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Cultural representation in Luxembourgish street naming practices

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Abstract: This paper investigates street naming practices in Luxembourg. Starting from a theoretical sketch of how the curation of a given cityscape by dint of cultural artifacts (e.g., street names) establishes complex orders of *cultural representation*, it discusses three case studies for street naming campaigns from Luxembourg. These case studies represent different types of action *modes*, ideological *motives* and linguistic *materials* involved in street naming. First, the naming process for a newly established neighborhood in Luxembourg City illustrates the default mode of street naming by administrative action. Second, the Germanization of Luxembourg City under German occupation during World War II demonstrates the forced alignment of a given cityscape through political octroi. And third, the recent first naming of preexisting streets in the rural municipality of Winrange provides an example of a participatory naming process that establishes an order of cultural representation based on local traditions.

Keywords: commemoration; cultural representation; linguistic landscape; Luxembourg; street naming

1 Curating the cityscape

Street names, monuments, and other cultural artifacts form part of the publicly accessible (self-)image of a given community. On the one hand, this image offers the participants of a community the opportunity to orient in and identify with a historically grown and therefore “legible social world” (cf. Blumenberg 1979). On the other hand, it is a recognizable sign for outsiders of the historical and current sociocultural character of this community. In regulated communities, such as cities, this public image is often being curated by dedicated groups of actors, for example, a standing street naming committee, and legitimized by municipal authorities against the backdrop of a specific societal climate (i.e., a form of government or political ideology), thus establishing orders of *cultural representation* in the cityscape. These orders can of course be challenged by other actors or even be removed and replaced with other artifacts to support a different ideological stance, for example, in the context of the current debates about monuments and street names commemorating figures linked to European colonialism.

The ensemble of artifacts in such orders of cultural representation has been described as the “text” of a given cityscape (see Tan and Purschke this volume), or as a specific form of semiotic collage that is the product of complex forms of social “place-making” (see Scollon and Scollon 2003). Beyond that, the curation of public space can also be described as a constant negotiation of regimes of *social visibility* (Purschke 2020a; Rancière 2000), which represent the (conscious as well as unconscious) sociocultural and ideological fundament of a given community. In this respect, the analytical focus is less on the ensemble of public signs than on the crucial role of actors in establishing and structuring this ensemble (see Ben-Rafael et al. 2006). Against this backdrop, it seems necessary to establish possible *modes*, *motives* and *materials* of cultural representation that underlie the curation of such ensembles of cultural artifacts depending on the different actors involved. In the following I use the (re)naming of streets to exemplify the curation of a socio-symbolic resource and a publicly visible component involving complex orders of cultural representation.

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2 Cultural representation – a theoretical sketch

The following theoretical sketch is not to be understood as a fully-fledged theoretical framework of cultural representation (see Hall et al. 2013 for a broad introduction). It merely establishes an analytical perspective that makes it possible to distinguish between different forms of curating an ensemble of cultural artifacts in the context of the present study.

In this context, *cultural representation* refers to the entirety of processes involving actors, actions and artifacts in the establishment and negotiation of the publicly accessible (self-)image of a given community. Regarding street naming practices, this includes different types of *modes*, *motives* and *materials* of representation (see Figure 1):

- **Modes** of cultural representation refer to the different kinds of *practical strategies* necessary to establish or curate an ensemble of cultural artifacts. In many cases, the default mode of street naming in regulated communities will be by *administrative action*, that is, the work of a committee or dedicated group of actors that develops ideas for street names then to be decided on by a municipal authority. Modes deviating from this can be, among others, the *public participation* in naming procedures as well as the imposed alteration of a linguistic landscape by *political octroi*, for example, in the aftermath of an occupation by a foreign power.
- **Motives** of cultural representation comprise different kinds of *ideological motivations* that may be used to legitimize action modes and their outcomes in street naming. The default motive in this context, especially in regulated practices, is the *practical organization* of public space in terms of its division and accessibility as a space for action. In addition, other motives can become effective, for example, in connection with the establishment of a collective identity as a form of *social appropriation* of the public sphere. Another example would be the *ideological consolidation* of social spaces after political regime change, for example, the eradication of street names commemorating persons unpopular with the new rulers. In practice, different motifs may overlap to some extent in many cases, when artifacts are inscribed in public space.
- **Materials** of cultural representation identify different types of *symbolic resources* that can be employed to realize such inscriptions, be it the use of the different *languages* present in a given community, the commemoration of *persons* representing different sociocultural spheres or the creation of street names using material from specific *semantic domains*, for example, names of plants, regions or professions.

The result of such processes can be best described as a complex *order of cultural representation* that comprises different aspects of the sociocultural embedding of an artifact such as a street name. First, every street name forms part of a *practical order* that *organizes* orientation in social spaces by associating a geographical location with a (locally) unique and referenceable name. Second, street names act as a *semiotic order* connecting a geographical location with a sociocultural concept that *symbolizes* different aspects of the characteristics of a

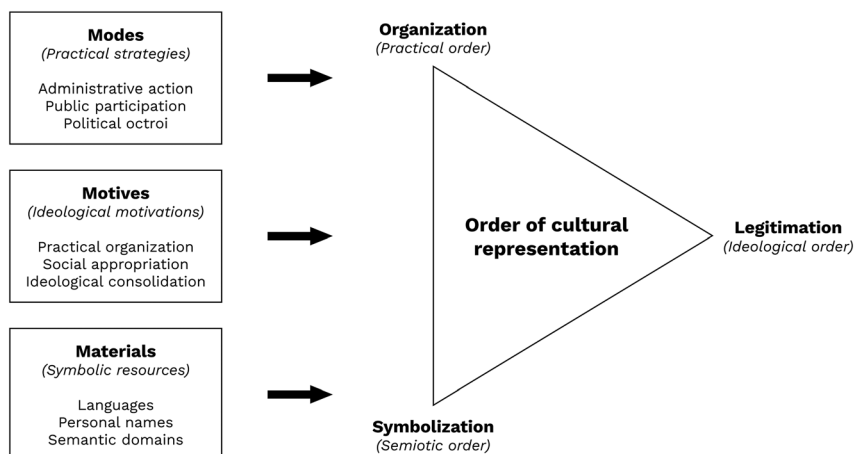


Figure 1: Modes, motives and materials of street naming practices involved in the creation of orders of cultural representation.

place. For example, the name “Hafenstrasse” (‘harbor street’) refers to the location of the street in relation to the specific function of the place, while names such as “Goethestrasse” and “Schillerstrasse” indicate a better residential area in many German cities (“Dichterviertel” ‘poets’ quarter’). Third, each street name also represents an *ideological order* that *legitimizes* certain aspects of the sociocultural (self-)image of a community by inscribing it into the cityscape. This is the case, for example, when, as a result of political change, the names of certain actors commemorated in the cityscape are replaced with new ones that correspond to the political ideology of the new rulers. Another example would be the eradication of certain languages in favor of others. In principle, every street name can be located in all three dimensions of cultural representation, but not all three are equally pronounced in every case. That is, it can be argued that an inconspicuous name such as “Gartenstrasse” (‘garden street’) is also an inscription of a certain self-image in the cityscape, and is thus ideologically motivated *ex negativo*, but compared to a name like “Strasse des 17. Juni” in Berlin (commemorating the East German uprising of 17 June, 1953) it is clearly less politically charged.

With that said, it is clear that the described processes are not to be seen as isolated but as embedded in and influenced by existing orders of cultural representation, for example, if the naming materials for a new city quarter correspond to the materials used in the neighboring areas (see Section 3.1). In this sense, the theoretical sketch establishes a specific perspective on the negotiation of orders of cultural representation, which puts certain aspects at the center for analytical reasons, that is, the modes, motives and materials and their role for establishing/curating such orders. In a follow-up study, the complex interactions between existing orders and street (re)naming would have to be systematically examined.

3 Street naming in Luxembourg – three case studies

Against the backdrop of the theoretical sketch, in the following I will examine three case studies as examples for street naming practices in Luxembourg. In doing so, I focus on the different aspects of cultural representation as discussed in the previous section. First, I examine the default case of street naming in Luxembourg by administrative action using the example of a new development area in Luxembourg City. Second, I investigate the renaming of streets in Luxembourg City under the German occupation during World War II as an example of renaming by political octroi. And third, I document the first naming of streets in a municipality in the north of Luxembourg, which came about through public participation.

For the case studies on Luxembourg City, I rely on documents from the Luxembourg City Archives, which can be researched using an online finding aid,¹ supplemented by historical and present-day newspaper documents. Relevant identification numbers of the archival documents used are noted in square brackets in the text.

3.1 Historical and sociolinguistic background

Today’s Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has been shaped by an eventful history (see Kreins 2010; Pauly 2013). For most of its existence, it was part of changing European empires. The current territory came into being through several divisions, most recently in 1839 as an outcome of the Belgian Revolution. In 1867, the country was declared neutral (and partly independent) in the Second London Treaty after another dispute over its political affiliation (the “Luxembourg Crisis”). In 1890, after the death of King William III of the Netherlands, the country became completely independent. In the two World Wars of the 20th century Luxembourg was occupied by the German Empire, first in 1914 when it marched to France, later in May 1940 (for the same reason). Today, Luxembourg forms part of the European Union and hosts several European institutions. It has a total population of 626,100, including a very high proportion of foreign residents (47.4%). In addition, there are 206,000 cross-border commuters coming in from Germany, France and Belgium every day (STATEC 2020).

¹ <https://www.archives-vdl.findbuch.net/php/main.php>.

Due to its location on the border between the Romance and Germanic language area, but also due to its complicated coming into being, Luxembourg is characterized by a historically grown multilingualism (Horner and Weber 2008). In addition to Luxembourgish, which was declared the country's national language by law in 1984, French and German serve as administrative languages. The social anchoring and practical use of languages in the country are domain-specific with each official language being dominant in certain areas of social practice (Erhart and Fehlen 2011). Luxembourgish has undergone processes of societal and political development in the past 15 years (Gilles 2019), including the transformation from a mostly spoken into a written variety and a language promotion law (2018) to advance its institutionalization and standardization. Given the country's sociocultural diversity and strong demographic dynamics (the population has grown by 42.5% since 2001; STATEC 2020), multilingualism and especially the societal role of Luxembourgish have been a frequent topic in public debates in recent years (Garcia 2014; Porschke 2020b).

Street naming in Luxembourg is organized at the municipal level. Each municipality has its own administrative procedures and people/committees responsible, which leads to local differences in street naming, for example, with regard to the presence and hierarchization of languages. In a comprehensive study of 58 municipalities, Garand (2011) surveyed the presence of languages in local street names. The study found that there are more monolingual (731) than multilingual (323) names, with French (56%) slightly outweighing Luxembourgish (44%) in monolingual signs. German played no role in this context (with rare exceptions). In multilingual signs, French was the dominant language in terms of design and typography, with most multilingual signs (69%) being homophonic. While the strong position of French in public writing can easily be explained by its historical dominance in administration, the study also found an increasing number of Luxembourgish street names, both in mono- and multilingual signs: the main motive of those responsible for street naming is directly concerned with the role of the language as a means of building a “national identity”.

3.2 Naming a new neighborhood – Ban de Gasperich

Luxembourg City is the capital and largest city of the country with a resident population of 124,528 in 2020 – and a foreigner share of 70.44% (Ville de Luxembourg 2020). Due to its central role in the economy, and fostered by the rapid socioeconomic growth of the country, the city has been growing constantly over the last years (30% population increase since 2010; Ville de Luxembourg 2020). Apart from various urbanization and renovation projects in the existing neighborhoods, the city council is also developing new residential areas on the outskirts of the city. The largest current project in this regard, covering a surface area of about 80 ha, is the area “Ban de Gasperich” (Luxemburger Wort 2016) in the south east of the city that is part of the district “Cloche d’Or” and extends it in eastern direction towards the motorway junction A3/A6.² The development area offers a mix of residential, commercial and public use with 50% of the area being reserved for green spaces. The first buildings were inaugurated in 2014, and the large local recreation area in the northeast of the neighborhood is expected to be completed in 2022.

The neighborhood comprises a limited number of newly established streets that were named in 2013 upon decision taking by the city council in 2012 [LU 64.2.2]. Two central axes run through the area: “Boulevard Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen” (1818–1888, German social reformer and local government official) from northwest to southeast, a preexisting road that has been massively expanded, and “Boulevard de Kockelscheuer” (neighboring village in the municipality of Roeser), a new street which connects the roundabout in the northeast with the arterial road towards the south-west in an arc. While the latter is the only example of a *directional* name in the neighborhood, the former establishes the main motive for street naming in this area: *commemorative* names inscribing international historical figures without any specific connection to Luxembourg in the cityscape. The list comprises mostly scientists, that is, Albert Einstein,

² An interactive map of the area can be found in the Geoportal of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: <http://g-o.lu/3/O3Mq> [last retrieved: 25.04.2021].

Charles Darwin, Gerhard Mercator, Hildegard von Bingen, Isaac Newton, Lise Meitner, Leonardo da Vinci and Rosalind Franklin. The only exception in this regard is a preexisting street in the southwest of the neighborhood that has been extended from the western part of the district to connect with the new neighborhood, and that commemorates Émile Bian (1873–1918), a local politician and industrialist. The only other street name deviating from the basic scheme is “Rue de la Francophonie” in the northeast of the quarter which runs around the large French school center “Vauban”, thus establishing an *associative* name for that street. At the same time, it is the only name in the neighborhood that can be connected directly to the sociocultural make-up of Luxembourg in reflecting its strong cultural ties with the French-speaking world.

The matrix language for all street names in the neighborhood is French, as can be seen in the generic name elements (“rue” ‘street’, “boulevard”, use of “de” ‘of’ as a connector). This is a mere reflection of French being the primary administrative language in Luxembourg City. Almost all official street names in the city are French, even if in many cases they have a second, unofficial name representing traditional Luxembourgish names. This is being mirrored in the default street sign setup for the city that has either only the official French name, or French on top and in larger letters compared to a possible secondary name in Luxembourgish. There are only rare exceptions with monolingual Luxembourgish street names in the city. In contrast to the generic parts of the name, the rendering of a person’s name (where evident from additions) reflects the respective cultural (and with it, linguistic) background of the person concerned. The “Rue Hildegard von Bingen” and the “Rue Leonardo *da* Vinci” are examples of this.

Luxembourg City has a standing street naming committee that develops street names and presents them to the city council for approval.³ The committee works on the basis of a set of criteria that regulate the suitability of street names. It also receives suggestions from the population and from organizations. The basic rule for the suitability of a name stipulates that all names, regardless of whether they relate to people or other semantic domains, must have a direct connection to the city of Luxembourg, such as Émile Bian. The only exception to this rule is for deceased figures who have merit for the history of mankind, such as scientists, inventors, writers or composers. In addition, the city tries to establish thematic coherence between the different names of a neighborhood. There are also special arrangements for Luxembourgish street names that have been added to the official French name in some parts of the city. Basically, they have to have a historically rooted meaning (such as historic names for places or traditional rural names) that is not a direct translation of the respective French name, except in cases where the traditional name already has the character of a translation.

Regarding the specific order of cultural representation that has been established in this new neighborhood, a couple of conclusions can be drawn: First, this case study represents the default mode of street naming through administrative action, that is, the work of a committee, which in this case worked out the proposals for the new names, and approval by local authorities (“Schöffenrat”). The materials used follow the specified rules of the municipality, for example, the use of French as default language for street naming (including the generic parts of street names commemorating persons). In addition, the “Ban de Gasperich” neighborhood is an example for the creation of a *thematic district*, in which almost exclusively international scientists are taken into account. According to the committee, the main motive for such naming practice is the continuation of the naming patterns in the neighboring areas, that is, “Cloche d’Or” in the west (mostly personal names commemorating important figures of the city’s history) and “Gasperich” in the north (mostly personal names commemorating international personalities such as artists, journalists, inventors or explorers). Apart from this, the international character of the city (foreign resident population) and the expected population structure of the district (international employees of corporations and institutions) may have been decisive for the thematic focus. However, a direct connection with the city or the planned usage of the district cannot be established, except for “Rue de la Francophonie”.

³ All information on the work of the municipal street naming committee come from correspondence with Dr. Evamarie Bange and Christiane Sietzen, current members of the committee.

3.3 Germanizing the cityscape – Luxembourg under German occupation in WW2

On May 10, 1940, Luxembourg was occupied by the German Wehrmacht as part of the Battle of France (see Pauly 2013: 93–104). The Grand Ducal family and parts of the government went into exile, and Luxembourg was placed under the administration of the Gauleiter Gustav Simon (Gau Trier-Koblenz). There were numerous attempts at Germanization by the occupiers (see Dostert 1985), some of which met with significant resistance from the population, for example, when enforcing compulsory military service or when registering a civil status survey.⁴ Since the Germans viewed the Luxembourgers as ‘ethnically German’ (“volksdeutsch”), the occupation administration pursued the goal of integrating the country and the population into the larger empire administratively as well as economically.

Part of the Germanization measures focused on the political alignment of the historically grown multilingualism (see Dostert 1985: 110–115). One of the Gauleiter’s first regulations concerned the use of the German language (Luxemburger Wort 1940): German was set as the sole language for all areas of public use (administration, school, business, media, advertising, correspondence). In addition, there were explicit provisions for company signs, house inscriptions and street and traffic signs for which only German was permitted. Figure 2 shows a remaining example of a French house inscription (“Blanchisserie” ‘laundry’) that was overpainted with the German equivalent “Wäscherei” in 1940. In the following two years, attempts were made to Germanize first and family names as well as to prohibit the use of French in the public sphere [LU 11 NS 00214: 38ff.]. Luxembourgish was tolerated as a “German dialect”, but its use was restricted to its function as an oral everyday language.

As early as 1940, the streets in Luxembourg City were renamed. While the majority of street names was simply translated from French into German (e.g., “rue d’Amsterdam” > “Amsterdamer Str.”, “rue des Dominicains” > “Dominikanerstr.”), a larger number of streets was assigned new names. These names were established by a group of officials, that is, the city mayor, the local police chief and the district commander, and authorized by the Gauleiter [LU 11 NS 00214: 49]. The renaming campaign included the removal of all French road and traffic signs [LU 11 NS 00214: 46], however, initially many French street signs only seem to have been



Figure 2: A rare leftover of Germanization in the Luxembourg cityscape: Rear view of the former Voelker-Schumann laundry in Pfaffenthal.

⁴ The civil status survey on 10 October 1941 is part of the Luxembourgish historical Master narrative and seen as an important steppingstone for the development of a “national identity”: When asked about their mother tongue, nationality and ethnicity, the majority of the population answered “Luxembourgish” three times, which is why the survey was terminated prematurely.

pasted over with German names [LU 11 NS 00214: 50]. In 1941, a booklet of street names was published for Luxembourg City, comparing old and new names (Strassenverzeichnis 1941). This list forms the basis for the following analysis of street renaming.

In total, 141 of the city's 399 listed streets were renamed.⁵ Most of the names that remained unchanged (that is, they were only translated) were *natural* names ("Rosenstr." 'Rose street'), *associative* names ("Rennbahnstr." 'Racetrack street'), *directional* names ("Pfaffenthaler Berg" 'Pfaffenthal hill') or the names of local historical figures such as "Peter von Aspeltstr." (1,245–1,320, Luxembourg-born archbishop of Mainz) or "Auguste Lavalstr." (1843–1915, Luxembourgish politician and industrialist). As for the renaming (that is, comparing the German versions of the old names with the newly assigned names), there are three different types to consider:

- **Adaptation** of orthography or generic name components (42 cases); this involves conversions from "-strasse" ('street') to "-gasse" ('alley'), adjustments to directional names ("Nassastr." to "Nassauer Str.") and the addition of name components ("Karlstr." to "Kaiser Karlstr." 'Emperor Karl street');
- **Germanization** of the spelling or of name components (28 cases); this comprises the adaptation of names ("Evrard Kettenstr." to "Eberhard Kettenstr.", "Longwystr." to "Longicher Str."), the removal of non-German characters ("Créchystr." to "Crechyststr."), but also the replacement of French-sounding generic name components ("Amalienavenue" to "Amalienstr.");
- **Replacement** of names (71 cases); there are a number of different motifs for this type:

First, names with a high symbolic value were replaced. The central "Freiheitsavenue" ('Freedom avenue') was renamed "Adolf-Hitlerstr.", supplemented by renaming the "Brüderlichkeitsring" ('Fraternity ring') to "Yorkstr." and the "Gleichheitsstr." ('Equality street') to "Auf dem Kahlenberg" in other city quarters. In this way, the memory of the motto of the French Revolution was erased from the cityscape. The same applies to references to enemy countries ("Vereinig. Staatenstr." to "Theodor Körnerstr."; "Frankreichplatz" to "Maximilianplatz"). Moreover, one main motive seems to have been removing from the cityscape a number of people disapproved by or irrelevant to the new government, for example, "Xavier de Fellerstr.", a Belgian poet (1735–1802), "Alfred de Mussetstr.", a French writer (1810–1857), or "Aloys Kayserstr.", a Luxembourgish sports propagator (1874–1926), and replacing them with names according to Nazi cultural ideology, for example, "Gottfried Kellerstr." (writer), "Spitzwegstr." (painter) or "Brucknerstr." (composer), but also "Gottfried Kurthstr." (1912–1990, anthropologist working on racial issues) or "Heinrich Stammer" (1785–1859, first German teacher in Luxembourg). Furthermore, a number of names for German cities and regions were inscribed in the cityscape ("Moselstr.", "Siebengebirgsstr.", "Saarlandstr.").

Among the historical files of the Central Administration of Luxembourg there is also the official regulation on the naming of streets, squares and bridges [LU 11 NS 214: 11–13] in Nazi Germany that regulates the exact procedures. It is likely that this regulation was not specifically designed to deal with occupied territories, and Luxembourg is the special case of an area considered culturally and historically German by the Nazis. Nevertheless, some information can be derived from the regulation that also applies to the renaming campaign in Luxembourg City. For example, the generic part of names (base word) should reflect the "street character", which might explain the changes from "-strasse" ('street') to "-gasse" ('alley') for some smaller streets in the city center. Moreover, a certain alternation between different base words for streets (e.g., "Damm" 'dam', "Allee" 'avenue', "Ring" 'ring') and squares (e.g., "Markt" 'market', "Plan" 'plan', "Park" 'park') should be employed. In general, names must be in line with the National Socialist worldview, especially when using place names or significant historical events as material. Furthermore, the use of cities, provinces, regions or mountains of the German Reich is recommended, for which there are also some examples in Luxembourg City.

⁵ Based on a privately owned historic map, Hilgert (2010) counts a different number of renamed streets. Another list that only contains the renamed streets, not simple translations into German, can be found in May (2002). Additionally, there is a list with renaming examples from different localities in Luxembourg available at: <https://www.industrie.lu/ruesChangements.html> [last retrieved: 25.04.2021].

For personal names, the regulation stipulates men (!) from German history, especially those who have merit for the German people (“Volkstum”), statesmen, military leaders or pioneers of Nazi ideology. In addition, men (!) from science, art, business and sport (“Leibesübungen”) are allowed. A final rule that is relevant for the present study concerns the language regime: the use of names from foreign languages, the spelling of which could lead to errors in pronunciation, should be avoided as far as possible.

Against this backdrop, the renaming campaign in Luxembourg City proves to be a mixed solution: On the one hand, the regulations were taken into account when selecting personal names, region and city names, as well as when adapting the generic parts of the existing names. On the other hand, many name changes apply only minor adjustments to the spelling of a name, which the official regulation explicitly advises against. Above all, the comparison shows that the German administration was concerned with the ideological consolidation of public space, that is, the Germanization of Luxembourg and the pushing back of French.

After the initial renaming campaign, there were only a few documented attempts at further renaming [LU 11 NS 00214]. For example, the Italian State Tourist Board tried to have a street renamed after Dante Alighieri, and the mayor himself wanted to name a street after the Japanese ambassador in Luxembourg. After some administrative scramble, it did not happen in either case. In contrast, “Josef Junckstr.” (1839–1922, a unionist and train station manager) was renamed to “Koblenzer Str.” (“Street to Koblenz”) in February 1943 – following a few disagreements between Gauleiter, police president and mayor – after the administration became aware of his status as the Grand Master of a Masonic lodge.

In September 1944, Luxembourg was first liberated by the Allies (see Pauly 2013: 101–102). While the north of the country temporarily fell back into German hands as part of the Battle of the Bulge, the south with the capital remained free from this point on. As one of the first measures of the transitional government, all street renaming by the Germans was officially withdrawn as soon as November 1944 with all names restored to those from before the occupation (Luxemburger Wort 1944).

The analysis has shown how political octroi can be used to transform an order of cultural representation in light of the ideological consolidation of a given cityscape. The German administration tried to anchor the Nazi ideology in the cityscape, but also to suppress all visible influence of the French language. This can be seen in the use of specific materials for the renaming: the conversion of the generic name components to German base words, the translation of personal names, the replacement of people related to Francophonie or the alignment of spellings to avoid non-German characters. However, the documents also show that the forced adjustment of an order of cultural representation, even under great political pressure, may cause resistance among the population, because it inscribes an ideological legitimation of reign in the cityscape that contradicts the cultural self-image of the population.

3.4 Wincrange – street naming between local traditions and public participation

The last case study represents a rare example in two ways. First, the selection of street names was largely carried out through public participation. And second, it was the first naming of roads that had been around for quite some time. The municipality of Wincrange (LTZ: Wëntger, DEU: Wintger) is located in the rural north of Luxembourg, directly on the Belgian border.⁶ It is a joint municipality, which consists of 27 smaller villages, with a total of 4,503 inhabitants (as of 2020). At the same time, it is the largest municipality in Luxembourg in terms of area created in 1977 by a municipality merger. Traditionally, none of the streets in Wincrange had an official name. Instead, each house in each village was identified by a unique house number. In view of the small settlements and few streets concerned, this solution was not a problem in practice. However, there were also a number of unofficial traditional names for streets used by the residents which often refer to historical settlement characteristics or rural names.

⁶ An interactive map of the municipality can be found via the Geoportal of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: <http://g-o.lu/3/2dZ2> [last retrieved: 25.04.2021].

The first considerations for the introduction of official street names in the municipality date back to 2004.⁷ Village ateliers were founded in two places (Asselborn, Rumlange), in which the population was asked about potential street names. The ateliers came up with many traditional names already in use in the population. Those were proposed as street names, but they were not officialized by the local authorities, partly because they met with little response from the larger population. In 2010 the process was resumed to introduce official street names in all sub-municipalities of Wintrange. The main reason for this was a new traffic regulation system and cadaster based on street names.

In all villages, existing traditional names were collected with the help of the population, with special actors taking over the coordination in some places (mostly “village historians”; in one place the suggestions came from a former postman). Where there were no traditional names, residents could make suggestions for naming their street. All street names in Wintrange are monolingual in Luxembourgish. Overall, the campaign was successful, but it took several years to complete. The main reasons for this can be seen in the changing composition of the municipal council, lack of time and sluggish feedback from some sub-municipalities.

Most of the official street names are based on traditional names, which in many cases go back to local rural names. Administrative adjustments were made in some cases, though: In Hamiville, for example, the proposal “Aalerbornerknupp” (‘Allerborn hill’), for which a place name was found on an old map (“Aalberknapp”), officially became “Om Allerburrer Knapp”.⁸ Other examples demonstrate local differences in the motives for the naming. The residents of Niederwampach, for example, did not want to keep the traditional name “Juddegaass” (‘Jews’ alley’) because historically no Jews have lived in that street, and to avoid a negative sounding assonance between “-gaass” (‘alley’) and “Gas” (‘gas’). In another village (Doennange), however, the same name remained. In Derenbach the name “Op der Strooss” (‘On the street’) was traditionally used for a street, but it was officially named “Hauptstraße” (‘Main street’) because the residents did not want to live “on the street”. In everyday life, however, the traditional name is still in use. In Troine a street was named “Om Schachkrutchen”, with the folkloristic reference to a supposed former resident presumably named “Charel Kruchten”. And in Oberwampach one of the residents of “Kierchestrooss” (‘Church street’) did not want to live on a street named after the Church, which is why the street is now officially called “Am Wolereck” (‘In the cartwright corner’ derived from a traditional house name “A Woler” referring to a former resident cartwright).⁹

Another aspect concerns the handling of orthography and dialectal variation. Luxembourgish is a young Ausbau language, the standardization of which has not yet been completed (Gilles 2019). In addition, the language has only become established as a written variety in the population with the advent of digital media in the last 20 years. When determining the street names, this fact made it sometimes necessary to adjust the spelling of suggestions orthographically. For example, the administration changed the proposal “A Schemer” (recorded rural name with unclear meaning) in Boxhorn to “A Schéimer” in accordance with the official spelling rules. Nevertheless, the official names sometimes show different spellings for the same name (e.g., “Duerfstrooss” ‘Village street’, standard spelling) in the villages of the municipality thus conserving features of the local dialects: “Duerefstrooss” (Allerborn, Boevange, Oberwampach), “Duarrefstrooss” (Crendal, Hinterhassel, Lullange, Troine), “Duärefstrooss” (Hachiville, Hoffelt, Stockem, Weiler). In one case, a (Luxembourgish) resident of Oberwampach spoke out against a traditional name for their street (“Am Hoppescheck” ‘In the Hoppesch corner’ derived from the traditional house name “An Hoppesch” going back to a former resident family) arguing that it was too difficult to pronounce for the many French-speaking residents of the street, which is why the street is now called “Om Bungert” (‘At the tree garden’).

⁷ All information about the street naming campaign in Wintrange come from an interview with Paul Schroeder, Secretary of the municipality of Wintrange.

⁸ The main reason for the adjustment was that the cadaster of Luxembourg was partly carried out by Prussian officials, whose correct transfer of the traditional names is questionable in some cases.

⁹ A house name is a traditional name for a house, an estate with several buildings or the entire inhabited property. In many rural regions, all members of a family were assigned the house name, a practice that is still existing in some regions today. A house name is used as a “second family name” in the community, which is only used and passed on orally, and is placed before the first name when talking about a person. Additionally, house names are often affixed to houses as inscriptions.

The reactions in the population to the new names were largely positive, also because many of the official names were already used in everyday life. The new street names were officially decided on May 15, 2017, by the local council (Gemeng Wëntger 2017) and announced on February 25, 2019 (Luxemburger Wort 2019), after a transition period. New house numbers were assigned at the same time as the street names, with each street being divided into a 15-m grid so that numbers could also be provided for vacant areas. The naming campaign has created a number of practical problems, though. For example, the new street names have so far only partially been recorded in commercial cartographic material and navigation software, which can make practical orientation difficult.

Overall, the naming campaign in Winrange proves to be an insightful example of the establishment of a new order of cultural representation through citizen participation. The system of street names is legitimized by being largely based on traditional names which were already in use in the population, and which enable residents to easily identify with names rooted in a shared local history. In considering these names, the community is creating a publicly accessible self-image based on local traditions (rural names, local dialects) by inscribing part of the region's collective memory into the linguistic landscape. This is also supported by the exclusive use of Luxembourgish as the designation language. However, the example also shows that there may be practical problems associated with the establishment of new orders of representation that question the orientation function of street names, for example, if new names do not appear in the official maps – or only with delay.

4 Conclusion

As can be seen from the three case studies, the naming of streets can take very different forms depending on the sociocultural and political situation, the actors involved and the objectives pursued. The interplay of different modes, motives and materials of cultural representation can be seen from the comparison of the three case studies: The example of “Ban de Gasperich” illustrates the curation of the cityscape through administrative action, the main goal of which is the practical organization of the public sphere. The naming of the streets in Winrange can serve as an example of the social appropriation of the linguistic landscape by a community, in this case through the active participation of the population. The German renaming campaign during World War II, on the other hand, reveals how political octroi can act as a means of ideologically consolidating public space, that is, the Germanization of Luxembourg. The studies also show how differently symbolic resources are used in these processes for the curation of orders of cultural representation, be it the inscription of NS ideology in the cityscape via personal names, or the strong emphasis on local traditions and identity through the use of Luxembourgish rural names in Winrange.

The theoretical sketch has proven to be a helpful analytical grid, which makes it possible to examine street naming practices in the context of the specific sociocultural situation of a given community. In doing so, the present study may provide a helpful addition to research on linguistic landscapes by embedding street naming practices into the larger context of the socio-semiotic self-organization of social groups. The results of the case studies go beyond the particular context of Luxembourg by mapping basic types of naming practices that can also be found in other contexts, for example, in the strategic use of street names for postcolonial nation building processes (see Tan and Porschke this volume). Starting from this, further case studies would have to examine which other modes, motives and materials need to be taken into consideration when analyzing the constant (re)negotiation of complex orders cultural representation, for example, the role of urban planning, architecture, transgressive art or artifacts of public commemoration such as monuments.

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