



<http://www.diva-portal.org>

This is the published version of a paper published in *Journal of the English Place-Name Society*.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Aldrin, E. (2016)

[Review of:] Guy Puzey and Laura Kostanski (eds), *Names and Naming: People, places, perceptions and power*, Multilingual Matters 163 (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2016). ISBN 978 1 783094 91 2.

Journal of the English Place-Name Society, 48: 122-124

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:hh:diva-36213>

Consortium 2, International Multiple Sclerosis Genetics Consortium, D. Lawson, D. Falush, C. Freeman, M. Pirinen, S. Myers, M. Robinson, P. Donnelly and W. Bodmer (2015), ‘The fine-scale genetic structure of the British population’, *Nature* 519, 309–14

Guy Puzey and Laura Kostanski (eds), *Names and Naming: People, places, perceptions and power*, Multilingual Matters 163 (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2016). ISBN 978 1 783094 91 2. Paperback, 258 pp. £39.95.

During the past decade, we have seen calls for a ‘critical turn’ of onomastics, asking for more politically aware, socially engaged and intrinsically critical analyses of names and naming (see Vuolteenaho and Berg 2009; Clark et al. 2014). This volume should be seen as a strong contribution to this emergent field. The collected papers emphasize the function of names as resources for political, ideological, cultural and social struggles at different levels and significantly broaden our knowledge about the role of names and naming in the construction of power and processes of reinforcement or challenge of cultural hegemonies. A great strength is the inclusion of both place- and personal names, official and unofficial naming, as well as examples from a number of different cultures. Another strength is the accessible form in which the papers are written, inviting not only onomastic scholars but also researchers from other fields and to some extent the wider public to read.

Already in the editorial introduction, readers’ expectations are set high through a distinctly critical and theoretically aware description of the scientific position of the volume and its aims. The editors aim to provide readers with examples of critical onomastics using a variety of theoretical perspectives that show the richness of onomastic analyses (xvi). The contributions are intended not only to describe local phenomena, but also to shed light on broader implications of onomastics (*ibid.*). After having read the volume in its entirety, the impression is that most of these promises are kept, although some questions do remain. Not all of the contributions succeed in shedding light on their empirical data through a relevant (critical) theoretical framework and not all of the contributions manage to link their local examples to broader issues and implications.

The volume consists of three equally extensive sections, the first of which is entitled ‘The varied identities of people and places’ (80 pp.). This section is concerned with ‘deriving [multiple layers of] meaning from the

varied and complex identities of a multilingual, multicultural world' (xvi). An outstanding contribution is made by Mühlhäusler and Nash (62–80), who discuss how names as commodities with attraction for tourists may contribute to language revival, but at the same time also raise questions regarding perceived authenticity. Other interesting contributions in this section include (in alphabetical order): a review of research in the new field of self-referencing internet usernames (Aleksiejuk, 3–17); perceptions of the onomastic landscape of Australia seen through the eyes of European travellers in the nineteenth century (Clark, 18–31); use of official as well as unofficial anthroponymic naming structures within a close-knit multilingual Scottish community (Bramwell, 47–61); and an analysis of the assimilation and consequences of personal names introduced during the colonization of Australia (Walsh, 32–46). In relation to the aim of the section, however, the stated purpose is only partially fulfilled. Several papers are primarily empirical and lack foundation within identity-theoretical frameworks, which makes deeper, multi-layered analyses problematic. Furthermore, the reader is often left searching for the promised broader perspectives. That being said, the section nonetheless contains a number of interesting analyses.

The second section, 'Attitudes and attachment' (81 pp.), sets out to explore 'elements of name attachment, name dependent or attitudes toward names [...] to seek a greater understanding of the interactions names can develop, support and provoke within our own lives, the communities in which we associate and the societies we inhabit' (xix). The papers in the second section include: a folk onomastic analysis of the metalanguage used in contemporary discussions of street-names, highlighting people's perceptions of the consequences of common naming strategies (Ainiala, 106–19); a survey of attitudes towards place-names among different ethnic groups in Oslo, indicating place attachment as a key factor for toponymic attachment in a multilingual urban environment (Berezinka, 120–36); a discussion of student perceptions of and attitudes toward slang toponyms (Györffy, 153–61); an analysis of attitudes to a name-restoration program in Australia leading to a stimulating discussion of the consequences of careless commodification of names (Kostanski, 83–105); and an outstanding analysis of the role of Scots within the linguistic landscape in Scotland as well as within both the official and the unofficial toponymicon (Scott, 137–52). This section includes some of the strongest scientific contributions. The papers are well linked to one another and give a variety of perspectives on the common themes and broader perspectives under discussion, creating a coherent section. Somewhat surprisingly, however,

the central concept of ‘attitudes’ is not clearly defined in any of the contributions in this section.

The third section, ‘Power, resistance and control’ (85 pp.), focuses on ‘the power to name, or on the effects of unequal power relations on names and naming practices’ (p. xx). Some of the themes considered are: contemporary authorities’ recognition or silencing of Sami place-names in two Nordic countries with similar legislations but very different socio-political landscapes (Helander, 229–49); name planning as a political project attempting to address social problems within a multicultural Swedish suburb of Stockholm (Nyström, 185–96); issues in implementing the Norwegian Place Name Act connected to general public attitudes to official and unofficial use of varieties in a multilingual context (Pedersen, 213–28); name-struggles related to counter-hegemonic movements and the process of names and naming being used as symbolic strategies when communities are re-imagined, re-constructed and re-positioned (Puzey, 165–84); and an innovative systematic treatment of personal name-legislations in different parts of the world and different periods of time disclosing administrative structures, ideologies and consequences (Walkowiak, 197–212). This section operates at the core of critical onomastics and brings forth a number of politically aware, theoretically well-grounded and interconnected analyses.

A number of common threads are pursued in the volume, in the form of name categories and methodologies as well as theoretical concepts such as identity, attachment, attitudes, power, and multi-culturalism. This creates an effectively multifaceted book. For the reader, it enables continuous variation, inspiration and social engagement, but it also creates a challenge in bringing the different threads together while keeping the broader picture in sight. For this reason, the volume would have benefitted from a concluding chapter in which the different empirical evidence, theoretical conclusions and broader discussions could have been brought together and raised to a higher analytic level. Nonetheless, this volume forms an extraordinary contribution that clearly illuminates the relevance of critical onomastics. It has the ability to inspire scholars to conduct politically aware and socially engaged onomastic research. The volume deserves to be read by everyone interested in the roles of names and naming.

Emilia Aldrin
emilia.aldrin@hh.se