

Less Politicised – (Not) More persistent? Longitudinal study of street name change in Kyiv, Ukraine

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Abstract

The paper investigates whether specific categories of street names (in particular, politically relevant vs. politically neutral) have more probability to be renamed in historical perspective. Focusing on the case of Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, a city with a rich history of street renaming due to numerous transitions of political power, and based on a longitudinal dataset (1880-2023) of street renaming in the city, we determine the odds of a certain category of street names to be renamed in a certain historical period employing multiple binomial logistic regressions as a research method. The results generally confirmed a theoretically grounded hypothesis that politicised street names are more likely of being renamed than politically neutral ones. At the same time, in between the tumultuous phases of the power transitions, ideologically neutral names become primary targets of renaming just because of their political neutrality, since the commemoration of new heroes needs additional street names. In this way, the probability of a specific semantic category of a street name to be changed depends on the stage of political transition cycle.

Keywords: *street name, renaming of streets, ideology, persistence to renaming, longitudinal study, Kyiv*

Introduction

Playing a role of nominal loci of historical memory and vectors of collective identity that are embroiled with power relations, street names could be a source of local pride or identity (Crețan & Matthews, 2016), a tool for advancing the goals of societal justice, equity and belonging (Alderman & Inwood, 2013), a source of restoration following the end of an era characterized by injustices (Azaryahu, 2012; Rose-Redwood et al, 2017b; Wanjiru & Matsubara, 2017; Listewnik, 2021). Given the preeminent nature of the conceptual relationships between social sustainability and street naming (Yankson, 2023), efforts should be made to make urban toponymy an instrument that unites and encourages local community rather than divides it and causes discord. Although the potential benefits of street naming for sustainable development may be overstated given the fact that the creation of a truly just and equitable society goes beyond mere toponymic inscriptions within the urban landscape, street naming definitely should be understood as an important element of the broader urban and national development within the social sustainability framework (Yankson, 2023).

The stability (persistence) of street names in democratic societies could be a good indicator showing correspondence of the local naming practices to the social sustainability principles. Of course, some street names are (and should) change to follow the altering spirit of the

time and to reflect rethinking of the past, present and future of a specific community at local, regional, national and supranational levels. However, too frequent and massive renaming of streets may mean, besides the frequent transition of political powers and related change of hegemonic (geo)political narratives, the absence of integrated holistic approach to street naming in the city, as well as the lack of links between the street names and local cultural and geographical context. Regular renaming of streets may result in negative implications for economic interests due to the cost or inconvenience associated with changing address plates, property ownership documents and rebranding business locations (Crețan & Matthews, 2016). Moreover, frequent and constant renaming of streets, including principal urban arteries and symbolically important places, may complicate the task of shaping strong local identity and offset the efforts of city and neighbourhood branding. Finally, the role of a street name as a means of spatial identification and orientation often is no less important than its semiotic role as a commemorative marker (Azaryahu, 1996; Light & Young, 2018), therefore constant renaming may substantially impair orientation of people in urban space.

In order to make urban toponymy more stable and locally rooted, and less vulnerable to political power transitions, many communities worldwide employed (or at least insisted on) using non-commemorative neutral descriptive names as dominant renaming strategy. But how justified are these expectations? The aim of the

research is to define whether specific categories of street names (in particular, politically relevant vs. politically neutral, but not limited to this dichotomy) are more or less targeted for renaming compared to the other street name categories. We focus on the case of Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, as a city with both a large number of street names (which is important for the reliability of statistical analysis) and a rich history of street renaming due to numerous transitions of political power and subsequent re-evaluations of historical memory and hegemonic (geo)political narrative. To determine the odds of a certain category of street names to be renamed in a certain historical period, binomial logistic regression is employed to a longitudinal dataset (1880-2023) of street renaming.

The rest of the paper is structured in the following way. It begins with an explanation of how the more or less politicised nature of a street name may influence its survivability in front of possible renaming, with a specific focus on the Ukrainian context of the problem. The following section contains a brief historical overview of toponymic changes in Kyiv and their underlying (geo)political drivers. The next section contains a detailed description of the data and methods. After that, the paper moves to the presentation and discussion of the empirical results of the study. The paper ends with concluding remarks summarising the findings of the research, as well as their theoretical and practical relevance.

Theoretical background

Street names have three basic functions: orientation (utilitarian), symbolic (commemorative) (Azaryahu, 1990), and aesthetical (the cuteness of the name, the positive associations it evokes, and ease of remembering) (Riznyk, 2007). The utilitarian function was the prevailing one during most of human history. For instance, European medieval street naming was mostly motivated by topography and function, being customarily coined on the basis of geographical features, the predominant resident businesses or architectural and topographic landmarks (David, 2013; Fabiszak et al., 2021). The situation has changed since the 19th century, when street naming started to be recruited as a discursive practice for the construction and expression of identity and collective memory.

This role of street names as ideological markers and a sort of “sites of remembrance” (Nora, 1989), becomes most transparent in the immediate aftermath of significant political power shifts (Azaryahu, 2011), when new authorities try to clean the toponymic landscape from any reminder of the former political order and simultaneously inscribe into the landscape the ideological ethos upholding the new structure of power (Light, 2004; Rusu, 2021). Massive renaming of streets as an important means of legitimating power has been observed and analysed in a variety of geopolitical contexts, including state-building (Yeoh, 1996; Azaryahu & Kook, 2002; Yeh, 2013), colonialism and military occupation (Aldrich, 2002;

Rose-Redwood et al, 2010; Gómy & Góma, 2019; Basik, 2020b), decolonisation (Bigon & Njoh, 2015; Rose-Redwood, 2016; Hui, 2017; Wanjiru & Matsubara, 2017; Azaryahu, 2019; Gnatiuk & Melnychuk, 2023), and transition to democracy from authoritarian rule (Capdepón, 2020), including post-socialist and post-Soviet contexts (Azaryahu, 1997; Bitušíková, 1998; Crljenko, 2012; Gnatiuk, 2018; Kaşıkçı, 2019).

Therefore, all street names can be roughly divided between two categories: (1) ideological (politicised) names with more or less clear commemorative meaning that function as symbolic markers of power, identity and belonging, and (2) ideologically neutral names that have no direct relation to a certain ideology and perform (almost) exclusively utilitarian function. Nevertheless, we should remember that every act of naming is politicised, and even giving an ideologically neutral name may, in fact, have a hidden ideological sense (Palonen, 2017; Rose-Redwood et al., 2017a). In this way, classifying a street name as ideological or non-ideological may differ, depending on the conceptualisation of the ideology, in particular, whether the focus is on the meaning of particular street name or the nature of the (re)naming process when this particular street name appeared (Fabiszak et al., 2021). A commemorative street name could be treated as less ideological if it refers to the local context, and more ideological if related more to the state identity framing; similarly, place names commemorating political or military leaders are apparently more ideological than place names commemorating teachers or entrepreneurs (Fabiszak et al., 2021; Buchstaller et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, there are no doubt that some street names have more ideological burden than others, and this may be a more or less definitive factor of their biography, including persistence to the further renaming. If politicised ideological street names are usually a subject to cleansing under each political transition (David, 2011), then it seems to be logical to give the streets ideologically neutral names, which would be a minor irritant for any future political authority. With an implicit or explicit belief in this consideration, many communities across the world are trying to break a vicious cycle of recurring ideologically driven renaming employing a strategy of introduction of non-commemorative neutral names.

For example, the restoration of pre-socialist commonly used names and the introduction of non-commemorative neutral names as a dominant renaming strategy was observed in the city of Banská Bystrica, Slovakia (Bitušíková, 2022). In Sibiu, Romania, after the transition from the Romanian People's Republic to the Socialist Republic of Romania, the names of Soviet leaders and heroes, purged off the urban nomenclature, were replaced with mostly descriptive, politically neutral names (in this specific case, a neutralization technique concealed political intentions) (Rusu, 2021).

In Ukraine, during the last decade being a hotspot on the global map in terms of urban toponymy revision (Basik 2020a, 2022) due to state politics of decommunization and decolonisation (the latter can be generally equated to de-Russification) (Kuczabski & Boychuk, 2020; Gnatiuk & Melnychuk, 2023), widespread belief could be heard saying that streets should be given ideologically neutral descriptive or figurative names because they are more stable compared to commemorative toponyms and thus have more chances to survive with every subsequent change in political course or official interpretation of history. For instance, in 2022, giving ideologically neutral names was the most popular general principle (52% of agreement) with respect to street naming in Kharkiv – that was the only position supported by the majority of the respondents, while commemorative naming received less support among the Kharkivites (Gnatiuk & Homanyuk, 2023). In addition, focus groups of Kharkivites discussed the idea that it would be better to abandon the practice of naming streets for famous people altogether – because of a great temptation that these names would be revised in the future for political reasons (Gnatiuk & Homanyuk, 2023). Similarly, in Vinnytsia, another Ukrainian city, many citizens lean towards ideologically neutral names as more stable (Gnatiuk et al., 2023).

Most municipalities from the east and south of Ukraine, while implementing obligatory decommunisation of street names legally adopted in 2015, were not ready to fully accept a new Ukrainian nation-centric memory narrative, including avoiding commemorating “builders of Ukrainian independence” (see Marples, 2018), and thus chose a strategy of maintaining political neutrality when choosing new names for renamed streets (Gnatiuk, 2018). In 2015–2018, the share of ideologically neutral (descriptive and figurative) newly introduced street names in the largest cities of the eastern and southern Ukraine varies from 20% to 70%; also, these cities have a substantial share of restored historical (pre-communist) street names, and a lot of these names are politically neutral (Gnatiuk, 2018). In this case, preference for neutral street names once again hides political intentions at least partially (Gnatiuk, 2018); nevertheless, the decrease of political and military place names in favour of toponymy exhibiting local topographical features, as well as peculiarities of local industry and culture, can be interpreted as a desire to lower the degree of ideologisation and avoid any future renaming situations (Golikov, 2020; Kudriavtseva, 2020; Kutsenko, 2020).

Besides the observed public demand for politically neutral street names and respective (re)naming strategies (being) implemented, already there is a recent specimen of rigorous scientific proof for the thesis that politically neutral street names are more persistent in the historical perspective. A quantitative longitudinal (1875–2020) analysis of street renaming in Sibiu, Romania, employing binomial logistic regression as a principal research technique, statistically confirmed that the level of

ideological burden of a street name (i.e. whether a street name is politicised or neutral) influences the probability of the street to be renamed (Rusu, 2021). Another recent research, focusing on longitudinal patterns of marking political ideology in street names in Leipzig and Poznań between 1916–2018, suggests that streets with non-commemorative descriptive names “provide semantic stability to the city-text; they are descriptive and indicative of what can be found on a given street. Commemorative renaming, by contrast, which brings about semantic change, breaks this continuity and adds fluctuation to the streetscape” (Buchstaller et al., 2023, p. 20).

Nevertheless, there are at least three reasons why longitudinal analysis of street renaming in various geographical contexts worldwide should be continued. First, the research by Rusu (2021), despite the wide temporal frame of analysis, addresses the change in urban toponymy at five discrete historical cross-sections. Probably, for the case of Sibiu such an approach can be substantiated by the discrete nature of street renaming in the city. However, street name change usually occurs continuously throughout history. Second, historical cross-sections analysed by Rusu (2021) are linked to a sequence of transitions from one political regime to another. At the same time, changes of toponymy during quieter historical periods in between these transitions turn out to be overlooked (being merged with the tumultuous period directly following the political transition). Third, it is known that the development of urban toponymy, despite indisputable commonalities worldwide, could be place-specific, and what is true for e.g. a Romanian city will not necessarily be observed for a Ukrainian one. Mihai Rusu himself emphasises that the main limitation of his work “consists in the case-study approach focused on examining the patterns of street name changes in a single place”, a methodological strategy which restricts the comparability of the findings, and therefore “further work is needed for addressing the methodological issue that limits the comparability of this paper” (Rusu, 2021, p. 19).

Furthermore, given the empirical evidence from different geopolitical contexts, it may be supposed that politically neutral names could be primary targets for renaming in certain historical periods, although they could be more persistent in a longer historical perspective. There are two illustrative examples. First, in Sibiu, during the transitions from Austria-Hungary to Greater Romania and from the Kingdom of Romania to the Romanian People’s Republic, many previously descriptive street names were politicised by renaming them after heroes, historical events, and political values associated with the new regime; at the same time, in general, neutral street names were more persistent to renaming (Rusu, 2021). Second, in Almonteños, Spain, politically neutral descriptive street names were a useful source for renaming under political power transitions in order to create politicised names. However, after a long cycle of such transitions, most of them were finally restored with democratization in 1980s,

while most of commemorative toponyms were not so lucky (Faraco & Murphy, 1997). Such observations encourage the idea that relative persistence of different semantic categories of street names could be more complicated than it appears at first glance.

Toponymic changes in Kyiv: brief historical overview

From the foundation of the city (roughly the 6th – 7th centuries) until the middle of the 19th century, street names in Kyiv were traditionally given mainly by local residents. The task of the city authorities was only to fix the existing names. The first street names fixed in historical chronics date back to the 10th century. Until mid 19th century, the absolute majority of them were descriptive names derived from local landmarks, topographic features, names of local landlords or churches, as well as geographical places outside Kyiv located in the direction of a street (Riznyk, 2007).

One of the first interventions of the state government in the politics of street naming in Kyiv dates back to 1812 when the main street and square of Podil (one of the historical districts of the city) were named after the Russian Emperor Alexander I. In 1866, the Commission for Renaming Streets, Squares and Lanes of Kyiv was established under the Kyiv Provincial Statistical Committee. The minutes of the meeting of the Kyiv Provincial Statistical Committee (1869) contained not only specific proposals regarding the naming or renaming of 95 streets, but also formulated the principles and criteria for naming. In particular, the names of the streets in the future were to perpetuate the memory of various historical events and prominent state and public figures (Riznyk, 2007).

The remaining half-century after 1869 and until the revolution of 1917 was characterised, on the one hand, by the official naming of streets in the centre of the city in honour of Russian imperial political symbols, on the other hand, by the continuous ‘toponymic self-activity’ of the people living on the city outskirts, where streets names were marked by a purely local semiosis in no way connected with the glorification of crowned persons (Riznyk, 2007).

In October 1917, under the political rule of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, Kyiv City Council renamed six streets in the city centre that bore the names of tsars and governors in honour of Ukrainian cultural and political figures. But very soon, after the capture of Kyiv by the Bolsheviks in February 1918, several dozen streets with Russian imperial and Ukrainian commemorative names, as well as with old descriptive names, were renamed after the Bolshevik leaders and communist symbols. During the 1920s, the efforts of communist commemorative renaming continued mainly in the central city areas. The late 1930s were marked by a massive revision of street names in Kyiv, including the peripheral urban areas, when

more than 300 predominantly descriptive street names were changed for communist ones (Riznyk, 2007).

The Nazi occupation administration implemented their own toponymic policy in Kyiv during 1941–1943, renaming streets in the city centre. Unlike the Soviet government, the Nazis did not pursue the total ideologisation of the toponymic space: up to a dozen main streets and squares were given distinctly ideological names, while the rest of the newly assigned names were of a purely descriptive nature, linked to a location or a direction. For many streets, the pre-communist names were restored. The names of some Russian prominent figures were substituted with Ukrainian ones (Riznyk, 2007).

The next Soviet renaming in December 1944 covered more than 200 street names. Besides the liquidation of Nazi toponyms, it reflected Stalin’s wartime attitudes to the “patriotic traditions of the peoples of the USSR”: 37 streets were given back their pre-communist names, and several streets received names derived from ancient local vernacular toponymy or abstract figurative names. However, the next, even more massive (re)naming campaigns during the 1950s covered more than 1000 street names and were marked by a one more turn of imposing the ideologically correct names via erasing the old descriptive toponyms, including some of those introduced just in 1944. One of the main sources of new names in that period was the geographical map of the USSR: hundreds of streets in Kyiv received names derived from geographical sites and landmarks from the whole USSR territory (Riznyk, 2007; Gnatiuk & Melnychuk, 2020a). The following Soviet decades of the 1960s-1980s were marked by much lesser intensity of renaming that mainly affected individual streets and had no systematic nature. Nevertheless, hundreds of renaming occurred during these decades.

During the period of independent Ukraine, there were three massive and/or important waves of renaming street toponymy in Kyiv, although less numerous cases of renaming were registered between them as well. The first wave, induced by national patriotic uplift after the restoration of national independence, occurred in 1990-1993. It was not so significant in absolute and relative numbers of changed street names, but it represented an important shift in post-communist naming politics. Up to 40 communist names were changed, mainly in the historical centre of the city, as well as certain main arteries on the urban periphery. In the absolute majority of cases, the historical names of the streets were returned, with the exceptions when the historical name did not correspond to the logic of constructing a new national Ukrainian identity. A few newly introduced commemorative titles glorified outstanding Ukrainian state and cultural figures. In general, the first wave of post-Soviet renaming was not so much a cleansing of the communist ideology or, even more so, the Soviet heritage, but rather the partial restoration of the pre-Soviet identity of Kyiv and forming a new image of its central part in order to make it more

suitable for the capital of an independent state (Riznyk, 2007; Hyrych, 2013; Gnatiuk & Melnychuk, 2020b).

The second post-Soviet wave of massive renaming of streets in Kyiv was related to the obligatory decommunisation of toponymy (a respective law package was adopted in 2015) after the Revolution of Dignity and the beginning of Russo-Ukrainian hybrid warfare in 2014. This wave of renaming covered more than 200 communist street names across the whole territory of the city. The absolute majority (68.1%) of new toponyms were commemorative names, of which 28.6% related to the realm of state politics and warfare. This time, only 12% of new toponyms were restored historical street names. About the same share was made up of descriptive topographic names, which mostly derived from the vernacular toponymy of Kyiv, and 8.6% were figurative names (Gnatiuk & Melnychuk, 2020b).

The third post-Soviet wave of numerous renaming of streets in Kyiv was inspired by public demand to erase the Russian and Soviet cultural markers following the full-scale Russian military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 – a process known as de-Russification and constituting, in fact, a sort of decolonisation (Gnatiuk & Melnychuk, 2023). During 2022-2023, the changes covered up to 200 street names semantically related to Russian history, culture, and geography.

For the period of 1890-2023, the absolute numbers and relative shares of changed street names in Kyiv can be tracked on the graph (Fig. 1). It can be easily seen that both absolute and relative intensity of renaming were quite low until the beginning of the 20th century, then gradually increased reaching a pike in 1950s, with subsequent gradual decrease until the beginning of the 21st century, when a new recent burst of renaming is observed due to the decommunisation and de-Russification efforts.

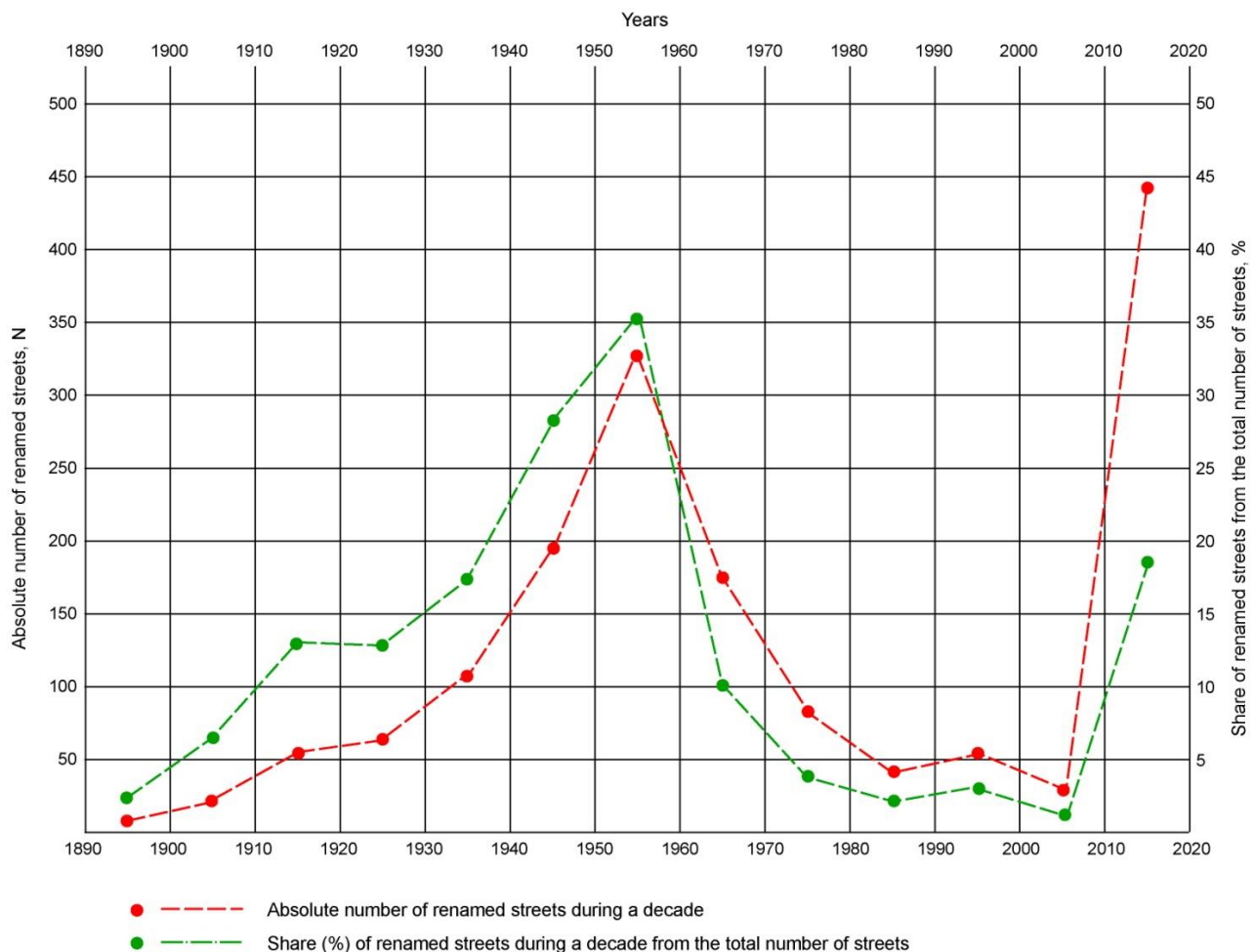


Figure 1. Renaming of streets in Kyiv: historical dynamics (source: authors' own calculation)

Notably, in Kyiv, we observe a little bit different timing pattern of the street renaming practices legitimizing the hegemonic sociopolitical order compared to the recent study focusing on the other two postsocialist national

contexts: Leipzig (East Germany) and Poznań (Poland) (Buchstaller et al., 2023). The common thing is the obvious peaks of street renaming activity at the cusp of each new political regime. However, contrary to both Leipzig and

Poznań, Kyiv experienced several episodes of even higher intensity of street renaming later on, when the regime was well established, e.g. in the 1930s and 1950s. We may propose two possible explanations for this phenomenon. The first is that in the Soviet Union, the communist regime could implement a more consistent, relaxed and long-term policy of changing urban toponymy in accordance with the prevailing ideology, which led to periodic "reordering" of street names corpus. The second explanation is that the Soviet leaders carried out repeated purges, including those of their own political and military elites, which led to the periodic reassessment of individual persons, events and symbols. Accordingly, the need arose from time to time to remove some street names and introduce others, which were more in line with the current line of leadership.

Methodology

A complete dataset of a historic sequence of street name changes in Kyiv was constructed based on several sources, including the official city records published on the web pages of the Kyiv City Council (<https://kmr.gov.ua/>), the Department of Public Communications of the Kyiv City State Administration (<https://dsk.kyivcity.gov.ua/>), the Official Portal of Kyiv (<https://kyivcity.gov.ua/>), the Official Directory of Streets of the City of Kyiv (<https://kyivcity.gov.ua/img/item/general/167.pdf>), the City Information and Analytical System for Urban Planning Activities "Urban Planning Cadastre of Kyiv" (<http://mkk.kga.gov.ua/>), the Directory "Streets of Kyiv" (Kudrytskyi et al., 1995) and the Atlas "Kyiv to Every Building 2023". Each row of the collected database includes the unique row code, the unique street code, the street name (toponym), the year of naming, the year of renaming (if the name was changed), the previous street name (if any), the following street name (if it exists), the final street name (as of June 2023 or at the moment when the street was liquidated). In this way, the database allows sequencing the continuous change of name for every street in Kyiv from the first historical data available until June 2023. In total, the database includes 2202 streets and 3952 street names (rows).

In order to distinguish between the more and less ideologically coloured toponyms, street names were categorised in the following way:

1. 'Topographic': street names indicating the location of the street relative to local topographic features or geographical landmarks both inside and outside the city. E.g.: vul. Teatralna [Theatre Street] located near the theatre, vul. Pivdenna [Southern Str.] in the southern part of the city; vul. Kharkivska [vul. Kharkivska] going in direction to the city of Kharkiv; Andriivskyi uzv. [Saint Andrew Descent] located near the Saint Andrew (Andrii) Church.

2. 'Figurative': street names which do not relate to the actual characteristics of the street but carrying rather a

certain emotional load. E.g.: vul. Radisna [Happy Str.], vul. Rankova [Morning Str.], vul. Kvitucha [Flourishing Str.].

3. 'Commemorative politicised': street names commemorating historical figure, organisation, date, event etc. related primarily to the realms of politics, state building, and warfare. E.g.: vul. Hrushevskoho [Mykhailo Hrushevsky Str.] named after the head of the Central Rada, Ukraine's 1917–1918 revolutionary parliament (1866–1934); vul. Herojiv Polku Azov [Azov Regiment Heroes Str.] commemorating a formation of the National Guard of Ukraine fighting in the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war; Maidan Nezalezhnosti [Independence Square] named after Ukrainian independence as a sovereign state in 1991. The absolute majority of such street names were given for specific persons (90.7%), while the rest were commemorating organisations (4.4%), dates or events (2.9%), professional groups of people or people united by the common historical context (2.8%), abstract ideas (1.1%) and political symbols, including flags, songs, newspapers, etc. (0.9%).

4. 'Commemorative non-politicised': street names commemorating historical figure, organisation etc. related primarily to the realms of culture, education, science, religion, etc. E.g.: vul. Mykhaila Kotsiubynskoho [Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi Str.] named after Ukrainian impressionist and modernist writer (1864–1913); prosp. Liubomyra Huzara [Liubomyr Huzar Ave.] named after the Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (1933–2017). This category includes also street names commemorating representatives of certain professions (except for military ones). E.g.: vul. Zodchykh [Architects Str.].

5. 'Transferred geographical names of Ukrainian origin', or simply 'Ukrainian transferred': street names commemorating the geographical names of other places (cities, regions, rivers, mountains, etc.) within Ukraine. Importantly, unlike similar 'topographical' names, these should be definitely considered commemorative names. E.g.: vul. Irpinska [Irpın Str.] named after Ukrainian city of Irpin; vul. Karpatska [Carpathian Str.] named after the Carpathians Mountains located partly in Ukraine.

6. 'Transferred geographical names of non-Ukrainian origin', or simply 'non-Ukrainian transferred': street names commemorating the geographical names of other places (cities, regions, rivers, mountains, countries, etc.) outside Ukraine. Importantly, unlike the similar 'topographical' names, these should be definitely commemorative names. E.g.: Moskovskyi Prosp. [Moscow Ave.] named after the city of Moscow, Russia; vul. Polska [Polish Str.] named after the state/country of Poland.

'Commemorative politicised', 'Ukrainian transferred' and 'non-Ukrainian transferred' street names are typically used to inscribe in urban space certain (geo)political ideologies and narratives. Therefore, these categories of street names could be classified as 'ideological' toponyms. On the contrary, 'topographic' and 'figurative' street names are basically unrelated to any ideology and thus

could be considered ideologically neutral. Finally, ‘commemorative non-politicised’ street names, in fact, are related to certain ideologies and political narratives (for instance, ethnic belonging or political attitudes of an artist or scientist do make a difference in terms of his/her commemoration under certain political regime), but not so strongly than ‘commemorative politicised’ street names. That is why this category of street names should be considered somewhere in the middle between the ‘ideological’ and ideologically neutral toponyms (cf. Buchstaller et al., 2023). In this paper, the criterion is a semiotic potential inherent in the street name (the ideological weight of the street name), while the nature of the renaming process is ignored (see Fabiszak et al., 2021).

Along with the street name category, the probability of a street to be renamed depends on its symbolic significance, which in turn depends, among else, on its location within the city and relative significance among the other streets (Gnatiuk & Glybovets, 2020; Rusu, 2021; Buchstaller et al., 2023). Thus, each street was classified according to its centrality and significance. The street was defined as ‘central’ if located in the historical centre of the city, and ‘peripheral’ if located outside the historical centre. The street was defined as ‘main’ if it belongs to the list of key urban arteries with the main transport traffic, including the routes of public transportation, and/or if it belongs to the key symbolic locations or tourist

destinations; otherwise, the street was defined as ‘secondary’.

Of course, both street centrality and significance are historically floating categories due to urban growth and development, and thus fixing them once and for all the studied period is a methodological shortcoming that could distort the research results. However, since the historical centre of Kyiv basically has been shaped by the end of the 19th century, and our analysis comprises the time period since the 1880s, the fixed centrality status of streets should not be considered as a crucial methodological deficiency. Also, although the significance of streets changed over time, during the 20th century, most streets categorised as ‘main’ have been more important than their ‘secondary’ neighbours.

Multiple binomial logistic regressions (Hosmer & Lemeshov, 2000) were used to evaluate the probability of a street name from each category to be renamed in specific decade. The list of independent variables (predictors) includes the street name category according to the above-described scheme (IV1), the street centrality (IV2), and the street significance (IV3). The dependent variable (DV) was the street name status during the respective decade: renamed or unchanged. Street name category (IV1) and street name status (DV) were exploratory variables, while street centrality (IV2) and street significance (IV3) played the role of controls. The coding of variables is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Coding of variables for multiple binomial regressions

Variable	Coding
Independent variables	
Street name category (IV1)	‘Topographic’ = 0 ‘Figurative’ = 1 (ref. topographic) ‘Commemorative politicised’ = 2 (ref. topographic) ‘Commemorative non-politicised’ = 3 (ref. topographic) ‘Transferred Ukrainian’ = 4 (ref. topographic) ‘Transferred non-Ukrainian origin’ = 5 (ref. topographic)
Street centrality (IV2)	‘Peripheral’ = 0 ‘Central’ = 1 (ref. peripheral)
Street significance (IV3)	‘Secondary’ = 0 ‘Main’ = 1 (ref. secondary)
Dependent variable	
Status of street name (DV)	Not renamed = 0 Renamed = 1

Source: elaboration by the authors

Separate binomial logistic regressions were performed for each decade starting with 1880-1889 and ending with the extended decade of 2010-2023. For each specific decade, the dataset includes street names that existed in the initial year of the decade (e.g. in 1940 for the decade 1940-1949) but does not include street names emerging during the decade. In total, the relative probability of street name from the specific category to be changed was investigated for 14 sequential decades embracing the end

of the 19th century, the entire 20th century, and the beginning of the 21st century. It did not make sense to take earlier historical periods for analysis due to both the small number of street names in most categories and the low frequency of renaming. Nevertheless, the analysis scrutinises street name changes registered across five political regimes (Russian Empire, Ukrainian People’s Republic and Second Hetmanate, Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, again Soviet Union, and independent Ukraine).

Results and discussion

It was expected that ‘commemorated politicised’ street names, being the most ideologically coloured toponyms, would be the least stable category of street names, the most susceptible to renaming.

However, the multiple regression results (Table 2; Fig. 2) suggest that this statement is true only for the tumultuous periods of geopolitical changes and transitions of power, accompanied by the massive change of street toponyms due to ideological reasons. The first such period is observed in 1910s-1940s, when (1) the street names originating from the Russian Empire were changed by Communists with usual subsequent adjustments due to the political struggle at the communist top (1910s-1930s), (2) the Communist street names were changed by the Nazis (1940s), and (3) the Nazi names were

once again changed by the Communist regime, and the whole street toponymy of Kyiv was reorganized after the WWII (1940s). For instance, the odds of ‘commemorated politicised’ names to be changed in the 1910s, 1930s and 1940s, compared to the ‘topographic’ names, were 2.9, 2.2 and 5.1 times higher, respectively. The second such period covers 1990s-2010s, when the Communist street names and the Russia-related ‘colonial’ street names were changed by the authorities of Independent Ukraine under the politics of decommunisation and decolonisation – first in 1990s, then after the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, and finally after the full-scale Russian invasion into Ukraine in 2022. During this second tumultuous period, the odds of ‘commemorated politicised’ names to be changed, in comparison with the ‘topographic’ names, were even higher than in the previous period of power transitions: 28.9, 5.1 and 23.6 times higher, respectively.

Table 2: Multiple binomial logistic regression results (odds ratios) for DV: Status of street name in specified decade (renamed/not renamed)

Predictors (covariates)	1880s	1890s	1900s	1910s	1920s	1930s	1940s
Centre (ref. periphery)	9.228·10 ⁶	0.551	0.534	1.507	1.760	2.980***	2.720***
Main (ref. secondary)	1.056	1.790	2.431	3.281**	2.709**	1.735	2.091*
Figurative (ref. topographic)	0.436	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.585	0.612
Commemorative politicized (ref. topographic)	78.228·10 ⁶	1.058	0.425	2.944**	1.249	2.154*	5.074***
Commemorative non-politicized (ref. topographic)	0.739	0.000	0.000	0.924	1.081	1.991*	2.417**
Transferred geographical names of Ukrainian origin (ref. topographic)	4.239	0.000	0.000	1.193	2.428	2.110	0.000
Transferred geographical names of non-Ukrainian origin (ref. topographic)	0.460	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	3.114
Constant	0.000	0.033***	0.070***	0.071***	0.075***	0.073***	0.080***
Observations	288	294	346	415	494	616	705
Hosmer-Lemeshow Test (Sig.)	1.000	0.655	0.866	0.553	0.917	0.992	0.944
Nagelkerke R Square	0.423	0.048	0.084	0.109	0.066	0.119	0.221
Predictors (covariates)	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
Centre (ref. periphery)	0.486***	0.731	1.155	1.806	6.472***	1.783	0.808
Main (ref. secondary)	0.634	1.849*	1.170	0.553	3.843***	2.613	1.196
Figurative (ref. topographic)	0.677	0.248*	0.110*	1.600	0.000	0.000	1.755
Commemorative politicized (ref. topographic)	0.698	0.789	0.350**	0.743	28.927***	5.092***	23.605***
Commemorative non-politicized (ref. topographic)	0.635*	0.599*	0.250***	0.612	4.470	0.518	3.988***
Transferred geographical names of Ukrainian origin (ref. topographic)	0.268**	0.448*	0.096**	0.500	0.000	0.000	0.811
Transferred geographical names of non-Ukrainian origin (ref. topographic)	0.777	1.037	0.080*	0.000	0.000	0.914	28.772***
Constant	0.618***		0.093***	0.036***	0.002***	0.007***	0.035***
Observations	922	1674	1777	1837	1905	1938	2702
Hosmer-Lemeshow Test (Sig.)	0.951	0.707	0.955	0.751	0.258	0.890	0.907
Nagelkerke R Square	0.054	0.028	0.087	0.036	0.357	0.145	0.312

Notes: odds coef. = $\text{Exp}(B)$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Source: calculations by the authors based on the own data.

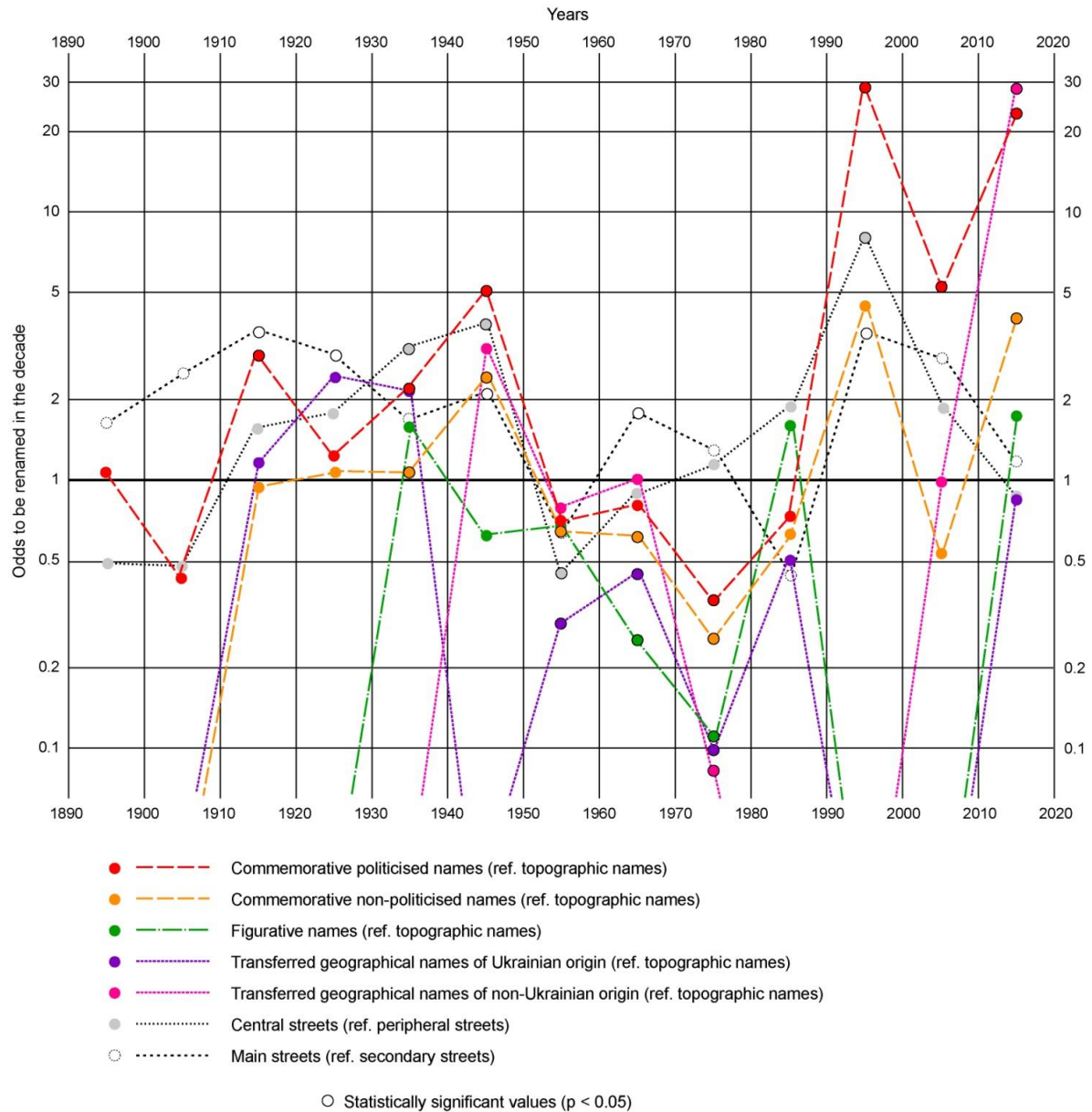


Figure 2. Odds ratios for the street to be renamed in specified decade depending on semantic category, centrality and significance (source: authors' own calculation)

On the contrary, before the 1910s and in the 1950s–1980s, in the absence of major political power transitions and changes in official historical narrative, ‘commemorated politicised’ street names were changed statistically significantly less than ideologically neutral ‘topographical’ names. For instance, in the 1950s, 1960s and 1980s the odds of ‘commemorated politicised’ street names to be changed were ≈ 0.7 compared to the ‘topographical’ names, while in the 1990s and 1970s they were ≈ 0.4 .

Such a dynamics, consisting of two opposite phases, may be explained in the following way. Each time, after the political power transition, or under the changed geopolitical circumstances (as in Ukraine under the full-

scale Russian invasion), the authorities are performing ideological cleansing of street names erasing undesired ideology and disseminating new ideological narrative instead. This is a period of a high frequency of renaming, and simultaneously the primary targets of the name change are street names with ideological burden. During more quiet periods in between political power transitions and upsets, when the overall frequency of renaming decreases, there are no more ideologically ‘wrong’ names, but the need for commemoration nevertheless persists. Consequently, ideologically neutral names serve as a reserve for further renaming in order to promote the prevailing ideology, and therefore, paradoxically, became

in such periods more vulnerable in terms of renaming compared to the names with clear ideological burden.

The odds of 'commemorative non-politicised' street names follow very similar historical dynamics as 'commemorative politicised': their relative chances to be changed rise in epochs of political transitions and fall in more quiet periods between them. However, they are expectedly always less susceptible to renaming compared to 'commemorative politicised' names. For instance, the odds of 'commemorated non-politicised' names to be changed in the 1940s, 1990s and 2010s, compared to the 'topographic' names, were 2.4, 4.5 and 4.0 times higher, respectively, but approximately 2 times lower compared to the 'commemorated politicised' names. In the 1910s-1930s, as well as in the 2000s, the chances of the 'commemorated non-politicised' names to be changed were almost equal to those of ideologically neutral 'topographical' names.

The higher odds of renaming commemorative street names in independent Ukraine compared with the Soviet period is explained by the fact that the communist authorities did not particularly care about the opinion of local residents about renaming streets, therefore not only ideologically wrong names but also ideologically neutral ones, were considered as a resource to be changed in order to promote the communist ideology. On the contrary, in independent Ukraine, under democratic political regime, practically every idea of a street renaming was treated more or less cautiously by the local residents – not only due to ideological reasons, but with the arguments that change of street names will result in additional unnecessary expenses for changing the documents and address plates. The authorities were obliged to reckon with this fact, and so 'innocent' neutral street names were rarely subject to renaming (occasional exceptions became possible after the Russian full-scale invasion in 2022, when more street names became needed to commemorate new heroes of the ongoing war).

Notably, with regard to gender bias: commemorative street names after women in all historical periods constituted a strong minority in Kyiv. A question of interest about the gender affiliation of the commemorative street names can be the following: are female street names more or less stable than male ones? In the present research, we did not perform a detailed comparative analysis of the odds of male and female street names to be changed. Nevertheless, given the results of the research specifically focusing on female street names in Ukrainian cities (Gnatiuk & Glybovets, 2020), where one may find the detailed description of the historical dynamics of female street names in Kyiv, we may suppose that they were no less vulnerable than male ones. This happens not least because most of female street names introduced during 20th century political regimes were ideologically coloured.

'Transferred geographical names of Ukrainian origin' show different patterns of susceptibility to renaming during the first and the second halves of the 20th century.

Before WWII, when communists seized power, they had a high chance of being changed compared to the other semantic categories of street names. However, after WWII, they appear to be among the most persistent category of urban street toponymy in Kyiv. In the post-war decades, their odds of being changed were from 2 to 10 times lower, compared to 'topographical' names, and in the 1990s and 2000s, when Ukraine gained its Independence, such names were not subject to changes at all. Referring to the national geography of Ukraine, such names are looking very organically and neutrally in terms of ideology. Thus, it may be supposed that for the functionaries of the late Soviet period, being not as radical as their predecessors from the beginning of the century, it was hard to raise the hand to erase them. In independent Ukraine, such street names are looking even more organic; moreover, they perform a clear ideological function of 'glue' symbolically putting the country together into a single geographically-projected national entity (Gnatiuk & Melnychuk, 2020a). A parallel can be driven here with the appearance of numerous transferred geographical names of Polish origin in the post-Nazi Poznań (Buchstaller, 2023). Recently, a lot of street names of this kind emerged across Ukraine to commemorate the Ukrainian cities being the places of significant military clashes during the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war or those most suffered from the Russian hostilities.

At the same time, 'transferred geographical names of non-Ukrainian origin' is a significantly less stable category of street names, which demonstrates a temporal pattern similar to that of commemorative names with ideological burden. They were stable before the WWII, but vulnerable in the 1940s, when Nazi and Soviet political regimes manipulated with them as geopolitical symbolic markers. After that, they were very stable once again for decades. Unlike 'commemorative politicised' names, they were practically untouchable during the first two decades of Ukrainian independence, but became the most frequently renamed category of street names in Kyiv in the 2010s, and especially with the start of official politics of decolonisation/de-Russification after the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022. In fact, until the recent efforts of decolonisation, most of such street names in Kyiv were related to the geographical landmarks from the former Soviet Union, and used by the communist rulers to symbolically mark the geographical expansion and unity of the 'Soviet Motherland' (Gnatiuk & Melnychuk, 2020a). At the same time, most newly emerging names of this category commemorate landmarks from the countries being key geopolitical and military allies of Ukraine in war with Russia, representing so-called 'gratefulness toponymy' (Gnatiuk & Basik, 2023). Beyond the Ukrainian context, such street names are also employed in various performances of transitional justice, toponymic gifting or shaming (Rose-Redwood, 2008; Balode, 2012; Brocket, 2021; Sysiö et al., 2023). Generalising, 'transferred geographical names' of foreign origin in most cultural and

geographical contexts are deeply involved in the “performative dimensions of the political construction of scale”, producing “multiscalar spatiality” (Rose-Redwood, 2008), constituting “an integral part of the enactment of such supranational relations through a variety of performative practices” (Rose-Redwood, 2008, p. 884), and thus are sensitive to geopolitical perturbations of various sorts.

‘Figurative’ street names appear to be a relatively persistent category of urban toponymy in Kyiv. These names are basically neutral in terms of ideology, and predictably, their chances to be renamed are least related to the (geo)political background and do not differ significantly from those of ‘topographical’ names for most of the studied decades. Only in the 1970s and 1980s were the prominent exception, when the odds of ‘figurative’ names to be renamed were 5 and 10 times higher compared to ‘topographical’ names. Political power transitions and geopolitical perturbations seem to have no apparent effect on the frequency of renaming of ‘figurative’ street names. In particular, during the two decades after the Soviet Union collapse, when commemorative street names had the highest rates of extinction in the history of Kyiv, ‘figurative’ names remained completely intact.

With regard to control variables, the following should be noted. During nearly entire studied historical period (except for the 1950s and 1980s), main streets were more susceptible to renaming than secondary streets. Especially this is typical for the initial periods of political transitions. For instance, the odds of the main streets to be renamed in 1910s and 1920s (when the Communist regime took power) and 1990s (after the Soviet Union collapse), compared to the secondary streets, were 3.3, 2.7 and 3.8, respectively. This is expectable, since the principal urban arteries have more symbolic significance compared to the secondary streets, and usually are renamed first for ideological reasons (Gnatiuk & Glybovets, 2020). A very similar pattern is observed for the central streets, but their susceptibility to be renamed is even closer linked to the cycles of political transition. In the 1910s-1940s and in the 1970s-2000s, main streets had more chances to be renamed than secondary streets, with statistically significant values for the 1930s, 1940s and 1990s. This is also expectable, since the central streets are more significant places in the urban symbolical space compared to the urban periphery, and every toponymic cleansing usually starts exactly from the central part of the city. The most extreme and illustrative decade was the 1990s, when Kyiv authorities performed cleansing of communist toponyms exactly in the historical city centre (Riznyk, 2007; Gnatiuk & Melnychuk, 2020b). These findings confirmed earlier observations, made for different geographical and historical contexts, that streets in the city centre and principal urban arteries undergo renaming more often than streets in the peripheral areas and small alleys (Light, 2004; Light & Young, 2018; Rusu, 2021;

Buchstaller, 2023). However, during the relatively calm 1950s, central streets were less vulnerable in terms of renaming than peripheral streets. The same trend is visible for street significance: in the 1950s and 1980s, between the key political power transitions, secondary streets had more chances to be renamed than the main ones. These observations emphasise that toponymic cleansing is usually a hierarchical process, starting from the most symbolically important locations, including the most central and the most important streets, and ending on the secondary streets of the urban periphery.

Conclusion

Longitudinal analysis of street name renaming in Kyiv, performed with the use of multivariate statistical techniques, generally confirmed a theoretically grounded hypothesis that ideological and politicised street names (including, first of all, commemorative names dedicated to people, organisations, historical dates, events, and ideologically-loaded geographical landmarks) are more likely to be renamed than the politically neutral street names, including descriptive (‘topographical’) and figurative toponymy (cf. Rusu, 2021). At the same time, the case of Kyiv reveals that it could be true only for the initial period after the political power transition or (geo)political upset when existing toponymy experiences a cleansing from ideologically ‘wrong’ place names with their substitution with new names corresponding to the ‘right’ narrative. Nevertheless, later, when the need for commemoration persists but the resource of ideologically ‘wrong’ street names is exhausted, ideologically neutral names become primary targets of renaming just because of their political neutrality – such place names may begin to be interpreted as ‘meaningless’ and ‘of no public value’ – a point that regularly occurs, for instance, in Ukrainian media under the full-scale war with Russia, since the commemoration of new heroes needs additional street names.

In this way, the probability of a specific category of a street name to be changed depends on the stage of the political transition cycle. This finding leads to a paradoxical, at first glance, conclusion that the more even the political life of the place, the more vulnerable politically neutral street names are, while politicized street names become the most persistent. And vice versa, ideology-related street names are extremely vulnerable during the active stages of political transitions, while politically neutral street names have much more chances to remain unchanged. This suggests that the stake on politically neutral descriptive or figurative street names as ‘more persistent to changes’ (see Rusu, 2021; Buchstaller et al., 2023) may justify itself during long periods of continuous political transition, but could be wrong for the periods in between political transitions. In view of our results, those Ukrainians that rely on ‘deideologisation’ of

urban street names in order to prevent urban toponymy from the subsequent changes are naïve.

We suggest, that in order to be maximally stable to various interventions of (geo)politically driven actors, urban toponymy, instead of relying on 'ideologically neutral' names, should (1) combine in balanced proportions different semantic categories of names, including both descriptive and commemorative, and (2) it is strongly advisable that commemorative names should keep maximal link to the local (urban or regional) historical, cultural and geographical context in order to decrease the perceived degree of its ideological burden (Fabiszak et al., 2021). In this case, urban toponymy will be an essential element of urban social sustainability (see Yankson, 2023). Yet, this suggestion should be further developed and supported with empirical data.

In addition, this research supports previous findings (cf. Gnatiuk & Glybovets, 2020; Gnatiuk & Melnychuk, 2020b; Rusu, 2021; Buchstaller, 2023) that the pattern and relative frequency of street renaming varies in terms of the street location in the city (the closer to the city centre – the higher odds of renaming) and significance (the higher artery class and importance in the public road network – the higher odds of renaming).

The findings of this research supplement existing knowledge on the factors that structure the process of street renaming. However, this knowledge could be country and city-specific, and thus needs comparative analysis with the other empirical cases in the region and worldwide. Therefore, echoing Mihai Rusu (Rusu, 2021), as well as in line with conclusions by Buchstaller et al. (2023), the authors would welcome further longitudinal investigations of the historical dynamic of street name changes across a broader set of geographical contexts.

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Author contribution

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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