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ДАРЬЯ ДМИТРИЕВНА ПАРХОМЕНКО

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СОВРЕМЕННОЕ ПРОСТРАНСТВО ГОРОДА: АНАЛИЗ ТОПОНИМИЧЕСКОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГА ЗА 2013–2023 гг.

Аннотация. В исследовании анализируются тенденции топонимической политики Санкт-Петербурга за десятилетие с 2013 по 2023 г., а также процессы наименования городской инфраструктуры, их ключевые закономерности. Топонимы играют важную роль в формировании коллективной памяти и идентичности, будучи частью «инфраструктуры памяти» (Irwin-Zarecka 1994). Вопросы присвоения и возвращения названий объектов городской среды давно находятся в центре внимания различных дисциплин, особенно в контексте постсоциалистических стран (Burd 2008; Light, Young 2015; Polyushkevich 2018). Топонимическая политика Санкт-Петербурга уже рассматривалась в ряде исследований (Terentev 2015; Abramov, Terentev 2014), однако современные тенденции и практики наименования городских объектов остаются недостаточно изученными. Работа опирается на концепции символической власти Пьера Бурдьё (1979) и коллективной памяти Мориса Хальбвакса (1992). Анализ проводится на основе данных, полученных с официального Топонимического портала Санкт-Петербурга, где рассматриваются названия улиц, мостов и парков, появившиеся или возвращенные в период с 2013 по 2023 г. Эти данные группируются по их символическому значению и анализируются с применением методов описательной статистики с помощью языка R. Для более детального изучения политики наименований дополнительно проведены два экспертных интервью с членами Топонимической комиссии Санкт-Петербурга.

Ключевые слова: топонимика, коллективная память, символическая политика, городское пространство, социология города

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Introduction

Urban spaces are living entities, continuously transformed by the interplay of historical, cultural, political and social forces. One of the most visible and symbolic manifestations of this evolution is the toponymy, or the naming of places within a city. Toponymic policy is the official approach to naming and renaming streets, squares, parks, and other urban elements. It provides profound insights into the identity, values, and priorities of a city at a given time. This paper focuses on the toponymic policy in Saint Petersburg from 2013 to 2023, aiming to unravel the prevailing trends and underlying patterns that have shaped the city's urban nomenclature over the past decade.

The study is grounded in the theoretical framework of critical toponymy (Terentev 2014) that examines the socio-cultural significance of place naming and its impact on urban identity. To address these questions, it employs a mixed approach, combining quantitative analysis of naming trends with qualitative interviews with experts of St. Petersburg Toponymic commission.

This topic is crucial as it sheds light on how urban naming practices reflect and shape collective memory, cultural heritage, and social values. Understanding toponymic policy is essential for comprehending how a city like Saint Petersburg negotiates its past and present, navigating between honoring historical legacies and adapting to contemporary socio-political contexts.

Theoretical framework

Pierre Bourdieu defined symbolic power as a type of non-coercive power expressed through symbols and cultural connotations (Bourdieu 1979). Owners of cultural capital wield the power of the symbol, using it to influence not only other people's perceptions of reality and social institutions but also their own perspectives on life. The capacity to shape the collective mindset without resorting to coercion is known as symbolic power. Embedded in customs and establishments, it frequently goes unrecognized as a kind of subjugation since the subjugated have internalized it in some way.

Bourdieu claimed that symbolic power functions effectively when it is mistakenly understood as arbitrary and when what he refers to as “symbolic

violence” obscures its arbitrary nature (Bourdieu 1979). Instead of being physical, this violence takes the shape of social dominance that is shown in the capacity to impose interpretations and have them accepted as true. Therefore, a shared confidence in the legitimacy of the power exercised by the person in charge of culture’s symbolic dimensions is necessary for symbolic power to exist. Toponyms can be viewed as a form of symbolic power in action. Place naming and renaming are acts of symbolic violence that represent and perpetuate social power structures. Authorities have the ability to mold collective memory, identity, and historical perceptions through their control over the toponymic landscape.

The theory of collective memory introduced by Maurice Halbwachs emphasizes that memory is a social process, rooted in group interactions and social contexts (Halbwachs 1992). Halbwachs argued that these social structures shape individual memories, resulting in a collective image of the past. In order to maintain social identity and cohesiveness, collective memory is selective and changes throughout time in response to the requirements and ideals of the community.

Place names contribute to group identity by narrating a community’s story and linking its present to its past, fostering a sense of belonging. Through commemorative naming societies honor significant individuals and events, ensuring their place in collective memory. Toponyms are a vital part of “memory infrastructure”, which encompasses the various physical, cultural, institutional, and social mechanisms that support collective memory (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 13).

Toponyms play a crucial role in collective memory by embedding historical and cultural significance in the physical landscape. They act as everyday reminders of historical events and figures, anchoring collective memory in place. Changes in toponyms often reflect shifts in social and political power, as new regimes rename places to align with their ideological narratives.

Toponymy in post-socialist space

In order to investigate the various geopolitical and historical settings of place naming schemes, Rusu (2021) conducted a systematic study of the literature on urban toponymy. While place names may be used to promote national identity and unity in contexts of nationalism and statehood, toponymics may involve efforts to decolonize place names and establish cultural sovereignty in places with histories of imperialism and colonialism. Another finding suggests that democracies that have transitioned from

totalitarian to democratic rule may rename streets to honor resistance groups and break with tradition. In this context, a large number of works are focused on the process of de-Sovietization of the urban landscape in post-socialist countries (Božilović, Petković 2022; Kazakevich 2011; Light 2004; Rusu 2019).

The post-Soviet toponymic policy in Russia constitutes a distinctive area of study, particularly concerning the efforts to restore the cultural and historical identity of cities through toponymic restoration (Gill 2005; Terentev, Abramov 2014; Polyushkevich 2019). This process involves reinstating historical names that were predominantly changed during the Soviet era for ideological reasons. However, despite the general trend of de-Sovietization of urban space, Toponymic changes in post-Soviet Russia have not been without controversy. These changes often spark debates about identity, memory, and the appropriate way to honor the past. Some view the renaming efforts as a necessary step in coming to terms with Soviet history and building a new national identity, while others see it as an erasure of important aspects of the country's heritage (Terentev 2015).

Historical legacy of Saint Petersburg

Anaïs (2017) provides a historical analysis of Saint Petersburg's renaming policy, defining the renaming process as a temporal boundary-making practice in collective memory in order to influence people's self-determination during periods of political regime change.

The case of Saint Petersburg is interesting because of its urban landscape embodying two conflicting identities: Saint Petersburg as the "window to Europe" and the capital of the Russian Empire, and Leningrad as the "cradle of three revolutions". Throughout the 20th century, the city witnessed the collapse of the monarchy, the rise of the Soviet regime, and its eventual dissolution. These political transformations were accompanied by four waves of toponymic purges, aimed at constructing a new national narrative while erasing previous historical markers:

1. The Red Wave: 1918–1924

Following their rise to power, the Bolsheviks utilized toponymic changes as a tool to solidify their ideology and authority. Pre-revolutionary names associated with monarchs, aristocracy, and religion were replaced with those honoring communist ideologists and revolutionaries. By the end of this wave, around 500 names had been altered, which constituted about a third of the total toponyms.

2. The Catharsis Wave: 1941–1952

This wave was triggered by the Nazi invasion and the Siege of Leningrad during World War II. The city underwent a de-Prussianization process, with toponyms linked to German figures being renamed, as anything German had acquired negative connotations. Additionally, some pre-revolutionary names, deeply ingrained in the public memory, were reinstated, and names associated with traumatic events were removed to foster unity and boost morale.

3. The Third Wave: 1989–1990

The third renaming wave swept the entire country, driven by activists and representatives of culture and science who proposed restoring pre-revolutionary names, seeing them as vital parts of historical heritage dismissed by the Soviet regime. This initiative was notably grassroots-driven, making the toponymic reforms democratic in nature. The newly emerging civil society pressed for the return of historical names to urban spaces. One of the most striking examples of an early successful return was the restoration of the historic name of the Primorsky District, formerly Zhdanovsky, through the petitions of local residents.

4. The Fourth Wave: 1991 and onwards

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, de-Sovietization of urban space commenced. The city returned to its pre-revolutionary name, and toponymic policy was directed at the revival of St. Petersburg's European identity. This effort distanced the city from its Soviet past and fitted into the country's foreign policy goals of rapprochement with Western nations. A Toponymic Commission was formed to regulate naming policy and process proposals from various local activists and associations. While democratization had been gradual in the previous years, the late 90s saw the process of new toponym approval become more politicized as city authorities monopolized decisions, resulting in fewer renaming.

While extensive research has been conducted on the immediate post-Soviet period and the initial waves of renaming, contemporary studies addressing current trends and policies in toponymy are scarce. Toponymic policy in the context of a rapidly developing city with a multi-layered historical past remains a relevant subject for exploration. Thus, there is a need for updated research reflecting the current evolution of place names in contemporary Russia. This paper aims to analyze the toponymic situation and identify the main naming patterns in St. Petersburg over the last 10 years to contribute to toponymy studies.

Methodology

Database

The data was taken from the Registry of Street, Bridge, Garden, and Park Names of St. Petersburg, posted on the Toponymic Portal of St. Petersburg¹. The registry is an official source of information on the names and boundaries of city objects, approved by Resolution of the Government of St. Petersburg No. 117². The version of the registry used in this work is current as March 4, 2024. The registry is a text document in doc format, which includes general provisions comprising terms, definitions of basic concepts, as well as rules for writing and inflecting names. The registry contains the following tables:

Table 1 — Names of historical districts and their boundaries

Table 2 — Names of territorial zones and their boundaries

Table 3 — Names of elements of the street-road network of St. Petersburg (excluding federal highways and elements of the street-road network of St. Petersburg in the territories of intracity municipal formations of St. Petersburg with the status of a city or a settlement)

Table 4 — Names of elements of the street-road network of St. Petersburg (excluding federal highways) in the territories of intracity municipal formations of St. Petersburg with the status of a city (settlement)

Table 5 — Names of bridges in St. Petersburg

Table 6 — Names of overpasses in St. Petersburg

Table 7 — Names of tunnels in St. Petersburg

Table 8 — Names of territories of green plantings for public use

To create a database for analysis, I used data from Tables 3, 4, 5, and 8. Data from Tables 6–7, which include information about overpasses and tunnels, were not added to the database due to following reasons: firstly, the names were assigned based on the geographical principle (by the name of the territory on which the object is located), and secondly, these objects were placed in areas with low pedestrian accessibility making them difficult to access for visual perception and, thus, reducing the symbolic significance of the toponyms. Tables 3–5 included 3 categories: Name of elements, Boundaries, Date of name assignment (reinstatement). Table 8 had an

¹ Реестр наименований улиц, мостов, садов и парков Санкт-Петербурга // Топонимический портал Санкт-Петербурга. — URL: <https://toponimika.spb.ru/> (дата обращения: 06.06.2024).

² Постановление Правительства Санкт-Петербурга № 117 от 06.12.2006 г. — URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/8424731> (дата обращения: 06.06.2024).

additional category, the Identification Number (IN), which contained numbers of territories specified in the Law of St. Petersburg dated September 19, 2007 No. 430-85 “On Green Plantings for Public Use”³. However, this category was excluded since it is not a focus of current research.

Therefore, names of street-road objects (streets, avenues, boulevards, etc.), bridges, and territories of green plantings for public use (gardens, parks, squares) listed in the tables were selected. The total number of objects was 4855. Next, data from the doc format was converted to xlsx format.

Using Excel functions, modifications were with the category “Date of Name Assignment”. Firstly, all alphabetical and numerical characters except the year of name assignment were removed, and then the data was converted to numeric format. Then, names that occurred from 2013 to 2023 were selected using filtering by year. It should be noted that there were 2260 missing values, which were also omitted during filtering. Since according to the registry description, dates are present if known, it can be concluded that the objects with missing data in this category do not have an officially established date of name assignment. It can be assumed that for 2013–2023 years, official dates are known and present in the tables due to the fact that toponymic policy has been organized and documented over the given period.

The database contains 541 names that emerged from 2013 to 2023, including 303 street-road network objects (162 within the “Greater” St. Petersburg, 147 in the territory of intra city municipal formations with the status of a city (settlement), 55 bridges, and 183 territories of green plantings for public use (parks, squares, gardens). Data are provided for three categories: *Name of the element*, *Boundaries*, *Year of name assignment*.

Classification

The classification was created based on the sources published on the Toponymic Portal of Saint Petersburg. The main sources were the Protocols of the Toponymic Commission from 2013–2023, as well as the Database of toponyms of Saint Petersburg (only for green zones and bridges. The protocols provide a written record of the process of reviewing and assigning place names, while the Database of toponyms contains brief information about the object and its name, including a short historical reference if

³ Закон Санкт-Петербурга о зеленых насаждениях общего пользования № 430-85 от 19.09.2007. — URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/8458668> (дата обращения: 06.06.2024).

available. When creating the classification, the primary criterion was the explanation of the reason for assigning a name to an object, i.e., the mechanisms of toponym assignment. This is an important aspect because, in addition to the mechanisms, there are the motives for assigning names, as well as the mechanisms of the territorial location of toponyms; however, the study of these is not the focus of this research.

The distinction between the motives and mechanisms of naming is made by George R. Stewart (1954), an American toponymist and the creator of the most well-known classification of toponyms. He defines motives as *“the psychological processes of the original namers in distinguishing one place from another by various methods”* (Stewart 1954: 1). Based on American toponyms, Stewart identified nine main classes of toponyms: descriptive names, possessive names, incident names, commemorative names, euphemistic names, manufactured names, shift names, folk etymologies, and mistake names. Each type has several subcategories as well as interrelated categories.

In creating classification, I relied on the logical principle of Stewart's classification but haven't used categories distinguished by him due to several reasons. Firstly, the American and Russian naming traditions have cultural and historical differences. Secondly, Stewart's classification is comprehensive and very detailed as it covers all existing toponyms and the ways they originate. The empirical base used in this paper is limited by the number and type of objects, so I aimed to make the categories less differentiated.

Thus, the classification includes four categories of toponyms:

Commemorative toponyms — these are names assigned in memory of specific events or individuals to preserve the memory of their significance or contribution to the history or culture of the area. This category includes two subcategories:

Period — the historical period during which the event occurred or the historical figure lived and worked. The main divisions are pre-revolutionary (before 1917), Soviet (1917–1991, the Soviet period is considered from the Bolshevik takeover in 1917, not from the actual establishment of the USSR in 1922), and post-Soviet (1991 and later). Later, transitional periods were also added: between the 19th–20th centuries and between the 20th–21st centuries for cases when the years of the historical figure's activity spanned different historical epochs.

Sphere — the field of activity to which the event or historical figure belongs. Four fields were identified: science, culture and sports, military achievements, and public achievements (includes labor and political

achievements). If the commemorated person is associated with two or more fields of activity, the variable is categorized by the activity emphasized in the Protocol when justifying the naming.

Relative toponyms — names assigned relative to other objects in the area. For roads, this group includes two subcategories: geographical — names given in relation to stable natural and territorial features, or urban — toponyms assigned relative to enterprises, public places, or buildings located near the object. For green spaces and bridges, the subcategories are: urban (which has the same meaning, but in the case of green spaces also includes monuments and memorial plaques located on the territory of the object), and shift — since the name was transferred from the name of neighboring object. Urban toponyms are divided by the period of existence and functioning in the urban landscape, where functioning is understood as performing the original purpose of the construction:

- pre-revolutionary (same as commemorative);
- Soviet (same as commemorative);
- existing — those objects that currently exist in the urban landscape not only as architectural monuments but also fulfill their functional purpose.

Historical toponyms — toponyms assigned to preserve a historical name. These can either be the restoration of original names or names given after lost names of urban environment objects, often justified by “preserving the historical name”.

Thematic toponyms — neutral, abstract names that are not directly related to the city but are part of thematic toponymic ensembles or naming traditions.

Descriptive statistics and visualization

For the quantitative descriptive analysis, a dataset including all classified toponyms was created. For ease of analysis, the data was divided into three separate datasets for each type of object: roads, green zones, and bridges. Each dataset contained the variables “Name of the element,” “Boundaries,” “Year of name assignment,” “District,” and “Name category,” as well as the variables “Sphere” and “Period” for subcategories. The dataset for roads also included an additional binary variable, “Status of the area,” for analyzing naming patterns of streets within “Greater” St. Petersburg and intra-city municipal territories with the status of a city or settlement. Furthermore, using the software R quantitative indicators were analyzed and the main naming patterns were visualized with the ggplot2 package.

Expert interviews

Two semi-structured expert interviews were conducted with members of the Toponymic Commission and specialists in urban toponymy to better understand the trends in modern toponymic policy. The interviews were conducted in person. Respondents were selected using the snowball sampling method. The first respondent was Alexey Dmitrievich Erofeev, a journalist and local historian, and a member of the Toponymic Commission since 1991. The second respondent was Andrey Borisovich Ryzhkov, a local historian and employee of the Institute of Cultural Programs, and a member of the Toponymic Commission from 2008–2017 and 2019–2023.

An interview guide was developed consisting of four sections: the Work of the toponymic commission, the Linguistic aspect of toponymy, the restoration of historical names, and the Symbolic significance of toponymy (see Appendix).

1. The Work of the Toponymic Commission section contained the main block of questions regarding naming principles, the process of assigning names, the characteristics of objects, interactions with urban space actors, and modern trends.

2. The Linguistic Aspect of Toponymy section contained questions about the lexical meaning of names and the main trends today. These questions were included because linguistic aspects reflect the features of each era, also shaping the city's space.

3. The Restoration of Historical Names section contained questions about current issues related to the restoration of names, the reasons behind them, and public reaction.

4. The Symbolic Significance of Toponymy section contained questions about the significance of toponymy for forming the historical and cultural image of the city, the problem of the politicization of the urban environment, and contemporary issues in toponymy.

Findings

From 2013 to 2023, a total of 541 names were assigned, including 303 roads, 183 public green spaces, and 55 bridges. For all categories of urban elements, commemorative and relative names are predominant, with 214 and 203 objects respectively. A smaller portion consists of 59 historical names and 65 thematic names, almost in equal measure.

Relative names are most common for bridges, commemorative names for green zones, and both categories are equally significant for roads. Historical

names are less frequent but consistently present, while thematic names, though the least common, have a significant presence in the naming of roads due to the fact that thematic principle is most commonly employed for street naming, but not for green zones or bridges. However, in green zones, commemorative names account for more than half of all place names.

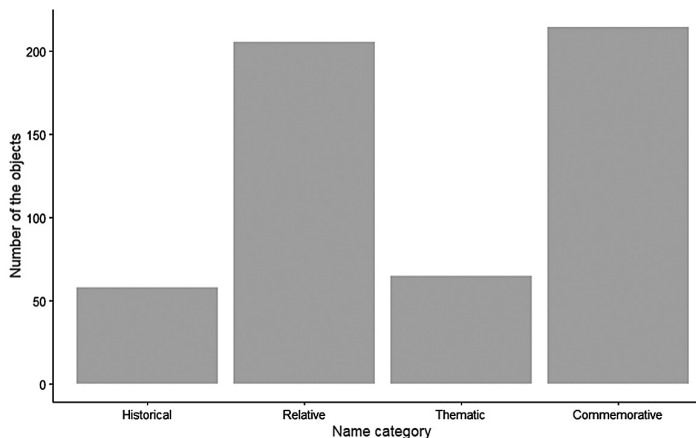


Fig. 1. The distribution of place names by name categories between 2013–2023

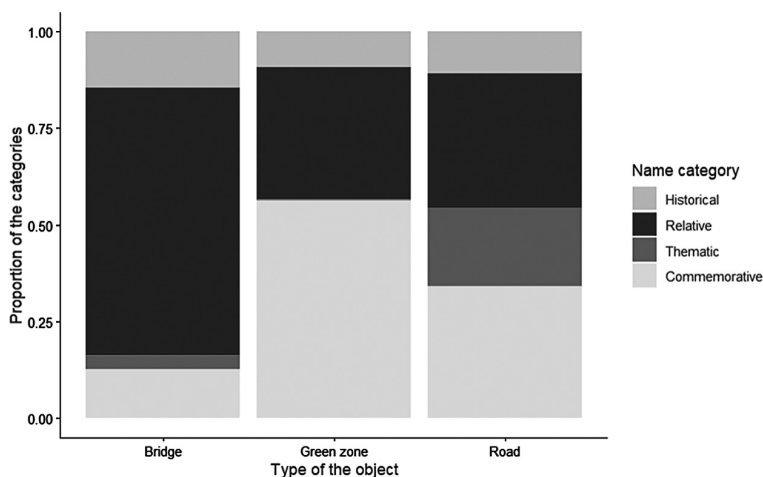


Fig. 2. The proportion of toponyms of different categories by the type of the object for 2013–2023

From 2013 to 2023, an average of 50 names were assigned per year. Interestingly, in 2015, only one assignment was recorded: Heroes-Firefighters Square. However, this distribution is not valid due to the law reforms in toponymic policy:

“In 2015, the lack of assignments was due to the fact that this was the year when the Procedure was adopted. Before 2015, St. Petersburg had no strict legal regulation of these matters at all” (Andrey Ryzhkov).

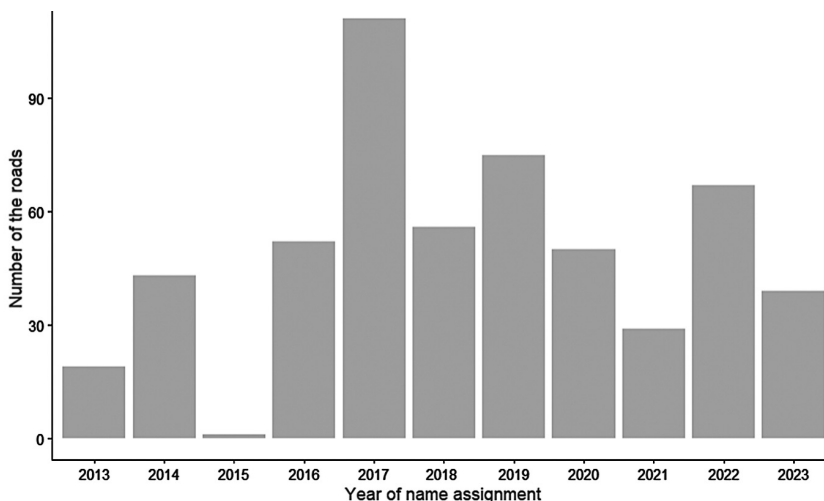


Fig. 3. The distribution of named objects by the year of the name assignment for 2013–2023

The Procedure and Rules for Assigning Names to Elements of the Street and Road Network⁴ officially regulates the naming procedure, certifying not only formal aspects of toponymy such as addressing, but also the main principles of naming.

According to the law, the naming of objects in St. Petersburg must adhere to modern Russian literary language norms, consider the city’s historical and cultural traditions, and reflect the functional purpose, location, and historical characteristics of the area. Two important rules are the prohibition of street renaming, meaning a street’s name cannot be changed to another, except for

⁴ Постановление Правительства Санкт-Петербурга № 737 от 24.08.2015. — URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/822405130> (дата обращения: 06.06.2024).

changes to the status part of the toponym or in case of a grammatical error. Thus, the law legally distinguishes between renaming and restoring names:

“It is impossible to rename a street in St. Petersburg. You can only propose the name that was previously used for this street. But you cannot rename any street out of the blue under the current regulations. The exception is, for example, changing a street to a lane or an avenue, or correcting something in a surname if, for instance, a mistake was made” (Andrey Ryzhkov).

Another restriction is the 20-year moratorium on commemorating outstanding individuals, meaning that commemorative names in honor of a person can be assigned only 20 years after their death. However, exceptions to this rule are possible if the commemorated person has certain state or city awards. This is an effort by the commission to prevent politicization and haste in commemoration:

“This was done for a reason, because it happened that everyone knows the person during their lifetime, but five years later, no one remembers them. On the other hand, this measure was taken to avoid politicizing the map” (Alexey Erofeev).

Following the introduction of the new legal procedure for place naming, the names assigned at the toponymic commission meetings were legally adopted and signed by the governor in the following years. As a result, they were carried over to 2017, which, according to data, had the most named items in a period of ten years (111 names) (see fig. 3). Thus, the yearly distribution may be incorrect since, in the Registry from where the data were obtained, the date of name corresponds to the date of the St. Petersburg government proclamation, although the classification was based solely on the Commission meeting protocols. The process from the commission’s decision to the official naming goes through a chain of approvals from municipal authorities and the governor, so the naming does not happen immediately:

“In general, such a cycle takes at least two months if everyone is in a hurry and rushing. Otherwise, it can take six months, or even up to a year from the moment the initiative is launched to the signing of the decree” (Andrey Ryzhkov).

Thus, when the yearly distribution is considered, a margin of error of one year should be accounted for (the case with 2015 and 2017 years can be considered an exception due to the introduction of the law).

Overall, the proportional distribution of assigned categories by year shows a fairly stable trend, except for 2015 (where only one name was assigned). Interestingly, thematic names significantly decreased after 2019, and the majority of names became relative and commemorative categories.

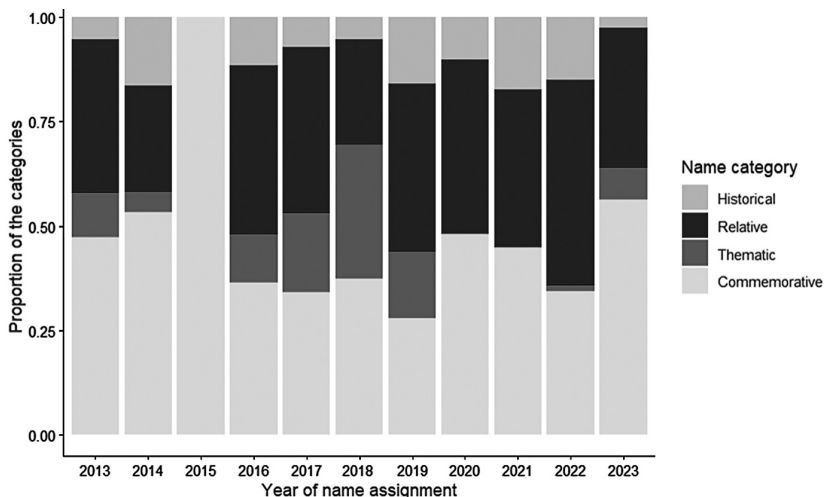


Fig. 4. The proportion of toponyms of different categories by the year of name assignment for 2013–2023

In particular, the trend of commemoration has gained traction over the past five years:

“There was a surge in commemorations. Not 10 years ago, but I would say it started gaining momentum about five years ago. Around 2019, I guess” (Andrey Ryzhkov).

One of the reasons, according to the expert, is the influence of the city authorities, who promote commemoration initiatives:

“This surge was characterized by the fact that the city authorities increasingly took on the role of additional promoters of specific commemorative initiatives” (Andrey Ryzhkov).

Another factor contributing to the growth of commemorative names is the emergence of a large number of unnamed squares and gardens due to the St. Petersburg law of 19.09.2007 No. 430-85 “On Public Green Spaces,” which expanded the legal requirements for granting land areas the status of a square, park, garden, etc., and, accordingly, the possibility of naming the object.

“We suddenly found ourselves with a vast army of unnamed squares, which is saving us. Because with the sheer number of proposals for commemorations that are coming in, the streets will never be enough. In fact, it’s the unnamed squares that are now prevalent. This wasn’t the case in the mid-2000s before this law was passed. Now, there are many sites where we can somewhat channel this activity” (Andrey Ryzhkov).

Roads

The toponymic commission broadly adheres to the thematic principle of street naming, which emerged during the Soviet era with the mass construction and development of new districts.

In the north of the city, the Kalininsky and Vyborgsky districts share the theme of science, culture, and art:

“If a new street or district emerges, we try to name them after composers, artists, and actors” (Alexey Erofeev).

In the southwest, the Kirovsky and Moskovsky districts cover the theme of the defense of Leningrad during the Great Patriotic War. The names in the Frunzensky district continue the international theme, where names are associated with Soviet-era allied countries. In the Primorsky district, the theme is related to aviation and space exploration, while the Vasileostrovsky district has a maritime theme. The only districts where the theme has to be abandoned are the Nevsky and Krasnogvardeysky districts. Their theme is associated with the events and heroes of the revolution, but due to the ambiguous attitude towards historical figures of that era, this theme is continued to a lesser extent:

“The right bank had a revolutionary theme during Soviet times, but now, to be honest, we don’t have much desire to commemorate fiery revolutionaries. We manage by assigning names based on local landmarks” (Andrey Ryzhkov).

The principle of naming based on local or geographical landmarks relates to pre-revolutionary naming traditions. It is also used in naming new districts where there is no established theme:

“If it’s about a new area where development is just beginning, themes related to old villages or settlements that exist or existed in that area are possible. For example, closer to Gatchina, the Gatchina district, Luga district, and the southern districts of the Leningrad region are considered. If it’s about the north, the names of settlements on the Karelian Isthmus can be used” (Alexey Erofeev).

Thus, two naming traditions from the Soviet and Tsarist periods continue in modern toponymic policy. Thematic district zones are also divided into more specific clusters, representing toponymic ensembles that can include toponyms of different categories. Commemorative toponyms can also be part of such ensembles if the person or event is connected to the theme:

“If a place is named after a person, that person should have some connection to the area, or at least their line of work should align with the overall theme of the cluster” (Andrey Ryzhkov).

One such example is the toponymic ensemble of streets in the Krasnogvardeysky district dedicated to the theme of painting and artists who worked for children, which appeared in 2016. It includes both commemorative names (Dobuzhinsky Street, Vasnetsovsky Avenue, etc.) and abstract names that fit the theme (Akwarelnaya Street, Peyzazhnaya Street). Another example of a toponymic ensemble is several streets in the Moskovsky district named in 2023 and associated with the nearby Pulkovo Observatory and space exploration. The ensemble includes commemorative toponyms (Struve Street, Georgy Grechko Street), and relative names (Orbitalnaya Street, Meridiannaya Street, etc.).

By the number of assigned names, the Pushkinsky district leads, while the fewest assignments are in the historical districts of Petrogradsky and Admiralteysky, as well as Kirovsky. The only district where not a single name appeared over the decade is Kronstadtsky.

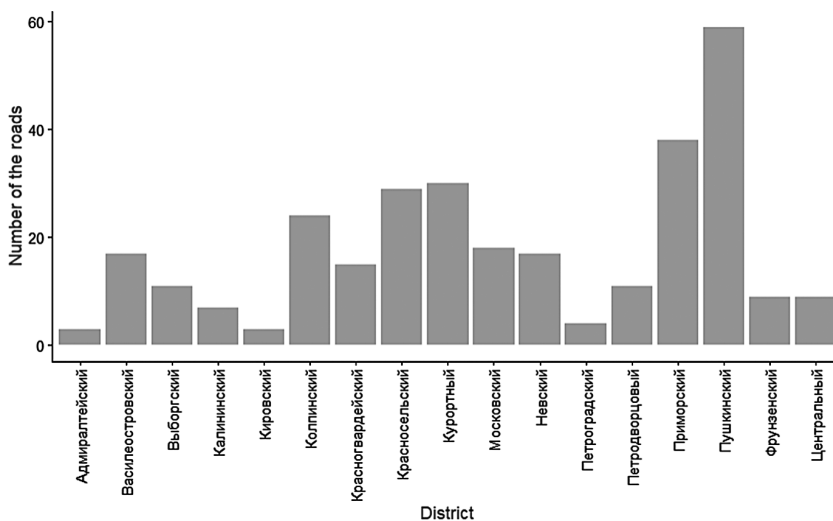


Fig. 5. The distribution of street names by districts between 2013–2023

It is interesting to note that the road and street network is developing equally within the boundaries of “Greater” St. Petersburg and in the inner-city areas with municipal status, which are often considered either suburbs or satellite cities of St. Petersburg. Over the course of 10 years, 162 names appeared in the main city, while 142 objects were named in the municipal areas. The categories of assigned names are also almost identical: compared

to the municipalities, Greater St. Petersburg has a slightly higher number of commemorative and historical names, while the municipalities have more relative and thematic names.

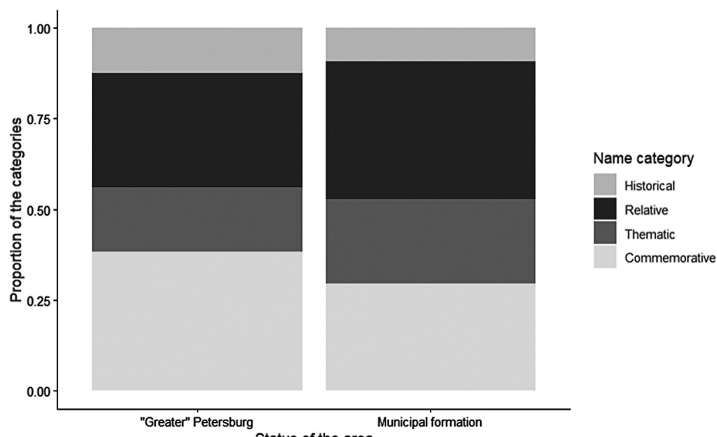


Fig. 6. The proportion of toponyms of different categories by the municipal status of the area for 2013–2023

Despite the special municipal status of these territories, the legal process of naming is no different from other districts of the city. However, experts highlight several characteristics, both positive and negative:

“In such satellite cities, the district administration is very attuned to local traditions. This has both positive and negative aspects” (Andrey Ryzhkov).

By negative aspects, the expert refers to the reluctance of the municipal authorities of satellite cities to align with names assigned in other districts to avoid repeated names, which complicate addressing and reduce the uniqueness of the urban space. An example of this situation is the naming in honor of Cities of Military Glory: Kronstadt, Kolpino, and Lomonosov. On the other hand, focusing on local traditions helps preserve the cultural and historical features of the cities. Often, the initiators are local activists and historians aiming to preserve the historical heritage of the districts:

“Kolpino, for example, is a large town. Some proposals come from the residents of Kolpino themselves because each suburb has its own local historians. There are many of them in Kolpino, and they come up with ideas themselves. They know their heroes, they know what to do. And we listen to them” (Alexey Erofeev).

In addition, the rich history of the satellite cities provides a reason to create themes and toponymic ensembles. For example, in Tsarskoye Selo, several streets were named after contemporaries of Alexander Pushkin. Historical features of the area's toponymy are also considered:

"The name of the Slavyanka district itself prompted us to make the decision to name the streets after ancient Russian cities. Therefore, we now have Rostovskaya, Poltavskaya, and Izborskaya streets" (Alexey Erofeev).

It is worth noting that trends in the naming of municipal zones are heterogeneous. Besides large satellite cities, territories with special municipal status include villages and gardening communities, where toponymy is dominated by "folk creativity," representing abstract names that emerged from everyday life or local characteristics:

"We still have pure folk toponymy preserved in dacha communities... They [names] are all simple, human. And, perhaps, with a certain kind of imagination, like in Pushkinsky district, for example, there is a street called Dreams or a street of White Nights. But I haven't seen a single dacha community with a street named after a person" (Andrey Ryzhkov).

With the developing construction of the city, there is a need to timely assign names to streets in new districts, while the majority of public initiatives are directed at objects within the developed areas of the city. The commission's task is to evenly distribute the flow of proposals and consider urban planning perspectives:

"People's initiative is mainly directed at the objects they see with their own eyes. [...] But, for example, in Shushary, even the residents who buy apartments there are primarily concerned with construction issues, not with what address they will receive. This is their last concern. It turns out that the responsibility for this initiative lies with the toponymic commission. That is, no one except the commission can raise this issue in a timely manner. And from a practical point of view, this is, first of all, a great responsibility, and secondly, a great creative task" (Andrey Ryzhkov).

In particular, complexity arises with historical districts where, despite the rare emergence of new passages, the question of historical names and their restoration comes up. This sparks discussions and attracts the attention of urban environment actors, including activists, public organizations, and municipal authorities. From 2013 to 2023, a total of nine historical names were restored. The most notable and discussed cases were the restoration of Voskresenskaya Embankment instead of Robespierre Street in 2014, and the restoration of Smolyanaya Street instead of Knipovich Street in 2021, which was the most recent restoration of historical names to date. Despite emerging public proposals, the toponymic commission tries to avoid politicized contexts, and the restorations are sporadic:

“This topic [restoration] is slowly fading away. Although periodically there are ideological proponents who want more and more restorations. But often what drives them is, you know, a political aversion to Soviet power and everything that was associated with it. We always try to stay away from politics because the political system of society changes” (Alexey Erofeev).

Historical names appear in the urban landscape not only through restorations but also through assigning names of lost local toponyms to new passages. However, this is also sporadic, and the number of historical assignments has decreased in recent years.

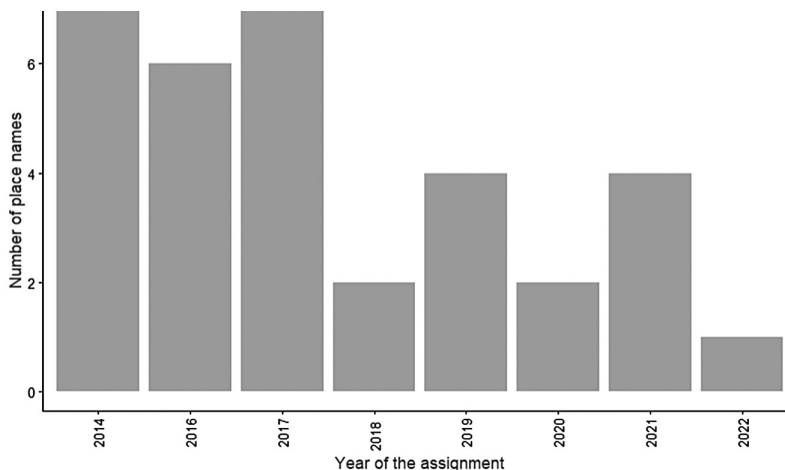


Fig. 7. The distribution of historical toponyms by the year of name assignment for 2013–2023

Commemorative street names

Most streets in St. Petersburg are named after cultural and sporting figures. Streets named after military figures and achievements, as well as scientists, are equally present in the urban landscape, although the sphere of public activity, which encompasses political and labor activities, receives the least attention.

The majority of the newly named commemorative streets are related with the Soviet period, however the pre-revolutionary era has also been well represented in the city's toponymy throughout the last decade. Despite the 20-year prohibition, post-Soviet people and events are becoming more reflected in the urban landscape.

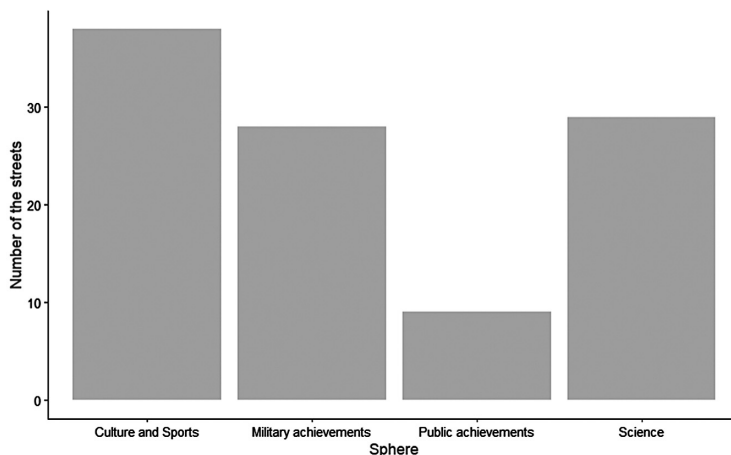


Fig. 8. The distribution of commemorative street names by the spheres between 2013–2023

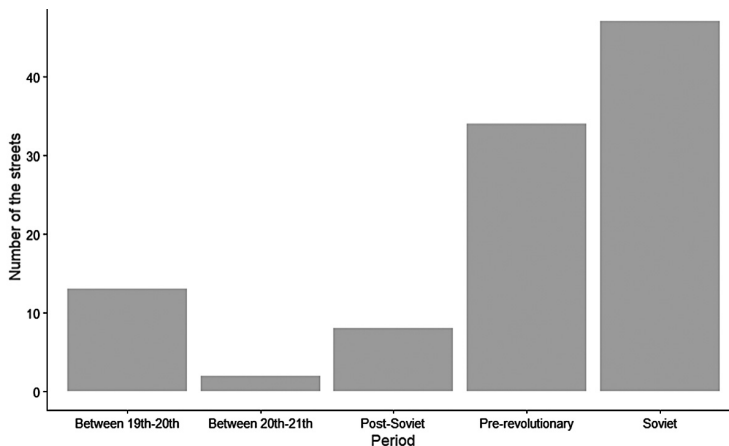


Fig. 9. The distribution of commemorative street names by the period between 2013–2023

The Soviet period is significantly represented in the sphere of military achievements, with most of the new names commemorating heroes of the Great Patriotic War and military events of that time. The pre-revolutionary period dominates the sphere of public achievements, with new streets named after political figures of Tsarist Russia, as well as individuals who influenced

the development and construction of the city in the 17th and 18th centuries. The scientific sphere is also widely represented by pre-revolutionary scientists and individuals who lived at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Streets related to the post-Soviet period have been named in memory of two contemporary events. In Peterhof, several streets were named in honor of naval soldiers who died on a submarine in the Barents Sea in 2019. Another example is Mariupolskaya Square, named in honor of the establishment of twin-city relations and partnership between St. Petersburg and Mariupol in 2022.

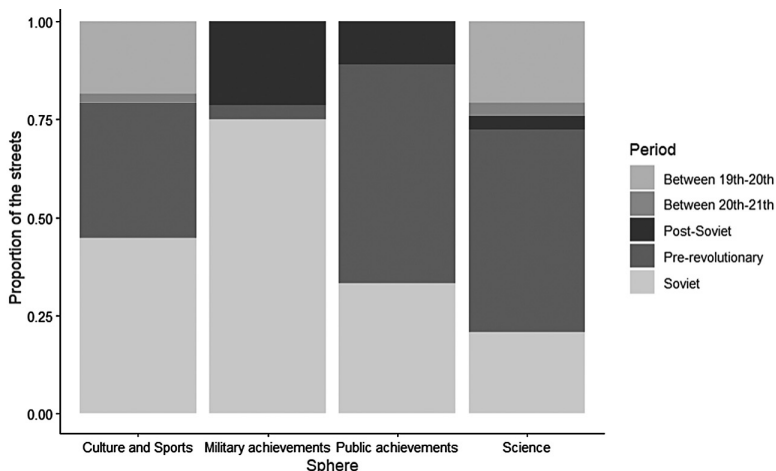


Fig. 10. The proportion of road names of different categories by sphere of activity for 2013–2023

Relative street names

From 2013 to 2015, 103 relative names appeared, including 54 geographical names and 49 urban ones. Geographical names are assigned based on nearby objects through which the passage runs, often roads are named after the settlements to which they lead. Names also appear based on physical features of the area, such as Chernichnaya Street or Okruzhnaya Street, although this method is characteristic of village toponyms in the territory of St. Petersburg. Urban toponyms preserve the memory of places in the city landscape. Most names are assigned in honor of those objects that continue to exist and function in the modern urban space but have a history from the Soviet or pre-revolutionary period.

Urban toponyms also preserve the memory of the pre-revolutionary city landscape, former estates, and historical buildings that have not survived in the urban landscape. Examples of such names include those that appeared in the Central District, such as Banny Lane and Ambarnaya Street, named in honor of public baths and grain barns, respectively, which existed in the 19th century. Names related to the Soviet period are assigned less frequently, as many Soviet enterprises have remained in the city's space to this day.

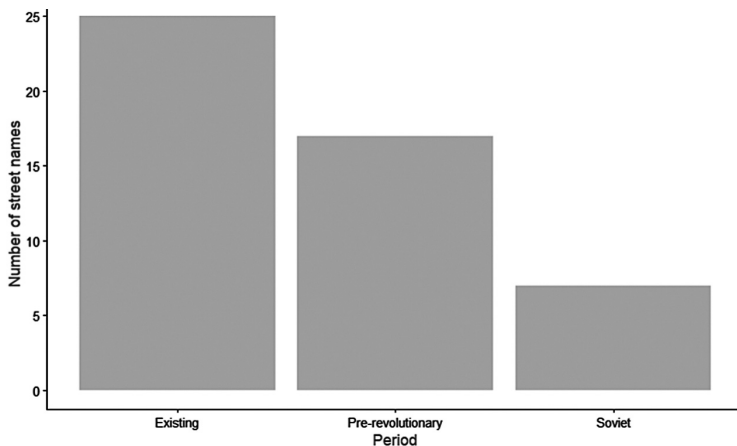


Fig. 11. The distribution of commemorative street names by the sphere of activity between 2013–2023

Green zones

Public green spaces have become areas for implementing a large number of naming initiatives. Over the past 10 years, due to the adopted law, the number of names assigned to green zones has significantly increased.

As already mentioned, a large number of unnamed squares provide an opportunity for toponymic creativity, often initiated by the public:

“But there is no theme like with streets, in squares. There, people often turn to us: here is an unnamed square in the area, let's name it after this artist, that writer, or that hero” (Alexey Erofeev).

Unlike streets, the names of green zones do not have thematic clustering, however, in 2019, one name was assigned based on a thematic principle. Isfakhansky Square in the Frunzensky District was named after the Iranian twin-city of St. Petersburg, Isfahan, which corresponds to the international theme of the district. Historical names are also reintroduced in square names. Names are assigned based on the names of nearby objects that were lost during

changes in the urban environment. Among such names, there is, for example, the unique Molchalivny Square named after a former street to which it adjoins. In an interesting manner, the historical name of Kondratievsky Prospekt was restored as Bezborodkinsky: next to the street, Bezborodko Square appeared.

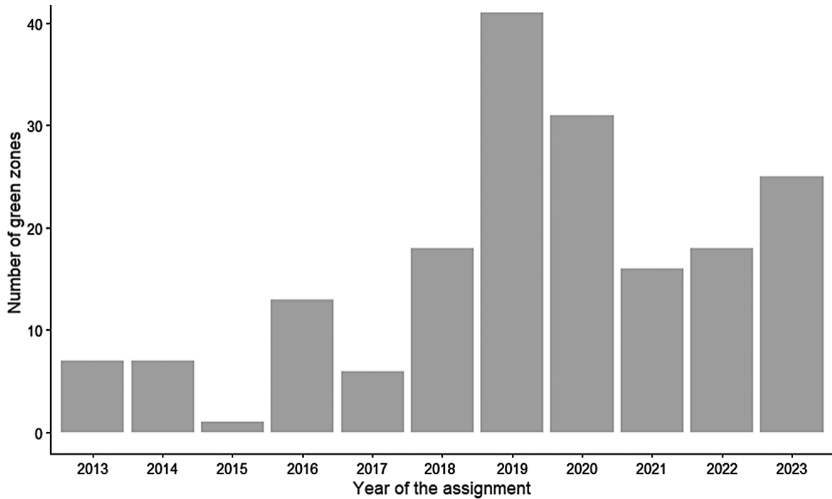


Fig. 12. The distribution of green zones' names by the year of the assignment between 2013–2023

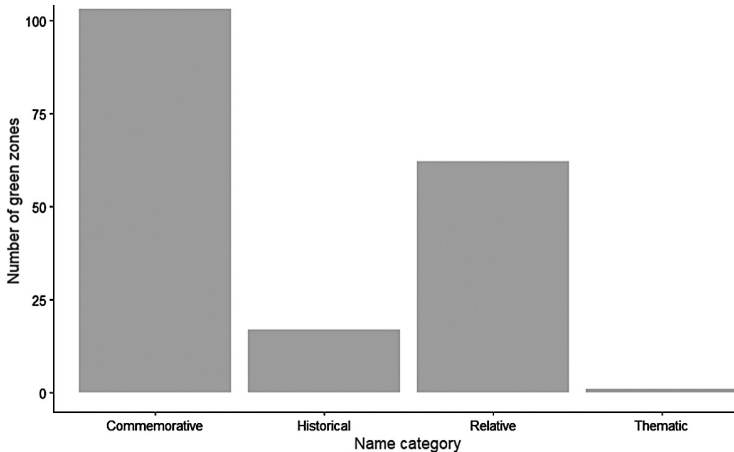


Fig. 13. The distribution of green zones' names by name category between 2013–2023

Commemorative green zones

Commemorative names make up more than half of all names assigned to green spaces over the past 10 years. An important factor for assigning a memorial name is the direct proximity of the object to the place of residence or activity of the person being commemorated:

“In the case of squares, we try to find a place where this person lived” (Alexey Erofeev).

Commemorative spaces in squares have a more localized character and create a cultural-historical space for the district. If the square is located in a district associated with the commemorated person, then the memorial function is performed more effectively:

“For example, in the Admiralteisky District, there is Lydia Clement Square. The singer died very young. The long-standing residents of Leningrad remember her. And there, people came up with the initiative, because that’s her place of genius. She lived there her whole short life. And they made such a wonderful square there! They made a sculpture of a gramophone record and landscaped the square, everyone remembers Lydia Clement. And it’s one thing to have Lydia Clement Square in this district, and another thing to have it somewhere in Parnas, and nobody would know who she is” (Alexey Erofeev).

Cultural-sporting and military spheres, like in the case of streets, also prevail in commemorative names of green spaces, public achievements, however, there are fewer commemorations of figures in the field of science.

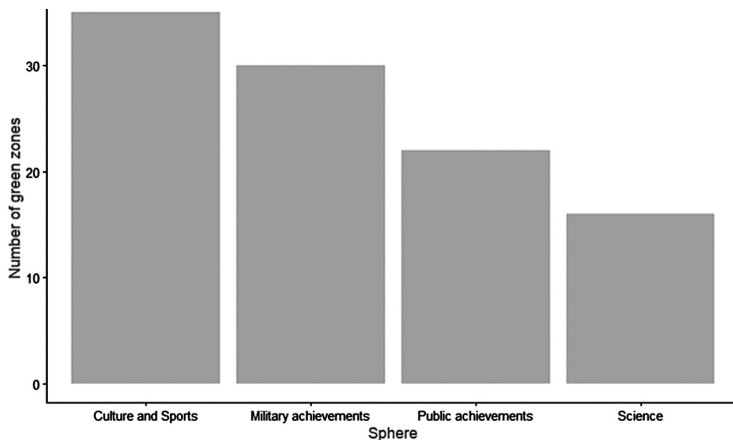


Fig. 14. The distribution of commemorative green zones' toponyms by the sphere of activity for 2013–2023

The Soviet period occupies a significant portion of commemorative toponyms in green spaces. Interestingly, compared to streets, squares more often commemorate figures and events from the post-Soviet and intermediate (between the 20th and 21st centuries) periods.

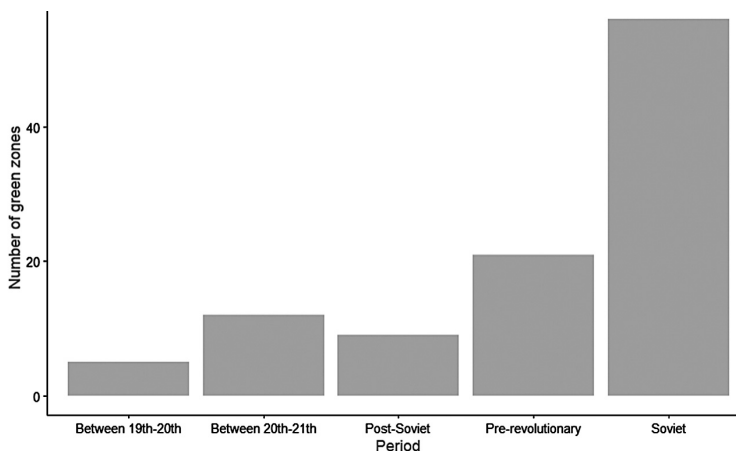


Fig. 15. The distribution of commemorative green zones' toponyms by the historical period for 2013–2023

Similar trends can be observed in square names compared to commemorative streets. Most toponyms commemorating military feats belong to the Soviet period. The Soviet era also prevails in the cultural-sporting sphere. In the field of science, half of the names are dedicated to pre-revolutionary figures, but the overall proportion of toponyms related to Tsarist Russia is lower than in street names. The post-Soviet period (including figures from the 20th and 21st centuries) commemorates events and outstanding personalities of post-Soviet history. Urban space reflects the memory of figures in science, as well as public and military events. For example, there's the Pskov Paratroopers Square, dedicated to the heroes who died in the Second Chechen War in 2000, as well as the Memorial Square, dedicated to participants of local wars and conflicts. Important geopolitical events have also found reflection in the city's toponymy: the appearance of Crimea Square commemorating the annexation of Crimea, and Incheon Square in Kronstadt, solidifying the partnership between cities. The city has also commemorated events during the pandemic — the

Mercy Garden appeared in honor of medical workers who died while fighting COVID-19.

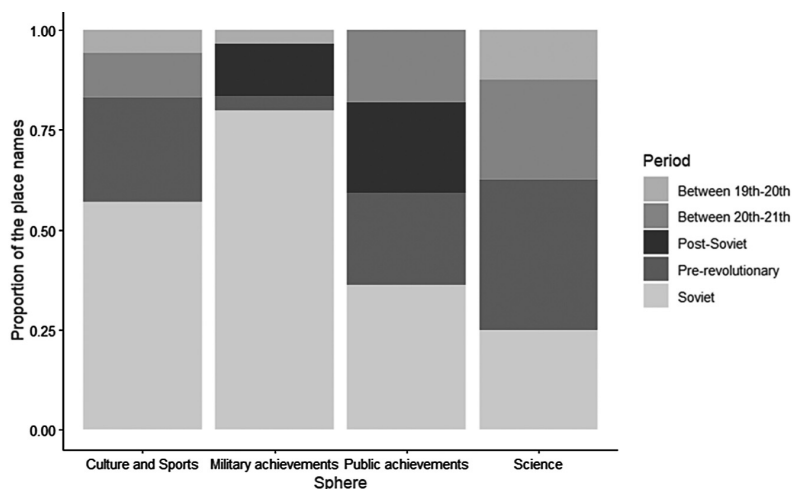


Fig. 16. The proportion of green zones' names of different historical periods by sphere of activity for 2013–2023

Relative green zones

Relative names are the second most frequent in naming policy of green zones. Over a ten-year period, 62 names were assigned, with 24 squares named after nearby toponyms and 38 named after urban objects. The distribution of these names throughout time corresponds to the pattern of urban relative street toponyms. The majority of these names come from structures that function within the landscape and are socially or culturally significant to the city. Moreover, urban place names incorporate infrastructure objects from different spheres of activity. For example, Jazz Square (Dzhazovy square) was named after the Jazz Philharmonic, Geodetic Square (Geodezichesky square) for its closeness to the scientific company “Aerogeodesy,” and Fidelity Garden (Vernosti garden) because of its proximity to the registration office. The pre-revolutionary period is represented by names of former estates or their owners. A few names linked to the Soviet period emerged from monuments located within the squares prior to their naming. For example, Prometheus Garden was named after the eponymous sculpture situated within the square.

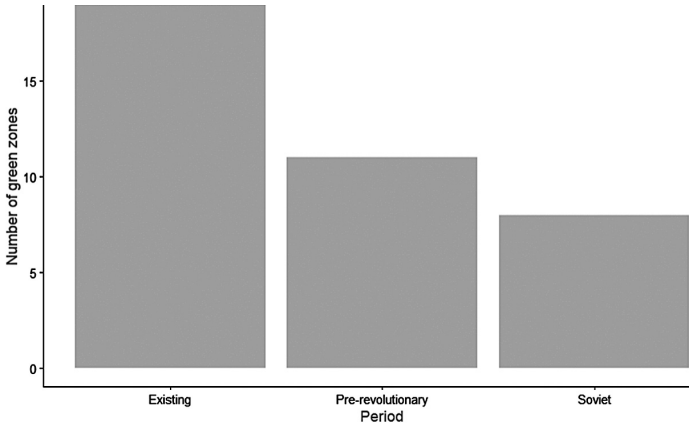


Fig. 17. The distribution of relative urban green zones' toponyms by the historical period for 2013–2023

Bridges

In 2022, there was a significant increase in the number of assignments, with 38 names being given to bridges, most of which are located within municipal entities. This surge is related to the mass naming decision made in 2020 by the Toponymic commission.

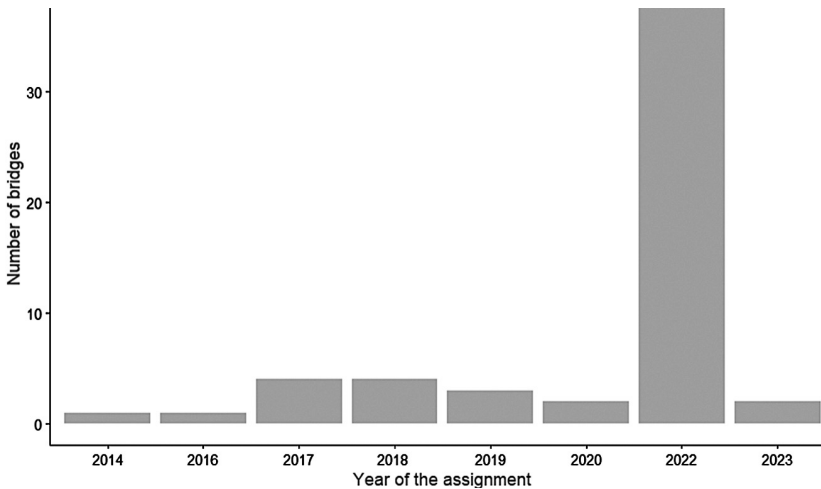


Fig. 18. The distribution of bridge toponyms by the year of assignment for 2013–2023

Relative naming prevails in bridge names, primarily represented by shifted names (30 names), while urban types are less common, and bridges are mostly given pre-revolutionary names in honor of estates on whose territories they were located. Historical principles are traced in bridge toponyms, and names are given according to lost names of settlements and streets.

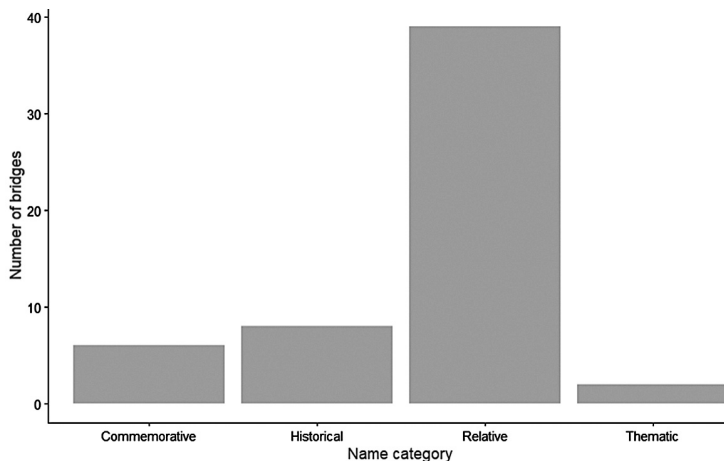


Fig. 19. The distribution of bridge toponyms by the name category for 2013–2023

Commemorative names are assigned less frequently than the previous categories but often carry significant symbolic value. The symbolic value of a place is determined by its location and scale:

“As for bridges, there’s a dual moment here. When small bridges appear, their advantage is that nobody wants to name a small bridge after an outstanding person. But when a large bridge appears, it’s the opposite” (Andrey Ryzhkov).

Commemorating through large infrastructure objects attracts public attention and generates discussions. A unique case over the past 10 years was the assignment of the name of Akhmat Kadyrov to a bridge in the Krasnoselsky district in 2016:

“Since the return of St. Petersburg in 1991, nobody has ever held rallies over names. There have been many returns, relatively many, 150–200 in total, but there have been no rallies” (Andrey Ryzhkov).

The assignment was politically motivated and violated the principle of connecting a person with the city. However, despite the widespread

reaction of activists, petitions and protests the name was assigned. The authorities explained that the name assignment was not based on the connection of politics with the city but the nationwide significance of the personality. Interestingly, the Akhmat Kadyrov Bridge is the only bridge commemorating a post-Soviet personality, as other toponyms are associated with pre-revolutionary figures. Unlike parks and streets, the Soviet period is not commemorated through bridge names widely.

Conclusion

With the dynamic development of the urban environment, the toponymy of St. Petersburg underwent several transformations and changes in creative and technical aspects over the period from 2013 to 2023. Firstly, the adoption of the law on naming procedures formalized the naming process, affecting the dynamics of decision-making. Secondly, another structural change was the regulation of green zones, leading to the emergence of numerous unnamed objects, thereby expanding the scope of toponymic activity.

The main trend in recent years has been commemoration, which has widely spread to the toponyms of streets and green spaces. The historical layers of the city are reflected in new names, with the most common theme being the Great Patriotic War and the people's heroism. The toponymic commission is trying to move away from Soviet traditions of commemorating revolutionary figures, instead immortalizing figures from various fields who were repressed and unrecognized during Soviet times despite their achievements.

The pre-revolutionary era is primarily commemorated through scientific and cultural figures and individuals who influenced the creation and development of St. Petersburg. The historical image of St. Petersburg is also recreated through relative toponyms that bring back lost socially significant or architectural objects of the urban environment into the modern landscape. Additionally, events and heroes of post-Soviet history are beginning to be woven into the urban space.

However, amidst social and urban processes, several issues have emerged in contemporary toponymy. Despite the trend towards commemoration, there is no unified body and order for memorial objects, including not only toponyms but also monuments and memorial plaques, that could standardize the process of commemoration:

“It's unfortunate that we don't have a single body in the city that deals with commemoration issues as a whole. Because commemoration is not just names, it's also monuments and memorial plaques. We have a separate council for memorial plaques, monuments are handled separately, and the

toponymic commission deals with names separately as well. But this should all be addressed comprehensively” (Andrey Ryzhkov).

Simultaneously, another issue has emerged — the politicized discourse surrounding commemoration and, particularly, the return of historical names. Toponymic restoration, which began after the collapse of the Soviet Union, is getting more sporadic and requires a special approach to consideration. However, lost historical names reappear in the urban space when naming new objects.

For various urban actors the city serves as an arena for advancing their own interests, which harms the historical and cultural heritage of the city and the harmonious formation of the urban space. Due to the numerous initiatives aimed at the main districts of the city, there is a difficulty in timely naming streets in new neighborhoods. To solve the creative task, the commission relies on Soviet and pre-revolutionary naming principles based on specific themes; however, thematic names have become less frequent in recent years.

Limitations

The paper has several limitations that need to be considered:

1. The study analyzes three types of toponymic objects: roads, green spaces, and bridges. However, toponymic policy also extends to a number of other objects, including schools, stadiums, government institutions, and other urban infrastructure objects that are not considered in this analysis. These objects perform their own functions in the urban space and are an important part of urban toponymy, making this analysis limited.

2. The analysis does not take into account the scaling of objects based on their location, scale, pedestrian accessibility, and other spatial characteristics, which play a significant role in the perception of the value of a toponym and, consequently, the approach to its naming.

Since the conducted interviews were with two members of the Toponymic Commission, who represent the same side of the urban actors, the discourse may be biased and not explain all the reasons and processes behind the certain toponymic patterns.

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CONTEMPORARY URBAN SPACE: ANALYSIS OF THE ST. PETERSBURG TOPONYMIC POLICY IN 2013–2023

Abstract. The research examines prevailing trends in the toponymic policy of St. Petersburg over the past decade, analyzing the dynamics of naming urban infrastructure and identifying key patterns. Toponyms shape collective memory and identity, forming part of the “memory infrastructure” (Irwin-Zarecka 1994). The naming and renaming of urban places have long been studied across disciplines, particularly in post-socialist spaces (Burd 2008; Light, Young 2015; Polyushkevich, 2018). While city renaming in St. Petersburg has been explored (Terentev 2015; Abramov, Terentev 2014), recent naming practices remain understudied. This study draws on Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic power (1979) and Halbwachs’ theory of collective memory (1992). The official St. Petersburg Toponymic Portal serves as the primary data source, with names of streets, bridges, and parks introduced or renamed between 2013 and 2023 analyzed. These names are categorized by symbolic significance and subjected to descriptive analysis using R software. Additionally, two expert interviews with members of the St. Petersburg Toponymic Commission offer deeper insights into naming policies.

Keywords: toponymy, collective memory, symbolic politics, urban space, urban sociology

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