

Underspecified, Ambiguous or Formal: Problems in Creating Maps Based on Texts

How can a reading of a textual description of a landscape be expressed as a map? Maps form a medium different from verbal texts, and the differences have consequences not only for how things are said, but also for what can be said at all using maps. Where are these limitations to be found?

The research presented in the paper has been supported by a computer-based model of *Major Peter Schnitlers grenseeksaminasjonsprotokoller 1742–1745, volume 1* (Oslo, 1962), built up through a semi-automatic modelling process. The process of creating the original text, as well as maps made by the same author, has also been reconstructed. This is used in an investigation into how geographical information read from a text can be expressed as maps, resulting in a typology consisting of three types:

1. **Under-specified texts.** Based on such a text, more than one map can be drawn, and at least two of these maps are significantly different.
2. **Fully specified textual descriptions.** Only one map that can be drawn based on the description.
3. **Ambiguous figures and negation.** The spatial information read from the text cannot be represented as one single static map.

It must be stressed that this is a description of the process of expressing information about geography *as* a map, not *onto* a pre-existing map. This means that the contextual information one would get from a pre-existing map or knowledge about the landscape is not taken into consideration.

The typology will be presented in detail, together with the evidence in the source text on which it is based. Further, ways to overcome the problems of map representations will be discussed, and some conclusions about the relationship between verbal text and geographical maps will be presented.