

Tiina Laansalu

✉ tiina.laansalu@eki.ee

🆔 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9034-5982>

🏠 Institute of the Estonian Language

🌐 Tallinn, Estonia

Peeter Päll

✉ peeter.pall@eki.ee

🆔 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9681-2825>

🏠 Institute of the Estonian Language

🌐 Tallinn, Estonia

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Defining Artifact Names: Is It Possible?

Abstract

Artifact names are traditionally viewed as a sub-category of culture names, which include the names of features created by humans. The nature and categorization of artifacts in the modern world is increasingly difficult to comprehend because of their diversity and dynamic expansion.

The names of populated places and cultivated objects are usually not included in the category of artifact names. In Estonia, farms are also considered to be populated places, hence they are not defined as artifacts. For example, in rural areas artifacts include barns, bridges, chapels, churches, mills, pubs, roads, schools, stables, and wells. In urban areas, all man-made features, i.e. entire cities, are by definition artifacts. Even if one were to exclude the names of urban areas (populated places), classifying the remaining features is a daunting task. Apparently, the main problem is understanding what can be defined as places within a city. Streets, squares, parks, ponds, houses, and public transport stops have traditionally structured names. But what about restaurants, cafes, bars, shops, commercial centers, kindergartens, schools, banks, organizations, hospitals? They all have names, but not necessarily typical place names.

Thus, the principle could be the following: if institutions and similar establishments are landmarks, they also function as place names. The present paper will look at the possibility of defining artifact names in the broader international context of onomastic research.

Keywords

artifact names, toponyms, chrematonyms, ergonyms, urbanonyms

1. Introduction

The word artifact (or artefact – both spellings are used) comes from Latin (*arte* ‘artificially’ + *factum* ‘thing made’). In onomastics, the term *artifact name* is used to define place names that denote certain anthropogenic objects. To date, the names of artifacts have only been dealt with separately in a limited way. The goal of this paper is to determine exactly what artifact names are and what types of named objects in traditional rural and new urban environments should be included in this category. The paper also aims to highlight some of the problems in classifying artifact names.

Quite a lot of ambiguity and variability exists, starting with the fundamental question: “What is an artificial object?”. In addition, the nature and categorization of artifacts in the modern world is increasingly difficult to comprehend because of their diversity and dynamic expansion.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), an artefact is “an object, such as a tool or a decoration, that is made by a person, especially one that is of historical interest”.

According to Online Etymology Dictionary (n.d.), an artefact is an “artificial production, anything made or modified by human art”, and is derived from Italian *artefatto*, from Latin *arte* ‘by skill’ + *factum* ‘thing made’, from *facere* ‘to make, do’. The word was officially adopted into German in 1791. The English spelling with *-i-* based on the Latin stem (as in *artifice*) had been officially adopted by 1884. Originally the word was used in anatomy to define artificial conditions caused by operations, etc. Applications in English related to archaeology date back to 1885 (and 1875 in German).

The most authoritative Estonian dictionaries (VL, 2012; ÜS, 2021) also define artifacts (Estonian singular, *artefakt*) as man-made objects, such as work tools, pieces of art, etc.

Based on these explanations, we can conclude that the word *artifact* is generally used to refer to man-made things. This field of meaning is somewhat narrower than suggested by the definition used in onomastics, which includes the names of objects that are larger than the usual “things”. In onomastics the term *artifact name* refers to the names that denote specific anthropogenic (i.e. man-made) objects.

In onomastics, what categories are classified as having artifact names? For instance, according to Zelinsky's (2002) classification, the following have artifact names:

- (1) Structures (buildings, bridges, dams, etc.);
- (2) Vehicles (ships, trains, cars, etc.);
- (3) Weapons systems;
- (4) Literary and other expressive works (books, periodicals, paintings, etc.);
- (5) Monuments;
- (6) Commodities and their brands;
- (7) Famous musical instruments;
- (8) Famous gems;
- (9) Major telescopes;
- (10) Coins and currency.

As we can see, the list includes names that can be classified as toponyms, as well as product names.

There are several classifications that do not mention the term *artifact names* at all. For instance, Podolskaya (1988) mentions subcategories of toponyms, such as oronyms, choronyms, agoronyms, hydronyms, ecclesionyms, oikonyms, dromonyms, necronyms, etc. but does not provide a general term for artifact names. Brendler and Brendler (2004) analyze various classifications of names but do not go into details.

Often, other existing classifications do not subdivide the toponyms but may include artifact names under other categories, for instance, the names of things (Pamp, 2000) or even varia (Debus, 1980).

A partially overlapping term is *ergonym* (name of a product or a brand; see also "ICOS List of Key Onomastic Terms"; Bauer, 1985; Ainiala et al., 2012; Sjöblom, 2016). The ICOS List (ICOS Terminology Group, n.d.) also notes that, in some languages, the term *chrematonym* is used as a synonym for ergonyms, but it can also have a broader meaning (i.e. the proper names of social events, institutions, organizations, etc.).

However, Estonian name classification is based on the Scandinavian onomastic tradition whereby artifact names have been viewed as a sub-category of culture names that encompass the names of anthropogenic features. In other words, they are a sub-category of place names.

The traditional classification of place names divides place names into nature names and culture names (see Figure 1). Nature names are further subdivided

into hydronyms (e.g., sea, river and lake names) and topographic names (e.g., mountain, valley, forest and cape names). However, culture names include settlement names (e.g., farm, village and city names), cultivation names (e.g., meadow, pasture and field names) and artifact names (see Kiviniemi, 1990, p. 46; Kallasmaa, 2005, p. 136; Ainiala et al., 2012, pp. 23–24).

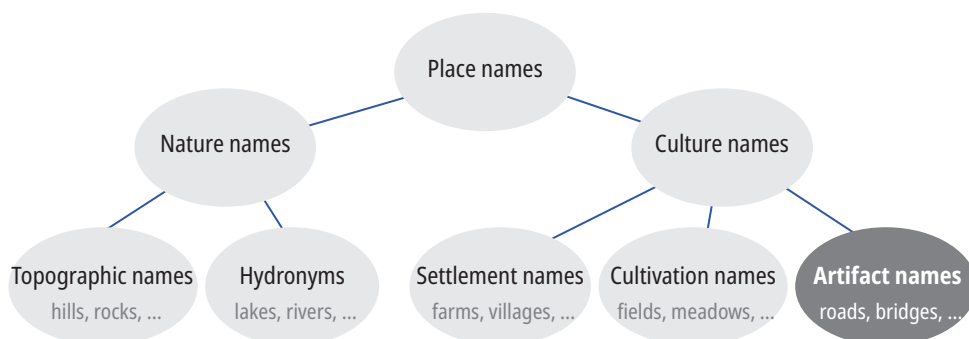


Figure 1. Artifact names

Source: own work based on: Kiviniemi, 1990; Kallasmaa, 2005; Ainiala et al., 2012.

According to Estonian name researcher Marja Kallasmaa (2005), this classification is actually conditional, because artifacts depend on human settlement, but,

(...) the separate identification of this group is probably justified by the fact that it has no direct link with the land. If villages or farms can be imagined as territories, then it is only the bottoms of artifacts that rests on the ground. This includes bridges, barns, gates and, according to some authors, rocks, even though, they are not manmade. (p. 136)

The conditionality of the classifications is also made evident, for example, by the fact that cultivated objects are also man-made, and thus resemble artifacts, while, on the other hand, also being closely connected to nature and the landscape.

There are also a number of ambiguous names. For instance, are park names nature or culture names? Are pond and ditch names hydronyms or artifact names? The situation with bog names is also complicated. Sometimes they are included among topographic objects and sometimes among hydronyms (see

Faster, 2017, 2020). The names of former taverns and mills can be included among the artifact names and settlement names – after all, the taverns and mills were settlements just like the farmsteads.

In addition to the names of the aforementioned bridges, barns and gates, road names, dam names and the names of “other structures” have also been classified as artifact names (see Ainiala, 2002, p. 298; Ainiala et al., 2012, p. 66).

2. Artifacts in rural areas

In order to analyze which artifact names appear in the lists of traditional rural place names, this section focuses on the place names of two parishes in Harjumaa, North Estonia, i.e. Jüri and Kose parishes (see also Laansalu et al., 2020). The source material comes from the Place Names Archive (KN) at the Institute of the Estonian Language, which is a collection of classical place names collected during the last century, with the main emphasis on rural place names. There are a total of 7,205 entries for Jüri and Kose place names in the card index, which have been collected as follows: 10% in the 1920s and 1930s; 58% in the 1950s, 26% in 1960s and 1970s; and 6% in the 1980s and 1990s. Thus, the place name collection for these parishes mostly reflects the situation from the 1950s to the 1970s.

In this paper, place names that are sometimes classified as settlement names are also included in the artifact names. These include the taverns and mills mentioned above, but also, for example, schools in farmhouses, which, in addition to being buildings with specific functions, have also functioned as proper farms and the names of which have also served as traditional settlement names. Often, versions of the same names have been used simultaneously, for example, *Nõmme kõrts* (Nõmme tavern) ~ *Nõmmekõrtsu talu* (Nõmmekõrtsu farm), *Oti veski* (Oti mill) ~ *Otiveski talu* (Otiveski farm). The frequent terms used in settlement names, *maja* ‘house’ and *saun* ‘cottage’ are included only when they constitute the main determining part of a compound toponym (such as *Metsa/maja*, literally ‘forest house’), or are what is called term names (terms functioning as full names, like *Saun*, literally ‘cottage’) (see also Saar, 2008, p. 69).

About 400 artifact names were found by processing the material related to the place names in Jüri and Kose parishes and a list was compiled of the frequencies of the artifact names appearing as generic terms. The ones that occurred most frequently are listed here:

- *küün* ‘barn’ (57);
- *kõrts* ‘inn’ (44);
- *tee* ‘path’ (37);
- *veski* ‘mill’ (18);
- *maantee* ‘road’ (17);
- *kool* ~ *koolimaja* ‘school ~ schoolhouse’ (14);
- *tänav* ‘street’ (14);
- *sild* ‘bridge’ (13);
- *rehi* ‘threshing barn’ (9);
- *teomaja(d)* ‘labourer house(s)’ (8);
- *karjalaut* ‘cattle barn’ (7);
- *kaev* ‘well’ (6);
- *(bussi)peatas* ‘bus stop’ (5);
- *tuuleveski* ‘windmill’ (5);
- *trumm* ‘little bridge’ (4).

The list shows that the most common groups of artifact names in the area under consideration are barn names (e.g., *Eeskopli küün*, *Loigu küün*, *Ussisoo küün*), tavern names (e.g., *Kabeli kõrts*, *Kõvera kõrts*, *Raudalu kõrts*), road and street names (e.g., *Kindluse tee*, *Pargi tänav*, *Teomeeste tee*, *Viljandi maantee*), mill names (e.g., *Kiili veski*, *Oti veski*, *Tuhala veski*) and school names (e.g., *Kaarepere kool*, *Lehmja kool*, *Nabala koolimaja*). The analysis results from the Northern Estonia region were compared with a study conducted in Southern Estonia, that is, Evar Saar’s (2008) doctoral thesis that analyzes Võrumaa place names based on the most frequent name composita and the naming system of the traditional community. A comparison with Võrumaa revealed that the artifact names that were most common in both regions included the following terms: *sild* (‘bridge’), *veski* (‘mill’), *koolimaja* (‘schoolhouse’), *tee* (‘road’; *tii* in the South Estonian dialect) and *kõrts* (‘tavern’). The other very common artifact names in Võrumaa included the following terms: *mõtsavahikotus* (‘forest ranger station’), *puut* (‘store’), *tsiht* (‘ride or path through the forest; a division line between compartments’), *vallamaja* (‘municipal hall’), *kerik* (‘church’), *surnuaid* (‘cemetery’) and *maja* (‘house’) (for more, see Saar, 2008, pp. 84–89).

Counterparts to all these can be found in the list of places from North Estonia, although with somewhat less frequency.

Thus, we can conclude that the types of the most common traditional rural artifacts in various regions are similar, with the more common artifact names being the same, although the dialects have resulted in the names being spelled differently (*pood* ~ *puut*, *surnuaed* ~ *surnuaid*, *tee* ~ *tii*). The structure of the rural artifact names that were analyzed is predominantly classical and follows the traditional Estonian place name template (name core + generic term).

The following section focuses on artifacts and artifact names in urban environments.

3. Artifacts in urban areas

In urban landscapes or densely populated areas, almost everything that can be classified is viewed as an artifact, because cities are man-made phenomena. Based on the usual breakdown of culture names presented above (settlement names, cultivation names, artifact names), the names of the city districts and wards as settlement names would be the only ones excluded from this study. Also, cultivation names in the classical sense do not occur in cities. However, the greatest problem related to the classification of artifact names in cities seems to be: what can even be considered to be a place name? Cities as living environments are diverse and dynamically changing.¹

First of all, there are objects in the city, the names of which are easy to classify as place names: roads-streets-squares, parks and other green areas, ponds, houses, public transport stops. Their names usually have a typical place name structure, i.e., (name core + generic term): *Merivälja tee*, *Roheline tänav*, *Vabaduse väljak*, *Tammsaare park*, *Luigetiik*, *Urla maja*, *Estonia peatus*.²

¹ Urban place names in Denmark and Scandinavia are dealt with, for example, by Jørgensen (2002), but even he does not try to particularly define them.

² The examples in this section come from the Institute of the Estonian Language's Place Names Database (KNAB). Some of the names may have changed in the meanwhile.

However, do objects such as restaurants, cafes, bars, shops, shopping centers, institutions, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, pharmacies, factories, banks, and organizations, also have place names? Here we can rely on the fieldwork carried out in Tallinn in 2012–2013, which was focused primarily on updating the artifact name layer in the Place Names Database (KNAB) of the Institute of the Estonian Language.

As of the late 1980s, a small number of artifact names, especially from Tallinn, were included in the KNAB database. For example, there were 24 restaurants, 36 cafes, 14 hotels and 11 cinemas in Tallinn in the place name database at that time. The choice of names at that time was limited, and in some ways, typical of the Soviet era (restaurants *Euroopa*, *Gloria*, *Kalinka*, *Nord*, *Pärnu*, *Szolnok*, *Vana Toomas* ‘old Thomas’ (Tallinn’s famous landmark); cafes *Harju*, *Moskva*, *Narva*, *Olümpia*, *Schwerin* (sister city of Tallinn); hotels *Aeroflot*, *Balti*, *Neptun*, *Ookean*, *Palace*, *Sport*; cinemas *Eha* ‘sunset’, *Koit* ‘dawn’, *Kosmos*, *Oktoober*, *Pioneer*, *Rahu* ‘peace’, *Sõprus* ‘friendship’, *Võit* ‘victory’. The Place Names Database also included the names of stores (*ABC-3*, *Aed* ‘garden’, *Agro*, *Aiandus* ‘gardening’, *Albatross*), institutions (*Tallinna Aiandussovhoos* – a state farm, *Eesti Ajaloomuuseum* – history museum, *TLÜ Akadeemiline Raamatukogu* – a library), and factories (*Ilmarine* – a mythical name, *Tarbeklaas* ‘utility glass’, *Teras* ‘steel’) etc.

When updating this layer of place names, it first had to be decided which could be considered place names. Business names as defined by §7 of the Estonian Commercial Code cannot always be considered place names, since the names of businesses as legal persons do not have to coincide with the name of the companies that operate them, e.g., the *Olde Hansa* restaurant is run by Starmaker OÜ and the *Hell Hunt* pub by Hunt Kriimsilm OÜ. Neither Starmaker OÜ nor Hunt Kriimsilm OÜ act as place names.

The understanding that place names in the city are the places (or objects) that are used for orientation or finding places was established as the starting point. In other words, if the name of an object is used to describe a location, it is a place name. In practice, of course, it is not always possible to determine this unambiguously, so secondary characteristics, such as whether or not an object is marked with a sign, were also taken into account.

Today’s urban artifact names are characterized by extreme diversity and dynamism, as objects develop, move, are renamed and disappear often. For example, the cafe at the address of Vabaduse väljak 10 in Tallinn. It was initially named *Kultas* (after the owner, 1937); later renamed *Moskva* ‘Moscow’

(as of 1951); and then *Kultas* again (in the early 1990s). Thereafter, it has been the *Metropol* (1996–2000), *Taevase Rahu Väljak* ‘square of heavenly peace’ (ca. 2000), *Kultus* ‘cult’ (2009, previously also *Kuldtass* ‘golden cup’), *Moskva* again (2013) and then *Wabadus* ‘freedom’ (with an old-fashioned *w*; as of 2015 at the latest).³ In December 2021, the cafe was called *Mood* ‘fashion’. Artifacts in the city are often given foreign names (for example, eateries called *Bocca*, *Brewery*, *Café Mademoiselle*, *Clayhills*, *Controvento*, *Depeche Mode*, and hotels called *Centennial*, *Center*, *Economy*, *Imperial*, *L’Ermitage*, *Old Town Maestro*’s). Artifact names can be structurally more complex, and also include phrases (*Seiklusjutte Maalt ja Merelt* ‘stories from the lands and seas’ pub, *Kolme Näoga Mees* ‘man with three faces’ wine shop, and the ungrammatical *Leib Resto & Aed*, literally ‘bread restaurant & garden’ – some of the words should have genitive case forms).

As of December 2021, KNAB includes the following artifacts: 11,453 roads, streets and squares; 566 parks and other public spaces; 189 various institutions (national and local government agencies, law enforcement and military agencies, courts and diplomatic missions); 156 cultural and scientific institutions (including museums, libraries, cinemas, theaters); 380 educational institutions (including schools, kindergartens); 121 medical institutions (including hospitals, pharmacies); 291 stores and other business; 325 eateries (restaurants, etc.); 127 hotels; 232 companies (including factories, banks); and 45 organizations. Except for the roads, streets and parks, most of the other artifacts are in Tallinn.

When briefly describing the most prominent changes in the names of artifacts that have occurred between the 1980s and the present, based on the example of Tallinn, the following observations can be highlighted.

In the past, there were relatively few building names and most of them dated back to the pre-war period (*Burmanni villa*, *Urla maja*, named after owners). However, especially since the 2000s, their number has increased significantly due to their promotion by real estate developers. A selection of building names (with some literal translations) include: *Admirali maja* ‘admiral’s house’, *Art Depoo*, *Kindlustuse maja* ‘insurance house’, *Lootsi maja* ‘maritime pilot’s house’, *Mäevärava maja* ‘hill gate house’, *Nautilus*, *Osten Tor*,

³ The years are given for orientation only, there is no exact chronology. Some of the names might even be missing.

Põhjatähe elamu ‘northern star living house’, *Reederi residents* ‘shipowner’s residence’, *Šveitsi maja* ‘Swiss house’. Some of these names were more actively used, especially during the construction of the buildings, when it was necessary to advertise the real estate, but have not been used later (e.g., *Mäevärava maja* at Narva mnt 128).

Whereas in the past, during the Soviet era, schools and kindergartens were numbered, since the late 1980s they too have been given names. Schools are often named after the locations in which they are located (*Karjamaa gümnaasium*, *Kristiine gümnaasium*, *Lasnamäe gümnaasium*), but also have their own names (*Arte gümnaasium*, *Gustav Adolfi gümnaasium*, *Inglise kolledž* ‘English College’, *Reaalkool*). Only a few are still numbered (*Tallinna 21. kool*, *Tallinna 32. keskkool*). Kindergarten names are more diverse and imaginative: *Aiake* ‘small garden’, *Kalli-kalli* ‘hug’, *Kiikhobu* ‘hobbyhorse’, *Lõvimeri* ‘lion sea’, *Memme Musi* ‘mamma’s kiss’, *Mesimummu* ‘bee’, *Mikumanni* (from children’s names Mikk and Mann), *Muumipere* ‘Moomins’ family’, *Mürakaru* ‘rowdy child’, *Naeratus* ‘smile’, *Pallipõnn* (from *pall* ‘ball’ and *põnn* ‘kid’), *Päikesejänku* ‘sunny bunny’, *Päkapikk* ‘gnome’, *Rõõmupesa* ‘nest of joy’, *Sinilind* ‘bluebird’.

However, store names seem to have undergone a decline. Stores are still named today, but mostly with the names of chains (e.g., *Maxima*, *Rimi*, *Selver*), which are supplemented by geographical reference (*Hiiu Rimi*, *Torupilli Selver*), Shopping centers are also named (*Arsenal*). Small independent shops are seldom named and not very prominently (*Bensport*, *Cristall*, *Elite Style*, *Glenfield*, *Infur*, *Pereking* ‘family shoe’). In comparison, in the 1980s, the following stores were located on Viru street alone: *Aroom* ‘aroma’, *Baltika* (previously *Riietur*), *Eesti King* ‘Estonian shoe’, *Elegants* ‘elegance’ (as of 1990 *Tik-Tak*), *Heli* ‘sound’, *Krista* (female name), *Laura* (female name; previously *Sipsik* – a literary character), *Mare* (female name), *Mart* (male name), *Progress*, *Siluet* ‘silhouette’, *Soliid*, *Virge* (female name), and *Viruvärava raamatukauplus* (bookshop named after a famous city gate; previously *Sõprus* ‘friendship’).

4. Summary

Artifact names are a very varied and diverse group of names. This is because of the varied nature and number of objects to be marked, as well as their uses and regions, which present a different picture in the country and the city.

The ways in which artifact names are classified was highlighted at the beginning of the article. It was established that the names of all objects resulting from human activity that cannot be classified under other culture names (settlement names, cultivation names) can be classified as artifact names.

As artifact names differ significantly in the various spheres of use, the use of artifact names was examined in two separate sections: in rural areas and in urban areas. In both cases, it was clear that artifact names can differ substantially.

The rural artifact names were studied on the basis of the place name collections of Jüri and Kose parishes in North Estonia. It turned out that named artifacts were predominantly buildings and structures (mills, bridges, school buildings, roads, etc.) and the most common artifact names were barn names, tavern names, road and street names, and mill names. It also turned out that the most common artifact names largely coincided with those in Võrumaa in South Estonia. The structure of the names was predominantly classical and followed the usual template of Estonian place names. While the classification of traditional rural artifact names seems to be quite clear and understandable, the urban artifacts and their naming presents a more confusing picture, as the names are more difficult to classify and define. There are more foreign names and structurally more complex ones.

Based on the above, we can conclude that artefact names are ones (depending on the specific treatment) used to classify the names of objects created or influenced by human activity that cannot be classified under other culture names (settlement names, cultivation names). Artifact names are a highly culture- and environment-specific phenomenon, covering the “*varia*” of the toponyms group, that differ in rural and urban settings. Where the precise line is drawn depends on the needs of the particular study.

When researching artifact names, problems related to distinguishing between names and non-names come to the fore, e.g., whether phrases can be considered real names or not. Given the extreme diversity of the subject, the methods used to study artifact names should probably also be diversified.

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