Poland: From changes of German names up to bilingual geographical names

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Poland after the Second World War changed its borders. The Soviet Union occupied eastern Poland with Vilnius and Lvov. Poland received the Opole Silesia, Lower Silesia, Western Pomerania and Gdańsk and the southern part of the former Eastern Prussia. The aim of the work is to show a two-stage process of changing geographical names and its consequences. After the Second World War, territories formerly belonging to Germany were inhabited by emigrants from Poland's Eastern Kresy. From a purely practical, but also political and historical point of view, the issue of replacing the German geographical names has appeared. German cities, such as Breslau, Danzig and Rastenburg, replaced Wroclaw, Gdansk and Kętrzyn. The changes of geographical names on the one hand restored the Polish character of the connected lands and, on the other, were intended to remove German names and histories from the symbolic sphere.

The second stage of the change of geographical names occurred after the accession of Poland to the European Union (2004) together with the problem of local identity and the issue of observance of the rights of ethnic and national minorities. Bilingual Geographical Names are regulated by EU law and the Polish National and Ethnic Minority Law (2005). Due to legal conditions, implementing the rights of national and ethnic minorities, it became possible to introduce bilingual names. Currently bilingual names can be found in 51 Polish communes, and in 33 languages the local minorities have the status of auxiliary language. Most bilingual names can be found in German and Kashubian, but also in Belarusian, Lithuanian or Lemkos.

Bilingual naming resulted in the development of a sense of local identity and a tourist attractiveness. But examples of the destruction of bilingual tables also show the negative consequences of these changes, such as the rise of nationalism, both on the Polish side and on the local minorities. However, considering all aspects of the introduction of bilingual geographic naming, it is a good example of "Achieving Peace and Justice through Geographical Naming".

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Poland, being situated in the heart of Europe, has been a migration destination for its Western neighbours for centuries. German-speaking migrants from the West have been eagerly settling not only in the borderlands, but also in numerous inland cities.

Emergence of the Teutonic State in Eastern Prussia led to another wave of settlement on Prussian and Polish lands. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a country of language and religious tolerance for almost 300 years. This peaceful coexistence of many nations, cultures and languages was interrupted at the end of the 18th century when Poland was divided between its neighbours. The country was occupied for 123 years by Russia, Austria and Prussia, then by Germany. After its rebirth in 1918, Poland was still a multi-ethnic country, yet the Poles dominated in the population structure. Nonetheless, in 1939 national and ethnic minorities constituted almost 35% of the whole population of Poland. During the interwar period, a part of Pomerania, Wielkopolska and Silesia, which had been occupied by the Kingdom of Prussia during the period of Partitions, were situated within the borders of Poland. German language was commonly used in these regions, as well as the German geographical names. After the Second World War, Poland had changed its borders again. More than a half of its territory was lost and incorporated into the former Soviet Union, the eastern lands became part of the soviet socialist republics – Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine and after 1989 those lands have remained within the borders of the countries which emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Within the scope of a specifically understood compensation, Poland gained the former German lands: the southern part of Eastern Prussia, Central and Western Pomerania, Lubuskie Land, the whole Silesia and the Free City of Danzig, existing in the interwar period. According to the agreements of the Potsdam Conference, the majority of Germans living there, who had not managed to escape the Red Army offensive, were resettled to the special occupation zones, established in Germany after the end of the war.

After the war, Poland, being under Soviet influence or, in fact, being controlled by the Soviet Union, had to face numerous problems: the political sphere, consolidation of the new „people's power" and dependence of the USSR as well as introduction of a new socialist economic and social system were not the only ones. Rebuilding the economy and mass migration processes were among the most important issues to deal with. While the German population was being resettled to the Allies occupation zones, the Poles leaving the former Polish eastern lands had to be resettled to the western territories, which, as a part of communist propaganda, were called the "regained territories".

The problem of double naming is an important social, political, but above all utilitarian. It has been widely discussed in literature for over fifty years in many countries, both in land and sea areas (e.g. Rydjord, 1961; Metford, 1968; Berg & Vuolteenaho, 2009; Choo, 2012; Woodmann, 2016; Yeginbayeva et al. 2016; Saparov, 2017). This research is based on the classic research of geopolitics and geography. The aim of the work is to present changes in geographical names within the present borders of Poland. The second objective is to try to identify the challenges that have arisen following the change of geographical names after World War II. As well as problems and challenges related to the introduction of bilingual names after the accession of Poland to the European Union.

The issue of geographical names in the "regained territories" was one of many problems which the new Polish authorities had to face. This issue concerned not the scope of

physical geography, but mainly names of towns and villages, where the Polish repatriates from the west were being resettled (Wagińska-Marzec, 1997; 2006). The new Poland covered territories reaching the lines demarcated by the Odra and Nysa Łużycka Rivers. Those territories were Polish for the last time not later than in the Early Middle Ages. A similar problem with geographical names emerged in the southern part of Eastern Prussia. The northern part of Eastern Prussia was incorporated into the Soviet Union and named the Kaliningrad Oblast. Prussia was originally inhabited by Prussian tribes which were conquered and colonised by the Teutonic Order in the 13th and 14th century. Although after the Thirteen Years' War victorious Poland annexed all the Teutonic lands and the already secularised Duchy of Prussia paid the liege homage to the Polish kings, both geographical names and the language spoken by the people living there remained unchanged (Wendt, 1999).   Unlike the other regions, for example Silesia, Wielkopolska or Pomerania with Gdansk, here in Eastern Prussia there were no bilingual (Polish and German) geographical names in use.

Another issue, less important from the practical point of view yet significant for the propaganda, was restoration polish geographical names which had been changed by the Third Reich in the period of 1939 – 1945. During the occupation, German administration not only germanised Polish geographical names, e.g. "Warszawa" and "Kraków" was changed into "Warschau" and „Krakau", but also replaced genuine names of many Polish cities with German ones. After the war, Gdynia and Łódź regained their original Polish names (during the occupation their names were changed into Gotenhafen and Litzmannstadt). In many cases, like in Gdansk or Wrocław, where bilingual names had been in use (Danzig and Breslau) as those cities were inhabited by both Germans and Poles before the war, only the Polish ones have remained.

Introduction of Polish geographical names in territories where German ones had been functioning for centuries was a much more significant issue. Such a problem concerned Silesia, Opole Silesia and Eastern Prussia. According to the agreements of Potsdam Conference (17.07-02.08.1945), which was the last of the three large conferences during which Great Britain, the USSR and the USA decided on the future of Germany, although the ultimate shape of the eastern Polish border had not been confirmed, some German territories were incorporated into Poland (Fig. 1). What is more, during this conference a decision on arbitrary displacement of German people from Poland was made. Final demarcation of the western and a part of the northern Polish border was agreed in the so-called 2+4 Treaty (Final Settlement with Respect to Germany) and in the Polish-German Treaty of 14.11.1990 (confirming the demarcation of the Polish-German border) (Dz.U. 1992, no. 14, p. 54). Thus, on the basis of the Potsdam agreements Poland took the former German lands and introduced Polish geographical names there (Wagińska-Marzec M., 2000).

In regions which used to be a part of Polish country in the past, like in the Free City of Danzig, a part of Wielkopolska or Western Pomerania, there were no problems with introducing Polish geographical names. In Pomerania or Silesia bilingual names of cities, rivers, lakes or other geographical objects had been in use for many years. However, in Masuria, former Prussia – conquered by the Teutonic State, names of the city had its origins derived from German language or from even older languages spoken by the Prussian tribes (Fig. 2).
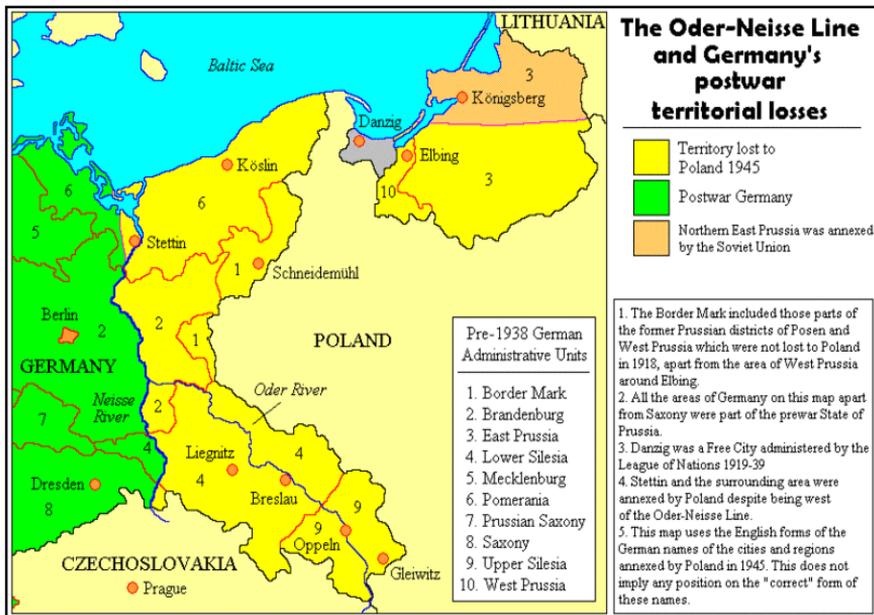
Figure 1. Germany`s postwar territorial losses
(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commission_for_the_Determination_of_Place_Names)

Figure 2. Polish names in place of German once in East Prussia
(Ostpreußen / Prusy Wschodnie)
(Source:http://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/przed-70-laty-wprowadzono-nazwy-miast-olsztyn-gizycko)

When replacing German geographical names with Polish ones, one of at least four approaches was used. The easiest cases were the ones where it was possible to introduce the already existing Polish names. Despite they were largely different from the German ones, they were deeply rooted in the people's consciousness and widely used. This way German Marienwerden became Polish Kwidzyn (Kwidzyń), Danzig was changed into

Gdańsk and Ortelsburg – into Szczytno. In some other cases German names, sometimes having Polish or Prussian origins, were intercepted and suitably adapted. When polonizing German names, a phonetic approach was usually used in order to keep the German pronunciation of them. In such a way German Elbing became Polish Elbląg or Goldap became Gołdap. Sometimes, only a German adjective was cancelled, like for example in the case of Deutsch Eylau which was replaced by Iława or Arys which became Polish Orzysz. Another way of polonization was translating the German names into Polish. For instance, Bischofsburg was replaced by its translation – Biskupiec and Bischofwerder – by Biskupiec Pomorski. However, the best examples of this approach are direct translations, like in the case of German Guttstadt (Good Town) translated into Dobre Miasto (Good Town) or Neuteich (New Pond) translated into Nowy Staw (New Pond).

German names that did not have Polish equivalent or thie equivalent was not commonly used or rooted in the people's minds caused more difficulties. In such cases, for ideological reasons and in order to emphasise the Polishness of the new territories, completely new names were being invented. From this point of view, the names Kętrzyn and Barczew are particularly interesting. These settlements are located in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship, a region which used to be the former East Prussia, the Teutonic State and the territory of the Prussian tribes in the very beginning. As soon as in 1945 the German name Rastenburg, having its origins in the Old Prussian name Raistpilis (a castle in the swamps), was simply replaced with a Polonized name Rastembork (in the period of 1945-1946). Then, a year later it was changed again to Kętrzyn, in honour of Wojciech Kętrzyński – Polish patriot, historian, ethnographer, politician and publicist who was the first to study Prussian-Masurian issues.

Table 1. Simplified classification of ways of polonization of German geographical names after 1945 in incorporated to Poland territories of Eastern Prussia and the Free City of Danzig.
(Source: own elaboration.)

German name	City located in	Polish name	Classification
Allenstein	1353	Olsztyn	
Arys	1725	Orzysz	
Barten	1628–1945	Barciany	
Bartenstein	1332	Bartoszyce	
Bischofstein	1385	Bisztynek	
Elbing	1246	Elbląg	
Frauenburg	1310–1945/1959	Frombork	
Goldap	1570	Gołdap	Adaptation
Nikolaiken	1726	Mikołajki	
Osterode	1329	Ostróda	
Passenheim	1386	Pasym	
Rhein	1723	Ryn	
Rößel	1337	Reszel	
Schippenbeil	1351	Sępopol	
Stuhm	1416	Sztum	

German name	City located in	Polish name	Classification
Willenberg	1723	Wielbark	
Zoppot	1901	Sopot	
Angerburg	1571	Węgorzewo	New
Drengfurt	1405–1945	Srokowo	
Lötzen	1612	Giżycko	
Marienwerder	1233	Kwidzyn	
Mehlsack	Before 1312	Pieniężno	
Rastenburg	1357	Kętrzyn	
Sensburg	Before 1444	Mrągowo	
Wartenburg	1364	Barczewo	
Braunsberg	1254	Braniewo	
Christburg	1288	Dzierzgoń	
Danzig	1224	Gdańsk	
Deutsch Eylau	1305	Iława	
Freystadt	1331–1946/1986	Kisielice	
Garnsee	1334	Gardeja	
Gilgenburg	1326–1945	Dąbrówno	
Heilsberg	1309	Lidzbark Warmiński	
Hohenstein	1359	Olsztynek	
Johannisburg	1645	Pisz	Return
Marienburg	1276	Malbork	
Neidenburg	1381	Nidzica	
Ortelsburg	1723	Szczytno	
Preußisch Holland	1297	Pasłęk	
Rosenberg	Before 1331	Susz	
Soldau	1349	Działdowo	
Tiegenhof	1880	Nowy Dwór Gdański	
Wormditt	1312	Orneta	
Mohrungen	Before 1332	Morąg	
Riesenburg	Before 1331	Prabuty	Return/Adaptation
Tolkemit	Since 1296	Tolkmicko	
Treuburg / Marggrabowa	1550	Olecko	
Lyck	1669	Ełk	Return/New (form)
Saalfeld	1305–1945/1986	Zalewo	
Gehlengurb/Bialla	1722	Biała Piska	Return/Translation
Bischofsburg	1395	Biskupiec	Translation
Bischofswerder	1331–1945	Biskupiec Pomorsk	

German name	City located in	Polish name	Classification
		i	
Guttstadt	1329	Dobre Miasto	
Liebemühl	1335	Miłomłyn	
Liebstadt	1323	Miłakowo	
Mühlhausen	Before 1330	Młynary	
Neuteich	Before 1476	Nowy Staw	
Landsberg	1335	Górowo Iławeckie	Translation/New (form)
Seeburg	1338	Jeziorany	

Adaptation – adaptation of the German name to the Polish language.
New – new Polish name.
Return – return to the former Polish (or to the old Slavic / old Prussian) name.
Translation – acquisition of the name translated into Polish.

In a very similar way the German name Wartenburg was changed into Barczew. The first location of the city was in 1325. Then, it was burnt down by the Lithuanians and it was given the city rights by the Warmian bishop Jan Stryprock (1300-1373) in 1364, after it had been rebuilt. In January 1945, when the city was retaken by the Poles after the German population had been resettled, the name Wartenburg was changed into Wartembork. However, this German-sounding name did not fit the new socialist ideology of Poland and not later than in September 1946 the name was changed again into Nowowiejsk. However, this name was also quickly changed, as in order to emphasise the Polishness of the region, in December of the same year, the city was given a new name – Barczewo, after Walenty Barczewski (1856-1928). He was a resident of Polish Warmia, a patriot and a pastor of the parish in Brąswałd (German Brauns-walde). At the time when the plebiscites deciding whether this region shall belong to Poland or Germany after the First World War were held, Barczewski was a member of the Warmian Plebiscite Committee and a co-founder of the Union of Poles in Eastern Prussia. The same way German Drengfurt was renamed after a famous Polish geographer Stanisław Srokowski (1872-1950) who studied Eastern Prussia. After his death Drengfurt was named Sroko-wo.

In the remaining lands incorporated to Poland after 1945 the process of renaming took a different course. The regions of Wielkopolska and Silesia, including Opole Silesia, were Polish in the Middle Ages. As a reason of that, bilingual names in German and Polish were commonly used by the people inhabiting these regions. After the war, the new authorities simply deleted the German geographical names, leaving only the Polish ones. An excellent example of such an approach may be the region of Silesia covering three currently existing voivodships: Lower Silesian and Opolskie, situated in the southern Poland.

In the Middle Ages Silesia was inhabited mostly by Poles as being a part of the Polish state ruled by the Piast dynasty. However, after the feudal fragmentation of Poland it was ruled by the Czech. Then, in the 15th century it was a part of the Austrian Empire and finally after the Austrian-Prussia War it was incorporated into the Kingdom of Prussia (Fig. 3). German language dominated in the western and partially in the central parts of the region while in the eastern part people spoke mainly Polish. After the First

World War and three Silesian Uprisings the region was divided between Poland and Germany. During the Second World War it was a part of the Third Reich and after the war it returned to Poland.

Unlike in Eastern Prussia and against the Potsdam agreements, many autochthonic German inhabitants did not left Silesia after the war, especially those living in Opole Silesia. Many of them considered themselves not only Germans, but also Silesians. In the social ist period, when the ideology of a homogenous country was being promoted, numerous inhabitants of Silesia were afraid to admit Silesian or German identity and that is why they declared Polish one. Nonetheless, after 1989 and especially when the relationship between P oland and Germany normalised (Polish – German Border Treaty of 14.11.1990; Poland ratified 26.11.1991, Germany on 16.12.1991 and the Treaty of Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation of 16.01.1992) tens of thousands people declared German and later Silesian identity as well as membership of other than Polish ethnic groups (Fig. 4).

After Poland accessed the European Union (01.05.2004), according to some new agreements signed by Poland, ethnic and national minorities were grated numerous rights, including the right to use their mother tongue. According to the Act of the 6th January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and on the regional languages it is allowed to introduce bilingual names in Polish and the language spoken by a particular minority. This provision concerns the so-called national, ethnic and regional minorities recognised by Poland, including the German one. Another condition that has to be met by a minority is the one telling that at least 20% of the minority members have to speak the language into which a particular geographical name is to be translated. When in a particular settlement live less than 20% of such residents, a bilingual name can be introduced after consultations held by local authorities and under the provisions set locally. In order to introduce a bilingual name, more than 50% of the population shall vote for it during the consultations (Fig. 5)

Figure 3. Silesia region in XVIII century
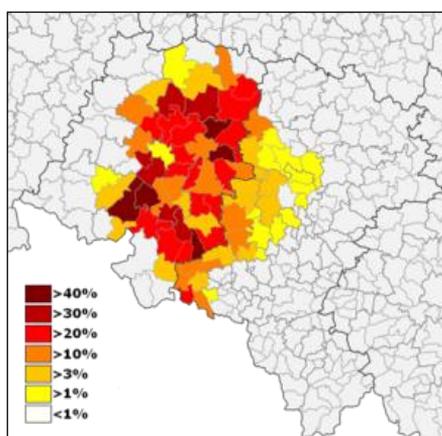(Source: http://donhoward.net/genp
oland/sil.htm)

**Figure 4. German minority(%) in
Upper Silesia in 2002(Opole-west
and Silesian-east Voivodships)**
(Source: https://ipfs.io/ipfs/QmXoypizjW3Wk
nFiJnKLwHCnL72vedxjQkDDP1mXWo6uco/wi
ki/German_minority_in_Poland.html)

Contrary to the official view of the Polish government which maintained the myth on ethnic homogeneity of Poland in the period of 1945-1989, in the People's Republic of Poland lived approximately 700 thousand Germans, Polish citizens (Wendt, 2004). In the years 1989 – 2016 the majority of them jumped at the opportunity to move to Germany. Nonetheless, still approximately 250-300 thousand people of German origins still live in Poland. According to 2011 Census data, 147,8 thousand people declared German nationality (as the first or second one). However, only 44,5 thousand people declared solely German nationality while 103,3 thousand combined German and Polish nationality. Approximately 74 thousand people declared German nationality as the first nationality and almost the same number of people (73 thousand) as the second one. To compare, according to 2002 Census data, 152,9 thousand people declared German nationality that year while almost 850 thousand declared membership of the Silesian minority which was not recognised by Poland nor as an ethnic either as a national minority. What is interesting, in 2002 the Silesian national/ethnic membership was declared by only 173 thousand citizens of Poland.

Figure 5. Silesian communes where German language is an official auxiliary language
(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilingu al_ communes_in_Poland#/media/File:Germ an_language_in_gminas.png)

According to 2002 Census data, in Opolskie voivodship the citizens declaring German identity constituted 9,8% of population while in 2011 – more than 10% what may be a result of a 4,2% decrease in the general number of people inhabiting this region: from 1061 thousand (2002) to 1016 thousand (2011). As in many cities, towns and villages the 20% threshold was surpassed, bilingual geographical names have been introduced in 28 communes.

Table 2. Bilingual Polish / German communes (2010) in Opolskie voivodship
(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilingual_communes_in_Poland)

Gmina (commune)	Gemeinde (commune)	Since
Biała	Zülz	06.03.2006
Bierawa	Birawa	23.04.2007
Chrząstowice	Chronstau	25.01.2006
Cisek	Czissek	Bd.
Dobrodzień	Guttentag	13.05.2009
Dobrzeń Wielki	Groß Döbern	22.04.2009
Głogówek	Oberglogau	22.04.2009
Gogolin	Gogolin	Bd.
Izbico	Stubendorf	06.03.2006
Jemielnica	Himmelwitz	28.08.2006
Kolonowskie	Colonnowska	22.09.2006
Komprachcice	Comprachtschütz	04.06.2009
Laskowice Wielkie	Gross Lassowitz	18.10.2006
Leśnica	Leschnitz	17.05.2006
Łubiany	Lugnian	Bd.
Murów	Murow	22.04.2009
Pawłowiczki	Gnadenfeld	Bd.
Polska Cierkiew	Groß Neukirch	Bd.
Popielów	Poppelau	Bd.
Prószków	Proskau	11.07.2006
Radłów	Radlau	25.01.2006
Reńska Wieś	Reinschdorf	26.10.2006
Strzeleczki	Klein Strehlitz	17.05.2006
Tarnów Opolski	Tarnau	15.02.2007
Turawa	Turawa	12.09.2008
Ujazd	Ujest	28.08.2006
Walce	Walzen	04.04.2006
Zębowice	Zembowitz	23.10.2007

Unexpectedly, in 2015, the Ministry of Administration and Digitization released some of the census data considering Polish communes, which had been much anticipated by researches and public opinion (Fig. 6). The data shows that the number of people declaring German nationality exceeded 10% of the population in two voivodships: Silesian and Opolskie. In both regions the number of communes where every tenth resident is German is 42, including 34 communes in Opolskie voivodship and 8 in Silesian voivodship.

In four out of those 42 communes every third resident declared German nationality. Those communes are: Strzeleczki (32,9%), Biała (32,2%), Reńska Wieś (32%) and Cisek (30,9%) in Opolskie voivodship. The most German commune in Silesian voivodship is Krzanowice (27,8%) – ranked 8th. Two communes – Nędza in Silesian and Olesno in Opolskie voivodship – almost reached the 20% threshold with the results 19.3%.
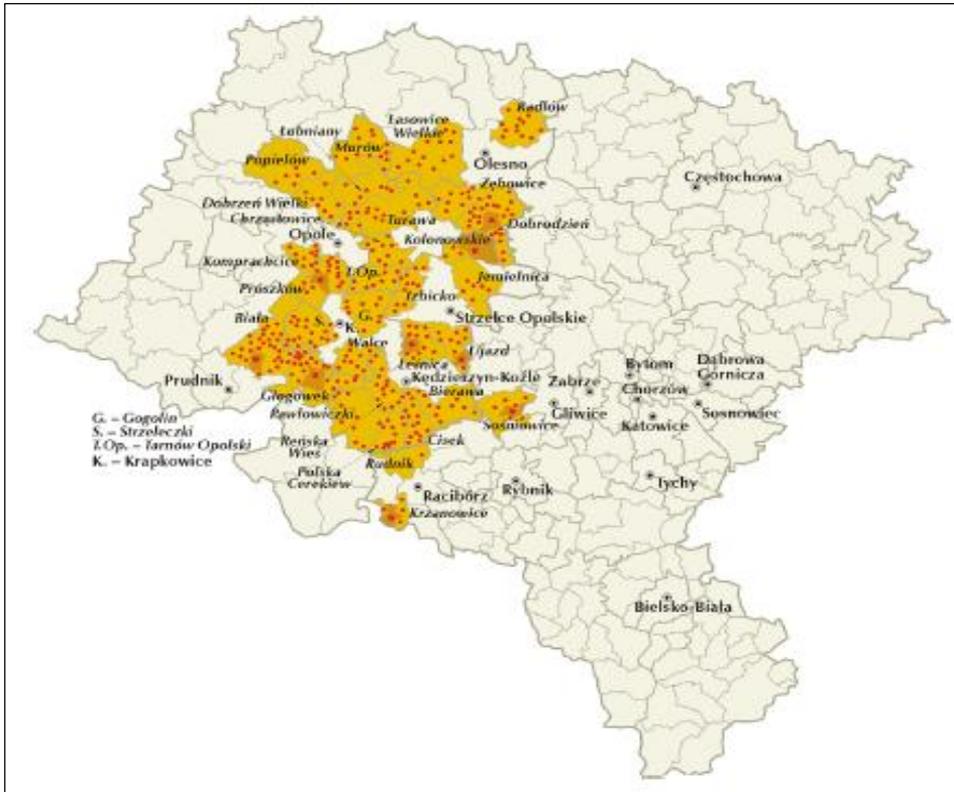
Figure 6. German names of localities in Opolskie and Silesian voivodships (2016)
(Source: List of minority place-names in Poland according to Register of the communes
place-names in minority language are used provided by Ministry of Administration and
Digital-ization, July 22, 2016 (Polish Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names))

No wonder that Poland, observing the rule of law in the European Union, fully accepts bilingual, Polish and German geographical names in the communes, cities, towns and villages which meet the conditions set in the Act of the 6th January 2005 (Wendt, Ilieş, 2014; Wendt, 2017). Currently, there are 342 such places (Fig. 7). Obviously, bilingual names were raising different emotions among both Poles and Germans after their introduction. Positive ones, as they have increased the sense of „feel at home", they promote regionalism. They are also perceived a specific type of tourist attractions. However, in some cases, the bilingual names provoked some negative attitudes. They trigger some negative patriotic attitudes, which may transform into more dangerous nationalist ones. There were cases of painting over both German and Polish names placed on the road signs, like shown in fig. 7.

Fig. 7. Bilinigual, Polish and German geographical names in Poland
(Source: https://howlingpixel.com/wiki/Bilingual_communes_in_Poland and internet.)

However, taking all the changes in geographical names introduced after 1945 and after the accession to the European Union in 2004 under consideration, it may certainly be stated that introduction of the bilingual names fosters development of positive Polish-German relations. The bilingual geographical names promote the idea of civic society (Wendt, 2007), according to which populations can thrive while cultivating local identities and languages, being part and parcel of this locality. Moreover, it allows to preserve and develop local identities and may constitute a vital element of tourist marketing.   Considering all aspects of the introduction of bilingual geographic naming, it is a good example of "Achieving Peace and Justice through Geographical Naming".

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