Toponyms: Cross-linguistic Patterns and General Research Issues

Prof David Mark, Department of Geography, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, USA

Abstract
Toponyms are proper names that refer to geographical features, objects, or places; as such, they are a topic at the intersection of geographic and linguistic phenomena. Geographers, linguists, and cartographers have had professional interests in toponyms for many years, but toponyms are often seen as a minor or peripheral topic within each of these disciplines. However, when looked at with a cross-linguistic perspective, toponyms represent a fascinating and complex research topic in how landscape is represented in language. This presentation will outline some of the main research questions regarding toponyms and then give some examples from case studies in Navajo, Yindjibarndi (Australia), and Swiss German.

Bio
David M. Mark is a SUNY Distinguished Professor in the Department of Geography at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He was a Research Scientist with the National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis from its inception, was NCGIA Director for the Buffalo site. David Mark was also Director of Buffalo’s NSF-funded IGERT Doctoral program in Geographic Information Science. David Mark’s research interests include ontology of the geospatial domain, geographic cognition, cultural differences in geographic concepts, geographic information systems, human-computer interaction, and digital elevation models.

Date: Tuesday, March 10th 2015
Time: 16:15 – 18:00
Room: Y25-H92, University of Zurich-Irchel