

# Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Buchstaller, Isabelle, Schneider, Carolin and Alvanides, Seraphim (2022) Towards a taxonomy of arguments for and against street renaming: Exploring the discursive embedding of street name changes in the Leipzig cityscape. Linguistic Landscape. An international journal. ISSN 2214-9953 (In Press)

Published by: John Benjamins Publishing

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1075/ll.21016.buc> <<https://doi.org/10.1075/ll.21016.buc>>

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:  
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/48438/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)

**Towards a taxonomy of arguments for and against street renaming:  
Exploring the discursive embedding of street name changes in the Leipzig  
cityscape<sup>1</sup>**

Isabelle Buchstaller, Sociolinguistics Lab, University of Duisburg-Essen

Carolin Schneider, Universiteit Utrecht

Seraphim Alvanides, Northumbria University

**Abstract**

In 2016, a special issue of the *Journal of Linguistic Landscapes* explored the nexus between LL and collective memory studies, calling for more research at the interface of these disciplines. Our analysis adds to recent studies by exploring the ways in which commemorative street renaming processes are discursively embedded. We build on research on memorialization as well as critical toponymy to analyze media discourses that accompany, support or contest commemorative naming practices in the urban streetscape of a large East German city during the last century. Based on this dataset, we develop a typology of arguments against or in favour of street renaming. The longitudinal analysis of discourses in the local press vis-à-vis ongoing resemioticization reveals a complex relationship between lived political history, freedom of the press, the type of argument and the stances encoded therein.

**Keywords:**

Collective Memory, commemoration, Street names, Discourse Historical Approach, Critical toponymy, media discourse, East Germany

**1. Introduction**

The fertile interface between Linguistic Landscapes (LL) and collective memory studies lies in the analysis of commemoration practices in the citytext, more specifically in the ways in which they contribute to the inscription of a collective cultural and historical heritage. A 2016 special issue of the *Journal of Linguistic Landscapes*<sup>1</sup> was dedicated to memory and

---

<sup>1</sup> We gratefully acknowledge funding by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Grant # BU 2902/3-1 to Isabelle Buchstaller)

memorialization (Ben Rafael and Shohamy 2016). Blackwood and Macalister's (2019) edited volume focused especially on the role of multilingualism in memory formation while the most recent issue of the *Linguistic Vanguard* edited by Fabiszak and Buchstaller (2021) further develops the nexus between naming practices in the LL and regime-specific commemoration. Our article contributes to this thrust of analysis by exploring discourses in the local press that surround changes in commemorative street naming.

Critical toponymy has brought to the fore the symbolic power of naming practices to insert various types of *Weltanschauung* into public textuality. Research in this field focuses on the overt display of a diverse set of ideologies to support hegemonic “power relations, public memory [and] identity formation” (Azaryahu 2012: 388; Berg and Vuolteenaho 2009; Berg and Kearns 2009; Tufi 2019). By inscribing and effectively canonizing events, people, and places as traces of the national past that are commemorated in the citytext, naming practices support the hegemonic socio-political order. Case studies in post-communist cities such as East Berlin, Bucharest, Budapest, Moscow, Kyiv, Pristina and Warsaw have illustrated the resemioticization processes that swept the citytext as a result of power shifts and ideological reorientation (Azaryahu 1997; Foote, Toth & Arvey 1999; Light 2004; Karolczak 2005; Sloboda 2009; Azaryahu 2012; Borowiak 2012; Majewski 2012; Pavlenko 2010; Palonen 2018 *inter alia*).<sup>2</sup> LL research, while not traditionally focusing on naming practices (but see Edelmann 2009 and Tufi 2019), has developed largely in parallel with critical toponymy, exploring a variety of practices for constructing and contesting power

---

<sup>2</sup> Research on post-colonial societies similarly explores the processes via which semiotic traces of the colonizers are replaced in the public narrative (Guissemo 2018, Jenjekwa and Barnes 2018 *inter alia*)

relations across, often contested, urban space. As Van Mensel, Vandenbroucke and Blackwood (2016) observe, the field has recently broadened its remit to explore affective geographies and the hegemonic power of memory formation (Ben Rafael and Shohamy 2016; Wee 2016; Wee and Goh 2016).

Memory studies add an explicitly historical angle to the analysis of naming practices, putting the spotlight on those aspects of public space that serve the conservation of collective memory, including cultural and political histories and traditions. In this line of research, the citytext, and especially the memorialization therein, is interpreted as the selective memory of a society (Jałowiecki 1985:132), a “memoryscape” (Harjes 2005: 149). Due to their indexical historicization, toponyms “represent ... the social and power relations through which [different types of collective] identities” are being formed and sustained (Listewnik 2021; Berg and Vuolteenaho 2009). Therefore, public top-down denomination strategies that form “site[s] of memory” (Winter 1998:102), such as *Stalinstraße* (‘Stalin street) or *Platz der kommunistischen Jugend* (‘square of communist youth’), are interpreted as geolinguistic signposts of a hegemonic narration based on collective memory (see the papers in Traba & Hahn 2012-2015).

In view of the indexical role of street name choices in supporting structural power, collective memory researchers have recently queried how such commemorative processes are discursively embedded (Fabiszak and Ruby 2021; Listewnik 2021). Given that debates about memorialization practices co-shape historical discourses (Czepczyński 2008: 50; Tufi 2019; Bendl 2019), researchers in all disciplines have argued for the need to document the voices that are supportive of or indeed challenge toponymic choices during regimes that are differentiated by their ideological orientation. To date, the few studies exploring the discourses that accompany the expression of broader political agendas in the citytext tend to

be exploratory in scope, historically narrow and/or focusing on opposition to and protests against renaming (Rubdy and Ben Said 2015; Lou 2016; Light and Young 2018). Even fewer propose taxonomies of arguments levelled towards street renaming that would allow comparative research across the individual socio-political context (Pöppinghege 2012; Buchstaller, Alvanides, Griese and Schneider 2020). Our article contributes to this nascent field of research by developing a typology of argumentative reactions, both sympathetic and critical, towards street name changes. We report on the media discourses that accompany, support or contest commemorative naming practices in the urban streetscape of a large East German city during the last century. More specifically, we investigate the arguments levelled for and against consecutive waves of commemorative street renaming in the newspaper of Leipzig (pop. 560.000) between 1916 and 2018.

## **2. The historical and geographical context of commemoration**

Frequent changes in state ideology make East Germany a paradigm case for the study of transformations in representational politics. As illustrated in Table 1, the rapid turn-over of forms of government means that consecutive eras are characterized by antithetical state-sanctioned political ideologies and commemorative priorities (Assmann 2010; Vuolteenaho & Puzey 2018). Halbwachs (1925) refers to such changes as the social frame of reference of memory, which provides the criteria according to which values, persons, events or places are deemed worthy of inscription and – qua commemoration – stand for the society and the ideals they represent (see also Tufi 2019).

Table 1. Historical political-ideological eras as implemented in the present article

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>State ideology defining the political era</b>	<b>historical event delimiting end point in East Germany<sup>3</sup></b>
1914 to end of 1918	empire, World War I	armistice agreement, 11. November 1918
1919 to start of 1933	Early democracy of the Weimar Republic	Hitler assumes total power, 30. January 1933
1933 to mid-1945	Nazi dictatorship and WWII	Germany surrenders, 8. May, 1945
1945 to end of 1989	Socialist regime	fall of the Berlin wall, 10. November 1989
since 1990	Unified democratic Germany	ongoing

Consecutive waves of official state ideology in East Germany have resulted in changes in the way collective memory is inscribed in the semiotic landscape via top-down public acts of memorialization (Assmann 2010). An example from street renaming in Leipzig is the change of *Südstraße* ('south street') to *Adolf-Hitler-Straße* in 1933 and finally to *Karl-Liebknecht-Straße* in 1945. As this example illustrates, commemorative renaming practices on the one hand memorialize (partisans of) a given state ideology while at other times purge bygone eras and inconvenient referents (Fabiszak and Rubdy 2021; Tan and Purschke 2021). The fact that different aspects of history are encoded in naming preferences – and are replaced across time – illustrates the subversive potential of streets to create a naturalized public narrative implanted into collective memory (Fairclough 2003). As Tufi (2019: 238) has argued “within a dynamic view of memory as performative cultural practice, ... street names can be seen as memory acts .... constituting fluid memorial intertext”. From this perspective, textual renewal

---

<sup>3</sup> The dates given here are a simplification of a much more complex timeline of historical events. For example, soon after Germany's surrender, the Potsdam Conference from July/August 1945 designated the territory that later became the GDR as the Soviet occupation zone. The *German Democratic Republic* was not officially formed until the constitution of the provisional government on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1949. The time zone given here thus covers Soviet occupation as well as the USSR-controlled GDR regime. Similarly, while the fall of the Berlin Wall occurred on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1989, the treaty that ratified the unified country did not come into effect until 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1990.

in public space can not only be seen as a repository and a “barometer” (Kaltenberg-Kwiatkowska 2011:165) of political changes. What is more, toponymic turnover is recruited as a powerful tool for the construction of successive hegemonic, publicly enforced memorializations of national identity. Research on politically-ideologically motivated (re)naming practices therefore needs to consider commemoration in a “time-space matrix of ... historical periods” (Azaryahu 1997:480).

But while we know a lot about the commemorative priorities that predominate at various junctures of renaming the past, we lack research that puts these developments into a longer historical context. Pavlenko and Mullen (2015, see also Bendl 2019) have called for LL research to broaden its remit to the investigation of textual choices through the temporal axis, especially across several political-ideological transformations. The present paper takes a longitudinal perspective to public commemoration by documenting the ongoing debates that surround changes in state-sanctioned commemoration in the Leipzig streetscape throughout the last century. Notably, commemorative renaming is ongoing. In line with the increasing pushback against the normalization of white hegemonic masculinity, in recent years Leipzig has seen its fair share of discussion regarding the canon of commemoration.

### **3. The city of Leipzig as a case study**

With a population of 587.857 inhabitants, Leipzig is a mid-size city in the state of Saxony in the East of Germany. While not the state capital (which is Dresden), Leipzig is famous for its trade fair, which has a history going back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and it prides itself as a city of culture and learning. Many famous musicians, including Johann Sebastian Bach, Gustav Mahler, Robert Schumann and Felix Mendelssohn-Bartoldy were active in Leipzig; Richard

Wagner was born and started his musical education in the city. Until WWII, Leipzig was also “the center of publishing, book production, and [printing] ... Among the most prominent business were publishers like ... Brockhaus, Reclam .... The Duden ... and 90% of sheetmusic and scores worldwide were printed here” (Verheyen 2019). The strategy of encoding the names of artistic geniuses whose oeuvres were created or being put in print in this very city goes back to the Weimar Republic and follows a well-known strategy for “commercializ[ing] ... public place-naming systems” (Rose-Redwood 2011: 34).

Leipzig’s intellectual pre-eminence is also scientific in nature. Leipzig University, founded in 1409, is the second oldest German university and many Nobel Prize winners and universal geniuses have studied, taught or done research here. Encoding their scientific reputation in public textuality (*Leibnizstraße, Heisenbergstraße, etc.*) is a strategy to market over 500 years of scientific tradition, advertising Leipzig as “a centre of science” (<https://tinyurl.com/2p8uwnmx>) with a “strong international reputation for outstanding achievements” (<https://www.kongresshalle.com/leipzig/science/>). The commodification of street names thus contributes to the branding, selling and thereby legitimising of market-driven memorialisation in urban toponymy.

Finally, Leipzig is famous for its role in the events that led to the end of the GDR (known in German as *die Wende* ‘the turn’) and thus German Reunification. It was here that weekly prayer meetings spilled into massive demonstrations and protest marches which were broadcast around the world. The *Nikolaikirche* (Nikolai church) in Leipzig city center and a focal point of dissent, has become the key symbol of the Peaceful Revolution of 1989.

#### **4. Commemoration, memory formation and regime change**



Our starting point is that commemorative (re)naming is an exercise in collective memory formation. While commemorative practices can take the form of tangible objects (monuments, museums, street names), as well as intangible practices (anniversary ceremonies, speeches, reenactments, see Assmann 2010; Drozdowski et al. 2016; Kosatica 2020), all forms of memory formation aim to construct a sense of continuity of a particular group identity through a historical narrative that is encoded for all to see (Zerubavel 2003). Top-down commemorative naming practices reify and normalize the memory of the socio-political order and/or shared identity they represent; “whether they remind us of activities since disappeared, whether they commemorate important events in our history or pay homage to exceptional people, [such] ... names are fraught with significance” for collective history (Moszberger, Rieger, Daul 2002:5, our translation).

Public commemoration via street naming thus becomes a form of top-down construction of a hegemonic image of the past and present, a process referred to as the creation and maintenance of an invented tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2015) of imagined communities (Anderson 2006). Memory researchers thus consider commemorative denomination “implants of memory” (Golka 2009:161; Fabiszak & Brzezińska 2016). As Tufi (2019:244) argues, and we agree, such *lieux de mémoire* (see Nora 1989, consider also Harjes’ 2005: 149 “memoryscape”) mark the nexus between identity and memory, contributing to “the linking with and legitimization of national discourses”.

While commemorative denotation is thus a fundamentally ideological practice of memory making, tapping into hegemonic notions of a common glorified past, commemorative re-naming can be recruited as a powerful mechanism to over-write memory during times of political transformations (Assmann 2016:22; see Mitchell 2003). Post-colonial and post-communist struggles over public naming in particular shows the vigor with which such narrative enactment in the citytext is linked to changes in nationhood, identity

formation and (counter)memorialization (Duminy 2018; Jenjekwa and Barnes 2018; Fabiszak and Rubdy 2021 *inter alia*). A pertinent example of semiotic obliteration at a turnover in political Weltanschauung is Directive 30, signed into effect by the Allied forces on May 13<sup>th</sup> 1946, which enforces the “Liquidation of German Military and Nazi Memorials and Museums” (Legal division 1946):

“Every existing monument, poster, statue, edifice, street or highway marker, emblem, tablet, or insignia, of a type the planning, designing, erection, installation, posting or other display is prohibited by Paragraph I of this Directive [... which preserves and keeps alive the German military tradition ... or commemorates the Nazi Party ... or is of such a nature as to glorify the incidents of the war] ... must be completely destroyed and liquidated by 1 January 1947... throughout the German territory”

Similarly to other processes of semiotic reversal, commemorative **re-naming** should thus be interpreted as an attempt to purge referents indexing the political Weltanschauung of a previous regime. As such, it functions as a powerful mechanism to obliterate “the discredited past from the public sphere, demonstrat[ing] the end of [one regime] ... and the beginning of a new era.” (Arazyahu 2012:387). As Lefebvre (1991:54) famously stated, political-ideological renewal is not completely effectuated until its semantic traces in urban textuality are eradicated. It is such acts of toponymic censure that have led researchers in collective memory studies to argue that commemorative renaming at the cusp of regime changes should be treated as an exercise in active forgetting (Assman 2010) or repressive erasure (Connerton 2008).

Following Järlehed’s (2017) call to concentrate on the social semiotic analysis of particular genres, our paper explores the ways in which reversals in the official citytext are

framed by argumentative discourses in the public sphere (see Fabiszak and Rubdy 2021). We focus on the voices in the local press that seek to affirm or challenge public acts of identity formation in the East German city of Leipzig. The analysis is inspired by research on the relationship between top-down street renaming as indicative of changes in “ideologies about history” and the “narratives of other actors in place ... that connect” with such reversals (Bendl 2019:268-9). Two previous taxonomies of arguments towards street renaming provide the starting point for our work.<sup>4</sup> Pöppinghege (2012) focuses on reasons against renaming in the Western German area of Westphalia.<sup>5</sup> Buchstaller et al. 2020 apply this taxonomy to a small East German town, Annaberg-Buchholz (population 22.248). They find that pragmatic-administrative, including practical (cost, orientation, administration and orientational) arguments are the largest group of discourses about street renaming in the local press. A further important argument against street renaming is the avoidance of disgruntlement and potential future complaints by citizens (see also Light and Young 2018). The dearth of didactic arguments and historicising discussions led the authors to hypothesize that, having experienced successive regime changes has made East Germans acutely aware of the fact that the sedimented citytext is a palimpsest of, sometimes antithetical, versions of history, none of which are ideologically neutral (see Tufi 2019). Unsurprisingly, discourses centering around the ideological instability of street names play an important role in argumentative strategies against street renaming in Annaberg-Buchholz.

---

<sup>4</sup> While Light and Young (2014, 2018) and Buchstaller 2021 do not offer an inventory of the arguments levelled for and against a certain reference in the cityscape, they explore the ways in which inhabitants as cocreators of meaning resist top-down hegemonic toponymy (including inertia, vandalism, grassroots campaigns lobbying for certain street names etc.).

<sup>5</sup> The geographical scope (Westphalia is in the far West of Germany) and lack of stringent quantification makes Pöppinghege’s taxonomy (which includes functionalist (practical), traditionalist, didactic, categorial, historical-factual and autonomy-related arguments) a useful but not necessarily comparable starting point for our analysis.

The present paper explores arguments for and against street renaming as they are levelled in the local press in the large city of Leipzig over a longitudinal timespan of 100 years (see Tufi 2019 for an analysis of the “hypertext” in the Sardinian city of Alghero). Our project goes beyond previous categorizations in two crucial aspects: (i) our typology includes arguments for and against toponymic change and (ii) we quantify the occurrence of different stances across argument type, stances encoded therein, and time. The overall objective of our project is thus to develop an empirically-based, systemic and inter-operable taxonomy of discourses underpinning and contesting changes in the “ideological robe of the city” (Zieliński 1994). Such a taxonomy informs our understanding of the continuously negotiated spatial expression of collective memory in the citytext. More specifically, it provides a systematic classification system to the complex narratives via which “landscape and identity, social order and power” have been linked to memory formation across the past hundred years in East Germany (Rubdy 2015:2).

## 5. Data sources

Following Tufi’s assessment that “street-name signs .... provide spatial anchoring to narrated events” (2019:245) across time, we included press coverage for a 102-year time frame covering the four consecutive eras that are characterised by antithetical political Weltanschauung. For the years 1916-1997 articles were retrieved manually from the physical archive of the Bibliotheca Albertina (Leipzig University library), which hosts the records of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (LVZ). This excludes the time between March 2, 1933, when the LVZ was banned by the Nazis, and May 19, 1946, when the new editorial office and printing plant were reinstated. While Leipzig did have a Nazi-friendly newspaper during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich, the *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten*, almost all copies of this newspaper in the city library were destroyed during a fire as a result of bombing on February 4, 1943. In consequence, we were

not able to retrieve any newspaper articles discussing street renaming during the Nazi era. For articles from 1997-2018, we rely on the online archive of the newspaper *Leipziger Internetzeitung (LIZ)* and the digitalized archive of the LVZ in the *Sächsische Landesbibliothek (SLUB)*.

For a systematic and consistent corpus compilation of our media corpus, we searched the press archives (both physical and digital) by combing through the newspapers three consecutive days after the official date of the city council's resolution on a particular street name change. We also included any coverage that was either announced within this timeframe for later publication (such as when calls for opinions from readers resulted in letters to the editor, or when we found announcements that a certain issue would be elaborated in a future issue, such as the beginning of a series on street name changes, etc.). The rare coverage published prior to the official name change (such as op-eds and idea contests on how to rename streets), was also included, provided they were referenced within the three-day timespan.

Overall, this search of press coverage for the city of Leipzig resulted in a total of 234 items. We excluded false hits, such as articles dealing with newly built streets, coverage on construction zones situated in particular streets etc. (n= 47).

As can be seen in Table 2, this procedure left us with 87 articles, announcements, and opinion pieces which met the criteria relevant for our study plus 33 small scale notifications. Small-scale notifications never contain any arguments for or against street renaming, being merely informative in nature. Argumentation is thus restricted to newspaper articles, larger announcements, letters to the editor and op-eds (for all of which we use the cover-term "articles"). In an attempt to normalize for intensity of arguments, we divided the number of

arguments by the average number of words contained in different types of genres. The outcome of this normalization is shown in the columns of the right in Table 2.

<b>Type</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Wordcount</b>
Announcement	5	4.2%	498
Article	69	57.5%	250,000
Opinion Piece	13	10.8%	4,301
Small scale notification	33	27.5%	7,679
Total	120	100%	262,478

Table 2: Numerical overview of the press corpus

Altogether, this corpus contained 210 arguments expressing a variety of perspectives and stances on street renaming. As we will discuss in more detail below, given the uneven size of our press corpus across the time-line, the lion’s share of discourses on the topic can be found in the post-Wende era (since 1989) with 73 arguments in favour and 120 against renaming (total n=193/210).<sup>6</sup> Using content analysis, we identified themes that underlie the arguments expressed in these articles. To this aim, all arguments were classified into broader categories as well as more specific instantiations (see Listewnik 2021 for a similar strategy). The following sections present a typology of the discourses surrounding street renaming in our Leipzig media corpus split up by their stance towards street renaming (pro vs. contra). Arguments used as illustrations were translated into English by the second author and checked by the first author. As a second step, we briefly explore the occurrence of these arguments by the historical-political era in which they occurred.

---

<sup>6</sup> We discuss the availability of archival sources throughout the time span in more detail below.

## 6. Developing a typology of discourses surrounding street renaming

As we noted above, the total number of arguments (n=210) is more than twice that of the number of articles (n=87), since many articles contain several arguments. This is illustrated in example (1), in which a resident optician argues against the renaming of *Karl-Liebknecht-Straße* by adducing two mutually supportive arguments (cost and orientation) both of which fit into the category ‘practical concerns’.

- (1) Optician Klaus Buggenhagen, who has been based in Karl-Liebknecht-Straße for 40 years ...., fears not only the cost of renaming but also orientational difficulties: "Many people will no longer be able to find us." (LVZ, 13.11.2002)

Note in this respect that our analysis needs to fundamentally disentangle the intention lying behind the act of street naming (which might or might not have been ideological in nature, see Fabiszak et al. 2021) and the extent to which the media discourses that accompany this change in the citytext refer to and topicalize these ideological motives. In example (1), the proposed renaming of *Karl-Liebknecht-Straße* refers to an ideologically motivated act: the purging of toponymic traces indexing socialist-communist Weltanschauung of the previous GDR regime. The letter to the editor on the other hand refers to a fundamentally non-ideological rationale for opposing this renaming: the potential practical repercussions of such a change in city textuality. And while non-ideological arguments can of course be used to camouflage underlying ideological points of view, discourse analytic methodology encourages us to differentiate between arguments that refer to the political-ideological motives driving street renaming as opposed to those which adduce other arguments, including practicality (Fabiszak and Rubdy 2021).

### **Historical-preservational arguments (n=20)**

Historical-preservational arguments, while not particularly frequent (see also Buchstaller et al. 2020 for the much smaller Annaberg-Buchholz), can be found in all historical eras for which we have media data. During the Weimar Republic and the GDR such voices tended to be in favour of marking historical semantics that is not ideologically tied to the current political Weltanschauung (2a) or indeed to any self-presentational goal. Post-Wende we mainly find arguments to the effect that street names are an archival record of the city and should thus not be tampered with (see 2b). What this naive reading of commemoration misses is the fact that memorialization tends to be selective, strategic and hegemonic in nature, recruited to index officially sanctioned identity and ideology through historicization (Scollon & Scollon 2003; Pöppinghege 2012; Molden 2015; Assmann 2016; Tufi 2019). As we pointed out above, the relative scarcity of such historical-factual arguments suggests that frequent regime changes in recent East German history has sharpened peoples' awareness of the fact that history is not ideologically neutral (see Vuolteenaho and Berg 2009; Buchstaller et al. 2020).

(2a) Furthermore [it was decided] to name the current *Hallische Straße Am Hallischen Tor* ... to take into account the historical significance of this locality, where the old *Hallische Tor* stood. (LVZ, 08.06.1921)

(2b) No street name should be erased from the historic inner city. (LVZ, 09.10.2004)

### **Moral-ideological arguments (n=95)**

The largest category of discourses about street renaming in our Leipzig media corpus consists of a cluster of six sub-types which address the fact that certain referents – such as personages,



values, dates, and places – index and perpetuate aspects of collective memory. The arguments in this category, which occur across all political eras for which we have data, focus on and make overt the indexicality of the street name by referring to its role as supportive of a hegemonic self-presentational narrative that serves (aspects of) the status quo. What unites these arguments is thus that the link between name choice and collective memory is made explicit and used as an argument in favour (n = 45) or against (n= 50) commemoration.

#### Indexing of officially sanctioned identity and ideology (n= 33)

These arguments address toponymic choices as carriers of system-specific political-ideological Weltanschauung in the LL. Numerically, the category is slightly biased towards arguments in favour of giving space to such referents (n=21, see 3a). Notably, arguments against indexing officially sanctioned identity and ideology in the streetscape usually refer to changes in political ideology (n=11, see 3b) and occur uniquely in the post-Wende era.

- (3a) Here, a city society programmatically shows its colors - for example, when old functionaries, sovereigns and field marshals are suspended, and reformers and resistance fighters are honored in their place. Or people who - like the soldier Raymond J. Bowman - stand for the liberation of the city from the Nazi regime. (LIZ, 08.03.2017)
- (3b) “Ernst Thälmann was not a saint, he made mistakes and corrected himself, and he was cruelly killed by the Nazis”, Grosser said. “He also deserves to be respected by us like any other non-communist resistance fighter. A reversal (to the old name) would be a wrong political sign - especially now that the brown riff-raff is starting to band together again and a ban of the NPD is seriously discussed”. (LVZ, 15.12.2011)

#### Retaining memory/ ideology (n=15)

Arguments to preserve the memory of a certain referent and thus to retain its ideological force categorically oppose renaming. One well documented example is the public push-back on plans to rename the square honouring *Wilhelm Leuschner*, a social-democratic politician who was sentenced to death for his opposition to the Third Reich. Seven articles and a letter to the editor argue against renaming this street, citizens started an initiative to petition and a Facebook survey by the LVZ sparked more than 3000 readers to vote against a name change (cf. LVZ, 11.10.2011). The main argument found in this group of discourses, illustrated in (4), is that failure to retain Leuschner's name in the Leipzig street scape would result in a fading of his memory.

- (4) [...] Wilhelm Leuschner Square at this location simply belongs to the city. "After the renaming, Leuschner would completely disappear from perception," fears Arnold. (LVZ, 11.10.2011)

#### Reversing the erasure of memory (n = 6)

Discourses in this category not only make a case for the alignment of toponymic semantics with the current political Weltanschauung. More specifically, they advocate reconnecting with the past by reverting to a previous referent that is indexing ideologies they consider more aligned with current commemorative priorities but which had been decommemorated by a previous regime. Such arguments are illustrated in example (5).

- (5) The reversing of the name [to its original] of Ludwig Beck Street (formerly Saefkow Street), Hoepner Street (formerly Wilhelm Florin Street) and Witzleben Street (formerly Walter Stoecker Street) yesterday also honored .... other participants in the July 20, 1944 resistance [against the Nazis]. (LVZ, 21.07.1997)

Arguments in favour of reversing the erasure of memory always co-occur with arguments regarding the indexing of or indeed re-alignment with the (cultural or political) Weltanschauung (see above). Hence, as so often when creating systems of categorizations, we need to contend with the fact that individual texts fit several nodes in our classification. As we pointed out above, our solution to this issue was to code individual press articles for all arguments contained therein, resulting of a ratio of about 2:1 in terms of texts vs. arguments.

### Institutionalization of cultural memory (n=17)

Collective memory studies interpret commemorative practices as serving the identity formation of a specific group. Street names in particular function as geolinguistic signposts of a self-presentational narration (cf. Traba & Hahn 2012-2015; Tufi 2019). Critical toponymy research has pointed out that tapping into marketable imaginaries is one of the major yet under-explored “strategies for branding, selling, legitimising, and characterising” urban toponymy (Madden 2018: 1611).

Leipzig’s strategic street naming highlights the advertising potential of public place-naming systems as part of marketable public memory formation, boasting a musicians’ quarter as well as a publishers’ quarter (Rose-Redwood 2011: 34, see also Rose-Redwood, Vuolteenaho, Young and Light 2019). The arguments in this category react to the encoding of cultural memory (n=12 in favor and n=5 against). The text in (6) argues in favour of naming a street after the famous conductor *Kurt Masur*, which contributes to the strategy of encoding Leipzig’s artistic tradition in its streetscape as part of an image management and branding strategy that relies on its identity as a city of culture.

- (6) As conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra, Kurt Masur had a decisive influence on the musical and social life of our city. Under his leadership, the Gewandhaus Orchestra has continued to develop into a unique and unmistakable musical address and has expanded its worldwide reputation [...]. Kurt Masur is an important artistic personality who deserves to be honored in Leipzig with a street name in a prominent place. (LIZ, 09.06.2016)<sup>7</sup>

Over- and underrepresentation of groups and individuals (n= 15)

In this group, we find arguments which assert that certain groups, individuals, or events have not found enough representation – or indeed have been over-represented – in the city text, often in proportion to other groups. Example (7a) instantiates this type of discourse. The leader of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) contends that the council overseeing Leipzig street naming ought to consider giving more space in the city text to commemorate resistance fighters of the Nazi era, especially when compared with the ample encoding of those opposing the communist regime.

- (7a) There is already an Olbrichtstraße and a Stauffenbergstraße there. “But that's not enough, given the historical significance of July 20, 1944 - especially since names from the communist resistance predominate to a disproportionate extent,” says party leader Wojcik. (LVZ, 26.06.1993)

---

<sup>7</sup> Quite apart from Masur’s reflection on the musical and social life of Leipzig (and thus as part of the branding of Leipzig as a city of culture), this commemoration is also based on his involvement in negotiating peaceful demonstrations in October 1989, which is critical for a city that markets itself as the ‘Wendestadt’ (city which brought about the ‘Wende’, as discussed above).

While we find five cases instantiating arguments in favour of renaming a street to commemorate an underrepresented referent, the majority of arguments in this category are against renaming (n=9). Such is the case for Clara Zetkin, the peace activist and women's rights advocate, who is amply commemorated in the Leipzig streetscape (a monument and a cluster of city parks are named after her). Example (7b) criticises the loss of the historic name *Scheibholz* (Holz = 'lumpens' belonging to the noble family *Scheibe*) designating the horse racing track and adjacent green space to yet another memorial for Clara Zetkin.

- (7b) Nevertheless, two culturally and historically important names have fallen by the wayside. On the one hand, .... the horse racing track in Scheibholz and thus the traditional and well-known name Scheibholz will be sacrificed to the memory of Clara Zetkin, after whom a street is named and who is commemorated by a monument in Johannapark. (LVZ, 16.04.2011)

#### Legitimization of instigators of change (n=10)

This cluster of arguments is categorically against toponymic reversal, in this case on the grounds of a perceived lack of moral legitimization of the instigators of street name changes. As Mitchell (2003:443) aptly points out "the capacity for ... remembrances to be [introduced and] sustained is vastly dependent on the ... power of the groups who produce and maintain them". Counter-hegemonic discourses contest such structural power and/or question the moral legitimacy of those choosing and effectuating commemorative narratives in the streetscape. As illustrated in example (8), in our Leipzig data-set, the writers of such arguments acknowledge that the agents of change (usually the city council) have the legal rights to alter street denotation, while challenging the moral authority of such top-down naming policies.

- (8) Completely incomprehensible is the stubborn and arrogant manner in which the city council and administration stuck to the renaming of Grenzstraße to Ludwig-Erhardt-Straße, to the detriment of the famous Louise Otto Peters. (LVZ, 19.12.2000)

### **Practical concerns (n=68)**

Practical concerns make up the second largest group of arguments regarding street renaming. Most frequently, these discourses contain stances that are fiercely opposed to toponymic change, referring to the burden such toponymic reversal would constitute for individual citizens, businesses, city districts but also for the town as a whole (n=47). However, we also find some cases where practical concerns warrant changes in the city text (n=21). Overall, the cluster of arguments in this category can be grouped into six subcategories, dependent on the type of imposition constituted by the new or old name.

#### Cost (n=13)

The cost of changing street signs is a frequently voiced argument against street renaming (consider also example 1). In one case, however, the absence of the usual costs related to renaming is mentioned as an argument in favour of a change in denomination (example 9).

- (9) And inconveniences like address changes do not exist either. The designated green area does not affect any residents; therefore, changes of address which could be perceived as a burden do not arise. (LIZ, 18.12.2013)

#### Administrative burden (n=16)

One of the main arguments against street renaming is the administrative burden on businesses and private citizens situated on a particular street to change addresses, the onus on the city to

update official documents, city maps, information materials as well as the added nuisance for the postal services. This is illustrated in example 10.

- (10) "[commemorative renaming] is at our expense," says Anke Löser, whose florist shop is now no longer on Beethovenstraße. "It means new stamps, new letterheads. My husband, who has his advertising agency next door, had to contact 300 customers about the change." (LVZ, 18.06.2003)

#### Orientational aspects (n=20)

Since street names function as orientational signposts, the avoidance of confusion makes up a non-negligible portion of the practical concerns voiced against street renaming (n=9). While discourses relating to orientational aspects can already be found in the Weimar Republic, such arguments tend to be particularly relevant after city expansions, when the incorporation of smaller local authorities result in the doubling of street names, giving rise to arguments (n=10) in favour of resolving this ambiguity (see 11a). As example (11b) illustrates, some articles pitch practical arguments opposing street renaming against ideological ones which favour the purging of a referent indexing the ideology of the previous regime.

- (11a) Every citizen has a right to a distinctive address. (LVZ, 07.12.2000)

- (11b) Matthias Wadewitz is also in favor of retaining the previous street name, which has now become so ingrained in everyone over time: "After all, everyone can relate to Karl-Liebknecht-Straße and knows where it is." (LVZ, 13.11.2002)

#### Avoidance of disgruntlement and potential future complaints (n=3)

Complaint letters, citizen-led surveys and letters to newspapers bring to light the powerful voices of individuals, businesses, or neighborhood groups in resisting or indeed insisting on change on public toponymy (Duminy 2018, Buchstaller 2021). These statements of discontent (about the renaming process, the new/old street name or the specific referent being commemorated) sometimes include suggestions for alternative candidates who are deemed more suitable for this honour. Interviews with East German city administrators reveal that they are astutely cognizant of the power of such bottom-up movements (see also Buchstaller et al. 2020).<sup>8</sup> This awareness is shown in example (12a), which suggests that renaming streets referencing natural phenomena are less likely to trigger complaints than those whose referents are highly ideological (prototypically personae indexing the Weltanschauung of a particular political regime). Example (12b), which refers to the avoidance of renaming the long shopping street *Karl-Liebnecht-Straße*, reveals the overlap with arguments relating to cost and administrative burden such a renaming would entail.

(12a) it will hardly hurt anyone if park avenues or neighborhoods named after planets are replaced with other names. (LVZ, 18.05.1994)

(12b) ...the irritation is far less than with the earlier idea to rename Karl-Liebnecht-Straße with its many stores. (LVZ, 18.06.2003)

#### Linguistic reasoning (n=8)

---

<sup>8</sup> While avoidance discourses are mentioned rather frequently in the interviews we have conducted with city officials, representatives of cultural institutions, the tourist industry, and street name activists, the quantitative representation of these discourses in the Leipzig Press organs is surprisingly low.



Our data contain eight arguments related to the pronunciation, practicability, spelling and semantics of proposed street names.

- (13) The residents of *Stöckartstraße* in Connewitz will henceforth live in *Stockartstraße*. The city councillors corrected some street names that had previously been misspelled. (LVZ, 21.05.1993)

#### Legal issues and customs (n=7)

Surprisingly, maybe, only few arguments refer to legal stipulations regarding street naming (n=2 in favour of change, n=5 opposing change). The examples illustrate the lack of precedent to include the names of job titles (14a) as well as the prohibition of doublets (14b).

- (14a) In regard to renaming a street *Pfarrer-Jahn-Straße* (*Priest-Jahn-Street*): The administration proposes the naming without occupational designation, since occupational designations in the street name are not common and also since all streets named after pastors have been decided by the city of Leipzig [to be named] without occupational designation. (LIZ, 05.07.2015)
- (14b) Furthermore, it is pointed out that the Council Assembly decided on 19.01.2000 that street names occurring more than once in the city of Leipzig are not permitted (Resolution No. III-176/00). Consequently, a second *Bismarckstraße* cannot be named. (LIZ, 16.04.2015)

#### **Didactic arguments** (n=5)

City councils take different approaches in terms of whether and how to recruit sedimented ononymic history for didactic purposes. One line of argumentation within this category which has been reported for other cities (Pöppinghege 2012) is that the only candid way to address the issue of street naming is to confront rather than purge the commemorative remnants of

one's history. Taken to a moralising extreme, which we have not come across in Leipzig, this position results in the total rejection of street renaming as an attempt to do away with uncomfortable eras of political history. And while many East German cities, including Leipzig, have resorted to adding information plaques to some of their street signs, it is, of course, impossible to provide pedagogical contextualization at every crossing (and unfeasible for navigation systems, address books etc.). Unsurprisingly, thus, we found arguments opposing (n=3, example 15a) as well as in favour of (n=2, 15b) renaming that refer to the didactic potential of street names.

(15a) Street names do not have the task of replacing history books. (LVZ, 05.09.2007).

(15b) It is also useful to give names to streets in order to retrieve the memory of things. (LVZ, 19.12.2000).

### **Ideological instability (n=9)**

Contrary to our research in the small Saxon town of Annaberg-Buchholz (Buchstaller et al. 2020), discourses centering around the ideological instability of street names play a relatively minor role in Leipzig (with n=3 in favour of and n=6 against renaming). Consternation about the semantic unsteadiness of public odonymy is illustrated in example (16).

(16) After 1990 role models such as Ernst Thälmann or Wilhelm Pieck disappeared quickly from the streetscape. After the Wende they were considered as outdated, because they represented an old regime. (LVZ, 01.05.2010).

The taxonomy of arguments around individual acts of street renaming illustrates the ways in which users of the citytext react to the selection of new name choices in public odonymy,

encouraging memorial choices or opposing official narratives (see Buchstaller 2021). More specifically, the finding that the same types of argument can encode supportive as well as divergent stances towards semantic reversal brings to the fore the “multiple, changeable and contradictory narrativizations of the city” (Tufi 2019: 257).

The following section briefly explores the occurrence of these discourses across the past hundred years in the city of Leipzig. We discuss the limitation of our study as well as the benefits such an endeavor holds for understanding the users’ perspective on hegemonic, top-down, acts of public memorialisation.

## **7. Tracing arguments surrounding renaming over the last 100 years**

Table 3 summarizes the occurrence of arguments for and against street renaming across the four political-historical eras covered in this research. As becomes immediately obvious, the historical eras prior reunification yielded very few data points. Also, none of the discourses in previous eras were critical of the toponymic changes implemented in the Leipzig citytext.

The first reason for this dearth of earlier data points is a problem inherent in archival research. In our particular case, factors that proved prohibitive were the devastations of war that ravaged many German cities during WWII – in particular the bombing of the city archive in 1943 and the ensuing fire.<sup>9</sup> Added to this are the banal ravages of time, where newspaper

---

<sup>9</sup> A thorough analysis of the city archives, the city library and the town chronicles resulted in no more than the sporadic finds included in our dataset. Note, however, that discourses in authoritarian states such as the GDR and the Nazi times might be found in specialized repositories. Future research might explore the potential of archives such as the records kept by political organizations, specialized museums (for example those dedicated to journalistic freedom or commemorative of Nazi propaganda) or indeed the section for agitation at the Central Committee of the SED.

issues are classified as lost or perennially "misshelved" in the catalogue of the library or archive. Note also that our corpus increased in size over the time period investigated, with the average article size becoming longer (see Table 2 above) and the inclusion of the LIZ in most recent years.

Table 3: Arguments for and against street (re)naming

Arguments for (+) and against (-)	Since Wende		GDR		3 <sup>rd</sup> Reich	Weimar Republic		Total	
	+	-	+	-	n.a.	+	-	+	-
Historical-preservational arguments	4	14	1	0		1	0	6	14
Moral-ideological arguments	35	50	9	0		1	0	45	50
a) Indexing officially sanctioned identity and ideology	12	11	8	0		1	0	21	11
b) Retaining memory/ideology (-)	0	15	0	0		0	0	0	15
c) Reversing the erasure of memory (+)	6	0	0	0		0	0	6	0
d) Institutionalization of cultural memory	11	5	1	0		0	0	12	5
e) Over- or underrepresentation of certain groups	6	9	0	0		0	0	6	9
f) Legitimization of instigators of change	0	10	0	0		0	0	0	10
Practical Concerns	20	47	0	0		1	0	21	47
a) Cost	1	11	0	0		0	0	1	11
c) Administrative Burden	3	16	0	0		0	0	3	16
b) Orientation aspects	9	9	0	0		1	0	10	9
d) Avoidance of disgruntlement	2	1	0	0		0	0	2	1
e) Linguistic reasons	3	5	0	0		0	0	3	5
f) Legal reasons	2	5	0	0		0	0	2	5
Didactic Arguments	1	3	1	0		0	0	2	3
Ideological instability of streetnames	3	6	0	0		0	0	3	6
Miscellaneous	10	0	3	0		0	0	13	0
Total of arguments	73	120	14	0	n.a.	3	0	90	120
N = articles available during this period	73	73	12	12	n.a.	2	2	87	87
N= articles + small scale notifications	97		16		n.a.	7		120	

We therefore need to be mindful of the fact that our data-set cannot fully represent the multiplicity of voices which contribute to the narratives that result in memory making across time. This is important since LL as a discipline aims to capture the “plural dimension of memory-making and emplacing” via the discourses that support or deny the encoding of referents that index Weltanschauung in the city narrative (Tufi 2019:257, see also Todorov 2003). Bearing these caveats in mind, we now offer some reflections on the distribution of arguments surrounding street renaming across time.

Needless to say, the occurrence of arguments regarding official toponymic choices is contingent on the relative freedom with which such voices can be publicly voiced and indeed printed in the local newspaper. The ideological muzzling of all press organs that were not entirely in compliance with party principles during the two non-democratic regimes, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich and the GDR, has been reported elsewhere (Wilke 2013, Pürer und Raabe 1996). Its consequence is that freedom of speech was severely curtailed during the years 1933-1989.

Also during the GDR regime, freedom of the press was severely curtailed, as the Socialist Unity Party, “which politically controlled East Germany ... had [complete] political power and with it [an] iron grip on the mass media” (Willnat 1991:193). While there is some discussion about the extent to which the GDR media were “‘uniform’ both in form and in content (Tiemeyer, 1986: 25)”, it is notable is that our data-set only contains neutral voices (short notes announcing 4 changes in street names) and system-supportive arguments (n=14 in favour of toponymic renaming in the overall data-set). What is more, the majority of these arguments are explicitly in favour of indexing officially sanctioned identity and ideology (n=8). This ties in with Fiedler and Meyen’s (2015: 847) contention that the SED leadership

used the press to “position... a fiction in the part of the public sphere that it could control directly“, manipulating public perception to their own ends.<sup>10</sup>

The freedom of the press during the Weimar Republic, finally, has been a matter of discussion in the political historical literature. While the constitution of the Weimar Republic officially prohibited censorship, Fliess (1955) paints a “discouraging picture” (Fleming 1956:500) of the actual protection of the press, arguing that “the change from authoritarianism [the former empire] to liberalism cannot be made over night” (501, see also Wilke 2013). Overall three arguments concerning street renaming can be found in the archives for the time-span 1918-1932, all of which are supportive (one preservational, one supporting the indexing of state ideology and one practical in nature).

The most recent tranche of data, the united, reunified Germany includes – for the first time – press discourses that are critical of toponymic reversal. As a matter of fact, arguments contrary to street renaming make up the majority of arguments in the post-Wende Germany (120/193). One line of reasoning which we only find since 1989 is the instability of ideological toponymy. This argument – which is even more plentiful in the newspaper of the small town Annaberg-Buchholz, see Buchstaller et al. 2020 – manifests a reluctance among the population to accept the recurring rewriting of the “ideological robe of the city” (Zieliński 1994).<sup>11</sup> Indeed, as our interviews with inhabitants of several East German cities suggest, the

---

<sup>10</sup> It is interesting that, as Fiedler and Meyen (2015: 845-846) point out, at least since 1980 “all petitions and readers’ letters [to the central party newspaper *Neues Deutschland*] had to be registered, to receive answers in a timely manner or to be transmitted to third parties for treatment (such as administrations).” It is this last, rather threatening, aspect which probably kept the East German audience from writing reader responses or editorials which feature critical voices.

<sup>11</sup> It deserves mentioning that, at the fall of the Wall, a sizeable proportion of the population had lived through the most dramatic semiotic turnover in the streetscape, from Nazi to Soviet Weltanschauung which followed the years following the end of WWII.

thorough ideological saturation of the citytext during the GDR era followed by drastic textual reversal after the Wende resulted in a reluctance (if not downright hostility) towards encoding referents that might be co-opted for ideological purposes (see also [https://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage\\_id=3489](https://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=3489)). Hence, only since the Wende do we find discussions deliberating whether certain referents encoded into the citytext are still acceptable in the current political Weltanschauung – potentially with the metatextual addition of an explanatory plaque – or whether their “ideological force” (Fabiszak et al. 2021) to index certain aspects of political ideology is no longer tenable. Consequently, only the most recent era features voices in favour of keeping certain referents encoded in the streetscape. We hypothesize that such arguments would have been much less possible during the non-democratic Nazi or GDR regime, not only because of their autocratic nature, but also because the respective breaks with the immediately preceding political ideology was too stark to allow for commemorative continuity. At the same time, we also find, for the first time, arguments that explicitly reject the political indexicality contained in street names, pushing for a re-semioticization that brings the citytext in line with the commemorative priorities of the respective author.

Whereas moral-ideological considerations prevail in our dataset, another large cluster of discourses are related to practical concerns. These arguments can already be found in the Weimar Republic but the prevalence of such voices as a rationale against renaming after the Wende must be seen within the context of lived experience, which not only brought about a radical regime change but also resulted in far-reaching changes that affected almost all aspects of people’s daily lives. It should thus not strike us as surprising that the inhabitants of Leipzig express concern at the prospect of having yet another orientational signpost – a fundamental aspect of street names – overturned (with ramifications for their identification documents, address and telephone books etc.). As we discussed above, practical concerns are

often weighted against ideological considerations, an argumentative balancing act that is currently played out on the global scale as a result of the backlash against colonial and discriminatory heritage in official semiotic choices.

Notably, in reunified Germany, these opinions could be voiced – and sometimes hotly debated – without fear of political retribution, providing a fertile ground for media discourses surrounding street renaming. Our data thus not only register a formidable upswing of voices opposing street renaming, but also, for the first time, we find arguments that explicitly challenge the legitimacy of the instigators of change.

## **8. Conclusion**

Huebner and Phoocharoensil (2017: 109) argue that “the power of monuments rests in the histories they create. They do this both verbally and visually”. The present study contributes to our understanding of the ways in which public discourses surrounding the socio-indexical power of hegemonic commemoration are linked to memory formation. We investigate arguments that support or contest acts of rewriting the streetscape across a century of political turmoil in Leipzig, a large East German city. Street names can be interpreted as both reflective and constitutive of transformations in political *Weltanschauung*, a “memoryscape” in Harjes’ (2005: 149) words. Following Tufi (2019:238), we thus consider street-name sign as emplaced memory, as “monuments both in an etymological sense .... and as discursive devices positioned at the intersection of memory and identity” (see also Harjes 2005). Past research on commemorative street naming has tended to focus on theorizing political rationale for commemoration without considering of the inhabitants’ understanding of place naming practices, and thus at the expense of users’ interpretations that may be unrelated to ideological agendas (Azaryahu 2011). Consequently, very little research has engaged with the discourses



which accompany, support, or oppose the turnover in memory formation in the public streetscape over time. If we see commemoration as a “practice of representation that enacts and gives social substance to the discourse of collective memory” (Sherman 1994: 186), we need to explore voices other than the top-down narrative encoded in the streetscape.

In line with Bodnar’s (1992) claim that public memory tends to be the result of a negotiation or symbolic struggle between the official top-down and the more vernacular memory, the present project presents a typology of arguments surrounding changes in street semantics in the two main press outlets of the city of Leipzig. While the ravages of time have meant that our archival data need to be taken with a fair grain of salt, voices in our data-set most frequently fall into two categories: moral-ideological arguments (n=95) and practical concerns (n=68). Many of these arguments overlap and reinforce each other in complex ways.

The few arguments regarding street renaming in media discourse that have survived from the Weimar Republic and the GDR are either related to orientational and historical aspects of the streetscape or supportive of the ideological-political agenda expressed in the citytext. None of them voice opposition to toponymic reversal and they do not engage critically with the ideologies encoded in the streetscape. Arguments that challenge street name changes – in particular such that contest the legitimacy of the instigators of change – only start to occur in the most recent, post-Wende, data.

We would like to suggest that the occurrence of press discourses surrounding street renaming is not only dependent on the extent to which a political regime affords full freedom of the press. Rather, our findings lead us to conjecture that arguments surrounding street renaming – and in particular critical voices opposing such reversals – are contingent on a complex combination of factors including public as well as self-censorship, the (perceived) ideological saturation of the citytext as well as the extent to which residents have been sensitized to the diachronic instability of the commemorative streetscape. Added to these

concerns are change fatigue and resistance to the loss of orientational signposts, as well as the existence and awareness of alternative solutions, such as the addition of information plaques. Finally, as Mitchell (2003:443) aptly points out “the capacity for ... remembrances to be sustained [and introduced] is vastly dependent on the ... power of the groups who produce and maintain them” and it is especially in the most recent era that we find discourses contesting the moral legitimacy of those choosing commemorative semantics.

Overall, thus, this paper provides a classification of the discourses of which opponents and advocates of street renaming avail themselves to buttress their textual agenda for the streetscape. This has allowed us to create an empirically-based classification scheme for understanding the types of discourses that surround institutionalized, top-down changes in the citytext. We hope that our taxonomy will serve as a springboard for future research on the “communicative negotiation of memory in public space, ... their ‘attendant discourses, ideologies, practices, and policies’ (Train 2016: 226)” (Bendl 2019:269). Extending the present framework to other situations in which choices in the citytext are debated in the media will provide us with a better understanding the complex ways in which commemoration as a “practice of representation .... enacts and gives social substance to the discourse[s] of collective memory” (Sherman, 1994:186).<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Note in this respect that the findings reported here are representative of European textual practices in the street scape. For research on the production, perception and reception of non-Western streetscapes, we refer the reader to Phan (2021) and Banda and Jimaima (2015).

## References

- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Assmann, A. (2010). Canon and Archive. In A. Erll, & A. Nünning (Eds.), *A Companion to cultural memory studies* (pp. 97-108). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Assmann, A. (2016). *Formen des Vergessens*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.
- Azaryahu, M. (2012). Renaming the past in post-Nazi Germany: Insights into the politics of street naming in Mannheim and Potsdam. *Cultural Geographies*, 19(3), 385-400.
- Azaryahu, Maoz. (2011). The Critical Turn and Beyond: The Case of Commemorative Street Naming. *Acme* 10(1), 28-33.
- Azaryahu, M. (1997). German Reunification and the Politics of Street Names: The Case of East Berlin. *Political Geography*, 16, 479-493.
- Azaryahu, M. (1986). Street Names and Political Identity: The Case of East Berlin. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 21, 581-604.
- Banda, F. & Jimaima, H. (2015). The semiotic ecology of linguistic landscapes in rural Zambia. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 19, 643-670.
- Ben-Rafael, B & Shohamy, E. (2016), eds. Memory and memorialization. Special issue of *Linguistic Landscape*, 2(3).
- Bendl, Ch. (2019). Appropriation and re-appropriation: the museum as a palimpsest. In R. Blackwood, & J. Macalister. (Eds.), *Multilingual memories: Monuments, museums and the linguistic landscape* (pp. 262–284). London: Bloomsbury.
- Berg, L. D. & Kearns, R.A. (2009). Naming as Norming: “Race,” Gender and the Identity Politics of Naming Places in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In L. D. Berg, & J. Vuolteenaho (Eds.), *Critical Toponymies: The Contested Politics of Place Naming* (pp. 19-52). Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company.

- Berg, L. & Vuolteenaho, J. (2009). Towards critical toponymies. In L. Berg, & J. Vuolteenaho (Eds.). *Critical toponymies: contested politics of place naming* (pp. 1-18). London: Ashgate.
- Blackwood, R. & Macalister, J. (2019). *Multilingual memories: Monuments, museums and the linguistic landscape*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Buchstaller, I. (2021). Community cityscape: Modes of engagement and co-construction of the streetscape. *Linguistics Vanguard*. (special issue on Ideology and commemoration in the urban scape, edited by M. Fabiszak and I. Buchstaller).
- Buchstaller, I., Alvanides, S., Griese, F. & Schneider, C. (2020). Competing ideologies, competing semiotics: A critical perspective on politically-driven renaming practices in Annaberg-Buchholz, Eastern Germany. In E. Ziegler & H. Marten (Eds.). *Linguistic Landscapes im deutschsprachigen Kontext* (pp. 229-260). Frankfurt: Lang.
- Bodnar, J. (1992). *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Borowiak, P. (2012). *Nazewnictwo miejskie Poznania na tle urbonimii bułgarskiej*. In A. W. Brzezińska, & A. Chwieduk (Eds.), *Miasto Poznań w perspektywie badań interdyscyplinarnych*. (pp. 55–60). Wielichowo: TIPI.
- Connerton, Paul. (2008). *Seven types of forgetting*. *Memory Studies*, 1(1), 59–71
- Czepczyński, M. (2008). *Cultural Landscapes of Post-Socialist Cities*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Drozdewski, D., De Nardi, S., & Waterton, E. (2016). Geographies of memory, place and identity: Intersections in remembering war and conflict, *Geography Compass*, 10(11), 447-456.
- Duminy, J. (2018). Street renaming, symbolic capital, and resistance in Durban, South Africa. In R. Rose-Redwood, D. Aldermann, & M. Azaryahu (Eds.), *The Political Life*

- of Urban Streetscapes: Naming, Politics, and Place* (pp. 240-258). New York: Routledge.
- Edelman, L. (2009). What's in a name? Classification of Proper Names by Language. In E. Shohamy, & D. Gorter (Eds.). *Linguistic Landscape: Expanding the Scenery* (pp. 141-154). New York: Routledge.
- Fabiszak, M., & Brzezińska, A. W. (2016). Żydzi i Niemcy w Poznaniu – (nie)pamięć w krajobrazie miejskim. Analiza korpusu prasowego i wywiadów grupowych, *Studia Socjologiczne*, 2, 217-241.
- Fabiszak, M., & Rubdy, R. (2021). Media debates over the renaming of the cityscape. *Linguistics Vanguard*, 7(5), 20200089.
- Fabiszak, M., Buchstaller, I., Brzezinska, A. W., Alvanides, S., Griese, F., & Schneider, C. (2021). Ideology and memory in the linguistic landscape: Towards a quantitative approach. *Discourse and Society* 32(4): 405-425.
- Fabiszak M. & I. Buchstaller (eds.) 2021. *Special issue on Ideology and commemoration in the urban scape*, special issue *Linguistic Vanguard*.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.
- Fiedler A. & Meyen, M. (2015). 'The totalitarian destruction of the public sphere?' Newspapers and structures of public communication in socialist countries: the example of the German Democratic Republic. *Media, Culture & Society*, 37(6), 834–849
- Fliess, P. (1955). *Freedom of the Press in the German Republic, 1918-1933*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University.
- Fleming, W. (1956). Review of Freedom of the Press in the German Republic, 1918-1933. *The Western Political Quarterly*, 9(2), 499-501.

- Foote, K., Toth, A., & Arvey, A. (1999). Hungary after 1989: Inscribing a New Past on Place. *Geographical Review*, 90(3), 301–333.
- Golka, M. (2009). *Pamięć społeczna i jej implanty*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Guissemo, M. (2018) Orders of (in)visibility: Colonial and postcolonial chronotopes in linguistic landscapes of memorization in Maputo. In A. Peck, Ch. Stroud, & Q. Williams (Eds.), *Making Sense of People, Place and Linguistic Landscapes* (pp. 29–47). London: Bloomsbury Academic
- Harjes, K. (2005). Stumbling stones: Holocaust memorials, national identity, and democratic inclusion in Berlin. *German Politics and Society*, 23(1), 138-151.
- Halbwachs, M. (1925). *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, Paris, Librairie Félix Alcan.
- Hobsbawm, E. J., & Ranger, T. (2015). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobuß, S. (2011) Aspects of memory acts: transnational cultural memory and ethics, *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, 3(1): 7188
- Jałowicki, B. (1985). Przestrzeń jako pamięć, *Studia Socjologiczne*, 2.
- Järlehed, J. (2017). Genre and metacultural displays. The case of street-name signs. *Linguistic Landscape*, 3(3), 286–305.
- Jenjekwa, V. & L. Barnes. (2018) Changes in the Linguistic Landscape Resulting from Zimbabwe’s Post-2000 Land Reforms: Recasting the First and Second *Chimurenga* Narratives. *Language Matters*, 49(3), 67-85
- Kaltenberg-Kwiatkowska, E. (2011). O oznaczaniu i naznaczaniu przestrzeni miasta. *Przegląd Socjologiczny*, 60, 135-165.
- Karolczak, W. (2005). *Ulice i zaułki dawnego Poznania*. Muzeum Historii Miasta Poznania.

- Kosatka, M. (2020). 102: the semiotics of living memorials. *Social Semiotics*, DOI: 10.1080/10350330.2020.1810557
- Legal division, office of military government of Germany (U.S.). (1946). *Enactments and Approved papers of the Control Council and Coordinating Committee of the Allied Control Authority*, 3, 137.
- Light, D. (2004). Street Names in Bucharest, 1990-1997: Exploring the Modern Historical Geographies of Post-Socialist Change. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 30, 154–172.
- Light, D., & Young, C. (2018). The politics of toponymic continuity: the limits of change and the ongoing lives of street names. In R. Rose-Redwood, D. Aldermann, & M. Azaryahu (Eds.), *The Political Life of Urban Streetscapes: Naming, Politics, and Place* (pp 185-201). London: Routledge.
- Listewnik, M. (2021). *A fo bont, bid ben*: colonial and postcolonial ideologies in debates on renaming the Second Severn Crossing, *Linguistic Vanguard*, 7(5), 20200102.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell. Originally published as *La production de l'espace*. Anthropos: Paris, 1974.
- Lou, J. J. (2016). Shop sign as monument. The discursive recontextualization of a neon sign. *Linguistic Landscape*, 2(3), 211–222.
- Madden, D. (2018). Pushed off the map: Toponymy and the politics of place in New York City. *Urban Studies*, 55(8), 1599–1614.
- Majewski, J. (2012). *Warszawa nieodbudowana. Żydowski Muranów i okolice*. Warsaw: Agora.
- Mitchell, K. (2003), Monuments, Memorials, and the Politics of Memory. *Urban Geography*, 24(5), 442-459.
- Molden, B. (2015). Resistant pasts versus mnemonic hegemony: On the power relations of collective memory. *Memory Studies*, 9(2), 125-142.

- Moszberger, M., Rieger, T., & Daul, L. (2002). *Dictionnaire historique des rues de Strasbourg*. Illkirch: Verger.
- Nora, P. (1989), Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire. *Representations*, 26, 7–24
- Pavlenko, A. (2010). Linguistic Landscape of Kviv, Ukraine: A diachronic study. In E. Shohamy, M. Barni, & E. Ben-Rafael (Eds.), *Linguistic Landscapes in the City* (pp. 133-150). Bristol: Multilingualism Matters.
- Palonen, K. (2018). Reading street names politically: A second reading. In R. Rose-Redwood, D. Alderman, & M. Azaryahu (Eds.), *The political life of urban streetscapes. Naming, politics and place* (pp. 25–40). London: Routledge.
- Pavlenko, A., & Mullen, A. (2015). Why diachronicity matters in the study of linguistic landscape. *Linguistic Landscape*, 1(1-2), 114–132.
- Phan, N. (2021). Memories and semiotic resources in place-making: A case study in the Old Quarter in Hanoi, Vietnam. *Linguistic Landscapes*, 7(1), 86-115.
- Pöppinghege, R. (2012). Geschichtspolitik per Stadtplan: Kontroversen zu historisch-politischen Straßennamen. In M. Frese (Ed.), *Fragwürdige Ehrungen? Straßennamen als Instrument von Geschichtspolitik und Erinnerungskultur* (pp. 21-40). Münster: Ardey-Verlag.
- Pürer, H. & Raabe, J. (1996). *Medien in Deutschland*. Vol.1, Munich: UVK.
- Rose-Redwood, R. (2011). Rethinking the Agenda of Political Toponymy, *Acme*, 10(1), 34-41.
- Rose-Redwood, R., Vuolteenaho, J., Young, C., & Light, D. (2019). Naming rights, place branding, and the tumultuous cultural landscapes of neoliberal urbanism, *Urban Geography*, 40(6), 747-761.



- Rubdy, R. (2015). Conflict and Exclusion: The Linguistic Landscape as an Arena of Contestation. In R. Rubdy, & S. Ben Said, (Eds.), *Conflict, exclusion and dissent in the linguistic landscape* (pp. 1-25). New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Rubdy, R. & Ben Said, S. (2015), eds. *Conflict, exclusion and dissent in the linguistic landscape*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Saxon state association for the protection of local history (Landesverein Sächsischer Heimatschutz, 1940). Grundsätze für die Benennungen von Straßen, Dresden.
- Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (2003). *Discourses in Place*. London: Routledge.
- Sherman, D. (1999). *The construction of memory in interwar France*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Sloboda, M. (2009). State ideology and linguistic landscape: A comparative analysis of (post)communist Belarus, Czech Republic and Slovakia. In E. Shohamy, & D. Gorter (Eds.), *Linguistic Landscape: Expanding the scenery* (pp. 173-188). London: Routledge.
- Traba, R., & Hahn, H. (2012-2015), eds. *Polsko-niemieckie miejsca pamięci. Deutsch-polnische Erinnerungsorte* (Vols. 1-4). Paderborn: Schöningh.
- Tufi, S. (2019). Instances of Emplaced Memory: The Case of Alghero/L'Alguer. In R. Blackwood, & J. Macalister. (Eds.), *Multilingual memories: Monuments, museums and the linguistic landscape* (pp. 237–262). London: Bloomsbury.
- Tan, P. & Purschke, Ch. (2021). "Street name changes as language and identity inscription in the cityscape" *Linguistics Vanguard*, 7(5), 20200138
- Tiemeyer F. (1986) Eine Spur ausführlicher: Ein Vergleich zwischen der SED-Presse und den Zeitungen der 'Blockparteien'. *Medium*, 16(2), 25–26.
- Todorov, T. (2003), *Hope and Memory: Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Van Mensel, L., Vandenbroucke, M., & Blackwood, R. (2016). Linguistic Landscapes. In O. Garcia, N. Flores, & M. Spotti (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Language and Society* (pp. 423-449). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Verheyen, P. (2019). Buchstadt | City of the Book, Leipzig, 1913.  
<https://pressbengel.blogspot.com/2019/01/buchstadt-city-of-book-leipzig-1913.html>  
 (accessed 14.09.2021).
- Vuolteenaho, J., & Berg, L. D. (2009). Towards Critical Toponymies. In L. D. Berg, & J. Vuolteenaho (Eds.), *Critical Toponymies. The contested politics of place naming* (1-18). London: Routledge.
- Vuolteenaho, J., & Puzey, G. (2018). Armed with an encyclopaedia and an axe: The socialist and post-socialist street toponymy of East Berlin revisited through Gramsci. In R. Rose-Redwood, D. Alderman, & M. Azaryahu (Eds.), *The political life of urban streetscapes: Naming politics and place* (pp. 74–97). London: Routledge.
- Wee, L & Goh, R. (2016). *Language, Space and Cultural Play: Theorising Affect in the Semiotic Landscape*. CUP.
- Wee, L. (2016). Situating affect in linguistic landscapes. *Linguistic Landscape*, 2(2), 105 – 126.
- Willnat, L. (1991). The East German press during the political transformation of East Germany. *Gazette*, 48, 193-208.
- Wilke, J. (2013). Censorship and Freedom of the Press. *European History Online*. <http://iegego.eu/en/threads/european-media/censorship-and-freedom-of-the-press> (accessed 14.09.2021)
- Winter, J. (1998). *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zerubavel, E. (2003). *Time maps, collective memory and the social shape of the past.*

Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Zieliński, F. (1994). Szata ideologiczna miasta. O przemianowywaniu ulic i placów. In E.

Kaltenberg-Kwiatkowska (Ed.), *Miasta polskie w dwusetlecie prawa o miastach* (pp.

189-199). Warszawa: Polskie Towarzystwo Socjologiczne.

## German Abstract

Eine Sonderausgabe des *Journal of Linguistic Landscapes*, die die Schnittstelle zwischen Forschung zu *Linguistic Landscapes* und der Erforschung des kollektiven Gedächtnisses untersuchte, forderte bereits 2016 eine tiefergreifendere Untersuchung der Schnittstelle dieser Disziplinen. Die hier präsentierte Analyse knüpft an diese Studien an, indem sie die diskursive Einbettung von Prozessen der Erinnerung durch Straßenumbenennungen untersucht. Auf der Grundlage der kritischen Toponymie als auch in der Erinnerungsforschung beleuchten wir Mediendiskurse, die kommemorative Umbenennungen von Straßennamen in einer ostdeutschen Großstadt während des letzten Jahrhunderts begleiten, unterstützen oder kritisieren. Auf der Grundlage dieses Datensatzes entwickeln wir eine Typologie von Argumenten für oder gegen Straßenumbenennungen. Die Längsschnittanalyse von Diskursen in der Lokalpresse im Hinblick auf fortdauernde Prozesse der Resemiotisierung öffnet den Blick auf ein komplexes Verhältnis zwischen Art der vorgebrachten Argumente und den darin kodierten Haltungen, relativer Pressefreiheit als auch gelebter politischer Geschichte.

Corresponding author:

Isabelle Buchstaller  
Sociolinguistics Lab  
University of Duisburg-Essen  
Universitätsstraße 2  
45141 Essen  
Germany

Carolin Schneider  
Department of Languages, Literature and Communication  
Universiteit Utrecht  
Postbus 80125,  
3508 TC Utrecht  
The Netherlands

Seraphim Alvanides  
GESIS  
Unter Sachsenhausen 6-8  
50667 Köln  
Germany