

How to collect the names: fieldwork and documentation

Kommentiert [FJO1]: SLIDE 1

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Introduction and objectives

Kommentiert [FJO2]: SLIDE 2

In the field, the topographer/toponymist has to record up-to-date information on the names of topographic features and local landmarks as 'in locally official use', as well as any possible alternative and formerly used names. *In official use* meant: correct according to the local authorities. A name would only become an *official name* after it had been endorsed as the official standard by the national names authority. One of the tasks of the topographer/toponymist was to investigate whether a locally official name was in actual accordance with the name the object was known by among the local population. Also, he had to check whether there was an unambiguous literal relationship between the meaning of the name and the current condition of the object. Further, he had to specify as exactly as possible the geographic range and delimitation of the named object. Finally he would have to check whether names previously in use were still used. **Requirements** are of course that the names collected are still up-to-date and written correctly.

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The feature code of an object – what generic class does the named object belong to – is sometimes less obvious and clearcut than one might think, and may have to be adjusted after the field check. Although the toponymist should be open-minded enough not to ignore any named phenomenon he encounters in the field, regardless of whether the occurrence of its generic class has been foreseen, a list of object classes and the feature codes assigned to them should be prepared before setting off into the field. As this is strongly region-dependent, a geographic expert on the region under survey may assist in composing this list. Of the named features the topographers have to record their coordinates and if applicable their extent. As the name versions to be collected should be in **current usage**, this should be differentiated from **historical or established usage**, **oral or written usage**, **legal or legislated usage**. In order to decide on current usage sometimes the number of informants and their **weight** have to be assessed

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Of the name itself, the toponymist had to record the *writing*, the *pronunciation*, the *meaning* and the *language* it was considered to belong to. But before he can do all this there has to be some logistic preparation.

2 Logistic preparation

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Before setting out for the terrain, the topographer would collect the necessary base maps and equipment, administrative maps as well as a scheme of the administrative hierarchy, so that he would be able to contact them and announce his visit. The finding of informants might have been anticipated by previous, preliminary visits.

Through appointments with local officials (don't forget their phone numbers) visits are planned to their offices, where the first information about official names of the area to be visited can be obtained. These officials will also be able to help find informers insofar as they themselves cannot act as such. In order to be able to communicate with them interpreters

might have to be brought along. Other problems to be anticipated have to be envisaged: with transportation, climate, non-availability of informers because of harvest-time or festivities. Apart from topographic maps for reference and orientation, road maps, the field work map, the necessary equipment for marking the maps and eventually a tape recorder, a field notebook is necessary in order to enter the names and all their characteristics and sources.

From the previous maps and other documents a list of the existing names can be drawn up, and alternate names and questionable names should be noted. All this information has to be transferred to the field work map where the names are marked, with codes for their sources.

One also has to **prepare one's mind** for contacting the local population: deal with them with respect for them and for their traditions, be aware of local customs of social intercourse, and explain that one is not collecting taxes but preserving names as a part of the cultural inheritance.

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3. Fieldwork

It is the first goal to find **good informants**. There seems to be some preference for informants that have an official capacity, such as town clerks or municipal registrars (these might have at least access to large-scale maps), priests, imams or ministers, mayors or notary publics, school headmasters and postmasters.

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These informants should be asked for the current use of names already recorded, for local names in use for specific features that have no recorded names yet, and, in general, the surveyor should ask them for evidence of any geographical names in use in the locality.

Moreover, as extra characteristics or attributes, if possible the name should be explained, translated, its generics should be clarified, the language from which it stems should be named, the ethnic or linguistic background of the informer should be noted, and also the fact how well known the name is. Of course the position and extent of the named object should be indicated on the map.

Problems with informants principally refer to their accessibility: they might be away on business, for purposes of their profession or otherwise. If local officials are new to the district they might want to mask their ignorance and give wrong information. The population might be too timid to provide useful names information, and when asked to indicate the extent or location of features this might be impossible as the current maps are outdated.

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It might be useful to plan the collection and checking procedure in the field in advance. A standard procedure might consist of a visit to the local administrative authorities, where an initial collection of the names will occur, followed by collection in the field. If names collected in the field would be different, these might be discussed again with the local authorities (administrative or cultural); if they concur, the names might be entered on a final list, from which the names to be incorporated in the topographic map will be drawn. The local authorities have to be involved anyway, as they would inform the local population about the purpose of the visit of the topographers, which would motivate the local population more to collaborate.

During the fieldwork one has to resolve how to deal with alternative views of informants (different age groups, locations, gender). Frequently also, the objects the topographer want names for and the objects the informants give names for, might not overlap, as they would use different spatial concepts. In northern Norway the indigenous Same population, which used to be a nomadic group tending reindeer, used to have names for slopes where the reindeer can graze; they would not be too much interested in mountain tops and valley bottoms, whereas the sedentary Norse-speaking farmers living in the same area would be more interested in the latter. So different groups would be interested in different aspects of the environment.

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As informants from different age groups and from adjacent localities might have different views, the names given by them might alternate over time and space. Also, names might just not exist for those objects the surveyor might want to name.

It would be important to assess, when informants do not agree about a specific name, how large the proportion of the population is that adopts one name form rather than another, and find out whether this is gender-, age-, language- or otherwise-related. Special pitfalls occur when the difference in perceived social status between interviewer and respondent may influence the language of the respondents. Reference to the object must be clear (example: in conversation, settlement and local administrative area names may be confused). When asked for the meaning of names, answers are not always reliable: none is safe for *popular etymology*.

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4. Data to be recorded on name forms

As indicated above, of the name itself, (1) the *writing* (the graphic quality), (2) the *pronunciation* (phonetic quality), (3) if traceable, the *meaning* (semantic quality), and (4) the *language* it was considered to belong to have to be recorded. Of the named feature, its coordinates, extent and feature code have to be registered. The topographers would bring special paper name forms or computer templates for recording the names. On these forms there should be place for the various information categories like sequence or ID number, coordinates of the named feature, feature type, attribute data, the name as given by local officials, by local population, as spelled on existing topographic maps and cadastral maps, as proposed by operator, as finally determined by state name board.

Kommentiert [FJO13]: Slide 11

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Such special name forms have been long in use, and exist in different forms, also indicating the area surveyed, the topographer in charge, date of survey, and preferably also listing names of local informants.

Kommentiert [FJO16]: Slides 14-18

French name books have entries for the name as spelled according to the current map, as spelled according to the cadastral map, according to the inhabitants, for the coordinates, and for the spelling proposed by the topographer, and as set by the names board, feature code and ID number.

Apart from the name book or name form, the topographer will also render the location of the name and the name itself on the map so that its coordinates can be taken from the map if the topographer has no GPS. Also on the map the extent of the named feature can be indicated. This can be done by arrows, for linear objects, by including boundaries, as for administrative objects or physical objects (mountains or seas).

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Kommentiert [FJO18]: Slide 20-26

The map with the names collected incorporated on it (names model, calque des ecritures in French), will be preserved as documentation for the final version of the new topographic map or datafile.

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5. Documentation

For future reference, the topographer will make a report every evening writing down whom he met (that is names of officials and informers with their phone numbers or addresses), what problems he encountered, how he solved them, what issues he dealt with, what his itinerary was. He will have made gps-measurements to assess the location of named objects and perhaps made photographs as well, to document new buildings.

6. Written instructions

In most cases, written instructions would be available in advance for the surveyors that have to collect the names. The written instructions for surveyors in the Netherlands that are to collect names consist of (Ormeling and Bakker 2006):

- the objectives (to collect both geographical and descriptive names)
- the categories of geographical objects that need names
- the preparation of the preliminary name model or field sheet during the preliminary phase
- the list of personal or documentary sources to be consulted
- the production of the names list (on official preprinted forms)
- the production of the final name model or name sheet, with the letter sizes indicated (on the basis of the extent of the objects or the number of inhabitants)
- instruction on the manner of locating the names on the name model, and the required density of the names on the final topographic map
- rules for spacing letters in names
- rules for abbreviations
- rules for putting height figures on the map
- rules for selecting fonts, sizes and colors
- some orthographic rules (about breaking up names, use of hyphens, capitals)
- rules for the orthography of names on dutch topographic maps that are located in adjoining countries
- definitions of the name categories represented on the map
- rules for documenting the decisions regarding the names

Literature:

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