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Street naming in Kaunas: Changes in urbanonyms originating from personal names

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Abstract: The aim of this research is to investigate the street names of Kaunas and determine how the change of these urbanonyms originating from personal names reflect the country's history and culture. In addition to their linguistic competence, urbanonyms can function as a means of intercultural communication, "the ability to understand culturally moulded actions and to perform them in such a manner that they are or can be understood and accepted by members of the target culture" (Baur and Grzybek 1990: 199). Focusing on Lithuania's second largest city, this study analyses the street names which have been restored or changed as a result of various shifts in the country's political situation. The research is based on numerous historical sources and scientific works which enabled the semantic examination of the urbanonyms of Kaunas and the identification of their origins.
Keywords: urbanonyms of Kaunas, personal names, semantics, change in street names.

Introduction

Researching street names, just like analysing all toponyms, requires not only linguistic knowledge but some understanding of geography, history, anthropology, ethnography, sociology, and psychology, too (Helleland 2012: 98).

Street names often carry additional symbolic meanings and mark specific urban territories linked to certain social, political and historical events in the country. By reflecting geographical places and historical facts, street names become signs of national identity. Analysing them through different historical periods can therefore show various political changes in society. As such, street names are, in a way, a historical source.

Street names are a subclass of urbanonyms, which also includes the names of city parts as well as smaller objects such as buildings, squares and districts (Ambrogio et al. 2018: 53). Typologically, urbanonyms are described in onomastic literature as either official or unofficial. This study focuses on one group of official urbanonyms – the street names of Kaunas.

The goal of this research is to investigate the urbanonyms of Kaunas originating from personal names and referencing the culture and history of the Lithuanian nation. The article aims to analyse street names from semantic and developmental perspectives, revealing the socio-cultural and political picture of Kaunas. The structure and

function of street names – to reflect the political, social and cultural characteristics of the city – are also discussed.

Kaunas is the second biggest city in the Republic of Lithuania. It is also a county centre (157 sq. km) with a population of 297,906 (according to the data of 1 January 2022). First mentioned in 1361, the city was granted the Magdeburg rights in 1408. This prompted a rapid expansion of Kaunas and its trading relations with Western Europe. In 1441, the city joined the Hanseatic League and remained in it until 1532. By the end of the 16th century, Kaunas had some of the best infrastructure in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The city functioned as a temporary capital of Lithuania between 1919 and 1940 (the Independent Republican period). When Vilnius regained its status as the country's capital after WWII, Kaunas became the second largest city in size and population. The Soviet occupation period (1940–1990) marked a considerable change in ideology, reflected in the urbanonyms of Kaunas and the rest of the country. The rise of a large-scale freedom movement in 1988 prompted actions to revive many other values. Original names were returned to streets, squares and museums, many monuments from the pre-occupation period were restored.

The restoration of the country's independence gave impetus to revive the original street names across all Lithuanian cities, towns and villages. Kaunas, one of the country's most important cities, was also eager to shed any names imposed by Soviet occupants and reflecting their ideology. These actions coincided with the modification of the city's territorial boundaries in 1996. A number of settlements which had previously been part of the district of Kaunas were now incorporated into the city itself which resulted in around 100 duplicated streets names. The newly added residential areas saw some of their street names changed, while newly built roads received brand new names. This is how a number of new streets and forgotten old ones appeared on the map of Kaunas, many of them bearing the names of prominent people whose contribution to Kaunas, Lithuania and the world was being honoured (Sajauskas et al. 2001: 11–12).

The city of Kaunas continues to expand. With additional territories being incorporated, the number of streets keeps changing too. During the period of 1994–2018, a total of 22 street names formerly in the district of Kaunas were completely eliminated to avoid duplication. There are currently almost 1,700 street names in Kaunas which should be researched as the city's cultural and historical signs. Reflecting the everchanging cityscape, "most of the streets in Kaunas are named after settlements (around 20% of all names), followed by personal names (around 17%), botanical names (around 13%), hydronyms (around 6%), names of various handicrafts (around 6%), animal names (around 3%), natural phenomena and celestial bodies (around 3%), names of nations or tribes (less than 3%), names of professions and crafts (less than 2%)" (Martinkus 2019).

The article focuses solely on the street names of Kaunas which originate from personal names and have been changed or restored for various reasons throughout different historical periods. The study aims to determine any non-linguistic modifications

that have taken place. Out of 90 streets located in the Central Eldership (*seniūnija*) of Kaunas – the area that best reflects political, historical and cultural changes in the city – 35 currently carry the names of historical figures and are known to have undergone various changes. The study therefore focuses on this group of street names and offers a detailed analysis of the reasons behind the modifications. This part of the city was chosen because its street names best reflect political, historical and cultural changes. A more detailed analysis was conducted on 35 modified street names based on personal names.

The research material was characterised using the descriptive method. Any historical changes to street names, their structure and semantic aspects were investigated using historical sources and applying the methods of structural and semantic analysis.

Street name research in Lithuania and beyond

There has been relatively little research on official street names in Lithuania. A. R. Čaplinskas (2004) investigated the streets in Vilnius named after prominent personalities, while I. Meškytė (2015) conducted a study of Klaipėda's street names and their semantic categories, although she mainly focused on names originating from oikonyms and oronyms.

B. Sabakonienė (1980) researched the history of the old street names in Kaunas Old Town. S. Sajauskas and his colleagues (2001) investigated streets of personal-name origin in Kaunas but their attention was mostly focused on historical personalities. *Memorialising the Famous People of Kaunas* (MFPK 2004) is a digital register of all commemorative places and ways of honouring prominent personalities in and around the city of Kaunas, dating from 1918. S. Samalavičius (2013) studied mostly the original street names in the old town of Kaunas, while M. Balkus (2020) analysed the city's street names and their changes between 1918 and 1940. R. Baranauskienė, I. Mickienė and S. Juzelėnienė (2020) researched street names from a semiotic perspective, while A. Ragauskaitė (2014) studied the non-official urbanonyms of Vilnius used by young people. V. Sidaravičienė's (2015, 2018, 2019, 2023a, 2023b) research focused on the construction of non-official place names.

Outside of Lithuania, studies of street names are both more numerous and in-depth. One such example is a study conducted by D. H. Alderman (2003) who looked at the link between politics and the streets named after Martin Luther King. S. Bucher et al. (2013) investigated how street names in Slovakia were shaping the country's identity. O. Felecan (2013a) analysed both old and current Romanian street names, discussing (2013b) theoretical aspects of anthroponyms in urban and rural toponymy as well as the historical development of street names and the impact of political and social factors on street naming in the ever-changing political context. Later, in 2015, Felecan analysed the street names of multi-ethnic, multi-faceted and multi-confessional Transylvania from a socio-cultural and ethnic perspective. In 2020, he also studied street names and oikonyms in Romania's historical, geographical, political and cultural context, concluding that toponyms are mostly influenced by political and

historical factors. In 2022, the researcher looked into Romanian street names linked to clergy from a semiotic perspective. Together with N. Felecan (2021), he discussed the connection between gender policies and contemporary street names in Romania. L. Balode (2014) studied the unofficial (slang) variants of urbanonyms in Lithuania, Latvia and Finland, while B. Neethling (2016) highlighted the most significant semantic features of street names. C. M. Shackleton (2018) analysed South Africa's street names reflecting the diversity of plants and animals; M. Wahlberg (2018) investigated local, national and international characteristics of Swedish street names; A. Gałkowski (2019) analysed Polish and Italian urbanonyms, including street names originating from female personal names; O. Suleimanova and I. Zots (2019) studied the names of streets and metro stations with the help of a socio-linguistic experiment based on polling speakers of different languages.

The above research shows that the main function of street names is to help individuals orientate themselves and recognise specific locations (Bucher et al. 2013: 55–56; Neethling 2016: 145; Nyström 2016: 40; Shackleton 2018), i.e. street names are indicators of geographical orientation (Neethling 2016: 145). The current study is closer to the function indicated by Felecan, who identified that street names reflect certain political, economic, social and cultural features of society (Felecan 2013a: 319).

A street name whose base word is linked to politics can be changed when there is a shift in political system (Alderman 2003): this is illustrated by Lithuania's street names, many of which went through several changes in the 20th century. Lithuanian street names have undergone several changes. Roads across the country were renamed when it was subjected to Soviet rule and reverted back to their original forms in 1990 when Lithuania regained its independence. For example, the Soviet-period *Lenino prospektas* ('Lenin Avenue') now bears its original name *Vytauto prospektas* ('Vytautas Avenue'); *Raudonosios armijos prospektas* ('Red Army Avenue') became *Savanorių prospektas* ('Volunteer Avenue') once again, *Pergalės krantinė* ('Victory Quay') was renamed *Karaliaus Mindaugo prospektas* ('King Mindaugas Avenue'), while *Jaunosios gvardijos gatvė* ('Young Guard Street') is now known as *Tvirtovės alėja* ('Fortress Avenue'). These examples illustrate how the Soviet ideology penetrated public life in Lithuania during the occupation period.

Street names can also capture certain ethnic or religious traditions (Felecan 2013a: 318). A number of street names in Kaunas memorialise the Baltic tribes and mythology: *Kuršių gatvė* ('Curonian Street'), *Prūsų gatvė* ('Prussian Street'), *Krivių gatvė* ('Oracle Street'), *Gabijos gatvė* ('Gabija (Baltic Goddess of Fire) Street'). Christian traditions are also represented: *Bernardinų skersgatvis* ('Bernardine Lane'), *Benediktinių gatvė* ('Benedictine Nun Street').

Another important category of local street names references place names, natural phenomena, flora and fauna. These street names offer significant contribution to Lithuania's national landscape: *Saulės gatvė* ('Sun Street'), *Akacijų gatvė* ('Acacia Street'), *Kiškių gatvė* ('Hare Street'), *Nemuno gatvė* ('River Nemunas Street'), *Nėries krantinė* ('River Nėris Quay'), *Vilniaus gatvė* ('Vilnius Street'). When creating or

choosing street names, associations with negative emotions or experiences are usually avoided (Nystrom 2016: 48). Most street names in Kaunas also carry positive connotations, e.g. *Laimės gatvė* ('Happiness Street'), *Laisvės alėja* ('Freedom Avenue'), *Nepriklausomybės aikštė* ('Independence Square'), *Taikos prospektas* ('Peace Avenue'), *Svajonių alėja* ('Dream Avenue').

According to their motive, street names fall into two groups: identifying and memorial (Vaculik 2013). Identifying street names are linked to the history of a particular street, locations of (formerly) existing objects, direction towards other towns or villages in Lithuania: *Ukmergės gatvė* ('Ukmergė Street'), *Seniavos gatvė* ('Seniava Street'), *Rokų gatvė* ('Rokai Street'). Memorial street names are given in order to commemorate important national or international public figures, organisations or historical events. E.g. there is a house on *K. Grybausko gatvė* ('K. Grybauskas Street') which was the home of the pharmacist and botanist prof. Kazimieras Grybauskas, while *K. Petrausko gatvė* ('K. Petraukas Street') is named after singer Kipras Petrauskas who for a short period lived on this street with his brother, composer Mikas Petrauskas. Other examples of memorial street names include *A. Mickevičiaus gatvė* ('A. Mickiewicz Street'), *J. Jablonskio gatvė* ('J. Jablonskis Street'), *K. Donelaičio gatvė* ('K. Donelaitis Street'), *Amerikos lietuvių gatvė* ('American Lithuanian Street'), *Sukilėlių prospektas* ('Rebel Avenue'), *Čečėnijos aikštė* ('Chechnya Square').

Streets in Lithuania are named in line with the recommendations for street name design and spelling by the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language (SCLL 2004; Press Release 2004–12–10 No. 95). Street names are assigned and changed by local councils in line with the Decree No. 1V–57 of the Lithuanian Interior Minister, signed on 25 January 2011 (redacted on 3 March 2014, No. 1V–178 (see SCLL 2023).

It is recommended that Lithuanian street names meet the requirements of correctness, officialdom and norm. Names of diminishing or extinct places should be prioritised.

Appropriate considerations should be given to the meaning of the proposed street name:

– When naming a street after a person, the contribution of that individual to the history, science, art, culture, politics or other public areas of the Lithuanian state or the region should be assessed;

– Street names reflecting historical, cultural events (dates) or locations should bear significance to the Lithuanian state;

– Street names should not disrupt public order or security, fuel ethnic, racial, religious or social hatred, force or discrimination.

Since 1 May 2023, additional assessment of street names is conducted by the Lithuanian Genocide and Resistance Research Centre (LGGRTC) together with local authorities. The process is guided by the Law on the Prohibition of Promotion of Totalitarian, Authoritarian Regimes and Their Ideologies which also includes the ban on promoting the above regimes and their ideologies in public objects.

Municipalities can consult the Commission regarding the correctness of a

proposed street name. All street names approved by the Seimas, Government or municipalities are included in the Address Register administered by the State Enterprise Centre of Registers (Registrų centras). The database also provides the official form of the street name and its map (https://regia.lt/map/kauno_m?gatid=18523) (see SCLL 2023).

Personal names in the street names of Kaunas: Structure, semantics and change

Cities are usually seen as compact and culturally distinct territories. They are also defined by certain street naming traditions which are driven by shared culture, history, worldviews and political events. Street names reflect the city's unique features and shape its individual character. The relationship between the city and its residents is two-fold: the people who live here are immersed in the cultural and historical space, while the city itself is a familiar place defined by its residents. In other words, the city is linked to its prominent inhabitants, illustrating the close connection between an individual and a place.

Street names originating from personal names serve to distinguish one city form another, revealing their individual features. By lending their names to old and new streets, avenues, squares and plazas, local residents help shape their city's image and unique character.

When studying the structure of a street name, it is important to consider the elements it is made of and their relationship. Official urbanonyms contain two components: (1) the defining element (the specific element) which names a specific, individual object (*Vytauto* gatvė 'Vytautas Street', *Vaižganto* gatvė 'Vaižgantas Street') and (2) the defined element (the generic element) pointing to the type of street name, such as avenue, lane, street, square (Sidaravičienė 2023a: 27). The defining element can also have "multi-segmented" structure (Sidaravičienė 2023a: 27), e.g. *Karaliaus Mindaugo prospektas* ('King Mindaugas Avenue'). The first component therefore determines the second element of the street name, specifying its particular meaning (Vanagas 1970: 258–259).

The street names investigated in this study originate from personal names and were all taken from the Central eldership of Kaunas. Each name consists of two or more segments: *Gedimino gatvė* ('Gediminas Street'), *Maironio gatvė* ('Maironis Street'), *Kęstučio gatvė* ('Kęstutis Street'), *Adomo Mickevičiaus gatvė* ('Adam Mickiewicz Street'), *Juozo Gruodžio gatvė* ('Juozas Gruodis Street'), *Vinco Mykolaičio-Putino gatvė* ('Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas Street'). The determinant component defines a street, less frequently an avenue, as in *Karaliaus Mindaugo prospektas* ('King Mindaugas Avenue'). The first component therefore specifies the second element while identifying: 1) kings and dukes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Mindaugas, Kęstutis, Gediminas, Vytautas, L. Sapieha); 2) Lithuanian writers and poets (Vaižgantas, Maironis, M. Valančius, D. Poška, V. Mykolaitis-Putinas, K. Donelaitis, M. Daukša, S. Daukantas, A. Mickiewicz, A. Jakštas); 3) Lithuanian linguists (J. Jablonskis, K. Būga); 4) doctors

(L. Zamenhof, V. Kuzma); 5) priests (A. Mackevičius, V. Sladkevičius); 6) cultural figures: artists, composers, painters, sculptors, architects (V. Putvinskis, M. Dobužinskij, T. Daugirdas, J. Gruodis, M. K. Čiurlionis, I. Zikaras, E. Frykas); 7) volunteer soldiers (P. Eimutis); 8) international writers, philosophers (A. Mapu, I. Kant, E. Orzeszkowa); 9) international businessmen, merchants (I. B. Wolf, F. Engelman, H. Naugardt); 10) saints (St Gertrude).

The first component of the street name determines its semantic group and indicates its purpose – to highlight prominent historical and cultural personalities, both Lithuanian nationals and foreigners. The researched street names of Kaunas can be linked to various periods in the history of the city and the country, e.g. *Karaliaus Mindaugo prospektas* ('King Mindaugas Avenue') refers to the rule of King Mindaugas (1236–1263), while *V. Sladkevičiaus gatvė* ('V. Sladkevičius Street') commemorates the life of cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius (1920–2000). Street names can also honour the lives of prominent people linked to the city, e.g. *J. Jablonskio gatvė* ('J. Jablonskis Street') is the location of linguist Jonas Jablonskis' apartment where he lived in 1919–1930.

In order to analyse any changes in the street names of Kaunas, both their current and previous variant(s) are provided. The data collected for this research shows that the oldest street names in Kaunas go back to the rule of the Russian Empire (1875–1914). During this period the city's street names were written in Russian (*Donskaja, II Portovaja, Novobazarnaja, Provianstskaja, Tverskaja II, Kijevskaja, Ekaterinoslavskaja bolšaja, Novaja, Michailovskaja, Garnizonaja, Mal.Tatarskaja, Gornaja, Malaja Sadovaja, Vilijampolskaja, Michailovskij pr., Pažeskaja*). Interestingly, under the German rule (1915–1918), Russian street names in central Kaunas were either translated into German (*Novaja* > *Neue Str, Michailovskaja* > *Michael Str.; Mickeviča* > *Mickevich Str.; Kurovskaja* > *Kurow Str.; Mal.Tatarskaja* > *Kl. Tataren Str.; Gornaja* > *Berg Str.; Vilijampolskaja* > *Wiliampol Str.; Novobazarnaja* > *Basar Str.*) or changed to German names (*Malaja Sadovaja* > *Tolstoj pr., Michailovskij pr.* > *Deutscher Ring; Ekaterinoslavskaja bolšaja* > *Schloss Str.; Kijevskaja* > *Ludendorff Str.; Puškinskaja* > *Hindenburg Str.; Donskaja* > *Hansa Str.*). The above examples show how certain cultural elements of a particular nation (Russia or Germany) modified the cityscape of central Kaunas during different historical periods (e.g. streets named after Russian writers Tolstoy and Pushkin, the Russian empress Catherine, the German airship Hindenburg, the commercial and political Hanseatic League of Northern Germany, Prussia and Livonia). When in 1919 Kaunas became the temporary capital of Lithuania, the city focused on replacing its German street names with Lithuanian ones, starting with the main arteries of the Old Town and Naujamiestis. The work was conducted "relatively consistently, trying to retain the names that were familiar to the public by adapting them to Lithuanian; only in cases of completely unacceptable street names radical measures were taken" (Balkus 2020: 60).

This is how the Tsarist-period *Donskaja* street became *Hansa Strasse* during the German rule, was renamed *M. K. Čiurlionio gatvė* ('M. K. Čiurlionis Street') in 1919 and still carries this name today. Similar changes affected other streets in Kaunas:

Novobazarnaja > *Basarstrasse* > *S. Daukanto gatvė* ('S. Daukantas Street'); *Proviantskaja, Inžinernaja, Pushkinskaja* > *Hindenburgstrasse* > *K. Donelaičio gatvė* ('K. Donelaitis Street').

During the interwar period (1918–1940), streets named after individuals made up around one fifth of all roads in Kaunas (98 out of 477) (Balkus 2020: 60). Any proposed street names at the time were expected to reflect features of Lithuanian culture and history, honouring historical personalities, national revival figures and freedom fighters. Interestingly, several streets were named after prominent personalities who were still alive at the time, e.g. *Jono Mačiulio-Maironio gatvė* ('Jonas Mačiulis-Maironis Street'), *Aleksandro Stulginskio gatvė* ('Aleksandras Stulginskis Street'), *Kazio Griniaus gatvė* ('Kazys Grinius Street') (Balkus 2020: 56). During the Independent Republican period, efforts were made to accommodate the country's ethnic minorities. Therefore, in 1919 signs of street names in Kaunas were written in Lithuanian, Polish and Yiddish (e.g. the Lithuanian *Laisvės alėja* was also known as *Aleja Wolnosći* in Polish) (Balkus 2020: 53). However, a decision was made in 1923 that all street names must be written only in the official language of Lithuania (Balkus 2020: 60).

In 1940, Lithuania was annexed by and incorporated into the Soviet Union. This marked another period of renaming streets across the country to reflect links with the Russian culture and politics. E.g. *E. Fryko gatvė* ('E. Frykas Street') was changed to *M. Lermontovo gatvė* ('M. Lermontov Street') during the Soviet period to honour the Russian writer, *P. Lukšio gatvė* ('P. Lukšys Street') became *K. Požėlos gatvė* ('K. Požėla Street') after one of Lithuanian communist party founders and leaders, *Eimučio gatvė* ('Eimutis Street') was renamed *V. Jacenevičiaus gatvė* ('V. Jacenevičius Street', after Lithuania's Soviet-period hero). Other changes included *A. Jakšto gatvė* ('A. Jakštas Street') becoming *Profsąjungos gatvė* ('Trade Union Street'), *I. Kanto gatvė* ('I. Kant Street') turning to *V. Majakovskio gatvė* ('V. Mayakovsky Street') after the Russian poet and *A. Mapu gatvė* ('A. Mapu Street') renamed to *I. Laukaitytės gatvė* ('I. Laukaitytė Street', after a famous revolutionary and Communist party member). *Prieplaukos Krantinė* ('Wharf Quay') and *Uosto krantinė* ('Port Quay') were renamed to *Pergalės krantinė* ('Victory Quay'), *Marijampolės gatvė* ('Marijampolė Street') became *I. Snitko gatvė* ('I. Snitko Street', after the Soviet scientist), *V. Putvinskio gatvė* ('V. Putvinskis Street') was changed to *S. Nėries gatvė* ('S. Nėris Street'), *L. Sapiegos gatvė* ('L. Sapieha Street') became *L. Tolstojaus gatvė* ('L. Tolstoy Street'), *Vytauto prospektas* ('Vytautas Avenue') turned to *Lenino prospektas* ('Lenin Avenue'), while *L. Zamenhofo gatvė* ('L. Zamenhof Street') was known as *Alytaus gatvė* ('Alytus Street') for a while.

Some of the street names remained unchanged during the decades of the Soviet rule, e.g. the Republican-period *K. Būgos gatvė* ('K. Būga Street'). This was also the case with *M. K. Čiurlionio* ('M. K. Čiurlionis'), *S. Daukanto* ('S. Daukantas') and *M. Daukšos* ('M. Daukša') Streets.

It is clear that during the Soviet period there were strong efforts to change the cultural and political cityscape of Kaunas by naming its streets after those who represented foreign culture and Soviet ideology. As noted by O. Felecan and N. Felecan

(2021), the "reconfiguration of street names was one of the simplest and cheapest instruments". The researchers summarised their study: "[b]y means of street names, authorities can impose certain socio-cultural, linguistic and ethnic rules".

When Lithuania regained its independence in 1990, street names had to be changed again in order to disassociate the country from its Soviet legacy, creating a new Lithuanian cityscape.

Some of the street names were restored from the Independent Republican period of 1918–1940: *P. Eimučio gatvė* ('P. Eimutis Street', named after Pranas Eimutis (1897–1919), Lithuanian volunteer soldier), *E. Fryko gatvė* ('E. Frykas Street', after Edmundas Alfonsas Frykas (1876–1944), Lithuanian engineer, architect who designed many of the buildings in Kaunas), *A. Jakšto gatvė* ('A. Jakštas Street', after Adomas Jakštas (1860–1938), Lithuanian catholic priest, writer, literary scholar, philosopher), *I. Kanto gatvė* ('I. Kant Street', after Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), German philosopher who was born and worked in Konigsberg), *A. Mapu gatvė* ('A. Mapu Street', after Abraham Mapu (1808–1867), Jewish writer who was born and worked in Kaunas), *V. Putvinskio gatvė* ('V. Putvinskis Street', after Vladas Putvinskis (1873–1929), writer, book smuggler[1], founder of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union), *L. Sapiegos Street* ('L. Sapieha Street', after Lew Sapieha (1557–1633), vice-chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, state and military figure, diplomat, led the preparation of the 3rd Statute of Lithuania in 1588), *Vytauto prospektas* ('Vytautas Avenue', after Vytautas the Great (c. 1350–1430), Grand Duke of Lithuania, one of Europe's most prominent political and military leaders), *L. Zamenhofo gatvė* ('I. Zamanehof Street', after Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof (1895–1917), ophthalmologist, philologist and creator of Esperanto who lived and worked in Lithuania for a while). The street names honouring personalities from the Independent Republican period were restored with the aim to revive its socio-cultural landscape and retain the historical narrative so important to the Lithuanian nation.

Other streets were given new names commemorating prominent personalities: e.g. the Soviet-era *Pergalės krantinė* ('Victory Quay') was renamed *Karaliaus Mindaugo prospektas* ('King Mindaugas Avenue' – Mindaugas was the first and only king of Lithuania (1253–1263)); *Panevėžio gatvė* ('Panevėžys Street') became *V. Kuzmos gatvė* ('V. Kuzma Street', after Vladas Kuzma (1892–1942), Lithuanian surgeon, member of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences); *Italijos gatvė* ('Italy Street') became *A. Mackevičiaus gatvė* ('A. Mackevičius Street', after Antanas Mackevičius (1828–1863), priest, one of the leaders of the 1863 rebellion against the Russian Empire); *I. Snitko gatvė* ('I. Snitko Street') was renamed *Naugardo gatvė* ('Naugardt Street', after Hanus Naugardt, a wealthy merchant in Kaunas who purchased some of the buildings in the Old Town[2]), part of *Raguvos gatvė* ('Raguva Street') became *V. Sladkevičiaus gatvė* ('V. Sladkevičius Street', after Vincentas Sladkevičius (1920–2000), cardinal, member

[1] During the Tsarist Russia rule, Lithuanian press was banned, so book smugglers risked their lives in order to secretly carry Lithuanian publications to the mainland from Lithuania Minor.

[2] Some of them currently house the Kaunas Faculty of Vilnius University.

of the anti-Soviet resistance movement); *Turbinų gatvė* ('Turbine Street') was renamed *I. B. Volfo ir F. Engelmano gatvė* ('I. B. Wolf and F. Engelman Street', after two founders of the Kaunas brewery, I. B. Wolf and F. Engelman); *Ažuolų gatvė* ('Oak Street') became *J. Zikaro gatvė* ('J. Zikaras Street', after Juozas Zikaras (1881–1944), Lithuanian sculptor who lived and worked in Kaunas for a while). New to the central part of the city, *M. Dobužinskio gatvė* ('M. Dobužinskis Street') commemorates Mstislav Dobužinskij (1875–1957), graphic artist, painter and scenographer who worked in Kaunas. There is only one street in Kaunas named after a saint – *Šv. Gertrūdos gatvė* ('St Gertrude Street'), formerly known as *Požėlos gatvė* ('Požėla Street'). The above examples illustrate the process of naming the streets of historical Kaunas and developing the city's narrative. The local residents exercise their rights to the space around them by referencing historical events and founders of the city.

Interestingly, some of the street names remained unchanged since the Independent Republican period throughout the Soviet era until today. Examples of this phenomenon include *K. Būgos gatvė* ('K. Būga Street', after Kazimieras Būga (1879–1924), Lithuanian linguist, one of the founders of Baltic studies), *M. K. Čiurlionio gatvė* ('M. K. Čiurlionis Street', after Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911), Lithuanian painter and composer), *T. Daugirdo* gatvė ('T. Daugirdas Street', after Tadas Daugirdas (1852–1919), archaeologist, painter, academic, founder of ethnographic studies in Lithuania); *S. Daukanto gatvė* ('S. Daukantas Street', after Simonas Daukantas (1793–1864), Lithuanian historian, educator, national revival figure); *M. Daukšos gatvė* ('M. Daukša Street', after Mikalojus Daukša (c. 1527–1615), one of the founders of written Lithuanian, catholic priest), *K. Donelaičio gatvė* ('K. Donelaitis Street', after Kristijonas Donelaitis (1714–1780), Lithuanian poet, evangelical Lutheran pastor, founder of Lithuanian fiction literature); *Gedimino gatvė* ('Gediminas Street', after Gediminas (c. 1275–1341), Grand Duke of Lithuania from 1316 until his death); *J. Jablonskio gatvė* ('J. Jablonskis Street', after Jonas Jablonskis (1860–1930), Lithuanian linguist); *Kęstučio gatvė* ('Kęstutis Street', after Kęstutis (c. 1300–1382), Grand Duke of Lithuania from 1381 to his death), *Maironio gatvė* ('Maironis Street', after Maironis (1862–1932), Lithuanian poet, catholic priest, prelate), *A. Mickevičiaus gatvė* ('A. Mickiewicz Street', after Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), Polish and Lithuanian writer, public figure whose life and work are linked to Lithuania); *E. Ožeškienės gatvė* ('E. Ożeškienė Street', after Eliza Orzeszkowa (1841–1910), Polish writer, public figure who lived in Lithuania for a while); *D. Poškos gatvė* ('D. Poška Street', after Dionizas Poška (1764–1830), Lithuanian poet, historian, lexicographer), *Vaižganto gatvė* ('Vaižgantas Street', after Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas (1869–1933), Lithuanian writer, literary scholar), *M. Valančiaus gatvė* ('M. Valančius Street', after Motiejus Valančius (1801–1875), bishop, writer who lived and worked in Kaunas). It is likely that some of the above street names were preserved by the community partly thanks to the efforts of the governing authorities in Kaunas.

Only two streets in the historical part of the city retained their names from the early Soviet period. The first, present-day *J. Gruodžio gatvė* ('J. Gruodis Street'), was known

as *Ugniagesių gatvė* ('Firemen Street') during the Independent Republican period but was renamed after Juozas Gruodis (1884–1948), a Lithuanian composer, conductor and educator, when the Soviet authorities set up a music school here. Similarly, the Republican-period *Altų gatvė* ('Alto Street') was changed to *V. Mykolaičio-Putino gatvė* ('V. Mykolaitis-Putinas Street') during the Soviet era. Commemorating Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas (1893–1967), Lithuanian writer, translator and literary scholar, the street is still known by this name today.

Research shows that "during the 20th century, most of the central streets of Kaunas had their names changed on at least 3 or 4 occasions, i.e. almost every time there was a shift in the country's political system" (Balkus 2020: 47), e.g. *Donskaja* (Tsarist Russia) > *Hansastrasse* (during WWI) > *M. K. Čiurlionio gatvė* (since 1919). With constant changes in ideological and political direction, some of the streets of Kaunas named after prominent people have undergone as many as 7 modifications, e.g. *Poiezuitska – Poturemna – Gimnazialnaja – Vtoraja Portovaja* (for reasons unknown, this name was changed four times during the Tsarist rule) > *Hafenstrasse II* (during WWI) > *Pranciškonų gatvė*, later *T. Daugirdo gatvė* (since 1919); *Michailovskij prospekt* (during Tsarist rule) > *Deutscher Ringstrasse* (during WWI) > *Vytauto prospektas* (during the Independent Republican period) > *Lenino prospektas* (Soviet era) > *Vytauto prospektas* (current name). These street names are unique monuments from different periods in Lithuania's history. They reflect the political views and language policies of the occupying government.

Most of the researched street names of the historical quarter of Kaunas are commemorative. Their purpose is to honour certain public figures and historical events (*Kęstučio gatvė, Vytauto prospektas*). Only a few identifying street names are related to the people who had lived there (*J. Jablonskio gatvė, Vaižganto gatvė*).

From a gender perspective, only 2 out of 35 analysed street names are related to women: *Šv. Gertrūdos* gatvė ('St Gertrude Street') and *E. Ožeškienės gatvė* ('E. Ožeškienė Street'). International studies show that "hodonyms mirror the mentalities and ideas prevailing in a society. Urban micro-toponymy is an androcentric one, as public life has belonged, throughout history, almost exclusively to men." Therefore, "The recognition of women's role in society and their commemoration through hodonyms can function as a reparative act of balancing the power and influence asymmetries" (Felecan and Felecan 2021).

Origin-wise, 6 street names in the researched central area of Kaunas come from international figures linked to the city or Lithuania in some way: *E. Ožeškienės gatvė* ('E. Ožeškienė Street'), *L. Zamenhofo gatvė* ('L. Zamenhof Street'), *I. B. Volfo ir F. Engelmano gatvė* ('I. B. Wolf and F. Engelman Street'), *J. Naugardo gatvė* ('Naugardt Street'), *A. Mapu gatvė* ('A. Mapu Street'), and *I. Kanto gatvė* ('I. Kant Street').

Commemorating the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, 4 streets in central Kaunas are named after the country's only king and several dukes: *Karaliaus Mindaugo prospektas* ('King Mindaugas Avenue'), *Kęstučio* gatvė ('Kęstutis Street'), *Gedimino gatvė* ('Gediminas Street'), *Vytauto prospektas* ('Vytautas Avenue'). When

publishing their work, Lithuanian priests and writers often used pseudonyms, so the public are more likely to recognise these personalities by their pen names rather than the real names. This is also reflected in the researched streets of Kaunas: *Vaižganto gatvė* ('Vaižgantas Street'; real name Juozas Tumas), *Maironio gatvė* ('Maironis Street'; real name Jonas Mačiulis), *A. Jakšto gatvė* ('A. Jakštas Street'; real name Aleksandras Dambrauskas). One road – *V. Mykolaičio-Putino gatvė* ('V. Mykolaitis-Putinas Street') – carries the writer's real name plus his pseudonym.

Changes in the names of the central streets in Kaunas reflect certain non-linguistic transformations of the cityscape. These shifts were mostly driven by political circumstances and ideologies, imposed by the authorities in order to artificially construct the city's narrative.

The current street names of the historical quarter of Kaunas are part of the shared social environment. They contribute to the city's historical and cultural traditions by telling the story of Kaunas and Lithuania as well as reflecting cultural aspects significant to both the city and the country.

Conclusions

The street names of Kaunas are used as an important means of disseminating historical and cultural discourses. In public spaces, urbanonyms function as informative, motivated and culturally-formed names.

One of the strategies of proposed street names is to preserve the socio-cultural memory of the city, build and strengthen local identity, or *genius loci* – the spirit of the place – so important during a particular historical period.

Street names also perform a socio-communicative function, supporting the creation of shared social meaning. Street names originating from personal names are also expressions of the residents' rights to the space that is being created, demonstrating that the people living here are members of the same communicative space. Such street names signify a close relationship between the individual and the place, which in turn impacts on the city's historical and socio-cultural landscape.

The current street names of Kaunas reflect the ways in which the city's history, culture and identity converge, reflecting the shared meaning and shared experiences created by the city's inhabitants.

Structurally, the street names of Kaunas consist of two interdependent elements. The specific element mostly contains one segment but can also be made of 2 or more parts naming an individual, specific object. The generic element, the element that is being defined, points to a street, less frequently an avenue. The first component determines the second part of the street name, narrowing its meaning.

Semantic analysis shows that current street names of Kaunas originating from personal names are mostly memorial. They often refer to prominent historical or cultural figures: Lithuanian dukes and kings, writers, poets, linguists, priests, artists, doctors, volunteer soldiers; international authors, philosophers, doctors, businessmen, merchants; saints. Non-Lithuanian nationals whose names have been given to some of

the streets in Kaunas are related to the city or Lithuania in one way or another. Only a few street names point to the people who had previously lived there.

Male names dominate the street names of Kaunas: out of 35 names analysed, only 2 are related to women. This tradition is typical of other Lithuanian towns and cities too.

The changing street names in the historical quarter of Kaunas show that major transformations took place during the periods of Tsarist Russia, German Empire, Independent Republic of Lithuania, Soviet Lithuania and the current Republic of Lithuania. The present-day street names analysed in this study have either been restored from the Independent Republican period of 1919–1940 (9 street names) or replaced previous street names (8). The latter group were mostly assigned instead of former appellative-origin names, less frequently replacing toponymic names. Just 2 street names remain unchanged from the Soviet period (one honouring a Lithuanian writer and one commemorating a composer). One new street in central Kaunas has been given a new name in honour of a local painter. 15 streets names have been successfully preserved since the Independent Republican period. They commemorate Lithuanian dukes, writers, linguists, historians and artists.

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