Urban Street Names as a Marker of Language/Authority Interaction in Ukraine: Soviet (1922-1991) and Post-Soviet Periods (1991-2011)

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Abstract

The article analyzes street names of Ukrainian cities (about 20 000 items collected from printed and electronic reference books). The aims of the article are 1) to describe urban street names of the Soviet (1922-1991) and post-Soviet (1991-2011) periods; 2) to explain the reasons for conscious influence of authorities on formation of city semantic space and 3) to reveal the prospects of development of national street names under current conditions. This approach is new and allows for better understanding of relations of language and ideology in Ukraine.

Urban street names of the Soviet period demonstrate how ideological, literary, scientific and historical elements related to state and dominant Russian culture were forced into the cultural space of the city. Street names became the means of influence on public consciousness of citizens testifying to de-Ukrainization of urban cultural space. The authorities attempted at forming supra-ethnic 'Soviet' identity with its own means of communication, namely the Russian language.

Urban street names of the post-Soviet period in the Western and partially Central regions include new thematic groups of names showing restoration of national image of the Ukrainian city. In the process of street renaming the pre-Soviet names are restored and new names are introduced. Names that show local cultural heritage are preferred. Though, de-Sovietization has not taken place in all parts of Ukraine. There is an authority vs. community opposition, since it is the community that supports the process of reconstruction of post-totalitarian cultural image of the city. The process of renaming is aimed at renovation of Ukrainian national identity. Under present conditions the national street names do not have prospects due to closer economic, political and humanitarian relations of new Ukrainian authorities with the Russian Federation. Toponymical image of the majority of the Eastern and Southern cities continues to keep traces of the Soviet period, since the authorities favour the bearers of the Soviet and Russian identity.

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Introduction

In Ukrainian linguistics *street names* have been an object of analysis in researchers in onomastics, urban linguistics, language ecology and text linguistics. In the present article a wider methodology is applied to characterize *urban street names*. It is based on interaction of the ideas of onomastics, sociolinguistics, linguistic landscape, history and political science, which enables to interpret urban street name as a marker of language/power interaction in the context of pressing problems in Ukraine: *language* and *policy, language* and *ideology, language* and *identity.*

The tasks of the article are the following: 1) to show the tendencies in development of urban street names as official public signs in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods; 2) to identify relations of *urban street names - type of identity*; 3) to explore the prospects of changes in Soviet street names in the context of current language situation in Ukraine. These are new tasks. They testify to possibilities of developing methodological basis of research in onomastics, as well as to its role in describing one of the fragments of public life in the state.

Urban street names of Ukraine, a state which became independent after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, are still keeping traces of former political regime. Linguists and historians have repeatedly given reasons for a need of scholarly considered concept of historical street names restoration in Ukrainian cities. This problem has been widely covered at conferences and round table discussions. *Nonetheless, public authorities are not sensitive enough to the suggestions of scholars to change the Soviet signs of urban space in Ukraine.*

National Board on Geography, founded in 1993, similar to other related structures engaged in state and political positioning of independent state, has not been functioning properly (Males 1998: 21; Taranenko 2002: 165;. Imena bilshovytskykh heroyiv….; 2ⁿᵈ round table discussion…).

The tasks set above will be viewed on the basis of street names of regional and district centers collected from printed and digital directories (about 20 000 units in total). It has been taken into account that in social urban communication a street name as official public sign performs a number of functions: nominative (names an object); informative (provides complete information about an object); aesthetic (emphasizes linguistic attractiveness and originality of street name); memorial (immortalizes names and surnames of famous people); educational (introduces new objects to language speakers) and ideological (reflects notions and ideas of certain ideology). The state of street names at the time of research has also been taken into account: there are cities which have completed the process of Soviet streets renaming (Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil), there are some that have done it partially (Kyiv, Cherkasy, Sumy, etc.) and some which preserve the names of former state (Donetsk, Kharkiv, Odesa, etc.).

1. Tendencies in development of urban street names in the Soviet (1922-1991) and Post-Soviet periods (1991-2011)

The Soviet period is defined by years of Ukraine being part of the USSR. Up to 1919 landscape, religious and church, military and directional street names had dominated in cities. Apart from religious ones, these street names characterized the object and resulted from team creative efforts of street, district or city residents. As a rule, these names had a transparent etymology, informed about something or explained the location of the object. For instance, names *Zaozerna (Заозерна, "Behind the Lake")* and *Sosnova (Соснова, "Pine Tree")* not only denoted certain spots of urban space, but also underlined peculiar features of the streets. The majority of initial street names served as signposts which assisted in spatial orientation.

Researches in changes of pre-Revolutionary street names by the Soviet authorities testify to the fact that changes took place in every Ukrainian city/town. For example, in the 19th century in Kyiv the residents themselves created street names. In 1916 the most part of urban street names were names originating from peculiar features of location (*Soliana – Соляна, "Salty"*), objects located there (*Kazarmenna – Казарменна, "Military Barrack")*, its residents (*Chervinstkyi('s) Lane*), while only a small part of street names was of administrative origin. Though, in between 1920-1927 the Soviet authorities renamed every tenth street of the city. In the 60s the tendency prevailed to name Kyiv streets with names originating from geographical objects of the USSR (*Uralska, Kurska, Yeniseyska, Hroznenska*, etc.). When the process of renaming had been completed and the image of the Soviet city modeled at the end of the 60s in Kyiv, there was only 7% left of pre-revolutionary street names since all the other names were tightly linked with the Soviet values. The process of ideologization continued in the 80s and 90s when the prevailing tendency was to name the streets in honour of a certain person (Males 1998: 21-23).

Kirovohrad may serve as another example. At the beginning of the 20th century 90% of all street names originated from geographical terms (*Bolotna – Болотна*), movement directions *(Obyizdnyi Lane - провулок Об'їзний, "Roundabout")*, etc. The Soviet authorities renamed the streets so that in 1991 more than 50% of all street names were memorial names *(Lenin, Kalinin, Budyonyi, Dzerzhunskyi*). The Soviet urban street names violated the main criteria of street naming: geographical, plant- and animal-related, which reflected the relation of name to natural conditions of street existence (Luchyk 2011: 51).

Thematic groups of the Soviet street names carried a distinct ideological content. They were closely related to the names of local and international Communist (Bolshevik) leaders;

names of Communist symbols *(Chervona Ploshcha – Червона Площа, "Red Square"; Chervonopraporna – Червонопрапорна, "Red Flag"; Kolhospna – Колгоспна, "Collective Farm")*; events, social values and important figures of the Soviet era (*40 Rokiv Zhovtnia – 40 років Жовтня, "40 years of October Revolution"; 50-richia SRSR – 50-річчя СРСР, "50 years of USSR")*; ; names of participants of revolutionary movement and civil war who had been imposing new Communist regime in Ukraine *(Artema Street – вулиця Артема; Hazety "Pravda" – вулиця газети «Правда», Newspaper "Pravda" Street)*; names of prominent figures in the spheres of culture, science and invention (there were few streets named in honour of Ukrainians, mostly these were Russians *(Cheliuskintsiv Street - вулиця Челюскінців)*; names of political and military agents *(Cherniakhovskyi, General Potapov).*

A distinct universal component was observable in the content of city urban street names of the Soviet period (names obligatory for all cities). It is an ideologically verified model created by city authorities. According to this model all central streets and squares were named in honour of the founders and Marxism and Leninism movements and leaders of political parties (these are *Marx*, *Engels*, *Luxemburg*, *Liebknecht*, *Lenin* and *Stalin*). The central area was surrounded by streets related to the signs of new system *(Radanska (Soviet), Komsomolska (Komsomol), Zhovtneva (October));* to the Russian writers, composers, scientists; to the names of the Soviet art and science workers and inventors.

Few street names symbolized Ukrainian national values or local traditions. These were street names deriving from the surnames of people who were ideologically neutral to the power and had lived before the Soviet period (*Shevchenko* or *Lesya Ukrainka)*, as well as those who supported required ideological patterns (for instance, streets named in honour of the Ukrainian public figures *Korniychuk* and *Bazhan)*. Spontaneously created by residents national, historically or locally stipulated names eliminated because of unification of urban name space for the sake of names with ideological content.

Similarly, streets in the Western Ukraine, annexed to the USSR in 1939, were renamed. The Soviet urban street names included names which were new to city residents. This way, after the Second World War Lviv urban culture experienced a flow of foreign political, state, historical, scientific and cultural components which had been typical for other cities of the Soviet Ukraine since the 30s: *Stalina* (1944-1961); *Frunze* (1944-1990); *Lenina* (1959-1991); *Liebknecht* (1950-1991) etc.

Thus, over the Soviet period the authorities introduced new elements to a cultural space. They were predominantly related to the Soviet state and Russian culture, which was a dominant element in it. Street names became a tool for influencing the social awareness of city residents.

The Post-Soviet Period (since 1991) started after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when politicians announced re-orientation of social ideals from the Soviet values to those which should be promoted by an independent state. The street names of the cities in Western Ukraine, annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939, were the first to be changed. Thus, renaming process in Lviv in the years 1991-1993, 2006 illustrated a return to national, historical and cultural roots. The Soviet thematic groups of names were substituted by the *pre-Soviet* local names. Suggested urban names deriving from general names reflected new content (for instance, *Prospekt Svobody (Проспект Свободи, "Freedom Avenue"),* where all the protests against the Soviet power took place together with the meetings of national and democratic powers with the public). New names were also formed from the surnames of people who had been fighting for the national Ukrainian idea, from the surnames of the Ukrainian writers of various historical periods, scientists, Ukrainian historical figures *(Kahanets)*, church leaders *(Sheptytskyi)*, singers, actors, film directors, artists *(Hnizdovskyi)*, sculptors, etc. Local governing authorities also used the names deriving from the surnames of people fostering

democratic values in other states *(Sakharov, Dudayev)*. Renamed streets of Lviv region represent the culture of 36 countries of the world, including Poland and Russia, since Ukraine used to be a part of these countries (*Baltiyaska, Biloruska, Hretska, Dahestantska, Monholska, Kazakhska, Varshavska; Balzaka, Betkhovena, Zhukovskoho, Rainisa*, etc.)

Thematic groups of new urban names of the Western, Central and Northern regions testified to renewed national and democratic ideals (streets named in honour of *Chornovil, Shukhevych* (prominent political figures) or *Nezalezhnosti (Independence)*, historical and local names. Though, the renaming process is still in progress in the Central and Northern regions of Ukraine).

Pre-revolutionary names in the cities of Ukraine have only been partially recovered. In some cities local governing authorities followed the way of compromise: it substituted the names with ideological content with neutral names, for example, the names of flowers (in the city of Dniproderzhynsk). In case of passive attitude of the authorities, the issue had been raised by public organization. For instance, this pattern worked in Sumy, Dnipropetrovks and Kirovohrad (Chuhayevskyi).

Different political parties were trying to find a compromise in the process of street renaming. For example, in Kyiv the representatives of democratic powers in the City Council were against the name of *Lenin*. Though, the communists failed to acknowledge the name of *Petliura* (a fighter with Bolsheviks in the 20s, when the Soviet rule settled in Ukraine). Neither democrats, nor communists wanted to restore an old name of the street in honour of a governor *Ivan Funduklei*. Consequently, political powers met halfway: the street was renamed in honour of *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi*, a military leader. For democrats, he is a fighter for national independence, while for communists he is a person who put into action a union with Russia.

Though, political factor has been rather significant in street naming up till now. In Kyiv there was a street named in honour of *Ivan Mazepa*, a famous hetman of Ukraine (1639-1709). He actively supported Ukrainian church and education and was a creator of European Ukraine. The Russian Orthodox Church pronounced an anathema against him, which has not been lifted yet. Patriarch Kiril, an advocate of anti-Ukrainian philosophy of the "Russian World" and a representative of other state (Russian Federation) won the support of the Ukrainian authorities and the street was renamed into *Lavrska* in 2010. (Pakhlovska 2010: 46-49).

In the Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine the authorities have kept the names of the Soviet streets. They bring the information content of the previous state system to the youth born in the independent state. The actions of the authorities are primarily addressed to the Russian-language electorate.

Thus, de-Sovietization and de-Russification of the cultural space of a Ukrainian city have not been completed yet. The process of street renaming has slowed down, though it is still in progress in the Central and Northern regions. The authorities of the Southern and Eastern cities aim at preserving the Soviet image of the cities.

2. Correlation of urban street names and "collective identity"

The present article relies on the idea of Landry and Bourhis on the role of linguistic landscape in forming collective identity: *linguistic landscape may serve important informational and symbolic functions as a marker of the relative power and status of the linguistic communities inhabiting the territory (Landry&Bourhis 1997: 23)*. This issue is related to the notion of "language and identity", which is still little known in Ukrainian linguistics. Sociologists are more active in discussing this idea. (Chernysh&Malancuk 2007: 70-71).

There are two levels of identity analysis, in particular individual and collective. Collective identity, based on cultural components (memory, values, symbols, myths and traditions) has been the most stable lately. Hierarchy of identities is dependent on the character of social group

links (class, social, religious, professional, cultural, etc.) or on the set of identifying factors (national, ethnical, regional, gender, age, class, cultural and political) (Antoniuk 2005: 142.)

In sociolinguistics the category of identity embraces the characteristics which help a person to identify oneself as a native speaker: common origin, language, age, gender, social status, generation, occupation and education level (Matsyuk 2009: 20).

Back in the 1930s Voloshynov (Bakhtin) introduced notions of *ideological sphere, word as ideological sign* and *consciousness as social and ideological fact.* He was an author of the idea of forming a system of disciplines united by a general subject, namely Ideology. These disciplines include Psychology, Literary Studies and Linguistics. The latter is of paramount importance since it is a medium for forming special ideologies: morality, law, arts and sciences (Matsyuk 2008: 241-243). Thus, ideological essence of urban street names is a relevant marker for analyzing the activities of political authorities and direction of society development in this state in whole.

Street names encode different identifying factors and illustrate various ideological environments and diverse ideological worldviews of the society. Semantics of current street names encompasses a) Soviet names; b) names that reflect the rebirth of the Ukrainian nation; c) names which represent the symbols of the Russian culture (provided it is not a titular ethnic group) and d) restored historical names. What is at issue is the addressee of authorities' steps these days. Stated differently, what identities are being supported by street names in independent Ukraine? To designate the political identity related to the values of the former state, the term "Soviet identity" is used. In order to emphasize the correlation with the values of the Ukrainian and Russian cultures, the term "ethnic identity" has been split into "Ukrainian identity" and "Russian identity". Similarly, for the purpose of denoting self-identification in accordance with certain location the term "local identity" is employed (this way ambiguity of the term "regional identity" can be avoided). The illustrative material allows for determining connection between urban names of Ukraine and collective identities.

Urban street names keep traces of the "Soviet identity". Names reflect the values of the former state. They perpetuate political figures and events that left a negative mark in the history of Ukraine. In the independent state these secondary names continue performing nominative and expressive functions. Content of a denotation itself, not speaker's intention, is a source for ideological estimation. This group of street names is formed of thematic groups derivative from the surnames of the leaders of October Revolution in Petrograd in 1917; active fighters against Ukraine's independence in 1918-1919; names of events which glorified military victories of the Soviet authorities; names of state, party and Komsomol activists of the Soviet state; names of European communist leaders, etc.

Names that correlate with the "Soviet identity" are supported by politicians at power (representative of the Party of Regions), who, as a rule, head city toponymic committees in the majority of Ukrainian cities. Thus, a toponymic committee in Kharkiv refused to rename the objects named in honour of the Soviet party leaders and military commanders, in particular Kalinin and Kotovskiy. In this city ideology of the Soviet state is visible not only in street names (*Tretioho Internatsionalu - Третього Інтернаціоналу, "Third International", Druhoyi Pyatyrichky - Другої П'ятирічки, "Second Five-Year Plan", Simnadziatoho Partziyzdy - Сімнадцятого Партз'їзду, "Seventh Party Convention",* etc.), but also in names of underground stations, city districts (metro station Radianska – Радянська, "Soviet"). In June 2011 the City Committee for Toponymy and Preservation of Historical and Cultural Environment (Харківська міська комісія з питань топоніміки та охорони історико-культурного середовища) passed a resolution on keeping the name of the public garden *Radianska Ukrayina (Soviet Ukraine)* (the committee is headed by city mayor Kernes, a representative of the Party of Regions). (Imena bilshovytskykh heroyiv…; Novyi park imeni..).

Els noms en la vida quotidiana. Actes del XXIV Congrés Internacional d'ICOS sobre Ciències Onomàstiques. Annex. Secció 3

365

Local authorities of Donetsk refused to change Soviet street names. The main street in the city is called *Artema* (to honour one of Bolsheviks who was active in setting the Soviet rule in Ukraine in the 20s of the past century) and the longest one is *Kirova* (deriving from the surname of the Soviet party leader, fellow of Stalin). There are streets like *50-Ricchia of USSR (50th Anniversary of the Soviet Union), Ploshcha Lenina (Lenin Square)* and *Leninskyi Prospekt (Lenin Avenue)*. Some streets have the names of the representatives of the former regime who were directly responsible for Great Famine (1932-1933) in Donetsk Region, notably Kosior and Postyshev. The young generation expresses their total disagreement with this situation. For example, in October 2011 protesting against the name of the street in honour of the Russian military commander Vatutin the students attached a sign plate with the name of *Heroyiv UPA* (heroes of Ukrainian Army fighting for independence).

Urban street names testify to the Ukrainian identity**.** These street names illustrate the rebirth of the Ukrainian culture and history, pay honour to those Ukrainian heroes whose names were suppressed and slandered by the Soviet power. These names testify to rectification of historical injustice towards the Ukrainian nation.

Representatives of democratic parties (now in opposition to ruling party) support the renaming of the Soviet names. For example, the deputies of one of the democratic parties addressed local authorities of more than 30 cities with a suggestion to rename the streets named in honour of Kalinin, Budionyi, Voroshylov and Kotovskiy. The reason was that they committed crimes against Ukrainians which had never been known to the society.

Urban street names serve as markers of "local identity". These are historical names of the street which had formed the image of the Ukrainian cities in the pre-Soviet period. There are examples which show that the residents of the cities kept identifying themselves with these names even over the Soviet period. This identity is now being supported by renewal of the old street names during the last 20 years. Thus, in Kyiv *Ulianovykh* Street has been renamed into *Laboratorna*, *Frunze* – into *Kyrylivska* and *Frunze* Square – into *Petropavlivska.*

Historical urban street names used to arise naturally. To some degree, they are linguistic and cultural monuments which have to be restored. Local authorities often give new names which continue toponymic traditions in the cities. These are names derivative from the names historical places, tracts and roads. For instance, toponymic space of Kyiv has been enriched by urban street names which follow toponymic traditions of the city. There are names in honour of prominent figures of the Ukrainian culture, science, education and industry. Similar names, free from clear ideological and political nuances, have a chance to stay on the city map, since they will not be widely affected by political changes (*Pryrichna – Прирічна, "By the River"; Pryozerna – Приозерна, "By the Lake", Verbova – Вербова "Willow Tree"*).

Urban street names support the "Russian identity". These street names derive from the surnames of Russian artists, composers, writers, scientists, doctors and other prominent figures who were not related to Ukraine: *Aliabiyeva* (composer), *Bazhova* (writer), *Botkin* (doctor), *Solovtsov* (actor), *Chigorin* (chess player) and others. In fact, every city had (and still have) names deriving from the names of Russian cities and rivers (*Amurska, Astrakhanska, Bilomorska, Brianska,* etc.); from the names of Russian military commanders of different periods: *Suvorova* (Russian general who lived during the reign of Catherine the Great), *Ushakova* (Russian admiral), *Zhukova* (Soviet military commander), etc. For certain part of the society, which is following the European way of Ukrainian development, similar names are currently associated not with the Russian cultural space, but with Putin's Russia and the philosophy of the "Russian World". (Novodvorskaya)

Els noms en la vida quotidiana. Actes del XXIV Congrés Internacional d'ICOS sobre Ciències Onomàstiques. Annex. Secció 3

366

3. Prospects of changes in Soviet street names in current linguistic situation

Asserting Ukrainian independence and sovereignty should have fostered the substitution of symbols of the former state. Though, the linguistic situation in the state and the role of politicians at power testify that chances for substituting Soviet names are scarce, especially in the Eastern and Southern parts of the country.

Ukrainians are faced with new challenges, such as philosophy of the "Russian world", which is extinguishing the Ukrainian church and Ukrainian identity, as well as legislative initiative on behalf of state authorities. Prior to autumn 2010 linguistic rights of Ukrainians had been executed *de jure*; though, after the introduction of new "bill on languages" these rights are endangered altogether. It is no wonder that the latest bill "On Languages in Ukraine" as of 2010 has been negatively estimated by field-specific committees of the parliament, opposition, Ukrainian scholarly institutions, public organizations, as well as by High Commissioner on National Minorities of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Knut Vollebaek and experts of the Venice Commission that labeled it as counterproductive with view to stabilization of the Ukrainian society. Nonetheless, in the following bill "On Fundamentals of State Language Policy" (2011) the rights of the Ukrainians are still greatly threatened since the bills of governing politicians are aimed at providing legal status to the Russian language in Ukraine.

The application of the Ukrainian language has been rather restricted recently. It is largely owing to the fact that private mass media are predominantly Russian-language (Marusyk 2008: 86-112; Besters-Dilger 2009: 129). This process is also affected by the Russian-language business structures; closing down of schools with Ukrainian as a language of instruction in the Eastern regions of the Ukraine; attempts to unify the Ukrainian history with that of Russia; restricted use of the Ukrainian language in education and lack of Ukrainian textbooks and periodicals in the Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine. Public opinion on language legislation is found out through sociological surveys and announced by certain independent mass media. A single sociolinguistic project in the state was carried out in 2006-2008. 53% of the respondents supported Ukrainian as a single state language, while 24.8% opted for equal status of both languages (Besters-Dilger 2008: 109). Even though civil society has not been shaped yet, the community is protesting against manipulative discourse of new laws.

Under such conditions of language situation the authorities of certain cities have not amended the sign code of space arrangement of the cities tolerating the Soviet and Russian "collective identities". It might be explained by the fact that old (including Soviet) symbols are still relevant for some part of city residents and changing street names may provoke another discussion of historical heritage and, consequently, expand the field of "cultural war" which evokes from time to time.

Conclusions

1. Urban street name as a marker of language-power interaction is fulfilling its political content. This type of unit calls for expansion of analysis methodology, in particular engagement of the ideas of sociolinguistics, linguistics landscape, historical and political sciences.

2. Urban street names of the Soviet period (1922-1991) show how new elements related to the Soviet state and dominant Russian culture were introduced through street names. Street names became tools for influencing public consciousness in Ukraine.

3. Urban street names of the post-Soviet period (1991-2011) testify to partial de-Sovietization and de-Russification of cultural space of a Ukrainian city. Renaming process has been completed in the Western regions of the state, but it is still in progress in the Central and

Northern Regions. The authorities of the Southern and Eastern cities opt for preserving the Soviet image of the cities.

4. Street names in modern Ukraine correlate with the Soviet, ethnically Ukrainian, local collective and ethnically Russian identities of city residents.

5. Under the present linguistic situation urban street names keep reflecting language/power interaction testifying to unwillingness of ruling authorities to form a semantic space of the independent state.

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