



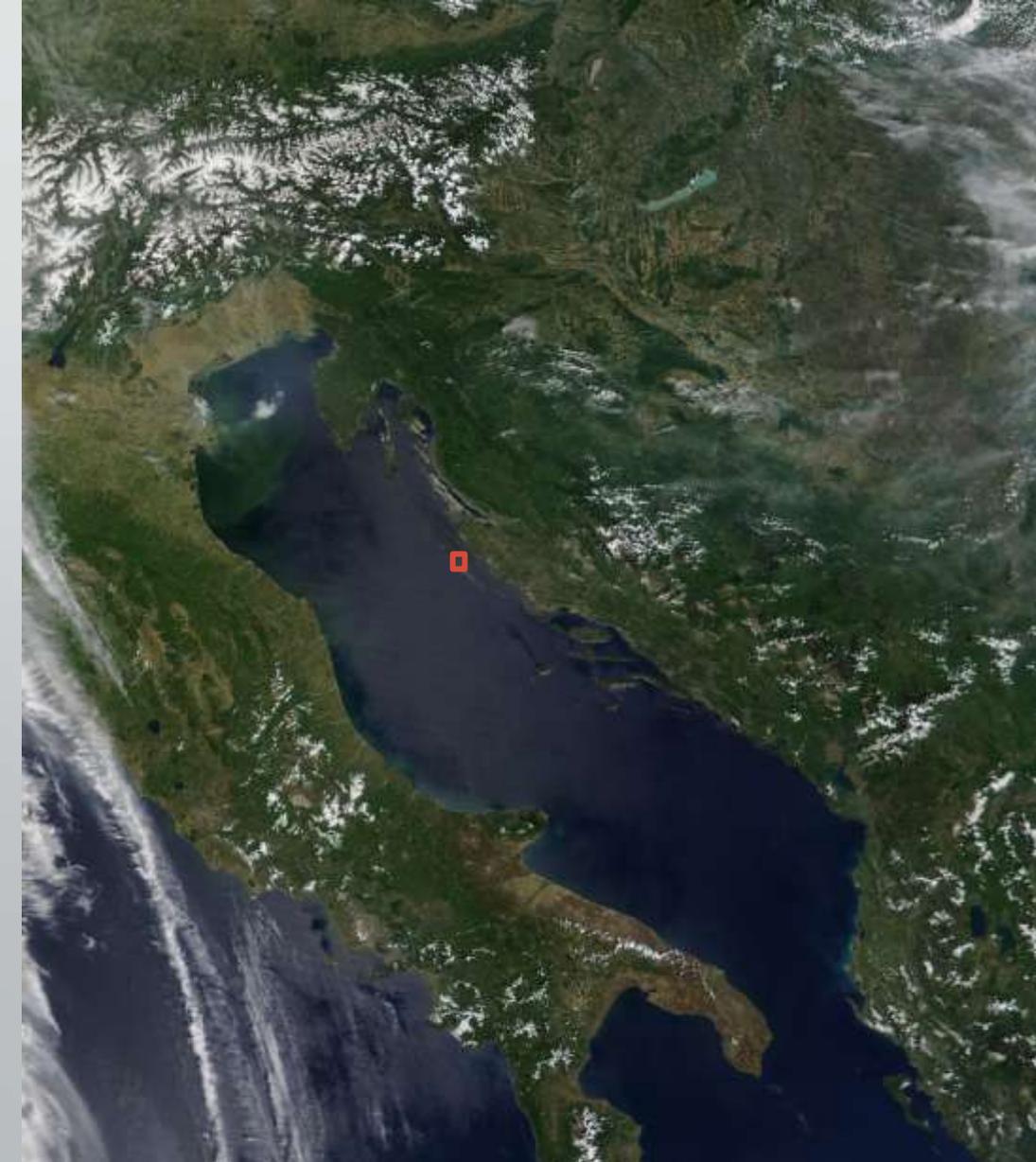
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# POLYONYMY OF GEOGRAPHICAL OBJECTS – CULTURAL WEALTH AND A CARTOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE

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# Introduction

- Many geographical objects have more than one name. This is the consequence of their being named by people from different language groups, whether completely different, or variants of the same language – dialects and local speech patterns.
- Polyonymy often occurs when a geographical feature extends across several regions or countries and is given different names, sometimes written in different scripts.
- It is common in border areas, particular those which have belonged in the past to various political entities (e. g. Austr. Germ. *Klagenfurt* / Slov. *Celovec*; Serb. and Croat. *Subotica* / Hung. *Szabadka*)
- Even a minor language group may have different names for the same object, depending on its use in different contexts (for example, one little islet in the Kornati Archipelago has four names: Sikica/Pinizelić/Tovar/Tovarnjak).



Can you imagine that such small geographical object has four names?!

# Two approaches in research the polyonymy

- Diacronic approach – historical retrospect of using of different names for the same geographical object in different time periods
- Example: Liburn. *Idassa* – Lat. *Jader(a)* – Bizant. *Diadora* – Cro. *Zadar* – Ven. (Ital.) *Zara*
- Synchronous approach – considering that different people use different names for the same geographical object in the same time
- Example: Eng. *Danube*, Germ. *Donau*, Czeh./Slov. *Dunaj*, Hung. *Duna*, Cro./Serb./Bulg. *Dunav*, Rom. *Dunărea*...

# Polyonymy as the cultural wealth

- Regardless of the reasons for polyonymy, it reveals a certain cultural wealth.
- Geographical names are part of cultural heritage, and often reflect linguistic layers created over many centuries.
- For example, they may indicate the multi-ethnicity of an area, reflecting its multicultural significance.
- However, they may also pose problems if a particular name is insisted upon in order to impose a specific political agenda, especially in terms of exonyms and endonyms.
- Problems may also arise when the standard form of a geographical names differs from that used by the local population.

# Polyonymy is rarely occur on printed maps

- On printed maps, it is often impossible to give all the variations of names of geographical objects, as there is not enough space and the aesthetics of the cartographic depiction would be spoiled.
- On printed maps, multiple names for the same geographic object are rarely used; this is the most common in the situation when cartographer writes endonym and exonym (within brackets): e. g. Roma (Rim), Wien (Beč), Budapest (Budimpešta)
- If one name must be selected, the choice must be based on relevant arguments.
- The issue, however, is whether geographers and geodesists are sufficiently competent to make independent choices which will be accepted by the wider academic community. **Because of that it is important to have the database of standardized forms of geographical names!**



Topographical map

Orig. scale 1:25,000

Third Survey,  
1869 – 1887

Ital. *Zara*  
Cro. *Zadar*

Ital. *Albanese*  
Old Venet. *Borgo Erizzo*  
Cro. *Arbanasi*

# Polyonymy on digital maps

- It is easy to write two or even more names for the same geographical object on digital maps, and particularly in electronic maps which function as systems for linking different media.
- In these systems, it is possible to add several name variants (for example, in a drop-down menu) and link them with an audio recording of the pronunciation and appropriate inflection.
- In this case, the 'only' remaining problem is the order in which the names appear.

# A need for collaboration among scientists and professionals

- Entering geographical names should preferably be preceded by collaboration between experts in different scientific disciplines; primarily linguists, geodesists and geographers.
- This is particularly important where official cartography is concerned (cadastral plans, topographic maps, charts) which forms the basis for the production of various thematic maps.

*Croatian  
Dictionary of  
place names*

standardized  
names of  
settlements,  
local variations  
of these names  
with  
standardized  
and local names  
of residents



*Croatian  
exonyms*

names of states  
and capital  
cities and their  
residents

Excellent editions published by The Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, Zagreb

Polyonymy is one of the reason  
for  
establishing the multidisciplinary committees on  
geographical names  
and for  
international gathering and cooperation of scientists  
and experts who are interested in toponymy

