Processing the names in the office and organizing a board

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Aims today

- Following a process
- Indicate some different models for names authorities ... membership, secretariat, some legalities
- Preparing material for a board meeting
- Follow up after decisions
- Some secretariat tasks
Process ........

- Gathering names
  - field collection from local use
  - other sources

- Processing in office
  - to database, etc.

- Official recognition
- Modifying the records
- Dissemination
Path to follow

- Assuming a data base structure – enter records, make cross-references to old or variant names (manual)

- Organize meeting and present documents to support acceptance (or refusal) of names

- Gazetteers, mapping, GIS, atlases, media, web searching ...

- Prepare materials for decision-making on names (spelling, application, etc.)
  - single / by map sheet

- Process the results of name decisions ...
  ... and make data available for use
Official recognition - decision-making

- Who should decide about the names?
  - Which names to make official?
  - How to spell the names?
  - One name for a feature?
  - Extent of feature named?
    - Delineation/geometry

- Consider establishment of a board
Who decides on what names?

- Friends and family
- Local community
- Province / state
- National level
- International level
Basic premises

- Geographical names should be clear and unambiguous
- Each country has control over the geographical names in its own territory
- Nationally recognized names are the basis for international use
Justifying a national programme?

- Not always easy to justify the benefits in financial terms
- Considerable money and time are spent on different programmes; overlapping efforts
  - little coordination and conflicting results
- Consolidated, small nucleus of dedicated people
  - at less cost
  - more consistent information in government documents
  - names more readily available to general public
Support from the United Nations

- UN resolution I/4a 1967 underlines need to establish national agencies … again V/15 1987
  - Importance of toponyms in spatial data infrastructure … UN Regional Cartographic Conferences, 2000, 2001 and UN res. VIII/6, 2002
  - Preservation of toponyms as elements of identity and cultural heritage … VIII/9 and IX/4 + link with UNESCO
Some types of names authorities

- The choice depends on the nature of the country
- (1) Default if no names board?
- (2) Centralized national names board
  - all decisions under one roof
  - by sub-committees: feature types, language ..
- (3) Decentralized to regional names boards
  - with central umbrella coordinating authority
  - with regional committees

  *Is it a board, a council ..?*
(1) Default scenario

Advantages:
• Need for names; related expertise
• Collect names during field survey
• Available finances

Disadvantages:
• Follow mapping agenda
• Decisions usually for maps only
• Lack of breadth of expertise in toponymy
• Political pressures?
(2) names authority (centralized)

National Names Authority (centralized)

Office

Branch offices

Sub-committees

Advisors

Examples:
New Zealand
Madagascar
Ireland
Estonia
Hungary
Hungarian Committee on Geographical Names

Responsibility - Under Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development

Legal basis - Decree 1989 and 1992

Decisions – physical and transport features

Advice – administrative names; treatment of names outside Hungary

Members – national mapping, departments of both domestic and foreign affairs; transport; geographical science, education and higher learning; experts in linguistics; local authorities, minorities; major map publishers; national press

Meetings – 3 to 5 times a year
Names authority (decentralized)

- National Forum for Policies
  - Regional committee
  - Office

Examples:
- Australia
- Canada
Geographical names - Canada

Administrative structure

Geographical Names Board of Canada
(national authority)
... since 1897 ...

Chair

Sec.

10 provinces

3 territories

11 federal depart.

(2) Adv. com. chairs
GNBC ...

- √ Forum for discussion
- √ Development of policies
- √ International, United Nations activities
- √ Receive advice on toponymic problems
- √ Work on common projects
- X .. Name decisions
Provincial and territorial names authorities

- Some have administrative structures
- Some have names boards

Public appointees
- academia
- First Nations
- Northern Ontario
- francophone rep.

Ex officio

Ministry of Natural Resources

Advisory to Minister

ONTARIO

Chair

OGNB
Names authority (central & regional)

Examples:
U.S.A.
South Africa
Names authorities – January 2009

Geographical Names Authorities

- **Green**: With national names authorities
- **Purple**: No national names authorities
- **Orange**: Status unknown
Names authorities - meetings

Names discussions:
A. Mongolia
B. Canada – advisory committee
C. Australia – NSW board
Composition, mandate

- Number of members:
  - usually 6-18 ..... 44 in Madagascar (1973)

- Types of members:
  - national / regional / municipal governments
  - cultural and language groups
  - non-government experts (e.g. universities, scientific academies, publishers, historical societies)

- Mandate:
  - natural features; populated places; municipal units – towns, etc.; streets; buildings; ephemeral features
  - features in parks, on indigenous lands; marine features
  - exonyms
Legal and other considerations

- Try to have names authority established by law, act, etc. (try to keep up to date)
- Appointments of chair, members
  - by whom and for how long?
- Lead department? Secretariat?
- Who pays for participation of members?
- Is the names authority advisory or has it the ultimate decision-making role?
- Is there an obligation for government to use these names? Is this binding?
- Writing of mandate/terms of reference?
Process

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Authorizing the toponyms 1

- Before meeting
  - Consistent preparation of documents for board meeting
    ... name explanation, map, sources used, etc.
    ... difficulties – language, grammar, application, more than one name known
  - Likely temporary record in data base
  - Indicate application of name to feature
  - Distribute in advance
Authorizing the toponyms 2

- After meeting
  - Modify the database records
  - Prepare decision list for signature
  - To Deputy Minister? To gazette/newspaper?
  - Necessary to address feedback?
  - Minutes of meeting to be made available
  - Contact those submitting names
  - Ensure names available for mapping, web, etc.
Why are some boards ineffective?

- No one reason! Some suggestions:
  - Lack of
    - commitment of management, particularly in the lead department (resources)
    - Secretariat as focal point
    - interest/commitment of board members
    - good advisors on subjects of concern
    - clear direction/mandate
    - consultation with local community and provision of feedback
    - availability of decisions and their use by government
Secretariat support

- Core group
  - professional/technical
- Focal point for national toponymic activity
- Leadership; organization; communication
- Prepare materials, meetings, follow-up
- How many people?
  - depends on whether other staff for database, media contacts, some committee preparations
Some Secretariat tasks - 1

- Liaison with board members, gov., public
- Organize board meetings (how often?)
- Prepare board documents
- Recording and archiving minutes / decisions
- Signatures, posting ... distribute decisions
- Ensure name decisions are in the records
- Answer enquiries
Some Secretariat tasks - 2

- Develop forms and information sheets for name proposals
- Provide support for Board appointments
- Take responsibility for Board budget
- Provide leadership in activities associated with the Board ... workshops, gazetteers
- Keep aware of international activities