



Preserving inherited toponyms – conception of the laity vs. the experts

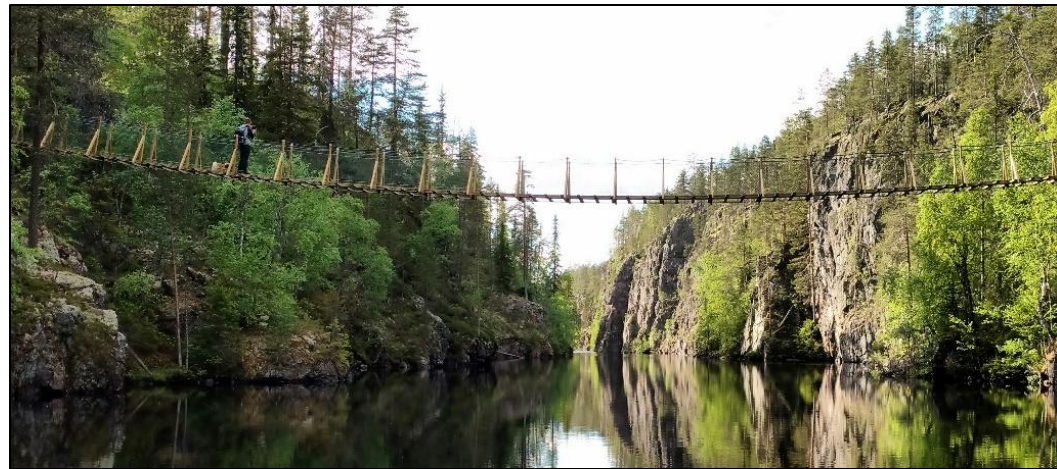
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knowledge in the standardization of geographical names

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Finland – no geographical names authority

- The legislation in Finland does not mention inherited place names.
 - It does not define any authority who has the power to decide on inherited place names or which place names authorities should use.
- Therefore it is the task of experts on toponyms to try to preserve the historically and culturally valuable inherited toponyms.
 - In practice this often means preventing any name changes that are not properly considered or justified.

Standardisation process of inherited place names 1

- National Land Survey of Finland (NLS) has the responsibility by law to maintain the topographic data system and produce national topographic maps.
- Institute for the Languages in Finland has the responsibility by law to practise language planning and give normative recommendations on Finnish and Swedish (including place names).
- NLS decides on the toponyms and their spellings in its Place Name Register. The names of natural features in the register and maps are always inherited toponyms, established through use by local residents.

Standardisation process of inherited place names 2

- NLS has the inherited toponyms and possible changes in them voluntarily checked by the experts in the Institute for the Languages of Finland (Finnish and Swedish names) and an expert in the University of Oulu (Saami names).
- Institute and university verify that the inherited toponyms in the NLS Place Name Register are used and known by local residents and that their spelling follows general recommendations.
- Key sources in verifying include the Institute's Names Archive's collections of toponyms, compiled by interviewing local residents.





Examples of requests to change or remove inherited toponyms

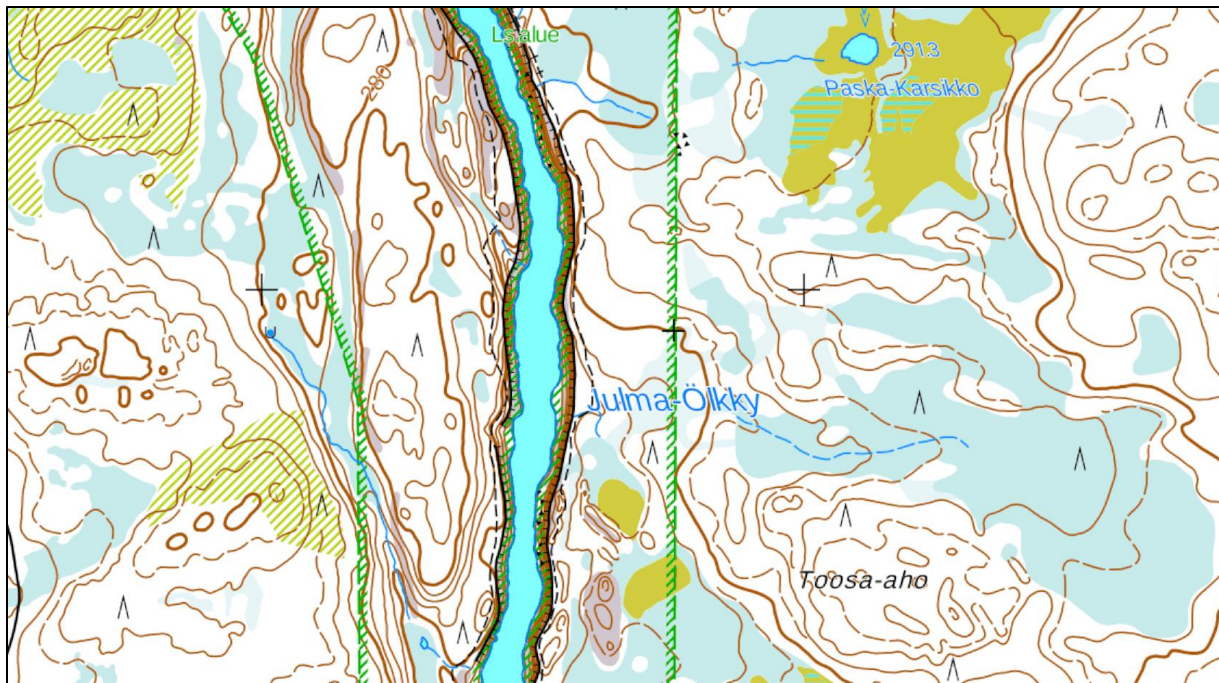
1. Always welcomed: Carefully prepared and justified requests by officials, local citizens, homestead associations etc.
2. Requests due to the lack of knowledge on policies and principles on inherited names
3. Requests due to problems in official name planning
4. Requests to follow other (unstandardised) name sources
5. Requests specific to bilingual and multilingual areas
6. Requests with commercial or economic objectives

Conclusion

- A legislation is urgently needed to ensure the standardisation process carried out by the experts, and to ensure preserving inherited toponyms.
- In the legislation should be defined
 - which names the law involves
 - who has the right to approve those names
 - which considerations and expertise should be taken into account before the approval
 - how the approved names should be registered
 - who is in charge of the registration
 - which names should be used in official contexts.

Thank you!

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Lake *Julma-Ölkky* in NLS Topographic Map 1:50 000.