
THE BORDER BETWEEN “OURS” AND “THEIRS” DRAWN BY PLACE NAMES

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Introduction

From a cultural-geographical perspective, to which especially Yi-Fu Tuan¹, Don Mitchell² and Botolv Helleland³ have essentially contributed, the endonym / exonym divide with place names symbolises the distinction between “ours” and “theirs” in geographical terms, i.e. between geographical features on a community’s own territory and features on the territory of another community. An in-depth discussion on the concepts of endonym and exonym and the endonym / exonym divide has been conducted by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) and more specifically by its Working Group on Exonyms (convened by the author of this article) between 2007 and 2014. It is well-documented by publications and provides also the basis for this article.⁴ From this cultural-geographical angle we could define

¹ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspectives of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977); Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press [1974] 1990); Yi-Fu Tuan, “Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81 (1991): 684–696.

² Don Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2000).

³ Botolv Helleland, “Place Names as Means of Landscape Identity,” in *Geographical Names as a Part of the Cultural Heritage*, edited by Peter Jordan, Hubert Bergmann, Catherine Cheetham, and Isolde Hausner, Wiener Schriften zur Geographie und Kartographie, 18 (Wien: Institut für Geographie und Regionalforschung der Universität Wien, Kartographie und Geoinformation, 2009) 25–31.

⁴ See especially Peter Jordan et al., eds., *Trends in Exonym Use: Proceedings of the 10th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting, Tainach, 28–30 April 2010* (Hamburg: Kovač, 2011); Peter Jordan and Paul Woodman, eds., *The Quest for Definitions: Proceedings of the 14th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting, Corfu, 23–25 May 2013* (Hamburg: Kovač,

endonym as a name used by a community for a geographical feature on its own territory, e.g. *Slovenija*, *Ljubljana*, exonym as a name used by a community for a feature outside its territory and differing in its form from the respective endonym(s), e.g. *Slovenia* (eng.), *Slowenien* (ger.), *Lubiana* (ital.), *Laibach* (ger.).

Endonyms in this sense are symbols of appropriation. Who owns a feature or has the responsibility for it, usually reserves the right to name it. This function of endonyms is similar to that performed by flags, coats of arms or logos.

For geographical features outside their own territory, a community will usually adopt the existing names, translating them into its own language or adapting them morphologically or phonetically. In contrast to names for features on its own territory, i.e. endonyms, these are exonyms, needed by a community to address such features in such a way

2014); Peter Jordan and Paul Woodman, eds., *Confirmation of the Definitions. Proceedings of the 16th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting*, Hermagor, 5–7 June 2014 (Hamburg: Kovač, 2015); Paul Woodman, *The Great Toponymic Divide: Reflections on the Definition and Usage of Endonyms and Exonyms* (Warszawa: Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography, 2012). Earlier elaborations of the author on the same and related topics can be found in Peter Jordan, “The Importance of Using Exonyms: Pleading for a Moderate and Politically Sensitive Use,” in *Second International Symposium on Geographical Names “GeoNames 2000”*, Frankfurt am Main, 28–30 March 2000, ed. Jörn Sievers (Frankfurt am Main: Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie, 2000), 87–92; Peter Jordan, “Exonyms as Indicators of Trans-National Spatial Relations,” *Review of Historical Geography and Toponomastics* 4, no. 7–8 (2009): 7–16; Peter Jordan, “Place Names as Ingredients of Space-Related Identity,” in *Geographical Names as a Part of the Cultural Heritage*, ed. Peter Jordan et al. (Wien: Institut für Geographie und Regionalforschung der Universität Wien, Kartographie und Geoinformation, 2009), 33–39; Peter Jordan, “The Endonym: Name from within a Social Group,” in *Trends in Exonym Use: Proceedings of the 10th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting*, Tainach, 28–30 April 2010, ed. Peter Jordan et al. (Hamburg: Kovač, 2011), 9–20; Peter Jordan, “Is Exonym an Appropriate Term for Features Beyond Any Sovereignty?” *Semestrare di Studi e Ricerche di Geografia* 25, no. 2 (2013): 41–53; Peter Jordan, “The Endonym/Exonym Divide from a Cultural-geographical Point of View,” in *Challenges in Synchronic Toponymy / Défis de la toponymie synchronique*, ed. Jonas Löfström and Bettina Schnabel-Le Corre (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2015) 163–179; Paul Woodman, *The Sea of the Three Endonyms*, paper presented at the 15th International Seminar on Sea Names, 3–5 September 2009, Sydney; Paul Woodman, “The Naming Process: Societal Acceptance and the Endonym Definition,” in *The Great Toponymic Divide: Reflections on the Definition and Usage of Endonyms and Exonyms*, ed. Paul Woodman (Warszawa: Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography, 2012), 11–18; Paul Woodman, “Endonyms, Exonyms and Language Boundaries,” in *The Great Toponymic Divide: Reflections on the Definition and Usage of Endonyms and Exonyms*, ed. Paul Woodman (Warszawa: Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography, 2012), 75–78.

that it is comfortable, i.e. that these names are easily pronounceable and easy to communicate. In contrast to endonyms, exonyms are not symbols of appropriation and do not express claims. Instead, they indicate the importance of a feature for this community and the relations it has with it, i.e. its network of external relations. Exonyms help to integrate this foreign feature into the cultural sphere of a community and help avoid exclusion and alienation.⁵

So, while the endonym / exonym divide marks the border between "ours" and "theirs" in the territorial sense, exonyms have also a function of debordering, of connecting us with others.

It has, however, to be remarked that linguists do not always share this cultural-geographical perspective on the endonym / exonym divide. While from this perspective neither officiality (of a name or a language) nor language are criteria, and the spatial relation between the community that uses the name and the feature marked by the name is the only thing that counts, linguists like Otto Back⁶ or Phil Matthews⁷ would rather style difference in language the criterion for this divide: A name that conforms to the language of its environment is an endonym; a name that contrasts from its linguistic surroundings an exonym. *Pizzeria Vesuvio* as the name of an Italian-style restaurant in England would then be an exonym, even if it has been named so by its owner and is addressed so in its neighbourhood; *Mon Repos* as the name of a villa in Germany would fall into the same category, because it is a French name in a predominantly German-speaking surrounding.

This contribution will, however, further elaborate on the topic of the endonym / exonym divide from a cultural-geographical perspective by at first highlighting briefly the place-naming process and then addressing some critical cases as regards the endonym / exonym divide. Finally,

⁵ Otto Back, *Übersetzbare Eigennamen: Eine synchrone Untersuchung von interlingualer Al-lonymie und Exonymie* (Wien: Praesens, 2002).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Philip W. Matthews, "Endonyms, exonyms, boundaries and standardization," in *Confirmation of the Definitions: Proceedings of the 16th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting, Hermagor, 5–7 June 2014*, ed. Peter Jordan and Paul Woodman, (Hamburg: Kovač, 2015), 61–104.

it will also show how exonyms reflect the networks of external relations by the example of some European linguistic communities.

The Place Naming Process

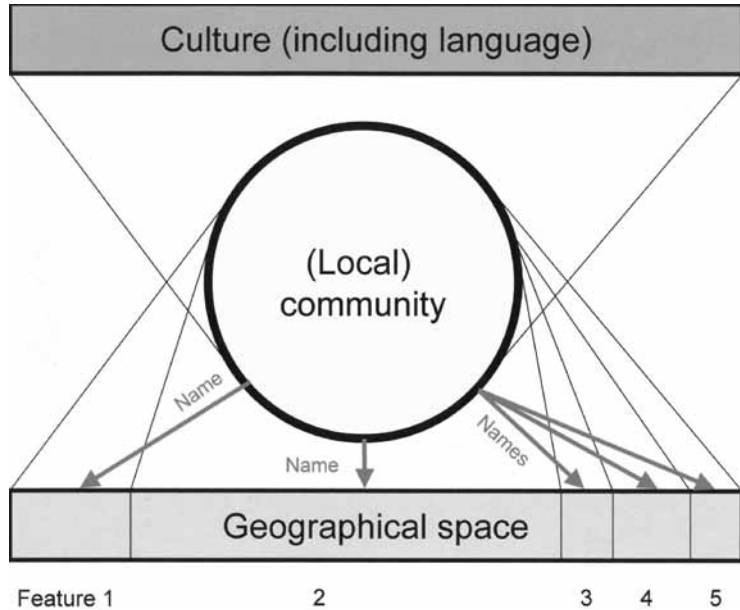


Fig. 1: The place naming process.⁸

In the place naming process, there are three factors involved (see Fig. 1): The community in the sociological sense of an identity group feeling to have some characteristics in common, not necessarily interacting on a regular basis and knowing each other. It can vary in size from a family or a partnership to a nation and the community of global citizens.

The second factor is the community's culture, including language; culture understood in the most comprehensive sense as the totality of all human expressions.

⁸ All the figures are author's drafts or photographs, unless otherwise stated.

The third factor is geographical space subdivided into geographical features; geographical space understood according to Wilhelm Leibniz as the totality of all relations between physical-material features.

The only actor in this process is the human community inhabiting a certain section of geographical space, having developed a certain culture and language, structuring complex geographical space mentally into the features on the background of its culture and – led by its specific interests – marking these features by place names. In fact, a geographical feature exists as a mental construct only if it bears a name. A feature without a name is mentally part of another feature.

Of course, also an individual can assign a name to a feature, but such a name will not get into use, assume communicative value and persist, if it is not accepted by the community. So it is at the end always the community, who acts in this process.

Place names used by a community for features on its own territory, i.e. endonyms, are (among other means) the markers of the community's territory, since names are also symbols for appropriation – as already mentioned before. This function of proper names in general, but of place names in particular, is also expressed by Genesis 2:20, when it says: "The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field (...)"⁹ So names always and inevitably have a political dimension.

⁹ *The Bible*, English standard version, Gen 2:20, accessed November 22, 2016, <http://bible-hub.com/genesis/2-20.htm>.

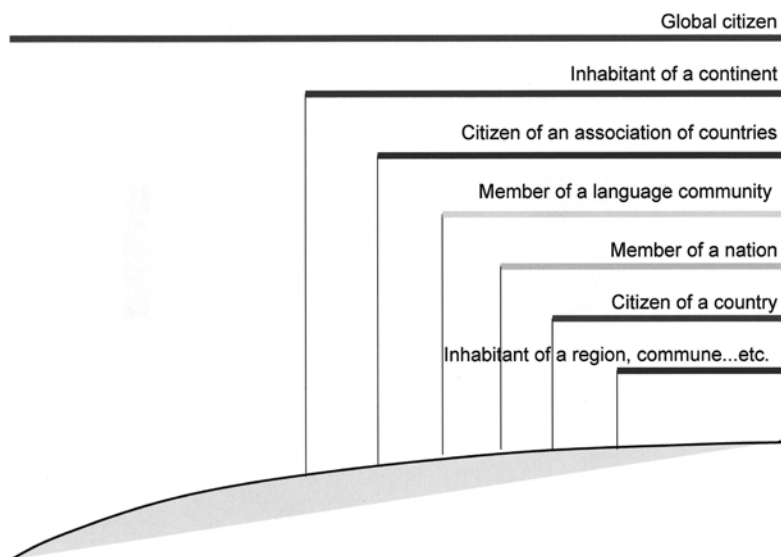


Fig. 2: Multiple space-related identities.

It is, however, also a fact that we usually do not belong to only one community, but rather to a multitude of them – we have in fact multiple identities, also multiple space-related identities. We are not only inhabitants of a village, commune, city, region. We are at the same time citizens of a country. We are also members of a nation, a language community (e.g. the English). We are citizens of an association of countries like the European Union. We may even feel as inhabitants of our continent or to be global citizens, when we engage ourselves for questions like climate change, global disparities in development etc.

So, when it comes to defining, whose name is the endonym (the name from within a community) and the exonym (the name from outside) according to the subsidiarity principle, it is always the local group that gives the name. The name for the Earth is an endonym in all languages, because we all inhabit the Earth. The name for Slovenia is an endonym in Slovene, Italian and Hungarian, because these are

the languages of the local, autochthonous communities. The names for Gozd Martuljek and Kranjska Gora are endonyms just in Slovene, because their inhabitants are Slovenes, while the German name *Kronau* for *Kranjska Gora* is an exonym.

The endonym / exonym divide:
Where is the line between “ours” and “theirs”?

Another question arising is: Where is the line drawn between “ours” and “theirs” and which are the consequences for the endonym / exonym divide?

The answer is quite easy and clear-cut, when features are located within community boundaries (see Fig. 3):

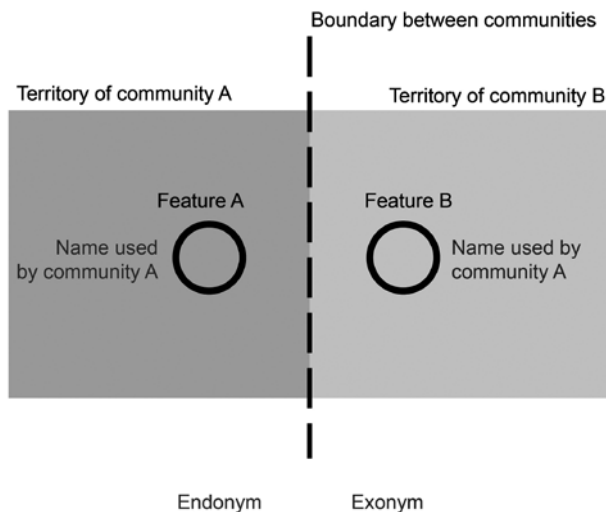


Fig. 3: Features located within community boundaries.

Names used by a community for the features located exclusively on the own territory are endonyms. Names used by a community for the features located exclusively outside are exonyms.

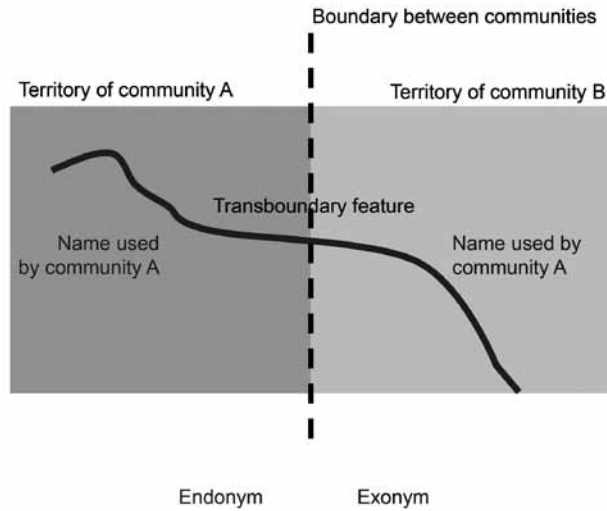


Fig. 4: Transboundary features.

If transboundary features are affected (see Fig. 4), a name is (naturally) valid for the whole feature, but has its endonym status only up to the boundary and assumes exonym status on the other side.

The problem is much more complex with seas. It is rather difficult to say where exactly a community's attitude of feeling responsible and emotionally attached ends. From my personal experience with the Adriatic Sea, I know that coastal dwellers have a profound emotional relation to their coastal waters – coastal waters not in the juridical sense, but in the sense of waters between the islands and in visible distance from the coast, where fisher boats and tourist vessels are cruising. They are as much part of their living space as land is. They are resources of food, areas for transportation, function nowadays also as tourist attraction. It is certainly justified to say that the coastal dweller community regards its coastal waters as their own.

But it is certainly different with the high sea – the sea beyond the horizon from the coast. Here it is necessary to differentiate between the cognitive and the emotional level.



Fig. 5: The endless sea. Gulf of Trieste.

Emotionally, the high sea is conceived as endless – even a narrow sea like the Adriatic (see Fig. 5), where you can look from coast to coast from a mountain top when skies are clear. This is, e.g., expressed by folk or also pop songs, which frequently use *sea* as a metaphor for the unlimited, the indefinite, the unconceivable.

Charles Trenet in “La Mer” (2nd verse)¹⁰

La mer
Au ciel d’ete confond
Ses blancs moutons
Avec les anges si purs
La mer bergere d’azur
Infinie

The Sea
With the summer sky
Mix up her white horses
With the angels so pure
The infinite azure shepherdess
Sea

¹⁰ Charles Trenet, “The Sea,” trans. Elisabeth “purplelunacy,” in *Lyrics Translate*, accessed November 22, 2016, <http://lyricstranslate.com/de/la-mer-sea.html>.

Gianna Nannini in “Alla fine”¹¹

Davanti a me si perde il mare
 io sto con te senza lacrime
 tu come fai a darti pace
 in questa immensità in questa
 solitudine.

In front of me the sea gets lost
 I stay with you without tears
 How can peace be added
 To this immensity, to this
 solitude?

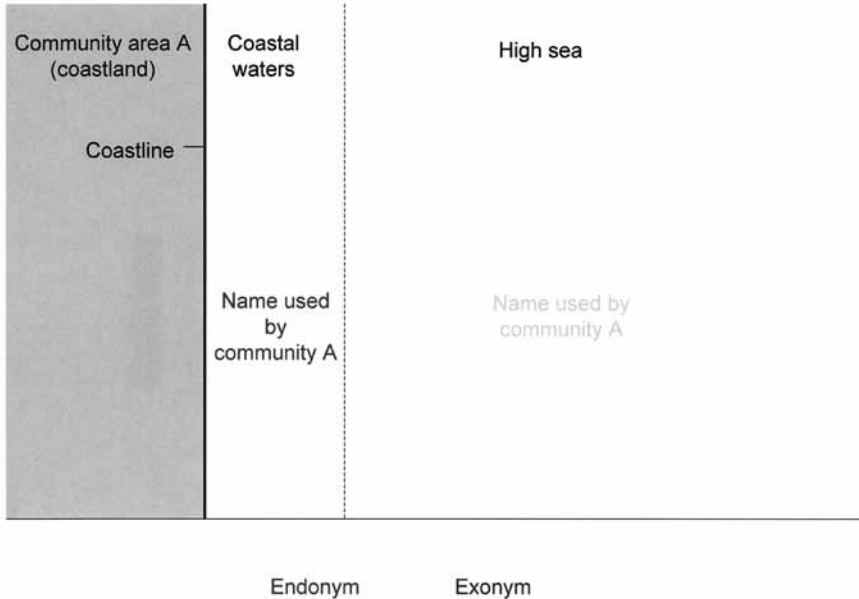


Fig. 6: Endonym status of sea names under the emotional aspect.

It can be concluded from this attitude (as expressed in the poems above) that, emotionally, coastal dwellers recognize no opposite coast, no counterpart beyond the horizon. They would, consequently, also not draw a strict line between “their own” and “the other’s” somewhere out in the sea; they would also not feel the necessity to confine the endonym status of their own name to some part of the sea. They would

¹¹ Gianna Nannini, “In the End,” trans. Lucia, in *Canzoni contro la Guerra*, accessed November 22, 2016, <https://www.antiwarsongs.org/canzone.php?id=4122>.

eventually extend it to the sea in its entirety, because they feel that this status is not contested by anybody else (see Fig. 6).

But it is also very likely that the intensity of this feeling fades away more or less as a function of distance, that the feeling of being the owner of the sea is relative insofar as it is combined with the other feeling that the sea is endless and unconceivable. (It is in the nature of the endless and the unconceivable that it can never be completely owned, that it is impossible to achieve full command of it.)



Fig. 7: The Adriatic Sea surrounded by various communities and languages using their own name for it.¹²

¹² Adriatic Sea map.png: NormanEinstein and MaGa, "Politička karta zemalja koje izlaze na Jadransko more," *Wikimedia Commons*, accessed December 6, 2016, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Adriatic_Sea_map_hr.svg.

At the cognitive level, they are aware of the fact that the sea ends somewhere, that there is an opposite coast inhabited by other people, who speak a different language and have another name for the same feature. They have learned this in schools, from maps (see Fig. 7) and charts and from the media.

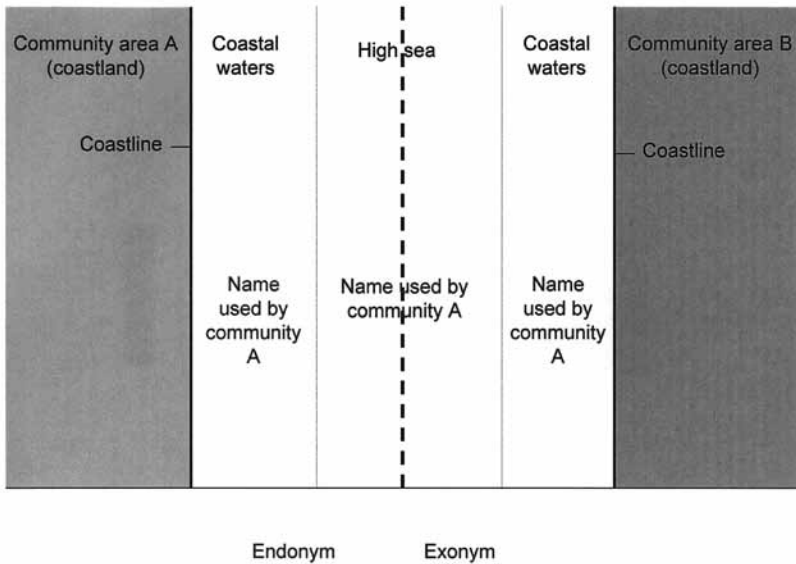


Fig. 8: Endonym / exonym status of sea names under the cognitive aspect.

Based on this knowledge, they would, however, usually (with the only exception of a politically aggressive and expansive attitude) be ready to acknowledge and accept that their own name loses its endonym status somewhere in between this opposite coast and their own coast; have no problem with accepting regulations ruling that there is some “artificial” line between the area where their name has its endonym status (see Fig. 8) and the area where the name of the others is valid as endonym. They will usually – as in many other fields of social interaction – accept that their right ends where the right of others begins, if this avoids dispute and conflict.

Debordering by the Use of Exonyms

Let us finally address – in response to the title of the journal – the debordering, integrating function of exonyms by the examples of three linguistic communities. As already mentioned, exonyms indicate the importance of a feature for a community, the relations it has with it, i.e. in their totality the community's network of external relations.

Mainly by translation of endonyms or by their morphological and/or phonetical adaption to the receiver language, exonyms facilitate to address foreign features, help integrating a foreign feature into the cultural sphere of the receiver community and help avoid exclusion and alienation.

Three maps to follow will demonstrate the network of a specific community's cultural, political and economic relations in present and history as indicated by its use of exonyms. All three maps show exonyms of a certain linguistic community just for populated places – not for other feature types like water bodies, mountains, landscapes or countries. The reason is that names for water bodies, mountains, landscapes or countries are much more frequently translated into the receiver language and become exonyms in this way. The network of relations is, thus, somehow distorted. It is, however, also distorted by some linguistic factors: linguistic relation and closeness of languages, easiness to pronounce a certain name, spread of trade languages.¹³

¹³ It would go too far to elaborate on these aspects in this context. For some further research see Back, *Übersetzbare Eigenname*; Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kartographische Ortsnamenkunde (AKO), *Empfehlungen zur Schreibung geographischer Namen in österreichischen Bildungsmedien* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2012).



Fig. 9: German exonyms of populated places used in Austria.¹⁴

German exonyms frequently used in Austria (see Fig. 9) show the network of relations of the Austrian German-speaking community. It is dense in the lands of the former Holy Roman Empire, i.e. Northern Italy, the Bohemian Lands, Belgium. It is also dense in East Central Europe with former German settlement and territories of former empires with Germans as dominant groups. The pattern of cultural networks is, however, distorted by the gradient in language prestige from West to East: Almost no German exonyms for populated places appear in the anglophone and francophone sphere. These are well-known trade languages in Austria, almost everybody knows how their endonyms are spelled and pronounced.

¹⁴ Author's draft based on Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kartographische Ortsnamenkunde (AKO), *Empfehlungen zur Schreibung geographischer Namen in österreichischen Bildungsmedien* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2012).



Fig. 10: Hungarian exonyms of populated places.¹⁵

The pattern of Hungarian exonyms in frequent use (see Fig. 10) reflects the former Hungarian Kingdom and Hungary's traditional trade relations to Northern Italy and Northern Germany. Hungarians have a lot of exonyms for places in modern Slovakia and the cis-Carpathian parts of Romania, Serbian Voivodina, Croatian Baranja and Međimurje, Slovenian Prekmurje and Austrian Burgenland. Very obvious are also the Hungarian trade routes across the Dinaric mountain range to the upper Adriatic as well as via Cracow and Wrocław to Leipzig and other parts of Northern Germany.

¹⁵ Author's draft based on András Dutkó, *List of Hungarian exonyms*, paper presented at the 5th Meeting of the UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms, Prague, 2007.



Fig. 11: Italian exonyms of populated places.¹⁶

The pattern of Italian exonyms in frequent use (see Fig. 11) highlights the Venetian trade network in the Eastern Mediterranean and, again, the former Holy Roman Empire, of which Northern Italy was a part. It is especially dense along the eastern Adriatic and Ionian coasts, where Venice had its trade posts on the way to the Levante. But also the non-Italian parts of the Holy Roman Empire up to the coasts of the North and Baltic Sea including Bohemia stand out on the map.

Conclusions

When place names are regarded from a cultural-geographical perspective and under the aspect of the spatial relation between the human community using the name and the geographical feature assigned by it, we arrive at the endonym / exonym divide. Endonyms are from this aspect names used by a community for geographical features on its own territory, while exonyms are names for geographical features outside its

¹⁶ Author's draft based on Sandro Toniolo, *Main Italian exonyms for European geographical elements*, Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Berlin, August 27–September 5, 2002.

own territory and differing in linguistic form from the endonym. In contrast to endonyms, exonyms are not symbols of appropriation and do not express claims. Instead, they indicate the importance of a feature for this community and the relations it has with it, i.e. its network of external relations. Exonyms help to integrate a foreign feature important enough to be addressed by a community into the cultural sphere of a community and help avoid exclusion and alienation, thus, having a debordering effect. It is, however, not always easy to draw the line between endonyms and exonyms. This is especially true with names for terrestrial transboundary features and even more so for seas. Up to where do coastal dwellers regard the sea as "their own", i.e. have an endonym for it? It could, however, be demonstrated that the endonym / exonym divide from a cultural-geographical perspective is applicable and makes sense also with these critical cases and that it works as a universal, all-comprehensive concept.

B i b l i o g r a p h y

1. Adriatic Sea map.png: NormanEinstein and MaGa. "Politička karta zemalja koje izlaze na Jadransko more." *Wikimedia Commons*. Accessed December 6, 2016. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Adriatic_Sea_map_hr.svg.
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