



First Circular and Call for Papers

# Eighth International Symposium on Place Names 2025

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*Harmonising toponymic heritage:  
balancing standardisation and  
local diversity*

26-29 November 2025  
Clarens, South Africa

[kongresETFB@ufs.ac.za](mailto:kongresETFB@ufs.ac.za)



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## First Circular and Call for Papers

Eighth International Symposium on Place Names 2025

### Harmonising toponymic heritage: balancing standardisation and local diversity

Face-to-face event

26-29 November 2025

Clarens, South Africa

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The [Department of South African Sign Language and Deaf Studies](#) at the University of the Free State (RSA), in partnership with the [Joint ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymy](#) as well as the [ICOS Working Group on Toponymy](#), is pleased to announce the next biennial international symposium on place names – ISPN 2025.

Place names serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, they are geospatial indicators of physical locations and geographical features. On the other hand, place names are artefacts of cultural heritage and serve to connect people to places. This two-fold function creates tension from a place-names management perspective. Standardisation is required for effective public communication and record-keeping. However, standardisation inherently requires a selection of one or limited forms of names. This is in contrast to the reality of most societies, whereby multiple names are assigned to one location by different socio-lingual-cultural groups. The challenge is to create an internationally-recognised standardisation system, while retaining the colourful local diversity. With the theme for this symposium, we wish to explore issues around standardisation and toponymic diversity. We need to consider the symbolic importance of place names, and examine the challenges of developing best practices for research and management that are sensitive to local diversity. Papers with a focus on minority and indigenous names, including sign languages, are encouraged in particular.

#### Potential subtopics

Only a limited number of papers can be accommodated, as all sessions will be plenary. Abstracts (250 words) can be submitted by **4 April 2025** to Dr Chrismi Loth at [kongresETFB@ufs.ac.za](mailto:kongresETFB@ufs.ac.za) in the following (but not limited to) categories of research:

- Recognition beyond standardisation, especially for indigenous and minority place names.
- Best practices for the standardisation, management, and research of multiple place names.



- Diversity in place names stemming from multiple socio-lingual-cultural groups.
- Harmonising toponymic heritage in multicultural and multilingual societies.
- Adequate representation of place-name diversity in texts and on maps.
- Approaches towards standardisation.
- Other dimensions of place names: administrative, commercial and/or economic, cultural and historical/commemorative, physical, political, and linguistic.

## Keynote speaker

- Prof Sambulo Ndlovu (University of Eswatini, Eswatini)

## About the venue

The symposium will be held face-to-face in [Clarens](#), South Africa.

## Important dates

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| • Abstracts deadline             | 4 April 2025 ( <a href="mailto:kongresETFB@ufs.ac.za">kongresETFB@ufs.ac.za</a> ) |
| • Feedback from Scientific Panel | 2 May 2025  |
| • Registrations open             | 28 February 2025  |
| • Registrations close            | 3 October 2025  |
| • Proof of payment deadline      | 24 August 2025  |

## Registration fees

To be announced. Includes meals (as indicated in the programme), the conference dinner and access to the workshop. Does not include the excursion.

## Language of the symposium and workshop

English, with professional South African Sign Language interpreting available. Please indicate requirement for SASL interpreting with registration.

## Publication

Depending on the number and quality of papers an accredited publication in our regular proceedings series will be considered:

<https://ujonlinepress.uj.ac.za/index.php/ujp/catalog/series/ISPN>.

**This is a face-to-face event, and only in-person presentations will be accepted. Only papers presented at the symposium may be submitted for the proceedings.**

Queries can be directed to Dr Chrismi Loth at [kongresETFB@ufs.ac.za](mailto:kongresETFB@ufs.ac.za).



## Organising Committee

Department of South African Sign Language and Deaf Studies, University of the Free State

- Host: Prof Annalene van Staden (University of the Free State, RSA)
- Facilitator: Dr Chrismi Loth (University of the Free State, RSA)
- Prof Theodorus du Plessis (University of the Free State, RSA)
- Jani de Lange (University of the Free State, RSA)

### Joint ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymy:

- ICA Chair: Dr Matjaž Geršič (Anton Melik Geographical Institute, Slovenia)
- IGU Chair: Prof Elena Dai Prà (University of Trento, Italy)

### ICOS Working Group on Toponymy:

- Chair: Prof Peter Jordan (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria / University of the Free State, RSA)

## SCIENTIFIC PANEL

- Prof Elena Dai Prà (University of Trento, Italy)
- 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 'Maboleba Kolobe (National University of Lesotho, Lesotho)
- Prof Marie Antoinette Rieger (University of Bologna, Italy)
- Dr Matjaž Geršič (Anton Melik Geographical Institute, Slovenia)
- Dr Boga Manatsha (University of Botswana, Botswana)
- Dr Petrus Angula Mbenzi (University of Namibia, Namibia)
- Dr Sambulo Ndlovu (University of Eswatini, Eswatini / Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe)
- Dr Maleshoane Rapeane-Mathonsi (Durban University of Technology, RSA)



## Guidelines for abstracts

Word limit: 250

Deadline: 4 April 2025

Email to: [kongresETFB@ufs.ac.za](mailto:kongresETFB@ufs.ac.za)

### Introduction

- Problem statement and/or research questions
- Show necessity of your study

### Theoretical framework

- Theoretical perspective
- Convincing line of argument
- Show clear connection between theory and/or literature and the problem statement/research questions

### Methodology

- Describe research strategies
- Justify methods

### (Preliminary) Findings

- Claim(s) as to what you've found