TRENDS OF EXONYM USE IN EUROPEAN SCHOOL ATLASES

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1 INTRODUCTION

An exonym is according to the most recent definition of the United Nations (2007) a "name used in a specific language for a geographical feature situated outside the area where that language is spoken, and differing in its form from the name used in an official or well-established language of the area where the geographical feature is situated." (Jordan 2007a).

A main reason why exonyms have developed and are kept in use is adaptation of a name in writing and/or pronunciation to a certain receiver language, when it otherwise would be difficult to be written or pronounced (and in consequence also kept in mind) for the member of a receiver community.

But apart from this linguistic aspect exonyms in a certain language have developed and been maintained for features with which this language community was and is closely connected in economic, cultural and political terms. The use of exonyms by a certain language community reflects therefore very closely its network of spatial relations throughout history, and geographical features indicated by a lot of exonyms in different languages are usually prominent and have a long record of international relations. It also happens that exonyms reflect mediator languages. This applies, e.g., to exonyms in Swedish for places in Italy, which have been mediated by German.

The paper investigates into the connex between exonyms and spatial networks highlighting this issue by the examples of German, Italian and Hungarian exonyms for European features, in turn confined to urban settlements (cities, towns).

2 SOME GENERAL REMARKS ON THE USE OF EXONYMS

Exonyms are – similar to other proper names (e.g. personal names) – parts of a certain language and should be respected as such. They have their important function in communication between speakers of the same language. Especially in education, in conveying a topographical knowledge, in making the world comprehensable to children and pupils they are actually indispensable. How can an average child or pupil in Europe be asked to pronounce correctly and remember properly Arabic names like al-Ğazā'ir (English exonym: Algiers) or al-Quds (English exonym: Jerusalem)? This proves to be difficult even for most students of geography at the university level (as the author is used to experience with every new seminary). Not using exonyms would in this context mean to reduce the chances of acquring an important cultural technique, namely the acquisition of a sufficiently dense and correct mental map.

While exonyms have their important function in communication between speakers of the same language and in addressing a domestic audience, they lack a similar function in international use. They are therefore to be avoided or must at least be used with utmost sensitivity. This is recommended by the United Nations by several resolutions as well as by the most recent definition of exonyms, which comprises the addendum "………".

Besides lacking a real function the use of exonyms in international communication is a politically delicate matter. They are often conceived as expressions of linguistic imperialism, political and cultural domination.

Indeed, changes in a country's or language community's international position usually affects the use of exonyms by a certain language in general, in international as well as in domestic use. Publishers, scientists, media and public authorities usually react to such a new situation very quickly.

This may well be proved by the example of the German language community from the period before WWI up to present. Before WWI the German language used a lot of exonyms. In the later interwar period and during WWII even new exonyms were constructed (e.g. Litzmannstadt for Łódź in Poland), when nationalism culminated, went into the extreme and the German Reich was in fact the dominating power in Europe. Quite in contrast, in the post-war period German exonyms were used with extreme caution, also in domestic communication. This can be explained by the facts that National Socialism had stigmatised the German language in total, also its exonyms; that right there, where German exonyms had been most numerous, in East Central and Southeast Europe, political and cultural influence of German speaking countries had declined most, due to the general political conditions (Communist bloc) as well as due to the reduction of German speaking population. Also the most recent political changes, the Fall of the Iron

Curtain, the unification of Germany, the political integration of East Central Europe into the European Union, have already had their effects: German exonyms are again gaining ground.

3 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USE OF EXONYMS APART FROM CULTURAL RELATIONS

Apart from the fact that exonyms in a certain language have developed and been maintained for features to which this language community was and is closely connected in economic, cultural and political terms (the factor I am going to highlight in this paper), also some other factors are relevant for the development and use of exonyms. They modify the effect of the cultural relations factor in a way and may even distort it.

In mentioning these factors I confine myself on exonyms for cities and other settlements and do not take into account names of other geographical features like countries, regions, rivers, lakes or mountains and mountain ranges. All these other factors are in fact related to linguistic criteria (Jordan 2007b).

Exonym development and use is favoured, if

- ***the endonym language is linguistically distant from the exonym language***

Linguistically related languages are mutually at least partly understandable and their words are also easier to be pronounced correctly. The formation and use of exonyms, which owe their existence at least partly to linguistic adaptation from hardly understandable and pronounceable languages is therefore less necessary.

Examples: Languages of the Slavic, Romance or Germanic language groups have much in common and the formation/use of mutual exonyms is less necessary.

- ***the edonym is difficult to be pronounced by speakers of the exonym language***

Apart from the general linguistic relation between languages it occurs that individual endonyms of a certain language are more difficult to be spelled and pronounced by the speaker of the exonym language.

Examples: Wrocław, Łódź and Szczecin as opposed to Opole, Torun or Lublin among Polish names for German speakers.

- ***the endonym language is not a frequent secondary, educational or trade language with speakers of the exonym language***

When the community of the exonym language is well acquainted with the endonym language, since it is thaught in schools and frequently used as a secondary language, it can also be expected that it roughly knows how to spell and pronounce their names as well as to interpret the meaning of generic terms.

Examples: English place names as parts of the most widespread trade and secondary language in the German speaking community require the least the use of exonyms (e.g. to add Felsengebirge to Rocky Mountains), while this is different with most languages spoken in East-Central, East and Southeast Europe, which are only learned by a relatively small number of German-speakers.

- ***the endonym language has not a specific cultural prestige among the speakers of the exonym language***

When a language has a certain prestige in some cultural or societal fields or terminologies (music, literature, diplomacy, financial sector etc.) among the members of an exonym community, even though this language is not frequently used as a secondary language, it can be expected that (1) there is some acquaintance with spelling and pronunciation and that (2) words of this language (also place names) sound pleasant in the ears of the exonym language speaker making him/her hesitating to replace them by an exonym.

Examples: This refers among the German speaking community certainly to Italian and French. A rather useful benchmark in this respect are the languages in which pop songs are internationally accepted and successful.

4 THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL RELATIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF EXONYMS EXEMPLIFIED BY GERMAN, HUNGARIAN AND ITALIAN EXONYMS

Now I am going to verify my thesis that exonyms in a certain language have developed and been maintained (in larger numbers) for features to which this language community was and is closely connected in economic, cultural and political terms. I will do this by the examples of the German, Hungarian and Italian language communities.

This choice of languages has been made, since German, Hungarian and Italian were at least at times dominant languages in larger parts of Europe supported and backed by political and economic power. They dispose therefore over a large set of traditional exonyms representative for all kinds of economic, cultural and political relations. At the same time their spheres of political, economic and cultural influence differed and differ to quite an extent in spatial terms resulting in divergent spatial patterns of exonyms.

As regards the question, which exonyms are actually in practical use in these three languages I refer to official and semi-official gazetteers and documents elaborated or approved by the respective national boards on geographical names. They contain exonyms in wider use, i.e. known to a wider range of educated people, not only to specialists or to be used for specific purposes. The exonyms listed in these gazetteers and documents are also widely reflected by school atlases and other educational media, i.e. they have some normative impact and they correspond at least roughly (if not in every detail) to the selection made by geographical media addressing a domestic audience.

As regards the German speaking community I refer to the Proposals for the Rendering of Geographical Names in Austrian School Atlases, published in 1994 by the Austrian Board on Geographical Names (Back et al. 1994). This list of exonyms is precisely reflected by all Austrian school atlases published later. It corresponds, of course, specifically to Austrian needs (i.e. has more exonyms for places nearer to Austria), but can with a few modifications nevertheless be taken as representative of the German speaking community in general. It currently approaches a second revised edition, but changes will not be so many to be significant in this context.

For Hungarian exonyms I refer to an index elaborated most recently by the Hungarian Board on Geographical Names (Dutkó 2007). This index is not yet implemented in Hungarian geographical media for domestic use, but it will certainly have its impact in the near future.

As regards Italian exonyms my source is an indext elaborated and published by Sandro Toniolo already some time ago, but presented in a slightly revised version at the Eighth United Nations Conference on Geographical Names in Berlin 2002 (Toniolo 2002). Italian geographical media for national use reflect this list to a high extent.

The choice of exonyms made here may therefore be regarded roughly as representative for exonym use in the respective language communities.

Interestingly enough, the three sources recommend the use of an almost equal number of exonyms for cities and other settlement in Europe: 152 German exonyms, 169 Hungarian exonyms and 173 Italian exonyms. The fact that right the number of German exonyms is the relatively lowest is telling. It confirms that German-speakers still feel a higher political sensibility and that it has left its traces that geography teachers in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s recommended utmost sensibility with the use of exonyms.

*4.1 The spatial spread of German exonyms (Fig. 1)*
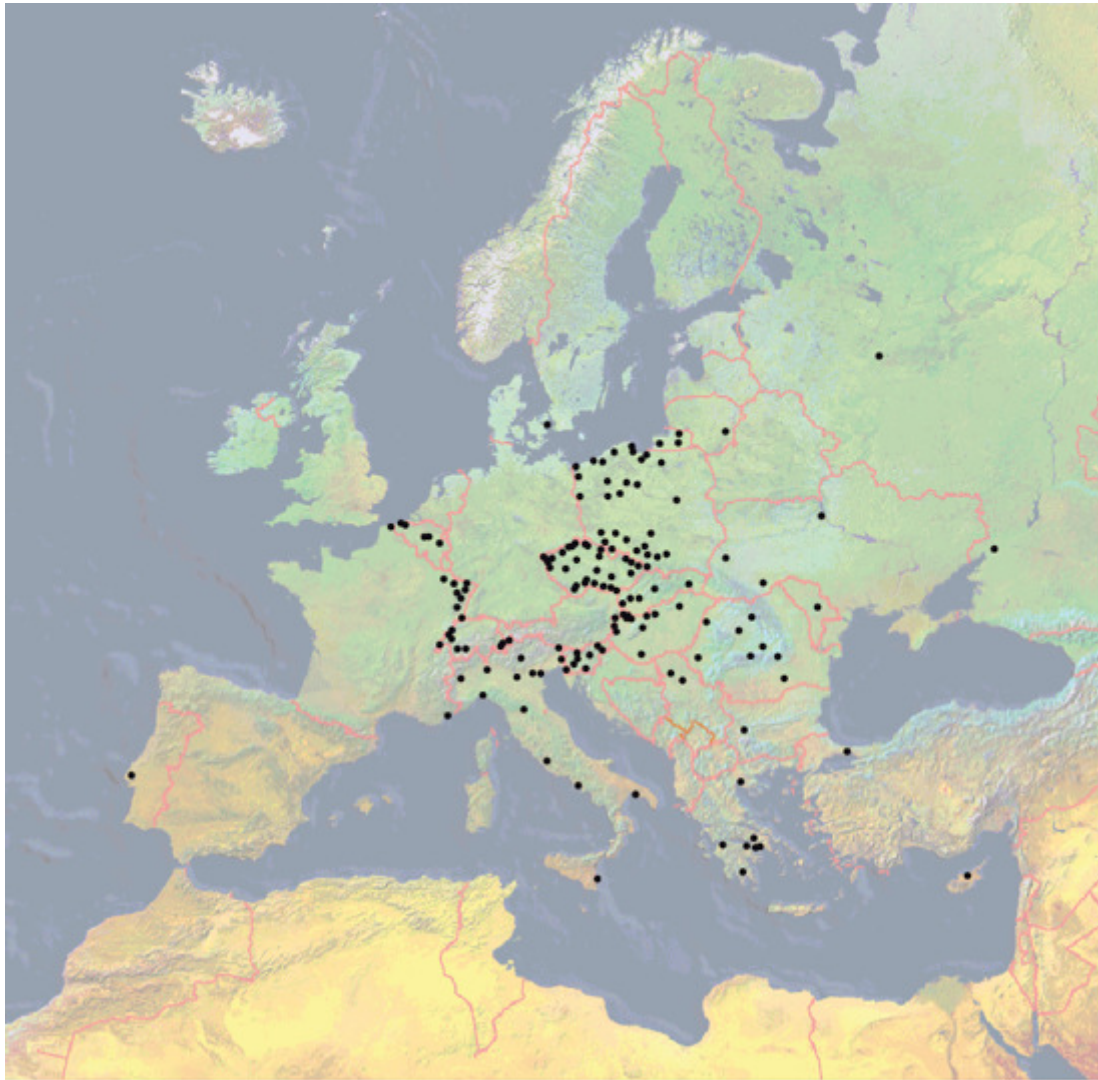
Figure 1

The pattern of German exonyms as represented by Fig. 1 reflects in the first line former German settlement or current German settlement without German as an official language. This is true for the "former German territories in the East", i.e. in modern Poland, mainly in Silesia, Pomerania and Greater Poland; for the fringes of the Czech Republic, the "Sudeten Lands", like the Polish territories settled by Germans up to WWII; also for the larger Czech cities, which had also a remarkable share of German population up to WWII; for western Hungary and the non-Mediterranean part of modern Slovenia; for the parts of Romania inside the Carpathian arc, where a larger number of Germans lived up to the fall of Communism; also for Alsace and Lorraine in modern France, where Germans have a larger share in the population, but German is not an official language; and even for the French part of Switzerland (Swiss Romande), larger parts of which switched from a domination of German-speakers to a majority of French-speaker only in more recent times.

By far lower in density, but still remarkable is the spread of German exonyms over East Central Europe in general as well as over Southeast Europe and Italy (especially North Italy). This corresponds to the main direction of political, trade and cultural interests and relations of German-speaking countries and powers for many centuries. The only counterpart in the West of Europe are the cities of Belgium, very likely due to their historical importance in trade with Central Europe, but also due the fact that Belgium was under the title "Austrian Netherlands" once a part of the Habsburg Empire.

It strikes that the British Isles and France have with the exception of Nizza [Nice] not a single German exonym. This can certainly not be explained by a lack of relations, rather by the fact that these languages are prestigious among German-speakers, are frequently known as secondary languages and do therefore not pose severe problems in pronunciation. As much as it seems to be "necessary" to replace the endonyms of the unknown and small East-Central and Southeast European languages by "pronouncable" exonyms,

this is not "necessary" with names in English and French. In a way this can be regarded as an expression of the fact the exonyms indeed indicate (also) domination and subordination.

### 4.2 The spatial spread of Hungarian exonyms (Fig. 2)
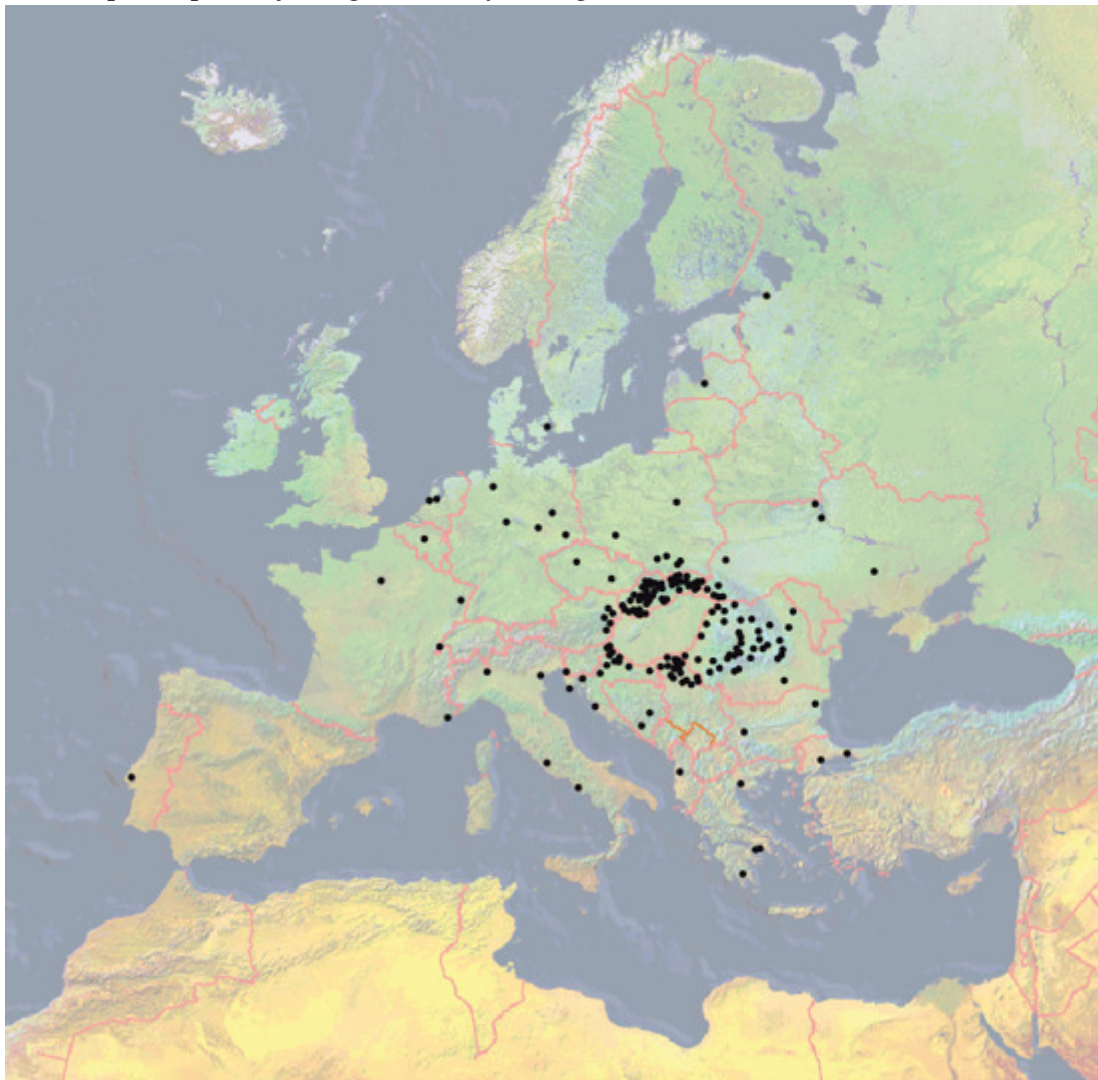
Figure 2

The spatial pattern of Hungarian exonyms clearly shows the extension of the former Hungarian Kingdom, which has by the Treaty of Trianon (1920) been reduced by two thirds. Slovakia, Ukrainian Transcarpathia, Romania, the Serbian Voivodina, Croatia, Slovenia and eastern Austria have also still – partly sizeable – Hungarian minorities.

Another pattern – much less significant, however – shows the (historically) most important trade routes for Hungary: the route to the upper Adriatic and the trade route through southern Poland to Saxonia (Leipzig) and the Rhine Lands.

Again, also Hungarian exonyms are very rare in France and on the British Isles – a fact that might be explained in the same way as with German exonyms.

4.3 The spatial spread of Italian exonmys (Fig. 3)
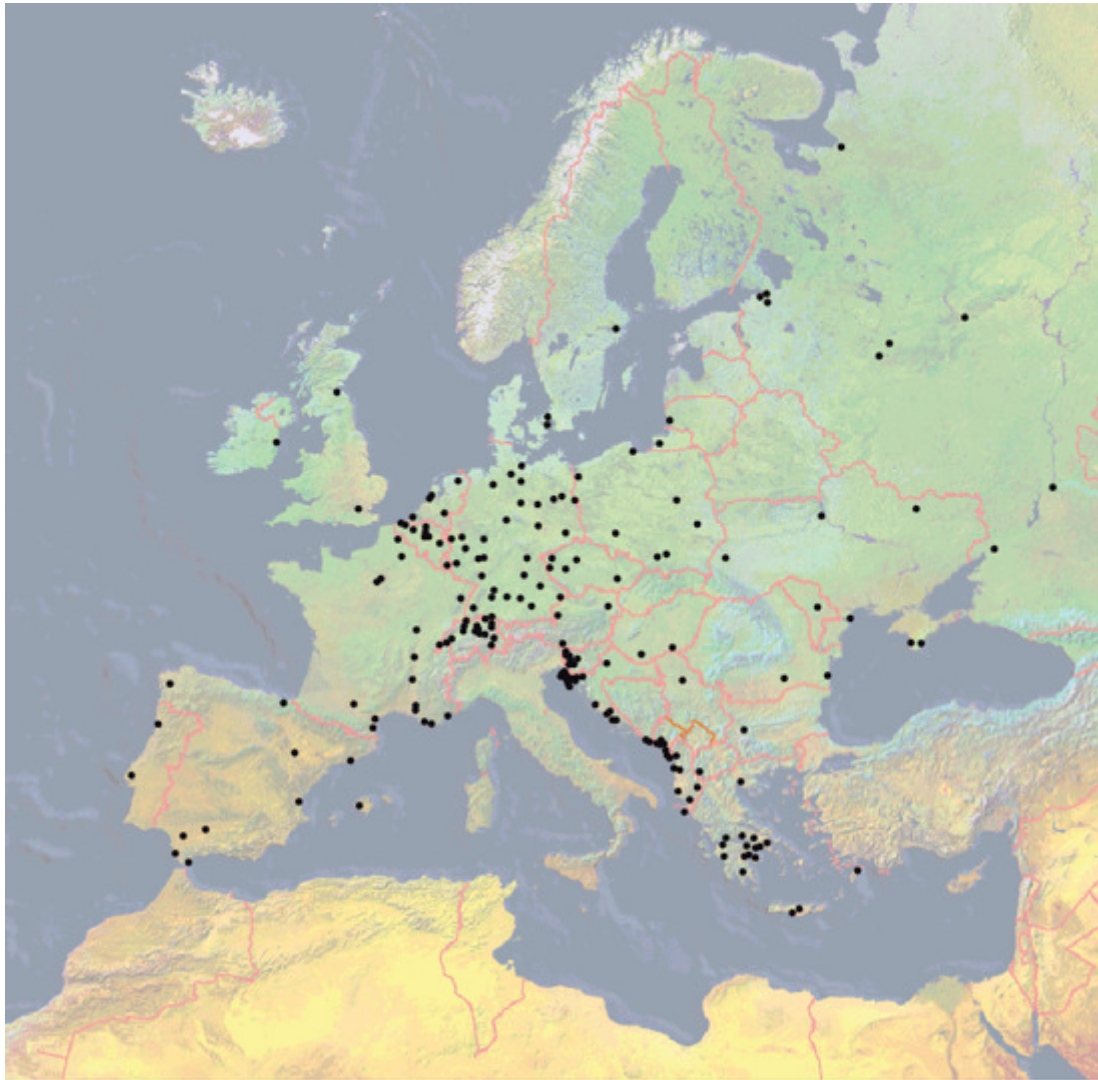
Figure 3

Most charactersitic for the spatial pattern of Italian exonyms are two features.

Firstly the crowding along the eastern coast of the Adriatic and in the Ionian and Aegean space. This is mainly due to the heritage of Venice which as a seafaring power had many trade posts along these coasts and whose interests were directed towards the Levant. Venetian (and also Genovese) trade and cultural influence reached even the coasts of the Black Sea. Some exonyms also there (Constanza [Constanţa], Odessa [Odesa], Sebastopoli [Sevastopíl'], Yalta [Jalta]) may be attributed to this heritage. But also after the end of Venice as a political power (1797), at first Austria, by supporting the Venetian/Italian cultural layer, conserved the Italian names at the eastern Adriatic coast and later Italian national interests focused on these regions.

The second striking feature is the high density of Italian exonyms in German-speaking areas and their close vicinity (especially Belgium, but also the Netherlands and Bohemia). This may be attributed to the fact that northern Italy was (together with the German-speaking countries, Belgium, the Netherlands and Bohemia) for centuries politically united in the Holy Roman Empire as well as to the fact that the important trade centres of northern Italy had the closest relations and their largest markets across the Alps.

5 MEDIATION BY OTHER LANGUAGES

Just a short hint at a most interesting phenomon: the mediation of exonyms by languages that dominate the trade routes between the donor and the receiver language. This is most obvious with Swedish, which adopted many German exonyms for cities in Italy: Venedig [Venezia], Turin [Torino], Genua [Genova], Rom [Roma], Neapel [Napoli].

6 CONCLUSION

The examples show that spatial spread of exonyms is largely influenced by historical as well as current political, cultural and economic relations. But other factors are also effective and distort this pattern partly.

These factors are mostly linguistic like linguistic distance between languages, difficulty of pronunciation. But already seemingly linguistic factors like the use of secondary and trade languages and language prestige are hinting at another important factor in the background: relations of political, economic and cultural domination and subordination.

7 REFERENCES

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