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NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION
ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF NATIONAL NAMES AUTHORITIES

The Swedish Names Authority and its work

Paper submitted by Sweden

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1. The administrative structure of the Swedish Place Names Authority.

The National Land Survey of Sweden (NLS) is the Swedish Place Names Authority. The NLS, which has the responsibility for basic civilian and military mapping and for cadastral matters in Sweden, was formed in 1974 through the merger of two government agencies, the Land Survey Board and the Geographical Survey Office. Prior to the merger the two agencies, both formally and by tradition but without being officially designated as place names authorities, had had responsibility for standardizing geographical names. In connection with the merger, the standing instructions for the NLS were extended to include the responsibility "to ensure that geographical place names are properly and carefully maintained..... and to have the right to standardize geographical names to the extent that this does not infringe on the rights of others". This means that the NLS has the right to make decisions regarding the spelling and physical placement of all names which are not the responsibility of other agencies (see below). The standardization of cadastral names is regulated in other statutes.

In 1985 a Place Names Advisory Board was formed to deal with formal place name questions and also with the responsibility for disseminating information regarding the standardization of geographical names. The work of the board is administered by the NLS whose representative is also chairman. The board's other members represent the Post Office Administration, the Central Office of National Antiquities, the National Federation of Arts and Crafts, the Board of Dialects, Place Names, Folk Songs and Folk Music Research Institutes, the Swedish

Language Committee, the universities, various Lappish associations, and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities.

The Land Survey has powers to decide on place names in fields of central government activity although with a number of limitations. For example, the National Administration of Shipping and Navigation which produces the Swedish nautical charts, the National Civil Aviation Authority and the Swedish State Railways are empowered to allocate place names within their respective spheres of activity. The names which they use are often already in use and appear on the national maps although, perhaps, with another connotation. The standardization of names for administrative divisions - counties, communes and parishes - is not done by the NLS. This is a government responsibility. Changes in the administrative divisions are, however, rare and new names are very seldom given. In those cases where the NLS does not have the direct responsibility for standardizing names, the responsible agencies often send their material to the NLS for consideration and comments.

2. The organization of place names activities at the NLS.

At the NLS there are two sections working with place names, one in the Department of Real Estate which works with questions related to real estate names, the other in the Department of Map Production and Field Surveys which works with other place name questions. The two sections have common in-house training and external information programmes. A data base containing place names is being built up as part of the national mapping activities.

Since the beginning of the present century, there has been close cooperation between the makers of the national map series and the Institute of Place Names Research in Uppsala. This cooperation was started when the map makers ran into problems with the spelling of Lappish and Finnish place names in Swedish Lapland; but was later extended to include consultation on the spelling of all place names. Cooperation has also been established with the Institutes of Place Names Research in Gothenburg, Lund and Umeå.

During the past ten years the NLS and the Central Office

of National Antiquities (ONA) have also worked together with place name questions. ONA is the administrative authority responsible for the care of objects of cultural and historical interest in Sweden. Currently the care of place names is looked upon as being an integral part of these activities. The involvement by ONA in place names questions is a result of the attempts which have been made by some authorities to replace place names with other designations.

3. The collection of place names in the field.

The systematic collection of material related to place names began in conjunction with the start of the field work for the Land Use map series towards the end of the 1930's.

The majority of the place names which are used on the Swedish national maps are collected in the field in the course of cartographic field work by field surveyors or, on a part-time basis, by university students specializing in Nordic languages. This task involves not only the collection of names but also a careful investigation of their origins and an exact physical definition of the objects to which the names refer. The latter is particularly important as there is a close correlation between the type and size of the lettering used on Swedish maps - particularly on the Land Use maps - and the size and extent of the object itself. To ensure that the spelling agrees with Swedish, Finnish or Lappish spelling rules the local pronunciation of the place names is also recorded.

University students have been engaged in the collection of place names since the beginning of the 1900's. The aim of this work has been principally academic and scientific and the material which has been collected has been kept in the archives of the institutes of place name research. In the instructions which regulate this work, the main emphasis is placed on the collection of the correct pronunciation of the names. A phonetic alphabet which has been specially designed for Swedish dialects is used. Great care is also given to the selection of persons from whom the information is collected. A basic requirement is that the persons giving the information should speak as old a dialect as possible. The many varied dialects which were spoken in different parts of Sweden are slowly disappearing and the Swedish which is

spoken today in most parts of the country is close to the written language.

These academically oriented activities have been carried out throughout Sweden although there are regional variations in the amount of work which has been done.

The collection of place names by the NLS field surveyors has been carried out in a slightly different way. When work on the Land Use map started the practice was to provide the field surveyors with lists of place names which had been prepared by the institutes of place name research. The field surveyor then checked that the names were known in the area, located them correctly on the map and also collected any new names. The surveyor's prime task was to collect any additional information concerning names of buildings and natural objects which were not included on the lists. The field staff do/did not normally have formal education in this field, although as a result of in-house training programmes they are/were aware of the importance of recording the pronunciation of the names as accurately as possible. It has also been standard practice always to collect place name information from two independent sources.

After completion of the field work, name manuscripts are prepared and are sent to the institutes of place names research for professional checking. This procedure ensures that the names on newly produced maps are always spelt in accordance with current orthographic rules.

Our experiences of this way of working are, on the whole, positive. In some cases, however, the result has been that the names on the maps are not those used by the local population or that the "wrong" name for a feature has been selected from the two which were collected. However, the fact that the same methods have been used for all map sheets is in itself valuable. With hindsight, it can be said that the quality of the material is somewhat uneven and tends to reflect the level of interest and knowledge of the individual surveyors.

The character of the Swedish landscape has changed since the mapping programme started almost 50 years ago: many farm properties have disappeared, urban areas have expanded and leisure cottages have been built. This has affected place names. In connection with the revision of both large and small scale maps efforts are made to

correct names which are not fully correct or which, for other reasons, are in need of amendment. This is done through field checks and interviews with members of the local population.

4. The real estate registers.

All real estate properties in Sweden are registered in real estate registers. Every property has its own unique designation. In the rural areas the designation always includes a village name component. The real estate registers contain approximately 100 000 geographic names, which represent the greater part of the settlement names in Sweden.

The Land Use map is used as a register index map. When this map series was originally produced all place names in the registers were examined. This involved a comparison of names in the property register with the names shown on old maps and included in old documents. The material collected from these sources was examined by language experts. At this stage, additional place name information, as included in the rural property registers together with data concerning the pronunciation of the names, was collected from the Institute of Place Names Research in Uppsala. In those cases where a new spelling was suggested lists were prepared and submitted to the County Administration and other local bodies for comments. The general public was also given the chance to present comments. Finally, the complete material was handed over to the Institute of Place Names Research in Uppsala for a final examination before the lists were given official approval by the Land Survey Board (now part of the National Land Survey).

These names were then used on the Land Use and Topographic map series.

About 1970 a computerization of the real estate registers was started. This reform resulted, amongst other things, in the old rural and urban property registers being amalgamated to form a new uniform register. In connection with the computerization, all names are checked. In addition to the NLS, the institutes of place names research and the Central Office of National Antiquities are also involved in this work. In those cases where changes are proposed they are sent to the property owners for their comments. The NLS has responsibility for making

the final decisions.

Approved names are, thereafter, used on the national maps.

5. The spelling of geographical names.

In 1987 an old ordinance which regulated the spelling of Swedish place names in official documents, such as those published by the government or by government agencies, was rescinded. This ordinance was from 1927 and according to it, all place names had to be spelt in accordance with the rules used in the Word Lists published by the Swedish Academy. The ordinance was normally interpreted to mean that place names should be spelt in accordance with the common, everyday vocabulary. This will, presumably, be the case in the future although without being defined in the ordinance.

A formal, academic education is needed to be able to interpret and implement these basic rules. Previously, the NLS only utilised the services of the institutes of place names research as far as suggesting name forms was concerned, but currently, the NLS has its own place names research group.

The treatment of Lappish and Finnish places names is discussed in section 6 below.

6. Place names in minority language areas.

There are three national languages in Sweden: Swedish, Finnish and Lappish. Swedish is the dominating language; but almost all Finnish and Lappish speaking Swedes also understand Swedish. The major part of the Finnish speaking population is concentrated in the areas along the boundary with Finland along the Torne Valley; the main Lappish speaking groups are to be found in Swedish Lappland.

Lappish comprises three languages or dialects: the north Lappish, the Lule Lappish and the south Lappish. In addition to being spoken in Sweden, north Lappish is also spoken in Norway and Finland. Lule Lappish and south Lappish are also spoken in Norway. The difference between the north and south Lappish languages is comparable to that between Swedish and German. Pure Lappish place

names are generally only found in the north-west mountainous parts of Sweden. In the eastern, forest areas of northern Sweden, Lappish place names have either been translated to Swedish or Finnish or replaced by Swedish or Finnish place names. Finnish place names are most often found in the Finnish speaking areas of the Torne Valley, although old Finnish names are found in the forest areas of central Sweden in the provinces of Dalarna and Värmland where groups of Finns settled in the 17th and 18th centuries. In these areas place names have been influenced by Swedish.

In 1978 a common Nordic orthography was adopted for the north Lappish language at a Lappish conference and this has been used in the national map series. In 1984 a similar agreement was reached for the spelling of Lule Lappish but this has, as yet, not been introduced on maps. Norway and Sweden have for many years had a common south Lappish orthography.

Finnish place names in the Finnish speaking areas of northern Sweden are spelt on the national maps and for other official purposes according to Finnish orthography. All place name with Finnish roots in central Sweden have been adapted to Swedish orthographic principles.

7. Toponymic guidelines

The Swedish toponymic guidelines for cartography were presented at the 4th United Nations Conference in Geneva in 1982. Since then a government White Paper on Swedish place names policy has received parliamentary approval. As a consequence, the original guidelines are now, in a number of cases, outdated. Furthermore, a number of new map series have been published since 1982 and the text on the existing series has been changed in connection with revision. This means that the first edition of the guidelines will have to be revised. This will be done later this year, in which case it will be possible to present the revised guidelines at the next meeting of the expert group.

8. The new Swedish national atlas.

The first Swedish national atlas was completed in 1971.

It was never revised and is now out of print. Work on a completely new atlas has recently been started. Computer assisted cartographic techniques will be used which will facilitate revision. According to current plans, the first edition of the atlas, which will comprise twenty volumes, will be successively published during the period 1988-1997.

A volume dealing with languages is proposed to be included. This volume is planned to include an overview of languages in Sweden and will present the minority languages and dialects which are spoken in Sweden. It will also deal with the spread of place name elements in both an historical and geographic perspective. Studies of person names in Sweden in the past and the present will also be included. Before this volume can be published research will be needed.