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Fields of research: geographic names in an interdisciplinary context, geographic names as evidence of medieval history in the German-Slavic contact zone, political significance of settlement names in the German-Sorbian-Polish language context in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, minor place-names / microtoponyms.

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## BEFORE THE SPATIAL TURN: THE AREAL ASPECT IN 1980s GERMAN ONOMASTICS AND ITS APPLICATION IN CURRENT RESEARCH

Iki erdvinio posūkio: arealinis aspektas  
vokiečių onomastikoje XX amžiaus  
9 dešimtmetyje ir jo pritaikymas dabartiniuose  
moksliniuose tyrimuose

### ANNOTATION

Mapping isn't just mapping. Far from an easy matter, presenting and analysing place names on maps is theoretically and practically challenging. In onomastic research at Leipzig, the areal aspect was concluded decades ago to be one of three main aspects useful for investigating language contact. Accordingly, the geographical distribution of names needs to be examined within the broader linguistic, cultural and social context. The areal aspect thus seems to be a forerunner of the 'spatial turn'. 'Areal onomastics' also played a prominent role in Czech research.

Practical problems include ensuring a clear mapping design, the careful interpretation of mapping without undue conclusions, the definition of place-name areas, and the choice of a base map suitable for the aim of cartographic presentation. Given the objective of mapping place names as evidence of the historical settlement landscape, the base map

should also show the former landscape as precisely as possible. This means for example that contemporary objects like reservoirs and canals etc. should be erased from present-day topographic maps while features such as historical shorelines must be taken into account.

KEYWORDS: place names, settlement names, mapping, spatial turn, historical settlement landscape.

## ANOTACIJA

Žemėlapiai – tai ne tik žemėlapių sudarymas. Teoriškai ir praktiškai yra gana sudėtinga vietų vardus pažymėti žemėlapiuose ir juos analizuoti. Atliekant onomastinius tyrimus Leipgige, teritorinis aspektas prieš kelis dešimtmečius buvo numatytas vienu iš pagrindinių aspektų, privalomu tiriant kalbų kontaktus. Atitinkamai geografinis vardų išsidėstymas turi būti nagrinėjamas platesniame kalbiniame, kultūriniame ir socialiniame kontekste. Taigi atrodo, kad teritorinis aspektas yra „erdvinio posūkio“ pirmtakas. „Erdvinė (arealinė) onomastika“ taip pat atliko svarbų vaidmenį vykdant tyrimus Čekijoje.

Praktinių klausimų sprendimo sritis apima sudaromų žemėlapių aiškumo užtikrinimą, detalių jų paaiškinimą be nepagrįstų išvadų, vietovardžių sričių nustatymą ir galutinio žemėlapių, reprezentuojančio kartografinį, pateikimą. Siekiant atvaizduoti vietovardžius kaip istorinio gyvenvietės kraštovaizdžio liudininkus, pagrindiniame žemėlapyje taip pat turėtų būti kuo tiksliau parodytas buvęs kraštovaizdis. Pavyzdžiui, tai reikėtų, kad dabartinių objektų, tokių kaip vandens rezervuarai (telkiniai), kanalai ir pan., galėtų nelikti šių dienų topografiniuose žemėlapiuose, tačiau į tokias jų charakteristikas, kaip istorinės krantų linijos, atsižvelgti būtina.

ESMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: vietovardžiai, gyvenviečių vardai, žemėlapių sudarymas, erdvinis posūkis, istorinis gyvenamųjų vietų kraštovaizdis (landšaftas).

## INTRODUCTION

Mapping is not just putting signs on some base map. It is a sophisticated task requiring appropriate theoretical premises and practical care to achieve a convincing and reliable result.

As in all other schools of onomastics in various countries,<sup>1</sup> onomastics in Leipzig also developed a theoretical and methodological basis. Regarding language (especially German-Slavic) contact, three aspects were identified which had to be taken into account *together* in all studies:<sup>2</sup>

The aspect of language levels,

The sociolinguistic aspect,

The areal aspect.

This theory also formed a forward-looking maxim of practical onomastic work. The aspect of language levels structured the evaluation section of toponymic dictionaries,<sup>3</sup> where the phonetics / phonology, morphology or typology and lexicology or semantics of the names examined were comprehensively set out. Their significance is apparent from the fact that they did not follow the dictionary (as would have been expected given the logic of the process applied) but preceded it. The consideration of language levels and the evaluation of names in terms of settlement history were what constituted onomastics itself, the dictionary of names ‘merely’ providing the basis for work. Admittedly, this basis was compiled with a great deal of effort, and was regarded by many, especially non-linguistic users, as the main result of onomastic research.

The sociolinguistic aspect considered the “realization of an onym belonging to the code in sociolects and idiolects and the corresponding classification of name variants”<sup>4</sup> (Eichler 1981: 10), i.e. the relations between names and social structures. It also played an important role in onomastic research. Related studies tended to be contained in numerous essays rather than in separate monographs.<sup>5</sup> Corresponding explanations can also be found in the relevant dictionaries of names (e.g. Walther 1971 [DS 26]: 47–57; Hengst 2003 [DS 39]: 192–207).

These two factors were augmented by the areal aspect. The areal aspects summarized two opposing but complementary perspectives: the fixation of onyms in the area and the formation of areas (Eichler 1981: 10). It addressed both the question of how areas are constituted from individual names (from the individual to the whole) and the position adopted by individual names in the areas (from the whole to the individual). Alongside grammatical and linguistic perspectives, great importance was attached to the location of onymy on the Earth’s surface. (Remarkably, history is not mentioned in these three aspects, despite being virtually inherent to diachronic research). In principle this was not new, for since the beginnings of scholarly or, from today’s point of view, quasi-scholarly work on proper names, mapping them has been one of the fundamental activities. This is borne out by the timeless quotation frequently cited in research literature: “We attach particular importance to maps. Their

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<sup>3</sup> See the overview in Walther (2004: 115–123) and since then Eichler & Zschieschang 2011. The place-name dictionaries of the *Brandenburgisches Namenbuch* (BNB) have a similar structure. By contrast, a different structure is found in Hengst 2003; Eichler & Walther 2010 and Foster & Willich 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Originally in German: „Realisierung eines dem Kode angehörigen Onyms in Soziolekten und Idiolekten und die entsprechende Einordnung von Namenvarianten“.

<sup>5</sup> See for example *Namenforschung heute*: 42–50 as well as ‘Der Name in Sprache und Gesellschaft’ containing several articles, Walther 1973 [DS 27].

demonstrative nature can say more than the talk of many pages”<sup>6</sup> (Frings 1957: 9; cited by Udolph 1979: 12, note 1; Obst 2001: 107, note 1). This declaration was already based on decades of experience when it was coined and thus reflects the onomastic research context spanning an entire century.

Are humans spiritually conditioned to devote themselves to cartographic abstractions of their surroundings? Some researchers enthusiastically stress in the titles of their essays that coloured maps have been included. Mind you, there’s nothing wrong with this, especially when we remember that apparently it doesn’t even occur to some researchers to use maps to depict complex geographical circumstances.

Note that the third aspect mentioned was called ‘areal’ rather than spatial, geographical or cartographic. Even if maps from times past often appear somewhat primitive due to the limited technical possibilities when they were made, the innovation of our ancestors – not only in Leipzig – should not be underestimated. As well as being dictionary-writers with an interest in etymology, they also left us a treasure trove of conceptual, methodological and theoretical considerations which is too precious to be ignored by posterity. Admittedly, penetrating this mountain of reading and relating it to current research will require substantial effort.

In a way, the areal aspect anticipated what the spatial turn of historiography later represented (Lübke 2018: 327–328, including with explicit reference to onomastics in Leipzig) – the fact that names aren’t simply mapped. Instead, it examined how the properties and specifics of onymy became spatially significant – not abstractly, but in connection with human inhabitants, their language and their socialization. Apart from describing the area occupied by names formed with a certain suffix, it is essential to at least attempt to explain why this area is constituted in this way as well as to identify the other constituents and influences involved. This is closely related to dialectology,<sup>7</sup> in which, in addition to mapping certain linguistic developments, linguistic areas are identified. In the 1990s, inspired above all by the monumental *Hessian Flurnamenatlas* (Ramge 1987), ‘name spaces’ were a very popular topic of research.

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<sup>6</sup> Originally in German: „Den Karten messen wir besondere Bedeutung zu. Ihre plastische Art vermag mehr zu sagen als das Gerede vieler Seiten“.

<sup>7</sup> Šrámek 2007: 292–301. For the sake of clarity, the titles of the individual essays in this volume and the original places of publication have been omitted. The corresponding information can easily be found in the publication cited.

Fortunately, it was decided to use the term ‘areas’ for these geographical perspectives rather than spaces or districts. It would certainly be worthwhile to assert *area* over *space* in the terminology.

The areal aspect also played an important role in Czech onomastics. In this respect, German and Czech onomastic research proved to be mutually inspirational. Above all, Rudolf Šrámek repeatedly emphasized the central, systemic importance of mapping names in their linguistic and social contextualization (cf. Šrámek 2007: 292–294, 300, 305–324).

Areality is thus one of the necessary prerequisites for the realization of language and at the same time one of the fundamental characteristics (signs) determining the existence of language, even though areality itself is not inherently linguistic. The areality of a linguistic phenomenon only becomes linguistically relevant as a result of the process of communication between people. It can be said that language is also closely linked by means of its areality (‘geographical space’) to the types of social, geographical, economic and cultural milieu that can also be classified as a symptom of social life, including in geographical terms, i.e. through their areality. And this is why the areas of realities, objects and terms form the conditions and the fundamental extra-linguistic network for the areas of their linguistic expression or their naming (Šrámek 2007: 292).<sup>8</sup>

Despite its complexity, this statement expresses the actual goal: that name areas do not exist in isolation but are integrated into the sum of human culture in the broadest sense. Such a comprehensive view is also the key requirement for onomastics to be able to participate in interdisciplinary discourses (Šrámek 2007: 212).

The result of this theoretical basis is that it’s not enough to simply enter things on some map or other. Indeed, ‘casual’ mapping is almost dangerous. This article addresses some of the related problems.

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<sup>8</sup> Originally in German: “Die Arealität bildet also eine der notwendigen Voraussetzungen der Realisierung der Sprache und gleichzeitig eines der grundlegenden Merkmale (Anzeichen), die die Existenz der Sprache bedingen, obgleich die Arealität an und für sich nicht inhärent linguistisch ist. Die Arealität einer sprachlichen Erscheinung wird linguistisch relevant erst als Ergebnis des Kommunikationsprozesses zwischen den Menschen. Man kann sagen, dass die Sprache auch mittels der Arealität (der geographischen Räumlichkeit) eng mit den Typen des sozialen, geographischen, ökonomischen und kulturellen Milieus verknüpft ist, die als ein Symptom des gesellschaftlichen Lebens ebenfalls klassifizierbar sind, u.a. in geographischer Hinsicht, d.h. durch ihre Arealität. Und deshalb bilden die Areale der Realien, der Objekte und Begriffe die Bedingungen und das grundlegende außersprachliche Netz für die Areale ihres sprachlichen Ausdrucks oder ihrer Benennung”.

**Problem 1: Representation on maps**

One year after the Berlin Wall was built, a short essay was published by one of East Germany's leading geographers (see Ogrissek 1983) entitled 'Basic Methodological-Cartographic Requirements for Toponomastic Maps' (Ogrissek 1962). It explained the basic principles for making cartographic representation meaningful and comprehensible. They included ensuring that the content of maps was not overloaded, and that the objects shown were clearly distinguishable. This essay was still cited decades later and there were calls for additional work to be done in this field (e.g. Šrámek 2007: 324). It's easy to understand this demand when confronted by some name distribution maps, many of which contain symbols and areas which are difficult to distinguish and, to make matters worse, try to show far too many objects. Even the most common visual impairment is ignored with red and green – two colours which some people cannot tell apart – often being contrasted. But this is something which deserves a topic of its own. What's more, the author of this paper does not claim that his own maps are perfect!

**Problem 2: Interpret with care**

No matter how well a map has been drawn, it must be viewed clear-headedly in order to resist the suggestion of the mapped image. Geographers, too, see in GIS-generated products with their apparent precision and impressive coloration the risk of distance determinism (originally in German: "Distanzdeterminismus") fostered by geographic information systems and their visualizations (Tschaschel, Wild, Lentz 2007: 5). This tempts the viewer to reach conclusions which are not actually indicated by the mapped material. For example, measurable precision is often implied because the data and the map originate from a computer, whereas in reality there is only a vague significance.

This applies for instance to distinguishing between older name types and more recent ones. Their temporal productivity can best be described by the Gaussian bell curve because it is in the nature of many characteristics that they assume this shape of distribution (Quatember 2011: 103). According to this normal distribution, a name type is initially used only sporadically, but later on employed with increasing frequency. At some point it reaches the maximum of its productivity, which then decreases again and gradually disappears. Productivity curves of different name types could be visualized by means of box plot graphs commonly used in statistics. However, this is purely theoretical since times when for example settlements were named in central Europe are usually unknown to us, and so corresponding graphs cannot be plotted. Even so, box plot graphs (Fig. 1) are extremely vivid when it comes to modelling chronological differentiation between different types of names.

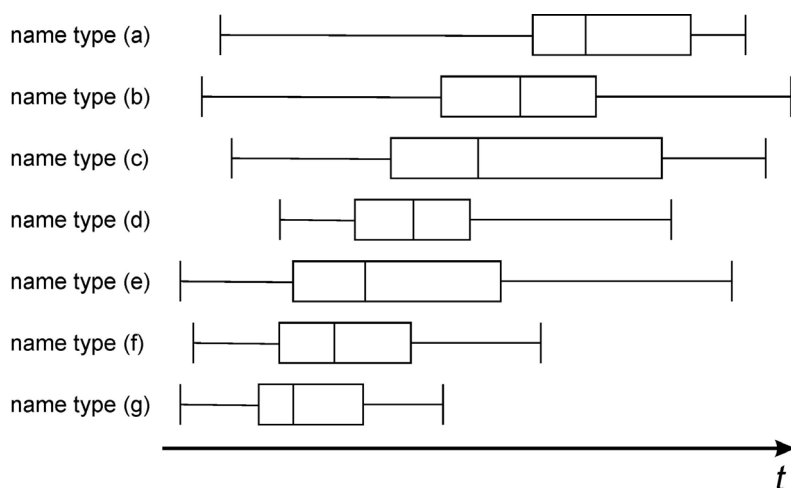


Fig. 1: Statistical model of the chronology of place-name types

It cannot be assumed that the onyms belonging to earlier types of names are all older than more recent ones. Instead, productivity curves must be assumed to overlap. This means that although the productivity periods are concentrated in different times, clear distinction is impossible and only trends can be identified. On a map, however, two distinct groups formed by two clouds of accurately situated points are shown by two different symbols. However, they can only be interpreted – and this is ultimately what the scientific approach is all about – together with their methodological background. The point cloud of older name types is not per se the older settlement area, but merely indicates it. The map is therefore only a more or less pale reflection of a more complex situation which once existed. And this means that it is essential to avoid careless interpretations of the geometric patterns of distributions of names.

### Problem 3: Name areas

In this context, we need to ask how a name area is defined. Given prevailing practice, the answer can only be: ‘by eye’. As a rule, point clouds are visually examined and certain agglomerations and concentrations are declared areas. Bearing this in mind, it would be worth exploring whether analytical instruments could be developed to define areas using mathematical methods. The operative word here is ‘whether’, because only relics of the former onymy are considered. The gaps, the lost names which we don’t know could falsify the results (through the above-mentioned distance determinism) without us being able to gauge the degree of falsification.

Nevertheless, it's worth considering whether simple buffers around each point on the map would be helpful when defining settlement areas. Since each rural settlement has a certain acreage of usable land in its surroundings, it could be roughly modelled with a buffer with a radius of 500, 1,000 or 2,000 metres reminiscent of von Thünen's concentric rings. A settlement area could then be deemed to exist when these buffers meet or overlap, forming a continuous area. Another possibility would be to define maximum distances between locations indicated by points and thus to represent the area as a network of connecting lines up to a certain length between locations. Archaeologists have already developed corresponding models of the spatial structures of early settlements (see for example Łosiński 1982: 168–176, Figs. 52–57; partly reproduced by Gringmuth-Dallmer 1996: 10; Volkmann 2009: 228–229, 241 and 243), which could also be used in an interdisciplinary sense for toponymy.

#### **Problem 4: Base maps**

It's also important to choose the right base map. Often, for example, items from the early Middle Ages are thoughtlessly presented alongside, say, the present-day coastline of the North Sea, the motorway network, or abandoned mining pits. In the latter case, when these opencast mines have since been flooded, this may result in some of the mapped symbols being shown in water. Accordingly, historical villages and so on whose names have been mapped appear to have been located on islands or floating platforms. The base map on which names are presented must therefore match the information shown, something that ultimately applies to all onomastic mapping. Bear in mind that the mapping of names can be based on two different premises:

- To show where these names are located so that the viewer can correlate them with their current spatial perception, or
- To relate the names to the historical landscape in order to show how the name landscape was influenced by the topography and integrated into it at the time of its creation.

Taking the former approach, for example on overview maps of place-name dictionaries, it is not ridiculous if some places are floating on water. In fact, this may even be highly relevant if a settlement is described in the text as, say, 'deserted' or 'devastated'. It is obvious that, seen in their historical context, settlement names did not originally float on water.

On the other hand, reference to the historical landscape is important for the many linguistic and historical analyses. Depicting a historical landscape on a base map, however, requires a lot of work and also compromises. Suitable base maps aren't always available. Even the colourful LIDAR scans (see for example Westphalen, Zschieschang 2015: 65, Fig. 5) so popular of late show not only

the (to a certain extent) timeless terrain relief, but also details of the current surface of the Earth such as buildings and roads, etc. If this disrupts or distorts the depiction of the historical landscape, manual correction will be necessary.

Allow me to illustrate this problem with a practical example in which toponymy was to be classified within the historical landscape in connection with written sources and archaeological finds (Altmann 2012; Altmann 2017; Zschieschang 2017). For one thing, the opencast lignite mines had to be erased. Moreover, the size and position of the Mansfeld lakes had to be at least approximately adjusted to their medieval state (Fig. 2a). Whereas nowadays only Süßer See ('Sweet Lake') remains, its counterpart known as Salziger See ('Salty Lake') also existed until the industrial age before disappearing in the late nineteenth century when the water seeped into the ground due to mining activities. Although no disaster, this was certainly an impressive phenomenon (Ule 1994 [1895]). Furthermore, because both lakes had already shrunk in previous centuries, shorelines recorded as long ago as possible had to be entered. What's more, there was once also a third lake near Eisleben known as Fauler See ('Rotten Lake').

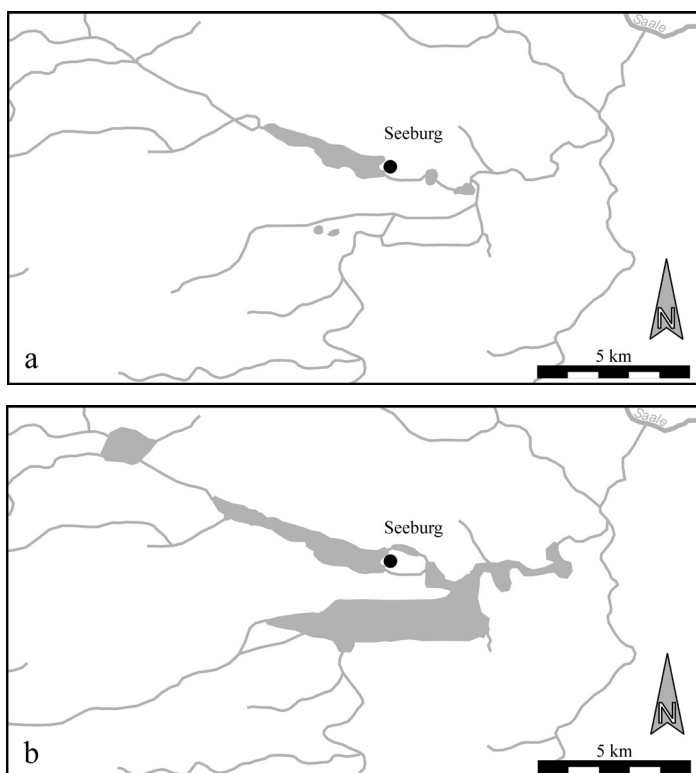


Fig. 2: The Mansfeld lakes, present (a) and medieval (b) state

The shorelines therefore needed to be altered,<sup>9</sup> to a certain extent by eye (Fig. 2b). Of course, not all changes could be reconstructed in detail owing to the lack of sources. Nonetheless, the natural landscape of the Early Middle Ages could at least be approximately shown. It can be seen that the above-mentioned lakes had a much more significant impact on the landscape (as they were larger and there were more of them) than today. Especially to the north, they formed an extensive barrier. Although dwelling on details of the historical toponymy and topography of the region would exceed the scope of this paper (see Zschieschang 2017), it should be mentioned that the name *Seeburg* ('Lake Castle') was prompted by a far more prominent location than that indicated by today's topography at the southern end of Süsser See. It turns out that in the past, Seeburg was surrounded in several directions by Süsser See, its former tributaries, and Salziger See.

This is by no means a rare exception. Some topographical changes even affected entire regions. For example, in historical times, large parts of northern Germany were affected by massive environmental changes. The development of the German lands in the High Middle Ages involving extensive deforestation resulted in large-scale soil erosion. The material washed away accumulated downstream, so much so that over time the north German glacial valleys were filled up with alluvial deposits several metres thick. Consequently, the name landscape from the Early Middle Ages was literally buried, with only relics remaining. In this situation, mappings of Slavic settlement names cannot simply be regarded as reflections of early-medieval settlement landscapes. Instead, the distribution of alluvial loam and the loss of settlements and their names must also be taken into account (Zschieschang, in print).

The study of field names can uncover onymic relics of earlier settlements. On the one hand, there are direct references such as *Wörplitzen*, *Wörblichen* and *Werbitzen*. This example is only documented in written records from the nineteenth century using the different forms listed. It can only be a patronymic place name \**Viřb\_l'*+*ici* based on a personal name \**Viřb\_l'* (Zschieschang 2003: 71, 327; Zschieschang 2020: 336). Then there are indirect references in the form of names based on local features such as *Hofstätten*, *Altes Dorf* and *Wüste Mark*. References like these make the highly labour-intensive examination of place names enormously important. Collaboration with archaeologists, geologists and sedimentologists in order to assess the extent and age of alluvial deposits would be even more important (see for example Brachmann 1979: 81–82; Schulz

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<sup>9</sup> This was done based on the information in Neuß (1995: 56–58) as well as Krümming (1933) with even larger areas of water, which were not yet considered in Zschieschang (2017).

1998; Schulz 2002; Tinapp, Meller, Baumhauer 2008; Kaiser et al. 2012; Laurat 2018; Zscheschang 2020: 333–335).

The effects of mill damming were no less significant. The construction of water mills in the High Middle Ages along with the necessary dams with heights of perhaps one or two metres sometimes had serious consequences in the lowlands with whole regions being flooded or waterlogged. For instance, “globally one of the largest anthropogenic dam-lake structures in historic times” (Kaiser et al. 2018: 253) was built on the River Havel in the Brandenburg region.

Failure to take account of such changes in the landscape can significantly distort analyses of the geographical distribution of place names. This is exacerbated if only the names of settlements still in existence are examined while ignoring evidence of villages that no longer exist. This shows how important it is to view the mapped toponymy in a far-reaching context, including the natural environment.

## CONCLUSION

The examples in this paper are intended to illustrate that when mapping geographical names, it is not enough to use some mapping tool or other and then interpret the distribution patterns geometrically. When analysing and interpreting mappings, care must be taken when choosing the base map and the presentation format as well as verifying the sources so that the results obtained are truly valid and not misinterpreted. Furthermore, beyond practical work certain theoretical foundations have to be considered, ideally in an interdisciplinary perspective. Especially in view of recent technical developments making the production of maps easier than ever, it's important to ensure that research does not lag behind the long-established findings of ‘areal onomastics’ (Šrámek 2007: 36–37) cited at the beginning.

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## Iki erdvinio posūkio: arealinis aspektas vokiečių onomastikoje XX amžiaus 9 dešimtmetyje ir jo pritaikymas dabartiniuose moksliniuose tyrimuose

### SANTRAUKA

Žemėlapių sudarymas yra ne tik ženklų žymėjimas tam tikruose žemėlapiuose. Tai sudėtinga užduotis, reikalaujanti tinkamų teorinių nuostatų ir praktinių įgūdžių tam, kad būtų pasiektas įtikinantis ir patikimas rezultatas.

Kaip ir visose kitose onomastikos mokyklose visame pasaulyje, Leipcigo onomastikos mokykla taip pat išstobulino teorinius ir metodinius pagrindus. Jau prieš kelis dešimtmečius siekiant nustatyti kalbų (ypač vokiečių ir slavų) kontaktus buvo numatyti trys aspektai, į kuriuos reikėjo atsižvelgti visuose tyrimuose: 1) kalbos lygmenų aspektas, 2) sociolingvistinis aspektas, 3) teritorinis aspektas. Būtent pastarasis ir sprendė klausimą, kaip teritorijos sudaromos iš atskirų vardų (nuo paskirų iki vardų visumos), ir iš kitos pozicijos – kokie paskiri vardai tose vietovėse (nuo vardų visumos prie paskirų vardų). Iš esmės tai nebuvo naujiena. Arealinė onomastika taip pat vaidino svarbų vaidmenį atliekant tyrimus Čekijoje. Nuo pat pradžių, žvelgiant iš mokslinių, ar šiandienos požiūriu, pusiau mokslinių, pozicijų, tikrinių žodžių tyrimų vienas iš pagrindinių tikslų yra vietų vardų žemėlapių sudarymas.

Tam tikra prasme teritorinis aspektas numatė tai, ką vėliau patvirtino istoriografijos erdvinis posūkis – vietų vardai nėra paprasčiausiai pažymimi žemėlapiuose. Be to, šiuo aspektu buvo tiriama, kaip onimijos ypatybės ir specifika tapo erdviškai reikšmingos – ne

abstrakčiai, bet santykdamos su žmonių gyvenamosiomis vietomis, jų kalba ir socialinėmis reikmėmis.

Greta vietovardžių, sudarytų su tam tikra priesaga, teritorijos apibūdinimo, būtina bent pabandyti paaiškinti, kodėl šios teritorijos vietovardžiai taip sudaromi, taip pat nustatyti veiksnius ir aprašyti kitas teritorijos sudedamąsias dalis.

Taigi vietovardžių teritorijos neegzistuoja atskirai, jos yra integruotos į žmogiškąją kultūrą plačiąja prasme. Toks platus požiūris taip pat yra pagrindinis reikalavimas onomastikai, siekiant ją įtraukti į tarpsritinius diskursus. Šių teorinių nuostatų pamatu parodoma, kad nepakanka tiesiog nurodyti objektus viename ar kitame žemėlapyje. Iš tiesų „atsitiktinis“ žemėlapių sudarymas yra netgi pavojingas. Šiame straipsnyje ir aptariamos kai kurios su tuo susijusios problemos. Praktinis problemų sprendimas užtikrina aiškų žemėlapių sudarymą (1 problema šiame straipsnyje), tikslų žemėlapių paaiškinimą be nepagrįstų išvadų (2 problema), vietovardžių sričių nustatymą (3 problema) ir galutinio žemėlapių, reprezentuojančio kartografinį, pateikimą (4 problema). Nesvarbu, kaip gerai bebūtų sudarytas žemėlapis, į jį reikia žvelgti objektyviai tam, kad būtų įmanoma atsispirti siūlomam suplanuotam (netikram) vaizdui. Pavyzdžiui, erdvinių išmatavimų tikslumas dažnai yra numanomas, nes duomenys ir žemėlapis yra paimti iš kompiuterio, tuo tarpu tikrovė turi tik neaiškius parametrus. Tai, pavyzdžiui, taikoma atskiriant ankstesnių ir naujesnių vietų vardų tipus.

Paprastai taškinių duomenų sritys yra tikrinamos vizualiai, o tam tikros aglomeracijos ir koncentracijos yra deklaruojamos teritorijos. Turint tai omenyje, vertėtų išsiaiškinti, ar nebūtų galima sukurti analitinius instrumentus, apibrėžiančius teritorijas matematiniais metodais. Taip pat svarbu pasirinkti tinkamą atraminį žemėlapi. Pavyzdžiui, dažnai, ankstyvųjų viduramžių objektai yra neapgalvotai pateikiami šalia, tarkime, šiaurės Šiaurės jūros pakrantės, greitkelių tinklo ar apleistų kasyklų. Paprastai gyvenviečių vardų žemėlapiai gali būti grindžiami dviem skirtingomis nuostatomis: (1) parodyti, kur yra šie vardai, kad vartotojas galėtų juos susieti su esama padėtimi erdvėje arba (2) susieti vardus su istoriniu kraštovaizdžiu, siekiant parodyti, kaip kraštovaizdžio vardynas buvo paveiktas topografijos ir integruotas į ją sukūrimo metu. Atsižvelgiant į tikslą pažymėti vietovardžius kaip istorinio gyvenvietės kraštovaizdžio liudininkus žemėlapyje, turėtų būti kuo tiksliau atspindėtas ir buvęs kraštovaizdis. Pavyzdžiui, tai reiškia, kad dabartiniai objektai, tokie kaip vandens rezervuarai (telkiniai), kanalai ir pan. galėtų ir nepatekti į šių dienų topografinius žemėlapius, atsižvelgiant į tokias jų charakteristikas, kaip istorinės krantų linijos. Pastarasis aspektas yra būtinas, nes vykę istoriniai topografiniai pokyčiai paveikė ištisus regionus. Neatsižvelgus į kraštovaizdžio pokyčius, vietovardžių geografinio išsidėstymo duomenys gali būti iškraipomi. Dar blogiau, jei yra tiriami tik vis dar egzistuojančių gyvenviečių vardai, ignoruojant įrodymus apie nebeegzistuojančias gyvenvietes. Ypač tiksliai atskleisti ankstesnių gyvenviečių oniminius reliktus galima tiriant laukų vardus.

Šiame straipsnyje pateikti pavyzdžiai yra skirti iliustruoti, kaip kartografuojant geografinius vardus nepakanka vien tik naudoti tam tikrus žemėlapių sudarymo įrankius, o po to interpretuoti vietovardžių išsidėstymą geometriškai. Analizuojant ir aiškinant vietovardžių pateikimą žemėlapiuose, reikia atsargiai pasirinkti pagrindinį žemėlapi ir pateikimo formatą,

taip pat patikrinti šaltinius, kad gauti rezultatai būtų teisingi ir nebūtų klaidingai interpretuojami. Ypač atsižvelgiant į naujausius technologinius pokyčius, kurie palengvina žemėlapių sudarymą kaip niekad anksčiau, svarbu užtikrinti, kad tyrimai neatsilikėtų nuo seniai žinomų arealinės (teritorinės) onomastikos išvadų.

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