Divergence and Convergence within Standardizing Danish Place-Names

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Orthographical correctness from the Danish Place-Name Committee’s point of view

• “Dictionary of Danish Orthography”
• Contemporary orthography
• Standardization both linguistic, historical and practical matter
• From the very beginning (first half of the 20th century) – resistance
• A number of linguistically ideal suggestions from first draft lists were changed
• Deviation create precedent
• The committee has repeatedly accepted antiquated forms (av>au, ks>x, t>th, s>z)
• And recently new names with foreign orthography/commercial elements as Victoria Street Station, Musicon
• The norms are repetitively challenged
Orthographical correctness from local communities’ point of view

• **Unawareness**
  • The overall purpose of standardisation and the historical background
  • The existence of legislation (and limitations within naming places)
  • Danish place-names - Danish forms (not foreign)
  • Orthography of contemporary words and place-names should be adequate
  • Lack of adequateness within authorised forms are exceptions – not standard

**Logic thinking**

• Spelling of place-names is as liberal as spelling of personal names
• A place-name is a personal/local communities’ matter
• Correct spelling of an old place-name is an antiquated/historical spelling
  (Typical 18th and 19th century forms from nation-wide maps)
• English language is high status – A (pseudo) English name is a great new Danish place-name (and great branding)!
Insufficient information?

- Earlier lists published as book
- Information about orthographic principles
- Distributed to municipalities
- Website
  - General information about the committee (also historically)
  - General recommendations
  - Information about purpose and legislation
  - About language and orthography
  - About UNGEGN resolutions
  - Links to lists of authorised place-names
  - Most relevant information can be found
  - No information about how to apply technically
  - Contact information – the secretary can be asked any time – and we are!
Balancing divergence into convergence

The process of guidance (or damage control)
• Dialogue and advice!
• Beforehand valuation of an individual name
• Is authorisation necessary?
• Is authorisation likely to achieve?
• Information about rules and principles including background
• Information about how to apply including advice about documentation needed
• Problem: The name is already formed and locally agreed on when local communities decide to formally apply
Balancing divergence into convergence

The process of authorising

• The secretary do research in advance
• The case is presented to the committee
• The case is discussed
• In case of
  • rejection - the applicant receive a reasoned refusal in writing
  • acceptance – the applicant is informed that the place-name is nominated for authorisation in the ministry
Convergence in disputes

• The many exceptions - historical as resent - from the orthographic rules makes it difficult to argue and maintain consistency

• A complaint can reach the Ministry of Culture

• The use of double aa instead of the correct letter å became a public matter

• Give the people what they want – and they are still not satisfied!