

Pavel Štěpán

✉ stepan@ujc.cas.cz

🆔 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2565-7079>

🏠 Czech Language Institute of the Czech Academy
of Sciences

🌐 Prague, Czechia

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Multiple Standardization of Czech Toponyms

Abstract

Although every town or village in Czechia has its single official standardized name, some other name forms may be used for the given locality, if the official name is not sufficiently clear and unambiguous. These extended forms have been influenced usually by train station or post office names, which are also official toponyms, though they have been standardized by a different authority. The paper provides a thorough analysis of train station, post office and cadastral area names differing from the name of the given municipality. The individual types of extended municipality names and their existing combinations are investigated. Also, the use of the extended municipality names is analysed, as well as their reflection in media discourse. The conducted analysis has shown that multiple standardization may cause confusion in communication. Not only strangers, but sometimes even local inhabitants are not sure about the exact official form of the name of their town. However, it is not easy to eliminate this multiple standardization due to the fragmented powers and insufficient coordination in the standardization process of Czech toponyms, resulting in the fact that one locality has two or even three diverse names, standardised by different authorities.

Keywords

oikonyms, standardization of toponyms, multiple standardization of toponyms, toponymic variants, train station names

1. Introduction

The present paper deals with some issues of standardization of toponyms in Czechia, especially with the problems caused by fragmentation and insufficient coordination of the standardization process. The focus is on the standardization of oikonyms (settlement names), that is, names of towns and villages or their officially distinguished parts.

As defined by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (2002), the standardization of toponyms is “the prescription by a names authority of one or more particular names, together with their precise written form, for application to a specific geographical feature, as well as the conditions for their use” (p. 23).

In Czechia, oikonyms are officially standardized by the Ministry of the Interior, though, in fact, control belongs to the municipalities themselves; the ministry only approves and registers the changes proposed by the municipalities (Boháč, 2009, pp. 180–181). The approval is usually only a formality.

Although the title of the present paper is “Multiple standardization”, it must be stressed that every municipality (town, village) or its officially distinguished part has **one** standardized name (disregarding special cases of bilingual areas on the Czech-Polish border, where toponyms have both Czech and Polish official standardized forms). A high number of towns and villages have duplicate names, repeating two or more times in the territory of Czech Republic. Some of them have been officially extended by distinctive attributes, but still many names repeat several times in different localities. In Czechia there is no regulation that would require unambiguous and unique names for every municipality. For this reason, extended forms of oikonyms differing from the standardised municipality names are often used in the names of train stations, post offices and cadastral areas.¹ This has been caused by the urgent need for unambiguous names in railway transportation, post relations and land surveying. Whereas the rules for unambiguity of municipality names

¹ In Czechia, cadastral areas are administrative units used for registration of land, estates, plots etc.; they cover the whole territory of the Czech Republic and they are usually identical with the territory of a municipality or its part (Český statistický úřad, n.d.).

are not so strict, as has been already hinted, the authorities responsible for names of train stations, post offices and cadastral territories² are stricter and require complete unambiguity and uniqueness of every name.

The term “multiple standardization of toponyms” is used in this paper despite the fact that an official name of a train station, post office or a cadastral territory is something different than an oikonym referring to a town or a village itself. It is important to notice that the names of all of these objects often interfere. For example, a post office name should be used in postal address instead of the (shorter) municipality name; for this reason, this extended name is often supposed to be the official name of the town. The same holds for train station names. Many people, often including even the inhabitants of the given municipality, are therefore uncertain as to what the official and “proper” name of the town or village is. All of these names are “standardized” in a way, that is, they are officially determined and used by an authority responsible for the standardization of a certain group of proper names. From this perspective, the given phenomenon is regarded as “multiple standardization”.

The mentioned uncertainty is exacerbated by the fact that the same types of extended names used in train station, post office or cadastral territory names may occur also in many official municipality names. Therefore, without particular knowledge, it is difficult to distinguish whether a distinctive attribute found, for example, in a train station name, is a regular part of the oikonym, or not. For example, the train station name *Stráž nad Ohří*

² At present, train station names are regulated by the Railway Infrastructure Management (in Czech, Správa železnic) and the Rail Authority (Drážní úřad), in terms of the document “Číselník železničních stanic a dopravně významných míst” [List of train stations and important transport localities] (Správa železnic, 2021). According to this document, names of train stations should be proposed by the municipality. These proposals should be addressed to the Railway Infrastructure Management and finally the request is passed to the Rail Authority. A complete list of train stations in Czechia is available at <http://portal.idos.cz/Train/Search.aspx?type=s> (retrieved June 11, 2021).

Designation of post offices is under control of the state enterprise Česká pošta [Czech Post]. A complete list of post offices in Czechia is available at <https://www.smerovak.cz> (retrieved June 11, 2021).

Names of cadastral areas are determined by Český úřad zeměměřický a katastrální [Czech Office for Surveying, Mapping and Cadastre]. A complete list of cadastral areas is available at <https://cuzk.cz/Katastr-nemovitosti/Informace-o-katastralnich-uzemich.aspx> (retrieved June 11, 2021).

(*Stráž* upon the river *Ohře*) is identical with the name of the municipality, which is distinguished from other localities called *Stráž* ‘guard’ by the localizing attribute (compare the towns called *Stráž nad Nežárkou* ‘upon the river Nežárka’ or *Stráž pod Ralskem* ‘beneath the hill Ralsko’). On the other hand, the nearby train station is called *Ostrov nad Ohří*, although the official name of the town is only *Ostrov*.

This uncertainty causes instability in the use of municipality names. Moreover, it may sometimes provoke a change of municipality names under the influence of a train station or post office names; for example, in 1996, the village of *Martinice* was renamed to *Martinice v Krkonoších* ‘in Krkonoše Mountains’ – according to both train station and post office names (Štěpán, 2018, p. 219).

Pavel Boháč (2009, pp. 180–181) discusses the strong disunity and insufficient coordination in the standardization of Czech toponyms, considering the names of cadastral territories and train stations. He points out that due to this disunity, two or even more different names are sometimes used for the same inhabited place.

Such extreme cases of three different names used for one locality can be illustrated by the example of the town of *Hranice* in the West Bohemia (which is, by the way, the westernmost town in Czechia, cf. *hranice* ‘border’). The local train station is called *Hranice v Čechách* (‘Hranice in Bohemia’), whereas the post office, as well as the cadastral territory has a different name *Hranice u Aše* (‘Hranice near Aš’).

2. Share of the extended names in the individual name groups

It is interesting to compare the share of extended forms differing from the officially standardized municipality names in train station names,³ post office names and cadastral area names:

³ It must be noted that more than one train station or more than one post office are often found in one municipality; then post offices are distinguished by numbers and train stations by distinctive designations of various types. Such cases are disregarded, for the names of the individual train stations or post offices are not the object of the study, but exclusively the forms

- train station names: 10.5% (235 cases out of the total 2237)
- post office names: 18% (429 cases out of the total 2418)
- cadastral territory names: 28% (582 cases out of 2075 cadastral area names in the Central Bohemia Region)⁴

How to interpret this data? The high share of extended names in cadastral territory names is due to the high number of the cadastral territories in the whole Czech Republic (more than 13,000); the probability of the occurrence of duplicate names that must be distinguished is much higher. The higher share of extended names in post office names (compared to train stations) is due to the fact that in post office names, the name is often extended only to distinguish the post office from a locality of the same name **without** a post office; on the other hand, such cases are less frequent in train station names.

3. Types of extended names occurring in train station, post office and cadastral area names

The most frequent type expresses localization near a certain town or village; for example, *Roztoky u Prahy* is a train station name in the town of *Roztoky*, found in the very neighbourhood of the capital of Prague. We can find also some extreme cases here. The district town of *Benešov* in Central Bohemia is the largest and most important city in the given district. However, the name *Benešov* belongs to several other towns and villages, therefore it has to be distinguished. The name *Benešov u Prahy* ‘near Prague’ is traditionally used for its train station, post office and cadastral territory, though the town is located more than 40 kilometres from Prague.

of oikonyms occurring in them. Therefore, the number of train stations or post offices in the given municipality is not reflected in the statistics (train stations and post offices in one municipality are always counted only as one instance), as it would deform the data.

⁴ There are more than 13,000 cadastral area names in Czech Republic. Overall analysis of such extensive data would exceed the possibilities of this short paper. For this reason, total analysis has been substituted by a sufficiently representative probe dealing with cadastral territory names in the Central Bohemia Region.

Another common motive is distinguishing according to the location in one of the historical Czech lands, namely Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia (e.g. *Teplice v Čechách* ‘in Bohemia’, *Zábřeh na Moravě* ‘in Moravia’, *Javorník ve Slezsku* ‘in Silesia’).

In other cases, the municipality name has been complemented by an attribute referring to the location on a river, for example, *Slapy nad Vltavou* ‘upon the river Vltava’ or *Černožice nad Labem* ‘upon the river Elbe’. Again, one extreme case can be mentioned, namely *Ostrov nad Ohří*. In fact, the town is located not on the Ohře, but on a different smaller and less important river called Bystřice (a tributary of the Ohře). The river Ohře is several kilometres away from the town (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. The town of Ostrov

Source: www.mapy.cz

Some municipality names have been extended by an attribute referring to the position in or beneath a mountain chain (*Harrachov v Krkonoších* ‘in the Krkonoše mountains’, *Hostomice pod Brdy* ‘beneath the Brdy highland’, *Hořice v Podkrkonoší* ‘in the region beneath the Krkonoše mountains’) or beneath a hill or a castle (*Dubnice pod Ralskem* ‘beneath the hill and the castle

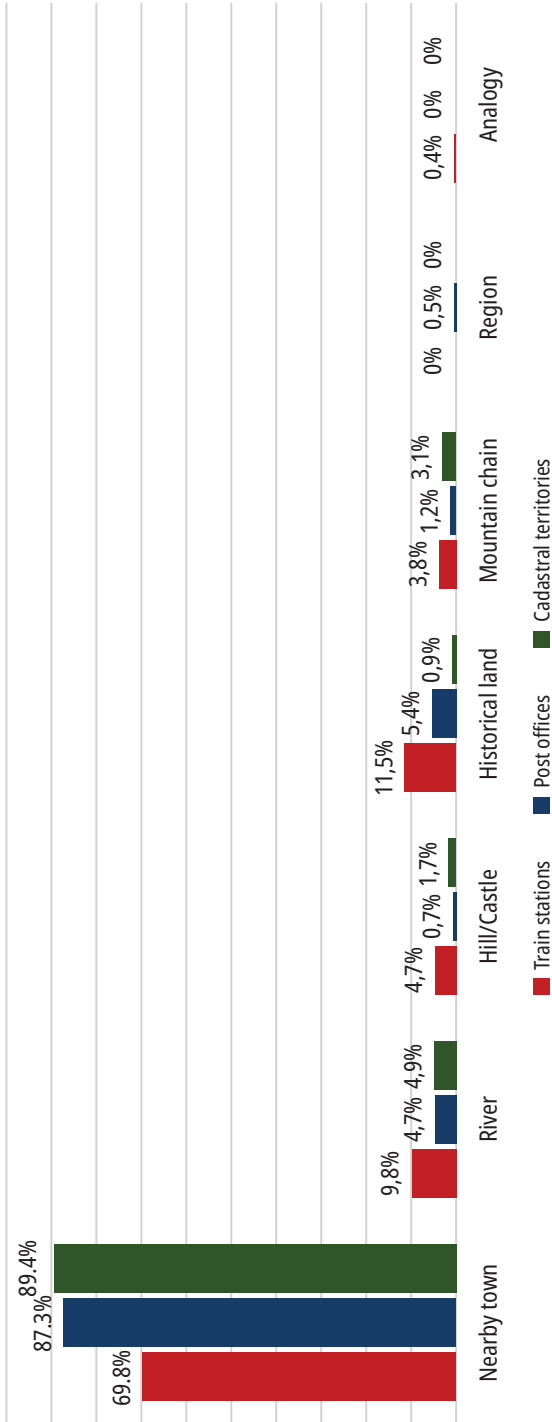


Figure 2. Share of the types of extended names in train station, post office and cadastral area names

Source: own work.

of Ralsko', *Staré Město pod Sněžníkem* 'beneath the Kralický Sněžník mountain', *Dobratice pod Prašivou* 'beneath the Prašivá mountain').

The share of the individual types of extended names in train station, post office and cadastral territory names is represented on the chart (Figure 2). The main tendency that can be detected in this comparison lies in the fact that the most productive type expressing localization near a certain town which is dominant in all the categories of extended names displays a significant prevalence in post office and cadastral territory names, whereas its share in train station names is somewhat lower. On the other hand, the other types are more frequent in train stations (in comparison to the remaining two categories).

4. Mutual comparison of train station, post office and cadastral territory names

The sample used for the mutual comparison of train station, post office and cadastral territory names (while at least one of them differs from the official name of the municipality, using certain type of its extension) is formed by a set of 102 localities, for only in these instances both train station and post office can be found. This comparison has shown that in only half of these cases are the names of the train station, post office and cadastral area identical. The other half of the analysed cases displays significant variability, as it can be seen from in Table 1. Table 2 provides particular examples of the combination types represented by Table 1. Almost all theoretically possible combinations are found in the data. It must be mentioned that the type MUN – MUN – EXT (in which both the train station and post office names are equal to the non-extended municipality name, while the cadastral area name is extended) has not been included in the analysed data, for not all cadastral area names (there are more than 13,000 cadastral areas in Czech Republic) could be investigated in this paper (see also footnote 4). However, a probe has shown that this type occurs as well (for example, train station and post office name: *Zlív* (equal to the municipality name), cadastral area name: *Zlív u Českých Budějovic*), although it is not included in Tables 1 and 2 and it is not quantified in percentage.

Table 1. Individual types of combinations of train station, post office and cadastral area names with percentage

	Train station	Post office	Cadastral area	Percentage
1	EXT	EXT	EXT	50 %
2	EXT	EXT	MUN	11 %
3	MUN	EXT	EXT	7 %
4	EXT 1	EXT 2	EXT 1	7 %
5	EXT	MUN	MUN	6 %
6	MUN	EXT	MUN	4 %
7	EXT	MUN	EXT	4 %
8	EXT 1	EXT 2	EXT 2	3 %
9	MUN	EXT 1	EXT 2	2 %
10	EXT 1	EXT 2	MUN	2 %
11	EXT 1	EXT 1	EXT 2	2 %
12	EXT	EXT	DIVIDED ⁵	1 %
13	EXT	EXT	0 ⁶	1 %
14	EXT 1	EXT 2	DIVIDED ⁷	1 %
15	EXT 1	EXT 2	0 ⁸	1 %

Legend: MUN = the given name is identical with the municipality name; EXT = the given name is an extended municipality name; EXT 1, EXT 2 = different forms of extended names.

Source: own work.

⁵ In two cases, the area of the given municipality has been divided into two cadastral areas. In the town of *Luby*, the two cadastral areas have been distinguished by numbers added to the municipality name: *Luby I* and *Luby II*. In the town of *Javorník* two cadastral areas can be found: *Javorník-město* 'town' and *Javorník-ves* 'village'.

⁶ No cadastral area whose name would correspond to the municipality name is found in the locality. The town of *Rudná* came into existence as late as in 1950 (Růžková & Škrabal, 2006, p. 455) by merging the villages of *Dušníky* and *Hořelice*. The cadastral areas in the given locality still keep the names of these original villages.

⁷ See footnote 6.

⁸ *Jindřichov* belongs to two cadastral territories: *Pleče* and *Pusté Žibřidovice*. The absence of the cadastral area named after *Jindřichov* is due to the fact that historically *Jindřichov* (*Heinrichsthal* in German) came into existence as late as in the 1860's as a colony found in the cadastral area of *Pusté Žibřidovice*. The arrangement of the cadastral areas was not changed after the constitution of the new municipality of *Jindřichov* in 1950 (Růžková & Škrabal, 2006, p. 211). Cf. also the case of *Rudná* (footnote 6).

Table 2. Particular examples of the types of combinations represented in Table 1

Type number	Municipality	Train station	Post office	Cadastral area
1	Benešov	<i>Benešov u Prahy</i>	<i>Benešov u Prahy</i>	<i>Benešov u Prahy</i>
	Hlinsko	<i>Hlinsko v Čechách</i>	<i>Hlinsko v Čechách</i>	<i>Hlinsko v Čechách</i>
	Slavětín	<i>Slavětín nad Ohří</i>	<i>Slavětín nad Ohří</i>	<i>Slavětín nad Ohří</i>
2	Bernartice	<i>Bernartice u Trutnova</i>	<i>Bernartice u Trutnova</i>	<i>Bernartice</i>
	Frýdlant	<i>Frýdlant v Čechách</i>	<i>Frýdlant v Čechách</i>	<i>Frýdlant</i>
	Moldava	<i>Moldava v Krušných horách</i>	<i>Moldava v Krušných horách</i>	<i>Moldava</i>
3	Bor	<i>Bor</i>	<i>Bor u Tachova</i>	<i>Bor u Tachova</i>
	Jesenice	<i>Jesenice</i>	<i>Jesenice u Rakovníka</i>	<i>Jesenice u Rakovníka</i>
	Šenov	<i>Šenov</i>	<i>Šenov u Ostravy</i>	<i>Šenov u Ostravy</i>
4	Blatnice	<i>Blatnice u Nýřan</i>	<i>Blatnice u Plzně</i>	<i>Blatnice u Nýřan</i>
	Březno	<i>Březno u Mladé Boleslavi</i>	<i>Březno u Mladé Boleslavě⁹</i>	<i>Březno u Mladé Boleslavi</i>
	Lužná	<i>Lužná u Rakovníka</i>	<i>Lužná v Čechách</i>	<i>Lužná u Rakovníka</i>
5	Hranice	<i>Hranice na Moravě</i>	<i>Hranice</i>	<i>Hranice</i>
	Teplice	<i>Teplice v Čechách</i>	<i>Teplice</i>	<i>Teplice</i>
	Třemošná	<i>Třemošná u Plzně</i>	<i>Třemošná</i>	<i>Třemošná</i>
6	Harrachov	<i>Harrachov</i>	<i>Harrachov v Krkonoších</i>	<i>Harrachov</i>
	Nové Hrady	<i>Nové Hrady</i>	<i>Nové Hrady v jižních Čechách</i>	<i>Nové Hrady</i>
	Zeleneč	<i>Zeleneč</i>	<i>Zeleneč v Čechách</i>	<i>Zeleneč</i>
7	Kralovice	<i>Kralovice u Rakovníka</i>	<i>Kralovice</i>	<i>Kralovice u Rakovníka</i>
	Opočno	<i>Opočno pod Orlickými horami</i>	<i>Opočno</i>	<i>Opočno pod Orlickými horami</i>
	Zábřeh	<i>Zábřeh na Moravě</i>	<i>Zábřeh</i>	<i>Zábřeh na Moravě</i>

⁹ The post office name differs from the train station and cadastral area names only in the use of the grammatical ending indicating the genitive case. The genitive of Czech place names of the type *Boleslav*, *Chrudim*, *Příbram* display certain fluctuation; in the present-day Czech, the ending *-i* dominates, while the older ending *-ě* is regarded as rather obsolete (Polívková, 2007, p. 22). The genitive ending *-ě* is typical mostly of post office names, cf. post offices such as *Březovice u Mladé Boleslavě*, *Čachovice u Mladé Boleslavě*, *Chrast u Chrudimě*, *Morašice u Chrudimě*.

Type number	Municipality	Train station	Post office	Cadastral area
8	Hranice	<i>Hranice v Čechách</i>	<i>Hranice u Aše</i>	<i>Hranice u Aše</i>
	Chlumčany	<i>Chlumčany u Dobřan</i>	<i>Chlumčany u Přeštic</i>	<i>Chlumčany u Přeštic</i>
	Petrov	<i>Petrov u Strážnice</i>	<i>Petrov u Hodonína</i>	<i>Petrov u Hodonína</i>
9	Loukov	<i>Loukov</i>	<i>Loukov u Kroměříže</i>	<i>Loukov u Bystřice pod Hostýnem</i>
	Mikulovice	<i>Mikulovice</i>	<i>Mikulovice u Jeseníku</i>	<i>Mikulovice u Jeseníka</i> ¹⁰
10	Třebovice	<i>Třebovice v Čechách</i>	<i>Třebovice u Lanškrouna</i>	<i>Třebovice</i>
	Třemešná	<i>Třemešná ve Slezsku</i>	<i>Třemešná u Krnova</i>	<i>Třemešná</i>
11	Červený Újezd	<i>Červený Újezd u Votic</i>	<i>Červený Újezd u Votic</i>	<i>Červený Újezd u Miličína</i>
	Staré Město	<i>Staré Město pod Sněžníkem</i>	<i>Staré Město pod Sněžníkem</i>	<i>Staré Město pod Králickým Sněžníkem</i> ¹¹
12	Luby	<i>Luby u Chebu</i>	<i>Luby u Chebu</i>	<i>Luby I; Luby II</i>
13	Rudná	<i>Rudná u Prahy</i>	<i>Rudná u Prahy</i>	none ¹²
14	Javorník	<i>Javorník ve Slezsku</i>	<i>Javorník u Jeseníku</i>	<i>Javorník-město; Javorník-ves</i> ¹³
15	Jindřichov	<i>Jindřichov na Moravě</i>	<i>Jindřichov u Šumperka</i>	none ¹⁴

Source: own work.

¹⁰ The post office name differs from the cadastral area name only in the use of the grammatical ending indicating the genitive case. The ending *-a* represents the variant preferred by the local inhabitants, though both variants are linguistically codified (Polívková, 2007, p. 19).

¹¹ The municipality name *Staré Město* has been extended by an attribute expressing the location of the town beneath the mountain called *Králický Sněžník*. While the cadastral area name uses the whole official oronym, the train station and post office names depart from a shorter, unofficial name *Sněžník*.

¹² See footnote 7.

¹³ See footnote 6.

¹⁴ See footnote 9.

5. Extended names in use

Extended names, especially those officially referring to train stations, are frequently used for the whole municipality (town/village) instead of the official (shorter) place name. This fact can be illustrated by a sample based on quantitative data of the Czech National Corpus SYN (Křen et al., 2019).

As an illustration, the use of a chosen extended toponym in regular sentences has been investigated. The aim of the corpus query was to find out whether the extended train station name *Hranice na Moravě* ‘Hranice in Moravia’ is regularly used for the whole city officially called only *Hranice* (though *Hranice na Moravě* is only its train station name). Intentionally, one of the largest and most important localities occurring in the analysed data has been chosen; in the case of some smaller towns or villages the corpus data would probably be less representative.

The query has been formulated “*v Hranicích na Moravě*”, meaning ‘in Hranice na Moravě’, for its aim has been to discover the use of the extended name in regular sentences (the locative use is much more suitable for this purpose than the nominative use). The query has displayed 2,042 records which can be illustrated by the following examples (translated by the author):

- David Jařab se narodil v Hranicích na Moravě. [David Jařab was born in Hranice na Moravě.]
- Robert Musil prožil v Brně a hlavně v Hranicích na Moravě dobu od svých deseti do osmnácti let. [Robert Musil spent the period from his 10 to 18 years in Brno and particularly in Hranice na Moravě.]
- Výrobu CRT televizorů v Hranicích na Moravě ukončil LG Philips Displays v roce 2006. [LG Phillips Displays stopped the production of CRT televisions in Hranice na Moravě in 2006.]
- Ve třicátých letech vyučoval taktiku na vojenské akademii v Hranicích na Moravě. [In the 1930’s he was teaching tactics at the military academy in Hranice na Moravě.]
- Žila v Hranicích na Moravě, v rodišti mého tatínka. [She lived in Hranice na Moravě, the birthplace of my father.]
- Radní v Hranicích na Moravě zastavili z finanční důvodů provoz městské knihovny. [The city council in Hranice na Moravě have closed the municipal library for financial reasons.]

All the items found in the obtained corpus refer to the whole town and none of them are connected with the train station, though officially the name *Hranice na Moravě* belongs exclusively to this station.

6. Media and public discourse on multiple standardization

In the last part of the paper, the media and public discourse on multiple standardization will be illustrated by a significant example. Figure 3 presents the beginning of the online version of a newspaper article published in 2016, “Ostrov, nebo Ostrov nad Ohří? Přibývá lidí, kteří chtějí změnu názvu” [‘Ostrov, or Ostrov upon the river Ohře? Still more and more people wish the change of the town name’] (Kozohorský, 2016).

The following is a summary of the article (translated by the author):

The town of Ostrov is found in a schizophrenic situation. At the train station people read they are arriving at Ostrov nad Ohří, but this is not the official name of the town. There are growing calls for this former attribute to be returned to the name of the town.

(...)

Ostrov lost the exact localizing specification in 1990’s. At present, many people would like to return to it. “Nobody would confuse Ostrov nad Ohří with other places called Ostrov”, says Ostrov resident, Jan Šeda.

(...)

However, the name Ostrov nad Ohří never completely disappeared from maps. It is used not only for the train station, but also the very cadastral territory of the town is registered as Ostrov nad Ohří. Pavel Čekan, the town mayor, considers this a failure of the state.

Ostrov, nebo Ostrov nad Ohří? Přibývá lidí, kteří chtějí změnu názvu

🕒 25. dubna 2016 8:58



Ostrov se stále častěji ocitá ve schizofrenní situaci. Na nádraží si sice lidé čtou, že přijíždějí do Ostrova nad Ohří, oficiálně se tak ale nejmenuje. Sílí hlasy po tom, aby se městu jeho někdejší přídomek vrátil.

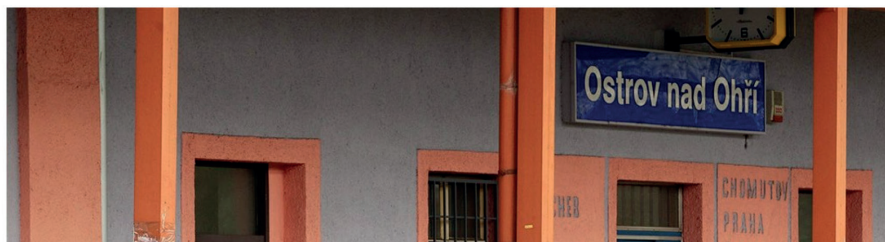


Figure 3. Beginning of an online newspaper article from 25 April 2016

Source: Kozohorský, 2016.

This article illustrates the chaos that can often be connected with the multiple standardization of toponyms. The claim that the town of *Ostrov* was officially called *Ostrov nad Ohří* by the 1990's is not true. Though even the town mayor believes this, *Ostrov* has always been officially called only *Ostrov*; the extended name *Ostrov nad Ohří* has never been official for the town itself (cf. Růžková & Škrabal, 2006, p. 380).

The situation in *Ostrov* proves the immense influence of the train station name, which used to be so important in the past that even the locals started to suppose that its extended name belonged to the whole town. In fact, seven years before the publication of this article, the town of *Ostrov* had officially asked the Railway Infrastructure Management to change the name of the train station from *Ostrov nad Ohří* to *Ostrov*. This change was not approved.

7. Conclusion

Although every town and village in Czechia has its single official standardized name, some other name forms may be used for the given locality, if the official name is not sufficiently clear and unambiguous. These extended forms have been influenced usually by the train station or post office names, which are also official toponyms, though they have been standardized by a different authority.

As we have seen from the cases of *Ostrov* and *Hranice*, often referred to as *Ostrov nad Ohří* and *Hranice na Moravě*, this multiple standardization causes confusion. Not only strangers, but sometimes even local people are not sure what the official name of the town is, in fact. However, it is not easy to eliminate this multiple standardization because of the fragmented powers. For example, train station names are not under control of the given local authority, but of the Railway Infrastructure Management and the Rail Authority. These authorities, by the way, refuse to change the name of the station *Ostrov nad Ohří* to *Ostrov*, and local authorities are usually against the change of the oikonym, due to its immense administrative and financial demands.

The situation thus seems to be unsolvable. On the other hand, it provides onomasticians an interesting area of research in a very specific case of polyonymy.

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