INTRODUCTION: What is at issue?

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1. Confusion in the naming of places?

When a truck driver from Southern Spain has to deliver a load of oranges to the westernmost city of Germany, the destination he will be aiming at will be called Aguas Gran in Spanish. Let us assume our driver knows the general location of this place, as he has found it in a school atlas. So he will know he has first to navigate for Paris, then Brussels, then eastwards. As soon as he has crossed the Pyrenees, however, the name has changed: in the French language area which spills over into Belgium, the name Aix la Chapelle is used, and our driver will find this name on signposts when getting nearer. However, just before crossing into Germany, he will find himself in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, and consequently his destination will not longer be known as Aix la Chapelle, but as Aken. Only on the German border, two miles from his destination, the local name of this destination will be displayed: Aachen. You can imagine that our truck driver must have been worried whether he was indeed going into the right direction.

Another example of confusion over names is what I witnessed just a week ago: a couple of Japanese gentlemen were standing at the ticket counter at the main station in The Hague, the seat of Government of the Netherlands. On this station its Dutch name, Den Haag, is displayed. And these gentlemen were asking for a ticket to 's Gravenhage - which is the same city, so they made an impossible request, but how were they to know that we have two names in official use for this town, the longer version only in official correspondence and the shorter version for all other purposes.

Confusion not only is created by the use of different names for the same location, but also, and even more so by the use of the same name for different cities. These similar names are then called homonyms. I come from Utrecht, Netherlands, and there is an Utrecht in Natal, South Africa, as well. Other examples are Birmingham in the United Kingdom and in Alabama, USA, or Perth in Scotland and in West Australia. The problem is minor when these locations are not in the same country, but if they are, additional name elements are needed to avoid confusion. That is why the homonyms Frankfurt am Main and Frankfurt am Oder can be differentiated. France has over 300 villages called Ste Marie, and it is by adding locatives, denoting the region where these villages are situated, that they can be discerned between.

Armenia is a lot in the news nowadays, because of the struggle over Nagorno-Karabagh with Azerbaidzhan. So the capital of Armenia is often mentioned, for instance as Yerevan. But when Dutchmen would want to know more about this place, and search for it in a Dutch encyclopedia, they would not be able to find it, as it is not rendered under this name but under the name of Jerewan or even Erewan. There appear to be 7 different systems for rendering the Russian alphabet into the Dutch one, and Armenian names are converted to Dutch spellings through the medium of Russian. This leads to the problems as described above. Moreover, we get news in the Netherlands from a number of different news agencies, like UPI, Reuter, AFP, CNN or DPA, all with their own

rendering of names from Russian sources. In 1960, an American plane was shot down over Russia, and Chrushchov, the then prime minister, put the pilot, Gary Powers, on display. It occurred over the Russian city of Kuybyshev, and this name was rendered Kouibychev by AFP, Kuybitschew by DPA, Kuybičev by the Eastgerman news agency Neues Deutschland. Luckily, the name has now been changed back to its original version, Samara, over which spelling no differences of opinion exist.

2. National and International Standardization

All these examples should indicate that something should be done. The problems I described have been diminished or even solved through standardization of geographical names. And we should differentiate here between national and international standardization.

National standardization refers to establishing, on a national basis, one single name version or spelling as the official version. International standardization goes for the same, but there is an additional complication here, because of the existence of different writing systems, and the need for conversion of these names from one writing system to another. So in international standardization these writing systems should be standardized as well. And as this calls for a lot of coordination, an intermediary is needed, and at this moment the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, or UNGEGN, is this intermediary.

The major aim of standardization of geographical names is to avoid confusion or ambiguity. It takes time to check which city is meant, or it takes time to check whether the proper spelling is used. And time is money. Place name spellings are not standardized in the Netherlands, and, consequently, there is no central reference list, and it takes cartographers lots of time to decide upon the proper spelling of Dutch place names to use on maps. Derivatives of the avoidance of ambiguity or confusion are the improvement of possibilities for reference and documentation, and for transportation, communication and information flows in general.

A minor aim of standardization might be to avoid political conflict. The use of some names might be experienced by the destination country as derogatory or even revanchist - for instance Poland at some time refused letters sent to places in Western Poland with their former German (pre World War II) names instead of the new post World War II Polish names. And the East-Germans used to refuse letters sent to Chemnitz, which they had rebaptized Karl Marx Stadt. The use of specific names, like Arabian or Persian Gulf, might be experienced as critical as the use of specific boundary delineations on maps. Greece refuses to recognize the independence of the former Yugoslav federal state of Macedonia, as it considers Macedonia to be a Greek name, as it calls its own northern province by this name as well, and as it experiences the use of the name Macedonia by the Southern Yugoslavs as putting a claim on Northern Greece.

3. What has been done until now, regarding standardization?

The contribution by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names will be discussed by Ms Kerfoot, so I will indicate, in a condensed version, only what has been done in this field before they went to work in 1967.

A general awareness of the current problems has been created before 1967 by scientists in the field of toponymy: "The use of geographical names" by A.O.Aurousseau, from the Bureau of the International Map of the World on the Millionth Scale, Weygandt's book "Ortsnamenkunde" and Rostand's "Les noms de lieux" were all classics that managed to convey some idea of the problems and concepts involved to the general public.

Even before that, there emerged an awareness of toponymical problems in scientific circles. As soon as there was an increase in scientific contacts, and no longer one single means of scientific communication, such as Latin or French, standardization of geographical names became necessary. The first international attempts at name standardization were made at the first international geographical congress, at Antwerp in 1871. The proposals made there, by Prof.Penck from Berlin, and reiterated later on behalf of the International Map of the World on the Millionth Scale, are surprisingly similar to the proposals studied now by UNGEGN.

Their central core was, what is termed nowadays, the Local Names Policy, that is the honoring and rendering of names in the version officially used by the local administration in control of the named object, and incorporating them in maps for use in other countries. So no use, on Dutch maps, of the name versions Ossenvoorde or Plijmuien by the Dutch for some English towns, but the locally official forms Oxford and Plymouth, even if such deviating name versions have been in existence and been used for ages - the latter at least - by Dutch fishermen.

The International Map of the World or IMW, a project started before the First World War, but frequently disrupted since and abolished a few years ago, short of completion, envisaged a coverage of the whole world on the scale 1;1 million, produced, in principle, by the various countries rendered, according to a centrally agreed legend, sheet division specifications, and this local names policy. The central bureau of this IMW organisation was located in Southampton, at the British Ordnance Survey's headquarters, and this bureau judged new sheets, proposed by states as sheets for this series, also on the application of this Local Names Policy. After the 2nd World War the United Nations took over this project of coordinating the International Map of the World, and with this also the geographical names standardization issue. It was at the occasion of the Third UN Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Far East that the United Nations Secretary General proposed a standardization programme to all members, and the next year a working group started preparations for a conference, which was held in Geneva in 1967. It was decided there that every country should constitute a commission to draft a standardized names list; after approval this list would be respected by and adhered to by all other UN member states. Countries with a non-Roman writing system were asked to elaborate an official conversion system (preferably a conversion system on a letter-by-letter basis) to the Roman alphabet as well.

4. Potential policies for standardization

Starting point for a policy for standardization should be a consensus on the person or the institution that has the power to decide on these names and their spellings. Naming something gives influence over the named object. Parents decide on the names of their children. Sea captains decide on the names of the lands, capes or islands they have newly discovered. After naming they generally took possession of these regions as well, on behalf of their souvereign or the company, that sent them. This is a two-sided relationship: if one knows the name of something or someone, this gives some power over it, if only the power of reference.

This power-concept was at the basis of a policy adhered to by the British Ordnance Survey for some time, and it consisted of letting those in control of some object decide on the name with which to indicate it on the map. So house owners would decide on the name of their abode, forest authorities would define the name of the forest they looked after, municipal authorities would decide upon the name of their city or town, and of the hamlets within the municipal boundaries, waterworks or power plant authorities would decide upon the names of canals or reservoirs.

This owner-controlled policy sounds very straightforward, but the policy was disbanded, as it emerged that these local authorities, or whatever level they represented, did not have any sense of history. Old names were disregarded and replaced by modern ones. The Ordnance Survey in Britain, which had lovingly collected names for over a hundred years and now saw the body of names it had constituted and cared for threatened, reversed its policy and reverted to looking after the names and deciding upon their spelling itself. This has been linked to the growing feeling that names belong both to our cultural heritage (and so should be preserved along with other monuments) and belong to the environment, or are an interface with our environment, without which interaction would be much more difficult. They have also a social value: if one removes the names, or changes them for new ones, society loses its spatial frame of reference and is affected.

The aim of topographic surveyors was, originally, only to have names on the maps in a form that would help the army in finding its objectives. As the civilian function of the maps became more important, more care was taken to indicate the names more properly, as it came out that names were the aspect the proper rendering of which the public cared about most. But topographers hardly had sufficient expertise in toponymical matters, and that is why, in most countries, geographical names bureaus have been constituted - either within the topographic surveys or outside them, in order to check the names collected by topographers. The people working in these bureaus, either linguists or onomasticians, would want to preserve the original names as much as possible. So they would try to find former versions of the names, in old maps or in archives. These old versions would help them to decide what the proper spelling should be. The names bureau linked to the Ordnance Survey in Dublin in Phoenix Park, for instance, has as its job to decide, on the basis of the present anglicised spelling of Irish place names, former occurrences in old maps and in archives, and the present standardised spelling rules for the Irish language, what the proper spelling for these names should be - as it is the policy of the Republic of Ireland to reconstruct all the former Irish names.

Of course in all these policies there should not develop too big a discrepancy between the names on the map and the names used by the people in the area mapped. Topographers do check whether old names are still used - and rightly so, as otherwise the functionality of the map to set one's course and check it would be diminished.
This raises the aspect of whether names should be seen as tools or as proper names or as cultural heritage. If they are considered tools, that is linguistic tools for reference, than they should be streamlined as such, and be subjected for instance to the same orthographical rules that are valid for the rest of the language. So the spelling of the geographical names should be similar to that of the language's other words. In this spirit the spelling of the Dutch geographical names in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, Flanders, was adjusted to the spelling reform of the Dutch language in 1934. And this is another reason why cartographers in the Netherlands have objected against the fact that geographical names in the Netherlands have not been adapted to these spelling reforms yet - because we would like these names to be written as they sound, and sound as written, so that

people might not need additional knowledge about pronunciation apart from knowledge about orthography, as is the case for most English place names.

5. What are the potential policies for international standardization?

If we start from the local names policy, two strategies are possible for converting names from one writing system to another: the system whereby the receiving country decides upon the conversion system, and the system whereby the donor country does so.

With the first system in theory as many new versions of the name might come into existence as there are receiving countries. That can never be the aim of standardization. That is why the Donor Principle has been formulated by the United Nations. This states that the conversion system selected by the Donor country should be adhered to. This does not prevent any consultation between the donor country and those receiving countries interested. This system does present the world with some other inconsistencies, however. The Donor Principle calls for donor countries without a Latin alphabet to devise a conversion system for their names into the Latin alphabet. So far so good. But what happens is, that country A devises a conversion system based on the Spanish pronunciation of the Roman alphabet, country B does so on the basis of the Italian pronunciation, country C on French or whatever. And what emerges is a set of names for which one must know the pronunciation rules, country wise. In order to illustrate this, we can show the pronunciation of the same letter and of the same sound in different European languages:

language	pronunciation of letter -c-	spelling of sound -sh-
Spanish	k or th	ch
Italian	k or ch	sci
French	k or s	ch
Czech	ts	š
German	s	sch
English	c/k	sh

6. Issues in standardization

Whatever the policies adhered to, there still remain a number of additional issues that should be cleared or solved before national or global standardization of geographical names can be reached.

I. Some countries do not follow United Nations recommendations. The Netherlands is an example. Though the first geographical names lists were published already in 1826 (Krayenhoff), and many have followed, none have been approved officially. The last list was drawn up by a commission initiated by the Minister of education in 1960, and presented to him in 1974. This list has since been residing in a ministerial cabinet, without anything happening to it. Apparently the contents were judged to be too incendiary by the Minister, and it is true that people's resistance against name spelling changes can be tough and long-winded.

II. Modern names vs traditional names (Krung Thep/Bangkok, Dublin/Baile Atha Cliath. In the Netherlands, new shopping malls are given fancy names, that look old, in order to convey some

prestige on the object. This is contrived by writing their names in an old spelling. This is also related to the fact whether

III. generally accepted names should be used or locally used dialect names? This goes already in the direction of minority names or regional names about which we will have a special lecture.

IV. Do place names fall under the spelling rules of a language? The answer should be positive, and they should be spelled as much as possible in accordance with current orthographic rules, in order to increase the ability to forecast their orthography resp. pronunciation. That is, if they are regarded as tools. If they are regarded as part of the cultural heritage, their spelling should not be streamlined or tapered with otherwise. This is also connected with the issue whether place names should be spelled as pronounced.

V. Multilingual areas. When more than one language is spoken in an area, and both have the same status, some procedure should be established on their priority on the map.

On an international level, there are the following issues still open:

VI. The need for cooperation between countries speaking the same language. Take the Arabs for instance. The Arabian countries have the same script, alphabet and language, but speak different dialects. The word for mountain is, when transcribed, gebel in Egypt (in English), djebel in Syria (in French), giabal in Lybia (in Italian) and jabal in Irak (in English). The Arab speaking countries have had a number of conferences on standardization, in order to agree on one single conversion system. They have decided that it is to be a transliteration system, but have not agreed yet on the transliteration of all letters.

VII. The starting points chosen by the United Nations is a) that the Roman or Latin Alphabet should be chosen for international standardization. 40% of all people speak languages written with a Roman alphabet, living on 60% of the Earth's surface. b) The Roman Alphabet Rule states that names from those countries that already use the Roman alphabet should be adopted integrally. This brings with it the problem of diacritical signs. These are extra signs joined to letters that adapt the pronunciation of the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet, like ł, å, ç, æ, š. These are not available in all map lettering or typesetting equipment, and therefore it might be difficult to apply this rule.

VIII. The fact that some countries differentiate between maps for national use and international use, or even between use for different age classes of the population. The idea behind the latter seems to be that smaller children would not be able to twist their little tongues around the foreign names, and should be served by exonyms therefore, that is foreign names adapted to the receiving language. This view does not take account of the fact that foreign names are mostly used in written form only, and that through the use of exonyms small children get used to the wrong spellings. Luckily, the use of exonyms is decreasing because of increased international communication and tourism. This trend can be stimulated by rendering the official names as well as the exonyms on maps.

IX. The choice between transcription and transliteration, when selecting a conversion system, the primary consideration might be that the names would be pronounced correctly in some receiver language. This then calls for transcription, the rendering of the sounds of a foreign name in this

receiver language. This would always be aimed at one language's pronunciation of the Roman alphabet only. Another consideration would be to be able to convert the names back again to the original language. That can only be done when the conversion is one of letter by letter. So this will not be possible for all writing systems, only for those that have alphabets. This letter-by-letter conversion is called transliteration. Generally, it is less aimed at one specific language.

Thailand went from a transcription system to a transliteration system during the last 25 years, because the first resulted in too many inconsistencies.

7. Final remark:

In the last figure, one sees a part of the topographic map of the Netherlands on the scale 1:25 000. Because there is no national names authority that decides on the names spelling, the Topografische Dienst (the national topographic survey) decides on the orthography on the basis of the occurrence of the names in official laws or acts. The only geographical names whose spelling is regulated are street names. They should adjust to the most recent spelling law. We have had spelling reforms in 1870 and 1934, so it will make a difference whether a name has been codified in some official act before 1870, between 1870 and 1934, or after 1934. In deciding on the name spellings of some topographic object categories, like settlements, municipalities are sovereign. The authority of deciding on the spelling of the remaining object categories is divided between the hydrographic office for all names on the coast, the Waterstaat, that is the drainage department, on the names of all rivers and canals, and the Topografische Dienst is responsible for the remaining names. When one knows all this the resulting names image is understood, but not yet acceptable, because it is not to be forecasted. And that is why we need standardization.