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ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TOPONYMIC RESEARCH

Toponomastics, 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 academy institutes and the like are rare. Toponomastics is at present usually pursued by academics as a sideline alongside their main role in one of the established sciences. Yet this lack of academic institutionalisation is not a valid indicator of the vital importance of place names. Toponyms are symbols, like flags and coats of arms, and as part of the intangible cultural heritage they possess – in addition to their more practical functions of identification and orientation – also a political significance. At the symbolic level they can often represent conflicts with deep roots in society.

The United Nations recognised the significance of geographical names standardization as early as 1960, when it established an expert group in this field (the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, UNGEGN) – one of just six active permanent expert United Nations groups. Many countries have also recognised the subject's significance by establishing national or regional boards on geographical names. Within the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS), too, toponomastics is attracting increasing interest, as indeed it is within the basic disciplines involved in onomastic research, especially linguistics, cartography and geography.

It is certainly an advantage of UNGEGN and ICOS to be organized 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, resp., 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, a.o., the question of identifying and naming features in different cultural contexts is important and can be answered by cartographers and geographers. Thus, a toponomastic forum within IGU and ICA certainly creates an added value compared to the already existing fora of UNGEGN and ICOS.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- To act jointly with IGU fostering the geographic and cartographic research on all fields involving toponymy;
- to disseminate the scientific knowledge on processing and use of toponyms within geography and cartography;
- to verify the use of other sciences' toponymy concepts, such as anthropology, linguistics and others, in favour of cartography and geography;
- to maintain contacts and scientific exchange with UNGEGN and ICOS, such as by organizing joint events;
- to support and encourage the elaboration and publication of gazetteers, toponymic data files and toponymic reference systems (such as EuroGeoNames);
- to organize regional joint IGU/ICA events (workshops, symposia and others) with IGU and ICA members;
- to participate in IGU and ICA Regional, Thematic and Main Conferences;
- to organize and maintain a website to facilitate contact between researchers in the field of toponymy and disseminate source material and literature available to the community and the general public alike;
- to organize and publish books, chapters and encourage paper publishing in specialized journals and the International Journal of Cartography.
- to establish a consortium of universities organizing training courses on toponymy
- to publish a study book on Critical Toponomastics
- to promote the representation of under-represented groups on the research agenda (e.g. female commemorative naming, indigenous names)



ACCOMPLISHMENTS since the Commission's foundation in 2011

- (1) 32nd International Geographical Congress, Cologne [Köln], Germany, 26-30 August 2012: Four toponymic sessions titled "Place names as markers and ingredients of space-related identity 1-4" with a total of 15 papers, organized by Peter JORDAN.
- (2) Peter JORDAN & Ferjan ORMELING (eds.) (2013), *Toponyms in Cartography*. Proceedings of the Toponymic Sessions at the 25th International Cartographic Conference, Paris, 3-8 July 2011 (= Name & Place, 2). Hamburg, Verlag Dr. Kovač.
- (3) IGU Regional Conference Kyoto, Japan, 4-9 August 2013: Four sessions on geographical approaches to toponymy with a total of 15 papers, organized by Kohei WATANABE. Proceedings: *Semestrale di Studi e Ricerche di Geografia*, Rome, XXV, 2, edited by Riccardo MORRI.
- (4) Seminar "Historical maps, atlas maps, and toponymy", Leipzig, Germany, 21-23 August 2013, a pre-conference event of ICC Dresden organized by the ICA Commission on the History of Cartography (chair: Elri LIEBENBERG), the ICA Commission on Atlases (chair: Peter JORDAN) and the IGU/ICA Commission/Working Group on Toponymy (chair: Paulo DE MENEZES) in co-operation with the Leibniz Institute of Regional Research [Leibniz Institut für Länderkunde, IfL] Leipzig, 17 paper presentations. Proceedings: MOSER J. (ed.) (2016), *Joint Commission Seminar on Historical Maps, Atlases and Toponymy* (= forum IfL, 30). Leipzig, Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde.
- (5) 26th International Cartographic Conference (ICC) Dresden, Germany, 26-30 August 2013: In two sessions organized by the Commission in total six papers on toponymy were presented.
- (6) 4th EuGeo Congress Rome, 5-7 September 2013: In a panel on toponyms organized by Cosimo PALAGIANO five papers were presented.
- (7) IGU Regional Conference Cracow, Poland, 18-22 August 2014: Five sessions on geographical approaches to toponymy with a total of 19 papers, organized by Peter JORDAN (Austria).
- (8) Symposium on place-name changes, Rome, Italy, 17-18 November 2014, jointly organized with the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei (the Italian Academy of Sciences) by Peter JORDAN and Cosimo PALAGIANO, 40 paper presentations. Proceedings: JORDAN P., WOODMAN P. (eds.) (2016), *Place-Name Changes*. Proceedings of the Symposium in Rome, 17–18 November 2014 (= Name & Place, 5). Hamburg, Verlag Dr. Kovač.
- (9) Session without a thematic focus in the framework of the IGU Regional Conference, Moscow [Moskva], Russian Federation, 17-22 August 2015, organized by Andrew HERZEN, 10 papers.
- (10) Symposium on Atlases, Toponymy and the History of Cartography, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20-21 August 2015, organized jointly with the ICA Commission on Atlases (chair: Peter JORDAN) and the ICA Commission on the History of Cartography (chair: Elri LIEBENBERG) as well as the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), which hosted the event with Ana RESENDE as the main organizer, three toponymic papers. Proceedings: DA ROCHA BÉRENGER RESENDE A.C., JENEY. (eds.), *Symposium on Atlases, Toponymy and the History of Cartography*. Proceedings of the ICC 2015 Pre-Conference Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20–21 August 2015. Sine loco [Rio de Janeiro], ICA International Cartographic Association.
- (11) Two sessions in the framework of the 27th International Cartographic Conference, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 23-28 August 2015, eight papers.
- (12) Session in the framework of EuGeo Budapest, Hungary, 30 August – 2 September 2015 with as focus on the role of place names in geographical education organized by Peter JORDAN with two panels and 12 papers.
- (13) Symposium "Place names, diversity and heritage", Clarens, Free State, South Africa, 17-18 September 2015, jointly organized with the Unit for Language Facilitation and Empowerment of the University of the Free State with Theodoros DU PLESSIS, Peter RAPER and Chrismi-Rinda LOTH as the main local organizers, 19 papers. Proceedings: *Nomina Africana*, Journal of the Names Society of Southern Africa, 30, 1, 2016: special issue containing ten papers presented at the Symposium "Place names, diversity and heritage", Clarens, Free State, South Africa, 17–18 September 2015.
- (14) Session in the framework of the 33rd International Geographical Congress, Beijing, China, 21-25 August 2016, on "Place names as social constructs" organized by Peter JORDAN and Cosimo PALAGIANO, 17 papers presented.
- (15) International Pan American Symposium on Toponymy, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3-5 May 2017, organized by Paulo DE MENEZES in cooperation with the Panamerican Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH), 30 papers presented.
- (16) ICC Joint Pre-Conference Workshop: Charting the Cosmos of Cartography: History – Names – Atlases, Washington, D.C., USA, 28-30 June 2017, jointly organized with the ICA Commission on the History of Cartography (chair: Imre DEMHARDT) and the ICA Commission on Atlases (chair: Rene SIEBER, represented by Eric LOSANG), six toponymic papers presented. Proceedings: DEMHARDT I., JORDAN P., LOSANG E. (eds.) (2018), *Charting the Cosmos of Cartography: History – Names – Atlases*. (= The Cartographic Journal, 55, 2018, 2). London, The British Cartographic Society – Taylor & Francis.
- (17) Three sessions in the framework of the 28th International Cartographic Conference, Washington D.C., USA, 2-7 July 2017, organized by Peter JORDAN and Paulo DE MENEZES, 12 papers presented.
- (18) International Symposium on Place Names: Critical Toponymy – Place names in political, historical and commercial landscapes, Windhoek, Namibia, 18-20 September 2017, jointly organized by the University of the Free State, the University of Namibia and the Joint ICA/IGU Commission (Peter JORDAN and Cosimo PALAGIANO). 28 papers. Proceedings will be published as an issue of the journal "Nomina Africana".
- (19) IGU Thematic Conference, Moscow, 4-6 June 2018, Session "Use of Place Names in Public Space", organized by Cosimo PALAGIANO and Peter JORDAN, 7 papers presented.
- (20) IGU Regional Conference, Quebec, 6-10 August 2018, Session "Place Names as Means of Structuring Geographical Space", organized by Cosimo PALAGIANO and Peter JORDAN, 9 papers presented.

ACTIVITIES IN 2019

Apart from a presentation as a side event of the 31st UNGEGN Session in New York (see photo to the left) the Commission offers the following events:

- (1) 29th International Cartographic Conference (ICC), Tokyo [Tōkyō], Japan, 15-20 July 2019, the Commission has 3 sessions open for all toponymic issues.
- (2) As a pre-conference symposium of ICC Tokyo, [Tōkyō], Japan, 15 July 2019, locally organized by Kohei WATANABE, the Commission highlights role and structure of national names boards.
- (3) Together with the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa, the Commission will organize the 5th International Symposium on Place Names: "Recognition, regulation, revitalisation: place names and indigenous languages", in Clarens, South Africa, 18-20 September 2019.
- (4) 2nd Pan American Symposium on Toponymy, Rio de Janeiro, 11-13 October 2019, organized by Paulo DE MENEZES in cooperation with the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH).
- (5) At the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Austrian Place-Name Board's foundation, the Commission will organize together with the Austrian Board on Geographical Names, the UNGEGN Dutch- and German-speaking Division (DGSD), the Federal Office of Metrology and Surveying and the Austrian Geographical Society a symposium in Vienna, Austria, 6-8 November 2019 on the general topic "Place names and migration".