

NARRATIVE MAPS OF DANGER AS A MEANS OF SUBJECTIVE PROTECTION

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This article examines how mental danger maps are mediated in belief narratives. The focus, which is novel, is on narrative localisation phenomena in connection with mobile sources of danger. The author demonstrates the universality of the process of constructing danger maps, illustrating its similarities with older legends (e.g. plague legends) and with modern media-influenced narrations. In addition, the importance of such maps in the selective collecting and remembering of information is discussed, as well as the ways in which they trigger re-narration and actual behaviour. The author concludes that, in addition to pragmatic aims (as a tool for granting safety), such maps also support one's subjective experience of coping with dangerous situations.

Keywords: belief narratives, mental mapping, place, narrative localisations, media-influenced narration, Estonia

Introduction

Belief narratives routinely refer to geographic locations and place names. For example, nearly 90% of Estonian plague legends mention specific places (Hiimäe 1997: 29).¹ On the one hand, the occurrence of placenames is expected – this type of localisation is especially characteristic of the legend genre as it adds credibility and specificity. On the other hand, other possible functions surrounding the use of place names and localising strategies are of considerable interest – one of the foremost among these is a certain mental “encouraging” function. In belief narratives about plague spirits, ghosts, and other supernatural phenomena, places help determine dangers that are otherwise hard to localise and which tend to turn up without advance warning. With the help of placenames, the initial cognitive mapping of landscape occurs, often based on a “dangerous – safe” oppositional dichotomy. What kinds of behaviour are considered to be appropriate follows in accordance with these emerging cognitive maps. Most belief narratives deal with sources of danger that have a clearly defined, fixed location (for example, forest spirits occur mainly in woods, the spirits of the deceased in the cemetery or at the site of a deadly accident). In the following sections, I rather focus on narrative localisation phenomena that are connected with mobile sources of danger and which, therefore, are not linked to a specific place. For example, a plague epidemic gradually spreads out and therefore cannot be associated with one specific place; however, it can be associated with a certain direction of movement, and in epidemiology these disease vectors are a well-studied phenomenon. In folk belief, quite logically, people tried to narratively map the route of the plague spirit as the personification of the disease (cf. Tangherlini 1988). I will first describe the processes of mental mapping in the plague lore, and then draw some parallels

¹ Legends regarding the spirit of the plague (Black Death) who was thought to wander around and spread the disease among people. The Estonian plague legends were mostly collected at the end of the nineteenth and during the first half of the twentieth century.

with modern narratives, such as the delineation of the moving trajectory of dangerous criminals through linking their activities to specific spots on the landscape. I proceed from the assumption that, in addition to stationary sources of danger, people in their storytelling also narratively mapped moving sources of danger. This process of outlining mental danger maps is in many ways similar in older legends and in modern media-influenced belief narratives.

My research is based on my anthology of Estonian plague legends that contains approximately 1500 legend texts (Hiemäe 1997). My conclusions about localisation phenomena in modern traditions are drawn on the basis of Estonian newspaper articles and several hundreds of related commentaries on the Internet, social media posts (Facebook), and interviews containing similar strategies of danger mapping. I conducted twenty-five semi-structured interviews about belief-based protective mechanisms (e.g. protective magic, certain protective behaviours) that people of various ages and genders use. I also asked them various other questions, including questions concerning their spatial behaviour.

Mental Maps: Theory and Practice

The topic of cognitive or mental maps emerged in connection with Eduard Toman's study of the spatial behaviour of rats in 1948 and, a dozen years later, Kevin Lynch (1960) added his groundbreaking work on the use of cognitive maps in the perception of urban space. In psychology, semiotics, human geography, and – to some extent – also folklore (e.g. Ryden 1993; Rogers 2002), cognitive maps have found a particular resonance from the 1970s onwards, although the meaning of the term “cognitive mapping” varies across studies and disciplines.

The basic definition that fits best into the context of this study was developed by the human geographers Roger M. Downs and David Stea:

Cognitive mapping is a process composed of a series of psychological transformations by which an individual acquires, codes, stores, recalls and decodes information about the relative locations and attributes of phenomena in his everyday spatial environment. (Downs and Stea 2011: 312)

In narrative research, mental or cognitive mapping is understood mostly as the ways in which the narrator uses a mental map as a mnemonic device or the listener creates a map of the places mentioned in a narrative to improve their orientation and understanding (e.g. Labrie 1999; Herman 2003). These approaches therefore focus, in most cases, on specific narrators or groups of listeners.

In contrast, the first part of this study focuses on the narrative reconstruction of the trajectory of a mythological being – the plague spirit – in Estonian plague legends. Thus, we can only speak of the “everyday spatial environment” that Downs and Stea mentioned in their definition with certain reservations. In legends, places mentioned often correspond with actual places in the vicinity of the storytellers (for more on this topic, see Callaway Moss 1983; Kvartič 2012), yet these places are culturally, mythologically and narratively determined or, as Barbara Bender points out in connection with landscapes in general, “[they are] created by people – through their experience and engagement with the world. Thus, they are involved in a continuing transformation and restructuring process” (Bender 2002: S103; see also Gunnell 2008: 14ff).

Several authors have concluded that belief narratives – and folk narratives in general – are preserved in memory not only as texts but also in some pictorial form (e.g. Stanonik 1993:

158) or as certain geosemantic images (e.g. Tangherlini 2010; Broadwell and Tangherlini 2016). Although these images include locations that exist in the physical world, the imaginary danger maps are drawn on the basis of their mental representations. The cultural context of the period in which the narratives were produced is clearly reflected on these maps. In a plague legend the route of the plague spirit is usually depicted within one borough or parish. Thus it does not normally exceed a few dozen kilometres, covering only the area within which people with a relatively sedentary lifestyle typical of the period (i.e. until the first half of the twentieth century) actually predominantly moved. Nowadays, people are more mobile, but the narrative localisation models are usually still based on locations in their close vicinity. Modern mental danger maps may sometimes well include broader areas and even places outside of Estonia, but their impact on the behaviour of the audience of such narratives can still be primarily observed only in a radius of a few dozen kilometres (i.e. the size of a borough). In part due to the limitations of human cognition and memorising capacity, but in fact largely due to the tendency to focus on one's immediate neighbourhood, the number of sites listed in the narratives is limited. For example, in plague legends the number of places mentioned does not usually exceed a maximum of five.

It is worth mentioning that a cognitive danger map stored in one's memory is not quite the same as an official geographical map (although the latter is, in principle, also a pictorial reconstruction of the landscape with the help of culturally agreed symbols and signs). In addition to the selected landscape information, an individual's mental orienting scheme additionally always contains information and meanings on the level of emotions and feelings, thereby representing the subjective worldview of the person. More precisely, a certain multi-layeredness can be observed in cognitive maps: some layers (e.g. the layers connected with personal experiences) are individual while others are shared within a group. The sum of these layers forms a unique whole for each individual. Danger maps that are constructed on the basis of belief narratives can be regarded as just one layer in this array of maps. In the individual mental maps of modern narrators, a number of places can be found where they themselves have never been physically, but only in their imagination, whereas the biographical and folk tradition-based memory is nowadays supplemented by a mass media-based memory.

In the case of belief narratives in a broader sense, we can talk about temporary and permanent place entities on mental maps, or sometimes of a combination of both. For example, the plague spirit (i.e. a mobile source of danger) can pass a graveyard (i.e. a source of danger that is associated with a fixed spot on the landscape) on its route. In modern narratives the graveyard is associated with the activity of dreaded criminals and maniacs (this view was supported by media coverage of a murder case that took place in a graveyard in Tallinn in 2012; the young offender was immediately referred to as "the graveyard killer" – cf. Kuul 2012). Thus, people place actually existing sites onto their mental danger maps, but the meaning assigned to them can change, depending on the narrating tradition, human experience, and the ways in which it is verbalised in a given cultural context. Places can be seen as reference points or as bases of gradation – the more people talk about them in the context of dangers, the more convincing their role as a source of threat becomes.²

Often the routes on narrative danger maps have a start and an end point, and a number of spots of minor significance between them. In addition, centres, peripheries and borders between areas are perceived with a different meaning attached (dangerous – safe, currently

² The relationships between the intensity of storytelling connected with certain places and fears dominating in a society have also been analysed by Matei et al. 2001.

relevant – passively relevant, etc.). Such imagined borders may be sharp or blurry, and more or less ready to change.³

The Narrative Fixing of the Plague Spirit's Route

In the case of the plague it was not clear why it broke out, how it would attack large areas and when it would stop. As a result, mythological thinking first gave the disease a form that permitted an invisible disease lurking everywhere to be compressed into the form of a visible disease spirit. This personified form (typically a plague boy or man), then enabled people to connect the threat to certain places in the landscape, thus rendering the trajectory of the disease as it spread around narratively predictable.

Estonian plague legends were mainly collected in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. This means that the informants heard them at least two hundred years after the last plague epidemic had struck Estonia. Thus it appears that even when dangerous situations have lost their contemporary relevance in the real world, they can be attributed a symbolic value that supports the preservation of corresponding narratives in later times. Hence, plague narratives do not simply reflect the risk relating to a real disease. Providing instructions for staying safe cannot be the only function of plague legends; they must have had a broader function as transmitters of a certain survivor-mentality: the descriptions about surviving dangers in the past and the elaboration of methods for doing so pass on the message that coping with dangerous situations will also be possible in the future. Two types of place descriptions can be found in plague legends: helping place hints, and places that mark the incremental spread of the plague.

Helping Place Hints and Place Names Connected with the Spread of Plague

Legend texts indicate that the plague spirit had a clear plan regarding places it had to pass through. Hence, those who managed to stay away from these places were able to survive, because in the majority of cases the plague spirit visited each place only once. At the end of a legend, the plague usually disappears – if not from the entire world, then at least from the given region. Thus, places seem to be more important to the plague spirit than people. The calculations of the movements of the plague spirit are mostly based on villages (see example one below), and to a lesser extent on farmsteads (see example two below). Such a way of thinking is predictable, as until the beginning of the twentieth century, people were not typically called by their family name (the law that obliged people to have family names was issued in 1819 but even afterwards people were rather referred to by the name of their farmstead).

According to some legends, the plague spirit makes plans for its further moves, whereby it sings or murmurs the names of the places where it intends to go, and remarkably often a human accidentally overhears its words, thus being able to protect themselves from the danger lurking in these places. Often the plague spirit knows these place names by heart, whilst there

³ A similar principle of cognitive space perceptions has been used when planning public information systems in cities (cf. Jarz 1997: 94).

is also a legend type describing how the plague spirit carries a book with place names and then reads them out aloud, giving those who overhear it hints as to its planned itinerary. Here the classic motive of the book of fate, which contains people's names, has been extended through the addition of specific locations.

Here (example one) is an example of a legend in which the plague spirit reveals its planned route.

Example One:

In the village of *Sigapusma, Koigi County*, there was a plague stone and a plague field. There are said to be footprints on this stone, and a cavity that looks like a book. The plague spirit was there and was reading [aloud] its book to find out the places that it still had to visit. So there were the villages of *Päinurme* and *Pätsavere, Suureluige* and *Lustivere*, to which it still intended to go. (Hiimäe 1997: 134, 48B)⁴

Although plague spreads out in random directions, in the narratives it moves only in one direction and only one plague spirit (or one dangerous person in modern narratives) is on the move at a time. However, the places described in the legends were positioned rather randomly with reference to the legends' particular narrator: the trajectories of the plague spirit could move away from as well as towards, and through as well as around the home village of the narrator.

The places mentioned by the plague spirit in a legend function as a set of instructions regarding proper behaviour: the people who are not in dangerous places are not at risk; the rest can mobilise themselves against the danger through culturally coded magical "proper" behaviour. Based on the structural categories that William Nicolaisen has outlined in legend plots, Timothy Tangherlini (2013: 48) points out that the success or failure of such behaviour represents an ideological endorsement or rejection of that strategy on the part of the narrator. Respective narratives thus make up repertoires of schemes of action or counteraction that can be considered potentially helpful within a given system (cf. de Certeau 1984: 23). Despite the fact that plague legends are likely to be post-plague reconstructions, they still present an ideal outcome, explaining what could be done or could have been done in order to survive, or offering a description of the reasons why the plague spared some places, as in the following legend.

Example Two:

In old times, in the times of plague, people died like fleas. Near *Suure-Jaani* the farmer of the *Tooba* farmstead was in the forest and saw the plague spirit dancing and singing under the trees: "Patt-patt-patt to *Paelamaa* [farmstead], köps-köps-köps to *Kõnnu* [farmstead], topp-toppp to *Tooba* [farmstead]!"

The farmer understood that it was the plague and said: "Let's see!" He went home, took a rowan cudgel, carved three five-pointed stars on it and started waiting. In the night someone came and asked to be let in. The farmer opened the door and saw a black man. The farmer started beating the man with his cudgel until the plague started begging that the farmer let him go. The farmer said: "When you promise that you won't go anywhere anymore to kill, I will stop." The plague promised and the man stopped beating. (Hiimäe 1997: 124cA)

⁴ The journey of the plague spirit that is depicted in the legend covers about forty kilometres and all versions of this type of legend have been collected from approximately the same territory that is covered in the legend. The emphasis in this and the following example text has been added by the author to indicate the connection with places and place names.

According to this example text, properly conducted protective behaviour granted the survival of the residents of the farmstead and of the surrounding area. Within the framework of the short legend text a mental map is established, which covers the emergence of the threat in the community as well as their escape from it. The observation that one and the same mental map can cover both has also been made by Brian Bocking (1993: 161).

A large number of the actually existing places in the legends are connected with the beginning, the incremental spread, or with the end of the plague. For example, a Katku [Plague] farmstead can mark the place where the plague broke forth, but also the place where it ended, thus symbolising perishing as well as surviving. In several legends collected from Estonian islands it is mentioned that the plague spirit initially came by boat from overseas, i.e. from a sphere that was perceived as foreign and therefore potentially more dangerous, and was finally sent away by a boat again (Hiemäe 1997: 97ff).

The above-described localisation phenomena occur, to a lesser extent, in legends about other mobile dangers as well (e.g. the *ague spirit*). Yet, interestingly, although the devil is well known in folklore and has several characteristics in common with the plague spirit (e.g. mobility, a demonic nature), devil legends do not usually feature danger maps connected with the devil. One of the reasons may be that, in comparison to the plague spirit who visited villages over a limited period of time and only once, the devil was depicted as omnipresent. On the other hand, the emphasis in the devil legends lies on human morals and therefore they focus on people rather than places. However, there is an interesting modern development: there exist certain new pentecostal communities whose members try to map the places where the devil or other demons are believed to dwell. All suspect places are marked on a geographical map in order to jointly combat the demons lurking there (for more on this phenomenon called “spiritual mapping” see Holvast 2009). It is noteworthy that local legend folklore is used to identify such demonic control centres: the influence of the locally known furious supernatural being Rudra has been thought to be the cause of recurrent big floods and hurricanes in Bangladesh, whilst the war on the territory of the former Yugoslavia has been connected with pagan cult places in the area, etc. (cf. Holvast 2009: 216–217). Thus, the mapping of mobile as well as fixed sources of danger has been combined in the case of plague spirit legends.

Modern Localisation Strategies: The Trajectories of Criminals

Réne Holvast uses the term “geography of fear” (Holvast 2009) when talking about spiritual mapping. On a more general level, this term relates, first and foremost, to feminist discourse, and one of the main topics in the corresponding works has been the perception of space from a gender perspective (cf. Tüür 2001: 86). Research has been conducted into women’s fears in connection with certain place types (e.g. underground parking lots, certain city districts) and also the respective mental maps (Tüür 2001: 88). My study does not focus on the gender aspects; however, it is still relevant to note that certain dangers and their mapping are clearly gender-related, while others have a more universal character. Additionally, categories of threat change over time, e.g. the plague spirit would not induce fear in modern people, yet narratives about dangers topical today nevertheless contain similar structural elements and are connected with similar mapping strategies. Although many people today still perceive the existence of supernatural threats (e.g. night hags, poltergeists, ghosts), the majority of these

are connected with a fixed location. Yet I will continue with the focus on mobile dangers and try to see if the mapping process is also similar in the case of non-supernatural phenomena. In the context of belief narratives, both old and modern, it should be stressed that such mental maps usually present a general cultural knowledge gained through oral or written texts, and not necessarily dangers that an individual has actually personally experienced in a certain place. Signs with messages such as “beware of pickpockets”, located in Tallinn and other tourist areas can be regarded as one example of such narratives, which involve a concentrated warning.

Since the autumn of 2012, English language instructions regarding the avoidance of rape have been spread by Estonian speaking females, and also some male users on Facebook (*Through-a-rapists-eyes* 2011). In addition to preventative instructions concerning behaviour, a list of dangerous place types is given; for example, the parking lots of supermarkets (especially underground) are mentioned as the most dangerous places, followed by the parking lots and garages of office buildings, and public toilets. As the actually moving trajectories of rapists are unknown, here again it is places rather than people that become associated with carrying the danger. The mapping of such places may give women helpful hints, yet at the same time such warning narratives create maps that build up the feelings of fear and danger present in these places, as mentioned in the following interview:

Underground parking lots and dark streets are special places [which are feared]. Underground parking lots are so mostly because in films there is always some crap going on there, the shootings of gangsters and in one film an especially evil character took out a cut-off human head from his bag in an underground parking lot. And now these “avoid rape” guidelines also stress that these are the most dangerous places. Finally, all of this has its effect, I know of other people who experience vague fears in underground parking lots. Therefore, I have got the feeling that you should not show your fear there. You must walk in a very confident and vigorous way to your car, yet at the same time you should secretly watch your surroundings and be alert. And the same is true of dark streets: if possible, you must walk in the middle of the street in a quick and confident manner. I have never experienced dangerous incidents in such places, maybe I have been able to prevent them from happening. (Woman, 41 years, 6. 10. 2015)

Such personal stories and warnings in the media have a number of points and common place motifs in common with internationally known crime legends (a subcategory of urban legends), e.g. the plot theme in which rapists in underground parking lots try to lure women away from their cars by playing them recorded sounds of a baby weeping.

An Estonian journalist who has discussed violent stereotypes has pointed out that most people regard lonely dark places as the most dangerous. Nevertheless, according to official statistics, violent crimes are committed in a familiar milieu in most cases, for example, at home and by people the victim already knows. In the web discussion that followed his article, a commentator came up with an ironic, yet straightforward suggestion for danger mapping: “Put the corpses on the map as red dots, so you will get a realistic picture of the danger, all else is fiction” (Kooli 2010).

In November 2009, a so-called “baseball bat murder” took place in Schnell Park in Tallinn, where an unidentified criminal killed a woman with a baseball bat. Due to this crime, the area became a significant spot on Estonians’ mental danger map – regardless of the slim chances that the murderer would return to the park. The mass media, in turn, played a role in this process of narrative focusing: for example, the title of a newspaper article (Delfi.ee 2009) clearly stresses the contrast of “loved / safe – dangerous”: “The baseball bat murder turned

the loved Schnell Park into a nest of fear". Readers' comments to the article confirm this change in perception. For example, one reader commented: "Yes, I must admit that earlier I used to walk alone in that park late at night, despite knowing that you could meet scoundrels and drug-abusers there. But now I don't dare go there even in broad daylight". Some statements are even retrospective: "I have always associated this area with a horrible place"; or "Even earlier very serious robberies and murders as well as beatings occurred in Schnell Park. This is one of the most dangerous places in Tallinn". As can be seen, modern people's mental maps correlate more or less with crime reports and crime-related nuances as highlighted in the media. Schnell Park gradually started to disappear from people's active fear maps only two years later, after the murderer was caught and the court trial ended with a guilty verdict, which was again extensively covered in the media.

Thus, the movement of uncaught criminals is fixated in people's minds in a manner similar to that of the plague spirit: their paths are unknown and their next offences unpredictable, yet people still seek to establish localising links. While the previous example related to one place, the following case analysis presents a danger map that includes a number of places.

Narratives of Dangerous Men in Cars

At the end of March 2012, a shocking piece of news appeared in the Estonian media concerning a nine-year-old Russian girl Varvara who was first claimed missing and later found murdered in Narva (e.g. Smirnov 2012). According to an initial version of events, the girl was seen getting into an unidentified car before disappearing; later this version was proven to be false, but the link with cars remained a permanent feature even present in later stories warning people of certain dangers. At the beginning of April, several people in Tartu County shared a warning on their Facebook walls.⁵ The author of the warning claimed that she had been informed by a trusted source that in the village of Kõrveküla, Tartu County, a stranger in a red car had offered a child to give him a lift home. Despite the fact that Kõrveküla is 150 kilometres away from Narva, the case was immediately connected with the one in Narva, as the author of the warning notes: "It is highly likely that it is the same murderer as the one from Narva". In a similar manner to the plague legends, the moving route of the danger is depicted to be moving in the close vicinity and the respective information is actively spread across a radius of a few dozen kilometres from the claimed danger spot (although an opening or concluding reference may also have been made to Narva – similarly as plague legends which listed places nearby sometimes began with a general remark, like: "The plague arrived at the island Muhu from overseas"). The warning also contains instructions motivating preventive behaviour, i.e. avoiding red cars and talking to strangers. The direct effect on people is likely to have spread over a distance of a few dozen kilometres: several spontaneous personal and Facebook conversations with mothers in the area revealed that they were affected by the warning: for instance, they forbade their children from walking alone, started to take notice of the colour of the cars in the area, etc. Hence, avoiding certain places depended on the narratively constructed mental danger map.

In October 2012, another warning spread on Facebook:

⁵ The examples in this section of the article are from private Facebook profiles and for reasons of privacy protection it was not possible to include complete references.

Let me inform you that there is a “candyman” in a grey car driving around in Mustamäe [a district in Tallinn]. The man has scars on his nose and is smartly dressed. He typically stops his car in a public place and asks a person in an authoritative voice to sit in his car, offering to take the person home. As a rule, such behaviour has no effect on adults, but it can have an effect on small schoolchildren. Please talk about it with your children over and over again! I also ask you to share this, so that this information will reach as many people as possible. (8. 10. 2012)

At the same time as this (in October 2012), a story about an uncaught male “maniac” who offered children candies and scared young women reached the media (web magazines, social media, newspapers – e.g. Smutov 2012). The account took place in a small town, Juuru, in Rapla County (more than 150 km from Narva and Kõrveküla). This time, no connection was made with the murder in Narva as the “maniac” had been active before the crime in Narva had taken place, but again the main defining feature was identical: the danger was moving in a car. According to the wave principle of the mass media, the “maniac” from Juuru received more media coverage after the news about the uncaught murderer from Narva had spread. The repetition of similar warnings led people to regard every person who was driving a car and talking to children to be a potential criminal. In a similar vein, in the times of the plague innocent travellers were likely to be accused of spreading the plague poison, or were mistaken for the plague spirit.

The last link in the localisation chain of a plague legend was the cessation of the illness in a given area. In modern narratives about dangerous criminals, the localisation chain ends with the criminals’ arrest, or with the emergence of a new, more intense news stories that push the older news into the background (cf. Hiiemäe 2008: 247). The narratives concerning danger associated with Schnell Park started to fade away in 2011 when the “baseball bat murderer” was sentenced for twenty years in prison. In the spring of 2013, stories of car-driving maniacs had also subsided, yet they were rather latent, awaiting another activation phase. In April 2013, news reports appeared in the media about a drunken man who had complimented an eleven-year-old girl in a supermarket in Tallinn. In an online commentary following these respective newspaper articles a direct parallel is once again drawn with the murderer from Narva: “For me this is a potential criminal who could well be the criminal from the Narva case” (Kossar 2013). Yet again, the danger map also affected people’s behaviour: several parents insisted that they would not dare send their children to this shop any more. In April 2016, the whole case finally came to an end with the news emerging that the murderer had been identified – he was a drug abuser who had committed suicide after the police had made him take a DNA test two years ago.

Mental danger maps build up a frame for occurrences that have already taken place, yet at the same time they also function as a timeless spatial model. When such a map has already been memorised, it tends to become activated in and through each subsequent similar situation.

Conclusions and Future Perspectives

Due to limitations on space, this article did not allow me to do anything more than present a few examples of danger maps. It would definitely be interesting to create a more extensive statistical overview of correlations between place designations in belief narratives and the places

of residence of their narrators, as Timothy Tangherlini (2010) has attempted to do on the basis of the legend material he has collected (see also the GhostScope tool: <http://etkpace.scandinavian.ucla.edu/maps/ghostscope.html>). Such an analysis would let me test my hypothesis that the danger maps in belief narratives usually cover a territory of just a few dozen kilometres. As regards research into modern danger narratives, a suggestion put forward by Bin Jiang is of interest: according to his idea, maps of the mental representations of whole cities could be drawn with the help of computer technology (Jiang 2012), for instance, on the basis of postings from certain social media groups about places that are perceived as dangerous. In any case, such modern material would require more systematised methods of collecting and analysing, e.g. parallels should be drawn between localized warning stories and international crime legend motifs.

However, in the above article I have tried to show that regardless of whether we are dealing with an old traditional legend or a modern media-influenced narration, the behaviour of the audience depends on decisions that are based on mental danger maps. These maps represent a combination of traditional and culturally predetermined information and individual experiences, and they reflect shifts in the borders of safe territory through the invasion of dangerous mythological or human agents. In plague legends, information about dangerous places is often mediated by the plague spirit itself or by the narrator, yet in contemporary warning narratives this role of the super-informed knower has been partly taken over by the mass media.

Mental danger maps are usually simplified and biased. For example, there is a tendency wherein narrative stereotypes of dangerous places (combined with dangerous human or supernatural agents) are demonised, yet a danger that occurs in a place that is missing on the mental map can go unnoticed (cf. Matei et al. 2001). However, the aim of this article was not to uncover the extent to which the described mapping strategies can actually help a person in granting his or her physical safety. I have rather intended to show the importance of such danger maps in selective information collecting and remembering, and as triggers for re-narrating and certain behavioural choices. In addition to these pragmatic aims, narrative maps have an encouraging function that supports one's subjective feeling of coping in life.

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Narative mape opasnosti kao sredstva subjektivne zaštite

Sažetak

Ovaj članak istražuje kako se mentalne mape opasnosti posreduju u narativima vjerovanja. Novi se fokus stavlja na narativnu lokalizaciju fenomena u vezi s pokretnim izvorom opasnosti. Autorica pokazuje univerzalnost procesa stvaranja mapa opasnosti, opisujući njegove sličnosti sa starijim legendama (primjerice legendama o kugi) te modernim pripovijedanjem pod utjecajem medija. Osim toga, raspravlja se i o važnosti takvih mapa u selektivnom prikupljanju i pamćenju informacija, kao i o načinu na koji one dovode do ponovnog pripovijedanja i stvarnog ponašanja. Autorica zaključuje da, osim pragmatičnih ciljeva (kao sredstva kojim se jamči sigurnost), takve mape također podupiru pojedinačno subjektivno iskustvo suočavanja s opasnim situacijama.

Ključne riječi: narativi vjerovanja, mentalne mape, mjesto, lokalizacije narativa, pripovijedanje pod utjecajem medija, Estonija