

## MULTILINGUAL AREAS AND LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

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### Introduction

In the northern part of Italy, up in the Alps, is the region of South Tyrol. It is a strategic region as it controls the mountain passes onto Vienna and Germany. It belonged to the Austrian Empire, but when Austria lost the First World War Italy annexed it. It had been a German-speaking area for over a thousand years, but the Italians next imposed their language on the area. In the middle of the capital Bozen or Bolzano they erected a triumphal arch with the Latin text on it: "We have brought culture to the barbarians". And from one day to another they changed the place names. As a matter of fact they changed all names, they even changed family names and names on tombstones in cemeteries. They did so because they did know the **power of names**. In figure 1 you will see names like Sterzing, Wiesen, Deutschhaus (or Lichtenberg, Schlanders and Laas). These names have connotations of German dishes like Bratwurst, or Schinken or roasted chestnut. The figure is taken from an Italian map made of this Austrian area before the First World War.

In figure 2 you will see exactly the same area, but instead of Sterzing, Wiesen and Deutschhaus (Lichtenberg, Schlanders and Laas) the map bears the names Vipiteno, Prato and La Commenda (or Montechiaro, Silandro and Lasa) for the same localities. And these names bring memories of Italian dishes like pasta and prosciutto con melone. But, more important, these names on the map make the area look like an Italian area. **That** is the power of names. Naming things conveys power to the one who bestows the names! A comparison of figures 1 and 2 will show that it is indeed the same area. Imagine that from one day to another your hometown and the street on which you live would be re-baptized and receive a name in a foreign language! In 1945 South Tyrol was again assigned to Italy by the Allied forces, on the condition that it would respect the German culture and language of the area. Well, place names are part of the language and of culture, but up till now no German place names have entered any official Italian maps of South Tyrol. There is only one commercial publisher, the Italian Touring Club, which publishes atlases and maps with **bilingual names for the area**. It does so either because it wants to reflect the local situation that has bilingual road signs now, or because it also publishes the maps for a German-speaking clientele.

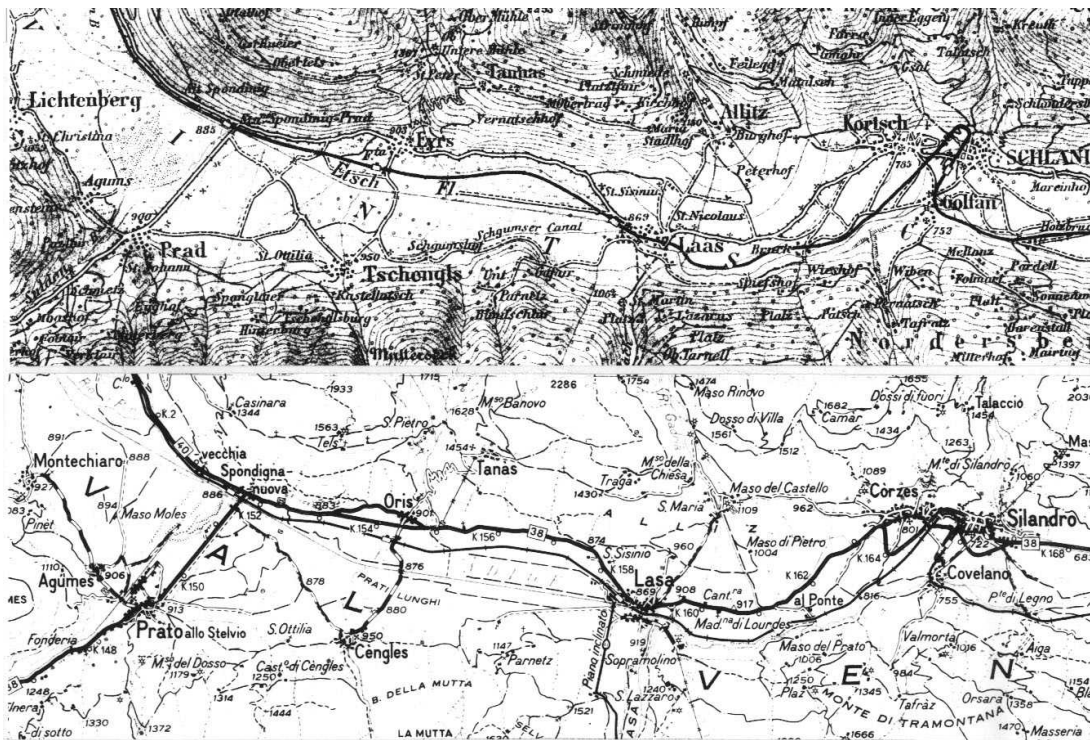
The use of names on maps is nearly as important as the use of boundaries. Naming things conveys power to the

one who bestows the name. Reversely, if one is in control over something one can name it: one's children or one's house. Italian names show they have been bestowed by Italians, they show Italian sovereign rights. So if names are in Italian, it is an Italian region. Vice versa, if it is part of Italy, it should have Italian names. That is the reasoning, at least. It is the reasoning of nationalism, a very important force, last century, in Western Europe. As topographic mapping is considered to be some sort of sovereign right, just like taking censuses, and as topographic mapping is usually performed by the state's civil servants, there is a tendency for minority language toponyms to be represented on the map in some transformed way, adapted to the state languages or to the *raison d'état*, that is to reasons of state. Because there were many wars, boundaries frequently changed and did not coalesce with language area boundaries. And that meant that there emerged quite a number of linguistic minorities in Europe. Figure 3 shows a language map of Europe, and you will be able to see that the language area boundaries and the state boundaries do not coincide. Where they do not, there usually are linguistic minorities.

### Minority names

I would define these linguistic minorities as spatially concentrated autochthonous groups, within a state, that do not speak the same language as the official state language.

They form groups so firmly settled in a region, that they can be regarded as its original inhabitants. Though not necessarily on a state level, minority languages can be officially recognized. The official language of the Netherlands for instance is Dutch. But in its province of Frisia the regional language Frisian has official status and is used in education, regional administration and law courts. The name of the capital of the province of Friesland is referred to by its official Dutch (majority language) name Leeuwarden. The Frisian name, Ljouwert, is used only locally and in the internal provincial administration. The official gazetteer of the Netherlands does not refer to the name Ljouwert; only Leeuwarden can be found. The same applies to the official topographic maps, whatever their scale: only the Dutch name version Leeuwarden is mentioned. It is only on some commercially published maps that both name versions are shown.



Figures 1 and 2: Part of South Tyrol (Italy) on Austrian (above, 1914) and Italian (below, 1960) maps



Figure 3: Linguistic minorities in Europe



Figure 4 : Part of the Riviera according to Italian (1864) and French (1960) maps

A number of the linguistic minorities have disappeared through assimilation, one example being the Italian minority language area in the Cote d'Azur, round Nice and Monaco. In Figure 4, right, one can see the area on an Italian map from the 1850ies when it was still part of Italy, or rather the Italian Kingdom of Sardinia. In 1864 France acquired the area, and names were changed, just as in South Tyrol, as one can see on figure 4, left. Only unlike South Tyrol, the population has assimilated and is French-speaking now.

You probably are aware of the terms I will be using, but I will define them anyway.

A **minority name or minority toponym** is a name locally used to designate a specific geographical object situated in an area where a minority language is concentrated. This need not be the numerical minority, but could just refer to the group not in power. In Belgium the Dutch language group has always been the numerical majority. But for over a century their language was not an official one. Only in 1930 an act was passed which recognized it, and which postulated that Dutch names be used in the speaking-speaking part of the country, Flanders. So instead of Lou vain, the name Leuven was re-instated. Though the act was passed in 1930, it was not before 1950 that the first maps adhered to this act. And they showed names bilingually: that is French names in capitals and Dutch names in parentheses. After 10 more years of bickering and pressure, all names were represented bilingually, which was a big nuisance, as only half the number of objects on the maps could be named this way. The final choice was, that in Dutch language areas only

Dutch names would be shown on the map; in French language areas only French names, and in the bilingual area of Brussels both names would be shown, with that name version first which reflected the local majority of the city quarter. You can imagine that all this cost a lot of money to the taxpayer, and it made onomastics a worthwhile subject of university studies in Belgium.

### Transformation of minority names

The adaptation of minority language toponyms into the majority language might take one of several forms from a linguistic point of view, e.g.:

1. Adherence to minority language orthography but pronunciation according to the majority language
2. Addition or omission of diacritical marks
3. Addition of articles in the majority language
4. Addition of name elements (generics, nouns or adjectives) in the majority language
5. Phonetic rendering in the majority language of minority language pronunciation (transcription)
6. Adaptation of the toponym proper to the structure of the majority language
7. (Partial) translation into the majority language
8. Substitution by a new name in the majority language

With the exception of the first one, all these cases tend to diminish the minority language character of the

toponyms from minority language areas on maps. The choice for either the original language name version or a name version adapted to the majority language for a topographic object within a minority language area might be institutionalised according to one of the following principles:

- I. Traditional usage principle. On the basis of traditional local usage the orthography of the toponyms is determined. The version chosen need not be in accordance with the official orthography of the local, minority language.
- II. Juridical principle. The language version of the toponyms is determined according to the laws of the administrative unit of which the minority language area forms a part.
- III. Territorial principle. The language version of the toponyms is determined on the basis of the codified language boundary.
- IV Personal principle. The language version of toponyms is determined on the basis of the absolute and relative number of speakers of the majority and minority languages.

In most countries with minority languages the principles according to which the toponyms from minority areas are rendered on maps are not explicitly stated, though internal service regulations might exist for the benefit of the surveyors.

What happens to names during a survey is that surveyors or topographers collect names in the field (see figure 5). In most cases they would not have the benefit of any toponymic schooling. Part of these names will be pre-

sented on base maps. Because of space restrictions only part of the names on the base map will find their way onto derived maps. This selection process is linguistically or politically biased in many cases. Of nearly 100 % Basque names on a French topographic map on the scale 1 : 50,000 no trace remain on a map on the scale 1 : 2 Million.

Now the various European mapping authorities transformed names on their maps to various degrees. It is not my intention to compare the various European attitudes towards minority names in the past, even if Europe offers some enticing possibilities for spatial studies in this field:

- One may compare the way different states related to the same minority language areas, like the Basques, the Laps, the Celtic or the Catalans (See figure 3)
- One may compare the way in which one state related to various minority languages on its territory
- One may study what happened in areas that changed masters frequently, like Alsace-Lorraine or Istria.
- One may compare the way countries related to an internal minority to the way they claimed rights for their external minorities.

Despite these possibilities I will only present some general conclusions (see Ormeling, 1983):

- Various scales of topographic maps each have a specific proportion of minority toponyms.
- Various categories of place names (oronyms, hydronyms) might be affected to different degrees by these transformations
- Then there is the time factor: the longer a minority language area has been a part of a specific state, the

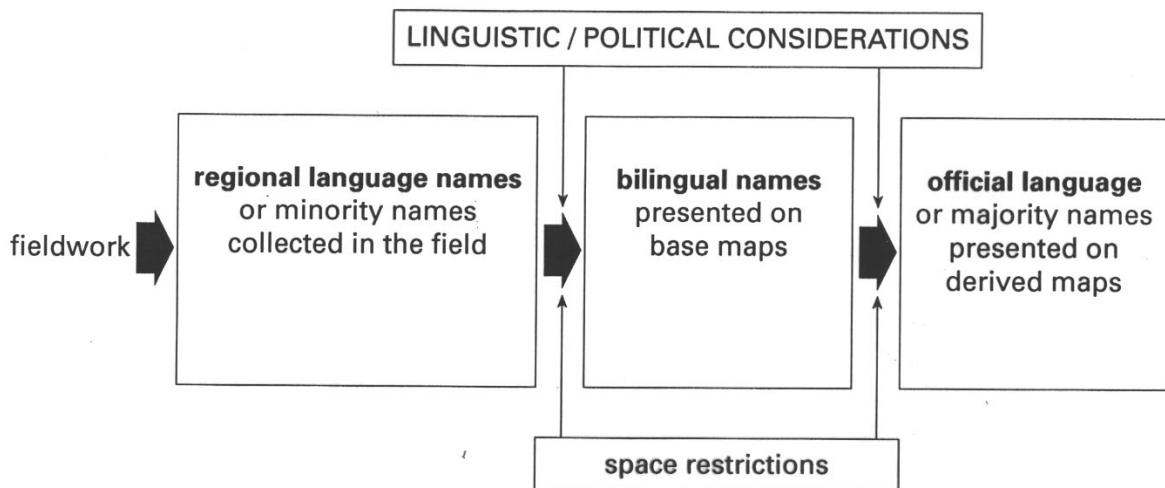


Figure 5 : cartographic and political considerations influencing the rendering of minority names on maps

more its toponyms tend to be affected by the majority language.

- Specific surveying procedures might lead to the domination of specific name categories
- Finally, in many cases there is a conscious state or government bias regarding place names to be found

This situation is not experienced as favourable for map use, and because of the following considerations:

### Map use criteria

For an evaluation of the situation sketched above two directions seem to be indicated: a functional one and a cultural one. The first one leads to a description of the name elements needed in map use. In most cases, maps are being produced for specific goals, for instance for reference purposes, for propaganda, for the communication of knowledge on the objects represented or for orienteering. In order to be able to select a map type that fits a specific purpose, one first needs information on map series titles, for instance ‘Soil map of the Netherlands’ or ‘Topographic map of the Netherlands at the scale 1: 50,000’. After a thematic selection has thus been made possible, one has to find the area looked for. Here we need the map-sheet title, e.g. sheet Leeuwarden or sheet Amsterdam). Generally speaking the name of the largest settlement in the area mapped within the national boundaries is selected as map title as, because of its local renown, it serves as a beacon for selection purposes. In map use the name ‘external orientation’ is used for finding the right map sheet.

As soon as the proper map sheet has been located, one should decipher the code of the relationships between symbols and the spatial objects or processes they represent. That is, one should read the legend. For a proper interpretation one should also have information on the accuracy, updating and completeness of the map. Such information can be gathered from the map’s margin. Recognition of the semantic relationships between objects to be represented and symbols representing them is called ‘internal orientation’.

It is only now that one is able to look closer at the map area, and to extract knowledge from it about the relationships between the objects represented, e.g. knowledge on distances, slopes, directions, surface areas, routes, patterns, correlations, etc. These thematic data have not been anchored to topographic reality as long as they have not been named: here we need toponymy. From the carto-

graphic point of view one does not need toponyms for historical, political or other goals, but for identification purposes only. It is by integrating thematic data and the geographical framework of toponyms and topography that map reading proper is made possible.

For a proper understanding of the functions of the names within the map area, these should be subdivided into toponyms and individual generics, abbreviations and letter symbols. Toponyms can consist of specific and generic components (-mountain, -lake, -pass, -canal). In many countries generics will be added on the maps to toponyms whenever they lack these components. In German language maps river names are indicated as Rhein, Inn. In French or Italian maps, however, generics are added: Le Rhin Fleuve, Le Senancole Torrent or Fiume Po.

These generics can also be represented individually, in order to indicate the nature of a map object, like Factory, Hospital or Sewerage plant. These generics are often abbreviated: Sce (Source), Pyl (Pylone), Sch (School), Gie (Gendarmerie), Sl (Sluice). Sometimes only the initial letters are kept, as PH for Public House or pub, and T for Telephone. These letters are in use as symbols consequently.

All these descriptive elements are needed for a proper selection and interpretation of the map sheet, and both requirements, i.e. selection of the proper sheet and understanding its contents, can be fulfilled when these descriptive elements are rendered (also) in the language of the map user.

An average map sheet of a topographic map series 1: 50,000 might contain 1000 toponyms, 100 individual generics, 100 abbreviations and 100 letter symbols. The average number of words contained in the map series title might be 5, the map title 1, the legend 100, the scale 2, the impressum 10 and in other marginal information 100. In a number of countries more abbreviations and letter symbols are used than elsewhere and up to 2000 of these might be used on a single map sheet.

In order to analyse the map use possibilities for members of linguistic minorities, the following questions might be asked:

- Are the map series titles also rendered in the minority language?
- Is the map title rendered also in the minority language?
- Is the map legend also rendered in the minority language?

- Is the other marginal information also rendered in the minority language?
- Are the toponyms rendered in the minority language or adapted to the majority language?
- Are the generics rendered in the minority language?
- Are the abbreviations and letter symbols also clear for minority language speakers?

### **Cultural criteria**

From the functional viewpoint one should thus concern oneself with the actual pragmatic aspects of the relation between the alphanumeric information on the map, toponyms included, and the local population that should be able to use these maps. From the cultural viewpoint it should be a nation's prerogative to preserve the cultural heritage of its population, its minority language population included. Toponyms are parts of this cultural heritage and should therefore be preserved in their minority language versions. The national authorities should also act as a go-between and allow foreign cultural communities to take cognisance of its minority language communities, toponyms included. By paying taxes the members of minority language communities share in the costs of national topographic surveys and the production of topographic maps. They should have the right therefore to see their home area represented on these maps as they know it, and not disguised in an unfamiliar onomastical cloak.

### **Current trends**

For now we will have a look at what is being done in Europe to redress or restore the original situation, because that is what is happening in many countries. The disappearance of state boundaries has led to a surge of regional feeling, especially so in Spain and France:

- \* We have now bilingual representation of minority names in Scandinavia, Netherlands, Irish Republic
- \* We have monolingual representation of minority names in Spain, Faeroe Islands, Finland,

- \* We have marginal information translated for minority languages

Actually, we are doing right now what was already state policy in the former Habsburg Empire in Central Europe before World War I: the Austrians incorporated as many names on the map as there were local languages. Population numbers decided the order of the names. The marginal information was also translated for the benefit of minority language communities. Pronunciation rules were also given on the maps.

Based on this European experience a package of measures has been established that should ensure the restoration of minority toponyms: it consists of the following steps

- a) Delimitation of minority language area boundaries
- b) Introduction of bilingual transitional periods on the map: so after a majority names edition a bilingual edition is published which precedes a monolingual minority language edition
- c) Official restoration of minority language name versions
- d) Exclusive minority language rendering
- e) Accompanied by the rendering of marginal information also in minority language

In Europe we have developed the feeling that recognition of their language and culture is an important contribution to the strengthening of the identity of minority language communities. The official use of their toponyms in the minority language is part of that recognition. The rendering of toponyms on maps might seem an insignificant aspect of this official recognition, but it should be stressed that these names often are the first and only representation by which the minority language community can manifest itself to outsiders. The acknowledgement of minority language toponyms on the map can be considered as an official recognition and acceptance of the minority language community.

A national state is nowadays considered responsible for the cultural heritage of all minority language communities, and minority language names also belong to this cultural heritage.