

1. DIFFERENT NOTIONS OF "OFFICIALITY"

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There is no uniformity in defining what would constitute an official name. Names might be given the official status by:

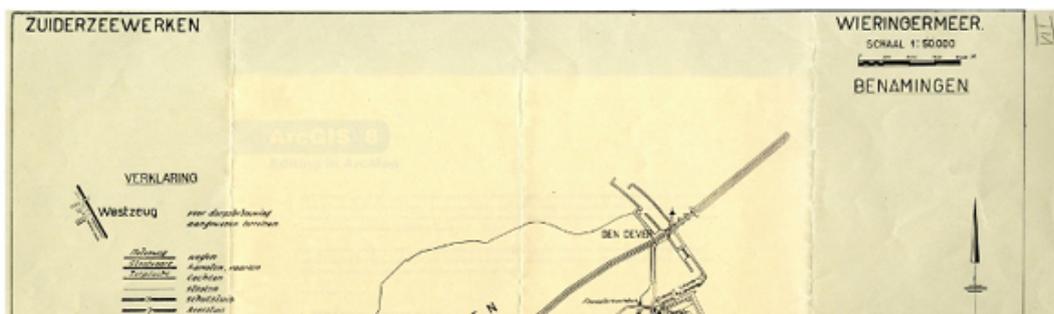
- a special name decision, or naming act, issued by an authorized agency;
- another legal act that would, *inter alia*, approve an official name to the place in question;
- mentioning the name(s) in official acts and documents;
- being published in official maps;
- being written on road signs, public signboards, etc.;
- the established usage.

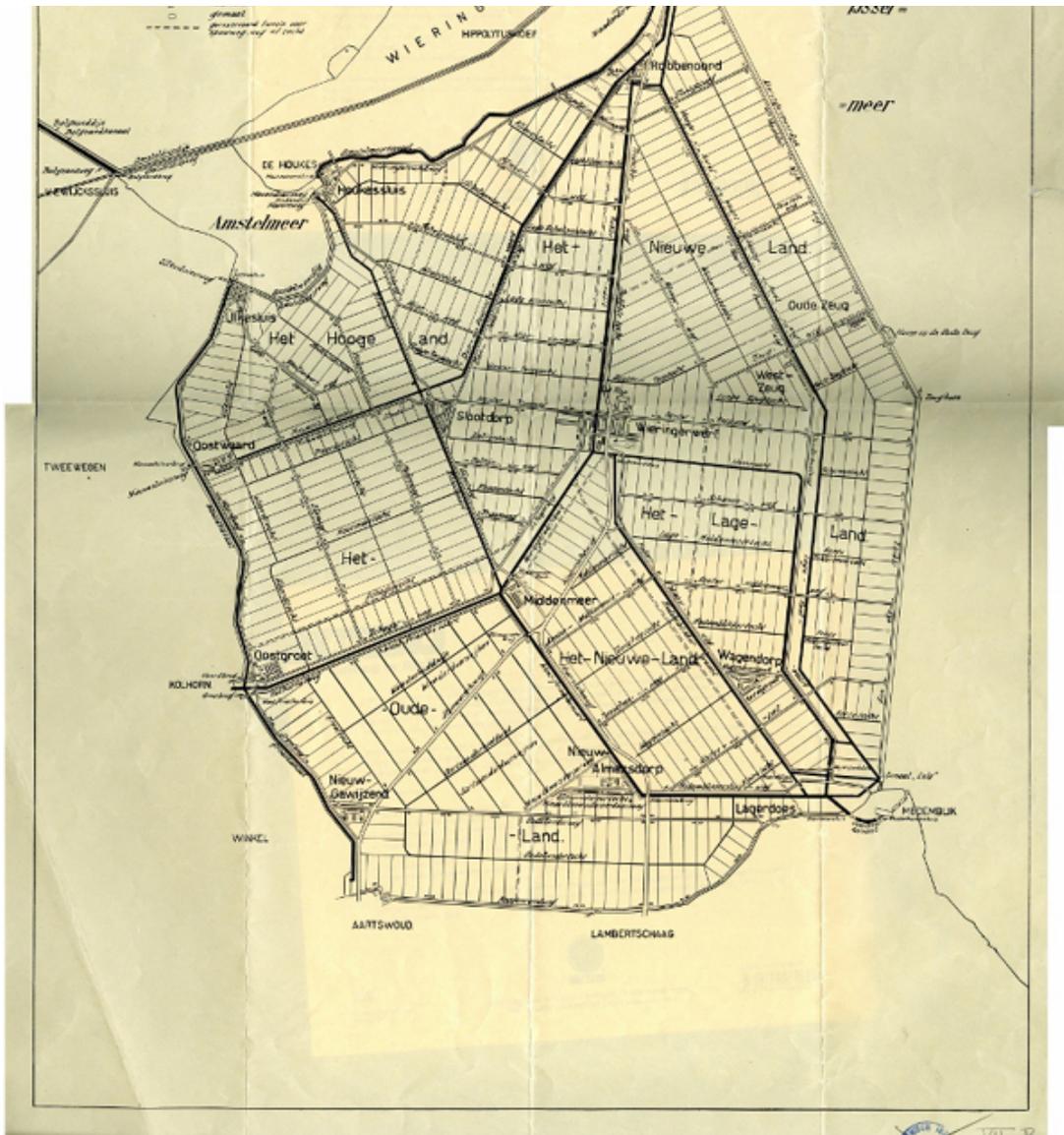
Obviously, these methods are not all equally clear and efficient. For example, names mentioned in official acts might too often be contradictory and varying in their spelling. Road signs seem to be universally the least trustworthy sources for any names, including official ones. The "established usage" is also vague as there should be an authority to define what is meant by that. Even name decisions might be contradictory if it is not clear who exactly is authorized to name a certain feature as, for example, different agencies might name the same feature differently.

Basic questions that should be answered, though, in each case, are:

- Who has the naming power?
- How is the official status granted to names?

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Map of the Wieringermeer polder in the Netherlands, with the official names bestowed on this newly reclaimed area (1930) by the authority that had reclaimed the area.

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