Report, 14th Meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms, Corfu, Greece, 23-25 May 2013

The WG met in the Saint Michael & Saint George Palace, Corfu City, hosted by the Greek UNGEGN delegation, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the City of Corfu. The meeting was organized in conjunction with a meeting of the UNGEGN Working Group on Toponymic Terminology (Convenor: Staffan NYSTRÖM), which met 25th May afternoon. The meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms (WGE) was attended by 33 experts from 20 countries (see list of participants attached).

The convenor opened the meeting and thanked the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represented by the Greek UNGEGN experts Emmanuel GOUNARIS and Alexandros STAVROPOULOS, as well as the city of Corfu, represented by its vice-mayor, for hosting the meeting in such a convenient atmosphere. He stressed that the thematic focus of this meeting is on the definitions of the *endonym* and the *exonym* and hinted at the proceedings of the 12th Meeting in Gdańsk (2012), edited by Paul WOODMAN and published under the title "The Great Toponymic Divide" by the Polish Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography.

After Peter JORDAN, Staffan NYSTRÖM welcomed the audience on behalf of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology and the vice-mayor on behalf of the city. The latter gave also a short survey over the history of the city and the island.

This opening was followed by a sequence of three sessions with in total 17 papers, 30 minutes presentation time each, including discussion. These papers are just listed below, they will be published soon as Volume 3 of Name & Place, edited by Paul WOODMAN and Peter JORDAN.

Session 1: The Great Divide – comprehensive approaches (Chair: Peter JORDAN, Austria)
WOODMAN, Paul (United Kingdom): The scope of activities of the UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms, and the definitions of *endonym* and *exonym*
JORDAN, Peter (Austria): Arguments for new definitions of *endonym* and *exonym*
NYSTRÖM, Staffan (Sweden): Endonym and exonym: basically linguistic concepts after all?
MATTHEWS, Philip (New Zealand): Endonyms and exonyms: New definitions
CHOO, Sungjae (Republic of Korea): The matter of "reading" in the exonym discussions
HELLELAND, Botolv (Norway): Why *Hellas* in Norway and *Grekland* in Sweden?
BUŠS, Ojārs (Latvia): Two kinds of exonyms – two kinds of classification problems

Session 2: The Great Divide – specific aspects (Chair: Paul WOODMAN, United Kingdom)
PÄLL, Peeter (Estonia): Exonyms: special case of countries with non-Roman scripts
ZAGÓRSKI, Bogusław R. (Poland): Some problems of exonym use in Arabic: the case of Polish geographical names in Arabic school atlases.
BELL, Herman (United Kingdom): Toponymic teleology: the Great Divide from a Nubian perspective
TANABE, Hiroshi; WATANABE, Kohei (Japan): A reflection on names of large seas
ZYCH, Maciej (Poland): Country names in Polish as an example of using exonyms and endonyms

Session 3: Exonyms – documentation and use (Chair: Sungjae CHOO, Republic of Korea)
MANDOLA, Małgorzata (France, Poland): Reflections about *endonym* and *exonym* as proper place names
KLADNIK, Drago; GERŠIČ, Matjaž (Slovenia): A gazetteer of Slovenian exonyms
CREȚAN, Remus (Romania): South-Danubian place names reflected in Theodor Capidan's seminal works

CEKULA, Zane (Latvia): Use of place names on maps in the border area with Russia: The territory of former Abrene

PAIKKALA, Sirkka (Finland): Finnish exonyms: a pragmatic approach to defining *exonym* and *endonym*

In a general discussion on new definitions of *endonym* and *exonym* lasting three and a half hours and moderated by the convenor, the convenor proposed at first a sequence of main questions to be addressed, which was approved by the audience:

(1) Do we agree to Phil MATTHEWS' unconventional approach?

(2) Do we agree that we have to define umbrella terms, even if they are not operational for standardization purposes?

(3) Do we agree that *language* is not an essential criterion for the endonym/exonym divide and that it needs therefore not to be part of the definitions?

(4) Do we agree that *officiality* is not an essential criterion for the endonym/exonym divide and that it needs therefore not to be part of the definitions?

(5) Do we agree that the divide should be confined to differences in writing?

(6) Do we agree that there is no third term necessary besides *endonym* and *exonym* − even not for oceans and large seas?

Ad 1) Phil MATTHEWS had in a very comprehensive paper stated a name "is an endonym when the members of a linguistic community use the name in a written, spoken or signed mode that conforms to their language's norms at a certain point in time". This means that the status of *endonym* and *exonym* is independent of a feature's location. It is conformity with use, the grammatical and other norms of the language of the members of a linguistic community that counts. According to his definition *Warsaw* is an English endonym, *Mailand* is a German endonym and *Londres* is a French endonym. He considers these endonymic toponyms as part of the identity and cultural heritage of the respective linguistic communities.

MATTHEWS argues that in this way the number of exonyms will be reduced to a minimum as only forms that do not conform to the linguistic community's norms are considered exonyms, e.g. *Donau* in English. With this definition the goal of the UN to reduce the use of exonyms will be accomplished to a considerable extent.

To the counter-argument that such a reduction is only achieved by looking at the same situation in a different way and that nothing is changed in reality, he responds that none of the assumptions and interpretations is more "real" than the other and that our current view on the endonym/exonym divide is an inappropriate burdening of this divide by a meaning that it actually does not have.

In the further discussion it is stated that although MATTHEWS' approach was consistent and logical, it was a purely linguistic approach and very much in contrast to what was discussed in this context within and outside UNGEGN so far. Following this approach would mean to reformulate several UN resolutions not only referring to exonyms, but also to other toponymic fields (Helen KERFOOT and others).

It is then decided not to follow this path further at the moment, but to keep MATTHEWS' proposal on the agenda for further consideration.

Ad 2) As already stated in his paper, the convenor stresses the necessity to define *endonym* and *exonym* as umbrella terms, even if they are not operational for standardization purposes. All the terms in the UNGEGN Glossary have to be referred to their umbrella term. If, e.g., the term *standardized endonym* is defined in the Glossary, the reader has also to find a definition of the *endonym* in principle, in its widest possible and most inclusive sense. And to define this umbrella term was the primary and basic task. Subterms derived from the umbrella term can be defined subsequently, after the umbrella term has been defined.

This opinion meets no major objection.

Ad 3) Whether language is an essential criterion for the endonym/exonym divide and has therefore to be part of the definitions, is vigorously discussed. Paul WOODMAN as well as the convenor had argued in their papers that an endonym (like a name for a house) can very well not correspond to the local language, proving that language is not necessarily a criterion for the endonym/exonym divide. WOODMAN in contrast to the convenor, however, wishes to preserve the language criterion in the definitions in order to make them less contrastive compared to the current definitions and to make them more widely acceptable.

While Peeter PÄLL shares WOODMAN's view, Staffan NYSTRÖM argues that *language* is already included in the term *name* (which is anyway part of the definitions) and that the fact that a name is a part of the language needs not always to be repeated.

Firuz REFAHI hints in this context at the fact that many names used by a certain community originate from another language no longer spoken in the place.

It becomes obvious that opinions in favour of and opposing language as a criterion are very much divided. The divide, however, crosses the lines of linguists and geographers/cartogrphers and coincides by no means with the scientific disciplines represented.

At this point of a deadlock Alexandros STAVROPOULOS comments not only on the language question, but extends his statement to the criterion of *officiality* mentioning a series of Resolutions of the Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names that refer to this term and raises the question, why so much stress is laid on the role of endonyms as emotional ties between a human community and a feature (by WOODMAN as well as the convenor in several papers) and why all sizes and kinds of human communities had to be taken into account. He rather pleads for a more distanced and state/nation-related view, which was more practicable in the field of standardization.

This comprehensive statement and the heated debate following makes Paul WOODMAN propose abandoning the planned sequence of agenda items and instead take Staffan NYSTRÖM's two alternative definitions of the *endonym* as a basis for further discussion. Paul WOODMAN would be ready to withdraw his proposed definitions in favour of Staffan NYSTRÖM's. This motion is approved by the audience and the convenor, who adds that he, too, would be ready to withdraw his proposed definitions in favour of Staffan NYSTRÖM's.

Thus, after a short break the discussion continues on the following two definitions of the endonym proposed earlier by Staffan NYSTRÖM in his paper:

NYSTRÖM, Alternative 1: "Locally accepted name of a geographical feature used in a language that is well-established in the area where the feature is situated."

NYSTRÖM, Alternative 2: "Name of a geographical feature locally accepted and used in the area where the feature is situated."

They were replacing

WOODMAN: "Locally accepted name of a geographical feature in a language that is well-established in the area where the feature is situated."

JORDAN: "Name for a geographical feature used by the population autochthonous in the feature's location."

Staffan NYSTRÖM's alternatives differed just as regards the inclusion or exclusion of *language* as a differentiating criterion, while neither required *officiality* as a prerequisite for

endonym status. This caused a debate on the question, whether for standardization purposes official names, names in official languages or at least standardized names were not the most and perhaps even the only important names – so in fact on item (4) of the planned agenda. It was argued that it is often difficult to find reliable sources for other than standardized names (Alexandros STAVROPOULOS, Maciej ZYCH and others), while Bogusław R. ZAGORSKI noted that in some linguistic areas such as the Arabic (26 countries) almost exclusively non-standardized names were obtainable even from official sources presenting differing versions.

In response the convenor argued that, while for many practical purposes like the rendering of place names on maps and in gazetteers standardized names or even only official names or names in official languages were of course the most relevant, nevertheless they were only a part of all endonyms. The definition of the *endonym* in the Glossary, however, had to be all-comprehensive, to include all kinds, status versions and linguistic forms of a name. Certainly these definitions were not operational for the purposes of standardization. But purpose-orientation was not the task of defining umbrella terms. Umbrella terms had just to be defined in such a way that these definitions are true and valid under all circumstances, that there is not a single case that they do not cover. Departing from these umbrella terms, subterms can be defined or are already defined, as with the term *standardized endonym*. A map editor or the editor of a names gazetteer will then have to declare which subterms/subcategories of the endonym he takes into account. He/she will have to make his/her method of selection transparent to the reader, which was in the interest of scientific clarity.

Maciej ZYCH hinted at the danger of arousing China's opposition if, e.g., Tibetan place names would figure as endonyms, and he defended *officiality* as a criterion for the endonym/exonym divide. Reminded of his critical attitude towards the current definitions and his pleading for "more practicable" definitions at the last WGE workshop in Gdańsk, he advocated a return to the definitions valid up to 2007. Bogusław R. ZAGÓRSKI remarked that Tibetan names were officially admitted and used in Tibet (and some other adjoining provinces of China) alongside Chinese, similarly to Uyghur names in Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan). Classifying Tibetan names as endonyms there could thus not be officially contested.

Generally speaking, during this part of the debate a divide became obvious between (a) "statist" views and (b) approaches granting also subnational communities the right to call their names *endonyms*.

Some members (Sungjae CHOO, Alexandros STAVROPOULOS, Ojārs BUŠS) had reservations about the term "locally accepted" as proposed in the revised definitions.

Facing significantly divided opinions related to *language* as well as *officiality* as criteria for the endonym/exonym divide and taking into account that the time available was almost exhausted, other questions like whether the divide should be confined to differences in writing or whether a third term besides *endonym* and *exonym* was necessary for large unpopulated features is not discussed anymore and the convenor closes the discussion as well as the 14th Meeting of the WG. He thanks all experts for their presence and valuable input and concludes that, although no consensus could be achieved as regards the definitions of the *endonym* and the *exonym*, this meeting had perhaps contributed to the clarification of viewpoints and was in this respect a step forward. The question of new definitions will be on the agenda also of the next meeting.

Peter JORDAN, Convenor