WHAT IS TOPONYMICAL PLANNING?

<previous - next>

Wiki says:

Language planning is a deliberate effort to influence the function, structure, or acquisition of a language or language variety within a speech community.[1] It is often associated with government planning, but is also used by a variety of non-governmental organizations, such as grass-roots organizations and even individuals. The goals of language planning differ depending on the nation or organization, but generally include making planning decisions and possibly changes for the benefit of communication. Planning or improving effective communication can also lead to other social changes such as language shift or assimilation, thereby providing another motivation to plan the structure, function and acquisition of languages.[2]

Amongst the goals of language planning are:

7) Terminology Unification - development of unified terminologies, primarily in technical domains, and

11) Auxiliary-Code Standardization - standardization of marginal, auxiliary aspects of language such as signs for the deaf, place names, or rules of transliteration and transcription.

Many countries have a **language policy** designed to favour or discourage the use of a particular language or set of languages. Although nations historically have used language policies most often to promote one official language at the expense of others, many countries now have policies designed to protect and promote regional and ethnic languages whose viability is threatened.
Language Policy is what a government does either officially through legislation, court decisions or policy to determine how languages are used, cultivate language skills needed to meet national priorities or to establish the rights of individuals or groups to use and maintain languages.

At various times minority or indigenous languages have either been promoted or banned in schools, as politicians have either sought to promote a minority language with a view to strengthening the cultural identity of its speakers, or banning its use (either for teaching, or on occasion an entire ban on its use), with a view to promoting a national identity based on the majority language.
For our purpose, toponymic planning can be regarded as/defined as the deliberate effort to influence the spelling of place names, primarily in order to improve communication. There can be other aspects, however, for instance shedding of the toponymic influences regarded as foreign.

What is the role of geographical names in language planning? Geographical names are a very visible manifestation of language, as these names are incorporated on signposts, place name signs and in maps. From the names (foreign) people see on these signposts, name signs and maps, they would deduce the language of the local communities. So place names are a way for linguistic communities to manifest themselves, to show themselves to the world. Contrary to this, national authorities may want to mask the existence of linguistic minorities by adapting their names to the majority language, and thus show through the adapted place names that the region is inhabited by majority language speakers.