Naming, Identity and Tourism

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Edited by

Luisa Caiazzo, Richard Coates
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INTRODUCTION

Names are all around us. Woven into the fabric of everyday life, they are taken for granted, self-evident. Yet, they may build, or rather be used to build, a thick network of paths leading to several configurations of meanings. This multi-layered dimension of names stands at the core of the present book, which stems from the idea that working at the intersections of naming, identity and tourism can bring fresh insights into the study of names. The underlying argument is that also in the context of tourism, names and identities are entwined. Drawing attention to the role that names may play makes it possible to better understand how tourist attractions—be they topographical or metaphorical locations—are promoted, as well as how tourism is involved in the multifaceted process of identity-formation. Introducing naming concerns into the study of identity and tourism provides a further lens for understanding how economic interests, political agendas and cultural traditions are involved in the construction of tourist maps of meaning.

Although, technically, names have no sense, i.e. no content which contributes logically to the linguistic meaning of utterances containing them (Coates 2006; 2009; 2012), they bear a considerable potential for taking on meanings depending on their contexts and co-texts of use and can therefore effectively be turned into vehicles of human goals and agendas (Azaryahu 1996; 2011; 2012; Berg and Vuolteenaho 2009). In this respect, the politics of names is about naming as the allocation of meaning resulting from the manipulative use of names for ideological purposes. This is also true of the world of tourism where names may play a strategic role in branding places and traditions in virtue of their ability to suggest distinction, originality, or authenticity. In other words, a name can become a tool to (re)create tourist attractions and (re)shape the identity of places, communities and their heritage. So-called heritage tourism, which has become an increasingly large sector in the economy of many countries, can be taken as an example of the commodification of uniqueness and tradition whereby cultural continuity is legitimized through a storytelling process that grants authenticity to specific sites (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Chhabra and Healy 2003). Part of the narrative relies on the resourcefulness of names, which, in the interaction with their discursive environment evoke/invoke associations or evaluative positioning that ends

up adding a subjective dimension to their alleged "meaning" (Caiazzo 2017; 2018). Moreover, one of the basic features of tourism—past and present—is the experience of "other" places, markedly far from the routine of everyday life. In this very basic sense, tourism is about exploring and shaping maps of meanings where names of all kinds play a crucial role in directing and shaping tourists' perception of the identity of the places that they visit.

This sense of "Other" is also at the heart of the very complex notion of identity (see Coates, this volume) in that it marks the border between what we share where we belong and those-out-there: "identity is always particular, as much about difference as about shared belonging" (Gilroy 1997, 301). It is such a complex knot to disentangle that the popular and academic appeal of the word "identity" suggests that it is a word at risk of being perceived as an empty signifier. Interestingly, in the 1960s the term appeared in conjunction with crisis, namely "crisis of identity," as shown by the title of Erik H. Erikson's influential collection of essays *Identity, Youth and Crisis* published in 1968. In contemporary western discourse, the notion of crisis has largely disappeared. Currently, a reference to "identity" entails a quest for identity, namely the felt need to preserve and empower distinctiveness. Whereas crisis of identity is about a blurring or even the absence of self-awareness, the present use of the word highlights individuality—of a person, a community and a place—as distinctiveness. In a context where identity reigns supreme, a name is a key, since the primary function of a name is to facilitate individuality and distinctiveness.

Although the intriguing interplay of names, identity and tourism outlined so far has largely evaded academic scrutiny, it is worth mentioning that in his semiotic analysis of tourism MacCannell (1999) identified naming as one of the markers in the process that he dubs "sight sacralisation" whereby objects, places or landscapes are legitimised as worth visiting (see also Light 2014). In this process, names are certainly the "simplest" markers, yet inversely related to their apparently simple role is the network of associations stemming from them. The present volume showcases an eclectic choice of issues as it collects original contributions that trace different trajectories in this emerging field of interdisciplinary enquiry. Starting from diverse perspectives, all the chapters converge into the web that weaves together naming, identity and tourism.

The contributions to this edited collection range from theoretical issues to case studies and methodological reconsiderations aimed at shedding light on the connections that names may trigger in the tourist world of meanings. The resulting picture encompasses not only a varied geographical scope that covers locations the world over but also a broad

time span ranging from the Maya civilization to present day. Very varied are also the names tackled: names of places, people, poets, historical events, popular traditions, archaeological sites, museums, documentaries, food, restaurants and more. By pointing to how naming practices affect tourism discourses, the narratives conveyed by names, the cultural geography of identity-formation and the commodification of places, the present collection brings together the works of both leading and emerging scholars from several research traditions and domains who share an interest in the ways in which the naming of places intersects with identity and tourism issues.

The main argument of **Maoz Azaryhau**'s chapter is that name-making does play an active, crucial role in place-making. As a process underlying the transformation of locations into destinations, place-making is therefore understandably a primary concern of the tourism industry. Although place-names conjure up the presence of a geographical feature into the mind by welding together language and territory, they are not mere signifiers of places, but are rather actively involved in place-making. In more detail, the chapter draws attention to and offers insights into two name-making practices that entail place-making. One is place-naming as a prerequisite for converting space into place. Following the perspective underlying recent developments in critical toponymy, Azaryahu focuses on place-naming as an ideologically-oriented political procedure where space, politics, memory and identity are interwoven. Based on the circumstance that names are often equated with fame and reputation, the second name-making practice addressed involves the issue of renown, in which name-making is about turning places into "celebrities," praised for their real or alleged special or even unique qualities or merely famous for being famous.

In the following chapter, **Richard Coates** points to the interaction between features that identity and names share as especially fruitful for creating expectations about tourist sites. Identity is a complex notion, Coates argues, and names may function as proxies for one or more aspects of it in a simple-minded kind of way. Such a flexible role is supported by the fact that names have no inherent synchronic linguistic meaning (sense), which makes them suitable for the manipulation of the other major aspect of their meaning, namely their connotations (associations). As a result, names function as addresses through which the probabilistic expectations of whole communities can be accessed, packaged, commodified and branded. This is of immense potential value to the tourist industry, as well as to other commercial operations. And it is from this standpoint that the chapter explores the role of names in the branding

and in the general Othering of regional and local identities, and their role in the construction of historicism and authenticity for touristic and language planning purposes.

Luisa Caiazzo points to the associative potential stemming from names as a resource that can do magic when it comes to tourist sites and their identity. Comparable with the commemorative decisions made to set new political agendas, those decisions serving the tourism industry are equally strategic in that names may pepper visitors' imagination with a myriad narratives that mould the profile of places and arouse curiosity. With a view to cultural tourism, which largely relies on the historical and cultural traditions of places, the chapter explores the discursive function of place-names in shaping the identity of tourist sites through the analysis of a sample selection of texts. The focus is on the language gravitating around names and the meanings it may trigger; the point being made is that mundane processes of using names, with their quality of constant reiteration, contribute to building up and stabilizing the ascribed properties of a place, hence its "meaning." Following some considerations on the discursive construction of names, the chapter zooms into the names of two places, namely Salem (Massachusetts, USA), nicknamed "Witch City," and Colobraro (Basilicata, Italy), renowned for being unmentionable given the bad luck associated with its name. The analysis carried out accounts for the meanings conveyed by the two names and the identity they contribute to shaping for tourism purposes.

In **Elena Bellavia**'s chapter, naming, identity and tourism mingle with political controversies. She focuses on the thorny issue of the Italianization of toponyms in South Tyrol, which has recently reemerged as a topic of heated discussion not only because the memory of painful historical events is still vivid in the minds of many people, but also because a resolution of this conflict is strongly advocated by politicians as well as by the tourism industry. As Bellavia points out, the reasons for the attention of the tourism industry lie in the fact that tourism is the most important economic driver of South Tyrol. And it is therefore especially in the tourist market itself that a tendency persists to deny the existence of the problem, with the concern that any public discussion may undermine tourism. Against this complex backdrop, the chapter explores the relationships between names and the key issues at stake, i.e. German-speaking identity, Italian identity and the market laws of tourism advertising.

Kathryn M. Hudson explores the complex interrelationships that exist among archaeology, cultural heritage, and tourism in Mexico and Central America as they are mediated through practices of identification and naming. She examines the interplay between archaeological classifications

of peoples, places, and things and the related categories of popular or administrative discourse, showing the hows and whys of the frequent use of the former for tourism purposes. She argues that these officially sanctioned categories often motivate local constructions of cultural heritage and identity, either through alignment with official historical narratives—which frequently provide economic, political, and social benefits—or through the conscious rejection of state sanctioned narratives in favour of alternative and localized perspectives that develop a different relationship with the archaeological past and perpetuate perceptions of local distinctiveness and agency within the postcolonial landscape. Since in both cases the relationships with the names and categories of archaeology motivate identities that attract the attention of non-local entities and individuals, tourism and tourist infrastructure encourage the identity categories represented by the use of these names. The result is a tripartite feedback loop among archaeological naming practices, tourism, and constructions of local and regional identities. The chapter considers the mechanisms and practical implications of this complicated set of entanglements through an examination of geographic place names, personal names and titles, and the names used for cultural groups and their material and cosmological productions, drawing on examples from throughout the region.

Valéria Tóth's chapter introduces the key principles that underpin the Hungarian Digital Toponym Registry, an initiative undertaken at the University of Debrecen that foregrounds the role of place-names as the basic building blocks of identity. Since toponyms are closely linked to the extra-linguistic reality, the culture and society in which they are embedded influences their genesis and the changes they undergo. Acknowledging the multiple roles of toponyms, the Hungarian Digital Toponym Registry is a valuable resource that aims to record the modern and historical place-names of the Hungarian language area—the Carpathian Basin—in a single online database. This wide-ranging Registry is divided into two units: the Hungarian Name Archive with 450,000 toponymic records at present, and the Hungarian Digital Toponym Registry with 250,000 records that can be searched and visualized on a map. What is outstanding about the Hungarian National Toponym Registry is its relevance in terms of both linguistic and national heritage strategy. By providing direct support to national heritage protection, the Registry contributes to maintaining collective memory and historical identity and serves the objectives of several fields such as, for example, those of education, cartography and tourism. Notably, it also plays a considerable role in the preservation of the identity and culture of the Hungarian communities living beyond the

borders of Hungary and of the minorities living in the country through collecting place-names of multilingual Hungarian regions and recording them in the database.

The multifaceted relationships between naming, identity and tourism are discussed by **Sara Matrisciano**, taking as an example the name of a museum located in Naples, The *Museo della Pace MAMT* (*Mediterraneo – Arte – Musica – Tradizioni*) (The Museum of Peace *MAMT* (Mediterranean – Art – Music – Traditions)). Started as an initiative of the *Fondazione Mediterraneo* (Mediterranean Foundation), the *MAMT* aims to tell the (hi)story of the Mediterranean, its cultural achievements, and its identity, creating a narrative that constructs the Mediterranean as a safe haven with a shared history, common grounds, joint efforts, and a collective identity despite all economic, religious, cultural and social differences. The very name implicitly conveys this message as its acronym *MAMT* sounds like *mammete*—"your mother" in Neapolitan—thus suggesting a sense of origin, emotional security and family sentiments. This evocative power of the name is not mentioned on the official website of the museum but has been widely discussed in the media. By analysing the discussions that have taken place on the Internet, the chapter focuses on the ideological links established between the museum and its name via what is defined "subtextual dialect use," i.e. the social and pragmatic functions of the use of dialect. For instance, since the word *mammete* is understood way beyond the city boundaries, it attracts the attention of potential tourists from the entire region of Campania awakening in them a sense of belonging to both the region and its capital city. Linguistically and geographically located in the heart of the Mediterranean, the museum appears to be appealing and worth visiting as the local touch of the name is considered very likely to create an emotional bond between visitors and the museum, if the marketing strategy related to its name works.

A further form of heritage is dealt with by **Esterino Adami**, who discusses naming, identity and tourism with regard to the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR), a narrow-gauge line from Siliguri to Darjeeling, in West Bengal, India, recognised as a UNESCO world heritage site. The tourist appeal of this scenic railway draws back to its very opening in 1879 when colonial visitors—one of them being Mark Twain during his Indian tour—desired to ride the so-called "toy train" to escape the heat of the plains and travel towards exotic destinations in luxuriant hills. Since then, far from being a mere means of transportation, the DHR has increasingly encapsulated sense of place and community. In the light of these considerations, Adami's chapter focuses on the language and style used to describe and conceptualise the railway—in terms of both

its actual structure and its symbolic world—through the analysis of texts ranging from guidebooks and travelogues to web sources, social media and BBC documentaries. On the one hand, Adami aims to explore the etymological overlapping of some of the names of the places through which the DHR runs, on the other hand, he argues that the cultural dimension of the Darjeeling Railway is largely symbolic, which is, to a certain extent, also mirrored in naming strategies, and their ideological projections.

Further insights into Hungarian onomastics are provided by **Katalin Reszegi**, who tackles the issue of naming, identity and tourism from a different perspective. Her chapter shows how features of proper names that go beyond their identifying role, namely their semantic structure and function, are related to our conceptual knowledge of the names and of the objects they denote. More in detail, she addresses the cultural and identity-denoting functions of names, arguing that the cultural meaning and cultural function of names are grounded on the fact that individuals become familiar with names as part of their culture during their socialization. The competence so acquired comprises the most fundamental cultural, pragmatic, semantic, and morphological knowledge of names. As a result, along with names, rich and diverse knowledge is accumulated about the world, society, other people, and ourselves. On the one hand, language and culture play a crucial role in the definition of human—individual and collective—identity; on the other hand, names do contribute to this process of identity formation. Drawing on the historical and modern Hungarian onomastic corpus, this contribution provides several examples which show how the identity-denoting and identity-building roles of proper names are closely intertwined with their cultural meaning.

Jean Louis Vaxelaire offers reflections on the very nature of proper names (Coates and Reszegi, this volume). He argues that conceiving of names as "rigid designators" (Kripke 1982), i.e. mainly as labels without any semantic content, is quite challenging also in the context of tourism. As he observes, in the last decades, several place-names have been changed, mostly because of reasons linked to tourism; if names were mere labels, there would be no point in changing them. He explains this discrepancy between the approach mentioned above and what actually happens by pointing to the different perspectives taken by philosophers and linguists on the one side and politicians or official tourism bodies on the other. The former tend to define meaning as intension (the word "bridge," used literally, is *necessarily* used to refer to a bridge, while the city-name *Zweibrücken*, etymologically "two bridges," does not *necessarily* denote a city); the latter foreground connotations when they talk about

meaning. A case in point is the renaming of *Côtes-du-Nord* as *Côtes-d'Armor* in France. In the new name, *Armor* sounds like a Breton word (*Ar Mor* means "the sea" in Breton), making the place more attractive by evoking both Britanny and the sea, while in the previous name the reference to the *Nord* Department seemed likely to call to mind its cold weather. The difference is between a logical approach and a symbolic approach to names whereby the linguistic object at stake is not the same. From this standpoint, the choices made by official tourism bodies are grounded in understandable reasons: people are more likely to go to a place whose name is symbolically attractive. However, he adds, the point of view of local residents must not be neglected, as they have their own symbolic investment in the name of the place where they live and do not want to let it go for purely economic reasons.

Vincenzo Asero and **Douglas M. Ponton** focus on film-induced tourism in relation to the Italian television series "Montalbano" adapted from Andrea Camilleri's detective novels. The stories narrated revolve around the character of Inspector Montalbano and are set in a Sicilian town, whose name "Vigata" was invented by Camilleri. Successfully broadcast worldwide, the series has led to the re-branding of the whole area which, as a result of what the authors call the "Montalbano effect," is experiencing a significant increase in tourist flows, a phenomenon that is at the core of this chapter. As Asero and Ponton observe, tourists are attracted by the "places of Montalbano" that they have seen on television, and in doing so, they trigger a process whereby the invented Vigata mingles with real destinations—Modica, Ragusa, Scicli, Porto Empedocle and other Sicilian towns—and contributes to turning them into important sources of revenue for the local economy. The analysis of tourist webpages carried out shows how the fictional Montalbano and Vigata have become a unique brand that attracts tourists towards parts of Sicily traditionally associated with Baroque architecture, folklore and their wine and food culture, thus reshaping their identity for the tourism industry.

Eleonora Sasso adds a further thread to the texture of film-induced tourism with her focus on the role that documentaries may play in shaping identities and promoting tourism. Starting from such conceptual metaphors as "Inuit Naming Is Identity" and "Inuit Naming is Art"—exemplified by a series of documentaries on Inuit art and tourism—she advances a new reading of Inuit naming as a cognitive practice. The documentary that she analyses is "Eskimo artist: Kenojuak," a 1964 Canadian short documentary film released in 1964 that tells about the drawings of the Inuit artist Kenojuak Ashevak and how they are transferred to stone, printed and sold. One of the issues the chapter revolves around is the

choice of "Eskimo" in the title instead of the now-accepted term "Inuit" that would have been confusing for the non-Inuit audiences of the day. The author shows an interest in the role these references play in terms of naming strategies that foster tourism. However, her main purpose is to re-read Inuit documentaries from a cognitive perspective; the resulting cognitive map of Nunavut appears to be that of a country unprepared to welcome millions of tourists. What Sasso suggests is that Inuit documentaries might have a negative impact on the environment as they contribute to generating mass tourism.

In the closing chapter, **Elsa Skënderi** tackles the theme of naming, identity and tourism drawing on linguistic landscape studies to analyse the socio-onomastic attitude of the inhabitants of Tirana, Albania, as far as the promotion of tourism is concerned. She devotes special attention to the linguistic landscape of the main headquarter of Tirana *Blloku*, located in the heart of the city, which used to be the symbol of the Communist regime before the political changes that took place in 1990. At present, it is the landmark of a vibrant city, busy with cafés, restaurants, pubs and the like, increasingly designed to be attractive to tourists, and at the same time intriguing for its mixture of past and present. Skënderi underlines that the linguistic landscape is also a medium where identity is shaped and performed. As a case in point, the present identity of *Blloku* is to a large extent shaped by its multilingual linguistic landscape characterised by the presence of foreign languages such as such as English, Italian and French as a result of globalization, emigration and of identity related matters. The study provides a survey of the names and naming practices of the main tourist attractions in Tirana, including restaurants, cafés and hotel names as well as heritage or entertainment sites that evoke the Communist past of the city.

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CHAPTER ONE

NAME-MAKING AS PLACE-MAKING

MAOZ AZARYAHU

1. Introduction

Underlying the transformation of locations into destinations, place-making is a primary concern of the tourism industry. Place-names that weld together language and territory conjure up the presence of a geographical feature in the mind. However, place-names are not mere signifiers of places but are actively involved in place-making. My main argument in this chapter is that name-making is an important aspect of place-making.

Notably, the academic study of place-names has focused on names and naming in particular, the implicit assumption being that places are specific, 'objective', well-defined and definitive entities in physical space that exist irrespective of their names. Concurrently, the academic study of place and place-making has largely ignored the issue of place-names, implicitly assuming that place-names are mere signifiers (Foote and Azaryahu 2009).

In the current understanding of place within cultural geography, place is about what it means to people: a place is a location in space that is invested with human meanings. These meanings are expressed in terms of values, experiences, intentions and commitments as well as emotional and social attachments. Since people also define themselves through attachment to particular places, place is constitutive of identity. Place-specific shared experiences and common memories are constitutive of a sense of community. In this sense, place is not a mere geometric location in space, but is enmeshed in a web of significations. Place is a dynamic cultural construct that is shaped and reshaped through history.

According to this understanding of place, place-making involves measures undertaken by interested parties to invest a location with specific attributes and characteristics and to associate it with certain experiences that make sense of a place in terms of a potentially diffuse sense of place.

The term "sense of place" combines personal evaluations that are biographical and hence unique with culturally shared notions that are possibly cast as clichés. Notably, the contemporary interest among anthropologists, cultural geographers and architectural historians in place-making reflects the contemporary academic interest in issues pertaining to social construction and cultural formation, which reflects a rejection of "essentialist" perceptions of society and culture.

This chapter sheds light on name-making as place-making. The underlying premise of the analysis is that name-making involves two issues. One is naming: the procedure by which names are accorded to locations, which is indispensable for converting them into places. A key factor here is the question of fittingness, namely, the idea that there are "right" and hence "wrong" place-names. The other is branding: associating place-names with positive images and attractive reputations to enhance their standing in a system of places competing for fame and attention. In the concluding section, I suggest that underlying the place-making capacity of name-making is the potential of place-names to be involved in story-telling that occasion stories about places.

2. Name-making I: naming

Naming is an act of creation that confers identity on what hitherto had been anonymous and hence unknown. In particular, naming a place is a prerequisite for converting space into place: the paradox of naming as place-making is that giving a name to a place is what primarily makes it a place. Essentially, place-names are signs of civilization. Moreover, conceiving geographical features so that they can be distinguished by a name of their own and thus marked as distinct, needs a measure of abstraction. Can a mountain be definitively delineated? What are the confines of an ocean? Where does a river "begin?" Topographic resolution is also an issue here. In his *Dubin's Lives*, Bernard Malamud depicts the protagonist looking through his window at the mountains around the state-line between New York and Vermont:

> Dubin liked them drawing his gaze into the distance; he made no symbol of them. The nearest peak was due north, a scraggy mass of twenty-eight hundred feet, in summertime covered with pines up its low sloping left flank. It had no name he could locate on the map and he called it Mt. No Name (Malamud 1977, 116).

Naming places is the necessary condition for and the first stage of place-making since naming recognizes a certain geographical feature as an

entity of its own, and as such, as constituent of culture. The paradox is that by referring to it as "Mt. No Name," Dubin's Mt. No Name has a name, which makes clear that even a nameless geographical feature needs a name of some kind in order to be mentioned: a place-name is a requisite for mediating a geographical feature through culture. If it has no name it cannot be spoken of and mentioned far from its immediate vicinity, and in this sense it does not exist: naming is an act of creation. When Dubin later refers to Mt. No Name, the reader is already aware that despite the fact that this feature does not appear on a map, for Dubin it is as real as any other named feature in the local landscape, and moreover, the reader is already familiar with it and does not need any explanation regarding what lies behind the unusual place name: "Mt. No Name, through the window behind Kitty, became more clearly visible as summer heat and haze diminished" (Malamud 1979, 227).

On a very basic level, a place-name makes it possible to recreate a place elsewhere. But like place, a name too is not a self-evident issue. Plato's dialogue *Cratylus* examines the relationship between names and objects, and in particular: how objects should be named properly (for a splendid discussion of *Cratylus* see Sedley 2013). The dialogue is about name-making and name-makers. It presents two divergent positions regarding the relationship between an object and its name. One is "naturalism," which holds that names *naturally* belong to their specific objects: speaking of something with any name other than its natural name, means a failure to refer to it at all. The other is "conventionalism," according to which *nothing* but local or national convention determines which words are used to designate which objects, and hence names are arbitrary signifiers.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare famously asked "What's in a name?" The answer recapitulates conventionalism: "That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." The idea that the signifier is arbitrary is a tenet of linguistic orthodoxy. However, at least regarding place-names, which are the centre of the discussion here, things are not as straightforward as suggested by linguistic orthodoxy since place-naming also involves specific interests of well-identified name-makers. And even if instituted long ago and hence conventional, questioning their aptness is a viable option. In a letter to his fellow writer Paul Auster, J.M. Coetzee wrote: "I have been thinking about names, about their fittingness or unfittingness." The underlying issue for him was "having to find good, 'right' names." The understanding that there are "right" and "wrong" names underlies renaming places as a corrective measure.

Beyond the issue of "naturalism" vs. "conventionalism," Plato's dialogue demonstrates human curiosity and fascination with the origin and meaning of names and the intentions of name-makers. This also applies to place-names, as is evident in the etiological stories societies tell about the mythical or historical provenance of place-names. These stories relate how place-names came into being. In Maori lore, stories about the journeys of ancient heroes also recount the names they gave to features of the land. The Old Testament contains numerous etiological stories about the origin and meaning of place-names.

One example is that of the Patriarch Jacob and the angel, as recounted in the Book of *Genesi*s, about how the name Bethel—in Hebrew "the house of God" came into being:

> [16] When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it."[17] He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."[18] Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.[19] He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz (Genesis 28, New International Version).

In contradistinction to the long-standing, popular fascination with the origin and meaning of place-names, the academic study of place-naming is a rather recent phenomenon. As it developed in the nineteenth century in Europe, underlying the traditional approach to the study of place-names were linguistic orientation and philological methods. With its overwhelmingly linguistic orientation, the traditional European approach to the study of place-names has focused on taxonomy and the etymology of older names. For lack of reliable historical records and documentary sources, etiology, namely the causes underlying name-giving, was almost inevitably a highly speculative matter.

The resurgence of interest in toponymy among academic geographers since the 1990s has largely been premised by the insight that place-naming reproduces power structures and ideological agendas in public space and in the language of everyday life. The "critical turn" in toponymy as a field of academic study has largely been concerned with recent, well-documented and often controversial place-naming procedures. This explains the growing interest in the politics of street-naming as a feature of urban modernity.

The emphasis on the politics of place-naming is about updating the question already addressed in Plato's dialogue, namely, how objects should be properly named. The "critical turn" directs attention to name-making,

and importantly, to name-makers. In the context of the critical turn, the over-arching answer to the question about the provenance of place-names is not to be found in mythological tales or etymological speculations, but in the realm of power and its contestation.

Notably, the "critical turn" in the study of place-names is not concerned with naming as place-making: it is not about identity of place, but about the relationship between place (re)naming and identity-politics. The emphasis on the ideological underpinning of naming places has been manifest in the growing academic interest in commemorative place-naming as a technology of public memory involving power relations and ideological concerns that determine commemorative naming priorities and practices (Azaryahu 1996; Berg and Vuolteenaho 2009; Rose-Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu 2017). Accordingly, the critical approach to the study of toponymic commemoration directs attention to how naming procedures are susceptible to perform as contested sites of memory, where conflicting visions of history are contested, debated and negotiated.

Public commemoration of illustrious persons is, in the words of Cicero, a homage to virtue (Philippic IX, II) in the form of public remembrance. When used for commemorative purposes, place-names weld landscape, language and remembrance. Moreover, in their commemorative capacity, they introduce remembrance of events and persons into everyday life practices and situations that seem to stand apart from political contexts and ideological commitments. The success of toponymic commemoration is evident in how the name increasingly becomes associated with a location and history becomes geography.

Naming places to honour persons is an ancient tradition that was associated with claims over ownership. Founders and conquerors named towns after themselves as a resounding statement of taking possession of the place. The practice of naming new cities after their founders was also a hallmark of the Empire created by Alexander the Great. According to the Greek historian Plutarch, Alexander founded more than 70 cities named after himself, one of them, Alexandria in Egypt, being the most successful and famous among them. In the Christian realm, villages and towns were named after their patron saints. Applied extensively in both the USA since the seventeenth century and the Soviet Union in the twentieth century, this commemorative practice has become a trait of the modern era and is independent of the type and character of political regimes.

Recent academic interest in the politics of place-naming found its expression in the growing number of studies dedicated to the analysis of commemorative street-naming. The use of street names as a commemorative vehicle was institutionalized in eighteenth century Paris, when street

names, hitherto local designations of no official status mostly expressive of local folklore, were appropriated by the authorities. The commemorative potential of street-naming fully developed during the French Revolution, and the use of honorific street-naming spread to other European countries following the Napoleonic wars. However, also as a result of colonialism, commemorative street-naming has become a dominant feature of modernity world-wide.

Fig. 1-1. Street signs in Paris (*photo by author*).

The primary function of the modern practice of street-naming is to provide spatial orientation in the city. In his memoirs, R. M. Graves, who served in 1947-1948 as British mayor of Jerusalem in the last days of British rule in Palestine, relates his experience of living in a neighbourhood without official street names:

> One of the minor defects of the city of Jerusalem – and this applies to the Old and New City – is the absence of street names. I lived for some years in a nameless street …My sister's house, where I lodged, was fortunately situated next door to that of a leading citizen, Mr. Garabedian. This was a definite landmark for taxi-drivers, and to make things easier a brass plate bearing the adverbial sentence "by a fig-tree" was placed on our garden gate (Graves 1949, 39).

Though a common practice rather than an obligatory norm, commemorative street-naming offers not only spatial orientation but also an opportunity to perpetuate names of those found eligible for the honour.

As an honorific measure, the symbolic purpose of commemorative street-naming is to combine remembrance of persons and events with the language of the cityscape and therefore into banal contexts of urban activities.

In his tourist guide to Paris published in 1882, Charles Dickens explained the names chosen for Paris streets to its British readers, largely unfamiliar with the use of street names as an honorific measure:

> It is worth observing, too, that in the street nomenclature the French authorities always avoid calling two streets by the same name…. Names of every sort are chosen: names of capital towns, of great statesmen, of generals, of authors, of musicians, of painters, of sculptors, etc. It is easy enough to find new names for streets, and by so perpetuating the memory of a man who has deserved well of his country… (Dickens 1882, 243).

Honorific street-naming belongs to the geopolitics of public commemoration, which makes them vulnerable to replacement following regime changes, postcolonial transitions, and population exchanges following wars. In such circumstances, a large-scale commemorative renaming of streets amounts to the "toponymic cleansing" of a former regime. Renaming streets involves exchanging names identified with the former regime by those who are identified with and supportive of the new socio-political order. In such a context, a commemorative renaming of a street involves rewriting history: heroes of the former regime are publicly shamed by being consigned to oblivion, while the heroes of the new regime are honoured by the promise that their names will be remembered by posterity. Such measures of historical revisionism proclaim discontinuity in political history and an onset of a new political era. Importantly, they introduce the ideological and cultural underpinnings of the new order into the language of the cityscape and into the practices of everyday life.

Renaming streets following shifts of political power is a compelling reminder that naming places is based on the notion that there are "right" and "wrong," "politically correct" and "ideologically incorrect" names, according to perspective and value-system. Such changes are disruptive to spatial orientations as well as to the possibility of continuous remembrance. Referring to the renaming of streets in his native Czechoslovakia as an expression of amnesia, the writer Milan Kundera observed that "[t]he streets that do not know their names are the ghosts of monuments torn down" (Kundera 1996, 127). Indicative of ideological reorientation of society, such changes are a source of toponymic confusion and thus disrupt spatial orientation in the city. In his tourist guide for Paris, written

a few years after the establishment of the French Third Republic, Charles Dickens complained about the negative effect the politically motivated renaming of streets in Paris had on finding one's way in the city:

> But even the municipal government in Paris is not perfect: it sins sometimes from excess of zeal. The frequent changing of the names of their streets is not to be commended; and under the present Republic the practice seems to have been pushed to an unusual extent (1882, 243).

3. Intermezzo: renaming place as place-remaking?

Renaming places is a powerful expression of the human awareness that somehow places are supposed to accord with their names: underlying renaming places is the deep-rooted conviction that some names are appropriate, while others are not. A case in point is the following reference to the ancient name of the Greek island *Santorini* known for the horrendous volcanic eruption around 1500 BCE that tore it apart and destroyed the highly-developed Minoan civilization there:

> "Anyone ever heard the word *kalliste*?
> "Certainly…means very beautiful. Very ancient. Goes back to Homeric times."
> "Ah!... Kalliste was the name given to this lady before it became either Thera or Santorini, and a more singularly inappropriate name I cannot imagine" (MacLean 1986, 81).

Officially, directed renaming of places is about replacing an inappropriate for an appropriate name. The politics of commemorative renaming of places following ideological reorientation of society focuses on the appropriateness of the name as public commemoration: the issue resolved by renaming is the need to rid the civic sphere from "politically incorrect" and "ideologically inappropriate" commemorations. In general terms, such renamings pertain to identity politics and are about names as a vehicle of commemoration and the fittingness of a place-name as an officially recognized *lieux de mémoire* (Azaryahu 1997; Alderman 2002). For commemorators the matter of place-making does not play a role save for the consideration whether a location, due to its prestige—a central thoroughfare, a large city, a prominent mountain—befits the status of the commemoration.

Beyond the commemorative politics of eligibility, renaming places also problematizes the relationship between place and its name. The question is whether a new name also means a new place. Obviously

renaming is about replacing one name for another. Yet is it also about "replacing" one place with another? Surely renaming a place heralds a new phase in its history: while a first place-naming means its birth as a distinct element of human geography, renaming a place is a "rite of passage" that marks the onset of a new phase in the place's history. Yet does it mean a different place altogether?

If we accept the orthodox semiotic model, according to which the name is a signifier and the place is the signified, renaming is about a change of signifier that ostensibly does not affect the signified. This static model offers an essentialist notion of place. Place-making, however, is a dynamic process involving change over time. As a constitutive element of human geography, place is about the meanings associated with a specified location. Referring to street names in his exchange of letters with Paul Auster, John M. Coetzee notes that in orthodox linguistics

> [w]hether a street is named Marigold Street or Mandragora Street or indeed Fifty-fifth Street is supposed to make no difference (no practical difference), in poetry the connotations of words—the accumulations of cultural significance around them—matter (2013, 78).

This is an important observation that also applies to place-names: it is through their connotative power that place-names are involved in place-making. As a hub of meanings, place is constituted through the connotations of its name. Following Umberto Eco's analysis of architectural semiotic, a basic distinction is between the denotative and the connotative functions of a place-name. The denotative function is the name as a signifier of location. The connotative function conjures the human meanings associated with a place-name. In his response to Coetzee's musings on numerical street names in New York City, Paul Auster observes:

> and yet, as you say, the signifier is arbitrary, and until or unless that signifier is filled up with personal associations, it will remain indistinguishable from any other signifier" (2013, 81).

Paul Auster specifically mentions "personal associations" that toponymic signifiers summon forth. At the level of culture, place-names also conjure socially negotiated connotations. Operative at a both personal and cultural level of toponymic signification, the connotative function of place-names is involved in converting locations into places and hence of primary significance for place-making.

The human mind conceives place as an object that is essentially one and the same thing even though it may undergo radical changes through its

history. In reference to this faculty of the mind, Steven Pinker notes: "Consider what kind of object 'a city' must be, given that we can say London is so unhappy, ugly and polluted that it should be destroyed and rebuilt a hundred miles away" (1997, 328).

The question is trickier when considering the effect of renaming a place. Obviously, renaming a place entails replacing a name, a radical change indeed that involves changing signs and reissuing maps. This is an abrupt measure that ostensibly does not change the place itself. However, following renaming we have two chronologically consecutive names each referring to different historical periods and each consequently with its own cluster of historical connotations. Thus, Leningrad is shrouded with the connotations of its being a Soviet city, including the heroic associations enshrined in Shostakovich's Seventh "Leningrad" symphony, while St. Petersburg calls for the pre-revolutionary Russian capital or the post-Soviet revival of the city. As this high-profile case shows, renaming a place necessarily entails a measure of place-remaking even if at first it seems as if the change of name is a technicality involving commemorative agendas only.

Renaming cities following conquests signifies and celebrates a transfer of national ownership. The Old Testament relates the renaming of settlements conquered and rebuilt by the Israelites in Transjordan:

> And the Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh and Kiriathaim, as well as Nebo and Baal Meon (these names were changed) and Sibmah. They gave names to the cities they rebuilt (Numbers 32:37-38, NIV).

After World War II, former German cities in Prussia and Bohemia became, depending on location, Polish, Soviet and Czech cities: *Danzig*, *Königsberg* and *Karlsbad* became *Gdańsk*, *Kaliningrad* and *Karlovy Vary*, respectively. Ethnic cleansing and change of national ownership was also manifest in a thorough renaming of the streets in these cities.

In these cases, associated with large-scale human suffering, renaming the city is an aspect of a dramatic transformation of the city and its identity. In such a circumstance, where discontinuity reigns supreme, the linkage between place-renaming and place-remaking seems to be straightforward. As a German city, *Breslau* ceased to exist in 1945, replaced by the Polish city of *Wrocław* (Thum 2011). The nationalist context of the transition was evident in the officially directed attempt by the Polish authorities to erase traces of the city's German past, most notably the almost complete purge of German inscriptions from the cityscape. The urgent need to visually declaim *Wrocław*'s validity as an urban reality is manifest in the visual recurrence of a graphic emblem in