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Toponymic data files and gazetteers (data processing and tools, database management, data dissemination: products and services) (Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers)

Benefits of persistent unique identifiers of named places and place names

Summary**

Places have been given names to enable people to speak and write about them effectively. The purpose of a name is to identify a particular place in human communication. As long as the sender and recipient of a message use the same names for the same objects, the message serves its purpose and helps people to think and act correctly in each situation. In maps and gazetteers, names help places to be found.

For applications in information technology and geospatial information infrastructure, names or other attributes of places do not usually identify places precisely enough, for example, when different places have the same name. Therefore, the geographic names data models are often accompanied by unique identifiers for named places and/or place names in order to identify them unambiguously for technical purposes.

Persistent unique identifiers allow, for example:

- Integration of data resources; association of designated places and their standardized names with respective objects in other registers and geospatial datasets
- Solid information on the life cycle of places and place names, based on the database object versions generated whenever there is a change in an object
- Change-only updates, based on information on the life cycle of places and place names; the updates may include additions, changes and deletions of the objects during a given time period

* [GEGN.2/2019/1](#).

** The full report was prepared by Teemu Leskinen, National Land Survey of Finland. The report will be available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/1st_session_UNGEGN.html, in the language of submission only, as document GEGN.2/2019/55/CRP.55.



- Dataset status at a given moment, based on information on the life cycle
- Provision of information on a specific place or place name as linked data in both browsable and machine-readable formats.

The report provides information on the management of unique identifiers and on the life cycle of places and place names contained in the Geographic Names Register of the National Land Survey of Finland. The report also contains information on related benefits, applications and possibilities regarding the development of information services and the national geospatial information infrastructure.
