

# The renaming of streets in post-revolutionary Ukraine: regional strategies to construct a new national identity

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## ABSTRACT

After the 2014 revolution, a massive renaming of toponyms related to the communist ideology took place in Ukraine. The results of this renaming help understand the essentiality of Ukrainian delayed post-socialist and post-colonial transition and, in particular, national and regional identities that Ukrainians are going to build, and ideology that local and national authorities are going to impose. This study covers the 36 largest cities in Ukraine with a population of more than 100,000 and focuses on the new street names that appeared as the result of de-communization. It was found that in south-eastern Ukraine, the renaming strategy was targeted to avoid the commemorative names, especially those related to military-political events and personalities, as well as to depoliticize urban toponyms, by using non-commemorative categories of street names, like topographical or poetic ones, or restoring the historical toponyms. On the contrary, new toponyms in western and central Ukraine reflect the legacy of the national liberation movements of the 20th century. However, urban toponyms in the most eastern regions, including Donbas, continue to retain close links with the Soviet period. The memory of the Cossack era and Ukrainian Peoples Republic seems to be the well-perceived and common-shared strata of national identity. At the same time, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Soviet legacy remain topics dividing the Ukrainian society. The street renaming process in post-revolutionary Ukraine shares some common characteristics with other post-socialist European countries, such as the appeal to the pre-socialist period in order to reinforce the national identity, replacement of political and military place-names with those related to local and national culture and heritage, and the increased importance of local and regional toponyms.

## KEYWORDS

urban toponymy; renaming of streets; identity; ideology; Ukraine

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## 1. Introduction

After the Revolution of Dignity, Ukraine officially set a political course for decommunization. This process includes renaming of urban toponymy, related to the communist regime. In fact, significant share of urban place-names were renamed even earlier, since Ukrainian independence in 1991. However, this process was non-systemic and quite uneven in regional dimension: while in Western Ukraine nearly all Soviet-originated place-names have been already renamed, in Eastern and Southern Ukraine the Soviet toponymy remained practically intact. Decision about this Soviet legacy was totally in hands of the local authorities. In contrast, today's renaming of urban place-names is non-discretionary and represents a part of the state decommunization policy. Therefore, all cities are legally obliged to go through decommunization. Clearly identified list of urban toponymy must perish from the maps.

Therefore, local communities must pass through decommunization even if they wish to avoid this process. However, the official legislation provides no strict instructions about new place-names which should appear instead. In this respect, local communities have a large range of discretion. Local authorities can choose different renaming strategies, based on local cultural traditions together with electoral and political situation. The ideology of erased toponyms may be replaced by a new national ideology, but the content of this ideology may be quite different depending on the region: emphasis can be placed on different values, different historical periods, various distinguished figures. There is also a scenario in which the new national ideology does not manifest itself; instead, preservation of the Soviet ideology in a hidden form or addressing to a purely regional or local identity may take place.

Therefore, the results of street renaming in the framework of decommunization give abundant food for reflection on a series of questions:

1. What different strategies do local authorities in Ukraine use while implementing decommunization in view of high level of cultural interregional diversity?
2. What are more or less hidden geopolitical and cultural fault lines existing in contemporary post-Revolution and war-affected Ukraine?
3. In what way local authorities in certain Ukrainian regions try to construct new national and/or regional identity (including how they cope with discrepancies between already existing local identity and official state ideology)?
4. What elements (strata) of national identity integrate or disintegrate the country?

The answers to these questions are important to understand the essentiality of Ukrainian delayed post-socialist (and post-colonial) transition, in particular, what state Ukrainians are going to build, and

on what grounds? The findings may clarify the real state of interregional differences, indicate well-integrated and badly-integrated areas, and point at inclusive values for contemporary nation-building as well as at disjunctive ones that must be avoided now in interregional dialog. Certainly, it is very lucky to have now a wide array of renamed place-names exactly in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, where national identity may (or may not) undergo crucial changes.

## 2. Scientific background

Toponyms are not merely abstract names in the spatial structure of cities, but also represent the construct of social and power relations, through which the identity of the city and society is being formed (Berg and Voulteenaho 2009). Reuben Rose-Redwood, Derek Alderman and Maoz Azaryahu argue that the study of place naming has recently undergone a critical reformulation as scholars have moved beyond the traditional focus on etymology and taxonomy by examining the politics of place-naming practices (Rose-Redwood et al. 2010). On the one hand, names are changing because society is doing so; however, place names are often transformed to propose or bring about evolution in society (Guyot and Seethal 2007). Place names, in line with this approach, are considered dually as: 1. a mirror of existing, actual identities, accepted by spatially-localized community; 2. an instrument used by political regimes to transform or erase the existing identity and create new one instead. The official factor must be stressed, since identities articulated by political elites are not necessarily the same as in the general population; however, with time, new names may become generally accepted: the political elite decides by whom or by which institution or social events streets will be named, but there is not always a compromise between the elites and the population of the city when naming certain streets. However, with time, new street names may be accepted by population (Stiperski et al. 2015; Bucher et al. 2013).

Changes of street names constitute an important part of the process of creating new public iconographic landscapes in harmony with the values of the new regimes, so analysing such changes may provide important insights into the ways in which post-communist countries alter the contours of national identities and national pasts (Stiperski et al. 2015). Graham et al. (2000) emphasize that political elites, if they are aware of the symbolic power denoted by space, erase symbols of previous regimes and implant their own ones; new regimes determine new versions of history and new world-views, accentuating persons, events and historical facts that can be useful to their rule, and trying to erase from the population's memory others that might be detrimental to them. The toponymic reworkings imposed by the community's succession

of political leaders reflect the goals, tactics, and, indeed, the ethos of each new national government (Gonzalez Faraco and Murphy 1997). Kadmon (2004) even uses the term of “toponymic warfare” to describe the extent to which marginalized nationalities and linguistic cultures within countries have appropriated and rewritten place names on maps as part of their campaigns of resistance.

According to Azaryahu (2011), (re) naming street names is well- tried and effective way of introducing and disseminating authorized version of history that political elite tries to implement into ordinary setting of “common” people’s everyday life, with the main intention of creating new collective memory. Both the urban toponymy and the process of its renaming reflect certain needs of political elites and their ability of manipulation with the symbols of common cultural and historical heritage. Commemorative street names are instrumental in the symbolic construction of national identity, mainly in terms of historical heritage (Azaryahu and Kook 2002), they represent an important vehicle for bringing the past into the present (Alderman 2003). Gonzalez Faraco and Murphy (1997) claim that toponymic reworkings reflect the goals, tactics, and the ethos of each new national government, and reveal distinctive mix of local, regional, and national orientations.

Almost every regime change in XIX–XX centuries was marked by the following widespread renaming of urban toponymy. The most prominent examples enlightened in the literature are: nascent and descent of right authoritarian political regimes in Europe (Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal etc.); fall of the socialist system in the countries of the Central and Eastern Europe; decolonization of Asian and African states; inner ethnical conflicts all over the world (Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel etc.). Consequentially, three main directions of research may be distinguished: 1. studies that rely on the interests regarding the fall of the great colonial system; 2. studies that deal with the ethnical disputes in ethnically divided areas, which also emphasize the importance of (re) naming streets as the mechanism of symbolic demarcation of ethnic groups, as well as the significance of hodonoms in building national and local identities; 3. studies that address the issues about changes of political regimes in the Middle European, Eastern European and Southeastern European countries (Stanić et al. 2009).

The Ukrainian case belongs to the third group of studies, however, also with some of post-colonial (in fact, Ukraine, like other Soviet republics, was a Russian colony) and ethnic (despite the annexation of Crimea and Donbas conflict, Ukraine remains a multiethnic state) discourses. In this view, the results of toponymy studies from the other post-Socialist and, especially, post-Soviet countries are of large importance. In general, different authors seek to demonstrate how, through the control of state and local government, the

political elite can promote its ideology in relation to the nomenclature of the street network.

A book of Sanger (1996) represents thorough analysis of the official memory policy in relation to street names in former GDR. Light (2002) studied the changes in nomenclature of the street network of Bucharest from 1948 to 1965 and disclosed a wide range of symbols and characters incorporated to the urban space in order to legitimise and institutionalise the ideology of revolutionary socialism. His further research of the mass renaming of streets in Bucharest in the 1990s (Light 2004) revealed the occurrence of hodonoms named after notable persons, events and figures that evoked the memories on the time before socialism. Thus, these renamings were expressions/ manifestations of a reconfiguration or restructuring of space and history, constituting a vital and integral element of the post-communist transformation. Similar processes were noticed in the Russian capital city of Moscow (Gill 2005).

The studies of urban place names revealed the general idea of the necessity of awakening national consciousness and identity among the citizens of new-born independent state (Crljenko 2012). Comparative analysis of place names in Croatian cities indicated that regional identity was more strongly expressed in Istria than in the region of Kvarner; analysis of toponyms in the Croatian town of Senj proved that its historical-geographic development could be to a great degree reconstructed from these toponyms (Crljenko 2006). It is worth to emphasize a good state of toponymy studies in Croatia: the researchers tried to investigate the main ideas, followed by the decision makers in the processes of renamings, in numerous cities of Zagreb (Rihtman-Augustin 2000; Marjanović 2007; Stanić et al. 2008), Vukovar (Crlenjak 2005), Zadar (Begonja 2006), Pula (Bertoša 2008; Krizmanić 2008), Rijeka (Malešić 2011).

Studying changes in the toponymy of the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Robinson et al. (2001) found out that names associated with Serbia, Croatia or respective nations, even those from the Bosnian-Herzegovinian context, were replaced mainly by names associated with Sarajevo and the Bosniak Muslim population and culture. They make a conclusion that this was an attempt to create a Bosnian-Herzegovina’s identity based primarily on the Bosniak element, as opposed to the identity in the previous Yugoslav period, which was founded on a mix of Bosniak, Serbian and Croatian elements.

Balode (2012) investigated street-names coined from toponyms in Riga, including the motivation of renaming and Latvians’ efforts to conserve their national place-names in urban toponymy. Comparative studies of urban toponymy at both national and international levels were carried out in Slovakia (Bucher et al. 2013) and by the international scientific team (Stiperski et al. 2011). The first study aims to determine the intensity of local, regional

and national identity in Slovakia. The authors tried to verify the statement that the names of streets, squares or parks in the historical centre of cities serve as indicators of official views and ideological impressions on the political, social and historical events, in the context of Central Europe. The second one investigates urban place names in international scale and provides interesting conclusions on the more and less typical structure of toponyms in terms of their semantics.

David (2013), studying post-Socialist renaming in Czechia, provides arguments supporting the preservation of the original urbanonyms in Soviet-time neighbourhoods, despite their ideologically motivated origins, and focuses on the role of toponyms as a part of cultural heritage and elements contributing to local identity. In the other paper (2012), the same author describes the structure of commemorative street names and stability of urbanonyms related to different periods of Czech history. The role of urban toponymy in development of local identity in post-Socialist period is described, based on rich empirical material, also in contributions by Odaloš and Majtán (1996), David (2011), Knappová (2013), David and Mácha (2014). Renaming process was not painless: in some countries, it came with heated discussions (Palonen 2008).

Also, there are many helpful studies on toponymy outside the region of post-Socialist Eastern Europe, including scientific papers representing toponymic evidence from Singapore (Yeoh 1992, 1996), Spain (Gonzalez Faraco and Murphy 1997), Israel (Azaryahu and Kook 2002), Unites States (Alderman 2003), South Africa (Guyot and Seethal 2007) etc.

As Azaryahu (2011) suggests, de-colonization of commemorative street names following independence may conform to three main strategies: 1. to erase all “colonial” toponymy to signify a complete break from the colonial past; 2. to leave colonial commemorations in their place; 3. to implement a selective de-commemoration of the colonial past. Although the discourse of Azaryahu refers to the post-colonial renaming, these strategies are applicable to post-Soviet renaming as well. Legacy of different periods may be emphasized to pursue some political goals, including attempts to unite a country in ideology and identity. E.g. renaming the East German past in Potsdam did not entail a return to the Prussian past: notably Prussian names, predominant before being erased by the communist administration in December 1945, were not restored to their former place (Azaryahu 2012). After the death of Francisco Franco in 1975, the socialist government in the town of Almonte, Spain, fashioned a crafty symbolic compromise aimed at ending the onomastic cycle of victors and vanquished (Gonzalez Faraco and Murphy 1997).

### 3. Ukrainian context for renaming the urban toponymy

The history of Ukraine is characterized by long period without own independent national state as well as the division of the country between neighbouring states (Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Second Polish Republic, Czechoslovakia, Romania, USSR), each of which tried to impose local people own state ideology, including by the renaming of urban toponymy. This process has been especially pronounced in the XX century, when the names that did not match communist ideology were massively replaced by the names related to communist leaders and organizations. Even nowadays, as Diesen and Keane (2017) emphasise, both the West and Russia seek to encourage a particular historical narrative in Ukraine that is compatible with their interests in the region.

At the same time, the complicated history of the country has led to the formation of differences in the regional mentality, which lay from the time of ancient history, but eventually formed during the Soviet rule. Passing over the details, it should be noted that inhabitants of Western Ukraine has the most nationalist (sometimes even radical) and anti-Russian, but simultaneously the most pro-European views. The activities of the Ukrainian Nationalists Organization and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (OUN-UIA), which during the WW II had cooperated with the Nazis to a certain moment, and then opened the struggle both against the Nazis and the Communists, constitute an integral part of local identity. The population of the central part of Ukraine as a whole shares the same ideology, but it has less radical appearance. During the period of Independence of Ukraine the influence of Soviet propaganda has practically faded away, therefore the activity of the Ukrainian Nationalists Organization and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army is perceived here mostly favourably, but without fanatical admiration. Simultaneously, in the south-east, much more industrialized and with significant share of ethnic Russians, pro-Russian sentiments are still widespread even in the face of a bloody military conflict in Donbas: if in the west the personification of evil is Russia as a state, then in the east and in the south it is the ruling regime and personally “Vladimir Putin who will sooner or later go”, while the “fraternal Russian people will remain”. In addition, there is still widespread pro-Soviet sentiment and nostalgia for the “great state” that built the industrial power of this land.

Regional differences in geopolitical attitudes have affected the character of the renaming of streets in the period since the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) to the Revolution of Dignity (2014). During this period, the renaming of streets was absolutely voluntary and depended only on the free will of local governments.

In particular, in the cities of Western Ukraine, especially in Galicia, almost all names related to the communist regime were erased during this period. Commemorative names, which had nothing to do with communist ideology, but associated with the Russian culture and science, were removed as well. In the cities of central Ukraine, including Kyiv, the renaming was limited and related to the streets in the central parts of cities and streets that carried the names of the most odious communist regime representatives. In most cities of southern and eastern Ukraine, with some exceptions, the renaming of streets practically did not occur, and the Soviet toponymy was preserved almost entirely.

After the Revolution of Dignity, a lively discussion broke out in the Ukrainian society and politics about the need to erase the Soviet toponymy and symbolism, as propagating the values of the criminal communist regime, from the faces and maps of Ukrainian cities. Consequently, on April 9, 2015, the Ukrainian Parliament passed the Law "On Conviction of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and Prohibition of the Promotion of Their Symbols". In addition to other aspects, this Law regulates the issue of naming and renaming of geographical objects. According to the Law, the list of obligatorily renamed toponyms includes place names related to the persons who held leadership positions in the Communist Party (the position of the secretary of the district committee and above), the higher authorities of the USSR, the Ukrainian SSR, and other Union and Autonomous Soviet republics (except for cases related to the development of Ukrainian science and culture), worked in the Soviet authorities of the state security, the names of the USSR, the Ukrainian SSR, other Soviet republics and derivatives from them, as well as names related to the activities of the Communist Party, the establishment of Soviet power in Ukraine or in its administrative units, prosecution of people struggling for Ukrainian independence in the XX century.

The renaming of streets in Ukrainian settlements is carried out by local self-government bodies within 6 months from the effective date of the Law (until October 9, 2015). If no decision on renaming is taken by the local government within the specified time period, such a decision should have been taken by the village, town, or city mayor within 3 months (until January 9, 2016). If within specified time the mayor is not taking the appropriate decision on renaming, such renaming is carried out by the order of the head of the relevant regional state administration. The head of the regional state administration is obliged to accept such an order in the 3-month period (until April 9, 2016).

Thus, city councils and city mayors played a key role in renaming the urban toponymy in the majority of cities. Special commissions were created at city councils, which received and studied suggestions on renaming that came from the local inhabitants and history experts.

Due to historical circumstances, contemporary Ukraine is quite heterogeneous in terms of historical and cultural background. The network of historical regions overlaps with ethnic and language polarization from the west to the south-east. This generates a high level of development of regional identities, more or less integrated with the national (or ethnic) one. Nagorna (2008) performed a rather in-depth analysis of the formation and present state of regional identities in Ukraine, with a focus on socio-political manifestations and consequences, concluding that regional identity has turned into a powerful factor affecting the entire sphere of geographic, socio-economic and ethnocultural life. Rewakowicz (2010) examined the representations of four Ukrainian cities in a few selected fictional narratives by four contemporary Ukrainian authors and found out an underscored sense of belonging to the local territory, yet the sense of belonging to the nation and the world is not dismissed. A series of regional identities were identified by Melnychuk et al. (2014) using names of private enterprises as identity markers. A number of studies (in particular, comparative) are devoted to the peculiarities of the identity of the population within certain regions (Melnychuk and Gnatiuk 2012; Gnatiuk 2015; Gnatiuk 2016) and cities (Mikheyeva 2008; Komarov 2008; Gnatiuk 2012). Strong regional effect on political values and voting behaviour has been shown in the papers of Birch (2000), Barrington (2002), Barrington and Herron (2004) and Kulyk (2016). Some regional stereotypes are permanently used by leading political parties in mobilizing their electorate (Osipian and Osipian 2012).

Taking into account the foregoing, the study of the new Ukrainian urban toponymy may reveal various strategies used by local authorities in the renaming process, including the desire to politicize or depoliticize the toponymy, making reference to certain historical epoch or deliberately avoiding some strata of national identity. If the historical memory of certain epochs or governmental powers plays a consolidating role for a nation, then corresponding toponymy will be encountered throughout the country, even where this historical memory stratum is not represented. Conversely, if these elements of historical memory are unacceptable for people in a certain part of the country, we will see significant disparities in their spatial distribution. Also, based on the spatial distribution of the regional-specific place-names, we may draw conclusions about the spatial limits of the certain regional identities.

#### 4. Data and methods

The study covers 36 largest cities in Ukraine with a population of more than 100,000 within government-controlled territories outside the temporarily occupied Crimea and part of the Donbas, and focused on the new street names that appeared as a result of

decommunization. Information on renaming was taken from the official decisions of local governments and administrative decrees of the heads of local state administrations. We traced the renaming of streets, squares, lanes, passages, avenues, embankments and other similar elements of urban infrastructure. Hereinafter, the term “street” is used referring to all of the above mentioned elements of the urban landscape. Unlike many other studies, this one does not take into account the hierarchy of streets and is not limited to the historical centre of cities.

Toponyms that arose as a result of decommunization were classified according to a number of criteria. The employed taxonomy is similar to those used in papers of Bucher et al. (2013) and Stiperski et al. (2015). First, they distinguished toponyms of local, regional, national and international scale; second, the set of street names was classified into basic groups: personalities, geographical names, historical events/institutions, craft and trade, and the other toponyms. Personalities were further divided by the realms of politics, art and culture, religion, science, business and entrepreneurship. However, our taxonomy is different as it was adapted to the country context and the goals of this particular study. First, we distinguished between the following main categories of the decommunized toponyms:

I. Restored historical names: the street was given back one of its previous names.

II. Non-historical names: the street has never borne such a name before.

The non-historical names were divided into three groups:

1. Topographical names, indicating the location of the street relative to other elements of the urban landscape. E.g.: Vokzalna (near the railway station, “vokzal” in Ukrainian); Zakhidna (in the western part of the city, “zakhid” in Ukrainian); Filvarkova (in the historical urban area of Filvarky).
2. Commemorative names. These names immortalize the memory of certain real historic figures, organizations, events, phenomena etc. that may or may not be directly related to the street. E.g.: Hrushevskoho (after the first Ukrainian President in 1917–1918), Nezalezhnosti (in honour of Ukrainian independence, “nezhalezhnist” in Ukrainian), Konotopskoyi Bytvy (in honour of the Battle of Konotop).
3. Poetic (or figurative) names. This group includes toponyms that do not relate to the actual characteristics of the street and provide some emotional load (usually positive): “Soniachna” (Sunny), “Radisna” (Cheery), “Mriylyva” (Wistful), etc.

Restored historical names, topographical names and poetic names taken together may be referred as non-commemorative names, because they were given without a direct goal to memorialize somebody or something; these names rarely have certain ideological burden.

Commemorative names were further classified. First, they were divided between (a) political and military names and (b) other names. The first group unites names related to political and military historic figures, events and concepts. These toponyms were additionally divided into subgroups according to the respective historical context: Kievan Rus; Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; Cossack State; Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires; Ukrainian Struggle for Independence in 1917–1922; Soviet Union; Ukrainian Insurgent Army and related liberation movements; Independent Ukraine (including Revolution of Dignity and Donbas military conflict). The second group includes all other commemorative names, predominantly related to the realms of culture, science, religion etc. These names, according to their denotations, were also additionally divided into pre-Soviet, Soviet-persecuted (prominent people persecuted by the Soviet authorities for several reasons), Soviet-favoured (prominent people having no obvious problems with the Soviet regime), ex-Soviet (people, related to Ukraine but constantly living outside of Ukraine in the Soviet epoch), and post-Soviet ones.

Second, commemorative names were classified according to their relation to the local, regional and national context. If memorialized person, object or phenomenon has some relation to the city in which the street is located, it was classified as local-specific; if it has no relation to the city but has some relation to the surrounding region (administrative oblast), it was classified as region-specific; if it has no relation neither to the city nor to the oblast, but has some relation to Ukraine in whole, it was classified as nation-specific. Finally, if this memorialized person, object or phenomenon has no relation to the city, region and nation, or this relation cannot be strictly defined, the name was treated as non-classified.

Conclusions and suggestions given in this paper are based on the spatial distribution of aforementioned groups and subgroups of street names, as well as their proportions (structures) and mutual correlations in particular cities and regions.

It should also be noted that in the cities of Lviv and Ternopil very few toponyms were renamed after 2014. Therefore, conclusions about these cities should be taken carefully in view of the lack of sufficient statistical data set. However, in order to confirm or refute some of assumptions, previous post-Socialism renaming history of 1991–2013 was reckoned with.

## 5. Results and discussion

The total quantity of place-names in test cities, renamed since 2014, is 2897. The quantity of such toponyms per city fluctuates between a few streets in the cities of Western Ukraine to several hundred streets in the cities of the southeast.

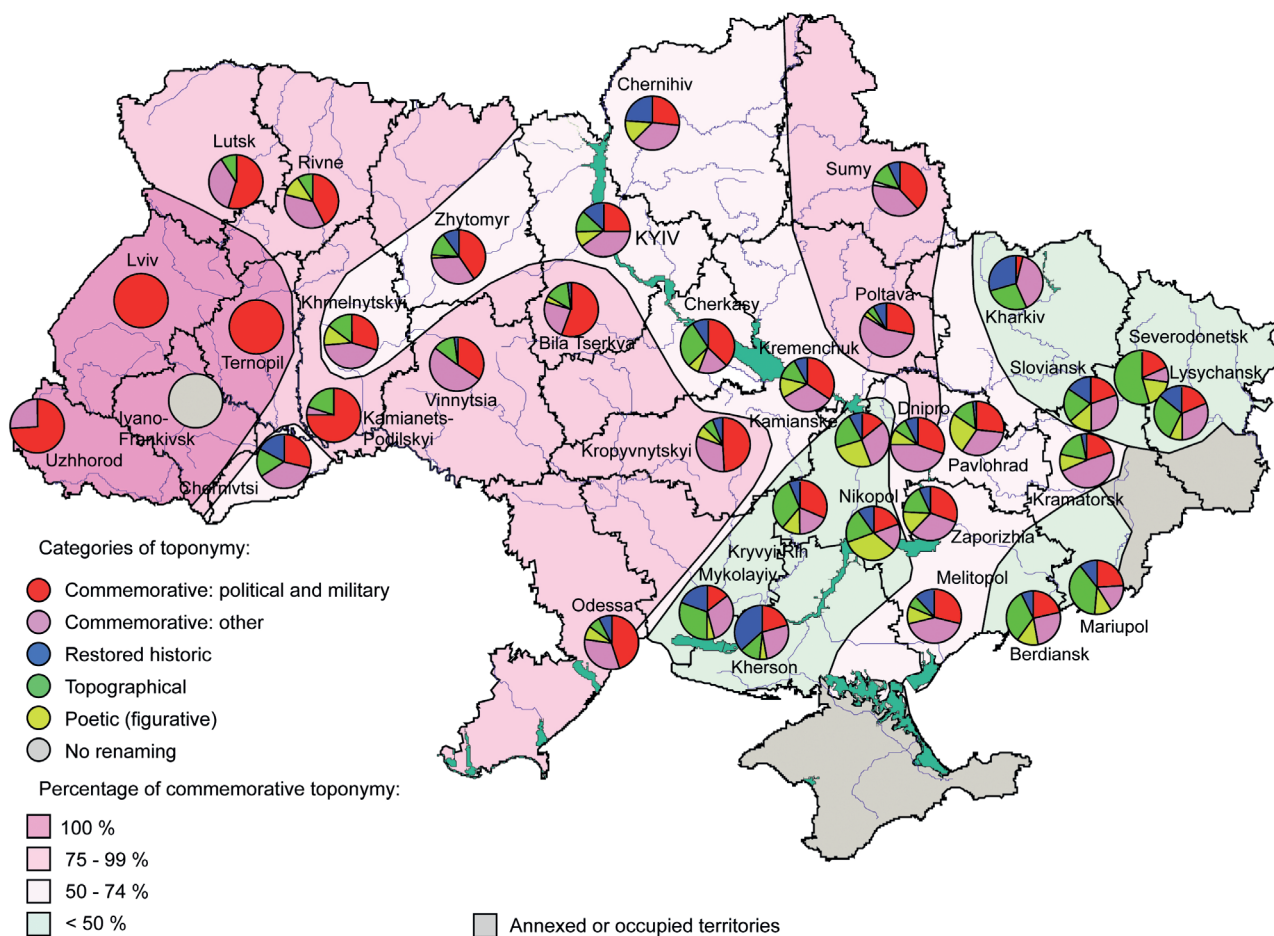


Fig. 1 Main categories of renamed toponymy.

The share of commemorative urban place-names gradually decreases from the west to the south-east (Figure 1), while the total share of non-commemorative toponymy increases in the same direction. The ratio of military-political and other commemorative toponymy shows a great individuality depending on a particular city, but generally also decreases in the south-eastern direction: from the absolute majority of renamed place-names in Galicia to 20–25% in Black Sea Region, Prydniprovya and Donbas.

This suggests that the renaming strategy in most cities in the south-eastern Ukraine was targeted to maximally avoid the commemorative names, especially those related to military-political events and personalities. The motivation for such a strategy could be as follows:

1. The toponymy associated with the Ukrainian national liberation movements of the XX century is unfamiliar and alien to a large part of the population of the southeast, moreover, as a result of prolonged communist propaganda, they are perceived by the public as plainly hostile. During the Soviet era, these events and historic figures were marked as ideologically hostile, bourgeois, and some of them (in particular, figures of Ukrainian Insurgent Army) were treated as criminals and collaborators of the Nazis. Moreover, until the very Revolution of Dignity, these

speculations were widely used not only by left-wing political forces, but also by the ruling oligarchic and pro-Russian Party of Regions to mobilize the electorate. Therefore, the city governments, which include also representatives of the above-mentioned political forces, firstly, sought to minimize the possible discontent of the locals with the mass appearance of such names, and secondly, implemented their own position on their inappropriateness or even inadmissibility.

2. Alternative could be the place-names associated with prominent figures of the Soviet era not prohibited to memorialize by the decommunization law. As will be shown below, such toponyms really appeared after renaming and concentrated exactly in southern and eastern Ukraine. However, the city authorities feared to massively approve such names, given that such a step could be considered as a betrayal by patriotically-minded citizens and as a signal of poor loyalty to the Ukrainian national project.

3. The cities of the southeast of Ukraine, where decommunization practically had not started before 2014, had significant reserves for restoring the historical street names. Some cities have really gone this way. As a rule, these are large cities (Kharkiv, Kherson, and Mykolaiv), which at the beginning of the Soviet era already had a significant number of

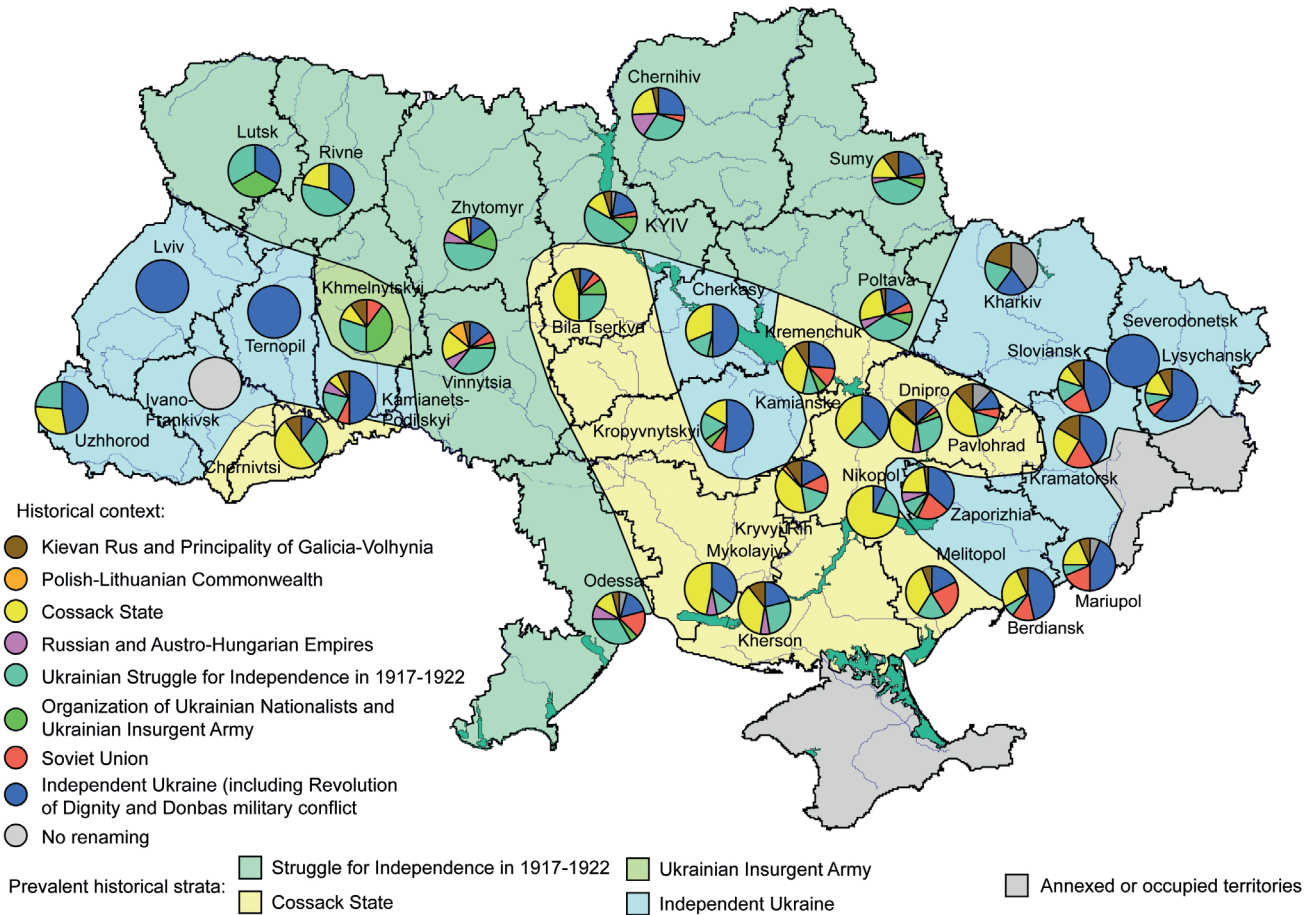


Fig. 2 Politic and military commemorative toponymy: historical cross-sections.

streets today concentrated in their historical centres. It is specific that the proportion of restored historical street names within Donbas is considerably higher in the more ancient Slovyansk, Lysychansk and Mariupol compared with more recently founded Kramatorsk and Severodonetsk. Interestingly, beyond the region of the southeast, significant proportions of the restored historical names are also observed in cities with a long history: Chernihiv, Chernivtsi, Kyiv, and Zhytomyr. At the same time, cities, having no possibility to massively restore historic names (or, e.g. city authorities did not want to restore historical names, since they were too closely related to the era of Russian tsarism), approved a large number of topographical and/or poetic street names.

Such a strategy of avoiding commemorative names was explained to the public by the need of deideologization and depoliticization of urban toponymy. I.e., it is not reasonable to assign the names of new heroes to the streets, if over time the power will change and a new wave of renaming will begin. Neutral names, which will not interfere with any government, must be assigned instead. However, this way of thinking holds two hidden ideas: first, attitude towards the idea of Ukrainian national state as an alien phenomenon, second, the perception of the current Ukrainian political regime as a temporary one.

The brightest exceptions among the cities of the south-eastern Ukraine are Dnipro and Odessa. These cities have a relatively large proportion of both commemorative street names in general and military-political street names in particular, comparable to the cities of the right-bank part of Central Ukraine. To understand the reasons for this situation, one must remember that in Odessa the streets were renamed not by a decision of the city council, but by the order of Mikheil Saakashvili, the head of the Oblast State Administration. Thus, this renaming pattern does not reflect the vision of the city government and the local community; it rather reflects the position of the central government. As for Dnipro, the key factor is the role of this city as a patriotic Ukrainian outpost in the eastern part of the country and an organizational base for logistical and medical support of military actions in Donbas.

As for the cities of the Western Ukraine and, to a lesser extent, the Right Bank of Central Ukraine, the high proportion of commemorative names in these regions is explained, firstly, by the fact that the strategy of local authorities is directed here to immortalize the memory of the characters of the national liberation movement leaders (which is perceived as a normal and, moreover, a necessary phenomenon by both the authorities and the population), and



secondly, much smaller possibilities for the apparition of non-commemorative street names, at least because of the fact that most of the Soviet urban toponyms, especially in the central parts of the cities, had been renamed there long before the Revolution of Dignity.

On the map (Figure 2) it is easy to see the three most represented categories of military-political commemorative street names. Firstly, these are names related to the Cossack epoch, which are present in almost all test cities; they make up an especially large share in the south-eastern part of the country, in particular in Prydniprovyia. Secondly, these are names related to the struggle for independence in 1917–1922. They are also distributed practically throughout the territory of Ukraine, but the largest share is observed in the cities of Western and Central Ukraine, whereas in the south-east, especially in Donbas, their proportion is significantly smaller. Thirdly, these are toponyms related to the prominent figures and events of the modern independence period, and more than 90% of them concern the commemoration of victims of the Revolution of Dignity and the current military conflict in the Donbas. This category of street names is particularly well represented in Western Ukraine, as well as in the eastern part of the country, especially in Donbas.

Other categories of military-political toponyms are relatively less represented and/or have limited spatial distribution throughout the country. The names related to events and prominent figures of the Soviet era are concentrated in the south-east, especially in the cities of Donetsk and Zaporizhia oblasts, where their share makes up 15–25% of the total number of military-political toponyms. Simultaneously, in the central part of Ukraine, this figure is reduced to 5–10%, while in the western regions this category of toponyms is absent at all. The share of the urban place-names associated with the Kievan Rus legacy is increasing from the west (where there are practically absent) to the south-east (with a maximum of 15–20% in the cities of Slobozhanschyna, Donbas and Prydniprovyia). Street names, associated with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, are very unevenly distributed over country: their share reaches 15–20% in the cities of the west and north of the country and 5–10% in the central part, but in the cities of the southeast, with the exception of Odessa, Dnipro and Zaporizhia, such toponyms are totally absent. The names associated with the Russian Empire (predominantly of local significance) are present in small quantities throughout the country, except for the extreme west (Galicia, Volhynia, Transcarpathia, and Northern Bukovina) and the extreme east (Donbas). Finally, few toponyms, related to the Polish-Lithuanian period, are located in several cities of the central Ukraine (Zhytomyr, Vinnytsia, Kryviy Rih, and Dnipro).

These spatial patterns are affected by the two main factors.

The first factor is: how the development of each particular city is connected with given historical epoch. Exactly this factor can explain the following regularities: (a) Concentration of names associated with the Cossack epoch in Prydniprovyia, where the Cossack Sichs (fortified military settlements) were located, and in Central Ukraine, which was under intense and long-term control of the Cossack state; (b) Concentration of names related to the struggle of the Ukrainian people for independence of 1917–1922 in the central and western parts of Ukraine, which were under the most effective and long-term political control of the Ukrainian Peoples Republic and Western Ukrainian Peoples Republic; (c) Concentration of names related to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in the areas of its highest activity; (d) Concentration of names associated with the Russian Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the areas that were actually controlled by these states; (e) Concentration of urban toponyms associated with the modern Ukrainian history, in Western Ukraine, from where the largest number of Maidan victims are descending, in Donbas, where many military men and women lost their lives, and in certain cities through the country, where troops, suffered heavy losses during the conflict, have their headquarters.

However, this factor cannot fully explain all the revealed regularities. E.g., why the names associated with Kievan Rus are not concentrated in the historical core of this state (i.e. around Kyiv, in the Middle Dnieper Region), but have the largest density in the south-east of the country, which at that time was practically unsettled and controlled rather by nomadic tribes of Torks, Cumans and Pechenegs then by Kyivan princes? How to explain the high proportion of names related to the Cossack epoch in the western cities of Chernivtsi, Uzhhorod and Rivne, where the role of Cossacks in local history was minimal? To a lesser extent, this is the very issue of the seaports of Mykolayiv and Kherison, as these cities were founded and intensely developed during the Russian Empire occupation without the direct participation of Cossacks. And, at the same time, why Russian Empire are poorly commemorated in Donbas, whose economic base was laid in precisely that period? Finally, why in Western Ukraine, which for the longest time was under the control of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, there are no new toponyms associated with the corresponding era?

Therefore, it is advisable to talk about the second factor: the ability of the corresponding historical epoch to be a consolidating element of identity for all Ukrainians, regardless of their ideological preferences and the place of residence.

Thus, aforementioned strange spatial distribution of the names associated with Kievan Rus and spatial sprawl of toponyms associated with the Cossack epoch is explained by the fact that these historic periods are equally well perceived by residents of all

regions and representatives of different ideologies from right to left over the spectrum. Implementing the renaming policy, local authorities in the south east gave preference to Kievan Rus and Cossack legacy because such names are equally well acceptable by all strata of Ukrainians, regardless of ideology and electoral preferences, and no one will protest. Simultaneously, it was a convenient way to minimize the quantity of place names, negatively perceived by both pro-Russian and pro-Soviet population (e.g., related to the activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army) and pro-Ukrainian and pro-EU patriotic population (e.g., toponyms associated with the Soviet legacy).

The numerical prevalence of the toponymy associated with the Cossack epoch is the consequence of the fact that this period of Ukrainian history is considered to be an era of struggle for national self-determination, unlike the era of Kievan Rus, which is not directly and exclusively identified with the Ukrainian national state.

The share of military-political names, which are clearly not related to any specific period of Ukrainian history, or do not have any relation to Ukraine at all, increases in the south-eastern direction, and this is another manifestation of the strategy for de-politicization.

The struggle of the Ukrainian people for independence in 1917–1922 was anti-Soviet one, therefore it is negatively perceived by the part of Ukrainians, especially in the south-east, where nostalgia for the Soviet Union still persists. However, these street names are presented in all test cities, except for Kramatorsk and Severodonetsk, and in absolute number of names they are only slightly inferior to the “Cossack” toponymy. Consequently, this liberation movement also becomes a consolidating element of Ukrainian national identity, and its values are more or less shared by people from all regions of Ukraine. However, the unifying potential of the Cossack heritage is still more powerful, given the lack of nationalistic connotations. Examples of Chernivtsi and Uzhhorod are quite illustrative here. Corresponding regions of Transcarpathia and Northern Bukovyna have traditionally been characterized by a smaller national patriotic pathos than the rest of the Western Ukraine. Therefore, when renaming the streets, the local authorities of these two cities decided to appeal to the Cossack and Kievan Rus heritage rather than to the XX century liberation movements.

On the contrary, the legacy of Ukrainian Nationalists Organization and Ukrainian Insurgent Army still remains rather disruptive than uniting factor for Ukrainian society, because it is perceived negatively in the south-eastern part of the country. The Soviet legacy is a very similar case: it serves as a “red cloth” for the population of the central, northern and, especially, western regions.

It is also interesting that among the cities of the southeast, the largest share of street names related to the national liberation movements, is observed in

Odessa (where the renaming, as noted above, does not reflect the vision of the local self-government and community), Dnipro (“The Eastern Outpost of Ukrainians”, “The Rear of the Donbas Front”) and Kherson (a city in the agrarian region where the proportion of the pro-Russian population is relatively small comparing to the other south-east regions).

The absence of the “Polish-Lithuanian” toponymy in the regions of Western Ukraine may be explained by the high level of national patriotism and hidden but confrontation with the Poles on the grounds of the Ukrainian-Polish war in 1918–1919 and the Volhyn tragedy of 1943–1944. Instead, in the Central Ukraine, a positive assessment of the Polish-Lithuanian contribution to urban development prevails, in spite of the well-known Ukrainian confrontation with the Poles during the Cossack era. In addition, in Western Ukraine, “Polish-Lithuanian” toponyms could simply not be statistically represented, given their low frequency and the small number of renamed streets. At the same time, such toponyms occur quite often among the streets, renamed before 2014.

As a result, the analysis of military-political names made possible to identify areas where one or another historical stratum of national identity prevails or is currently perceived as the most important (Figure 2).

Since the heritage of the Cossack and the Kievan Rus periods is used to depoliticize urban toponymy, while the legacy of national liberation movements of the XX century, on the contrary, to support the current national political course, and the inheritance of the Soviet period – to emphasize the genetic link with the Soviet Union, interrelations of these three toponymy strata makes it possible to highlight several hidden geopolitical and cultural spatial faults of modern Ukrainian society (Figure 3). The first fault separates areas with a predominance of names associated with the national liberation movements of the XX century and areas with a predominance of “Cossack” toponymy (Figure 3a). The second fault, much more sharp comparing to the previous one, delineates areas with a predominance of names associated with the national liberation movements of the XX century and areas with a predominance of Soviet-era place names (Figure 3b). These two fault lines conditionally divided the country into three parts, which can be called “nationalistic Ukraine”, where national identity has clear anti-Soviet and pro-European orientation, “Cossack Ukraine”, where the identity of the Cossack epoch plays a role of refined, depoliticized version of national identity, and “post-Soviet Ukraine”, which Soviet values are still regenerated, even though without clear ideological wrapper. Interestingly, the limits of “post-Soviet Ukraine” roughly coincide with the area where ethnic Russians constitute significant share of the total population and where the Oppositional Block, successor of the Yanukovych’s Party of Regions, won local elections in 2015.

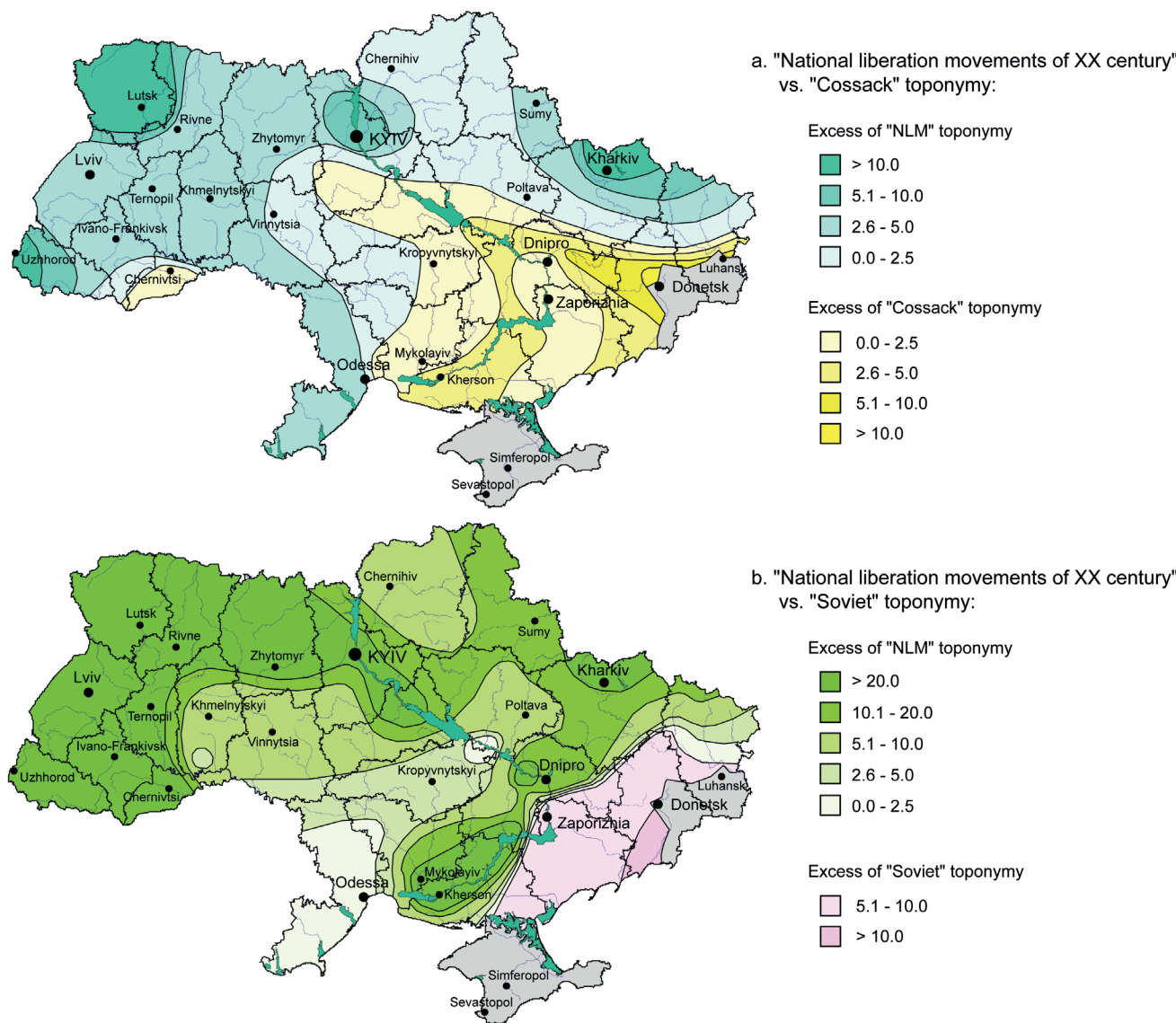


Fig. 3 Relationship between three main strata of politic and military toponymy.

In respect to other commemorative names, which are not directly related to the military-political sphere (Figure 4), the most numerous group of them is associated with the heritage of the pre-Soviet era, mostly the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. This phenomenon, like in other post-Socialist countries (Crljenko 2012), marks an accentuated reference to the pre-Soviet history in order to reinforce the national identity. However, toponyms, directly related to the Soviet era (i.e. given in the honour of Soviet-favoured and Soviet-persecuted personalities) account together for more than 50% of all other commemorative names. This leads to interesting considerations, since the military-political names of the Soviet era comprise only 10–20%, even in the most pro-Soviet and pro-Russian regions. Of course, the possibility to introduce Soviet political and military toponyms was substantially limited by the decommunization law, which is not a case of toponyms related to the realms of culture and science. However, it may be supposed

the apparent desire to distance from the military-political heritage of the Soviet Union, but a radical departure from the cultural heritage of the Soviet period is not observed, since it continues to be interpreted as a powerful and inalienable layer of Ukrainian culture in whole.

But, perhaps, these prominent figures conflicted with the Soviet authorities, and were memorialized exactly for this? In fact, we observe numerical equality of the street names related to the Soviet-favoured and Soviet-persecuted personalities. Place-names, given in honour of Soviet-favoured people, are concentrated mainly in the south-east, while toponymy related to Soviet-persecuted personalities prevails in the central and western parts of the country; however, this general rule has many exceptions. Nevertheless, this spatial pattern becomes more accentuated if consider the ratio of the sum of the soviet-persecuted and ex-soviet toponymy to the sum of the soviet-favoured and international toponymy (Figure 4). This implies

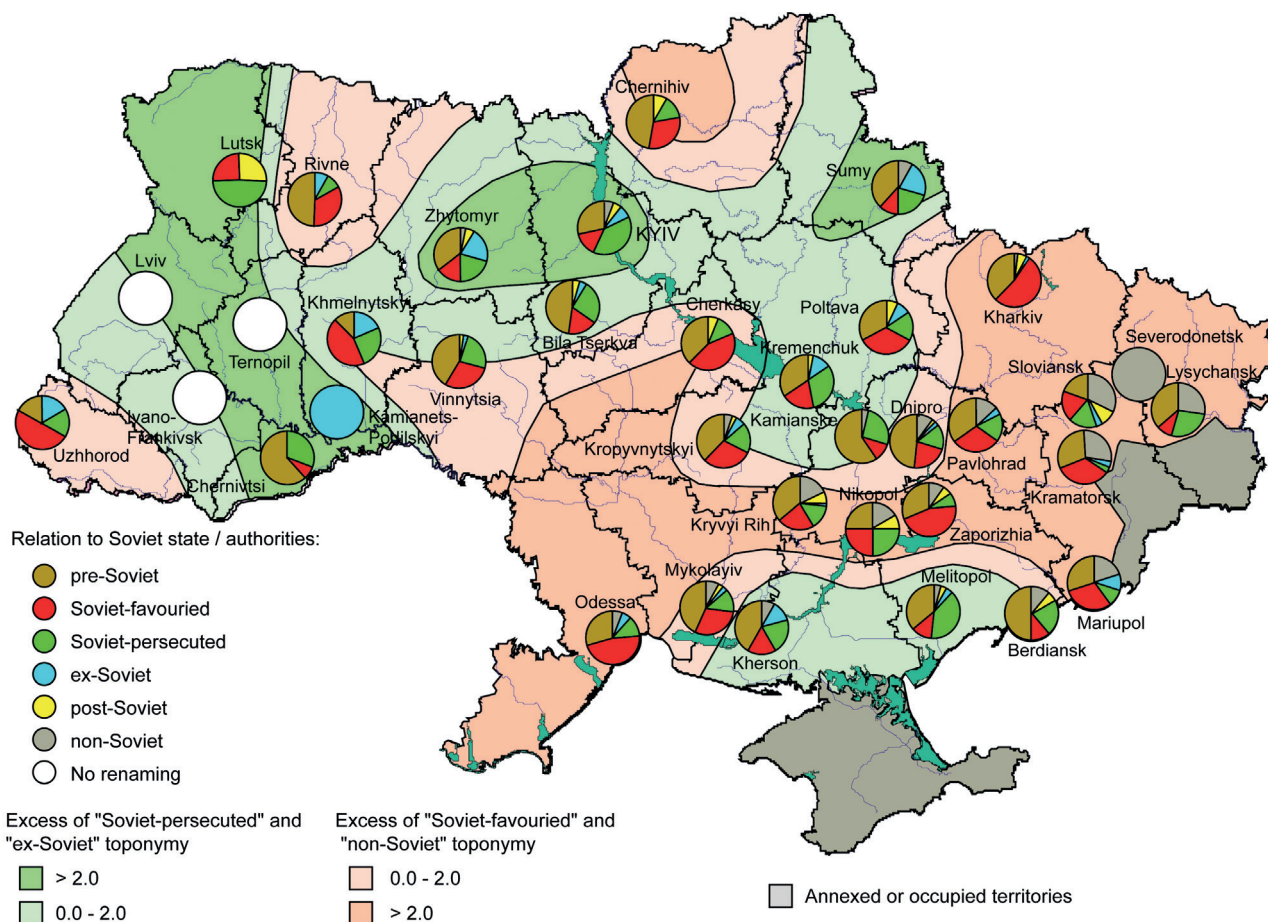


Fig. 4 Other commemorative toponymy: relation to the Soviet authorities/state.

that in western and central parts of the country we observe pronouncedly anti-Soviet commemoration policy, while the south-east once again shows an attempt to depoliticize toponymy and to maximally integrate Soviet heritage into the new identity.

The most unevenly distributed toponyms are those given in honour of the prominent individuals who, due to life circumstances, including persecution by the Soviet authorities, lived and worked outside of Ukraine. These names are concentrated in the western and central parts of the country, which means that exactly in these parts of Ukraine the activities of Ukrainians in emigration is considered as an integral part of national history.

Also, there is a noticeable downfall of the share of post-Soviet other memorial names in comparison with their military-political counterparts: their quantity is simply negligible, and they have no specific spatial distribution. But this does not give grounds for arguing that the modern identity of Ukrainians has only political and military components. The matter is that in the vast majority of cases, like in the whole world, commemorated people are those who have already departed from their lives. In modern Ukraine, these are not representatives of cultural, scientific, or business elites, but the victims of the Maidan and Donbas conflict.

The analysis of the ratio between local-specific, regional-specific and national-specific memorial toponyms shows that decommunization retains the balance between, on the one hand, local and regional, and, on the other hand, national identities. In almost 80% of test cities, the share of national-specific street names is in the range of 25–75%. That is, in only one case of five we have a significant imbalance.

Significant spatial patterns of placement of cities with an emphasis on local or national identity are not observed (Figure 5). In particular, strong preference for local and regional-specific place-names is typical for certain cities from western (Uzhgorod, Lutsk), central (Cherkasy, Vinnytsia, Bila Tserkva, Poltava), southern (Odesa, Mykolaiv) and eastern (Zaporizhia) parts of Ukraine. The only clear regularity is the reduced share of local-specific and, especially, regional-specific names in Donbas. This may be explained, firstly, by the desire of the local authorities to integrate the local toponymy into the national context, and secondly, by the absence of a well-developed regional Ukrainian national narrative in Donbas.

The increased share of names not related to any level of Ukrainian national identity is another characteristic feature of the renamed toponymy in the south-east, especially in Donbas. Typically, such names are associated with outstanding figures of world culture.

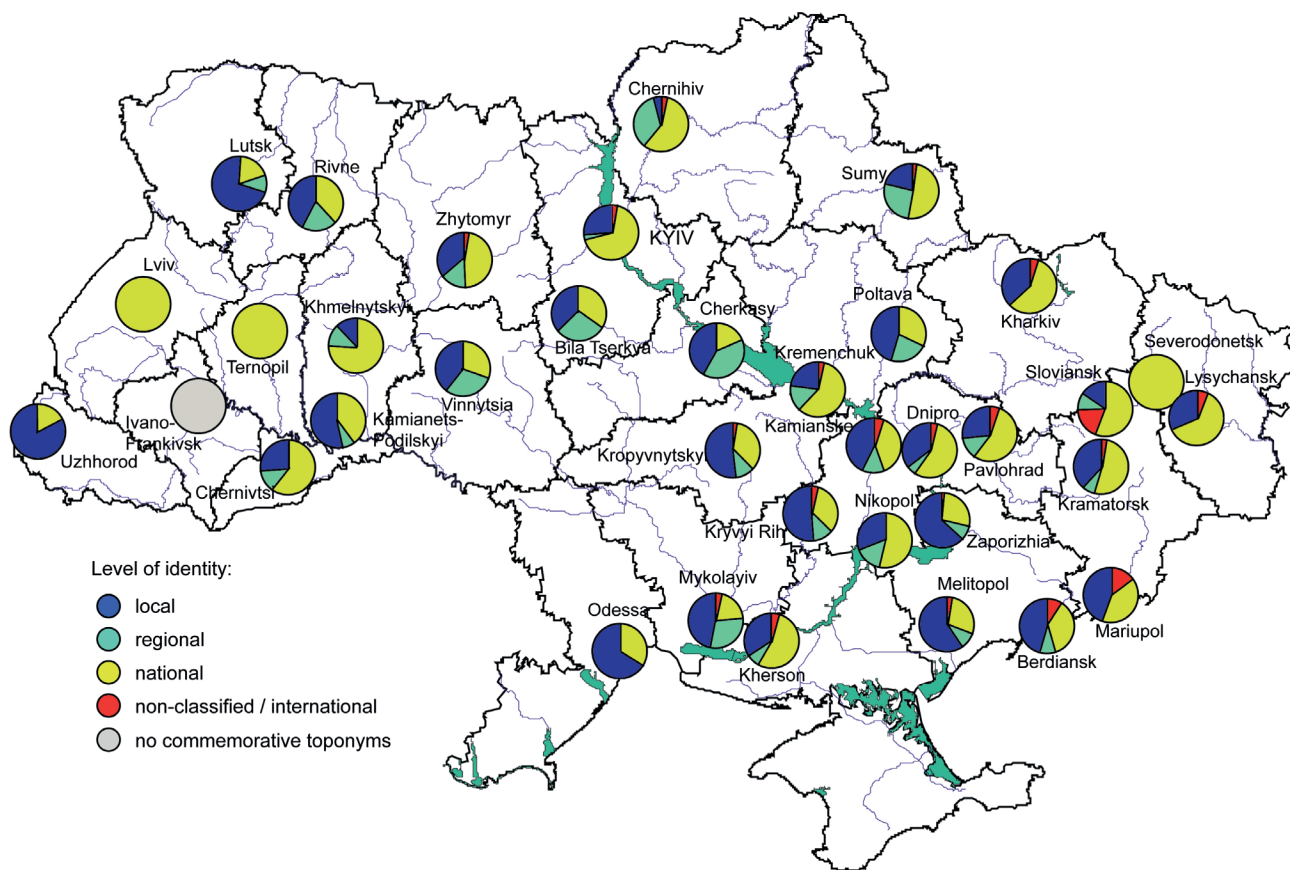


Fig. 5 Toponymy by levels of identity.

This is a testimony of certain cosmopolitanism in the selection of new names, while in the rest of Ukraine a clear priority is given to memorialization of the very national culture. Interestingly, similar characteristics (a high proportion of national and non-specific names) are also observed in Kyiv. This corresponds to the capital status of this city: here, street names should reflect the peculiarities of different regions of the country and, at the same time, should have a certain scale of cosmopolitanism.

What the spatial patterns discovered do reflect more: the real identity of population or local government policy of constructing identity? Given the coincidence with the electoral fractures and the ethnic composition of the population, it is very likely that the spatial structure of the new Ukrainian urban toponymy does corresponds to the real structure of identity, although in many cases the semantics of place names does not reflect the exact meaning of real identities. E.g., if the great importance of the Ukrainian liberation movements for the population of the western and central parts of the country is beyond doubt, then excessive accentuation of the Cossack era in Chernivtsi or the cities within the Black Sea region is clearly artificial. This means that local authorities have proposed such street names to satisfy the locals. That is, the ideology formulated in toponymy does not contradict the identity of the locals, and therefore is well-accepted.

The analysis, presented in the paper, would be incomplete and poor reasoning without giving some review of a public discussion related to the renaming policy, procedure and regional approaches. In this paper we will not pay attention to the general discussion on the feasibility/priority of the decommunization: our focus will be on the part of the discussion that is related to competition between different identities and layers of historical memory.

At the local level, the debate took place during the collection of suggestions on renaming specific streets and the subsequent public discussion of new street names proposed by the commissions. Often, several variants of the new street name were presented at the discretion of the community, and the discussion participants could vote for each of them. Basically, this was so-called calm discussion, that is, discussions and voting for a street name occurred smoothly and within a defined procedure. However, sometimes there was a hot discussion, when there were sharp controversies regarding specific names. In this respect, there were strong regional tendencies manifested in the greater public commitment to the memory of a certain historical epoch or the desire to distance from politicized names in favour of the neutral toponymy (topographical or figurative toponyms, or, where possible, restoration of the historical names).

For example, in Cherkasy (Central Ukraine), residents gave a steady advantage to commemoration of

the XX century national liberation movements and the Cossack Epoch. At the same time, in Dnipro and Kamianske, the idea of changing the Soviet toponymy to the actual and patriotic one was questioned, given the high versatility of the political situation and the complexity for the elderly people to get accustomed to the change of the usual street names into radically opposite ones. The opinion was expressed that restored historical names, as well as timeless, non-political and even non-contextual toponyms, are the best choice (DneprChas, 17 June 2016; *Novoe Vremia*, 12 January 2018; *Disk*, 15 June 2015). “The residents themselves expressed a desire to give politically neutral place-names, and we listened to them. To avoid future renamings, we turned to names reflecting human emotions, nature, and professions” – emphasizes Serhiy Svitlenko, a member of the renaming working group, the dean of the historical Faculty at Oles Gonchar Dnipro National University. As a result, 130 toponyms in Dnipro have got neutral names (Dnepropetrovskaya Panorama, 29 June 2016).

It is revealing that the proposals to rename Lenin and Moscow streets in Dnipro in honour of nationalist leader Stepan Bandera were rejected: the preponderance was given to the historical name (*Voskresenska*) and to the commemoration of the Kyivan Rus Prince Volodymyr Monomakh, respectively. Instead of Roman Shukhevych, another nationalist leader (proposal of the renaming commission), one of the streets was named after Leonid Stromtsov, director of the Dnipro machine-building plant in Soviet times (1954–1983) (*DepoDnipro*, 14 August 2015). The inhabitants of some streets stood up against erasing the names of the Soviet figures and replacing them with some Cossack leaders. Residents of one of the streets created an initiative group and said they did not want to live on the street named after hetman Ivan Vyhovsky, since his period of rule belongs to the Ruin period of Ukrainian history; the initiative group insisted that the street should retake its historical name instead (*Polihonna*), which was finally done (*Radio Svoboda*, 18 August 2015). However, the Prospect Kalinina (Kalinin Avenue) was renamed in honour of Serhiy Nigoyan, the first of the protesters killed in Ukrainian capital during Euromaydan; this decision was supported by the community during a public discussion, then challenged by opponents in court, but protected due to a clear and strong position of the city authorities (*tyzhden.ua*, 15 December 2017).

Particularly keen discussion of a somewhat different nature unfolded in Dnipro regarding the renaming of Prospect Karla Marksa (Karl Marx Avenue), the main street of the city. Outstanding personalities have become competitors in the process of changing the toponymy. Olexandr Pol (1832–1890), archaeologist, entrepreneur, philanthropist and active public figure, thoroughly studied local iron ore basin for 15 years. The director of the Olexander Pol Institute in Dnipro believes that “the region, which was purely agrarian,

became a powerful industrial centre thanks to Pol and his followers, therefore, it is logical to commemorate him in the name of the central avenue”. The choice in favour of Olexandr Pol means the emphasis on the industrial history of the city. Proponents of Dmytro Yavornytsky (1855–1940) had their arguments: an outstanding scientist dedicated more than 30 years of his life to the Dnieper region; he is considered to be the founder of archeology in Ukraine and the father of the study of the Ukrainian Cossacks; he wrote the first history book of the city, was the founder of a local university, etc. The Head of the Dmytro Yavornytsky Memorial Museum said: “It is difficult to find a significant event in the life of the then-city [Dnipro], to which Yavornytsky would not be involved.” Therefore, the choice in favour of Yavornytsky is an attempt to emphasize the continuity of the city with the Cossack epoch. In fact, it was the choice of the city’s brand, the personification of its essence. Finally, Yavornytsky won this toponymic battle, and toponyms associated with the Cossack epoch constitute the relative majority in Dnipro. However, another central street of the city, Prospect Kirova (Kirov Avenue) was renamed in the honour of Olexandr Pol (*RadioSvoboda*, 03 August 2015).

It is revealing that both these figures are closely connected with the city of Dnipro and the surrounding region, which cannot be said about their toponymic predecessors (Kirov and Karl Marx). In many cities, decommunization committees decided to strictly follow the will of the community and not offer new names other than those proposed by the residents. This led to an emphasis on the local historical and cultural context in cities with developed local identity. For example, in Vinnytsia (where we were able to get an official comment from a representative of the decommunization committee) there were almost no streets renamed in honour of the OUN-UIA personalities, in particular Stepan Bandera. This is not due to the rejection by local community, but because their activities are not directly related to the city and the surrounding region. The only exception was Omelian Hrabets, a UIA-South partisan group commander, who acted precisely in Podolia, including the Vinnytsia region. Given the overwhelming opinion of the residents, the former Red Partisan Street in Vinnytsia was renamed in honour of Vladislav Gorodetsky, a Ukrainian architect of Polish origin born in Podolia, although representatives of local nationalist movements demanded that the street should be radically renamed in honour of the UIA heroes. The approach was similar in Kryvyi Rih, Zaporizhia, Lutsk, etc.; in this way a number of sharp conflicts regarding new street names were minimized, but urban toponymy was limited mostly to the local and regional context. Cited above Serhiy Svitlenko (from Dnipro) recognized this problem emphasizing that “Inventing new toponymy, we need to look beyond the Middle Dnieper elements and reflect also the history of Western

Ukraine; this is very important politically” (Litza, 22 July 2015).

A striking example of the conflict between the official decommunization approach and local government’s policy was the already mentioned situation in Odessa, when the city council initially self-abolished from the renaming process, and then cancelled some of the renamings carried out according to the order of the Head of the Odessa Regional State Administration, and turned back communist toponymy to the city map. However, this decision of the city council was appealed by the prosecutor’s office and investigated by the Security Service of Ukraine.

At the national level, the debate on decommunization, covered in media, is confined almost exclusively to the issue of commemorating the memory of the OUN-UIA, as well as other figures that contributed to the formation of the OUN’s ideology. This discussion is quite important because decommunization legislation prohibits to glorify both Soviet and Nazi regimes. This means that if an organization or some of its representatives were Nazi collaborators during Second World War, the streets cannot be renamed after them. This moves the discussion from the standpoints of solely personal or collective preferences to the legal dimension.

The official position, transmitted by the Institute of National Remembrance, is that the OUN-UIA members were not collaborators. Some ONU leaders initially sought to use the military and political power of the Third Reich to gain an independent Ukrainian state (on June 30, 1941, the OUN, under the leadership of Bandera, proclaimed the Act of Restoration of Ukraine’s Independence with numerous diplomatic laudations to Hitler), but for several weeks, seeing the real Nazi policy towards Ukrainians, understood the mistake. A number of OUN figures, including Stepan Bandera, even found themselves in the Nazi concentration camps soon afterwards and could not physically control either the political or the militaristic formations of the nationalists. The soldiers of UIA, created only in 1942, fought from the outset both against the Red Army and the Nazis.

However, not all citizens and experts share the official statements. The attempt to rename some streets in eastern and southern Ukraine in honour of the OUN-UIA leaders provoked public resistance. Particularly strong discussion in media was induced by the renaming of Moskovskyi Prospekt (Moscow Avenue) in Kyiv in 2016 in honour of Bandera. Online media Gordon asked for opinions of several well-known history experts regarding this fact (Gordon, 8 July 2016). The experts had quite different, individual assessments, but mostly agree the following positions:

1. This renaming in Kyiv was done in the teeth of Russia as the OUN leader now turned into the symbol of struggle against the current Russian policy. The radical renaming of streets is not a mistake but rather stupidity, as this may scare away many

Ukrainians who may potentially be patriots but are not (yet) ready to accept Bandera. Such renaming will only increase the distance between the capital and the southeast regions.

2. True history of the OUN-UIA and biographies of their leaders have not yet been rigorously investigated: they are either idealized or demonized with political goals. Some of nationalists did collaborate with the Nazis, but they did want, by this medium, to create an independent Ukraine and gave their lives for this.
3. Since the purpose of decommunization is to create a new value matrix, new toponymy must unite society rather than split it. Unfortunately, Ukraine still lacks an integral historical policy. A mature democratic society should seek (and preferably find) for a consensus, especially in the choice of national heroes. In the historical pantheon of Ukraine there are many worthy people who do not split the society, e.g., dissidents, human rights activists, and writers.
4. Preferably new street names should be related to local specifics, the history of the city, and its outstanding inhabitants. E.g. we may have different attitudes to Bandera, but the important thing in this particular case is that he had nothing common with Ukrainian capital. A good example may be the street renamed after Symon Petliura, a Head of Ukrainian Peoples Republic, who lived in Kyiv and even often drove along “his” street to the railway station.
5. Since military and political regimes and dominant ideologies are constantly changing, it is desirable to retrieve old historical toponymy or give preference to neutral place-names. However, the complete refusal to honour the national heroes will interfere the building of national memory and lead to preservation of the existing fault lines in Ukrainian society. Therefore hiding head in the sand is equally harmful as extremely radical renaming policy.

Obviously, the main message is that new names should consolidate Ukrainian society, and renaming should not be used as a tool to erase one layer of historical memory for the benefit of another. In a similar manner, Yevhen Hendin, the Head of the University Theatre at the Oles Honchar Dnipro National University, also spoke about a similar renaming attempt in Dnipro: “I cannot understand the stressed bending across the knee, the underlined PR, sadistic from my point of view – please, take Bandera instead of Lenin. I consider it not a conciliatory, not a compromise, but a discreditable step. But, at the same time, I think that in principle such a street should be in the city” (DepoDnipro, 14 August 2015).

Renaming of Prospekt Vatutina (Vatutin Avenue) in the honour of Roman Shukhevych, a commander of the UIA, was the other, most recent and even more sensitive case from Kyiv. Shukhevych studied at the

Abwehr, served in the Wehrmacht units, and was one of organizers of anti-Polish and anti-Jewish ethnic cleansings (Rudling, 2016). Moreover, by a twist of fate, the only synagogue and the Jewish community within the Left Bank Kyiv now are located on Prospekt Shukhevycha. Avraham Shmulevich, rabbi and political scientist, commented this in the following way: "If the name of Shukhevych were given to some other street, this could eventually be forgotten, and the severity of the conflict would gradually disappear. But now a permanent reminder has been created. It's like hammering a nail into the body: it will always hurt" (Obozrevatel, 14 June 2017). Antifascist Human Rights Legal League and Jewish Human Rights Watch demanded to recognize the renaming as illegal and cancel it (Obozrevatel, 14 June 2017).

However, despite these isolated cases, the facts point to the absence of total "banderization" of Ukraine: the rush occurs about individual, isolated cases. In particular, according to Volodymyr Viatrovykh, the head of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, only 34 streets out of over 50,000 renamed in the framework of decomunization, were named in the honour of Bandera. As Viatrovykh commented, "attempts to create a cult of Bandera under the canons of the cult of Lenin are harmful both for understanding his place and role in history and for proper commemoration. But even more harmful are attempts to invent this cult artificially and to represent decomunization as "banderization".

## 6. Conclusions

In Ukraine, there are three main regional strategies for renaming urban toponymy in the framework of decomunization, which reflect the goals and tactics of local governments. The essence of these strategies is to update the various pages of national history and politicize/depoliticize of toponymy. If the political elites of the western and central parts of the country position Ukraine as a direct ideological successor to the Ukrainian People Republic, the oppositionally-minded political elites of the south-east made an attempt to depoliticize the local toponymy as much as possible and propagandize Ukraine as the successor of the Cossack state (in the medium-term perspective, this renaming can indeed lead to a shift in the collective memory in the south-east). In the far east (in Donbass and in Zaporizhia oblast), the new place-names maintain a close connection with the Soviet era. Spatial patterns of these strategies are well correlated with the existing electoral differentiation and the existing ethnic composition of the Ukrainian population.

Cossack epoch is considered by the Ukrainian political elites as the most compromise and intermediary stratum of national identity, which does not cause rejection in society regardless of the political

preferences and ideological beliefs. The similar role belongs to the epoch of Ukrainian Peoples Republic, which is widely represented in the toponymy throughout the country, except for the extreme east. At the same time, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Soviet legacy remain topics dividing the Ukrainian society, including political elites.

The street renaming process in post-revolutionary Ukraine is both national and regional-specific; however, it shares some common characteristics with other post-Socialist European countries: 1. appeal to the pre-socialist period arouse in order to reinforce the national identity; 2. the decrease of the political and military place-names in favour of connotations associated with local and national culture and heritage; 3. increasing role of local and regional toponymy.

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