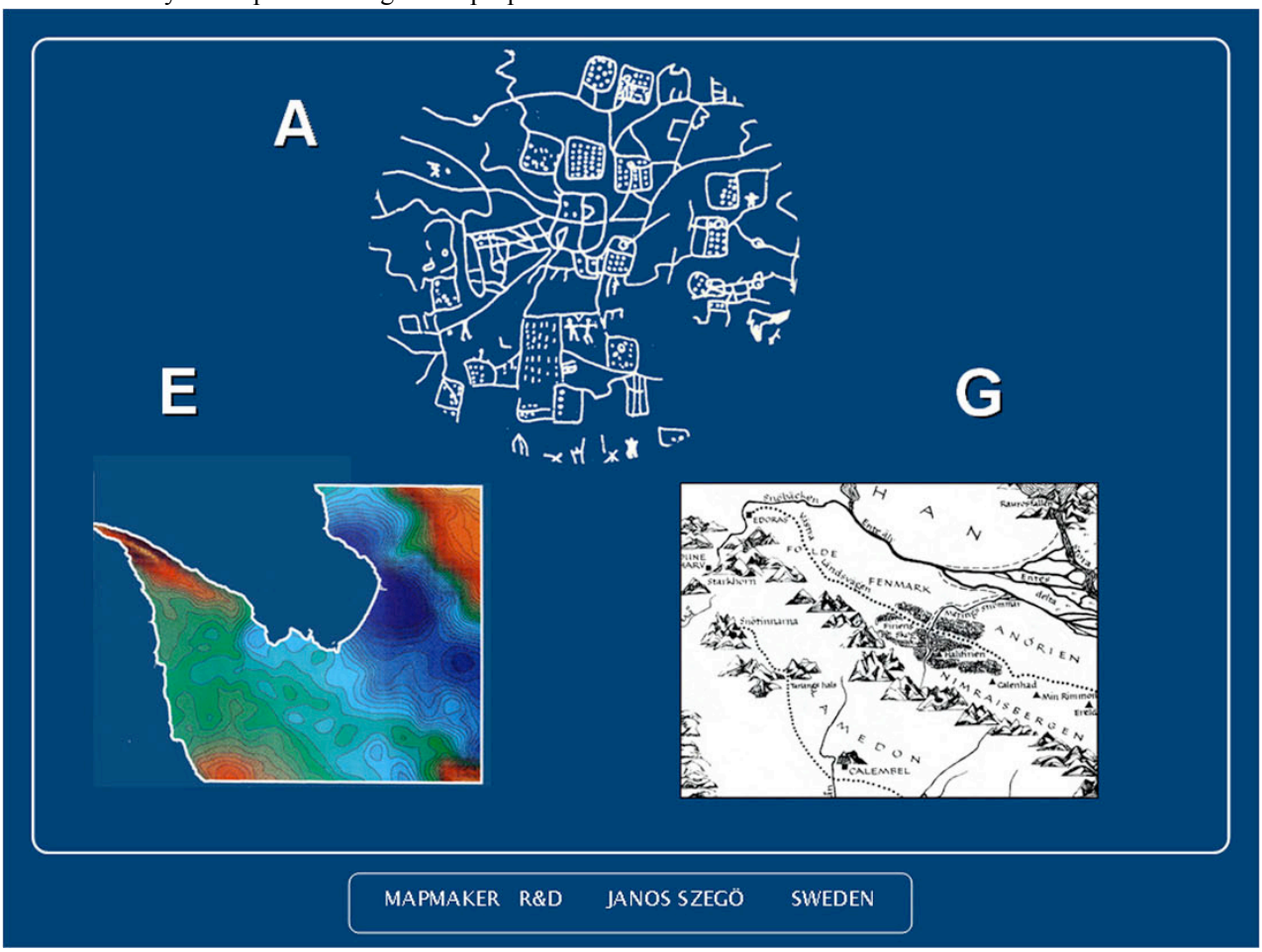
CO-285

CLASSIFYING, ANALYSING AND EXPERIENCING MAPS. A TENTATIVE HUMANISTIC APPROACH

SZEGö J.
Mapmaker R&D, KARLSKRONA, SWEDEN

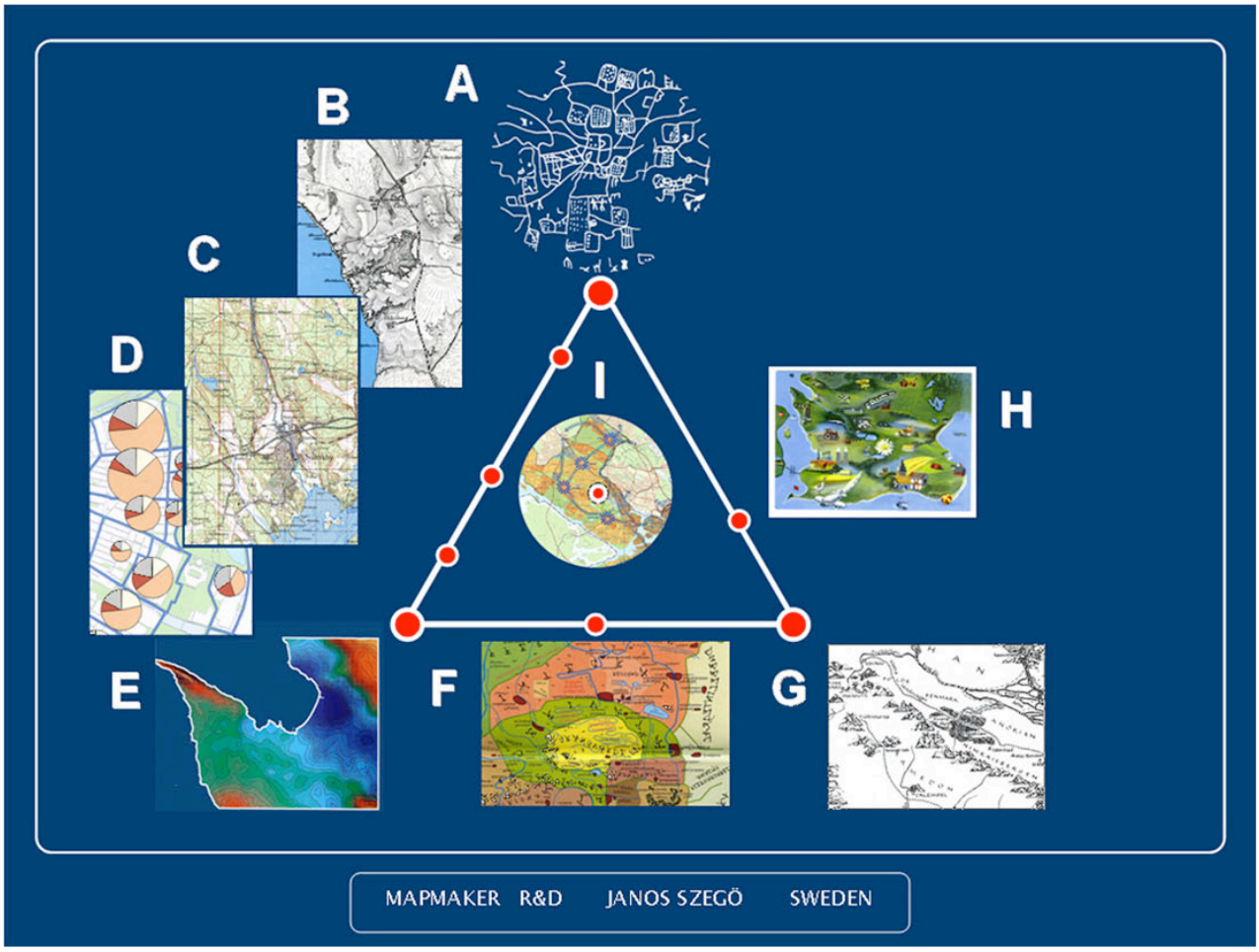
All maps emanate from three different sources
1. Visual observations
2. Abstractions based on measurements, calculations or abstract thinking
3. Human imaginations.

In some cases one of those sources enough to form the entire content of a map. In most cases, however, two or all three elements are present.
We can classify all maps according to the proportions between those three elements.



Only one of the components is present.

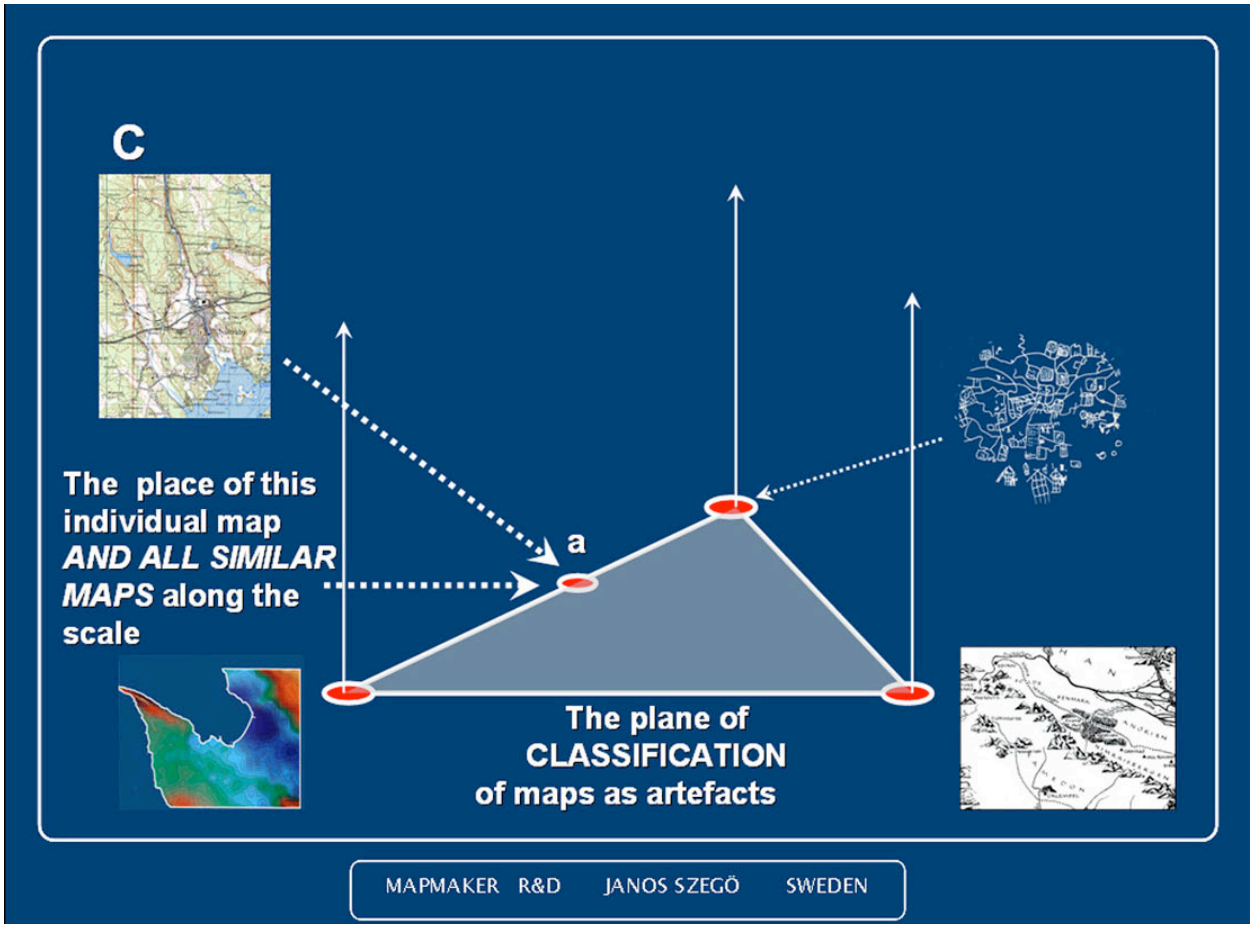
- Maps based entirely on visual observations. One example of Palaeolithic map is presented (Fig 1A). Hand drawn coastline observations belong to this category.
- Maps based entirely on measurement, calculations, statistical and similar data and abstract thinking. An example of contour maps is shown (Fig 1E). A new global grid net, mathematically calculated could be another example, as well as maps based on geophysical measurements.
- Maps based entirely on human imagination. The map of Middle Earth (J.R.R. Tolkien, Fig 1G) is used as example. A T-in-O map would perhaps be a better example.



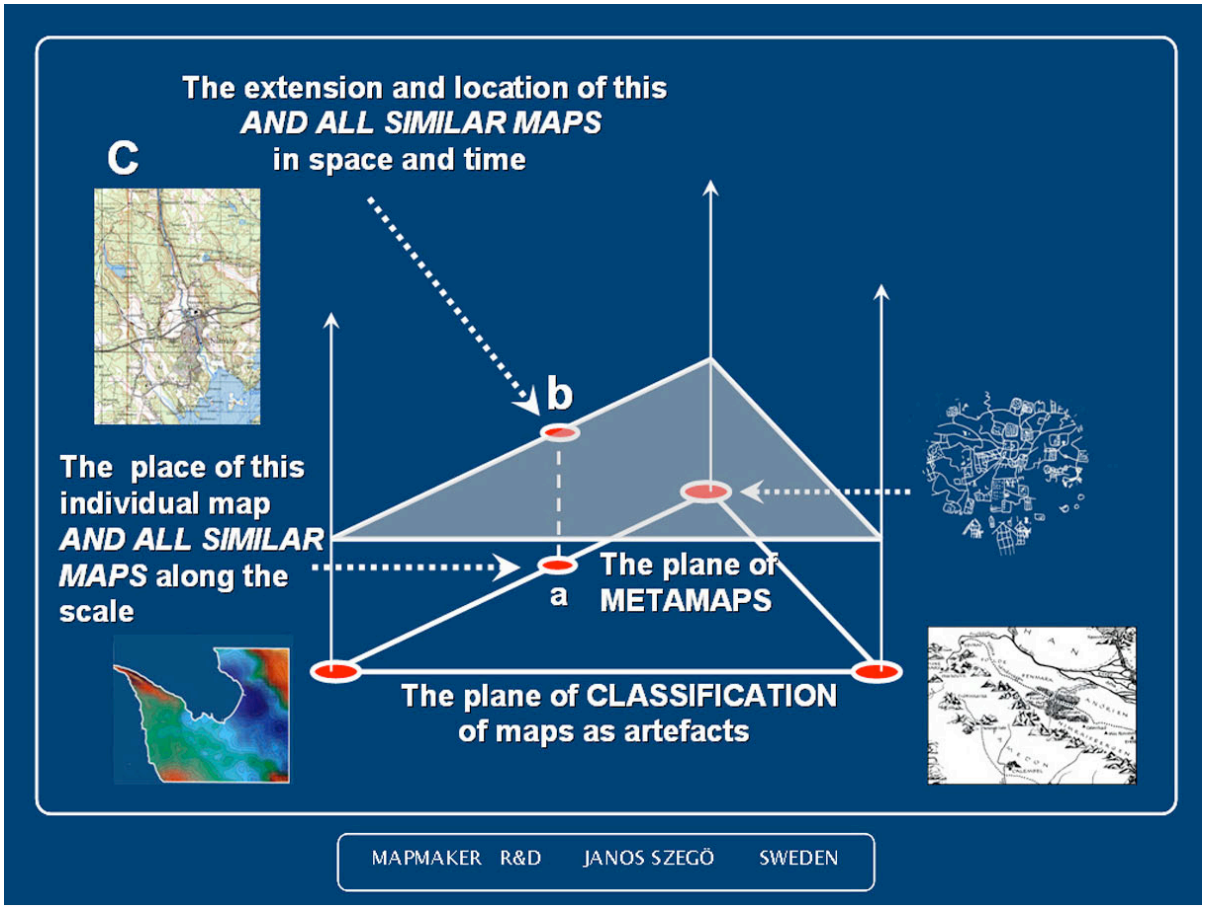
More than one component is present

Figure 2 shows the array of all possible combinations of maps according the three sources. Most maps would be found between Fig. 2A – 2E. These maps are based on visual observations including measurements instrument. Fig. 2B is a historical example of map tabling, while Fig. 2C is a conventional combination of aerial photo-based topographic map and advanced calculations. Fig. 2C is a thematic map combining statistical data and topographic elements. Fig 2F is a a map combining abstract thinking (mathematical notions) and pure fantasy (a non-existing geography based on pure mathematical notions). Fig 2H is pictorial postcard presenting an artistic image of an existing landscape. Fig. 2I is the only example here of maps containing all three components. This is a detail of a regional plan of traffic, containing not only visually and otherwise measured data but also product of imagination of the future. Many maps of the past could be placed inside the triangle diagram.

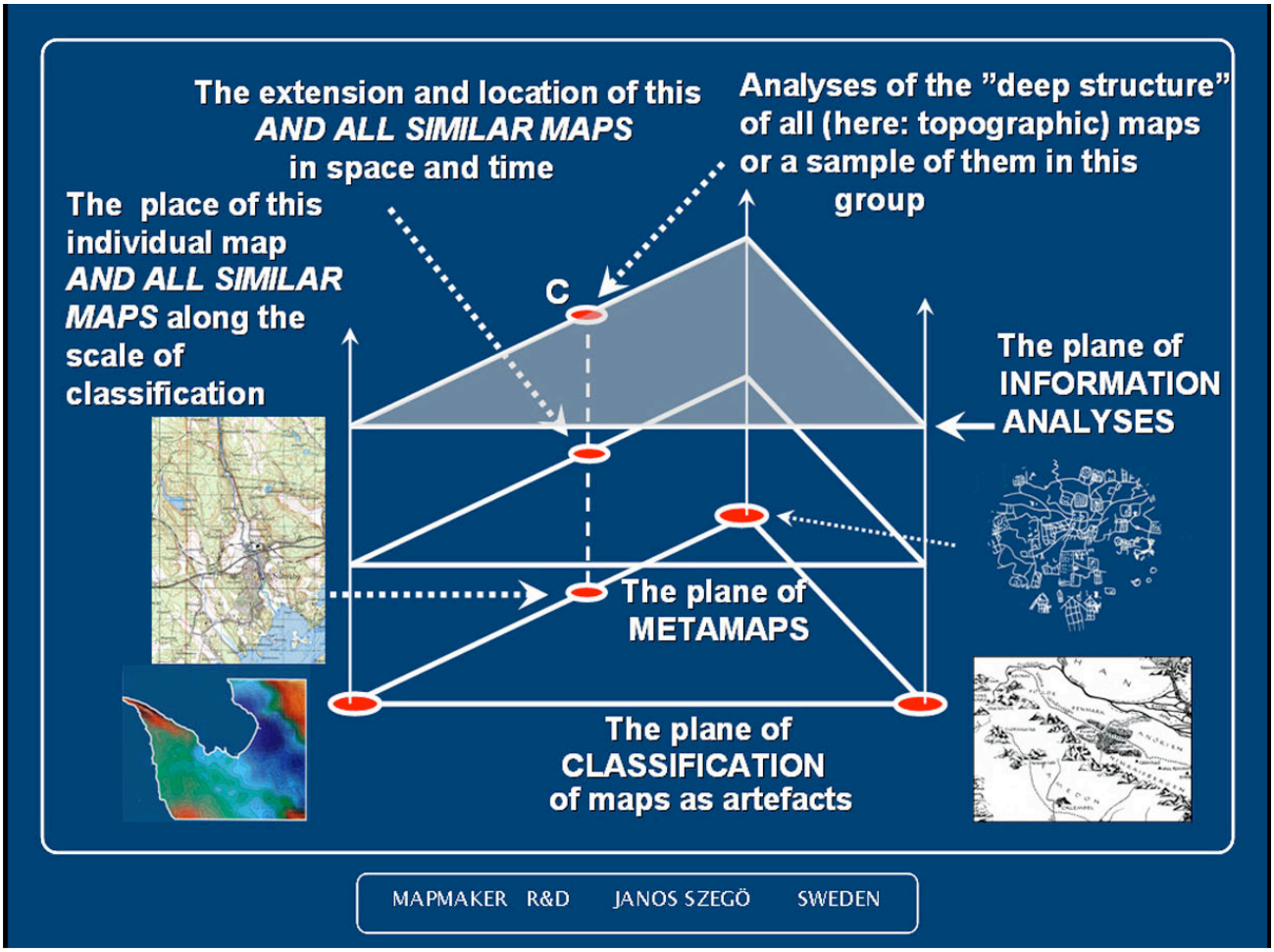
All maps can be classified by positioning in this triangle. A single position can, however contain more than one type of maps. When using the system, presented here is necessary to observe this fact.



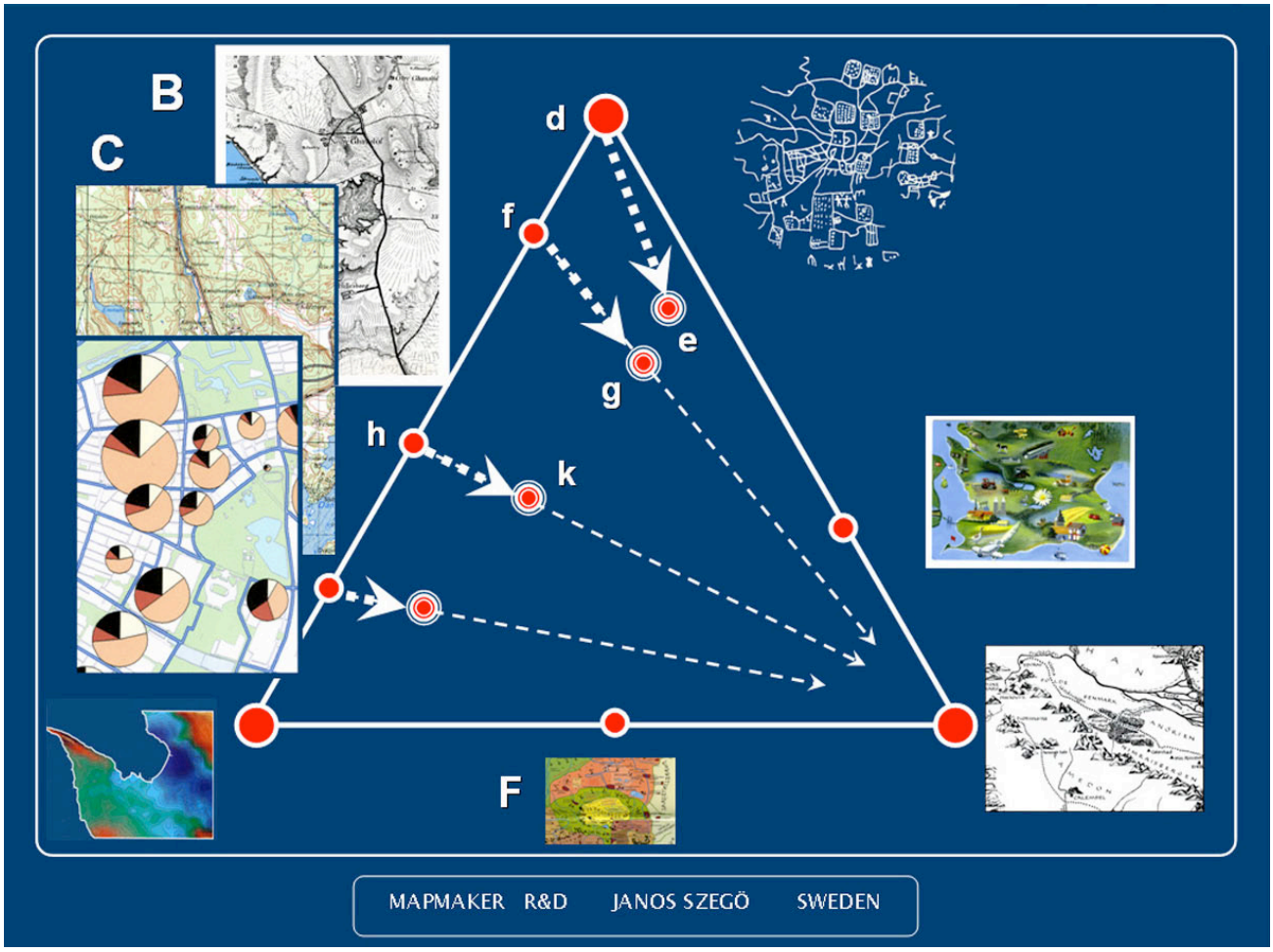
As an example for classification, based on the map content, a Swedish topographic map series is used Fig. 3. The location (point "a") represents however, not only this map series, but all maps with similar combinations of content.



In Fig.4 a new plane of triangle diagram is introduced: the plane of METAMAPS. In this diagram level every point represents metadata of all maps belonging to the analogue point in the level of "Classification". In this way Fig 4b represents all metadata (the area covered by maps, the sources of information in those maps, time for their creation, their quality etc) not only for this particular Swedish topographic map series but all similar maps.



The level "INFORMATION ANALYSES" contain all studies based on maps belonging a specific point in the plane of classification. All studies based on the content of maps represented point "a" is represented by point "c".



This triangle diagram represents experiencing maps. Even maps based on exclusively visual observations, different measurements and pure abstractions evoke fantasies, associations and feelings when we study them. The reader`s experience is attracted and "pulled" inside the diagram surface, where all the three components of maps are present. Reading maps involves also emotions. It is most probable that even the creators of those maps experience those feelings when creating them. (see the points "d" "f" and "h)

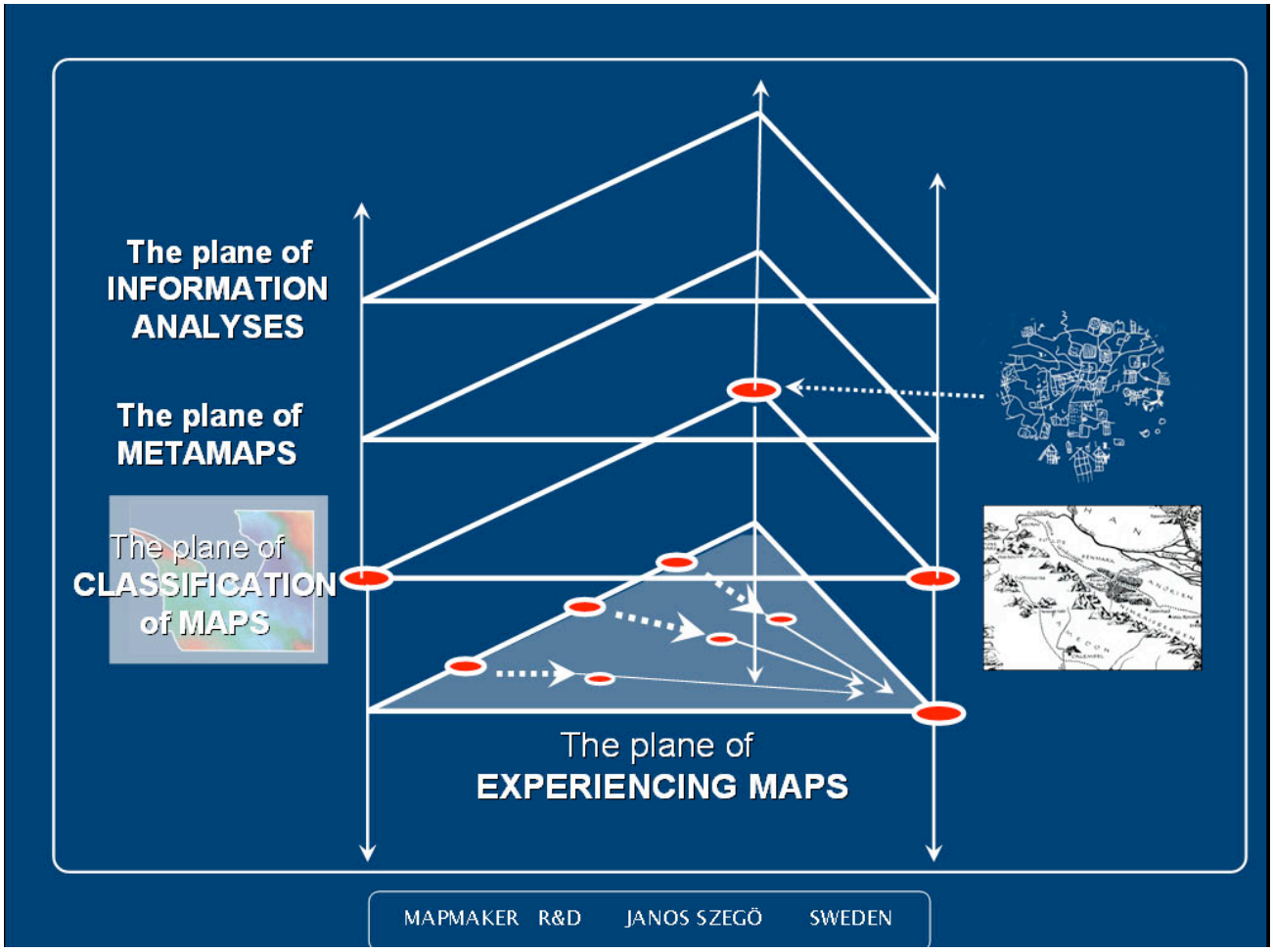
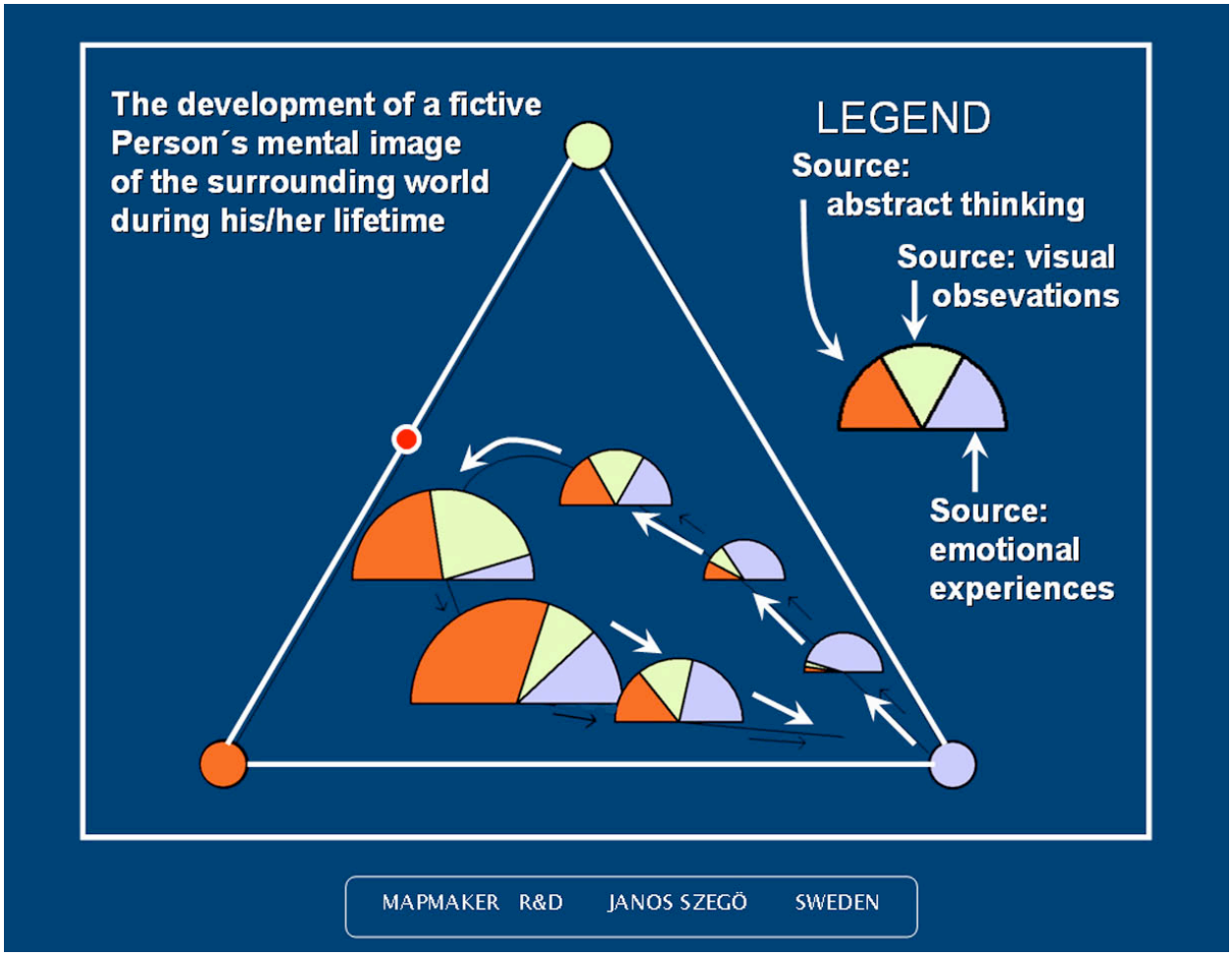


Figure 7 shows the plane of EXPERIENCING MAPS is shown as a part of the system. This plane is, however, placed bellow the level of classification. This emphasise the different direction of analyses dealing with the personal experiencing of maps in contrast the methodical analyses.


The development of a fictive
Person´s mental image
of the surrounding world
during his/her lifetime
LEGEND
Source:
abstract thinking
Source: visual
obsevations
Source:
emotional
experiences
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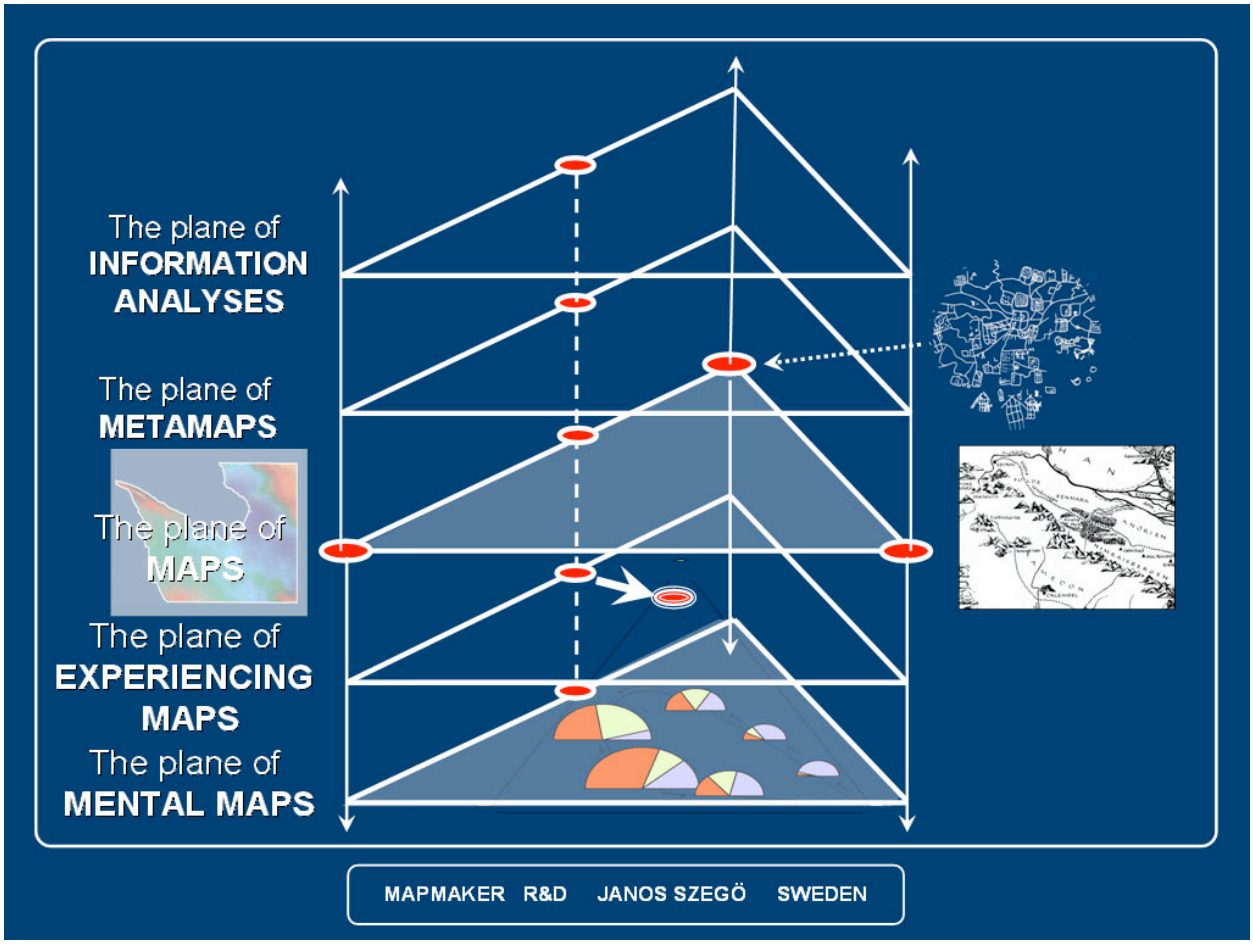

The triangle diagram is used here to represent not the experience of maps rather experiencing the surrounding world. The same components are used to describe the development of the personal image of the outside world – the personal mental map of human being. This is in close connection with the maps reflecting this world. The mental image is partly formed by maps through indirect visual information and maybe also affects the development of maps.

The presented system can hopefully contribute to create a general view of different cartographic products and studies based on them. It also emphasizes the real importance of the. roll of the human imagination.