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THE ENDONYM/EXONYM DIVIDE¹ FROM A CULTURAL-GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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The paper presents a view on place names from a cultural-geographical perspective by the example of the endonym/exonym divide, which is conceived as very indicative for the role of place names in a cultural-geographical context.

1. Older discourses about exonyms

The term “exonym” was introduced by the Australian toponymist Marcel Arousseau (1957). Only later did the Austrian Slavist Otto Kronsteiner (1974) confront it with the term “endonym”. This temporal order may be related to the fact that the exonym is the rare, striking phenomenon, while each named geographical feature has an endonym, the endonym thus being the ‘normal case’.

In particular, the linguist Otto Back contributed with his 1983 first published and later twofold revised work “Übersetzbare Eigennamen” (‘Translatable Proper Names’) significantly to the knowledge of the nature of exonyms (and endonyms) (Back 2002). He regards exonyms as geographical names that differ from the language in the area of the feature they designate, thus assigning the language the essential role in the distinction between endonym and exonym. As an essential societal function of exonyms, he mentions the inclusion of the alien into the own cultural sphere of a linguistic community.

The geographer Josef Breu considers exonyms to be also very helpful in acquiring and developing a geographical world view, as they facilitate the learning and use of geographical names (see Breu 1959, 1960, 1981, 1992).

In fact, most of the exonyms are probably the result of frequent confrontation of a human community with certain geographical features outside their realm: endonyms of features very important for a certain community are translated into their own language or made easy to handle in their own language by adapting them morphologically or phonetically. Often today's exonyms are also takeovers of older endonyms. Thus, the German exonym *Prag* corresponds to the older Czech endonym *Praga*, before it became *Praha* by a change in Czech orthography.

In any case, there are only exonyms for geographical features that are or were important, either because of their proximity in space or because of their special meaning to the recipient community. In a way, they reflect the (historical and current) network of external relations of a community and facilitate these relations (see Jordan 2009b). They developed more or less ‘naturally’ – because they fulfilled this function – and were only

exceptionally 'set'. The intensive and ostentatious use of historical endonyms, which are now exonyms (for example, for the former German settlement in present-day Poland or Czechia), can, however, also be politically motivated, express political claims, political nostalgia, or cultural dominance. The use of exonyms is therefore politically sensitive and requires careful consideration (AKO 2012; Jordan 2000a, 2000b).

The United Nations were probably guided by this latter idea when they passed several resolutions in the 1970s and 1980s that recommended the reduction and cautious use of exonyms.² Also the at that time Communist countries avoided the use of exonyms under the pretext of Communist internationalism. In the German-speaking countries, after the events of World War II, any national exuberance was avoided, and exonyms were used with great restraint. After the fall of Communism, however, the transition countries, with a few exceptions (Czechia, Slovakia), returned to an abundant use of exonyms, and in the German-speaking countries, too, the restrictive attitude opposite exonyms declined to some extent (see Jordan 2013). In the meantime, also the United Nations' opposition against exonyms has weakened, so that no such resolutions were passed in the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. On the contrary, exonyms have even been appreciated as a valuable part of the cultural heritage. In its standardization policy, the United Nations de facto moved also from the goal of "one name for a feature" to the goal of "one name per language for a feature" after having recognized minority language names as additional names of a feature in the 1980s. In 2002, they then established an interdisciplinary working group on exonyms (UNGEKN Working Groups on Exonyms) that was to deal comprehensively with the question of exonyms. It first developed new definitions of the terms "endonym" and "exonym", which were adopted by the United Nations in 2007 and included in their glossary:

"Endonym: Name of a geographical feature in an official or well-established language occurring in that area where the feature is situated. Examples: Vārānasī (not Benares); Aachen (not Aix-la-Chapelle); Krung Thep (not Bangkok); Al-Uqşur (not Luxor)." (UNGEKN 2007, p. 2)

"Exonym: Name used in a specific language for a geographical feature situated outside the area where that language is widely spoken and differing in its form from the respective endonym(s) in the area where the geographical feature is situated. Examples: Warsaw is the English exonym for Warszawa (Polish); Mailand is German for Milano; Londres is French for London; Kūlūniyā is Arabic for Köln. The officially romanized endonym Moskva for Москва is not an exonym, nor is the Pinyin form Beijing, while Peking is an exonym. The United Nations recommends minimizing the use of exonyms in international usage. See also name, traditional." (UNGEKN 2007, p. 2)

However, these definitions could neither satisfy from a fundamental theoretical point of view nor could they suffice standardization practice. From a fundamental theoretical point of view, they are not comprehensive, i.e. they do not include all sorts of cases. For standardization practice, they are too vague. (For example: What is a "well-established language"?) In the Working Group, therefore, they triggered an intensive and profound discussion of the two terms exploring them for the first time in all facets and resulting in a full publicized documentation (see Jordan et al. 2007; Jordan et al. 2011; Woodman 2012c; Jordan & Woodman 2014; Jordan & Woodman 2015; Jordan & Woodman 2016; Jordan, Švehlová & Woodman 2018). In this discussion, language and officiality were called into question as

² See especially Res. II/29-1972, Res. II/35-1972, Res. III/18-1977, Res. IV/20-1982, Res. V/13-1987 at the UNGEKN website <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEKN/confGeneral.html>

discriminating criteria, and the point of view of spatial reference between the human community using the name and the feature designated by the name, that is, a cultural-geographical and sociological perspective, gained in importance.

Despite this convergence on the spatial point of view as the sole decisive criterion, even these who support this view (**S** – spatial perspective with its variants **1-3**) interpret it still in different ways. In addition, this spatial point of view is contrasted by a completely different language-related minority opinion (**L** – language-related view). In essence, these schools of thought differ in the following points, which can best be explained using the example of sea names.

- **S-1:** The name of the community of coastal dwellers for a sea is an endonym only for the coastal waters that coastal dwellers consider part of their territory and to which they have an emotional relationship. For areas outside the coastal waters, the same name becomes an exonym. Example: The Croatian name *Jadransko more* is an endonym for the Croatian coastal waters but an exonym for the open sea and the Italian coastal waters (represented for example by Jordan 2009a).

- **S-2:** The name of the community of coastal dwellers for a sea is an endonym for all parts of a sea, including the open sea and up to the opposite coast, which is inhabited by another community. Example: The Croatian name *Jadransko more* is an endonym not only for the Croatian coastal waters, but also for the open sea and off the Italian coast. The Italian name *Mare Adriatico* would be vice versa an endonym also off the Croatian coast. English *Adriatic Sea* or German *Adriatisches Meer* would be exonyms because they are not used by any local community (represented, for example, by Woodman 2009).

- **S-3:** The name of the community of coastal dwellers for a sea is an endonym only for the coastal waters that they regard as part of their territory and to which they have an emotional relationship. For the open sea, the name is neither an endonym, nor an exonym, because the term exonym lacks due to the absence of a local community the necessary counterpart of an endonym. One would have to invent another term for this situation. Example: The Croatian name *Jadransko more* is an endonym only for the Croatian coastal waters (such as Italian *Mare Adriatico* in the Italian area). They are neither endonym nor exonym for the open sea. Also English *Adriatic Sea* or German *Adriatisches Meer* could not be called exonyms there (represented for example by Kadmon 2007).

- **L:** *Jadransko more* is a Croatian endonym and *Mare Adriatico* is an Italian endonym because they comply with the rules of their language – regardless for which part of the sea and by whom the name is used. An exonym would be, e.g., *Jadran more* – a name version that does not correspond to the structure of the associated language (represented, for example, by Matthews 2012, 2014, 2015).

In the following sections, the spatial perspective is presented in its variant S-1. It is the point of view of the author, who developed it as a convenor of the UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms in the discussions of this Working Group repeatedly modifying and refining it. It is, therefore, in fact the result of these discussions, even if – as mentioned – variants of this view have remained, and this result has not yet found expression in official documents of the United Nations. The latter is mainly due to the fact that the United Nations and its sub-units are not only – and not even primarily – scientific institutions, but political bodies operating according to the rules of political logic.

The perspective presented here is, however, not only the result of the Working Group, but also based on the works of Yi-Fu Tuan, an important representative of the Berkeley School of Cultural Geography (Tuan 1974, 1977, 1991), and the Viennese geographer Peter Weichhart (see, inter alia, Weichhart, Weiske & Werlen 2006) and his valuable suggestions.

2 The term pair endonym/exonym

Geographical names can be regarded under various aspects: what language they belong to, what etymology they have, what they mean, whether they are official or not, whether they are standardized or not, whether they have a commemorative function or are descriptive, what they mean for the space-related³ identity of people, etc. The aspect that leads to the distinction between endonym and exonym is the spatial relationship between the human community using the name and the geographical feature designated by that name (Fig. 1). This is a sociological and geographical (spatial) aspect. It is only one of many aspects of geographical names, but a very important one because it corresponds to two basic human attitudes, namely (1) to distinguish between “mine” and “yours,” “ours” and “theirs”; (2) territoriality, the desire to own a place expressed at all levels of human activity and community-building: the wish to own a flat or a house; even within a family apartment to have one’s own room or at least one’s own desk, where we can store our personal belongings; at work, where we like to have our own office or at least our own desk; up to the level of countries that want to enforce their law and exercise their power in a well-defined territory. This aspect has therefore always a social, political and legal significance and is for this very reason very sensitive and often a cause of political conflict.

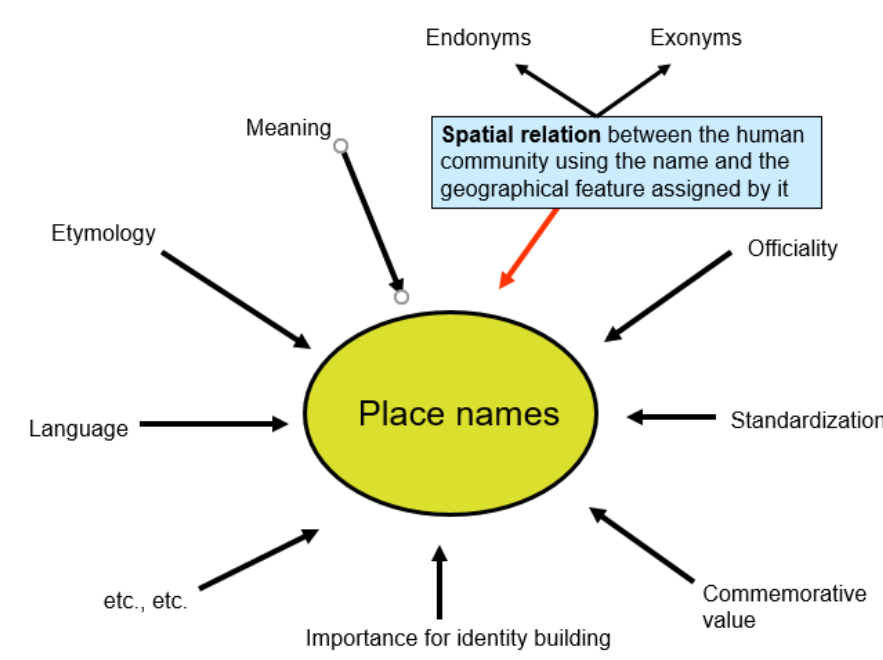


Fig. 1. Aspects of place names

Under this aspect, which places the spatial relationship between the name-using community and the feature designated by the name in the foreground, the following definitions of the endonym and the exonym result:

³ In the context of personal or group identity very consciously the adjective “space-related” is used instead of “spatial”, since this kind of identity is not a property of space or a section of space, but a property of a person, a group of people or a community related to space or a section of it.

Endonym: Name accepted and used by the local community.

Exonym: Name not used by the local community and different from the endonym.

Endonym and exonym are thus status categories of geographical names, which result from a certain aspect. They are space-related, relational concepts. Within a local community, a certain name can only belong to one of the two categories. If it is the name for a feature in the area of the local community, it is an endonym (= a name from within the local community). If it is a name for a feature outside the area of the local community, then it is an exonym (= a name from outside). Thus, the Ukrainian name *L'viv* is an endonym because the city is so called by the local community. If the same name is also used by outsiders, then they use the endonym. The German name *Lemberg*, on the other hand, is today an exonym because no local community uses it anymore. In Austrian times, however, when a small autochthonous German-speaking community in L'viv used it, it, too, was an endonym.

While for geographical features that are located exclusively in the area of a community and not surpassing its boundaries, endonym and exonym status of a name are mutually exclusive, in the case of geographical features that cross community boundaries or that are shared by several local communities – such as longer rivers or mountain ranges – the situation is different. Then, the same name can be an endonym in one section/part of the feature and assume exonym status in another section/part, while it always designates the whole feature. The German name *Donau* for the river Danube, for example, is an endonym along the German and Austrian sections of the river because it is used by the local communities there. However, from the Austrian-Slovakian border this same name assumes the status of an exonym because the local communities use different names: the Slovakian community *Dunaj*, the Hungarian *Duna*, the Serbian and Croatian *Dunav*, the Romanian *Dunărea*, the Bulgarian again *Dunav* and the Ukrainian again *Dunaj*. Nevertheless, each of these names refers to the whole geographical feature, i.e. the whole river Danube from the confluence of the two source rivers Brigach and Breg to its mouth into the Black Sea.

The status categories endonym and exonym does not escape any geographical name. Each name can be attributed to one of these categories or corresponds to both (in the case of transboundary features differing by sections or parts of a feature). These are therefore taxative, all-inclusive categories including all possible cases. They can even be applied to names for compact and completely uninhabited areas like oceans or Antarctica, for which all names would (according to view L-1 that is further elaborated here) be exonyms, i.e. names from outside and not used by an autochthonous local community.

Endonym and exonym are under this aspect also a basic onomastic pair of terms that is not only applicable to geographical names, but also to names of

- persons: The self-designation (the name from within) would be the endonym, the (not always flattering) nickname (the name used by others) the exonym.
- ethnic groups, nations: Dignified self-descriptions (endonyms), which often mean simply “people” or “humans”, are often contrasted with ironic or pejorative external names (exonyms).
- institutions: The endonym *police* is frequently contrasted, e.g., by various ironic and derogatory exonyms.
- political parties: In Austria, e.g., the Social Democratic Party, the People's Party and the Freedom Party also have sloppy external names (exonyms) such as *The Red*, *The Black*, *The Blue*.

The term pair endonym and exonym can thus be transferred in principle to names of all types of features to which an inside and an outside view applies.

However, general concepts like these need further explanation, since on closer inspection there are several questions to which the concise definitions presented before give no explicit answers:

- Who is the local community? Don't we always belong to several communities? Which size must the local community have to be considered as such and its name as an endonym? For how long does a community have to be resident to be regarded as a local community and the name it uses as an endonym?
- Is language a criterion for the distinction between endonym and exonym? Can names from other languages be endonyms in a local community not using these languages in internal communication? Can there be exonyms between communities speaking the same language?
- Is an official name necessarily an endonym?
- How far does the 'territory' of the local community extend? Does it also cover uninhabited areas (forests, mountains, lakes, seas)?

These questions will be explored in the next section.

3. Closer definition

3.1. Who is the local community?

Let us first take a look at the naming process with geographical names (Fig. 2). It involves three factors: (1) the local community in the sense of an identity group, i.e. a group of people that feels to be bound by a common identity. It can vary in size – from a family/partnership up to a nation and language community; (2) their culture in the sense of the totality of human expressions, naturally including language; (3) geographical space in the sense of a three-dimensional network of relationships between material and immaterial features, subdivided into geographical features such as populated places, rivers, mountains, states.

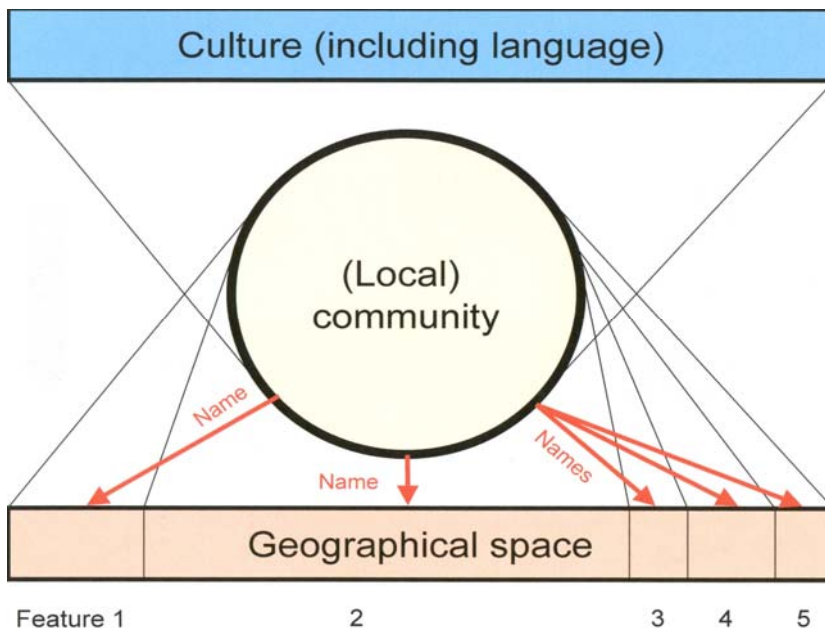


Fig. 2. The place-naming process

The only actor in this process is the local community. It inhabits a section of geographical space, has developed a specific culture and language, structures complex geographical space into geographical features mentally and assigns geographical names to them by means of its language and on the background of its culture. Only by names do the features gain their individuality, become they manifest as subunits of space. A part of space without a name remains part of another feature, does obviously not individualize itself in human perception.

Naming takes place either through convention within the community or through an institution charged and legitimized by the community. Of course, even an individual can bring up a geographical name. But this name will only come into use, acquire communicative value and continue to exist when accepted by the community. Therefore, ultimately, the community is always the actor.

But we are never just members of a single community, we always have multiple identities, including multiple space-related identities (Fig. 3). We are not only the inhabitants of a flat, a house, a quarter, a village or a city, but also inhabitants of a region, a state, we feel a national belonging, perhaps also as Europeans or global citizens. Each of these identities has its specific spatial reference, its own territory. And the names the relevant community uses for its territory or features on it are endonyms. The word for Earth is an endonym in all languages of the world, because we are all earthlings – the local community of the Earth. But when it comes to a section of geographical space, a particular geographical feature, for example a city like L'viv, then only the local community or (as it is with L'viv) the local communities have the endonym – the community/communities that inhabit(s) the feature or is/are (in the case of uninhabited features) the closest to it. The principle of subsidiarity applies.

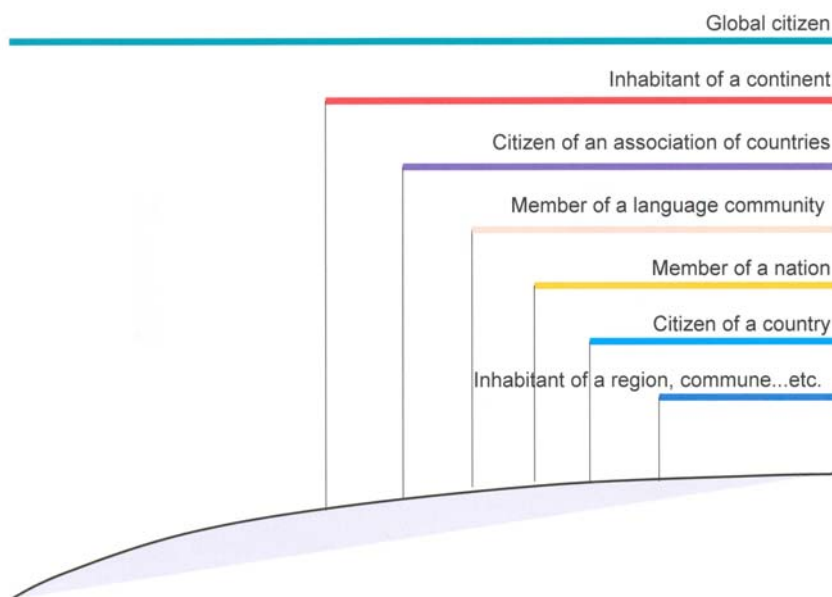


Fig. 3. Multiple space-related identities

What is the minimum size of a community to be considered as such and its name as an endonym? For how long does a community have to be resident to be regarded as a local com-

munity and the name it uses as an endonym? If a homeowner has a name for his home, he and his family will undoubtedly use the endonym because they are closest to the named feature – no matter how long they live there. The answer is more difficult when it comes to a cultural/linguistic minority and its use of names for a city or region. How big does the minority have to be? For how long does it have to be established to be considered autochthonous? The usual answer is: at least for three generations. Only then has this community proved to be stable and persistent, and only then has it usually developed its own names for the features of its environment. But this question is also answered in other ways and the issue is basically controversial.

3.2. Is language a criterion for the distinction between endonym and exonym?

The subsidiarity principle also applies within the same language community. When, e.g., the German-speaking Banat Swabians call the river Mureş *Marosch*, while the also German-speaking Transylvanian Saxons, who live on the upper course of the same river, call it *Mieresch*, the name *Marosch* can only be regarded as an endonym where the Banat Swabians live, and the name *Mieresch* only where the Transylvanian Saxons live. In the other area, the names of the same language are exonyms.

A name needs also not to match the local language to be considered an endonym. Thus, in a Ukrainian or German-speaking environment, someone may call his house French *Mon repos* or his restaurant Italian *Pizzeria Vesuvio*. These are then the names used by the closest local community or very likely also by neighbours and guests. And this is the only fact to be taken into account for their status in the endonym/exonym divide. They do not become exonyms through their linguistic exoticism.

Language is therefore – contrary to the opinion represented by Otto Back – no criterion for the distinction between endonym and exonym. It is certainly true that language very often, and actually in the predominant number of cases, leads to the distinction between endonym and exonym – but it is not a basic distinguishing criterion between the two terms in the sense of a *differentia specifica*.

3.3 Are official names *eo ipso* endonyms?

If we understand by endonyms names that are accepted and used by the local community, then official names are not necessarily endonyms, for there may be situations in which political powers impose names on a local community. Although they are then official and will out of necessity certainly also be used by the local community in public communication and in relations with the authorities, they are not the names that serve communication within the community.

For example, Ettore Tolomei's Italian names for many geographical features in German-speaking South Tyrol [Südtirol] were, for the most part, probably not endonyms when they were introduced after World War I, when this part of Tyrol [Tirol] was awarded to Italy, even though they were the official names. Another example is the official name *Litzmannstadt* introduced by the German occupation force during World War II for the Polish city of Łódź. It was even never in use by the (at that time still existing) local German community, which preferred the Polish name in German spelling (*Lodsch*), and so the official name remained a name from the outside, an exonym.

It may, of course, happen that a name imposed by an authority gradually gains ground also in local communication and turns thus from exonym to endonym status.

3.4 Up to where does the territory of a local community extend?

The territory of a local community is not always clearly definable. Does it only cover settled areas (houses, gardens and traffic areas) or also (uninhabited) fields and forests? Does it, in the sense of an experience and perception space, also extend beyond the administrative boundaries of a local community? Does it perhaps include mountains or the lake or sea adjacent to the place of residence and to be seen from there day by day? May it even be enough that a feature has a non-visual, purely functional relationship with the community's home – a relationship that can, however, be emotionally charged, such as to the country capital or to a frequently visited place of pilgrimage in far distance? Thus, it's less about administrative units and their boundaries than about living, experience and perception spaces. Almost always there is also a neighbouring local community with which one's own local community competes for such transition zones. The question that arises then in our context is: For which features does a local community still have endonyms, for which no more?

Unproblematic and simple is the answer only if the name-bearing geographical feature is located exclusively and undoubtedly on the territory of a community (Fig. 4) – as in the case of the city of Vienna, for which the name *Wien* is the endonym and the names *Vienna* (English) and *Vienne* (French) are two exonyms among many others.

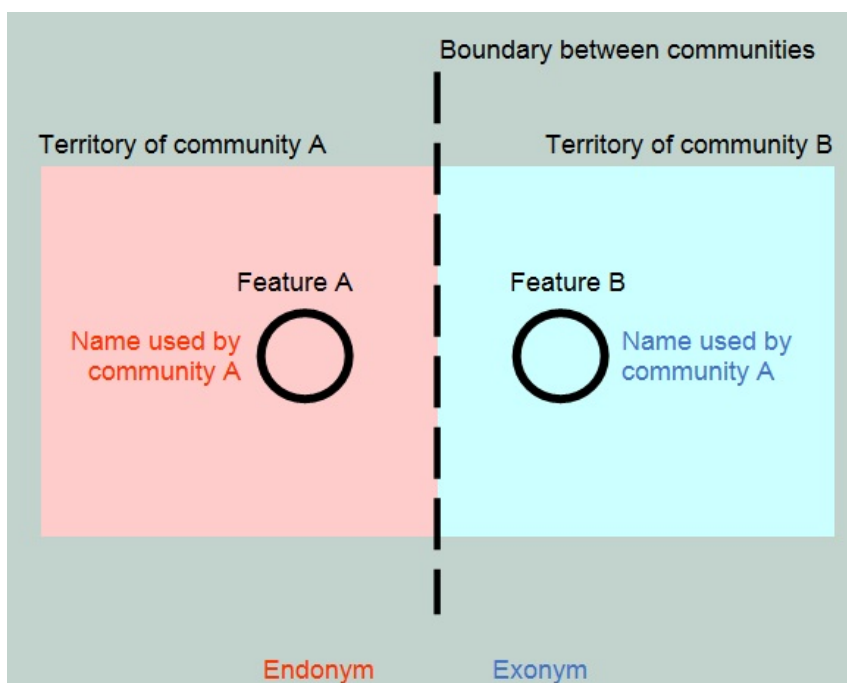


Fig. 4. Features located within community boundaries

In the case of features that cross community boundaries – as already addressed earlier – the name (of course) always applies to the whole feature but has endonym status only up to the boundary of the community accepting and using it and assumes exonym status on the other side of the boundary (Fig. 5).

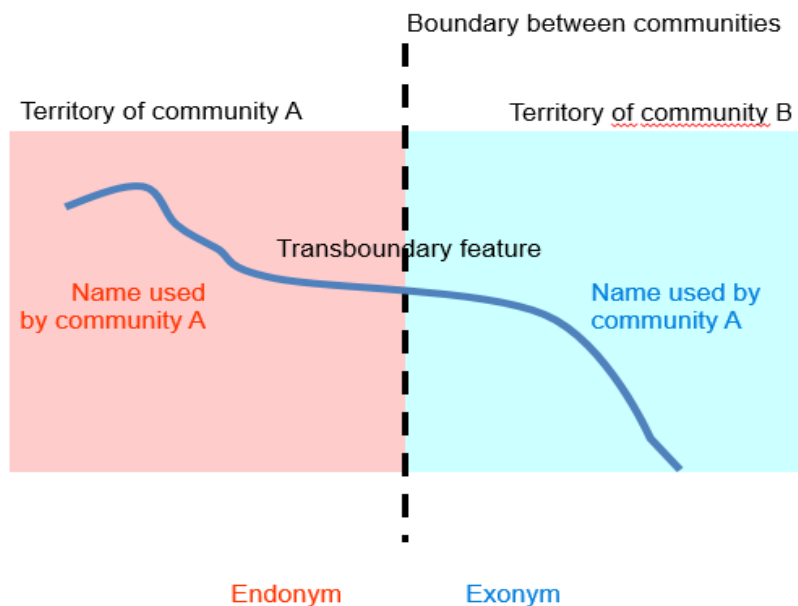


Fig. 5. Transboundary features

The answer is much more difficult with regard to maritime features, which are of course uninhabited, but to which coastal dwellers usually have an emotional relationship. This emotional relationship refers in any case to the coastal waters, the waters within sight of the coast, where fishing and sailing boats cruise. They are as much a part of the habitat of the coastal dwellers as the mainland – they are a source of food, a traffic area, a recreational area, a daily space of perception. In Opatija at the Croatian coast of the Adriatic Sea, e.g., on the day when they celebrate Corpus Christi, a procession of boats goes out into the bay, where the priest blesses the sea “with everything that lives in and by it.” This may be taken as a symbolic confirmation of coastal dwellers’ emotional relationship with their coastal waters. Since they regard them as part of their territory their names for them are endonyms.

But it is difficult to say where exactly this sense of attachment to the sea ends, and it is for certain that the relationship of coastal dwellers to the open sea, to the sea beyond the horizon from the coast, is different. There we will have to distinguish between the emotional and the cognitive level. At the emotional level the feeling is that the open sea is endless. Even a narrow sea like the Adriatic, where you can see the opposite coast with clear skies from the top of a mountain, is felt to be endless. This is, e.g., expressed in songs in which the sea is often used as a metaphor for the limitless, the infinite, the incomprehensible – as in this song of a Dalmatian choir:

Moje si more
još pamtim nebo u očima
moje si more
more bez kraja i obala
more bistro ka dan
i jedino njim plovit znam
Zauvik moje si more
još pamtim nebo u očima
moje si more

You are my sea.
I still have the sky in my eyes.
You are my sea.
The sea without end and coast
The sea is clear as the day
And I'm the only one who can sail on you.
You are my sea forever.
I still have the sky in my eyes.
You are my sea.

duša ti svitli pod zvizdama	Gently you shimmer under the stars
ispod tvog miseca	Under your moon.
jedino plovit znam	And I'm the only one who can sail on you.
Moje si more	You are my sea.

This otherness of the open sea is also expressed by other words for the open sea: e.g. not *more*, but *pućina* in Croatian, meaning the ‘wilderness’, ‘where the winds blow’. According to their feeling, for coastal dwellers there is no opposite coast beyond the horizon. They do not draw a line between ours and theirs somewhere out in the sea. From this perspective, one could conclude that the endonym status of their name is not limited to a part of the sea and probably even extends to the whole sea. But it is at the same time true that the intensity of the relationship of coastal dwellers to the sea decreases with distance from the coast, and that the feeling of owning the sea as a whole is relativized by the fact that the sea is conceived as incomprehensible, as a feature that never can be owned completely. So probably the endonym status of their name fades away with distance from the coast (Fig. 6).

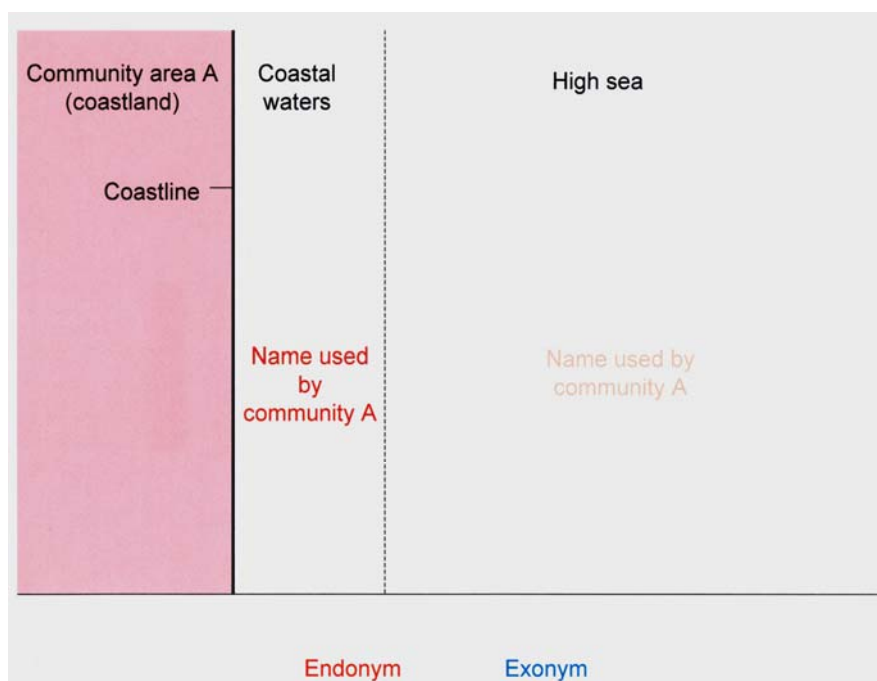


Fig. 6. A coastal dweller's relation to the sea – emotional level

At the cognitive level, however, they know anyway that the sea is ending somewhere, that there is an opposite coast where another community lives that has another name for the sea. They know that from school, from the media and from maps. With this knowledge, they would usually (with the exception of aggressive and expansive attitudes) be willing to acknowledge that their own name for the sea is an endonym only up to a certain limit, would accept an ‘artificial’ boundary in this regard (Fig. 7). They would be ready to acknowledge, as in other fields of social coexistence, that their right ends where that of others begins, if in this way conflict can be avoided.

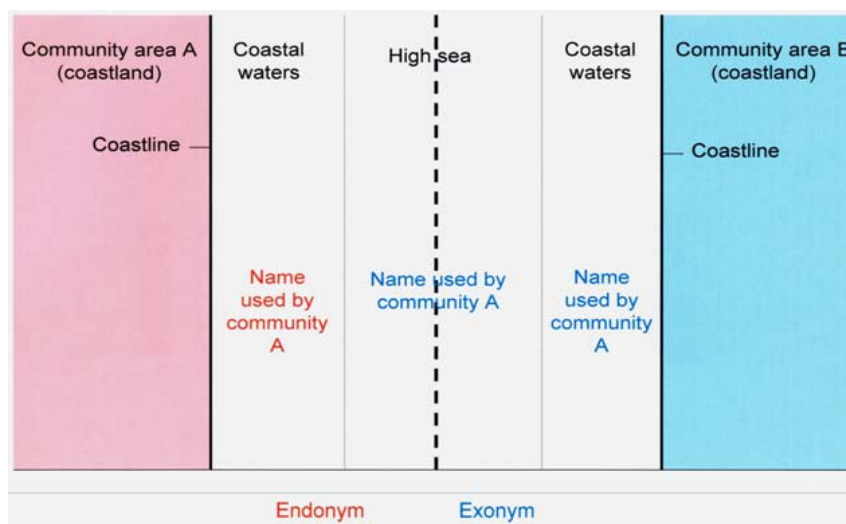


Fig. 7. A coastal dweller's relation to the sea – cognitive level

But there are also difficult cases on land, e.g. in a country with a locally concentrated minority. Suppose an uninhabited mountain directly adjoins the territory of the minority, it would not be inhabited by the minority, not even part of its administrative territory, not officially assigned to it (Fig. 8). But they saw it day after day, it was also their recreation area, they also used it economically and had an emotional relationship with it, it was part of their living and perception space. But the same applies also to the community on the other side of the mountain. An additional fact relevant in this context is that a mountain often looks different from different sides, is not the same visually. This would suggest the conclusion that the mountain is to be shared between the two communities right at the ridge and that the (different) names of the two communities for the mountain are endonyms only on their own side.

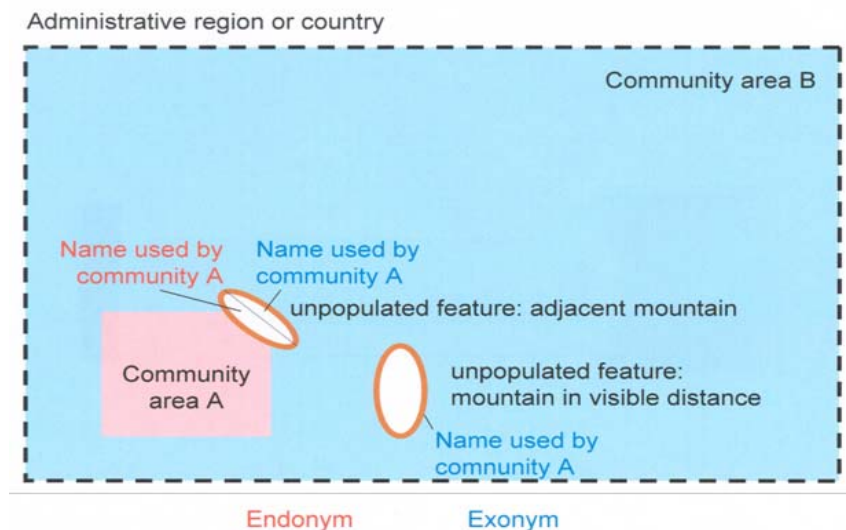


Fig. 8. Unpopulated mountain range near to but outside a minority area

A next case refers to an uninhabited mountain away from the minority area, but still in a visible distance from it (Fig. 8). The same assumptions apply as before – with the one big (and decisive) difference that the feature is completely enclosed by the other community, so this community probably also has the closer relationship to the feature. Therefore, the name of the minority for the mountain is only an exonym.

But if the feature is now a lake (Fig. 9), the conditions are the same as in the case of the mountain, except that the surface of the lake is flat, that you can see the opposite bank making it harder to draw a dividing line. Would it therefore not be appropriate to assign the lake to both communities in the same way, to admit that the names of both communities for each part of the lake are endonyms, even up to the opposite bank? One would have nevertheless to deny it, because on the other bank the other community is closer. In a competitive situation like this, the closer community has the more justifiable claim to the primary name, the endonym. Like at sea, there would be a need for an ‘artificial’ boundary between the two endonyms.

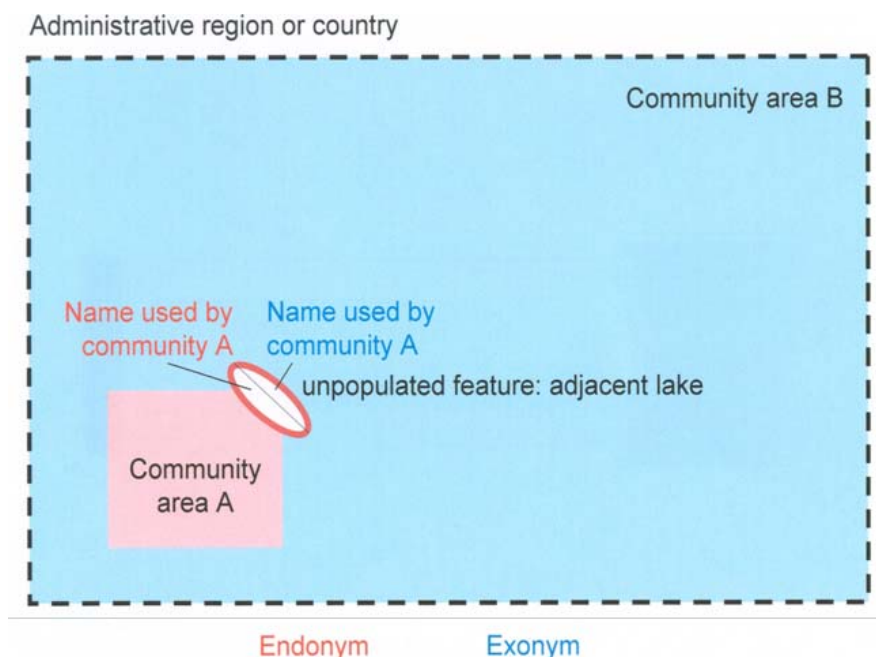


Fig. 9. Lake located near to a minority area

Finally, one last of many other critical cases: The capital of the country where the minority lives is far from the minority area, but is responsible for the minority (for example, Kiev for the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia) (Fig. 10). So the minority has a functional relationship to it that is probably also charged emotionally, because the minority would feel that “this is also our capital”, “what happens there affects us as well”, “the symbols and landmarks of this city also represent us.” But the minority is not a local community there, the capital is inhabited by another community/by other communities. And only they have the endonyms. Thus, although Kiev is also the capital of the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia, the Hungarian name *Kijev* is an exonym.

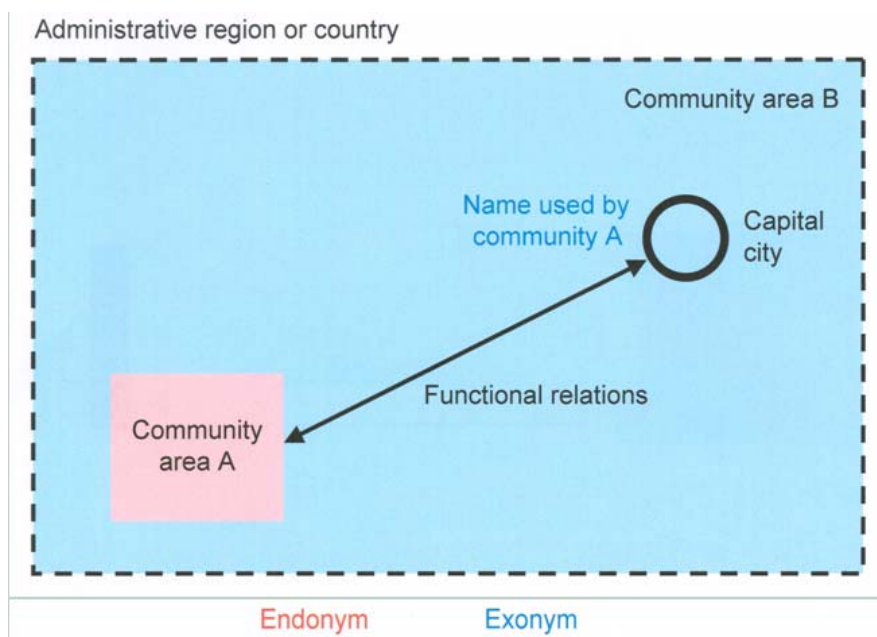


Fig. 10. Capital city located far away from a minority area

4. Conclusions

The paper presents a cultural-geographical or sociological view of the terms endonym and exonym, in which the difference between the two terms results from the spatial relationship between the name-using community and the geographical feature designated by the name. Not only is this concept – though hardly ever so consciously perceived – de facto the most widespread and therefore politically relevant, but also derives its meaning from the fact that it meets two basic human needs, namely the distinction between self and other as well as territoriality, the need for a place of one's own – with all sociological, political and legal implications. The attempt to define two simple but all-encompassing definitions leaves much to be said, especially as to what would be understood by a local community and how far the territory of a local community extends. It can be said very clearly, however, that the distinction between endonym and exonym is not essentially tied to language and that even the officiality of a name is not essential for this distinction.

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THE ENDONYM/EXONYM DIVIDE FROM A CULTURAL-GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Background. The endonym/exonym divide is a much contested and at the same time frequently used concept. New UNGEGN definitions of endonym and exonym have been passed in 2007, but they neither satisfy the requirement of being all-comprehensive, nor do they suffice standardization practice. The UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms has therefore entered in a profound discussion on this divide succeeding in exploring the essence as well as many facets of this concept but failing to achieve unanimity on it and having it passed at the UN level.

Purpose. The paper aims at reflecting this discussion and presenting theoretically valid and all-comprehensive definitions of endonym and exonym from a cultural-geographical perspective.

Results. Endonyms are thus defined as names applied by a community for geographical features conceived to be part of the area where this group lives and to which it feels to be emotionally attached; exonyms are names applied by other communities for features in this same area and differing in their form from the respective endonym(s). Neither language, nor officiality are considered relevant criteria for the endonym/exonym divide. It is also shown that this view of the endonym/exonym divide is transferable to other name categories and can thus be regarded a wider onomastic concept. The paper finally exemplifies the limits between endonym and exonym by highlighting critical cases that most frequently occur with names of transboundary features.

Key words: toponymy, terms, endonym, exonym, cultural-geographical perspective, transboundary features, United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).

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