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Toponymic Education

Advanced Toponymy Courses

Submitted by the WG training Courses in Toponymy **

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Summary

Advanced Toponymy Courses

This paper, meant as a discussion paper for a meeting of the UNGEGN Working Group on Training Courses on Toponymy during the 10th UNCSGN in New York**,** first lists the new course elements that were added to the standard toponymy course contents (developed in the 1982/2002 period) during the last decade, under the influence of new requirements perceived on an ad-hoc basis.

These elements are then grouped and analysed, and - on the basis of a set of criteria drawn up for possible evaluation – are used as building blocks for an advanced toponymy course programme. Such an advanced course would fit in a two-week programme, but elements could be selected to match a shorter time-frame. The purpose of the meeting would also be to assess the availability of lecturers on these themes, willing to prepare syllabuses in advance, prior to the actual courses.

(The model for such courses until now has been that the lecturers are seconded by their employers to attend the courses, that local organisers would pay for local transportation, accommodation and meals, and that sponsors are sought to provide for the airfares.)

ADVANCED TOPONYMY COURSES

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INTRODUCTION

Toponymy is not a subject for the masses. Every country only needs a few toponymists, and it is only the larger countries, like Russia or China, that would have their own institutionalised toponymic education structures. Smaller countries either depend on on-the-job training or on international courses. The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names has been involved with toponymic education and training since 1982 when, pursuant to resolution nr 18 of the Second UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in London in 1972 the first Pilot Course on Toponymy was held in Cisarua, Indonesia, and the subsequent establishment of a Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy during the 5thUNGEGN session in 1973.

Over the years, since 1982, a basic course programme evolved in which participants were made aware of the need for standardization of geographical names and the techniques and procedures to realise that. Elements in that basic programme were introduction to the terminology, the naming process, functions of geographical names, their collection through fieldwork and their processing, and the organisational framework for standardizing them. In a digital environment the digital creation and population of toponymical databases has been part of such basic courses, as was the production of derived documents like gazetteers.

This part of basic courses referred to the national context. National standardization is a precondition for international standardization. In order to make people engaged in national standardization aware of what happens to their names in an international context, in global communication, concepts like exonyms, multilingual mapping, languages, scripts and conversion systems were incorporated in these basic courses. The support role of UNGEGN in both these national and international endeavours was also highlighted in these courses.

Since 2002, in a number of atypical, more specialised courses, we have added elements to the basic programme that together could be regarded as making up the core of an advanced toponymy course. The reasons for setting up such an advanced toponymy course would be the increasing complexity of the spatial data infrastructure of which geographical names form an essential part, increased pressure on streamlining the production and upkeep of names files and the realization of the many applications that are to be catered for.

NEW ELEMENTS ADDED DURING RECENT TOPONYMY COURSES

-Bathurst 2004

In the ***Toponymy Training Course*** organised by Greg Williams of the Geographical Names Board of New South Wales in Bathurst, Australia in 2004, the following new elements were added: new applications were the *collecting of names from indigenous/minority group cultures, legal aspects, multiple naming* and *sea area naming*, presented by the Australian navy. Another cultural aspect was the special attention paid to the *history of place names*. A new management aspect were the *data audits*

between different organisations working with supposedly the same spatial information. Communication skills were dealt with in the items on the *functioning of names board meetings*(course participants actually sat in on an actual names board meeting) and in *handling contacts with the media*.

-Malang 2005
In the ***Training Course on Toponymy*** held in 2005 in Batu near Malang, Indonesia organised by Rudolf Matindas, Jakub Rais and Widodo Edy Santoso of Bakosurtanal, *toponymic research* was dealt with in a special session: Flavia Hodges dealt with the *methodology of linguistic research and with lexicology and Onomastics*, Tjeerd Tichelaar gave an overview of *Internet sources for linguistic research*, and the lack of university courses in this field was regretted. A special application was dealt with by Jakub Rais who presented the *special small island naming programme*. Ormeling lectured on *toponymic history*.

-Vienna 2006
The DGSD Division hosted a ***Training Course in Toponymy*** held in 2006, at the Federal Office for Metrology and Surveying in Vienna, organised by that Institution and the Austrian Academy of Sciences; the organisation was directed by Dr Isolde Hausner. The staff of the Topographic Survey introduced a number of cartographic subject that had not been dealt with before: the *positioning of named objects, name sheet updating, names in foreign borderland on the map series and optimal names density of maps*. New applications were names on maps for tourism and media cartography. The Technical University in Vienna contributed with its research on *label placement in telecartography*. New *regional initiatives* were a presentation by Jörn Sievers on the coordination of national names boards (StAGN) and by Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu on the EuroGeoNames initiative.

-Maputo: 2006
In the ***Training Course on Toponymy*** held in Maputo in 2006, at the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, organised by Luis Abrahamo, communication skills were exercised by *a role play simulating a names board meeting*, and *establishing principles for decision making for names boards*. In order to provide new technical skills, lectures on *database management* and on *positioning with GPS* were given.

-Ouagadougou 2008
The ***Atelier de Sensibilisation sur la gestion des noms des lieux***, organised by Claude Tapsoba of the Institut Géographique Burkinabé in Ouagadougou in 2008 stood out because of its *cultural heritage dimensions*: the participation of Maître Titinga Frederic Pacere, the visit under his guidance to an anthropological museum and his presentation on *urban street names*, conceived to provide a living museum for the inhabitants of the capital city.

-Timisoara 2008
A ***UN Toponymy Course for Eastern Europe*** was organised by Peter Jordan and Remus Cretan, at West University in Timisoara, Romania, in 2008.There was special interest, in this multicultural part of Romania,for name standardisation as part of *preserving the cultural heritage* of the various groups ofinhabitants. *Place name history* and *street name history*were dealt with as well.

-Nairobi 2009
The UNGEGN Task Team for Africa and the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy organized the ***Second Toponymy Course for the UNGEGN East-Africa division***in Nairobi, directed at participants of the 2009 UNGEGN-session, at the premises of the Regional Centre for Mapping of

Resources for Development, thus enabled by RCMRD Director General Hussein Farah and its GIS officer Vincent Mtaroni.

The course structure answered a new concept in which we started from the need for *standardized geographical names as part of the national geospatial data structure*. In the first session we highlighted the eminence of the national toponymic database, and its benefits for administration, development, emergency mapping and preserving the cultural heritage. An *evaluation of current international name servers* showed that these contained outdated names, which proved the need for each country to standardize its own names, and not depend on foreign initiatives to do so. We included for the first time also the actual *management of a national names programme*, with finances, administration, legal issues and human resources included.

Outreach and Interaction sessions were added. Outreach meant making names data available on the internet: to this end the *functionality of a number of current official websites* providing geographical names was compared . Under the Interaction heading, the South-African website was dealt with by Mr Truman Kubheka, showing the potential to allow the public to propose names for new objects or name changes for the consideration of the names board. Both Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu and Bill Watts dealt with *regional gazetteers*. It was in the last session, termed 'African Solutions', that the major contribution to this course was presented: at UNECA headquarters in Addis Abeba the IT specialists had produced a *freely-available database programme for geographical names*, currently baptized AfricanGaz, and Mr Yoseph Mekasha provided now hands-on experience of this package for the course participants.

-Madrid 2009

The **twenty-first José Joaquín Hungría Morell Geographical Names Course in applied toponymy** offered under the auspices of the Pan American Institute of Geography & History was presented by Roger L.Payne and George Troop in 2009 at the Instituto Geográfico Nacional in Spain. This course had a more advanced level than the usual PAIGH courses, which were modified to allow for analyses, discussions and refinement of the names policies already developed atthe national level in Spain regarding their*functioning and effectiveness*, and whetheradditional policies would be required forsituations not yet addressed. *Internet aspects of geographic names research* were explored and much time was devoted to the *web-based maintenance programme* forgeographic names. The *changing role of the names layer in a national spatial data environment*, and theincreasing requirements for digital mapping, both general and thematic were examined.

The establishment of an *integrated data system for geographical names for the Latin Americancommunity* was discussed .

-Yaoundé 2010

The ***Atelier de Formation sur la Normalisation des noms géographiques***, held in Yaoundé in 2010 was organised by UNGEGN and the Institut National de Cartographie, directed by Michel Simeu. During this course Mr Simeu regretted the non-existence of any academic degree programmes in Toponymy. Fernand Isseri gave a presentation on the *use of GPS systems*, and a contribution byTruman Kubheka on the South-African experience with a *names website* was read.

-Yogyakarta 2012:

The ***4th UN Toponymy course for the Asia Southeast and Pacific Southwest Division*** that will be held 17-21 September 2012 inYogyakarta, Indonesia, organized by Widodo Edy Santoso, of

Bakosurtanal/BIG (National Coordination Agency for Surveys and Mapping/National Agency for Geospatial Information) will be structuredalong the same lines as the Nairobi 2010 course. Focus will be on the national toponymic database as a part of the national geospatial data infrastructure. A new element will be the *bringing in agreement of statistical and topographical toponymy*, one of the aspects of the new UN-GGIM initiative. Course participants will also be introduced to the UNSDI Pilot *Gazetteer Framework project* Bakosurtanal/BIG has started together with CSIRO. Another new item will be the *audit of existing records*, in order to coordinate toponymic information from different parts of the country as well as from different survey periods (and therefore collected according to different standards, processes and procedures).

ASSEMBLING THE NEW ELEMENTS

These new elements, added more or less haphazardly to these courses held during the last decade, when categorised and grouped would result in the following structure:

a. Toponymic research
Although even advanced UNGEGN courses would never be mainly research-oriented and would have practical applications as their primary focus, course participants at least should be directed to current research topics and methodologies intoponymic research (Hodges). That would imply they should have some idea of *lexicology*(the branch of linguistics that studies the stock of words (the lexicon) in a given language), *onomastics* (the study of proper names), and *etymology*, the study of the history of words, their origins, and the changes that occurred in their form and meaning over time. The *historic study of place names* would illustrate ethnic settlement patterns, the physical conditions during settlement and could also help identify discrete periods of immigration. Provision of *internet sources for linguistic research* would help in providing insight in this field.

b.Management issues and organizational aspects
An advanced course in any field would always imply the incorporation of management aspects, if only because higher level staff would have to direct the activities of those they supervise, and would be responsible for best practice in dealing with the available resources. The main issue here would be the *management of a national names programme*: finances, administration, legal issues, human resources in maintaining and publishing the geographical names database.

As names bureaux would work in close cooperation with other institutions in the field of geospatial information, the organisation of *data audits* between different organisations working with supposedly the same spatial information, data audits within the same organisation for data collected in different regions and for data collected withing different ime periods (and therefore subject to different standards, processes and procedures) should also be tackled.

c.Special applications:
Up till now the focus of toponymic activities and courses has been on the production of gazetteers and geonames databases. This focus should be broadened and include the requirements of *urban street naming programmes*, *small island naming programmes*, and *sea area naming*. As many border map sheets of a nation´s map series would show foreign territory, the selection and versioning of *names in foreign borderland* is a special issue that deserves attention.

The best practices shown at UNGEGN, and thus also its toponymy courses were developed with the production of topographic maps/data files in mind. *Sea area naming* would already be directed at charts

instead of topo maps names, and likewise other applications come to mind like *road maps* or *maps for tourism*. Both would contain distinct sets of names usually not collected during regular toponymic activities (motorway junctions, touristic designations like Costa Brava, Italian Lakes, etc.).

A geo-information institution that started its own names standardization work simultaneously - if not earlier - than topographers is the national bureau of statistics. It would have developed and standardized names for its sets of enumeration areas, but even if those enumeration areas would coincide with the administrative areas shown on the topographic maps, their names would show many spelling variants. The new UN-GGIM framework in which statisticians and topographers are expected to collaborate would provide excellent opportunities to iron out these differences between *statistical names* and topographical names.

In the standard courses the topic ´names issues for school atlas cartography´used to be incorporated. An extreme case of the necessary reduction of names to an absolute minimum, in order to preserve both optical and semantic legibility would be *media cartography*, with its short reading times, potential small resolutions or screens, varying from tv´s to handhelds.

d.Regional and Global Initiatives
Regional cooperation projects for the production of *regional geographical names datafiles, gazetteers, or even names services* are increasing. They might be preceded by *coordination of national names boards* for countries speaking the same language (like German or Dutch

e.Cultural aspects:
Toponymy as a prime example of the *cultural heritage* of linguistic communities is getting increased attention in UNGEGN, and should therefore also be part of advanced toponymy courses. Experiences with *collecting indigenous geographical names*, and with studying the *history of street names*or*history of place names* should be shared.

f.Cartographic issues
Topographical maps are stilll one of the main results of the work of toponymists, and one of the issues for these maps is an *optimal names density* of the printed map sheets, to keep these legible. The process of *updating the name sheets* during map production, and deciding on the *positioning of named objects*, in order to derive the correct coordinates.

The jumping of place names on monitors or screens when zooming or panning may affect both optical and semantic legibility as well; that is why *label placement in telecartography*also is an important cartographic issue.

g.Technical issues
It is impossible to imagine toponymy today without attention for *GPS positioning* and for *database management* . Likewise is the distribution or dissemination of standardized names becoming completely dependant on the availability on the *Internet*. *Evaluation of current international toponymic databases* should be an instructive part of toponymy courses, as would be the setting up of *web feature services*.

It is most important that course participants learn as quickly as possible that theprovincial or national toponymic database they are working on is part of the *national geospatial infrastructure*, and also become aware of what that implies regarding standards. The use of different *software packages* for

databases or webservers might be discussed, with pros and cons, and the use of Open Source packages, like African GeoNyms, the gazetteer programme developed by the UN in Addis Abeba.

h. Communication issues

Communication is crucial in various stages of the production process of standardised names, such as in interviewing informants, but also in setting up meetings of names boards. *Defining principles for decision-making* in names boards, speeding up the decision process by having *role-play names board meeting*, are possible ways of improving communication. *Special training for contacts with the media*could be added as well.

CRITERIA FOR AN ADVANCED TOPONYMY COURSE PROGRAMME

Before we structure the highlighted items into a possible course programme, we should set the criteria such a programme would have to answer:

- The knowledge of toponymy as provided in the basic ICA toponymy webcourse would form the starting point for those taking the advanced course. So course participants already should be familiar with aspects like terminology, the support from UNGEGN, field work procedures, practicality of feature types, or the equivalence of generics and feature types across languages.
- The course should not detract too long from actual production time.
- The course should be interactive and provide exercises and hands-on experience
- The final goal of an advanced toponymy course would be to enable those in charge of toponymical operations to deal with them, according to the best practices shown.
- It should be possible to organize such an advanced course either for an UNGEGN division somewhere in the division area, or at a regional training institute such as in Ile Ife (RECTAS), Nairobi (RCMRD) or Enschede (ITC). In both cases an international lecture team would be expected to provide its input.

PROPOSAL FOR AN ADVANCED PROGRAMME

DAY 1 Opening, speeches, need for names in NSDI, applications
Session 1 The need for standardized geographical names as part of the national geospatial data structure. In this first session we highlight the eminence of the national toponymic database, and its benefits for administration, development, emergency mapping and preserving the cultural heritage, and we check the starting point: knowledge of the basic toponymy course: fieldwork, names processing, role of UNGEGN, etc.
Session 2 Examples of applications of the national names database in emergency mapping, administration and development
DAY 2 Management of a national names programme
Session 3 Management of a national names programme: Finances, administration, legal issues, human resources in maintaining and publishing the geographical names database.
Session 4 management of a national names programme: Exercises on logistics, production time needed, necessary upkeep costs.
DAY 3 Regional activities and different applications
Session 5 different applications
-Geographical names for hydrographic charts
-Geographical names for tourist maps

-Urban street naming
-Tourist /road map exercise
Session 6 Regional and global initiatives
-small islands names project
-regional datafiles (for instance ASEPSW)
-regional names services (for instance Eurogeonames)
-World names database UN
DAY 4 Regional and technical issues
Session 7 Concordance between statistical and topographical names
-UNSDI Gazetteer Framework project
-Standardization of names for statistical enumeration areas
-Smoothing differences between statistical and topographical areal object names
Session 8 Technical issues: **database applications***
-Database management
-Text files, spreadsheets or databases
-Database design
-Requirements for school atlas names database
DAY 5 Technical issues – webservers and software packages
Session 9Software packages*
-Open source options vs commerial options: criteria for selection
-Designing Access applications
-Working with AfricanGaz
Session 10technical issues: internet and web servers*
-Website design: criteria for selecting packages
-Web feature services
-Entering names into databases and Google Earth
-Homework with website development assignment
DAY 6 websites and cultural heritage*
Session 11 evaluation of current Internet products
-Evaluation of current websites
-Evaluation of current names servers
Session 12 cultural aspects
-Place names as cultural heritage
-History of place names, street names
-Collecting indigenous names
DAY 7 Toponymic research and documentation
Session 13 Toponymic research
-Onomastics and lexicology
-Etymology and the historic study of place names
-Internet sources for linguistic research
Session 14 Toponymic documentation
-Study of linguistic and toponymic sources
-Preparing briefs for place name guides
-Collating sources and maps
DAY 8 Positioning
session 15 D**ocumentation exercise**
-Assignment: write a study on the placenames in a specific area, based on the sources made available (origin, development, meaning)
Session 16 Positioning
-Theoretical aspects of positioning
-Assessing optimal object positioning procedures: best practices
-Hands-on GPS exercise
DAY 9 Cartographic aspects
session 17 Cartographic aspects:paper and digital map series
-Updating names sheets andAssessing optimal names density for map sheets

- Dealing with areal names on adjoining map sheets; multiple naming
- Digital/automatic place name labeling -Jumping place names on monitors screens (hierarchical aspects)
Session 18 Audit of existing records
- in order to coordinate toponymic information from different parts of the country
- in ordeer to coordinate toponymic information from different survey periods (and therefore collected according to different standards, processes and procedures)
-in order to coordinate names record from different national institutions
DAY 10 Communication and contacting the media
Session 19communication issues
-Interview techniques
-Role play for names board meetings
Session 20 Special training for contacts with the media
-Special media training
-Media cartography
-Producing media maps exercise
Closure

*) sessions for which course participants need computer access

CONCLUSION

It is the intention to discuss this course programme proposal together with other proposals for advanced toponymy courses sent in to the 10th UNCSGN,during plenary or businessWG meetings. Apart from identifying potential lecturers that could participate in the lecturing staff of such courses and could contribute by delivering course syllabuses in advance, the working group is also looking for sponsors that can pay for their airfares.Apart from lecturers in English, the WG is also looking for lecturers in French, Arabic or Portuguese.

(The customary organizational model for such courses until now has been that the lecturers are seconded by their employers to attend the courses for their duration, while local organisers (usually national mapping agencies) would pay for local transportation, accommodation and meals, and that sponsors are sought to provide for the airfares. Lecturers would receive no remuneration.)

In the absence of academic teaching programmes in toponymy, with the webcourses developed by the ICA, by PAIGH and by the Division Francophone of UNGEGN (see the Report of the Convenor of the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy 2007-2012 for the 27th session of UNGEGN, 2012), an important first step is provided that allows for a basic education in toponymy through self-study with some interaction, and with the provision of all the necessary literature. The logical nextstep for further education in toponymy would be the creation of an advanced course,