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Preface

Peter Jordan*

Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Urban and Regional Research
University of the Free State (South Africa), Faculty of Humanities

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* Contact: Institute of Urban and Regional Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences,
Bäckerstraße 13, A-1010 Wien; e-mail: peter.jordan@oeaw.ac.at, website:
<http://www.oeaw.ac.at/isr>.

The International Geographical Union (IGU), the global umbrella organization of geographers, organizes in between its quadrennial global congresses also regional and thematic conferences. One of such thematic conferences was the IGU Conference on Heritage Geographies: “Politics, Uses and Governance of the Past” in Lecce (Italy), 26–28 May 2021. It had already been planned for May 2020, but to be postponed for one year due to the Covid-19 pandemic and could also in 2021 only be held virtually. It had been organized by the local university, the University of Salento [Università del Salento], jointly with six IGU commissions, i.e., the Commission on Political Geography, the Commission on Cultural Approaches to Geography, the Commission on the History of Geography, the Commission on the Geography of Tourism, Leisure and Global Change, the Commission on the Geography of Governance and the Joint ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymy. They had organized the following sessions.

- Traditional agricultural landscapes, between heritagization, commodification and tourism sustainability
- Smart governance, urban planning, and heritage
- Place names as cultural heritage – general perspectives
- Place names as cultural heritage – the regional focus
- Place names as cultural heritage – specific categories of place names as cultural heritage
- The maritime cultural heritage: discourse, practices and uses
- Heritage and islandness: the islanders’ narratives
- Heritage geographies of tourism: prospects and challenges
- Heritage and nationalism
- Place names as part of cultural heritage
- Sharing the heritage: heritage narratives in the age of social media
- Southern thinking. Heritage, migration and Mediterranean cultures
- Local government and the governance of urban heritage
- Citizen participation in the governance of urban heritage
- Landscape as heritage: critical perspectives
- The geography of culture-led development
- Language (as) heritage (in) place: Political geographies of linguistic heritage geographies

These sessions saw 90 paper presentations by colleagues from 27 countries and five continents. Two round tables on the topics “Women in social sciences for equity in research” and “Perspectives on heritage geographies” complemented the program.

The four sessions “Place names as (part of) cultural heritage” with 16

papers, smoothly fitting into the overall conference theme, were contributed and organized by the Joint ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymy. A selection of these papers, i.e., those having passed the obligatory double-blind peer-reviewing process, composes this issue of *Onoma* thanks to the welcoming attitude of its Editor-in-Chief Oliviu Felecan.

Place names, toponyms or geographical names are part of the cultural heritage, because they are elements of a language, but also because they exert very specific functions as proper names designating geographical concepts and features, the latter in the sense of all kinds of space-bound features.

This has been confirmed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in its Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage passed in 2003 and entered into force on 20 April 2006. It defines in its Article 2, Paragraph 1, intangible cultural heritage as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage [...]” and regards as its domains “(a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; (b) performing arts; (c) social practices, rituals and festive events; (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; (e) traditional craftsmanship” (UNESCO 2023).

Based on this Convention, at the 9th United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, 21–30 August 2007, geographical names as a part of the cultural heritage evolved as one of the major topics. Madame Hélène-Marie Gosselin, UNESCO Representative to the United Nations and Director of the UNESCO New York Office, presented in a keynote speech the above-mentioned UNESCO Convention pointing at geographical names as an important element of linguistic heritage and traditions.

In the years following several symposia on this topic were held and proceedings published: the first in Vienna [Wien], 19–21 May 2008, organized by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names’ (UNGEGN) Dutch and German Speaking Division (DGSD) with 83 experts from 24 countries and 4 continents (see [Jordan et al. 2009](#)); the second in Seoul 7–9 November 2014, organized by the National Geographic Information Institute (NGII) of the Republic of Korea (see [Choo 2015](#)), the third in Florence [Firenze], 26–27 March 2015, organized by UNGEGN’s Romano-Hellenic Division (see [Cantile & Kerfoot 2016](#)). In parallel and supported by this scientific expertise UNGEGN elaborated resolutions that were passed by subsequent United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names: Resolution VIII/9 (2002): “Geographical names as cultural heritage”, Resolution IX/4 (2007): “Geographical names as intangible cultural heritage”,

Resolution X/3 (2012): “Criteria for establishing and evaluating the nature of geographical names as cultural heritage” (see [UNGEKN 2023](#)).

The symposia and resolutions emphasized the following aspects of place names in the context of cultural heritage:

- Place names are an important part of the cultural heritage. Traditional geographical names are partly very old, have been attributed to features in a certain linguistic, political, social and economic situation and have partly been preserved also by succeeding languages. They are therefore a key to settlement and cultural history. They tell a lot about the character and the essence of a place, and its former economic and linguistic situations. They form an inter-related system of names in a certain region, a ‘place-names landscape’, describing historical, but very often still existing situations. Place names support space-related identity building. Mentioning or remembering the name of a familiar place evokes a whole set of thoughts of that place and expresses or confirms the emotional relation of a person to a place. Geographical names are therefore an important element of feeling at home, not the least for linguistic minorities.
- Special protection is needed for names in minority languages, names in other declining languages and also in dialects, the latter being subject to a significant erosion process due to the spatial expansion of personal communication networks, the power of nation-wide media and trends towards cultural globalisation. Also exonyms need protection, since they are very often not standardised and not systematically documented. When documenting them, it is important to refer them as well as other variant names to the standardised endonym.
- Dangers to which geographical names are exposed are partly provoked by the strong symbolic power of place names. Place names are frequently interpreted as a claim for dominance over a certain region or country. The dominant force in a society wants to have definitive power over geographical names. Changes in dominance (at all spatial scales, from the country down to the settlement level; also, e.g., from the political to the economic sphere) may result in renaming. Other dangers emerge from inadequate legislation in the protection of names, the loss of knowledge of particular names, the changing way of life from rural to urban, the loss of oral traditions due to a lack of recording, globalisation and the influence of other cultures as well as indiscriminate renaming and perpetuation of incorrect or incorrectly spelt versions of names.

The sequence of the twelve articles in this issue proceeds from the more general towards the more specific and conveys quite a comprehensive picture of the topic.

Přemysl Mácha (Brno, Czechia) starts with addressing the most important dilemmas with place-name recognition and protection and suggests possible solutions. He emphasizes, e.g., the necessity of setting protection priorities and hints at the dynamic nature not only of language in general, but also of toponymic systems and the potential tension between place-name protection and the freedom of people to name their places according to their own intentions.

Joan Tort i Donada (Barcelona, Spain) then focuses on the heritage value of microtoponymy in the sense of toponyms for small geographical features or the system of place names at the municipal level by the example of Catalonia [Catalunya/Cataluña] (Spain). The study of 1,776 oronyms may be considered a model for examining the heritage value of microtoponymy, and the question arises to which extent it can be projected onto other toponymic systems.

Together with César López Leiva (Madrid, Spain) he then uses place names as indicators of former land use, more specifically of forest management systems, and exemplifies this by the mountains of La Rioja in Spain. Former grazing landscapes, shaped through almost a millennium, have evolved into a mosaic of forests and shrublands once the outstanding transhumance activities had collapsed in the mid-20th century due to population decrease. Also agricultural lands were abandoned in the era of industrialization and urbanization since the 1960s. Place names are used to reconstruct these former situations.

Pamela J. Rader (Lakewood, New Jersey, United States) analyzes Alice Oswald's poems *Dart* (2002) and *Memorial* (2013) that draw attention to the ecology of water in the 21st century by excavating stories and myths around place names, specifically waterways.

Gábor Mikesy (Budapest, Hungary) focuses on two groups of place names in Hungary that can be regarded as a significant cultural heritage: place names after early Hungarian personal names and after professions. The vast majority of the examples discussed do not conform to modern Hungarian. Both groups tell a lot about interethnic relations and migrations.

Viviana Ferrario, Piergiorgio Cesco Frare, and Andrea Turato (all Venice [Venezia], Italy) discuss experiences with cadastre-based Historical GIS applied to minority-language place names in the Alpine valley of Comelico, Italy. The Comelico digital toponymy atlas (T-Atlas) is a tool to record and map local place names for scientific purposes. It promotes the linguistic minority as a resource for cultural tourism, intends to revitalize the use of Ladin toponyms and aims at unravelling the process of translation of local place names into the dominant language in official cartography.

Rhian Parry (Bangor, United Kingdom) reports on documentary and mapping research that has been conducted in parts of the Snowdonia National

Park in Wales. By a new methodology he reveals a palimpsest of toponyms in Welsh rural landscapes and uncovers previously concealed history and untold narratives of Welsh heritage. He also discusses the critical legal issue of protecting place names in Wales and illustrates how the Welsh Place Name Society has worked alongside organisations and local communities in Wales to promote and defend place names.

Andrey A. Herzen and Olga Herzen (both Moscow [Moskva], Russian Federation) contribute by a historical-cartographic analysis of places in the northwestern Black Sea region, more specifically in Moldova, to geographical research of the cultural heritage. The three cases studied represent different types of places.

Wojciech Włoskowicz (Cracow [Kraków], Poland) examines the Austrian toponymic policy in the late 18th to early 20th century cartography of Galicia [Galicja, Galyčyna] and Bukovina [Bucovina, Bukovyna]. This is done by analyzing samples of toponyms extracted from the maps of the First and the Third Survey of Austria(-Hungary) as well as the “Spezialkarte”. Special attention is paid to the cartographic relations between Ruthenian (Ukrainian) and Polish toponym forms.

Pandeleimon Hionidis (Ilion, Greece) analyzes Greek perceptions and politics related to place names in the early 20th century, when as a part of a Greek-national agenda renaming places became a systematic process. The case of Harvati-Mycenae, a small village in Argolida [Argolída], which in 1916 was renamed from *Harvati* to *Mycenae*, is taken as an indicative example of the interaction between administrative expediency and national aspirations in the reshaping of the map of Greece.

Zvinashe Mamvura (Harare, Zimbabwe) explores how secessionists in Zimbabwe deploy place naming to subvert, contest, and resist state-consecrated versions of national identity, belonging and citizenship. By the example of the Ndebele-speaking regions he shows how secessionists appropriate place naming in their quest for self-determination. He uses data gathered through semi-structured interviews with the choreographers of secession and cultural and language committees.

Peter Jordan (Hermagor/Vienna [Wien], Austria) finally substantiates the thesis that exonyms in the sense of place names not used by the local community and differing from the respective endonym are parts of the cultural heritage by four reasons: they are elements of a language; they reflect the pattern of a community’s network of external relations; they relate a community with its history; they are in the user community often reflected and repeated by street names, names of dishes, pieces of music or theatre plays etc., where they actually assume the status of endonyms and form the nucleus of a name system.

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¹ Peter Kang, Paul Woodman, Marie A. Rieger, Theodorus Du Plessis, Milan Harvalík, Grant Smith, Brahim Atoui, Ammara Bekkouche, Vincent Jenjekwa, Charles Pfükwa, Jordi Chicheri, Ekaterina Mikhailova, Allison Dollimore, Catherine Cheetham, Zsombor Bartos-Elekes, Dorin Lozovanu, Patrik Tatrái, Gábor Gercsák, Sungjae Choo, Paulo de Menezes, Guido Lucarno, Igor Jelen, Ferjan Ormeling, Maciej Zych, Andreas Hadriafitis, Cosimo Palagiano, Frédéric Giraut.