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Degrees of precision in toponyms containing compass points

*Riemer Reinsma**

1. *General Introduction*

Many toponyms all over the world contain a compass point¹. Most of them bear a cardinal compass point, like North Dakota and South Dakota. Relatively few names bear ordinal ones, like South East Cape and South West Cape (Australia), each referring to the cape's location with regard to the central part of Tasmania. Such compass point toponyms express different kinds of relationships. Many of them concern part-to-whole relations, as in the case of the two Dakota's (each originally part of the Dakota Territories). A second category consists of names which originally were identical, and were provided with a compass point as a disambiguating element, and thus refer to the geographical position of the location concerned. For example, Oosteklo (Flanders), indicated in C 13 usually as *Eeklo*, was provided with the compass point in order to avoid confusion with another Eeklo, situated about 10 km westward². Thirdly, compass points in toponyms may indicate the position of locations concerned with regard to some external object, like a river or mountain, as in the case of *Oostzaan* and *Westzaan*; these names refer to their location with regard to the Zaan river, Oostzaan lying east of it and Westzaan lying west. Combinations of these meanings occur, too: the name *West End* of the London quarter expresses its geographical location with regard to the medieval city as well as a part-to-whole relation.

This paper focuses on toponyms in the Netherlands. Two categories of precision will be discussed: 1) the use of ordinal compass points; 2) the extent to which cardinal compass points in toponyms correspond to the real compass points.

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¹ I am indebted to Dr. K.A.H.W. Leenders, Mr. H.J.A. Jonker and Mrs. I. Hertel for their critical comments on an earlier version of this text. The views expressed in the final text remain my responsibility.

² Debrabandere et al., 2010, p. 189.

2. Ordinal compass points

2.1. *Introduction* – Toponyms containing ordinal compass points are scarce in comparison with cardinal compass point toponyms. Dutch examples are *Noordoostpolder* ('north eastern polder') and *Noordwestgronden* ('northwest shallows').

2.2. *Problem* – The paper explores the question why this category of toponyms rarely indicate settlement names and mainly indicate other categories of objects.

2.3. *Method* – A list of toponyms containing ordinal compass points has been compiled from a topographical atlas (*Grote Topografische Atlas*, 1987), Van Berkel and Samplonius, 2006, *Bosatlas*, 2007 and incidentally from other sources.

2.4. *Results* – Nineteen toponyms contain ordinal compass points (Tab. I). They refer, in order of frequency, to 5 polders, 4 natural bodies of water, 2 business parks, 2 city quarters, 1 non-natural canal, 1 cape, 1 dike, 1 beltway, 1 shallow, 1 municipality and 1 town.

The town name *Zuidoostbeemster* ('southeast Beemster') is one out of four compass point toponyms in the Beemster polder, the others being *Middenbeemster*, *Noordbeemster* and *Westbeemster*. The name *Zuidoostbeemster* does *not* refer, however, to the town of *Middenbeemster* but to the geographical center of the Beemster polder, as a closer look to the geographic position of the other compass point toponyms in this very polder demonstrates. *Noordbeemster* (deviation 19° eastward with regard to *Middenbeemster*) lies near the northern part of the ring canal around the polder, *Westbeemster* (deviation 74° northward!) is located near the western part of the ring canal. *Zuidoostbeemster*, although located more or less south of *Middenbeemster* (deviation 25° eastward) lies on the extreme southeastern tip of the polder. The name *Zuidoostbeemster* was first attested in 1884³, long after *Middenbeemster*, *Noordbeemster* and *Westbeemster* (all first attested in 1639).

³ *Nieuws van den Dag* [newspaper] 14-10-1884.

Tab. I – Toponyms containing ordinal compass points.

* Abbreviations of province names:

D = Drenthe; Fl = Flevoland; Fr = Friesland; Gr = Groningen; NB = Noord-Brabant; NH = Noord-Holland; ZH = Zuid-Holland.

Objects	toponyms concerned (numbered consecutively)	earliest attestation
I. Non-natural canal, channel	1) Noordoostkanaal (NH)	HC 13-06-1929
II. Natural water	2) Zuidostrak (Fr) (channel in Wadden Sea)	Kreekel 1807, I, 73
	3) Zuidwestplas (NH) (lake)	1987 Grote Topografische Atlas 1987 (<i>Zuidwestplas</i>)
	4) Zuidoost-Lauwers (Gr) (channel in Wadden Sea)	LC 19-11-1965
III. Cape	5) Noordoosthoek (Fr; mun. Vlieland)	Tijd 23-08-1889 Former name: Horn. Locally called <i>Noordstoek</i> (www.ecomare.nl)
IV. Polder	6) Noordoostpolder (Fl)	LN 20-10-1928
	7) Zuidoostpolder (Fl; unofficial name for Oostelijk Flevoland)	LN 20-10-1928
	8) Zuidoostpolder (Fr; mun. Het Bildt)	LC 07-12-1887
	9) Zuidoostpolder (Fr; mun. Menaldumadeel)	LC 13-01-1860
	10) Zuidwesterpolder (Fr; mun. Het Bildt)	LC 21-04-1884
V. Beltway	11) Zuidwesterringweg (Fl)	1948 (Picarta)
VI. Dike	12) Noordwesterdijk (NH)	1608
VII. Shallow	13) Noordwestgronden (Fr)	RN 03-09-1890 Former name: Westerbuitengronden (?)
VIII. Business park	14) Noord-Oost Kwadrant (Sliedrecht, ZH)	Dordtenaar 11-06-1997
	15) Noord-West (ZH; business park northwest of Rotterdam)	1998 (Picarta)
IX. Municipality	16) Súdwest-Fryslân (Fr)	2009 Wikipedia
X. Town	17) Zuidoostbeemster (NH)	NvdD 14-10-1884
XI. City quarter	18) Noordoosthoek (Fr; mun. Sneek)	
	19) Zuidoost (NH, mun. Amsterdam)	

2.5. *Conclusions* – Ordinal compass point toponyms can be found relatively frequently in names of dikes, polders, channels, capes or sandbanks, and rarely in settlement names and road names. It has to be kept in mind, though, that toponyms indicating polders, etc., too, occur mostly with cardinal compass points: the 19 toponyms with ordinal compass points have parallels in 91 toponyms with cardinal compass points, like *Westdijk* ('west dike'), *Oosthoek* ('east cape'), *Zuidpolder* or *Oosterplas* ('east lake'). The frequent occurrence of ordinal compass points in these categories of names might be ascribed to practical needs. It seems, for example, quite understandable that some dike names need to be detailed enough, e.g. in order to allow for efficient dike surveillance in case of a threatening flood. In the case of capes, shallows and channels in the sea, elaborate names meet navigation needs.

This explanation seems to be supported by the fact that one dike name (*Noordwesterdijk*, NH) dates from at least as early as 1700, in a period when no place name or road name carried an ordinal compass point. Another relatively old water name is *Zuidostrak* ('southeast channel', in the Wadden Sea), dating at least from 1807⁴.

That settlement names indeed did (or do) not really require ordinal compass points, follows from the observation that *Zuidoostbeemster*, in informal language use, is sometimes called *Zuidbeemster* (Google supplies 'about' 333 hits). Another, more usual, contraction, however, is *Zuidoost*⁵.

3. *Cardinal compass points*

3.1. *Introduction* – The second category compass point toponyms consists of those bearing cardinal compass points. They constitute an overwhelming majority of all toponyms containing compass points.

Imprecise, or rather seemingly imprecise cardinal compass points are also the subject in Muller 1923⁶, who observes an old naming tradition in the coastal parts of the Netherlands, whereby the northwest was often (not always) called 'north', the northeast being called 'east', etc., all cardinal compass points being shifted clockwise. Muller proposes an explanation: this tradition would have had its roots in naming by medieval Frisian sailors, who used the North Sea as their reference point. In the case of (part of) Friesland itself and of Groningen, this was quite correct: here, the coast runs from east to west. West of Friesland, however, the North Sea coast curves gradually southwestward. Muller supposes that the naming tradition did not take this curve into account, even though people were clearly aware of the real position of the cardinal

⁴ Kreekel, 1807, p. 73.

⁵ Personal communication from Annelies Roeleveld, by e-mail.

⁶ I thank Prof. Dr. R. Rentenaar for bringing this article to my attention.

compass points: on maps, the north arrow was depicted correctly. The naming tradition concerned has lost ground in modern times⁷.

3.2. *Problem* – The question is: can deviations >45° be found? And if so, were the namegivers just mistaken? If this is the case, the deviations might be supposed to be distributed haphazardly over the adjoining cardinal compass points. If, however, a bias towards one or more specific compass points exists, an attempt might be made to explain the phenomenon.

3.3. *Method*

3.3.1. *Data selection* – A list of toponyms containing cardinal compass points which express their location with regard to a neighboring settlement has been compiled from the Grote Topografische Atlas, 1987, Van Berkel and Samplonius, 2006, Bosatlas, 2007 and incidentally from other sources⁸.

Correspondances between cardinal compass points in toponyms and real cardinal compass points have been examined in toponyms which indicate settlements or roads, the compass point indicating the settlement's (or road's) location with regard to a neighboring settlement, mostly one considered central⁹. For example, the name of the hamlet Westeinde ('west end', province of Noord-Brabant) is related to the town of Besoijen¹⁰.

The toponyms belong to 8 morphological categories (Tab. II). One category are names consisting of the cardinal compass point itself, as in the case of *Ooste*. A second category are names consisting of the compass point followed by the name of the central settlement (*Noord-Bakkum*). The remaining categories consist of the compass point, followed by a word with the meaning 'house', 'houses', 'group of houses', 'houses at the end' or 'town, village'.

⁷ A comparison between Muller's data and the ones examined here may be interesting. It will, however, have to take into account (1) the distance between the locations on the one hand, and the coast on the other (Muller suggests that the naming tradition concerned only occurs in coastal regions); (2) data concerning the Belgian coast regions (ignored in this paper); (3) the age of toponyms concerned (because the tradition has faded); (4) the location of toponyms with regard to the part of coast running west-east, on the one hand, and the coastal regions south of the curve on the other. Curiously, Muller seems to imply that the orientational shift also extends to a few toponyms in Friesland itself (Ooststellingwerf, northeast of Weststellingwerf), and in Groningen (Noordhorn, northwest of Zuidhorn), although here the coast runs from west to east (Muller, 1923, p. 123).

⁸ The list should be considered as a sample. Street registers, like the ones in *Travelmanager*, may supply many more items. One toponym referring to a wüstung has been included: *Oostermijzen*. A farm near the deserted town, Mijzen, has been chosen as the reference point.

⁹ Prudence is called for in the case of toponyms with seeming compass points, based on folk etymology, like Westdoorne < Woestdoorn (*woest* = savage; Buiks and Leenders, 1993).

¹⁰ Other reference points which lend themselves to this type of measuring the degree of precision are relatively scarce. For example, the name *Noordschans* ('northern redoubt') refers to a settlement north of the Vesting Klundert, a fortress (Buiks and Leenders, 1993) or a town hall (Noordeinde, north of Graft).

Tab. II – Name types according to morphological category.

Name category	Examples
1) Compass point itself	<i>Ooste</i> (east of Koudum)
2) Compass point followed by name of neighboring settlement	<i>Noord-Bakkum</i> (north of Bakkum); <i>Ooster-Dalfsen</i> (east of Dalfsen); <i>Oostervijk</i> (east of De Wijk)
3) Compass point followed by <i>-einde</i> , <i>-eind</i> , <i>-ein</i> or <i>-end</i> ('end, buildings at the end')	<i>Westeind</i> (west of Papendrecht); <i>Westerein</i> (west of Garijp); <i>Oostereinde</i> (east of Winschoten); <i>Oosterend</i> (east of Gorredijk)
4) Compass point followed by <i>-dorp</i> 'village'	<i>Oostendorp</i> (east of Elburg); <i>Westdorp</i> (west of Borger)
5) Compass point followed by <i>-boer</i> ('house'), <i>-boeren</i> or <i>-bierum</i> ('houses'), <i>-buren</i> or <i>buurt</i> ('group of houses')	<i>Oosterboer</i> (east of Meppel); <i>Oosterbierum</i> (east of Sexbierum); <i>Oosterburen</i> (east of Middelstum); <i>Oosterbuurt</i> (east of Castricum)
6) Compass point followed by <i>-huizen</i> , <i>-huizum</i> ('houses')	<i>Oosterhuizen</i> (east of Lieren), <i>Surbuizum</i> (south of Augustinusga)
7) Compass point followed by <i>-hoek</i> ('group of houses on the margin of a settlement')	<i>Noordhoek</i> (north of Rucphen)
8) Compass point followed by <i>-wijk</i> or <i>-ik</i> (< <i>wik</i> < <i>wijk</i>) ('group of houses')	<i>Westerwijk</i> (west of Biest)

Tens of toponyms which, linguistically speaking, would seem perfect candidates for this list, have been eliminated, mostly because no plausible neighboring settlement could be allocated. For example, we cannot be sure about *Noordburen* (NH). Does its name refer to *Zandburen* (presently a road, formerly a settlement¹¹), or to *Hippolytushoef*? And sometimes names may refer to a (former) city gate, as in the case of the Amsterdam road names *Westeinde* and *Oosteinde*.

Prudence is called for with regard to the road name *Westerwijk*, west of the town of Diessen. The part of this road closest to Diessen shows a

¹¹ See Kuyper, 1869, province Noord-Holland, mun. Wieringen.

deviation of over 45°, but it was constructed in recent times, long after the name had been given¹².

Disputable is the name trio *Middelbeers*, *Oostelbeers* and *Westelbeers*. The latter two names originally did not refer to Middelbeers, but (roughly) to their position within the whole area. *Beers* probably means ‘hunting ground’¹³. The sound changes *Oosterbeers* > *Oostelbeers* and *Westerbeers* > *Westelbeers*, in 1542 or before, under the influence of the name *Middelbeers* (‘middle Beers’; first attestation in 1542) indicate that at that time the central town was experienced as the point of reference¹⁴. The circumstance, however, that the names with cardinal compass points did as a matter of fact not refer to the central settlement, but to the area as a whole, is a reason not to include them in this study¹⁵.

Road names have been included in the paper because roads – often with ribbon development – have in many cases been the historical origin of settlements. A requirement here was that the roads concerned radiated from the central settlement. The road (and settlement) Oosterwijk (near Alphen) has been excluded for this reason.

The difference between a settlement and a road is in many cases hard to indicate, especially if the historical past is concerned, when many names did not have an official status. Even at present, in the Netherlands many road names are also hamlet names or neighborhood names, like *Noordeinde* (mun. Graft-De Rijp), a hamlet with ribbon development. Nevertheless, a distinction between these two categories – daughter settlement names and road names - is relevant from a practical point of view: if a daughter settlement is involved, its center should be taken as the starting point. If a road is concerned, the question arises, as to the point of the road from which its location with regard to the central settlement should be measured. In the latter case, it goes without saying that the point closest to the central settlement should be chosen as the starting point: here, the first houses were built, so this point can be considered as normative for the naming process. This is especially relevant if the road makes one or more turns, as in the case of *Westeinde* near the town of Hazerswoude: farther to the west, the road has a dip; in a case like this, the position with regard to the central settlement has to be measured east of the dip.

The choice of toponyms like these, referring to central settlements, is

¹² See Kuyper, 1868, map Diessen.

¹³ K.A.H.W. Leenders, however, supposes that the area owes its name to two brooks, namely the Kleine Beerze and the Grote Beerze respectively (personal communication by e-mail).

¹⁴ Van Berkel and Samplonius, 2006, p. 332. *Westelbeerze*, however, was attested as early as 1340-1351 in a family name (*Van Weestelberze*), i.e. before 1542 (personal communication from K.A.H.W. Leenders, by e-mail).

¹⁵ Roads of this category are often oriented towards a different compass point from the one embedded in its name; for example, an Oosteinde running from north to south.

based on the assumption that it is then possible to measure the location of the respective settlements more accurately. In other categories of toponyms, often difficulties arise. For example: it might at first sight seem legitimate, also to include toponym sets (mostly pairs) consisting of two or more opposing cardinal compass points, like *Oostzaan* and *Westzaan*: these names seem directly related to each other. Caution is, however, called for. In fact, *Oostzaan* and *Westzaan* refer to their location with regard to the Zaan river, as mentioned above. Drawing a line between the two settlements in order to calculate their positions with regard to the real east or west would be pointless: not the other settlement is the reference point, but the river¹⁶. Another example is the name pair *Oosterland/Westerland*. Originally, these names indicated the eastern and western region of the island of Wieringen, but later on they turned into settlement names. Measuring the mutual locations of these settlements would make no sense.

It would not make sense, either, to relate the members of the toponym set *Noordeinde*, *Oosteinde*, *Zuideinde* and *Westeinde* – four streets in the city of Delft – directly to each other. These streets date from different periods: 1350, 1474, 1741 and 1929, respectively¹⁷. The naming order tells us that in this respect no city planning was involved: the naming of the *Zuideinde* was not a direct reaction to the naming of *Noordeinde*. The same applies to *Oosteinde* and *Westeinde*: the latter was not the direct ‘answer’ to *Oosteinde*. In the more remote past, city planning was small-scale, each expansion being made in its turn. Moreover, the name *Westeinde* was consciously assigned as late as 1929, as a – considerably delayed - counterpart, not only of *Oosteinde*, but also of *Noordeinde* and *Zuideinde*¹⁸. Historically, each of these names is thus primarily related to the city center.

3.3.2. *Measuring method* – The positions of the locations, indicated with regard to the central settlements, have been determined in terms of the number of degrees of deviation from the real compass point. If a deviation was measured, it has been rendered in relation to adjoining compass points. For example, 3 degrees westward, or 21 degrees southward.

The location of the settlements or roads in relation to the central settlements has preferably been measured from the church in the central

¹⁶ A comparable case is the settlements Noord-Scharwoude and Zuid-Scharwoude, both having been called after their location with regard to the whole area in which they were situated, namely Scharwoude (Scorleworth, *walth* corresponds etymologically to *wood*; Scorleworth denoted a reclaimed area, originally a swamp with low trees; Halbertsma, 1996). For an alternative reconstruction of the naming process, see Van Berkel and Samplonius, 2006, pp. 324 and 526.

¹⁷ Van der Krogt et al., 1985, s.v. names concerned.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

settlement (if possible, the very church that existed at the time the name was given)¹⁹. For example, the position of the Noordeinde, in The Hague, was measured from the Grote Kerk (C 15), the oldest church in this city. Sometimes, however, churches have been demolished in the course of time, as in the case of the town of Fochteloo. If a settlement has never possessed a church at all, or if there are no data concerning a church, another reference point has been chosen: e.g. a castle (in the case of *Westrik* in Princenhage²⁰), or a village green, central in the village (Dutch: *brink*; e.g. in the case of *Westeinde* in Hijken), or a central market square, or the location where two or more roads with names containing compass points meet (in the case of Noorderbuurt and Zuiderbuurt, in Drachten).

In this paper it is taken for granted that in cases of doubt (i.e., if a settlement name exists as well as a road name) the road was the original reference point, and the settlement name was secondary²¹.

The church does not always seem a reliable reference point, especially if the center of the daughter settlement has been moving in the course of time. This is probably the case in Oosteinde near Ruinerwold, the center of which lay 1,5 km north of the church²². Measuring from the church (built in C 12), would yield a considerably larger deviation (> 45°) than measuring from the former center.

Two other ways of measuring seem also conceivable. First, namegivers might have estimated their position with regard to that point in the central settlement which lies closest to the daughter settlement. From a psychological view, however, it seems more probable that namegivers chose the settlement's center. Especially churches are mostly clearly visible in the scenery, and estimating the compass point concerned is easy. No mental map is required.

A second alternative applies to roads. Some cases give rise to the question whether the *direction* of the road concerned with regard to the real compass point should not be taken into account. For example, Ooste (a settlement as well as a road, east of Koudum) shows a church orientation deviation of no less than 78°; the direction of the road, however, deviates 'only' 60°. Conversely, however, church orientation is in some cases more precise than the direction: in the case of Noordereind, a road in

¹⁹ This approach can also be found in Buiks and Leenders, 1993, cf. *Oostland* (s.v. Oosterweel) and *Oosthoven* (s.v. Turnhout). Contemporary records also show that churches were common reference points, cf. for example Jochum-Godglück, 1995, p. 242, concerning the church in Noordt Dorp, a wüstung near Dudzele, Belgium (1496 "jn dudseele, noordt byder kercke int noort dorp"). I thank Prof. Dr. R. Rentenaar for bringing this publication to my attention.

²⁰ Reference point chosen by Buiks and Leenders, 1993, V, p. 643.

²¹ The reverse is obvious in the case of *Westeinde* in Waarder; the hodonym is considerably more recent than the polder of the same name.

²² Nijstad et al., 1991, p. 11ff., 37.

Winschoten, church orientation yields a deviation of 40°, whereas the direction of this road deviates 68° from the real north. Here, too, from a psychological view orientation with regard to the center of the central settlement seems more probable, for the reasons mentioned above.

3.4. *Results* – The list of toponyms which without reasonable doubt refer to a neighboring settlement totals 181 items. Some of them seem remarkably imprecise²³. Out of the 181 items, 19 show major deviations: see Tab. III. The town of Zuideinde (‘south end’), for example, lies exactly south-east of the central town of Zoeterwoude, and would deserve an ordinal compass point: **Zuidoosteinde*. One road called *Westeind*²⁴ shows even a southward deviation of no less than 81° with respect to the central settlement of Sint-Nicolaasga, and would have deserved the name *Zuideinde* (‘south end’).

Almost 10 percent of the 181 names are thus actually inappropriate. This suggests again (cf. section about ordinal compass point toponyms, above) that accuracy of compass points in these categories of toponyms (settlements, roads, city quarters) has not been experienced by namegivers as being particularly relevant, and it would seem that such names should not be subject to criticism of this kind: nobody would ever take his compass and check whether the name is accurate.

²³ Orientation of church choirs – always to the east – has been considerably more precise. Here, deviations are always less than 10° (or sometimes even zero, if the discrepancy between the compass north and magnetic north is taken into account; see Leenders, 1981). In the religious context, accuracy was, of course, of the utmost importance.

²⁴ Gildemacher, 2007, p. 263.

Tab. III – Major deviations (> 45°) in compass points, degrees
 Explanations of abbreviations of province names, see Table II.

Compass point expressed by toponym	Earliest attestation	Central settlement referred to; earliest attestation	Reference point	deviation, degrees
1) Ooste (Fr, mun. Súdwest-Fryslân)	C 19 Oostend	Koudum ca. 890 Colwidu[m]	Martinikerk (1857), successor of an older church (1617)	78 N
2) Oosteind (NB, mun. Sint-Anthonis)		Ham ?	crossing Molenstraat/ Lindensteeg	59 N
3) Oosteinde (D, mun. Midden-Drenthe)		Hijken 1370 Hyken	Gereformeerde Kerk (1906)	51 S
4) Oosteinde (D, mun. Noordenveld)		Roden 1139 Rothen	Catharinakerk (originally C 13)	78 N
5) Oosteinde (NH, mun. Zeevang)		Oosthuizen C 12 Asthusa minore	Grote Kerk (1518)	47 N
6) Oosterburen (Gr, mun. Loppersum)	1866 (Kuyper)	Middelstum probably 822-856 Mitilistenheim	St.-Hippolytuskerk (C 15)	51 N
7) Oostereinde (Gr, mun. Oldambt)	1866 (Kuyper)	Winschoten C 13 Winsewida	Grote Kerk (approximately 1275)	70 N
8) Oostwijk (NH, mun. Graft-De Rijp)		Graft C 12 Greft	town hall (C 17), next former church	81 S
9) Westdorp (D, mun. Borger-Odoorn)	1866 (Kuyper)	Borger 1327 in Borghere	Willibrordkerk (1826; successor of medieval church)	56 S
10) Westeind (Fr, mun. Scharsterland)		Sint-Nicolaasga 1399 Sinte Nyclaesga	Nicolaaskerk (1722; Protestant church) ³	81 S
11) Westeind (Gr, mun. Oldambt)	1899	Nieuwolda 1711 Nieuwolda	Nederlands Hervormde kerk (1718)	46 S
12) Westeinde (D, mun. Aa en Hunze)		Gasteren 1298-1304 in villa Ghestre	Brink (village green)	48 S
13) Westeinde (ZH, mun. Zuidplas)		Moordrecht 1250 Mordrecht	Nederlands Hervormde kerk (1657; originally C 16)	60 S
14) Westeinde (ZH, mun. Noordwijk)		Noordwijk 889 Nordcha	Oude Jeroenskerk (medio C 15)	82 S
15) Westeinde (ZH)	1867 (Kuyper)	Zoeterwoude 1204 Sotrewold	Lebuinuskkerk (C 15)	46 S
16) Westend (Fr, mun. Lemsterland)	beginning of C 20	Oosterzee-Buren C 12 O(e)sterse	Nederlands Hervormde kerk (1860)	67 S
17) Westlaren (D, mun. Zuidlaren)	NvhN 09-03- 1929	Midlaren ⁴ 1298-1304 in Middelare	crossing Groningerstraat/ Hunebedpad	74 S
18) Zuideind (D, mun. Borger-Odoorn)		Drouwenerveen 1841 Drouwenderveen	former church (Martinuskkerk, 1915)	48 E
19) Zuideinde (NH, mun. Waterland)		Monnickendam 1288 Monnickendam	Speeltoren (C 14)	61 E

Nevertheless, one might wonder how such huge deviations are possible, viewing the fact that ordinal compass points were in evidence in Dutch as early as C 11 (*suthost, northwest*, etc.)²⁵. So the question arises: are these deviations distributed at random, and are the ancestors to be blamed for sloppiness, or could there have been a – possibly unconscious – tendency in namegivers to favor one or more particular compass point? One might imagine, for example, a preference for the north, being at the top of maps and being the direction the compass needle points to. Or possibly a preference for the east: before the advent of the compass, the east may have been the dominant compass point, being the place where the sun rises²⁶. Tradition has it that the sun is said to rise in the east and to set in the west.

The data in Tab. III encompass almost exclusively toponyms with ‘east’ and ‘west’ (only two of them contain the south), and thus suggest that sunrise and sunset locations were crucial. In contrast, the north did not ‘attract’ any toponyms that actually would deserve the name of either the eastern or western compass point; the south lagging behind with only two items. An explanation other than sloppiness would therefore seem more appropriate.

3.5. *Conclusion* – If we take for granted that people on the mainland – i.e. non-sailors – until recent times did not have a compass in their possession, they had to assess compass points by looking at the position of the sun, especially with regard to sunrise and sunset. An explanation for the large northward and southward deviations might be that the location where the sun rises and sets varies considerably according to the season: in the Netherlands, positioned at 50-53° north latitude, the sun rises at the beginning of the summer almost in the northeast, and sets near the northwest. At the beginning of the winter, however, it rises in the southeast and sets in the southwest.

It is thus well conceivable that people who assigned a toponym in the

²⁵ *Oudnederlands Woordenboek*, 2007-2009, s.v. *sūthōst, northwest*.

²⁶ Two arguments for the east being the most prominent compass point are that (1) the Latin word for ‘south’, *auster*, is thought to be related to *aurora* ‘dawn’ and therefore with ‘east’ (Reinsma, 2006, pp. 38-40); (2) *north* and its cognates are related to Oscian *nertrak* ‘left’, i.e. with regard to the place where the sun rises, from the viewpoint of someone standing with his face to the east (*ibid.*, p. 35). The west is the only compass point whose etymology, at least in Indo-European languages, does not in any way refer to the east.

The prominence of the east seems manifests itself in the present study (35x N, 65x E, 32x S, 47x W) and is also corroborated by Ramandt and Vannieuwenhuyze, 2012, p. 199, who found that east toponyms are the most frequent of all toponyms bearing cardinal compass points. Muller, 1923, p. 123 found that toponym pairs with the compass points east- and west outnumber pairs with compass points north and south. No clear preference for the east is, however, found in Buiks and Leenders, 1993, I, p. 72 (N 13x, E 12x, S 8x, W 6x).

middle of the summer, seeing the sun rise in the north east, 'rounded' this compass point off to the east compass point. And a similar consideration applies to toponyms 'rounded off' to the west compass point. After all, the sun is supposed to rise in the east! If this is true, it might imply that, for example, the settlement of Weste (deviation 66° southward) received its name in the winter, while Oosteinde (in the province of Gelderland; deviation 60° northward) received its name in the summer.

The fact that toponyms represent the north and south generally considerably more accurately than the east and west, might then be due to the north and south not being 'variable' in terms of the position of the sun. This explanation is falsifiable: if, for example, examination concerning the same category of toponyms in equatorial areas should indicate similar deviations, the here proposed explanation concerning seasonal differences would possibly have to be rejected.

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Riassunto - Livelli di precisione in toponimi contenenti i punti cardinali

Molti toponimi nel mondo contengono punti cardinali. Il focus di questo paper riguarda i nomi di luoghi in Olanda. Venti toponimi contengono due punti cardinali. La maggior parte riguarda dei 'polder' (es. Noordoostpolder, 'polder nord-ovest'), ma anche canali, promontori, zone industriali. Solo pochi indicano quartieri, municipalità, città. Il paper argomenta che i nomi dei polder e di luoghi simili a volte acquisiscono due nomi di punti cardinali per ragioni pratiche, contrariamente a quanto accade per quartieri, città, ecc. Qualora alcuni di questi ultimi ricevano un nome di due punti cardinali, ciò potrebbe corrispondere ad una esigenza di modernizzazione o di precisione scientifica.

Sono stati esaminati 179 toponimi contenenti un punto cardinale. Ciascuno di essi indica insediamenti localizzati vicino a un insediamento considerato centrale, e i toponimi del luogo indicano la posizione in cui si trovano rispetto all'insediamento centrale. Ad esempio, il nome della città di *Noordeinde* ('estremità nordica') significa, almeno per gli abitanti di Graft-De Rijp, che si trova a Nord rispetto a loro. Tuttavia 19 di questi 179 toponimi vengono localizzati in modo impreciso (cioè con uno scarto maggiore di 45°) e la maggioranza di queste deviazioni riguarda toponimi con Est e Ovest. Il paper suggerisce una connessione con la variabilità, in conseguenza della posizione geografica del paese, secondo il corso delle stagioni, del sorgere e del tramontare del sole in Olanda: all'inizio dell'inverno il sole sorge a Sud-Est e tramonta a Sud-Ovest, all'inizio dell'estate rispettivamente a Nord-Est e a Nord-Ovest. I nomi potrebbero, perciò, essere stati dati in base alla stagione durante la quale il nome è stato attribuito.

Résumé - Degrés de précision en toponymes qui contiennent des points cardinaux et intercardinaux

De nombreux toponymes partout dans le monde contiennent un point cardinal. L'article porte sur les toponymes aux Pays Bas.

Vingt toponymes contiennent des point intercardinaux. La plupart d'entre eux désigne des polders (par exemple, le Noordoostpolder, 'polder nord-est'), des cours d'eau, des caps, des zones d'activités. Ce n'est qu'un petit nombre d'entre eux qui désigne un quartier, une municipalité ou un village. L'article montre qu'entre autres les polders ont parfois été nommé d'après les points intercardinaux pour des raisons pratiques, contrairement à la grande majorité des noms de quartiers et d'autres implantations. Le fait que les ceux-ci contiennent quelquefois des points intercardinaux semble révéler une tendance de la modernité d'une précision scientifique.

Cependant, la majorité des toponymes contient un point intercardinal plutôt qu'un point intercardinal. Les 179 toponymes examinés dans cet article désignent des implantations situées près d'une localité considérée comme centrale. Les points cardinaux indiquent leur positions à l'égard de l'implantation centrale. Par exemple, le nom du hameau *Noordeinde* ('bout septentrional') indique qu'il se trouve au nord de Graft-De Rijp. Dix-neuf toponymes portent des dénominations relativement imprécises (deviation géographique supérieure à 45°). Dix-sept de ces déviations concernent des toponymes contenant 'est' et 'ouest'. L'article suggère un rapport avec les lieux où le soleil se lève et se couche en fonction de la saison. Au commencement de l'hiver, le soleil se lève au sud-est et se couche au sud-ouest; au début de l'été, il se lève au nord-est et se couche au nord-ouest. Il est alors concevable que ceux qui ont attribué le nom en question aient 'arrondi' ces points cardinaux selon la saison pendant laquelle le nom a été donné, l'est et l'ouest étant des point cardinaux (de premier plan) plus facilement repérables.