

United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

6th Meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms

Prague [Praha], Czech Republic, 17th – 18th May 2007

Summary Report

This two-day meeting was jointly arranged with the EuroGeoNames Project and part of a meeting on geographical names in conjunction with a meeting of the UNGEGN East, Central and Southeast-East Europe Division. It was hosted by the Czech Land Survey Office and took place in the premises of this Office, Praha, Pod sídlištěm 9/1800. Participants and the papers presented are listed in the Annex to this Report.

The meeting was opened and the delegates welcomed by Ms Helen Kerfoot, the UNGEGN Chair, Mr. Peter Jordan, the Working Group's Co-convenor and Mr. Jörn Sievers as the representative of the EuroGeoNames Project. In her opening address Ms. Kerfoot emphasized that UNGEGN views on exonyms had somewhat changed in recent years. All the three opening addresses referred to Mr. Pavel Boháč, the meeting's principal organiser, thanking him for his great efforts.

Mr. Jordan then outlined the programme of this meeting and its main task of clarifying the use of exonyms in an empirical (in which situations are exonyms actually used?) and in a normative (in which situations should exonyms be used or not be used?) way. The question of definitions had already been settled in the last meetings and should not be raised again.

He then presented the book "Exonyms and the International Standardisation of Geographical Names. Approaches towards the Resolution of an Apparent Contradiction" as a result of the WG, published in spring 2007 in the book series "Wiener Osteuropastudien" and edited by Milan Orožen Adamič, Paul Woodman and himself. The book highlights the essence of exonyms, discusses the question of definitions between endonym and exonym and presents trends of exonym use in different countries and situations. The book was made available to the delegates at half of the retail price, i.e. € 12.50.

Papers

Mr Jordan presented a paper specifying the criteria for the use of exonyms. It classified such criteria (altogether 21) into feature-related, language-related, audience-related and medium-related and gave arguments and examples for these criteria. The paper was conceived as a check-list or (normative) guideline for the use of exonyms, conceding however, that the exonym should, if ever possible, only be used in addition to the endonym.

The paper provoked a discussion, in which some delegates expressed the opinion that this list of criteria due to its complexity and comprehensiveness could be regarded as a first approach towards guidelines for the use of exonyms, but in which others also questioned the validity of some criteria or attributed the paper a trend of promoting exonyms.

Mr Helleland reported in his paper on divergent trends in Norwegian exonym use. While there were apologists of pure endonym use, a majority as well as practice was inclined to preserve well-established exonyms, especially for more important and nature objects. The paper identified cases of Norwegianizing as well as de-Norwegianizing.

Mr Woodman in his paper traced back the English/British use of names for places in the Czech Lands to the end of the 9th century, comparing political history and English/British relations and interests in the Czech Lands with the rendering of place names. He arrived at the conclusion that the two aspects were related, but not necessarily parallel. He also stated that according to the new UNGEGN definitions of the endonym/exonym English/British use of place names in the Czech lands was always almost exclusively confined to endonyms, since also German place names could be regarded as endonyms up to shortly after World War II.

Mr Pál presented a paper discussing the use of names in history atlases. He highlighted the problems of two major options, (1) the use of contemporary official names for a certain period in time, (2) the use of current names for all time periods, and noted that in practice these two options occur very often in a mixed form. In the discussion it was mentioned that it was (except for the Roman Empire and some other cases) difficult to ascertain the official status of a name in periods before the 18th century and that it was a third option to use the names most frequently occurring in history literature of the language in question.

Mr Zych reported in his paper about the decision of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland, responsible for the standardization of Polish exonyms, to adopt neither the definitions of endonym/exonym in the current UNGEGN Glossary nor the new definitions proposed by the WG on Exonyms, but to use a concept of the (Polish) exonym defining it as a "name presently used in Poland in Polish language for a geographical feature situated outside its territory and different in graphical form from the standardized endonym of this feature". A difference of graphical form in this context is constituted by the omission or addition of diacritical marks or prefixes, but not by the omission, addition or translation of generic terms. Also transliteration or transcription of names written originally in non-Latin script is not recognized as a difference. This definition will be in force till a new definition has been adopted by UNGEGN. When UNGEGN will adopt a new definition, the Commission will take a new decision. This paper was not further discussed.

Mr. Sievers gave as a first part of the sub-session on the EuroGeoNames (EGN) Project a survey over the current state of the project, which had started in 2006 and was now in the stage of developing a data model, of data selection, of developing a business model, a model for exonym management and of service and interfaces.

Mr Zaccheddu then presented a first version of the conceptual data model. Its guiding idea was to link existing data bases without creating an additional super-structure. Just the collection and maintenance of an exonym data base will be a centralised and separate task. In this latter context he raised the questions, who would provide the EGN with a reliable set of exonyms and how exonyms should be linked with endonyms and objects.

Mr Stani-Fertl continued the exonym theme within the EGN Project by presenting a typology of exonyms or rather “name variants”, a term he preferred to “exonyms”, as well as by considering different kinds of sources for “name variants” useful for the EGN. In his typology he differentiated between official, recommended, standardized and conventional “name variants”.

Mr Woodman concluded this sub-session by a second paper informing about a list of English-language exonyms currently in use for features in the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland for the EGN Project. Surprisingly enough this list comprises only 62 features, half of them natural.

Mr Pokoly presented a paper on the use of exonyms in the Hungarian language, emphasizing that they were part of the vocabulary, and highlighting the different role exonyms play according to feature category (country names, names of provinces, names of physical features are most frequently indicated by exonyms), distance from Hungary (the nearer the more exonyms) and the type of publication. He also drew the attention to the role of intermediary languages for the creation of Hungarian exonyms, especially of German, Italian and Russian.

Mr Dutkó then presented a list of more than 800 Hungarian exonyms in frequent use and universally used by the press not including obsolete exonyms, pure transliterations or transcriptions, pure translations of generic terms and pure casual translations. The list was received with distinct acknowledgement by the audience.

Mr Crețan presented a paper examining German exonyms in the Romanian part of the Banat region. Up to the exodus of Germans from the late 1970s onward, but mainly in the early 1990s, this multicultural region had at least 54 settlements with a considerable German (Swabian) population. German names in this region could therefore be classified as

endonyms according to the new UNGEGN terminology. Now, in absence of an autochthonous German population, they have to be referred to as exonyms. But many have also been adopted unchanged or with only slight modifications by the Romanian language.

Mr. Bergmann gave in his paper a survey over the use of exonyms in Austrian daily newspapers. Based on investigations into the five most widespread Austrian newspapers he concluded that the use of exonyms is all but consequent, even within the same article, and at the maximum based on very general guidelines like to avoid to use German names, when this might be politically sensitive.

Ms. Austere and **Ms. Cekula** in a common paper gave a comprehensive survey over the use of exonyms in Latvia, which are frequent for neighbouring countries and regions, but deviate from the endonym sometimes only by the suffix -a, thus constituting morphological exonyms. They drew special attention to rules for the rendering of foreign proper nouns issued for several languages as well as to a revised list of Latvian country names published in a newspaper in 2006.

Mr. Kladnik and **Ms. Urbanc** reported in another common paper on the procedures applied for standardizing Slovene exonyms, i.e. for selecting out of almost 50,000 Slovene exonyms those complying to scientific criteria. This is done on the basis of 9 atlases and meets in the public divergent opinions ranging from a reduction of exonyms up to maximum use.

Ms. Brozović Rončević reported in her paper on the situation in Croatia, which is characterized by a lack of an official names authority as well as of an official or semi-official list of exonyms. Thus, the otherwise very comprehensive Croatian Geographical Names Data Base does not include exonyms so far. But Croatian exonyms are widely used and many of them have a long tradition. Referring to feature categories and individual countries many examples were given in the paper.

Mr. Zych referred in a second paper to three types of names, which were not in the strict sense exonyms, but had in a way this function: (1) names of trans-border objects corresponding to one of the endonyms, (2) names of officially multilingual places corresponding to one of the official names, (3) names derived from other scripts by transcription or transliteration.

All the papers presented were made available on the WGE website under the address http://www.zrc-sazu.si/ungegn/Prague_2007.htm

Final discussion on the use of exonyms

Intending to bring the discussion to the point, not necessarily to have it passed, Mr. Jordan presented a draft resolution referring to the use of exonyms and mentioning some major fields of exonym application. To present such a text at the present stage was found inappropriate by some delegates. It was also found inappropriate by an even larger number of experts to mention fields of exonym application, even when at the same the role of exonyms is confined by stating that the exonym should always be accompanied by the endonym and that exonyms have to be used in a politically sensitive way. A second draft, presented by Mr. Woodman in reaction to Mr. Jordan's draft and not explicitly specifying possible fields of exonym application found also no support. To the question, how the WG should then further proceed regarding recommendations for the use of exonyms, which was one of its core tasks defined by Resolution VIII/4, the opinion was expressed that precedence should be given to the elaboration of guidelines (for the use of exonyms), not to the formulation of resolutions.

Panel discussion on the Concept of a UNGEGN Geographical Names Database

Ms. Kerfoot presented the concept of the UNGEGN Geographical Names Database focusing on its furnishing with exonyms. Exonyms will be given for countries as well as for populated places with more than 100,000 inhabitants. Together with the other panellists Sievers, Woodman and Jordan and including the plenary, the discussion focused on how to provide the Database with exonyms, how to co-operate with the EGN Project, how to establish a quality control and whether to include historical exonyms. Regarding the latter point the opinion prevailed that precedence should be given to current exonyms and historical exonyms should only be introduced in a later stage.

Conclusion

The two days of the meeting were very well-organised and profitable and provoked much interesting and fruitful discussion. They profited very much from the fact that three meetings on geographical names had been jointly organized at one place and during three consequent days ensuring a participation that would otherwise have hardly been achieved. The following outcomes and actions items emerged:

- A list of criteria for the use of exonyms was presented, which in a modified form could serve as a first approach towards the “formulation of **guidelines** ensuring a politically sensitive use of exonyms” (Resolution VIII/4).

- Many papers referred to **categories of exonym use** mostly in an empirical, but also in a normative way, pushing the WG ahead on its path towards the goal of “categorization of exonym use” (Resolution VIII/4).
- A valuable survey was provided over **national lists of (standardized) exonyms** and attempts into this direction complying to Resolution III/19.
- The impression was confirmed that **in practice the use of exonyms spreads**, very often in an inconsequent way and without much regard to scientific principles.
- It became obvious that **statements attributing exonyms a positive role and a kind of functionality** even in selected and confined fields of application are still heavily disputed even within a WG of experts on exonyms.
- The **EuroGeoNames** Project was supported by the WG, and the question of furnishing it with exonyms was discussed.
- The **UNGEGN Database** Project was discussed with special reference to exonyms.

Next Meetings

The Working Group agreed to hold its next (7th) meeting in the framework of the 9th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names from 21st to 30th August 2007 in New York. This will just be a short meeting focussed on the Conference agenda. Time and location will still be specified according to the UN Conference schedule. For a next comprehensive and thematic meeting Mr. Crețan invited the WG to Timișoara (Romania), an invitation that was warmly received.

Peter Jordan
 (WG Co-convenor)
 June 2007

Papers presented (in the sequence of presentation):

- Peter JORDAN (A): Criteria for the use of exonyms
Botov HELLELAND (N): Exonyms from a Norwegian point of view
Paul WOODMAN (UK): The toponymy of the Czech lands as reflected in Britain
Peeter PÄLL (EST): Some reflection on extending the notion of exonyms/endonyms into history
Maciej ZYCH (PL): Definition of exonym applied by the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names
Tomáš BERÁNEK (CZ): A new list of Czech exonyms
Jörn SIEVERS (D): Status report on the EuroGeoNames Project
Pier-Giorgio ZACCHEDDU (D): EGN conceptual data model, version 1.x
Roman STANI-FERTL (A): Status report on identifying, evaluating and assessing variant names
Paul WOODMAN (UK): English-language exonyms for the EGN project
Béla POKOLY (H): Exonyms of the Hungarian language
András DUTKO (H): List of Hungarian exonyms
Remus CREȚAN (RO): German exonyms viewed in the microtoponymy of the Romanian Banat region
Hubert BERGMANN (A): Observations on the use of exonyms in Austrian daily newspapers
Baiba AUSTERE, Zane CERULA (LET): Exonyms and principles of writing foreign place names in Latvia
Drago KLADNIK, Mimi URBANC (SI): An approach to the standardisation of exonyms in Slovene language
Dunja BROZOVIĆ RONČEVIĆ (HR): The use of exonyms in Croatia
Maciej ZYCH (PL): Problems of standardizing names which are not formally exonyms; categories of Polish exonyms
Helen KERFOOT (CAN): UNGEGN Geographical Names Data Base

Participants in the WG meeting (in alphabetical order, WG members in bold letters):

1	Audzere	Juta	Latvia
2	Austere	Baiba	Latvia
3	Beranek	Tomáš	Czech Republic
4	Bergmann	Hubert	Austria
5	Boháč	Pavel	Czech Republic
6	Brozović Rončević	Dunja	Croatia
7	Burgess	Caroline	United Kingdom
8	Cekula	Zane	Latvia
9	Cheetham	Catherine	United Kingdom
10	Christodoulou	Menelaos	Cyprus
11	Crețan	Remus	Romania
12	Dutkó	András	Hungary
13	Hausner	Isolde	Austria
14	Helleland	Botolv	Norway
15	Jordan	Peter	Austria
16	Kerfoot	Helen	Canada
17	Kladnik	Drago	Slovenia
18	Kováčová	Mária	Slovakia
19	Matthews	Philip W.	New Zealand
20	Ormeling	Ferjan	The Netherlands
21	Päll	Peeter	Estonia
22	Pokoly	Béla	Hungary
23	Radomirović	Slavica	Serbia
24	Sievers	Jörn	Germany
25	Stani-Fertl	Roman	Austria
26	Syvak	Nina	Ukraine
27	Urbanc	Mimi	Slovenia
28	Vasileiou	Prodromos	Cyprus
29	Vučković	Milorad	Serbia
30	Woodman	Paul	United Kingdom
31	Zaccheddu	Pier-Giorgio	Germany
32	Zych	Maciej	Poland