

ERRORS ON METEOROLOGICAL MAPS

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Weather forecasts play an increasing role in the modern applied meteorology, although the quality of the maps - on which the expected weather is indicated - is still poor. The reason is that meteorological cartography is an interdisciplinary area, and unfortunately meteorologists and cartographers do still pay very little attention to this matter. We can find forecasts with maps in different areas of the media (written press, television, Internet), but - unfortunately - lots of them are erroneous. I try to demonstrate some mistakes from all over the world. I start with Hungarian and European meteorological maps, and I finish with maps of U.S. In the age of computers, it takes just five minutes to correct the mistakes on a map, so the meteorological cartography has to correct the errors and must follow the geographical and political changes with new and more precise maps.

Weather forecasts play an increasing role in the modern applied meteorology, although the quality of the maps - on which the expected weather is indicated - is still poor. The reason is that meteorological cartography is an interdisciplinary area, and unfortunately meteorologists and cartographers do still pay very little attention to this matter. The German geographer Alexander von Humboldt created the first isothermic map in 1817. The first daily weather map was prepared at the Great Exhibition in 1851 in London, the first Hungarian weather map was presented in 1880. We can find forecasts with maps in different areas of the media (written press, television, Internet), but - unfortunately - lots of them are erroneous. I demonstrate some mistakes from all over the world. I start with Hungarian and European meteorological maps, and I finish with maps of U.S.

National Meteorological Office can be expected to use perfect maps for their weather forecast, in accordance with this they make vast number of mistakes. Day by day their maps are slightly and slightly erroneous. There are not only political geographical (changing borders) and natural geographical (rising mountains) mistakes but graphic errors (over generalizing) can be found on the weather reports as well. The most horrible that they know this mistakes - because I did a presentation about it last year in their Office -, and they do nothing.

I found the most number and most various mistakes on the maps of The Times (made by Met Office) with the most humorous sentence: The best of The Times and The Sunday Times. We see now never exist borders, natural condition of the sixties and "walking cities" then what would be the worst?

I collected fewer mistakes on the CNN and Yahoo maps, but enough to speak about them: merging colors, merging states and merging texts. For a cartographer it takes just 5 minutes to correct that mistakes (for example: draw the missing borders, erase the surplus and exchange the mixed citynames), but nobody does nothing. I try to do something: here are some mistakes and their corrections on the border.

MAGYAR NEMZET (HUNGARY)

The weather forecast of Magyar Nemzet (Hungarian Nation, the second most important serious newspaper in Hungary) is made by The Hungarian Meteorological Office. The map is very slightly and slightly erroneous, because the coordinates of seven cities (Bratislava, Vienna, Graz, Zagreb, Belgrade, Brasov and Cluj-Napoca) are bad. For example the distance between Bratislava (Pozsony - the Hungarian name on the map) and Vienna (Bécs) is about 50 km, but on the map is about 120 km! We can find other mistakes, like the Adriatic Sea is invisible. It takes 5 seconds to correct: just recolor the sea by white.

MAGYAR TELEVÍZIÓ (HUNGARY)

The Hungarian Meteorological Office make the weather reports for the Hungarian Television. Attractive map with mountains, rivers, lakes and border. But erroneous in every parts. The Great Plane in South-East Hungary is only 70-120 m "high" (the highest point is Hoportyó, with 186 m) and it continues to North and East in Romania, Ukraine and Slovakia. There aren't mountains! And we don't find mountains on the other side of Danube, the Transdanubian Hill's average altitude is 300 m. We found other mistakes on the borderline (it's overgeneralized) and on the rivers. For example: the path of Tisza (river in eastern Hungary) is simply bad.

And it is worthy to seeing the maps of the Hungarian Meteorological Office on their homepage! Never exist river, illegible citynames, and a state from 1989, the ancient, big Yugoslavia! I don't understand them: they know that mistake (because I told them), it is very simple to draw the new borderlines and they do nothing. Why don't want they correct the mistakes? Why don't like they Slovenia and Croatia and Macedonia and... Why?

THE TIMES (UNITED KINGDOM)

The weather report of the Timesonline (You know: The best of The Times and The Sunday Times, in real time) is made by the English Met Office. There are not only natural geographical mistakes (like the Aral-sea from 1960 - in real time!) but political, graphic and text errors can be found as well. It's not easy to list the mistakes, here are the most serious, that I found:

North East Europe:

Poland annexed Kaliningrad, Lithuania and Brandenburg (with Berlin) from Germany! I would like to know the opinions of Germans and Lithuanians...

Finland occupied the Lake Ladoga and dried up it. For this reason St. Petersburg moved to East (cca. 150 km) The mapmaker didn't find the real coordinates of Moscow too (cca. 200 km). There are further more significant political and geographical mistakes on the first map, for example the extension of Aral Sea became smaller, nowadays a North and a South Aral Sea exist. We found another mistakes in the texts: Zurich and Baku are parts of North East Europe. Really? Baku lie south of Madrid...

North East America:

I knew, there are two Washington in the United States, but one of them is on the west side and the other one is on the east side. Now I see, I was wrong! But where is Philadelphia?

Central Asia:

Earlier I have mentioned, that the Aral Sea have begun to dry out. And yes, it has dried out - according to the mapmaker. And if I see well, the Caspian Sea dried out too.

In text parts they start with the Seychelles, but this islands belong to Africa.

Far East:

Japan got back the Kurill Islands and in the same breath the Japanese annexed the Sakhalin Islands. Merger of North Korea and South Korea is wanted, but not true.

North Africa:

Three natural geographical mistakes are the most visible:

The first one is Lake Chad. Similar to Aral Sea it has started to dry out as well. Now its measure is 5% of its previously extent.

The second one is disappearing of Corsica .

The third and the most interesting one is that Suez Canal, which makes connection between Medi-terranean and Red Sea, starts from Aqaba Gulf instead of Suez Gulf.

Other maps of the Timesonline:

You could find several other mistakes (like Venezuela annexed Guyana, Slovakia belong to South East Europe, California is a new, independent country), but it's enough if you set down the fact that the mapmaker (and anybody at Met Office) has no geographical knowledge. When you take a look at the maps certainly it appears that something is wrong on it. It's a pity that nobody has found and corrected these mistakes.

YAHOO (UNITED STATES)

The Weather Channel make the weather forecast and the maps for Yahoo, but if I were The Weather Channel I would remove my logo from maps or I would correct the mistakes. Here are the most important mistakes:

Middle East satellite map:

Eritrea is an independent country (05.24.1993.), but I don't find it. On the other side between Iraq and Saudi Arabia the Neutral Territory of Ruhayima extincted.

North America:

Because of the small letters, the citynames are illegible. If we haven't enough place to make a big map, then we can use the Macromedia Flash software (or a similar vector-graphic software) to draw interactive maps where you can magnify.

Africa map:

North and South Yemen unified on 22. 05. 1990. More than 15 years! Libya occupied north part of Chad in 1983, but in 1987 their military forces lived the area. The border debate finished 18 years ago, didn't it?

Africa satellite map:

Eritrea doesn't exist. But Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia does! Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Oman unified. I really don't understand.

The "old" mistake: the extension of Aral Sea became smaller, nowadays a North and a South Aral Sea exist.

CNN AND NEW YORK TIMES (UNITED STATES)

The Accuweather.com provides the maps and the weather forecasts for the CNN and The New York Times, but that fact don't relieve of responsibility the publishers. The CNN and The New York Times must to know the political and geographical changes! On the CNN maps the shades of green and blue color are indistinguishables, I propose that they have to use white or black outline for the circles. Other mistakes:

Middle East:

On the map, the territory of Eritrea is smaller than the real: Eritrea is bordering Sudan. The mapmaker unified Yemen and Oman.

Nowadays the Aral sea have two parts: North and South Aral Sea, but the cartographer of Accuweather.com don't know that.

Between Iraq and Saudi Arabia the Neutral Territory of Ruhayima is extincted, but the mapmaker don't know that too. On the map, I didn't find the Gulf Aqaba and the territory of West Bank

Africa:

The border debate between Chad and Lybia finished 18 years ago. In 2005, please don't use maps from 1987!

Biography:

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