

**Department of Economic and Social Affairs**  
Statistics Division

# **Manual for the national standardization of geographical names**

**United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names**



**United Nations**  
**New York, 2006**

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat is a vital interface between global policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres and national action. The Department works in three main interlinked areas: (i) it compiles, generates and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which Member States of the United Nations draw to review common problems and to take stock of policy options; (ii) it facilitates the negotiations of Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint courses of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges; and (iii) it advises interested Governments on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into programmes at the country level and, through technical assistance, helps build national capacities.

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## Foreword

“What is the standardized way of writing geographical names?” This question was raised in connection with cartographic services provided through the United Nations Economic and Social Council after their inception in the late 1940s. The topic was discussed in the 1950s, and pursuant to Council resolutions, a six-member group of experts gathered in 1960. Under the chairmanship of Dr. Meredith F. Burrill (United States of America), the meeting considered the standardization of geographical names at the national level and standard methods of converting these accepted forms into other languages (and scripts) at the international level. This meeting was the starting point for the subsequent United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names (eight conferences had been held as of 2002) and the sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) (22 sessions had been held as of 2004). The Conferences and the Group of Experts study national and international problems connected with standardization of geographical names and exchange technical information in this field.<sup>1</sup>

To disseminate an understanding of its work and to encourage countries to undertake their own programmes, the United Nations has published for the Group of Experts the reports of, and the technical papers presented at, the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the sessions of the Group of Experts, a variety of articles in the volumes of *World Cartography*, a brochure on the tasks and accomplishments of the Group of Experts, and a *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names*.<sup>2</sup> The significant need for a manual that would address the establishment of national geographical names authorities was first filled through the publication of *World Cartography*, volume XXI,<sup>3</sup> in 1990.

Under the auspices of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names convened by David Munro (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), a new manual has been prepared. The material from *World Cartography*, volume XXI, has now been completely revised and updated by its original author, Donald Orth (United States of America), with editorial assistance from experts from several countries, in particular Helen Kerfoot (Canada), Roger Payne (United States of America), Naftali Kadmon (Israel) and Peeter Päll (Estonia). This material makes up part one of the current publication. In addition, we are pleased to add some more detailed contributions pertaining to aspects of the administration of geographical names standardization, written primarily by Botolv Helleland (Norway), Naftali Kadmon, Helen Kerfoot and Ferjan Ormeling (Netherlands). Botolv Helleland, Helen Kerfoot and Ferjan Ormeling reviewed those texts.

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<sup>1</sup> More information about the work of the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names can be found in part two, chap. I, of the present publication.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. M.01.XVII.7.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.I.12.

The Group of Experts currently has working groups established to address issues of training, database and gazetteer development and data exchange, romanization systems, country names, toponymic terminology, exonyms, pronunciation, and promotion of indigenous and minority group geographical names. In addition, working groups are discussing publicity and funding, and matters of evaluation and implementation of United Nations resolutions. All are important projects for the Group of Experts.

However, the cornerstone of all the work of the Group of Experts is the goal of establishing a geographical names authority in each country and promoting the use of the nationally standardized names internationally on maps and in documents. The present *Manual for the National Standardization of Geographical Names* provides a framework for those embarking on this important journey.

**Helen Kerfoot**  
**Chair, United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names**  
**2004**

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## Part one. Organization of a national programme for geographical names standardization

*Donald J. Orth (United States of America)*

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## Introduction

*Rationale for the present manual and notes on presentation of the material; some advantages of geographical names standardization; information about training courses of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names; who to contact for further information*

### The present manual

At the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in Berlin from 27 August to 5 September 2002, the Conference, in its resolution VIII/15<sup>4</sup> requested the United Nations Statistics Division to include in its publication programme for the biennium 2004–2005 a basic manual on the standardization of geographical names.<sup>5</sup> In resolution I/4 adopted at the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in 1967, the Conference provided the basic framework for such a project.<sup>6</sup> The complete text of both resolutions can be found in the annex to the present publication.

In accordance with the direction of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, the present publication is designed primarily to assist countries that do not have an appropriate authority and a specific set of standards for the consistent rendering of their geographical names. Members of the Group of Experts are mindful that conditions for geographical names standardization vary from country to country. They depend on the resources and organization of each national Government, the number of languages involved, and the cultural and/or political relationships within and among regions of a country.

The information in this manual consists of suggestions that hopefully will be useful to those interested in ways to standardize their nation's geographical names. Although the manual directs attention to procedures for beginning a programme, countries already involved in standardization should also find some useful suggestions in the manual.

The manual has been divided into two parts: part one provides the basic information for establishing a national geographical names programme and part two offers readers some further details regarding selected aspects of the basic tenets of geographical names standardization. A very brief indication of the content of each chapter in part one of the manual is provided immediately under the chapter title. To assist users of the manual, references to further readings in part two are contained in numbered footnotes (footnote number is immediately followed by

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<sup>4</sup> See *Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Berlin, 27 August–5 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.I.14), chap. III.

<sup>5</sup> A precursor of part one of the present manual can be found in Donald J. Orth, "Organization and functions of a national geographical names standardization programme: a manual", *World Cartography*, vol. XXI (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.I.12), pp. 11-40.

<sup>6</sup> See *United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, vol. I, Report of the Conference, Geneva, 4–22 September 1967* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.68.I.9).

the index sign (☞) at appropriate places in part one. The material in part two may present the subject in more depth, provide more details or examples or contribute a different perspective on a particular topic.

The number of a resolution adopted by one of the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names cited in the text may be given in parentheses followed by the year of adoption. For example, (V/2; 1987) refers to resolution 2 adopted by the Fifth Conference held in 1987. The full texts of some resolutions are included in the annex. For the full texts of all the resolutions adopted through the Eighth Conference, please see the published Conference reports.

Eight conferences have been held to date:

First	1967	Geneva	Fifth	1987	Montreal
Second	1972	London	Sixth	1992	New York
Third	1977	Athens	Seventh	1998	New York
Fourth	1982	Geneva	Eighth	2002	Berlin

In part one, material printed in **boldface** refers to United Nations resolutions or constitutes key information.

### Advantages of standardization

Modern society depends on the use of standard geographical names for accurate and efficient administration and communication. A national standardization programme produces savings in time and money by increasing operational efficiency in all levels of government, industry, commerce and education. This is particularly true in map and chart production; census operations; national defence; domestic and international land, air and sea communication; water and mineral surveys; postal and shipping deliveries; land and water safety; disaster control; and demographic, cultural, social and scientific research. National standardization processes should eliminate duplication of work, where more than one office or organization identifies correct and consistent name usage.

Just as important, a nation's people inherently consider geographical names an essential part of their cultural heritage. A national names authority also gives each country the means to establish its own officially accepted names, instead of their having to be determined by non-governmental or international map, atlas and gazetteer makers.

Geographical names standardization varies from one country to another. In fact, no two countries with effective programmes approach standardization in the same way and their organization, principles, policies and procedures vary widely. No one method is better than another, provided each achieves the goal of establishing consistently written names that are nationally accepted and agree (allowing for some exceptions) with local spoken and written usage.

## **Training courses**

Periodically, the United Nations provides training courses on the national standardization of geographical names. These courses have been given in various parts of the world. The first/pilot course was given in Cisarua, Indonesia in 1982 (see figure I). In the following 20 years, some 30 courses were offered through the Group of Experts as well as through the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH).

The courses, presented under different auspices and in different languages, have included lectures, workshops, field exercises, and computer and Internet training for persons in beginning and intermediate standardization programmes. A working group within the Group of Experts is currently in the process of developing a web-based training course programme. It has been started online within the framework of the cartography-oriented web course being produced by the Commission on Education and Training of the International Cartographic Association (ICA). Further information on training courses and available materials may be found on the website of the Group of Experts Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy (<http://toponymycourses.geog.uu.nl>).

## **Contacts**

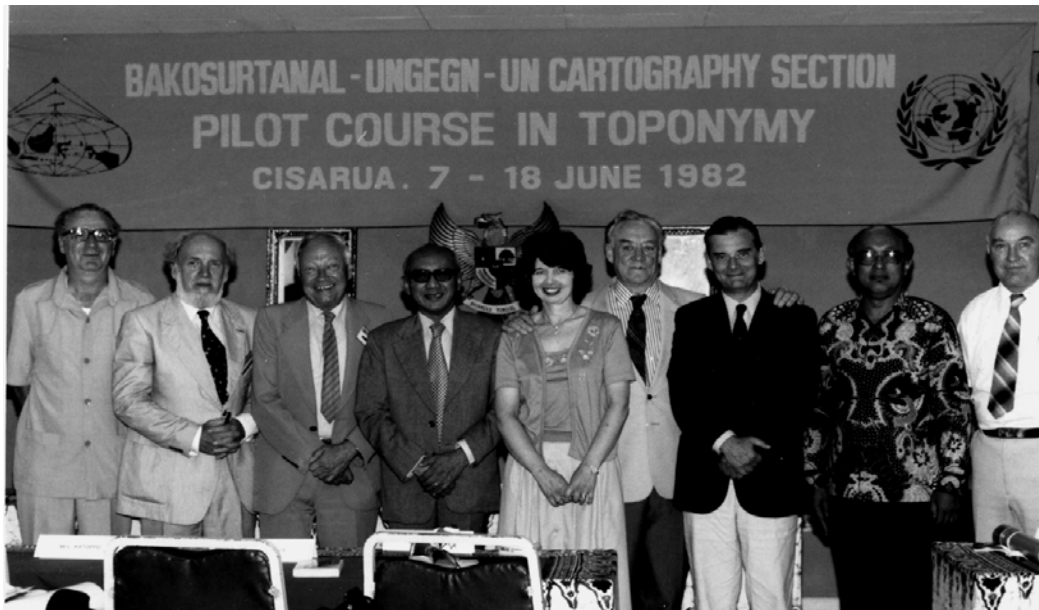
Support for the programme of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names is provided through the United Nations Statistics Division at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Current information on personnel and contact details (as well as much more information on the standardization of geographical names) can be found on the UNGEGN website (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/>).

As of the date of publication, contact details are as follows:

UNGEKN secretariat  
United Nations Statistics Division, Office of the Director  
Two UN Plaza, DC2-1640  
New York, NY 10017  
United States of America

Telephone: 212 963 3042  
Fax: 212 963 9851  
E-mail: [laaribi@un.org](mailto:laaribi@un.org)



**Figure I.** First training course held by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, hosted by Bakosurtanal (National Coordinating Agency for Surveys and Mapping) in Cisarua, Indonesia, 1982

Instructors, from left to right: Mr. E. Foldi (Hungary), Prof. F. Ormeling (Netherlands), Mr. R. Böhme (Federal Republic of Germany), General Pranoto Asmoro (Indonesia), Mrs. D. Lewis and Mr. H.A.G. Lewis (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Prof. D. Blok (Netherlands), Prof. J. Rais (Indonesia) and Mr. Alfred W. Taylor (United States of America).

Part one

Organization of a national programme for  
geographical names standardization

Donald J. Orth (United States of America)





## **Acknowledgements**

Recognition is given here to several people who have assisted in the writing of part one of the present manual. In particular, a word of special thanks goes to Helen Kerfoot (Canada) for her leadership and dedication as principal editor of the present work. Thanks also are extended to Naftali Kadmon (Israel) and Peeter Päll (Estonia), in particular for their assistance in the clarification of language terminology; to Roger Payne (United States of America) for his contributions, especially involving naming procedures and the use of computer technology in the standardization of geographical names; and to Botolv Helleland (Norway) for his input on cultural issues.



## Chapter I

### Definitions and standardization

*Defining some terms, including geographical names and standardization; national and international standardization goals of the Group of Experts*

#### Defining a geographical name

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names defines a **geographical name** as a **name applied to a feature on Earth** (*Glossary*, 216).<sup>7</sup> In general, a geographical name is the proper name (a specific word, combination of words, or expression) used consistently in language to refer to a particular place, feature or area having a recognizable identity on the surface of the Earth. Named features include:

1. Populated places (for example, cities, towns, villages)
2. Civil divisions (for example, States, cantons, districts, boroughs)
3. Natural features (for example, streams, mountains, capes, lakes, seas)
4. Constructed features (for example, dams, airports, highways)
5. Unbounded places or areas that have specific local (often religious) meaning (for example, grazing lands, fishing areas, sacred areas)

A **geographical name** may also be referred to as a **topographical name** or **toponym** (a term that in a wider context can also include extraterrestrial names, such as names applied to features on the Moon or on other planets).

#### Geographical names standardization

The word **standardization**, as applied to geographical names/toponyms, is defined by the Group of Experts (*Glossary*, 311) as:

- (a) **The establishment, by an appropriate authority, of a specific set of standards or norms, for example, for the uniform rendering of toponyms;**
- (b) **Rendering an item such as a toponym in accordance with such norms.**

A **standardized name**<sup>8</sup> is defined (*Glossary*, 228) as:

**A name sanctioned by a names authority as the preferred name from among a number of allonyms [variant names] for a given feature. However, a single feature**

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<sup>7</sup> The *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names* (United Nations publication, Sales No. M.01.XVII.7) is a multilingual glossary containing terms and their definitions in the six official languages of the United Nations. In the present manual, all further references to technical terms in the *Glossary* take the form “(*Glossary*, [number of term])”. The text of the manual is also available on the UNGEGN website (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/>).

<sup>8</sup> In the text of this manual, geographical names may be referred to as “standardized”, “official”, “authorized”, “approved” or “standard”. This is purely for ease of reading and no distinction in meaning is intended, unless specifically stated.

may have more than one standardized name. *Example: Kaapstad and Cape Town (but not Capetown).*

### National standardization

The goal of the United Nations is to establish usable and consistent written forms of toponyms and their applications throughout the world. This depends heavily on the official use of names within each country. The Group of Experts defines **national geographical names standardization** as the **standardization of geographical names within the area of a national entity, such as a State** (*Glossary*, 314). Resolution I/4 adopted by the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in 1967 constituted one of the first efforts to establish uniform instructions for a national standardization programme.<sup>9</sup> The Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (1987), in its resolution V/15, urged **those countries that did not yet have national geographical names authorities to proceed without delay to establish them.**<sup>10</sup>

Such a programme is directed towards the determination and selection of the best or most appropriate names in their written form. The expression “geographical name standardization” applies to the dual aspect of both the written name and its reference to a place, feature or area on the surface of the Earth. It does not apply specifically to names used in speech, although spoken usage influences the written word and the written word can influence names used orally.

The Group of Experts also strongly recommends that standardized geographical names data be considered in the design of national and regional spatial data infrastructures and be included in their development and implementation.<sup>11</sup>

### International standardization

Worldwide geographical names standards are important in meeting the needs of commerce and international relations. For example, the United Nations requires accurate geographical names for clear communication and administration of its activities and for the development of international toponymic data exchange standards. Such international standardization ideally is based on national standards of each individual country. The Group of Experts defines **international geographical names standardization** (*Glossary*, 313) as an **activity aimed at reaching maximum practical uniformity in the rendering ... of all geographical names on Earth ... by means of:**

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<sup>9</sup> See *United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, vol. I, *Report of the Conference*, Geneva, 4-22 September 1967 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.68.I.9).

<sup>10</sup> See *Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, vol. I, *Report of the Conference*, Montreal, 18-31 August 1987 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.88.I.7).

<sup>11</sup> In its resolution VIII/6 (see annex to the present manual and *Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, Berlin, 27 August–5 September 2002 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.I.14), chap. III), the Eighth United Nations Conference (2002) expressed support for previous resolutions, adopted at the Fifteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific held in Kuala Lumpur in 2000, and the Seventh United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas held in New York in 2001. All stressed the importance of geographical names as a critical means of access to, and fundamental data set of, a nation’s spatial data infrastructure.

1. national standardization, and/or
2. international convention, including the correspondence between different languages and writing systems.

The second item refers to an international need to convert names from one language or script to another. **Script** is defined (*Glossary*, 283) as a set of graphic symbols employed in writing or printing a particular language. For example, Roman, Cyrillic, Arabic and Chinese are different scripts used to write a particular language or languages (see figure II).

The method of conversion from one script to another is generally decided by the country concerned and then submitted for approval as the international system. The United Nations conferences over the last 30 years have agreed upon the romanization of some 30 non-Roman scripts. International toponymic usage still depends on the availability of official toponyms established within each country. The United Nations organization encourages each country to provide official national names, in a form suitable for use on maps, using its own standard writing script. It also urges all countries with non-Roman scripts to provide a single system of **romanization** (that is to say, conversion of its script into Roman script (*Glossary*, 280)). Non-Roman scripts can then be converted via their romanization into other scripts for national and international use.

---

### Russian Cyrillic alphabet

А Б В Г Д Е Ж З И Й К Л М Н О П Р С Т У Ф Х Ц Ч Ш Щ Ъ Ы Ь Э Ю Я

А б в г д е ж з и й к л м н о п р с т у ф х ц ч ш щ ъ ы ь э ю я

### Arabic alphabet

ا ب ت ث ج ح خ د ذ ر ز س ش ص ض ط ظ ع غ ف ق ك ل م ن ه و ي

A character may have different forms, depending on its position in a word.

### Chinese characters

兄入丹濁灑別力勾匱华唵覘喧序庙夤径帐恤惠尻挾捐齐昀曳菴榘斐

A random selection of the many thousand characters.

---

**Figure II.** Some examples of different scripts: Russian Cyrillic, Arabic and Chinese



## Chapter II

### Names and language<sup>12</sup>

*Geographical names in languages of the world: their spoken and written forms; basic introduction to writing systems and scripts, and the conversion of names between languages/scripts*

#### Spoken language

**Geographical names are found in every known language.** Their use in daily speech provides a practical system of geographical reference, and satisfies a need to classify and name the vast variety of landscape features in the world around us. Humans, at an early date, learned to sort out and group similar kinds of features from infinite varieties of landscape. Each of these perceived groups (or classes) was identified by a common word (such as river, hill, lake or camp). For particular reference to an individual feature, a more unique word was associated with the group name to form what we call a geographical name. The word (or words) for particular reference in each name is (are) referred to as the **specific** element (for example, Taupo in Lake Taupo; Mackenzie in Mackenzie River). The part of the name referring to the group (or class) is called the **generic** term or element (for example, Hill in Little Green Hill; Camp in Camp Russ). In some languages, the specific and generic are combined in one word (for example, Altafjorden). Names developed along with the evolution of language groups to form the vast numbers and variety of geographical names/toponyms found today in hundreds of languages throughout the world.

Most spoken languages allow some variation in the forms of names and their applications to the landscape. This variation is complex in nature but normally does not cause major problems in everyday speech. This is because sentences, not words, are the essence of understanding in spoken language. Names taken out of sentence context, however, require a degree of consistency. Cartography, for example, where “accurate and unambiguous” presentation is required, is intolerant of name variation. In fact, in terms of public criticism, names are the most vulnerable aspects of a map. People familiar with the area shown on a map identify the errors in names more quickly and more easily than they do other problems connected with the use of symbols on the map.

#### Written language

Geographical names normally originate in and are influenced by spoken language. This fact is important because the goal of standardization is to use names in a different kind of communication system, that is to say, in visual/graphic symbols (writing) rather than in sound symbols (speech). **Standardization programmes are concerned with written forms of names including their script, spelling, word forms, writing marks and capitalization.**

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<sup>12</sup>  The subject of the present chapter is addressed in more detail in chaps. II and VI of part two.

### Writing systems and scripts

Although the written forms of many languages (for example, English, French, German and Polish) use what is known as the Roman (or Latin) script, many (for example, Arabic, Russian and Chinese) are recorded using other scripts. Some writing systems have evolved over centuries, others over a short period of time. Throughout the world, the number of speech sounds and the number of ways of uttering and modifying them are very large. No single language contains all the sounds, no person can pronounce them all, and no traditional system of writing<sup>13</sup> can represent them all.

#### Systems for writing languages generally fall in three general groups:

- (a) **Alphabetic systems** (*Glossary*, 013), in which the unit sounds of vowels and consonants ideally are represented by distinct symbols called letters (examples: Roman; Cyrillic; Arabic; Greek; Korean, etc.);
- (b) **Syllabic systems** (*Glossary*, 323), where written symbols represent combinations of speech sounds called syllables (examples: Inuktitut syllabics; Japanese Kana syllabics; Amharic, etc.);
- (c) **Logographic systems** (*Glossary*, 182), where whole words or basic units of meaning are represented by distinct writing symbols (examples: ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics; Chinese characters; and Japanese Kanji characters).

#### Names conversion: transcription and transliteration

**Names conversion** (*Glossary*, 041) is the process of transferring names in one language or script (source or donor language/script) to another (target or receiver language/script). It endeavours to represent the written forms of sounds of the script of one language (that is to say, its graphic characters) by those of the other. **Names conversion is achieved chiefly through two distinct methods: transcription and transliteration.**

The conversion of sounds of one language into the closest corresponding written sound symbols of another (normally without any modifications to the writing of the receiver language) is called **transcription** (*Glossary*, 346).

However, it is usually impossible to adapt accurately the sound symbols of one language to another without adding special marks (diacritics) and/or letter symbols to the receiver writing system. Conversion using such additional diacritics and/or letters is called **transliteration** (*Glossary*, 352). Transliteration aims to enable the reverse process (that is to say, a full reconstruction of the original name in the source script).

Special marks and letter symbols, however, are generally meaningless to people who are unfamiliar with their intended sounds. For this reason, transcription is often adopted for more everyday situations, using only the letters and letter combinations of a target alphabet, without attempting always to render exactly the original pronunciation.

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<sup>13</sup> The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) has been developed with the aim (not fully achieved in practice) of representing all sounds of human speech in written form.



**The Roman script (also referred to as Latin script) has been adopted as a base for international use by the United Nations, and the Group of Experts strongly recommends the development of a single romanization (that is to say, transliteration) system for each non-Roman script.**

More details on names and writing systems can be found in various sources, for example, in chapters 10 and 11 of the work by Naftali Kadmon entitled *Toponymy: The Lore, Laws and Language of Geographical Names*, New York, Vantage Press, 2000.



## Chapter III

### Programme requirements

*Recognizing the need for a name standardization programme; creating the legal or official authority; establishing the mandate for a continuing authority*

#### Justification for names standardization

It is often difficult to convince senior management in government to devote time and money to an issue that has generally taken care of itself for so long. What is not realized is that large amounts of time and money are being spent on efforts in a number of agencies to determine and use “correct” names for maps, legal documents and other publications.

The cost of such endeavours is generally hidden, because the work is thought of as constituting parts of other programmes. For example, mapping and charting organizations spend a great deal of time and production cost on the collection, selection and application of up-to-date cartographic nomenclature. This and similar work in other offices and organizations are often being done without coordination. This leads to duplication of effort and resources, as well as to variation and conflicts in name usage.

**A strong argument in favour of a national programme focuses on consolidation of effort with less overall cost, more consistent results and greater benefit to a larger number of government and non-government organizations, and the general public.**

There are four basic steps needed to begin setting up a national authority:

- (a) Recognition of a need;
- (b) Legal or official authority;
- (c) A clearly stated mandate;
- (d) Continuing status.

#### Recognition of a need

The need for a national programme seems obvious to those of us interested in the standardization of geographical names. **However, someone in authority in the national Government must be aware that such a programme would achieve an overall savings of government resources and must be interested and concerned enough to act on this.** If that person has a high enough position or wide enough management responsibility, and available financial and personnel resources, the programme may be organized by decree or order. The head of a mapping or internal affairs office, for example, can be effective in establishing a committee to investigate organizational procedures.

It is also possible to have interested persons from several government offices meet and discuss advantages, organization, support and membership, and the matter of which department

or office would be responsible for setting up and obtaining approval for a national names authority. Someone or a group of persons must initiate whatever action is needed to get things started.

### Legal or official authority<sup>14</sup>

**A legal or official authority or institution is desirable for an effective national programme.** This is particularly important because universal recognition and validity, within and outside government, are based on the credentials of the organization. Legal authority already may be implied in the official mission of a particular government office. However, unless it is specifically stated, that authority may not be recognized by other government offices or by people throughout the country. It is best if the necessary legal authority for responsibility for geographical names is obtained directly from the lawmaking arm of the national Government.

Such an organized national body, or coordinated group of bodies, is thought to provide the best opportunity for a nationally acceptable, balanced and efficient national geographical names programme. Sometimes, obtaining legal authority may take considerable time, so that it may be preferable in the interim to initiate the organization and practical work of a standardization programme. Basic preliminary regulations can be written to provide consistency of approach in the meantime.

### A clearly stated mandate

Full and legal recognition is a critical factor in the effectiveness of a national programme. The efforts of an authority need to rely on the support and respect given not only by national and local Governments, but also by citizens throughout the country. This support depends on real powers or a real mandate given to the names authority by the Government.

**A mandate should clearly define powers, mission, areas of responsibility and initial procedures for a successful programme.** The decision to include or exclude certain categories of toponyms within the scope of the national authority needs to be clearly indicated.


A mandate should allow a names authority to:

- (a) Approve or change names, individually or in groups, together with their applications, according to prescribed policies and procedures adopted by the names authority;
- (b) Promulgate these official names and their applications for official and public use;
- (c) Publish rules to be followed by cartographers and publishers concerning the choice, spelling and application of geographical names.

### Continuing status

There is a continuing need for an authority to deal with the dynamics of geographical nomenclature. **Continuous status for a national names authority is not only important but also critical because the naming process is an ongoing one.**

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<sup>14</sup>  Some examples of legislation concerning geographical names authorities can be found in part two, chap. III.

While most geographical names are relatively stable, some are dynamic to the extent that there is both variability in their use and constant pressure to change them. Names are subject to many of the same influences that affect other aspects of language and culture. This is particularly true in multilingual areas and in areas of modern and commercial development, where cultural changes are occurring at a rapid pace. Named features might change in extent or nature depending on natural, cultural or administrative conditions.

Keeping up with changes and linguistic conflicts is very important. A significant interruption in the work of a names authority could call into question the integrity and currency of names data, could jeopardize a nation's standardization efforts and could adversely affect mapping programmes and the nation's spatial data infrastructure.

### **Authority limitations**

The law/mandate may consider certain categories of toponyms to be outside the purview of a names authority. The names of major civil/political divisions (States, provinces) are organically derived by law and are thus official. This holds true in many countries for minor civil divisions (towns, counties, boroughs).

In cases of entities such as administrative areas, streets, roads, buildings and dams, the names are frequently determined by the responsible government or maintenance organization and are generally recognized as official.<sup>15</sup> ☞ These may, or may not, be included as part of the work of a national names authority.

Sometimes, the mandate of a geographical names authority is limited to the standardization of the names of natural features and minor populated places. There are advantages, however, in the authority's being responsible for disseminating all types of official geographical names.

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<sup>15</sup> ☞ For an example of the involvement of different authorities see part two, chap. VII.



## Chapter IV

### Types of national geographical names authorities

*Some examples of different types of names authorities: a central names office, a national names committee; a decentralized names authority; some comments on committee size, membership, etc.*

**A national Government may standardize geographical names in any one of several ways.** In its resolution I/4 A, the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (1967) recommended that national standardization be accomplished by means of a national geographical names authority. Such a body, or coordinated group of bodies, is thought to provide the best opportunity for a balanced, efficient and successful programme. An early review of standardization programmes in a number of countries was included in *World Cartography*, volume XVIII,<sup>16</sup> pp. 6-8. Although there is no recent synopsis, country reports to the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names provide this type of information.

#### Authority structure

The organization of geographical names authorities varies from country to country. Most can be classified under one of three kinds of government structures:

1. Central names office
2. National names committee (board, council, commission, etc.)
3. Decentralized names authority

The details can differ considerably depending on how each was internally organized with regard to principles, policies and procedures (see figure III). There are advantages and disadvantages connected with each approach, depending on the internal organization of a nation's government.

**A names authority should be organized in such a way as to offer the best chance for success in carrying out a national standardization programme at reasonable cost in time and money.** As countries differ in structure, size, number of languages in use and names complexity, national names authorities throughout the world also differ. The selection of an organizational structure is an important step in the process of creating a national geographical names authority. It is important to ensure the independence from political pressures of the names authority's work.

#### 1. Central names office

In some countries, the authority is solely vested in an existing government office. It is possible, and sometimes prudent, for a national Government to officially assign this responsibility to a single agency, such as one involved with mapping, or to a separate autonomous

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<sup>16</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.I.23.

authority within a government department. Whatever approach is taken, standardizing geographical names and standardization in general are inherently a task of government.

**A central office authority is the simplest form of organization.** If located within a national mapping organization, for example, a names office can be effective because map usage plays a major role in names standardization.

A university or college providing assistance to the names office, and under the authority of the national Government, is helpful in multilingual countries. It can also provide the expertise of professional geographers, historians and linguists in names research and publication.

The central office professional staff is normally responsible for determining decisions, policies and procedures for delegated categories of names. However, even in this simple structure, it is preferable for more than one person to be involved with the actual decision-making, and for final decisions to be signed off by a higher authority (for example, the head of a department).

There are disadvantages when an authority is located in an agency or single office. Persons in other government offices and other users of official names might be concerned that the assigned office will introduce unacceptable preferences and agency prejudices into the selection of official names. There is also a risk that scholars at an associated university might become more involved with theoretical issues than with the practical goal of standardizing large numbers of names.

**In one variation of a single names office, two or more departments are given the responsibility for standardizing particular categories of names.** Named geographical entities can be grouped into several categories. The more obvious categories are:

- (a) Natural landscape features;
- (b) Populated places and localities;
- (c) Civil/political subdivisions of a country;
- (d) Administrative areas (parks, reservations, forests);
- (e) Transportation routes (streets, roads, trails);
- (f) Other constructed features (buildings, dams, monuments).

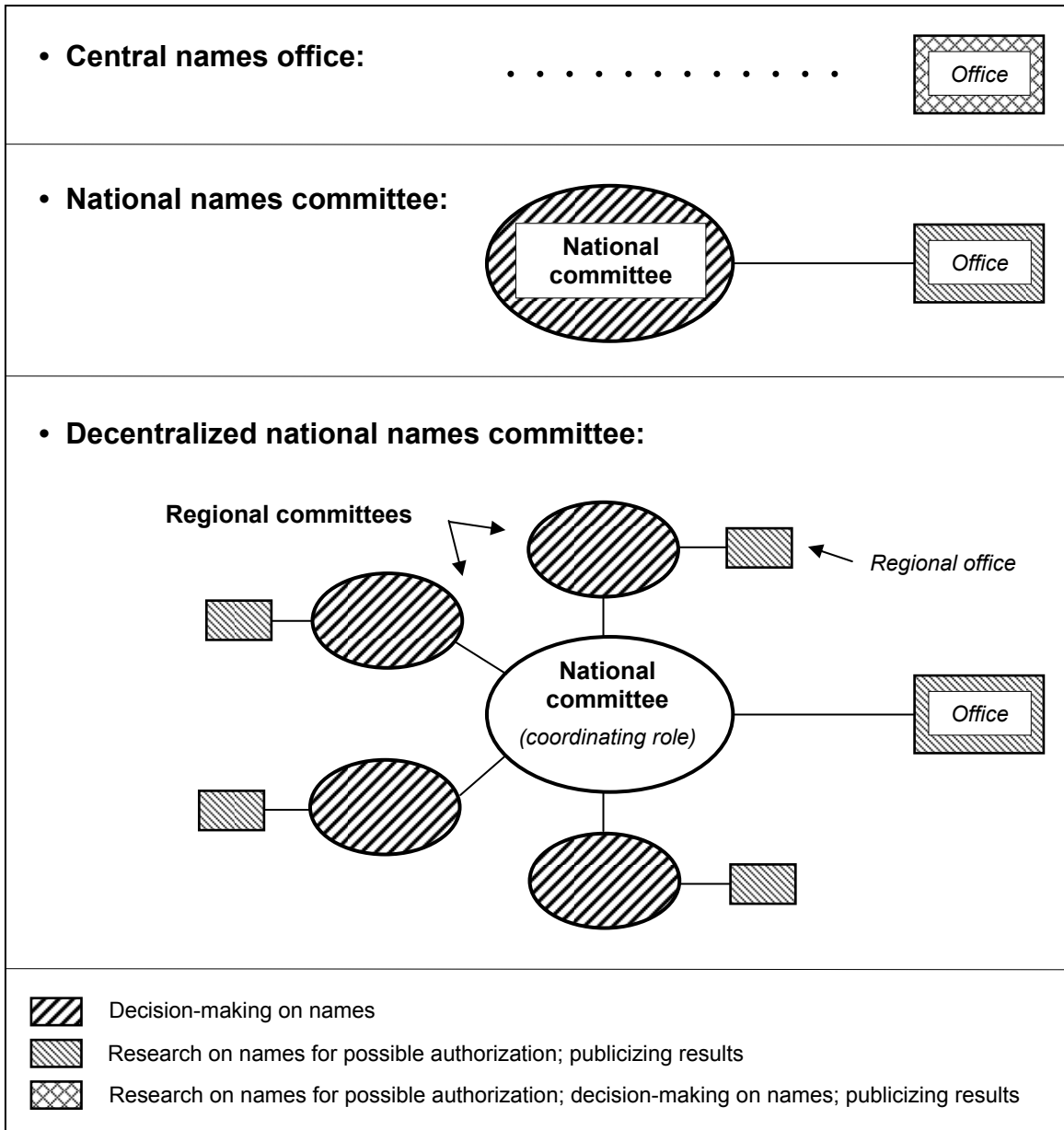
## **2. National names committee**

In some countries, the national Government has established a geographical names committee with provision for adequate staff support. In this structure, authority and decisions rest with a committee, consisting of persons representing various key government offices and, perhaps, non-governmental experts. Such a committee normally meets periodically, thus requiring the support of a small staff that keeps the committee informed of name issues and problems requiring formal action. It also performs background research, undertakes administrative duties and is responsible for publications relating to committee actions.

The committee system introduces more complexity into a names authority. An advantage of the committee/staff system is that it allows persons with different specialties and backgrounds from other government departments to be represented and involved in the standardization



process, and to work towards consensus among departments. It reduces or eliminates suspicion of bias and provides an opportunity for major users of toponyms to integrate their needs into the process.



**Figure III.** Basic types of national geographical names authorities

**Broad-based committee representation creates an environment that allows policies and decisions to be respected by various levels of government and the public.** Representation from key agencies and organizations goes a long way towards eliminating concerns about the validity of the work being done by a names authority.

As committees might meet infrequently, every effort should be made to avoid delay in the decision-making process, as this could adversely affect mapping and other publishing programmes. On the other hand, decisions must be based on adequate information and sufficient analysis to eliminate the need for subsequent reconsideration.

### **Committee membership**

Membership of a names committee could, for example, consist of:

- (a) Representatives of national government offices and departments;
- (b) Representatives of regional governments;
- (c) Representatives from cultural or language groups;
- (d) Non-governmental experts (such as advisors from universities, scientific academies or publishers).

Whatever the make-up of a names committee, membership should include representation from national agencies and offices that require nationally standardized names. The national mapping agency definitely should be involved because it publishes official maps with official names for all to use.

Other government representation may include archives, libraries, cultural affairs, parks and natural resources, agriculture, commerce, communications, urban and rural planning, transportation, defense, and postal and publishing services. A number of these activities may fall under a single department and, for example, one committee person may represent several agencies.

Government offices with representation on a names committee whose work is ongoing are more likely to comply with its policies and decisions.

Committee members need not be restricted to those with a scholarly knowledge of toponymy. Their job is to consider practical considerations important in names standardization. Pertinent information is normally provided to them by the staff and by expert members or special advisory experts.

Persons holding key or senior management positions in government could be included, as they are effective in making decisions and formulating standardization policies. They also are in a position to ensure conformity with the actions of a names authority within their own organizations.

### **Committee chairperson**

Consideration should be given to the position of chairperson of the committee—to how the position is filled and the term of office.

The chairperson could be a member already appointed to the committee, or an individual separately appointed by the sponsoring department or through the consensus of the members. If one of the existing members is to take on this role, a clear policy should be put in place as to whether in this situation an election is required, or whether various departments will rotate in providing the chairperson of the committee. A chairperson from outside government could be appointed to avoid possible biases of government departments.

Similarly, clear guidelines should be established as to the term of office of a committee chairperson and as to whether or not more than one term can be served consecutively.

### **Committee size**

The size of a names committee needs to be given careful consideration. It should be large enough to allow representation from key organizations, but small enough to function efficiently. The optimal number of voting members for most working committees appears to be somewhere between 6 and 18 persons, not counting non-voting staff involvement. Costs for running the committee might be a consideration in determining the committee size.

### **Frequency of meetings**

A names committee may meet on a regular or an irregular basis, depending on its decision-making workload and its secretariat support. In the beginning, it may be necessary for the committee to meet often to develop policies and procedures; but once a programme is established with a good working staff, the need to meet frequently will be less urgent.

In some countries, the national geographical names committee meets monthly and in others, from one to four times a year, as necessary, to deal with policy matters and to make decisions on names. Its staff, and in some cases special working subcommittees, are given responsibility for carrying out the standardization programme and the daily administrative, processing and publication work.

## **3. Decentralized names authority**

Another structure used to accomplish standardization delegates naming authority to major civil/administrative divisions within the country. These major civil divisions may organize names authorities following the same patterns suggested here for national authorities, that is to say, through a central names office or names committee within their own jurisdiction. In some countries, it might be necessary to establish names authorities based on language/cultural areas.

However, decisions made through decentralized names authorities need national processing for universal acceptance. A small staff in the national Government can maintain a catalogue or database of approved names and make them available for national and international use.

With a decentralized structure, the national Government will likely require a mechanism to deal with the naming of features outside an individual jurisdiction, such as those in national government areas (for example, parks and forests), and in cases where the named features cross boundaries between jurisdictions.

## Types of national geographical names authorities

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Where naming responsibility rests with different civil jurisdictions across the country, a task of the national office will be to remain aware of the policies in the different parts of the country, and to understand where there are differences from one jurisdiction to another. It is prudent to minimize the differences in approach among the various jurisdictions.



**Figure IV.** Decision-making on geographical names: a geographical names committee in session

## Chapter V

### Beginning a programme

*Thoughts on setting up a names authority and the leadership and staff support required; involving local expertise and advisory committees could be beneficial*

#### Setting up a names authority

The **structure of a names authority** should be based on fair consideration of those governmental agencies directly concerned with names standardization. Once a decision to establish a programme is made, and with consideration of the requirements outlined in chapter III, it is time to plan the organization and the means to achieve objectives. A national standardization activity need not be complicated or expensive, provided there is agreement concerning the organizational and instrumental components of the task.

**It is important that decisions on names be objective and based on formalized rules.** Names standardization rules (referred to as principles, policies and procedures) are best established, with the help of a knowledgeable staff, when a committee is first organized. These rules can be modified over time, as needed and as experience is gained. As a starting point, it might be helpful to review those rules and guidelines established by other countries.

**It is important to keep in mind that the prime objective is standardization and not necessarily the in-depth study of geographical names,** a field best left to university scholars. Of course, there are occasions when background research is necessary to resolve particular name problems or to refine rules. In these cases, the names authority can rely on staff and/or other expert information and advice before rendering decisions on the issues.

In this respect, it should be kept in mind that many names of major features might already enjoy a degree of written uniformity and that it is normally prudent to give official recognition to such names as present no problem. The operation of effective decision-making on names for official standardization purposes depends more on general rules and less on individual names research.

**Standardization programmes require a clear statement of purpose.** Agreement on fundamental issues by interested parties is essential at the planning stage. The following questions should be considered and answered at the outset:

1. What kind of names authority is best suited for the internal structure of the national Government and the political organization of the country?
2. What status and resources will be available for staff support to the authority and where in government will the staff reside?
3. What kinds of names of features will be under the purview of the national authority?
4. What characteristics or attributes associated with toponyms will be standardized?
5. How will the costs of operation and promulgation of official names be covered?

A names standardization programme should begin carefully and not be over-organized. A small core of persons who are aware of the practical needs of the programme can work out a plan of organization, procedures and even preliminary principles and policies for national standardization. It is possible to “fine-tune” these rules to meet special conditions when experience is gained during the planning stage, and as work proceeds.

The cost of a names authority and a standardization programme need not be great. It should decrease overall costs in government by centralizing an activity performed in several offices. Actual cost will depend on several factors such as size and organization of an authority, number and complexity of the country’s names, and necessary procedures used to achieve standardization. It is important to balance the time and money spent for national standardization with potential savings derived from the programme.

### **Leadership**

A key person in any organization is the one responsible for directing its mission and leading a successful programme. **Administrative leadership of a director (or executive secretary) is required either for a central names office or for a national names committee.**

A central names office organized within the government of a country needs only the simplest form of administrative organization to do its work. The director is the main leader of the staff and programme and often is responsible for the success or failure of this effort. The person chosen for the job should have both administrative and technical abilities. The position requires efficient and sensitive management skills, and the person should be sensitive to language and cultural issues, as well as to the interests and special names-related problems of government agencies, private organizations and local citizens groups. Under normal circumstances, he or she would be expected to:

- (a) Recommend and direct plans of work;
- (b) Supervise the staff;
- (c) Deal with the daily activities of the standardization programme;
- (d) Ensure and supervise the publication/distribution of the results of the committee’s work;
- (e) Act as spokesperson for the programme;
- (f) Orchestrate the support for the national names committee.

A national names committee (centralized or decentralized in nature) generally has an elected or appointed chairperson (or president). That person runs the committee in compliance with established policies and may also serve as spokesperson in the public arena. The role of chairperson, however, is frequently undertaken by someone who has a full-time job performing another activity. It is generally necessary for the chairperson to rely on the director (or executive secretary) for administrative and operational leadership.

In the case of a national names committee, the responsibilities of the director are similar to those described above for a central names office, but are performed in consultation with, or under the immediate direction of, the committee chairperson.

## Staff support

**Staff support is key to a successful standardization programme.** Every governmental or institutional body needs both administrative and technical staff to carry out its mission. Although some technical and professional help may be available from knowledgeable public and university volunteers, it seems practical for a national Government to provide some, if not all, technical and administrative support.

The effectiveness of any programme in government depends on the flow of information. It is no less true for a names office. A geographical names authority, in the form of a central names office, a national names committee, or a decentralized authority, cannot function unless the everyday business of the programme is accomplished. Geographical names require investigation and processing, letters need to be written, records need to be kept and official publications dealing with decisions and policies need to be prepared. A small professional staff headed by a director or executive secretary can do this work. It is possible to have a staff office located within an existing organization interested in supporting the programme, which could be the national mapping agency or office of natural resources. Such an established organization could easily provide office space, and technical and administrative assistance for a small names staff.

Staff support for a central names office and for a national names committee are much the same. In the former, policy and decisions are made by the staff, and in the latter, by a committee representing several interested government agencies and/or local citizens groups. In the latter case, the staff is responsible for providing the committee with all necessary information to allow good decision-making. A decentralized authority allows most decisions to be made locally by appropriate major civil divisions, with a small national government staff coordinating activities and dealing with issues that lie outside the authority of those divisions.

## Staff responsibilities

**Any type of national names authority depends on accurate information to function effectively.** Obtaining information is the job of a professional staff. Such information is gathered from a variety of sources, then analysed and processed for appropriate treatment. The information is obtained from:

- (a) Document research and investigation;
- (b) Scholars appointed to advise the names authority;
- (c) Support committees;
- (d) Field investigations;
- (e) Local citizens;
- (f) State, regional and local names offices.

The staff also provides administrative service, handles correspondence and answers enquiries, prepares documentation on names, maintains paper and computer records, keeps files of decisions made, and prepares reports and publications, all under the supervision of a director.

### Staff size

The size of a supporting staff is about the same for all forms of national authorities. The amount of work needed for standardization activities is a constant. Because of varying conditions in different countries, many factors enter into the equation, making it difficult to suggest staff size. Including the director and staff personnel, the number ranges between 4 and 10. Staff size for a single authority can also vary over time, depending on the workload, which might be large in the beginning and less demanding later when maintenance is the main activity.

### Staff qualifications

**A support staff includes those with administrative functions and professionally qualified people.** Administrative/secretarial support is needed for processing the volume of filing, typing and other office duties. Also, it is important to have staff with competence in using computers in order to facilitate the office work and detailed information-handling undertaken.

**Professional staff members** are responsible for the collection, researching, and analysis of toponymic information and **should have training or education adequate to deal with geographical, cartographic and linguistic problems.** These needs will vary, depending on the toponymic environment found in each country:

- (a) Professional geographers and cartographers, with an understanding of geographical name phenomena, are necessary. They need to have an understanding of geographical features and terminology, and be capable of correctly identifying entities (for example, landscape features) on maps of different scales and accuracy;
- (b) Personnel familiar with historical research methodology are useful for identifying and evaluating historical names usage found in documents;
- (c) In multilingual countries, one or more persons sensitive to cultural issues are needed to deal with linguistic concepts and questions. Knowledge of phonetic systems, grammatical structures and orthography of relevant languages is a key requirement for understanding and recording name information.

In the beginning, not every staff member needs to be expert in any of these areas. Experience can be gained by working with professionals. **Most important is an interest in the standardization process and the ability to work as a team member** so as to give a country the best and fairest names programme possible.

### Advisory committees and support organizations

In 1967, the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names recommended that, when appropriate, provision be made for establishing cooperative regional, local and/or advisory committees. The need for establishing one or more of these committees is normally determined by the national authority. **Advisory committees can be part of the standardization process.** They are useful as long as they demonstrate cooperation and compliance with the policies and practices of the national authority.



Often, local support committees or organizations are able to investigate and resolve names-related problems better than a national authority located in a capital city some distance away. **Support committees, with local involvement, can be sensitive to local situations important in the determination of official names.** It is recommended that the need for regional, local and/or advisory committees be considered carefully. In the beginning, it might be best, however, to delay their organization—at least until the national authority has developed initial guiding principles, policies and procedures and become fully operational.

**Advisory/support committees can be permanent or temporary, and organized by particular language and/or cultural areas and/or according to political subdivisions of a country.** These committees may consist of key persons in local or provincial government; teachers and professors from area schools, colleges and universities; and community leaders. Committee membership may be voluntary or constitute part of regional government activity. Besides investigating and reporting on local problems, regional and local committees are able to investigate and collect toponymic information for the national programme and recommend policies affecting the national standardization of names. **Overall, they are able to reduce the investigative and research costs of a names standardization programme.**

### **Special toponymic experts**

For advice, some national authorities use volunteer scholars expert in disciplines pertinent to names standardization. For example, an expert might possess knowledge of a particular minority language or be able to make professional recommendations on specific kinds of issues, such as those associated with urban and administrative toponymy, or names related to desert, coastal, mountain or underwater features. Special advisors may be permanent or temporary, depending on the nature of the work and the length of time needed for completion of the task.



## Chapter VI

### Standardization procedures

*Establishing the policies, principles and procedures needed to guide the committee in fulfilling its role; naming features crossing internal and international boundaries*

**The success of a geographical names standardization programme depends on its ability to meet the needs of government agencies and other organizations that rely on standard names for their operations.** Different users have different reference requirements. It would be ideal to collect and standardize the written forms of all geographical names found in written and spoken use throughout the country. However, a beginning programme should not overextend its abilities. It is very difficult and costly to collect and process a large proportion of a country's names within a short period of time. However, one way to organize this cost-effectively would be to adopt, as official, names found on a quality map series. These map-series names can then be corrected or added to over time.

There is always a need to have standard names of major and minor features for activities ranging from large-scale mapping or charting to effective maintenance of national, regional and local government records. In the beginning, a standardization programme requires a practical approach, one where priorities are established to meet immediate and important national needs.

#### **Establishing guiding principles, policies and procedures**

Major programmes with specific goals normally follow formalized courses of action. In the case of toponymic standardization, these formalized processes are sometimes divided into principles, policies and procedures.

**Principles** constitute the fundamental doctrines used for guiding the national standardization, encompassing general adherence to local usage, use of a particular script, and areas of responsibility.

**Policies** are rules covering specific details devised to deal with problems and the means of implementing standardization. Formalized policies may include rules covering name changes, treatment of derogatory names, names commemorating living persons, name duplication, and the use of minority-language names.

Principles are seldom changed but policies may be changed over time to meet new situations or to address unforeseen events.

**Procedures** deal with methods for carrying out names standardization according to established principles and policies.

**As one of its first activities following organization, a names authority needs to formulate and adopt tentative guiding principles, policies and procedures for the national standardization of geographical names.** The formulation of these standardization rules requires

considerable care because they form the basis for a successful programme. Principles, policies and procedures should address, for example:

- (a) Rules for writing official (standard) names;
- (b) General aspects of acceptance and treatment of names in multilingual areas;
- (c) Dealing with the possibility of there being more than one name for a geographical entity;
- (d) Treatment of minority-language names;
- (e) Treatment of names derived from unwritten languages;
- (f) Clarification of the precise extent of the application of each name to a feature, including the naming of the whole and parts of major features;
- (g) Treatment of names established by legislation;
- (h) Treatment of names that are questioned or contested.

It is suggested that the principles and policies formulated for national standardization purposes be kept as practical and objective as possible. They should contain provisions that guard against interference from special interest groups and against political pressure. Decisions should not be arbitrary, nor based on personal opinions of correctness and appropriateness.

It is also desirable for operating rules to be conservative with regard to changing names. In such cases, there should be assurance that each name change reflects local usage or preference and that changing a name is in the best interests of national standardization. Hasty decisions often lead to reversals in the future.

**The names authority should ensure that adequate publicity is given not only to its existence, organization and mission but also to its principles, policies and procedures for achieving national standardization.** This includes informing persons in government offices, private organizations and other groups of the procedures to be followed when submitting to the authority: reports on controversial or inconsistently used names, proposals for naming unnamed features, and changes to existing names. This is done by publishing the rules for all to see and by creating standard forms for general use. These documents make clear the kind of information that is needed in order for proposals to be processed for submission to the names authority.

### Decision factors

**When dealing with names problems, members of a names authority are guided by established principles, policies and procedures.** Problems, however, exist in a variety of forms and gradations. They occur when there are different perspectives on the name itself, on its spelling or its written form, or on its application to a specific feature. Inconsistencies and ambiguity occur, for example, when local citizens use different names for the same feature, when locally used names differ from those used on maps or in other documents and records, and when different names for the same entity are used in maps and other records.

Policies in existence at any point in time are unlikely to cover all individual situations. As particular problems arise, it may be possible to fine-tune policies or establish new ones to meet new, different or evolving situations. Decision-making will always require judgement (and documented reasons for the judgement). For example, if names decisions are based on locally used names and only one official name is allowed, would the name usage of a few newly settled

families in a sparsely populated area justify changing names that have been in use on maps or other documents for one hundred years?

A few factors that could affect policies and name decisions are:

- (a) Population density and degree of local usage;
- (b) Number of years during which a local name has been used;
- (c) The kinds of official maps and documents in use and the effect thereon if a name was to be changed.

Social, cultural, ethnic and political factors frequently enter into naming situations and require special consideration. Many of these can be addressed by the principles and policies of the names authority. However, there often is a human factor that cannot be handled completely by rules. Invariably, situations occur where people involved with the names decision process view problems differently. **Discussion of involved issues could help narrow the divergence of opinion. Nevertheless, there are times when each member of the staff or committee must compromise on his or her own opinion for the greater benefit of the programme.**

The types of information needed when names problems and proposals are being considered are:

- (a) Current local oral usage, its amount and extent;
- (b) Current and historical usage on maps and in official documents;
- (c) Circumstances of naming;
- (d) Name duplication within the area;
- (e) Offensive or derogatory word(s) in a name;
- (f) Name length and acceptability;
- (g) Regional government and advisory committee recommendations;
- (h) Social, cultural and political concerns;
- (i) Clear application of the name to a feature/area.

### **United Nations recommendations**

On the subject of principles, policies and procedures, the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical names recommended (in resolution I/4, 1967) that:

- (a) Unnecessary changing of names be avoided;**
- (b) The spelling of geographical names be as much as possible in accordance with the current orthographic practice of the country, with due regard to dialect forms;**
- (c) The systematic treatment of names should not operate, to suppress significant elements;**
- (d) Where some names occur in varying or grammatical forms, the national names authority should consider making one of those forms the official standard name (for names that can be declined, it should normally be the nominative case);**
- (e) In all countries in whose languages the definite article could enter into geographical names, the national names authority should determine which**

names contain the definite article and standardize them accordingly; and for languages in which both definite and indefinite forms exist for all or most names, that standardization be based on one or the other form;

- (f) All countries set up standards for the use of abbreviations of elements in their geographical names; and
- (g) A system be devised in each country for the treatment of compound names (for example, whether hyphens or mid-name capital letters are to be used).

### Basic considerations

A newly organized authority needs to consider two basic questions when establishing official standard names.

The first concerns the basis on which names are selected for standardization. It is possible, for example, to choose names arbitrarily without reference to existing usage. However, this procedure is not recommended because it would introduce conflict and confusion into the naming process by creating two naming systems in a country: one based on local usage and the other on government usage. Instead, **it is recommended that precedence be given to those names in established local/public use.** It is good policy to integrate administrative and academic judgements with the preferences of local people. Exceptions will occur when particular names cannot be adopted because of conflict with other principles or policies, or when public/local usage is variable or ephemeral.

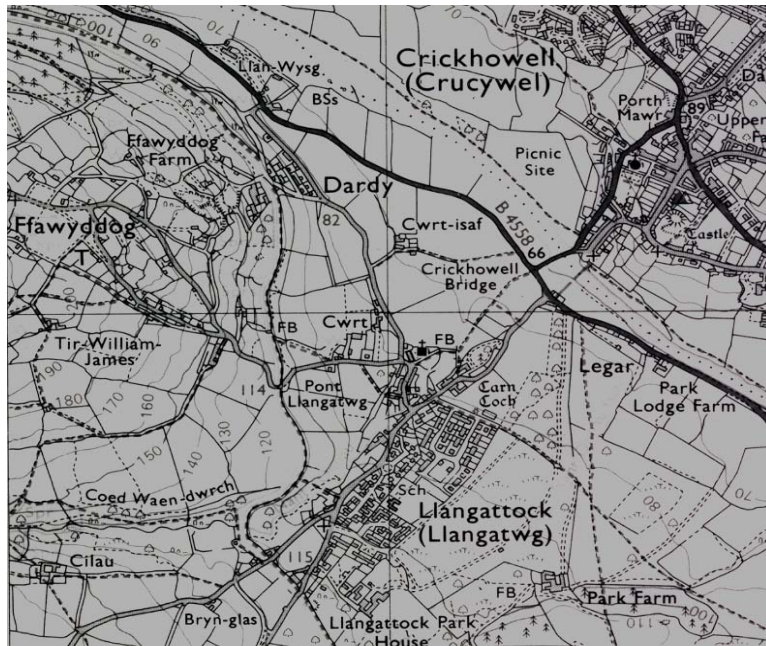
The second question relates to the meaning and purpose of names standardization. Univocity, the principle whereby one standard name is assigned to each geographical entity (place, feature or area) at any point in time, represents the ideal toponymic standardization. Every effort should be made to adhere to that principle so as to avoid ambiguity. It can sometimes be difficult to achieve this one name/one feature ideal, especially in multilingual areas where name usage is divided along language lines. In those cases, the names authority could:

- (a) Choose only one name, based on specific criteria, as the official form;
- (b) Recognize and make available for use in other languages, one or more names (that is to say allonyms—*Glossary*, 005), not equal to the official form in rank, but chosen for use in specified contexts; or
- (c) Choose two or more forms as official on an equal basis (multiple names would thus most likely be shown on maps where scale permitted) (see figures V and VI).

A national authority may adopt more than one official name for a geographical entity. It is suggested, however, that one of the names be recommended for international usage.

### Recommended standardization procedures

For the standardizing of geographical names processed individually, both office and field research should be as complete as possible, providing information on the following points (resolution I/4, 1967):



**Figure V.** Multiple names for a place or feature shown on a map by parenthesizing one of the names

(Reprinted by permission of the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain.)

*Note:* Multiple languages may give rise to more than one officially recognized geographical name. This example from the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain illustrates one of the ways of indicating this situation.



**Figure VI.** Multilingual road sign for a community in the County of Finnmark, northern Norway: Lakselv (Norwegian); Leavdnja (Saami); Lemmijoki (Kvenish/Finnish)

- (a) **Written and spoken form of the name and its meaning according to local inhabitants;**
- (b) **Spelling in cadastral documents and land registers;**
- (c) **Spelling on modern and old maps and in other historical sources;**
- (d) **Spelling in census reports, gazetteers and other relevant documents of value;**
- (e) **Spelling used by local administrative and technical services.**

This recommendation is based on a procedure whereby the names of a country are standardized one at a time. A collection of official names is then built up through the years. In some countries, this might be a good procedure, especially if the names coverage is already stable, with few questionable names. The process in itself is costly and slow, and may not meet immediate needs.

**The best procedure seems to lie between standardizing names one at a time and standardizing large numbers of names at one time.** For example, established nationally known names found on official maps can be standardized as a group, and local names and the names of minor features can be collected, reported, researched and standardized individually.

### **Cartotponymy and standardization**

**In most countries, mapping and name standardization are complementary processes.** Mapping provides one of the best and most efficient ways of promulgating official names. Cartotponymy is the process whereby the official written form of each name is applied to a geographical entity shown graphically on a map by point, line and area symbols, and where the symbology of each entity can change depending upon scale. In a digital environment, a toponym can be stored as an attribute of a point, line or area (that is to say, polygon) feature.

This mutual relationship may be used to advantage when beginning a standardization programme. It is important to consider how to handle existing names found on maps and in other publications, and to decide on the best and most practical procedures for standardizing large numbers of names as quickly as possible. If a relatively reliable and current series of maps cover most, if not all, of the country, and if the names on those maps conform to normal written forms of names for the respective language or languages, it might be possible to recognize and declare those names and their applications on the maps to be official. The few names found to be unacceptable, at variance or in error for one reason or another can be corrected formally by the authority (or its staff) when they are brought to its attention.

This procedure for standardizing large numbers of names quickly cannot be used, however, if many names on the maps do not conform to established local usage or acceptable orthographic criteria.

For public knowledge and use, the names authority can publish periodically notice of the approved name changes and new names on a map series, as special lists or computer files. Together, the map series and “correction and addition” notices allow users to easily determine official toponymy for any area and to learn of updates. Cartographers also can keep a record of changes for the purpose of correcting maps at the time of a new edition or printing.



Today's digital databases make it easier to carry out continuous updating of names files. They also allow users to identify name changes or newly official names in particular time frames. However, the concepts of names standardization remain the same.

### **Names of features on or across boundaries**

Official boundaries between countries and between administrative/political subdivisions within a country affect naming practices and standardization. The use of names for places, features and areas that lie on or across boundaries is often influenced by factors indigenous to the respective sides of the line. Adequate principles, policies and procedures can help prevent misunderstandings and problems that might arise in connection with the treatment of such names. Variation in name use from one side of the boundary to the other is often due to differences in language and/or traditions that could account for the existence of the boundary itself.

Name differences on internal boundaries are generally easier to resolve when a single national names authority has jurisdiction over the area; but even here, it is wise to approach differences diplomatically so as not to impair the integrity of the names authority. A compromise may be possible.

**In the case of named features that lie on or across international boundaries, cooperation and agreement would be mutually beneficial to each country and its people.** Where linguistic, cultural or historical names development might prevent compromise, each country must go its own way and agree to disagree when mutual standardization is impossible. Although names differences should be respected, it is still practical, whenever possible, to cooperate and attempt to reduce the number of names differences between countries. Compromise is often possible when spelling differences are minor, when names are ephemeral and not well established, or when most of a feature is located in one country. It is also worth the effort to attempt to agree on and coordinate the approval of new names and proposed changes of names that occur on boundaries.



## Chapter VII

### Office treatment of geographical names

*Evaluation of material by office staff; keeping paper and digital records of names and their cartographic extent—a time-consuming, but very essential task; some suggested office research tools*

#### Staff research

It is economically desirable to standardize most names according to established principles, policies and procedures. Research, however, is often required when there are particular problems concerning name choice and application. A clear understanding of these problems and their relevant factors is important. **Evaluation by staff, and treatment and processing of geographical names are necessary parts of the standardization process.** Staff duties involve a variety of possible procedures, including:

- (a) Collection of name information;
- (b) Investigation and research of names and their applications;
- (c) Maintenance of the official file of standard and variant names;
- (d) Dissemination of standard names information to a variety of users;
- (e) Provision of direct support to a national names committee through the preparation of toponymic reports and other information papers important in the decision-making process;
- (f) Preparation of pre-field investigation material and instructions, and the review of information submitted after fieldwork has been completed.

#### Name records and letter files<sup>17</sup> ☞

The process of standardization requires the gathering and presentation of toponymic information in a format that is easily understood. Orderly evidence allows clear comprehension of required details for decision-making. This recorded evidence is obtained from:

- (a) Documentary investigation (the systematic review and cataloguing of name information from maps and other publications available to office staff);
- (b) Field investigation (the systematic collection of local names usage).

Organized name information can be stored in computer files and/or on paper forms. **Regardless of the method or methods used, a large proportion of office time will be spent developing and managing these records.** The kind and amount of information to be collected to achieve standardization goals are worth careful consideration. An overly ambitious effort might defeat what is intended to be a practical programme designed simply to standardize the written forms of names and their applications.

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<sup>17</sup> ☞ Further information on this topic is found in part two, chap. IV.



**Figure VII.** Working in a geographical names office

**The minimum or most basic information for a toponym need only be its written form, identification of the geographical entity to which the name applies, and location of the entity.** Experience has shown, however, that it is important to furnish more information for each name record. Users need enough information to locate easily the entity under consideration, to prevent misunderstanding of the intended application of the name, and to be aware of other names that refer (or referred) to the same entity.

The optimal fields of information needed for an official name record include:

- (a) The written form of the official name;
- (b) All other known variant names currently or historically used to refer to the same feature, place or area;
- (c) Location and identification of the geographical entity to which the name applies through, inter alia:
  - Its location within a civil/administrative division;
  - Geographical coordinates (latitude and longitude) and/or topographical (plane rectangular) coordinates;
  - The standard series map(s) on which the entity is located;
- (d) A standard descriptive term (sometimes referred to as a designator, class, feature type or category) that clearly identifies the kind of entity named (for example, lake, stream, hill, mountain, bay).

This list of data fields can be expanded to cover other kinds of information that may be useful and appropriate, such as:

- (a) Elevation;
- (b) Population;
- (c) Size or extent of a feature;
- (d) Pronunciation of the name and other linguistic information;
- (e) Historical information about the named entity and the naming event (name origin).

Unless it is part of the delegated mission of a new names authority, the provision of these supplemental data should likely be omitted, as it will increase the time required to carry out the programme. The collection of additional information of this kind could be determined at a later phase of file development.

**The time and difficulty of ongoing maintenance of information for which the office is not directly responsible should be considered before including such extra data fields.**

When recording names, special care should be taken in each case to ascertain the generic term (for example, “Bay” in “Long Bay”; “Mont” in “Mont Blanc”) used locally for each name, unless the name in local usage exists without a generic. The generic term, often a separate word, is an integral part of most geographical names and should be included as part of the official name. Of course, some written languages incorporate the generic within the name itself as a one-word form. When necessary to prevent misunderstanding, this can be clarified for people unfamiliar with the particular written language. The meanings of generic terms used locally and any meanings at variance with standard usage should be recorded.

### **Card files**

A number of name files existing today are based on the use of card files. Each geographical name with associated information is recorded on a card, and the accumulated cards are arranged in a systematic order by name (for example, alphabetically, as appropriate to the language). The files are often arranged according to major administrative divisions of a country. Card files were actively used in the past and are still being used in some instances for research and documentary purposes. However, the use of computer files has increased considerably in recent years and is becoming the primary method of name information-handling. Archival collections of cards converted to computer files can be retained for backup purposes (see figure VIII).

### **Computer files**

A major task in the office treatment of names is simply that of information-processing. **An efficient names support staff requires easy access to large numbers of names records and must have the ability to retrieve, sort, correlate and analyse the information rapidly and accurately.** This is best accomplished through the use of computer storage and retrieval systems, sometimes referred to as automated data processing (ADP). The automated equipment developed in the last fifty years offers a powerful tool that is well suited for supporting a national names standardization programme. Many countries today find the computer indispensable for filing, processing, manipulating and publishing toponymic information. In this age of technology, with computer storage of data, and with the proper equipment and software, maps and official names can be generated for any specified area of a country.

Simple word-processing, spreadsheet or database software can be used to store toponymic records. A careful review of appropriate data fields, convenient loading and updating processes, and required outputs should be completed before starting. This will help assure the selection of suitable software that can handle all the diacritical marks needed and the development

of appropriately designed data storage. It is recommended that the software selected be compatible with the digital cartographic systems (for example, those of the national mapping authority) for which it is intended to provide input.

### Using the Internet<sup>18</sup> ☞

The Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names recognized the potential of the Internet to realize national and international geographical names standardization goals. It also recognized the **importance of countries' preserving their individual toponymic heritage and promoting the international use of their nationally standardized names by all available means, including the Internet. In its resolution VII/9,**<sup>19</sup> the Conference recommended that country toponymic websites be established and used for a variety of purposes, including:

- (a) **Information on the standardization of geographical names;**
- (b) **Toponymic guidelines;**
- (c) **Information on training courses in toponymy;**
- (d) **Nationally standardized names** (in other words, making them widely available);
- (e) **Interactive capabilities for handling geographical names enquiries;**
- (f) **Facilitation of the international exchange of toponymic data.**

Computer database and Internet training courses are part of the United Nations training programmes. Technical papers presented at United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names should be consulted for details and examples of toponymic data storage. In addition, reference to the website of the Group of Experts (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/>) and the website of the Group of Experts Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy (<http://toponymycourses.geog.uu.nl/>) will provide leads on obtaining further materials.

### Geographical names and base map files

Geographical names form an essential element of a country's spatial data infrastructure and official names are frequently used as an entry point into other geo-referenced (geographically referenced) databases.

**It is often necessary to identify official names in a particular geographical area. A map provides the user with a spatial context and the ability to visually identify the extent of a named entity, together with its location relative to other named entities.** Maps are important tools for evaluating toponymic information. A base map (paper) file can effectively complement computer files by acting as a “worksheet”.

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<sup>18</sup> ☞ Some selected websites relevant to geographical names standardization, providing locators for geographical names authorities, searchable toponymic databases, etc., are found in part two, chap. X.

<sup>19</sup> See *Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, New York, 13-22 January 1998*, vol. I, *Report of the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.I.18), chap. III.

**Figure VIII.** Example of a toponymic database (for Mozambique) developed to enter information from existing card records

*Source:* Mozambique Sistema de Gerência de Topônimos.

*Note:* The hand-written cards were scanned and can be viewed in association with the new digital name record. The name of each field is shown in English, although this database is more often used in Portuguese.

Base map files usually consist of a set of intermediate-scale maps that cover the whole country and on which official geographical names are identified with the appropriate features.<sup>20</sup> Annotating conventional paper maps that can be kept in the office is a means of collecting and recording names not previously shown on these maps. Those names not already printed on the maps can be carefully added by manual annotations. When necessary, symbols can be drawn on the map, allowing names to be identified with their geographical entities. Different colours can be used to identify particular aspects of the names or features.

### Other files

The geographical names authority office will accumulate various kinds of records relative to particular name problems. These documents are important and worth keeping for future reference and research purposes. Most will be in the form of worksheets, letters, special maps, legal documents and reports. These various records can be kept together in files organized in a suitable way: for example, alphabetically by subject; by geographical name and/or by civil administrative division; or, possibly, according to map sheet number or map sheet series.

If possible, these documents should be scanned into digital form for easy retrieval and viewing, as well as for archival purposes. Provision should also be made for associating the information with individual records of the national geographical names database.

**These background files and name records become an important national cultural resource.** The collection will be valuable not only for standardization and cartographic purposes, but also for students of toponymy and scholars in socio-linguistic and historical fields. To ensure the continued availability of records in future years, there should be planning for and implementation of the archiving of materials.

### Office research tools

**Most office research supporting names standardization involves documentary investigation of geographical names.** It entails the review, evaluation and collection of names

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<sup>20</sup> Technology for scanning conventional paper maps has now decreased in cost. This encourages the creation of a link from an automated geographical names database to a digital base map series, thus enhancing the standardization process, through increased visual and spatial representation. Furthermore, “real time” corrections and additions of geographical names to the base map series are possible. In a digital environment, the scale of the map can be changed at will, allowing greater flexibility for viewing the application of names. However, names deletion as part of map generalization, as the map scale becomes smaller, is still not a fully automated process.

The official map series of a country may include several scales. Moreover, each map at each scale should reflect the official names of the country from that country’s official names database. Furthermore, that database should be the only source of names for any product of that country’s Government. Base map files represent an important means of making official geographical names available to government departments and the general public. All digital products should be updated according to a well-established and well-planned schedule. Conventional (paper) products should also reflect the official names, although, in reality because of cost, these products do not normally reflect changes or additions until they are revised or reprinted.

Although a nation’s cartographic programme is likely the most significant user of the names made official by a geographical names authority, other government and public users should not be forgotten. Decision-making and records of the country’s official geographical names database might indeed include toponyms that would not be shown on base map files but that are perceived to be of public value (see conference resolution VIII/10, 2002, in annex).



information from maps and other publications, manuscripts, reports and digital sources. The reference tools needed in a staff support office comprise a specialized library made up of maps, books, and other publications, and access to the Internet. However, it may not be necessary to collect all these items in the names office if the office is located close to a major library.

It is useful to have easy access to the following kinds of reference materials, if they exist:

- (a) Complete set of official topographic maps that cover the country at the largest scale available;
- (b) Complete sets of all other official maps and charts that cover all, or parts, of the country;
- (c) A collection of local and commercial maps (road, railroad, agricultural);
- (d) Old, out-of-date and/or historical maps and charts;
- (e) Special books and other publications that contain lists of geographical names (postal guides, shipping guides, national and local gazetteers, railroad and bus timetables);
- (f) National, regional and commercial atlases and national encyclopedias;
- (g) Books on national or local geography, geology and history;
- (h) Books on geographical names and general toponymy;
- (i) Books and other kinds of publications that deal with various languages used in the country;
- (j) Census data, in, for example, statistical yearbooks;
- (k) Other yearbooks and special publications, such as mountaineering guides, that are based on the use of geographical names for reference purposes.

Increasingly, material that is not easily accessible in paper form can now be located through the Internet. However, the quality of the sources of information consulted must be carefully considered.



## Chapter VIII

### Researching name problems

*Research is needed to provide committee members with the relevant material required to make decisions on, for example, names that are inconsistently used, requests for name changes and proposals of names not in local use*

The amount of research required to support a standardization programme depends on procedures, principles, policies and other decision-related criteria formulated by the national authority. For example, a procedure that establishes a large body of official names at one time (such as those found on a map or standard series maps) requires little or no research provided the cartotponymy is considered reliable. The collection or recording of accepted names from maps or charts becomes mainly a clerical exercise. However, **names that are inconsistently used, or proposals for name changes or for the adoption of new names, require documentary and, in some cases, field research.**

#### Inconsistently used names

**It is recommended that the names authority develop a special form for reporting names that are found to be used inconsistently.** Directions on the use of the form should specify the kind of information needed by the national authority for processing and rendering a decision.<sup>21</sup> In general, it is possible to state that such problems of ambiguity or inconsistency occur when:

- (a) More than one name exists in local oral usage for the same feature;
- (b) Local oral usage applies the same name to two (or more) different features;
- (c) There is local disagreement in the spelling of a name;
- (d) Local records differ from local oral usage;
- (e) National or regional maps or charts use names or spellings of a name that differ from those existing in local oral usage or local records;
- (f) Maps or charts apply a name to a feature different from the one to which the name is applied locally, or apply the name in a way that is different from the way it is applied locally;
- (g) Maps and charts disagree on the name, its spelling or its application.

Most differences between published and local usage are not discovered in the office. They are brought to the attention of the names authority by:

- (a) Letters of complaint received from local officials and citizens;
- (b) Reports received from local and regional names committees and special advisory committees;
- (c) Reports received from toponymic field parties, surveyors, mapping field parties or other government officials.

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<sup>21</sup> Such a form could include space for recording the preferred name as decided by the names authority, as well as the reason for its decision.

### Name change requests

It is useful to confine the meaning of “name change” to situations in which there is a **request to change formally a locally well-established or official name for a specific reason** (see figure IX). For example, a request to change could be in response to a duplicate name, a derogatory name or a name no longer in local use.

Many name change requests are made to suit personal, political, cultural or administrative purposes that may or may not be of general benefit to the community. Whatever the reason, the staff is required to undertake research to gather information, including supporting and opposing evidence, which is then submitted to the names authority for a decision.

It is desirable for operating guidelines to be conservative in regard to changing official names. The names authority should have a clear idea of the reason behind a name change, whether it has been adopted in local usage, and whether the change is in the interest of a national programme. Principles and/or policies of the names authority normally cover the treatment of name change issues.

### Proposals of names for unnamed features

**A national authority may be asked to approve an official name for an entity that is thought not to have a local or published name.** Proposals of this kind would most often apply to natural features and to features under construction (for example, dams, reservoirs, etc.), provided the national authority has jurisdiction over these names. Procedures for submitting and handling proposals of this kind need to be outlined in established principles or policies. The staff must ensure that the procedures are followed.


Research focused on a variety of documents and maps, and communication with local officials and committees are recommended for each case to ascertain whether the feature indeed has no current name in published or oral usage. Also, care should be taken to learn whether a proposed name is acceptable to local citizens and governments and to any national agencies that may have jurisdiction over, or a special interest in, the geographical entity being considered.

### Research procedures

Staff research procedures vary depending on the kind of submission involved. Procedures depend on whether the case involves inconsistently used names, a name change request, or a proposal for a new name. A staff researcher must investigate, collect and evaluate evidence relevant to each case; and if the authority is committee-based, all evidence should be given to the committee so that the best decision can be made, in accordance with established principles, policies and procedures.

### A name and its entity

**Each name submitted for committee consideration must be referenced to a particular place, feature or area.** A toponym and the entity to which it refers are inextricably related. Major mistakes can be made if concerns are concentrated only on the name rather than

 <p>NEW ZEALAND GEOGRAPHIC BOARD</p> <p>NGA POU TAUNAHA O AOTEAROA</p>	<p><i>New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa</i></p> <h2 style="margin: 0;"><i>Submission Form For A Place Name Proposal</i></h2>
<p>Note: (i) A separate form must be completed for each place name proposal.</p> <p>(ii) Refer to the accompanying 'Notes For Your Guidance' when filling out this form.</p> <p>(iii) Complete all sections of the form and attach any extra pages or other supporting documentary evidence.</p> <p>(iv) The information you supply is subject to public scrutiny. Personal information provided in this form will be held by Land Information New Zealand <i>Toitu te Whenua</i>, and may be used for the purpose of public consultation on your proposal. In particular, your personal information may be provided to, and used by, Te Puni Kōkiri (the Ministry of Māori Development) for enabling consultation on your proposal with appropriate Māori groups. The provision of this information is not mandatory or required by law but failure to provide this information will mean that your proposal cannot be considered. Pursuant to the Privacy Act 1993, you have the right of access to, and correction of, personal information provided in this form.</p> <p>(v) Information considered to be culturally, historically or spiritually sensitive will be treated respectfully.</p>	<p><b>Send to:</b> Secretary New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa c/- Land Information New Zealand Private Box 5501 Wellington NEW ZEALAND</p> <p>Freephone: 0800 Online (665 463) Telephone: 64 - 4 - 460 0581 Facsimile: 64 - 4 - 460 0112 Email: info@linz.govt.nz</p>
<p><b>Submitters Name:</b> ..... <b>Submission Date:</b> .....</p> <p><b>Address:</b> ..... <b>Telephone (home):</b> (.....).....</p> <p>..... <b>Telephone (work):</b> (.....).....</p> <p>..... <b>Facsimile:</b> (.....).....</p> <p>..... <b>Email:</b> .....</p>	
<p>① <b>Proposed New or Changed Place Name:</b> <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> <i>(Includes spelling changes)</i></p> <p>② <b>Current Place Name:</b> <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> <i>(If one exists)</i></p> <p>③ <b>Location:</b></p> <p>(a) <i>Land District:</i> .....</p> <p>(b) <i>Description and general vicinity:</i> .....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>(c) <i>Map series, sheet number and grid reference:</i> .....</p> <p><i>(or chart reference and latitude / longitude)</i></p>	
<p>④ <b>Māori or European Name:</b> <i>(Complete a or b, and c. Refer to the accompanying notes for requirements, including guidelines on consultation)</i></p> <p>(a) <i>Māori Name; Translation and its source:</i> .....</p> <p>(b) <i>European Name; Does a Māori name exist?</i> .....</p> <p>(c) <i>Sources consulted:</i> .....</p>	
<p>⑤ <b>Origin:</b></p> <p>(a) <i>Description:</i> .....</p> <p>(b) <i>Background:</i> .....</p> <p>(c) <i>Local usage?</i> .....</p>	
<p>⑥ <b>Name Duplication:</b> .....</p> <p>⑦ <b>Other supporting evidence:</b> .....</p>	

*NZGB General Submission Form Version 3.doc, June 2003, version 3*

**Figure IX.** Example from New Zealand of a name submission form for use by the public in proposing names for unnamed features or changes to existing names

(Reproduced by permission of the New Zealand Geographic Board)

on both the name and its application. Here, identification of the geographical entity on a map is crucial to understanding its location and spatial relationships. When the same name is applied to two nearby features, in two or more published sources, staff research is necessary to determine the appropriate application of the toponym.

### Report forms

Members of committees need complete good-quality reports to enable them to render decisions. **Report forms are useful for achieving consistent research of complex problems and should allow clear presentation of information.** These forms should be designed to record data in an organized way. They ensure that primary evidence is collected and not accidentally overlooked. All documents associated with a particular case should be attached to the report form.

After the report forms and associated documents have been used, they should be stored for future reference. One approach is to store these papers alphabetically in a subject or name file; another possibility is to file them according to the appropriate map sheet number. If the records have been digitally scanned, they should be archived at this time.

Pertinent official name information is entered into the nation's official geographical names database. Variant names associated with official names are also stored in the official database and catalogued according to established cross-referencing procedures.

### Toponymic research

Research includes the review and evaluation of geographical names used on maps and charts, and in publications. The use and meaning of geographical names and their written forms require careful investigation, particularly when more than one language is involved. Research entails evaluating field and other name reports; assessing research and investigative reports produced by regional and local committees; checking information with local informants; and preparing comprehensive reports for submission to the national names authority for decision-making.

**A good researcher will attempt to gain a full understanding of the nature of each name being considered** by reviewing the:

- (a) Toponymic history of the geographical entity involved;
- (b) Languages involved and their written forms;
- (c) Sources of all variant names and spellings;
- (d) Special ethnic, cultural and political interests;
- (e) Local usage and local preferences;
- (f) Degree and reliability of name usage;
- (g) Options with regard to standardization.

A topic that may come under the heading of toponymic research is the problem of names transliteration (that is to say, conversion into another script), although it may often be solved by existing (for example, United Nations-adopted) transliteration systems. This problem arises:

- (a) In multi-scriptual countries (that is to say, those having more than one official script);
- (b) If romanization of the standardized toponyms is to be effected in countries with non-Roman script, as recommended in resolutions adopted by the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

It is suggested that the names authority deal with this task either directly or by delegating it to an expert body.

### **Working with a names committee**

Clear communication between the staff and a names committee is vital. The only way members of the committee can make intelligent decisions on individual cases is to have access to information collected during the conduct of research. **Appropriate evidence in each case must be submitted to members of the committee in a complete, balanced and unbiased manner.** This can best be done by means of reports with pertinent information for each case shown in a fixed format. Also, appropriate and immediately available map coverage for each case is important.

A qualified staff person should attend all committee meetings and be prepared to answer detailed questions and clarify information about each toponym being considered. The staff person should also be able to provide technical advice on the languages involved, and, if asked, offer recommendations concerning the issues being discussed.





## Chapter IX

### Field collection of names<sup>22</sup>

*Field collection is the ideal method for gathering names in local use; pre-field preparation; procedures for field investigation; recording and reporting the information; some thoughts on fieldwork in multilingual areas and where names are in unwritten languages*


Field treatment of geographical names involves the collection of toponymic information through personal interviews with a select number of informants who use local names on a regular basis in their everyday language. It also includes local investigation of the written forms of names, such as those used on signs and in local records. **Field investigation carried out by knowledgeable individuals is the ideal method for obtaining information about the local use of geographical names and their applications.** In fact, it is the only means by which some toponymic information can be obtained, especially that involving linguistic data. Just as important, field investigation is one of the best ways to discover differences between established official names and those in local usage.<sup>23</sup>

Field collection of names provides the basis for decision-making with respect to authorizing toponyms for cartographic and documentary use. Equally important, a body of local knowledge and a part of the region's heritage are preserved through the collection of these locally used names (perhaps previously maintained only in oral tradition).

Fieldwork is an expensive and time-consuming process (see figure X). Every effort should be made to reduce costs by using correspondence, telephone or e-mail to acquire some basic local toponymic information. Few names authorities have the resources necessary to carry out full-scale field investigations, except for the coverage of small areas.

A fieldworker most commonly collects names by conducting meetings with individuals and using maps and aerial photos to gather the names of places and features. A variation on this approach is to arrange for a number of local informants to come together as a group to discuss the names in local use.<sup>24</sup> More difficult to arrange, but potentially very effective, is the fieldworker's travel with one or more informants (by road, river, etc.) for the purpose of identifying names of features as they are seen, and marking these entities on maps and/or taking Global Positioning System (GPS) readings at the named locations.

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<sup>22</sup>  The social and cultural aspects of the collection and preservation of toponyms are examined in more detail in part two, chap V.

<sup>23</sup> A detailed manual on the collection of names in the field entitled *Méthodologie des inventaires toponymiques* was developed by the Commission de toponymie du Québec, Canada, (author: Hélène Hudon). It was made available in English in 1987 with the assistance of the Ontario Geographic Names Board as *A Manual for the Field Collection of Geographical Names*, published by the Queen's Printer of Ontario, Canada.

<sup>24</sup> This approach to fieldwork is not dealt with in depth in this publication. However, a detailed description of a step-by-step approach for the systematic collection of geographical names developed through working in Inuit communities in Canada is found in: *Guide to the Field Collection of Native Geographical Names*, provisional ed. compiled by the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (now the Geographical Names Board of Canada) (Ottawa, 1992).

The presence of tape recorders during interviews may be very useful, but their use entails careful consideration and preparation, as informants may well feel less at ease under such circumstances. Nevertheless, in certain situations tape recordings of the names can prove very useful, for example, in cases where the local language has no standard written form, where local dialects are involved or where information might later be used with respect to language preservation.

National standardization, however, is a cooperative programme, as noted in resolutions adopted by the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names (for example, **Conference resolution I/4 A: 1967**), **in which the Conference recommended that the national geographical names authority make full use of the services of surveyors, cartographers, geographers, linguists and any other experts who might help the authority to carry out its operations efficiently.** It is possible to enlist the help not only of surveyors and field-mapping personnel but also of local and regional names authorities whose work may already include the collection of local name information. University and government linguists, geographers and geologists who periodically work in the field may also provide assistance. In some countries where field experience is an academic requirement, trained volunteer college students have been used successfully for field enquiries.

The work of obtaining toponymic information in the field can be divided into three phases, of which the first and last are best performed in the staff support office, regardless of who does the fieldwork. These phases are:

- (a) Pre-field preparation;
- (b) Field investigation;
- (c) Field information review.

### **Pre-field preparation**

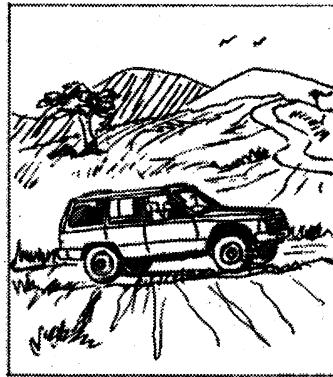
An important phase of fieldwork is the preparation carried out in the office before field assignments are made. **Office preparation can reduce the amount of time spent and cost incurred in the fieldwork, and it can ensure that the work accomplished is complete.** Pre-field preparation includes:

- (a) Identifying known name questions and problems;
- (b) Identifying local informants and providing introductions to local leaders;
- (c) Assembling the appropriate map and aerial photo coverage, and other materials and supplies the field investigator might need;
- (d) Planning the logistics needed for travel and recommending the most feasible and economical routes for meeting and interviewing informants.

It is useful to prepare a field operation map or series of maps that cover the work area, along with a set of instructions for the fieldworker's guidance. This material is best prepared in the office, where an in-depth geographical, cultural and language study of the investigation area can be made. Field instructions generally require the fieldworker to verify all nomenclature in a map area: the names, their spellings and their applications by the local people.



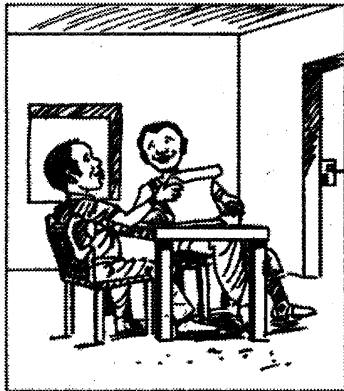
**A. Prefield Preparation:** field work map and a set of instructions are prepared in the staff office to assist field-worker.



**B. Going into the field.**



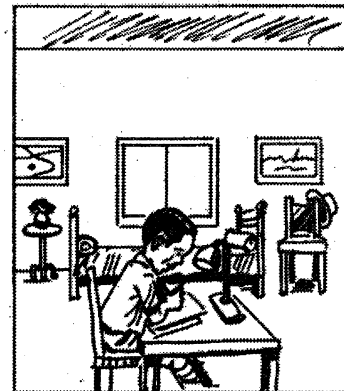
**C. Initial contacts:** preliminary introduction to local people and getting acquainted with area.



**D. Interviewing in the home, school, or office.**



**E. Interviewing in the field.**



**F. Preparing field reports and checking completeness of work.**



**G. Field information review in the staff office for processing.**

**Figure X.** Steps involved in the field collection of geographical names, in many cases including the use of computers to facilitate the recording or processing of the names data

In rare cases, a map might already show named entities for which no local names are known to exist. Many of these names could have national and historical connections. Many probably have enjoyed long-established map use and, with few exceptions, should be kept as references for a wider audience.

It is important to retain as well as collect **names of historical significance**, that is to say, names that have fallen into disuse or names of features that no longer exist. Experience has shown that while these names might be of little value on current maps, there is a wide and varied user community interested in them. A nation's official geographical names database should serve more than cartographic applications. Applied toponymy has uses in numerous areas, of which cartography is but one.

Field instructions list questions and potential problems that have been identified by office research. Each question or problem can be keyed to annotated numbers or letter symbols on the fieldwork maps. It is also possible to annotate questions and problems on the map border, with lead lines to particular features on the face of the map.



**Figure XI.** Planning for local fieldwork

Since time and travel in the field entail considerable expense, **the more that can be done in the office to make things easier or simpler for the field investigator, the better.** This is particularly true if the field investigators are people employed by other government organizations, such as surveyors or field engineers who are doing toponymic investigations as part of a cooperative effort and in addition to their regular duties and might not have either previous toponymic experience or appropriate training or preparation. If possible and appropriate, it is useful for the field investigator to be able to review the work done by office personnel before going into the field, in order to discuss and resolve possible questions regarding pre-field material.

It might be useful for the field person to have some advance information concerning:

- (a) Logical or appropriate contacts in the work areas, with a list of possible informants who are known to be knowledgeable about specific toponymic issues;
- (b) Locations of interpreters;
- (c) Places of lodging;
- (d) Communications and transportation;
- (e) Special protocol matters;
- (f) Known administrative/linguistic divisions in the area to be worked.

More specifically, **office staff should bring to the attention of the fieldworker all toponymic questions and possible problems learned from documentary research.** Certainly those cases where variance is found between names in primary government maps and other publications should be identified. Local information can then be collected to help resolve the discrepancies. The field investigator can also be asked to:

- (a) Determine whether places, features and areas not named on available maps and other publications are named locally;
- (b) Indicate the limits or extents of large and perhaps less easily delineated named features, according to local usage (for example, plains, mountain ranges, ridges);
- (c) Clarify the usage of generic terms and their meanings when not obvious;
- (d) Identify and record names duplicated within the area, and how they are differentiated in everyday conversation;
- (e) Record languages involved and name meanings;
- (f) Record the gender, approximate age and ethnic/language background of persons interviewed along with the toponyms collected from each;
- (g) Identify and record locally used written forms of names found on signs and in records.

After pre-field preparation work has been completed, the work maps, overlays, report forms and other materials are assembled for easy use.

### **Field investigation: procedures**

The purpose of toponymic field investigation is to learn how local people use geographical names in referring to elements of their environment. **The process involves verification of names and their applications already published on maps, and the collection of names in local use that are not found on maps.** A visit to an area or community could be brief (part of a day) or longer (several days). The length of time spent in an area depends on the nature of the assignment or assignments.

If toponymic investigation is limited in time, or is carried out in a sparsely populated area, the job of interviewing is less involved. Only a few people need be contacted and, in most cases, the fieldworker will randomly interview whoever can be found.

Of course, a more extensive field programme requires greater organization. In such cases, initial community contacts are made before interviewing in order to learn about the community, its people and geography and, more importantly, the names and locations of persons to be interviewed.

### **Field investigation: training**

It would be ideal if people who were expert in field interviewing techniques and toponymic studies were always the ones to carry out the verification and collection of geographical names. However, this is not always possible. Because of practical considerations, sometimes people doing the work have little training in either subject area. They might be surveyors, topographers or administrators to whom investigation of name usage has been delegated as an adjunct to their regular duties. Nevertheless, good fieldwork can be accomplished by such people if they take an interest in the work, have a professional attitude and are provided with appropriate guidelines concerning interview and recording procedures, and the nature and quantity of information needed by the names authority. This can best be achieved through the use of **concise field instructions prepared by the office staff**. It may be possible for experienced persons in the office or at a college or university to provide a short training course in field procedures.<sup>25</sup> ☞

### **Initial contacts**

It is an advantage for a fieldworker to have a letter of introduction to an important or well-known person in the area to be worked. A list of possible contacts prepared by the office staff will assist in the initial introductions to people who could probably identify good local informants.

Without a list of contacts, it is still possible to find someone (teacher, librarian, postmaster, doctor, area officer) who knows good local name informants. The local general store is often a good place to begin in a village or small town. It is frequently a gathering place for sharing local news and for social interaction.

Depending on the political/social make-up of the area, it might be good and appropriate protocol for the fieldworker to first contact the local head person, like the chief or mayor, to explain his or her presence in the area. In some jurisdictions, formal approval may be necessary before fieldwork can begin. In sparsely populated areas, the fieldworker cannot necessarily depend on predetermined contacts, but must rely for the interviews on individuals found at isolated farms or ranches.

### **Selection and number of informants**

After initial contacts have been made, helpful knowledge of the geography of an area and its people has been gathered, and a list of possibly good informants has been created, the field investigator faces the most exacting part of the job: the selection of and meeting with individual informants. Because of cost constraints, the selection and number of people interviewed are important considerations.

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<sup>25</sup> ☞ An example of instructions to surveyors is provided in part two, chap. VIII.



**Figure XII.** Discussion with village leaders prior to collection of local toponyms in Brunei Darussalam

Older men and women often have a greater knowledge of an area's geography and history and may be more familiar with local geographical names. However, a sampling of younger people should not be overlooked because they might provide insight into possible shifts in name usage between generations.

**All information must be reported without bias. It is not the role of fieldworkers to decide on the selection of official names. However, this does not preclude comments or recommendations from fieldworkers who, because of their presence at a particular location, might have special information concerning the toponyms and specific toponymic problems.**

The number of informants needed for a good sampling of geographical name usage depends on various factors including:

- (a) Size of the area being covered;
- (b) Its population density;
- (c) Number of geographical entities in the area covered;
- (d) Complexity of name problems found;
- (e) Number of cultural groups and languages involved;
- (f) Money available for the job.

The number of informants needed to confirm names already on maps and the location of the features to which they are applied need not be large. However, where inconsistency in the use of names exists, more in-depth investigation is required in order for adequate information to be provided to a names authority. In areas of sparse population, one or two area administrators, forest or park rangers, game wardens or mine operators might be the only available informants who know the toponyms of the area.

In areas where people are nomadic or travel seasonally on land or along the coast, more than one name may be used for various features. For example, different nomadic groups may use different names for the features they pass.

A fieldworker needs to be aware that **in some cultures, certain places bear names that are considered taboo**. Here, it is not wise to press the informant. Taboo naming situations are noted, however, to assure office personnel that names for particular entities have not been overlooked.

**Overall, the number of people to be interviewed depends on the judgement of the fieldworker. The interviewer needs to feel confident that the information collected is adequate and reliable and reflects name usage of the general population, rather than of an individual or group of people with personal or political agendas.** This sense of completeness cannot be easily conveyed and must be achieved through experience.

Where two or more linguistic groups live in the area, names used by each group should be recorded. As far as possible, fieldworkers should be familiar with the languages involved or have appropriate assistance available.

In general, informants are picked with certain qualifications in mind. It is important for them:

- (a) To be local residents of the area covered;
- (b) To have a good visual grasp of the local landscape and its features (or able to read a map confidently) and able to communicate well in identifying the geographical entities being discussed;
- (c) To be generally knowledgeable about name usage;
- (d) To not be easily led by the fieldworker's questions;
- (e) To be able to maintain their intellectual integrity. For example, they should not arbitrarily alter local names or "improve" them from considerations of delicacy.

### Asking the questions

The purpose of toponymic field investigation is to obtain information on the local use of geographical names and their applications from competent persons who can be interviewed personally.

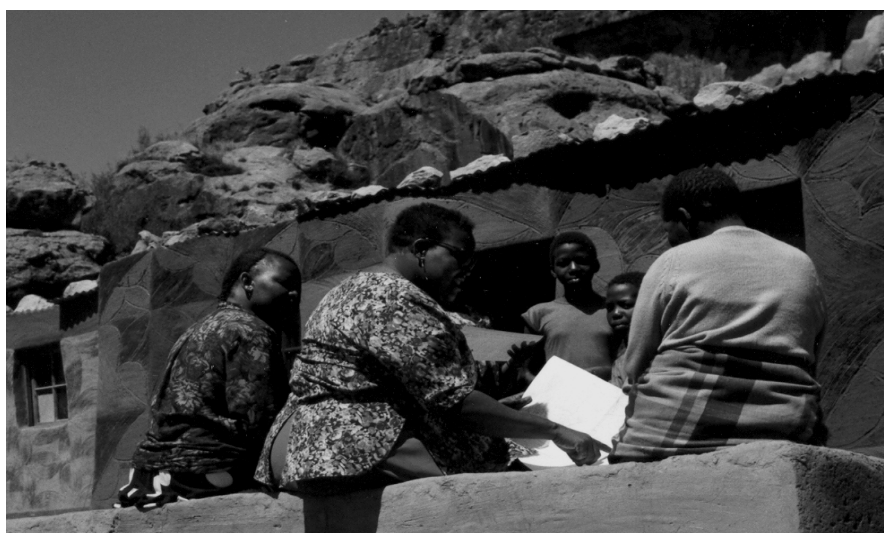
The success of an interview depends on several factors, some of which are not easily controlled. The interview process constitutes a dialogue between persons who are generally unfamiliar with each other and where personality can play a role. Personal interviewing requires tact. The selection of informants is planned, however, to help reduce personality problems or difficulties arising from the informants' lack of knowledge about the local usage of geographical names.

At the beginning, **the fieldworker should make clear the purpose of the visit** and explain that it has nothing to do with sales or taxes. The fieldworker should not become involved with controversial political or social issues or have any motive other than the desire to learn how each informant interviewed refers to the geographical entities within the area with which he or she is most familiar.



In conducting interviews, each fieldworker develops his or her own procedure. Some may move forward at each meeting as quickly as possible and thereby save time by overlooking social courtesies and small talk. Another may briefly establish more intimate relations with the informant and family before proceeding with the interview.

A method that is sometimes used, especially if the fieldworker is dealing with someone of another culture and language, entails first meeting the informant and explaining the purpose of the planned visit. The interview is then arranged for a different date and time. This procedure reduces the element of surprise and possible anxiety that could result from meeting a stranger and trying to understand the purpose of his or her visit, both at the same time. When the fieldworker returns, the informant is generally ready and often much more cooperative than he or she would be during a one-visit event.



**Figure XIII.** Field collection of geographical names in progress: collaboration over provision of locally used names of nearby features (South Africa)

Regardless of the technique used, the goal of the fieldworker is always the same. In every case, a quick evaluation must be made of the informant's toponymic knowledge, veracity and ability to read a map or to explain clearly the locations and identities of the places, features and areas that are not within view.

Care must be taken to ensure that a map lying on the table does not influence the person being interviewed. Some might feel that local names are trivial and unimportant, compared with those already appearing on an official map. The informant should be made aware at the beginning that it is not necessarily names on maps (rather than local names) that are the correct ones. In some cases, it may be possible to travel with an informant in the study area and have the geographical names and entities pointed out directly.

**It is important that fieldworkers ask questions without bias and not lead the informant during the interview.** Also, assumptions should not be made based on knowledge received during previous interviews. For example, in an English context, one would never ask, Is Balto the correct name of this cape shown on the map?

Another example of an error an interviewer might make would be to ask, What is the name of the creek that flows through the pond at the south end of the village? If the response is “Ajax”, and the fieldworker then writes down “Ajax Creek”, the name might be partly wrong. The local name could really be “Ajax Branch”. The question should be posed in such a way as to ensure that the generic element of the name used locally will be clearly indicated in the response.

Some field investigators, to test the informant’s knowledge of local names, occasionally ask questions using incorrect names. This is not recommended; however, the investigator who does engage in such a practice must handle the informant with skill to prevent unnecessary embarrassment or confusion.

Information is obtained from each informant by direct questioning. However, if the goal is to learn how names are used within the context of everyday language, the questions should not always be phrased so as to elicit only straightforward answers of the yes or no variety. **In order to arrive at an understanding of actual usage, the investigator will find it helpful to encourage the informant to use geographical names in the context of a sentence.**

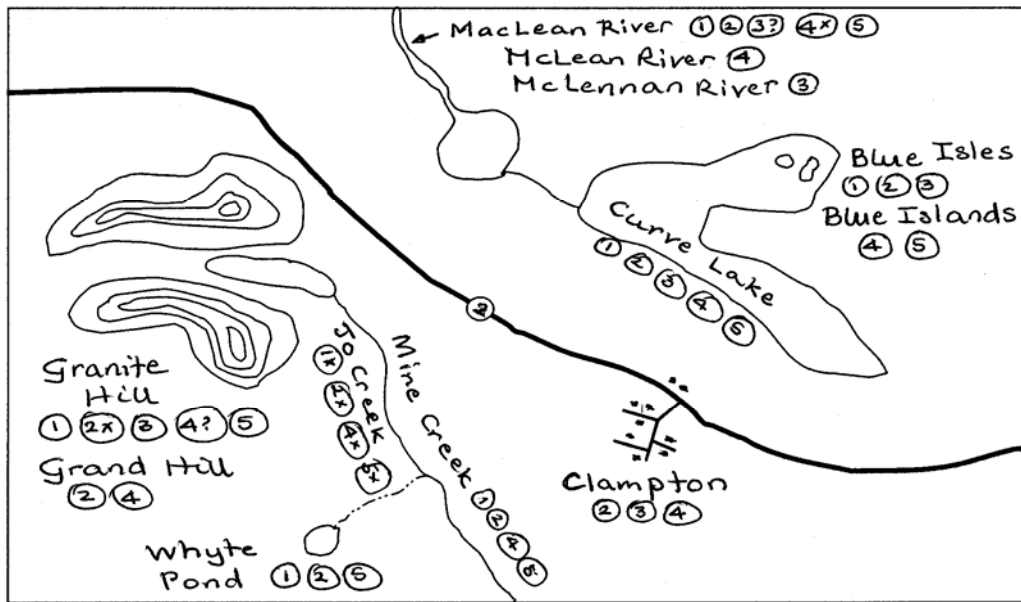
### Name application

Determination of the written forms of names is only part of the standardization process. Equally important is an understanding of the association between the names and the geographical entities they identify. In other words, one must answer the question, **To what precisely does the name refer?** Desired information includes:

- (a) Identification and location of the place, feature or area to which each name applies;
- (b) A description of the extent of each named feature;
- (c) When necessary, an explanation of the hierarchic relationships among associated named entities (such as a peak and the mountain on which it stands).

Each named entity is identified and located by annotation directly on the fieldwork maps (overlays, aerial photographs), along with the informant’s identification according to an established scheme, such as the one discussed below (see figure XIV). The procedure is simple and provides one of the best means of identifying a geographical entity. Care should be taken by the fieldworker to avoid crowding and putting misleading marks on the maps. Field conditions are not always conducive to careful pen-and-pencil annotation. However, every effort must be made to add neat and accurate writing and line work to the field maps or map overlays. The effort will save time and prevent errors in the office where the information is collated and evaluated. It is generally impossible to go back to the field in order to clarify indistinct work. Increasingly, information can be digitally recorded in the field for office analysis.

Any named geographical entities not symbolized on the fieldwork maps or identifiable on the aerial photographs can be accurately located and carefully annotated on the maps, overlays or photographs in their true location, relative to other features, using standard map symbols where possible. The fieldworker must therefore be experienced in map reading and in the use of coordinates and, preferably, also of aerial photos.



**Figure XIV.** Recording of geographical names on a base map outline

*Note:* Individual numbers correspond with informants (as identified in the field notebook). In this example, “?” beside the number of an informant indicates uncertainty about the toponym; “x” indicates that the informant had no knowledge of this name’s being in use.

### Vaguely defined named entities

The majority of names apply to relatively discrete geographical entities that can be logically defined and described. In our world, no two entities are exactly alike and the limits or extents of some are often vague.

The problem is: Exactly what is named? The question posed might take the form: To what does the name apply? **The fieldworker might observe a lack of information or conflicting information on feature extents.** Local people may agree on names for deserts, ridges, mountains or bays without being concerned with their precise limits or boundaries. The mouth of a named river may be fairly clearly defined but in local usage there may seldom be agreement on its headwaters, unless it heads at the junction of two named branches. People who fish might define a named point of land extending into a body of water as the extreme tip of land, whereas local farmers might apply the same name to the entire peninsula.

**For map making, name application is important.** A fieldworker must determine and clearly identify local applications of names and, just as significant, report when local usage is not clearly defined. That information is important to names office staff and to a names authority when deciding on the applications of approved names. **The authority can use such information when logically (although perhaps arbitrarily) defining specific extents of features. Such decisions are important, as they provide guidance for name placement on maps, and in other applications where named entities require precise limits.** In these cases, logically defined limits are normally not in contradiction with rules concerning local usage and, if carefully assessed, are accepted by local citizens.

The precise definitions for the extents of features have always been important. Today, they are of increasing significance to toponymists because the system software of names databases now has the capability to store and display geometry, that is to say, digital boundaries of the extents of features.

### **Hierarchic relationships of generic terms**

In many local languages, as generic terms used in toponyms can create difficulties for the unwary, they need special consideration. They need careful handling by the fieldworker who must record how people actually use the generic terms with regard to named entities and their relationships with other features.

Hierarchic relationships between generic terms are revealed in the way people use names in everyday language. The situation varies from language to language depending how parts of the landscape are perceived for name reference purposes. In English, for example, generic terms often reflect relative relationships, but not necessarily size. For example, a cove might be as large as a bay located elsewhere, but when it is part of the named bay it is relatively speaking a smaller feature. In the same way, a named peak can be as large or larger than any mountain elsewhere, but it can also be part of a mountain. However, a mountain cannot be part of a peak. Knowledge of such hierarchic relationships in a country's languages is useful to fieldworkers who may need to explain the use of generic terminology in a report to a names authority.

### **Recording and reporting field information**

The goal of field investigation is to provide adequate information about local geographical name usage, and so foster good and lasting decisions for national standardization purposes. It is a **critical link between the real world of local name usage and the standardization process.** Toponymic information obtained from each informant needs to be clearly understood, evaluated for accuracy and recorded by the fieldworker in field books and on maps (conventional or digital) for submission to a names authority. It is good procedure to record, with the toponymic results, some pertinent information about each informant who provided the data (see figure XV). This should include the person's approximate age and occupation and the years during which he or she has lived in the area. Such information can be useful when evaluating information in the office. When government officials or those in similar positions are being interviewed, it may be useful to include more complete contact information for any future follow-up.

**Geographical name registration form**

Fieldworker: ..*Olav Stuestøl*... Date: ..2/6-72.. Informant: ..*Lars Øye*.. Date of birth: ..1905.....

County: ..*Aust-Agder*..... Municipality: .....*Grimstad*..... Parish: .....*Landvik*.....

Map sheet name: ..*Syndlesøya*. Map sheet number: ..*BP 009-5-1*..... Map sheet scale: ..1:5 000..

*Details completed in office*

No.	Local name	Preposition	Feature type	Extra information (use back also)	Cadastre	Map grid ref.	IPA <sup>a</sup> and standard spellings	Tape ref. #..6...
1	<b>Lisledal</b>	i 'in'	dal 'valley'	small valley with pasture; used formerly for hay	118/3	A1	[lɪslədal]  Lisledal	1-10
2	<b>Lislesonn</b>	i 'in'	sund 'narrow strait'	in Lake Syndle, S. of Lisledal; good fishing	118/3	A1	[lɪsləsun]  Lislesund	11-14
3	<b>Berenes</b>	på 'on'	nes 'cape'	cape between two lakes	118/3	B2	[bærənəs]  Berenes	15-20
4								

**Figure XV.** Example of a form used in Norway for the field collection of geographical names

- Note:*
- The numbers used correspond with numbering used on the map to identify these features.
  - For each informant, the numbering system is a continuation of that for the previous informant, as long as the features are identified on the same map.
  - It is essential to obtain information on a feature from several informants.
  - Names with comments are also read into a tape recorder (with names pronounced at least twice and put into a sentence structure using a preposition).

<sup>a</sup> International Phonetic Alphabet.

One method for keeping track of information and informants in field investigation uses a coding system for convenience. Each person interviewed in a project area is given a unique identification number that can relate the informant's recorded data in the field book with those annotated on the field map. Also, simple alphabetical and/or numerical codes, or other symbols, can be used as a form of shorthand to note standard replies to routine questions and the judged reliability of the interview responses. Through use of established codes of this kind, the amount of note-taking can be reduced and the crowding of annotations on the field maps can be avoided. The office staff or the national names authority might wish to develop a standard coding system for field use.

During an interview, there are various ways of recording the toponymic information. For example, it can be annotated directly onto the field map or a transparent map overlay (for areas of a map where information is already crowded). Information can also be recorded in a notebook or into a digital report or database using a laptop or hand-held computer. The informant's code must be included in each case. Differently colored pens or pencils might be used on the map or in a notebook to differentiate types of data.

A good procedure is to use **name worksheets**, keyed to a sequence of annotated numbers for features or existing names on a map. Worksheets allow more space for recording information during an interview. They present a practical problem however: separate sheets are sometimes hard to handle and one or more might get lost among other papers and maps. In some areas, laptop computers are used to record field information.

The value of a field investigation project is judged by the results, which reflect not only how successful the interview and recording techniques were, but also how well names information has been conveyed to the names authority office. Every effort should be made to transfer to the office information that is:

- (a) Factual;
- (b) Clearly stated and unambiguous;
- (c) Neat;
- (d) Appropriate;
- (e) Adequate.

Hastily written and often cryptic notes taken during an interview need to be transcribed in order that office staff may understand clearly their meaning and significance. **It is best that field recorded notes be reviewed and transcribed (possibly into a computer) by the fieldworker at the end of each day.** The longer the fieldworker waits to do this, the greater the risk he or she will forget or confuse significant details of several interviews.

### Multilingual conditions

In most countries throughout the world, more than one spoken language generates geographical names. **Field investigation procedures are affected by multilingual conditions, of which there are a great variety.** At one end of the spectrum are those countries that are essentially unilingual, where a large majority of the people speak and understand one language,

even though some people might also speak other languages. At the other end of the spectrum are those countries that are composed of numerous cultural groups in which many languages are spoken.

Since standardization programmes are normally based on the principle of local usage, most countries must take into account the treatment of names derived from the different languages. How this is done is a matter for consideration by the national names authority. The field investigator is responsible for the collection of all names in the field, and must not be selective in the process. Selection, if there is any, is the responsibility of the names authority and its support staff who should undertake selection according to established principles, policies and procedures.

Terms such as “official language”, “national language”, “minority language”, etc. must be understood in the context of any particular country (see *Glossary*, “language, ...”). The legal status of languages in the country as a whole, or in parts of it, must be clear to staff, particularly as it affects geographical names.

The effect of multilingual conditions on interview procedures depends on the ability of the fieldworker to communicate with the people being interviewed and to create a written record of names in a manner acceptable to the names authority and the staff support office. If the fieldworker does not speak the language in which the informant is providing geographical names, other assistance is necessary. For example, it may be possible to use an interpreter—someone who understands the purpose of the interview and is able to deal easily with linguistic and geographical matters. A local schoolteacher, an administrative official or another such knowledgeable person who is able to converse freely in two or more languages might furnish this service.

### **Recording names in various languages**

**When working with a variety of languages, the procedures for recording names will likely vary depending on whether the names are derived from languages that have a written form or from languages that do not have a written form.** In the first case, the names are recorded using the standard writing and spelling of the language from which the name is derived. The written forms of those names gathered in the field may need to be converted into an acceptable orthography according to established rules of the language.

#### **Recording names: unwritten languages**

If a language does not have a standard writing system, the names collected must be written with consistent representation of sounds, if possible according to a system already developed by linguists. Two resolutions adopted by the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (I/20, 1967; and I/16, 1967) addressed this particular case (see annex).

Unless a fieldworker is a linguist and can record names using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), he or she is not qualified to hand-record names from unfamiliar languages. Linguists aware of the standardization processes can do the job in cooperation with the field investigator who, for his or her part, makes sure that the names are correctly identified with the

features and that the records are clear. A geographer or field cartographer who qualifies as a linguist would be able to record the names properly.

People knowledgeable in linguistics, however, are not always available. In that case, it is recommended that the locally spoken names and their meanings, if known, be recorded on tape or diskette. Each is number-coded to the appropriate symbol on the fieldwork map or annotated to coincide with the relevant image marked on an aerial photograph. It is good procedure to have each name spoken twice along with its use in the context of a sentence. Later, in the office or at a university, qualified linguists can transcribe the recorded names into an acceptable orthography. The recorded information can also be used to develop pronunciation guides for the names. In all cases, the meaning of each name, if known by the informant, should be included in the recording in order to assist in correct interpretation.

**For names in unwritten languages, electronic sound-recording on tape or diskette is sometimes the only really practical method.** The recorded material is best transcribed and evaluated later in the office by “centrally” located linguists (preferably members of, or advisors to, the names authority), who are well acquainted with any existing phonetic transcription method.

Electronic recording in the field may also be used to assist in the office evaluation of problems of articulation (such as stress, tone, etc.) that are not easy to record in writing.

### **Local names committees: field assistance**

**The field investigator should not overlook the possible assistance that existing regional and local names committees or authorities can provide in the introduction and selection of people to be interviewed.** If such an authority exists within or near the area being surveyed, it also may be possible to rely on persons associated with that authority to conduct the field interviewing, with or without the supervision of a field investigator working for the national Government. This fieldwork can be done in cooperation with the national names authority as an integral part of the standardization programme. Such a procedure allows local communities to be directly responsible for collecting and recording their own names.

Local committees may also be able to handle multiple-language situations more easily than someone from the outside who is unfamiliar with the languages of the area. Local and regional authorities normally operate with essentially the same principles, policies and procedures for the treatment of geographical names as those followed by the national authority.

At a more informal level, it is possible for a government fieldworker to organize an ad hoc local committee to assist in the interviewing and recording of names. An ad hoc committee can be used to help overcome any language barriers.

A variation of the fieldwork procedure that involves going from one informant to another might also be possible through a local committee. **It could be less costly and more effective to arrange for knowledgeable local informants to come together as a group to discuss and record the area toponyms.** Collection of information using this process can accomplish name selection democratically through discussion among local citizens. This approach to the



collection of geographical names could also entail less time and cost than the procedure of visiting people individually.

### **Field information review**

Although the goals of field investigation are simple and straightforward, it can be seen that the procedures and methods used in the field may vary considerably. Many conditions affect field investigations. The process of obtaining specific and sometimes complex toponymic information from local people having different cultural attitudes, personalities and languages requires flexibility in the procedures and methods used.

**The final result of a field operation is the collection of field reports, annotated work maps and their overlays, and other material related to the toponymy of a specific area.** This material, as far as possible in computer files, is submitted to the staff support office for processing. The field material is reviewed and evaluated for relative completeness, accuracy and adherence to standards. In packages of manageable size (usually based on map sheet area or types of features), names and their applications are then processed and reported, according to established office procedures, for consideration by the names authority.



**Figure XVI.** Discussion and verification of the results of fieldwork



## Chapter X

### Dissemination of official toponyms

*Making known the decisions of the names authority, for example, through gazetteers, maps and toponymic guidelines for map and other editors*

#### Publishing official names

**The dissemination of official geographical names is the end result of a standardization programme. The work of the national authority will have limited success if those in national and local government, the business community, the general public and the international community are unable to obtain official name information quickly and easily.**

Publication of the national authority's principles, policies and procedures is also important because it explains the basis for official name decisions and supports the integrity of the naming process.

Information on official names can be provided to the user community through official maps and gazetteers made available in paper copy. Today, distribution can be carried out electronically through the Internet, and on CD-ROMs, as well as via a national GIS (geographic information system) (*Glossary*, 118) that may also include official maps. Different media suit different user needs.

The publication of a standard map series, by the national mapping organization is one of the best methods available to most countries for the dissemination of official names. Paper maps, unfortunately, are not frequently revised, but public notices in the form of periodic correction lists can provide new names and official changes to names on published maps.

With geographical names in a computer database, the official names, name correction lists and the national authority's principles, policies and procedures can be made available by CD-ROM and/or posted on the Internet. The Internet allows distribution to a large user audience worldwide and supports daily or almost real-time updating of data. With the provision of a search engine on the World Wide Web, users can effectively address their own queries to the official database.

#### Gazetteers

The First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names recommended that each names authority produce, and continually revise, appropriate gazetteers of all its standardized geographical names and that, in addition to the standardized names, each gazetteer should include, as a minimum, such information as is necessary for the proper location and identification of the named features (I/4 E, 1967). In particular, it was recommended that the following be included:

- (a) **The kind of feature to which the name applies;**
- (b) **Precise description of the location and extent, including a point position reference if possible, of each named feature;**
- (c) **Provision for the parts of natural features to be additionally defined by reference to the whole and for the names of extended features to be defined as necessary by reference to their constituent parts;**
- (d) **Such information on administrative or regional areas as is considered necessary and, if possible, reference to a map or chart within which the features lie;**
- (e) **All officially standardized names for a feature, if there is more than one; and provision for cross-references to be made to names previously used for the same feature.**

A basic group of publications for any particular country includes a language dictionary (or dictionaries), a national atlas, a large-scale map series, a national encyclopedia and, importantly, a national gazetteer. To date, most gazetteers are in paper-copy format. However, if a country's toponymic data has been automated, gazetteer information can be made available in digital format, for example, on the Internet.

**Gazetteers** list in a logical (for example, alphabetical) order the geographical names found within an administrative division of a country or within the whole country (see figure XVII). For all official names, a gazetteer should include information that identifies the kinds of geographical entities named, their locations, and variant names and spellings. In some countries, gazetteers might include additional information, such as: elevations, population of places, official map sheets, grammatical information such as name gender or romanized name forms. Gazetteers are generally compiled and published after a relatively complete collection of names and associated information has been assembled for an area. The national authority's database of official names (or the card files) should provide the data source.

Gazetteers differ from publications that also include information on name meaning, history of the naming process and/or history and geography of the feature. These works are normally termed **geographical dictionaries**.

The Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (1977) considered that the publication of full national gazetteers might not be immediately possible in some countries. However, considering the international community's need for a basic stock of a country's official names, the United Nations Conference recommended making available interim lists of standardized names.

In its resolution II/35 (1977), the Second United Nations Conference recommended that **in the interim, countries be encouraged to publish concise lists of their names of geographical entities, including administrative divisions, within a reasonable time and that, as far as possible, where those names were officially written in a non-Roman script for which a romanization system had been agreed, romanized names in accordance with those systems should be included in those lists.**<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See *Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, vol. I, *Report of the Conference, London, 10-31 May 1972* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.74.I.2).

NAME NOM	ENTITY ENTITÉ	LOC 1 LIEU 1	LOC 2 LIEU 2	MAP CARTE	POSITION LAT LONG
<b>A</b>					
Aalders Landing	UNP/LNO	NS	Annapolis	21 A/15	44°50' 64°55'
Aasiwaskwasich	UNP/LNO	QC	Kativik	33 N/2	55°06' 76°53'
Aass 3	IR/RI	BC	Nootka	92 E/10	49°37' 126°49'
Abamasagi Lake	LAKE/LAC	ON	Thunder Bay	42 L/6	50°28' 87°15'
Abamategwia Lake	LAKE/LAC	ON	Kenora	52 G/12	49°40' 91°54'
Abana	UNP/LNO	QC	Abitibi-Ouest	32 D/14	48°57' 79°21'
Abattis, L'	UNP/LNO	QC	Charlevoix	21 M/2	47°14' 70°36'
Abbé-Huard, Rivière de l'	RIV/CDE	QC	Minganie	12 L/14	50°59' 63°17'
Abbey	VILG/VILG	SK	31-20-20-W3	72 K/10	50°44' 108°45'
Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin National Historic Site - also-aussi - Refuge-du-Col-Abbot, Lieu historique national du	PARK/PARC	AB		82 N/8	51°22' 116°17'
Abbotsford	CITY/VIL1	BC	New Westminster	92 G/1	49°04' 122°15'
Abbotsford	UNP/LNO	BC	New Westminster	92 G/1	49°03' 122°17'
Abbott	UNP/LNO	SK	21-7-18-W2	72 H/9	49°35' 104°24'
Abbott's Corner	UNP/LNO	QC	Brome-Missisquoi	31 H/2	45°02' 72°48'
Abee	UNP/LNO	AB	1-61-21-W4	83 I/3	54°14' 113°02'
Abénakis	UNP/LNO	QC	Bellechasse	21 L/10	46°35' 70°49'
Abenakis Springs	UNP/LNO	QC	Nicolet-Yamaska	31 I/2	46°05' 72°52'
Abénaquis, Lac des	LAKE/LAC	QC	Les Etchemins	21 L/1	46°10' 70°22'
Abénaquis, Rivière des	RIV/CDE	QC	Bellechasse	21 L/10	46°35' 70°49'
Aberarder	UNP/LNO	ON	Lambton	40 O/1	43°03' 82°06'
Abercorn	TOWN/VIL2	QC	Brome-Missisquoi	31 H/2	45°02' 72°40'
Abercrombie	UNP/LNO	NS	Pictou	11 E/10	45°38' 62°41'
Aberdeen	TOWN/VIL2	SK	6-39-2-W3	73 B/8	52°19' 106°17'
Aberdeen	UNP/LNO	NS	Inverness	11 F/14	45°59' 61°03'
Aberdeen	UNP/LNO	ON	Prescott	31 G/7	45°30' 74°40'
Aberdeen	UNP/LNO	ON	Grey	41 A/2	44°12' 80°52'

**Figure XVII.** Example of gazetteer content and part of a page layout, as illustrated in the bilingual publication entitled *Concise Gazetteer of Canada/Répertoire toponymique concis du Canada*

Note:

- Names are shown in upper and lower case with appropriate diacritics and listed alphabetically.
- Entities: populated places, administrative and geographical areas are grouped into 13 types of entities (that is to say, categories) and physical features are grouped into 21. Each entity is displayed in abbreviated form in English and French.
- Location 1 and location 2 are the first- and second-level administrative divisions of the country.
- Map scale: 1:50,000.
- Latitude (north) and longitude (west) are provided in degrees and minutes, rounded to the nearest minute.

If the office maintains its official name records in automated form as a computer file, the publication of a gazetteer becomes an easy matter. The computer, with simple printers, is capable of printing out whatever fields of information are required, in any order and with the desired layout for publication purposes.

Today, digital gazetteers available on CD-ROMs or on the Web may supplement, or replace, printed gazetteers.

Before a gazetteer programme is begun, it would be useful to review gazetteers published in other countries, their publishing procedures and formats, and the methods of correction and update used.

### Updating official name information


Maps and printed gazetteers become out of date shortly after they are published. The time gap can be bridged by use of information reports that keep users informed on a regular basis of changes and new names. If the official name records are part of a computer file, the information maintenance problem is easily solved. These reports and up-to-date gazetteers in various formats can be printed or made available digitally with very little preparation cost. Again, **with an official geographical names computer database, current information can easily be made available to a wide range of users.**

### Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors<sup>27</sup>

In 1979, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names developed the idea that each country should periodically make available to the world community an up-to-date document to promote a better understanding of its toponymy. The Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names recommended (resolution IV/4, 1982) that **countries should be encouraged to publish and keep up-to-date toponymic guidelines for map and other editors, which would enable cartographers of other countries to treat correctly all problems of cartographic toponymy of the countries that had produced such guidelines, and which might be of help to all users in interpreting maps.**<sup>28</sup> It was further recommended that **those guidelines contain, inter alia, and as appropriate, the following items:**

- (a) **Legal status of geographical names in the respective languages of multilingual countries;**
- (b) **Alphabets of the language or languages and, furthermore, in the case of non-Roman alphabets and scripts, the officially introduced romanization keys;**
- (c) **Spelling rules for geographical names;**
- (d) **Aids to pronunciation of geographical names;**
- (e) **Linguistic substrata recognizable in the existing place names, but only as far as their knowledge could be of benefit to the cartographer;**
- (f) **Relationship between dialect(s) and standard language(s);**
- (g) **Peculiarities of dialect and areal distribution of the main dialects;**
- (h) **Areal distribution of languages in multilingual countries;**
- (i) **Names authorities and measures taken in names standardization;**
- (j) **Source material;**
- (k) **Glossary of words necessary for the understanding of maps;**
- (l) **Abbreviations in official maps;**
- (m) **Administrative divisions.**

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<sup>27</sup>  For further details, see part two, chap. IX.

<sup>28</sup> See *Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, vol. I, *Report of the Conference, Geneva, 24 August–14 September 1982* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.83.I.7).

This list of recommendations for national guidelines is formidable and it could be difficult for a beginning names authority to comply with them, especially with those aspects that relate to linguistics. It is suggested that the authority obtain copies of existing country guidelines and make a compilation based on what is currently possible. As experience is gained, office staff can build on the initial compilation for more complete editions of the guidelines in future years. Obtaining assistance from professional linguists is also recommended.

## Afterword

People use geographical names every day of their lives. As noted by one of the first members of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, Meredith F. Burrill, geographical names are the language of maps and charts and provide the main geographical reference in all forms of written documents. Establishing a geographical names authority and carrying out a national standardization programme need not be costly or complex. Such a programme will provide a country's governments, its industrial, commercial and business organizations, and its citizens with a suite of official geographical names that have been approved by the national authority. If the programme is planned and organized carefully and undertaken with moderation, there will be considerable savings in time and money. Over-organization, especially in the beginning, should be avoided, as the added complexity could burden the programme and lead to unnecessary costs.

**The process comprising the giving of names and their use in everyday spoken language is a dynamic one. A workable standardization programme requires continuous and careful attention to the details of the process and an effective system through which to disseminate information. It is particularly important that the names authority exercise responsibility over the use of names in government, if it is to accomplish its mission of achieving the national standardization of geographical names.**



Part two

Some selected readings on geographical  
names standardization



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## **Chapter I**

# **Role of the United Nations in the standardization of geographical names: some fifty years on<sup>1</sup>**

**Helen Kerfoot (Canada)**

Geographical names mean many things to many people! They are embedded in our minds as daily reference points, as integral parts of local or national history, or perhaps as places with special connections or interesting stories to tell. To a cartographer or geographic information system (GIS) specialist, they are an important element in geo-referencing; to a journalist, a vital colour in his reporting palette. For all, geographical names may constitute either a clear communication tool or a source of ambiguity and confusion.

The avoidance of ambiguity entails some sort of standardization of geographical names and their applications. Although standardization might have been considered long before, it was only at the Fifth International Geographical Congress, held in Bern, Switzerland, in 1891, that the German geographer Albrecht Penck first proposed applying the concept on a worldwide basis. He launched the idea of a world map on the scale 1:1 million, not only with map projection, symbolization and design laid out, but also with proposals for the standardized writing of geographical names (de Henseler, 1992, paras. 4-5).

### **A. Geographical names at the United Nations: early years**

Details of the “formative years” in establishing a United Nations focal point for the standardization of geographical names are well documented in the report of Max de Henseler to the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (1992). He discussed chronologically the meetings, debates and recommendations extending from the sixth session of the Economic and Social Council in 1948 to the First United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific in 1955 and Council resolution 715 A (XXVII) of 23 April 1959. This provided the foundation stone for the formation of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and the holding of the quinquennial United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

In the late 1950s, the work of geographical names standardization at the United Nations level was recognized as addressing:

- The standardization in one form (univocity) of geographical names at the national level by the country concerned (for international use).
- The agreement on standard methods of transliteration of the accepted form into other languages at the international level.

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<sup>1</sup> Updated from Helen Kerfoot, “Role of the United Nations in the standardization of geographical names”, in *Lecture Notes*, vol. 1, for Dutch- and German-speaking Division/United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names training course in toponymy, Enschede, Netherlands/Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 10-24 August 2002, pp. 91-102. Edited at Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands, 2002.

In its resolution 715 A (XXVII) the Council, requested the Secretary-General:

- (a) To provide encouragement and guidance to those nations that had no national organization for the standardization and coordination of geographical names to establish such an organization and to produce national gazetteers at an early date;
- (b) To take the necessary steps to ensure the functions of a central clearing house for geographical names, including:
  - (i) The collection of gazetteers;
  - (ii) The collection and dissemination of information concerning the technical procedures adopted by Member States for standardization of domestic names, and concerning the techniques and systems used by each Member State in the transliteration of the geographical names of other countries.

To put the plan in motion, a small consulting group of experts from different linguistic groups and with a wide geographical distribution was set up. Its task was to consider and to prepare draft recommendations on technical problems of domestic standardization of geographical names, and to consider the appropriateness of holding an international conference on geographical names standardization.

The Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Geographical Names, chaired by Dr. Meredith F. Burrill (United States of America), met in New York in 1960. It recommended that a conference be held, and was subsequently tasked with preparing the specific objectives for the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names convened in Geneva from 4 to 22 September 1967. In summary, the objectives of the Conference were as follows:

- To confirm that national standardization was the proper basis for international standardization.
- To ensure that countries took greater account in their standardization programmes, of the problems others might encounter in using their geographical names (especially to ensure that all linguistic details were included for proper conversion to other scripts).
- To compare problems and programmes of countries.
- To identify topics for further study.
- To formulate principles of international standardization and transfer from one writing system to another.
- To establish systems for romanization from other writing systems into the United Nations Roman-alphabet languages (English, French and Spanish).
- To consider establishing systems for international standardization based on the Cyrillic and Arabic alphabets,
- To identify categories of names of features extending beyond the sovereignty of a single country and the possibilities of standardization.
- To develop a mechanism for international exchange of information.
- To propose the establishment of a programme of regional conferences/working groups to follow up the Geneva conference.
- To promote the establishment of names standardization bodies in all countries.

The Group of Experts continued its work after the First United Nations Conference. In London, the Second Conference (10 to 31 May 1972) recommended a more permanent status for the Group of Experts. Following endorsement by the Economic and Social Council (decision of 4 May 1973, entitled “Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names”), the Ad Hoc Group of Experts, renamed the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, became one of seven United Nations standing expert bodies.

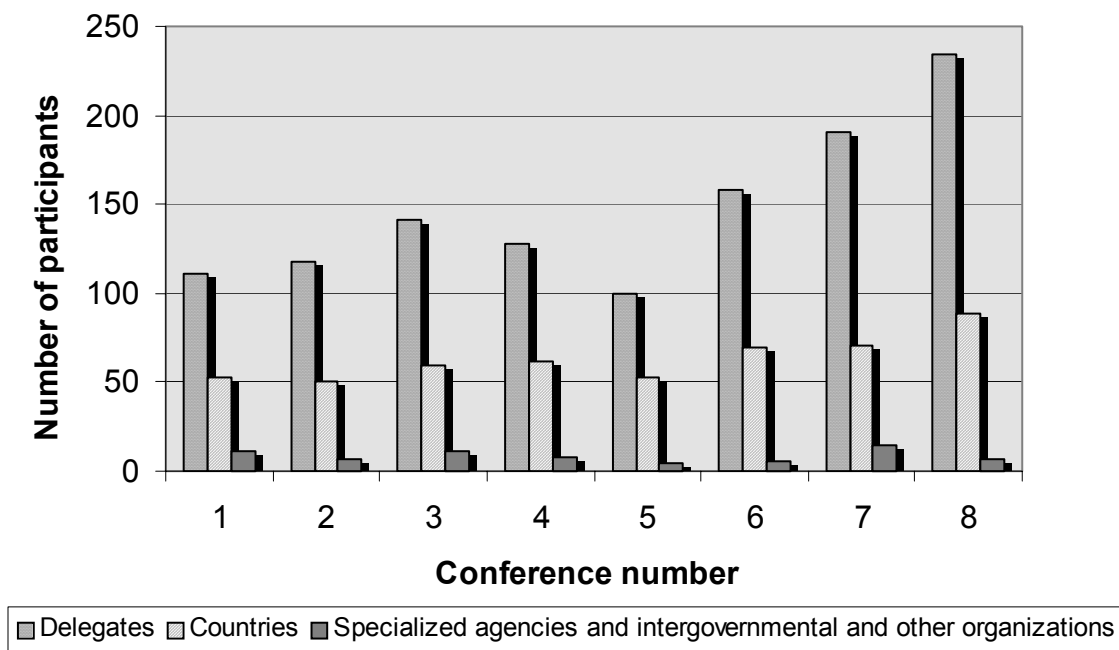
## **B. Participation at the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names**

As of 2004, the United Nations had held eight Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names (and 22 sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names). Participation in the conferences is quantified in figures XVIII and XIX. Some comments on the figures as they applied to the first seven Conferences are included in Kerfoot (2000). These are summarized below with updates so as to include the Eighth United Nations Conference held in 2002.

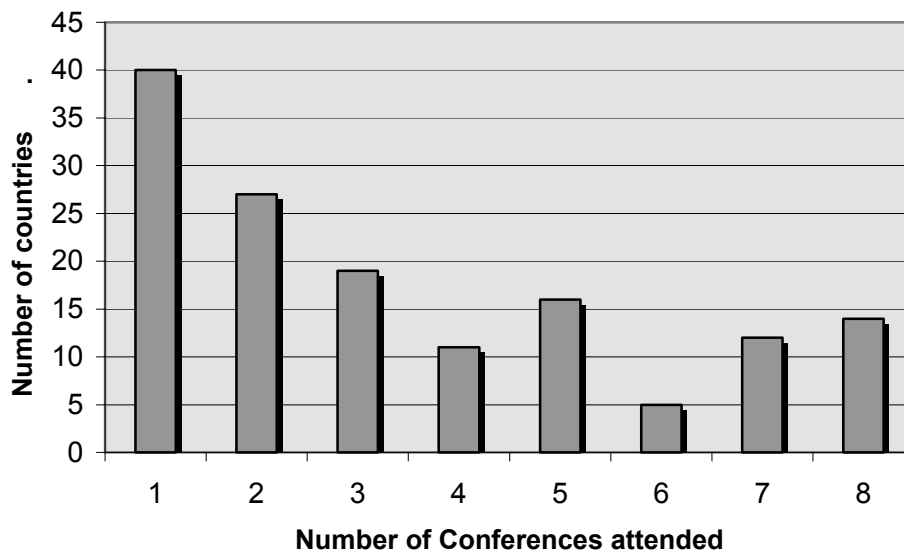
Figure XVIII indicates the number of delegates, countries, and specialized agencies and intergovernmental and other organizations that participated in each of the eight Conferences held between 1967 and 2002. Max de Henseler’s report (de Henseler, 1992), presented at the Sixth United Nations Conference, had shown participation in the first five United Nations Conferences. The results indicated that the Third United Nations Conference held in Athens in 1977 had had the greatest number of delegates participating (141) and that the Fourth United Nations Conference held in Geneva in 1982 had had the greatest number of countries represented (62). One might have thought that the main aims of standardization had been achieved. However, the data from the last three United Nations Conferences show increased participation in recent years—with 89 countries and 234 delegates having been represented at the Eighth United Nations Conference held in Berlin from 27 August to 5 September 2002.

Although the numbers for the participating special agencies and intergovernmental and other organizations, as shown in figure XVIII are small, the Group of Experts has been trying to create stronger ties with international organizations and professional groups (for example, the International Hydrographic Organization, the Economic Commission for Africa, the International Organization for Standardization, the International Cartographic Association and the International Council of Onomastic Sciences). Increasing their involvement and collaboration will further the work of the Group of Experts and the United Nations Conferences.

Figure XIX shows the participation of countries at the United Nations Conferences, by the number of Conferences attended. Of 144 countries that participated at any of the eight Conferences, 35 per cent attended five or more conferences (in other words, over half of the Conferences). Just less than 11 per cent had been represented on all eight occasions. It is encouraging to note, however, that of the 40 countries that attended only one Conference, 18 of them were at either the Seventh or the Eighth United Nations Conference.



**Figure XVIII.** Numbers of delegates, countries, specialized agencies and intergovernmental and other organizations participating at United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names



**Figure XIX.** Participation of countries at the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names, by number of Conferences attended



### **C. Continuing need for standardization**

Since the early gatherings of the 1960s, exponential advances in technology and communication have permitted a more sophisticated approach to geographical names data storage and retrieval, and the possibility of instantaneously reaching worldwide names users in many fields of endeavour. These opportunities to provide and receive data easily, and often cheaply, will not of themselves realize the original goal of standardization, which was to facilitate communication. They do, however, go a long way towards enhancing the need for the Group of Experts and the United Nations Conferences to meet the challenges of national and international standardization. Data may be easy to come by, but reliable, authoritative information is at a premium. Hence, the onus on Member States to work at the grass-roots level to record and disseminate accurate and appropriate geographical names information is increasing, as the tide of often spurious and unsubstantiated second- and third-hand data rises ever higher.

To summarize the benefits of using consistent and accurate geographical names, the Group of Experts developed the text for a brochure that could be widely circulated to government managers, United Nations officers, the media, etc. At first printed in English in Australia, but later (2001) published by the United Nations in its six official languages, the brochure underlines the socio-economic benefits of a standard set of names for national—and by extension for international—use. The benefits of such standardized names are apparent in communication: they can prevent ambiguity while providing clarity and cost savings in commerce, planning, search and rescue, emergency preparedness, censuses, property rights, environmental management, etc. Several additional language forms of the brochure have now been created within various divisions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names to assist their own programmes. The text or PDF file (see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/>) is available for any country or division of the Group of Experts that would like to translate the brochure into other languages to meet its own needs.

The concept of national standardization of geographical names is a significant cornerstone of this United Nations work. The financial benefits for a country of this undertaking's being administered through a single authority (committee, department, etc.) are not easy to determine, but the resulting elimination of duplicated effort among government departments, for example, where no single organization has this responsibility, becomes immediately apparent. Furthermore, such an authority may contribute valuable input into efforts to protect and preserve elements of a country's values that are embedded in its history and culture. The United Nations Conferences promote this process of national standardization as a basis of international standardization.

### **D. Resolutions adopted at the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names**

At the eight United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names held between 1967 and 2002, many resolutions were adopted,<sup>2</sup> with the aim of furthering and directing the work on geographical names standardization around the world.

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<sup>2</sup> One hundred and eighty-four resolutions were adopted, but it should be noted that about 22 of these would be considered non-substantive (that is to say, related to votes of thanks, proposals for forthcoming conferences, etc.).

At the Fifth United Nations Conference in 1987, Max de Henseler, then Secretary of the Group of Experts, compiled the resolutions of the earlier Conferences, grouped under general subject headings. This work was continued by Canada, producing English- and French-language compendiums of resolutions of the eight Conferences. The following subject headings continue to be used (with a few resolutions listed under more than one heading):

<i>Subject area</i>	<i>No. of resolutions</i>
1. United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names	11
2. United Nations Group of Experts of Geographical Names	30
3. International cooperation in the standardization of geographical names	5
4. Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors	4
5. National standardization	12
6. Regional meetings	6
7. Education and training in the treatment of geographical names	10
8. Terminology (including glossaries)	8
9. List of country names	7
10. Preparation of gazetteers	6
11. Bibliographies	4
12. Exchange of experience	2
13. Automated data processing/digital data	11
14. Exonyms	8
15. Romanization/General	6
16. Romanization by language	27
17. Maritime and undersea feature names	6
18. Names of features beyond a single sovereignty	8
19. Extraterrestrial feature names	3
20. Geographical names from unwritten languages	3
21. Manual of national names standardization	4
22. Aids to pronunciation	2
23. Minority languages	3
24. Physiogeographic names	1
25. Geographical names on tourist maps	1
26. Votes of thanks	7

The Conferences have produced the following numbers of resolutions:

<i>Conference</i>	<i>No. of resolutions</i>
First	20
Second	39
Third	27
Fourth	26
Fifth	26
Sixth	14
Seventh	15
Eighth	17

Following the Fifth Conference, the Group of Experts established a Working to assess the work in hand. Among the issues discussed were the resolutions. Various suggestions were made regarding the elimination of resolutions that were obsolete, the rewriting of resolutions that were contradictory, the revision of those encompassing approaches that might have changed over the years and the dropping of those that were non-substantive in nature. As might be imagined, this undertaking is not an easy one and has not yet been accomplished. In effect, even more resolutions would be necessary to achieve such objectives!

### **E. United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names**

To follow up on the implementation of the resolutions, the Group of Experts takes over during the years between the Conferences. It usually meets twice between Conferences and, in addition to the two meetings before the First Conference, had held 22 sessions as of 2004. In addition, tasks of common interest mandated by the resolutions are undertaken by the Working Groups of the Group of Experts. As well, the 22 linguistic/geographical divisions of the Group of Experts provide opportunities for Member States to work in smaller groups with common interests (see figure XX).

Support for the Group of Experts is provided by a secretariat, currently within the United Nations Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs located in New York.

At the twenty-first session of the Group of Experts held in 2002, 22 geographical /linguistic divisions<sup>3</sup> of the Group of Experts were in place. The most recent is the French-speaking Division (Division francophone), created at the Seventh Conference (VII/1, 1998) to provide guidance to Member States of the United Nations that could benefit from documents and discussion on French-language issues in geographical names standardization.<sup>4</sup>

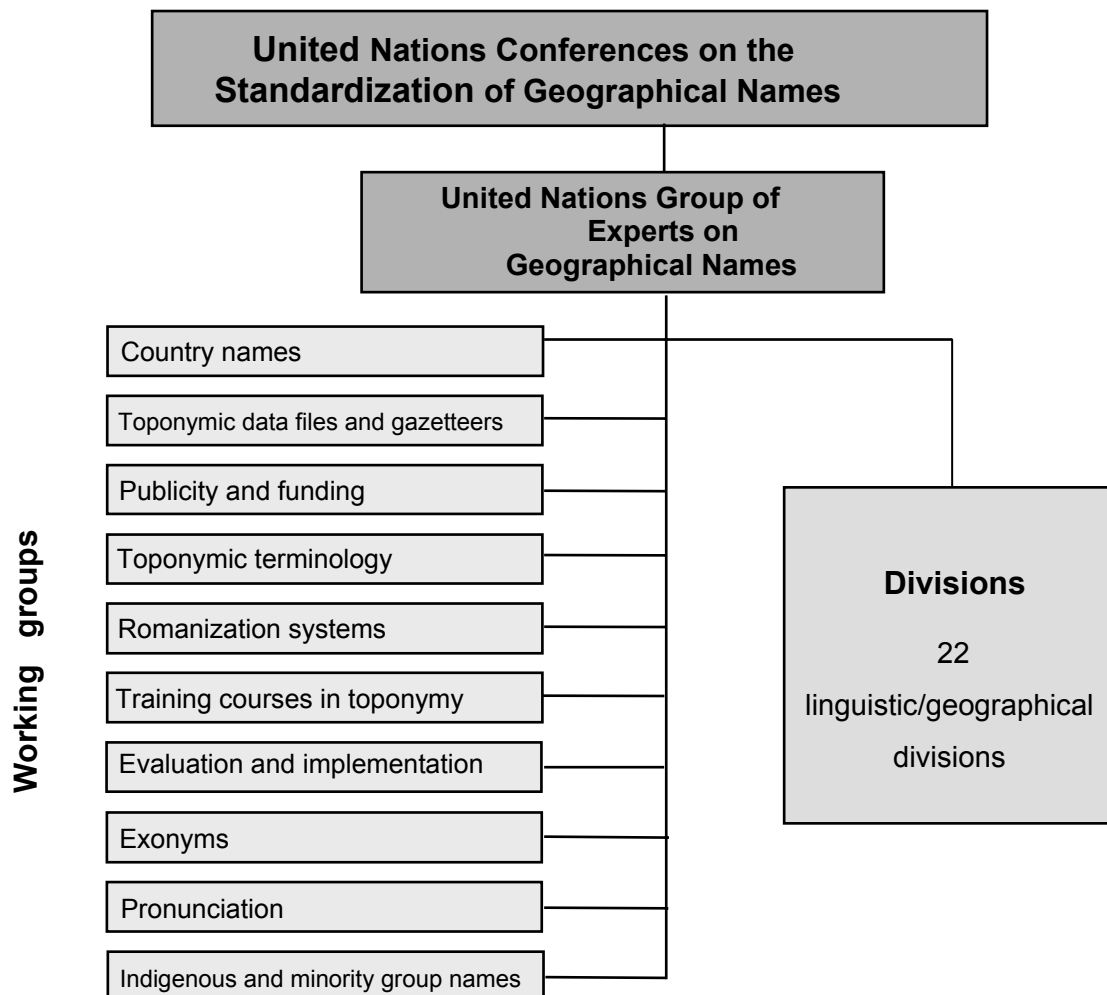
The divisions are important grass-roots networks encouraging national standardization, and providing focal points for discussion of themes of common interest. Countries can elect to be members of more than one division, if this will be of benefit to them. Many divisions function well and convene regularly. The cost of participating in their sessions is generally less than that of participating in sessions of the Group of Experts and the existing structure allows experts to contribute to the discussion of regional issues.

Unfortunately, there are currently a number of inactive divisions. However, it is hoped that encouragement of renewed cooperation in those divisions will enable mutual assistance in establishing and promoting names authorities and standardization programmes. It is particularly encouraging that all 22 divisions of the Group of Experts were represented at the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in Berlin in 2002.

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<sup>3</sup> Africa Central; Africa East; Africa South; Africa West; Arabic; Asia East (other than China); Asia South-East and Pacific South-West; Asia South-West (other than Arabic); Baltic; Celtic; China; Dutch- and German-speaking; East Central and South-East Europe; Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia; East Mediterranean (other than Arabic); French-speaking; India; Latin America; Norden; Romano-Hellenic; United Kingdom; United States/Canada.

<sup>4</sup> See *Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, New York, 13-22 January 1998*, vol. I, *Report of the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.I.18), chap. III.



**Figure XX.** Working groups of the United Nations Group of Experts of Geographical Names and the overall structure of United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names, the Group of Experts and the divisions of the Group of Experts

#### F. Working Groups of the Group of Experts

To follow up on Conference resolutions, various working groups of the Group of Experts have been established. Following the 1998 Conference six were active:

<i>Working Group on:</i>	<i>Convenor</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Country names</li> </ul>	Ms. Sylvie Lejeune (France)/ Mr. Leo Dillon (United States of America) (from 2003)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toponymic data files and gazetteers</li> </ul>	Mr. Randall Flynn (United States of America)

- |                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Publicity and funding        | Mr. David Munro (United Kingdom)  |
| • Romanization systems         | Mr. Peeter Päll (Estonia)         |
| • Toponymic terminology        | Mr. Naftali Kadmon (Israel)       |
| • Training courses in toponymy | Mr. Ferjan Ormeling (Netherlands) |

In addition, at the twentieth session of the Group of Experts held at United Nations Headquarters in January 2000, a need was expressed for the re-establishment of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation so that the activities, functioning, cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the Group of Experts could be examined (see GEGN/20, para.62). Its creation was confirmed in 2002; in addition, three new working groups have been created to address resolutions emanating from the Eighth United Nations Conference.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • Evaluation and implementation                                    | Mr. Ki-Suk Lee (Republic of Korea)                                |
| • Exonyms  | Mr. Milan Orožen Adamič (Slovenia)/<br>Mr. Peter Jordan (Austria) |
| • Pronunciation  | Mr. Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig (Ireland)                           |
| • Promotion of indigenous and<br>minority group geographical names | Mr. Brian Goodchild (Australia)/<br>Mr. William Watt (Australia)  |

Other working groups will be established as the need arises.

The tasks of the working groups are normally technical in nature, and are characterized by greater depth and detail than can be dealt with by the Group of Experts as a whole. The convenor of each working group coordinates the continuity of its effort between sessions of the Group of Experts. In response to the wishes of experts to involve a wide variety of individuals in the working groups, meetings of the groups during sessions of the Group of Experts have been included as meetings of committees of the whole, so that the simultaneous interpretation facilities are available. The accomplishment of tasks of working groups is fundamental to the effectiveness of the Group of Experts.

## **1. Country names**

A complete terminology bulletin/reference manual of country names is available through the United Nations (United Nations, 1997; the most up-to-date version is available from <http://unhq-apps-01.un.org/dgaacs/unterm.nsf>) and is used, with periodic updates, by all United Nations departments and bodies. The short, as well as the full or formal, names of States Members of the United Nations are recorded in the six official languages of the United Nations. In addition, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) two- and three-letter codes for the countries are provided.

In 1992, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names formed a working group to study the writing of country names and to record the forms used by the countries themselves in their official languages and writing systems. Transliterated forms, where possible using the systems recommended by the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names, were also to be included. A carefully researched document providing this information for 193 countries was presented to the Seventh Conference in 1998. This document was updated and modified where necessary and is available (in English only) as E/CONF.94/CRP.11 of the Eighth Conference (2002).

Efforts are ongoing to update and upgrade this document and to rationalize variances in usage with the above-mentioned 1997 *Terminology Bulletin*.

## **2 Toponymic data files and gazetteers**

Since its inception, and under different titles, the current Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers has performed, over several decades, major tasks in promoting consistency in data presentation and fields of data to be included in paper copy gazetteers, developing and maintaining digital toponymic data files and databases and, more recently, addressing questions of toponymic data exchange formats and standards. Just recently, a stronger liaison has been established with the Unicode Consortium in the context of digital text encoding and with the ISO Technical Committee on Geographic Information/Geomatics (TC 211).

At present, this Working Group has a number of objectives, including provision of information on software, fonts, data exchange formats and standards, and availability of gazetteers and data files. The Working Group's website is located at <http://www.zrc-sazu.si/ungegn/>.

## **3. Publicity and funding**

Following the Fifth Conference, a Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation was established. After reporting to the Sixth Conference in 1992, this Working Group was refocused to concentrate on a narrower field: that of publicity and funding. Through the efforts of this Working Group, the information brochure entitled "Consistent use of place names", based on text prepared by the Group of Experts was first published with the support of the Australian Intergovernmental Committee on Surveying and Mapping and the efforts of John Parker (Australia), then convenor.

The aims of this Working Group continue to include dissemination of material on the work being undertaken by the Group of Experts. In the last few years, it has been promoting the importance of ensuring that an effective website is established and maintained by the secretariat of the Group of Experts in New York. In 2003, the Working Group gathered and prepared material for two books on geographical names standardization to be published for the Group of Experts by the United Nations: a basic manual, and a technical manual on romanization systems, formats and standards for toponymic data exchange, as well as country names.

## **4. Romanization systems**

Throughout history, many means have been used to convert non-Roman writing systems to the Roman alphabet. Such a variety of methods, often unscientific in nature, cause considerable difficulty in communication. Since their inception, the Group of Experts and the Conferences have had the important task of recommending single systems of romanization based on scientific principles for each of the languages that use non-Roman script. The Working Group on Romanization Systems strives between sessions to reach agreements on such systems. At the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (in 2002), it was reported (see E/CONF.94/CRP.81 and Add.1) that systems had been ratified for 28 languages, although not all had been fully implemented at national and international levels.

Another 17 languages were cited as having romanization systems being devised and/or officialized, but not yet recommended for international use.<sup>5</sup>

The Working Group continues to look to a future where single romanization systems for each language using a non-Roman script are recognized and implemented. It also monitors modifications to existing systems on a continuing basis. The Working Group maintains a website at <http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/>.

A letter database that displays languages, special characters and Unicode with images of the letters can be found at the website of the Institute of the Estonian Language (<http://www.eki.ee/letter/>).

## **5. Toponymic terminology**

A systematic account of the terminology used in the standardization of geographical names constitutes an important basis for common understanding. In 1984, a publication entitled *Glossary, No. 330: Technical Terminology Employed in the Standardization of Geographical Names* was issued by the United Nations (ST/CS/SER.F/330). The Working Group on Toponymic Terminology subsequently made refinements and added further definitions. Experts from different language groups have translated the new English-language text; some language versions have been published (for example, Chinese, German) and others have been made available on the Web (for example, French).

The new multilingual *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names* was published by the United Nations in 2002, and is available in the six-language format (United Nations Group of Experts of Geographical Names, 2002). The Working Group will continue to monitor the use of terms and will prepare updates and modifications to the *Glossary*.

## **6. Training courses in toponymy**

On the website of the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy (<http://toponymycourses.geog.uu.nl/>), information is provided on the toponymy courses that have been offered to international audiences since 1982. In some cases, the associated lecture notes, manuals, fieldwork guides, etc. are also available. These courses held under various auspices and in different parts of the world have been provided in the form of lectures, exercises, workshops, fieldwork and digital toponymic processing techniques. In all cases, the concept of national standardization (and hence international standardization) is the focal point of the course.

Although the total number of courses grows (currently about 30), the number of individuals reached still remains relatively small. As a means of making the concepts and materials more widely and freely available, a primary focus of this Working Group during the

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<sup>5</sup> Languages with romanization systems supported by resolutions adopted by the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names: Amharic, Arabic, Assamese, Bengali, Bulgarian, Chinese, Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Kannada, Khmer, Macedonian Cyrillic, Malayalam, Marathi, Mongolian (in China), Nepali, Oriya, Persian, Punjabi, Russian, Serbian, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tibetan, Uighur, Urdu.

Other languages for which romanization systems have been noted in reports, but that are not yet supported by resolutions adopted by the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names: Armenian, Burmese, Byelorussian, Dzongkha, Georgian, Japanese, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Korean, Lao, Maldivian, Mongolian (Cyrillic), Pashto, Sinhalese, Tajik, Tigrinya, Ukrainian.

next few years will be the development of Web-based course material. This has now been started online within the framework of a cartography web course produced by the Commission on Education and Training (CET) of the International Cartographic Association (<http://lazarus.elte.hu/cet>).

## **7. Evaluation and implementation**

In 1987, following the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, the Group of Experts originally established the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation to address Conference resolution V/4<sup>6</sup> entitled “Work performed by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and its future activities”. Specifically it recommended that the functioning of the Group of Experts should be evaluated and fresh approaches investigated to improve and enhance its effectiveness. After reporting back to the sessions of the Group of Experts in 1989 (see WP 31) and 1991 (see WP 55), the Working Group was disbanded in favour of a new group established to consider aspects of publicity and funding.

However, as this work needs to be undertaken on a periodic (if not continuing) basis, the Working Group was re-established in 2000. Its work plan includes an evaluation of the functioning and efficacy of the Group of Experts and the implementation of resolutions, finding ways to involve Member States not currently active in the Group of Experts and examining the needs of developing countries with respect to achieving national standardization of their geographical names.

## **8. Exonyms**

The Working Group on Exonyms was created in response to resolution VIII/4 entitled “Working Group on Exonyms of the United Nations Group of Experts of Geographical Names”, adopted by the Eighth Conference in 2002. Various conference resolutions now exist on the treatment, use and reduction of exonyms and the opposition to the creation of new ones in the context of geographical names standardization and effective United Nations communication. The consistent use of names on cartographic products, and the use (pros and cons) of nationally standardized names (endonyms) worldwide have been discussed at many conferences. A workplan is being developed to encourage progress in addressing these resolutions and a publication on exonyms is anticipated. The Working Group’s website is located at <http://www.zrc-sazu.si/wge>.

## **9. Pronunciation**

Also at the Eighth Conference, resolution VIII/11 was adopted, recommending that a Working Group on the Pronunciation of Geographical Names be established within the Group of Experts. In the same resolution, it was noted that the transliteration of geographical names from the script of one language into the script of another, such as romanization, did not normally provide a guide to the correct pronunciation of such names by persons who were unacquainted with the source language. The Working Group’s workplan is currently being developed.

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<sup>6</sup> See *Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, vol. I, *Report of the Conference, Montreal, 18-31 August 1987* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.88.I.7).



## **10. Promotion of indigenous and minority group geographical names**

At the twenty-second session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, held in 2004, the Working Group on the Promotion of Indigenous and Minority Group Names was established to address resolution VIII/1 adopted by the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. A database and reporting structure are being developed for detailing such activities as fieldwork projects. Interested countries will then be able to participate in worldwide promotion of their indigenous and minority group toponymic activities.

### **G. Other activities of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names: toponymic guidelines**

Professor Josef Breu (Austria), as Chairman of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in 1979, initiated the concept of toponymic guidelines for map and other editors. The aim was for every country to use a common format to present material to advance the understanding of the country's toponymy, in particular for those involved in the treatment of geographical names for cartography. Some countries have presented one or more editions of their guidelines at United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names or at sessions of the Group of Experts; others have published them, either independently or in *World Cartography*. Estonia, Slovenia and Slovakia, followed by Norway and Austria, were the first to make guidelines available on the World Wide Web.

A working paper (WP 6), submitted by Canada, and presented at the twentieth session of the Group of Experts (2000), had summarized the progress of this worldwide project up to 1998. By 2000, some 35 countries had contributed to the project, including Algeria, Greece, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Poland and Slovakia, whose guidelines were submitted to the Group of Experts in that year.

At the Eighth United Nations Conference in 2002, Poland, Germany and Cyprus had available published toponymic guidelines; and Italy, the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Austria presented first or later versions of their guidelines. At the twenty-second session of the Group of Experts in 2004, Finland and Italy provided revised editions of their guidelines.

From now on, it would appear that the Web will be most useful for the distribution of such material. In 2004, Ms. Isolde Hausner (Austria) took over as coordinator of toponymic guidelines.

### **H. Publications and other information**

#### **1. Documentation for the sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names**

For each session of the Group of Experts and each United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, documentation is available in various forms:

Sessions of the Group of Experts:

- Individual technical papers presented
- Report of the session (including agenda, list of participants)

United Nations Conferences:

- Individual technical papers presented
- Volume I: report of the Conference (including agenda, list of participants, resolutions)
- Volume II: collection of technical papers presented<sup>7</sup>

Copies of some documents are available from the secretariat of the Group of Experts, or can be consulted at United Nations Headquarters in New York in the General Collection or Map Library of the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library. Now documents are being made available for a wider public as PDF files on the website of the Group of Experts.

## **2. Website of the Group of Experts (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/>)**

In response to resolution VII/9 adopted by the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names entitled “Standardization of geographical names using the Internet”, the secretariat of the Group of Experts has now established the website of the Group of Experts where documents and information about activities can be accessed.<sup>8</sup> The aim is to keep this site up to date and to provide links to websites of divisions and working groups of the Group of Experts, as well as to those of individual national names authorities and their geographical names databases.

## **3. Brochure prepared by the Group of Experts entitled “Consistent use of place names”**

After preparation of the text by the Group of Experts Working Group on Publicity and Funding, and its adaptation for general appeal, the brochure entitled “Consistent use of place names” had been first published in English in Australia. In 2001, the brochure was issued in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. The text, photos and maps included in the brochure can also be downloaded from the website of the Group of Experts. It has also been issued separately in other languages, for instance, French and Greek.

The brochure explains the programmes of the Group of Experts on the consistent use worldwide of accurate place names, and the economic and social benefits of geographical names standardization. It is primarily intended for those trying to interest their own Governments in the work of the United Nations in this field.

## **4. *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names***

The *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names* developed by the Group of Experts, through the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology convened by Naftali Kadmon, was published by the United Nations in 2002. It provides a reference in six languages

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<sup>7</sup> Volume II was available after the first seven conferences, but with documents now available on the website of the Group of Experts, its publication has been discontinued.

<sup>8</sup> See *Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, vol. I, *Report of the Conference, New York, 13-22 January 1998* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.I.18), chap. III.

for many of the terms used worldwide in the standardization of geographical names. This new publication containing 375 terms replaces the 1984 version entitled *Glossary No. 330: Technical Terminology Employed in the Standardization of Geographical Names* (with 115 definitions).

## I. Concluding comments

Although the United Nations Conferences and the sessions of the Group of Experts have accomplished much since their inception, efforts must be of a continuous nature. Some countries have not yet heard of the work of the United Nations in this regard; others have not yet witnessed the advantages or have been unable to create a national names authority; still others have started out on their path but have been unable to continue. It is to be hoped that the Group of Experts, through its divisional structure, can reach out further to help countries promote standardization processes, and that, through the sessions of the Group of Experts and the activities of its working groups, experiences can be shared in regard to the development of procedures, databases, writing systems, etc. If we can all learn from each other's successes—large or small—we can all move forward in the same direction towards improved international communication.

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## Chapter II

### Language and the conversion of geographical names<sup>1</sup>

Naftali Kadmon (Israel)

#### A. Language and pronunciation

Geographical names constitute elements of human language, but what is meant by the term "language"? In other words, how do we define what we all know intuitively? It is evident that there can be no single definition of language, since there exist different uses of the term. This becomes obvious when one considers such expressions as "scientific language", "Shakespeare's language", "computer language", "body language", the "Chinese language" and even "bad language"! The *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names* prepared by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names includes 15 uses of the term "language" (entries 145-159) in connection with the standardization of geographical names.

For the purpose of the present chapter, we can adopt, instead of a formal definition, a quite simple description of language as a channel of communication with the help of which members of a given society, usually called a linguistic community such as a tribe or a nation, can transmit conscious thought between individuals.

How many languages are there in the world? This, again, is a matter of definition and of conjecture, estimates ranging from several hundred to several thousand often being provided. One authority estimates that there are at least 4000 living languages, with probably another 15,000 dialects.<sup>2</sup>

Three terms should be introduced in connection with languages:

- **Lingua franca** or **vehicular language**, which is a means of verbal communication between peoples who have no other language in common. One of the first *linguae francae*, or "western languages", was based mainly on Italian and served communication in the eastern and south-western Mediterranean regions in the Middle Ages.

A geographical names authority, especially in a multilingual country, may have to deal with the following kinds of vehicular languages:

- **Pidgin**, which is a kind of auxiliary language derived, for some specific purpose (such as trading with foreigners), from one or more existing languages, by a process of strong and sometimes extreme simplification of the latter. One example, which served trade in the South Seas, is Beach-la-mar or Bislama, based on English. Chinese Pidgin English is another example. Fanagalo, based mainly on Zulu, which

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted with permission from N. Kadmon, *Toponymy: The Lore, Laws and Language of Geographical Names* (New York, Vantage Press, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> See David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (Cambridge, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 285.

evolved among black mine workers with different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds in South Africa, is a further example.

- **Creole**, which is a pidgin that has stabilized and become the sole or primary language of a linguistic community. Some examples are Haitian Creole based on French and on the African languages of former slaves; Sranan (also called Sranantonga and, somewhat derogatively, Taki-Taki), an English-based creole, with some Dutch and other elements, used in Suriname; and Melanesian, also based on English.

Another term must be introduced here, namely, **unwritten languages** (sometimes called imprecisely, and with little justification, illiterate languages), which are channels of oral communication for which no separate or original system of written expression has ever been developed. Practically all indigenous languages of Africa south of the Sahara belong to this group, as well as most of those spoken by American Indians both in North and in South America, and the numerous tongues of the Pacific Ocean region. While they have no direct significance in written communication, they are of great importance as regards geographical names coined by their speakers. All writing in these languages is being conducted in the script of colonizing powers, or, as in the case of the Inuit (Eskimos) of Canada, in new scripts especially developed for them.

We now turn to pronunciation—the spoken form of a toponym.

One of the more severe problems of toponymy stems from the fact that geographical names originate in so many different languages. Dealing with names therefore entails two separate issues. The first is the matter of pronunciation and the second that of the written or graphic expression of the name. Both problems must be addressed by the toponymist. The spoken form of a geographical name is clearly the more basic and was chronologically the earlier one. Writing, which evolved later, is the “freezing”, codification and storage of the spoken word, by which it was converted from breath of mouth into a permanent or documentable form.

By pronunciation, we mean, in this instance, the proper, correct or standard pronunciation—standard, that is, within the linguistic community concerned. Even between individual members of the same linguistic community, one can find differences in the pronunciation of a given toponym, for instance, in the placing of stress (for example, Newfoundland, as against Newfoundland and Newfoundland). However, let us assume that there exists a standard pronunciation of a set of toponyms within a given linguistic community. Now if this set of toponyms was presented to a different community, for example, to one consisting of speakers of another mother tongue, in many cases, the members of this second group would simply not be able to discern and hear, let alone pronounce, some of the sounds used by the first linguistic community, at least not without lengthy study and practice. This fact leads to numerous problems in toponymy and demonstrates that a person can approach "strange" sounds at best only by reproducing them approximately, whether orally or in writing. This fact is of importance and must be borne in mind by the investigator during interviews in fieldwork, because one of the aims of applied toponymy is the standardization of geographical names for international use, as in maps, atlases and gazetteers. There exists a more "refined" aid to the written expression of speech sounds, namely, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). We shall thus conclude by asking the reader to bear in mind that, phonetically, geographical names can be standardized only approximately in writing on an international level, for example, by romanization (see below).

## B. Transliteration, transcription and translation of geographical names

Members and staff of a national geographical names authority have to deal primarily with endonyms (*Glossary*, 076). An endonym is the name of a geographical feature in the language or languages occurring in the precinct where the feature is situated. However, under certain circumstances, authorities have to consider the conversion of these endonyms through one or more of four processes, namely, transliteration, transcription, translation and exonymization. While exonymization is treated in part two, chapter VI, transliteration, transcription and translation are dealt with below. However, these processes are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Thus, an exonym can be formed through translation, for example, Kyašulynas in Lithuanian for the former Cape Province in South Africa, or Black Sea for Turkish Kara Deniz.

Names conversion (*Glossary*, 041) is the process of transferring a name, and in particular an endonym, from one language to another or from one script to a different one. This may become necessary when the authority deals with, or is situated in, a multilingual country, and has to standardize the names in two or more languages and/or scripts, or when the need arises in a monolingual country to supply names in different scripts, either to its own citizens or to institutions in another country.

### 1. Transliteration and diacritics

The first method of names conversion to be considered by the names authority is transliteration (*Glossary*, 352). The term is derived from the Latin word *littera*, meaning letter, and indicates the basic concept: letter-for-letter transformation. Transliteration is a method of names conversion between different scripts (and not between languages). In principle, each graphic character in the source script, whether alphabetic or syllabic (though not logographic), is replaced by a corresponding character of the target script. However, since different scripts often (and, indeed, usually) represent different sounds, certain single characters or character combinations of the source script are represented or replaced in transliteration not by just one character such as a single letter, but by letter combinations, for example, two letters (digraphs), three (trigraphs) or even four (tetragraphs). Often even this is not enough, and the target script then makes use of special graphic signs called diacritical marks or simply diacritics (*Glossary*, 064). True transliteration aims at (but does not always achieve) complete reversibility, so that a person reading a toponym in the target script will be able to reconstruct its original form in the source script, if he/she is familiar with it. Transliteration can be applied between different alphabetic and syllabic scripts where, in principle, a particular graphic character always represents the same sound. It cannot be rigorously applied to logographic scripts such as Chinese and Japanese Kanji, where a graphic character represents meaning and not just sound.

Let us take the example of transliteration from Greek into Roman script. The endonym of the capital of Greece, in Greek script, is Αθήνα. We can decide that for the letter θ we will substitute the Roman digraph th. In transliteration, Αθήνα then becomes Athína. If the reader knows Greek script (but does not necessarily understand the Greek language), he or she can reconstruct the original form Αθήνα from the transliterated form Athína (only approximately, because for complete reversibility the letter í should be underscored). This is called retransliteration (*Glossary*, 278). However, the reader must be supplied with a so-called transliteration key (*Glossary*, 354), which specifies the one-to-one correspondence between Greek and Roman characters.

Now consider transliteration from Russian Cyrillic script into Roman script. Here we take as an example the Cyrillic letter Ч, which has no equivalent in Roman script. However, we can represent its sound (which in English is represented by ch and in German by tsch) by substituting the Roman letter c, together with a graphic marker, thus č. This marker (and others such as ^, ~, and many more above, through and below the letters) is called a diacritical sign, or simply a diacritic (*Glossary*, 064). Its main purpose is to change or modify the phonetic value, in other words, the sound, of an existing basic letter. Sometimes diacritics are used to distinguish between homonyms (*Glossary*, 130), or similar names, such as Rovne and Rovné in Slovakia.

Up to this point, we have been discussing alphabetic scripts where transliteration alphabets are used as transliteration keys. Transliteration is applicable also to syllabic scripts (*Glossary*, 294). Thus, Japanese Katakana characters for k-syllables, for example, are similarly represented in Roman script by ka, ki, ku, ke, ko. A list of rules for transliterating from a syllabic to an alphabetic script is called a transliteration syllabary.

While the above were general examples of transliteration, they happen to illustrate the special case of transliteration into Roman script, which is called romanization (*Glossary*, 280). Its particular importance is such that the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names have called upon all countries whose script is not Roman to adopt a single agreed system of transliteration converting their script into Roman, to be adopted also by the United Nations. This is referred to as the single romanization principle. Such a case may have to be taken up by a national authority on geographical names. Sometimes the rules for romanization are developed and prescribed by an academic body such as an academy of language or a university, but the names authority may be called upon to prepare the list of romanized names in its country to be included in its national geographical names database.

Transliteration has advantages and disadvantages. Its main benefit (though this is not always fully achieved) is reversibility, which turns it into a useful tool. A national cartographic institute in a country with non-Roman script that wishes to produce different language editions of its maps (for example, for foreign tourists), can print its maps using Roman script for readers of any language, be it French, Spanish, English, Turkish, Zulu, etc., in a single version. The institute can achieve this without needing to change the spelling of hundreds or perhaps thousands of its toponyms in different language editions (there is such a need if transcription is used (see below)), and would require only a translation of the legend of conventional signs into the various languages, as well as providing the romanization key (*Glossary*, 281).

The chief disadvantage of a transliteration system is that it is "good for everybody but perfect for nobody" because the diacritics and special letters introduced often have no meaning in the scripts of the various languages. This is the reason why a transliteration key is required for each language (in the above case, a romanization key in French, Spanish, etc.). However, for the map or atlas producer this is a less costly option than converting and reprinting the entire body of toponyms in the atlas or map (even though, in the end, it is usually the customer who pays the bill).



## 2. Transcription

The previous paragraphs demonstrated how the sounds of a toponym can be converted from one script to another via transliteration. It is primarily used for converting local endonyms into a foreign script, as in the case of romanization. Transcription, on the other hand, is predominantly used to convert the sounds of foreign languages into the script of a local language. While this does not concern a geographical names authority to a great extent, transcription may have to be used by the authority in order to make its own romanization system understandable to foreign readers, as described below.

Transliteration transposes a name from one script to another. Transcription (*Glossary*, 346), from the Latin word *scribere*, meaning to write, is the written conversion of the endonymic form of a toponym from one language to another, using the script of the target language only, without having recourse, as has transliteration, to additional or special letters, diacritics or other markers. Perhaps the greatest advantage of transcription lies in the fact that a reader of the target language who wishes to pronounce a foreign name will be able to read it. If the name was presented to him/her via transliteration, he/she would probably stumble over it and its diacritics. While it may sound strange to the ear and be strange to the articulating vocal system of the reader, he/she can, when reading it in transcription, at least approximate the spoken form without any outside help such as a transliteration key. The reader can approximate the spoken form, that is, as far as the sounds included in his/her language can reproduce those of the foreign name, and its script can reproduce them, or rather direct the reader how to reproduce them in vocal articulation, that is, in speaking.

Transcription, constituting the second of the methods of names conversion, is thus the purely phonetic transformation of a name, in writing, from one language to another. It was the method resorted to by former explorers and discoverers as well as other travellers who did try to retain, for later use, the sound of the foreign names that they had heard and learned from endemic populations. This they did not only for their own use, but for the benefit of later navigators and travellers, mainly through the services of cartographers who permanently recorded and published the names.

Transcription is usually a non-reversible process. This means that after a toponym has been transcribed from one language into another, retranscribing it into the original source language does not necessarily produce the original name. This is a distinct drawback for anybody who wishes to reconstruct the name form in its original script from the transcribed form that has been found in a map or text. The following example will make this clear.

Transcribing the English name Chichester into German, for example, in a school atlas, would result in Tschitschester, which is nearest to expressing the sounds of the original source language in the script of the target language without resorting to special symbolization. But now trying to retranscribe Tschitschester into English (something a native reader of the German atlas might wish to do in order to learn the spelling of the original English endonym) could result in Tshitshester, Tchitchester, Tshitchester or Tchittshester, besides the original Chichester.

After what might appear to be a theoretical example, here are some real ones. Ἀγλαγγιά in Cyprus is pronounced approximately Aglangiá and appears as such in transcription into Turkish (and Roman script). Retranscribed it might become Ἀγλανγιά. Worse: Μπογάζι,

pronounced Bogázi, would be retranscribed into Greek, which has no letter for the Turkish b, as Βογάζι, which would sound like Vogázi. Αγκαρα for Ankara, retranscribed as Agkara, presents a similar problem.

As a result of this non-reversibility, and because of the adaptation to the target language, transcription can be regarded as a "popular"—not a “professional”—method of names conversion. One of its main uses is in the production of a general world atlas in any particular language, a topic not dealt with here.

A name’s being readily "pronounceable", albeit regarded as an advantage, can be seen in a different light, particularly in maps, where it may become a disadvantage from an economic viewpoint. It was made clear previously that a cartographic establishment, especially in a country having a non-Roman script, using transliteration (and not phonetic transcription) would have to print only a single romanized version of a map for speakers of different Roman-writing languages. Only the map legend would have to be supplied to the reader in his or her preferred language, together with the romanization key, perhaps in a separate publication or print. The romanization key has to be explained to the foreign reader in his or her own language and this must be done via transcription. For example, for English readers of romanized Arabic place names the (transcription) item “kh = pronounced as in the ch in Scottish loch” must appear in the romanization key.

Let us take the example of an English map of the Russian Federation using United Nations-approved romanization. The romanization key for Russian states that the Cyrillic letter ч is represented by č. This would be unintelligible to the English reader and therefore the transcription note "pronounced as English ch" should be added. For the Cyrillic letter ш, the transcription note would be "pronounced as English shch".

### **3. Translation.**

Translation (*Glossary*, 350), dealt with here, and exonymization (*Glossary*, exonym, 081), dealt with in part two, chapter VI, transplant a toponym linguistically from a source to a target language. Unlike transliteration and transcription, they do not attempt to preserve either an endonym’s original spoken form or its written one but are concerned instead with the problem of how to name a place, rather than how to write that place’s endemic name.

By definition, translation is the expression of meaning of a word in a given language, the source language, in terms of another, the target language. To what extent does this process apply to geographical names?

One of the differences between a proper name such as a toponym, and a common name or other words, is that whereas the latter can be found together with their meanings in an ordinary dictionary or lexicon (we therefore speak of lexical translation), the former, that is to say, the geographical name, will usually be found only in a geographical dictionary or gazetteer.

Translation can be employed as a method of names conversion only if the source toponym, wholly or in part, has semantic or lexical meaning, in other words, only if it can be found in an ordinary dictionary. This rules out translation of many one-word names such as London, Pretoria, Sydney, Kassel and Nantes, unless one returns to the historical or linguistic

root of the name in a diachronic (historical) process and examines its meaning, but then one would have to substitute the Latin *Castellum* for Kassel in German, translating it by Castle (English), Château (French), Qasr (Arabic), Kastélli (Greek), Castillo (Spanish) or some equivalent in another language.

Translation, being the conversion of a toponym from one language to another, requires that the target language be specified explicitly or implicitly.

Above, the phrase "wholly or in part" was used in reference to a toponym's having semantic or lexical meaning. In a composite name (*Glossary*, 212) the parts are (a) the generic component, which is always a word with lexical meaning such as river, hill, town, bridge, new, etc.; and (b) the specific component which may be any word, lexical or not, such as a proper name and even a toponym, for example, "Victoria" in "Lake Victoria", "York" in "New York" and "Swansea" in "Swansea Bay". In some languages, both components are often combined in a single word, as in Cambridge, Newport, Villeneuve and Rheinbischofsheim, while in other languages, such as Arabic and Hebrew, this is impossible.

However, it should be added that generics can be true or false. Lake Victoria is a real lake, therefore, its generic component is a true one. On the other hand, Lake Placid in New York State is not a lake but a populated place; and 'Ayn as-Sultān is a populated place, not a spring (Arabic 'ayn). Thus, in these cases, lake and spring are false generics (*Glossary*, 111).

When is translation resorted to in names conversion? Chiefly when the toponym includes a "translateable" generic term. Naturally, toponyms are often translated when one deals with topographic features outside one's own linguistic region. A common case is that of the cartographic editor preparing a general atlas in a particular language. He or she will be sure to translate some of the names in "foreign" lands, so that they will better convey to the reader the nature of the feature named. General geographical or other texts, too, often make use of names translation.

However, here we are mainly concerned with a geographical names authority. Its members, too, may have to apply translation, for example, in a multilingual country like South Africa which has 11 official languages. Take the case of the English name Cape Town: its Afrikaans (and formerly Dutch) name is Kaapstad, and the two names are translations of each other and enjoy equal administrative status. The city's Xhosa name eKapa ("at the cape") is not a translation but an adaptation of the Afrikaans *kaap*. In the Afrikaans name Mossel Baai, only the generic term is translated, so that the town now carries the allonyms Mossel Baai and Mossel Bay. In such cases, the translated names and the original ones constitute endonyms, even (though not necessarily) standardized and official ones, as decreed by the names authority. If the names are not of equal administrative status, the names authority should determine the order of preference.

On deciding to translate a toponym, one must check it for meaning and "isolate" its translatable parts. Speaking very generally, four possibilities concerning translation present themselves.

1. The name under consideration is a simple non-translatable one or is not to be translated for other reasons. Some examples were presented above (London, Pretoria, etc.).

2. The name is of the composite type, being composed of a specific and a generic element, in either order. Generalizing, there are then the following possibilities:
  - (a) Only the generic element is translated. Examples: Sliabh Speirin (Irish)—Sperrin Mountains; Simonstad (Afrikaans)—Simon's Town;
  - (b) Translation is applied only to the specific element or elements of the name: Sierra del sur (Spanish)—Southern Sierra; Pacific Ocean—Stiller Ozean (German);
  - (c) Both specific and generic elements are translated: Tafelberg (Afrikaans)—Table Mountain; Suomenlahti (Finnish)—Finskaviken (Swedish).

In many cases, the specific component, though not translated, is adapted to the target language, as in the example of Speirin/Sperrin in 2(a) above, while in 2(b), Ocean/Ozean can also be regarded as an adaptation, both words being derived from Greek/Latin, rather than a translation.

The three processes of names conversion—transliteration, transcription and translation—require different qualifications on the part of the toponymist. Transliteration and transcription are involved with writing systems on the one hand and with pronunciation on the other, while translation demands a knowledge of languages. A good toponymist will combine skills encompassing these areas of linguistics.

## Chapter III

### Some examples of legislation concerning geographical names authorities<sup>1</sup>

#### Helen Kerfoot (Canada)<sup>2</sup>

Legislation for the establishment of national (and/or provincial, State and territorial) geographical names authorities has been noted as constituting an important step towards demonstrating the legal competence of the commission, council or board to carry out its standardization work.

The types of legal documents, and the details included in the relevant laws, vary from country to country. In any jurisdiction, these documents are reviewed periodically, to make sure that the names authority can function in a way appropriate to current political, administrative, linguistic and cultural conditions.

Already in the nineteenth century—and, in some cases, even earlier—many countries had passed laws and regulations applying directly or indirectly to the standardization of geographical names. Most national mapping authorities have been established by law and have thereby gained the power to determine the spelling of names used on official maps. In order to stabilize the written form of geographical names in official contexts, many authorities produced lists of recommended spellings. For example, in 1863, Norway passed an act concerning the cadastral system of the country, including the updating of the spelling of farm names. The revised standardized names were approved by government legislation in 1886 and published in 18 volumes (*Norges matrikul*).

The present chapter provides a few examples of the types of legislation that have been used throughout the world since the late 1800s. Different models are used in different countries, and the inclusion or omission of particular examples is not intended to imply that any one model is better than another. Those involved with the establishment of geographical names authorities today will hopefully find this material useful as background information, while clearly recognizing the need to develop legislation appropriate to their own particular circumstances.

#### Establishment of national names authorities

It appears that the first national names authority to be established was the **United States Board on Geographic Names (USBGN)**, created by Executive Order of the President, Benjamin Harrison, in 1890. At a time of mapping associated with exploration, mining and settlement of the west, this federal body was given authority to resolve all unsettled questions concerning geographical names. Decisions of the Board were accepted as binding for all departments and agencies of the Federal Government. In 1906, Board responsibilities were extended to include

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<sup>1</sup> In some examples cited in the present chapter, the term “place name” (or “placename”) is meant in the sense of “geographical name” in other words, it does not represent the name only of a populated place.

<sup>2</sup> With contributions from Peeter Päll (Estonia) and Botolv Helleland (Norway).

authority to standardize all geographical names for federal use (including both new names and names changes).

The Board was established in its present form by Congress in 1947, through Public Law 80-242.<sup>3</sup> Important provisions of the law determine that:

- The Board and the Secretary of the Interior jointly shall provide for uniformity in geographical nomenclature and orthography throughout the federal Government.
- The Board shall comprise members from specified federal departments (as well as from relevant agencies), appointed for two-year (renewable) terms. Board members receive no special financial compensation for this work.
- The Chair shall be nominated by the Board, and appointed by the Secretary of the Interior, who may also establish advisory committees.
- The Board, subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, shall develop principles, policies and procedures governing the use of both domestic and foreign geographical names (as well as undersea and Antarctic feature names), and decides on the standardized names for official use.
- The decisions and principles shall constitute the standard for all material published by the federal Government.

Although established to serve the federal Government as a central authority to which all name problems, name enquiries and new name proposals could be directed, the Board also plays a similar role for the general public. In its operation, the Board has two sub-units, one dealing with domestic names and the other with foreign names.

Shortly after the establishment of the United States Board on Geographic Names, **Canada's** first Order of the Privy Council to establish a names board was issued in 1897. The reasons for its creation were similar to those of the United States, as settlement expanded westward across the land. In contrast to the United States Board, the Canadian Board, very soon after its formation, took into account the authority of the provinces in the decision-making process, and by the 1960s, all provinces (and in the 1980s, the territories) had responsibility for naming in their areas of jurisdiction. Since 1897, several updates have been passed to the original Order in Council; the most recent (1990)<sup>4</sup> established the Geographical Names Board of Canada as the “national body coordinating all matters affecting geographical nomenclature in Canada”, pursuant to which:

- Membership is as follows: federal government members are noted by department and position (currently 11, representing such interests as mapping, charting, geological survey, defence, aboriginal affairs, archives, translation, parks, statistics, and postal services). Each province (10) and territory (3) appoints a member, and chairpersons of advisory committees (currently 2) are members of the Board while holding office.

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<sup>3</sup> See Donald J. Orth and Roger L. Payne, *Principles, Policies, and Procedures: Domestic Geographic Names*, rev. 3<sup>rd</sup> printing (Reston Virginia, United States Board on Geographic Names, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Order establishing the Geographical Names Board of Canada, P.C. 2000-283, March 22, 1990.

- The Chairperson is appointed by the Minister of the responsible department (Natural Resources Canada); the Secretariat, and the funding of activities of the Board, also fall under the jurisdiction of the same department.
- The functions and power of the Board are noted, including the fact that “name decisions approved by the appropriate federal, provincial or territorial authority, according to its respective jurisdiction, shall become official decisions of the Board”. All departments, agencies and Crown corporations of the Government of Canada shall accept and abide by decisions of the Board.
- The organization of the Board is established; it shall meet at least once per year; no remuneration is provided for participation, but travel and living expenses may be paid.

Many other countries have established names authorities since the inception of the first national names authority. These include, according to information received from experts belonging to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:<sup>5</sup>

- Denmark (1910)
- New Zealand and Ireland (both in 1946)
- At least seven countries in the 1950s and 1960s, for example, the Federal Republic of Germany (1959) and Botswana (1967)
- Ten or more countries in the 1970s and 1980s, for example, Brunei Darussalam (1976), Jordan (1984), Australia (1985) and Venezuela (1989)
- Thirteen so far in the 1990s and the current decade, for example, Lithuania (1990), Thailand (1992), the Sudan (1996), and the Islamic Republic of Iran (2000).

As one can see, several countries have been active in establishing or re-establishing names authorities in the last 20 years. For instance, in **Hungary**, the Hungarian Committee on Geographical Names functions as an interdepartmental decision-making and advisory board<sup>6</sup> under the umbrella of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (also responsible for mapping). Government Decree 71/1989, amended by Decree 19/1992, forms the legal basis for the Committee. Membership includes representatives from 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 and the national press. The Committee, which meets from three to five times a year, rules on names of physical and transportation features, and provides advice on the names of administrative units. Particular attention is paid to orthography. Recommending the treatment of names outside Hungary for Hungarian use is also a task of the Committee.

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<sup>5</sup> Based on information gathered from a questionnaire circulated to countries participating in the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in Berlin in 2002. Also, see part two, chap. X for information on websites of names authorities.

<sup>6</sup> See “Report of Hungary on the activity of the standardization of geographical names in the period 1998-2002” (E/CONF.94/INF.10) to the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Berlin, 2002.

**Slovenia** first appointed its Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1986; the most recent reappointment was in February 2001.<sup>7</sup> The primary task of the Commission is to direct and harmonize the work in the field of standardization of geographical names in Slovenia and to resolve problems arising. This entails defining the written forms of names and making the use of the names uniform both inside and outside the country. The Commission falls under the authority of the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy in Ljubljana, and currently consists of some 16 members from departments responsible for surveying, geodesy, mapping, geography, standards, statistics, domestic affairs and foreign affairs, in addition to representation from academia.

**Madagascar's** National Committee for Geographical Names (Komitim-Pirenena Miandraikitra ny Anaran-tany (KPMA)) was created in 1973 by Government decree 73-157, subsequently revised by decree 2001-235 of March 2001.<sup>8</sup> There are eight members from government departments who assume the role of members of a permanent secretariat, including the Chairman, from the Ministry of Lands. The total membership of the Committee was increased from 21 representatives of Government departments in 1973 to 44, as specified in the decree of 2001. The Committee meets at least once a year, and has a mandate to deal with all aspects of geographical names standardization inside Madagascar, including problems in cartographic and other official publications. The decree also sets out other responsibilities of the Committee, including: conserving and developing the toponymic heritage, organizing seminars and training, maintaining liaison with other organizations involved with toponymy, and participating in database development and dissemination of geographical names.

In 1998, **South Africa**, by Act of Parliament (Act No. 118 of 1998), brought into existence the new South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC), as the body responsible for standardizing geographical names in South Africa,<sup>9</sup> pursuant to which:

- Membership consists of one representative from each of the provinces (nine); representatives from the Post Office, Surveys and Mapping, and the Pan South African Language Board; and experts appointed for their special expertise in the official languages and cultural heritage. The Secretariat of the Council and the appointment of experts falls under the Department of Arts and Culture.
- The Council establishes the policies and principles for naming geographical features in South Africa, and determines the names and their written forms, in accordance with its jurisdiction. The standardized names are recommended to the Minister for approval and publicized through the Council.
- The Council is responsible for geographical names, considered to include towns, smaller settlements, post offices, railway stations, highways, dams and natural landforms, but not juristic names (names of provinces and local authorities), street names, private building and farm names, and cadastral names.

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<sup>7</sup> See Slovenian Government website (<http://www.sigov.si/kszi>).

<sup>8</sup> The text of decree 2001-235 is contained in "Le rapport sur la situation et le progrès accompli dans le domaine de la normalisation des noms géographiques en Madagascar" (E/CONF.94/INF.70) presented to the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Berlin, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> See South African Geographical Names Council, *Handbook on Geographical Names*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Pretoria, Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, South Africa Geographical Names Council, 2002). The Council replaced the National Place Names Committee of South Africa.



- The establishment of Provincial Geographical Names Committees (PGNCs) is included in the Act of 1998. Their function is primarily to interact with the South African Geographical Names Council and the local authorities and to undertake preparatory work for the submission of names to the Council for decision.

The Council has established policies and principles that apply equally well to the Provincial Committees and are available for the use of local authorities. Essentially, the application of one official name for each individual feature or entity is stated as a basic principle.

In 2002, the National Committee for Geographical Names (NCGN)<sup>10</sup> was established by the Malaysian Cabinet, with responsibility for coordinating geographical names activities in **Malaysia**, in respect to which the following may be noted:

- The membership consists of the Director-General of the Department of Survey and Mapping Malaysia, as chair, and members representing federal agencies, State Governments and the Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit.
- At the State/Federal territory level, a Committee has been established to coordinate and implement guidelines and procedures of the National Committee, which will also work through technical committees and working groups.
- The National Committee's responsibilities include:
  - Developing national guidelines
  - Developing a web-based National Geographical Names Database and National Gazetteer
  - Promoting the use of official names
  - Coordinating Malaysia's input into international nomenclature activities.

### **Association of names authorities with cultural and language realities**

In some countries, geographical names ("place names" or "placenames") have particular significance in the language(s) of the country and are intertwined with the social structure. Information from Ireland and New Zealand illustrates these connections.

The work of the Placenames Commission of **Ireland**, established in 1946, will be affected by recent legislation: the Official Languages Act of Ireland was passed in 2003 "to promote the use of the Irish language for official purposes in the State; to provide for the use of both official languages of the State in parliamentary proceedings, in Acts of the Oireachtas, in the administration of justice, in communicating with or providing services to the public and in carrying out the work of public bodies".<sup>11</sup> The Act includes a specific section (part 5) entitled

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<sup>10</sup> See "Country report: Malaysia" presented to the 10th meeting of the Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, in Kuala Lumpur, October 2003.

<sup>11</sup> See Acht na d'Teangacha Oifigiúla 2003/Official Languages Act 2003, No. 32 of 2003. Government Publications, Dublin. "Official languages" means "the Irish language (being the national language and the first official language) and the English language (being a second official language) as specified in article 8 of the Constitution".

For more details on the Placenames Commission of Ireland, see also Art Ó Malfabhail, "The conception, birth and growth of a national placenames authority", in *Proceedings of the XIXth International Congress of Onomastic*

“Placenames” that refers to names of provinces, counties, cities, towns, villages, baronies, parishes, townlands, territorial features (natural or artificial), districts, regions or places, as shown on the maps of Ordnance Survey Ireland. The roles of the Placenames Commission (An Coimisiún Logainmneacha), the Minister and House of the Oireachtas are stated. Only the Irish language place names in Irish-speaking (Gaeltacht) areas may be used in Acts, on Ordnance Survey Ireland maps or on road and street signs where the names have been so declared by the Minister. Road and street signs and Ordnance Survey Ireland maps must use both language versions of a place name outside these areas.

In **New Zealand**, the New Zealand Geographic Board Act of 1946 established the Board as the official place naming authority for New Zealand,<sup>12</sup> recognizing the importance of Māori place names and allowing for public consultation over place naming. Since 1998, the use of original Māori place names has been encouraged on official maps, including those published by or under the direction or control of the Surveyor-General. The Board’s decisions are subject to public input; only if the Board receives objection(s) and upholds its original decision is the name referred to the Minister for Land Information for final decision.

As of 2004, the Act governing this statutory body is under review to clarify and update the jurisdictional, consultative and administrative provisions of the New Zealand Geographic Board/Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa. The review of the Act will:

- Clarify the jurisdiction of the New Zealand Geographic Board
- Review procedures for public participation and consultation in the place naming process
- Consider the composition and membership of the Board (currently eight members)
- Ensure that the provisions of the Act align more clearly with the Treaty of Waitangi
- Modernize the Act’s administrative and procedural provisions.

The original Act, now over 50 years old, may be replaced with one that better aligns the Board with today’s reality. Following public consultation and analysis of public submissions, revision of the Act would involve the introduction of a legislative bill into Parliament, followed by its referral to a Select Committee for detailed examination.

### **Geographical names: official status and names legislation**

The official status of the standardized geographical names themselves also varies. In most instances, it is only government documents that should, or must, use the names as authorized. However, in some cases the approval structure leads to full legal status of the names,

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*Sciences, Aberdeen, August 4-11, 1996*, vol. 3 (Aberdeen, United Kingdom, Department of English, University of Aberdeen, 1998), pp. 243-251.

<sup>12</sup> See *Frameworks of the New Zealand Geographical Names Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa*, September 2003, version 1. “Original Māori place name” refers to any Māori place name that is recognized by the *tangata whenua* (people of the land) as one historically associated with a place within their tribal boundary. Frameworks of the Board can be found at the Land Information New Zealand website (<http://www.linz.govt.nz/rcs/linz/pub/web/root/core/Placenames/frameworks/index.jsp>).

as, for instance, in **Israel**<sup>13</sup> where names ratified by the Government Names Commission can be changed only by the Commission itself or by a court of law. Israel's national names authority was set up by decree of the Israeli Government in 1951. The Commission is part of the Prime Minister's Office, and its members are appointed individually on a professional, non-political basis; only the permanent secretary is a government official. The Commission is the sole authority on geographical names in Israel and its decisions (which exclude street and neighbourhood names) have legally binding official status. The Commission is composed of three subcommissions (Committee on Populated Places; Committee on Geographical Names; and Committee on Historical Names). A name is first approved by the appropriate subcommission before being brought before the Plenum of the Government Names Commission, which convenes around three times a year. Approval by the Plenum and publication in its records confer official status on a name.

In many countries other than those described above, there are legal acts that concern, at least in part, the standardization and official approval of geographical names. For the most part, these identify the competence of various agencies in dealing with names. However, in a few countries, for example, Norway and Estonia, geographical names have merited special legislation.

In **Norway**, a place name act was passed by the Norwegian Parliament in 1990, and the Act came into force in July 1991.<sup>14</sup>

The main provisions are that:

- The official body using a place name should authorize the spelling, after consulting with all parties concerned, including place name consultants.
- Place names authorized in accordance with the Place-name Act are to be used by all official bodies; where a locality has a Saami name and/or a Finnish name in addition to a Norwegian name, both/all should be used.
- The written form of a place name should be based on the traditional local pronunciation, while at the same time complying with current spelling rules (with the acceptance of some regional variations).

In addition to the Act itself, a set of spelling regulations has been established.

In accordance with the Act, positions for two place name consultants and one assistant were created for each of the four university regions in the country, in addition to consultants and

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<sup>13</sup> See Naftali Kadmon, *Toponymy: The Lore, Laws and Language of Geographical Names* (New York, Vantage Press, (2001), pp. 213-216. Kadmon also notes that while there is notable uniformity in the use of standardized name forms in Israel, the romanization of these endonyms is not always as consistent, despite the adoption, by the Israeli parliament in 1956 and the United Nations in 1977, of an official system of transliteration from Hebrew into Roman script.

<sup>14</sup> Based on Botolv Helleland, "The Norwegian Place-name Act" (E/CONF.85/L.85), document presented at the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, New York, 25 August-3 September 1992. Website: <http://www.statkart.no> (in Norwegian). See also Botolv Helleland, "La loi norvégienne sur la normalisation des noms de lieu", in *Actas do XX Congreso internacional de Ciencias Onomásticas*, Santiago de Compostela, 20-25 de setembro de 1999 Ana Isabel Boullón Agrelo, ed. Coruña, Spain, (Fundación Pedro Barrié de la Maza, 2002), pp. 475-482 (CD-ROM).

secretaries for Saami and Kven (Finnish) place names in Norway. This advisory service is organized by the Norwegian Language Council and financed by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

All names recognized under the Act must be reported to a central computerized register administered by the Norwegian Mapping Authority.

An appeal committee, under the chairmanship of a High Court judge, was set up to handle complaints about the standardized forms of place names. The act will be reviewed periodically for update.

**Estonia** also has a special act addressing details of the names and naming process. The Place Names Act of Estonia was adopted in 1996.<sup>15</sup> This legal act determines both the competence of various agencies in establishing place names and the requirements to be fulfilled in order for place names to be approved officially.

The main requirements address:

- The language of place names (as a rule, these are in Estonian but, if justified, minority names are permitted).
- The spelling of place names (must comply with the rules of orthography but may reflect the local sound structure).
- The matter of having only one name per place (although two official names—one “principal”, the other “alternative”—are allowed in order to preserve minority place names).
- Harmonization of the spellings of names.
- Publicity in respect to naming procedures.
- Choice of new official place names (those locally most widely recognized, and also those most significant in terms of history and cultural history, shall be preferred).
- Allowing for change of geographical names only under exceptional circumstances.
- Avoidance of identical names for places in close proximity.

The full text is available on the Web from <http://www.eki.ee/knn/endex2.htm>, but, as with legislation in other countries, the Place Names Act of Estonia is reviewed only every few years for any necessary revision.

### **National geographical names authorities: the status quo**

At the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in Berlin in 2002, a questionnaire was circulated to gather information from the delegates present about geographical names authorities in their countries. Of the respondents, 43 countries confirmed the current existence of national names authorities (either one or several with differing

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<sup>15</sup> Based on Peeter Päll, “Legal Status of Names”, in *Lecture Notes*, vol. 1, for Dutch- and German-speaking Division/United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names training course in toponymy, Enschede, Netherlands/Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 10-24 August 2002, p. 78. Edited at Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands 2002.

mandates), and 12 other countries indicated the intention to create such an authority in the near future. Several countries plan to review their legislation, or to ameliorate the structure of their names authority or authorities.

For the most part, the provision for a board was reported as having been associated with the civil or military survey/mapping/geodesy/cadastral or with a language commission/institute. In some cases, the decision of the board is final; in others, the board recommends its decisions for the approval of a government minister. Where no board exists, by default, the civil or military mapping agency usually makes the decisions, at least for use in respect of its own products.

Space does not permit the inclusion of other (equally worthy) examples, but as can be seen from those presented above, legislation in different countries can provide for the functioning of a geographical names board in ways appropriate to the country's particular situation. In respect to developing the work of a names board, it is most important to move towards some form of legislation to support the ongoing functions of the board in the context of the country's social, economic, linguistic and cultural reality.



## Chapter IV

### Office processing—storing the data and maintaining the records: some basic thoughts on data fields<sup>1</sup>

Helen Kerfoot (Canada)

One of the major responsibilities of a national names authority is to act as a focus of geographical names activity. The support office for the board is required to process all the names information, to keep comprehensive records of ongoing activities and to make sure that the data are available for wide government and public distribution.

Particularly in the past, records were often kept in large ledgers, on file cards and in various forms of handwritten documents. Today, considerably more emphasis is put on word processing, digital databases and public use through easily accessible websites.

It is not necessarily the type of data required for geographical names records that has changed, but rather the methods of processing, storing and distributing the data which are being transformed as technology moves forward. Nevertheless, the key qualities of accuracy and care in the creation of records are just as important as before. The usefulness of records and a database can be only as good as the quality of data entered. It is always better to create the records more slowly, but to get them right the first time. Correcting records later can often be a difficult and painstaking task, as errors can be elusive. Proliferation of errors can produce a data set that is unreliable and of dubious value.

Storing the data and maintaining records can be considered one part of “office processing” of geographical names, which in the wider sense includes the following phases:

- (a) Gathering of toponymic information;
- (b) Authorizing the toponyms;
- (c) Storing the data and maintaining records;
- (d) Disseminating the data.

Generally, today, records will be maintained in some sort of database format in a computer environment. A spreadsheet (as used for accounting and financial purposes) may be suitable for temporary storage of geographical names data, but is not recommended for a permanent textual toponymic database. Some systems may be more sophisticated, for example, with the database being maintained on the Web with direct officially authorized regional input.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on an extract from Helen Kerfoot, “Office processing of geographical names”, in *Lecture Notes*, vol. 1, for Dutch- and German-speaking Division/United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names training course in toponymy, Enschede, Netherlands/Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 10-24 August 2002, p. 83-85. Edited at Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands.

Digital databases may be created from existing handwritten card records, from various types of lists, by digitizing maps at one or more scales, or by entering names newly collected from fieldwork. Entering from card records will require that many decisions be made along the way, as it is likely that the record-keeping was not as rigorous as needed to complete the data fields of a digital database. Even if, on an interim basis, records must still be maintained on cards, some decisions will have to be made on what fields should be gathered and stored for each name.

## **Data fields**

The fields of data for each geographical name will vary considerably from country to country, according to needs. However, there are some core fields of data that are required. The list below can, of course, be modified for individual needs, but is based largely on the contents of databases reported to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

### **1. Toponym**

Names that have been standardized should be entered with the correct capitalization, hyphens, diacritics, etc. Only if abbreviations are a standardized part of the name should they be entered (for example, St. John's).

- (a) Natural order, as would be found on a map or text (for example, Lake Phillip);
- (b) Inverted order, as needed for an alphabetical lookup list (for example, Phillip, Lake). Names of populated places (for example, Harbour Grace) would not be entered in inverted order.

### **2. Feature type**

For example: river, mountain, populated place, etc. (or a more detailed breakdown).

The feature type is very important, particularly where ambiguity exists. For example, are Baker Lake and Mount Pleasant physical features or populated places?

### **3. Administrative units in which the feature is located**

- (a) First level of administrative unit below the country itself (for example, province, state, district, etc.);
- (b) Second level (and third level might also be useful).

If a feature such as a river crosses administrative boundaries, one must be able to indicate more than one administrative unit in the name record.

### **4. Geographical coordinates**

- (a) Latitude (degrees, minutes, seconds: two digits for each);
- (b) Longitude (degrees, minutes, seconds: three digits for degrees, two digits for minutes and two digits for seconds).

Although other grid systems may be in use, a mathematical algorithm should allow their conversion to systems that can be joined with data from other countries. Also, location north or south of the equator, and east or west of the prime meridian may need to be included if there is possible confusion within the country.



For use of the data outside the country, the N, S, E or W designator will need to be added in a suitable way. For geographic information system (GIS) applications and data exchange, the following examples indicate the standards used:

Latitude, north of 0 degrees	e.g.	30
Latitude, south of 0 degrees	e.g.	-30
Longitude, east of 0 degrees	e.g.	120
Longitude, west of 0 degrees	e.g.	-120

Coordinates should be read as accurately as possible from large-scale maps or possibly with a Global Positioning System (GPS).

Even if the extent of a feature is being identified on a digital graphic system, it is still useful to have one set of reference coordinates. For areal features (for example, lakes), these are selected at the centre; for flowing water features, the mouth is used (and headwater coordinates could be recorded as a secondary value); for urban areas, the central core is usually the value recorded. The selection of coordinates for some features, such as glaciers, canals, multiple features (for example, an island group, twin peaks), needs special consideration.

**5. Map sheets**

This could be one map sheet that corresponds with the coordinates of the feature. There could also be several map sheets on which the feature is located (for example, Mackenzie River). Separate fields might be used for different scales (for example, 1:50,000; 1:250,000), depending on the map coverage available.

**6. Variant names**

This field is for other names that should be cross-referenced to the main toponym, for example, historical names, other language forms, other spelling variations.

**7. Status**

At a minimum, this could indicate whether the name has approved status, whether it had approved status in the past or whether it is unapproved. The field can be expanded to indicate many other levels of information (for example, name change, one of multiple official names, rescinded by the board). This same field, or a similar one, could also be used to show what stage the name has reached in processing (for example, ready for submission to the board, waiting for signature of the department manager).

**8. Date of approval**

Year, month, day that the name acquired approved status. (If the date of board recommendation is different from the actual approval date, this information could be added in another field.)

**9. Record identifier**

In a digital system each record will require its own unique identification—most likely a numeric field, although alpha or alphanumeric fields are also possible. In a strictly toponymic database, a unique record identifier will be attached to each name record. As names can be duplicated, a name field alone, or combined with another field, is not

suitable as an identifier. (In a GIS system, the features will have unique identifiers, with the name records becoming attributes of the feature records. Using both name and feature identifiers is also a possibility when systems are being linked together.)

Other fields can be added, to show, for example, the geodetic reference of map bases used, the language of the name, its meaning and origin, its legal status, sources of data, etc. Possibly older card records can be scanned and added as fields of information on the name record. If more than one board is responsible for names approval, a field may be necessary to indicate the approving authority. In some databases, a location narrative (for example, “north of Pembina”, or “flows south into Blue River”) have been included.

Some toponymic databases may include other information, such as population data and altitude. However, one should bear in mind that clients expect data to be up to date, and to keep accurate information for which one does not have direct responsibility requires more resources. In today’s digital environment, links to other databases responsible for such information may be a better option.

In any digital database, other fields will be created to allow for identification of the operator who has entered or modified records and when this was done, explanations of any codes used in the different data fields, etc.

From the viewpoint of data exchange, it is important that the database be set up to follow the appropriate International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards for the language(s) in question. Even so, there may be characters that cannot be represented. For example, in the Athapaskan languages, there are “hard to construct” characters that cannot currently be entered into the national database following any national or international standards. Until such time as standards become available, substitution characters are used to cover such name entries.

From the perspective of office processing, a comprehensive “Records manual” needs to be available to staff members inputting data. It will indicate how to format data for entry or modification in the different fields. The better the instructions and the more familiar the staff are with the database, the more accurate will be the records created—and it is the records themselves that are the essential part and that will be accessed and used over and over again.

In addition to the alphanumeric data of the toponyms, it is very important that the extents of the features named (that is to say, the application of the name to the landscape) be maintained in a spatial (graphic) form. This could be on reference copies of paper maps or, in today’s increasingly digital world, limits could be included in digital map files.

## Chapter V

### The social and cultural values of geographical names

#### Botolv Helleland (Norway)

##### Overview

Whereas the question of standardizing geographical names has been discussed for many decades, and even for more than a century in some countries, the social and cultural values of geographical names have been focused on less. The primary goal of the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names is to foster the establishment of national programmes for the standardization of geographical names and to promote consistent international use of nationally standardized names. However, it has been stressed in many forums, in addition to the United Nations contexts, that geographical names represent a vital part of a nation's cultural heritage and that it is essential to treat and preserve them accordingly.

Support for this position has come from several sources. First, there is the matter of historical documentation. Many geographical names were coined by describing certain aspects of localities or features and thus they provide information about natural and cultural conditions at the time they were coined. Second, the geographical names of an area form an integral part of the local language and history. Third, geographical names serve as links between individuals and their topographic surroundings and, in this capacity, they constitute a part of the identity of a local population.

##### A. Place names: the memory of places

Geographical names, or place names, may be said to represent the oldest living part of human cultural heritage, in the sense that they have been handed down orally from generation to generation for hundreds or several thousands of years. In the continents overseas where Europeans introduced their languages and their names, many aboriginal names nevertheless survive as a testimony to the existence of earlier civilizations. In many cases, geographical names are the only surviving elements of extinct languages.<sup>1</sup> When one considers that many geographical names have been coined as descriptions of the area or place in question, it becomes evident that we are dealing with material of immense historic value; but more recent names of dwelling places, streets and fields, as well as microtoponyms, also form a part of this collective onomastic memory and heritage. All the geographical names of the Earth put together represent an immeasurable body of human experience and insight.

In 1999, Finland chose “Place names: the memory of places” as its theme for the European Heritage Days. The aim of the Heritage Days is to induce people to see and evaluate the environment built around them, and to make them value the beauty and variety in it.

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<sup>1</sup> See Naftali Kadmon, *Toponymy: The Lore, Laws and Language of Geographical Names* (New York, Vantage Press, 2001), p. 47.

Geographical names, or place names, constitute an indispensable part of the environment, and the aim of the 1999 Heritage Days was to enable people to become aware of the use of such names in the planning process. The Heritage Days activity was used as a means of educating the public about the importance of standardizing geographical names without causing them to lose their historical value. During that year, a number of events were held, with many people involved, and the organizers had good reason to call the arrangements a success. As part of the activities, a video was prepared by the Research Institute for the Languages in Finland, which was shown on Finnish television.<sup>2</sup>

For a long time, the question of the preservation of names had hardly been a matter of interest, although the historic and linguistic value of names was acknowledged. It was not until the latter half of the twentieth century that the treatment of geographical names in the cultural context gained wider recognition and became an area of greater activity, thereby increasing interest both in the general population and among names scholars and planners. Since the 1970s, numerous conferences and meetings have been held around the world addressing this aspect of the treatment of geographical names.

Viewpoints representative of communities of name scholars in this field are found in a report adopted at a symposium on place name treatment and planning held in Finland in 1977, where it was agreed that:<sup>3</sup>

- Geographical names are an important part of our geographical and cultural environment. They identify geographical entities of different kinds and represent irreplaceable cultural values of vital significance to people's sense of well-being and belonging.
- Geographical names are therefore of major social importance. Society must also bear the responsibility for respecting geographical names heritage and assuring that place name planning is carried out in such a way as to ensure that the functionality of the body of place names is preserved and the cultural heritage protected in a rapidly changing society.

The United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names have adopted several resolutions that directly and indirectly apply to the cultural and social values of geographical names. In resolution VIII/9 adopted at the Eighth Conference (2002), the Conference recognized the emphasis placed by delegates on the importance of geographical names as part of a nation's historical and cultural heritage. The resolution urged countries that had not already done so, to undertake both the systematic collection of geographical names and the promotion of a greater understanding among the wider public of the significance of inherited geographical names with respect to local, regional and national heritage and identity. The recommendation involved such activities in the treatment of geographical names, as collecting, storing, interpreting, standardizing, publishing and teaching.

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<sup>2</sup> See "Place names: the memory of places: the theme of the European Heritage Days in Finland 1999" (WP 22) submitted to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names at its twentieth session, New York, 17–28 January 2000, by Sirkka Paikkala (Finland). See also Sirkka Paikkala, "Place names in Finland as cultural heritage", in *Onoma*, vol. 35 (2000), pp. 145-164.

<sup>3</sup> Kurt Zilliacus, ed., *Ortnamnsvård och ortnamnsplanering* (Place name care and place name planning), NORNA-rapporter (Uppsala, Sweden), vol. 13 (1978), p. 211.

## B. The function of geographical names

A geographical name normally exists in relation to a geographical entity, real or imagined, and if this entity changes character, the reference of the name may also change. This important function of geographical names means that they constitute an essential linguistic tool that is used by most people many times a day; and for this tool to function as well as possible in an increasingly complicated society, it is incumbent upon the authorities to regulate naming in certain ways and in certain contexts. For example, it must be determined what name is to be chosen, in which standardized form, and to what entity it applies.

The reference address function of geographical names is primary, but like other parts of language geographical names function on several levels, including:

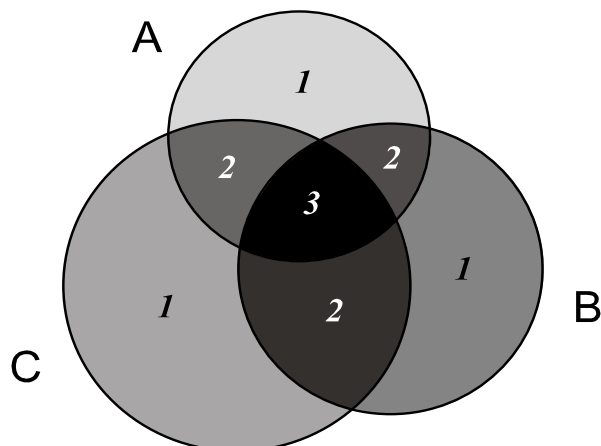
- The cognitive level (identification of an entity), for instance, the North Sea, referring to a sea in Europe.
- The emotive level, for instance, names relating to places that evoke good or bad feelings (example: Paradise and Hell).
- The ideological level, for instance, Bethel as the name of a religious assembly house and Karl-Marx-Stadt for the former (and present-day) Chemnitz.
- The community-constituting level, for example, Saami-speaking people identifying with Deatnu and Norwegian speakers with Tana, both names referring to the same river in northern Norway.

All persons are surrounded by named features with which they are familiar, and which they know as their own. At the same time, there are other names that they share in common with larger groups in what one may call a structural hierarchy. This can be demonstrated by a simple three-level hierarchy comprising:

- The geographical names that are common to the people in a microcommunity (family, farm, village).
- The geographical names that are common to two or more microcommunities (rural district or town).
- The geographical names that are common to many or most of the communities of a society.

Figure XXI illustrates the levels of names knowledge shared by different communities in this particular model. Each circle (A, B, C) represents the collective geographical names knowledge of individuals in a particular microcommunity.

People who belong to the same language community will on the whole be familiar with the same names and feel attached to them—even more so if they belong to the same local community. In multilingual societies, people speaking different languages will apply different names. These names not only form a body of reference addresses, but constitute a part of linguistic and local identity. Also, through their close connection with the dialect, geographical names represent an inherent human value; and for the individual, certain geographical names may be connected with life experiences.



**Figure XXI.** Conceptual representation of geographical names knowledge

*Note:* **A, B, C** Collective geographical names knowledge of individuals in a microcommunity.

- 1** Geographical names (for example, Hesthaug, for a small hill; Leikvoll, for a small area where people gather) that are common only to the people of a particular microcommunity.
- 2** Geographical names (for example, Opedal, for a group of farms; Eidfjord, for a local municipality) that are known and used by the people of more than one microcommunity, but that are not widely known.
- 3** Geographical names (for example, Lofoten, for a well-known group of islands; Oslo, for a capital city) that are known and used by many or most communities of a society.

### **C. Giving geographical names**

Naming of geographical entities has mainly followed one of two paths: “spontaneous or popular naming” and “baptism”. The majority of geographical names that are used today (in Europe at least) are the product of the first type of naming, the result of a process of lexicalization with its starting point in a description of the object being named. Normally, a geographical name evolves from a descriptive expression (for example, the hill or the green hill) into a proper name (for example, The Hill or Green Hill). In many cases, the naming will be governed by analogy, that is to say, new names will be produced on the pattern of other names in the area or of other names with which the name-givers are familiar. This is one of the reasons why certain types of names have a tendency to occur with greater frequency than others in particular areas.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See, for instance Wilhelm F.H. Nicolaisen, “Lexical and onomastic fields”, in *Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, Cracow, August 21-25, 1978*, by Kazimierz Rymut, ed. (Wroclaw, Poland, 1982) vol. II, pp. 209-216.

Another way of giving geographical names is to transfer existing names to new entities in order to compare them with or to commemorate the original place, through the process known as baptism. This has in particular been the case in earlier European colonies, for instance, Harlem in New York is named after the Dutch town of Haarlem. Also, people are commemorated in many geographical names, for instance, George Washington in Washington.

Place names such as Washington could be considered to be among those that have resulted from a more intentional baptism through which towns, streets, roads, squares and other entities are given prescribed names through special resolutions. It is true that some of the names that are given formalized status in this way have earlier been used informally for all or part of the same named entity.

The preservation of geographical names encompasses first and foremost the inherited and spontaneously given body of names, but also names that have resulted from planned naming and have become an integrated part of the society's cultural heritage. Already in late medieval times, fortresses and towns, like the Scandinavian Akershus and Landskrona, were named in accordance with already existing naming patterns. However, planned naming of places over the last few centuries, and especially in the last 150 years, has become a more vital part of the naming process.

The earliest official naming in the form of street names appeared first in the major cities. Some towns had town plans as early as the Middle Ages; and in the beginning, existing traditional names were used for districts and streets. However, as long as these names had not received any official stamp, they were liable to change. As the towns gradually developed and new areas were brought under regulation, naming in a more planned form was carried out. In the Netherlands, official street names were introduced in Napoleonic times, as likely were the street names in other parts of continental Western Europe under the influence of the French Empire.

Most of the major, and many of the smaller, Nordic towns have their own surveys of the development of street names and provide examples of the historical street naming process. For example:

- The street names in Helsinki had been established for the first time in 1820, whereas the first street names committee came into existence only 100 years later.
- Stockholm had had its first printed map with street names in 1733, but not until an announcement in 1832 did the street names in the city acquire an official status.
- In Norway, it seems that Bergen had been the first to appoint a names committee, which in 1822 made proposals for permanent designations for all streets, alleys and passages leading to the wharves, and public squares that were found to have no generally agreed names. Gradually, other towns and local authorities followed suit, and today all local authorities have an organized system for the giving and planning of names, often with some contribution from names scholars. This may also be the case in many other local communities around the world.

The naming of streets, roads, squares, buildings, etc. is an important administrative activity for local authorities all over the world. The giving of names takes place either through the acceptance of existing names in the area or through the creation of new names. In recent times, the use of various categories of names has been a common occurrence, for example,

names of birds in one area, names of animals in a second, and names of artists in a third.<sup>5</sup> Usually there is some hesitation about using the names of people who are still alive. In its resolution VIII/2 (2002), the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names recommended that appropriate national authorities discourage the use of personal names to designate a geographical feature (interpreted as including street names, etc.) during the lifetime of the person in question.

The Swedish name scholar Bengt Pamp<sup>6</sup> has emphasized the following factors that should be considered when new names for streets, buildings, etc. are to be chosen: (a) distinctiveness/functionality, (b) length of names/orthography, (c) tradition, (d) meaning/etymology, (e) pronunciation and (f) acceptability (that is to say, non-offensive nature). The usual practice of urban naming is for a designated body in the local authority to pass formal resolutions on new names, in some cases on the advice of names consultants. A broader overview of the standardization and designation of geographical names in the Nordic countries is also available.<sup>7</sup>

### D. Values to be preserved in geographical names

A great deal has been said and written about the value of geographical names, and about the importance of preserving them. As indicated above, support for this position has come from several sources. In the first place, there is the matter of historical documentation. Most geographical names were coined by describing certain aspects of localities or features and thus supplying information about natural and cultural conditions existing at the time they were coined. They constitute an important supplement to the history of the places where people settled. The world's stock of geographical names reflects the history of civilization over a time span of several thousand years—even though it is often impossible to decide upon the exact age of most names. It is also difficult to know the exact number of geographical names in a given linguistic society as old names are being forgotten and new names are being given, according to the present needs of name users.

One can also see geographical names as a reflection of the interplay between humans and nature through different periods of time. The many regional names studies that have been carried out in the world show that geographical names provide a multifaceted and detailed picture of human existence in relation to our surroundings. In some cases, the written geographical names may tell us in a general way about the time spans of settlement. For instance, Dirk Blok, in referring to Dutch-speaking parts of Europe, indicated that: names ending in -burg or -ingen

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<sup>5</sup> For examples of this type in a South African city, see Colin Clive Smith, "Naming a city: the street and place names of the Roodepoort area 1854-1999", *Nomina Africana*, vol. 16 (2002), pp. 56-64.

<sup>6</sup> Bengt Pamp, "Namnvårdens argument" (The arguments for name care), in *Ortnamnsvård och ortnamnsplanering*, Kurt Zilliacus, ed. NORNA-rapporter (Uppsala, Sweden), vol. 13 (1978), pp. 9-21. The Swedish Act concerning Ancient Monuments and Finds was revised in 2000 and includes a new paragraph concerning "a code of good place-name practice". The emphasis is placed on the importance of preserving the place names as a part of the nation's cultural heritage (see Leif Nilsson, "Current trends in Swedish place-name standardization", *Onoma*, vol. 35 (2000), pp. 279-287).

<sup>7</sup> Botolv Helleland, "Place-name care and standardization in the Nordic countries", *Onoma*, vol. 37 (2002), pp. 325-356.



were recorded in the period from the seventh to the ninth century; names ending in -donk were recorded after the tenth century; names ending in -kerke were recorded in the period from the twelfth to the thirteenth century; and names ending in -dam were recorded after the thirteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to being repositories of natural and cultural history, names represent an important part of our linguistic heritage. This understanding of geographical names as a historical and linguistic source has long been central within the community of names scholars and has in the course of time opened up the way for a broader commitment to the protection and preservation of names, as attested in the legislation of several countries. In this perspective, we also note the increasing concern with geographical names in multilingual areas,<sup>9</sup> and recall several resolutions adopted by the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names that have supported the collection and use of minority group and indigenous geographical names, for example, Conference resolutions V/22 (1987) and VIII/1 (2002).

### **E. Collection of geographical names**

It is self-evident that all countries and regions should record and preserve their geographical names. Since around 1900, an important aim has been to collect geographical names, either by categories or by in-depth studies in selected areas. In this work, emphasis has been placed on registering the pronunciation that has been handed down by oral tradition, since it best reflects the linguistic basis of names. At the same time, although the scientific archives have built up systematic collections of older written forms, it is the collection in the field of oral material that has been, and still is, the most important means of preserving, as far as possible, the wealth of names still existing in older tradition. In recent times, the preservation of geographical names from both oral and written sources has been acknowledged politically in many countries.

For the general public, it is usually not the historical value of names that is of most concern but rather the unilateral changes made by administrators, without adequate local consultation to names currently in use. Many people feel this to be a form of encroachment on their well-being. That names uphold the social and cultural values of the individual is an important argument for promoting the systematic collection of names.<sup>10</sup>

### **F. Exonyms**

One special type of geographical name seen as part of the cultural heritage is that referred to as an exonym. The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names* defines an exonym as a name used in a specific language for a geographical feature situated outside the area where that language has

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<sup>8</sup> For an English-language reference, see Dirk P. Blok, "Names in *-iacum*", in *Topothesia: A Collection of Essays in Honour of T.S. Ó Máille*, Breandán S. Mac Aodha, ed. (Galway, Ireland, 1982), pp.111-114.

<sup>9</sup> See F.J. Ormeling, *Minority Toponyms on Maps. The Rendering of Linguistic Minority Toponyms on Topographic Maps of Western Europe* (Utrecht, Netherlands, Department of Geography, University of Utrecht, 1983).

<sup>10</sup> Naftali Kadmon, *Toponymy. The Lore, Laws and Language of Geographical Names* (New York, Vantage Press, 2001), p. 177.

official status, and differing in its form from the name used in the official language or languages of the area where the geographical feature is situated (*Glossary*, 079). Better-known examples include: Vienne (French) and Vienna (English) for Wien in Austria; Ginebra (Spanish) for Genève in Switzerland; and Vilna (Finnish) for Vilnius in Lithuania. Less generally known examples may form part of the vocabulary of smaller language groups (for instance, in Faroese: Høvdastaður for Cape Town; Skiloy for Sicilia; Kili for Chile; and Simbabvi for Zimbabwe). All language communities have such names, and in the individual language they are part of the linguistic heritage of those communities. This has been recognized by the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names (for example, in Conference resolution II/28, 1972). At the same time, however, several United Nations Conference resolutions have recommended that the use of exonyms be reduced (for example, II/29 and IV/20), particularly in cartography, in order to facilitate international communication through the use of nationally standardized geographical names.

### **G. Concluding remarks**

In discussing geographical names as part of the cultural heritage, one must take into account the fact that geographical names in a society are part of the language. Geographical names are functional to the extent that they have a place in a society's communication system; when they no longer fulfill a need, they fall out of use. As is apparent from this presentation, geographical names preservation is an important issue of concern to both laymen and experts. Traditionally, problems in connection with the spelling and writing of geographical names have been the central focus, and indeed they still are; but in recent decades, the issue of protecting geographical names as part of the linguistic cultural heritage has come more to the forefront. Increasing globalization offers the advantage of allowing a wider understanding of local names and heritage. However, in some cases today, local place names appear at risk from the imposition, through both local and global commercialization, of names introduced from outside cultures.

## Chapter VI

### Exonyms, also called conventional names<sup>1</sup>

Naftali Kadmon (Israel)

Part one of this manual deals only with "local" names or endonyms (*Glossary*, 076), those names that a national authority on geographical names is authorized to standardize. At an advanced stage, however, this authority may be called upon to prepare a list of exonyms or conventional forms of names to be used for features outside the area of its jurisdiction. The present chapter deals briefly with this aspect of toponymy.

Three methods of names conversion, namely, transliteration, transcription and translation, were discussed in part two, chapter II with respect to endonyms; exonyms will now be considered. An exonym (*Glossary*, 081) is just a "different" name for a place, adapted to the linguistic or other cultural environment of the community that coined it, often without preserving the meaning, sound or graphic form of the original endonym.

An exonym is a name given by a linguistic community—a group of people who communicate with each other with relative ease in a common language—in its own language to a topographic feature situated in a territory where this language has no official status, for example, a foreign country.<sup>2</sup> The English traditionally use the form "conventional name", but here we will use the internationally accepted term "exonym".

For a toponym to be defined as an exonym, there must exist a minimum degree of difference between it and the corresponding endonym. Therefore, the Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (1977), in its resolution III/19,<sup>3</sup> in effect excluded the following categories of toponyms from being included in lists of exonyms: those differing from the official name only by the omission, addition or alteration of diacritics or the article; those differing from the official name by declension or derivation; those created by the translation of a generic term. Also, a name constitutes an exonym if it differs from the endonym other than by transliteration or transcription. Čkalovsk is not an exonym of the Russian city Чкаловск, but simply the endonym written in a different script. The omission of diacritical marks usually does not turn an endonym into an exonym: Sao Paulo (for São Paulo); Malaga (for Málaga) or Amman (for `Ammān) are not considered exonyms. However, in certain languages, diacritics enable names that are otherwise identical to be distinguished; in such cases, the

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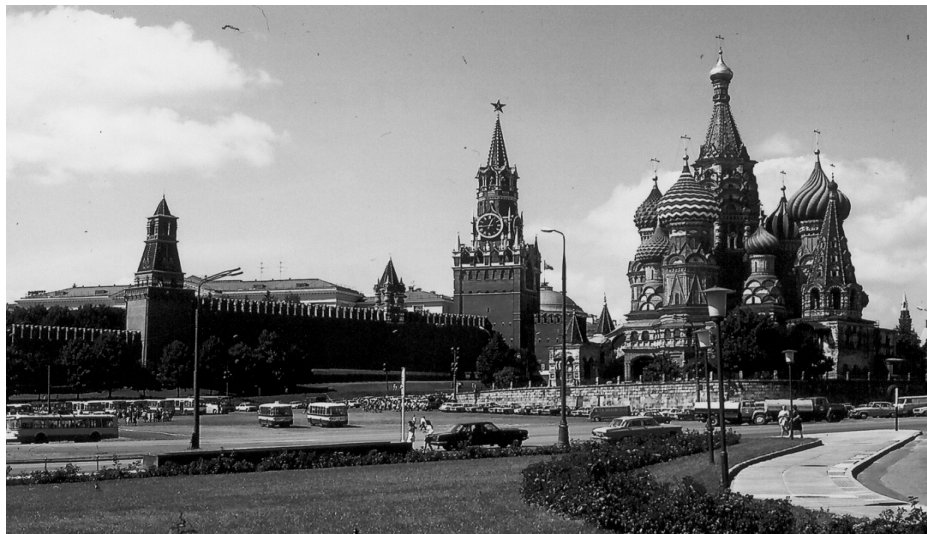
<sup>1</sup> Text adapted, with permission, from Naftali Kadmon, *Toponymy: The Lore, Laws and Language of Geographical Names* (New York, Vantage Press, 2001), chap. II.

<sup>2</sup> The view—deviating from the formal definition cited—is held by some that names given by a linguistic community to places that formerly belonged to a political entity (such as a country) where the language of this community had official status, but where it now has none, do not constitute exonyms. At the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (2002), a new working group was established to deal specifically with questions regarding exonyms.

<sup>3</sup> See *Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, vol. I. *Report of the Conference, Athens, 17 August–7 September 1977* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.79.I.7).

omission of these diacritics could be regarded as generating exonyms. Thus, in Slovakia, Rovné and Rovne are different places, as are Brezany and Brežany. This is the reason for the broad definition of the term "exonym" in the *Glossary*.

When speaking of an exonym of a place, one should always indicate the language in which it applies. The following are a few examples out of a vast multitude: Brunswick is an English exonym for the German endonym Braunschweig; Kopenhagen is the German exonym and Köpenhamn the Swedish exonym for the Danish København (English exonym: Copenhagen); Moscou is the French exonym and Moscow is the English exonym for the endonym of the Russian capital (romanized as Moskva). Similarly, Cairo is the English exonym for the Arabic al-Qāhirah.



**Figure XXII.** Red Square in Moscow

*Note:* Red Square is the English exonym for the Russian Krasnaja ploščad and Moscow the English exonym for the Russian Moskva

Photograph by the author.

There are three main reasons for the evolution, existence and persistence of exonyms. The first is historical. In many cases, explorers, unaware of existing local names, or colonizers and military conquerors unmindful of them, gave names in their own language to geographical features having native names, and these exonyms remained in use in the countries concerned. One of the best known is Mount Everest, named after the British Surveyor-General of India between 1830 and 1843. It later became an official endonym, but this geographical feature was, and is still, called Qomolangma by Tibetans and Sagarmāthā by Nepalis. These alternative names are known as allonyms (*Glossary*, 005).

The second reason is related to problems of pronunciation. A specific speech community may not be able to pronounce a particular foreign name, or even to hear some of its sounds, and thus may mis-record it. Many Europeans are unable to pronounce the Arabic *gh*, *ġ*, sound as in “Ghazza” or “Benghāzi” and often substitute a hard *g*, resulting in Gaza and Bengazi.

Finally, if a geographical feature extends over more than one country, it may have a different endonym in each. In such cases, an exonym is usually substituted by other countries. The river starting in Germany under the endonym Donau and ending in the Black Sea as the Dunaj traverses eight countries and carries five different endonyms; hence, for simplicity, the English language uses the exonym Danube to cover the river’s entire length.

When an exonym is "accepted" by a linguistic community and frequently appears in its literature in connection with some tradition, it may be regarded as a traditional name (*Glossary*, 345). This term relates, among others, to names with a religious connotation such as Rome (English) for Roma (Italian) and Mecca (English) for Makkah (Arabic). Exonyms for countries and important cities also usually come under the heading of traditional names.

However, while there is little chance that exonyms or traditional names will be totally abolished in national and local use, there is practically unanimity of opinion within the United Nations that they should not be used internationally.

Finally, the Western exonym Peking is still remembered in restaurants in connection with duck, but even on the menu Peking is already being replaced by the endonym Beijing—hence, Beijing Duck.



## **Chapter VII**

### **From fieldwork to authorized names: the “owner decides” principle followed in the Netherlands**

#### **Ferjan Ormeling (Netherlands)**

In many countries, a names authority decides on the spelling of geographical names, but even if a names authority exists, it can delegate the authority to decide on the orthography of a geographical name.

In the Netherlands, the principle of local usage is followed in adopting geographical names. The Topografische Dienst, which has responsibility for geographical names on the national topographical map series of the Netherlands, uses the names provided by various bodies and individuals considered to “own” the entities (that is to say, places, or natural or constructed features) in question.

**In the Netherlands, the central principle in recognizing a geographical name is that the “owner” of a geographical object decides on the (spelling of the) entity’s name.**

- 1. The names of provinces and municipalities are fixed by law, as it is the Government that oversees and controls them.**

The country is divided into 12 provinces and (in 2003) 489 municipalities.

- 2. Within each municipality, it is the municipality that decides on the names of entities (islands, lakes, rivers, populated places) within its territory.**

There exists no regular consultation structure for deciding on the names of entities that do not totally lie within a single municipality, so that it may happen that the name of a feature changes from one municipality to another. Hearrenwei may change to Herenweg (Frisian and Dutch versions, respectively, of a road name, which would translate into English as “Gentry Road”).

- 3. It is owners of farms or individual buildings who decide on the names of these buildings.**

Farmers may name their farms for their families (for example, Sybellemahof, Drewerderhof, Albertine-state), give religious names (such as Ora et Labora, or Eben Haëzer), reflect on their objectives (for example, Hoop op Welvaart: “Hope for prosperity”) or name the farms for nearby geographical features. As the owners decide on the name, they may also use spelling that is no longer current, or just linguistically incorrect. The owner may name his farm De Weide Blick, which in official orthography should be De Wijde Blik (that is to say, “The Wide View”). Near the Dutch hamlet Eese, some derived names like Eeserveen (a peat area) and Eesermeer (a lake) are used in accordance with the original name Eese. However, a nearby farmer is at liberty to name his farm Ezerveld instead of Eeserveld. And as

the spelling the owner uses is definitive, it is the name Ezerveld that will appear on the map, next to Eese, Eesermeer and Eeserveen. Misspelled or altered names are accepted but are, of course, inconsistent with the principle that derived names should be spelled in the same way as the names with which they are associated.

**4. Rivers and canals are being managed and supervised in the Netherlands by specific water management authorities (waterschappen) and it is these bodies, therefore, that decide on the names of these units and their constituent parts.**

Since the twelfth century, the waterschappen have been organized in parallel to the provincial/municipal hierarchy to address issues of the struggle against sea water and river water. To prevent inundations, they oversee the building and maintenance of dams and dykes, sluices and windmills used for pumping out the superfluous water. These drainage organizations have their own elected boards and collect their own taxes. And, of course, they have their own geographical names, both for the overall units and for the constituent parts, or polders (that is to say, areas usually surrounded by dykes that have a specific fixed ground water table level, determined by the decree of these water or drainage boards). As a coordinating agency, the State Government has superimposed over them the Department of Public Works and Water Management (Rijkswaterstaat), a directorate of the Ministry of Public Works. The polder names, as recorded in the decrees that fix the water levels, are used as a source for topographers who collect the relevant names for the maps.

Parallel hierarchic organizations with specific territorial functions, as described for the Netherlands in the waterschappen (as opposed to the provinces/municipalities), also exist in other countries. Examples are the irrigation organizations like the *huertas* in Spain and the cattle grazing organizations on Hungary's *puszta* (steppe).

Apart from the “natural” rivers and lakes that dot the Netherlands (actually one vast delta area of the rivers Rhine and Meuse), there is a multitude of artificial waterbodies. The technical terminology reflects their differences in size and function. A “-zijk”, for instance, is a canal that ends at a sluice or at least at a point where water can be pumped out. A “sloot” is a small canal (ditch) used for drainage of individual parcels of land. The determination whether a water body falls into one feature category or another might sometimes be rather arbitrary, as the standards or definitions of the categories, as well as the functions of the water bodies themselves, may have changed over time. The generics linked to the names may therefore in fact have become obsolete!

**5. The Hydrographic Survey is in charge of mapping the tidal flats, estuaries, channels, gullies and sandbanks on our coast, and it is this organization that is in charge of the names of these entities.**

Of course, there could be an overlap in naming responsibility: municipalities, rather than the Hydrographic Survey, might regard themselves as in charge of deciding on the names of coastal features. However, this has not caused any conflicts as yet.



### **Naming new places and structures**

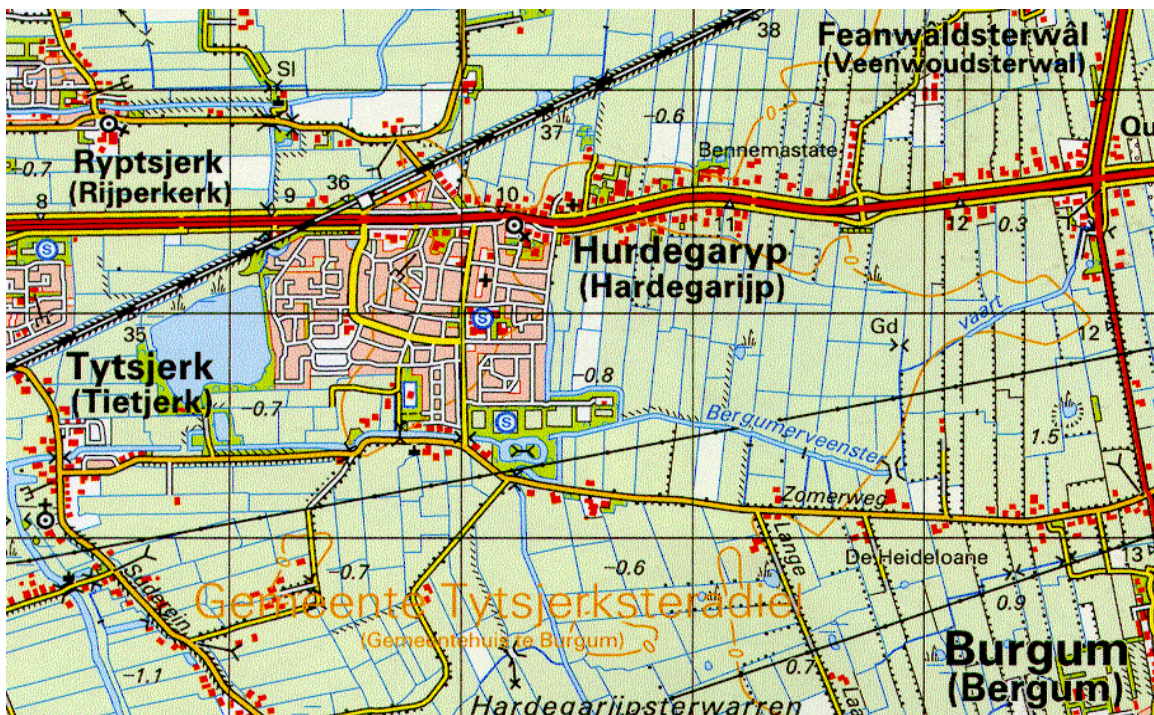
As most of the country has been densely settled for a thousand years, new names need be given only to new infrastructure features, such as canals, tunnels and port extensions. New names have to be found when municipalities are amalgamated, or when land is reclaimed from the sea. In this last-mentioned case, names found in archival documents showing previously existing villages have been used to name the newly planned settlements. The “new” names proposed by local administrative bodies in such cases are submitted to the Advisory Commission for Determining Dutch Geographical Names (Adviescommissie voor het vaststellen van Nederlandse aardrijkskundige namen) of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. The Commission advises only on official administrative or political applications, and there exists no possibility for public input regarding requests to change place names.

Laws regulate the spelling of the Dutch language, and these laws have to be adhered to at least for street names; other geographical names in the Netherlands, for the time being, are exempt from this law. In adjacent Belgium, the same spelling law for the Dutch language applies, and here all geographical names do adhere to the law.

### **Minority names**

Under the system of the “owner decides” principle, a municipality can now, if it so desires, render the names of the entities within its area in the minority language. This has in fact happened in part of our minority-language area, the province of Fryslân (in the north of the country), where a number of municipalities have a population that feels strongly about the restoration of their original Frisian names. They have used this newly established principle to correct the geographical names within their area and to rewrite them according to the (new) orthographic rules for the Frisian language.

The formerly official Dutch names can be added in brackets, as illustrated in figure XXIII, by a Netherlands topographic map (original scale 1:50,000).



**Figure XXIII.** Bilingual map presentation with Frisian minority names first and Dutch majority names in parentheses

Copyright 2003, Topografische Dienst, Emmen, Netherlands.

## Chapter VIII

### Example from the Netherlands of written instructions to surveyors for collecting toponyms in the field<sup>1</sup>

Ferjan Ormeling (Netherlands) and  
Nico Bakker (Netherlands)

Written instructions should be available in advance for the surveyors/topographers who have to collect geographical names in the field. For example, for surveyors/topographers in the Netherlands, their instructions include the following topics:

- **Objectives.** The objectives are to collect both geographical and descriptive names of objects (namely, places, and natural and constructed features) referred to by local people in their day-to-day conversation. The names collected should still be current, they should be in the official orthography<sup>2</sup> and the entities to which the names refer should be known, regarding both their nature and their extent. The rules for writing the Dutch language have been laid down by law. This law applies only to street names, however, not to all other geographical names.
- **Categories of geographical entities that need names.** There is a standard list of entities to be named, consisting of:
  - (a) Municipalities;
  - (b) Populated settlements;
  - (c) Non-administrative geographical entities, like forests, regions or fields;
  - (d) Polders or other water drainage entities;
  - (e) Navigable watercourses;
  - (f) All other watercourses and lakes;
  - (g) Channels;
  - (h) Roads, streets, dykes, paths, quays and embankments;
  - (i) Buildings (farms, isolated buildings);
  - (j) Special features (bridges, dams, viaducts, border markers, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Tjeerd Tichelaar and Ferjan Ormeling, “Names collection in the field and the office”, in Lecture Notes, vol. 1, for Dutch- and German-speaking Division/United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names training course in toponymy, Enschede, Netherlands/Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 10-24 August 2002, pp. 64-65, edited at Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands, 2002; and on the presentation of Nico Bakker (Topografische Dienst Nederland) on “Geographical names in the Dutch Topographical Maps”, given at the same course. Some examples have been taken from the Specifications/Handbook *Namenboek Topografische Dienst, Handleiding Versie*, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> The term “official orthography” refers to the spelling of these names as used in official sources, for example, decrees of water management boards, municipality acts, and provincial and State laws that refer to geographical names in their texts. These official decrees and laws were never intended as the final authority in the spelling of these names; but in the absence of an official names agency in the Netherlands, they have taken on this role.

The responsibility for collecting the official spelling of the names in categories (d) and (e) used to rest with Rijkswaterstaat (see part two, chap. VII) and that for collecting the names in category (g) with the Hydrographic Service, the Topographical Service (Topografische Dienst Nederland) being responsible for all the other names. As lately the two first institutions have not been very active in collecting names, the responsibility for collecting names in categories (d), (e) and (g) has gradually drifted to the Topographical Service.

- **Preparation of the preliminary names model, or field sheet during the preliminary phase.** The aim of this activity is to establish an awareness of the issues that are relevant for the names collecting in the designated area and of problems connected with finding the names of specific entities.
- **A list of persons or documentary sources to be consulted.** We need local authorities that have lived a long time in the region, have information on recent developments and have travelled widely over the area. Among the persons to be consulted are municipality personnel, schoolteachers, knowledgeable shopkeepers, postmasters, clergy, public notaries, local historians, polder board officials, and spokesmen for State forests and nature areas. Among the documentary sources are the current map(s), names on entities or signposts, official municipality lists, town plans and guides, navigation handbooks and handbooks on nature reserves.

Before the topographers go into the field, they can consult the names ledgers and the names lists for the previous edition of the relevant maps. They may find lists of sources, with telephone numbers of informants used for reviewing names for the previous edition of the map. In theory, at least, these persons can be contacted beforehand in order to arrange meetings. Since the publication of the previous edition of the map sheet, all queries, remarks and suggestions regarding the geographical names have been collected on an additional names document. This will help the topographers in solving any outstanding issues and correcting mistakes. Before going into the field, the topographers will also discuss the area to be surveyed with their section head, who will make them aware of any problems or issues regarding the area's names.

- **During the fieldwork.** The topographer/surveyor has to verify all the names on the map, by checking them on name signs or buildings, by asking the inhabitants about them or by contacting the local authorities. If any official documents exist that reflect recent name changes, they should be copied and added to the file. During this phase, the topographer also has to assess the numbers of inhabitants of settlements in the municipality, if these data can be derived from the population files. For this purpose, the name of the relevant administrative officials are kept in the files. Information to be requested in the municipality includes names of settlements, names of parts (for example, wards or neighbourhoods) of villages, towns and cities, and their number of inhabitants. (The number of inhabitants will determine the size of type to be used for the name.)

Topographers/surveyors in many countries have been or are equipped with special name collection forms, on which to fill in, for example, the spelling of a name

according to the current topographical and/or cadastral maps; the name spelling according to the inhabitants, local officials and old maps; and, then, the name proposed by the surveyor for official use. In the case of the Netherlands, the surveyors/topographers annotated the names on names ledgers (also referred to as field sheets) that are a printing in grey of the line work of the previous edition of the map. Here, with letter codes, the sources were added and explained in the map margin. Names no longer current were indicated with specific colours. Now, however, the surveyors go out into the field with hand-held computers containing the previous map edition and recent aerial photographs, with digital forms for the names to be added shortly.

Issues to be considered when using names ledgers (or computers) to record the names are:

- (a) The location and extent of the named entity;
- (b) The orthography of the name;
- (c) The nature of the entity being named.

Special problems were encountered using names ledgers when the map margin cut through the named feature. The topographer/surveyor then had to liaise with the colleague doing the fieldwork for the adjoining map sheet.

All modified or new names have to be inserted on the aerial photograph or the map of the area by the topographer.

- **Production of the names list.** This is completed on official preprinted forms with an indication of the nature of the named entity, its size, etc. These lists used to be produced for the typesetter, but are now used by the cartographers who have to know what size, colour and style the names on the map should have. It is expected that, in the new digital environment, these names lists will be automatically system-generated.

The information collected by the topographers comprises two categories:

- (a) Toponyms;
- (b) Generic designations (labels) such as factory, cemetery, etc.

- **Production of the final names model or name sheet.** This names model will have the letter sizes indicated and the names rendered in their planned final locations (on the basis of the extent of the entities or the number of inhabitants).
- **Instructions on the manner of locating the names on the names model, and the required density of the names on the final topographic map.** These instructions also refer to the colours, sizes, script types or styles to be used. Here, also, rules are provided indicating where to put the names for entities located on a coastline, and how to deal with linear or point entities. Names of rivers and canals and depth figures are indicated in blue. Municipality names and altitude figures are rendered in brown. Purple is the colour used for all air navigation names. Red is the colour used for all names and road numbers that are related to the highway network. All other names and designations are shown in black.

- **Rules for letter sizes of names of town wards or neighbourhoods.** The various wards of a town or city can have individual names as well. Sometimes, they are the names of originally separate settlements.
- **Rules for selection of farm names.** These should be contingent on the relative density of farms.
- **Rules for splitting up names.** In case there is little space within which to place the name, the name may have to be split up, and it should be made clear where in the word(s) of the name this may be done.
- **Rules for spacing letters in names.** In order to improve reference to a specific entity with a broad extent, spacing between letters might be feasible, if carried out in a systematic way.
- **Rules for abbreviations.** As is the case with splitting up names, if there is not enough space on the map to accommodate all names that should be included, names may have to be abbreviated. Abbreviations have to be explained in the map margin. Standard abbreviations exist for most generics, as well as for words denoting cardinal directions, titles and some adjectives frequently used in geographical names (such as the Dutch versions of old, new, large, small, lower and upper).
- **Rules for putting altitude figures on the map.** This has little to do with toponymy, but as the figures for height and depth values are printed in the same colour as that of the names on the map, this kind of information is usually defined by the same person who determines the topographical names.
- **Rules for selecting fonts, sizes and colours.** For different map scales, different selections of fonts, sizes and colours can be made.
- **Some orthographic rules.** This refers to the use of hyphens, the use of capitals, and the handling of orthographically incorrect names.
- **Sources for the official orthography of specific name categories.** Names of privately owned entities might be subject to different orthographic rules from those applied to publicly owned entities.
- **Definitions of the name categories represented on the map.** Sometimes it is not clear whether an entity should be named, or into which category it falls. That is why definitions of these entities are needed.
- **Rules for documenting the decisions regarding the names.** As there is no geographical names board in the Netherlands, the Topografische Dienst is responsible by default for collecting the names. Its decisions regarding the orthography of the names are well documented for future reference. The name of the informant is documented, as well as his/her occupation, and address or telephone number.
- **Rules for selecting majority or minority language name versions in bilingual areas.** In this section of the instructions, the generic parts of the Frisian name are listed so that their spelling can be standardized and explained in Dutch, that is to say:

- (a) Municipality names are to be derived from a list published in the official gazette;
- (b) For settlement names, the first name found on place-name signs should be used as the main name on the map. If there is a second name underneath, this may be added on the map in parentheses;
- (c) Names of entities in the other categories are written on the map in the form that has been found on name signs in the area (these can be either in Dutch or in Frisian) unless official sources state otherwise;
- (d) Labels for factory, cemetery, skating rink, etc. are rendered in Dutch only and are not translated into Frisian.





## **Chapter IX**

### **Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors, for international use (from the 1970s to the present)<sup>1</sup>**

**Helen Kerfoot (Canada) and Eeva Maria Närhi (Finland)**

#### **Toponymic guidelines: their conception**

At the Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in Athens in 1977, the gathering and dissemination of toponymic information were discussed. It became clear that the general comprehension of geographical names around the world was not of a high level. The great variation in geographical names and in the approaches to their use in different countries was not well understood by experts, and certainly not by the information users, for example, cartographers.

This deficiency triggered action. Dr. Josef Breu of Austria, elected Chairman of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names following the Third Conference, initiated a practical approach to make the current toponymy and standardization methods in different countries systematically available to the information users. Initially, this was directed at cartographers, but later the user base was considered to encompass a more general international audience, particularly including those involved in publishing.

At the eighth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in New York in 1979, Dr. Breu presented the first sample of “Toponymic guidelines for international cartography”. His 10-page document (WP 5) summarized the appropriate information for Austria and provided readers, for example, with information on spelling rules, on the linguistic substrata and on minority languages (Slovenian, Burgenland Croatian, Hungarian and Czech). He explained different responsibilities for names standardization and recorded such important source material as the 1:50,000 Österreichische Karte and the official gazetteer of 1971. Appellatives, adjectives and other words necessary for the understanding of maps and cadastral plans in German and minority languages were listed over three pages.

This model for toponymic guidelines was published in *World Cartography*, vol. XVIII,<sup>2</sup> 1986, and still provides a helpful reference for others to follow.

#### **Recommendations on the content of toponymic guidelines**

This useful tool for advancing the common understanding of toponymy is aimed at systematically presenting information for each country: about languages, their distribution and status; linguistic and administrative maps; the alphabet/script used in written forms of names,

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<sup>1</sup> The text of the present chapter is a modified and updated version of Helen Kerfoot and Eeva Maria Närhi, “United Nations standardization of geographical names: development of toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use”, *Nomina Africana*, vol. 15, Nos. 1 and 2 (2001).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.I.23.

supplemented by information on the phonetic values of characters and the use of capitalization, word strings, etc.; names standardizing authorities and their contact addresses; published source material containing standardized names; and a glossary of common terms within toponyms. In subsequent years, other items were added, including abbreviations used and methods of differentiating toponyms from other text on national maps (see appendix I to the present chapter for a detailed outline.)

Where countries had names standardization bodies or well-established means of treatment and maintenance of toponymy, these guidelines could normally be considered “official”. In other cases, they were viewed essentially as practical professional instruments for toponymists, geographers and cartographers. Some countries have presented more than one edition of their guidelines. Updating is, of course, one of the necessary factors in respect to keeping the guidelines useful.

### **Some important aspects of toponymic guidelines**

Toponymic guidelines are seen as a tool for advancing the common understanding of toponymy and the need for standardization. For each country, these guidelines, promoted by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, provide a systematic way of collecting basic information on the national toponymy and relevant policies. The consistent approach developed for the guidelines also entails giving the user easy-to-use reference documents.

Many toponymic guidelines are of excellent quality and contain very useful information—unfortunately, only a few items can be cited here by way of example.

In most countries more than one language is spoken, so it is important that the guidelines give a clear picture of the languages, their distribution and status in the country. The status possibilities are many, as witnessed by the entries for “language” in the Group of Experts *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names* (2002): official, national, principal, indigenous, vehicular, minority, literary, colloquial, standard, non-official, etc. For example, South Africa (in 1992) provided details on the Afrikaans, English, Khoekhoen and Nguni languages (E/CONF.85/L.23).<sup>3</sup> Turkey’s guidelines provided information on the linguistic substrata in Turkish place names, reflecting Turkey’s “intermediate position between two continents and different cultural realms” (E/CONF.74/L.7).<sup>4</sup> The guidelines for France, published as *Guide de toponymie cartographique* in 1989 (Institut Géographique National, 1989), included significant detailed information and maps on languages and dialectal variations in France.

Guidelines provide information about the alphabet (or other writing system) used in a country in written forms of names. It was quickly found, however, that an alphabet needed to be supplemented by information on the phonetic value of characters in the particular languages of the country. Even within the Roman alphabet, characters may have different values in different

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<sup>3</sup> *Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, vol. II, *Technical papers*, New York, 25 August–3 September 1992 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E/F/S.95.I.39), pp. 279-294.

<sup>4</sup> See *Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, vol. II, *Technical papers* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E/F/S.86.I.21).

languages. For example, the character *z* is pronounced as: a voiced [z] in English, Dutch, Polish, Czech, French, Greek (new), Romanian, Hungarian and Russian (transliterated) names; as [θ] in Spanish names; as [s] in Swedish; as [ts] in German, Greek (classical) and often in Italian; and as [dz] in some Greek and Italian names.

As the guidelines are intended to serve national and international publishing needs and communication, rules of spelling are of primary importance. The use of capitalization, hyphens, joining of word strings, etc. are usually established by the long tradition of a country and these fundamentals provide important knowledge for the correct use of place names. Most European countries—all countries of the Norden Division, for instance—emphasize the necessity for specific diacritics and ligatures in writing toponyms in the languages of their countries. The guidelines for Estonia, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands elaborate well-established spelling rules for Estonian, Finnish/Saami, German and Dutch names; Swedish and Danish have no explicit orthographic rules, but usage is based on long-standing tradition. Iceland's guidelines indicate that spelling of toponyms is resolved by the Icelandic Place-Name Committee, while those for Norway discuss the status of two standard languages and the spelling of toponyms in the context of the historical background.

From the outset, it was considered very important to include contact addresses for more information on the handling of standardized names in a country. Also, it was essential to include published source material that used standardized forms of toponyms, for example, gazetteers, maps and atlases providing the user with reliable information. Various countries (for example, the United States of America, Canada, Australia and Germany) provide detailed information on the names authorities, at both federal and State/provincial/territorial level, that are responsible for official toponymy.

Cartographic abbreviations, which can be a puzzle for those unfamiliar with the language, have proved most valuable (for example, those presented by the Federal Republic of Germany in document E/CONF.94/CRP.29 and by Finland in document E/CONF.91/L.17). Well documented generic terminology has also been most useful (for instance, that provided by South Africa in document E/CONF 85/L.23).

### **Progress to date**

Dr. Breu's initiation of an approach to the guidelines provided a framework within which others could undertake similar work, and at the ninth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in 1981, 10 sets of guidelines were presented, by: Austria (WP 10); Federal Republic of Germany (WP 11); Suriname (WP 12); Canada (WP 16); France (WP 21); Greece (WP 28); Hungary (WP 35); Finland (WP 37); Sweden (WP 38); and German Democratic Republic (WP 60). By the twenty-second session of the Group of Experts in 2004, some 35 countries had presented toponymic guidelines, some now having produced three or four editions, or more.

Since the early days, the title has been modified to fit a broader user audience and to clarify the purpose of the guidelines. The latest recommendation for the title (from 1982 and 1986 amendments) is "Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors, for international use".

Dr. Breu had continued as coordinator of the toponymic guidelines until after he had retired. In 1991, Dr. Peter Raper (South Africa), newly elected as Chair of Group of Experts, took over guidance of the project. In 2004, the Group of Experts again handed back the reins to Austria, with Dr. Isolde Hausner taking responsibility for coordinating and re-evaluating the content of the guidelines.

At several United Nations Conferences and sessions of the Group of Experts, considerable attention was given to questions of publishing collections of available national guidelines. Although for various reasons (both technical and financial) this has not come to fruition, individual country toponymic guidelines continue to be available in paper or digital form.

Appendix II to this chapter lists all the sets of guidelines that have been presented at United Nations conferences and sessions of the Group of Experts. It also indicates which countries have had their technical papers printed in volume II of the reports of the United Nations Conferences.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the guidelines for Austria published in *World Cartography*, vol. XVIII, in 1986, there have been guidelines published by various countries. For example, (as mentioned above) guidelines for France were published as *Guide de toponymie cartographique*, an information bulletin of the Institut Géographique National in 1989; toponymic guidelines for Slovenia were published in Ljubljana in 1995; and those for Slovakia were published by the Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre Authority in 1999. In 2002, Poland published its most recent guidelines (third revised edition), Germany published the fourth edition of its guidelines and the Government of Cyprus published the first edition of its toponymic guidelines. In 2004, Italy published the third edition of its guidelines.

By 1998, the use of the World Wide Web had put the production of a compendium of various toponymic guidelines in a different light. The problem of having paper copies fall out of date, and of undertaking the potentially costly programmes of republishing could now be approached from another angle. At the Seventh United Nations Conference (1998), Estonia had noted that its guidelines were already available on the Internet. Other countries (for instance, Austria, Germany, Finland, Norway, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) subsequently put their documents on the Web (see Appendix III for the Web addresses).

The United Nations now also has a number of sets of the toponymic guidelines available online. Those 11 sets of guidelines presented as technical papers at the Eighth United Nations Conference in 2002 are available through the Group of Experts website (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/>). In addition, the Map Collection of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library at the United Nations in New York has scanned many back copies of papers presented at sessions of the Group of Experts. Some toponymic guidelines are therefore available at <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/maplib/ungegn.htm>.

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<sup>5</sup> Most technical papers presented as limited distribution category (L) documents at the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names are contained in volume II of the reports of those Conferences. Documents with other designations presented at those Conferences or to sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names are not found in the published reports.

It is recognized that the Internet is not the solution for all countries. However, it has been emphasized that the goal is the widest possible dissemination and that countries should use whatever media possibilities are available to them to make their toponymic guidelines widely available.

### **Looking to the future**

Several resolutions adopted at United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names have addressed the need for toponymic guidelines for map and other editors, for international use (see appendix IV) and some 35 countries have presented guidelines. This is encouraging and makes important national details on the standardization of geographical names available to names users internationally. However, 23 of these countries are European. Only 6 countries in Asia, 3 in the Americas, 2 in Africa and 1 in Australasia have presented guidelines. Hence, from the perspective of world coverage, the Group of Experts should still be encouraging further participation in the project. To this end, the Chairs of the divisions of the Group of Experts are encouraged to use step-by-step methods to develop guidelines for the countries in their divisions that are unable to initiate this work themselves. To be sure, some countries have made a move in this direction by preparing papers on such topics as romanization, national standardization processes, administrative regions and new products that provide standardized names for features and places in their own countries. This represents an important beginning.

Guidelines should be distributed as widely as possible to cartographers and publishers. The Internet now provides a solution for easier worldwide dissemination of toponymic guidelines without the high costs of printing and distribution being incurred. The Web certainly provides the medium for rapid communication of name changes and has become of increasing importance in knowledge management. On the other hand, for the more “permanent” characteristics of guidelines, hard-copy editions remain invaluable reference tools for frequent users.

However, whether the medium is paper or a digital one, the Group of Experts still faces the challenge of the development of the actual fundamentals of names standardization processes in all countries and the production in association therein of the toponymic guidelines for most of the world.

**Appendix I**

**Toponymic guidelines**, as originally proposed by Dr. Josef Breu in his Circular No. 2, 12 December 1977, with the additions, modifications and new numbering of 1981 (Circular Letter No. 20) shown in italics.<sup>1</sup>

*Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors, for international use<sup>a</sup>*  
Name of individual country

- 1 Languages
    - 1.1 General remarks
    - 1.2 National language(s)
      - 1.2.1 Legal situation and practical application in administration and official cartography
      - 1.2.2 Alphabet(s) and transcription(s)
      - 1.2.3 General spelling rules for geographical names
      - 1.2.4 *Pronunciation*
      - 1.2.5 Grammatical peculiarities that are essential for the treatment and understanding of geographical names
      - 1.2.6 Distribution of main dialects and their characteristics; how far are dialectal name forms adapted to the standard form of the language(s)? (In the case of many African countries with English, French, Portuguese or Spanish as official languages: distribution of main vernaculars and their characteristics; how far are vernacular name forms adapted to the spelling of the official language?); *linguistic maps*
    - 1.3 Minority languages
      - 1.3.1 – 1.3.6, as under 1.2
  - 2 Names authorities and names standardization
    - 2.1 National names authority. Aims, functions, rules, address
    - 2.2 Provincial names authorities. Aims, functions, rules, addresses
    - 2.3 Names standardization. Legal aspects, procedures, progress
  - 3 Source material
    - 3.1 Maps: map series containing standardized names. Which sheets of a series contain already standardized names?
    - 3.2 Gazetteers containing standardized names
  - 4 Glossary of appellatives, adjectives and other words necessary for the understanding of maps. (As such glossaries will serve the needs of foreign users they must contain also - and above all - words of the general vocabulary.)
  - 5 *Abbreviations used on official maps; the decoding and meanings*
  - 6 *Methods of differentiating toponyms from other text on national maps*
- Annex Administrative maps*

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<sup>1</sup> The title reflects modifications emanating from the eighth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, 1979; the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, 1982; and the twelfth session of the Group of Experts, 1986. Item 6 follows a resolution adopted by the Fifth United Nations Conference, 1987.

## Appendix II

### Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use

<i>Country</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Edition</i>	<i>Document</i>	<i>Venue</i>	<i>Pub. in vol. II</i>	<i>Location</i>
Algeria	2000	draft	WP.78	20th UNGEGN		New York
Australia	2002		E/CONF.94/CRP.19	8th UN Conf		Berlin
	1992		E/CONF.85/L.64	6th UN Conf	*	New York
Austria	2002		See E/CONF.94/INF.80	8th UN Conf		Berlin
	1998		E/CONF.91/INF.21	7th UN Conf		New York
	1994	add.	WP.67	17th UNGEGN		New York
	1992	rev.	E/CONF.85/L.14	6th UN Conf	*	New York
	1992	add.	E/CONF.85/WP.41	6th UN Conf		New York
	1991	rev.	WP.10	15th UNGEGN		New York
	1986			<i>World Cartography XVIII</i>		
	1985		E/CONF.77/CRP.3	3rd UN Americas		New York
	1982		E/CONF.74/L.2	4th UN Conf	*	Geneva
	1981		WP.10	9th UNGEGN		New York
	1979		WP.5	8th UNGEGN		New York
	1975	prel.		Geogr. Namenbuch Österreich		
Canada	2000	add.	WP.30 and Corr.1	20th UNGEGN		New York
	1996	add.	WP.36	18th UNGEGN		Geneva
	1992	rev.	E/CONF.85/L.47	6th UN Conf	*	New York
	1989	rev.	WP.48	14th UNGEGN		Geneva
	1985		E/CONF.77/CRP.7	3rd UN Americas		New York
	1981		WP.16	9th UNGEGN		New York
China	1992		E/CONF.85/L.1	6th UN Conf	*	New York
	1982		E/CONF.74/L.48	4th UN Conf	*	Geneva
Cyprus	2002	1 <sup>st</sup> ed.		(published 2002; Lefkosia)		
Czech Republic	2002		E/CONF.94/CRP.70	8th UN Conf		Berlin
	1998		E/CONF.91/CRP.17	7th UN Conf		New York
	1996		WP.52	18th UNGEGN		Geneva
	1994		WP.28, p.3	17th UNGEGN		New York
Czechoslovakia	1987		E/CONF.79/INF/62	5th UN Conf		Montreal
Denmark	1982		E/CONF.77/L.14	4th UN Conf	*	Geneva
Estonia	1998	2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.	E/CONF.91/INF.16	7th UN Conf		New York
	1992		E/CONF.85/L.76	6th UN Conf	*	New York
Finland	2004	4 <sup>th</sup> rev.	WP.49	22nd UNGEGN		New York
	2002		E/CONF.94/CRP.76	8th UN Conf		Berlin
	1998	3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.	E/CONF.91/L.17	7th UN Conf		New York
	1994	rev.	WP.63	17th UNGEGN		New York
	1982		E/CONF.74/L.41	4th UN Conf	*	Geneva
	1981	prel.	WP.37	9th UNGEGN		New York
France	1989		WP.44	14th UNGEGN ( <i>Guide de toponymie cartographique</i> , 1989)		Geneva
	1985		E/CONF.77/CRP.1	3rd UN Americas		New York
	1982		E/CONF.74/L.21	4th UN Conf	*	Geneva
	1981		WP.21	9th UNGEGN		New York

## Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors, for international use (from the 1970s to the present)

Germany	2002	4 <sup>th</sup> ed.	E/CONF.94/CRP.29	8th UN Conf		Berlin
	1998	3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.	E/CONF.91/L.26	7th UN Conf		New York
	1992	2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.	E/CONF.85/L.93	6th UN Conf	*	New York
	FRG 1982		E/CONF.74/L.9	4th UN Conf	*	Geneva
	FRG 1981	prel.	WP.11	9th UNGEGN		New York
GDR 1981		WP.60	9th UNGEGN		New York	
Greece	2000	rev.	WP.90	20th UNGEGN		New York
	1998		E/CONF.91/CRP.22	7th UN Conf		New York
	1981		WP.28	9th UNGEGN		New York
Hungary	2002	3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.	E/CONF.94/INF.9	8th UN Conf		Berlin
	1994		WP.10	17th UNGEGN		New York
	1981		WP.35	9th UNGEGN		New York
Iceland	1982		E/CONF.74/L.15	4th UN Conf	*	Geneva
Iran, Islamic Republic of	2000	2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.	WP.41	20th UNGEGN		New York
Ireland	1994		WP.65	17th UNGEGN		New York
	1992		E/CONF.85/WP.3	6th UN Conf		New York
Italy	2004	3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.	WP.112	22nd UNGEGN		New York
	2002	prel. rev.	E/CONF.94/CRP.61	8th UN Conf		Berlin
	2000	2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.	WP.86	20th UNGEGN		New York
	1998	1 <sup>st</sup> ed.	E/CONF.91/CRP.20	7th UN Conf		New York
	1987	prel.	E/CONF.79/L.30	5th UN Conf	*	Montreal
Japan	1994	2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.	WP.43	17th UNGEGN		New York
	1987		E/CONF.79/INF/11	5th UN Conf		Montreal
Netherlands	1992		E/CONF.85/L.2	6th UN Conf	*	New York
	1987		E/CONF.79/INF/6	5th UN Conf		Montreal
	1986		WP.5	12th UNGEGN		Geneva
Norway	1998		E/CONF.91/CRP.16	7th UN Conf		New York
	1982		E/CONF.74/L.16	4th UN Conf	*	Geneva
Poland	2002	3 <sup>rd</sup> rev.	E/CONF.94/CRP.7	8th UN Conf		Berlin
	2000		WP.21	20th UNGEGN (ISBN 83-239-4555-1, Warsaw 2002)		New York
	1996		WP.6	18th UNGEGN (ISBN 83-7239-596-9; Warsaw 1999) (ISBN 83-900969-2-7; Warsaw 1993)		Geneva
Republic of Korea	2002		E/CONF.94/INF.49	8th UN Conf		Berlin
Romania	1994		WP.79	17th UNGEGN		New York
	1991		WP.20	15th UNGEGN		Geneva
Russia (only as USSR)						
Slovakia	2000	3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.	WP.47	20th UNGEGN		New York
	1996		WP.72	18th UNGEGN		Geneva
Czechoslovakia	1987		E/CONF.79/INF/62	5th UN Conf		Montreal
Slovenia	1995			(published 1995; Ljubljana)		



South Africa	1992		E/CONF.85/L.23	6th UN Conf	*	New York
	1991	3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.	WP.4	15th UNGEGN		Geneva
	1987		E/CONF.79/L.35	5th UN Conf	*	Montreal
	1986	2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.	WP.6	12th UNGEGN		Geneva
	1984	1 <sup>st</sup> ed.	WP.19	11th UNGEGN		Geneva
Spain	1982		E/CONF.74/L.86	4th UN Conf	*	Geneva
Suriname	1985		E/CONF.77/CRP.2	3rd UN Americas		New York
	1981		WP.12	9th UNGEGN		New York
Sweden	1998		E/CONF.91/L.46	7th UN Conf		New York
	1982		E/CONF.74/L.17	4th UN Conf	*	Geneva
	1981	prel.	WP.38	9th UNGEGN		New York
Switzerland	1982		E/CONF.74/L.67	4th UN Conf	*	Geneva
Thailand	2002		E/CONF.94/INF.50	8th UN Conf		Berlin
Turkey	1982		E/CONF.74/L.7	4th UN Conf	*	Geneva
United Kingdom	1982		E/CONF.74/L.57	4th UN Conf	*	Geneva
United States	1989		WP.28	14th UNGEGN		Geneva
	1987		E/CONF.79/L.19	5th UN Conf	*	Montreal
	1985		E/CONF.77/CRP.4	3rd UN Americas		New York
	1982		E/CONF.74/L.102	4th UN Conf	*	Geneva
USSR	1987		E/CONF.79/INF.53	5th UN Conf		Montreal
	1984	prel.	WP.39	11th UNGEGN		Geneva
<b>General</b>						
<i>Kerfoot, H. (Canada) and Närhi, E.M. (Finland)</i>	2000		<i>WP.6</i>	<i>20th UNGEGN</i>		<i>New York</i>
<i>Breu, J. (Austria)</i>	1987		<i>E/CONF.79/L.7</i>	<i>5th UN Conf</i>	*	<i>Montreal</i>
<i>Breu, J. (Austria)</i>	1986		<i>WP.9</i>	<i>12th UNGEGN</i>		<i>Geneva</i>
<i>Breu, J. (Austria)</i>	1984		<i>WP.20</i>	<i>11th UNGEGN</i>		<i>Geneva</i>
<i>Breu, J. (Austria)</i>	1984		<i>INF.6</i>	<i>11th UNGEGN</i>		<i>Geneva</i>
<i>Gall, F. (Guatemala)</i>	1981		<i>WP.2</i>	<i>9th UNGEGN</i>		<i>New York</i>

### Appendix III

#### Toponymic guidelines on the Web

Austria	<a href="http://www.oeaw.ac.at/dinamlex">http://www.oeaw.ac.at/dinamlex</a>
Estonia	<a href="http://www.eki.ee/knn/ungegn/un7_gdl.htm">http://www.eki.ee/knn/ungegn/un7_gdl.htm</a>
Finland	<a href="http://www.kotus.fi/inenglish/toponymicguidelines/toponymicguidelines.shtml">http://www.kotus.fi/inenglish/toponymicguidelines/toponymicguidelines.shtml</a>
Germany	<a href="http://www.ifag.de/Kartographie/Stagn/tr_engl/f_Empfnam_e.htm">http://www.ifag.de/Kartographie/Stagn/tr_engl/f_Empfnam_e.htm</a>
Norway	<a href="http://www.statkart.no/virksomh/forvaltning/navnlov/guidelines.html">http://www.statkart.no/virksomh/forvaltning/navnlov/guidelines.html</a>
Poland	<a href="http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/tgp.htm">http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/tgp.htm</a>
Slovakia	<a href="http://www.geodesy.gov.sk/sgn/typonym/Eng/typoframe.htm">http://www.geodesy.gov.sk/sgn/typonym/Eng/typoframe.htm</a>
Slovenia	<a href="http://www.sigov.si/kszi/ang/top_guide.pdf">http://www.sigov.si/kszi/ang/top_guide.pdf</a>
UNGEKN	<a href="http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/">http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/</a>
United Nations Map Collection	<a href="http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/maplib/ungegn.htm">http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/maplib/ungegn.htm</a>

**Appendix IV**

**United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names: resolutions on toponymic guidelines<sup>2</sup>**

<b>Resolution No.</b>	<b>Year Adopted</b>	<b>Title</b>
IV/4	1982	Publication of toponymic guidelines for map and other editors
V/11	1987	Differentiation of toponyms from other map text
V/14	1987	Publication of toponymic guidelines
VI/7	1992	Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors

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<sup>2</sup> Full texts are available on the website of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/>) or in the individual Conference reports.

## **Chapter X**

### **Some selected websites relevant to geographical names standardization**

**Compiled by Helen Kerfoot (Canada)**

#### **United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names**

- <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/>

#### **Divisions of the Group of Experts**

- Baltic Division  
<http://www.eki.ee/knn/ungegn/index.htm>
- Dutch- and German-speaking Division
  - Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen (StAGN)  
<http://www.bkg.bund.de/kartographie/stagn/stagn.htm>
- East Central and South-East Europe Division  
<http://www.sigov.si/kszi>
- French-speaking Division  
<http://www.divisionfrancophone.org>
- Romano-Hellenic Division  
<http://www.igmi.org>

#### **Working Groups of the Group of Experts**

- Country names
  - List of country names (United Nations Cartography Section, United Nations, New York)  
<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/geoinfo/geoname.pdf>
- Exonyms  
<http://www.zrc-sazu.si/wge>
- Publicity and funding
  - Group of Experts brochure: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/documents.htm>
- Romanization  
<http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/>
  - Letter database (displaying languages, special characters and Unicode with images of the letters) at Institute of the Estonian Language <http://www.eki.ee/letter/>
- Toponymic data files and gazetteers  
<http://www.zrc-sazu.si/ungegn/>
- Training courses in toponymy  
<http://toponymycourses.geog.uu.nl/>
  - Web-based toponymy training courses

- International Cartographic Association: <http://lazarus.elte.hu/cet/>
- L'Université Laval (Canada): <http://www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca>.  
Path: Outils.

### **Group of Experts: toponymic guidelines**

- Austria  
<http://www.oeaw.ac.at/dinamlex>
- Estonia  
[http://www.eki.ee/knn/ungegn/un7\\_gdl.htm](http://www.eki.ee/knn/ungegn/un7_gdl.htm)
- Finland  
<http://www.kotus.fi/inenglish/toponymicguidelines/toponymicguidelines.shtml>
- Germany  
[http://www.bkg.bund.de/Kartographie/Stagn/tr\\_engl/f\\_Empfnam\\_e.htm](http://www.bkg.bund.de/Kartographie/Stagn/tr_engl/f_Empfnam_e.htm)
- Norway  
<http://www.statkart.no/virksomh/forvaltning/navnlov/guidelines.html>
- Poland  
<http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/tgp.htm>
- Slovakia  
<http://www.geodesy.gov.sk/sgn/typonym/Eng/typoframe.htm>
- Slovenia  
[http://www.sigov.si/kszi/ang/top\\_guide.pdf](http://www.sigov.si/kszi/ang/top_guide.pdf)

### **United Nations**

- United Nations home page  
<http://www.un.org/english/>
- United Nations Map Library (Group of Experts documents)  
<http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/maplib/ungegn.htm>
- United Nations: cartography (United Nations Cartographic Section)  
<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/>
- United Nations Statistics Division  
<http://www.un.org/depts/unsd>

### **International organizations**

- International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS): general information  
<http://fuzzy.arts.kuleuven.ac.be/icosweb/>
- International Hydrographic Organization (IHO)
  - General information: <http://www.iho.shom.fr/>
  - General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) Gazetteer of Undersea Feature Names <http://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/gebco>
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO)
  - General information and ISO catalogue: <http://www.iso.ch/>
- ISO Technical Committee dealing with Geographic Information/Geomatics  
<http://www.isotc211.org/>

- Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR): Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica  
[http://www.scar.org/Publications/bulletins/webbull\\_138a.htm](http://www.scar.org/Publications/bulletins/webbull_138a.htm)
- Unicode Consortium  
<http://www.unicode.org/unicode/consortium/memblogo.html>

**Countries: national names authorities**

- Australia and New Zealand: Committee for Geographical Names in Australasia (CGNA)  
<http://www.icsm.gov.au/icsm/cgna/>
- Canada: Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC)  
[http://geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/info/gnbc\\_e.php](http://geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/info/gnbc_e.php)
- Czech Republic: Czech Office for Surveying, Mapping and Cadastre  
<http://www.cuzk.cz/>
- Estonia
  - Place Names Board of Estonia: <http://www.eki.ee/knn/index2.htm>
  - Place Names Act of Estonia: <http://www.eki.ee/knn/kns2.htm>
- Finland: Research Institute for the Languages of Finland  
<http://www.kotus.fi/inenglish/>
- France: Institut Géographique National: toponymie  
[http://www.ign.fr/affiche\\_rubrique.asp?rbr\\_id=926&lng\\_id=FR](http://www.ign.fr/affiche_rubrique.asp?rbr_id=926&lng_id=FR)
- Iceland: Place Name Committee  
<http://www.ismal.hi.is/ornefnanefnd.html>
- Iranian Committee for Standardization of Geographical Names  
<http://geonames.ncc.org.ir>
- Lithuania: State Commission of the Lithuanian Language  
<http://www.vlkk.lt>
- New Zealand: The New Zealand Geographic Board/Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa  
<http://www.linz.govt.nz/rcs/linz/pub/web/root/core/Placenames/nzgeographicboard/index.jsp>
- Slovakia: geographical names authorities and the pertinent acts  
<http://www.geodesy.gov.sk/sgn/typonym/Eng/typoframe.htm>
- Slovenia: Slovene Governmental Commission for the Standardisation of Geographical Names  
<http://www.sigov.si/kszi/>
- South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC)  
[http://www.dac.gov.za/about\\_us/cd\\_heritage/geographical\\_names/South\\_African\\_Geographical\\_Names\\_Council\\_\(SAGNC\).htm](http://www.dac.gov.za/about_us/cd_heritage/geographical_names/South_African_Geographical_Names_Council_(SAGNC).htm)
- Spain: Instituto Geográfico Nacional  
<http://www.mfom.es/ign>
- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British Official Use (PCGN)  
<http://www.pcn.org.uk>
- United States of America: United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN)  
<http://geonames.usgs.gov/bgn.html>

**Countries: searchable databases of geographical names**

- Australia
  - 2005 Gazetteer of over 315,500 geographical names of Australia  
<http://www.ga.gov.au/map/names/>
  - Australian Antarctic Gazetteer (Australian Antarctic Names and Medal Committee)  
<http://www.antdiv.gov.au/default.asp?casid=5675>
- Austria
  - Hydrological Atlas of Austria: <http://www.lebensministerium.at>
  - Atlas of Eastern and Southeastern Europe: <http://www.osi.ac.at>
- Bulgaria: Bulgaria Antarctic Gazetteer  
<http://www.geocities.com/apcbg/>
- Canada
  - Canadian Geographical Names Data Base: <http://geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/>
  - Canadian Geographical Names Service: <http://cgns.nrcan.gc.ca>
  - Gazetteer Map Service <http://atlas.gc.ca/site/english/dataservices/gazetteer.html>
- Denmark: lists of authorized Danish place names  
<http://www.navneforskning.dk>
- Estonia: Place Names Database  
<http://www.eki.ee/knab/knab.htm>
- Finland
  - National Land Survey of Finland  
<http://www.kartta.nls.fi/karttapaikka/eng/info/index.html>
  - Nordic Place Names Database (some 2000 place names stored in Unicode, including Saami-language characters): <http://nondb.nls.fi/>
- France: Institut Géographique National: Communes  
[http://www.ign.fr/affiche\\_rubrique.asp?rbr\\_id=889&lng\\_id=FR#41403](http://www.ign.fr/affiche_rubrique.asp?rbr_id=889&lng_id=FR#41403)
- Hungary
  - Gazetteer of Hungary: <http://fish.fomi.hu/angolfish/>
  - Detailed Gazetteer of Hungary  
[http://helynevtar.ksh.hu/index.php3?c\\_lang=en](http://helynevtar.ksh.hu/index.php3?c_lang=en)
- Japan
  - Topographic Map Browsing System, 1:25,000: <http://watchizu.gsi.go.jp>
  - Digital Japan web system: <http://cyberjapan.jp>
- Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática (INEGI) database  
<http://www.inegi.gob.mx>
- New Zealand: Geographic Placenames Database  
<http://www.linz.govt.nz/rcs/linz/pub/web/root/core/Placenames/searchplacenames/index.jsp>
- Norway: Central Place Names Register  
<http://ngis2.statkart.no/ng2/ng2.html>
- Poland: names of countries, their capitals and inhabitants  
<http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/>
- Qatar: landmark and street names in GIS
  - Arabic: <http://www.gisqatar.org.qa/new2a/>
  - Roman: <http://www.gisqatar.org.qa/new2/>
- South Africa: Official South African Geographical Names System  
<http://sagns.dac.gov.za>

- Spain: Registro de Entidades Locales  
<http://www.dgal.map.es>
- Sweden
  - National Atlas of Sweden: The Swedish Gazetteer  
<http://www.sna.se/gazetteer.html>
  - Land Survey place-name database: <http://www.lantmateriet.se>
- Switzerland: Federal Office of Topography: “SwissNames”  
<http://www.swisstopo.ch/en/digital/namen.htm>
- United Kingdom
  - Ordnance Survey (OS) geo-referenced street dataset ("National Street Gazetteer" (NSG)): <http://www.nsg.org.uk/>
  - Ordnance Survey (OS) placename search for Get-a-map  
[http://www.getamap.co.uk/getamap\\_index.htm](http://www.getamap.co.uk/getamap_index.htm)
  - Ordnance Survey (OS): place-name search with 1:50,000 map  
<http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/>
  - Ordnance Survey (OS) gazetteer of British place names  
<http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/freefun/didyouknow/>
- United States of America
  - Geographic Names Information System (GNIS): <http://geonames.usgs.gov/>
  - National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA): GEOnet Names Server, 4 million features for outside United States of America and Antarctica  
<http://earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/>
  - The National Map: <http://www.nationalmap.usgs.gov>
  - United States Antarctica Geographic Names Database:  
<http://geonames.usgs.gov/>
  - United States Department of State
    - Independent States in the World:  
<http://www.state.gov/s/inr/rls/4250.htm>
    - Dependencies and areas of special sovereignty  
<http://www.state.gov/s/inr/rls/10543.htm>

### Miscellaneous

- Country names
  - In the German language (StAGN)  
<http://www.bkg.bund.de/kartographie/stagn/staatennamen.htm>
  - From the Institut Géographique National (IGN), France  
<http://www.ign.fr/telechargement/Pi/SERVICES/pcm.pdf>
- Exonyms
  - In the Dutch language (Nederlandse Taalunie): pronunciation being added  
[http://taalnieversum.org/taal/aardrijkskundige\\_namen/](http://taalnieversum.org/taal/aardrijkskundige_namen/)
  - In the German language (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (StAGN))  
[http://www.bkg.bund.de/kartographie/stagn/Exonyme/f\\_Exonyme.htm](http://www.bkg.bund.de/kartographie/stagn/Exonyme/f_Exonyme.htm)

- Gazetteers
  - Alexandria Digital Library project, University of California  
<http://www.alexandria.ucsb.edu/>
- Letters and languages database  
<http://www.eki.ee/letter/>

## **Contact**

For updated information, consult the UNGEGN website:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/>

or contact the UNGEGN secretariat at United Nations Headquarters in New York:

UNGEKN secretariat  
United Nations Statistics Division, Office of the Director  
Two UN Plaza, DC2-1640  
New York, NY 10017  
USA

Tel: 212 963 3042  
Fax: 212 963 9851  
E-mail: [laaribi@un.org](mailto:laaribi@un.org)



## Annex

### Texts of selected resolutions adopted by United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names

#### First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, 1967

##### I/4. National standardization

###### *The Conference,*

*Recognizing* that the national standardization of geographical names provides economic and practical benefits to individual nations,

*Further recognizing* that national standardization of geographical names by all nations is an essential preliminary to international standardization,

1. *Requests* that the following recommendations on the national standardization of geographical names be reviewed by the proper United Nations authorities;

2. *Urges* that these recommendations be conveyed to all Member States and interested international organizations for favourable consideration.

#### RECOMMENDATION A. NATIONAL NAMES AUTHORITIES

It is recommended that, as a first step in international standardization of geographical names, each country should have a national geographical names authority:

(a) Consisting of a continuing body, or coordinated group of bodies, having clearly stated authority and instructions for the standardization of geographical names and the determination of names standardization policy within the country;

(b) Having such status, composition, function and procedures as will:

- (i) Be consistent with the governmental structure of the country;
- (ii) Give the greatest chance of success in the national names standardization programme;
- (iii) As appropriate, provide within its framework for the establishment of regional or local committees according to area or language;
- (iv) Provide for consideration of the effects of its actions on government agencies, private organizations and other groups and for the reconciliation of these interests, as far as possible, with the long-range interests of the country as a whole;
- (v) Make full use of the services of surveyors, cartographers, geographers, linguists and any other experts who may help the authority to carry out its operations efficiently;
- (vi) Permit recordkeeping and publication procedures that will facilitate the prompt and wide distribution of information on its standardized names, both nationally and internationally.

It is recommended that those countries that have not yet begun to exercise their prerogative of standardizing their geographical names on a national basis should now proceed to do so.

It is further recommended that the appropriate United Nations office be kept informed by each national names authority of its composition and functions, and of the address of its secretary.

#### RECOMMENDATION B. COLLECTION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

For each geographical name that is to be standardized, it is recommended that:

(a) The field and office research be as complete as possible in order to provide information on the following points:

- (i) Written and spoken form of the name and its meaning according to local inhabitants;
- (ii) Spelling in cadastral documents and land registers;
- (iii) Spelling on modern and old maps and in other historical sources;
- (iv) Spelling in census reports, gazetteers and other relevant documents of value;
- (v) Spelling used by other local administrative and technical services;

(b) The local spoken form of the name be recorded on tape and written in the phonetic notation approved by the national names authority;

(c) The character, extent and position of the feature named be determined -- in this regard it should be noted that aerial photographs can provide useful supplementary information -- and recorded as accurately as possible, and that the meaning of the generic terms used locally be clearly defined;

(d) If possible, at least two local independent sources be consulted for each inquiry.

It is further recommended that personnel responsible for the collection of names should have training adequate to recognize and deal with the linguistic problems (phonetic system, grammatical structure and orthography), geographical phenomena and terminology that they are likely to encounter.

#### RECOMMENDATION C. PRINCIPLES OF OFFICE TREATMENT OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

It is recommended that each names authority formulate, adopt and define the guiding principles and practices that it will normally apply in the course of operation.

These principles and practices should cover:

(a) Formal procedures to be followed in the submission to the authority of proposals for new names or changes in names;

(b) Factors that the authority will take into account when considering name proposals, such as:

- (i) Current usage;
- (ii) Historical background;
- (iii) Treatment in multilingual areas and in unwritten languages;
- (iv) The extent to which hybrid names should be avoided;
- (v) Avoidance of repetition of names;
- (vi) Avoidance of more than one name for one feature;
- (vii) Clarification of the precise extent of application of each individual geographical name, including the naming of the whole and the parts of major features;
- (viii) Elimination of objectionable names;

- (c) Rules of writing names applied by the authority;
- (d) Procedures whereby all interested parties may express their views on a name proposal prior to decision by the authority;
- (e) Formal procedures for promulgation of the authority's decisions and for ensuring that standardized names shall appear on the national maps.

In the elaboration of these principles, it is recommended that:

- (1) Unnecessary changing of names be avoided;
- (2) The spelling of geographical names be as much as possible in accordance with the current orthographic practice of the country concerned, with due regard to dialect forms;
- (3) Systematic treatment of names should not operate to suppress significant elements;
- (4) Where some names occur in varying or grammatical forms, the national names authority should consider making one of these forms the standard name (for nouns that can be declined, it will normally be the nominative case);
- (5) In all countries in whose languages the definite article can enter into geographical names, the national names authority should determine which names contain the definite article and standardize them accordingly. For languages in which both definite and indefinite forms exist for all or most names, it is recommended that standardization be based on one or the other form;
- (6) All countries set up standards for the use of abbreviations of elements in their geographical names;
- (7) A system be devised in each country for the treatment of compound names.

It is further recommended that the names authority give adequate publicity to these principles and practices.

#### RECOMMENDATION D. MULTILINGUAL AREAS

It is recommended that, in countries in which there exist more than one language, the national authority as appropriate:

- (a) Determine the geographical names in each of the official languages, and other languages as appropriate;
- (b) Give a clear indication of equality or precedence of officially acknowledged names;
- (c) Publish these officially acknowledged names in maps and gazetteers.

#### RECOMMENDATION E. NATIONAL GAZETTEERS

It is recommended that each names authority produce, and continually revise, appropriate gazetteers of all its standardized geographical names.

It is further recommended that, in addition to the standardized names, each gazetteer include, as a minimum, such information as is necessary for the proper location and identification of the named features.

In particular, it is recommended that the following be included:

- (a) The kind of feature to which the name applies;
- (b) Precise description of the location and the extent, including a point position reference if possible, of each named feature;
- (c) Provision for the parts of natural features to be additionally defined by reference to the whole and for the names of extended features to be defined as necessary by reference to their constituent parts;
- (d) Such information on administrative or regional areas as is considered necessary and, if possible, reference to a map or chart within which the features lie;
- (e) All officially standardized names for a feature, if there are more than one; and provision for cross-reference to be made to names previously used for the same feature.

When national authorities determine it possible, both technically and economically, they may include such information on geographical names as gender, number, definite and indefinite forms, position of stress, tone and pronunciation in the system of the International Phonetic Association and such other linguistic information as may lead to the better understanding and use of names both nationally and internationally.

## **I/16. Recording geographical names from unwritten languages**

### *The Conference,*

*Recognizing* the many problems resulting from the lack of a writing system for many languages of the world,

*Recognizing further* the need to record such languages as scientifically as possible in a suitable writing system,

*Recommends* that for the purpose of recording geographical names of unwritten languages, the methods to be employed, in order of preference, will be:

- (a) Recording in a phonetic writing system;
- (b) Recording in the alphabet of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA):
  - (i) Where necessary, a narrow transcription of the pronunciation of the geographical names will be carried out in order to record as precisely as possible the full phonetic character of each name;
  - (ii) In normal circumstances, the broad transcription of a name in the IPA will be carried out;
  - (iii) The final writing of the geographical name will be in an appropriate conventional alphabet or script, to approximate as nearly as possible the sound represented by the IPA broad transcription;
- (c) Recording in the alphabet of a kindred language for which an alphabet exists;
- (d) Recording directly into a conventional alphabet or other writing system, if possible by a person familiar with the language from which the recording is made; if the person making the recording is unfamiliar with the language, as much information as possible will be recorded in order to assess the reliability of the name as finally written.

## **I/20. Revision of recommendation VII of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names**

*The Conference,*

*Having considered* recommendation VII of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names,<sup>1</sup>

1. *Suggests* that the following paragraphs replace those previously contained in that recommendation:

“It is recommended that, if they have not already done so, countries of complicated ethnic and linguistic constitution consider and attempt to solve the problems brought about by the existence within their boundaries of geographical names from unwritten languages, or from minority languages (written or unwritten) or from dialects of the principal languages. Since the solutions of the problems brought about by the existence of names from unwritten languages or from dialects of the principal language may be exceedingly difficult, it is suggested that the countries concerned work together with, and profit from the experience of, other nations with similar problems, to bring about solutions satisfactory for their own needs.

“For the treatment of names from unwritten languages, two stages are necessary. First, for recording names from oral evidence, one can develop an unambiguous phonemic notation for each language. Alternatively, where there is in use a phonetic alphabet adaptable to a number of unwritten languages, for example, the International African Alphabet, it may be advantageous to apply it. Secondly, one can write the names in final form by means of regular correspondence established between that phonemic notation or phonetic alphabet and the writing system adopted by the country concerned for the language in question.

“It is recommended that names from languages with different writing systems be rendered systematically by transliteration or transcription as appropriate”;

2. *Recommends* that the proposed United Nations Permanent Committee of Experts on Geographical Names consider this question further.

## **Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, 2002**

### **VIII/6. Integration of geographical names data into national and regional spatial data infrastructures**

*The Conference,*

*Emphasizing* that standardized geographical names information is a crucial component of the efficient development of national economies in all countries,

*Noting* that geographical names serve as a common means of access to geo-information and spatial data infrastructures,

*Recalling* that the Fifteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific, held in Kuala Lumpur in 2000, recognized the promotion of national and regional geographical names standardization programmes,<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *World Cartography*, vol. VII (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.62.I.25), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> See Fifteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific, Kuala Lumpur, 11-14 April 2000: Report of the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.I.2), chap. VIII, sect. 8, resolution 7.

*Recalling also* that the Seventh United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas, held in New York in 2001, recognized the importance of standardized and consistent geographical names as a fundamental data set of national and regional spatial data infrastructures,<sup>3</sup>

*Recommends* that standardized geographical names data should be considered in the establishment of national and regional spatial data infrastructures and included in their design, development and implementation.

#### **VIII/10. Toponymic data-collection procedures**

*The Conference,*

*Recalling* the importance of field collection of geographical names as conveyed in resolution 4, recommendation B, of the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, and as noted in resolution 27 of the Second Conference,

*Recognizing* the rapidly developing requirement for highly accurate and complete geographical names and associated information,

*Noting* the increasing demand for geographical names of all categories for use in a geographic information system (GIS) environment as well as in specialized and multi-purpose automated databases,

*Recommends* that Governments expand their existing data-collection procedures for geographical names, and establish procedures for collecting names from all acceptable sources so as to be responsive to the needs of geographical names users.

#### **VIII/15. Support for training and publications**

*The Conference*

1. *Expresses its appreciation* to Germany, the Netherlands and the United Nations through the United Nations Statistics Division for providing funding for participants from developing countries to attend the training course associated with the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names;

2. *Stresses* the importance of this training and requests the Statistics Division, within existing resources, to continue to provide funding for such training for participants from developing countries;

3. *Recognizes* the importance, for the foreseeable future, of both electronic and print versions of documents available in all official languages of the United Nations and, in this connection;

4. *Requests* the Statistics Division to include in its publication programme for the biennium 2004-2005 the following:

(a) A publication of about one hundred and sixty pages on romanization systems, and formats and standards for toponymic data exchange;

(b) A basic manual of about one hundred and fifty pages on geographical names.

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<sup>3</sup> See *Report of the Seventh United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas, New York, 22-26 January 2001: Report of the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.I.13), chap. VI, sect. B, resolution 7.

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