

Meta-Photoatlases as Semiotic Knowledge Models: From Atlasgraphy to Atlas Semiotics

Saba Modebadze ^{a,*}, Alexander Wolodtschenko ^b, Demetre Modebadze ^a, Lika Tsertsvadze ^c

^a Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, PhD student, Saba.modebadze618@sps.tsu.edu.ge, demetre.modebadze@tsu.ge

^b Independent researcher (Dresden, Germany), Alexander.Wolodtschenko@mailbox.tu-dresden.de

^c Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Bachelor's student, cercvadzelika05@gmail.com

* Corresponding author

Keywords: Atlasgraphy and Atlas Modeling, Cartosemiotics and Semiotic Analysis, Meta-Photoatlas as Epistemological Model, Bilingual Cartographic Communication, Atlas-Based Knowledge Representation

Abstract:

In contemporary cartography, the atlas is increasingly understood not merely as a collection of maps but as a structured semiotic system of knowledge integrating text, image, and map. Within this conceptual framework, atlasgraphy has emerged as a discipline concerned with the theory and practice of creating atlas models that combine cartographic and non-cartographic traditions. At the same time, recent developments in cartosemiotics point toward a broader theoretical shift in which atlases are interpreted as epistemological instruments for the production and organization of knowledge.

This paper examines the concept of the meta-photoatlas as a higher-level semiotic knowledge model, developed through the creation and analysis of derivative bilingual photoatlases (English-Georgian and German-Georgian) within the German-Georgian project (2025). These atlases, characterized by the dominance of visual (Bild) information and structured within a semiotic coordinate system of three meta-variables (text/image/map), represent a new form of atlas-based knowledge modeling. Derived from primary atlases, books, collections, and other media sources, meta-photoatlases function as analytical and synthetic constructs that extend beyond traditional illustrative roles.

The study adopts a cartosemiotic and conceptual approach, focusing on the transformation from primary to derivative atlases and the emergence of meta-level structures. Particular attention is given to the role of bilingualism, storytelling, and hybrid atlas forms in shaping new modes of cartographic communication and knowledge representation, which are essential for understanding how these elements contribute to the evolution of cartographic practices and the dissemination of geographic knowledge.

The results suggest that meta-photoatlases can be interpreted as a distinct epistemological and methodological development within atlas-based cartography. The paper discusses whether this development represents a transition from atlasgraphy to atlas semiotics or rather the coexistence of two complementary disciplines with equal theoretical significance. In the context, the meta-photoatlas is proposed as a key model for understanding contemporary atlas design in the digital and semiotic era.

References

- ABC Kartenkunde. 1982. Leipzig 1982.
- Denk, W. 2001. Atlas (Stichwort). In: Lexikon der Kartographie Heidelberg, Berlin 2001.
- Lexikon der Kartographie und Geomatik (2002). Bd. 2, Heidelberg, Berlin 2002.
- Louty, A. 1998. Iazyk karty: sunshnost, sistema, function. Moscow 1998.
- Wolodtschenko, A. 1995. Einige Aspekte der kartosigmatischen Untersuchungen von Atlanten. In: Proc. 11. Kartogr. Konferenz, Bratislava 1995, S. 72-78.
- Wolodtschenko, A. 1999. Die Karte und die Kartographie: Struktur-konzeptioneller Abriss. In: Diskussionsbeiträge zur Kartosemiotik und zur Theorie der Kartographie. Bd. 2. Dresden 1999, S. 149-180.
- Wolodtschenko, A. 1999. Kartosemiotische und konzeptionelle Aspekte der 90er Jahre. In: Intern. Korrespondenz-Seminar 2/1999, Dresden 1999.
- Wolodtschenko, A. 2004. Europa aus kartosemiotischer Sicht in Briefmarken. In: 11. Inter. Symposium der OGS. Wien 2004. S. 40-41.

- Wolodtschenko, A. 2009. Kartosemiotik (Miniwörterbuch, e-Lexikon), Dresden 2009 (in russ., 3 Ed.) http://rcswww.urz.tu-dresden.de/~wolodt/2016/E_Lexikon HYPERLINK "http://rcswww.urz.tu-dresden.de/~wolodt/2016/E_Lexikon2009B.pdf."2009B.pdf.
- Wolodtschenko, A. 2012. On the new generation of digital mini-atlases. In: Proceedings, AutoCarto-2012 Conference. Columbus, Ohio/USA. 2012. 1-8 pp. Cd-version.
- Wolodtschenko, A. 2021. Karto-atlasnaia semiotika (e-Lexikon). Dresden 2021. <https://atlas-semiotics.jimdofree.com/app/download/12149916197/e-Lexikon-2021.pdf>.