

Section 1 General/strategic issues

Chapter 2 Toponymy web course

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2.1 Introduction

Just to show what we regard as the knowledge possessed by all those to whom the UNGEGN toponymy manual is directed, we will deal with the content of the toponymy web course developed by the International Cartographic Association and the UNGEGN. It can be accessed from the UNGEGN website (see figure 2-1) as well as the ICA Commission on Education and Training website (see <http://lazarus.elte.hu/cet/>, under 'Internet Cartography Teaching Courses').

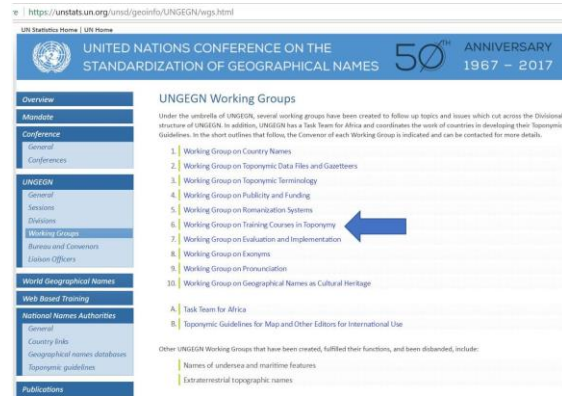


Figure 2-1 UNGEGN website

The UNGEGN website, accessed through <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN> leads through the UNGEGN Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy and its link to the English language

toponymy web course (see figure 2-2) to the actual web course site at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs_data_ICAcourses/index.html. It consists of 20 modules, each dealing with a specific aspect of toponymy, and consisting of the actual lessons, exercises (and the answers to them), relevant documents (full text) and links to further literature or other relevant websites.

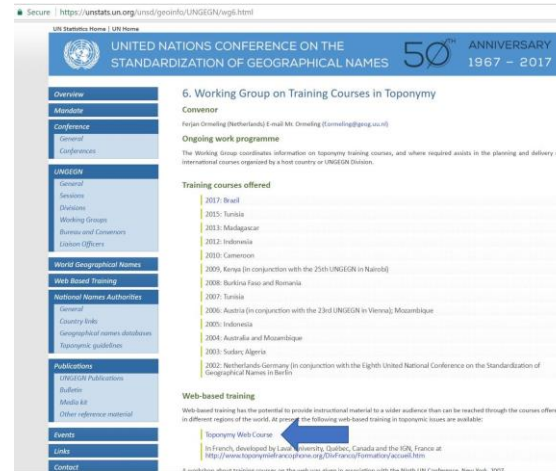


Figure 2-2 WG Training Courses in Toponymy

This web course (see figure 2-3) has been structured in such a way that it is meant to be self-explanatory, and that one can follow it independently, with the help of the exercises and documents provided online.

2.2 Web course contents and structure

After an introductory module (see figure 2-4 for the modules that together compose the course), explaining the need for standardization of geographical names, the



Figure 2-3 UNGEGN/ICA Toponymy web course

course first deals with the naming process (module 2), explaining why humankind gives names to the spatial objects in its environment, what kind of names are given, and how these names develop over time. Once given, these geographical names tend to get other functions (module 3), next to their primary orientation function: they become links in data exchange, but also serve as symbols, are used as brand names and as educational concepts.

The course then follows the institutional process developed by national spatial data agencies (module 4), by describing how names are collected during field work (module 5), necessitating not only the recording of their correct spelling and pronunciation, but also their georeferencing (module 6).

Once collected and georeferenced in the field, the geographical names are being processed at the office, prior to their standardization (module 7), and this processing requires quite a number of considerations, depending on the actual situation: there might be

different language groups, each with its own set of geographical names, living within the area for which the names have been collected (module 8, multilingual areas), and this in turn necessitates dealing with languages (module 9), writing systems (module 10) and the conversion of one writing system to another (module 11). These are complex issues, and as the UNGEGN has described and documented a number of best practices in its publications, these are described in module 12.

Once geographical names have been collected and standardised nationally, they are used in school and reference atlases, in the news media, by press agencies, etc., and in this international environment it becomes necessary to deal with the issue of exonyms (module 13). To help with these international issues, UNGEGN has induced individual nations to each publish its toponymical guidelines (module 14), to help map and news editors from other countries to deal with the nation's geographical names.

Back again to the institutions that have standardised the names, their work isn't done as yet, as they have to make the standardised geographical names available to the public at large, and this calls for the production of gazetteers, names data bases and names servers (module 15). The names now can be entered on maps, and module 16 shows how that is done. All the other editorial aspects of applying the geographical names to atlases, and how to proceed consistently here, are dealt with in module 18.

In the description of the course contents, I have forgotten module 17, which is status-related and shows how names are made official, for example by place name acts. When changes in place names are foreseen, to avoid ambiguity, this requires careful planning and intermediate periods in which both the old and new names are valid, a process described in module 19.

Finally, module 20 deals with geographical names as our cultural heritage, something of value to be preserved, even if no longer referred to in our day-to-day usage, as humankind is becoming increasingly urbanised.

2.3 Concepts dealt with in the web course

In the course of the 20 modules, a number of concepts are introduced, explained and defined. The primary concepts, of course, are *geographical names* (this term will be alternated with *toponyms* and/or *geonames*), and *standardization*. *International standardization of geonames* can only occur when these names have been standardized on a national basis first. Here we have the concept of *univocity*, the ideal of having only one unique, specific name for every geographical object. When studying geonames, immediately the concepts of *variant*

UNGE GN-ICA webcourse on Toponymy - PROGRAM			
COURSE MODULES	SELF STUDY	EXERCISE(S)	DOCUMENT(S)
1 Introduction	S01	E01	D01
2 The naming Process	S02	E02	D02
3 Functions of geographical names	S03	E03	D03
4 National Agencies	S04	E04	D04
5 Field collection systems	S05	E05	D05
6 Reference systems	S06	E06	D06
7 Office processing, standardization	S07	E07	D07
8 Multilingual areas, minority names	S08	E08	D08
9 Languages	S09	E09	D09
10 Writing systems	S10	E10	D10
11 Conversion systems	S11	E11	D11
12 UN Role	S12	E12	D12
13 Exonyms	S13	E13	D13
14 Toponymical Guidelines	S14	E14	D14
15 Toponymical data files	S15	E15	D15
16 Names placement	S16	E16	D16
17 Legal status of names	S17	E17	D17
18 Editorial issues (atlases)	S18	E18	D18
19 Toponymical Planning	S19	E19	D19
20 Names as cultural heritage	S20	E20	D20

Figure 2-4 Web course modules contents

names /allonyms (different name versions for the same geographical object) and *homonyms* (similar names for different objects) will crop up, as reasons, why standardization is necessary in order to decrease the ambiguity in dealing with geonames.

Geonames are differentiated according to categories, such as *oronyms* (mountain names), *odonyms* (road names), *choronyms* (area names), *hydronyms* (water names), and may further be differentiated according to: *anthro(to)ponyms* (objects named after people) and *hagionyms* (religious names). There also are the distinctions between current toponyms and *historical names*, and between (locally official) toponyms, *conventional names* and *exonyms*.

In many geonyms we can spot the *generic* and *specific name parts*, we may differentiate between *simplex names* (single word toponyms) and *composite names*, the latter consisting of more elements. Then there are name attributes like *name gender* (is it le fleuve or la fleuve?) and *name number* (is it plural or singular?). In some languages the form of the toponyms changes, depending on its function in the sentence, leading to different case endings: we go to Kiev: до Києва (do Kieva) vs. we are staying in Kiev: в Києві (v Kievi) vs. We have left Kiev: Київ (Kiev). Apart of such changes in case there may also occur the joining of affixes or suffixes, like *postpositional generics* (like the ending on øya, that is –island, e.g. Hinnøya, Flakstadøya) or the names may occur in definite or indefinite form: elv is a river, but elven is the river in Swedish (-en here is the *definite article*).

When dealing with toponyms in other countries then our own (for instance when producing atlases or when

reading news bulletins) we are confronted with the existence of *exonyms* versus *endonyms*. We might tackle this issue by referring to the *Local names policy* (the use of locally official names) already adhered to in the 1880s. The next step would be to ascertain whether the names we want to use are in the same alphabet as ours or in different writing systems. The *Roman alphabet rule* states that, when confronted with names from other countries using the Roman alphabet, we have to copy their spelling, including all the *diacritical signs* they may contain. For countries not using the Roman alphabet, we have to turn to transcription systems, such as *transcription* or *transliteration*, decided by either one or the combination of the *source country* and the *receiver country*. When such systems are used to convert names in non-Roman alphabets or writing systems to ours, we call them *Romanization systems*.

Onomastics and *etymology* study the original meaning (the *semantics*) of toponyms, which may be *descriptive names*, *commemorative names*, *commercial names*, *statutory names* (names given according to the statutes, mostly of administrative entities).

Toponyms in specific areas belong to specific languages, and these languages, each with its specific *grammar* and *syntax*, decide how these names are written, spelled, abbreviated or divided. Different languages have different alphabetisation rules (see figure 2-5), and different for capitalisation and hyphenation as well. Therefore we need to know what languages are either *official*, *dead*, *disappeared*, *literal*, *national* or *minority languages* or *dialects* (local varieties of a language) in that area.

V	X	Y	Z	Æ	Å
Vaerlan 1 F5	Xanten 21D	Yam Kinnarat (Tibetiansasen) 35A B2	Zaanstad 24 C2	Ætelle 1 D5	Åbenrå 1 C6
Värmland 10 F2 G2	Xiaman (Amoy) 38 E3	Yamoussoukro 40 C5	Zadar 27 G2	Ægatiske Hav 27 H3 I3	Åbenrå Fjord 1 C6
Västana 22 E4	Xian 38 D2	Yampi Sound 52A C3	Zagreb 27 G1	Ækvatorial Guinea 40 D5 E5	Åbo 11 K2
Västerdälälven 10 F2	Xi Jiang 38 D3 E3	Yanan (Yenan) 38 D2	Zagrosbergene 30 F6 G6	Ærhus 10 G4	Åland 11 J2
Västergötland 10 F3	Xinjiang-waiwur (Sinkiang) 36 D1	Yangtsekiang (Chang Jiang) 38 C2 E2	Zahle 35A B1	Ælvelaten (banskati) 10 F2	Åkersberga 11 I3
Västernorrlands län 11 I3	Xizang 38 D2	Yantse Stadium 47C C2	Zaire (Kongo) (flod) 40 F6 E6	Ængeltorn 10 F4	Åkersberga 11 I3
Västervik 10 H4	Xuzhou 38 E2		Zaire (stat) 40 E6 F6	Æra 1 D7	Åkerbygd 1 H9 I9
Västerås 10 H3			Zakopane 20 H4 I4	Æreskränning 1 D7	Ålandsöarna 8 F4 G4
Västmanland 10 G3			Zambia 40 F7		Ålönby 1 C2
Växjö 10 G4			Zandvoort 24 C2		Ålönby 1 C2
Väru 11 M4			Zanzibar 40 G6 H6		Åmönby 2 E5
Vägar 12B B2			Zaria 42C		Åmot 10 G3
Vägnä 12B A1			Zawitern 24 C4		Åmot 10 F3
Vägnä 12B A1			Zeebrugge 24 B3		Åndåsne 8 C3 D3
Vägnä 12B A1			Zeele 24 B3		Ångermanålv 8 F3
Vägnä 12B A1			Zelen 27 G5		Åndåstungen 10 C2 D2
Vägnä 12B A1			Zepernick 21E		Åhus 1 D4
Vägnä 12B A1			Zerke 35A C2		Åhus Bugt 1 D4
Vägnä 12B A1			Zermatt 17C		Åkers 10 E2
Vägnä 12B A1			Zhanjiang 38 E3		Års 1 C3
Vägnä 12B A1					Åseda 10 G4
Vägnä 12B A1					Åsena 10 G4

Figure 2-5 Part of the names register of a Swedish school atlas, showing the sequence of names starting with a letter to which diacritical signs have been applied. (With permission of Noordhoff Atlas productions)

In areas where minority languages are spoken, we might witness the effects of *topographic bias* in the collection of geographical names, leading to an under-representation of minority names. In areas where the right of speakers of the *minority language groups* are recognised, the maps produced will show both the toponyms and the *marginal information* (legend, scale indicator, imprint, reliability diagram on the map sheet outside the map area) *bilingually* or even *biscriptually*, that is both in the official and the minority language and their writing systems.

Languages are written in different scripts (see figure 2-6), and it is considered relevant to know how these developed. Originally, *pictograms*, that is purely pictorial representations of concepts (*ideograms*) or words (*logograms*) were used, but for many languages these logograms developed into *phonograms* in which the sound value of mono-syllabic words becomes attached to the symbol representing these words. Finally the *syllabic script* develops into an alphabetic script in which symbols represent single *phonemes* instead of syllables. As a result of this development we have *ideographic* and *logographic scripts*, *syllabic scripts*, and *alphabetic scripts* that can either be vocalised or non-vocalised (see figure 2-7).



Figure 2-6 Part of Southeast Asia, showing the different scripts in use. © Menno Bolder

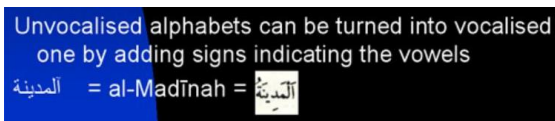


Figure 2-7 Non-vocalised and vocalised names

When producing toponymical databases, from which later gazetteers and/or name servers can be derived, one has to make sure that the necessary attribute

information for both the name and the accompanying named object is stored in the database. Apart from ID numbers, these necessary attributes may consist of the feature code, coordinates, and extent of the named object, and the language, gender, number and pronunciation of the name.

- avoid crossing names with horizontal lines (e.g. map grid)



- where possible, avoid crossing of lines (especially black and high density)



- avoid erroneous (wrong) association



- do not cover important detail

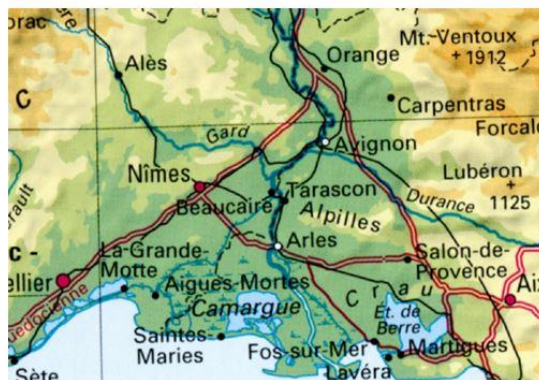


Figure 2-8 Capture of an illustration from the module on names placement in the web course. © Noordhoff Atlas Productions.

When the object of our toponymical databases also is producing maps, we might add information on the map sheet(s) the named object will occur on, and its relative importance, for incorporation on derived, smaller scale maps.

The toponymical databases also serve to help us to correctly name the objects or features on our maps. So the course also deals with applying the names to the maps, in such a way that they are legible, placed unambiguously (so that it will be clear to which mapped object the names refer, see figure 2-8), and that by diversifying the fonts used, each matched to a specific feature category (such as lower case italics used to render river names) it becomes easier to identify a name belonging to a specific feature category on the map.

Kerning (the adjustment of the space between two consecutive letters) is a concept from typography, as are *serifs*.

Finally, in the module on Names as cultural heritage, we deal with concepts such as (toponyms as) *landscape identifiers*, leading to mental or emotional associations, linked to the connotations of names discussed in the module on name functions.

2.4 Processes included in the course

When doing the web course, students were asked to look up definitions, find literature, follow links to other relevant material on the website, and generally explore the wealth of toponymical material available on the UNGEGN-website. Especially the following, downloadable publications should be mentioned:

[Glossary](#) of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names (UN-New York 2002) / [pdf](#)

[Manual](#) for the national standardization of geographical names (UN - ECOSOC, New York, 2006 available in the 6 UN languages) / [pdf](#)

[Technical reference manual](#) for the standardization of geographical names (New York, 2007) / [pdf](#)

[Resolutions](#) adopted at the ten UN Conferences on the standardization of geographical names ([English \(pdf\)](#) / [French \(pdf\)](#))

Apart from these educational publications, individual working papers handed in by delegates for UNGEGN-sessions or UNCSGN-conferences were referred to as well, and had to be accessed by course participants.

Moreover, participants had the opportunity of doing exercises in looking up data fields, georeferencing, in matching maps, identifying writing systems, in name transcription, the creation of a names data base, producing a geographical names index, solving editorial issues and adapting a map to a new dispensation.

2.5 Final remark:

In order to highlight the educational possibilities of the web course, access to it has been eased, by displaying it more prominently on the UNGEGN website (under Web Based Training), and simplifying its url: as can be seen in figure 2-9. The URL to access it directly remains: [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/ data_ICAcourses/index.html](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/data_ICAcourses/index.html)



Figure 2-9 Easy access to the Web based training course