

COMMERCIALIZATION OF PLACES AND PLACE NAMES

A SEARCH FOR UNGEGN'S ROLE

UNGEEN Scientific Symposium
Brussels, 11 October 2018

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01 Place name as a brand



Place name



Product/Company brand



0 1 Place name as a brand

amazon

Place name



Product/Company brand

**MONT
BLANC**



01 Place name as a brand



Champagne

Place name
▼
Common noun

Eau de Cologne



1 Place name as a brand



TOYOTA

Toyota city

Product/Company name
▼
Place name

Source Perrier-Les Bouillons



0 1 Place name as a brand

Place names using product (company) names: A few types

- ▶ Newly adopting: 日立市 (Hitachi City) (1924)
- ▶ Replacing: 拳母市 (Komoro City) → 豊田市 (Toyota City) (1959)
- ▶ Dual naming: Les Bouillens → Source Perrier-Les Bouillens
- ▶ Proposal not accepted: 鈴鹿市 (Suzuka City) proposed as 本田市 (Honda City)
- ▶ Company (product) disappeared: DuPont City (WA, USA)

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02 UNGEGN's concern on commercialization

X/4 Discouraging the commercialization of geographical names

Recommends that national toponymic authorities discourage the designation of geographical names that seek a commercial purpose, as well as various practices involving the commercialization of geographical names, by adopting standards that address these issues.

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Considering/Noting:

- Practices of replacing geographical names with long-standing local usage and threatening the integrity of geographical nomenclatures;
- Need to avoid commercial misappropriation and distortion of the meaning and purpose of the intangible cultural heritage;
- Need to protect the stability of geographical names with long-standing local usage and the quality of the names as useful geographical references.

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X /3 Criteria for evaluating geographical names as cultural heritage

Considering/Noting:

- The age of a name (the oldest possible record of the name);
- The resilience of a name (duration of its continued use up to the present or its notable capacity to transcend history);
- The rarity of a name or of a toponymic phenomenon;
- The "testimoniality" of a name or the capacity to embody a cultural, geographical, historical, social or other reality that is specific to the place and an essential component of local, regional or national identity;
- The appeal of a name, which corresponds to a feeling of belonging associated with the name and the place it designates;
- The imageability of a name or its capacity to inspire ideas or strong, rich images within users

02 UNGEGN's concern on commercialization

Concern of individual countries

United States (Principles, Policies, and Procedures, 2016)

- Reject a proposed name when the primary purpose of the name is construed to promote a commercial product or enterprise
- Approve a name for a feature that has a longstanding association with a commercial enterprise.

Canada (Principles and Procedures for Geographical Naming, 2011)

- Company or commercial product names are usually rejected to avoid publicizing a particular commercial or industrial firm.

Republic of Korea

- Proposal being made in revising *Guidelines for the Standardization of Geographical Names*
- A proposed name motivated by commercialization purpose is advised to be replaced with other name.

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03 Discussion: A search for UNGEGN's role

Issue 1.

Economic values as a facet of place names as social constructs **- Naming as branding**

Place Names as Social Constructs

Perception
of human beings

Cultural heritage
of social groups

Political expression
of power groups

Economic values
of interest groups

TOPONYMIC LANDSCAPE

Source: Choo et al. (2016)

03 Discussion: A search for UNGEGN's role

Issue 2.

What is 'commercialization' (versus cultural heritage)?

- ▶ Inserting an commercial element, e.g., company name/ product brand as a proper noun
- ▶ What about common noun? E.g., Pharmacists' Street, Apple Village, Jewelry Street
- ▶ What if when company name/product brand has become a valid cultural heritage?

03 Discussion: A search for UNGEGN's role

Issue 3.

The issue of naming rights: place name as a property

- ▶ Stronger motivation of naming as branding places
- ▶ Development of local autonomy and grass-root proposal of 'higher' brand names
- ▶ Naming of private properties, e.g., apartment districts, urban facilities, sports stadium, farms, etc.
- ▶ Adding a 'commercial' name by dual naming, e.g., selling subway station name to commercial actors

03 Discussion: A search for UNGEGN's role

UNGEGN's role as an inter-governmental expert group

- ▶ Further discussion on commercialization: nature, motivation, inclusiveness, relationship with cultural heritage, etc.
- ▶ Reflection on the concept of 'geographical name' commonly concerned among UNGEGN and proposal of additional concept if needed, e.g. urban toponymy
- ▶ Functioning as a platform of sharing experiences of individual countries: principles, practices, specificities

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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