade typically seen in Flemish architecture. What is interesting to note in the images is the suggested scale of the town. Considering the cathedral and the multi-story buildings along the square, it appears that the *mairie* would not be located in a rural setting, but as an administrative center would be located in a larger town. This is notable because larger towns occupied the transitional space between regional architecture and the architecture of the centre, and often were not included in discussions of regionalism because of the influence of the centre on the upper classes.



Figure 15 and 16: Elevation and Perspective of a Flemish Mairie, *Murs et toits*, 1923.

By including hypothetical examples of regional architecture in more urban environments, Letrosne demonstrates how regional styles are not restricted to smaller scale rural domestic architecture. His images of the *mairie* also reinforce his belief that the *mairie* was now considered the center of society. In his elevation (Figure 15)⁸⁶, the houses surrounding the

⁸⁴ Letrosne, *Murs et toits*, 1923, 35.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 37.

square are obscured by trees planted in the square, and his perspective (Figure 16)⁸⁷ emphasizes the *mairie* over the surrounding houses, businesses and the cathedral found in the background. With this design Letrosne demonstrates that regional architecture, when used judiciously in civil structures can enhance national sentiment in the peripheral regions and create a seamless urban fabric that upholds the character of the region as it continues to evolve and modernize.



Figure 17 and 18: Elevation and Plan for an Alsatian Mairie, *Murs et toits*, 1923.

The other examples included in the *mairie* chapter reinforce Letrosne's message that in larger urban spaces, regionalism can be successfully used to retain the local aesthetic while encompassing modern programs. In the case of the Alsatian *mairie*, while the images reflect a similar message as the other examples like the Flemish *mairie*, the text, which is much more brief than the other descriptions, treats Alsace in an almost identical manner as *les Maisons*, written five years earlier. Rather than describe the building's facade or plan (Image 17 and 18)⁸⁸, Letrosne writes:

"the square that surrounds the Alsatian town hall offers its vast spaces to costumed reunions and to local occasions: markets, festivals, and parades, all with an active and joyous population to animate these festivities. On the days of the celebrations, the amiable decoration of the town hall of Alsace stands out over the clear coating of the tower. Following local tradition with lively nuanced decoration, the richness dresses the facade of the town hall and harmonizes with the amusing silhouettes of Alsatian houses."⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Letrosne, *Murs et toits*, 1923, 40.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 65, 63.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 65.

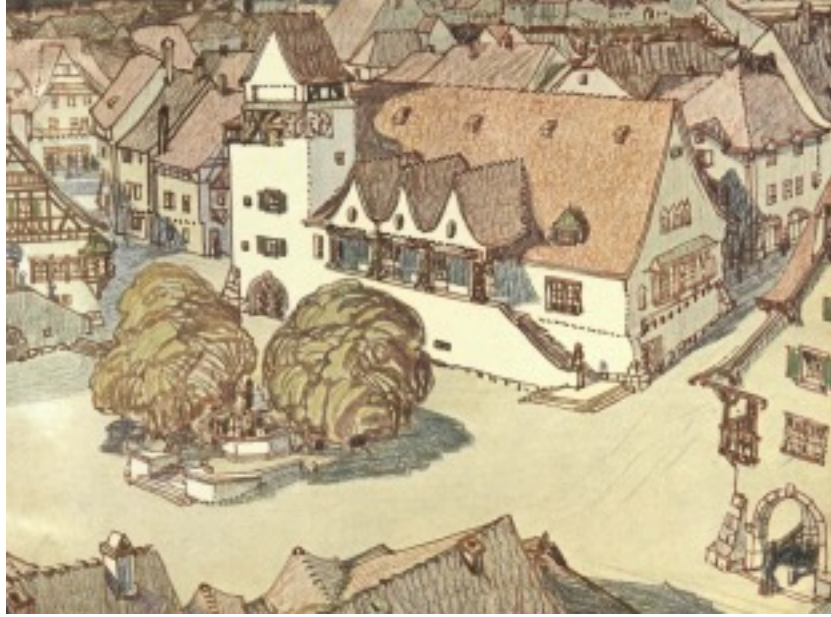


Figure 19: Perspective of an Alsatian Mairie, *Murs et toits*, 1923.

By focusing on the activities held in the square and the temporary decorations, Letrosne avoids discussing Alsatian architecture as it relates to the *mairie*. Although most regions in France had their own distinct style of architecture, the architecture of Alsace continued to be glossed over in *Murs et toits*. Half-timbering is barely in Letrosne's design, as seen in the top of the tower (Figure 19)⁹⁰, considered the defining trait of Alsatian architecture. This choice could be influenced by the economic realities of Alsace during the 1920s. Not only were labor shortages detrimental to general reconstruction, but there was also a lack French laborers educated in carpentry and other vocations necessary to construct new buildings according to regional styles. In the case of Alsace, the level of deforestation and destruction due to the Great War and the loss of skilled laborers led to a decrease in half-timbered construction during the post war period. Coupled with the fact that German laborers, despite their skill and willingness to work on reconstruction projects in the devastated northern regions, were not welcomed into these regions, half-timbered construction was soon replaced with other construction methods using available skills and materials like stone.

⁹⁰ Letrosne, *Murs et toits*, 1923, 67.

This example demonstrates how in postwar France, the tension between nationalism and regionalism continued to include the cultural heritage. Unlike during the war however, the aggressor no longer needs to be named, it is implied, as the damage had already taken place. In the case of Alsace, its ties to Germany were severely damaged due to the German government's treatment of its inhabitants, causing many to embrace their new French nationality over their German heritage. In regards to acknowledging the rapid modernization of the regions, the Alsatian *mairie*, despite the relatively new building type, does not address modernization to the same degree that the other examples included in the chapter do, suggesting that modernization in Alsace was somewhat slower. The clearest examples demonstrating the impact of modernization in the regions can be found in the later chapters concerning rural and what Letrosne calls *artisan* housing because it discusses a familiar regional building type, the house, relative to the changes that were made after the Great War.

Distinct from the discussion of farms, the housing chapters show residences of farm laborers, as well as the houses of factory workers and artisans, who were the lower and middle social classes in regional towns and villages. In these chapters it becomes evident that housing for workers was a point of convergence between the ideals of regionalism and the realities of modernizing the regions of France. While the chapter on rural housing attempts to negotiate the altered agrarian economy in the peripheral regions, particularly in the north, the chapter on *artisan* housing seeks to mediate between regional life and the quest to sanitize the regions.

The Great War predictably led to a mass migration out of the regions in the north, and a direct consequence of this migration was the availability of land to acquire in the aftermath of the war as well as an increase in farm laborers in other regions who would not be able to purchase land. Coupled with the general trend of migration into the cities, large farms were created in all regions of France. The rural houses that Letrosne describes are the houses of "small rural landowners. They are occupied by the agricultural laborer working in the large centers of exploitation in the region"⁹¹ who, with the help of their families, keep small numbers of

⁹¹ Letrosne, *Murs et toits*, 1926, 127.

livestock on the premises. While this building type does share similarities with the more traditional farms, “all of the new legislation favors these constructions which offer to the owner the cleanest facilities to support the roof that shelters his activities and provides his family with indispensable refuge.”⁹² Unlike the civil and service structures which relate in program and function more closely with modern building types, these homes carry the vestiges of pre-war regional conditions.

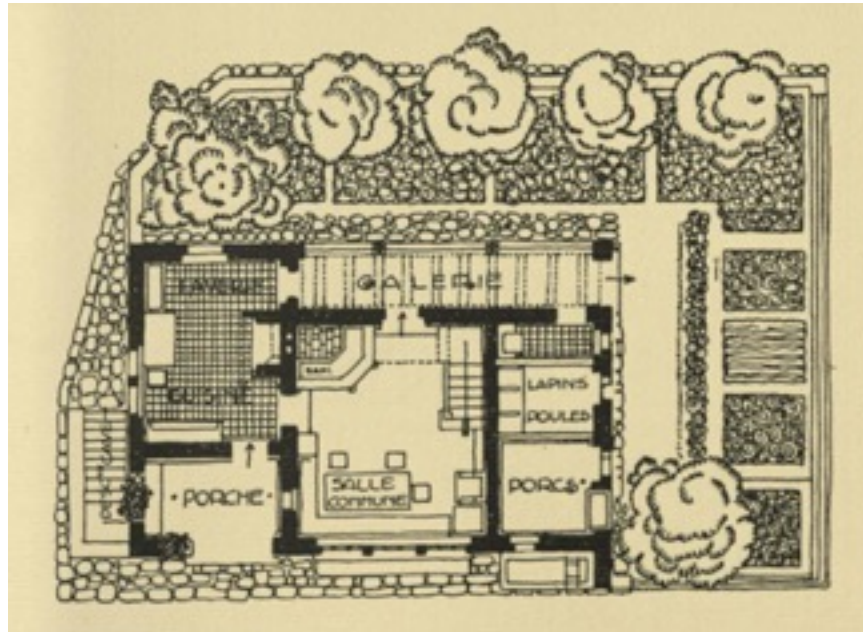


Figure 20: Plan of a house for an Alsatian farm laborer, *Murs et toits*, 1926.

The Alsatian model for the farm laborer reveals this mediation more explicitly than other building types due to the strong manifestation of cultural heritage in the regional architecture. The text describing the program of the house is written in great detail, suggesting that unlike the description of the *mairie*, knowledge of Alsatian housing was perhaps more significant in understanding the region’s architecture. While the text describes the layout of the house, the images support and visually present the connections between the past and the present. The plan of the house (Figure 20)⁹³ shows a complete separation of livestock from the living quarters as access to the livestock is restricted to only one side of the house, which was a design feature

⁹² Letrosne, *Murs et toits*, 1926, 128.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 159.

that responded to the hygiene laws. The central location of the communal room however directly references the regional culture; in lieu of a salon, the *stube*, or as it is labelled the *salle commune* (communal room) was a fundamental characteristic of Alsatian domestic architecture. The emphasis on the kitchen follows traditional Alsatian domestic architecture, as does locating the bedrooms on the second floor and the use of half-timbering. Letrosne is able to successfully integrate traditional building features with modern principles because these types of dwelling are between a wholly rural/agrarian building type and an urban one. Although the artisan houses are more commonly associated with urban frameworks, they can be found in all scales of urban spaces, from villages to towns to cities, allowing them to similarly occupy the in-between space.

A unique feature concerning artisan houses is the perception of the artisans themselves. While the farm laborer shares in the idealized view of the countryside, the artisans in the lower classes include the factory workers and craftsmen. As such, the criticized aspects of industrialization further influence the portrayal of the artisan. In the introduction to the chapter, Letrosne writes:

“it is a mission to familiarize the working classes, often with a neglected lesson, of the benefits of hygiene and comfort. We can say that the moralization of a social class, their moral perfecting, is intimately tied to the facilities of life that we accord to them. Nothing elevates men more than a peaceful life in an agreeable setting. Held at home by the honest joys of family and the foyer, the laborer will desert little by little the cabaret.”⁹⁴

This social commentary is unique to the artisan housing chapter, and echoes Vaillat’s work in *Les Maisons*, in particular his description of Flemish industrial housing. Reconstruction and the hygiene laws enacted after the Great War necessitated discussions of healthy living conditions in regional residences and allowed architects to discuss a building type for which they typically were not commissioned. While group housing projects outside of factories were designed by architects, individual residences in smaller towns were usually built by craftsmen before the Great War. Designing artisan houses exposed architects to lower social classes, perhaps prompting the social commentary by figures like Letrosne, who usually worked on large scale public works.

⁹⁴ Letrosne, *Murs et toits*, 1926, 207.



Figure 21: Perspective of a house for a Flemish laborer, *Murs et toits*, 1926.

The critical tone of the introduction is carried into some of the examples, in particular the discussion of the factory worker house in the Nord region, which includes the province of Flanders. Letrosne writes that, “all the wellbeing accorded to the worker is a guarantee against social disorder, against anarchy, strikes and revolution. By attaching the worker to his foyer, it remains the best way of maintaining calm and sage reason in his mind.”⁹⁵ In this case, not only does Letrosne discuss regional architecture relative to modernization but also relative to nationalism. Letrosne explicitly states that “the best way to incite the workers to create a strong and populous France remains to provide them with an agreeable house.”⁹⁶ In the description of the house, Letrosne demonstrates how the various parts of the house relate to the geography of the region, tying the inhabitant to the environment and subsequently to the country. Analyzing the exterior (Figure 21)⁹⁷, Letrosne explains that brickwork is the typical building material in Flanders, and that the clay for the bricks comes from the fertile plateaus of the region. He continues to integrate the social benefits of a house organized like his model into his description of the layout and interior, relating that the communal room on the ground floor would allow the workers to relax in comfort after a day’s work.⁹⁸ It is also interesting to note the similarities between Flemish and Alsatian houses, particularly with regard to the significance of the

⁹⁵ Letrosne, *Murs et toits*, 1926, 217.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 219.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 218.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 219.

communal room (Figure 22 and 23).⁹⁹ Although the similarities are never explicitly discussed by Letrosne, their presence reinforces the disparity of each region's presentation in *Murs et toits*. For example, Letrosne's discussion of the craftsman's house in Alsace has an overtly positive tone that exaggerates its folk qualities.

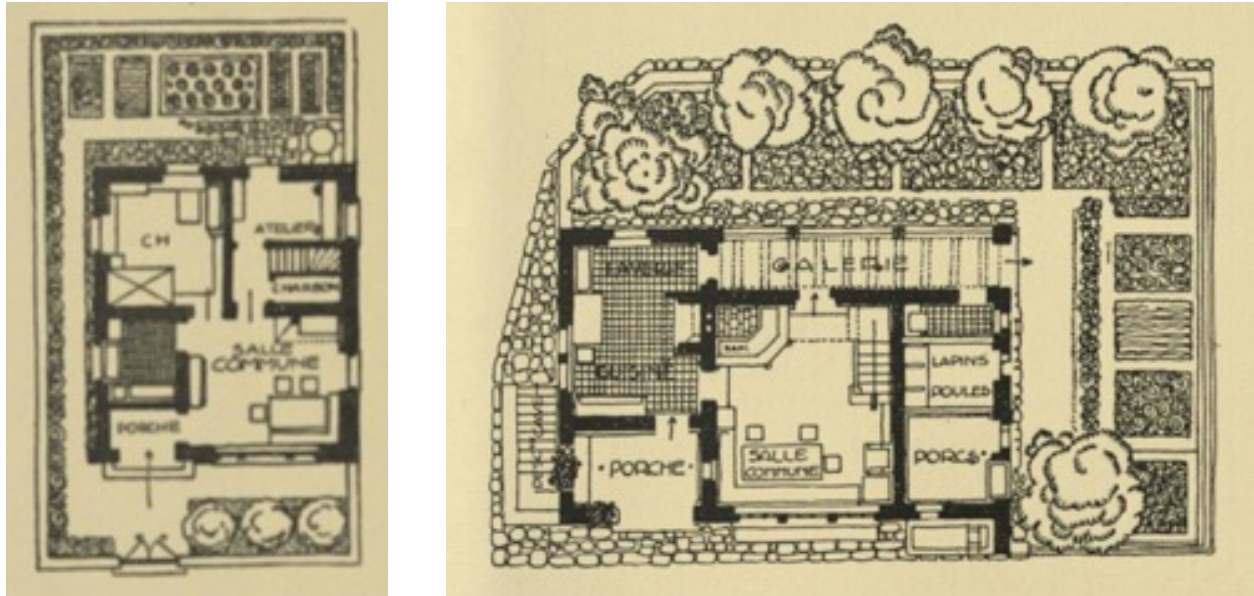


Figure 22 and 23: Plans of a house of a Flemish laborer and an Alsatian laborer, *Murs et toits*, 1926.

The model for the Alsatian artisan house is credited by Vaillat as “a building more important than the preceding constructions studied in the Nord.”¹⁰⁰ Unlike preceding examples, this model integrates and successfully balances the commercial, private and regional aspects of a dwelling. This type of home could be found in all scales of urban settings and shows clear ties to pre-existing built structures in Alsace (Figure 24 and 25)¹⁰¹. Organized with commercial activities on the bottom floor and with increasingly private spaces on each level, this model demonstrates how a regional style can be applied to a quintessentially modern residence (Figure 26)¹⁰². The regional features included in the house are the steeply pitched roof and the *stube*, a room which Letrosne describes as, “decorated with Alsatian furniture, with a

⁹⁹ Letrosne, *Murs et toits*, 1926, 217.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 241.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 245 and Vaillat, *La Maison*, 80.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* 244.



Figure 24 and 25: Perspective of a house for an Alsatian artisan, *Murs et toits*, 1926, and streetscape from *La Maison*, 1922.

memorable rustic charm, it contains the large traditional stove, indispensable against the cold and a symbol of familial life for Alsatians.”¹⁰³ Although Letrosne does not elaborate on why this model is the most important, it is noteworthy that he relates the region to other northern *départements*, considering that regionalism typically did not emphasize a direct correlation between the various regions in order to emphasize their unique attributes. Considering these changes from preceding regional publications, it is apparent that during the postwar period, in order to maintain the influence of regional styles as reconstruction slowed, advocates needed to demonstrate how regional architecture could be translated into modern and increasingly urban environments.

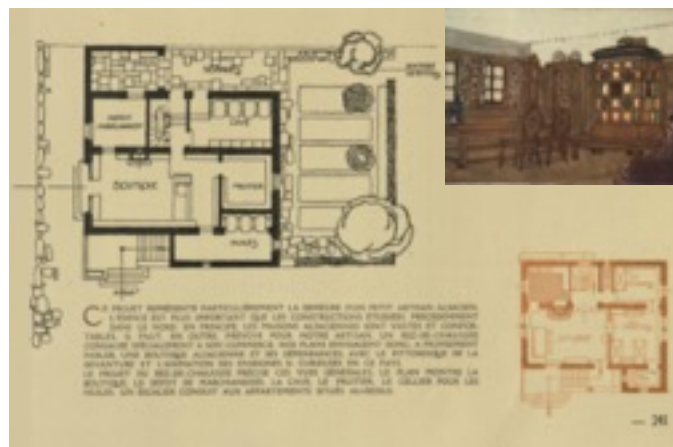


Figure 23: Plan of a house for an Alsatian artisan, *Murs et toits*, 1926.

¹⁰³ Letrosne, *Murs et toits*, 1926, 243.

The transition from regionalism to progressive traditionalism stemmed from the need to adapt to postwar conditions. Not only did regionalism need to assert its relevance with the revitalization of industry and modernization, but it also needed to validate its presence as a mediator between national and regional identity as the rise of Paris prompted tension between the regions and the centre. The work of Letrosne in *Murs et toits pour les pays de chez nous* provides a first comprehensive attempt to present regionalism within a modernized frame. The introduction of new building types to the regional discussion, as well as the inclusion of informative orthographic drawings in discussions of regional work, provided a foundation for a regionalism that was grounded in the present. The models included in *Murs et toits*, could have been applied to Le Corbusier's *Maison Dom-ino* frame if it had been produced and widely distributed throughout the regions, especially in the northern *départements* where skilled labor shortages could have benefitted from the easily assembled structures. Likewise the models of Letrosne could have been adapted to fit the needs of inhabitants using available material because of its attention to the geography of a given region.

The underlying goal of Letrosne was to demonstrate how regional architecture was simultaneously universal in its response to local geography and the needs of its users and unique in that it would embody the culture of the region and the character of the user. The potential of regional architecture to simultaneously highlight the individual characteristics of a region while connecting it to its fellow regions was one aspect that prompted its use to promote nationalism. If the presence of the administration was seamlessly integrated into town and village life using a refined regional vocabulary, then the discrepancy between the lifestyle of those influenced by the centre and those who embraced regional culture would not appear to be so large.

While the evolution of regionalism into progressive traditionalism provided hope for the acknowledgement and protection of regional culture and lifestyle to a certain extent, the realities of exhibitions like the 1925 Exposition de l'art décoratif, which glorified Paris, foreshadowed the increased tension between Paris and the regions during the rest of the interwar period.

Originating during the Great War, regional resentment of Paris increased not only due to the economic disparity that formed between those living in larger cities and those living in rural areas, but also due to the prioritization of Paris and the colonies in international venues such as the exhibitions of the 1930s. In the years following the postwar period, regionalism suffered due to the change in focus of the administration towards Paris, and to the regions outside of the hexagonal borders of France.

Chapter 3: Interwar Period (1926-1939)

By 1926, the attention paid to the regions devastated by the Great War shifted as reconstruction slowed and the nation of France transitioned into a period of commemoration of the losses incurred during the war. No longer pressed to revitalize affected regions, the French administration shifted its focus to the development of its colonial holdings. Although the planning laws enacted after the war remained in effect, the direct participation of the administrative center lessened, subsequently causing a regression in the representation of regionalism by the government. During the main period of reconstruction after the war the government had advocated for progressive traditionalism; however, this changed back to a traditional conception of regionalism, based in folkloric and pastoral traditions from before the war. This development most likely derived from the slowing of reconstruction as memorials and monuments became the predominant construction projects, commissioned by town inhabitants more often than the central government. With this shift, the government no longer needed to advocate a developed concept of regional architecture, but instead addressed the unrest in the regions concerning the prioritization of Paris and its economy over the rest of the nation. In that regard, two regionalisms emerge: that which was promoted by the French government and the regionalism of the design world, described as “regional rationalism” by Vaillat.¹⁰⁴ While the former framed the attempts made by the government to motivate tourism to the regions, the latter sought to integrate a relatively new residential building type to the regions, the villa.

Regional rationalism evolved from progressive traditionalism by further advocating the judicious use of regional elements in a home that also featured modern technology, and its application to villa design would prevent other styles of architecture from diluting the pre-existing regional fabric. Rather than constructing an Italianate villa in the northern French countryside, regional rationalism allowed for a Neoclassical program to exist within a regional composition. During this time period, regional architecture began to be critiqued and evaluated, and architects supplied examples of good and bad regional designs. The qualitative criteria for this

¹⁰⁴ Vigato, “Between Progress and Tradition”, 20.

evaluation mainly related to the accuracy of the style used in its context; projects were often criticized if they did not use the style of the region. This method of evaluation is especially relevant to the widespread construction of the villa, an altogether new building type constituting the second home of an urban dwelling inhabitant. Since villas did not house the same operations as traditional rural buildings, nor was it a manifestation of civil administrative infrastructure, it was an urban method of engaging with the countryside from the city, echoing the pastoral perception of ideological regionalism. Despite its distinction from other regional building types, the popularity the villa is indicated by its inclusion in publications concerning regionalism. Unlike previous publications which sought to inspire designers, publications during this time included more quantitative studies of regional architecture, seeking to present architecture that embodied the style of a given region. These publications attempted to capture the essence of the region, primarily in order to motivate travel there, as well as to illustrate examples of successful regional design. The *Collection de l'art regional* was one of these publications. Begun in 1923 and printed into the early 1930s, it was not as comprehensive as earlier projects such as *Murs et toits*, but it demonstrated the presence of new issues in regionalism, such as the rise of the villa and the project of colonialism.

Ch 3.1 La Collection de l'art regional



Figure 24: Title page, *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, 1928.

La Collection de l'art régional (Figure 24)¹⁰⁵ was a collective effort to survey the two most indicative manifestations of regional identity and culture: furniture and buildings. Divided into two series, *Le Mobilier* and *L'Habitation*, *La Collection* sought to present regional works that showcased regional identity as it appeared in built forms. Published as early as 1924 with additional volumes introduced during the later 1920s and editions printed as late as 1933, it appears that *La Collection* was a large-scale effort to present regional identities in printed form. While each volume shares structural similarities with *Murs et toits*, it differs in that each volume features different contributors, and the projects are existing structures identified (when possible) by architect. Like *Murs et toits*, written descriptions are restricted to the introduction, and each volume contains approximately 40 plates of photographs and plans of the various sites. Although the sites featured continued to be up to the contributor's discretion, in several volumes projects by the contributors themselves are included. The volumes of *La Collection* are some of

¹⁰⁵ Paul Gélis. *L'Habitation Alsacienne*. Paris: Impr. L. Maretheux (texte), Impr. Catala Frères (planches) ; Ch. Massin Et Cie, Éditeurs, 1928.

the first publications surveying regional architecture that feature existing contemporaneous work and that show the actual application of regional styles to modern buildings. While *Murs et toits* features hypothetical works, *La Collection* includes actual documented projects assembled by an author familiar with a particular region. The regions included in *La Collection* were not only some of the most distinctive regional cultures in terms of their crafts, but also featured the strongest regional identities that impacted their political relations with the French administration. Most of the regions in *La Collection* either encompassed a singular cultural group that posed administrative challenges, like the Basque region, or they could trace their cultural heritage back to another European power like Normandy. All of the regions included in *La Collection* are located along the perimeter of France, with the exception of *L'Habitation Tunisienne*, demonstrating the expansion of both France as a governing power and the discussion of French regionalism. *La Collection* demonstrates the continuing evolution of regionalism into regional rationalism, following *Murs et toits* as an indication for the evolving perspective of regionalism in architecture by primarily increasing the number of contributors to a publication of regionalism, which allows for a variety of opinions on regionalism rather than the sole view of one author. By analyzing the introductions of two volumes, *L'Habitation Flamande* and *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, comparing their treatment of familiar regional styles relative to the previously examined publications, and then analyzing their representation of the villa in each volume, it will become apparent how regional rationalism evolved from progressive traditionalism by absorbing modern building types and technology. Furthermore, *L'Habitation Flamande* and in particular, *L'Habitation Alsacienne* also provides a glimpse into the tension between the regions and the central administration as the French government's shift in focus to its colonies further heightened the tension that started in the postwar period.

The text-only introduction of each volume in *La Collection* written by the author or a reputable figure knowledgeable on the region provides a brief chronology of architecture in the region and identifies its main traits. It also provides textual evidence of the perception of a given region and its architecture, especially within the context of modernization and nationalism.

L'Habitation Alsacienne responds to the themes of modernization and nationalism explicitly in its introduction, while *L'Habitation Flamande* presents a more nuanced approach to these themes.

In the introduction of *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, the author Paul Gélis, the Chief Architect of Historic Monuments, establishes a rigid distinction between that which is German, French and Alsatian. Gélis wrote that “Germany tried in vain to plant its architecture in Alsatian soil,”¹⁰⁶ and, in reference to Neoclassicism, that eighteenth century bourgeois architecture “transformed under the influence of French taste”¹⁰⁷. These distinctions continue into the organization of building types, where Gélis describes monumental buildings as most likely constructed in the German style, bourgeois and urban architecture in the French style, and the rural architecture in Alsatian style.¹⁰⁸ These delineations mark the perceivable difference between the Alsatians and either country that controlled their region. This distinction provides an explicit example of the separation between the French administration and some of its regions. Although the authors of *La Maison* and *Murs et toits* hoped to inspire architects to build in regional styles, most construction projects applied Alsatian architectural motifs to buildings that featured Beaux-Arts planning and modern technology. A dilution of traditional architectural aesthetics occurred because of a need to avoid the appearance of influence by German architecture, as well as the effect of modernization in the region. Commenting on the interwar period, Gélis wrote that, “these days, solely due to the difficulties of skilled labor and economic conditions, has half-timbering been abandoned and replaced by masonry walls covered in plaster.”¹⁰⁹ Although he does not elaborate, the implications of the transition from half-timber construction to masonry and plaster represent a fundamental shift in the construction of Alsatian buildings from the interwar period onward. This change, as well as the incorporation of modernizing elements when applied to a new building type, presented a different type of architecture, one disparate from the regional architecture of Alsace. The results of these influences are apparent in the

¹⁰⁶ Paul Gélis. *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, 4.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 4-6.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 6.

subsequent images of *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, not only as it compares to preceding publications on Alsatian architecture, but to other publications in *La Collection*.



Figure 25: Title Page of *L'Habitation Flamande*, 1927.

The introduction for *L'Habitation Flamande* (Figure 25)¹¹⁰, as an example of a less contentious region in France, presents a more nuanced discussion of regional architecture heavily influenced by the author. Jacques Barbotin, a Beaux-Arts trained architect, practiced in Flanders and was an ardent advocate of Flemish regional architecture. He described the relation between French Flemish and Belgian Flemish architecture as more dynamic than in *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, where Gélis distanced Alsatian architecture from Germany as much as possible to reinforce political aims. For Barbotin, “the Belgians [during reconstruction] imposed an architecture inspired by tradition and local construction principles in their country...in French Flanders...efforts inspired by the principles of Flemish architecture were realized.”¹¹¹ To that effect, analysis in Barbotin’s introduction reveals noteworthy commentaries on the period in

¹¹⁰ Jacques Barbotin. *L'Habitation Flamande*. Paris: Impr. L. Maretheux, 1, Rue Cassette ; Ch. Massin Et Cie, Éditeurs, 51, Rue Des Écoles ; 1927.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* 4.

which the volume was published. Rather than outline the perception of Flemish regional architecture as distinctive from other forms of Flemish architecture, Barbotin first describes the French perception of Flanders as reputedly being “a cold country, a black country, and [one] of the liberated regions.”¹¹² Not only are the peripheral regions already considered distinct from other regions, particularly the Ile-de-France and its surroundings, but even the northern regions were perceived differently due to the devastation of the Great War. Engaging with the goal of *La Collection* to inspire travel to the region, the enthusiasm Barbotin integrates into the introduction and the number of recent works (including his own) in *L’Habitation Flamande* depicts Flanders as an active area for the construction of contemporaneous regional architecture. Barbotin goes one step further in his introduction by comparing the scale and quality of construction in Flanders with other French urban centers, writing that “[architects] must often fight against the taste of patrons who unhappily consider the banal residences of the suburbs of large cities as construction models.”¹¹³ Considering that Lille, a large commercial and economic center, is located in Flanders, the ability of Barbotin to compare construction in Flanders to other cities, most obviously Paris, is feasible. However, excluding the first few images in *L’Habitation Flamande* which depict the oldest examples of Flemish architecture in the volume, all of the projects in the folio are located in the suburbs of Lille. Despite its varied response to influences, *L’Habitation Flamande* provides a cohesive folio of images that reinforce what was described in the introduction as Flemish architecture. Barbotin’s choice to select only works around Lille illustrates a similar banality to other grand cities, one that is Flemish in nature rather than Neoclassical or functionalist. Nevertheless, Flanders is one of the few peripheral regions in France that contained a large economic center, so its regional architecture is distinctive for its pre-existing integration into larger urban fabrics. Both *L’Habitation Flamande* and *L’Habitation Alsacienne* provide necessary expansions to the published survey of regional architecture, not

¹¹² Jacques Barbotin. *L’Habitation Flamande*, 4.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 6.

only in the number of works they add to the representation of their particular regions, but in their demonstration of the changes in regionalism during the interwar period.

The transition from progressive traditionalism to regional rationalism is evident in *La Collection* in both the introductions and the collection of images. To consider the material in *L'Habitation Alsacienne* first: it demonstrates the increase in knowledge of regional architecture and the advanced forms of documenting these works. Rather than sketches identified by town, photographs now illustrate the sites, which are identified by town, patron and architect when possible. This improvement shows advancement in the knowledge of Alsatian architecture, while it also provides works built in the present. A key development of regional rationalism relates to the ability for architects to evaluate contemporaneous regional design. While during the postwar period, advocates for progressive traditionalism hoped to inspire architects designing buildings for reconstruction, designers of the interwar period could review what was built in the postwar period and establish which works and methods were successful and which were not. Another facet of *L'Habitation Alsacienne* that demonstrates the shift to regional rationalism was the expansion of regionalism to include building types other than residential architecture, in many cases, works that were usually constructed in regional styles but had yet to be studied. While *Murs et toits* hypothesized applying regional principles to schools and inns, *La Collection* included built works with these functions in their folios. Another key change inherent to regional rationalism is the dissemination of discussions of regionalism to the regions themselves. This is not to say that discussions of regionalism only took place in the center, but that in the formal discussion of regional architecture, the regions were no longer only source material for the discussion but also active participants. Although *L'Habitation Alsacienne* follows the practice of previous publications with its author holding an administrative position within the government, *L'Habitation Flamande* was authored by a practicing architect in the region, suggesting that his selection of works benefits regional Flemish architecture in providing an accurate representation of the region.

The use of a local architect as author for *L'Habitation Flamande*, particularly a Beaux-Arts trained architect, reveals an interesting component of regional rationalism that is unusual in the publications on regionalism in this thesis. Although Beaux-Arts trained architects contributed to previous publications at some point they stated or demonstrated a rejection of Beaux-Arts training in favor of adopting regional methods of spatial organization, construction material and ornamentation. In *L'Habitation Flamande* and other volumes of *La Collection*, the fact that the author was trained by the Ecole de Beaux-Arts adds a level of legitimacy to his ability to present a collection of regional works. While the introduction of *L'Habitation Flamande* distinguishes between Flanders and Paris, evidence of the influence of the Beaux-Arts is present in the introduction and the images, and demonstrates how *L'Habitation Flamande* departed from its predecessors. The most prominent difference is the general representation of Flemish architecture. Unlike the previous publications discussed in this thesis, Barbotin focused exclusively on buildings using brick and located in suburban rather than rural locations around Lille. This directly contrasts with many of the images in *Les Maisons* and *Murs et toits*, which typically described a Flemish street scene as rows of homes separated from the street by a small garden (Figures 6 and 21). Similarly the intricacy of the masonry used in the sites selected by Barbotin was not included in earlier publications, and in the introduction he references bay construction and the Gothic-like facades to be defining characteristics of Flemish architecture. The connection of a regional style to a transnational style like Gothic architecture was not a common practice by regionalists, who sought to substantiate the necessity of building in regional styles because of their unique relation to a particular geography. By equating the Flemish style with the Gothic, Barbotin reveals the influence of his higher learning at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

The effect of the Beaux-Arts is similarly pronounced in the projects selected for *L'Habitation Flamande*, as eighteen of the projects were designed by one of six Beaux-Arts trained architects featured in this volume. Furthermore, in many of the residential projects, including those designed by Barbotin himself, there is the presence of the salon, which

developed in urban centers such as Paris and was advocated for by the Beaux-Arts as a social fixture in Parisian design. The use of the salon in residences in the northern *départements* was highly criticized by regionalists during the Great War and in the postwar period, so the prevalence of the salon in the projects presented in *L'Habitation Flamande* reflects the effect of Paris and the Beaux-Arts on practicing architects in the regions despite the efforts of regionalists. The salon was not the only concept that permeated the regions from the centre; the villa was new building type associated with the rise of the urban middle classes that would be integrated into the fabric of the regions.



Figure 26: Villa of M.T., *L'Habitation Flamande*, 1927.

Unlike traditional domestic regional buildings, the villa was not considered a primary residence, nor did it share the same functions as a farm or town shop in which the residence was located above the store. The villa was not centrally located within a town; it was often located in the suburban area surrounding a large city or at a distance away from a town as a retreat. The form and plan of a villa varied according to the desires of the patron, causing villa design to cover a broad spectrum of styles, including regional styles as well as Neoclassical and

Beaux-Arts traditions. In *L'Habitation Flamande*, Barbotin presents one example of a Flemish style villa that reinforces his perception of Flemish regional architecture, while in *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, Gélis includes three examples, each distinctive as they adapt to its context. By examining the differences between the villas included in these volumes, it will become evident that relative to other regional building types discussed by regionalists, the villa was the residential type in the peripheral regions most closely associated with the ideas of the centre and urban centers. The ties between villas and the centre are explicit in the facades and plans that often share more similarities with the architecture of cities than with buildings in the region in which they are located.

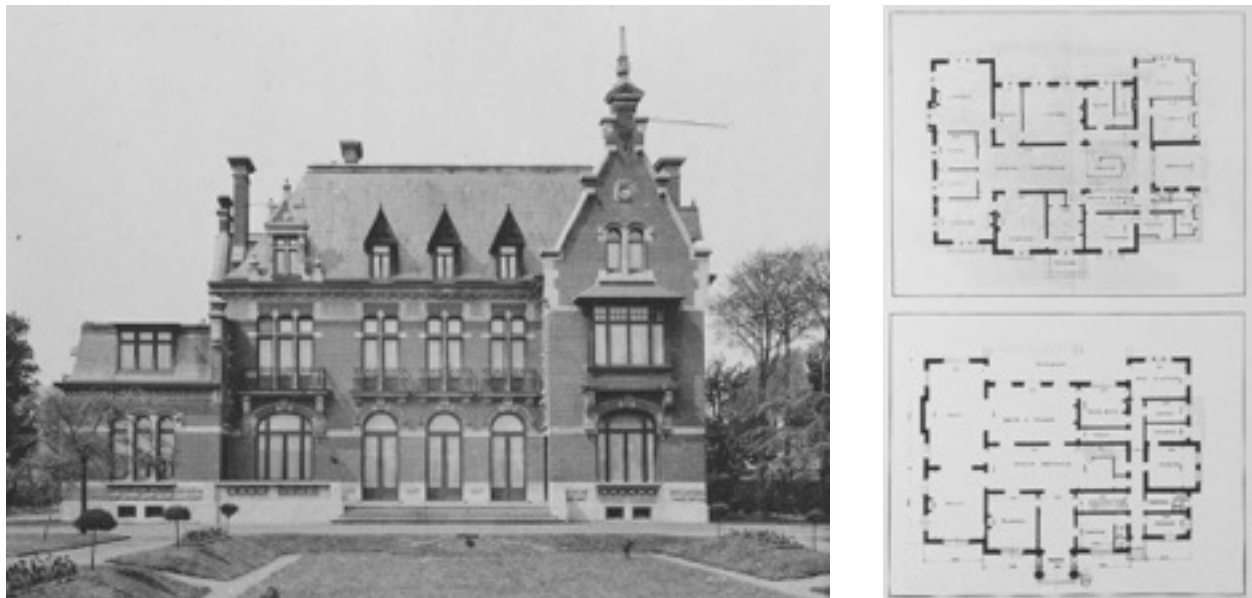


Figure 27 and 28: Rear Elevation and Plan of M.T. Villa, *L'Habitation Flamande*, 1927.

The villa included in *L'Habitation Flamande* is the Villa of M.T. by MM. Cordonnier (Figure 26)¹¹⁴. Located in Loos, a suburb of Lille, this villa adheres to Barbotin's presentation of Flemish architecture, but has little relation to the Flemish regional style described in earlier publications. Although it follows Barbotin's description of Flemish architecture in the use of brickwork, bay construction and sprockets, this villa could just as easily be perceived as a Neoclassical style chateau due to its scale, ornament and position in the landscape with a tapis

¹¹⁴ Jacques Barbotin. *L'Habitation Flamande*, 32.

vert and formal gardens. Although the facade indicates some connection to Flemish architecture as described by Barbotin, the bay construction and use of brickwork, the building is situated in a formal French site with a tapis vert in the front and formal gardens in the rear (Figure 27)¹¹⁵. The plan maintains two axes in keeping with Neoclassical design, and the programs of the rooms suggest a complete disconnect with the Flemish regional house, suggesting that this plan could just as easily be constructed outside of Paris as it could be constructed in Flanders (Figure 28)¹¹⁶. This disconnect could be due to the architects, the Cordonniers, who were Beaux-Arts trained, and Louis-Marie Cordonnier worked on major commissions in the area like the Lille Opera House and the Peace Palace in the Hague. Due to their education as well as their participation in transnational architecture circles, their style of design was influenced by Neoclassicism and revivals. The fact that architects working in Flanders designed not only in French Flanders but in neighboring countries provides further substantiation to Barbotin's argument that Flanders and its architecture could be compared to the architecture of other large cities in France, implying that regional architecture merited the same distinction as Parisian supported styles. However, some regions, like Alsace, despite their inclusion of a large city like Strasbourg, did not receive the same considerations if their styles were perceived as rudimentary and pastoral.

Unlike Flanders whose regional identity permeated all parts of the architecture in the region, both in urban and rural environments, Alsatian architecture as it was described by regionalists remained in the rural areas of Alsace, transitioning into higher styles the closer to an urban center. In *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, this transition is evident in the three villas included in the volume. Compared to preceding discussions of Alsatian architecture, including Gélis' introduction, the villa does not resemble the form of the farmhouse due to the drastically different function. The form of the villa instead relates to the residences of laborers and artisans, while the larger program reveals the change in social class of its patrons. These

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 33.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* 34.

examples also indicate that different cities were influenced by different styles, which in turn affected how many regional characteristics were included in the villa. The variety of the villas included in *L'Habitation Alsacienne* also indicates the intent of the author to provide a comprehensive study in Alsatian architecture rather than to support a particular message of the author, such as Barbotin's depiction of a thriving Flanders in *L'Habitation Flamande*. Beginning with a villa in a suburb of Strasbourg, then moving to a villa outside of Mulhouse and finally a villa in the Vosges Mountains, Gélis shows that Alsatian villas responded to their contexts by varying the use of regional traits on their facades, and that although their plans did not embrace defining traits like the Stube, their programs suggest an attempt to emulate the lifestyle of the region.

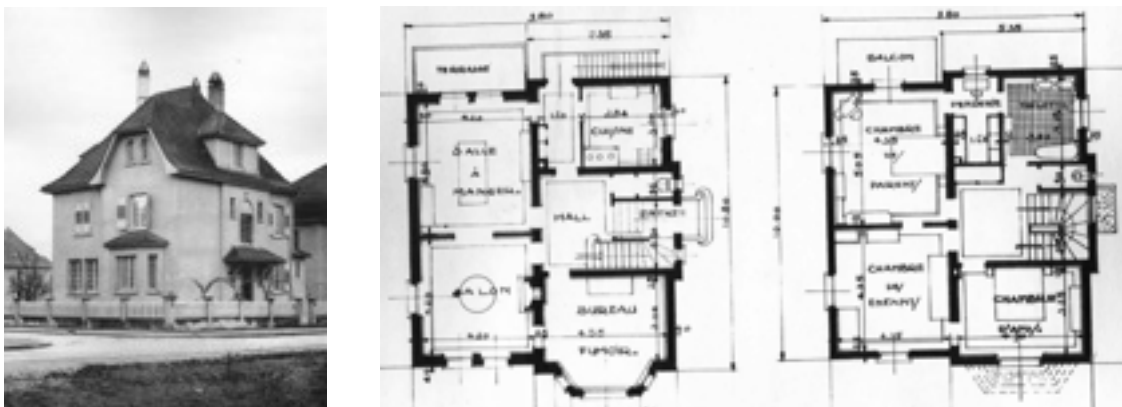


Figure 29 and 30: Photograph and Plans of the Turcas Villa, *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, 1928.

The Villa of M. Turcas designed by M. Riegert and M. Wolff in the suburbs of Strasbourg is one of the least emblematic examples of Alsatian architecture in *L'Habitation Alsacienne*. With its smooth facade uninterrupted by wooden beams, the shape of the roof is the only element indicative of its location in Alsace (Figure 29)¹¹⁷. The interior plan shows no indications of Alsatian regional architecture. The salon, which would be the room closest in function to the stube, is completely separate from the kitchen and is not the main point of entry for the villa like in traditional Alsatian homes. The inclusion of the salon and the study further indicates the higher social status of the inhabitants as well as the influence of Neoclassicism in Strasbourg

¹¹⁷ Gélis, *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, 25.

(Figure 30)¹¹⁸. Due to the influence of both France and Germany on Strasbourg, the city in the first half of the 20th century featured architectural disparities between the traditional half-timbered buildings and the later German and French civil structures built to reinforce possession of the city. As urban expansion occurred, the new construction within the suburbs provided a more flexible urban fabric in which regional and neoclassical architecture could blend, resulting in a broad spectrum of architecture with varying degrees of regional and neoclassical traits. In the suburbs of Strasbourg, Neoclassical examples like the Villa of M. Turcas indicate the prevalence of Neoclassicism in architecture in that city, whether as built works or in discussions. Although Neoclassicism was certainly present in discussions in architectural circles all over France due to its connection to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, in smaller regional cities, its influence on built works was less prominent as familiar regional styles continued to be used.

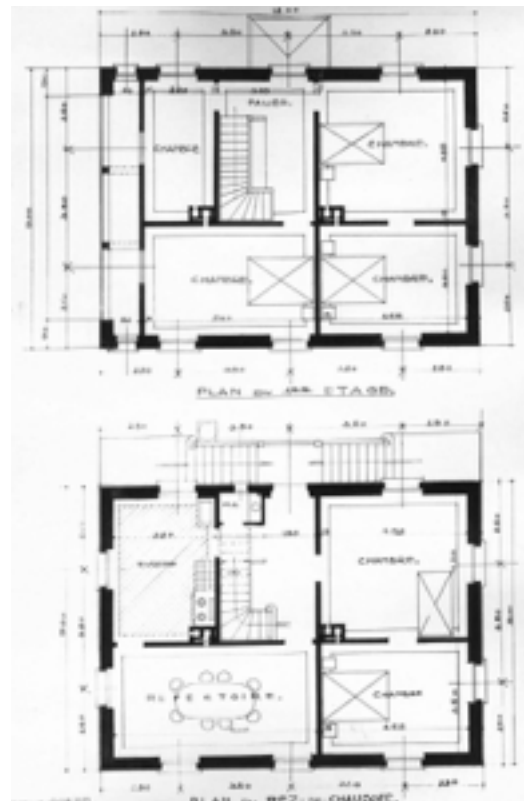


Figure 31 and 32: Photograph and Plan of Remy Villa, *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, 1928.

¹¹⁸ Gélis, *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, 26.

The Villa of M. Remy in Wattwiller by the architect M. Schwartz is an example of a suburban villa that reveals a blending of urban and rural architectural features while adhering to a regional style. The shape of the roof echoes the Turcas Villa in Strasbourg, and relates to the form of urban Alsatian architecture, although its uncomplicated form also shares similarities with rural Alsatian houses (Figure 31)¹¹⁹. Although half-timbering was not used, the clear organization of windows and the wood balcony and shutters refer to traditional Alsatian architecture. The lack of half-timbering in these villas further supports Gélis' claim that the lack of skilled labor and access to raw materials led to the decline of half-timber construction. Unlike the previous example, the plan of the Remy Villa shows an evolution from traditional Alsatian housing, most notably the location of the refectory, which could be interpreted as an evolved form of the stube, adjacent to the kitchen (Figure 32)¹²⁰. One of the heating sources for the villa is also located between the refectory and the kitchen in keeping with Alsatian traditions of a centrally located hearth to the primary spaces of the house. The blend of regional and formal styles in this villa suggests that in its context, both regionalism and Neoclassicism were present, but one style was not emphasized over the other. The town of Wattwiller is a suburb of Mulhouse, an historically autonomous city with ties not only to France but to Germany and Switzerland as well. The fact that Mulhouse was the next largest city after Strasbourg in Alsace further suggests that Neoclassicism would be present in its fabric, most likely in preceding civic structures, but that the mixed heritage of Mulhouse would ensure the use of traditional regional architecture, particularly in residential architecture. By looking at projects like the Remy villa and the Turcas villa, it appears that the further a project was from a center of French influence, most notably Strasbourg, the more regional its form became.

The last example of an Alsatian villa is the Hermann villa in Radersmatt by M. Roth. The town of Radersmatt is located in the Vosges mountains, making the Hermann villa the most rural of the villas included in *L'Habitation Alsacienne*. As such, the facade of this villa emulates

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* 35.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 36.

the traditional rural Alsatian architecture as described by Gélis and his predecessors (Figure 33)¹²¹. The villa features some half-timbering on the facade as well as a wooden balcony and shutters. The plan of the villa suggests that the house was most likely commissioned by someone who either primarily lived in the city or was influenced by urban architecture due to the inclusion of a hall and a separate dining room. However, the open program of the remaining rooms downstairs suggests the incorporation of traditional Alsatian elements; it could have functioned as a communal room like the traditional stube, especially with its location adjacent to the kitchen (Figure 34)¹²². Like the previous example, the Hermann villa integrates itself into its regional context, matching the surrounding built environment, which in this case is far removed from the centers of Neoclassical architecture. The Alsatian villas Gélis included in *L'Habitation Alsacienne* demonstrate the evolution of Alsatian regional architecture during the interwar period. The economic consequences of the Great War led to a dramatic decrease in half-timber structures, and the effect of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and urban architecture caused the plans of villas to depart from traditional regional homes.

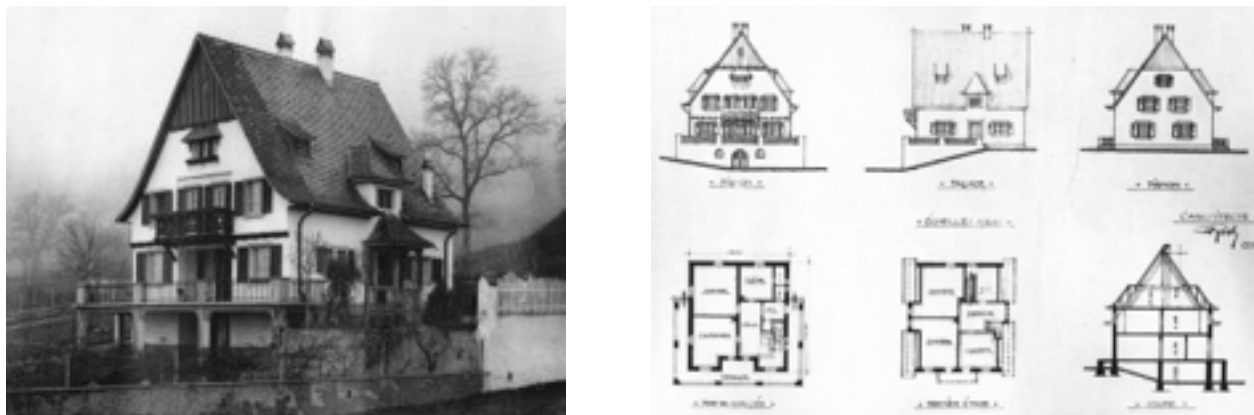


Figure 33 and 34: Photograph and Plan for the Hermann Villa, *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, 1928.

In both *L'Habitation Flamande* and *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, the given examples demonstrate how regional rationalism applied to built works. The examples from *L'Habitation Flamande* show the selective use of certain components of Flemish architecture in an effort to

¹²¹ Gélis, *L'Habitation Alsacienne*, 37.

¹²² *Ibid.* 38.

create a seamless regional fabric. Rather than apply the rural regional style of Flanders in an increasingly urban environment, Barbotin presents examples that focus on urban Flemish architecture, identifying the roof structure, bay construction and brickwork as the defining elements of Flemish regional architecture. The villa example from *L'Habitation Flamande* problematizes regional rationalism; in order to create a complete design, the elements of the work which are not regional must come from somewhere. In the case of the villa, the architect Cordonnier chose to fill in the gaps between the regional elements with strong Neoclassical elements, arguably diluting the regional nature of the villa. While *L'Habitation Flamande* demonstrates the prominence of Flemish regional architecture in contemporaneous design, it also presents the encroaching influence of Neoclassicism, a popular style to blend with regional architecture because of its presence in architectural education and the fact that both are historical styles. During the interwar period, regional rationalism was not only influenced by trends in architecture, but from external influences like nationalism and modernization.

L'Habitation Alsacienne demonstrates how regionalism was affected by French nationalism during the interwar period. Unlike *L'Habitation Flamande*, whose shared regional heritage with Belgium was not a threat to French identity in Flanders, the connection between Alsace and Germany was a contentious aspect of Alsatian regional identity. As such, publications during the interwar period avoided referencing any connections to Germany unless Germany was portrayed as a villain in the history of French Alsace. In order to avoid tying Alsatian regional identity to Germany, regional rationalism provided an effective tool to continue building Alsatian architecture without appearing too German. By selecting particular characteristics to include in works, architects could effectively avoid creating buildings that might be construed as German. This desire to avoid certain aspects of a regional culture was reinforced by the effect of modernization in the region of Alsace because of the demise of skilled trades, in particular the decrease in carpenters and laborers knowledgeable of half-timber construction. By reducing the use of half-timbering in Alsatian architecture, there was a profound shift in the appearance of Alsatian regional architecture. Although roof shapes and the

use of timber continued in contemporaneous structures, the exterior appearance of Alsatian buildings more closely resembled other northern regions' rural architecture than before, reinforcing the 'Frenchness' of Alsatian architecture.

Compared to earlier iterations of regionalism, the lack of homogeneity in the architecture of regional rationalism as well as the variety of architecture discussed in publications during the time period suggests that there was no longer a necessity for regionalism to exist as a cohesive unit against a larger threat as the centre and Paris had posed in previous years. In fact, *La Collection* demonstrates that regions for the most part now dealt with particular issues autonomously, for example the equation of Flemish urban architecture with that of Paris, or the integration of the villa building type into the various levels of suburban and rural contexts in Alsace. The main reason for this shift was the transition of the French administration from focusing on the regions within France to the new regions outside of France, the colonies and protectorates. While prior years had demonstrated an investment by the French administration into the regions, this attention began to waver during the postwar period, and by the interwar period, had fully transitioned to the development of the colonies. To this effect, the only time regions could coalesce in a physical presentation of regional cultural was during the expositions of the interwar period, and even then, their presence was eclipsed by the Parisian location and the inclusion of colonial pavilions.

Ch 3.2 Expositions of 1931 and 1937

After the 1925 Exposition, the juxtaposition of French urban centers and rural areas continued to affect discussions of regionalism into the 1930s, and became the primary platform for criticism of representations of regionalism in Paris, particularly as it related to regional representation at international expositions. However, regionalism as a concept did not remain static. Two major transformations were epitomized in the 1931 Exposition coloniale internationale de Paris and the 1937 Exposition Internationale des art et des techniques dans la vie moderne. The first transition was the cognizance of regionalists that colonies functioned in a similar capacity as French regions. Not only were they considered distinct from the Métropole, they were unique in their preservation of their own indigenous art and architecture.¹²³ The second transition was an increasing awareness of the detrimental impact of tourism on regional culture. It was believed that tourism promoted an artificial representation of regional culture, and especially architecture— causing the oversimplification of the complexities within each region and ultimately benefitting the Parisian tourist industry over the regions themselves.

These transformations created a new version of regionalism that unified the peripheral regions of France with its colonial holdings, changing the nature of the relation of regionalism to nationalism. While prior iterations of French nationalism, in an effort to reunite France after the Great War, focused on Paris as the origin point of French nationalism, spreading modernization out into the peripheries of l'Hexagone, a version of nationalism based in the regions became more popular. One of the more influential of these was a regionalist approach that linked “France’s cultural vitality to the strength of its rootedness in the soil.”¹²⁴

In comparison to earlier events, such as the 1925 Art Deco exhibition, the 1931 Exposition coloniale, dealt with different challenges to its success. Unlike prior exhibition’s emphasis on the importance of France within the arts and industry, the 1931 event attempted to

¹²³ Patricia Morton, *Hybrid Modernities Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000. 193.

¹²⁴ Romy Golan, Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France between the Wars*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995. 7.

cohesively present the distinction between French culture and colonial cultures— while simultaneously justifying colonialism and its benefits. While the 1925 Exposition was located in the center of Paris and used its plan to privilege pavilions dedicated to modernity and luxury goods over regional pavilions, the 1931 Exposition was located in the eastern outskirts of Paris, where organizers of the exposition attempted to impact Parisian infrastructure on a level parallel to their alterations made in the colonies. Overseen by Marshall Lyautey, who had served as a governor of Morocco, the 1931 Exposition sought to expand the urban infrastructure of Paris into its periphery in the Bois de Vincennes with large avenues, public transportation and modern housing. These goals, present from the initial planning of the exposition, would not be achieved — an issue that was one of many sources of criticism of the exposition.

Le Corbusier described what was completed of the project as “thirty kilometers of shame” because of the indifference evident in the constructed housing.¹²⁵ Vaillat wrote that Marshall Lyautey was discouraged from attempting to reform the capital, “having measured the distance that separates modern Morocco from old Paris, or, more exactly, from an old-fashioned Paris.”¹²⁶ This comment seems even more relevant in relation to the loi Cordunet of 1919 which required all regional towns to provide a modern plan for growth— as Paris did not have a general plan for organizing the city’s expansion. Considering the problems of urban planning within the regions after the Great War and the limitations of its success, it seems paradoxical that the most successful instances of urban planning by this time occurred in the French colonies. Despite this failure to integrate the site of the Exposition into the larger urban fabric of Paris, the organizers reinforced the supremacy of France and Paris over its colonies through the architectural styles assigned to each building.

Unlike previous expositions that dedicated a small portion of their site to the representation of the colonies, the 1931 Exposition allowed for indigenous architecture to be dispersed throughout the site among Westernized colonial pavilions. Although buildings were

¹²⁵ Morton, *Hybrid Modernities*, 169.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 170.

organized by their imperial power, the presentation of indigenous constructions next to pavilions of their colonizers was relatively new to French international expositions and contributed to communicating the success and benefits of colonialism by juxtaposing the “native” with the modernizing character of European civilization. While indigenous building types varied by colony, colonial pavilions like the Cité des Informations were rendered in classicized versions of the Art Déco, continuing the architectural language of the 1925 Exposition.¹²⁷ This dichotomy between representations of the colonized and the colonizers functioned in a similar manner to the distinction between the regional and modern pavilions of the 1925 Exposition. By situating the colonies in opposition to Paris and *sa maîtresse civilisatrice*, the 1931 Exposition reflected the earlier 1925 Exposition and highlighted the similarities between how the centre treated the regions and its colonies.

During the 1925 Exposition, Vaillat observed that “the French colonies, in the form they have given to their pavilions, have shown us that they intend to develop modern civilization following the traces and the path of ancient civilization.”¹²⁸ Between 1925 and 1931, efforts to more explicitly tie colonies to regions were made, such as the *Collection de l’art régional*. At the time of the 1931 Exhibition, the connection between the regions and the colonies solidified and led to the term *la plus grande France*. Indeed, halfway through the Exhibition in August 1931, critic Robert de la Sizeranne “decried the death of French regional art and celebrated the local culture of ‘la plus grande France’, the France of the colonies. Sizeranne characterized the colonies as regions or provinces that possessed an art distinct from that of the Métropole...This art deserved preservation as the regional culture of *La plus grande France*.”¹²⁹ By emphasizing modernity in 1925 and colonialism in 1931, the expositions of those years provided ample justification for the inclusion of colonial culture within regionalism, effectively expanding their nationalist agenda. By overshadowing regional and colonial culture with representations of Paris, nationalism begins to weaken due to the cracks created by prioritizing one aspect of

¹²⁷ Morton, *Hybrid Modernities*, 5.

¹²⁸ Vaillat, “La tendance nationale”, 188.

¹²⁹ Morton, *Hybrid Modernities*, 193.

French culture over the others. The regional center of the 1937 Exposition attempts to repair the fragility of French national identity through the promotion of tourism within France with mixed results.

While connections have been made between the 1925 Exposition and the 1931 Exposition coloniale, the latter event also has a strong connection to the 1937 Exposition Internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne. Indeed, they both created what organizers believed to be cohesive, and seemingly complete representations of the colonies and the regions of France in a Parisian exposition. The 1937 Exposition featured a Regional Center that in the planning stages was considered the “star attraction” which the General Commissioner Edmond Labbé acknowledged gave the regions unprecedented status at a French world’s fair.¹³⁰ Labbé also describes the goal of the Exposition as well as the role of the regional center:

“we must not forget that, in France, the cause of regionalism is linked to the cause of tourism. Those things that attract the foreigner to visit us are not only the differences among our nations but also, and perhaps primarily, our [internal] regional differences...The Regional Center will serve as the bait to lead Exposition visitors into the diverse provinces...[and] will produce [in them] the most powerful reawakening.”¹³¹

This emphasis on tourism resulted from the Depression, which had led to a decrease in tourism by a factor of four.¹³² Tourism became even more emphasized with the rise of the Popular Front to power, who created an entirely new class of tourists to visit the Exposition and perhaps the regions in the future. The overall results of the Exposition could be considered a success, in that tourism in France increased in 1937, however visitation to the Exposition itself was below expectations.¹³³ By focusing on tourism as a central theme of the Exposition, regional committees had more opportunity than before to participate in discussions of how the regions of

¹³⁰ "Simulating France, Seducing the World: The Regional Center at the 1937 Paris Exposition." In *Architecture and Tourism Perception, Performance, and Place*, edited by D. Medina Lasansky and Brian McLaren, by Deborah Hurr, 147-164. English ed. Oxford: Berg, 2004. 148.

¹³¹ Edmond Labbé. *Le Régionalisme et l'exposition internationale de Paris 1937*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1936. 4.

¹³² Hurr, "Simulating France", 148.

¹³³ *Ibid.* 157.

France as a whole would be represented in a world's fair. Despite these discussions, the temporary and superficial nature of the exposition became a topic of debate and was one of the main contributing factors to dissatisfaction among the regions regarding their representation at the exposition. The superficiality of the exposition affected the Regional Center on several scales, from the delineation of regions and their organization within the Regional Center to the creation of inconsistencies within individual buildings in terms of their building forms as well as their use of materials.

Due to the continued use of terms referencing the provinces of pre-1789 France, committees of the Regional Center believed that in order to most accurately represent all of France, they must divide it among cultural regions. These boundaries have never been accurately or acceptably delineated on a map of France. The exhibition started with an initial proposal of 17 regions that was transformed into a final map of twenty seven, a process Vaillat, who served as congress reporter, likened to "topographic surgery."¹³⁴ These regions were then organized spatially according to environmental attributes. Regions near water were located next to the Seine, while mountainous regions were next to artificial rock formations and regions with major cities located around a central plaza. Not only did these regional delineations create visual connections between dissimilar regions like the northern coastal regions of Normandy and Brittany with sight of Provence and Côte d'Azur, but within each regional building architects had to negotiate the various styles tied to each region.

The problem of style and whether a building had a cohesive or aggregative appearance contributed to the discontinuity between the exterior and interior of many buildings. Rather than specify a building type by program, the tourist agenda of the exposition relegated many interior spaces to be display rooms. Not only was the program of each building counter-intuitive to what would typically be found in a building of this form, architects were allowed, to varying levels, to alter plans of regional buildings and architectural elements in order to integrate modern elements. The Alsatian pavilion is a prime example due to its avoidance of half-timber

¹³⁴ Hurtt, "Simulating France", 151.

construction and steeply pitched roof in an effort to avoid referencing its German past— a tendency that was further evident in its symmetrical Beaux-Arts plan.¹³⁵ This disconnect between the exterior and the interior was further exacerbated by the use of artificial materials of the facades. Although a majority of regional delegates supported the construction of the Regional Center *en dur*, which they believed would contribute to the authenticity given the heavy emphasis of local materials in regional architecture, the delegates also believed that by building the Regional Center using permanent materials, the site would act as the center for the regions in Paris after the close of the exposition.¹³⁶ Time and budget constraints prevented the use of actual materials in the Regional Center and “many interpreted the decision to use false materials as a devaluation of the regions by the central administration who had promised to portray them with substance and dignity.”¹³⁷

The reality of the Regional Center in the 1937 Exposition was that it proved to be more beneficial for Paris than for the regions in terms of generating tourism. As a tourist attraction itself, the Exposition included a Tourism pavilion, which was located a substantial distance from the Regional Center. Regional committees felt this decision pulled resources away from the regional pavilions and ultimately contributed to the apparent failure of the Regional Center to increase tourism to the regions. The fact that the Regional Center was popular among visitors to the Exposition prompted support for it to remain open after the close of the Exposition. However, supporters of the actual regions, such as the President of the Pyrénées-Atlantique committee, commented that:

“the opinion is increasing, nearly everywhere, that the Regional Center, because of its success and consequently [its] benefits for the Exposition and the city of Paris, will barely serve the regions since it is already jeopardizing them by depriving them of some of their travel support and even of their inhabitants who are lured away by the great international festival. The ‘mystique’ that we hoped would spread and for which we have worked our hardest is emerging, however, in a way completely contrary to our publicity.”¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Hurtt, “Simulating France”, 153.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* 155.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* 156.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* 158.

Echoing Le Corbusier's comment on the 1925 Exposition's failure to acknowledge the problems of urbanism in France, many felt that the 1937 Exposition did not address the problems the regions of France faced during the Depression. The original goal of promoting tourism on a national scale in actuality only achieved further promotion of Paris as the embodiment of France, reinforcing the centralized nature of the 1925 and 1931 expositions. By creating what was widely believed to be a complete representation of the regions of France, the regions negated the necessity of visitors to Paris as well as Parisians themselves from venturing outside of the city into the regions of France.

By the close of the 1937 Exposition, supporters of regionalism and *la plus grande France* were relatively disillusioned with the nationalism built on the ascendancy of Paris over the regions that supported its decadence and metropolitan reputation. It is from this dissatisfaction that nationalism based on regional roots emerged and gained support, as regionalism not only embodies the amorphous regions of l'Hexagone, but the colonies of France in the Outre-mer. Within architecture, this was further propounded by the ability of regionalism, particularly regional rationalism, to be as suitable a strategy in the regions of France as in the colonies. Due to the variety of cultures and environments under French control, the relevance of regional rationalism as an international architectural strategy was arguably embraced by many architects, particularly those working in the colonies. Publications like *L'Habitation tunisienne*, a part of *La Collection de l'art régional* demonstrate the relative embracing of architecture influenced its location in the colonies, and the author, Victor Valensi, was a practicing architect in the area of Tunis during this time. The parallels between his publication and *L'Habitation flamande* are extensive, and though they will not be discussed in this thesis, provide insight into what research could follow this work.

Conclusion

The discussion of the three forms of architectural regionalism in the preceding chapters traces the rise of regionalism as a mode of architecture from the Great War into the interwar period. The Great War and subsequent reconstruction provide the primary catalyst for the rise of regionalism in discussions of architecture because of the various forms of regionalism that could respond to the necessities of restoring a devastated region. During the process of reconstruction what had begun as ideological regionalism evolved into progressive traditionalism in an effort to blend the needs of the inhabitants with the goals of the French administration to modernize rural areas of France while fostering a French national identity in these same regions, some of whom shared cultural heritage with other countries. As reconstruction ebbed, progressive traditionalism transformed once again into regional rationalism as the discussion and application of architectural regionalism transgressed the boundaries of the country of France into the colonies.

This evolution of regionalism was in both publications and built works that were featured in international exhibitions. Ideological regionalism was espoused in the work *La Maison des pays de France* and sought to inspire architects in the 1917 Exposition de l'architecture dans les provinces envahies as a way of halting any effort to rebuild the regions of France in a wholly modern aesthetic. Progressive traditionalism manifested in *Murs et toits pour les pays de chez-nous* as Letrosne presented hypothetical regional projects that matched the character of a particular region. This representation as well as the regional pavilions of the 1925 Exposition des arts décoratifs demonstrated the ease with which architects could design projects that were both modern and indicative of their regional context. These two contexts however, also revealed a growing tension between the regions and the centre as the national identity of France became more closely associated with the city of Paris and the support of regional culture became a strategy of appeasement for the French administration rather than an embracing of a cultural identity that could exist in tandem with a national identity. These surrounding influences led to a transition from progressive traditionalism to regional rationalism, which acknowledged

that regional architecture already solved many of the contextual problems faced by architects designing in the regions. By selecting certain regional characteristics to highlight in a work, regional rationalism embodied a blending of modern technology and design with regional traits, establishing a style of architecture that fluidly connected traditional regional works in both urban and rural areas to Neoclassical architecture and works that were more modern.

This transformation was the result of each region regaining influence over their individual architectural development rather than adapting to input from the central administration, whose focus was now on colonial development. The inclusion of Tunisian housing in *La Collection de l'art régional* as well as the emphasis placed on the colonies in the 1931 Exposition coloniale internationale de Paris and the 1937 Exposition Internationale des arts et des techniques dans la vie moderne further emphasizes the shift in national focus to *la plus grande France*. With this shift, regions were allowed more autonomy with regard to how to preserve their architectural heritage. The ability of regionalism to respond to the many aims of so many advocates allowed for it to exist in multiple forms by evolving as needed, not only during the period discussed in this thesis, but through the interwar period and into the rest of the twentieth century.

The development of French regionalism throughout the twentieth century could be a possible trajectory for this work, drawing parallels between French regionalism and other prominent forms of regionalism, particularly in the United States with the work of H.H. Harris and Lewis Mumford. Another avenue of inquiry, and perhaps the most compelling would be a comparative study of the development of regional architecture in France after the Great War and the development of the colonies after the initial act of colonization. The modes of representing colonial architecture in publications and exhibitions suggests certain commonalities with regional representation, as well as the system of the French administration projecting a vision of the regions or colonies from a distance into these areas. The importance of further research into French regionalism extends past the study of architectural history into other fields of study, from geography and history to colonial studies and cross-border studies, and is an informative addition to the knowledge of twentieth century France.

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