

Section 13 Media training

Chapter 32 Fieldwork Interviews

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33.1 Fieldwork preparation

Preparations for the collection of geographical names make it necessary to anticipate possible difficulties that could manifest themselves in the field and to try to devise adequate solutions in advance, in order to avoid unnecessary efforts and loss of time.

33.2 At the office, selection of the itinerary

Before the whole undertaking, one should start at the office with the selection of the itinerary. It would be good practice to opt for a test-route first, selecting an area with a variation in geographical objects: administrative centres, dispersed or concentrated population, varied relief, permanent rivers or wadis, construction works (wells, dams, bridges), forests, cattle-breeding and agricultural areas, many hamlets, manufacturing plants, schools, cultural centres, etc...

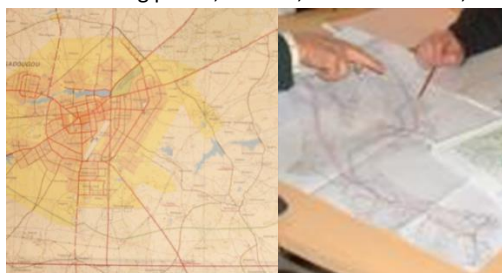


Figure 33-1 Itinerary selected on the basis of a map 1: 200 000 of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) in 2008

33.3 Specific preparatory information needed for meeting local authorities

It is always advantageous for those in charge of the fieldwork operations to contact the names bureau or the toponymists in their agency. Those may have prepared toponymic card-index systems, technical reports, or guidelines regarding the languages spoken in the fieldwork region, linguistic and social influences exercised there, sub regions for which the orthography of place name families should be harmonised, or even overviews of the mistakes that have been made in the past.

Objet : Fiche technique de toponymie : Mise à jour départementale Région Ile-de-France							
QUALITÉ GÉNÉRALE							
On observe une toponymie homogène, bien fixée, comprenant beaucoup de zones urbaines, peu d'hydronymie et de zones boisées. Les remarques des fiches techniques de la BDTopo indiquaient un assez grand nombre d'erreurs typo à corriger, ce qui a été fait dans la plupart des cas, et portait essentiellement sur l'application des règles toponymiques. Lors du suivi de l'évolution éventuelle des toponymes existants, il faudra faire attention à ne pas modifier la nomenclature de façon intempestive.							
ÉTAT DES LIEUX							
Depuis 1976, l'Ile-de-France regroupe les départements de Paris (75) et ceux dits de la « couronne parisienne » : Essonne (91), Hauts-de-Seine (92), Seine-Saint-Denis (93), Val-de-Marne (94), Val-d'Oise (95), Yvelines (78), et à quoi s'ajoute celui de Seine-et-Marne (77). Toutes les feuilles concernant la région Ile-de-France ont été complétées en BDTopo, et certaines ont été mises à jour récemment.							
Ile-de-France							
Département	Numéro	Nom de la feuille	Date de BDTopo	Date de mise à jour	Date de complé- ment	Date de révision	Domaine linguistique
95	2112	Gisors	1994-97		1950-53	1979	français
78	2115	Nogent-le-Roi	1995		1954	1995	français
91	2116	Chartres	1995		1952	1995	français
AIRE DIALECTALE							
La région fait partie du groupe de la langue d'oïl ; elle se trouve entièrement dans l'aire dialectale du français d'Ile-de-France, et de l'océanais pour la partie sud de la Seine-et-Marne et de l'Essonne. C'est une zone linguistique simple, ne présentant pas de difficulté dialectale puisqu'on retrouve les termes géométriques. Il faudra veiller à ne pas les écrire en phonétique, mais conserver leur orthographe standard, et cela même si l'habitant indique une prononciation particulière.							
REMARQUE GÉNÉRALE							
Faire attention à la cohérence des noms identiques voisins. Par exemple, si l'on a affaire à la « Plaine du Charmois », le toponyme proche serait « le Charmois », et non « Chammois ».							
GLOSSAIRE							
Abime	:	penne					
Alleu	:	propriété	(Ne pas écrire la leu)				
Arglière	:	terrain argileux	(Ne pas écrire argillière)				
Bos	:	bois	(Ne pas écrire beau)				
Du...	:						

Figure 33-2 Abstract of a toponymic card prepared by the Names bureau of IGN, the French national topographic mapping agency.

Moreover, it is always essential for those in charge of the names collecting fieldwork, to contact local authorities, to advise them of their coming, in order to inform them of the reasons for their visit and about the nature of the

work required. The local authorities thus would also be asked to support the names collection work with their local knowledge and historical expertise.

33.4 Quality check

It is always worthwhile to take stock of the state of the toponymy of the region concerned, on the basis of the collected documentation, in order to be able to estimate the time needed to complete the work.

The names bureau may assess the quality of the existing toponymy on the basis of the principles adopted (standardisation rules, transcription, transliteration, use of glossaries). By doing so, place names may be judged correct, muddled, ready for improvement or for correction after verification.

33.5 Names density

It would be just as important to discuss in advance the required average names density and the insertion or positioning of the selected names on maps of a given scale.

The number of names inserted would vary according to the nature of the operations (depending on the kind of the terrain and the legibility). The following numbers might give an idea of good practice:

On the average, we need 4 names per km², that is between 420 and 550 names on a standard map sheet at the scale 1:10 000, between 660 and 780 names on a standard map sheet at the scale 1:20 000, and from 1800 to 2000 names on maps at the scale 1:25 000.

But it would be wise to recognise that desert areas cannot contain but a very limited number of names and that highly developed areas would contain many more names. In the latter, legibility will impose restrictions, depending on the scale and (special) purpose of the map in question.

33.6 Knowledge of administrative unit lists

As it is our role to formulate general principles, we have to make sense of the country, that is, we have to find out its administrative structure and define its permanent units, made up from former or transitory units.

- 1 Structure of the country: we have to get to know the first and second order administrative divisions, and next the suitable administrative unit under which we can group the toponyms we have collected. It would be useful to write down for every administrative unit the local words that signify « family » (household, house, and yard), « clan, line », etc. in order to render these social constructs on the map and include them in the data base, taking account of this immaterial cultural heritage.

As an example, we take Tunisia: here the 24 first order administrative units (governorats) have been subdivided into 264 second-order units (délégations or municipalities). The smallest administrative division is the ward or *imada*, of which in December 2011 there were 2073.

- 2 define the objects to register: record all permanent constructed objects (such as towns, villages, local government buildings, etc.) and render them differently from former or temporary objects (former villages, dispersed buildings, etc.). – without forgetting the latter.

A complete list of administrative toponyms can only be arrived at with the help of local government officials or dignitaries that have been designated by those in charge. It would be essential to contact those in charge of local administration in order to avoid mistakes, like the insertion of non-existing administrative names (like river names), imaginary or invented names.

33.7 Preparation of the names inventory forms and of the map of the fieldwork

The objective of the toponymic fieldwork is to collect for a given area the toponyms in current use (checking whether former toponyms still are used, or new toponyms created), checking the disappearance or re-emergence of names, or whether the reference area of the names has changed, in order to create or to update toponymical data bases.

The results of this work will be written down both in names inventory forms (in French: cahier de terrain, cahier d'inventaire or État Justificatif des Noms [EJN]), and on maps of the fieldwork area.

These two documents (name forms and maps) together should contain all the necessary information and documentation regarding the current use (authenticity) of the toponyms for a well-defined area.

In order to be understood (by both the map reader and the inhabitants), it should be one's goal to let the toponyms remain as close as possible to local usage: all additions or modifications of toponyms in order to render their orthography more correct, logical, or in line with usage elsewhere should be introduced with the

help of clear standardisation principles, after having consulted local users.

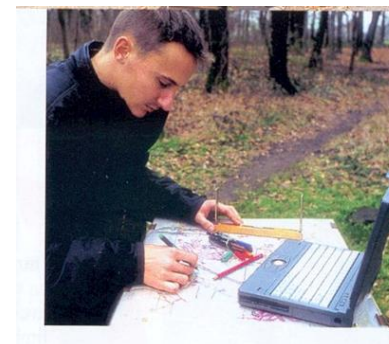


Figure 33-3 An operator is collecting toponyms, with the help of his map and his digital names inventory forms.

It is the goal to establish a names inventory form which, corresponding with the fieldwork area map, will allow the names bureau or the person responsible for the toponymy to determine, under optimal conditions, the graphic form of the names that will be incorporated in the data base.

The names inventory forms have to be filled in as follows:

All the place names listed during the field work have to be correctly located, in their final orthography in the names inventory forms, supported by the map (which is also named in French « minute de complètement »).

Whatever the format of the names inventory form (paper or digital), it has been established in order to legitimise the orthographies adopted. It should contain all the information the operator has been able to collect during the fieldwork on every name. It should at least

contain the following sections: the map title, the names contained in the maps already published, administrative names (for census areas or the land cadastre), the names according to the local inhabitants and according to name signs, the local pronunciation, former spellings, the etymology, the meaning of the name, the nature of the named object, and finally the orthography of the name as proposed by the operator.

In the names inventory form, fields have to be filled in. Some of them can be filled in beforehand, at the office; others should be filled in in the terrain. The last section, showing the final orthography as decided by the Toponymy commission or by the person responsible for the toponymy, has to be filled in after the fieldwork.

33.8 Types of names inventory forms

The names inventory forms should contain as many pages as is necessary. Its pages will be divided into different sections.

First, names should be grouped under administrative headings, with a clear title (in France this could be a préfecture or a municipality; in Tunisia a first order administrative unit (gouvernorat), and under the number of the map sheet concerned, according to the numbering system in the sheet index.

GPS geographical coordinates. Both the latitude and the longitude of the named object have to be assessed accurately; this may be done in 10m units.

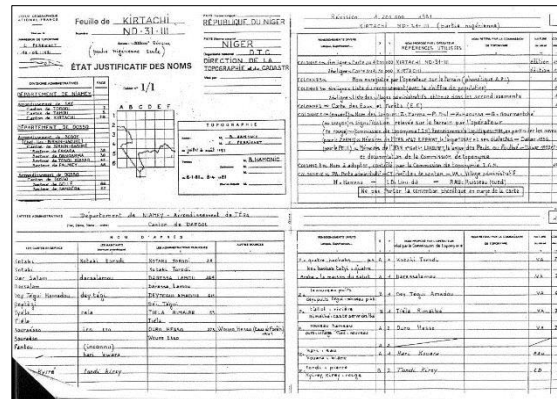


Figure 33-4 Example of some pages from a names inventory form, established in Niger in 1981

Maps already published. Here it is about the name as written on the previous edition of the map. Should this not be available, then one should have recourse to old maps, of which the title, date, scale and publisher should be mentioned.

Nature of the named object. In this section, the nature of the named object should be specified: does the name refer to the principal town, to the parish, to permanent or temporary villages, to hamlets that may be inhabited or not, to rivers ending in the sea or in other river, watercourses, lakes, ponds, to mountains, hills or valleys, passes, forests or woods, cultivated fields or conspicuous trees, etc. To guide this process, one has to compose a summarizing table on the nature of the detail (see figure 33-5) to which one may refer, and to which one has to conform to.

Importance. Regardless whether it concerns physical or man-made objects, every object is more or less important in relation to nearby objects of the same kind.

Starting from the nature of the named object, one should stick to the criteria for object importance as noted in the summarizing table in figure 33-5.

	Very important	Important	Less important
Inhabited places	1. Administrative names (provinces, municipalities, etc)	7. Hamlets, wards, castles, misc. institutions, abbeys	13. Gamekeepers lodge, farms
Orography	2. Mountain tops, ranges, passes, hills, islands, capes	8. Table lands, rocks, coombs and glens, mountain ridges	14. Caves, beaches
Hydrography	3. Rivers, lakes, canals, glaciers, bays, gulfs, deltas	9. Ponds, marshes, brooks, torrents, (water)falls	15. Wells, fountains, pools
Field names	4. National parks, forest reserves, woods	10. Non-inhabited physical regions of average importance	16. Field names of minor importance, remarkable trees
Infrastructure	5. Motorways, airports, dams, tunnels	11. Highways, viaducts, bridges, approaches, exits	17. Roman roads, ways, ski lifts
Miscellaneous	6.	12. ruins, prehistoric monuments, stadiums	18. Monuments, statues, barns, cabins

Figure 33-5 Summarizing matrix table showing the nature and the relative importance of the named objects. The fields 1-18 are ranged from higher to lower importance

Name according to cadastral or administration documents or other sources. In principle, these are the names contained on the cadastral plan. In case there are differences between the names on the cadastral plans and the ledgers, this should be mentioned. Whenever possible, one should also try to collect the name variants used by the postal authorities, by foresters, on road signs, in village guides, on village lists and in gazetteers...In this list one could also mention the names as used on information panels, or derived from local history experts.

The inhabitants. One should rather consult locals that have lived in the area all their life than recently settled

persons. The best indications are usually given by those that are most familiar with the area.

Miscellaneous. One cannot do without this section. Here one should be able to find the meaning of the name, its former and local variants, the local pronunciation, and its supposed etymology. When neither meaning nor etymology are given, one should write down the current nature of the named object, the aspect of its slopes, the kind of relief forms as well as remarkable objects too be found there: rocks, springs and quarries or its former nature, such as abandoned villages. Just one of those details might explain the meaning of the name as it has been handed down.

Name proposed by the operator. Here the name has to be entered in the orthography in which it should be inserted on the map and in the data base. Current practice in France is to insert here the name as given in the field « principal name version », « name in French », « variant name » or « local nom ».

Name retained by the names bureau. This section is left for the toponymic authorities or the names bureau to fill in for every name they have the final decision on.

33.9 Specific questions to put when meeting local authorities or inhabitants in the terrain

How to put questions?

One has to make sure to what geographical objects the names are linked. Frequently the local population attributes them to terrestrial objects rather than to rivers, or only to rivers or to some characteristic locations; names may be applied to a mountain or only to one of its slopes. Each of the main slopes or aspects of

a mountain might have a different name, different again from the name of its summit. Are these the names used in their own language, when amongst themselves?

Wherever the fieldwork takes place, one should never forget that human evidence is something fragile and uncertain. In oral inquiries, a confirmation cannot be regarded as valid unless it is corroborated from another, different source. This is a guideline one should always adhere to. And in order to validate such corroborations one should make sure that they are given spontaneously.

Regarding interview techniques, it is almost impossible to interview people regarding the names of places and designated points, without generating possible confusion; it has to be done with sensitivity. The way in which we pose questions influences in a major way the spontaneity and the validity of the answers. The question should be completely open and should leave the spokespersons completely free in answering them, thus avoiding leading questions suggesting specific answers. « How this name should be written? » is a question well-posed. One should avoid questions like « Does one write it like this? ».

1st point to deal with: identifying the place. One would ask « How do you call the place where we are? » Depending on the answer, the question could be completed by asking « What is its name in the administration language and what is it in the regional language » « How is this place named on the cadastral plan, and what is its permanent name? » One should record the pronunciation accurately, subsequently one could enlarge the scope of the investigations in order to test the names collected later against each other: « What is the name of the wood we see from here in that

direction » « What is the name of the locality situated immediately north of where we are now? » To support this question, we may compare it with a copy of the cadastral plan, or other administrative documents that were taken along.

2nd point: the meaning of the names. « What is the meaning of that name? ». «To what events in local history does it relate? » « What legends does it refer to? » One should also write down the relationship with the terrain forms, the geographical location (situation), the nature of the soil, or whether there are any rocks, remarkable wells or ruins nearby...

3^{ed} point: the orthography. Here one should take care not to make any suggestion regarding the spelling, in order to avoid that the spokespersons might find it better than the one they use themselves, and therefore could be tempted to substitute them. « How do you write that name? », and subsequently « Is the name correctly written on the cadastral plan? » « Did you also see that name written differently? » and if so: « Where? »

4th point: the pronunciation. It frequently transpires that a name can be pronounced in different ways according to the spokespersons. Of course, one has either to record the pronunciation with the help of the international phonetic (API) or with the Roman alphabet as its letters is pronounced in the country concerned

One should only pose simple, direct and precise questions, and deal successively with the different points they are bearing on. One should adapt the conversation to the level of the spokespersons in order not to ask them something beyond them, which would put them in

a difficult position, as the necessity could always emerge that the spokesmen would have to be interviewed again.

Finally, it would be local cultured persons (intellectuals, teachers...) that can shed light on the etymology of the place names collected, former orthographies, different possible or conjectured meanings, social histories, the credibility of ancient legends, and the validity of the information already received elsewhere.



Figure 33-6 Collection of toponyms during fieldwork at Ghar el Melh (Tunisia) in 2015

Never believe that this multitude of precautions is redundant or superfluous. All information collected can be required later when the names bureau has to express its opinion regarding the difficult cases that would be submitted to it, as every piece of information could enlighten it.

33.10 References

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