

# toponymy course

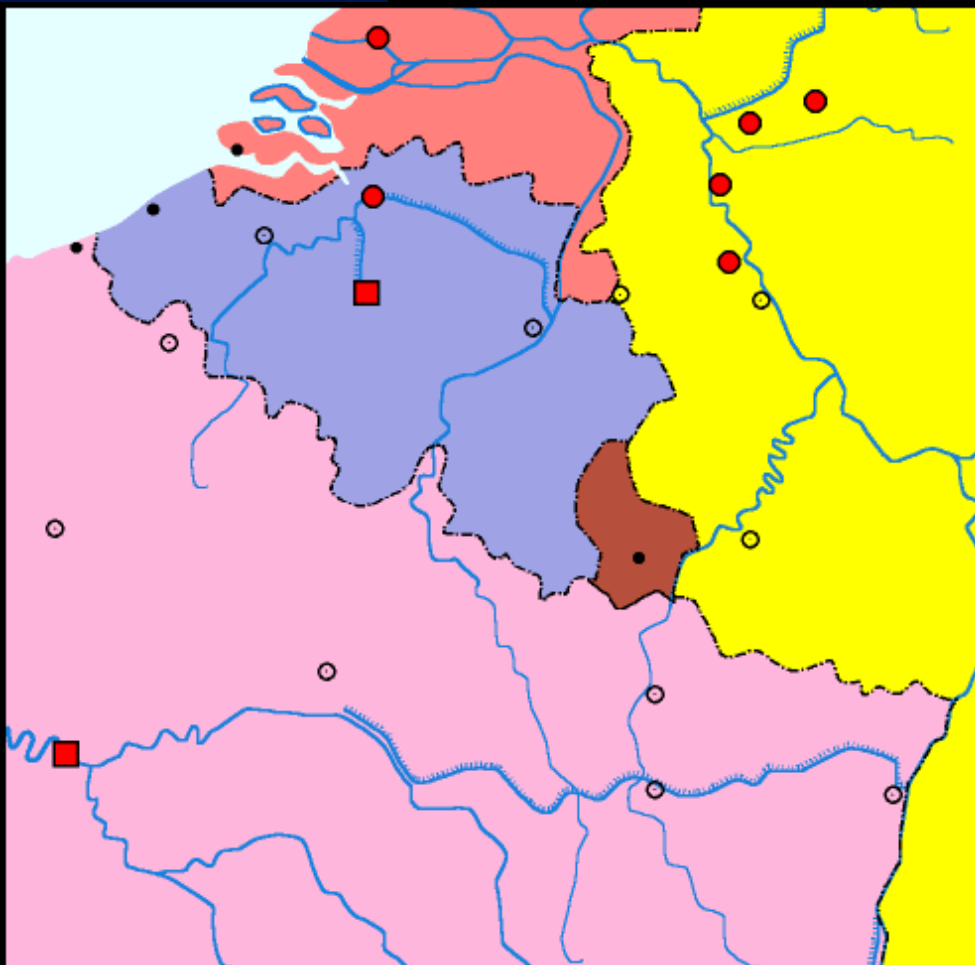
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# Naming Principles

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**We give names in order to have labels for geographical objects**



Why do we name? In order to make sense of our environment

# We give names

- In order to be able to have labels for geographical objects.
- That is much more important than the semantic meaning of the names
- We give names to point, linear, area- and 3D-objects on the Earth's surface

# What do we name:

- Rivers and lakes
- Mountains
- Settlements
- Roads, bridges, etc
- Bays, gulfs, capes
- Polders, huertas
- Estates
- Administrative areas
- Regions
- Islands
- Fields
- Houses, farms
- Slopes

# What do we name them for?

- Attribute names
- Names of cardinal directions
- Names of soil or vegetation characteristics
- Names to commemorate events
- Names that commemorate other places
- Names to commemorate people
- Names with religious overtones
- Names to stake claims

# Names mostly start as descriptive names

- So first names mostly are transparent.
- Later, because knowledge of the (initial) language disappears, they may become opaque

# Nature of the name:

- Specific part
- Generic part
- Possible transfer to other objects (false generics)

The relationship between specific and generic name parts may indicate:

- nature
- property
- purpose
- events



# What is expressed in geographical name? Relationships between x and y

- X with/of Y: Thabazimbi (mountain with iron)
- X resembles Y: Vaal River (river like the colour grey)
- X belongs to Y: Simon's Town (Town of Simon)
- X at Y: Barkley East (Barkley in the East)
- X for Y: Signal Hill (hill for signalling)
- X where Y happened: Rustenburg (town where they rested)

(after Meiring, 1993)

# These relationships might be expressed in place names because specific events happened there:

- Physical
- Physiological
- Sensory
- Emotive
- Intellectual
- Communicative
- Social
- Controlling
- Movement
- Impact
- Transfer

# Names might be

- Simplex: Hawaii, Oslo, Pretoria, Enschede
- Complex: Port Elizabeth, al-Qahira, New York, Frankfurt am Main

# Apart from establishing relationships or memorizing events, names do more:

They have/provide connotations!  
(descriptive backing):

What do you think of when you hear the name

Hawaii,

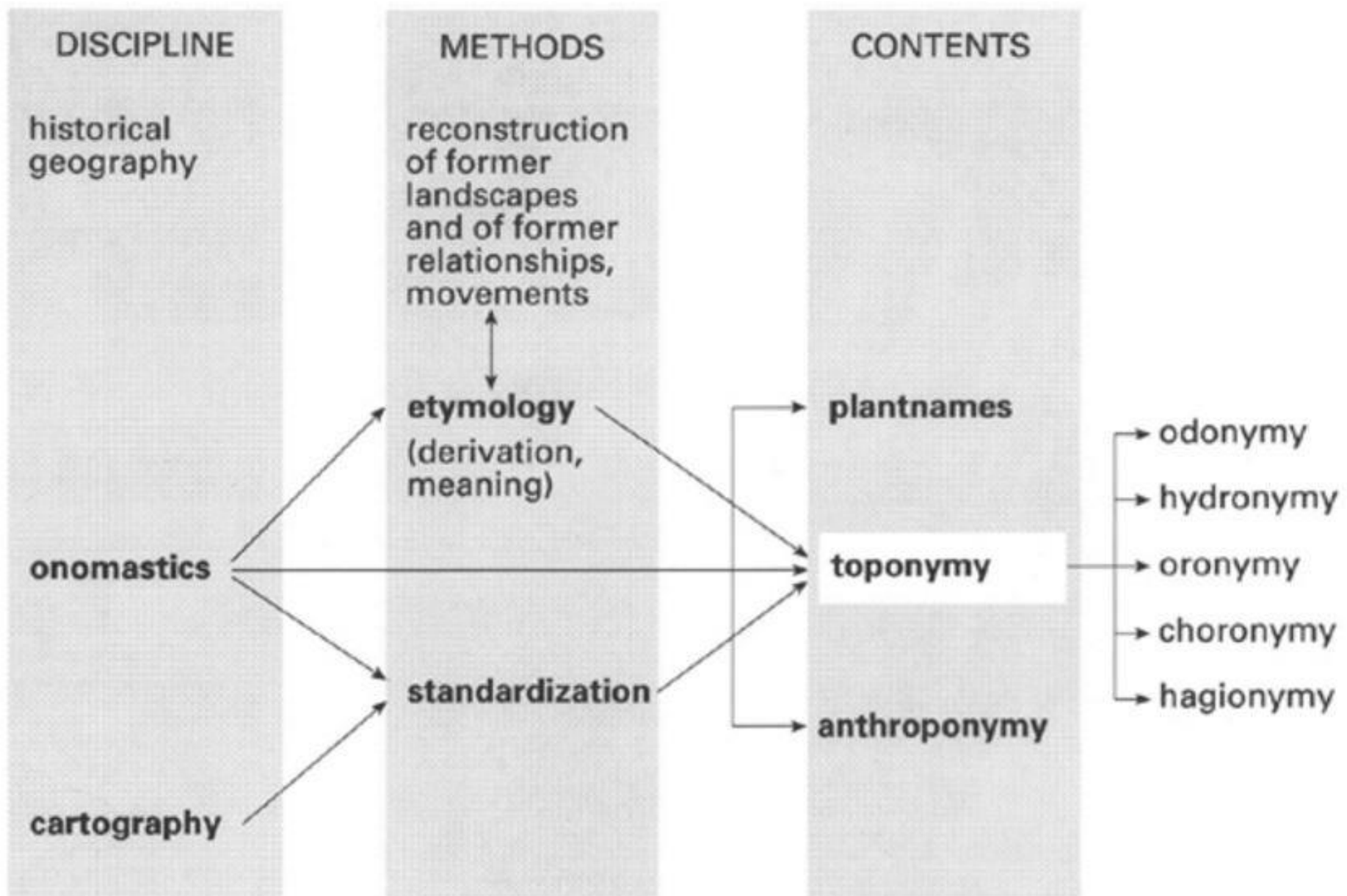
New York,

Gaza Strip

Pernambuco?

# Names do more (2)

Names provide boundaries: in an urban environment street names are grouped in themes, so that when a person hears a street name, she recognises the theme and will know where to go

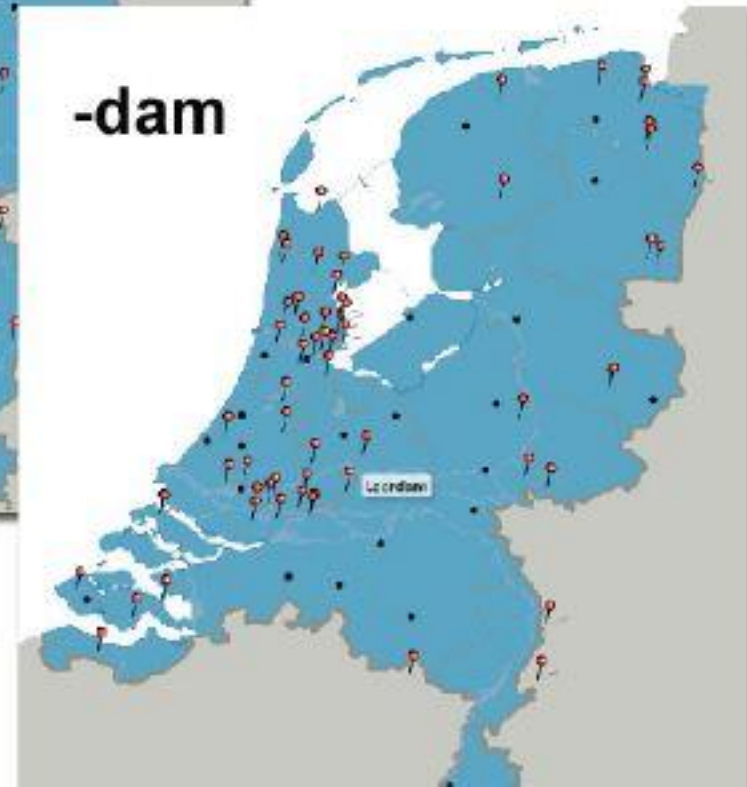


# Historical aspect:

Names tell us something about:

- The nature of the entity named when the name was given
- The nature of the society that provided the name: its attitude towards nature

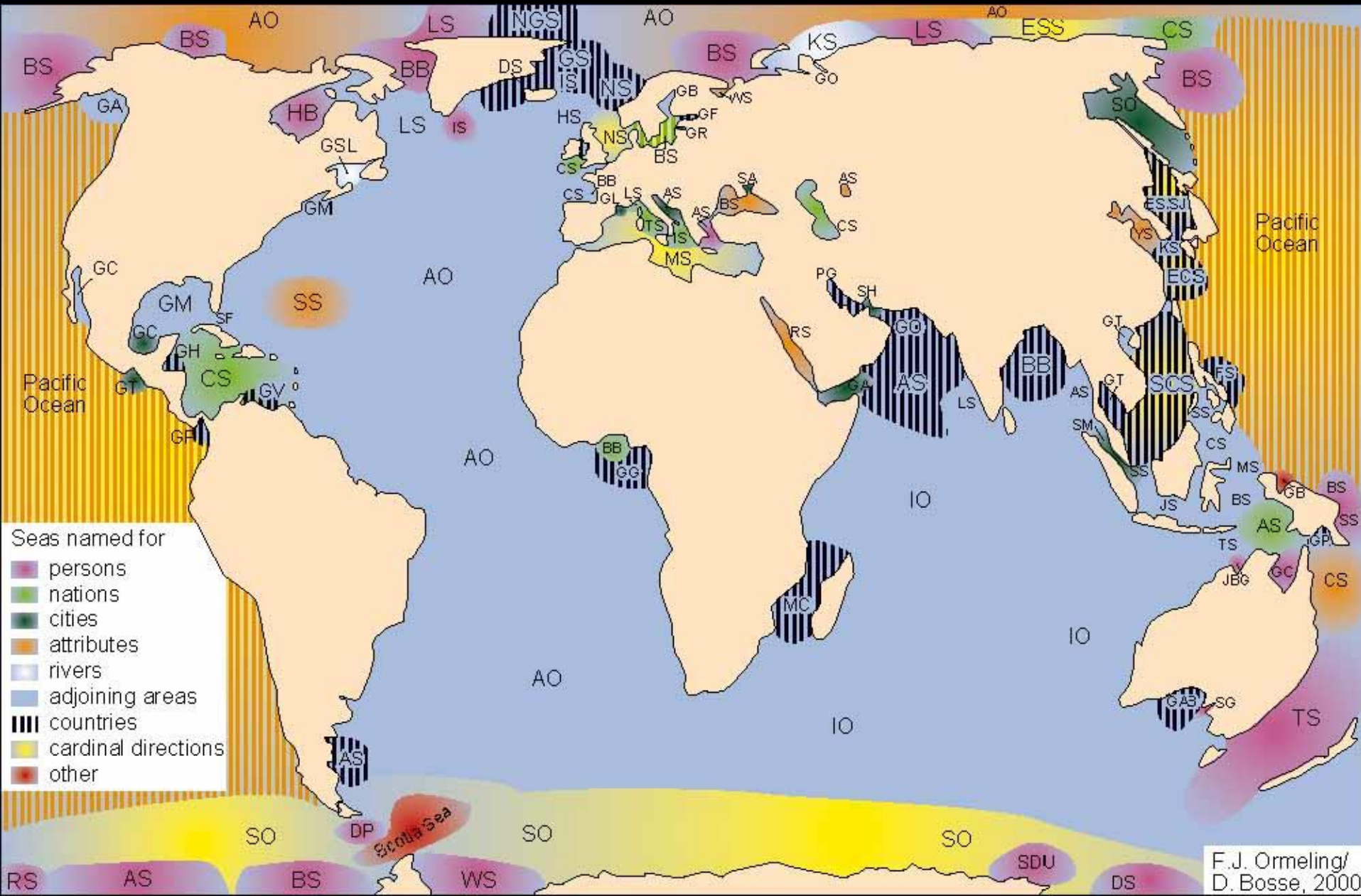
Names ending in –burg: 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century  
Names ending in –donk: after 10<sup>th</sup> cent.  
Names ending in –dam: after 13<sup>th</sup> cent.



Just as for Christian names, we also see trends in place names



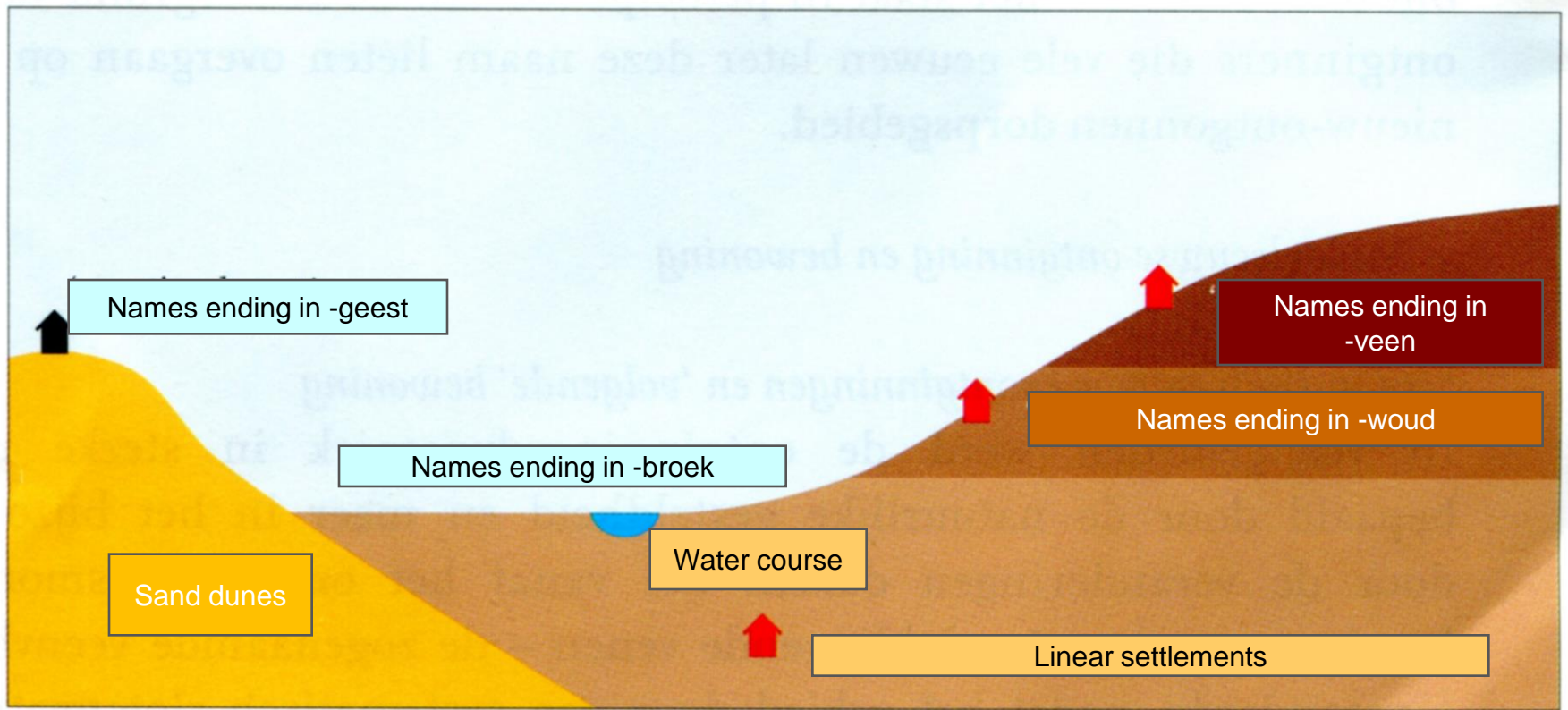
# Synchronous research: Sea name categories



# Diachronous research: Sea naming period







Toponyms ending on –broek, -woud and –veen, behind the coastal dunes in the Netherlands, and their

relation to the natura of the subsoil:

eutropic peat (  ) Eutropic/mesotrophic peat (  ),

Oligotrophic peat (  )

# Role of names

