

Spezialthema / *Special Topic*

**GEOGRAPHISCHE NAMEN ALS MITTLER
ZWISCHEN MENSCH UND RAUM
*GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES AS MEDIATORS
BETWEEN HUMANS AND SPACE***

**SOME WORDS OF INTRODUCTION TO A THEMATIC FOCUS
OFFSIDE MAINSTREAM GEOGRAPHY**

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Zusammenfassung

**EINIGE WORTE DER EINLEITUNG ZU EINEM SPEZIELLEN THEMA ABSEITS
GEOGRAPHISCHER HAUPTFORSCHUNGSRICHTUNGEN**

Die Einleitung zum Spezialthema dieses Bandes positioniert geographische Namensforschung im Feld der Wissenschaften, skizziert die verschiedenen Aspekte dieser Forschungsrichtung und beschreibt den noch sehr fragmentarischen institutionellen Rahmen der Toponomastik, der Wissenschaft von den Toponymen, geographischen Namen oder Ortsnamen. Sie hebt aber auch die symbolische und politische Bedeutung geographischer Namen hervor; weshalb sich auch viele Gremien von der lokalen bis zur globalen Ebene mit ihrer Standardisierung und Verwendung befassen. Schließlich werden die vier Fachartikel dieses Themenblocks und ihre Autoren und Autorinnen vorgestellt.

Geographical names, place names or toponyms are an interdisciplinary field of studies. They are in the first line the concern of linguists, but also of historians, cultural anthropologists, lawyers, cartographers and geographers. Linguists focus on the linguistic form and etymology of a place name, draw comparisons between names in different languages and regard also their embeddedness and relation into/to society. This latter branch, socio-

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linguistics, is very near to geographical aspects of toponomastics. For historians, the first historical documentation of a name, its further development as documented by source materials, its association with political and societal events and developments, the role of place names as keys to settlement and cultural history are most important. Cultural anthropologists look prevalingly into the handling of place names by indigenous societies, ask for the meaning of place names for the individual and for their role in creating an individual's place in the world. Law sciences regard place names as a subject of law prompting questions like "Who is entitled to name?", "Which names are at disposition?", "In which contexts can a name be used?" Designations of origin and asking for "Who has the right to apply them?" are characteristic topics here. Cartographers are, besides issues like name placement on maps or the design of toponymic data files also interested in the modes of rendering place names on maps, e.g. the choice between endonym and exonym, transliteration and phonetic transcription of names in other scripts.

Geographical research in place names, if cartography is not subsumed under geography, is a relatively recent current. It has gained momentum only after the seminal works of Yi-Fu TUAN in the 1970s but has decisively gained ground in the last few decades by researchers like Derek ALDERMAN, Maoz AZARJAHU, Naftali KADMON, Ferjan ORMELING, Reuben ROSE-REDWOOD, Paul WOODMAN and others. For geographers, place names are indicators of human relations to space, of space-related behaviour and human perceptions of space. Thus, the symbolic dimension of place names is in the foreground. Geographers draw conclusions from the fact that place naming indicates how a given society perceives its environment and sheds thus a light on its cultural disposition. Geographers regard place names also as markers of a community's own territory and as tools of relating the identity of a certain community to a section of space – a relation that is reflected and in turn becomes a facet of personal and group identity. Place names are from a geographical perspective also instruments for the mental structuring of complex geographical space into distinct geographical features and thus indispensable for communicating space-related concept systems. Place names are for geographers also important as supporting emotional ties between people and place in the sense of a section of space to which somebody has developed a special relationship as well as to locations not necessarily personally known, but having an image carried by a name.

Despite its vitality, toponomastics, the study of toponyms, is very much the 'faible' of individual researchers and lacks institutionalisation. There are no university or academy institutes devoted to this field, and even onomastics, the study of the larger variety of proper names including place names is only rarely institutionalised. There exist, however, global umbrella organisations fostering research in this field by conferences and publications: The *International Council of Onomastic Sciences* (ICOS)¹⁾ with its interdisciplinary structure and a considerable focus on toponomastics, and the *Joint ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymy*,²⁾ a joint venture of the two global umbrella organisations of cartography (International Cartographic Association, ICA) and geography (International Geographical Union, IGU).

¹⁾ <https://icosweb.net/drupal/>

²⁾ <http://www.igu-icatoponymy.org/>

Apart from academic research, place names are, due to their role as identity markers, their resulting political sensitivity and their potential to develop into sources of political conflict, but also for the sake of unambiguity, which can be very important in emergency situations, subject to standardisation and to a wide range of institutions concerned with it. The range extends from local and regional administrative levels via national names boards well to the global level, where the *United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names* (UNGEGN),³⁾ one of nine UN expert bodies, coordinates national standardisation internationally based on a place-name policy and passes UN resolutions that are to be respected by UN member states. Geographers and cartographers play an important role in it. In addition, other bodies work for the standardisation of place names in specific fields: the *International Hydrographic Organization* (IHO)⁴⁾ in respect to sea names for the purpose of maritime navigation; the *International Civil Aviation Organization* (ICAO)⁵⁾ in respect to airport names; the *Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research* (SCAR)⁶⁾ standardises place names on Antarctica.

Place names are thus, although still a marginal topic in geography, certainly attractive for geographers and offer a wide field for geographical research that is increasingly cultivated in recent years. A series of toponymic events in 2017 functioning as a turbo for place-name studies was an additional motive prompting us to devote a thematic focus to this topic. It comprises – after the usual selection process – four articles. They are authored by linguists and cultural anthropologists but are all relevant for geographers.

Under the title “Place-name policies in Scandinavia and elsewhere” Staffan NYSTRÖM, linguist from Uppsala, one of the rare full professors of onomastics and prominent member of ICOS as well as Past Convenor, UNGEGN Working Group on Toponymic Terminology, presents his keynote at the ICOS Congress 2017 in Debrecen. He hints at the need for place-name policy and reminds of its limitations, e.g. set by the private and commercial sphere or the everchanging character of language. He raises also the question, whether the intention to preserve place names as part of the intangible cultural heritage and modern demands can be conciliated. The article departs mainly from experiences in Sweden and Scandinavia. Taking, however, into account that the countries of this region have always been pioneers and benchmarks of place-name research and place-name policies, it addresses globally relevant procedures and problems.

Also the contribution of István HOFFMANN and Valéria TÓTH, both linguists from Debrecen, on “Theoretical issues of toponym typology” was presented as a keynote at ICOS Debrecen 2017, Valéria TÓTH having also been the main organiser of this triannual main global gathering of onomasticians. The article focuses in its first part on universal motives for place naming – a very geographical aspect of place names, since it expresses the relations of people to geographical space, what they regard as important, to be emphasised. The article then moves on to various name types by naming motives and features named.

³⁾ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/default.html>

⁴⁾ <https://www.iho.int/srv1/index.php?lang=en>

⁵⁾ <https://www.icao.int/Pages/default.aspx>

⁶⁾ <https://www.scar.org/>

What makes this article specifically interesting for Austrian readers is that it presents examples from the Pannonian Basin, to which Austria is more than a neighbour and which has – like the eastern parts of Austria – been settled by a Slavic population in the 6th and 7th centuries, from which the Hungarians, having invaded this area in the 9th and 10th centuries, like the Bavarians in the Austrian case, adopted many place names.

Přemysl MÁCHA, Horst LASSAK and Luděk KRTIČKA, cultural anthropologists from Ostrava, emphasise in their article “City Divided: Place names and nationalism in the Czech-Polish borderlands” the symbolic character of place names and focus on their role for identity building by the example of the modern twin cities Cieszyn and Český Těšín at the Polish-Czech border, which emerged from the former capital of the Austrian crownland Silesia (Teschen). It was a hotspot of national and regionalist conflict in the later 19th century due to its multinational composition (Germans, Poles, Czechs, Silesians) and suffered also from later hostile events that burden the situation up to the present day. The authors investigate into street-name changes on both sides of the border from before World War I up to present and relate them to contemporary naming policies and dominant political powers. Readers of this article will well be reminded of Peter AUTENGRUBER’s treatise on place-name changes in Vienna [Wien] in Volume 155 (2013) of our journal.

Justyna B. WALKOWIAK, linguist from Poznań, presents under the title “Female street namesakes in selected Polish cities” the first study on the visibility of women in Polish linguistic cityscapes. The study comprises the dozen Polish cities, in which the number of hodonyms, i.e. names of streets, squares, parks etc., was the highest in January 2018: Warsaw [Warszawa], Cracow [Kraków], Poznań, Łódź, Wrocław, Szczecin, Gdańsk, Bydgoszcz, Lublin, Katowice, Częstochowa and Białystok. They are spread over different parts of the country, and among them are several cities that underwent a complete population exchange after World War II resulting in a similar exchange of the namescape. The article also highlights the methodological problems with defining and counting female commemorative names, e.g. the distinction between naming after real (historical) persons and fictitious characters. Results by cities are related to reasons like city functions or the impact of the Church on a place of pilgrimage like Częstochowa. The study does not statistically reflect temporal changes in the share of names after women but refers in this respect to a study by A. JĘDRZEJCZAK as of 2014 on Warsaw and presents in general current trends in urban place naming in Poland.