

# Proper Names in the Polish Global Reality

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The paper presents the most recent names, particularly those related to cities and towns (especially names of buildings, streets, factories, and shops) against the background of current globalization processes that assume various forms of unification or individualization.

Proper names are treated as units that co-create the local identity (narrative names) or transparent identity (transparent names). Narrative names as defined in the paper are created from existing proper names. Proprial narration is understood here as multidirectional references made by certainonyms to other objects, for instance the names of buildings connecting to names of nearby streets, lakes, or islands. On the other hand, transparent designations are anonymous names that conceal the origin of denotats. They indicate an unreal origin (e.g., English or Italian) of the named object.

KEYWORDS urban toponymy, globalization, narrative identity, transparent identity, narrative names, transparent names, theory of the late modern age

## Introduction

The contemporary world of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries describes itself in various ways: as postmodern, late modern, postindustrial, or post-liberal. It is also defined in terms of the so-called postmodernity and even *surmodernité* or simply liquid modernity. One of the elements that overwhelm this variously depicted reality is explicitly labeled as globalization.<sup>1</sup> This term has become so familiar that it is easily used to describe very different spheres of the present life. Globalization is understood as a process causing economic, financial, political, military, cultural, and ideological connections and relations between societies that become more condensed and demanding. One of the consequences of globalization is the world's uniformity in the form of "social ties, solidarity and identity on a superlocal and supernational scale" (Sztompka, 2005: 598). It means that nations, groups, and individuals are more and more dependent on one another and live in the so-called "one world" (Giddens, 2004: 74). An expression of this unity is modern technology

spreading around the entire world, e.g., a network of transportation links (e.g., air connections) or telecommunication links (e.g., the Internet). Interrelations are tightened by economic, financial, political, and cultural connections (cf. stock exchange fluctuations, fashion, certain political events). Newly formed enterprises and super-national organizations (e.g., Coca-Cola, McDonald's, United Nations, UNESCO) also strengthen these interrelations.

The inevitably progressing phenomenon of globalization does not only apply to general systems of human activity (global financial markets, production, trade, or telecommunications). It is also perceptible in the most local of dimensions, in the sphere of private lives. According to Giddens, an English sociologist (2004: 83–84), globalization tendencies change our personal lives and identity, leading to major changes in the way we perceive both ourselves and other people. In light of the overwhelming influence of globalization on human life, one should consider how this global impact manifests itself in the linguistic sphere at the turn of the century. The intensified international contacts forced those involved in them to use the same language. Efforts made to promote artificial languages to be used by representatives of multilingual cultures have been unsuccessful. Esperanto or other artificial languages have not fulfilled their roles. Today there is no denying that the worldwide tool of communication is the English language. Therefore, if fundamental changes are seen in the manner in which reality is experienced by the human being and in the sphere of our linguistic functioning, similar transformations must be observed in the onymic layer. Since this effect is indisputable, the manner and scope of this influence seem to be of great importance.

Undoubtedly, the onymic signs of late modernity (as defined by Giddens: 2002) reflect the nature of the globalization process itself as an open phenomenon, entangled in internal ambiguities and therefore beyond any control. According to the so-called advocates of the concept of transformation,<sup>2</sup> globalization — being full of contradictions — “consists of numerous, multidirectional and sometimes opposing, influences” (Giddens, 2004: 98). In their opinion, globalization is a bidirectional flow of influences and information. Both ethnic, local and newly-arrived and “temporarily” exotic groups coexist in large global communities (Giddens, 2004: 82–83).

Similar contradictions can be seen in the collective consciousness of those who inhabit the so-called “global village.” Their perception of the new reality is also ambivalent. This contradiction is expressed in a specific way in which people see themselves and the world. On the one hand, there is the thinking in terms of “we” which goes beyond the framework of the local or national community and which can be referred to as regional or global identity. On the other hand, a somewhat defensive local identity is reinforced. The willingness to emphasize and highlight one's own identity in terms of culture, customs, beliefs, and lifestyle is what motivates the individual to take action. According to the French sociologist Maffesoli, this contributes to creating the so-called new “tribal mentality” (Sztompka, 2005: 585). The opposing trends, expansion of the world beyond the boundaries of the local community (the so-called “regional identity” or “global solidarity”) on the one hand and on the other hand the fact that people increasingly identify themselves with their local community, its customs, and beliefs, “may have more revolutionary implications for the future of the human community” (Sztompka, 2005: 585).

## Transparent names

The above-mentioned processes are visible in the contemporary Polish nomenclature. Similar to the lexical system, for instance, the onymic system also is influenced by the contradictory mechanisms of the global process. This influence can be observed mainly in the urban space, in toponymy and the so-called chrematonymy (i.e., in Slavonic onomastic terminology for proper names of things, human products, institutions, etc.), especially in names of companies. A result of what seems to be one of the most common globalization mechanisms (unification, standardization) is structures alienated from a specific space. These anonymous (transparent) names conceal the origin of denotats (referents). Perhaps they should be referred to as false names because they indicate an unreal origin of the named object. Names coined with such an intention create a typical, global, perfectly cosmopolitan space (cf. Burszta, 1998: 469), not so much without specific cultural references but rather with references that are inapplicable to reality.

The references discussed above are different in nature and therefore heterogeneous groups of intertextual names are created.<sup>3</sup> These names are terms derived from other proper names formed on the basis of structures familiar to the former or contemporary user. The original item (founding) is called “hypotext” (terminology according to Genette, 1992: 322–23), while the second item (founded one) is called “hypertext.” Transparent intertextual onyms can be divided into three types: foreign transtextualizations, iconizations, and imitations.

### *Transtextualizations*

This type (of the three) is created as a result of quite a perverse denomination that consists in concealing a domestic product under a foreign brand. As a result, the so-called transtextual names are structures that in toponymy are regarded as shifted. In the domain of company names such designations are created as a result of a purchase (takeover) of a certain designatum (enterprise) together with its name and simultaneously a brand that the name started to symbolize. Obviously, the purpose of such activities is to make a profit. Creating a new brand requires time, is expensive and highly risky. The use of a mark already existing in the market ensures safety. For instance, Polish manufacturers enter foreign commercial arenas in this manner, buying German companies and then selling their own (Polish) products under German names. For example, *Selena*, a Wrocław-based manufacturer of polyurethane foam, following an unsuccessful effort to conquer the German market, started operating under the name *Dr. Schenk*, once they had bought a German polyurethane foam producer (Zdziechowska & Piński, 2007: 53). The success came instantaneously. As a result of similar marketing actions, the Polish company *Kopex* operates on the German market as *Hansen*, the name of the world’s second biggest mining electronics manufacturer taken over in 2007 by Kopex S.A., a Polish producer of coal mining equipment (after: [www.teberia.pl](http://www.teberia.pl)).

### *Iconizations*

Transparent transtextual names, if they were priced, are the most expensive. Therefore, the most popular phenomena in the globalizing onymic space are iconizations. They are used to conquer a foreign market by replacing a name existing on the domestic market. Similar onyms are thus created: one being original, the other

secondarily created for the purposes of a new mercantile space. Additionally, the structure of the secondary name refers to non-Polish geographical origins, deceiving the user, a potential buyer of the product. In accordance with the above-mentioned technique of territorial renaming, a Poznań-based jewelry maker named *Apart* operates in Germany under the somewhat Italian-sounding name *Artelioni*. Spanish references are contained in the name *WLC Coleccion Certificada*, i.e., as the German equivalent of the Polish *Wólczanka* (Zdziechowska & Piński, 2007: 53). The similarity to the “mother name” in the structure of iconic onyms is based on a single letter or several letters of the “mother name” (*Artelioni*, *Wólczanka*).

### **Imitations**

However, it is false names, the so-called imitations that prove the most popular. In their phonetics, structure or even lexis, these units intentionally draw on foreign, non-Polish elements of the linguistic system. Being completely cosmopolitan, these units fill present-day stores. For instance, *Simple*, a clothes maker’s name, does not suggest the Polish origins of the manufacturer but rather implies English origins. In a similar way customers are deceived by the names *Monnari* or *Gino Rossi*. The fact that they sound French and Italian is surely an effort to promote sales of product bearing these names. Such naming and branding activities suggest that foreign things arouse interest and attract customers, whereas Polish products are unattractive, unfashionable and poor quality. For centuries the Italian, French, and also English cultures have symbolized elegance, fashion, and style. The creator of such names takes advantage of a cultural stereotype: foreign, western, or global is better; “we are world-class and that is why our products and services are top quality.” Other names of the same genre include names of very popular stores in Poland: *Tatuum*, *Diverse*, *Maxima*, *Mariée*, or *Marssel*. Foreign-sounding names of Polish companies occur in certain onymic sequences. New brands of clothes belonging to a transparently named company are also labeled with similar proprietary forms. For example, *Semax S.A.*, a well-known Polish manufacturer based in Poznań, owns brands named *Deep*, *Hot Oil*, and *Vabbi Factory Outlet* (after: [www.deep.com.pl](http://www.deep.com.pl), [www.semax.com.pl](http://www.semax.com.pl), [www.hotoil.com.pl](http://www.hotoil.com.pl), [www.vabbi.pl](http://www.vabbi.pl)). An uninquiring buyer surely does not suspect that these products are Polish. The purpose of such names is to make the commodity appear attractive by implying that it originates from abroad (Zboralski, 1995: 208).

A similar naming (imitation) pattern found in other regions pointing to the globalization of Europe can be found in the nation of Bulgaria.<sup>4</sup> The names or trade names used by firms gain an international quality by using English (mainly) as well as Italian or French (Dimitrova-Todorova, 2006) as businesses names. For example, names can be descriptive (cf. Beauty Center, St Sofia Gold Club & Spa) or in the form of antroponyms (cf. Antoannette, Duda) and toponyms (cf. Hollywood, Picolla Italia). An international phenomenon (a term of Dimitrova-Todorova) of naming firms is universally found as well in other countries in East-Central Europe, for example in Czech Republic or in Ukraine (cf. Knappová, 2003: 379–80; Lučik, 2003: 392–393).

### **Transparent and narrative identity**

The above-mentioned names given for all three types can be described as intertextual transparent because they express the so-called transparent identity as defined by Augé, the French anthropologist (Śliwiński, 2005: 84). Transparent identity manifests

itself in total insensitivity to cultural differences and, being a product of the Western culture, it considers “European” elements as “universal” (Melosik, 2002: 28). Transparent onyms were not created in accordance with the Polish language system. They were artificially forced into the parasystem or system of foreign languages, e.g., English, Italian, Spanish, or French, or new denotats (referents) copied their structure. Similarly sounding onyms can be found in stores almost all over the world. They become unspecific such that the name does not provide a clue as to what manufacturer stands behind the brand name.

Transparent names describe the space that Augé called “the space of non-places” (Śliwiński, 2005: 79–80). Such places are very typical for the contemporary city which becomes a city of fiction, because it is particularly filled with non-places, i.e., spaces experienced only superficially in the form of images, billboards or advertising screens seen all over the world. One can say that names that describe them also have a fictitious dimension, untrue superficial structure, a structure that is untrue by definition and hides something that could be disclosed by a structure referring to the system of the native language — Polish.

This onomastic picture of the operation of globalization mechanisms is not only omnipresent, just as the city of non-places is not only fiction. The city also makes it possible to use space. These non-places in new places give a feature of familiarity to the space in which they are found. This is the so-called new global familiarity, thanks to which people do not perceive reality through the *native-foreign* perspective, but rather individually, feeling an emotional affiliation to a certain space (Śliwiński, 2005: 80–81). In this situation, people and their environment do not only undergo homogenization, but — in response to lost support in the former systems that gave meaning to their lives (religion, culture) — they have to create their own way in the unispace actively and reflectively (Śliwiński, 2005: 71); hence the seemingly contradictory tendency of the global world manifesting itself (apart from unification) in individualization, with an excess of individual references. As a result, the modern human being especially cares for his/her own biography and gives it his/her own, separate meaning.

Therefore, what also changes in the globalizing world is the individual’s identity. In the past it was shaped by the society that a person was born in while the values and ethics of this society served as guidelines about how the individual should live his/her life. Currently one has to actively shape one’s own being. Tradition and specific values are becoming less important with the domination of interactions between local and global society groups. Globalization makes an individual adopt an active and reflective lifestyle (Giddens, 2004: 84). This new identity needs to be consciously created by an individual taking advantage of the present-day opportunities and thus become established in a form of coherent narration. It does not involve rejection of traditions, on the contrary, the fear of losing control over your life makes you look for your own roots. Identity created in this way is now called narrative identity (see Rosner, 2006; Kordys, 2006).

## Narrative names

In the super-individual dimension, narrative identity is very clearly reflected by the contemporary onymic system functioning mainly in the urban space — most distinctly in big cities (Rutkiewicz-Hanczewska, 2008: 421–23). This system plays an

important role in the continuance of biographies. Proprial narration determines the place of the urban organism and its inhabitants in the globalized, ever-changing world. Narrative intertextual names are specifically intended to conduct narration and thus ensure the continuity of urban biography. Thanks to narrative names one can create an ambiguous culture-specific sign and, most importantly, enter into an interesting discourse between individual forms, their users and the times in which they are always set.

Depending on the type of relations on the hypotext-hypertext line, the units in question take various forms in relation to the relevant onymic spaces. In the urban nomenclature, especially the local one, the following three types of onymic narration seem to be especially popular: native transtextualizations, transformations, and intextualizations.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Transtextualizations***

Native transtextualizations consist in transferring a hypotext onto the hypertext level without any formal changes, i.e., it is a re-denomination relating to a different, new designatum. Thus, a specific being (e.g., urban organism) becomes rooted in the past that, thanks to similar proprial operations, becomes the present; manifests itself anew, blocking transparent, anonymous, shapeless references and reviving a possibly lost or blurred memory of oneself.

The second type is transformations in the unstable space of the global city which create favorable conditions for such units to arise. In view of the multidimensional urban space that consists of various onymic substrates (cf. historical rural components and contemporary urban ones), it should be concluded that that such units are truly unique because they rescue names of old structures (important from the geographic, economic or social point of view) from oblivion. Every city has such units of its unique designata. For instance, Poznań has names of watermills that in the contemporary urban nomenclature function as street names (*Przepadek*, *Na Podgórniku*), ponds (*Olszak*), rivers (*Bogdanka*, *Wierzbak*), and city districts (*Nowy Młyn*, *Wilczak*). Warsaw's street names contain references to former fields (*Wilcza*, *Wójtowska*).

The most frequent transtextualizations are urban chrematonyms, especially names of conspicuous buildings. Apart from transparent units, such as *King Cross*, *Plaza*, *World Trade Center*, and *Victoria Center*, urban place names conduct a simultaneous narration by making references to names existing in the vicinity of the newly named denotat (referent) of structures in their area. These forms of proprial discourse often involve names of nearby routes (*Centrum Handlowe A4* [A4 Shopping Center]: a shopping mall by the A4 road in Wrocław, *Galeria Orkana* and *Galeria Rusalka* ["galeria" means "shopping mall"]: shopping malls on Orkana Street and Rusalka Street in Lublin, *Galeria Rembalińska*: a shopping mall to be built on Rembalińska Street in Warsaw), names of administrative units (*Centrum Handlowe Bemowo* [Bemowo Shopping Mall]: a shopping mall in Bemowo, a district of Warsaw, *Centrum Franowo* [Franowo Center]: a shopping mall in Franowo, a district of Poznań, *Centrum Handlowe Uznam* [Uznam Shopping Mall]: a shopping mall in Świnoujście on the Isle of Uznam), geographical facilities (*Galeria Malta* [Malta Shopping Mall]:

a shopping mall to be built by Lake Malta in Poznań), or — rarely — names of means of transport (*Galeria Pestka* [Pestka Shopping Mall]: a shopping mall by Pestka, a fast tram line in Poznań).

### ***Transformations***

Names belonging to the group of native transformations are also frequently used to conduct narration with the past, but they designate proprial references less directly. Transformations result from various types of changes to the original text (hypotext). They contribute to creating onomastic sequences that can be infinite and only limited by the extralinguistic reality (existence or non-existence of further objects). The phenomenon of narration conducted in this manner relates to many onomastic types but it manifests itself the most actively in local nomenclature. The rapidly changing modern reality requires almost immediate denomination and these denominations are created the most easily by referring to the onomastic past of the specific area, the past that exists in the user's memory. Apparently, most names created in this manner belong to a space seen horizontally and simultaneously. For example, there are rivers or rather streams named after nearby watercourses (*Gluszec* < Głuszynka in Poznań) or after names of settlements where a certain river bed is located (*Ceglanka* < Ceglana Street in Poznań, *Chartynia* < Chartowo, *Kotówka* < Kotowo, *Michałówka* < Michałowo, *Plewianka* < Plewiska, *Przeźmierka* < Przeźmierowo). A similar mechanism can be seen in the structure of the name of an office building at Anders Square — *Andersia Tower*. This method is used for creating a peculiar network of onymic cross-references.

### ***Intextualizations***

Another technique employed to enter into a discourse with the past is so-called intextualization which consists of an indirect influence of a hypotext on a hypertext. Intextualizations are very popular references in the global urban space, especially street names. The names mentioned here are the most recent ones of those discussed above because mediation, being necessary to co-create the narrative identity of units, relates to the most recent past. The names in question are appellative street names, also known as artificial names or names without real-meaning motivation. In reality, each hypertext is a motivated name already as it refers to a specific hypotext. The faster growing a city, the more potential for hypertexts to enter into relations with the hypotext and the more frequent is the process of specific revival, refreshment of the city's memory or biography (cf. street names: *Anyżowa* [Anise Street], *Bylicowa* [Sagebrush Street], *Laurowa* [Laurel Street], *Mleczowa* [Dandelion Street], *Rumiankowa* [Camomile Street], *Słonecznikowa* [Sunflower Street], *Zagajnikowa* [Grove Street]). This sort of narration is not chaotic, on the contrary, with these names it becomes predictable and well organized, helping the recipients find themselves in the unstable reality.

Allusive names also represent an interesting type of arrangement of the onymic space. For instance, pharmacies located at the Queen Marysieńka, King Sobieski, and King Batory housing estates in Poznań were given the following names, forming a logical sequence: *Wilanowska* (relating to Wilanów [Wilanów was a summer

residence of King John III Sobieski and Queen Marysieńka]), *Wiedeńska* (relating to Vienna [in 1683 King John III Sobieski routed the Turks at Vienna]) and *Królewska* (Royal [Stefan Batory — king of Poland from 1576 to 1586]). By looking at a city map, a person who does not know where these pharmacies are located will find it easy to locate drugstores bearing such names. A reality named in this way can be grasped and given a certain meaning that is typical for specific units.

## Conclusion

Summing up, the most recent nomenclature of the globalizing world (especially names of companies) fully reflects the nature of the new reality, particularly the urban reality that, being very changeable and unstable, exists at the two opposing ends of human experience.<sup>6</sup> At one of these poles there are onyms with false cultural references. In consequence, such onyms become anonymous signs of the global ecumene, with a fully cosmopolitan passport. The recipient of such names situates the designata hidden behind them on an undetermined international market and does not connect them with the familiar, Polish reality. The origins of the denotat (referent) are no longer clear. Nomina propria transparently or even parasitically build a strong brand. The situation discussed here aims at disorientating a potential user, deliberately pushing the user into a uniform, colorless, international abyss. Similar mechanisms in the research of the formation of one's transparent names (cf. imitation) can be applied as well to other countries becoming globalized in East-Central European countries like Bulgaria, Czech Republic, and Ukraine.<sup>7</sup>

In view of the onymic methods used for creating space that lacks a solid, well-defined identity built on stable foundations, the contemporary visitors to the non-places of the global village start to long for the clearly defined "self." This longing manifests itself in narrative names that help to establish the boundaries of one's own place and define the identity of the unit situated there. Thanks to such narrative names a specific space conducts a continuous narration, discloses fragments of its interesting biography, sometimes making inhabitants think about the origins of the created hypertext.

The other pole of the global perception of reality is a sign of universal cognitive processes because narration constitutes a specific inner imperative. People must tell things in order to ensure coherence of their inner world or reality around them. Neurolinguists' research shows independence of the "narrative competence." For instance, the loss of this competence is not caused by an aphasia type of language disorder because people suffering from aphasia follow the basic rules of building a narrative discourse (Ulatowska & Sadowska, 1998: 61–68; Ulatowska et al., 2000: 227–50; Rutkiewicz-Hanczewska, 2007b: 229–30).

The ability to conduct narration is an "extraempirical but incessantly functioning atom of thought" (Kordys, 2006: 137–38). Thanks to narration, e.g., as expressed by proper names, it is possible to achieve homeostasis, a balance between the global transparent identity and the narrative identity, the latter of which — as the so-called happy medium — has been one of the most valuable treasures of humanity from the dawn of time.



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Other terms are pejorative, colloquial, cf. *McDonaldization, coca-colonization, Americanization, Westernization, cultural imperialism* (Sztompka, 2005: 582).
- <sup>2</sup> Because the phenomenon of globalization evokes a lot of emotions with sociologists, three approaches can be distinguished. Representatives of each school of thought: a) skeptics, b) hyperglobalists, or c) advocates of the concept of transformation. The first group thinks that the present economic interdependence is not a new phenomenon and is reflected in the past and therefore the idea of globalization should not receive so much publicity. On the other hand, hyperglobalists claim that globalization as a very real phenomenon will diminish the importance and influence of national governments in favor of trade and economics. Finally, according to Giddens, the global reality is “almost certainly” best described by advocates of the concept of transformation (Giddens, 2004: 80–83).
- <sup>3</sup> Apart from intertextual units in the textual classification of proper names discussed above, there are metatextual units and contextual units (for more details on this topic, see Rutkiewicz-Hanczewska, 2006: 299–317).
- <sup>4</sup> In Bulgaria the effect of globalization is additionally revealed in the increasing frequency of use of the Latin alphabet in place of the Cyrillic alphabet (ten to fifteen years ago the Latin alphabet was known only by graduates of elite language schools). What is not uncommon, from the point of view of the actual meaning of the new names in their own language, is it leads to the creation of curious and amusing names of the type *Lovim brimki* (Dimitrova-Todorova, 2006: 54). In Bulgarian this means “we are mending the runs in our nylons.” To those unfamiliar with Cyrillic, however, this name may just seem to be associated with the English verb *love*.
- <sup>5</sup> For a different classification of intertextualizations in urban space (unidimensional, bidimensional, and multidimensional intertexts), see Rutkiewicz-Hanczewska, 2007a.
- <sup>6</sup> This dichotomy of onomastic practice in the late modern age can only be observed in the most recent proper names, because not all groups of names function at the two opposite poles of unification and individualization.
- <sup>7</sup> However, these are not the same processes in terms of the concentration of use in each nation. For example, in Bulgaria the use of English to create new firm names is used decidedly more often than in Poland. Unfortunately, due to the lack of appropriate analysis (in regards to the foreign-native relation) it is hard to determine to what degree the Bulgarian transparent names (also Czech, Ukrainian, and others) displace the narrative names (cf. Dimitrova-Todorova, 2006). Current research is usually in one area or the other — naming with the use of foreign languages (typically English) or naming in one’s native languages — but does not analyze the effect of one upon the other.

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