

PARTICULARITIES AND THE PRESENT STATE OF OFFICIAL TOURIST CARTOGRAPHY IN GALICIA

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Cartography is a scientific-technical discipline with the aim of reliable representation of space reality. As a scientific discipline it has to abide to a series of compulsory requirements: precision, use of technical parameters (geodesic datum, projection system), representation of reliable and updated information, and so on. But, apart from this technical character, cartography has had and continues to have a clear artistic touch, and in the eagerness to represent reality there is a series of aspects that come into play (visual balance, use of shades and adequate colours, etc.) and all this enables the making of a quality map.

The treatment given to cartography until recently, was not the most adequate, this was probably due to its devaluation as an information source, the fact that acquisition and treatment proves expensive (constant updates, adequate software needs, etc.). So, many companies, administrations and institutions frequently published low quality cartography together with low technical rigor, the tourism sector probably being the maximum exponent of this cartographic devaluation process.

A direct consequence of all these problems came in the shape of the lack of accurate information being offered (free of technical parameters), being the perception and interpretation of published maps which were scarcely adequate (a large use of symbolism and a lack of patterns) and, as a consequence, contributing to offer a map of little trustworthiness. From our point of view, we believe the reasons for this widespread misinterpretation of cartography stem from the following:

- Cartography was traditionally expensive and exclusive, only becoming popular in the last few years when access to it has been popularised and democratised.
- The separate treatment of graphic and alphanumeric information, until the appearance of GIS, which has meant a push forward in the treatment of cartographic and geographical information.

- The rather widespread idea that maps are only a simple drawing or sketch. Precision is the key element within cartography although for many years it seems to have been given second stage to graphic design, which sometimes goes against all cartographic patterns.
- Lack of standardisation rules. The problem we found a few years ago was that nearly everybody seemed to be doing their own cartography because there were not any general guidelines or standards regarding geographical information. Standardisation rules imposed on geographical information in the last few years have seen the treatment of cartographic information homogenised and unified in order to economise resources and avoid redundancies.

A map must offer truthful and trustworthy information (the data represented must be correct), different elements must be perfectly symbolised and represented with the final result being harmonious and well-balanced to the eye (adequate use of graphical design components). This ideal solution brings with it the obligation that all maps should have a scale and an associated key specifying the meaning of all the symbols, colours, frames, sizes, etc., all giving information on the map's purpose.

Therefore, the present cartography is immersed in an important reconversion process, with its mainstay being its democratisation (thanks to the appearance of free platforms allowing cartography downloading and consultation), homogenisation (European standardisation rules on geographical information), GIS programme development and the appearance of so-called intelligent cartography (with associated alphanumeric information).

The treatment of cartography for tourism is even more complicated as nobody has set any patterns or means to go about it. Among the reasons making its treatment more complicated the following stand out:

- The public addressed is very heterogeneous.
- The setting of points or areas of tourist interest.
- Tourist maps are generally presented inside folding leaflets, monographic magazines and the like, with the aim of being pleasing to the eye and within which the most important aspect tends to be aesthetics.

In light of these facts some questions arise: How and what elements are shown in a tourist map? Should a general tourist map be made or should there be a series of maps? Should we prioritise graphic design above cartographic rigor?

The following frequent dilemma is to be found inside many tourist establishments: graphic design or cartographic vigor. Decisions on graphic design in cartography are not easy because the conflict between intellectual and visual aims are very common. Until a few years ago, these two premises seemed to be incompatible, the first being the priority. However, nowadays, institutions and tourist companies choose balanced models, where map cartographic rigor is on a par with graphic design.

In the case of Galicia, the *General Secretary for Tourism* (from now on Sxt) is the institution managing tourist policies in the autonomous region of Galicia. The Sxt delegates some of its tasks to some institutions, bodies or companies, one of which we will focus

on for the sake of our study: *The Society for Image and Promotion of Tourism in Galicia*, (Turgalicia): This body promotes, publicises and commercialises the Galician tourist image in various ways: regularly published magazines, web page, tourism fair attendances, etc.

The main errors that stand out in official tourist cartography published by Turgalicia are the following:

1. A lack of scales and symbol orientation.
2. The use of inadequate cartographic elements.
3. Unclear to whom the cartography is addressed.
4. Outdated or erroneous information.
5. The making of tourist cartography upheld in low body (administrative) divisions.

The current mistakes in Turgalicia cartography are very similar to those found in any Spanish autonomous administration, although it is fair to say that there are big differences in the treatment of tourist cartography within the different autonomous administrations. Among the possible solutions to the current errors the following stand out:

1. The inclusion of scales and orientation symbols.
2. The optimisation and improvement of the cartographic elements used.
3. A target study and analysis.
4. A process of constant updating and revision of published cartography.
5. When possible, tourist cartography must delete all representations that are not important to reality, although this must not be considered a universal rule.

It is clear that some of the solutions are easy to adopt, such as cartography with all the associated elements (key, accurate scale, compass rose) but others are more complicated. In fact, the updating of cartography demands constant editing.

The solution adopted by large companies and administrations, working on a daily basis with cartography, is the introduction of the Geographical Information System (GIS), which allows information to be handled in a fast, integrated way, dealing with the graphic and alphanumeric part of geographical information simultaneously. Another advantage of GIS is the fact that the edition process and/or geographical information updating is almost instantaneous and also much cheaper than that of traditional analogical cartography, both in terms of economy and effort. With this in mind, many administrations have shown interest in reducing the amount of paper cartography to a minimum and thus joining efforts and resources in order to encourage digital cartography and GIS applications on the Internet (WMS).

The analysis of official cartography in Galicia dealt with in this article represents a particular study in which the conclusions are perfectly extrapolated to any administration in other autonomous regions. The regions receiving more tourism are, at the same time, those making more investment in their promotion, pledging themselves to quality cartography as the main information tool to present their territory. The aim of this is to give the Internet user every opportunity to consult the web quickly, using interactive cartographic servers with the WMS service (Web Mapping Service).

