OpenAtlas
An Open Source Application to Map Historical data with CIDOC CRM

Alexander Watzinger
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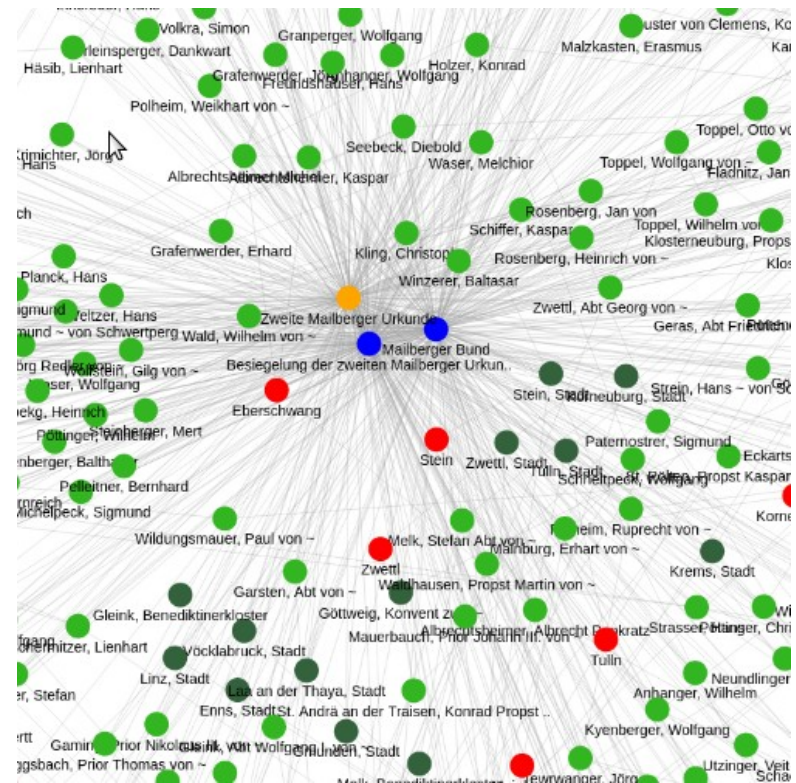Medieval Mount Athos between Wealth and Poverty

OpenAtlas

https://openatlas.eu

- Open source, browser based database software

- Acquire, edit and manage research data

- Historical, archeological and prosoprographic projects

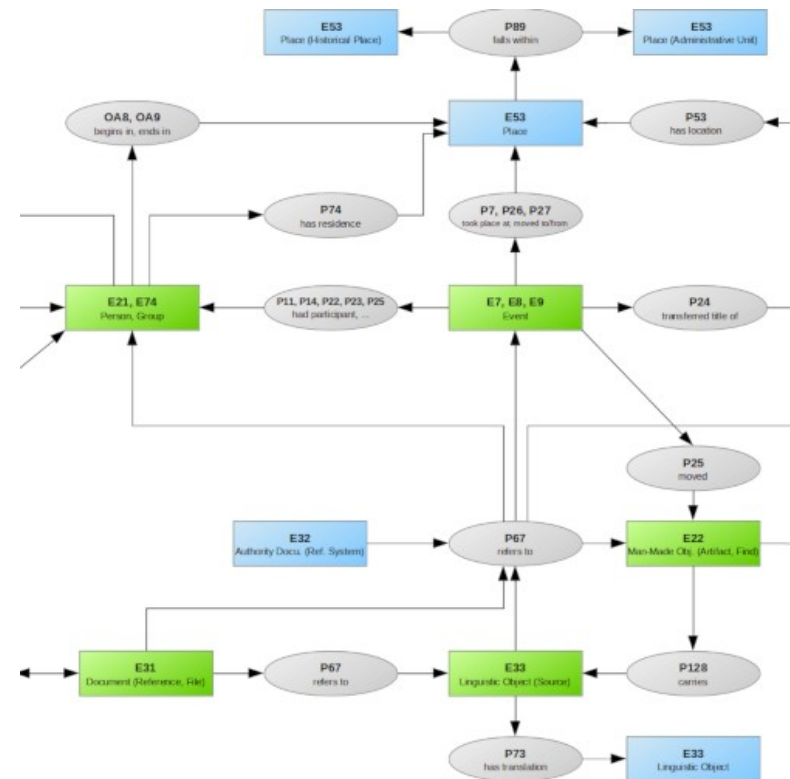- Developed by a small core team

https://demo.openatlas.eu/overview/network/

Model

CIDOC Conceptual Reference Model

- International standard (ISO)

- Developed by CIDOC CRM Special Interest Group

- Entities with classes like actor, source, event, place connected via links

- Stored in an object oriented network

https://demo.openatlas.eu/overview/model

Names in Historical Projects

Challenges

- Different or uncertain spelling

- Name parts with meaning

- Ambiguous names

- Possible duplicates

- Changes over time

Falsehoods Programmers Believe About Names

1. People have exactly one canonical full name.
2. People have exactly one full name which they go by.
3. People have, at this point in time, exactly one canonical full name.
4. People have, at this point in time, one full name which they go by.
5. People have exactly N names, for any value of N.
6. People's names fit within a certain defined amount of space.
7. People's names do not change.
8. People's names change, but only at a certain enumerated set of events.
9. People's names are written in ASCII.
10. People's names are written in any single character set.
11. People's names are all mapped in Unicode code points.
12. People's names are case sensitive.
13. People's names are case insensitive.
14. People's names sometimes have prefixes or suffixes, but you can safely ignore those.
15. People's names do not contain numbers.

Patrick McKenzie: Falsehoods Programmers Believe About Names
https://www.kalzumeus.com/2010/06/17/falsehoods-programmers-believe-about-names/
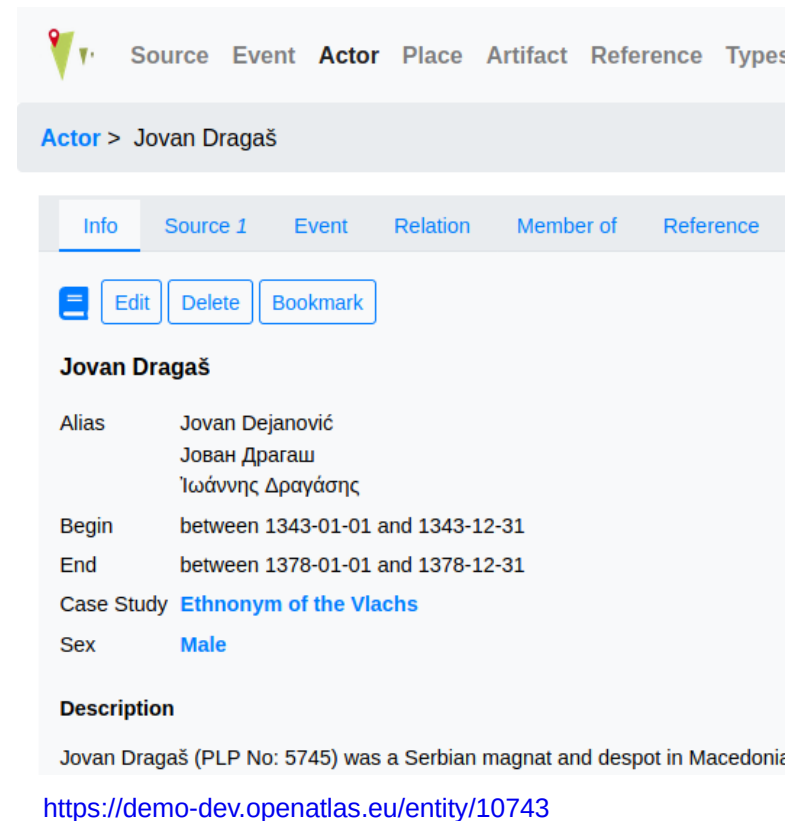
Names in Historical Projects

Names in Forms

- Classical approach
  - Title
  - First Name
  - Last Name
- This approach gets quickly problematic if:
  - A former name exists
  - A middle name exists
  - It's uncertain what was the first and what was the last name
- Would be adding more fields be a viable solution?

Names in Historical Projects

Names in OpenAtlas

- Only **one** free text field

- Unlimited aliases

- Supports a wide range of Unicode characters

- Title/function/profession via relations

- Tools to manage names

https://demo-dev.openatlas.eu/entity/10743

Names in Historical Projects

Title, Function, Profession

- Always in a relation to a group or institution

- Multiple relations possible
  - Can differ in time
  - Can differ in context
  - Can differ in function

- Allows more detailed data and analysis

https://demo.openatlas.eu/entity/144#tab-relation

Names in Historical Projects

Tools for names in OpenAtlas

- Links to external reference systems

- Display aliases in table overviews

- Also search in aliases

- Find name duplicates

- Find orphaned data

Admin > Check similar names

Class Person

Ratio 80

Search

Show 25 entries

Name

Andreya
Andreya

Andronikos III Palaiologos
Andronikos II Palaiologos

Banislavь
Stanislavь

Bogda
Bogde

Bogdan Prodan
Ioan Prodan

Bogdanь (2)
Bogdanь (1)

Bolta Exino
Costa Exino

Boyo
Boyo

https://demo-dev.openatlas.eu/admin/similar

Names in Historical Projects

Open Challenges

- There isn't one right solution, no silver bullet

- (Many) anonymous persons

- Track uncertainty if one name identifies one or more persons

Thank you for listening

https://openatlas.eu