NAMES COLLECTION IN THE FIELD AND THE OFFICE

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1. Objectives and purposes

The purpose of a geographical names survey is to (Orth 1990):
1. identify local landmarks referred to by   people in their day-to-day conversation
2. Record well-established names in the area
3. Check whether names previously used in   maps are still in use.

A general purpose of the field survey would be to gather important geographical and linguistic information, useful in understanding the area.

It is the objective of the fieldwork to bring to the office up to date geographical name versions in current usage, in their official form and correct spelling. Moreover, for office purposes their meaning should be collected as well. This information is to be used both for topographic maps and for geographical purposes.

2. Preliminary study of the area

Before going out into the area for which the names have to be collected, maps and air photo's of the area have to be collected. In order to identify the name questions and problems previous maps of the area and other geographical sources have to be studied. It is important to check the municipal or administrative boundaries, as introductions to local leaders or officials might be necessary. It is as important to check the linguistic divisions in the areas, locate interpreters and identify local informers in advance. Their locations might be a factor in planning the routes, and the logistics of the fieldwork trip, and for that purpose it is also important to check the main roads and their names. Details on property ownership might also be relevant as this might ease one's movement through the area.

From the previous maps and other documents a list of the existing names should be drawn up, and alternate names and questionable names should be noted. All this information has to be transferred to the field work map where the names are marked, with codes for their sources. Another necessary preparation might be the production of a list of the generic names applicable to the area, in the various languages that might occur there.

Of course the surveyors should make themselves familiar with the forms and procedures to be used, and if possible with the local language or dialects. Before going into the area the procedure for treatment of names in multilingual areas or of minority names should be clear, the same goes for the treatment of names from areas without written languages. The way abbreviations will be handled and the way compound names should be treated (with or without hyphens for instance) should be determined in advance.

3. Necessary equipment

Apart from topographic maps for reference and orientation, road maps, the field work map, the necessary equipment for marking the maps and eventually a tape recorder, a field notebook is necessary in order to enter the names and all their characteristics and sources.

Orth (1990) says also to prepare one's mind for the fieldwork; one has to proceed as a detective sometimes in order to collect the proper names and their meanings. To this preparation of one's mind belongs also a realisation of the problems to be anticipated: during names collecting there might be problems in communicating with the informants and in defining the spelling because of alternative views under the informants. Names might alternate over time and space, as informants from different age groups and from adjacent localities might have different views. And names might just not exist for those objects the surveyor might want to name.

4. Fieldwork

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

These informants should be asked for the current use of names already recorded, for local names in use for specific features that have no recorded names yet, and, in general, the surveyor should ask them for evidence of any geographical names in use in the locality.
Moreover, as extra characteristics or attributes, if possible the name should be explained, translated, its genetics should be clarified, the language from which it stems should be named, the ethnic or linguistic background of the informer should be noted, and also the fact how well known the name is. Of course the position and extent of the named object should be indicated on the map.

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

5. Office treatment

The editing of the names in the office has as its primary objective the creation of a permanent record of the names, for use on maps and in geographical publications (descriptions, statistics, physical planning documents, etc) that are in current local use.

In order to establish this permanent record, the names are checked against:
- official spelling rules or orthography
- the existence of alternate forms
- the suitability of the genetic elements that have been added
- the existence of homonyms (duplicate forms)
- the existing spelling of names with the same roots (Rodepoort/Rooiepoortseveld)
- derogatory or offensive elements
- their length
- other social, political or cultural concerns or compatibilities with other established
  policies

Of all names their geographical location and extent, the name history and the sources for this information should be noted.

While editing the names it should be born in mind (UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, 1967, resolution 4) that:
-unnecessary name changes should be avoided
-names should be spelled as much as possible in accordance with current orthographic practice
-no significant name elements should be suppressed
-only one name variant should be selected as the official one
-either the names should all be selected in their definite form or all in their indefinite
  form

6. Written instructions

In most cases, written instructions would be available in advance for the surveyors that have to collect the names. The written instructions for surveyors in the Netherlands that are to collect names consist of:
- the objectives (to collect both geographical and descriptive names)
- the categories of geographical objects that need names
- the preparation of the preliminary name model or field sheet during the preliminary phase
- the list of personal or documentary sources to be consulted
- the production of the names list (on official pre-printed forms)
- the production of the final name model or name sheet, with the letter sizes indicated
  (on the basis of the extent of the objects or the number of inhabitants)
- instruction on the manner of locating the names on the name model, and the required
  density of the names on the final topographic map
- rules for splitting up names
- rules for spacing letters in names
- rules for abbreviations
- rules for putting height figures on the map
- rules for selecting fonts, sizes and colours
- some orthographic rules
- sources for the official orthography of specific name categories
- rules for the orthography of names on Dutch topographic maps that are located in adjoining countries
- definitions of the name categories represented on the map

Literature:

D.J.Orth - Manual d'organisation et fonctionnement d'un programme national de normalisation des noms geographiques. La cartographie mondiale, Volume XXI, Nations Unies, New York 1990.

B.Goodchild - Field collection and office treatment of names. Proceedings Cisarua, 1999