

**Papers related with Symposium
'Minority Names in Public
Space – Problems, Challenges, Solutions'
(Vienna, November 2018)**

Preface

Peter Jordan

This issue of “Onomàstica” contains five papers presented at an international symposium held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna [Wien] in 2018. The meeting was devoted to discussing the results of a research project, conducted between 2016 and 2018, entitled “The politics and poetics of toponymy, identity and place in multilingual areas. A comparative study of southern Carinthia (Austria) and the Těšín/Cieszyn region (Czechia)”, funded by the Austrian Science Fund [Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung, FWF] and the Czech Grant Agency. Taking the perspectives afforded essentially by cultural geography and cultural anthropology, the project sought to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What do place names mean for the identity of human communities in general and more specifically for linguistic minorities? What is the relationship between language, place and identity and how do we make ourselves at home through place names?
2. What toponymic strategies have been employed by different actors in establishing, maintaining, and subverting ethnic/national boundaries and what are the principal social forces structuring the contemporary toponymic landscape and everyday toponymic praxis?
3. How are the multilingual/multiethnic city-text and linguistic landscape produced, performed, interpreted, and contested?
4. When we speak of minority rights and cultural preservation, what role do place names play in this discussion? Why, how, by what means and procedures, by whom and for whom should place names be protected?

These were the questions and research fields that experts not directly engaged in the project were also invited to present their papers and ideas

on. Thus, the symposium was designed not only to discuss the results of the research project in question, but also to explore other aspects of this broad research area. While the results of the research project will be published in a book (JORDAN & MÁCHA et al. in press),¹ this issue presents important additional contributions to this wider debate.

The first paper is the work of Urszula BIJAK and Barbara CZOPEK-KOPCIUCH. It is with deep sadness that I have to report that this was, in all probability, Barbara CZOPEK-KOPCIUCH's last publication. Not quite two years after her active and fruitful participation in our symposium, she passed away on 7th July 2020 after a severe illness. Barbara Czopek-Kopciuch was born in 1952 in Częstochowa, Poland. Later, she would study Polish philology at the Jagiellonian University, completing her M.A. in 1976. In 1985, she was awarded a PhD from the Institute of the Polish Language of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAS), for a thesis on the place names of the Land of Chełm and Bełz, written under the supervision of Professor Kazimierz RYMUT. In 1995, she received *habilitation* for a monograph on adaptations of German place names in the Polish language, and in 2008 was awarded a Full Professorship by the President of the Republic of Poland. Barbara CZOPEK-KOPCIUCH served as a professor at the Institute of the Polish Language of PAS, where she was the head of the Department of Onomastics and the editor-in-chief of the journal "Onomastica". For many years, she chaired the Polish Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects. Barbara CZOPEK-KOPCIUCH was a member of the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS) since 1996, a member of the ICOS Board of Directors between the years 2008-2012, the Chair of the Scientific Council of the Polish Onomastic Society since 2018, and the main coordinator of the 27th International Congress of Onomastic Sciences that should have been held in Cracow [Kraków], Poland, in August 2020, but which had to be postponed due to the Corona crisis. We will keep her in our memories, recalling above all her fine academic skills and her human excellence.²

1 JORDAN P., MÁCHA P.; BALODE M., KRTIČKA L., OBRUSNÍK U., PILCH P., SANCHO REINOSO A. (in print), Place-Name Politics in Multilingual Areas. A comparative study of southern Carinthia (Austria) and the Těšín/Cieszyn region (Czechia). New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

2 Adapted from the obituary at the ICOS homepage (<https://icosweb.net/>)

Urszula BIJAK, also from the Institute of the Polish Language of PAS, is active in much the same international and national onomastic fora and boards and is known, among others, for her involvement in the following onomastic research projects: the Slavic Onomastic Atlas, the Electronic Dictionary of Polish Hydronyms, and the Dictionary of Polish Water Names.

The paper in question focuses on the legal situation and practical use of minority place names in Poland following the passing of the Act on Ethnic and National Minorities and Regional Language in 2005. This act establishes the right of today's rather small autochthonous minorities in Poland to use their languages as "supporting languages" and their own place names as "supplementary names" for populated places, streets and natural features. This second right has, to date, only been exercised by Kashubians, Germans, Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Lemkos. It is interesting that having their own place names represented in the public space appears to be only a minor concern for minorities in Poland – compared, that is, to receiving schooling in their own language – and that they show even less concern for employing their names for natural features than they do for populated places. Among Belarusians, the fight for the public representation of their place names is perhaps the weakest among Poland's minorities. The paper expands on the discussion by including a case study of the Podlaskie Voivodship [województwo podlaskie] in the Northeast of Poland along the borders with Lithuania and Belarus, where many variants of Polish, Belarusian, Lithuanian and Russian dialects are spoken.

Matjaž GERŠIČ, Drago KLADNIK, and Marija BRNOT, all of them prominent Slovenian toponymists, consecutive holders of the chair of the Slovenian place-name committee and representatives of their country in the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), refer in their contribution to the two officially recognized autochthonous linguistic minorities in Slovenia: the Italians in the coastland of Istria [Istra] and the Hungarians in the country's easternmost region, Prekmurje, near the Hungarian border. While minority place-name representation in the public space and on official maps presents a high standard in these two cases, the authors identify problems with the standardization of minority place names, which, according to their

findings, lags behind legal requirements, especially in the case of natural features and in that of the Hungarian minority in general because of the absence of any relevant organizational structures.

Martina PIKO-RUSTIA, head of the Urban Jarnik Slovene Ethnographic Institute in Klagenfurt am Wörthersee in Carinthia [Kärnten], Austria, addresses the public visibility of minority place names as an expression of the appreciation of minority cultures, which are, indeed, very much in need of affirmative action. She highlights this by citing the example of the field and house names of the Slovenian minority in Carinthia, which were included in the Austrian National Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010. Their inclusion meant enhanced public appreciation and had notable consequences: Not only was the collection and documentation of these microtoponyms supported by the local population and the public authorities, but even those communes with a vast majority of non-minority speakers welcomed and co-financed tourist and hiking maps displaying these names. Such a development would have been hardly imaginable prior to their recognition by a prestigious international authority, given the background of this historically disadvantaged minority in Carinthia.

Mátyás ROSENBERG, Gábor MIKESY, and Andrea BÖLCSKEI from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Lechner Knowledge Centre and the University of Debrecen, respectively, undertake an in-depth examination of the problem of Roma minority names in Hungary by describing the history, spatial distribution, and variety of Roma communities. They highlight a lack of linguistic standards and the failure to integrate into the local society and economy as obstacles to the visibility of Roma place names in the public space. They show, moreover, that the progressive Hungarian minority act of 1993 did not help Roma communities very much. While other linguistic minorities – much smaller in number than the Roma communities – benefitted from it, for example, by becoming more visible thanks to town signs in the public space and place names on maps, this was not the case for the Roma. According to the authors, the reasons for this were not so much that the Roma do not have or do not use their own place names, but rather that little effort – from within their own ranks as well as on the part of the public authorities – was made to standardize them, combined with a somewhat assimilative attitude

expressed by the minority, including the will not to cause any conflict. A further reason should perhaps also be mentioned: The fact that Roma – not only in Hungary – are far from a homogenous group and stand out for their ethnic, linguistic and socio-political diversity and their lack of unified political representation.

Attila SASI, also from the Lechner Knowledge Centre, finally reports on the general situation of minority place names in Hungary. In contrast to some other countries, e.g. Austria, in Hungary the state provides only framework legislation with respect to minorities, while it falls upon the local minority communities in cooperation with their communes to convert this framework legislation into executable practice. This results – again in contrast to a number of other countries – in bottom-up naming by minorities, i.e. the use of the locally popular minority name on town signs and in other public contexts, frequently in its dialect form. The article addresses more specifically the unfortunate discrepancy between the place-name gazetteer published by the Central Statistical Office and the names actually found in situ. It also points out that minority place names in Hungary have no official character, but are rather just informative; nevertheless, they are used in many contexts. Finally, the author stresses the need for a scientifically elaborated place-name database comprising all place names in Hungary – official and standardized as well as variant and minority names.

It remains for me to thank Joan TORT I DONADA and Maria del Mar BATLLE most cordially for their readiness to publish these papers as a thematic issue of “Onomàstica” and for the editorial work they have undertaken as a result of their kind offer.