

# An Analysis of Toponymic Anomalies in Valencian Municipalities by Means of a GIS

## Joan Carles Membrado Tena

DOI: 10.2436/15.8040.01.255

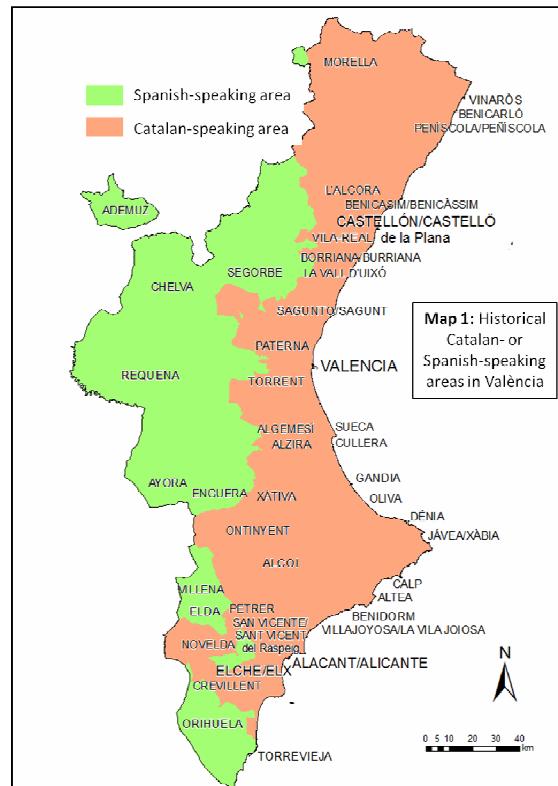
### Abstract

València (officially *Comunitat Valenciana*) is a territory in eastern Spain inhabited by five million people where both Catalan (officially known as *Valencian* in this territory) and Spanish or Castilian (*castellà*, i.e. Castilian, is the traditional name of the Spanish language in València and the other Catalan-speaking lands) are official languages. The official use of Catalan was banned in València in 1707, but restored in 1983, after democracy finally arrived in Spain. From 1983 to the present, Catalan has made significant legal advances, among them the reinstatement of the original Catalan/Valencian official names of the municipalities, most of which had been adapted or translated into Castilian/Spanish after 1707. Nowadays, 396 of the 542 municipalities of València belong to the Catalan-speaking area, and most of these have adopted a Catalan official name; 32 of them, however, have chosen a bilingual name; and 48 have kept the Castilian/Spanish form untouched or simply have not adapted their name to the modern orthographic rules of Catalan –among these is the territory's capital, the city of València (officially *Valencia*). These anomalies will be reflected in a series of GIS maps, in which we will show patterns that are repeated, such as municipalities with Catalan names that have never been altered; municipalities with an original Catalan name that was once translated or adapted into Spanish and where, later on, the Catalan name was reinstated; municipalities which nowadays have bilingual place names; municipalities where the original Catalan name has never been reinstated, etc.

\*\*\*\*\*

### 1. Introduction

After the *autonomous community* (i.e., the region) and the province, the municipality is the most important official administrative unit in València. This paper focuses on the 542 municipality names of València, which represent most of the official place names in our territory –by *official* we understand names which appear on road and city signs and in the statistical records of the National Statistics Institute of Spain (*Instituto Geográfico Nacional*) and the Valencian Statistics Institute (*Institut Valencià d'Estadística*). Nowadays, 3 in 4 Valencian municipalities are still Catalan-speaking (map 1), despite the process of *castilianisation* (i.e., linguistic substitution of Castilian/Spanish for Catalan, Castilian (*castellà*) being the traditional name of the Spanish language in València and the other Catalan-speaking lands) which began in the eighteenth century (1707), when Castilian/Spanish was imposed by the newly-established Bourbon dynasty as the new official language, replacing Catalan. Catalan had been –along with Latin– the Kingdom of València's official language since its founding in 1238, following the Christian conquest of this formerly Arab Muslim territory, to 1707, when the Kingdom of València was officially



abolished and its territory was annexed to neighbouring Castile. Some municipalities, especially smaller ones, never lost their original Catalan official name, but the change of one official language for another led to most cities and villages eventually adapting their names to Spanish spelling or simply translating them into Spanish. After the establishment of democracy in Spain (1977), the Catalan language being still alive in three quarters of the Valencian municipalities, a process began that led to many municipalities altering their official name again, this time in order to reinstate the original Catalan forms, now adapted to the current spelling of this language. This process has been slow and irregular: some municipalities have not undergone it yet in 2011, 34 years after its start. In this paper we will study the different ways in which the names of Valencian municipalities were translated or adapted into Spanish after 1707 and also how those municipalities have –or have not– restored their Catalan names after the establishment of democracy in Spain, and the anomalies that have occurred in this process.

## 2. Methodology

We have included the 542 Valencian municipality names in a single database connected to a Geographical Information System (GIS) (figure 1) in order to work more easily with these data, while presenting them on maps. This database consists of a first field listing the official names of municipalities; a second field shows their Catalan name, which may –as it does in most cases– or may not correspond to the official one; a third field informs us whether the name belongs to a municipality in the Catalan-speaking area of València or to one in the Spanish-speaking area; if it belongs to the former, the fourth field tells us whether the name has been adapted or translated into Castilian/Spanish, and in case it has been, there is yet another field showing whether the name has been kept in its castilianised form or the Catalan form has been reinstated after 1977, or maybe a bilingual (Spanish/Catalan) official form has been adopted for it.

FID	OFICIAL	NOM	predomini	CANVI
0	Ademuz	Ademuz/Ademús	castellà	ESP
1	Añar	Añor	català	adaptat
2	Agres			adaptat
3	Agullent			adaptat
4	Aiguës			SI
5	Alaquàs			Sí
6	Albaida	Albaida	català	adaptat
7	Albal	Albal	català	adaptat
8	Albalat de la Ribera	Albalat de la Ribera	català	adaptat
9	Albalat dels Sorells	Albalat dels Sorells	català	adaptat
10	Albalat dels Tarongers	Albalat dels Tarongers	català	SI
11	Albatéra	Albatéra	castellà	ESP/CAT
12	Alberic	Alberic	català	Sí
13	Albocàsser	Albocàsser	català	Sí
14	Alborache	Alborache/Alboralig	castellà	ESP
15	Alboraya	Alboraya	català	Requereix
16	Albuxech	Albuxec	català	Requereix
17	Alcalalí	Alcalalí	català	adaptat
18	Alcalà de Xivert	Alcaló de Xivert	català	Sí
19	Alcoy/Alcoi	Alcoi	català	bilingüe
20	Alcoleja	Alcoleja	català	Sí
21	Alcàntera de Xúquer	Alcàntera de Xúquer	català	Sí
22	Alcàsser	Alcàsser	català	Sí
23	Aldaia	Aldaia	català	Sí
24	Alfafar	Alfafar	català	adaptat
25	Alfafara	Alfafara	català	adaptat
26	Alfara de la Baronia	Alfara de la Baronia	català	Sí requ
27	Alfara del Patriarca	Alfara del Patriarca	català	adaptat
28	Alferp	Alfarb	català	Requereix
29	Alfarrasí	Alfarrasí	català	adaptat
30	Alfauir	Alfauir	català	Sí requ
31	Alfondegulla	Fondegulla	català	adaptat
32	Algàr de Palància	Algàr de Palància	català	NO
33	Algemesí	Algemesí	català	adaptat
34	Algimia de Almonacid	Algimia de Almonacid/Aig	castellà	ESP
35	Algimia d'Alfara	Algimia de la Baronia	català	NO
36	Alginet	Alginet	català	adaptat
37	Algorta	Algorta	castellà	ESP/CAT
38	Almazora/Almassora	Almassora	català	bilingüe
39	Almedíjar	Almedíjar	castellà	ESP
40	Almenara	Almenara	català	adaptat
41	Almiserà	Almiserà	català	Sí
42	Almoinés	Almoinés	català	adaptat
43	Almoradí	Almoradí	castellà	ESP/CAT
44	Almudaina	Almudaina	català	adaptat
45	Almussafes	Almussafes	català	Sí
46	Almàssera	Almàssera	català	Sí

### 3. Geographic and sociolinguistic situation in València

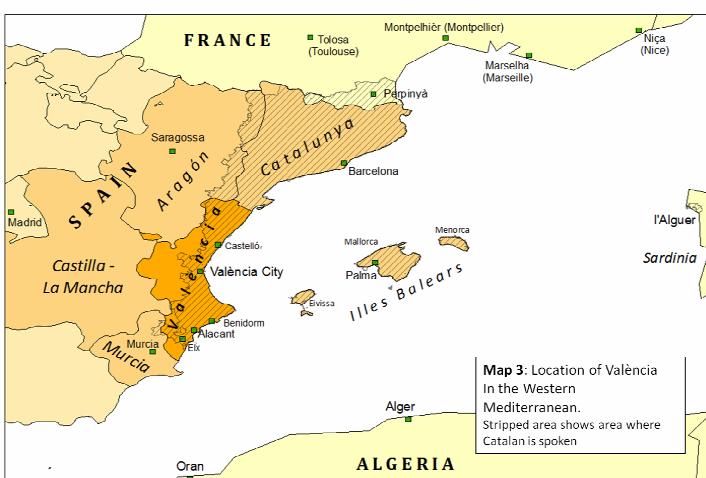
València, also known in the Catalan language as *País Valencià* or, historically, *Regne de València*, and officially called *Comunitat Valenciana*, is a territory inhabited by 5 million people and located in eastern Spain (map 2), whose main cities are València city,<sup>1</sup> with an urban agglomeration reaching almost 2 million inhabitants, and the urban area of Alacant and Elx (*Alicante* and *Elche* in Spanish), with about 750.000. València is located southwest of Catalonia, southeast of



Aragon, east of Castile, and northeast of Murcia, and the Valencian coast faces those of the Balearic Islands, to the east, and of Algeria, to the south<sup>2</sup> (map 3). Both Catalan (officially known as *valencià*, Valencian, in this territory) and Spanish or Castilian are official languages. People from València are called *Valencians* (both in English and in Catalan, not capitalised in the latter; *valencianos* in Spanish), and its autonomous regional government is called *the Generalitat*, an historic institution created in 1418 in order to collect taxes for the medieval Kingdom of València. The Generalitat was banned in 1707, along with the teaching and the official use of Catalan in València. In 1982 the Generalitat was reestablished, and so were the official use and the teaching of Catalan just one year later, nearly three centuries

after they were banned. The official authority in the field of the Catalan/Valencian language in València is, since 1998, the Acadèmia Valenciana de la Llengua (AVL).

Thanks to the Law on the Use and Teaching of Valencian (LUEV, 1983), this language now enjoys an extensive legal support, and it is widely used in areas such as schools, the media, road and street signs or festivals. However, it is seldom used for business, and knowledge of Catalan is hardly



ever a requirement for getting a job. In the world of advertising, only a small portion of ads are in Catalan. At supermarkets, signs in Catalan are common, but its oral use between customers and employees is not so common, particularly in the main metropolitan areas.

<sup>1</sup> The official name of the Valencian capital is *Valencia*, but in this paper we will call it *València city*, in order to distinguish it from the Valencian land (officially *Comunitat Valenciana*), which will be called València in these pages.

<sup>2</sup> Barcelona (Catalonia) is 350 km to the northeast of València city and the French Catalan city of Perpinyà (*Perpignan* in French) is 535 km away; Saragossa (Aragon) is 325 km to the northwest, and Madrid, 350 km to the west; Murcia city is 83 km to the southwest of Alacant and 240 km SW of València city; Palma de Mallorca is 300 km to the east of València city, but the island of Eivissa (*Ibiza* in Spanish) is only 100 km off the Valencian city of Xàbia; Oran (Algeria) is 260 km south of Alacant and 370 km south of València city.

Having an official language status is not enough if this language does not have a public presence and a social use that give it prestige, and Catalan does not have them in València. If we search for the reasons explaining why Catalan in València has not achieved the prestige that it has in Catalonia –or even in the Balearic Islands–, we need to go back to the period 1977-1983, during the Spanish transition to democracy, when the language and identity of València became a matter for political dispute (was the language to be called *Catalan* or *Valencian*? Was it to have –generally speaking– the same spelling and grammatical rules as Catalan or a completely different set of such rules? Was the official name of the territory to be *País Valencià* (Valencian Country) or *Regne de València* (Kingdom of València) (*Comunitat Valenciana*, Valencian Community, was the eventual –rather unappealing– compromise)? Was the city of València's name to be spelled with an accent or not? These and other –e.g., symbols such as the territory's flag (figure 2) and anthem– conflictive issues weakened Valencian identity –and its most characteristic trait, the territory's historic language– at a moment when it could have regained strength after centuries of official subordination and persecution.

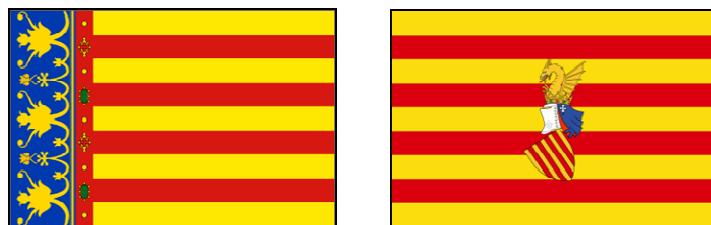
Only a part of Valencian society, more in medium-sized and small towns than in the big cities, and especially people working in the field of teaching, took position in favour of the Catalan/Valencian language in those years, but most people gave scarce support to those who defended it, and many regarded them as marginal, or even radical. Although AVL<sup>3</sup> surveys show the progress that has been made in the knowledge of Catalan among young people in the last decades, it is equally true that conversations between strangers –even if they are Catalan speakers, a fact unknown to each other– are mainly and by default in Castilian/Spanish; so, more people can speak Catalan, but less people use it: polls say that the oral use of this language in València has declined at an alarming rate over the period 1995-2004: those who always or habitually use it at home have decreased from 44 to 35%, while those who always or habitually use Spanish at home have gone up, from 48 to 53%. We must take into account that in 1995 only 1% of the inhabitants of València were immigrants from other states, whereas in 2004 non-Spanish immigrants were more than 10% (17% in 2011). These immigrants usually try to integrate into Valencian society by learning Spanish (when it is not their mother tongue), and even a good part of them (above all, the British) do not integrate at all (Membrado, 2011). These data show that the process of linguistic substitution of Castilian/Spanish for Catalan/Valencian which began centuries ago has not come to an end in our own time, despite the –very limited– institutionalisation of the latter language in València after the establishment of democracy in 1977.

## 4. Legislation

### 4.1. In València

The Law 4/1983, November 23, on the Use and Teaching of Valencian (LUEV) says, in article 15, that the Valencian Generalitat is the institution determining the official names of

**Figure 2:** Two versions of València's flag.  
The one on the left is the official one.



<sup>3</sup> Surveys such as *Llibre blanc d'ús del valencià* (AVL, 2005).

Valencian municipalities, which can be monolingual in Spanish or Catalan, or bilingual in both languages (Spanish/Catalan).

Since 1998, the competent authority with regard to the Catalan/Valencian language in València is the Acadèmia Valenciana de la Llengua (AVL), as established in article 3 of the Law 7/1998, September 16, Creating the Valencian Academy of the Language, which also says that the linguistic rules prescribed by the AVL will be based on the Normes de Castelló, i.e., essentially the same spelling rules that are used in Catalonia (there are, nonetheless, a few distinctive characteristics, a situation comparable to the differences between American English and British English). Moreover, article 7 of this law says that the AVL will decide, at the request of the Generalitat, which ones are the correct forms of place names before they are adopted as official.

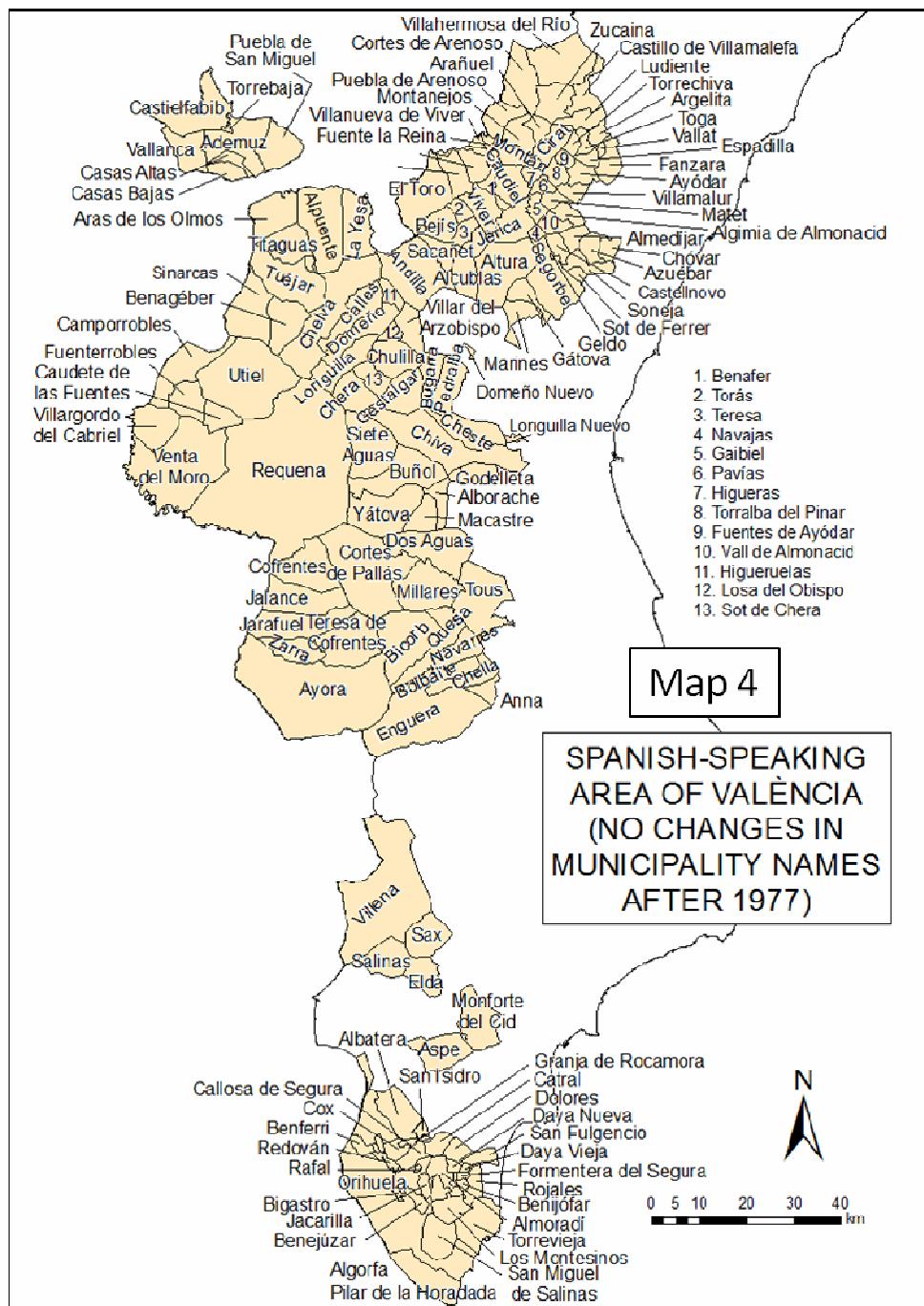
#### **4.2. In other places**

In Catalonia, article 18 (paragraph 1) of the Law 1/1998, January 7, Governing Language Policy, states that there is only one official form for the names of municipalities, which has to be in Catalan and has to conform to the rules of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (IEC). However, in point 2 it is stated that the names of municipalities will be determined by municipal law, a provision that has led to a few Catalan town councils refusing the IEC's authority and adopting forms that, according to the IEC, are incorrect as official –there are 11 such cases (Rabella, 2005, 263). In the Balearic Islands (Law 3/1986, April 29), determining official place names is a competence of the regional government (the Govern de les Illes Balears), and the names have to conform to the Universitat de les Illes Balears's spelling rules –which are the same, essentially, as those used in València and Catalonia (Ramis, 2010). In the French Catalonia, only the French versions of place names are official, even though many municipalities use the Catalan name as well (Castells, 2008, 110). In eastern Aragon, along the border with Catalonia, Catalan has been widely spoken for many centuries, but Catalan place names are not official there (Burgoño, 2002, 188).

We will now shortly review other comparable legal situations to be found in Western Europe. In the Basque Country and Navarre, Euskaltzaindia (the Royal Academy of the Basque Language) is the official advisory institution with regard to the Basque language (Íñigo, 2010, 107-108); determining the names of municipalities depends on the town councils, and most of them have adopted either Basque or bilingual official names, but in some cases there are conflicts (Gorrotxategi, 2007). In the French Basque country, the names of towns are often written in Basque, but only the French names are official. In Galicia, the names are fixed by the Law 3/1983, June 15, on Linguistic Normalization in Galicia, which in article 10 states that place names must have one official version, always in Galician only, and it is the Galician government (the Xunta) that determines the official names of municipalities (Boullón, 2010, 31). In the autonomous Italian region of Val d'Aoste, local authorities have the power to determine the local place names, which are only in French, with the outstanding exception of the bilingual name (Italian/French) of the city of Aosta/Aoste. In the Italian province of Bolzano/Bozen (South Tyrol), local authorities can adopt German names in addition to the Italian ones (Ormeling, 2005, 177). Breton, Corse, Alsatian, Flemish and Occitan place names are not official in France, but in the Occitan-speaking area of Val d'Aran (Spanish Catalonia), only the Occitan version of place names is official. The official name of the Belgian capital, Brussels, is bilingual, in French and Dutch or Flemish: Bruxelles/Brussel.

## **5. Changes in the official municipality names**

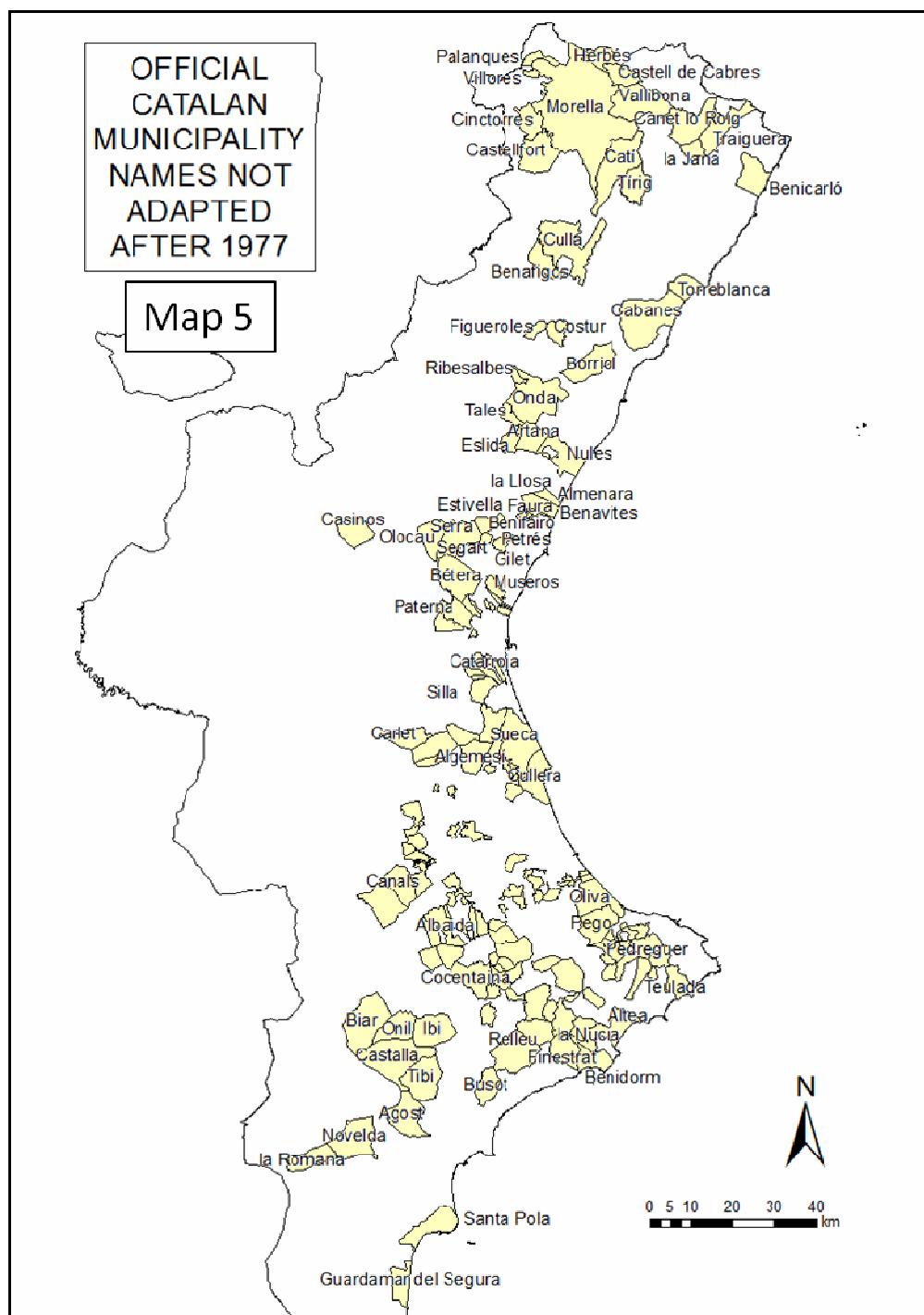
Of the 542 Valencian municipalities, 146 belong to the Spanish-speaking area (map 4). None of these has adopted a Catalan, or even bilingual (Spanish/Catalan), official name, in spite of the fact that most of them had a historical name in Catalan.<sup>4</sup> In some cases, these historical Catalan names have been kept unaltered, but they are not considered to be Catalan names; they pass –rather incongruously– as Spanish.<sup>5</sup> The only town in this area that has altered its name has been *Aras de los Olmos*, formerly *Aras de Alpuente*, but both are equally Spanish names.



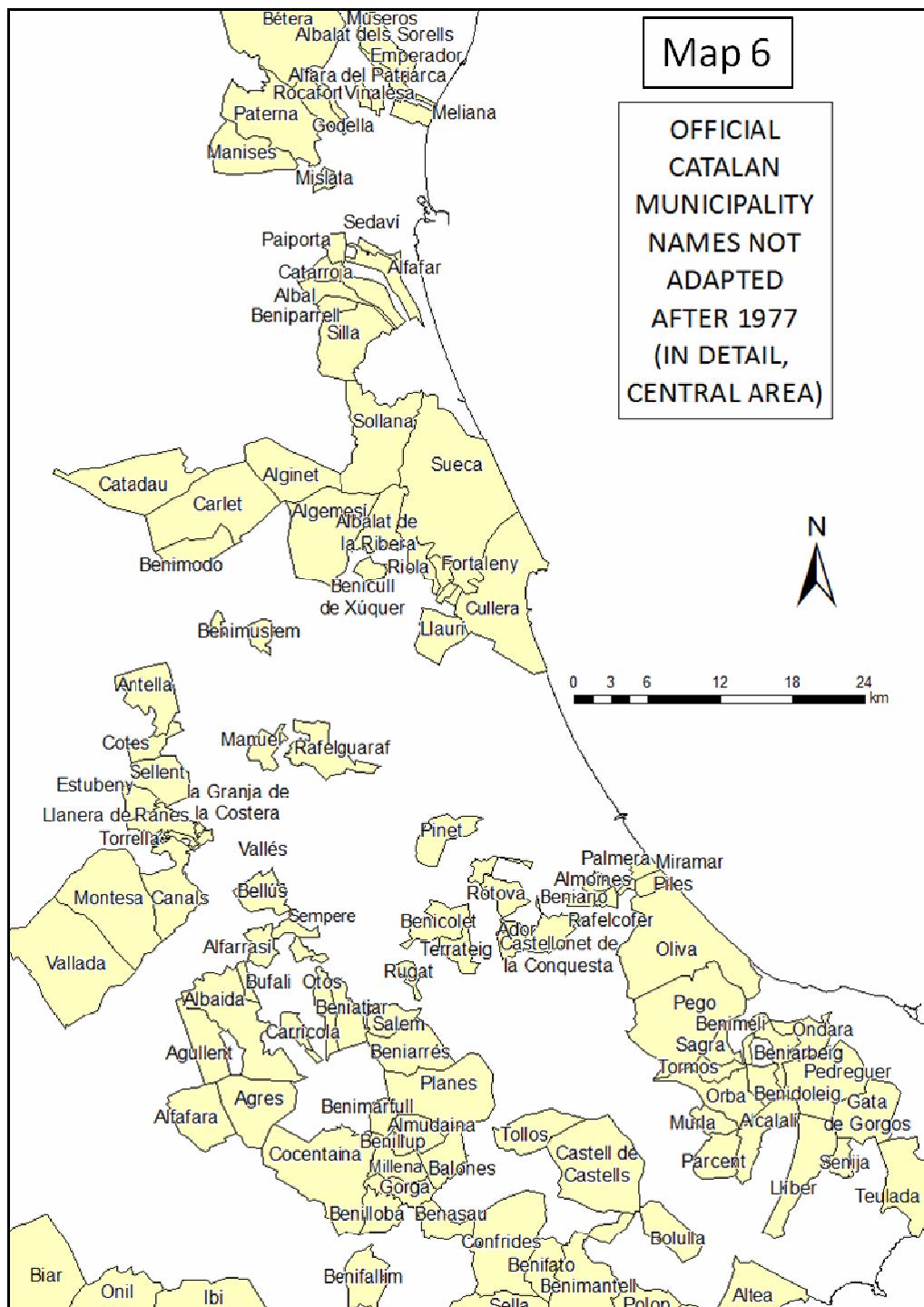
<sup>4</sup> Such as Oriola (*Orihuela*, in Castilian, is the only official name), Rojals (*Rojales*), Sogorb (*Segorbe*), Énguera (*Enguera*), Xelva (*Chelva*), Xiva (*Chiva*), Bunyol (*Buñol*), Montfort (*Monforte*), Asp (*Aspe*), Setaigües (*Sieteaguas*), Dosaigües (*Dosaguas*), etc.

<sup>5</sup> Such as Formentera, Tous, Navarrés, Anna, Vall (*de Almonacid*), Viver, Matet, Macastre or Sot.

Of the 396 Catalan-speaking towns in València, 167 had no need to change the official name they had in 1977, since this name had never been castilianised and was considered to be correct in modern Catalan (maps 5 and 6). The reasons why these names were never castilianised are unclear: it may be because it seemed easy to make them pass as Spanish<sup>6</sup>, or maybe because of a lack of inventiveness or initiative on the part of the clerks in charge of the castilianisation process. In this way, names such as Benicolet, Beniatjar, Tírig or Polop remained unaffected by castilianisation, in spite of their decidedly un-Spanish appearance.

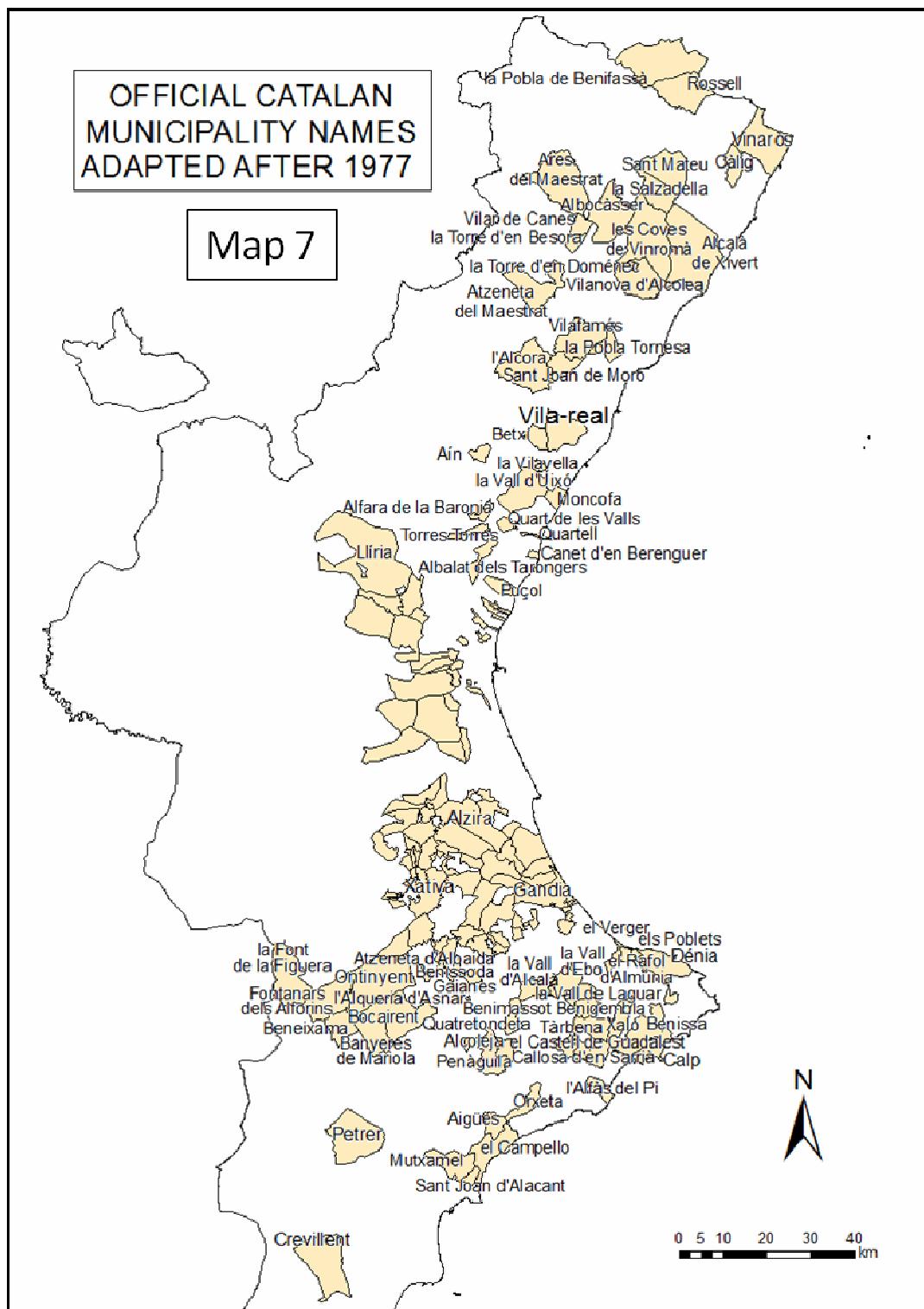


<sup>6</sup> This may be the case of many feminine names ending in -a, such as Albaida, Almenara, Altea, Castalla, Catarroja, Cocentaina, Godella, Novelda, Oliva, Ondara, Santa Pola, Silla, or Torreblanca.



With the establishment of democracy in Spain in 1977, Valencian municipalities now had the opportunity to reinstate their original Catalan names, where they had been previously translated or adapted into Spanish. In some cases, slight changes in spelling were needed in order to transform official names from medieval to modern Catalan. There were 229 Valencian municipalities in 1977 that needed to make changes to their official names in order to have a correct modern Catalan designation. So far, 149 of these have undergone this process and now have a correct monolingual Catalan name, whereas 32 other towns have chosen a bilingual (Catalan/Spanish or Spanish/Catalan) designation. There are 48 Catalan-

speaking municipalities which in 1977 bore castilianised names (32) or names not adapted to modern Catalan spelling (16) that have not yet replaced them.



We should now, with some examples, briefly examine this process of castilianisation affecting Valencian town names. To begin with, it must be said that the smaller the municipality, the less likely it is that its name was ever the object of castilianisation: this is why relatively important towns such as Ontinyent, Crevillente and Carcaixent were castilianised –into *Onteniente*, *Crevillente* and *Carcagente*–, whereas smaller nearby villages

like Agullent or Parcent were not. To this we must add that there was a general inconsistency in the process of castilianizing Valencian town names. Thus, the Catalan *x* in Xàtiva, Xeresa or Xixona was replaced by the Spanish *j* (*Játiva, Jeresa, Jijona*), yet Carcaixent, Moixent and Beneixida were castilianised as *Carcagente, Mogente* and *Benegida*, with a *g*. Some Catalan digraphs were left untouched: *ix /jʃ/*<sup>7</sup> in *Albuixech* (Albuixec); *-ig /tʃ/* in *Puig* (el Puig) or *Beniarbeig*, */itʃ/* in *Tírig* and *Càlig* (Càlig); or *tj /dʒ/* in *Beniatjar*. The Catalan spelling *j/g(+e,i)/dʒ/*<sup>8</sup> corresponding in Spanish to a very different sound (/χ/), was spared –changing its pronunciation– in some cases, such as *la Jana, Algemesí* or *Alginet*, but not in some other cases where it was replaced –both in writing and in pronunciation– by the Spanish spelling *ch /tʃ/*: *Benichembla* (Benigembla), *Alcolecha* (Alcoleja), *Fachecha* (Fageca) or *Albalat dels Taronchers* (Albalat dels Tarongers). The ancient Catalan ending *-ch /k/* was kept in *Albuixech* (Albuixec, in modern Catalan), *Benlloch* (Bell-lloc) and *Torre Endoménech* (la Torre d'en Doménec), but old Alberich (now Alberic) was castilianised as *Alberique*. Some names starting with a typically Catalan double *l*, sounding /ʎ/, like *Llutxent* and *Llíria*, lost one *l* and became *Luchente* and *Liria*, whereas both *l*'s were kept in *Llombay* (Llombai). The Catalan digraph *ny /ɲ/* was kept untouched in *Estubeny* and *Fortaleny*, but replaced by a typically Spanish *ñ* in *Bañeres* (Banyeres), *Picaña* (Picanya), *Rafelbuñol* (Rafelbunyol), or *Poliñá* (Polinyà). The Catalan name *la Vall d'Uixó* became *Vall de Uxó*, but *la Vall d'Alba* –not too far away– never lost its Catalan (and un-Spanish) apostrophe. The Catalan versions of most names of Arabic origin were never altered, which resulted in word endings that were obviously alien to Spanish spelling and pronunciation rules and habits, as in the names of the famous seaside resorts Benidorm and *Benicasim* (Benicàssim), or in those of the less well-known Benillup, Benimantell, Massamagrell, Benidoleig, *Alfar* (Alfarb), Simat, Benifairó, Benicarló. The Latin-derived name *Castelló*, however, became *Castellón*, -ón being quite a usual word ending in Spanish. Someone castilianised the seaside resort town of Calp into *Calpe*,<sup>9</sup> but it never occurred to anyone to alter the name *Agost*, un-Spanish at it looked and sounded. The feminine plural ending in Catalan is *-es*, corresponding to Spanish *-as*; this ending, however, was not altered in most cases (it was kept, for instance, in *Tavernes, Cabanes, Piles*, or *Bañeres*), but it was in the case of *Useras* (les Useres).

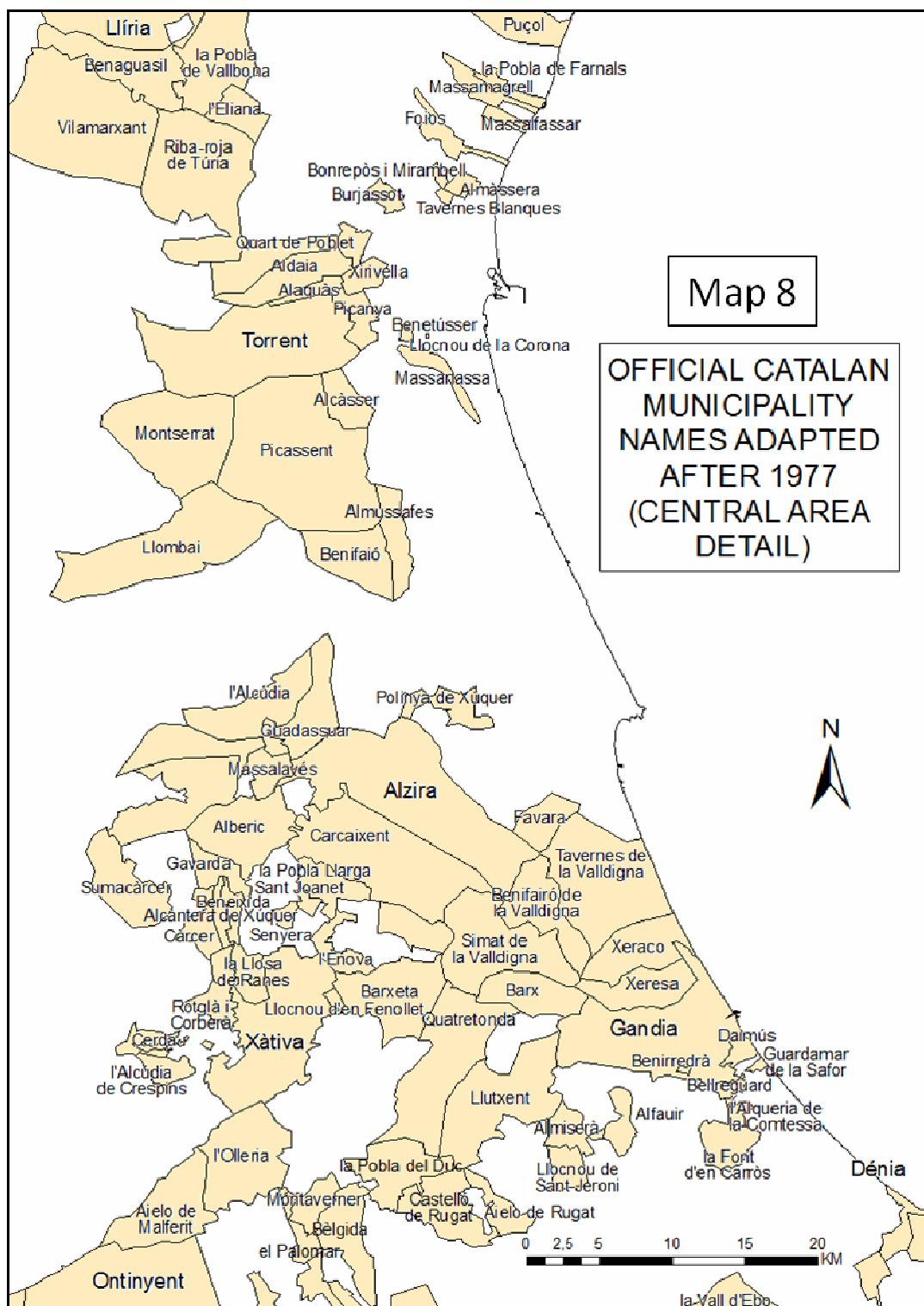
As for the most outstanding translations into Spanish, we can mention all the towns beginning with *vila* (*villa*), *pobla* (*puebla*), *lloc* (*lugar*) or *font* (*fuente*), and all the hagionyms (*Sant Mateu* > San Mateo, *Sant Vicent* > San Vicente, *Sant Joan* > San Juan), but also *Aguas* (Aigües), *Cuevas* (les Coves), *Torremanzanas* (la Torre de les Maçanes), *Hondón* (el Fondó) or *Torrente* (Torrent). All these translations into Spanish correspond to place names of Catalan origin which were not difficult to understand for the clerks. According to Rosselló (2004, 29), people castilianised in this way those names that they understood –or thought they did. Mutxamel, a place name deriving from the Arabic expression *mugma ellah* 'large market', evoked *muchá miel* 'abundance of honey' to its inventive translator, and the seaside resort city Peníscola, whose name derives from Latin PAENINSULA 'peninsula', became *Peñíscola* because someone imagined that it derived from *peña*, 'cliff'. However, *Vall* (d'Uixó, d'Alba) was never translated into *Valle*, nor *Castell* (de Castells, de Cabres) into *Castillo*, or *Llosa* (de la Plana, de Ranes) into *Losa*. In some cases, translation was only partial: *Puebla* del Duc (la Pobla del Duc, i.e. (The) Duke's Village).

<sup>7</sup> It is usually pronounced /jʃ/ in western Catalonia and most of València, but /ʃ/ in eastern Catalonia, in the Balearic Islands and southern areas of València.

<sup>8</sup> It is pronounced /dʒ/ (as in English *James* or Italian *Giacomo*) in most of València, and /ʒ/ (as in French *Jacques*) in most of Catalonia and in the Balearic islands.

<sup>9</sup> The consolidation of the castilianised forms *Castellón* and *Calpe* was very late: in the late eighteenth century, the famous Valencian botanist Cabanilles still wrote *Castelló* and *Calp* in a Spanish-language text.

A similar chaotic process of castilianisation of place names took place in Catalonia (Sant Boi > *San Baudilio*, Sant Fost > *San Fausto*, Sant Quirze > *San Quirico*; but Sant Feliu > *San Feliú*, not *San Félix*, Sant Celoni > *San Celoni*, not *San Celonio*, Santa Coloma > *Santa Coloma*, not *Santa Paloma*), in the Balearic Islands (*Santanyí* > *Santañy*, *Llucmajor* > *Lluchmayor*) or in Aragón as well (*Vallderoures* > *Valderrobes*, *Tamarit* > *Tamarite*), whereas in Northern Catalonia place names were adapted into French (*Ribesaltes* > *Rivesaltes*, *Sant Esteve* > *Saint-Estève*, *Sant Feliu d'Avall* > *Saint-Félix-d'Avall*, *Prada* > *Prades*). Italians adapted the name of the Catalan-speaking Sardinian city of l'Alguer into *Alghero*.



Maps 7 and 8 show the 149 municipalities in València that have reinstated their Catalan names, including some *comarca*<sup>10</sup> capitals (Gandia, Alzira, Dénia, Ontinyent and Vinaròs), some medium-sized industrial cities (Vila-real,<sup>11</sup> Petrer, la Vall d'Uixó, Crevillent, Carcaixent), some towns comprised in the urban areas of València city (Torrent, Burjassot, Xirivella, Aldaia, Alaquàs, Quart de Poblet) and of Alacant (Mutxamel, Sant Joan d'Alacant), and some seaside resorts and second residence towns (Calp, el Campello, l'Alfàs del Pi, la Pobla de Vallbona, Riba-roja de Túria).

Map 9 focuses on the 32 municipalities that have adopted the bilingual (Catalan / Spanish or vice versa) official name, including the second and the third cities in València, which are Alacant/Alicante and *Elche/Elx*,<sup>12</sup> respectively. In the Basque Country and Navarre some large municipalities have chosen a bilingual (Basque/Spanish or Spanish/Basque) name too (Donostia / *San Sebastián*, Pamplona/Iruña, Vitoria-Gasteiz),<sup>13</sup> but in Catalonia only the Catalan names are official (e.g. Lleida and Girona, not *Lérida* and *Gerona*); the same holds for Galicia and the Galician language (A Coruña and Ourense, not *La Coruña* and *Orense*, are the official forms).

Some medium-sized Valencian municipalities did not want to lose the Spanish form of their name, maybe because they are well-known in Spain for their history (*Sagunto/Sagunt*),<sup>14</sup> for their traditional industries (*Jijona/Xixona*; *Alcoy/Alcoi*) or for being a tourist resort popular with Spanish-speaking visitors (*Villajoyosa* / la Vila Joiosa, Jávea/Xàbia, Benicasim/Benicàssim, *Oropesa del Mar* / Orpesa, Peníscola/Peñíscola).

Some of the names for which a bilingual form has been adopted were originally noun phrases consisting of a head and a prepositional phrase with a distinctive value, which makes the bilingual form inordinately long, as in the case of *Torremanzanas* / la Torre de les Maçanes, or el Fondó de les Neus / *Hondón de las Nieves*; sometimes the distinctive segment is identical in Spanish and Catalan, which makes it difficult to see why it has to be repeated: *Castellón de la Plana* / Castelló de la Plana, *San Vicente del Raspeig* / Sant Vicent del Raspeig, *Campo de Mirra* / el Camp de Mirra. It is also difficult to understand why some small towns whose Spanish (i.e., castilianised) name has little or no tradition at all have nevertheless adopted a bilingual name as official, as in the cases of Montitxelvo/*Montichelvo*, Rafelbuñol/Rafelbunyol, Sant Jordi / *San Jorge*, Sueras/Suera, Useras / les Useres, Vilafranca / *Villafranca del Cid*, etc.

Rosselló (2004: 32-33) considers bilingual names pointless, and argues that no municipality in the Spanish-speaking part of València has adopted a dual official name (even though, we may add, the Catalan names of many of these towns have a tradition far older than the Spanish –castilianised– ones). Bilingual forms, apart from being a useless expense,

<sup>10</sup> The *comarca*, a geographical unit comprising several municipalities, is not officially recognised in València, but it is in Catalonia and Aragon.

<sup>11</sup> Vila-real (50,000 inhabitants) is famous in Spain because it is the smallest town to have a team playing in the Spanish Premier League and often in the Europa League and even the Champions' League as well. Despite the town having a monolingual Catalan official name, the football club executives have refused to change its name to date, which has made Vila-real go by a *wrong* (i.e., currently unofficial) castilianised name (*Villarreal*) in both Spain and Europe.

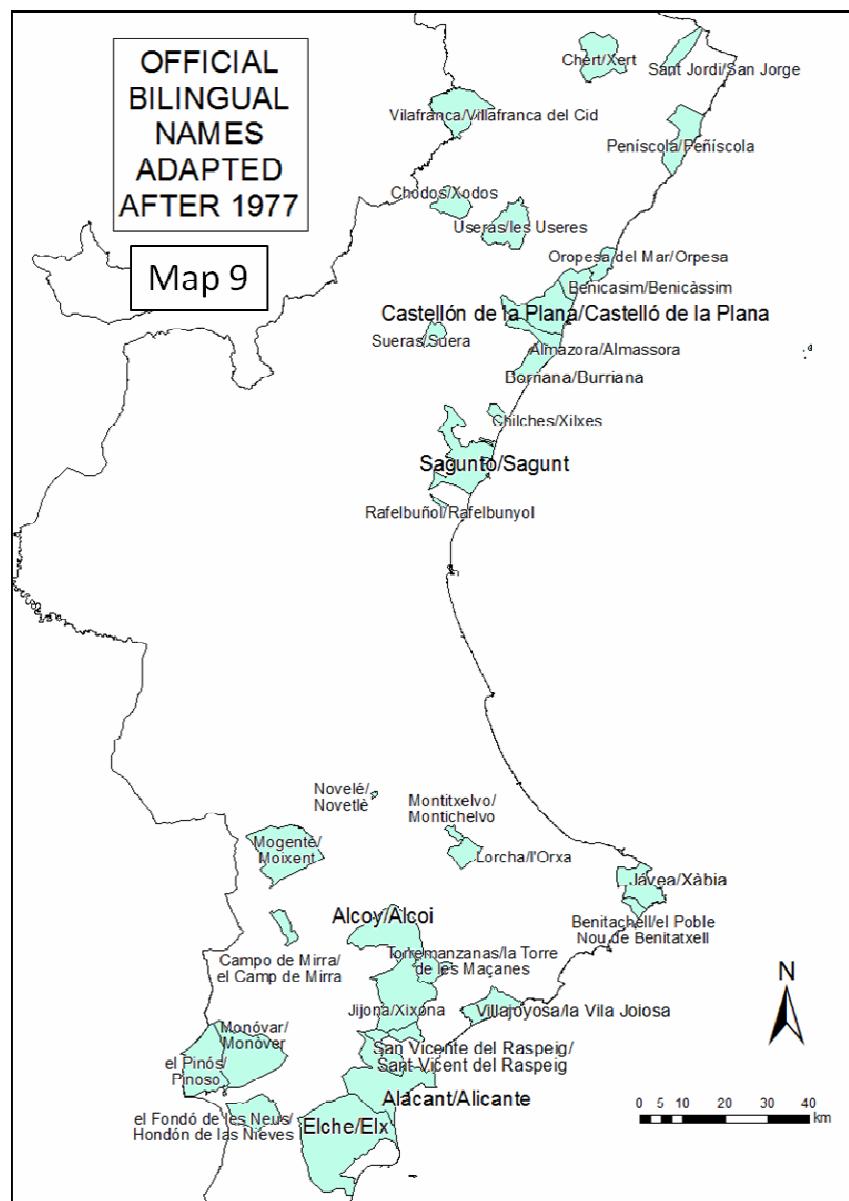
<sup>12</sup> The Spanish names *Alicante* and *Elche* have a long historical tradition, since these towns were part of the Kingdom of Castile during the second half of the XXIII century, before becoming a part of the València Kingdom in 1304 (Casanova, 2011, 258).

<sup>13</sup> Rather than a bilingual name, Vitoria-Gasteiz is a compound, hyphenated name.

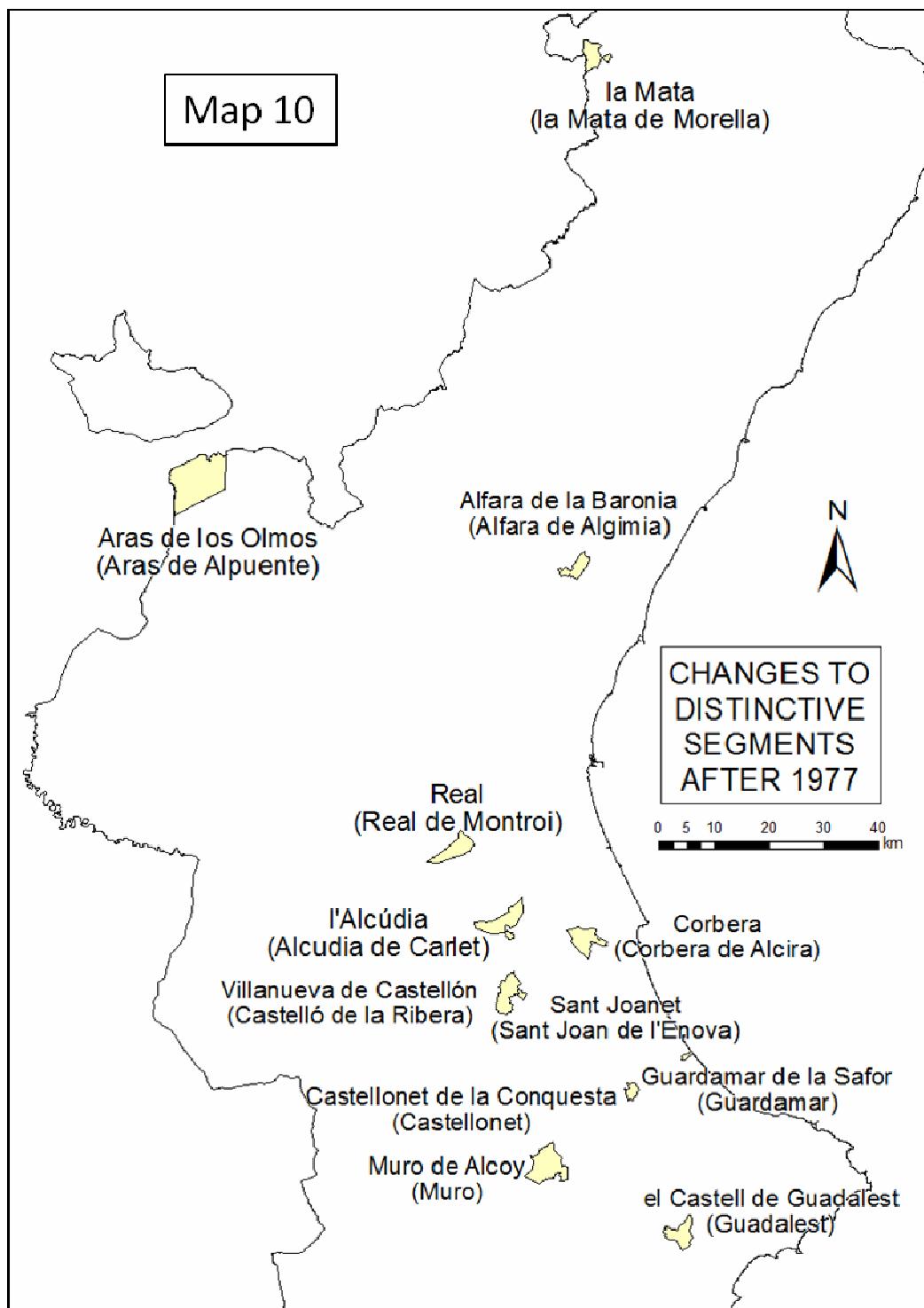
<sup>14</sup> Having been called *Morvedre* (later castilianised into *Murviedro*) from the Middle Ages, in 1868 this town changed its name to *Sagunto*, a Spanish adaptation of the famous name it bore in Roman times, *Saguntum* (probably from Greek *Saigantha*, of unkown origin). Saguntum's siege and conquest by the Carthaginian Hannibal was the *casus belli* that started the most important conflict of ancient times in the Western Mediterranean, the Second Punic War. In 1987, this historical town's name became officially bilingual.

are in opinion this author a form of diglossia, since it is no secret for citizens which is the important language, and which the minorised one.

Until 1999 in bilingual names, Spanish was always first and Catalan second, but that changed when the law 25/1999, July 6, made the following bilingual names of the 3 Valencian provinces official: Alacant/Alicante, Castelló/Castellón, and València/Valencia. Most towns that have adopted an official bilingual name since have chosen to place Catalan first (Sant Jordi / *San Jorge*, el Pinós / *Pinoso*, Peníscola/*Peñíscola*, etc.). The only municipality that, having adopted a bilingual official name before 1999, has decided to alter it in order to place Catalan in the first position is Alacant; in 1990 this city had established the form *Alicante*/Alacant as official, but since the homonymous province has been officially called Alacant/Alicante since 1999, the town council decided some years later that the city's name should be the same as that of the province of which Alacant is the capital (<http://ssweb.mpt.es/REL/>). The town councils of the capitals of the other two Valencian provinces, however, did not follow Alacant's example: Castelló de la Plana kept the Spanish (i.e., the castilianised) form in the first position (*Castellón de la Plana* / *Castelló de la Plana*), while the town council of València city (officially *Valencia*, in Spanish) has never adopted a Catalan/Valencian or a bilingual name, as we shall see.



Map 10 also shows the municipalities where the only or the main cause for their name change was to remove or to modify their distinctive segment, i.e., the element that is attached to a core name (or *noun phrase head*) to distinguish a town from others with whom it shares the same core name.<sup>15</sup>



<sup>15</sup> As in Tavernes Blanques and Tavernes de la Valldigna, where ‘Tavernes’ is the core name and ‘Blanques’ and ‘de la Valldigna’ are the distinctive elements.

The municipalities having suppressed their distinctive segments are l'Alcúdia (formerly 'de Carlet'), Corbera (formerly 'de Alcira'), la Mata (formerly 'de Morella'), Real (formerly 'de Montroi') and Sant Joanet (before 'Sant Joan de l'Ènova'); those having modified them are *Aras de los Olmos* (before 'de Alpuente') and Alfara de la Baronia (before 'de Algimia'); on the other hand, Castellonet and Guardamar, both close to Gandia, which had no distinctive segments in their names, added 'de la Conquesta' and 'de la Safor', respectively, in 1994 and 2001. In 2002 in (former) Guadalest, the core name became the distinctive segment, as the town decided to change its official name into Castell de Guadalest.

The town of *Villanueva de Castellón* suppressed in 1994 its previous core name (*Villanueva*) and added to the new one, 'Castelló' (whose castilianised form had until then been the distinctive segment), a new distinctive part: 'de la Ribera'; the name Castelló de la Ribera, however, was finally annulled in court, first in 1998, and later in 2005. Muro de Alcoy wished to remove the distinctive segment from its name in 2002, but it was not allowed to do so. The removing or altering of distinctive segments almost always aims to eliminate the reference –in that segment– to a nearby town, a reference which does not please the locals, who understand it as a sign of subordination to this other town.

Map 11 shows those municipalities that have not yet restored their Catalan/Valencian name or that have not adapted their name to the current spelling rules of this language. Mainly they are small-sized towns, save one: València city, which we will deal with later on. There are some place names where adding a definite article (*el, la, els, les*) is required (in fact, it may be the only thing that needs to be done): la Serra d'en Galceran (*Sierra Engarcerán*), les Alqueries (*Alquerías*), la Canyada (*Cañada*), l'Alguenya (*Algueña*), el Fondó (*Hondón*), el Forcall, el Portell, la Todolella, la Serratella, la Vall d'Alba, el Puig, la Vall de Gallinera, els Negrals, el Genovés, el Ràfol, el Real, etc. There are four place names where adding an *s* is needed: *Benas(s)al*, *Benis(s)anó*, *Benis(s)uera*, and *Guadas(s)équies*. Three place names need to replace *y* with *i*: *Alboraya* > Alboraia, *Montroy* > Montroi, *Sanet y Negrals* > Sanet i els Negrals. Other cases in which a slight change in spelling would be enough to adapt the names into modern Catalan are: *Benlloch* > Bell-lloc, *Albuixech* > Albuixec, *Adsubia* > l'Atzúbia, *Moncada* > Montcada, *Alfarp* > Alfarb, or *Alcocer* > Alcosser. In some cases, a translation of the distinctive segment is needed: *Vistabella del Maestrazgo* > del Maestrat; *Cervera del Maestre* > del Maestrat; *Santa Magdalena de Pulpis* > de Polpis; *Palma de Gandía* and *Real de Gandía* > Palma de Gandia and el Real de Gandia, respectively. Some names include Spanish letters or digraphs which are nonexistent in Catalan and should be replaced with their Catalan equivalents, such as *Fachecha* > Fageca, *Algueña* > l'Alguenya, *Cañada* > Canyada. Other towns that still keep names that were once translated or adapted into Spanish are *Lucena del Cid* > Llucena, *Zorita* > Sorita, *Villalonga* > Vilallonga, *Alquierías del Niño Perdido* > les Alqueries, *San Antonio de Benagéber* > Sant Antoni (de Benaixeve), *San Rafael del Río* > Sant Rafel, *Sierra Engarcerán* > la Serra d'en Galceran, *Hondón de los Frailes* > el Fondó dels Frares... or *Villanueva de Castellón* / Vilanova de Castelló / Castelló de la Ribera.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> This name has a conflictive political and judicial history, as a result of which a part of the town's inhabitants (aided by reactionary forces from outside) have succeeded –for the moment– in imposing their opinions on another part of the townspeople, both parts unwilling to reach an agreement. That is why, in Spain's democratic period, this town has been officially called first *Villanueva de Castellón* (before 1982), then Vilanova de Castelló (1982-1986), then again *Villanueva de Castellón* (1986-1994), later on Castelló de la Ribera (1994-1998), then *Villanueva de Castellón* for the third time (1998-2004), then again Castelló de la Ribera (2004-2005) and from 2005 to the present, *Villanueva de Castellón* (for the fourth time).

Finally, there are some cases where the changes needed would affect only the accents: sometimes an acute accent needs to be changed into a grave one: *Benigánim* > Benigànim, *Beniardá* > Beniardà, *Ràfol de Salem* > (el) Ràfol de Salem, *Nàquera* > Nàquera; sometimes the accent should be removed in Catalan: *Potries* > Potries, *Palma de Gandía* > Palma de Gandia; on the other hand, some names having no accent in the Spanish (castilianised) spelling need one in the Catalan version: *Algímia* > Algímia, *Guadasequies* > Guadasséquies, or *Valencia* > València.

The case of València city is particularly symptomatic of Valencian linguistic anomalies. As mentioned before, the name of the central Valencian province is bilingual (València/*Valencia*), but that of the city which is its capital is not. Most university scholars defend that the Catalan/Valencian version of this name should carry a grave accent (València), but there are some who believe that the accent should be acute (Valéncia) (Casanova, 2011, 284). This controversy makes it easier for the town council to keep the Spanish version of the city's name (*Valencia*, with no accent) as the only official one. But, even though the form València is not recognised as official, the Valencian regional TV (Canal 9), the two public universities in the city, three main railway stations, the taxis<sup>17</sup> and often, even the town council itself use it –as in the logo ‘Ajuntament de València’ (figure 3).

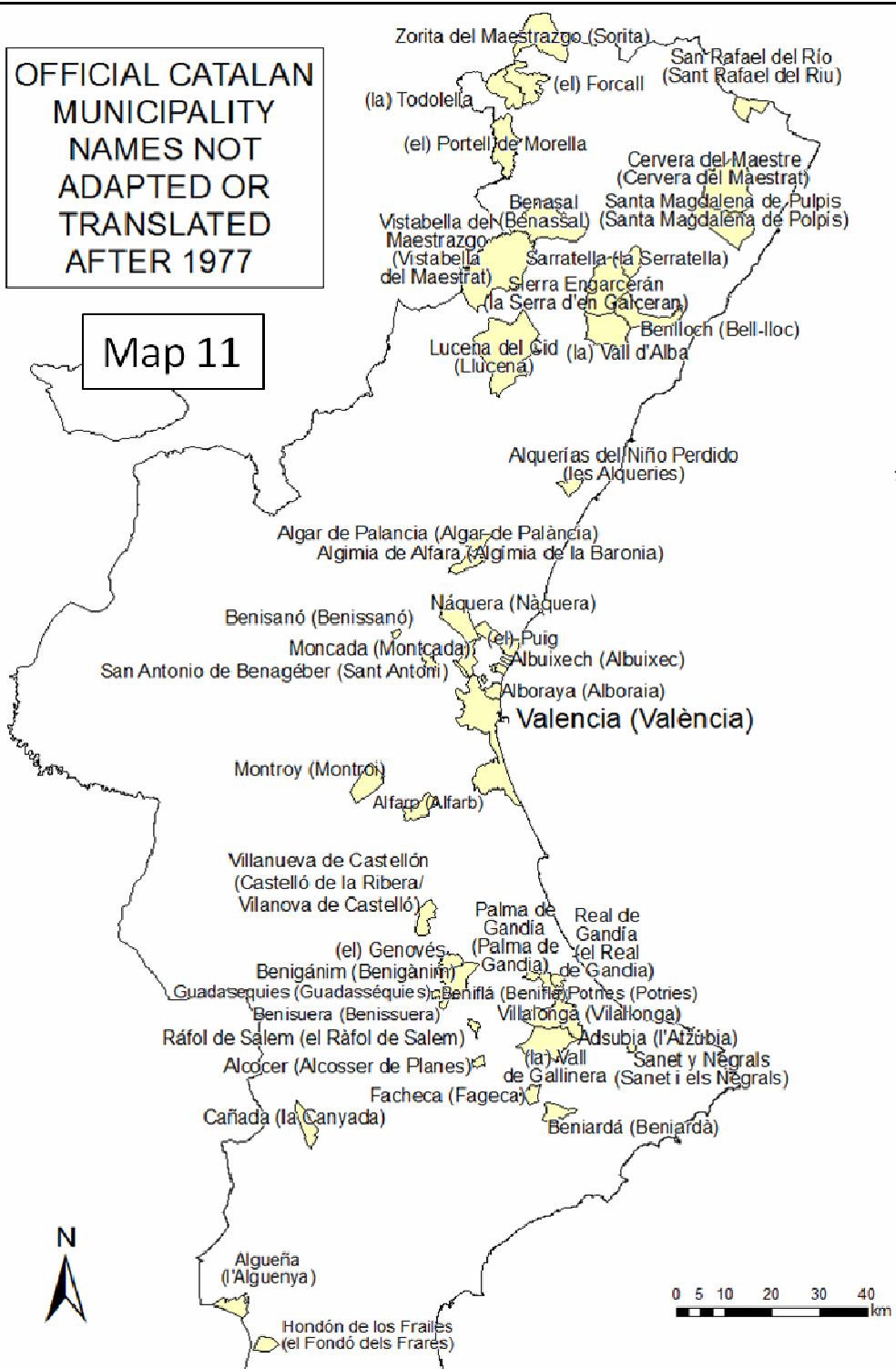


**Figure 3:** two versions of València's Council logo

<sup>17</sup> Most taxis carry the inscription ‘Àrea de València’, with a grave accent, but some carry the same inscription with acute accent in the (non-official) name Valéncia.

**OFFICIAL CATALAN  
MUNICIPALITY  
NAMES NOT  
ADAPTED OR  
TRANSLATED  
AFTER 1977**

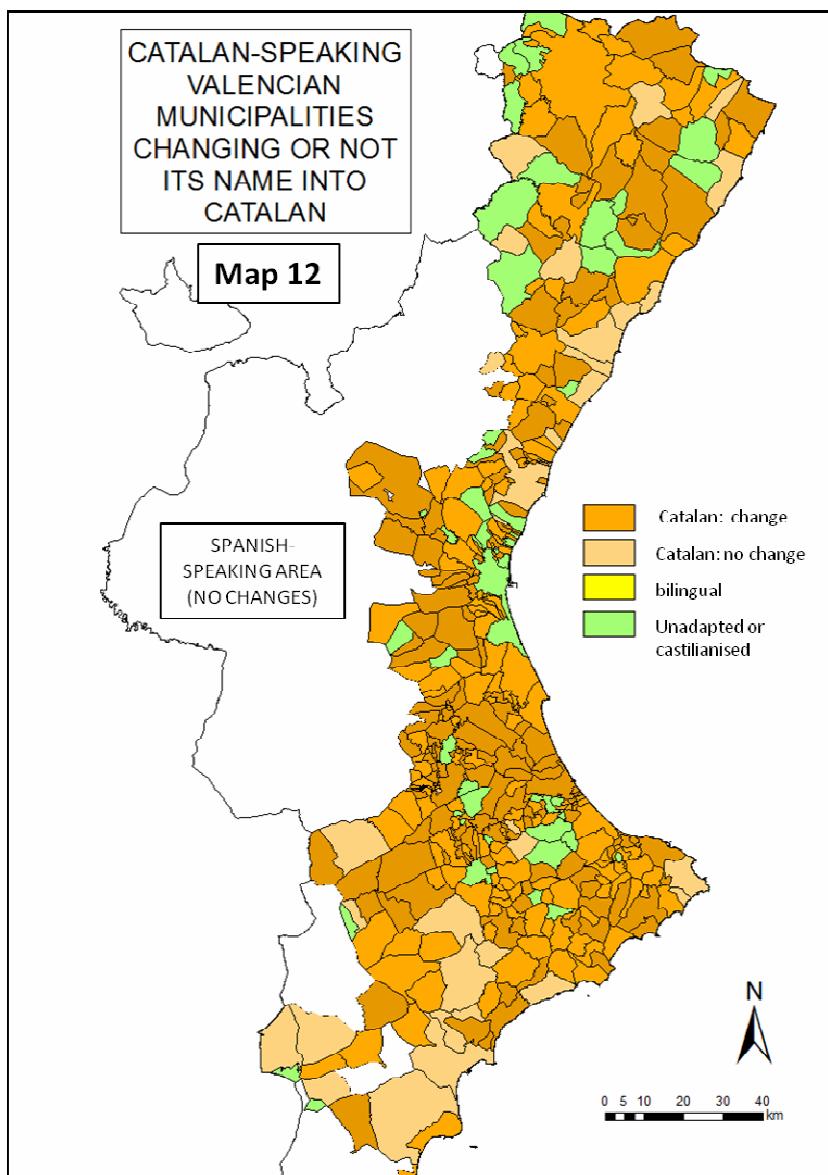
**Map 11**



## 6. Conclusions

The banning of the official use of the Catalan/Valencian language in 1707 in the former Kingdom of València (which had been abolished and annexed to Castile that same year) led to the names of most Valencian municipalities, originally in Catalan, undergoing a process of *castilianisation*. This process was supposed to entail a translation of the names into Castilian/Spanish, where such translation was feasible, or at least an adaptation to the spelling of this language. In fact, it was a chaotic and unpredictable process that did not affect all Valencian municipalities in the same way. The main patterns that we can spot in such a messy process –with lots of exceptions, though– were: in the first place, those names that the clerks in charge were totally unable to find any meaning to tended to be left untouched: that would explain why that was almost always the case with names of Arabic origin; and secondly, the smaller the town, the less likely it would be for it to be translated or adapted into Spanish.

The results of our research show that, of the 542 Valencian municipalities, none of the 146 which are located in the Spanish-speaking area has adopted a Catalan –or even a bilingual Spanish/Catalan– official name in modern times –even though many of them bore a Catalan official name before 1707. The remaining 396 municipalities are those located in the Catalan-speaking area, but here the situation is not as uniform as the one we have just seen in the Spanish-speaking area (map 12). In 1977, the establishment of democracy in Spain allowed a Valencian municipality to restore its Catalan/Valencian historical name for the first time (*la Font d'en Carròs*, formerly castilianised as *Fuente Encarroz*). Many Valencian villages and towns have followed this example since. 167 out of the



396 Catalan-speaking municipalities in València, however, have had no need to change the official name they had in 1977, since this name had never been castilianised and was considered to be correct in modern Catalan. 149 municipalities, on the other hand, have now

a monolingual Catalan name, but –like la Font d'en Carròs– have needed to make changes to the one they had in 1977. A third group includes 32 municipalities that have now a bilingual –Catalan/Spanish or vice versa– name, having only a Spanish name in 1977; among them we find major cities such as Alacant, Elx, Castelló, Sagunt, or Alcoi. Finally, a fourth group is constituted by Catalan-speaking towns that have kept the same name that they had in 1977, even though it is considered to be a castilianised or incorrect –with respect to modern Catalan spelling– version of the name; the case of València city, as we have seen, falls into the last one of these categories.

VALENCIAN MUNICIPALITIES ACCORDING TO THEIR OFFICIAL NAME AND THEIR PROCESS OF CASTILIANIZATION	
<b>1. They belong to the Spanish-speaking area and have the official name in Spanish</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>2. They belong to the Catalan-speaking area and have the official name in Catalan, with no need to make changes to the one they had before 1977</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>3. They belong to the Catalan-speaking area and have the official name in Catalan, needing to make changes to the one they had before 1977</b>	<b>149</b>
3.1. They have a castilianised name and have reinstated the Catalan name after 1977	129
3.2. They have a non-castilianised name, but needed some adaptation to modern Catalan after 1977	20
<b>4. They belong to the Catalan-speaking area and have the official name bilingual (Catalan/Spanish or vice versa), thus they needed changes after 1977</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>5. They belong to the Catalan-speaking area and keep the official name they had before 1977, even though it is considered to be a castilianised or incorrect version of their Catalan name</b>	<b>48</b>
5.1. They have a castilianised name and have reinstated the Catalan name after 1977	32
5.2. They have a non-castilianised name, but needed some adaptation to modern Catalan after 1977	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>542</b>

To sum up, in 2011, 348 out of the 396 Catalan-speaking Valencian municipalities have an official name in Catalan, either a monolingual one (316 towns, i.e. 80%) or a bilingual form, Catalan/Spanish or vice versa (32, i.e. 8%). That means that 84% of municipality names in the Catalan-speaking València are in Catalan. This may not seem very impressive if compared with the situation in the other main Catalan-speaking lands in Spain, Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, where 99% and 95% of municipalities, respectively, have a monolingual official name conforming to the correct Catalan spelling. Nevertheless, the successes of the *revalencianisation* (or *recatalanisation*) of municipality names in València should not be underestimated: the Valencian sociolinguistic situation must be born in mind, as must the fact that the social prestige of the Catalan language is, in our time, much lower in València than it is in Catalonia or even in the Balearic Islands. As a general pattern, we can say that in medium- and large-sized towns, official names are often either monolingual in Catalan or bilingual –València city is an exception–, even though in some of these towns Catalan is nowadays spoken by a minority of people; on the other hand, in smaller municipalities, where Catalan is still widely used by their inhabitants, it is not rare to find that Spanish (i.e. castilianised) names have been kept as the sole official ones. This paradox is one of the many anomalies to be found in Valencian toponymy, and in the wider Valencian sociolinguistic situation.

## 7. Bibliography

- Alcaraz, Manuel; Ochoa, Josep; Isabel, Ferran. 2004. La llei d'ús i ensenyament del valencià, en via morta. In: *Revista de Llengua i Dret*, 41, 105-139. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya.
- Bracho, Llum. 2008. El comportament ideològic a través de la toponímia. En *Llengua & Literatura: revista anual de la Societat Catalana de Llengua i Literatura*, 19, 189-220. Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans.
- Boullón, Ana Isabel. 2010. Toponimia de Galicia: estado da cuestión. In: *Toponimia de España. Estado actual y perspectivas de la investigación*, 31-58. *Patronymica Romanica*, 24. Berlín: De Gruyter.
- Burgueño, Jesús. 2002. El mapa escondido: las lenguas de España. In: *Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles*, 34, 171-192. Madrid: Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles.
- Casanova, Emili. 2010. Estado actual de los estudios sobre toponimia valenciana. In: *Toponimia de España. Estado actual y perspectivas de la investigación*, 195-212. *Patronymica Romanica*, 24. Berlín: De Gruyter.
- Casanova, Emili. 2011. Comunidad Valenciana. In: *Toponimia hispánica. Origen y evolución de nuestros topónimos más importantes*, 257-292. València: Denes.
- Castells, Alfred. 2008: Ressenya al Nomenclàtor toponímic de la Catalunya del Nord. En *Llengua i ús. Revista tècnica de Política Lingüística*, 43, 109-112. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya.
- Gorrotxategi, Mikel. 2007: Normalización y actualización de la toponimia vasca. In: *Jornada Toponimia cartográfica. Tendències actuals i futures*. Barcelona: Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya.
- Íñigo, Andrés. 2010. Toponimia de Navarra y de Euskadi. In: *Toponimia de España. Estado actual y perspectivas de la investigación*, 107-138. *Patronymica Romanica*, 24. Berlín: De Gruyter.
- Membrado, Joan Carles. 2010. Experiencias para la introducción de la toponimia en el Institut Cartogràfic Valencià. In: *III Jornada de la Comisión Especializada de Nombres Geográficos (CENG): toponimia y sociedad*. València: Consejo Superior Geográfico, Acadèmia Valenciana de la Llengua, Institut Cartogràfic Valencià i Universitat de València.
- Membrado, Joan Carles. 2010. Introducció geogràfica a la toponímia municipal valenciana. In: *Postgrau de Toponímia 2010-2011. Toponímia i cartografia*. València: ADEIT, Universitat de València.
- Membrado, Joan Carles. 2011. Cartografía del urbanismo expansivo valenciano según SIOSE. In: *XXII Congreso de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles*. Alacant: Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles.
- Ormeling, Ferjan. 2005. Minority Toponyms on Maps – Vingt ans apres. In: *Proceedings of the international conference on Minority Names/Indigenous Names and Multilingual Areas*, 172-181. Frisia: Geonames 2005.
- Pérez, Aigües Vives. 2001. Legislació sobre onomàstica: el cas valencià. In: *Congrés Internacional de Toponímia i Onomàstica Catalanes*, 977-984. València: Denes
- Rabella, Joan Anton. 2005. Presentació del nomenclàtor oficial de toponímia major de Catalunya. In: Estudis romànics 27, 261-266. Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans.
- Ramis, Josep Tomàs. 2010. Normalización de la toponimia en la comunidad autónoma de las Islas Baleares. Estado de la cuestión. In: *III Jornada de la Comisión Especializada de Nombres Geográficos (CENG): toponimia y sociedad*. València.

- Rosselló, Vicenç. 1997. Els topònims de mossèn Cababilles. En *Cuadernos de Geografía*, 62, 603-613. València: Departament de Geografia, Universitat de València.
- Rosselló, Vicenç. 2004. *Toponímia, geografía i cartografía*. València: Universitat de València.
- Variaciones de los municipios de España desde 1842*. 2008. Madrid: Ministerio de Administraciones Públicas. Secretaría General Técnica.  
[http://www.mpt.gob.es/publicaciones/centro\\_de\\_publicaciones\\_de\\_la\\_sgt/Monografias/parrafo/011113/text\\_es\\_files/file/Variaciones-INTERNET.pdf](http://www.mpt.gob.es/publicaciones/centro_de_publicaciones_de_la_sgt/Monografias/parrafo/011113/text_es_files/file/Variaciones-INTERNET.pdf)

Joan Carles Membrado Tena  
Geography Department  
University of València  
[joan.membrado@uv.es](mailto:joan.membrado@uv.es)