

Discussion

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On the surface, the excellent papers that were presented in this session are quite different. Finding what they have in common is possible by emphasizing the idea of place naming rather than place names. By this, I mean focusing on how names are made or changed instead of cataloguing names themselves. This shift is at the heart of the recent challenges made to toponymic studies by some of the scholars here and by those involved in the 'critical' literature in toponymy. Emphasizing place naming then offers a new way in which to understand the three papers in this session.

With this in mind, I wish to draw attention to three interrelated ways in which these papers may be considered together. The first is the diverse types of actors that are involved in place naming; the second is a concern for the exercise of power by these actors; and the third is the geopolitical contexts in which the naming act occurs.

Taken together, these papers highlight the numerous types of actors involved in giving, changing, resisting, and reinforcing place names. Although each paper focuses on different actors (cartographers, the media, and school teachers), in sum they draw attention to the many types of actors involved in place naming. For example, cartographers mediate place name disputes by making decisions about which names to use, which name goes first, or which names to avoid or ignore. Media organizations and school teachers play similar roles as they both are involved in disseminating knowledge about places to the broader public. In this way, place naming is not just about the people within or near a place; it is also about the many different types of agents that shape the discourse in which place naming occurs. From this point of view, I find it encouraging to see such a diversity of participants in the conference while recognizing that a serious concern for the actors in the *East Sea/Sea of Japan* naming dispute would also include scrutiny of government officials, international organizations, civil society groups, and business interests along with those already discussed in the papers presented here today.

A focus on actors also necessarily leads to a concern for power, by which I mean the ability of some actors to shape or impact place naming outcomes, especially in the face of obstacles, opposition, or alternatives. Power is always unevenly distributed as some

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actors have an outsized ability to impact the naming process while others are marginalized. Therefore, a serious interest in place naming also means asking not just who is involved but how they are empowered to achieve their preferred goals. Considering the papers in this session, being interested in power might mean asking what are the cartographic norms that shape or limit the choices of the cartographer? Or perhaps asking what are the differential abilities of certain media outlets to reach and impact their audiences? Or to be open to asking why certain school boards are lobbied to adopt naming changes while others are not. A genuine concern for power may be problematic for some in a venue like this conference where specific naming agendas are pursued. But for scholars involved in toponymic studies, questions such as these must be at the heart of a field that takes naming seriously.

Identifying the various actors involved in a naming process and understanding their relative ability to pursue their goals leads to my final point, which is a concern for the broader geopolitical contexts in which such activities occur. The act of naming is not just an exercise of power but is an act of politics. As such, the historical and geographic circumstances in which a naming occurs is a crucial way in which to investigate and understand the processes involved. For instance, the presence of European cartographic or media organizations in a conference like this calls to mind the role of Europeans in shaping the understanding of places beyond Europe itself. This is, of course, not just a reference to the relative economical and cultural influence of some societies in the current international system but also to the histories of European colonialism and domination. How have these histories impacted which actors have influence in naming and what acts or groups may either enable or challenge that status quo? Such a perspective is also needed to understand why a government involved in a name dispute would seek to influence an educational system in another country to adopt a particular cartographic standard. This decision clearly occurred within the context of a particular geopolitical order in East Asia which itself may be changing. Perhaps in the future, it will be deemed less important to consider how American schools name the body of water between Korea and Japan and more important to consider China's position on the matter.

These are just a small subset of the possible directions that open up for scholars interested in place naming rather than only in the names themselves. The papers in this session are then examples of not just where we are now for toponymic studies but opportunities that point us to where we can, and perhaps must, go next.