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From Velebit to Casablanca: (Re)construction of Geography and Identity in the Names of Croatian Enterprises

LAURA ŠAKAJA

Street Signboards and the Reproduction of Culture

As an intersubjective reality developing through social interaction, culture is expressed via symbols and signs. The system of symbols/signs is linked to “shared space” through common heritage and experience; a multitude of symbols and signs, representing various group cultures and identities, is superimposed onto this space, producing a diversified and sophisticated cultural/spatial complex.

One element of this symbol network is the symbolism conveyed in business signboards. Every day, while walking the city streets, we pass through a landscape filled with signs, each of which conveys a certain message to passers-by, invoking and reproducing certain values. Naturally, the primary function of signboard texts is to provide information. They tell us if the business in question is a tourist agency, a commercial firm, a law office, an architectural bureau or a café. However, very few signboards solely limit themselves to providing such basic details – i.e. very few have an exclusively informational function. All enterprises, being reliant on customers, ultimately strive to be attractive. Therefore, apart from merely identifying activities, each signboard includes forms of symbolism that anticipate social values, and in so doing, adapts itself to the assumed tastes and identities of consumers.

Some cultural values are recognisable even on the level of graphic vehicles, side-traits used to produce advertising effects. For example, in Moscow and other Russian cities, after the fall of the Berlin Wall there was an increase in the number of signs in Latin script. Via associative shifts: *Latin script* → *the West* → *Western quality* → *the quality of our company*, this symbolises a binary vision of Europe, clearly typical in transitional countries. A value dichotomy divides Europe into a *good* West (effectiveness, modernism, liberalism, economic prosperity, excitement, order, a wide range of possibilities) and a *bad* East (ineffectiveness,

backwardness, remnants of the socialist system, limited possibilities, boredom) (ŠAKAJA 2004). This value-judgment is reflected in street signboards and is one of the marks of post-socialist transitional culture.

In Croatia, in mixed Catholic – Eastern Orthodox settings, the script used in signboards will be a signal, if not of ethnic affiliation (Croats – Latin script; Serbs – Cyrillic), then at least of the owner’s ethno-national commitment or orientation.

Indeed, even the style of graphic vehicles per se may at a glance convey a certain world of values. In Zagreb, a stone’s throw from the main square, there lie two catering establishments: a McDonald’s restaurant and a café, K&K. The McDonald’s yellow and red sign suggests youth, modernity, dynamism, openness. The respectable and somewhat old-world style of the sign and its meaning *knjiga & kava* (“book and coffee”) suggests a world of values totally opposed to the McDonald’s ethos: faithfulness to tradition, local orientation, the dignity of taking one’s time, contemplation and nostalgia for old Zagreb, when a café was a place where people spent much time, discussing matters of the day or reading. In fact, K&K has another association, also dating back to this bygone era: the German-language abbreviation *k. u. k.* (*kaiserlich und königlich*) was used in Austro-Hungary to indicate things pertaining to the emperor and king, state and public institutions, etc. The allusion or coincidence cannot be misread by anyone familiar with the history of Croatia and Zagreb during Austro-Hungary.

Mythological Dimensions of Names

Undoubtedly, the names of companies alone, as printed on signs, may be considered very significant manifestations of culture and value systems.

In their article *Myth, Name, Culture*, the semioticians Jurij Lotman and Boris Uspenskij claim: “One can say that

the general meaning of proper names, in their final abstraction, can be reduced to myth. It is precisely in the sphere of proper-name-words that identification occurs between names and that which they denote; this is so characteristic of mythological ideas, whose traits are, on the one hand, various taboos, and on the other – ritual changes of self-names... Therefore myths and the names are directly linked by their nature. In a certain sense, they define one another: myths are personal (linked to nomination), names are mythological” (LOTMAN & USPENSKIJ 1992, p. 61)¹. “The language of proper names” – according to LOTMAN and USPENSKIJ, “moves in a series of conscious and mutually sharply delimited naming and renaming acts. A new name corresponds to a new state. From the mythological point of view, transfer from one state to another is perceived via the formula ‘And I saw a new heaven and a new earth’, and at the same time it is seen as an act of complete renaming of all proper names” (ibidem, p. 70)².

Name changes during historical periods of transition provide very obvious support for this theory. Value shifts in transitional countries, or, in the words of LOTMAN and USPENSKIJ, the discovery of “a new heaven and a new earth”, are often recognisable, for example, in changes of street names. Some ten years ago, the street name landscape in Croatia experienced a very noticeable shift from socialist, antifascist and revolutionary value manifestations to national ones. Street names commemorating protagonists and events from World War II (the Proletarian Brigade, Boris Kidrič, Moše Pijade, the Social Revolution, the 8th Party Congress), or Partisan military units (the Moslavina Detachment, the Bjelovar Detachment, the 6th Partisan Division, etc.) were renamed in honour of national artists and scientists (Lavoslav Ružička, Faust Vrančić, Ivan Lučić and others), the old Croat no-

¹ Translation by author

² Translation by author

bility (princes and kings), characters from important Croatian novels (Diogeneš, Đuka Begović, Marulić's Judita, Šenoa's Branka, Gundulić's Dubravka, etc.), saints (St. Leopold Mandić, St. Nikola Tavelić) or politicians who played major roles in the creation of the new Croatian state (Gojko Šušak, Franjo Tuđman).

The main street of the town of Vukovar provides us with perhaps the most obvious example of "matching a new state with a new name". The city fathers, in keeping with the various changes in the political situation, renamed the street six times during the 20th century. First it bore the name of the Austro-Hungarian emperor Franz Joseph. Later, it was renamed after the first Yugoslav king, Petar I, and then after his son, the second Yugoslav king, Aleksandar. During World War II, it carried the name of the Ustashi leader Ante Pavelić. In the post-war period, it was renamed after the communist leader, Marshal Tito, and finally, following Croatian independence, it received the name of the country's first president, Franjo Tuđman. Throughout all these changes, however, one thing did remain constant: political and ideological prestige – i.e. the high status of state leaders had to correspond to the high status of the town's main street.

New geographies usually correspond to *new states* (i.e. situations). We can recognise such new geographies in street landscapes. For example, in Zagreb at the beginning of the 1990s, references to the Federal Republic of Germany and the Vatican began to appear in street names, while Belgrade and Moscow withdrew.

Ergonyms as Elements of Informal Geography

Whereas the naming and renaming of streets is a question involving official ideology and political decisions, the naming of firms and companies is a matter pertaining to intersubjective communication and is based on decisions made by common people. Ergonyms are indicators of a society's popular cultural symbolism, and this paper will focus primarily on them.

According to the dictionary definition: "ergonyms are names of business associations, companies, firms, societies and other organisations" (PODOLSKAJA 1988, p. 151)³. The basic aim of an er-

gonym is to attract clients. This aim is achieved through the information that they contain and the way in which it is presented. The information involved can be rational (indicating the object of sale, the subject of sale, or the consumer of the product), or it can be an advertisement. It is the very function of advertising, in fact, that constitutes the backbone of the ergonymic semiotic field, since it includes the key elements of separation and evaluation (ROMANOVA 1998). A name must be recognisable – it must invoke certain connotations or emotions. Companies do not so much embed their own outlook in such names, as much as their views on values present in the environment in which they operate. "... the namers, consciously or otherwise, select names with which their clientele can empathize and which should help assure the success of the enterprise in so far as they reflect the inner feelings or aspirations of the local population" (ZELINSKY 1980, p. 7). Consumers, therefore, participate (CRANG 2001) in the naming process. Thus, a common system of values and symbols, a common culture, is built into the names of enterprises and is further reproduced in them.

From among the multitude of words that convey symbolic content, ergonyms often utilise geographic designations. The frequency with which some geographic designations are used in ergonyms is an indicator of imaginative mapping. In other words, the use of toponyms in ergonyms tells us which geographic areas and locations serve as the main frameworks and landmarks on the imaginative map of both the near and distant world and which of them fall into the obscure regions of ignorance and indifference. Hence, geographic ergonyms can be defined as elements of informal geography, or – using John Kirkland WRIGHT's term – as elements of the "peripheral zone of geographical knowledge" (WRIGHT 1947). Spatial relations that we can reconstruct on the basis of ergonyms do not correspond to relations in the real world, but they certainly conform to world visions within the communities in which the ergonyms are formed. Such maps tell us which locations a given society considers "favourable", meaning those that may be employed to attract clients, and also which areas or regions are best left unsaid, since they have no power in invoking empathy.

The aim of this study is to analyse the imaginative world picture expressed in

ergonyms – from the Croatian perspective. The research was conducted on the basis of telephone directory listings for all twenty one counties in Croatia (Telefonski imenik Republike Hrvatske, 2002). I applied the same methodology as used by Wilbour ZELINSKY in his delimitation of vernacular regions in North America (ZELINSKY 1980). However, while ZELINSKY used only regional names, my study analysed all geographic designations (toponyms) appearing in the telephone book, including names of continents, countries, socio-historical spatial entities, regions, towns, rivers, oceans, etc.

From the first, it was apparent that not all geographic ergonyms function as indicators of "popular geography". Some of them have a purely descriptive function; others are the result of political decisions. Such names have no symbolic significance – they do not express self-identity, an awareness of belonging to some region or a specific image of the world. For this reason, they bear no relevance in a study of "symbolic geography". Hence, I have excluded from the analysis all names that do not have a symbolic dimension.⁴ Where exactly can we draw the line between ergonyms that should be included in the analyses and those that should be excluded? It could perhaps be illustrated by comparing the ergonym of the automobile-distributor "Renault-Croatia", with that of the bakery named "Croatia" and of the pizzeria called "Roma". The first mentioned name is a formal description indicating the location of a foreign firm's branch-office and a formal transfer to Croatia of a name given outside the country. The other two are an act of creativity on the part of a domestic name-giver (usually owner). In

⁴ These include: 1) All ergonyms in which the geographic designation has a purely descriptive function, such as a) names indicating the immediate locations of the firms (e.g. Karlovac Sports Society, Split Bus Terminal, Elementary School Banova Jaruga); b) Names of branch-offices or subsidiaries indicating the countries (or cities) where these firms carry out their business, or where their head offices are located (e.g. Renault Croatia, Wiener Städtische Insurance); c) National professional associations (e.g. the Croatian Society of Fine Arts); 2) All names of state companies deriving from political decisions and not from the free choice of individuals or groups (e.g. Croatian Railroads, Croatian Forests, Croatian Postal Service, etc.); 3) Branch-offices (e.g. Međimurje Bank has many subsidiaries in various places, but only the head office in the region of Međimurje was taken into consideration); 4) Ergonyms that only sound like geographic designations, but actually derive from personal names or abbreviations (e.g. a workshop called "Paris" after the owner's surname Paris, or RIO, the abbreviation for *Riječka industrija odjeće* – Rijeka Clothing Industry).

³ Translation by author

one we can recognise an idea of patriotism, in another an image of Italy and Italianess which includes the world-wide cliché on pasta and pizza as elements of Italian culture.

After filtering out such names, 2,607 geographic ergonyms were found in the telephone directory. Almost two thirds of them refer to Croatian inner-territorial areas (the state, regions, natural elements and cities). Could homeland-bound geographic references in ergonyms be, seen as manifestations of territorial affiliation and identity? I will highlight briefly two theoretical positions which provide a foundation for a positive answer to this question.

First, this would be Niklas LUHMANN's theoretical notion of autoreference and reflection. From LUHMAN's point of view the way the system establishes itself is by way of reflection or, in other words, self-description, self-designation (LUHMANN 2001, pp. 268 - 278). Despite their heterogeneity, systems tend to detach themselves from the outside world. Self-description is a mean of setting boundaries in regard to the outside world. Drawing boundaries implies differentiation between the one's own and another identity. "It is not by way of the notion of essence of a system, but by way of the process of a particular, first of all, regional specification that the individuality of systems is achieved" (LUHMANN 2001, p. 270)⁵. Reflection, states LUHMANN, is not about integrality (simple production of unity), but about identity. The procedure of self-designation requires collective action, but it is simple and common. In the classical world Greeks, argues LUHMANN, called themselves Greeks to differ themselves from barbarians (ibidem, p. 275). In today's world, as in the past, social systems establish themselves through various forms of reflection. References to the homeland in the names of enterprises (firms) are undoubtedly among them, for homeland-bound geographical ergonyms are, in another words, self-descriptions expressed in spatial terms.

Similar to LUHMAN's claims are the theoretical stances on the importance of self-description developed in the framework of the Tartu/Moscow semiotic school. One of its founders, Jurij LOTMAN sees self-description as a culture's creation of its own model. At the basis of self-

description the culture builds its own ideal self-portrait, reduced, structured and organised (LOTMAN 2000, pp. 564 - 566). This self-model (the organised image of own culture) leads to a reinforcing of the system and of its distinctiveness. We speak, thus, about the "individuality of culture", cultural identity (VERŠIĆ 2004, pp. 123 - 125; UŽAREVIĆ 1990, p. 16). Geographical ergonyms, as a form of self-descriptive expression, participate in the constant reestablishment of culture and identity. Self-designation by toponyms is a self-identification via the spatial symbolic order.

Regional and National Ergonyms

The greatest proportion of names refer to Croatian regional entities. Therefore I will start with them.

Although – as all geographers know – regions can be defined in many different ways, in this paper Paul Claval's definition will be applied, according to which they are "spatial structures which are smaller in area than the State, which possess certain individuality, and which are considered an entity either by the people who live there or by outside observers" (CLAVAL, in BEAUJEU-GARNIER 1976, p. 87). Thus, the existence of regions implies regional self-awareness. The use of regional designations in ergonyms does not just mean regional self-identification on the part of the namers. Authors of regional ergonyms invoke regional affiliations to their communities as they see them, thereby hoping to instill trust based on community awareness and a feeling of belonging to the same entity.

In Croatia, regional ergonyms account for thirty five per cent of all geographic ergonyms, with the mosaic of regional orientations being truly rich. The total of twenty seven regional ergonyms, twenty four of which are most prevalent in their own localities, reveals the extent of the problems facing the central government of the Republic of Croatia, which is presently working on a new plan to create territorial-administrative divisions. Every proposal to increase the size of administrative regions encounters resistance, and is regarded as coercion and an attempt to "depersonalise" the country.

Specific details on the distribution of regional ergonyms (published in: ŠAKAJA 2003), are not touched upon for the purposes of this paper, so farther comments are limited to two polar types of ergonym distribution: compact and diffused.

The former can be seen in Istria (*Figure 1*). Judging in terms of ergonyms, Istrian identity is the most strongly expressed regional identity in Croatia (as it is illustrated by both the absolute number of ergonyms and their location quotient in relation to the population of the region) (ibidem: p. 37). Istria's specific historical trajectory, relatively recent unification with Croatia, significant Italian language presence (which eight per cent of all Istrians claim as their mother tongue), all along with a higher level of economic prosperity, obviously stimulates a feeling of regional specificity. Istria appears to be the most compact region in Croatia with regard to feelings of regional affiliation among its inhabitants: Istrian ergonyms are found in 69 per cent of all Istrian towns and municipalities. This compactness is also displayed by the fact that, outside of Istria, in other Croatian landscapes, signboards with Istrian ergonyms are very rare, mostly occurring in areas bordering Istria. When one considers Istrian-orientated politicians insistence on the separation of Istria into a political-administrative region, and that this aspiration has been criticized severely by successive central government authorities, one might be tempted to pose the question: do compact regional identities, such as the Istrian case, potentially lead to conflict situations?

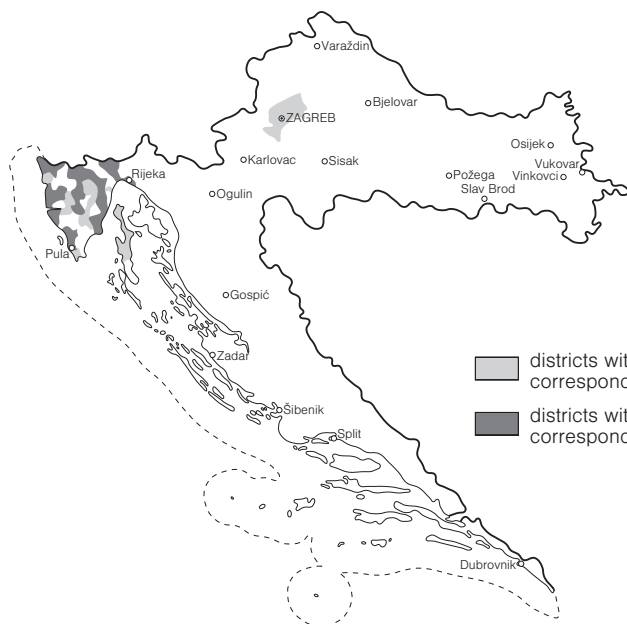
A complete contrast to the Istrian example is the distribution of ergonyms with the name *Dalmacija*, i.e. Dalmatia, or a variant of it (*Dalmatinski, Dalmati, Dalmatinac, Dalmatino*, etc.) (*Figure 1*). These are the second most numerous regional ergonyms in Croatia. Unlike Istrian ergonyms, Dalmatian ones are widely diffused. Within Dalmatia itself, they can be found in only 26 per cent of the towns and municipalities, many of them lying outside this region. The best example is Zagreb, where the ergonym *Dalmacija* appears in the names of many firms and catering establishments. Thus, it is with good reason that Zagreb – although situated far to the north – is often in jest labelled "the capital of Dalmatia". Bearing in mind that Dalmatia is a traditionally major emigration area, then it becomes obvious that ergonyms have followed migration flows. Migration, combined with the feeling that Yi-Fu Tuan defined as *topophilia* (TUAN 1961), as well as nostalgia for former home regions, have led to attempts at recreating lost homelands in new places. Ergonyms

⁵ Translation by author

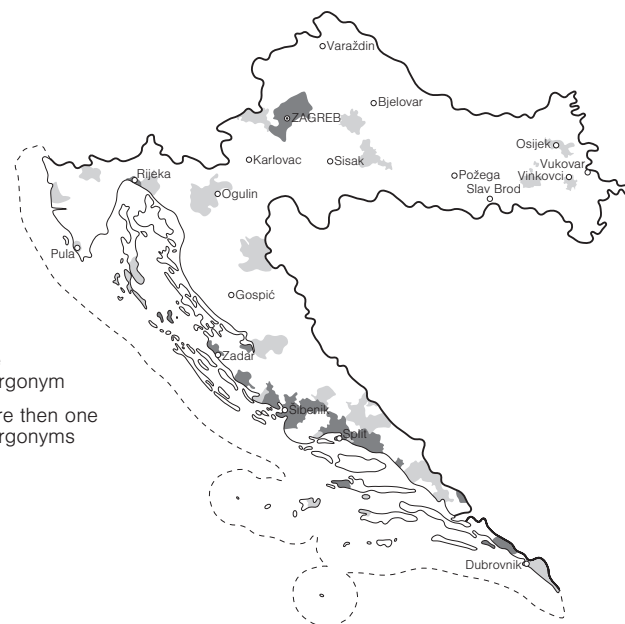
Croatia

Concentrated and dispersed distribution of regional ergonyms

Ergonyms containing the toponym "Istria"



Ergonyms containing the toponym "Dalmatia"



districts with one corresponding ergonym
 districts with more than one corresponding ergonyms

IFL 2005
 Draft: L. Šakaja
 Cartography: P. Mund

0 50 100 150 km
 Maßstab 1: 6 000 000

Fig. 1: Concentrated and dispersed distribution of regional ergonyms in Croatia

Source: Telefonski imenik Republike Hrvatske 2002. (Croatian Telephone Directory), HT - Hrvatske telekomunikacije, CD ROM.

are clearly a part of this process and their relocation can therefore be defined as part of the process of relocating culture.

Among regional ergonyms there exists another phenomenon – the use of historical toponyms as regional designations. The most interesting aspect of this practice is the application of old and proud historical names to smaller geographic areas. The names of once large spatial entities have survived only as myths and relicts, having been limited to the context of much smaller areas. One such example is Liburnia, a name derived from the Liburnians, a people once subjugated by the Romans. In Roman times, this toponym was applied to a large area between the Krka (Titius) and Raša (Arsia) rivers. Today, however, it is confined to a small area in the north-east of the Istrian peninsula. The same applies to Vinodol – once a influential feudal estate with thirteen communes, but now just a small territory withdrawn into the mountains of the Croatian Maritime region. Both processes are plainly shown by ergonyms.

Our study has shown that in cases where regions are encapsulated into one another, like Russian dolls – smaller ones into larger ones, and so on, then ergonyms likewise overlap. In border areas,

ergonyms from both regions serve as regional markers. All this serves to underline the major problem in regionalisation: even though the existence of regions may be incontestable, determining their borders will always be open to question.

Despite expectations that in a recently independent and proud country such as Croatia there would be many ergonyms indicating the Croatian name it is appa-



Photo 1: Bakery "Croatia"
Photo: ŠAKAJA 2005

rent that regional identity is more widely pronounced than national identity, at least as far as ergonyms are concerned. Indeed, references to Croatia in ergonyms are three times less frequent than regional terms. (It should be taken much more into consideration that state organisations were excluded from the analysis.) Even more interesting is the fact that the country's name appears five times more frequently in its foreign form – *Croatia* – than in its native form – *Hrvatska* (Photo 1). Evidently, national self-identification remains reserved for expressions of pride and foreign display, while on a domestic level, self-identification is reduced to regional level – self-demarkation in relation to one's peers.

How do regional feelings fit into the national sentiments? In many Croatian regions with strong regional identities (like Istria, for example) a relatively high concentration of general national ergonyms can also be found. Therefore, ergonyms confirm what we already know to be true: regional attachment and identity do not threaten national integrity.

Geopietty in Ergonyms

Love towards a certain territory is expressed, among other ways, through senti-

mental attachment to its natural qualities, that is to say through geopiety (the term *geopiety* was coined by J. K. WRIGHT and today designates “sentiments of human attachment to elemental space (telluric, aquatic, etc.)” (COSGROVE 1994, p. 227). Geopiety, it seems, is characteristic of all communities – be they local or national. It is expressed in the lyrics and even the very title of the Croatian national anthem *Lijepa naša domovina* (Our Beautiful Homeland). Of its sixteen verses seven refer to the beauty of Croatia: its mountains and plains, the sea, fields and forests.

The most frequent natural trait of Croatia mentioned in ergonyms is its sea: fifteen per cent of all geographic ergonyms refer to the sea. It is interesting, however, that just as in the *Croatia/Hrvatska* example, the sea that bathes Croatia’s shores is almost twice more frequently denoted by variants of its foreign name – *Adriatic*, *Adria*, etc, than by its domestic name – *Jadran*. These references are very often transmitted via foreign sintagmas: e.g. *Adria Agent*, *Adria Communication*, *Adria Dent*, *Adria Tours*, *Adria Travel*, *Blue Adriatic*, etc. The development of Croatian tourism, in which the Adriatic coast was promoted as the major attraction, evidently paved the way for a commercialisation of the sea. Thus, a parallel reorientation is easily traced: as the maritime population shifted from fishing to the tourist industry, references in ergonyms correspondingly changed from the native *Jadran* to foreign forms that international tourists could more easily recognise – *Adriatic*, etc.

Besides the sea, the most frequent natural features in ergonyms are rivers and mountains (six and four per cent of all geographic ergonyms). Three rivers have particular importance for Croatia and are mentioned in the national anthem: “Flow Drava, Flow Sava and also you, Danube, do not falter ...” These are the largest rivers that run through Croatian territory. The Sava and the Drava also achieve their greatest lengths in Croatia and the relatively frequent use of their names in ergonyms in settlements located on their shores reveals their great (practical and sentimental) importance for these areas. The ergonym *Dunav*, i.e. Danube, judging from all indications, conveys a different symbolism. It is very rarely found in settlements on the banks of this river. In view of the fact that the

Danube continues downstream into Serbia, and that a portion of it delimitates the state border between Croatia and Serbia, this ergonymic void clearly corresponds to an attempt to cut ties with a country that in the recent past was an enemy. Nevertheless, the ergonym *Dunav* can be found in other parts of Croatia (Crikvenica, Orahovica, Zagreb, Sisak), located far from the Danubian border and far from the banks of the Danube. Evidently the name has less traumatic symbolism in such areas, indicating that the meaning of ergonyms is spatially variable; in other words, the semantics of a name is sensitive to socio-geographic differences.

The most frequently mentioned mountain range in ergonyms is Velebit. However, sixty per cent of all ergonyms with this name are found outside of the Velebit area. The designation “Velebit” is used in a wide variety of activities: from maritime associations to bowling clubs, from business and apartment buildings to journals, from talent clubs to pizzerias. It is very often to be found in the sintagma “Vila Velebita”, the Fay of Velebit. Although the peaks of Velebit are not the highest in Croatia, it seems that the name and ergonym Velebit does contain a highly expressive mythological component. This is partially due to the position of the mountain range, which, as a *triplex confinium*, is a point of conjunction (or division) between North-West, Central and South Croatia. Since during much of its history Croatia was a much divided country, even to this day Croats are very responsive to the notion of national unity.

Apart from its geographical position, literary works and political events have also contributed to the mythology of Velebit. In 1873, the poet Danilo Medić composed the song “Vila Velebita” in which he depicted the imaginary Velebit Fay as the “Fay of all Croats”, and in doing so turned Velebit into a source of national inspiration. During the period of Socialist Yugoslavia (1945 - 1991), when uniformity was imposed instead of particularism, Yugoslavism instead of Croat identity, and when all expressions of national specificities were deemed undesirable, the melody of “Vila Velebita” became one of the symbols of the nationally oriented Croatian student movement in 1971 – known as the “the Croatian Spring”. Singing the song – with the sintagmas “pride of our people”,

“Fay of all Croats” – became a symbol for expressing Croat identity. After the Yugoslav authorities crushed the Croatian Spring, the song was outlawed and only sung in secrecy, for fear of ending up in prison. The mythology of Velebit, enhanced by such clandestinity, transformed the mountain range into something much more than just a mountain range. Precisely for this reason, the name “Velebit” in ergonyms has very high axiological status. Apart from semantics such as high, great, prominent – which are typical for all ergonyms referring to mountains – the ergonym Velebit also contains a very recognisable national component as the geopiety it expresses extends to the “greater homeland”, or the state as a whole.

In contrast, the majority of Croatian ergonyms referring to natural features are altogether simpler, being mere names of lesser mountains, lesser rivers and streams. Hence, any geopiety invoked through them is much more intimate, focusing purely on the “little homeland”, the home place.

Europe, the Mediterranean, the Balkans

Europe, the Mediterranean, the Balkans – these are three possible terms for Croatian identification. But how does Croatia like to define itself? The answer is plainly shown by ergonyms: Europe is mentioned in 358 examples, the Mediterranean in 31 and the Balkans in 3 (see *Table*).

In first place, Europe symbolises prestige and high quality (not least in terms of products and services); Croatia strives for European acceptance and is oriented towards it. Consequently, it is quite a safe name for any firm or company. Ergonyms with the element *Europa* are present throughout Croatia, especially in large cities and other urban centres, and most frequently in the names of enterprises associated with modern technologies.

The ergonym *Mediteran* presupposes empathy, an awareness of a common mentality and a common way of life. It appears almost exclusively in the maritime part of Croatia, which can be identified as Mediterranean.

The term *Balkan* (*The Balkans*) is now thoroughly out of favour and has practically disappeared from all signboards since Croatia gained independence. The name-change of the largest cinema in Zagreb – from *Kino Balkan*

Area covered by ergonyms	Number of ergonyms	The most frequent toponyms in ergonyms
Inner-territorial space		
Home regions	912	Istria (177) Dalmatia (155) Slavonia (118) Međimurje (71) Zagorje (63) Kvarner (41), etc.
Croatia as a whole	233	Croatia/Hrvatska (195/38)
Homeland's elemental space	658	Adriatic/Jadran (251/136) Drava (24) Sava (23) Velebit (22) Učka (10) Biokovo (10), etc.
Homeland's urban areas	87	Zagreb (17) Dubrovnik (15), etc.
Total: 1890		
Broader cultural affiliations*		
Europe	358	Europe (358)
Mediterranean	31	Mediterranean (31)
The Balkans	3	The Balkans (3)
Total: 392		
The external world		
Foreign countries by number of ergonyms referring to them (their cities, places, natural features)		
USA	76	Hollywood (11) Texas (6) Florida (6)
Italy	67	Italy/Italian (22)

		Roma (8) Etna (7) Venice (5) Naples (5) Padua (5)
Brazil	14	Rio (11)
Monaco	15	Monaco (10) Monte Carlo (5)
Austria	11	Vienna (9)
France	9	Paris (6)
Germany	9	Bavaria (5)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8	Bosnia (3)
China	6	China (4)
Argentina	5	Argentina (5)
Morocco	5	Casablanca (5)
Cuba	4	Havana (4)
Countries with 3 and less ergonyms referring to them	45	
Total: 274		
Other references: oceans (Atlantic, Pacific) undefined regions (Iliria, Arabia, Orient, West), fictitious lands (El Dorado, Atlantida)	51	
Total: 51		
Subtotal: 2607		

Tab. 1: Areal representation in Croatian ergonyms

* Only three general toponyms (Europe, the Mediterranean, the Balkans) are included in this section. All other, more specific, toponyms concerning Europe and its countries are included into selection The external world.

to *Kino Europa*, symbolises the shift in the geopolitical orientation of the new state. Today the term Balkan remains only in the names of three res-

taurants serving grilled food – hence the “Balkan-Grill” is the last bastion of resistance on the departure route from the Balkans.

“Favourable Places” in the World

According to Jurij LOTMAN, “geographic space, due to its asymmetry and its close ties with the general image of the world

... is an area of semiotic modelling ... Geography very easily turns into symbolism" (LOTMAN 2000, p. 303)⁶. We have already had an opportunity to see how geographic ergonyms confirm this thesis. The way that culture semiotically envisions space will be shown here additionally by examples of ergonyms that include names of foreign countries, foreign cities, or generally refer to the external world.

All cultures divide the world into an internal space ("ours") and an external one ("theirs"). Although various cultures interpret this distinction in different ways, taken *per se*, it is universal (see LOTMAN 2000, p. 257). Distinguishing "our" world from the "foreign" world in post-modern post-colonial discourses has, for the most part, boiled down to studying xenophobia, the colouring of "Others" in various shades of darkness. Ergonyms, however, reveal a totally different semiotic picture of the dichotomy between "our world" and "foreignness".

Ergonyms are a part of advertising. By their very nature, they must be attractive. Hence, the world revealed in the landscape of ergonyms is a filtered one.

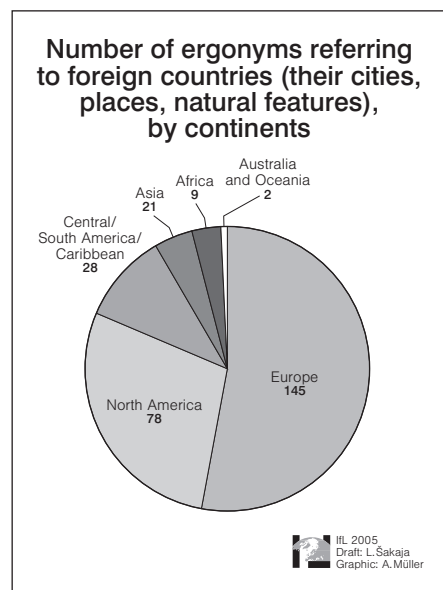


Fig. 2: Number of ergonyms referring to foreign countries by continents
Source: Telefonski imenik Republike Hrvatske 2002. (Croatian Telephone Directory), HT-Hrvatske telekomunikacije, CD ROM

The only things passing through external borders – through the cultural membrane – are those appealing to the namer or things that he or she estimates could attract customers. Thus, the external

⁶ Translation by author



Photo 2: Café "Little Venice" in the heart of Zagreb
Photo: ŠAKAJA 2005

world, upon absorption into the internal one, receives a new structure. Only those external elements that we consider interesting, or that appeal to us for whatever reason, may become part of our own cultural landscape (Figure 2).

Ergonyms containing foreign locations most frequently refer to catering establishments, followed by boutiques (although sometimes foreign places also appear in the names of tourist agencies, video rentals, hairdressing salons, import-export companies, etc.). In cases of former, the name bids you to take a short rest in a "different place" (coffee shops and café-bars called "Florida", "Miami", "Capri", "Payton Dream", *Napoli* = "Naples", *Mali Pariz* = "Little Paris", *Mala Venecija* = "Little Venice", etc.) (Photo 2); in the latter, an ergonym is urging the customer to be "different", i.e. modern and beautiful (via boutiques with names such as "Madison", *Pariz* = "Paris", *Venecija* = "Venice", "Monte Carlo Shop", etc.).

So how is this different "favourable world" structured in the landscape of Croatian ergonyms?

As a rule, it is cities that make up the framework of this imaginative ergonymic world map; names of countries or their provinces appear much less frequently. Cities are obviously more recognisable, more concrete and hence make better landmarks.

Among ergonyms of this type, the greatest number involves places in the

USA (Table). This is probably a direct repercussion of omnipresence of American films and media, as revealed by the fact that the most common American ergonym is *Hollywood*. The second most common American ergonym, *Texas*, most likely also reflects the popularity of American films, in this case, cowboy westerns. However, the semiotic sphere of Texas encompasses an additional meaning: Texas is mischievously favourable. *Motion picture Texas* is an area of lawlessness. So while Texas, like many other far-away locations, symbolises a break from the daily routine, it also implies mischievous break: an escape from convention, social structure and orderliness.

Among other American ergonyms can be found references to New York and its central areas: Madison Avenue – associated with a "parade of expense and pretence" and "chic shopping opportunities" (SINCLAIR 2000, p. 72 - 73), and exciting Manhattan and Broadway. Other American ergonyms include Vegas – the gambling town, sunny Miami and Hawaii, Memphis, Nashville and Dixieland – packed with musical symbolism, Payton – another film symbol, and so on. It should be noted that North America on this ergonymic map has been reduced to the US with Canada remaining in total obscurity (the only ergonym which partly refers to Canada is *Niagara*).

A second focal area in the Croatian imaginative world map, judging from

ergonomic evidence, is Italy. Ergonyms mention the country itself, its cities and natural features: Rome, Venice, Rimini, Padua, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Etna, the island of Capri, etc. This high status of Italy as a “favourable place” is somewhat predictable. As shown by a study carried out in 2001, young people in Croatia rank Italy as the most desirable place of residence in Europe (ŠAKAJA 2002). According to young Croats, Italy has everything: tradition going back to the ancient Romans, a long and rich history, a leisurely yet dynamic Mediterranean lifestyle, wonderful works of art, beautiful architecture, high fashion, a pleasant climate and lovely landscapes (“sun, sea and sand”). Croats consider the Italian language to be beautiful and the people themselves are viewed as communicative, open, temperamental and unburdened; Croats value the Italian aesthetic sensibility, sense of humour and their fun-loving, as well as their food: eleven per cent of the Italian ergonyms designate pizzerias.

In general, on the Croatian ergonomic map of Europe cultural and historical ties with neighbouring European countries are strongly emphasised. The importance of neighbouring countries as points of reference is apparent not only in the large number of ergonyms with Italian toponyms. Vienna, the capital of former Austria-Hungary (which included the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia-Dalmatia) has a high ergonomic status. Even Bosnia and Herzegovina, a neighbour that is undergoing serious socio-economic and political problems, and thus perhaps not expected to fall into the category of “favourable places”, still manages to penetrate through the filter of ergonomic selection (which is probably due to the large number of immigrants from that country and close personal and business ties with it).

In other respects, Europe is firmly divided on the ergonomic map into two parts: Europe and North America with many “favourable locations”, and the rest of the world, with very few such locations. Apart from neighbouring countries, two places in particular stand out on the ergonomic map of Europe: Paris and Monaco (including Monte Carlo). As aforementioned research has shown, perceptions of Paris in Croatia reflect the stereotypical “most beautiful and most romantic city in the world” framework, whereas Monaco and Monte Carlo are

linked to stereotypes such as: “a lot of money”, “luxury”, “glamour”, “splendour”, “prestige”, “life lived as a holiday” (ibidem, pp. 114 - 115)

Another distinctive area on the Croatian ergonomic map is Brazil. In this case, Rio plays the key role, being mentioned more often in Croatian ergonyms than any other foreign city. The name “Rio” appears mainly in catering establishments: restaurants, café-bars, bistros. A brief telephone inquiry revealed that part of the owners had actually visited Brazil as tourists or sailors, while for others Rio de Janeiro was just an abstract positive association. What is the symbolic content of Rio? It is difficult to determine precisely, since ergonyms alone do not provide the necessary information. Perhaps some partial insight into this problem is to be gleaned from a Russian popular novel *The Golden Calf*. The main protagonist, Ostap Bender states: “Rio de Janeiro – that’s the crystal dream of my childhood, don’t touch it with your paws” (IL’F & PETROV 1983, p. 276). For him, Rio is a place “of leisurely life on the shore of a warm ocean between balcony palms and rubber plants” (ibidem, p. 521)⁷ – perhaps not only for Bender that is the highest symbol of affluence and leisure. Beaches, sun, sea, a care-free life – is that the symbolism generated by tourist postcards from Rio? Is the lure of Rio also increased by daily consumption of (“Brazilian”) coffee, by passionate coffee lovers (including most Croats)? Or is this perhaps the manifestation of a principle dating from the time of medieval utopian quests – “a beautiful land is a land located at the end of a long journey” (LOTMAN 2000, p. 303)? Whatever the reasons, judging from ergonyms, Rio is an important focal point for Croats on the imaginative map of the “favourable world”. Although the imaginative map of Latin America is somewhat more diverse than the map of North America, it is limited, or reduced, basically to the ergonyms “Rio”, “Brazil”, “Havana” and “Argentina”.

The Orient is present on the ergonomic map mostly from the aspect of oriental food; there is a series of pastry shops bearing the name *Orijent*. Among Asian countries, only China appears in ergonyms and, at that, mainly in the names of Chinese restaurants, or firms

owned by Chinese businessmen (China House, China Garden, China Star, China Town).

The African Orient and the Maghreb apparently convey a different ergonomic meaning. From an ergonomic aspect, only two towns in North Africa can be considered “favourable places”: Casablanca and Cairo. This shows that the imaginative ergonomic world map is a kind of mixture of locations taken from tourist brochures and films. What, for example, is Casablanca? Is it a real city in Morocco or a virtual place wrapped in romance, where the two main protagonists of the same-named film dramatically meet and later part? Encyclopaedias devote more lines to the film than to the city (Websters Interactive Encyclopedia, 1994; Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia Deluxe Edition 1998). Hotels bearing the name Casablanca claim to be “inspired by the glamour and romance of the film” (www.expedia.com; www.travelworm.com). Tourist agencies in the Moroccan town of Dar al-Baida, the real Casablanca, present the city primarily through romantic songs from the film (*As Time Goes By*) (www.moroccotravelandtours.com), with less focus placed on its cultural and historical characteristics.

The example of Casablanca perhaps best illustrates the fact that on imaginative maps “reality is replaced by its symbols” (BAUDRILLARD 1985). On such a virtual map, “favourable places”, known from films, advertising and global media, intermix with real locations. And so the world that is revealed in the landscape of Croatian ergonyms is not based only on domestic stereotypes, but also on global ones. It is not determined only by its own culture, but by global culture as well.

Conclusions

After reconstructing the basic landmarks within the spatial ergonomic-semiotic world model, we might ask: And what is the meaning of this model? What insights has it given us? In explaining the role of the given semiotic model and models similar to it, we shall refer once again to Jurij Lotman. “Semiotics creates the non-semiotic world. It is futile to think that nature surrounds us with a non-semiotic world and that a semiotic lake exists within it. We are in fact surrounded by a non-semiotic world, but we do not see it. We see the world that we create – the semiotic world of the non-semiotic world. And thus how can we escape

⁷ Translation by author

beyond the borders of semiotics?" (LOT-MAN 1994, p. 458)⁸. Therefore, through knowledge of the spatial semiotic-ergonymic model we do not gain a greater understanding of the real (non-semiotic) world, but rather an understanding of the signifying systems of our own culture.

Ergonyms represent a form of reflective cultural discourse about one's own spatial area and the neighbouring world. To whose culture does this semiotic-ergonymic world belong? Whose identity do ergonyms reproduce? Proceeding from the concept of culture as an intersubjective reality, as a totality of organised symbolic systems through which human communication is realised, we may understand the meaning built into ergonyms as a product (and medium) of interaction and communication among people who live in one and the same area: a state, a region, a city. The ergonymic semantic field illustrated in this paper is the whole into which the mosaic of Croatian identities had been installed: from the identities of name-givers (owners of firms) to the identities of product/service consumers, i.e. the people who make up local and regional communities and whose value systems name-givers anticipate in order to be commercially successful.

The world on the Croatian ergonymic map reveals itself in a certain linear perspective: the closer the area – the larger it appears, i.e. the more references that are made to it. Judging by all the data, small homelands – regions, home-areas – are spatial units with which Croats most readily identify. Quite unexpectedly for a post-socialist and post-war country, self-identification through national references (to the greater homeland) is practised much less than through regional/home-region references. Regional ergonyms are four times more numerous than national ones. The effect of the linear perspective persists also on other levels: ergonyms in regard to the inner space of the country are five times more numerous than those in regard to broader cultural affiliations, and the latter are, on their part, more numerous than ergonyms in regard to the totally external world. The non-semiotic (real) world, therefore, is transposed on the ergonomic map in quite a reconstructed form.

In geographic literature there is a well-known thesis on the role of iconic images of nature in shaping territorial identities,

or rather on the relationship between a people or nation and the territory or nature it occupies (COSGROVE 2003, pp. 262 - 264). Selected topographic features are used by film-makers, poets and novelists in order to express a collective identity (BASSIN, 2000; GLEASON, 2000; MCCANNON 2000). COSGROVE claims that "... correlation of people and territory through landscape can be found in every European nation" (COSGROVE 2003, p. 263). Croatian ergonyms confirm that iconic images of natural features can be used as a means of self-indication. Thus, for example, rivers and mountains appear as very important landmarks on the ergonymic map (the Drava, Sava, Vuka, Zrmanja, Una, Mura and other rivers, the Velebit, Biokovo, Dinara, Kalnik and other mountain ranges). Yet the most frequently mentioned home-region element in ergonyms is *Adriatic*, and its semantic meaning expresses absolute pride in "our sea" – "the most beautiful sea in the world" – a *cliché* which is repeated regularly in Croatian tourist advertisements, as well as in everyday discourse and in the media.

Croatian ergonyms prove the thesis on the mythological meaning of names. The mythological dimension of relations to the homeland can be noted in ergonyms referring to the former glory of presently non-existent or significantly reduced formerly powerful spatial formations (Liburnia, Vinodol). The mythological meaning of names is well expressed in the frequency of mentioning some spatial terms and not mentioning others. The mythical meaning of *Velebit* – a mountain range and a nation symbol, or of the term *Europe* – a symbol of future prosperity and order – can be measured by the relative frequency of ergonyms referring to them. On the other hand, the avoidance of ergonyms which could be associated with the compromised former Yugoslav notion of "brotherhood and unity" is in accordance with their low axiological status. Terms such as Danube (= Croatian *Dunav*) and the Balkans (= *Balkan*) are very rare, and names such as Serbia, Belgrade (or references to any Serbian city or natural feature) are totally absent – they are avoided in a wide arch.

The deformation (anamorphosis) of the geography of the non-semiotic world is semiotically most expressed in the ergonymic model of the external world. The specificity of this model is primarily in the fact that it reproduces only a part of

the world. Due to the commercial function of ergonyms, only desirable parts of the external world are incorporated into their semantic (semiotic) field. By reconstructing it, we can understand many facets of the culture that semiotically envisions the external world. In such a desired external world, the basic landmarks are areas and places information about which derives from films, tourist advertisements and *high-style* magazine columns. Although the semiotic spatial system of the world in its entirety is deformed in relation to its non-semiotic prototype, its major deformations can be reduced to two: domination of the developed West and domination of urban areas.

Geographic ergonyms are agents in the reproduction of culture. Designations on signboards by which we pass every day are a part of the landscape, understood not only as a form (appearance and style, the morphological composition of a place), but they are also part of the landscape understood as a representation, as a complex system of meanings, as a reflection of cultural values, identities, imperatives (MITCHELL 2005), as a way of seeing the world (COSGROVE 1985, p. 55). And quoting Don MITCHELL, "while landscape signifies the look of the land, it also signifies a specific way of looking at the land" (MITCHELL 2005, p. 50). Geographical ergonyms once more show how subjective images of places and spaces are inscribed into landscapes.

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⁸ Translation by author

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