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Geographical names and the railway industry

Submitted by Austria[*]

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Summary

This paper highlights the various relations between geographical names and the railway industry, focussing on Austria but giving also some examples from neighbouring countries. It presents some of the aspects of railway communication where geographical names play an important role (names of railway stations/destinations, train lines, trains) and demonstrates how, for example, the names of railway stations/destinations often differ from standardised place names. The paper also provides examples of how the railway industry has influenced the naming of places. Furthermore, it examines how minority names and the exonym problem are treated by the railway industry, especially in online timetables, which today constitute the most popular source of information on the rail network in Austria.

1) Introductory notes

The relations between geographical names and the railway industry are manifold. It is in the nature of things that the former play an important role within the positioning of the railway net in space. Geographical names are essential for the localisation of destinations as well as of starting points of railway connections. This paper aims to highlight the relationship between geographical names used in the railway industry on the one side, and standardized geographical names on the other. Although its main geographical focus is Austria, examples from adjacent European countries are also sporadically provided.

2) Names of railway stations and destinations

Within the range of topics that we may call "Geographical names and the railway industry" the denomination of stations plays a significant role. Preparations for this paper have brought to light not only that names of railway stations may differ from the official standardized place

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name designating the place the station is situated in, but also that the name of the railway station as designated on railway station signs does not always identify with the names of railway destinations displayed on online timetables of railway companies. We decided to call the latter class of names *names of (railway) destinations*. As this small investigation is based predominantly on research into online timetables, most of the names cited in this paper are to be regarded as names of destinations as shown on online timetables. If names refer to those written on railway station signs, this is noted separately.

A railway station usually bears a name. In most cases this is linked to another name, usually to a geographical one. Unlike airport names, which in addition to the name of the (nearby) town where they are situated often also contain a commemorative element, referring for example to a well known figure from the respective country (for example *Salzburg Airport W. A. Mozart* [AT], *Köln Bonn Airport Konrad Adenauer* [DE], *Letisko Milana Rastislava Štefánika* [Bratislava, SK], *Letališče Jožeta Pučnika Ljubljana* [SI]), naming railway stations in this way is quite a rare phenomenon in Central Europe. Perhaps the only example from Austria would be *Wien Franz Josefs Bahnhof*, named after the penultimate Austro-Hungarian emperor. Another of the rare examples from Central Europe would be *Masarykovo nádraží* in the Czech capital Prague, named in 1919 after the first president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.

As mentioned above, geographical names in the broadest sense are the main reservoir for the denomination of railway destinations and/or railway stations, first of all the name of the town/village, where the respective railway station is situated. But even smaller towns may already have more than one railway station, in which case additional geographical names may be added in order to provide a more precise localisation. These additional elements may be names of parts of towns:

- o *Bratislava-Petržalka* (SK)
- o *Klagenfurt Lend* (AT)
- o *Maribor Studenci* (SI)

Street names can also appear in this function:

- o *Wien Haidestraße* (AT)
- o *Wien Rennweg* (AT)
- o *Wien Traisengasse* (AT)

With termini we also find names that indicate the position of the relevant station within the town or the direction in which trains leaving from this stations are travelling:

- o *Budapest Keleti pályaudvar* (HU, 'eastern station')
- o *Wien Westbahnhof* (AT, 'western station')

Prominent buildings or important institutions may function as eponyms. Two Austrian examples:

- o *Graz Don Bosco* (named after a nearby catholic church, consecrated to Saint John Bosco)
- o *Kapfenberg Fachhochschule* ('university of applied sciences')

As already mentioned, geographical names present in the names of railway destinations and/or railway stations may differ from the respective standardised name. Onomastic annexes for example may be omitted, as is the case in the railway station name *Spittal-Millstättersee* (official name of the respective Austrian town: *Spittal an der Drau*).

On the other hand, new additional onomastic elements may appear in order to define the destination more precisely, as can be seen in the following examples from Austria (official standardized names in brackets):

- *Aich im Jauntal* (*Aich/Dob*)
- *Lienz in Osttirol* (*Lienz*)
- *Stadt Rottenmann* (*Rottenmann*)

In the first two cases an additional geographical name other than a settlement name is added to the name of the railway destination. Such geographical names as additional onomastic elements may refer to names of regions (*Osttirol*) or landscapes/valleys (*Jauntal*) in order to render the names unambiguously. In other cases these additional elements may refer to objects that have a certain importance for tourism. This could be the case in the above mentioned railway destination and station of *Spittal-Millstättersee*, whose second element refers to a lake near the town of Spittal an der Drau. Another example would be *Imst-Pitztal* (a destination which refers to the station in the town of Imst), the second element of which alludes to the homonymous valley which branches off near Imst. *Ötztal* is the name of a railway destination situated in the municipality of Haiming at the beginning of the Ötztal valley. The railway station provided the name of a village called *Ötztal-Bahnhof*.

Especially in rural areas we may often find double names referring to a railway destination situated at equidistance from or near two villages. In Austria we find many examples for such names that usually contain a hyphen dividing the two names (official standardized names in brackets):

- *Golling-Abtenau* (referring to *Golling an der Salzach* and *Abtenau*)
- *Schwarzach-St.Veit* (*Schwarzach im Pongau* and *St. Veit im Pongau*)
- *Spielfeld-Straß (Spielfeld* and *Straß in Steiermark)*

3) Geographical names used for denominating railway tracks

It is a well known fact that railway tracks often bear names. In Austria railway tracks may be named according to the direction of the track (with Vienna as a reference point). The two most important railway lines in Austria, the *Westbahn* ('western railway') and the *Südbahn* ('southern railway') are named like this. Other denomination principles may be the destination of the line:

- *Badner Bahn* (linking Vienna and Baden)
- *Mariazellerbahn* (from St. Pölten to Mariazell)
- *Schneebergbahn* (a collective name for several railway tracks in the surroundings of Wiener Neustadt, one of the branches leading to the Schneeberg, the highest mountain in Lower Austria)

The name of the track may also refer to the landscape/valley this track is passing through:

o *Donauuferbahn* (from Krems to Emmersdorf an der Donau, along the Danube)
o *Pinzgaubahn* (from Zell am See to Krimml, crossing the Pinzgau region)
o *Zillertalbahn* (from Jenbach to Mayerhofen in the Zillertal Valley)

4) Geographical names in train names

Train links in Austria are usually designated by an alphanumeric code. Particularly express trains may additionally bear a proper name. This name is shown on timetables, display panels, in the information material on the trains etc. and also figures in oral announcements on platforms and on the train. This additional name may also refer to geographical objects of several categories, as shown in the following examples:

Place names (endonymic or historical forms):

o *EN 240 VENEZIA* (Budapest [HU] > Venice [IT]; *Venezia* is the Italian endonym for *Venice*)
o *OEC 151 Emona* (Vienna [AT] > Ljubljana [SI]; *Emona* was the Roman name for *Ljubljana*)

Names of administrative units, landscapes, countries:

o *EC 159 Croatia* (Vienna [AT] > Zagreb [HR])
o *OEC 160 Vorarlberg* (Vienna [AT] > Zurich [CH]; referring to the homonymous westernmost province of Austria, which this train crosses)

Hydronyms:

o *EC 114 Wörthersee* (Klagenfurt [AT] > Dortmund [DE]; the *Wörthersee* is the biggest lake in Carinthia)
o *EN 465 EuroNight Zürichsee* (Zurich [CH] > Graz [AT]; *Zürichsee* is the German endonym for *Lake Zurich*)
o *IC 407 Donau* (Vienna [AT] > Bratislava [SK]; *Donau* is the German name for the river *Danube*)

In Austria it has become popular to name express trains in the framework of PR-actions. As a result of this we nowadays find a couple of trains named after private firms, public institutions etc. Thus indirectly additional geographical names may appear in the names of trains. Examples include:

o *OEC 531 Stadttheater Klagenfurt* (Vienna [AT] > Lienz [AT]; named after a theatre in Klagenfurt, the capital of Carinthia)
o *OEC 568 Industrieland Österreich* (Vienna [AT] > Bregenz [AT]; contains the German endonymic form for Austria; a promotional action of the Federation of Austrian Industries)

5) The eponymous railway industry

As has already been demonstrated above by the example of *Ötztal-Bahnhof*, railway stations can also "produce" geographical names. Thus in the official gazetteer of Austria we find a couple of standardized names of villages that contain the German word *Bahnhof* ('railway station'), or – to a minor degree – *Bahnhaltestelle* and *Bahnstation* (the latter two denominating minor train stops). Usually they designate small groups of houses or even singular buildings. Examples of such names which do not contain other concrete geographical names as referential elements are:

- o *Bahnhof* ('railway station', for example in the municipality of St. Peter in der Au)
- o *Bahnhofsgebiet* ('railway station area', municipality of Sitzenberg-Reidling)
- o *Bahnhofsiedlung* ('railway station settlement', for example in the municipality of St. Pölten)
- o *Bahnhofssiedlung* ('railway station settlement', municipality of Terfens)
- o *Bahnhofviertel* ('railway station quarter', for example in the municipality of Radkersburg-Umgebung)
- o *Bahnsiedlung* ('railway settlement', in the municipalities of Absdorf and Werndorf)

In some cases we find the elements *Bahnhof*, *Bahnhaltestelle* or *Bahnstation* combined with a concrete referential geographical name. This name may stand before the element *Bahnhof*, *Bahnhaltestelle* or *Bahnstation*, like in the following examples:

- o *Bahnhaltestelle Hallstatt*, *Bahnhaltestelle Kopperbrüllerhöhle* (both in the municipality of Obertraun)
- o *Bahnhof Großhollenstein* (municipality of Hollenstein an der Ybbs)
- o *Bahnhof Hintergasse* (municipality of Innerbraz)
- o *Bahnhof Imst-Pitztal* (municipality of Arzl im Pitztal)
- o *Bahnhof Koglhof* (municipality of Koglhof)
- o *Bahnhof Söding* (municipality of Söding)
- o *Bahnhof Summerau* (municipality of Rainbach im Mühlkreis)
- o *Bahnstation Wiesen-Sigleß* (municipality of Mattersburg)

More frequent, however, are combinations where the words *Bahnhof* or *Bahnstation* occur after the adjusted geographical references. In this case a hyphen may link the additional geographical name(s) and the element *Bahnhof*:

- o *Eibesbrunn-Bahnhof* (municipality of Großebersdorf)
- o *Fehring-Bahnhof* (municipality of Johnsdorf-Brunn)
- o *Flaurling-Bahnhof* (municipality of Flaurling)
- o *Götzendorf-Bahnhof* (municipality of Götzendorf an der Leitha)
- o *Hetzmannsdorf-Wullersdorf-Bahnstation* (municipality of Wullersdorf)
- o *Marchegg-Bahnhof* (municipality of Marchegg)
- o *Patsch-Bahnhof* (municipality of Patsch)
- o *Ravelsbach-Bahnstation* (municipality of Ravelsbach)
- o *Rohrbach-Vorau-Bahnhof* (municipality of Eichberg)
- o *Rückersdorf-Harmannsdorf-Bahnstation* (municipality of Harmannsdorf)
- o *Wilfleinsdorf-Bahnhof* (municipality of Bruck an der Leitha)

There are also cases, however, in which the hyphen is missing:

- o *Grafendorf Bahnhof* (municipality of Grafendorf bei Hartberg)
- o *Haslach Bahnhof* (municipality of Berg bei Rohrbach)

- *Irnfritz Bahnhof* (municipality of Irnfritz-Messern)
- *Zirl Bahnhof* (municipality of Zirl)

We also find two of the above mentioned names *Bahnhofsiedlung* with an additional geographical name:

- *Bahnhofsiedlung St. Egyden* (municipality of St. Egyden am Steinfeld)
- *Grund-Bahnhofsiedlung* (municipality of Wullersdorf)

In a few cases, railway lines function as referential elements for the specification of place names. The (original) place name and the name of the railway line are linked by the preposition *an* 'at, on, upon'; the respective names thus have the same structure as place names following the model "[place] X upon [river] Y". The six Austrian examples for this type of naming are:

- *Brunn an der Schneebergbahn* (municipality of Bad Fischau-Brunn)
- *Gösing an der Mariazellerbahn* (municipality of Puchenstuben)
- *Klaus an der Pyhrnbahn* (municipalityof its own)
- *Krummnußbaum an der Donauuferbahn* (municipality of Marbach an der Donau)
- *Pöls an der Wieserbahn* (municipality of Zwaring-Pöls)
- *Strasshof an der Nordbahn* (municipality of its own)

6) Minority names and the railway industry

In areas with more than one official language, railway stations may also bear more than one name. This is for example the case throughout the province of Bolzano/Bozen in Italy, where all railway stations are designated in Italian and in German (for example *Bolzano/Bozen, Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck*). In Austria there are only a few railway stations situated in municipalities with official minority names. It is possible, however, to provide some examples. The railway stations of *Aich/Dob* and *St. Michael ob Bleiburg/Šmihel nad Pliberkom* for example are signalised in German and in Slovene. Dual naming of railway stations is, however, not practised in the province of Burgenland, where we find official bilingual (German-Burgenland Croatian and German-Hungarian) place names on road signs for example. In the online timetable of the Austrian Federal Railways (Österreichische Bundesbahnen, short ÖBB) names in a minority language are not displayed in the result of the query, even if they have an official status. In the search mask, however, respective names in the minority language are taken into account. So when entering *Šmihel nad Pliberkom* as destination or point of departure for example (omitting the caron on the *S*) links to or from *St. Michael ob Bleiburg*, i.e. the German official form, are provided. On the other hand the database behind the online timetable also takes into account a certain number of names in minority languages that do not have an official status, for example the following Slovene place names in Carinthia (German official name in brackets):

- *Beljak* (*Villach*)
- *Celovec* (*Klagenfurt*)
- *Metlova* (*Mittlern*)
- *Pliberk* (*Bleiburg*)

- *Podrožca*[2] (*Rosenbach*)
- *Velikovec* (*Völkermarkt*)

Which names have been taken into account cannot be said precisely. This point could be cleared by contacting the appropriate authority though.

7) The endonym/exonym problem in the context of the railway industry

Regardless of whether we are dealing with printed information material, information displayed electronically on panels or online timetables, it is interesting to look at how the endonym/exonym problem is dealt with in this context. In Austria the use of endonymic forms predominates in this case. The rendering of special characters in endonymic forms of place names in foreign languages, however, causes problems. This is not only the case for electronic displays, but also for printed material, as the following examples from printed travel information (*Reisebegleiter*) distributed on trains of the ÖBB show (correct forms in brackets):

- *Bratislava-Petrzalka* (*Bratislava-Petržalka* [SK]; information booklet on train *IC 649 Alpenkonvention*, 14.12.2008-13.06.2009)
- *Györ* (*Győr* [HU]; information booklet on train *IC 630 CARITAS Kinderpatenschaften*, 14.12.2008-13.06.2008)
- *Krsko* (*Krško* [SI]; information booklet on train EC 159 *Croatia*, 7.6.2008-13.12.2008)

Within the search functions of the online timetable of the ÖBB many name variants are taken into account but not displayed in the search results. These names include minority names within Austria (see above), but also German exonyms. When looking for railway connections on this timetable one may, for example, insert the German exonym *Brünn* as a destination and the search will be successful, displaying the train connections to *Brno* (CZ). The timetables of Swiss Federal Railways (Schweizerische Bundesbahnen / Chemins de fer fédéraux suisses / Ferrovie federali svizzere, short SBB CFF FFS) and the German Federal Railway (Deutsche Bahn, short DB) work in a similar way. One can, however, detect slight differences in the use of exonyms in these three countries which can also be observed in other fields, for example in the media. Looking for *Sitten*, the German exonym for the Swiss town of *Sion*, on the online timetables of the ÖBB or the DB, for example, will remain a futile attempt, whereas such a search on the respective service of the SBB CFF FFS leads the customer to the connections to Sion. On the other hand, one can perform a successful search in the online timetables of the ÖBB using the German exonyms *Steinamanger* (for *Szombathely* [HU]) or *Hohenfurth* (for *Vyšší Brod* [CZ]) for example. In the respective internet services of the SBB CFF FFS and the DB only *Szombathely* is accepted, and the online timetable of the DB knows only *Vyšší Brod* (without carons and the acute, as with the ÖBB page), whereas the latter does not appear at all in the Swiss service.

If the destinations consist of more than one official name in different languages, there are cases in which the web service of the ÖBB displays the name in both languages in the search results. This is the case, for example, with the bilingual (Italian/German) railway station names in the neighbouring province of Bolzano/Bozen (Italy). The fact that some other

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[2] The name lacks the caron though. Searching the name by using the correct character (Unicode 017E) gives no result, the caron has to be omitted to perform a successful search. This is also the case with many other diacritic signs like, for example, *ő* (Unicode 0152) or *Š* (Unicode 0160).

destinations in official bilingual areas figure only in one language may be due to the fact that the respective railway stations or/and railway destinations have only one name. Examples for such destinations in bilingual areas figuring only in one language on the online timetables of the ÖBB are *Sopron/Ödenburg* (HU, only *Sopron*) or *Bautzen/Budyšin* (DE, only *Bautzen*). Both names, however, appear only in one language also on the online timetables of the respective national railway companies (*Sopron* on the online service of the Hungarian State Railways [Magyar Államvasutak], short MÁV, and *Bautzen* on the DB service). *Budyšin* is not taken into account on the DB web service, neither is *Ödenburg* on the MÁV page. The latter does, however, function in DB enquiries, leading to the display of connections to *Sopron*.

Comparing the search performances of railway sites in different countries and the results they provide is very informative and reveals differences in dealing with the endonym/exonym problem, as illustrated in the examples above. An in-depth analysis of this would, however, go beyond the scope of this short paper.

8) Conclusion

There are numerous contact points between geographical names and the railway industry (geographical names as primary elements for designating railway stations and/or destinations present also in the names of railway tracks and trains on the one side, and the railway industry as eponymous for geographical names on the other). The broad variety of geographical names, the divergence between geographical names used in the context of the railway industry (names of railway stations or destinations) on the one hand and standardised names on the other, enriched with the problem of (official and unofficial) minority names and exonyms pose a certain challenge for railway companies as well as for their customers. This is especially true in the digital era, when online timetables play a central role in everyday railway transportation. On the other hand, these very online services provide new flexible solutions for handling problems in connection with geographical names, as this paper has tried to demonstrate on the basis of some (predominantly Austrian) examples.

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