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Activities relating to the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

**Place-Name Changes
Proceedings of the Symposium in Rome, 17-18 November 2014**

Submitted by the Joint IGU/ICA Commission on Toponymy*

* Prepared by Peter Jordan (Austria), Common Vice-chair, Joint IGU/ICA Commission on Toponymy, and Paul Woodman (United Kingdom)

Summary

Languages are promoted by political powers and are dependent on them. In a historical dimension languages come and go depending on political support. Place names as elements of language are part of this historical fluctuation. Due to their symbolic role as markers of geographical features, territories and space-related identities, however, they are even more exposed to political change. This is especially true for the commemorative names that started to mushroom in urban space from the middle of the 19th century onward, when the spread of liberal thought made it possible to commemorate individuals.

This book represents a selection of papers presented at a symposium in Rome, Italy, November 17-18, 2014. It comprises 34 articles by 41 authors from 17 countries and four continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, South America). It may thus not claim to provide a comprehensive survey over the theme, but it does include a representative selection of aspects from various viewpoints, situations and parts of the world. It is divided into five chapters.

The first chapter presents general approaches and methodological issues such as the problems of defining place-name changes, the proposal of a typology, and the suggestion of transonymy – the phenomenon whereby names change their ‘onymic’ category, e.g., from personal names to place names, or change within the category of place names, e.g., from oronyms to names of restaurants.

The second chapter presents country and regional studies relating to Brazil, France, Italy, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain and Suriname.

The third chapter highlights place-name changes in urban space, i.e. of street names and other parts of public space. This is the field in which place-name changes are most frequent and – at least in democratic societies – a matter of intense public discussion and sometimes even conflict. In this context, case studies of Stockholm, Uppsala, Ljubljana, cities of Romanian Transylvania, Novara, Monza and Cremona in Italy, Mossel Bay in South Africa, Havana and Shanghai – as well as a comparison of two squares in Algiers and Marseille – are presented.

The fourth chapter explicitly highlights multicultural situations. One of the articles draws a comparison between Cyprus and situations in East-Central Europe; a second focuses on the Romanian portion of Banat; a third on the Croatian portion of Istria.

The fifth chapter investigates the impact of specific historical events on place names. Thus, it highlights the toponymic consequences of de-colonisation in Algeria, the impact of a 1947 peace treaty on place names in the Roya Valley (a French region bordering Italy), the partial retention of place names commemorating Tito following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and the toponymic impact of the lifting of martial law in Taiwan in 1987.

The book has been edited by Peter JORDAN and Paul WOODMAN, its layout has been provided by Florian PARTL at the Institute of Urban and Regional Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences, in Vienna.

Bibliographic citation

Peter JORDAN, Paul WOODMAN (eds.) (2016), Place-Name Changes. Proceedings of the Symposium in Rome, 17-18 November 2014 (= Name & Place, 5). Hamburg, Dr. Kovač, 492 p. ISBN 978-3-8300-8423-5.

Topic and scope of the book

Languages are promoted by political powers and are dependent on them. In a historical dimension languages come and go depending on political support. Place names as elements of language are part of this historical fluctuation. Due to their symbolic role as markers of geographical features, territories and space-related identities, however, they are even more exposed to political change. This is especially true for the commemorative names that started to mushroom in urban space from the middle of the 19th century onward, when the spread of liberal thought made it possible to commemorate individuals.

At any time, the replacement of the dominant political or cultural force within a given society can result in place-name changes. A recent example is the rise and fall of Communism in Eastern Europe. But the commercialisation of our societies also has its impact on toponymy. New commercial names replace traditional ones, prompting the question whether place names should perhaps be regarded as a part of the cultural heritage and be protected for this very reason. Sometimes it is also the prestige of a name not necessarily 'commercial' in the narrow sense that counts, and makes the inhabitants of a street or urban quarter vote for it.

Upheavals of the namescape are certainly caused by a change of dominant political forces. But the emergence of new official names, e.g., due to standardization and public recognition of place names of indigenous and non-dominant groups, can also result from new cultural directions and attitudes in a given and otherwise stable society, when for example strong efforts are made to codify the languages of indigenous peoples and to display their place names subsequently in public space.

Place-name changes often affect the names of streets and of urban spaces in general, since many of them have a commemorative function and are thus closely related to certain historical periods and powers. But names of populated places and especially cities are also frequently subject to name changes due to the prominence of these features and their importance in politics, culture and the economy. Special cases at all spatial levels are names of administrative units, which are intimately connected with the dominant political system and are accordingly exposed to change.

It is also interesting to see how place-name changes are received and accepted by the users, i.e. the local community and the outside world. It frequently occurs that the old and the new name remain in use simultaneously for some time – the use differing by age groups, political directions, or between 'insiders' and people from the outside. Reception of a new name can also be affected by the motivation for the name change or by its historical and political background and appropriateness.

Thus, the topic of this book is highly space-related and geographical, but also has very significant historical, sociological and political dimensions, while linguistic aspects such as the gradual adaptation of names by other languages, the preservation of antiquated name forms, or names changes by orthographic reforms, are further in the background.

The book comprises 34 articles by 41 authors from 17 countries and four continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, South America). It may thus not claim to provide a comprehensive survey over the theme, but it does include a representative selection of aspects from various viewpoints, situations and parts of the world. It is divided into five chapters.

The first chapter, with four articles, presents general approaches and methodological issues such as the problems of defining place-name changes, the proposal of a typology, and the suggestion of transonymy – the phenomenon whereby names change their ‘onymic’ category, e.g., from personal names to place names, or change within the category of place names, e.g., from oronyms to names of restaurants.

The second chapter, with twelve articles, presents country and regional studies relating to Brazil, France, Italy, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain and Suriname.

The third chapter, with eleven articles, highlights place-name changes in urban space, i.e. of street names and other parts of public space. This is the field in which place-name changes are most frequent and – at least in democratic societies – a matter of intense public discussion and sometimes even conflict. In this context, case studies of Stockholm, Uppsala, Ljubljana, cities of Romanian Transylvania, Novara, Monza and Cremona in Italy, Mossel Bay in South Africa, Havana and Shanghai – as well as a comparison of two squares in Algiers and Marseille – are presented.

The fourth chapter, with three contributions, explicitly highlights multicultural situations, which exist of course also in many of the cities, regions and countries referred to before. One of the articles draws a comparison between Cyprus and situations in East-Central Europe; a second focuses on the Romanian portion of Banat; a third on the Croatian portion of Istria.

The fifth chapter, with four articles, investigates the impact of specific historical events on place names. Thus, it highlights the toponymic consequences of de-colonisation in Algeria, the impact of a 1947 peace treaty on place names in the Roya Valley (a French region bordering Italy), the partial retention of place names commemorating Tito following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and the toponymic impact of the lifting of martial law in Taiwan in 1987.

This book represents a selection of papers presented at a symposium in Rome, Italy, November 17-18, 2014. It took place in the Villa Farnesina on the right bank of the Tiber and was organised by the Joint International Geographical Union/International Cartographic Association (IGU/ICA) Commission on Toponymy and the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, the Italian Academy of Sciences – in person by Peter JORDAN on behalf of the Commission and Cosimo PALAGIANO on behalf of the Academy. Members of the scientific council and the paper selection committee were Vincenzo CAFFARELLI (International Council on Onomastic Sciences: ICOS), Giuseppe GALASSO (National Member of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei), Peter JORDAN (Austrian Academy of Sciences and United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names: UNGEGN), Cosimo PALAGIANO (Università La Sapienza, corresponding member of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei and IGU chair of the Commission on Toponymy), Paolo POCETTI (University of Rome Tor Vergata), and Domenico SILVESTRI (University of Naples “L’Orientale”).

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Ordering the book

The book can be ordered from publisher Dr. Kovač, Hamburg, email: info@verlagdrkovac.de, website: <http://www.verlagdrkovac.de/> It corresponds to Volume 5 of the toponymic book series “Name & Place” edited by Peter JORDAN and Paul WOODMAN.

Earlier volumes of this series are:

Peter JORDAN, Hubert BERGMANN, Caroline BURGESS, Catherine CHEETHAM (eds.), *Trends in Exonym Use. Proceedings of the 10th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting, Tainach, 28-30 April 2010* (= Names & Place, 1). Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač 2011, 328 p.

Peter JORDAN, Ferjan ORMELING (eds.), *Toponyms in Cartography. Proceedings of the Toponymic Sessions at the 25th International Cartographic Conference, Paris, 3-8 July 2011* (= Name & Place, 2). Hamburg 2013, Verlag Dr. Kovač, 127 p.

Peter JORDAN, Paul WOODMAN (eds.) (2014), *The Quest for Definitions. Proceedings of the 14th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting, Corfu, 23-25 May 2013* (= Name & Place, 3). Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 295 p.

Peter JORDAN, Paul WOODMAN (eds.) (2015), *Confirmation of the Definitions. Proceedings of the 16th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting, Hermagor, 5-7 June 2014* (= Name & Place, 4). Hamburg, Dr. Kovač, 244 p.