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**NAME AND PLACE**

**Ten essays on the dynamics  
of place-names**

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## Ellipsis in place-names\*

Two volumes of onomastic standard works appeared in 1996, namely *Namenforschung. Ein internationales Handbuch zur Onomastik*, vol. II, and John Kousgård Sørensen's *Danske sø- og ånavne* (DSÅ) vol. VIII. Both volumes present general analyses and both comment on ellipsis in place-names. The International handbook treats ellipsis under the heading "Morphologie und Wortbildung der Ortsnamen", whereas in DSÅ ellipsis is treated in the chapter "Udvikling" ('Development') (Handbuch II 1996: 1370; DSÅ VIII: 459). Thus, ellipsis is viewed primarily as an aspect of name formation in the former work, and as an aspect of name development in the latter.

Setting out from the classifications more or less explicitly expressed in the above headings, I shall try to clarify some of the problems pertaining to the assessment of ellipsis in place-names.

The discussion of ellipsis in the international handbook is extremely brief considering the jumbo size of the volume. It amounts to 24 lines in a single column under the heading "Elliptische Namen", written by Wolfgang Laur (Handbuch II: 1375). In the brief survey ellipsis is exemplified by the two names *Sankt Peter* (from *Sankt Peters Kirche*) and *Salzburg* (from *\*Salzachburg*). The latter is referred to as Klammerform, a term that will be discussed below.

By comparison, the two-page presentation of ellipsis in DSÅ (VIII: 464–66) is considerably more detailed, including the following definition "In elliptical formations, one element of the original place-name is omitted" (op. cit. 464). This is consistent with definitions found elsewhere, for instance in the Finno-Swedish list of place-name terminology from 1974 (Kiviniemi et al. 1974: 74). DSÅ adds one important limitation, stating that the omission should

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\* A revised and translated version of: "Ellipse i stednavne". In: Harling-Kranck, Gunilla (ed.) 2001: *Namn i en föränderlig värld. Rapport från tolfte nordiska namnforskarkongressen, Tavastehus 13–17 juni 1998. Studier i nordisk filologi* 78. Helsingfors, pp. 53–61.

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not be the result of regular linguistic development. The omission should be arbitrary, irregular, inorganic (DSÅ VIII: 459; cf. Bach 1953: 233; Skautrup 1953: 351). In more technical terms, ellipsis belongs among the so-called exceptions to the element functions (cf. Hjelmslev 1963: 48), where linguistic intuition causes a reorganisation of the linguistic sign (cf. Christensen & Kousgård Sørensen 1972: 128).

Another limitation could be added to the definition: The elliptical name form must refer to the same location as the non-elliptical one. In other words, the denotation of the two has to be identical. This is consistent with definitions of ellipsis of common nouns that require the elliptical forms to have the same signified as the non-elliptical form.

DSÅ distinguishes between ellipsis of the first element and ellipsis of the second element. Reduction affecting the second element of the name will be discussed first. Among the examples quoted in DSÅ are the name of the watercourse *Spanget* (elliptical form of *Spanggrogen*), and the name of the pond *Stampen* (an ellipsis of *Stampedam*) (DSÅ VIII: 466).<sup>1</sup> The elliptical form *Sankt Peter* from *Sankt Peters Kirche* belongs to the same category. Similar elliptical forms are found in the lexicon, e.g. *snuff* (*tobacco*), *daily* (*paper*).

Ellipsis of the first element can be total or partial according to DSÅ. Among the examples of total ellipsis, with omission of the first element, are the names of the lakes *Lunen* and *Øjet*, ellipses of *Bredlunen* and *Paddesøje* respectively (DSÅ VIII: 465). Parallel forms in the lexicon are for instance Scandinavian *bil* from *automobil*, which is in its turn a loan from a French elliptical form (*voiture*) *automobile*.

Partial ellipsis of the first element is defined in DSÅ as the omission of the latter segment of a compound first element. The bases for the ellipses in such cases rarely survive. Among the recorded examples are the watercourse names *Fokkebæk* and *Gelså*, from *Fokkebrobæk* and *Gelstoftså* respectively. In most cases where

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<sup>1</sup> Both names consist of the first element of the original name plus a postpositive definite article *en* (comm.) or *et* (neutr.).

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partial ellipsis is likely to have occurred, the basis for the ellipsis is hypothetical. This goes for *Gribsø* from the supposed base-form \**Gribskovsø* and *Abildå* from the supposed basis *Abildtrupå* (DSÅ VIII: 466). Parallels such as *isbod* ‘ice-stall’ and *motorløb* ‘motor-race’ as opposed to *iskagebod* ‘ice-cream stall’ and *motorcykelløb* ‘motor-cycle race’ can be found in the lexicon.

The German term for partial ellipsis of the first element is “Klammerform”, as can be seen from the international handbook’s example *Salzburg*. This is supposedly an elliptic form of \**Salzachburg*, containing the watercourse name *Salzach* (cf. Bach 1953: 233, Witkowski 1964: 41). In Swedish onomastics, Sahlgren’s term reduction has gained acceptance for this kind of ellipsis. The result of reduction is referred to as reduct (Sahlgren 1912–35: 29).<sup>2</sup> These terms have also been applied elsewhere, e.g. in Denmark (cf. DSÅ V: 247). The phenomenon has also been termed ellipsis of a medial element (e.g. Lindén 1969: 6; Kiviniemi et al. 1974: 100, Ainiala 1997: 17) or “das Ausstoßen eines mittleren Gliedes” (Witkowski 1964: 41). In my opinion, these terms should be avoided, as we are not dealing with elements in a medial position but rather with the generic of the compound that functions as a specific in a new compound place-name.

In the international handbook, Laur explicitly states that the non-elliptical form may never have existed (Handbuch II 1996: 1375). It may be difficult or even impossible to tell whether ellipsis occurred at the moment a name was coined or in the course of its existence as a proper name.<sup>3</sup> Even so, there is a fundamental difference between the two events. Ellipsis at the time of name-formation has been termed ideal ellipsis, particularly in Swedish onomastic literature but also in Danish (e.g. Jørgensen 1970: 186). Ideal ellipsis pertains strictly to word formation. If the full name form has never existed except as an idea in the mind of the coiner of the name, it is obvious that the elliptical form cannot be seen as a result of name-development.

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<sup>2</sup> The Swedish terms are “reduktion” and “redukt”.

<sup>3</sup> This also applies to reductions; these may have taken place either when a name is coined or at a later stage (cf. Zilliacus 1976: 76).

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What about the real ellipsis, which has demonstrably occurred while the name has been in use, can this be seen as a case of word formation too? The international handbook clearly does so, by quoting examples of real ellipsis under the heading word formation. Implicitly, even DSÅ seems to treat real ellipsis from this point of view, since the elliptical name is seen as a new name as compared to the basis form. If the elliptical name replaces the basis form, it is also classified as a name shift (DSÅ VIII: 460).<sup>4</sup> According to DSÅ, a name is new not only if it consists of one or more elements different from the original name (which has been termed partial and total name shift), but also when it differs structurally or semantically from the original name (sometimes called name variation. The term includes reciprocation,<sup>5</sup> epexegetis and ellipsis) (DSÅ VIII: 459).

DSÅ is by no means alone in regarding reciprocation, epexegetis and ellipsis as related phenomena. Reciprocation and epexegetis are often seen as extensions of the name forms by one or more elements, and ellipsis, whereby the name is reduced, tends to be regarded as the inverse (e.g. Zilliacus 1966: 52).

A closer analysis of reciprocated and epexegetic name forms certainly reveals parallels. A reciprocated place-name like *Store Rørdam*, one of DSÅ's type examples, contains the original name *Rørdam* as a generic compounded with a reciprocating specific *Store*.<sup>6</sup> The meaning of the name at the moment of coinage can be rendered as 'the large(st) one of the localities named *Rørdam*'. Just like reciprocated names, epexegetic names such as DSÅ's example *Gudenå* are compounds. Epexegetic *Gudenå* contains the original name *Guden* as a specific. The generic, in this case *å* 'stream', is an appellative describing the category of the locality when the epex-

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<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, there is a genetic connection between the two forms in a name shift of this kind (DSÅ VIII: 460).

<sup>5</sup> In Danish onomastics, reciprocation denotes the addition of a characterising element to distinguish identical names, e.g. Newcastle upon Tyne – Newcastle under Lyme. See Jørgensen 1977: 458.

<sup>6</sup> The elements in the original compound name *Rørdam* are transparent in Danish, the generic *dam* 'pond' is specified by *rør* 'reeds'. The reciprocating element *stor* means 'big, large'.

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egetic name was formed. The epexegetic *Gudenå* has a formation form which can be rendered ‘the stream called *Guden*’.<sup>7</sup>

An elliptic name form cannot be analysed as a new syntactic-semantic unit in the same way. For instance, *Gelså* cannot be seen as a new syntactic-semantic unit as compared to *Geltoftså*. A rendering of the semantic content is impossible for *Gelså*, as well as for *Spanget* and *Stampen*. This is not contradicted by examples such as *Søen* (from *Bildsø*), where the elliptical form is homonymous with an appellative in the definite form, ‘the lake’. This can be seen from other examples such as *Krogen* (from *Ørekrog*), for even if the elliptical form is homonymous with the common noun *krog* ‘hook, bend’, there is no semantic reference to the name-bearer. Just like the basis form, elliptical *Krogen* denotes a castle (the forerunner of Elsinore).

Contrary to reciprocation and epexegegesis, ellipsis does not result in a new formation and should thus be treated separately. Furthermore, defining ellipsis as the omission of an element is not precise, if element is taken to mean an etymological element. This tends to be the case in onomastics, where name elements normally refer to name-formation elements. According to Zilliacus, a name element can be defined as a linguistic unit expressing a specific feature or quality of the name-bearer at the time when the name was formed (Zilliacus 1966: 70). The above-mentioned example *Øje* from the basis *Paddesøje* demonstrates that ellipsis does not necessarily imply the omission of etymological elements. Etymologically, the omitted element *Paddes-* is not the specific, neither is the remaining *-øje* the generic. As can be seen from several source forms, the name was originally a compound containing the generic *sø* ‘lake’ (DS XIV: 296). Locally *sø* in this name has been pronounced [-*soj*] and it has eventually changed into or interpreted as the word *øje* ‘eye’. The initial *s* in *sø* has been interpreted as the

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<sup>7</sup> The analysis of reciprocated and epexegetic names also shows that reciprocation and epexegegesis cannot be seen as extensions of names by the addition of one or more elements. In the reciprocated and epexegetic place-names the original place-names form new compounds, functioning as generic and specific respectively (cf. Dalberg 1991: 116).

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genitive morpheme of the etymological specific *Padde*- ‘toad’, and the whole linguistic unit has subsequently been omitted. Consequently, terms like *forledsellipse* and *efterledsellipse* (ellipsis of the first end second element respectively) are ambiguous and thus less suitable when describing ellipsis in place-names. The fact that the elements omitted by ellipsis are identical to etymological elements in many cases is irrelevant in this context.

Elliptic names are sometimes characterised as non-compound, as opposed to their compound formation form (e.g. Kiviniemi 1975: 24; Ainiala 1997: 14). This description is not entirely appropriate, since an analysis of the elements in the original formation is not possible for the elliptical form.

To my knowledge, no major systematic study of ellipsis in place-names has ever been carried out, even though various onomastic works comment on the phenomenon. Nor have the reasons for ellipsis in place-names been studied in detail. Various explanations have been suggested, possibly a combination of several factors. Being of a psychological nature, they are difficult to verify. According to the two main lines of explanation, elliptical forms are simpler and easier for the user and offer a sense of familiarity (e.g. Ståhl 1970: 53 and Lindén 1969: 20). The latter explanation is supported by the frequent addition of the definite article to elliptical names, such as the examples *Spanget* and *Stampen* referred to above. Definite forms are supposedly more colloquial than indefinite forms (cf. Skautrup 1968: 245). This explanation can only apply to real ellipsis, however, for the elliptical form can only be seen as a stylistic variant of the full form if the full form remains in existence.

Finally, a comment on the frequency of ellipsis in Danish place-names in so far as this can be established. Hydronyms have been studied most thoroughly in this respect, owing to the publication of DSÅ. Based on a corpus of 16,175 names, Kousgård Sørensen’s conclusion that ellipsis is rare in Danish hydronyms carries great weight (DSÅ VIII: 465). Thus, there seems to be a striking difference between Danish and Swedish hydronymy. In the latter, in lake names in particular, ellipsis is regarded as quite frequent. As noted by Svante Strandberg (1996: 64), it would be interesting to find out what lies behind this discrepancy.



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In Danish toponymy there are few documented instances of elliptical name forms replacing non-elliptical place-names. Even what appear to be ellipses are sometimes contradicted by source forms. For instance, the two village names *Stenmagle* and *Humble* look like ellipses when compared to older forms such as *Stenløsemagle* 1489 and *Humlæthwet* 1231 (King Valdemar's cadastre). However, later source forms such as *Stensemagle* 1570 and *Homlet* 1496, show that these are developments pertaining to unstressed syllables rather than ellipses (cf. DS XIII: 254 and DS XXIII: 59).

It seems that in most cases the elliptic and non-elliptic name forms live side by side as alternatives, in the same way as for appellatives. This ties in well with a view of ellipsis as a means of creating linguistic variation. In some cases, it may be difficult to distinguish between ellipsis and other kinds of name changes that result in alternating forms. If the first part of a name is omitted, it may be difficult to distinguish the alternating name forms from reciprocated and non-reciprocated forms. If the second element is omitted, the alternating form may be confused with epexegetic versus non-epexegetic names.

To sum up: Ellipsis at the moment of name formation should clearly be regarded as an aspect of word formation, whereas this is not the case for ellipsis in a current name form. The latter does not imply a new formation, but rather a new name form. An elliptical form replacing a non-elliptical one can be seen as name alteration, but not as name shift. As a rule, elliptical forms resulting from real ellipsis seem to have emerged as stylistic variants among a close circle of name users. In the Danish onomasticon ellipsis appears to be quite rare, but the question still awaits a more comprehensive treatment.

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