

## 7. THREATS TO CULTURAL HERITAGE ASPECTS

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So geographical names are **irreplaceable cultural values** of vital significance to people's **sense of well-being**. They are an important part of local identity and contribute to a **sense of belonging**.

Geographical names constitute a part of the **collective memory** and **heritage** and thus function as **social identifiers**.

But they are threatened by:

- the continued extension of towns and cities over the rural countryside, with the related loss of geographical names for fields and hamlets, villages and farms.
- The same is due to extensification of agriculture, or the abandoning of marginal farms;
- there is the immigration of population groups speaking other languages without previous links to the environment.
- there is the lack of interest in the names minority groups are using to refer to their environment.
- New mapping methods, not depending on terrain surveys tend to lose on toponyms.
- Toponymical cleansing: countries try to change the names because they want other countries to believe that the names areas are only inhabited by citizens speaking the country's major language.

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