



Public inertia towards the new toponymic landscapes in Vinnytsia, Ukraine

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ABSTRACT

Key words:

dual toponymy, popular responses, practices of place name use, social sustainability, toponymic transition, Ukraine

The paper focuses on the practices of everyday use of street names after the massive toponymic cleansing under the frameworks of decommunisation and de-Russification in Vinnytsia, Ukraine. Employing a mixed method approach, which includes a social experiment with the passersby on the streets of the city, analysis of the real estate advertisement and a series of interviews with the citizens, the authors reveal various practices of everyday use of new and old street names as a public response to the officially imposed city-text. The findings indicate that the transition from the old to the new toponymic system after the ideologically-driven toponymic cleansing does not represent an immediate and a single-step action, and should be considered a long-lasting, protracted and multi-staged process that requires several years or even decades. The gradual introduction of a new place name into various spheres of public life represents a kind of heterochronic coevolution driven by the collision of top-down vs. bottom-up interests. Another finding is that public inertia towards the new toponymic landscapes may be driven almost totally by motivations that have no relationship to ideology and politics. Also, it has been found that the actual communicative practices after the renaming depend on a variety of predominantly local factors and actors, including the specific place, place name, communicative situation and characteristics of the interlocutors. The findings are discussed in the framework of social sustainability, pointing at the need for clearly articulated and coherent municipal politics aimed at familiarising the community with newly introduced place names.

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1. Introduction

The post-Soviet space, with its constant and multidirectional geopolitical reconfiguration and related transformations of the national and local toponymic landscapes, requires more efforts to analyse the various forms of connections between space, toponymic landscapes, political power and societies, including toponymic aspects of the people's everyday life (Basik 2020; Basik 2023).

The existing research literature on the toponymic landscape in the post-socialist and post-Soviet contexts has focused mostly on the official acts of renaming, as well as its (geo)political drivers, actors, and concomitant negotiations – when, where, why and under what circumstances a certain place name has been erased or introduced. Various aspects of conscious resistance to the hegemonic toponymic politics implemented by the national or local governments have been also more or less elucidated in the literature. Nevertheless, little attention has been paid at the moment to the everyday lives of newly introduced place names, as well as on the everyday afterlives of the erased place names that have lost their official status but continue to be present in the urban toponymic landscape – both built environment and heterogeneous social communicative practices.

Following Rose-Redwood's call, the time has come to move beyond a focus solely on the official discourses of toponymic inscription, to shift more to the everyday act of place name use (Rose-Redwood 2008). There is a need to look more precisely on the multifaceted

phenomenon of toponymic continuity (Light and Young 2018), conceptualising politically-driven changes of toponymic landscape as a continuous transition rather than abrupt switching between two different modes. As Giraut and Houssay-Holzschuch (2016) point out, “end product” names might be less revealing than the processes through which toponymic regimes are themselves constructed.

In this paper, the authors focus on the practices of the everyday use of street names after the massive toponymic cleansing under the frameworks of decommunisation and de-Russification in Vinnytsia, Ukraine, “engaging with the issue of residents’ emotional and everyday lived geographies of street names” (Light and Young 2018). Employing a mixed method approach, we seek to find answers to the following research questions:

1. How much time does take the transition between leaving and coming toponymic landscapes in the conditions of the ideology-driven toponymic cleansing?
2. Is this transition synchronous or heterochronous with regard to the various practices of place name use and different strata of the urban toponymic landscape?
3. Can a public response to an officially imposed city-text be driven rather by non-ideological factors like conveniences and habits than by ideological motives?
4. What actors and factors, including those local-level (Light and Young 2018) may affect the practices of street name use in every specific case?

Since street names may be a source of local pride or identity (Creţan and Matthews 2016), as well as a tool for advancing the goals of societal justice, equity and belonging (Alderman and Inwood 2013; Wanjiru and Matsubara 2017), and given the preminent nature of the conceptual relationships between social sustainability and street naming (Yankson 2023), the findings are interpreted via the social sustainability framework.

2. Toponymic transition and popular responses to place naming

Studies focusing on various historical, cultural, national and geopolitical contexts have shown that the transformation of toponymic landscape, including in conditions of toponymic cleansing that typically follows the change of political regime, rarely is immediate and thorough (Rose-Redwood 2008; Azaryahu 2012b, 2012c; Shoval 2013). On the contrary, toponymic reconfiguration, driven by an ideological imperative to erase unwanted symbols of the former political regime from the urban landscape, is rather incoherent, inconclusive, and spatially diverse than systematic and comprehensive; it is a rather long-lasting and protracted process than immediate and single-step action (Light and Young 2018). The abilities of a national government to reconfigure toponymic streetscapes are limited by the local settings and lower-level actors (Verdery 1995), including conscious contestation by local inhabitants, pragmatic motifs, bureaucracy hoops, lack of funding, or simply negligence of the responsible persons. There are several aspects of toponymic continuity, which expresses itself primarily in the form of inertia in and towards new toponymic landscapes.

First, a toponymic transition may be incomplete and inconsistent at the level of legal acts of renaming. There could be leftover toponyms – place names that should have been erased from the streetscape by the new political regime due to their ideological burden, but for some reason escaped this fate. Sometimes the reason lies in the legal sphere, for example, the names of oblasts (first-order administrative units) in post-Soviet Ukraine and Russia escaped the renaming after the renaming of their capitals just because the names of the oblasts are fixed in national constitutions, which are usually hard

to change (Marin 2012). In other cases, some old regime toponyms may survive because of the wilful or unintentional negligence of the authorities and/or contestation by the local community. A specific case could be an ambivalent relationship between a new political regime and its predecessor, producing a large share of toponymic leftovers, for instance, Russia as a successor of the Soviet Union (Gill 2005). In Ukraine, a common form of silent protest against the central government’s imposition of decommunization was some local governments’ attempts to keep the old name by giving it a different interpretation (Kuczabski and Boychuk 2020). The axiological map of the city also does matter: officially undesired place names are often erased from the central parts of the cities and the most symbolically important urban places, including the main arteries, but persist or even reappear in the urban periphery and the less important, secondary streets (Light 2004; Gnatiuk and Glybovets 2020; Rusu 2021). Sometimes relocation of street names or even monuments from the more valuable to the less valuable places occurred as a compromise for citizens who did not want to see their former heroes leaving the city altogether (Crljenko 2012; Palmberger 2018; Šakaja and Stanić 2017).

Second, in some geographical contexts, the erased ideology may be reproduced in the newly introduced place names, although such place names do not directly fall under the normative requirement that regulates naming politics. For example, in the eastern part of Ukraine, despite the removal of explicitly communist street names under the obligatory decommunisation campaign launched in 2015, Soviet identity continued to be reproduced through surviving or even newly emerging toponyms semantically appealing to the Soviet era, including those commemorating local factory directors or shock workers of the communist times (Gnatiuk 2018).

Third, which is most important in the context of the paper, the renaming of a street does not end with its regulatory enactment. As Light and Young (2018) noted, “Previous research has perhaps tended to draw too neat a link between regime change and street renaming, implying a straightforward political process”. Employing a brilliant case of Sixth Avenue, Rose-Redwood (2008) reveals performative limits of sovereign authority over regimes of spatial inscription as well as the use of street naming as an instrument of policy. Despite the formal approval of renaming, old place names may continue to be present in the mundane lives of citizens – in the material environment, in the minds of the people, and in their everyday communicative and orientation practices. A significant delay between the official renaming of a street and the installation of new street signage, including address plates, as well as parallel address plates showing both old and new street names has been reported (Bylina (in press); Light and Young 2018), and in many cases, local lower-level actors and factors within and outside of urban administrations (committees, urban managers, block managers, work units, workers, city budget, etc.) are responsible for such a delay. Similarly, formally outdated street names may continue to be used in real estate advertisements, taxi navigator systems, and, of course, everyday communicative practices of the citizens (Kearns and Berg 2002; Rose-Redwood 2008; Azaryahu 1992, 2012a; Shoval 2013). According to the observation by the authors, address plates with communist names continued to be massively present on the facades of buildings, street advertisement, and other signage across Ukraine in 2021, although legal acts of decommunisation were adopted mostly in 2015–2016. Diverse studies of place naming elucidated a phenomenon when the names imposed by the municipality were often ignored by the residents of the city who instead continued to use the longstanding vernacular names of streets (Yeoh 1992; Yeh 2013; Light and Young 2014, 2018). Especially conservative could be the older generations, who often persistently prefer to continue their

old practices of place naming and wayfaring (Brocket 2021). The divergence of the officially introduced toponymicon and the actual communicative and orientation practices of the citizens represents a vivid example of plural toponymies as a possibility of the co-existence of vernacular place names along with official place names that are imposed by hegemonic actors (Giraut 2020). Also, it mirrors Lefebvre's (1991) framework that contrasts official representations of space with the spaces of representation that are constituted by the lived experiences of everyday life.

The popular responses to the place names imposed by the authorities include a variety of forms and can be, of course, acts of conscious resistance (e.g. Kearns and Berg 2002; Rose-Redwood 2008; Yeh 2013; Creţan and Matthews 2016; Basik 2022). However, in many cases, the inertia towards new toponymic landscapes results from the everyday habits, (in)conveniences or cost expenses of city dwellers as they navigate urban space rather than a form of conscious 'resistance' to the toponymic regime itself (Azaryahu 1996; Yeh 2013; Light and Young 2014, 2018). The survey of the inhabitants of Košice, Slovakia, revealed that some older communist toponyms remain in use by older generations of city dwellers who continue to use them out of habit (Chloupek 2019). The research of multiple toponymies and everyday life of place names of South China Sea Islands demonstrated that it could be feasible to go beyond political power alone and to consider the intersection of state power with other processes which are neglected in the critical toponymies literature, including socio-economic change, demographic change, technological change, the 'heritagisation' of place names, the emotional attachment to place names, etc (Wu and Young 2022). The role of a street name as a means of spatial identification often is no less important than its semiotic role as a commemorative marker. Beyond the symbolic or ideological side of names and naming, ordinary citizens use, connect with, and depend upon street names in practical terms, and thus they internalise and react differently to the costs of rewriting the city-text (Creţan and Matthews 2016). There are indications that place names, imposed by the political regime that came to power, over time may become a part of everyday routine and are not perceived as ideologically charged in a more or less wide set of mundane situations. Discussing the so-called Leninfall (mass demolishing of Lenin monuments in Ukraine after the outbreak of Euromaidan), Gaidai et al. (2018) admit that over time, the Soviet monuments and, especially, the Soviet street names lost their semantic sense and became almost invisible for locals as ideological markers, functioning just as signifiers of place and direction.

3. The city of Vinnytsia as a case study

In this study, we focused on the city of Vinnytsia, a regional centre with a population of ca. 370,000 in the central Ukraine. The public moods and local political regimes in Vinnytsia during the post-communist period basically declared them as pro-European/pro-Western and held moderate position between the extreme Ukrainian nationalism and integration with post-Soviet space. Post-communist change of street names in Vinnytsia, similar to the other cities in the central part of Ukraine (see Gnatiuk 2018; Gnatiuk and Melnychuk 2020), took place in three main waves. The streets renamed during each of these three waves of toponymic cleansing are shown in Fig. 1.

The first stage covers the period between the declaration of Ukrainian independence in 1991 and the outbreak of the Euromaidan in 2013. During that period, mostly in the 1990s, 25 communist names, including the names of the most odious communist functionaries like Lenin, Dzerzhinsky, Kotovsky, etc., were erased and substituted with new names mostly glorifying prominent figures of Ukrainian and local history. Nevertheless, the first attempt to erase communist

symbols from the cityscape in Vinnytsia was partial, unsystematic and in fact did not destroy the whole communist toponymic system in the city.

The second wave of post-communist toponymic transition in Vinnytsia was induced by the Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014, but became really massive after the adoption of decommunization laws in 2015, demanding a mandatory change of communist street names in Ukraine (Kuczabski and Boychuk 2020). The main part of the street renaming in Vinnytsia under the official decommunisation framework took place in 2015-2016. In total, 161 street names have been changed, which embraces more than 20% of the urban toponymic system. At the same time, new street naming politics in Vinnytsia was aimed at promoting a new Ukrainian national-state identity but with a specific focus on the local urban historical and geographical context. Therefore, in addition to the commemorative toponyms, a large number of newly emerged street names were of a descriptive topographic nature, indicating the location of a street in relation to certain urban landmark. A detailed description of the second wave of post-communist toponymic transition in Vinnytsia was addressed in the literature (Karioeva 2016, 2017; Gnatiuk 2023).

The first two waves of post-communist toponymic cleansing in Vinnytsia dealt with communist street names only but left untouched street names related to the Soviet and Russian geography and culture. The situation has changed with the outbreak of the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war on February 24, 2022. The atrocities of the war led to the reevaluation of the Russian cultural markers in Ukrainian public space and growing public demand to remove them and substitute them with the new symbolic markers glorifying Ukrainian national heroes. This caused a third wave of post-communist toponymic transition in Vinnytsia, which resulted in renaming 197 streets under the politics of de-Russification: 12 streets in April 2022, 4 – in May 2022, 158 – in September 2022, and, finally, 23 – in November 2022. At this stage, the erased street names referred to the Russian culture and geography (Gnatiuk and Melnychuk (in press)).

4. Mixed methods approach to the toponymic landscape in transition

Three mutually supportive blocks of data were involved in the study.

The first block of data was collected via the social experiment. The researchers approached passerby on the streets of the city and asked them "how to get to Street X", where X is a street name that had been changed once since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. In some cases, the old name of the street was used, in others – the new one. Informants were not informed that they asked for research purposes and gave answers like in the case of the ordinary query of direction. Queries were made at a distance of one or two city blocks from the desired street to increase the chances that the respondent knows the street itself.

The researcher recorded the following points: (1) knowledge of a street name asked for – does the respondent know the street with such a name and can point a way to it, (2) in case of a positive answer – whether the informant appeals to the alternative street name (old name when new name is asked, or vice versa), (3) emotional charge of the response – whether the response was emotionally neutral or emotionally charged (with surprise, astonishment, laugh, irritation, anger, etc.) – which may be an indicator of the informant's attitude to the street name asked by the researcher.

For the social experiment, 10 streets were selected. Among them: 2 streets were renamed in the 1990s, after Ukrainian independence in 1991; 4 streets were renamed in 2015, pursuant to

the decommunisation law package adopted after the Euromaidan and Revolution of Dignity in 2013–2014; 4 streets were renamed in 2022 as a part of de-Russification induced by the full-scale Russian invasion into Ukraine on 24 February 2022. In the selected sample of streets, we tried to combine: (1) streets in the central part of the city and on the urban periphery, (2) main urban arteries and secondary pathways, (3) streets with different types of old/new names – referring to prominent persons, organisations and events (commemorative), derived from local landmarks, or distant geographical places, or abstract concepts, (4) street names of different lengths and apparent simplicity for pronunciation and memorising.

Assuming that young people may have systematically different attitudes to the same street names compared to elderly people, the sample of informants for each street name should have been at least roughly representative in terms of informants' age. Since the research design left no possibility to accurately determine the age of the informant, the researcher assigned the informant to one of three age categories based on visual assessment: young people (up to 20 years old), middle-aged people (20–60 years old), and elderly people (60+ years old). The samples were organised in a way that the first and the last groups constituted ca. 30% each of the total sample, while the medium group the rest of ca. 40%.

Information about the selected streets, their names, and the sample of informants is provided in Fig. 1 and Table 1.

The second block of data is based on the analysis of 5767 real estate advertisements published on the online real estate portal DOM.RIA (<https://dom.ria.com/>) from November 2022 to February 2023. We focused on the addresses on the streets in Vinnytsia renamed after the Soviet Union collapse in 1991, and checked whether the new street name, the old street name, or both names together are used in advertisements. In particular, we found addresses on 11 streets renamed in the 1990s after the declaration of Ukrainian independence, 95 streets renamed in 2015–2016 under official decommunisation politics, and 120 streets renamed in 2022 as a part of de-Russification politics.

The third block of data is derived from a series of brief interviews with 14 inhabitants of Vinnytsia. Given the small number of interviews, the sample cannot be considered representative of the whole urban community. Nevertheless, the value of these interviews was in the possibility of getting information about the motivation of the informants to use the old or the new street name, their attitudes to the street renaming, together with the use and knowledge of specific street names. The age, gender, and approximate address of informants were recorded (to know an informant's living place was important to interpret his/her knowledge of specific street names). The interview included the following list of questions:

Question 1: What street names do you use: only the old ones, only the new ones, or both old and new?

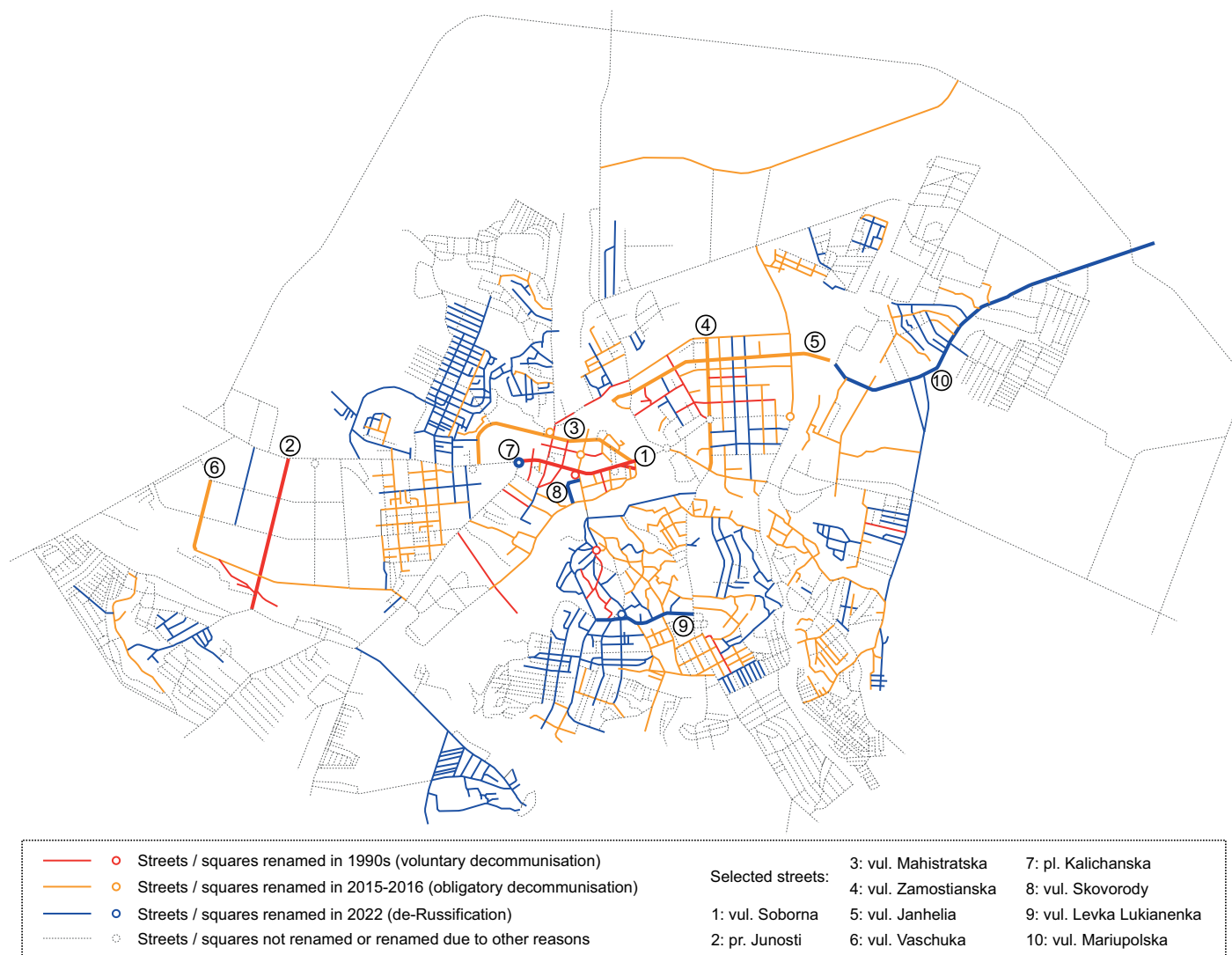


Figure 1. Streets and squares renamed in Vinnytsia in 1991–2023 under decommunisation and de-Russification.

Table 1. Streets selected for the social experiment, their names, and the sample of informants.

Time of renaming	Street code	Type of name	Street name / English translation	Street name denotation	Number of informants			
					Total	Young (<20)	Middle aged (20-60)	Elderly (60+)
1990s	Ind1	Old	vul. Lenina / Lenin St.	Prominent person: communist leader	20	9	7	4
		New	vul. Soborna / Cathedral St.	Local landmark: Holy Transfiguration Cathedral	15	4	6	5
	Ind2	Old	prosp. Leninskoho Komsomolu / Lenin Komsomol Ave.	Communist organisation	21	6	9	6
		New	prosp. Junosti / Youth Ave.	Abstract concept	21	7	8	6
2015	Rev1	Old	vul. Pershotravneva / 1st May St.	Holiday: International Workers' Day	20	7	7	6
		New	vul. Mahistratska / Magistrate St.	Local landmark: non-existent building of the city magistrate	20	6	8	6
	Rev2	Old	vul. Frunze / Frunze St.	Prominent person: communist military leader	25	7	11	7
		New	vul. Janhelia / Yangel St.	Prominent person: Soviet missile engineer of Ukrainian origin	20	6	8	6
	Rev3	Old	50-richchia Peremohy / 50th Anniversary of the Victory St.	Prominent event: Victory over the Nazis in 1945	19	5	8	6
		New	vul. Zamostianska / Zamostia St.	Local landmark: urban district	21	7	8	6
	Rev4	Old	vul. Kviatka / Kwiatek St.	Prominent person: communist military leader	20	6	8	6
		New	vul. Vaschuka / Vaschuk St.	Prominent person: liquidator of the Chernobyl accident	20	6	8	6
2022	War1	Old	pl. Haharina / Gagarin Sq.	Prominent person: first Soviet cosmonaut	18	5	7	6
		New	pl. Kalichanska / Kalicha Sq.	Local landmark: River Kalicha and Kalicha Market demolished in 1960s	21	7	8	6
	War2	Old	vul. Pushkina / Pushkin St.	Prominent person: Russian poet and writer	20	7	7	6
		New	vul. Skovorody / Skovoroda St.	Prominent person: Ukrainian philosopher	20	6	8	6
	War3	Old	vul. Vatutina / Vatutin St.	Prominent person: Soviet military leader	20	6	8	6
		New	vul. Levka Lukianenka / Levko Lukianenko St.	Prominent person: Ukrainian dissident and politician	20	6	8	6
	War4	Old	vul. Moskovska / Moscow St.	Geographical place: Soviet and Russian capital	19	6	7	6
		New	vul. Mariupolska / Mariupol St.	Geographical place: Ukrainian city destroyed by Russian troops in 2022	18	4	8	6

Question 2: Do you use old or new street names depending on the specific situation? For example: the nature of communication (official or informal), location and status of a specific street (central or secondary, close or distant...), specific toponym (more odious and less odious names; difficulty in memorising; binding to the local context...).

Question 3 (if the informant uses old street names): Why exactly do you use the old names? Is it due to ignorance of the new names, is it a habit to use the old names, or is it a conscious protest against the renaming of the streets?

Question 4: What renamed streets/squares in Vinnitsia do you know?

Question 5: Have you felt the ideological nature of communist street names in your everyday life? Did you perceive them as imposed by the government or the political system?

Question 6: And what about the new street names? Are they perceived as artificial, or imposed by the current Ukrainian political regime?

Question 7: What is your attitude to the renaming of streets under decommunisation?

Question 8: And what is your attitude to the renaming of streets as part of de-Russification?

Question 9: Do you know where the streets/squares with the following names are located? (The list of street names matches the new street names from Table 1 for the possibility of comparison between the first and the third data blocks).

Interviews were taken in Ukrainian and translated into English by the authors.

5. Results of the social experiment, real estate advertisement screening, and interviews

The social experiment demonstrated that the more time has passed since the renaming date, the better was the knowledge of the new names and the worse was the knowledge of the old names (Fig. 2). In particular, the absolute majority of informants knew the old names of streets renamed in 2022 (less than a year before the study), while slightly more than half of the informants knew the old names of the streets renamed in 2015 (7 years before the study), and only one-third of informants could remember the old street names that had been changed in the 1990s (approx. 30 years before the study). And vice versa, the share of informants who know the new street names increases with an increase in time after the renaming date: one-third for streets renamed in the same year, more than half for streets renamed 7 years ago, and the absolute majority for the streets that changed communist names in the 1990s.

The appeal to a parallel old street name is rather frequent for recently renamed streets but reduced twice 7 years after the renaming, and was not detected for the streets renamed in the 1990s. On the contrary, the appeal to a parallel new street name was observed in all cases when the researcher asked the old name for streets renamed in the 1990s, while 7 years after the renaming – only in half of the cases, and for recently renamed streets – in less than every fifth case (Fig. 2).

Looking at the emotional charge of the responses (Fig. 2), we found that shortly after the renaming informants were completely calm hearing the old street name. Nevertheless, seven years after the renaming, there were 6% of emotionally charged answers, and three decades after the renaming the respective figure reached approximately 40%. Typical emotions recorded were astonishment, surprise, and laughter. We did not observe any irritation or anger in the respondents when asking them the old street names. At the same time, the use of the new street name just after the renaming also sometimes results in astonishment, laughter, and, rarely, irritation.

The screening of real estate advertisements correlates well with the findings of the social experiment (Fig. 3). In the first six months after the renaming, the use of old names still prevails, and after about a year old and new names are used mostly in parallel. However, six-seven years after the renaming, new names absolutely prevail, although the old ones continue to be in parallel use in approximately every tenth case. Finally, after ten or more years of renaming, the old names appear to be practically out of use, although may surface in some exceptionally rare cases.

In the context of individual streets selected for the social experiment, we observe a certain variation, which seems to decrease with the time that has passed since the renaming date (Fig. 4). The most crucial individual differences are observed for streets renamed in 2022 – the knowledge of a new/old street name, the appeal to a parallel name, and the emotional charge of the responses vary in a wide range. A quite similar pattern is visible from the real estate advertisements (Fig. 5).

There are certain differences between the age groups in terms of knowledge of old and new street names (Fig. 6). Especially extreme differences among the age groups are observed for the knowledge of the old names of streets renamed in the 1990s: the young generation is practically unfamiliar with those names, while the elderly people used them during the most of their lives and keep them in memory. Also, the reaction of young and middle-aged people to the outdated communist street names from the 1990s is much more emotionally charged compared to the reaction of elderly people. At the same time, young people are not the best experts in new street names: elderly and, especially, middle-aged people have better knowledge of new street names than representatives of a younger generation.

Turning to the interviews, most of the informants (13 out of 14) use both old and new street names depending on a specific street name or a communicative situation. Among them, 3 informants use mostly old street names, and 1 informant uses old street names only. None of the informants uses new street names only. Thus, the most common communicative strategy is to use both old and new street names in parallel with some inclination toward old names.

None of our informants said that prefer old names to new ones due to clear ideological or political motives. On the contrary, many informants emphasised that *“This is definitely not a protest”* (Informant #09). The basic reasons to use the old street names, mentioned by our informants, are in no way related to ideology or politics and include:

1. Ignorance of new street names (ten informants): *“I just can't remember. Well, I haven't learned them [new street names] all yet. I don't know all the old names either”* (Informant #01).

2. The habit of old street names (seven informants): *“Whenever possible, I try to use new street names. But old names often jump in conversation – because of habit, because of inertia”* (Informant #10).

3. Desire to be understandable to the interlocutor, supposing that he or she should be familiar with old street names for sure (four informants): *“When I use an old name, I am sure that the interlocutor will accurately identify the place”* (Informant #13).

In turn, personal ignorance about new street names, which is the most popular reason to use the old ones, was explained by the following general reasons:

1. Absence of a public informational campaign to familiarise people with new street names (five informants): *“They must be on hearing. There should be an explanation at each [public transport] stop”* (Informant #11); *“Maybe there is just a need to draw people's attention to the explanation of why these streets are named in honour of certain persons ... It is necessary to pay attention to clarifying the history, biographies of those people in whose honour the street is named ... They just need to work on highlighting the [commemorated]*

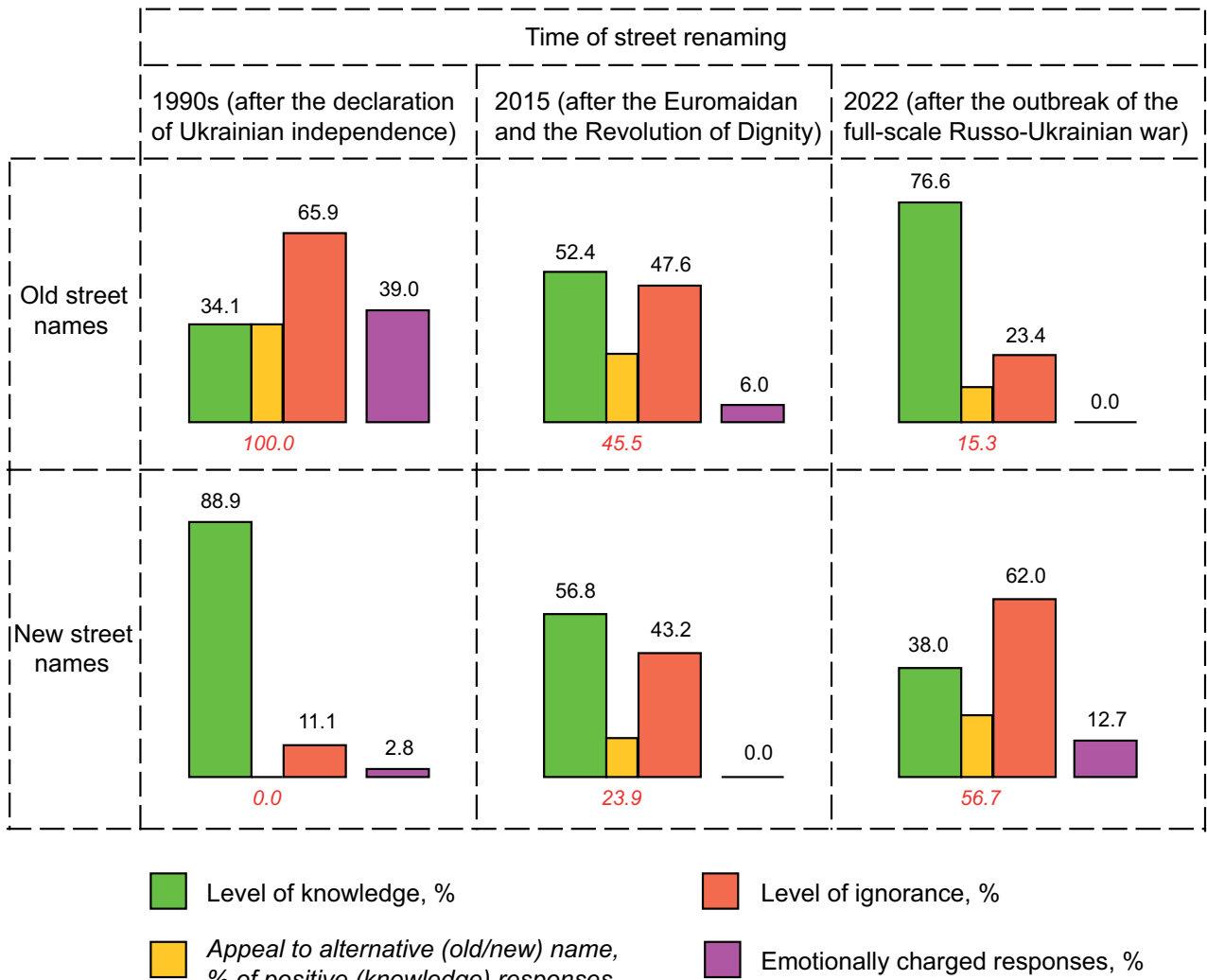


Figure 2. Social experiment: summary of the results.

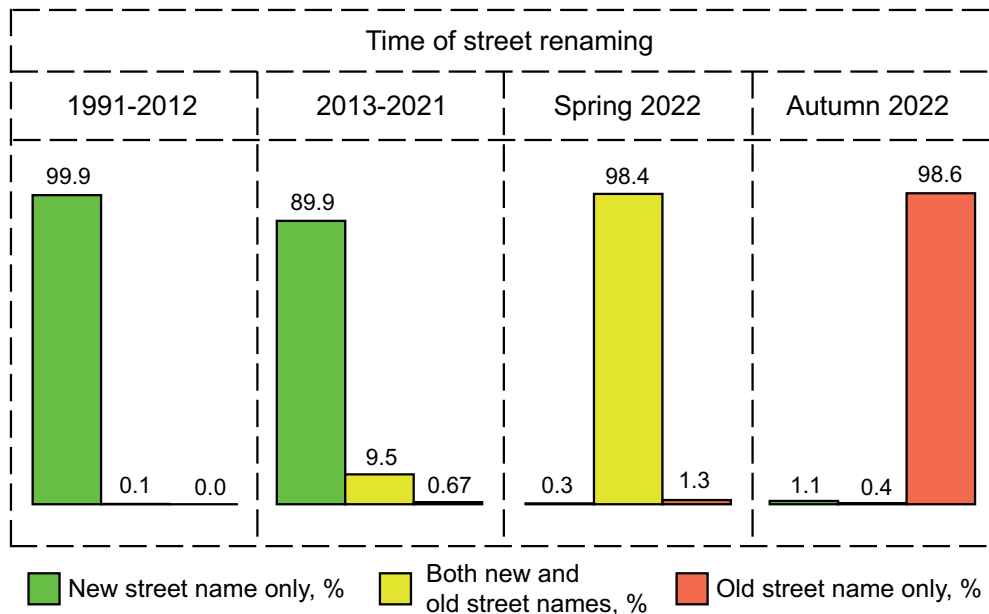


Figure 3. Real estate advertisements: summary of the results.

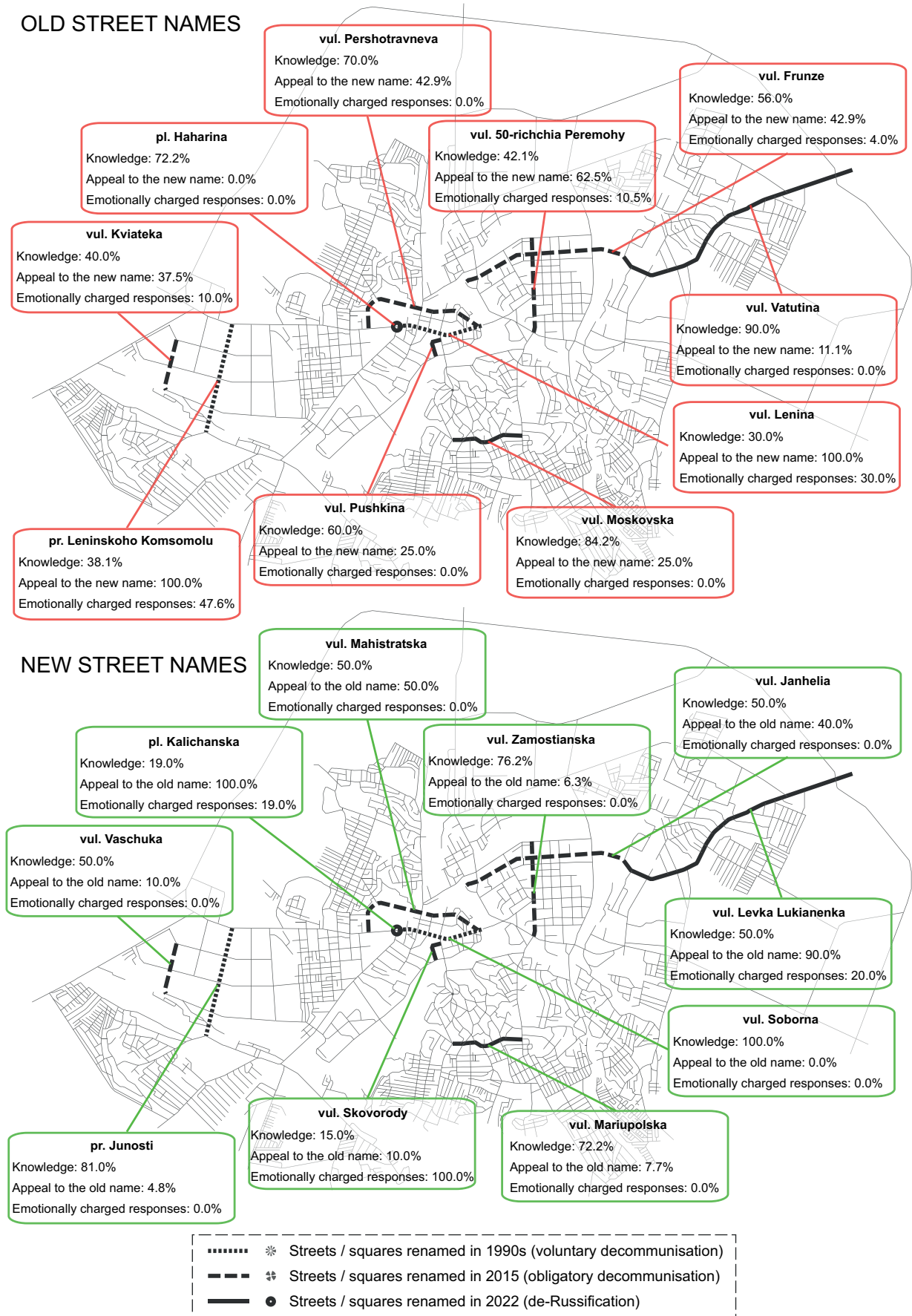


Figure 4. Social experiment: results for specific selected streets.

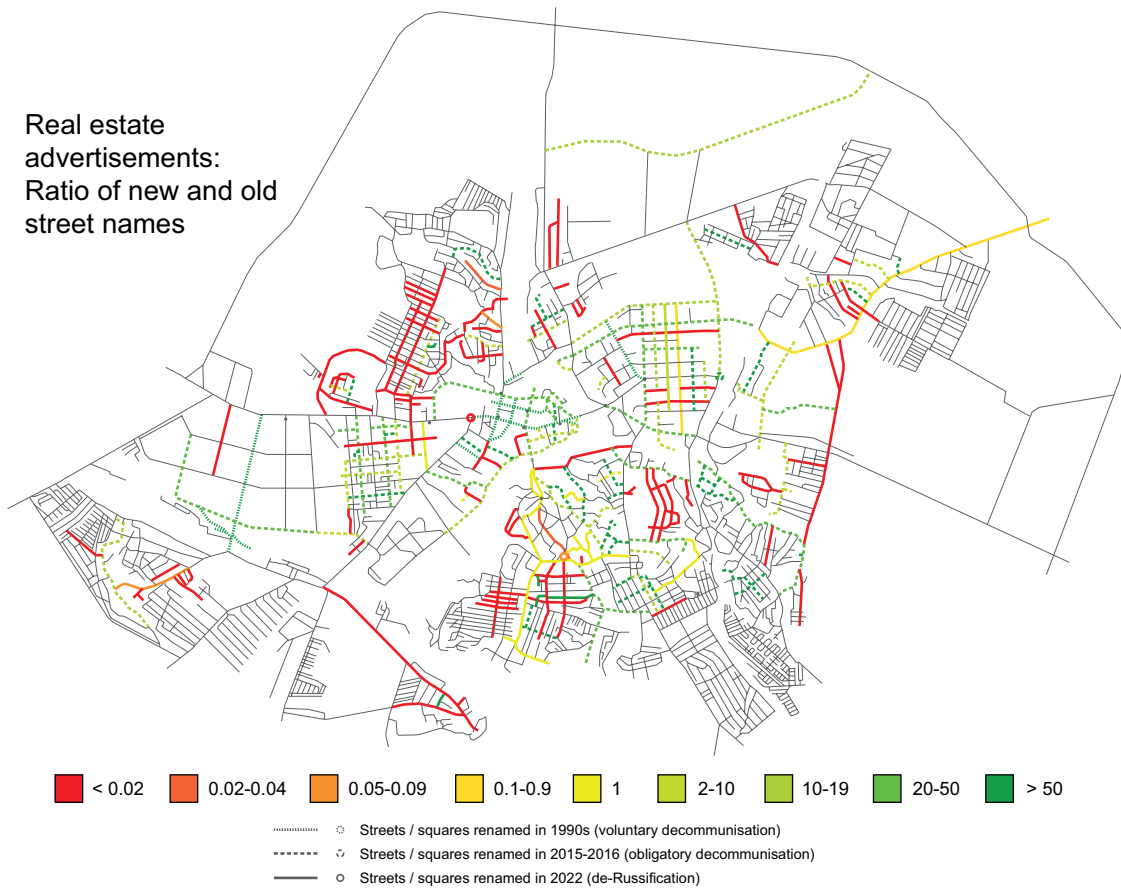


Figure 5. Real estate advertisements: results for specific streets.

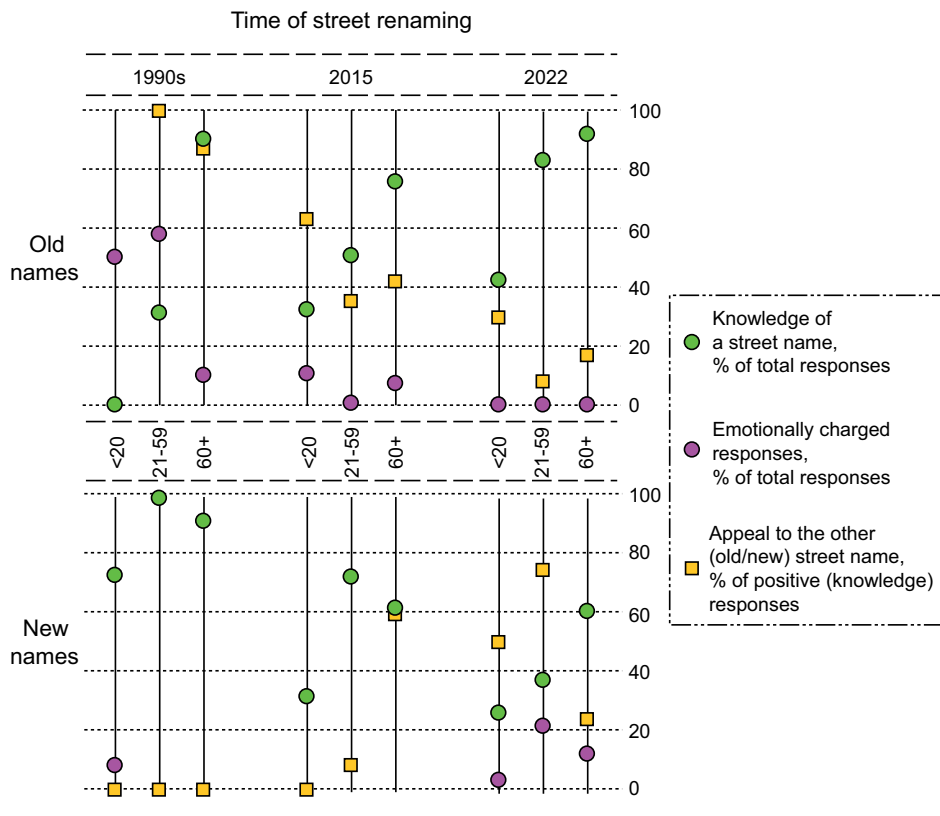


Figure 6. Social experiment: age distribution of the responses.

figures themselves. That way, people would understand the renaming more easily” (Informant #04).

2. Absence of new address plates on buildings (three informants): “I know that some streets have been renamed, but there are no new address plates. This does not allow me to memorise them well” (Informant #09).

3. Low level of personal mobility in the city – less needs and opportunities to learn new street names (two informants): “I don’t know new names because I don’t go much around the city. My daughter knows because ... she travels a lot [in the city]” (Informant #12).

4. Too many renamed streets in the city – too many names to learn (2 informants): “There are hundreds of renamed streets. It is simply impossible to remember everything” (Informant #10).

Additionally, some informants explained why some street names are easier or harder to memorise than others. For instance:

- Distance from the space of everyday activity, including places of living, working, etc. (six informants): “I know exactly all the new street names in my neighbourhood, in the city centre, in Zamostia – all places I visit. But in peripheral areas, in remote areas – there I may not know [new street names]” (Informant #10). At the same time, some informants noted that for them the knowledge of new street names does not depend on distance to home.

- Understanding the meaning and history (origin) of a street name (four informants): “Well remembered are those names whose meaning and history we know. For example, pl. Kalichanska [Kalicha Sq.] – once there was Kalicha market” (Informant #13).

- Configuration of public transport routes (three informants): “The names of stops announced in public transport are, of course, easy to memorise” (Informant #10), “Those street names that sound in public transport” (Informant #13).

- Relationship between the street name and the street itself (two informants): “Names associated with the street are easier to remember. [For example:] vul. Soborna [Cathedral St.], vul. Pryvokzalna [Railway Station St.], vul. Zamostianska [named after Zamostia – a homonymous urban district]” (Informant #10).

- Status of the street (one informant): “Well, new names of main streets I know better” (Informant #01).

- Bad selection of some new street names, which sound very similar and thus confusing (1 informant): “There is vul. Karmeliuka – our national hero [Ustym Karmaliuk was a Ukrainian outlaw who fought against the administration and became a folk hero, often referred to as the ‘Ukrainian Robin Hood’], and, again, my vul. Stanislavskoho was renamed as vul. Korneliuka – this is already our modern hero [Pavlo Korneliuk was a soldier of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, a participant in the Russian-Ukrainian war, killed in 2017], and the names can be confused” (Informant #05).

Also, informants mentioned that the meaning of the old street name or personal attitude to it may influence the practice of its use:

- Considering some of the old names less odious than others: “As for odious names – I try to avoid communist names, but I am more relaxed about those that are simply in honour of Russians – Pushkin, Tolstoy” (Informant #10), “Depends on the meaning of the specific name. I don’t use clearly communist ones – all kinds of Lenins, Dzerzhinskis, Kirovs. But Karbyshev [Soviet general] was a war hero. This is not such a clear ideology” (Informant #12).

- Personal sympathy for some old street names (one informant): “I really liked the old name of my street – vul. Stanislavskoho – it sounds so melodious, and the person was creative [Konstantin Stanislavski was a seminal Soviet Russian theatre practitioner], so I don’t think it was something so bad. So I use the old name to call this street” (Informant #05).

Some informants noted that they may use different toponyms for the same street in specific communicative situations. In official

communications, many informants (six) tend to use new street names, because they are official ones, but in daily routine prefer old names: “When I talk to official representatives, I try to use new names” (Informant #01), “In everyday life – old names, officially – new ones” (Informant #12).

The age of the interlocutor matters: “... communicating with an elderly person, it is easy to say the old name than a new one. Elderly people are worse in remembering the new name, but for sure can understand the old one” (Informant #04). Similarly, the expected knowledge of a new street name by the interlocutor is important: “If the interlocutor does not know about renaming, I use the old name” (Informant #09).

At the same time, some informants said that the communicative situation is irrelevant, and the main factor is the possibility of remembering a street name: “I use the one I remember. It does not depend on the nature of communication” (Informant #02).

Most of the informants (six) did not perceive old communist names as ideologically charged in their everyday life – an observation that echoes previous findings by Gaidai et al. (2018):

“I didn’t care, just that the street had a name. Why exactly such a name, well, I didn’t take it critically, that it is an [ideological] imposition and so on. It’s just become a habit, for ease of orientation in the area” (Informant #04).

At the same time, some informants did perceive communist names as ideological:

“Yes, I noticed it all the time. I felt an ideological flavour” (Informant #07).

One informant mentioned that the feeling of ideological charge depends on the specific situation. Also, two more informants reported a personal rethinking of communist street names over time:

“Now they are really perceived as alien names because Russia is an enemy. Previously, their origin was not paid attention to. We used them without thinking” (Informant #11).

Notably, the same informants who noticed the ideological flavour of the old communist names and/or condemned the communist ideology, widely used the old names after the toponymic cleansing: both new and old names (Informants #03, #08, #10), mostly old names (Informants #07, #09, #13), and even almost exclusively old names (Informant #11).

The majority of informants (eight) perceive new street names as organic and not imposed by the authorities. Nevertheless, two informants admitted the new street names are imposed by authorities, but they are, of course, better than communist or Russia-related ones. Other informants (four) said that although some new street names are good, there are problems with the others. For instance, they should be better linked to the local urban context, or at least the authorities should explain the meaning of a new name and a reason for commemoration:

“They must be linked to the local context. They should have relation to Vinnytsia so that we know who these people are, or what these events are” (Informant #11).

“In most cases, we don’t know who they [commemorated people] are. Let [authorities] explain to us who they are, what connection they have with the city, what made these people famous” (Informant #13).

Some informants condemned a practice of giving weird or long and awkward street names, which could be inconvenient for memorising and everyday use: “... there are some awkward names, long ones. I have nothing against the commemoration of our heroes, but they made vul. Heroiv Natshvardiji [National Guard Heroes St.], vul. Herojiv-Pozhezhykiv [Firefighter Heroes St.], vul. Herojiv Politsii [Police Heroes St.], etc. These are long names, similar to each other, and I personally confuse about which street is where. Or just

vul. Andrija Pervozvannoho [Andrew the First-Called St.]. *Everyone shortens it to vul. Pervozvannoho*" (Informant #10).

Most of the informants (11) declared a positive attitude to changing communist street names, while two informants argued that only some of them, the most odious ones, should have been renamed, and one informant totally condemned the change of communist names arguing that the renaming process needs funding that would be better to use for more vital directions. Interestingly, all these critics of toponymic decommunisation use mostly or almost exclusively old street names in their everyday lives, and two of them justify the use of old street names by saying that in reality most such names are not so much odious. Nevertheless, even in these cases, the main motif for the use of old street names remains mainly utilitarian, not ideological. Similarly, most of the informants (nine) definitely supported the change of street names that are related to Russian geography and culture, while five informants argued that de-Russification should be selective. Nevertheless, none of the critics of toponymic de-Russification has provided clearly ideological arguments for their personal preference for the old street names in everyday life.

Trying to remember the specific renamed streets in the city, informants mentioned 49 streets. Among these streets, two streets in reality have not been renamed. Among the rest of the actually renamed streets 16 (34%) are located in the city centre, 20 (43%) belong to a list of main urban arteries, 21 (45%) are streets with public transport traffic (tramway, trolleybus, and bus routes), and

32 (48%) are streets with homonymous public transport stops. All these figures substantially exceed the share of such streets in the total set of renamed streets. As for 17 streets mentioned more than 3 times, i.e. the most frequently, the figures are even more impressive: 8 (47%), 9 (53%), 10 (59%), and 14 (82%), respectively. This means that new names of the most central, important and visited in everyday life urban places have more chances to be disseminated in the urban community, and resonates with some informants that announcements of stops in public transport, as well as labels of stops, may facilitate memorising of new street names after renaming. Also, it is noticeable that informants reported more cases of renaming from the outskirts of their living or working places (Fig. 7).

Answering the question about the location of the streets selected for the social experiment, all informants (14 correct answers) coped well with streets renamed in the 1990s. The knowledge of streets renamed in 2015 was good but depended on a specific street: better results for the central street (*vul. Mahistratska* – 13 correct answers) and main arteries (*vul. Zamostianska* – 13 correct answers, *vul. Janhelia* – 10 correct answers), worse for secondary peripheral street (*vul. Vaschuka* – 7 correct answers). Knowledge of street names introduced in 2022 significantly varies – from good (*vul. Mariupolska* and *pl. Kalichanska* – 9 correct answers each) to bad (*vul. Levka Lukianenka* and *vul. Skovorody* – 2 correct answers each). These figures correlate well with the results of the social experiment.

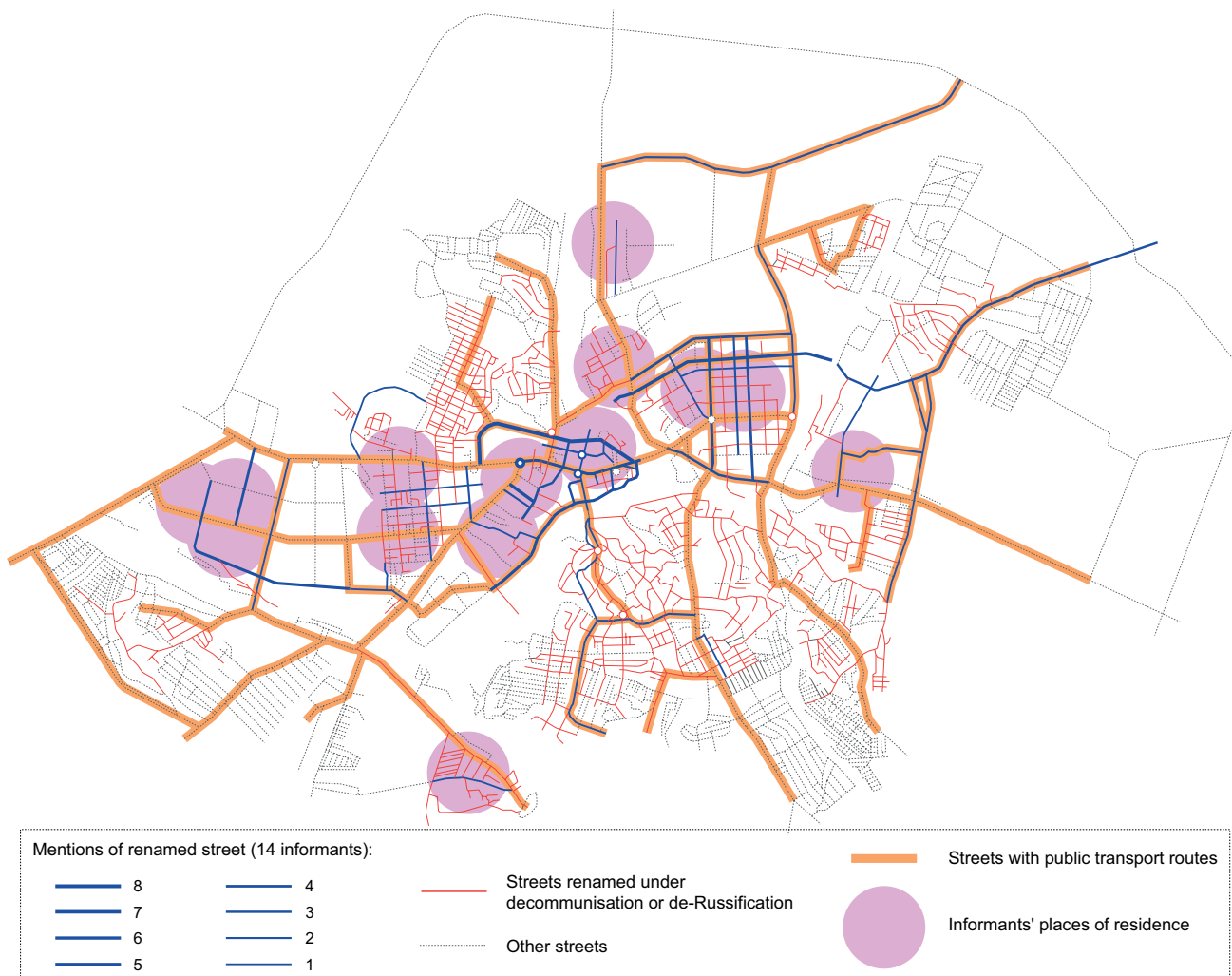


Figure 7. Interviews: spatial pattern of the renamed streets mentioned by the informants.

6. Discussion: toponymic transition as a protracted heterochronous utility-driven process

The results of the research demonstrate that a change of a place name does not end with its regulatory enactment (Rose-Redwood 2008; Light and Young 2018). Official approval of a new place name is just a first step followed by a gradual acceptance of a new place name in different spheres of public life and/or more or less successful and more or less conscious contestation by the various stakeholders. The social experiment and the screening of the real estate advertisements, together with the analysis of the interviews, show that the transition from the old to the new toponymic system after the ideologically-driven toponymic cleansing is not an immediate and a single-step action. On the contrary, it can be a long-lasting, protracted and multi-staged process that requires several years or even decades and probably, in some circumstances, would never reach the end. During this more or less prolonged period of transition, the elements of the old and the new toponymic systems may coexist and be in active use in different combinations and proportions, producing a phenomenon of plural toponymies, including a parallel use of the different (including ideologically opposed) names of the same place, and contributing to the enhanced multi-layering and polysemy of the toponymic landscape (Giraut 2020).

Considering the findings of this study, the prolonged transition from the old to the new street names happens (including, but not limited to) for two reasons. The first reason is that people forget the old street names as they gradually go out of active use. The second reason is the change of generations. For instance, in our research case, people under 25 years old in 2022 were born already after the renaming of streets in the 1990s, so the respective old street names have never been in official use during all their lives. At the same time, even three decades after the renaming approximately one-third of the respondents still can remember old street names and thus can use them for practical purposes in everyday life. It is worth noting here that two streets, renamed in the 1990s and selected for social experiment, are important urban arteries, therefore the knowledge of their old names can be better compared to the knowledge of the old names of less important streets. Habituation to the new street names is an inevitable process; however, it is not a one-time shift, but a gradual process that requires several years and even decades. The actual practices of street name use in the city of Vinnytsia support the point about performative limits to the official city-text, where the official act of street renaming is not guaranteed by decree of the state alone but depends upon its performative uptake in everyday life (Rose-Redwood 2008).

The appeal to a parallel (old/new) street name is an additional informative marker of the change in communicative behaviour under toponymic transition. The results confirm that shortly after the renaming, both street names (old and new) are perceived as the varieties of the norm, but the old name is something usual and well-known, while the new name is something unaccustomed and unknown for many. Thus, in this early transitory period, people tend to check for the old street name while being asked about the new one, just for the certainty that the asker's question is understood correctly. Gradually, people become used to the new street name, and the necessity to clarify the intention of the asker reduces. After several decades, the need to refer to the old name (even if the asked person knows it) disappears altogether. Vice versa, the use of the old street name basically requires no additional clarification just after the renaming, but over time the old name gradually became unusual and even weird, which generates a need to appeal to the new name in communication.

Similarly, the emotional reaction to the old street names means that several years after the name change the old street name continues to be perceived as a norm. Several decades after the renaming it becomes weird, so the asked person may be surprised how is it possible not to know that the street was renamed, or thinking that the interlocutor is just joking. For instance, the sharp contrast between the high (nearly 60%) and low (nearly 0%) shares of emotionally charged responses associated with old names erased in the 1990s and 2015 within the 21–59 age range. This may be explained by the fact that the names of 1990s were practically out of use in 2022 and therefore perceived as extremely outdated, while the names replaced in 2015 still function in everyday life and are perceived as a second variant of the norm. Simultaneously, we may suppose that this emotional reaction to the new street names may be (1) a response to hearing the unknown street name or, alternatively, (2) a surprise that the interlocutor also knows the new street name, which remains unfamiliar for the majority. These mechanisms gradually became irrelevant, so that seven years after the renaming the new street name practically does not cause an emotional reaction.

This gradual introduction of a new place name represents a kind of heterochronic coevolution driven by the collision of top-down vs. bottom-up interests (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006) since the same toponym could be accepted with varying speed and varying degrees of success in different strata of the urban toponymic landscape. For instance, a new toponym may appear practically instantly in official legal documents, but with the certain and different degrees of inertia on address plates, in advertisements, in everyday communication, etc. Taken together, the results of the social experiment and the analysis of real estate advertisements suggest the heterochronic scenario of toponymic transition. The new street names relatively quickly penetrate the sphere of the real estate market, but are much more persistent in the sphere of way finding personal communication. For example, seven years after the renaming, the real estate market has practically reoriented to the use of new street names, while in the sphere of way finding, the old street names seem to be used in parallel with the new ones.

The case of toponymic transition in Vinnytsia convinces that in certain socio-cultural contexts, the public inertia towards the new toponymic landscapes may be driven almost totally by motivations that have no relationship to ideology and politics. For instance, we found practically no evidence of conscious resistance against the new street names due to purely political or ideological motives. Instead, the use of officially erased street names along or in parallel with new street names is motivated by the practical reasons of habit, common sense, and personal (in)convenience (cf. Azaryahu 1996; Light and Young 2014, 2018; Crețan and Matthews 2016; Chloupek 2019). From the observed spectrum of emotional reactions to the old street names in the social experiment we may conclude that Vinnytsia residents basically do not consider the use of even very outdated and odious communist names as an insult, or something obscene or indecent. Therefore ideological considerations seem to play the modest (if any) rule in the emotional reaction on the old communist name. In a wide set of mundane situations, both old and new place names may become a part of the routine and are hardly perceived as ideologically charged (cf. Gaidai et al. 2018). Moreover, for the same person, ideological and practical functions of the urban place names may exist in various planes, without interfering, and thus individual communicative practices may come to apparent (for the researcher) contradiction with the ideological attitudes of a person. The critics of street name change, observed in our study, is driven almost exclusively by the utilitarian motifs, which echoes the residents' assessment of toponymic transition in other geopolitical

and cultural contexts, for example, in the city of Kharkiv in the eastern part of Ukraine (Gnatiuk and Homanyuk 2023) or in the city of Ramallah, Palestine (Brocket 2021). This means that, at least in some geographical and historical contexts, the role of a street name as a commemorative marker may be less important than the role as a means of spatial orientation, and that the use of street names as proclamative ideological statements may be less powerful than is assumed (Light and Young 2018). Therefore, the actual use or non-use of certain place names should not be immediately and directly interpreted in terms of public ideological or political attitudes without scrutinizing the specific socio-cultural context.

The actual communicative practices with regard to a specific set of parallel place names after the renaming depend on a variety of predominantly local factors and actors (cf. Verdery 1995; Creţan and Matthews 2016; Light and Young 2018). These may include: (1) the time that passed after the renaming, (2) specific communicative situation (e.g. official vs. informal), (3) the ages of the interlocutors – elderly people seem to be more conservative – cf. observations by Brocket (2021), (4) activity space and spatial mobility of the interlocutors, (5) correlation between the place name and the site and situation of a place itself, (6) position and status of a place in the city (central vs. peripheral, main vs. secondary), (7) specific meanings of an old and/or a new place names – e.g. more or less ideologically odious, more or less versatile, (8) simplicity of a place name for pronunciation and memorising, (9) the frequency of a name use in other public spheres, e.g., in public transport announcements, (10) availability of municipal politics aimed at adaptations of the citizens to the new toponyms. In a specific case or cultural setting, some of these factors could be irrelevant (cf. Wu and Young 2022), but potentially they all may contribute to the communicative practices of the citizens. In this way, the individual scenario may vary substantially depending on a specific urban place.

To help illustrate the point: focusing on the streets renamed in 2022, we found that the level of the new name knowledge varies significantly – from ca. 15-20% (*pl. Kalichanska* and *vul. Skovorody*) to ca. 80-90% (*vul. Levka Lukianenka* and *vul. Mariupolska*). Also, in the case of *vul. Mariupolska*, both percents of emotionally charged responses and the appeals to the old street name are substantially lower than for the rest of the three places. Similarly, we found that all advertisements use parallel names for *vul. Mariupolska*, while in the case *vul. Levka Lukianenka* they use mostly parallel names and sometimes the old name only, and in the cases of *pl. Kalichanska* and *vul. Skovorody* – the old names only. These differences may be explained by the individual characteristics of the place itself, its old and new names, and the context of renaming. For example, renaming of *vul. Moskovska* [Moscow St.] to *vul. Mariupolska* [Mariupol St.] was among the first and most resonant cases of de-Russification in Vinnytsia, widely reflected in local media. Therefore, the city residents may be more aware of this specific renaming compared to the rest of the selected cases. At the same time, *pl. Kalichanska* and *vul. Skovorody* are located in the city centre, and their old names could have become so ingrained in the memory of the citizens, that the old names (*pl. Haharina* and *vul. Pushkina*) are extremely persistent.

One another example: based on a set of indicators, it can be assumed that the new name of *vul. Zamostianska* (former *vul. 50 rokiv Peremohy*) is better known and better perceived by the residents compared to those of the other selected streets renamed in 2015. The reasons for this could be (1) the semantic relationship between the new name of the street and the local urban setting – the name is derived from the urban district (*Zamostia*) where the street is situated, and (2) the long old name that is difficult to

remember. Taken together, these reasons facilitate the learning and use of the new name, and simultaneously simplified the forgetting and replacement of the old one.

Finally, the maintenance of social sustainability might be associated with neighbourhood (Shirazi and Keivani 2019), of which urban toponymy constitutes an integral element (Yankson 2023). Consequently, both governments and communities should be interested in making local toponymic system simple, coherent, well-understandable and well-perceived by the citizens. Especially this is important for post-transitional societies in various set of post-colonial and post-authoritarian (including post-socialist and post-communist) contexts. Our study, in line with previous research focusing on the perception of the street name change (e.g. Brocket 2021; Gnatiuk and Homanyuk 2023) demonstrates a public demand for place names that fit the local historical and geographical context, for easy-to-remember names, for balance in-between the commemorative and non-commemorative toponymy, and for clearly articulated and coherent municipal politics aimed at familiarising the community with newly-introduced place names, their meaning and substantiation of naming decision.

Notably, public concerns and dissatisfaction with the fact that new street names are alienated from a local context and overlook the local heritage were observed in other geographical contexts. For instance, Brocket (2021) cites his interviews with residents in Ramallah, Palestine, who are unsatisfied with official naming politics because it overwrote existing toponymic practices and ignores the local urban identity in favour of the national one. Similarly, in Singapore, the residents felt uncomfortable because of the government's efforts to remove colonial names as these had become bound up with local memories and experiences in the city (Yeh 2013). However, in the case of Vinnytsia, most of the newly introduced street names were in fact related to the local urban or regional context (Karoieva 2017; Gnatiuk 2023; Gnatiuk and Melnychuk (in press)). Therefore, the problem lies in the fact that the residents are not properly informed by the authorities about the meaning of the new street names, and this circumstance impairs the willingness to learn and use the new street names. In Ukraine, this phenomenon should be considered to be widespread and not limited to Vinnytsia. Notably, in Kharkiv, the eastern part of Ukraine, the focus group participants emphasised that the renaming of a street is easier to accept if people are informed about the biography of a commemorated person, especially his/her links with a city (Gnatiuk and Homanyuk 2023). Similarly, based on the empirical data from the Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih, Kudriavtseva (2020) found that although renaming arises as a reconstruction of national identity, the major naming motives include individualisation and prevention of future renaming. This reflected in the predominance of topographic place names and toponymic iconisation of the periods related to the city's history, as well as in the decrease of political and military names. It should be noted that the perceived degree of ideological burden attributed to a certain commemorative place name may be reduced by linking it to the local (urban or regional) historical, cultural or geographical context, thus making the place name close and understandable to the locals (Fabiszak et al. 2021). Similarly, Chloupek (2019) demonstrated that urban elites in Košice, considering the possibilities of vernacular cultural responses, sometimes sought conciliatory strategies of street renaming like choosing unnamed or generically named streets for politicization, in the hopes that such changes would be accepted by the citizenry, and such strategies ensured that some types of toponyms were much longer lived than others.

The findings of this paper, in line with previous research, call for a balanced and continuous approach to the local toponymic

landscape, which has the potential to contribute to the development and strengthening local identities, to create opportunities for sociocultural expression in the urban landscape through street naming, to promote transitional social justice, inter- and intra-generation equity (Yankson 2023) and to lower perceived degree of ideological burden of place names (Fabiszak et al. 2021). Since the latter may contribute to the instability (more frequent renaming) of the toponymic system, as was directly demonstrated by Rusu (2021) and implicitly by Faraco and Murphy (1997). Therefore, future research focusing on the heterogeneous mundane practices of place name use seems to be of increased importance as it can elucidate the potential of toponymic politics as one of the instruments promoting social sustainability at the municipal level.

7. Conclusions

Light and Young (2018), presenting the underestimated phenomenon of toponymic continuity, warned that researchers studying the politics of toponymic change have perhaps been too keen to focus on resistance, while the use of old toponyms can persist even when officially and materially they have been changed, simply because of everyday practices and habit. This research, focusing on the everyday lives of street names after the ideology-driven toponymic cleansing, elucidates the public inertia towards the newly emerged toponymic landscape, which represents, probably, the most inclusive side of toponymic continuity. It contributes to the understanding of toponymic landscape as a result of continuous evolution rather than a product of abrupt changes, simultaneously dismissing a temptation to explain all public responses to the imposed place names through the lens of ideological considerations. It breaks a direct link between the official act of (re)naming and the everyday lives of place names. Furthermore, it questions the straightforward nature of the impact that changing toponymic landscape actually has on urban residents. The public rejection to use a certain place name may be driven by mundane prosaic considerations rather than ideological or political opposition to the ruling regime. The actual practices of a place name use in every single case depend on a set of mostly local-level actors and factors, which determines the patchy and heterochronous pattern of a place name use.

In this way, the findings of the present research support the point by Rose-Redwood et al. (2018b) that critical analyses of street naming must consider how naming depends on a series of reiterative citation practices enacted by a diverse array of social and political actors and their repetitious use in daily life. There is, as well a call to explore the complex interaction of official and non-official place naming systems considering of a broader range of contexts, factors, and processes that shape the use of place names in everyday life (Wu and Young 2022). From the practical point of view, given the links between toponymic landscape, social sustainability, and local identity (Yankson 2023), what is needed is thoughtful and permanent toponymic politics, which will respond to the visions and requests of the local community and consider local place names as a resource for sustainable development. If the local policy-makers adopted these considerations, this would be one of the possible real political interventions of critical toponymic scholarship into the practice of place naming (Rose-Redwood et al. 2018a).

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