WHY TOPYNONMY? Topynomastics, the science of place names, geographical names or toponyms is in one sense a sub-discipline of onomastics, the science of proper names in general. However, toponomastics may equally well be regarded as a science in its own right, located at the intersection of several acknowledged disciplines: notably linguistics, geography and cartography, but also historical, cultural and juridical research.

The location of toponomastics at the intersection of better-known disciplines has resulted in the subject enjoying only a low level of academic institutionalisation. There are very few university chairs devoted exclusively to this field, and dedicated academies and institutes of the like are rare. Topynomastics is at present usually pursued by academics as a side-line to their work in another area of the established scientific disciplines. Yet this lack of institutionalisation is not a valid indicator of the vital importance of place names. Toponyms are symbolic, like flags and coats of arms, and as such an essential part of the human identity. They are the most permanent expression of our cultural heritage and serve as an orientating tool in society.

The United Nations recognised the importance of geographical names standardisation as early as 1960, when it established the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) – one of six active permanent expert United Nations groups. Many countries have also recognised the subject’s importance and established national or regional boards on geographical names. Within the ICA (International Cartographic Association) and its sister organisation, the International Geographical Union (IGU), toponomastics is attracting increasing interest, and as such it is in the basic disciplines involved in onomastic research, especially linguistics, cartography and geography.

It is certainly an advantage of UNGEGN and IGS to be organised in multidisciplinary way and to facilitate in this way interdisciplinary discussions and work. But it also makes sense to establish toponomastic fora within the International Geographical Union (IGU) as well as the International Cartographic Association (ICA) to encourage engagement of geographers and cartographers, respectively, in this field.

Geographers are able to contribute a lot to research into questions like the role of place names for space-related identity building or as mediators between man and place. For cartographers certainly the role and function of place names on maps is in the focus of research interests. But it is also important to raise the awareness of the meaning of place names and to further disseminate scientific methods of place-names representation on maps among cartographers. For UNGEGN, on the other hand, the focus of the Joint Commission/WG is on scientific researches about toponymy, trying to disseminate knowledge on place names to geographers and cartographers and to anyone who works with toponyms.

INTRODUCTION The talks for the creation of an ICA/IGU working group or technical commission acting on toponymy, were initiated in the frame of the 25th International Cartographic Conference in Paris, held on July 3-8, 2011. Prof. Georg Gartner opened the discussions exposing the importance of geographical names, that is toponomy, and the need of a cooperation among the sister organizations, just as ICGG, informing that his President, Prof. Ron Abler supported entirely the idea of a joint working group. The discussions about the joint working group would continue during the 25th International Cartographic Conference in Paris, France, in 2011.

Immediately after Paris´ Conference it was proposed to the ICA Executive Committee the creation of a joint working group on this subject, representing ICA and IGU, due to its importance, mainly for the geographical aspect, as well as for the cartographic one. In the lack of a specific commission, researches on the theme were presented in events, without a dedicated forum for the discussions. The discussions about the joint working group would continue during the 25th International Cartographic Conference in Paris, France, in 2011.

During the meeting on July 05th, 2011, Prof. Georg Gartner opened the discussions exposing about the importance of geographical names, that is toponomy, and the need of a cooperation among the sister organizations, just as ICGG, informing that his President, Prof. Ron Abler supported entirely the idea of a joint commission ICA / IGSU on the theme, in conversations that occurred in previous events. It was explained the role and structure of existing toponomy fora such as the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) and the International Council of Onomastics Sciences (ICOS). Both are multidisciplinary in structure, with a dominance of cartographers/geographers with UNGEGN and a dominance of linguists with ICOS. It was emphasized that an ICA commission would join the sister organizations and thus within ICA it would have to start as a working group and could be elevated to commission status at the next ICA General Assembly (Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires 2011). Otherwise, the IGSU-part of the proposed joint commission could start immediately as a commission.

Prof. Gartner reported on a talk with Helen Karfoss, UNGEGN chair, who gave him the impression that UNGEGN would potentially interlink with a future toponomy commission. Regarding to involve other organization participants such as IHG, prevailed the opinion that the new commission should first get established before matching with interdisciplinary organizations.

To represent ICA, Prof. Paolo Mennesses from Brazil was appointed by Prof. Georg Gartner. Immediately after Paris’ Conference it was proposed to the ICA Executive Committee the creation of a Working Group on Toponymy, as a first step to be defined a joint ICA/IGU commission on toponomy. With the ICA Executive Committee agreement for the proposal and relating the terms of reference, it was submitted to the IGU Executive Board, to organise within the framework of the Regional IGU conference in Santiago, Chile in 2011(November), a first meeting of the proposed joint commission, and to take steps that this commission is initiated and established.

Consequently, an invitation to this meeting was sent to all potential members.

The meeting took place on November 17th, with presence of Prof. Ron Abler, President of IGSU, Prof. Cosimo Palagiano, Italy, Prof. Peter Jordan, Austria and Prof. Paulo Mennesses, Brazil, ICA Chair.

Prof. Ron Abler, president of IGU, communicated that the IGU Executive Board had approved this joint initiative. The IGSU Executive Board had appointed Prof. Paolo Abler, President of IGSU, Prof. Cosimo Palagiano, Italy, Prof. Peter Jordan, Austria and Prof. Paulo Mennesses, Brazil, ICA Chair. Prof. Ron Abler, president of IGU, communicated that the IGU Executive Board had approved this joint initiative. The IGSU Executive Board had appointed Prof. Paolo Abler, President of IGSU, Prof. Cosimo Palagiano, Italy, Prof. Peter Jordan, Austria and Prof. Paulo Mennesses, Brazil, ICA Chair.

Figure 1 shows Prof Palagiano, Prof Ron Abler, Prof Mennesses and Prof Jordan, at the Santiago meeting.

REFERENCE TERMS

1. Joint ICA/IGU Commission/Working Group on Toponymy

2. Functions of place names on maps:
   a) to serve as markers of an area
   b) to provide identity
   c) to represent the location of a place

3. Rendering of place names on maps:
   a) in the standard script
   b) in a readable manner

4. Place names as place names
   a) unique identity
   b) cultural heritage
   c) economic significance

5. Place names as transportation
   a) navigational aid
   b) strategic location

6. Place names and administration
   a) government responsibilities
   b) public relations

7. Place names and cartography
   a) spatial representation
   b) thematic mapping

8. Place names and transportation
   a) road signs
   b) traffic signs

9. Place names and disaster
   a) emergency response
   b) relief operations

10. Place-name conflicts: e.g. What do place-name conflicts indicate? Backgrounds and reasons of current conflicts.
   a) political
   b) cultural

COMMISSION/WORKING GROUP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. 32nd International Geographical Congress, Cologne, Germany, 26-30 August 2012: Four toponymic sessions titled “Place names as markers and instruments of space-related identity 1-4” with a total of 15 papers had been organized by Peter JORDAN (Austria).
3. IGU Regional Conference Kyoto, Japan, 4-9 August 2013: Four sessions on geographical approaches to toponomy with a total of 15 papers had been organized by Kishai WATANABE (Japan). The proceedings have been published in the geographical journal “Saito Shigaku”.
4. IGU Regional Conference Cordoba, Spain, 18-22 August 2014: Five sessions on geographical approaches to toponomy with a total of 15 papers had been organized by Kohei WATANABE (Japan). The proceedings have been published in the geographical journal “Saito Shigaku”.
5. IGU Conference Barcelona, Spain, 18-22 August 2014: Symposium on “Place names, diversity and heritage”. The proceedings have been published in the geographical journal “Saito Shigaku”.
6. 4th EuCIS Congress Rome, Italy, 7-10 September 2015: A session on “The Importance of Exonyms. On the use of exonyms in atlas editions and other educational media” will be organized by Peter JORDAN (Austria) and Cosimo PALAGIANO (Italy). The proceedings will in 2015 be published as Volume 5 of the toponymic book series Namenspace Name & Place, edited by Peter JORDAN and Paul WOODMAN and published by Peter JORDAN.

PLANNING FOR THE YEAR 2015

Besides toponymic sessions in the framework of ICC Rio de Janeiro, the planning for 2015 comprises the following events:

1. IGU Regional Conference Moscow, Russia, 17-21 August: A session on place-name study and geographical research will be organized by Andrew HERZEN (Russia).
2. 9th International Cartographic Congress Budapest, 30 August to 2 September 2015: A session on “The Importance of Exonyms. On the use of exonyms in atlas editions and other educational media” will be organized by Peter JORDAN (Austria).
3. IGU Regional Conference Geneva, Switzerland, 3-7 September 2015: A session on “Place names, diversity and heritage”, to be organized together with the Unit for Language Facilitation and Empowerment, University of the Free State, Free State Province, South Africa, in collaboration with the Unit for Place Names, Diversity and Heritage, University of the Free State, Free State Province, South Africa, 17-19 September 2015; organizers: Theodorus DU PLESSIS and Peter RAPER (both South Africa).

CONCLUSIONS

The joint Commission/Working Group conceives its function complementary to the tasks of UNGEGN whose focus is concentrated on standardisation issues and international politics on geographical names. In contrast, the focus of the Joint Commission/Working Group is on scientific researches about toponymy, trying to disseminate knowledge on place names to geographers and cartographers and to anyone who works with Toponymy.

The adopted model of a Joint ICA/IGU Commission worked very well during these four years, with a high demand on scientific papers, as can be seen by the eight sessions during these three years.

In this way, the BRAZILIAN SOCIETY OF CARTOGRAPHY - SBC, National Representatives of Brazil, proposes to the 36th General Assembly of the International Cartographic Association to create a new Commission on Toponymy, continuing the Working Group on Toponymy, operating since 2011, jointly with IGU and UNGEGN.