

## Role and importance of expert knowledge in the standardization of geographical names

The approach to geographical names standardization varies from one country to another in terms of organization, principles, policies and procedures. According to the Manual for the national standardization of geographical names (UNGEGN 2006), no method is better than another, provided each achieves the goal of establishing consistently written names that are *nationally accepted* and *agree with the local and written usages*. Where the standardization of geographical names used to be a top-down activity, an increasing number of political, social, economic and commercial actors seek power and influence in the standardization process. In a world where the concept of 'one language, one people, one state' is no longer valid, it is not always obvious which name forms are 'nationally accepted' and 'agree with the local and written usages'.

This symposium seeks to enlighten the role and importance of expert knowledge in all steps towards a standardized name, including the establishment of a national framework for standardization, the selection of name varieties for a given geographical feature, the determination of a written form, and the implementation, promotion and evaluation of authorized name forms.

Acknowledging that the study of geographical names inevitably touches upon the fields of both onomastics and geography, and may include elements of social and other sciences, the theme of the symposium invites to critically explore and broaden the understanding of expert knowledge in the context of geographical names standardization. An important aim of the symposium is to enlighten conflicting views and interests in the standardization process today and to discuss how we can manage and balance those. Presentations scrutinizing the relationship between expert knowledge and local community knowledge are especially welcomed.

The theme of the symposium raises questions like:

*What is considered 'expert knowledge' in the context of geographical names standardization? How can expert knowledge be gathered and facilitated? How are the experts identified and selected? How can expert knowledge be secured, developed and adjusted in the future?*

Topics could include, but are not limited to:

- Crowdsourcing and local participation in the standardization process
- Quality assurance and securement of toponymic data collection
- Access to and utilization of expert knowledge in the production of maps and atlases
- Experiences and reflections on the standardization of indigenous and minority group geographical names
- The influence of private and commercial companies on geographical name usage; how can we facilitate collaboration?
- Increased commodification of geographical names; the use of geographical names in different branding and promotional strategies
- The importance of pronunciation and vocal names registration for speech technology