Quo vadis environmental and carto-/atlassemiotics?

Monika Huch (Adelheidsdorf, Germany), Hansgeorg Schlichtmann (Regina, Canada) &
Alexander Wolodtschenko (Dresden, Germany)
< alexander.wolodtschenko@mailbox.tu-dresden.de >

1. Preamble

On February 17 - 18, 2018, a future-workshop "Quo vadis Semiotics?" and an advisory meeting of the German Society for Semiotics (GSS) took place at the Industriemuseum in Chemnitz. With about 25 participants it was a successful and constructive workshop with promising ideas for the future as well as an exchange about already started projects. This short article describes and comments on new proposals of the section for environment- and carto-/atlassemiotics (ECAS or UKAS/ Umwelt- und Karto-/Atlassemiotik) of the GSS.

Figure 1: Future-workshop of the GSS at the Industriemuseum, Chemnitz

2. New ideas and suggestions at the future-workshop

2.1. From a mono-section (ecosemiotics) to a combined section (environmental and carto-/atlassemiotics)

The concept of a section on eco- and cartosemiotics (ECS) of the German Society for Semiotics (GSS) was already discussed in late 2014 / early 2015 by Jan-Oliver Decker, then chairman of the GSS, and Alexander Wolodtschenko. The combination of the fields of ecosemiotics and cartosemiotics is targeted on a much more application-oriented direction than the previous section on ecosemiotics (headed by Monika Huch). The basis of cartosemiotics are spatial and time-related graphic sign models that have been developed in both cartographic and non-cartographic traditions from prehistoric times to the present. In the 2000s, cartosemiotics was the „mother" of atlas-semiotics and photoatlas-semiotics.

Within the GSS, 18 sections were proposed and approved for the period 2015-2017. One of them was the new, combined section of eco- and cartosemiotics, headed by Monika Huch and Alexander Wolodtschenko (Huch, Wolodtschenko 2015).

Dividing the existing 18 sections of the GSS in accordance with the professions of their respective chairs, three groups become apparent. 14 sections (group A) were headed by academics, two by entrepreneurs (group B) and two by retirees or former graduates / entrepreneurs (group C). While group A dominated and, hence, reflected the academic representation and activities of the GSS, sections „eco- and cartosemiotics" and „semiotics and hermeneutics" belonged to group C.

At the GSS future-workshop in Chemnitz the ECS section management proposed an extension of the name from two (eco-cartosemiotics) to three semiotic components (environmental and carto-/atlassemiotics). A fruitful discussion at workshop and advisory board meeting showed that the „somewhat nerdy" fields of environmental and carto/atlassemiotics are promising within the GSS. The new section will be led by Monika Huch, Hansgeorg Schlichtmann and Alexander Wolodtschenko.

2.2. Why environmental and carto-/atlassemiotics?

Main objective of the 2015-2017 section was the popularization of eco-/carto-/atlassemiotic products on mobile devices and the inclusion of electronic media, e.g. in the form of e-journals, multidisciplinary and multimedia (mini) atlases, etc.

International conferences in 2017 (13th IASS in Kaunas, 28th ICC in Washington and 15th Int. Congress „Borders. Contact - Communication - Contrast" in Passau) showed that carto-/atlassemiotics needs multidisciplinary synthesis.
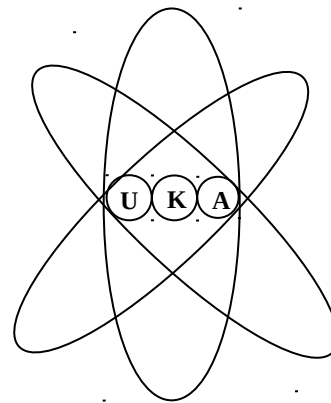
Figure 2: Logo of the combi-section ECAS (UKAS)

Carto-/atlassemiotics needs a broader platform as a thematic and mutidisciplinary interface to various disciplines such as biosemiotics, cultural semiotics, ecosemiotics, etc. A combined section reflects this synthesis (Fig. 2).

2.3. Websites of section leadership

The section leadership has three individual web pages with environmental (Huch), geographic-cartosemiotic (Schlichtmann), and carto-atlassemiotic (Wolodtschenko) profiles. The web pages reflect thematic potential and also belong to the section (Fig. 3).

http://www.geokultur-erleben.de

https://semioticon.com/pool/
hansgeorg-schlichtmann

https://atlas-semiotics.jimdo.com

Figure 3: Websites of the section chairs Monika Huch (left), Hansgeorg Schlichtmann (center) and Alexander Wolodtschenko (right)

2.4. Recruitment of new corresponding members

Shortage of young semioticians is problem in most of the GSS sections. The section ECAS has suggested to recruit new members (abroad and in Germany) as corresponding members for one year. Such persons may be academics, entrepreneurs and/or retirees from neighboring semiotic disciplines. They are intended to be „active observers/advisers" with semiotic interest to support the section activities and propose new directions.

Corresponding members not necessarily have to be members of the GSS, but they might, e.g. after one year, of course, become members. In this respect, we see the involvement of such people as a practicable way to spark interest in the section and the GSS.

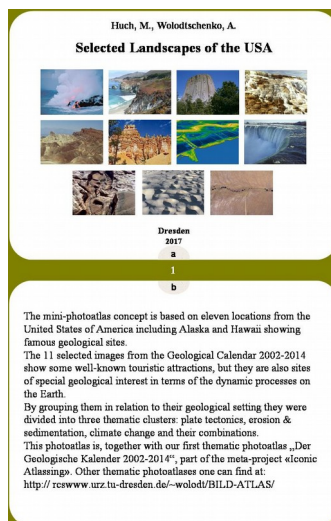## 2.5. Multidisciplinary „iconic atlassing" project

Atlassing is an interdisciplinary trend in the exploration and production of electronic atlases (with cartographic and non-cartographic traditions) in a semiotic coordinate system and on a semiotic classification basis. Atlassing can also be considered a new kind of creative activity, which includes analysis, portraying, and creation of various electronic atlases as models of knowledge (Wolodtschenko, 2013). Atlassing brings together all three generations of atlases (print atlases, digital atlas information systems and digital user-oriented, ubiquitous atlas products), (Wolodtschenko 2014).

The „iconic atlassing" („Bild-Atlassing") project deals with various image and photo-based atlases. Image atlases reflect a steadily growing importance of images (image information) in our modern mobile society, defining a new trend in the development of „iconic atlassing" / „image atlassing" of the 21st century (Wolodtschenko, 2014). The idea of the project „iconic atlassing" was developed in the years 2008-2011 and implemented within the author's course on "Atlas-Semiotics" for students of geography and media informatics at the Dresden University of Technology (TU), (Wolodtschenko, 2009). The photoatlases of students were designed and created as new information documents for smartphones and tablets.

In the period from 2015 to 2017, the „iconic atlassing" project received a new impetus for the creation and analysis of various thematic image atlases within the activities of the section ECS. By the end of 2017, the project consisted of about 70 pictorial atlases with non-cartographic traditions and a single- and double-sided design (Fig. 4). Three-sided photoatlases are still in the optimization phase. Three groups of photoatlases can be distinguished: event, cultural-historical and bibliographic photoatlases prevail among pictorial atlases published so far. Iconic atlassing is looking forward to an interesting future: In the 21st century, the pictorial form of thinking (iconic thinking) will probably dominate over the linear-textual one. Where this thinking will drive us is still hard to say.

http://www.geokultur-erleben.de

https://semioticon.com/pool/
hansgeorg-schlichtmann

https://atlas-semiotics.jimdo.com

Figure 4: Examples of photoatlases with one, two or three pages layouts

2.6. Photoatlas collection as a "photoatlassing library"

We want to realize our new plans of the multidisciplinary "iconic atlassing" project with the help of new section members as corresponding members. For this project, a collection of picture atlases is being prepared as a "photo-atlassing library" or "Bildatlastheke" (Huch & Wolodtschenko, 2018). Approximately 50 photoatlases were already produced at the end of 2016. By the end of March 2018, the project included more than 70 thematic photoatlases and a focus on one-sided design.

At present, our pictorial products (photoatlases, picture books, calendars, posters, etc.) one can be found on several different (private and institutional) websites. Providing a unified website as a digital "photo-atlassing library" will highlight the thematic and conceptual diversity of photoatlases. Participants of the "iconic atlassing" project cannot only get ideas, but also present their products. All those interested in cooperating in a "photo-atlassing library" have already been invited (Huch & Wolodtschenko, 2018).

2.7. Environmental and carto-/atlas-semiotic mini-forum in Dresden 2019

The section ECAS is planning a mini-forum with 15-20 colleagues from Germany and abroad to be organized in October 2019 in Dresden. 25 years ago also in Dresden, in 1994 an international cartosemiotic colloquium was organized for the first time in Germany. This colloquium was initiated by Ján Pravda (Bratislava) and Alexander Wolodtschenko (Dresden) and held at the TU Dresden Institute of Cartography.

The first courses in cartosemiotics (2000-2012) were organized in Germany for cartography students and the first courses on atlas-semiotics (2008-2012) for geography and media computer science students (Wolodtschenko, 2011) at the Institute of Cartography of the TU Dresden. Unfortunately, these semiotic training traditions have sunk into oblivion.

Cartosemiotics as a stand-alone subject within cartography has left its mark in Dresden and Germany, although activities of the last decades are discontinued for the moment. A combined ECAS section could give an impetus to cartosemiotic research.

3. The "Haus der Zeichen/House of Signs" Project

http://www.geokultur-erleben.de   https://atlas-semiotics.jimdo.com

Figure 5: Ingrid Lempp and Thomas Friedrich presenting the project "Haus der Zeichen/House of Signs"

"Haus der Zeichen/House of Signs" was founded in 2016 in Ulm, Germany, by about 20 interested people. Ingrid Lempp, the first chairwoman, presented House of Signs as a cultural forum on two levels - lay and scholarly (Fig. 5). Prof. Dr. Friedrich (University of applied sciences Mannheim) reported about the student activities planned for the next years. House of Signs shall be a meeting place for semioticians from all over the world.

4. Fazit

The section "Environmental and carto-/atlassemiotics" as a combined section of the GSS received new impulse for the period 2018-2020. The main objective of the section is to popularize new semiotic methodological-theoretical publications, projects (such as "iconic atlassing") and products (such as thematic photo-atlases, calendars, infographics, etc.) at international conferences and in web pages and relevant journals (meta-carto-semiotics, DKTK, Geocontext).

For the current year, the contributions of the section are focused on various semiotically relevant publications (articles and two books on "Bildatlas-Semiotik" and "Von der Ökosemiotik zur Umwelt- und Karto-/Atlassemiotik"), excursions (e.g. "Lese.Zeichen" in the sense of reading signs) and exhibitions as well as presentation in the form of photoatlases, posters, infographics, calendars etc.

5. References

Huch, M., & Wolodtschenko, A. (2015). Über die neue Sektion „Öko- und Kartosemiotik" der Deutschen Gesellschaf für Semiotik. *Meta-Carto-Semiotics, 8*(1), i-iii. http://ojs.meta-carto-semiotics.org/index.php/mcs/article/view/41

Huch, M. & Wolodtschenko, A. (2018): Quo vadis Sektion "Öko- und Kartosemiotik"? *Diskussionsbeitraege zur Kartosemiotik und zur Theorie der Kartographie. (Festschrift für Abraham Solomonick, Eberhard Sandner und Hansgeorg Schlichtmann).* Vol. 21, p. 35-42. Dresden: Selbstverlag der TU Dresden.

Wolodtschenko, A. (2009): Atlaskartosemiotik als neue Lehrdisziplin. *Geomatics, Scientific Journal of the Riga Technical University, 6*, 41-44.

Wolodtschenko A. (2013): Deutsche Atlaskartographie im 21. Jahrhundert: Quo vadis? Präsentation am 61. Deutscher Kartographentag, 28.-30.8. 2013 in Dresden.

Wolodtschenko, A. (2014). Über Atlaskartographie und mobile atlasbezogene Produkte. *meta-carto-semiotics, 7*(1), 24-36. http://ojs.meta-carto-semiotics.org/index.php/mcs/article/view/15