

Names in motion

Adaptation processes of person and place names in areal, diachronic, and social fields of tension

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As proper names refer directly to individual objects, they crucially depend on stable, fixed relationships between form and referent. However, such fixed references open up fields of tension when contexts change for people who bear and use the names. Changing contexts may prompt names to be formally adapted, meaning that – at least temporarily – names may lead a double life. The aim of this conference is to identify factors that motivate, condition, and constrain adaptation processes of person and place names to changing or varying circumstances.

In German or other naming systems (e.g. Germanic languages or contact languages of German), the structural and social factors that govern adaptation can be investigated through relevant diachronic or synchronic case studies. In such case studies, of particular interest is not just the phonological or graphemic adaptation of a name's substance, but also the processes that drive the abandoning of old names in favour of new names, e.g. in social transgressions.

The following paragraphs outline examples of relevant fields and topics of research, first from a diachronic, then from a synchronic perspective. From a diachronic perspective, names can find themselves in fields of tension because of language change (e.g. in phonology or writing), verticalisation (i.e. the establishment of written standard varieties dominating traditional oral varieties), long-standing multilingualism, or a change of the dominant language in a specific area. Possible topics are for instance: the Latinisation/Graecisation of family names or the adaptation of Low German Names to High German phonological shape (e.g. Kunze 1998) in the Early Modern Age, principles of folk etymology in names, and strategies of integrating names from other naming cultures in a new writing, phoneme and naming system (e.g. Menge 2000 and Marti 2008 on adaptations of Polish family names in German mining areas; Haubrichs / Tiefenbach 2011 on interference onomastics in general). In toponyms, a double or variable life can indicate power relations in the linguistic landscape of multilingual communities, it can contribute to the (in)visibility of minority languages, and it can indicate attitudes towards the colonial or totalitarian past of a culture, cf. approaches from culture geography (Giraut / Houssay-Holzschuch 2016), and postcolonial onomastics (Schulz 2016).

From a synchronic perspective talks can investigate how names adapt for social reasons: bearers of names fulfil diverse social roles, may belong to multiple groups, and may undergo transgressions between groups and identities. Modifications of names play an important role in doing and changing identity. For instance, adaptations can be a consequence of migration, especially where typologically diverse naming systems clash (e.g. where a two-partite personal name system consisting of given name and surname is not standard); also, people entering a new culture sometimes chose a new name (e.g. Chinese students or employees in Western societies often choose Western given names). Adaptations can be conditioned by social group (names used by/for insiders vs. outsiders) and by the situation, such as private vs. more public situations. This holds not only for person names, but also for place names (e.g. *Kotti* vs. *Kottbusser Tor/Platz*). Affective values of nicknames often arise as a relational issue between official long forms and unofficial short forms (Wierzbicka 1992). Adaptations of names may also happen when shifting between standard varieties and dialects and between oral and written mode. As Christen (2007) showed, family names in German-speaking areas of Switzerland lead double lives in spelling and pronunciation, and the extent of using dialect features is adapted according to the situation. Possible topics from an interactional perspective investigate how different forms of names and other fixed references such as kinship terms can be

used for different purposes, e.g., for addressing the referent in different situations or in reference to third parties. German dialects have established different constructions for these functions. Last but not least, questions of changing and choosing names in transgressions of personal identity (Alford 1988:85) can be addressed, e.g. factors determining the choice of marital names (Matthias-Bleck 2000) or name changes in gender transgressions (Schmidt-Jüngst 2018).

Following the overarching question of what factors condition the processes of adaptation or the double lives of person and place names, more detailed questions arise:

- Psychological and social aspects:
 - How (un)consciously and (un)controllably do adaptation processes unfold?
 - Under what conditions are double lives of names maintained and time stable?
 - Who decides about and has power over implementing adaptations – name bearers or name users? Do name bearers capitulate against their own wishes and historical situations in view of uses established by others?
 - What kind of impact do adaptation processes have on name bearers and users? (Identification? Experience of gain/loss?)
- Factors constraining or facilitating adaptations: Apart from structural and social conditions, legal and other aspects might also be addressed here.
- Use and range of variants: Who knows which variants of a person or place name, and who doesn't? Under what conditions do speakers prefer one over the other variant?
- Structural aspects: What are the possibilities and constraints of formal manipulation, e.g. in adapting names to the German naming system or in transforming them to Latin? What role does the respective appellative system have as a reference point? For example, in contrasting Flemish and Dutch family names, the timing of orthographic standardization is a decisive factor (Marynissen/Nübling 2010).

As most of the proposed topics and questions are best addressed from a multidisciplinary perspective, contributions and approaches from social scientists, culture geographers and other disciplines are also welcome, in addition to linguistic-onomastic approaches.

Talks (20 minutes + 10-minute discussion) or posters can be presented in German or English. Please submit an anonymous abstract (pdf-file, 500 words, not counting references) including your preference (talk or poster) no later than **30 April 2019** to bewegte.namen@wwu.de.

Conference Homepage: <https://tinyurl.com/bewegtenamen>

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