Introduction to Geoinformatics – IFGI-Munster SS 2016

Assignment #2 – An essay on "Ontology of Geographical Objects"

In this assignment, you will read papers related to the idea of ontology of geographical objects. Please read first the two papers by Barry Smith and David Mark, the leading authority in the field ("Ontology and Geographical Kinds", "Do Mountains Exist?"). Then read the papers from Robinson ("Reexamining fiat, bona fide, and force dynamic boundaries for geopolitical entities") and from Galton ("On the Ontological Status of Geographical Boundaries"). Both Robison and Galton present a critical vision of Smith's division between *fiat* and *bona fide* objects.

Your assignment is to write a revision of the topic "The Ontology of Geographical Objects", using these four papers as a basis, but also making additional searches in the literature. Your assignment should consider, among others, the following questions:

1. What is a geographical object, considering the different definitions (Smith, Galton) and also the topological operations discussed in the previous assignment?
2. What are the main differences between the views of Smith and Galton regarding geographical objects?
3. What are the main criticisms by Robison against Smith's theory of *fiat* and *bona fide* objects?
4. Do mountains exist?
5. Do "bona fide" objects exist, in your opinion?
6. Consider the TED talk about differences between US and Japanese addresses (www.ted.com/talks/derek_sivers_weird_or_just_different?language=en). How do Smith and Galton deal with "blocks", "roads" and "addresses"?
7. What about networks, such as the London Underground and the internet? Does Smith's theory of fiat and bona fide objects apply to them? What counts as on object in a network?