

ON THE PRESENT STATUS OF CARTOSEMIOTICS

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Abstract

Modern theoretical cartography reflects different directions of scientific cartographic activity. Theoretical elaborations on map language are among the important developments in modern cartography. Within the framework of theoretical cartography, cartosemiotics can be considered as: (1) one research direction among others; (2) one of the academic subjects in which map language is studied from the points of view of modelling, communication and cognition; (3) one theoretical conception among others; (4) the correspondence seminar and discussion paper series "Kartosemiotik/Kartosemiotika".

1. Introduction

Cartosemiotics as a component of theoretical cartography continues developing and fighting for its acceptance. It will be able to maintain its position in theoretical cartography only via new and attractive elaborations. With such formulation of the question, this work will deal with basic manifestations of cartosemiotics and its position in theoretical cartography. In any such status cartosemiotics is a component of cartography. Still: is it nowadays easy to develop and to popularize theoretical cartography? To my mind it isn't. I'd like to give an example concerning international cartography. It was probably quite by chance that for the 17th International Cartographic Conference in Barcelona 20 problem subjects have been selected. In this "cartographic TOP 20", theoretical cartography occupies a modest 16th place. In my opinion theoretical cartography should be among 10 main subjects of modern cartography. One can give different answers and interpretations to the question why theoretical cartography has such a rating, why it is so "popular and honourable". I think one of the reasons is that until recently theoretical cartography has not united but separated cartographers.

A characteristic feature of the 1990s is that cartosemiotic activities become strongly noticeable. These activities are going off in the German-Russian language area. In my paper [8] at the International Colloquium in Dresden I have put the question: Kartosemiotik - quo vadis? and have gone into four characteristic manifestation forms of cartosemiotics. In what follows they will be briefly discussed and partly added to.

2. Manifestation forms of cartosemiotics

2.1 Research direction

The research direction of cartosemiotics is a relatively young one in cartography but it has already its short history. As the research direction cartographic semiotics is formed at the end of 1960s -

beginning of the 1970s. Communication-theoretical aspects are gaining a big applied importance especially with research and design of cartographic character systems. In the 1970-1980s semiotic aspects of cartographic images have been investigated with theoretical and applied accents as well as from different points of view - communicative, metacartographic, linguistic etc. That were individual research works of cartographers-loners under the conditions and in a period of time when the clarification of relations between cognitive and communicative paradigms has gone on with varying success. Such a polarized environment was not very favourable for research of map language. Nevertheless 5 directions could be distinguished within the framework of research of map language at the end of the 1980s: (carto)semiotic, (carto)linguistic, formal-logical, cybernetic and sublanguage-related one [5]. But at the beginning of the nineties only (carto)semiotic, (carto)linguistic and cybernetic directions were active. The cartosemiotic direction is not the only one in the field of research of map language. But it is this direction that attracts and continues to attract cartographers who form an active core and set the tone in this research.

The nineties have brought a certain animation into cartosemiotics via the international correspondence-seminar and the collected works "Kartosemiotik/Kartosemiotika" [3]. The creative axis Bratislava-Dresden is playing a special role here which since 1994 has got its geographic continuation: Europe - Northern America or Bratislava-Dresden-Regina [4].

Without going into concrete tasks of cartosemiotics which are listed in the works [6], [7], [9] one can briefly state that the cartosemiotic direction will further develop from theoretical-experimental to practical-applied works. It is also to expect that further common works of cartographers with geographers, linguists etc. will bring new interesting results.

2.2 Academic subject

Presently there isn't any university where an independent course "Cartosemiotics" would be offered to students of cartography and geography. From my experience at the Technische Universität Dresden and the Altai University (a special course of lectures on the subjects of map language for students of geography in October 1992) I can state that it is reasonable to introduce this subject in the 4th or 5th year.

At the colloquium in Dresden I have proposed to give a pilot course "Cartosemiotics" at one Russian-speaking and one German-speaking university for senior students of cartography or geography [8]. Such a course could include 8 to 14 lectures and be given by several teachers (5 to 7 teachers), also from other countries.

22nd-24th of March of this year a seminar "Modern aspects of cartosemiotics" was held at Kiev Chevtchenko - University for civil and military students of cartography (Kiev University has a military department for cartography, finances/credit, jurisprudence and translators/interpreters). Initiators of the seminar were K.I. Dritsch (Kiev University) and A. Wolodtschenko (Technische Universität Dresden). The first attempt has been made. In this way experience can be gathered and views exchanged on introduction of new cartosemiotic material for education of students in a couple of years.

2.3 Theoretical conception(s)

In modern theoretical cartography more than 10 conceptions can be distinguished. It is reasonable to divide these cartographic conceptions into two groups - group 1 "General theories of cartography as a science" and group 2 "Special theories of cartography". Cartosemiotic conception(s) are to be considered as special conceptions. They don't claim the place of general conceptions of cartography and deal with special problems of map language.

I adhere to the cartosemiotic conception in which the research object - map or cartographic image - is defined as "(poly)semiotic spatial-temporal model of reality" [8]. The formation of cartosemiotic conception has begun at the end of the eighties-beginning of the nineties, when the conceptual background of cartography has changed. Active research on map language and the first attempts to develop conceptions of map language refer to this period of time [1], [2].

Towards the beginning of the nineties favourable conditions are created for a new theoretic paradigm to be formed - the one of map language. The modern paradigm of map language must be looked at as a totality of several conceptual constructions which, in a definite period of time, are forming the model of theoretic thinking, new ideas, the approach to problems of map language and the ways to solve them. By its activity, manifestation and accomplishment form map language paradigm of the beginning of the nineties is characterized by the fact that it has entered a period of consolidation of theoretic cartography. It is characterized by its open manner of theoretic search without ideological dogmas and "confrontation of ideas" for the sake of theoretic "skirmishes". Under such conditions map language paradigm as one of working models of approach to scientific-cartographic problems will continue to attract researchers during a certain period because it has brought animation into the theoretic thinking in cartography of the beginning of the nineties. Within the framework of such a paradigm different conceptions can really exist and develop what is normal for cartographic pluralism.

2.4 Correspondence seminar and discussion paper series

The aims and tasks of the correspondence seminar have been presented at the 16th International Cartographic Conference in Cologne [10]. Today it can be stated that accumulation of cartosemiotic knowledge is going on what manifests in the paper series "Kartosemiotik 1991-1994". Collected works "Kartosemiotik 5" which has been published contains papers and reports sent to the colloquium to Dresden. Collected works have become a good example of consolidation of different cartographic schools and traditions. And as a "cartosemiotic tribune" collected works remain open for discussions, personal opinions and constructive criticism.

3. Conclusion

Cartosemiotics is an interesting and versatile phenomenon in theoretic cartography of the nineties. Nowadays its manifestation forms are different by their activities and scope. Every manifestation form of cartosemiotics makes its contribution to strengthening of positions of cartography as a branch of science.

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