

## Renaming Indigenous Toponymy in Official Use in the Light of Contact Onomastic Theories

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### **Abstract**

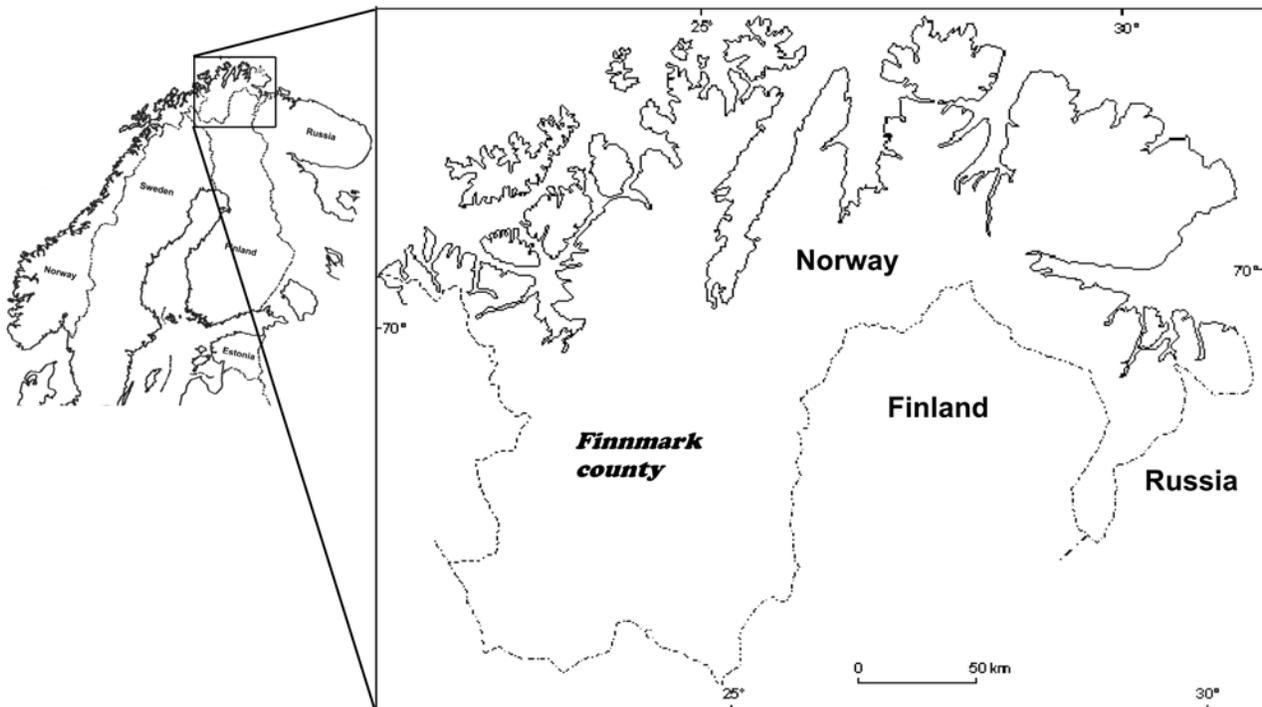
From the 1870's, Norwegian authorities began to give instructions for the ways in which the indigenous Sámi toponymy had to be changed into Norwegian in official place name use. These instructions concerned especially place name use in land purchasing and mapping. According to the 'Land Purchasing Act', the land property had to have a Norwegian name even if in many cases the land properties had only a Sámi name in oral use. In mapping, the main rule for Norwegianizing the toponymy was to translate the Sámi names into the Norwegian language.

In my paper, I will discuss the linguistic strategies which were used in creating the Norwegian place names in cases when these names were deliberately constructed for the purposes of renaming. As a starting point, the contact onomastic theories will be applied in discussion of methods of this type of conscious renaming policy.

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### **1. Background**

From the 1870's central authorities in Norway began to give instructions about how the indigenous Sámi toponymy had to be changed into Norwegian in official place name use. This very conscious renaming policy was carried out especially in the northernmost county of Norway, in Finnmark.



**\*Map 1. Finnmark county, the northernmost county of Norway in Scandinavia.**

In other counties the Norwegianizing of the Sámi nomenclature has a much older history. The renaming policy in Finnmark county, which began in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued until the 1980's, was a part of the assimilation policy called *Norwegianization* aimed at the northern minorities. The subject on which it focused especially was language. This became a measure and a symbol of the failure or success of the policy of Norwegianization (Minde 2005: 7).

Similarly, just as the Sámi language was Norwegianized, place names were also changed from the original Sámi into Norwegian using different linguistic strategies. This place name policy has many similarities to colonial naming in other indigenous areas all over the world. Hence, the Norwegianization of Sámi nomenclature is an example of a deliberate renaming policy with the aim of changing the original indigenous nomenclature to a toponymy in the state language.

The instructions concerning renaming of the Sámi toponymy were especially connected with the place name use in land purchasing and mapping. In 1876, the Land Purchasing Act of 1863 received an additional Royal Decree, in which the use of multilingual place names was restricted for the first time. Section 3f of the Royal Decree states:

The farm shall be given a Norwegian name with possible current Sámi or Kven name added in brackets (Royal Decree 1876).

In the new Land Purchasing Act of 1902, the language requirements were further tightened, because Section 5 of the Royal Decree states:

The land property shall be given a separate Norwegian name (Royal Decree 1902).

The formulation “*shall be given a Norwegian name*” points out clearly that the locations did not necessarily have Norwegian names but that these were from now on deliberately created by

political means. No specific linguistic instructions were given as to how these Norwegian settlement names should be created or loaned.

In mapping, the main rule for Norwegianizing the toponymy was to translate Sámi names into the Norwegian language. This was explicitly defined in the mapping instructions from the end of the 1880's. In 1886, *The National Land Survey of Norway* wrote to the *Department of Defence* that for mapping in the county of Finnmark the following rules applied:

Instead of foreign place names, a Norwegian name should be used where it exists; if there is no Norwegian name or it has not been established, a Norwegian translation will be registered as an original name of the location and the foreign name will be written in brackets (NGO 1886).

The “foreign names” were the indigenous Sámi place names because the Norwegianization in mapping was based on the Sámi toponymy (Helander 2008: 131). Hence, the Sámi people were defined as the Other in the concept of “foreign nationality” who had “foreign place names”. The first mapping instruction in Finnmark county and the subsequent instructions as well emphasized the translation of the Sámi toponymy into the Norwegian language. Most of the loan names which Norwegian authorities began to create in the county of Finnmark were totally lacking an oral tradition. This is in many cases well documented, e.g., by having different name suggestions before one of the Norwegian names was finally chosen as a parallel name. The name of a large marsh in Southern Várjjat can be given as an example. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the marsh area had just a Sámi name in oral tradition, *Fárrenjeaggi*, derived from the verb *fárret* ‘to move’ and the noun *jeaggi* ‘marsh’. In the mapping process, the authorities suggested the following Norwegian names: *Flytnings-Myren* (1887), *Færdsels-Myren* (1887), and *Færdesmyren* (1891). Finally, *Færdesmyren* was chosen as a Norwegian name on the map sheet A5. The original Sámi name with the spelling *Farrimjægge* was subjugated and placed in brackets below the Norwegian name (Helander 2008: 140–141).

The renaming process caused many lexical, semantic and morphological problems. It is worth remembering that the contact languages, Sámi and Norwegian are not linguistically related. The Sámi language is a Finno-Ugric language belonging to the Uralic language family while Norwegian is a Scandinavian language of the Indo-European language family. The Sámi language is a synthetic language with a wide derivation system for both verbs and nouns. This is reflected especially in the specifics of Sámi place names, but also in generics. Hence, crucial structural differences combined with wide semantic differences in contact languages were the main linguistic challenges which had to be solved in the deliberate renaming process.

## 2. Linguistic strategies of loaning Sámi names into Norwegian

To be able to verify the loan process, archival material, such as name lists for topographic maps, correspondence between cartographers and place name advisors, and also protocols and other background material for cadastres, was examined. The archival material sheds light on the ways in which the deliberate renaming process was carried out.

The classification of loan names is based on the degree of adaptation or substitution of syntactic name elements. Because of the artificial nature of loaning, Sámi names were usually analysed syntactically during the loan process. That is why the syntactic classification serves well for the analysis of the material. With these criteria, the loan names are classified as *semantically motivated*, *totally integrated* and *partly integrated loan names*. Even if the process of creating Norwegian names is not primarily based on the oral contact between the languages but has an artificial character, I have chosen to use the term *loan name* because the renaming process is clearly based on the original Sámi nomenclature.

### 2.1 Some main features of loaning strategies

In the following, some main linguistic features typical of the Norwegianization of the Sámi toponymy will be briefly discussed.

In **semantically motivated loan names**, syntactic name elements are translated with Norwegian lexemes, such as Sámi *Daŋasoavve* > Nor. *Lyngklumpen* (map Z7, 1894) and Sámi *Stokmuorskaidde* > Nor. *Tørtræaasen* (map Z5, 1895). In section 2.2, the linguistic features of the semantically motivated loan names will be discussed in more detail.

In **totally integrated loans**, all syntactic name elements are graphemically or phonetically adapted into the Norwegian language, such as Sámi *Ráhpenjoaski* > Nor. *Rapnjask* and Sámi *Buoiluovta* > Nor. *Byluft*. Hence, none of the name elements are translated as they are in semantically motivated loan names.

A totally integrated loan name can also have a similar spelling as an original name. I call this type of loan name *orthographic loan*. It is typical for orthographic loans to have a spelling that was actually used from the beginning in the original language, such as a settlement name *Sirma* in Sámi. This was a valid spelling in the Sámi language at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Because the location had not and still has not any Norwegian name, this now out-of-date Sámi spelling has also been taken into use in the Norwegian language context.

Today, the valid Sámi spelling is *Sirbmá*. From the point of the Sámi language, this means that two Sámi spellings are in use, an obsolete spelling *Sirma* and a current spelling *Sirbmá*. This is totally against all intentions of contemporary Norwegian place name planning because toponymy in official use is supposed to have approved current spelling. However, because the out-of-date Sámi spelling *Sirma* is used in Norwegian, it still has a prioritized protection according to the current Norwegian Place Name Act (see § 9–2; Royal Decree § 7–1, advisory to § 9–2). Hence, the Act still maintains power relations created during the Norwegianizing period.

The status of orthographic loan names with respect to spelling in an original language can also be a question in other indigenous areas where the silenced indigenous names are gradually achieving official status as a result of the decolonizing process involving the indigenous nomenclature.

In **partly integrated loan names** one of the name elements is substituted and the other element is graphemically or phonetically adapted. When loaning Sámi toponymy into Norwegian, a specific is usually adapted and a generic is substituted by a Norwegian topographic appellative, such as in the following names: Sámi *Alljavæjokka* > Nor. *Alljavæjvelven* (map Z4, 1900) and Sámi *Bægašamskaidde* > Nor. *Bægasamhøiden* (map Æ5, 1893).

Often a combination of adaptation and substitution is common if it was impossible to translate a specific of a Sámi place name, e.g., because of the opaqueness of the lexemes (as in the specific *Alljaveaj-*) or if a specific contained morphological elements which had not any counterparts in Norwegian, such as *Bægašam-* which in Sámi is derived from the basic verb form *beahkit* ‘to crawl’ > *beagašit* ‘to crawl back and forth’.

Both in partly and totally integrated loan names, phonetic substitution is typical in cases where the Norwegian lexeme has phonetic similarities to the original Sámi lexeme. As a result of phonetic substitution, Norwegian loan elements often are homonyms with Norwegian appellatives. This causes a semantic difference between the original meaning of the Sámi name element and a Norwegian loan element. A Sámi specific *Buoiluovta* can illustrate this: the Sámi specific *Buoi* (*Bui*) is a shortened form of *buoidda* ‘ermine’ or *buoidi* ‘fat; blubber’ and is loaned to Norwegian *By* ‘town’. The Sámi topographic appellative *luovta* ‘bay’, here a generic, is phonetically adapted to the Norwegian word *luft* which is homonymous with the Norwegian lexeme *luft* ‘air’. The result of borrowing the name *Buoiluovta* (‘Bay of blubber’ or ‘Bay of ermines’) is *Byluft* where name elements are substituted with homonymous Norwegian words ‘town + air’. In this type of integrated loan names the phonetic similarity between the original and

the loan name overtakes semantic suitability of a loan name (Helander 2008: 114–116; Eichler 1980: 130–133; Sandnes 2003: 86–89).

## 2.2 *Semantically motivated loan names – examples of substitution problems*

In oral loan contacts the translation of place names is regarded as a recent loan strategy (Eichler 1980: 134; Zilliacus 1980: 345, 2001: 73). In the political renaming process in Norway, translation was established as a primary strategy for creating Norwegian names especially in mapping. In land purchasing regulations, translation was not mentioned explicitly but in practice, translation of settlement names from Sámi into Norwegian was a commonly used loan strategy. (Helander 2008.)

The translation of a place name is methodologically a complicated issue because of polysemy and possibilities of understanding the background of a particular name giving in many different ways. Norwegian authorities certainly lacked the same linguistic and cultural information of place names which local Sámi societies had. The transparency and opaqueness of toponymy have also had an influence on understanding meanings of the original names. The problems of translation were especially common when the Norwegian language had no lexical or morphological counterparts to the name elements used in the original Sámi names (Helander 2008).

The translation of name elements and a toponym is based on appellative semantics which means that the name elements are analyzed according to lexical semantics. Hence, it is not always possible to find a lexical equivalence or phrase for the semantic motivation in the borrowing language. The result can therefore be an appellative translation of the semantic meaning (Šrámek 1978: 396–397; see also Albøge 1993: 23–24).

An example of this is the Sámi village name *Gorñitak* (map Z4) (*Gorgñetak* with the current spelling) which is based on a deverbal appellative derived with the *-tak* (*-hat*) suffix from the verb *goargñut* ‘punt up a river; climb, go up’. The meaning of the derived appellative is ‘a place where to go up’. There is neither any equivalent suffix nor a term in Norwegian for *gorgñehat*. Basically, it is not possible to translate this Sámi name into the Norwegian language. However, the archive material of the mapping process shows that there were many suggestions for the Norwegian name: *Opstigningsplads* (1893) > *Opgangsted* (1894) > and finally *Landgangsted* (1894), which was chosen as a prioritized name for the topographic map sheet of 1900 (Z4). The Norwegian name suggestions with different semantic meanings are examples of the appellative translations of the original Sámi name (Helander 2008: 215–216).

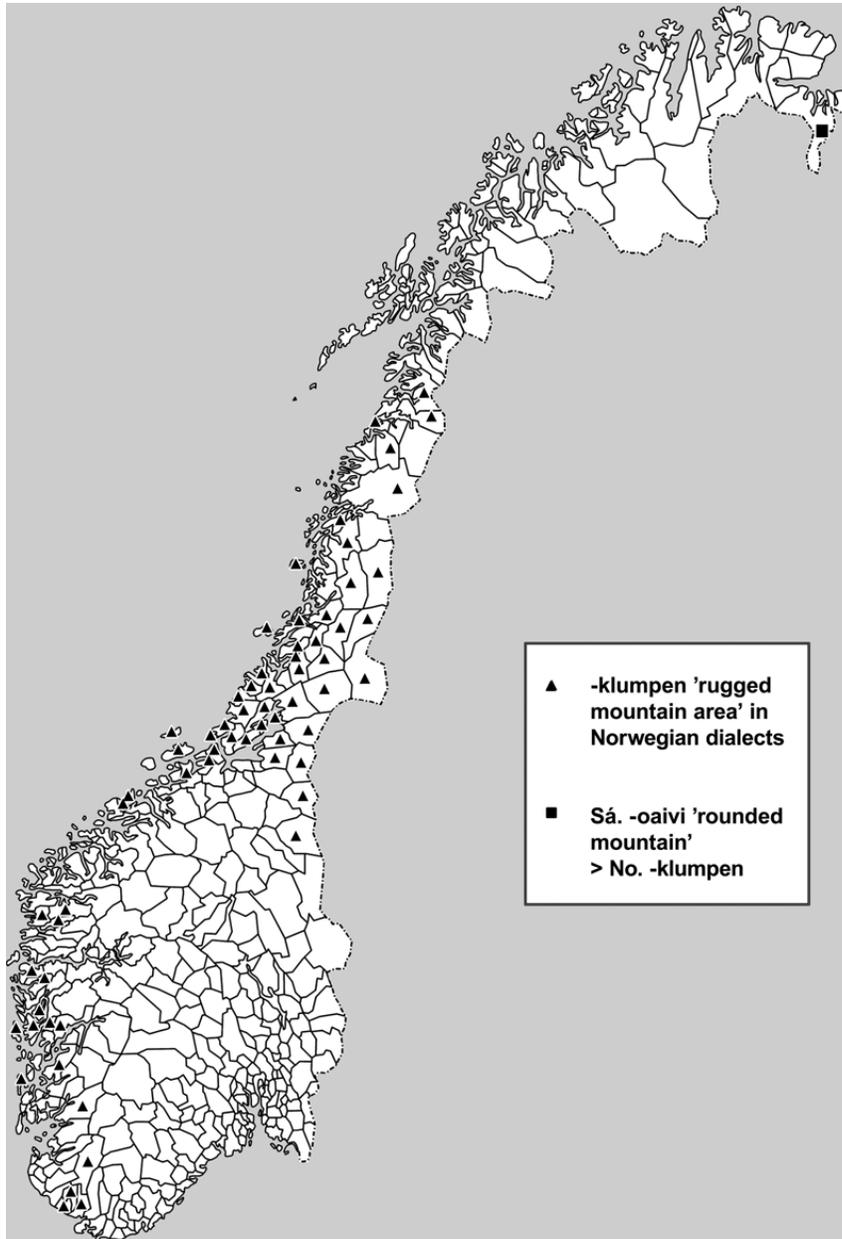
In compound names, a specific and a generic have different functions in a place name. According to the syntactic-semantic theory a **specific** is a syntactic phrase expressing the basic principles of the naming idea. In **generics**, the question is usually of semantics of the topographic appellatives. There are considerable differences in the field of the topographic appellatives both lexically and semantically between the Sámi and the Norwegian languages. This has had an effect on how the topographic appellatives were substituted in the Norwegian language during the Norwegianizing process. If Sámi topographic appellatives did not have counterparts in Norwegian they were often substituted with many different Norwegian appellatives (Helander 2008: 166–174).

To describe this situation, the substitution of a very common word in Sámi, *skáidi*, with the meaning ‘the land between two rivers which join’ can be used as an example. There is not any substituting term in the Norwegian language for the appellative *skáidi*. In the mapping material from Southern Várjjat, the generic *skáidi* was translated, for example, in the following ways: Stokmuorskaidde > *Tørtræaasen*; Rogjavrreskaidde > *Gravsjøffeldet*; Guoikkaluobbalskaidde > *Fosstjernhøgda*.

In the original names the generic *skáidi* indicates the crucial semantic information about which kind of common features these localities have, namely that they are land areas between two

rivers joining together. This information disappears totally in the Norwegian translations which are just based on different kinds of appellatives describing hills or mountains. However, the meaning of ‘mountain’ is not the most relevant semantic feature in the original lexeme *skáidi*.

In the original Sámi toponyms, the differences in the choice of the topographical appellatives reflect the differences in the topography. In the loan process, often many of the significant semantic differences disappear and a choice of the topographic appellative is even made by coincidence. Even Norwegian topographic appellatives not belonging at all in the northern Norwegian dialect background are also used as substituting appellatives, such as the appellative *klump* ‘rugged mountain (area)’ substituting for the Sámi appellative *oaivi* ‘rounded mountain’.



Map 2. The generic *-klumpen* in Norwegian dialects and as a loan element for the Sámi generic *-oaivi*.

The Norwegian appellative *klump*, in the definite form *-klumpen*, is used as a generic in the coastal dialects and especially in Central Norway (Trøndelag). As the dialect map shows, *klumpen* as a generic is not used at all in North Norway except in northernmost Norway, namely in some deliberately translated names. By studying archive material, it can be shown that during the mapping process at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *klump*-lexeme was chosen by a name advisor from Central Norway. This appellative belongs to name advisor's dialect background but not at all to the vernacular vocabulary in North Norway (Helander 2008: 170–172). Hence, the deliberate renaming policy in the Sámi areas has introduced and established unvernacular linguistic features based on Southern Norwegian dialects.

In the category of **semantically motivated loan names**, the meanings of the loaned name elements are clearly based on the original name elements, but the semantic meaning in the loan result is not at all always the same as in the original name. However, the semantic motivation is a starting point for the translation even if it often was impossible to substitute the original lexeme or suffix semantically correctly. To precisely emphasize the semantic basis of the loan names, I have chosen to call this type of translated names *semantically motivated* loan names and not, for example, semantically *identical* names.

Because of the great lexical differences between Sámi and Norwegian vocabulary, translations of the Sámi nomenclature do not at all reflect the original Sámi toponymy correctly. The main intention in translating and loaning names was to carry through the governmental renaming policy.

### 2.3 Ellipsis and epexegetis as typical linguistic elements in loan names

**Ellipsis** and **epexegetis** are also worth mentioning briefly because these concepts are also very typical linguistic elements in the loan process. **Ellipsis** means that usually one element is not included in the loan name, as in these examples from Sámi *Lievllamraššajokka* > Nor. *Lievlamelven*, in which the name element *rášša* 'mountain area covered with stones' is not borrowed, or Sámi *Fallegurajavrre* > Nor. *Hauksjøen* in which the lexeme *gurra* 'cleft' is elliptically deleted.

Ellipsis causes syntactic and semantic differences between the original and the loan name, e.g., the Sámi name *Lievlanráššajohka* is syntactically derived from the primary name *Lievlanrášša* meaning 'a river in the area called *Lievlanrášša*'. Hence, the original river name refers to the river belonging especially to *Lievlanrášša*. The reference of the Norwegian name is more general referring only to 'a river in the area of *Lievlan* (which is a wider area than *Lievlanrášša*)' and hence the connection with *Lievlanrášša* is lacking. That is why the exact reference of the original name changes to a more general reference in a loan name with this kind of ellipsis.

**Epexegetis** is the opposite process to ellipsis. In a loan process, a new name element is added to a loan name. This is usually a topographic appellative which emphasizes the function of the name such as Sámi *Galbajohka* > Nor. *Galbajok+elven* where the meaning of the Sámi generics *johka* 'river' is repeated with the Norwegian lexeme *elven* also meaning 'river'.

Epexegetis is also used if the original Sámi name has only one syntactic element, such as a name for a large mountain area called *Váhčir*. The Sámi name was misunderstood by a name advisor as *Veahčir* meaning 'hammer' and then translated with *Hammer*. In the loan process a generic *fjeldet* 'mountain' was added to the Norwegian name.

To avoid mixture with the corresponding appellative (such as *hammer* in the previous example), the topographic appellative is added to emphasize the name function and the geographical feature of the location. In the original name this is not needed because the society using the name has the information of the name and especially knowledge of the referent.

In the Norwegian artificial loan names, epexegetis is not used as systematically as in many other indigenous areas (e.g., Peplinski 2007: 6–7). In the Norwegian material, epexegetis seems also to be more usual in oral contacts than in the literal naming process.

### 3. Conclusions

In conclusion, research on Norwegian names created in accordance with the renaming policy in Norway shows clearly that the authorities took the Sámi nomenclature as a starting point when creating Norwegian names. However, the loan results shaped a different naming landscape from the original Sámi context. The original Sámi nomenclature is full of morphological and semantic details connected with traditional culture, ways of living and use of resources. Many of these crucial details disappeared or were simplified during the loan process. Because the Norwegianizing process was carried out both in the mapping and in the land purchasing activities, it is not unusual that different authorities created different loan names for the same Sámi name (Helander 2008).

In the Norwegian renaming policy, it was not usual to create names as independent name pairs without any linguistic connection to the original Sámi names, as was typical in many other colonial areas where Europeans named locations with, for example, commemorative names, such as *Ayers Rock* for Uluru in Australia or *Mount Cook* for Aoraki and *Christchurch* for the town Oatahi in Aotearoa (New Zealand).

In Norway, literally borrowed place names are not sporadic examples, but they are a result of a deliberate governmental policy of the nation state with the purpose of establishing a Norwegian nomenclature in the indigenous Sámi areas (Helander 2008: 109). A great number of the Norwegian names created by political means are still in official use, even as the *only* accepted official toponyms, while the original Sámi names are silenced. According to the Norwegian Place Name Act, the Norwegian loan names still have prioritized protection. Hence, the main decolonizing process of the nomenclature in Sámi areas nowadays is to discuss the status of the Norwegianized names in official use and to get the original Sámi toponymy accepted from the oral use to an official use equal with the Norwegian place names.

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### Map sheets

- Z4 = Gradteig Z4 Nesseby. Topografisk kart over Norge. Norges geografiske oppmåling 1900.
- Z5 = Gradteig Z5 Garsjøen. Topografisk kart over Norge. Norges geografiske oppmåling 1895.
- Z7 = Gradteig Z7 Krokfjeld (Muotkavaara). Topografisk kart over Norge. Norges geografiske oppmåling 1894.
- Æ5 = Gradteig Æ5 Neiden. Topografisk kart over Norge. Norges geografiske oppmåling 1893.

### Acts

- NGO 1886 = NGO 1886b: Brev fra Norges Geografiske Opmaalning 23.12.1886 til Den Kongelige Norske Regjerings Forsvarsdepartements arméafdeling [Letter from the Norwegian Mapping Authority to the Ministry of Defence]. – Hovedarkivet, Statens kartverk, Hønefoss.
- Royal Decree 1876 = Reglement angaaende Fremgangsmaaden ved Afhændelse eller Bortforpagtning af Statens Jord og andre den tilhørende Herligheder i Finmarkens Amts Landdistrikt i Henhold til Lov af 22de Juni 1863. Givet ved Kongelig Resolution af 6te Mai 1876 [Royal Decree 6.5.1876 for the Land Purchasing Act of 1863].
- Royal Decree 1902 = *Lov af 22. mai 1902 (nr. 7) om afhændelse af statens jord og grund i Finmarkens amt landdistrikt*. Royal Decree 22.5.1902 for the Land Purchasing Act of 1902].
- Place Name Act 2005 = Lov 2005-06-10 nr. 53: Lov om endringer i lov 18. mai 1990 nr. 11 om stadnamn m.m.

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