

Report

Sixth International Symposium on Place Names 2021

*Standardisation and the wealth of place names –
aspects of a delicate relationship*

29 September – 1 October 2021

Virtual, South Africa

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The Sixth International Symposium on Place Names (ISPN 2021) was hosted virtually by the [Department of South African Sign Language and Deaf Studies](#) (University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa) in partnership with the [Joint IGU/ICA Commission on Toponymy](#). For the 2021 event and going forward, the Scientific Panel has been expanded to include representatives from each of South Africa's neighbours. The new members are warmly welcomed to the team. For the first time, ISPN also presented a workshop. The Symposium was opened by Prof Annalene van Staden, Head of the hosting department. Prof Peter Jordan handled the closing on behalf of the Commission.

The theme of the symposium was "Standardisation and the wealth of place names – aspects of a delicate relationship". Talks presented research on place names as cultural heritage, the standardisation of place names, and multiple place names. Continuing the introduction of the topic at ISPN 2019, two talks also referred to the issue of place names in sign languages.

Twenty-seven delegates registered – one for the Workshop only, 12 for the Symposium only, and 14 for the Symposium as well as the Workshop. Of course, the co-ordinator, project assistant, host, two keynotes, and workshop presenter were also present, rounding up a total of 32 attendees.

Eighteen talks were delivered, with main speakers representing institutions from the following countries:

- Australia: 1
- Austria: 1
- Brazil: 1
- Canada: 1
- Croatia: 1
- Czech Republic: 1
- Germany: 3
- Hungary: 1
- Italy: 1
- Kenya: 1
- South Africa: 5
- Switzerland: 1

The talks presented research on place names from the following research sites:

- Brazil: 1
- Croatia: 1
- Eswatini: 1
- France: 1
- Kenya: 1
- Lesotho: 1
- Lesser Sunda Islands: 1
- Serbia: 1



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- South Africa: 4
- Zimbabwe: 2
- Tanzania as represented in German guidebooks: 1
- East African and Chinese interactions: 1
- Historical, pre-Columbian Mesoamerica: 1
- Conceptual: 1

The two keynote addresses were delivered by Pierre Jaillard (Chair of UNGEGN) and Dr Tendai Mangena (Great Zimbabwe University). Mr Jaillard's talk, "Reconciling the safeguarding and the standardisation of geographical names", addressed UNGEGN's position on the reduction on exonyms versus the safeguarding of cultural heritage. He expounded on how other academic disciplines, such as anthropology, linguistics, economics, political science and law, inform this consideration. Dr Mangena spoke on "Theorising multiple place names in southern Africa". Using examples from Zimbabwe and South Africa, she argued that certain places, especially those carrying multiple names, can be considered to bear toponymic palimpsests.

The workshop was presented by Dr Gerhard Rampl, Chair of the Austrian Board of Geographical Names. The topic was "[Collecting and documenting informal and alternative place names](#)" and he addressed the methodologies related to data collection during field work as well as the post-processing of collected data.

ISPN 2021 and its accompanying workshop was a success. Depending on the response to the call for papers, an accredited conference proceedings will be published as with all the previous symposia. The UFS and the Joint IGU/ICA Commission on Toponymy look forward to continuing their fruitful collaboration.

For any queries related to ISPN, please contact the co-ordinator, Dr Chrismi Loth, at kongresETFB@ufs.ac.za.

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

- **Host:** Prof Annalene van Staden (University of the Free State, RSA)
- **Convener:** Prof Theodorus du Plessis (University of the Free State, RSA)
- **Coordinator:** Dr Chrismi Loth (University of the Free State, RSA)
- **Resident member:** Dr Lucie A Möller (University of the Free State, RSA)
- **Joint IGU/ICA Commission on Toponymy:**
 - **Common Vice-Chair:** Prof Paulo Márcio Leal de Menezes (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)
 - **IGU Chair:** Prof Cosimo Palagiano (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy)
 - **ICA Chair:** Prof Peter Jordan (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria / University of the Free State, RSA)
 - **Member of the Steering Board:** Prof Peter E Raper (University of the Free State, RSA)



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SCIENTIFIC PANEL

- Prof Theodorus du Plessis (University of the Free State, RSA)
- Prof Peter Jordan (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria / University of the Free State, RSA)
- Prof Paulo Márcio Leal de Menezes (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)
- Prof Cosimo Palagiano (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy)
- Prof Peter E Raper (University of the Free State, RSA)
- Dr Boga Manatsha (University of Botswana, Botswana)
- Dr Thabo Martins (National University of Lesotho, Lesotho)
- Dr Petrus Angula Mbenzi (University of Namibia, Namibia)
- Dr Lucie A Möller (University of the Free State, RSA)
- Dr Sambulo Ndlovu (Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe)